

# FLY LINES



JULY 2020

## July Meeting with Karen Brooks

**K**aren competes regularly in state and national competitions and is our Australian Ladies Fly Fishing Champion for 2019/2020. She represented Australia in the World Masters Fly Fishing Championships in South Africa in 2019 and was a member of the Australian ladies' team which represented Australia at the Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships in New Zealand in March earlier this year. She has also been chosen as a member of the Australian ladies' team which will compete in the inaugural Ladies World Fly Fishing Championships in Norway next year.

Karen plans to tell us about her involvement in the Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships at Taupo in New Zealand earlier this year. She will talk about the increasing numbers of women now involved in competition angling, and the lead up and preparation required for international competition, along with the venues, fishing techniques involved, and outcomes. She may also make reference to the recreational fishing opportunities available in New Zealand's North Island in mid to late summer.

This will again be a Zoom video presentation, commencing at 8:00 pm.

Thursday, July 16,  
8:00 pm,  
via Zoom



Please note that some days prior to July 16 members will receive an email giving detailed instructions on how to log in to see Karen and hear her presentation.

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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## Index

VFFA Office Holders.....	2	Weather And The Fishing Season .....	22
New Member .....	3	VFFA April Zoom Meeting.....	24
The Warrnambool Dinner .....	3	Historical Photos .....	25
President’s Message.....	4	North Of The Border.....	26
June Meeting With Charley May .....	6	This Month’s Yarn .....	29
The AGM – August This Year.....	13	The Uncertain Trout.....	30
The 2020 Annual Dinner .....	13	A Report From 103 Years Ago .....	32
Editor’s Desk – Lyndon Webb.....	14	Fly Of The Month.....	33
Stevenson River Audit.....	16	VFFA Meetings & Activities .....	36
Demystifying Stillwater Fly Fishing.....	18		

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## A Warm Welcome to a New Member

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Robert Bailey as a member of the VFFA. We trust that his membership brings many years of pleasure and lots of great memories. In joining the VFFA Robert’s membership links the generations – his father Philip, a frequent contributor to our newsletter, was president of the VFFA in the period 1987 – 1990.

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## The Warrnambool Dinner ...

For many years one of the featured items in our July calendar has been the Warrnambool Fly Fishers’ Annual Dinner. Invariably a number of city members head west to enjoy a fabulous meal and some great company. Unfortunately it would appear that the dreaded coronavirus has created problems for this event too.

Our regular contact there, Jim Blakeslee, informs us that at a recent WFFC meeting it was decided that they would cancel their booking for this year’s Annual Dinner scheduled for July 25. Instead, they will investigate the possibility of rebooking the Chef and Venue for a date in late October. If that fails, they will cancel the Dinner for 2020 altogether, and hope they can get back to normal lives and celebrations in 2021.

# President's Message

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Welcome to another *Fly Lines* newsletter.

A small group of people from the VFFA, ATE, VFA, Red Tag Fly Fishers, Southern Fly Fishers, ARI and Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority met in Marysville last month to conduct a survey of the Steavenson River. We were divided into groups of three and then each group was allocated a 2 - 3 kilometre stretch of the river and asked to map the habitat along the river. The data collected will assist the GBCMA in planning future river restoration projects. A report on this survey has been prepared by Dermot O'Brien and is given later in this issue. The general consensus highlighted the need for better angler access to the Steavenson and the removal of substantial infestations of blackberries. When the full report is made available we will share it on our website.

No doubt there will be more projects in the future for VFFA members to assist with in improving fishing access and habitat.

Jaala Pulford (Minister for Employment, Innovation, Medical Research and Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business), has been moved to another role in our state government, and Melissa Horne has added Fishing and Boating to her portfolio as Minister for Ports and Freight and Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. Jaala has been a great supporter of fisheries and the broad array of projects to improve our Victorian fishing opportunities. We wish her well in her new role and welcome Melissa Horne into the portfolio.

The Australian Trout Foundation and Victorian Fisheries Authority have



reached an agreement to use wild trout ova for stocking trials in the coming months. The wild trout ova will be sourced from Gaden Trout hatchery in Jindabyne. While the locations for these wild trout ova are yet to be confirmed, the key rivers identified for the trial include the Upper Dargo, Jamieson and Macalister rivers. Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions there won't be any Jordan Scotty incubator trials this winter.

VFA has continued its stocking program across regional and metropolitan lakes for the usual school holiday stocking. Stocked waters for these holidays include:

- Albert Park Lake (1,500)
- Lillydale Lake (1,000)
- Emerald Lake (500)
- Spavin Lake in Sunbury (600)
- Victoria Lake in Shepparton (750)
- Hyland Lake in Churchill (800)
- Pakenham Lake (750)
- St Augustine's Water Hole in Geelong (750)
- Kennington Reservoir in Bendigo (500)

- Darlingsford Lake in Melton (500)
- Pertobe Lake in Warrnambool (450)
- Yarrambat Lake (1,000)
- Casey Fields Lake in Cranbourne (750)
- Crusoe Reservoir (450)
- Eildon Pondage (1,100+)
- Marysville Lake (450)
- Ouyen Lake (500)
- Tchum Lake in Birchip (1,000)

A daily bag limit of five trout applies, of which only two can exceed 35 centimetres.

We are proceeding at this time with winter casting on July 26 at the Red Tag pool and safe distancing rules will apply.

Our July General meeting will again be via Zoom when we welcome Karen Brooks as our guest speaker.

As we work towards a gathering at the Kelvin Club we have changed some dates

to accommodate both the Covid-19 requirements and indoor gatherings. Hence we have brought forward the Annual General meeting to Thursday, August 20, at 8:00 pm via Zoom, and have moved our Annual Dinner to Thursday, September 17, with Mark and Philip Weigall as our guest speakers, with the plan being to be back at the Kelvin Club for this dinner. Please mark down these changes in your diary.

We will email the statutory reports and previous AGM minutes along with the Zoom link in the weeks prior to August 20. Included in the newsletter this month are the Notice of Annual General Meeting, Nomination Form and Proxy Form.

We are looking forward to some new councillors coming onboard. Please consider this as a worthwhile and rewarding contribution to your wonderful Association. Forms can be completed and returned to Kevin Finn, our secretary.

Stay well.



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## Our June Meeting with Charley May

Our guest speaker for June was Charley May, who spent some time last year fishing two wonderful rivers in the UK. Here is the text of Charley's presentation.

I really appreciate this opportunity to talk to you again. When I last spoke at a VFFA meeting I'd just started my guiding business, was on the cusp of starting work at the Victorian Fisheries Authority and had just taken on the challenge of studying for my Certified Casting Instructor certificate! A lot has happened in these two years! My part-time guiding business is thriving, I have qualified as a Certified Casting Instructor (the eighth woman in Australia to hold this qualification) and I'm now heading up communications at Better Boating Victoria.

Tonight, however, I'm here to talk to you about fishing two of England's finest chalk streams. No, I'm not talking about the Test and the Itchen; I'm talking about the Lathkill and the Wye rivers in Derbyshire.

I was born in Manchester and as a proud 'northerner' was raised in the rolling hills of Cheshire in a little village called Sutton. My childhood was spent learning how to ride a horse, shoot a shotgun and cast a fly line. My dad thought that teaching me to master these pursuits would keep me out of trouble. And it has ... most of the time!

It was fly fishing that most captured my imagination, and allowed me to spend hours of quality time with my dad. It's a skill I have nurtured my entire life and one that always reminds me of him when I'm out on any water. This connection is very precious.

As a kid I cut my teeth on stillwaters and didn't fish many rivers in my local area. However I knew some famous ones existed and had always yearned to fish them. But for one reason or other things



*Charley with her dad*

got in the way and we stuck to the waters close by our house. So when my dad got in touch to say that he'd like to treat me to a day on two private beats on the Lathkill and Wye rivers as a 40th birthday present, it was: "Yes, I'll come home for that." It's fair to say I was pretty excited when I headed off to the UK last July to redeem my present.

### **The Lathkill and Wye rivers**

The Lathkill and Wye rivers are two chalk streams flowing through the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire, which is located between Manchester and Sheffield. It's an area of 555 square miles that covers parts of the counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Stafford, and Yorkshire. The Lathkill and Wye both run through limestone and are thus classed as chalk streams.

Chalk streams are rivers that flow through limestone - a highly porous sedimentary rock. They are typically formed when rain percolates through the porous limestone to form aquifers and underground water courses. This water

then usually emerges as a spring from which a stream is formed further down the valley.

Chalk streams typically have fairly stable flows. They are renowned for being crystal clear and very productive. Their water is slightly alkaline and mineral rich, thus providing perfect conditions for in-stream and stream side vegetation to thrive and provide habitat and food for a plethora of insects and invertebrates that trout love.

What makes the Lathkill and Wye so special? For a start, they're off the beaten track. When you Google 'chalk stream fly fishing in England' pages appear describing the chalk streams of southern England. Yet the Lathkill and Wye are nowhere to be found, despite them being featured as fishing nirvanas and written up centuries ago in the 'Compleat Angler' by Izaak Walton.

Walton's friend Charles Cotton wrote of the Lathkill specifically: "It is the purest and most transparent stream that I ever yet saw. And breeds, it is said, the reddest and the best trouts in England."

It is indeed one of the clearest waters I've ever fished and this is because it is the only stream in Britain to rise and flow in its entirety through limestone. This makes its water quite alkaline, unbelievably crystalline and incredibly pure. You can see the fish quite clearly many metres from where they're sitting ... and they can see you too!

The Wye is special because it is nationally renowned for its fly life and has been a 'dry fly only' water since 1865! The Wye also has the only population of spring spawning wild rainbow trout in the UK. They came from California in the 1890's. The eyed ova were hatched into a lake above Bakewell and escaped into the river after a flood.



*The Hall beat on the Wye*

One of the best parts of fishing these rivers, apart from catching ten beautiful wild fish, was spending time with Jan Hobot, one of the river keepers on the Haddon Estate, to learn more about what sets these two chalk streams apart.

The Haddon Estate, the family home of Lord Edward Manners, owns most of the Lathkill River and controls a 7.5 mile stretch of the Wye River. This is important because it means the Estate has a massive influence over the management of the catchment and the resulting health of the river. And, fortunately, the Manners family are passionate land custodians.

As an example, the Estate insists the entire valley floor of Lathkill is preserved as a sanctuary for its waters and doesn't allow any of its tenant farmers to add artificial fertilizer or herbicides to their meadows. On the Wye, the Estate either directly manages the farmland alongside the river or lets it to progressive farmers.

This means that the Estate can fearlessly pursue its philosophy of stewardship, without interference from others, to ensure the catchment is managed in a way that creates a rich and ecologically diverse environment that works in the best interests of wildlife and anglers. This level of control over the catchment is >>>



*Magnificent English countryside – the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire*

rare and sets it apart from many southern chalk streams that are owned and managed by many different people, each with their own philosophy and interests that do not always serve the river well.

When you fish the Lathkill and Wye you know you are fishing two very special rivers because they are managed with the sole purpose of creating a wonderland of plants, birds, animals and wild fish.

Haddon Estate employs two fulltime river keepers - Jan Hobot and Warren Slaney. I got to hang out with Jan and when I asked him what his vision was for the rivers he said this:

“All I want is rivers to be natural. Full of invertebrate life and self-sustaining wild trout, and teeming with all the species that are meant to live in and around the river corridor. I don’t want manicured paths, or stocking or spraying or over-enrichment from farmers. We are not here to make profits from the rivers. The anglers that visit us help support the rivers being truly looked after without any negative impact.”

Sounds like utopia, right? These guys are wholeheartedly supported by the Estate

to turn this vision into a reality. But it’s not easy work. So how do they do it?

For a wild fishery to flourish, habitat needs to be provided for fish of all age classes. So the keepers fence off the rivers to keep livestock away to a maximum of 8 metres. Spawning gravel needs to be clean (i.e. silt free), and ideally located in pinch points and uplifts on rivers. Where this doesn’t occur naturally the river keepers introduce gravel at the right areas.



*Adding some spawning gravel to the stream*

Just downstream of the gravel beds the alevins need protection from being eaten by bigger fish. The river keepers do this by planting species such as flag iris or by putting bundles of willow branches,



*Rainbow trout spawn naturally in these rivers*

secured to the bank, into the water to provide cover for the alevins.

Once the fish grow they need to move into faster flowing shallow water to avoid being eaten by larger fish and birds. Where this kind of habitat isn't in natural abundance the river keepers will sometimes raise areas of the river with large cobbles, allowing independent territories to be established. This is good for 1 – 2 year-old fish, meaning they can feed in relative safety. Once the fish grow, they can move into deeper water where they can compete against older fish for the 'best lie'.

Jan says a river can never have enough cover. He provides this by manipulating trees so their branches hang into the water, and by using large instream rocks and installing upstream croys to deflect the flow and provide new fish-sitting areas.

All that hard habitat work would go to waste if it wasn't matched with a zero tolerance policy toward non-native invasive species. American mink - the escapees from local fur farms - have a devastating effect on native species such as fish and water voles. The keepers trap

and dispatch them year round.

American signal crayfish are another unwelcome visitor. They apparently taste like lobster, so many end up in the pot. Himalyan Balsam is a plant that strangles and outcompetes everything and then dies back in the winter leaving the banks prone to erosion. This weed is trimmed and pulled to try to eliminate the seed base. And vermin such as cormorants and goosanders are kept under control by being shot under licence.

### **No stocking policy**

The estate stopped stocking in June 2003. Why? Because it was having a negative impact on the wild fish population. In Jan's view, stocking is used to cover up 'failing' rivers where not enough habitat management is done for all trout age classes. A natural river has all sizes of fish, not just 3 lb or larger fish that have been hatchery grown and stocked.

However, on other chalk streams, including several famous ones down south, stocking does occur because fishery owners are under pressure to provide easy fishing in nice settings and they can charge a lot of money for it.

>>>

The philosophy on the Lathkill and Wye Rivers is completely different. By fishing there you will be supporting rivers that are run for the fish and other inhabitants, and not for anglers and not for profit. And yet paradoxically, you will enjoy some of the most spectacular dry fly, sight fishing there is to have. For me, this is the stuff of dreams.

### So what was the fishing like?

Hard!

I fished two private beats - the Dukes Beat on the Lathkill and the Hall Beat on the Wye. The Dukes Beat only holds brown trout because the rainbows and grayling can't climb the weir at Alport. The Hall Beat holds grayling and rainbows. I only caught rainbows. I'm yet to catch a grayling. Both beats are more expensive than other places, but you're paying for the fact they are very lightly fished and set in stunning private grounds.



*The Dukes Beat on the Lathkill –  
stunningly clear water*

I fished them in late July on a sunny and scorching day (well, for England) - just shy of 30°C. The water level was fair on the Wye but a little low on the Lathkill. The water clarity was great on both rivers, but the Lathkill was next level clear.

It was bank fishing only (no wading allowed), so you couldn't always get yourself into a better spot to cast into the hot zone. But that was half the fun! The bankside foliage was thick and verdant on both rivers, but the Lathkill was particularly bushy. This made manoeuvring and setting up for casting pretty tricky, especially when you're ducking down to try and stay out of sight. But the upside was you didn't have to worry about snakes!

All of this meant you really had to use all sorts of different casts to get line out in tight spots. I used side casts, roll casts, bow and arrow casts, off shoulder casts, ... any kind of cast that would get my fly to land delicately in the right places! Long leaders were not always my friend because in really tight spots they were often hard to control and I did get snagged a few times. So I ended up fishing with a 9 ft leader with a 3 ft of



*A section on the lower Lathkill*

tippet, and on balance this worked best for me. I used 6X and 7X tippets to give a more delicate presentation.

In terms of rods, I think I should have used an 8' 3-weight rod as opposed to the 7'3" 2-weight I fished with, because for a shorty like me I think a slightly longer rod would have helped me reach spots and cast into places that were hard to do with my tiny 2-weight.

The flies you should pack in your fly box depends on when you go. The season opens in April and during the early weeks up until May the hatches of large dark olives and Grannom are short, but the fishing can be great when it's on. Greenwell's Glory, Kite's Imperial and Grannom pupa emergers would be good to have in the armoury at this time." Mid-season (mid-May to the end of June) marks the Hawthorn and Mayfly hatches, which are usually exceptionally good! So packing some Hawthorn fly patterns and some Para Adams, Pale Morning Duns and other mayfly imitations would be good.

The summer season (when I was fishing there) is July to September, and sees good hatches of blue-winged olives, caddis, and lots of other species through the day. And on a warm windless evening, an evening rise of sherry spinners.

During the morning I did particularly well on small Elk Hair Caddis and F-flies. In the afternoon I tied on blue-winged olive patterns, and the evening was all about small orange spinner patterns. You wouldn't go amiss packing a good detached mayfly pattern (like an Oliver Edwards) and a double badger (gnat pattern) too.

### **My top moments**

We started our day on the Hall Beat on the Wye. It was just magic. We drove in through a private gate past Haddon Hall

(a medieval manor house) and stopped underneath a majestic oak where we geared up. The air was muggy, the bees were buzzing, there were insects everywhere, and I was more than a bit eager to cast a line.

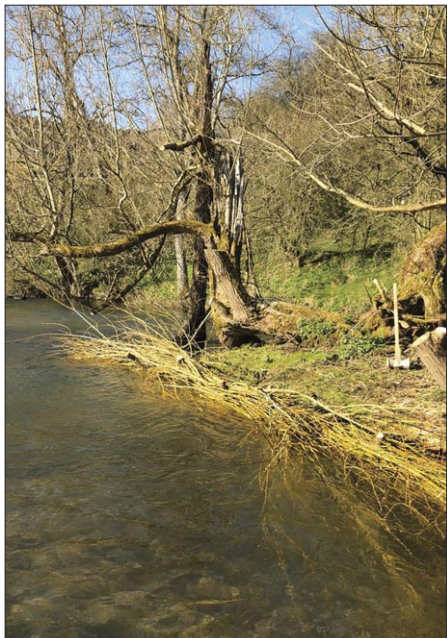
We walked downstream, stopping at each hotspot and saying: "That looks awesome, but we'll go a bit further down and come back to that one". I finally called it a day and my dad happily dropped in line - it was a ripper looking section.

I tied on a small tanned Elk Hair Caddis and made my first cast. I worked the nearest bank first and then the tail of a pool, but nothing played. And then I chucked one out into the middle of the head of the pool and bang - I was on. My dad was beside himself, tripping over the net, telling me to keep it from bombing into some snags. A beautiful 2 lb brown trout leapt and dived all over the shop for about five minutes before we landed him. Dad nearly took a swim in the drink because the fish was hard to net from the bank. All this excitement within the first 15 minutes of the trip!

### **Landing my first Lathkill brown.**

These fish were really hard to catch. There were sections where I could see them clear as day, and I reckon they could see me too because they didn't budge. Despite numerous fly changes they just sat there and did nothing.

So I moved on and tried my luck in another section. It was a more open section, with slow glides where I could make longer casts. In this particular section I decided to put on a small grey Para Adams. I changed my tippet and made it a tad longer. I worked the near sections first - no luck. I then decided to make a really long cast to a particularly sweet looking section and the fly was taken as soon as it landed! Striking >>>



*Bundles of willow branches placed along the edges to provide protection for young alevins*

at such a distance was a risk but I managed to set the hook. A super fight and a stunning fish. I relaxed after I caught this fella and managed to get a few more on this river in the late afternoon and evening.

### **Drinking decent beer in a good pub**

You may laugh, but this is very important when fly fishing. One needs to keep refreshed and northerners brew awesome beers. It's much better than the stuff you get down south. Anyway, one of my favourite moments was sitting down to a good steak and a couple of wonderful pints with my Dad at a local pub on a balmy evening. I can highly recommend Marston's Pedigree Bitter and anything by the Wincle Brewery.

### **Get inspired about going fishing in Derbyshire**


Hopefully by now I've convinced you why you need to fish the Wye and

Lathkill. However, there are plenty of other reasons why you should visit the region - something that's really important if you're travelling with family or non-fishing mad friends.

Right on the doorstep of the Wye and Lathkill is Haddon Hall. Described as 'the most perfect house to survive from the middle ages' the hall is a history lover's haven. Around the corner is Chatsworth House, a lavish stately home with an incredible art collection, jaw-dropping gardens, an adventure playground, a kids' farmyard and awesome farm shop. You could spend a couple of days here and still not see it all. It is a must visit for all the family.

Ashford in the Water is regarded as one of Derbyshire's prettiest villages and it's a lovely place to base yourself to explore the region. There is the plush Riverside Hotel and a mix of bed and breakfasts and self-catering cottages to stay at.

Finally, I would highly recommend a drive down to Dovedale to see (and potentially fish) the river that Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton regularly fished and which inspired Walton to write the *Compleat Angler*. There is a stunning, easy-going walk alongside the River Dove that takes you through the most beautiful limestone country. Day tickets to fish the river can be purchased from the Izaak Walton Hotel - which is a great place for a few beers and a bite to eat.

Hopefully, once international travel is back on the cards, you are now inspired to head to Derbyshire to enjoy a good slice of northern English hospitality fishing. 

## The AGM – in August this year

Members should note that the August meeting this year will be our AGM. This change has been brought about because of the Covid-19 restrictions, which limit attendances and have proximity requirements. We hope to meet again soon at the Kelvin Club, and our goal is to have an Annual Dinner this year with Philip and Mark Weigall as our guests.

The AGM is still some weeks away, but our president is very keen to remind us that all financial members are eligible for nomination and election to the Council.

Notice papers relevant to the AGM included with this newsletter are the Nomination Form, the Appointment of

Proxy Form, and the AGM agenda.

Council meets on the last Wednesday of each month, and all the management issues involved in running the Association are dealt with at these meetings. So if you have some experience and skills in management and are keen to see our Association remain vibrant and responsive to the needs of members then please give some thought to nominating for Council. Meetings are invariably lively and stimulating and you will enjoy participating, as well as contributing useful points of view for the benefit of our Association.

The date – Thursday, August 20, and again this will be a Zoom meeting.

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## The 2020 Annual Dinner with Philip and Mark Weigall



*Mark and Philip Weigall*

Normally our Annual Dinner is held each year in August. But this year is not in any way a normal year. Covid-19 has played havoc with all of our lives, including our VFFA program of meetings and activities.

But we are still planning to have an Annual Dinner. Hopefully we will be able to return the Kelvin Club for our 2020 Annual Dinner with Philip and Mark Weigall as our guests. The date for this keenly anticipated event is Thursday, September 17.

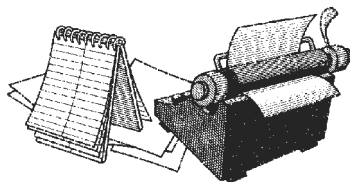
Philip and Mark are well known to us all. They have both been guest speakers at previous VFFA meetings and dinners, and have always drawn large crowds. Philip is one of our most prolific Australian writers on fly fishing. He is the author of several superb books and countless magazine articles, and now edits the very popular digital fly fishing magazine *FlyStream*. He is also heavily booked as a fly fishing guide.

Mark is also a highly skilled and popular guide, though is probably best known as the owner/manager of Millbrook Lakes, our most popular and successful private fishery.

All being well this year's Annual Dinner will be a hugely successful event, so mark the date in your diary - Thursday, September 17.

More information on this event will be given in next month's *Fly Lines*.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"Why do people go fishing? Some say they fish to get fish. This is obviously false."*  
(John Randolph)

*"A good fisherman can secure many regenerative hours in winter, polishing up the rods and reels."* (Herbert Hoover)

*"Three-fourths of the Earth's surface is water, and one-fourth is land. It is quite clear that the good Lord intended us to spend triple the amount of time fishing as taking care of the lawn."*  
(Chuck Clark)

*"The only reason I ever played golf in the first place was so that I could afford to hunt and fish."*  
(Sam Snead)

*"There will be days when the fishing is better than one's most optimistic forecast, others when it is far worse. Either is a gain over just staying home."* (Roderick Haig-Brown)

Our president in his message noted that the VFA has continued with its program of stocking stillwaters in regional and metropolitan lakes for the school holidays. Yearling rainbow trout are dropped into lakes and reservoirs in Melbourne and country towns for school students to target in the school holidays. At least that's the plan, and it's a good one too. Highly commendable. Mind you, the kids who live near where I live have to elbow their way in if they want to see the water. Those stocked trout are enormously popular, and many of the anglers I see in action have beards and grey hair (if any). So if they're still at school they've repeated a lot of years.

A 10 minute drive down Stud Road from where I live gets me to Cogley Lake, Hill Lake and Suttons Lake – three stillwaters clustered together in the middle of a large housing estate in Rowville. I scout down there at least once a week in the winter months as they are an ideal place for half an hour of relaxing fly casting practice. I usually take a box of flies with me, but rarely bother tying anything on.

The lakes are populated with redfin, roach and carp. The carp are targeted by

some very serious anglers who turn up with lots of expensive equipment. They often bring sleeping bags and sleep the night there, as after midnight (so they say) the big carp start to move. And there are some monsters there apparently. I've been told that carp as large as 30 lb have been landed. What do they do with them? Put them back of course - for next time.

Another team of guys I've got to know turn up regularly to fish for the redfin. They, too, bring along some smart looking 'coarse fishing' gear. They burley furiously then fish with these enormously long poles, using corn or maggots as bait. They've shown me photos on their iPhones of quite large catches, but unfortunately the redfin there have become a lot more cunning and discriminating. At least that's what the guys have concluded, because lately a single redfin landed after a couple of hours of fishing is regarded as a huge success.

I headed off to these lakes a few weeks ago for a relaxing casting session and when I arrived I met a young guy there I'd previously met when he was working



*Trout fishing in the middle of suburbia*

in a local tackle shop. He reminded me that the magnificent VFA had just dropped 500 trout in the lakes there for the school holidays.

He was fishing with a spinning rod and a small red lure and told me he had hooked and landed (and released) somewhere between 25 - 30 fish. That's quite impressive, so I hung around and watched. He caught another dozen (I was counting!), then decided he'd had enough and left.

It struck me that in recent years I had often headed off with Dermot in his truck up over the Black Spur to fish the rivers around Buxton and Marysville. And these days, for a variety of reasons, a few ten-inch browns or rainbows caught there would be regarded as a reasonable or at least typical return for the time and effort. Yet here was a fishery just a short drive away that was well stocked with fish of the same size. Mind you their numbers go down fairly quickly. They get hammered as soon as they're released.

My fellow angler who I had just seen pulling rainbows out at a rate of one

every three casts was telling me about the other places he fishes locally. As an example, there is a quarry in Ferntree Gully that has been stocked and is fishing really well.

In his message this month president Chris lists a number of stillwaters in or close to Melbourne City that were recently stocked. So if you live near Albert Park, Lilydale, Emerald, Sunbury, Pakenham, Melton, Moorabbin, Roxburgh and Yarrambat then you don't have to travel far to try out a new fly, or rod, or your experimental Loch Style leader.

Yes, I know, these fish are there for the kids. But if it's not too crowded and you carefully put them all back and offer some tuition and advice to the kids you come across then I'm sure the VFA won't mind. I know it's not quite the same as polaroiding a Tassie highland lake for five pounders, but it's an opportunity to flex the casting muscles and just be out on the water. And that's always a good thing.

Best wishes, take care and stay safe,

*Lyndon*

# Steavenson River Audit

... a report from Dermot O'Brien

The VFFA has been instrumental in a stream audit, believed to be the first of its type in Victoria. On June 3 the VFFA and representatives from the Australian Trout Foundation, Red Tag Fly Fishers, Yarra Valley Fly Fishers, Native Fish Australia, Victorian Fisheries Authority, Arthur Rylah Institute and the Goulburn Broken CMA conducted an audit on the Steavenson River between Buxton and Marysville.

Most of the VFFA Council were present and the group of 15 broke into smaller groups of three and each group walked about 3 kilometre beats, noting and marking points of interest, both good and bad, on detailed satellite maps.

The groups were checking on angler access, blackberry presence, fencing to and in some cases into the river, erosion, weeds, stock access, lack of stream side vegetation, and trout (if any were seen). These points were added to the maps with the intention of creating a database to assess the health of the Steavenson and any other issues.

What the groups found on some beats, among other issues, was excessive blackberry infestation, poor angler access, lack of riparian habitat, lack of fencing, and stock being fed too close to the stream. In one case a 1½ kilometre stretch of the river was totally unfenced on the Western (non-road) side and clear evidence of stock being fed too close to the stream.

Angler access in many places was poor and there was little signage to alert anglers to legally accessible points. The broad issue of access is complicated because some farmers have paid licences to use the Crown Land and apart from the strict legal interpretation, many



farmers have used, cared for and fenced Crown Land for generations. They have a proprietorial attitude, which in caring for the land and stream is a good thing. However, the stream always remains a shared resource and the property of all Victorians. On one property signs had been hung on fences specifically warning anglers NOT to cross the property.



*Blackberries infest lots of sections of the Steavenson*

It was not all doom and gloom. Many parts of the Steavenson were in great shape with in-stream structures, shading foliage and stock fenced away from the water. Sue Kosch from the GBCMA will be collating the information for distribution and future research in her organisation, and Terry George from the



*The briefing*

ATF says the data will be used at future habitat workshops.

We may be called on down the track to help with habitat planting and this would give us the opportunity to not only put back but to demonstrate to landowners that we care like they do ... in other words we are committed stakeholders.

One issue found close to Marysville was the amount of rubbish along the stream. VFFA President Chris Gray said if he had taken a sack he could have filled it. Anthony McGrath from VFA, who worked with the group, said a code of conduct for fishers was coming.

The day was extremely cold and coffee at the Marysville Bakery before and after the Steavo walk was very welcome. Of course social distancing was observed.

The report on the Steavenson will be critical into the future and the same initiative may be rolled out to other rivers and streams. The VFFA's commitment to the project continues to demonstrate our passion for trout and trout habitat and can only help in our dealing with Fisheries, the GBCMA and landowners.



*The elders of the tribe – Dermot O'Brien and Terry George checking their map*



*Renae Ayres, a scientist with the Arthur Rylah Institute, provided some expert help with the survey*

## Demystifying Stillwater Fly Fishing For Trout

... Brian Chan (This article is used with permission. It was first published in April Vokey's *Anchored Outdoors* Website in May this year. Brian Chan is a highly esteemed Canadian biologist, teacher and guide. He has dedicated his entire career to better understanding trout behaviour and diet.)

Each year I meet more and more anglers who are just starting their journey into fly fishing lakes for trout. Many are long-time river anglers simply looking to broaden their fishing horizons while others are fishing for the first time and have been intrigued with fly casting and catching fish with flies. At some point almost all stillwater anglers come to appreciate the tremendous diversity of opportunities offered by fly fishing in lakes.

Approaching lakes is often considered a daunting task to many anglers, as they are now facing what appears to be a featureless body of water. There are no immediately obvious landforms to help one determine where to start fishing and with what flies. The familiar riffles, runs, pools and flats of favourite trout rivers and streams are nowhere to be seen. Thoughts of trolling around a black Woolly Bugger come to mind as the only way to have success.

In reality, learning how to successfully fish lakes for trout or any other freshwater fish species comes down to having a basic understanding of lake ecology. This includes structure of a lake, seasonal changes in water chemistry, aquatic invertebrate life histories and the biology of the fish species being targeted. These topics may sound like a university-level course but they are actually easy concepts to grasp when you think of them from a fish's point of view.

The typical trout lake has a mix of shallow and deep water. Those lakes with abundant shallow water areas are often the most productive in terms of growing trout, because the shallow water



*Evening on Currawong Lakes in Tasmania*

areas allow the energy of photosynthesis to reach the lake bottom and provide the basis for the production of aquatic green plant life. This lush underwater plant growth provides habitat for many of the common insect and other invertebrate food sources of trout. It also provides cover for both juvenile and adult trout as they forage for food.

In biological terms the shallow water areas of a lake are referred to as the littoral or shoal zones and they are typically defined as those areas where the water is less than 25 feet in depth. The littoral zone is the major grocery store for trout. It is home to all the major trout food sources including scuds, midges or chironomids, mayflies, damselflies, dragonflies, caddisflies, leeches and forage fish. When you look at some of the most famous stillwater trout fisheries found in North America, South America, Tasmania and elsewhere, they will invariably have two things in common: abundant littoral or shoal areas and nutrient rich water.

The transition from the shoal to the deeper or mid-water parts of the lake is



*Brumbys Creek is a famous fishery in Tasmania*

known as the drop-off and it can be very gradual in slope or sharp, quickly dropping off into deep water. The drop-off zone is an important area not only for trout feeding, but also as a source of refugia during warm summer months when the shoal areas are too warm during the day for fish to feed. The drop-off zone is cooler and better oxygenated, and also provides cover from predators.

The deepest parts of the lake are referred to as the deepwater zone. There is no rooted aquatic plant life in this zone as it is too deep for photosynthesis to produce green plant growth. Prime food sources found in this zone are zooplankton such as *Daphnia* and some deepwater chironomid emergences.

Like all fish, trout are cold blooded and thrive in cool, well oxygenated water. The littoral or shoal zone of the lake is their prime feeding area as long as water temperatures remain cool enough to support adequate oxygenated levels. Extensive feeding occurs on the shoals

during the spring to early summer months and then again in autumn. In many small, highly productive lakes the shoal zone can become too warm during the mid-summer months for trout to be on them during daylight hours. However, once the sun is off the water the temperatures cool and oxygen levels increase, allowing the trout back into shallow water to feed through the night.

Overall, the most productive trout lakes, those waterbodies that have a reputation for growing large fish, are often landlocked or have only seasonal stream flows. The water is nutrient rich, which supports a large diversity of invertebrate life and there is an abundance of littoral or shoal water. These lakes are stocked on a regular basis, often with triploid or non-reproductive fish and managed with regulations designed to achieve a specific population number and size range of fish.

A lot of anglers have a hard time believing that trout living in small lakes can grow big by eating miniscule >>>



*Tungatinah Lagoon, a delightful spot ... Tasmania calling*

they do, and often to double-digit proportions. Like all animals, a trout will expend as little energy as possible in obtaining their food.

Nutrient-rich lakes provide incredibly abundant sources of protein that can be found throughout the water column. Trout can gorge on quality food items such as zooplankton simply by breathing and filtering these almost microscopic organisms through their gill filaments, or they can slowly cruise through the shoal zone plant life and pick off scuds, damselfly nymphs or leeches. Feeding becomes even easier when there is a major insect emergence such as chironomids or mayflies as the trout become extremely focused in their feeding behaviour.

The next step in becoming a proficient stillwater fly fisher is taking the time to learn about the various insect and other invertebrate food sources that dominate the diet of trout. This information is

instructional videos and apps. Key learning points include identification of a food source during its various life stages, common colours, sizes and in the case of aquatic insects, what their emergence process entails.

As an example, chironomids emerge in extremely large numbers and over a prolonged period of time. They are the most extensive aquatic insect hatch occurring in stillwaters. The mature pupae emerge out of their old larval cases that are found in the benthic matter at the bottom of the lake. The pupae slowly rise vertically to the surface of the lake to complete the transformation to the adult life stage. This pupal ascent could be happening in 6 or 65 feet of water. The emergence sequence is the same regardless of depth. Trout simply inhale the helpless migrating pupae. Understanding the emergence process then allows the angler to employ specific fishing techniques to fool the trout into biting pupal imitations.



*A large fish rising in a backwater – a sight that enlivens every fly fisher*

All aquatic insect hatches are driven by water temperature. Each insect order requires a certain amount of thermal units of heat in order to complete larval, nymphal or pupal development. In lakes, the first insect hatch of the season is always chironomids. This is followed by mayflies, then damselflies, caddisflies, dragonflies and finally mating and swarming flights of water boatman and backswimmers. Rivers experience a similar emergence sequence that we commonly refer to as hatch charts.

As previously mentioned, there are ample educational resources found online and in books to help you learn fly-fishing tactics for all the major trout food sources. There are also some very good books that provide excellent information as well as diagrams and photographs of the various life stages of each food source. I highly recommend *Aquatic Entomology* by W. Patrick McCafferty, as this book is written from an angler's perspective. It covers all the aquatic insects and other invertebrates found in lakes and rivers. *The New Field Book of Freshwater Life* by Elsie B. Klots, is



*The sun setting over Bronte Lagoon in Tasmania*

another handy reference guide covering lake ecology, entomology and plant life found in and around lakes and ponds.

Fly-fishing for trout in stillwaters will provide you with a lifetime of angling memories. Today, more than ever, there are many learning resources to guide you in your new-found fly-fishing journey. And the best part is, there are many thousands of small trout lakes found throughout the world waiting for you to enjoy.



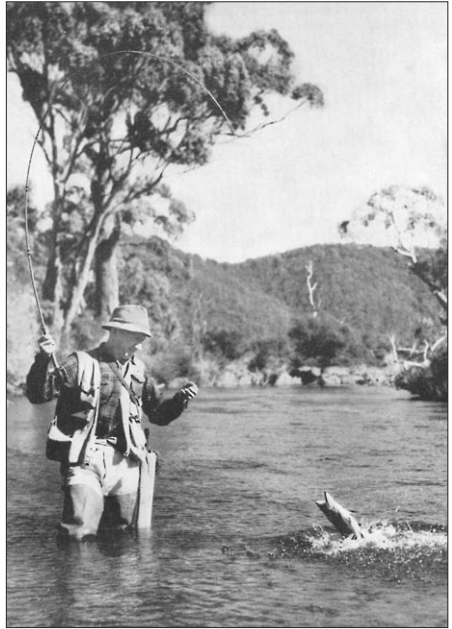
## The Weather and the Fishing Season

... a short extract from David Scholes' classic *Fly-fisher in Tasmania*. Us fly fishers fuss over the weather. What matters and what doesn't? Here are some thoughts from one of our best known anglers and writers.

No other factor influences fishing in Tasmania more than the weather, and if an angler can successfully foretell its likelihood before he sets out, indeed actually choose his place of fishing according to his forecast, he is a clever fellow and will have far more consistent and exciting sport than average anglers, amongst whom it is quite common to hear plans being made for an outing to a certain water sometimes even as far ahead as a week or more.

In due course the enthusiasts depart, according to the pre-arranged scheme, when quite possibly a far different target for the day would have provided better fishing. If luck takes a hand they may return with trout galore, but more than likely weather conditions are unsuitable, or only partly suitable, and the results disappointing. Before we go fishing, therefore, our first consideration must be the weather, and only after satisfying ourselves on the outlook can we decide where to go. To do otherwise is like setting off for the movies without first knowing what program is showing.

This choice of a suitable fishing place calls for a wide knowledge of various waters, and also the likely effect on each which the expected conditions of weather will produce. An angling diary is of tremendous assistance in acquiring this knowledge, and while special interest will be found in a study of these notes when reference is made to the experiences of both yourself and other anglers on the same day, additional entries should be made covering reports received on days when you are not fishing yourself. In this way one is



*A well-known photo of David Scholes*

possessed of extremely valuable information, which, in all its detail, cannot be committed to memory.

In addition to noting conditions of weather, details regarding the stomach contents of fish caught should also be included in the diary. Comparison of these observations, season after season, is most enlightening, and helpful in giving an idea of what foods should be available at various times and places. Some foods are confined only to certain waters, while others may be common to many, but nevertheless not available in all such places at the same time. Tadpoles, as a broad instance, while common to most waters, will hatch earlier on the lowlands than the

highlands. Waters are, therefore, best studied in groups or areas.

In the main, it will be found that the feeding habits of trout in various locations are repeated year after year as the season unfolds. One phase or other of the manner of feeding may be longer or shorter from year to year, depending not only on natural fluctuations in numbers among the food populations, but also on variations of weather conditions. A season of continuous wind will mean a great reduction in surface feeding, regardless of the amount of floating food available, while the opposite will apply to an unusually calm year. There are exceptions, of course, particularly where water levels are controlled by man and not by nature, but broadly speaking there is this repetition of feeding habits. Plagues of caterpillars, beetles, ants and other land-bred foods have always to be considered and made the most of whenever they occur. Often these concentrations of food give us most exciting fishing, but usually the period of supply is limited and we are lucky if we can afford sufficient time to see enough of the fishing so produced.

A complete study of meteorology cannot be carried out overnight. Fortunately there are only two weather factors that concern us especially. Firstly, we are interested in the wind, its strength and direction, and, secondly, the amount and type of cloud-cover. I am convinced that these two conditions are the vital weather features on any day throughout the season, because they directly affect the light, and, of equal importance, the temperature of both air and water.

Barometric pressure plays no momentous part in my day's fishing. Prior to deciding my place of fishing, I always consult it with great concern—if it is falling I may get wet, and therefore

take a coat, but once on my way it can do what it likes. The suggestion that trout will not rise, or are difficult to catch on a fast-falling barometer has not been my experience. I do not say that barometric pressure has no effect on trout, but simply that I have caught fish on a fly in one way or another, regardless of this instrument's antics.

Large numbers of anglers are out during each weekend of the season, but never do they all return fishless. To some of those who do, the barometer may provide as good an excuse as any, but we must alter our method of fishing according to the varying conditions of weather encountered. Rising fish may be put down instantly by a wind over the surface, or they may be put down by cloud-cover shielding the sunshine and thus frequently decreasing fly-life to nil, particularly Mayfly spinners. But are these same fish not still takeable by a different method? Can a dry fly not be snipped off, and a sunken fly knotted on? Versatility in a fly-fisherman on any water is worth ten thousand barometers. When one method is no longer productive, for any reason, we must be able to turn to the next best thing.

Success then revolves around knowing where to go under the weather conditions forecast, bearing in mind, through experience and knowledge gained by observation, memory, and notes in the angling diary, where trout should be found under certain weather conditions and what might be their most likely manner of feeding. This in turn will decide the hours of more probable activity and also your method of fishing. The more the weather is studied, relating your choice of water to it, the more accurate will become your forecast, and the greater your resultant sport.

## VFFA - April Zoom Meeting



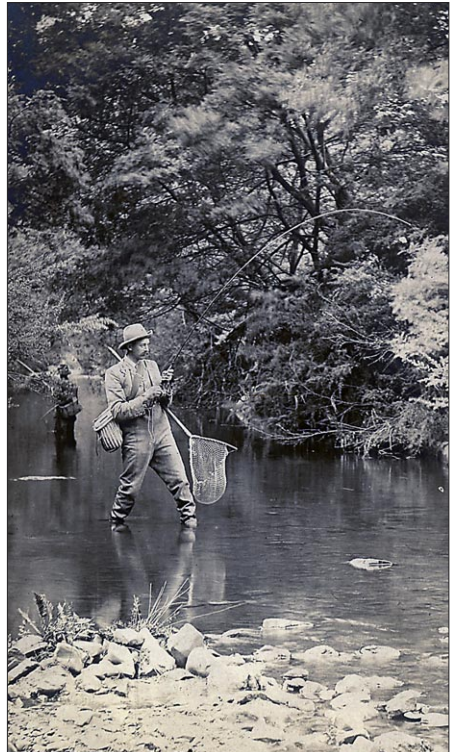
*VFFA monthly meetings have been rather different for much of this year. Those attending were doing so via Zoom - a web-based video conferencing tool. So members are able to stay at home and logon to the site using a computer or iPhone and see all the other members attending, and especially the presentation by the guest speaker. We are hopeful that we might be back at the Kelvin Club for meetings by September*



*Many members have enjoyed our annual trips to Thorpdale to fish the dams there stocked by members of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers. Here is a superb brown caught recently in one of the dams by Frank Kappf.*



*Your editor has been the recipient of large numbers of photos. Here are just a few from the archives. A number of people in these photos were very significant in past years. How many of these members can you identify?*



## North of the Border

... from Rod Whiteway.

Our June issue of *Fly Lines* carried a report on the presentation at our May meeting by Cameron Westaway and Nathan Miles on the current condition and management of the NSW trout fishery. Partly in response, Rod Whiteway, Secretary of Monaro Acclimatisation Society, has written the following article for us on the state of the Monaro/Snowy Mountains Fishery following the drought floods and fires of the past two years.

I know many VFFA members enjoy fishing north of the border, so I thought that there might be some interest in learning of the calamity that has befallen the NSW trout fishery. Though in all honesty, I have written this article as much to share the burden as to inform.

The Monaro fishery, which includes the Kybeyan, Kydra, Maclaughlin, Cambalong and Wulwye rivers and the Bobundara Creek, has been decimated by events of the past two seasons, and much of the Snowy Mountains fishery has also been affected.

We all know that the Monaro can be fickle, but the current situation is made so much harder by the fact that only three years ago the Monaro was fishing the best it had been since the halcyon days of the late 1980s and early 1990s. At my place at Kydra, on the eastern Monaro, annual rainfall between 2009/10 and 2015/16 was generally above average, varying from 638.5 mm to 1077.5 mm. Fish numbers were high in most streams, as natural recruitment built on maintenance stockings made during harder times, and the food chain prospered as well. Four pounders were common and there were many bigger fish.

But from 2016/17 the drought hit. Rainfall over the next three years was 484.0 mm, 570.0 mm and 550.0 mm. Still, losses were minimal through until 2018/19, as streams drew on deep reserves and fortuitous summer rain

helped as well. But in 2018/19 the weather gods got really nasty. Low rainfall combined with record temperatures, and ironically in some cases too much water delivered too quickly, killed many fish.

As an example of how hot it got, water temperatures in the Thredbo River at the Gaden Hatchery reached and stayed at around 27°C for a number of days around Australia Day. Temperatures over 26°C degrees if maintained for long periods are lethal to trout. Fish died in the river and there were significant losses in the Hatchery that draws its water from the Thredbo. The hatchery losses would have been greater, but for the efforts of the dedicated hatchery staff.

Around this time there were two huge thunderstorms within half an hour of each other in the bare catchments of the Bobundara, Maclaughlin and the Wulwye, each delivering 50-70 mm. These put torrents of hot, silt-laden water into all of these streams. After the deluge dead fish were found throughout the Bobundara, and subsequent surveys of these streams failed to find a fish. Amazingly, fishable populations of trout remained in the Kybeyan and Kydra and subsequently a few fish were found alive in the Bobundara and parts of the Maclaughlin. Also, despite the fish losses in the hatchery, we got our full allocation of brown trout fingerlings which NSW Fisheries held over until April when a little rain and cooler temperatures improved stocking conditions.

So we went into the current season with hope that the damage had been limited. But as we now know, it has been the season from hell, with bushfires, extreme heat and little rain. All streams on the Monaro stopped flowing at various times, water temperatures in the Thredbo River reached an unheard of 29°C on one occasion, and further hot floods affected some streams. Even the Kydra was reduced to a series of disconnected holes that got perilously lower as the season progressed. At one stage I held grave fears for the platypus populations of all streams.

A good fall of rain towards the end of February/early March provided some respite for the eastern Monaro, but has not as yet been followed up by general rains particularly west of Nimmitabel. To make matters worse, the distribution of our fingerlings this autumn in Monaro Streams was disrupted by the coronavirus. The stocking was undertaken in a hurry by NSW Fisheries rather than by members of the Monaro Acclimatisation Society. As a result, as far as I can tell, these fish were not spread out along streams as would have been done by MAS members. The effect of this remains to be seen. However, now, at the end of the season, I believe it unlikely that apart from in the vicinity of recent stockings, there are not any fish left over long lengths of the Maclaughlin, Bobundara and Wulwye, and only vestigial numbers in the Kybeyan and the Kydra.

What of the future? If we get a return to normal seasons, and the Bureau of Meteorology reports are hopeful in this regard, and recent stockings survive and spread, then they could provide limited pockets of fishing for fish up to a pound and a half by the end of next season. If we have to wait for next year's stockings to grow, add another year.

The Snowy Mountains Fishery has also suffered, particularly the northern end of the Park. I have not seen for myself, but reports are that the Eucumbene, Tumut, Murrumbidgee and Tooma catchments, including the beautiful Ogilvies Creek, were all badly fire affected. The damage around Three Mile Dam and Kiandra was particularly severe.

Flows in the Eucumbene River following rain in the mountains have been black, and some siltation has occurred. Whether this affects the spawning run and subsequent spawning remains to be seen. I have heard that there have been some fish caught below the Portal where clean water from Tantangara flows in. The Thredbo River as far as I know was not affected by fire and remains a fishable option in those stretches not affected by high water temperatures or those restocked by runs out of Jindabyne Dam. I have not yet had a report on the Delegate and Little Plains rivers, but there were fires in this area too.

Streams in the northern end of the Park have also been badly affected by feral horses, whose numbers have soared to over 20,000. Before the fires they had already trampled Currango Creek out of existence, and caused extensive damage to the Eucumbene River and its tributaries, as well as the Murrumbidgee, Nungars and the Gungarlin. The fires did not reduce horse numbers, but further concentrated them on remnant vegetation including bogs and watercourses, exacerbating the damage already caused by them and the fires.

The other fishing option is the lakes. As many of you would know, Eucumbene and particularly Jindabyne have not fished well over the past couple of seasons. This has been largely put down to the strange disappearance of rainbows in both lakes, despite the normal annual stocking. Various theories have been >>>

put forward for this. NSW Fisheries has been under considerable pressure to try to find a cause and solution, and a lot of research is going into this.

Many people suspect part of the cause may be changes in the food chain in these lakes. Jindabyne is being held at higher levels than previously, presumably to ensure that water is available to maintain environmental flows down the Snowy. As a result water is now covering barren eroded banks, and former weed beds have been inundated by higher water levels. Eucumbene, on the other hand, has been low but also relatively stable over the past couple of years. Some Eucumbene regulars believe that this lake fishes better when you have a regular, seasonal, rising and falling level, as it results in the incorporation of organic matter from flooded grasslands that benefits the food chain. Rainbows, especially the small fish, seem to rely heavily on daphnia blooms which have reportedly been reduced. Could this be related to the water levels in the lakes? Just a theory; one among many.

Through all this Tantangara has been the one shining light, but it is also under threat from the proposed Snowy Hydro 2.0 development. Under this proposal water will be pumped up from Talbingo Dam to Tantangara, then released back to Talbingo generating electricity.

Unfortunately Talbingo Dam holds a large redfin population, and there are grave fears that despite Snowy Hydro's best efforts redfin will be transferred to Tantangara, and thence via the portal to the rest of the Snowy Lakes and also down the Murrumbidgee below Tantangara. Redfin are voracious predators of small fish including trout, and they also carry the EHN virus that is lethal to rainbow trout and some native species.

MAS has been negotiating with Snowy Hydro for an environmental offset that will allow us to set up a facility to grow trout to sizes less susceptible to redfin predation, for stocking if redfin are transferred. Our work with Snowy Hydro saw this concept placed in the Environmental Impact Statement, and the recently released Snowy Hydro 2.0 Assessment Report states that Snowy Hydro is to commit \$5million to this project. As well as this, no one is talking about what effect the regular rising and falling of Tantangara levels will have on the benthic food chain and hence the edge fishing.

This is not a very bright picture I know, but what has happened over the past two years, particularly the high water temperatures in supposedly alpine streams such as the Thredbo river, and the violent thunderstorms that have ravaged the Monaro, has sheeted home to me how tenuous much of our mainland Australian trout fishery is in the face of climate change. If the Thredbo River loses fish to high temperatures, how many other streams in NSW and Victoria are losing trout habitat and trout.

Long-time VFFA member Robert Roles has fished the Corryong area for many years over the Christmas and New Year period. He has reached the conclusion that this area is barely worth fishing now over the summer period. Robert keeps comprehensive records of water temperatures, and in Nariel Creek they regularly approach critical levels. Even in the Swampy Plains River below Khancoban Pondage temperatures are often high enough to suppress all fish activity.

I am sure that you will have noticed a similar deterioration some of the streams that you fish. Strangely we do not see much acknowledgement of this threat in our angling publications, and perhaps we

have already left taking action too long now to prevent the loss of many fisheries anyway. I can understand that bad news stories may not sell magazines, but it

would do well for all anglers to be aware of the threats to our fishery and take every opportunity to support action to oppose these threats.



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## This Month's Yarn ...

(From February 1966)

"I see there's been a request", said Alf, placing the necessary proceeds on the counter for McTaggart's third helping, "for anglers to not take their dogs with them when they're out fishing."

"That's okay for most dogs," cut in McTaggart, "but not for my dog, Fut. I think I've told you about him before. A most intelligent animal; no harm in him at all, and very helpful at times."

"In fact I'll give you one instance. I was fishing in a small lake near Dalesbridge a couple of years back. Conditions looked good, but I wasn't doing any good. I'd tried a number of flies – dries, nymphs, emergers and wets, but couldn't get a response. Now Fut, as I might have previously mentioned to you, always took a great interest in my fishing, and was remarkably observant. After a couple

of hours, during which time I had caught nothing, I noticed that Fut had started to wander around the edge of the water. Suddenly he waded in very quietly where there were some weeds, waited a couple of minutes, then came out again and walked up to where I was standing and shook himself vigorously. And would you believe - out of his coat fell a number of shrimps. Then he looked up at me meaningfully and I got the idea".

"You're not going to tell us you used those things for bait!" said Kossy, indignant and aghast. "No, of course not," replied McTaggart, "After all, I'm a respected and principled member of the VFFA! But I did pull out an imitation of a shrimp, which of course I had tied myself, and proceeded to catch trout after trout!"



*Tichborne watercolour  
McLaren Lake*

## The Uncertain Trout

... a review of Dick Wigram's famous book, by Bill Jeans. Compiled by Bill with acknowledgements to Tom Edwards, Mick Hall and Jim Findlay. This book is in our VFFA library and is available for loan. Members can borrow it for four weeks. Please contact our librarian John Pilkington if you would like to read it.

Wigram, R.H. (1951) *The Uncertain Trout*. Georgian House: Melbourne; small 4to; (xvi), 72pp; frontis and 27 black and white plates by Norman Taylor; hard cover; dust jacket.

R.H. Wigram's *The Uncertain Trout* has long been one of Australia's best-loved angling books. In his review for *The Australian Shooters and Anglers News* (October 1951), B. O'Loughlin wrote:

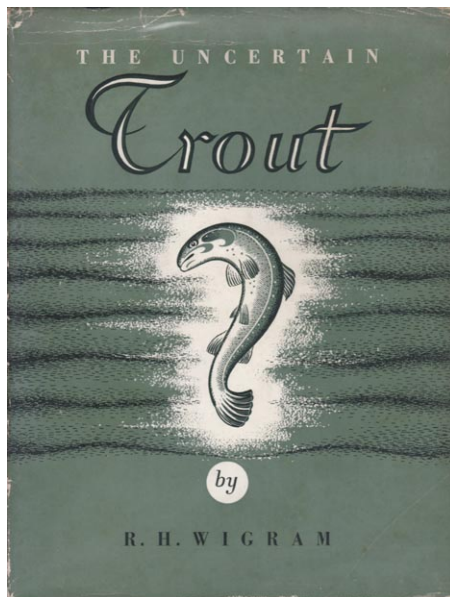
"This is a very readable book, which more than fulfils the promise of the writer's earlier works and is a major contribution to our Australian angling literature. There are 29 beautiful plates from photos by Norman Taylor, and the technical side of the production is a credit to Georgian House."

Wigram dedicated his book to his wife, 'who has constantly reminded me that I must finish this book, and to Norman Taylor who went to so much trouble to take the photographs I wanted.'

The preface is from our friend Izaak Walton's 'Angler's Song':

"I care not, I, to fish in seas, Fresh rivers best my mind do please, Whose sweet calm course I contemplate, And seek in life to imitate."

R.H. (Dick) Wigram came to Australia in 1924 with his brother John (Jack). The brothers were direct descendants of Money Wigram who donated space on the Norfolk, the ship that brought the first trout ova to Tasmania in 1864. Together they managed Rainbow House, the guest house at Breona on the Great Lake (Rainbow Chalet, built in 1929, replaced Rainbow House). In the early 1930s



Wigram became known to the angling public through his many angling writings in Launceston's *Weekly Courier* and later in *The Examiner*, as well as other newspapers and angling journals.

For much of his life Dick lived around Longford in Northern Tasmania, close to the South Esk and Macquarie Rivers. He would fish almost every day. In the mid-1930s he became a professional fly tier with a team of fly dressers, supplying trout flies to the Australian market. In 1955, Wigram returned home to England on family business. While there, he tied flies commercially for Ogden Smith, Farlows, and others.

He reveals his expert knowledge of the fly tying art in *The Uncertain Trout* with passages such as this: "The larvae of the Ephemeroptera are lively little beasts.

They swim with an undulating movement of the body; their legs move and the breathing gills are constantly pulsating. How then should the nymph be fashioned by the fly-maker? It must give the appearance of life in the water."

Norman Taylor's photographs fit superbly with Wigram's prose. Here is another sample of his writing: "Heavy rain has fallen in the headwaters of the stream and the water is rising and flowing back through the screen of grass and rushes, pushing the teeming insect life ahead of the creeping water. Instinct tells the trout that more food, or at least easier feeding, is to be found outside the river channel and so they slide gently out onto the flooded land to gorge themselves. They are nervous at first, the water is shallow and there are unknown dangers to be faced, but food is plentiful and soon caution is partially forgotten as the stomach is filled with rich, new food. Many of the best fish are taken at these times—fish that live in inaccessible parts of the stream and can be reached at no other time."

As always, Wigram's focus is on the flies and the fishing, and has a whole chapter devoted to the Cocky Spinner. Chapters include 'Approach and Presentation,' 'Flies and Caddis Nymphs,' 'Nymph Fishing,' and 'Primary and Secondary Armament.'

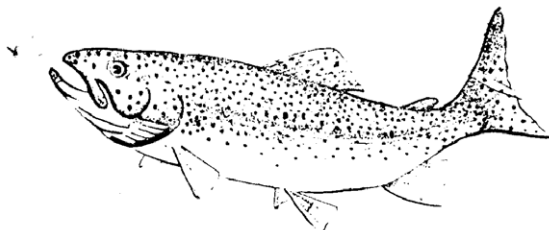
Bob Dunn aptly described this title as 'a beautiful book by a master storyteller.' It is a classic of Australian fishing literature.

Wigram's books are still read and popular today. He had five books published



*This is a well-known photo of Dick Wigram in his later years*

during his lifetime: *Trout and Fly in Tasmania* (1938), *Nymph Fishing in the Southern Hemisphere* (1939), *Anglers' Guide to Tasmania* (1946), *The Uncertain Trout* (1951), and *The Shannon Rise* (1953). Later publications include *The Fly*, published in 2002 from a 1965 manuscript by Wigram and Carl Massy.



## A Report From 103 Years Ago

... from Fishing Notes by 'Fin', in the Weekly Times, April 28, 1917

(At the Ballarat Anglers' Club's last meeting) Mr W.L. Hartland spoke of the fallacy of stocking streams with rainbow trout. He instanced cases where up to two years old the species could be caught in great numbers, but after that they tended to disappear, particularly during a flood season, and he said they all find their way to the sea eventually. At the present time along the coast at Frankston it is quite common for the fishermen to secure rainbow trout in their nets, as the fish seem to hug the coast. This goes to prove the arguments of many experts who have for years been averse to stocking streams with rainbow species, but good sport has been afforded in many parts of Australia where fishing was unknown, and there is very good reason for re-stocking all the waters found suitable for their reception.

The close season for English trout in Victoria starts on May 1, and terminates on August 31. The season all round has been fairly successful, thanks in great measure to the splendid catches made

from the Moorabool Reservoir [Editor - completed in 1915], which late in the season was opened to fishing. The early results of this magnificent water proved that no part of the world, even the Great Lake (Tasmania), gave better returns. One enthusiast, late in February, went to the trouble of compiling a list of catches for about a month, and they were as follows:

A. Burton, 25 trout, totaling 75 lb; W. Chisholm, six trout, 15½ lb; Jeffreys, four trout, 9½ lb; P. Maher, 38 trout, 103 lb; W. Haymes and party, five trout, 12 lb; Young and Scott, seven, 16½ lb; J. Grainger, 12, 26 lb.; W. Baber and party, 17, 40 lb.; J. Thomas jnr, four, 9 lb.; J.W. Grove, 12, 32½ lb.; R. Allan, five, 13½ lb.; Mitchell Bros. and Stevens, about 140 lb for a couple of visits; J. McKee, seven, 15 lb.; T. Kane, four, 2½ lb; T. Foster, three on fly, 8¼ lb., three on bait, 9 lb; E. Todd, five, 14 lb.; Atkins, four, 9½ lb; F.W. Foster, 30 trout; V. Wastell, for three visits, 56 lb.

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

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

VALUED DONORS

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *Jim's Water Boatman*



I recently emailed Jim Blakeslee, our regular Warrnambool correspondent and highly skilled fly fisher, to get some news on the fishing in our state's south-west. Jim replied with this:

Fly fishing in wintertime around Warrnambool can be tough. There are few insects hatching and very little surface action. So, when I woke a few weeks ago to a bright sunny morning with a light north-westerly breeze I took advantage of the break in the weather to do some loch-style drift fishing on Lake Gilllear [Ed: a small lake just to the east of Warrnambool].

I rigged up my 8-weight Sage with an intermediate sinking line, tied on a #6 Green Matuka and started casting. After covering the water for an hour without a sign of a fish I finally hooked a good one that leapt into the air, tail-walked and tore off across the lake looking for a weed bed to dive into and break me off. It eventually tired and I netted a beautiful 5 lb brown.

>>>



*Jim provided us with this photo of the brown trout from Lake Gilliear*

That afternoon, as I cleaned the fish, I noted that it had a couple of galaxias minnows and a few small green scud in its stomach, and ... a hand-full of water boatmen, a staple item in their diet at this time of the year.

That evening I tied a dozen Water Boatmen to imitate the bugs in Lake Gilliear that the fish there had been mainly feeding on.

Here is the pattern:

#### **Materials for the Zulu Tag:**

**Hook:** Wet fly hook in size 12. I use a Mustad 7957BX.

**Thread:** Yellow 6/0.

**Body:** Two long fibres of green peacock herl.

**Rib:** Medium pearl Mylar tinsel.

**Over Rib:** Stretch gel (or V-rib).

**Back:** Six blue fibres from the eye of a peacock feather.

**“Oar” Legs:** Two furnace hackle tips with the ends cut square.

#### **Tying Procedure**

1. Wrap the shank of the hook with tying thread from the eye to the bend of the hook.
2. Tie in the materials in this order: blue peacock fibres, stretch gel, tinsel, green peacock herl.
3. Wrap the green herl around the hook and tie it off a couple of millimetres back from the eye of the hook.

4. Spiral the tinsel over the herl. Tie it off.
5. Tightly wrap the stretch gel over the tinsel to completely cover the body with no gaps. Tie off.
6. Where the body finishes (just behind the eye) tie on the hackle-tip "oars" so they stick out at 90 degrees to either side of the hook shank. Figure-eight with tying thread to fix them in place.
7. Pull the Blue peacock strands forward (over the back) and tie down to make a "shell" over the back of the fly. Coat the Blue peacock fibres with Loon UV setting Fly Finish to make a hard durable shell.
8. Wrap the tying thread behind the eye of the hook to build up a large yellow head.
9. Place a dot of black nail polish on either side of the head to make distinct eyes. Let them dry.
10. Cover the head with head cement and you are done!



## VFFA 2020 meetings & other activities

### July 2020

- 16 Thursday General Meeting: Speaker – Karen Brooks, fly fishing guide at Driftwater, Tasmania, and one of Australia’s top fly fishers. This again will be a Zoom video presentation, commencing at 8:00 pm.
- 26 Sunday First Sunday Casting for the year – 10:00am at the Red Tag Casting Pool at Yarra Bend Park, Fairfield.
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm, via Zoom

### August 2020

- 20 Thursday VFFA Annual General Meeting.  
[Please note that this is a month earlier than normal. The three necessary AGM notices are included as inserts in this issue. This again will probably be a Zoom video presentation, commencing at 8:00 pm.]
- 23 Sunday Sunday Casting – 10:00am at the Red Tag Casting Pool at Yarra Bend Park, Fairfield.
- 26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm, via Zoom

### September 2020

- 17 Thursday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm, at the Kelvin Club.  
Guest Speakers – Philip and Mark Weigall.
- 20 Sunday President’s Casting Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:00 am
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm, at the Kelvin Club.

### October 2020

- 15 Thursday General Meeting, commencing at 8:00 pm, at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker – Andrew Fuller from the Melbourne Flyfisher store – telling us about the best of fly fishing in Argentina and the latest and greatest in fly fishing equipment.
- 28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm, at the Kelvin Club.

### November 2020

- 19 Thursday General Meeting, commencing at 8:00 pm, at the Kelvin Club.  
Speakers - John Billing from Mending Casts, and Jo Dobson from Casting for Recovery.
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm, at the Kelvin Club.

### December 2020

- 11 Friday Our Annual Christmas Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm, at the Kelvin Club.  
Guest Speaker – to be confirmed.