

# FLY LINES



MARCH 2024

## March Meeting with Sam Fawke (Senior Technical Officer – Conservation Hatchery)

Hailing from a background in Aquaculture and Environmental Management, Sam has over 16 years of experience in the aquaculture industry. He has spent the last nine years at Sealife Melbourne aquarium overseeing the operations of a range of species and programs, including sharks, crocs, frogs and fish. Water and animals are his passion.

Thursday, March 21,  
7:30pm, at the  
**Kelvin Club**

He has recently stepped up to a new role at the Victorian Fisheries Authority, where he is now focusing on the conservation of some of Victoria's most threatened and endangered freshwater species. So come along and hear more about his journey and the role Snobs Creek plays in both conservation and salmonid fish production and stocking.

We would encourage all members to attend what will be a great evening, and for those who would like to join us for a meal beforehand PLEASE make a booking for dinner by emailing Terry Rogers at [terryrogers@bigpond.com](mailto:terryrogers@bigpond.com) before Tuesday, March 19, and leaving a message.



*Sam in action*

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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*A glimpse of John Pilkington's magnificent Big River residence*

# President's Message

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As the fishing season enters autumn much has been happening. Groups of VFFA members have been down in Tasmania with Peter Hayes enjoying his wonderful facility at Cressy and another group has been off to New Zealand to fish the North Island. (We look forward to reports from both groups in our newsletter in coming months). Liars' Night was held at the Kelvin Club on Thursday, February 22, and as always there's a very entertaining report of proceedings in this edition of *Fly Lines*.

Our next big event coming up is the Donger Weekend on the Mitta Mitta River on April 12 to April 14, and those of us who have attended in the past know what a wonderful experience it is to be hosted by the Bairnsdale Club, and to fish the wild rivers of north-eastern Victoria. Peter Clayton (petergc@bigpond.net.au) is coordinating this year's event and I encourage all members to consider attending.

Our senior vice-president John Spragg has set up a VFFA WhatsApp group for VFFA members as an informal way to encourage more on-water activities, so members can post their up-coming fishing trips if they have room for other VFFA members to join them.



*Simon Joel*

Alternatively, members can post their availability to join in future private trips, either locally or further afield. So please text John on 0407 555 621 if you would like him to add you to his WhatsApp Group.

This is a wonderful initiative for fellow members to get out on the water and enjoy the great fishing in our state.

I'm off to New Zealand on March 5, and am looking to sending a report with lots of photographs of fishing the upper Rangitikei River in the North Island.

Wishing you all tight lines,

Simon Joel

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## Hayes on Brumbys: February 3 - 11

... a report by John Spragg

While I have been to Tasmania many times for business and to visit my grandparents, this was my first trip to Hayes on Brumbys.

Qantas flew me to Launceston, and a hire car got me to Peter Hayes Lodge at

around noon on February 3. I was first to arrive, and over the next few hours the rest of the group of 11 VFFA members drove in. We headed to the Cressy Hotel for dinner. The meal there was fine, but paled into insignificance compared to the



*Chris Gray had a busy time in Tassie catching a number of fish*

gastronomical extravaganzas we enjoyed during the rest of the week.

On the Sunday I fished with John Fasso, chosen because of his superb skill in hooking the decoy duck on the Hayes casting pond. We fished St Patrick's River upstream from the bridge but had no luck at all. A large black tiger snake crossed my path and got the adrenalin pumping, but no fish showed. We encountered two young local lads with fly rods who told us: "You should have been here three weeks ago. We landed over 20 fish in one day." (Don't you hate hearing that!!)

We also tried the St Patrick's near the fish farm, and then the South Esk in the Ballroom area. These rivers were in great condition, but yielded no fish. We arrived back at Hayes to hear that we were not the only anglers to get skunked. It was a common story.

The next morning we were out sharp at 8:00 am for the first of Peter Hayes's daily casting classes. What a revelation

they were. Peter is a highly skilled and experienced casting instructor, and each of these morning sessions helped all of us cast better. I probably gained more from these sessions than the countless hours I had spent trying to cast better on rivers and in parks. For me, the trip was worth just the Peter Hayes' time. I discarded a lot of what others had taught me and now try to cast the 'Hayes way'.

I was very fortunate that day with John Fasso and I being guided by Peter on the Lake River on Connorville Station. This is an exclusive private river and I thank Peter for getting us on there. The river was in great condition, but again the fishing was tough. I missed a couple and was given a mild rev up by Peter. I then proceeded to land a few, and John did too. Peter was surprised by the lack of fish, and some of his "never miss" holes and stretches produced nothing. But I had a sensational day's fishing with Peter as my guide and ended up with five fish. John landed 'the fish of the day' size-wise and managed to catch a couple more. When we arrived back at the lodge we heard lots of stories again about how tough the fishing was. Catch numbers low.

On the Tuesday I teamed up with Rodger Muir and we produced undoubtedly the best meal of the week, with roast pork, home-made apple sauce, roast spuds and vegies, followed by lemon tart with lemon-flavoured cream.

On Wednesday I teamed with Ray Goddard and we headed to Gunns Lake. When we arrived we couldn't believe our eyes. Fish were rising and jumping in large numbers everywhere. We entered the lake in a good area where we could fish reasonably close together without spooking fish. The water was only thigh deep but had a very muddy sticky bottom. We had mixed success,

even though many fish were breaking the surface, and landed a few. It was tough going because if you stayed in one position for too long, even though there were rising fish close by you became bogged in the mud. Ray took a tumble when he tried to move as his legs were stuck in the mud almost to his knees.

On the Thursday Ray and I decided to go back to Gunns Lake. We were disappointed when we arrived to find that only a handful of fish were rising compared to the hundreds of rises on the previous day. We picked an area with a rocky bottom this time and waded out and started casting. It was intriguing in that fish would rise or eat something in front of us or beside us, or even behind us. I landed only one fish for the day and missed one other.

Thursday evening was a highlight of the trip, only just eclipsing Peter Hayes's casting lessons each morning. Local members of the VFFA were invited to join us for dinner, and we had fly fishing royalty in the room. It was mentioned that there were more ex-presidents in the room that night than at King Charles's Coronation..

Michael Youl gave the after dinner speech and at 95 years of age did a superb job. His great grandfather was the person

who brought trout to Tasmania, and thus to Australia. It was a honour to be among such a group of legends. There were countless stories and lots of laughs. A fabulous night to remember.

On Friday Ray and I headed to the Meander River at Chefhunt Road and had a very enjoyable time fishing. We even landed a few each. The river was in fine condition and we both thought we should have seen more fish. Ray was very pleased with one he caught - he claimed it was a textbook cast and strike and playing of the fish. It was right where Ray figured it should have been, and he nailed it.

On the Saturday Ray and I headed to the Liffey River, a magnificent little waterway with very clear water that is easy to wade. We tried a variety of flies and fished every inch of the river, yet did not get one take or even see a fish. There was a couple of rocks with cormorant droppings on them, but I couldn't understand how a cormorant could fish such a small stream . We later caught up with some locals and were told that for some reason there were just no fish in the Liffey River at this time, but no-one could give a reason why.

Ray Goddard had fished the levee bank on Brumbys a couple of hundred metres



*Another solid connection!*



*Past President David Hooke didn't bother with Qantas – he flew his own plane to Tassie*



*Michael Youl speaking at the Thursday night dinner*



*David Hooke with a fine brown*



*Chris Gray and David Hooke comparing catches*

from the lodge on dusk on the last couple of nights, and had been broken off by good fish two nights running. On Saturday evening he nailed a very nice fish while we were having our after dinner cleansers.

On Sunday Rodger Muir and I fished Brumbys off the levee bank and I missed one and was about to head back to pack when Rodger landed a very nice fish only a few metres out in a similar area to where Ray caught his fish the evening before.

