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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

DECEMBER 2010

Organisation No. A0024750J

C/- The Kelvin Club, 14-30 Melbourne Place, Melbourne 3000

[www.vffa.org.au](http://www.vffa.org.au)

**PRESIDENT**

( & Website Administrator)

Rick Dugina

Tel: 0401 963 601 Mob

Email:

[edugina@bigpond.com](mailto:edugina@bigpond.com)

**HONORARY TREASURER**

Tony Mitchem

Tel: 9832 8405

0407 309 797 Mob

**HONORARY EDITOR**

Lyndon Webb

Tel: 9801 6151

Email: [lgwebb@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lgwebb@bigpond.net.au)

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

Terry Rogers

Tel: 9820 3119

Mob: 0438 553 326

**HONORARY SECRETARY**

Richard Garvey

Tel: 9370 5958 A/H

0412 150 190 Mob

Email: [garvey@connexus.net.au](mailto:garvey@connexus.net.au)

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

John Pilkington

Tel: 9225 8616 Bus

9489 2186 A/H

**NEXT MEETING – CHRISTMAS DINNER**

**GUEST SPEAKER: PETER MORSE**

**AT THE KELVIN CLUB, 6:30 PM FOR 7:30 PM, THURSDAY DECEMBER 16, 2010**

## November Meeting – David Featherstone

(Our guest speaker for the November meeting was David Featherstone, who gave us some reflections on his 70 years of fly-fishing experience. The following is the text of his talk.)

**I**t is something special for me to address this Association because it has been a special part of my life.

Eildon and the Goulburn scheme were the start of my fly-fishing. My father and I fished all the rivers of that catchment area, which was quite unique. As we fished those rivers my father gave me all this tuition. What a wonderful experience – to be tutored by your old man. Unfortunately I haven't got my son with me any more, but it was something special with my dad.

I was just under five years old when I caught my first fish on a fly. Dad gave me an old rod with a bit of gut tied on top and a black beetle. I popped it over the edge of the bank on the Stony Creek in the north-east, and caught a fish on my first cast.

Victoria was fantastic but we had the urge to explore other places. Think about the Murray, the Swampy Plains, the Geehi, and the Indi. What rivers! We had 7 packhorse trips into the Indi and the Geehi. Wonderful country, and the fishing was superb. I remember when we headed into the Geehi on the first trip. The fellow who was guiding us said, "Feathery, you'll have to get dinner while we set up camp." I went down to the river, and there was only one fly to use up there and that was the Geehi – a truly wonderful fly. You could use it anywhere in the world. We camped there and fished all the rivers around that area.

And what about the Monaro, where the rivers were as good as anywhere in the world. There's no question about that. And what about Jindabyne? When it opened Geoff Youl, the grandson of Sir James Youl, was there with me. We went to Jindabyne and had a wonderful morning. I took two trout that finished up in the Hardy Hall of Fame. Jindabyne was a superb brown trout water.

We also went to Tasmania, and Tasmania was again something special. It's the greatest brown trout water in the world, and there's no question about that. And what about the rainbows in the lakes of Tasmania? They were big! Whilst fishing Tasmania it was my privilege to fish in the company of anglers like J. M. Gillies, John Brookes, Dick Wigram, Les Roberts, Dr Butler and Max Christensen (who was a wonderful fly tier). We fished the Shannon Rise on three occasions and it was an experience to see some of those men fishing there. They were great fishermen, and wonderful guys to be with. When my dad died they were like fathers to me. Dad also took me to New Zealand on several occasions. It's the greatest fishing hole in the world.

For 104 years we had our business in Hawthorn, and then in 1985 I sold it. I'm sure my dad would have shot me if he knew I had done this. I started a guide service in 1985 and I think one of the greatest things to happen to me was to fish with Bill McLay. He was an



unbelievable fly fisherman, and the greatest fly fisherman I have fished with. I could go a whole night just talking about my experiences fishing with Bill in New Zealand.

I've had a lifetime of fly-fishing – 70 years in fact. It's a long time, and my talk tonight will cover some of the places I visited as a fly fisherman.

I'll start off with a place called Nova Scotia. Jim Hardy of Hardy Brothers, who I have fished with, and who was a fabulous fisherman and world casting champion, arranged for me to meet with a fellow in Nova Scotia by the name of Campbell. He was a Canadian guide, and a top guide too. We walked all day into a river called the North River. It was a full day's walk, and it wasn't easy country. We set up camp and set a fire, and I slept well that night, as walking all day through that country had been tough going.

When I woke in the morning the fire was stoked but Campbell wasn't anywhere around. "Hell," I thought, "here I am out in the never-never." About half an hour later Campbell returned and we had breakfast. Then he said, "I've found three fish." I was flabbergasted. We had walked all this distance for just three fish! Then he said, "I want you to catch these three fish before we go." Just three fish - but they were salmon. We used dry flies and they were very big flies. I started casting, and casting, and casting, ...! You don't spook salmon; they're not like trout. You just keep casting over them and eventually you drive them mad. All of a sudden I had an explosion and was into one. I eventually landed it after a tremendous fight – a 10 lb salmon. I was on top of the world, but Campbell said, "there's more to catch Feathery." We stood there for a while and I had my Polaroids on and eventually spotted one. Campbell said, "Right, now you've seen him, cast over him again. Put your fly about 30 feet ahead of him and let it float back over him." So I cast - again and again and again. Then all of a sudden there was another explosion – I had him on. Another beautiful fish - this time 15 lb. Campbell said, "There's one more to go Feathery. You'll have to get him too!" So again I cast repeatedly and eventually I was into the third salmon. He came out of the water five times and went up and down the pool, which was 70 metres long and very deep and the water was very fast. I think it took 45 minutes to wear this fish out, but I finally landed him. This third fish was even bigger still – 20 lb of magnificent salmon.

Let's move on to the Yukon. I had taken three Canadians out fishing here in Australia. We had gone up to Eucumbene when it was fishing at its best. It was fantastic. When I brought them back and dropped them at the airport they said, "Feathery, if you ever come to Canada we'll look after you." I replied, "I've been there three times but, sadly, I don't think I'll get there again". But then Alison's father died and left us \$10,000. Oh boy! I rang Maurice, a half-Indian and a wonderful guide. He was the owner of CP Airlines, and he said to me, "Ring me back next Monday morning." So I rang him and he said, "I've got it all organised. I own a float plane and we are going up through the outback of Canada and into the Yukon and Alaska." The trip took us eight weeks. We got lost one day but eventually came upon a fishing camp and flew into it because we needed fuel. There was an American there who said he had been fishing Lassui. "Where's Lassui?" We looked up the map and saw where it was. Maurice said, "We can fly in there and I reckon it will be all right." We landed on a lake above Lassui, with about 200 - 300 metres of river down to Lassui. I fished down the river but caught nothing. Not a fish to be seen. When I eventually reached Lassui I found that there was an inlet into it with a peninsula on the far side of the river. I waded across, eventually reaching the peninsula. Then in 59 casts I took 36 rainbows, all better than 6 lb. When I turned there was a wolverine

no more than 30 feet from me. I scrambled back into the scrub; wolverines are the worst killers pound for pound in the world. Even the Indians were very frightened of them. I didn't tell Maurice what happened to me.

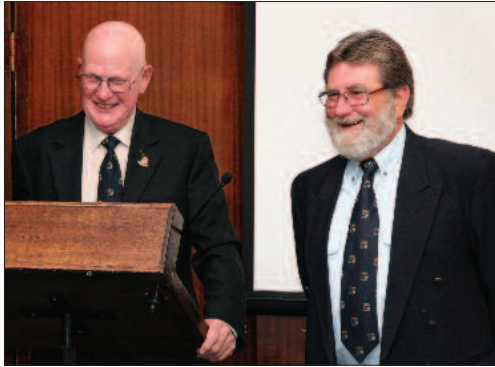
Let's now visit Finland - an incredible land of water. Alison was with me, and Petri Siron, secretary of the world body, set Alison up in a unit in Tamperi, a beautiful Finnish town. He said, "I'll pick you up at 5 tomorrow morning Feathery!" And he did, and we headed off. I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "To the Russian border, about three hours drive." We got there and fished three rivers. They were dark - a bit like the tannin-coloured rivers of Tasmania. But they were big and deep rivers and it was 'chuck and chance' fishing. We took lots of fish on large nymphs, and they were all 4 - 5 lb fish, but you couldn't keep them - they were full of 'Chernobyl problems'. Chuck and chance - not my preferred style of fishing, but what a great experience.

We'll head off to Scotland. Jim Hardy had organised a trip for me - my last trip with Jim, because he wasn't very well. He told me we were going to Bellathy House, on the Tay River. Alison and I were in a little Ford Escort and we tootled down the road, finally arriving at the entrance to Bellathy House. I drove the 3 km up the driveway to the car park, and what did we see - Rolls, Bentleys, Mercedes, Lamborghinis, more Rolls, more Bentleys ... and we were in our little Ford Escort. We walked into the foyer of this castle hotel just as the guests were coming down for dinner - black ties and evening gowns. I turned to Alison and she looked back at me. My godfather! We went up to our room and got dressed and walked down to the dining room. I had a tie and jacket, but we were put around the back corner, out of sight of the main dining room. We were the colonials and had to be kept out of sight. I was totally cheesed off!

After dinner I went to the desk and said I wanted to speak to my ghillie for the following day. "Oh no sir, we don't speak to the ghillie. He'll be here at 8 in the morning." I said, "Jim Hardy has organised this trip for me and I insist that I speak to the ghillie." I bulldozed ahead and eventually was put in contact with him - his name was Jock, and he was a lovely guy. "Jock," I said, "I want you here at 7 am." He said, "I start at 8." I said, "I want you here at 7 and I want you with your rod. We're fishing together tomorrow. I'm an Aussie. Jim has organised this and I want you to fish with me." We fished the second beat on the Tay, a magnificent river, and we took 13 fish each. We had a wonderful day and Jock was a great fisherman. We came down to dinner that night, me still in the same jacket and tie, but this time we were placed at the top table - there was only one other fish taken on the whole hotel beat that day.

Let's now travel to Africa. I'd always wanted to fish Africa, and I've always wanted to fish for those Tiger Fish. They grow to about 60 - 70 lb. I didn't catch any that size but let me tell you the story. We were camping not far from Lake Okavango when a very dark young lad called Mongo arrived at our tent. "David Featherstone," he asked. I said, "Yes?" "I've read some of your articles in a fishing magazine, and I'd like to fish with you. I like fly fishing." So at 5 o'clock the next morning he arrived in a Land Rover that was the greatest wreck of a car I had ever seen. We headed off to the Okavango, which was about 20 km away. The track took us through creeks and across marsh country. It truly was a nightmare of a trip. When we arrived he drove straight into the lake, into about 18 inches of water. He said, "Feathery, we've got to do this in this country. You'll have to fish from the bonnet of the car." So I sat up on the bonnet and started fishing for Tiger Fish. The ones we caught were only 10 - 12 lb, but what fantastic

fish. They go like hell. You need to use steel traces and you can't handle them. They are well-equipped with very sharp teeth and are very dangerous. The natives eat them, but I wouldn't. I was standing on the bonnet there when Mongo said to me, "Don't move David. Have a look behind you." I turned around, and there was a pride of lions walking past behind us. Over on the left side three crocs lay on the mud, and on the other side five hippos were in the water. Africa is a fantastic country, and it has some good trout fishing. I fished for trout there, but this wasn't the most exciting part of our trip.



*David being introduced by  
President Rick Dugina*

What about Japan? People don't realise that there are trout in Japan. Alison and I had been given a place to stay at a hotel in the mountains, and whilst sitting having lunch I spotted a rise. A rise? I called the waiter over and asked if they were trout. "Yes," he said. I said, "I've got a rod in the car. Could I fish for them?" "Most certainly!" Now Alison wasn't particularly happy about all this, but I went out and threaded my rod and started fishing. And what fly did I use? The greatest fly in the world – the Red Tag! By the time I finished I had quite an audience watching me take these trout.

Now to New Zealand – the greatest fishing hole in the world. I guided there with Bill McLay. He died a few years ago and I haven't had the heart to go back. We used to guide for about 8 weeks each year, and then for the last couple of days Bill would say, "Right David - these last two days are ours. We are going to walk into a river - the Ahuriri. It's a long walk though". So we walked in and camped for the night. The next morning we woke up and found ourselves beside a beautiful pool – about 150 metres long, 70 metres wide and crystal clear. I stood up on a knoll and spotted five fish. Then we fished all day, but never took a fish. Not one. But just on dark I yelled out to Bill, "I'm into one!" He yelled back, "So am I!" He landed his and walked back, dragging this fish on the ground - it weighed 11 lb 2 oz. "Where's yours Feathery?" "It's over there on the grass," I said. "Feathery," he said, "This is something very special." It was 15 lb 6 oz. We had taken them on midge pupae, size 16!

I think one of the last trips I did with my dad was to the Monaro. 1959 was the opening of Eucumbene, and Dad chartered a plane to get me there. The first morning I was there I headed off in the 4WD I had hired to the Frying Pan arm. I fished a Black Matuka. Dad wasn't at all well at this time, and he had hired a taxi driver with a 4WD to bring him down through the snow, arriving at about 10 o'clock. "How did you go David?" "Pretty good Dad." "Where are they?" "Behind the rock over there." He went over and looked in my bag, which had several trout in it, averaging 6 lb. He stood there with a tear in his eye. It had been a magnificent morning, and it went on like this for quite a few more years. We used Black Matukas, and Hamill's and Craigs', and so on. When we had fished New Zealand Dad had put all those New Zealand flies together and gave them to J. M. Gillies. Gillies started tying them and what a great range of flies they were.

Over the years we used to have a meeting of top fly fishermen at our house in Kew. Every Wednesday night they came. A cup of tea, and mum would make a cake. They were fantastic fly fisherman – unbelievable guys.



*David's display of photos and mementos*

Eildon! The stories from those early years were fantastic. They thought it would take five years to fill, but it only took 18 months. They raised the wall by 100 feet and the water was nearly up to Jamieson. We were up there with all these wonderful fishermen, and at daybreak they headed off in all different directions. One of these anglers was Reg Lyne - a wonderful man and an incredible fisherman, but the grog was his undoing. By lunchtime he was hopeless. He always had a bottle of whiskey in his bag.

On this particular day I stood on the edge of the lake and Reg came down and said, "How did you go Feathery?" "No good, Reg." "No good??" "No," I said, "I never even saw a fish." Reg said, "Look! There's a good fish coming along the shore towards us now. What have you got on?" I said, "One of your latex flies, Reg". "Then put it out – keep it well in front of him!" There was a huge explosion, and there I was with all these top fishermen telling me how to land it. It's quite a story, and that fish remains today as the record from Lake Eildon.

Gentlemen, that's a good point to end my talk.

(At this point David showed a short film of some of the huge trout he had taken in 2009).

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## Welcome to a New Member

The Association is delighted to welcome John Trioli as a new member. We trust that his membership brings many years of pleasure and fulfilling involvement.

# President's Message

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Here we are again, another year almost over. The sun has finally shown up after many weeks of intermittent rain showers. Work commitments are falling behind and the clients are grumbling. I did manage to get to a friend's birthday bash in the north of the South Island of New Zealand, and whilst there also managed to do a tour and show my wife the sights of Nelson and the west coast. Yes, I did fish – for about a half hour on the Grey River. This resulted in a lovely 4 lb brown. The thing that struck me were the water levels of the rivers we crossed. The Buller had lots of water and the Grey was reasonable, but the smaller rivers were mostly rocks and puddles. Apparently the Kiwis have been in a drought situation with little rain for the past few months. What a contrast to our side of the ditch. My backyard rain gauge has recorded another 80mm in the last week and I see stories of flooding on the news. The weather patterns are getting ridiculous.



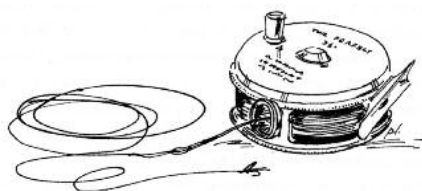
There have also been some grumbings in New Zealand about dairy run off into the Maitai River. It seems to me that the decision-makers in both countries are very slow to learn that water management needs to take a much higher priority than is presently the case. Farmers need to earn a living, as we all understand, but not at the cost of the environment surrounding them. There is a great need for all of us to take a more active interest in the current policies of our governments so that we have something to look forward to in the future.

Christmas is very close, together with all the associated preparations. Our final meeting for the year promises to be very interesting with Peter Morse sharing his latest experiences. He may well tell us about his latest book and will sign copies for members who wish to acquire one. Members intending to attend the Christmas Dinner need to either send in the booking slip promptly, or phone the Treasurer, so that numbers can be finalised. I am sure it will be heavily booked so get in early for a seat.

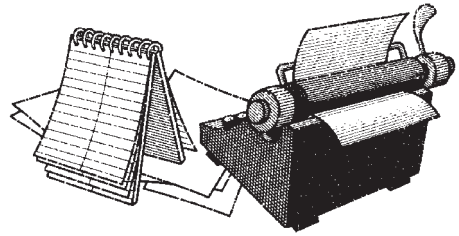
Lastly, I would wish all members and their families sincere best wishes for the festive season and the coming year. Please drive safely and use a nominated driver to the various functions. I know how fond our members are of a glass of red and I would like to fish with you again in what looks like a return to the great Victorian fishing of the past. I expect to hear many pleasing reports at the February "Liars' meeting".

May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Rick Dugina*



# From the EDITOR'S DESK



As I sit writing this contribution I'm still recovering from a long overnight flight home from Singapore, having just spent a week visiting my daughter and her family, who now live there. Not much trout fishing in Singapore, but there are a couple of fabulous bookshops, including the incredible Kinokuniya store that makes your average Borders look like a corner milkbar. And Kinokuniya carried quite a selection of fly-fishing books and magazines from all corners of the globe. So I invested in a few, because books, both old and new, are a vital part of our fly-fishing experience, aren't they.

