

FLY LINES



DECEMBER 2021

The December Christmas Dinner with Jim Allen

This year we are combining two important VFFA events, the Annual Dinner and the Christmas Dinner, on the one night – Friday, December 10. Our special guest for this event is Jim Allen OAM, well-known to us all and a very popular speaker at VFFA events.

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

This will be a fabulous opportunity to hear one of our best, so mark it in your diary – Friday, December 10, 6:30pm at the Kelvin Club.

The official invitation to attend, giving details of costs and times, was recently emailed out by Terry Rogers to all members.

The important details are also given in this issue.

Friday, December 10,
6:30 for a 7:00pm sit down
at the Kelvin Club



Jim hunting through his fly box" (Photo from FlyLife magazine)

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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

info@vffa.com.au www.vffa.com.au

President

David Hooke

Email: president@vffa.com.au

Phone: 0411 683 684

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.com.au

Phone: 0407 309 797

Honorary Secretary

Will Davidson

Email: secretary@vffa.com.au

Phone: 0418 160 020

Honorary Editor

Lyndon Webb

Email: editor@vffa.com.au

Phone: 0488 555 724

Honorary Librarian

Bill Jeans

Email: b.jeans@bigpond.net.au

Phone: 9596 7192

Other Council members:

Councillors:	Joanne Dobson	(0429 140 341)
	Frank Gadea	(0431 337 265)
	Hamish Hughes	(0418 108 686)
	Simon Joel	(0419 368 391)
	Daniel Lovecek	(0407 291 200)
	Terry Rogers	(0438 553 326)
	Chris Gray (Immediate Past President)	(0408 256 525)

Covid Vaccinations

Members are reminded that there are now government regulations and associated penalties in relation to Covid 19. As a consequence, members and visitors attending VFFA meeting and functions must be fully vaccinated

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Never too young to start” (Kristina Placko photo)

The Annual Dinner with Jim Allen

This year's annual dinner will be on Friday, December 10, at the Kelvin Club, with guest speaker Jim Allen OAM.

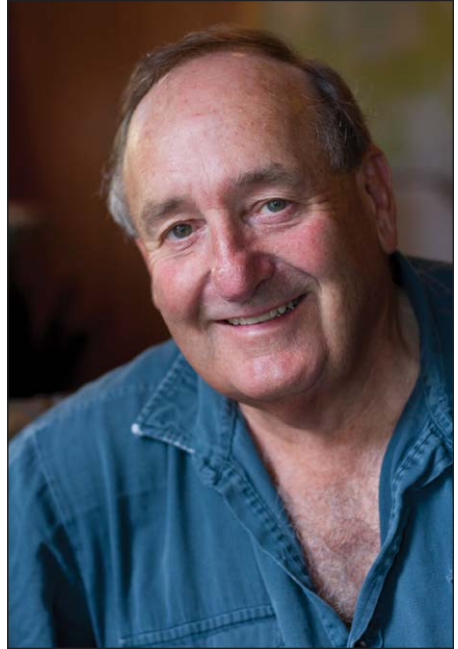
The time for this event is 6:30 for a 7:00 pm start.

The cost is \$80 per head, excluding drinks which will be charged at bar prices.

Payment can be made by cheque posted to the treasurer, or by direct debit to BSB 182 512, account 960547289, with your name in the reference box.

Also, whether you pay by cheque or by direct debit, please mail your name and the names of guests you are bringing to:

Tony Mitchem,
VFFA Honorary Treasurer
C/- William Buck
Level 20, 181 William Street
Melbourne 3000



Fly Fishing Trivia?

Peter Whitelaw has a distant relative (Ian Whitelaw, ex-UK, now living in Canada) who wrote a book, *The History of Fly Fishing in Fifty Flies*, which contains many interesting snippets. Ian has given Peter permission to reproduce some of these with due credits, so we shall share some of these in future issues.

Here's our first snippet:

Entomology or Etymology?

The first recorded use of the word 'palmer' appears in 1300, meaning a pilgrim returning from the Holy Land carrying a palm leaf, often folded in the form of a cross, as a token of the journey he had made. It later came to mean any pilgrim, of which there were many

in Europe in the Middle Ages making their way between the shrines and holy places. By the 1500s the term was being applied to hairy caterpillars that travel in groups, wander in all directions, and devour everything in their path. After fly tyers made imitations of the palmer, or palmer-worm, by winding the hackle in open spiral wraps around the body of the fly to re-create the bristling hairs, the term 'palmer' eventually came to refer not only to the fly but also to this form of hackle. The palmered hackle is used on a vast array of wet and dry flies today. (With permission from Ian Whitelaw of Canada, author of *The History of Fly Fishing in Fifty Flies*, 2015, published by Quid Publishing UK.)

President's Message

"In the whole round of human affairs little is so fatal to peace as misunderstanding." (Margaret Sangster - American writer and poet 1838-1912)

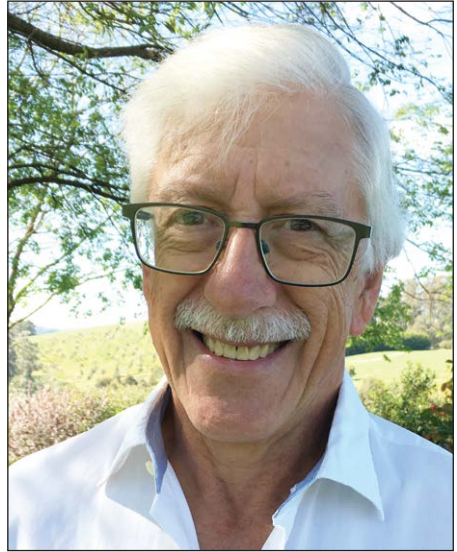
Currently, world affairs are dominated by the stand-off between China and the United States over Taiwan, and the struggle for hegemony in the Indo-Pacific.

A random thought occurred to me - is there any fly fishing in China?

Obviously, much of our tackle and equipment is made in China, not to mention most of the manufacturing in other sectors of the economy. I googled 'fly fishing in China' and discovered that, yes, there is fly fishing there. But just as it is easy for us to have misunderstandings in the English language, so it is even easier to have misunderstandings across language and cultural barriers, and even within something as simple as fly fishing.

'Fly' fishing has been going on in China for centuries prior to Izaak Walton. But the 'fly' is not an exquisite concatenation of fur and feathers, but a cormorant with a ring around its neck trained to catch fish. The ring is set at such a diameter that it allows the cormorant to swallow small fish but requires it to bring the large fish back to its master...very efficient!

Misunderstanding requires communication, but even silence can be misinterpreted. Your Council has been dealing with a little of this over the last month as, with very short notice, we were advised that we were required to remove our library, cabinets, and memorabilia from the Retreat (the small room where our library and other items were stored) at the Kelvin Club. And so, in a spirit of cooperation, a group of VFFA members turned up on a Sunday morning with a



10-tonne truck and shifted most of the VFFA belongings into storage while we contemplate how to manage the situation in the future. It was a sterling effort from all involved - my heartfelt thanks.

The Retreat has been improved to now be a much more usable room. Our shadow box framed flies and pictures are now back in this room and displayed on the wall, as are the Honour Boards. I encourage you to inspect the room when you are next in the Club.

Council had already been contemplating better management of our library and a plan had been drawn up by John Pilkington, our longstanding librarian. Bill Jeans, with the assistance of Peter Clayton, has now sorted through the library and our most valuable books (in both senses of the word valuable) will be returned to the two locked cabinets that remain within the Retreat. Some misunderstanding between the VFFA and the management of the Kelvin Club

remains regarding further cabinets, but I'm hopeful we can reach a sensible conclusion.

