

FLY LINES



FEBRUARY 2020

February 2020 Meeting: Another Keenly Anticipated 'Liars' Night'

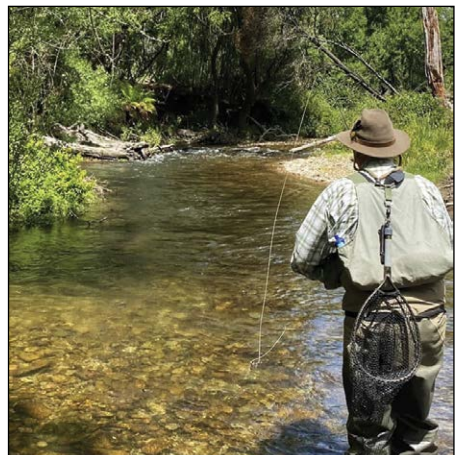
Yes, the first meeting of the year is again a review of the exploits and successes of some of our members over recent months. Lots of us have been out fishing, but alas it would seem that overall it has not been a particularly productive season thus far. While some have enjoyed successful times on the rivers, others of us have had a few too many 'toom creel' days.

Chris Gray and David Hooke have been busy rounding up reports and debriefing successful anglers. As result some excellent candidates have been identified and recruited, so Liars' Night this year will be a fabulous opportunity to catch up with colleagues and hear rollicking tales of trout encountered near and far.

Thursday, February 27,
8:00 pm,
at the Kelvin Club

We would encourage all members to join us for what will undoubtedly be a great start to the year, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, February 26, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.

(The photos below show Kristina, a New Zealand VFFA member and fishing guide, holding a magnificent South Island brown, and popular member Bernard Holbery fishing a very attractive high country run.)



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 68 NO.4 - February 2020 Organisation No. A0024750J

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

info@vffa.org.au www.vffa.org.au

President

Chris Gray

Email: president@vffa.org.au

Phone: 0408 256 525

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.org.au

Phone: 0407 309 797

Honorary Secretary

Kevin Finn

Email: secretary@vffa.org.au

Phone: 0401 695 414

Honorary Editor

Lyndon Webb

Email: editor@vffa.org.au

Phone: 0488 555 724

Vffa Website Administrator

Kevin Finn

Email: webadmin@vffa.org.au

Phone: 0401 695 414

Honorary Librarian

John Pilkington

Email: library@vffa.org.au

Phone: 0407 356 676

Other Council members:

Councillors:	David Hooke	(0411 683 684)
	Hamish Hughes	(0418 108 686)
	Dermot O'Brien	(0412 330 265)
	Terry Rogers	(0438 553 326)
	Mike Jarvis (Immediate Past President)	(0418 265 390)

All material copyright © all rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent of the publisher. Published monthly by the Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Inc., PO Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Index

February 2020 Meeting: Another Keenly Anticipated 'Liars' Night'	1	On Keeping a Diary	22
VFFA Office Holders	2	Summer in Southland	25
New Members	3	Unhooking Those Unwanted Hook-Ups	27
President's Message.....	4	Book Review – The Way of an Angler, by David Scholes.....	28
The Christmas Dinner with David Grisold.....	5	Fishing in Patagonia - Jurassic lake.....	29
This Month's Yarn.....	12	The Tassie Report.....	31
The March Meeting with Anothony McGrath.....	13	A Note From Jim Blakeslee.....	33
Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) -post bushfire fish response plan summary	14	Fly of the month.....	34
From the Editor's Desk	15	VFFA Meetings & Activities	36
Notice of Major Event (NOE) for big River, March 2020.....	17		
Tom Sutcliffe's Offer	18		
Items of Interest ... The 2020 Ballarat Fly Fishers' Two Fly Competition:	19		
Where Have All The Insects Gone?	20		
Trout Fly Trio.....	21		



A Tom Sutcliffe sketch

New Members

It is our great pleasure this month to welcome five new members to the Association. Charles Foletta, Jennifer Phillips, Michael Hitchen, Rodney Hirst and Alf Priestly have all recently joined our ranks. We trust that their membership brings a great deal of pleasure, lots of fabulous fishing, and a host of wonderful memories.

President's Message

I welcome you to 2020 and hope you have had an enjoyable festive season.

We finished last year with David Grisold as guest speaker at our Christmas Dinner. David is a VFFA past president, secretary for many years, and Life Member, and he certainly entertained us, speaking with passion and wisdom about the VFFA and fly fishing in general.

We also recognised our 25 year and 50 year members, and badges were awarded on the night to those who were able to attend. Those unable to attend will receive their awards soon.

The fishing has been great on our Victorian rivers, with some wonderful catches by members over the holiday break. Thank you to those who have shared their success stories. There will certainly be some impressive photos shown at Liars' Night this month.

Over the last nine months we have seen some unwelcome changes along the Steavenson and Little Steavenson rivers, with a subsequent court case. There are 'No Trespass' signs now displayed on one property and these have caused concern amongst anglers. Hopefully this situation will be resolved soon so that property owners and fishers can work cooperatively together.

The summer bushfires have been devastating to many communities in Gippsland and north-east Victoria, as well as further afield in other states. We have received calls expressing concern from overseas members, and I thank our local members for keeping in touch with fire-affected members and friends.



Both the Australian Trout Foundation and Victorian Fisheries Authority have been monitoring the fire-affected catchments and the VFA has released its recovery plan for the affected areas. See the plan further in this newsletter. There is more to come on ATF activities that we will be keen to support throughout the year.

The ATF Trout Survey is still open for members to complete and go in the draw to win a Trevor Hawkins print. Go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WildTroutSurvey> to complete the survey or view the draft strategy at <https://atfonline.com.au/home/page/wild-trout-fishery-strategic-plan> and email in your comments by the end of February.

Unfortunately our recent January day at Millbrook Lakes was cancelled due to the hot weather. Our next visit will now be in March.

Bill Fary stepped down from Council in December. I would like to thank Bill for his time, contribution and assistance during his few years on Council. Hopefully we will see Bill back again in the future.

The year ahead ...

The Tasmania Trip is on soon - February 15 – 23. An eager contingent is all set to enjoy a week at Hayes on Brumbys. Hopefully the weather will be kinder than it was in the first week of the recent World Championships.

Joanne and Rick Dobson have offered to run a Nymph Techniques day on the Goulburn River in early April. This will undoubtedly be an informative and fun day. However numbers will be limited.

The Big River trip (March 13 – 15) will be another fabulous weekend at John Pilkington's chateau at Enochs Point. Be sure to get in early with your booking, as again numbers are limited.

Our guest speaker list for the year is looking very impressive with Bill, Hamish and David booking some great identities to speak at our general lunch and dinner meetings.

We have offered our support to the Australian Trout Foundation with recovery programs and habitat restoration projects, so as news relating to each project comes to hand we'll call on members for support.

I look forward to seeing you at an event soon or on the water.



The Christmas Dinner with David Grisold

On December 12 last year some 50 members and guests gathered at the Kelvin Club to celebrate our Christmas Dinner. We did it in fine style. A number of members brought their wives/ partners as guests and a number of our new female members also attended, so the Kelvin Club dining room was comfortably filled and we enjoyed the very warm and welcoming ambiance. It truly was a thoroughly pleasurable event and a great way to finish the VFFA year.

As is our custom the Christmas Dinner is the event at which we acknowledge those who have been members of the Association for notable periods. This year we congratulated Ian Howell, Graeme Menere and Andrew Mossman on 50 years of membership. Members who were honoured for 25 years of membership were Nigel Brown, Robert Lewis, Bill Skacej, Paul Squires and Sol Yezerski. We

heartily congratulate all of these members for their years with the VFFA.

Our guest speaker for the night was the very popular David (Choco) Grisold, who joined the Association in 1998 and subsequently became heavily involved in so much that is central to the Association. He served on the council for several years, was president in the period 2005 to 2008, was secretary for several more years, and was elected a very worthy Life Member in 2012.

Here is the text of David's talk:

I joined the VFFA in 1998 and from day one felt very welcome and at home. My membership led me to meet so many other fine people, many of whom are now valued close friends. Shortly after joining the Association I was persuaded to join the Council, and this was the best thing I did. Sadly, most members >>>

on that council have since passed away, but I remember them fondly and the knowledge they imparted.

One year whilst working in Sydney I received a late night call from John Philbrick. "Chocolates," he said, "Congratulations! You're the new Junior Vice President." I said, "But John ..." His reply was swift: "Choco, as a councillor you should always attend the AGM." Lesson learnt!

As a newbie to fly fishing I was keen to learn and tried to attend as many weekend trips as possible. I soon discovered that trips were more about getting away than fly fishing. Hughie and I were usually up early and out fishing all day with not much to show for our efforts, but I am glad to report that our fly fishing did improve. We were last in at night and several drinks behind the ones who returned earlier in the day. Laughter abounded, and the stories of past trips and the big ones that got away or were seen just under the fly were fascinating.



Rick Dugina and Gerard Dridan enjoying the night

After several fishless trips Hughie and I attended the 'season closing' trip to Dobson's on the Goulburn. It was a 10:00 am start. Everyone was dressed in their Sunday best fly fishing attire, which of course is a must for a Sunday on the Goulburn.

The fire was alight, the hot plate scrubbed clean, and Marty was getting the quail ready. Someone offered a nip of something to celebrate the day, the claret was opened, quail were placed on the hot



It was a very pleasant and convivial gathering

plate, and the stories began. "Bob Roles caught a 5 pounder not far from here", and "Philbrick used to wade the river and catch them on a nymph." And so on. By 2 o'clock most of us were dozing, curled up in the long grass, bellies full and contented.

Later I asked myself, "Is this what happened further to our north in earlier years – our indigenous menfolk sitting around a campfire telling stories to the younger members of the tribe?" Then one day later on I was talking to Marty Rogers about these fishing trips. He looked me in the eye and said: "Captain, it's all about being there. A fish is a bonus. It's about BEING THERE!"

"But Marty, I just want to catch a fish on my new fly rod." "Don't worry, you will." He looked at me over the top of his glasses and said with a grin, "You'll come across a suicidal trout one of these days."

Philbrick fished the North Esk in Tasmania every year on Ian and Rosemary Dickenson's property and he stayed at Old Whisloca. He invited Colin

Morrison, Hugh Maltby and me to join him for a week, and luckily for us this one week subsequently turned into a number of annual trips. What wonderful weeks they were. We caught fish and I learned so much that I will always be in John's debt for those wonderful weeks on the North Esk.

Philbrick was a great teacher. To watch him wade a river or a small creek always amazed me: slow, precise, and not a ripple from his large frame. And his cast always landed exactly where he wanted it.

One day when we were fishing together he took my rod from me, cut my leader into pieces, told me to go away and tie a proper new leader, then went on fishing up the river. That night at dinner he harangued me big time about my thousand dollar rod and reel kitted out with a crappy leader worth sixpence. I miss him very much, and his weird sense of humour.

Bill Morgan-Payler was the new President of the VFFA, and I was Senior Vice



Jon Kenfield assured his colleagues that this red did indeed have a very good nose

>>>

President. Not long into his presidency Bill announced that he had cancer, and sadly within six months had passed away.

I was now President, with Peter Boag my Vice President. Then 12 months into my term I was diagnosed with cancer - an aggressive form of prostate cancer. A week before my surgery Marty Rogers called. "Captain," he said, "Let's go to Tassie for a week. It will help you clear your mind before your big op." DONE.

Rhonda booked the flight and a week's accommodation at Old Whisloca, and on Monday morning we flew into Launceston. Mike Stevens picked us up and we went for a coffee, then lunch, and then to Andy Braithwaite's to pick up Philbrick's land cruiser.

I said to Marty, "We need to go to Kings Meadows to do some shopping on the way to Old Whisloca." But on the way we stopped again - at Peter McKean's to pick up Marty's new cane rod. \$850 later and I had also ordered a new cane rod - a 7'6" 4-weight, 2-piece. "It's only money Captain," said Marty. "Oh, and don't forget you only have a lend of it." It took me a while to work that one out. Marty

was full of little gems like "the poor man always buys twice."

We arrived at Ian and Rosemary's right on dinner to pick up the keys. "Stay for dinner," said Rosemary. Marty, who was born hungry, said, "Yes. Captain - go and get some claret from the wagon."

We finally arrived at Whisloca around midnight. "Chew some toilet paper and shove it in your ears, old boy. It will help you sleep." I did, but it didn't. Marty Rogers on a full belly snored at a volume that would wake the dead.

Tuesday was again spent visiting people for lunch and dinner. Special secret spots were revealed, and stories told of legendary anglers such as Scholes, Gillies, and Wigram. The list went on, and endless stories followed about the fish they caught. It was becoming the where, the how, and the who of Tasmanian fly fishing.

Wednesday morning: "Marty, can we please go fishing?" "Sure thing, Captain. Let's go and have a chat with Bill." So we went out to where Bill Morgan-Payler's ashes were scattered on the North Esk on Dickenson's property. We first went to Musselburgh Creek, where Bill caught his last fish, then to the river. It was now



Your editor with Andrew Mossman and Graeme Menere – two members whose 50-year membership was acknowledged and celebrated at our Christmas Dinner

blowing a gale. And cold, and the river's surface was covered in yellow wattle leaves and scum. Not even a suicidal trout would be out in this weather.

"You fish upstream Choco, and I'll fish here with a Royal Wulff. It's the only fly Scholes used on the North Esk," proclaimed Marty. After an hour of fishing upstream I returned to find Marty curled up in the grass out of the wind, and snoring sonorously. I asked, "Mart - are you still alive?" One eye opened slightly and he said: "I missed one and rose one to the fly. Argh, the Royal Wulff is the only fly for the North Esk." I later realised when packing up that his fly rod was still in the car.

So off we went - more stories, more special and secret spots, then to Torian's for dinner and then home to Whisloca.

On Thursday morning over breakfast Marty decided that we should invite everyone for dinner. "But Marty, we don't have enough food."

"Leave it to me, Captain. You obviously don't know much about dinner parties." So off we went. "Julie-anne - you and Mike are to come out for dinner tonight, and Jule's - how about one of your special apple pies?" "I'll bring two," she said.

To Braithwaite's. "Andrew - dinner tonight, and bring some of that good claret you stole when you worked at Penfolds." Three bottles of 389 arrived with Andrew that night.

To Peter McKean's: "Dinner tonight, and you're in charge of the main." Peter arrived with several large pots of home-made pasta.

"Ian, Rosemary and Torian - come for dinner, but don't bring anything. We'll look after you."

Then to Mary and Shorty next door. "Mary - just bring some nibbles. And don't worry - everything else is organised."

And what a night it was. Truly magnificent. Well after midnight, as I was chewing a fresh allocation of toilet paper, Marty said: "Now that's how you organise a dinner party, old boy."

On Friday morning we cleaned up, packed up, and called into everyone's to say thank you and goodbye. Philbrick's truck back to Andrew's, and Mike drove us to the airport.

What a week, and next week the unknown. On the way home in the plane



A large and attentive gathering

>>>

I suddenly began to feel nervous. But it was great to be home to see Rhonda and the girls and give my liver a well-earned rest.

Rhonda's first question was, "So, how many fish did you catch?" And for the first time ever I was able to say those immortal words: "Rhonda, it's not always about catching a fish, it's about BEING THERE. A fish is a bonus."

It was a week I won't ever forget. I am forever grateful to Marty for sharing his Tasmania with me. Life is strange with many twists and turns, and as it turned out Marty had his own battle with prostate cancer. Sadly, it took his life.

I know many of our members have been touched with cancer. If you don't have a regular check-up, then please start. Stephen Leacock reminds us elsewhere in his writings that we learn too late that life is in the living, the tissue of everyday and hour. When I was thinking about tonight, I started to read some of Stephen

Leacock's humorous stories and picked this one – copies of the small reprint are on your tables. It matches the theme for tonight - "Being There."

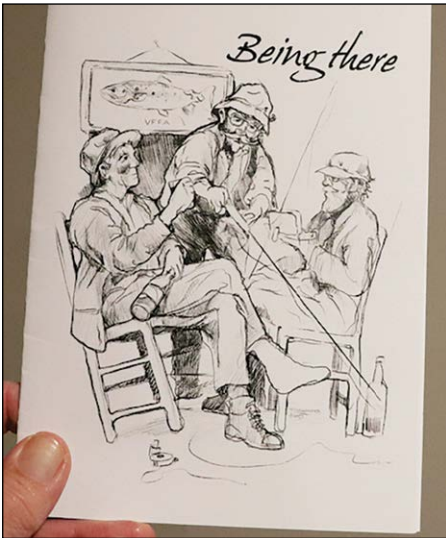
As I look back over my time in the VFFA I am saddened when I think of all those who have passed away. I have truly loved my time in the VFFA - as a councillor, president, secretary, and now feather duster. The VFFA has led me to meet and work with so many wonderful and interesting people. People I now call good friends.

I am currently the Chairman of the Recreational Fishing License Working Group that administers all VFA license funds and grants. I'm also working with Terry George, a VFFA member and the very hard working president of the Australian Trout Foundation, on a steering committee to help protect Victoria's wild trout populations.

If you are not a member of the ATF please see Terry here tonight and become a member; it's the best \$25 you will spend.

I am disappointed when I see the same people on council year after year doing the heavy lifting. As I look around here tonight there are people in this room who I'm sure could find two hours a month to sit on council, and perhaps even one day becoming a future president. In 10 short months Chris Gray will have served his time as President and will be ready to stand down. We need a replacement for Chris. The secret to our longevity is new members, new councillors, new ideas, and drive and enthusiasm. These are the things that will carry the VFFA forward to its 100th birthday. So if you've got two hours a month to spare, please put your hand up. Join council and help keep the VFFA strong into the future.

The VFFA for me has been, outside of my family and business, the best thing I have ever done. I have learned so much about



The reprint of Stephen Leacock's delightful short story that David had made available to everyone who attended the dinner

myself and have thoroughly enjoyed the journey. And I look forward to the future with great excitement.

I wrote the forward for our book *Geehi to Great Lake* and said this: "For over 75 years the VFFA has offered friendship, a sharing of knowledge and sanctuary for countless members and their guests who have attended its dinners, fishing trips, fly tying nights and our now famous auctions. Its newsletter has presented a wealth of informative and entertaining contributions from some of the major figures in this wonderful sport."

As I see it, nothing has changed. The VFFA is still a magnificent Association. Membership is strong and we are fitting back into the Kelvin Club with ease. Please step forward, nominate for council and offer your services to the VFFA.

Since Tony Brothers' passing I have been the custodian of two very special packages. Tonight I would like to present these to the VFFA. They are a collection of flies, letters and fishing diaries that once belonged to Edgar Ritchie and his son Jack, along with material from Tony Brothers. Tony was given the Ritchie family flies and diaries, and he passed them on to me for safe keeping. I am



Our guest speaker – David Grisold

now presenting the Ritchie and Brothers collection to the VFFA. The diaries' earliest entries go back to 1907. There are flies in the collection by some of the most innovative fly tiers in our sport. Letters also dating back to the early 1900s which I think will make fascinating reading when Lyndon has the opportunity to include them in the newsletter.

I wouldn't ever want to see any of these fly boxes in a VFFA auction, and I would hope that some of the more memorable flies are framed and held in the library. Last week I showed the flies to Ray Brown. Ray was like a kid in a candy store, he couldn't believe his eyes. I now pass this treasure trove to Christopher Gray for very safe keeping.



Wes Betts and Jason Platts planning the next trip?



President Chris Gray with David and Rhonda Grisold

>>>



David had our attention



This Month's Yarn ...

"Snakes are a real danger in our Victorian fishing," said Squizzly knowingly.

"They're quite a pest around our lakes and rivers, and you need to be careful. Those tiger snakes, in particular, really aggravate your blood pressure when you nearly step on one."

"True," said McTaggart, "They can be a bother. But then again, I can remember one occasion when a tiger snake proved quite helpful."

Eyebrows around the group rose quizzically as McTaggart pushed his glass across the bar for a third refill. Chris nodded to the barmaid and dropped a note on the counter.

"Yes, it was a while ago," McTaggart added, "but I well recall the occasion. It was quite extraordinary."

"We were up in New South Wales fishing the Murrumbidgee, and the fishing had been really tough. We'd been there for a week and had tried every fly and every trick in the book (and several not in the book) but hadn't caught a thing."

"But Uncle Alf was always persistent and he'd wandered down to an attractive pool

late in the afternoon. He was keen to see if the evening rise produced anything, so took a large caddis pattern (a Dunny Brush I think) and some whisky in a hip flask to keep himself warm."

"And this most incredible thing happened. A frog came hopping along the bank and a large tiger snake suddenly raced out and snatched it up in its mouth. Alf leapt back in shock, then in a moment of inspiration whipped out the whisky and sprinkled some on the snake's head. The snake dropped the frog and belted straight back into the bush. So Alf picked up the dazed frog, impaled it on the caddis fly hook and hurled it out into the water. Almost immediately there was a huge swirl and Alf found himself connected to the first fish of the week. And a sizeable brown it was, too. However, after netting it he discovered that in the fracas the frog had got lost. Alf reckoned he'd found the answer, but wondered how he could get hold of another frog."

"Just then he felt a tap on his ankle. The snake had reappeared with another frog in its mouth, and was looking up expectantly."

The March Meeting with Anthony McGrath

Anthony is a Senior Projects Officer with the Victorian Fisheries Authority. He has worked for the VFA for three years delivering access and infrastructure project all over Victoria with many successes. Being a keen fly fisher himself, Anthony is passionate about all things fly fishing, having fished in many different places around Australia and New Zealand. He was a member of the Ballarat Fly Fishers Club, VRFish,

and the Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs before commencing with the VFA.

Anthony gave a presentation at the Wild Trout Conference last November on angler access to rivers and potential changes to this access – an issue very close to the heart of all trout fishers. Obviously we would love to hear more about this, and Anthony has agreed to come to our March meeting to talk about his work and how VFFA members can get involved.

He will discuss one of the key issues facing recreational fishers throughout Victoria - good quality access to lakes and rivers. For the most part, river frontage land parcels still belong to the Crown and therefore to all Victorians. Yet much of it has been licenced out over the decades, with many licence holders unsure of their responsibilities in regard to public access. On-water boat and kayak access has always been a contentious issue for fishers and boaters. Why is it that some reservoirs are open to all types of boating use, whilst others have stringent rules around no water entry being permitted? Working with water authorities, the VFA has been able to improve access to six reservoirs, with better access to come over the next 12 months.

This will be a very pertinent and informative presentation by Anthony.

Mark it in your diary – Thursday, March 19, 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.



Anthony adding some more fish to one of our impoundments

Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) -post bushfire fish response plan summary



Victoria is experiencing the worst bushfire season on record with more than 1.2 million hectares burnt through much of East Gippsland and through alpine regions of north-east Victoria. Recent rains are now washing large loads of ash, sediment and debris into rivers. This runoff is impacting water quality. High sediment load degrades fish habitat and will clog fish gills.

Over the next weeks and months decomposing organic material may reduce dissolved oxygen. We anticipate fish kills are likely to occur within and downstream of bushfire affected areas. Over the last 48 hours we have received an increasing number of reports of fish kills related to bushfires and recent rainfall that has mobilised ash and silt.

The VFA is monitoring the extent of these impacts on fish populations. In the short term the VFA will work locally with partner Natural Resource Management (NRM) agencies and recreational fishers to monitor bushfire related impacts on fish. VFA will feed key information into the State and Federal 'whole of government' Government bushfire recovery planning process.

We will also assess the feasibility of salvaging fish that are likely to be impacted. In the longer term fish stocking will be considered when conditions improve and where it is likely to help recover fish populations. By working closely with local fishing and businesses, when conditions have improved we will encourage fishers to go fishing again in bushfire affected regions.

VFA Response Plan

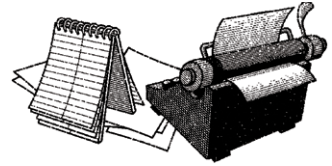
1. VFA Fisheries Education and Enforcement Officer's to work closely with local NRM partner organisations

(NSW DPI, CMA's, DELWP, Parks Victoria and EPA) to understand those waterways affected by bushfire related run-off. This information will be provided to the VFA Senior Managers for action. The focus of this monitoring will be to inspect affected waterways and, where it is safe to do so, identify potential opportunities for fish salvage.

2. In response to feedback from the above local information, the VFA will assess the feasibility of fish salvage operations and logistics. The VFA will feed this information and advice through the whole of State and Federal Government bushfire recovery planning process. If feasible, the VFA may partner with other NRM organisations to facilitate and resource fish salvage operations.
3. The VFA will keep recreational fishers up to date on our response actions through social media and through VRFish, ATF, NFA and Future Fish, plus other angling club organisations.
4. When it is safe to do so, in collaboration with local recreational fish organisations and businesses, the VFA will promote regional fishing visitation to bushfire affected regions through social media and potentially lead a tag reward program. This is intended to support local communities and businesses who rely on fishing related tourism.
5. The VFA will prioritise future stocking at locations where fish kills have occurred when conditions can support fish stocking and where stocking is identified as likely to recover fish populations.

Victorian Fisheries Authority January 2020

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"All the romance of trout fishing exists in the mind of the angler and is in no way shared by the fish." (Harold Blaisdell: *The Philosophical Fisherman*)

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

"Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach him to fly fish and he'll move to Tasmania." (Anonymous, and slightly altered)

"These trout will strike any fly you present, provided you don't get close enough to present it." (Dick Blalock)

"Even the thousandth trip to the same old familiar fished-out stream begins with renewed hope, with unfailing faith." (Zane Grey)

"On the Firehole I caught thirty-six inches of trout – in six instalments." (Arnold Gingrich: *In a letter to me, 1971*)

"Secretly I lament the hundreds of fish we never caught because we forever persisted in fishing only the likeliest holding water." (Tom Sutcliffe MD: *Reflections on Fishing, 1990*)

"The indications which tell your dry fly angler when to strike are clear and unmistakable, but those which bid a wet fly man raise his rod point and draw in the steel are frequently so subtle, so evanescent, and impalpable to the senses, that, when the bending rod assures him that he has divined aright, he feels an ecstasy as though he had performed a miracle each time." (G.E.M Skues: *Minor Tactics of the Chalk-Stream, 1910*)

I read an article in a Canadian fly fishing magazine before Christmas on the characteristics of good and 'less good' fly fishers, and thought, well, there's some beaut content for my February bit. Then of course our December and January news was dominated and overwhelmed by those appalling bushfires. And the fire season is not over yet. Heaven help us if we get yet more of those early January infernos.

My first reaction was to check to see if any of our members had been affected. Graeme Menere, who came to our Christmas Dinner last December to receive his 50 year membership badge, lives at Lucyvale near Corryong. Graeme reports that his property was right in the path of fast-moving fires when a wind

change saved him. Brian Eddy, one of our Life Members, lives at Harrierville, and he and his wife were required to move out and spend a weekend in a motel at Wodonga, as their house was also in some danger. They returned and were greatly relieved to find that all was well. Wes Betts has a property on the Howqua River. A Facebook photo showed that he had identified the important things – his fly rods and guns. They were all stored in the boot of his car ready for any necessary rapid retreat. As it happens Wes was working back in Melbourne when he was told that people in the area near his property were asked to leave urgently because of potential fire dangers, so he had to race back up to the Howqua to rescue his wife, who was holidaying there. >>>

Trevor Stow, who lives at Bairnsdale and is very active in the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club as well as the VFFA, spent some days constantly hosing the roof of his home because of the flying embers from nearby fires. He took a phone call from his daughter, who works at the local council, telling him that people were arriving there whose houses had been totally destroyed by the fires. Could he help? So Trevor welcomed three homeless strangers into his house and hosted them until they were able to move on. A great story typifying the magnificent generosity that seems to emerge when tough times happen in this country.

When lives have been lost and houses burned and farms and businesses destroyed it seems petty and trivial to wonder how our trout fishing is faring. But of course, we do. We've had fires before and seen what they do to our rivers and streams. The run off pollutes our rivers and clearly has a detrimental effect on fish and their food.

During the fires this year we've seen countless examples on our television news of planes dropping huge quantities of pink fire retardant on the fires. Great stuff, credited with saving countless homes and lives, not harmful to humans

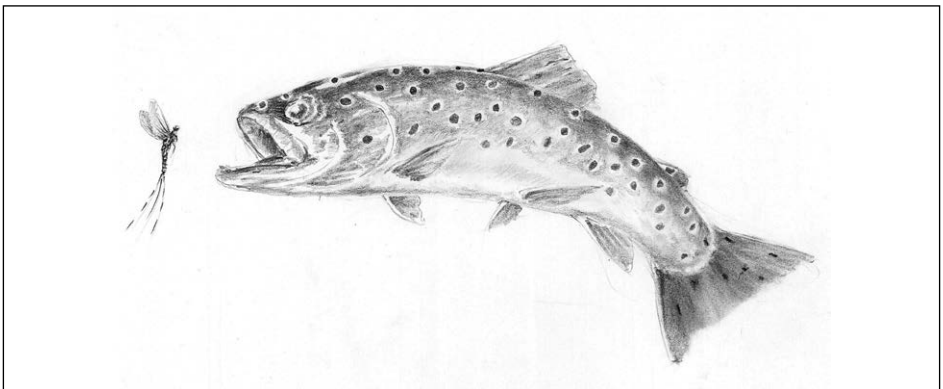
or animals – but. Experts are concerned about possible fish kills and harmful blue-green algal blooms when retardants are dropped on waterways.

So I guess we just have to wait and see. I take heart from the fact that not so many years ago the Ovens River near Bright was very badly affected by bushfires, and then floods, and the fishing was really tough for a few years. But the river recovered and the trout came back too, partly because of recovery stocking organised by the Australian Trout Foundation. In recent years the Ovens has recovered and fished really well. So perhaps all is not lost. Plenty of our better trout streams have not been in fire areas this year, and organisations like the ATF continue to work hard to improve habitat along important trout streams.

At this stage of the year I start to look forward to the arrival of our autumn months. Hoppers abounding, pleasant weather, and often some of our best stream fishing. I hope this is the experience for all of us.

Best wishes and tight lines,

Lyndon



Brown taking a mayfly - Tom Sutcliffe Art

Notice of Major Event (NOE) for Big River, March 2020

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

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

Event date: Friday March 13 to Sunday March 15, 2020. 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: Mobile phone coverage is now available at Enoch's Point (but only for Telstra customers).

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 March 1.

Date of issue of this NOE: February 3, 2020 (mandatory for quoting in ERF)

Event Registration closing date: March 6, 2020

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]

Tom Sutcliffe's Offer ...

... buy a delightful watercolour print and in the process make a donation to Wildlife Victoria to assist in the treatment of fire-injured native animals.

Tom Sutcliffe is a semi-retired doctor in Cape Town, South Africa. He is also a highly respected fly fisher there and has written books that are recognised as among the very best of South African trout fishing literature. He is also a great friend of the VFFA. Among his many other skills, he is an artist of some note.

He emailed us recently, and said this:

"I have been so dismayed by the fires in Australia and wondered if I could do anything – obviously small. What I am thinking of is helping the vets treat countless injured animals, as I believe many good charities will support the poor folk on the ground, but animals such as the koalas might also need some help.

I had thought of providing a watercolour that would appeal to fly fishers in Australia who could then donate whatever they thought reasonable to the VFFA for use by an appropriate group specifically geared to address the plight of animals as a result of the fires. I will send some examples of recent art for you to consider in a day or two. I will of course donate the door to door courier costs.

Best regards, Tom."



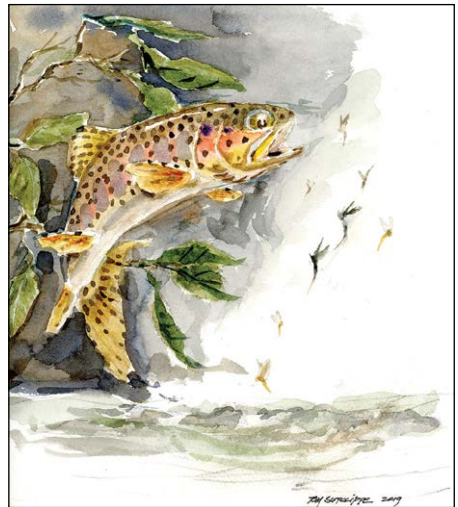
Two of Tom's watercolours have since arrived, and they are shown below. Our president Chris Gray has suggested that Wildlife Victoria (<https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au>) would be a suitable recipient.

Details of Tom's proposal will also be published on our Facebook page. Council discussed this issue at our most recent meeting, and various strategies and ideas were discussed. The details are still being worked out, but the plan is that members (or non-members) who would like to acquire a delightful fly fishing watercolour will be able to make a bid, knowing that their donation will then be passed to Wildlife Victoria or a similar organisation. More details will be given soon.

The pieces of artwork will obviously then go to the highest bidder.

The two prints –

'Lone Trout Over Pebbles' (29 x 40 cm) and 'Rainbow against a bankside' (23 x 30 cm)



Items of Interest ...

The 2020 Ballarat Fly Fishers' Two Fly Competition:

Venue – Lake Wendouree in Ballarat, Date – Saturday and Sunday, March 28 & 29.

Further information – from Shane Stevens – 0408 179 927

The entry fee is \$50, Entry being via: www.trybooking.com/571689; entries close March 26.

The submission of flies and official signing in is on Friday, March 27, from 5:00pm to 6:00pm and on Saturday, March 28, from 7:00am to 8:00am.

There are two sessions on the Saturday, with a break for lunch, then 6:00am – 12 noon on the Sunday. Then there is the presentation of prizes.

Competition Rules

- Lake Wendouree is the only designated competition water.
- A registered fly-fisher can only use their two drawn flies during the competition.
- Trout shall be the only species of fish eligible to be registered.
- An eligible fish must be measured and photographed on an approved brag mat (available at event registration). The photograph must clearly show the length of the fish.
- The Jim Thomas Memorial trophy (and event winner) will be awarded to the fly fisher who has caught the longest trout over the fishing sessions based on length in centimetres.
- Each registering fly-fisher is required to provide three flies of their choice to the Registration Desk.

A note from Trevor Stow – the Patearoa Hotel in New Zealand

Members who have fished New Zealand's South Island may possibly remember the Patearoa Hotel. Regrettably the hotel recently closed. The owner stripped the chattels out of the building and then placed it on the market. Unfortunately there has not been a lot of interest from potential buyers, and thus the small community there has lost its last business.

Rafting the Mataura and Oreti Rivers

The proposed commercial rafting operation on the Mataura and Oreti rivers has now been given the go-ahead by the local authorities, despite widespread demands that anglers and the affected public in general be allowed to be heard (either for or against the proposal).

This has become a very contentious issue, and those opposed are furious that local authorities have refused to allow any public discussion of the issue. To quote from a website: "Local authorities have learned that the public, they now realize, is not to be trusted, and democratic processes, which can lead to unexpected outcomes, are risky. Best to keep things in the dark, make decisions behind closed doors, and ignore any rumblings of discontent from the people most affected."

For those interested in more information on this, check <https://www.change.org/p/southland-district-council-stop-intensive-commercial-rafting-on-the-mataura-waikaia-and-oreti-rivers>

Where Have All The Insects Gone?

... by Andrew McKenzie, New South Wales Rod Fishers' Society.

(This article is used with Andrew's permission. It was included in the 2019-2020 Journal of the New South Wales Rod Fishers' Society. Those of us who read the trout fishing magazines from the UK would be well aware of the concern there with the very serious decline in insect populations on their trout rivers and streams. Andrew asks what's happening here in our trout fisheries.)

Where have they gone?

Many of you will have noticed what appears to be a decline in the numbers of insects you see on streams that you fish regularly. And it's not just on the streams: you can drive to Oberon, or anywhere really, nowadays, and you don't have to clean the car windscreen. So, what's going on?

Well, you are not on your own in asking this question. A number of reports from around the world recently show alarming declines in the numbers of insects. Salmon and Trout Conservation in the United Kingdom released their *Riverfly Census Report* earlier in the year. This important longitudinal study, conducted over three years, details the health of twelve important representative rivers in the UK. What they found will astonish you - the overall finding is that there has been a 59% loss of insect species in the UK since the 1970s. Insect populations in rivers are showing serious decline too - you can download a copy of this ground-breaking report from their web site: <www.salmon-trout.org>.

Or perhaps you saw the ABC's recent Foreign Correspondent report titled 'Insectageddon'? This report covered findings from amateur entomologists in

Germany and Holland which showed similar declines in insect numbers and disappearance of species in those countries. If you missed it, this program is well-worth a watch and can be found online with a Google search.

So what can we do? A local initiative has been designed, harnessing citizen scientists to help document insect populations in our rivers across the nation: it is called the National Waterbug Blitz. You can find more information about it on their website: <www.waterbugblitz.org.au> There are three levels of "Blitz": Mayfly Muster for 20 minutes; Quick Waterbug Survey for 1 to 2 hours, and the Detailed Waterbug Survey for several hours (or the day). Insect sample information can be recorded in the field and then uploaded to the Waterbug Blitz app (which is downloaded to a mobile phone). Training, which involves insect identification and collection techniques, is available and we are looking at trying to schedule a session for the Rod Fishers' Society in 2020.

It might be possible, with very little extra effort, to combine your next fishing trip with some 'citizen science' and help scientists around the country learn a little more about the rivers we fish and about the bugs - depended upon by the trout for which we fish.

Trout Fly Trio

... a poem by Alan Pilkington.

I'm not sure if trout have moods,
but one thing I do know,
they constantly search for foods;
their daily life is spent
keeping their appetites content.
Omnivorous, their diets sometimes
exotic,
they mostly feed on foods aquatic.
Opportunistic, from a windfall,
they also eat things terrestrial.
Stirring them from subsurface ennui
are three families of insects they mostly
see.
A fly fisherman tries to detect
which one, in a given moment,
he should imitate to best affect.

Mayfly

The mayfly, of the family *ephemera*,
tops the list; they got fly fishing started,
when Macedonians and Romans
saw trout come to the top,
on these delicacies to sup.
In *Olde England*, some called them *drakes*,
and cast horsehair lines into their wakes.
Their underwater nymphs often in May
emerge,
provoking hungry trout to splurge.
The beautifully transformed beings
have launched a million words;
They skyward fly,
on delicate, up-right gossamer wings
like tiny birds.

Stone Fly

Stone flies, *plecoptera*, so-called by
the ancient Greeks, for their braided
wings,
emerge in a different way;
their nymphs crawl to the bank,
then leave their shucks before they fly
away.
Unlike the mayfly, their wings lay flat,

somewhat like a sailor's hat.

One, *petronycus californicus*, or Salmon Fly,
is two inches long and takes the prize.
In June, in western rivers
it's the fly most trout insist upon,
while anglers' other offerings they
despise.
A smaller, pretty lemon-bodied relative,
the Yellow Sally, will quickly cause
a pod of trout to rally.

Caddis Fly

The third family of insects that feeding
trout
Think are heaven sent,
the caddis fly, *tricoptera*,
has its wings arched along its back,
like a tent.
Hundreds of varieties challenge anglers
to decipher which caddis fly,
just flew by.

After emerging, they mate in a hovering
dance,
and after their acrobatic romance,
the female spreads her fertilised eggs
on the water;
an airborne deposit
experts call it an *oviposit*.

It's helpful for an angler to learn
about these things.
But no science is needed to be transfixed,
in wonder, as we see their delicate wings,
mayflies, stone flies or caddis flies,
all lit with sun,
as the trout beneath them rise.

On Keeping a Diary

Philip Weigall, top fishing guide, writer, and editor of the digital fly fishing magazine FlyStream writes an article for us every year. Here is Philip's wisdom on the value of keeping a detailed and accurate fishing diary.

"Spare us!" I hear at least some of you mutter as you read that heading. You've just come in from a long, if quite possibly enjoyable day on the water, and the last thing you want to do is sit at the table conscientiously writing things down. And if the day wasn't all that enjoyable, double the dislike. Pouring a drink and putting your feet up is a much more agreeable proposition. But bear with me, and I'll see if I can change your mind.

I started keeping a fishing diary of sorts at a very young age. The entries were clearly selective (no sign of any bad trips!), full of elaborate maps, and I think they were as much an attempt to wring every last drop of enjoyment out of my limited schoolboy fishing days as anything. Perhaps that's the first good reason to keep a diary: simply as a record of particular fishing trips, to be savoured long after the actual experience has passed.

It wasn't until I was in my twenties that I can find regular records of those tough days when few if any fish were caught. By then, I had a car and the capacity to fish more often (nearly every weekend looking at some diaries!) and I suspect I was beginning to see a diary as a way of predicting seasonal events, such as hatches; or particular conditions which helped or hindered success. (More on this shortly.)

Simultaneously, I was no doubt recognising that honestly recording what happened was the only way of obtaining decent data for future use. An entry for 25-26 June 1988 at Bullen Merri and Purrumbete states simply: 'No fish caught.'; although I also noted, 'Good fish feeding near the shore at Bullen Merri.'

I filled ten of these books

Even a blank day may offer a skerrick of useful information for the future: this record suggested that if I went back to Bullen Merri in late June I might find feeding fish within range. I just had to work out how to catch them!

Memory versus Machine

Although unintentional at the time, entries like this throw up a second good reason to keep a diary: for modern perspective. It's a proven feature of the human mind that we tend only to remember the good times and blot out many of the not so good. As I sit here, I can recall a number of successes from the 1980s on the Crater Lakes without any need for the diary, right down to a 7 pounder from Purrumbete which I was so proud of. I took off my thigh wader and stuffed it inside to keep the big rainbow looking fresh! (Catch and release was only an occasional indulgence back then.) But I honestly don't remember ever blanking on those lakes – even though

my diaries offer irrefutable proof that I did.

This line, in an entry from Hepburn Lagoon on 18 May 1985, makes me smile: ‘Good action, though no fish moving on surface. Bitter weather.’ This is the first occasion I can find where I make a connection between good fishing and bad weather on this regularly bleak lake – a Hepburn feature which has proved itself countless times since. So there’s a third solid reason to keep a diary: it can indeed help identify patterns or features (even counterintuitive ones) which help you catch more fish.

As both a guide and a fishing writer I’m obliged to get my facts right, and this is the fourth and most reassuring feature of a diary. I don’t have to guess when I fished the last big jassid fall at Penstock, how cold the Victoria River was that day in May when we still caught them on dry flies, or the earliest there’s been a decent dun hatch at Millbrook – and which year? (27th September, and 2019 as it happens! The previous earliest was 30th September 2001.) And when was that amazing fishing on a super-low Nariel Creek when I polaroided and caught a 3 pounder on a hopper in a normally inaccessible spot above McNamara’s Bridge? 20th December 2006.

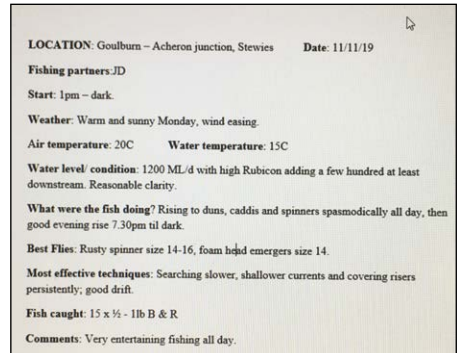
One slightly alarming feature of a diary is that it coldly demonstrates the frailty of human memory when it comes to dates and times. Often, I find myself looking for, say, that Mitta spinner fall I recall from last year... only to discover it was actually two years ago. And I’ll bet you a dozen Possum Emergers that in early spring 2021, one of the Millbrook guides will pronounce, “Hey, I hope we get a September dun hatch like we had last year.”

Hard or Soft?

Since 2012, I’ve kept a diary electronically, with each entry fitting the following

template, loosely based on a format friend Peter Julian developed for his print diaries (which I filled 10 of going back to 1998):

LOCATION: _____ **Date:** _____
Fishing partners: _____
Start: _____ **Finish:** _____
Weather: _____ **Wind:** _____
Air temperature: _____ **Water temperature:** _____
Water level/ condition: _____
What were the fish doing? _____
Best Flies: _____
Most effective techniques: _____
Fish caught: _____
Comments: _____



The format since 2012 – the least character, but by far the easiest to reference

It’s a simple diary, with many prompts easily completed with a single number or word – perfect for when you’re feeling a little stuffed and/or shell-shocked after, say, an evening rise on the Maruia River in New Zealand.

This ‘modern’ diary now runs for 310 pages and I print it out regularly, but it’s starting to look like an old telephone book, so I don’t know if that’ll continue forever. The soft copy is a joy for practical use, because I can punch anything into the search function (e.g. ‘Murrumbidgee River, grasshoppers’) and all the relevant entries come up in a nanosecond. And the diary is saved to my Dropbox, which is linked to my iPhone, and so I can be >>>

standing on Lake Fyans in July, and check what flies were successful at Fyans last July... or the July before that.

But...

And you probably guessed this was coming (we're talking about fly fishing after all!), my diaries also prove that past events do not entirely predict what to expect next time. It turns out, for example, that you can have good fishing at Hepburn in pleasant weather; just not very often.

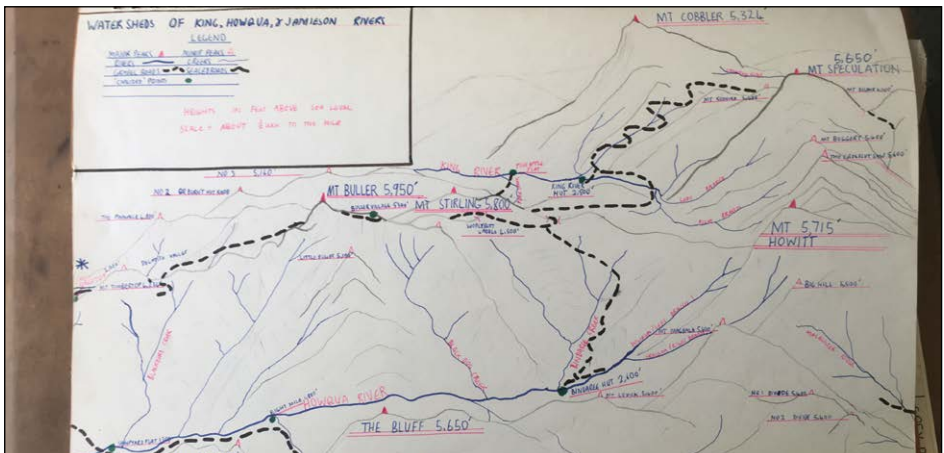
The other slightly weird thing is, in some cases, the diaries show certain waters don't simply cycle through phases like a wheel; they undergo significant long-term shifts – for better and for worse. When I was a kid, Lake Bellfield in the Grampians was a mediocre brown trout water; attractive enough, but with fish that were often a bit on the slabby side. Then the lake really suffered in the Millennium Drought, being extremely low for years – though sometimes fishing reasonably for rainbows and the odd skinny brown. It then filled with debris and dirty water after the 2011 floods; yet it has recently settled down to become about the best rainbow water in the area; retaining good levels through wet years and dry, in part thanks to Wimmera-



Lake Bellfield in July 2007; it's a totally different lake today

Mallee Pipeline water savings. I won't be at all surprised if Bellfield undergoes some other changes in the future as the forest which grew in the 'noughties' and then flooded this decade, eventually rots away completely in the 2020s.

And then there are waters like the upper Mitta, Howqua, Delatite in Victoria; and Little Pine and Bronte lagoons in Tasmania. Each have their good years and not so good, but I regularly find myself fishing in a sort of time capsule, where my diaries show nothing much has changed in decades; right down to the nature of certain shores and stretches, and trout behaviour. Makes me feel old and young all at once.



Early entries; selective but entertaining

Summer in Southland

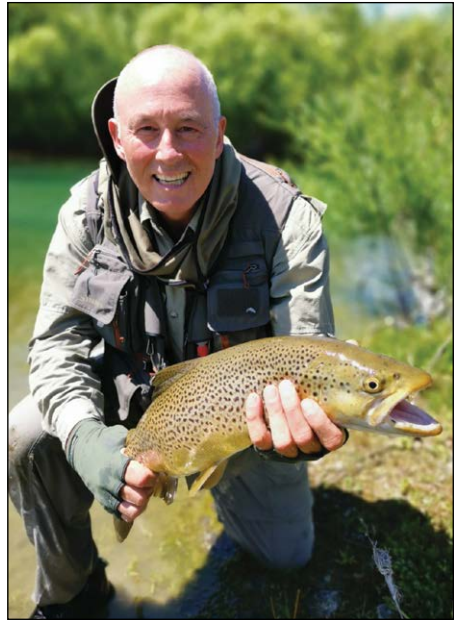
... Trevor Stow

Each year Hubert Reichelt and I head off to New Zealand. This year our arrival coincided with the start of summer and we headed to Gore. In Southland, as in Victoria, spring had been cold and wet, with high water levels a feature of the local rivers. These same conditions have been a constant in Southland over the past few years so we were somewhat used to them.

Upon our arrival in Gore we hooked up with the “Mataura Man”, Andrew Mossman and his friend Doctor Rob Negri. These two competent Victorian anglers had been fishing in Gore for almost two weeks so we were keen to hear their words of wisdom. Andrew informed us that the fishing had been terrible. The rivers were up and down like a (well you know!) This had resulted in little mayfly activity, and Andrew felt that this had been one of his worst trips to the Land of the Long White Cloud for many years.

Andrew and Rob left us a few days later to return to Australia. On his last day Andrew said that the day he was leaving was the first day of his trip where he thought that the trout looked like coming back on in the Mataura. The river had returned to a normal flow and there were a few fish moving. Well, I’m here to tell you; the fish were not “on” for long. The next day it began raining and the river returned to a minor flood level.

As we had experienced these conditions before, Hubert and I made the decision to target the smaller waters such as the Otamita, Waimea, Waikaka, Waipahi and the larger Pomahaka. By December most of these smaller tributaries are usually running low, often too warm



Frank Kappl, a keen and skilled member of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers, was fishing the South Island at the same time as Trevor and Hubert and also enjoyed some great fishing

and quite weedy. This year, with the cool conditions, they were in quite good shape.

We amused ourselves fishing these rivers for the first week. We did not catch lots of fish, but we did catch fish every day and the quality of the fish was good. We caught a number of trout in the 3 to 4 pound range as well as the usual 1 and 2 pounders. About a quarter of these fish were prepared to “look up” and take a size 16 Parachute Adams. The rest readily accepted Hubert’s Bismarck Nymph in a similar size.

In the second week we moved into Otago hoping for some better weather, which we got. We based ourselves >>>

at Ranfurly and fished the immediate area. The fishing was not as good as we had experienced on some previous occasions but nevertheless it was quite rewarding. On our best day there we caught 11 browns that ranged from 3 to 6 pounds, and that evening we added another 3 of around 2 pounds. These were all sighted fish and, like Gore, they fell mostly to the Bismarck although a couple took a dry during the evening rise.

During this trip Hubert's Bismarck again proved its worth. It is a great representation of the Deleatidium Mayfly Nymph that is so prevalent in New Zealand rivers. In the streams that we fish we find that it should be tied in size 16. Hubert is very fussy when he ties this pattern to ensure that the black bead is tied onto the hook shank in exactly the correct position. We find that this fly sinks quickly (like its namesake boat in WW2!) but will still ride happily along behind a size 16 Parachute Adams without pulling it under the water.

We left New Zealand mid-December and returned home. I spoke to another fly fisherman recently who arrived in Southland on the day that we left. He stayed for two weeks and reported that the main river was in flood most of that time and fishing was extremely difficult.

Sometimes it pays to not be too rigid about where you fish when you go to New Zealand. If the conditions are not so good in your chosen spot, consult Mr Google and be prepared to move. The South Island is not that big so there is usually somewhere within driving distance where you can fish in weather that is a little more favourable.



One of Hubert's very neat and well-organised fly boxes



A size 16 Bismarck – Hubert's wonderful nymph that catches so many trout in both Australia and New Zealand



Unhooking Those Unwanted Hook-Ups

... from the Hastings Fly Fishers newsletter – November 2019 issue. Reprinted with permission. These suggestions are from Bob, one of the Hastings Club's life members.

Yes, I know we usually like hook-ups, but there are those unwanted ones at times. Here are a few tips to unhook those "unwanted" hook-ups.

1. Don't tighten the line. When your cast ends up in the brush or trees don't pull, as that just ties a knot or tightens the wraps of leader making it tougher to free your flies. Many times you can simply stay calm, don't pull, and let the line fall in the water. The current will sometimes slowly pull the flies free from willows or other brush close to the water. When that doesn't work proceed to this next suggestion.
2. When your flies are loosely wrapped or the hook point is lightly embedded try to gently shake the flies free. With a loose line and a fair amount of slack quickly wiggle the rod tip up and down or side to side. If the flies don't come free then repeat this with more and more force. Remember to always leave enough slack to put big waves in the line as you shake the rod tip. The quick changes in angle from up to down that you create by sending these waves is often enough to free the flies.
3. When you hook a rock under water you can often pull the flies free by pulling straight upstream. Bounce the rod gently at first and then give it more and more force. Don't risk breaking your rod though. Check your hook point for dulling after the fly comes free.
4. If you hook a stick under water try pointing straight at the snag and pull steadily. If you can't move the stick

from the bottom try several different angles. Many times if you find the correct angle you can pull sticks out of the mud or rocks on the bottom and then remove your flies.

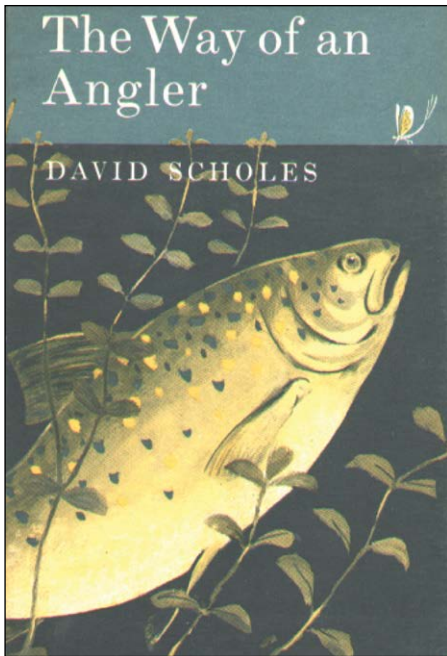
5. Sometimes you just won't win and your flies need to be broken off. Do this by pointing the rod directly at the snag and steadily tighten the line until the tippet breaks. By pulling only on the line and leader and not the rod you should at least get your leader back and won't risk breaking a fly rod worth hundreds of dollars to save a much cheaper fly.
6. Make sure you fish barbless flies, not only for the fish, but also so you can get yourself unstuck when that occasionally occurs.

Don't get too frustrated when you get stuck. Remember, if you don't get stuck occasionally you aren't casting close enough to the banks or getting your flies deep enough to catch fish.

Ps: After a hook-up your hook will probably need sharpening! Or change your fly!

Book Review – The Way of an Angler, by David Scholes

Bill Jeans has offered to provide some reviews of important books in our library. David Scholes' *The Way of an Angler* is without doubt one of our finest books on Australian fly fishing.



Scholes, David (1963)

The Way of an Angler: An appreciation of fly-fishing on many waters. Jacaranda Press: Brisbane; 8vo; 184pp; frontis; title vignette, 16 full-page plates, text-illustrations; index; hard cover; dust jacket.

This is a book of reminiscence rather than of instruction, although the reader will be educated as much as entertained by his stories of fishing in Victoria, Tasmania, the Monaro, America and in Britain. 'Mr Findlay's Water-race' was selected for the excellent anthologies by Eric Rolls (*An Anthology of Australian Fishing*) and Jack Pollard (*The Scream of the Reel*). Pollard also included a number of shorter excerpts.

This is another fine book by David Scholes. In the penultimate chapter ('I Believe in Fishing Stories'), David Scholes brings up

that perennial delight, the strange-but-true tale, where he writes about the disbelief of anglers when it comes to such stories.

He writes: "I was, until the spring of 1961, just as questioning as most anglers, but now I am likely to accept any kind of fish story as genuine, no matter how fantastic; the change being due to the fact that I was at this time involved in the most unusual occurrence myself. But although I had a witness present and can support my story with others very similar, whenever I relate what happened to somebody else I can detect a faint but definite look of uncertainty on the countenance, a distinct shadow of doubt."

"There is nothing more gloriously mysterious," says David Scholes, "than fly fishing. Yet most fly fishermen, after only a few years at the game, are tempted to speak with considerable authority. This is a grievous mistake (except, perhaps for the fish!), for there will come a day when, in a remarkably short time, some quite positive conviction is either woefully shaken or completely shattered. Once the angler is past this stage, his fishing really begins; but even then it is wise not to be too dogmatic."

The fishing discussed in this book covers the author's own angling experience from quite soon after commencement until the season just ended. He has chosen to tell this by a series of reminiscences and discoveries which, by their nature, should prove of interest and general appeal not only to those who are just beginning with the rod, but also to seasoned veterans. He relates events as they happen all over the world.

(With kind permission of Jim Findlay, Australian Fishing Books.)

Fishing in Patagonia – Jurassic lake

... John Hannagan

I had a call from my travel agent (Hema) in late July telling me she had finalised my air fares and accommodation arrangements for Argentina in late November and early December. She added that all other arrangements for the fishing trip in Patagonia were being handled by Gin Clear Travel. This came as quite a surprise as I had no plans to fish in Patagonia and informed Hema of same. She responded that my friend Hamish Wallace had told her that I was part of a group heading to Jurassic Lake and to go ahead with the same booking as the rest of the group.

Needless to say, I fell in with the arrangements and started researching Patagonia and Lake Strobel, popularly

known as “Jurassic Lake” as a consequence of its population of very large rainbows with some exceeding 20 lbs and many 10 lb plus.

The lake is around 60 square kilometres (Great Lake in Tasmania is some 154 square kilometres) set in a huge basalt plain at the foot of the Andes. It has crystal clear waters and alkaline conditions that have encouraged amazing growth of trout which feed on a very large shrimp population.

Trout were introduced to the lake in the 1990’s and exploded, as in lake Pedder, but the fish at Strobel kept getting bigger and establishing a very healthy population that shows no sign



John caught some magnificent fish at Jurassic Lake

>>>

of diminishing, although the lodge manager said that the sizes were tending down. This might be due to the heavy population and the fact that very few fish are taken by anglers.

We were booked into Estancia Laguna Verde which owns 95% of the lake and surrounding land, including the all-important Barrancoso River which provides the lake with its crystal-clear water from the snow melt in the Andes and is the spawning run for the rainbows. The only other lodge on the lake is Jurassic Lodge, which has a small section at the bottom of the Barrancoso river and

two large pools before it enters the lake. They also have lake frontage on both sides of the river .

The location is very isolated and getting there from El Calafate (the closest airport) is a five-hour drive with most being done in Hilux utes over what are best described as tracks. Despite the seemingly barren landscape there is a teeming bird and wildlife including the Puma, which one of our party insisted he saw on a trip back to the lodge but was judged to be a very large feral cat by most of the party.



... and here's another superb rainbow

The defining characteristic of the region is its wind, with 40 km/hr plus common and occasionally winds exceeding 100 km/hr. Rain and cold unpredictable weather are also a defining feature of the area and we had been instructed to pack blizzard gear. Fortunately, we didn't get to experience the harsh weather as the sun shone every day but one, and temperatures were almost "balmy" for the region. We were told this was most unusual.

Tour leader for the week was Andrew Fuller from the Flyfisher in Melbourne.

The fishing was spectacular both on the lake and in the river with all members of the group doing well. Two fish caught were just shy of 20 lbs and plenty were

in the 14 – 18 lbs category. I don't expect to catch as many trout of such size ever again in my life.

The lodge is very comfortable, and the guides are first class and eager to get you onto fish. In regard to flies to take I would recommend that you make use of the guides who will tie up what you need overnight. Taking two rods, a 6-weight and 7-weight, is a sensible option as the rods can break – mine did.

For details on costings, gear, getting there and what to expect go to Nicholas Reygaert at travel@gin-clear.com.



The Tassie Report

... from Chris Wisniewski (with Tasmania's IFS)

Despite the atrocious weather that we turned on for the World Fly Fishing Championship in the first week of December the weather has generally been fantastic in Tasmania for trout fishing. We could do with a little more rain in the east of the Central Plateau with lakes Leake and Tooms now getting low and the South Esk experiencing low flows in the lower section. But the fishing is still good. Lake Leake is fishing well for those fishing dry flies.

In fact most of our rivers are fishing well – to nymphs and dries during the day and a focus on caddis in the evening. The Meander River is worth a look with a good cool flow coming from Huntsman Dam. Anglers should remember that there is now access to the section below the Dam with the tracks that were developed for the World Fly Fishing Championship. This a boulder stretch of

river that can be a bit slippery and fast, so be careful. Head downstream below the township of Meander if you are not sure-footed.

Woods Lake has held a good level. The aquatic plant growth in some areas is getting thick as the lake level falls, but this is providing some great habitat for insects and fish. The fishing here has been as good as ever.

Penstock Lagoon has also been fishing well with lots of insect life and some super fish.

The water level at Little Pine Lagoon is also good but falling steadily through evaporation and low inflows. However water is not being drawn from this lagoon and it should hold a good fishable level through to the end of the season. The brown trout in Little Pine are >>>

in superb condition and the mayflies have been about when the weather is right. The hatches have been short though, so you need to be on the water when they are on. The same old story!

Midging rainbows will eat a nymph in the wind lanes on Dee Lagoon. Some nice-sized browns have been spotted along the edges cruising through the logs eating dries.

I mentioned Talbots Lagoon in my report a few months ago. This is fishing really well. Both browns and rainbows are taking mayflies and damsels. Those VFFA members heading down to Brumbys for the week with Peter Hayes in February should ask him about this, as he knows it well.

We have had reports of fish up in the waves and cruising the shores at the Great Lake. There have been lots of beetles about to keep the fish looking up. Wind lanes at daylight have been productive with the settled weather, and so too sharking during the day as the northerlies come up.

We have also had a report of good polaroiding from the shore at Lake

Pedder. The fish there are taking black spinners on the white quartz beaches. Anglers have also enjoyed some top polaroiding in the clear waters of Lake St Clair, where trout have been taking gum beetles and black spinners.

Lake King William is nearly full due to a Hydro shut down. It can be accessed by boat from the Derwent Bridge end which is unusual for this time of year. Anglers have found some very exciting fishing here to beetle feeders.

The Nineteen Lagoons are low and need some rain, so anglers need to focus on the slightly deeper lagoons such as Carters, First and Dudley. There have been plenty of fish on the sand flats at Old Lake Augusta.

We had a bit of a fire scare back in November but unlike the devastating fires on the mainland, trout fishing and access in Tasmania have been relatively unaffected thus far this summer. So - no better time to come down and trout fish Tasmania."

Very best wishes for the New Year.



Kites Imperial - Tom Sutcliffe Art

A Note From Jim Blakeslee

(Jim is our regular correspondent from Warrnambool, and a highly skilled angler. He wrote this note to a friend a few weeks ago, but copied your editor in.)

Tricia and I got off the ferry yesterday and returned home from a seven-day hike with two nephews on the Central Plateau in Tasmania. We walked from Lake Ada car park to the west and fished a number of lakes and tarns including the Christies chain, Fanny, New Years and Lunka. There had been several weeks of winterish weather before we got there, including snow when the World Fly Fishing Championships were on. According to Mike Stevens at the Essential Fly Fisher in Launceston, there were 55 teams of competitors, including a team from Kiribati. Altogether they caught over 2,000 fish and everyone used sinking lines, dredging with a rig of three big wet flies. The individual winner was Howard Croston from England. The winning 5-man team was from France. Competitors get points for the number of fish caught and the cumulative length of the trout. Highest total wins. They fished Penstock, Little Pine and Woods Lakes from boats, even during snowstorms, and two lowland rivers, the Mersey and the Meander.

Anyway, we started our hike on December 7 and the Championships finished on the 8th. We had cold and windy weather, and a little rain and a sprinkling of snow too. No hatches, no beetles flying, only a few rises - very quiet. I caught a 3 lb brown at the big Christies Lake the first day (which I kept to check its stomach contents - mudeyes - and to eat of course) but after that nothing. We polaroided when it was sunny but only saw a few. Not many near the edges. Nephews Jason and James

fished hard and each hooked fish but lost them.

When we got home yesterday afternoon we unpacked, cleaned and put away gear, washed clothes, etc. Then to take out my frustrations at about 9pm I went down to the Danger Board on the Hopkins River where Russell O'Shea was waiting for me. We each caught 25 - 30 estuary perch and a few bream in a couple hours. He was casting a bubble float with a galaxias minnow trailing a couple feet behind. I fished my usual tandem rig of #6 grey nymph followed by a Green Matuka. I got one on the first cast and one on almost every second cast after that, and even a number of doubles. No mulloway crashing about, but maybe next time.

Regarding New Zealand flies, tie up lots of small nymphs and dries. I mainly use a #14 Hare's Ear and Gold nymph with a gold bead head, a #16 Pheasant Tail Nymph (I tie a version called a Lapsley's Pheasant Tail. I'll send the pattern and photo), and slender #16 black nymphs such as a Quill Gordon nymph. For dries, if they are on Cicadas I use a #10 Royal Wulff and #6 Green Cicada. For mayfly hatches in April I use mainly a #16 Parachute Adams, a #16 grey CDC parachute Dun, and a #16 Quill Gordon. A few #10 Hoppers and Humpies would be worth throwing in your fly box, too.

All for now, Jimbo

FLY OF THE MONTH

Bob Wyatt's Deer Hair Emerger



This is a great fly, and is relatively easy to tie. But first, two acknowledgements. Bob Wyatt has been a very significant contributor to fly fishing literature in recent years. He has written countless articles in fly fishing magazines, has authored a superb book (*What Trout Want – the Educated Trout and other myths*), and produced a two-volume set of DVDs entitled *Flies That Catch Fish*". And I've undoubtedly omitted other contributions he has made. His Deer Hair Emerger is demonstrated in Volume One of his DVD set. Thank you Bob for this great fly.

My other acknowledgement? For years Gordon Brooks wrote the fly tying notes in the South Australian Fly Fishing Association's monthly newsletter. His notes were superb, and I frequently printed off his monthly contributions and stored them in my collection of fly tying articles. His notes on this fly, the Deer Hair Emerger, were written in 2014 and I had no difficulty in hunting them out when I was looking for a good fly for this month's issue. My description of the tying procedure that follows is largely taken from Gordon's description. Thank you Gordon.

In his book *What Trout Want* Bob writes about this fly (the 'DHE') at some length. "It was originally designed for fishing as a static mayfly emerger on Scottish lochs. It quickly became my go to emerger. In appropriate sizes it works extremely well during the emergent period of any hatch, anywhere, and maybe has an edge on some of the more complicated emerger patterns.

If you have trouble getting it to float properly, this issue can be fixed by a couple of basic fly tying points and a tactical use of floatant. Getting the DHE right is just

about proportions. If the wing is too long, for instance, it can overbalanced the keel effect of the sunken abdomen. This fly isn't meant to float like a conventional dry fly, but with the abdomen and even the thorax completely submerged. Getting floatant on the abdomen will definitely capsized it so that it floats on its side on the surface rather than in it."

Materials for Bob's Deer Hair Emerger:

Hook: Curved emerger, sizes 10 – 20 (e.g. Kamasan B100 Grub Hook).

Thread: Brown 6/0.

Wing: Deer hair, fine to medium with short tapered tips, or hair from the heel of snowshoe rabbit's foot for hook sizes 16 – 20.

Rib: Tag of the tying thread.

Abdomen: Hare's ear dubbing.

Thorax: Spikey fur from the centre of a hare's mask, darker than the abdomen.

Tying Procedure:

1. Leaving a thread tag of about 12 cm, start the thread behind the eye and wind firm touching turns around the shank to a point well around the bend, as shown in the photo. Then take two or three turns to return the thread to a point about a quarter of the distance along the shank from the eye – this being the point where the wing will be tied in. (The thread tag should now be hanging down past the hook point. This tag will be used later to add a rib to the fly.)
2. Select a small to medium bunch of hair from a deer hair patch. Ideally the tips of the fibres should be short tapered rather than long and fine. Remove the short fibres and any fluff and underfur, then even up the tips in a stacker.
3. Tie the wing on so that the tips extend forward over the eye of the hook and the height of the wing will be equal to the length of the hook shank. Make the first wrap of thread with moderate tension so that the fibres don't flare too much. Then make succeeding turns back towards the bend of the hook and tighter to lock the wing in position. Five or six turns should be sufficient to hold everything in place. You can also at this point tie a couple of turns of thread around the base of the wing to tidy it up if the deer hair fibres have spread out a bit too much.
4. Trim the waste from the wing at an angle and then bind down the stubs with the thread. Continue wrapping the tying thread along the shank to the point where you will start the abdomen.
5. Apply a thin layer of dubbing to the tying thread and wind a slender abdomen to the rear of the wing. Then take the tying thread around in front of the wing.
6. Pick up the thread tag at the end of the abdomen and wind it as a rib in the reverse direction to your dubbing turns up the abdomen. Tie the rib off in front of the wing and trim off the excess.
7. Now lay a darker layer of spiky dubbing to the thread and starting behind the eye wind the thorax back against the base of the wing to hold the wing vertically. Then make two turns through the thorax before finishing with a whip finish behind the eye.

VFFA 2019 meetings & other activities

February 2020

- 3 Monday First Council Meeting for 2020 – 6:30 pm.
15 – 23 Tasmania trip to Hayes on Brumby’s.
Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray.
27 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
“Liars’ Night” – reports from members on their summer fishing.

March 2020

- 13 – 15 2020 Big River trip. Event Co-ordinator – John Pilkington.
19 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker - Anthony McGrath, Senior Project Officer with the
Victorian Fisheries Authority, talking about angler access to rivers.
22 Sunday Nymphing Techniques – the Goulburn River, a workshop run by Jo
and Rick Dobson. Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray
25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm.

April 2020

- 10 - 12 Easter 2020
16 Thursday General Meeting – Lunchtime at the Kelvin Club
Speaker – James Laverty, from Fly Odyssey Australia.
29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

May 2020

- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker (TBC)
27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

June 2020

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker (TBC) - Mark Weigall, owner / manager of Millbrook Lakes
24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2019 Annual Dinner:

- AFN Fishing & Outdoors • Armadale Angling • Aussie Angler
- Australian Trout Foundation • Compleat Angler (CBD) • Essential Flyfisher
- The Flyfisher Melbourne • Fly Finz Fishing Tackle & Books
- FlyLife magazine • Hook Up Bait & Tackle • Hurley’s Fly Fishing
- J.M. Gillies • Mayfly Tackle • Millbrook Lakes and Victorian Fisheries Authority.