Brian Clarke, author of *The Pursuit of Stillwater Trout* and *The Trout and the Fly* (with John Goddard) and angling correspondent for *The Times*, says: 'No sport has a finer literature than angling and no sport's great works are more avidly sought. The market in second-hand and antiquarian angling books is immense and world-wide. Some dealers handle little or nothing else, their catalogues offering hundreds of titles and thousands of volumes.' And Alfred Miller, who wrote copiously under the Nom De Plume 'Sparse Grey Hackle', assures us that 'some of the best fishing is done not in water but in print', and William Humphrey suggests that 'the literature of angling falls into two genres: the instructional and the devotional. The former is written by fishermen who write, the latter by writers who fish.'

Arthur Ransome said 'I cannot imagine anybody writing a whole book about maggots, whereas many a man has spent much of his life thinking and writing about fishermen's flies'. (Peter Morse, our Christmas Dinner guest speaker, has recently done exactly that. Peter will have his new book on saltwater flies available for purchase at the dinner. Details are given elsewhere in this newsletter.)

And while it doesn't relate to angling books, another Arthur Ransome quote caught my eye. He tells us 'I fished a little while ago with a man, not in his first youth, who had wasted the flower of his life on business and golf and gardening and motoring and marriage, and had in this way postponed his initiation far too long.'

So here we are, just weeks away from the end of the year, with the celebration and enjoyment of the Christmas period ahead, and undoubtedly for most of us, some time off work and the opportunity to wet a line somewhere. The rivers will be in top condition after the winter and spring rains so there's some great fishing to look forward to, as Geoff Hall suggests in this month's Eildon Report. And for those days when we just can't get away, there's nothing like a good angling book, either new or old, to dip into.

Enjoy the time, and tight lines. And very best wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year.

*Lyndon Webb*



## Advance Notice – February Meeting: ‘Liar’s Night’

Just a reminder to members that the first meeting next year will be on Thursday, February 17, 2011, and will be the traditional and much revered ‘Liar’s Night’, when esteemed and courageous members step forward and describe their fly fishing adventures over the previous few months. These nights are always both entertaining and instructive.

### VFFA Meetings & Activities

#### DECEMBER 2010

8 Council Meeting

16 **Christmas Dinner: Guest Speaker – Peter Morse**

#### FEBRUARY 2011

9 Council Meeting

17 **General Meeting: Liar’s Night**

18 – 20 Dudley Lee Donger Weekend at Bairnsdale

19 – 25 Tasmanian Trip to Peter Hayes’ Complex

## This Month’s Yarn

(from December 1960)

“Trout are susceptible to very subtle influences, I think you’ll agree”, said McTaggart. We all agreed. “I was over in New Zealand not so long ago,” he went on, (as he always does). “The trout in the Watabitti, though numerous, were particularly shy. There was quite a bunch of first-class anglers there too, including myself of course, staying at the Anglers’ Lodge, and none of us could even get a rise. All except one chap, and he was catching heaps of fish. He kept to himself, I noticed, and wouldn’t fish near anyone else.”

“But I was determined to find out his secret. So I cultivated his acquaintance, and finally he told me. He wasn’t using a gut or nylon leader, but one made out of single strands of horse hair.”

“That seems rather strange,” we incautiously commented. “You’d think that horse hair would be much more visible than even a 2X cast.”

“That’s where the subtlety came in,” said McTaggart. “The strands came from the tail of a well-known racehorse. I think it’s name was Rising Fast.”

## The Annual Christmas Dinner – with Peter Morse

This year's Christmas Dinner is scheduled for Thursday, December 16, and our guest speaker for the occasion is Peter Morse. The Dinner Invitation is enclosed as an insert with this newsletter.

### *Peter Morse*

Peter is one of the country's best known fly-fishing journalists, casting teachers, and presenters.

He has fished all of his life and has been writing on fly-fishing since the mid-1980's. During the 90's had a very successful prime-time television series called *Wildfish*, which ran for 26 episodes and was subsequently shown in some 30 countries.

Peter is currently doing a lot of writing and photography, and travelling the country speaking at clubs and conducting casting days and fishing seminars. He has also written some books. *Saltwater Fly*

*Fishing Fundamentals* still sells very well, as does his instructional DVD entitled *Arbor to Fly*, which describes the connections and systems used to put together a reel filled with backing all the way from the arbor through to the fly. His most recent book, which has just been released, is entitled *A Few Great Flies ... and how to fish them*. Peter will have copies with him at the dinner, and those anxious to get their hands on an early Christmas present will be able to purchase a signed copy. Details of the book are given below.

Does he prefer freshwater or saltwater fly-fishing? He doesn't differentiate too much – its all fly-fishing and its all good. They're all fish and they all eat a fly if you're prepared to figure them out. He will try to catch anything anywhere on a fly. He loves his trout fishing and his carp fishing, has caught some wonderful native freshwater fish on flies, has fly-fished for marlin, tuna and bass, and thoroughly enjoys his time in the high country of the Snowy mountains using a 2 weight rod on tiny alpine meadow streams full of little trout. It's all good, and there's no such thing as a bad fish or a bad day's fishing. There are tough days, better days, and GREAT days, but no bad days.

Peter has personally caught 280 different fish species on flies.

As you will appreciate, Peter has an incredible wealth of experience in fly-fishing, and is a wonderful choice as guest speaker for our Christmas Dinner.

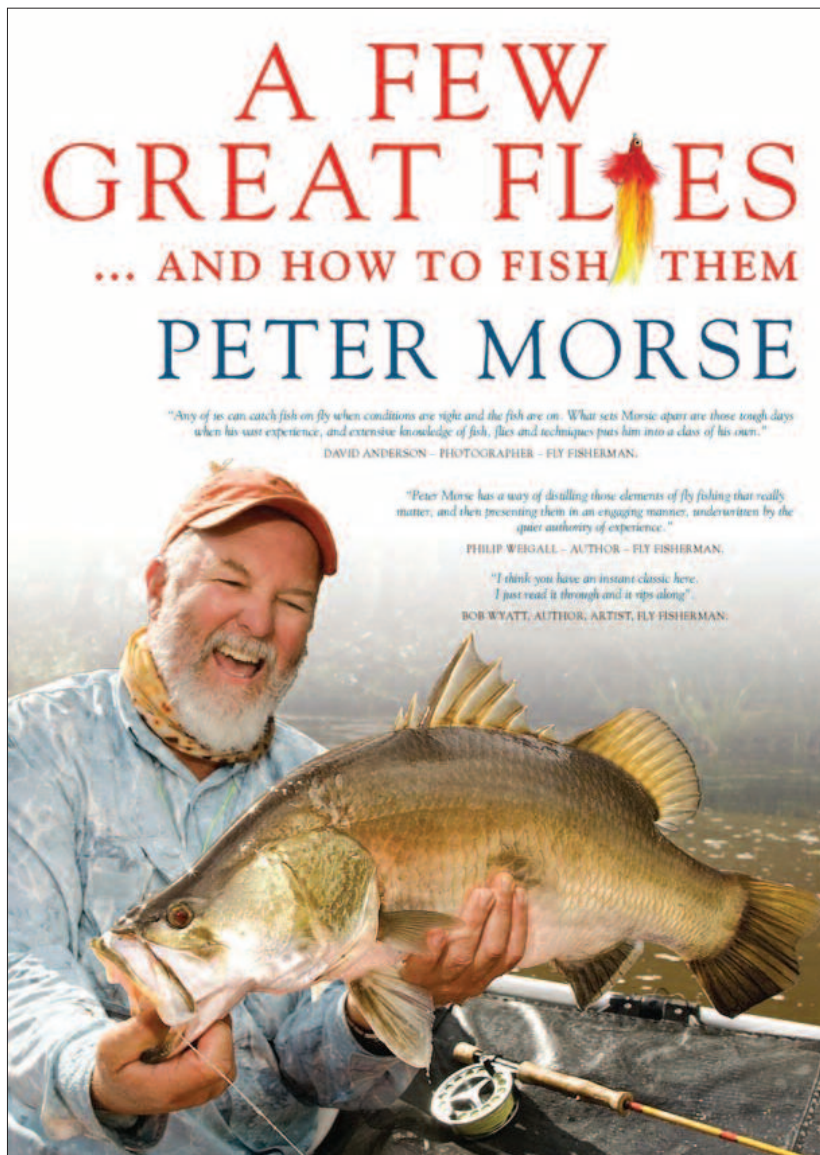


### About Peter's new book....

Peter's new book is a very detailed examination of flies for saltwater fly-fishing and how we should fish them. The fly selection is pretty straightforward - it's the flies Peter travels with regardless of where he's going fishing, and includes instructions for tying these basic patterns. But where this book really shines is in its detail on how and why we should fish these patterns. This instructional component is written in a highly entertaining way, with endless anecdotes about his considerable fishing experiences around the country (and other parts of the world).



*Cheers Dermot*



There are chapters on what makes a good fly, how to fish flies deeper, and the importance of varying your retrieve. Line management issues are addressed and there is a very enlightening chapter on fly lines in general.

The book is 240 pages with 64 pages of stunning colour images and 120 black and white photos, including fly tying sequences. It has been printed on a heavy grain, high quality matte paper and it is evident that this has been a labour of love because this is a classy publication.

RRP is \$45.



# The Test River - at Romsey

(David Grisold fished the Test earlier this year.)



*The little red Alfa*

I unlocked the first padlock, then the second, and pushed on the large gate to give me access to the famous Test River at Romsey. This was the Holy Grail, a fly-fisherman's paradise. As I walked to the river the excitement started to build.

I wandered down through the paddock (it was just a paddock), past the cows. They were just cows - in fact the same sort of cows we see everywhere when we fly-fish for trout.

But – ah! The river! And what a river it is, flowing fast and crystal clear. What a beautiful chalk stream, with large mats of lime and dark green weed waving to me and beckoning my dry fly.

I sat and watched for ten minutes from my little possie on the river bank, and spotted several fish of around two pounds swimming in the river. I decided to tie on a blue dun, size 18, and send her for a swim.

She bobbed along like a cork in the ocean. On her third run down the current, slurp and down she went. My beautiful blue dun had disappeared. Then, as I lift the rod, she remerged with a very healthy Test River brownie attached. He thinks she is his, but I know they are both mine. After several minutes of back and forth, running up and down the river bank, a beautifully-colored brownie of two and a half pounds returns my fly. Oh, how clever are these British brown trout.

Photos over, the fish swam away, then the fly was cleaned and dried and returned to the fly box, and out came a Tups, lovingly tied for me by J. D. Philbrick.

I sat talking to my wife Rhonda, who, by the way was celebrating her 50th birthday. And she had taken me fly-fishing! What a girl!



*A handsome Test trout*

As we drank our wine and sampled some delightful French cheese the fish started to rise, so I cast my Tups in the general area, not wanting to line the fish. To my amazement, a fish from right under the bank we were standing on darted out and molested my fly, stealing her and heading upstream to a large mat of weed in a deep hole. Sadly the weed waved good bye and my Tups, which was still hanging onto the trout's lip, was lost forever.

As night started to fall, (this being at 9:30 pm in the Test valley at Romsey) I tied on a Choco's Stimulator, size 16, and cast it onto the river. It returned several minutes later with my very first grayling firmly attached.

The bride was hungry and the cows were sick of these uneducated Aussies yahooping up and down their river bank, so it was time to go. But I wanted to return and after some quick talking and plenty of "I love yous" there was a change of plan and we decided to stay another night in glorious downtown Romsey.



## Day 2

After dreaming all night of the Test, I was reminded by Rhonda very quickly the next morning that this was her holiday, not mine, so the Test was left behind and we headed for Bath. We negotiated the crowded roads and finally arrived at Bath. Everywhere we looked it all looked the same. Buildings were quaint but identical - a little like an AV Jennings estate from the 15th century. Dick Goodall's ancestors have a lot to answer for. At least the Romans tried to teach the Poms how to build things, a skill that seems long lost these days.

From Bath we headed to Stonehenge - another freeway driven at breakneck speed. Thank heavens that one thing the Pommies do right is travel fast on their highways. So at 150 kph I saw the sign out the corner of my eye - Stonehenge: next right.

I jumped on the brakes and stood the little Alfa on its nose, hit the indicator and swung hard right as I looked across at Rhonda. I'm sure she mumbled something about THE FOX HAT. But never mind, we made it to Stonehenge - half a dozen rocks standing upright in a paddock. So what's the meaning of life and what are we doing here? I didn't have to ponder much longer, as the river beckoned and the late afternoon rise waits for no man. So off we went back to Romsey.

It's 6:30 pm when we arrived at the Test. The wind had picked up and developed a chill, but we were prepared and were made of tough Aussie stock. We unpacked our ham, chicken, cheese and claret while I cast an anxious eye for any telltale signs of a fish. As we started to

eat I tied on a fly to make sure all was ready. Ah - a rise, and then another. I cast - nothing. I cast again, the fish sipped gently, and "Houston we have lift off". I could never tire of this - a lovely brownie coming to the bank. To my amazement it was the same fish I had caught the previous evening. I knew this because he carried a battle scar on his lower jaw. Again he swam away to fight another day.

Some cows arrived and headed straight for our picnic. Rhonda bravely protected the wine while I scooped up the edible morsels from the rug.



*The evening rise*

Thwarted, the cows all plunged into the river to seek their revenge.

After 30 minutes we have consumed the picnic and wine, the cows have gone, and the fish have started to rise again. I tied on another of my stimulator patterns, and we are on again - this time a sensational 3 lb brown trout with green back and burnt butter flanks. This is a beautifully-marked fish, which again swam off to resume his life in this wonderful river.

As we left the river I realised how fortunate I had been. I must wholeheartedly thank Doctor Rodney Foale for the opportunity to fish his wonderful stretch of river. Also, to Pilks for making it all happen, and Tups (aka John Philbrick) for tying some flies that worked a treat. And a very special thank-you to the birthday girl and cow whisperer, Rhonda. Happy Birthday, darling!



# Fly-fishing the Goulburn River in the 1960's

(by Mike Griffiths)

The Goulburn River, that big brawling tailwater that starts at Eildon and winds its way through its namesake valley to eventually flow into Nagambie Lake, is perhaps Victoria's most important trout fishery, particularly the section between the townships of Alexandra and Eildon that's so popular with fly-fishers.

But for me, fly-fishing during the 1960s meant fishing the Goulburn much further downstream, near the town of Seymour. Growing up in the district, the Goulburn was my home water, the river along whose banks I was to take my first uncertain steps towards fly-fishing. It was here too, at the old Hume Highway bridge that crossed the Goulburn near Seymour where so many of my fishing days began, that the then Fisheries and Wildlife Division classified the river upstream of the bridge as *Trout Water* and the river downstream as *Murray Water*.

Now if you were to stand on this bridge back then, as I often did, and peer into the river's crystal clear depths, both upstream and down, there was nothing to distinguish either *Water* as being any different from the other. And yet this seemingly arbitrary classification of water types was to have significant influence on my fishing of the river. During those early years, most of my fishing was done upstream of the bridge in the Trout Water, as I believed that the Murray Water was somewhat second-rate and most likely, bereft of trout. A rather silly notion now, but back then it carried the weight of authority, and if the Fisheries and Wildlife Division didn't consider the downstream water as Trout Water, then there had to be a reason. I did venture downstream a couple of times, just out of curiosity and because the water looked good, but these brief forays, inevitably fishless, only reinforced my belief that to fly fish for trout in *Murray Water* was a complete waste of time!

Of course in those early years, it wouldn't have mattered where I fished on the Goulburn, as fishless days were the norm and successes were few. For all my reading of McCausland and Blackwood provided little information on how to fish such an imposing river. The answers that I needed to confidently fish the Goulburn would be learnt in time, and along the way, so too would come the realisation that my prejudice toward fishing this *Murray Water* was totally unfounded, and far from being second-rate water, the river for several kilometres downstream of Seymour would produce excellent fishing. In fact there seemed no shortage of trout as I progressively fished my way further downstream with each season. My delight was to discover a new anabranch or backwater, as I found these easier to fish than the main river, which I reserved for the evening rise on the walk out. In the anabranches it was possible to spot trout feeding throughout the day, often just quietly sipping flies from the surface while tucked in under an overhanging branch or working a beat, foraging amongst the weeds for water beetles and stick caddis. What I liked about the anabranches, apart from the fact that I found them easier to fish than the main river, was the size of the trout they held. Fishing the main river during the evening rise on a good night might produce two or three fish averaging around 1½ lb. But in the anabranches most of the fish I caught ranged between 2 lb and 3 lb, and occasionally larger.

For me, the discovery of a large trout was the most exciting aspect of anabranch fishing. If all went well, just occasionally I would catch one of these outsized fish on our first encounter, but if not, it was simply a matter of going back to it the following day or week, as generally it could be found feeding in the same place. The outcomes of many of these encounters were only settled after several weeks and I recall many of my days in the classroom were spent planning tactics and idly dreaming of those trout and the coming weekend.

Most of the trout caught around Seymour were browns but there was also a healthy population of rainbows. The rainbows seemed to prefer the faster flows of the main river, and once hooked, seemed impossible to stop. One particularly large rainbow that I remember with painful vividness, even after all these years, was feeding on the large red-eyed cicadas that were in abundance along the riverbank that year. The sight of this giant with its brilliant green back, zig-zagging back and forth across the fast current chomping down cicada after cicada, did little for my composure and brought out every flaw in my suspect casting technique. Somehow I managed to get the fly out, a large Zulu, and was totally stunned when the fish charged and took the fly. I don't remember striking but I do recall nearly being pulled off the log I was perched on before the heavy tippet snapped on the rainbow's first mighty leap. The fish leapt several times as it headed up-river, just to show me what I had lost. If a knife had been thrust into my stomach and twisted right then, it would have felt no worse than how I felt after that appalling loss. Forever etched into my memory is the image of that rainbow, glistening like bar of silver with a blood-red blotch on its cheek, suspended above the river.

