

FLY LINES



DECEMBER 2022

Our Christmas Dinner with Alan Pilkington

After graduating from Melbourne University, Alan worked in advertising. He moved to the United States with his family in the 1980s, where he was chairman of one of Chicago's largest advertising agencies. An active conservationist and environmentalist, he also served as Board Chair of Defenders of Wildlife, a leading United States wildlife advocacy group.

Since his retirement twenty years ago Alan has become a writer, publishing novels, collections of verse, short stories, and a memoir, all with outdoor themes or settings. In recent years has been a frequent contributor to *Fly Lines*.

His latest book, *Where Time Stands Still*, which was co-authored with his brother John, tells of his family's involvement with the Big River in north-eastern Victoria for almost a century.

Graduating from spinning to fly fishing in his teens, Alan has been an addictive fly fisherman ever since and has fished in the United States, Canada, England, Iceland, the Caribbean, Patagonia, Central America, Fiji, New Zealand, and in Australia in Tasmania, the Snowy Mountains, the Victorian alps, and of course on his beloved Big River.

In his address to members, Alan will talk about why he loves fly fishing. This will be a wonderful opportunity to hear an outstanding speaker telling us about his best experiences fly fishing for trout.

Friday, December 9,
6:30 pm at the
Kelvin Club

So mark it in your diary – Friday, December 9, 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.



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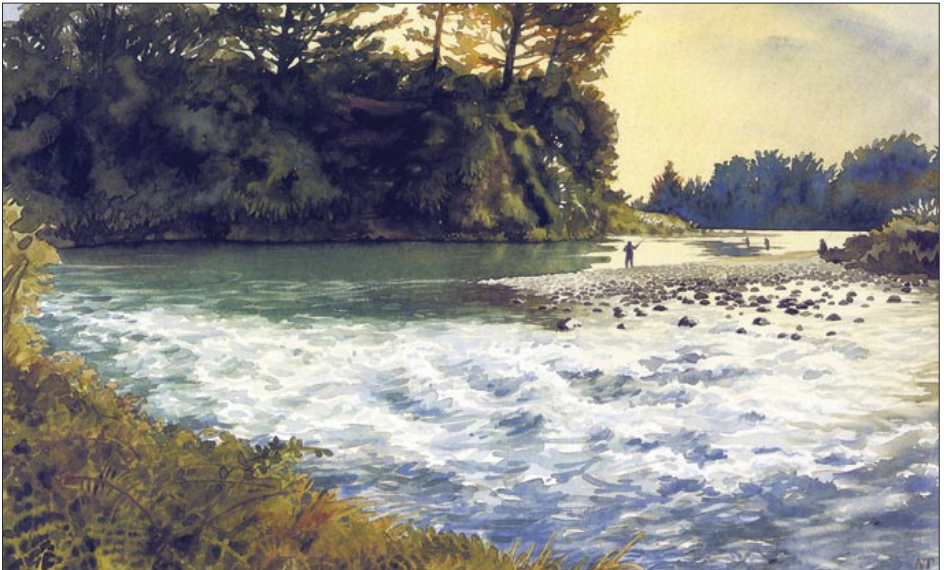
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Tichborne watercolour – Tongariro River - Poutu Pool

President's Message

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
(My Country by Dorothea McKellar, 1908)*

The extremes of weather continue much as they did at the turn of the last century and no doubt much as they will at the turn of the next century. Being an Association involved in the outdoors and hence subject to the vagaries of the weather, our activities have been significantly affected over the last few months.

Unfortunately, our trip to Western Victoria as guests of the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club was cancelled due to the weather and flooding creeks and rivers. There was also limited interest from our members, perhaps in part due to the recent Bruce Whitehead trophy which was also conducted in Western Victoria. But I suspect the weather and the resurgence of Covid were negative contributors. The plan, in discussion with our host Jim Blakeslee, is to reconvene in the first half of next year.

As we are all acutely aware, the flooding in northern, central and north-eastern Victoria has been catastrophic and the end is not in sight. It was no surprise then that our Guest Speaker for the November meeting, Mark Turner, initially warned us and then confirmed that his responsibilities in the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority precluded a trip to Melbourne. Many of you will have seen social media reports of the efforts of fisheries authorities in salvaging as many fish as possible from major blackwater events.



Dr David Hooke

The trip to the Shrine preceding our November meeting went ahead as planned and was an absolute eye-opener for many of us who had only attended the Shrine previously for the Dawn Service on Anzac Day. There is so much more to experience, and we were all most grateful to Peter Whitelaw, a Life Governor of the Shrine, who introduced and then guided us through the memorial displays. We then participated in the daily memorial service, conducted on this occasion by Peter. Very moving. All agreed a most worthwhile and enlightening morning and the suggestion was made to repeat the visit in a couple of years.

Lacking a guest speaker for our November meeting afforded an ideal opportunity to discuss many of the issues facing the VFFA. Several members, some of whom couldn't attend, penned their thoughts and those



The November lunchtime meeting at the Kelvin Club was a very pleasant social event

ideas/comments together with some of Council's concerns, formed the agenda for a lively and extremely fruitful discussion. Roughly twenty members attended, and some made a special effort to travel significant distance to contribute.

The issues canvassed were broad and of course many are not specific to the VFFA. All fishing clubs have experienced a decline in members and activities over the past few years and some are on the brink of folding. Fortunately, we are far from that position. Our membership has held up well, but attendance at meetings and enthusiasm for trips has declined. Hence our interest in the views of members to guide Council going forward.

Issues mentioned included Covid resurging; the hospitality industry struggling; cost of living pressures; an aging core membership; VFFA organised trips; special interest groups; the place of technology in communication; potential "forum" with all members contact details; increased VFFA sponsored

instruction ... and the list goes on. The discussion was exceptional and highlighted for me the passion and concern for the VFFA amongst members. It also emphasised that we are a broad church and the different activities we provide will suit different members at different times.

A report collating the discussion will be presented to Council and a survey will be sent to all members canvassing views on specific issues. Again, my thanks to all who participated so fully in the meeting.

Our next event is the Christmas Dinner on Friday December 9 where our Guest Speaker will be Alan Pilkington, who is well known to many members, if not personally, then through his regular contributions to *Fly Lines*.

It will be a cracker evening to close out 2022 and I encourage as many of you as possible to attend.

If I don't see you on the 9th, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy and more fishable New Year.

Australian Trout Foundation Report

... the following is a summary of a report sent to Terry George, ATF President, by Taylor Hunt and Anthony Forster, from VFA

[VFA response to floods and fish salvage opportunities – Update no. 1 (2nd November)]

On Thursday, November 3, 2022 Taylor Hunt (VFA) wrote:

Dear Recreational Fisher,

Like you, the VFA remains concerned about the impact of major flooding on our native fisheries particularly in the lower reaches of river systems in northern Victoria.

In the last week, we have seen significant fish deaths (predominately carp and native fish) in the Little Murray River, Broken Creek, Boosey Creek, Gunbower Creek, Loddon River, Kerang lakes, and the Murray River at Echuca and Swan Hill.

Because of limited access to flooded waters, we also expect but can't confirm reports that fish kills have also occurred in other rivers, creeks and wetlands in northern Victoria.

Here's where we are at:

- Major flooding has transported vast amounts of natural and cropped vegetation into creeks and rivers that is being broken down by bacteria - this removes dissolved oxygen from the water (also known as blackwater).
- Beyond the initial blackwater events, we expect deoxygenated water trapped on floodplains will eventually drain into rivers once river levels start to fall, and this will pose further blackwater risks.
- Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's) are actively monitoring flood levels, dissolved oxygen levels and the movement of blackwater.
- Catchment Management Authorities are leading local native fish rescue operations in collaboration with the Victorian Fisheries Authority, Arthur Rylah Institute (DELWP), New South Wales Fisheries, OzFish and fish ecologists.



The VFA team rescued some sizeable Murray Cod



The VFA - well-equipped and active in rescuing fish from flooded blackwater

- Fish researchers and contractors have been engaged to harvest a limited number of native fish (and crayfish) from locations that are about to be impacted by blackwater – this is a precautionary approach.
- These fish are being moved to nearby waterways where there is better water quality or held at our Arcadia and Snobs Creek hatcheries until they can be returned when conditions improve.
- The VFA is providing fish transport trailers and vehicles to support these operations and issuing permits for fish translocation.
- More than 100 highly endangered purple spotted gudgeon have also been relocated to safer wetlands.
- Around 100 native fish and crayfish are being held at Arcadia Native Fish Hatchery. A small number of fish will be retained as broodstock to breed fish for restocking affected waters.
- Purple spotted gudgeon are being held at Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery.
- NSW Fisheries and OzFish have collected and are holding more than 300 Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish from both banks of the Murray River.

Native fish salvage operations:

- To date more than 550 large native fish (mainly cod and golden perch) have been captured from the National Channel, Lower Gunbower Creek, Pyramid Creek and Taylors Creek and translocated to mid Loddon River, Campaspe River and Kow Swamp – this work is continuing.

Reporting fish kills and fisheries offences

- The EPA is the responsible body for managing fish kills in Victoria. To report a fish kill please ring 1300 372 842
- If you see illegal fishing activity in response to flooding please call 13FISH on 13 3474

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Constraints and challenges

- Many of these waters remain in flood condition which is limiting vehicle access for salvage operations,
- In some cases boating access to these waters is not safe because of the inherent flood risks,
- Fish that are long stressed through oxygen depletion have a low chance of recuperation, even if salvaged.

In summary, we are still learning the scale of flood impacts on native fish populations, but in some rivers and creeks we know it has been significant.

We won't know the full impacts of major flooding on native fish for some time, but we do expect blackwater events will persist for many weeks and possibly months to come.

We are working with many partners to capture and relocate high valued native fish to safer waters as a precautionary measure.

Recreational fishers care deeply about native fish and so do we.

From past experience of blackwater events, we know native fish are incredibly resilient and with our help, they will bounce back.

Thanks for your passionate interest in supporting Victorian inland fisheries. We will keep you posted on our collective effort by email and through social media.

Anthony Forster
Manager Inland Fisheries, Victorian Fisheries Authority

(While this report is concerned with native fish we can assume that trout and trout streams have been similarly affected.)



February 2023 Meeting – Liars' Night

Our February meeting, the first for 2023, will again be our traditional Liars' 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.

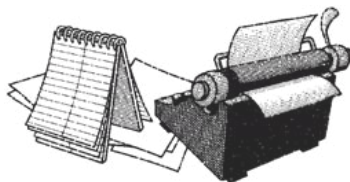
Members who plan to be out and about, or possibly even overseas (even Tassie), in the December/January period and

who are willing to share with us their excursion plans are asked to contact our president and let him know they are 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.

So mark it in your diary – Thursday, February 23, 6:30 pm (for a meal prior to the meeting) at the Kelvin Club.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"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." (William Humphrey)

"Some of the best fishing is done not in water but in print." (Sparse Grey Hackle)

*"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." (Arthur Ransom: *The Fisherman's Library*, 1959)*

"It is the constant - or inconstant change - the infinite variety in fly fishing that binds us fast. It is impossible to grow weary of a sport that is never the same on any two days of the year." (Theodore Gordon, 1914)

*"Fly tying is the next best thing to fishing." (Arthur Ransom: *Fly Tying in Winter*, 1929)*

Fly fishing is not all about flies, but they're certainly fundamental to the business. I recall once being in a group of colleagues when someone asked what fly fishing was all about and what flies had to do with it. One of the group responded by describing flies as 'artificial bait', and went on to describe how he thought they were made: 'bits of feathers and fur are stuck on fish hooks and made to look like the insects that trout eat'.

Fortunately, we get away with such 'flies' because trout are fairly dumb. I read once that on a human IQ test trout would get a score of about 5 or 6 (where a score of 100 is the average for humans). Mind you, the trout I encounter seem heaps smarter than that.

But getting back to flies, the process of constructing them, 'fly tying', is in my mind a very important and enjoyable part of it. Not all fly fishers are fly tiers, but many are. I recall a VFFA member some years ago telling me that he loved his fly fishing, but he ran a business that demanded a lot of his time, and he had a wife and some kids, so all the time he could spare for his fly fishing was spent fishing. He didn't have any time left

over for fluffing around tying flies. But many of us do, and that gives rise to a pile of questions.

Yale Sacks is a good friend of the VFFA. He is a retired medico living in Oregon in the USA. In retirement he remains a very keen fly fisher and fly tier. In an email a little while ago he told me that he had tried counting his collection of flies and gave up at 2,000. He figured he had enough; that number would see him out and he didn't need to tie any more.

I haven't counted mine, but there are lots of plastic storage boxes out in the garage full of my creations over many years.

So why do I keep tying? I started trying to tie flies soon after I started fly fishing back in the 1970s - for the obvious reason that the flies I tied, regardless of their very modest quality, were much cheaper than the ones on sale in local fishing stores. I'm not so sure that this is still the case, as hooks and beads and quality hackles, for starters, are not cheap these days. But there are still lots of good reasons why I keep tying.

It's a pleasant creative hobby, filling in quiet evenings when the weather outside

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is foul and you wouldn't be fishing anyway. And tying your own gives you control over the components – the hooks you use (barbed or not), the materials you use, the colours, the hook sizes. You can experiment with all manner of variations - add weight, or not add weight, add or leave out some other features, and so on.

I tie to replenish my depleted supplies, or to construct some exciting new patterns I've just heard or read about. Often I tie because I feel an urge to try to do better. A well-tied fly is an accomplishment – something you can be proud of.

We have some superb fly tiers in our VFFA ranks. Far too many for me to list. Here are a few I know particularly well. Andrew Mossman ties fabulous flies and, among other tricks, is a champion at tying those tiny dual-winged old-style UK dry flies. Richard Kos, our regular fly tying demonstrator is, of course, highly skilled, and Robert Bailey is very impressive too. One of the best I've seen is Ray Brown, who lives in Tasmania. Ray ties professionally, and has for many years, so naturally is exceptionally good. I watched Ray tie three samples of a complicated fly one afternoon. He completed them in no time at all, and all three looked identical and absolutely perfect.

I've mentioned before the astounding skills of Hubert Reichelt. Hubert is a retired engineer, and his fly tying technique reflects the attitude to detail of a professional engineer. Who else would bother counting the number of turns of thread wound on a hook shank, and for so many of the common steps involved in fly tying Hubert has developed his own personal set of repeatable procedures.

