

FLY LINES



FEBRUARY 2018

The February 2018 Meeting - with David Anderson

Our February meeting, the first meeting for 2018, will again be a lunchtime meeting, commencing at 12 noon at the Kelvin Club. Our speaker for this meeting will be David Anderson, who contributes regularly to *FlyLife* magazine. David is a very keen fly fisher and an accomplished professional photographer.

David's interest in photography began in the early eighties, when his mother, a Middle Eastern news correspondent, loaned him a Nikon camera, and a couple of rolls of film.

He returned to Australia in 1984, settled in Sydney, and began full-time professional photography in 1989. By 1995 his career

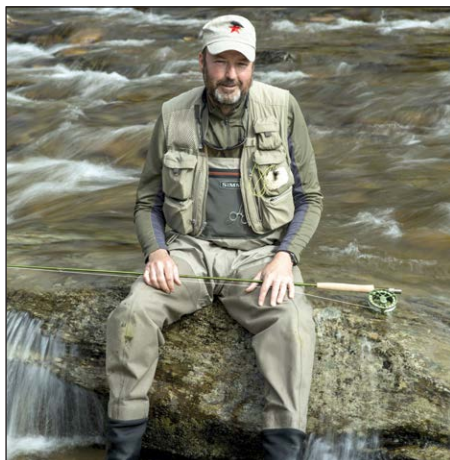
Thursday, February 22,
12 noon,
at the Kelvin Club
(in Melbourne Place,
off Russell Street)

had expanded to include work for most mainstream Australian magazines. With the launch of *Flylife* magazine in 1995 he was able to combine photography with his passion for fly fishing and has written many articles for *FlyLife* on fishing in Australia and New Zealand.

At our February meeting David will talk about fly fishing and photography, including some tips on how we might improve our own photography. His presentation will consist mainly of fly fishing photos, and be assured, we are in for a display of absolutely stunning images.

David will have copies of his new book – *Fly Fishing – Places to catch trout in Australia and New Zealand* – for sale, and members wanting to purchase a signed copy will be able to do so.

We would encourage all members to join us for what will undoubtedly be a great start to the year, but PLEASE make a Lunch booking by 5:00 pm on Tuesday, February 20, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



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Reminder - Getting to the Kelvin Club:



The Kelvin Club is located at 14 – 30 Melbourne Place. Melbourne Place runs off the east side of Russell Street between Little Collins Street and Bourke Street in the CBD.

President's Message

Christmas seems such a long time ago but I do hope that you and your families all had a great Christmas and that 2018 has started well for you.

I also hope that you have had the opportunity to get out and fish, which I unfortunately have not been able to do. I was invited to go fishing on a couple of occasions in December and January but was not able to get away from family and other commitments during the holiday season.

Those of you who were able to attend the December Christmas dinner would have really appreciated the presentation we had from Travis Dowling, the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Fisheries Authority. Not only is Travis a very good speaker, he is also a committed fisherman and I have no doubt in my mind that the trout in Victoria are in good hands with Travis and his team at Victorian Fisheries. Again, thank you Travis for being so generous with your time.

Let's take a look at 2018 and what's ahead for the VFFA. By the time you read this one trip will have already been completed and another, the annual trip to Tasmania based at Peter Hayes' Fly Fishing Lodge at Cressy, is about to start. In January a small group of keen anglers enjoyed the float trip on the Goulburn River at Thornton. I hear that this trip was very successful, and I would thank Alex Evans for his initiative in setting it up. The group had a great time on a very hot day and some good fish were caught. It would be nice to think that this event could become a fixture on our calendar in years to come.



Other trips coming up include the annual trip to the Big River from March 16-18, which is always a most enjoyable event, thanks to the generous hospitality of John Pilkington. I am certainly looking forward to this event; it's one that I try not to miss. Then of course in April we have the Donger weekend challenge at Bairnsdale with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers on April 14 and 15. Once again this is always a great weekend, and I urge as many members as possible to sign up for this event and help us retain the Donger trophy that we managed to win back last year for the first time in many many years.

Your Council is planning what I believe will be an interesting program of meetings, with a range of speakers and other events during the year. Our first speaker for the year will be David Anderson, who is making quite a

name for himself as a photographer, particularly photographing fly fishing and fly fishing destinations. He has recently published a new book and will have copies available for sale at our February luncheon meeting on February 22. I think we can be assured that this will be a very interesting presentation, particularly for those of us who are keen photographers and keen on portraying our own sport.

The March meeting will be an evening meeting on March 15, when our speaker will be Jon Clewlow, regular contributor to *FlyLife* magazine and part owner and guide at Millbrook Lakes fishery. I certainly look forward to hearing from Jon and hearing what is happening at Millbrook.

Council also has a small working group looking at developing a program for the winter months when the river season is

closed. The plan at the moment appears to be a number of casting-based events at the Red Tag pool in Fairfield Park. As soon as we have further details I'll make sure that we advise members so they can plan their winter casting activities.

Talking about events and trips and speakers, we are always keen to have members' suggestions and ideas for what they would like to do and who they would like to hear from at our meetings. If you have any thoughts and ideas on this then please let someone on Council know, and we will do our best to accommodate.

Well that's it for me this month.

Tight Lines



Nancy Tichborne Watercolour - the Wainuiomata River

The March Meeting with Jonathan Clewlow

Jonathan Clewlow writes a regular monthly column in *FlyLife* magazine that is often hilarious, invariably perceptive, and always interesting. His talk at our March meeting will undoubtedly be highly entertaining. He has provided the following note to introduce himself:

"Fly fishing is synonymous with challenges, attributes, health benefits and mateship, not to mention the beautiful places it takes you. It is so easy to sink into the sport.

Jon Clewlow, a guide and part owner of Millbrook Lakes, first started fly fishing in the womb. His failure to catch anything only spurred him on, and by the age of 3 he was representing Australia in the Junior World Fly Fishing Championships.

Variously described by his peers as flamboyant, neat, fastidiously clean and just a little testy, Jon is perhaps best known in fly fishing circles as the only person who wears a red fly vest and as a columnist and contributor to *FlyLife* magazine.

To say fly fishing and trout have been a big part of Jon's life is an understatement, but if he had thought about it a bit more in the early days may be wouldn't have let the genie out of the bottle?

Enjoy a fly fishing journey with Jon – riding the ups and downs along with the joys and obsessions and the insane fiscal strain. It all started with a small highland trout ..."



Jon with a fine Millbrook brown

Last December's Christmas Dinner with Travis Dowling

Some 55 members and guests attended our 2017 Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club where we enjoyed a fine three-course meal and were superbly entertained by guest speaker Travis Dowling. Travis was in excellent form. As Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Fisheries Authority he impressed us all with his energy and enthusiasm and profound knowledge of all aspects of our Victorian trout fishery. Here is a brief summary of his presentation.

I have attended a number of VFFA meetings in the past and absolutely love coming to these events and speaking with people who believe so strongly in trout fishing in Victoria. And we have a very good story to tell about our fishing in this state.



Our guest speaker Travis Dowling...

I think that the photo on the screen might be slightly controversial. The two trout I'm holding are not going back and they were caught on spinning gear. The person who took the photo was Anthony Forster, our Freshwater Fisheries Manager, and he and I were fishing the Goulburn just downstream from Alexandra. Now Anthony is a mad keen fisherman, and when we are walking up a river he likes to be first to get to the next run, and to

the run after that, too. He had got onto a couple of fish, so I walked past him and had a cast, and the larger fish in the photo came out, looked at the lure, and then ate it. I said to Anthony, "Just look at these fish," and then I didn't see him for the rest of the day. He went straight up the river past me, and when I came around a bend he would be off again. But we had a fantastic day together, and it was a Saturday so we weren't there on taxpayers' money.

It's great to have Neil Hyatt here with us tonight. Neil is our Fish Production Manager at the Snobs Creek Hatchery, and you are in very safe hands with Neil. He's been there for 14 years and is absolutely dedicated to the growth of that facility. It has changed a lot and we are now seeing some fantastic fish production there.



... with two fine Goulburn River trout

>>>

Let's talk briefly about growing fishing participation. 'Target One Million' is a plan to see one million people fishing here in Victoria by 2020. We believe, and the Victorian State Government believes, that it is important to bring a whole new generation through into fishing, because fishing has many physical and mental health benefits, as well as incredible economic benefit to regional areas.

So we are committed to getting more people fishing, and making this a good experience. That's why we are spending all this money - trying to make fishing a good experience with good habitat, good environments, lots of fish to catch, and anglers not fishing shoulder to shoulder. Suggestions on how we might grow this fishing participation include increased fish stocking, better riparian habitat, better access to rivers, and better environmental flows down particular rivers.

It's interesting that one of the topics raised earlier tonight was concern about the warm water recently flowing down the Goulburn. Years ago there would have been little response to this. Authorities would have said it's all about potable water for communities, hydroelectricity generation, and water for farm irrigation. Fishermen just didn't count. Fortunately those days have moved on, and people are now recognising that recreational uses of waterways are just as important as those other uses. What we are now seeing are water authorities and government agencies starting to address these recreational uses, because they know that politicians understand that recreational fishers want healthy habitats and they want those going fishing to be happy.

We recently amended our regulations relating to size and bag limits for particular waterways. It would be interesting to go around the room tonight and talk with you about your thoughts

on our regulations. What I want to impress upon you is that I appreciate that while I am in this role I am the custodian for a short time, and there will be others coming after me. I don't want anyone under the impression that we are suggesting that the way we do things today is the way they must always be done. That attitude doesn't give credit to the environment, or how people may want to manage their fisheries in the future.

Victoria has changed a lot in terms of how the state manages its trout and native species, and we need to continue that discussion. Should we have 'fly only waters', or 'blue-ribbon waters', and how much regulation is 'good regulation'. I suppose I'm a little different to some other bureaucrats in that I don't like a lot of regulation. I'm in favour of allowing people to get out there and fish uninhibited as much as possible, but then there are other voices saying, "Hang on, the fishing experience will be better if this water is managed for some particular purpose." Where should we end up with our trout in Victoria? Do we want to be like Tasmania or New Zealand? I don't know. I'm not sure.

There are anglers out there who want to put maggots in a cage and fish sections of the Goulburn. And that's okay. There are people who like to fish a river knowing that the fish they are catching are stocked fish that have just been released. I am quite open to all these discussions about the different ways we can fish for trout in Victoria, and we continue to push boundaries in regard to what we stock and where we stock.

A number of years ago we weren't stocking the lower Goulburn, and I remember coming into Fisheries and asking about that. People said, "No, we don't stock rivers, and we certainly don't stock the lower Goulburn. That's our policy." I asked, "Who can show me

that policy? Where is it actually written down?" Of course there never was a written policy.

Rather, particular people made that decision because they thought there would be insane pushback from environmental and green groups if trout were put into the lower Goulburn. But that turned out to be a fallacy. Those interested in the protection of our small natives recognised that the lower Goulburn from Molesworth up to the Pondage was a highly modified waterway. A lot of cold water was coming out of the dam at the wall, so it didn't matter that trout were being put in. So now we stock 10,000 fish a year in the lower Goulburn and we get an incredibly high return on those stocked fish. Much better than some of the returns we have had with stocked fish in our high upland rivers. But there are reasons for that.

So it's about pushing boundaries - stocking salmon or different types of trout, for example - whilst not destroying our wild trout fisheries or compromising good existing fisheries. It's about providing opportunities for people to do something different.

One of our great successes in recent years has been Lake Toolondo. I have fished there, and the brown trout there are truly incredible fish in brilliant condition with magnificent colours. I also discovered they are incredibly smart and hard to catch, so I had to go there with someone who was a really good trout fisher - much better than me.

Toolondo was one of those examples where some people were suggesting: "You've just got to let it go, because the water is just not there." But we said, "Hang on, we know how much water is in Rocklands Reservoir, and how much is needed for the towns of Horsham and Hamilton. So why can't we put 5 or 10 Gigalitres from Rocklands into

Toolondo?" This was a very controversial point at the time. So Government put some of the Rocklands water into Toolondo, and then it didn't rain for ages and people were saying, "Horsham is going to run out of water and you've got fish over there in Toolondo swimming around in Horsham's water."



A typical Toolondo brown

So it got a bit hairy. But then the Horsham community backed us. They said that while there were challenges, it was really important that they could relax and spend some time fishing. I remember speaking to the mayor of one of the communities, and he said the last thing they would do with the water they had was keep the cricket oval watered and keep water in the local swimming pool, because when it's all said and done people wanted to be able to relax and spend time enjoying their pastimes.

So Toolondo turned out to be a great success. We put the water in and kept the trout alive, and the browns there are now up to 10 lb. It's a beautiful spot, and if you set up your swag on the banks of the lake and watch as the sun comes up it's an incredible sight. And the fishing is fantastic.

We will continue to advocate and push to ensure that our fisheries are maintained, and we will keep trying things. And this is a really important point - we are >>>

only able to do this with the support of the recreational fishing community.

This is really important to us, because people get very nervous when bureaucrats make mistakes and the community goes nuts and says, "Why did you do that. It's such a waste." Then they remove our authorising environment, which is a fancy way of saying you can't do anything anymore. But what we found with fishers is that when we took a few chances and a few risks the support from fishers was fantastic. We stocked some Western Victorian lakes, such as Lake Bolac for example, that may go dry, and things do occasionally go south. And lots of letters came in, and nearly all said, "Well done for having a crack and trying something, and keeping those opportunities coming."

Does anyone here tonight ever fish for native species with a fly? A few I see. In some other forums I have spoken at people have said to me, "Why are you putting so many natives in when we really only want more trout", or "You guys are against trout," etc. I talked about this at the recent trout conference, and what is really fantastic is the acceptance across the fishing community that trout are a really good sports fish, but natives are great fish too, and you can fish for both.

Lake Eildon is a classic example of this. There was a bit of nervousness at Fisheries when Eildon was stocked with golden perch and Murray cod. Was the trout community going to say, "Hang on, what are you doing to our trout fishery?" But that didn't eventuate.

We are seeing a real acceptance and support for all fishing, and at a political level politicians don't differentiate between types of fishing. When they hear a united voice from fishers they say it's worth investing in fishing. The politicians from all sides are now saying it is worth

investing in fishing because the fishers seem happy and united about what they want.

Native fish in Victoria have seen a resurgence since the 1970s and 1980s, mainly because the carp have been knocked around big time. Carp aren't nearly as plentiful now as they were in the Campaspe, Loddon, Goulburn and other rivers where they were, and the natives are making a big recovery. There's been a lot of discussion about this, and some of the science suggests that when an invasive species hits a virgin area it absolutely smashes it for a couple of decades. It comes in and numbers go through the roof for a couple of decades, but then the populations decrease to more manageable levels. So carp and redfin will be here to stay, but it looks like our natural environment is starting to adjust to the presence of carp, and that's a good thing because they were starting to push up into some of the upland waters.

So we've seen this resurgence in our natives, and we've also seen different fishing methods for them. I was on the Goulburn River on Sunday up near Murchison, and people there were fishing in very dirty water trying to catch natives on flies, which was fantastic. We are seeing people starting to fish for natives now not with set lines and bardi grubs and yabbies, but with surface lures and hopefully with flies too going forward.

We stocked a million cod into Lake Eildon a number of years ago as well as stocking trout. During the winter months the trout fishing is good, but as soon as summer arrives the water warms up and the trout tend to go deep. But then the redfin and the yellowbelly come on and it's a whole different fishery. It's now a 12 month fishery. It continues to be an excellent winter fishery for trout, and now has become an excellent summer fishery for natives.

Trout cod are also making a comeback across a number of our rivers, and they are a sensational fish to catch. If you have just one trout cod in a hole then you can guarantee that it will take your lure or your fly because they are so aggressive. They have made a significant recovery in the Goulburn, in the Ovens, and in parts of the Murray. They are still limited in terms of their natural range from where they were years ago, but as trout fishers you might well see trout cod appearing in some of your upland rivers, and I think that's exciting. You might hook into a one pound rainbow or a two pound brown, and then you'll get smacked by a six pound trout cod. And that might well be a lovely evening out. They are an incredibly aggressive fish.



Trout cod are a fine fish

I've got a picture here of a Macquarie perch. Victorian rivers, and particularly the Goulburn, used to be filthy with them. However some literature suggests that after the fires and drought of 1920 and 1921 parts of the Goulburn had a significant black-water event, with lots of ash in the water. As a consequence the Macquarie perch were wiped out. After that event had passed redfin and other species started coming in, and the Macquaries never really made a comeback.

We've got a real challenge in trying to get the Macquarie perch back, as they and trout cod will live with trout in cold upland waters. When I was young I used to fish in Strathbogie a lot, and up around Strathbogie there were lots of Macquarie perch, trout cod, brown trout and river blackfish, so it was an amazing fishery. Unfortunately someone translocated some redfin into the area, and they really smacked into the blackfish and the Macquarie perch. We are hoping that we can get Macquarie perch back into a lot of these cold waters, and they will provide another fantastic fishing option.

I have talked about the importance of having a unified front. The support from the Victorian government for trout fishing is incredibly strong, and that's a lot to do with how trout fishers have presented themselves. You as a group, and more broadly through the trout conference and angling clubs, have been really proactive and supportive, and almost every week I'm seeing something on social media about trout fishers doing riparian habitat restoration by planting trees on riverbanks and trying to build good environments for trout.

Trout are a very important part of our recreational fishing here in Victoria, and the investment we are making at Snob's Creek is continuing to produce quality trout in larger numbers. This year we stocked a million trout for the first time ever in Victoria. New South Wales stocks a lot more trout than we do, but we stock a size that avoids trout being predated by redfin and carp. So we stock trout at that 50 – 100 gram size, whereas New South Wales stocks a lot of fry. We do that too in waters that don't have predators, but generally we stock larger fish and we stock them across a range of waterways.

Where are these fish stocked? They are stocked in waters all across Victoria. We are stocking them in places where we have never stocked them before, >>>

and we are always on the lookout for new opportunities. We stock fish in nearly 200 family friendly fishing lakes across the state every school holidays to get kids into fishing.

Our trout stocking has been incredibly well supported. Places like Wendouree are now booming with the trout fishery there, and a number of other trout fisheries in the western district are going well too. We would love our upland trout rivers to be as good as Tasmania or New Zealand, and we will continue to work at that. It might require regulation change or other change.

The issue of stocking those upland waters is hard. I went to a fly fishing club a while ago and members there asked me why we don't put trout in the rivers around Omeo. I replied that when we put trout in these waters they just disappear. The stocked trout are just not supported there, perhaps because of climatic conditions or low water levels or wrong temperatures. Their response was, "But you said that last time you were here", and I replied, "Well it hasn't changed. The water is still low and it's still too warm. But we remain open to ideas and having a go, and the option is always open to do further high country stocking with the support of trout fishers."

I love those sorts of conversations at angling clubs. We're spending a lot of money on trying to build trout fisheries, and we are spending money on research. We are tagging fish, and stocking fish, and I think that at the end of the day some of the habitat work now being done will be part of the key.

If you go back to 2007 we were stocking about 600,000 - 700,000 fish per year, but next year this number will be up around 5 million, and that's not compromising on quality or on size. It's putting more fish in more waterways and getting a great return for recreational fishers.

I want to talk now about some of the controversies over recent years in relation to trout. Willow tree removal, for example. I've probably received a hundred letters on that subject, and I've caught a lot of good fish under willows. Parks sometimes restricts access to roads and tracks, and there have been lots of letters about that. "Those horrible greenies and those environmental departments are trying to keep us out because they don't like us fishers. And blackberries are proliferating where we want to go fishing." Now I have to say that some of the best fish I have caught, particularly in the upper Goulburn, was where I floated down in just a pair of board shorts into a hole where nobody could fish from the bank because there were blackberries on both sides. And there were some very good fish in there.

The reason why I have mentioned these things is because a lot of the battles of the past, with trout fishers versus environmental agencies, or catchment management authorities, or Parks Victoria, or the Department of Environment, Land and Planning, seem to have gone. We all now seem to be on board with trout fishing and are working cooperatively with groups like the Australian Trout Foundation and other angling clubs to build assets and create better opportunities for fishing.

One of the challenges ahead will be using the voice of fishers to work with farmers in how we manage our rivers. Fishers should support Victorian farmers, as farmers do a fantastic job, but I think there's a conversation here that must be had. Understandably some farmers may shut up shop when environmental groups start telling them how to run their business. But when fishers say to farmers, how can we work together, or what do you need from us to help look after our rivers, then this is a really important conversation we need to have with the

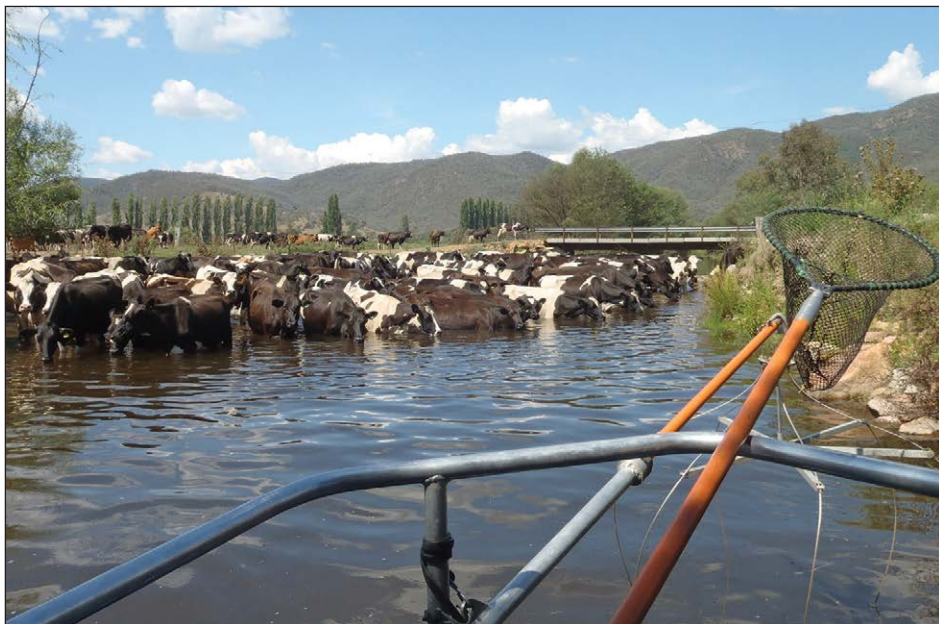
Victorian Farmers' Federation and other farmer groups.

I fish parts of the Goulburn River, and we're doing quite a lot in the close season replanting and protecting the runs when trout are spawning. Having cattle in the rivers can be very damaging, so what can we do with farmers to protect the riverbanks and stop the spawning runs from being impacted. This is a good time to have this conversation. People will be very receptive, and there's money that can be used because there is a lot of money being provided by the government. It's a matter of working together, and I think that fishers having that conversation with farmers will be well received.

Fishing is big business in Victoria. It is worth \$2.3 billion to the Victorian economy, and involves 16,000 jobs and 840,000 recreational fishers. Victorian fishing is a big investment.

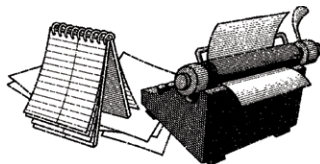
Officially, the Victorian Government is committed to delivering its \$46 million Target One Million plan for recreational fishing to get more people fishing more often, and increase participation to one million anglers by 2020.

The Target One Million program will encourage recreational fishing in Victoria, get families outdoors fishing together, boost local economies and create jobs. A wide range of projects are being delivered to achieve these goals, including banning commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay, saving Lake Toolondo, establishing a marine stocking program, opening trout cod fisheries at Beechworth, stocking barramundi into Hazelwood Pondage, removing boating restrictions at Blue Rock Lake, providing \$2,000 grants to nearly 200 fishing clubs, increasing stocking to five million fish per year, banning netting at Gippsland Lakes' river mouths, and most importantly, establishing Fisheries Victoria as a Statutory Authority.



The cows were enjoying their swim – whilst wrecking the river

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Wherever the trout are, it's beautiful." (Thomas Masaryck)

"I have fished through fishless days that I remember happily without regret."
(Roderick Haig-Brown)

"All of us search for that perfect trout stream. Those who find it treasure it the rest of their lives. Those who don't keep on searching." (Jimmy D. Moore)

"The angler forgets most of the fish he catches, but he does not forget the streams and lakes in which they are caught." (Charles K. Fox)

Dual citizenship became the flavour of the month last year, with New Zealand connections particularly popular. I was wondering what my chances were, so pulled out the history of the Webb clan (compiled some years ago by an obsessive and enthusiastic aunt), examined my ancestry carefully, and found to my great disappointment there wasn't a whiff of a Kiwi connection anywhere. So perhaps I could just apply for New Zealand citizenship. I looked up the criteria: five years of residency in New Zealand required, and I needed to be of good character. Oh dear - failed on both counts.

Why this sudden interest in New Zealand citizenship? Well, I love visiting the place, and I especially love fishing for their trout. The scenery is stunning, the rivers are gorgeous, and the fish are magnificent. My concern is that if the proposals advocated in a recent copy of their *Field & Game* magazine (issue 98) are taken seriously, my New Zealand fishing aspirations are in dire straits.

According to the article, written by Nick King and headed *'Managing the Masses – Protecting Our Angling Experience'*, locals are fed up with arriving at a favourite fishing spot and finding it occupied by

'non-resident' (i.e. tourist) fishers, or worse still, tourists with a guide attached. Now I can appreciate their frustration. If I headed to the little Steavenson River, one of my favourite close to home haunts, and found cars everywhere and the river occupied by hordes of anglers from overseas, I'd probably feel a bit peeved. But the difference here is the trout in the Steavenson are best measured in centimetres while those in New Zealand are measured in kilos – big kilos at that.

New Zealand undoubtedly has some of the best trout fishing in the world, so locals can hardly be surprised if people from all over are keen to visit. In the January 2018 issue of the *UK Trout Fisherman* magazine, Paul Procter, a prolific writer in UK magazines and a highly regarded guide who travels the world for his fishing, described New Zealand as his 'spiritual home', because 'to a huge degree you've got a right to roam and given a vast, lightly-populated country, you really can get lost in the wilds.' Yes indeed, this love of New Zealand trout fishing is world-wide.

And there are huge financial benefits flowing from this popularity. Tourists visiting New Zealand in 2017 contributed NZ\$12.9 billion directly to the economy,

with a further \$9.8 billion contributed through tourism flow-on effects. Tourism is New Zealand's second biggest export industry, trailing the export of dairy products but closing the gap.

Of course only a small percentage of New Zealand visitors are there specifically for the fishing, with one source suggesting that about 100,000 visitors a year go there to chase trout. But add the cost of car hire and fuel, accommodation, food and beverages, fishing licenses and the odd fly line or flies or some such, and the end result is often several thousand dollars added to the New Zealand bottom line by each 'non-resident' angler for a couple of weeks' fishing. Lots of overseas anglers will also grab the services of a guide to ensure their trip is successful, and this ups the ante. Try the Owen River Lodge - their summer rates for a week's accommodation and guided fishing is nearly \$8,000. So overseas anglers certainly pay their way.

What, then, does Nick King in his *Field & Game* article want? He seems fascinated with a couple of fisheries in Canada, where locals complained that 'crowding, disproportionate numbers of non-resident anglers or guided anglers, illegal guiding, and poor angler etiquette lead to a degraded quality of angling experience.' So restrictions were placed on visiting anglers to address these complaints, with these including non-resident anglers not being allowed to fish on weekends, river-specific maximum day limits for non-resident anglers, non-residents required to use a guide, guide-free areas where only residents can fish, catch and release only, ballots of non-resident anglers to limit access to classified waters, and licence and usage fees for non-residents raised to give better returns for management (i.e. visitors required to pay heaps more to fish).

Applying this to the New Zealand situation, Nick King bemoans the fact that 'presently it is New Zealanders who are vanishing from our prime waters, displaced by the bright and eager faces from overseas and the continual increase in commercial guiding presence. This is the exact opposite result we should be aiming for ...'. He then outlines a number of corrective proposals, including these:

New Zealand rivers and lakes ought to be categorised as either 'classified' or 'open' waters, (where classified waters are the good ones). New Zealand residents can then fish any and all of these, but non-residents can only fish 'open' waters on their own, and must hire a guide to fish classified waters.

Non-residents who wish to have the same rights as resident anglers (i.e. be allowed to fish the better quality classified waters without a guide) may be able to purchase a 'premium three-month non-resident licence' at a suggested cost of \$1,500. If this proves to be an overly popular non-resident option, then the price might need to be raised.

Finally, 'classified waters should have capped guide numbers and guide days based on historic usage.'

It all sounds rather ominous, but of course at this stage is merely huffing and puffing in a magazine and way short of becoming official policy. So hopefully I'll manage a few more trips before the guillotine drops.

Mind you, I must add that *Fish and Game* magazine repeatedly runs two persistent laments. The first is the dreadful problem of overseas anglers fishing their rivers (as per Nick King's article), and the second is the decline in the quality of their fishing, particularly in the South Island,

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because of problems being caused by the escalation in dairy farming.

In this same issue of *Fish and Game* there is an article by a Brian Turner describing the decline in South Island trout rivers. He says that in September last year the New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers released a list of 70 rivers in the South Island that are 'unfishable or have declined because of intensive farming and large-scale irrigation.' This reflects the recent comment of a VFFA member who has lived in the South Island for the

past six or seven years, and who tells us: "The fishing here is still very good, but every year it's just that little bit worse."

So there it is. And with the big improvement in recent times in our local fishing in Southern NSW, Tasmania, and our own state of Victoria, perhaps we might just as well stay at home. Then our dollars will support our local fisheries, and this mightn't be such a bad thing.

Tight lines,

Lyndon Webb



Vale - Rob Hennessy

Dennis Carter recently passed on the sad news that Rob Hennessy had died in early January. Rob was a VFFA member for some years. He was born in Washington, USA, on September 2, 1943, and died in Wantirna, Victoria, on January 3, 2018.

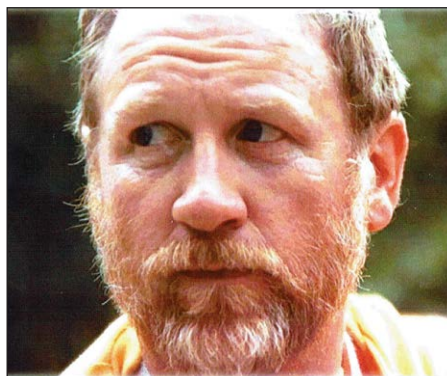
Friends wrote that he died from a recurring cancer and was stoic and philosophical about it, accepting his fate with a wistful smile and great courage.

Dennis wrote the following tribute to his friend:

Rob, as I remember, was a VFFA member for a while. He was a good friend.

We had some enjoyable and successful angling trips together (sometimes in the company of Marty Rogers and Rob Fraser), travelling to the Oberon area where we fished the Native Dog Creek, Brisbane Valley Creek, Solitary Creek, and the Fish River early in the day.

Then with a pie or two at Bud's Pub at Tarana, washed down with Toohey's Old for lunch, we would snooze on the couch grass under a tree outside, and then in the evenings fish to beetle feeders in Oberon Dam. This was in the mid 1980s.



Flies? Brown nymphs, emergers or Twilight Beauties if there was a mayfly hatch, Green Nymph (willow grub feeders), small 'Cochy', midge patterns, a Hair Winged Coachman or a Royal Wulff for beetle feeders. The fish were ferocious risers, and later we would fish Wigram's Robin until we agreed it was time for a drink or two and a feed. If this sounds a bit clinical, it wasn't. These were great days. My, how time passes.

Rob was a dear friend, a keen and proficient angler, and a fine man. Vale Rob.

Dennis

This Month's Yarn ...

(... from February 1960)

"You know," said Alf, giving the barmaid a nod to indicate McTaggart needed another refill, "It's interesting just how few of our Australian native birds are edible. Aside from ducks, we don't eat too many at all."

"Yes, I agree," said McTaggart, feeling replenished now that his glass was.

"But I did spend some time a number of years ago investigating cormorants as a possible delicacy, and eventually settled on the following recipe as the most efficacious. It's best carried out in a camp fire, or failing that then on an old-style backyard barbecue."

McTaggart continued: "You need to get hold of two or even three cormorants, and for each bird you will need half a gallon of oil – olive oil, maize oil, peanut oil, viscostatic, or even kerosene, along with two pounds of butter, lard, prime beef dripping, or mutton fat. If any of these last items are difficult to obtain, then whale blubber can also be used, with that of a young female blue whale preferred."

"Now you take the cormorants and carefully remove all internal apparatus,

including undigested trout, jewellery, watch bands, etc, and then securely tie their necks. Then use the thumb of your free hand to squeeze the butter, lard, prime beef dripping, or mutton fat up their rear ends, packing their recently vacated interiors tightly and keeping it all in position using a strip of good quality Scotch or gaffer tape."

"Then you need to soak the cormorants in one or more of those previously mentioned oils, making sure that the feathers, which you didn't remove, are thoroughly saturated. Wrap the birds in Thursday's Age with the Green Guide removed, and place each of the prepared cormorants underneath the frying pan and any other utensils you have previously placed the steak, sausages, calamari, rissoles, kebabs, pulled pork, vegetables, and anything else you planned to eat. Then you need to ignite the cormorants (a cup or two of Mobil 95 octane helps to get them going), and immediately retreat to a safe distance."

McTaggart concluded, "When the cormorants are all entirely consumed and the smoke has cleared I usually found the meal was ready to serve."

Web Fish

Cast regularly at vffa.org.au

About the VFFA web site:

The VFFA web site has a comprehensive coverage of VFFA events, meetings, trips, ...updated monthly making it easy to track dates and times.

Features of VFFA web site:

- Monthly Newsletter delivered to members in full colour.
- Live access to more than five years of past Newsletters
- Newsletter in PDF format for easy reading on computers / iPads / tablets & smart phones
- Newsletter in PDF format can be read & saved on iPad / tablets like eBooks
- Calendar of all activities can sync with all you digital device calendars
- Gallery of events - Photos & Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand

Upcoming Event - the Big River Weekend:

This year's Big River trip is scheduled for the weekend Friday March 16 to Sunday March 18. John Pilkington tells us that there are still a few vacancies.

A Notice of Event form (NOE) for this weekend is included in this newsletter. If you haven't attended one of these weekends yet then this is definitely one for the Bucket List. 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 warm and comfortable, the food is delectable, and the cost is minimal (\$50).



Hughie helping with the cooking

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



The renowned Saturday night dinner under the stars

Notice of Major Event (NOE) for Big River, March, 2018

Notice of Major Event (NOE) for Big River, March, 2018

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 16 to Sunday March 18, 2018. 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: \$50 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 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

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Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to John Pilkington by March 1.

Date of issue of this NOE: January 10, 2017 (mandatory for quoting in ERF)

Event Registration closing date: March 6, 2018

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]



Special Event for the Ladies

... a weekend of Casting Tuition for all levels of ability, including beginners.

This event is the brainchild of Peter Hayes and Judith Oliver, and its purpose is to introduce women to fly fishing with some structured tutoring but without any pressure.

There will be classroom tutorials and casting practise around the casting pond. This will be the fourth year of this event, which is growing in popularity each year. Peter stocks the casting pond with rainbow trout so the ladies can have lots of fun honing their skills.

Since the original event one participant has sat her Certified Casting Instructor assessment, and another lady is about to sit her CCI assessment.

The weekend is opened on the Friday night by Peter Hayes, and participants will be addressed by a guest speaker on the Saturday evening.

The event is sponsored by The Essential Flyfisher store in Launceston (Mike and Jules Stevens, and Jock). The main prize is a rod and reel presented by Jules Stevens, and there are several other prizes to be given away.

The weekend is catered for by the famous Jen Guerre.

Date: Friday April 20 to Sunday afternoon April 22, 2018.

Hosted in Tasmania at Hayes on Brumby's

Launceston Airport pick up / drop off available

Web page to visit:

Peter Hayes www.flyfishtasmania.com Look under Courses and you will see GGFF. Also visit GGFF Facebook page.

Address of the Location:

Hayes on Brumby's, 1696 Cressy Road, Cressy, Tasmania 7302

Contact: For any information please contact VFFA member Judith Oliver IFF CCI

Email: juditholi@bigpond.com



VFFA Guided Drift Boat Trip on the Goulburn River

... report by Alex Evans

A small but dedicated party of VFFA members (over half of whom are also members of the Red Tag Fly Fishers' Club) braved ferocious heatwave conditions to enjoy a day of guided drift boat fishing with the team from the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre in Thornton on the weekend of January 19 - 21.

The Goulburn was running at a good height of 4,000 megalitres/day and GVFFC's guides were reporting another season of consistent catches.



Steven Wallace with his superb 4 lb rainbow

When we met for dinner at the Alexandra Hotel on the Friday evening, there was still some uncertainty about our start time the following day, due to the exceptional heat, which had reached 45°C in Melbourne earlier in the day. Later starts

on the river had proved more productive in preceding days.

An early departure was decided on (with high temperatures again forecast) and our first boat, comprising Wayne Sanderson and Janie Joseph (from the Red Tag Fly Fishers and a friend of VFFA members), hit the river around 7:30am. Large cicada and hopper patterns were the order of the day, including GVFFC's secret weapon 'The Serbian Ant'. The team encountered plenty of action during their six hours on the water, including some unexplained short taking. A mixture of brown and rainbow trout to two pounds were brought to the boat, and all were returned.

A second boat comprising Tony Ryan and Steve Wallace departed about an hour later and also experienced an exciting drift, with around a dozen fish hooked and returned. Steve took the fish of the day with a magnificent rainbow trout weighing in at 4 lb.



A brook trout from the Rubicon River

Marianne Wallace was sadly unable to participate in a drift while recuperating from a recent foot operation. Alex >>>

Evans fished a mid-river section of the Rubicon, returning half a dozen fish to a little over one pound on dry flies, including a beautifully-marked brook trout – an escapee from the nearby fish farm. GVFFC guides had reported Goulburn fish moving into the Rubicon and Alex was broken off by a larger fish during this expedition.



Tony Ryan looks very pleased with this one

The team regrouped at GVFFC's accommodation in Thornton to escape the soaring heat, which hit 40 degrees mid-afternoon, and enjoy TV coverage of the Australian Open, along with some cooling refreshments.

GVFFC kindly organised a fine BBQ dinner that evening in the vaulted hall

of the centre (which acts as the shop) and we enjoyed an interesting overview of local fishing and water management issues provided by GVFFC's David Pickering, as well as other wide-ranging conversations which continued into the night.

Drift boat fishing offered by GVFFC provides a unique way to experience the Goulburn using specialist drift boats manufactured in the USA. Two comfortable swivel chairs are situated at either end of the boat, with the oarsmen placed in between. Due to the speed of the Goulburn's summer flow, the oarsman's job is to navigate between the banks as well as hold the boat over key lies before it is carried downstream by the strength of the current.

Many of the party had not fished the Goulburn from a boat previously, and all reported their enjoyment of the day and how it took them into parts of the river that would otherwise be inaccessible to bankside fishermen. The boats each covered around 12-15 kilometres of water during their drifts – a wonderful way to discover the natural beauty of this majestic river.

About half of the party intended to fish locally on Sunday before returning home. Everyone who participated in the trip expressed a keenness to reorganise in the future, as well as determine if there was another time of the year that would suit a greater number of VFFA members.

The Team: Marianne & Steve Wallace, Janie Joseph, Wayne Sanderson, Tony Ryan and Alex Evans.



A Cod and a Trout

... by Philip Weigall. Philip, a long-standing VFFA member, is also one of our most celebrated fly fishing writers and guides. He edits the very popular *FlyStream* magazine, a high quality digital magazine found at <https://flystream.com/magazine/>

"I'll show you how it's done!" I said to Mark, more than a little ironically. My brother and I had just parked the car and walked down to the lower Indi River for some cod fishing, having made the decision after lunch to temporarily leave some perfectly good trout action on the nearby Swampy Plain River. The third member of our party, Nick, had politely declined to join us and was sticking with the trout. I could tell that Mark had also been tempted to stay with the fishing he's grown up with, rather than risk a few hours on a species that still baffles the experts, let alone a couple of greenfish greenhorns like us.



Don't show Harro! I bit of high-sticking in all the excitement

That's the first thing a hardened troutie chasing Murray cod must accept – almost all your accumulated fly fishing wisdom up to this point is of little use.

When it comes to casting, fly selection, reading the water, picking the conditions, understanding fish behaviour, gear, locations... in fact just about anything, you're a beginner again. To make matters worse, there isn't the same authoritative advice available to fall back on as there is for trout. People have been fly fishing for trout for centuries, and right across the world. The best minds globally mightn't have quite come up with a solution to every trout-on-fly situation you can imagine, but they're not far off.

With cod, a few brilliant anglers over recent decades have been working at catching them on fly and they've set the rest of us up with a decent head start. However, you can tell that even the experts are still bamboozled more than occasionally. Their writings always include a line to the effect that, it all looked good and we fished well, but we caught nothing. Followed by something like, "Oh well, that's cod for you." The message for the rest of us is, you may or may not be doing everything correctly, but because these are Murray cod, you'll never know. A disconcerting thought.

So as I stood beside the Indi, I wasn't surveying it with complete authority – hence my tongue-in-cheek comment to Mark. Still, I have a bit more cod-on-fly experience than he does, and I set about demonstrating how I thought we should fish. I had a hand-sized wet fly (name unknown) tied to 5 feet of 30lb tippet, tied to a sink tip line on an 8 weight rod. The pool just downstream looked like a good place to start: it was one of those classic, almost circular 'holes'. You know, the sort the farmer directs you to if you make a good impression. You nod appreciatively, too polite to point out that the dark, nearly

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flowless depths are the last place you'd choose to fly fish for trout.

Except Mark and I weren't fishing for trout, so the less flow and the more depth, the better. Plus, a 10 metre arc of willows and snags on the far side created a nice defined feature where it was likely any cod present would be holding.

I cast (flung?) the fly as far into the shadows as I dared and let it sink. I say 'dared', because cod fishers are confronted by the frequent need to put the fly in a cod's snag-surrounded face to get a take, versus not losing expensive flies. I then began a slow strip-stop-strip retrieve, trying to visualise the starling-sized artificial pulsing enticingly 2 metres down. Cod can break the rules as often as any trout; however, a common theme, often expounded by the experts, is that in daylight at least, cod need to be pestered into eating. Old timers talk about bumping a likely snag with their boat to 'Wake the buggers up!' Not exactly the trout fishing approach.

My fly made it back unscathed, so I told Mark (who was already looking a bit bored) that I mightn't have put it far enough into the mess. Gritting my teeth, I used the next cast to literally bounce the fly off a shaded log, which thankfully, it didn't stick to. I counted the fly down again and began the painstaking retrieve. Halfway back came the wrenching hit – that addictive cod moment when you don't know whether you've hooked a 5 pounder or a 50 pounder. I tried to look as if I was expecting the take, but being second cast of the session, I suspect I failed to hide my astonishment. Anyway, Mark was suddenly motivated and barely hung around to take a couple of quick snaps of the fish before marching upriver to the next likely spot.

The pool Mark had headed to upstream was the sort I have a love/hate relationship with. It was about 200 metres long, with almost the entire far bank lined with good cod cover. On the one hand, it was all great cod habitat, but as opposed

to the confined hotspot where I'd recently caught my fish, the cod could have been anywhere. With cod being fish which might require three or four presentations – each landing less than a foot from them – before eating, there was a lot of work to do.

It was then that a trout started rising. Not occasionally, but flat out, swaying back and forth in the bubble-line. Mark dismissed it, working his way through the half-drowned logs and overhanging willow branches opposite; almost angrily dragging his great big fly right through the rises.

Incredibly, after Mark had moved on, the trout – which I could now polaroid as a 14-inch rainbow – was still rising. I moved past it too, trying to ignore it. But every time my cod fly ended up downstream (which due to the current, happened a lot) I found myself looking at the trout rising merrily below.



The Indi trout that wouldn't stop rising

In the end, I gave in. Though I'd left all my trout gear behind to avoid such distractions, I found a Red Spinner on my vest patch, and a spool of 6 pound tippet in my pocket. With the tippet tied straight to the 30lb line, which was attached to an aggressively-tapered 8 weight RIO Outbound intermediate, never has a dainty Red Spinner been presented on a more inappropriate outfit. (I could almost hear the collective weeping of friends like Nick Taransky, Peter Hayes and Christopher Bassano.)

Anyway, I reasoned that if I crashed this unhappy marriage of tackle too close to the trout, I'd spook it. Yet when I tried landing

it well upstream and drifting it down, the sinking line dragged the Red Spinner under before it could reach the rises. It took several attempts before I finally managed to land the dry exactly the right distance above the rainbow: the fish kept rising after the noisy touchdown upstream, and the fly managed to stay afloat just long enough to reach it. The trout drifted a foot to its right and sipped the spinner down as if I was fishing 3 weight bamboo.

As I beached the rainbow, I yelled out "Got 'im!" to Mark and punched the air. He glanced over his shoulder, grunted something, and went back to focussing on the area his fly was in, leaning forward slightly like a giant heron.

We never did catch another cod that afternoon, although I had one appear at my feet as I was wading in water up to my chest. It seemed to open its mouth to eat my fly, though I felt nothing. Mark had another cod chase his fly along a log before the current snatched it away. My limited cod experience suggests that, unlike trout, they either eat a fly or ignore it completely, so I wondered if the barometer or something wasn't quite right. Then later, on our way back up the road, a farmer mate stopped his ute and showed us a photo on his phone of a cod the size of a toddler that a lure fisher had just caught, so the conditions can't have been too 'off'.

Oh, and I should say that I saw two more trout rising beautifully on the Indi that afternoon, but rightly or wrongly, I ignored them and kept cod fishing.



That wasn't so hard!



A Letter to the Editor - from Josh Bradshaw

Many of us would remember Josh - he is a Tassie fishing guide who spoke at our July meeting in 2015. He recently emailed me the following report on his fishing this year in Tasmania, admittedly after some nudging from your editor.

Greetings Lyndon,

Please forgive my tardiness in replying to your request for an update on Tassie fishing conditions over the past months. Unfortunately other commitments have resulted in me neglecting my correspondence duties. Please see this extended note as a means of addressing

this with you and the members of the VFFA.

Firstly, can I say what a time it is to be fishing in Tasmania! While I'll can't claim to having been around during the halcyon days such as the Shannon Rise, the flooding of Lake Pedder, or the Macquarie as Scholes wrote about, the Tasmanian fishery now seems to be producing >>>

better fishing than it has in a number of seasons.

Now, whether this be due to better management, rainfall, hydro flows or just plain good luck is not for me to say, but the result at the end of the day at each boat ramp or trail head I visit is the same - happy anglers with stories of good fishing and fun days, the likes of which some of the younger generation haven't seen in Tassie since they started wetting a line.

And here's the thing - is a bloke coming off Penstock at the moment who's just had a cracking day fishing to dun feeders, caught half a dozen, got broken off by a few lifters and passed up a couple of sprats, having any less fun than someone fishing the same place 50 years ago. I don't think so.



Josh with a magnificent Macquarie River brown

In fact, under the circumstances, and given the way Fisheries is managing Penstock and many other inland waters, I suspect anglers this year are having heaps more fun than they otherwise might have been.

Here's a few examples. At the moment you can go to Lake Crescent and, with a little bit of patience, catch a trout that some years ago would have ended up mounted on a bar room wall. You can go to Woods Lake and consistently catch fish in the weight class that we typically associate with New Zealand. You can fish the west coast rivers for big sea runners and, if you dare and know the spots, you can fish the hydro tail racers for fish in the 20lb class.

Closer to town you can take the kids, the wife, and the dog to waters that

consistently produce fun fishing, and, occasionally, a massive (released) Atlantic Salmon. Is it for me? No, but to see and hear stories from friends and family who are new to freshwater fishing having had a great day out on these waters means we are sowing the seeds of the next generation young anglers of the future. They will preserve the wild fishery that we so love and enjoy. I take my hat off to the IFS for pursuing this model - increasing licence sales and using the revenue to undertake upgrades of facilities in so many areas.



An average brown from the wonderful Lake Crescent

For those who like it a bit more subtle, the red spinner hatches this year rival those of the past that we've only heard about. Yes, the fish might be a bit smaller and they might be part of a fishery that is now 'managed', but a day out on the water to catch only a brace of these fussy little buggers results in a smile back at home that stands the test of time regardless.

As I write this at Great Lake, we have just had a weekend with 50 cm snow dumped, and this was preceded by nearly two weeks of unseasonal hot weather. There are beetles in the air during the warmer days, midge around my porch light at night, and a smile on my face that I hope records the season ahead.

Hoping to see you and other members in the New Year, and until then - tight lines.

Josh



The Chocolate Duns of Wendouree

... by Mick Hall. Mick is one of our best-known fly tiers and magazine contributors on the fly tying issues.”



Back in 2009 Lake Wendouree at Ballarat was bone dry; the big drought had seriously taken its toll on this once great Western district lake. Finally the rains came and the lake filled, and in 2011 it again reached its full capacity. Then the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society and Fisheries Victoria stocked the lake with both brown and rainbow trout. As with any reborn water, the fish thrived, feeding on whatever was around and slowly nature rebounded. Aquatic food life such as snails, midge, baitfish, dragon fly larva, damsel flies and caddis all came back big time.

To some extent everyone was happy, but the talk amongst the fly flickers was, “Where are the duns?” None were seen for a couple of years, but then slowly the odd one started to emerge and the numbers grew.

The discussion at the Ballarat Fly Fishers’ Club during our Friday night happy hour was whether the duns would come back to what they were before the drought, when duns came off in good numbers from around 10am to 3pm. It was called “gentlemen’s hours” and big browns would be seen sipping away at those hapless little critters. The species was *Atalophlebia australis*, or the Lambda Dun as originally named. Today most would know it as a March Brown.

Jim Bambridge suggested that duns that emerge early in the season are normally larger than those that appear around March. This is not an uncommon occurrence. It happened with mayflies that emerged in my old haunt along the banks of the Goulburn, and I have read that it also happens on the rivers in America. All interesting stuff.

But the big news is that the duns are back. They started to show in the latter half of October, and are coming off in big numbers if conditions are right. The hatch starts around midday, if not a little earlier, and peaks around 2pm. What is needed for a top dun hatch is a dull, overcast day with a gentle breeze. These bugs do not have eyelids and are sensitive to harsh sunlight, so that’s why they prefer overcast weather. How often do we get these days? The simple answer is not enough, but we live in hope.

Finding the duns is another problem. It’s a big lake and they don’t come off all over at the same time, so you need to watch for the seagulls that can be seen swooping and picking up newly emerged duns as if it was their last feed. Sometimes you will see as many as fifty seagulls swarming over an area the size of a football ground, and you don’t have to be too experienced to realise what they are up to.

A call from Robert Haines back in October alerted me to a couple of bits of information that were good news. First, the duns were coming off big time, and secondly there were two types - a smaller one and another that was larger and darker.

Well I couldn’t get out of the house quick enough; loaded with fishing rod, flies,

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camera and all the other stuff needed to make a day of it.

Robert was right - there were indeed two different duns of the same species, with one lighter in colour and smaller than the other.

A. australis - the light version I named for simplicity "Milk Chocolate" because of its light mottled brown tonings and stumpy features. Hook Size 14.



Mick's photo of the lighter coloured dun

The photo here shows the darker version of the two duns. The colouration is closer to the common version found all over Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the lower regions of New South Wales. However the wings are a little narrower than the "Milk Chocolate", the body is skinnier and overall this "Dark Chocolate" version is a hook size larger, being a good size 12.



The darker coloured dun

What is interesting is that like all animals, there are variances in size, shape and colour. Ever since moving to Ballarat I have been waiting for the chance to get some pics of the local duns to compare with what I have found and photographed elsewhere.

What I discovered was that the duns at Wendouree had local colour and size variations of what seem to be the same species I found on the Goulburn. From a fly tier's perspective, I find this intriguing and it just goes to prove the importance of Angling Entomology.

Another interesting aspect to this saga is that all I could find during the daylight hours are samples of the female duns, which would suggest that the males are coming off on evening or during the night. Again, I checked back with the other pics in my collection that include species from Tasmania, Eildon and Woodend. All were daytime shots, and again all were females.

This sort of activity is not unknown. Take for example the Highland Dun in Tasmania (*Tasmanophlebia lacustris*), where again there are different colourations, dark and light. And again, the females emerge during the day and the males on evening. This was recorded by the great Australian entomologist, R. J. Tillyard way back in 1921. There is so much we don't know. The answer may be that in some species this is a common occurrence.

The job at hand was to make up some patterns to match what was coming off. The patterns that I put together have a proven past and they work well. All that was need was to match the colours.

First was the Wendouree Milk Chocolate Dun, and to match the colour of the body I blended together some Golden Stone Spirit River dubbing with some Spirit River Brown Stonefly. The mix was 50/50 of each colour and it was a good match.

The Wendouree Milk Chocolate Dun, as designed by Mick Hall is as follows:
Hook: Partridge Klinkhamer Extreme,
Size: 14

Tail: Light Pardo Cock de Leon saddle hackle fibres.

Ribbing: Stripped Peacock Herl - four turns.

Body: Dubbing blend, as above.

Wing/Post: March Brown EP Triggerpoint fibres.

Hackle: Golden Badger tied parachute fashion, four turns only.

Note: The new Partridge Klinkhamer Extreme has now been adjusted in size to match standard shank lengths. I know that Hans would possibly disagree but for this purpose it matches beautifully.



Mick's Wendouree 'Milk Chocolate Dun'

Wendouree Dark Chocolate Dun as designed by Mick Hall:

Hook: Partridge Klinkhamer Extreme, Size: 12

Tail: Dark Pardo Cock de Leon saddle hackle fibres

Ribbing: Stripped Peacock Herl - four turns

Wing/Post: EP Triggerpoint March Brown blended with Black EP Triggerpoint fibres.

Hackle: Whiting Farms Dark Brassy Dun or Dark Brown Dun tied as a parachute hackle, four turns only.

Notes: To tie the pattern in reverse use a standard Partridge Klinkhamer hook

and tie your post in first on the bend as shown below. The rest is as above.

Robert Haines got into four fish the first time he used this pattern at Wendouree, and he said one was huge - he felt its weight and then it was gone. I also witnessed Geoff Hetherington catch and release a magnificent brown that weighed 5.5 pounds (2.5 kilo). And what a great looking fish - almost as deep as it was long, and it was not his first on the day. He caught it on a dark reversed parachute emerger that I designed; in reality it is the Dark Chocolate Dun tied in reverse and is being sold through Clarkson Imports in Melbourne and is freely available in most tackle shops.



Mick's Wendouree 'Dark chocolate Dun'



The Dark Chocolate Dun tied reversed



FLY OF THE MONTH

The wonderful Kate McLaren



I have to admit that this month's Fly of the Month is a pure indulgence. But who could resist a fly with such an alluring and charming name.

So who was Kate McLaren? Kate was the wife of John McLaren, who ran the Kinlochewe Hotel in the Scottish Highland in the 1930s. The McLarens were close friends of William Robertson, a Glasgow tackle dealer and superb fly tier. John McLaren wanted a fly to use on the sea trout in nearby Loch Maree, so Robertson devised this pattern for his friend, and as a nice touch, named it after his friend's wife. The fly was later made very famous by their son, Charles, who

featured in his book, *The Art of Sea Trout Fishing*, published in 1963. Thus it was introduced to anglers around the world.

The Kate McLaren has become very popular Scottish loch fly. While initially devised as a sea trout pattern it soon became highly regarded as an essential brown trout pattern, where it is commonly fished as the top dropper (or bob fly) in a team of three flies. It is usually fished using a floating line, and, according to various scribes, "should be pulled through the waves on a windy day or retrieved by a figure of eight on calmer days."

The fly has a high reputation: "The Kate McLaren is one of the most successful sea trout and brown trout flies ever devised. To go fishing without a few Kates in your box is to be improperly dressed." Again: "The Kate McLaren is THE classic Scottish wet fly. Not to have a Kate in your box when chasing brownies is criminal. It is an all-time favourite top dropper fly."

Our own Jan Spencer wrote this: "Recently I was asked how to tie laid-back hackles for wet flies. The fly I chose was the Kate McLaren, given to me by a friend from Scotland and a fly I rate very highly as a bob fly. It can be used on both floating and sinking lines. On a floating line when there is a good wave, pull it quickly. On a sinking line retrieve half way and then lift the rod high, bringing the Kate to the surface, and create a wake through the surface."

So there you have it – a Scottish wet fly that is highly effective, fairly easy to tie, and with a most appealing name. It's an excellent fly for when you're next doing some loch-style fishing on Lake Wendouree or one of those wonderful Tassie lakes. But what if you're like me and don't have either a boat or much experience with loch-style fishing. I think I could still fish young Kate from the shore of some of

my favourite stillwaters with something else hanging off the back – perhaps a Damsel Nymph, or small wet, or Tom Jones, or stick caddis, ... The idea is that Kate can be dragged across the surface kicking up a fuss to draw the attention of any nearby trout, and then maybe one will grab the enticement towed behind. It might work?

The Materials:

Hook: Down-eyed Wet Fly - Sizes 8, 10 or 12.

Thread: Black 6/0.

Rib: Medium silver oval or fine silver wire.

Tail: Golden pheasant crest or topping feathers.

Body: Black seal's fur for the original pattern, though some modern ties suggest using seal's fur mixed with Antron or rabbit fur or wool, or perhaps any other rough spikey black dubbing.

Body Hackle: Black cock or black hen hackle.

Head Hackle: Red cock hackle or dark ginger hen hackle.

Tying Notes:

- 1 Start the thread a couple of millimetres behind the eye and run it down to just above the barb.
- 2 Tie in a short length of ribbing material, and then the golden pheasant crest feathers so that the natural curve of the feathers is upwards, as shown in the photograph. Run the thread back along the shank towards the eye of the hook to tie the crest feathers down, then trim away the waste.
- 3 Run the thread back to the rear of the body, then add some dubbing and wind it on to build up the body, finishing the body a couple of millimetres behind the eye so that there is some hook shank left bare to tie in the two hackle feathers.
- 4 Choose a black body hackle with barbs about 1½ times the gape of the hook, then prepare the hackle and tie in the stem just in front of the body.
- 5 Take two turns at the front and then wind four or five turns of loosely spaced hackle to the end of the body.
- 6 Trap the end of the hackle feather in place with the ribbing, and then wind the ribbing through the hackle towards the eye, with five turns of ribbing being standard. If some of the hackle fibres are caught under the rib these can be released by rubbing the body gently with a piece of Velcro.
- 7 Trim away the end of the black hackle, and then choose a suitable red or ginger hackle for the front of the fly with barbs that are slightly longer than those of the body hackle.
- 8 Tie in the head hackle by the tip, but some distance up the feather from the tip to where the stalk is thicker and stronger. Wind two or three turns of hackle. If you can manage it, hold the front hackle up from the hook shank and fold the fibres to the rear whilst carefully winding two or three turns of the hackle forward.
- 9 Tie off the head hackle behind the eye and trim away the waste. Wind on a few turns of black tying thread to build up a neat black head, then add a couple of coats of head cement or varnish to complete the fly.

VFFA 2018 meetings & other activities

February 2018

- 5 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
 10 - 16 Tasmanian Trip to Hayes on Brumbys
 Event Co-ordinator – Hughie Maltby
 22 Thursday General Meeting – a lunchtime meeting – 12 noon at the Kelvin Club.
 Guest Speaker: David Anderson – professional photographer and regular contributor to *Flylife* magazine

March 2018

- 5 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
 15 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
 Guest Speaker: Jon Clewlow, regular contributor to *FlyLife* magazine, and part-owner of Millbrook Lakes syndicate
 16 – 18 2018 Big River trip
 Event Co-ordinator – John Pilkington
 30 – April 1 Easter 2018

April 2018

- 9 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
 14 – 15 Donger Weekend at Bairnsdale
 Event Co-ordinator – Mike Jarvis
 19 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
 Guest Speaker: TBC

May 2018

- 7 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
 17 Thursday VFFA Auction – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
 Hugh Maltby and Peter Boag co-ordinating

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2017 Annual Dinner:

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