

FLY LINES



APRIL 2021

The April Meeting

Our April meeting will be another lunchtime meeting at the Kelvin Club. So come along at 12 noon and join with us for a very pleasant meal together with colleagues.

Our guest speaker for this meeting will be John Douglas, who is a very good friend of the Association.

John is a Fisheries Manager with the Victorian Fisheries Authority and has over three decades of experience in fisheries and fisheries management. These years include research on native fish aquaculture, conservation of threatened fish, habitat restoration, fisheries assessment, and most recently fisheries management. The constant theme throughout his career has been a driving objective to make a difference to recreational fishing.

John currently manages the VFA's recreational fish stocking program and he works closely with anglers to maintain and enhance fisheries across the state.

He is also a keen fly fisher, and as he lives in Alexandra on the Goulburn River, has access to a number of local trout streams that he fishes regularly and productively. He also generously provides frequent reports for *Fly Lines* on the trout fishing around the Thornton and Eildon areas.

Thursday, April 15,
12 pm for a 12:30pm meal
at the Kelvin Club

We look forward very much to hearing John again. So mark the date in your diary: Thursday April 15, 12:30 pm at the Kelvin Club.

We need to inform the Kelvin Club of numbers for catering purposes, so members who plan to attend our April lunchtime meeting are asked to email Terry Rogers to indicate their intention to attend.

Terry's email address is - terryrogers@bigpond.com



John Douglas

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 69 NO.6 - April 2021 Organisation No. A0024750J

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May Annual Auction – Thursday, May 20

Roll up, Roll up, Roll up ...

Our Annual Auction is on again at the Kelvin Club, 8 pm on Thursday, May 20.

Hughie Maltby will again be our auctioneer, and the items for sale include books and gear from the estates of John Philbrick and Rick Keam.

There will be a range of gear for sale, including rods, reels, flies, etc, as well as many books. John Philbrick and Rick Keam were avid collectors of quality books, and many of the titles being auctioned are simply the best of fly fishing and fly tying literature.

Mike Stephens has kindly donated some copies of Rick Keam's new fly tying book *Dressed for Dinner*. This is of course the last book written by Rick and we will have some copies to auction along with the book launch. Rick was without doubt one of our very best fly tiers, and his book tells us all about how to tie such classics as his Autumn Hopper.



Auctioneer Hughie Maltby asking for a bid

This will be a great opportunity to purchase some quality gear and books at very attractive prices.

Mark it in your diary - the Kelvin Club, Thursday 8:00 pm, on May 20.

President's Message

Welcome to another *Fly Lines* newsletter.

The return to the Kelvin Club was a wonderful evening catching up with members, partners and friends after a long break. We celebrated the 25- and 50-year members, and congratulate Robert Bett, Andrew Braithwaite, Mark Flook and Kevin Hindle on 25 years of membership. Congratulations, too, to Les Robertson who has completed 50 years of membership. We thank these members for their contribution to the Association through their years of involvement.

In late 2019 Council received a nomination for the Jack Ritchie Medal, and in going through the due process it was a unanimous decision of councillors to present this prestigious award to Terry George in recognition of his leadership in preserving and enhancing the environment in which trout can prosper.

"It wasn't anti-progress, and it wasn't a question of locking up natural resources, but it was aimed at making sure that traditional and non-damaging pursuits could co-exist in a world of powerful interests and narrowing options." This resonates with the work done by Terry.



Terry George receiving his Jack Ritchie Medal



Terry is actively involved, as President of the Australian Trout Foundation, with the ATF committee and members, along with individual anglers, angling clubs and associations, the Victorian Fisheries Authority, DEWLP, CMA's and other government agencies. His nomination by VFFA member Tom White was strongly supported by 12 letters from across Catchment Management Authorities, Government agencies and individuals recognising his enormous contribution.

His leadership in achieving the following speaks highly of his immense contribution to our trout fishery in recent years:

- River access tracks – Delatite, Howqua, Jamieson, Goulburn and Rubicon Rivers;
- Instream/Riparian rehabilitation - development of the Trees for Trout program across the Ovens, King, Kiewa, Jamieson, Nariel, Buckland, Rubicon, Mitta Mitta, Macalister, Little River and Steavenson rivers;
- Habitat workshops across all regions;
- Conservation – of Barred galaxias, Shaw galaxias, and the spotted tree frog, and involvement in controversial

issues such as the Rubicon Valley Logging and private hydro electrical projects;

- Stocking / Restocking of Hepburn Lagoon, and Buckland, Ovens, King and Goulburn Rivers;
- Stocking trials with Jordan Scotty boxes;
- Development of the Victorian Wild Trout Strategic plan;
- Incubator stocking of the Upper Goulburn, Ovens, Macalister and Hopkins rivers, and Mt Emu and Traralgon creeks.

Terry has represented Victorian trout fishers on these organisations:

- Freshwater Fisheries Management Plan;
- Victorian Trout Fisher Reference Group;
- Victorian Recreational Fishing

Roundtable;

- Victorian Freshwater Fish Habitat & Flows;
- Wild Trout Strategy Planning Committee;
- Spotted Tree Frog Advisory Group;
- Angler Riparian Partnerships Program;
- Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program.

Congratulations Terry! You join a unique list of identities who have contributed significantly to our fishing pursuits and a better environment.

Our March Millbrook Lakes day was again successful for the members who attended. I would like to call out ghillie Brian Cooper for his gentlemanly assistance in providing net and photography services to assist me with one of my trout. He certainly went way beyond the depths of the main lake to ensure my trout was



President Chris had a very successful day at Millbrook in March. This fine rainbow just one of the several he caught.

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landed, photographed and released. These are great days out and we enjoy the services of Millbrook guide, Jim Jackman, on these days.

Tasmanian Inland Fisheries have conducted their annual Carp Management workshop and published some interesting data:

- Only three carp caught;
- 41,499 carp have been removed from Lake Sorell since 1995;
- Carp are contained to Lake Sorell;
- No spawning or small carp were found in Lake Sorell;
- Numerous juvenile brown trout have been caught in Sorell, indicating the trout fishery is rebuilding naturally;
- No carp were found in Lake Crescent.

It's a credit to Tasmanian Inland Fisheries for their continued work in eradicating carp without needing to poison the water. Hopefully this will be viewed as an alternative to the national carp plan proposal of poisoning rivers and lakes. Our general meeting in April will see John Douglas, from Victorian Fisheries

Authority, update us on all trout matters in Victoria. I'm sure there will be some interesting questions asked. Has a year of travel restrictions and lockdowns provided a greater natural recruitment in our streams? Come along to this informative lunchtime presentation from JD.

Our May general meeting will be our annual auction. We have fishing gear and books from the estates of John Philbrick and Rick Keam. The VFFA, with Mike Stevens, will also launch Rick Keam's last book, *Dressed for Dinner*. This will be a big night and I look forward to seeing you there.

Terry Rogers is co-ordinating bookings for our lunch and evening general meetings. He will email members with details.

When you manage to get out to enjoy some time on a river or a lake, savour the time and take a mate.

Stay well.



The March Meeting – the Welcome Back Dinner

... report by Dermot O'Brien

The "Welcome Back" dinner at the Kelvin Club on March 18 was a great success and this was evidenced by the number of smiling faces and warm welcomes.

Covid in 2020 was undoubtedly a most difficult period but the VFFA Council had continued to work in the background and this year's events and activities should prove winners for members and guests.

The Welcome Back Dinner took on a significant tone because for the first time in ten years the VFFA Council decided to award an individual the Jack Ritchie Medal. This medal is to acknowledge a person's contribution to catchment and

river conservation for the preservation of wild trout in a natural environment.

To understand the medal, up until this dinner on March 18 it had been awarded only seven times in the history of the VFFA.

Previous recipients included Sir James Youl (who was responsible for successfully shipping the first salmon and trout ova to Australia in 1864), Athol Brown, Wal Coventry, Tony Brothers, Fred Dunford, Howard Scrivener, and Mick Hall in 2011.

At the dinner, President Chris Gray painted a picture of hard work and

dedication towards the Victorian trout fishery, and the recipient of the Jack Ritchie Medal was Terry George, President of the Australian Trout Foundation and VFFA member.