I remember talking with Hubert some time ago when he was about to head off on his annual trip to New Zealand with Trevor Stow. Prior to leaving he was in the process of tying five dozen special

bead-head nymphs for Trevor. Hubert confessed that he had actually tied six dozen. While tying the first dozen he was just 'getting his eye in' and getting the shape and balance right. From then on they would all be identical, and perfect. I found this confession from such a skilful tier somewhat comforting, because I know from my own experience that when I sit down to tie a pile of Red Tags, or whatever, I also need to tie a few starters to 'get my eye in'. The first few off the vise are often not so good.

Here's a question – can fly tying be a hobby or interest for someone who doesn't actually fish? I recall popping into the Hookup store in Ferntree Gully one afternoon some years ago and meeting a young chap there who told me his hobby was tying Royal Wulffs. (And us tiers know that this fabulous fly is a brute to tie. A lot of steps involved, and getting an end product that looks good is a challenge.) But this young lad I'd met didn't fish his Royal Wulffs, he just tied them. I looked a bit sceptical, so he whipped out a fly box and showed me the contents – a number of immaculately tied Royal Wulffs, in sizes 16, 18 and 20. Tiny flies, and every single one absolutely perfect.

One of the challenges with all this fly tying is sorting and storing them, and then deciding what you'll take when you actually head out fishing. You will undoubtedly have a collection of dry flies, and nymphs and some wet flies. But whoa, those dry flies will probably include some beetle patterns, and duns, and hoppers, and ants, and dry caddis patterns, and parachute patterns, and spinners, and possibly even some midges. And where do the emergers go? (How many boxes of dry flies will we need?)

And if you're heading to a lake you'll need your wet flies – big ones and small ones. So in your fly boxes go your spider patterns, and Matukas, and Woolly Buggers, and Yetis, and your Mrs

Simpsons, and Robins, and a few Hamills Killers, and you wouldn't dare go out without some Magoos, and of course Tom Jones and Woolly Worms,... And that's still leaving out a pile of other 'essentials'.

And the selection of important and essential nymphs is equally huge.

Then of course you need to carry many of these flies in a range of sizes. I looked in a member's dry fly boxes one night and there they were - a whole row of Red Tags size 12, then another row of Red Tags size 14, then a third row of Red Tags in size 16. Oh dear - the number of fly boxes needed is exploding ... (But then again I still recall one of the highly respected members of the Warrnambool club who back in the 1970s would head out with a fly already tied on his tippet and three spares in a matchbox.)

Clearly, we can't go fishing loaded up with all these boxes of flies. So what do we do? Do you put together a small collection of boxes for our stream fishing and another collection for when we fish lakes? I once had a selection of dry flies in a box that was labelled 'Evening Flies for the Yarra'. Goodness, and it was packed tight too.

Our flies are doubtless our most essential item of fly fishing equipment, and deciding what we'll take requires a bit of thought. Best of luck with this, and I hope you don't have too many occasions when you're out miles from home and there's a fish rising right in front of you – and the fly you desperately need is in the box you didn't bring.

Tight lines and pleasant tying,
Lyndon



A Visit to the Shrine

In the morning prior to our scheduled November meeting (November 17) some 15 members attended the Melbourne Shrine. We had been invited to make this visit by Peter Whitelaw, a long-standing VFFA member who is also a Life Governor at the Shrine.

Peter gave a brief outline of the history of our Melbourne Shrine, and then took us on a conducted tour – a first time there for many of us.

Officially titled the Shrine of Remembrance, it is Victoria's national memorial 'honouring the service and sacrifice of Australians in war and peacekeeping'. It certainly is a very imposing and inspiring building that dominates the skyline just south of the city.

According to Peter's notes, after the World War One Armistice in 1918 >>>



Peter Whitelaw, VFFA member and a Life Governor at the Melbourne Shrine, gave us an outline of the history and major features of the Shrine



VFFA members visiting the Shrine were keen to ask questions

there was strong community sentiment to create a memorial to remember those Victorians who had made the ultimate sacrifice and all of those who had served. Then followed some years of debate and controversy before the Shrine of Remembrance was finally approved for building in 1927. Building began in 1928.

In 1934 the Shrine was completed, and at the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the day then known as Armistice Day, the Shrine was dedicated by the Duke of Gloucester in a ceremony attended by 300,000 people (one third of Melbourne's population at the time).

The Shrine was built to commemorate the 114,000 Victorians who enlisted and especially the 19,000 who did not return. Every family had been impacted by this conflict. The purpose of the Shrine was to not glorify war, but to be a memorial to all who served. The Shrine became a place of pilgrimage for unit members and

their families. They gathered to remember their mates and loved ones.

The soul of the Shrine is the Sanctuary with the Stone of Remembrance. It is here that at 11 o'clock on the 11th of November each year a ray of light shines through the roof onto the word "love" within the inscription on the stone which reads: "greater love hath no man".

Around the sanctuary there are 42 Books of Remembrance which record the names of those Victorians who served in the Great War. Both of Peter's grandfathers' names are recorded there.

Outside the building the forecourt contains the Cenotaph and Eternal flame and three flagpoles, all in commemoration of those who served in WW2.

Conflicts since 1945 service are commemorated by the Garden of Remembrance on the western side of the



The Eternal Flame at the Shrine symbolises eternal life - if the Flame does not die, then neither will the memory of the fallen.

Shrine, and include Malaya, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Other memorials include the Lone Pine struck from seeds of the original Lone Pine in Gallipoli, the legacy garden where poppies grow from seeds brought from Villers-Bretonneux, the statue of the Man and his Donkey (we don't name memorials after people), hundreds of trees dedicated to individual units, the statues of 'The Driver' and 'Wipers', and the Cobbers statue near the new Anzac Station. The Balcony provides a stunning view of the City of Melbourne.

In 1996 the Trustees of the time (of which Peter was one) recognised that the Shrine would eventually lose its relevance to the community unless its role was enhanced. The number of veterans, especially those involved in WW2, was fading away. It was decided that the unused under-croft space of some 6,000 square metres under the Shrine be developed into Galleries of Remembrance with a primary purpose of

educating the public and future generations about the service and sacrifice of our veterans. Some \$45 million was raised to build these Galleries.

The Visitor Centre was included in the design to provide exhibition space and access to the Crypt from ground level. Later an education centre and an auditorium were added.

Since the opening of the Galleries the number of visitors has increased to about 1.1 million each year (prior to Covid), including some 60,000 school children who attend the education centre.

The Shrine has a staff of 40 supported by around 100 volunteer guides, and the 14 Life Governors and Governors host the ceremonies at the Shrine. There are about 200 ceremonies each year, which includes the Last Post Service at 4:45 pm each Sunday.



Fixing the Delatite

... report from Rick Wallace.

The ATF had planned a day with the GBCMA to do some tree planting on the Delatite River some months ago.



The original notice said:

“Volunteers wanted for working with the GBCMA on the Delatite River:

Tree Planting and Riparian Maintenance,

Date: Wednesday October 19,

Location: Hearns Road Bridge
(downstream side)

Time: 9:30 am to 1:00 pm

Work Involved: Planting additional trees, Weed control, Removal of tree guards.”

Rick Wallace represented the VFFA and reports as follows:

A group of seven of us assembled at the Delatite Lane bridge over the Delatite River. We focused on a section of riverbank on private land where there had been some earlier planting. There had also been some instream habitat work done in recent years.

Between us we planted 100 new trees – a mixture of wattles and eucalypts – to further stabilize the bank. We kept ourselves productive by digging out the holes and inserting the trees, hammering in stakes, or putting guards around the newly planted trees.

In the humid conditions it was sweaty business but rewarding, and punctuated by a pause at 11am to mark Remembrance Day and the service of all our veterans.

Our group was comprised of representatives from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Association (led by supervisor for the day Jim Lakes), the Australian Trout Foundation, and fly fishing clubs including the VFFA.



Rick Wallace represented the VFFA at the Delatite Tree Planting working bee

A few of us were keenly eyeing the waters of the Delatite throughout the morning. It was running high but relatively clear, given the rainfall in the catchment. There'd been reports of good



The group paused at 11:00 am to mark Remembrance Day

fishing when the river was higher with some fat browns taken on worm flies and nymphs.

Four of us fished during the afternoon, with the VFFA's Peter Clayton taking a nice 3 lb brown. With storm clouds approaching it was a couple of hours before I got on the scoreboard in the nearby Hearn's Road stretch with a little brown surprising me by snatching my Stimulator off the top. It was followed by a nice brown of two or three pounds taken on a nymph in a lovely pool.

By this time the rain was beginning to teem down and there were lightning strikes hitting the ridges on both sides of the valley. So, a good time to head back to Melbourne after a successful day on all fronts.

Jim Lakes added: "Hi everyone, just a quick email to say thank you for coming along to help with tree planting on Friday. Although there were only a few of us we got some 120 plants in the ground! I kept my eye on the weather in Mansfield over the weekend and the plants got a good soaking, so they are off to a great start.

Peter Clayton managed to catch a nice 3 lb brown trout and dropped a 2½ lb rainbow after the planting was done.

Thanks again and I hope to see you at the next tree planting day."

Regards, Jim

A Report from our Past President

... our past president, Chris Gray, headed off last week with two highly skilled and experienced compatriots (both with VFFA-president experience) and plans to do some serious damage to the trout populations of a couple of Gippsland rivers. Before leaving Chris promised your editor a report – text and photos – for our December issue. I'm sure that many of our readers will empathise with Chris's chronicle of their fate.

"Hi Lyndon,

Some would have it that there would be a detailed report for you, with lots of images of past and current presidents casting and mending and catching and holding lots of fish. Not so!

Some would have it that there would be a detailed report for you showing beautiful sunrises across the Dargo high plains, with misty fog rising as the morning sun crept across the valley, illuminating eager fly fishermen garbed up and heading off for an early fish. Not so!

Some might even have it that there could be a detailed report about high rivers and

creeks, a total lack of entomology above the rivers, of long drives, trees across roads, sulking trout, 25 mm of rain, Choco missing the only two fish in three days, and warm beer.

The reality is there is no report of any of the above. Just: "*Grisold, Gray & Hooke were beaten by the weather gods*".

I know you will have put aside 3 - 5 pages for our report. However, you could make good use of these newsletter pages with a scone recipe and clear instructions on the best way to whip cream.

So, apologies and cheers, Chris"



Duncan Johnson's hut where Chris Gray, David Grisold and David Hooke filled in the time while the rain came down

Tasmanian Fishing Update - Looking to the end of January

... Chris Bassano

A wet spring has meant high water levels in many lakes and rivers this season. La Nina has particularly impacted the eastern side of the state bringing good spawning conditions for galaxia in lakes such as Tooms Lake. On the back of this, impressive bags of fish have been caught here using Yeti style flies along the edges. This weather pattern is also the driver for Lake Crescent, which has seen extremely high-water levels so far. Trout here have been growing fast, with most fish landed being in the 6 – 8 pound range. A few fish over ten pounds have also been caught. Next year this lake will be worth making a special trip to fish, as trout sizes will increase further.

Arthurs Lake has produced large numbers of fish for anglers looking for tailing fish during low light, and it has been equally productive for those fishing in around 1.2 metres of water with Woolly Buggers. Fish are gorged on worms and looking very fat. They should start eating mayflies during December, with caddis, midge and stoneflies hatching earlier in the month. The Cowpaddock is always popular, but excellent fishing continues at Hydro and Pumphouse Bay. The water is clear enough to polaroid for those who move slowly. Both shore-based and boat angling have been, and will continue to be, excellent.

Duns will keep hatching on Woods and Penstock over the next two months. They started a few weeks ago and fish have been willing to rise on most days. Woods Lake dry fly fishing has been slower than usual due to exceptionally high (spilling) water. This has kept water temperatures down and delayed the big hatches. Trips later in December will be perfectly timed.



IFS Director John Diggle with a Woods Lake trout caught in November

The wet fly and nymph fishing at Woods Lake has been excellent.

Penstock will remain popular with anglers throughout summer. Easterly weather patterns are very good on Penstock when fishing the lee shore. La Nina could provide more of this into the new year.

Mayflies have also been hatching on Bronte Lagoon. While not noted for big hatches, the fish in this lake do love eating them. Fishing mayfly patterns 'blind' on overcast days has been working, especially when they are moved around the strap weed. The last two to three years has seen the average size of fish in Bronte Lagoon increase. It is fishing as well as it has in many years.

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Mayfly fishing at Four Springs was excellent early in the season. More of this action can be expected at Little Pine, Woods Lake, and Penstock in December.

Nearby at Pine Tier large rainbows have been caught in the first few months of the season. There is no reason to think this will change through the summer months. Recently, anglers fishing from a boat into the shore caught a large bag of fish using dry flies and small Woolly Buggers. I would love to tell you that the dries out-fished the wets, but it wasn't the case. Many of these fish were rainbows, and some were over two pounds.

Staying on that side of the plateau, Lake St Clair will be worth fishing when the warmer weather arrives. Beetle patterns on bright days and mayflies under cloud always bring fish to the surface.

Little Pine Lagoon spilt for most of August, for the second half of October, and the start of November. The fishing has been very good for anglers who were there as the water was rising, and tailing fish have been seen by most. The size of fish in the lake has varied, with reports of both very small and quite large fish, which shows what a healthy fishery it is. Those fishing around the shore are, on average, catching larger fish while anglers pulling streamers from boats are catching a mixed bag.

From the boat red and black Woolly Buggers, along with a gold Humungous, have been productive on intermediate fly lines. Fly selection when fishing the edges has been more varied. Dry flies were doing the job when levels were very high, and spiders were being washed out. On other occasions small green nymphs have worked.

Last season I was lucky enough to get to Little Pine at around 5 pm on December 16. This has always been a great time of year for me when looking for fish eating mayflies on the lake. I spoke with anglers coming off the water who were very disappointed with the fishing. They had not seen many mayflies or fish eating them. I launched a boat and went to the back shore where a few duns were coming off. Within a short time a reasonable hatch started and the fish were on them. I had the entire lake to myself. Those fishing in Tassie during the middle of the month will be well served to remain on the water later than usual, as this was not a one off for me or my friends in the days to follow. The clouds of black spinners during the day have to come from somewhere!

The Western Lakes have been very difficult to access since the start of the season. Wash outs and closed roads have meant fish there are receiving very little pressure. It goes without saying that if you are feeling up to the walk, or the road is open to vehicles, this area should be on top of the priority list. Those who have ventured into the Nineteen Lagoons have reported excellent fishing with many using large dry flies cast at moving fish. Non-descript caddis patterns have been as good as any, but Zulus and other 'tagged' flies have also been good. I can't give any specifics on locations and water heights out there, as there is very little information available.

On the rivers, water levels have been very high, but the fishing has been excellent. For much of the season so far rain has made most rivers unfishable. With summer approaching, those willing to take a risk on lower sections of the South Esk and Macquarie Rivers might find mayflies being eaten in backwaters. I was lucky to experience this at Evandale in the second last week of November during a muggy afternoon.

Smaller rivers have produced large numbers of modest fish in their headwaters. The St Patrick's, Tyenna and Mersey have all been excellent, with the St Patrick's being the pick of the dry fly rivers. Any caddis pattern is worth running down a bubble line in these rivers as snowflake caddis started hatching a few weeks ago. While water temperatures are cool the fish are still willing to move to the fly. Avoid fishing the faster water that mainland anglers are used to fishing on their local streams. Tassie fish tend to sit just off the fast water and are much lazier. They prefer the seam line or the area where the current slows. The best speed of water to fish is that which is flowing at the pace of a man walking. Fish will move into the

faster currents well after Christmas when water temperatures rise.

The Meander River won't start to fish well until the irrigators start irrigating out of it. With spring having been so wet, this may delay the best of the fishing in that river. It is a good thing we have so many other great options!

The Leven will be worth fishing at Taylors Flats in the very upper reaches. This is similar to most headwaters but offers something a little different for those who fish 'the usual' spots regularly. The lower reaches of the Leven were very good last year. While this year's major flood might have impacted on this, it is worth fishing if you are wanting larger river fish.

All in all, the months ahead are looking extremely promising, with high water levels across the state except in the south-west. River anglers will find excellent fish on all rivers, but cooler water than usual may mean nymphs are preferred to dries on some rivers. If you are looking for somewhere a bit different to fish, try to the upper Leven or the upper North Esk / Ford rivers. Lake anglers should be excited about water levels as high levels can extend the good fishing well into the last few months of the season. For those wanting something different on the lakes, Tooms Lake (although past its best) will be well worth a visit when conditions are rough in the highlands. If Great Lake keeps rising, then polaroiding the shores of the most under fished lake in Tasmania will be worth your while.

Don't forget the tagged trout competition that is still running. There are 80 fish worth \$2K each still swimming around our inland waters. Any one of these fish could help cover more than just the cost of flights to Tasmania. But why stop at catching only one?



New Zealand South Island 2022

... from Trevor Stow

With Covid it's been a couple of years since we've had the chance to get back to Southland and chase the trout. It's always great to get out on the river and cast a fly. However, it's not always easy. Our previous trip, two years ago, saw us on one of our favourite streams but not having a lot of success.

The trout were there, and they were rising like mad to damselflies. And do you think we had a damselfly representation? No! We tried over a dozen different patterns and finally fooled just one brown. Most likely we didn't fool him. More likely we wore him down casting flies over him until finally, in frustration, he took one. His mates were not so silly and completely ignored our offerings.

So we resolved to get some damselfly imitations before our next trip. But like a lot of New Year's resolutions, the good intention was largely forgotten. Luckily I had made some effort and had picked up three moulded green plastic imitations. Then I tucked them away somewhere in my box and, of course, forgot about them. Until today!

We were back on that same stream. And guess what? Yep, damsels everywhere. Red damsels of course, and mine were green. Ah well, they'll have to do, so where are they? Great news - I found them! So I took the Adams off and prepared to tie the damselfly imitation on. But I fumbled the fly and it fell into some long green grass, never to be seen again. So now down to two damselfly patterns.



A superb South Island brown that fell to a damselfly imitation



Trevor's green plastic damsel imitation that fooled some fish

Being a little more careful this time, I managed to successfully tie on my second damsel pattern. I found a feeding trout and cast the little fly ahead of him, only to see it sink under the surface. The plastic body apparently doesn't float. I pulled the line in and put heaps of Gink on the leader, then cast the fly towards the fish. It floated momentarily then sank just below the surface. The next thing I saw was a boil about where the fly landed. I lifted the rod and was pleased and somewhat surprised to feel the weight of a nice 3 lb brown.

For the next hour I continued on, and my plastic fantastic accounted for two more fish before an annoying easterly wind put them down.

It's now December and my 2023 resolution is to source a good damsel representation. Anybody got any ideas?



Hubert Reichelt with a fine South Island brown

Who would like to fish The Test?

The River Test is a chalk stream in the south of England. It is without doubt one of the most famous trout streams in the world. Historically, it is regarded as the birthplace of modern fly fishing. The river rises in Hampshire near Basingstoke and runs for 62 km before entering the sea near Southampton. It is famous world-wide for its superb trout fishing.

But fishing the Test is problematic because it is privately owned. More than 90% of the river is owned by members of an organisation called the Test and Itchen Association. It is possible to pay to fish some sections, but the cost is very steep.

However, VFFA members are being offered the wonderful opportunity to fish the Test next year. Rodney Foale is a member of the VFFA and is a close friend of John Pilkington. Rodney, originally

from Melbourne, is now a cardiologist living in London. He is a keen fly fisher and has access to fishing the Test near Awbridge/Romsey. At this point it is a beautiful classic chalk stream. John has fished there several times at Rodney's invitation, as have several other VFFA members.

Rodney has made a very generous offer – two days fishing the Test to be auctioned at our Christmas Dinner. He has kindly donated the fishing in 2023 on his water on the Test near Stockbridge. There are two beats located close to Awbridge/Romsey and they are available on weekdays (Mondays to Fridays) after June 12 through to September.

John has personally fished this water several times with Rodney. There is a small comfortable shack by the stream



Beautiful weather and a very attractive section to fish



The River Test near Stockbridge on a cool overcast day where fish were rising all day

with BBQ facilities. A ghillie is available if required, and good local accommodation is available at popular nearby hotels.

This is a wonderful opportunity to fish a river steeped in the history of the development of fly fishing. F.M. Halford, regarded as the father of dry fly fishing, fished it regularly as his 'laboratory' to test his theories.

Rodney is a member of the famous Fly Fishers' Club in London, and members of the VFFA have always been warmly welcomed there. A visit to the Club's premises at Brook Street in London to see a fascinating collection of fly fishing memorabilia could also be arranged.

Rodney suggests that two weekdays in July or August would be best, with more days available if preferred. He will book accommodation at local hotels if required. Good accommodation is available at The Duke on the Test, The Greyhound, and The Peat Spade. Dinner at the Fly Fishers' Club in London can be included and hosted by Rodney.

Outside of the mayfly fishing period from May 14 through to June anglers typically pay £300 - £500 per rod per day, so the incredible value of Rodney's offer can be appreciated. He can allow up to four rods per beat, and if having a picnic lunch/dinner on the river the tables seat 12 comfortably with butterfly of lamb BBQ facilities, all cutlery, glasses, etc, provided. Visiting VFFA members just need to bring ice and the food and drink.

If required Rodney can arrange a guide to assist at a cost of £200 per day (to be confirmed), but he adds VFFA members are good fishermen so a ghillie is probably not needed. And in any case Rodney is able to give advice regarding conditions, flies to use, gear to use, etc.

So there it is – the very generous offer by Rodney for the opportunity to fish the fabulous Test which will be auctioned at our Christmas Dinner on Friday, December 9.

Millbrook Ventures

The VFFA has four visits to Millbrook Lakes each year, and many of our members have now enjoyed this fabulous experience. The lakes we fish are very attractive and well-stocked, and our past visits have been thoroughly enjoyable. We are very grateful to Mark Weigall for arranging this opportunity for us.

The date for our next visit is Wednesday, January 11, and our scheduled fishing time is from 10:00 am until dark.

The invitation to visit Millbrook on this day will be provided by Terry Rogers via an email to all members, probably arriving in about the first week of January next year.

Keep an eye out for this email.



Richard Kos netting another Millbrook trout



The cabin at Hillies

Cooma Notes

... from John Killip

Most of the fishing reports so far this season have been about the Snowy lakes, especially Eucumbene. Regular visitors have been happily talking about the best fishing they have ever experienced, with many large trout being caught.

The Snowy Monaro region has escaped the serious flooding that has affected places further inland, but the mountains have been receiving some very extreme weather at times. Snowfalls of 50 cm in October and November are not usual. So the larger rivers flowing out of the mountains have been maintaining very high flows.

Snowy Hydro have been trying to lower the level in Tantangara Lake where they are boring the head-race tunnel for the pumped hydro Snowy 2.0 project. Some water is flowing into Lake Eucumbene via the Providence Portal tunnel, but a lot is also being released into the Murrumbidgee River below the dam wall.

This is affecting our river fishing in two ways. Lake Eucumbene is rising and flooding the Providence Flats, where we have enjoyed a lot of good fishing in recent seasons, and our "local" river, the Murrumbidgee, has been kept very high.

There have been reports of keen fly fishers catching trout in the Bidgee by fishing heavy nymphs in the quieter places, but so far Margaret and I haven't tried the river.

Instead, we have wound the clock back, or maybe that should be calendar, and have been enjoying fishing on the Monaro streams like it used to be many years ago before the Millennium drought. There have been occasional good seasons since, but this year things appear to have really settled down. Three wetter than usual years has seen to that, along with the efforts of the Gaden Hatchery and the Monaro Acclimatisation Society.

The second half of October and then November are Mayfly time on Monaro. It has been great to see so many of these delicate insects hovering above our heads, and above the water surface. Small dark olives, light olives, small black spinners, red spinners and large black spinners. They have all been busy over the streams on those days when the weather conditions have been to their liking. And the trout just love them.

On one such day, Margaret and I became quite fatigued casting to rising trout, hooking them, and having a hard fight with very strong fish, some near two kilos, and very fit in the cold water. I won't mention our ages, in deference to my lovely wife, but I have to say I was reminded of the story told I think by G.E.M. Skues in his "Minor Tactics of the Chalkstream", about a certain Jeremy Castwell.

Jeremy had passed on, and when he arrived at the Pearly Gates he cheerfully said it would be lovely if he could have some decent fishing. Well, he was allocated a guide who arranged some very nice fly fishing tackle for him and took him out to a beautiful meadow with a very pretty chalk stream flowing through it. And his guide pointed out a trout rising near the top of the first pool. Jeremy made a good cast, and hooked and landed a nice trout. Jolly good, he thought. His guide pointed up the pool and there was another rise in the same place. Well, this went on for some time, with Jeremy casting and landing fish after fish, until he became so tired he just wanted to rest. But his guide insisted he cast to the next rising trout. Jeremy complained bitterly: "But this is absolutely hell". His guide just smiled and nodded.

Lake Eucumbene

... a report from Mrs Simpson

Most people will have heard by now that Lake Eucumbene has been rising steadily over the past year. From a low of just 8% in about 2007, it now stands at a very respectable 60%, and is still rising. The recent flooding rains experienced over south-east Australia have certainly helped. Also, a full tunnel of water is running in from Tantangara. Earlier this week the Eucumbene River was so high that it was just below the Kiandra Bridge.

Other lakes in the Snowys are also on the rise, or in the case of Jindabyne, full. At the time of writing Jindabyne stood at 100.7% capacity, and excess water had to be released into the already flooded Snowy River.

What does this mean for the fishing? Well, in the case of Eucumbene, it means great fishing. In fact the lake has fished well all year, including over the winter months. As you would expect, the water is well up over vegetation that has not been covered for years.

We decided to take a two-day trip to Eucumbene this week. The weather conditions were stable, with light winds, a tiny bit of rain predicted, and mild temperatures. We fished from a boat using Loch Style techniques during the day and midge patterns in the evenings.

The evening rise was spectacular, with literally hundreds of fish rising in every bay. The rotting vegetation under the



Phil Jones with a typical Eucumbene rainbow



Phil enjoying some Loch Style fishing from the boat. At this stage conditions were not ideal – not much wind and bright sunshine.

water makes ideal conditions for midges. They were appearing in good numbers, and those numbers are likely to increase over the next few months. The fish are mostly feeding off the top, but they are still not too proud to take a size 18 Zebra nymph (or similar). Our technique in the evenings was to put on a small dry with two midges underneath it - the first about 18 inches below the dry and the second a further 18 inches below that.

During the day we did really well with a team of three flies on a 3-weight sinking line. Typically we would have a size 8 bead-head Woolly Bugger or Magoo on the point, a size 10 English wet about 5 feet above that, and a size 12 black bead-

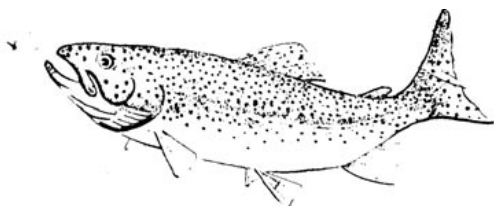
head nymph a further 5 feet up the leader. Our technique was to cast out as far as we could and roly-poly the line back towards the boat. When the flies were about five metres from the boat we would let them “hang”. We caught a number of fish on the hang.

Loch Style fishing worked well for us. We boated around the lake looking for likely spots, fished them for a time, and then moved on to another likely spot. Soaks running into small bays were always worth a look, but we did best in the deeper waters of the bays. Often the fish were not rising but they were showing up, quite deep, on the sounder. They seemed happy to come up for a team of flies.

On the second day we did well at the Portal near where the Eucumbene River runs in. We were fishing at a depth of only two metres and the fish were most co-operative. At one stage the clouds broke up, the wind dropped, and the fish rose. We again did well with the roly-poly technique. The most successful fly during the two days was the Woolly Bugger, but we got fish on all the flies we fished.

The water temperature was about 10°C.

It was very wet and boggy around the lake, so a boat was a big advantage. A 4WD is necessary to access many of the popular bays. We saw a four-wheelie bogged at 7 Gates and we found the road into Frying Pan boggy and difficult whilst towing our boat. I believe that the local towing truck is charging \$400 to pull out bogged vehicles, and business was brisk.



Bluey Powell

... some delightful memories from Dennis Carter

Red hair. Red face. Purple language. Once, many years ago, the purple was vivid as the towering Bluey attempted to get his nymph down deep to one of those large speckled beauties. The very air was robustly purple while we stood back unnoticed as a group of fully habited nuns, heads down, crept past learning new words with every step.

We should have been ashamed of our mirth...

I'm holding here now in my hand my Bluey Powell 'Coronet', split cane fly rod, inscribed 'BUILT FOR DENNIS CARTER DECEMBER '65'. Still straight, still with the original tip, and a wonderful thing only 57 years later.

Dad and I first met Bluey as a fly fishing salesman at Donald McIntosh's Gun and Fishing store in Latrobe Street, Melbourne. When? Late '50s?

Bluey, otherwise Theo Powell.

The irascible Bluey was our guide into fly fishing.

Me, the boy watcher, and Dad coaxed into Bluey's fly casting classes from the wooden casting platform at Ringwood Lake on Saturday mornings. Didactic was Bluey. The human casting machine whose exact instructions occasionally grated with Dad whilst extracting public curses from Bluey and instilling fear in the other pupils who naturally got the shakes. More purple and red, while other Lake recreators closed their ears and scurried the other way - any other way.

Bluey. The consummate performer.

Bluey moved from McIntosh's to manage the Myer Melbourne fishing tackle department after some kerfuffle about doing private work for McIntosh Clients.

Bluey was only trying to help them ...

Dad's and my casting got better.

Bluey, as I recall, didn't drive. Probably a good thing. He would have given Jaques Tati a run for his money I'm sure ...

Many were the occasions when Bluey sat beside Dad in the front of one Rover or another as we purred our way cautiously beneath towering forest canopies beyond Healesville, crossing the 'Black Spur' and descending at last after 24 kilometres of stomach churning to Narbethong. Then steadily on, Bluey in strident conversation all the way, to Buxton. Then onward to Taggerty, past Thornton, to arrive at our destination - 'Gilmores Bridge', which was upstream from the renowned 'Breakaway' on Victoria's great trout river - the Mighty Goulburn.

But wait. Disciplining ourselves, and with the best of intentions, we stopped at a camp site just before the bridge where an elderly gent and his wife with a big black American car set up camp every summer. In their big canvas tent standing pride of place and surrounded by tidiness and orderliness was a magnificent brass-framed double bed. One or two of you may recall ...

A quick hello to get the gist of things, and then on across the bridge, pulling the Rover off the road to the right.

Nonchalantly and as excited as all hell we climbed out of the Rover, strolled back to the centre of the bridge, and peered downstream into the water below.

And what a glorious sight to behold! Water grass and strap weed, waving in green sparkling clear water, and between, on the fin, careless trout lazing. Eyes picking up any and everything that

spelt food, mouths opening once, then again, gills working to suck in any subaqueous morsel. Or, a slight sideways move and a raising of the head to vacuum in a few caenids or pluck a dun from the surface. Truly!

Then back to the car to tackle up. Thigh waders on for tiger snakes.

Bluey would race off ahead while Dad and I were still getting rods out of bags, finding reels and everything else ...

We would find him, or more likely we could hear him, upstream, oaths ringing loud as he stood at the edge of a near vertical embankment, performing one of two Powell activities.

Bluey's great skill was admired as we stood back and marveled at his exquisite pin-point accurate long-distance casting to present his fly into the tiniest of gaps between willows on the opposite bank. To there drift with no drag. To be seized by a huge trout to which Bluey showed no mercy as he confidently controlled its runs whilst walking the bank to get down to the water. Then his long-handled net was held under the water, to be lifted up holding another magnificent brown to the bank. It was then donged on the head with his priest and dropped

into his fish bag while his eyes searched for the next one. Bluey was not one to give way to a fish or give away a fish.

We learned to go at our own pace, and we did catch an occasional fish.

To go at our own pace I say. Should we not, Bluey would rant and rage in the most didactic manner describing everything that did, could, or might go wrong with our casts. It didn't help.

We did thus work way up stream slowly on the opposite bank to the quarries at the bottom of what is now Dobson's property, where many moons later I would fish with dear friends Marty Rogers, Greg Kelly, John Haythorne, and the master Robert Roles.

Bluey drifted out of my life when I got a driving license, when Terry (who departed the earth at the age of 23) and I fished anywhere and everywhere at any spare and as often not spare moment. That is, the decision would be made in a moment, the fishing, anything from hours to days including nearly every weekend ...

Terry used one of his grandfather's greenheart rods. Me - a rod made even then by the great Bluey Powell.



New Zealand North Island

... report from Nick Taransky

The season here in the Rangitikei is underway and is slowly warming up. It's been a little stop/start, with rain coming every time the rivers settle. On the plus side that has given me the chance to get some more rods completed in the workshop.

I've really only scratched the surface here in the region and it's taken me a whole year to fish the Rangitikei River itself. I did this the other week with my prototype hollow-built 10 foot bamboo Trout Spey rod. I've enjoyed Spey casting for several years now, but struggled to find water that really did justice to the technique. The Rangitikei is well and truly that water! It's more than large enough, and has the perfect mix of pools,

riffles, glides and other features to make it perfect for swinging a wet fly. Plus, with a healthy population of rainbows, it feels like "poor man's steel-heading". Before long I had a nice 2½ pound rainbow snatching the fly at the end of the swing. Three more followed soon after, and I have a feeling that this style of fishing will complement my small stream dry fly passion perfectly.

I've spent the last two days with my good friend from Australia, Simon Zarifeh. Simon is a self-taught FFI Master Casting Instructor, which is no mean feat! His "Fly Fishing Diaries" Blog is a lot of fun too:

<http://www.simonzarifeh.com>



Simon Zarifeh "ripping some lips" on the Hautapu



Kivi Bamboo rod makers hard at work

Simon is passionate about dry fly and sight fishing in general, but also enjoys fishing nymphs and especially “ripping streamers” through streams too. It was fun to watch him stir up some browns on an otherwise quiet morning here on the Hautapu. With a couple of fish on the board, we moved to more challenging Spring Creek-like water higher up on the Hautapu. Simon’s full casting abilities were required to present small dries and nymphs to some really nice fish in the slow, smooth water. After losing a magnificent fish of around 6 lb to a broken hook on a sipped dry, Simon redeemed himself with a nice 4½ pounder hard earned on a small nymph.

Day two dawned to swollen rivers that were out of the question to fish. Ironically, the main Rangitikei had remained clear enough to nymph, which saved the day for us.

Giving Simon the lion’s share of the fishing during his visit reinforced how much I enjoy watching (and helping) other people fish. (Though Simon can well and truly look after himself on the water!) This pretty much settled a thought that has been forming in my mind for some time. From next season I plan to start guiding here on a limited basis in parallel with my bamboo rod business. The idea will be to offer

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The Rangitikei is perfect for two-handed fishing with a Spey rod

guiding with bamboo rods across the diverse waters in the region, with booking priorities given to rod customers. Keep an eye on my website or contact me for more information.

The Rangitikei is perfect for two-handed fishing. It has also allowed me to run my first NZ-based bamboo rod-making class, which was a resounding success. It's wonderful that there are now three new bamboo rod-makers in New Zealand, and for me to have played a part in that. The signs are that like in



Good one Simon!

Australia, there is growing interest in bamboo rods, and it will only take a spark to ignite it! Next year will see the inaugural "Kiwi Cane" gathering to celebrate bamboo rods on this side of the "ditch".



Jim's Moon Theory

... published in the VFFA newsletter in June 1996, written by John Philbrick

With some justification in recent years, Jim Allen has achieved the status of an angling guru among the denizens of the shacks around the Great Lake. Anglers flock to his shack in Miena each morning in summer to dwell on his every word in the hope of picking up a crumb of information to help them with their fishing day.

This is a story which demonstrates that even gurus make mistakes.

The Lagoon of Islands in Tasmania is located at the Steppes near the road from the Midlands to Great Lake. It was once

a marsh in which clusters of tea-tree grew. In the 1960s the Inland Fisheries Commission and the Hydro Electricity Commission co-operated and built a wall across a tributary of Blackburn Creek that drains the marsh. As the water level rose, so too did clumps of tea-tree, becoming islands: hence the name 'Lagoon of Islands'.

The plan of Fisheries was to stock the lagoon exclusively with rainbow trout. However, despite liberal releases of rainbow trout, the fishing was generally poor. This was partly due to low water levels. In 1971 the lagoon was stocked

with brown trout. It was not until the mid-1970s when these fish grew to maturity that this water started to provide the phenomenal fishing for which it became renowned.

In those days fish of five, six, seven or even ten pounds could be caught from the shore, usually in the early morning or on dark. In addition, each October there was excellent mayfly fishing with prolific hatches of lambda duns, although a boat was generally required to gain access to the rising trout.

One January evening in the late 1970s Jim Allen and I fished the point near where the creek flows into the Lagoon. This creek is dry most of the year, but flows in winter, and in the spawning season is subject to the depredations of poachers. Large, heavy steel stakes have been driven into the few pools along its length to thwart netting. Many a game of 'cat and mouse' has been played between fishing inspectors and poachers along the banks of this small creek.

I well recall that evening—I walked for miles and only saw the occasional fish move near the edge of the lagoon. However, these fish were 'oncers' and I had no luck. Jim stayed at the point near the road. I returned to the point and asked Jim how he had fared and was directed to a big rock near the shore. In the half light I looked at the rock and saw the best brace of trout which I have seen caught on a fly - 8 lb 12 and 9 lb 14 respectively. What's more Jim had three other takes and had lost two other large trout on a Mrs Simpson. He was only casting out about 30 feet of line into the same.

He had no need to move from the rocky point as it was obvious that he was casting his fly into to a migration pathway for the mudeyes that the trout had been gorging on. Mudeyes from

acres of water must have been channelled through by the point hence the concentration of large trout.

Now as I have already observed Jim is a resourceful fly fisher if not an angling guru, and he knew that the moon would be full the following weekend. And he knew from his experiences on Lake Eucumbene that the mudeye hatch was likely to be at it most prolific at the height of the full moon.

Although we were due to return to Melbourne in a couple of days, Jim's plan was to fly back from Melbourne to Launceston on the following Saturday afternoon, fish the point that night and return to Melbourne the following day. There was room for more than one angler on the point, and when the full mudeye hatch occurred, nothing short of piscatorial mayhem was bound to occur.

I was agog with anticipation the following week thinking of the outside trout that we were bound to catch on our impending 'hit and run' trip. I crammed my fly boxes with mudeye imitations and made up leaders with ten pound points certain in the knowledge that we would be landing double figure fish.

When we finally arrived at the Lagoon I should have realised our plans might become unstuck when I saw the water level had fallen a couple of inches. We cast countless different patterns off the point at dusk and for hours after dark. Not a fish did we see rise and not a take did we get. As time went by and we did not see or hear a sign of a fish, even Jim's enthusiasm began to wane.

And as we trudged back to the car late in the evening in the eerie moonlight I came to realise that even a guru is fallible.

FLY OF THE MONTH

A Quick and Crude Parachute Royal Wulff

... Lyndon Webb



The Royal Wulff is a superb fly. Trout love it - it catches a lot of them. But it is also a complicated fly to tie and involves divided wings of white calf body hair. All a bit tedious, and after spending heaps of time trying to put all the bits together you (or I at least) wind up with something that looks a long way short of perfect. And you can't stop at just one - you need a dozen at least for your fly box. What's more, the parachute version is even trickier to get together neatly. And tying them in sizes 16 or 18 is a job for fly tying specialists.

But your editor discovered years ago that you can cheat with some simplifications, and the trout don't seem to mind. Substitute white polypropylene for that finicky calf body hair and then tie the fly as a simple parachute hackle.

Materials:

- Hook: Size 12 – 16 dry fly hook.
- Thread: Uni-thread 8/0 black thread.
- Tail: Black moose or deer hair (or stiff black cock hackle fibres on smaller flies).
- Body: Peacock herl and bright red floss.
- Hackle: Brown cock.
- Wing: White polypropylene.

Tying Procedure:

1. Wind thread along the hook from the eye to the bend and tie in the tail fibres.
2. Also tie in a strip of peacock herl and make a few turns to create the small band of peacock herl at rear of the fly.
3. Wind a few turns of thread around the shank to lock the peacock herl in, and then tie in a short strip of bright red floss silk.
4. Wind the thread along the shank a short distance, then make some turns of the red floss to construct the red band in the middle of the fly.
5. Tie off the red floss silk and tie in another short strip of peacock herl. Make a couple of turns with the peacock herl to complete the second band of herl and then lock it in with a few turns of thread.
6. Remember that the balance of the body parts is important. At this stage the three bands of peacock herl, red floss, and more peacock herl should occupy only about two thirds of the hook shank. You must leave space for the wing.
7. Take a small length of white polypropylene and fold it up from under the hook shank just behind the eye so that the two halves come together above the shank to make the wing. Tie some turns of thread around the polypropylene just above the shank to hold it tightly in place.
8. Select and prepare a brown cock hackle of just the right size and tie in the butt just in front of the wing and then tie some tight turns around the butt up the wing a short distance.
9. Then complete the parachute hackle by winding three or four turns of the hackle around the wing down to the hook shank. Trim off the waste wing material and tie a few turns of thread tightly behind the eye of the hook.
10. Cut the thread, trim the white wing to the right length, and add a few drops of fly tying glue on the thread behind the eye to complete the fly.

VFFA 2022 & 2023 meetings & other activities

December 2022

- 3 Saturday Celebration of the life of Professor Kevin Hindle –
2:00 pm at 40 Yarravale Road, Kew.
- 9 Friday Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club.
Speaker: Alan Pilkington

January 2023

- 11 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, provided day summer
temperatures are not too high.
Event Co-ordinator – Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)

February 2023

- 1 Wednesday First Council Meeting for 2022 – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
- 4 Sat -11 Sat Tasmanian trip to Hayes on Brumby's. Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray
(chris@graysmail.com.au.)
- 18 Sat – 23 Thu World Recreational Fishing Conference – Jeff's Shed
- 23 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
"Liars' Night" – reports from members on their summer fishing.

March 2023

- 8 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes.
Event Co-ordinator – Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 11 Sat – Sat 18 VFFA trip to Currawong Lakes
Event Co-ordinator - Hugh Maltby
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
(Speaker – Dr Jarod Lyon, Principal Research scientist at
Arthur Rylah Instiute)
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm, Zoom meeting.
- 31 Mar – 2 April Big River Trip. Event Co-ordinator – John Pilkington

April 2023

- 7 - 9 Easter 2023
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
(Speaker – TBC)
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm, Zoom meeting.