The rainbows that I did manage to land provided an interesting contrast in their dietary habits to those of the browns. As most of the fish I caught back then were destined for the table, I always made a habit of examining the stomach contents during the cleaning process. Most of the bigger browns' stomachs contained largish food items such as stick caddis, aquatic beetles and an assortment of terrestrial insects, but their stomachs were rarely full and occasionally empty or with just the remnants of a yabby claw. By contrast, the stomachs of the rainbows were invariably packed full of a wide assortment of aquatic insects, tiny riffle beetles, midge larvae, and small horn-cased caddis. But the over-riding difference was that of abundance and size - most of the food items were very small. It always struck me that the rainbows were more efficient feeders than the browns; or perhaps the browns were just fussier feeders. Whatever accounted for this dietary disparity, one thing was very clear – the rainbows were always better conditioned than the browns - fatter and fitter.

Apart from caddis, fly hatches of any significance were rare. While there were some mayflies in the river, mostly small baetids, the hatches were sporadic and were never a feature of the fishing that I recall. The best mayfly hatches were in the Goulburn's nearby tributaries, the Sunday and Sugarloaf creeks. But it was the evening caddis hatches that most often brought the trout to the surface. As often occurred along the Goulburn, the wind would ease off as evening settled upon the valley, and in the stillness clouds of snowflake caddis would drift over the river like smoke from a fire. As the caddis engaged in their mating and descended closer to the water, the first of the rises would start. These were mostly small trout that would leap eagerly for this fluttering cream caddis that seemed not much more than two pairs of wings. For a few seasons I was fooled by their presence over the water, believing they triggered the frantic feeding that was the evening rise, for shortly the real rise would begin. One or two at first, in the quiet water off the main current. But these were better fish - you knew by their sound, and the displacement of water. Soon more fish joined in feeding, and

now more were positioned in the main current flow, gulping and slashing at the surface. Up and down the river in the fading light you could glimpse the flinging spray of their rises, and what you couldn't see, what was lost peering into the dim shadows of the bank side foliage, you could unmistakably hear above the river's rush; every fish in the river seemed to be feeding. And into this maelstrom of rises I would cast in desperation that most useless fly, at least for me, the white moth; a fly which seemed to promise so much, but on which I was never to catch a trout. As the feeding intensified, so too would my sense of panic if I was hitherto fishless. In desperation I would charge upstream and then down, casting to every fish. In the failing light, my earlier composed targeting of the bigger fish having dissolved into casting at anything – as long as it was gullible!

It was on such an evening, under equally desperate conditions, that I was to make a discovery that was so surprising to me that its revelation would change the way I would approach and fish this river thereafter. But at the time, the outlook for that evening was grim. Facing a fishless day at the end of twelve hours and several miles on the water, I stood thigh-deep in the river casting into the gloom at the last remnants of the evening rise, resolved to the inevitable outcome. The snowflake caddis had been particularly thick, but several fly changes had produced nothing, so I went back to my most successful day fly – a March Brown wet fly. This drab-looking fly didn't have the appeal for me that a Zulu, Alexandra or Bloody Butcher had, so it was never a first choice. But it had caught me some nice trout and often proved successful despite being used as a last resort.

By now the rise had petered out to just a few fish, one of which continued to rise well out in the river. But after several casts had swung through the area without a response I was ready to give up. The line hung below me in the current as I stood there looking, hoping for an answer. What did I have to do to catch a fish; why was it so hard? It was during this moment of contemplation that I became aware of a throbbing sensation in the rod, followed by the wobbling of the centre-pin Bakelite reel as line quickly peeled away, to be followed by a mighty crash as a fish broke the surface. Stunned beyond belief at what was happening, my initial euphoria was tempered by the terror that I might lose it and after some minutes I was convinced of this; no net, no torch, it would snag me like the others and without me having ever seen it. Somehow I managed to not break the tippet, and after what seemed an interminable period I was able to get the fish into a small shallow backwater where, after a couple of heart-stopping attempts, I managed to scoop it ashore and clutching it against my chest, scrambled for the hinterland well away from the water. After a moment of composure, I stood on unsteady knees and with my hands still trembling, I held the trout aloft so that I could admire its outline against the gloaming.

The long bike ride home, so often an ordeal after a fishless day, was a pleasant affair. The trout, which weighed 4 pounds, greatly impressed my parents. My father, who could never understand why I gave up the reliable redfin for the infrequent trout, had to admit that he had never seen a trout so large... but I digress. And so I spoke of a discovery. Well, on cleaning the fish and placing the stomach contents in an enamel bowl full of water, I expected to see scores of snowflake caddis. There were none.

What was there though were several large brownish winged long-horned caddis flies about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch long, and many, I was soon to discover, were in the pupae form with an orange-brown thorax and pale creamy orange abdomen. So, this was the answer! All those fruitless

evenings flailing the water believing it was the snowflake caddis that they feeding on, when all along it was something much larger, much more of a meal. But why hadn't I noticed this before? The answer was simple: the rise reached a peak of intensity when most of the light had left the river. Then this dull-brown caddis could emerge and immediately head for the cover of bank-side foliage, unnoticed. But it was not so dark that you could miss the clouds of snowflake caddis drifting over the water, and it was upon these that I had become fixated. Yet they had masked from me what was really happening, and now it all made sense. That was the reason why largish trout would position themselves to feed in the fast water, not to take dainty hovering snowflake caddis, no - but to better intercept and capture these rapidly emerging caddis pupa.

Were these larger caddis the pupae form of the stick-caddis larva that I often found drifting in backwaters and in the stomachs of trout, whose case was so much larger than seemed necessary. I was convinced that they were. These cream-coloured larvae with a brown head were about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch long but occupied 'sticks' that were up to twice as long. There seemed more 'stick' than grub but it didn't seem to worry the trout. It was obvious that both stages of this insect appealed to the trout.

The discovery was to change my approach to fishing the Goulburn. Up until then, I was intimidated by the main river and lacked the confidence to tackle it during the day, leaving it for the evenings and concentrating on the anabranches and backwater during the day. But the main river offered many more opportunities and for all their appeal, anabranches were limited in number and length, while on the main river I could fish all the way to Nagambie, or to Eildon. Reasoning that the large caddis pupa was the key to success for the evening rise and the stick caddis nymph was my hope for daytime fishing, I set about developing suitable imitations of both. My first stick caddis imitation was, I thought, a crude job. It was composed mostly of wool yarn - dark-brown for the case, a hint of white to suggest the grub, brown wool again for the head and, depending upon availability, a small bantam rooster hackle for the legs. But it lacked the look of the classic wet flies I loved so much. There was no silver or gold tinsel that I was so used to seeing on my favourite patterns, no iridescent feathered wing; in fact it held so little appeal for me I was prepared to give it one chance only. Fortunately, it only needed one.

Jiggled from the end of my rod while hidden behind a tree trunk, I watched as a 2lb brown casually swam up and inhaled the fly. This was repeated many times that season as I dapped or bow-and-arrow cast the fly to every trout I spotted. And yet I still found it difficult to reconcile the fly's success to its rather simplistic appearance. In the end, I had to admit that the trout seemed to take it for what it was meant to imitate. Over the years I refined the fly by using more exotic materials, more to satisfy my own sense of what a fly should look like, but it proved no more effective. The fly's success, I'm convinced, lay in the fact that it simply looked like a stick!

The pupae imitation similarly proved an immediate success, but this was perhaps due as much due to its method of fishing as to any inherent appeal the fly possessed. Knowing that the trout were likely to be feeding on the emerging pupa, it was simply a matter of getting upstream of the rising trout and dropping the fly into its feeding path. As the sunken fly reached the suspected position just ahead of the fish, the line was tightened. If all went well the fly rose in front of the fish, a boil ensued, and if you maintained a high rod tip with a droop in the fly line

throughout the drift, the trout would not feel tension in the line as it took the fly. If there was no take, I simply repeated the process until the trout and the drift were aligned. I tied a dry caddis imitation of the pupa by changing only the wing, and this proved effective both dry and wet, for in the heavy flows of the Goulburn, with repeated presentations the fly quickly became waterlogged, but no less effective.

In the decades following the 1960s, there was not much of the Goulburn River that I had not fished from about mid-way between Seymour and Nagambie up to the Eildon Pondage. And all along this extensive length of river, I had encountered the emergence this large, brown, long-horned caddis during the evening rise and the exciting fishing that accompanied it. By about the late 1980s there were signs that the caddis's appearance was diminishing. At around this time, too, the fishing around Seymour started to deteriorate. The larger fish seemed to disappear first, followed by the caddis hatches. And then the carp appeared and totally overwhelmed the trout in the anabranches.

But the seeds of the lower Goulburn's demise as a trout fishery were sown long before, and had taken root by the time I had first cast a fly on its water. The crystal-clear water that enabled you to see the bottom of the river in 10 feet of water was to become increasingly tinged with colour, never quite achieving the clarity of the previous season. Sand dredging and erosion in the Sunday-Sugarloaf Creek catchments would have the biggest impact on the fishing below Seymour. Sunday Creek would discharge its sediment load upstream of my favourite stretch of water, making it harder to spot fish in the anabranches. Water extraction from Dabyminga Creek following the proliferation of hobby farms along its length robbed this once magnificent spawning and nursery stream of the means to recruit both brown and rainbow trout for the river.

I no longer fish this part of the Goulburn, though I hope to some day if it ever clears, though I somehow can't see this happening. I see the river occasionally when I cross over it at the Hume Highway bridge downstream of Seymour, usually on my way to fish the Snowy Mountain area. Looking down at this sad river that once saw so much of me during those long endless days of summer, I still feel a stirring in my heart - not for the sight of its brown tepid water, but for the memories it can still evoke. Memories of hot steamy days and grasshoppers, of frantic caddis hatches amid the cool relief of the evenings. But above all, the sight of those cruising anabranch trout and the promise they held.

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## Confessions of a Mechanized Puddler

(by Joe Kahler – who writes regularly for various USA fly-fishing magazines,  
and now also for the VFFA)

A sure sign of middle/old age having arrived, or being close at hand, is the phrase, “back in the day,” creeping into one's thoughts, writings, and verbal patter. I try not to use these words for that reason but, being the father of a 15 year old girl, I find them creeping in like a cockroach in the garage more and more frequently these days. While I try to convince myself that

nostalgia about the days of yore is just a sign of a maturity of perspective that's been well-earned by virtue of youthful mistakes, I don't quite buy that 100%, at least not in my case. I have a sneaking suspicion that, for me, nostalgia is at least 50% a geezerous longing for what I cannot have: the power and boundless energy of youth, without the recklessness and hubris of that condition.

So . . . back in the day, when I first started my little experiment with fly-fishing from a kayak, I spurned the notion of mechanization of any sort. For years my closest fishing buddies, Steve Lee, Mike LaFleur, and I sort of prided ourselves on the amount of marsh we covered in our puddlecraft (kayaks and canoe). Those were the days when we would often fish for eight hours straight or more, even in the heat of the summer, exploring vast areas of the tidal wetlands and trying to figure out the where, when, how, and which-fly of it all. A day of projectile sweating could only be counteracted by litres to gallons of Gatorade and water, and the muscle fatigue at end of day seemed to scoff at aspirin, or even the big gun - naproxyn. While we got kind of good at it with those marathon days of marsh-lashing, looking back I'm amazed at what we put our bodies through in order to figure it all out. I guess it had to be done in order for us to know what we know now.

Later on, as the learning curve's slope leveled out, Steve Lee decided to outfit his canoe with a trolling motor, figuring he could thus find new areas to explore, see new sights, and ache less after each outing. In those days I was still in the Pequod (a Wilderness Systems Pungo), which was fast, tracked well, and was relatively easy to paddle compared to the canoe Steve was in. Nevertheless, there was no known way to outfit it with an electric motor, so muscle power was still my only option. Besides, I told myself, I could stand to burn the calories.

I thought of using a trolling motor as "cheating" somehow, and I resisted even accepting a tow from Steve. The other prong of the trident of marsh prowlers of which I was a part, Mike LaFleur, succumbed to temptation before I did, or at least that's the way I like to remember it. On a particularly hot summer day, when the three of us had all had good luck with Redfish, we were paddling back to the launch site with about 30 pounds of live fish hanging on stringers off the sides of our vessels – into the teeth of a fairly stiff breeze and against a tide moving straight at us. Steve asked, "You want a tow?" Mike accepted and I declined, figuring that the Pequod and I could keep up with a canoe pulling a kayak, while on the other hand, a canoe with a trolling motor might run out of juice before it reached home base if it were pulling two 'yaks'. We were in the experimental phase with the trolling motor-assist and I figured we'd better start slow, so my plan was to paddle alongside and see how things worked out. Mike has about 14 years seniority on me, so I figured he deserved the break. Now, you shouldn't assume that this was all about altruism and practical thinking though. There was that prideful part of me that simply wasn't ready to give up the idea of myself as "noble savage," free of as many of the 20th century softeners as I could manage for as long as I could manage it.

Then, as I recall, on a trip I'd missed for some reason, Mike and Steve found a previously unexplored Redfish Valhalla that was far enough away from one of our launches that getting to it would mean paddling a long way before even beginning the hunt for tails and backs to cast to. They spoke so highly of it in their typically understated way that, at the next trip to that spot, I joined them, reluctantly pocketed my pride, and accepted my first tow. And ya' know, the benefits far outweighed the bitter taste of shame at having temporarily given up my position as paddling purist. Mike and I hooked up behind Steve in tandem and we scooted

along at a fast clip, arrived without having broken a sweat, disconnected from the mother ship as it were, had lots of energy to paddle around in the new and distant shores, explored acres of new water, caught lots of good fish, reconnected with Steve, and got towed all the way home with a little electricity left to spare in the battery. I still got a workout in the middle, but I wasn't my usual wet dish-rag self after a summer fishing trip when I got home.

Sadly, Steve then entered Law School and wasn't fishing as often as Mike and I did anymore. He still found occasion to join us from time to time and Mike and I started (secretly) looking forward to bootlegging a little juice from Steve on his albeit less frequent fishing trips with us.

The Pequod eventually wore out. A hole got scraped into the hull directly under the seat after years of scooch-launching it over sand and concrete and shell and paddling over oyster beds, and I had to put her into semi-retirement. I shopped for a replacement and eventually settled on the Native Watercraft Ultimate 12 for its stability (I can stand up in it, although I'm not yet comfortable doing so,) its open cockpit, and its comfortable, versatile seating. I didn't realize it at the time, but this turned out to be a very lucky purchase since the good folks at Native Watercraft were soon to develop and offer a trolling motor mount designed specifically for the Ultimate. With graduation from law school, Steve moved home to Natchitoches and with him went the hope of "borrowed juice" on any predictable basis. The siren song of motor-assisted kayaking began to reach my ears from the distance, but the internal battle between what I thought of as giving in to sloth on the one hand, and a healthy acceptance of the limitations of approaching geezerdom on the other, raged within me. I was almost ready, but not quite.

When LaFleur got knocked out of the boat in the Autumn of 2008 by a problem that required surgery, a subsequent nasty infection, surgical mesh that failed and had to be replaced in a second surgical procedure, a long hospitalization that left him weak as a kitten, and a lengthy period of convalescence at home, the balance finally tipped in the direction of what I've lately come to accept as my next phase of development.

Well, I thought, it would be selfish of me not to invest in the relatively inexpensive equipment that would allow Mike to get back on the south Louisiana water sooner and stay out there on the water longer and more comfortably, wouldn't it? Mike's physical setback was the perfect excuse and, truth be told, that's mostly what it was. After all, how altruistic was it of me really to buy something, just so I could continue to fish more often and more widely with somebody I really love to fish with? But then, that's kind of the way true friendship works, isn't it? When the lines between what's good for your buddy and what's good for yourself begin to blur, I guess you're pretty much in the realm of that *Philia* (Friendship with a capital "F") that Aristotle counted among the Virtues.

While Mike has recovered and no longer needs my towing capacity, and I am (hopefully) quite a way from needing it myself, I must admit that I've been (as we say in Texas) "rode hard and put up wet" more often than I would have if I'd known way back then what I know now. I suppose it is inevitable that in the days to come my forays into The Cathedral of the marsh will depend more and more on a little mechanized support. I only hope that I'll approach those days with something like humility and true acceptance of the human-ness of my own limitations. Maybe having the motor now will let those days sneak up on me kinda' quiet like; will ease the passing a bit. In any case, right now I'm happy to have the increased range and personal energy reserve that it affords me and my friend. Thanks, Mike, for the excuse and thanks, Steve, for paving the way. May the circle be unbroken for a long time to come.

# Tasmania Fishing

(Notes taken from Tasmanian Fishing and Boating News, Issue 88)

## *Inland Fisheries News*

For those planning to fish Tasmania in the next few months, the following data may well be very useful. The Inland Fisheries Service surveys anglers during the season to obtain quantitative data on the recreational fishery. Two main surveys are conducted - the annual Angler Postal Survey (APS) and the angler creel survey. The results from the APS are collated and calculations made to produce estimates of the catch rate and total harvest for each species and the total number of anglers fishing at each water.

This year, a total of 4,190 questionnaires were sent out and 862 were returned for analysis, representing a return of over 17% of questionnaires sent out.

The results of the APS in terms of ranking of the most popular fisheries in 2009 and 2010 are displayed in the Table below. It shows the estimated number of anglers who fished at each location, along with the estimated total catch rate for all species combined (brown trout, rainbow trout; brook trout and Atlantic salmon)

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Catch Rate (fish per day)</b>	<b>Angler Numbers</b>
1	Arthurs Lake	2.02	9,586
2	Great Lake	1.68	8,871
3	Woods Lake	2.90	5,902
4	Little Pine Lagoon	1.28	3,970
5	Penstock Lagoon	0.90	3,219
6	Bronte Lagoon	1.80	2,968
7	Bradys Lake	1.38	2,503
8	Four Springs Lake	0.95	2,360
9	Craigbourne Dam	0.68	2,146
10	Lake Echo	2.77	2,146
11	Lake Barrington	0.99	1,752
12	Brushy Lagoon	0.86	1,752
13	Huntsman Lake	1.83	1,752
14	Lake Augusta	3.25	1,609
15	Lake Burbury	3.69	1,359

Ranking	River	Catch Rate (fish per day)	Angler Numbers
1	River Derwent	0.50	3,433
2	Mersey River	1.39	3,040
3	Brumbys Creek	0.68	3,004
4	South Esk River	2.02	2,146
5	Macquarie River	1.21	1,967
6	Huon River	0.79	1,824
7	Tyenna River	2.94	1,716
8	Meander River	2.59	1,573
9	River Leven	1.38	1,359
10	North Esk River	3.53	1,287

The top five still waters have remained relatively unchanged in terms of popularity over the past few years. These are Arthurs, Great and Woods lakes and Penstock and Little Pine lagoons, which are Tasmania's premium trout fisheries. Of these, Woods Lake has provided anglers with the most consistent and high catch rates. It replaced Bronte Lagoon in 2006-07 after the road was upgraded to two wheel drive standard, which improved access and boosted its popularity. Woods Lake continues to produce fish at a high catch rate despite greatly increased angler visitation. The most significant difference in the results this year compared with last season was the return of Craighourne Dam into the top ten after a three year absence. The reason for its re-emergence was the return of high water levels and the fishery's recovery from the severe drought conditions from 2006 to 2009.



# The VFFA Warrnambool Trip

(Bill Skacej)

On the weekend of November 6, I was one of a contingent of 16 VFFA members lucky enough to be hosted by the Warrnambool Fly-Fishers on their home waters. The VFFA team arrived on Friday afternoon and evening, but having prior commitments, it was not until 12:30 pm on Saturday that I met my old mate Rob Ainscow and Warrnambool's Jim Blakeslee on the Merri River. We were just upstream of Jim's "backyard" in Woodford, 10 kilometres north of Warrnambool.

Rob and Jim had spent the last hour fishing a long, open, picture postcard bend of the river, consisting of a series of large and small pools separated by fairly deep and swiftly flowing channels. Strapweed lined the edges of both banks marking the steep drop-offs. "A classic spring creek," Jim explained. Rob, with hands shaking as he changed to a heavier tippet, said he'd been broken off by three "good fish", and Jim had extracted a three and a half pounder from the pool they'd started at.

I asked what flies and method we'd be using, and so began one of the steepest learning curves in fly-fishing I'd ever experienced. The fish were not really rising yet, and the slightly discoloured water limited sight fishing, so the set up was a small, weighted green shrimp trailing about three feet from the bend of a black woolly bugger. The technique was short-line nymphing where the water flowed, and a jiggled retrieve through any slack water. The idea was to stay in touch with the flies, drag not being an issue with this kind of fishing - a cross between nymphing and lure casting.



*Jim Blakeslee knows his Merri River fish rather well*

Jim made only a few casts into each pool or run, then moved onto the next if there was no response. Soon we entered a patch of willows where Jim demonstrated the "bow and arrow" cast. I had once embedded a hook to the hilt in my index finger practising this technique in my backyard. But a few pointers from Jim had me getting my flies into some tight spots, though perhaps not with his efficiency or elegance of style.

I was connected to my first trout within 20 minutes of arriving on the water. Jim spotted the fish with its head virtually in the channel feeding the pool we'd been casting through. It turned when it heard the flies plop behind its tail, following then taking without hesitation. The fish pulled hard straight for the bottom, then turned toward a tangle of willow. I put the brakes on but he got in there anyway leaving the woolly bugger in a stick and departing with the green caddis pupa (shrimp).

A couple of pools along and the next trout was hooked under exactly the same circumstances, this time spitting the hook with a head rattling leap. These were both solid fish- two pound plus. I finally landed a beautifully conditioned two and half pound hen, once again plopping

the flies behind her as she drifted down the middle of a pool. All three fish had taken the green shrimp.



Jim left us at around 4 pm to make preparations for the BBQ being held at his place later that evening. So, in a few hours I had learned new techniques and fished new waters for top quality fish, with some success. An invaluable fly-fishing lesson from a master practitioner on his home waters, and one of the most enjoyable afternoon's fishing I've had anywhere.

Jim's "backyard" overlooking his vineyard and the Merri River provided a spectacular setting for the BBQ feast we enjoyed that evening. Of course the night was spent comparing notes and photos of the day's fishing.

Hugh and Choco had done well on the Merri at Grasmere with the woolly bugger and shrimp set up on Friday, and small dries on Saturday. Dick Goodall and company got stuck into some huge redfin boat fishing on Lake Gilleear. Others had done well on the Moyne River, with Rick Williams landing a magnificent five pound brown. Interestingly Rick had used the same fly rig as we had but all takes for him were on the woolly bugger. Rick Dugina, Col Morrison, and Bob Loch had fished the lower Merri by boat, chasing larger resident browns without any luck. Recent rain had left the Hopkins River and Mount Emu Creek unfishable for the weekend, but Jim and Bob assured us that the fishing was even better in those waters. In fact all the rivers in the area provide great polaroiding and dry-fly fishing when running clear, with the Mount Emu being the premier dry fly fishery in the area.

Our president Rick Dugina (and several others) made speeches of thanks to the Warrnambool folk. Then with full bellies, many smiles and much hand-shaking we bid one and all good night.

The next morning we woke to overcast skies, drizzle, and a cool breeze. Most decided to pull the plug and head home, but Rob and I decided to have a crack at the Moyne. The gusty breeze put a ripple on the water and with an overcast sky made sight fishing impossible. After half an hour we were discussing packing it in, casually retrieving our flies, when a large bow wave crossed the pool to Rob's fly. No contact. But another quick flick, a more studied retrieve, a gentle lift, and Rob was on. The fish pulled hard and long, putting on a great show. A beautifully conditioned four pound buck was eventually brought to the net, weighed,



*Nice work Bill*



*Rick's 5 lb Moyne brown*

photographed and released. We fished on for a few more pools in crappy conditions for one more follow up before deciding to head for home.

I take this opportunity to thank the Warrnambool Fly-fishers for their incredible generosity in sharing with us their years of experience, and revealing some of the secret ways of these magnificent trout fisheries. Also special thanks to Jim and Tricia for welcoming us into their home. And to all the Warrnambool folk whose efforts ensured we all had great fishing, great food, and good fun and camaraderie.

Postscript: Rob and I stopped at Jim's to pick up a CD of the previous day's photos and to make our farewells. Over a cup of coffee Jim pulled out a photocopied topographical map of the Hopkins/Mount Emu area, and marked his favourite stretches and access points with a highlighter. I can't wait to get back when the water is running clear.

Thanks Jim!

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## Catch and Release

(Alexander Kallas)

As fly-fishermen, our noble quarry, trout, provide us with our most treasured pastime in the great outdoors. In today's frenetic world, the value of this to our brotherhood is immeasurable. As the environment is impacted, and it's resources dwindle, more than ever these beautiful creatures require our utmost respect and conservation.

Catch and release is a major contributing practice for the presensible or gazetted limits, none of us has a problem with the taking of fish for personal consumption. However, stocking the deep-freeze is not a sport. Any time a fish is taken, the manner of dispatch of the trout must be a matter of concern. Regardless of the venue, public or private, a quick, merciful end should be the priority for a table fish. Inhumane handling is a thoughtless and cruel practice, and must be abandoned.



# Eildon Report

(The following information was given by Geoff Hall at the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre.)

## *The Goulburn River*

The Goulburn is currently running at 130 ML/day and the water temperature is 14 - 15°C. However the water is also very dirty, because a small creek running into the Pondage is filling it with filthy water which is then running down the Goulburn. Fishing in the area in recent weeks has also been affected by the rain. While both necessary and welcome, there have been heavy downpours on 12 of the last 14 weekends, making the weekend fishing unpleasant. However Geoff assures us that the fishing over the summer in the Goulburn will be excellent once the weather settles, and good summer fishing is likely to be enjoyed for the next four or five years. Locusts are now appearing in the area, so some great hopper fishing is very likely in the next few months. There have also been a number of termite hatches in recent weeks preceding the many thunderstorms, and even though the water is dirty, with clarity down to about 50 cm, the fish are still looking up and being caught, mainly on emerging caddis pupa patterns. There has been 'a bit of a rise' most evenings, with fish rising to small duns. Adult sawflies have been spotted, the lava of these flies being the now familiar Willow Grubs. While Willow Grubs haven't yet been seen falling into the water, Geoff suggests that there will be some fishing to fish taking these grubs in the next 2 – 3 weeks.

## *The Lake*

The Pondage is about 30% full, and, as mentioned earlier, a small creek near the cemetery is spewing filthy water into the Pondage, and hence it is not fishing well. Those fishing it are using large black patterns which provide contrast in the dirty water, so flies such as the black woolly bugger are the fly of choice.