Hayes on Brumbys. What a week it was. The fishing had been disappointing. A good number of fish had been missed or landed, but nowhere near as many as in previous years. Winds and cormorants were given as partly to blame. A number of fish caught had cormorant scars. But the food was exceptional, the comradery outstanding, and the tips Peter Hayes gave every day were priceless.

There were many great stories, with an ex-president showing his swimming

skills fully kitted out, cars being stuck on stumps, Ray bogged in a lake, Rodger asking if there were any snakes there and me replying: "Like that tiger snake coiled up about three feet from your boots". There are many more tall tales and true from the week, and I would recommend Hayes on Brumbys to all members. Jump in when bookings open, as around 12 is the number for a comfortable week's fishing in some truly great waters. Whether you are an expert caster or a tryer like me, Peter Hayes will make you a far better angler by the end of the week, and it is great fun as well.



*Believe it or not, Chris Gray went swimming fully kitted out in waders, vest, rod and the rest of his fly fishing gear*



*Another nice river fish Chris*



*A sight to warm the heart of all fly fishers*



*Solid connections*





*John Fasso connecting solidly – with the decoy duck on Peter Hayses' casting pond*

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## Liar's Night

Here are some summaries of the contributions of members on Liar's Night, though it would appear that all of them were in fact quite truthful.

### **Peter Clayton**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.  
Welcome to Liars Night 2024.

I should mention a couple of upcoming events. The first is the New Zealand trip - from Sunday, March 3, to Sunday, March 10, coordinated by John Spragg. He tells me there's one spot left if anyone is interested.

The next one is our first Millbrook Lakes trip for the year, which is on Wednesday, March 6, and coordinated by Lyndon Webb. There'll be an email coming out very soon inviting members to participate.

At our next general meeting, on Thursday, March 21, Sam Fawke will be guest speaker. Sam is the Senior Technical Officer at the VFA's Conservation Hatchery.

From Friday, March 22, to Sunday, March 24, we have our annual Big River trip, which I believe is currently oversubscribed. So there's a waiting list.

Following that is the annual Donger competition at Omeo, and I've put my hand up to co-ordinate our VFFA team. Let me say that the more people we can get there, the better. We will be extremely well looked after by the Bairnsdale members. The date is Friday, April 12, to Sunday April 14, and this newsletter carries the NOE.

I can also provide advance notice of the Bruce Whitehead Western Lakes trophy, which is now likely to be in August. There have been some preliminary discussions with the Bairnsdale Club about when this might happen.

Tonight our first speaker is Jon Kenfield, who will report on our recent trip to Tasmania.

### **The Tasmania Trip – Jon Kenfield**

Good evening everyone. Having originally trained in law I would like to suggest that this will be more about misleading half-truths than lies.

Two things I'd like to say about our Tassie trip. The first is that the fishing was crap. According to the locals it was some of the worst fishing they've had in 30 years. Fish were certainly very hard to find. My experience was that on the final day of our trip John Fasso and I went with Peter Hayes on a guided trip, and I think an indication of how the fishing went was given in Peter's suggestion that 'maybe we should go chasing whiting'.

It gets better. We were down at the Tamar River with the guide in his boat, and because we were not actually fishing for trout our esteemed guide considered he was entitled to fish too, which he normally never does when he's guiding.

We fished for the day, and by the end of the day it has to be reported that the two guests had both caught a number of whiting, gurnard, little pinky snapper, and a few other things. However, our esteemed guide had caught nothing. Virtually on the last cast of the day your half-truth purveyor here did hook into something which felt like another whiting. So in taking pity on our esteemed guide I, of course, offered him the rod. But he absolutely refused - on the basis that he could never live it down.

So that was the first part of our Tasmanian experience. Chris Gray did cover himself in glory by catching the first trout ever caught from my boat in Pine Tier Lagoon. But that was the only fish we caught all day. We had been told

that "three months of 45 knot winds had killed all the insect hatches, and we'd had a cormorant plague", so fish were extraordinarily difficult to find all the way through the time we were there.

The second thing I've mentioned is that, as has become traditional, we had the pairing up of odd couples to do the catering. And some of the couples, bless their cotton socks, spent the entire day not fishing, but preparing food.

I was paired with John Fasso, and I felt we should take a rather more intellectual approach to all this. So we carefully investigated the constitution of the VFFA, and found no mention anywhere of *My Kitchen Rules* or *Master Chef*, and therefore decided that we could make a couple of bowls of pasta, which we could knock over in an hour, and still go fishing.

(Thanks, John. Apparently the pasta was good, as everybody went back for more.)

### **David Hooke**

We sort of started a tradition last year of asking some of our elder citizens of the VFFA to speak about their experiences. Charles Peck spoke last year, and you will have read what he said in *Fly Lines*. We also had Jim Allen speak. He spoke at the Christmas Dinner the previous year, and that's also been reported in *Fly Lines*.

We thought this year we might ask Michael Youl to speak. Michael is actually 95 years old, but he still spoke for about 20 minutes. And he spoke very well about his experiences as a fly fisher. We're trying to develop a series of chapters for a book that we might bring out in our centenary in about eight or nine years' time. So we're looking to have a record of our senior members and other people who have been members. Their talks can be used as a basis for a chapter to be edited, and so on.

We thought that the Thursday had been a very successful night. And I should add that Michael Youl did not get COVID from the night, for which we are inordinately grateful.

Michael's great grandfather brought the first trout from the UK to Tasmania. He was actually trying to bring salmon but at the last minute somebody provided him with trout ova. To cut the story short, the trout ova were actually tougher and survived, while the salmon ova died. And so it was that Michael's great grandfather was responsible for the fact that we are now fishing for trout in Tasmania, and of course, more broadly in Australia.

(Thanks, David. Our second speaker is Bill Jeans, and he's going to recap his trips over the last year.)

### **Bill Jeans**

First - the two gentlemen who provided the trout eggs to Mr Youl were Frank Buckland and Francis Francis.

Here are photos of our trip up to Weipa last year. We go there every year and it is fantastic.

And here are photos of Graham Seeger and Ian Sambell. Ian is one of our casting experts, and here he is with a decent-sized permit. I haven't landed one of those yet, but I've got close.

A friend of ours has got a place up at Rushworth and he invites us there to fish for carp. If the conditions are right it's a lot of fun. We use a fly a bit like a Tom Jones. You just look for the swirl, then put your fly out, and tweak, tweak, tweak. We take them home and put them in a big circle around trees planted on his block. They decompose and help his trees grow.

Jon Kenfield talked earlier about the weather in Tassie. A mate of mine is over in Tassie at the moment with his wife in their caravan. He was in Deloraine about three weeks ago stocking up with food and then they were going to head up to Miena. But anybody with a caravan was advised to not go up for a couple of days,



*Liars' Night attendees – a very perceptive and discriminating group*

because caravans were being flipped over by the wind. So my mate's been four nights in Deloraine, which he said is about three too many.

He was at Little Pine a couple of weeks ago and said he could hardly stand up in the wind. We had stayed at Little Pine in November, and it was one of our better years. We didn't have to go off the mountain. Usually you have got to get off the mountain for a few days to get away from the wind.

The water level there this year was quite high. We like it a bit lower because as soon as you take a couple of steps in the water at say five o'clock in the morning you see the bow waves heading away from you. This year we got quite a lot of fish, though anything that was two and a half pounds or bigger was getting a bit slabby, because they had had three good breeding years and all the young ones were pinching the food. The fisheries license inspector was telling us that the next two years are going to be fantastic.

We fished Penstock one afternoon and saw the most magnificent hatch of red spinners. But we got everything except fish. There were certainly plenty of spinners. But we mostly fish Little Pine.

### **Peter Clayton**

Thanks Bill. I'll give a quick recap of my last 12 months fishing, again highlighting my many fishless days. But there may be some light at the end of the tunnel.

Shortly after last year's Liar's night I had six days on the Mitta and other streams in that area – plenty of fish hooked but 43 missed. Then at the end of March and in early April I was at Enochs Point on the delightful Big River. Six trout caught, twelve missed, and nine small red fin was a good return for the weekend.

Then off to the Donger weekend in Omeo valley at the end of April. In 2022 I rose 48 fish over five days and hooked only seven. In 2023 my tally was 31 missed and 33 hooked in four days, suggesting that I'm on the right track, or the trout are simply more hungry.

In early May I was invited to a weekend at Millbrook Lakes. The weather wasn't ideal, being overcast and windy. We tried several dams and my tally was one three pound rainbow, one bust off, and four missed.

In late May I was involved in a riparian revegetation exercise with 5,000 trees and grasses planted over three days at locations along the Nariel River. I fished briefly, saw only two trout, and spooked them both. Not too many around because according to local guide Neil Bennett it was too late in the season.

In September, Gordon and I attended the annual game dinner in Warrnambool, and on the way we stopped at Lake Bullen Merri. It looked ideal but nothing was stirring so we moved on to the Hopkins at the junction with the Mount Emu. Both were running high and dirty so after a short while we gave up and went wale spotting. We didn't see any whales either.

Everything at the Warrnambool dinner is provided by the local members. 70 people attended that year. It's likely to be held in May this year, and I highly recommend attending.

After the annual auction in October last year Hughie and I headed to a lake near Stawell. It was a bit windy when we arrived, but I did land a rainbow of about three quarters of a pound and missed another. By Saturday the wind had greatly increased and eventually it got too much, though not before Hughie landed

a nice two pound rainbow and I missed a second one.

In early December I was back on the Mitta. On the way there I located Pretty Valley Dam, despite a distinct lack of signage. It started raining as soon as I got there, but the water looked good, so despite the rain I walked 20 metres to the water and tossed out a brown nymph. On the second drift the Royal Wulff indicator was pulled under and I was hooked up to a 30 cm brown. Surprisingly there was nothing in its stomach, as I discovered when I gave it to my mate who likes to eat trout.

I was about halfway home when my partner sent me a text saying she had tested positive to Covid, and despite our best efforts a week later I tested positive too.

To summarize - this slide details my take versus hook up numbers and percentages in the years 2020 to 2023, and shows that things are improving. Over the years the gap between takes and hook-ups is narrowing. So projecting the trend shows that by about the end of this year I will have reached a special state of enlightenment when I believe I will be hooking more trout than actually take my fly.

### **Ray Goddard**

Having gone to Hayes on Brumby's last year for the first time, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I decided that the levee not 300 metres away from Peter Hayes's Lodge was an ideal place to be right on dusk. Now most times we were having dinner right on dusk, so the opportunity didn't arise. But I did get out there one night last year and got a lovely 2½ lb brown right on dusk.

This proved to me the merits of fishing the evening rise. And I was pretty chuffed



*Andrew Mossman spoke of his concern for the future of trout fishing in New Zealand*

to be honest. I couldn't wait to take a photograph and rush back to show everybody. So this year I thought: "I'm going to do that again." On the first two nights I got out there I got attached to 10 pounders, both of which broke me off. It made me more intent on getting out there and getting even. And I know there's a couple of 10 pounders getting around out there with my flies in them.

On the third night I got attached to another one. No, it wasn't quite 10 pound - maybe a pound and three quarters. But gee, they're good fun to catch. And as an evening rise, it's just fun and it takes just 10 minutes of your time. I would recommend it to anybody. Go to the VFFA's week at Peter Hayes's place - it's a fabulous week. I'll keep going back. It's great camaraderie, lots of fishing, and lots of fun. But yeah, plenty of ten pounders. Is that a big enough lie for you tonight?

### **Andrew Mossman talking about New Zealand.**

I went to New Zealand in April 2023, and I went again in November-December. I have been going to New Zealand two or three times a year now for many years.

I'm really worried about what's happening in New Zealand. In April last year my wife was very sick, and we didn't know how sick she was. She died in June. But I went in April with a friend from Tasmania. We stayed at Gore and had 10 days fishing. It was cold, and it was wet. The river (the Mataura) was high and often muddy. I managed to catch a couple of fish a day, which is just appalling fishing in my experience of fishing in New Zealand. There were virtually no hatches of insects. There were no general hatches, and there was no general rise. And most of the fish I caught was by blind casting into likely spots.

Then I went again in November – December, and conditions were better. The Mataura was a bit lower. It was mostly clear but not always. And again, there were no hatches and no rises. And, again, I caught a couple of fish each day. Some days I got more than two, and on others I got less than two. I have never

had such poor fishing in New Zealand in moderately good conditions.

I am convinced that things are changing for the worse in New Zealand. Now I don't know about the other fishing areas in the North Island and the wilderness country. I'm talking here about the Gore area, which includes the Mataura, the Aparima, the Oreti and a whole lot of other rivers that we fish. Hubert Reichelt and Trevor Stow went in February this year, and they came back with exactly the same story - very poor fishing. They went there for some willow grub fishing and some other sorts of fishing, and hardly saw a fish. They caught fish of course, but not many. It's really difficult to know what's happening.

There have been three major floods in the Mataura in the last five years. When I say major floods, I mean very big floods. The Mataura has all these points along it giving the river heights, and I use the one



*The hoppers are about*

Wyndham, which is a couple of villages down from Gore.

If it's above 1.2 metres I don't fish, because 1.2 metres is just too much water. Now one of those floods was 5.7 metres. And the river picked up a shipping container and wrapped it around a tree. There was a photo in the Australian papers of this shipping container. It went through the Mataura township, the paper mill and then through Wyndham, and it did an enormous amount of damage. And there have been two other floods of that order.

When I started fishing there I took my dear wife with me. Margot used to fish with me. The river there never changed much. We had all these spots we'd fish above and below Gore, though Margot didn't fish with my immoderate passion. We had our little lunch spots. She'd come and catch a fish maybe, and then we'd have lunch together. We would sit on the bank together and a fish would rise, so we would go and catch it. And it was not uncommon to be sitting having lunch together and we'd catch two or three over lunch when we weren't even seriously fishing.

A good day in those days, and I'm talking 10 - 20 years ago, was catching at least 20 fish a day, fishing to rising fish. Not flogging wet flies and that sort of stuff. Often we'd catch them in quite shallow water. Most of you know the Mataura. A lot of the riffles have a gravel bank, and it goes down into heavy water on the other side. You'd often catch fish in shallow water along the bank just by sneaking up. You'd be fishing in knee deep water and mostly with a dry fly.

I don't often fish with a nymph below a dry in that sort of water, because I find that when I do seven times out of ten the fish takes the dry and the dropper hits

the line and booff! The nymph spoils the take. So if you just fish with a dry fly you get most of them when they take.

But that has changed dramatically. The lunch banks that Margot and I used to sit on and have our lunches together are now gone. They've been washed away. Thousands of tons of gravel have been coming down the Mataura with each flood, and it would be thousands of tons because huge banks are now missing. And there are now banks where there weren't banks, so the river that I knew is now very different.

David would know some of these spots, and other guys too. There's one spot near Mandeville where I had some 300 metres of beautiful riffley water that's now only about 30 metres. There were some good places left, but they'll take a while to come on. This year is the first year that I'd been there and not seen a general rise. So I got down on my hands and knees and turned over a whole lot of rocks. Now you guys know that the Mataura down the bottom end has small gravel. But I saw big rocks. I got down and turned over stones everywhere, and there were mayfly nymphs under most of those stones. It looked normal, though I suspect it was somewhat less than normal.

But when you've got a river running four or five metres above its normal level I'm sure a lot of little fish get killed. And I'm sure insects get killed too. I didn't see a lot of caddis insects in the river this past year. I fished the Waimea a couple of times and that seemed to be full of fish. You could see them everywhere. They weren't easy, but they were there. But I didn't see one fish in shallow water in the Mataura in all the times I fished it. In those early days when I was there with Margot I would expect to average 8 to 12 fish every day that I fished, whether I

fished for two hours or for half a day. (I never fish full days.)

Recently, before COVID, five or six fish a day would be a normal average for me, but I've just been there for two trips and caught two fish as my daily normal average. I'm not seeing fish either, and I don't think I've lost my fishing skills yet. I haven't changed in my view. So there's something desperately wrong happening in New Zealand.

Let me show you this photo. Can you see all that fly on the water? That was normal 20 years ago. If I went to New Zealand for a fortnight's fishing there would be several times where I'd see hatches like that.

They are the standard mayflies on the Mataura. The little ones are about size 16. Although you can't see any fish heads there they would just jump into those, even if it was raining and cold. I don't know how often I have fished the Mataura in really cold, miserable, windy, sleety conditions. But that doesn't happen anymore either, or not in my experience.

That is a photo of the sorts of flies that are no longer there. Or at least I haven't seen them. And the other thing that's happened at the top end of the Mataura is that all that country was originally natural snow grasses, but now it's been ploughed up and it's all improved pastures.

The fish in this photo was caught in the riffle coming off the river there. The river is up at least a metre, if not a metre and a half, and that's right down there at Mataura Island Bridge, which is below Wyndham. It was one of my favourite spots, and there's a whole lot of good water that used to be there. The river had risen a lot and it was still crystal clear, and the mayfly coming down the



*Andrew Mossman and Peter Clayton both contributed to Liars' Night*

river would drift into that, which would normally be five or seven metres from where the river normally is. The mayfly drifting down and blowing a bit across would come through there. I got two fish drifting into that riffle directly behind me.

But this never happens now, because every time the river rises six inches it goes dirty. And when you come through Kingston on the way from Queenstown to Gore, or wherever you're going down south, you just see ploughed paddocks everywhere. There never were ploughed paddocks before. When it rains all that dirt ends up in the river..

So I don't know what the future holds. I think it's fairly grim. I'd like to show you the ten pounder I caught the other day and another one that I caught the day before. But I don't think I'll ever go back to New Zealand. If the floods stop, and they're not a function of global warming (which I suspect they are) then it'll recover. But I'm sure the fish numbers in the rivers have dropped, and have dropped dramatically. There are a lot of insects and nymphs, though not many caddis, in the river. I'm sure they'll come back in a year if the river doesn't flood. So that's my pessimistic comments. Thank you.

**Thank you Andrew. Our next speaker is Gordon Baker.**

Thank you for inviting me Peter. I want to talk about a recent trip to Hurley's Fly Fishing in Lumsden, from January 14 to January 21. We had eight fishermen, four guides, and were there for six days. Generally two people went with a guide. The people included Ian Clark who is here tonight and another VFFA member Robert McLachlan, along with two of my sons, another buddy, and also two fellows from Hobart and Perth who had been members of the Australian fly fishing team in years past. We fished the Waikaia, the Mataura, and one other South Island river.

Basically, everybody got fish each day, and most were caught on nymphs and bloodworms. Purists of course wouldn't dare put a worm pattern on. But willow grubs were what the fish were mostly after, though in general they seemed to be rather hard to catch on willow grubs. But blowfly patterns worked really well. The problem was we had rain the night before we got there, so on the first day the rivers were very high. Then on the night before our last day there was more rain, so the rivers were high again.

Now although I'm not given to boasting, you'll have to allow me some somewhat ostentatious self-glorification. This is a photo of my first fish, caught on the upper part of the Waikaia River. The water was still quite turbid, but this fish was blind-fished. It came up and took a blowfly. Four and a half pounds. That same day my son Matthew caught a seven and a half pounder. This was on the Mataura, and the guide there was Scott Slater. He had very good eyes.

I was very pleased when I got a fish, then another fish, and then a luncheon fish. We were sitting on the bank there, and the guide said, "Keep your rod there. The fish

can't do it." The etiquette here is to stay sitting down to cast, and then play the fish, or the guide will pull it out for you.

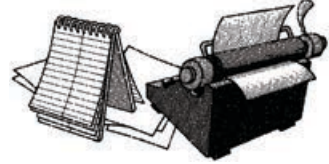
Now on the last day we had this problem with the rain again. So we went to this Parawa stream – an artificial stream that's been put in to drain marsh down to the Mataura. We'd seen a large fish near the poplars but nothing else all the way down. It was very muddy near the poplars because we had caught a very big fish there – 7¼ lb.

So that's my story for the fishing in New Zealand. It was good fun. I think that possibly the difference there is that the guides talk to each other and know where the fish are all the time, and they have very good eyes for spotting them.



*Bernard Holbery's fly box*

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"Fly fishermen are born honest, but they get over it."* (Ed Zern)

*"There is no such thing as too much equipment."* (Unknown)

*"The fishing is good in troubled waters."* (German Proverb)

*"In fishing, as in life, opportunity is often a matter of being in the right place at the right time."* (Larry Koller)

*"One thing becomes clearer as one gets older and one's fishing experience increases, and that is the paramount importance of one's fishing companions."* (John Ashley-Cooper)

When I began serious fly fishing in the years I lived in Warrnambool I mostly fished alone. Lots of my favourite spots were only a short drive from home, and often enough when I arrived one of my friends from the local fly fishing club was already there. Only occasionally did I head out to a favourite location with a mate on board.

But that changed when we moved to Melbourne in 1984. Reaching fishing locations now required an hour or two's drive, so a day out often involved four hours in the car. So a companion made the trip (and the fishing) just so much more pleasant.

In 1981 I participated in a Teacher-Exchange Program that involved me swapping jobs for a year with an overseas teacher. Thus I found myself teaching for 12 months in a secondary school in a small town not far from Hamilton in New Zealand. The school wasn't the best I'd taught in, but the town was fine, the surrounding countryside was attractive, church was good (as us Webbs are church goers), and the fishing was truly fabulous.

As soon as I arrived I joined the Hamilton Angling Club, and their vice-president, a wonderful angler called Peter Scott,

spotted this bewildered soul from 'across the ditch' and took me under his wing. Peter worked for a major dairy company as a refrigeration mechanic, so spent lots of time visiting local farmers. In return, they allowed him to fish the streams that ran through their farms. And Peter took me along with him. So from a fishing perspective it was a brilliant year. Anglers heading to New Zealand invariably go to the South Island, but the North Island is very good. It seemed to me that every little town and hamlet had a river or two flowing past that was filled with trout that hardly ever saw an angler.

Peter became my fishing partner for the year. He frequently phoned on Friday nights to invite me out to one of his favourite rivers on the Saturday. So thanks to Peter I enjoyed a lot of truly great trout fishing that year.

Peter and I remained friends from that year. About ten years ago he and his wife were in Melbourne, and they spent an evening with us. During the night Peter told me a great story.

The Dairy Company that he worked for had gone into partnership with a US-based firm specialising in automation, and soon after the deal was settled one of the senior vice-presidents from the

US company was despatched to New Zealand to check things out. Prior to his arrival he made it clear in his emails that he expected to do some fishing. Trout fishing of course, for some of those big back country monsters.

So Peter's boss said: "Fix it!" So he did – by booking a local guide to look after the visitor. However, two days before the Senior Vice-president arrived the guide found he was double-booked and wasn't available. The New Zealand Company managers were panic-stricken, and again asked Peter to fix it. He was, after all, the resident trout expert.

Peter agreed to take on the guiding role, but indicated that he would need a helicopter for the day to get into some good water in the limited time available. Ok, but the instructions were clear - the visiting Senior Vice-president had to catch some fish.

So at 5:00 am on the big day Peter picked up his guest and they headed for Rotorua. It was immediately obvious that the visitor was both elderly and generously overweight. He also revealed on the drive to Rotorua that he suffered from a heart problem, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

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

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



*In 2015 I caught up with Peter again when I was in New Zealand for a few weeks. Though now in his 80s of course he took me fishing*

puffing and sweating and popping pills for his ailments.

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

Time was running out and the helicopter was due when they arrived at the last section. Peter quickly walked up ahead to check the possibilities and saw the flash of a feeding fish at the top of a run. They crept into position, and on Peter's instruction (with an extra-hand on the rod guiding the cast), the vice-president tossed his weighted nymph up into the current well ahead of the feeding fish.

The nymph landed in some white water and the fly was swept down past the trout. There was a flash of silver, and the hook connected. The trout leapt several times and then bolted downstream at a huge rate of knots. So Peter grabbed the vice-president by the shirt collar and the belt to keep him upright, and together

they stumbled and tripped and fox-trotted their way down the pool, chasing the escaping fish. By some miracle the hook held, and despite several more leaps and lunges the trout – a magnificent 5 lb rainbow hen – was finally netted.

Peter then had to retrieve the camera from the bowels of the vice-president's gigantic backpack and take endless photos of the great white hunter with his trophy. The trout quickly became totally sick of the whole business, and was very grateful to finally be released back into the stream.

Then, with exquisite timing, the helicopter landed. On their way back to the hotel the vice-president sat silent for quite some time. Peter became a little concerned about his guest's welfare and kept glancing across to confirm that he was still breathing. Finally the

vice-president spoke. "Peter", he said, "Thank you so much. Even without that wonderful fish, today has simply been the best day in my life."

A few years ago I received an email from one of Peter's friends telling me that Peter had suffered a serious stroke. A few weeks later a second email reported the news I had been dreading – Peter had died.

Peter had indeed been a truly fabulous fishing companion, and I am so grateful for his contribution to my fishing experiences. But of course since then I have thoroughly enjoyed the company of other fishing friends I've made. John Ashley-Cooper is right. One's fishing companions are indeed of 'paramount importance'.

Lyndon Webb

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## Donger Weekend

This year's Donger Weekend, the annual competition between members of the VFFA and members of the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers' Club, is on Friday April 12 to Sunday April 14.

Accommodation and the centre of activities will again be the "Mitta Lodge", Omeo Valley Road, Omeo Valley, about 15 minutes' drive from Omeo. Participants are responsible for their own travel arrangements to and from the event. Omeo is about five hours drive from Melbourne via Bairnsdale and then North along the Great Alpine Road. Participants need to arrive Friday afternoon/evening and will have dinner at a hotel in Benambra or Omeo (to be confirmed).

The competition will be held from 7:00am Saturday until weigh-in at 1:00pm Sunday. The BFFC will provide meals on Saturday night and Sunday lunchtime,

so participants need to bring all other food plus bedding and personal items for their stay. If they wish VFFA members are welcome to stay on for an extra night or two with payment at BFFC rates (\$20pp/night – to be confirmed).

For more details see the Notice of Event in this newsletter or contact the Event Co-ordinator Peter Clayton at [petergc@bigpond.net.au](mailto:petergc@bigpond.net.au) or mobile 0438 219 538. Registrations close on Friday, April 5.



*Victoria's Big River is not so big, but it's a very attractive and productive trout stream*

# Notice of Event for VFFA 2024 Donger Weekend

**The Event:** A weekend in the magnificent high country of East Gippsland for the annual Victorian fly fishing heavy weight clash between the VFFA and the BFFC.

**Dates:** Arrive Friday April 12 & depart after weigh in & presentation 1:00 pm Sunday, April 14

**Address:** 'Mitta Lodge', Omeo Valley Road, Omeo Valley, VIC.

**Travel:** You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements to and from the event. Omeo is about a 5 hour drive from Melbourne via Bairnsdale and then north along the Great Alpine Road. The lodge is about 15 minutes from Omeo with access through a locked gate (access details for those who register will be provided closer to the event.)

**Catering / food and drink requirements:** Friday evening dinner – at a pub in Benambra or Omeo (to be confirmed) or self cater. Self-catering for Saturday & Sunday breakfasts and Saturday lunch. BFF will supply Saturday evening BBQ dinner & Sunday BBQ lunch, BYO drinks.

**Cost:** For VFFA members who may wish to stay Sunday & beyond payment at BFFC rates (\$20pp/ night) is required (to be confirmed).

**Fishing locations:** Rivers in Omeo region (Mitta Mitta, Livingston, Cobungra, Gibbo, etc)

**Fishing licence:** A current Victorian licence is required.

**Mobile phone:** Coverage is patchy. Good in major townships (with Telstra) but poor or non-existent in most angling areas.

**Sleeping requirements:** BFFC members kindly leave the lodge, which

accommodates ~10 people, available for VFFA members. Bring own bedding and towel (or tent or swag if this is preferred).

**Strongly recommended personal equipment:** Waders/ wading boots, gaiters for wet wading, brimmed hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, insect repellent, wading staff, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), torch at dusk onwards, mobile phone in waterproof container, handheld UHF radio.

**Essential equipment if intending to fish out of direct sight of other participants:** UHF radio.

**Essential equipment for Remote Locations:** Compression bandage, UHF handheld radio, water, prescribed medicines for those with a medical condition which could re-occur, mobile phone if coverage available.

**Weather:** Varies from hot to very cold, can be hot during the day with cooler temperatures at night (high country conditions). Latest forecast will be at the lodge each morning.

**Event Registration Form (ERF):** Register by Friday 5th April by sending the Event Co-ordinator a completed and signed copy of the ERF by email as an attachment or a hard copy via the post. "First in best dressed". Obtain your ERF from the VFFA website: [www.vffa.com.au](http://www.vffa.com.au) or pick one up at a General Meeting.

**Event Co-ordinator:** Peter Clayton, mobile: 0438 219 538, email: [petergc@bigpond.net.au](mailto:petergc@bigpond.net.au) Postal address: 8 Benteleigh St., Shepparton, Vic. 3630

**Date of this Notice of Event:** February 27, 2024



# OVENS RIVER CHALLENGE

22nd - 24th March 2024



**EVENT HEADQUARTERS:**  
NIMMO BRIDGE RECREATION AREA  
BUFFALO RIVER ROAD, MYRTLEFORD

**“CATCH, MEASURE & RELEASE” ONLY EVENT**

**Capture Awards for Trout, Murray Cod and other species  
Special prizes and give-aways for Junior Anglers**

- \* Casting exhibitions and Free tuition for all ages Sunday 11.00 am to Midday.
- \* Tuition will cover fly casting, lure casting and includes surface lures.
- \* A true family day - all welcome, and learn how to catch fish from the experts.
- \* Free BBQ on Sunday.

## To Register

go to: <https://australiantroutfoundation.com.au/ovens-river-challenge-2024/>

and 'click' the **REGISTER** button on the page.

Please Note:

Prior to commencing fishing, all anglers must visit the event headquarters at Nimmo Reserve to collect a record card, identification token, and official ruler (for measuring your catch),  
(Event H/Q will be open from 5:00pm-9:00pm on Friday and from 7:00am until mid-day on Saturday.)

**For any other queries refer to our FAQ's or contact:**

**Terry George, (President - ATF) on 0418 332 744**

**Or**

**Tim Curmi, (President - NFA) on 0417 419 765**



**Generously supported by:**



# ANACONDA



# North-East Report

... from Brian Eddy

The season so far in the upper Ovens has been a tad quieter than the previous couple of years (which admittedly were exceptional). Water levels and temperatures are, for mid-summer, quite good, but insect activity seems to be a bit low. There have been very few hoppers about thus far, and only moderate hatches of caddis and mayfly.

Nevertheless, trout are still around. A visiting fly fisher yesterday (late February) had a good early morning session with plenty of small rainbows about, and later (mid-morning) he hooked and landed a number of 30 - 35 cm rainbows. He also connected with a large brown that unfortunately he lost. Successful flies included small Royal Wulffs, and Copper John nymphs.



*A colourful brown from the Bundarra River*

I spent a few days at Anglers Rest/Blue Duck recently, during the time when that huge storm took out the State's power grid. As there is no power or phone reception over there, it didn't make any difference to us. By co-incidence, there was a group from Yarra Valley Fly Fishers also staying there. The hoppers were about and there was good fishing in the Mitta Mitta, Cobungra, Bundarra, Middle Creek and Big River.

Stimulators, Parachute style dries, any "rubber leggy" patterns, and bead-head nymphs all worked.



*Phil Jones from the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers showed Brian some top water on Victoria's fabulous Mitta Mitta Rive*



*Stalking a nice brown on the Cobungra River beside the Blue Duck Hotel*

# A New and Serious Challenge to Trout in NSW

... from Rod Whiteway, Secretary, Monaro Acclimatisation Society

Trout and trout fishing in New South Wales are now facing a new challenge that puts into doubt the sustainability of trout fishing. The threat stems from a concerted effort by environmental researchers to use the threatened species legislation and process to demonise salmonids – with a view to eradicating trout from NSW. But anglers in other States need to be aware that the same Commonwealth legislation can be used to target their trout.

Under the threatened species process a species can be declared, on a continuum, to be threatened. Part of the declaration process provides for actions to be implemented to reduce the threat to the species concerned. When it comes to aquatic species in the montane region of NSW, this always consists of either a ban on the stocking of trout or the eradication of trout.

While native species are important, the attack on trout is often mounted with very limited evidence as to the *actual* extent of the impact from trout. It now has become common practice for the threat from trout to be couched in terms of 'believed', 'suspected' or 'inferred'. Despite countless studies, the precise interaction is not defined.

And so it is that the Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) is now facing more sanctions on trout stocking from two threatened species declarations. To be fair it is not so much the declaration that annoys trout anglers, but rather the secretive and non-consultative approach taken by the authorities that hinders our ability to respond.

In August 2023, Steve Samuels, President of the MAS, and I were informed by NSW Fisheries of trout stocking bans that would apply to several Snowy River Catchment streams, as well as the Murrumbidgee River and Adjungbilly Creek.

In the Snowy River catchment, a part of the population of a relatively abundant and widespread galaxiid, *Galaxias olidus* (or Mountain Galaxia) was reclassified as a new species *Galaxias terenasus*, or Round Snout Galaxia. The sampling subsequently carried out found that it met the criteria as endangered under the EPBC Act, in that it was restricted in distribution and numbers. The fact that *G. terenasus* has been co-existing with trout for over 130 years and that in sampling conducted in the Snowy catchment up until 2015 its numbers were shown to be static or increasing seems to count for nothing.

As a result, the Commonwealth Scientific Committee recommended the banning of trout stocking in the Snowy River catchment. While the *G. terenasus* populations are found below Jindabyne Dam, the recommendation by the Commonwealth would see all trout stocking stopped in places like Lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne. On any level this is pure over-reach, but it does indicate that due to the secretive nature of the process, the best information is not made available to the decision-makers and they are happy to make broad-brush recommendations that are unsupported by fact.

Credit must be given to NSW Fisheries who have seen and understood the ludicrous nature of the Commonwealth

recommendation. However, rather than sit down with the MAS to nut-out a mutually acceptable solution, NSW Fisheries merely mandated the stocking bans, and then asked if we had anything to say.

So now we are faced with stocking bans in all the mid sections of the Maclaughlin River – the premier section of trout stream in mainland Australia, and a legendary water in the story of Australian freshwater recreational fishing. Bans will also apply to most of the fishable water on the Delegate River, all the water in the Snowy River from below Dalgety to well upstream, and much of Cambalong Creek: first-class trout fishing opportunities.

The affected section of the Snowy River is the Dalgety town reach and on the Delegate River it includes the Delegate town reach. Both towns have a caravan park on the rivers concerned, and for small rural communities, taking away trout fishing is likely to have a very significant economic effect on tourism and local amenity. It seems that economic well-being for small rural communities is of no concern to the authorities.

However, this will not be the end of it. We understand that up to 15 new galaxiid species have been identified within the *G. olidus* complex – all of which presumably could meet the requirements of the EPBC Act as endangered and be used to attack trout stockings. And the threat is not limited to galaxiids. In the Barington Tops in NSW, the listing of a native crayfish threatens trout stockings. Where does this stop – will there be other species: ephemerals, freshwater mussels, and the like that can be weaponised in these secretive efforts?

So how is this so secretive? On this *G. terenasus* issue it seems that the surveys

were carried out in secret. The MAS was made aware a few years ago that there were electro-fishing surveys being conducted by NSW Fisheries on Monaro streams, but we were not informed why they were taking place. When pressed for an explanation, we were told that they were routine surveys related to trout. We accepted this, but little did we know that the surveys were not as they were portrayed to us – but we know now.

These surveys were conducted in a limited number of waterways to establish a limited range and population of *G. terenasus*, but it seems that not all waterways capable of supporting *G. terenasus* were surveyed. As a result, the reason for listing *G. terenasus* is due to its restricted range, or area of occupation, and population. The results of this flawed methodology are convenient at best, and deceitful at worst.

In our meetings with NSW Fisheries, we asked to see the raw sampling data; they said that this was not possible as it was subject to privacy / confidentiality agreements. So, the secrecy continued. We are left wondering how we can interrogate the data to verify it, or to put forward suggestions for mitigating the threats? We have since been informed that the Recreational Fishing Team at NSW Fisheries has also not seen the raw data.

We also have discovered that there was a Draft Conservation Advice released by the Commonwealth Scientific Committee for comment. We don't know where this was advertised – but what is disturbing is that it seems that neither did the Recreational Fishing team at NSW Fisheries.

While the conservation advice relates to a non-angling species, the effect on recreational fishing is profound. It is also

entirely possible that other units within NSW Fisheries did see the draft (and perhaps commented on it) but failed to pass it on, or to notify the Recreational Fishing Team. Having a dysfunctional NSW Fisheries department that works in enclosed silos is not at all helpful and indicates a lack of cohesion and professionalism. It also indicates that personal agendas may be the driving force within NSW Fisheries.

As a result, this Draft was ratified and published early last year. Of course, had the recreational sector been aware of the draft and opportunity to comment, we believe we could have made worthwhile contributions that would have been supported by the fishing community and that would have been beneficial for *G. terenanus* – but as it stands, we again find recreational anglers (and the commercial and community enterprises that serve them) being portrayed as irrelevant or anti-native fish people.

At the same time, we have also been advised that the stocking of trout will be banned in the whole of the Adjungbilly Creek near Tumut and the Murrumbidgee River upstream of the Numeralla River confluence. This confluence is a considerable distance downstream of Cooma and the ban extends to Tantangara Dam wall.

Adjungbilly Creek offers a valuable freshwater fishing opportunity for the Tumut District, and the Murrumbidgee some of the best and most satisfying angling opportunities on the mainland. Once again, we were unaware that anything like this was coming. We have been informed that this stocking ban is because of Macquarie Perch but when pressed for details, the NSW Fisheries Recreational Fishing Team did not have any detail to offer. Considering that we have been stocking only rainbow trout in

this section of the Murrumbidgee River and Adjungbilly Creek for 24 years under the Macquarie Perch Recovery Plan, it is hard to fathom what has changed and why the authorities will not disclose this. Once again it is the secrecy that is disturbing; if there were a valid reason for the change, surely it would have been communicated to anglers?

But there is more secretive action we have encountered. Recently we were made aware of stockings of Trout Cod into the upper Goodradigbee River by the Threatened Species Unit of NSW Fisheries. Neither the MAS nor the NSW Fisheries Recreational Fishing team were aware of this. It had been done in secret.

We have no objection to the stocking of native species and support the development of mixed fisheries, where appropriate. What we do object to is Fisheries not involving their major client base, anglers, in the process. It is particularly important that we know their intentions with the stockings because we understand that there are powers under recovery plans to remove threats to the stocking and we have noted that in the Draft Trout Cod Recovery plan, provision is made to eradicate trout.

It seems to the MAS that the current doctrine adopted by many environmental scientists is the removal of trout is their talisman. As was explained to MAS President Steve Samuels: “we cannot do anything about climate change, which includes more frequent and severe bushfires, agricultural livestock and sediment from cultivation in rivers, water extraction or redfin and carp, but we can stop you guys from stocking trout”. This is a lazy and unprofessional approach, which is indicative of the modern public service not wanting to take on hard issues and give them proper management. The real and immediate threats to *G. terenanus*

are the same as for trout: climate change and loss of habitat from poor land use and riparian management practices. We as trout anglers are prepared to do our bit, but we cannot be the sole focus for the redress of our wider environmental problems. Tackle the hard issues as well, and we are sure that anglers will gladly work with scientists to get action on these.

As it stands, the MAS continues to negotiate with DPI in good faith, but there is an overarching feeling of disappointment that we have not been treated as a partner. To-date we have been presented with determinations and trying to get any sort of adjustment where warranted is met with a less than enthusiastic response.

The future for trout in the banned stocking sections will now rely on natural recruitment. Understanding how droughts affect trout leads us to believe that these once good trout fisheries will become, over time, second-rate and the small towns that rely on fishing and the related tourism will soon feel the pinch. We are paranoid that redfin perch will seize the vacuum left by trout. What effect will that have on *G. terenassus*? We are sure the trout will survive – but in much smaller numbers – and we are also sure that *G. terenassus* will survive, but probably not thrive: the other pressures are too great.

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## Latest news from the Inland Fisheries Service Tasmania

... from Chris Wisnieski

### Little Pine Lagoon boat ramp upgrade

The Little Pine Lagoon boat ramp upgrade commenced on February 26, and is due to be completed at the end of March. The boat ramp will be closed to the public during construction.

An alternative launching site is available via the Little Pine Lagoon Road in front of the shacks, approximately 500 metres to the north.

The water level in the lagoon will be drawn down to approximately 1.03 metres below the full supply level during the construction period. To facilitate the work the drawdown will commence on February 13, which may impact anglers. This is regrettable but necessary to facilitate the upgrade before potential autumn rains.

The project will deliver a single lane concrete boat ramp and multi-level timber jetty, providing better access, safety and amenity for anglers.

A buoy line will be installed in Monpeelyata Canal as an additional safety feature.



*Little Pine proposed new boat ramp and jetty*

### Four Springs Lake access track.

Work is well underway on the access track that will circumnavigate Four Springs Lake. The track will have sections of duck board across marsh areas along with a well-formed gravel track in other areas. The track will be approximately 8 km and will provide easy walking to a variety of good shore fishing spots around the lake.



*Map of Lake Four Springs Walking Track*

### Further maintenance on Nineteen Lagoon Roads

During the autumn of 2023 the IFS undertook major maintenance on the Double Lagoon and Lake Kay tracks in the Nineteen Lagoons. These roads had deteriorated badly over recent years and were heavily potholed. They have now been sheeted with gravel, and the last part of the Double Lagoon track has been upgraded to make it an all-season track allowing early access to anglers looking to launch a boat. Over coming weeks further maintenance will be undertaken.

### Lake Mackenzie Road closed for upgrade works

From February 26 Hydro Tasmania will be undertaking important upgrade works on Lake Mackenzie Road at Gun Lagoon Creek to improve access and safety. The

project involves replacing a culvert on Lake Mackenzie Road at Gun Lagoon Creek with a bridge to ensure safe conditions when travelling on the road.

Access to Lake Mackenzie will not be available to the public throughout the duration of the work. This is important to note for anyone contemplating access to the Blue Peaks in the Western Lakes. Works are expected to be completed by mid-March.

### Wild rainbow trout management report.

The Inland Fisheries Service recognises the value of maintaining wild fisheries, as these are best suited to our environment and provide a much sought-after angling experience. The Service only stocks waters when wild populations are not being adequately maintained by natural recruitment, and they use wild fish whenever possible. Stockings are guided by the Tasmanian Inland Recreational Fishery Management Plan 2018-28 and risk assessments for each water.

The Service uses fish traps at yingina / Great Lake and Lake King William to monitor and enhance the wild rainbow trout fisheries there.

The Liawenee Canal trap was opened in August 2023 and the Canal had moderate to low flows for much of the rainbow trout spawning run. The trap was closed on November 1. A total of 4,417 rainbow trout were captured throughout the run, these being 1,632 males and 2,785 females. It was notable that the total number of females was similar to 2022, while in 2023 there were 956 less males represented in the run. Water flows in 2023 were significantly reduced from the flows recorded during the 2022 spawning run.

For more information read the full Wild Rainbow Trout Management Report 2023.

# A CENTENARY OF TOURNAMENT FLY CASTING IN AUSTRALIA, 1907 – 2007

Geoffrey Newman and Kevin Laughton

Limited edition of 100 copies signed by Kevin Laughton

\$49.50 including postage within Australia

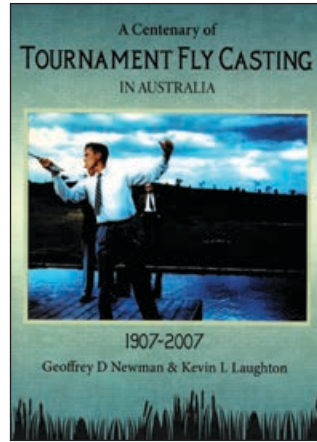
ISBN 978-0-6458723-0-9, 124pp, A4, Illustrated, 2023

This book chronicles the history of a hundred years or so of the sport of competition fly casting in Australia. It was born of a friendship of over 50 years between Geoff Newman, tournament fly caster and long-term member of the Red Tag Fly Fishers' Club of Melbourne, and Kevin Laughton of Orange NSW, three times Australian Fly Casting Champion of Champions and a tournament fly caster for over 70 years.

From the 1950s, Geoff Newman was a passionate and thorough collector of the records of participation in, and results of, fly casting tournaments at Club, State and Australian levels, and he and Kevin Laughton became friends through tournament casting.

Kevin Laughton first came to notice in the Australian tournament casting world as a thirteen-year-old, becoming the Dry Fly Accuracy Champion at the inaugural Australian Fly Casting Championships held at Queenscliff in Manly, NSW in 1951. From his early teens, Kevin competed against legendary fly casters including Bill Southam, Malcolm Gillies, Dick Wigram, John Brookes, Theo Brunn and CA Reynolds, as well as the world champion Jon Tarantino of the United States. He represented Australia in two World Fly Casting Championships, in 1973 at Scarborough, England, and in 1974 at Taree, NSW. Kevin was also 26 times NSW Fly Casting Champion of Champions.

Geoff Newman had long intended to write a book to preserve and make



available all the information he and Kevin Laughton had collected over the years. He began working on it in the mid-1970s, his records regularly updated by Kevin based on his participation in fly casting tournaments within and outside Australia. When Geoff's health deteriorated, he asked Kevin to complete the book and take it through to publication.

The book provides an invaluable insight into competition fly casting in Australia, capturing the evolving story of events, venues, equipment, and above all, its remarkable personalities.

## How to order:

**Price** is \$49.50 including postage within Australia.

**Email** [redtagcasting@gmail.com](mailto:redtagcasting@gmail.com) stating the number of copies you require.

An invoice will be emailed to you including payment details (EFT only).

Once funds are received your order will be mailed to you.

**For overseas delivery** please email for quote.

**Please note** once this limited edition has sold out the book will only be available via Amazon print on demand.

## Jason Platts' Brief Report on the Acheron

... Jason is one of our most active younger members, and frequently fishes the streams north of Melbourne. Here is his brief report on a recent excursion.

I recently had an absorbing evening session on a popular Acheron River feeder. I got on the water around 6 pm and fished until 9:30. It was a stunning night to be out on the rivers! The fishing was quiet while there was still light on the water, but near 8 pm the snowflake caddis went ballistic and the browns really switched on. As is often the case in the summer months, from sunset until last light is the time to have your fly on the water. I fished a blowfly in the late afternoon, then egg laying caddis and the mighty Muddler on dark. Tight lines everyone!



Jason is a highly skilled fly fisher and he catches a lot of fish from our Victorian trout streams



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## Trout cod reintroduced into the Upper Goulburn River

Endangered Trout cod (*Maccullochella macquariensis*) have been reintroduced into the Upper Goulburn River to re-establish the historical population and help take another step towards recovering the endangered native freshwater fish species!

Although long suspected to be a separate species from Murray cod, trout cod

(or blue-nose cod) were only formally recognised in 1972. The species doesn't grow as large as Murray cod (commonly 40-50cm and less than 5kg, maximum 85cm and 16kg) and is distinguished by a protruding upper jaw, lack of markings on the head, except for a horizontal stripe and some more pronounced spots on the body (very pretty). Like many other Australian freshwater fish

species, trout cod were once abundant across the Murray-Darling Basin but a range of factors, including barriers to fish migration and loss of habitat, have restricted populations to just a handful of locations today. To help conserve and rebuild remaining populations, the species is almost fully protected from fishing harvest.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) are committed to recovering native threatened fish species such as trout cod, and have been working for many years on restocking programs and habitat restoration to bring back populations.

In early February 2024, these efforts took a step further when VFA, Arthur Rylah Institute researchers and recreational fishers intensively surveyed lakes Sambell and Kerferd, near Beechworth in northern Victoria to catch mature trout cod using electrofishing, fyke netting and mesh netting methods.

The trout cod were transported to the Upper Goulburn River (upstream of Lake Eildon and Jamieson) where they were inserted with acoustic tags by fisheries scientists and then released into their new riverine habitat.

The acoustic tags will help the team monitor survival and movement of translocated trout cod to inform future translocations as a strategy to re-establish trout cod populations.

Interpretive signage is being installed at access points along the river to let recreational fishers and the public know trout cod are present in these waters and how they can help to care for them.

Trout cod were historically present in the Upper Goulburn River and this release will kickstart re-establishing the population prior to the stocking of trout cod fingerlings into the Upper Goulburn River planned for next Summer.

So, if you are up that way chasing a few brownies on fly, keep your eyes peeled for a strange looking cod – it just might be one of our trailblazers helping to re-establish their numbers in the system.

By re-establishing populations of trout cod across the Murray-Darling Basin, we move closer to downlisting the species and bringing back another option for recreational fishers to catch, which is the ultimate goal of the National Trout Cod Recovery Plan.



*Dr Taylor Hunt and Lauren McPherson carefully releasing trout cod into the Upper Goulburn River*



*A beautiful trout cod after being caught at Lake Sambell, prior to translocation to the Upper Goulburn River.*



*Electrofishing was one of the methods used to catch trout cod at lakes Kerferd (pictured) and Sambell*



*Recreational fishers such as Robbie and Holly Alexander assisted in the catching of trout cod*



*Dr Corey Green and Craig Eury, local recreational fisher, with a trout cod just prior to release into the Upper Goulburn River*



*The trout cod were carefully transported to the Upper Goulburn River by Mark Adams of the VFA*



*Prior to release the trout cod were surgically inserted with acoustic tags. Dr Corey Green of the VFA will monitor their survival and movement.*

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *Kossy's Pre - emerging nymph*



Richard Kos is one of our top VFFA fly tyers. He is very creative and is constantly tying and trying variations of established patterns. And then he tries them out. Richard catches a lot of fish.

The Brown Nymph is a very popular fly. We all have some and it is popular because it is so effective. Richard has created his version of the fly, and confirms that while it is a recent creation it has already hoodwinked a number of trout in the rivers and lakes he regularly fishes. It certainly looks like attractive trout food.

### **Materials:**

**Hook:** Kamasan B175, or barbless alternative Hanak H200BL – in sizes 14 & 16

**Thread:** Black 70D or Veevus 10/0 black

**Weight:** 7 – 8 turns of 010 fine lead wire at the thorax

**Tail:** Grizzly feathers dyed Coachman Brown

**Body:** Rusty brown possum dubbing

**Rib:** Fine red copper wire

**Wingcase:** Black pheasant tail – 3mm wide for #14 flies and 2mm wide for #16 flies

## Tying Procedure:

1. Start the thread about 1 mm behind the eye, and wind a layer of thread on to cover thorax area.
2. Wind 7-8 tight touching turns of 0.10 lead wire on the hook shank at the thorax, then cut the wire. Then wind a layer of thread over the lead wire.
3. Wind thread along the hook shank towards bend, finishing just above the barb (or where barb would be on a barbless hook).
4. Tie in the tail. The tail should be about the same length as the hook shank length.
5. Tie in some fine copper wire ribbing.
6. Form a slightly conical-shaped body by applying dubbing to two-thirds of hook shank length. The dubbing will obviously be thinner near the tail and increasing in thickness towards the thorax.
7. Wind some ribbing over the dubbing in the reverse direction of the dubbing – four or five turns, then tie off.
8. Tie in the wing case at thorax position.
9. Dub the thorax, adding more dubbing to the top area of the thorax to form the pronounced hump (a rolled dubbing ball).
10. Pull the wing case over the top of dubbing and tie it off.
11. Apply a small dab of clear nail polish to seal the thread.
12. Brush out the underside of the thorax to create a 'buggy' look.

## Note:

For a more durable fly coat the underside of the wing case with nail polish, letting it dry before tying in.

The fly can be tied with or without weight. My way of differentiating between the two is to apply a very small drop of bronze nail polish to the head of all of my weighted flies.

This nymph can be tied in any colour, from natural possum to black. The most common productive colours for me have been Rusty Brown, Claret and Olive.



## VFFA 2023 meetings & other activities

### March 2024

- March 3 – 10 VFFA trip to Taupo in the North Island of New Zealand  
Event Co-ordinator – John Spragg (john@bellingham-marine.com.au)
- 6 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, our first for the year:  
Event Co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – Sam Fawke, Senior Technical officer –  
Conservation Hatchery, Victorian Fisheries Authority
- 22 Fri – 24 Sun Big River Weekend at Enoch’s Point.  
Convenor John Pilkington – 0407 356 676
- 22 Fri – 24 Sun ‘Ovens River Challenge’ at Myrtleford,  
An Australian Trout Foundation / Native Fish Australia event
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
- 29 Friday Easter - Good Friday
- 31 Sunday Easter Sunday

### April 2024

- 12 Fri – 14 Sun Donger Weekend at the Mitta Lodge, Omeo  
Convenor – Peter Clayton 0438 219 538
- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
(Speaker – John Spragg – reporting on the New Zealand trip in March)
- 24 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes  
Event Co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm, Zoom meeting.

### May 2024

- 11 Sat & 12 Sun Murray cod fly fishing at Myrtleford
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – TBC
- 24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

### June 2024

- 5 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes  
Event Co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 7 Friday The trout fishing season in Victorian rivers officially closes at midnight on  
Friday, June 7, this year.
- 16 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – TBC.
- 26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom  
(Millbrook visits for 2024 will be on March 6, April 24, June 5 and September 25)