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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.  
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FEBRUARY 2010

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**NEXT MEETING – THE TRADITIONAL SEASON OPENER – ‘LIAR’S NIGHT’**

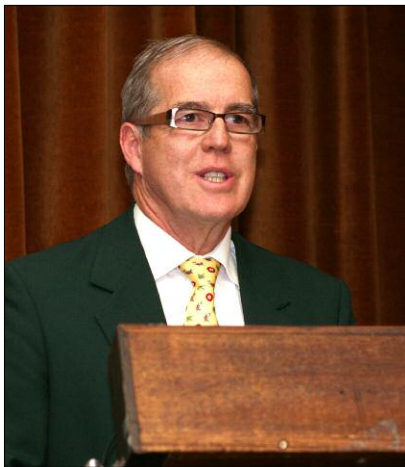
**AT THE KELVIN CLUB, 8:00 PM, THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2010**

# The December Christmas Dinner

The traditional December gathering of members for the VFFA Christmas Dinner again fulfilled all expectations. The meal was superb, with the Roast Turkey and Plum Pudding deliciously complemented by the King Island Cheese Platter and Chocolatier chocolates. The 50 members who attended enjoyed a convivial evening, with plenty of absorbing discussion and reminiscing, and an excellent talk by our invited guest, Peter Dixon.

Peter, a VFFA member, is Captain of the Australian Fly Fishing Team, and spoke about competitive fishing and international competitions. His talk gave a fascinating insight into the world of the competitive fly fisher. It became very apparent that those who represent us at the highest levels of international competition have exceptional skills in all facets of the sport, and we can learn much from their strategies and techniques.

The accompanying photos provide some glimpses of the evening. The text of Peter's talk is given below.



## Peter Dixon's Presentation

Gentlemen, good evening, and thank you Peter Boag for the opportunity to present at our Christmas function!

I am acutely aware that I follow last year's talk by Michael Youl on the introduction of brown trout to Australia. In Michael's words, "I am not sure my forbears went to significant efforts to bring trout to this country to be sort after in competition."

However, I personally believe a balance is possible. This evening I wish to briefly consider three aspects of competition fishing:

- a) The importance of fishing the whole water column;
- b) The role of FIPS-Mouche as the custodian of fisheries of the future;
- c) Some discussion of the challenges ahead in 2010.

It is the personal preference of most anglers to practice classic dry fly fishing. However on many occasions this is not practical, and understanding the nuances of fishing the whole water column will improve many a day's fishing! If you consider fly-fishing as placing imitative or attractor patterns in the feeding zone, your skill in achieving this ultimately determines your success.

In lakes, for example, small galaxia are seldom seen in the surface film, so placing lures at controlled depths of the water column by using modern sinking lines is the essential technique to optimising our fishing opportunities.

When next on your favourite river turn over a few sunken stones or a submerged branch, and

you will see a real abundance of life. An autopsy of the stomach contents of trout caught will invariably find various nymphs, larvae and scud or freshwater shrimp. When successfully nymph fishing, we imitate these life forms in their appearance, depth and activity!

In the World Fly Fishing Championships of 2008, held in New Zealand, Australian team member Joe Riley demonstrated the benefits of deep nymph fishing.

In the Wanganui River, a boulder-riddled heavy water river which dwarfs the Tongariro in width and current diversity, Joe landed six rainbows out of a holding lie about the size of a billiard table.

Interestingly each successive trout was larger than the previous fish. This all occurred in a matter of 15 minutes, creating frantic journeys to the controller who measured each fish whilst Joe returned to the holding zone across the raging flow. Each fish was caught on a long leader using a technique called the 'French leader'. Finally Joe fished the same weighted flies down and across and caught a 6 lb brown trout that was lying deeper than the rainbows. Such is the efficiency of appropriate nymph techniques in proficient hands.

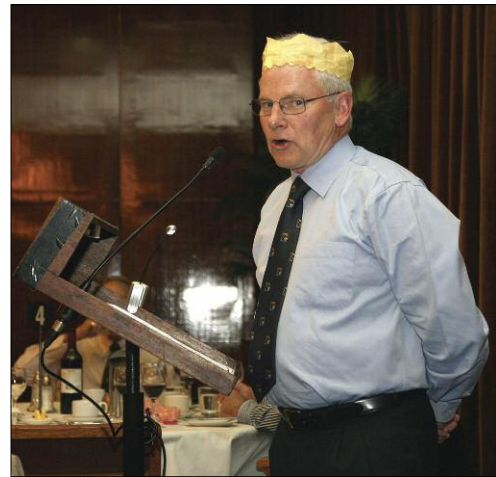
More of the techniques later!

FIPS-Mouche, or the 'International Sports Fly-Fishing Federation', aims to encourage the practice of sport fly-fishing throughout the World. Its members are the National Competitive Fly-fishing Bodies of 33 countries. Australia is presently ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and won the championships on one occasion when they were held in the Snowy Mountains in 1999.

FIPS-Mouche, in association with the organiser for each region, arranges annual World and Regional Fly-fishing Championships according to a specific set of competition rules. In addition, Australia competes in Commonwealth and Oceania competitions. Make no mistake - these are all very serious competitions with national pride on the line!

In Australia our governing body is *Fly Fish Australia Inc.* ([flyfishaustralia.com.au](http://flyfishaustralia.com.au)). To qualify as a competitor an angler must finish in the top 1/3 at the State Championships and be in the top 15 at the Nationals. Our recent National Championship in Tasmania was contested by 54 competitors. Compare this with the French who have an A League and a B League, with their international representatives being part of the French Institute of Sport. The Czech Republic Team is professional, and members are expected to fish every day, with their occupations supporting these ideals. The Anglers' Alliance in Poland has some 600,000 angler members, and a proportion of their licence fee is used to support their international fishing teams.

I often hear that Australia's best fly fishermen do not compete in the championships. I would dispute this, but encourage all who feel they have the skillbase to enter the State Championships. Competing in the State Championships does not require membership of FFA. They should be aware however that they will be fishing under controlled conditions quite foreign to weekend angling where they can pick and choose the opportunities!



In fact, in reply, I contend that Australian fly fishermen are lazy and fail to make the most of the opportunities our fisheries provide. I read with interest Philip Weigall's expose, "Thoughts on Stream Success", in a recent edition of the newsletter (Feb 2009). He describes the little things that lead to success, which may be summarized as - Right Spot, Right Conditions, Right Fly, and Right Time. This is in high contrast to fishing a specific and limited beat at an inopportune time in a competition where the result depends on the number of fish caught, measured and released on barbless hooks. Such is competition fly-fishing.



In the "World Championships", individual and team champions are decided on the basis of the least number of ranking points. Ranking points are awarded according to the number of fish measured, with bonus points for each centimetre. To be measured, a salmonid or grayling must be over 20 cm in length. The present World Champions are the English team, but in recent times the French and Czech Republic have consistently shared the tributes.

To outline a typical Australian campaign, we arrive after a period of informal practice three days prior to

the championships for a further two days of official practice. Each championship commences with a march and ceremony, with teams committing to the Olympic ideals.

A competing team consists of five anglers, a reserve, and a captain. A competitor stays within his group for the five sessions and is ranked in each session from 1 to say 27, if there are 27 competing teams, according to the number and total length of fish measured and released.

***Herein lies Lesson 1 – in competitive fly fishing it is vital to avoid a 'blank', as to not catch a fish automatically sees the competitor awarded the maximum points.***

***The corollary of this is Lesson 2 – minimize losses!***

Competitions are generally five sessions, each of three hours, held over three days. Skills are tested on a combination of lake and river venues.

Each day's competition starts at 4 am with breakfast and travel to the venue, and concludes at about 11pm after the debrief and preparation for the following day! Success demands not only superb skill and the latest technical equipment, but attention to rest, relaxation, nutrition and hydration.

And here I would digress.

Recent Australian fly fishing teams have embraced a professional approach to their preparation. We have taken instruction from high performance coaches, Australian olympic gold-medal winners, and sports psychologists. Preparation has focused not only on fishing,

but on the psychology of success and attention to nutrition to maximise performance. I am personally very grateful to the guidance of Anne Marie Harrison, head of the Victorian Institute of Sport, and Marty Aitken, the elite coach supervisor at the Institute. Whilst we are not recognised as an officially sponsored sport, I am very grateful for their advice and encouragement.

