

FLY LINES



JUNE 2026

Unfortunately there will
be no General Meeting
for this month

Trevor Stow is a superb angler and regular contributor to our monthly newsletter. He fishes New Zealand often, and invariably catches some superb trout in those New Zealand rivers



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Vice President's Message

A Message from Our Senior Vice President – Rodger Muir

May started with a group of six VFFA members heading up to Loombah Weir (near Benalla) for an induction day preceding their stay at the weir as part of the Australian Trout Foundation project to lower the number of trout in the reservoir. A fish trap and holding pens were installed, and instruction were given as to the handling of captured fish, the use of the boat provided, and other on-site activities.

For the first team on site early in May (Rob Tuck, Peter Whitelaw and Lester Walton) weather conditions for capturing fish in the trap were less than optimal, with warmish weather and low water flow - resulting in no fish taken. Fishing conditions were also challenging, though Lester did land a nice brown on a damsel nymph. However I understand that on-site conditions were reasonably comfortable for tent camping, albeit the only facilities provided were a circle of rocks for a fireplace and a portaloos.

The second team (John Spragg, Peter Clayton and myself) will be onsite for seven days from June 2. The weather forecast is for rain for the first three days, and possible snow down to 1100 metres (Loombah Weir is at 770 metres). Depending on your perspective, this is either really great as it is likely to stimulate the fish to run and we will be very busy clearing the trap, or it's going to be cold, wet, and miserable. Probably both! We will report back in the July issue of *Fly Lines*.

The General Meeting on May 21 was a very interesting and entertaining evening for VFFA member with

guest speaker AFL great Will Minson. Will took us through his lifetime involvement in fishing, aspects of his career as a professional sports person, and his introduction to and subsequent significant involvement in fly fishing in Australia and overseas.

A group of VFFA members ventured to Lake Purrumbete on Friday May 22 to compete against Bairnsdale Fly Fishers for the Bruce Whitehead Trophy. The fishing was extremely tough with only a few fish caught in the two lakes fished, being Purrumbete and Bullen Merri. Ingomar Matthes from Bairnsdale came in with the largest fish, so Bairnsdale took home the trophy. Members should be aware that Lake Purrumbete was down over two metres, so it was almost impossible to launch a boat unless you were willing to push your boat through the mud. However, the margins were still wadable and cruising fish could be taken.

While staying at Lake Purrumbete a group of us headed to Warrnambool on the Saturday night for their annual Game Dinner, which was exceptional. Hopefully it raised plenty of funds for the Warrnambool Club.

'*Fly Tying – the Fundamentals -Part 1*' on Tuesday May 26 saw VFFA member Richard Kos (Kossy) showing and explaining to about a dozen "would be" and experienced fly tiers the equipment you require to tie flies. In *Part 2*, on June 16, those tools will be put to work with Kossy taking participants through the tying of several fly patterns that will demonstrate some fundamental techniques using common materials. Equipment and materials will also be available for participants to try their hand.

John Spragg and I ventured up to Thornton to visit the Goulburn River Lodge at the invitation of the new owners. The property is on the banks of the Goulburn, and until about 15 years ago was used for trout rearing and fly casting. It has since been converted into an events venue with on-site accommodation, but retains a number of impoundments suitable for fishing. The property has significant potential as a venue for VFFA events – either on the waters within the property, or within the surrounding area, as there are a number of rivers within easy reach. We will keep members posted.

As you will have seen in the May issue of *Fly Lines*, the Association's Purdon Dinghy is for sale, with tenders closing on June 30. Members should be aware that in addition to being advertised internally, it has been listed on several external sites and enquiries have been received. If you are interested in purchasing it, please

make sure you get your bid in before the deadline (5:00pm, on June 30, 2026).

Members will be aware that the Council has decided to bring the annual subscription process in line with the timing set out in the Association rules, reversing the 'slippage' that has arisen in over recent years. Members can be assured that this shift in timing does not represent any change to their annual membership or the membership period. If anyone has concerns, please contact me at either info@vffa.com.au or 0414 253 890.

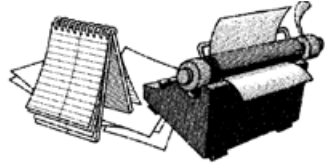
We are still looking for an editor, or sub-editor, or other interested party to take over the editing of *Fly Lines*. Again, please contact me or any other Council member if you are interested in having a role in this integral part of the VFFA culture.

Rodger Muir (Junior Vice President and Honorary Secretary)



A fabulous New Zealand South Island river

From the EDITOR'S DESK



... from Lyndon Webb

I recall many years ago, when I was living in Warrnambool, heading out one Saturday morning to fish Lake Cartcarrong at Winslow. I enjoyed fishing there – it was regularly stocked with trout by the VFA and also had a solid population of sizeable redfin (English Perch). So on a good day my fishing efforts there would often include a couple of quite reasonable trout and perhaps ten to fifteen redfin.

What I liked about this lake was that I invariably had some action. Sometimes I didn't catch any trout, but I always caught lots of those redfin. So if I hadn't been catching much in recent weeks in the other trout waters around Warrnambool, morale could be restored with an afternoon out at Cartcarrong.

But one day it was calamitous. We'd had some rain, quite a lot in fact. I arrived at the lake, climbed into my thigh waders, grabbed a rod and some flies, and started marching off to the edge of the lake. But the lake edge, following the heavy rain, was now mostly lots of soft goeey mud, and I rapidly sank almost to my stern in the muck. With some difficulty I managed to turn around, then half waded and half breast-stroked my way back to the car. I was covered with this gelatinous goo, so I stripped down to my underwear, threw the muddy mess into the car boot, and drove home. And yes, my dear wife was rather startled at my appearance.

Now this horrid event could hardly be described as life-threatening. But we'd all agree that fly fishing does have its

potential hazards. Our Australian snakes are dangerous and can often be found poking around the rivers and lakes we fish. I haven't stood on any yet, but I've seen plenty.

