

# FLY LINES



JULY 2016

## The July Meeting – with Christopher Bassano

Many members will be aware that Chris Bassano is a top Tasmanian fishing guide and regular member of the Australian fly fishing team representing us at World Championships. Chris has fished extensively throughout the world in both fresh and salt water. As a guide with over 20 years' experience he has guided in the north of Australia chasing sailfish, black marlin, giant trevally, tuna, queenfish and barramundi. The freshwater of Tasmania, however, is his home and he has fished nearly every piece of water that Tasmania has to offer.

He is a Certified Casting Instructor and is currently the Vice President of the Trout Guides and Lodges Association of Tasmania (TGALT). He has written extensively for many fly fishing publications, both in Australia and internationally, and has been featured on the front cover of the Japanese *FlyFisher* magazine.

During the peak fishing season Chris lives at Miena near the Great Lake, and for the rest of the year he lives on the banks of the St Patricks River at Nunamara. When he is

THURSDAY, July 21  
8:00pm at the  
Celtic Club

not fishing he plays husband to wife Krystal and father to his two young daughters.

For those who wish to join us for dinner in the dining room prior to the meeting PLEASE make a Dinner booking by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, July 20, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



**Mark it in your diary – Thursday, July 21, 8:00pm at the Celtic Club.**

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

**VOL. 64 NO.9 – JULY 2016**

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

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

---

## **President**

Hamish Hughes

Email: president@vffa.org.au

## **Honorary Treasurer**

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.org.au

## **Honorary Secretary**

David Grisold

Email: secretary@vffa.org.au

## **Honorary Editor**

Lyndon Webb

Email: editor@vffa.org.au

## **VFFA Website Administrator**

Kevin Finn

Email: webadmin@vffa.org.au

## **Honorary Librarian**

Rick Dugina

Email: library@vffa.org.au

## **Other Council members:**

Senior Vice President: Mike Jarvis

Junior Vice President: John Permewan

Councillors: Hugh Maltby

Ian Sambell

Peter Boag

Dermot O'Brien

Terry Rogers (Immediate Past President)

---

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

---

## Index

VFFA Office Holders .....	2	New Members.....	13
The June Dinner With Jim Higgs.....	3	This Month's Yarn.....	14
President's Message .....	4	Web Fish .....	14
The August Dinner .....	5	Lake Ina Hut.....	15
Warrnambool Fly Fishers Game Dinner.....	6	New Fly Lines From Sunray .....	23
Editor's Desk – Lyndon Webb .....	7	Lake Fyans Match With Bairnsdale.....	24
'Time Flies' - book production.....	10	Crack Willow Trees.....	25
Vale Marty Rogers.....	11	'Time Flies' 3rd VFFA Publication .....	30
Winter Casting .....	12	Fly of the Month.....	31
Anyone For Tying .....	13	VFFA Meetings & Activities .....	36

---

## The June Dinner with Jim Higgs

Some 30 members attended the lunchtime dinner in June to hear Jim Higgs, VFFA member and an accomplished fly fisher talk about angling and cricket. Jim is probably best known beyond the ranks of fly fishers for his performance on the cricket field. He played 22 tests for Australia as a legspin bowler and was later a Victorian and Australian selector.

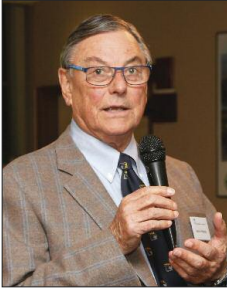
In his talk he described his early days growing up in Kyabram, and his concern these days for making fishing, and especially fly fishing, attractive to our

grandchildren. He enjoyed some recent trips to New Zealand where he fished and also caught up with New Zealand cricketers he played against in the 1980s. He concluded his talk by giving the budding cricketers (??) among our members some very useful advice on facing fast bowlers.

Jim's talk was very entertaining and drew a lot of laughter.

# President's Message

---



A sad day for the VFFA.

I have just received the news that Marty Rogers has passed away. Marty was a great friend to many of us and over the years gave much to the VFFA.

How many years? In our history *The Country For An Angler* we learn that Marty signed up Bob Roles as a member in 1962 and he in turn signed up Jim Allen in 1963. On your behalf I offer our condolences to Marty's family, in particular his wife Mary and son Edward, known to us fondly as Zak.

I bought my first new rod from Marty at the Compleat Angler store in December 2001. In fact Jim Allen would be pleased to know that Marty sold me two that day; a Sage SP and a Loomis Trilogly with the recommendation 'you always need a spare stick'. Later Marty sold me more good tackle and quality clothing with the advice 'the poor man always pays twice'. I have never forgotten his wise words. And I won't forget his input and quips at Council meetings, excursions, and casting days, and his entertaining of us all as auctioneer. Marty we will miss you. We thank you for your immense contribution to the VFFA over so many decades.

As I write this Australia is electing our next government. I only hope that who ever wins can get things done successfully on behalf of us all. Last month I asked you to consider whether you should stand for Council in September. I also asked you to consider who you think would be an ideal candidate to take the VFFA ahead. If you have not already done so, please speak to him or her about standing. Or please give



*Marty as so many of us remember him – as chief auctioneer introducing us to some quality tackle*

me or another councillor your recommendation.

Because I was fishing the flats off Hinchinbrook last month I missed the June general and council meetings. I thank Mike Jarvis for taking over and Jim Higgs for what I believe was a most entertaining talk on fishing and cricket. I look forward to seeing you later this month at Christopher Bassano's presentation. We are fortunate in that we are going from one champion to another.

Unfortunately I will not be able to join our team at the VFFA Lake Fyans Match with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers on July 28-31. I wish them the best of luck and trust that everyone has a successful and enjoyable weekend.

To those at home rug up, those travelling be safe, those fishing tight lines,

## The August Dinner

This year's August Annual Dinner at the Celtic Club on Friday, August 26, will be a very special occasion. We have the launch of the third book in the VFFA trilogy, a superb publication entitled *Time Flies*, by Rick Keam, featuring the many flies that are associated with VFFA members. An order form is included with this issue of *Fly Lines* for members who would like to pre-order copies. Mike Stevens informs us that printing is now completed, so copies will be available for pickup or purchase at the dinner. An invitation to attend the dinner is also included in this issue.

Our two special guest speakers for the occasion are Travis Dowling, Executive Director of Fisheries, and Anthony Forster, Freshwater Fisheries Manager. Travis will speak about the Government's 'Target One Million' program, where \$46 million is being spent to grow participation in recreational fishing to a million anglers by 2020. This exciting program involves action on a number of very practical fronts, including increasing stocking to 5 million fish per year, allocating 'stronger fishing club grants', pursuing a reciprocal licence arrangement with NSW and a number other significant initiatives.

Anthony will give us an update on the 'Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program', a collection of nine projects over three years aiming to deliver a clearer understanding of the cause(s) of the decline in wild trout fisheries, better understanding of priority trout populations' health and status, improved engagement with anglers to share our understanding of trout fisheries management, science and factors that drive the fishery, a more responsive management of wild trout recreational

fishing in Victoria, and improved fishing opportunities for wild trout in Victoria.

Both of these topics will be of great interest to all VFFA members.

As background to our two speakers, Travis was born in Euroa in north-east Victoria, where he fished for trout, redfin and carp in local creeks. He studied at La Trobe University in Melbourne, then worked in the Department of Justice in Victoria. He later moved to the Northern Territory where he worked for the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. On returning to Victoria he was appointed Chief of Staff to the Environment Minister and Deputy Premier, John Thwaites. In 2007 he moved to Fisheries Victoria as Freshwater Manager, and was appointed Executive Director in 2014. He is married with three children who love nothing more than camping and fishing, is a passionate Magpies supporter, and 'has the best job in the world as Executive Director of Fisheries.'

Anthony was born in Footscray and completed a degree in Aquaculture at Tasmanian University in 1985. He helped establish the now booming Tasmanian salmon farming industry where he worked as a marine farm manager for 10 years. Since then, Anthony has worked for Western Australian Fisheries and as a consultant to the Victorian trout farming sector. He joined Fisheries Victoria in 1995 and managed the aquaculture development program until 2009, when he was appointed Manager, Inland Fisheries. Since then, he has led many of Fisheries Victoria's key recreational fishing initiatives. Anthony is a passionate recreational fisher.

# Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc.

## 2016 Annual Game Dinner Invitation

Dear Fellow Fly Fishers and Guests,

Here is the official invitation to you and your guests to join us at our Annual Game Dinner, to be held on Saturday, July 23, at the "Matilda Room" in the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion, on Grafton Road, Warrnambool.

This year, the cost for non-WFFC members 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 fabulous company.

I urge you and others who you invite as your guests to contact me at my e-mail address before July 14 to book a seat if you/they will be attending.

Between July 14 and no later than July 20, please contact our WFFC President, Adrian Jacobs, by calling him on 0437 620 972.

Since this is our one and only fund raiser for the Club, we want to fill every available seat and trust that people who book a seat and say they are coming will show up on the night. There is a capacity



E-mail: [jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au](mailto:jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au)

Phone: 0355 625168

P.O. Box 1380 Warrnambool 3280

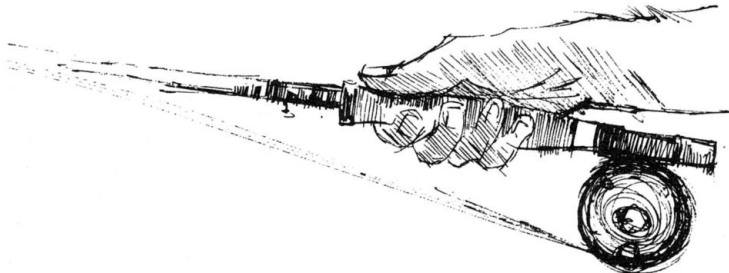
limit of 65 persons who can fit into the Venue at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion and places are filling up fast, so a prompt response is recommended.

Jim Blakeslee, Social Committee Member,  
Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc.

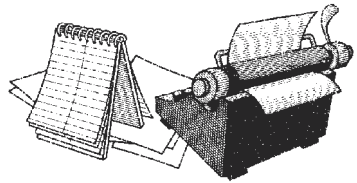
112 Bridge Road

Woodford, Victoria 3281

Ph – 03 55625168 & Mob – 0437 983 421



# From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"Fly fishing is a thinking man's pursuit – because right up to the moment of hooking the fish, which may take minutes, or all day, or may not happen at all, you're not fishing, you're thinking: where to go, how to approach a fish, what fly to use, and so on. You observe and learn from what you see; you figure out strategies and eliminate those that don't work. All this engages your creative problem-solving mind, in a beautiful environment.*

*Then you see people who just flog the water without being present in what they're doing, just hoping that if they do it long enough they'll get lucky and something will happen. They don't observe, don't draw conclusions. You come back hours later and they're still in the same place, doing the same thing, hoping against hope."*

(a comment by PJ, a fishing companion of Derek Grzelewski, and quoted by Derek in his book, *The Trout Bohemia – Fly Fishing Travels in New Zealand*.)

This is a thought-provoking comment, and one I take to heart. Too often when I'm out fishing and things have been quiet for a while with not much happening I'm guilty of losing focus. My thoughts wander off into all sorts of extraneous areas while I'm mechanically and mindlessly casting and recasting. I must do better.

I acquired Grzelewski's book on a recent trip to New Zealand. Sadly there was no fishing involved, as the purpose of the trip was to help a good friend of many years celebrate a significant birthday. While I was there I purchased some books, ogled numbers of monster trout in the pools at Rainbow Springs tourist centre in Rotorua, spent time and dollars in tackle shops, and generally kept a low profile whilst enjoying the company of some very hospitable friends.

From the perspective of at least some New Zealand trouters I suspect I was their ideal tourist. I spent lots of money while there, but didn't sully any of their streams. I say this because I gather from the scribblings in various New Zealand

fishing publications that some locals are not keen on overseas anglers, especially Australians, fishing for their trout. As an example, I spotted the following comment in the May 2016 issue of *Reel Life*, the anglers' newsletter from *Fish and Game New Zealand*, where a rather melancholy soul called Hugh Creasy vented his spleen with these warmly welcoming thoughts: "... these human blowflies, these maggoty oiks, who infest and despoil our coastline and our national parks. They add nothing to our economy and despoil our countryside. It is no accident that the vehicles they travel in are as obscene as their occupants and are mainly purveyed by Australians, a nation of the coarse and unrefined." Goodness me! Hugh – whatever brought that on? Did we beat the All Blacks? And of course many of us will recall that infamous article in issue #66 (November 2009) of the New Zealand *Fish & Game* magazine, where scribe Hamish Carnachan wrote a rather lengthy rant detailing all the apparent character flaws and odious angling etiquette of us bogan Australians.

>>>



*A monster brown in captivity – Rainbow Springs at Rotorua, New Zealand*

Now I hasten to add that I have many New Zealand friends. 1981, when I was working in Hamilton (New Zealand), I joined the local angling club and was made very welcome. The members were a great bunch of guys who were generous, warm-hearted, and unstinting in their help and advice. I still receive an annual Christmas card from Peter Scott, club vice-president at the time and a superb angler who took me out on countless trips to his favourite streams. And I know that many VFFA members will support these sentiments, because they have very positive memories of great friends they've made with the New Zealand anglers they have met.

But that weird antipathy persists. While I was in New Zealand I purchased the obligatory current issue of *Fish & Game*. A fascinating read it was too. It carried a 'letter to the editor' from a Swiss angler who reports that he has fished in New Zealand every year since 1988. He writes: "I would suggest that instead of being threatened by the presence of so many overseas fishermen it would be better to make us pay more for the privilege of fishing in New Zealand. This may take some of the pressure off those rivers where it is most keenly felt. How much should we pay? Most of us would find \$300 per season reasonable." Apparently

the writer of this letter was responding to an article in the previous issue of the magazine (which I haven't seen) where a guide, Nick King, had argued strongly that all overseas anglers should not be allowed to fish unless they have a guide with them. So there's a couple of challenging proposals to ponder.

But it wasn't all bad news. The author of my new book, Derek Grzelewski, had contributed a lengthy article in the current issue of *Fish & Game* describing the changing character of trout fishing through a season. And there it was – "double-handed spey casting has become another of my winter favourites." Derek has seen the light too. Since my scribbles last month I have discovered just how popular casting with two-handed fly rods is becoming. Recent issues of Australia fly fishing magazines (*FlyLife*, *FlyStream*, and *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating*) all carry articles on the two-handers, and some of the US websites are exploding with information and suggestions on how they might be productively used in trout fishing. I also discovered some great material in New Zealand's *Fish & Game* issues from a few years ago, where Rene Vaz, a local guide and writer, describes and recommends their use in the New Zealand fishery.



*Some big rainbows there too*

Of course I couldn't resist making a purchase. The *FlyFisher* store in the Melbourne CBD carries a good range of two-hander rods and lines, but I wound up being fitted out by Rick at *Aussie Angler*. Rick was great – an exponent himself, he offered a pile of sensible and helpful advice. So to my dear wife's consternation ("Do you really need another rod? You've got a garage full of those things already!") "Just trying to catch up with the handbags and shoes my dear.") I headed home with a 'switch rod' and recommended line. The rod is 11 foot long, and is a size 5/6 (one of the lightest). But don't be confused – the size markings on lines for double-handers don't relate to those for 'normal' fly rods. The first 30 feet of my 5/6 line weighs 400 grains, which is the weight of the first 30 foot of an 11 or 12 weight line for a single-hand rod.

And what have I discovered? The light two-handers are called 'switch rods' because you can supposedly cast them either single handed or with two hands. You can cast them as a single-handed rod too, but that length of rod and the matching heavy line requires some brute strength. It's heavy work and a bit of a shoulder-wrecker. But two-handed overhead is fine – hurl the line back behind you, let it straighten, then drive it

forward and it sails into the next postcode. But the real challenge of course are those spey casts. It looks straight forward but my first efforts were miserable. They travelled 10 metres and landed in a heap. Since then a stack of reading and YouTube videos have yielded some clues and my distances have improved. Bintoro, VFFA member and highly qualified two-handed instructor, is about to get a phone call.

So why am I bothering? Rene Vaz offers this: "Two-handers have been gaining in popularity (in New Zealand) for a number of fishing applications. Single-handed fly rods are still going to offer the best solution for most of our fishing requirements. However there are a number of specific situations where the double-handers excel. What's more, once you've started playing around with a double-hander you start to think about new things to do with them. ... Learning to Spey cast is a great adventure and taking the time to practice the basics will vastly improve your time and enjoyment on the water." So there you go.

Tight lines, and lots of drag-free drifts,

*Lyndon Webb*



## ‘Time Flies’ – the third in the trilogy of recent publications

In 2007, to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> year of the VFFA, the Association published *Geehi to Great Lake*, an anthology of articles from VFFA Newsletters. It was followed three years later by Tony Brothers’ history of the VFFA, *The Country For An Angler*. Rick Keam served as editor of both books.

From the beginning it was intended that these two publications should be followed by a third, detailing fly patterns created by or associated with VFFA members over the years. Now Rick has researched, compiled and written that book.

*Time Flies: A Victorian Fly-Fishers’ Association Fly Box 1932–2015*, again published for the Association by Michael Stevens, is an elegant production of 186 pages. There are 37 chapters describing over 60 flies. However, the style of presentation is very different from the routine fly-pattern recipe books of old, with their unimaginative side-profile photographs and basic text. Instead the flies, beautifully photographed by top Melbourne cameraman Vlad Bunyevich, are presented at angles that capture their individual distinctiveness. Wherever possible, the accompanying descriptions supply information and stories about their creators. These are supplemented by some wonderful black and white photos from the 1930s and 40s, and decorative cameo sketches from the same period.

The Introduction presents an historical background to the development of Australian fly-tying, including some surprises, and the final chapter documents even more surprising research into the evolution of that iconic fly the Brown Nymph. These sections

alone make the book a major contribution to Australian fly-fishing history.

Even for those members who don’t tie their own flies, *Time Flies* will be a beautiful book to have and to hold, and a treasured memento of our own rich fly-fishing tradition.

The Publisher, Mike Stevens of Stevens Publishing in Launceston, tells us that the print run has just been completed and the books are now available for release at our August Annual Dinner. Mike describes the books as follows:

*Time Flies* follows the tradition of the previous books by the VFFA. It has been produced in two versions - a standard and a limited edition. Both are a testament to members in that their content, editing and publishing has been done by members – a great undertaking and result for any organisation, let alone a group such as the VFFA.

There are some interesting aspects to the new book. I should explain a little about the publishing and production. As a publisher of some 20 years it is always a joy to produce something one has a deep interest in, so it is a no-brainer to produce a fly fishing book.

We use the world’s leading publishing suite called Indesign, which links with other parts of the suite called Photoshop, Acrobat and Illustrator. It is unusual for publishers to use any software outside these programs these days.

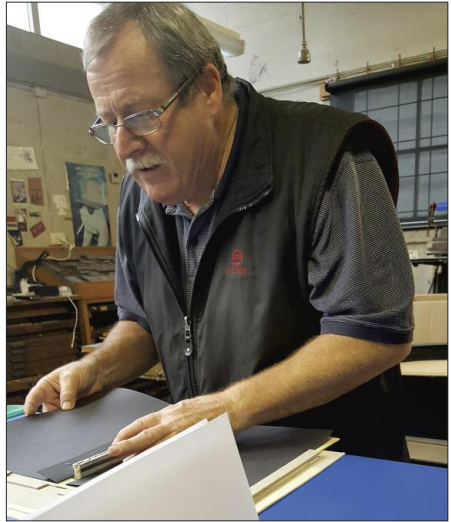
Despite many believing Macs are essential for publishing I have a good standard PC with two 30” screens. It makes no difference these days, it is just a personal choice. *Time Flies* is a mix of

contemporary and traditional techniques. Modern in that it is digitally printed, and traditional because it is hand bound by perhaps Tasmania's last exclusive production book binder, Denis Carey.

Watching Denis at his craft is like stepping back in time. There are pots of hot glue, old hand-operated book presses, and a huge guillotine that looks to be 80 years old. I am pretty sure no machine has a digital readout of any sort and even the machine that gold embosses the spine and cover is hand operated.

Both books are hard case bound, the first in black Alb Buckram and the collectors' edition is bound in black Samala book cloth. The first book is printed on 120gsm Colotech paper and the collectors on 140gsm Silk.

Size is similar to previous books, being 148mm x 210mm in size, and 186 pages. Both books are gold foil embossed on front and spine with an inlaid photo on the front.



*Denis Carey binding the last copies of Time Flies*

### **The Two Earlier Books**

Some copies of *Geehi to Great Lake* and *The Country For An Angler* are still available. Members who would like to purchase copies, or additional copies, of these very popular books should contact Peter Boag on 0408 711 946, or email him on [pboag46@gmail.com](mailto:pboag46@gmail.com).

---

## **Vale Marty Rogers**

As was mentioned by Hamish in his President's Message, one of our longest serving members, Marty Rogers, died last Friday – July 1. Marty made a very significant contribution to the Association, and to fly fishing in general in Victoria through his involvement in the tackle trade, over several decades. A number of his many close friends in the Association have indicated that they would like to write about their experiences and memories of their friendship with Marty. These will be featured in our August issue.



*Marty with his great mate Joe*

## Winter Casting

Sunday Casting started on the first Sunday in June. What's it all about?

According to our President it's a very casual and relaxed social event that includes a warm cup of coffee and usually some food as well.

Casting commences at around 9:30 – 10:00 am and finishes between noon and 1:00 pm regardless of the weather. Attendance is not usually large, with 6 - 12 participants there on average.

Members bring their rods and practice their casting. They often try other members' rods. They can also bring along any potential new members to try their hand at fly casting. There are always experienced members there who are willing to assist with tuition.

It all happens at the Red Tag casting pool in Fairfield and can be found in Fairlea Road off Yarra Bend Road, (Melway 44 J2). Just look for a hardy bunch of fly fishermen having a coffee and a laugh.



*This is how it's done!*



*I think we should move those casting rings out a bit further*

## Anyone for fly tying?

In last month's issue of *Fly Lines* we indicated that the VFFA was considering reintroducing fly tying lessons as part of its ongoing development program. Richard Kos (Kossy), a very experienced and skilled fly tier, has agreed to run these classes and is pleased to report that already some members have contacted him to say they are keen to join the class. Kossy has suggested that we keep the invitation open for one more month, and then he will negotiate a suitable time and venue with those who have indicated they

are keen to be involved. Then classes will commence. Any other members who would like to have some fly tying tuition should contact Richard at [kossy1@bigpond.com](mailto:kossy1@bigpond.com) or on his mobile, 0430 091 300, to confirm their interest.

Any members who have spare fly tying vices or tools or tying materials that they no longer need should contact Kossy in order to build up a supply of tools and materials to help the class get underway.



*Kossy demonstrating his tying skills*

---

## New Members

With great pleasure we welcome Jennifer Singe as a new member of the Association. We trust that her membership brings many pleasant and enjoyable times, and lots of happy memories. Welcome to the VFFA Jennifer.

## This Month's Yarn

(... from August 2000)

"You know, from what I've read," said Alf, as he organised the mandatory rite with the lunch glasses, "Some American clubs go to great lengths and huge expense to provide easy to catch trout for their members."

"That's right," agreed McTaggart, after a lengthy sip, "and some of those American business tycoons who own private waters do remarkable things too. When I was over there in California some years ago there was an oil millionaire who wished to impress another millionaire who was about to visit him on his private ranch with some really top trout fishing. But conditions had been poor on the stream that ran through his range. The flow was sluggish and there hadn't been any decent insect hatches for quite some weeks. So on the morning when his visitor was due to arrive and do some fishing the host hired a large wind machine from the nearest movie studio

(you know, one of those contrivances that create those monster howling gales you see on films). He set it to work along one bank of the stream so that it would blow grasshoppers and beetles and other bugs out of the undergrowth and onto the water. He succeeded too. This synthetic hatch was the greatest seen on that stretch of water for many years."

"And did his millionaire friend get any fish?" asked Hughie Maltby, who was lingering on the edge and fascinated with the yarn .

"Not a single one," McTaggart replied, shaking his head. "You see the ranch owner made the fatal mistake of setting the wind machine up on the east bank of the river. So while it blew huge numbers of insects onto the water, it also created a synthetic east wind, and we all know that the fish bite least when the wind is in the East."

# Web Fish

Cast regularly at [vffa.org.au](http://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

# Lake Ina Hut

... by Greg French

Greg needs no introduction to VFFA members. He is a highly skilled angler, and a prolific and gifted writer and commentator on Tasmania fishing and fly fishing in general. He contributes regularly to *FlyLife* magazine, and has written a number of very popular books. His *Trout Waters of Tasmania* is accepted as the definitive guide to the Tasmanian trout fishery, as he shares in this guide his unrivalled knowledge of Tasmania's waters. Members will be pleased to hear that Greg has just completed two more books, which will be released this month. The *Last Wild Trout* is published by Affirm Press in Australia, and *The Imperiled Cutthroat* is published by Patagonia Books in America. Both can be ordered online from *FlyLife*.

When I was a teenager, no Tasmanian fishing guidebooks were readily available from tackle shops or bookstores. I just bought maps, looked for likely water, and headed off to see what I might find.

I first visited the Nineteen Lagoons in the late 1970s, and was intoxicated by the starkness of the moors and brilliance of the fishing. Immediately I felt compelled to walk away from the roads to see what lay beyond the next rise, responding to the same siren song that forever beckons stream fishers beyond the next bend.

My first bushwalk was to Lake Nameless via Higgs Track. Next I went to lakes Adelaide and Meston via a track marked

on the 1:150 000 Central Plateau map (1978).

There were no other tracks marked on any contemporary maps, but I'd heard lots of talk about a little-used vehicular route from Augusta to Julian Lakes and Pillans Lake. I figured that from Julian Lakes I could easily follow watercourses all the way to Lake Mackenzie. Unfortunately, I assumed that the 4WD track to the Julian Lakes was the one that I'd noticed leading north from the southwest corner of Lake Augusta. It hadn't occurred to me that the actual track might go right through the middle of the Augusta lakebed, especially not since the lake was brim-full at the time.

I caught a bunch of good browns on lures during this bushwalk, but as David Scholes promised in *Fly-Fisher in Tasmania*, there was something other than the fishing which kept drawing me back to the Western Lakes: 'perhaps the remoteness and the feeling of treading unknown paths like that of the explorer'.

In 1981, Tasmania's fisheries associations produced their first edition of *The Tasmanian Angling Report*, and it was here that I read about Clarence Lagoon, a

>>>



*The Ina Hut – a treasure hidden in the Tassie Highlands*

small lake on the south-western boundary of the Western Lakes that supported Tasmania's only wild population of brook trout.

The very next week, I walked to Clarence along 4 km of overgrown 4WD track from the Lyell Highway, but it wasn't until I caught my first brookie I finally paused long enough to take in the surrounds. The landscape was very different to the moors around the Nineteen Lagoons: rolling forested hills covered with stunted forest separated by wide, grassy dales which, clearly, would provide convenient corridors for anyone caring to walk further north.

I consulted my Nive map, and was excited to find that, just out of sight there were a great many potential trout lakes. I'd have to compass my way across swathes of featureless wilderness before reaching the first water, but I was too excited to give any sort of damn about the potential consequences of my inexperience.

The next Friday I set out on a multiday exploration with my sister and brother in law. From the northern end of Clarence it was 8 km north and west to Travellers Rest Lake. With no streams to follow and virtually no hills tall enough to be marked on the map, I felt completely out of my depth, and gloriously alive. Miraculously, we got to Travellers without incident, even if it took much longer than I had hoped. Half a dozen trout ate our lures, and the two biggest weighed almost 6 lb apiece.

On day three we bashed our way upstream, then headed east cross-country. The terrain was quite scrubby, but the walking relatively easy so we kept heading east all the way past the northern end of Lake Ina to Lake Nive, where we finally found some trout. Even though the land we traversed had been



*The long trek in*

so flat that it warranted only a few contour lines on my Nive map, I realised that I could now identify tiers and hills from cartography as easily as rivers and lakes. In fact, my map had suddenly become a three-dimensional thing, a perfect replica of the actual landscape: the most surprising milestone in my bushwalking career.

On the fourth day, in rapidly deteriorating weather, we walked south-west, compassing our way from tarn to tarn, all the way to the midway point on Lake Ina's eastern shore. We set up our tents just as the snow began to waft, but despite the storm, I still went spinning. Within a few casts a giant fish rushed across the whitecaps and, snapping continuously at the wobbler, zigzagged its way right up to my legs. Then it nonchalantly swam away, never to be seen again. (Three decades on, this trout still ranks as one of the very biggest I've seen in Tasmania.) The weather then became so cold and bleak that I was forced to retreat to my tent, my dreams full of impossible predictions about what tomorrow might bring.

We awoke to grey air and white ground, and with the wind building again, my companions were keen to head home. On the southern beaches we were aghast to find rampant evidence of irresponsible



*It's worth the hike for fish like this*

vehicular activity: deep wheel ruts, mud wallows, chain-sawed trees, empty beer cans. Yet again I wondered where the vehicles came from. Yet again I wondered why the track wasn't marked on my map.

Compassing the way from Ina to Clarence was daunting. In the fog we could never see more than a hundred metres ahead, and often I felt sure that I was leading everyone in the wrong direction. But I gritted my teeth and pressed on, and on, until suddenly we were on the shore of Clarence Lagoon. Elation! Not only had I mastered cross-country walking, but I couldn't wait to do it again.

On the drive home, we ended up having a counter meal in the Bush Inn at New Norfolk. The barman, noticing our muddied clothes and bedraggled appearance, said 'Where you been?'

'Lake Ina,' I replied smugly, knowing full well that almost no one would have

heard of the place, let alone been there.

'There's a hut there, you know,' he commented casually.

My mouthful of beer nearly sprayed out my nose.

'True,' he insisted. 'I towed a dinghy in there a few years back, and while trolling we noticed a walking pad leading into some dense bush. We got out of the boat, and followed the track a short way, and there it was: a log cabin. Been there for ages, from the look of it.'

On my next walk to Ina I set up camp on the southern beaches. After two days of good fishing, the weather turned ugly, but this time, instead of going home, I devoted the day to exploring the mysterious vehicular track, tracing it all the way back to the Gowan Brae Road near the Nive River. When I got back to my tent I figured that the return walk must have been about 25 km. The track had been so rugged that I knew I'd never favour it over the cross-country walk from Clarence Lagoon.

For a year or two I only looked cursorily for the hut, mainly because I had become too keen a fly fisherman and too reluctant to sacrifice fishing time. Sometimes I would polaroid a lot of fish, sometimes none. Sometimes I found tailers, sometimes not. At any rate I never did find another fish anywhere near as big as my original monster, though I caught countless specimens weighing 1–3 lb and the occasional five-pounder.

I kept hearing vague rumours about the hut, however, and by 1984 I'd concluded that if there was a hut at all, it had to be in the most densely rainforested gully. Finally, I bashed my way down through a tangled stand of myrtles and fagus, and there it was. Guarded by a stony-faced man.

>>>

The old-timer seemed a little annoyed by my arrival: not unfriendly as such, just unapproachable, though he eventually volunteered his name, Helmut Berger. It turned out that he was one of the hut's four builders, the others being his mates Peter Shultz, Stewart Craig and Paul Kablau, European migrants one and all. He had leased the site in the late 1960s, he said, and built the bulk of the hut from 1970 to 1972, always walking in from Clarence. Why was it so easy for 'foreigners' to appreciate the value of Tasmania's wilderness, when so many locally born people were ambivalent towards it?

'Wish I'd known about this shelter on my first trip,' I said to Helmut, and he looked at me as if I were a brazen halfwit. Luckily, however, we had a shared interest in building, and after a while he offered me a drink.

Shortly after this I began work as a park ranger in Strahan on Tasmania's West Coast, where I met lifelong bushwalking friends and angling companions, Karen Ziegler, Ric Dowling and Lester Jones. We began organising regular fishing trips to Ina in summer, even solstice parties in winter, and the hut began to feel ever more like my own personal property.

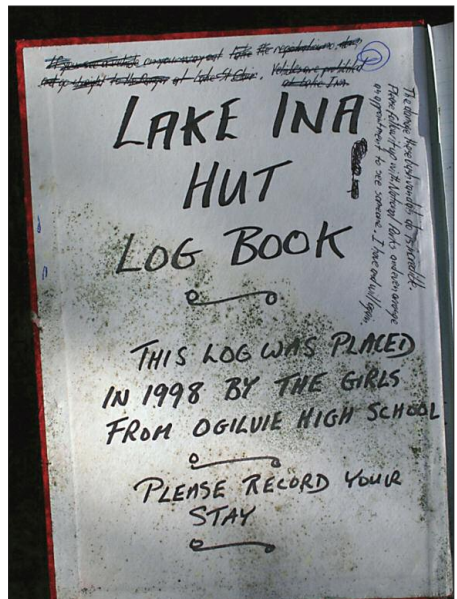
Years later, in 1989, when I was working for the Inland Fisheries Commission, I went back to Strahan for a reunion party, and I met Frances. I invited her on a bushwalk, just the two of us, to Lake Ina. 'It's just been included in the extension of World Heritage Area and incorporated into the Walls of Jerusalem National Park,' I encouraged. 'It's one of my favourite places in the world.' A fortnight later, on a frosty mid-July morning, we walked in from Clarence and used the hut for a sort of honeymoon.

Then Rob Sloane, Chief Commissioner of the IFC, asked me if I'd like to help him

draw up a management plan for the Western Lakes, which had become more or less mandatory because of the area's World Heritage listing. Part of our work involved mapping the distribution of native and non-native fish, and recording the local history.

For much of the time we based ourselves in the quaint bush hut on Halls Island in the middle of Lake Malbena. Mostly we flew in from Cynthia Bay, Lake St Clair, but the float plane rarely managed to pick us up on the day allocated for our return — the weather was too unreliable. Usually we'd end up having to walk back to the Lyell Highway via Ina and Clarence.

I mentioned all this in *Frog Call* (2002), and afterwards several people wrote in the Ina Hut logbook (left by the 'girls of Ogilvie High School' in 1998) that it was my writing that inspired them to visit the area. Serendipitous, I thought, not knowing what was to come.



The hut Logbook

In the early years of the new millennium you only had to walk a couple of hundred metres south-east from Ina to reach the World Heritage Area boundary. Then you entered a large private property on the Skullbone Plains, which in turn was bounded by State Forest (or, more accurately, state-owned land earmarked for destruction). But everyone sensed that the public was becoming ever more sympathetic to the idea of preserving what remained of Tasmania's wild places. In a fit of panic the state-owned Forestry Commission decided to 'devalue' the remaining areas of oldgrowth by building roads all the way to the World Heritage boundary and logging from the back to the front. This was a dumb business model which was always going to send the organisation broke, but in those ludicrous times the state government didn't seem to care.

Luckily, when the inevitable happened and the forest industry crashed, the nearest coups were still more than three kilometres from Lake Ina. In order to recoup costs, the main logging company was forced to sell its holdings at bargain-basement prices, and this was when the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, through public donations, was able to purchase the Skullbone Plains. Finally, in order to earn international Forest Stewardship certification, the government agreed to have the Skullbone Plains and much of the nearby State Forest included in yet another extension of the World Heritage Area.

As soon as the Land Conservancy acquired the Skullbone Plains and had it listed as World Heritage, a friend of mine, fly fishing guide Daniel Hackett, obtained permission to establish some architect-designed eco huts. Then he asked me to help him evaluate the potential for guided fly fishing. Lake Ina would be the main venue, of course, but



*Eco huts – a bit cool though in the snow*

he'd need a fallback option for when things were tough, and trekking options for his more adventurous clients. After we had worked out where it was practical (and impractical) to take paying clients, Daniel then asked me to help with the actual guiding. I didn't think I'd find guiding all that appealing, but I was keen to help a friend in need.

As expected, some things about taking paying clients into the wilderness initially drove me nuts. Many clients, for example, couldn't cast well enough to consistently put a fly a metre in front of cruising fish - not even when the quarry was just five to fifteen metres away. And I disliked the way some people were more interested in their trendy equipment than the actual fishing and walking.

But these annoyances were soon overcome. Since the mechanics of casting are simple to explain, most fly fishers were pleasantly surprised at how quickly and dramatically they could improve their skills. Moreover, most loved learning about the local botany, zoology and geology. Teaching, I soon decided, had to be one of the most rewarding things I'd ever done.

A very special advantage to spending hundreds of hours fishing a single water like Ina, and doing it over seasons >>>

and years, was that it gave me the opportunity to piece together the natural imperatives and rhythms that governed local trout behaviour. Observing all the different ways trout respond to crawl-out mayflies (as I described in *FlyLife* #84) was a fantastic revelation. So too was working out the life cycles of landlocked galaxias. Nowadays, instead of stumbling upon good fishing, Daniel and I are always able to accurately predict exactly where the best action will be.



*Good polaroiding conditions – blue sky and a co-operative fish*

Then there are stand-alone incidents, more frequent than you might expect, which become cherished lore amongst family and friends. Once, after a long, hot day of casting to spinner leapers, first in the small tarns north-east of Ina, then all the way down Ina's eastern shore, we took advantage of a short lull in the action to gulp down a few handfuls of water. 'The lake tastes a bit metallic or something,' I noted casually.

'Ashy,' Daniel ventured. But there was no evidence of bushfires nearby: absolutely no smell or haze. Returning along the track to Daniel's huts, we caught up with a group of older walkers and stopped to talk. 'Just been in for a day trip,' the leader offered. 'A sombre occasion. Just scattered a friend's mortal remains on the water. He loved Ina, he did.'

Another time, this very year in fact, I met a family of six: a mum and dad, with their four kids aged from twelve to seven. The children seemed interested in my fishing gear, so I showed them some flies and gave some casting tips.

'Are you a teacher?' Mum asked. But before I had time to answer she added, 'My name's Rosie by the way, and this is my husband Stuart, who is with the Land Conservancy.'

'Are you a teacher,' I asked, my question piqued by something light and encouraging in her voice. 'I am, actually. When I graduated from uni, a couple of decades ago, I spent my first couple of years teaching on Kiribati.'

What an adventure for a young woman in her twenties, I thought. What spunk.

'Where are you camping?' I asked.

'We thought we'd go to the hut.'

'Do you know where it is?'

'Yes, my father built it.'

'Helmet?'

'Do you know him?' Rosie sounded incredulous.

'Met him decades ago, at the hut.'

'He was a reserved man. I don't imagine he talked much. I have a book with me that I'm going to leave in the hut, a history of the place. Would you like to see it?'



*Another fish caught. But note that blue skies in the highlands require plenty of sun protection on hands and faces*

Rosie had created the book through one of those web-based services where you import your own photos into ready-made designer layouts, add a bit of your own text and, for a fee, the company mails you as many hardbound copies as you care to order. Our easy conversation seemed inexhaustible. The children told us about what they would be cooking for tea, and I told them about having eaten marmot in Mongolia and rotten basking shark in Iceland.

‘You and your wife must come to dinner sometime,’ Rosie insisted, and we exchanged email addresses. Frances and I ended up at Rosie’s house a few weeks later. The multi-course meal she had prepared was superb.

All the guests were great company, but Rosie was especially entertaining, filling us with stories about her upbringing by Catholic European migrants who were, at times, comically prudish and strict. We hadn’t laughed so much in ages. Then, late in the evening Rosie presented Frances and me with our own copy of *The Log Cabin*.

Frances leafed through it, enthralled with all the family snapshots, especially the ones taken by Helmut and his three friends when they were building the hut. They had obviously cut the logs from dead pencil pines elsewhere around Lake Ina, then roped them together and rafted them to the hut site. In fact, it seemed as though the most fun thing about the hut was building it.

>>>



*Great highland polaroiding conditions – an isolated lake, blue sky, clear water, and fishing cruising close in*

When Rosie was seven, Helmut took her brother (aged ten) and sister (thirteen) to his wilderness sanctuary, and promised a disappointed Rosie that it would be her turn the following year. But, although her dad continued to organise several trips a year to the hut, Rosie was always left behind. The increasingly implausible excuses would have been funny if they hadn't been so hurtful.

It wasn't until Rosie's last year of college that Helmut finally redeemed himself. Her story about how elated she was to finally arrive at the place where so much family lore had originated was enough to bring tears to our eyes. Yet she expressed no animosity for the decade of broken promises, just sincere gratitude that Dad had finally come good.

Helmut did his last bushwalk from Clarence to Ina in 2007, aged seventy-three. Then, a little more than six years later, it was Rosie's turn to take her father

to the hut, for his eightieth birthday. He was frail, and everyone knew it would be his last chance to go back. And 'everyone' was scarcely an exaggeration: the birthday party included a complete contingent of grandparents, children, grandchildren and family friends, the oldest person eighty-two, the youngest four.

This time they drove in as far as they could via the Skullbone Plains before walking the rest of the way to the lake. They carried a canoe, too, to get Helmut around the scrubbiest bits of shore.

I wonder if, when Helmut and his friends began work on the hut all those decades ago, he had any inkling that it might become the framework for his family's history. In any case, I'll bet he had no idea that his hideaway would feature so strongly in other people's lives.



## Incredible New Fly Lines from Sunray

... from Jeremy Lucas, top UK fishing guide, prolific writer and author, and for many years a member of the England team competing in World Championships. Jeremy has been at the forefront of the innovation in fishing the 'French Leader' or 'leader-to-hand' technique. He says: "These new lines from Sunray are remarkable, and have effectively made obsolete both conventional fly lines and leaders." So here is an article describing an advance in line technology that may well have a huge bearing on our fly fishing in the next few years.

A few years ago I met a whacky street theatre performer called Tom Bell. He told me he wanted to make me a line that would do what I had designed my presentation leader to do, but better: to fish dry fly and nymph (but mostly dry) with presentation that was only possible with fixed leader or variations of the French leader concept, but without the pitfalls of these, or of the low-tec, conventional fly lines with which the industry has burdened us for decades. Tom said that he could change all that. As owner of Sunray micro-thin fly lines, he could make me the line I wanted. I liked him immediately.

Tom already had a line that was causing a bit of noise in the industry. He called it the World Championship Nymph (WCN) line, designed as a level fly line with a diameter of 0.55mm, which meant that it conformed to the strange FIPS rulings of minimum fly line dimensions. In a stroke, this line almost rendered French leader variations obsolete, while also offering several advantages over monofilament-based leaders, such as lack of coiling, flash and being a lot more comfortable in the fingers, even allowing bunch coiling for nymph fishers who are into such things. Best of all, though, it bridged that gap which the leader had not been able to do, adequately. It allowed great presentation of dry fly, at ranges beyond what was possible, or comfortable, with monofilament leader, and with better control, speed and accuracy. Frankly, Tom could have stopped right there and river

fly fishers would have loved him for it; but that is not in his nature. He knew he could go beyond even this altitude in the sport.

In Europe, and actually throughout the world, there have been only incremental developments in fly fishing for a very long time. Materials, and their fabrication and use, have improved of course, but the fundamentals of fishing technique and method? Not really, not since Frank Sawyer on the river or Arthur Cove on the lake, even though we have, as a sporting fraternity, considerably improved the general standard of skills. Although, it has been that fly line more than anything else which has held us back, forcing us to explore with leader-only techniques. Nudging at a new frontier. Until Tom, and Sunray, saw beyond that tired old frontier.

Funny where you find genius, how it happens. How you perceive it. I mean, I'm the ex-research chemist, and dry fly aficionado, pushing, striving, with my plume tip dries, for the best presentation - which is all that matters out there, to me - on the rivers of Europe. Then along comes Tom Bell, from a wildly different background and almost twenty years my junior, taking us to a whole new level. A Sawyer moment in the sport, as I call it. Tom looked after all the chemistry, and the physics - my domain - and the materials science, notwithstanding the intransigence of the tackle industry, and unfathomable R&D, which are totally out of my domain. He did it all, really. >>>

He just asked me what I wanted, then made me show it all to him on the Eden, England's most sublime, treasured, wild trout and grayling river on such a large scale, and in a few months, he gave me the JL presentation line prototype.

Sawyer, Cove, again. Moments on the river, on the Eden, and the San, and the French chalk streams, and I am so far beyond that frontier. So far beyond the nonsense of English artificial fisheries, the English competitive approach, the tiredness of ego-centric British guiding and even the commercial travesty of American fly fishing (although that is better than the British). Here is wild river fly fishing in what I term the 'ultimate refinement'. Thanks to the European influence, and Tom Bell.

He has gone on since, of course. 'My line', which I think is called the Dry Fly (long) is all part of a range of micro thin lines, which also includes my great friend Stuart Croft's Dry Fly (short) which is the presentation line designed for short, soft rods on small, enclosed rivers. And then there is the evolution of the WCN, and scarcely to mention the staggering casting

performance of the International series of lines and the double handers.

Relevant to the Antipodes? Your adventurous fly fishers have visited Europe long enough to figure that it's all about presentation, and no matter the size of the trout, the speed of flow, there will be a Sunray that will do the job better than any former generation of fly lines. In those big, steep rivers with giant rainbows and browns muscled up by the force of waters, you might (or might not) want the finesse of a dry fly presentation line, and will want to err towards an International #5 perhaps, on a matched rod. Then again...

And it is all so delightfully simple, now, for me, which is exactly where I want to be. A plume tip, the presentation line, a bit of tippet, all on a truly soft, long rod... There is nothing that can better it. No, not in my lifetime, I think, on the European scale of river, anyway. Trout and grayling river space. The ultimate refinement.

(For readers who would like to check out Sunray and their incredible new lines then go to <https://sunrayflyfish.com>).



---

## Lake Fyans Match with Bairndale Fly Fishers

A winter "friendly" match with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers (BFF) is being planned for Lake Fyans and other western lakes from July 28 until July 31. While still in the early stages of organisation, the event will be based at the Lake Fyans caravan park with anglers either camping or staying in on-site cabins, and is scheduled to tie in with the BFF annual winter trip to the area.

VFFA members Trevor Hawkins (0409 195 507) and Mike Jarvis (0418 265 390)

are looking after arrangements for the weekend, which should provide an opportunity for the VFFA to continue its long standing relationship with the BFF, and hopefully repay some of the generous hospitality we have enjoyed during Donger weekends at the BFF lodge on the Mitta Mitta River near Omeo.

Anyone interested in taking part should contact Trevor or Mike.

# Crack Willow Trees: In defence of their contribution to trout habitat

... Robert Roles

In the Weekly Times newspaper, of July 2014, there appeared an article: 'Trout in trouble'. In this report, former Fisheries Victoria Recreational Fishing Manager Ross Winstanley blamed climate change 'exacerbated by the removal of willows' for the loss of high country trout. "We are fighting against nature," Mr Winstanley said. "The best we can do is hold off the impact of climate change, reduce it, or slow the impact."

Along our trout streams and creeks in north-east Victoria the grim picture is made even worse by the deliberate human intervention of removing crack willow trees, on the basis that they are 'an environmental weed', as labelled by CMA

and conservationists; a view even supported by Fisheries Victoria.

The 2015 Wild Trout Conference in Mansfield was rated a success, with 200 people attending. Habitat was a key aspect of most presentations, and I presume that to mean 'good habitat' for our beloved trout. Discussion during Theme 2, 'Climate and Habitat', led to discussion on work carried out by Goulburn Broken CMA, mainly willow removal and re-vegetation, along sections of key north-east Victorian streams. At one point, when describing willow removal on the lower Howqua River, the presenter added: "... and besides, this is marginal trout water anyway."

>>>



*Hopper time on the Nariel in 2009. Plenty of shade here for trout in the hot weather before the trees were ripped out*



*Thowgla Creek, January 2000. A great example of willows providing top habitat for trout*

Dedicated trout anglers (and the emphasis at the conference was on improving trout fishing for all anglers) know that willow trees grow mostly along the middle and lower reaches of our trout streams and creeks, and typically these sections are 'the best holding water' for mature trout. And they are there for a reason because willow-lined pools are invariably deeper than the upstream forested catchment, and contain in-stream woody debris, providing refuge and sanctuary not only for fish, but all manner of aquatic creatures. These types of places are also a magnet for platypus, native water rats and waterbirds.

But during the summer months the streamside willows makes their most valuable contribution to good trout

habitat by providing dense canopy shade, which on some of our smaller creeks can mean total shade above key trout spots.

Many crack willow trees actually grow out of the stream bank, and I know places where mature trees grow directly from the channel bed. Nothing beats this type of in-stream shading. Willow foliage on a mature tree can be dense just above the water surface, and the proximity of branches close to the stream current is a position from which a log jam can start which in turn becomes the best possible 'cover' for brown trout. A well-developed 'log jam' can become impenetrable for anglers and other predators, an invaluable contribution to the overall habitat of the stream.



*Thowgla Creek, March 2015. The trees have been ripped out and replaced by rocks to stabilize the bank. But no shade for trout and water temperatures in summer rising to lethal levels for trout*

At the Trout Conference some key findings were expressed regarding CMA removal of willows: “Willow removal is unlikely to have caused the observed declines in trout because it has neither been extensive enough, nor occurring in the upper parts of the catchment where the majority of stream shading should occur.”

This view differs from that of Ross Winstanley, so someone is incorrect. The presumption here is that upper catchment stream flows are cooler being mostly shaded by natural forest, and the removal of downstream willows (being only a small percentage of riparian vegetation) plays only a minor part in the overall impact (adversely) on trout and aquatic habitat.

The CMA describes willow removal 'as affecting local scale shade, habitat and food for trout, but on a river scale, the impact from willow removal on trout pales in insignificance against the broader

catchment issues like climate, drought, bushfire and topography.'

These catchment issues are set in place by nature and not easily controlled by CMA managers. Combined, they determine the health of a trout stream, good or bad, and no CMA activities are likely to change this. But the deliberate removal of willow trees is human intervention. The CMA recognises that 'willows are removed by managers because they are a major environmental weed', but follow this up by stating: 'but this removal causes a very obvious change to the local stream amenity for trout anglers. It is acknowledged that willows can provide shade, habitat and food at a local scale.'

In north-east Victoria the act of willow removal is supported by re-vegetation on bare stream banks, but not always. The new vegetation consists usually of small gum trees housed in tubes, supported by sticks, and planted adjacent to where the willow trees once were.

>>>



*Thowgla Creek, again in March 2015. This pool was once shaded by several willows. Now thanks to 'stream improvement' by the CMA a once attractive and productive trout habitat has been totally destroyed*

'Rocking up' to help stabilise denuded banks often completes the work. Often the rock fill contains a lot of soil and clay, and assorted debris, which contributes to streambed siltation. Very large rock sections require in-stream machinery (see Thowgla photo) to facilitate the work, damaging the streambed and invertebrate communities. We are led to believe revegetation of willow cleared banks replaces the shade value of the so-called 'major environmental weed'. Gum trees growing back from the bank edge will never provide the shade value of a willow, or its lower canopy (over the water), or the potential to develop 'log jams', cover and refuge at the base of these trees. 'Rocked up' banks deny trout of good habitat, and contribute to increasing water temperature during north-east Victorian summers.

On my last visit to the Little Snowy Creek in January 2016, I was keen to inspect the

area affected by willow removal, a distance of about 3 km above the Eskdale Camping Ground. Every willow had been removed, and the adjacent areas replanted with gum trees. There were some rocked up areas too. The gum trees had grown well, some to a height of 8 metres, but there was not shade anywhere over the stream, as they were planted back from the creek edge, and even at full maturity I doubt if the shade capacity could match the in-creek willows.

I took my Loomis rod and searched with my ever-reliable Keam's Autumn Hopper. Not a single response over 500 metres. This was the same stretch of creek that produced fantastic hopper fishing in January 2004. It was then I measured the water temperature, to find it a staggering 29°C! No fish, no aquatic creatures, nothing to suggest any form of life in that once beautiful little creek. My wife and I drove upstream for about 5 km to where



*Back to the Nariel in January 2009.  
Before the CMA's destructive 'improvements'  
sections like this held good populations  
of brown trout.*

the creek emerged from bushland. Here the water temperature was 24°C, hot water by trout standards, but trout can survive in 24°-25°C, though it is rare for them to feed and act freely at that temperature.

Removing willow trees from the middle and lower reaches of north-east Victorian streams allows summer temperatures to increase water temperature beyond what is safe for the survival of trout, and other

aquatic creatures. I fear Ross Winstanley's observations are meaningful. Global warming is increasing our alpine river temperatures, and any intervention to remove shade trees in lower catchments can only have an adverse impact on quality trout fishing. It might result in no fishing at all.

### **Willow density:**

Most trout anglers would know the term: 'choked with willows'. This situation can occur when willows in some areas are left to multiply into impenetrable foliage along riverbanks, such as along the Campaspe River below Kyneton, and the Jacksons Creek below Gisborne.

The approach to willow removal presently is to 'clear-fell' whole banks of trees, usually at public locations that can be viewed easily from a bridge. The CMA is then seen to be doing something. The 'thinning out' of willows, if adopted, could be a tool for relieving congestion while retaining key trees in important locations. This would require supervision by a person who is able to identify the value of certain trees in relation to protecting trout and aquatic creatures' habitat. These trees should be clearly marked for the machine contractor to avoid easily made mistakes.

Revegetating between willows with native vegetation will contribute towards soil stability, and the marked willows will continue to provide valuable shade and habitat for trout and other in-stream creatures. Let's hope common sense prevails.



## To fish alone or not to fish alone... that is the question...

... by Gavin Hurley, from Pro-Angler store.

There is nothing better than standing on a lake edge, or wading up a river, with just your own thoughts for company. It is a time when you can be completely and utterly alone, without ever feeling lonely.

A nice cast into a tight situation is satisfaction enough, without the need for an audience to impress or judge your ability. You get to cast to every possible lie, rise, or sighted fish, without feeling guilty about allowing your fishing partner an equal opportunity. You can start when you want, stop when you want, walk as far as you like as it is all about you, 100% self satisfaction.

As good as that seems when written down, in small doses it is fine, but I think we can all agree, fishing, like many other things we all enjoy, is better done with a partner!

Then there is the safety factor to consider. I have had falls and accidental swims when fishing alone that have really made me stop and think and ask: could I have put myself in genuine danger? And let's not even bring up snakes! Even though I now take a 'Spot' locator with me everywhere, I know the safest way to fish is with a friend. A lot can go wrong on the water and it is comforting to know there is a mate there to help or be helped if the need arises.

I vividly remember an early season trip to my beloved Mataura, staying at the magnificent Nokomai Station as a real reward for myself. I went a few days before our guided group was to arrive and I fished one of my favourite legs, back to the Athol Lodge. It was two days after a 'wee fresh', so for the Mataura

that's almost cheating! Almost every fish I cast to, I caught. Even those monsters in the 'special' spring fed backwater that everyone who has ever fished that section has spent hours on, all took my fly. I landed between, (I am a self proclaimed bad counter), 20-40 of the most magnificent browns up to 7lb. I had them on dries, nymphs, jumping, snagging, some of the most amazing fishing I have ever experienced anywhere in the world... and yet as good as it was, the actual ongoing excitement was such that it took me over a year to develop the film - yep film, it was a few years ago! Then when I did get the photos back, these self-shot photos had my feet in the picture, along with a seemingly lifeless fish, a stationary rod, and no story in the photo itself.

I constantly compare that day with others spent with friends on the water. Most are not nearly as successful, but not surprisingly far more enjoyable. Over a beer at the end of the day we can recount the captures, the runs and leaps, the bad casts, the lost fish, the stumbles, sometimes the electric fence re-enactments which in particular is still, some seven years later, the funniest situation I have ever witnessed! The days are shared and are fun, and I guess it highlights that when we go fly fishing, it's not always to just catch fish. Sometimes it is just an excuse allowing us to spend time with friends under the illusion of fly fishing

So fish wherever and whenever you can, alone if you have to, but rest assured, fishing, like a good wine is best shared with friends... enjoy.

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Small Stream Soft Hackle (Ed Herbst)*



(Some weeks ago Ed Herbst, a prominent contributor to South African fly fishing and fly fishing literature, emailed me notes and photos on small stream soft hackle flies. It was a well-researched article which I'm sure would be of interest to our members.

Trout in small mountain streams eat what's available and research throughout the world shows that what is mostly available are Baetis nymphs and black fly (Simulid) larvae. The reason for this is that these two species are predominant in terms of behavioural drift, with the main drift occurring at dusk and a smaller level occurring at dawn.

South African fly fishers have used stomach pumps on larger trout for years and the results confirm the scientific research. However when I read Rob Flower's excellent book *Australian Trout Food, Trout Flies and how to fish them* (Australian Fishing Network, 2001) I found no mention of simuliidae. So I Googled simuliidae + Australia and found that they are just as prevalent in your mountain streams as they are in South Africa.

This failure to recognise the role of black fly larvae in trout diet is a universal predicament, as I pointed out in several articles on Tom Sutcliffe's Spirit of Flyfishing website. I attribute this to the fact that imitation proved almost impossible until the UV light-cured acrylic resins became available to fly tiers.

The Small Stream Soft Hackle is premised on a singular common factor in both blue wing olive mayflies and black fly. At different stages of their development each contains a significant trigger – a bubble of air which looks like mercury. In the black

fly it occurs during emergence when the adult is sheathed in air, as you can see in this fascinating video clip. See also the photographs by Dwight Kuhn.

In the Blue-Winged Olive it occurs during the egg laying process which occurs underwater. The female crawls into the water and deposits small patches of eggs under rocks on the stream bed. As part of this process the Baetis female is almost always accompanied by the male because there is safety in numbers and this ensures that there is a 50% chance that predators will take the male leaving the female to lay eggs.

A bubble of air is captured between the wings in this process which can be seen in a fascinating underwater video by Ralph and Lisa Cutter. South African entomologist Helen Barber-James saw this happening and placed the rock on the bank where the insect continued to lay eggs. What that means is that the “mercury” bubble is seen constantly by trout and this is what the Small Stream Soft Hackle seeks to emulate.

Silver lined glass beads perfectly mimic this bubble and they form the foundation of Pat Dorsey’s Mercury series of nymph patterns, as outlined in his book, *Tying and Fishing the Tailwater Flies*. The arrival on the market of 1.5 mm beads in brass and tungsten that also imitate the air bubble provides more opportunity in terms of sink rate.

I have always been fascinated by the patterns developed by subsistence anglers centuries ago, and in designing the Small Stream Soft Hackle I was guided by the forward-facing patterns of Tenkara anglers in Japan and the Valsesiana flies developed in the Po valley in Italy. I wanted a soft hackle that would have lots of movement and would also encase the bead. To my delight I found what I was looking for in CDC oiler puffs. This feather lacks a quill and is thus easy to distribute around the bead. I am not aware of this feather being used by soft hackle fanatics but I believe it is ideal.

The body is the result of my experiments with UV light-cured resins to emulate the black fly larva. Brassie bodies are opaque but I found that separating the wire wraps added depth to the fly. The first coating of the body is with Loon fluorescing UV acrylic resin which is cured with a UV torch. It is not very durable however, so the next coating, a protective one, is with Sally Hansen’s Megashine nail polish, which dries within a minute and contains tiny specks of reflecting material. Deer Creek Fine Resin fluoresces almost as much and is more durable. To secure the wire to the hook shank I use a thin coating of superglue.

To push the hackle forward and add more life I use a technique for the thorax which I call “plaiting” – wrapping herl around a dubbed thread. Gary LaFontaine used this in his Double Magic nymphs. In this fly I combine peacock herl and fine strands of black Ice Wing dubbing in the thorax which pushes the CDC feather forward to encompass the bead. This is broad spectrum imitation because by the time a mayfly, crane fly, midge or other adult aquatic insect reaches you after traversing the lip currents at the tail of several pools it is a crumpled mess and looks like what you find in the lint trap of your washing machine.

My preferred thread is black Semperfli Spyder thread followed by Veevus 16/0. My preferred hook is a #16 Dohiku HDN 302/16 SPR Racing which drifts with the hook point up, but any #16 fine wire hook will suffice.

**Materials needed:**

**Hook:** Dohiku, size 16

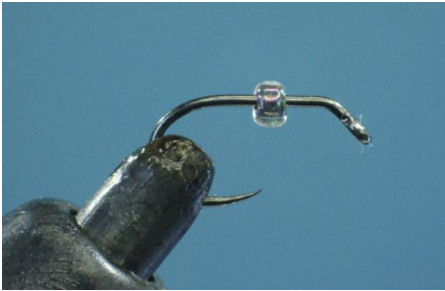
**Hackle:** CDC puff

**Bead:** Clear glass, or silver 1.5 mm in tungsten or brass

**Body:** Black x-sm UTC wire covered with one layer of Loon Fluorescing UV-light cured resin covered with a layer of quick-dry Sally Hansen Megashine

**Thorax** a mixture of peacock herl and black Ice Wing Fibre

**Tying Procedure:** as shown in the following photo sequence



*A pearl bead on the Dohiku 302 hook*



*The body fluorescing strongly under UV light*



*Attaching the UV puff feather – clip away the tip*

>>>



*The peacock herl is wound round the thread, trapping the lightly dubbed Ice Wing material*



*Wet the feather and pull it forward over the bead. Wrap the peacock herl/Ice wing combination forward to the CDC feather and whip finish behind the feather*



*The finished fly*



*A Small Stream Soft Hackle using a black CDC puff and a silver 1.5 mm tungsten bead*





# 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
<b><i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie .....</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>
V.F.F.A. car stickers .....	\$2.00 each

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

VALUED DONORS

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

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

## VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

### July

- 3 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
10 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
17 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm  
Speaker: Christopher Bassano – Tasmanian guide  
23 Saturday Warrnambool FFC Annual Dinner  
24 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
25 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM  
28 - 31 VFFA trip to Lake Fyans with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club  
31 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool for those not at Lake Fyans

### August

- 7 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
14 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
15 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM  
21 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool  
26 Friday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 PM  
*'Time Flies'* book launch – Rick Keam  
Guest speakers: Travis Dowling and Anthony Forster, from Fisheries Victoria  
27 Saturday President's Casting Day – 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM at Red Tag Pool

### September

- 3 Saturday 12 midnight – rivers again open to trout fishing  
5 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM  
22 Thursday Annual General Meeting – 8:00 PM

### October

- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm  
Speaker: TBC  
24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM