

FLY LINES



JULY 2015

Josh has fished in Tasmania all his life, though his passion for fly fishing has seen him travelling extensively to fish in the UK, Europe, Central Asia and New Zealand. In his early twenties he worked as the fishing guide at Bronte Park Chalet, a position he held for six years. He has also worked for Blue Lake Lodge on Arthurs and, most recently, for Peter Hayes on Brumby's Creek.

Currently he and his partner, Renee, are the general managers of the Pumphouse Point Wilderness Retreat on Lake St Clair in Tasmania's Central Highlands, a location that gives access to some of the best fly fishing water in the country.

Thursday, July 16, 8:00pm,
at the
Celtic Club

PLEASE make a Dinner booking
by 12 noon on Thursday, July 16,
by phoning
0498 254 497
and leaving a message.

For those of us who fish Tasmania, and that's a lot of us, Josh's presentation will be full of helpful insights and information on the fishing in that wonderful trout fishery, as well as being a very entertaining talk. Don't miss it.

July Meeting
with Josh Bradshaw



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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New Members

This month we again warmly welcome two new members. Simon Joel and Neil Hyatt have joined the Association. We trust that their membership brings many years of enjoyment and fulfilment.

Last month we welcomed two new members – David Edney and Charles Bradley:



David



Charles

July Meeting with our Guest: Josh Bradshaw

Josh started fishing Tasmania's lakes and rivers with his grandfather when he was old enough to walk. First trips involved upstream casting with worms on the creeks and rivers around Hobart, while longer trips involved overnight stays at Arthurs Lake and the club shack at Lake Sorell. He started fly fishing when he was an early teenager under the tutelage of members from the Tasmanian Fly Tiers Club and quickly became equally as passionate about fly tying.

In his early twenties, Josh started working as the fishing guide at Bronte Park Chalet, a position he held for six years. He has also worked for Blue Lake Lodge on Arthurs and, most recently, for Peter Hayes on Brumby's Creek.

Josh's passion for fly fishing has seen him travelling extensively across the country, the UK, Europe, Central Asia and New Zealand.

Currently he and his partner, Renee, are the General Managers of the Pumphouse Point Wilderness Retreat on Lake St Clair, in Tasmania's Central Highlands. The retreat offers access to some of the best fly fishing water the country has to offer and Josh is continuing to pursue his love of fly fishing and fly tying in his current role.

Josh has fished Tasmania all his life, and has an intimate knowledge of Tasmania's rivers and lakes. His talk will be full of valuable insights into how best to tackle the trout in this wonderful fishery.

Thursday, July 16, 8pm at the Celtic Club.

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 your digital device calendars
- Gallery of events - Photos and Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand

President's Message



I am writing this only a few hours before I set off to spend a month in California, mostly mucking about in boats with my son Christian. The only fishing I am likely to do will be deep sea off the coast so the fly rods will stay at home.

I am sorry that whilst I am away I will miss the July meeting with Josh Bradshaw. During VFFA Tassie trips I have been guided by Josh a number of times. I have always enjoyed his company and stories. And he certainly helped me catch a trout or two. I am sure he will be most entertaining. I particularly wanted to hear about the Pumphouse Point exclusive getaway that he manages. On the other hand it will give me a good excuse to catch up with him as a guest one day and as a willing client on Lake St Clair.

Last Sunday I joined the gang at Sunday casting. I must say Joe has raised the catering standards even further this year. After a couple of cuppas and a truly delicious hot dog or two, I needed no lunch. And it was good to catch up with some familiar faces.

At the last Council meeting I put in a notice of motion for the AGM in September to allow female fly fishers to join the VFFA. Since I raised this issue in my Message in the March issue of *Fly Lines* I have been encouraged by many written and verbal messages of support. And to my surprise no one has raised any arguments against the proposal. Still it is not too late if anyone does have a concern.

After I return I look forward to joining some of you at the Snob's Creek Hatchery visit on August 13. And then I hope to catch up with a big contingent at the Annual Dinner with Philip Weigall later in the month. In the meantime I wish tight lines to those hardy souls fishing Victorian lakes, and to those of you on your travels in fairer climates.

Take care, *Hamish*

Winter Casting

Despite the cold Sunday mornings casting has been an outstanding success so far this year. The first weeks have seen up to 16 members and casting enthusiasts turn up at the pool off Yarra Bend Road in Fairfield.

This is a great opportunity to keep casting actions well honed and to see what needs to be worked on for that next big trip. And, there is no better time to tinker with equipment both old and new.

It is also a great opportunity to catch up with mates and make new ones over a cup of coffee.

Core hours are 10 am to 1 pm at the casting pool – Melway reference: 44J2.

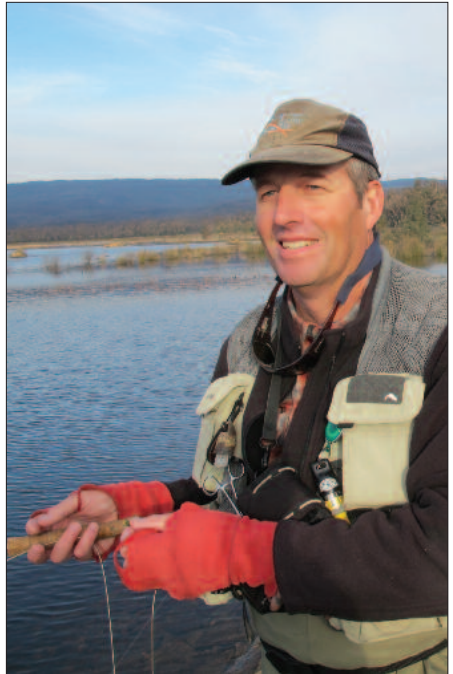
August Annual Dinner, with guest Philip Weigall

The August Annual Dinner is now just weeks away - on Friday, August 28. Our guest speaker this year is Philip Weigall.

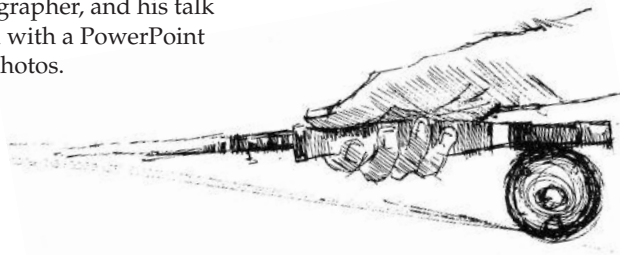
Philip is a member of the VFFA. He is also well known to us all as a writer, editor, fly fishing guide, and commentator on all things to do with Australia's trout fishery. He has written nine very popular books on trout fishing and has contributed hundreds of articles to our various fishing publications. He has been a fly fishing guide and instructor since 1989, and since 2000 has served on a number of government committees to advise on matters relating to recreational fishing. He is currently a member of the Victorian Trout Reference Group, the Recreational Fishing Grants Working Group, and the Snobs Creek Hatchery Advisory Board.

Philip edits *FlyStream* magazine (a first-rate online fly fishing publication found at www.flystream.com) and his latest book, '*Flyfishing North-east Victoria*', was released in October of last year. He guides at Millbrook Lakes and lives near Ballarat, Victoria, with his young family.

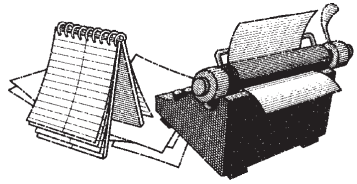
Philip's topic for the August Dinner is '*A Season in the South-east*', and it will be an account of the highlights of his fishing in the past year in New Zealand, Tasmania and Victoria. Those who have read Philip's articles will be aware that he is a fine photographer, and his talk will be illustrated with a PowerPoint display of great photos.



An invitation to the dinner is included in this issue as an insert. The cost has been kept at \$65, and members who regularly attend annual dinners have come to appreciate that they are invariably the highlight of the VFFA year. It's a wonderful occasion and a great opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues, enjoy a fine meal in great company, and be entertained and informed by one of our very best fly fishing presenters.



From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Leaders translate vision into reality"
(Warren Bennis)

"A leader is a dealer in hope" (Napoleon Bonaparte)

"A leader takes people where they want to go" (Rosalynn Carter)

"Great leaders are not defined by the absence of weakness, but rather by the presence of clear strengths" (John Zenger)

"Leaders are the key to 99 percent of all successful efforts" (Erskine Bowles)

Were did all this come from? I was Googling up some quotes on leaders and these appeared. Now I could continue writing about the five most recent VFFA presidents (leaders) that I have worked under (including our current president Hamish), and I'd have no trouble finding plenty of well-deserved plaudits. They differed in leadership styles but all had two things in common – a passion to serve the VFFA and promote its interests, and a willingness to put in countless hours (and often plenty of their own personal finances) to meet the expectations and demands of the job. We salute them all, and thank them heartily for their efforts.

My reason for chasing up quotes on leaders was, actually, to find some relating to those we use in our fly fishing – those skinny bits of line joining our flies to our fly lines. Perhaps, on reflection, the quotes above could be construed to apply to our fly leaders too.

My thinking on this subject was provoked by a recent podcast from the Orvis site.

Tom Rosenbauer, the presenter, was discussing fly leaders with his boss, Orvis CEO Perk Perkins, who apparently is a highly skilled fly fisher who loves experimenting with his gear. Perkins had tested various types of leaders and had arrived at some firm conclusions. For his nymph fishing he was content with those commercial tapered leaders (Orvis brand of course) with a couple of extra bits tied on as tippet. But for his dry fly fishing he extolled the virtues of braided leaders. These are heavier than monofilament leaders and the extra weight apparently gives better energy transfer and improved turnover at the end of the cast. However they also pick up water and spray it around during the cast. Perkins sorted this out by applying floatant along the braided leader, which eliminated the water spray problem while increasing the weight a bit and adding to the smooth turnover. The floatant also caused the leader to float higher on the surface, thus reducing drag. So there you go. Braided leaders are usually only 5 or 6 feet long, so you need to add two or three extra sections of monofilament to extend the overall length to the 9 - 12 foot leaders we typically use on our rivers.

It's worth recalling that arguably the two most important items in our gear – the fly and the leader – are also the cheapest. You hardly need me to point out that if you invest in the latest Sage rod, the finest Hardy reel, and the most expensive RIO fly line, and then connect a crappy leader giving you hopeless presentation, then ...

Perkins suggested that if he didn't have any early success when out fishing he

would most likely change or adjust his leader before he changed his fly. Related to this, Tom Rosenbauer tells us that if you were to attach a leader made up of odd bits of monofilament of varying thicknesses and tied together in no particular order, and then tried to cast with this leader you'd be staggered at how horribly your rod suddenly behaved. Apparently a well-designed leader is vital for both presentation and for the proper performance of your fly rod.

Of course leaders have to be connected to fly lines, and that's a whole new area of discussion too. Nail knots are the usual connection, and I can recall many hours spent trying to poke the butt end of a leader into the end of a fly line and then out through a small hole I'd made in the side of the line, so that I could tie a nail knot that came out the end of the fly line rather than beside it. However some years ago Peter Hayes recommended using a particular type of superglue (Zap-A-Gap) to glue leader butts into the ends of fly lines. Yes, I bought the kit and glued some of my leaders into my fly lines. And they all still work; none have let me down ... yet.

It seems the game is dominated these days by those reasonably cheap commercial tapered leaders (90% of leader sales in the USA). They're certainly convenient. You'll remember that in the old days we tied our own by joining measured lengths of different thicknesses of monofilament, all connected according to some formula. Charles Ritz was the authority, and page 81 of his famous book, *A Fly Fisher's Life*, gives several recipes for leaders for various fishing situations. I think the general idea was to have roughly 60% of the length as butt (thick stuff), 20% as taper (short 6 inch sections), and then 20% tippet. Lots of tedious measuring and knot tying was involved, and those knots could come

undone or gather weed when you're out fishing; hence the popularity of commercial tapered leaders. But hang on - tying your own leaders has a lot of advantages. You have total control over the profile, and can construct your preferred leaders for different situations - windy conditions, big wet flies, dry flies in still conditions, fishing nymphs, etc. You can experiment. But with those commercial tapered leaders you have to put up with whatever comes out of the packet. Our good friend and popular member Andrew Mossman still ties his own, using brands of monofilament he's sussed out over many years. Members may even recall an article by Philip Bailey a few years ago where he suggested tying leader sections together using big loop knots such as Perfection Loops. Very time-consuming (I tried), but this process produces leaders that are far less susceptible to drag.

From all this it would seem smart when you venture out to carry a variety of interchangeable leaders to accommodate whatever conditions you encounter. But how do you change leaders if your leader butt is joined to the fly line with a nail knot? When I need to change my leader I usually cut the leader on my fly line in the middle of the butt and then use a blood knot to tie on the new leader. But you can only get away with this a limited number of times. Perhaps loops on the business ends of fly lines are a good alternative. Many lines these days come with loops already attached. Or you can add your own loop. Again, our wise and practical Peter Hayes suggests you get a better (neater and smaller) connection by using a clinch knot to tie your leader to your fly line, rather than a bulky loop to loop arrangement. But then there are those who argue that loops on the end of fly lines make too big a splash on rivers and spook fish. They might just be ok on windy lakes.

What about the other end – the tippet? It seems that there are lots of folk these days recommending using fluorocarbon tippets with dry flies as the fluorocarbon will sink a bit and thus be less visible and not such a huge hawser connected to the fly. But then there are others who say nay, much better to use monofilament or copolymer for your tippets and coat them with floatant. The fish are not particularly fussed about the line connected to the fly and the floatant eliminates a lot of the drag on the tippet.

Finally – what about the knot you tie your fly on with. I've seen articles recently recommending that for nymphs and wet flies some sort of loop knot is better, as

the fly is then free to move around in the water, and thus be more enticing. Use Google to find Lefty's Loop Knot or the similar Homer Rhode Loop – you will find lots of diagrams and YouTube videos there telling you all about these. That's if you want to give them a try.

Well that's my bit for this month. And I know that there will be lots who will want to take issue with just about everything I've written. Some will be frothing at the mouth. I hope so. That's one of the many delights of fly fishing – there's so much to talk about, so much to argue about, and so many strongly held opinions. And we never stop learning

Tight lines, Lyndon Webb

Craig Coltman at the June Meeting

Thank you Hamish for your welcome this evening. I grew up in a family of golfers, but had an uncle called Mike Spry, and during my university summer holidays I used to go up and work with him at his operation at Khancoban on the Swampy Plains River. These were certainly very formative years in my fly fishing life. He taught me a lot about streamcraft. You see I lived in Ballarat, so most my experience had been gained on Lake Wendouree.

I'll be speaking tonight on my experiences fishing in Argentina and Patagonia, and I'm a bit concerned, because I can see a rogue's gallery of gents along the front row here who were on the same trip as I was. There were two halves to the trip, with half of us going to the river first and then to the lake. Then we swapped. And what is interesting is that we had dramatically different experiences because of the weather, which has such an enormous bearing on



our fishing. Because the weather was so different it affected our experiences accordingly.

This trip for me came about because Rick Dobson at Aussie Angler, who I've known for ever, invited me on it a couple of years ago. I said, "Rick, I simply can't. I'm doing some other things and I can't make a commitment to you." I'd been actively involved in politics for some time in



Lago Strobel entrance. Still 4½ hours to go!

Ballarat, and of course we had a state election happening. Then about three days after the election, when I discovered that I hadn't won, Rick was on the phone saying, "I see that you lost, so do you want to come to Argentina?" I thought about it for all of 30 seconds, then said, "Yes I'm in." So I went along very underprepared. Rick and his darling wife had done all the work. There were 18 of us heading off from Australia to Argentina and Patagonia. This is an area that I'd heard a lot about, but had never paid much interest to the past. It wasn't high on my bucket list, but in turning up I soon discovered that it was an amazing place.

We initially flew into San Diego then over to Buenos Aires. I was amazed at just how vast and immense and majestic this area was. We flew into Buenos Aires and the next day flew down to a little town called El Calafate. This was a 3½

hour flight – equivalent to flying from Melbourne to Perth. So we're talking here about a seriously large country. When we arrived at the little airport at El Calafate we were 50° South at this point, and let's remember that Tasmania, our most southern point, is 42° South.

The whole area of Patagonia is underpinned by the Andes, which run as a ridge through the middle. There is significant snow and rainfall on the Andes, but Patagonia on the eastern side is in a huge rain shadow. So it doesn't rain much there; it's really an alpine desert. But it has these amazing rivers that run through it because of the snow melt. The Santa Cruz River runs into Lake Argentina, then runs out again and flows the whole way to the eastern seaboard. This is the only river in the world that has a run of steelhead or sea run rainbow trout that run up a river from the Atlantic. It also has a run of



Good use for a Snapper net

quinnat salmon, and guides at Lake Strobel showed us a photograph of a quinnat they had caught in the previous week that weighed 30 kg.

We then drove for 4½ hours in a four-wheel-drive along some very bumpy old roads to get to Lake Strobel, our destination. As you drive into Lake Strobel you see the Barrancoso River which is the only river that runs into Lake Strobel (or Jurassic Lake, as it is more popularly known). The Barrancoso is a beautiful river.

So we had finally arrived at the lake. Rick had warned me that it was going to be freezing cold and the wind was going to be blowing at anywhere from 50 to 100 km/h. But instead we found beautiful sunshine and no wind. In fact we had no wind for the entire week, which made it quite a unique experience. What normally drives the fishing here is the wave action. The fish predominantly feed on scud and snails that get stirred up by the waves pounding on the shores. But we were there when there was no wind, so food wasn't available in the normal way, so the fish were just aimlessly cruising around. They became incredibly spooky and difficult to catch, but at the



Only a small one

end of the day I was in the privileged position of sight casting with a 5-weight rod to the biggest rainbow trout in the world. So it was a very special experience.

On most mornings I would go out and walk the banks. I tied on a size 12 scud pattern and stalked fish, only casting to fish that I could see. Over the whole week I was there I didn't catch a single fish that I didn't see first. So it was a very visual experience. We would come back to the lodge at lunchtime and have lunch and a siesta, and then I would head to the river and fish it until evening. I went down to the river mouth and targeted these big fish as they swam up to where the river ran out into the lake. It was strange - they swam along the top of the water, pushing a huge bow wave ahead of them. I picked these fish off by casting from the shore before they got to the river mouth.

Some members of our group had planted their feet in the same spot outside the rip at the river mouth and never moved from there for the whole week. Boring! Because by actually walking and fishing the river, and walking up and down the lake you could get some very >>>



The camp

interesting and exciting fishing. These fish are strong because they are so big, and there were many very large and very exciting fish caught during the week. I was using a relatively light rod, while most of the guys fishing the river mouth were using 7-weights. A funny story here – I was expecting to catch big fish, but my first fish from Jurassic Lake was a 1 pounder, the second was 1½ lb, and my third fish was 9 kg.

But even the small fish were like footballs and were really fat and powerful. It was so calm that Rick Dobson put his float tube out on the lake and hooked a massive fish but then couldn't land it. He had to paddle back to shore and get out of the float tube so that he could then haul it in. That fish was about 12 kg. I think I hooked a couple that were possibly bigger than that, perhaps even one of about 30 lb, but with 15 lb tippet I broke the loop knot on two occasions. On another occasion I foul-hooked a fish in the dorsal fin and almost got spooled. I could see the spaces between the loops in the backing on the spool. You can't go to

Jurassic and not take photos of big fish. There were some beautiful fish caught in a beautiful place. In many ways Lake Strobel reminded me of Bullen Merri.

I've been asked if we ate any of the fish? Well, one night we did. Luke, the youngest member of our group, was given the task of going and catching four fish all around 10 lb. An hour later he returned with four fish – they were all around 10 lb. And they were the best trout that I have ever eaten.

We were there in March, and the rainbows were coming to the river mouth to run up and spawn. Actually the fish at Lake Strobel run all year round, though there are times when there are more running and times when there are fewer running. We were expecting more rain than we had and thus more water coming down the rivers. So we probably didn't have as many in the river mouth or in the river as we might have expected, but that of course is in the lap of the gods. In terms of averages I was catching about 10 big fish a day. But I also did a lot of

fishing on the river, and here you could literally catch hundreds of small fish.

I did a lot of nymphing on the river and could catch small rainbows on almost every cast, these being fish of about 10 – 12 inches long. There were lots and lots of them in the river and if you fished small you could literally catch one a cast. I cast with a big dry fly tied on much of the time as it kept the smaller fish at bay. There were three types of fish in the river – small rainbows, resident rainbows that were 1 – 4 lb, and then the big lake fish that had moved up the river to spawn. There weren't a lot of these big fish in the river when we were there, perhaps because there wasn't a lot of water coming down. The river was in fact dropping while we were there. So that was our experience at Jurassic Lake or Lake Strobel. As we were leaving the wind began to pick up, so for us to have a whole week with such still conditions was quite remarkable.

In the week before we arrived a puma had been sighted near the camp. I was

desperate to see a puma. One day I wandered up the river, and the next day I went up again along the same track. It was sandy and I found my footprints from the previous day, and overlapping them were these large puma prints. I didn't see him and I don't know whether he was there when I was there. I did wonder who was being hunted here – the fish or me. The local ranchers shoot puma, and they can't run sheep in this area because the pumas kill them.

At the end of the first week we swapped over with the other group and we went down to the Rio Gallegos, a big river that runs all the way from the Andes across to the eastern seaboard. We stayed at a ranch called Las Buitreras that was 250,000 acres. They run 40,000 sheep. They also have 65 to 70 km of river frontage. The thing that impressed me most was not the big fish but the inherent beauty of the countryside, even though it was so desolate. The fishing lodge was very nicely appointed and the hospitality was fantastic. We were well looked after –

>>>



Biggest fish of the trip – 12kg



Dusk – always a great time to fish

I put on 5 kg while I was away on the trip.

It's in quite a hard environment with the 50 – 100 km/h winds and being totally under snow at times during the year with the river itself frozen over. So the lodge is open only for about four months of the year. Their season is not dissimilar to the height of the season we have in Tasmania. The Tasmania fishing season is usually November through to March and the Patagonian season sort of corresponds with that.

There was a big change in weather conditions when we got there. The group before us had a river that was falling slowly, which makes for good fishing. You'd normally expect to catch 50 or 60 sea runners a week there. But because of snow and rain in the Andes a big rush of very cold and very dirty water came down the river. The fishing was half decent for the first couple of days and then that cold water hit us. In the mornings there was ice along the side of the river, and the average temperature of

the water was 2 – 4°C, so it just shut the fishing down. I got about 13 sea runners for the week and what helped me was changing to a Spey rod. You needed a Spey rod to cover the water, because this was the only effective tool for getting to where the sea runners were sitting in the river. If you weren't fishing the right water you might as well be fishing the bank. Certainly we caught lots of other brown trout which were a gorgeous fish from 1 – 6 lb, but to get the sea runners you had to be in the right spots. The water wasn't overly deep but there were only some spots where you could wade across.

This was the first time I had tried Spey casting so I had to learn a new technique on the job. Despite this I occasionally got my fly in the right water and did manage to catch a few fish, even though the sea runners were pretty quiet. However we did catch a number of resident browns. The weather at this point was really cold with a high wind chill factor. I was fishing wearing thermals and a down puffy jacket and two pairs of gloves.



Real pocket water

Hence I felt fine but was wearing a lot of gear. We had snow and the air temperature was around 4 or 5°C.

In regard to the Spey casting I fell into a trap and made a mistake. I had taken along a switch rod because they are similar to a single-handed rod and tried to cast with it. >>> Big mistake – it was too short and too light. So I borrowed a Spey rod, a 14 foot 9-weight rod and this was a lot easier to cast with. When they were fresh in the sea runners were very silver and were shedding scales. Those in the river a little bit longer had started going dark. The fresh sea runners jumped a lot where as the browns that had been in the river longer weren't so aerial. These fish were very powerful, and pound for pound would pull the Strobel rainbows backwards. These sea runners are strong and powerful because they are athletes.

Early on we had clear water and were fishing smaller flies. But as conditions changed and the river came up and got dirtier and colder we had to fish bigger flies to get the attention of the fish.

On reflection I don't think I would go back to Strobel, but I would go back to fish these sea runners in a heartbeat.

Everybody should fish Strobel if they can, because it's such a unique experience. But once you've done it once you've had your fill. But those sea run browns would keep me going back time after time.

