

FLY LINES



August 2023

Our August Annual Dinner - with Christopher Bassano

This year's Annual Dinner will be held at the Kelvin Club on Friday, August 18.

Our guest speaker for the occasion is Christopher Bassano, whose record in fly fishing is truly outstanding. Christopher started guiding in Tasmania in 1993, and since then has written for, or been featured, in *Fresh Water Fishing Magazine*, *FlyFisher*, *FlyFisher* (Japan), *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating News*, *Trout Fisherman* (UK), *Trout and Salmon* (UK) and *Fly Fishing and Fly Tying* (UK). He started competition fly fishing in 2011 and qualified for the Australian World Fly Fishing Team every year until he finished in 2019. He fished in eight national fly fishing championships, winning three, was placed second in two, and was ranked as the number one placed angler in Australia when he retired from competitive fishing in 2019. He fished in one Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championship and won both the individual and team gold medals. In 2018 Christopher made the decision to leave guiding and start working for the Inland Fisheries Service in Tasmania. He is currently the Senior Technical Officer in the IFS where he works predominantly in Fisheries Management.

Chris is an exceptional fly fisher and we are most fortunate to have him as our guest at our Annual Dinner, where he will speak about the

Friday, August 18,
Our Annual Dinner at the
Kelvin Club

management and organisation of the Tasmania trout fishery - a topic of great interest to us all.

Note the date – Friday, August 18, 6:30pm at the Kelvin Club.



Christopher Bassano in competition mode

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Kristina Placko – popular South Island guide

President's Message

England Cricket Board Chairman Richard Thompson calls for "schedules to be more flexible" in light of the "strange eventuality" at Old Trafford. The "strange eventuality" was rain in Manchester! (Gideon Haigh, The Australian 28 July, 2023)

Strange as it may seem for July in Melbourne, it rained intermittently on our Sunday Casting last week.



Sunday Casting – hiding from the rain

Our Immediate Past-President however, was wise to these strange eventualities and as you can see from the accompanying photo, he had thoughtfully provided an amazing shelter, which saved the day.

We had some sunny breaks and eventually the clearing showers did what clearing showers do ... and 20 members enjoyed plenty of casting, not to mention coffee, tea and barbeque snags.

James Norney (CCI) from *MountainFly* came down from Taggerty and provided some expert casting tuition, which produced some immediately obvious improvements for some of our members, particularly the younger, faster learners who "listened"- thank you James.

Our final Sunday morning casting will be the President's Casting Day on Sunday, August 20, following our Annual Dinner on the Friday evening. James will again



Dr David Hooke

be present, and we are hopeful Louise Christeson (CCI) will also be available.

Our Guest Speaker this month was our very own Council Member and Librarian, Bill Jeans. Bill gave a fascinating talk, part travelogue, part fishing adventures, on his recent trip to Cuba. Those with a spirit of adventure were inspired to emulate, while those of a more conservative bent, marvelled at the group's fortitude and resilience! A memorable trip Bill; the transcript of which appears elsewhere in this issue.

The Annual Dinner this year is being held at the Kelvin Club on Friday August 18, and promises to be another cracker night. Our Guest Speaker is Chris Bassano, one of the pre-eminent competition fly fishers in Australia. Chris has been a sought-after guide in Tasmania for many years and more recently has been appointed to the IFS in Tasmania. He will be talking about the management of the Tasmanian trout fishery, which will of course include many of our favourite lakes and rivers.

As usual a splendid Sage rod donated by J.M. Gillies will be auctioned and we

will have our usual fund-raising raffle of tackle and books kindly donated by our very generous retail sponsors.

Fly tying continues at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne on the first Thursday of the month with our last session being on September 7. So if you need some guidance on tying flies for the upcoming season, do come along; bring your vice (fly tying) feathers, fur and thread. Warmth, wine, cheese and biscuits are supplied. (I should add - if you don't have any of the above fly tying essentials but are simply interested in starting, you will of course be most welcome.)

There are several important items currently on the Agenda at Council.

The first is the website. Your Council is keen to upgrade the website to the point where it becomes a focal part of VFFA life. As we move further into the 21st Century, it is obvious that more of our lives are online and digital. Much of the communication which occurs through the Newsletter will also appear online and we are hopeful that much of the administrative functions can be streamlined via the website. That process is in train.

The second is the relationship with our cousins in New Zealand. As I mentioned in the last Newsletter, James Carter has put together a submission, which has been endorsed by Council, to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade asking for them to intercede on our behalf regarding differential licence fees and access to rivers in New Zealand. The submission is based around the Closer Economic Relations (1983) agreement with New Zealand.

Unfortunately, we have not even had the courtesy of an acknowledgement of receipt, let alone a reply. The plan is to circulate the Submission more widely to fly fishing clubs in Australia and to Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Fish and Game in New Zealand. If any of you have



Our President addressing the July meeting

contacts in these Departments, please let me know.

Finally, the Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 21, commencing at 8:00pm on Zoom. Formal Agenda and Notices are included with this Newsletter.

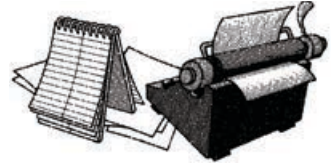
I encourage all members to consider what they might bring to a term on Council and just as importantly the experience and indeed fun they would have participating in the management of the VFFA. As my term draws to a close I reflect on a marvellous three years as Senior Vice-President and President. I look forward, as Immediate Past President, to continuing involvement supporting the incoming President. Do consider nominating.

David H Hooke



How could they resist this?

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Lo the angler. He riseth in the morning and upsetteth the whole household. Mighty are his preparations. He goeth forth with great hope in his heart – and when the day is far spent he returneth, smelling of strong drink and the truth is not in him." (Anonymous)

"It is only the inexperienced and thoughtless who find pleasure in killing fish for the mere sake of killing them. No sportsman does this." (W.C. Prime, 1888)

"Listen to the sound of the river and you will get a trout." (Irish proverb)

"If I'm not going to catch anything, then I'd rather not catch anything on flies" (Bob Lawless)

I agree with Bob. Fly fishing is definitely the most gratifying and enjoyable way of going about it, regardless of the result.

Like many (most?) fly fishers I keep a fishing diary, and the occasional flick through the pages can a sobering experience. My diary reminds me of the relatively few occasions when I have hooked a really large fish, and the even fewer occasions when I actually managed to land it.

In regard to this I have one particularly favourite memory. Some years ago I was fishing the Matura in New Zealand's South Island with Dermot O'Brien, and on approaching a corner pool I saw a trout of perhaps 2lb cruise past and swim into the pool. The water was very clear so I kept well back and flicked a Parachute Adams out onto the surface where I had seen this fish heading. But instead of this two pounder sticking his nose out, a massive trout I hadn't seen rose majestically from the depths and swallowed my fly. I lifted my rod and we connected, then this huge bruiser of a battleship charged off upstream into some heavy bushes and foliage. I hung on grimly, but it was pointless – I could feel my line scraping against the shrubbery and soon enough it all went slack. I'd lost the fish, but a wonderful memory remains.

Happily there are entries in my diary recording days when the fish were kind to me and I caught a number. There are rather more entries reporting on those countless pedestrian outings when I connected with just one or two.

And finally - the blanks. Those days when I went out full of enthusiasm and anticipation, and flogged away all day for a nil return. Frustrating days when despite my persistence and effort, the



New Zealand's South Island produces some monster trout. This photo comes from Mark Weigall's magnificent collection.

water was empty. Nothing was even seen. All my best flies remained unmolested.

I don't much enjoy those fishless days, though I must concede they are probably an important part of our fishing experience. For starters, fishless days cause us to value our good days so much more highly.

These fishless days of course happen for countless reasons. The weather was wrong, the water was cloudy or coloured or too hot or too cold. The place we'd fished had already been flogged to a foam by other anglers and there was nothing left. Perhaps our technique was wrong – we fished dry flies when the fish were down deep and eating nymphs ...

The list of potential reasons for failure is long and endless. So what's good about them? They do prompt us to try to work out why we were unsuccessful. Was the fault ours, or were there reasons beyond our control?

Perhaps it might be better to choose our times more carefully.

What time in the day should we fish? The popular wisdom is that dawn and dusk are often good times for catching trout. I recall conversations with David Featherstone at VFFA meetings in past years. David often fished the lakes and dams around Ballarat and would tell me that his alarm was set for 3:00am. He would then arrive at his chosen venue by 5:00am and after a quick cup of coffee would be having his first casts at the crack of dawn, "when the big trout are cruising the edges!" At 9:00am he'd be finished and on his way home.

Those 3:00am starts are bit rugged, for me anyway, but evenings are good. I've had some delightful evenings on the Yarra up around Warburton with, on many occasions, lots of fish (yes, mostly small) chomping away happily as the sun went down.

This raises another thought: how is it that you can go fishing on some very pleasant

days and find fish actively feeding, yet on other days that seem the same in all respects you can fish the same water and see and catch nothing?

In last month's newsletter Chris Gray wrote about his recent success fishing a dam on a property in Gippsland. To quote Chris: "I discussed the scientific approach with a mate who investigated this in more detail. He came up with the day, the time, and the indicative weather pattern to chase some winter trout. ... we found a Saturday morning on which to try our scientific approach."

Chris's comments remind me of those books of Solunar Tables we purchased at tackle shops. Alternatively you can check the early pages of Bill Classon's monthly *Freshwater Fishing* magazines, where the predicted best fish biting times are listed. On my iPhone I have an application called "Solunar", which tells me for each day in the month how active the fish are likely to be. The table also lists "The Major Solunar Periods" (the times in those days when the fish will be most active, i.e. feeding hardest) and "The Minor Solunar Periods" (when fish are feeding but not as actively as in the Major Periods).

So there you go. How can I get it wrong? I have to confess that these days my fishing times are mainly determined by the weather and by opportunity. Even in retirement my weeks are often way too full, and a free day for some fishing can take a bit of juggling. And if the opportunity is there I'll head out, regardless of the Solunar predictions.

I have to say, too, that over the years the Solunar Theory ideas have generated some fierce debate. There are those who swear by the tables and others who swear at them. Some years ago Tasmanian guide Neil Grose wrote an article that was published. I can't recall now the year it was published, or the magazine it was published in, but I did copy some of it. Here is what Neil wrote:

Fishing by The Moon, by Neil Grose:

“How do the different phases of the Moon affect fish behaviour in both fresh and salt water?”

Fishing and the Moon/Sun cycle

There is a strong argument that fish activity is related to Moon and Sun activity, in addition to any influence the tides may have. While this is very significant at spawning times for various species, it also has a strong correlation with feeding times. These two factors (feeding and breeding) are probably the biggest single influence in an angler's success or failure.

The Angler's Almanac (i.e. Solunar Theory) is based on the theory of Moon Above and Moon Below.

The best times to fish are when the moon is above the angler's head and when the moon is on the other side of the earth below the angler's feet. When the moon is halfway between these two points there is also a minor period of activity. Peak activity is described as when the moon is above and below, and a shorter peak of activity is when the moon is halfway between these two points.

So in any given fishing day you are likely to get a major period (moon above or below) and a minor period (moon half way between above and below). There are two majors and two minors in 24 hours, but usually only one of each during daylight hours.

What It All Means On The Water

I have been comparing data and observations while guiding and fishing for the past 12 years to the information supplied in the Angler's Almanac. I guided between 1998 and 2007 = 1,138 days on the water, the overwhelming majority being diarised.

The Angler's Almanac (which is the easiest source of tables in a printed format) lists peak times during the 24-hour period. It also categorizes days into

'best', 'good', 'fair' and 'poor'. These are calculated on the phase of the Moon and Sun, although I have found in practice that they don't have as much impact on proceedings as expected - I have had awesome days on poor predictions, and the opposite on best predictions.

The key for me is the times of peak and minor activity - here in lays the real value that has proven itself to me over ten years of guiding.

Freshwater lakes

I first started taking notice of the Almanac when I was fiddling around with loch-style fly fishing in 1996. At that stage I was fishing Pine Tier Lagoon a lot to escape the crowds at Little Pine Lagoon. I was matching my results to the Almanac, and a clear pattern began to emerge. The major times as predicted saw good activity. The minor periods (6 hours after the major) would see a shorter period of action, but a much better catch rate.

If there were long periods of predicted 'poor' days, then the overall activity would be reasonably poor, with spikes in activity to coincide with the predicted times. If there were several 'best' days in succession, then the fishing would be good with an increased level during the predicted times.

The weather and general conditions will always over-ride any predictions. It doesn't matter how good the almanac predicts a day, if it features a howling south-west wind, the barometer through the floor and it's pelting with rain then it is not a great day!

I remember one day in particular in the western lakes on a perfect blue-sky polaroiding day. We found a bunch of fish in the weed tunnels! By this stage it was 11:30am and time for an early lunch. By the time we had emerged from a post lunch snooze it was nearly 1:00pm and the fish were out and about, giving us great fun for an hour or so before their activity tapered off. I have been back to that lake on predicted 'best'

days and have found fish all day, with an abundance of activity during the predicted good times.

I tried to work out a correlation between predicted peak times and mayfly hatches, only to fail miserably before a pattern emerged. In deeper water there seemed to be no correlation at all. In shallow water it was closer to the predicted times, but not within them, which would refute the theory. I am coming to the belief that the Moon above/below theory has more influence on nymph activity rather than the actual hatch process. This would account for dun hatches being further outside the predicted times as the water becomes deeper.

Freshwater streams

Most of my observations are restricted to the St Patricks River and the Meander River. I have had many times where many fish are seen under banks or deep on the bottom as opposed to on station in the runs and riffles, especially on days rated as 'poor'. The Meander is a good case in point, especially in my favourite stretches of pocket water, (which are now under the new Warners Creek Dam!)

On days rated as 'best' I would find that the fish will rise to dries all day long, while poor days would really only produce dry fly action during the peak times.

Autumn Trout Pre-Spawn Activity

The closer that trout get to spawning time the greater the influence the Moon cycles have on them. While guiding during April in Arthur's Lake you could just about set your watch to them! You had to find the fish first of course, but once located they would go silly in almost perfect concert with the predicted times.

If the major time wasn't until 5:00pm, then you'd know you were in for a lean day till then. It isn't that you wouldn't catch anything till then, it is just that you would experience a definite increase



This one was released, as it should have been

in activity once you approached the predicted time.

So To Summarise

I take great notice of the times predicted in the Almanac and try to plan my fishing day around them. I don't have the luxury of being able to choose to fish only on the 'best' rated days (nor do many other people I guess), and when I was guiding you certainly couldn't pick and choose. I have noticed key differences in activity according to the Almanac, whether it is chasing trout in the highlands or on streams and in saltwater from Cape York to the Derwent River.

The Almanac, and more importantly the Moon and Sun stages that support them, can help maximize your fishing results, even if it is only an aid to when you start or finish, or when to take lunch! It can help enormously with confidence as well. I know that when I fish inside the predicted good times and on the 'best' rated days I fish with extra vigour and energy."

So there you have it – a solid outline of the underlying ideas of Solunar Theory. I would be greatly interested to hear of the experiences of members. Have the tables consistently predicted the best fishing times for you?

In any case, tight lines,

Lyndon

Bill Jeans at our July Meeting – Fishing in Cuba

Cuba is a Marxist-Leninist one party socialist state, where the role of the Communist Party is enshrined in the constitution. It's the largest island in the West Indies and has 11 million people.

In getting there we flew first into Mexico City where we booked into the hotel at the terminal as we were only staying there overnight before flying onto Havana. So we retrieved our bags from the carousel, stepped into the lift, and went up to our hotel room. But John arrived the next day, and he went out the terminal door and showed a taxi driver the address. So the taxi driver drove him around the block twice, then back to the hotel at the terminal, and charged him \$40.

When we arrived in Havana we stayed at a place that was a tad downmarket and costing us just 16 euros a night for Bed and Breakfast. Just across the road locals started gathering most mornings at 5:30, waiting for the government food store to open at 8:30. The photo on the screen was taken from the door of my dog box. It shows people gathering across the road who had started arriving there from



Mothership Avalon IV

about 5:30 in the morning, because at this corner at 8:30 the roller door for the government food distribution opened. They sit there peacefully from 5:30 to 8:30 most days because they have ration books and it's a lot cheaper to go to the government store to buy potatoes and pumpkins than to go to the commercial store up the road.

The businesses in Havana prefer you to pay in euros. There are in fact three currencies in use. When you go to a restaurant, for example, you can pay the bill in local Cuban pesos (which nobody wants), or euros, or US dollars.



Buffet evening meal with the girls who were helping with our laundry

Early on we went for a walk with a government tourist guide, a job that earns him \$30 a week. But he got \$60 for the morning from our group. And he was fantastic. Like most tour guides, he seemed to know everything. But he told us he could never afford to own a car there. His wife was a paediatrician at the local hospital, and she received the same salary as he does. He had to have another job so he could get some extra cash coming in.

Everybody is familiar with the book *'The Old Man and the Sea'* written by Ernest Hemingway. There were 105 bars there that advertised that 'this is where Hemingway used to drink'.

While there we didn't have a bad meal anywhere. The food was great. One evening we went to a rooftop restaurant. There were a few foreigners there, but mostly rich Cubans. We talked with a young waiter who was a qualified dentist and had completed five years of university study then three years practicing dentistry. And he was giving it away. All he could do was pull teeth out because he had no other materials. So he was working as a waiter to save enough money to find other career.

Our time in Havana finished and we had a 6½ hour bus trip down to Jucaro, and then a 4½ hour boat trip. We were then taken out to this archipelago a fair way off land but still in quite shallow water.

We were on one of four motherships that were well-equipped. There were even facilities for our clothes to be washed and ironed for us each day, this being done for us by a team of young girls on board. What we didn't know was that because there were four motherships they divided the fishing into four areas, and "mothership one always goes to area number one". So if the fish are biting in



Spectacular tarpon



Getting closer



*An Australian tarpon (*Megalops cyprinoides*) caught by Bill in Weipa a few years ago*



*Bonefish (*Albula vulbes*)*



A large blue trevally

area number two, our guides were not allowed to take us there because we were restricted to fishing only in area number one. Trying to find out all about this from somebody who didn't speak English was a challenge.

There were a number of young girls on board working in various capacities, and from the moment we came on board they were "all over us like a rash", trying to be very helpful, because they were very keen to earn tips from us as all they earned was \$30 a month from the government.

We were allocated our fishing guides each night before we went fishing, and at breakfast time we were given a plastic bowl to fill with lunch from the buffet. At the end of the day a young lady was waiting there for us with cold towels for our faces and hands. After this we had to write up our catch for the day on the board, and someone would grab our rods and wash them for us and hang them up. The organization was very slick.

There was a doctor on board, and each morning as we went into breakfast he took our temperatures. One day I felt a bit off and the doctor said to me: "What tablets would you like?" His second question was: "Have you got any spare sunglasses?" But at our age all our



*Giant tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*)*

sunglasses were prescription, so they were no good for him.

At the end of our fishing when we finally got back to Havana we were walking around in the market there when a woman who spoke good English said to us: "Oh today is officially the last day of windy week." So windy week was the week when we were fishing. On some days the wind was so strong we just had to come in to fish a little lagoon where it was far more peaceful because there were mangroves around the outside providing some protection.



Local snapper

Our bonefish fly was a 'Pregnant Shrimp' and that was used for all fish except tarpon. We also had three or four tarpon flies, and that's all we needed for the whole trip. We had a crab pattern tied by one of my mates in case there was a chance of catching a permit.

We came across two feeding permit so I got out of the boat to wade closer. My first cast was a bit short and the guide shouted: "Quick – recast!" What he meant, and I should have known, was to slowly draw in 20 feet of line and then recast. No more permit!

There was an American angler there who has fished there 30 times and only fished for permit. So on some days he didn't do much. He had caught quite a few permit, as you would if that's all you were doing.

In the mornings about a dozen small boats would come out to the big boat. Then they would then head off in all directions with us anglers (with not a radio amongst them). We had breakfast at 6:00 am and departed at 7:00 am.

The first day was fantastic. There wasn't much wind, but from then on because it was 'windy week' every other day was windy. Once we left the back of the big boat we were heading into an easterly of about 30 km/hour.

Tarpon were a popular target. They classified 'baby tarpon' as fish 5 to 20 pounds, and these lived inside the mangrove lagoons. Larger residents were 20 to 60 pounds, and giant migratory tarpon were 60 to 200 pounds. These can be caught in Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Mexico and the USA.

The best fishing for tarpon is in May and June. We were there in April. The biggest ever landed was 286 pound. At 150 pounds they are about six feet long and about 15 - 30 years of age.

Where we were fishing there were lots of shallow lagoons, and between these lagoons there were deeper channels. And that's where we were - on the deeper channels waiting for migratory tarpon. You could see them rolling in the water as they created a white flash. We were using 12-weight fly rods with a 40, 60 or 80 lb tippet, depending on what the guide thought at the time.

On my first morning I cast out a mullet fly, hooked a tarpon, and thought how easy is this – I'm hooked up on my first cast. But the tarpon was about 100 metres

away when he jumped for the third time, and that was the end of that. You read all this stuff about what you should do, and when catching trout you know that if the trout leaps in the air you're supposed to drop your fly rod down. But with tarpon some say you must release the tension when you see them jump, while others say you have to put your fly line in the water to maintain the tension. In any case, mine jumped off.

The tarpon came through in schools and we saw those silver flashes when they rolled. The photo on the screen shows the biggest tarpon we landed. You can see the fly there, stuck in his mouth. He took some 20 minutes to land.

Two of our group were adamant they didn't want a particular guide the next day, so Dan, who was sort of in charge of everything, said: "Alright, I'll have that guide tomorrow and you can have another guide." So Dan went the next day with the guide that the other two didn't want, and got the biggest tarpon for the whole trip. And in fact our group only ever caught a tarpon with that guide, so you need to be careful what you wish for.

My friend Peter Golding, who I was fishing with when I hooked a tarpon first cast, stepped up for his go and he hooked a tarpon on first cast, and his was probably 160 metres away when he dropped it. So first of all you have to find them, then you have to hook them, and then you have to actually land them.

This photo is of Mr Avalon and his famous fly that we all bought. We would nudge into a little mangrove island for lunch, and iguanas would appear looking for food scraps.

We caught many different species of fish on our Pregnant Shrimp fly.

Here's a photo of an alligator, and obviously they are there too, and he's a decent sized specimen. We saw two – one from the boat and another one sun-baking.

You can see from the photos that sometimes we were fishing quite close together. If you've got a decent deepish channel there then that's where the tarpon are going to be, so you spread yourself out across the channel just like the photo shows.

To summarise, we used 12 weight rods and 12 weight weight-forward floating and intermediate lines, along with fluorocarbon leaders. We took some of these ready-made leaders. I had some 22 pound fluorocarbon leaders, but unless it said 'Bonefish' on the packet, the guides didn't want to know about it. "Oh - no good, no good. You must have one with Bonefish written on the packet."

There's some initial discussion at the moment about whether we'll go back again next year, at a different time and not doing the sightseeing this time. We would try to get a flight that lands closer to the marina. Then we would just get on the boat and go out for a week's fishing. We might also go to Florida Keys for a weekend, just in case we didn't catch anything. I'm still negotiating this trip.



Raw material for a large handbag?



Notice of Event for VFFA February 2024 Tasmanian Trip



The Event: A week with fellow VFFA members at *Hayes on Brumbys Fly Fishing Lodge, Cressy*. Fishing in groups of two or more during the day and sharing tales of the day's adventures over dinner. 15 positions are available.

Dates: Arrive Saturday, February 3 AM - depart Sunday, February 11 PM. (8 nights)

Address: Hayes on Brumbys, 1696 Cressy Road, Cressy, Tasmania 7302.

Travel: You will be responsible to make your own travel arrangements to and from Tasmania. You are also responsible for arranging your transport while in Tasmania. The buddy system works well with fellow members, including transport of gear to Tasmania if you plan to fly.

Cost: \$1,210.00 per person for twin share accommodation.

Accommodation: Hayes on Brumbys has twin rooms, and you will be expected to bunk in with another member for the week. All facilities are shared for the week.

Meals & Drinks: You will be involved in purchasing ingredients and cooking a meal on one of the nights, purchases will be reimbursed. Breakfast will be supplied with a range of cereals, toast, juice and coffee. Lunch is your responsibility each day. BYO wine, beer, spirits.

Fishing license: A current Tasmania license is required. Before departure to Tasmania, you may purchase one via the Internet on <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au/the-rules/angling-licence>

Members & Friends Dinner: On Thursday, February 8, fellow VFFA members & friends living in or visiting Tasmania will be invited to join us for drinks and dinner from 6:30 PM. Dress will be smart casual.

Guiding: Peter Hayes is available for the week exclusively to VFFA members on the Tasmanian trip staying at Cressy. Peter has provided VFFA members with a special daily rate for this week. Please notify Chris Gray with your intended dates to be guided by Peter. Do not book with Peter.

Event Registration Form (ERF): Register by sending the Event Co-ordinator a completed and signed copy of the ERF by email as an attachment. Obtain your ERF from the VFFA website www.vffa.com.au or request a copy via email from the event coordinator.

Event Co-ordinator: Christopher Gray,
mobile 0408 256 525
and email: chris@graysmail.com.au

Date of this Note of Event: August 1, 2023

What to do next:

- 1) Please register your intent to attend ASAP as we have several interested people.
- 2) Chris will send you confirmation, trip and payment details.
- 3) Book your travel to/from Tasmania.
- 4) Please let Chris know if you're taking a vehicle. We have a few people already taking vehicles and may like to share fishing time/transport during the week. It could also be a good way to get your gear across to Tasmania.
- 5) Pay your deposit to VFFA by end of December and the balance in January.
- 6) Complete the Event Registration Form and email to Chris prior to arriving in Tasmania.
- 7) Let Chris know if you would like to be guided by Hayesie during the week.

Tasmanian Fishing Report – for August 2023

... from Chris Wisniewski, Section Manager, Tasmania Inland Fisheries Service

The 2023-24 trout season opens on Saturday, August 5, and there is much anticipation and thought going into where might be the best places to fish in the coming season. Many of you will have mostly likely received your Tasmanian Angling Licence renewal pack in the mail. If not, go to www.ifs.tas.gov.au. This year's licence has another great piece of artwork in the series by Trevor Hawkins titled "Sea Runner".

In recent weeks we have completed in-lake trout population surveys at Penstock Lagoon and Four Springs Lake. As set out in the Tasmanian Inland Fishery Management Plan 2018-28 these surveys help us adjust the management of "Assisted" fisheries to ensure best possible opportunities for anglers in popular waters where there is little or no natural trout recruitment. The results of

these surveys will be available online in coming months, and will be used to plan next year's adult brown trout transfers from Central Highland spawning runs.

Tasmania has had reasonable rainfall so far this winter and on the back of several La Nina years most waters are in good condition with healthy numbers of well-conditioned trout. The rivers and streams have fared well from the wet conditions, as have most hydro impoundments, natural lakes and tarns.

Despite predicted dryer conditions the scene is set for a great year of fishing in Tasmania!

When planning to fish in Tasmania weather conditions and in particular water levels must be closely watched if you are to get best fishing. Rainfall can vary significantly from catchment to

catchment. So following rainfall patterns and knowing where to go will play a big part in your success.

An example of this was the opening of season 2022-23 last year. Despite cold blustery conditions on the Central Plateau, those who braved the conditions and were watching the rainfall had the best fishing that can be imagined at Little Pine Lagoon. Good rainfall out in the Nineteen Lagoons delivered a pulse of water down the Little Pine River, so the Lagoon filled quickly and began spilling the day before the season opening.

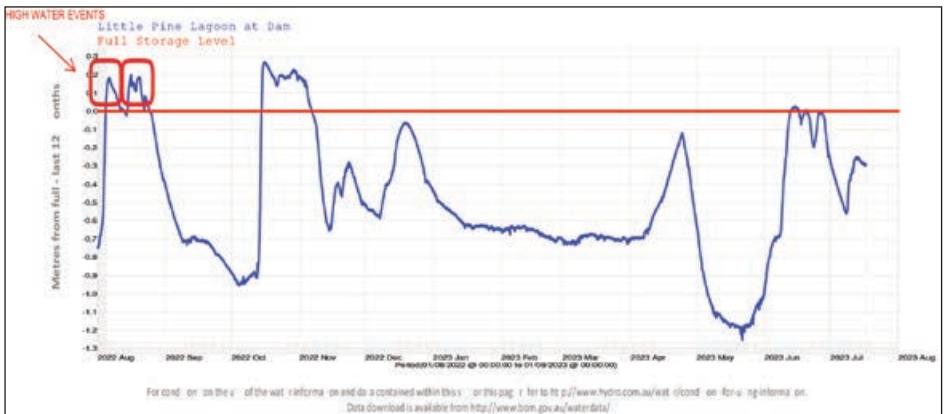
The spill was just under 200 millimetres but was enough to flood back into the bushes and tussocks for the first time in a few months. This brought the trout into the shallows for a feast. Anglers who braved the conditions found trout everywhere and caught unheard of numbers of fish - most on the dry fly. It only lasted a couple of days before the lake level fell away, and those who arrived late were disappointed to find that it was all over! But the event was repeated in the coming weeks.



Trout hunting in the flooded shallows

Arthurs Lake as it rose quickly. Heavy rain in October saw Lake Crescent fill and spill. The big trout that this lake is known for were able push back into the extensive wetlands and provided exciting fishing for the fly fisher.

As the weed started to thicken at Four Springs Lake in October, the quick rise in water level saw fish in on the clear water edge hunting out flooded food.



There were similar scenes across the season at a variety of locations. The flooded backwater fishing in springtime on the northern rivers was at times fantastic. Fish were in on the shore at

To fish Tasmania, especially the Central Plateau, you need to be able to fish in the wind. The wind brings opportunity. Quite often the fish will cruise the edges of the

windward shore collecting food that is stirred up or blown in. In warm weather terrestrial insects will be blown on the water. We all know about the “shark” fishing out on yingina/ Great Lake with fish drawn up out of deep water to surface insects.

It is no different in the smaller and shallower waters. The fish are still looking up, and the wind, when used to your advantage, allows the presentation of a fly that will quite often be taken more readily and at times aggressively. There has been more than enough written about using polaroids on blue sky days. The front and back of the waves created by the wind open a window to see fish more easily. It is just a matter of knowing your casting ability and positioning yourself to get the shot!

Likely highlights for the coming season!

Lake Crescent should fill and spill again in early spring. With conditions like this there is no place in Australia that grows fish as big as this lake. It is not easy, but if you are after the trout of a lifetime this is the place.

Lake Sorell is back. The lake is full and spilling. The carp have been eradicated and all the barriers that prevented fish from accessing the wetlands have been removed. The trout will now have access to a huge food supply but also be back in the zone where fly fishers can target them more easily. The trout population had

been suppressed by the carp management activities but has been rebuilding naturally for the past few years. There were thousands of brown trout seen spawning in Mountain Creek over winter, so the population will continue to build. This spring is the time to either fish what was Tasmania’s most popular trout water for the first time, or to reacquaint yourself.

Tooms Lake is still a bit dirty after some turbulent years. There is not a large trout population here, but the fish are always in good condition. It could be the season that Tooms comes back into the spotlight, particularly for summer dry fly fishing.

Look for particularly high and low water levels at Little Pine Lagoon and you will be sure to find fish in on the shore, either searching through the bushes or tailing on the grassy flats.

A rising level is always good at Bronte Lagoon. There will be some first-rate fishing there as the water rises into the tussocks. Alternatively floating a dry fly



Lake Crescent has big trout



Fat young trout from Lake Sorell

off the rocky points can bring pleasing results as the water rises and flushes insects out with the wind.

Four Springs Lake will continue to fish well. Those who have not fished the mayfly hatch in October time should plan a trip to target some of the best mayfly fishing you will find. The lake becomes weedy from November onwards. The weed beds provide the diverse insect life and thus the healthy population of trout in this lake.

Talbots Lagoon will continue to provide fantastic dry fly fishing to big brown and rainbow trout from October through until the end of the season in April. The dun

hatch in November is special. There is some good fishing from the shore via the access points that have been developed, but a small transportable watercraft is an advantage.

Rivers around the state have a huge head of trout now after multiple years of good spawning. Jump in at any of the angler access points and you are sure to find good fishing.

Remember that there is lots of good information to be found on the IFS website www.ifs.tas.gov.au or download the Infish 2.0app. You can find all of the angler access brochures and fish stocking information here, along with lots more.

Millbrook in September

As members are aware, Mark Weigall has very generously offered us four Millbrook trips a year – one in each season.

Our next scheduled trip is our Spring visit – timetabled for Wednesday, September 27.

Terry Rogers will email us all early in September, inviting interested members

to email him indicating they wish to be included in the group. The number of members attending each Millbrook visit is limited to a ten, and these visits are very popular, so those keen to go need to be prompt in their response.



Millbrook Lakes offer fabulous fishing

Tasmanian Trout Season Licences

John Diggie, Director of Inland Fisheries for Tasmania, has sent us this note:

With the outlook for the new trout fishing season looking good, now is the time to renew your licence and get the best value. The wet conditions we experienced last year has seen fishing in the lakes and river systems firing, with Lake Sorell expected to return to its former glory.

The Tasmanian Government has made junior angling licences free until the end of the 2024-25 season. Junior anglers from 14, up to, and including, 17 years of age can fish Tasmania's inland lakes and waterways with a free angling licence. Junior anglers under 14 years of age do not require an angling licence.

The new angling season starts on August 1, with the brown trout waters opening on Saturday, August 5, 2023.



Members keen to renew their Tassie licences can go online to www.ifs.tas.gov.au, where they can renew their licence as well as finding lots of information on the new Tasmanian season.

Brief relevant licence costs:

7 days, one person, one rod	\$44.50
28 days, one person, one rod	\$69.00
Full season, pensioner, one rod	\$48.00
Full season, senior, one rod	\$69.00
Full season, adult, one rod	\$87.00

The Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner

The Warrnambool Fly Fishers' 54th Annual Dinner will be held this year on Saturday, September 2, in the Function Room at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion on Grafton Road, Warrnambool.

This is a very special event which many members have attended in the past. As usual, it will be a BYO wine and beer night, as there is no bar at the venue. The cost of the dinner has been set at \$100 for non-members.

The Chef is again Robert King. Before dinner drinks with canapés will begin at 6:00pm and the first course will begin at 7:00pm for the start of what should be a fabulous night of fine food and great company.

Because of the size of the venue the total number attending is limited to 70, so it



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Phone: 0355 625168
P.O. Box 1380 Warrnambool 3280

would be appreciated if VFFA members who wish to attend would confirm their intention to do so soon, and certainly no later than August 15, by emailing Jim Blakeslee on jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au or by calling Jim on 0437983421 to make a booking.

Jim Blakeslee
Social Committee Member
Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc.

The Fly Tying Night on July 6

Unfortunately the attendance at this event was a tad disappointing, with only seven members present. But for those who were there it was a very pleasant and instructive night.

Andrew Mossman demonstrated how to tie his highly effective Possum Emerger, Geoff Bloch constructed samples of his Reverse Hackle Dun which included a new tailing product courtesy of a

Monarch Chalk Paint Brush, and Richard Kos showed those present how he ties his Pink (Fl. Cerise) Butt Jig Nymph. He also demonstrated the split thread dubbing procedure.

The evening was very enjoyable, and those present would thank Jenny and David for their hospitality. As Kossy reports, the wine and cheese platter topped off a great evening.



Busy fly tiers at the July fly tying night

Learn to Observe, writes Jim Allen.

I've written before about watching for the slightest movement or nervous water when fishing, but I continue to be surprised by how many anglers fail to turn on their 'lights' when out in that wonderful church called the outdoors. Whether it's watching the weather or water, I cannot believe how few people look around before they race upstream or head out to some remote tarn in the highlands. They race to put on their waders, check carefully to see they have everything in their fly vest, and yet fail to look at the sky or what's happening on the river or lake.

I remember years ago a farmer mate called Slim giving me grief about my powers of observation. Casting aspersions on a city slicker's lack in this department, he even quoted the words of 'Banjo' Patterson: "Their eyes were dull, their heads were

flat, they had no brains at all..." Slim carried on about how farmers are a stretch ahead when it comes to observing nature. How they're always watching the weather; or their ability to notice a distressed animal in a paddock, or ants climbing tree trunks with eggs before flooding rains, and more.

I took Slim's ribbing in the right spirit. There's something special about the way we Australians have of being grossly irreverent to each other; especially mates and even more importantly, close mates. Australians have not lost this trait, probably imported via the many migrations during convict times or the gold rushes. Americans are astonished when we insult each other this way, being far more polite. Perhaps this goes back to the original American immigrants being waves of religious pilgrims. However, I

like the way we are and as we become more politically correct and increasingly pay attention to legislation like Section 18c of the Racial and Discrimination Act, I hope we don't lose this unique sense of humour entirely.

Anyway, back to observation and as often happens, what goes around comes around. Years ago, Arthurs Lake was arguably the most outstanding trout fishery in Tasmania and possibly Australia. The mayfly and midge hatches were prolific and as regular as clockwork. The polaroiding along gin clear weedy shores was as good as anywhere. Then, as I've written before, the fishing deteriorated as the water became cloudy and olive-coloured, and the lake still hasn't recovered to its former glory.

Anyway, on this particularly day many years ago, the lake was in its prime. From the banter in the shack the night before, it was clear this day was going to be the farmers versus the city slickers. Recent easterly weather indicated the best boat launch would be on the eastern shore near the wall, and the best fishing would probably be dun feeders out of Stumps Bay. Hopefully a very light north-westerly would develop, blowing the duns into the Morass.

We all arrived at the boat ramp and there was obviously going to be an unspoken race to get up the lake to secure the best fishing drifts for the expected dun hatch. However, no sooner had I put my boat in the lake, when I looked out across the calm waters and to my amazement, discovered a midge hatch just off the boat ramp with trout head and tailing everywhere. I immediately slowed down, and dawdled getting all the gear sorted out. My companion for the day was John, an executive in the energy and minerals industry: another gazetted city slicker.

John appeared understandably concerned as the competition got ready in record time, but I just winked at him and held a finger to my mouth. His quizzical look caused him to come closer and he whispered, "What's going on?" I said nothing until the others had raced off towards Stumps Bay. Only then did I point out the fish rising just off the ramp. "After last night's insults about us city slickers, I really had to let them go," I explained. He nodded with a mischievous grin.

We went on to enjoy some exceptional dry fly fishing, with 18 trout coming to the net, all less than a few hundred metres off the ramp. Much later, our farmer friends returned, commenting that they hadn't seen us up around Stumps and wondering if we'd broken down? "No, we were just a couple of old bulls enjoying ourselves, catching plenty," John remarked. There was a surprised silence. Then we explained what the two of us had noticed from the ramp, using our powers of observation as the farmers raced off to their expected dun fishing. It gave us both further pleasure to hear that few duns had appeared, and that the farmers' tally was a total of three fish!

As is usual amongst good friends, much mirth and laughter ensued about the day's events afterwards over a hearty grill, washed down with good claret in front of a roaring log fire. And of course, the farmer versus city slicker banter continued, despite our country friends having suffered a temporary setback!

Observation is vital to give you the edge. The tale above deals with only part of the story. Weather is also so important and a study of conditions is all powerful in making good fishing decisions. A change in wind direction, increasing blue skies, cloud formations... Whilst the Bureau of Meteorology is a valuable resource, so is personal experience. Some fishing destinations like Lake Eucumbene and

the Great Lake in Tasmania both have their own microclimates. I can't tell you how many times my good mate and trout guide Bill Beck on Little Pine, only a few kilometres away from the Great Lake, has had a light southerly while we on the big lake have fished through a stiff northerly.

Learn to read weather maps, watch the sky intently, listen to the old timers and increasingly you will learn more about the vagaries of weather. I remember another day on Arthurs whilst fishing the western shore. I wasn't paying attention and got caught up in a huge westerly. I hadn't noticed the build-up of the gale and when I jumped into the boat to head home, I

came around the corner of the bay to be confronted by waves that were so large, they could have had snow caps on them! I did a quick U-turn and headed back to shore, resigned to the fact I was in for a long night in front of a campfire. I always carry firelighters and a few muesli bars, so I wasn't particularly worried. Better to get home safely tomorrow than to risk crossing a big lake with large waves side on. As it turned out the wind died just on dark and eventually I was able to get back to the shack and a more comfortable bed! Nevertheless, another lesson in observation – or in this case, lack of it – had been learned.

Action at Lake Wendouree

Dr Taylor Hunt, Fisheries Manager at the Victorian Fisheries Authority, has sent us a brief report on some work done by the VFA to support the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society and Ballarat hatchery.

As of June 1, 2023, a recreational fishing closed season will apply to a small area of Lake Wendouree for two months. The trial, which will be conducted via a Fisheries Notice, aims to protect spawning trout in a small defined area, such that they can be collected by Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation



Another way to catch trout

Society (BFAS) volunteers for breeding at the Ballarat Fish Hatchery.

The VFA will monitor the trial through BFAS numbers of spawning brown trout and angler feedback to Fisheries Officers, via email and social media. The VFA will review the trial with anglers annually.

For further information, please feel free to call or email Taylor Hunt, Fisheries Manager on 0418 478 028 or taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au



Wendouree produces some top browns



Fish being collected to be stripped of their eggs

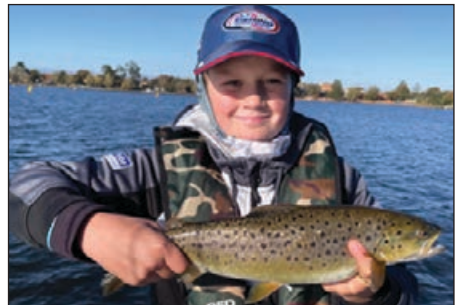
Background

Lake Wendouree is one of our most productive trout fishing lakes in Victoria and is stocked annually with trout from the BFAS Ballarat Fish Hatchery and Snobs Creek Hatchery.

In October 2022 the BFAS wrote to the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) seeking a temporary closure of a 200 metre section of Lake Wendouree adjacent to the hatchery outfall pipe, to protect the spawning trout that congregate in the pipeline flow.

The BFAS has expressed concerns over declining numbers of spawning brown trout which have been collected in this location for many years, and this has been impacting their ability to produce and supply trout to replenish Lake Wendouree and other Victorian waters for recreational fishing purposes.

The VFA met with BFAS in December 2022, inspected the 200 metre site, and believed the introduction of a 2-month fishing exclusion area would have no negative impact for recreational fishers,



It's always great to see young anglers venturing out

but rather assist with security of fish production and stocking for recreational fishing benefit in Lake Wendouree.

Mature brown trout were gently collected using a seine net at the hatchery outfall pipe, where they were carefully stripped of eggs and milt then happily returned to the lake. The BFAS stripped over 300 brown trout and laid down 60,000 ova in their first run.

The eggs and milt were mixed, fertilised and taken to the hatchery to produce thousands of fingerling trout, which were stocked back into Lake Wendouree and

other Victorian waters for recreational fishers to enjoy.

This trout breeding and production practise at Ballarat has been conducted by volunteers since 1870. Yes - that's an incredible 153 years of service to recreational fishing!

A reminder to anglers that the 200 metre hatchery outfall pipe area remains closed to recreational fishing throughout June and July this year while the Ballarat volunteers complete this valuable trout breeding. However, the rest of Lake Wendouree is available for fishing and by the look of some of these beautiful big browns, well worth the cast.



These researchers enjoyed their work

The September AGM:

September is the month for our Annual General Meeting. There are three documents relating to this event: the Notice of Annual General Meeting, the Proxy Form, and the Nomination Form. These will all be distributed with this newsletter.

As for last year, the AGM will be a Zoom meeting, so members everywhere will be able to view the proceedings and possibly contribute at various times.

Internet connection details for the Zoom meeting will be emailed to all members well before Thursday, September 21, the date for our AGM.

Adaptive Nymphing

... from Philip Bailey. In the period 1986 – 1988 Philip was President of the VFFA. He has lived in the UK now for some years and is a highly skilled angler. He has written several excellent articles for us on nymphing technique, and here is his latest – outlining the most recent developments in nymphing technique in the UK.

Here in the north of the United Kingdom we have just come through a spring/early summer period with little rain. Waters have been extraordinarily low and have suffered greatly from a combination of high water temperatures and low oxygen levels, sometimes resulting in fish kills. The current practice of water utilities regularly dumping untreated sewerage into rivers has not helped, but that's another story.

We have experienced this pattern of weather for a few years now. Climate change? The early season starts off well with good hatches and fish willing to rise to a dry, but changes quickly to a situation where fish are seeking cooler and more aerated water. They either skunk off to sit under vegetation or undercut banks or else move into the faster skinny water.

By about the end of May the fishing gets tougher, even with the famous Mayfly

hatch. The fish have had a fair number of flies chucked at them by then, have seen every size bead and material combination, and have had anglers wading into prime lies, so they start to become ornery and fussy. Dry flies don't seem to work as well, tight line nymphing gets harder, and fishing moves to early morning or evening.

I am unfortunate that these days my fishing seems to be limited to the middle of the day, generally between 10 am and 4 pm. Some would say 'the dog hours'. So fishing the prime morning and evening periods do not feature too much for me. Interestingly, my catch rate has not dropped at all. It has just meant that I have had to be more innovative in how I attacked to water. I have found that if you fish smaller flies (and most invertebrates are pretty small during the summer period) and change your approach to



This 50m stretch of river produced over 30 fish by systematically working over all of the water with a floating sighter and a 2.5mm header nymph



42cm Grayling taken on a Perdigon with a 2mm bead under a floating sighter taken from the above stretch

fishing further away, you can pick off fish in water that you would normally leave or not fish as hard.

There are places where I would still tight line nymph, but there is a lot of shallow water there which is not ideal for that approach. So I have turned to a method slowly gaining in popularity in the USA. It is termed 'floating the sighter'. Instead of tight line nymphing with the sighter held vertically and up off the water, I float my sighter today on the water, allowing me to fish a lot more water where a micro leader and tight lining would not be as effective.

Pat Wiess is a USA team member renowned for laying his sighter 'on the water', rather than having it in an upright position. Pat has won numerous individual and team medals with his approach, and fellow team members reckon that he is a master at working over water that is skinny and pressured. His approach is gaining popularity. A search for Pat Wiess or 'floating the sighter' on Google or YouTube will offer up some insights.

So what's different? Not much but everything.

The fundamental difference is in the leader make up. Because the sighter is monofilament, the size and weight of flies is limited. If too heavy the sighter will sink, and it needs to float on the surface for

some time for the method to be effective. In addition, the reduction of weight means that the leader needs to be able to cast flies some distance - much further than the limitation of a straight through Spanish leader. It also needs to float, so the diameter of the sighter is much thicker than the micro leader most use for tight line nymphing.

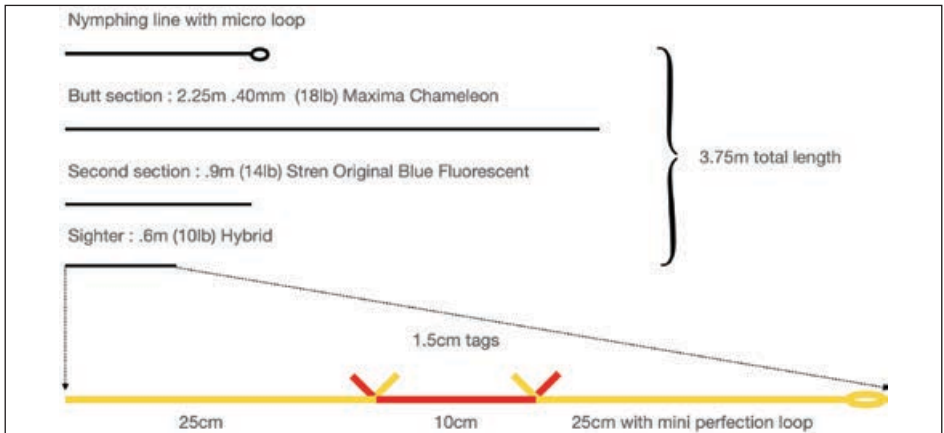
My leader set up.

The overall length is not that important. It is the front end that is critical. I like a leader that is 3.7 metres in length, excluding the tippet. This is because I like to feel the fly line when I am managing the leader. But you could make a longer leader if feeling monofilament does not worry you.

I do not use tippet rings (even with a micro Spanish Leader). Instead I opt for a micro perfection loop, as I believe there is more sensitivity with a monofilament loop. I also like a multi-coloured sighter, so I use some very economical material from Japan which is multi-coloured sea fishing line. It is highly visible and does not fade like euro nymphing sighter material does. To aid visibility as it lays flat on the water surface I cut and re-knot it so that I get 2 centimetre tags at each knot. Dimensions are 25 cm yellow / 10 cm red / 25 cm yellow. It does not matter much about fishing conditions as I am always able to locate either the sighter or the tags.

The Stren section is important as it allows me to locate the leader above the sighter very quickly. This is critical when light conditions are bad. I use Maxima Chameleon in the butt section because the stiffer material aids casting.

I do not use a knotless tapered leader at all. The above design, with level sections, allows me to mend the leader either in the air during casting, or immediately after the flies hit the water.



My leader set up. There will be some line up through the guides

Now the great thing about this is that you can still use it for tight line nymphing when required.

Rod, reel and line

If you have a tight line nymphing set up you are ready to go. Just swap your leader over. A longer rod helps enormously as it enables you keep everything other than the sighter off the water. A rod with a softer tip also aids casting. If you do not have a nymphing set then you might like to use a longer leader to eliminate sag in your line.

Tippet and flies

This is the pointy end of the set up. The combination of tippet diameter together with fly design and weight allows you to manipulate the depth of the flies as they drift. Floating your sighter correctly means that flies drift more freely because you are not tight to them - a big benefit when targeting spooky fish.

I only nymph with a single fly as I then get better drift and control. Worth trying, as multiple flies will be competing against each other with the currents in the water. So I carry a combination of flies. Not too many patterns but a selection of multiple weights with a variety of bead colours (some days they just want a change). A

Perdigon type nymph will sink faster than a 'frenchie' and both will sink faster than a nymph that has lots of fur or a hackle. Having a selection allows you to manage the pace of water penetration, and thus the length of the tippet.

As I said earlier, heavy nymphs will pull the front of the sighter under the surface. A 3 mm bead will be far too heavy at times. 2.0mm beads up to 2.8mm are generally the norm with smaller flies preferred for spooky fish.

Tippet diameter is important as it can become critical in managing the depth of the flies. The difference between 5x and 6x is only 0.002 mm but even that thickness can retard fly penetration. I usually use 6x and 7x diameters and always defer to the 7x unless there is a good head of big fish. Selecting a thicker diameter would make me think about using heavier flies.

Normally I keep my tippet length to no longer than 1.25 metre.

Approach

The aim of this method is to fish smaller flies at distance where stealth is paramount. Casts are generally 7.5 metres to 10 metres away from you and generally upstream, although casting across currents



Two of my nympling boxes with Perdignons, frenchies and hackle wets. Not a lot of patterns but variation in bead colour and weight. Each row = one bead size. Biggest size = 3.3mm
 can be useful where leader mending can then become critical.

It is important to move slowly and to not create too much noise or water movement, as fish will react to rashness. Position yourself where you can cover a lot of water before moving. Take your time to get into position and move upstream slowly.

Casting is more like a normal action rather than the oval type of cast used when euro nympling. Cast upstream and immediately get control of your leader with your non-casting hand. The aim is to only have the sighter on the water surface.

It is important that you treat the sighter with some form of floatant. Mucilin or Loon Payette Paste are good options. I use Mucilin to which I have added fluorescent sighter wax.

It is best when the sighter is straight. Then look for any change during the drift. The tip pulling forward and down, a movement to the side, or a tightening of any curve are all signs of a potential bite - so strike. Even a curvy sighter can

transmit fish takes, so watch the sighter for any change and strike if you see a change.

Not much more to it really, but the real skill comes from fly depth manipulation. The fish can be on the bottom feeding, or mid-water, and you need to be able to manage fly depth accordingly.

So the first thing to address is fly type. Do I need to get down deep or do I need to be further up in the water? I start with a Perdignon type fly, work to a 'frenchie' type of fly, and if I see flies hatching move to a hackled pattern. Next is fly weight. I try to form a mental image of the water I am fishing. Where is it deeper? How long is that deeper water. That then allows me to select a bead size which may change as I progress through the water - this being the reason why I carry so much variation in bead sizes. Lastly we come to tippet length and that will depend on fly type and fly weight. A heavy slim pattern might require a shorter tippet as the fly will get down fairly quickly. But a longer tippet might be required for the same fly in deeper areas. Lighter and thicker fly combinations may require a longer tippet. As a rule my tippets vary between 1.0 metre and 1.5 metre, depending on water depth.

Summary

Floating the sighter offers another string to your bow when confronted with low water conditions or water that has seen a lot of recent fishing. It is not the panacea for catching more fish; it is simply an option for you to consider. At times it may feel that you should throw everything else away and just use this method. You can do that, and become a very successful angler, like Pat Wiess has become by honing his approach. Entirely up to you.

Tight lines from the United Kingdom,
 Philip Bailey

FLY OF THE MONTH

The Marauder

... another fascinating fly from Jim Jackman



As we march on into the depths of winter our attention is well and truly focused on the lakes. Using a streamer is one of the most reliable methods of getting a fish into the net at this time of the year. There are countless varieties of Woolly Buggers and Zonkers, etc, and they all work on their day. The Marauder is a large fly designed to bring big fish undone, and for these large flies I prefer to use Zonker strips over Marabou because of its durability.

Materials needed (Beadhead version):

Hook:	Kamasan B175 or Tiemco 3761 are good choices. However any standard heavy hook will do in either size 6 or 8.
Bead:	Orange brass bead – 3.2 to 4.0 mm.
Thread:	Black, 6/0.
Tail:	Short length of red wool or red floss.
Rib:	Medium copper wire.
Body:	Pearl Estaz Chenille.
Wing:	Green rabbit zonker.
Collar:	Black hen hackle.

Tying Procedure:

1. Place the bead on the hook, slide it around to the eye, then put the hook in the vise.
2. Start the thread behind the bead and using touching turns wind the thread along the shank to a point above the barb.
3. Tie in the copper wire ribbing by holding the end of it on top of the shank, then wind the thread back to the bead again, locking the copper ribbing in.

4. Tie in some red wool or some red floss by running the thread down the hook shank again. There is a fair bit of flexibility here. I tend to err on the side of some extra length of wool or floss sticking out past the end of the shank, as you can always trim it later if you wish. The thread should now be at the rear of the fly again.
5. Strip the end of the chenille to expose the core and tie this in firmly, bringing the thread back to the bead again. At this stage apply some superglue to the full length of the hook and then wrap the chenille forward in touching turns, finishing behind the bead. Secure your work here with a couple of whip finishes.
6. The next step is to prepare the rabbit zonker. Measure the hide so that it is about 1.5 to 2.0 times the length of the hook shank. Lift up the fur and slide the scissors in and cut the hide, leaving an overhang of fur. Refer to the photo for the overall affect. Before tying in the zonker behind the bead it's a good idea to strip a couple of millimetres of fur away from the front and trim the exposed hide into a blunt arrow making it easier to tie in.
7. Tie in the zonker on the exposed hide firmly, and secure with another whip finish leaving the thread behind the bead.
8. The next step is to tie the zonker down securely by threading the wire through the fur with four or five wraps, then tie the wire off behind the bead. A simple way of achieving this is to use a bodkin to separate the fur so that the hide is exposed and the wire can be wrapped through the fur so that it doesn't catch any fur.
9. Select a black hen feather. Ideally the barbs should be about 1.5 times the hook gape, though there's a fair bit of flexibility here. If black isn't available, then any other colour will do.
10. Strip away the excess feathers from the bottom, then tie in securely behind the bead. Pull the feather up gently and slightly forward, then brushing the feather fibres back with your fingers make a few wraps, stroking the feather back after each wrap. Three or four wraps should do. Tie it off and whip finish. Add some head cement and you're done.

Fishing the fly

The first thing to do when approaching a lake in winter is to take some time to survey the situation and look closely for any sign of feeding fish. If there is some activity then it's a good bet it's midge, snails or stick caddis being taken, so tie on one of the usual suspects and leave the Marauder in the fly box. The main function of this fly is for prospecting. Its allure is in its movement and its ability to move water.

The art to fishing big flies in this situation is to be mindful that a varied retrieve is more likely to get the attention of a fish that is not feeding than a one-paced monotonous retrieve. Fish are acutely attuned to movement so use it to your advantage when there is not much else going for you.

Here are some key points to be mindful of:

- Vary the speed and the rhythm of the retrieve. Animate the fly!
- Count the fly down and fish the entire vertical water column.
- Use a smaller unweighted fly on a dropper to give the impression of a predator chasing its prey. Nothing like a bit of competition to get a reaction.
- Always fish the hang. So many opportunities are lost because the fly is ripped out of the water too soon.

VFFA 2023 meetings & other activities

August

- 3 Thursday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 18 Friday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
(Guest Speaker – Christopher Bassano from IFS Tasmania. Christopher will speak about the management of the Tasmanian trout fishery, including stocking policies and the management tools used on various lakes.)
- 20 Sunday President’s Casting Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am (Certified Casting Instructors will be present)
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

September

- 2 Saturday Trout season opens again for Victorian rivers.
- 2 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers’ Annual Dinner.
- 7 Thursday Last Fly Tying session at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 21 Thursday 2023 Annual General Meeting – 8:00 pm, and again a Zoom meeting.
- 22 – 24 The 2023 National Entomology Insect Expo
- 27 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing, 10:00 am till dark.
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

October

- 19 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Annual Auction of equipment and books
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

November

- 10 Fri – 12 Sun Annual Trip to Warrnambool.
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 6:30 at the Kelvin Club.
Speaker: TBC
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

December

- 8 Friday Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club.
Speaker: TBC

January 2024

- 10 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, provided day summer temperatures are not too high. March 2024

A very early notice - in March next year there will be a VFFA trip to New Zealand:
March 3 – 10, 2024 VFFA trip to Taupo in the North Island