Terry's passion for the health of our streams and our trout fishery were motivating forces in the minds of Council members when considering awarding the medal. Terry has been the president of the ATF since 2015 and has been a tireless worker in terms of conservation and trout. He and his team have been involved in or directly organised tree planting, river restoration and river access projects across the state.

He is also, along with VFFA, heavily involved in the troublesome Steavenson River Issue, which is now before the courts. He is also a member on numerous fishing, conservation and Government committees.

Terry attended with his wife Jan and he was taken by surprise when the announcement was made. He thanked the VFFA, and in typical fashion thanked his ATF team for all the work they did in supporting him. He acknowledges that there is still much to do if the Victorian trout fishery is to survive and thrive in difficult times.

Our sincere congratulations to Terry on being presented with this very prestigious award.

The other significant part of the night was acknowledging members who had completed 25 and 50 years of membership in 2020.

Our lone 50 year member was Les Robertson, and the members who completed 25 years of membership of the Association last year were Robert Bett, Andrew Braithwaite, Mark Flook and Kevin Hindle.



The March meeting was a great opportunity to meet again with friends and fishing colleagues





President Chris Gray congratulating Terry George on his Jack Ritchie Medal award



Terry George's Jack Ritchie Citation and Medal



Terry George enjoyed the evening with his wife Jan



Kevin Hindle receiving his 25 year's of membership award



VFFA Secretary Kevin Finn enjoying a moment with Cleola Anderiesz

Notice of Event - The Inaugural “State of Origin” Competition

This event has been heavily advertised in the February and March issues of *Fly Lines*.

Andrew McKenzie, our NSW member of Council, has gone to great lengths to organise a fabulous week of fishing for members with Mark Weigall at Millbrook Lakes. It was nominally titled “State of Origin”, as the invitation is for six VFFA members based in Sydney to fish with six VFFA members from Victoria. While there was a tentative hint at it being a NSW vs Victoria competition, the underlying objective is for twelve VFFA members to enjoy each other’s company whilst fishing the very best lake fishing that our state can provide.

The date for this event is Saturday, April 24, to Saturday, May 1, and the lakes selected for this event by Mark are five top lakes normally only available as “guided waters”. They will be locked off and held exclusively for our group for the duration of the week. The lakes Mark has chosen have fish in them up to 14 lb, so this is certainly an excellent opportunity to fish high quality water while enjoying the company of a group of fellow VFFA members.

The cost is \$1,450 per person for shared accommodation, and this is incredibly good value: seven days fishing with guiding provided on the best private lake fishing in the state. The cost includes accommodation, all meals, and guides. (Compare this cost with the typical cost of trips to Tasmania or New Zealand. For us Victorians the travel time and travel cost is negligible, and the likelihood of connecting with some really big trout is there.)

Meals & Drinks: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner are included in the above cost. Ingredients for breakfast and dinner will

be supplied, and you will be expected to be involved in cooking a meal on one of the nights. Breakfast will be self-serve and will include a range of cereals, toast, juice, coffee. Lunches and morning and afternoon teas will be provided by Millbrook. BYO wine, beer, spirits and non-alcoholic drinks as required.

Mark has suggested these top flies for Millbrook: Millie Midge, Olive Magoo, Black Woolly Bugger, Brown Nymph and Dun patterns in shaving brush/paradun style.

If you are interested please contact the event coordinator Andrew McKenzie promptly as there are limited spots for this event.

Event Co-ordinator: Andrew McKenzie, Mobile: 0447 333 818, and Email: brixton@optusnet.com.au, Postal address: 9 Davidson Avenue, Warrawee, NSW 2074

Direct debit to VFFA bank account: BSB 182 512, account number 9605 47289

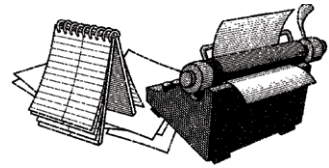
Include your name and “Millbrook2021” or post a cheque to Tony Mitchem, VFFA Honorary Treasurer, PO Box 18423, Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3001.

Fishing licences are not required to fish at Millbrook.

Mobile phone: There is good mobile phone coverage at Millbrook and in most townships and on major highways heading to Millbrook.

What to do next: Please confirm your interest in participating by contacting Andrew McKenzie ASAP as we have a number of interested participants. Organise your travel to/from Millbrook Lakes. Complete the event registration form and email it to Andrew McKenzie prior to arriving at Millbrook.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Skill at the riverside, or at the fly table, never came, nor will ever come to us by any road other than that of practice." (George Kelson: *The Salmon Fly* – 1895)

"There is only one secret in dry fly fishing, and that is to make an artificial fly float over a trout in such a way that it looks appetising enough for him to swallow." (Dermot Wilson: *Fishing the Dry Fly* – 1970)

"Any meticulous attention to colour or detail in a fly pattern is wasted effort." (Vincent C. Marino: *In the Ring of the Rise* – 1976)

"There is no greater fan of fly fishing than the worm." (Patrick F. McManus: *Never Sniff a Gift Fish* – 1979)

"I look into my fly box and think about all the elements I should consider in choosing the perfect fly: water temperature, what stage of development the bugs are in, what the fish are eating right now. Then I remember what a guide told me: 'Ninety percent of what a trout eats is brown and fuzzy and about five-eighths of an inch long.'" (Allison Moir: *Love the Man, Love the Fly Rod, Fly Fishing Stories by Women*)

Fly fishing is all about fly casting, and that statement encompasses the two essential skills – casting and fly tying.

To me, catching a trout on a fly I tied myself adds to the sense of satisfaction. But some years ago a retired VFFA president explained to me that he loved his fly fishing but the pressures of work limited his available fishing time, and he would much prefer to spend all of this fishing time on the water rather than wasting some of it trying to put bits of fur and feather together. I can appreciate his sentiments, but still regard fly tying as a valuable and fulfilling activity.

I began trying to tie flies soon after I started fly fishing in the early 1970s, because in those days tying your flies saved you money. These days, however, with hooks and tungsten beads costing about a dollar each, the savings seem

to have diminished, though the other advantages are still there. If you roll your own then you have total control over the final product – the size and shape of the hook you use, the colours of the materials, the variations and changes you think might work or at least are worth a try, and so on.

A few weeks ago David Coutts from Warrnambool sent me details of a special Stimulator fly that he had found was very effective as a hopper pattern. It was a quite complicated creation and seemed to have more moving parts than a 747. But I tied a few and took them with me to Myrtleford where I was helping with the ATF Ovens River Challenge. And yes, on some heavily flogged water, I caught some fish using David's special Stimmi. This fly was simply not available in the tackle shops, so I had to tie my own.

Like other creative skills, there are levels of competence here. Australia's Karsten Neben won prizes at the Slovenian Open Fly Tying Championship in 2012. Every so often I have another look at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCdQoDm88ek> where Karsten demonstrates how to tie a Pheasant Tail Nymph. His tying skills are simply stunning. It's well worth a look.

It's also good to report that we have some great tiers in the VFFA. Mick Hall is the standout in terms of our professional fly tiers. He has demonstrated his skills all over the world and is great to watch in action. Another top VFFA tier was Rick Keam, who so sadly died a few months ago. His fly tying book, *Dressed for Dinner*, will be officially launched at our May meeting.

Richard Kos is our current fly tying demonstrator and has, through lots of practice, developed impressive skills. Hubert Reichelt, by training a German engineer, regularly turns out a few dozen Royal Wulffs (a challenging pattern to tie well) and every fly in the batch will be superbly tied and all are identical. (When I tie Royal Wulffs mine are all clearly distinguishable individuals.)

Years ago when Hubert was in the habit of fishing in New Zealand every year I used to invite myself around to his house in the weeks leading up to his annual trip. I'd just sit and watch while he filled his fly boxes. An added attraction was that Hubert's delightful wife Herta kept me topped up with coffee and loads of her delicious German pastries straight out of the oven. Herta's cooking was in the same class as Hubert's fly tying.

Andrew Mossman is another VFFA tier whose skills I admire enormously. He is a master at tying those dainty little size

16 English flies with matching upright starling wings. If fly tiers were ranked like music students, then those patterns would be right up at the Licentiate level. They are very difficult to tie well, but not for Andrew.

John Pilkington ties a ripper Red Tag, and his Cinnamon Parachute Dun is proving a winner. Jim Blakeslee at Warrnambool ties everything superbly. Years ago he used to sit in a beanbag in front of his television set churning out flies for his next Tasmanian trip. I'm still not sure how he managed that.

I could go on, but these are the VFFA tiers that come quickly to mind. Apologies to the many other top tiers I've overlooked.

Fly tying is a creative skill, and there is a lot of personal satisfaction in turning out flies that are neat and attractive. I have a video of American tier Skip Morris who describes how he would spend three hours tying a fly for an exhibition. On the other hand I was once told about a Melbourne commercial fly tier who could churn out top class Red Tags at the rate of one per minute.

Flies can be very simple. When I started fly fishing in Warrnambool in the early 1970s Barry Quigley, a VFFA life member and stalwart of the Warrnambool club, took me out to the Hopkins River at Allansford one evening to show me the ropes. His son, then about eight or nine years of age, came along too. Barry's son had tied up some flies that were simply bits of black wool wrapped around a hook. Did they work? This inventive young lad headed off to an upstream pool and took eight fish with eight casts. (I counted them as they came out.)

Last year when we were in lockdown I decided to tidy up

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my fly collection, so gathered all my fly boxes and emptied the lot onto our dining room table. My wife was aghast, but I assured her they wouldn't wind up in the soup.

The first selection process was dividing them into keepers and chuckers. The keepers were obviously the best of my flies – the ones that looked good and which I would be happy to take out and fish with. Now Gordon van der Spuy in his new book, *The Feather Mechanic*, assures us that trout will happily take flies that are less than perfect. No doubt he's right, but my fishing confidence relies heavily on fishing with the very best flies I can pull out of my fly box. I was fishing the Ovens at Bright a few weeks ago and decided at one point to try a Parachute Royal Wulff. I opened my fly box, found them all lined up, and carefully selected the best one I could see there. Undoubtedly this fly would have to give me the best chance of catching a fish. (Does anyone else share this weird logic.)

Back at the dining table the keepers were divided according to type – dries, nymphs, midges, emergers, spider patterns, large wets, ... Then each of these categories were further subdivided – dries, for example, separated into beetle types, evening flies, parachute hackles, hoppers, etc.

I eventually wound up with several boxes sorted by type. But you can't take all these boxes up a river when you're fishing, so I went and found an empty fly box and filled it with a selection of my best dries for streams and another box of good nymphs and small wets for rivers. But then I went fishing a lake. So – more boxes with selections of my best flies for lakes. A recent article I read had an angler selecting flies by the season –

thus a box of early spring flies, another for mid-summer, etc.

I could go on. The trouble is that after a while I felt I needed to start all over again, as I now had a huge pile of fly boxes with my best flies spread everywhere.

And how many flies do you need to take anyway? In Warrnambool all those years ago one of our club members took his rod up the river and three or four flies in a matchbox. On the other hand the infamous Artie Hogan took a suitcase of fly boxes with him, including fly tying tools and materials in case he needed to match the hatch somewhere.

The proliferation over time is another challenge. In the years I have been editing the VFFA newsletter our Fly of the Month segment has featured just on 240 flies, and every single one of them was a proven fish magnet. None of them was a dud. They were all dangerous and likely to denude a river or lake. My personal computer database of flies, admittedly built up over many years, now numbers over 620 entries and includes 25 different hopper patterns.

And how many of these do I actually use? In a typical season perhaps about 30 all up, all being favourites that I have confidence in. But it's fun to hunt through the database on a cold winter's night – just for the heck of it.

Best wishes and tight lines. And give this month's Fly of the Month a try – it, too, is another excellent fish catcher.

Lyndon



The Australian Trout Foundation Notes

There were two items of significance this month. First, ATF President Terry George was awarded the Jack Ritchie Medal at the recent VFFA March Dinner for his countless hours of work and deep personal commitment to the ATF's mission, this being "to protect, build and promote Australia's trout fishery, and to protect, repair and regenerate inland waterways and riparian zones for the benefit of better stream water quality, thus providing better environmental outcomes for trout and native fish species." The Jack Ritchie Medal is a highly prestigious award, with only eight awarded thus far in the VFFA's long history. Our congratulations to Terry on this magnificent achievement.



Tim Curmi, President of Native Fish Australia, was joined by Julie Morgan from the Victorian Fisheries Authority to give out some well-deserved prizes to junior anglers. Every young angler who participated was given a brand-new rod and reel and a bag full of other fishing items.



This very competent young angler was a prize-winner at just five years old. He apparently caught his first Murray cod when he was three years old. Young anglers growing up in country towns with productive trout and cod rivers nearby are very fortunate.

The day following the VFFA March meeting saw Terry up very early and on the road to Myrtleford to complete the organisation of the annual Ovens River Challenge, a catch and release fishing competition organised by the ATF in conjunction with Native Fish Australia to provide information on fish stocks in the Victorian north-east region.

This year's "catch, measure and release" event brought together a wide cross section of 81 anglers who fished on the Saturday and Sunday morning for either native fish or trout in the beautiful Ovens River catchment. It was pleasing to report that this year's event included six female junior anglers and 18 male junior anglers.

The Grand Champion was Alex Evans who caught the double - a Murray cod of 60 cm and a brown trout of 27cm. >>>

The winners for the longest Murray cod were 68 cm, caught by Shaun Reynolds (senior), and 64 cm caught by Spence Reynolds (Junior).

Winners for the longest rainbow trout were 33 cm caught by Jordan Grasser (senior) and 36 cm caught by Alan Grasser (junior). Winners for the longest brown trout were 39 cm caught by Zac Mather (senior), and 32 cm caught by Max Lyon (Junior).

A number of Macquarie perch were caught during the challenge, with a few caught at Nimmo Bridge in Myrtleford. Also registered was a river blackfish of 19 cm and a carp of 67 cm. All fish caught, except the carp, were successfully released.

Terry George (ATF) and Tim Curmi (NFA) would thank the Victorian Fisheries Authority for their support. Julie Morgan

looked after the junior anglers, and John Douglas and Anthony McGrath were available to talk fishing.

It was fabulous to see the excitement and enthusiasm of the junior anglers who participated. With wonderful support from a range of generous sponsors, all junior anglers walked away with a fishing rod and a bag of other goodies. Our generous sponsors once again provided the quality fishing tackle and apparel for the awards, for which we were most grateful.

The next challenge is already in planning for March 2022 and the ATF and NFA Committees look forward to meeting current and new participants next year.



Julie Morgan giving a new rod and reel to another very keen young angler



Anthony McGrath with his 12 year old daughter Grace were also at the Ovens River Challenge. Anthony is a Senior Projects Officer with the VFA and reports that Grace and her 4 year old brother Oliver are both very enthusiastic anglers. Oliver caught his first Murray cod and now sleeps with a tackle box full of lures under his pillow.

On River Trout Spey Weekend

A growing number of Australian fly fishers are investigating Spey casting as a quite different way of presenting a fly. It's great fun (quite addictive in fact) and very effective in the right situation. But it needs some help and expert tuition.

Peter Morse, well known to us all as a fine casting instructor, is running a training weekend at Khancoban on one of two these dates – April 30 to May 2, or May 7 – 9.

Numbers are restricted to four and there will be two instructors.

The training course will cover the fundamentals of Trout Spey using light weight two-handed rods, or if you prefer, single-handed rods. Peter will have a selection of rods and lines available, though you are of course very welcome to bring your own two-handers and single hand rods.

Using two-handed rods is quite different from single-handed rods, so there's a bit to learn. Peter plans to cover enough of the essential nuts and bolts to get you fishing.

Topics to be covered will include the tackle (Why two hands? Why Spey?), the fly



A magnificent D-loop here. Anglers are being invited to learn Spey casting with Peter Morse

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lines and tips – simplifying a complicated business; casting – the four casts, why, when, and how; flies and leaders – rigging and fishing single, double, and triple rigs, streamers, nymphs, wets; reading the river from a swing perspective; and fishing – ‘the Swing is the Thing’.

The group will stay at the Khancoban camping ground, and those attending will need waders and boots. A wading staff is also highly recommended.

Those interested in investigating this new (to us Australian fly fishers) and exciting way of fishing flies should contact Peter for further information (including the very reasonable cost) or to reserve your place.

Email Peter on petermorseflyfisher@gmail.com or call him on 0422 607 038



New Members

It is our great pleasure again this month to welcome two new members to the Association. Barry Cawthorn and Robert Lennon have joined our ranks. We welcome Barry and Robert very warmly and trust

that their membership of the VFFA brings them much enjoyment, some great fishing experiences, and countless wonderful memories.

Report from Way Out West – a Fish Tale

Our VFFA Editor is very familiar with the Moyne River. In fact Lyndon is the fly fisher responsible for taking me there soon after I arrived at Warrnambool High School in April, 1976. He was the head of the science faculty and was very excited to discover that the new biology teacher from the USA was a fellow fly fisher. He took me under his wing, got me to join the Warrnambool Fly Fisher's Club, and proceeded to show me the local waters.

Lyndon took me to his favourite beat on the Moyne, near Port Fairy, on the day of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Game Dinner that year. I caught a 7½ lb brown on one of my #10 lead-weighted beaver fur caddis emergers (later to be re-incarnated as a shrimp fly).

I put the brown on a platter and that evening brought the fish along to the Dinner. One of the founding members of

the WFFC, Arthur Hogan, picked it up and carried it around, sticking it under the noses of our visiting Melbourne guests from the VFFA (we were a sub-branch of the VFFA then). Artie was making a not so subtle point that we had some quality fishing in the Warrnambool area. How could I disagree?

For me, that introduction to the Moyne was a real eye-opener. I was a Californian used to hiking into the Sierra Nevada mountains at the end of school holidays, before returning to high school, and in later years, to university. The Sierras run the length of the state, north to south. I enjoyed exploring this mountainous wilderness area during late summer in search of high altitude golden, rainbow, brown and brook trout.

A two pounder was a “wall-hanger” when caught in a lake or stream at 8,000 to 9,000 foot altitude. The trout fed heavily

on terrestrials carried by the wind that dropped onto the waters the fish called home. Back then I liked to cast a small “grasshopper” fly (a #10 Muddler Minnow or a Joe’s Hopper) during the hopper season in autumn. The fish took them enthusiastically, as they still do now.

Half a world away, fly fishing for brown trout on the Moyne a kilometre from the ocean was a different experience altogether. It was at sea level with crystal-clear spring-creek water flowing through grazing land dotted with dairy cattle and sheep. The Moyne here was narrow, but deep, for long stretches interspersed with large pools. It was weedy, slow-flowing, nutrient rich courtesy of the volcano country through which it flowed, and full of trout food. There was an abundance of aquatic insects,

crustaceans and minnows to feed hungry brown trout that lurked in the depths or hid beneath the under-cut banks.

The Moyne is still pretty much the same 45 years later. Fishing it is not easy, especially in autumn. The steep banks, tall reeds and Phalaris grass make it hard to get to the water at times. Did I mention the snakes?

One has to be patient and be prepared to stand and polaroid the water carefully in search of a good fish. Because of the low stocking rate it doesn’t usually pay to blind-flog the Moyne. Better to walk, look and only cast to the ones you see which is “an acquired taste.” Maybe because I am much older I have learned to be patient. And I still get a buzz searching for, stalking, casting to and hooking a good one. I especially like to drop a hopper fly in front of a brown that’s



Jim Blakeslee's magnificent 6 lb brown from the Moyne River. The Moyne holds some magnificent specimens, but they aren't easy to tempt

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obviously working its beat, looking for one of these tasty insects to chomp on during the grasshopper season.

A few weeks ago I was wandering upstream on the Moyne, peering through gaps in the reeds at the tail end of a long, deep pool, when I saw it – a fish's tail. The tail of a really good fish. My pulse went up several notches. I moved a bit and could see it was hard against the reeds on my side of the river, just holding position - gently finning, not going anywhere. I thought I had a chance, so crept up to the reeds, ready to make a bow and arrow cast and "ping" my Uni-Hopper onto the water near (but not too near) the brown. I peeked over the top of the reeds hoping to get a better view, ready to cast, and, as so often happens, it saw me first. It wasn't particularly spooked but the dark, hook-jawed buck brownie just slowly swam away and that was that. For that day, anyway.

But all was not lost. Further upstream I found several other browns, all about four pounds, cruising their beats searching for and sucking down drowned hoppers floating on the surface. With each one I cast the Uni-Hopper on the water in their path, crouched down and waited. Each time, as the trout approached, I gave a small twitch so the fly did the "hopper stroke." The fish saw the fly move, accelerated and smashed it. I lifted, the hook sank home, and all hell broke loose. It was a real challenge and lots of fun.

Still, I was determined to get "the Big One." Two days later I was back. With the morning sun on my back I walked quickly upstream from where I parked the car, making a bee-line for the pool where Mr Brownie lived. Sure enough, he was back in his home at the tail of the pool, hard up against the reeds on the east bank. This time I got the fly on the water without spooking him. But the fish didn't move. He just ignored my hopper. Had he seen me after

all?? I backed away, left the fish to settle down, and moved on to chase the browns that lived further upstream.

Later in the afternoon, when the sun had moved into the western sky, I crossed the river and had the sun behind me as I walked back on the western bank. As I got near the tail of the pool where the big brown lived I got down off the high bank and crept along behind the reeds - searching, searching ... And there he was. Same spot. Hard up against the reeds on the opposite bank. Gently finning. Mouth agape.

I pulled a few metres of line off the reel, made one false cast and "splatted" the hopper on the water a couple metres ahead and to the left of the fish. When the fly hit the water he turned and swam straight to it. His mouth opened and closed over the hopper. I couldn't believe it. I waited a couple seconds for the fish to turn away and down. Then I struck.

He shook his head in disbelief then took off up the pool, plowing through bunches of strap weed trying to rid himself of the hook in his jaw. I was in hot pursuit, freeing my fly line from the weed as I went. He made a dive for a bunch of drowned tea tree. I gave as much side strain as I dared and managed to stop him just in time before he could break me off. He turned and charged back down the pool, back through the strap weed. I wound madly, regaining line, and once again disentangled my line from the weed. He jumped, and jumped again, then went to circle around and around, sulking on the bottom. The end was near.

I gradually got him to the surface, circling, circling ... I slid the net under him and lifted him onto the bank. He was just over 6 lb.

Elation! Any wonder why I like fly fishing the hopper on the Moyne.



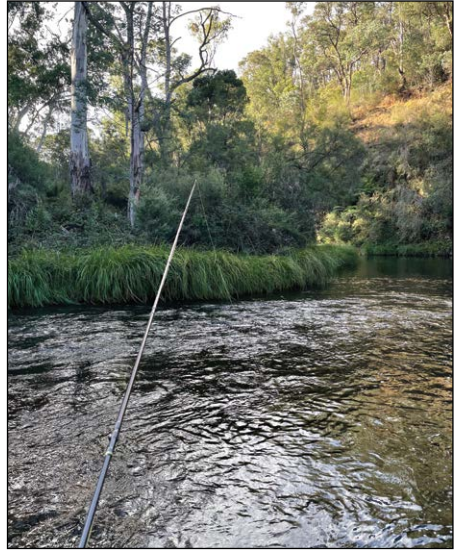
VFFA Big River Trip 2021

... report by Will Davidson

The VFFA's annual pilgrimage to Enochs Point on the Big River was held over the weekend of the last weekend of March. John Pilkington was once again a consummate host to a 'sell out' crowd of over a dozen other members. This was my debut attendance at the annual Big River event (also to a VFFA event 'on the water') and I quickly realised I was fortunate to secure a place.

I arrived after dark on the Friday evening, which created some small difficulty as I found Pilks's directions about 90% effective. After some nocturnal exploration of the surrounding bush and an awkward introduction to a neighbour, I joined the other members just in time for some sticky wine and apple pie (which was almost worth the trip in itself!).

Saturday started foggy and damp, but the natural beauty of Enochs Point was still quite breathtaking as I emerged from



The sun peeking through on a very attractive Big River run



Another magnificent Big River section – this area being known as the Brewery Hole

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our quarters. The Pilkingtons have been custodians of the 'Enochs Country Club' for nearly 100 years now, and the buildings blend so effortlessly into their surroundings that they appear to be almost naturally occurring. Any visitor will quickly be taken by the bucolic charm of this compound and its almost faerie-like surroundings. The log cabins have kept much of their original form (with some modern additions of lighting and insulation) and are furnished with magnificent stone fireplaces. An architectural highlight is the semi-covered latrine which brings a unique feeling of 'oneness' with the surrounds.

Former President Mike Jarvis kindly acted as guide on my maiden expedition on the Big River. We had to dodge showers many times in the morning, with little reward fishing some particularly promising looking stretches of river. The Big River has no shortage of 'fishy' looking water, with a smorgasbord of bubble runs, feeding lines, fast running stretches and deep pools in very wadable water. Towards lunch, some glimpses of sunshine brought with it the appearance of some spirited young rainbows and we both managed to 'break our duck'. This was enough for us to retire to the Country Club for lunch.

Pilks provided some delicious homemade sausage rolls and pizza for lunch, all cooked



A typical Big River brown

in the onsite pizza oven. This oven showed remarkable versatility over the weekend, cooking everything from apple pie and sticky date pudding through to an amazing roast lamb.

In the late afternoon the sun made a full reappearance and a few of us ventured out to fish the evening rise. The fish seemed to appreciate the better conditions and made a visible appearance in multiple rises along the river. An unnamed member made the sacrilegious decision to descend to using spinners. However, as a benefactor of his success, I will restrain my criticism. Just on dark the fish became positively animated, with no fewer than six fish rising excitedly just on dark in the space of 50 metres. It was only when I could no longer see the eye of



Hamish Hughes, Bruce Houghton and John Pilkington enjoying the Saturday night outdoor roast



Enoch's Point Country Club blends in perfectly. A very special place.



The rustic charm of this wonderful place

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The Big River offers rainbows in good numbers too

the hook and was unable to tie on a new fly that I decided to retire to the Country Club.

A clear night provided an ideal opportunity to eat outside, and a veritable feast was provided. The lamb was cooked to perfection, and Pepe (Pilks's very personable Kelpie) was almost done out of a job in gnawing on the bones. A special mention must also go to Brian Cooper, one of our new members, for one of the finest sticky date puddings I have ever tasted (and on his first attempt, no less).

The real dessert was still to come though. Alan Pilkington, John's brother residing in the USA, had penned an amazing fly fishing inspired version of 'Piano Man'. Professor Kevin Hindle showcased his considerable talent in bringing this work to life on his 'Stradivarius Ukulele', with the rest of us joining for the chorus. The result cannot be done justice to in this article, but there are video recordings for those interested. The Professor proceeded to regale us with some amazing renditions of classic tunes, accompanied by his Ukulele, as we sat around the fire for the remainder of the evening. There was also some discussion of legal issues later in the evening, though the author reiterates that none of this constituted legal advice in any sense.

After what was undoubtedly a challenging year for all, the 2021 Big River trip provided a wonderful escape to a place that has a rare ability to remain unchanged by the outside world. We warmly thank Pilks for being so

wholeheartedly generous with such a very special place.

Alan Pilkington's poetry:

'Tie Me A Fly'

(Lyrics by Alan Pilkington; to be sung to the tune of Billy Joel's, 'Piano Man')

It's six o'clock in the 'arvo,
the rise is just setting in,
there's a nice brownie sipping above me
but I've lost my old dry fly tin.
He's big and he's taking small mayflies,
he's set on a regular beat,
I'm sure with a size eighteen Adams
I'd get the big bugger to eat.

(Chorus)

Tie me a fly, you're the tying man,
tie me a fly tonight,
I'm goin' back for that brownie tomorrow,
with your fly I'll hook him alright!

Now Pilks, at the vise, is a mate of mine,
he ties me my flies for free,
he's as nice with the silk as some of his ilk,
but I know where he'd rather be.
He'd rather be down on the river,
watching the rise from the shade,
with his small Red Tag on his tippet
he knows that he's got it made.

(Chorus)

His son Ben's a real up and comer',
where there's water he'll give it a try,
he's one of the best with a fine four pound test
but he's standing in line for a fly.

He says, 'Pilks, please tie me another,
a monster took off with my last;
I know where he lies, I need one of your flies,
and please Lord, I need it real fast!'

(Chorus)

They're all waiting their turn for the tier,
he's taking their orders with grace,
they're his mates and he just can't deny them,
he ties with a smile on his face.
He knows the thrill of a full throttle rainbow
racing across a wide pool,
or the throb of a well hooked old brownie,
as long as a carpenter's rule.

(Chorus)

So raise a glass to Pilks, the fly tier,
without him we'd be on our arse,
he deftly ties wings that match the real things,
and ensures that his hackles are sparse.
Then he ties in a small touch of magic,
just a hint, on every fly,
if you ask why his flies are unfailing,
you now know the reason why.

(Chorus)



Tasmania, February 2021 - Another Perspective.

... some comments and thoughts by David Wakefield

My first trip to Tasmania was in the spring of 1983. A few groups of us from Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers in Combi vans spent a week touring much of Tasmania thanks to the restlessness of a former Latrobe Valley resident (Bob Brown, a.k.a. Black Bob) who had lived in Campbelltown for several years and ended up as our uninvited but valuable guide.

Have you ever met a freeloader who lobs on the floor of your two-person campervan to make an uninvited third? Arriving with a sixpack of stubbies and a can of baked beans, only to take the baked beans back home? Bob, a.k.a. the 'Cormorant', was an expert fly fisherman. Fish anywhere near him and if you didn't get the fish first cast, he was onto it by the second.

We toured Tasmania from Brumbies to the Central Plateau, Bronte system down to the Meadowbank area, and Tasmania's lowland lakes and rivers all inside a week. Good fun and a broad geographic introduction.

Almost annually since then I've returned to Tasmania at different times, invariably lodging in a mixture of campervans, caravans, tents, Great Lake Hotel, Crownlands "Tiger Hut", private accommodation owned by Val Dell the Crown Land Warden, etc. Visits were spread over all parts of the season on the

central plateau area. I have experienced some fantastic fishing, and more than a few blanks, as we all do.

So, this latest trip to Tasmania wasn't without some background.

Fortunately, unlike most of the other VFFA members, I managed to arrive in Tassie two or three days before this year's trip was scheduled to start. A bit of fishing and general poking around, and then on the Friday we closely monitored the epic hysteria of our State Politicians as a few people in Melbourne's west displayed Covid symptoms.

The online information at the Tasmanian end confirmed that had the ten other enthusiastic VFFA members boarded the Spirit of Tasmania on the Friday afternoon they'd have all disembarked without having to quarantine the next day. Unfortunately, the media and some self-serving political garbage disguised this reality sufficiently to instigate a mass turn back. Club president Chris Gray worked valiantly through the day but the factual information for Victorians was obscured by the hype, and clarification did not emerge until it was too late for them to jump aboard.

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In hindsight perhaps they didn't miss too much. In my 35+ years of fishing Tasmania this would count as the toughest of all seasons. Esteemed patriarchs of the fly fishing world, such as Jim Allen and others, voiced identical comments well in advance of mine. They'd never known it to be so tough.

As ever, attribution and speculation were rife. Consensus was that it was all due to a very cold and wet summer along with the bane of all fishermen - the dreaded easterly as the dominant seasonal wind. Perhaps no one really knows why, but any wind that originates even vaguely from the east is an anathema to our piscatorial quarry. Perhaps not so much to the fish, but rather the persistent quelling of insect activity that any wind from that direction seems to produce. No doubt everyone can cite the odd exception, but as a rule the adage: "Wind from the east is good for neither man nor beast" seems remarkably close to a truism.

My personal score was probably my worst for a week in Tasmania. As fundamentally a lake and stillwater fisherman the days were astonishingly unproductive.

On the Monday Hughie and I fished Four Springs with Peter Boag, Kevin Finn and Peter Hayes. An otherwise overcast and seemingly opportunistic day produced zero fish. Certainly Hughie and I did not have our fly offerings disturbed by Mr speckles at all, and though we saw perhaps three or four on the still waters they were "oncres". A tough day indeed.

Tuesday seemed an absolutely perfect Lake Fergus day - except that the 10° of East in the otherwise light northerly breeze on a blue-sky day meant a dearth of visual or actively feeding fish in this fabulous polaroiding lake. Peter Hayes subsequently remarked on the lack of fish sightings as he traversed the crystal-clear water in his boat with Peter and Kevin on board. An unusual absence of activity. And although they eventually nailed a few fish it was nothing like the numbers expected.

I have fished Fergus many times; have even bagged out there. I headed to the north-east shore on foot to take advantage of the sun and the wind after we arrived late mid-morning. Hughie went to the west. Unfortunately he only had thigh waders on and thus tested the Fergus water temperature frequently that day. Given the conditions I anxiously pushed towards the windward and up-sun shoreline to make the most of the wade polaroiding conditions. Along the way I saw two fish move in a small area, so anticipated a superb day. But when I reached the northern sand flats and worked them for the best part of an hour in superb 50 metre plus visibility, they were barren - absolutely barren!

Returning to that small area where I had earlier seen two active fish I spooked one, then managed to cast to another sighted fish and pick it up. My first of the day! Healthy and in good condition, feeding comfortably but alone.

The next fish activity was a three-minute period when the wind dropped and several fish started to actively rise in the weed-bed area on the south-eastern shore. Hughie picked one up. I walked around a couple of tiger snakes but on arriving at my destination the wind picked up, the fish stopped rising, and that was it. I caught one more fish later in the day back where I'd picked my first one up, and that concluded the activity for the day. A pleasant post-mortem sipping Peter Hayes' glorious gin (with tonic) confirmed the universally confounding difficulty experienced by all of us that day.

Hughie and I subsequently spent a glorious day exploring headwater regions of streams whose names cannot be disclosed, becoming lost in a maze of natural forest and pine plantations then emerging to fish some semi-private stream on a superb property. It produced a single fish that managed a long-distance release. Again, despite covering lots of water in near ideal conditions the absence of fish, active or otherwise, was perplexing.

On yet another superb “blue sky” day I fished the northern shore of Brumbies using the refurbished sentimental VFFA Purdon. It was quite hot, with blue sky and quality visibility. The water was slightly murky but an early fish rolled on a grasshopper pattern, and an hour or so later a very healthy two pound cruiser not six inches from the bank took the same pattern. This was the day’s total. Despite hours of polaroiding and close attention to the water there was zero visible activity.

Hughie had gone and Kevin and Peter had started the homeward trip. Again I headed up to the plateau and to the usually reliable Todd’s corner on the Great Lake, where, if I don’t catch a fish, I will always see one. You probably know the area. It is to the west of where the pumped water from Arthurs pours into the corner.

It’s a small perennial creek that flows out across the rich sand and peat flats. An hour or so’s fishing saw an active little tiger snake, but for the first time ever no fish sighted and none caught.

On past Little Pine down to Bronte and an hour spent watching its barren waters. On to beautiful Tungatinah, and again nothing. The usually reliable walls of Lake Binney where the browns patrol the rock breakwater was as blank as a Melbourne puddle. Continuing on, I eventually reached Meadowbank Lake. Clear deep water with notoriously large fish and a superb dam wall topped with an easy bitumen road. A single, isolated small rise a long way from anywhere fishable and that was the total activity for an hour’s polaroiding and water observation.

The affirmation of a less than normal season came on the Wednesday when I spent an entire day with Peter Hayes on Lake Leake. Peter puts in an extraordinary effort as a guide, regardless of whether he is working with VFFA people or not. He gives 100% of his vast knowledge and experience. He takes it very personally if the day does not produce a good result for a client. He would be the most dedicated, knowledgeable and hard-working guide I have ever fished

with in 40 years, and is an absolute credit to his profession. Our discussions ranged over many topics that day, and it was just as well, as try as we both did the fish were non-existent. They’d probably gone to the pub!

Other than a small rainbow early in the day and another two reasonable fish seen at the spawning stream inflow before spooking – well, that was pretty much it. Conditions were flat calm, almost the doldrums really, and it was not until late in the afternoon, at around 7 o’clock, that some wind lanes formed and we found several ducks gorging on a massive ant fall. One or maybe two rises in this well-stocked smorgasbord was the entire result.

Where were the fish? Well, they weren’t anywhere that we could see, hear or catch!

Peter expressed enormous frustration at the day. It must be extraordinarily trying for a professional guide wanting to ensure a client experiences a few satisfying fish for the day. From my perspective, despite the lack of fish it was a huge learning experience. An expansion of my knowledge and information base that I will be forever grateful for. As is said, it’s the blank days which you learn from rather than the days when you “dong them”. And I learned plenty that day from Peter.

Despite the lack of fish, the annual visit to Tasmania was yet again an experience that we who were there enjoyed. We thoroughly enjoyed Hughie’s cooking, the companionship, and the wonderful relaxing atmosphere created by Diane and Peter with their superb vegetable garden, devoted partnership, and the relaxing experience of “Hayes on Brumbies” we were privileged to share.

And of course next year it might all be different. The fishing might explode and everyone who booked will be there to enjoy the experiences. The fun, food, wine and fraternity will be richly savoured again.

And so, we will return!



Rod Barford at Eucumbene

I recently spent a very productive week on Rushy Plains Bay on Eucumbene, with 46 fish landed, quite a few bust-offs in the thistles, and three others that threw the fly mid-jump. I was spooled a couple of times, and you don't often come across fish big and strong enough to do that.

The weather on day one was bright but windy. The thirty knot north-westerly wind made casting impossible, but I still managed to find two rainbows mooching around in the thistles.

Most of the time I fished just three tiny bays in front of my camp. The mudeyes started hatching around 7:30 pm, with the peak of the hatch between 8:30 and 9:30. The action was crazy at times. The best of it lasted only an hour, but there was still worthwhile fishing for an hour either side of it. On a couple of nights I fished into the wee hours, but most nights I was knackered by then. The mudeyes restarted around one

o'clock in the morning and kept going until three o'clock. And bigger fish seemed to be around during this early morning time.

There was only a handful of anglers who shared this location with me over the week, perhaps a dozen all told. But everyone there was catching fish.

During the day I fished 8 lb tippet with a sinking Couta Mudeye pattern, but as soon as the sun went down I switched to 10 lb tippet with a floating Cubit Mudeye. It made a beautiful surface wake that told every trout: "Hey, here I am!"

It was during daylight that I sighted my biggest trout. On my third morning there I walked around to an adjoining bay, climbed out onto the rocks and was amazed to see a massive rainbow swimming straight towards me, heading around into the third bay. He was only a couple of rod lengths out from where I was sitting and perhaps a foot below the surface.



The pool on Fiddlers Green Creek – a great place for a quick dip

It was quite possible that this was the same fish that I hooked the next day when fishing from rocks a bit further around. I was fishing my Couta Mudeye about 15 foot down when suddenly the line drew tight and started heading away from me very quickly. I couldn't turn this fish, let alone stop it. It was just one long fast continuous pull until I reached the end of my 200 metres of 50 lb dacron backing. Then it was gone. I was left with nothing but a long rewind. This fish had broken my 8 lb tippet effortlessly.

I had two more spoolers after that. The next one picked up my fly the following afternoon at about 5:00 pm. I was fishing over a gully near the fence and allowing my fly to sink. This one put on a bit of a display, jumping twice before heading off for Providence Portal. The first jump was only 15 metres away so I had a decent look at him - a large buck brown.

The third spooler was just as the sun went down the next evening. I saw the snout come up and engulf the Cubit Mudeye before taking me through the fence and, amazingly, back out the same way it went in. It made three long runs, the third one when I could see only half my backing remaining. These mudeye eaters are in

fantastic condition and pull like freight trains.

The first rainbow I caught in the thistles had obviously been snailing somewhere. When I did an abdominal lift his belly felt like it was full of pebbles. I stripped out a long stream of tiny snails, similar to what I regularly see in the Goulburn. I don't know where they came from because I couldn't find any among the weeds and thistles. Possibly from deeper water out further?

On the way home I stayed for one night at Nimmitabel so I could fish Lake Williams. That resulted in a brown of about 3.5 lb, another of similar size that threw the hook as I was about to net him, and three chunky little rainbows of about 13 inches.

Trying to net it, and three chunky little rainbows of about 13". I have rarely fished this lake without some success. Don't know how many trout are in it, but there must be lots.

South of the border I stopped for a swim in a beautiful pool on Fiddlers Green Creek, then went in search of grayling. Prior to the building of the new highway this creek was full of them, but both this creek and the Cann River suffered greatly from increased



Barren, but certainly not devoid of fish – it's been a great season on Lake Eucumbene

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siltation during and after the road building project, and thus the grayling have become quite rare.

I saw a few this time but didn't fish for them. Where once it was common to find a shoal of 35 - 40 fish, now I struggle to find any more than a dozen. I've fished for them since the mid-1970s and enjoyed some great fishing. Of course they're nothing like their northern hemisphere namesakes, but they're great fun on a 3-weight rod and a size 16 Red Tag, as they're willing

risers. The clarity of the water makes for great sight fishing, though as they are small they can be hard to spot. I generally see a shadow on the sandy bottom before I see the fish.

Overall it was a great trip and I look forward to my next visit. Whatever the Eucumbene trout are eating it's making them particularly strong. On eating them I found them to be wonderful on the palate - bright orange and firm in the flesh.



Gratitude and Great Fishing - the 2020-21 Season Thus Far

... a quite special reflection on her return to the streams, by guide Charley May

I don't know about you but when I cast my mind back to this time last year my chest tightens and I get a sense of impending doom. While the relative normality (at least for us in Australia) of the present is a tonic, everything still feels so fragile - like the 6x tippet bearing the strain of a massive wild brown that could snap and break your heart. For now, things seem to be holding up and hope is most definitely on the horizon. But that's the thing about a global pandemic, you just never know what's around the corner. For me, it was great fishing and a new level of gratitude.

Like millions of others, I tuned into the daily newspapers and was front row when they lifted the 'ring of steel' last November. It was like someone had just opened the blinds and I don't think I've ever been so keen to visit regional Victoria. I phoned my fishing partner in crime and booked us into a cabin the following week. I felt a bit like a criminal leaving my 25 kilometre perimeter to drive up to Noojee. Locals there treated me with caution and it felt miles from the warmth I usually encounter on country trips. I couldn't blame them but it played on my mind, and by the time I hit the water I was already doubting myself - never a good start because I swear the trout can sense it!

Everything felt wrong. Despite practicing during lockdown, I was throwing sloppy



Charley's partner in fishing crime Katherine Grech

loops, getting tangled in trees and tripping over submerged snags ... I could feel the rage brewing inside me. Dropping a good fish was the straw that broke the camel's back, and it sent me off into a foul-mouthed tirade at myself and everything around me. I'd never felt this kind of anger before. Tears stung my cheeks and I felt shambolic. Luckily, my fishing partner wasn't nearby to witness my tantrum and I managed to get myself together and join them again to close out a slow morning's fishing (well, for me at least!).



Charley's nephew Fin about to get hooked

I fished alone in the afternoon because I needed to find my groove and make peace with the water. I started the session with deliberate and kind self-affirmations and apologised to the river out loud. Yes, you may think I'm mad, but the gods were listening and it wasn't long before I was netting pretty little trout. And then the tears came again. But this time they washed away months and months of fear and melancholy and triggered the most intense feelings of love and gratitude for everything and everyone I hold dear in my life. Grief and celebration collided and left me feeling so much lighter. I went on to have one of the best sessions I've ever had on the Toorongu, and it's all been great since then.

In December I headed to Bright and the region's rivers were on fire! I won't theorise about why but there were plenty of good size, well-conditioned fish about. First up was Mountain Creek and the conditions were magic - blue skies, balmy, and just enough humidity to get the insects going. The water was crystal clear and flowing



Matt and Maddy – favourite clients of Charley who got over the long lockdown with her

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beautifully. As I was tying up on the bank something moved out the corner of my eye. A perfectly presented caddis pattern prompted an immediate take from a gorgeous 1 lb wild rainbow. And the action just got better, with two incredible brownies among the fifteen I landed during my morning mission. The Ovens boiled too, with an evening above Harrietteville that saw healthy brown after brown rise to different dries. Honestly, it was the stuff of dreams and that night my friends thought I was high when I returned home.

The week before Christmas I hit the Steavenson River with my nephew, who'd just graduated from primary school. It was without a doubt the highlight of 2020.



One of many gold ingots from magic Mountain Creek

A complete novice, he patiently completed a basic casting course on the grass before fidgeting to get onto the water. After 30 minutes of fruitless labour, I couldn't help but laugh at his comment: "Can we go to another river because there aren't any fish in here." So, I took the rod, talked through how and why I was doing what I was and in two minutes disproved his theory. From there his ears really opened and fish started to bite. Two hours in and the lad had landed a few little ones and then shocked himself when a 2.5 lb rainbow took him for a ride and hit his net. How did he feel? I think the words "this is one of the best moments of my life" summed it up. It was a privilege to be part of such a right of passage.

January marked the start of my official guiding season. My soul felt refreshed and I was in great shape to take on the back to



After the lockdown came sunshine and rainbows

back bookings ahead of me. From fishing next to a platypus, dodging big swimming snakes and watching kangaroos splash about to marvelling at the regrowth of bushfire-impacted areas, 2021 has filled me with so much love and gratitude for the beauty of what's on our doorstep. And the joy of sharing it all with my clients who feel exactly the same is a feeling that's beyond words. Each fish landed, each memory made, is done so with a whole new level of collective thankfulness that feels cathartic and is helping re-establish hope and those human connections we've been denied for so long.

The days are getting shorter now, but there's still plenty of time to wet a line before the cloak of winter wraps itself around our part of the world. With the vaccine roll out underway in Australia and in other countries there is real reason to feel confident about brighter days ahead. For me, I'll be losing my heart to the wild as much as I can before the season closes, and thanking Mother Nature for everything she's given me. I'm sure I'll see you there. Tight lines.



Fisherman's Luck

... from Gordon Baker

In the late 1960s some large emporia entertained the concept of the 'one-stop shop'. They would sell everything from sanitary equipment to breakfast and beyond. Also at this time there were attempts to train staff in more general ways and young employees destined for middle management were set to work for short periods in different parts of the store to get an overview of the activities of the establishment.

Our hero YE was assigned to sales from the beginning of his employment and he came to the attention of the big boss (BB) when Accounts noticed that he had made a very large sale of about half a million dollars. The big boss called in YE and said, "Boy - that is a very impressive sale. I want you to speak at a training seminar on Saturday morning about how you did this." YE replied, "Sir, I am not willing to do this because I would stand out among my contemporaries and be reviled."

BB said, "My boy, you are showing unmistakable signs of intelligence. I admire your scruples. However I would like you to tell me how you made the sale so that I can use the information in the training seminars." YE replied, "Well sir, I will do that but would like you to understand that my scruples would not go so far as to make me unable to accept a significant bonus." BB said, "Son, I can see you will go far. Tell me everything from the beginning about the sale."

YE: "Well I started by selling him hooks."

BB: "hooks?" "Yes Sir, fish hooks. Then I sold him fly tying equipment and fly tying materials and a CEA course on fly tying."

"Then I sold him fly rods, reels, lines, leaders and tippet materials and organised him to have fly casting lessons with a past champion."



Gordon Baker entertaining us at the March meeting

"Then I sold him outdoor clothing, including a fully-equipped fishing vest, hats, waterproof jacket, Polaroid glasses and waders."

"I sold him a number of day and weekend guided fishing trips in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania over the next 12 months with the appropriate licences."

"Then I sold him a library of the 50 best fly fishing books and subscriptions to six fly fishing magazines."

"Then I sold him fishing trips over the next four years to Scotland, Norway, Alaska and Argentina."

"Then I sold him a boat, motor, trailer, shed to keep it in and a you-beaut ute to drive it about."

"And then I sold him a waterside block at Bonnie Doon and a kit holiday home and organised the contractors to build it."

"Then I sold him insurance and got our financial boys to set him up with a tax-effective loan to pay for everything."

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BB: "Did we give him any discount?"

YE: "Yes we paid his first year's VFFA subscription and I gave him a cash discount of \$5,000."

BB: "Well, OK. That's magnificent. I've still one concern that you were extraordinarily lucky to have this man as your first customer!"

YE: "No sir. Not at all. He came in asking for directions to the maternity-wear department and the tattooist and I said to him you look like you could do with a

good breakfast. After he had eaten a cooked breakfast with the lot and was into his third coffee, I said to him - you must realise that you won't be getting much entertainment at home in the future. Why don't you forget about the tattoo and take up fly fishing?"

"If anyone wonders what his wife thought, she was absolutely delighted as he used all of the \$5,000 discount to purchase luxury lingerie, designer maternity dresses, pants and tops and a large diamond ring to mark the occasion. So there was no tattoo, and they lived happily ever after."



Getting Hooked – with the Right Hook

... from Rick Wallace

(Rick has put some time and effort into developing a really useful tool for fly tiers. Have a look at his search tool on the web address given below. It's very good. Well done Rick!)

Hook comparison and search tools

Using the right hooks is vital in fly tying. It's something I've learned the hard way with rookie mistakes such as tying Klinkhamers on grubber hooks (well, they are curved!) only for them to sink.

The reality is that most of us when we are tying don't have a ready supply of hooks from a variety of brands at our disposal. So when a pattern calls for a particular model and make of hook that we don't have, what do we do?

For me, the answer used to be to go on to the internet and Google "hook comparison chart" and sift through the results trying to find a chart that had both the recommended hook and its equivalent in the brands I actually have at home!

The messiness of this process led me to develop this hook comparison tool:

<https://tacklevillage.com/fly-tying-hook-database/>

It's based on some of the more comprehensive hook comparison charts

and allows you to select a hook brand and model and then spits out the closest equivalents across a range of other brands. The brands included so far are Ahrex, Tiemco, Orvis, Gamakatsu, Dai-ichi, Dai-riki, Eagle Claw and Kamasan.

While it is not a space-age piece of technology, I hope it serves as something of a minor leap forward for fly tying hook selection. I worked with a very bright Russian programmer to develop it, and so far it has worked seamlessly.

Feedback via Facebook and email from users has been great so far, and I am glad it is being used.

Over time I will input more brands and models and adapt it to include barbless variants of the key hooks included, but I think it already serves a purpose. I will also shortly release a related tool on the same page that allows you to put in the type of fly you are tying - say a Klinkhamer, a scud or a hopper fly - and it will return suitable hooks across the full range of brands.

I invite the fly tiers among you to give it a try and let me know your thoughts.

(For those wishing to correspond with Rick his email address is cpwallace@gmail.com)

FLY OF THE MONTH

... *Jim Blakeslee's Uni-Hopper*



I have tied and tried many different grasshopper patterns, in differing sizes, over the years. Some work better than others, and some are more elaborate and difficult to tie. As I've got older I have settled on a "UNIVERSAL HOPPER" that works well for me. It is simple and quick to tie, is easy to cast because of its moderate size, and appeals to trout everywhere that I have fished it. The fly has a few basic "universal", but important, features that give the impression of a disheveled grasshopper that has just crash-landed in the water.

It's hopper season right now around the Warrnambool area, so I've been out polaroiding for brown trout cruising the pools in our local rivers in search of these tasty morsels that accidentally fall into the water. When I spot one of these fish I try to get in close and personal, make one false cast, and "splat" the fly about a meter from the fish. Once the trout hears, or sees, or senses the hopper crash landing on the water I watch as it turns, swims over and almost invariably scoffs the fly. I wait for the fish's mouth to close and the head to turn a bit, then I mumble "God save the queen" and lift. Then the brawl begins.

Tie a few Uni-Hoppers and give them a go in your area. I don't think you will be disappointed.

Materials:

Hook: #10 Mustad 94840 Dry Fly Hook or similar

Thread: 6/0 Yellow Danville's Pre-waxed thread

Tail: Six to ten red-dyed rooster saddle hackle fibres

Body: Yellow dubbing made from water repellent polypropylene yarn cut into 2 cm lengths then "blended" in a coffee grinder

Under-wing: 10 - 20 black/orange banded fibres from a golden pheasant cape feather

Over-wing: Two slips cut from matching mottled brown turkey wing flight feathers

Head/legs: Natural brown deer hair

Tying Procedure:

1. Start with the thread behind the eye of the hook and wrap back to the bend, covering the shank of the hook.
2. Tie in the red saddle hackle fibres so they extend back beyond the bend and are approximately the same length as the shank of the hook. Secure with a half-hitch.
3. Wrap the thread forward two thirds of the way back to the eye of the hook.
4. Wax 10 cm of the tying thread (I use Overton's Wonder Wax). Then dub the yellow polypropylene dubbing onto the thread and wrap back to the bend of the hook, then wrap the thread forward over the dubbed body to secure the dubbing. Make another half hitch. If you want, you can then use a strip of Velcro to fluff up the body.
5. Just ahead of the body tie in the golden pheasant fibres so they extend past the bend of the hook to give the impression of slightly open orange and black banded "under-wings" that hoppers use for flying. Half hitch again.
6. On top of the golden pheasant fibres tie in the two matched slips cut from the turkey wing feathers to give the impression of a hopper's mottled brown "over-wings." Secure with a half hitch, then trim the tips sloping backwards so the slips just cover the under-wing.
7. Cut a small bunch of deer hair from the hide and hold the tips pointing backward so they are about the same length as the bend of the hook. Loosely wrap the thread a couple time around the bunch of deer hair, then sinch the thread down, allowing the hair to spin slightly as you do so. Then wrap the tying thread a few times behind the eye of the hook and half hitch it again. Whip finish to secure the thread, then cut it.
8. Use your tying scissors to trim the deer hair to make a compact, "Muddler Minnow style" hopper head. Don't trim off all the pointy ends of the deer hair. Leave enough pointing backwards to represent legs and to give the impression of slightly open over-wings.
9. Secure the thread by placing a dab of head cement behind the eye of the hook.

When the Uni-Hopper is “ginked-up” it should float well. If it does start to sink after you’ve caught a few fish just give it a few false casts to shake the water out of the water repellent polypropylene body. Then you’ll be ready to “splat” it in front of the next fish you see.

The materials needed for this fly are shown here:



All the necessary ingredients

Our Sponsors


















VFFA 2021 meetings & other activities

April 2021

- 2 - 4 Easter 2021
15 Thursday General Meeting – a lunchtime meeting (12 noon) at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – John Douglas from the Victorian Fisheries Authority
28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

May 2021

- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Annual Auction of books and equipment
Book Launch of Rick Keam’s fly tying book: “Dressed For Dinner”
26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

June 2021

- 11 Friday The trout fishing season in Victorian rivers officially closes at
midnight on Friday, June 11, this year
17 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Jim Jackman, who will talk about “The One Percenters”
20 Sunday Social Casting at the Red Tag Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

July 2021

- 15 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – TBC.
18 Sunday Social Casting at the Red Tag Pool, commencing 10:30 am
28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

August 2021

- 20 Friday Annual Dinner at the Kelvin Club, Guest Speaker: TBC
22 Sunday President’s Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool, commencing 10:30 am
25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

September 2021

- 4 Saturday Victorian rivers open again to trout fishing
16 Thursday 2021 Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

(VFFA events still to be finalised include Sunday Casting, casting tuition, winter fly tying, a possible Cane Day, nymphing and river tuition on local streams. The date for this year’s Donger Competition is also still to be finalised.)