

# FLY LINES



MARCH 2022

## March Meeting with Andrew Mossman

Andrew is well known to us all. He is guest speaker at our March meeting where he will tell us about *Fly Fishing – Developing Strategies but also having fun*.

Andrew has been a passionate fisher all his life. He began fly fishing for trout at age 9 or 10, and fly fishing soon became his sporting obsession. He has fished all round the world, but for many years now has mostly fished in New Zealand's South Island and to a lesser extent South Eastern Australia and England.

Andrew believes that to consistently catch trout you need to understand their behaviour, their food, and their feeding habits. You also need to understand the natural forces that drive insect life cycles and insect behaviour.

He believes that the most successful fly fishers are excellent hunters. They sneak up on their quarry and try to determine how the fish are feeding and what they are feeding on. When all this is achieved the fly fisher then has to deliver an excellent fly flawlessly.

Andrew will be discussing aspects of this, describing strategies that have worked for him based on his long fishing experience. He will discuss environmental changes that he has observed and will share with us humorous anecdotes from his years of fishing.

Thursday, March 17,  
8:00pm at the  
**Kelvin Club**

We would encourage all members to join us for what will be a fabulous meeting, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by Wednesday, March 16, by emailing Terry Rogers at [terryrogers@bigpond.com](mailto:terryrogers@bigpond.com) and leaving a message.



*Andrew frequently catches very large fish too*

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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# Index

March Meeting with Andrew Mossman.....	1	Tasmanian Fishing Report – Western Lakes .....	13
VFFA Office Holders.....	2	VFFA Trip to Currawong Lakes - February 2022 .....	17
We welcome a new member.....	3	Tasmania Trip Report - February 2022...	20
The April Meeting with Kiel Jones .....	4	A Brief New Zealand Report .....	22
President's Message .....	5	April Vokey .....	24
Report on Liars' Night .....	6	My Five Favourite Books.....	28
From the Editor's Desk.....	8	Omeo Report.....	30
The Origins of the Australian Trout Foundation .....	10	A Report on Tassie Fishing from Way Out West .....	32
Tom Sutcliffe's Offer .....	11	Fly of the Month.....	34



*Bernard Holbery fishes both complicated water and some fabulous streams here in Victoria*

## We welcome a new member

Again this month it is our great pleasure to welcome a new member to the Association. James Allen has recently joined our ranks. We trust that his membership brings many years of enjoyment along with countless wonderful memories.

## The April Meeting with Kiel Jones

Kiel Jones grew up fishing Victoria's central highland lakes.

He caught his first trout on a fly at age 11 and has never looked back, becoming obsessed with turning over the rocks at Hepburn Lagoon and Newlyn Reservoir in search of any bug that could trick a fish.

Kiel's fly fishing takes him all over Australia and the world. He regularly hunts midge feeding trout in those central Victorian highland lakes and the springtime dun feeders on the shores of our local waters, he fishes the rivers of New Zealand's back country, he chases GT's and bonefish on the Pacific islands, and he regularly explores Victoria's north-east rivers and the NSW Snowy Mountain streams.

As an avid bream and estuary perch fly fisherman Kiel spends his free time exploring the inlets between the South Australian border all round to Mallacoota in the east.

Kiel guides for Millbrook Lakes and Wilderness Fly Fishing. He is an excellent guide with a passion for teaching beginners and up-skilling seasoned fly fishers. His drive for catching fish and having a good time doing it is infectious.

At our April meeting Kiel is preparing a presentation on "Mayfly Scenarios" - mayflies (life cycle), before the hatch, during the hatch, after the hatch, spinners, tactics, flies to use and gear to use.

This will be a very informative and helpful meeting, so mark it in your diary - Thursday, April 21.



*A magnificent brown and an excellent reason to smile*

# President's Message

*"It's not the depth of your intellect that will comfort you or transform your world. Only the richness of your heart and your generosity of spirit can do that". (Rasheed Ogunlaru)*

Several of us have just returned from a memorable two weeks fly fishing in Tasmania. Our traditional week at Cressy with Peter Hayes was a cracker week with some difficult fishing, some very productive fishing, and a very windy day on one of the highland lakes. Under guidance we were using hoppers, beetle patterns and black spinners.

There were a number of highlights apart from the days we were guided by Peter.

The first was the institution of a morning clinic, mostly around casting and relating to the stories from the previous day's calamities! Some of us were skewered and some were not ... depending on your skill level. Plenty of encouragement to practise prior to next year, but more importantly - what to practise and why ... detailed, clear and logical explanations ... all very helpful. It would be good to entice Peter to visit us in Melbourne in the off-season; more on that in a future newsletter.

The second was the fierce competition for culinary top-dog, which produced superb evening meals cooked by pairs of anglers rotating. Taking into account a myriad of considerations the judges awarded the prize for 2022 to Peter Clayton and Bill Jeans. Congratulations! But thanks to the rest of the group for superb meals, excellent wine, great company, and lots of help cleaning up.

Thursday night was our traditional dinner, with notable guests Michael Youl, Jim Allen, Ron Dennis, Ray Brown, Ian Dickinson, Mark and Genevieve



*Dr David Hooke*

Youngman, Andrew Braithwaite, David and Rhonda Grisold and Simon Joel. Other Tasmanian friends of the VFFA, fly fishermen, and supportive landowners were invited but unfortunately were unable to join us. It was a splendid evening. Modesty forbids me commenting on the food, as the cooks for the night were the President and the Immediate Past President. Suffice to say there were no complaints and the 'piece de resistance' was Chris Gray's crepes!

This year, for the first time, quite a few of those who came to Cressy spent the previous week at Currawong Lakes. They reported difficult fishing but otherwise had a fine time. A separate report will appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

By the time you read this newsletter we will have had our traditional Liars' Night, with reports from Jon Kenfield on Currawong Lakes, Chris Gray on Cressy, and Will Davidson on his

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first visit to John Pilkington's place at Enoch's Point on the Big River. I'm not exaggerating! The Kelvin Club is still having some difficulty retaining a chef, so the meal on Thursday will be provided courtesy of the restaurant next door.

Andrew Mossman will be the speaker at our March meeting, so we look forward to a great night. Andrew is a highly skilled fly fisher and fly tier, and a very experienced angler who has fished for trout in Victorian and Tasmanian waters, rivers in the UK, and of course the rivers in New Zealand's South Island that he has fished every year for so many years. Andrew is a very knowledgeable and thoughtful angler and has much to teach us. So mark Thursday, March 17, in your diary. This promises to be a very good night.

Our speaker in April will be Kiel Jones, who will tell us about 'Mayflies'. This will be an entomological 'tour de force'. Only this week I was struggling to recall the life cycle of mayflies as we watched them hatch on the stones beside the lake we were fishing. We can also report that our guest speaker for May is Peter Morse, courtesy of J.M. Gillies. The Annual Auction, which we normally hold in May, has been moved to later in the year.

Finally, you may be wondering at the relevance of the above quote from Rasheed Ogunlaru. Tis the season for

living in close quarters with our fellow fishermen and observing the daily give and take. Little things that might often pass unnoticed but which together make an ordinary trip into a truly memorable experience.

Not wanting to embarrass him, but one of the outstanding 'givers' in the VFFA is Chris Gray, who put an enormous amount of time and effort into the logistics and communications to make this year's trip to Cressy the success that it was. Peter Hayes has also experienced 'generosity of spirit' up close and personal, so much so that he has named one of the gins he distils 'Generosity of Spirit'. At the end of a day's fishing, with a dash of tonic and a slice of orange, it is hard to beat. It can be purchased online via [www.wintergin.com.au](http://www.wintergin.com.au) and if you include the code VFFAGIN there is a 10% discount, provided you place your order before March 21.

Also on the website is the story of how two well-known Tasmanian fly fishermen came to be distilling a very fine gin. It's quite a Lark.



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## Report on Liars' Night

Our first meeting for the year was at the Kelvin Club on February 24. We began with a meal – beef or fish – delivered from a neighbouring restaurant, and it was fine.

Unfortunately numbers were a little low, which was a pity as the three speakers

for the night were very entertaining. Jon Kenfield told us all about our first VFFA-organised trip to Currawong Lakes in Tasmania. Currawong is a private fishery with three very attractive lakes that are heavily stocked with browns and rainbows. The weather wasn't kind to our group initially, but towards the end of

the week conditions improved and over the week some 56 fish were landed. Jon's report on this week is included later in this issue.

Chris Gray then reported on the week at Peter Hayes's fishing lodge. Again the fishing was testing, but fish were caught and some members enjoyed excellent days on some of Tassie's top rivers. Chris's detailed report is also included in this issue.

Our third speaker for the evening was Secretary Will Davidson, who gave us a very entertaining account of his first visit to John Pilkington's superb lodge at Enoch's Point on the Big River. Among other things, Will reminded us that a photo he took in one of the rooms at the lodge wound up being the 'Shot of the Month' in the highly esteemed UK magazine *Fly Fishing & Fly Tying*. Mark Bowler, who edits this magazine, is a keen reader of our newsletter. He spotted Will's photo and subsequently published it.



*President David Hooke began proceedings*



*Jon Kenfield told us all about the week at Currawong*

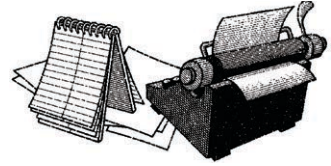


*Our secretary Will Davidson enjoyed Enoch's Point*



*Chris Gray reported on the time at Hayse on Brumbys*

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



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

*"With the right conditions, nature herself provides the best and the cheapest way of producing trout, and will produce as many as the food in the river will support."* (Dermot Wilson: *Fishing the Dry Fly*)

*"Here lies poor Thompson all alone, as dead and cold as any stone.  
In wading in the river Nith he took a cold which stopp'd his breath.  
He fished the stream for 10 years past, death caught him in his net at last."* (Written on a tombstone in Dumfries, England)

*"Knowing a river intimately is a very large part of the joy of fly fishing."* (Roderick Haig-Brown: *A River Never Sleeps*)

Books are a significant component of fly fishing. So Nick Taransky has written this month about some of his favourite books.

The VFFA has over the years acquired a magnificent library, though very few members borrow from it. Perhaps the usefulness of our fishing literature has diminished a bit with the advent of YouTube. For example, I have several books on fly tying, which I value, but if I need some help tying a particular fly I often check on YouTube and find a video of some guru demonstrating the tying procedure in detail. And it's easily accessible and at no cost.

But I still love my books, and they remain a constant source of information and enjoyment. And I, too, have my favourites. I think I'm close to owning all of Philip Weigall's books, many of which I regularly consult. But without doubt the writer I most enjoy is David Scholes. When I open *The Way Of An Angler* or *Trout Quest* he takes me up the river and tells me about the fish he finds, the challenges they present, and the methods

he uses to undo them. On a cold winter's night a chapter or two of *Trout Quest* is very relaxing entertainment.

David wrote mostly about the trout fishing in Tasmania. And why not. After all, Tasmania has the ideal climate for trout and an ample supply of suitable rivers and lakes. I have on my bookshelf a copy of David's *The Enchanting Break O'Day* – a tome entirely devoted to a wonderful Tasmanian river that provided him with so much pleasure.

Many years ago!

Recent reports on the Break O'Day describe an alarming decline in this once fabulous stream, and maybe this is symptomatic. It seems there is growing concern among those who know the river fishing in Tasmania that perhaps it is not as good as it once was. Possibly towards the end of his days Scholes sensed the start of this decline - he is reported as saying: "I've had the best; you take the rest."

A few weeks ago I was pointed to this website - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-28/tasmanian-waterways-report-not-released-bombshell-advice/100655798>

To quote from it: "A major report showing a deterioration in Tasmanian rivers was not publicly released after the department directed staff to make it an internal document, following acknowledgements some stakeholders might have found it "difficult to accept", and the department did not want a "bombshell"."

This report "drew on more than 20 years of monitoring data from 85 sites on Tasmanian rivers, and showed 46 per cent of those sites had declined in recent years, with many severely or significantly impaired. The independently reviewed report linked agricultural land use and water extraction to poor river condition."

Another website I found is at "<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-08/tasmania-river-system-health-decline-department-report/100424004>, and it continues the saga, noting these key points:

- Tasmania's water quality has been under increasing pressure from climate change, agriculture and other industries;
- A report linking poor river health to agricultural land use, salinity and extraction was only released after a Right to Information request was lodged;
- The state government is also pushing ahead with ambitious growth plans for industries heavily reliant on freshwater.

The website quotes angler Rick Lohrey, who has fished the rivers in north-eastern Tasmania for more than 40 years. Some of his favourite spots used to be

on Tasmania's longest river, the South Esk. "You could catch fish pretty much anytime, anywhere, on any stretch of the river," he said. "It was just a magnificent river. But the South Esk is not what it used to be. Long stretches of the stream appear to be barren." Another of Mr Lohrey's favourite rivers, the Break O'Day, used to draw fly fishermen from across the country. Now, he can barely catch a fish.

The Anglers' Alliance is an important Tasmanian fishing organisation. It describes itself as "the peak body for freshwater anglers in Tasmania and works closely with the Inland Fisheries Service to provide significant angler feedback to both fisheries management as well as State and Local Government." Anglers Alliance is "Working for your trout fishery".

The AAT website can be found at: [https://www.anglersalliance.org.au/?fbclid=IwAR2iTKSwbEuwv\\_zqq-72y2cph9381rXxBypbAED6kZLqORhEYdVXTOVSpTc](https://www.anglersalliance.org.au/?fbclid=IwAR2iTKSwbEuwv_zqq-72y2cph9381rXxBypbAED6kZLqORhEYdVXTOVSpTc)

The Alliance reports receiving "an unprecedented flow of concerns from anglers across Tasmania, the common theme being river health." The Website then lists a number of recent river disasters.

These websites describe the problem. Anglers want clean, clear, healthy and unpolluted water for their trout, and the trout request the same. Rivers reduced to a series of shallow water holes due to heavy water extraction, or being used as a cheap and convenient way to get rid of unwanted toxic waste, don't support many fish. But the rivers of course remain a public resource available to the whole community. When the rains don't come farmers need to pump water for their crops, and all manner of other users will take water or add to it, depending >>>

on their specific needs. So clearly there are conflicting demands.

Tasmania once provided wonderful river fishing for trout that was enjoyed by locals and huge numbers of trout tourists. And no doubt there are still many rivers there that consistently provide good stream fishing. VFFA members who stayed at Peter Hayes's recently report some good stream fishing. But sadly the reports suggest that overall it is not now as good as it once was. Speaking on behalf of trout fishers, we've all lost something that was magnificent, and that is sad.



*David Scholes was a favourite author for many of us*

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## The Origins of the Australian Trout Foundation

In the early 1990s, when it became evident that Victorian government fishery managers were keen to eradicate trout from Victorian freshwater fisheries, two prominent Victorian trout anglers, Philip Bailey and Mick Hall, saw the need for a new independent organisation dedicated to fighting for the welfare of trout in Victoria. They agreed that it should be called the 'Australian Trout Foundation'. Thus the ATF came into being.

Philip and Mick gathered a team of high profile Victorian anglers who drew up a Trout Fishery Management Plan, then took the fight up with the fishery managers.

A state election was held at this time and there was a change of government. The ATF met with the newly elected minister and presented him with an assessment that showed that recreational angling contributed significantly to the state's economy. From that time onwards the Australian Trout Foundation has remained a key player in protecting and promoting trout in Australia.

We have several species of native fish in Victoria, so why this interest in trout? This is because trout are almost certainly the most important sporting fish worldwide. Brown and rainbow trout fisheries thrive and are highly valued in the USA, the UK, Europe, South Africa, Japan, Canada, ... The list goes on, and includes Australia. Trout are an attractive fish, and can be caught using bait, metal spinners, and flies. They often feed by eating insects from the surface of rivers and lakes, and thus are the keenly sought target of fly fishers.

Trout need cool clean water, and this is where the ATF currently contributes so significantly. Victorian trout are found in both lakes and rivers. Because many of our Victorian stillwaters don't have spawning streams running into them they need to be stocked. But with rivers, however, there is plenty of research demonstrating that putting hatchery-raised fish into rivers where spawning can occur naturally can be counterproductive.

So the ATF's response to improving trout populations in rivers has been to use Jordan Scotty Incubators to place fertilized trout eggs, from wild trout, in rivers where more trout are needed. ATF members and fishing club members gathered in recent years at the Snobs Creek Hatchery and loaded large numbers of incubators with fertilised eggs. These eggs were then placed in selected rivers by ATF members who travelled long distances in some cases to reach isolated localities.

Trout also need cool water, so another major activity of the ATF has been to improve river habitat. Teams of ATF volunteers with fishing club helpers have planted trees along the banks of many Victorian rivers to provide shade and thus keep water temperatures down to levels that are comfortable for trout.

Another invaluable habitat improvement measure the ATF has undertaken is to place rocks and logs in stretches of several rivers. These rocks and logs form pools where fish can shelter from strong currents. They create seams of fast and slow water where trout can congregate to feed. These introduced rocks and logs greatly increase the number of fish that can occupy a stretch of river.

The ATF is now led by Terry George, a very hard-working and deeply committed president who is supported



*ATF president Terry George at a Trout Foundation function at Myrtleford*

by a committee that meets regularly to manage the ongoing program and a large team of willing volunteers who give up weekends and travel sometimes long distances to assist with habitat work. The contribution of the Australian Trout Foundation to the Victorian trout fishery is immense and incalculable, and the impact of this work benefits many hundreds of keen Victorian freshwater anglers.

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## Tom Sutcliffe's Offer

In late 2019 we had some fierce bushfires here in Victoria. One report says: "The 2019 - 2020 bushfire season was unprecedented in intensity and devastation. Throughout the summer multiple fires burnt large areas of Victoria and all states of Australia, resulting in 34 fatalities and huge losses of land and wildlife."

Tom Sutcliffe lives in South Africa. He is a prominent South African fly fisher and has authored six highly acclaimed books on trout fishing. He is also a skilled artist and has created some stunning water colours of fly fishing scenes.

Tom is also a good friend of the VFFA, and when he read of the

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*Scans of Tom's two watercolours. The leaping trout is 28cm x 23cm and the swimming fish is 40cm x 29cm. Both are on heavy art paper*

devastation caused by the 2019 fires he was keen to help in some way. So in December 2019 he emailed this message:

“Lyndon - I have been so dismayed by the fires in Australia and wondered if I could do anything – obviously small. What I am thinking of is helping vets who treat countless injured animals. I believe that many good charities will support the poor folk on the ground, but animals like the koalas might also need help.

I thought of a watercolour that would appeal to fly fishers in Australia who would then donate whatever they thought reasonable to the VFFA for use by an appropriate organisation specifically geared to addressing the plight of animals as a result of the fires. I will send some examples of recent art for you to consider in a day or two. I will of course donate the door-to-door courier costs. Best regards, Tom.”

Accordingly, two fine watercolours from Tom arrived, and we had every intention of following through with his suggestion. But life then became dreadfully

complicated. Covid arrived, and VFFA meetings were Zoom affairs. Then president Chris Gray and I discussed some ways of selling or auctioning Tom's two prints, but the circumstances never seemed to be quite right.

However, we must follow through. The organisation we can send funds to is Wildlife Victoria at <https://www.wildlifelivictoria.org.au>. Even though it is now some time since the 2019 fires this organisation is always in need of funds.

Above are quick scans of Tom's two prints. If any of our readers are keen to purchase one or both of these watercolours then please email me at [lgwebb@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lgwebb@bigpond.net.au) with any queries and/or your offer, and we can then organize the delivery of the artwork and forward the funds to Wildlife Victoria.



# Tasmanian Fishing Report – Western Lakes

... from Chris Wisniewski, Tasmania Inland Fisheries Service

A group of six of us have a seven-day fishing trip into the Western Lakes each January. It all started in 1989 when we drove three 4WDs to the crossing at the Julian Lakes. Our camp was rudimentary, being a tarp strung between the vehicles. We slept in the back of the vehicles or in old tents. We were belted by the wind and rain and caught only a few fish on that first trip. But we learned many lessons. There must have been something about the place that drew us back, because as we prepared our gear this year for the 33rd time we were as excited as ever.

## **Saturday:**

We met at the Liawenee Parks and Wildlife base at 10:00 am where we signed in on the register. This put us at Lake Augusta and the start of the Pillans/Julian track at around 10:30 am. We stopped for a quick briefing at the James River crossing, then I unloaded my mountain bike and the others put their vehicles into 4WD. The track is rough and hard on vehicles, so it is a cautious trip in trying to dodge the differential cracking rocks and duco gouging bushes. But the drivers know the track well, have vehicles with improved suspension, and had fitted high profile 12 ply tyres and steel rims for the trip. Despite this it still took two and half bone jarring hours to travel the 14 km to the Julian Lakes. I ride my bike there in less than half that time but don't carry the steak, beer, wine and comforts of home, so it is always good to know that the cavalry is behind me. And things are now much improved from those early days!

We have found that the Julian Lakes provides a good central location for the wide variety of visual fishing that we like. In the days leading up to the trip we keep

a close watch on the weather forecast and plan our daily excursions around the conditions.

At first light a morning patrol is common provided it is not raining and blowing. This means a 5:00 am start. There are areas near our camp where tailing fish can be found fairly consistently. This is the main attraction at this time of day, but we also find midge feeders and fish chomping duns at times in the early morning light. On clear sky mornings the polaroids come out as soon as the sun is up, and by using any elevated position we can spot fish. But you need to be careful, as the long shadows of a waving rod will scare them. Setting them up in the right place is important. The aim is usually to get any feeding fish to take a dry fly, but sometimes a nymph is the only thing that will get their attention when their tails are up. A dry Zulu or black nymph are the first flies to be tied on.

Typically blue sky days are used for walking and using the light to polaroid fish in the smaller headwater tarns. A day walk can mean you end up covering 20 – 30 kilometres. You can head off in any direction and find suitable water and cruising fish. We tend to pair up for our walks, as this not only provides some safety but allows us to fish each side of the ponds and tarns, thus covering as much water as possible as we wander.

This year the trip in was uneventful. No punctured tyres and I didn't fall off my bike! It was a sunny day with a light north-west wind. I always carry a small pack with a box of flies and a rod to keep myself entertained while waiting for the troops to arrive. I stopped at a roadside lagoon close to where >>>

we were planning to camp and took advantage of the good light to have a wander with the polaroids. This pond is known for holding big fish. And sure enough, after about 20 minutes of careful looking I spotted a big brown, 3 kg plus, lying still in about a metre of water. I could make out his large pectoral fins as he was looking straight at me.

I wasn't sure if he had seen me, but he hadn't spooked so I made a short low cast with a size 10 black foam cricket. No reaction. I tried a few more drifts, but again no response. A stick caddis was then drifted past his nose a couple of times. Again, no response. A scruffy parachute dun and then a black spinner didn't get a response either. After 10 minutes of torment the fish finally turned and cruised out though the reeds. I had a few more shots with a dry fly but these brought no interest other than steadily increasing his speed, stirring the silty bottom as he moved out into deeper water.

I moved along about 20 metres and spotted another brown cruising along the shore towards me. I took a few steps back and fired an ambush shot out around a large boulder. As the fish came around the boulder he spotted the dry fly and sped up, heading directly towards it. This was one of those fish that you would have money on, convinced he was going to take the fly. But no, he stayed on the bottom and cruised right under the fly continuing on his way. A couple more shots were ignored as he cruised out into deep water. Ha! They weren't going to be easy but at least I was seeing them. By then the rest of the team had arrived in the 4WDs and I had to leave the fishing and do my duty helping to setting up camp! It is always good to get one up on them, but not this time.

That evening there was a steady north-east breeze. It started to drop out towards



*George caught this superb golden brown trout*

dark and a few duns were floating about in front of the camp. There was the odd fish munching them but despite getting a couple to rise none were hooked.

### **Sunday:**

I woke before first light and went for a wander down along the shore. I didn't find any tails until the light brightened up a bit and I arrived down near the bottom of the lake. Here I found a couple of fish working in a thick weed bed. You could see the weed move a bit, or the tip of a tail, and at times a dorsal fin or tail would appear like a submarine surfacing then sinking in slow motion. I tried a dry and then a nymph, but they were in weed so thick that they just didn't see my presentations.

I persisted for a good half an hour with no luck, then headed back to a small lagoon that usually has reliable tailing fish. But things were quiet. Finally, as I was about to head back for breakfast a tail and dorsal appeared. A quick flick and the Zulu was about a metre ahead of the fish in the shallow weedy pond. The fish slowly mooched toward the fly, its head and snout coming out of the water as it engulfed the fly. I hooked the fish and it wallowed around in the shallow water

with really nowhere to run. After a short battle I lifted the barbless hook from the side of the fish's jaw with forceps without lifting him from the water. Away he swam as slowly as he had been cruising along. Did he know what had just gone on? Back to camp for breakfast.

The day was going to be a blue sky polaroiding beauty. Young George had walked out to spend a couple of days with us, and with our aging group it was good to have someone keen to go on a lengthy hike and check out some more remote water. George is a keen outdoors man, and while he has only been fly fishing for a couple of years has already spent a fair bit of time in the western lakes and has fallen in love with them. Oh, to be 20 again. We headed off down the Pillans track about 9:00 am on a mission to see if we could find George a big western lakes fish.

Before reaching Pillans Hut we turned west and headed up through the Slab Lagoon catchment. George was on the right bank at Slab Lagoon, and I was on the left. It wasn't long before I saw him drop to his knees and make a short cast. A couple more casts and he stood up



*George standing on a high bank to better polaroid the edge of the lake*

and continued to walk, indicating that the fish had moved on. We rotated from left to right sides as we moved up the catchment. In the next tarn I landed a fish around 1 kg. The fish was in a shallow corner where a creek flowed in. I saw the tail of the fish as it cruised around the corner under some bushes and out of sight. So I nipped up ahead and set up the ambush. He didn't hesitate to take the scruffy dun.

A few pools further up I could see George using the sun over his shoulder from the high left bank. He began casting and was soon hooked up. After a strong fight he was down at the water's edge and released the fish. The next pool was deep and you couldn't see the bottom. It had a deep sphagnum moss edge on the left bank. A fish rose on the edge and disappeared back down deep. I floated a scruffy dun through the area, and sure enough the fish came up and with a slow head and dorsal rise chomped down the fly. I waited, then lifted the rod. The fly came back over my shoulder without the hook touching the fish. The fish began to go deep again, so I quickly recast. The fish rose again, and this time when I lifted the rod there was a tightening followed by a shake of the head he was gone. We continued searching around a number of very likely big fish waters, but things were quiet despite the conditions being so good.

We got together to discuss our next moves at the bottom of a small hole below Pencil Pine Tarn. As we stood peering into an attractive corner a fish cruised in from the deep and started slowly patrolling. A quick flick put the scruffy dun out ahead of it. The fish crept along, then rose off the bottom and took the fly. Again there was a tightening, a shake of the head, and it was gone! Luck certainly wasn't going with me.

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We walked up through the Pencil Pines on the western shore of Lake Gwendy. On warm days like this spinner feeders can often be found in the quiet bays. It was quiet. The odd fish rose spasmodically out in the deeper water out of reach, but there was nothing in close. We drifted our dry flies off a deep point as we sat and had lunch. Nothing rose. The most brightly coloured black and gold banded tiger snake appeared and came directly toward us across the lake. It reached the shore and was about a rod's length away. As it lay in the water peering at us George touched it on the nose with the tip of his rod. It dived down under the water into some large rocks about 2 metres down and disappeared. The water was crystal clear, and while we sat there for another 10 minutes finishing our lunch it didn't reappear.

We wandered around the northern end of Gwendy and the wind dropped and black spinners started drifting out off the sheltered shore. We spotted a good fish cruising in one of the quiet corners. George floated a black cricket over it a number of times and I tried to tempt it with a scruffy dun and a black spinner, but it would not take our offerings, and eventually disappeared.

In the next pond to the north of Gwendy we didn't see a fish. The following tarn is known by those who fish the area as 'Tombstone' because of a large rock that is there. This is a reliable water and has produce some big fish for me. The visibility was still good. George decided to go to the left - a good decision. This is where I had seen good fish in the past cruising along the undercut banks and deeper water. I sauntered for half an hour looking in all the likely spots. There were lots of overhanging bushes, attractive edges, calm corners and good points jutting out with the breeze pushing past. And I saw nothing.

I had lost sight of George because of the shape of the tarn, so sat on the bank and waited for him. After a while I saw him coming along the shore. He was talking to himself and appeared quite shaken. Had a snake chased him? No, he had just caught a ripper of a trout. Still shaking, he went into great detail explaining how while he stood quietly looking into deep water he had made out the shape of a fish moving ever so slowly along the bottom. He placed his size 8 black cricket well ahead of the fish to ambush it. The fish kept moving ever so slowly, then finally spotted the fly and rose up, engulfing it right in front of George, who held his nerve, waited for the fish to turn down, then tightened. The fish shook its head and charged off, taking the line towards underwater branches and rocks. George had to apply strong side pressure to manoeuvre the fish away from these game-ending snags. Finally, after some 10 minutes, George was able to lift the fish from the water, take a photo and release it. Interestingly, while George was fighting this fish another larger fish cruised by!

It was getting late in the day and we were still a long way from camp. George had caught a great fish, so we had achieved what we had set out to do. From here we had a long cross-country trek over hill and dale to get back to the camp. It was a two hour walk. We arrived back at camp, footsore and with the GPS showing we had wandered 24 km over the tundra. Dinner had been prepared for us - silverside and vegies. I enjoyed hearing George's story again as he described catching that big fish, along with some intense questioning from the older blokes over a cold beer.

(Too be continued next issue ...)



# VFFA Trip to Currawong Lakes - February 2022

... by Jon Kenfield (“Gadget”)

In one of his many splendid books John Gierach opines that when a fishing article starts out describing the beauty of the environment in which the fishing took place you can be sure that few or no fish were actually caught. Well, that didn't apply to our trip to the fabulous Currawong Lakes in Tasmania's Eastern Tiers, though the environment was utterly beautiful and the fish were hard to find and even harder to catch.

According to the trip log, 56 fish were caught by 10 guys over the week, most of these fish being browns of 2 to 3 pounds, and generally in great condition.

We saw limited numbers of frustratingly uncatchable dragonfly leapers and early morning sippers, polaroided the occasional very cautious shallow water marauders, and blind-flogged the lakes with streamers and dry flies with nymph droppers.

Interestingly, 43 of the 56 fish were caught by two groups of boat-based anglers. The shore-based guys had a tougher time, especially with the unseasonable weed growth extending from the edges of

most of the three lakes, largely caused by unusual weather conditions

“Hammer” Hughes caught the two largest fish of the week at 4½ and 6½ pounds respectively (guide's estimates). “Woody” Priestley top scored with 15 fish, although he did troll vast numbers of flies (English loch-style) to do so. It was suggested (tactfully, I thought) that if he really wants to catch lots of fish he'd



*Gordon Baker with a typical Currawong brown*



*The comforts and consequences of guided boating*

>>>

be better off buying a trawler than going fly fishing ... but I doubt he will.

The weather was kind to us, although less Easterly wind would have been nice. Tasmania has been plagued with constant Easterlies for most of this season, and so with very little rain for months before our arrival we were warned to keep expectations low.

So what of Currawong Lakes? It's a 2,000 acre property with three lakes, hundreds of deer, a fantastic "sporting clay pigeon" range, small conference centre, magnificent Lake House, plush cabins, and excellent sleeping and cooking facilities. Everything has been "themed" to the nines by Meryn, the arty half of the couple that comprises her and husband, Richard, a mad keen, whisky-drinking fly fisherman who drove the purchase of the property four years ago, almost on a whim. There is a good back story there!

Most of us fished all day and decompressed back at the Lake House at dusk for drinks and snacks on the balcony overlooking Long Marsh Lake. Dinner followed, prepared by a different pair of anglers, each night. We worked an honour system: cook whatever you like for your mates, knowing that effort would be appreciated and that the slagging would be interminable if you cheaped or whimped out. It worked, and everybody enjoyed the varied and



*Hamish Hughes was in top form. He caught the two largest fish for the week – a brown of 4½ lb and another of 6½ lb*

sumptuous repasts presented each night. Great culinary efforts were driven by dreams of glory, fears of retribution, and one forward thinker who persuaded his bride to make and freeze something tasty for him to bring with him.

The generally agreed plan was to eat early to allow late fishing sessions, but most of us got too "comfortable". We enjoyed the luxurious accommodation and shared fishing tales, tall and true, over dinner. So there was little appetite for hairy-chested nocturnal forays, notwithstanding we were in one of the easiest places on the planet to do so. There was easy access to fishing at our back door, but it was sooooo nice to just sit and talk in the evenings.

Over dinner we held a daily de-brief where everyone shared what they'd done, what worked, and what didn't.



*Treasurer Tony Mitchem enjoyed Currawong*



*While browns were mostly caught some fine rainbows were connected with too*

We were also introduced to a new knot – the Davey Knot - by Lester, our resident psychiatrist. These evening sessions generated some very interesting information and discussion. Most of us acquired both new knowledge and closer acquaintances with our compadres.

The dynamic was a little different to that at St Peter’s Croft (Hayes on Brumbys), to which most of us headed at the end of the Currawong week. Others will tell that tale. Most participants were keen to book

in for another trip next year. Richard suggested we come in March, and my sense is that it would be better to separate the two trips (Currawong and Hayes), rather than tag one onto the other, as we did here.

So, farewell Currawong Lakes, and thanks to our gracious hosts - Meryn and Richard.

In the words of the Terminator: “I’ll be back!”



*The Lake House on Long Marsh Lake – truly luxurious accommodation*



*Farewell Currawong Lakes, and our thanks to our two gracious hosts Meryn and Richard Krimmer*

# Tasmania Trip Report - February 2022

... from Chris Gray

In our 17<sup>th</sup> year of trips to Hayes in Brumbys at Cressy, Tasmania, a fantastic week with some great banter was enjoyed by all who attended. Enthusiasm was high and expectations warmed with discussion of where the best trout could be found.

Messrs Hooke, Wakefield, Muir, Kenfield, Priestley, Clayton, Jeans, Carter, Hughes, Hirst, Walton and Gray had a combined wisdom level way beyond their fishing experiences, though this was soon levelled when Haysie commenced his morning teaching on everything from basic line management to the more technical “one fly day”.

Local support came from Ray Brown, Andrew Braithwaite, Mark Youngman, and Jim Allen, who provided up to date knowledge on best locations and flies to kick off the week. We were warned to expect some challenging conditions with the prevailing easterly winds.

Our week encompassed a range of rivers and lakes: the Meander, Lake, Mersey, Camden Rivulet, St Patricks, Ford, Macquarie, North and South Esk, Nile, Musselboro, Brumbys, Western Creek, Huntsman, Gunns, Leake, Little Lake, Penstock and Lake St Clair. We covered some miles in search of trout.

The lakes fishermen enjoyed some mixed success over the week, with healthy



*Michael Youl shared some memories with Jim Allen”*



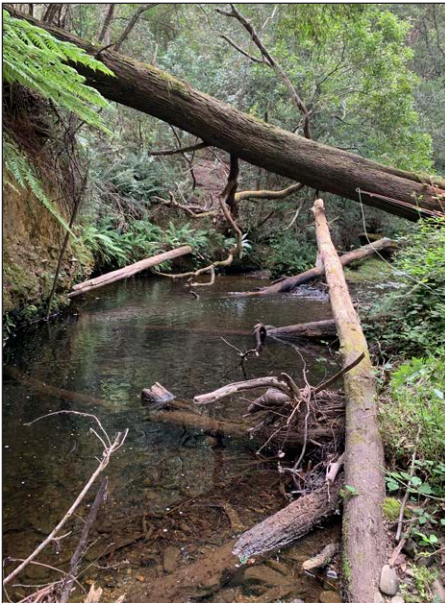
*The Thursday night meal was another well-attended event*



*The day began with some casting tuition by Peter Hayes, one of our top Australian casting instructors*



*A typical Tassie river brown being returned by Ray Brown, well-known Tasmanian angler and top fly tier*



*Tasmanian trout sometimes live in tight corners.  
The river here is the Little Forester.*



*Alf Priestley enjoyed some great fishing on the Lake River with Peter Hayes.*

fish being taken on spinners, duns and streamers. A group day on Lake Fergus was a very successful outing with President Hooke taking the prize for his efforts. River fishers were rewarded by using hoppers, duns, caddis and spinners. We were fortunate to fish the Lake River at Connorville Station with Peter on several days and enjoyed great success there.

Our Thursday night dinner was well supported with the local coterie joining us. Peter Hayes, Jim Allen, Michael Youl, Ron Dennis, Andrew Braithwaite, Ray Brown, Ian Dickinson, Rhonda and David Grisold, Mark and Genevieve Youngman were our very welcome guests. A wonderful night for catching up and sharing stories.

We had booked Peter Hayes for the week and were rewarded each morning with some casting tuition along with entertaining descriptions of the previous day's angler pitfalls.

The evening meal duties were shared amongst the aspiring chefs and provided keen competition amongst them as they attempted gourmet meals for the tired and weary anglers. The evening discussions on the day's learnings and plans for the next day's adventures were well supported with gin, wine, whiskey and banter. Congratulations to our winning Chefs of the Week – Peter >>>

Clayton and Bill Jeans, who took home the prize donated by Aussie Angler.

The week was very enjoyable with some enthralling stories and great camaraderie shared amongst the group. The spirit within the VFFA along with the diversity of backgrounds brought us together in

pursuit of trout. A simple endeavour that captivates us all.

A very special thank you to each of the members on the trip for making it successful, and to our Tasmanian friends and members for their generous hospitality and assistance.



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## A Brief New Zealand Report

... Nick Taransky

February here in the Taihape region has felt a little like I've moved all the way from Australia only to bring the hot weather here with me. It seems that when the low pressure systems off the Australian East coast bring the rain there, New Zealand misses out. The Hautapu slowed to a gentle flow and went very clear - "as clear as it gets", as the locals tell me.

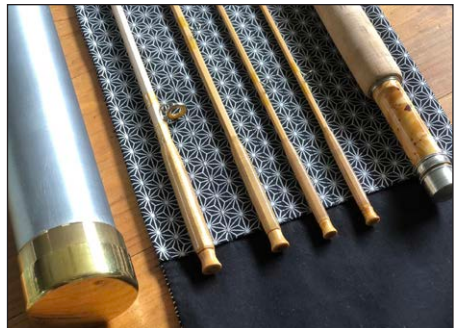
Flowing through farmland and Papa, it usually has a tinge of suspended silt through it, but until the "drought" broke a week ago it was almost gin clear. With the warm weather and lack of current, the fish pushed hard in under the shade of the willows and have been lazily sipping down willow grubs all day long. I've continued to have fun trying different flies and presentations on these fish, with mixed results. It's curious how what works on one fish can send the next bolting like a scalded cat. Then a third fish will just completely ignore the same pattern with disdain. And the fourth charges up and eats it like the last free party pie on the table ...

With the constant distraction of fish rising out my window, and the call of the larger Rangitikei just down the road, I've been quite proud of my work ethic of late. I have quite a few rods in production on the bench, and my first completed New



*Whatever willow grubs taste like, trout love them!*

Zealand-made rod has been mailed off to the new owner. It's one of a new "Madake Series" that I am making, with a Japanese theme. Madake bamboo has a lower modulus than Tonkin Cane, creating



*First rod finally out of the New Zealand workshop*

a very fluid action. Finished in lemon blonde cane and wraps, with matching Huon burl reel seats, and bamboo ferules, they've been a nice counterpoint to my normal richly flamed Tonkin rods. The Madake rods are supplied in a custom bag made from vintage recycled Japanese Kimono fabric.

Angus, my local friend and fellow bamboo rod fisher, recently chiselled me out of the workshop to show me a small Rangitikei tributary flowing out of the Ruahine Ranges. After a visit to the landowner and a steep descent to the valley floor the river was more reminiscent in parts to an American brook trout stream than a New Zealand river. It held a small fish population, but the fish sizes were anything but small. We saw a handful of fish for the day, and managed to hook and land a couple. The added bonus was the free cardio workout when walking back up out of the valley at the end of the day. I don't mind the exercise, but tiptoeing along cliff ledges is something I don't know that I'll ever get used to.



*At the other end of the scale from the small streams, the majestic Rangitikei has been looking inviting...*

Though it still feels like summer at the moment, the odd hint of Autumn has been in the air recently, so I really should start making the most of the remainder of the season. We're semi-settled into our new place now, the garden is up and running, and the workshop is in "full" production, so I have no excuses or guilt to stop me from spending some more time on the water ...



*Exploring local small streams has been fun, though the walks in and out to get to them have been a real workout*

## April Vokey

April Vokey is a good friend and honorary member of the VFFA. She is also one of the best-known fly fishers in the world. After discovering a passion for fly fishing in her late teens, she soon dedicated her entire life to the pursuit. She began her guiding career on the Fraser and Harrison rivers in Canada, but left after several seasons to found her own guiding operation, Fly Gal Ventures, at age 24. She has since established herself as a respected authority in the sport and has written for many of the leading fly fishing publications. She has also been featured in countless TV presentations, including her own series, *ShoreLines with April Vokey*, shown on the World Fishing Network. She now has her own podcast, *Anchored with April Vokey*, dedicated to archiving the stories and personalities from some of fly-fishing's most influential people. April is a FFF certified casting instructor, a fly-tying instructor, travelling speaker and an eternal student of life, love, and conservation. Here is an article she wrote many years ago giving her account of her passion for fly fishing.

I grew up in Surrey (in Canada), a city where nothing surprised me. “Drugs, sex, and alcohol” were the cliché catchwords used by teachers who knew nothing of what happened in our world after midnight — words used to deter their students from strolling down the wrong path. What they didn’t know was that “drugs, sex, and alcohol” took place

in the high-school handicap bathroom during lunch breaks, let alone off school property in the after-hours. In fact, for many of my friends, the over-used rock and roll phrase wasn’t something to stay away from, rather an improvement to their current lifestyle.



*April Vokey demonstrating she is a highly skilled angler*



*When April was in Melbourne some years ago she gave some excellent fly tying demonstrations*

I was fortunate to have been brought up by loving parents who worked hard to ensure that my younger sister and I were comfortable in both home and living. Dad worked late nights in a rope factory, while mom ran an office nearby. They focused on raising us as strong, moral young women, at times even fearing that they'd encouraged us to be too hard-headed or ambitious. Looking back now, I'll admit that I occasionally wonder the same thing.

To imply that I was difficult during my teenage years would be an understatement. Neither drugs, sex, nor alcohol were my vice, but disobedience, fighting, and nonconformity easily took their place. I had a big mouth, strong arms, a vast vocabulary, and a complete lack of respect for anyone who bullied the weak. Be it teachers or peers, I couldn't help myself from fighting to make wrongs right. Suspension was an annual event, but my recurring lead-role in the school's musical theatre managed to clear me of expulsion. I knew my cards and I played them well.

But years of harsh reality inevitably take their toll on soft hearts, and by the

time I was a senior in high school I was searching for a getaway beyond the city lines. From my days as a young child, I'd always loved the outdoors and its endless opportunity to explore the unknown. So, armed with a beat-up car and years of accumulated fishing tackle, I skipped my afternoon classes to unwind by the river. Alone and liberated, I roamed the forest looking for adventure in its mossy shadows, and while I found much excitement in the white-water rapids and bear inhabited cliffside, it was the exploration of myself that truly lead me to the river.

By the time I graduated, my passion for fishing had drawn a dividing line between myself and the people I surrounded myself with. Late night parties and brawls saw me duck out early so that I could be somewhat rested for first-light fishing treks. Roommates who brought home random men laughed at me as I sat alone on the floor greasing up reels, and I laughed back knowing that as soon as they'd served their disgusting purpose the very same men would be sitting around me, curious and eager to know more about my craft. The entire routine sickened me, and before long I was sourcing out alternate living arrangements in the countryside where the rivers were close and the drama was limited.

Ironically, it was when the river pushed at my knees that I felt the most grounded; when the road led me to mossy overgrowth that I felt the safest; when I'd forgotten where I was that I felt the most found. In those days the mornings never came soon enough, and only the black of night stopped me from leaving the house any earlier. Even that may not have been enough of a deterrence, if it hadn't been illegal to fish for salmon and steelhead before dawn.

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My love affair with the sport wasn't nearly as romantic as one might like to think it should be for a fly fisher. Starting as a bait-fisher, I would rely on the use of treated eggs to tempt fish to bite. Bits of crusty roe nestled themselves into the curvatures of my thumbnails, and I would habitually grate my finger tips down the leg of my waders in an attempt to fade the cerise stain of pro-cure and borax from my hands. It wasn't until after several years, fishing buddies, and books that I came to own my first fly rod and box of handmade flies. But equipment does not make the angler and it wouldn't have made a difference to me if I was fishing a dew worm, or a Victorian-era featherwing. I was there for the fish, not the methodology. The "fish". Just the simplicity of the word seems to cheapen the significance of an animal many of us devote our lives to pursuing.

I still have not yet been able to decide if it's the steelhead themselves, or the places steelhead live that draw me to some of the most remote corners of our planet. The steelhead enter the freshwater system with scales so bright they appear white when the fish is laid on her side. A subtle blush smears her cheek, so perfectly placed that one might think she was embarrassed she'd been caught. Her downturned eye, an indication that she is alive and well, dances in the sun's reflection reminding her captor that without water they will quickly dry, dull and flatten. She is wild, she is free, she is adaptive, she is everything that is perfection in the natural world. I suppose that in many ways she reminded me of who I was — of who I am — beautiful in a strange sort of way, primitive to the very core, and born to fight for survival. As she pulled my line taut and leapt from the depths of the rushing white water her head shook with anger, spitting my fly back to me on the shore. I reeled in the slack line smiling. Today she had beaten



*April speaking at a VFFA function*

me and, for one reason or another, I was happy she did.

I decided at eighteen years old that to spend as many days as I could on the water, I would have to make fishing my profession. To do this, I would need to start guiding. So I began guiding for an outfitter, before eventually starting my own company, Fly Gal Ventures, at the age of 24.

At first, business as an independent operator was difficult. A bad car accident in the beginning months of my start-up put a major dent in both my body and planning. Up until one month before the wreck I waitressed part-time in the evenings at a casino, which allowed me a late start time. Now with a rebuilt foot and no side-job I needed to be extremely innovative. I started by putting together business plans that would draw revenue from every pot available to me in the fishing industry. Guiding (when I was back on my feet), teaching, writing, television, and selling printed merchandise were all active columns in my Excel spreadsheet. To be able to afford 'z', I needed to make 'y', so I needed to sell enough of 'x' to make it all

happen. The planning was thorough, the budgeting tight.

Year one of my business was ambitious — too ambitious for some. The fly fishing industry is renowned for its shortage of business-minded people. Primarily made up of fishermen who face the same dilemma I did, they long to spend their days immersed in the sport and therefore start their businesses rich with passion, yet poor in funds. I was aware of the predicament and strove to steer clear of the typical traps many business owners commonly fall into: starting a fly shop, building a brand entirely around oneself without an outlet for expansion, speaking for free, working for gear, missing opportunities in fear of seeming vain, being afraid to say no to those who wanted to use me for anything against my integrity, and, the hardest part of it all, keeping my head held high when the wolves tried to tear me down for simply

figuring the cycle out — worse off, for simply having the balls to run with it. Big balls for a woman who isn't supposed to have any.

They hated me. Like the steelhead, it only made me work harder. I took her lead and spud back at them on shore.

The road of entrepreneurship winds along a mountain of narrow paths and falling rocks. At times I dodged rockslides. Occasionally I fell off-course. I dusted my pants off and stood back up. Bruises heal.

I am quickly realizing that while it is the fishing itself that initiates people's interest in my personal story, it is actually the timeline of how I came to be that intrigues people the most. I can only hope to inspire them — to give them a glimmer of hope that they too can succeed, live, take chances, and follow their hearts to



*April demonstrated some of her wide-ranging fly fishing skills by catching and releasing Murray cod*

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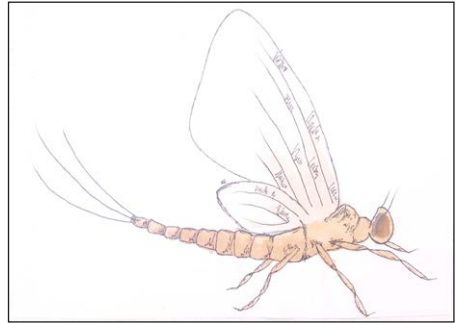
something they love. If there was one thing I have learned over the years, it is how to live my life with a purpose.

Like the river, my business ebbs and flows. There are days when I wonder what the point of it all is. Why I care so much about making an impact on an industry that has tried for so long to get rid of me. But then my email dings with a person who found strength in my blogs, or someone approaches me with a story about the job they hated and left to follow their heart after listening to an episode of *Anchored*, or my PO box receives a crayon coloured drawing from an eight-year-old who wants to be just like me when she grows up...

I walk to the water where the truth sounds clearly through the rushing river and rustling leaves. A steelhead rolls in the heart of it all and the symbolism doesn't escape me — she reminds me to

keep moving upstream, to trust in the quiet noises, and to let mother nature take care of the rest.

Chase it all — the fish, the rivers, and the pursuits that lead you into unfamiliar terrain.



*Red Spinner - sketch by Amber Jessup. Amber is the grand-daughter of both James Carter and John Killip*

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## My Five Favourite Books

... Nick Taransky

The idea for this article came about via Tom Sutcliffe's wonderful "*Spirit of Fly Fishing*" newsletter. A recent issue featured the five favourite books of sixteen invited guests, which included luminaries such as Nick Lyons. You can read the issue here on Tom's website:

<http://www.tomsutcliffe.co.za/newsletter/item/1511-august-2021-newsletter.html>

This got me thinking about my own favourite books, and the overall importance of literature as part of fly fishing culture. Much of what I could say as preamble is said much better by Tom in the introduction to his article, so I do suggest visiting the website above!

So, onto my conundrum. I'm far from a collector, but somehow I've amassed well over 500 angling books. Narrowing down to a hundred favourites might be manageable, but anything below fifty would be a real challenge. There are so many sub-genres within the broad spectrum of fly fishing books that even choosing five books out of any category could be a squeeze for me. Thinking of the genres, we have technical "how to" books, memoirs, travel books, coffee table/photography-based books, fly tying references, humour, biographies, location guides, books on trout biology, aquatic entomology, angling history and more. And to help out, you could even assemble a substantial library of books about

books, starting with Arnold Gingrich's classic, "The Fishing in Print".

While setting the arbitrary limit at five books seems a little unfair, there are probably good reasons for this. Firstly, it makes it manageable for the reader! Secondly, for the writer, it really makes you think hard about your reading and really explore why you like what you do. So after a lot of head scratching, and books being added and removed, the best I could do was come up with was "Five books that shaped and reflect my love of trout and fly fishing".

### David Scholes – "Fly Fishing in Australia"

Finding this book in my school library really set me on my path into fly fishing. I didn't come from a fishing family, let alone a fly fishing family, so this book became my bible through my early progression into the sport. Compiled into a book from a series of articles for "The Australian Angler", it may not be considered as David's finest work, but

it has that wonderful Scholes style of teaching while taking you to the stream with him. I still think it is one of the best books that any beginner fly angler could start with.

### John Gierach – "Fishing Bamboo"

John Gierach needs no introduction to most reading anglers. "Trout Bum" remains a classic and has become a mainstream term that many of us aspire to. His other books have received similar praise. But "Fishing Bamboo" took me on a detour into a love of cane rods, which eventually led me into quitting a well-paid, successful computing career for the relative poverty of a fulltime bamboo rod maker. John gets a share of the blame for that, so "Fishing Bamboo" is in.

### Robert Traver (John D Voelker) – "Anatomy of a Fisherman"

John Voelker, a previous Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, wrote under the pen name "Robert Traver" during his career. "Trout Magic" and "Trout Madness" would be on many peoples' lists of favourite angling books. I love them too, but I have a special place for "Anatomy of a Fisherman". This quirky book of photos and short accompanying paragraphs are a joy to savour. Many of these are hilarious, but also included is his often quoted and moving "Testament of a Fisherman": <https://troutbitten.com/testament-of-a-fisherman/> which is worth repeating here:

### Testament of a Fisherman

*I fish because I love to. Because I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful, and hate the environs where crowds of people are found, which are invariably ugly. Because of all the television commercials, cocktail parties, and assorted social posturing I thus escape. Because in a world where most men seem to spend their lives doing what they hate, my fishing is at once an endless source of delight >>>*



Nick Taransky's bookshelf, which houses some superb fly fishing reading

*and an act of small rebellion. Because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed, or impressed by power, but respond only to quietude and humility, and endless patience. Because I suspect that men are going this way for the last time and I for one don't want to waste the trip. Because mercifully there are no telephones on trout waters. Because in the woods I can find solitude without loneliness. ...*

*And finally, not because I regard fishing as being so terribly important, but because I suspect that so many of the other concerns of men are equally unimportant and not nearly so much fun. — Robert Traver, Anatomy of a Fisherman*

Curiously, the book also contains areas of blank space for readers to add their own stories and quotes!

### **David M Carroll – “Trout Reflections - A Natural History of the Trout and Its World”**

David Carrol is an American naturalist, author and illustrator. This book contains some fishing, but is more about the actual fish, following them for an entire year as the seasons change. He does an amazing job in relating the natural world that the trout live in. His other books focus more on other elements of the natural environment, with a special focus on turtles (his real passion). His memoir, “*Self Portrait with Turtles*”, is actually my favourite book of his, but it's hard

to include it in a list of angling books! David is also a renowned artist, and his writing is complemented by exquisite fine drawings of trout and other elements of their environment.

### **Tom Sutcliffe - Yet More Sweet Days**

Tom's Newsletter started this idea, but he is a wonderful and prolific author in his own right. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, his writing conveys the majesty of the South African trout fishing landscape and culture. To describe his writing as “part Scholes, part Gierach” puts him in esteemed company, but doesn't really do justice to his own unique style. He writes as much about the road trips, cooking meals, hospitality of landowners and friendship of fellow anglers as the actual fishing - a true embracing of the “Spirit of Fly Fishing”. “*Yet More Sweet Days*” is his most recent book and completes the collection of other classics including the iconic “*Hunting Trout*” and “*Shadows on the Stream Bed*”. Like David Carroll, Tom is a talented artist, and his books are illustrated with his own beautiful drawings.

So, there it is. Hardly a definitive list, but all worthy in any fly fishing library. I cringe at all the books I've left out, but better that than leave you reading an article on “My favourite 500 fly fishing books”. How about yours?



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## **OMEO**

... by Mrs Simpson

East Gippsland has had an unusual year. We are in the shadow of the Victorian Alps, and as a consequence, we often miss the rain that other parts of Victoria receive. This year, however, has been different, and we have had constant

rainfall all season. This rainfall has resulted in our rivers flowing well with comparatively low water temperatures. In Omeo this summer the days have typically been in the mid-20s with only one day, so far, reaching 30°C.



*A fine Mitta brown – and there are lots more like this one*

Farmers are loving it. In a "normal" year by now the paddocks would be dry and bare. This year, the lush green grass is fence height and the cattle as fat as mud. The fish are also loving it. In general the fishing has been very good, but it has also been interrupted for periods of time due to heavy rainfall. Just recently Omeo received 120 millimetres of rain in five hours.

This resulted in some quite serious flooding in some rivers. The Livingston River, as an example, had a massive amount of water flow down it that flooded and closed the Omeo Caravan Park. The park is still closed, and the clean-up and repairs will take several more weeks. The members of the Omeo Golf Club, which is situated next to the river, found that they had a new water hazard next to the third hole, and the Omeo Anglers Club needed to detour as their track was partially washed away.

Let's look at some of our local rivers:

### **Mitta Mitta River**

I fished it yesterday and it was flowing quite strongly, but could be safely crossed. The water temperature was 17°C in the upper section. Fishing has been good all season. There are plenty of small browns in the river, together with a good number of 2 to 3 pounders. Whilst the fish will take a dry, action can be slow. Nymphs have been the most successful

flies and Euro Nymphing has worked well. Of course a nymph trailing a dry fly is always hard to beat. There are also plenty of small hoppers around.

### **Livingston Creek**

The "Livi" was great early in the season. The section downstream of Omeo saw lots of rainbows up to 2.5 pounds caught. These fish have now either moved on or been caught. However there is the usual number of small browns in the upper section.

### **Bundara River**

This river is flowing high and a little discoloured, but still quite fishable. One of our members caught a 5 pounder out of it early in the season. It was badly affected by the 2020 bush fires, which resulted in silt being washed down the river during periods of high flow. The CMA has told us that it will take three years to recover. But still always worth cast!

### **Cobungra River**

Similar to the Bundara. It is flowing high and a little discoloured. Despite this, fish continue to be caught in the Innisfail area. Typically two or three per trip, and mostly on nymphs.

### **Middle Creek**

This stream is flowing high but is fishing well. A dry fly and nymph is the preferred method.

I would expect to see some great late summer and autumn fishing this year. The rivers are cool and flowing well. There are plenty of fish about, and the grasshoppers, though still small, are around in good numbers. We probably need a couple of weeks of settled, warm weather for them to get up and about.

# A Report on Tassie Fishing from Way Out West

... Jim Blakeslee

It was great to be back in Tassie after a couple years of Covid-19 travel restrictions. Alan Richardson and I enjoyed a smooth crossing on the Spirit of Tasmania, did our shopping at Devonport, had a latte and egg-and-bacon-roll breakfast, then made the two hour drive up to Miena on the Central Plateau. We settled into our rental accommodation, readied our fly fishing gear, and loaded it in the car. Over lunch we discussed our plans for the first afternoon's fishing. With half the day already gone we decided to try our luck and see if there was a late dun hatch at Little Pine Lagoon.

There were at least a dozen boats on the lagoon and we could see a number of shore-based fishermen as we drove into the access lane. As it turned out, there was a Ladies' Fly Fishing Competition on, which explained the number of boats and shore anglers. But there didn't seem to be any rises, and no-one was catching fish.

We got into our waders, rigged up our rods and set off for Scottie's Corner.



*Typical of the superb browns that Jim and Alan caught on this trip*

There were five anglers there already, but we suspected they could be another group of Warrnambool anglers who had arrived four days before us. Sure enough, when we caught up with them the group included Chris Beaton, his two brothers Donald and Neil, Donald's son Louis, and Peter Carman. They said the weather prior to our arrival had been cold, overcast and windy, and fishing had been tough. At 3:00 pm a sparse dun hatch started, and the odd fish rose. Alan, Chris and Louis caught a few small trout on small brown nymphs, but then the hatch stopped and that was it. We retired to our rentals to clean up and prepare for dinner.

Luckily, Chris had booked a table at the hotel because it was a full house when we arrived. Everyone was starving so we ordered a porterhouse steak which we washed down with an ale or two and bottles of hearty red. The weather prediction for the next five days was for a moderate east to north-easterly breeze, clear skies and temperatures in the teens to low 20's. The Beatons decided to return to Arthur's Lake in search of a dun hatch the following day (unfortunately, there wasn't). Alan and I headed up top to the 19 Lagoons.

As it turned out, we made the right decision. That day, and every other day



*Jim Blakeslee is a highly skilled angler with years of experience fishing the Tasmanian highlands*

that we went up top, there were relatively few anglers compared to pre-Covid years and we could usually have whatever water we chose to fish pretty much to ourselves. On that first full day we fished the channel of the James River in Lake Augusta in the morning, then drove to Carter's Lakes for the afternoon session. And even though there were no hatches of duns or terrestrials, the conditions were ideal for polaroiding. The lakes and lagoons were low and the water crystal clear.

Our usual approach was as follows. We positioned ourselves so we could fish with the sun and wind at our backs. Nothing was to be seen inshore, but in the shallower lakes and lagoons with reasonably solid bottoms we waded out into water that was knee to crotch deep. On the deeper lakes we walked along rocky shores with drop-offs into deeper water. In both cases we would see browns as they cruised "out in the ripple." They weren't rising but when we spotted fish we covered them with my "go-to fly" for the 19 Lagoons in summertime – a #12 Great Lake Beetle.

Almost invariably the fish would notice the distinctive black and hot-orange hackled beetle, would then rise slowly to inspect the fly, then gently suck it down. While watching all this happen in slow-motion it was essential to relax and say "God-save-the queen" to give the fish time to close its mouth over the fly and turn down before lifting the rod tip to gently drive home the hook. After a stunned half-second where the brownie would seem to be thinking "what the ...." it would go berserk and the fly line would scream from the reel as the fish swam for freedom. Alan and I had a ball and agreed that in spite of the lack of hatches we had one of our most successful trips in years.

We took care wading slowly to avoid creating a disturbance or sending shock waves and ripples out ahead of us. We searched carefully, scanning the water ahead of us, and we avoided excessive casting. Always polaroiding, we were looking for gray shapes mooching along the bottom, head down and tail up – not unlike bonefish. Once a brownie was sighted – often within 10 metres of us – we would cast a short line, taking care to avoid spooking the fish. We would try to drop the fly near to, but not on top of the fish, typically a metre or two away from it.

By the end of our stay, we figured that we had each averaged three to five beautiful golden-brown trout per day (though I must admit that my first and last half days of blind-flogging at Little Pine were blanks). Anyway, the ones we caught were all beautifully conditioned and mostly 1.5 kg. Over the years for most Warrnambool anglers fishing the 19 Lagoons from shore a two fish per day average is pretty good, so Alan and I were happy with our results. Anyway, that's Tassie for this season, and I hope we have better hatches next time we manage to get over there.



*This one can go back*

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Woolly Bugger Mark II*



In a few months' time we will move into the late autumn and winter period of the year when our rivers are closed. But the lakes remain open, so many of us will head for our favourite stillwaters – lakes, reservoirs, and stocked dams. A popular and often very productive fishing technique for these places is 'flogging wets' – working your way along a bank casting and retrieving wet flies.

For this style of fishing the Woolly Bugger is well established in our collections of best lake fly favourites because it is so often effective. *Australia's Best Trout Flies*, compiled by Malcolm Crosse, lists a variant called the Woolly Bugger Mark II, devised by Tasmanian guide Ken Orr. Ken relates how he was fishing Lake Fergus in Tasmania with a colleague in the early 1980s when they came across an angry rearing tiger snake that disgorged a frog. Ken picked up the frog and found that it had bright orange flashes on the inside of its rear legs. He continues: "So the Woolly Bugger Mark II was born and on its first outing created absolute mayhem. It has become a regular in my fly boxes and is an ideal fly for searching and prospecting shallow lake margins."

I was fishing a stocked dam near Leongatha with VFFA member Milton Zeuschner in November last year. Milton was fishing his version of the WB Mark II and was catching a lot more fish than I was. He gave me one of his Mark IIs and it quickly proved to be an effective fish attractor for me as well. So here are the details for this fabulous wet fly:

## Materials for the Woolly Bugger Mark II:

<b>Hook:</b>	Wet fly hook in sizes 8, 10 or 12. Milton uses a Gamakatsu S10 model hook but any popular wet fly hook in these sizes should work.
<b>Bead:</b>	Gold 2.8 mm – 3.6 mm depending on hook size.
<b>Thread:</b>	Olive or black 6/0 Unithread.
<b>Body:</b>	Rayon chenille in medium olive, obviously in finer sizes for the smaller hooks.
<b>Tail:</b>	Black marabou.
<b>Tag:</b>	Egg yarn (Wapsi) flame, or similar bright orange or red fluorescent material.
<b>Rib:</b>	Fine orange or red ribbing wire.
<b>Hackle:</b>	Hen or cock grizzly hackle dyed Coachman Brown.

### Tying Procedure:

1. Slide the bead onto the hook and around to the eye, then put the hook in the vise.
2. Tie some turns of thread behind the bead to hold it in place, then run turns of thread along the hook shank to just before the bend.
3. Take a small bunch of black marabou fibres and wet them (to make them easier to manage and tie in) and hold them along the shank. Tie them in to form a tail that should be about the same length, or just slightly longer, than the hook.
4. Select a small piece of the orange or red tag material (Wapsi egg yarn or similar) and tie it in on top of the tail.
5. Strip a small amount of material from the chenille so that the thread base is exposed, and tie this in at the bend of the hook. Also tie in a short length of the ribbing wire.
6. Run turns of thread along the shank to just behind the bead.
7. Tie turns of the marabou along the shank up to the bead to form the body. Tie it off at this point and cut off the waste.
8. Prepare the hackle feather by stripping away fibres from the stem so that you are left with a length of hackle feather with good quality fibres for the palmer hackle. Tie the hackle feather in right behind the bead.
9. Make five or six evenly spaced turns of hackle along the shank to the tail, then hold it in place and lock it in by winding firm turns of the ribbing through the hackle back along the shank to just behind the bead. The ribbing turns should be in the opposite direction to the direction of the turns of chenille and palmer hackle.
10. Tie the ribbing off here and make a few extra turns of thread before using a whip finish to complete the fly.

## VFFA 2022 meetings & other activities

(... all events subject to Covid restrictions)

### March

- 9 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for the Autumn visit, 10:00 am till dark.
- 17 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker – Andrew Mossman, who will speak about ‘Developing Strategies for fly fishing and also having fun’
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm Zoom meeting.

### April

- 8 – 10 Big River Trip. Event Co-ordinator – John Pilkington.
- 15 – 17 Easter 2022
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker – Kiel Jones, with a presentation on “Mayfly Scenarios”.
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
- April 29 – May 1 Donger weekend with Bairnsdale members. Expressions of interest can be sent to our secretary, Will Davidson (w.davidson151@gmail.com)

### May

- 19 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker – Peter Morse, from J.M. Gillies.  
(The Annual Auction, usually in May, has been postponed until later in the year.)
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm Zoom meeting.

### June

- 1 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for a Winter visit, 10:00 am till dark.
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker – TBC.
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

### July

- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker – TBC.
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm Zoom meeting.

(The Council is considering plans for some casting instruction days – one for ladies, and another for all interested members. A Donger Weekend with the Bairnsdale FFC is also being negotiated – possibly late autumn or later in the year in November. We will keep you informed.)