But I would advise you to learn to Spey cast first. Spey casting is a lovely way to fish and will allow you to cover all the water. It also gives you line control in the high winds because your line is not in the air as with Spey casting you are effectively roll casting all the time. The switch rod was too light for the conditions.

Another point – if you plan to go there then do it fairly soon because they are building a new airstrip so that you will fly in and land only about an hour's drive from Lake Strobel. The camp is under new management and the new owners are investing a lot of money and are therefore looking to market it to the more wealthy east coast Americans who >>>



A Spey Rod was very useful when long casts were needed

have pots of dough. While the fishery won't get overfished it is likely that the costs will keep rising in response to the demand.

This is one of the few places where the fish are genuinely as big as you are told that they are, and according to Rick, who has been there before, the size is getting bigger. When he first went there the average size was 8 lb, but now it is over 10 lb. The increase in size is possibly due to the fact that the lake is very fertile but there is only one river for spawning and this limits the recruitment. The river is not a big river and there are lots of fish going up to spawn, so they muck up each other's spawning redds and feed on each other's eggs.

The main food in Lake Strobel remains scud and snails and some small smelt. The lake is not overly deep. The wind has a huge impact on the feeding behaviour. We all fished within walking distance of the camp. The fish when we were there were spread all round the lake, but they do tend to gather at the entrance to the

river, so that's where people fish. I walked kilometres around the lake and kept finding these small bay beaches where a 15 lb fish would be just cruising around over the sand and they were not difficult to see. They were large fish on a white bottom in excellent polaroiding in conditions, so were not at all hard to see.

I fished my #12 scud pattern dead drift because the fish were spooky. I was using a tippet of 8 lb fluorocarbon. I would present the fly about 3 metres in front of the cruising fish. Now these fish were not in fact feeding, so it was a matter of allowing the unweighted fly to slowly drop down in the water so that it would intersect with the fish which were so lazy that they wouldn't move for it. They really were quite challenging. There were plenty of times when they didn't take the fly and it would literally just slip past their sides. They just weren't interes^ted. I was using a 9 foot tapered leader with another 4 foot of tippet attached. But it was, as I suggested, a unique experience for me, and I was very glad Rick talked me into it.

Snobs Creek Invite

Our speaker at the April meeting was Neil Hyatt, Program Leader for Fish Production at Snobs Creek Hatchery. Neil indicated that he would be delighted to host a group from the VFFA to visit the hatchery and have a tour of the fish production centre, then enjoy a BBQ lunch together. The hatchery will provide all food and beverages.

A date for this event has set – Thursday August 13, and the time to meet there is 11:00 am. According to Neil this is an excellent time of the year to visit the hatchery as production of trout for later release will be in full swing.

Those who plan to stay on for some fishing after the BBQ will find the picturesque Pondage close by and well-stocked. The rivers are closed at this time of the year but the Pondage is a very attractive winter fishery.

The Event Co-ordinator is Terry Rogers, and members who are interested in making this visit should contact Terry by Wednesday August 5 on Mobile 0438 553 326, or via email at terry@australianbusinessforensics.com.au



Inside Snobs Creek Hatchery

The World Championships – Bosnia, June 2015

Again this year an Australian team competed in the World Fly Fishing Championships, this year in Bosnia Herzegovina. Team members were Jim Williams (Captain) from Queensland, Peter Butcher (Manager) from Queensland, Jonathan Stagg - Tasmania, Christopher Bassano – Tasmania, Luke Barby – Victoria, Vern Barby – Victoria, Michael McKay – Victoria, and Joshua Flowers (Reserve) – Tasmania.

Christopher Bassano wrote a series of reports on the team's preparation and performance. Here are some of the highlights, used with Chris's permission, and downloaded from the *FlyStream* Blog at <http://flystream.com>. Chris is arguably one of the best trout anglers in the country. Aside from being a regular member of the Australian team competing on the world stage, he is also a top Tasmanian fishing guide, and can be contacted at <http://www.rainbowlodgetasmania.com.au>. Chris is also a very entertaining writer with a wonderful sense of humour. You will enjoy these reports!

Notes From The World Championships - June 8

We are all together now and enjoying Bosnia. I drove one of the vans and Jim the other. On the way to the border we had convinced Vern that they would likely want to strip search him and in this part of the world, cavity searchers were not uncommon. As it would be done in alphabetical order, he would go first. I have never seen someone so nervous when we handed passports over to a very serious-looking gentleman who was not to be messed with. "Don't run Vern, it will make it worse," we told him. You could see the sweat running down his brow.



Driving into Bosnia it was common to see houses shot to pieces. Bullet holes everywhere! Tragic. The war started in 1992 and ended four years later. Our guide in Bosnia, Amir, was in the war and fought the Serbs – some of whom are now his friends. He has two children who he has been trying to put through university from his income tying flies. His wife runs 100 chickens from which they get 50 eggs a day that they sell. That is it! He was shot twice during the war, and was hit in the stomach by shrapnel from a bomb. Amir is a wonderful fly tier. He takes his time to get things right and is proud of his flies. He should be.



The Australian team marching past



Musical Support from the locals

The place where we are staying is in an amazing setting. It is situated on the banks of the Pliva River with the water running directly behind the rooms. The river is crystal clear and we can see grayling from the lounge! The water was really cold and very fast.

Yesterday was our first day on the water. It started on what is best described as a flat, fast chalkstream. Every fish could be polaroided from a long way away. The brown trout seemed very easy to catch and weren't fussy, but the grayling were not as helpful. Josh caught the first trout and grayling and fished well the entire day. Vern, still recovering from his scare at the border, had both the dry and wet flies working to great effect. Amir also landed a couple of fish. All in all we did not catch hundreds, but simply fished difficult water, changing approaches regularly to try and work out the strategies. We were a little concerned with the difficult nature of the fishing but by night-time were confident about everything except Pete's driving.

Jimmy is well on top of things as captain of the world team. Nothing is a problem and he stays positive even in adversity. He hasn't quite learned which side of the road to drive on though, and we have had some close shaves. In fact, every time we leave the hotel, a few hedges get a close shave! Vern decided that Jimmy needs All Terrain tyres on one side of the car and Slicks on the other!

It will not be surprising to learn that I was the first person to fall in. I actually fell while getting into the river for the first time! I went for a swim again later when the gravel disappeared from under my feet while I was running on the spot like a cartoon character. The water is freezing. We were warned it was so cold it would have a

'shrivelling' effect if we fell in. You can tick that box! The rivers are also very dirty. I am talking about plastic bags, toilet paper, the lot! The rivers are postcard material but you would have to Photoshop out the milk crates.

Day two on the water was spent on the Vrbas River, a competition venue for the upcoming championships. We had a look at some of the competition beats and fished a part of the practice water. It is the most disgusting waterway I have ever fished. It looked very fishy with glides and runs, pockets and currents. The problem is the filth that continually floats past you and into you while you are trying to fish. Sewage drains appear to run straight into the river, making changing flies quite challenging. You have to keep your hands away from your mouth, which is difficult when juggling multiple rods, line that has been in the water and old flies.

The fishing was extremely good. Fish were rising regularly and every technique we tried was successful. The grayling were large and plentiful, while the trout were smaller and had that distinctive curved tail tip that's indicative of 'stockies'. Consequently, the trout were very easy to catch and we soon headed off to another area to find water closer to the competition water.

The location for the second half of the day was certainly

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A very civilised local stream

tougher. The beats seemed to differ a lot in terms of the type of water you might draw. Some were very deep next to the bank so that wading was impossible, while others could be fished in their entirety. This sounds like a lottery but you just have to catch the fish that are in front of you, and at the end of the comp, from a team perspective, it will work out to be fair. The winning team still has to deal with bad beats.

On a less serious note, we had a few more swimmers today. Vern became a repeat offender. I was fishing downstream when I heard him screaming and thought he was into a good fish. But he'd gone A over T and one of his fly boxes was swept down the river. It went raging past Staggy and me. After running through a farmer's paddock I eventually managed to get hold of it a few hundred metres downstream with a lunging net. Of major concern was that it was a clear,

compartmentalised fly box containing ten of his favourite patterns. So every fish in a few hundred metres of river saw his favourite ten flies and none of them rose to eat the box! He is currently at the tying vice.

Notes From The World Championships - June 18

Two days ago we moved into the official hotel. The opening ceremony was the usual story - not particularly well organised and it rained at the start after having 30 degrees plus temperatures every day. The ceremony was good once it got going as we were able to catch up with old friends and see a bit of the local culture and listen to traditional music. People lined the streets and cheered for the teams as they entered the area.

Checking into our hotel was a debacle. We had asked for single rooms but instead got rooms for three people with just two beds! They were tiny rooms and certainly not big enough for us and our gear. We moved tables, televisions, etc, outside in order to fit in. We let reception know that having two beds to sleep three was not good enough, so Luke was given a fold-out single chair to sleep on.

The draw came and went and then came again. We were given our draw at night and it was changed in the morning. I was off to the Sanica and Sana rivers. Luke was on the Pliva River and then the Verbas River. Staggy was on the lake and then the Sanica; Mick on the Sana and then the Pliva; and Vern on the Verbas and then the lake. I hope that all makes sense!

The rain kept falling and that was to make things tough. My bus was to leave at 5am as I was the first one off. Staggy was last at 7:30am. The morning sessions started at 9:30am and the afternoon sessions at 4:30 pm. They are all three hours long. We all felt prepared for the



Impressive and picturesque - the waterfall

challenge and had our fingers crossed for our mates when it came to the lottery of the draw. Josh was to head to the Pliva River to watch while Peter was at the lake and Jim would rotate between the Sana and Sanica, depending on who drew the worst beats and needed help. Flies were tied and leaders sorted. Roll on 9:30.

As a side note, Luke and Mick went for a walk to the main tourist attraction of the town, the waterfall. With all of the rain around, it would have been beautiful. But as they approached the viewing area a man on the platform became very agitated. He approached them, pulled out a police badge, and told them there had just been a murder and they should go back to their hotel. So the boys raced back to the hotel in some haste.

The first day's competition saw mixed results. As we suspected, the beats played a huge part in success and failure. For us, the draw had not been kind. Many countries would say the same thing. It is

rare to see the Czechs so far down the list and the French had blanked on some river beats - and that was almost unthinkable. But you can't catch what is not in front of you. The Aussie boys were fishing well in spite of what the scorecards said. We had some terrible, terrible beats and caught fish where others had not. I was the lucky one with two good beats. The lake continued to be a pain in the backside as very few fish came off it.

Luke caught two chub on the day and should be proud of his efforts on a lower Pliva beat. Those bottom beats can be death beats. The Sanica produced good numbers of fish all day, as did the Sana. The feared Vrbas River showed that if you drew one of the first four beats you would be casting at rising fish all session. Below that you were trying to save the blank. The current world champion, Lubos Rosa, drew one of the top four beats in the morning and caught twenty fish and the same beat produced

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Practice sessions

another twenty in the afternoon. Vern did very well to catch a fish on the river that morning and Luke managed three in the afternoon. Good angling from the boys. Josh stayed up tying flies for me, which was an enormous help. What a champion he is.

(A note here from Glenn Eggleton: "After day one of the World Championships Chris Bassano was in first place with a total of 51 fish from his two three-hour sessions. Second place was Devin Olsen (USA) with 34 fish. Unfortunately other team members were not faring so well, with Australia sitting in 16th place.")

Notes From The World Championships - June 21

Gutted! What a day we have had. The competition is over and the results are in. Spain has won the gold, USA the silver and Bosnia the bronze. I can't remember the last time the Czechs, French and Italians all missed out on a medal. This tells you something about the draw and the fishing. That's not to take anything away from those who did well, but you can't catch what is not in front of you.

Mick had the dreaded lake this morning and it was not kind once again to the Aussies. He had a couple of good chances but they didn't stick and he

blanked. A few fish were caught and the fish appeared active for a while but with so many boats in a small area, the fish soon disappeared. He then went onto the Sanica and landed two and broke a couple off. Once again, he drew a terrible beat and the beat analysis will tell us that. He actually had his success on a toilet paper fly! Yes, that's right! A blob of white poly-yarn. What does that say about the fishery? I really do feel for Mick. He fished well and was excellent in practice, but had no chance with the draw he was given.

Staggy fished the Pliva and caught plenty of undersized fish. He did manage a couple of fish in another hard beat which has produced very few. He is a great river angler and someone I hold in very high regard. For him to struggle to catch fish meant it was hard. He then went to the Vrbas in the afternoon and did not even see a fish. More incredibly, the person on beat 3 caught 21 fish on dry flies, casting to rising fish all session! The river was high and even dirtier than normal after overnight rain. It was the only river in the comp that got affected by rain.

Luke was on the Sanica and then the Sana. He fished very well in the morning on a good beat and caught 19 fish. In the fourth session anywhere, that's a good effort and placed him right near the top. He then backed it up in the last session with 9 fish. Luke had the tougher sessions early in the comp but capitalised well today, coming home with a wet sail.

Vern also had a good day, catching four fish in both his sessions. Although he caught most nymfing, he has turned into a dry fly tragic and I would expect that any fish mad enough to rise in front of him in future will get a well placed dry put in front of it. He would be justifiably proud of his efforts today.

Then there was my sub-par performance. I drew a top five beat on the Verbas in the morning and did not take full toll of it. The day started badly for me when I got a dose of gastro from eating breakfast at the hotel. At one of the drop off points I had to run into the bushes. When I arrived at my beat I explained to my controller that I needed a toilet, so he knocked on the door of one of the houses overlooking the water and the lady kindly let me use her bathroom. I returned to my beat and rigged my rods, then had to return to the bathroom. When 9:30 came around, I was still sitting on the toilet and the session had started. Eventually I made it to the bottom of my beat and started fishing. The water was high and very, very dirty. Visibility was down to 2 cm. I knew that the Czech had caught 21 fish here on day one and had fish rising everywhere.

In hindsight, I did not approach the beat as well as I could have. I find this sort of water quite daunting and off-putting, probably due to the fact that I never get to see water like this. Only two grayling had come off the beat and the rest were trout. Knowing that they would have pushed in along the edges, I set about fishing dries along the "soft" edges on the river. The near bank had tight overhanging trees while the far bank was a little more open and there was one place I could cross in deep water. I got a small fish early on - a brownie of around 22 cm. Nothing else came off my bank so I had to cross the river to find similar water. I thought that a couple of fish would give me a good placing and therefore set about taking my time to fish the same way on the opposite bank. I caught another fish after about an hour on the dry and then I missed a beautiful fish that head and shouldered over the caddis. I changed flies, re-presented and he ate it again. This time I tightened and



Josh Flowers from Tasmania in a practice session

... nothing. I recast a few times without any movement from the fish so moved on. I fished hard along the edge and did not see another trout. I then swung a small Woolly Bugger back down the beat, again concentrating on the edge. With five minutes to go I had repositioned myself where I had missed that fish previously, but this time I was upstream, fishing down to it. I had much more control from here and the fly was eaten within a foot of touching down. This time the fish stayed on and was landed. That was it for the session.

If you are wondering how I was going with the gastro, the answer is - not well. Just after catching my first fish I had to make a decision as to whether I would leave the water and spend the rest of the session in the bathroom or keep fishing and suffer the consequences. I chose the latter, and in doing so have had to part company with a pair of trousers, two pairs of socks and my waders. I had a pair of Aquaz waders that had served me brilliantly at home and abroad and I was very sad to see them go, but they were not salvageable. It was not a pleasant experience and a long way from the most enjoyable session I have ever fished. I returned to the lovely lady's house before the bus came, washed and changed clothes, but could not

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do much with the waders as I needed them for the last session.

I felt a bit better heading to lunch even though I knew I had not caught the fish I should have on that beat. Only one fish rose and I did catch it but my nymphing left a lot to be desired as I lacked confidence and conviction in water whose depth was impossible to predict. The water was falling and clearing as I left, and I expected that whoever fished that beat after me would catch a power of fish. As it turned out, I was placed fifth in that session. If I had fished to the beat's potential, I should have come second. The winner caught around 12 and that was not going to happen in my beat.

At lunch I was feeling a little better. As a diabetic, I have to eat and keep hydrated at these times, but the food did not agree with me and I was back to square one after lunch. After a few toilet stops I made it to the lake and onto the water. I had drawn the Irishman as my boat partner. He was a lovely guy and we worked well together. The Irish had caught a fish in every season and sometimes more. Their tactic was to fish a Di 3 (sinking line) with a single Cat's Whisker on the point and pull hard. He was not fishing deep and wow, was he pulling. I decided that I would fish high in the water on a clear intermediate (my favourite sinking fly line, the Stillwater taper) with two flies spaced ten feet apart. Nothing had worked for us the entire comp and I wanted to try things. The wind was strong and as we had no drogues and the boats have no keels, the drift was fast and all over the place. This made fishing slowly very difficult. An hour in and I had to be dropped back on the shore for a short while where I had to contend with a massive bed of stinging nettles. My backside is still itchy! Back in

the boat, the Irishman had not seen a fish and this trend continued up to when the horn sounded to end the session. The Finnish competitor had managed two fish and five others had one fish. The rest were blanks. It was the lowest number of fish caught during any session on the lake. Not one fish moved and we did not get one pluck or even a follow. The dreaded blank!

When the final results were tallied up and placed on the board for all to see, we had dropped to 17th place overall. There was a lot of head shaking and discussion about where we went wrong. Clearly, it was the stocked fish on the lake. Five blanks! Had we all caught only one fish each on the lake, we would have made the top five. From an individual point of view, I came 32nd. One fish on the lake would have given me the bronze medal and two, the silver medal. Regret!! Don't you hate that!

It goes to show how close things are at the top. You simply cannot afford to make a mistake. It kills you. I often get strange looks at home if I manage to do well in a session but say that I was unhappy with it. It is all about how you fish. How many chances you give yourself and your conversion rate. Why? Because when you get to this level, mediocrity is unacceptable. Others won't make a mistake and neither can you. It is you versus the fish, not you versus your competitors.

Some of the boys are up having a drink while a couple of us are tucked away for the night. There is not much to celebrate. That's it for now then. I'm on the way home for my daughter's third birthday next week. I have missed my family for five weeks.



Fishing for Spawners in the Eucumbene River

Rod Barford, President of the Australian Trout Foundation and well-known Victorian fishing guide, fished the Eucumbene River a few weeks ago before crossing back to the Gibbo at Benambra. This is the time of the year when huge numbers of large brown trout run out of Lake Eucumbene and go racing up the river to spawn and produce next year's youngsters.

The river is open to fishing at this time of the year and attracts large numbers of anglers. Sadly, some of these anglers (who are clearly not fly fishers) lack a bit in the elements of common courtesy. Rod counted 61 cars in one area and observed lots of 'anglers' on the shallower reaches above the camp area jaggging fish off the redds with lures and jigs. Apparently there was a punch up on the day prior to his arrival and he was guessing those

involved were the same aggressive bunch of hoodlums that shouldered him out of the upper reaches so they could continue with their jaggging unhindered. Rod asks, "Is this fishing? Or unarmed combat? It's completely out of hand, and NSW Fisheries Officers are needed there every day to police compliance and proper behaviour."

He continues: "I think it's time NSW Fisheries introduced a more flexible season closure to protect these spawning fish. I don't mind fishing while they're running, but once they start spawning they should be left to it in peace."

To avoid the crowds Rod fished the river mouth at night and was busted off six times between 10:30 pm and 2:30 am. He caught and weighed one at just under 15 lb, and saw a couple of other larger fish near the old bridge.



Rod tells us this one weighed 9 lb

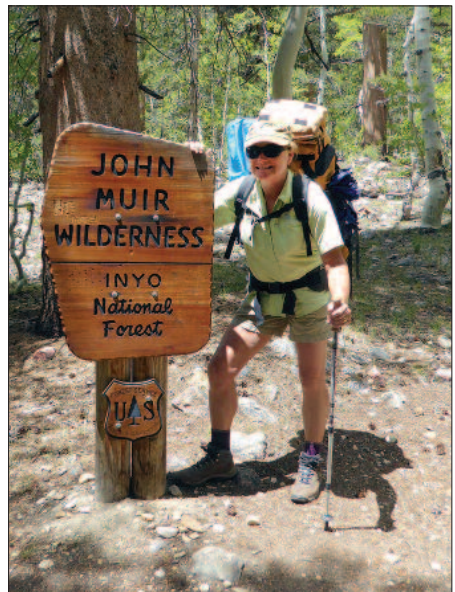
A Short Walk In The John Muir Wilderness

It was June 8, the beginning of summer in California. We were doing the 7-day Evolution Basin Loop. After leaving the trailhead at North Lake on the eastern slope of the Sierras, my wife Tricia and I had been hiking west, uphill, for 5 hours and 11,423 ft. Piute Pass was just ahead. Finally, we were there! What a feeling of relief as we dropped our packs for a rest and admired a magnificent panorama of the High Sierras – “the range of light” as John Muir described it over a hundred years ago. We were tired and breathless because of the altitude, the steep climb over a snowfield to reach the saddle, plus heavy packs full of provisions for a week in the wilderness. Still, there was the tremendous feeling of satisfaction at having finally made it to the top. After shouldering our packs again it was only an hour’s ‘stroll’ downhill to our first night’s campsite on a sheltered knoll overlooking Upper Golden Trout Lake, elevation 11,120 ft – an appropriate destination for a couple of avid fly fishers.

Those who know me expect to see fly rods strapped to the side of my pack whenever I go hiking, and this trip was no exception. We had come to California to visit family and friends, but had set aside the last week of our trip to hike a portion of the John Muir/Pacific Crest Trail (JMT/PCT) and, along the way fish some of the high country lakes and streams that I had visited in my teens and 20s in the late 1960’s to early 1970’s. The campsite was appropriate since one of the reasons for crossing Piute Pass was to fish the high altitude lakes and streams of the Humphrey’s Basin, well-known for the quality of fishing for its brook trout, actually a char - *Salvelinus fontinalis* (introduced from the eastern USA) and

for golden trout - *Oncorhynchus mykiss aguabonita*.

The golden trout are actually a strain of rainbow trout that became isolated from their sea-run steelhead cousins by impassable waterfalls at the end of the last ice age, and evolved in the upper reaches of California’s Kern River. Because of their great beauty and adaptation to life in very cold water and high altitude, the golden trout have been widely introduced to high mountain lakes and streams in California and elsewhere throughout the western United States. But they have to be in waters isolated from rainbow or cutthroat trout, otherwise they will hybridize and lose their distinctive colouration which includes retention into adulthood of the “parr marks” that one sees on the sides of juvenile rainbows. At the altitude we were fishing – 9,000 to 11,500 ft – the



The starting point



Big, majestic country

streams and lakes are frozen over for much of the year and the fish might spend as much as 6 months under ice. So they don't grow very big or very fast, averaging only 8 – 12 inches even at 3 - 5 years of age. A golden trout of 18 inches or about 2 pounds would be a trophy.

That first evening we set up our tent and camp, cooked our traditional first dinner of steak accompanied with dehydrated potato and veggies, and washed it down with 500 ml of red as we admired the sunset over the lake, surrounded by jagged 13,000 ft plus peaks. Then, as dark crept upon us we cleaned up, made sure our food was secure in the National Forestry Service mandated "bear barrels" that we were required to carry, and finally tucked into sleeping bags in our tent. (As it turned out, the rodents - marmots,

ground squirrels and chipmunks - were more of a threat to our food than bears, and the food barrels kept our tucker safe from gnawing little teeth).

The next morning was calm and sunny, with fish rising, actually bulging to nymphs under the surface, right across the mirror-smooth surface of the lake. We crawled out of the tent and shuffled around, flexing some tired muscles and weary bones. Then we started the Shellite-burning stove and boiled a billy of water to make the porridge, two cups of coffee, and a toasted English muffin spread with butter and strawberry jam. (You got it - us hikers are obsessed about food). Then it was time to cast a fly in one of the most spectacular settings imaginable.

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It looks a bit cold for wet-wading Jim

Since the fish seemed to be nymphing near the surface, we tied on a #14 Red Tag dry, with a #16 Black Martinez nymph trailing 2 feet behind. The ice had only recently melted off the lakes at that altitude, so the fish were ravenous and smashed the flies as soon as they hit the surface. It was virtually a fish a cast. After a couple hours of catching and releasing small brookies and goldens it was time for morning tea. I had another fish in the afternoon while Tricia read. I fished around the lake, then for a mile along the upper reaches of Piute Creek above the lake. If anything, the trout in the creek were even hungrier, taking anything in their path, then fighting like mad until their release. By 4 in the afternoon I'd had enough and returned to camp, looking forward to a bowl of pasta and the last of our wine.

The next morning, June 10, after a breakfast of coffee, eggs, bacon, muffin and jam, it was time to pack up before hiking on downhill along the Piute Trail

to Hutchinson's Meadows at 9,490 ft. We wanted to get there and set up camp before midday. Why? Before we started the hike the weather forecast was for thunderstorms and rain that day – the result of a cyclone in the eastern Pacific that had come up along the west coast of Mexico, lashed Baja California, and was headed straight for the southern Sierra Nevada. As it turned out we found a campsite in a grassy meadow sheltered amongst the white pines, set up our tent and just had time for a quick cuppa and lunch of dry biscuits, salami, cheese, sundried tomato, lettuce (yes, a head of lettuce will easily last a week as you peel-down and eat the outer leaves day by day), with a Snickers for dessert. As we crawled into the sleeping bags the temperature dropped, the wind whipped up, and with a flash of lightning and clap of thunder the skies opened and the rain poured down. It was cosy inside, reading our Kindles, then dozing, while the storm raged outside. That evening, just before

dark, things calmed down enough for us to cook dinner and clean up, then retreat to our tent before it started raining again. The next day we walked down along the Piute Trail beside Piute Creek to its junction with the San Joaquin River at 8,050 ft, left the John Muir Wilderness and entered the Kings Canyon-Sequoia National Park. While looking for a shady spot to have lunch we saw hikers with their tents and sleeping bags spread out on bushes to dry, as many hikers doing the Pacific Crest Trail had been caught in the storm either side of the 11,955 ft Muir Pass to our south-east.

There seemed to be a lot of single girls doing the four month hike along the PCT from Mexico to Canada. (Had they all read Cheryl Strayed's book and/or seen the movie *Wild*???) Anyway, as we packed up after lunch that day, one very sad young lady walking past stopped and told us her story. She'd been caught by the storm and quickly set up her tent above the tree-line near an exposed lake

just below the pass. She was blasted by wind, rain, hail, popcorn- snow, thunder, and lightning, and at one point the wind lifted her tent with her inside and shifted it sideways, breaking a tent pole in the process. She spent a hypothermic night with her tent flattened on top of her. After hearing her tale I managed to fix it for her with some duct tape and an aluminium "sleeve" that I carry with our tent to use as an emergency tent pole splint. She seemed a lot happier as she headed off towards a place called Muir Ranch to pick up a food parcel that would have to last her for the next 7-day leg of her PCT pilgrimage.

Later that day, we ran into another girl walking with her companion, a husky, loaded with "saddle bags" to carry its own food. She peppered her story with 4-letter expletives as she described how she, too, had been caught out by the storm, and had quickly set up her tent. It wasn't long before she had visitors. Four male PCT hikers, walking without >>>



Crystal clear water and lots of trout

tents of their own to save weight, had been caught out and asked for shelter. So she let them pile in. Packed into a 2-person tent with 4 other unwashed hikers and a dog would have been "cosy" to say the least.

The next day, June 12, we had a leisurely breakfast of pancakes with maple syrup and butter, washed down with a couple coffees. Then we packed up our camp and walked up Evolution Creek to beautiful McClure Meadows at 9,600 ft. It was only a short four hour walk, so "we took time to smell the roses" along the way. It struck us that most of the PCT hikers that passed us going the other way were males, usually walking alone but occasionally in 2's or 3's and seemingly obsessed with making miles, walking long hours (we sometimes saw of them walking past our camp sites after 8:00 pm), and they DIDN'T seem to stop to take photos or admire their surroundings. Because many of the guys seemed to be small, smelly characters with red beards and their heads down, Tricia speculated that maybe they were actually leprechauns doing the American equivalent of the Spanish El Camino pilgrimage. Who knows?

For us, McClure Meadows was an absolutely beautiful setting for our camp. Surrounded by spectacular peaks, deer grazing on the grassy meadow, the wildflowers, gorgeous campsites sheltered under stands of white pines, Evolution Creek gliding gently past with trout rising – who could ask for more? (Well, we could do without the marmots and squirrels trying to steal our food). After setting up camp, then having lunch and a snooze we went out for an afternoon catching and releasing tiny goldens until another of the Sierra's thunderstorms swept in and sent us scampering for our tent. It was a late evening dinner and clean-up once the sky cleared at 7:00 pm.

The 13th was always going to be a big day for us, and certainly lived up to expectations. After muesli and a coffee we packed up and started the climb up to the Darwin Lakes in Darwin Canyon. It was a steady hike up the PCT for a couple hours until we checked our map, took a compass bearing and started a cross-country section that involved a lot of steep sections with boulder scrambling and searching for the occasional cairn to indicate we on the right track. Luckily, we had good weather right up to the Darwin Bench at 11,000 ft, where we had lunch on a small lake full of goldens, surrounded by towering peaks over 13,000 ft, including Mt Mendel, Mt Lamarck, and Mt Darwin. The clouds were beginning to build, threatening another thunderstorm on the way, so we made tracks for a campsite on the biggest of the Darwin Lakes shown as 11594 on the map (presumably its altitude).

We set up camp and Tricia moved into the tent while I went out for a fish in the gathering gloom, with wind rising, the occasional flash of lightning in the distance and boom of thunder. There were no rises, so I went down to the fish. The goldens that took my #14 gold bead head Hare's Ear nymph on the sink, or on a short strip, were bigger and fatter and



A colourful breakfast – golden trout

very pretty in their best spawning colouration in this lake. I kept a half dozen to fry up. I also kept my eye on the sky and retreated to the tent when the first drops of rain landed. Luckily, we had selected an ideal spot sheltered by stunted pines because we had wind and a good pelting of rain the next few hours, with a proper thunder and lightning show. Again, it was a late dinner. Cous cous with dehydrated veggies, this time. The trout were hung in a tree out of reach of the critters until morning.

The 14th dawned clear and calm. Breakfast was muesli and coffee, orange-fleshed golden trout fried crispy, a sprinkling of salt and pepper and a squeeze of lime, muffin and honey and more coffee. We had a big day ahead – eight hours walking as it turned out. After breaking camp we had 1½ hours of cross-country boulder hopping and scrambling along the north shore of the last three upper Darwin Lakes. Along the way we saw schools of brightly coloured golden trout, presumably spawning in “Springtime” over shallow gravel beds near the lake edge following the melting of the ice. Eventually, we turned due north for a further two hours of climbing steeply over boulders, always searching for an elusive cairn, until we reached Lamarck Col at 12,290 ft. The views from the top were magnificent. We sat, drank some water, ate some jelly snakes for a glucose hit and a hand full of fruit and nut “trail mix”, then faced the next task at hand. On the north side of the Col is a permanent snowfield. We tried walking down, but fell through the surface crust up to our hips. What to do? Glissade of course! So we sat in the snow on our bums and slid the 1,000 ft or so to the bottom. We were only wearing shorts and T-shirts, so our hands and bums were freezing when we got to the bottom. We then force-marched for an hour downhill

to warm up, always looking for cairns, crossed another couple of “minor” snow fields and eventually stopped for lunch at 2:00 pm on a sunny patch of short, soft grass next to a tiny rivulet. After boiling the billy for a cup of tea and finishing the last of our salami, biscuits and lettuce, another handful of trail mix, a dried fig and apricot or two and a Snickers for a sugar hit, we were on our way again. Down, down, down ... after a further 3 hours we were back at the trail head at North Lake.

We felt relieved that we were finished, yet sadness too in a way – it was certainly one of our most memorable trips and a shame it was at an end. We drove the 30 minutes down the mountain to Bishop to find a motel with a hot shower, a meal and a soft bed, and talked about the stories we had for our mates, with photos in the camera to back them up. And we wondered how long it would be until we could, once again, walk in “the range of light.”



All this walking worked up an appetite

An Invitation – the Warrnambool Annual Dinner

Again this year members of the VFFA are invited to attend the Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Game Dinner.

In previous years Hors D'Ouvres were plates piled high with deep-fried crumbed abalone, and it was almost worth attending for this dish alone.

Last year the entrées (there were five) included Game Soup, Battered Hopkins River Bream, Southern Bluefin Tuna Sashimi, Smoked Trout and Smoked Eel, and Hare and Duck Terrine with Woodford Crabapple Jelly.

The main course was Grilled Kangaroo Sirloin, Hare and Duck Sausages, and Roasted Vegetables. The finale was tea or coffee with a Cheese Platter and Woodford Quince Paste and Apples.

This is a very special occasion and the food is magnificent. It is well worth the trip.

The date this year is July 25, and the venue is the Matilda Room at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion on Grafton Road, Warrnambool. As usual, it will be a BYO wine and beer night. There is no bar at the venue.

The cost of the dinner has been set at \$75. The Chef is Robert King. Before dinner drinks with canapés will begin at 6:00 pm. We will sit for the first course at approximately 7:00 pm what will be



E-mail: jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au

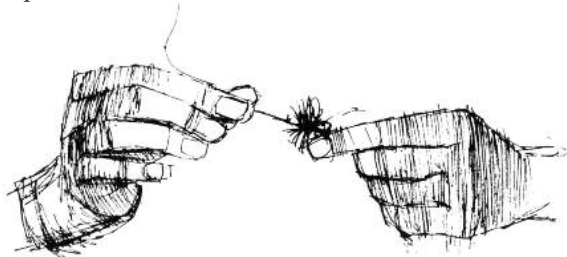
Phone: 0355 625168

P.O. Box 1380 Warrnambool 3280

another night of fine food and great company.

Because of the size of the venue the total number attending this year is limited to 65, so it would be appreciated if VFFA members confirm their intention to join us for dinner a.s.a.p. and no later than July 24. Before July 14 Jim Blakeslee can be contacted at his e-mail address (jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au) or by calling him on 03 5562 5168 to make a booking.

Between July 14 and July 24 anyone wishing to contact the WFFC to book a seat should phone our President, Adrian Jacobs, on 0437 620 972.



FLY OF THE MONTH

Max Chistensen's famous Yeti



The trouble with good flies – the ones that work really well – is that they seem to spawn a multitude of copies, variations and modifications. Sawyer's pheasant tail nymph is a prime example. So, too, is Max Christensen's fabulous Yeti. No surprises then that the version described here is not the original, but rather one I came across in the September 2006 issue of *The Tasmanian Sportsfisher*, edited by Neil Grose. Neil's fly tying consultant was Bruce Gibson, a very successful commercial fly tier based in Burnie, Tasmania, who tells us this:

The Yeti is one of Tasmania's most enduring flies. In Ned Terry's book *The Great Trout of Lake Pedder* he gives a whole chapter to the Yeti and how they tied and fished them in Pedder during its heyday of massive fish. It is one of the most useful early-season flies - large enough to fish blind, yet not too large to present to a fish tailing in shallow water. It has a bold profile and is a very functional and durable fly.

It is really a small Matuka, but tied with a fur wing instead of feathers. The body can be any a colour you like, whether dubbed or chenille. I personally like a two-tone chenille body, usually black, with a red butt like Dick Wigram's Robin. The same fly with a fluoro green butt works very well in Bronte Lagoon. I have used mainly mink or seal fur in the past, but there is an abundance of natural and dyed zonker type materials available these days.

The Yeti can be fished in any weather and in just about all situations early in the season in lakes or rivers. In late spring the Yeti is best fished on rougher days when there is a bit of chop on the water. It is also a good night fly tied in dark colours, and I've caught many fish on a black Yeti before daylight and late in the evening.

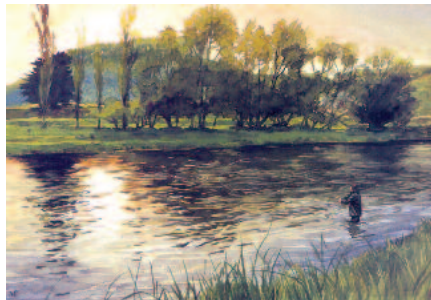
Mick Hall also writes extensively about the Yeti. (Check his website – kossiedun.com.au, then 'Fly Talk', then 'The Last Yeti'). He suggests that, 'as most would acknowledge, Max Christensen was one of Tasmania's greatest fly designers and it was he who designed the Yeti. In fact he tied a large number of variations of the Yeti and I believe some of the very first contained fur from a Platypus or Tassie Devil, both very illegal to use today.'

Mick tells us that Max first designed the Yeti in the very early 1950s, and from all accounts, after many prototypes, the final choice for the wing came from an old fur coat made from Musquash. In Canada, England and Australia this fur, commonly sold as Musquash, is also known in America as Muskrat. However the Hudson Bay Fur Company actually patented the name "Hudson Seal" for Muskrat that was dyed to imitate Seal's fur, a practice that this company had been doing since 1906.

To add to the confusion, dye masters also used the term 'seal' or 'sealing' of the colour during the dying process. Bevan Stewart writes in a letter to noted collector Tom Edwards that the fur used was seal fur dyed Musquash. He also writes in part, "Many tyers believe that the fur is from a seal, confusing the animal with the process of seal dyeing by brushing the dye into the fur".

Mick was fossicking through a plastic storage bin a few years back and came across five Yetis that had been tied by Noel Jetson during the 2004 Bronte Tie-In. Noel announced that the material used for these Yetis was the last from the famous fur coat that this fly was made from. Apparently Max Christensen's widow gave Noel the remnants of the coat not long after Max's passing.

According to Andy Braithwaite, Max Christensen designed some 69 patterns that were marketed, although not many are still around today. The Yeti is one of the survivors. Andy even believes that there may have been more than one Musquash coat. Mick suggests that there are a number of fly tiers who claim to have a small piece of the fur from this coat and they are hanging onto it like gold. What about those five Yetis tied by the legendary Noel Jetson? Mick is hanging onto them like gold and will have them mounted and preserved for future reference.



*Tichborne watercolour
Mangatainoka River*

Materials for Bruce Gibson's Yeti

Hook: Wet fly hook, Limerick or Mustad R72 or R50, sizes 6, 8 or 10.

Thread: Black 6/0 Unithread.

Body: Red chenille butt (fluorescent red is a good choice here), then black chenille for the rest of the body. (A version with a fluoro green butt is also well worth trying.)

Rib: Gold or copper wire

Wing: Black zonker strip (mink preferred, but rabbit is fine).

Tying Procedure

(These notes mainly from Bruce Gibson's description.)

1. Wind thread along the hook shank to just short of the bend and tie in a short length of wire for the rib.
2. Tie in the red (or green) chenille and wind it to cover about a third of the hook shank. Then tie in the black chenille and wind it towards the eye, tying it off 2 or 3 millimetres short of the eye.
3. Tie in the zonker wing just behind the eye. Then cut the other end of the wing off so that it finishes just beyond the bend of the hook.
4. Here's the tricky part. The zonker wing will be tied down along the shank using the wire rib. To do this take the wire and do a half turn under the hook shank away from you. Then use your dubbing needle to separate the hair on the zonker strip above the wire. Now while keeping the hair separated bring the rib through the gap towards you and slightly slanted toward the eye. Repeat this procedure two or three more times to bind the zonker strip down all the way to the eye.
5. Tie off the wire, tie in a head behind the eye, add some head cement and whip finish to complete the fly.



*Tichborne watercolour
McLaren Lake*

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

July

- 5 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 12 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 16 General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: Josh Bradshaw – Tasmanian fishing guide
- 19 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 22 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 25 Warrnambool Annual Dinner
- 26 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool

August

- 2 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 9 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 12 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 13 Visit to Snobs Creek Hatchery with BBQ lunch
Event Co-ordinator – Terry Rogers
- 16 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 23 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 28 Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
Speaker: Philip Weigall – Victorian guide, author, and commentator
- 29 President’s Casting Day -10:00 am Red Tag Pool

September

- 9 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 17 VFFA AGM - 8.00 pm

October

- 11 Dam Day with Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers’ at Thorpdale
- 15 Lunchtime General Meeting – 12:30 to 2:00 pm
Speaker: to be advised
- 21 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 23 – 24 Bullen Merri Trip at Camperdown
Event Co-ordinator - Hugh Maltby

November

- 13 - 15 Warrnambool Trip
Event Co-ordinator - Hugh Maltby
- 19 General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: Malcolm Cross
- 25 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm