

FLY LINES



August 2018

The August Annual Dinner – with Special Guest Peter Morse

This year's Dinner, our 86th Annual Dinner, will be held at the Kelvin Club. The cost is \$70 for members and their guests, and an invitation is included with this issue of *Fly Lines*.

Our guest speaker for the evening is Peter Morse, a highly respected fishing guide, writer, and casting instructor. He is also a Sage Ambassador and RIO Ambassador and a Certified Master Casting Instructor with the International Federation of Fly Fishers.

Peter has fly fished since the early 1970s in both freshwater and saltwater, and has written extensively on the sport for various fly fishing magazines. He has also authored three books.

He has fished around the world from the jungles of Brazil to the flats of Mexico and Florida, throughout the South Pacific, to the chalk streams of southern England.

In 2017 Peter was awarded the Fly Fishers International Mel Krieger Instructors Award.

Peter is also a superb photographer, and his presentation at the annual dinner will no doubt be illustrated with stunning images of fabulous fish caught in exotic locations.

Friday, August 24,
6:30 for 7:00 pm,
at the Kelvin Club



All members (and their guests) are invited to attend, but PLEASE complete and return the invitation acceptance enclosed if you haven't already done so. Note that dinner acceptances need to be sent to VFFA Treasurer Tony Mitchem by members paying by BSB as well as well as those paying by cheque.

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 66 NO.10 – AUGUST 2018

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

info@vffa.org.au **www.vffa.org.au**

President

Mike Jarvis

Email: president@vffa.org.au

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.org.au

Honorary Secretary

Kevin Finn

Email: secretary@vffa.org.au

Honorary Editor

Lyndon Webb

Email: editor@vffa.org.au

VFFA Website Administrator

Kevin Finn

Email: webadmin@vffa.org.au

Honorary Librarian

John Pilkington

Email: library@vffa.org.au

Other Council members:

Councillors:

Dermot O'Brien

Terry Rogers

Chris Gray

Marianne Wallace

Neil Vincett

Bill Fary

Hamish Hughes (Immediate Past President)

All material copyright © all rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent of the publisher. Published monthly by The Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Inc., PO Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Index

VFFA Office Holders.....	2	NOE Warrnambool Weekend.....	18
The September AGM.....	3	European Nymphing.....	20
President’s Message.....	4	CSI: Fish - Using Genetic Testing.....	26
July Meeting With President Of ATF.....	6	Seeking Solitude.....	27
Web Fish.....	11	In The Pink.....	30
Editor’s Desk – Lyndon Webb.....	12	Bernard Explores Inspiring Rivers.....	32
New Member.....	14	This Month’s Yarn.....	33
In Memory Of Dick Connor.....	15	Fly Of The Month.....	34
Some Important Events.....	17	VFFA Meetings & Activities.....	36

The September AGM

Members are reminded that the September meeting will be our AGM. It’s still a few weeks away, but President Mike Jarvis is keen to remind us that all financial members are eligible for nomination and election to the Council. Notice papers relevant to the AGM are included with this newsletter, these being the Nomination Form, the Appointment of Proxy Form, and the meeting agenda.

Council meets regularly, and all the management issues involved in running the Association are dealt with at these meetings, so that our monthly general meetings can be given over totally to the advertised activities – guest speakers, auctions, fly tying demonstrations, ...

So if you have some experience and skills in management and a keen desire to see our Association remain vibrant and responsive to the needs of members, please give some thought to nominating for Council. Meetings are invariably lively and entertaining, and you will enjoy your participation as well as no doubt contributing useful insights and viewpoints for the benefit of our Association.

The date – Thursday, September 20, at the Kelvin Club.

President's Message

As many of you are aware I recently returned from several weeks overseas, and there has been so much to catch up on since getting back to Melbourne whilst shrugging off the inevitable jet lag and getting used to the winter weather after a heat-wave in Europe.

There were many highlights in this trip, but from a fly fishing point of view two stand out in particular. One was a "bucket list" visit to the famed River Test in Hampshire (more on that a little later), and the other a visit to the Fly Fishers' Club in London.

The Fly Fishers' Club occupies a floor of a well-known London club, the Savile, in Mayfair, just around the corner from posh Grosvenor Square. I had made arrangements to visit the Club for lunch before leaving Australia but was quite unprepared for the reception I received and the overall experience of the visit.

Club President Paddy Laverty was on hand to meet me and host me to lunch with several other members, including John Knott, the Honorary Archivist/Curator, who spent a considerable time showing me the amazing and extensive collection the Fly Fishers' has acquired over the years. Rods and reels owned and used by many famous fly fishing luminaries including G.E.M. Skues, flies tied by Halford and others, a collection of carefully preserved individual hackle feathers, and a remarkable collection of aquatic and terrestrial insects, all mounted and documented in true museum style.

In pride of place is a clearly old, battered, leather pannier-style fishing bag. The story goes that it belonged to the



Mike enjoyed the Fly Fishers' Club

legendary Izaak Walton, but no-one can actually prove its provenance. The initials "I.W." under the lid may be a clue, but no-one really knows. Anyway, it is a lovely story and who am I, a mere visitor from the colonies, to suggest otherwise.

While I was at the Fly Fishers' Club I presented the President with a copy of the VFFA book *Time Flies* for the Club's library. Clearly the quality of the publication and its content made quite an impression.

Any members visiting London would be most welcome to visit the Club, and I strongly recommend it if you happen to be there with a few hours to spare.

The second of my fly fishing experiences came a week or so later when I was fortunate to spend two days fishing the River Test downstream from Stockbridge in Hampshire. I'd always wanted to visit this legendary river which has played such an important role in the development of our sport, and thanks to John Pilkington and a close friend of his, the chance to fish the river materialised.



Bucket list ticked with a fine brown

Armed with a few tried and tested Australian flies (including Pilks's deadly Cinnamon Para Dun) and a borrowed rod, reel and landing net, I arrived on the water to be met by the keeper of the beat, who outlined the rules and etiquette associated with fishing the Test. He also pointed out a number of fish rising quite freely, despite the incredibly bright conditions.

My first day was spent trying to understand the ways of the fish in an unfamiliar river whilst getting used to someone else's rod. I did manage to hook and land several nice trout, but missed many more though sheer ineptitude, poor eyesight and perhaps a tad too much over-exuberance. I did get to cast to a salmon but had no idea that it had already spat out my fly by the time I lifted the rod.

Day two was totally different. Fish after fish were spotted, cast to, hooked and landed, and I finally retired from the river that evening with ten brown trout to my name, all around three to four pounds in weight. I have the pictures to prove it, and memories that will last a very long time.

But what an experience. Yes, I know, the Test is well-stocked and many of the beats these days are run as commercial fishing propositions, usually for lots of Pounds Sterling to enjoy the privilege.



Tranquility on the Test

But just because the fish are put in the river doesn't necessarily mean they are that easy to get out, as I quickly discovered. And not all are from a hatchery. I was fortunate to catch a fine four pound wild brown that put up an excellent fight before coming to the net.

But more importantly, it was all about being there. I couldn't help but think I was walking in the footsteps of the legends of our sport - Halford, Skues and many, many others who played such important roles in developing the flies and techniques that are so familiar to us today.

I arrived back in Melbourne just in time for the July meeting and the excellent and informative talk by our own member Terry George, who is President of the Australian Trout Foundation. It's a pity there weren't more members present (probably due to the bitterly cold winter weather) to hear about the work of the ATF, and particularly their in-river and riverbank habitat improvements and more recently stocking projects using in-stream incubators. Keep up the great work, Terry.

The next meeting will be our Annual Dinner. This is always a popular event, so make sure you get your booking in early. This year we are fortunate to >>>

have as guest speaker Peter Morse, well-known as a highly regarded guide, writer and casting instructor. He is also a superb photographer so his presentation will no doubt be well-illustrated with his own images.

That's all from me for this month. I look forward to catching up with many of you shortly.

Tight Lines,



The July Meeting with Terry George, President of the ATF



Terry George at the July meeting

Thank you Mike for your kind introduction and the invitation to speak to you tonight. It's a pleasure to be here among fly fishers who I know are passionate about the health of our streams and our fishery.

Do you like our new logo? It was done for us by another VFFA member - Trevor Hawkins. Trevor has been a great supporter of the ATF over a long period. He comes to our events and attended our habitat workshop in Myrtleford earlier this year. Some of the articles that he has written in *Freshwater Fishing* are truly superb and so relevant to our cause.



AUSTRALIAN TROUT FOUNDATION

The new ATF logo, courtesy of Trevor Hawkins

Our vision, our mission and our strategy are outlined here on the screen. The Australian Trout Foundation seeks to ensure that all Australians can enjoy trout fishing now and for generations to come. In order to achieve our vision and mission, the following areas have been identified as our key focus areas: Resources – People and Money; Partnerships and Alliances; Habitat – Healthy Streams producing Healthy Fisheries; and Communication and Education.

As Ray Buckland, our Vice President, mentioned earlier, what we're doing now is not just for us and for our trout fishing; we are doing it for future generations. We want our grandkids and their kids to also enjoy catching wild trout.

We had a strategy planning day earlier in the year where we planned the way ahead for the next few years. The strategy is now in place and one key focus area is to do with our resources – people and money. Tom White, our treasurer and finance chairman, is looking after our money. But we need people. We need more people to join our committee and sub-committees. So, if anyone here tonight is interested in joining us as a member of our committee or subcommittees we would welcome you with open arms.

In terms of partnerships and alliances we are doing well and have established good working relationships and partnerships



Riparian rehabilitation and in action

with most of the people in the trout industry. We work closely with the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) and of course the various Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs).

We would certainly like to work closer with the VFFA in whatever projects we're running that you may also be interested in. Of course healthy streams equate to healthy fisheries and the VFFA has done a lot of work in that area already.

In terms of Communication and Education, we need to educate people on how important the health of our streams is, and how important our fishery is, and how we should preserve it.

So these are the key issues we are going to focus on over the next few years.

We have another Wild Trout Conference this year in August, and once again habitat will no doubt be one of the most important topics discussed. At an earlier Wild Trout Conference Dr Dan Dauwaiter from Trout Unlimited USA was a guest speaker, and he affirmed that if you take care of the fish the fishing will take care of itself.

Another important speaker at this earlier conference was Dr John Morrongiello from Melbourne University. He has a team that is doing research commissioned by the VFA, and his message was that under the current circumstances the distribution of trout in Victoria could decline by as much as 35% to 50% by the year 2030. We were quite alarmed by that, and it's the reason why we are embarking upon a number of habitat projects.

The threats we see facing our wild trout fishery are:

- Warming waters and ambient air temperatures;
- Habitat degradation caused by bush fires, floods, and human intervention such as mining practices, weirs, logging in catchments and stock having access to streams.
- Low abundance of fish – the “Trout Drought” related to the “Millennium Drought” period of 1997 – 2009.

One of our strategies is to determine whether the Jordan Scotty incubators are a possible way to overcome the low abundance of trout due to the drought. A lot of our self-sustaining streams have recovered, but there are still many others that have a low abundance of trout. >>>



The team working on the Buckland River project

Dr John's research found that shaded pools can be up to 10% cooler than pools with no shading. So we need to get heavily involved in re-establishing riparian vegetation. And we are doing this. We have planted trees on the Little River, the Jamieson River, and more recently the Steavenson, where over 60 people turned up, many of them VFFA members. To continue this work we need both money and people. We've been given money by DELWP, who provide the CMAs with funding. And if the CMAs run out of money I promise you we will find funds from somewhere else. And our habitat army of volunteers is growing by the day.

Here is another major concern – snags that were removed from our rivers. I remember growing up on the Ovens River back in the 1950s and 60s. The Ovens River Water Trust started at the top and went right down the river to where it flows into Lake Mulwala pulling every snag out. They thought they were doing the right thing, but what did it do to our trout fishery?

Dr John's research shows that putting snags back in the rivers increases the trout abundance by a massive 88%, so we

need to get those logs and fallen trees back in our rivers.

We needed to identify the various projects required to fix our rivers, and we've had a lot of help with this from our recreational fishers and angling clubs. We're also getting help from our habitat workshops. We are getting funding for these habitat projects, both in-stream and riparian, from grants, and if we ask Travis and Anthony at the VFA they will find money for us through the 'better fishing fund'.

The action proposed is to install dead hardwood trees and manufactured woody structures wherever they are needed. Boulders also provide good in-stream habitat, as proven by recent projects on the Ovens, Delatite, Howqua and Upper Goulburn Rivers. The photo here shows boulder seeding work done on the Howqua. It looks fairly bare in the photo, but before the end of the season Mansfield anglers were catching trout there around those boulders.

The Steavenson River tree planting day was another wonderful day with over 630 trees planted, and again there were a lot of VFFA people there to help. This was a joint project with the ATF and Kris Leckie



Boulders might not look significant but they provide valuable habitat

from VRFish. Kris is a real habitat champion. He organised the day with Sue Kosch and Jim Castles from the GBCMA, and they did a great job.

In 2016 we put in a bid to get funding to hold some habitat workshops, and we eventually got funding from Anthony and Travis. VFA put in \$10,000 and we got another \$10,000 from DELWP.

The first of these workshops was held at Myrtleford last April, and 61 people turned up to participate in the discussions. There were a number of presenters, and these included Matt Byrne, our ATF chairman of stocking, who has had a lot to do with our trial of the Jordan Scotty incubators. He is also president of the Mansfield and District Fly Fishing Club.

Brian Eddy also spoke. Brian is a VFFA life member and president of the Harrietville Angling Club, and was also heavily involved in getting a major habitat restoration project completed on the Ovens River near Harrietville. He also helped prepare the ATF submission to restock the Ovens River after the devastating bushfires and floods of 2013 and 2014.

Tim Curmi, president of Native Fish Australia, was another presenter, as was Renae Ayres, one of the scientists at the Arthur Rylah Institute. John Douglas from the VFA was also a presenter. John gives us a lot of support and is very passionate about our wild trout fishery. Other presenters included Kris Leckie from VRFish and Andrew Briggs from the North East Catchment Management Authority.

The photo on the screen now shows our work on the Buckland River. The habitat restoration there involved both in-stream and some riparian work as well. We obtained a grant of around \$60,000 to put in 35 hardwood trees and 85 tons of boulders. We had initially allowed \$35,000 to acquire and then transport the trees to the river, but when we got there we found that there were some large high voltage powerlines over the river near the site, and on each side of these power lines there were these big bare hardwood trees. They had been lopped and poisoned and then left there years earlier. And these were on Parks Victoria land.

I mentioned this to Andrew Briggs from the CMA. Now Andrew is very creative. He spoke to Parks Victoria and >>>

convinced them that 35 of these trees were a significant danger to the power lines and needed to be taken down. And it worked. So instead of paying \$35,000 to get trees from somewhere else and move them to the site, it cost us about \$5,000 to have trees already there knocked over and dropped in the river, and we've still got the remaining \$30,000 to spend. This will allow us to do some additional habitat work further downstream. So that was a win-win.

Last year when we were trialing the Jordan Scotty incubators we discovered we had 30,000 fertilized eggs left over. These eggs duly hatched and the fry were at Snobs Creek hatchery, so we had a chat with Anthony Forster and John Douglas. We told them about the Buckland River project and asked if we could drop the fry into the Buckland. They agreed, so at the site where we had just completed the habitat restoration project we dropped 30,000 brown trout fry in five locations along the river.

At the habitat workshop at Myrtleford earlier this year we split into four groups and each group had maps from the CMAs showing the streams in each region. From this discussion 19 possible habitat restoration programs were identified for investigation. Our target for this workshop was to identify a minimum of six projects, so we certainly surpassed that.

We immediately selected two projects and put funding proposals to Travis and Anthony. They gave their approval, so these two have started. One of these was for in-stream and riparian habitat restoration on the Rubicon River above Tumbling Waters. We are now getting all the required permits in place in order to proceed, and we hope that the VFFA will be right with us on this particular project. We've got the money, it's in the bank.

The other project was for the Mitta Mitta River at the tailrace near Eskdale. It, too, will require in-stream and habitat restoration, and this project has also been approved. The work will go ahead just as soon as the water level drops sufficiently.

Let me give some brief explanation on the trial of the Jordan Scotty incubators. After the devastation of the Ovens River from the bushfires and floods of five years ago we got approval for some recovery stocking, and this was the first river stocking to be approved since 1997. We put those trout in as a once only recovery stocking.

The following year, in response to enquiries from our members, we put in submissions to stock the Kiewa River, the Buckland River, and the King River, where at the time it was believed there was a low abundance of trout. A stocking meeting was held at Benalla where these submissions were supported by everyone, including VFA, with the proviso that the final decision wouldn't be made until results came in from the Wild Trout Management Program, which was running at the time.

There were reports of a low abundance of trout in both the Howqua and the Upper Goulburn rivers, so Fisheries obtained funding of nearly \$900,000 to trial stocking hatchery trout in these rivers.

These trout were fin-clipped and stocked as yearlings, and then checked every year to see how it worked. 5,000 hatchery trout were put in the Howqua and 5,000 put in the Upper Goulburn each year for three years, so 30,000 trout were stocked altogether. Then an electro-fishing exercise was carried out on both rivers, and a grand total of only 17 fin-clipped trout were found. So it seemed that stocking yearling trout in wild trout streams wasn't a good idea. Then the ATF went to Fisheries and asked if there would be any objections to stocking wild



Our thanks. President Mike Jarvis presented Terry with a token of our appreciation

trout streams with wild trout. Fisheries agreed to a trial, so that's when we did the research on the Jordan Scotty incubators. We were looking for the best incubator available on the market.

Matt Byrne, chairman of our ATF stocking program, did a lot of the initial work. The VFA agreed to the trial and they paid for the incubators too, which was helpful. The plan was to put the incubators in three streams, with ten incubators in each stream, each incubator holding a thousand eggs. In the first year the three streams stocked were King

River tributaries, the Jamieson River, and Traralgon Creek. We'll have the results of those stockings soon. We had fantastic hatch rates of about 96%, though they were a bit lower in the Jamieson River because there was a flash flood which reduced the hatch rate to about 70%.

Since then we've had ARI scientists there with their electro-fishing equipment getting little one-year-old trout and clipping them and sending the fin clips back to match the DNA of their parents. This year we stocked the same streams again, and our friends from the Bairnsdale Club had a special request to stock a stream in Gippsland. So another 20 Jordan Scotty incubators were put in the upper Dargo.

These little trout are hatching out right now but we won't know the success of the hatch rates until we get the incubators out of the river in about four weeks' time. So we're looking forward to getting the hatch rates and the results from the scientific analysis of last year's stocking. These results will be available at the August Talk Wild Trout conference.



Web Fish

Cast regularly at vffa.org.au

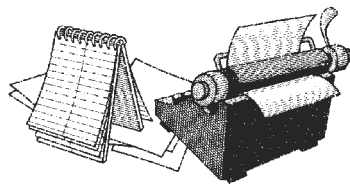
About the VFFA web site:

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 and smart phones.
- Calendar of all activities can sync with all you digital device calendars.
- Gallery of events - Photos and Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand

From the EDITOR'S DESK



The wisdom of Izaak Walton:

"I, Sir, am a brother of the angle."

"No life is so happy and so pleasant as the life of the well-govern'd angler."

I received an email a few weeks ago from Lucy Connor, informing me that her father, Dick Connor, had recently died. Dick was President of the VFFA in the years 1997/1998, so a tribute acknowledging his contribution to the Association was certainly appropriate. Long-standing members may recall that during Dick's presidency there was a vote taken on the issue of admitting female members. The vote was lost, and consequently Dick resigned. So, too, did Ian Williamson, a close friend of Dick's and Vice President at the time.

Lucy suggested that I contact Ian, as he could provide some details on Dick's life. The reply I received from Ian gives a fascinating and to my thinking a rather sad insight into that period of our history. Here are excerpts from Ian's email:

Hi Lyndon,

Thanks for contacting me about writing a few words about Dick. I am delighted. I will give some background and context, and also my tribute to Dick for the August newsletter.

I got an enormous amount of pleasure from my membership of the VFFA. The Association introduced both Dick and I to fly fishing and especially for trout. Dick and I also became reasonably competent fly tiers. My passion for fly fishing was instigated by the VFFA, as

was Dick's, and for that I am eternally grateful.

As I am sure you are aware I was a Vice President of the VFFA when Dick was President. Our resignation due to the VFFA not allowing women as members was regrettable, but something we thought we had to do. On a positive note the VFFA gave Dick and I an amazing interest that for me continues to this day. I am really delighted to hear that the VFFA now admits women and that Tammy Fraser is a member. Wonderful news!

Without wanting to drag up the past it might be worth giving the background to why we resigned. It all started with Dick and I planning the annual dinner. I had contact with Malcolm Fraser and we thought he would be a terrific guest of honour and guest speaker. The council was delighted, so I organised a lunch with Malcolm to ask him to attend. He very graciously accepted but pointed out that Tammy was in fact a better fly fisher than he, so he would of course attend accompanied by her.

When I took the good news back to the council they were happy for Malcolm to attend, but Tammy was not welcome being a woman! Dick as President was very upset and embarrassed. I was instructed by the council to advise Malcolm of this - I need not tell you what he said about the VFFA. It was probably the most embarrassing thing I have ever had to do.

As a result of this Dick and I decided to try to change the VFFA constitution to permit women fly fishers to be members.

We passionately proposed and argued that women should be admitted, but at the end we were defeated. Having I think three or four QCs speaking very eloquently against us may have tipped the vote. Whatever, that's history.

So your news that the VFFA now admits women with one of them being Tammy almost brings tears to my eyes. Most certainly Dick would have been very, very happy and proud of the position he took. It is unfortunate he was not aware of the good news. So a hearty congratulations and a well done to the VFFA. Some things just take time.

From my end I have enjoyed fly fishing with a passion since my VFFA days. I have fly fished for trout in Chile, Alaska, Montana, in the Rockies for brook trout, on the stream flowing through Camp David near Washington DC, in Eastern Canada on numerous occasions for salmon and trout, to Norway for amazing salmon fishing. I've also fished in Africa and the chalk streams of England and in Mongolia for Taimen. And, of course, many years fishing the Victorian high country on the Jamieson and King, as well as trekking the Western Lakes of Tassie where Noel Jetson taught me more than I can remember. I also spent five years salt water fly fishing across Northern Australia, from both sides of Cape York, Arnhem Land, Coburg, Kimberleys, etc. These were great times catching barra, sailfish, Spanish mackerel, sharks!!!, and the normal fish. Fantastic.

Then for many years I got out of fly fishing, having moved to the south coast of NSW with my wife where I have a small place on an estuary with boat shed, jetty, boat ramp, oyster lease, etc. Dick was a regular visitor. But in the last couple of years I have got back into fly fishing for trout. Thankyou VFFA!

The South Island of New Zealand was always a special place for Dick and I. To serve his passion Dick was a part owner of a shack on Poolburn Dam out of Alexander with his good fly fishing friend George Benwell from Dunedin.

Amazingly my son has recently purchased the nearly 100-year-old Poolburn Pub near Omakau in the Ida Valley, where some VFFA members may have stayed. He runs it with a mate as a B&B. So I am now a regular visitor to Poolburn and George's (and Dick's) fishing shack. Last season I caught some amazing trout up to 3 kg, including sight fishing to cruising fish, and catching tailing fish early in the morning - just like Little Pine in Tassie. These are the pleasures that Dick also had up to a few years ago.

Unfortunately Dick's wife Pat passed away about 15 years ago. It was quite sudden. Dick was fishing in the South Island of New Zealand when he got the news of her sudden illness. I don't think he ever recovered from the trauma of his wife's passing. Anyway a few years ago Dick was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. He decided to return to England to be with his old friends and hopefully do some fly fishing on his favourite stream. Unfortunately, he went downhill quickly and passed away quietly on July 9.

Ian Williamson

Our sincere thanks to Ian for this quite moving account of his friendship with Dick Connor, a revered past president.

On a totally different tack, there's always something new to learn in fly fishing; some new fly or cast or technique to try. It's one of the endless charms.

In recent years I've spent some time fussing around with French Leader nymphing, and my interest was

>>>

re-ignited a few weeks ago when Phil Bailey, now living in the UK, emailed to ask if we would be interested in his thoughts on “Modern European Nymphing” (the all-encompassing name used now for French Leader and similar techniques). Would we ever. His truly excellent article is included in this issue.

For those wondering what the fuss is about, the French Leader technique involves fly casting using a very long monofilament leader so that no fly line is actually used in the cast. In regular fly casting it’s the weight of the fly line that loads the rod and makes the cast happen. But in this French Leader technique the fly line isn’t involved. So to get around the difficulty of casting a long light leader a longish and very light rod is used, typically 10’ to 11’, designed to cast a 2-weight or 3-weight line. The casting feels different, but you soon learn the tricks needed, and casts of 10 metres are not a problem. This is good enough because the books tell us that most of the trout we catch in rivers are caught within 10 metres from where we’re standing.

But the question remains - why would you bother when casting a proper fly line is easier and more pleasant. The payoff is that the French Leader method consistently proves to be a much more effective way of catching trout.

In an exchange of emails I had with Phil he recommended that I acquire to two

fairly cheap Vimeo YouTube videos demonstrating the technique. These are called *Modern Nymphing - European Inspired Techniques and Modern Nymphing Elevated - Beyond the Basics*. In the first of these a team of anglers who happened to be members of the USA international fly fishing team carried out an experiment. One of the anglers fished a section of a trout stream using dry flies. A second angler then fished the same section using nymphs under an indicator. Finally, a third angler fished this same stretch using the French Leader technique and caught significantly more fish than the combined totals of the previous two anglers, despite being third to fish this stretch of the river.

Philip Bailey describes how he fishes some UK rivers with a companion who is a dedicated dry fly fisher. Phil’s companion is somewhat critical and dismissive of his Euro Nymphing habits, but then Phil goes on to report that he invariably out-fishes his dry fly mate by a factor of 10 to 1. And stories like this abound.

Anyway, have a read of Philip’s article. You will undoubtedly find a fund of information there that will fire your imagination.

Tight lines – regardless of the method you’re fishing,

Lyndon

A New Member

It is our great pleasure this month to welcome Mike van der Graaf as a member of the VFFA. We trust that Mike’s membership of the Association brings many pleasant and enjoyable times and lots of wonderful memories.

In Memory of Dick Connor – A Past President of the VFFA

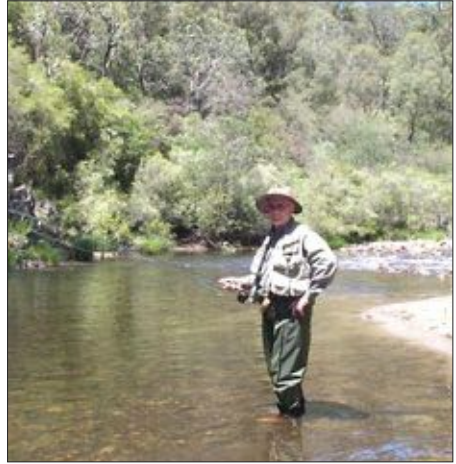
Dick passed away quietly on July 9, 2018.

Dick was one of nature's gentlemen. While being a family man and a businessman, his passion in the later part of his life was fly fishing and all the things that went with it. He was a member of the VFFA for many years and served as President. I am sure Dick saw this as just one way of giving something back to the VFFA. He enjoyed the company, the meetings, participating in the fishing events, and particularly loved tying flies. The VFFA gave him so much and he was appreciative. Like most passionate fly fishers he loved collecting fly rods, reels, fly tying vices, fishing books ... his house was full of them!

But Dick was someone who not only enjoyed all things fly fishing, he really enjoyed the actual fishing – and he did a lot of it or as much as he could. He regularly just headed off by himself, usually in Australia or New Zealand to enjoy fishing. He loved the solitude, the natural environment and the challenge. He enjoyed fishing the Victorian High Country but fell in love with New Zealand's South Island where he became a part owner of a shack on Poolburn Dam with his good friend George Benwell.

I have so many wonderful memories of Dick. He was easy going. He enjoyed a glass of red sitting around a camp fire. He was always up for an adventure as long as it involved fly fishing.

Like all of us, Dick had some challenges in life, especially in his later years, but it was his involvement with the VFFA that gave him some of his most memorable and cherished experiences. Fly fishing allowed him to express who he was.



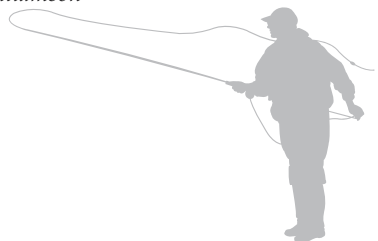
Dick Connor fishing the King River – one of his favourites

He was also a passionate star gazer, something that he would say has a lot in common with fly fishing – a love of the outdoors, the unexpected and the unknown.

Dick is survived by his three children, Richard, Nicholas and Lucy and grandson Connor, the love of his life. He will be sorely missed by two of his fishing buddies, George from Dunedin (who he shared the shack at Poolburn with) and myself.

Tight lines old friend. Rest in peace.

Ian Williamson



Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Game Dinner

... report by Bruce Houghton

On Saturday, July 28, I ventured off for my fourth Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club (WFFC) Annual Game Dinner, travelling with Gordon Baker and Peter Clayton. Peter reminded us that we can now legally fish in the winter months in some of the Warrnambool rivers, so we took our rods with us to do some fishing before the dinner. We tried below the Hopkins River falls, but the water was quite turbid and we didn't see any fish, though enjoyed practicing our casting in lovely sunny conditions. The WFFC members are developing redds in the Merri River, so they don't encourage fishing there in winter, even though such areas may now be legally fished.

We tried not to eat too much at lunch time in anticipation of thoroughly enjoying the spread of food at the Game Dinner, specially prepared and cooked for us by local chef Robert King, who has prepared these game dinners now for over 20 years.

A different banquet room was used this year, apparently because of changes relating to alcohol licence holders, but plenty of BYO was still consumed along with the food by our many friends. The WFFC went to great lengths to ensure the room was warm and had the right atmosphere for a game meal.

We met up with some of those friendly WFFC members who took us out in their boats on Lake Purrumbete in June. We chatted with non-anglers there too, including some who belonged to a food and wine group who were happy to attend this fundraiser for the WFFC.

We ensured we were there by 6 pm to avoid the disappointment of missing out on the entrée delicacies of abalone



Jim Blakeslee won both trophies this year – the Arthur Hogan Trophy for the largest trout caught in local waters and the Geoff O'Brien Memorial Trophy for the best selection of flies tied by a WFFC member.

(which again this year had been collected by Jim Blakeslee) and whitebait. All the many courses were delicious. This year the Chef used a different procedure for cooking the kangaroo, and mine was great.

The annual raffle is part of the fund raising, and Gordon Baker scored early with a raffle prize involving a boating expedition to catch tuna, though maybe not on a fly. Gordon had never, or rarely, previously won a raffle prize, but this year he was in great form, winning two other prizes as well. I even managed to win a couple of fly box samples, so am now ready to catch those local fish.

Jim Blakeslee won the Club's two major trophies, no doubt well-deserved.

We finished the weekend in bleak and wet conditions, but took the opportunity to walk the breakwater, view the penguin islands, visit the whale watching



One of many courses served during the evening, they were all scrumptious



The entrée was again magnificent

platforms, spot some walking options for another time, and then while travelling home stopped for lunch at the café overlooking Lake Purrumbete. However, the café couldn't match the food provided by the WFFC at their

annual dinner, as their menu didn't include abalone, bream, duck, hare, kangaroo or rabbit.

We will certainly be going back to Warrnambool again next year.

Some Important Events

Casting in September

Ian Sambell has agreed to run another casting instruction day at the Red Tag Pool, this one being scheduled for Sunday, September 16. Ian has invited Judith Oliver to come along and assist with the instruction. Both Ian and Judith are qualified casting instructors.

Ian has already given some thought to how the day might be run. A barbecue lunch is part of the planning, but more importantly he has been thinking that he would like to give members something to take away for future reference on how to cast perfect loops.

Bill and Jay Gammel produced a publication many years ago called *The Essentials of Fly Casting*". Their intent was to 'help fly casters learn quickly to cast

more efficiently. In order to be more successful casters need an overall view of what they are to accomplish and why those accomplishments are important'. Once casters know and remember these five essentials they are in a better position to analyse their casts and correct their own casting mistakes.

Ian has been trying to chase down copies of this publication, and so far it has proven elusive. But he's still hopeful. Full details of the day will be given in the next issue of *Fly Lines*.

Latrobe Dams in October

This year's trip to Thorpdale is scheduled for Sunday, October 7. Each year the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers invite members of the VFA to travel to Thorpdale to fish their stocked dams. The Latrobe >>>

Valley club is very active and has eight or nine dams in the local area stocked with big browns and rainbows.

VFFA members who would like to participate should arrange to meet at the park opposite the Thorpdale bakery at 9:00 AM on Sunday, October 7. The Latrobe Valley members will meet their visitors there and escort them out to one of the many available dams where the locals will act as guides. At lunchtime everyone returns to the park for a magnificent barbecue lunch and an appraisal of the fishing. Then after lunch it's off to another dam or two for the afternoon.

Given good conditions and friendly weather the dams are attractive and interesting fisheries. The water is often quite clear and fish can be polaroided along the edges. Occasionally there is even a dun hatch. So here is a great opportunity to connect with a 3 or 4 lb brown or rainbow to get the new season underway. And you'll be fishing in the company of the very friendly and hospitable Latrobe Valley members.

At this stage we don't have a trip organiser for this event, but this information will be given in the next issue.

The Annual Warrnambool Trip in October

The very popular trip to Warrnambool and District is on again this year - from Friday, October 26, to Sunday, October 28. The NOE for this trip is included in this issue.

Members will fish a number of local rivers including the Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu and Moyne. These rivers offer a variety of fishing to some very big brown trout. Both wet and dry fishing styles may be employed, depending on the height and clarity of the water.

The President and members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers will again guide us, and join with us for a magnificent evening meal at Jim Blakeslee's Winery on the Saturday evening. Jim and his wife Trish will be our hosts. Members will each share the cost of this meal and provide their own drinks.

The event organiser is Richard Kos, and he has already confirmed details with Jim Blakeslee and made bookings for accommodation. However Kossy is overseas until September 3, so in the meantime those who are interested in participating can contact Mike Jarvis on Mobile 0418 265 390 or mc.jarvis2@bigpond.com. After Kossy returns in early September members can confirm their interest in participating by contacting him on Mobile 0430 091 300, or by email – kossy1@bigpond.com.



Tichborne watercolour - Ahuriri River



VFFA Notice of Major Event - Warrnambool

October 26 - 28, 2018

The Event: Weekend visit to Warrnambool to be hosted and guided by the Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club.

Event date: Check in Friday October 26, and check out Sunday morning October 28.

Travel: You are responsible for making your own arrangements to and from Warrnambool

Cost/s: TBA, accommodation based on the number sharing cabin.

Saturday night dinner to be hosted by Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Club at Napa Merri Vineyard.

Event location & address: Accommodation is confirmed at the Surfside Caravan Park

Accommodation: Shared Cabin

Sleeping requirements: Bring own bedding and towel

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Self catering Friday night, though the group usually meets for a meal at "Bojangles" Restaurant in Liebig Street, Warrnambool

Dinner on the Saturday night will be hosted by the Warrnambool Fly Fishers at Tricia and Jim Blakeslee's beautiful Napa Merri Winery, 112 Bridge Road, Woodford

BYO drinks, attendees will cover the costs for this great evening.

Description of fishing areas: Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club members will each guide two VFFA members on Saturday, October 27. We will fish a number of local rivers which may include the Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu, and the Moyne

These rivers offer a wonderful variety of fishing, both wet and dry styles, depending on the height and clarity of the water.

Mobile phone coverage: Most areas.

How physically challenging: Comfortable fishing most areas.

Fishing license required: Yes, if applicable.

Strongly recommended personal equipment: waders/wading boots, gaiters if wet wading, brimmed hat, glasses/sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, wading staff, UHF/VHF radio, torch at dusk onwards, mobile phone, water, lunch.

Essential equipment when fishing out of sight of other participants: UHF radio

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to Event Co-ordinator by Wednesday October 10, 2018. Obtain ERF from www.vffa.org.au or pick up one at a General Meeting.

Event Co-coordinator : Richard Kos - Mob 0430 091 300, or Email – kossy1@bigpond.com
However Richard will be overseas until September 3, so members keen to register before September 3 can notify Mike Jarvis on Mob 0418 265 390 or mc.jarvis2@bigpond.com

Date of this Notice of Event: July 20, 2018

European Nymphing – My Approach

... by Philip Bailey

Czech Nymphing, Polish Nymphing, French Nymphing and Spanish Nymphing - all of these techniques have been developed over the last 20 years, and all are very effective in their particular water types. With the evolution of longer and lighter rods, thinner fly lines, and hybrid French leaders these techniques seem to have morphed into what is now known in the Northern Hemisphere as “Modern European Nymphing”.

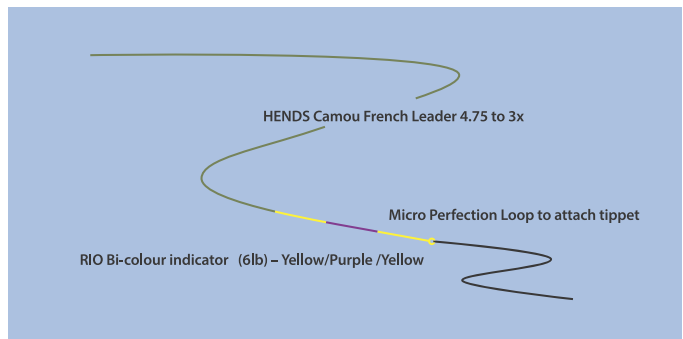
This article is an attempt to help members develop their nymphing techniques into a deadly and effective fishing method. But let me warn you - there is no one true style. It is how you interpret and apply the many nuances associated with European Nymphing. So this is what I have learned over the past decade watching and fishing with international competitors as friends, all of whom are much younger than me. (I don't often beat them, but I do hold my own).

What constitutes a ‘European Nymphing Outfit’? Even this question is open to debate, though generally it incorporates a long light rod (9'6" and longer), a light weight, a light line weight (2 - 3 weight), and a long supple leader which includes a section acting as an indicator. (The modern indicators are used mainly to track your leader and not so much as bite indicators).

You need to work out what works for you, and there is plenty of information to choose from. I use a stiff 10' rod with a

sensitive tip rated for a 2-weight line. The line rating isn't important, but sensitivity is. I conform to the FIPS Mouche rules for this style as it gives me structure and reference points, so I use a RIO FIPS Nymph Line which is extremely thin. To this I add a 4.75 metre Hends Camou French Leader, which includes a Rio bio-colour section above my tippet. According to FIPS Mouche rules the entire leader must not exceed twice the length of the rod, so you can immediately see that the thin RIO line plays a large part when fishing this style.

My leader set up is shown here on the below:



I am not going to dwell on patterns, as what I fish here in the UK will be different to what you will use in Australia, given that here we have both trout and grayling as target species. The only advice I can give you is to experiment.

Enough of that; let's move to technique.

There are a myriad of articles and YouTube snippets that address this. Here are two videos that are a must to watch - *Modern Nymphing - European Inspired Techniques* and *Modern Nymphing Elevated - Beyond the Basics*.

To me there are four very important aspects of this technique that separate frustration from success –the water, fishing in a grid, selection of nymph weight, and using angles. Understanding these four elements will produce better returns for you.

The Water

Most of a river will hold fish and you need to believe that there are fish in the most unlikely places. Consider the challenges facing a competitor fishing a stream in a competition. Competitors are allocated a short beat on a river, and this beat may have already been heavily fished in an earlier session (especially if you are allocated to it in the afternoon). And you need to produce at least one fish from it - to blank is considered a sin.

So you study the water. Fast runs are obvious, so you clock them as prime lies. But you'll also look for other things: depressions in the river bottom will hold fish because they are deeper and offer protection, rocks under the surface which create holding areas, etc. All of these other places are important and become sub-prime lies.

Think about how you might approach each part of the river differently in order to optimise your chances. I never accept that a stretch of river is fishless, and by studying it I work out strategies that allow me to nymph most of the river. Thinking this way forces me to think about my approach, fly selection, tippet length and minor changes to my technique.

Start with the sub-prime areas, and use stealth to fish them out before you approach the prime lies. And remember - never stand in water you have not first fished.

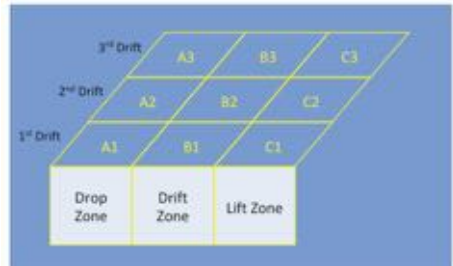
This is how competitors approach their fishing. They accept what is on offer, collect their thoughts, and develop tactics

that they believe will catch them a fish. The average angler, on the other hand, just fishes the prime spots and then moves on, often walking away from places that hold fish. Remember - fish think differently to the textbooks.

The Grid and “U”

This is probably the most important technique you must master. Successful nymphing is not about casting to and from just hoping to hook a fish. You need to develop some structure in your approach, and then be disciplined in applying that to the water.

Successful fly fishers and competition anglers fish to a ‘grid’ system, irrespective of whether they are using a dry fly or wet fly technique. For nymphing you need to think of each square as having a “U” underneath it.



Grid & the “U”

This I how you use it with good effect.

The ‘grid’ consists of nine squares which you superimpose on the water surface. It consists of these zones: “A” = the zone into which you cast your fly(s), “B” = the zone where your fly(s) drift, and “C” = the zone where you lift off to recast. This sequence applies irrespective of whether you fish dry or wet. Once you have fished sequence 1 you move to sequence 2, and then to sequence 3, all covered without moving from where you are standing. You can then either move outwards into the river or upwards along the river, but always using the grid >>>

to cover the water. Getting used to this will improve your coverage of the water irrespective of technique.

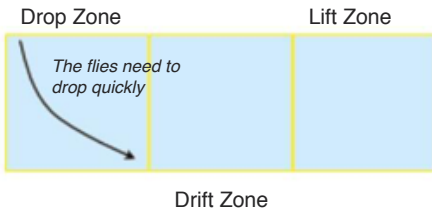
But it is not always simple. Sequences might be a simple crease or even a wider flat section. Observation will allow you to work it out, and casting accuracy will allow you to do it right.

You need to drift your flies through this sequence more than once.

For nymphing this could be anything up to 10 times before you move to the next sequence or even change flies (more on this later). So work the water over completely before you change anything.

Understanding the “U” or Zone is where good nymph fishers are separated from the average.

There are three zones you need to think about, and each is different. The **Drop Zone** is the part of the sequence where you need to get your nymphs down quickly. The speed of the drop will depend on the current speed, depth of the water and the weight of your flies.

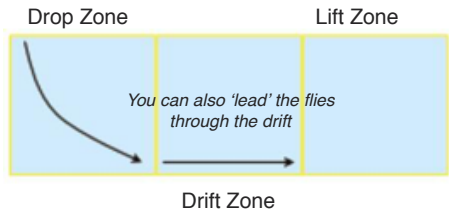


If the current speed is fast then you may need to increase the weight of your flies. But too heavy and they will hang up through the Drift Zone. Too light and they will not reach the correct depth until they are in the Drift Zone. So you need to think about this while you are studying the water.

Try this: take one of your small nymphs and drop it in the water. You will notice that it sinks fairly quickly without drifting too far. There is the clue. It might

be that you need to reduce tippet thickness rather than increase fly weight. I can't tell you this - you need to experiment and find it out for yourself. But to help, deep water means a heavier point fly or the combined weight of two lighter flies. Shallow water conversely means less weight.

Drift Zone – this is the part of the sequence where your flies are at their most effective (not necessarily dead drifting). Ideally you want your flies to be just above the bottom or even bouncing off the bottom from time to time.

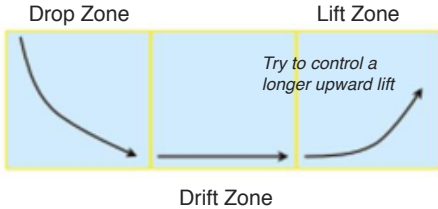


Some anglers don't understand that the current speed on the bottom can be much slower than higher in the water column. The trick to fishing this area is to balance fly weight with tippet diameter. Too heavy a fly and it will hang up, and too heavier a tippet means the drift will be influenced by the faster current. Again, you will need to work it out. My advice is go thinner with your tippet, but not so much that you lose fish. I generally use 6x tippet on most flies except the very small ones.

The Lift Zone – this is the part of the sequence where your flies have finished the drift and are lifting off the bottom.

Often nymph fishers don't pay enough attention to this part of the sequence. Lift too early and you may well pull your nymphs away from a fish that is investigating them. Too late and you may have missed the opportunity to hook into a good fish. My advice here is to fish the lift out, and by that I mean try to extend

the drift by controlling the pace and length of the lift. Start your lift as though you are expecting the fish to grab your flies. If nothing happens then give it a quick flick and start the sequence all over again.



This technique of nymphing is so important that I'll try to summarise it. Firstly, expect to catch fish in all three zones. Trout love taking flies that are dropping, so quite often you will pick up fish early in the drift. That's why it is so important to get the relationship between water speed, water depth, fly weight and tippet diameter right. Try to make sure you are in touch with your flies right through the drop, drift and lift zones. Don't be sucked in by trying too hard to get a dead drift. Sometimes (and

probably most of the time in medium to shallow water) it is better to subtly 'lead' the flies through the drift. Experiment, as only experience will get this right for you. Don't be afraid to drift your flies through the sequence more than once, as quite often the fish simply do not see your flies.

Weight Selection

Without doubt it is better to have fewer patterns in different weights rather than lots of different patterns.

Here is a photo of my nymphing box, a leafed C&F box. The first picture is of my working side of the box. You will notice that there are only three or four different patterns here, but they vary from 4.0 mm tungsten beads down to 2.0 mm tungsten beads (the pink patterns are for Grayling). All are tied on 'Jig' hooks. The point here is that these differing bead sizes allow me to get the weight right so that my flies get down quickly to the right depth to optimise the drift. Don't get too hung up on the patterns; these flies work for me on fishing for both trout and grayling.



One of Philip's very neat and well organised nymphing boxes

>>>



More of Philip's very neat and well organised nymphing boxes

(**Tip:** trout love the combination of copper and orange). As I said earlier, you work out your patterns and then get them in multiple weights.

Note that I label the weights.

The other plates have a variety of nymphs and these are for the tougher days and winter grayling. But again, note that there are multiple weights in each pattern. Don't poo poo the Sqirmies; rivers are full of earth worms and sometime they just turn the day into a blast.

So, why is weight important? The best way I can explain this is by relating a real fishing situation. Recently I was fishing my local river and was fishing a stretch that had a very nice 'prime' section of faster water at the head which was about a metre deep. Now I approach each stretch as though it is my 'competition

beat' and I had already taken a couple of small fish out of the 'sub-prime' areas.

I just felt that there had to be a couple of better-sized fish in this prime water. I had selected a 2.8 mm bead fly for the point and a 2.3 mm bead fly on the dropper. I cast up and let the flies drift back down, fishing through that water 6 or 7 times without hooking anything. Now most people fishing that section would then have walked on. Not me. I changed the dropper fly to a 2.8 mm fly and went through the water again about 10 times. This time I knew I was fishing a little deeper but still didn't get any takes. So then I changed to a 3.0 mm bead on the point and a 2.5 mm bead on the dropper, and four casts produced four fish. The subtle extra weight just dropped the flies down a few centimetres and that made the difference. Weight and depth control is critical for success.

The point of this is that you need to get it right and sometimes that means changing flies. In this case I didn't change the patterns, only the weight.

Using Angles

This part of the technique is often overlooked or misunderstood by nymph fishers. You will often hear that the line needs to drop straight down from the rod tip to achieve a dead drift. Yes, but not all of the time. It is impossible to get it like that all of the time, and often the angle of the leader to the rod tip is more like 60 degrees, and that might be away from you or possibly upstream or downstream from you.

Changing the angle of the leader to the water surface can often speed up or slow down a drift. For example, if you are fishing heavy flies in shallow water, leading the flies with the rod tip well in front of the leader entry point will 'lift' the flies from the bottom, thus allowing you to fish an undulating bottom.

Sometimes changing the angle at which the leader enters the water can induce takes from a fish which otherwise had not previously shown any interest in the flies.

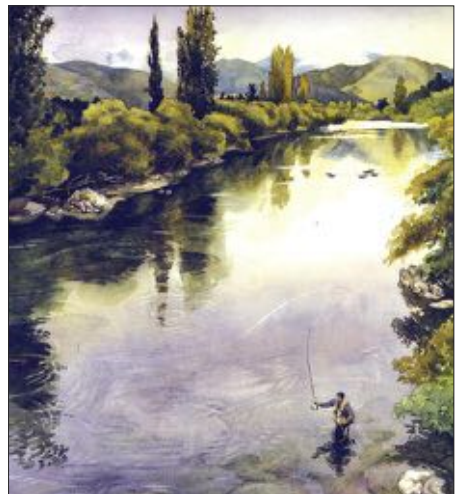
Competition anglers always experiment, don't accept the norm, and are always trying different angles of entry in order to catch a fish, especially in those sections that have been heavily fished. I only try to get the leader to drop straight down in very deep water, as I want the drift to be as long as possible.

I hope you get something from this article. The new approach to nymphing is an exciting part of the evolution of fly fishing. Though more intense and technical than other aspects of fly fishing, there is no doubt that if you take the time to learn these new techniques you will catch more fish. So to finish, here is a pattern that will produce for you next season.



- Hook: Size 16 or 18 Jig hook
- Bead: Copper in 3mm or lighter (you can always add lead to increase weight)
- Thread: Grey
- Tag: Glo-brite No. 5 (Glo-brite in various colours are a must for this style)
- Body: Loosely dubbed hares ear
- Rib: Clear lureflash (or similar)
- Thorax: Hot orange ice dubbing.

Philip Bailey
Yorkshire, UK



Tichborne watercolour – Motueka River

CSI: Fish - Using Genetic Testing To Detect Trout

(From 'This Way Up', Radio New Zealand, May 19, 2018)

<https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/thiswayup/audio/2018645485/csi-fish-using-genetic-testing-to-detect-trout>



The wonderful BioRanger device

Graeme Webb, the father of VFFA member Steve Webb, lives in New Zealand's North Island. Graeme often visits his family in Melbourne and has attended a few of our dinners. Graeme recently emailed the following article, which he thought might be of interest to our readers.

The latest DNA technology, based on techniques used in forensic science, is being adapted to detect spawning trout in Manawatu rivers - think CSI, but for fish. Mature trout return each year to the place they were born to reproduce. If a stream used by fish to spawn gets polluted or damaged, future generations of fish in that area are under threat.

The BioRanger device, shown in the photo here, scans for environmental DNA - genetic traces in air, soil or water

- which are then used to precisely identify any living species present, whether that's myrtle rust, shark, or, in this case, procreating trout.

Wellington Fish and Game Council locates breeding habitats in order to protect them.

"We walk up and down the side of the river trying to find what is called a redd," says Dr Adam Canning, research scientist at Wellington Fish and Game Council.

"A redd is patch within the river a trout has made with its tail, and that's where they lay their eggs."

But these breeding habitats can be difficult to spot, especially in muddy water, and there's 4,200 km of river catchment in the region.

Dr Richard Winkworth, from Massey University, says using environmental DNA testing for the presence of fish is a bit like the TV show CSI.

"Police officers are going into a crime scene and they're looking for traces of evidence that a particular person has been present. People will leave a trace of DNA on things they touch, in a little piece of hair or skin," he says. "It's exactly the same for a fish."

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2017 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 • Peter Hayes • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne
- Hook Up Bait & Tackle •

VALUED DONORS

Seeking Solitude

Written by April Vokey, June 7, 2016

(As previously published in Fly Fusion Magazine.)



Sharing ideas on the river

I felt my temper flare just slightly. My oars dug a little deeper, my raft pushed a little faster, and my polite smile began to look forced. My dog Colby just slunk behind me in hopes that we would be back to our homestretch soon.

Upon reaching camp, I found solitude while sweeping my deck. As evening approached, the voices funnelled downstream until the river was in the same quiet state it was earlier that morning when I'd sipped my coffee on the riverbank.

It took me a few days to get the motivation to fish again. My friend Cat LaFlamme and I sat atop the large Yeti beside the campfire discussing our options.

"We could fish higher. Nah, it was crazy there two days ago."

"We could fish earlier. Nah, the jet boats will just get there before us."

"We could just launch the jet boat. Nah, would just add to the problem or upset the guides."

"We could fish differently. Yes, we could ... by going somewhere else."

And just like that we were on a mission — what turned out to be a successful mission too. I did a lot of contemplating that week. My time exploring various rivers throughout northern British Columbia was rewarded with quiet days, fresh fish, and a remembrance that the exploration had always been more fun for me than actually catching fish.

I wondered if other anglers had forgotten this as well, so in a cheeky social media post I mentioned the entire Bulkley parade. [Editor - The Bulkley River in British Columbia is a major tributary of the Skeena River and a renowned steelhead river.]

The response was as one might expect: a healthy percentage of people who felt the same way I did, and a less healthy percentage of people who blamed me for the loss of solitude on rivers worldwide, the influx of anglers who have taken up the sport in the last ten years, and basically for world hunger and the war on terror.

Of course the humour in the "you make the bed you lay in" cliché was due to how busy the Bulkley was before I had ever stepped a foot in it. It's a well-known, highly publicized fishery that's had its bouts of pressure even before I was born. I scoffed at the accusations, but, nonetheless, I couldn't help but ponder certain aspects of the debate.

>>>



Sharing ideas on the river

I'm not ignorant enough to believe that a busy day on the Bulkley is because of me, or even that an article such as this one will have people excitedly booking trips in DIY fashion. I'm also not ignorant enough to deny that my advocacy to grow this sport doesn't have its downfalls. There has been a large growth spurt of anglers in the fly fishing community over the last ten years or so. Social media and the Internet have opened our means of communication and the secret is out — we have the best sport in the world. However, I have always been able to justify this growth with an understanding of the benefits such participation brings.

One wonderful thing about fly fishing is that once the passion develops roots into an angler's core, for many it remains nested there for life. Even when that same angler cannot leave the house to indulge in a day of fishing, such passion remains. Cold Winter? Newborn child? Easily upset spouse? Busy working overtime? For many, it is still the fantasy of a day on the water that so often keeps their "off-water delays" manageable. Why does this matter? Because while anglers may not be able to immediately fish the waters they dream of, they are still oftentimes at the forefront of the battleground when such fisheries need help.

For me, I'd always seen the time I spent growing the sport as an investment. One with a relatively low-risk cost, yet a huge return. Never before had I associated it with destruction. Should I have?

The question was too broad, so I looked to narrow it down to the Bulkley. I'd filmed on this river several times. I hadn't done much writing about it, but I'd done my share of television and social media posts about my newfound home. Why then were half of the anglers I was passing on my way downstream the good 'ol boys who'd been fishing this river since the 80's? These anglers were kind, incredible sources of knowledge who were content being out on the water. Indeed, the crowds bothered them, but for now they were just happy to fish a river where the gravel was fine and the current was gentle on their knees.

As I bushwhacked through blackberry shrubs, avoided being mauled by grizzlies, and walked my raft around whitewater obstructions, my passion for the sport was reignited and my soul felt alive again. That had been the initial purpose of my post—to inspire others like me who had lost the desire to stand in queue, to get back to remembering how exciting it was to fish a river and feel as though you were the first one to ever step foot in it.

Laying topographic maps across my deck, old highlighter marks flashed fluorescent at me, reminding me of the days when I sat at my parent's kitchen table, tracing the lines of rivers I thought might hold steelhead: gradual gradients, ocean access, forgotten logging roads ... I'd made these marks before Google Earth and phones with GPS, when I barely had enough gas money to go out and explore. Now, staring at these same maps, it was all too clear. None of these rivers were easy to get to and many required hours, maybe even days, of driving. Most would



Rowing as a shared experience

require floating and a well thought out shuttle system. All of them needed a dog for safety. Most importantly, they all guaranteed both adventure and uncertainty.

Curiosity got the best of me, and I couldn't help but Google the name of each river with the word "steelhead" to see what I could find. A small part of me wanted to find a glimmer of hope that steelhead frequented the river I was searching. A smaller part of me wanted to find no mention of it at all. What popped up on my browser was to be expected: the occasional guide service desperate to sell something different, the common Internet forum with some ego-driven blowhard spouting off about his discovery, and lastly, sad reminders from outdated government reports about which runs of steelhead used to exist.

But what if the majority of people who loved to explore these rivers were just like me, willing to die before divulging any names and obeying the "no camera, no mention" rule? What if these men and women were no longer with us, or could no longer find the physical strength to

invest such time off-road for only the hopeful mere glimpse of a fish? Did that mean these rivers weren't worth fishing?

Over the years, as a guide, I'd met some of the most independent and hardcore anglers on the planet. Now with age, many of them were limited to lodges with jet boat access and easy wading, but their eyes still lit up when reminiscing about their younger days — their days of mapping, planning, hoping, not knowing.

Then it hit me. Maybe this was all part of a cycle. A cycle where the youth put in the work to fish difficult, technical rivers that are home to smaller runs of fish, all the while creating memories, appreciation and experience while doing so. As a reward for the effort put forth, as they age, perhaps the cycle entitles them to fish the famed rivers like the upper Bulkley with steadier substrate and more predictable migrations.

For me, before being spoiled with the Bulkley, the Dean, the Kispiox, the Copper, and the rivers we've all grown up dreaming about, it was the rivers I believed held fish that rewarded me with the richest satisfaction and most >>>



No one said it was going to be easy

valuable learning experiences (especially when I ended up being right about them).

Today, in my 30s, I still crave the adventure hidden in the rugged BC and Albertan mountains. They call to me with an unexplainable urgency, a reminder that my feet should be used for walking more so than pressing pedals. I can only dread the grief that will overcome me when Mother Nature decides that my body is better suited for less physical exertion and therefore limits the places I can fish. Worse yet, I fear the time when I have to compete with capable anglers for a spot because they're unwilling to venture off the beaten path. A path that I know would be good for them to take, but one that I

can't suggest without sounding like a bitter, selfish nag.

Naturally, this is a topic dependent upon each individual angler, and yes, the room for debate on this subject runs deep. So while it's true that there are many things I am unsure of, there are several things I do know for sure: some anglers fish for numbers regardless of their age, some fish for camaraderie with fishing buddies, and some fish just to get outside. But we all fish to learn, to feel like we've figured a part of nature out, to be proud of ourselves when we succeed in our pursuit.

The other thing I know—we all get old and none of us are that excited about it. So while you will occasionally see me on the Bulkley fishing the easy water and sizeable steelhead migrations, when you don't see me out there, I am lost somewhere in an adventure nestled in a forest with a river that I will never tell you about. And one day, when I'm unable to bushwhack through the unforgiving landscape, I'll be the little old grey-haired woman who is giving you shit about being in my water.



In the Pink

... from Alan Pilkington

I've had some entertaining days on the water over the years but a recent one on the Cedar River, about an hour and a half from my Seattle home, takes the cake, at least so far for 2018.

A half a dozen or so of my fly fishing club members and I rendezvoused there mid-afternoon in late June. I had the job of guiding a couple of new members, two charming, well-to-do, fiftyish ladies who had been to our club casting classes and were not too bad at it. Late starters, they were new to angling and wanted to learn about fly fishing.

And not from books either, or YouTube or Google, God bless them, these ladies wanted to learn on the water. They had just been outfitted with everything an Orvis catalog, or similar, has to offer: waders, boots, caps (the latest ones that overhung their fair necks and noses), polarized glasses, wading staffs, landing nets with fish friendly netting and gadgets hanging all over their vests and Simms shirts like Christmas trees. And covered in sweet smelling sun screen and bug dope, not the citronella and zinc cream I grew up with. Pretty as a picture as they fussed around a new Jeep

Wrangler (bright Royal Wulff red), they really lit up the car park as the Cedar sang happily nearby.

Now, this is not to disparage these nice ladies in any way; far from it. You had to admire their spirit and enthusiasm; their willingness to invest as heavily in the sport as some of their friends no doubt invested in diamonds. They showed old codgers like me what's possible in the 21st Century. And the avocation of angling with the fly needs all the new members it can, especially women and youngsters; it's pretty crowded with old white men struggling to find waders to fit as it is. So, right on, ladies!

And to make matters even more interesting, visually at least, they had both recently bid at a charity auction supporting Casting-For-The-Cure. This is a fine organisation that helps breast cancer surviving women recover by introducing them to fly fishing and its recuperative and natural healing powers.

So far, so good, but now, get this. They each had won at the auction, and this is for real, you can't make this stuff up, pink fly rods (8'6", #5, by Sage), pink wide arbor reels (also Sage), which were loaded with, hold it, PINK FLY LINES (from Rio, the line maker owned by Sage) and PINK BACKING!

I later cast one when I was sure none of my mates were lurking in the bushes with a camera. Really nice top-of-the-line outfits; they cast beautifully, but were just not my cup of tea color-wise. It is the color of the ribbon for breast cancer survival, but I like my pink on a silver salmon fly or on the body of a Tup's Indispensable. But the ladies were happy, in the pink, so to speak.

We hiked a mile along a track downstream, the water shielded by high rocky banks and tall second growth

timber. The Cedar flows north-west from the Cascade mountains along the Pacific north-west coast, mostly through a rain forest and a National Park, and ends up in a large lake near Seattle, connecting with Puget Sound. It is quite lovely to have a river like this so close to the city. Ambient temperature was 75 degree Fahrenheit; water temperature was 60 degrees (still a bit warm for the trout) as we arrived on the water at 4:30 pm. We reached a couple of beautiful pools connected by a small riffle and crossed by a high, narrow steel bridge for hikers, cyclists and horse riders.

There were no bugs coming off, but I showed them the likely looking spots and got them comfortable with reading the water, which was mostly wadable. I was wet wading as the older I get the harder it is to get my waders on, let alone off. I hardly fished at all, moving back and forth offering advice to each pink lady in the connected pools. I left the water at 7pm to get home to feed my dogs, just as a couple of bugs started coming off the water. When I left the ladies were conscientiously casting in the same runs as they started in at mid-afternoon, getting their drifts just right. They stayed for another hour, happy as clams, but missed the hatch which started in earnest at around 9pm. It was the summer solstice and darkness fell at 10pm. My mate stayed and caught a dozen or so on small dries before it got dark, rainbows and cutthroats, 10"-15", on water about a half mile upstream from the pools we fished.

It was a special afternoon. Who knows, next time I'm on the Cedar a lady in pink may emerge, to borrow from fly fishing vernacular. And to borrow again, this time from an ancient Buddhist saying, "... when the student is ready, the teacher appears ...", and that student might just be wearing pink!

Bernard Explores Rivers That Have Inspired Him

Popular VFFA member Bernard Holbery has been enjoying some fishing and sight-seeing in England. He has emailed a pile of photos, and offered some reflections on his experiences.

It's a long way from the Steavenson River, but I've come across some exceptional hatches of mayflies during my days here, along with spinner falls in the evening. The Lunn's Particular has been a good imitation for me. The Colne and Itchen rivers near the wonderful town of Stockbridge were my target for a few weeks before I moved onto Beresford Dale and the River Dove.

But it's not just about the fishing; when you're here you can't escape an awareness of our history. You are fishing rivers that some of our most esteemed and celebrated pioneers fished, and rivers where many of our most famous fly patterns were devised and fished.

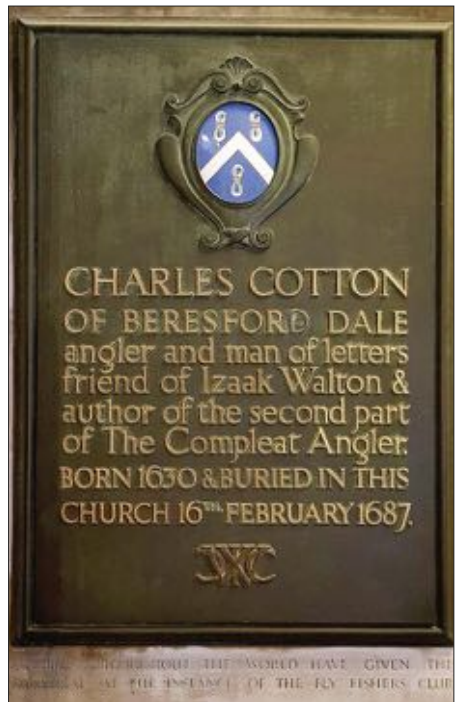
I took and kept a fine rainbow from the Itchen below Winchester. Browns have to be released but rainbows must be kept, so the hotel had the task of preparing this one for the guests. The water clarity of these rivers is absolutely incredible.

My early fly fishing was inspired by the books I read, and many of these were written by men who fished these wonderful chalkstreams. Anglers such as Frank Sawyer, who was river keeper on the Avon and whose nymph remains a favourite in fly boxes worldwide. I've read John Waller Hills' classic *A Summer on the Test* countless times and it continues to fire my imagination. Skues fished his beloved Itchen while developing his nymphing techniques, and Halford wrote about the dry fly fishing on the Test. I treasure their contributions.

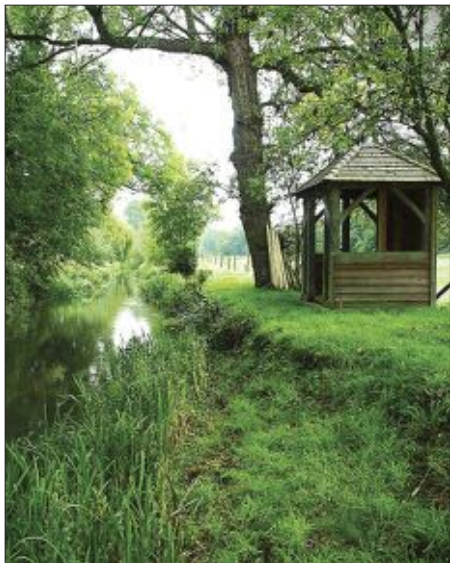
Charles Ritz introduced me through his books to the French Chalkstreams - the

Andelle and Risle, which I fished some years ago. Last year I fished the Colne, Test and Itchen rivers in the UK. This year I will fish the Test and Itchen again, and then the Avon, Lambourn, and the Temple Beat on the River Dove, where Charles Cotton built a stone fishing temple in honour of his great friend Izaak Walton.

Then I can finally say I have fished the places that have inspired me since I was a boy trying to become a fly fisher and gaining so much inspiration from our wonderful literature. Such is a fly fisherman's life.



A bronze tribute to Charles Cotton



Bernard's beat on the Coln River in the Cotswolds



A fine fish from the lower Itchen

This Month's Yarn

(... from February, 1966)

"I see there's been a plea to anglers," said Alf as he pushed another \$10 note across the counter, "to not take their dogs with them when they're out fishing."

"That's all right with other dogs," cut in McTaggart, "but not with my dog Fut. I think I've already told you about him – a most intelligent animal. There's no harm in him at all, and he's been very helpful on a number of occasions."

"I'll give you one instance. I was fishing a small lake near Dalesbridge some years ago, and conditions look really good. But I wasn't doing any good. I tried everything I could think of but couldn't get a response. Now Fut, as I have previously mentioned, always took a great interest in my fishing and was remarkably observant. After a couple of hours, during which I had caught absolutely nothing, he got up and started

to wander around the edge of the lake. Then he found a spot where there were some weeds and waded quietly in. He stood there silently for a couple of minutes, then walked out again and came and stood beside me. Then he shook himself vigorously and a number of shrimps fell out of his fur onto the ground. He looked up meaningfully and I got the idea."

"You're not going to tell us you used those shrimps as bait!" exclaimed Chris Gray in horror.

"No, absolutely not," replied a very indignant McTaggart. "After all, I am a fully paid up member of the VFFA. But we had tied some excellent shrimp patterns at Kossy's most recent fly tying class, so I put one of these on and caught trout after trout."

FLY OF THE MONTH

*The 'Something to Try'
(... from Philip Bailey)*



This issue carries a great article by Philip Bailey on Euro Nymphing. In the exchange of emails that I had with Phil he quite out of the blue sent me a photo taken with his iPhone of a nymph that he uses.

He called it "something for you to try". So it wasn't even given a name. The photo above is my attempt at tying Phil's nymph, and I used a bright red bead because I didn't have an orange bead like the one he used in the photo he emailed to me.

His pic is given here:



Tying details:

Materials:

- Hook:** Jig hook, size 16 (for the fly in the photo. Philip ties them in larger and smaller sizes.)
- Thread:** Brown 8/0
- Bead:** Pearl orange— size 3.0 mm. Philip ties this fly using beads of 2.4 mm, 3.0 mm, and 3.3 mm for various hook sizes. He also suggests that a copper bead can be used.
- Tail:** Grizzle hackle fibres.
- Rib:** Glo-brite orange. (Which I didn't have, so I used some bright orange thread as a substitute for the photo.)
- Body:** A few turns of lead on the hook shank behind the bead will add some weight and keep the bead in place. The body is then dubbed hare fur.
- Hackle:** Philip uses Francolin, but suggests that brown partridge is an acceptable substitute.

Tying Procedure:

1. Slide the bead onto the hook and place the hook in the vice.
2. Slide the bead along to the eye and then lock it in place with a few turns of lead wire tied behind it. Then tie some thread over the lead wire, adding extra turns behind the wire to hold the lead wire turns in place. You can add a few drops of superglue on the lead and the thread at this stage to keep it all secure.
3. Take more thread turns down to the start of the bend and tie in the tail fibres and the ribbing. The tail should be about two thirds the length of the hook shank.
4. Add hare fur dubbing to the thread and wind the thread back along the hook shank to the bead, building up a body of increasing thickness.
5. Wind the ribbing on in evenly spaced turns with these turns being made in the opposite direction to the turns made to complete the dubbed body. (This will prevent the ribbing from sinking into the body.)
6. Prepare the hackle feather. If using a partridge feather then tie it in by the tip right behind the bead and then make two careful turns around the shank.
7. Tie the hackle feather off carefully wind the thread through the hackle turns back to right behind the bead.
8. Add a pinch more of hare fur dubbing and make one more turn behind the bead.
9. Trim off all the excess bits and then use a whip finish to complete the tying process. (Philip suggests that if he used a copper bead he might be tempted to put a smidge of orange ice dubbing behind the bead.)

VFFA 2018 meetings & other activities

August 2018

- 6 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
- 11 Saturday 2018 Wild Trout Conference at the Darebin Arts Centre at Preston
- 24 Friday Annual Dinner, with Guest Speaker Peter Morse
(well-known Australian guide and writer on both fresh and saltwater fly fishing)

September 2018

- 1 Saturday Our Victorian rivers open again to trout fishing
- 3 Monday Council Meeting - 6:30 pm
- 16 Sunday Casting Instruction Day at the Red Tag Pool with Ian Sambell and Judith Oliver (VFFA members who are highly qualified casting instructors)
- 20 Thursday 2018 Annual General Meeting – 8:00 pm

October 2018

- 1 Monday Council Meeting - 6:30 pm
- 7 Sunday VFFA annual visit to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers
- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club, with Guest Speakers Kristina and Adam Royter, New Zealand fishing guides.
- 26 – 28 Annual Warrnambool trip. Event Co-ordinator – Richard Kos

November 2018

- 1 Thursday Dinner at 7:00 pm at The Metropolitan Hotel, 263 William St, Melbourne, with Guest Speakers Simon Gawesworth (World Casting Champion and RIO representative) and Marc Bale (representing Sage products)
- 3 Saturday Casting demonstration and clinic by Simon Gawesworth at Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club's Casting Pool at Yarrambat
- 12 Monday Council Meeting - 6:30 pm

December 2018

- 3 Monday Council Meeting - 6:30 pm
- 6 Thursday Annual Christmas Dinner with guest speaker John Philbrick (VFFA past president, life member, editor for 13 years, and highly skilled and experienced angler)