Peter Hayes, my friend and mentor, is also a constant resource for advice and encouragement, and I am most grateful for his assistance, too.

I am often asked, “What are the skills necessary for competitive fly fishing?”

In brief:

It is fundamental to have had exposure to fishing over the long term, and a willingness to record, assess and adjust according to past experiences;

Casting, Casting, Casting! i.e minimising the time the fly is out of the catch zone in all conditions;

Important and often neglected by many is a high level of efficiency in the angling process: changing reels, lines, leaders, flies, etc;

In competition nothing is more important to success than the ability to stay grounded in the present moment with total focus on the execution;

Being thoroughly organised is a must, as a session passes very quickly!

And the one important ingredient is a past life in competitive sport. This preparation provides the foundation of a winning culture!

How often have you gone fishing and left a fly box or some other vital piece of equipment in the study or garage? Australian teams use pre- and post-session check lists. This allows our competitors to focus on the relevant activity of the competition, and not be distracted by the irrelevant.

***Hence we have Lesson 3 – Compose and use a routine checklist.***

Friend, Englishman, fly fishermen and former world 1500 metre champion Steve Ovett presented our team with his coach’s advice - that most of the athletes in his event were convinced they were going to lose before the race had started. As Captain, I nurture self-belief in my team, as I believe this is the number 1 mental skill.



Dietician Joanna Shinwell challenged us! She asked us, “How often have you come off the river thirsty, or suffered a headache later that evening.” These are signs of dehydration, which causes reduced cognitive functioning and skill co-ordination, and ultimately diminished performance.

The US Airforce will not allow a pilot to fly if 3% of his body weight is lost through dehydration. I strongly commend the use of appropriate fluid replacement to keep you in the best condition for an evening scotch or tippie of wine!



***Thus Lesson 4 – Be prepared through routine time and effort to achieve peak performance.***

In 2010 the challenge is Poland. The River San is to be the centre of the competition, with four river sessions and one session on a rainbow-stocked lake. Preliminary intelligence gathering from our elite athlete and VFFA member John Philbrick, along with that of the local guides, is already programmed into the computer. Whilst grayling are plentiful, trout taken on sizes 18 - 24 CDC dries may be (weather permitting) the road to success. However, proficiency in various nymph-fishing techniques will also be essential.

It is a widely held belief in international teams that fishing ‘New Zealand style’ with a nymph under a dry is an inefficient way of searching a river. The preferred approach is to use deep nymphing techniques to work the fly through much more of the water column.

Those members acquainted with the history of our sport will appreciate that the flies and technique of Skues, Sawyer and Kite are not dissimilar in their nature to the ‘short line’ or ‘Czech nymphing’ techniques. Skues relied on the weight of the hook and the absorbent nature of the tying material. Sawyer added weight so that the nymph would ‘sink to the fish’s eyesight’, and practiced the controlled lift and induced strike and techniques popularised by his protégé Oliver Kite.

It is paradoxical that the history of the Czech nymph technique had its beginning on the Dunajec River in Poland, where, during the International Fly Fishing Competition in 1984, the Czech competitors observed the short line methods used by the locals. Most of the Polish competitors were forced to fish short, because they had no proper fly lines at their disposal, and had to substitute with thick nylon monofilament.

Their flies were simple, thin and heavy. They were radically different in appearance from traditional nymphs because they were made with fine lead wire added to hooks in a variety of styles, along with a myriad of tying materials such as foam bodies from washing sponges, ribbing from horse hair and backs from plastic mackintoshes!

The principle of short line nymphing is fishing under the tip of the rod with the outstretched arm. Minimal fly line hangs out the tip of the rod and its end often does not even touch the water level. Traditionally you fish downstream with 2 or 3 flies.

Success requires -

- a) Keeping permanent contact with the flies, and leading the flies just faster than the current;
- b) Flies that sink rapidly, so are heavy and slim;
- c) Altering the flies according to the depth being fished;
- d) A rod which acts as an 'amplifier', usually AFTMA 2 - 5 weight; and 9 -11 foot in length;
- e) Light level leaders incorporating some coloured nylon as a 'depth indicator';
- f) Practice so that the flies are fished very close to the streambed;
- g) Keeping a low profile in shallow water;
- h) Casting by lobbing the flies upstream using the downstream water tension to load the rod.

The latest variation of this technique is the 'French leader', which entails a 10+ metre level nylon leader with a colour indicator approximately one metre from the top fly. The lack of fly line accentuates the take and allows for long line nymphing. This is the technique favoured by Joe Riley and which he used with great efficiency in New Zealand.

#### ***Lesson 4 – Proficiency is needed in techniques to fish all levels of the water column.***

### **In Conclusion**

Competitions provide a focal point that has facilitated an exchange of technical ideas and advancements in tackle and technique.

It is important to the future wellbeing of our sport that FIPS-Mouche acts to address issues of conservation, water quality, habitat loss and other environmental problems. It's now a proven fact that habitat and environmental problems in one place often relate to other areas. The fish might be different and the rivers might flow in different directions, but the problems created by pollution, destruction of habitat, degradation of environmental conditions, or over-fishing have similarities that might be resolved by implementing success stories from elsewhere.

Australian inland fisheries could well benefit from the lessons from fishery managements overseas, and particularly Europe, where heavy angling pressure would have decimated the sport if authorities had not introduced 'no fishing zones', limited take and technique controlled areas.

One more comment from Michael Youl. Modern trout fishing techniques, whether they be sinking lines or soft plastics, will decimate our fisheries if personal restraint is not practiced on our precious waters. I remind everyone that competition fly fishing is a 'catch and release event', and competition anglers are acutely aware of the fine balance in so many of our venues and are proud advocates of trout conservation!

Finally, when it comes to your everyday fishing experiences, embracing the lessons of competitive fly-fishing will enhance your enjoyment of your day's outing.

Remember to maintain hydration and nutrition, minimise losses, become familiar with different approaches through the water column, maximise your fishing time through preparation and organisation, and at all times respect our adversary.



## **Bairnsdale Fly Fishers Club Inc.**

### **DONGER TROPHY WEEKEND**

VFFA members are invited to attend the Bairnsdale Annual Dinner, which will be held on Friday, February 19, at the "Paper Chase", 166 Main Street, Bairnsdale, commencing at 6:30 pm. The cost will be \$28 per head for a 3-course meal.

(The Paper Chase is part of Collins Bookshop. It is situated in the main shopping centre, on the left hand side of the street near the pedestrian lights.)

Following this, the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers are again holding their annual Donger Trophy weekend at their new Lodge. All VFFA members are invited to attend and join with the Bairnsdale members on Saturday, February 20, and Sunday, February 21, at the Mitta Lodge. A barbecue tea will be provided on the Saturday night.

VFFA members wishing to attend should contact Trevor Stow (at Bairnsdale) on 03 5152 4363, or Colin Morrison on 9375 2298, by February 16.

## February General Meeting – Liar’s Night

The February general meeting, on Thursday February 18, will be our traditional “Liar’s Night”, when members will recount tall tales and true of their angling exploits over the summer break.

Beatrice Cook (in *Till Fish Do Us Part*) asserts that “fishermen are liars; it’s an occupational disease with them like housemaid’s knee or editor’s ulcers,” and William Sherwood Fox wrote: “Even eminent chartered accountants are known, in their capacity as fishermen, blissfully to ignore differences between seven and ten inches, half a pound and two pounds, three fish and a dozen”. And dear old ‘Author Unknown’ tells us that: “Nothing makes a fish bigger than almost being caught.”

However none of this applies to VFFA members, so join with the gathered experts and get the very latest intelligence on the troutng both here and overseas.

Members and their guests are encouraged to have dinner at the Kelvin Club prior to the commencement of the meeting. But please be seated in the dining room by around 6:30 pm so that we can commence the meeting on time.

### VFFA Meetings & Activities

#### **FEBRUARY 2010**

- 10 Council Meeting
- 18 **General Meeting – Liar’s Night**
- 19 Bairnsdale Annual Dinner
- 20 - 21 Donger Weekend
- 20 - 26 VFFA trip to Hayes on Brumby’s (Tasmania)

#### **MARCH 2010**

- 18 **General Meeting: Speaker – Neil Morrow**
- 24 Council Meeting

#### **APRIL 2010**

- 15 **General Meeting: Speaker – Travis Dowling**
- 16 – 18 Big River trip to Enochs Point
- 21 Council Meeting

## New Member

We are delighted to welcome Brian Bulluss as a new member this month. We trust that his membership will bring many years of fulfilling involvement in the Association.

# President's Message

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I trust everyone has had a very relaxing and enjoyable Christmas / New Year holiday break, and hopefully, for a good many of us, some fishing to boot.

Members and guests enjoyed a very well attended Christmas Dinner, with VFFA member Peter Dixon, the Captain of the Australian Fly Fishing Team, speaking about competitive fishing and international competitions. Although the idea of competitive fishing is not to everybody's liking, those present were very impressed with Peter's presentation, and left with the feeling the Australian team is in very good hands.

There is certainly a lot more to competitive fishing than I was aware of, and the text of Peter's talk, given elsewhere in the newsletter, is well worth reading. Peter remarked to me afterwards, "The quality of the questions and comments afterwards indicated people had listened." The evening also gave him an opportunity to wear the Captain's team blazer.



Our first meeting in February is the traditional 'Liar's Night'. This is always a good evening, and it will be interesting to hear how the better rains in the latter half of 2009 have impacted on the fishing both here on the mainland and in Tasmania. For members who have not previously attended, it is an entertaining and instructive evening, and for those who are able to, attending dinner at the Kelvin Club dining room beforehand makes the likelihood of hearing 'tall stories' even more likely.

I spent some time in Tasmania in December and January, and was surprised to hear the audible sighs of relief from our Tassie friends with the arrival of better water. I had not appreciated the extent to which the past years of below average rainfall was impacting on the Tasmanian fishery.

It is remarkable the number of VFFA members you come across directly, or hear about on the grapevine, fishing in Tassie at any one time. The VFFA has again organized a trip to Peter Hayes' Complex at Cressy in Tasmania in late February. The trip is fully booked, and I think this is a healthy indicator of the level of interest members have for fishing trips.

Also coming up in February is the 'Bairnsdale Donger Trophy Weekend,' and full details appear elsewhere in the newsletter. We need a few anglers to put up their hands in an attempt to regain 'The Donger'.

The coming year will be the usual busy one for the VFFA. We have a full list of activities and guest speakers for our monthly meetings, so please refer to this year's calendar of events in the newsletter.

For the March meeting, we have Neil Morrow from Inland Fisheries Services, Tasmania, who will speak on the Angler Access Program, which should be of special interest to those who fish in Tasmania, or who plan to do so in the future.

To counterbalance the Tassie connection, we have Travis Dowling, Director Fisheries Management, Fisheries Victoria, speaking at the April meeting. Travis will update us as to how Fisheries Victoria is working with anglers to provide improved fishing opportunities in Victoria.

On behalf of the Council, I want to sincerely wish all members and your families a healthy and prosperous 2010, and trust the VFFA can continue to provide you with angling opportunities and companionship through our shared interests.

Tight Lines

*Peter Boag*

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## **Advance Notice: March Meeting with Neil Morrow**

Our guest speaker for the March general meeting is Neil Morrow. Neil is the Project Manager - Anglers Access, for the Tasmanian Inland Fisheries Service. He has been involved in the tourism industry in Tasmania since 1985, operating hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions throughout the state. He has also been a keen trout angler for most of his life - the last 25 years as a fly fisher.

Neil became interested in trout tourism in 1999 on his first visit to New Zealand. In 2006 he co-authored the *Tasmanian Sport Fishing Tourism Development and Marketing Plan* for the Trout Guides and Lodges Association of Tasmania. Since then he has been working for the Inland Fisheries Service, implementing some of the key recommendations of that plan.

His presentation at the March meeting will focus on the implementation of Angler Access, which is an integrated strategy to provide information, access and infrastructure for anglers, in conjunction with fisheries and land management. This will be particularly relevant for those anglers visiting Tasmania to experience some of that State's wonderful trout fishing.

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### **New VFFA Badge**

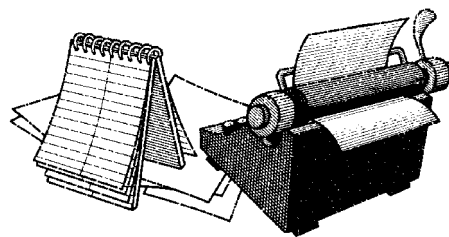
Supplies of the old badge had dwindled, so Council arranged for the production of new supplies. New badges are now available – President Peter Boag carrying a plentiful supply at all times.

At only \$10 each, members should consider buying several – one to wear on the jacket, another for the fishing vest, and perhaps another for the fishing hat.



The design is almost identical to the previous badge, and is 21 mm x 21.5 mm in size.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



First – an apology. The printed copy of the December issue was very late in reaching letterboxes. This was most unfortunate and to be regretted. We have a deadline – the intention is always to have the printed copy in letterboxes well before the date of the monthly meeting. Mostly we succeed, but last December we didn't.

Members will appreciate that getting each issue completed and distributed is something of a process. Your editor gathers the material – text and photos – and forwards these to our typesetter, Ross Frame, at Spectrum Printworks. Ross does the layout and then emails the first of 2 or 3 drafts back for checking. A small group of proofreaders then scan this first draft, and corrections (there are always some!) are emailed back to the editor. Once all the corrections and changes are sorted the final draft is forwarded to Elgin Printing in Carlton, where the newsletter copies are printed, placed in labelled envelopes and then delivered to the post office.

The address labels for the envelopes are printed by Vice President Rick Dugina, whose database of members' addresses needs to be revised each month as new members join, current members change address, and occasionally and sadly older members pass on. The printed labels are then attached to envelopes, which are then delivered to Elgin Printing – a vital task that has been very faithfully and efficiently carried out by Malcolm and Nancy Elms for over 30 years. Unfortunately Malcolm has not enjoyed good health over past months, and he and Nancy are no longer able to carry out this essential task. It is certainly appropriate for us acknowledge their magnificent contribution over so many years. Thank you Malcolm and Nancy.

It is also appropriate to acknowledge the excellent work done by our professionals – Ross Frame at Spectrum and Julius Schwantzer at Elgin. Both are keen and generous supporters of the VFFA, and on many occasions have gone way beyond their remit to ensure that the printed quality of our newsletter is as good as we can make it.

So there's a bit involved in publishing our monthly newsletter, and occasionally something goes wrong. Mostly the gremlins don't hold us up too much, but last December they did. Even so, the printed copies were delivered to Australia Post two or three days before the Christmas Dinner, but then took another 7 – 9 days to reach letterboxes. It wasn't a good time to be posting things.

So there's a New Year's resolution for me – we must try harder to get all issues out in good time, including the December issue. And talking of New Year's resolutions, I came up this year with a few of the fly-fishing variety.

I enjoy casting, and wander up to the local oval reasonably often to have a few practice throws – which invariably entails trying to hurl the works out of sight. Distance is everything, and trying to cast the entire line is the aim. But my recent trip to New Zealand with the VFFA contingent convinced me, if I needed convincing, that the most useful cast

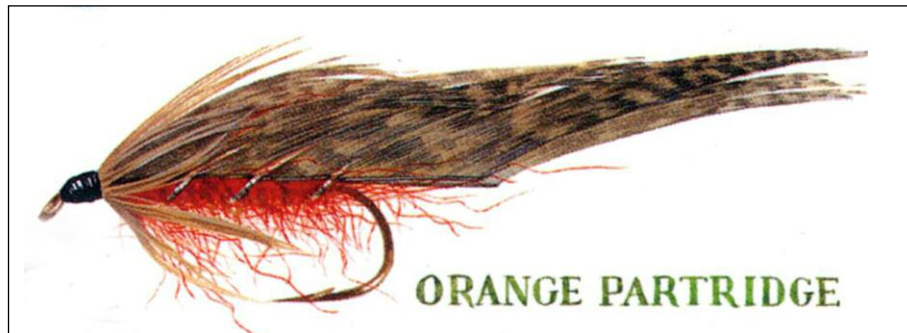
was one of perhaps 10 – 12 metres, into a stiff breeze, lobbing a weighted nymph consistently into an area the size of a hub cap. Accuracy was the vital requirement. So this year I'm taking a few old hub caps up to the oval.

I also discovered in New Zealand that on many occasions the geography of the river bank and the bankside vegetation necessitated lots of awkward casting with the rod out over my left shoulder. Now if I had been a natural left-hander those casts would have been a cinch. As a natural right-hander I can sort of cast left-handed, but it's crude and not a thing of beauty, and far short of the demands of those hyper-sensitive Mataura browns. Not sure how I'll go, but I must try harder this year to become a more proficient leftie.

Finally, Peter Dixon's talk at the Christmas Dinner pressed a few buttons. He described how competition anglers, when representing their country with great pressure on them to perform, were randomly allocated, say, a 200 metre section of river to fish. They had no choice in the selection, but were stuck with what they had drawn. Then, regardless of water height and clarity, stream geography, bugs in the air, and weather conditions they fished for three hours in the middle of the day, and had to make the best of what they were given. They needed to adapt their methods to the conditions, and succeed regardless of whether these were favourable. I suspect that on too many occasions I've given up because conditions weren't ideal. Perhaps a little more determination and experimentation might reap some rewards - another resolution for 2010.

Tight lines,

*Lyndon Webb*



## **SPECIAL OFFER**

**COLUMBIA SHIRTS/LOGO**

\$70.00 each

**POLARFLEECE JACKETS/LOGO**

\$40.00 each

**POLARFLEECE SLEEVELESS VEST/LOGO**

\$35.00 each

To order a shirt or two contact  
Hugh Maltby on Work: 9455 9000  
Mobile: 0400 887 065

# New Zealand 2009 – Thought and Reflections

(In late November last year five intrepid VFFA members flew to Queenstown in New Zealand's South Island, then drove to take up residence at the luxurious Nokomai Station for a week of fabulous fishing in the local rivers. Here are reports from three of the travellers, giving their varied memories and reflections).

## *a) Richard Garvey - VFFA NZ Trip Reflections*

The 2009 VFFA trip to Athol in the Southland region was my third consecutive adventure to New Zealand. For a variety of reasons, these visits to New Zealand represent my major fly-fishing endeavours for the past few years. The 2007 trip was my first serious effort after a prolonged absence from a sport that I had enjoyed with my two sons as they were growing up.

I consider myself a fairly average caster and fisherman, and have treated each trip as a serious learning experience in the mecca of fly fishermen. The challenges and adventure have been thoroughly enjoyable and taught me much about our sport, human nature and myself. I have enjoyed the research and planning aspects of our trips, and ensuring that I have the right gear to cover most eventualities. The saying my sons and I have been known to observe about others now also applies to me - "all the gear and no idea!"



I am not especially fussed about the number of fish I catch (probably just as well!) as long as I am enjoying the marvellous outdoor experience that trout fishing in NZ presents in the company of other like-minded

VFFA members. In NZ I have found that, provided the weather is reasonable, there is often a chance of locating fish, although catching them is an entirely different matter. Sighting and stalking trout in pristine waters against the backdrop of the superb Kiwi mountain country is hard to beat. This said, I have achieved moderate success on our last 2 trips, including several fish over 4 lbs, and this has made the experience complete.

We have stayed at the Athol Caravan Park and Nokomai Station over the past few years. These are at opposite ends of the spectrum in cost and quality, and both are fairly priced for what they offer.

The Caravan Park is just too basic for my tastes and needs some money spent on it – not a lot but enough to ensure the facilities all work properly. It is a pity that the owners have let it become run down and it struggles when more than 8 - 10 are in residence.

Nokomai is a wonderful place to stay, with great food, hospitality and all the creature comforts. I love the place and would happily return. Nokomai is world class in its offering and certainly a place to take your spouse when travelling through Southland.

A few observations on the fishing:

- The fish are big, wary and hard to catch, especially when on your own, as they are often on the move. So working in pairs and taking turns to act as 'spotter' is essential. Also, precision casting and presentation is required – so make sure you have plenty of practice beforehand. Nearly all fish were caught within 8 – 10 metres, meaning that distance casting is not such a vital factor – something for the VFFA Sunday morning casting sessions.
- There are plenty of fishable waters within an easy 60 minutes drive of Athol – rivers in every direction - the Mataura, Oreti, and Brightwater, to name just a few.
- The local Athol guides, Nigel Black and Len Prentice, are fantastic guys and a day or two spent with either of them will pay handsomely, especially given their ability to access some great waters. Nigel has extraordinary fish spotting skills.



- The fishery suffers a lot of pressure and this was especially evident during our past 2 trips. It is worth making an effort to get away from the easily accessible waters as these see plenty of anglers. This often requires plenty of walking and some off-road driving with an experienced person. Wet wading NZ style works a treat and provides great mobility and flexibility, provided you don't mind the cold.
- The two-nymph rig under an indicator has become the standard form of fishing during our visits, although dries worked well in lower clear flowing waters.

I plan to return to NZ later this year and the Athol/Mataura district will certainly be part of the trip. I can heartily recommend the VFFA trip to any member seeking a thoroughly relaxing and challenging holiday in the company of gentlemen.

*Richard Garvey, 9 January 2010*

### ***b) Rick Dugina - REFLECTIONS On NOKOMAI                      New Zealand 2009***

It is getting close to time for the 2010 VFFA trip to Tassie, so my thoughts are wandering back to my recent fishing adventures on the Mataura.

I have been extremely busy with renovations to our future home, and have not had the time to consider fishing. It has been “go..go..go” as the contractors have been able to fit my work in between their other jobs, and I have had to keep the prep up to their wants. The editor has been asking for my report, but my inclination has been to lay on the couch as soon as I have arrived home from the project.

I should be back in Melbourne putting the sealer on the new plaster, but instead I'm at Thornton, with a vicious wind howling across the river. So I'll write my report, and maybe the wind will subside tomorrow and I will get in some much needed casting practice. (Our good friend Gadget has been rafting this section in the last few days and he reports catching some good fish.)

I think back on our time at Nokomai and the poor weather we had with overcast skies and strong winds. The group was small last year, with just five intrepid members with enthusiasm enough for a dozen. Our spirits were only slightly dampened by the conditions and we attacked the water with lots of energy.

Catch rates were down but sizes made up for this. We travelled far and wide - up to an hour from Nokomai - looking for sheltered water, and were rewarded with some interesting fishing. The Hamilton Burn, Waimea, Nokomai River and, of course, many sections of the mighty Maitai succumbed to our perseverance.

Nigel Black, our long time guide, did his usual job in assisting all to increase their catch rates. I think he is far more relaxed these days as our skill levels have improved markedly over our early forays. The lack of sunlight made his job harder but not impossible. I don't recall any hard words from either side, although I sensed some disappointment at one backwater that I fished in company with Nigel and Colin Morrison.



We had fished some of the flats furthest from Nokomai with some success, and it was getting late when we decided to have a look at a backwater that most of us had fished on previous occasions. It usually contained a couple of good-sized browns, but they were easily spooked and great care was needed.

We made our way up to a high bank to see if we could spot something, and it didn't take long to polaroid several fish around the pool. We hid behind bushes - the fish were BIG and feeding well. Some were in the weed bed, and others patrolled the open sand patches. Colin and I selected flies and cast out ambush fashion. Time after time our flies were ignored. I managed to put a cast into the centre of a sandy patch and waited. It seemed like hours but was

probably only 10 minutes before a very large cruiser made a beeline towards my offering. It was one of my own ties and a last resort - basically a brown grub on a caddis hook that was more hook than fly with some black fluff at the eye. Unweighted, it was suspended about half a metre down and was clearly visible against the sandy background. The trout approached as I watched nervously, but then he seemed to stop or slow about a foot short. I cursed, but then the indicator moved toward the fish and sunk. I struck and all hell broke loose. I could hear Nigel yelling as I played the fish for all I was worth (for about 3 seconds) as it headed straight into the weeds, where it broke off. No one spoke for a while, and then we trudged back for the car. The Professor knows this pool very well, and it would have been nice to have him there.

