

FLY LINES



JULY 2014

Our guest speaker for the July meeting will be Dallas D'Silva, General Manager of VRFish. While Dallas confesses that he is a keen saltwater angler, targeting mainly snapper and calamari, he has a growing interest in fishing for salmonids. He is well aware of the challenges and opportunities currently facing our Victorian trout fishery and sees these as a high priority for VRFish to address. Over coming months he will be leading the review of VRFish's policy on trout.

At our July meeting he will present to us his thinking on these issues.

July Meeting
with
Dallas D'Silva

Thursday, July 17, at the
Celtic Club

The Meeting will be preceded by Dinner at the Celtic Club, which will commence at 6:00 pm.

All members are invited to attend the Dinner, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking by 12 noon on Thursday, July 17 – either by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message, or by sending a text message to President Terry Rogers on 0438 553 326.



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THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

JULY 2014

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July Index

VFFA Office Holders	2	An Elder Statesman - Jim Allen Part 2	14
July Meeting	3	Tips And Tactics To Catch More Trout	18
Web Fish	3	Hopkins River Bream	25
Advance Notice - the August Annual Dinner...	4	VFFA Cane Day	29
The June Meeting – with David Pickering	5	This Month's Yarn	31
President's Message	10	Fly of the Month	32
Warrnambool - Annual Game Dinner	11	VFFA Meetings & Activities	36
Editor's Desk – Lyndon Webb	12		

July Meeting

Our guest speaker for the July meeting will be Dallas D'Silva, General Manager (Executive Officer) of VRFish. VRFish is the government funded representative organisation for recreational anglers in Victoria. As such it is committed to representing and advocating the interests of the 721,000 amateur anglers located throughout Victoria.

Dallas was appointed as General Manager late last year. Prior to his appointment he held senior department positions in fisheries management and policy for over 15 years in Queensland, Torres Strait, New South Wales and Victoria. Prior to taking on the VRFish role he was the Industry Liaison Manager with NSW Fisheries. He was also the Executive Officer of the Australian Fisheries Managers Forum from 2010 - 2012. He has an environmental science

degree from Melbourne University and diplomas in fisheries management from the Australian Maritime College.

At a personal level he is married with two young sons. He is a very keen saltwater angler but tells us he fished for trout when he was young and plans to rekindle his interest in salmonids. Over coming months he will be reviewing the VRFish trout policy, as the current issues facing our north east and Gippsland trout fisheries are a high priority for VRFish. He sees lots of challenges and opportunities ahead and will discuss these in more detail in his presentation at our July meeting.

So our meeting on July 17 will provide a wonderful opportunity for us to hear at first hand what VRFish, a significant organisation representing amateur anglers, has in mind for our trout fishery.

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 that can be read and saved on iPads and tablets like eBooks
- Calendar of all activities that can be synced with all you digital device calendars
- Gallery of events - Photos and Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand

Advance Notice – the August Annual Dinner

This year's Annual Dinner is scheduled for Friday, August 22. It is our 82nd Annual Dinner, and will again be held at the Celtic Club in Queen Street, Melbourne. The cost is \$65 per person, and an invitation is included as an insert in this Newsletter.

Our guest speaker for the evening is our own Rex Hunt. Rex is well known to us all, and has a well-deserved reputation as a very entertaining and engaging speaker. He is perhaps best known for his involvement in AFL football. He played 208 AFL games with Richmond, Geelong and St Kilda clubs, and following his retirement as a player spent many years as a broadcaster. But it is his lifelong and passionate interest in angling that is the reason for his invitation to speak at our Dinner. In 2000 he was awarded the Centenary Medal by then Prime Minister John Howard for his services to Australian Football and Fishing.

He is a member of the Australian Fishing Tackle Association Hall of Fame. His Television Fishing Show ran for 17 years in Australia and was shown in over 70 countries. He is currently working with the Government to get kids off the streets and into fishing. He was a founding board member of the Rex Hunt Futurefish Foundation fighting for anglers' rights and promoting families and children into fishing. He is also a founding board member of the Australian Fly Fishing Museum, preserving the history and ethics of fly fishing as well as encouraging youngsters to try fly fishing.

Above all he is a passionate angler enjoying all forms of the sport. But his greatest passion is fly fishing for trout in small streams. Be assured, Rex is a polished performer, and his presentation at this year's Annual Dinner will be well worth hearing.



The Annual Dinner – always a highlight of the VFFA calendar

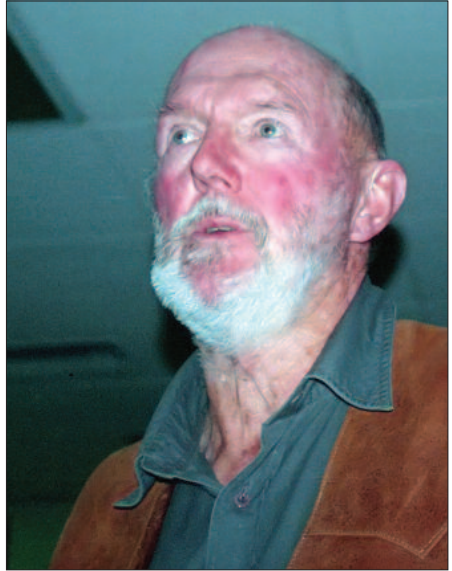
The June Meeting – with David Pickering

David Pickering, from the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre at Thornton, was guest speaker at our June meeting. Here is a brief summary of his presentation.

The lower Goulburn is a tailwater - its level is controlled and raised or lowered according to the demands of the downstream irrigators. For most of the fishing season the level is kept high, so when you got there you can't see shallow gravel bars or the bottom, and you can't wade out to fish. When the river is high like this we use a technique called 'high bank polaroiding', where you stand on a high bank and polaroid fish. It's a technique that involves lots of crawling around on hands and knees, hiding behind trees, and flicking out short casts. You find yourself in all sorts of awkward places and when you finally connect with a 4 lb fish you have to try to get it out without being busted off. So it's not everyone's cup of tea.

The best time for high bank polaroiding is from 11 am to 4 pm, and later when the light deteriorates you need to change to another technique. Perhaps you can find a corner of the river where you can fish the nymph and indicator method. In other words you need to keep changing your strategy through the day and using different methods that will work where the fish are.

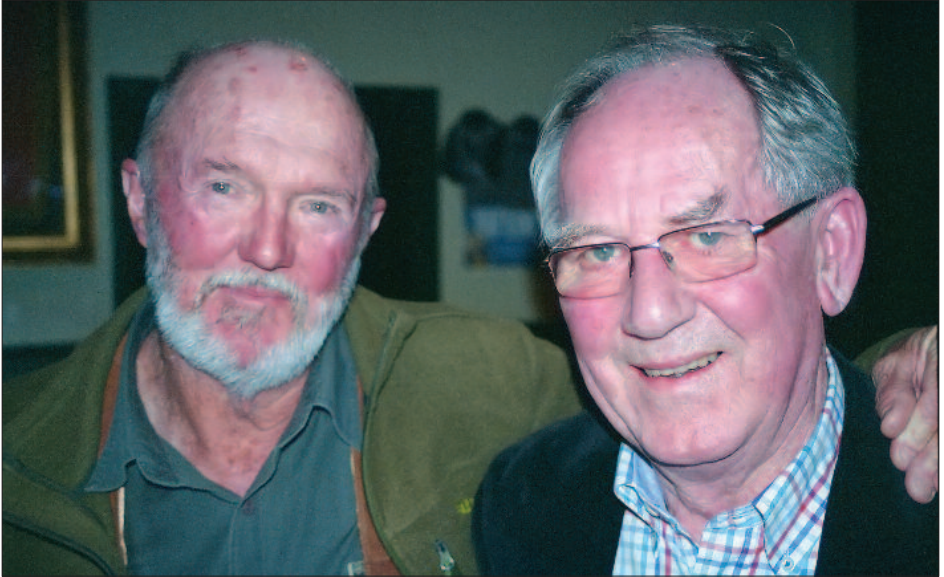
Those who have polaroided fish in those wonderful New Zealand South Island rivers will find that polaroiding here in Victoria is very different. The New Zealand rivers have bottoms of light-coloured stones and grey or cream gravel and sand, and the trout stand out on these light-coloured bottoms. But the bottoms of our Victorian rivers tend to be dark or black because they are made of old rock, and the trout in these rivers blend in with the bottoms and are much



David Pickering – guest speaker in June

harder to see. But when they shift to those high banks and lift to get into the feeding lies we can spot them. Then they are visible to us.

A group of young blokes who come to Thornton have specialised in this style of fishing and they catch a lot of good fish. They hit those high banks at the right time of day and they might cast to ten fish over a couple of kilometres of high banks. If they land one or two they think they've had a good day, because it isn't easy fishing. It's hard but they enjoy doing it. And we're not talking small fish here – these guys are catching lots of 3 and 4 pounders. A few months ago I phoned fellow guide Antony from New Zealand, as I do regularly when I'm guiding in New Zealand. He had taken a young angler out on a drift boat for a half-day session on the Goulburn and



President Terry Rogers took good care of our guest speaker

they had caught 15 fish with nearly all of them about 3 lb. Antony told me that every backwater eddy they cast a fly into had a fish in it. So clearly there are some great fish to be caught in the Goulburn - if you have the right tactics and go after them.

Everybody hits the Goulburn in September and October, and then again in March, April and May. Why? Because at these times of the year it is low and you can wade out and fish lots of lovely flat ripples and glides. What's the fishing like? The first few days after the level is dropped you can pull fish out one after another. But then as time passes it gets progressively harder because there are lots of anglers hitting it, the water is crystal clear and shallow and smooth, and the fish become very spooky. But at other times of the year when the water is high, these same anglers fish other rivers in the area because the Goulburn is out of their league. The hardest time of the year to fish the Goulburn is the month of May. At this time it is really difficult because the water is

very low, the fish are super spooky, and the hatches are slowing down.

We have a Goulburn River Hatch Chart on our website (at <http://www.gvffc.com/Miscel/goulburn%20hatch%20charts.htm>) yet we've discovered that most anglers know very little about the hatches on the Goulburn over the season. The chart tells you when the premium times occur, and thus enables you to fish with the right flies at the right time of the season. American fisheries run on hatch charts and American fly shops know exactly when a hatch is going to happen. They know the week when it will happen and when it's going to move up the river. The stonefly hatch on the Madison, for example, moves up the river progressively over some weeks, so the fishermen are able to follow the hatch. They have information about the hatches worked out in minute detail.

Our stoneflies here are quite small but over in the USA they are huge. The biggest fly we have on the Goulburn and Rubicon

is the Kossie Dun, which you will see written about as Australia's largest mayfly. Back in the good old days in the 1960s, when big flies were in vogue, anglers were fishing them on waterways that weren't heavily fished and that had big numbers of fish, so the trout would take those large flies. But the pressure is on these days – there are not so many fish, and the fish rely on the hatches. And our hatches aren't of big insects, so matching the hatch becomes very important. Many of us need to think about sizing down. We are using size 12 flies when we should be using 14s, and 14s when we should be using 16s. We guides are trying to match the hatch day in and day out, and whatever is happening on the rivers we have to log onto quickly.

As guides we spend hours teaching entomology to people, trying to get them to understand our insects. They need to understand the importance and the relevance of the various insect cycles and what they should be fishing in each cycle. Many anglers just go to their fly box and pull out a favourite fly. It might catch them a couple of fish, but they are handicapping themselves. They need to know the entomology of the rivers and how this translates to their fly box. My guys from Thornton go with me to America and see hatches there the likes of which we never see here. They get to see the value of knowing how to interpret the hatch information back to their fly boxes. In a hard fishery, which is what we've got here now, the best fishers are the ones who know what fly to use at any given time. The Goulburn has set hatches each season and successful anglers will have flies in their fly boxes to match these hatches.

We are lucky, however, in that we have one fly that seems to work endlessly throughout season – Bushy's Emerger.

People often fish a Parachute Adams, but it has a white post and none of the duns floating down the Goulburn in an evening rise have white wings. So a Parachute Adams doesn't match the evening rise. It might catch a few fish for you, but while you're fishing it I'll be catching heaps more, as someone fishing the right fly will always catch more.



Rick Dugina was decked out in fine style

But even if you have the right fly in your fly box you still have to match the size. Generally the flies we pull out of our fly boxes are too big. Then when we put a too large fly over a fish and get a refusal our common reaction is to think: "He's not eating that fly so I'll try something else." Mostly we should be fishing flies in sizes 16 and 18. You need to get the size right, because when you get the size correct your catch rate improves, your catch rate being determined by your skill and your knowledge. You can all cast, but do you know the life cycle of mayflies and caddis flies? You should also know what a cripple mayfly looks like, and which caddis

species emerges upside down, and what colour the pupa is when it emerges?

Caddis, after all, are one third of a trout's diet.

But when you kill a trout and do a gut analysis what do you find? Generally 75% to 80% of what you find are nymphs, so 80% of your fishing time ought to be on the bottom. You can fish all day with a dry fly but if there's nothing floating down the river to make the trout come up you could well end up catching nothing. The best rig we can use today is the indicator and nymph rig. When I approach a river I will watch for several minutes. Let's say it's 10 o'clock in the morning and nothing is happening. There's no hatch, so I will use a nymph under an indicator. You can use a dry fly as your indicator, or a piece of fluff; in either case your nymph is down there doing the work.

My experience is that most people who use this rig fish the nymph too shallow. We need the nymph deep enough to dredge the bottom. A guy came into our shop one day last December telling us he had fished the Rubicon from 9 am until 12 noon, using the nymph and indicator method, and had caught only three fish. However he revealed that he had fished over 4 km of the Rubicon during this time, so had obviously raced along and not fished thoroughly.

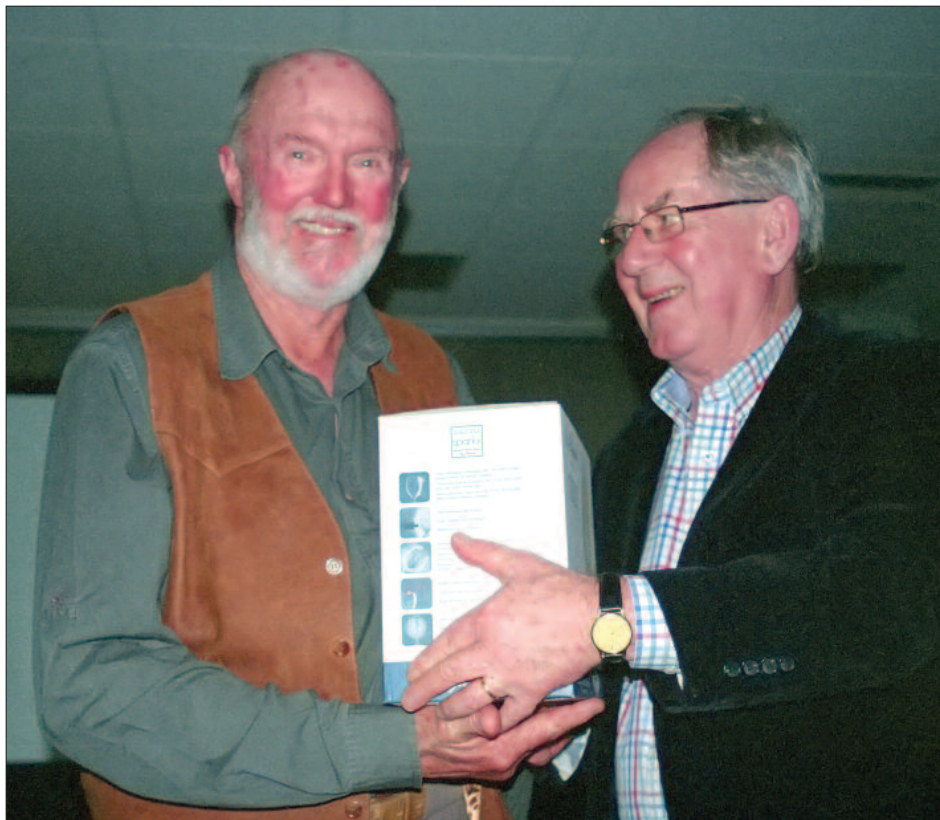
Nymph indicator fishing is boring because it is repetitive, but very productive if you do it the correct way and cover the water. Two or three drifts through a pool is not really searching the water. A piece of water that is 10 feet wide will require about 10 drifts, and a piece of water 20 feet wide will require 20 drifts. You must thoroughly search the water in front of you with several drifts before you move up a bit. The reason why you need to comb the water with a multitude of drifts is because a fish down in the depths will only move a small distance to intercept passing nymphs. He has found his spot in

the pool and has nymphs coming towards him in the current. His 'reward for effort' instinct tells him not to bother moving too far to the left or the right because there's plenty of food coming straight to him anyway. And each fish in each pool is doing the same thing, so if your drifts are separated by a metre you might easily miss them. Without a thorough search you're possibly missing several fish in each pool.

A pool 15 metres long in the Rubicon River will hold on average 5 to 10 fish, so we have to work hard to find all those 5 or 10 fish in each pool. This is our lot in a hard fishery, and the guys who are thorough catch more fish than the guys who aren't. If you want to catch more fish then you have to work harder at it, as we just don't have the fish population here. In the USA they have rivers with 4,000 to 6,000 fish per kilometre, and a good angler can catch 50 to 100 fish per day. But our fishery is harder so we need to do it better.

So on the Goulburn when there are no fish rising we fish nymphs and indicators, and when they are on the top we match the hatch. However a big problem we have in Victoria is that our best hatches often occur when everybody is heading for home. With daylight saving it doesn't get dark until 9:30 pm and if you're travelling back to Melbourne after waiting for the hatch you won't get home until 1 o'clock in the morning, which is tough if you face work the next day. Our hatches happen late in the day because it is the water temperature that triggers the hatches and the temperature during the day is too hot for the insects to hatch. So they wait until the evening when the water cools down sufficiently.

In open rivers such as the Goulburn the daytime air temperatures and the sunlight drive the water temperature beyond the limit at which insects will hatch. So, for



Thanks for coming David – greatly appreciated

example, when the river is at 15°C and the temperature at which the insects hatch is 11°C we have to wait for the water to cool. In the daylight saving months the highest water temperature each day occurs at about 4 pm and then it progressively decreases. As it comes down it will eventually hit the required hatching temperature for a particular insect. But Victoria's climate north of the Divide is such that hatches on the rivers around Eildon generally don't happen until about 8 or 9 o'clock at night, and we can't change that fact. But we do see a short morning hatch because in the morning the water is warming and will go through a particular hatching temperature. But it

usually doesn't last very long, as some of our rivers rise by 1° in less than half an hour. Of course some insects hatch at night, particularly the Kossie Duns that are making a comeback after the drought. During the drought years the temperatures didn't get down sufficiently until perhaps 11 o'clock at night and the Kossie Duns did well then because there were no predators, i.e. birds, out then to eat them. We've all seen fish rising at night, and often that's when the big boys come out to feed. They can still be quite selective at night though, and while the colour doesn't matter we still have to get the size right.

President's Message



The depths of winter are upon us. As I sit on top of the heater in my office to compose this message it is 6°C outside, and that's not on top of Mount Buller but in suburban Melbourne at 11:00 am.

So what has and has not happened since the last issue of the Newsletter. Unfortunately the Partners' Dinner scheduled for Friday, June 13, had to be cancelled due to lack of support. This is most disappointing as this event has, for a number of years, been very successful. The lack of support for this function and fairly low numbers at the Cane Day on Sunday, June 15, has prompted your Council to ask: "What do our members want their Association to do to stimulate their interest?" Following our discussion, the Council has decided to conduct a survey of as many members as is possible, particularly Melbourne based members, to ascertain your thoughts and suggestions.

The plan is to have a member of Council phone you to ascertain answers to some questions that we are currently preparing. Prior to being contacted, please give some thought to what you think should be done to stimulate interest in the VFFA

from your perspective. To speed up the process feel free to send any suggestions to me immediately. My email address is: terry@australianbusinessforensics.com.au

Rick Dugina is the Co-ordinator of the Planting Day scheduled for Sunday, July 13, in the Thornton area. Those willing to assist, and I urge as many as possible to do so, are asked to advise their intention by leaving a message on the Hotline: 0498 254 497.

Our Guest Speaker for the next General Meeting on July 17 is Dallas D'Silva, General Manager of VRFish. Please see further details in this Newsletter and make an effort to attend what will be a very interesting presentation.

The two major social events of our calendar are the Annual Dinner and the Christmas Dinner. The Annual Dinner is fast approaching, and this year it will be held on Friday, August 22, at the Celtic Club, with guest speaker Rex Hunt. The Invitation is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please ensure that you mark off this date in your diary as I would love to make this year's Annual Dinner the biggest we have conducted for many years. I look forward to seeing you there.

Best Wishes,

Terry Rogers

Warrnambool Fly Fishers Annual Game Dinner



Guests and members at last year's Warrnambool Dinner

Dear fellow fly fishers, it's that time of year again! Here is the official invitation for you and your guests to join us at our annual Game Dinner, to be held on Saturday, July 26, at the 'Members Lounge' in the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion, Grafton Road, Warrnambool.

Because of the new venue the cost for WFFC members is \$60, and for others who wish to join us on the night as paying guests the cost is \$75. This is a BYO wine and beer night. Before dinner drinks with deep-fried crumbed abalone will begin at 6:00pm. We will sit down for the first course at 7:00pm for what should be another night of fine food and great

company.

I urge all who would like to attend to register your interest with our President, Adrian Jacobs, before July 24. His mobile number is 0437 620 972. There is a limit of 65 persons who we can fit into the dining room at the Pavilion and places are filling fast, so a prompt response is recommended.

Hafey Rock - Secretary

Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc.

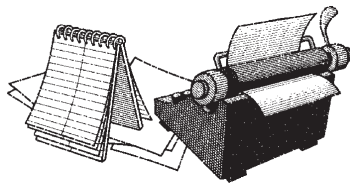
Ph - 0405 348 834

E-mail: hafey_rock@hotmail.com

Mystery Donor

Treasurer Tony Mitchem is again anxious to identify a member who paid his subscription but didn't actually identify himself in the BSB transfer. The member paid in April from a Vic Teachers Credit Union Account, member number 66099 to VFFA. If this is your subscription then please contact Tony so that he can correctly allocate the payment to the right member. Tony can be contacted on mobile 0407 309 797 or email treasurer@vffa.org.au

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"In lakes, when fish don't come, as sometimes they don't, you grasp, all at once, the cosmic sense of scale, the cosmic disparity between the volume of water in front of you and the ridiculously small fly with which you are attempting to search it." ... Ted Leeson, *The Habit of Rivers*.

I agree – lakes can be very intimidating. All that water! Where are the fish and how do you find them?

A few weeks ago Philip Weigall gave a talk at the *Flyfisher* store in Melbourne (the text of which is commenced in this newsletter), and at one point he described a recent trip he'd made to Newlyn Reservoir, a popular Victorian stillwater near Ballarat. It's an attractive lake with a very respectable history. The DEPI stock it every year – 4,000 browns this year, and 4,000 in each of the previous years. So I couldn't help wondering just how many trout might still be there in Newlyn. Apparently this is a very difficult question to answer, as there are so many factors involved. Plenty of those stocked fish have undoubtedly died from predation or other natural causes, anglers (and especially the white-bucket brigade) have removed lots more, and the cormorants too have gathered a hefty quota this past season. So let's make a wild and optimistic guess and suggest that after all those additions and deletions there are perhaps 3,500 left. Newlyn Reservoir has a surface area of about 70 hectares, so if these 3,500 trout were spread evenly over the whole reservoir there should be one fish in each 200 square metres of water. If you were standing on the banks and could imagine a square of water out in front of you, 7 metres on either side and 14 metres

out in front, then this area is close to 200 m² and there should be one trout lingering in there somewhere - on average. If they were evenly distributed. But of course they're not.

I recall from my teaching days and the countless school fetes I attended that you could always find the Year 8 boys – they were invariably hanging around the food stalls. I gather trout are much the same; find the food and you'll find the fish. Which sounds simple, at least in theory. The books also tell us that feeding fish are mostly around lake edges, because that's where much of the food is found. And the wind has an effect – if it blows from the north for a couple of days lots of bugs will be blown down to the south end. Trout apparently also like to gather around lake features such as weed beds, structure (trees), drop offs, inflowing streams, and a rather large list of other supposedly desirable venues. And so it goes. The challenge is in putting all this marvellous theory together when you arrive at the water's edge. If you actually see fish visibly working then you're in business. If they're not then what you see is a huge expanse of windswept water, and the search begins.

I confess that in my weaker moments I've often wondered how I could shortcut this searching process. I once heard of an angler fishing the pondage at Eildon soon after it had been stocked with ex-brood trout from the hatchery. This astute fellow walked the banks with a bag of chook pellets and hurled handfuls out into the water as he strolled along. Mostly nothing happened, but every so often the surface

boiled as ex-brood fish, accustomed to rising to a hatch of pellets, reacted instinctively. Our clever angler thus found his fish.

I grew up in Mildura, a town on the Murray River. In my high school days I recall that a classmate was catching heaps of fish from the river, using an apparently deadly technique – he was fishing with lures and was sprinkling a couple of drops of aniseed oil on his lure before each cast. According to my classmate it was highly illegal to use aniseed oil as a fish attractor because it was so effective. So of course we were sworn to secrecy. And the fish at Mildura apparently loved the stuff, as they were racing down the Murray from as far away as Swan Hill to have a sniff. Or so we were assured. Aniseed oil is a bit scarce at our place at the moment, but I've got some cheap aftershave I could try. Then again it might only attract female trout. Then again it mightn't work at all – it certainly didn't do me any good.

But all this raises the issue of using berley. I saw an angler fishing at Rowville Lakes a couple of years ago using a long pole and a hook baited with a couple of lively maggots. He caught (and released) three of the recently stocked rainbows in the few minutes I watched, and this took his tally to 27. He had a bucket filled with wet sand crawling with maggots, and every few minutes he pitched a handful out into the water to maintain interest. At a subsequent VFFA meeting I asked one of our highly respected members if berley was legitimate when fly fishing for trout. He was mortified, but then admitted that he used berley when fly fishing in saltwater. So apparently berley is ok when you're fishing an estuary for bream, but reprehensible when fishing a lake for trout.

Perhaps my iPhone might help. It has lots of 'apps' that help with fly fishing, but what I needed was for someone to develop



The iBobber and Charger

an app where I simply pointed my iPhone at the water and it would tell me how many fish were there in the water in front of me. All totally fanciful of course; pure science fiction. But when I opened my emails the other morning – there it was! The new 'iBobber!' Sold in tackle stores across the US it does exactly what I've described. It's a small floating electronic fish detector that you tie to the line on your old snapper rod and then cast out into the lake. It then uses sonar to detect any fish drifting past and you can watch the passing parade on the screen of your iPhone. So, for a \$99US investment all your fish finding problems are solved. (What on earth is the world coming too!)



And there's the fish on your iPhone

By the way, my earlier estimate of trout numbers in Newlyn Reservoir represents about 12 or 13 trout per acre, though I've been told that Newlyn is stocked on the basis of 23 fish per acre. The UK Environmental Agency website recommends 200 – 300 pound of fish per acre for natural stillwaters. Are we being short changed here? Again we must be a little cautious, as the science suggests that carrying capacities can vary dramatically from one water to the next. Even so, it would certainly help if the DEPI tossed a few more in for us.

Tight lines, *Lyndon Webb*

An Elder Statesman – Jim Allen – Part 2



*Photo provided by Brad Harris
- FlyLife Magazine*

Dermot O'Brien continues his interview with one of Australia's great fly fishermen Jim Allen.

Jim do you tie your own flies?

No, but I used to.

I recently saw an old photo of you with what appeared to be a mighty sparse fly box. Do you have many flies?

My fly box is bulging with lots of flies I never use. For many years customers would come into my shop and ask why the flies cost a little more than the opposition's, and I used to say that we had them tied by Australian tiers and not Chinese tiers, which was not all that true, because we did get a lot of flies tied by a specialist English company in Kenya using cheap labour. But by the time they went back to England then to us there was a bit of margin attached to them. But I used to say to some of these men, often professionals, that they should tie their own flies as it was very therapeutic.

I would sell them all the kit and all the gear they needed, often \$600 or \$700 worth ... well sold by Jim Allen, I say! And they would go home with the outfit and all the pretty feathers and

therapeutically create some apparition with tinsel, fur and feather that looked awful. They never complained about the cost of flies again. Flies are the business end of your gear. You can buy a \$1,000 rod but the thing that matters is the fly on the end. In absolute truth, the fly probably does not matter as much as the quality of the hook. The quality of the leader, the fly, the hook and the knot should all be exactly 100%. It is the business end of your gear.

I am a completely hopeless case. If I walk into a tackle shop in New Zealand, I will walk out with a hundred bucks worth of flies. Cannot help myself. It is pathetic. And because I don't ever use them, they just sit in my box. It is wrong to think my fly box is sparse. Jill Allen's fly box is usually full of crap that I never use.

How many different flies do you use?

In a year I would probably use no more than 10 or 15 different patterns. I have a favourite beetle pattern and I have some favourite mayfly patterns and I have a few favoured wet flies. But, I cannot help myself; if I see something that looks attractive I am sold. I am as guilty of having done to me as I have done to others as they stood in front of great trays of pretty looking flies.

I can hear hundreds of fly fishermen cheering!

Yes, I have sold hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of flies, but truly, you don't use many.

In talking about flies, you touched on something that tens of thousands of words has been written about. What is your opinion of presentation versus imitation?

Presentation, presentation, presentation. Natural drift of your fly is so important. Presentation will win over a fly that doesn't look so good. Trout are opportunistic feeders, so if it looks insect-like it will get eaten. Occasionally that is wrong - if we get an ant hatch, they will be on ants only and you cannot get 'em off. And, even with your best ant representation they are onto you. When they are selective it is the hardest fishing.

You can create your own hatch. I remember in New Zealand one day I ran a dry fly, a Dad's Favourite, a little mayfly pattern, maybe 50 times over this one trout and I eventually teased him into taking it. I am convinced I created a hatch on that day. If you are able to put 50 perfect presentations over a stationery or feeding trout, I think you have a real chance in a river. Hard to do in a lake; cannot be done there.



Jim's Fly box - photo provided by Mike Stevens

What were the positives and negatives about both your passion and career being in fishing?

It happened by accident. I left school and went into the carpet trade and then into the furniture trade at the old Ball & Welsh store in Flinders Street; so I was born to be a retailer. Starting a fishing tackle shop with Bob Roles was an accident in the sense that I wanted to do it, but I expected Bob to go on with it and for me to be an investor in the enterprise. I thought he was the best fishing tackle salesman I'd ever met. He worked at Turvilles and Bob wanted to own his own shop at the time. We are still great mates today, although the partnership, like most partnerships, didn't work out long term. Incidentally, Bob is one of the most outstanding fly fishermen I have ever met. He was at age 18, and he still is at age 70.

Because the partnership didn't work, I was the one selling tackle, and I started meeting interesting people and I discovered there was so much more to being in the industry than selling fishing tackle. It led me to meeting captains of industry. And meeting genuine Australians, remarkable people from social workers to people working in factories; there is something special about the fly fishing community. I met outstandingly good people. I felt comfortable in my retailing life, and while the original aim was to build the business up and then sell it, I loved it so much and I loved talking to fishermen I kept it going for many years.

Back to fishing, do you kill fish or catch and release?

Both. I think you can take wildlife, and I am an avid duck and quail shooter, but I have a very strong view about it. If you are going to kill something in the wild you must treasure it. You must really

value it. I think I am known for being a killer of trout, and I am, but I smoke them and gravlax them and treasure them. I think very strongly about it. However, if I am in New Zealand where I can't make use of the fish, I catch and release. I have no trouble with catch and release, in fact in Tasmania I put a lot fish back these days, but I also kill a lot. And I won't say that it is right or wrong. It would be a sad day if we all went fishing just to put them back. It is important that people learn to harvest from the wild and to treasure what they harvest. There is a responsibility to understand our wildlife and what is a sustainable resource. Fishermen need to know about the management of our trout fishery and we need to have this respect, particularly if we are killing something. If we kill something then we have no right to waste it. My views on this issue are very strong.

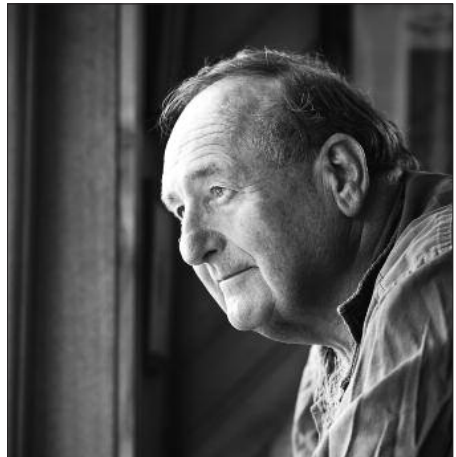
Do you have a favourite fishing author or book?

Douglas Stewart's *The Seven Rivers* is undoubtedly the most beautifully written book on fly fishing in Australia. The first three books of David Scholes are a priceless part of any fishing library. All his other books were good, but his first three books were significantly more important. Also, I loved Charles Ritz's writing. There are lots of lovely books on fly fishing these days.

Alive or dead, who would you like to spend a day fishing with?

Three guys come to mind. John Philbrick is an amazingly thinking person. He is a typical barrister, a 'Rumpole of the Bailey' type character, and my respect for him as fisherman is gigantic. I have not fished with Bob Roles for a hundred years, but if I fished with him I would know that I am fishing with one of the great fly fishermen in Australia. I have fished with a lot of

well known anglers, but it is the unknown anglers that I thoroughly enjoy, and I enjoy fishing with my friends like Timmy Wallace in Tasmania. I enjoy a day with him more than anyone because I know we are on the same page in the same fishery. Lastly, spending a day fishing with Michael Youl is something special. He is the great grandson the man who brought trout to Australia, Sir James Youl.



*Photo provided by Brad Harris –
FlyLife Magazine*

How important is mateship and the VFFA to you?

I was the youngest President ever. I joined in 1964 as a teenager and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I think there has been one fundamental mistake over the years in that the VFFA has not concentrated on recruiting younger members. I have seen young guys come and go and I would like to see some research on why they leave. Perhaps it would be possible to give them the first few years at a reduced rate. I feel there is something wrong and it is not just with the VFFA, it is the same at angling clubs generally. When I speak at angling clubs everybody there is over 50 and that

worries me. When I joined with Bob Roles and a little group of young blokes, we all fished together on the Goulburn. I think we have lost that. But it is certainly not just the VFFA.

In January 1964 you went on your first fishing holiday with a mate. You toured in a FJ Holden for three weeks around the Monaro region in NSW. What memories do you have?

I have many fond memories of that trip. It was my first trip as a fly fisherman. It all started when I picked up Bob Roles as a hitchhiker outside the Maroondah Dam and finished up a year later on the West Branch of the Kiewa River. I had a brand-new cane fly rod from Turville's, a Silver King fly reel and a silk fly line and that was the spring of 1964. That trip with Bob (Roles) was a three-week trip and I could still produce a diary of that trip with details of every fish we caught and what we did.

We got to know each other, with some of it good and some not so good. For example, he can be a bit of a grump in the morning and I am good in the morning, but I am sure there were faults on both sides. I have to say that "Rolsey" had 2 or 3 years fly fishing experience on me, so I was learning from a guy who had actually made a study already.

As I said earlier, Bob Roles is the most remarkable fly fisherman in Australia that I have met. He has a real understanding of what fly fishing is all about. We have never lost our mateship.

On that trip, what grief did John Hedge's book 'Fly Fishing NSW' cause?

The book was helpful, but on one particular occasion a local farmer accused us of having the book - and he was dead right. He chucked us off the property and we went into the local pub and had a few

beers and ran into the farmer's 18-year-old son, who took us sheepishly back to the farm with undertakings that "mum and dad" would be all right. We then formed a nice long-term relationship with the farmer and his family - firstly because Bob took in a couple of nice trout, and secondly because we agreed not to light any fires or have any firearms. In the end we had the run of the place and were friends of the family from that time on.

The property was on Delegate River, and of course when we got there the first time the farmer had had a gut-full because John Hedge had written this book and had listed all the great properties on which to fish. I remember going onto properties on the Kybeyan River and the Delegate River and encountering serious objections to what Hedge had written. We managed to get over the problem in both cases, and I am sure turning up in our own car was an advantage. Cars were not common in those days and property owners must have thought we had a bit of substance. Also, I guess we were a couple of charming scallywags.

I think our generation, now aged 70, was the first generation that country Australia opened up to, and largely because we had a car. We were not the first to fish any river, but we were the first generation to put a bit of pressure on rivers. Today it is totally different. Try camping on the side of a river or road today - you'd be hunted off in a heart-beat by the local ranger. Now you have to go to a camping ground, and then try pulling out a guitar and singing. You would be shown the gate. I think one of the modern day tragedies in Australia is that kids cannot go and make a bit of noise beside a river. Everything has to be formalised, so over time we have lost a lot. As kids we could camp everywhere and anywhere.

Philip Weigall - Tips And Tactics To Catch More Trout

FlyStream editor Philip Weigall recently gave a talk at the *Flyfisher* Store in Melbourne. Here is the text of the first part of his presentation. It is copyrighted and reproduced here with his permission. Philip needs no introduction – he is a prominent fishing guide and a well-known and highly respected writer and commentator on Australian trout fishing. He spoke for over an hour to a packed and very appreciative audience. We will include the second half of Philip’s talk in next month’s issue.

I guess most of the time I would avoid a topic as broad and as glib as the heading above. Perhaps it’s something you might expect to find on the back of a fly line box! But I am inspired to make an exception tonight because of the events of the past 12 months or so. Generally across south-eastern Australia and Tasmania I would describe the last 12 or 18 months as tougher than normal, and for me and most of my friends that’s all it was. Still great fun, still plenty of trout caught, and still some magic days, but just not as prolific and easy as say 2010 to 2012. And that’s okay, because we choose to enjoy a pastime that involves nature and the wild. For most waters, even stocked waters, the quality of the fishing is influenced by natural events over which we have no control. Rainfall, winters that end three months late, super hot summers, cormorant plagues – these are the things that we deal with as fly fishers. So in a slightly tougher year we just roll with it; it’s just one of those things that comes along.

But as a guide, magazine editor and member of several fisheries management committees I have been exposed to the fact that for lots of fly fishers 2013/2014 was very bleak indeed. Internet forums had headings such as ‘trout fishery collapses’, and some people with either very short memories or no fishing diaries told me that it was the toughest fishing in memory. So that’s why 2013/2014 stands out to me - not because the fishing was exceptionally bad, because by historical standards it simply wasn’t. But rather

because of this contrast in experiences between the people who had good fishing and enjoyed their season and the people who found it really hard.

It got me thinking – why this disparity between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’? Why was it so obvious this year? So I thought about some ideas that might help close the gap; some things that people could do differently that would improve their success. Hence the glib title for tonight’s talk. More importantly, the things that would help you catch fish in this past season will help you catch fish all the time – in good years, mediocre years, and bad years. So this is stuff that will hopefully help you always, and not just when the fishing is hard.

Having said that there are obviously plenty of really good anglers in this room, and I’m not suggesting that everything I say tonight will be some great revelation to everyone here. And I can’t hope to cover every conceivable thing that might help you catch a trout either, because if I did we’d be here until daybreak! But I’m hoping that for most of you at least a couple of the things that I say may resonate and help you catch more trout.

As you can see, the five dot points I’ve listed on the screen are:

- Be committed
- Turn up (and ignore the negativity)
- Persist
- Fish with confidence
- Develop & hone the basic skills



The Lake Fyans fundamentals stacked up for this trip, and sure enough, the fishing was good

Some of you may have been here for my talk last year. One thing that I said then and which I say at the start of most of the clinics I run and which I'll repeat again now, is that fly fishing is not some flippant thing that you can just dabble in. You can't. If you want to be a fly fisher then you need to accept that it requires a certain amount of commitment and effort. I don't apologise for saying that because if it wasn't the case we would all quickly lose interest. The thing that makes fly fishing so compelling is that it is a challenge, and it does require us to think and to work at it to enjoy success. If you're going to just dabble in fly fishing then the only way you're ever going to catch fish with any consistent success is to go out with a guide, and even then you will only catch a fraction of the fish that you possibly could, because even the best guide can only offer you opportunities.

So you have to be prepared to put in a little bit to succeed in fly fishing, and everything I say tonight relies upon that premise.

One of the things that you've got to do to catch a fish is to actually turn up. A lot of people this year just stopped turning up, and that makes it hard. In his books the late L. J. Wackett tells us that you can never catch trout when the barometer is falling. But he was always back in the tent when the barometer was falling, so it was no surprise that he never caught any fish when it was falling. So you have to turn up, and this year especially that meant going against a lot of the negativity that was out there. "Oh mate – you can't get fish in the Snowy Creek - it's all fished out." Or "That area's stuffed because the cormorants have got them all." And so on.



Snowy Creek wasn't fished out after all!

So you have to try to see through all that, and you need to persist. You always need to persist when you are fly fishing. Even in the best season and in the best places – on those days when you get out of the car and walk down to the water and catch a fish straight away, and then another one. But those days are few and far between, or at least they are for me. Occasionally I go down and catch a fish quickly but mostly it's a work in progress. You need to get the feel for what's going on, and often it takes a while to find the fish and what they're feeding on. And sometimes it requires that the fish themselves actually become active enough to be caught. Then things improve. So you've got to persist. You don't just roll up and give it a couple of minutes and then say, "It's no good here. I haven't caught anything, so I'm going."

I'm not going to be offhand about my fourth dot point, because it's a lot easier said than done - the idea of fishing with confidence. If I could make people

confident I would be the richest sports psychologist around, so I won't try to pretend that it's an easy thing to do. However do your best to be confident. Hopefully after tonight you will have a few ideas that will lift your confidence when you're out next, because there is nothing more certain to fail than a fly fisher who doesn't expect to catch anything. If you are fishing without confidence then that's just not fishing. The days when you can catch a fish, or should I say fluke a fish, when you are fishing without confidence are very few and far between.

I'm going to ask you tonight to hone or develop some basic skills - things that you have to do to be a better angler and catch more fish. But let me tell you that I have taught thousands of people to fly fish and I haven't found one who didn't make a good fly fisher if they wanted to be a good fly fisher. And that last bit is the important bit – you have to *want* to be a good fly fisher. Without doubt there are

those who are natural athletes and natural hunters, but if I told you the names of some of the people who struggled harder than anybody and who are now fantastic fly fishers you would be amazed. One of these guys now owns a fishing lodge. So it's not beyond the reach of anybody. You don't need to have fantastic eyesight or the hand-eye coordination of a helicopter pilot. You just have to commit to putting in the work.

The first thing you need to do is to think carefully about where you are going to go fishing. There has been some rubbish on the Internet over the past few years but the 2013/14 season certainly takes the cake, and is proof that the online world has got rid of any kind of filter. About 15 or 20 years ago if you wanted to go on Rex Hunt's radio show or write for a magazine or newspaper column you needed to have some kind of credentials. That didn't mean that you were necessarily a great fisherman and that everything you said was true, but at least someone had made an effort to confirm that you had some sort of qualification to speak. These days that's gone. Anyone can say whatever they like, and so as far as fishing reports go the Internet is awash with people who aren't succeeding and want to tell everybody about it. Why is that? Of course people having success often don't want to broadcast it. They perhaps had some fabulous fishing on the Mitta last week, so won't tell the whole world because they want head back there again tomorrow. Conversely people who have done it tough want to know that they are not alone. So they tell us that the fishing on River X is terrible because they're hoping that someone else will say, "Yes it is. It wasn't you – it's the river."

Whatever the reasons, I would happily say that most of the location advice that you read on the Internet is rubbish. No-one in their right mind would invest

money in a Nigerian company because of an ad they saw on the Internet, but someone says on a fishing forum: "My mate reckons that the Snowy Mountain rivers are fishing terribly at the moment", and some people think, "Well, I better not go to the Snowy Mountains then." If you are serious about your fly fishing then please think long and hard about the quality of the information you have, and particularly about any location advice, because location advice is really important. You are off to a bad start if you are fishing somewhere where there are no fish, and conversely you are off to a bad start if you're not heading to really good water because someone has erroneously told you that it is fishing poorly.

There are some things we can do. I'm very fortunate because I can contact a big network of highly skilled anglers and acquaintances, yet a lot of the time I decide for myself where to go. For example, if I'm going to Tasmania of course I'll ask Andrew Fuller how it was for him last week. Or I'll ask Peter Hayes if there is anywhere I should think about fishing. But if I'm planning a trip to Tasmania I'll also look at the fundamentals. What are the water levels like? What's the weather been like? How are the trout stocks? Then I'll make my own judgements about whether I should be going there and where I should head when I get there. And this is something anybody can do.

The good news about the Internet is that aside from all the rubbish it also provides plenty of good hard facts. In Victoria, for example, all the stocking data is easily accessible. Most water supply reservoirs have published graphs showing what their levels have been and therefore what the current water conditions are likely to be. Stable or rising levels are great news, and a good minimum level through the summer tells us the fish have lived. So

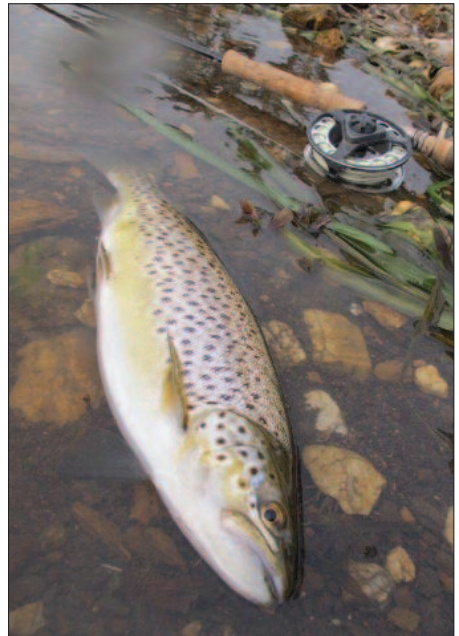
there are lots of things that you can glean without speaking to anybody, and you know that the fundamentals are pretty hard to ignore because they rarely lie.

To give you a great example, a couple of weeks ago I looked at the stocking figures and the water levels over the summer for Lake Fyans. I also saw that the current level was rising. So I thought to myself, I like Lake Fyans and this has got to be good. I knew that there were plenty of my friends who would have been there and I also know a lot of the guys at the Ballarat club. I also had a vague idea that some of the competition fishers had given it a go recently. But I didn't contact anyone; I just said to my friend Max, "Fyans looks good. We know the fish are there and the lake is rising, and it is late autumn and the weather forecast is good. Let's just get in the car and go." We went, and those who have read my *FlyStream* blogs will know that it was a mixed trip in terms of results. I did catch some fish but also had a lot of opportunities that I mucked up. The fact is the fishing was really good. I had a 5 lb trout swim right past my feet. I could have caught more, but make no mistake - Fyans was fishing well.

After I got back from the trip I was speaking to a couple of elite competition anglers and I told them I'd gone to Fyans. One said, "Oh, that's a shame." I said, "What do you mean?" He replied, "We were there last week and four of us fished for a day and we didn't touch a fish. Didn't even see a fish." Now my friend is a good enough angler to know that his experience was no proof that the fishing at Fyans was poor; merely that he and his friends had had a tough day. Nevertheless he was pleasantly surprised to hear that I had enjoyed an exciting day's fishing at Fyans. Now had I phoned that friend and asked him how the fishing was at Fyans and he had told me of his experiences the chances are I wouldn't have gone. And let

me assure you that these four anglers would be among the top four anglers in Australia, yet they hadn't touched a fish at Fyans because things hadn't lined up for them and fly fishing isn't an exact science. On a good lake they had hit a bad day. But I'd looked at the fundamentals and they suggested Fyans was worth a visit.

So please think about where you're going. Don't keep going back to the Howqua because you had a good day there five years ago. The lower Howqua is a very fickle fishery, and there are countless examples like that. So invest some time and effort into thinking about where you are going. And that doesn't mean grabbing the first few headlines off Facebook from someone you don't know, and then saying, "Well they didn't do any good. It must be terrible, so I won't go there". Instead give it some serious thought.



The result of plenty of walking, looking and listening - a nice Newlyn smelter this June

My next point - noticing fish - is a huge one. Now it's true that not every day gives you the opportunity to notice fish, because there are days when you just can't see them. But boy, if you can, it's gold. I'm going to talk in a little while about presentation. One of my good friends is Rob Meade, and he has this wonderful analogy that I've shamelessly stolen - that we fly fishers are puppeteers. A good puppeteer, by staying out of sight and by keeping the strings in the dark, can fool us into thinking that the puppet is alive. The puppeteer can move us to tears with his bag of cloth and wood because we are absorbed by the puppet. Now if a puppeteer can do that to us humans, imagine what we, as fly fishers, can do with a trout that has a brain the size of a pea. We've got this useless bit of fur wrapped around a hook that looks like nothing, but if we are clever enough we can fool a fish.

Now the first thing that a puppet show needs is an audience, and as trout fishers being able to notice fish is 'finding an audience'. But trout don't like to be seen, because when they show themselves they get killed. The extroverted strain of trout became extinct a few million years ago, so the surviving strain are genetically programmed to be careful and cautious, even when they're feeding. However here's the good news - if you see a trout moving then most of the time it's a feeding trout. So not only do you have an audience, but you have a potentially willing audience. So being able to notice trout is huge, and is something that with every passing year I fish I think is more and more important. I say 'notice' because often it's as much about our ears as our eyes. On a stream you'll hear a 'clip' and you immediately ask, "Where did that come from?" But you can't see anything so you think that it must have come from undercover somewhere. "Is it

under that willow?" So suddenly you are on alert for a fish; you have information that is really useful.

Now streams have a fairly high head count of fish as a rule, and stream trout tend to stay in one spot and this gives us all sorts of advantages for finding them. With lake trout however the density of trout is almost always much less than in a stream. Also, lake trout are almost always on the move and on any given day on any given lake, even the best lake that you can name, the action is not evenly spread. Think about Little Pine Lagoon in a dun hatch. Even on the best day at Little Pine you can find a bay where there are no fish rising because there are no fish or duns there. So things that let you know where the fish are, are just gold. So while spotting trout is valuable on streams it is fundamental on lakes.

Be aware that polaroiding fish in Victorian rivers and lakes is only a small part of the story. It is more about noticing the very subtle disturbances that trout make. The difference between seeing a fish move at Newlyn Reservoir, for example, and seeing no fish move at Newlyn is massive. If you see a fish moving then first of all it's a feeding fish. Secondly, you know that fish is in that area, and thirdly, trout rarely do things on their own. It's not a certainty but the chances are if there's one fish there then there are more. So being able to notice fish is huge. As I fish more I spend more time just looking for fish and trying to notice fish.

But remember that most of the time what you're looking for is very subtle. I recently guided a fine angler, a friend of a friend, from Europe. He had a Master's Certificate from the Federation of Fly Fishing, and was both a lovely guy and a beautiful caster. He was clearly a very good fisherman who caught lots of fish.

We caught a few smelting fish early and I could see that this guy was the real deal, so I took him to Bluegum, one of our lakes at Millbrook. Now this guy was from the other side of the world so I was hoping, of course, that he would see our fishery at its best. We arrived at Bluegum and found, hallelujah, that heaps of trout were up in the shallow northern end tailing. I was so proud – just look at this lovely lake with all these magnificent tailing fish.

I said, “John, have a look up here. Look – they’re tailing.” He came up the bank and said, “They’re what? What is tailing?” I said, “They’re creeping around in the shallows. Look – there’s one there. Can you see it’s little fin?” “No, I can’t see that fish!” “Look - over there. There’s another one!” But it was like guiding a blind man - I don’t think he saw any of them. Fortunately he was a very good caster and if I gave him good enough instructions he put his fly where it was supposed to be and a couple of fish ate it. But it was a real wake-up call to me, because I assumed that anyone could see what I was seeing. So this experience brought home to me that I and a lot of my friends had a skill that is not something innate. It is something that you have to learn how to do through practice and effort. Had John been there on his own he would have blundered through the bay, probably wondering what all the bow waves were (if he had seen the bow waves), and wouldn’t have caught a fish.

So teach yourself things to help you see fish. We all love polaroiding and polaroiding is great. But let’s face it, on rivers and lakes on the mainland it’s a secondary skill. It’s great to have, but if you go out and try to polaroid a fish at Newlyn you’ll walk a long way before you do. What you are looking for most in our lakes are those little subtle disturbances that Jim Allen in *FlyStream*

#2 describes as ‘nervous water’. That little something in the ripple that is not quite right, the tiny little signs that betray those feeding trout that don’t want to be seen. And if you can start to see or hear these subtleties on our lakes then you will be racing ahead of the pack.

I spend a lot of time just walking and looking and listening when I’m on our lakes – Cairn Curran, Tullaroop, Newlyn and Hepburn. How much walking should you do versus how much fishing? This is a really hard question, and a bit like the question ‘how long should I fish this fly before I change it?’ Really hard to answer. But what I do know is you should spend a lot of time walking and looking. And even when you are fishing blind and searching you need to have all your faculties on red alert for that little tiny shimmer of nervous minnows in that bay just 20 metres away. Don’t stand up on top of a hill sweeping your eye over a kilometre of shore and then say there’s nothing moving there. You’re just not going to see much from that range. Sometimes you have to be within a few metres to see the tailers or hear the fish moving discreetly. Hence the need to walk and to move, and all the more so if the water is broken, because you won’t see it then unless you are staring at the actual spot when they move. So invest in looking for fish. Invest in teaching yourself how to do it and make the effort to go and look and listen, especially on our lakes. I went to Newlyn last week. The first 500 metres of shoreline – nothing, but then I got to a little bay where the wind was just right and the minnows were doing their thing and there were a few smelting fish. I got some shots and was able to catch one. So there we see the value of walking and looking.

(The second part of Philip’s talk will be included in the August issue.)

Report From Way Out West - Hopkins River Bream

(from Jim Blakeslee)

If you want to learn how to catch bream in the Hopkins River and Merri River estuaries you need to spend some time with Peter Hussey, the "bream guru." Let me explain.

It all started when the Dinner Committee decided to serve a bream entrée at our Annual Game Dinner in July. Now Adrian Jacobs, Peter Hussey and I have caught a lot of bream and estuary perch in the Hopkins, though usually our bream forays involve checking the tides and the cycle of the moon, and fishing after dark on a warm, still summer evening. If we time it right there is an incoming tide, not much wind, a crescent moon sinking on the western horizon, and fish "smacking" the surface of the

water as they inhale small baitfish and shrimp. My flies of choice have been a #6 Green Matuka and a #6 Grey Nymph dropper, fished with a floating line and a slow, short, strip-pause-strip-pause ... retrieve. On other occasions, when for example the crickets are flying about and falling on the water, a #6 Black Muddler Minnow, or other cricket imitation, is the fly to tie on. When they are on the bite the fish hammer one of the flies and fight the good fight.

We were actually making good headway filling the freezer with bream fillets for this year's Dinner, and then the Hopkins River mouth blocked. The river backed up over the river flats upstream, there was no tidal flow to stimulate the fish to



Estuary Perch – great fun on the fly



... and they taste better than trout, too!"

school up and feed in the usual places, so things got tough. The water was too deep to wade our favourite spots, so bream fishing became a "boat job." Even then, we saw little surface action. In spite of going out on a number of occasions we caught only a few fish here and there.

What to do? Leave it to Peter Hussey to work things out. Peter has been fishing for bream around Warrnambool his whole life, starting many years ago as a bait and lure fisherman before settling into fly-fishing-only for bream. Peter knew that bream would take a bait or lure during the day, so why not a fly? There was no tidal flow in the Hopkins with the mouth blocked, but that was not the case for the Merri, Moyne or other local rivers. So Peter fished an in-coming tide on the Merri at mid-day. The floating line and Matuka combination was not working, so he switched to a sinking line and his

favourite fly - one of Mus Wilson's creations, a #6 Olive-Green BMS. Peter cast the fly out into the in-coming current, let it sink to the bottom, then began a short, sharp, strip-strip-strip ... retrieve. Wham! He started catching one fish after another. Then the mouth of the Hopkins was opened. After allowing a few days to let the river settle down into a regular tidal rhythm he applied the same technique on the lower Hopkins. Eventually he let his mates know what he was up to and we've been trying ever since to emulate his success rate.

After a couple weeks the Hopkins mouth blocked again, and it was back to boat fishing. Were we disappointed? Not at all, because the "bream guru" was now the "perch guru." Peter figured out he could use the same combination of sinking line, BMS, short, sharp, strip-retrieve during the daytime to catch estuary perch - and



Peter Hussey with a Hopkins River bream

all within a 10 minute drive from home. So Bob Loch, Peter Hussey and I fished the Hopkins for 2 or 3 hours on a number of occasions in the next couple weeks, during the day of course. We averaged 50+ fish each session, returning all except the five largest if we wanted fish for tea. It was almost a-fish-a-cast at times. An added bonus was when Bob hooked into a monster. Was it a perch or maybe a big bream? Whatever it was it gave him a tremendous fight, ripping line off his reel and taking him way into the backing. The fish did a lot of head shaking, then took off again. But Bob hung on, wore him down, and eventually brought the fish to the boat to be netted by Peter. It turned out to be a 55 cm mulloway, Bob's first on a fly. Was he a happy man! A week after that I caught one that was 72 cm, and I'm a happy man too!

Everything changed when the first big storm of the winter struck. Gale-force winds with huge seas and king tides combined to blast out the bar at the



Bob Loch made some good connections too



Jim Blakeslee's mulloway – an occasional but always welcome catch

mouth of the Hopkins. Blue water is pouring upstream with the rising tide as I type this. With the mouth open again and the restoration of a tidal flow in the river and clear sea water replacing the brown,

brackish estuary water, we will have to locate the fish and work out how to catch them all over again. I guess that's part of the challenge and beauty of fly fishing.

VFFA Cane Day

The VFFA Annual Cane Day was held on Sunday, June 15. It looked a little watery and threatening early on but the dark clouds disappeared and the 30 members who attended enjoyed a fine day with a pleasant cool breeze. There were two rod makers present – Graham Foxman and Peter McKean, and Jim Baumgartel and Phil Kininmonth were also very welcome guests. Jim set up his stall selling a wide range of fly fishing and fly tying materials, and Phil was offering for sale a fabulous array of outdoor clothing and other fly fishing related items.

Joe Haslauer and Terry Rogers acted as chefs, and from all reports they cooked up with the best hamburgers ever. The day again provided a very relaxed and pleasant occasion where members could enjoy a BBQ together, a chat with friends, and of course the opportunity to flex their

casting arms and try out those fancy cane rods. Those who own and bring along their personal cane rods were able to show off their prized possessions, and those who don't own a cane rod had the chance to experience the very different but intriguing and smooth feel of 'casting with grass'.

Of course it's always good to have some makers there, so our thanks to Graham and Peter. Members present certainly appreciate the opportunity to scrutinise and try out the latest and best. Andrew Mossman was busy with his camera, and Andrew Orr, our artist in residence, again captured the event with his watercolour sketches.

The general consensus was that it had been an immensely enjoyable and worthwhile event. Our thanks to all who attended and assisted in various ways to ensure the success of the day.



Old mates – Dermot and Mick



Our thanks to Andrew Mossman for these great images of a very pleasant occasion



This Month's Yarn ...

"I hear Charlie's been at it again", I remarked to McTaggart as we motored up the Calder.

"You mean Charles A. Robb?" he asked. "Also known as Catch-and-Release?"

"That's the one. Reckons he took 43 fish from the Mitta last Sunday. Fishing by himself, of course. And all 43 of them put back for the benefit of us all."

"Some blokes' catches have shot up since catch-and-release got popular," said McTaggart. "Still, y'don't want to dismiss it out of hand. One day I must have released several dozen myself. Good fish, too."

"Come off it, McT," I protested. "You must have been fishing at the bar again!"

"I can read your mind," said McTaggart, "but it wasn't what you think. There was always four or five of us used to spend Boxing Day to New Year up at Lake Lakuna. Before Christmas I used to open my dry fly box and give it a quick spray of that silicone water-repellent they sell for shoes. The flies'd take a day or two to dry out, but then they'd float like champions.

Anyway this one year I came home cheerful from a Christmas Eve turn, the place is moonlit and the wife's asleep in bed, and suddenly I remember. I haven't siliconed me flies. So not wanting to bang

about and turn on lights and wake her, I quietly find the fly box and go to the shelf where the spray cans are, and I give the box a quick spray like usual.

Three days later we're at the Lake and on the water, the fish are looking up and I open the dry fly box. First thing that hits me is the smell. I know it from somewhere, but I can't quite place it. Like a mixture of mullet gut and diesel. Then I notice the flies haven't dried out—they're all wet-looking. Then it hits me."

McTaggart paused, waiting for the question he expected. So I asked it: "What was going on?"

"What had gone on, my boy," replied McTaggart, "wasn't silicone at all. It was WD-40. You know, that lubricant stuff you spray on to loosen rusted bolts and start wet engines, that sort of thing. I'd sprayed from the wrong can."

"Did they still float?"

"Sank like a rock," said McTaggart, "but that didn't worry the trout. They hammered those flies like they'd missed out on Christmas dinner. I couldn't keep 'em off! Must have been the smell that attracted them. Only problem is, I couldn't land a single fish. The flies were so slick they kept slipping right out of their mouths. That's catch-and-release for you!"



FLY OF THE MONTH

The Royal Stimulator



The Stimulator series of flies have been around for quite a while, and they're popular because they are very effective. As Hubert Reichelt describes them, "they're big hairy monstrosities, but boy do they catch fish!" Like the Wulff flies and Humpies they come in a variety of styles and colours. The fly featured here is one that is very popular – the Royal Stimulator. Like the Royal Wulff and Royal Coachman, it has a body with lots of bright red in it, and trout love flies with some red in them. So where does it come from, how do you tie it, and how do you fish it?

To quote from some of the website descriptors, "The original pattern was created by American fly tier Randall Kaufmann, and is probably one of the most popular flies in North America. It was originally tied to imitate the adult giant stonefly, but will fish just as well as a hopper or caddis fly. It is well dressed for fishing rough fast flowing water, can be easily seen at distance and it floats like a cork. Stimulators are versatile, and by varying the size and colour, can imitate most adult stoneflies. The Stimulator can also be tied with rubber legs, like the Madam X. This is a great attractor pattern that will bring fish up to the top when most other patterns fail! When fishing it you can use the same presentation as a caddis fly, streaking the Stimulator over the water's surface, especially in windy areas. Stimulators float well in rough water, but on calmer drifts it can be fished better if you trim the hackle on the underside so that it floats a little lower in the water, then strip it hard with short pauses through the surface over possible fish lies."

Materials for the Royal Stimulator

(There are any number of sources and websites giving details of how to tie this popular fly. The following description is mainly from the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre's website. Our thanks to David and Antony for allowing us to use their material.)

- Hook: Tiemco 200R in sizes 8 - 18. (This is the preferred hook but any 2X dry fly hook will do at a pinch.)
- Thread: Fluorescent red or orange 6/0 thread. (You can tie most of the fly using black 6/0 thread, then change to the fluorescent red or orange for tying the thorax and finishing the fly.)
- Tail: Deer hair Texas whitetail or body hair. Some of the websites suggest that Elk hair is better for tying the larger size flies. It is more buoyant but also bulkier, so looks sparse when used for tying small flies. Texas whitetail is a very fine hair.
- Wing: Same as for the Tail.
- Rib: Fine copper wire.
- Palmer hackle: Brown or ginger cock hackle.
- Body: Peacock herl with a band of red floss in the middle.
- Front hackle: Grizzle cock hackle.
- Thorax: Fluorescent red or orange dubbing, with Antron or SLF recommended.

Tying the Royal Stimulator

1. Wrap a nice even base of thread starting from near the front of the hook and extending to the point where you are going to tie in the tail. This point should be about level with the barb on the hook.
2. Take a small clump of deer hair and tie it in as the tail. The length of the tail should be about equal to the hook gape.
3. Next take a piece of fine copper wire and secure it to the hook at the rear of the fly. Trim the excess wire and cover it with a few turns of thread.
4. Now take a thick piece of peacock herl and tie it in, then wind it forward so that it covers slightly less than a quarter of length of the hook shank. Tie it off and trim the excess.
5. Take some red floss and wrap a nice thick band of red that is say equal to 1/2 to 2/3 the width of the previous peacock herl body section.
6. Select another piece of peacock herl, tie it in and wrap the third body section making it equal in size to the first. This completes the body and the three sections – herl, floss, herl – should occupy about two thirds of the length of the hook shank.

7. Take a brown cock hackle with barbs about equal to the hook gape and tie it in at the eye end of the body, then very gently and evenly wind it back towards the rear of the fly. When you get near the back of the fly carefully locate the wire with your other hand and catch the hackle with a turn of it. Carefully wind the copper wire towards the front of the fly, then tie off and trim both the wire and the hackle tip.
8. Select a clump of deer hair, even the fibres up in a hair stacker, then measure the wing off against the fly. The wing should come back to a point roughly level with the rear of the fly.
9. Tie in the wing. Firstly pinch the measured clump of deer hair in between your thumb and first two fingers of your left hand (for right hand tier). Now make several loops of thread around the hair but not the hook. Then pinching very tightly to stop it from spinning, attach the hair to the hook, starting with looser turns to the rear and getting progressively tighter as you move forward. Don't let the deer hair flare. Trim the hair butts off as close to the hook as possible.
10. At this point if you have been using black tying thread you can use a couple of half hitches to tie it off. Then tie in some bright red or orange thread with which to finish the fly.
11. Select and tie in a small grizzle cock hackle feather so that it extends towards the rear of the fly. Trim the excess.
12. Select some hot orange or fluorescent dubbing, add it to the thread, and wind it on to build up a tapered thorax.
13. The last step is to wind the grizzle hackle forward over the thorax to the hook eye, then tie it off and trim the excess. Add a couple of half hitches or a whip finish and some head cement – job's done.



This photo from the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre's site shows the construction clearly

The main problem with this fly is that it has so many parts and is complicated to tie. However it is worth the effort as the Royal Stimulator works really well as an attractor pattern and works equally well when Caddis, Grannoms and Stoneflies are about. In smaller sizes it can be used during most Caddis hatches and has excelled on the Rubicon and Goulburn Rivers. It is often used as the dry fly indicator in a dry fly / nymph combination. A yellow version of this fly is a good hopper pattern. But try it in large sizes too – remember that Rick Dobson was telling us a few months ago that fish in rivers will often ignore small flies but will race to the surface for a decent mouthful. So tie up a few 'stimmies' in big sizes – 8's and 10's for next season.



LIBRARY NEWS

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

The library is divided into three parts.

- Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.
- Part 2 Books available for reference only and not to be taken from the library.
- Part 3 Books bequeathed to the Association and not to be taken from the cabinet.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA)	\$70.00 each
Book "Geehi to Great Lake"	\$45.00 each
Columbia Shirts.....	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon)	\$35.00 each
Wine glasses and whisky glasses inscribed with VFFA logo, set of 6.....	\$45.00 per set
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
<i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie	\$20.00
V.F.F.A. car stickers	\$2.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Hugh Maltby prior to the monthly General Meeting on telephone 0423 283 079.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2013 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Bernard Holbery • FlyLife Magazine • Hayes on Brumbys • Hookup Bait and Tackle
- J. M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Mountain Stream Company • Nick Taransky Bamboo Rod Maker • Pro-Angler Tackle • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Compleat Angler Box Hill
- The Flyfisher Tackle Store • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle

VFFA Meetings & Activities

July 2014

- 6 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 13 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 13 Planting Day – at Tumbling Waters, Rubicon River – convenor: Rick Dugina
- 17 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: Dallas D’Silva**
- 20 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 26 Warrnambool Fly Fishers’ Annual Dinner
- 27 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

August 2014

- 3 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
- 10 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
- 13 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 17 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
- 22 **Annual Dinner – Guest Speaker: Rex Hunt**
- 23 President’s Casting Day - 10am to 3pm at the Red Tag Casting Pools

September 2014

- 18 **Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club.**

October 2014

- 3 – 5 Annual Bullen Merri trip (Camperdown) – convenor: Hugh Maltby
- 16 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club: Speaker - TBC**
- 22 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

November 2014

- 14 - 16 Annual Warrnambool Trip – Convenor Hugh Maltby
- 21 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club: Speaker - TBC
- 27 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

Advance notice – upcoming trips:

Bullen Merri - October 3 – 5

Warrnambool - November 14 – 16

Tasmania 2015 – February 14 – 20

Bairnsdale Donger – Still being negotiated, but possibly in February or March in 2015