

FLY LINES



FEBRUARY 2016

February – a Lunch Meeting with Ian Sambell

Our first meeting for the year will be a lunchtime meal in the Shamrock Restaurant at the Celtic Club. A special feature of the occasion will be a display of photos and videos taken by Ian Sambell. Ian regularly fishes Queensland, New Zealand and Tasmania and recently returned from a trip to Patagonia (Argentina). During these trips he has gathered some spectacular photos and video footage of his experiences. For our February meeting he has put together videos and photos of the VFFA trip to Snobs Creek last year, a short video of his fishing in New Zealand recently, and a longer video of his exploits in Rio Gallegos and Jurassic Lake in Argentina.

The photo here is of a 22 lb rainbow trout he caught at Jurassic Lake in Argentina.

Thursday, February 25
12.00 Noon
at the
Celtic Club

Don't miss this start to our 2016 year. It will be an opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues over a fine meal, and enjoy a top presentation by Ian.

But PLEASE make a lunch booking by 12 noon on Wednesday, February 24, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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March 2016 meeting – with Clinton Isaac

The guest speaker at our March meeting will be Clinton Isaac.

Clinton was given his first fly rod at the age of 14 and has never looked back. He grew up in the Blue Mountains, learning to fly fish for Australian natives and trout. Then, looking for new challenges, he discovered the world of saltwater fly fishing. He soon turned his passion into a fulltime job, guiding in Cape York and on the east coast into the Coral Sea in far north Queensland. He has also guided internationally.



He has emailed to tell us that his talk in March will be about fly fishing and sight fishing the saltwater flats around Hinchinbrook Island on the far north Queensland coast. His presentation will cover a range of topics including the specialist boats used to target fish on the flats, species such as barramundi, queenfish, golden trevally, gt's and permit, and the equipment and techniques used to chase these fish. He will bring some fly boxes to show us the range of flies used. He will also introduce us to Australia’s first fully functional saltwater fly lodge that he runs for anglers.

Important Notice: Members should note that while this meeting would normally be on Thursday, March 17, we have moved the meeting date back to Tuesday, March 15, as March 17 is St Patrick’s Day. So mark it in your diary – Tuesday, March 15, 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club to hear guest speaker Clinton Isaac.

President's Message



Happy New Year. I trust that you all enjoyed the Christmas and New Year festivities with your families and friends and that you were able to get in a bit of angling as well. I am about to start my fishing year with a week in New Zealand followed by the annual VFFA trip to Hayes on Brumbys in Tasmania.

The VFFA 2015 year ended on a high note with a most enjoyable Christmas Dinner. The highlights were welcoming Tamie Fraser as our first lady member and a very interesting presentation by Rick Wallace. I was pleased to announce George Gamble Senior as a 50-year member and Michael Blanche, Colin Boyce and Mick Hall as 25-year members.

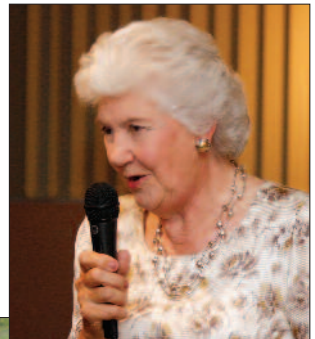
The VFFA has a lot to be proud of but sometimes we do make mistakes. On behalf of the Council I sincerely apologise to Andrew Orr for failing to congratulate and recognize his becoming a 50-year member at the dinner. Our records were incomplete. Andrew should have been presented with his 50-year certificate the

previous year as he joined in 1964. Andrew has now received his certificate and I hope he will accept our apology.

There is no active sporting club in Australia that is not keen to welcome new members. The VFFA is no exception. We are proud that our membership base is approaching 250. However, we are particularly keen to introduce more young members, both male and female. Council is tackling this issue but we do need members' help and support. If you have any family or friends who are, or may be, interested in fly fishing please bring them along to meetings. They will be very welcome.

I look forward to seeing you soon, hopefully at our first General Meeting at lunchtime on February 25.

Tight lines,



Tamie Fraser responded to her welcome



Andrew Orr is often seen using his watercolours to capture scenes at casting events

Notice of Major Event (NOE) Big River, February 16, 2016

Please note the date of this event – March 18 – 20. The date given in the December issue of *Fly Lines* was incorrect.

VFFA Major Event*: Weekend trip to Enochs Point on the Big River.

Event Co-ordinator (EC): John Pilkington, phone: 0407 356 676; 9489 2186(h)
Email: jpilks@vicbar.com.au

Event date: Friday March 18 to Sunday March 20, 2016. Arrive in the afternoon or earlier for some fishing. Huts will be open from around midday. Leave Sunday afternoon or stay on by arrangement.

Cost/s: \$40 for the weekend to cover food and extras.

Event location & address: At Enochs Country Club, Enochs Point on the Big River.

Travel directions: Maroondah Highway, turn off just before Eildon on Jamieson Road to Big River Bridge, then 14 km upstream to Enochs Point. Detailed directions available. Approximate travel time from Melbourne is 3 hours. About 180 kilometres.

Transport requirements: Four wheel drive vehicle is not necessary.

Accommodation: In huts, basic but comfortable. Bring sleeping bag, pillow slip, torch.

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Bring own food for BBQ on Friday night and breakfasts. Lunch and evening meals supplied. Cooking on open fire, oven. Bring esky for food, drinks. All cutlery, crockery, cooking equipment, etc, supplied.

Travel insurance: NA

Description of fishing areas: Fishing is in the Big River, a medium-sized fast flowing mountain stream with rapids, runs and pools. The river is easily accessible around Enoch's Point but more demanding (and productive) fishing is available by driving and walking down long spurs to the stream. Dry and wet fly fishing. Wading is essential. Maps are available. It is a remote area.

Weather: Usually settled at this time of year, and lowish river flow but can vary widely if recent rain. Forecasts will be obtained closer to the event.

Mobile phone coverage areas, or otherwise: No mobile phone coverage after Eildon turnoff (approximately one hour away from Enoch's Point).

How physically challenging: Varies from location to location - from easy to difficult.

Fishing license required: Victorian inland fishing licence required.

Strongly recommended personal equipment: Waders, wading boots, wading staff, gaiters if wet wading; brimmed hat; glasses/sunglasses, sunscreen; wet weather gear, warm clothing; UHF/VHF radio; torch; water and lunch food. PLB - especially in Remote Locations.

Essential equipment for Remote Locations: Compression bandage, UHF radio, any necessary prescribed medicines.

Guiding: NA

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to John Pilkington by April 13.

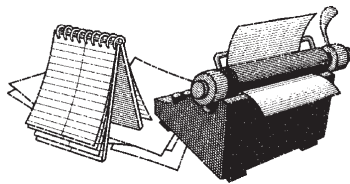
Date of issue of this NOE: As above – February 16, 2016 (mandatory for quoting in ERF)

Event Registration closing date: March 13, 2015

The event is limited to 16 participants and applications will be accepted on a first come, first in basis.

[Please note – the Event Registration Form (ERF) can be downloaded from the VFFA website or obtained at the next VFFA general meeting]

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." (Mae West)

"Old age may have its limitations and challenges, but in spite of them, our latter years can be some of the most rewarding and fulfilling of our lives." (Billy Graham)

One of the concerns occasionally mentioned at VFFA Council meetings is that we're largely an aging group. Fortunately fly fishing is an activity not too handicapped by the practitioners displaying a few grey hairs. Perhaps over the years our fitness and stamina fade but hopefully this is compensated by increasing experience and fishing wisdom.

My thoughts here were prompted by a comment from Mick Hall. Mick had sold his property at Thornton and moved to Ballarat, and I had offered some commiserations along the lines that the move had taken him away from all those fabulous trout streams around Eildon. Mick's response was that wading and fishing some of those rivers had become increasingly tiring work, whereas Ballarat gave him access to a number of nearby lakes and reservoirs, and parking and walking a short distance to a fishable shore at Newlyn or Hepburn was a far less exhausting enterprise. I think many of us would be sympathetic to this observation.

And in terms of fishing smarts accumulated over the years I love the

story I heard of Victorian fishing legend John Brookes, who died just a few years ago. If I've remembered it correctly he fished Millbrook Lakes regularly in his 80s, and his fishing strategy, observed by others, was to move very quietly along the lake edges just watching and waiting. Then with the incredible fish spotting radar he had developed over many years (remember his autobiography was entitled '*Lifelong Pleasure - Seventy Years of Fly Fishing*') he would detect the presence of a fish, make a cast, catch and release the fish, then move on. In a couple of hours he might only make half a dozen casts, but nearly all of these presentations would have connected.

I recall reading accounts of World Fly Fishing Championships where fit and adventurous young competitors would half wade, half swim across deep raging torrents to reach a far bank and a better position to cast to a fish they'd seen rise. Good luck to them. I also recall visiting the Monaro area in NSW with Hubert Reichelt many years ago. Hubert knew the local rivers well and was adamant we had to fish a favourite stretch on the McLaughlin. We parked the car at a bridge, saddled up with all our gear, and walked in heavy waders downstream for four hours to reach Hubert's spot. Then we fished for four hours, and after all likely lies and runs had been culled, we walked out again. I slept well that night. As I said, this took place many years ago. If the feeling ever came over me these days to repeat this sort of exercise

I'd sit and relax and wait for the feeling to pass.

On a VFFA trip to New Zealand's South Island in December 2009 I fished on one particular occasion with Colin Morrison. We were guided that day by Nigel Black, who very kindly drove us in his battered old 4WD across the paddocks from one fishy spot to the next. I hasten to add that this is the only time I've ever been chauffeured along a river, and while Colin and I missed some of the delights of the quiet stroll along the stream bank, it certainly saved on weary legs.

This advancing age nonsense even effects your fly tying. When I started tying flies I didn't need glasses. But these days I need every optical magnification and assistance I can muster. But who cares – my flies still catch a few fish for me. And the big advantage of the passing years is that the number of wonderful memories of great outings and times spent with good mates just grows larger.

Cheers and tight lines,

Lyndon Webb

Rick Wallace at the 2015 Christmas Dinner

Our Christmas Dinner last December was another well attended and very enjoyable VFFA event. The special guest for the occasion was journalist Rick Wallace, who is now a very welcome member of the Association. Here is the text of his presentation.

Thank you Hamish for your very kind introduction.

I'm sure there are a lot of people here tonight with far more experience and skill at fly fishing than me, but the one thing that I can offer you are my experiences fly fishing in Japan. I'm quite evangelical about the potential of fly fishing in Japan, and as I don't think many people have been there to fish I look forward to this opportunity to tell you something about it.

I grew up in north-east Victoria and we actually had a trout stream running through our property. So I learned to fish on our property chasing the little trout in our stream. As mentioned earlier I'm a journalist by trade, writing mostly about politics. But I try whenever possible to write about fly fishing, and the paper has been very good about this in that they give me the opportunity to do so. I was in Japan for four years, from 2010 to 2014, and I wrote quite a bit from there trying

to bring a little of Japanese fly fishing to an Australian audience.

Fly fishing in Japan is a niche sport compared to lure fishing. The Japanese are fanatical about their fishing, particularly lure fishing. But in a country of 110 million you only need about 0.1% of the population into something and that's going to represent 110,000 people.



Hokkaido is the northern most island in Japan

>>>

So there are in fact a lot of very passionate fly fishers in Japan. And even more so there are some really passionate Japanese fly tiers because it ties into that sense of pride of manufacture in Japan and pride in their attention to detail. I will show you some pictures later of Japanese fly tying, which I think is quite exceptional.

I'm not going to talk about Tenkara, because it didn't really float my boat. I was much more interested in going to Hokkaido to chase bigger fish. If you look at a map of Japan you will find that Hokkaido is the most northern island. It is a remote area, much like we might view the Northern Territory. Because it is so far north it has very long days in the summer. It also has lots of good salmonid species too.

Hokkaido is about the same size as Tasmania, though possibly a little larger, and has a population of 5 million. So by Japanese standards it is quite sparsely populated. It is essentially agricultural land with big rivers and mountains, and a few volcanoes thrown in too. It is basically under snow from November through to April and the best fishing is in a really short sharp summer that starts in June and technically finishes in August, though the salmon fishing extends a little further into September and October, and you can still catch taimen and other species through these months too. Because it is such a short summer it concentrates every bug in the forest to come out and do its business in that short period, thus giving some fabulous terrestrial fishing for rainbow trout, which I really enjoyed.

The main species there are taimen (itoh), rainbow trout (nigimasu), white spotted char (amemasu) and salmon. The Japanese taimen is a sea run version of the Mongolian taimen, and it only occurs

in Japan. There are also five different types of salmon, which we will talk about later.

Unfortunately there is always a downside, and on Hokkaido it was the bears. The bears there are the same species that occur in Russia, so every couple of years there will be a fisherman killed by a bear. When I went fishing with Japanese friends in some of the rivers there they always took with them two canisters of bear spray, a type of mace. I personally didn't have any run-ins with bears, but they did kill people from time to time.

I'm always interested in stories about people, and for me it's as much about the people as about the fishing. They have an expression in Japan that the nail that sticks up gets hammered down - a reference to the passion for conformity and uniformity in their society. But I found that most of the fishermen that I met didn't conform. They were kinds of misfits in Japanese society.



Two of Rick's angling compatriots – Adachi-san and Taguchi-san

In the photo on the screen the angler on the left (Adachi-san) is actually a Queenslander, though of Japanese origin. He was the Queensland Trade Commissioner in Tokyo, and it was him who introduced me to fly fishing in Japan, so I owe him a great debt. He was a tremendous fisherman too. The other person in the photo is Taguchi-san. I'm sure that you all have an angler like him in your fishing group. You can all be there thrashing the water to foam and catching nothing, but you know there is one guy in the group is going to catch a fish - and this was the guy. He wasn't technically any better than any other angler but he was the one who always seemed to catch the fish.

Taguchi-san is a fantastic guy and was an executive with Fuji Xerox for a long time. Then he did the unusual thing in Japan of retiring at age 50. He said he had enough money, and was divorced, so was just going to live on Hokkaido and fly fish. I think he had about five girlfriends spread across the island, and he was certainly a most remarkable guy.



Chiba – angling companion and top guide

Lastly the guy in the yellow jumper on the next photo (Chiba) was also an unconventional type. He too was a tremendous fisherman, and I fished with him many times. My Japanese is not great and his English wasn't good either, but we could communicate and get along together and have a fantastic time. He guides up there on the island and makes about \$30,000 a year, then spends the rest of the time skiing and loving life.

So these guys certainly have a different approach to life. A lot of them are divorced and they call themselves the Batsu-ichi Club, which means the 'one cross club', a sort of male divorcees club.

The main species that I was interested in fishing for were the Japanese taimen, the big rainbow trout there, the five varieties of Pacific salmon, and the white spotted char - which is native to Japan and which you can catch in a really fascinating mayfly hatch which I will tell you about later.

First the taimen. In Mongolia this fish grows a lot larger, but in Japan the biggest you'll catch is about 1.3 metres long. It is anadromous - it goes out to sea. It's only found in about four spots in Hokkaido, so once you have the local knowledge you can target it. I should mention that these Japanese guys had a 'One Metre Club' for this species, and they had made up seven badges. Why seven I don't know, but these badges were presented to people who had caught a taimen of more than one metre. When I was there five of the badges had been taken, so it was my goal to be the first non-Japanese angler to be in the One Metre Club. But it didn't end well, as you'll see.

Because taimen are sea run you fish for them in the estuaries. They come into the estuaries to chase bait fish. They hide in the deeper water then rush into >>>



Japanese taimen – which grow to 1.3 metres

the shallows to snatch the bait fish, then race back. So there are basically two approaches to fishing for them. You can use a long two-handed rod to punch out massive casts then strip a streamer back in. Or you can find one of these ambush points and target them by sight fishing, which is probably what you are used to doing when fishing Tasmania or New Zealand.

I had done one trip fishing for taimen when a guy called Nick Reygaert, from Gin-Clear Productions, emailed me out of the blue. He had read a story I had written about fishing for taimen and indicated that he wanted to come and try it. Now I didn't really know him but said, "No worries. If you come here I'll take a week off and we'll head up to Hokkaido and give it our best shot." We exchanged a few more emails, then he arrived on my doorstep and said: "I've got \$2,000 in my bank account, my wife is pregnant, and all of my credit cards are maxed out - so I really need this trip to be a success." He was making a film called 'Predator' and was desperate for this chapter of the film to be an absolute winner. So we went to

Hokkaido and I engaged Chiba to fish with him, and we tried to catch some taimen. We had allowed five days for this because this is the sort of fishing where you can fish for a week and not catch anything.

At this time of the year the days are really long, so on our first day we were on the water at 3:00am. We wanted to get a fish and get the monkey off our backs. And we each caught a 70 cm Taimen on this first day, and I was thrilled, thinking that Nick would have been pleased with this. But he's a funny guy and was trawling through the footage that night saying, "Mm, mm, just 70cm. Is that really a predator?"

This speaks to the guy's perfectionism – he was really striving for more, and he pushed us for more. So the next day we were out there again at 3:00 am, fishing through until 6:00 pm. Luckily we got an 80 cm fish that day and then a 95 cm fish on the last day, at which time Nick was finally prepared to concede that a 95 cm fish could fit in his film as a 'predator'.

The joke here is at my own expense, but I want to show you a brief snatch from the film. On the screen you will see me fishing, and making a botched attempt to join the One Metre Club. You will see the take, and things were going really well. But I'd let all this loose fly line whip out through the reeds and you'll see what happens. I lost the fish, and it's good that the microphone wasn't turned on because there was plenty of foul language as the line wrapped around the reeds and the fish came free. Bad luck for me. On the same trip I hooked another fish also about a metre, and it went down under a snag and I lost it by not being aggressive enough. I don't think it was meant to be. I hadn't paid my dues and obviously they weren't ready yet for the first non-Japanese member of the Club.

I'd been using a single-handed 8-weight rod and some little streamer flies, and it's usually simply a matter of casting to a boil as the taimen come into the shallows. You don't have to be too accurate either, as they will travel a long way to take your fly. They are a truly beautiful fish with that magnificent purple sheen on their side.

I would suggest that a one metre fish is exponentially so much more powerful, and you have so much more trouble stopping them. When they get to that one metre mark their head and shoulders seem to expand and they are a much more muscular fish. I had great fun helping Nick make the film and it has been reasonably successful for him.

Another interesting fishing experience in Hokkaido is fishing for white spotted char. The best thing about this species is that you fish for them in a hatch of large mayflies about the size of a green drake. The hatch starts in the middle of June and runs through to the end of the month. It is really prolific, with fish gulping down



White spotted char

these huge mayflies. You head there with your fly boxes full of spinners and emergers and duns on these ridiculously large hooks, and it is great fun. The white spotted char is a beautiful fish which is found in only one particular area in central Hokkaido.



Large Dun

A species enormously underrated is their rainbow trout fishery. Rainbows occasionally get a bad rap for being stupid and easy to fool, especially in New Zealand where they are looked upon with a degree of scorn. But these fish in Japan were really spooky - almost akin to brown trout in their wariness - and if you weren't fishing with fine tippet or were making too many false casts you got punished. Because it is such a compressed summer it was mostly fishing with big bugs to match the naturals falling onto small congested rivers that had canopies over them. >>>

Many times you were sight fishing to these really large rainbows that hit hard and fought hard.

The photo here shows one taken on my last cast of the day. It was on one of the rivers where Chiba insisted on carrying his bear canisters and we'd had a couple of scares. The sun was setting and I was desperate to catch this big rainbow, while Chiba kept telling me we really needed to get going. We had to walk back to the car in the dark with the real possibility of meeting bears. I kept saying, "Just one more cast, one more cast," and right on my last cast I got this guy on a size 8 Stimulator pattern. He just came up and gulped it, and bang – just the type of fishing you dream about.

The other wonderful fishing there was for salmon, but for some reason fishing for salmon in the rivers was banned. So you had to find a little drainage ditch or stream that flowed into the ocean, then target the salmon while they are milling around the entrance to the stream and preparing to come in.



A fine rainbow taken on Rick's last cast of the day

I tried to catch salmon but wasn't very good at it - I kept missing the takes which were very very subtle. The locals had devised all these techniques for fishing for them using little flies which, for example, consisted simply of a bit of red tinsel on a fish hook. There was a whole science to it, and it was a nut I wasn't ever able to crack.

Those of you who have travelled in Japan will know how phenomenally organised they are and how obsessed they are with logistics. So when I went fishing with the Batsu-Ichi Club those who had partners or wives would catch a fish during the morning, then stop fishing at lunchtime and take the fish to a Courier Depot where there were these containers shaped like a fish. The fish would then be packed into these containers with lots of dry ice and despatched to Tokyo, arriving there before 5:00 pm so the wives could have fresh salmon for dinner. This of course really helped the guys extend their holiday. The wives were getting a break from their husbands but were still getting some fish. Now this is a service I think we could do with here in Australia.

Everything works like clockwork in Japan. It was really amazing and one of the things that I loved about living there. The fishing seemed to go like clockwork too.

A totally different fishing experience I enjoyed, though not a wilderness experience, was fishing near Tokyo. I had only been in Tokyo for eight months when the earthquake happened. The next six months for me went like a blur, travelling up to the disaster site and back again, and covering the nuclear plant which was a ticking time bomb. It was a very stressful time, heightened by the frequent after-shocks that would wake you at 2 o'clock in the morning. So one night Adachi-san and I decided to go fishing and put some of this stuff behind us.

We headed out on Tokyo Bay and tried some sea bass fishing, and it was just the best fun. You cast surface poppers towards these fish which don't fight very hard but are quite big – typically 60 to 70 cm long. We cruised along in a boat past an oil refinery here and a freighter there, and then a bridge or two. We actually fished around the airport. So we were crawling around the back blocks of Tokyo in the dead of night targeting these fish that congregated where spotlights on the ends of freighters shone on the water. We'd cast our poppers into the light and these fish would come up and smash them, so it was a really exciting form of fishing. It was prolific fishing too, with 40 or 50 fish a session if it was on.

Let's talk a bit about Japanese fly tying. Of course they were influenced by the West, but because they are isolated they branched out on their own and did their own thing. The hallmark of Japanese fly tying is a very heavy use of CDC. They also have a different set of insects that they are trying to imitate, so of course they have developed their own patterns. Also, because it fits their personality type, their tiers are really focused on detail. They tie these beautiful ornamental Salmon flies, such as in the photo on the screen. These flies were tied by Mitsugu Bizen, who I interviewed for a piece in FlyLife magazine. Mitsugu spends seven or eight months of the year at Hokkaido when it's snowbound, tying these beautiful flies in his log cabin. Then when the sun emerges and the ice melts he comes out to take advantage of the fishing.

In flicking through his photos on the screen you soon realize that they really are works of art. You can see the workmanship in these flies; it's truly amazing. He's also a very unconventional bloke. He didn't ever work as a salaried employee. Most people in Japan will

work for one company for their entire life. Mitsugu worked for two years and then he dropped out to run a reggae record store. Then he became a semi-professional fly fisher and trout bum. He's a pretty strange guy by Japanese standards, but the quality of his workmanship is truly stunning and he makes a good living selling his ornamental flies.



Salmon fly – an example of fly tier Mitsugu Bizen's work

I guess there are some listening here tonight who may at some stage want to fish in Japan, so let me give a bit of practical information at the back end of this talk. If you try to google up information on fishing in Japan you find very little information in English. To organise it yourself is possible, but you quickly run into the language barrier. Hokkaido is very remote and virtually no one there speaks English. It's not impossible to do it on your own, but you can also do guided trips. I have no commercial affiliation with the company listed here: <http://www.troutandking.com/eng/> and ebi@troutandking.com, but I know the guys who run it and have sent friends to them and it has worked out well.

I think that this is the only company that does guided trips and has guides that speak English. Anyone who wants my PowerPoint presentation is most welcome to contact me and I'll email it to you. >>>

If you do want to go then I strongly encourage you to give it a try. There is a huge diversity of fishing, all of it is exciting, and the potential is so untapped. I've probably done six trips there and I feel that I have barely scratched the surface.

It will also be great for the conservation of the species, because the taimen is threatened. It is only found in these four spots and some of the locals don't accord it any value because it is not a particularly good eating fish. So

sometimes anglers just catch and kill it. What we are trying to do is establish a tourist industry around this fish so that people will see that it has a value beyond its eating quality. Up until recently there were essentially no rules and we all know where that leads. So people like Chiba are very keen to get more foreign fly fishers there to guarantee the taimen's future by creating an economic value for the local people.

My contact details are
rpwallace@gmail.com and 0477 799



Rick speaking at the dinner



Tamie Fraser draws a winning ticket



Past president Terry Rogers was Tamie's host for the night



Andrew Mossman and good friend Andrew Orr

April Auction

Our April meeting this year will be an auction of fly fishing equipment and books. Auctioneer Hughie Maltby is putting together the lots for sale, but has indicated that there is plenty of room for more items. So members who have some surplus gear or books and would like to offer them for sale are very welcome to phone or email Hughie with the details.

Hughie's contact details are home – 9459 2241, mobile – 0423 283 079, and email – reddtag@hotmail.com

A catalogue of the items to be sold will be included as an insert in the April newsletter. Members offering items for

sale should note that these auctions are an important fundraiser for the VFFA, as a small commission on sales is retained by the Association.

The date – Thursday, April 21, at the Celtic Club.



Big River and the Magnificent Chateau Pilkington

This year's Big River trip is scheduled for the weekend Friday March 18 to Sunday March 20. John Pilkington tells us that there are still some vacancies.

A Notice of Event form (NOE) for this weekend is included in this newsletter. Be assured that if you haven't attended one of these weekends then you should. The venue (Chateau Pilkington) is stunning, the surrounding Australian bush is exquisite, the Big River in this area is a crystal clear mountain stream well populated with trout, the accommodation is comfortable, the food is delectable, and the cost is minimal (\$40).

To make your booking simply contact John Pilkington - by phone: 0407 356 676; or home on 9489 2186, or by email - jpilks@vicbar.com.au



Our Wild Trout – A Precious Resource

... from Philip Weigall. Philip needs no introduction, as he is so well known to us. Aside from a significant involvement these days in trout politics and management, he's a top guide, the author of several very popular fly fishing books, the editor of the fabulous *FlyStream* magazine, and the writer of countless magazine articles. He's also a VFFA member who contributes regularly to our newsletter. In this article he tells us that wild trout are the key to a great eastern Victorian stream fishery, so we need to get the best from them.

I've been involved in trout fishery management through various boards, committees, reference groups, advisory groups, etc, for a few decades now. Overall it's been a positive experience, but in my darker moments I've found myself thinking I should just bow out. For better or worse, anglers will get the result they deserve.

I think a problem for fisheries management – and from what I can tell this is a problem the world over – is most recreational anglers are quite understandably drawn to fishing as an escape from their everyday worries and challenges. They don't want their gentle pastime ensnared in the 'politics' of angling, or drawing them into the quite complex (and often counterintuitive) science which it is necessary to understand to advocate for or against particular management approaches. In fact most anglers would prefer not to have to advocate at all! They would far rather just go fishing, and preferably catch a few.

A Bit of Background

But that last bit is the catch, so to speak. It's inescapable that 'catching a few' in turn requires good management, and

that doesn't happen by itself. For example, in the quarter century prior to 1996 Victoria had no trout regulations. None. Zip. If you wanted to fish for spawning trout in a tiny creek in midwinter, you could haul them out and knock them on the head one after the other until your arms hurt. And if you wanted to fill several white buckets with stockies straight out of the hatchery truck, you could do that too with the cheerful blessing of the authorities. Both positions were staunchly defended by some fisheries managers at the time: the former on the grounds that in wild trout populations angling mortality was minimal compared to other causes of mortality; the latter on the assumption that anglers quickly harvesting as many expensive hatchery-reared trout as possible was a good outcome, preventing 'waste' as inevitable mortality from birds, etc, cropped the stocked trout as they grew on.

Now both lines of thinking had merit superficially, but as most readers would recognise, they were seriously flawed on several fronts, which space prevents us going into here. It took years of well-presented and compelling argument by anglers and angling organisations to begin the shift in culture and approach which led to trout regulations being reintroduced. Incidentally, there were still anglers (including some prominent fly fishers) who wanted things to remain as they were and who pushed hard against the new trout closed season and bag limits! Things are seldom straightforward when it comes to trout fishery management decisions...

Wild Trout in Victoria

If you've stuck with me this long (and I won't blame you if you've nicked off

fishing instead!) that's all some context for what is probably the preeminent Victorian trout fishery issue of the moment: how best to manage the trout streams in the mountains of eastern Victoria? For the last few decades, the vast majority of these streams haven't been stocked... at all. Trust me on this – I'm not expert on much but I know my facts when it comes to Victorian trout stockings. So forget what your old mate Joe 'reckons' or what you read on Facebook. The lion's share of the fishing you've had in north-east Victoria to date – good, bad or indifferent – has been on the back of trout generated by natural recruitment; in other words, wild trout. Yes, a handful of these streams are stocked from time to time, and trout farm escapees may occasionally contribute fish for a short period to an even smaller sample. But to be clear, the eastern Victorian stream trout fishery is basically a wild trout fishery.

Whenever we experience a tougher than average patch of fishing (like after the 2003 Alpine Fires for example, or the cormorant plagues and other woes around 2013) the question arises, how would artificial stocking affect this river or that creek? Would it make it better, worse or no different? To answer that question, we need to go back a step or two.

Stocking is Wonderful

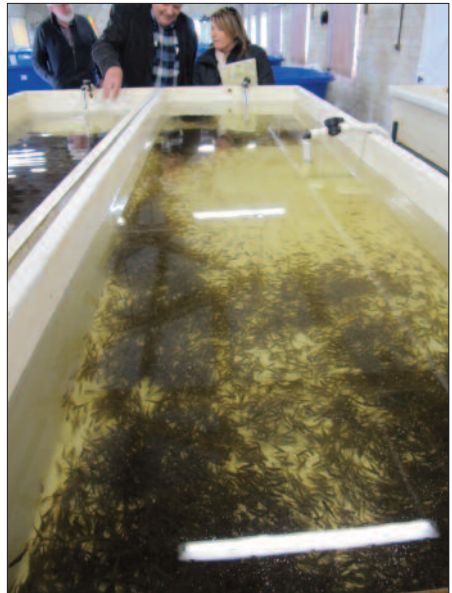
No, I'm not being ironic. Regular readers of my books and articles will appreciate how much I adore fishing the trout lakes of western Victoria and virtually all of these are reliant on annual hatchery trout stocking to produce decent fishing. The same can be said of a few important western streams. What all these waters have in common is a lack of good trout spawning habitat. If trout stocking were to cease, the odd water might maintain a relic trout population, but trout would

sink to becoming an occasional by-catch at best. In fact in most western Victorian lakes, if stocking ceased trout would soon become extinct there.

Our Snobs Creek hatchery, which produces most of these stocked trout, is an invaluable public resource. We're lucky to have it, and it deserves further investment and support. Again, this is really a topic in its own right, but for now I hope you get the idea. Stocking is a crucial element of good trout management (and the management of many other key species) in Victoria.

If stocking can be such a powerful trout management tool, shouldn't it be used to at least boost wild trout stocks in eastern trout streams? What's the harm in that?

For a long time I held this view; after all, stocking is a very appealing solution because it is so visible and quick. >>>



Young trout at Snobs Creek Hatchery. This facility does a fantastic job stocking the many Victorian waters that lack natural recruitment.

It's action; it's doing something. Not enough trout? Back the truck up to the stream and put more in. Even to someone with little knowledge of the intricacies of trout fishery management can follow that logic.

King River Case Study

But is stocking trout into wild trout streams really so simple, or free of negative consequences? Towards the end of the 'noughties', I was one of many advocating stocking of the King River below Lake William Hovell. By this stage I'd witnessed wild trout fisheries stage some incredible recoveries on their own: the Otway streams after Ash Wednesday, or the Indi, Mitta, Nariel and numerous other streams after the 2003 Alpine Fires. So I was coming to appreciate the power of wild trout spawning and migration to restore wild trout fisheries, often in mere months.

Nevertheless, it seemed to me the King River tailwater was an exception. With access to most spawning tributaries blocked by the William Hovell dam wall, and a cessation of irrigation flows in late autumn greatly reducing spawning habitat in the main river (and probably also stranding eggs already laid) the lower King was surely the perfect example of a wild trout stream that needed stocking help.

Our hopes were realised when Fisheries released 2,500 fin-clipped browns into the King in winter 2010, and again in 2011. As good rain returned following the Millennium Drought, my friends and I enjoyed markedly improved fishing on the King in 2010, and again in 2011 and 2012. But here's the thing – among the dozens of great trout we caught, none were fin-clipped. Keep in mind that we wanted to catch a stocked, fin-clipped trout to vindicate our support for the King's restocking. But we didn't catch a

single one between us. Still haven't. The evidence was black and white: all the rejuvenated fishing we were enjoying on the King was down to naturally spawned wild fish. Apparently, with the return of wetter, cooler conditions it was the habitat that had changed for the better and the wild trout quickly followed.



Bringing a good wild brown to hand on the Steavenson River in April 2010, just 14 months after the stream was devastated by the Black Saturday bushfires.

Lessons from Montana

Okay, so those King River stockings in 2010 and 2011 didn't seem to achieve much, but besides the dollar cost, they couldn't have done any harm could they? Well, this is the troubling thing – they just might have.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Montana's Dick Vincent, as a young fisheries scientist he conducted ground-breaking research on the famous Madison River in the late 1960s and early 1970s. To cut a very long story short, using then-new electrofishing techniques



A wild Rose River rainbow – although much of this stream dries up every few years, wild trout usually return within a year of water returning.

to accurately count trout numbers, Vincent established that, much to his astonishment, the main reason for an observed decline in trout fishing in the Madison was stocking. In essence, the more trout stocked, the fewer trout were present to be caught. Not surprisingly (it's still happening in Australia today!) Vincent was initially pilloried by anglers, local businesses and even employees of the Montana Fish and Game Department for making such heretical claims.

But eventually the numbers from his research proved so emphatic that people were forced to accept them. For example, just before stocking ceased on a four mile control stretch of the Madison at Varney in 1967, total trout numbers were 1500. But with no stocking, by 1971 they were up to 3800, and by 1974 they hit 4700. As Vincent says in his recollections published 30 years on, 'By the end of 1973, the department and the commission agreed that (stocking wild trout streams) didn't make sense. The following year, the department stopped stocking trout in rivers and streams.'

The results were immediate and

remarkable. For example, on the nearby Gallatin River, wild trout numbers went from 450 per mile during stocking, to 2500 per mile once stocking ceased. (By the way, the wild trout in these studies were introduced brown and rainbow trout, first planted in Montana not long before they were first introduced to Victoria.) Vincent proved that when stocking wild trout streams 2+2 can equal 1, or even worse.

Why?

Other studies closer to home, like Dr Aubrey Nicholls' research during the mid-1950s on Tasmania's St Patricks and North Esk rivers, demonstrated that the stocking of tens of thousands of trout made no significant contribution to natural stocks; a point confirmed by further Inland Fisheries Commission research on the same waters 30 years later.

Why does stocking, which works well on waters without natural recruitment, so often fail or even do harm when it comes to wild trout fisheries? One reason is to do with the initial incompatibility of hatchery fish behaviour versus wild >>>

fish behaviour. Impose the yearling trout typically stocked in Victorian waters, which are comparable in size to or bigger than many of the wild residents, and the competitive pressure is damaging – for both the hatchery fish and the existing wild fish. In the Science section of The New York Times (13/7/1991) behavioural ecologist Dr Robert A. Bachman described how hatchery trout, suddenly thrust into the stable social order of wild trout, create confusion and chaos. Bachman found that the result was ‘fewer fish of either kind.’ The New York Times article concluded that ‘Other studies have also found that stocking tends to reduce the number of wild trout. The hatchery trout dwindle too, since they are generally more easily caught (by predators of all kinds) and less adept at feeding... The outcome is often an impoverished fishery...’ As Dick Vincent found, 2 + 2 can equal one.

These issues don’t arise on stocked waters where there are no wild trout to affect. Yes, there is still the inevitable spike in the mortality of stocked fish that are killed by anglers or other predators before they adapt to life in the wild, but there is no alternative source of trout, so no opportunity cost. And given time to settle in, some hatchery trout will adapt to their new environment and grow on. As for the impact of new stockings on these survivors, the latter are at least a year ‘bigger’ and cope reasonably well with the new flush of hatchery intruders. Although these larger trout are still unsettled by the newcomers (anyone fishing the western Victorian lakes for the first week or two after a stocking will often notice the scarcity of larger fish



Several million wild trout are hatched each year in Victoria’s streams, creating great fishing for trout like this Mitta brown. But do we appreciate, understand and manage this fantastic fishery as well as we should?

feeding normally) they usually survive the event. The effect of new stockings on trout stocked previously is also mitigated on lakes, where there is more space and an individual trout’s territory or ‘lie’ tends to be less defined than on streams.

Options

The latest research conducted in 2015 for Victoria’s Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program*, shows that most of our wild trout streams that don’t receive stocking of any kind are carrying around 400 to 1,000 trout per kilometre.

Option 1: Fully replace these wild trout with ‘catchable’ hatchery trout.

Based on the kilometres of wild trout stream in Victoria, this option would need several million additional hatchery trout per year. To put this in context,

currently Snobs Creek produces around half a million trout a year. So trout production at the required levels would cost tens of millions of additional dollars in new infrastructure, staff and new sources of high quality water. Needless to say, the social licence to stock on this scale would be challenging to acquire, not to mention finding the money. There are of course streams in the northern hemisphere that are managed this way, but they usually cost an individual at least a couple of hundred dollars a day to fish, which helps in part to fund the enormous stocking bill.

There would likely be no going back from this option as the unique genetics of the wild trout from the various river systems – genetics that have evolved over 150 years and which help explain Victorian wild trout resilience to things like high water temperatures – would be wiped out in the process.

Option 2: Targeted stocking of ‘catchable’ hatchery trout.

The idea here is to stock yearling trout into parts of trout streams where wild stocks are perceived to be temporarily depressed due to things like drought, fire damage, etc. Some anglers see this as a ‘short-cut’ back to fishing while waiting for wild stocks to recover. Obviously, before it can be applied, this approach requires the habitat to have recovered enough to support trout (hatchery trout stocked into warm or silt-choked water will die just like the wild trout; probably quicker) and as wild trout recovery usually occurs within a year or so of habitat coming back, this option buys a year or so of extra fishing at best. Given the research of Vincent and others, the question is whether stockings like this make any difference in practise – or if they even suppress wild trout recovery.

This option is being scientifically investigated right now on the Howqua and upper Goulburn rivers as part of the Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program. When available, the final research results will really help to assess the impact of this kind of stocking.

Option 3: Targeted stocking of fry or fingerling-sized hatchery trout

As an option for recovering badly depleted wild trout populations on a local scale, stocking small hatchery trout has some things to recommend it. For example, as the stocked littlies have had less time to get used to hatchery life, there is evidence to suggest they adapt more quickly to a wild environment*. Also, fry or fingerlings aren’t going to disturb existing wild trout in the same way larger stocked trout will.

On the downside, stocking small trout won’t provide the instantly catchable stockies that some anglers want. Similarly, by the time little stocked trout grow on, it’s often difficult to say if they’ve added any benefit to what recovering wild stocks would have provided anyway. For example, as anyone who fishes the Rose River will know, wild trout usually repopulate it within a year or so of water returning after its periodic drying up. Would stocking a stream like this really make any difference to recovery time? A new technique, barium marking, may help to better assess this option in future studies.

Option 4: No stocking, focus on other things

When interviewed by Montana Outdoors magazine in 2004, Dick Vincent was asked what else had resulted from his work? He replied, “I think the biggest thing was that people began to see wild trout as a valuable, limited resource, and that the state >>>

needs to protect habitat to conserve that resource. Back in the 1960s, anglers didn't care about stream flows and river habitat, because if the fishing was poor, you just tossed in more fish. But if you want to catch big wild fish, then you need to fight for water and for habitat, and that is what has happened. I don't know of a state where people have fought as hard for their rivers as they have here in Montana."

Most Victorian anglers would recognise that a trickling stream fully exposed to the blazing summer sun, or a river filled with sludge from eroded banks, isn't going to support many trout – wild or stocked. Yet mustering the same level of interest and resources for fixing where trout live compared to stocking, seems as hard as ever. The two needn't be mutually exclusive, but any fisheries scientist will tell you that in most places, the balance is still badly skewed.

I think this imbalance in advocacy, effort and resources is what Dick Vincent was referring to above. Having accepted that stocking often isn't the solution to better wild trout fisheries, Montanans have redirected their energy to other things like better trout habitat.

Back here, I wonder if it's the 'invisibility' of trout – the fact we can't see them or monitor their numbers very easily beneath the water – that allows many to still believe that stocking is the cure for all ills? Or is it simply that habitat repair is hard and takes time, whereas stocking is relatively quick and simple? Harvest is another thing. Wild Trout Fisheries Program findings to date suggest angler take isn't a big issue, but I suspect that some seasons on some streams, it may be. This requires more research and maybe a future willingness to tweak regulations to match the needs

of individual catchments or important streams.

Getting the Balance Right

The Wild Trout Fisheries Program and techniques like barium marking will give us a better understanding than ever about how stocking affects our wild streams. One thing is for sure though: stocked or not; or eventually harvested or not, trout can only do as well in the first place as their living conditions permit. If we're going to direct advocacy, effort and resources to something, improving trout habitat seems a pretty logical place to start.

*The Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program (to give it its full name) is a terrific project, instigated jointly by anglers and Fisheries Victoria. If you're not familiar with it you should be – about half the million dollar budget is funded by your fishing licence fees! Have a look here:

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/fisheries/recreational-fishing/wild-trout-fisheries-management-program> . You can also browse back through several blogs about the Program at flystream.com

**Research has shown that stocking trout fry and fingerlings into Victorian lakes often fails due to predation by other larger fish, particularly redfin. This is much less an issue on eastern Victorian streams where redfin numbers are generally low.



Dress For Action And Not For Surgery Or Worse!

Peter Dixon is a well-known member of the VFFA. He is also a prominent Melbourne plastic surgeon. He wrote an article recently for Mike Stevens' *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating* magazine on the dangers of Skin Cancer to those of us who spend time in the Australian sun. He has re-written the article for Fly Lines, and describes it as an extension to the article he wrote for *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating*.

Recreational angling is a high-risk sport for developing skin cancer!

Fly fishing participation rates are highest when UV reaches potentially damaging levels. Reflected radiation from the lakes and streams we fish augment the damage from direct exposure. Should your passion take you to the highland lakes of Tasmania the danger increases exponentially, due to thinning atmosphere and altitude. Whilst clouds filter UVC the more damaging UVA & B are just as intense on a cloudy day!

Let's debunk the concept that crinkly skin, liver spots, and wrinkles are normal aging. They are not. They are a sign of the cumulative affect of excess sun exposure. No matter what your skin type, this exposure to ultraviolet radiation damages skin cells, and over time will cause skin cancers, the most lethal of which is Melanoma.

What is your individual risk?

If one or both of your parents have had a skin cancer, you too have an increased risk. An Anglo-Saxon heritage characterized by red or blond hair, light-coloured eyes, fair skin, or a tendency to freckle indicates a higher risk of developing skin cancer than for people with naturally darker skin. While a Mediterranean or tanned skin has some natural protection, malignancies are often found at a later, more dangerous stage, when the risk of death is much higher.

Everyone, whatever your skin type, should become familiar with your skin. Ask a spouse or friend to assist and then

reverse the favour. You never know - they may save their life! Or you theirs! Check all areas, including the scalp, soles of your feet, and your back, because these are areas of your body that are difficult to examine and unfortunately can have some of the worst outcomes!

If you notice anything new or unusual, including any change in shape, colour or size of a spot, then visit your doctor immediately.

It takes a trained eye to pass a verdict on moles. Even a few months of delay can make a difference between life and death! With early treatment 95% of skin cancers can be successfully managed. If surgery is required reflect on how much smaller or disfiguring the scar may be!

Schedule an annual skin review with your medical professional, or take advantage of the MoleMap services. (Phone: 1800 665 362). MoleMap is a proactive approach to managing skin cancer risk. Managed by trained experts, plastic surgeons and dermatologists, the service provides a head to toe check with "Total Body Photography", magnified inspection of individual skin lesions and sequential monitoring of over time.

Prevention is better than a cure!

Australia has been a world leader in the management of skin cancer. It has banned tanning salons and promoted simple sun protection measures to reduce your risk. But it is up to individuals to put into practice the "Sun Smart" guidelines when dressing for the outdoors.

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Hats:

Peak caps and visors should be discarded as they provide inadequate protection for the face and particularly the ears. While many members prefer “Gentleman’s” designs with their classical limited brims, Sun Smart recommendations are for a brim of 7-8 cm. I personally prefer the “Fishpond brim hat” with its wider and firmer brim and deep extension at the back to protect the neck. The stability of the brim makes the hat ideal for polaroiding the western lakes in windy conditions or shark fishing the Great Lake. Alternatively, use a legionnaire style that covers the neck and overlaps at the sides of the front peak. Alternatively the recent trend to wearing a “Buff” or sun hood in combination with a cap is acceptable, if not a little claustrophobic.

What ever your choice ... **Cover Up Top!**

Clothing:

Sun-protective clothing provides protection by absorbing and reflecting UV radiation that strikes the surface of the fabric. Layering of fabrics and garments is an effective way of increasing protection from UV.

Discard your favourite fishing shirt which stands as testament to your longevity in the sport, as over time with

washing, wear and tear the protection is reduced making protection minimal. Then, when choosing a smart replacement look for a shirt with a UPF50+ rating. Make sure it fits as stretching the fabric nullifies protection. At peak times of UV radiation roll sleeves down and turn the collar up!

Sunscreens:

The regular use of sunscreen is one of the most effective methods of sun protection. In Australia we have some of the most stringent legislation controlling the testing and labelling of sunscreen. One anomaly is that SPF is a measure of UVB protection, and to this date there is no measure of UVA protection!

For daily wear SPF 30 is recommended, but for outdoor sports, particularly on water or in the highlands, broad spectrum water resistant SPF 50 physical blockers containing zinc oxide or titanium dioxide provide superior protection.

Apply a generous amount of sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outside and re-apply it every two hours (whether or not the label tells you to do this). Apply more than half a teaspoon of sunscreen (about 3 ml) to your face and neck and each arm, and proportionally larger amounts to other exposed areas. Pay particular attention to the tips of your ears, nose and back of your neck, because these areas are vulnerable to skin cancers.

Whilst lotion and creams with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide with their superior reflective technology are recommended for the face, other lotions or spray sunscreens are easier to apply to the body.

Be aware - sunscreen does not store well! Check and follow the ‘use by’ date stated on the packaging, and store sunscreen below 30°C and away from direct sunlight!

Lips, eyes and hands require additional precautions. Make it a habit to wear sun gloves, apply lip balms with a high SPF factor, and use wrap-around sunglasses, making sure they meet Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1067:2003.

Vexed Questions:

Vitamin D. Everybody needs vitamin D and your daily co-incidental exposure is generally enough. However Vitamin supplements are an alternative without further damaging your skin.

Nanoparticles in sunscreen. To date, the current weight of evidence as reviewed by the TGA suggests that titanium

dioxide and zinc oxide nanoparticles do not reach viable skin cells; rather, they remain on the surface of the skin.

To summarise - overexposure to UV radiation causes skin and eye damage, sunburn, tanning, and ultimately can result in skin cancer. So get into the habit of using a combination of sun protection measures on every fishing trip and make sure you are not the one caught. Avoid becoming a victim and another statistic!

*Peter Dixon, F.R.A.C.S.
Plastic Surgeon*



A Day in Southland

... by Humpy

Each year Hubert Reichelt and I head over to New Zealand for a couple of weeks of fishing. We often base ourselves in Gore where we have a wide selection of rivers and streams to choose from. As our trip is in November, we often also experience a wide range of weather conditions and water flows.

This year saw the Mataura flowing a little higher than normal but still quite fishable. The tributaries were a mixture, with some such as the Waikaka River flowing high and discoloured, yet others were flowing well below normal height.

One of our favourite streams is the Waimea River. This is a small tributary of the Mataura River that enters the main river at the small hamlet of Mandeville. Its headwaters are situated about half an hour's drive away between Balfour and Lumsden. The river basically flows through pastoral country that is now a mixture of the traditional sheep farming and the more recently arrived dairy industry.

Access to the river is good as it is crossed by several bridges that offer public access upstream and downstream. In addition, we find that the farmers are usually quite receptive to anglers requesting access through their property.

The Waimea River has been a favourite of fishermen for many years, though today it differs somewhat to its original form. Some years ago it was decided to straighten the river to stop the surrounding country from flooding. So now-a-days the majority of the river runs in a series of relatively straight lines broken up by some remnants of the original river course. These original sections offer anglers the best fishing, though the "straight" sections, although somewhat featureless, still offer reasonably good fishing.

On our most recent trip Hubert and I decided to examine the river at the highway bridge. Is there a serious fisherman anywhere who does not at least slow down at bridges over >>>

rivers that have fish and take a cursory look upstream and downstream? We are no different, but we did stop to have a more careful look. The river was flowing well but you would have to say it was below its average height for this time of the year. It was also very clear and the day was quite sunny. Fishing was going to be a challenge!!

Unperturbed we approached a farmer in the middle section and were given permission to drive down to the river through his property. The river in this area is a mixture of the old and the new with a few willow trees adorning the banks in places, and the odd stand of flax just ready to grab any fly that came within range. We parked the car near the river and walked downstream about half a kilometre. This section consisted of mainly the straight dredged section of the river. We immediately came upon fish. They were sitting in shallow flat water. There was an occasional dun floating downstream and the odd trout taking an interest in them, but basically we were confronting some pretty tough conditions.

It is no secret that Hubert is a superb fly tier. It is also well known that Andrew Mossman ties a great Possum Dun. Put the two together and what do you get? I'll tell you - a couple of dozen beautifully tied Possum Duns in my fly box. This was going to be the fly of choice for today.

The day started well when I spotted a 2 lb brown rising in the flat water under the willow trees. I made a long cast upstream and as my dun drifted down into his space he didn't hesitate to take it. However this early action didn't continue. By lunchtime we only had one fish each, though we had spotted several. And they had also spotted us. After lunch we were preparing to fish upstream from



A magnificent Waimea brown – 4 ½ lb

where the car was parked when we saw three anglers walking downstream heading our way. They turned out to be a guide and two American clients. They had walked a considerable distance downstream from the bridge and intended to fish back to the bridge. They were very courteous and obliging and gave us right of way as we had been on the river first. We bundled them into our car and drove them downstream quite a distance so that they had access to a lengthy stretch of unfished water. We didn't see them for the rest of the day

For the next three hours we continued to spot numbers of fish, but with the low and very clear water and the lack of any real hatch it was tough going. We did manage to land three more fish, including a nice 4½ pounder, but it was hard work. I was using a 4 weight rod with a 14 foot leader that included 3 feet of 4 lb fluorocarbon, but it looked like an anchor rope on the water in these conditions. I guess you could say that four browns up to 4½ pounds was a reasonable return, and it is always good seeing and casting to fish rather than just blind flogging. So it was a fair day's fishing, and it's always good to be back in Southland.



Our North East Rivers

... a report from Brian Eddy on the fishing in recent months.

Local streams are faring fairly well despite the heat. We had a couple of real downpours which gave some 40 mm during the first week of the year. This was a great bonus as levels were dropping and the water temperature was rising. It has helped us get through the next very hot dry spell.

Fishing pressure on the Upper Ovens has been very high over the Christmas holidays. Word of the success of the "recovery" stocking here in 2014 has obviously spread far and wide, with lots of visitors along the stream, and most having some success. Fly fishers are increasingly common and most, fortunately, are practising catch and release.

Good numbers of pan-sized rainbows and browns are being taken (depending on the day of course), interspersed with the occasional better fish. Evening hatches are quite consistent, particularly caddis and red spinners. (I took two fish

on the first two casts a couple of evenings ago on an Elk Hair Caddis).

I've heard very few reports on other streams – the Buckland is still quiet, except high up. And it has very heavy camping, swimming, fishing and shooting pressure at this time of the year. The Mitta Mitta seems to be firing well. I went for a quick "reccie" a couple of weeks ago and was told of two 5 lb+ trout caught in the preceding couple of days. The Buffalo River must be fishing reasonably as the local paper carried a report of a 79-year-old angler lost on New Years Eve. He found his own way out the next morning, but the search and rescue police involved seemed to think (for reasons that totally escape me) that the five trout he had caught were not worth the effort!

Cheers

Brian Eddy



Two views of the wonderful little Ovens River

Ultra Light Short Line Nymphing

Philip had a high profile in Victorian fishing in the 1980s and 1990s, being a past president of the VFFA and a founding member and first president of the Australian Trout Foundation. He moved to the UK some years ago, where he has guided on rivers in Yorkshire and written for UK fly fishing magazines. He has been a regular and valued contributor to our newsletter over the years, and his articles frequently introduce us to new and emerging issues in fly fishing. As does this one...

Recently I posted some small baetis nymph patterns on Facebook and was asked by your editor, who spotted them, if I would prepare an article for the VFFA newsletter. Here it is; I hope you enjoy it.

They say that a good nymph fly fisher will out catch a pure dry fly man every time, and I think that after 40 years of fly fishing in lakes, rivers and streams around the world I would agree with that view.

When I moved to the United Kingdom and settled in Yorkshire, I turned from being predominantly a stillwater fly fisher to a river fly man. And with that came a few changes to the way I fished. Without going into too much detail I ended up an avid wet fly man, fishing North Country Flies (aka Spiders) to be specific. I also started to gain an understanding of what fish did below the surface. My catch rate blossomed to the point where a day without a dozen or so fish was pretty disappointing.

Then I started experimenting with the principles of the Italian Casting Style, and turned away from wet flies to concentrate solely on dry fly fishing. And my catch rates dropped way off. It was a good day if I scored a dozen fish.

Nowadays nymph fishing uses long rods, very light specialist lines and long leaders with typically three nymphs spaced about 50 cm apart. Often referred to as Czech Nymphing, it has drawn a huge following across the world and is

probably only rivalled now by the recently arrived Tenkara style. There is also the French Nymphing style deploying very long leaders and ultra light nymphs to catch fish in heavy fished low clear waters, and the Spanish style which is close to the French style but using nymphs that are more like bullets than natural nymphs (though still tiny). Then there is the new Czech style that closely follows the French style but now heavily modified with anglers often up to their armpits in water using heavily weighted flies with huge tungsten beads. And we are also seeing hybrids now of all of these tactics being used.

My friend Edgardo Dona, an Italian who has won the European Rivers Championship on many occasions and is predominantly a nymph fisherman (and a recent coach of the English team in the European Championships), has developed a style that is deadly. I watched him one day pulling fish out of the river on nearly every presentation. (I am not calling it a cast as the technique is more like lobbing.) He uses a 10' rod with a 9' leader tapered to 2x, then 100 cm of bi-coloured line as a sighter, and finally a 2 metre leader with a dropper 50 cm above the point fly. Believe me, when he fishes in a competition those who follow hold little hope of hooking anything.

Nymphing has been around for years, so what has changed? Fly design has changed dramatically, and so too have

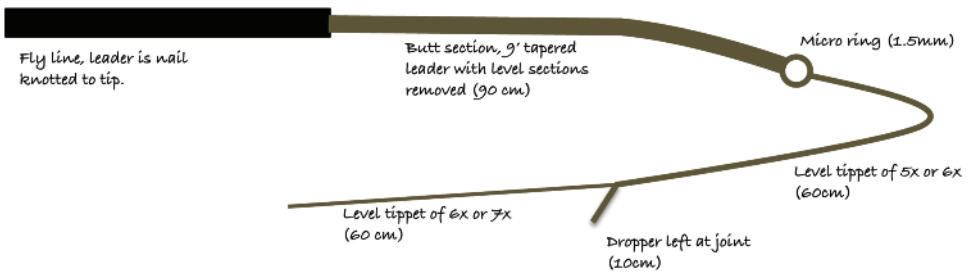
techniques. We forget however that the Czech master – Jiri Klima – brought these new approaches to us during the 1990 World Championships fishing the now famous Czech nymphs. But Jiri fishes differently these days, choosing to use a shorter rod and very short leaders attached to a 2 weight line. ‘Ultra Light Short Line Nymphing’ is what he calls this technique, and it is one which I have adopted and brought into the Italian style which uses short rods and light lines.

Let me share what I have learned and now use with deadly success.

Let’s start with the outfit. Most of what you use today is okay but a shorter rod gives you greater control with Jiri’s technique. I use a 7’9” very fast rod coupled with a 2 weight double taper line. Jiri uses an 8’3” rod. I couple my rod to a specific leader - one that uses fluorocarbon all the way through. I start with a Varivas All Purpose 9’ Fluorocarbon leader that finishes with a

4x tippet. I then trim that leader by removing the level sections at each end. This gives me a tapered section of about 90 cm (sorry about swapping between metric and imperial). I attach the butt of this leader to my fly line and a micro ring to the thinner end. This allows me to change the rest of the leader without having to change the section attached to the fly line. I am not worried about the physics that normally goes with leaders as I am always casting some weight.

Now to the action end of the leader. To the micro ring I attach 60 cm of 5x fluorocarbon tippet material and to that I attached 60 cm of 7x (or 6x if you are scared) fluorocarbon tippet with a two turn water knot making sure I have a dropper of about 10 cm below the knot of the 5x. That gives me a total leader of about 2 metres. Very short, especially for nymph fishing and even for dry fly fishing. But Jiri’s logic is that he gets greater control and visibility of any takes because the leader is short.



Leader construction. Total length will be 1.5m with dropper 50cm above point fly during the drift

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So let's add the flies. I like small flies and rarely go bigger than a size 16. Consider this - most trout food is about 5 – 7 mm in length. Trout are always foraging and if you ever do any river sampling, or stomach analysis, you find that a lot of the food is small. Most of it in fact. I attach a weighted nymph to the point. This will be on a jig hook so that there is less chance of getting hung up on the bottom. I want this fly to swim along just above the bottom. A size 16 hook will have a 2.8 mm bead, a size 18 a 2.3 mm bead and a size 20 a 2.0 mm bead (and I fish this size a lot). On the dropper I use a variation of a traditional Spider. The variation is simply the addition of a small tungsten bead (1.0 – 1.5 mm) just to pull it under the surface but not heavy enough to sink it to the bottom. I want this fly to act like an emerger. Here is a baetis combination for you to try.

Baetis Nymph (Point Fly)

Hook: Jig hook size 16,18 & 20
(the photo is a size 20)

Weight: Gold 2.3mm tungsten bead

Thread: Olive

Tail: Coq de Leon fibres

Body: Golden Olive pheasant tail

Thorax: Pinch of Dark Peacock Ice
Dubbing



Baetis nymph

Baetis Emerger (Dropper)

Hook: Dry fly DE size 18 & 20
(the photo is a size 20)

Weight: Black 1.5mm tungsten bead

Thread: Waxed yellow

Dubbing: Very sparse natural mole

Hackle: Small CDC feather tied in
'split thread' style

Note: This is similar to a Waterhen Bloa which would have used a Waterhen covert feather. I have used CDC as it moves better and has small micro air bubbles attach to the fibres.



Baetis emerger

Now let's get fishing. Jiri's style is to fish short and fast with most of the casting done upstream. Because of the small size of the flies you can comfortably cast as you would for a normal cast. Typically there is only about 2 - 3 rod lengths of line used and you work the pockets and seams of the stream. When working upstream, two techniques are employed. The first is to watch the line tip like a hawk. That is why I use a white fly line. The short leader ensures that there is very little slack so there is constant tension against the line and any delay is visibly seen as a 'tick' on the fly line tip. Lift immediately irrespective of whether you have hooked a fish or you think you have. Often you hook up.

The second technique takes a little time to learn (or to unlearn old habits). Most fly fishermen, when retrieving line, leave the line under a finger of the hand that is holding the rod, even if they are stripping or figure-of-eighting. This is a no no for ultra light nymphing as you

simply will not have the line control necessary to feel a take and then strike. Instead, learn to figure of eight quickly with your left hand without touching the line with your casting hand (assuming you are right-handed). In essence you are retrieving directly against the flies and you need to make sure you maintain direct control and contact with the flies. With practice you will be surprised at the success of this approach. If you get a situation where you want to fish deep, then simply adopt the normal Czech nymph technique and let the leader drop straight down (although you might need a little bit more weight).

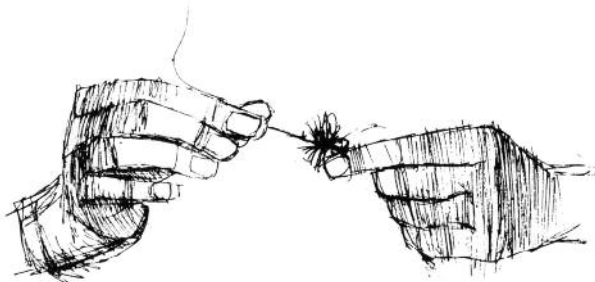
So this is the "Ultra Light Short Line Nymphing" technique used by the Czechs. I have this set up on a spare spool which I carry with me when I'm fishing. I can then simply swap between spools depending on whether I am using a dry fly or nymphing.

Tight lines from the U.K.



New Members

This month we warmly welcome two new members. Andrew Tshaikiwsky and Mark Gibbs have joined the Association, and we trust that this brings them many years of fulfilling and enjoyable membership.



FLY OF THE MONTH

Flies of the Month – Two Willow Grub Patterns



In recent years willow grubs have become an important food source for the trout in rivers around Thornton here in Victoria. If you want a comprehensive outline of the grub and its impact here, along with some useful patterns to imitate it, then check Mick Hall's website –

http://www.kossiedun.com.au/WillowGrubs_TheFullStory.htm.

Willow Grubs have always been important in New Zealand, and according to Mick our scientists suspect that the grubs we're finding here now may have come from New Zealand. The suggestion is that they might have been blown over or come over in shipping containers. The following information is from Mick's article.

The willow grub is actually the larva of the Willow Sawfly *Nematus oligospilus*. This grub is normally found in temperate zones in Europe but in recent years has spread all over the Southern hemisphere. It turned up in New Zealand in 1997 where it is now widespread. It first showed up in Canberra in 2004. It then spread rapidly and is now in the Snowy Mountains, along the upper Murray, South Australia, Tasmania and around Eildon in Victoria.

The lifecycle of *N. oligospilus* starts with the eggs, which are laid on the leaves and the hatching young larva are a pale yellow or green colour. They are really small, but grow rapidly to around the 2 cm mark. As they grow their colour changes to almost chartreuse and are slightly translucent. The head of the grub is a dirty yellow colour with tan slashes on each side of its head.

They are short lived: the eggs develop at around six days depending on temperature, and the grub stage lasts for about two weeks before pupation. In New Zealand the grub appears around October and according to Mick they should appear here about the same time, because as soon as those leaves are out so too are the grubs.

The two patterns shown above were passed to me by Hubert Reichelt, who in turn was given them by Gavin Hurley from Pro Angler. The top pattern represents the grubs that drop onto the water from the trees, and the second pattern is used to represent the grubs that sink and drift downstream from the trees, to then be apprehended by trout that station themselves downstream to snack on these freely drifting food items.

Materials for the Floating Grub:

Hook: Curved caddis or grub hook, sizes 12, 14 & 16.

Thread: Green or yellow Uni Thread.

Body: Small diameter green or yellow cylindrical foam. A good choice is Wapsi Chartreuse 1/16" foam cylinders.

Tying Procedure:

1. Wrap an even base of thread on the hook shank, starting from near the eye of the hook and extending to a point just short of the barb.
2. Tie in the foam at this point with a couple of firm turns of thread, then wind the thread back to just short of the eye.
3. Now bend the foam around the hook and tie it in firmly. Trim off the foam so that a short stub of head sits behind the eye.
4. Whip finish and cut the thread, then add a black dot to the top of the head using a waterproof marker (a Sharpie).

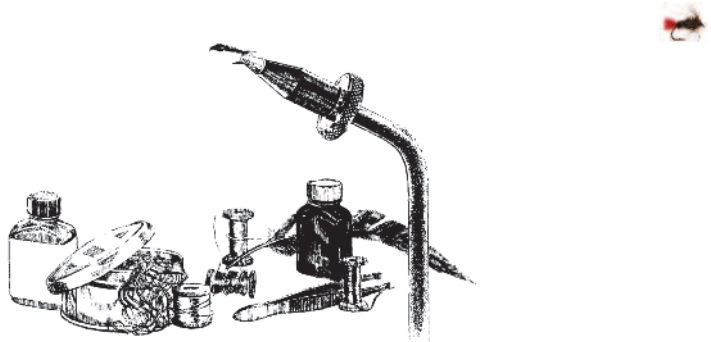
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Materials for the Sinking Grub:

- Hook:** Curved caddis or grub hook, sizes 14 & 16.
- Thread:** Green or yellow thread for the body, black thread at the head.
- Tail:** Two short lengths of black Krystal Flash
- Body:** Green or yellow thread.
- Thorax:** Green or yellow thread with a small black tungsten bead behind the eye and a piece of dark brown or black Thinskin tied over as a wingcase.
- Hackle:** A few pieces of rubber leg material or a couple of lengths of black Krystal Flash.

Tying Procedure:

1. Wrap a few turns of black thread behind the eye, building up a small lump to prevent the black bead from sliding right up to the eye. Whip finish and cut the black thread.
2. Take the hook out of the vise and slide the black bead around the shank until it is up against the lump of black thread behind the eye. Put the hook back in the vise and then tie in the green or yellow thread behind the bead and build up another small lump to hold the bead in position.
3. Wind the thread down the hook shank to make the body and then tie in two short lengths of black Krystal Flash to form the tail. Wind the thread back to a point a small distance behind the bead and tie in a short narrow strip of Thinskin for the wingcase.
4. Build up the thorax with the thread and then tie it off with a whip finish and cut the thread.
5. Reattach the black thread in front of the bead and pull the Thinskin over the bead to form the wingcase. Tie it off and cut it short.
6. Tiny in a couple of short lengths of Krystal Flash or rubber legs as the hackle.
7. Whip finish and cut the thread, then add a small drop of head cement to complete the fly.





LIBRARY NEWS

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

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA)	\$70.00 each
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
Wine glasses and whisky glasses inscribed with VFFA logo, set of 6.....	\$45.00 per set
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
<i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie	\$20.00
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 0423 283 079.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2015 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Andrew Braithwaite Fishing Gear • Armadale Angling •
- Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery • FlyLife Publishing •
- FlyFinz Fishing Tackle and Books • Gavin Hurley's Fly Fishing Pro-Angler •
- Hayes On Brumbys • J.M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall • Millbrook
Lakes Lodge • Mountain Stream Company • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies •
- Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Compleat Angler Box Hill • The Flyfisher Tackle
Store Melbourne • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle •

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

February 2016

- 8 Monday Council - 7:30 pm
- 13 – 19 Tasmanian Trip to Hayes on Brumbys
Event co-ordinator - Hamish Hughes
- 25 Thursday General Meeting – A Lunch Gathering - 12 noon
Special video and photo display by Ian Sambell

March 2016

- 15 Tuesday** General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: Clinton Isaac – Hinchinbrook Island fly fishing guide
- 18 – 20 Big River trip - “Chateau Pilkington”, Enoch’s Point
Event Co-ordinator - John Pilkington
- 25 – 27 Easter

April 2016

- 21 Thursday General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Auction of Fly Fishing books and equipment
- 25 Monday Anzac Day
- 26 Tuesday Council Meeting - 7:30 pm

May 2016

- 19 Thursday General Meeting – time and speaker to be advised

** Meeting moved to Tuesday because Thursday is St Patrick’s Day and Celtic Club not available