I caught a number of fish this trip and was happy with the way I fished. Hamish Hughes has some lovely photos of my captures as proof, but there are some moments that live on ... with reflection.

*Rick Dugina* - Senior VP / NZ Trip Co-ordinator

### ***c) Lyndon Webb - VFFA NZ Trip Reflections***

This was my second trip to New Zealand with the VFFA group, and one that I'd looked forward to with keen anticipation. We stayed at Nokomai, and the superb quality of the accommodation there has already been mentioned. A feature of our stay were the evening meals. Because our group was smaller than in previous years, other anglers were sharing the accommodation, and the evening mealtimes were very profitable and enjoyable times of debriefing and discussion and sharing of the days' angling experiences.

Yes the weather has been mentioned. For the first two days it blew a gale and on our second day there, the Friday, the rain pelted down, so we headed to Gore for a pleasant lunch and a browse around the well-stocked angling stores there. On the way home I was travelling with Richard Garvey, who suggested that we had come a long way to not fish. So despite the atrocious conditions, we drove into the Dillon Road access point on the Mataura, upstream from Gore, saddled up with all our wet and wild gear, and headed to the river. I don't think I have ever fished in worse conditions – driving rain and a foul, howling upstream wind. My polaroids kept misting up so it was difficult to see what was happening (which wasn't much anyway), and as I tried to drift a nymph down a long, attractive ripple the wind kept blowing my line and indicator upstream, creating a rather novel form of drag. I caught nothing, despite an hour of determined effort, and was not at all sorry when Richard conceded to the conditions, and we raced for the relative warmth of the Prado. I mention this incident, because on this same day, in those same odious and appalling conditions, Andrew Mossman, fellow VFFA member and Master of the Mataura, who was holidaying at Gore, fished the river downstream from the township and took 21 trout. He assured me when I caught up with him later that “the rougher the conditions the better they bite”.



The following day, the Saturday, was fine and sunny - some cloud and wind, but decidedly more pleasant. I was paired with Richard again, and guide Nigel Black drove us to the fish. His chosen beat was on the famous Oreti, downstream from Lumsden. From my perspective this was a wonderful choice. I'd heard and read much about this river, but had never fished it. And now here we were with a top guide and ideal conditions. The river at this point consists of a number of parallel braids, and the first challenge was to cross a fairly fast and deep channel. This was scary – I was carrying an expensive digital SLR camera and a couple of lenses – and was not keen on going for a swim. As we waded out further the water became steadily deeper and the current swifter, and the feeling underfoot was of skating on rolling ball-bearings. I eventually made it across, much to Nigel's amusement, and was very pleased to find terra firma on the other side. (The more firma the less terra, as far as I was concerned!)



From here we walked, Nigel spotted heaps of fish, we cast to them, and we caught some. Accurate casting was vital, and the smallest error in presentation saw these well-educated and flighty fish motoring off. My favourite memory was fishing a large backwater, perhaps 50 or 60 metres long, 20 metres wide, 2 to 3 metres deep, and with water as clear as an

aquarium. Well populated too – with 5 or 6 fish of enormous size cruising around. Nigel set me up with a small nymph suspended some 1.5 metres below a tuft of bright orange indicator. One of the occupants cruised over, inspected the nymph, and swam off. So Nigel changed the nymph and the trap was re-set. Another fish with shoulders like a centre half back cruised over and inhaled the offering. Nigel screamed “strike!!”, so I lifted ... and pulled the fly straight out of the trout’s great gaping mouth. In the post-mortem that followed Nigel and Richard consoled me with the assertion that striking when the fish is facing you can be tricky. I needed consoling.

We re-set the trap, and not too much later a much smaller fish inhaled the drifting nymph and immediately bolted, hooking itself and saving me from further embarrassment. The scales measured it at 4 lb, so I kept wondering about that earlier one.

On the Monday I again fished with Nigel, and my VFFA colleague on this occasion was Colin Morrison. Nigel took us up the back of the property to fish the glorious little Nokomai River. The river here consists of shallow sections of clear, fast flowing stream, interspersed every 30 – 40 metres with a deep hole or corner pool, and these fishy hangouts were occupied with fish from 3 – 5 lb.

Colin opened the innings with a magnificent brown of 3¾ lb, culled out from under some bushes. I managed a slightly smaller cousin at the next corner. Things were looking good. But then we had a series of reversals - missed strikes, fish that were too easily upset by our presence and our presentations, awkward currents that created





hopeless drag on our nymphs as they floated onto fish that were sitting just below the lips at the tops of pools. And we hooked and lost a couple each. We both hung on too strongly and were broken by big fish that raced toward heavy timber in the water, much to Nigel's frustration. The last straw was a fish he found sitting at the tail of a long pool. The pool was heavily overgrown, with lots of branches overhead, so a low side cast was required. It was my turn and my fish, so Colin and Nigel waited as I fired off a first cast. It fell well short, so I tried again. The length was good, but my attempted side cast was off target - the fly landing well to the left. The little blue blowfly drifted quietly down along the edge,

and then somehow got itself caught up on a small twig, which was sticking out of the water level with the beady eye of his nibs. I pulled ever so gently on the line to free the fly, but the twig lifted an inch or two, and the trout fled. Nigel didn't speak to me for 30 minutes. Later in the day we fished the pool below the waterfall, and I hooked and landed another 3 lb brown, with Nigel and Colin shouting encouragement and instructions from the cliff top. I think Nigel's forgiven me.

I love New Zealand. I love the colourful countryside with those magnificent rolling hills and mountain ranges. I love those glorious rivers with their beautiful strong fish. I thoroughly enjoy staying at Nokomai – Ann Hore is a gracious, generous, and delightful host. And the company of my VFFA colleagues just adds to it all. It was a very good trip.



# CHALKSTREAM ADVENTURES

(John Philbrick)

In over four decades of fly-fishing I have found many ways to spoil a day on the stream. Floods, gales and snowstorms have thwarted me. I once drove for two hours to fish a central Victorian stream, only to find that I had not put my rod in the tube. I have broken rods, been knocked over by lightning, forgotten to bring my flies, been swept off my feet whilst wading across a river, become lost, bogged my car, become hopelessly bogged when wading in Lake Fergus, been ordered off rivers by angry landowners, and hangovers have occasionally taken the edge off my day's fishing. But until this past July I never had my fishing ruined by bees.

The upper Test at Whitchurch Fulling Mill is divided into two beats. The main river flows towards the mill house where it bifurcates - one branch flowing through the mill and the other passing through a hatch. I spent a very pleasant morning fishing the two branches below the mill house, landing six trout and two grayling, including one brown which would have weighed three pounds. The keeper, Chas House, had told me that the best fishing was in the beat above the mill house and, as I munched my sandwich during lunch, I was confident that I would spend an enjoyable afternoon there. How dangerous it is for an angler to become smug - for it was not to be.

After lunch I ambled up to the top beat. A retaining wall a little over a metre high ran along the edge of the bank. As slid my not inconsiderable bulk down the side of the bank part of it crumbled away. I felt the first sting about the same time as I saw the horde of angry bees emerging from the hive that I had disturbed. I moved quicker than I have for years to escape the swarm but, alas, I was stung on the hands, face, head and torso dozens of times. I had bees in my hair and down my shirt. Luckily they left me alone once I reached the other side of the river - they could have killed me if they had continued the attack.

The stings were intensely painful and my face, upper body and hands soon swelled up. I tried to fish on but it was too unpleasant and I decided to leave the river and drown my sorrows at my hotel in Stockbridge. This was particularly galling as I could see the trout lined up on station one after the other as I left the river. Two hours later I was still picking dead bees out of my hair as I self medicated with English ale at the Three Cups Inn.



The rest of the trip was less dramatic. Beat number three on the Dever (a tributary of the Test) was very productive. Last year I fished beat number four and it too was crammed with trout. I spent a very pleasant day on the River Dun (another Test tributary) at Dunnerley Cottage. The trout in the Dun averaged the better part of three pounds and were in excellent condition. I took five of these fish from one medium sized pool which ran through the garden of Dunnerley Cottage. In fact, I spent most of my time fishing this pool and did not fish the beat out.



I was fortunate to receive an invitation from Peter Lapsley, the editor of the journal of the *The Flyfishers Club of London*, to fish the Meon River. The Meon is a beautiful little chalkstream near Southhampton. I soon learned that the trout of the Meon are quite unforgiving of any error in presentation by the angler, and how difficult it was to deliver the fly to these fish so as to achieve a drag free drift. I also discovered that once your fly was caught in the branches of an Alder tree it was very difficult to extricate. Peter was able to effortlessly deliver his fly perfectly to fish after fish, whilst my fly either found an Alder tree or dragged. It was obvious that he was an extremely capable flyfisher. Later we had a very interesting chat as we ate a picnic lunch by the river. Peter told me the story of his father's remarkable career in the RAF. He enlisted as an apprentice and later managed to qualify as a pilot. In 1941 his plane was shot down at Tobruk and his life was saved by an Australian soldier. He never discovered the identity of the soldier. Following the end of World War II he rose through the ranks and was appointed an Air Marshall. When he retired Air Marshall Lapsley was the longest serving member in the history of the RAF. Peter also told me that his mother, who is aged 94 years and nearly blind, was still fly fishing - albeit with his assistance.



Another highlight was fishing Dr Rodney Foale's water on the lower Test at Awbridge. Rodney, John Pilkington and myself were resident students in the later 1960's at Ormond College. He cut his fly-fishing teeth fishing with John on the Big River at Enoch's Point, and on his visits back to Australia loves to return there. He has built his own hut on the Test, Enoch's Point style. Rodney is an excellent host. Even though it was raining he lit a fire and barbecued some delicious steaks, which we washed down with a couple of bottles of French red. Duty called Rodney back to London and I was left to wait for the rain to

stop. Unfortunately it intensified and I abandoned notions of fishing and devoured the remnants of our victuals and spent the night in the hut - there being not many anglers who can claim to have camped on the Test.

I liked Dorset. It is less manicured and hillier than Hampshire and is off the main tourist track. And I loved the quaint Greyhound Hotel at the charming little village of Nicholas St Sidling. Although it is only ten or so miles from Dorchester it has an atmosphere suggesting a far more remote location. The Greyhound Hotel has a good reputation for providing high quality, hearty pub meals and the dining room was booked out for lunch on the Sunday that I arrived, and most nights during my stay. Many of the patrons were day trippers from Dorchester. The rooms were spacious, the hosts were welcoming and friendly, and there was a good range of reasonably priced beers and wines. I recommend this hotel to any member who visits Dorset



I fished the Rivers Allen and Frome in Dorset and was particularly impressed by the Frome at the Wrackleford Estate. This is a lovely stream about the size of the middle reaches of the North Esk in Tasmania and has a head of wild fish, although these are supplemented by judicious stocking. Thus it is not crammed with easy to catch stock fish as are many of Hampshire's chalkstreams. I had some interesting fishing to the occasional rising fish until a storm at the headwaters caused the water to rise and become turbid.

Then it was off to the conviviality of the Flyfishers Club in London and finally the Heathrow nightmare. One word of advice to the travelling flyfisher in England about hire cars – a GPS is essential unless you are prepared to take the risk of driving from Heathrow to the Test via Land's End.



# The Collective Wisdom of Mike Weddell & Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein, the great physicist and mathematician, is a rich source of interesting quotes, one of his most famous being: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".

Mike Weddell hints at this in some of his advice to anglers. Mike was the five times British All Round Fly Casting Champion before moving to Dunedin in New Zealand's South Island several years ago. He is the author of a number of books on fly fishing for trout, and continues to fish with great skill, as well as writing prolifically and teaching on all issues related to trouting. In a recent article on fishing New Zealand's Southland rivers, he suggests that "if you are not catching fish then you need to do something different. Either try a different approach, or change location. If you do nothing different then you will surely continue to catch nothing."

Similarly, in his book, "*Fly Fishing Made Easy*", he says: "A habit that many beginners get into, and some more experienced fishers too, is that of standing in one place and repeatedly covering the same patch of water. Unless you are doing something different every few casts, this is a total waste of time. If you are fishing the correct fly and covering the water properly then any fish present will take in the first 2 or 3 casts. If there is no response in that time, move on."

Mike's comments prompt some reflection. Persistence is seen as a fly fishing virtue, so how long should we persevere with a method or a location before trying something different or moving on?

In the meantime, what else did Einstein say that might have a bearing on our approach to the wonderful art of fly fishing?

- "Imagination is more important than knowledge."
- "The only really valuable thing is intuition."
- "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."
- "The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing."
- "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." (Sign hanging in Einstein's office at Princeton)



# Artery Forceps and Needle Holders

(Andy Hodson)

Seeing artery forceps being used to tie the Penny Knot (December Issue) reminded me of a pet peeve. These days it is considered de rigour for any fly fisher to have a pair of artery forceps somewhere on his personage to assist in releasing fish. If you are going to be photographed then your forceps will almost certainly be clipped to the top pocket flap of your expensive vest - just to show how handy they must be for releasing the many fish you catch!

Not only does this ruin the temper of the spring in the steel but also flashes around, frightening everything in range - let alone getting tangled in the undergrowth when beating up that hallowed small creek (though not much of a problem for the lake heretics).

May I suggest that surgical needle holders be considered instead? Whilst there are several different styles of needle holders known to my surgical colleagues, I suggest the ones that look very similar in style and mechanism to the common artery forcep? This style has a few advantages. Firstly the pivot point is closer to the tip of the instrument - giving better pressure on the hook (or needle in the surgeon's case). Secondly, the jaws have a finer diamond striation pattern rather than the deeper transverse pattern found on artery forceps. This is far kinder to the steel of your hook, especially for those smaller sizes. Hence the needle holder holds a hook far better than an artery forcep - which was initially designed to hold an artery anyway!

Whilst the best German manufactured instruments will have lovely gold finger rings and calibrated tensions on the three 'catches' of the locking mechanism, one does not need to shell out a small fortune for instruments of this quality. In these days of 'single use', perfectly adequate (for our purposes but not that of the surgeon's) needle holders manufactured on the sub-continent may be available from your friendly GP if he / she still does minor procedures and has switched over to the disposable instrument mindset. (I did mention the difference between artery vs needle holders to a major fishing tackle retailer some time back, but rarely get the opportunity to gaze in his hollowed ground to know if the hint was taken up.)

Needle holders do come in various lengths with the 5" probably being most suited to our purpose. The bright finish can be dulled by leaving the item in vinegar for a time (though the cheap disposables are usually not so bright to start with). It would also be feasible to hang them off a lanyard tucked away in some pocket so as to not stress the temper. If you have time to give the hair a quick brush before the photo then surely you have time to retrieve the needle holder! For those that are really catching a lot of fish where every second counts then find a friendly surgeon to teach you how to 'palm' the needle holder rather than going through the rigmarole of putting thumb and fourth (yes! fourth) finger in the rings.

Here endeth the epistle, and may all your bites be trout and not snakes.

*Andy Hodson*



# ATF Report

Late last year the Annual General Meeting of the ATF needed to be postponed, as several key office holders were either ill or caught up in conflicting appointments on the date scheduled. Hence the AGM has been re-scheduled for late March of this year, and Mick Hall will book the Bailey Room at Yarra Valley for the meeting. The date will be finalised in the next few weeks, and the March newsletter will provide all relevant details.

This will be an important meeting of ATF members, and all interested and concerned anglers who support the ATF and its work are encouraged to attend.

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## Tasmanian Notes

*(From Daniel Hackett's site – January 12)*

The Western Lakes trout are on fire, with flats-cruising brown trout averaging between one and two pounds heavier than normal, due to the great winter and spring flooding. Main food items are early morning caddis, late evening midges, and daytime galaxia, with the average trout size ranging from 2½ to 6 pounds.

Back down on the lowlands, juvenile hoppers are starting to interest river trout on the South Esk, St Patricks and Meander rivers, and most of the creeks in between – the tiny granite-spring creeks of the north-east are fishing exceptionally well.

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## Website Report

There have been some delays in uploading material to the website due to other commitments, but I am catching up. Newsletters and some other materials are now being added.

We also had a few problems with non-members trying to register. I will email these people to advise them of their options. The registration process has not been functioning correctly, and the login email was not being processed by the system (this is automated). This problem was referred to our technical guru and apparently is now fixed. I will check and confirm this on my return to Melbourne.

It is now time to consider updating some of the links and information, so I welcome any comments regarding changes that might be incorporated.

Registrations have slowed during January, but this will be an annual fluctuation and quite normal as members are on holidays, or better still – out fishing.

*Rick Dugina*

Website Admin / Senior VP

# The UK Report

(Phil Bailey)

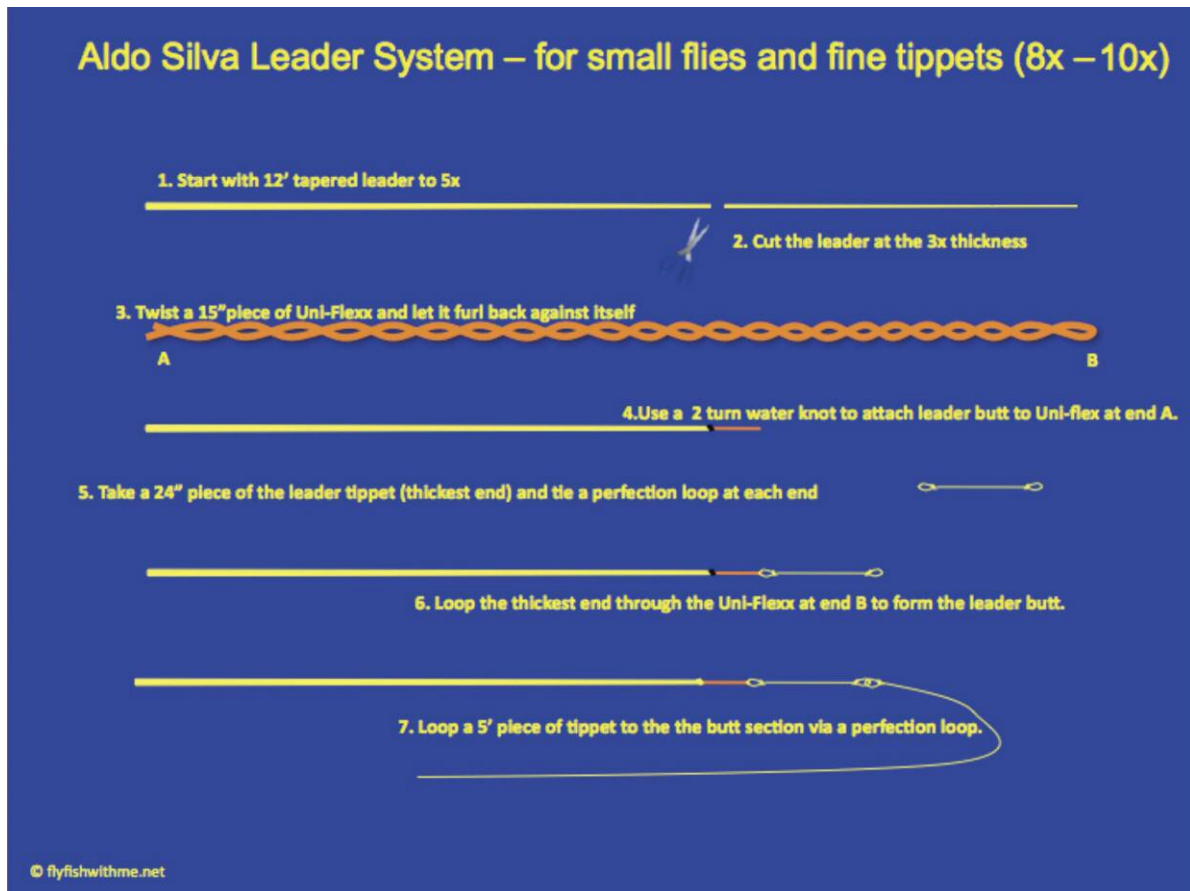
It is now well into the dog days of winter and after 17 days of snow the fishing has suffered.

However, in late November I visited a rod factory in Italy (see [www.flyfishwithme.net](http://www.flyfishwithme.net)) and had the chance to fish with a couple of members of the Italian and Czech teams. These guys really know how to fish a stream. They use long leaders and fine tippets to catch 2 & 3 lb fish. By 'fine tippets' I mean nothing larger than 8x and most of the time a 10x tippet.

The reason behind this is that they want the flies to get down as fast as possible to the fishing level, and the sizes of the flies are no larger than a #16. Their fly design is very interesting in itself, but that is another issue.

"What about break offs", I hear? They have designed a rather interesting section into their leaders. Uni Thread make a product called 'UNI-Flexx'. This a 1680 Denier elastic thread used to tie up buzzers, etc.

By twisting and furling a section they get a very strong elastic section which is incorporated into their leaders. This is how it is done:



Now I have tried this and it works. The very fine tippet and small flies go down very quickly. Grease up the UNI-Flexx and it will float as a strike indicator.

No report for February. I am back in Australia so I might just see you at the February meeting.

Best wishes,

*Philip*

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## Eildon Report

Our usual correspondent, Mick Hall, has been away, fishing some of those New Zealand rivers, so the following information is from Antony Boliancu at Goulburn Valley Fly Fishers.

Antony reports that he hasn't heard much recently about the fishing in the Lake or the Pondage, but the fishing in the Goulburn has been 'quite good but patchy', with catches of 8 or 9 fish some days, interspersed with days when very little shows. The fish caught are being taken on hoppers, or where there are willows, on willow grub patterns. Late last year more fish were stocked, and some of the ex-brood fish that were put in the Goulburn are now showing up. The largest taken thus far is a brown of 12 lb, but a 10 lb trout and several around 5 lb have also been caught. According to the data, some 70 trout in the '2 – 3 kg' size range were released.

Antony also reports that all the rivers running into the Lake are fishing well, as long as you get well up into the headwaters. The Big River (beyond Enoch's Point), the Howqua, the Delatite and the Jamieson are all producing fish, though sizes are typically small.

On a sadder note the Steavenson and Acheron Rivers are not fishing well. Antony has had contact with a number of farmers who have properties along these rivers, and they all tell the same tale – pools that normally have numbers of fish moving in the evenings are showing very little. Antony blames the fires of last summer, and suggests that these rivers are urgently in need of stocking to re-establish their populations.

On the other hand the Rubicon is fishing well – to hoppers during the day, and good rises to caddis in the evening.

Our thanks to Antony for this information.



# Report From Out West

(Jim Blakeslee, our very reliable Warrnambool correspondent, has been busy over the January period – fishing the Tasmanian highlands and bushwalking in New Zealand. He has provided the following report on the Warrnambool Fly Fisher's trip to Tassie in late December / early January)

On Monday, December 28, nine members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club landed at the Launceston airport full of anticipation. The weather was predicted to be fine, warm and sunny for the next 4 days. It was an auspicious start to the trip. We packed our gear into a couple 4WD rental Nissan X-trails and made a beeline for the supermarket in town. Adrian Jacobs, the Club President, had drawn up 3 shopping lists. We split into three flyfisher-commando teams, each team with a shopping cart and list, and terrorized the rest of the shoppers as we zoomed around the store, tossing in the specified items and ticking them off as we went. After leaving a pile of cash at the checkout counter and exiting with mounded shopping carts, we were then faced with the task of jamming our tucker into every spare bit of space in the boots of the cars, then loading in the rear passengers and piling more food and drink in around them. Then we were off! Fortunately, no one was car sick or needed a toilet stop before we got to Miena.

After picking up the keys to our 11 bed rental house from Phil and Jo Stewart, we moved in with our gear, liquid refreshments, and tucker. By then it was dinner time, but we were not inclined to cook on the first night, so piled back into the cars and set off for the Great Lake Hotel for dinner and a glass or two of refreshment. Afterwards, we had an evening cast on the Great Lake, but nothing was moving. We gave it away early and saved our energy for the next day.

Back at the house, the rest of the crew sipped a coffee or tea, chatted, organized fishing gear and compared various ties of duns, spinners and Great Lake Beetles, while Matthew Wood and I busied ourselves packing our rucksacks for our 3-day bushwalk/fishing excursion to points west of trailhead at Lake Ada.

The next morning we were all up early. Peter Hussey was in charge of preparing 9 lunches for the day, while the rest of us polished off our breakfast, cleaned up and loaded our rucksacks, daypacks and fishing gear into the cars. By 8:00am we were on the road to the Western Lakes. By 8:45am we were the first cars to arrive at the Lake Flora and O'Dell car park. We off-loaded Adrian, his brother Tony and brother-in-law Glen, Brendan, George and Ellen, who then set off on the 45 minute walk to the lakes. Peter Hussey drove Matt and I to the trail head at the Lake Ada boat ramp, promised to pick us up at 5:00pm in 3 day's time, then returned to join the others. We had a three hour walk ahead of us to get to the campsite I had in mind at the north end of Lunker Lake. As it turned out, it took us 7 hours. Here's why.

After a steady two hours of walking, following the old Talleenah Lagoon 4WD track or taking shortcuts marked by cairns, Matt and I reached our morning tea/first fishing stop at the junction of the three western-most Christies Creek lakes. The fish were rising, presumably to black spinners, so of course I tied on a #12 spinner. The first fish I covered had a look and refused. So I tied on a #12 Great Lake Beetle which I presented to the next fish I spotted. He swam up and took it without hesitation. Five minutes later, I had landed my first 3 lb wild



Tasmanian brownie for the trip. He was in good condition, golden and beautifully marked. I released him after a bit of resuscitation and he swam away to live and fight another day. We spent a couple hours polaroiding, stalking, casting to and catching fish in the first two lakes, especially in the corners where there were weed beds. Of course, during this time and for the rest of the trip the Great Lake Beetle reigned supreme. We called a halt to have lunch (we had forgotten about morning tea!). We then shouldered our rucksacks and set off, once again, for Lunker Lake. We were at the southern end within 45 minutes.

It should have taken only half an hour to reach the northern end campsite, but we took three - the reason being that we dropped packs every few minutes to cast our Beetles to cruisers and the occasional rising fish. We fought, landed and released some beauties before moving on, only to repeat the process again another few minutes walk along the lakeshore.

Finally, at 4:00pm we arrived at the campsite set amongst a beautifully manicured wallaby lawn, pitched the tent and boiled the billy for a cup of coffee. The light breeze that had been blowing for most of the day dropped, the lake was glassy-slick, the spinners moved out over the lake in their millions and the fish started to rise, gently sipping them down. It was hot for the highlands – 25°C!! I suggested that Matt go out and catch one to keep for our dinner. He set off – a man on a mission – and disappeared around a nearby point. I took my towel, walked down to the lake in front of camp, stripped off and plunged into its crystal-clear, beautifully refreshing water. I was reflecting on what a perfect day it had been when I heard “WHOO –HOOO!!!” I could hear the leaping fish and could just make out the arched tip of Matt’s fly rod held high. He fought it for a long time, so I figured it was a good one.

Back in camp I dressed, then opened my plastic drink bottle – filled with a hearty shiraz – and poured a celebratory drink into our cups. As I started preparing the spaghetti carbonara to go with our trout for dinner Matt strode around the point with a spring in his step and a well-conditioned, golden-brown fish of 4 or 5 pounds. Matt took his cup with my congratulations and posed for a photo – grinning from ear to ear. I filleted the trout. The flesh was a rich orange and ate well. It was a fabulous start to our trip. JB



# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The 'Carey Special' – a Proven Performer*

When Jim Blakeslee arrived in Warrnambool from California in the 1970s, he brought with him an interesting selection of flies that were new and quite intriguing to the members of the Warrnambool fly fishing fraternity. One of these was the 'Carey Special' – a fly with a number of attractive virtues: it was easy to tie, it represented some important food items, and it caught fish.



It was written up as the 'Fly of the Month' some thirty years ago, and it is certainly worth another look.

In his original notes on fishing the Carey Special, Jim wrote: "This fly is a good one to use when there are frogs about. It can be fished around reeds and weed beds, and should be cast out and retrieved in a series of short jerks. When fished in this manner the long hackle fibres pulsate or "kick", thus making the fly look very alive. It can also be used as a mud-eye imitation, and in fact is well worth tying on when fish don't appear to be moving and the angler is forced to do some searching and prospecting."

What about its genealogy? The book tells us that its creator was Colonel Carey, a retired British army officer. In 1925 "the Colonel", as he was known, moved from Vancouver Island to British Columbia, and found himself in the very heart of what was, and continues to be, a fisherman's paradise. As one story goes, the pattern was developed while Colonel Carey fished the Beaver Lakes chain near Kelowna, but we will probably never know the precise details of its origin.

Known under several names at different times, it eventually came to be simply the 'Carey Special'. The earliest description specifies a body of groundhog hair, presumably the fur of the yellow-bellied marmot; but today the body is tied with chenille, dubbing, or floss, and is commonly black, olive, green, or red.

The original pattern called for several turns of the long-fibered, brownish to gray-green pheasant rump feathers to form the hackle collar, though modern versions are generally tied more sparsely. The long, mobile fibres of this feather with their faint green iridescence are certainly one of the reasons that trout seem to find the Carey Special so attractive.

Just what the Carey Special is taken for has always been something of a mystery. Suggestions are that it imitates a dragon fly nymph, an emergent caddis pupa, a leech, a frog, or a damselfly nymph. Perhaps in the end, like so many other good patterns that aren't precise imitations of any particular food item, its appeal lies in looking like a large number of edible things.

### Materials:

Hook: size 6 or 8 Limerick or Round Bend Tying

Thread: 6/0 black or brown

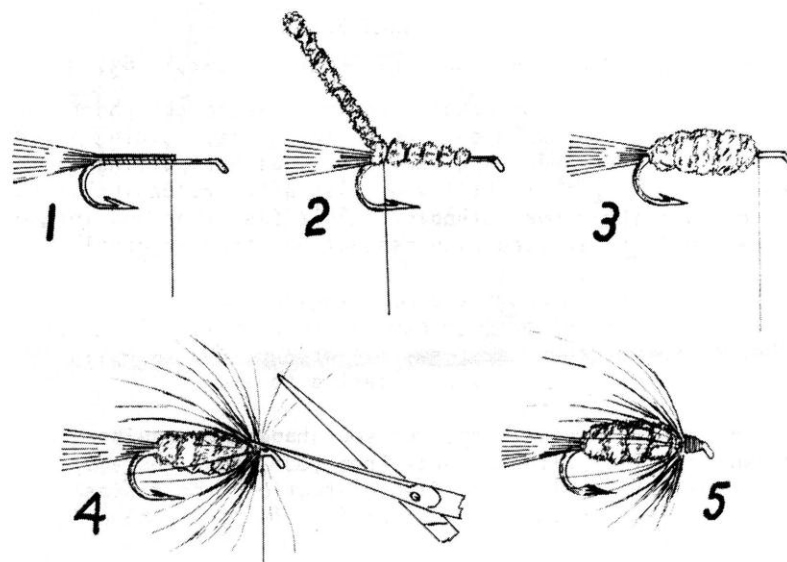
Tail: fibres of cock pheasant green rump feathers, i.e. "Mrs. Simpson" feathers (use the ones in the packet that are not suitable for tying Mrs Simpsons)

Body: chenille (light green, dark green, or brown are the popular "frog" colours)

Hackle: cock pheasant flank feathers

### Method:

1. Tie in the tail fibres, as shown in figure 1. (If required lead wire can also be added at this stage to get the fly down to the fish in deep water)
2. Tie in the chenille along the top of the hook shank, as shown in figure 2.
3. Take the tying thread forward, then wind chenille along the shank and tie it off (figure 3).
4. Prepare one or two cock pheasant flank feathers (the "hackle"), tie them in at the head, then wind them on. Use scissors to unwrap any tied down hackle (figure 4).
5. Build up a good head using the tying thread so that the hackle is forced back over the body (figure 5).
6. Whip finish the head and add lacquer.





## LIBRARY NEWS

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

The library is divided into three parts.

Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.

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

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

## OVERDUE BOOKS

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

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

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

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

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

### VALUED DONORS

#### The following made donations for the raffle at the 2009 Annual Dinner:

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