The lake proper is promising some excellent fishing this year. Treetops are sticking out of the water in lots of places, and the level is at 70% and still rising. The water has flooded right up into the Merton Arm at Bonnie Doon. There have been lots of fish rising on dark, particularly on calm evenings when the water is calm. However access to the lake margins is difficult in many places because of the regrowth, so the Bonnie Doon area has been popular as it provides easy access to the lake edge. Otherwise the lake is best fished from a boat, and lots of fish are being caught from boats, particularly those trolling. The flooded areas have provided lots of rotting material which is generating big populations of microorganisms and invertebrates, and thus excellent food for the trout which are now putting on great condition.

## *The Other Rivers*

The Big River is flowing very fast and very high and is thus hard to fish. It can't be crossed because of the powerful flow. However once the level drops it will provide superb fishing right through the summer. The Acheron is also flowing high, fast and muddy, but when it clears and drops in late December or early January it should provide some superb hopper fishing. The Little River, Steavenson River, and upper Acheron River are all clear and fishing well, except that every second or third day there have been heavy deluges that have caused these small rivers to burst their banks again. But once they settle and drop they continue to fish well.

## ATF Report

A major launch of the 'Native Fish Awareness Campaign' was held at Marysville on Friday November 12. Fern Hames, from the Arthur Rylah Institute (DSE), was responsible for much of the organisation and she had asked the ATF to help cater for the BBQ as a show of mutual and ongoing support for all of the recreational fishing bodies involved. The Lions Club from Marysville provided the morning tea and snacks. The ATF organised the BBQ cooking and provided all food, ice, and drinks. The team catered for some 50 people and their efforts were greatly appreciated and provided great PR for the ATF.



*A magnificent Murray Cod – made out of rubber*

The event was held under a large Marquee put up by the Lions Club. The day started with speeches from various officials and a welcome from an Aboriginal Elder. Students from several local primary schools attended and participated in an educational program focused on Australia's native fish. (Perhaps trout may get a mention next time).

### The Dudley Lee Donger

Bairnsdale Fly Fishers' Club will be holding their Annual Dinner on the evening of Friday, February 18, 2011. A note from president Adrian Bond says:

“At our September meeting the members of Bairnsdale Fly Fishers Club honoured the memory of Dudley Lee and unanimously approved the following motion – that, as Dudley was very involved with the VFFA and highly respected by members of that Association, the traditional VFFA weekend be renamed the Dudley Lee/VFFA Weekend, and that the Trophy fished for be named the ”Dudley Lee Donger”.

Bairnsdale Fly Fishers Club therefore extends an invitation to members of the VFFA to attend our Annual Dinner on Friday, February 18, 2011, and to participate in the Dudley Lee/VFFA Weekend fishing competition for the Dudley Lee Donger.

We look forward to seeing your members at the dinner and we wish all your members an enjoyable and productive trout season.

Yours sincerely, *Adrian Bond*, President Bairnsdale Fly Fishers Club Inc.”

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Prince Nymph*



This fly was used a lot by Hubert Reichelt on his annual trip to New Zealand this year, and was particularly successful on the rainbows in the McKenzie country. The references suggest that while the nymph was initially seen as a stonefly pattern, it is an excellent 'general purpose' nymph, effective in both lakes and rivers. It is effective both with and without the beadhead.

According to the websites, 'the Prince Nymph is one of those must have flies. It rates along with Pheasant Tail nymphs, Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear nymphs and Zug Bug as one of the top 10 nymphs that you must have in your fly box. It is the use of the green peacock herl with it's efflorescent qualities that makes it so alluring and successful. This forked tail nymph originated with the brothers Don and Dick Olson of Bemidji, Minnesotas, USA, but was made popular in Western North America by Doug Prince of Monerey, California, from whom it gets it's name. He used it for fishing his favorite stream, the Kings River.'

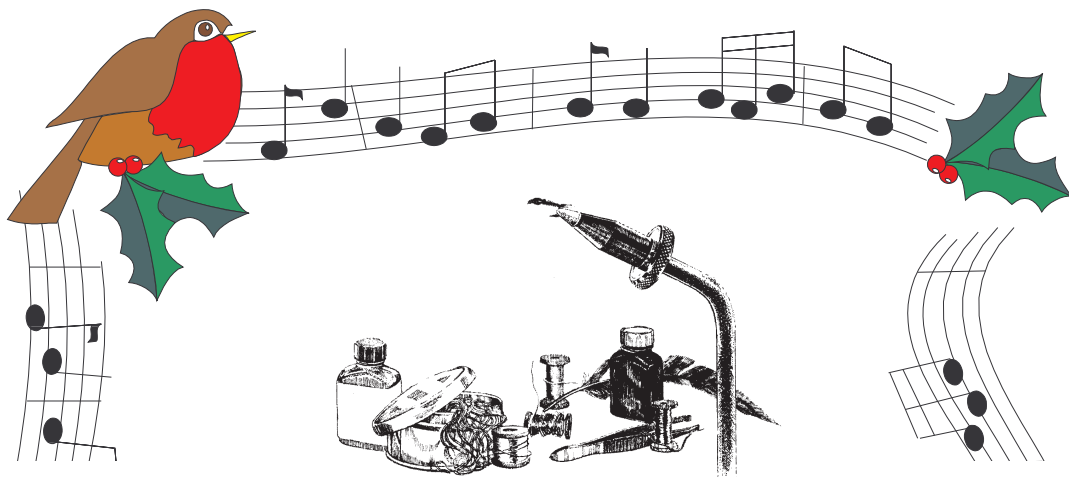
### ***Materials:***

Hook:	Heavy wire nymph hook, such as the Mustad R72, or Kamasan B175, sizes 8 – 14
Beadhead:	Gold bead (optional). For extra weight some sources recommend a few turns of lead wire as well as the gold bead.
Thread:	Colour – Black 6/0
Body:	Peacock herl
Tail:	Brown goose biots
Rib:	Oval gold tinsel or copper wire
Wings:	White goose biots
Hackle:	brown hen

### ***Tying method (gold beadhead version)***

1. Slide a gold bead over the point and up to the eye of the hook, then add a few turns of lead wire behind the bead if needed.
2. Whip the hook with thread behind the eye to keep both the bead and the lead wire in position. Then wind the thread down the shank to the bend and tie a small ball of thread at this point. This ball of thread will spread the two goose biots.
3. Take two matching brown goose biots and tie them in at the tail on either side of the shank. Wind the thread back along the biots so that the small ball of thread spreads the two biots slightly. The length of the tail should be about half to two thirds of the shank length.
4. Tie in a short length of rib material – oval gold tinsel or copper wire. Also tie in three or four strands of peacock herl. Wind the thread back up the shank to just behind the bead.
5. Wind the peacock herl strands around each other to form a ‘fluffy rope’ and then wind them around the shank up to the tying thread to form the body. Tie off the peacock herl but leave the excess hanging underneath the bead.
6. Wind the ribbing in evenly spaced turns, but in the opposite direction to the direction the body was wound, so that the rib isn’t buried in the peacock herl. Tie the rib off.

7. Take two white matching goose biots and tie them in behind the bead on top of the body material so that they are splayed apart slightly and extend back about two-thirds of the shank length. Bind them in firmly with strong turns of thread.
8. Take a hen hackle feather and tie it in on top of the white goose biots. Take 1 or 2 turns of hackle around the shank behind the bead and then tie it off.
9. To finish the fly, take the peacock herl left hanging from step 5 and tie a couple of turns over the base of the white goose biots and the hackle feather to add a slightly thicker thorax, then tie off the thread to finish the fly.





# LIBRARY NEWS

All members should remember that the Mick Martin Memorial Library is one of the most extensive collections of fly-fishing literature in Australia. It is valuable in its own right but is a great asset to members wishing to expand their knowledge or who simply enjoy sitting by the fireside and vicariously enjoying the exploits of others. In addition, the library boasts a number of videos on trout fishing. Our librarian Marty Rogers will be available prior to each general meeting to assist members wishing to borrow books or videos.

The library is divided into three parts.

Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.

Part 2 Books available for reference only and not to be taken from the library.

Part 3 Books bequeathed to the Association and not to be taken from the cabinet.

## OVERDUE BOOKS

Our librarian reports that a number of members have failed to return library books on time. Could all those book loving members who have failed to return books promptly do so.

## V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "Geehi to Great Lake" .....	\$45.00 each
Columbia Shirts .....	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo.....	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon) .....	\$35.00 each
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
Diaries .....	\$2.00 each
<b><i>The Australian Trout by Jack Ritchie .....</i></b>	<b>\$20.00</b>
<b><i>(Special offer – buy one, get one free!)</i></b>	
V.F.F.A. car stickers .....	\$2.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Hugh Maltby prior to the monthly General Meeting on telephone 9455 9017.

### VALUED DONORS

#### The following made donations for the raffle at the 2010 Annual Dinner:

- Armadale Angler • Aussie Angler • Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery
- Compleat Angler Box Hill • Compleat Fly Fisher Melbourne
- Daniel Hackett, RiverFly, Tasmania • Fly Life Publications • J M Gillies
- Lowes Furniture • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall • Michael Steven's Publishing •
- Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Nick Taransky - Bamboo Rod Maker • Peter Hayes, Cressy • Pro Angler Fishing Tackle • Ray Brown, Onkaparinga Flies & Cane Rods