This might be delusional, but I'm hoping that by wearing thick socks and trousers under my waders those snakes will have too much to bite through before reaching any of me. And because I'm always aware of the possibility of a snake encounter, I'm super careful to examine what lies immediately ahead when I'm walking around our rivers and lakes, particularly when shuffling through knee high or waist high grass. And I mostly fish in company these days, which adds some extra protection with another pair of eyes scouring the path ahead, as well as assistance if either of us has a snake encounter.

One of the other hazards of my early fly fishing days in Warrnambool was the livestock. Warrnambool is a major dairying area, and getting to one of our local rivers often involved crossing a paddock with its resident bull. Mostly they didn't mind, but sometimes they did.

There was a large pool on a bend in the Merri River near Bushfield that I often visited, as it always had fish in it. But on the other side of the river there was a paddock accommodating a large black foul-tempered bull. If I was lucky when I arrived he would be up the far end of his paddock and not even aware of my presence. But if he spotted me he would come racing down to the other side of

this deep corner pool, then bellow and kick dirt in the air and generally display immense annoyance and irritation at my presence. Fortunately he was fairly dumb, because about 25 metres downstream from this pool was a section where the water was only ankle deep. He could have easily crossed the river at this point to continue the interview, but fortunately he didn't. All the same, it was still a tad unsettling to fish this fabulous pool with all that racket and fuss on the other side.

I recall crossing a paddock one evening that had a horse in it, and the horse took exception to my presence. I needed to scramble rapidly under the bottom strand of the fence to diminish the attention I'd drawn.

Fences can be a nuisance, if not a hazard. Years ago I was fishing a favourite section of the Yarra upstream from Warburton. Reaching some of the better water involved climbing over a reasonably high electric fence, so I often took a rubber mat from my car and would lay it across the top of the fence, then slide over. I'd then leave the mat there ready for my return trip.

In 1981 I taught for a year at a school near Hamilton in New Zealand's North Island, and quickly found (with the generous help of some very kind and helpful members of the Hamilton Anglers' Club) some truly fabulous local fishing. I recall one pleasant Friday evening when I arrived at a high barbed wire fence guarding a section of a river I had been told was well populated with sizeable trout.

Now I had just acquired a new pair of waders and was very keen to not tear them whilst climbing over this pestiferous barrier. So I took my new waders off and dropped them over the fence, then laid on my back beside the bottom of the fence and used a stick to push the bottom

strand of barbed wire up a few inches – just enough for me to squeeze under and out the other side. And it was worth it – I subsequently interrogated a number of very lively and sizeable rainbows.

A story I have reported before is the occasion many years ago when I took Jim Blakeslee across to show him the Moyne River near Port Fairy. Soon after we got started Jim was fishing a pool upstream from where I was when he called out to tell me he had just spotted a couple of monster browns cruising the clear Moyne water. So of course I immediately hurried to catch up with him, but in trying to climb over an intervening barbed wire fence caught my toe in the top strand and fell headfirst into a concrete channel, thus dislocating my left elbow. Bother! (Or words to that effect.)

That finished the fishing. Jim dropped me at the Warrnambool hospital, then called to tell my wife where I was. In the meantime back at the hospital a truly delightful and quite attractive young nurse was removing all of my clothing prior to dressing me in a hospital gown for the surgery I was about to have. The discomfort here was that I knew this young nurse so well – she had been a student in one of my senior classes the previous year at the local high school. No – I did not enjoy this experience at all!

I'm sure we all have countless similar memories and tales to tell. Our years of fly fishing in all sorts of places means we invariably encounter a wide variety of situations and experiences – some humorous and entertaining, others perhaps a tad scary or even dangerous, but all of them together making the treasured memories that are our personal fly fishing story.

And remember – it is important to keep a detailed fly fishing diary. Otherwise,

many of the dates and details slip away over the years – and that’s a tragedy!



Trevor Stow fishes New Zealand frequently – and is on good speaking terms with many of the South Island trout

Will Minson Speaking at our May Meeting



Will Minson just warming up...

I've got a plan for this evening but it could go in any direction. I'm going to begin with a little bit of my childhood journey, and then some elements of football and elements of fishing. Let me say I'm a proud member of the VFFA.

Are there any new members here tonight?
Yes - there are, so welcome!

I've designed a talk for tonight, and what I want to say is incorporated in the slide show I have prepared for tonight. I'm happy to have your questions, so please interrupt me at any stage.

I'm a Victorian, proudly born here in Melbourne. But then the family moved to Adelaide in the late 1980s when I was about one and a half years old. Fishing was then a big part of our life. But as a Victorian family growing up in South Australia, we were not always so welcome amongst the old Adelaide families. Thus

a bit of my anti-establishment – 'go and get stuffed mentality' – was born out of my being a Victorian growing up in South Australia. But we found it a haven.

My father bought a beautiful holiday house at Carrickalinga, a stunning coastal town located about 61 km south of Adelaide. All our childhood holidays were spent there. We had the best grass tennis court outside of Wimbledon I reckon, and when we weren't on the tennis court we were out in a boat catching fish. We caught bucket loads of garfish, whiting and tommy ruffs. The point here is that fishing has always been in my life.

We had a half cabin boat, and dad used to fall asleep when we were out fishing, then wake up when there was an argument or a tangle. So messing around in boats has always been there too.



I had two other brothers and a sister. The fishing was great where we fished – no swell and never any waves. You could be kilometers out to sea, and as long as there was no wind, it was dead calm. We caught squid on fly, garfish on fly, and tommyes on fly. It was all about the experience of boating.

I don't know how many people here have tried to do a beach launch with BMW 5 series. In case you want to know, it's highly unsuccessful. We had this fiberglass one and a half ton half cabin cruiser and dad just towed it down onto the beach. And you know, the car didn't come out. But that was a learning experience. Two days later we bought a Massey Ferguson tractor, which took an hour to get to the boat ramp. But it was all fun, and cemented the absolute passion for our fishing.

I also loved footy. Footy was a big part of my childhood. We would have had about 30 or 40 footballs upstairs where we lived, and we would kick footies every night of the week, trying to bend them into the room. So I was constantly kicking footies, and I would go to sleep with a football. I was footy obsessed.

Dad would come home from overseas and on Friday nights we watched footy. We watched footy all weekend. We were obsessed with football, and my personal interest in the game became more serious over time.

I got to about year 11, and when you've demonstrated some ability you sense that people are watching you. But my focus was very much on completing my schooling, and even though I knew there was some interest in me, my focus was with my school studies all the way

through. In 2002 I did my last set of school exams.

School finished on a Tuesday, and Thursday was the first day of the Ashes cricket. So I went to the Adelaide oval for the Ashes. And this was the first year they banned cricket in the outer. Previously it was just customary - you had a game of cricket on the lawn there. So here I was, this 17 year old kid out on the oval playing cricket in the lunchtime break. And the Barmy Army were throwing tennis balls at me, and I was trying to bat but kept missing because I had definitely had too much to drink for a 17 year old.

Then after lunch someone threw another ball, and this one I batted straight out onto the Adelaide oval. I think Gillespie was bowling at the time, and he actually picked the ball up and threw it back to the security guards. About three seconds later I got grabbed: "You can go the hard way or the easy way!" "Oh, please - the easy way!"

So I get escorted out of the Adelaide oval, and started walking home. Now mum and my grandmother drove past as I was stumbling home. They picked me up and drove me home. I got out of the car and vomited all over the lawn, so grandma picked up the hose and hosed me down. And that was kind of a fun memory because she took it so well. "She'd had a few of those experiences herself back in the old days", I was told.

But that was Wednesday. Friday was 'schoolies', which you know is school leavers' big celebration. So I went off to Victor Harbour to celebrate 'schoolies'.

Saturday morning was the draft - and I got drafted. I went pick number 20, and immediately from that point the phone calls were happening. I left home on the Sunday, and the next day started training. So in the space of five days, I finished year 12, had been kicked out of the Ashes, had been drafted, and had moved to Melbourne.



The media reports were that I was six foot three or six foot five, played down back or up forward or in the midfield. In other words, they had no idea. Was I German, or French? As it happens I was fluent in German, gaining a nearly perfect score in Year 12 for German. I could speak it, so that was interpreted that I was in fact German. I also did music in Year 12 and played the clarinet. So they suggested that I played eight different instruments. So it just kept going.

It was all a bit rapid. One minute I'm 17 and telling mum I'll never leave home and she's going to have to feed me until I'm 30. And then three days later I have moved out of home. My first salary in 2002 was \$37,500 dollars/year.

And life was suddenly very good. I bought a shirt, a coffee machine and a computer. Up till then the most money I'd ever spent on a single purchase was \$100 on a shirt from David Jones. I came home at Christmas time and said, "Mum, can I have some money to go and buy an ice cream?" She said: "No, you've got a job now."

I'm now apparently becoming an elite athlete. But the journey for a seventeen-year-old school boy was brutal. I got to Footscray's Whitten Oval, and these guys were all grown men. I remember a guy flattening me at training and then laughing at me. He did it just to see what kind of response he got from me.

But we were a struggling club. We didn't have a lot of sponsorship. And we really sucked. In 2003 we were at the bottom of the ladder, and again in 2004 we were at the bottom of the ladder.

All through my career I paid for a lot of my own services - massage, physiotherapy, psychology ... I paid for

the lot. At another club these were all provided for you.

I played in three losing preliminary finals: in 2008 2009 in 2010, and the teams I lost to spent three times as much on their footy department expenditure than we did. So, it's not a fair competition. We sacked the coach. I had five of them. Yes, it was really tough. Often in elite sport there are more downs than there are ups.

I am a civil engineer. So I used to go to training, then to Melbourne university, then back to training. It was also a link to my sort of identity. I was an engineer, I was a fisherman, and I was just someone who was pretty good at football. This changed much later in life, though there were certain elements of the identity of the footballer that I didn't associate with.

The selection of players at that level is brutal. There are 42 players on the list. And when I finished my career, I think the average career duration was three years, and I played for 14. Everybody knows Scott Pendlebury who has played so many games. But so few people know all the ones who come in every year that don't play a game. They're around for five years and play in perhaps two or three games. So the average playing career is just three years. So there's a high turnover.

You were on a list of 42 players. Eighteen get a game every week, plus the four on the bench. There's a whole other squad of about 22, a mixture of them, some injured, whatever. They're largely non-existent in that sense. It's quite brutal in that respect.

Rocking up after long periods of losing is awful. And it's made more awful by the capability of the coach to deal with that scenario. I've had everything from: "Open your eyes. You need to watch how terrible you all were."

We played West Coast over in the West, which is never easy. And I don't think we kicked a goal after half time. West Coast kicked 10. We came back from Perth on the red eye – a midnight flight. So after playing on Sunday afternoon we caught the midnight flight, landing at 6am. Then we went straight to the swimming centre and swam a couple of kilometres. Then we went back to the club, and the coach played the replay of the second half of the game. So we watched the whole second half.

Then we went into the training floor. This is on Monday, the day after the game. (Normally, all we do is just walk around the block.) And the coach said, "Right, where's the starting 18s? You stand over there." And to everyone else he said, "Right, who's position do you want? Go and stand next to the bloke who's spot you want." And then we went out and did a match practice during the afternoon. Two players dislocated shoulders, and another guy did some other sort of injury.

That was the Monday afternoon. And then it was 7am the next day and we walked to the end of the Kerferd Road pier. "Now bring your own bricks!" So, there's a whole bunch of footballers scouring around looking for bricks, and then we're all standing out on Port Melbourne beach holding bricks. We then went out on the end of the Kerferd Road pier, jumped in and swam ashore. And what I say is, "What kind of madness is that?"

I'm a full-time footballer, but as soon as football finishes, I'm off to university. I'm trying to study hard, and the only real break I get each year was at Christmas time.

This photo is of me back at the beach. I don't like shore-based fishing, but this fish was caught about a metre out from the edge in 30 centimetres of water. So that

was my release at Christmas time - a little bit of spear-fishing. We didn't own a boat anymore, so it was the only avenue I had to fishing. If I'd lived in a warmer climate whilst playing football, I probably would have kept it going, because it's great recovery. It's good for your legs, and good for your lungs. But right now I still get a buzz out of spearing a mullet.

This photo on the screen is the beginning of my fly fishing. In 2010 we went on a training camp in New Zealand, and my grandmother, who I loved dearly, had a next door neighbour called Geoff who was a brilliant fly fisher. Geoff came to me, and said: "Will, I just want to caution you. If you take this fly fishing up it's going to cost you." I was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's fine." "No, I'm telling you, this is expensive!"

I said, "Geoff, I'm going to Queenstown tomorrow for a training camp. Will you teach me to fly fish?" So we went to the pond in Mont Albert near the baseball corner on Mont Albert Road. Just a tiny little pond. So I learned to cast there one afternoon, and the next day I was on a plane to Queenstown for a 10-day training camp. I had a day and a half off over the 10 days that we were in New Zealand. On the first day I had off I went down the main street and hired a guide. And we went to the Greenstone, the Caples River in New Zealand.

We were walking up the Caples River, and I was with a team mate, Pat Veszpremi, who was an accomplished fly fisher. But I'd never cast a fly in my life. And then we got to this spot on the Greenstone, and the guide says: "So what do you know?" I said: "Nothing!" He replies, "Well, this is how it works." He cast a fly out near the bubble line and this fly got eaten right there and there. First cast from the guide, and he says: "Oh dear, that's not supposed to happen." Anyway, we get

what he does, and I did land a fish. So we were walking up there, and then it just hit me. It was that visual element in gin clear water. I'd never experienced it before. I've always been a boat angler - garfish up on the surface, and a squid occasionally.

Then it was: "What fly have you got on? Cool. Now you are going to have to strip some line out?" And the fish was still there - it was just waiting there for me. Anyway, we caught some more fish and kept moving up. When we came back, every fish we caught (and I think we caught six on the way up) was in exactly the same position we'd seen four hours earlier. So from never having been fly fishing, in my first six hours of fly fishing I've been casting to sighted fish and managed to catch and release some fish, so that was all pretty special.

I was in the Solomon Islands a couple of years ago, and was snorkeling on this reef when I saw these massive GTs. I happened to have a sinking weight 12 line in the boat, which I thought I'd use another time. So I'm out there in eight metres of water with a snorkel and a sinking line. So I stripped off all this line. I didn't have any of those advanced sink tips or any of that kind of stuff. I probably even had like a deceiver or something. It wasn't even a weighted dumbbell fly. It was like a deceiver on a 12-weight sink tip and I was trying to trick this fish. Anyway, I could see a fish and I had a fly. So that was the rule - I was fly fishing.

Now Peter Morse came to Melbourne just prior to the commencement of the Victorian dry fly trout season. I was trying to swing flies on the Mataura - all completely useless. I spent the whole evening chatting with blokes who owned residences on the Victoria and the Delatite and the Howqua. Peter Morse came and told us to swing flies but that's not what it's about. But sight casting is. Like



standing on the front of a boat, holding a fly, waiting to see something, trying to put a fly in front of a fish. I've been hooked ever since.

It's only as a result of fly fishing that I've discovered Victoria, otherwise it would have just been Cardinia Park, or the MCG. And if you get dropped, you're off to Wangaratta. But the places I've been to as a result of fly fishing I consider to be improvements, and the effect it's had on me in my life.

It's not the places really but the people you meet that make it important. Here is a photo of Jim Allen's shack. It's the relationships that have come to me through fishing.

Now Philip Weigall is here this evening. I messaged him the other day, I said, Philip, I'm doing a talk at the VFFA. I've been on the journey, and people like yourself, Andrew, and Chris Bassano are three people who have had the

most influence on me in my fishing journey. And the learning curve that I was taking on through exposure to you was phenomenal. As Rex Hunt said, the way to get people into fishing is to catch fish, and so the sooner you learn how to catch fish, and the sooner you learn all the techniques, the better you are. And I learned a hell of a lot from you Philip, so thank you. And I'm humbled to see you here tonight.

I am easily 30 years junior to people like Jim Allen, but am able to share a conversation, tell tall stories, share a phenomenal meal, and have all that enjoyment and so much purpose through going down to Tassie, and seeing Jim and Andrew and fishing with them and sharing all sorts of great stories about the fish they missed or the ones they caught or could catch. It's only as a result of that, you know, that I'm here in this place tonight, and I'm forever grateful for that. And I've got many more of those opportunities ahead of me as well.

This photo was of last year up at Hitchinbrook. I hadn't been fishing for ages, as I've been pretty busy, and we've had a young three-year-old, so you know all the stuff that we all complain about being busy with life and mortgages and of all that sort of stuff. My 40th birthday was two years ago, and I didn't celebrate it until late last year, so we went to Hitchinbrook, and it was just the absolute best weeks of my life. We had seven days fishing, and were up there for eight nights. We hired a car and we had two boats, with two anglers in each boat, and we had so much fun. We tied flies every night, we tied flies in the morning, and the most absurd, hideous things we created then caught fish. It was just that camaraderie and that experience that was only through fly fishing that I've had those experiences.

Here's a picture of my wife, my younger

brother and his wife (an American girl), back in South Australia and fishing yet again. When people have a purpose, and an elite sport has an absolute alignment in purpose, every single person that goes to a footy club is just trying to win a championship. It's not up for debate, every single person in that organization is aligned to the pursuit of winning that championship.

As far as sporting clubs go, they're all trying to win championships. You might have just lost ten in a row, but you'd still like to win next time, so you just keep rocking up. But it's really hard to win a premiership. It's never guaranteed. I've only had six operations throughout my career. I broke my hand, I had a punctured lung, a foot fracture, and you know, when you're recovering from all those, you suck it up.

Every time you go fishing, and it's called 'fishing', not 'catching', because it's never guaranteed. If I'm fishing, I'll go a whole day without a drink and without food, and I'll go the next day too without a drink, or food. Why? Because I'm trying to get a fish. Eventually I'll have a drink, and eventually I'll have something to eat. "Can we stop fishing now and have lunch? No - we're here to fish!"

But I've slowed down now, and it is nicer at times to sit down, have a drink, and enjoy the river. But then that has become the purpose. The purpose then is to enjoy the environment and experience the people you're with.

It's good to have that positive mindset that fishermen have. It's crazy to think that we're going to go out there and cast this little thing and try to fool fish with it. This photo is Lake Pillans and I'm in Tassie somewhere fishing with Phil's brother Mark and a whole bunch of people. I had just retired, and I'd got a

phone call from Mark Weigall. He said, "Do you want to come fishing?" Well, I'd just been sacked, so I said, "That sounds fabulous. It's something I really want to do."

I later learned that the request came because of my load carrying capacity, and he had brought a few esteemed gentlemen in order for us to all end up carrying at least one bottle of whisky per person per day. I was required to come, so I came out at the expense of getting an occasional shot at a fish. You know what trout fishing teachers you? You're possibly going to get just one shot at a particular fish. We've sweated and worked and seen nothing for three days, and then this thing comes along, and I've completely mucked up.

But instead of being in that moment of disappointment, I thought that's actually pretty cool. We've worked really hard for three days, and then I get this one opportunity to catch a fish and I mucked it up. Was it my preparation, or was it my casting action? I've just got to improve. On this particular occasion, we sat down as I had to re-rig, a new leader, the whole lot.

We finished it, and I was just thinking ok, this is one of those one shot only fish, but maybe I'll get a second shot. My second cast landed ok and the fish was eating. It ate, ate, ate, ate, ... eating four naturals ahead of my fly. I kept saying "Please keep eating, please keep eating, please keep eating, please keep eating ..." And it ate mine and I landed this beautiful fish.

The experience of being invited out there was really something special. As I said, I'd just been sacked, so to go fishing was a truly wonderful idea. We spent about six days out in the Western Lakes, thus providing me with some very special memories in my fishing experiences.

Being out in the Western Lakes and not seeing them up for three days was for me a much more memorable experience; a much more rewarding experience. And I think I linked that back to my first years at the Whitten Oval when for the first three years we were on the bottom of the ladder, or second bottom or third bottom.

Then much later in my career, in 2009 I think, by the halfway mark of the season we had won ten games and lost one in a draw, so at the halfway mark in the season we were top of the ladder, and we're the talk of the town playing a beautiful style of football like the bulldogs with heart.

And I remembered when we were absolute rubbish. We didn't have any funds, we were in real strife, so the sense of achievement I was now getting from playing was completely different. So in sport you can be taught some pretty brutal lessons in front of tens of thousands of people. The minute you think you've got it, and you're capable of all that, you can lose it quickly, and it's often very public.

Getting back to fly fishing - it has taken me all around the world, to parts of Europe, to North American and New Zealand. This is on the back of some of the volunteer work that I'm involved with in my local community. My brother lived in the US for a long time, and I visited him. I was told by a guy there on one occasion that there were ten steelhead for every brown trout in the river, and I'd got a brown trout.

Saturday a week ago I needed a new pair of waders and spent about four hours in Andrew Fuller's shop after it closed. I'm grateful to Andrew, as he's introduced me to the community of fly fishing.

Loombah Weir Project Report – Team 7

VFFA members agreed to participate in the Loombah Weir (Benalla’s water supply) trout relocation project that is being conducted by the Australian Trout Foundation, the Victorian Fishing Authority, and North East Water between the May 2 and the June 28, 2026.

The aim of the project is to capture as many trout as possible from within the weir, re-locate them to local publicly accessible waters, and then stock the weir with Macquarie Perch fingerlings.

Our Team, ‘Team 7’, consisted of Robert Tuck, Lester Walton and Peter Whitelaw, and we camped onsite from May 10 - 15. Our primary task each day was to take an electric-powered boat from the dam wall across the water to the fish trap installed in Ryan’s Creek at the head of the weir. We were to transport any fish found in the trap back to holding pens near the dam wall to await collection by VFA staff.

We were granted special access permits to the heavily treed and fenced area surrounding the weir, and were permitted to fish without size or bag limits –

and allowed to consume any fish we personally caught.

Unfortunately, due to the warm sunny weather, not one trout decided to move upstream into the fish trap during our tour of duty. This was in contrast to the team who preceded our visit who had left eight sizeable brown trout in the holding pens. We watched enviously when Mark from the VFA arrived and moved these fish (using nets) into his trailer-mounted tank. He indicated that they would be released later into Mount Beauty Pondage.

Lester skilfully saved us from starvation by landing a 2 lb brown on a damsel nymph. This was later cooked in Peter’s smoker and served as an entrée to our main meal. One interloper named Peter Clayton arrived in time to consume much of the catch.

We enjoyed a pleasant six days on-site with enjoyable visits to the Farmer’s Arms in Benalla and a couple of wineries in the King Valley.



A beautifully marked brown trout

The Flyfisher's Report

... from Andrew Fuller



Philip with a nice bream taken on a fly

With the river season now closed, winter has properly arrived. For some that means packing the trout gear away until spring. For the rest of us, it means changing gears a bit.

The team at the Fly finished the season with a fun run up to the Murrundindi, where there were a few fish farm escapee salmon getting about. They are good fun on a fly rod, no question, and it was hard not to enjoy catching them. But there is a more serious side to it too. Any large escape of farmed fish into a wild trout stream raises questions about what they are doing to the natural balance of the river.

They are not meant to be there. They compete for food, push into the same holding water, and may have consequences we do not fully understand until well after the fact. A few fish can feel like a novelty.

A lot of fish can become a problem. It is something worth watching, especially in small systems where the wild trout population is already dealing with low flows, heat, pressure and habitat issues.

Winter does not mean there is nothing to do. In fact, it is probably the best time of year to do the work that makes you a better fly fisher when the trout season opens again.

Kossy's fly tying course through the VFFA is a great place to start. Whether you are a rusty tier or just want a reason to sit down and refill a few empty rows in the fly box, winter is the time to do it. By September, most of us are suddenly wondering why we only have three serviceable nymphs and half a dozen chewed up dries left. Better to get on top of it now.



VFFA new member Peter Panopoulos with a Murrundindi escapee

The same goes for casting. Sunday casting is coming up, and I reckon this is one of the best things the Association offers. Make it your winter mission to become a better caster before the season opens.

There is also some very good fishing available through winter if you are willing to look beyond the trout streams.

The south-west has had proper rain, and the lakes have had a much needed top up. That is good news. Lake fishing should be well worth the effort over winter. Bullen Merri, the Ballarat lakes and the wider western district are all worth keeping an eye on as levels improve and the weather settles between fronts.

Bream are also a very real winter option. Philip Weigall's recent report on *FlyStream* from the south-west showed just how good the estuary fishing can be between bouts of wild weather, with the Fitzroy, Hopkins and Merri all worth attention when conditions allow. Bream fishing on the fly is not just something to fill time. It

is technical, visual, challenging and hugely satisfying when you get it right.

I was also chatting with Tom Jarman at the Goulburn River competition, and it sounds like he will be doing some guided saltwater fly fishing out of Corio through winter. That should be well worth a look. The quality of the fishing, and particularly the sight fishing, will surprise a lot of freshwater fly fishers. We are lucky to have that style of fishing so close to Melbourne, and winter is a good time to broaden the horizons a bit.

So while the trout streams are closed, fly fishing certainly is not. Tie some flies. Get your casting sorted. Watch the lakes. Look at the estuaries. Have a crack at the salt. Then, when September rolls around, you will be a much sharper fly fisher than you were at the end of last season.



Fishing the edge of some big water

Thoughts on Tippet

... from Philip Weigall



Amac hooked up on the Madison on 4X – but don't tell the guide!

My mate Andrew (aka Amac) and I had just arrived on the banks of the famous Madison River in Montana, to find a midday rise had started. The rise quickly grew to a scale neither of us had ever witnessed anywhere; at least not in broad daylight. It brought to mind feeding time at a trout hatchery, with the water literally boiling with rises as size 14 duns poured off.

"Make sure you use 6X," advised our guide in his cowboy drawl, "Otherwise, they won't eat." Amac and I discreetly exchanged a sceptical glance and proceeded to tie Parachute Adams dry flies to our existing 4X tippets.

Well, the next hour or so helped us further understand what all the fuss was about with Montana. We caught plenty of trout and whitefish (the latter just fine by us!), missed a few, and were quite possibly refused by others – although in the chaos

it was hard to distinguish a rejection from fish simply not noticing the fly.

Meanwhile, our guide looked on from a respectful distance, having worked out by this point in the trip that, after being taken to a decent spot at a good time (and given a few pointers on arrival), we were more than happy to be self-sufficient.

I can't remember whether the hatch eventually died down, or we got to the point where we'd caught enough and were ready to move on to the next gem. Either way, when we got back to the truck, the guide stated with a satisfied air, "Yes sir, you can't beat that 6X for eats."

The Bust-off Factor

I would like to think I'm a fly fisher who is capable of considering new ideas, and trying them if the evidence is good enough. However, in over half a century on the water, I'm yet to be convinced that fine tippet is much of a fly fishing solution to anything, except maybe decorating fish with flies. And yet, in the last decade or so, among the general fly fishing public, a trend seems to have developed for fishing cobweb-like tippet, by which I mean 6X, 7X, or (god help us!) 8X.

Now, I need to own up here: I really hate breakoffs by good fish – whether mine or a guided guest's. This may be a character flaw. I've been told there are worse things in life than having your line break on a fish. But if so, it's a flaw I'm stuck with it, and I make the disclosure to acknowledge a possible bias when it comes to my analysis of tippet.

So, whether guiding or fishing myself, my opening tippet bid is: "How heavy can I get away with?" In other words, I



You never know what might grab your fly – even on a smaller Goulburn

start with tippet at the thicker /stronger end of the spectrum, and only go lighter if I subsequently think there might be a significant fish-fooling advantage. Mostly that will be because I decide to change down in fly size. Fish can always 'see' your tippet, no matter how fine the diameter, but whether they *notice* it enough to avoid eating your fly, is what counts. Usually, this only happens if your tippet is too thick to allow the fly to behave naturally. In turn, that's a function of relativity: a size 6 Woolly Bugger on 1X tippet is going to swim fairly realistically, whereas a size 18 midge on the same tippet is going to behave as if it's attached to a length of fencing wire.

Tippet preference

In practice, this means I'm often fishing lakes and estuaries with 2X, reducing to 3X for smaller wets or dries; and occasionally 4X. On rivers, 3X is the standard, with 4X getting a go regularly. 2X is used only a few times a season, and

I can't easily recall the last time I used 5X anywhere – lake or stream.

Some anglers ask, "Why do you need 3X when you're fishing, say, the Steavo, Howqua or upper Ovens?" Well, most of the time I don't need it to land the typical trout in those streams. However, every so often I hook something much bigger. It may only happen once or twice a season, but when it does, I'm a fighting chance. Meanwhile, as I'm confident there's no disadvantage with the 3X for catching those more typical trout, it mostly stays on. Oh, and it can come in handy for getting flies out of high branches, or snags.

Exceptions

Yes, to the disgust of AI (or Absolute Idiocy as I'm persuaded to call it) most fly fishing rules come with exceptions. For example, fine tippet sinks quicker than thick, so it does have some merit for particular nymphing or wet fly applications ... although I will usually see what I can achieve with fly weight /shape first. And once in a blue moon (literally), circumstances require a fly so tiny, it forces me to 5X.

Tippet quality

Regardless of what 'X' you use, this piece of advice is simple: always use the best tippet you can buy. You pay for the good stuff, but on the overall inventory of fly fishing expenses, it's still inexpensive. For example, on a typical day I probably use a few dollars' worth – about the same cost as a single fly, or a cup of coffee.

Keep your tippet in good shape, too. After a dodgy cast check for wind-knots, and after a decent fish and/or any snag encounters, feel for nicks or abrasions. Check your tippet join and fly knots – it only takes a moment, and worst case - you lose a couple of minutes of fishing time



2X didn't stop this shoreline Eucumbene brown eating a dry fly in bright sunshine – but it did stop it taking all the backing.

retying. I tie hundreds if not thousands of fishing knots a year, and yet I still reckon every tenth knot or so fails – probably due to some error in my tying. It turns out practice doesn't make perfect (at least not in my case), although I'm self-aware enough to avoid knot failure on a fish.

Each to their own

I've occasionally met or fished with anglers who genuinely don't seem to care if they land a good fish or not – and fair enough. I would hate to dictate what people's fishing preferences should be. For these anglers, I guess the only practical issue is getting the eat in the first place. So aside from tippet twist with larger, heavily hackled flies, and losing more flies to snags and fish, there's probably no downside to using tippet as fine as they wish to.

So I'm not going to beg you to use stronger tippet; it's your life after all. But if you choose to fish cobweb, I'll just assume you don't care if you land big fish ... or not.

Philip Weigall is editor of FlyStream magazine. Visit flystream.com for new articles every week.



A Final Farewell to a Great Friend

... from Hugh Maltby



Some dear friends of Colin Morrison who travelled to Tasmania to say goodbye

Our dear friend and VFFA Life Member Colin Morrison passed away on September 3 last year, and it was Colin's expressed wish that his remains be scattered at his favourite fishing place.

This was the North Esk River at Blessington in Tasmania, where it flows through a beautiful valley in the shadows of Ben Lomond National Park on a property owned by Colin's dear friends Ian and Rosemary Dickenson.

On this vast beef, timber and cropping property called "Elverton" there is a cabin called "Old Wisloca", and it was here

that Colin enjoyed many trips fishing and waxing lyrical with his friends John Philbrick, Choco Grisold, Jean Jacques Lale-Demoz, myself, and many others.

On every trip we hosted a dinner for our Tasmanian friends, and these evenings became legendary as we shared wonderful local fare and copious amounts of alcohol.

Gordon Baker, who Colin introduced to the VFFA, Annie Morrison and her sister Danella, and I recently returned to Old Wisloca with Colin's remains, and we hosted dinner for his Tasmanian friends



One of Colin's favourite river sections

– Ian and Rosemary and their son Adam, along with Mike and Jules Stevens, Peter Hayes and Ray Brown. It was a great night and a wonderful trip down memory lane.

The next morning we headed to the river to say our final farewell to a great friend. It was an amazing Tasmanian Autumn day. The sun was warm and the river sparkling as it bubbled over rocks making its way down the valley.

It was a solemn but happy occasion, followed by a beautiful lunch hosted by Ian and Rosemary at the homestead.

The following day Gordon and I, along with Jules and Mike, returned to find that Colin had already found a friend. A five foot tiger snake was snuggling up to one

of the Dahlia's that was floated the day before.

A fitting farewell to our great mate.



VFFA Annual Auction – in October 2027

The VFFA Annual Auction is coming up and we're calling for donations and consignment items now. We're looking for quality fly fishing gear of all kinds — rods, reels, fly lines, fly tying materials, and of course flies of every description. Books, DVDs, and fishing literature are always popular, as are artwork, prints, and photography with a fishing theme. Waders, wading boots, vests, packs and accessories are also welcome, along with any other quality gear you've upgraded and thus replaced.

Two ways to participate:

- Donate an item to the Association — all proceeds will then support the VFFA;
- Consign an item to sell on the night — the Association then retains a small selling fee, with the remainder returned to you.

If you have gear gathering dust that deserves a good home, this is the perfect opportunity. All items should be in good fishable condition.

To register a donation or consignment item, we need contact [NAME] at [EMAIL] by [DATE].

Let's make the 2027 auction one to remember!

Regards,

Rod Hirst



Here it is – all ready to go

Purdon Dinghy For Sale



Items for sale with the Purdon Dinghy



Members are likely to be aware that the VFFA owns a Purdon dinghy, which is currently located at Hayes on Brumby's, at Cressy in Tasmania. In light of a number of factors, your Council has decided that the dinghy and associated items should be sold on an as is, where is, basis.

As an initial step, we are offering these items as a package for sale to any member interested in purchasing it.

The specific items on offer are as follows:

- 12-foot Purdon Dinghy, glass over ply
- Home built tipping trailer and spare wheel, not registered for road use
- 2 life jackets
- 2 oars in poor condition
- Anchor (folding) and warp
- Drogue



Here it is – all ready to go

- Seat cushion
- Boat cover in poor condition
- MotorGuide brand 12 Volt electric trolling motor – 55 lb thrust
- Fullriver brand deep cycle 12 Volt battery

See also the gallery of recent photos below.

As set out above, the dinghy and associated items are offered on an ‘as is, where is’ basis. That means the buyer will be required to travel to Hayes on Brumby’s, Cressy, Tasmania to collect the boat and will be responsible for transport from Cressy.

The items listed above are for sale by way of tender, to be submitted to the VFFA Honorary Secretary by email to ‘info@vffa.com.au’ on or before 5:00pm, June 30, 2026. Please note, acceptance of any

tender will be entirely at the discretion of the Council.

Caveat emptor: In offering these items for sale, the sale is a private, consumer-to-consumer sale, and the VFFA provides no warranty in respect of the condition of the items, or the suitability of the items for any particular use.

Please contact Rodger Muir, VFFA Honorary Secretary at the above email or on 0414 253 890 with any questions.

Millbrook Lakes – Visits later this year

One of the very popular features of our VFFA program in recent years has been our visits to the fabulous Millbrook Lakes near Ballarat. Unfortunately, low rainfall in the area last year meant that the lakes we usually visit (although fishing very well) are too low to be fished by ten people at once.

However, Mark Weigall, the owner of the Millbrook Lakes complex, recently contacted your editor to confirm that visits to Millbrook Lakes this year will again be possible. Mark has given us two dates for VFFA member visits – Wednesday July 8 and Thursday October 8.

In previous years our visits were limited to the four lakes in the Hillies area, but Mark has suggested that other Millbrook lakes could be accessed in our visits this

year. Most are at a great level, fishing well and rising with recent good rains.

Mark has suggested organising three guides to take our members to some of the other Millbrook lakes. Each guide would take three people, so our group would be limited to nine VFFA members.

Some members have already contacted your editor indicating their keenness to attend on one of these dates. Other interested members are invited to contact your editor on 0488 555 724 or at lgwebb@bigpond.net.au to make a booking.



We will let this one go!

This Month's Yarn



Fut capturing his first trout

This time the “hero” is a member of our Association, but he prefers to not have his name mentioned. Let’s call him Mac. On one occasion Mac, with a companion, was fly fishing the Woori Yallock Creek. His companion was an intelligent retriever dog named Fut. Mac was fishing off the banks and taking advantage of the bushes there for cover. Came a time when, for some reason, Mac laid his rod against a bush by the stream’s edge, while he walked a little distance away.

Then came a puff of wind. It blew the fly on Mac’s line onto the flowing water, and a trout grabbed it and lit off upstream. In went the rod with a splash. Mac was unable to attend to it for a moment, but Fut, sizing up the situation, leapt into the creek.

He seized the rod between his teeth and brought it back to the bank with the reel

still screaming. Then Fut, though not clever enough to wind the reel with his teeth, still showed considerable resource. He got one powerful hind leg between the line and the rod butt, and then racing “inland” thus dragged the fish to shore.

By the time Mac had pulled himself together the trout was ready for unhooking.

(... from November 1955)



Some Notes from Rick Dobson

(Your editor was searching through a pile of old fly fishing articles and came across the following list of random suggestions given some time ago by Rick Dobson. They are certainly worth pondering again.)

- Use 16 foot leaders when fishing in New Zealand
- Ensure you have black under your hat peak
- Avoid flash – no shiny rods or watches or items on your vest
- When fishing flat water use a Parachute Adams as your indicator
- Watch a pool first before deciding where to cast from
- If the rocks in a river are clean and there have been recent floods, then there's not much food there and thus probably few fish
- Fish with confidence
- Heavily weighted flies are dull and have very little movement
- In New Zealand you often find you have to make several presentations before you get the perfect drift that a fish will take
- In dull light use yellow sunglasses
- In the summer fish the pocket water and 'high stick' – keep your line off the water
- Vary the depth of your nymph to match the water depth
- In pocket water use size 8 or 10 dry flies
- Rainbows tend to take nymphs and browns take dries
- Use thin fluoro tippets on dry flies
- Get nymphs down fast – drop your fly in the water to see how fast it sinks
- Rub tippets with mud to remove any flash, or use some very fine wet-dry paper
- On rough water grease leaders up to the fly, but on flat water don't grease your leaders
- On dry flies use silicone hourglass floatants on your flies a week before you go fishing. Be wary of using Gink on flies – it makes them dull and heavy
- Use bigger flies in ripples and smaller flies on the flat water
- In riffles use a size 12 Stimulator
- In Victorian rivers use two drifts per each section of water, then move on. Cover lots of water. Don't false cast but do use short casts
- Cast to the side of a fish rather than land your fly on his head
- Barbless hooks are better
- You will lose fish if you don't strike hard enough, so hit hard and quick





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FLY OF THE MONTH

The Hare's Mask & Pink



Here is a fascinating variation of the old standby - the Hare's Ear Nymph, this one designed and tied by one of our top fly tiers Richard Kos.

Here is a fascinating variation of the old stand-by – the Hare's Ear Nymph.

Materials are as follows:

- Hook:** Hanak H450BL size 12 (with a 3.8mm bead) – for Euro-Nymph rig
Or - Hanak H450BL size 14 (with 3.3mm bead) – ideal for a dropper rig.
(The 3.8mm tungsten bead would probably be too heavy for a dry-dropper rig)
- Thread:** UTC 70D white
- Bead:** Hareline Plummeting Tungsten – Met Pink
(Hareline Plummeting Tungsten Beads are premium, high-density fly tying beads used to quickly sink nymph and streamer patterns without the need for split shot. Because tungsten is about 50% heavier than brass, these beads allow you to get into the strike zone rapidly.)
- Rib:** Semperfli Wire - 0.2 mm (Baby Pink)
- Tail:** Hare's Mask – two-tone
- Body & Thorax:** Hare's mask – light
- Collar:** SLF Prism – Ice Pearl

VFFA 2026 meetings & other activities

*(Unless otherwise notified, all meetings are at The Kelvin Cub,
14 - 30 Melbourn Place)*

June

- 2 – 8** Team 2 on site at Loombah Weir (Clayton/Spragg/Muir)
- 11 June** Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 16 Tuesday** Fly Tying - The Fundamentals Part 2- Richard Kos, 7.00pm, The Botanical Art School, South Yarra
- 18 Thursday** General Meeting – Cancelled
- 21 – 28** Winter Taupo Event (Organiser - Rodger Muir)
- 28 Sunday** Casting Day, 11:00 am, Red Tag Pool, Fairfield
- 30 Tuesday** Fly Tying - Intermediate - Richard Kos, 7:00 pm, The Botanical Art School, South Yarra

July

- 16 Thursday** Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 23 Thursday** General Meeting – Update on AFFC/Red Tag pool/Fairlea Road redevelopment – Stuart Murphy/Chris Gray, 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 26 Sunday** Casting Day, 11:00 am, Red Tag Pool, Fairfield
- 28 Tuesday** Fly Tying - Advanced - Richard Kos, 7:00 pm, The Botanical Art School, South Yarra

August

- 13 Thursday** Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 20 Thursday** Annual Dinner – Venue/time TBD
- 30 Sunday** Cane Rod Casting Day, 11:00 am, Red Tag Pool, Fairfield

September

- 17 Thursday** Annual General meeting (virtual)
- 24 Thursday** Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm