

FLY LINES



AUGUST 2021

The August Annual Dinner with Jim Allen

This year's annual dinner is on Friday, August 20, and will be held at the Kelvin Club. The cost is \$80 for members and their guests, and an invitation is included with this issue of *Fly Lines*.

Our guest speaker for the evening is Jim Allen OAM, who is well-known to us all. Jim is a VFFA life member, past president (1972 – 1974), and an exceptional fly fisher. While recognized as an authority on the trout fishing in Tasmania, he has fished for trout and other species in lots of other places.

Jim has been a guest speaker at VFFA meetings and dinners many times, and invariably draws a crowd because he is so knowledgeable on trout matters and is always entertaining.

At this year's dinner he will be looking back on living in Melbourne as a youngster growing up here and he will reflect on the freedoms now lost to those growing up in Melbourne these days. He will also draw some comparisons between the fishing of today, the fishing he knew as a young aspiring fly fisher, and the fishing we might see in the future.

Friday, August 20,
6:30 for a 7:00pm commencement
at the Kelvin Club



This will be a fabulous opportunity to hear one of our best, so mark it in your diary – Friday, August 20, and ensure you complete the enclosed invitation and send it to treasurer Tony Mitchem.

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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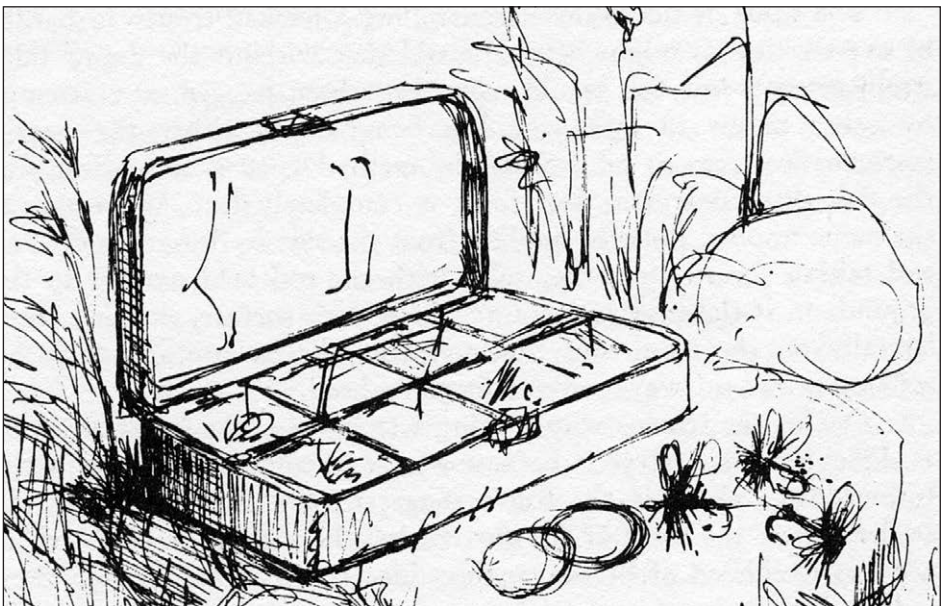
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Flybox - Scholes

President's Message

Welcome to another *Fly Lines* newsletter.

We are rolling through the year with some wonderful member participation as we continue to move between the Kelvin Club, Zoom and Aussie Angler for the various events through winter.

We enjoyed an informative presentation on small stream fishing by Jason Platts and Bernard Holbery last month. Their photographs and detailed accounts provided inspiration for us all to consider stopping by the small streams for a fish, as these, too, hold some large fish. Their commentary followed on well from Craig Coltman's presentation on the one percenters and the importance of the time of day to fish, proper set up, correct fly size, and surveying the river before rushing in to fish.

Fly tying has taken front and centre for our events through winter with Robert Bailey presenting the benefits of soft hackle flies, and how to tie and fish them. We also took advantage of an opportunity to host Gordon van der Spuy, author of *The Feather Mechanic*. Another online presentation in August will feature a fly tying zoom demonstration by Geoff Bloch on constructing a reverse hackle dun.

We will return to Aussie Angler on August 26 where Andrew Mossman will lead a session as our instructor. Pizza, wine and coffee will be on offer with a \$5 contribution, and banter and the tying knowledge provided is free!

The Goulburn Broken Catchment strategy is up for renewal and open for public comment. We (VFFA) regard the region as local to many of our members to fish or get involved in the habitat restoration events as and when they are offered. I encourage you to investigate the draft



strategy and put forward your comments either online or by attending one of the workshops. More details via this link: <https://bit.ly/3qyCxIh>

Victorian Fisheries Authority have continued their stocking program through winter:

- Merri River at Grassmere and Dennington has received 10,000 brown trout
- Wurdiboluc Reservoir has received 8,800 brown trout
- Lake Wendouree received 3,000 browns courtesy of Ballarat Fish Hatchery
- Lake Eildon – 15,000 rainbow trout and 20,000 brown trout
- Talbot Reservoir – 2,700 browns
- Cosgrove Reservoir – 2,700 browns
- Lake Purrumbete – 1,200 tiger trout
- Devilbend Reservoir – 10,000 rainbows & 10,000 browns
- Blue Rock Lake – 10,000 rainbows
- Bellfield Reservoir – 10,000 rainbows
- Dean Reservoir – 1,000 rainbows & 500 browns

- Moynes River – 5,000 browns
- Aringa Reservoir – 1,000 rainbows & 1,000 browns
- Lake Fyans – 10,000 browns
- Upper Sandy Creek Dam – 1,000 browns
- Hamilton Lake – 2,000 browns & 4,000 rainbows
- Hepburn Lake – 5,000 rainbows
- Moorabool Reservoir – 10,000 browns
- Bullarto Reservoir – 500 browns
- Wombat Reservoir – 1,000 browns
- St George's Lake – 1,000 browns

Certainly some opportunities there amongst the lake fisheries. I do hope our wild trout have enjoyed the wet cool summer and prolonged rain through Autumn.

This month we will be our Annual Dinner with Jim Allen OAM, life member and past President, our speaker on Friday, August 20. This will be a wonderful evening with Jim entertaining us and the opportunity to catch up with friends. Invitations are in the newsletter, so please confirm your attendance as soon

as possible. We will follow up with the President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool in Fairfield on Sunday, August 22.

Our Annual General Meeting will be in September, and we are on the lookout for a few more members to come forward and get involved in the various events and activities along with being involved in council. It's not onerous, but is enjoyable and rewarding to play a part in our direction.

In October our guest speaker will be VFFA member Tony Stewart discussing the fly fishing opportunities in the Otway Ranges.

The calendar now lists some more outdoor events from September onwards, with a BBQ to see in the new season, a Donger Weekend in spring, a return of the nymph technique day run by Rick and Jo Dobson, streamcraft by David Grisold and two Millbrook days as well.

Stay well



Funding Raffles

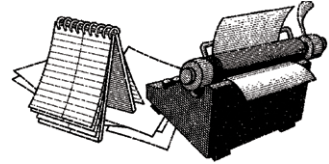
Our annual dinner is being held at the Kelvin Club in a few weeks. One of the features of this important event is the raffle. Several local fishing stores and other fishing organisations support us very generously by donating great prizes for the raffle, thus giving opportunities for members to acquire some fabulous equipment for the price of a raffle ticket.

So the request from our president and treasurer is that members attending this year's annual dinner bring along plenty



of \$20 notes and \$50 notes for purchasing those raffle tickets.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"I learned how to fly fish in the hit -and-miss, trial-and-error way that makes things stick, and I learned patience, persistence, acceptance and probably a few other good things, too." (John Gierach: *Another Lousy Day In Paradise*)

"The most indispensable item in any fisherman's equipment is his hat. This ancient relic, with its battered crown and well frayed-band, preserve not only the memory of every trout he caught, but also the smell." (Corey Ford: *Tomorrow's The Day*)

"I carry fewer flies each year, and less gear. Each year I watch a little more, fish a little less. My expertise with a fly rod, such as it is, fails to improve much." (Christopher Camuto: *A Fly Fisherman's Blue Ridge*)

"The reel sang it's high, screeching obligato, on and on, and then this marvellous silver and rose beauty was breaching clear of the water once, twice, three times, and I could see the plastic of the real spool showing through." (Clive Gammon: *I Know A Good Place*)

"Fly fishing, which has a vaguely mystical aura, is a lot like work. I'm a frenetic fly fisherman. I wade up and down streams, looking for good spots, changing flies, usually falling and breaking some piece of equipment. Or I stand still and work myself into a frenzy about what fly I should use. I love fly fishing, but it has never given me a moment's peace." (James Gorman: *Testing a Hypothesis on Time and River Fishing*)

I was sorting out some old files a few weeks ago when I came across a collection of lists of what some prominent anglers supposedly had in their fishing vests. If you like, what they took with them when they went fishing. This stirred my curiosity, so having little else to do in yet another covid lockdown I rescued my fishing vest from the wardrobe in the garage and emptied the pockets. What was I guilty of carting with me?

There are those who travel lightly, and those who take the kitchen sink. Sadly I've been accused of falling into the latter group. All dressed up to go I was once accused of looking like a Christmas tree in its pomp. Loaded to the gunwales. Mind you, I once tried to lift Hubert Reichelt's vest and nearly herniated

myself. Obviously I'm not the only one who loads up.

So what's really needed when you head off for a couple of hours on a stream? Waders, boots and socks obviously. What goes under the waders? I usually wear thick socks and an old pair of long slacks. Then if I manage to stand on a snake he's going to have bite his way through a fair bit of stuff before he gets to me. But I've heard others talking about wearing only shorts or thermals, or nothing much at all. Each to his own.

Also essential are the hat and Polaroids. I've got to the stage now where a wading staff is another vital piece of equipment. I made one once out of an old broom handle and a short length of rope. I screwed a large cup hook into one end and used this for rescuing flies stuck in trees. The rod and reel is a given of

course, along with a net. I also wear a pair of thin sun gloves, as on sunny days my hands often get quite badly sunburnt.

Then there's the vest. But if I'm heading out for a few hours fishing on a warm spring or autumn day then an apple, a couple of bars, and a plastic bottle of water or energy drink are likely to go with me. So that means taking a backpack too. If the backpack is not too heavily filled I can wear it and fish with it on, but if it's well loaded I'll often carry it from spot to spot and just drop it at the downstream end of each bit of the river I'm fishing.

What goes in the vest? Usually two fly boxes – one of dry flies and one of nymphs with a few small wet flies tucked in as well. And the iPhone – vital. It's the camera, maps and compass, car locator, weather predictor, end of day fishing report recorder, fishing colleague contactor, sunset and moon phase informant and wife contactor with arrival home details.

The pockets of my vest are filled with the obvious collection – fishing licence, fish release forceps (we live in hope), a small hook sharpener, line clippers, a thermometer for measuring air and water temperatures, spools of leader material, a small pair of scissors, various indicators for nymph fishing, a couple of different fly floatants, silicone Mucilin, a small tub of some muddy brew to make my leader sink, cheap magnifiers for tying knots, an item for straightening leaders and tippets, small plastic bottles of Loon Easy Ride or Top Ride, and a very small roll of toilet paper for drying soggy drowned dry flies. I also have a small fly box with a plastic lid that pins to my vest. It has open ends, and flies I have used are stored there to dry out.

Have I forgotten anything? Yes – a neat trick my wife helped me with. I came across a small but strong cylindrical magnet some years ago. My dear spouse

sewed it into a small cloth sheath that is pinned to my vest. When you change flies you have two flies to manage – the one you take off and the one you want to tie on. One of these is dropped onto that little magnet which holds it tight while the other fly is put away or pulled out. It's a great trick.

Now for the backpack. Time for confession. Aside from eats and drink it usually carries some line cleaner, sometimes a camera, always some insect repellent, my wallet, a pair of secateurs (very useful for hacking through blackberries and dense stream-side bush), snake bandages, bandaids, lip balm, sunscreen, a small pack of handwipes, an old hand towel, and a small plastic bottle of spray-on bandage for any cuts that happen. I often take a spare reel so I can change lines – just for the heck of it. Some spare leaders and often an extra box or two of flies gets dropped in. On a few occasions when I've been out for a while on a warm day I've experienced cramps, so a small bottle of anti-cramp pills has proven handy. One final item – if my late afternoon fishing lingers into the evening then a pair of polaroids with yellow lenses are great for when the light levels drop. And if I'm out fishing after the sun sets then I've got with my normal everyday bifocals with me.

Just occasionally I take a change of clothes and a towel in the car. To remove the sweaty fishing shirt and towel off and put on a clean T-shirt for the trip home does make the end of the day a bit more comfortable.

Yes, it is quite a pile. Have I forgotten anything? I look forward to wise words of advice from my VFFA compatriots who will hopefully remind me of obvious things I've forgotten.

In the meantime, take care and stay safe,

Lyndon

The July Meeting with Jason Platts and Bernard Holbery

... here is a summary of the presentations by Jason and Bernard

Jason:

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you tonight. I'm a student of the history of fly fishing and am particularly proud of the highly significant contribution of the VFFA to our Victorian trout fishing.

Sometimes the opinion is expressed that the premiere fishing in this part of the world is in New Zealand or the Tasmanian Highlands or the Snowy Mountains. These are certainly very exciting fisheries. But Bernie and I have found that our local streams here in Victoria provide excellent sport and plenty of willing fish if we apply ourselves.

Small streams have largely escaped the many changes to the fishery in the lowland rivers – the dams, the pollution, the stocking problems, the popularity of 4WD drives and the destruction of habitat. But don't get me wrong. Bernie and I fish these lowland streams and we fish them hard, but we are very selective about where and when. If we fish the meadows these days it's likely to be at first or last light, or when we are confident that these rivers have hit their sweet spot in the entomological cycle and trout are likely to be feeding.

However, the small streams through their isolation and lack of access (especially where it is wade in only) have often provided us with great fishing options when other anglers are bemoaning their poor fishing. Over the years, as we have built up our knowledge about a district under different conditions and at different times in the season, it became apparent that in almost any conditions good fishing could be found somewhere. It certainly didn't come easy, and of course there are



Jason...

no guarantees when so many trips were chasing up new water, or blue lines on a map, or just thinking: "Gee I wonder what's down there? It might be worth a look."

It's this reservoir of local knowledge that helps us determine where and when to fish. You can have all the skills and gear you like, but if you can't target the most likely water for a particular trip you are not going to be as effective as you would like. Good fishing breeds confidence and can reinforce a hunch or a technique, and this cycle of hunches and experimentation leads to sessions when it all comes together and you succeed in capturing prime fish.

The river is the teacher. All the theory and books don't mean much if you can't learn to read a river. You need a keen awareness of what all your senses are picking up - a sensitivity to subtle changes. Maybe the water is going up or down or becoming discoloured or too warm or too cold.

Or suddenly there's a hatch going on. Sometimes these are tiny mayflies or midges. Being able to identify which

phase of the insect life cycle trout are feeding on is essential. Incidentally, mayflies are ubiquitous in the Acheron Valley at almost all times in the season and can be fished in some way all season long. Anyone can see a terrestrial being gulped, but with emerging caddis or mayflies the key hatches of the day are not often seen with the air teeming with insects.

There's no substitute for learning the entomology of your fishery. You need to be familiar with the lifecycles of three or four predominant insects in the area, and over time this will grow to include some highly localised or specialised organisms.

Bernie and I are constantly searching the weather and assessing the conditions. Good fishers are weathermen. We are assessing the long-range conditions all the time, because even in the off-season there are weather events that will affect the long-term viability of our fisheries.

How has the weather in the preceding 24 hours? What rivers may be running high, or low, or clear? Are we looking at finding freestone sections? Are we in a dry spell? What will fish need at this time, and how will this relate to the likely

migration of fish in the system. We have some 'indicator creeks' that correspond to how streams further away will be fishing. Fish need habitat, and they need to feed at some stage. All these issues play into the decision as to where to fish on a particular day, and there are a range of occasions when you target small streams because they are likely to offer the best fishing in the district.

If you think there's only small fish in small waters you're wrong. Fish of 2 lb plus and some of twice that size are present in almost all healthy headwater fisheries. These prime fish are sometimes present only for short periods when they may be targeting a particular insect, gorging on beetles for example. Or they may be resident fish. In my experience some fish have dropped out of the breeding cycle altogether. Having found an area that serves them well they've parked the bus!

Observing some of these wonderful resident fish over multiple seasons has been very special, but also a challenge, because they are highly adapted to their environment and know where to escape to if hooked.

I've always loved the outdoors. All my early school reports said the same thing: "Jason shows potential, but only ever seems to want to read fishing books!"

In the early 80s Lake Eildon was all the rage, so we would head up to the lake and catch countless trout on spinners. When I was old enough to drive we went camping on the Howqua, Delatite and Jerusalem Creek. We used threadline gear and squished on anything that was on the car grill when we arrived (mainly hoppers, blowflies, beetles and crickets). The fascination with trout was now in full swing.

My first use of the fly came after visiting the Bonnie Doon general store on >>>



Bernard had an attentive audience

the way up to Jerusalem Creek in 1988. The store owner suggested I use a fly instead of running around the tall grass in the hopper and snake season. He sold me half a dozen Knobby Hoppers. I treasured these first flies and have kept the last one for its sentimental value.

Before I was 20 I had chased up most of the waterways in the Victorian Great Divide. I had access to two wonderful properties on the Delatite and became very familiar with this river and its astounding array of aquatic insects.

I was attending Monash Uni and it was all too easy to sneak away for long weekends. I graduated in 1990 and planned to attend post-grad Uni in the USA in 91. But by the time it came to get on a plane I knew this idea wasn't going to happen; I was too obsessed with trout!

So I told my folks I was going overseas for three months and ended up coming back four years later! For two of these years I lived in a spectacular part of

Colorado where my home waters were the Roaring Fork and Frying Pan rivers. After Colorado I moved to Lake Kootenay in British Columbia where the fishing was ridiculously good. We fished all over southern BC and Western Alberta. But I was keen to come home again and fish my pet streams, and in particular the Delatite and Acheron Valley rivers.

From my late 20s I moved away from using generalist flies to something more entomologically accurate. I was putting in the time, getting into remote systems, and gradually becoming a more accomplished and confident angler.

I was happy enough fishing mostly solo, but then I met Bernie. He had recently moved to Melbourne from the Acheron Valley after the devastating 2009 fires. We just hit it off. We were similarly foolhardy when it came to chasing up the more inaccessible areas, and this became our trademark. Our first few seasons fishing together led quickly to heading off as often as we could to remote locations.



A thoughtful collection of members, keen to hear about fishing small streams

If I was to give one piece of advice it is to fish virgin water and remain undetected. This goes for all fisheries, but is especially relevant to fishing small streams. A clumsy fisher or poor fly presentation will alert fish to your presence. Small fish charge upstream to escape, alerting better fish to your presence. Bow-waves and the shadows and sounds of a clumsy fisher are the death knell to a successful approach.

If, after weighing up the recent weather and prevailing conditions, you have chosen a healthy fishery and are fishing in rarely fished water and you can get into position undetected you are already in a good place to target quality fish. When I head up to the Acheron Valley I still see many anglers parking their cars at a popular spot on, say, the Steavenson or Rubicon rivers at midday on a Sunday, and wondering why they don't have a great day.

Let's discuss tactics and approaches. First - stop, assess, and slow down! Consider



Jason and Bernard – a highly skilled fishing team

the variety of possible lies of the trout and try to cover each run and pool carefully. The first few casts are critical. In smaller water you can't lay out half a dozen casts on a pool. You've alerted fish to your presence and already the idea of fishing undetected is gone.

I see a lot of fishers who are keen to fish the middle seams or heads of pools and who thus disturb many of the likely trout lies. Small streams inevitably have more trees and overhanging banks of grasses, tree roots and rocks. Very often in an undisturbed pool sizeable fish are sitting in the base of pools where they can get a good look at food as it races out of faster water. So, especially in bright conditions, you need to fish the banks carefully. Top fish are wary of predators and will often be hiding under overhanging vegetation or in the backwaters of structures where they can ambush food whilst using the least energy to maintain their position. The heads of pools, of course, are often good lies, but also look for changing current lanes and bubble lines as likely trout water.

When Bernie and I are fishing we cover water very quickly and move on. This comes from being able to swiftly assess the likelihood of good fish being present and the need to keep moving to more likely water rather than getting too obsessed with what's in front of us. We have learnt that in a day with possibly a limited window of good light, a good tactic is to concentrate on the better pools and cover the marginal water quickly.

You need to find your own approach. Some fishers are very good at nymphing. The European nymphing approach is very successful for skilled exponents. Some anglers take two rods - one for surface fishing and one for sub-surface, and that can work well. Re-tying leaders takes time, and you need to judge whether it is worth re-tying to fish a deep >>>



Classic twig water

run for example. If I'm convinced that a good piece of water is holding fish near the bottom then of course I will re-tie and change approaches.

In the past three or four seasons I have tried fishing small mayflies and now frequently fish mayfly dries in sizes 18 and 20. I know there are deeper sections of streams where a fish is unlikely to come up for a dry, but I have also learned how to lure fish up with a small dry to the extent that I still feel I'm covering the water effectively fishing only a dry. But I'm certainly not a dry fly purist and I will fish wet flies and nymphs when the conditions dictate.

The other aspect of fishing dries in small waters is that you can fish more delicately and flick a fly around to a wider variety of places without getting caught up, and that can tip the equation of fishing efficiency in favour of dries - you're getting more time with the fly on the water.

Don't underestimate structures, especially old structures such as substantial logs and larger boulders. These are often the best places for trout to reside. Significant structures will often hold the best fish in a beat. These fish have often fought for their right to that home and they will defend it aggressively.

Many I've observed Bernie fish what looks like the best pool in the area and surprisingly come up blank, and he will say, "There's a good fish in that pool." What he means is that there might be an older, wiser fish in that pool - one that may require coming back for, perhaps to be fished to at night. It might be a fish that dominates that pool and won't tolerate competition, hence why nothing else was caught. Bernie will often go back for this fish and nail it. That's experience!

This represents a crucial tactic in capturing larger fish. If, for example, you spook or prick a good fish and suspect

you know where it lives, it is possible to come back on evening or on another day (provided you are still within the same weather cycle) and re-target that fish. Sometimes this goes on for several seasons. I currently have two or three fish I've been trying to capture for a few years now. I know where they live.

There are some instincts that larger trout exhibit that are worth mentioning. I remember Bernie fishing huge stimulators one evening after dark. He was slapping large flies down with such ferocity that most fish would scatter in the daytime, but at night when some of the night-feeders had lost their inhibitions he was triggering a different instinct in some larger trout. A prime fish was coming back time after time to a large fly almost in annoyance.

Of course fishing large flies can elicit the interest of a large predator. I have a pair of bushy size 6 Wulffs that I tied with an extra bulky buck tail. They float all day and have been chewed to pieces. Sometimes it's worth throwing the kitchen sink at a fish and once it works you have confidence to know when to try it again.

Stripping large Muddlers in small areas can be deadly. The fish around Marysville are not known for having mice in their diet, but there are warm nights when a mouse pattern, or cicada or some such, will do the trick - not because the trout are necessarily targeting this food, but because it sometimes elicits an aggressive predatory instinct that many larger fish have.

We all know this dilemma: "Should I make a particularly difficult cast that has a high probability of getting snagged or hooked up? Of course there are times when it is too inefficient to risk needing to retie, such as in the last moments of light, or during a short hatch or rise. But

if it looks like a prime lie then make the cast, and if you stuff up - learn how to do it better. If your instincts tell you that a particular lie could have a top fish in it then take the cast! Also delay lifting the fly until the last moment around old structures. A classic logjam offers a good chance of getting snagged on, but can also hide the best fish in the area. What's the point driving home saying to yourself, "I should have had a go in there!"

Fly selection:

In slow or still waters, especially clear still water, it is better to fish a more entomologically accurate fly, but in small waters, and especially small moving water, it isn't as critical to get fly selection and size exactly right. But it is certainly more productive if you are fishing the right insect and stage of insect in the case of say caddis and mayfly feeders.

There are certainly times of great abundance of a food source or when trout are concentrating heavily on a particular hatch that you need to be tuned in. Goulburn fishers will attest to this where a good fish is seen picking off, say, a size 18 olive emerger to the exclusion of all else. This type of precision is not as necessary on small waters, but if you are in the Acheron Valley in late November prior to a thunderstorm and you don't have a good termite pattern when the fall starts you may as well give it away.

In terms of flies Bernie and I have thousands of flies and we tie all year round. We take along what will cover almost any eventuality, along with some personal favourites. Often we fish what we feel most confident with. Beetles wet and dry (and together they are a deadly combination!) and small mayflies are flies I fish often. In recent seasons I've also gone back to fishing ants for fussy fish. A large stonefly is worth having in the fly box. Many classic flies such as the Greenwells or Whirling Dun >>>

get a regular run. But we also have our specialty flies.

Bernie is fond of adapting stillwater flies to small waters. He has fished Great Lake Beetles and traditional Loch flies and classic wets in some of the smallest water and come up trumps. We will sometimes strip large flies such as a Muddler or Woolly Bugger in very small waters. The wrong move at the right time can work! Find what works for you and use something you can fish and still say you've covered the water.

Keep it simple. There's not much need for teams of flies and fancy rigs in small water. Remember you are fishing shorter, so a short leader with some strength for the inevitable bashing it will take on rocks and hang ups. We often note a few prime pools to target on dark and after dark. We fish short strong leaders here as it is often necessary to horse a good fish quickly to the net to avoid snags.

The fly links with the cast in the presentation, and we often find ourselves dapping the fly on the water - reaching over and placing the fly. There's almost never any back casting; it's all just flicks and rolls. The water does the work in small streams so just give the fly a chance to be seen. Trout are incredibly athletic and capable of snatching a fly if they are motivated. Small waters harbour opportunistic fish - they will come off their line in ways fish in the meadows won't, especially in unfished water, to grab a food source that is usually only seconds from being washed away.

I am a complete sook when I lose a big fish. Only last season on the second trip out after our lengthy covid lockdown I lost a brown exceeding 5 lb just a few metres from the net. It was a very small stream and I knew landing the fish was going to be an issue. I had hooked it whilst standing on a high bank and

when I slid down to the water I must have slackened the line for a moment, and that was enough for the hook to slip out. Then the indignity of watching the fish just sitting in the shallows for a few moments before casually slipping away. I was gutted and it haunted me! The fly fisherman is an optimistic character by nature, and I know I fish better when I 'expect' something to happen.

When Bernie and I fish our experience has taught us how long to persist on a stretch of water and when we might expect predation. I'm reminded of a day in late January 2019. It was a 40°C day in Melbourne, and we had walked four hours into a remote alpine headwater. It was quiet from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, then bang! Mayflies, stoneflies and caddis everywhere and voracious trout feeding out in the open sections. So don't be too quick to judge a fishery! If we'd left after three hours we would have missed the best fishing of the year.

As well as assessing the time of year and the likely entomology you also need to consider at what time of day the best feeding will occur. As a general rule around peak summer the best fishing is first and last light. That means first light to sunrise; not 9:00 am! And in early spring and late autumn the middle of the day is when the fishing is best. Broadly speaking the insects need heat before becoming active. This can be a critical piece of the puzzle in small water because you are fishing in areas that often have tall forests, cliff walls and high surrounding mountains, so the window of light and heating is far smaller. The alpine insects are highly evolved and sensitive to these changes in light and temperature. You need to time your arrival with an entomological event.

In small water we generally fish shorter rods due to the amount of vegetation and potential for hang ups. Our small stream

rods are 6 – 8 feet. We both own and fish cane rods, but we leave these at home if an area is particularly tight. We both have a fondness for glass rods in tight situations - firstly because they are far less prone to breaking in slippery heavily vegetated areas, and because if you find yourself needing to horse a big fish then fibreglass is very forgiving in these instances.

You also need quality clothing. Alpine environments (anywhere say 700 metres or above) can change rapidly. I've experienced snow on the upper Delatite on Christmas day! Bernie and I have been lost and stuck, we've taken some falls, Bernie once fell into a mine shaft, and we've both been whacked by snakes - so wear gaiters. We've experienced dehydration, hypothermia and disorientation. In this past season I got caught in quicksand! There's been some hairy moments, but it comes with the territory, especially when fishing an area for the first time.

So basic precautions, appropriate gear, some extra food, plenty of water, first aid kits, compression bandages, a sense of direction, a reliable plan for how to get out and when to call it a day. If you are

fishing solo let someone know where you expect to be and when you are expected to make contact. I've been a shocker at this over the years, but I feel I should mention it!

Thank you!

Bernard:

I'm surprised that Jason and I were invited to talk tonight. I told Rosa, my wife, that we had been invited to talk at a VFFA meeting about fishing small streams, and she said, "Really? You and Jason get lost half the time." Which is true. There are many times we almost pressed the emergency beacon.

Most of my adult life has involved fly fishing the streams of the Acheron Valley. After the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires and the loss of my little fly shop in Taggerty I decided to open up a fly fishing shop in Fitzroy. It was during this time that I met Jason. He came in to purchase some fishing items and we got talking about fishing and made plans to have a day on the water together. Jason was the same age as me and had a great natural hunting instinct – something that all the great fishermen have or had.

After that first day on the water together I found that our fishing styles were very similar. Since then, years have passed with us fishing together in wild remote places, climbing waterfalls, and venturing into some of the most remote river valleys in Victoria and New South Wales, all in search of good trout fishing. Our day trips always commence well before dawn and often finish well after midnight. Our partners we suspect are at home tearing hair out.

Over the years I have taught Jason things about fly fishing, just as he has taught me. And thus I can relate to a passage in *The Way of an Angler* by David Scholes, who was writing about his great mate and

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Bernard sharing some tips



A fine brown from tiny water

past VFFA member Fred Stewart. David Scholes wrote:

"I want to now introduce you to Fred Stewart, a rugged Scott whose acquaintance I am eternally grateful to have made soon after the war. The events surrounding our meeting while fishing at Buxton in Victoria are of no consequence here. Of real importance, however, is the fact that now for the first time I had found someone with similar ideas on the sport to my own, and further, someone from whom I knew I could learn something.

Until this time, as it was in the beginning, I had worked out my own approach and learned by my own mistakes, but now I had gained a real confederate. Fred still remains the keenest, most energetic and most devoted angler I have ever known. For some years after our meeting we fished together extensively on many rivers both north and south of the Divide."

Over the years of fishing trout streams one tends to pick up a thing or two about rivers and trout, and I am a true believer that the river will teach you everything. The key to being a good fly fisher is

observation, knowing your surroundings, and especially the rivers you fish. If you visit rivers often enough you get to know them intimately – every run, pool and riffle. And from your past experiences and fish captures you learn where the small ones are and where the big ones are.

Streamcraft is something that comes with experience. It takes time to master. But like all things in fly fishing it comes with lots of practice and patience and time. In my fly fishing journey there has always been a close relationship with the seasons and observation of my surroundings. Observation leads to good fishing – understanding the cycles and moods of the river and being in touch with its fly life. Arming yourself with this knowledge equips you for the trout stream. You know when to use a dry fly, or a nymph, or a wet fly, or possibly that terrestrial pattern.

Knowing the life cycle of insects and bugs and their most active time of the day or night is important. This is valuable knowledge in discerning where one should be and what one should be doing. Then it is all about making sound choices – early morning fishing before a hot day, or waiting for that late evening caddis hatch. Observation of the stream will also

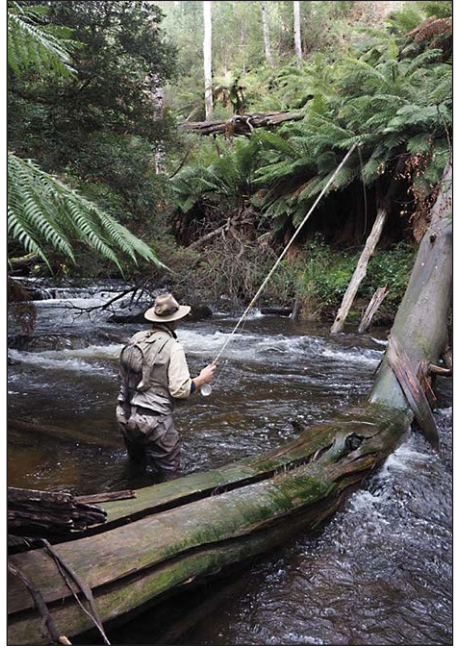


There are some gems in the hills

help in your decision-making. A good choice made earlier rather than later can make the difference between a good day's fishing or a bad day.

All of these situations take place over a fishing season and on any given fishing day. My fishing journey has changed dramatically over the years, and during this time I have had to work things out in a wide variety of fishing situations. Every season has its challenges. I've had some exceptional seasons and some poor seasons. Some seasons have seen drought and others have seen high rainfall and major flooding with the river overflowing and filling the surrounding paddocks. And there are those summer fires that can devastate a complete area.

But one thing that has not changed is the course of the river – it is what it is.



A place for short drifts and tight casts

The September AGM

Members are reminded that the September meeting will be our Annual General Meeting, and President Chris Gray is very 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 perspectives and opinions for the benefit of our Association.

The date – Thursday, September 16, at the Kelvin Club.

All members are welcome to join us at 6:15 pm for dinner in the Kelvin Club prior to the meeting, but PLEASE make a booking by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, September 15, by emailing Terry Rogers to indicate your intention to dine prior to the meeting. Terry's email address is terryrogers@bigpond.com

Some Notices

This Year's Warrnambool Dinner

The Warrnambool Fly Fisher's Dinner, which a number of our members regularly attend, was to be held on Saturday, July 31. But lockdown #5 put paid to that. However, Jim Blakeslee has informed us that the dinner has been re-scheduled and will now be held on Saturday, September 11. Jim has also asked that those who had earlier indicated their intention to attend need to re-confirm if they wish to come. Jim's phone numbers are home: 5562 5168, or mobile: 0437 983 421.

Fly Tying Report

In June we had a very successful fly tying evening at the Aussie Angler store where some 14 keen tiers attended, so another night was scheduled for July 22. Unfortunately this event too was affected by the covid lockdown, so was changed at the last minute to a zoom presentation.

This time some 43 keen fly tiers logged in to see Robert Bailey demonstrate the tying of spider patterns. Robert was in fine form and his explanation of how to tie these flies and then how to fish them was superb and greatly appreciated. Robert



*Jim Blakeslee and Warrnambool club president
Adrian Jacobs*



The entrees at Warrnambool are always great



A recent Warrnambool dinner – they are always well-attended



Robert Bailey – one of our skilled fly tying demonstrators

is a highly skilled and experienced tier, and gave us a wealth of very practical and helpful advice.

September Millbrook Visit

Again this year Mark Weigall has very kindly offered VFFA members the opportunity to fish the fabulous lakes at Millbrook, which undoubtedly offer the best stillwater fishing in Victoria.

Our next visit is scheduled for Wednesday, September 8, fishing from 10:00 am till dark.

The invitation to join the group will be emailed out by Terry Rogers about two weeks before the date of the visit. So keep your eyes peeled for an email notice about this visit in the last week of August.



Rick Wallace checking a rise at Millbrook



Rick Dugina caught this fine brown at Millbrook

The Flyfisher has a new address

One of our well-known fly fishing stores is moving from the CBD after many years to South Melbourne. The new address for this well-known and very popular store is now 211 Moray Street, South Melbourne, VIC 3205, phone 03 9621 12



The new Flyfisher store – now located in South Melbourne

They tell us that this new address in South Melbourne provides much easier parking, a casting area, and espresso coffee.

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The Kelvin Barber

Peter Whitelaw recently emailed me to remind me that there is a hairdresser at the Kelvin Club who provides a top professional service at a reasonable price for VFFA members. If you are

at the Kelvin and need a haircut then Sammy, the hairdresser, who operates the hairdressing salon in the Kelvin Club, provides an excellent service to members for a cost of \$40. Peter strongly recommends this service.



The Tasmanian Trout Fishing Season Outlook 2021-22

... from Chris Wisniewski, Tasmanian IFS

The Tasmanian trout season opens on Saturday, August 7, this year. What can you expect?

Brown trout have had access to spawning grounds across the state due to good winter rain, particularly in the typically dry eastern area. At Liawenee the first pulse of spawning brown trout started at the beginning of April. This coincided with a large release of water from Lake Augusta that Hydro Tasmania had held back due to works in Liawenee Canal.

Over 10,000 brown trout have been caught in this trap over winter. Most have been transferred to popular waters around the state. To find out more about where these adult browns have been moved to go to <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au/fisheries/stocking/>.

The fish from the Liawenee Canal trap ranged up to 1.550 kg this year with an average weight of 852 grams. Strong spawning runs were observed in the many creeks flowing into yingina/ Great Lake this year. The lake level is at 13.24 metres below full supply and is positioned to flood new ground if we receive average rainfall. Freshly flooded fishing around the edge of the lake is something to keep an eye out for during spring.

In an effort to assist the recovery our officers have been kept busy monitoring the spawning fish traps on Tumbledown,

Scotch Bobs and Hydro creeks at Arthurs Lake. Over 14,500 adult brown trout were caught and released through these traps to go on their merry way to spawn upstream. The fish were in good condition and ranged up to 1.370 kg. The condition and numbers of fish in the spawning run indicate that Arthurs Lake is recovering strongly. Last season the fish were hard in on the edges early in the season so the shallow margins at low light times of the day should be the focus. Hopefully the dun hatches will continue to improve and the fish start looking up as the season warms.

For those who fish Penstock Lagoon you will notice from our adult transfers that we have been reducing the number of fish transferred to this water over the last few years. This year a mixture of 1,200 adult brown trout were moved from Liawenee Canal and the River Derwent at Lake King William to Penstock. With Arthurs Lake recovering the aim is to increase the average size of fish caught in Penstock by reducing the number of adult transfers. This is likely to mean a reduced catch rate in Penstock Lagoon but the opportunity for a larger fish will see a return to what the lagoon was known for.

Little Pine Lagoon produced well-conditioned fish last season and this is expected to continue. Hopefully the weather will allow more consistent fishing to mayfly feeders, as reports



This photo collage shows some of the different colours of browns in the Liawenee spawning run this year

were that dry fly fishing was difficult on the lagoon last year. The IFS has been in discussion with Hydro Tasmania about the low water levels that saw the lagoon become dirty in the last month of the 2020 - 2021 season. Anglers have been strong advocates for better water level management, and this has helped in the discussion. We will aim for a better outcome this year.

Although low at the moment, Lake Echo is likely to reach a good level as the season goes on due to the power station being shut for refurbishment. When

the lake starts to fill the shallow edges in Brocks and Teal bays, along with the Surveyors Marsh area, will provide good visual fishing to tailing fish and flooded terrestrial feeders. The water level needs to get to about 4 metres from full for the action to start happening in close. To monitor water levels go to <https://www.hydro.com.au/water/lake-levels>

After the success of adult brown trout transfers into the Brady's Chain in recent years we have followed up with 5,000 from the River Derwent trap at Lake King William again this winter. >>>

The adult browns appear to be getting on top of the redfin perch population in the lake and are providing good fishing. The clear water in these lakes offers good polaroiding opportunities. There are grassy flats in Lake Binney and Tungatinah Lagoon that are particularly suitable for this type of fishing.

Woods Lake has been in a rain shadow and needs more rain to get it to a safe level before summer. The fish did go up to spawn after rain in June had the Upper Lake River flowing. With anglers returning to Arthurs Lake the pressure has come off Woods Lake. It should be as reliable as ever and well worth a look.

There have been some good easterly weather systems over the winter months that have brought rain to Lake Leake and Tooms Lake. Both lakes have had a good flush and have been spilling. This is most important for Tooms Lake which has been low and dirty for the past couple of seasons and has not performed to the standard that we have come to expect. Lake Leake should continue to fish well with the addition of 1,200 adult brown trout from the Central Highlands. Both these lakes will be worth a look.

If you would like to explore the north-east of the state there are some great fishing options. You can mix up some stream fishing on the St Patricks or Great Forester rivers and their tributaries with some trophy trout hunting at Blackmans Lagoon. Curries River Reservoir has received 2,000 wild adult brown trout over winter and Big Waterhouse Lagoon has received wild adult fish also. A boat is not necessary at Blackmans but is very handy. A recent survey of the Cascade Dam, near Derby, indicated a good head of well-conditioned brown trout. Camden Dam, which has now filled, will also be worth a look. There are lots of other waters in the north-east. For fact sheets and access brochures for these waters and

others go to <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au/anglers-access-program>.

Four Springs Lake will be as productive and popular as ever. The crowds normally start to settle by the end of August and the best fly fishing will start in October. The weed has become quite extensive during the summer and although this makes it a bit trickier to fish it does provide aquatic habitat for trout and their food.

Huntsman Lake is always worth a look if it is rising after rain, as the fish are happy to come in and mooch around the edges.

On the north-west coast the secret is well and truly out about the sensational fishing for both wild brown and rainbow trout at Talbots Lagoon. The fish are free risers and the action really starts to heat up from mid-October when the mayfly appear. You will need heavier tippets to land these fish!

If you are at the southern end of the state, Craigbourne Dam is full and has been spilling. This water is open year-round. There have been 1,660 wild adult brown trout transferred from the highlands and these fish are already making themselves at home and fossicking around the flooded edges.

There have been 50 tagged fish released into waters around the state. Each fish is worth \$2,000. You could buy a decent fly rod for that! If you are interested in a bit of fun trying to catch one go to <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au/about/tasmanian-tagged-trout-promotion> for more information.

In these uncertain times Tasmania is the place to be. What better time to explore the wide range of exceptional trout fishing we have in our wonderful state?



Rick Wallace and Dan Lovecek break the shackles of COVID and take a chance on a late season stream session

Rick:

Remember that 2021 started with a sense of optimism about how the worst was behind us? Us fly fishers here in Victoria felt the same way - with much of the spring of 2020 lost to Covid. Surely 2021 would be better.

Lockdown had lifted (although it would rear its head again) and rivers had been rested.

Theoretically it should have been perfect. But for me, my fly fishing just never quite got going - the lost hours of pleasure seemed to be always front of mind; the frustrations of lockdown too, coupled with limited opportunities to get on the water.

As a result, when I got out I fished poorly or suffered ill fortune - too much haste, sloppy casting, unco-operative fish, missed strikes and choosing the wrong days. So when the chance to sneak away for a final trout fish - for rivers anyway - for the year there was much riding on it. Eight short hours to rediscover the joy of fly fishing before the chill of winter set in.

Dan picked me up at the relatively gentlemanly hour of 7:00 am and we set



Freedom - and some fine fishing

off for one of the small streams in the Goulburn catchment.

As with all late season missions, there is a sense of trepidation. Push too far into late autumn and you bump closer to that day when the fish switch over to reproduction and the streams shut down.

A bit of banter on the walk to the river probably failed to conceal my nerves about how the day would pan out ...

Dan:

Compared to Rick, season 2021 had afforded me plentiful fishing opportunities, so this rare late season outing took on the relative air of a bonus session unladen by the usual weight of expectation. Despite a very cool and crisp start to the day, the forecast of light winds, highs in the mid-twenties and a Friday luxuriously free of work commitments, toddler-rearing responsibilities and lockdown restraints was incentive enough to escape.

In any event, any residual concerns that the day would not yield results were quickly dispelled. I suspect it's a shared affliction, but I suffer terribly from a compulsion to have a sneaky look at a promising pool or riffle when taking a walk

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Dan with the fish of the day

downstream to establish a session's beat. This day was no different, and Rick was similarly unvaccinated against this disease and was quite obliging!

The sight of three steadily rising trout in the first small pool inspected was more than enough to quicken the pulse. Better yet, each brown proved willing to oblige us after a quick change to 6X tippet and downsizing to a size 18 caenid pattern. It was a great start to what would prove to be a rewarding day out.

Eventually we managed to drag ourselves away from this great pool and walk a couple of kilometres downstream to a suitable starting point to work carefully up the river. A good number of opportunities presented over the course of the day with the bright sunshine providing optimal sight fishing at times. A subtle but consistent rise over the course of the afternoon was also welcome, and some lovely well-conditioned fish came to the net, including a number over two pounds, to be subsequently released.

At one point Rick spent a good deal of time waiting for a chance to present a fly to a sighted and much larger specimen feeding happily in an unfortunately tight

and unforgiving location; but it wasn't to be. I was encouraged, though, to know that such beauties are still there, particularly at the end of a season of reduced but still reasonably heavy fishing pressure.

Rick:

It's a bit of cliché to be honest, but fly fishing - particularly dry fly fishing - really is therapeutic.

We quickly settled into the pattern of either sighting a fish and presenting to it, or casting into likely lies and watching the dry carefully - often squinting into the light thrown out by the low sun as it made its arc across the sky to our north. With your eyes locked on either a fish or your fly



Another one into the net



There were at least three fish feeding in this pool

there's not much room for anything else to enter your consciousness - not Covid, not lockdowns, not work.

With the river carrying a good head of fish we were able to move on from one opportunity to the next, correcting faults or errors in approach as we went. We fooled a good number of fish with the F-Fly though small mayfly patterns accounted for the majority.

I could feel the grip of frustration that had bedevilled my previous post-lockdown sessions weakening and the joy in what we do returning. As Dan said, one or two bigger specimens took the points on the day but we've noted their locations for

a return bout in the season to come - a season I feel a lot more positive about having shaken off my fishing demons.

When it is your last session of the year and you know it, it takes on a greater import than other sessions and ending it with some champagne dry fly fishing is hard to beat.

Dan:

At this time of year the warmth of a late autumn afternoon is quickly displaced by the cool descending mist in the valley, and with a rapidly darkening sky we reluctantly called stumps on what had been quite a day.

Soon after this trip the winter rain set in, drawing the curtain on season 2020/21, but also providing the flows to stimulate spawning and river health to set up next season.

I think it is going to be a special season - not just because we should be shaking ourselves free of Covid's grip, but the state of our lakes and rivers - refreshed over a cold, wet winter - promise some wonderful fishing.

And we are determined to make the most of it!



This beats lockdown!



Glassy water requires delicate casts and small dries

Chez Pilkington at Big River

... Dermot O'Brien

One of the favourite haunts of the Victorian Fly Fishers' Association has gone global. The editor, Mark Bowler, of the prestigious English magazine *Fly Fishing & Fly Tying* was recently reading our newsletter, *Fly Lines*, and came across photos of John Pilkington's cottage cluster at Enoch's Point on the banks of Big River.

Mark Bowler contacted editor Lyndon Webb seeking permission to run one particular photo in a double page spread. The wonderful photo of the main hut and all its collected paraphernalia has now graced the magazine and will be seen by fly fishers and tiers all over the world.



The two-page spread – pages 6 & 7 of the July 2021 issue of UK fly fishing magazine Fly Fishing & Fly Tying



The original photo of the room at Chez Pilkington. Will Davidson took the photo and FF&FT editor Mark Bowler selected it as his 'Shot of the Month' for the July issue.

Many of us have enjoyed sitting by the fire in this hut and enjoying the company and refreshments. The VFFA is lucky to have an annual trip to Enoch's Point and there are other gatherings both small and large.

The hut was originally built for John "Pilks" Pilkington's grandfather and has been used down the generations.

Recently Alan Pilkington, who lives in the USA, made a return trip and he and John spent time at Enoch's Point catching up and casting a line in Big River.

One wonders, what great stories, both true and untrue, have been spun under this roof. And for that matter, what stories, both true and untrue, will be spun through the rest of this century.



The July issue of a fine fly fishing magazine



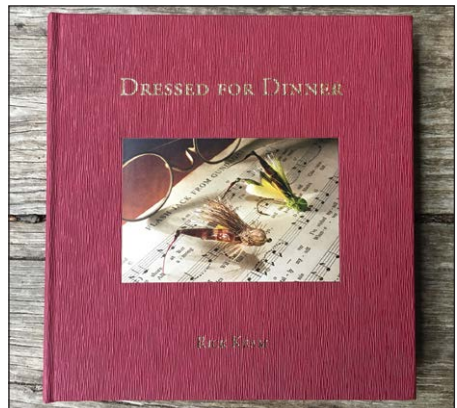
The caption on Will's photo

Book Review – 'Dressed for Dinner' by Rick Keam

... by Philip Weigall

(This review first appeared in Philip Weigall's digital fly fishing magazine *FlyStream* on June 8, 2021. Philip has very kindly given permission for us to use it in our August issue.)

I have many memories involving Rick Keam's flies, but two stand out. One was when he introduced me to his then unknown Chinese Dragon. "Got a mud-eye pattern I'd like you to try," offered Rick's distinctive baritone over the phone (the old landline in those days). Not long after, we were out on one of Millbrook's lakes, with me tying on Rick's rather scruffy-looking dark thing which only vaguely resembled a mud-eye. It wasn't really mud-eye weather (a grey and drizzly November afternoon) nor the right time of day, but being on the water, I felt obliged to at least give the Chinese



Rick Keam's fabulous book

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Dragon a swim. You guessed it, 4 to 5 pound browns and rainbows lined up to smash the new fly.

A few years earlier, I was fishing the Delegate River near the Victorian border on a bright, breezy March day, trying to work out why my Muddler Hopper patterns weren't performing – the Delegate's banks were bouncing with grasshoppers. In desperation, I pulled out one of Rick's Autumn Hoppers. It's hard to believe now, but at the time, I thought the fly was too plastic-looking (foam-bodied flies were an unfamiliar concept to me back then). Half-heartedly, I flung the fly out into the middle of a large, still pool rather than some beguiling run – hardly a fair first test. It didn't matter though: a 2 pound brown appeared out of the dark water and sucked it down.

That's how it continued with Rick's flies. He designed them to impress fish, not necessarily anglers, so I slowly learned to leave the judgement to the trout!

Aside from his fly-tying creativity, Rick was a talented writer and a meticulous editor, so he was well-placed to document his flies in print. Over the decades, the subject of writing a book came up regularly. I was convinced he should do it: Rick's flies were clever, unique and – most of all – effective. But I recall Rick was conflicted. On the one hand, documenting his patterns in print would give him rightful credit for his intellectual property, but on the other hand, such a publication could open the way for his designs to be reproduced without protecting his interests. (Rick was well aware of the tortuous process involved in copyrighting fly design.)

Well, it's happened. The book is out, and I'm half delighted for Rick's sake that his legacy is assured; half sad that he didn't quite live to see the finished product – although he would have at least had the

reassurance it was imminent. (Publisher Mike Stevens' note at the front of the book confirms this). Importantly, this 220 page book is a high quality production befitting the contents. Stevens Publishing has a history of doing justice to significant fly fishing books, so the impressive hardcover, binding, photographic reproduction and high quality paper, comes as no surprise. Having worked with Mike on previous books, Rick would have known this.

As for the contents... where to start? This is much more than a book of fly tying instructions – as valuable as those are! The book opens with Rick's philosophy (flyosophy) on flies, and a brief history of fly tying, particularly with synthetic materials. Rick then goes into more depth, so to speak, about his own explorations with synthetics, including some frustrations as well as successes.

This paragraph is telling: "Most amateurs would benefit from a period of commercial tying, though few would enjoy themselves. It is a brutal taskmaster, and among its chief lessons is the importance of economy of design and materials. To anyone who has turned out flies in the tens of thousands, unnecessary complexity has long since ceased to be interesting and challenging. It is nothing but a burden. The real creative task is to cut through complexity wherever possible, always looking for the stripped-down essence of things."

(No wonder I at first found the Chinese Dragon so disappointingly... basic. But no wonder it worked.)

Rick then provides a thorough insight into the (mainly) synthetic materials he considers important, including what to look for, what to avoid, and how to work with the materials. These sections come with colour photos by Trevor

Foon, whose flawless images appear throughout the book.

Next, it's on to flies in detail; some famous like Rick's foam hoppers, some less so like his damsel nymph, but all intriguing. Those who've fished for sea-runners and smelters will be glued to the baitfish ties and accounts (including reports from Greg French), and there are even some genuine saltwater offerings as well.

Whatever your fancy, if you've wanted to tie a Rick Keam fly exactly as its creator intended, now you can – the instructions and pictures are unambiguous.

Mixed in amongst all this, are observations and information about buoyancy, density and how dry flies (and the insects they suggest) sit; also tools... in fact most things a fly tier either wants (or needs) to know.

However, Rick's final word is, "Ultimately, the most important equipment available to all of us is the apparatus that lies between our ears: our brain. I wish you creativity and joy on your journey."

(Limited copies available from The Essential Flyfisher, Tasmania.)



Rick's book impresses with the superb quality of the text and photos

Fly Fishing in the 1930s

The VFFA has a superb library with a fine collection of much of the best of fly fishing literature. Recently our librarian, John Pilkington, recommended that I borrow an old book we had recently acquired – 'Chasing Rainbows', by George Patterson. This is a thin volume, published in 1956, and a truly delightful read.

George Patterson describes in the book his introduction to fly fishing and his subsequent experiences. Fly fishing in the 1930s, when he started, was rather different to our fishing today. Our transport these days is in the comfort of Four-wheel drives; in the 1930s much of it was on horseback. As a sample of >>>

George Patterson's fly fishing, have a read of the third chapter:

THE PROFESSOR AND THE PUPIL

One of my trout fishing mentors was Professor John McLuckie, of Sydney University, who usually visited Kosciusko at the same time as I did each year.

Although there were many other fishing spots within easy distance of the hotel, McLuckie was the first to introduce me to the joys of Island Bend. Here, except at low summer level, the Snowy is a treacherous stream, fast flowing and difficult to wade or cross.

Being virtually impossible to fish the Snowy at Island Bend from the right bank, it was necessary to cross the river near the Island. This was rather hazardous. First you had to wade through a still pool in the shelter of the Island and beyond this your troubles commenced. On the right of the Island the river raced past in heavy rapids that poured into a deep pool immediately below. You had to cross these rapids, but first you had to reach them.

This could only be done by grasping your rod and a wading pole in the right hand, and holding fast to ti-tree with your left hand as you clawed a way round the base of the Island. Still grasping the ti-tree, you moved to a point halfway up the side of the rapids. Here you commenced to pole across the broken water very slowly, one step at a time, bracing against the current to avoid being knocked over and perhaps swept into the pool below.

But having reached the other side, the fishing was a sheer delight. Upstream you could wade the left bank in comparatively easy water, up to the waist, casting across to a slow-moving run that flowed for several hundred yards beneath steep cliffs on the right bank.

The trout invariably lay in the deep water against these cliffs and you frequently

waded beyond a safe depth, often tripping over boulders and getting thoroughly soaked. After such a ducking, you waded to the bank, and let the blazing sun dry your clothes, while you smoked and watched the river for signs of rising fish.

From the left bank of the giant peninsular formed by the river bend, you could walk across to a number of gigantic pools. The first really large trout I had ever seen rose to a fly which I had cast quite casually on one of these pools. To my surprise, an enormous brown trout rose suddenly and was about to take the fly in its great, ugly jaws when it saw me and swirled away. It was one of the many lessons to be learned as the years went by—"keep out of sight of the fish."

In those days, it was fascinating to watch McLuckie in action. Whereas I was invariably wet to the hips, McLuckie, dressed in plus-fours with golf stockings and shoes, hardly got wet above the knees. He had an uncanny knowledge of where fish would be lying and cast an enormous line, dropping the fly within inches of his objective and usually with success. I have never known a fisherman who was so expert and so imperturbable.

While fishing with McLuckie, I got my first decent rainbow trout. It weighed 2½ lbs and I still remember how alarmed I was when the fish raced downstream jumping and fighting to break me in fast water. I was in fear and trembling until I drew it ever so gently into a shallow bay and literally fell on it, being too scared to use a landing net.

I had many experiences with Professor McLuckie, and one of them was quite terrifying. Some miles below Island Bend there is a stretch of river known as Long Corner, where the Snowy is about 100 yards wide and impossible to fish effectively from either bank. The river flowed swiftly amidst huge rocks and it

was necessary to wade to the centre where there was a reef. Having reached the reef, you waded upstream, at times up to your armpits, moving carefully around gigantic rocks until you reached a position where you could fish the deep run between the reef and the right bank.

One morning I decided to wade from the reef to the left bank of the river where I had seen a good fish rising near a big rock. I managed to reach the bank and, clambering on to the rock, I began to cast. In a few moments the fish took the fly and darted downstream. Turning suddenly to watch the trout, my hobnailed boots skidded on the rock, and I fell into the rushing river. That, of course, was the end of the fish. I managed to hold on to my rod, and after some difficulty, was able to scramble ashore where I lit a fire and started to dry my clothes.

I was sitting smoking and planning how I would get back when I heard McLuckie

shouting from upstream on the opposite bank and wondered what it was all about. He suddenly emerged from the trees and, above the noise of the river, I managed to hear his warning that there had been a cloudburst and the river was coming down fast. Then I noticed that the water had become discoloured and leaves were floating by. There was no time to waste! I pulled on my wet clothes and, wading into the river, floundered and swam my way across. Within half an hour, the Snowy was a raging torrent and if McLuckie hadn't hurried to warn me, I would probably have been marooned on the opposite bank for the night as others had been. These cloudbursts in the Alps can be dangerous, coming as they often do "out of a blue sky." This was another lesson — whenever you hear thunder high in the valleys, make sure you are on the safe side of a river.



The Lockdown Project – Part 2: ... Adventures in Paradise in a Rubber Duck

... from Jon Kenfield

(Last month Jon told us all about his 2020 lockdown project – building an easily transportable fly fishing watercraft. This month he tells us the result ...)

In Part 1 of "The Lockdown Project" I described a torturous gestation process: from wish, to concept, to design, to learnings, frustrations and costs, to prototype, to successful trials on river and lake. The nymph had emerged - now to make things real.

VFFA's Tassie trip 2021 was cancelled on departure day, somewhat dramatically by yet another Victorian lockdown. We could have gone, but our president made the only call he could on the basis of zero credible information being provided by Chairman Dan, the Government of Tasmania, or The Spirit.

So, Woody and I plotted a replacement trip to Tassie after the lockdown. In truth, we were going in May at the very tail end of the season, and had modest catch expectations.

Initially we couldn't get a high berth for the car on the outbound journey (which would have saved a motza in fares having the boat on the roof), so we decided to take Woody's new steed: an Isuzu D-Max dual cab, with his racy new pod trailer to carry the boat. The trailer was rigged out to facilitate camping – in anticipation of plunging mercury.

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Our first target was Lake Leake. It was a great discovery for us the previous season, and I hoped for a re-match with a speckled submarine that broke me off after a lengthy fight. It surfaced twice, and looked to be easily the largest trout I'd ever hooked. I hoped to find it again, just one season larger, although there's an awful lot of water in that lake. Spoiler: I didn't get to use my harpoon.

We had booked a couple of days at Currawong Lakes, near to Lake Leake. We'd heard wonderful things about the place from incoming President David Hooke, and a phone call to the lovely Merryn sealed our fate.

In the mysterious way things sometime happen in fly fishing (read: "dumb luck and the kindness of strangers"), Woody had arranged access to a highlands lake he'd fished a lot in his youth (now sadly long past). It was water I'd never fished, but had heard many speak of. We planned to go in and bush camp there for

a few days which, given the time of year, promised to be interesting.

We then hoped to finish up with a few days on the Tasmanian savannah near Cressy, hopefully at Chez Hayes. Given the amorphousness of the first parts of the trip, we planned to wing that bit and hope for the best.

Several crazily serendipitous things happened on this trip to test our faith in statistics:

1. As we loaded gear for the trip outside my apartment in Melbourne a rather courtly gentleman stopped to chat. During the discussion we all worked out that: (a) it was he who had graciously given us permission to access the lake he controls, and (b) he has a place in my apartment block, which only has about 5 other residents!
2. While we were on aforesaid lake, the only other person turning up over the three days we were there was St Peter (Hayes). Not only did he give advice that led to our catching fish, he also helped us firm up our plans for the rag end of the trip.

The trip across on the Spirit of Tasmania was uneventful, although it was a bit weird with so few passengers, and all wearing masks. Catering must not have been told about the reduced numbers, because although neither Woody nor I present as being malnourished, our plates were stacked so high they could barely be carried to our table.

The ferry rolled heavily during a stormy crossing but happily the sun was shining when we disembarked. We stopped for a delightful breakfast at Café Squire in Devonport - partly to kill time to ensure that Mike Steven's Essential Flyfisher would be open when we got there as that was where we had to collect the key for the secret lake, and partly because I



Great private fishing

just can't pass by a great Eggs Benedict without stopping.

Essential Flyfisher is one of our favourite tackle shops. Between the stock, the ambience, the local updates and the technical/practical advice (which always



Fun and games in Bunnings car park, and we haven't even started fishing

come freely, laced with some personal abuse), it's a great joint.

I was keen to test an Echo Glass Rod Mike reviewed in a recent newsletter. The 7 weight wasn't quite what I needed, as he'd flogged me a delightfully cheap Airflo 7 weight the previous summer. But after testing the 7 weight glass, I ordered an 8 foot 8 weight, sight unseen, for as soon as they become available. Mike and Allan briefly inspected the boat and gave it their approval as a two-man rig.

Lake Leake: We arrived late afternoon to find no caretaker for the lake or camp ground (if you can "find" something that's not there). We pitched tents, had a couple of hours of pleasant, but unrewarding fishing; enjoyed a glorious sunset over the lake, and then repaired to the Lake Leake Hotel for drinks and a splendid dinner.

Back in camp some terrifically loud music was issuing from a friendly and rather



Currawong - where even the oarsman gets to fish

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“interesting” group, who were much too close for comfort. Mercifully, they shut down around 10 pm. We were shifting to nearby Currawong Lakes the following morning and had no regrets packing up and leaving early.

Currawong Lakes: this is a place everybody I like should fish. It’s 2,000



No water was too shallow

acres of manicured bush retreat, with all the trimmings: beautiful accommodation; three lakes brimming with magnificent fish (we only fished in one); herds of wild deer; Olympic class skeet shooting range; and a warmth of welcome that would have taken varnish off the boat, had it been varnished.

We had two very full days fishing the top Currawong Lake. We took 18 fish between us on wets and streamers: one brown of just over 4 lb, the rest rainbows from 2 to 3 lb. Poor sods, they were all dressed up in spawning colours with absolutely no party to go to. But man, when they did go, they went like the clappers! Every fish was in great condition, and all were caught from the boat in mid-water or outside the reed banks. The weather was wonderfully kind and sunsets over the lake were breathtaking. The lack of breath was partly caused by our running out of whisky much too quickly. Thanks Woody.

Our hosts, Richard and Merryn, are keen to host a VFFA trip at the lakes. I believe they foolishly assumed that all VFFA members are as charming as me. Still, I kept everybody’s secret and pray we organise a club trip there ASAP. If our experience was anything to go by, a week exploring all three lakes would be spectacular.

Lake #&*&# (I can’t reveal its name under pain of death) is up in the Central Highlands. It was a full day’s journey from Currawong, what with re-stocking supplies for three days of bush camping in what we expected to be perishingly cold conditions, and less than complete confidence that we knew where we were going. Once we got there we quickly found a great place to pitch camp, with plenty of daylight to spare. A sea eagle appeared as a majestic omen – a good one, we hoped.

We enjoyed a meal, an open fire, more whisky, and lots of anticipation for the morrow. Anticipating a cold night (down to around freezing) we each followed personal rituals in determined attempts to avoid waking in the night needing a toilet stop. And it worked for three nights straight.

Lake #\$\$*&\$\$ is long, wide and flat. Flat? I meant "shallow". It lies in a broad cirque, has weedy shores and rocky shores, and the wind seems to blow on and off all of them - most of the time in the opposite direction to wherever you're trying to row. The water is aquarium clear and shows

a thick carpet of succulent weed growth almost everywhere. No wonder the place is reputed to have lots of wild, well-fed, and feisty browns.

We used a small Minn Kota to quarter the lake, and switched to oars when we got close to fishy areas. There's so little drag on the boat this worked remarkably well, although a bit more speed wouldn't go amiss. Over three full days we estimated doing around 15 hours of motoring, exploring all parts of the lake. The 2 x 100Ah Lithium batteries handled this easily.

We used the oars to control our drifts downwind along the edges of weedbeds in conjunction with the Essential Flyfisher's drogue (a knockoff of St Peter's original design). This was an easy task and we each complimented the other on our dexterity-in-the-drift. It must be said that sledging usually comes to the tongue more easily, so something must have been working well.

However, perfect as the lake appeared to be, apart from an early morning tailer for Woody it was all for nought. For two full days that is, until St Peter himself arrived on our third day with a client and his drift boat. While we'd been pulling all manner of wets, having seen nothing moving on top, they were twitching surface flies along the edges of weedbeds - and scoring hits. We moseyed over for a closer look. In typical style St Peter gave us the good oil



Some great fish in Currawong



Lake Leake – Woody in top form



You can't say we weren't trying

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Lake Leake - and Woody strikes again!

on what we needed to do to excite some takes.

Happily it worked, and we both started bringing good browns to the net. They rose beautifully to delicately landed terrestrials, up through achingly clear water. It doesn't get much better than that, especially in winter when we didn't expect any surface action. Something important learned - for filing and future use.

A collateral benefit, if any were needed, is that we also got to organise our last couple of days staying at St Peter's croft in Cressy. That was good for several reasons, not least because there was no accommodation available in Miena, whether we wanted it or not.

After three days of bush camping, active fish hunting, fire hugging, and bundling up at night, we left Lake #\$\$*&\$\$ wondering if we'd be welcome at the Miena Hotel. But nobody seemed to pay any attention to the "aura" we felt sure was travelling with us. Electric lighting, a warm environment, and somebody else doing the cooking, pouring and fetching, felt like bliss.

Travelling on, we reached St Peter's croft quite late. No issue, people were still up.

We slept particularly well that night, in real beds.

Over breakfast the following morning we discussed lowland options for our last two days. I was keen to try the boat on the Macquarie, as we'd only tackled lakes thus far, but we'd blanked on our last Mac float on the previous trip, and word was it hadn't fished well for a while. The strong advice was to hit Lake Leake again, to try to bag some big ones to take home to appease the troops.

At some point St Peter inspected the boat and gave it his blessing: "looks like you've thought of just about everything" being as fine a benediction as one could expect.

We were in no great hurry to leave, as the conversation at the croft was both informative and enjoyable, but we finally saddled up and headed out to battle. I like John Gierach's line about knowing you've negotiated something important with yourself when fishing trips no longer feel like commando assaults against the fish, with only do or die outcomes. He meant you're then fishing for pleasure, rather than result, and that the pleasure has become the result you're seeking.

Deep thoughts indeed, which I do get, but also find to sit better with me after I've caught a few fish. Happily we'd caught far more fish on this trip than expected, so I was very relaxed as we fished Leake ... until I wasn't. Woody started catching fish, and big fish at that, while I maintained an easily remembered score. By sunset he'd taken four good trout and a hefty redfin. He also narrowly avoided a "boating accident" for being unable to hide his smirk. His barely suppressed joy was counter-balanced by my mounting frustration. Sorry JG, the head's with you, but the heart ...

We did have fish to take home, as planned. It's just that they all had "his" mark on them. Mercifully, back at the croft, St Peter

spirited them off to his smoker. And that was that.

Dinner was graced with the presence of Peter's son Lachlan, Mike and Jules Stevens, and Julie Butler - current Women's Australian Fly Fishing Champion. Julie won medals at the recent world championships and the fact she took up fly fishing only a few years earlier made her story quite remarkable.

Woody and I did our best to keep up with the cognoscenti round the table, but it was a little like eating with royalty: the venison was superb, the ambience delightful, the information and stories - priceless. We were deep in the community of fly fishing and, as someone who feels he's only just started to penetrate its mysteries after coming to the sport far too late in life, it was pure, bottleable, magic.

It gave me a small epiphany about why I keep coming back to Tassie and Peter's

croft, and probably about why I love fly fishing. Currawong Lakes was a huge pleasure that I hope to partake of many more times - in addition to, not as a substitute for - the croft. The beautiful location, luxurious appointments, wonderful hosts, willing fish (and lots of them) all provide a great fishing experience, but it's different to returning to the spirit home that is St Peter's and Di's place.

Then again, maybe I just need to fish Currawong more often? That wouldn't be so hard to take. I look forward doing it with my VFFA mates. And ... I'll be taking my boat!



Currawong Lakes - pretty as a picture and fabulous fishing



FLY OF THE MONTH

*The Milly Midge –
a Great Fly for Midge Fishing
... from Jim Jackman*



This month's fly, the Milly Midge, was suggested by Jim Jackman. It was featured as our Fly of the Month many years ago, in fact back in 2010. However, it is a fabulous Australian midge pattern and is certainly worth another look. The following notes are Jim's very helpful description of the fly and how it can be fished:

The Milly Midge was originally developed by Philip Weigall and has proven its worth over many years. It was designed to mimic a midge (chironomid) pupa as it ascends toward the surface to hatch into an adult. We all know how frustrating midge fishing can be, and it took me many sessions to realise that the key to successfully bringing midge feeders to the net was observation, accurate presentation. And of course throw in a good portion of luck; then what can go wrong ...

During a midge hatch, trout are either taking adults from the surface, or taking emerging pupae. As the hatch progresses it can be both. It's important to ascertain if there are any winged insects on the surface. If they're not present, then it's a fair bet the trout are focused on insects rising through the water column, or taking them as they are trying to break through the surface film.

A good each-way bet is to deploy the Milly Midge suspended under a Carrot dry fly. This covers both the surface and subsurface options, and has saved the proverbial bacon many times.

It's also worth fishing the Milly Midge washing-line style. This involves tying the Milly as a dropper about three to four feet ahead of a buoyant dry on the point, and suspending the midge about six to eight inches deep. Make sure the tip of the fly line and about three to four feet of the thick part of the leader is greased, thus enabling the dry fly on the point to be skated from time to time - creating a wake which can trigger brutal strikes.

Then of course, there's the old standby - simply fishing two Milly Midges about four to five feet apart: one on the dropper and one on the point. It's helpful to keep these flies close to the surface.

Materials:

- Hook:** Black Magic G series or Tiemco 2487 BL If you prefer barbless. Sizes 12– 16.
- Thread:** 6/0 Olive Uni-thread.
- Rib:** Maxima Chameleon 4 lb monofilament.
- Body:** 6/0 Olive Uni-thread.
- Wing (back):** Clear Midge Tubing. Use 1 mm for size 12 flies, 0.6 mm for size 14 flies, and clear small D Rib or Vinyl Rib for size 16 flies. If tubing is not available, then use the appropriate size D Rib or Vinyl Rib for the larger sizes.
- Thorax:** Peacock herl.
- Breathers/gills:** Glo-Brite number 16 floss. However Tiewell Hi-Viz, Antron, Poly Yarn, and Tiemco Aero Dry will do just as well.

Tying Procedure:

1. Start by securing the thread an eye length behind the eye with 4 or 5 wraps.
2. Then select some breather / gill material long enough to be tied along the entire hook. Also select about 10 cm of the Maxima monofilament and tie both on together. Appy a couple of turns with the whip finisher to save your work.
3. Start wrapping the thread rearward going past the bend of the hook. Grab the breathers and Maxima as you go to form a nice curved slim profile.
4. Finish the body by bringing the thread back and tie off where the thorax is going to be tied in.
5. Now tie in the clear tubing or D rib at the thorax. Make sure its secure. Leave the thread here as the Maxima will secure the tubing or D rib. (It's a good idea to run the tubing through your fingers to make it soft. It's easier to lash down this way. Even a tiny drop of superglue can help here.)
6. Stretch the tubing or D rib down the hook, making sure it sits on the top of the hook. Lash it down with the Maxima ribbing, winding four or five firm turns back up to the thorax. You may need to manoeuvre the tubing or D rib to keep it in place.
7. Now tie it off securely at the thorax position. A few turns with the whip finisher here is a good idea to save what you've done.
8. The last thing to add is the peacock herl which is most vulnerable to damage. After tying in a couple of strands at the base of the thorax, it's useful to twist the two herls around the thread forming a rope. This increases the durability of the fly considerably.
9. Then wind the herl to the eye leaving enough room to whip finish and complete the fly.

Most of the time it takes a few attempts before a satisfactory result is achieved. Key tips include being careful to not crowd the eye and endeavouring to get a slim profile. A bit of trial and error generally sorts things out! The Milly Midge is worth the effort because this fly is such a consistent producer.

Remember the 'Golden Rule' with fly tying: You are only tying on one thing at a time, so there is no need to let a complex looking fly be intimidating.



VFFA 2021 meetings & other activities

(... subject of course to the possibility of further lockdowns)

August

- 12 Thursday Special Fly Tying event at 7:30 pm. Geoff Bloch will demonstrate the tying of a reverse hackle dry fly which has proven particularly effective. This will be a Zoom demonstration, so members will need to watch for an email giving the Zoom connection details.
- 20 Friday VFFA Annual Dinner at the Kelvin Club, with Guest Speaker Jim Allen
- 22 Sunday President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool, commencing at 10:00 am
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 26 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, with Andrew Mossman as instructor

September

- 4 Saturday Victorian rivers open again to trout fishing
- 8 Wednesday Millbrook Lakes – 9:00 am till dark
- 11 Saturday Warrnambool Annual Dinner (rescheduled from July 31)
- 16 Thursday 2021 Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 19 Sunday Start of new season Barbecue, at Acheron, commencing at 11:30 am
- 23 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, with John Pilkington as instructor
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

October

- 10 Sunday Annual trip to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker: Tony Stewart, who will tell us about fishing the streams in the Otways.
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

November

- 12 – 14 Annual Trip to Warrnambool
- 17 Wednesday Millbrook Lakes – 11:00 am till dark
- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker: to be confirmed.
- 21 Sunday Streamcraft session by David Grisold and Nymph Techniques by Jo and Rick Dobson. 10:00 am start and 2:00 pm BBQ. Acheron address TBC
- 24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

December

- 10 Friday Annual Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club
Speaker: to be confirmed.