Covid continues to wreak havoc with our activities. Unfortunately, our annual trip to Warrnambool was cancelled due to a combination of foul weather and Covid restrictions, making it likely to be a seven-hour round trip with no fishing, minimal social contact, and a miserable weekend in a country motel room! After discussions with our host Jim Blakeslee, it was decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and we should cancel the trip. This was very disappointing, as I know a number of our members were looking forward to this trip, the first after the lifting of regional restrictions for city members. And, of course, the hospitality of the Warrnambool fly fishers is legendary.

On the other hand, our first meeting back at the Kelvin Club for many months was a very good night. The renovations have greatly improved the ambience in the upstairs dining room with the old carpet removed, the walls painted, and daylight streaming through the windows due to the building to the West being demolished!

Our guest speaker for the evening was Rick Dobson from Aussie Angler. He took us for a virtual trip around the world from small stream fishing in Victoria through the Jurassic lakes in Patagonia and frozen bootlaces in Alaska. This was followed by Rick sharing a number of his tips, with particular reference to Euro-nymphing; a most appropriate lead into our Sunday trip to the Acheron at Thornton. I have reported on this more fully elsewhere in this newsletter, but suffice to say it was a marvellous day with David Grisold instructing us in Streamcraft, and Jo and Rick Dobson, ably assisted by John Kruska, providing instruction in Euro-nymphing.

Hopefully you will receive this Newsletter before our combined Annual/Christmas Dinner. It will be a big night. Our Guest Speaker, Jim Allen OAM, will reflect on his lifetime involved in fly fishing and growing up in very different times.

The occasion will also allow us to make those presentations which have been held over from the Zoom AGM, and to conduct the all-important fund-raising activities which normally accompany the Annual Dinner.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter I have commented on the generosity of the industry in facilitating these activities. You will have noticed how often Rick and Jo Dobson appear in these pages. This reflects the enormous support Aussie Angler provides to the VFFA, for which we are very grateful. Of course Jo also contributes through her position on Council.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a New Year with plenty of fishing and much less Covid and government involvement in our lives.

Tread carefully, mindful of the fact that Christmas and families make for a potent source of misunderstanding.



Is that a reel mayfly dun?" (Bernard Holbery photo)

Euro-Nymphing and Streamcraft

... report by President David Hooke

In the middle of one of the wettest Novembers on record, the weather gods turned on a magical day for our combined Euro-Nymphing and Streamcraft sessions on the Acheron River at Thornton.

We all gathered over a coffee at the Schoolhouse Café in glorious sunshine and with minimal wind. We then split into two groups.

David Grisold took one group about 500 metres upstream and demonstrated the technique of fishing small streams in a grid pattern using minimal fly line out of the rod tip. Everyone had a go and Choco provided his usual patient support to skill levels varying from complete novice to the very competent.

Young, old, male, female, novice, experienced; everyone came away having learned something and potentially lifting their fishing skills to the next level.

To reinforce the day's activities Rhonda Grisold had restored and collated Mike Spry's *Streamcraft Notes and Introduction to Fly Fishing* and each participant received a copy. Many thanks to Rhonda for producing such a valuable booklet.

The second group was instructed in Euro-Nymphing (Czech nymphing) by Rick and Jo Dobson, ably assisted by John Kruska from the Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club. The theory and practical aspects of setting up the rig were demonstrated on the lawn in front of the Old Schoolhouse. After lunch the group took to the river to put the theory from the morning's instruction into practise. John was an able demonstrator, and we thank him for his input. The large groups and lots of discussion made actually catching fish quite problematic. However,



We think this one is a tad undersize Jo

when the crowds dissipated some splendid fishing was had! (See photo above of Jo with her monster trout.).

The day was capped off by a splendid lunch put on by the Schoolhouse Café, which opened especially for us, and we thank them sincerely. All of this was organised and facilitated by our Immediate Past President Chris Gray, who also had a very successful day on the water! What a magic day in a magic setting!

The word on the streets is that next year we may try for a two-day trip, so that members can participate in both activities. Any feedback on this is welcome. As Alan Jones would say, "Let me know your thoughts".

(Following the day's instruction and activities Tony Stewart emailed this note:)

I attended the nymphing session on Sunday and stayed on to test the theory on the Steavenson River on Monday morning. I made up a nymph leader following Rick and Jo's instructions, and in spite of only have an 8' glass rod the

system worked quite well.

As I approached a particularly attractive run I was quite confident of catching a trout on my dry Stimulator, as I had already caught several smaller fish during the morning. However there were no takers, even after I added a trailing nymph. So I swapped to the nymphing leader and moved up to the deeper head of the run, and on the second drift with a deep double nymph rig the beautiful rainbow in the photo took my tungsten purple Perdigon!

Is it actually fly fishing? I'm not sure, but it surely is effective.

By the way, for members keen to enjoy some more of Tony Stewart's fabulous

photos and videos of the Otways, check out these three sites:

<http://www.inthebubbleline.com>
<https://inthebubbleline.tumblr.com>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC69kon435ozv1n1nYVRoMoXg/videos>



Tony Stewart's Steavenson River rainbow – a superb fish from this beautiful little stream

Support for Christmas Fundraising from the Fly Fishing Industry

Covid, and government response to the virus, has wreaked havoc on retail, wholesale and supply chains. As an example, Aussie Angler reported no expectation of another delivery from Simms until the end of 2022.

It was therefore with some trepidation that your President and Immediate Past President ventured forth to visit all the fly tackle shops seeking contributions for our annual fund- raising events.

We needn't have been concerned. We were greeted amiably and generous donations of items were immediately forthcoming.

Arriving just on closing time at the FlyFisher, Andrew offered us a beer and then proceeded to open a recent delivery and unpack a brand-new fly rod for us. Andrew Summers at Mayfly had set aside some Orvis and Scientific Angler equipment; it was interesting to see his extensive warehouse.

Glenn at Hook Up Bait and Tackle has increased the profile of his fly fishing section on the back of a couple of young enthusiastic fly fishers on his staff.

Gavin from Hurleys Fly Fishing, surprisingly, had gone fishing, but I caught up with him later and he very kindly put together a very generous contribution for us.

Trevor from Armadale Angling has also very kindly agreed to contribute.

Jim at FlyFinz was up for a chat, and as well as putting together a package might even talk to us one evening in the new year about G.E.M. Skues.

Millbrook Lakes continue to be marvellous supporters of the VFFA, contributing a night's accommodation. (And if you haven't yet taken advantage of one of the VFFA days at Millbrook, you should).

The Essential Flyfisher and FlyLife,

both in Tasmania, have also contributed initially to our cancelled Annual Dinner, and these contributions have now been carried over to our Christmas Dinner. And Ray Brown, also in Tasmania and one of Australia's finest fly tyers, has contributed a collection of superb flies.

The crowning contribution, which has become an annual tradition from Pat Levy at J.M. Gillies, is a Sage X 590-4 fly rod which will be auctioned on the night.

Jo and Rick Dobson at Aussie Angler added to the support they already provide, about which I will write in the President's message.

As your incoming President, it was a great opportunity for me to meet the major players in the fly fishing retail world and I thank Chris Gray for taking even more time from his work commitments to make it happen.



Kristina Placko catches lots of magnificent New Zealand fish

February 2022 Meeting – Liars' Night

Our February meeting, the first for 2022, will again be our traditional 'Liar's Night', where some carefully chosen and well-prepared speakers will entertain us with their tales of fabulous fishing successes over the Christmas/January period.

This event is totally unpredictable – you never know what you're going to hear, and recent Liars' Nights have yielded some delightful and very entertaining surprises.

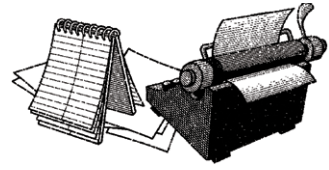
Members who plan to be out and about,

or possibly even overseas (even Tassie), in the December/January period and who are willing to share with us their excursion plans are asked to quietly contact our president and let him know they might well be a possible candidate for Liars' Night.

At the very least, the night provides a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues after the Christmas break.

Mark it in your diary – Thursday, February 24, 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Fly fishing does have its social aspects – on some of our crowded trout streams it can get too social – but essentially it's a solitary contemplative sport. People are left alone with themselves in beautiful surroundings to try to accomplish something that seems to have genuine value." (John Gierach)

"Fish are, of course, indispensable to the angler. They give him an excuse for fishing and justify the fly rod without which he would be a mere vagrant." (Sparse Grey Hackle)

"On a trout stream only the space near to hand is important. The immediate stretch of river you confront holds enough challenge to eclipse everything beyond its strict boundaries, if just for a little while. The entire world reduced to a single riffle." (Glenn Law, A Concise History of Fly Fishing)

"Some say trout fishing is a contemplative sport, but it never is when you stick a tiny fly into a big unsuspecting trout." (Vincent Marinaro, Small Fish: Big Fish)

"There don't have to be a thousand trout in the river. Let me locate a good one and I'll get a thousand dreams out of him before I catch him – and, if I catch him, I'll turn him loose." (Jim Deren, Angler's Roost)

In his talk to us at the November meeting Rick Dobson described catching a large trout some years ago in a New Zealand river. After the obligatory photos and measurements he put it back in the river, and it swam happily away. Or so it seemed. Later that day when they returned he found the fish floating dead in a backwater. It was a sharp reminder to him that we really do need to be careful in how we deal with the trout we catch. They are a precious resource, and they need thoughtful and informed handling. We are talking here of course about 'Catch and Release'.

I was talking about this recently with Dermot, and he admitted catching a 6 lb brown from a NSW river some years ago. The size was important, so the fish was weighed carefully on two sets of scales, just to confirm the accuracy of the weight. Dermot now regrets the time that all this took and suspects that his magnificent fish might not have survived.

When I was first getting into fly fishing,

in the years I lived in the Western District, Catch and Release was unheard of. Everything we caught, regardless of size, was banged on the head and carted home as a trophy to confirm we that had indeed been busy on the river. One local angler, and a good one at that, took home everything he caught and deposited it in the freezer out in the garage. But no-one in the family ate fish, so at the end of the year the freezer was taken to the local tip and its frozen contents emptied out. A clean empty freezer was then ready for the new year.

In 1981 I spent a year living (and teaching) in New Zealand. While there I often fished with a fine local angler called Peter Scott. Peter and I would often head out to some local stream and under his guidance I might catch a fish or two. And typically I would haul my capture in with an avaricious glint in my eye. Then I would look at Peter, who would be shaking his head and saying, "Surely you're not going to kill that beautiful creature! If you need

a feed of fish there's a good fish and chip shop near where you live." And as I was a guest and these were essentially Peter's fish, I'd reluctantly slide my catch back into the water.

And the habit has remained. It is now many years since I last killed a trout to keep. They are indeed beautiful creatures that bring a lot of pleasure, and by releasing all my trout I'm providing fellow anglers with extra opportunities to cast to, deceive with skill, and land fish. A shared experience, which reminds me of a fishing event I enjoyed some years ago. Hubert Reichelt took me to a stream he knew that ran into the top end of Lake Eildon. During the day he cast to a fish rising in a pool, landed it, measured the weight in his net (comfortably over 2 lb), then carefully released it. About a year later I returned to this river to fish it by myself. I arrived at the same pool that Hubert had caught his fish in, cast my fly out onto a fishy-looking spot, and hooked and landed (and released) a superb brown just a touch under 3 lb. I might be wrong, but I like to think that this was Hubert's fish. Because he released it I later enjoyed a beautiful moment landing a fine stream trout.

This gets us back to the topic of handling our fish very carefully. I'm not trying to sound like some paragon of fishing virtue, but I do try to minimise any harm to the fish I catch. I've joined the growing number of trout fishers who tie their flies on barbless hooks. When I catch small fish (and don't we get plenty of these in our Victoria streams) I keep them in the water if I can. Just slide the hook out and wave them off.

Big fish invariably have to be photographed, and this needs planning. To my thinking it is best achieved with two people – an angler and a photographer. The photographer gets the camera ready to go – turned on, focused and framing organised. Then the angler raises the fish, a couple of quick pics are grabbed, and the

fish released back in the water promptly – gently held under the surface for releasing, not just chucked out into the middle of the pond.

The Australian Trout Foundation has produced a very useful guide to 'Catch and Release'. The main points are obvious – use heavier leaders so you can land fish as quickly as possible (to minimise stress), use a large fish-friendly knotless net, allow a fish to recover fully before releasing it, fish with barbless hooks, use forceps to remove hooks, and wet your hands first before touching the fish.

Websites abound with good advice, with typical comments being never fight a fish to exhaustion, dehook the fish in the water whenever possible, cut the line as close to the hook as possible if a swallowed hook can't be easily removed, keep air exposure to a minimum if you must remove a fish from the water (less than 60 seconds is ideal), handle fish as little as possible and only with wet hands, avoid touching the fish's eyes and gills, support the weight of any fish removed from the water along the length of its body, never suspend a fish by its lip or mouth, and resuscitate a sluggish fish by facing it into the current until it regains strength and can swim away on its own.

Just to finish, I think us fly fishers are generally virtuous in these matters. Our fly-caught trout are nearly always hooked in the mouth. The problem is the majority of trout anglers in Victoria fish for trout with bait, and when a trout eats a worm and swallows it, then gets dragged to the bank by a hook embedded in its stomach, it is probably too late for any of this Catch and Release stuff.

I think for the benefit of the trout all the best trout streams in Victoria should be fly only.

(Did I really say that??)

Take care and stay safe,

Lyndon

Rick Dobson at the November Meeting

David - thank you for your very kind introduction. It's good to be back, and good to not have to wear a mask. I have given lots of presentations before to this audience so I thought tonight, at the risk of boring you, I'd give a general talk based on a selection of photos you are about to see. Light-hearted hopefully, entertaining possibly, and possibly informative too. If you have any questions then feel free to ask them.

I have spent my life fishing in Victoria principally. At a younger age I defended Victorian fishing against Tasmania, but then of course I embarked on trips to Tasmania and to New Zealand.

Let me say at the outset that this year Victorians will probably have the best fishing we have had since perhaps 1992/93. There's hardly a place in Victoria that won't fish well. So this year you need to make the effort to find a couple of hours and sneak out to some small stream locations. We've had two short summers and mild winters and the fishing is quite frankly marvellous. I get reports every day on what's happening around the state so of course I want to go here and I want to go there. There are fish to be caught everywhere.

Tonight I'm going to show you a selection of photos of places I have fished.

The picture below is of a typical Victorian



A small but rather complicated Victorian trout stream

small stream. It's actually a section of the Murrindindi. I tend to fish places only once a year. There are just so many waters to visit so I won't fish a place twice. And by the way the Goulburn is currently crystal clear above the main tributaries.

This typical small stream is one I fished some time last year. It's not hard to access. I spotted a fish and this is really just bread and butter stuff. Nothing flash. The presentation was with a great big dry fly. The fish there are quite small yet they are very humbling fish –very perceptive and hard to deceive. The small stream fishing in Victoria is really quite special.

Here are some photos from South America. If the opportunity arises it's not difficult to get there, and there are some truly amazing fish in Lago Strobel. This trip was in 2013. I could have stayed there for 3 days or 7. I initially opted to stay for three days, but after three days I wished I could stay for two weeks. They are big fish there, and they go hard. You can sight fish them as they go crashing through the waves.



Rick with a Lago Strobel monster rainbow

We caught some on mouse patterns - big ugly things cast in horrible conditions. Our boots and bootlaces were frozen solid. We were using 7 weight rods loaded with 8 weight lines. The white caps in the background show how rough it can be. It's very similar to fishing in the surf. The fish there really pull hard.

Like lake fish anywhere they move in proportion to the wind. At Jurassic they have three windless days a year. Last year on our last trip we got five of those three windless days. I discovered that while the wind made it hard for anglers it certainly got the fish going. When we were there the wind was so strong that when we walked down the lake for five minutes it took us 15 minutes to battle our way back.

Jurassic is pretty special and has some great fish. The accommodation where we stayed was fairly rudimentary, and to get there took a 10-hour drive with the last eight hours in first gear. It was a very rough trip in those days, but now you can fly in.



And another

The photo below is of Alaska. It's a pretty good place to go – not too expensive and not too difficult to get there. There are five different species of salmon that you catch there as well as rainbow trout and grayling. There is a whole bunch of wildlife there – moose and bears, and to see a bear up close and personal is quite daunting.



This one is an Alaskan salmon, and a large one too

The grayling take dry flies beautifully and may even take them going downstream, which makes them harder to hook. Most of the fish there eat rainbow trout eggs and sockeye salmon eggs. The rainbows predate on their own eggs which provide good nutrient value.

I fish in the Victorian Alps where there is a short growth cycle. The fish there are small because there is only a short time when temperatures are suitable for fish to grow, unlike New Zealand where the water is a constant 13 or 14 degrees most of the year and the fish can metabolise a lot longer.

In Alaska our fishing guide asked who was the best shot, and I said my friend here is a senior sergeant. So the guide passed him a shotgun and said, "You can take care of it. When a bear comes along fire a first shot, then a second shot, then a third shot. Then if the bear is still there you better run like hell."



The very popular Alaskan grayling

It is currently illegal to take fish out of water in Alaska. They can also predict very accurately when the various fish species are going to come past a certain point.

Christmas Island is for bonefishing, and it's a great venue - sight fishing under blue sky days, and it can be very exciting. We all like sight fishing. But playing a fish can be boring. When you're fishing for bonefish and you've got one on you are already looking for the next one. You're in a hurry to get this one off, because there is one over there you want to catch. Seeing them and stalking them and casting to them and getting a rejection has a lot more to it than the obvious. Polaroiding and fishing

is something we all love to do when it presents itself.



A fine rainbow and that daggy hat

Here is a photo of the daggy-looking hat that I like wearing. But I believe it shields my eyes and makes the pupils open up and I can then see a whole lot better.

The polaroids I have here have a yellow-green lens and that's an ideal colour. Trout in New Zealand, Tasmania and Victoria really stand out with these lenses, so don't be afraid to try some lighter coloured lenses.

There are some great rafting trips available in New Zealand and you get to fish wonderful rivers. My favourite is the North Island by a long shot - North Island rafting trips on their brilliant rivers are very special.

I'm happy taking photos of the fish that we have caught but two incidences in New Zealand caused me concern. We caught a 7 lb brown on the first day of a trip and we took a lot of photos. Then we released the fish and it swam away. We fished the rest of the day and came back to the car that evening and found our big brown trout dead. We need to be really conscious of this - a lot of fish swim away and we feel good, but in some cases they go away to die. We have to be responsible as custodians of our fisheries.

We have to look after our fish, because then you may catch the same fish more than once. We had a training program

going with Ray Butterworth several years ago where we caught some fish in the King Parrot Creek four or five times in a season.

On a New Zealand trip we stayed in some huts and one evening we kept two small rainbows to have for dinner. After we filleted the two fish we threw the carcasses in the water and five minutes later there were six eels there that had come out of nowhere. Their sense of smell is amazing.



A small Victorian brown trout caught on one of Rick's large dry flies

Back to Victoria now and back to my favourite waters. Here is a photo of a small fish taken on a big dry fly. I am into using big dry flies. They land in the river with a plop and draw the fish's attention. Fish will seek out bigger bugs before they seek out small ones, so if you get stuck then try something bigger - even something outrageously big. There is a time and place for small but there's lots of places where you do better using something big.

Earlier I showed a photo of a typical small stream, and they are not hard to get to. All these places are in Victoria. Most of them may take a 10 minute walk and a lot of them are next to roads and car parks. But you often don't know they are there unless you actively seek them out. The King Parrot was mentioned before. It will fish stupidly well this season; likewise the upper Yarra.

Over the years I've killed lots of fish, but these days it's all about catch and release. Use wet hands to release your fish and use a good net.



Some of our small streams can be quite challenging

On small tight streams you catch most of your fish with just a short line on the water. Years ago I used short rods in these situations – 6 and 7 foot stuff. But these days I used a 9 foot 2-weight rod, and Jo's favourite rod is a 9'6" 2-weight. The idea is to put the fly somewhere and hold the leader off the water. When you've got a fly on the water watch it come down. Hold the leader off the water and don't let it hinder the fly's movement. The amount of drag you can get with just a metre of leader on the water is amazing. I think that in small streams in many cases we cast too far. It should be really close work. There's tons of water around the Noojee area to fish and also around the upper Yarra.



Jo fishing a Tasmanian stream – note the very silty stream bottom

Here's a photo taken in Tasmania, and you can see all that sandy silty stuff on the bottom of the river. When you find silt evenly spread across the river I can promise you that it's a very unstable

bottom and therefore it won't support insect life so won't support trout. I grew up on the Acheron. It was mostly freestone with some shingle but there was a section full of silt and hardly a fish there. Victoria is blessed this year in that we've had a lot of winter rain and thus a lot of siltation has been washed out by the rain. That's one reason why this year's fishing in Victoria will be good. If you find yourself in an area where there's a lot of silt on the bottom try to fish the darker bottom regions which are likely to be the more stable areas.

My tippet in many photos looks like a length of barbed wire. It will be 2X or 3X. I don't fish fine tippets in small streams. The fish don't care and the tippet size I use depends on the size of fly I'm fishing. In New Zealand I often fish bigger flies and I use 13 or 14 pound tippet to match the size of the fly.

When the Goulburn is high and running at over 8,000 – 9,000 Megalitres/day look at the edges. You'll be amazed at the fish there. So hunt the fish, take your time, be methodical and don't rush.

Another thing that has become relevant these days is related to our new nymphing techniques. A lot of people use tapered leaders that go from fat to skinny. But we want our nymphs to get down into the depths. When we cast them the skinny stuff sinks quickly but the fatter stuff will hinge and hang up. If you want to fish conventional nymph under indicator that's fine, but if you want to fish at depth don't use tapered leaders because the thicker section will stop your nymph sinking quickly.

Try this leader instead – three foot of 10 lb line, three foot of 8 lb, three foot of 6 lb and a couple of feet of 4 lb. This will cut through the water very quickly and get your nymph down where you want it. In New Zealand I use a leader 14 foot long of only 8 pound line.

Thank you for listening to me.

A New Zealand Report from Nick Taransky

We're slowly settling in and getting organised here in Taihape. Even with the pull of the season opening, and trout literally visible from my workshop window, there has been so much to get set up that I haven't really made the most of getting on the water yet.



"Nugget" coming home with Mount Tongariro in the background

A trip to Tauranga to pick up "Nugget", our 1967 Airstream Caravan, went smoothly. She is now in getting an initial look over in Fielding to make sure that she is roadworthy and we can start on the interior renovation. I'm really excited about this project. Nugget will be the base for our fishing, surfing and other adventures, and also for friends and family to stay here when they are able to visit.

On the home front we are installing raised garden beds to grow most of our own food. I've had plenty of inspiration from Mark Valencia and his "Self Sufficient Me" YouTube channel. Anyone interested in food gardening should look him up. He's as interesting and humorous as he is informative.

Planning is underway to convert our main building into a residence and renovate/extend. The main work there has been dealing with the local council. I think someone switched the highlights of "Yes Minister" with their training videos. Anyway, I expect it will be a marathon rather than a sprint, and by the time I die of old age everything should be sorted.

My workshop is also back up and running. After nine months off the tools,



Nick asks – business or pleasure...?

it's felt great to be splitting cane and planing again. My new workshop is a big improvement in both location and layout from my suburban operation in Australia.

On the fishing side, it's been really interesting to see the Hautapu River here develop into the season. Our stretch of the Hautapu is above a small hundred-year-old hydro weir, which moderates the flow of the river as well as raising the height of it a little. Essentially it has the nature of say a large pool on a Monaro stream like the Bobundara. This means that most fish are usually cruising on a slow beat, though some will take up station from time to time.

Prior to the season opening, fish were actively feeding, but seemingly solely focusing on corixid, often holding still over the silt bottom for long periods before charging to pick up a boatman and often a mouthful of silt in the process. I saw my first fish rising on October 3, the third day of the season. It was taking whatever it could find, seemingly just wanting to have a break from looking down at the bottom all day. Within a couple of weeks fish were

rising all over the place. They had become fixated on emerging midges, which are prolific in our silt-bottomed section of backed up water. The far bank is covered in willows, and the red galls are forming on the leaves so I expect willow grubs will be a mainstay here over summer.

Most days I go down there without a rod, just to watch for an hour or so. I was amazed at how much better my stalking skills are without a rod or my eagerness to actually catch a fish. Often I could stalk within almost arm's length of fish without spooking them by taking my time and moving very slowly, often on hands and knees or even crawling.

Yes, I did weaken a few times and actually go down with a rod! It did seem a little unfair with all that research under my belt. In truth it wasn't altogether a positive feeling, landing my pets, so I will definitely limit my interactions with them and the fish a little further afield. "Little" is the operative word. Angus Gordon, local landowner and angler who's taken me under his wing, briefed me via text on "*Taihape Fishing maths... 16 streams and 2 lakes within easy 1 hour drive, not counting north of Waiouru, and only 30 weekends to sample them*". I informed him that maybe I should only work on weekends and fish weekdays, which will turn the odds in my favour a little!



One of Nick's Taihape house pets

This week I did venture out with Angus a whole 15 minutes from here to a property on the Moawhango in the Next valley. Unlike the Hautapu, which is browns only, the Moawhango is a mix of browns and rainbows, and we managed several of each, on both dry flies and nymphs in a very enjoyable session. The only part that wasn't fun was the climb out, involving a cliffside scramble where my life flashed before my eyes a few times. I survived to write this, but my "natural" fear of heights might be something I need to tackle if I'm to take full advantage of the fishery here!

With the weather warming up and fish looking up too, and being a little better organised here, I hope to make the most of it and have more to report before long.

Best regards to you all. Nick Taransky

The Australian Trout Foundation Annual Report

The ATF had its Annual General Meeting on November 15, and despite the incredible difficulties created by Covid Lockdown and Restrictions, the organisation kept functioning and President Terry George presented a detailed and lengthy Annual Report on the many events and tasks the Foundation attempted and completed in the past year.

Interested members can find the ATF Annual Report for 2020-2021 at this

address:

https://australiantroutfoundation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Annual-Report-2020-21-FINAL.pdf?mc_cid=0a51a12785&mc_eid=310cf4d347

Those checking this report will be enormously surprised by the volume of work the ATF has undertaken. Terry George has been a tireless leader and has voluntarily given hundreds of hours of unpaid work in organizing

and supervising projects across the state designed to improve our Victorian trout fishery for all trout anglers.

In brief, the annual report mentions the 50,000 brown trout fry liberated in the Macalister River and the 25,000 fry stocked in the upper Dargo River. Follow up electrofishing to collect DNA samples was conducted in both rivers during April 2021. The results indicate good numbers of brown trout will be present in these rivers in the coming years.

The ATF has been at the forefront in organising tree planting days and liaising with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) to conduct habitat restoration works. With Gippsland out of drought conditions and receiving consistent rainfall, the trees planted on the Macalister River in 2019 are growing and providing shade and insect habitat whilst enhancing the ecosystem of the rivers. The rivers are once again showing that with a bit of support, they are returning to the reliable trout fishery that anglers have enjoyed for decades.

In the upper North-East there were bushfires and the flash flooding following the fires washed toxic ash into the local streams, depleting oxygen levels and causing major and minor fish kills. The far North-East fishery in the Corryong district consists of five major streams and their many smaller tributaries, all of which feed and form the headwaters of the

Murray River. These streams include the Cudgewa Creek, Thowlga Creek, Nariel Creek, The Indi or Upper Murray River, and the Swampy Plains River.

The Nariel Creek was badly affected by multiple ash-wash events shortly after the fire, and fish kills occurred over its entire length. Electro fishing shortly after the fires produced few if any fish.

Lobbying by the ATF and the Corryong Angling Club produced a massive effort by the VFA. This involved sourcing wild brown trout eggs from Gadens Hatchery in Jindabyne and transporting them to Snobs Creek Hatchery for hatching. The hatched fry were released in four sites in the middle reaches of the Nariel in November 2020. Well done ATF Stocking Manager, Matt Byrne, and VFA Stocking Manager, John Douglas.

With little or no predation or competition most of the 20,000 stocked fish stand a good chance of survival. Fish of 20 cm were being caught some months after the release.

The report also describes work by the ATF on the Spotted Tree Frog project and several habitat restoration projects. While Covid-19 has delayed much of the activity of the ATF in habitat restoration projects there are a number of tasks pending that will be activated soon. These include Steavenson River riparian restoration, Macalister River riparian restoration, Nariel Creek riparian restoration, Rubicon



Buckland River Habitat Restoration Project with “Trees for Trout” Volunteers.

River access trail and riparian restoration from tumbling waters to camp Jungai, Goulburn River riparian restoration in conjunction with Fishcare, GBCMA and volunteers, Owens River in-stream and riparian restoration, Cobungra River riparian restoration and bank stabilization, and Nariel and Thowgla Creeks riparian

restoration and bank stabilization.

So the ATF have been busy and is planning heaps more once Victoria gets back to some sort of 'normality'. The \$25 annual subscription to join the ATF is certainly the cheapest and best investment any fly fisher can make to see our trout fishery improved.

Springtime in the Nineteen Lagoons – Tasmania

... by Chris Wisniewski, Tasmanian IFS

October is always an interesting month for Tasmanian trout fishing. Trout are feeding on whitebait in the estuaries, rivers are still providing flooded backwater fishing, and the duns and red spinners are getting the fish looking up in the lowlands. But most excitingly, as the water warms in the highlands with high water levels, the trout are on the edges looking for frogs and anything being washed out of the flooded edges.

It is not too often that your wife says she would like a few days at Liawenee, let alone in October. I am fortunate in that my wife likes to write and enjoys going for a jog and taking photographs with her you-beaut iPhone, so will entertain herself while I race off to have a fish.

We headed to Liawenee on the Tuesday night. There had been good rain over the previous weeks and water levels were high. Wednesday was forecast to be sunny. The gate into the Nineteen Lagoons was shut at Lake Augusta, so I had my mountain bike in the back of the ute.

On Wednesday morning I was in no rush, wanting the sun to get up a little so that polaroiding would be at its best. I arrived at the gate at 10 am, to find half a dozen cars already there. It was a clear blue sky day with a stiff north-easter blowing.

Another angler was there with his bike, so I asked him where he was going and he replied that he had just returned from

Lake Botsford because he had broken his rod after a few casts to fish he had seen on the back shore. I offered him my spare rod, but he said he had another.

We got our gear together and chatted about fishing the area as we rode to Botsford. I left him there and rode on round Rocky Lagoon to the parking area for lakes O'Dells and Flora. Leaving my bike there I walked down and crossed the Little Pine River, which was running a banker. I followed the old four-wheel drive track until I hit the north-eastern corner of O'Dells, where the river flows out.

In bright sunshine I rigged my rod, pulled on my polaroids, and headed down the eastern shore with the sun over my left shoulder and a nice north-easterly breeze.

I crossed the creek and straight away saw a fish laying still, facing into the breeze,



Those Tassie highland trout love the Zulu

looking at me about 30 meters down the shore. A sitter I thought. As the lake was high into the edge of the grass and the frogs were croaking, I had tied on a small rabbit fur fly. I carefully moved closer, stripped some line onto the ground, made one false cast, and landed the fly six feet in front of the fish. The fish responded quickly - charging at the fly, swirling all over it, then bolting out into the lake without taking it! It had been a good cast, so I was wondering what all that wasted effort and energy was for?

I moved fifty metres down the shore and found another fish sitting just the same - stationary, nose into breeze, and looking at me. I followed the same procedure as before and got the same response.

The weather was perfect for polaroiding and the fish were in close where they should be. I changed to a stick caddis pattern and the next two fish refused that. I then put on my favourite - a dry Zulu. I soon found another fish laying just the same, facing into the breeze, so fired out the Zulu. It landed where I wanted it - a little short so the breeze would blow it onto the fish. The fly drifted closer and the fish spotted it, cruised over, sat right underneath it, hesitated for a second, then bolted out into the lake. What was going on! I saw two more fish down this shore, and they also did the same.

I had now reached the bottom corner of the lake where the creek from Lake Flora flowed strongly, and a resistant wind pushed into the incoming flow. The water was quite stirred up here and about a metre deep along the undercut bank. I spotted a fish moving slowly in the dirty water, so flicked the Zulu out. The fish came up off the bottom and took the dry as if it had been looking for it all day. After a strong fight with plenty of jumps the 1 kg fish was unhooked and released.

I began walking up the creek between the two lakes and came upon a small, flooded backwater. A fish laying deep in



This one preferred the Fur Fly

the weed didn't hesitate to take the Zulu. After a short fight and while releasing this fish I spotted another cruising on the bright green grass. This fish didn't hesitate to take the Zulu either, and was landed. Three fish in three casts. That was a turn around.

I walked across to Lake Flora, and as the sun was now overhead I started down the western side where the wind was blowing onshore. As I crept along I spotted a fish sitting on the silty bottom with its nose poked into the bank. The Zulu was dispatched and landed almost on top of the fish, which turned as if spooked, and began heading out. It then turned, came back, and ate the dry. Four from four casts!

A creek flowed in at the next corner and the lake had flooded back up for about 50 metres around the bend. Kerosene bushes lined the bank and the bottom was bright green grass. Another trout could be seen clear as day cruising the flat. A quick cast, and the brownie surged onto the fly and sucked it down. Five from five!

For the next couple of hundred metres I polaroided the waves breaking onto the edge, and despite it looking very fishy no fish were seen. Another small creek



Another victim to a well-presented Zulu

flowed in here, and I looked carefully into the water as I eased my way up. Then about two rod lengths away I spotted a solid brown cruising directly toward me, coming around the corner out of the creek. I plopped down onto my bottom, releasing the fly which dropped onto the water. The fish kept coming slowly, then rose and took the fly at my feet. Six from six! My luck couldn't continue. The next two fish refused the Zulu.

At the bottom of Lake Flora there are some big backwaters. I spent an hour searching through these, yet despite being very fishy with nice connecting drains to the main lake, nothing was seen.

As I returned out of these backwaters I found a deep channel connecting to the lake. Some high cloud had come in and visibility was getting a little harder. But I still managed to spot a large fish (2 – 3 kg) cruising the channel. The Zulu was placed about 10 metres out in front as an ambush. But the fish cruised straight under the fly and despite having a couple more shots out in front he only became agitated and took off.

Visibility was getting harder along the sheltered eastern side of the lake. A couple

of fish were spooked along the edge, as the decreasing light made it difficult for me to see the fish before they saw me.

I continued around then hiked back over to O'Dells, where I headed up the western shore. The wind was punching in now, and visibility was deteriorating. The lake had flooded up over the undercut bank but with not quite enough water to bring fish over it during the day. Early or late in the day there would definitely be fish making the most of the frogs that are abundant along this edge.

I spooked a few fish along the way, and was now back where I first started fishing the lake. It was only 4 o'clock but the day was shot for high visibility polaroiding. What to do? I looked down into the Little Pine valley below. There were plenty of flooded lagoons but it was a little early for the evening tailers. Down I went anyway. I headed straight to a spot where there was most likely to be fish in on the edge - a long narrow back water with a deep channel to the fast-flowing river. Easy access for the trout meaning there might already be a couple in there.

There was a strong chorus of frogs, so the Rabbit Fur fly went back on. I walked, stopped, and watched. After about half an hour had passed a large golden tail popped up for a few seconds. I loaded the rod and the fly landed a metre in front of the fish, which absolutely monstereed the fly as if it had been looking for it all day. The hook was set and the fish jumped and cartwheeled in the shallow weedy water. It was big brown that looked to be about 2.5 kg.

By this time it was getting late in the day and I had a two kilometre walk across the tundra to my bike so I took this fish as a fitting end to good day's fishing. The cloud was coming in with the approaching cold front as I rode the bike back out to the car and then drove carefully down the road, dodging wallabies to Liawenee.

JD's Fishing Report

John Douglas has just got back from the North-East. He tells us that the Livingstone Creek at Omeo is well worth a look. He landed three out of a couple of pools and runs, but couldn't stay long as he needed to get back to Thornton. However he got waylaid on the way home so grabbed a quick a look at the Ovens. It was running strong and clear and the fish were looking up. A big Stimulator was the effective fly.

And the news us Melbourne members want to hear - the Goulburn is still low at 400 Megs/day and is fishing really well. Evening rises are a feature, but there is good fishing all day.

Thank you John.



Another solid connection



A small but very pretty rainbow



The Ovens produces fine browns



We'll grab this one too. It was a very good session.

Millbrook Report

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Good heavens, I had no idea Charles Dickens, writing *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, had put together such an insightful comment on our day at Millbrook last week. It certainly was a fabulous day, yet filled with frustrations.

The weather was good in a week when it had been appalling. Hamish had fished the same lakes two days earlier in sleet and temperatures around 2°C. But for us on the Wednesday it commenced with some cloud and a very light breeze that saw the sun appear for the afternoon. The air temperature was in the low 20s for most of the day.

When we arrived there were fishing rising; lots of them in all three lakes that



Rob McLachlan's first fish



Dermot O'Brien was a picture of concentration

we fished. And they kept rising all day, just tapering off in the late afternoon. But they were so hard to catch. It was a day for fishing dry flies, the required fly being a Red Spinner. You could land your particular Red Spinner out in front of feeding fish and often enough it would simply be ignored, or less often a snout would poke out through the surface and appear to eat the fly, but when you lifted your rod there was nothing there.

But fish were caught, and most of our group landed some. Rob McLachlan headed over to the other side of the main lake to a favourite stretch, and every time we looked across it seemed his rod was bent in a hoop. He landed four, then got weeded and broken by a large brown. “A couple on Damsel Nymph patterns and the rest on Orange Spinners” was his summary.

Rod Hirst landed three, including his first tiger trout. Richard Garvey managed three before lunch and another couple after lunch, his best being just over 3 lb. All on a Red Spinner pattern. Mike Hitchen described it as a great day out, “despite the challenging conditions”. He landed four and lost a couple, with his



Hamish Hughes extracted this superb 4 lb brown

best being a 2 lb rainbow on a Damsel Nymph. Daniel Lovcek worked hard all day and caught four or five fish, but lost a few as well. He stayed on till dark and caught his best fish right at the end. Hamish caught the best fish of the day – a brown of just over 4 lb.

I could go on. Others caught fish as well, but I didn't get all the numbers. The overall group summary was that Millbrook is a great place to fish, the day was fabulous, and there was unanimous agreement that Craig Coltman was a very patient, generous, helpful and highly skilled guide.



Guide Craig Coltman worked hard all day offering advice and assistance



Rob McLachlan fishing the far side has just caught another one



Millbrook offers a wonderful tranquil setting. However lots of fish were rising here all day to keep our attention.

Lake Botsford – Central Plateau Tasmania

... from Richard Clark. This article was written by Richard some years ago, describing his fishing on one of Tasmania's most popular lakes. Richard has fished the highland lakes around Miena for many years. He is a very skilled and successful angler and has accrued a wealth of experience. Lake Botsford is a favourite, and in this article he shares some of his knowledge.

Noel Jetson penned an article in a 1979 edition of *Fishing World* - 'Never Pass Up a Rise' – in which he gave an exciting account of fishing for big browns rising to duns hatching at Lake Botsford. This was at a time when many anglers drove straight past this lake on their way to other waters. That article by Noel triggered my lifelong passion for fishing in this fabulous wilderness area. Noel described this place as heaven, but equally warned it could also be hell. 'Take time to know it and go well prepared. Don't rush in for a bag of fish'. Wise words from a sage!

My first fishing trip to Tasmania was in the early 1980s with a group of Southern Fly Fishers. My 'apprenticeship' began with a trip out to the Julian Lakes and then to some of the 19 Lagoons, including Lake Botsford. At that time my knowledge of these waters was limited, and so was my success. It was the beginning of a steep learning curve.

Of all the Western Lakes on the Tasmanian Central Plateau Lake Botsford is known for the superb wild browns that exist in its water. Its popularity attracts hundreds of anglers each season looking to experience that adrenaline rush when a big snout rises to suck down a small dry fly. Such is its reputation as a premier fishery it's fair to say everyone wants to catch a fish there. Not everyone succeeds.

Being an alpine environment the weather is very changeable, and often for the worse. This lovely shallow lake with its sandy, weedy, rocky bottom often offers perfect wade polaroiding opportunities for the enthusiast. You can spot fish from



Richard had some good days on Botsford

the bank or you can wade further out in your endeavour to find them. The challenges offered to the angler here are endless, but a willingness to adapt to the prevailing weather condition is paramount.

Throughout the season you will regularly see fish with their snouts in the sand feeding on what must be their staple diet - isopods. The challenge is to get their attention when their eyes are firmly fixed on the bottom. If they won't look up, try a small wet fly or nymph placed well ahead. Over the summer they become more attuned to surface food and you can expect to find fish cruising mid-water and feeding during a dun hatch, beetle fall, stoneflies or an ant hatch, giving a perfect

opportunity to present a small Red Tag. During calm periods it is good practice to stop moving and look for rises; also to avoid spooking fish that are lying doggo on the bottom while waiting for the wind to spring up again, especially if they are under pressure from anglers.

The lake originally had a few trout that had come up a small creek from Lake Baillie during a very wet year, but it has no regular natural recruitment. Since 1971 the then IFC (now IFS since 2000) introduced a regular stocking program of mainly adult brown trout from the Great Lake, with some variations that included fry and fingerlings - both diploid and triploids.

The annual stocking program is outlined in the IFS Inland Recreational Fishery Management Plan, which is currently under review. Its aim is 'To develop & sustain a wild brown trout fishery in the Central Highlands including some trophy waters'.

Over the years I have made this wonderful area my preferred annual fishing location, with all its challenges and the variations offered throughout the season.

Perhaps the most notable change I have seen is the significant increase in fishing pressure. Don't expect to have the lagoon to yourself but be prepared to share it with other anglers. Typically, the weather is arctic, and if you are lucky enough to have a blue sky day the cars invariably swarm in. When the weather is foul you usually have the 19 Lagoons to yourself.

Lake Botsford is well placed at the road junction to Lake Kay and Lake Ada. You can make a quick stop to survey the water, check the number of rods, and perhaps have a chat with other anglers before making the decision to stay or to travel on. I find Lake Ada and Lake Kay are also exceptional fishing waters

offering wonderful tailing and dun hatches if Botsford is crowded.

During the 1980s the IFS stocking of adult brown trout varied from 200 up to 400, and they also liberated large numbers of triploid rainbow trout - fry, fingerlings and yearlings. No doubt the larger browns had a feeding frenzy on a number of these fry, but survivors grew to 7 and 8 lb and possibly bigger.

On one occasion I had the lake to myself and was fishing in strong winds, heavy cloud cover and rain, when I noticed what appeared to be a plastic bag floating on the surface that kept disappearing then reappearing. As I got closer I realised it was the tail of a big fish feeding on isopods on the bottom. Its tail had a distinctive split near the top. I followed this fish for an hour during which it continued on its tail up, tail down feeding pattern, quite oblivious to me. Every time I got close enough to cast the tail went down. Unfortunately I didn't hook up, but my heart was pumping in the red zone. I believe this was probably one of those triploid rainbows estimated at 8 lb, as I was thigh deep in water. A year or so later I did manage to hook one of these big ones (with me running through the water trying to keep up), only to be beaten when it came straight back at me at full speed after a powerful run which took me well into the backing.

In the early 1990s the IFS annual stocking was maintained at 200 to 300 adults, with a few triploid brown yearlings tossed in for trial, presumably due to the increased fishing pressure. At this time I had started fishing with Charlie Thorpe, one of the most enthusiastic guys you would ever meet. He had a habit of holding his rod high when we were searching the edges, which tended to bother me. But he always had his fly on the water and he did catch a lot of fish. He copped all my abuse with a smile, and we enjoyed

great camping and fishing together in the Julian Lakes and Christies Creek systems for many years.

Together we started spending more time fishing the Little Pine system and the 19 Lagoons; Lake Botsford in particular. On one occasion we arrived at Botsford about mid-morning. My fishing diary recorded:

‘Very cold, blue sky, barometer rising, calm to light west breeze. Some rods leaving. Visibility very good. Fished middle to bottom end and started sighting fish immediately. Fish doggo and spooky. I took a good strong fish on a #14 Red Tag and had a few refusals. Two other rods left, so we had the water to ourselves after lunch, with the breeze increasing to make perfect conditions. Covered the same water as the morning and sighted fish easily. Chas took two fish in quick succession near the rock. One had a Red Tag already in its top lip. He saw more fish than me! I took a fish that was 12 foot in front and swimming straight at me. Sun and wind behind made it easy to see fish, often swimming down wind. Got good hook ups on these. Fished the flats until 6:15pm. Fish average size was 4 lb and strong. Warm & sunny. We both used the same Red Tag fly all day, only flicking it dry ready to cast again. The fish didn’t care whether the fly was on the surface or under it. A day in Paradise!’

We returned the next day in similar weather conditions and achieved similar results, but on this occasion shared the water with Peter Hayes and his client. Jim Allen arrived in the afternoon and out-fished us all.

When the weather was in our favour we often ran between nearby lagoons to capitalise on the best light and polaroiding opportunities. This may have been counterproductive in terms of fish grassed, but we continued to gain

knowledge of other waters within the 19 Lagoons. Charlie also captured his personal best with a 9 lb brown during one of these ‘runs’. We continued to fish Botsford every season, often sighting those elusive big fish and thinking we could easily spend lots more time on this lake. But other lagoons were also very attractive and offering their own unique challenges and rewards.

During the 1990s and beyond the IFS continued to stock Botsford annually with 250 – 350 adult browns from Liawenee Canal on the Great Lake or Hydro Creek at Arthurs Lake.

Later and during 2012 and 2013, 1000 brown trout triploid fry were liberated in lieu of adult fish. In 2014 the adult fish release was wound back to 100, maybe to give the fry a chance of survival as these fish were significantly larger than previous stockings. Anglers who fished Botsford at this time will attest that the average mature fish grassed weighed in at 2 kilogram, which I think was a marked improvement on the previous years.

I made several trips to the Highlands last season. On my first trip I didn’t get out to the western lakes due to heavy snow and bad weather. However, in early December I was on my way to Lake Kay and called into Lake Botsford for a quick look (remember Jetson). The water was high and it was windy and very rough, but I managed to spot a superbly conditioned fish cruising in mid-water that to my amazement ignored my nymph and rose to take my large Red Tag indicator fly. It’s hard to predict what these fish will take at times but it suggests the fish must find the fly. In rough conditions I find you can drop a dry fly closer to a fish without spooking it.

In the New Year on my next trip I again called in during an extremely strong west

wind, with cloudy conditions and water somewhat coloured. I spotted 20 fish over two hours but only managed to prick one. I was able to wade very close to these fish and tried big dry flies, nymphs and wets, but all to no avail. In poor light I retired for the day!

I returned the next morning determined to make amends, and had the lake to myself. It was cold, blue sky with rolling cloud, and a light breeze. Water levels were still relatively high and cloud reflection limited wade polaroiding, so I opted to sight from the shoreline, which gave me a better range of visibility in which to spot fish. I searched for two hours without seeing a fin, then finally spotted a cruising fish that made the perfect rise to a #14 Geehi Beetle. It was one of those excellently conditioned mature fish at 4½ lb. I left to fish other waters in the afternoon, satisfied that Botsford still produced great fish. My sampling of fish at Lake Botsford the next season was small but the fish I encountered were the best I had seen for a few years.

In my early days I dreamed of fishing in Tasmania under blue skies and casting dry flies! Reality set in very early when I was invariably confronted with weather variability that included snow falling during every month that I fished the highlands. Fishing after the blast however can be very rewarding, as the fish are often more settled and willing to grab a well-presented fly.

Nowadays I adapt to the prevailing weather conditions, water levels, insect life (if any) and what I observe the fish doing (if I can see them), before making that important decision of how to fish and what fly to tie on.

My gear is very traditional for my Western Lakes fishing. Depending on the wind strength I choose either a #5

or #6 fast taper rod for control and speed of presentation. Lines? Well I still prefer DT lines for general searching, but occasionally use a WF taper for dun feeders, together with a 9 foot leader with an 8 lb point. You need to tie your knots carefully as these powerful fish will put them to the test! I put more faith in presentation than considerations such as fly choice (within reason), and of course fishing with confidence is essential. Another essential factor is casting capability. I found a period of tournament casting helped develop the skills to cast confidently and with speed in all weather conditions.

Like all the western lakes, fishing Lake Botsford is not easy. Catching fish is not a given. It can be disappointing and frustrating, and it can also be very rewarding. For short term visitors the biggest hurdle is the weather. If you can crack it for a blue sky day - thank the fishing gods and drive no further! For those more fortunate and who can wait for the best days to arrive - good luck and tight lines. For those who choose to fish on a bad day, be optimistic as the sun does occasionally break through the clouds and you can often find fish all in a small window - all on your own!

If you find that Lake Botsford is overloaded with too many rods on a given day, there are the other 18 Lagoons on the Plateau. But fly fishing on a pristine alpine water like this one on a perfect day really is 'Heaven'.

For my last thought I would suggest that you spend the time and become familiar with the water. Fish barren water quickly and slow up when the water looks 'fishy' or when you see a fish, as you may see more. Prepare well and fish confidently!

FLY OF THE MONTH

From Brian Eddy – Fred the Mudeye



Mudeyes, aka dragon fly larva (Corduliidae), are very popular trout bait in Australia. They provide a decent mouthful and catch fish in all the Australia states that have trout. So, it's no surprise to find that the fly tyers have entered the scene too. Rob Flower's *Australian Trout Food, Trout Flies and How to Fish Them* has eight patterns, and Peter Coulson's *Australian Fly Patterns* lists eleven. Probably the most famous of the Australian mudeye patterns is Fred Dunford's Corduliid. Mick Hall has written a lengthy article entitled *Australian Mudeye Patterns - A short history from their origins to modern day*. We must publish this soon.

Brian Eddy, an experienced fly fisher and fly tyer living on the Ovens River at Harrietville, has also investigated mudeye patterns. He writes as follows on the pattern featured here:

I first saw this mudeye pattern in the 1970s in *The Fly Fisher*, the newsletter of Southern Fly Fishers Inc. I believe it was created and named "Fred" by the late George Rowney, the much admired and very entertaining editor of the Southern Fly Fisher's newsletter.

There were (and still are) many mud-eye patterns around, but the one featured here is, I think, the most realistic. It has been, for me, a very successful pattern. Until I started preparing these notes, I hadn't realised that my biggest browns and rainbows from mainland streams have all been caught using this fly.

Fred Mark II: Over the years Fred has spawned (excuse the pun) some descendants - for this version I added some legs.



This was a result of studying the natural, and until I did this, I hadn't realised how just prominent the legs are, particularly on the larger Couta/Spider mud-eyes.

Fred's most recent progeny is "Fast Freddie". I added a paler underbody having noticed that nymphs commonly have a lighter colour underneath and I felt that this perhaps showed as a little flash as they tumbled around whilst being carried along in the current, and maybe this drew the attention of the trout.

It is a heavily weighted version in order to reach trout that I could see down deep but couldn't entice to lift up even a little with other weighted flies. (And believe me, I've put a lot of flies over these fish). This happens in the mostly shallow upper reaches of streams where there are occasional deep but short pools that don't give a long enough drift to get a fly down to where it needs to be.

This latest version has a lead wire underbody and two tungsten bead eyes. It will sink fast, even in fast water; hence the name.

Tying of the original Fred is fairly straight forward. The things to look for are the right colour and thickness of chenille - you need to be able to thread the bead "eyes" onto the chenille.

Materials for tying Fred:

- Hook:** Partridge, round bend or limerick, size 8
- Silk:** Black
- Body & head:** Dark brown chenille
- Back/wing cases:** Black duck breast feathers
- /Eyes:** Two black glass beads (about 2 mm)

Tying the Basic Fred:

- 1 Wrap thread to the bend of the hook and tie in a 40 mm length of brown chenille – tied in at the middle. Tie turns of thread to back to just behind the eye.
- 2 Tie in another length of chenille behind the eye and wind it down to the bend then back again.



- 3 Take the two ends of the first piece of chenille that was tied in and bring them forward along either side of the body to create a wider fatter body. Tie them in behind the eye. Trim off the excess.
- 4 Now take two or three black duck breast feathers and pull off the lower fibres to make a feather length which will extend just past the bend of the hook.
- 5 Tie these in as a piece (i.e. stacked one on top of the other). A little head cement helps keep things together in this step.
- 6 Snip a little Vee out of the tail end. (See photo here).
- 7 Thread two black glass beads onto the chenille and wind on as eyes using a figure of eight pattern between the beads to put them into their correct position on either side of the head.
- 8 The completed Fred:



Our Sponsors

VFFA 2021 meetings & other activities

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

December

10 Friday Annual & Christmas Dinner (combined) at the Kelvin Club. Speaker: Jim Allen, who will bring some "Reflections on a Fly Fisherman's Fortunate Life". Details and the cost have been given in an email from Terry Rogers in late November. These details are also given in this issue.

January 2022

12 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, provided day summer temperatures are not too high.

February 2022

2 Wednesday First Council Meeting for 2022 – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
6 – 12 Trip to Currawong Lakes private fishery in Tasmania (subject to possible border crossing restrictions). Event Co-ordinator – Jon Kenfield (solutionist999@gmail.com)

12 – 20 Tasmanian trip to Hayes on Brumby's (subject to possible border crossing restrictions). Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray (chris@graysmail.com.au.)

24 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
"Liars' Night" – reports from members on their summer fishing. (Our president David Hooke is asking that members who have some good stories to tell should contact him with the details.)

March 2022

9 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for the Autumn visit, 10:00 am till dark.

17 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club. Speaker – TBC.

30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00pm at the Kelvin Club.

April 2022

8 – 10 Big River Trip. Event Co-ordinator – John Pilkington.

15 – 17 Easter 2022

21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club. Speaker – TBC.

27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

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