

# FLY LINES



JULY 2019

## The July Meeting with Rene Vaz

The guest speaker at our July meeting will be Rene Vaz.

Some of us will be familiar with Rene through his many articles in New Zealand and Australian fly fishing magazines and his appearances as a top angler in a number of recent fly fishing DVDs.

Since the age of 19 Rene has been heavily involved (obsessed!) in fly fishing and the fly fishing tackle industry. He lives and breathes fly fishing. He is a past New Zealand Fly Fishing Champion and New Zealand team member, is an FFF and STANIC Fly Casting Instructor, holds a Masters Degree with Honours in Fisheries Biology and Management, and has worked for and advised a number of tackle companies from around the globe.

Rene started the Manic Tackle Project in 2008 in his garage at home, and after years of hard work, late nights, and some great customers has successfully grown the company

Thursday, July 18,  
8:00 pm,  
at the Kelvin Club

into Australasia's largest fly fishing distributor.

Rene will speak at the VFFA July meeting about fly selection and the latest gear from Simms, Scott Fly Rods, Lamson Waterworks reels, Airflo lines, and more.

Mark it in your diary – Thursday, July 18, at the Kelvin Club.

We would encourage all members to join us for a meal beforehand, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, July 17, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



*Rene Vaz – our July guest speaker*

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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*Chris Bassano showing David Grisold how to catch fish using the French Leader technique*

# President's Message

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... from Christopher Gray

As I write my message for this month, a brave and dedicated group have turned out for the Bruce Whitehead Western Lakes Trophy at Lakes Bullen Merri and Purrumbete in Camperdown. Hughie's note to me this morning described 30 knot winds and white caps racing across the lake. I wish you all every success over the weekend, as you compete with our friends from Bairnsdale and some very unfriendly fishing weather.

Casting day last Sunday was a huge successful with 28 people attending on a brisk and foggy winter's morning. A great turn out, and sincere thanks to Hughie Maltby and Joe Haslauer for providing the morning refreshments and the lunchtime barbecue. I was approached by a long-time member there who described the event as less about casting and more about mates catching up and enjoying some time in each other's company. A wonderful way to sum up our Sunday morning.

I would like to welcome a new member this month. Tony Stewart joined the Association a few weeks ago, and we greeted him and welcomed him formally at the June meeting.

At the recent Council meeting there was discussion on possible opportunities for members to participate in extra fishing activities organised by the VFFA. We hope to facilitate some winter and spring lake fishing for you in the near future – more to come in the August newsletter.

There was a good turnout at our June meeting to hear Taylor Hunt from the



Victorian Fisheries Authority present an overview of the work the VFA is doing to provide better fishing experiences for us all, and the work the VFA is doing to promote trout fishing in the state. Of great interest to members is the trial stocking of tiger and cheetah trout in the crater lakes in an effort to create alternative fishing experiences in addition to the drought-proof trophy trout and chinook salmon already present. The initial stocking will be in Lake Purrumbete. The trout are hybrid stock that have been crossbred from brown, rainbow and brook trout to produce sterile trout that in theory should be fast growing as they do not allocate any energy to reproduction. The trial results will be fascinating to observe!

Also of interest was the recent announcement that a dedicated native fish hatchery is to be built in Shepparton.

The Snobs Creek hatchery will then return to being solely a salmonoid hatchery. This will mean that we should see greater numbers of trout being stocked in future years.

The Talk Wild Trout Conference is on again this year - on Saturday November 23 at Mansfield. With a number of top trout rivers in the area, members are encouraged to make it a weekend of fishing and learning more about the health of our rivers and lakes, and the trout within!

We have received an invitation to attend a Freshwater Fish Habitat Workshop in Traralgon on Saturday, July 13. This workshop is jointly hosted and presented by the Australian Trout Foundation (ATF), Native Fish Australia (NFA), Arthur Rylah Institute, West Gippsland CMA and East Gippsland CMA. This event is funded by and held in partnership with the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) and the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP). To register for the workshop please email [habitat@atfonline.com.au](mailto:habitat@atfonline.com.au) or [renae.ayres@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:renae.ayres@delwp.vic.gov.au)

The winter events calendar is looking great with a number of opportunities to catch up. At our meeting on July 18 we

have special guest Rene Vaz from Manic Tackle to tell us about all things to do with fly fishing tackle.

A few of us will join the Warrnambool Fly Fishers for their annual dinner. I look forward to meeting up with them at this year's dinner. Then we have another Sunday Casting Day on July 21 at the Red Tag pool.

We have Tamie Fraser as our guest speaker in August. It will be a wonderful night to hear Tamie discussing her fly fishing adventures. Get your invites (included in this issue) completed and returned to confirm your seat for the night.

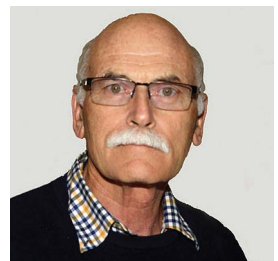
Tight lines and heavy nets for the month ahead.



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## A Warm Welcome to a New Member

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Tony Stewart as a member of the VFFA. We trust that Tony's membership brings many years of pleasure and lots of great memories. Tony is a keen photographer. We look forward to seeing some of his work in future issues.



## The August Annual Dinner:



*Tamie Fraser's skills are second to none*

Our guest speaker for this year's annual dinner will be Tamie Fraser, who was elected as our first lady member a few years ago.

Tamie has a well-deserved reputation as a gifted and entertaining speaker with some great stories to tell. She deserves our full support, and this would be an



ideal opportunity for members to bring their partners to our annual dinner.

The date for this event – Friday, August 23, at the Kelvin Club. Time: 6:30pm for a 7:00pm commencement.

An invitation to this year's dinner is included in this issue.

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## The June Meeting with Taylor Hunt from the VFA

Before I forget we've got a coffee mug and some sunscreen for each of you here on the side table. A little gift for each of you from the VFA.

Thank you Chris for your kind introduction. I'm delighted to be here tonight. I know that you are a passionate group of fly fishers and I love talking to passionate fishers. And Dermot keeps reminding me that you are the oldest recreational fishing club in Victoria, so the VFFA is very important to us.

As Chris said in his introduction, I'm a fisheries manager. I love fishing, and can assure you that many of my VFA



*Taylor Hunt speaking at the June meeting*

colleagues are also very keen anglers. We do it for everyone, and we do it for ourselves too.

I'm here to talk about how we manage our fisheries in Victoria. I hope this excites you and also gives you an appreciation of the challenges we've got. There are certainly plenty of great opportunities in our fantastic state fisheries.

First, a little about the Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program. I understand that most of you mainly fish for trout, so you'll be particularly interested in what we're doing there. Dermot, Choco, Philip Weigall and Terry George (VFFA members) have all been involved in this as part of the Trout Reference Group. I'm also going to tell you a bit about conditions around the state at the moment and hopefully give you some insight and helpful knowledge for when the streams open again later in the year.

I love my fishing, and I like fishing for everything. Unfortunately I'm a hack at fly fishing. I fly fish for trout with my colleague John Douglas, and I fish for everything else using lots of other methods. If it swims I love to fish for it.

I studied at Melbourne University, and my first job out of university was working at Snobs Creek hatchery as a fisheries researcher. When I arrived the boss said, "Great - you're going straight out into the field to do some electro-fishing. We need to find what's going on with our trout populations following the 2003 and 2004 bushfires."

So Adrian and I went out and we put a wand in the water and zapped it. Then the trout floated up and we netted them and weighed them and measured them. And we did this right through the high



*Taylor Hunt*

country for several months. Those high country streams had mainly small trout, but we found big ones there too.

From this exercise we learned something really important. Bushfires can be devastating for our streams and the results can look totally catastrophic. But trout are very resilient, and within two years, provided the habitat is there and the water temperatures are cool enough, they will come back quickly. That was an eye-opener for me. I learned that trout are very special and they are very tough. If conditions are right they will recover.

On one occasion Adrian and I were electro-fishing the upper reaches of the Caledonia River. We had finished for the day and I was hungry, so we made a camp fire and I put a tin of baked beans on the fire. Adrian scooted down to the river to fish and I waited for my baked beans to heat up. Then I had this clever idea that I should punch a hole in the can, and this led to the biggest explosion. Baked beans were splattered all over my face and all over our camp. Adrian thought the shotgun had gone off, so he came racing up from the river to find baked beans everywhere.

>>>



*Taylor electro-fishing with a colleague*



*Murray cod research underway*



*There are still some magnificent Murray cod out there*

But these were good times, and I learned so much about trout in the process.

My next fisheries research job was with John Douglas. We travelled right across the Murray-Darling Basin investigating Murray cod. We were electro-fishing big cod in the middle of their spawning season to work out whether they were mature or not. To do this we had to put a little straw up their backsides and suck the eggs out to find the sizes of the eggs. This brought me to a whole new level in my love of fish and fishing.

We caught some really big fish too, and all of this helped me appreciate the fabulous freshwater fish that we have here in Victoria. And it's great to report that there are now more of these big cod around than ever before.

I spent eight years as a fisheries researcher but am now a fisheries manager, and have been for seven years. So my job now is not about providing information to fisheries managers for them to make decisions; rather, I have to make decisions with my colleagues based on the information that we get. And our job is to ensure that you guys have a great fishing experience and that these will continue into the future for your kids, your family and your friends. We want our fishery to be sustainable.

We've got 15 key recreational fish species here in Victoria. As well as our brown and rainbow trout, fish such as Murray cod, golden perch, bass and estuary perch are all becoming increasingly popular. The humble redfin is still very popular with many freshwater anglers, and we are seeing more anglers chasing fish >>>



*A young Taylor out on the job doing research on our fisheries*

such as silver bream. We are also trying to recover Macquarie perch, trout cod and catfish, and we've got chinook salmon in our two crater lakes near Camperdown. These are the key species that we actively manage, so it's a big portfolio.

There are about 500 waters in the state that we manage, and we stock fish in 250 of these. Our job is to make sure that the fishing is good, and the tools we use are the fisheries regulations, harvest regulations, bag and size limits, and closed seasons. We stock fish from our hatcheries and we also try to improve their habitat. Fish need good places to live so we install better habitat where we can.

We are also doing lots of work on land and water management. We are concerned with environmental flows. We are also trying to ensure that people have access to our fisheries, so we engage with stakeholders and we try to ensure

that anglers follow the rules. As Anthony Forster says, we are custodians for the moment and we must continue to ensure that our fisheries are great.

I spend a lot of my time talking to groups like you about our fishing, and I love it. The government has this Target One Million policy that many of you will be aware of. At Fisheries we think it's a really good thing. It is political (a 2014 election promise), but it has given us record investment in our fisheries. Some \$47 million was invested by the government over four years in our trout fishery, and this is off the charts. We've never had anything like this before.

As part of Target One Million we've increased trout stockings, introduced size and bag limits on four premier rivers and two premier lakes. We've also got a heap of kids involved in fishing, and especially trout fishing at Vic Fish events, because getting more kids involved in fishing and

appreciating our sport is so important. This of course will keep fishing going into the future.

We were given another \$35 million in 2018, and this will take fish stocking up to ten million fish per year. Currently we're stocking about six million per year. We've also got money to build a new native fish hatchery at Shepparton that will produce all our native fish. Snobs Creek hatchery will then be prioritised for trout and salmon production, and this will be a good thing for our trout fishery.

There is now better access on lots of waters. You can take kayaks and boats with electric motors on Tullaroop, Lauriston, Hepburn and Barkers Creek. We are also opening up lots of fishing access on crown river frontages where in the past farmers have locked gates and prevented anglers from getting to the streams. I think that these are all really good things for our fishing, and it's great to have these sums of money from the government to help make our sport so much better. So I'm really proud of what we do.

One of the great things in the last few years has been the Wild Trout Fisheries Management conferences which many of you have attended. We've had 200 - 500 people in a room talking about trout, with guest speakers coming from around the world.

Report cards for trout have been a great way for monitoring and understanding how our fisheries are performing.

We have restored trophy trout fishing in our crater lakes, where we've now got large chinook salmon and trophy brown trout being caught. I spoke with Scott Gray this morning, and he said that he has caught over 20 brown trout in the last two weeks that have been between 2 and

3 kg. There are plenty of these fish there and they are cruising in the shallows as well, so there are some cracking fish to be had in those two lakes.

Let's talk again about the Wild Trout Program. The headline in the Weekly Times newspaper in 2013 was: "Hook, Line and Stinker – Trout in trouble, and anglers blame the government." This described the situation in the high country in the state's north-east. The fishing was bad and the weather was really hot. So angler groups were asking us (the VFA) what we were going to do about it?

We said that we didn't have all the answers so let's work on this together. What was happening with our trout fishery? Were high water temperatures the problem? Was something wrong with the health of our wild trout fisheries? Were too many people taking fish? Was the fishing pressure really high? Should we be stocking our rivers again? Was there something wrong with the habitat?

So we put a program together with angler groups and established the Trout Reference Group, which by the way has had very good representation from the VFFA. The important thing was that it was driven by anglers and the VFA working together. It's been really powerful and we have learned a lot over the past five years.

Let's just run quickly through some of the things we learned. We carried out wild trout population surveys in about 30 rivers and found that trout are seasonally dynamic but very resilient. Same with the bushfire scenario – trout can be hit pretty hard by the fires, but if the habitat is there they will come back quickly. (Native fish take a bit longer.) A graph showing the overall abundance of trout across lots of different rivers (with data from right >>>

back into the 1990s) has frequent and large rises and falls. But generally we are tracking okay, and 2019 is not too bad.

Hot temperatures in rivers really affect our trout. Dr John Morrongiello from Melbourne University did some research on this. He's a guru and he loves his trout fishing. His research showed that high temperatures in the summer affect our trout, and they try to move upstream where it's cooler if they can.

We also saw poor returns from stocked trout. We fin-clipped and then stocked 30,000 trout into the Howqua and the upper Goulburn rivers, then checked later by electro-fishing. And we managed to find just 13 of those 30,000 stocked trout. This was a profound result. It just doesn't work to put yearling fish into self-sustaining populations.

Streamside shading is critical. There can be a 10°C difference between the sunny and the shaded areas on a river in our summers, so habitat work planting trees along banks is really important.

As it happens, the overall harvest pressure on trout in rivers in the alpine regions is actually quite low. At times there is high visitation, but the numbers of fish that are taken or harvested isn't large. We determined this through a couple of different methods, one of which was elegantly simple. We caught a hundred catchable trout, all over 25 cm, and put tags in them. We then offered a \$100 reward for anyone who caught one of these fish. These tagged trout were then put back into the rivers and over 18 months only three of these fish were caught. So on this evidence the exploitation rate is low. So while lots of people are fishing, not many of the fish are being harvested. Which is good to hear because there are plenty of fish there.

We've now got some new marking technology so that we can tell our stocked fish apart from the wild fish. We now mark all of our fish from Snobs Creek with a barium marker and hence we can tell which trout in our rivers were stocked and which are wild fish.

We also managed to convince DELWP, the environment department of government, to give us \$1 million for habitat restoration. Terry George at the ATF, working with the VFFA and other clubs, have subsequently done some amazing stuff through habitat workshops and tree planting projects along our rivers. We've also got Scotty Jordan incubator trials happening across the state to see if these can help with our wild trout fishery. In the end it's all about people – engaging with people and building trust and knowledge and capacity, and this then follows through with on-ground action.

As I suggested earlier, the Wild Trout Conferences have been really powerful. We've had a thousand anglers overall attend the earlier conferences, and this year we hope to increase on that big time. It's all about learning, sharing, networking, and getting together. It's fabulous to see people then getting out there, caring for their trout fishery, and making a difference. The trees that have been planted are growing now and providing that buffer along our rivers that is needed. As result the fishing is going really well.

The results from the incubator trials, however, have been mixed, so we are also going to do some fry stocking this year to see if that helps.

So there's a summary of the Wild Trout Program. We've got this year's conference coming up on November 23, the fifth in the series.

Let's now talk about the current conditions we are seeing in Victoria and hopefully give you some ideas about where you might go for your next trip.


Climate is affecting our trout fisheries. We're going to have ups and downs because warm water is not good for them. 2018 was pretty dry - drier than 2017, and it was the third warmest year on record, which explains why our stream fishing wasn't all that fantastic. At the start of 2019 the trend continued, as we had lower than average rainfall and warmer than average temperatures. But in the last two months we've had above average rainfall, particularly through central Victoria, and that has really helped in improving our fishing. It has turned this season's outlook completely around.

The long-term outlook is not great, but Philip Weigall suggests that outlooks are often incorrect and notoriously unreliable. So we need to wait and see. At the moment things are actually looking okay. John Douglas has been up around Eildon in recent days and saw good inflows from all those Eildon streams. So the river fishing options are looking okay.

Let's touch briefly on the report cards for 2019. These are going to be shown at this year's conference in November, so you are getting an advance look at what we've found. These report cards explain where we fished, what we caught, and what sort of key river health indicators we are seeing.

Here are four of the streams that we surveyed this year and three of them are looking really good.

# River fishing options



| Stream               | 2019 Results |                    |                       |                     |                |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                      | Abundance    | Recent recruitment | Multiple year classes | Mature fish present | Overall rating |
| Upper Goulburn River | ↑            | ✓                  | ✓                     | ✓                   | Excellent      |
| Howqua River         | ↓            | ✓                  | ✓                     | ✓                   | Good           |
| King River system    | ↑            | ✓                  | ✓                     | ✓                   | Excellent      |
| Traralgon Creek      | ↓            | ✓                  | Some                  | Some                | Low            |

>>>

In the upper Goulburn River the number of trout has risen since last year. We can see recent recruitment with lots of small fish coming through. There was a variety of sizes indicating different year classes, and that is really important. And we also found mature fish present. So there are plenty of fish there for you guys to catch, along with lots of good breeders for next season. So the rating for the upper Goulburn is excellent.

The Howqua River is down a little on last year, though all of our key health indicators were up. The King River has everything up, so we've given that an excellent rating too.

For Traralgon Creek, however, the abundance was down. There was some recent recruitment, but only a few multiple year classes and few mature

fish. But that is typical for this creek. It's starting to become marginal, so will have good years and bad years. But the other three rivers in the high country are looking really good and resilient, so there are fish available there for you to catch.

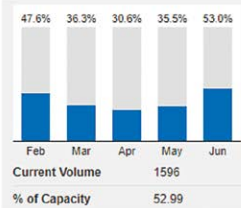
Now for our lake fishing options. As I said, the recent rain has changed things and the lake fishing options are looking great. The middle of Victoria has received exceptional rain in the last six weeks and you can see this in the graphs. If you look at Goulburn Murray Water the catchment was saturated in May, so any rain we get from now on is a bonus. So hopefully it'll keep raining and the levels will keep coming up.

What that means is that lakes like Hepburn, Moorabool, Tullaroop and Newlyn are filling and water is covering

# Lake fishing options



- West-central Victoria has received exceptional rain last 6 weeks
- Lakes such as Hepburn, Moorabool, Tullaroop and Newlyn are on the way up
- Trout have survived last summer, expect them to prosper on new ground
- Good quality fish - polariding, tailing



new ground. They will be really productive and fish will be out and about. We know that the trout survived last summer and we are about to put some more in, but those bigger fish are still there and available. So lake fishing in Victoria is looking really good.

One in particular that I would recommend is Tullaroop Reservoir. We've done a lot of work there. We've opened it up to boats and kayaks with electric motors, so there is now quite a few people fishing there. The fish that have been coming out of Tullaroop have been exceptional. There have been some 10 lb browns and some really big rainbows, including a rainbow of 13 lb.

This item is a little bit controversial, but I wanted to see what you thought about it. As fisheries managers we've got all these

waters across the state and we've got our key species that we put in them. But we are also looking out for different boutique fisheries that provide some different opportunities. One that has come up was suggested by anglers, and we said, "Okay, we'll give it a shot. We will stock some tiger and cheetah trout." Tiger trout are a cross between brook and brown trout – the female is a brook and the male is a brown. A cheetah trout is a cross between a brook trout and a rainbow trout.

So we are putting tiger trout and cheetah trout into Lake Purrumbete, and we may later put some into Rocky Valley Reservoir as well, to see how they go. They are a beautiful looking fish. The theory is that these are hybrids, so they should grow faster and are super aggressive, and can be a sensational

# Tiger and Cheetah trout



*Potential new trout species for Victorian anglers*



sports fish. The trouble is they're a little bit more fragile in the hatchery to grow. We've got lots of cheetahs ready to go and they'll be stocked in July. The tigers were a bit fragile and didn't make it through, so we'll have another crack at them.

So who would be interested in catching a tiger or a cheetah trout? That's good – quite a number of you. That's interesting, because some people think that we're messing with nature and shouldn't do it, but should simply stick with the basic browns and rainbows. These hybrids are sterile. They can't breed so all of their energy is put into growth rather than trying to reproduce. Hence they can display faster growth rates, so lots of anglers are quite keen on them.

So we think they're exciting, and lots of anglers do too. Travis Dowling, my CEO at VFA, has done some amazing work at Fisheries in getting us lots of resources and investments from government. His attitude is that we should give it a shot. We don't always get it right, but if it doesn't work then we will just try something else.

We would love to see you all at the Wild Trout Conference on Saturday, November 23, up at Mansfield. Greg French will be there talking about wild trout fisheries.

Chris Bassano will tell us all about European nympling. The health cards will be discussed again. And our keynote speaker might be Hilary Hutcheson from the USA – a fly fisher woman who will tell us it's all about passing on our love for trout fishing to our friends and our family.

We need to share our love of trout fishing so that we maintain the interest in our fisheries and it continues and remains healthy. Hilary will give us some fascinating insights into USA trout fisheries.

Renae Ayres, the habitat queen who does some amazing work, will be there with Terry George from the ATF, and John Douglas will tell us all about the latest results from the Scotty Jordan incubator trials.

Hopefully the underlying message from tonight is to encourage you to believe that there is a lot of effort being made in Victoria to create great fishing for you. We are always open to suggestions. Give me a call if you have any ideas or thoughts about how we might do it better.

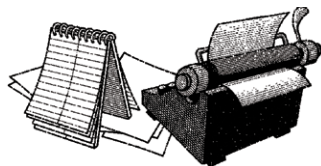
Thank you for listening.



*An attentive audience in the palm of Taylor's hand*



# From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"Some of the best fishing is done not in water but in print."* (Sparse Grey Hackle)

*"The literature of angling falls into two genres: the instructional and the devotional. The former is written by fishermen who write, the latter by writers who fish."* (William Humphrey)

*"I fished a little while ago with a man, not in his first youth, who had wasted the flower of his life on business and golf and gardening and motoring and marriage, and had in this way postponed his initiation far too long."* (Arthur Ransome – "On Giving Advice to Beginners", 1929)

*"It was late in April, with the river running fine and as clear as a young parson's conscience."* (Tom Sutcliffe – "Reflections on Fishing")

I heard years ago that the best preaching is not about promulgating new truths, but re-emphasizing old truths. This thought crossed my mind a few weeks ago when I was listening to a podcast by Tom Rosenbauer from the Orvis website. Tom was interviewing Dr Russ Carpenter on the topic: "How trout think". Russ Carpenter is a neurologist at Stanford University who studies the brains and senses of fish, specifically rainbow trout. In the interview we heard stuff we've heard before, but there were some new ideas too.

The doctor reminded us that water temperature is important in determining how active trout are likely to be (something we all know). He also reminded us that fish feed more actively at the change of light, i.e. at dawn and dusk (again something we are well aware of). However according to Dr Carpenter this is possibly related to changing gravitational forces exerted by the sun and the moon. Somehow these affect the movement of fish food, such as nymphs, and of course trout are fully aware of when their food is more accessible.

There was also a suggestion that at full moon periods trout can feed

right through the night and thus feel less inclined to feed during the day. Conversely during new moon periods when it is much darker at night trout don't feed, and thus are more likely to feed energetically during the daylight hours.

But what about those confounded barometers? Dr Carpenter assured us that barometric pressure is a huge predictor of trout feeding. He didn't actually indicate whether high atmospheric pressure is better than low pressure, or the converse, but he did say that large rapid changes of pressure, such as when a front moves through, do have a significant affect: "A system moves through and you get a big pressure drop or an increase in pressure, and in my professional opinion it takes time for trout to readjust to the rapid pressure change. It makes them uncomfortable and puts them off their food. It takes some time for the swim bladder to adjust to these big sudden changes. They take it easy for a bit and wait for the adjustment."

Some of Dr Carpenter's extended explanations were a tad difficult to follow, at least for me. For those who would like to hear the original podcast, go to: >>>

<https://news.orvis.com/fly-fishing/podcast-how-trout-think-with-dr-russ-carpenter>.

Earlier this week I was hunting through my collection of old newsletters and came upon a set of issues from the 1970s. They made fascinating reading. I noted that in 1973 there were refreshments and supper available after general meetings for those who attended.

The 1973 VFFA Annual Dinner was held at the Dauphine restaurant in Ivanhoe. Dinner was served at 7:00 pm and included soup, fish entrée, roast turkey, sweets, cheese and greens, and coffee. And the price was an extortionate \$6 a head.

Mind you, in those days the VFFA annual subscription was a paltry \$6. Despite this the February 1975 newsletter had a note from the president bemoaning the fact that there had been a very poor response to repeated requests for the payment of subscriptions. In fact 70% of VFFA members in that year were unfinancial, despite the pleas, and some were in fact two years overdue. I also saw somewhere in these issues that in the 1970s the membership was 440, though this also included members of associated country fly fishing clubs.

A note in one of these issues tells us that 'talent scouts missed out on a rare performance last weekend, when Alan Thomas turned on a fine show in the middle of the Goulburn River. Deeply engrossed in casting to a rising fish, he lost his footing and was fully submerged. The ensuing complete clothing change was viewed in comfort from the Breakaway beach by Charles Brittain and his wife.'

Perhaps my best find was this gem, from the 1973 collection:

"It really did happen. We had a social day. And this one was a roaring success.

On Sunday the 18th of February there was a social day at the Breakaway on the Goulburn River. The weather was hot and the river was cold, as usual. Wally caught the first fish, and the second, and the third, and the fourth. But then he was there early, and won the prize. President Riley was there. He preferred molesting black snakes by poking his rod down their burrows, if you please. He fell in, too, but caught a fish – then stayed on till 1 o'clock in the morning celebrating. (He rarely catches fish!)

Charlie was there. He didn't catch any fish. In fact I don't know if he even went fishing. Rob Roles was there. I saw him crawling through the willows like Tarzan. He caught a fish (on my hopper pattern). The he fell in too!

BG and little Brian were there. No need for ice in the Scotch with all that cold Goulburn water. J.V.P. England was there. They say he can cast. Well, I've seen worse.

There were wives there too, lots of them. There were lots of others there as well, but I've now forgotten who.

It really was a good day! And despite slanderous rumours, Editor remained sober for the duration. (Ha! Ha! – Editor's wife.)"

Following that enchanting report all I can say is that fortunately your current editor is renowned for his sobriety. (Must have something to do with his Salvation Army upbringing.)

Anyway, tight lines, enjoy the lakes, try a Magoo, and tie some flies for the stream opening in September.

Best wishes,

*Lyndon*



## The Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner

Dear Fellow Fly Fishers,

It's that time of year again! You are cordially invited to join us at our 52nd Fish and Game Dinner, to be held on Saturday, July 20, at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion on Grafton Road, Warrnambool.

This year the cost is again \$80/person.

This event is a BYO wine and beer night. Before dinner drinks with deep-fried crumbed abalone and white bait will begin at 6:00pm, and we will sit for the first course at 7:00pm for the start of what will undoubtedly be another night of fine food and company.

Contact Jim Blakeslee at my e-mail address - [jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au](mailto:jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au), or by calling me at 0437 983 421 before July 15 to book a seat if you will be attending.

There is a capacity limit of 70 persons at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion, and as places will start filling up fast, a prompt response is recommended.

Jim Blakeslee, Vice President and Social Committee Member



*From an earlier Warrnambool dinner – a nicely served entrée*

112 Bridge Road, Woodford, Victoria 3281

Phone – 03 5562 5168 and mobile  
0437 983 421

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



*Warrnambool annual dinners are always well attended*

# VFFA NOE – Visit to Snobs Creek

VFFA members and family visit to Snobs Creek Hatchery on September 15

## **Background**

The Victorian Fisheries Authority's Snobs Creek Hatchery has produced and grown fish for recreational fisheries and conservation stockings for more than 70 years. The hatchery produces trout, salmon and native fish and is responsible for their release into Victorian waterways.

The salmonid breeding season at Snobs Creek generally lasts for about 12 weeks over autumn and winter.

Female and male rainbow and brown trout broodstock are selected, sedated, and handled carefully to harvest eggs and sperm from the fish. After eggs and sperm have been removed, the trout are returned to holding tanks to recover before they are released as ex-brood stocked into lakes or impoundments. Some stocking starts about October. However most stocking takes place about May the following year when fingerlings have reached an average weight about 30 gram.

In 2017-18 the VFA stocked over 1.2 million salmonids of which over 3,000 were brook trout, 630,000 were brown trout, 539,000 were rainbow trout and 29,000 were chinook salmon.

## **The Event**

VFFA members and family are invited for a private tour of the hatchery with Neil Hyatt, Salmonid Supervisor. This very interesting tour will start at 11:00am and take about one to one and a half hours. We will finish with a barbecue at the pond as guests of the VFA.

Attendees are limited to about 30 or so, so please register asap. First in, best dressed. Interested partners, children and/or grandchildren are welcome.

## **Where and When**

Snobs Creek Hatchery, 455 Goulburn Valley Highway, Eildon 3713.

Sunday September 15 at 10:30am.

(As the entrance gate is locked at weekends, we will meet Neil there at 10:30 so we can start the tour at 11:00am. Note that the drive there is about two and a half hours from Melbourne CBD.)

## **Weather**

Who knows? Check the forecast and be dressed for the outdoors whether it is hot or cold, rain or shine. Hats for the sun.

## **Registration**

Email or call Bill Fary with your name and those of your guests by September 7.

Email: [pbfary@gmail.com](mailto:pbfary@gmail.com) or mobile 0408 037 540

## **Date of this NOE**

May 31, 2019

# Lake Malbena Appeal

Members will be aware of the current controversy concerning Lake Malbena in Tasmania's highlands. One of the potential consequences of this issue, if the application for establishing a private lodge with helicopter access in Tassie's highlands is successful, is that a risky precedent will be established.

Greg French is taking a lead in opposing the Malbena application and has asked if we would include in this newsletter an appeal for funds to fight the proposal. While I know that members of the VFFA have varying opinions on the issue I felt that we should include Greg's letter. Members are then aware of the action Greg is taking, and can choose whether to support him.

Hi everyone

I'm not sure how much you know about the Lake Malbena issue, but you can always brush up by consulting the relevant thread on the *FlyLife* Forum: <https://flylife.com.au/forum/topic/why-can-t-wilderness-just-be-sacred-lake-malbena>

Anyway, this is a request for donations to help a coalition of interest groups and individuals (the 'partners') support the Central Highland Council (CHC) in its decision to reject a Development Application (DA) for a luxury lodge (incorporating helicopter-only access) in the core of the Western Lakes Wilderness Trout Fishery.

If the CHC decision is overturned by the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal (RMPAT), the development will result in the privatisation of an entire island and displace hundreds of existing users in favour of a handful of wealthy clients. It would also set a precedent for the privatisation of other waters within the Western Lakes, with other proposals already in the pipeline. And it would open the door to further helicopter access in the Western Lakes.

Defending the CHC decision in the RMPAT involves the engagement

of barristers and expert witnesses, and despite major assistance from the philanthropic Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) it is estimated that it will still end up costing \$50,000, perhaps much more. To make matters worse, the state government is asking the RMPAT to rule that DAs are not actually required by law on public land (meaning that the CHC decision should be ignored regardless of its merits and overwhelming public support). The hearing is slated to be heard from 24 – 28 June 2019, but more time may be needed, in which case the case may resume in July, August or later.

The partners have set up a mechanism by which donations can be made through the Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA). The TNPA is a philanthropic group entirely independent of the government's Parks and Wildlife Service, and as a fly fisherman I wholeheartedly support it. (It was necessary to use an existing registered entity so that donations would be tax deductible.)

- Option one is the TNPA Lake Malbena Appeal Fund which utilises GiveNow, who will skim off a commission (<https://www.givenow.com.au/lakemalbenaappeal>).

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- Option two utilises direct bank transfer (<https://tnpa.org.au/donate>).

I understand that the partners have a strong case – both in defending the CHC decision and on the jurisdictional question – but even if they win, they will end up tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket. If we do not support the partners, we run the risk of losing free access to the Western Lakes and, ultimately, other publically owned fisheries.

If this case is lost, the minister of the day will have enshrined in law an unlimited power to approve any development

he likes on any piece of public land – including in national parks and World Heritage areas – without calling for public submissions or even consulting parliament.

Sincere thanks for your support.

*Greg French*



## Fred Stewart's Big Rubicon Brown

... from the April 1973 newsletter.

About 30 years ago, wishing to fish the Rubicon below the bridge at Thornton I called on the owner of the land, a Mr Harold Robinson, for permission to walk to the river. The reply was: "Oh yes, and I can tell you where there is a really big fish - if you can catch him!"

I started fishing about 100 yards below the lair of this supposed monster fish and the action was fast. The day was hot, the month was February, and the time was 11 o'clock. Grasshoppers were on the water in vast quantities. After taking several fish over 2 lb, I came to the 'big trout' corner. A huge log rested on the far bank and sloped slightly downstream, diverting a steady flow to the side from which I was fishing.

The first cast of the fly, a red beetle, was taken and a fish of 2¾ lb came to the net. Thinking how prone people are to

exaggerate fish sizes, I thought to myself, "So this is his big fish!"

Somewhat downcast I made a cast to the top of the run. There was a little sip at the fly, so I struck, and downstream came this huge fish. No sudden rush, just steady progress, and I needed to walk fast along the streambed to guide him away from roots and weeds. I was very conscious of my 4X tippet, so dared not check the trout, being content to just maintain contact.

A long way downstream there was a deep pool where children were bathing. "Look at that big fish!" they cried, and at that point the net went under him.

The fish was weighed by Jack Pearce at the Cathedral House where I was staying, and a little later at Tom Rob's hotel. It was 7½ lb and 27½ inches long. Not a big fish for some rivers, but it was a challenge accepted.

## Sunday Casting Recommences

It was very pleasing to see a good turnout for the resumption of VFFA Sunday casting. Twenty-eight VFFA members turned up at the Red Tag pool on Sunday, June 23, for a few hours of casting and a social get together. The weather was extremely chilly to say the least, but the wind and rain stayed away.

Not everyone turned up with a rod, but that didn't matter; it was good to catch up with those who don't always make the Kelvin Club meetings.

Jim Higgs was working hard to perfect a new casting technique for salt water fly fishing. No doubt he will master it in time. Joe Haslauer, who has been working hard in recent times, enjoyed casting his beautiful Sage SP. Hubert Reichelt was trying to get his eye in for New Zealand later in the year.

It was great to see Colin Morrison there, as he was nearly always on hand when the casting was every Sunday in the off season.

Others were trying out gear both new and old at the pool, which has plenty of water in it at the moment.

Thanks must go to Hugh Maltby and Joe Haslauer for organising the hot drinks and food. Hugh got the barbecue going and there were plenty of sausages and hamburgers to warm up the members. President Chris Gray and Council members present on the day were very happy with the turn out.

The next casting day is Sunday, July 21, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, again at the Red Tag pool.



*A foggy start to Sunday casting*

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*VFFA stalwarts getting their eyes in for next season*



*It was great to catch up with old mates over a hot cup of coffee and a snack*



## The Bruce Whitehead Western Lakes Challenge

On the last weekend in June twenty VFFA and Bairnsdale members ventured to Camperdown for the annual Western Lakes Challenge.

Tragically the weather was absolutely horrendous, with gale force winds and 50 mm of rain. The fishing was either non-existent or at best wretched and intolerable. No fish were landed and hence the trophy remains with Bairnsdale until next time.

Having said that, a wonderful time was had by all who attended with great camaraderie, delectable food and the odd wine or two. The official dinner at Maddens on Saturday night was a highpoint.

However the main highlight of the weekend was the final unveiling of the trophy. Trevor Hawkins presented it to President Trevor Stow and VFFA Life Member Hugh Maltby, and as you can see Trevor Hawkins has done a magnificent job. As a work of art it says it all and further cements our longstanding and close relationship with the Bairnsdale club.

Thank you Trevor!



*The Three Amigos – Hughie Maltby, Trevor Hawkins and Trevor Stow holding the trophy*



*The magnificent trophy for the Bruce Whitehead Challenge designed and produced by Trevor Hawkins*



*The weather for the weekend was appalling but Saturday night in a warm pub provided some consolation and solace*

## Chironomids: Springtime Stillwater Trout Candy

... from April Vokey's Blog - Anchored - June 7, 2019. April's Website has a growing compilation of fabulous articles on all manner of fly fishing topics. She has very kindly given us permission to use some of her articles in *Fly Lines*. Readers can find this wealth of material at <http://www.aprilvokey.com/blog/>. It's winter here in Victoria now, so we're fishing the stillwaters where chironomids are often on the menu. While this article describes chironomid fishing in Canada and North America, it is still very relevant to our stillwater fishing.

When I was little, my dad and I used to go on an annual fishing trip in British Columbia's interior. In the excitement leading up to the trip, I polished my Wedding Ring and Willow Leaf spinners before organising them into their designated Plano compartments. As a treat, Mom let me stay up late and armed me with a flashlight to raid the backyard for nightcrawlers.

Once on the lake, Dad and I motored around in search of gullible trout and, every so often, we actually connected to one. Mostly though we just caught bad weather and two-stroke fumes. We trolled without rhyme or reason, only ever stopping to deal with engine trouble and squiggling worms. We assumed shinier lures and bigger baits meant more fish, so when I learned that we were being out-fished by fly anglers casting a tiny, nearly-bare hook called a "cromimid," I was shocked.

We knew fishing was tough and that we were rookies, but never in a million years did we think we were being put to shame by a little maggot look-alike in shiny clothes. If you're like we were, trolling expensive lures and immaculate earthworm harnesses wondering why you just can't seem to catch a damn thing, this article is for you.

### It Starts In Your Mind

We may as well start out with the biggest obstacle in chironomid fishing: pronunciation. While it doesn't really

matter how you say the word, you'll have more confidence exploring it if you feel comfortable using it in a sentence. It's pronounced "ker-ON-oh-mid," though "CRON-oh-mid" will get you through a conversation.

The chironomid is one of the many unfortunate casualties in the fly fishing misconception war. Anglers who avoid fly fishing because they assume it's less effective do themselves a major disservice by assuming this is the case in lakes and ponds. Chironomids make up an enormous part of trout diets all across North America, all year long. Almost anywhere you go, chironomid imitations will often work just as well as worms and lures in slow and stillwater situations. They can be fished just as effectively on conventional tackle as well.

### But What Is It?

Picture this. You're camping, the sun is low, dinner is simmering, the lake is glassy, loons are howling and everything is perfect except for the thousands of mosquitoes hovering over the lake. A closer look, however, determines that they're not mosquitoes at all. They're actually midges, small black flies resembling mosquitos—only without the desire to suck blood.

I'll spare you the entire entomology lesson, but the name "chironomid" is used to refer to thousands of members of the globally-distributed family Chironomidae, non-biting aquatic



*Some samples of tiny Chironomids" (Image via Jordan Oelrich)*

midges. You may have also heard them called lake flies, sand flies, muffleheads or chizzywinks. By any name, anglers are generally referring to large midge pupae or adults in slow or still water.

### **The Life Cycle**

Chironomids undergo a complete metamorphosis, meaning their life cycle has four stages: egg, larva, pupa, adult. The adult female fly deposits the egg on the water surface and it sinks to the bottom, soon after to hatch into worm-like larva. Chironomid larvae come in various sizes and colours, sometimes even bright red from the haemoglobin in their thin bodies. We call these sorts of larvae "blood worms." But it's the next stages in the metamorphosis that interests most anglers.

The larva typically form cases in which to become pupa. Once hatched, the pupal

midge's shiny, gas-filled body spastically jolts toward the water's surface with the intention of emerging as a winged adult. Once it makes contact with the air, it sheds its exoskeleton, dries its wings and flies away to help start the cycle again. That's the plan anyway—many don't survive long enough to see it past the pupal stage as trout and other fish hone in and feast as the bugs writhe and squiggle upward.

Dorky side-note: if you've done some fly fishing with nymphs before, you may be more familiar with pupae than you think. Insects that transition through simple metamorphosis (three life stages, such as mayflies and stoneflies) are called nymphs in their free swimming/crawling phase, whereas those that undergo a complete metamorphosis (four life stages, such as caddis and midges) are called pupae in that form.

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*A lone natural. Trout love them*

### **Fishing**

When a trout is dialled in on hatching insects, it can be hard to convince it to eat anything else. They eat plenty of other things, but almost anywhere trout live, their diet will include a lot of midges. Glance inside a trout's entrails sometime. You'll often find nothing except mounds of partially digested midge larvae and pupae.

Though midges can be fished successfully year-round, stillwater chironomids tend to be larger and involved in more prolific hatches after lake turnover in the spring, or in the fall before the first freezes, yet hatches still happen throughout the summer. Water temperature plays an important role in most insect hatches and chironomids are no exception. On many lakes, anglers spend the cooler mornings and evenings fishing leeches or tackle, focusing on midge activity once the water heats up midday.

### **Where To Start**

Searching around a waterbody with a chironomid imitation is never a bad idea, but to really key in with this tactic

you'll want to locate hatching midges. Boats certainly help anglers to cover more water, though they don't need to be anything fancy. Belly boats, canoes, pontoons, prams and small car-toppers all work well for lake fishing. Start by rowing around looking for signs of a chironomid hatch. An obvious hint will be the discarded shucks from hatched pupae. This will help you determine the size of the midge that's hatching, but it won't necessarily show you the hatch location.

The most reliable way to track down a hatch's coordinates is to actually spot the midges flying off the water. If you can't see any adult midge activity, it's worth trying to factor in water current, wind direction and strength to discover where the shucks blew in from. Hatches often occur near the shore and drop offs, and the fish usually follow the action. Sometimes the fish themselves give the hatch location away. Like a serve-yourself smorgasbord, when things are hot and heavy they'll swim in cruising lanes, coming back for seconds, thirds and fourths.

### Take Your Time

Once you have a general idea where the shucks or adults are coming from, don't drop your anchor in haste. Peer into the water and watch to see if chironomids are emerging. It helps to have a small aquarium net handy so that you can scoop them up to further examine their size and colour. I like to have a jar or water bottle with a lid to put the squirmers inside, because once they've been exposed to oxygen they won't stay pupae for long.

If you're confident that you've found the source, figure out the depth of the water they're emerging from. I used to clamp my forceps to my fly and then drop them down to the bottom. I pulled in my line by the arm's length, counting each pull as 5 feet (depends on your height). A clip-on ice fishing depth-checker is probably a better tool. From there, ensure the wind is at your back and then reposition yourself 20 to 30 feet from the hatch before dropping your anchor. Anchors help keep your presentation on top of the hatch without drifting off it. Pontoon boats can

get by with a single anchor, but prams are best positioned with an anchor set out on either end.

### Depth

Now that you know where the hatch is, it's time to determine where in the water column the fish are feeding. Again, we can often thank the fish for helping solve the puzzle. As a general rule, if you see snouts breaking the water, they're feeding on adults on top. If you only see their dorsal fins and backs, they're feeding on emerging pupae just under the surface. If you don't see them at all, they're feeding somewhere in the depths. In situations like that, it's not a bad idea to start a couple feet off the bottom (for depths up to thirty feet). When fly casting, you'll need to be comfortable casting long leaders before fishing such depths.

### Rig Up

Every angler has their own preferred chironomid setup and technique, but the two most common methods include fishing under an indicator or slowly retrieving a naked line. When fishing



*A magnificent capture – reward for effort*

>>>

under an indicator, a little bit of wind chop on the water helps to give the fly some movement.

When stripping or winding in, a gradual ascent looks more natural than a quick, sharp retrieve. Neither method requires a lengthy cast—fish are regularly caught within ten feet of the boat.

Set your indicator or bobber above a long, tapered leader and tie either directly to the chironomid or to a swivel that's attached to a few feet of tippet to the fly. Some anglers skip the swivel and prefer to fish straight to the chironomid because they believe it looks more natural in the water. Extra depth can be achieved by using a chironomid tied with a tungsten bead or on fluorocarbon leader, which sinks faster than monofilament. Some people simply use split shot weights. Casting bubbles are a great way to accomplish these same presentations using conventional tackle.

If staring at an indicator isn't your cup of tea, feel free to leave it off and fish naked. Before stripping down to your underpants, let me explain: Fishing naked simply involves only using your line, leader and fly. To do this, cast toward the hatch and allow your fly to sink to where you believe the fish are feeding. Count how long it takes for it to sink, as this will help you be consistent and strategic when you make your next cast. From there, very slowly retrieve the chironomid. A great way to do this is with the figure-eight method, slowly wrapping each strip of line between your fingers so that your pace is slow and smooth and your line is clear, untangled and ready for action.

Other important considerations for chironomid fishing are size and colour. Black, red, green and purple seem to be most common, but folks will fish just

about every colour in the spectrum to imitate chironomids. Imitations typically follow the form of a long, thin body tapering up to a bead head that imitates a wing case. Many fly patterns even include gills or head tufts. I used to go so far as to weave intricate details into my flies so that the thorax and abdomen were identical to the naturals, though I'll admit that even the most basic chironomid patterns work great.

Most chironomids range between sizes 12-18, with some on either side of that. Be sure to have a variety of sizes in your box and have fun using different tinsels, threads and materials. If you choose to tie your own, use a thread underbody to build up the chironomid's taper and then simply wrap an outer colour and rib over the top. Chironomids are an excellent way to get into fly tying, plus they're inexpensive and can be made out of materials around the house.

Chironomid fishing is a great way to better understand fish behaviour and the role insects play in an ecosystem. For many anglers, it's a gateway into fly fishing but it's also a firsthand opportunity to learn that fish don't always prefer the most obvious presentations. While I still occasionally use baits and lures, I usually turn to chironomids when lake fishing. It's not as much fun as hunting for earthworms, but they sure do get the job done.



## Dreams Can Come True

... Ray Buckland

The incredible aspect of this 'Prince of Sports' that we call fly fishing is that it is not always about the actual fishing; there is so much more. We study all the various aspects of rods, reels, flies, entomology, fishing rivers and lakes and the weather with the intensity of a medical student preparing for final exams.

Then there are our dreams of trout, actual and imagined, and how we shall challenge these trout and match our IQ of 145 against their basic instincts. We should win this contest hands down, but oh no; if only it was that easy. We all have memories from our past of a particular trout of large proportions that has tested us and won every round. These obsessions are compelling.

It was in the modern era, the past 25 years, when fly fishing for trout began to dominate my recreational pursuits. I daren't say 'my whole life' because family courts do irreparable damage to one's financial status, and my family really is paramount in my life. (What would be your answer to this moral dilemma?)

I discovered fly fishing for browns in the Yarra River at Warburton East and a particular fish was the first to dominate my challenge to win such a contest. He resided in a subterranean jungle in a deep pool abounding with rocks and fallen trees. I saw him rising to termites in November and I delighted in watching him just lining them up, 2, 3, or 4, in a row. This was a magnificent cock brown trout of about 4 pounds. The only time I was in charge of the contest was the strike. Then he took control and made for the timber in a heartbeat, and it was over: Trout 1, Ray 0. This contest was repeated

many times and the result was always the same.

I could not get this fish out of my mind. I theorised about using different strategies such as dry fly fishing, wets, tandem rigs, Czech nymphing, early morning times, late session times, and stainless steel tippets. But he was the monarch of this section of the river. The myriad of snags was the clincher: these heartbreakers gave him all the advantages. Did I get over it? Sort of. I dreamt many times of besting this fish but it was only in my dreams that I conquered.

This year in autumn I drove up to the Yarra River to fish from Warburton East upstream to Reefton to interview some good brown trout. It was one of those days in March where the temperature was about 25°C and the cloud cover ensured the fly population would be prolific, active and dancing around the river. Caddis, orange and olive stimulators, and black and orange spinners would be on the menu during the day. And pleasing to report, the regular environmental flows being sent down the Yarra were producing the best fishing for years. It was a good day and I had captured four lovely brownies from 260 to 360 millimetres that gave me the same joy releasing them as it did catching them. As the shadows lengthened I thought perhaps a mudeye or muddler pattern fished along the surface just on dark just might attract some serious attention. As I waited for the twilight I had a sandwich and studied sections of the river that might have a good trout in residence.

Then I saw a rise. A very good one. It was in a deep hole well covered >>>

with an overabundance of native shrubs. Heart rate went rapidly to 140. Could my optimism and skills match it?

I had tried to catch this fish several times before, but there is a good reason she is still there. Larger trout are large because they live in premium, jungle-like locations and are well educated against our often clumsy attempts to catch them. And yes, she has featured in my 'trout dreams' often.

During the next hour I planned a strategy for my approach and waited nervously for the moment of engagement. So many thoughts going through my mind. Should I use a buff coloured or black muddler, or perhaps a proven mud-eye pattern. Should it be a cutout mud-eye pattern or a spider mud-eye, and how big? What colour? Observation can assist here.

I went back to the deep hole which required precision casting (if only I could) with the Loomis 'Streamdance' 3-weight, the right sized corduliid mud-eye (I hope), fished just right (perhaps) and a bucket load of luck. At least the poor light was working for me.

I attempted a side cast of about 10 metres to avoid most of the shrubs and grass. It was a little short. Take two was about a metre and a half longer and I was happy. I allowed the corduliid to work on the surface or marginally below it with three short retrieves and intermittent rests. About half way back to the bank there was a strike and it was bigger than the 360 mm brownie I had caught earlier. It was heavier and stronger, and heading for structure. Bloody hell, I had to apply pressure to turn it around or I would lose it for sure. Oh please, not again!

I did manage to turn this feisty brown around and followed her downstream,

applying pressure when I sensed danger. There was another deeper hole on the journey and I found it. The Simms got a good soaking and my extremities sought out warmer places internally. I hoped this would all be worth it. I regained my upright stance and a modicum of balance and resumed the contest.

It's funny what you think about when you hook up with a good trout. Is the knot still in good shape? Should I have switched the tippet from 3 lb to a 5 or 6 lb? Of course I should have - it is night and a larger fish is a possibility. I can't see the deeper holes anymore; where are they? Abject panic takes over and you have no idea how long you have been engaging the trout. Why is this so complicated? Fishing isn't quantum physics!

Did I finally win? Yes! Did I take a photo? No! All I wanted to do was minimise the lactic acid build up in the fish's muscles, unhook it quickly, and hope it swam off. It did.

It was about 440 or 450 millimetres long and in superb condition. Pretty good for a Yarra trout whose size made it easily discernible in the dark. Have I caught this fish again? No, but I almost got her to the net a couple of weeks later.

Do I still dream about my successes and tragedies with big trout? Yes!

Tight lines.



# FLY OF THE MONTH

*Vern Barby's Magoo*



(This superb photo supplied by Brad Harris, from *FlyLife* magazine, and used with permission.)

Our local streams are now closed until September, so many of us will be turning our attention to the lakes. Stillwaters of any sort – lakes, reservoirs, stocked dams, whatever ... can be fished with all manner of flies – dries, emergers, nymphs, wets... But searching with a big wet fly is very popular because it is often effective. That big wet cruising through the water is so much more visible to a roving trout on the lookout for a decent feed than a tiny dry sitting stationary in the meniscus.

Vern Barby's Magoo has won a lot of friends in recent days. Vern has kindly given us permission to describe his fly and how to tie it. In *Australia's Best Trout Flies Revisited* Vern says: "The Magoo is probably my signature fly. A prolific fish catcher, it has been developed and refined since the 1999 Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships on Lake Wendouree in Ballarat. During that event Vince Gwilym gave me one of the Welsh team's flies, and it really got me thinking. By using different materials and colours I worked on developing my ideas. The one significant aspect of the Welsh fly was its overall length. I came from the old school that believed long flies and small hooks don't catch fish, so it took me some time to get to grips with it!

Eventually I arrived at the fly as it is today. The name came about after discussions with Gary McKay and well-known Ballarat fly fisher, Alan Howlett, whose nickname was 'Magoo'. The fly was originally tied with a gold beadhead, but it now features many different bead colours, the most popular being hot orange. This is a pattern that should always be in your wet fly box when targeting the lakes.

The Magoo can be fished either slowly through dirty water or with a fast strip, mainly using sinking lines, always pausing once or twice during the retrieve, and always hanging the fly before lifting it out of the water."

Philip Weigall's fabulous *FlyStream* magazine, issue 12, has Craig Coltman describing the Magoo at some length. He says, "In the autumn of 2000 we had a round of the Victorian Fly Fishing Championships on Lake Purrumbete. The lake was full, with plenty of fish holding in the weeds around the swamp area. Vern had given me one of his new Magoo flies and these were perfect conditions to give it a swim. The fly was, quite simply, devastating. I landed 18 fish on the first day, all on the Magoo. At one stage Vern motored by and enquired whether the Magoo was working for me? At that precise moment yet another fish took it.

Vern's original Magoo was tied on a size 12 Kamazan B175 hook, with lead under the body and concentrated at the front of the fly to emphasise the jiggling movement. Looking for a simpler fly to tie, I introduced a bead instead of the lead underbody.

Progressively the fly has increased in size from a size 12 to a size 8. Different colours – in particular orange beads; and pink, claret and orange marabou tails have all proved successful. However, the main elements of this fly remain the same: a short shank, metal bead at the front, long marabou tail and a little flash.

Some anglers avoid using long-tailed flies, believing they cause short takes. I disagree – I have never observed a trout nibbling at the tail of a fly. They inhale it with gusto. Missed fish can be attributed to a lack of conviction on the fish's behalf, or poor striking technique, or simply bad luck. By the way, when wet fly fishing a strip strike is most effective. The traditional form of raising the rod tip to strike is nowhere near as effective and should be reserved for dry fly fishing where slack line needs to be taken up.

### **Fishing Tips**

The Magoo is mainly a pulling fly. It can be fished slowly using a figure-8 retrieve; stripped slowly or fast; or retrieved with a roly-poly from slow to flat-out. I normally fish the Magoo on the point as part of a team of flies, although I do carry some unweighted versions for use on the dropper. Line types can vary from a floating line right through to a DI7 (i.e. fast sinker), depending on the depth of water and the speed of the drift if boat fishing.

I use both brass and tungsten bead Magoos, again depending on the depth of water and speed of retrieve. Mostly I use a copper-beaded version when fishing from the bank. An orange beaded Magoo can be very effective early and late season.

When pulling the Magoo, takes can be quite aggressive, so I never use a tippet lighter than 8lb fluorocarbon to avoid bust offs."

**Materials:**

- Hook:** Kamasan B175 - sizes 8 or 10, or Hanak H200 BL in sizes 10 or 12.
- Bead:** Gold or Hot Orange, sizes 2.8 mm – 3.6 mm.
- Thread:** 8/0 olive.
- Tail:** Olive marabou and 4 strands of Sparkle Flash “Emerald Rainbow”.
- Body:** Peacock herl (three strands).
- Rib:** Fine gold or copper wire.
- Rear Hackle (Palmered):** Olive hen hackle stripped on one side, or a cheap Indian cock hackle.
- Front hackle:** Olive Partridge.

**Tying the Fly:**

1. Add the bead, then slide it on the hook and up to the eye. Then put the hook in the vice. At this stage you can add just a couple of turns of fine lead wire. Push these up into the back of the bead to hold the bead in place.
2. Select your marabou - long supple fibres. Tear about eight fibres off the feather and arrange them so that their ends are roughly equal, then tie them on the shank of the hook so that they lie along the shank almost to the eye. The tail should be three to five times the length of the hook shank.
3. Tie in two strands of the lure flash down either side of the tail.
4. Tie in the wire rib. Then tie in two or three strands of peacock herl and wind them to the front. Leave a small gap behind the eye for tying in the palmer body and partridge hackles later on.
5. Tie in the body hackle behind the eye, ensuring the natural camber of the feather faces backwards. Wind this hackle in open turns to the rear of the fly using four turns.
6. Trap the hackle down with the ribbing wire and wind this back through the palmer hackle towards the eye to hold this hackle in place (again using about four turns).
7. Finally, tie in the partridge feather, again at the butt, and use two to three turns. Once again pay attention to getting the natural camber of the feather facing backwards. Also ensure the partridge hackle is slightly longer than the body hackle.
8. Tie in a small head then whip finish.

## VFFA 2019 meetings & other activities

### July

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – Rene Vaz from Manic Tackle (New Zealand)
- 20 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club Dinner
- 21 Sunday Sunday Casting – 10:00 am at the Red Tag Casting Pool
- 29 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

### August

- 23 Friday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Guest Speaker – Tamie Fraser
- 25 Sunday President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing  
at 10:00 am
- 26 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
- 31 Saturday Ballarat Fly Fishing Club Centenary Dinner

### September

- 7 Saturday Opening of the new trout season for rivers in Victoria
- 15 Sunday Visit to Snobs Creek Hatchery
- 19 Thursday VFFA Annual General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
- 22 Sunday Sunday Casting – 10:00 am at the Red Tag Casting Pool
- 30 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

### October

- 6 Saturday VFFA annual visit to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Club's  
stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers
- 17 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – Chris Wisniewski, from Tasmania's Inland Fisheries  
Service
- 28 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

### November

- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – Cameron McGregor, from River Escapes (fly fishing for  
Murray cod)
- 25 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

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#### The following made donations for the raffle at the 2018 Annual Dinner:

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