

FLY LINES



JULY 2021

The July Meeting with Bernard and Jason

Bernard and Jason are good friends. They fish together often on the rivers and creeks around the Black Spur and Marysville area. They have fished the streams there every season for many years. And they catch a lot of fish. They know this area and its streams intimately, and as their photos on Facebook suggest, they are quite adventurous – frequently hiking into some heavily forested areas.

They are keen to tell us how they do it. Their presentation will focus on successful approaches to fishing small streams including getting to know a fishery, learning how to appraise the prevailing conditions, selecting locations and places to fish, and preparing the right gear for small streams.



Jason and Bernard ready for action

Thursday, July 15,
8 pm
at the Kelvin Club

They will also discuss tactics for smaller waters including how to remain undetected, how to cover water, how to determine likely feeding behaviour, and how to make sense of the entomological calendar and hatches and thus make appropriate fly selection. They will discuss the challenges of casting on small streams, fly presentation, targeting prime fish, and will add some thoughts on mental preparation and fishing outside of one's comfort zone.

They look forward to some lively discussion on these topics and encourage questions and debate amongst their fly fishing fraternity.

This is a meeting you won't want to miss, so mark it in your diary - the Kelvin Club on Thursday, June 17, at 8:00 pm.

We need to inform the Kelvin Club of numbers for catering purposes, so members who plan to have dinner prior to the meeting need to email Terry Rogers to indicate their intention to dine prior to the meeting. Terry's email address is terryrogers@bigpond.com

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New Member

Again this month it is our delightful pleasure to welcome a new member to the Association. Rhonda Grisold has submitted a member application and is welcomed very warmly into our ranks. Members would be aware that Rhonda is the wife of David Grisold, a past president, council member and secretary, and life member. Over the years Rhonda

has made a significant contribution to countless VFFA activities through her keen and wholehearted support of David's initiatives as president and secretary. She is also a keen and skilled fly fisher.

We give Rhonda a very warm welcome to the VFFA, and trust that her membership brings great times and great memories.

President's Message

Welcome to another *Fly Lines* newsletter.

It's pleasing to see some new members joining our ranks. In recent times we have received and accepted nomination forms for Glenise Webb and Rhonda Grisold. Both ladies have been involved in the VFFA over many years, supporting the secretarial, presidential, and editorial roles held by David and Lyndon. Congratulations ladies, and welcome.

With the recent lockdown we transitioned Craig Coltman to a Zoom presentation, and had a wonderful show of support with over 70 logging in to learn about the "one percenters" to brush up on our skills.

Fly tying resumed with the first evening held at Aussie Angler. Rick and Jo cleared the floor and set up Kossy and company to tie some Woolly Buggers and nymphs. We were also treated to an ongoing display of clever fly tying by Robert Bailey. Pizza, wine and coffee amongst plenty of ongoing banter provided members with some new skills. We plan to run three more fly tying nights over the coming months, with Robert Bailey, Andrew Mossman and John Pilkington providing tuition.

At the time of writing this report we are in discussion with Gordon Van Der Spuy (author of *The Feather Mechanic* fly tying book) to present to us via Zoom on July 29. Keep an eye out for the Zoom details via email to join in and listen to Gordon.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment strategy is up for renewal and open for public comment. We (VFFA) regard this region as local to many of our members to fish or get involved in the habitat restoration events as and when they are offered. I encourage you to look at the draft



strategy and put forward your comments either online or by attending one of the workshops. More details via this link: <https://bit.ly/3qyCxIh>

The Victorian Fisheries Authority is conducting a number of forums across Victoria to update fishers and boaters on what they are working on. To get further information you will need to book on their website: www.vfa.vic.gov.au/localforums.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority is also encouraging us to fish more with the Golden Tag competition continuing. Brown trout have been tagged in Mt Beauty Pondage and Bellfield Reservoir (the Goulburn River and Nariel Creek will have to wait till the season reopens in early September). For the more adventurous fly fisher try for a tagged -

- Black bream in the Gippsland Lakes and Tamboon Inlet;
- Dusky flathead in Mallacoota Inlet;
- Murray cod in the Ovens River, Rocklands and Upper Coliban reservoirs, Gunbower Creek and the Lindsay/Mullaroo;

- Australian bass in the Snowy River and Blue Rock Lake.

They have also stocked 80 lakes and reservoirs across Melbourne and regional locations with catchable size trout.

So there are many lake and non-trout options available while we take a break from the rivers. Locations and quantity details are here: <https://bit.ly/2Ueyjcl>

Our Annual General Meeting will be in September and we are on the lookout for a few more members to come forward and get involved in the various events and activities as well as being involved in council. It's not onerous but is enjoyable and rewarding to play a part in our ongoing activities.

At this month's meeting we will hear Bernard Holbery and Jason Platts present their story on "streamcraft on small streams". No doubt this will be fascinating and filled with some wonderful photography and stories. We do plan to hold this in person at the Kelvin Club.

Save the date for Jim Allen OAM who will join us for our Annual Dinner on Friday, August 20. It will be a wonderful evening with Jim entertaining us. Invitations are included in the July newsletter. Please confirm your attendance as soon as possible.

Vale David Martin

We are saddened to receive news of David's passing on June 18. David was a Past President and Life Member of Ballarat Fly Fishers' Club and held active roles in Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society (Life Member). He was a strong advocate on many occasions, addressing Fisheries Victoria on the stocking and management of our fishery. David was a long-time member of VFFA as well.

Our condolences to the Martin family.

Stay well.



The June Meeting with Craig Coltman

... here is a summary of Craig's presentation:

I was wondering how I could put this into some sort of structure. I'm going to describe to you some of the many things, often just little things, that good anglers put into practice that make a difference to their catch rates.

Some time ago I wrote an article in Philip Weigall's *FlyStream* magazine on the five things that the best anglers that I have seen from around the world do consistently to catch fish. I thought I should speak to these first, and then I'll talk about some of the one percenters because it is in doing these one percenters that those five things come into play.

The first of these, and it will sound rather obvious, is to fish where the fish are. I know that sounds self-evident, but a lot of anglers don't actually give a lot of consideration to where the fish are likely to be. I work in Tasmania as a guide, and the most agonising thing us guides have to do is to try to work out where to go fishing on any particular day. If we make the wrong decision this can have a big impact on the success of the day. So we talk to fellow anglers and look at the weather and try to get the very best intel that we can. This is definitely the thing to do before you go fishing to consistently find to the right spots. >>>

The second thing is to put your fly in front of the fish. Again that sounds fairly obvious, but so many times I have seen people, particularly on lakes, casting to the rise form rather than to where the fish is heading. So take time to try to anticipate where the fish is going and take a punt. You know the trout is not going to rise in the same spot again, so therefore you have to try to anticipate which direction he is going. Then try to cast your fly in front of the fish.

The next thing I've seen the best anglers around the world do is ensure the fish sees their fly. Getting your fly in front of the fish is one thing, but particularly in a big mayfly hatch for example, where your fly can get lost in the crowd, this is where movement and colour and flash all come into play. So we use these things in our flies or in the way we fish our flies to make sure the fish focuses in on our fly. It's like a lady in a bright red dress. You can see all the businessmen in suits

walking up Collins Street first thing in the morning, and none of them stand out. But a lady wearing a red dress certainly does.

That's where we use those nymphs in competition angling that are not really imitating anything in particular, but they have different coloured beads and the fish will see the colour and respond to it. Fish aren't that smart.

So now we are fishing where the fish are - we've done our intel, we're on the right lake at the right time, we are putting our fly in front of the fish, and we've made sure fish have seen our fly. The next trick is to make sure the fly is behaving the right way. I'm not one for exact imitation in a fly. In fact I prefer my flies to be more impressionistic. But I am very particular about the way the fly presents. If, for example, we are on Penstock Lagoon in Tasmania we get a very good example of this. We often get a lot of wind down in Tasmania and we also get big hatches of mayfly. If you're presenting your dry fly



Craig looks very pleased with this superb Tassie brown

directly downwind to the fish they often will not take it. So what we do instead is to set ourselves up sideways to the fish across the foam lines and we get our fly bouncing down the foam line, being blown along by the wind in the same way as the naturals. This can be all the difference between catching fish and not catching fish. So this would be a good example of making sure your flies are behaving the right way.

Finally, to fish efficiently you need to keep your flies in the water. If you are constantly tangled, or changing flies, or for whatever other reason your flies aren't in the water you really are reducing your ability to catch fish. The best anglers I've observed keep their flies in the water all the time. You could imagine in a competition situation that if you've got three hours of fishing and you're getting tangled or messed up and that keeps you out of the water for say 20 minutes, that's a huge difference in your fishing time on the water. Also consider the number of false casts that you make. If you take three false casts to get your flies out as against taking only two false casts (and I've seen people out on the water taking ten false casts), then if you extrapolate that over a day's fishing that, too, can make a big difference to the number of fish you are actually getting the opportunity to present to.

So there are the five things that the best anglers that I've seen do consistently well. None of these is complicated in nature. They are all simple things that of course you might take a lifetime in trying to eliminate them from your fishing. Now let's get down to the little one percenters that go into contributing to that.

These are in no specific order. I've just written down the little things that I do or have seen other people do that I think make a difference to being an efficient and effective fisherman.

The first is to do with knots. Often I see people joining line together in their leaders and leaving big tags on their knots. The problem with these tags is that if you make a poor cast and your leader runs past itself it can tangle. Often I'll ask them why they have left those big tags, and they say, "Well my knot might slip, so I'm giving myself a bit of insurance." My response then normally is to say, "If you are tying a knot that you think is going to slip then you should actually retie it." I clip all of my knots down hard so I don't have any tags. Then if I do make a poor cast I'm less likely to get a tangle. It is a little thing, but it can make a difference. It relates to that last point about fishing efficiently and keeping your flies in the water.

Another one of my pet hates are those loop to loop connections between a fly line and leader, because there are two catch points there - where the two loops join and the knot on the leader that creates the loop. I suggest that you chop off the loop on the leader and then tie a blood knot directly to the loop at the end of the fly line. It's a far neater connection and the fly line will run more smoothly through the tip of the fly rod.

My third one, and it really isn't a one percenter, is to put more effort into practising your casting. If you become a better caster you will inevitably catch more fish. Being a great caster does not make you a great angler, but you will never be a great angler unless you are a good caster. I implore everybody to spend more time practising your casting, effecting different casting techniques, and learning to work with the wind - particularly in Tasmania where we get a lot of wind. Don't fight the wind when you're casting, but learn to work with the wind.

We need to be organised. The best anglers I've seen have all been very well >>>

organised. They have organised tackle bags where everything in it has a place. They are not carrying too much gear, but they are carrying just the gear they need, and it is well organised in their vests and gear bag.

And that brings us to their fly boxes. You don't need tons and tons of flies. Martin Droz is a guide I work with in Tasmania and he is arguably the best credentialled competition angler in the world, having won two worlds and two European championships. He was in the Czech team for quite a long time. He carries very few flies. He says he doesn't need lots of flies, just a reasonable selection. Now I am a bit of a fly junkie and I carry more than I need, but the essential trick is to get your fly boxes organised.

I have my nymph box here. I keep my nymphs in rows and each row has all the same pattern but with four different bead sizes. The beads are all tungsten beads, and each row has only one nymph pattern but with beads that are 2.5 mm, 3.0 mm, 3.5 mm and 4.0 mm. Thus I can be sure that I've got the right weight of fly for the different depths of water in the rivers I am fishing. So look critically at the flies that you carry and make sure that you're not carrying too many, but what you do carry are well organised.

Another point to mention here is that when you are out fishing it's better to look more and cast less. A lot of people feel that they have to be casting constantly in order to be fishing. But what you really need to be doing is presenting to the fish, so I would thoroughly recommend that rather than racing down to the water and thrashing away you need to be observing the surroundings and fishing where the fish are and not where they aren't.

The same applies to rivers. Look at the river to analyse its features and work out



The one percenters pay off

where you think the fish will be sitting, rather than just racing in and casting straight away. Again you don't have to be casting to be fishing. You can actually be fishing while you are just standing on the side of the river or the side of the lake observing what is going on.

Another one percenter relates to your net. I have seen lots of people turning up with nets in all sorts of strange orientations on the backs of their vests, and I think the funniest one is actually when people get the clip on their net and clip it on the back of their vest with the handle up. In this situation when you get a fish on you have to first get that net unclipped and then try to net your fish.

I like to use magnetic clips with a bungee cord so that I don't lose my net, and can just reach around and grab my net by the handle. I normally put the magnetic clip on the top of the net which then hangs upside down with the handle down. Then I can just reach around and pull on the handle and I'm in a position to net the fish. If you are taking your eye off the hooked fish and losing your focus on it then that's a good opportunity for him to dive into the weed and escape. So good net organisation is important.

Another thing that I guess is a one percenter is to do your homework to ensure that you are fishing in the right

spot at the right time. Saltwater fishermen recognise this in the way they study and utilise the tides, but when we're fishing in freshwater for trout we don't give this as much attention as we should. Being on the right water with the right conditions will make a big difference in your catch rate.

Wading is another thing we need to think about, and I admit that as I get older I now use a wading staff. I encourage people to use a wading staff as it enables you to get to water that you might not be able to get to without its help.

But you need to use it on a regular basis because using and managing a wading staff needs practice so that you are comfortable with it and you not getting your fly line tangled up in it. I use mine all the time when I'm on a river, irrespective of the size of the river or whether I think I'm going to need it or not, because that way I am getting used to using it. As a guide I find it really useful because I point with it, use it to knock flies out of trees, and for all sorts of other things as well. They are a very useful accessory, particularly when we get on a little bit in years.

We need to keep our fly fishing simple. So much of it is made complicated. Some of the American authors seem to want to make a fairly simple pursuit too complicated. I think this is one of the reasons why some people don't get into fly fishing - they think that it is too difficult. But really if we go back to those five things that the best anglers consistently do none of that is complicated. You really need to keep your fly fishing as simple as possible.

Another small thing is hook choice for our flies. The Australian team was concerned about our poor conversion rates on fish that we hooked when we were fishing downstream. We had to

pull these fish upstream to get them into the net. Ideally you don't want to be pulling a fish upstream, but sometimes you have to. This will happen a lot if you are swinging wet flies or streamers or spider-type patterns where every fish will be hooked downstream of where you are standing and will then have to be pulled upstream to be netted if you can't get down below the fish.

We found that by using different hooks we were able to land at least 10% more fish than if we had continued using standard hooks. There is a hook called a Tiemco 2499SP-BL. It's a type of circle hook. It has a spear point, is barbless and is ideal for those who like to fish downstream swinging spiders and nymphs.

Another thing that is very important is to pay attention to how your flies present on the water. If you have, for example, a size 14 paradun tied to say a 6 lb tippet, which you would use when fishing for larger dun feeders down in Tasmania. If you use a standard blood knot tied onto a size 14 paradun the stiffness of the tippet is going to affect the way the fly sits in the water. So I will often use a small loop knot to attach my fly to the leader. This won't affect the way the fly rides - the fly will fish naturally, as opposed to being stuck on the end of this stiff leader which won't represent the fly as well. A Penny Knot is a good knot to use for this - you can tie a very small knot and then gently ease it back so that there is a small loop through the eye of the hook. This is what I often use. When the fish takes the fly the loop closes, but that doesn't matter because the job has been done.

The other thing I pay a lot of attention to is keeping my dry flies dry. I've seen a lot of people using Gink on their dry flies, this being one of the more common liquid dry fly dressings. Then when their fly gets waterlogged or wet they put >>>

more Gink on. My thoughts are that this is the wrong way to do it. I use Gink as a waterproofing agent – I put a little bit on my fingers and then gently rub it through the fly before I start fishing it, but that's the last time I use it on the fly in that manner. After that I use a thing called a 'Flykerchief' by Tiemco, which is similar to those patches you can get to clean your glasses. I'll squeeze my damp dry flies in the Flykerchief to suck out as much of the water as I can, and then I use one of those desiccant powder fly shakes on my fly. I have found this the best way to keep my dry flies floating.

One other little idea that one of my clients introduced me to offers a great way to look after the environment. We use one of those small circular hairbrushes which proves ideal for gathering and storing your loose bits of leader. In the guiding game we tend to sort a lot of tangles and thus go through a lot of leader material. Now we simply wind those loose bits of discarded leader around the hairbrush. This is an extremely effective way of storing bits of wasted line, rather than discarding it in the environment. When the hairbrush is full you then just run

some scissors down one side through the grooves, then chop the bits of line into tiny pieces which can be thrown in the bin. This way you're not doing anything adverse to the environment.

Finally, let's talk about glasses. As we get older we obviously need our specs for tying knots, and I like to use those clip-style magnifier glasses – those ones with the long arms. I have my Polaroid glasses on and my clip glasses hanging around my neck. Then when I need to tie a knot I just clip them over the front of my Polaroid glasses to tie that knot. That way I don't have to keep taking my Polaroid glasses off and on. This is a very quick process and thus more efficient in helping me keep fishing more consistently.

Well, that brings me to the end of my one percenters. There are no doubt heaps of others that I haven't thought about, so at that stage we might open up for any questions.



A Brief Warrnambool Report

It's always good to hear that the Warrnambool rivers continue to produce quality fishing.

Jim Blakeslee wrote recently to say that he with a guest, Bill Hodgson from Mornington, fished the Hopkins River downstream from the junction with the Mt Emu. Jim caught four and Bill caught three – all browns with sizes in the range 3 to 4½ lbs. They also had 'lots of follows and missed others'.

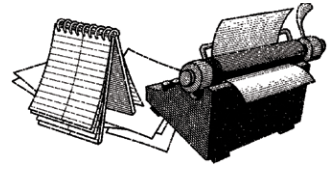
Jim also fished Lake Purrumbete and caught a pile of redfin on a #6 Green

Matuka. He discovered that the browns there 'liked them too.'

In a later note Jim indicated he was off to the mouth of the Merri to join Peter Hussey chasing bream on the incoming tide. No doubt these bream will be served up at the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club's Annual Game Dinner on Saturday, July 31.

The venue for this fabulous annual event is again the Warrnambool Racing Club rooms on Grafton Road, Warrnambool.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"There is no taking trout in dry breeches." (Cervantes - *Don Quixote*, 1605)

"You must cultivate an eye for water and an eye for trout. The gift is not easily attained: in all cases it requires practice and some never acquire it." (John Waller Hills – *A Summer on the Test*, 1930)

"You must endure worse luck some time, or you will never make a good angler." (Isaac Walton - *The Compleat Angler*, 1653)

"There is no use in you walking five miles to fish when you can depend on being just as unsuccessful near home." (Mark Twain)

"Fishing with a partner is a cooperative enterprise. I learned to say at the end of a good day: we caught a lot of fish." (William Tappley - *Those Hours Spent Outdoors*)

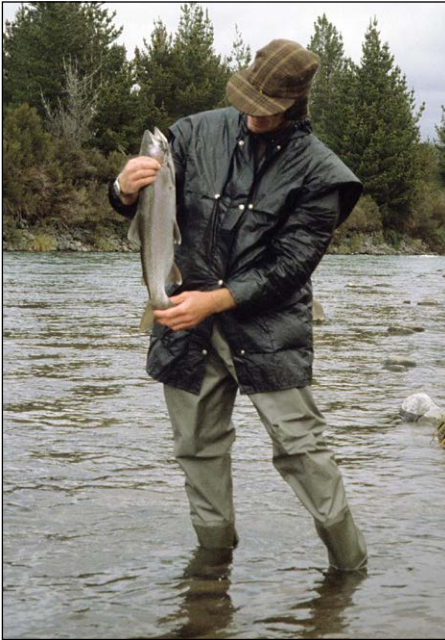
I must confess that for much of my earlier fly fishing I was a solo operator. There are advantages in this – you can go when you like, fish where you like, fish the best water, fish as fast or slow as you like, and pack up when you've had enough. But in recent years and now in retirement, most of my fishing has been with a colleague. And there are obvious advantages here too – with two rods on the water there's double the chance of success (this being mostly about fish caught). Those hours on the road, going and returning, are a lot more enjoyable with some company in the car. But the obvious advantage of fishing with a colleague, especially for us retired folk, is to do with safety. If, for example, you fall and break an ankle somewhere up some isolated creek with the car a long hike away, or have a losing encounter with one of our river-dwelling serpents, then company can be very important. While these sorts of misadventures are highly unlikely if we're careful, having a nearby mate is invaluable insurance.

On reflection, a fishing companion whose company I really treasured was Peter Scott. I've mentioned his name before. In 1981 I taught in a secondary school in New Zealand as part of a teacher-exchange program. The school was not far from Hamilton in the North Island, so early on I sought out the Hamilton Angling Club. Peter was vice-president there. He saw this bewildered soul from across the ditch so took me under his wing. We fished together countless times.

Peter was a refrigeration mechanic by profession working with one of the large dairy companies, so spent a lot of time driving to dairy farms in the Waikato district and thus developing strong relationships with farmers who had top trout streams flowing through their properties. Need I say more. Peter had keys to gates and together we fished some fabulous streams.

At the end of the year I returned to Victoria but remained in contact

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Even your editor managed the odd Tongariro rainbow with Peter Scott's help

with Peter. Some ten years ago he and his wife were visiting Melbourne so of course spent an evening with us. During the evening Peter told me a fascinating story.

The Dairy Company that he worked for had gone into partnership with a US-based firm specialising in automation, and soon after the deal was settled one of the senior vice-presidents from the US company was sent to New Zealand to check things out. Prior to his arrival the vice-president made it clear he wanted to do some fishing. What sort of fishing? Trout fishing of course – for some of those big back country monsters.

So arrangements were made with a local guide to look after the visitor. However, two days before he arrived the guide discovered he was double-booked and wasn't available. The New Zealand managers were panic-stricken, and after failing to find another guide free at the

required time asked if Peter could help out. He was, after all, the resident trout fishing expert.

Peter agreed, but indicated that he would need a helicopter for the day to get into some good water in the limited time available. Ok, but the instructions were clear - the visiting brass had to catch some fish and have a good time.

So at 5 am on the appointed day Peter picked up his guest from his hotel in Hamilton and they headed for Rotorua. It was immediately obvious that the visitor was both elderly and generously overweight. He also revealed on the drive to Rotorua that he suffered from a heart problem, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other ailments.

They arrived at Rotorua and the helicopter flew them into one of Peter's favourite back-country streams. They were dropped off at the downstream end of a section that offered an easy day's fishing, with the helicopter returning in the late afternoon.

Conditions were perfect - the water was low and clear, the breeze was gentle, and the sun made fish easy to spot. But Peter then discovered that his client's casting skills were rusty – appalling in fact. And he was seriously out of condition. Twenty minutes up the first run and he collapsed onto a stump, puffing, sweating and popping pills.

Progress was slow, and by lunchtime they were a long way short of the half-way point. So after lunch Peter began to hustle his guest along, walking past stretches of good water and picking out the very best of what remained. But despite countless opportunities the fish tally remained zero. Peter had no trouble spotting fish, but his visitor's blundering casts and inability to react to the subtle dips of the

indicator meant that he continually failed to connect.

Time was running out and the helicopter was almost due when they arrived at the final section. Peter walked up ahead to check the possibilities and saw the flash of a feeding fish at the top of a run. They crept into position, and on Peter's instruction his guest tossed the weighted nymph a short distance up ahead of the feeding fish.

And for once he got it right. The cast landed in some white water and the fly was swept down past the feeding fish. There was a flash of silver, Peter screamed 'Strike!!!', and somehow the hook connected. The trout leapt several times then bolted downstream. Peter grabbed the vice-president by the shirt collar and belt to keep him upright, and together they stumbled, tripped and fox-trotted as fast as they could down after the fish. By some miracle the hook held, and a magnificent 5 lb rainbow hen was finally netted.

Peter then had to retrieve a digital camera from the bowels of the vice-president's gigantic backpack and take endless photos of the successful angler with his trophy. The trout was finally released back into the water. Then, with exquisite timing, the helicopter landed.

On the drive back to Hamilton the vice-president sat silent for quite some time. Peter became concerned with his guest's welfare and kept glancing across to confirm that he was still breathing. Finally the vice-president spoke. "Peter", he said, "Thank you so much. Even without that wonderful fish, today has simply been the best day in my life."

In 2015 I was back in New Zealand for a short time and spent three days staying with Peter and his wife. We fished some

of his favourite Waikato streams. The fishing was fabulous and much of the scenery was stunning. But Peter admitted that in recent years he had virtually given fishing. "Why?" I asked, "You have easy access here to so much truly fabulous fishing."

"Well," he said, "For years I have fished with a small group of very dear friends. But in the past few years a couple have died, and others have moved away in retirement. So I've had no-one to fish with so I've just given up."

Two years ago Peter had a serious stroke. He survived for some months but then died. He was a great fishing companion, and I treasure the many memories I have of the times we fished together.

Best wishes, stay safe and covid free, and take great care of your fishing companions.

Lyndon



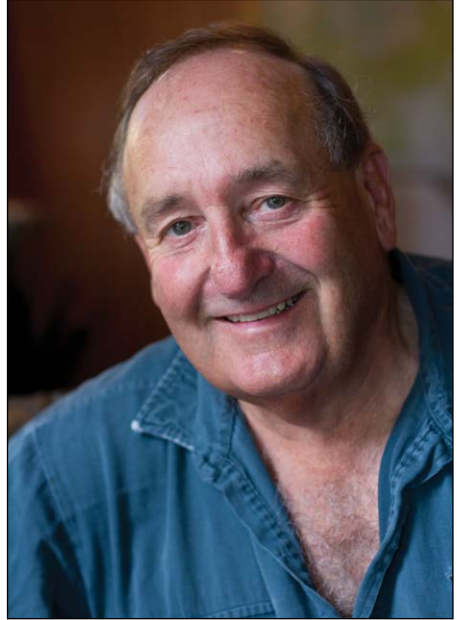
Peter Scott with yet another fine rainbow. He was a very skilled and productive angler.

The August Annual Dinner with Jim Allen

This year's annual dinner is on Friday, August 20, and will be held at the Kelvin Club. The cost is \$80 for members and their guests, and an invitation is included with this issue of Fly Lines.

Our guest speaker for the evening is Jim Allen OAM, who is well-known to us all. Jim is a VFFA life member, past president (1972 – 1974), and an exceptional fly fisher. While recognized as an authority on the trout fishing in Tasmania, he has fished for trout and other species in many countries. Jim has been the guest speaker at a number of our VFFA meetings and dinners and always draws a crowd because he is so knowledgeable about trout matters and is always entertaining.

In his speech at this year's dinner he will be looking back at living in Melbourne as a youngster and reflect on the freedoms now lost to those who grow up in Melbourne these days. He will also draw some comparisons between the fishing of today, the fishing he knew as a young aspiring fly fisher, and the fishing we might see in the future.



This will be a fabulous opportunity to hear one of our best, so mark it in your diary – Friday, August 20, and complete the enclosed invitation and send it to treasurer Tony Mitchem.

Vale David Martin

We were very sad to hear recently that David Martin had died. David was a VFFA member, joining in 2008. He lived in Ballarat, so was heavily involved in the Ballarat Fly Fisher's Club.

We thank the Ballarat Fly Fishers for this tribute:

David Martin was an ardent fly fisher from his adolescent years and joined the Ballarat Fly Fishers' Club in 1967. He remained an active member until his recent passing. David was awarded a Life

Membership of our Club in 1987 and also held Life Membership of the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society.

He was active in many roles in the BFFC with two highlights being his foresight in setting up the Ballarat Club's Building Fund and forming and leading the Trout Action Committee (TAC).

The BFFC Clubrooms on Lake Wendouree are a testament to David's enthusiasm. However the advocacy work of the TAC through the 1980s to push for better

planned and additional trout stockings across Victoria really united trout fishers in encouraging the VFA to get their act together – the moving of a motion of “No Confidence in Fisheries Victoria’s trout stocking policy” really got people’s attention and created animosity from some bureaucrats within Fisheries. The advocacy did eventually achieve its objective in giving recreational fishers a better trout fishery and a greater say in stocking programs.

David was also a highly skilled fly tier producing everything from gnat imitations on size 24 hooks to saltwater flies on 4/0

hooks. A display of David’s saltwater flies holds pride of place in our clubrooms.

He was renowned for his alliterations at meetings and Club dinners; albeit some being long winded but always extremely precise and interesting.

David was a generous, intelligent and thoughtful gentleman who was always prepared to provide advice and support to all members, be they newer or older. A good bloke!

We will all miss David’s wise council and friendship. Deepest sympathies to Kerry and the Martin family from all BFFC (and VFFA) members.

Fly Tying Recommences

... from Jo Dobson

The VFFA 2021 winter sessions of fly tying recommenced in June with an encouraging turnout of 14 members. Richard Kos was instructor for the night and delved into the theory and fly tying secrets of the Woolly Bugger and a Pheasant Tail nymph, while Rob Bailey displayed his fly tying innovations and skills with some custom patterns. It was a fantastic evening with knowledge shared, skills learned and history passed on.

The following dates have been set for the next couple of months:

Thursday, July 22, Thursday August 26, and Thursday September 23

A zoom meeting with fly tier, angler and author Gordon Van Der Spuy is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, July 29. Gordon will zoom in from South Africa to discuss his recent book, *The Feather Mechanic*, and his passion for fly tying and angling. He will also tie some flies for us.



Robert Bailey offered to tie this month's Fly of the Month



Rhonda Grisold showing our president the results of her developing tying skills



Brian Chambers learning some new techniques



Robert Bailey demonstrating his brilliant fly tying ability



Richard Kos was our very enthusiastic instructor



The Aussie Angler store provided a fabulous environment for our fly tying class

Our Library

... a note from librarian John Pilkington

The library has acquired a number of new (old) editions following the recent auction of books kindly donated by the estates of John Philbrick, David Featherstone, Rick Keam and Tony Brothers. Many are classics ranging from Isaac Walton's *Angler* (1825), G.E.M. Skues, John Waller Hills, and Charles Orvis to our wonderful Australian authors including Dick Wigram, David Scholes and Douglas Stewart.

As I was listing these for inclusion in the library's catalogue I delved into a little volume *'Chasing Rainbows'* by George Paterson (1959). I could not put it down! Beautifully written about the streams of the Snowy Mountains before the advent

of the Snowy River Scheme when access to water was mostly by horseback and the trout were of a larger stamp than today. It is a lovely little volume.

There are many such gems in our library. It covers the full range of fly fishing literature from the English masters and their American counterparts to our own Australian and New Zealand writers. Fly tying is well represented and there are numerous 'how to' books. Members interested in borrowing books should refer to the catalogue on our web site. The books are listed both by Author or Title and can be accessed at the Monthly meetings or otherwise by arrangement with me.

The Skyhunter's Last Dance



When the ruffle subsides there's a suave oily glide
Where the slowing stream mirrors the light
There the dragonfly strives between river and sky
Maneuvering her gossamer rudder
Adjusting her thrust doing what she must
Laying eggs with a hovering shudder

There's not much to say of this fateful ballet
Conducted with effortless grace
Older than dinosaurs ancient of days
Mysteriously fragile and fierce
Caressing the river forever so clever
Dancing through millions of years

Sparkle spun from the day in a brisk rainbow spray
Is prised through glistening wings
But there's death in her dance it's no wistful romance
With her eggs gone so is her life
So I relish the chance to honour her last prance
As she lands on my hand for respite

Unbelievably she has flown straight to me
As her gliding eggs quietly subside
All her energy spent in the eternal event
Sees her calm in the warmth of my palm
So as soft as I can I hand her to the land
Striving gently to cause no alarm

"The Skyhunter's Last Dance"
Poetry by Elwood Beach
Illustrations by Bintoro



The Red Tag – The ‘Everymans’ Fly

... by Alan Pilkington

If you look through the leather-bound volumes of the Visitor’s Books of the Enoch’s Country Club (our log hut compound on the Big River), and its entries going back at least fifty years, you will find detailed records of trout taken on the river upstream and downstream of Enoch’s Point. These mostly show date, time, place or pool, angler and fly, size and type of trout. They are, predictably, largely records of the angling successes (or otherwise) of Pilkington men – my brother John, his sons Ben, Chris, James, and the writer - as well as those of some close friends and regular visitors. Sadly, there were no similar records kept for my father, Ralph Pilkington, and my grandfather, Rex Pilkington, both of whom first fished these waters in the 1930s.

There are several flies which feature prominently – the Red Tag, Doctor Wark, Cochybundhu, and CPD, and to a lesser extent, the Adams, Royal Wulff, Yellow Humpy and Ausable Wulff, the latter

four arriving since I encountered them in the United States where I’ve lived since the early 1980s. The dominant fly, by far, is the Red Tag, so much so that John’s entries of the fly’s successes have for years referred simply to ‘R.T.’ The Doctor Wark is well represented, especially in the earlier years, and still takes fish in the right conditions. With its upright white wings and bright green silk (or mylar) body palmered with light brown cock hackle, it is easy for both fish and angler to see with its long guinea fowl tail cocking the fly up nicely as it floats.



Alan’s Red Tag steelhead pattern. Alan calls it the Red Squirrel Tail Peacock. The body is Peacock Ice Dub, the wing is red squirrel tail, the collar is brown hen hackle, and the tag is of course red wool.



Alan’s Big River dry fly box – lots of Red Tags and Doctor Warks

The Red Tag, an old, classic, and simply tied pattern with a peacock herl body, a brown hackle and a red wool tag, has probably taken more trout in the Big River than any other. And it is no surprise the Red Tag came along early in our angling lives. Brother John is a student of the water, of the craft, and an ardent tier, and he didn’t need his Melbourne University law degree as a young man to see beetles drop to the water under the streamside ti-trees, and to find them in trout stomachs, especially as in those days all fish went into the skillet, and to put two and two together.

>>>

In the 1960s at G. M. Turville's fly shop in North Melbourne if you asked Jack Myles for a beetle pattern that worked, you were sold a dozen dry Red Tags, usually four each of sizes #10, #12 and #14. A Cochybundhu or a Geehi Beetle may have been suggested by Jack, but the Red Tag invariably got his vote as the best.

When I recently sent him the lyrics to *'Tie Me A Fly'*, a brotherly nod to John's skill at the vise and on the water, he mentioned the CPD (for Cinnamon Para Dun) as his fly of choice, referencing a wonderful mayfly imitation he developed a few years back and which has been popular with his mates everywhere, and is especially effective on the Big River. He emailed me his (modest) satisfaction with the lyrics, but asked that the Red Tag should have the place of honour as his all-time favourite in the song – this from a man who has assiduously sought trout with a fly for over 60 years! John's preferred dressing for the fly for the Big River is palmer tied, which floats higher and longer in the quicker water where many of the river's rainbows are found.

When John and I took to fly fishing as young men the Red Tag was already an established and popular fly both in Tasmania and on mainland rivers and lakes or weirs. It is widely written about in Australian angling literature in the first half of the twentieth century, and one long-established angling club, The Red Tag Club, formed in 1932, obviously bears its name.

And this is no surprise either – our early angling traditions were imported from England where the Red Tag, reputedly first tied by Martyn Flynn in the North Country in the 1850s, and named the Worcestershire Gem by some devotees, and the Worcestershire Wonder by others, was well established. It was initially tied as a grayling dry fly, but its

effectiveness, simplicity, ease of tying and availability of materials quickly made it an "Everymans" fly, and by the time it reached Australia it was being fished widely in England and Scotland for trout - on top, tied as a dry, and across and down, tied as a wet fly, and on lochs, tied as a soft hackle.

Although it never seems to have achieved wide popularity in the United States, it is commonly used as a brook trout fly, often with the name Brown Hackled Peacock and usually fished wet. It is more widely fished in Canada as a trout fly, and has various adaptations under different names, as a sea trout fly and for Atlantic salmon. A red tag, or tail, and a peacock body with a cock hackle, sometimes palmered, sometimes not, is pretty easy to adapt, and Atlantic salmon flies like Turk's Red Butt, Cerf Noir and Ingalls Butterfly all have a direct lineage to the Red Tag, deliberately or inadvertently. Some loch flies reflect its origin in flies like the Irish Goat's Toe and the Scottish Clan Chief. In the Pacific Northwest you still see hair-wing steelhead flies like the McLeod Ugly and the Red Butted Rhesus in use - red butted, dark bodied and palmer hackled. Sound familiar?



Red Tags in Alan's steelhead fly box

This all tells us of the fly's magic – its universal appeal which, with appropriate variations, attracts brown, rainbow, brook, cutthroat, and sea-run brown, rainbow (steelhead) and cutthroat trout, and Pacific and Atlantic salmon.

Recently I found myself on a high lake in southwest Montana. It was early summer and the salmon fly hatch I'd prepared for during the pandemic was a bust – uncharacteristically cold, foul weather with heavy rain, and snow on the higher ridges, the rivers high and dirty. No weather for a salmon fly emergence. A friend came to the rescue, and I left the river for a seat in his small boat on a lake at 7,500 feet. When we reached the lake, the weather had cleared and the temperature had risen.

It was a largish body of natural water, clear and shallow, with a good population of rainbows. We fished the shallow edges over weed beds. I thought it much akin to Scottish loch fishing, although we were not dapping. Our flies were lightly weighted to get them a few inches above the bottom. We had little luck using my mate's usually successful flies, mostly leech patterns, when we found a pod of active spawners over a gravel bed – large, dark fish busily doing their thing and ignoring every fly we cast to them.

In desperation I tied on a small, bead-headed Red Tag nymphish fly, an adaption I came up with some years ago and which has worked for me on Montana rivers, fished along the edges of drop offs of deeper runs. It is a scraggy, buggy representation of no insect in particular, tied on a slightly curved #16 hook, and with *Cul de Canard* for a soft hackle instead of the usual brown cock hackle. But the nondescript fly looks like something alive, and I had faith in it, so I put it past the nose of a big buck rainbow that had rejected all my



John Pilkington's palmered dry Red Tag - his all-time favourite fly

offerings and gave it a small twitch. He immediately left the ladies and took the fly aggressively, and in a short while we had a nice six or seven pounder in the net, then set him free.

My mate wasn't sure if this was a fluke, or if the fly was taken out of annoyance at its interruption of his tryst, but I soon after took a bright, strong two-and-a-half pounder with the same fly. Anticipating his request, I offered my mate one of the flies and he went on to take a couple of nice fish with it. The stomach of the one fish we kept was full of small black beetles and olive scuds. So, another affirmation of the Red Tag's effectiveness and versatility.

In the on-line forum and blog, *The Global Flyfisher*, there are some excellent articles on the Red Tag by Martin Joergensen, including *The Red Tag Odyssey*, and *The Red Tag Revisited*, both worth checking out. You'll learn more of the fly's history and of its popularity in Scandinavia as a sea trout fly, and see patterns for some of its adaptations for salmon, as a wet fly, and as a soft hackle. Joergensen notes that the fly is one of the few that have made it into *Wikipedia*, and its entry mentions the fly's success in Tasmania. I suppose this is the ultimate endorsement for this 'Everyman's fly'.



Fishing the Eastern Cape Highlands of South Africa

... from Peter Brigg

The Wild Trout Association (WTA), originally known as the Barkly Wild Trout Association, was founded in 1991 and sought to bring the many and diverse fly fishing waters in the region of the Eastern Cape Highlands of South Africa under a single marketing and administration authority for the sustainability of the fishery. This is a vast area straddling the southernmost portion of the Drakensberg Mountain range with hundreds of kilometres of rivers and streams and some trophy stillwaters in the rugged terrain between 2500 and 1900 metres above sea level.

These waters range from Lilliputian streams found in the headwaters of the tributaries of the large Kraai River that grow as they tumble down into the valleys below to form, amongst others, freestone rivers and streams such as the Bell, Sterkspruit, Kraai, Bokspruit, Kloppershoekspruit and Rifelspruit. This is the largest trout fishery in Africa.

The waters are in private ownership in this farming region, which means that access is through the goodwill of the riparian owners or through being part of the WTA. The original stocking with rainbow trout took place in the mid 1920s and continued intermittently until the early 1980s. Since then the trout have bred prolifically, establishing the wild spawned fish so sought after by fly fishers today. In addition to the rainbows there are a couple of smaller streams that have a sprinkling of brown trout. And then there are the powerful indigenous yellow fish that are a much sought after target species on fly, especially in the summer months when they move upstream during their breeding period.



Rhodes Hotel



A handy welcome

At the centre of it all, also known by many as the *Centre of the Universe*, is the historical hamlet of Rhodes with a permanent population of around 25 people. It is here at the legendary Walkerbouts Inn that Dave Walker, a founding member and current Chairman, conducts the WTA business. It's also the focal point for the annual trout festival. The Victorian-era village dating back to 1891 was established to serve the burgeoning farming community. With its tree-lined dirt roads and quaint corrugated iron roofed houses there is a



Two magnificent South African trout streams - the Rifelspruit (above) and the Bokspruit (below)



feeling of stepping back in time. Rhodes is far off the beaten track and is where the vehicles, mostly 4x4s, are mud splattered and covered in dust, where you can step into the bar unshaven with your fishing pants mostly wet below the knees and a faint smell of fish about you, and you won't get a second glance. It's just taken for granted. The place oozes fly fishing.

This year the WTA celebrated its 30th anniversary as part of the annual Dirt Road WTA Festival held in April. This river festival is arguably the premier festival of its kind in South Africa, bringing together fly fishers from around the country - a gathering of the like-minded, many returning annually, where old friendships are rekindled, and new ones formed. Apart from providing the best and most diverse river and stream fishing in the country, the festival is a great social affair. The pub at Walkerbouts

Inn is always a hive of activity each evening, where stories are told of the day's fishing. It is said that the length of the fish grow by the inch after each passing hour.

The event this year, held over a four-day period, was once again a great success with some 40 participants including six guides. The fishing was challenging with low water conditions and the impact of a cold front that passed through sending daytime air temperature into the low teens and bringing some rain and a light dusting of snow on the high ground. Autumn is the high season for trout fishing, and when the countryside is at its finest in shades of reds, oranges and yellow it just doesn't get much better.

Other than those who come to experience the wild trout fishing on offer, there are many other attractions and activities for



The track into Rhodes Village



A fine Bell River rainbow

anyone visiting the area, such as snow-skiing in winter, mountain biking, hiking, San rock art viewing, guided wild flower tours, bird watching and for the hunting enthusiast, bird shooting. For some it's just a place to relax far away from the bustle of the city and an opportunity to enjoy the tranquility and take in the beauty of the wonderful mountain environment.

There a couple of sites for additional reading:

<https://www.wildtrout.co.za> and
<https://rhodesinfo.co.za>

Peter Brigg - <https://callofthestream.wordpress.com/about/> June 2021

Another Perspective On One Percenters

... Jim Jackman, professional guide at Millbrook Lakes

It's amazing how sometimes the most obvious things are taken for granted and overlooked. Then again some omissions are due to a lack of information or experience. I believe that many of these things, the one percenters that we fail to do that lead to undesirable outcomes, are difficult to correct because they are not on our radar. We are not even aware of them. A day spent with an experienced guide invariably eliminates unproductive habits, enhances knowledge and naturally increases the catch rate. I'm reminded of an old axiom: "If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, wait till you hire an amateur!"

One percent. It doesn't sound like much, but sometimes it's everything. It can be the difference between success and failure, mediocrity and excellence, going the distance or not even starting.

One of the most common things I've seen over many years of guiding are flies that

don't swim truly. How often do we check to see if the fly we've tied on is actually swimming correctly. It's something that even the most experienced fly fishers neglect to attend to.

I recall a trip I made to Eucumbene some years ago. On sitting at the vise one evening I came up with a creation that I thought would be a winner. The next morning I strolled down to the water and was delighted see feeding fish, so quickly put my creation to work. The others in my party were catching their fair share, so I had high expectations. But I spent the next hour waving my fly around without so much as a hint of a take. It wasn't until I finally wound the line in that I found to my dismay that the fly was on its side spinning from side to side. A quick change of fly saw my pent-up frustrations relieved after just three casts.

Years ago when I was a Sales Rep I would often drop in to see Muz Wilson in >>>

Camperdown for a coffee and a chat. It was enlightening to see his designs being tested in a large glass fish tank to make sure they behaved as he wished them to. I wonder how many commercially tied flies are tank tested?

Hackled flies are more prone to spinning than say zonker patterns. Take small Woolly Buggers for example. It pays to strip away one side of the hackle before tying it in palmer style. This mitigates the propeller effect that can occur. The dynamic is simple. If the palmered hackle is too dense for the weight and size of the fly then the fly is prone to rotate when it is false cast and when it is retrieved too quickly.

Another element to take into consideration when fishing hackled flies is the energy and momentum imparted to the fly in false casting. Each false cast is like changing up gears. At one end of the spectrum we have all seen tippets twisted horribly at one time or another, while at the other end some of the effects can be quite subtle.

Tying tail fibres on the top of the hook is essential. Sometimes thread torque will pull the tail to the far side of the hook shank, and as the tail acts as a rudder even small deviations can cause problems.

Hook selection is also critical. One of the roles of a hook is to act as a keel. For some flies a heavy hook with a large hook gape is essential. If a suitable hook cannot be sourced, then a strip of lead-free wire tied to the shank may be necessary.

Overdressing a fly can also cause an imbalance. As more materials are added to the hook there is greater chance of introducing some imbalance. Some commercially tied flies are overdressed; perhaps the intention is to catch fisherfolk rather than fish.



This fly has a hackle like a propeller

Before using a wet fly for the first time cast the leader into the water, let the fly sink, then lift the rod tip and see how the fly swims. Then when the fly is well saturated give it three or four solid false casts and test it again.

It's also a good idea to thoroughly inspect the leader and fly every dozen or so casts. Look for wind knots, flies swimming backwards because the tippet is wrapped around the bend of the hook, or flies swimming erratically because the tail is wrapped around the barb of the hook.

Examine the fly for bits of vegetation that occasionally get caught around the bend of the hook, usually just beneath the tail or near the eye where the tab of the knot can sometimes collect stuff. When all is said and done trout are not vegetarians!

Dry flies can also be problematic at times. Unbalanced flies won't ride as they should and some larger hackled flies or bulky foam flies are well known for their tendency to twist tippets.

It makes sense to keep false casts to an absolute minimum. I encourage folk to "pick up and lay down" when using flies that are prone to rotating. This cast in my view is very much underutilised, period! However that's a story for another time.



No Name Creek

... by Andrew McKenzie

It's no understatement to say the last twelve months have been a crazy sort of time, covid and all. And while this is very much a first world problem it has played havoc with fishing trips. Well, here in Australia it has. The extent of the virus has been well curtailed, but there has been little coordination of responses between the various states. If New South Wales reported a handful of cases Premiers in other states would immediately close their state borders with a range of conditions attached, and no one knew how things might then play out.

A number of us Sydney-based fishers had a trip planned to Tasmania in January 2021. But then of course, just a week or so before departure there was a small cluster of cases reported in Sydney, so the Tassie border was shut – that is, unless you felt like quarantining at your own expense in a hotel for a couple of weeks. None of us did, but then what to do with a few weeks of clear time up our sleeves?

A friend suggested a trip to the Snowy Mountains. Due to the various border closures we had fished the area twice already during the season. While this area is about a 5 to 6 hour drive from Sydney it's still in NSW, and although not close it is arguably, given the change in climate here, the most reliable trout fishing on the mainland of Australia. Given my friend's work commitments we could only schedule a four day trip, which would give us around 2½ days of fishing.

I have been fishing in the Snowy area for 40 years, but as numbers of fish seen and results over time from the major rivers and lakes dropped off I had switched my attention to New Zealand. Around six years ago a good friend, Marty, invited me to spend a week with him. We stayed

in a ski lodge at Perisher where he was a member. In winter this area is full of skiers but in summer there are barely any people at all. We had a fantastic time fishing new water every day - all tiny "twig" creeks where a 12" trout was a trophy. So successful was this trip that over the following winter I spent a heap of time pouring over Topo maps and cross-checking thin blue lines on the map against Google Earth.

One creek on the map intrigued me. A mere trickle where it crossed a track it then appeared to open out into a lovely alpine meadow on Google Earth. It would take some serious backcountry walking to get there though. Unfortunately the weather over the next two years on our week away just wasn't settled enough to take the chance on getting caught there. Finally, after three years of looking at it online, we had a settled day so in we went.

No tracks; just bush, tussocks, boulders and a little creek. We caught a lot of fish on 2-weight rods and tiny dry flies. The general run of fish was around six to ten inches with a trophy measuring 12"+. The fish might be small but they're not stupid. A poor presentation, or some drag, and like wild fish anywhere, they won't eat. Skylight yourself on the bank and they are gone in a flash. On top of this casting is very tricky with alpine winds causing havoc with light line loops, along with lots of streamside vegetation and overhead trees or bushes. You quickly learn that a tight casting stroke coupled with close line management is required – or you spend a lot of time fighting tangles in the bush.

Over the following years we became more confident in our entry and exit points and continued to explore. The creek is a mix of alpine meadow and gorge sections. >>>

In early season you can find the odd large fish staying up there after spawning. This year, for example, we caught a couple of huge fish at 2¾ lb and 2½ lb, but at the height of summer this little creek won't hold those fish. They eventually drop back to the main river and you are left with the normal run of smallish residents.

With two and a half days of fishing in the bank a walk into "No Name" was Number One on the agenda - if the weather would behave.

On arrival in Jindabyne we booked into our accommodation and headed out for a quick fish in a small nearby stream. While water levels were much lower than our trips earlier in the season we did OK, ending up with five for the afternoon between us - to 1¼ lb, all sighted and all on a dry. A great start to the trip. Getting back late, we rushed a meal at the last place open in town then headed home to check the forecast. It still looked good, so we got ready - water, food, snake bite compression bandages, emergency shelter, fire starter, then leaders, tippets and fly boxes all checked - the usual. All good to go.

We woke around 6:30 am to cloudy skies. The forecast was now saying a small chance of rain about in Jindabyne. We optimistically figured it would be better up top, so a quick breakfast and we were on our way into the Kosciuszko National Park.

We parked the car by the roadside and as we got everything together there were a few drops of rain and a very cold wind. We wondered if we had been too optimistic. We picked our way through the bush, which broke out into a beautiful alpine meadow with our small creek flowing through the middle of it. We crossed the creek and walked for another hour, heading downstream through light scrub to the end of the meadow where

things gorge out. We stopped here and rigged up.

Later in the season as the water gets more shallow and clear (that's gin clear) it is arguably best to wade upstream in the creek. You present such a large image trying to spot fish from the bank and the fish spook from tens of meters away.

Making our way slowly up the creek we came to a largish shallow pool with a nice undercut bank. This pool has form. Marty had caught a magnificent 1½ lb fish here a few seasons ago and I had been smoked by something similar on our trip before.

I spotted a fish around 12" towards the back of the pool and put a cast out to cover it. Just as I did a gust of wind blew my fly well off course into the slack water in the middle of the pool. The fish saw it land from a couple of metres away, zoomed over and smashed it. I paused, struck, and had him on for a brief moment before the fly came back to me.

"I think I struck too soon," I said to Barry. "I'll just prospect the top of the run but I think that will be it." There's usually just one "large" fish in these pools. First cast landed midway down the run and the fly ran perfectly under the overhanging tea tree. No-one home. Second cast a couple of metres further upstream also landed perfectly about 5 cm off the bank, then after drifting along the bank perhaps 50 cm it quietly disappeared in a nice rise. Having now learnt the value of a decent pause I struck and came up fast. I was sure this was the same fish that had smoked me on the previous trip, so I quickly shortened up my line and moved up into the pool so he couldn't get downstream of me. I held him on top to play himself out. Netted he weighed 1½ lb, and while you could still see the damage to the underside of his tail from spawning he was in really good condition. A great start to proceedings.

The weather continued to improve. Barry caught a magnificent rainbow. We had worked our way to the beginning of a nice run with a 90-degree bend in it so we couldn't see round the corner. Barry spooked a small fish at the tail of the pool and was trying to work out where he had been hiding when I spotted movement further up, coming around the corner towards us. "Fish coming down, cast..." was about all I had time to get out. Barry made a perfect cast to the centre of the pool as the fish turned. It saw the fly land, raced over and ate it. This fish fought very hard indeed and almost gained his freedom under a rock a couple of times. In the net he weighed 1¼ lb, was in great condition and was the best rainbow I had seen in the creek.

And that's how we spent our day. We slowly made our way up the creek taking turns on likely spots. We saw a lot of fish and ended up landing five each. We got well and truly smoked a couple of times, too. These fish have plenty of food, the

water is cold, and they are fit. I am always reminded of John McInnes New Zealand trilogy of books when here: Tread Quietly, Look Closely and Cast Lightly. Just a sublime total experience.

I might also comment on gear. We fish contrasting rigs – Barry fishes a new Sage Dart 7'6" 2 weight. This rod is a weapon. Lightning fast, very accurate, and would probably cast the whole fly line. On the other hand I fish a Sage II Light Line 7'9" 2 weight which is about 35 years old now and slow as a wet week. Totally different rod tapers and materials, but they both get the job done beautifully. It's great to see these rods bent double holding a fish out from under a bank or rock, and marvel at just how good they are to fish with and the technology that goes into them.

Given covid isn't going away we will be back to the Snowy Mountains for another shot at No Name later this season. It's a real privilege to be able to access these kinds of places and any day in there is a great day.

The Lockdown Project, Part 1 – From Concept to Water

... By Jon Kenfield

Well, if there is a silver lining to Victoria's four Covid lockdowns (March 2020 to May 2021) perhaps it can be found in the time and head space they forcibly made available to re-think some of the profoundly important things in life – like how to create the perfect, two-man, easily transported, fly-fishing watercraft?

In earlier years almost anything that kept me above the water and helped to get my flies in the water was enough - provided it was cartoppable (that's a word), and could navigate both rivers and lakes. But now I'm into replacement body parts, being halfway through getting both knees swapped out, I want something more stable, with a solid deck, a sturdy lean

bar for casting, comfortable seats, a good rowing setup, a fixed motor mount, and plenty of storage space for gadgets and luxurious shore lunches.

Oh yes, it also needs a very shallow draft, be easy to row, able to safely carry a couple of strung up rods, an anchor system to hold midstream, a polling system 'cos they look cool, and be easy to launch without a boat ramp.

Which got me thinking ...

1. Length: must be roomy enough for two, including an oarsman, with space for both to fish on a sideways drift, and short enough to sit on a Range Rover roof. 3.5m / 11 feet sounds about right? Check.

2. Weight: if two old blokes are to lift the thing onto a roof rack atop a full-sized 4WD at the end of a long day - maximum weight of 100 lb / 45kgs? Check.
3. Transport: must be easily transportable on a car roof, or on a trailer, and be packable in bags: both to go inside a car or trailer, and to be efficiently freightable (also a word) to exotic places. That's a lot of "ables".

Preliminary Findings: This looks like being a roll up inflatable, with an air deck floor. The only solid part of the hull will be its transom.

4. On-water needs: very shallow draft to get into, and to cross, thick weeds; effortless manoeuvrability with oars to stay out of willows and whirlpools on rivers; low drag to move along smartly with a modest electric motor; dry ride in a mild chop for windy lakes and inshore fishing, and decent straight-line tracking – to preserve sanity.

Design Thoughts: A lot of this reflects core characteristics of my old float boat, which had two inflatable pontoons lashed together by a rowing frame. On commencing this lockdown project I thought I'd simply modify that boat by adding an enclosed bow plus a deck to facilitate standing and casting plus a stronger transom. Easy, eh?

But, after a lot of design thinking, and online research for parts, I abandoned the whole modification concept. At best it would only produce a compromise - and I hate compromises with a passion on both a personal and professional level!

Time to move on.

In my day job as a Solutionist I try to prevent despair and exhaustion from crushing creative problem-solving. I believe that compromising



Bare bones.



Sea trails ... on a lake?

(giving up stuff) is a reductive style of thinking that inevitably produces sub-optimal outcomes, where nobody gets exactly what they want, or really need. Compromise may be "the art of politics" (Julie Bishop), but it's not the type of art I like, if I have the power to choose.

Preliminary Conclusion: I need a made-for-purpose, catamaran-style inflatable, onto which I can affix everything I need to achieve uncompromised perfection.

5. Design Concept: So I'm now looking for a tough, collapsible, catamaran-styled inflatable with big tubes for

loads of buoyancy, as a base. Maybe a yacht tender? Cheap Chinese creations on eBay; serious contenders found in Kiwiland. Go the serious contender – a 3.5m catamaran, enclosed hull, fat tubes (700 kg load – should be enough for two of us, even after lunch). The hull looks perfect, but as sold the unit is designed for a wholly different purpose, with its lightweight oars and removable slat seats. The as sold format won't cut it where this baby's going.

6. Modifications and Upgrades: I need a serious rowing setup to handle rivers, lakes and especially motor-free waters; good swivel seats for old bums and weak backs; a sturdy lean bar for casting; practical gear storage; several secure rod holders, and secure fuel / battery placement.

7. Design Epiphany: White water raft setups meet some of these design requirements, using pre-shaped aluminium tubing and custom clamp systems. A supplier in the USA could supply frame components to my specifications, which would leave me to get some extra lashing points fitted to the tubes. The end result will be way over-engineered, since we won't be carrying 6 to 8 people, and I pray we'll never hit serious white water. But then, who wants 4 cylinders when you can have 8?

8. However - Problem: White water rafts aren't designed to carry delicate fishing rods, or to provide quick access to the gear and gadgets I dreamt up during my downtime from saving the world. We're not there yet.

Solution: Make the extra bits myself. Learn to cut, bend and weld aluminium tube and plate. Praise be to Bunnings, Google, and its sidekick YouTube. If the end result takes the world by storm I'll have a



So that's one fish per 16kms?

built prototype that local aluminium engineers can copy to reduce weight and save costs.

9. Delivery: The parts arrive from the US of A and all the bits fit together nicely. I ordered all lengths a little oversized to allow me to cut things down when it's all laid out on the inflated hull. Plans are all well and good, but a supply screw up over imported components would seriously suck, and I know what I'm like - Eight cylinders and all that ...

Problem: The cheap tube bender bought off eBay at the start of the project, when I planned to modify my old boat, can only manage 25 mm diameter tube. The tubing obtained from the US is 1.625" (approximately 42 mm) in diameter - far too strong for my little bender. Also, the closest



Non-ramp launching.

comparable aluminium tube available here for the extra parts I need is 40 mm in diameter, and it won't fit over the 42 mm splines on the clamps.

Solution: To bend both 40 mm and 1.625" tube I need a serious pipe bender (rather than tube bender) delivering around 8,000 kg of pneumatic force. This is "next level" - it will be capable of making rollover cages for dune buggies and dragsters!

Problem: I also need to grind 2 mm of thickness off my shiny new clamp splines, preferably without having to spring for a lathe.

Solution: No problem, it's only money. Good thing this is a legitimate R&D project, with export potential - or will be when the marketing department gets onto it.

10. Neighbourly Neighbour: Thanks to the passing, previously unknown neighbour, who saw me haplessly wrecking a brand new grinding wheel at the beginning of my spline reduction campaign. Hearing the shrieks (the grinder, not me), he took pity and stopped to provide advice. It turns out that because aluminium is so soft it requires wood-sanding tools rather than metal grinding implements to shape it. Aluminium just clogs the grit of grinding wheels, to the point where they can explode. Thanks Glen!

I probably should have known that, but it's a good excuse to get that new, cordless AEG angle grinder I've been lusting after. The car knows its way to Bunnings by now.

11. Bending: To bend, or fail to bend? That's the question. Who needs to read the manual? Looks like I do; I'm not a natural bender (that may not sound quite as I'd intended?). The first couple of attempts didn't go so well - a couple of crushed bends, and some seriously

offline angles (funny how hard it is to get corresponding angles equal, in heavy gauge tube, by eye using odds 'n sods in the garage as formwork). Back to YouTube - bless you, complete strangers, for sharing your knowledge. A bit more trial and error - and it's working; it's all coming together - my prototype is ready for trials.

12. Sea Trials?? In an all-too-brief lull between Chairman Dan's lockdowns I'm able to initiate sea trials on a lake (is that a thing?). The removable transom wheels work great going downhill on the track to the launch beach. I manage the 350 metres by myself in a single haul. Not so good coming back uphill, which is a harder slog, but the good news is that I've achieved proof of concept - the boat is cartoppable, it floats, it's stable, it can be rowed on flat water against a light breeze with the 7 foot oars pinched from my old boat (although something beefier would be better); seats, gear and rod holders only need some minor adjustments and, most importantly, on the water it's a huge improvement over the old boat.

Compromise be damned - now to test it on moving water....

13. Yet another lockdown. I need: (a) Chairman Dan's blessing; (b) the right weather; (c) amenable water levels on the Goulburn and, (d) for Woody Priestley to be available so I can test the boat on moving water. There's nothing for it but do more conceptualising to improve on almost-perfect. I guess this is what continuous improvement is about?
14. Goulburn Drift: The day comes, the boat is launched from Walnut Reserve above Thornton, and Woody and I push out bravely into the slowish current. Apart from playing tick-tack with Anthony from GVFF all day (there

was no way we were getting past him and his clients) there were no dramas, problems, or even serious issues (other than confirmation I needed longer, stronger oars) and ... there were almost no fish. I blame Woody for that – I was on the oars all day and could only fight off hippos and ‘gators. His job was to prove we were close to fly fishing Nirvana. In fairness, I don’t think our fellow travellers fared any better.

15. Conclusion: other than getting some better oars, the design is about there. The lean bar could perhaps come back a couple of centimetres and I need to fit a slider under the oarsman’s seat so it can move from rowing to helming functionality. But for the life of me I can’t think of much else to tinker with. We’d better be over lockdowns, or I’ll need another project or, gods forbid, I’ll have to start doing some serious work.

A new gadget has emerged to enrich the lives of all fly fisherfolk.

16. Final Question (1) - Name: “*Waterglider 3500*” (describes what it does), or “*Solutionist 3500*” (describes the design process and what the boat’s designed to do – solve the problem of: how to catch more trout)?

17. Final Question (2) - Launch Ceremony: how the heck do you crack a bottle of bubbly on the hull (not the superstructure) of an inflatable?

Prize available for the first correct answers to both questions.

(The saga continues in Part #2 next month of *The Lockdown Project: Adventures in Paradise in a Rubber Duck.*)



Goulburn days.

FLY OF THE MONTH

The Red Tag Klinkhamer



Us Australian fly fishers are well aware of the Red Tag, or at least the traditional dry fly beetle-type version that we all carry. It typically has a bright red tuft of wool hanging out the back, a fat peacock herl body, and a springy red cock hackle to keep it afloat. It's a standard inclusion in all of our fly boxes, and is deadly in Tasmania. However, Alan Pilkington recently pointed me to the Global FlyFisher Website which carried a lengthy article titled "Red Tag Odyssey", where author Martin Joergensen gave a "bunch of fly pattern descriptions and materials lists for flies inspired by the Red Tag".

For those interested in checking the article the website (a very useful one) is <https://globalflyfisher.com/patterns/red-tag-odyssey>.

Joergensen lists a pile of flies based on the Red Tag components – something red, some peacock herl, and perhaps a hackle. His list includes the Red Tag Klinkhamer (our choice of Fly of the Month for this month), Red Tag Once and Away, Red Tag Spider, Red Tag Intruder, Red Tag Tube, Red Tag Copper Salmon, and a JC Red Tag Salmon. The article gives photos and detailed instructions for all of these flies.

Two things to note. First, Alan has followed up with a delightful article on the Red Tag – its origins and use in many other countries. The article is found earlier in this issue. He describes the use (invariably very successfully) of the Red Tag on the trout in the Big River at Enoch's Point.

Secondly, at the recent VFFA Fly Tying night at Aussie Angler store Robert Bailey, a highly skilled fly tier, took the instructions for the Red Tag Klinkhamer and produced the fly in the photo above. (Robert also took the photo.)

Tying instructions for the Red Tag Klinkhamer

Materials:

- Hook:** Partridge Klinkhamer GRS 15ST sizes 14, 16 or 18, or a similar Klinkhamer hook
Thread: Black Semplerfli Nanosilk
Body: UNI 8/0 bright red thread
Wing: White Antron yarn
Hackle: Brown badger cock hackle, slightly oversize
Thorax: Peacock herl

Tying Procedure:

1. Start the red thread a couple of eye widths behind the hook eye and wrap the thread for the body in touching turns well down into the bend of the hook and then all the way back. (Check the photo.)
2. Whip finish and cut the red thread.
3. Tie in the black thread right in front of where the red thread finishes.
4. To construct the wing take a small piece of the white Antron – enough for about half of the wing. This piece should be 5 cm long. Roll it in your hands to make a thin tight length of 'rope'. Wrap this under the hook and pull the two sides up above the hook.
5. Start tying the wing in by making wraps of the black thread around the Antron, tying successive wraps of the thread up the Antron for about two millimetres.
6. Also tie in a longish fluffy piece of peacock herl and leave it pointing to the rear of the fly.
7. Now prepare the hackle and tie it in by the stem on the top of the hook shank in front of the wing. The hackle should be shiny side up.
8. Hold the hackle up so that it is parallel to the wing post, then wrap thread up the wing post 2 – 3 millimetres and then down again to lock the stem of the hackle securely in place.
9. Now wrap the hackle around the wing post in successive turns winding down, using four or five wraps.
10. Tie the hackle in and cut it off.
11. Wrap some turns of the peacock herl around and under the hackle to make the thorax. Tie it down in front of the thorax, trim away the waste and whip finish to complete the fly.



VFFA 2021 meetings & other activities

July

- 15 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speakers – Bernard Holbery and Jason Platts, who will tell us about
'Streamcraft on Small Streams.'
- 18 Sunday Social Casting at the Red Tag Pool, commencing at 10:00 am
- 22 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm,
with Robert Bailey as instructor
- 28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 29 Thursday Zoom fly tying session with Gordon Van Der Spuy from South Africa.
This will be at 8:00 pm our time. (Details still to be confirmed.)
- 31 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner

August

- 20 Friday VFFA Annual Dinner at the Kelvin Club, with Guest Speaker Jim Allen
- 22 Sunday President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool, commencing at 10:00 am
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 26 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm,
with Andrew Mossman as instructor

September

- 4 Saturday Victorian rivers open again to trout fishing
- 8 Wednesday Millbrook Lakes – 9:00 am till dark
- 16 Thursday 2021 Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 23 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm,
with John Pilkington as instructor
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

October

- 10 Sunday Annual trip to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley club's stocked
dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker: TBC
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

November

- 12 – 14 Annual Trip to Warrnambool
- 17 Wednesday Millbrook Lakes – 11:00 am till dark
- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker: TBC
- 24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

(VFFA events still to be finalised include Sunday Casting, casting tuition, winter fly tying, a possible Cane Day, and classes on nymphing and river tuition on local streams. The date for this year's Donger Competition is also still to be settled.)