

# FLY LINES



MARCH 2026

## March Meeting with Anthony McGrath from VRFish

Thursday, March 19, 6:30  
at the Kelvin Club

Anthony McGrath is the recently appointed Executive Officer of VRFish, the peak body representing Victoria's recreational fishers. Anthony will be attending our VFFA March meeting to tell us what VRFish has been up to lately, and to outline what the organisation is doing to get outcomes for Victorian fishers in the lead up to the state government election in November.

Anthony comes to VRFish following ten years at the Victorian Fisheries Authority, where through a variety of different roles he was able to deliver many outcomes for our Victorian fishers. This included the delivery of the boating project at Kyneton lakes, Tullaroop and Barkers Creek, as well as delivering many infrastructure and access projects. In recent years Anthony was responsible for managing the state's commercial Abalone fishery, which is famously difficult with plenty of challenges.

An accomplished fly fisher in his own right, Anthony took up the fly rod at the age of twelve and spent many years fishing North-East Victorian rivers, the Snowy Mountains, the north and south islands of New Zealand, Tasmania and the Amazon, though these days you're more likely to find him fishing the less adventurous lakes closer to Ballarat.

Please bring along plenty of questions for Anthony.



*Anthony is a highly skilled angler*

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### THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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# Vice President's Message

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..... from Rodger Muir

This message is somewhat truncated, as I've been busy over the last couple of weeks making sure that the VFFA Taupo 2026 event goes well (see my report). So I've just not had much time to put thought into this report.

One important event that does warrant mention is that Kevin Finn, after many years of service in the role has stepped away from the position of Secretary of the VFFA. Kevin has been our secretary at various times under a number of presidents over the last 12 years. I and all other Council members would acknowledge with gratitude the huge amount of work Kevin has put in as Secretary over these years, and we thank him for his significant contribution to the VFFA.

At the Council's request Kevin has agreed to remain a member of the Council, so that the Association can continue to benefit from Kevin's extensive knowledge of the VFFA's history, culture, and membership.

I have taken on the role of Secretary in the interim, and the position will be up for re-election at the next AGM.

Council members Andrew Fuller and Scott Raggatt have organised a Prospective Members Dinner on Wednesday March 18 at Brewmanity Brewery, South Melbourne. The evening is designed as a relaxed social introduction to the VFFA for potential new members, featuring fly fishing trivia, canapés and guest speaker Scott Xanthoulakis. The event is part of Council's broader effort to actively grow and strengthen the VFFA's membership.

Thanks to Andrew Fuller's efforts the recently updated VFFA website now also supports online ticket purchasing for events, making it easier for members and guests to register.

The general meeting on Thursday March 19 at the Kelvin Club will feature an address by Anthony McGrath from VRFish. Anthony is a fly fisherman, so come along and hear about the VRFish program from the perspective of someone who understands and participates in the sport (Organiser – John Spragg).

We have the Big River event (Organiser - John Pilkington) at the end of March, and the Donger Weekend in April (Organiser - Peter Clayton). We also have six members who have put their hands up to assist the Australian Trout Foundation with its Loombah Weir project (VFFA organiser - Rodger Muir), which will likely have them on the water up there as two teams of three in early to mid-May, but note that this project runs through until late June, so later participation is possible.

There is also a Notice of Event in this issue for the VFFA 2026 Winter Taupo event (Organiser – Rodger Muir), which will run from June 21 to June 28.

So, there is plenty activity for members to get involved in. Please contact either myself or any of the members mentioned as organisers if you would like to be part of any of these events.

Tight lines, Rodger

# Taupo 2026 Report

... Rodger Muir – Event organiser

Only a few days ago 15 of the 16 participants in the VFFA 2026 Taupo (Summer) event left Waitahanui, the majority travelling back to Melbourne with fabulous memories of a great week of fishing and fellowship. A lucky few have continued their New Zealand travels, some heading over to Rotorua to terrorise the trout in the Ngongotaha River and one to Tuatapere in the South Island

As the organiser of this event I am not well placed to comment on how good it was, but the feedback I have received from the participants is that it all went extraordinarily well.

Everyone caught fish, and some caught fish in significant numbers – in excess of 30 for the week. While the Waitahanui River proved to be as challenging as ever, some of the other rivers in the area were less difficult, with good catches made in both the Hinemaiaia and Tongariro Rivers.



*Bill Jeans scores a beautiful Tongariro brown*

That is not to say that the Waitahanui did not yield fish – participant Ian Wakefield nailed a cracking 5¼ lb rainbow wet lining with a smelt pattern fly.



*Ian Wakefield with a magnificent 5¼ lb rainbow*



*Sydney member Rob Lennon with a fine Hinemaiaia rainbow*

Three pairs undertook some raft fishing with Tongariro River Rafting down the upper reaches of the Tongariro River. They covered 14 km of river over the day, from

the Potu Intake (the furthest upstream access point for the river) down to the famed 'Blue Pool'. The rapids in the river are 'Grade 3', the scenery is absolutely stunning, and the water is only accessible by raft.

The fishing is challenging. The guide stopped the raft at six or seven pools or back-waters over the course of the day's journey, and depending on the conditions, the anglers takes turns to cast to (mostly) sighted fish, with a dry fly or nymph under a dry. The underfoot terrain varies from sand banks to boulders the size of a house, and in between stops there is often a soaking as the rapids are negotiated.

Yours truly had a great day, netting seven rainbows – the 4 lb fish below being the pick of them, taken on a dry in the foam line right up against the cliff on the other side of the river.



*Rodger Muir caught this superb Tongariro rainbow*

Our team of 'resident' guides (Dustin, Ceiran and Gareth) did a magnificent job. Participants were taken to a variety of locations and invariably experienced fishing success.



*Hamish Hughes strikes again! A 6lb Brown*

Significantly, all reported learning something from their guide, be it streamcraft, line management, or fishing technique. The demand for stillwater guiding was high and Dustin provided six days of excellent boat fishing on either Lake Kuratau or Lake Rotoaira. The catch rates at both locations were great, with Hugh Maltby and Tony Mitchem netting something like 40 fish between them for their day on Kuratau.

I managed to boat this great rainbow on Rotoaira, but unfortunately poor line management on my part resulted in the tip section of my cane rod becoming a three piece. Never mind, I built the tip so I can build a replacement.



*Rodger with another fine rainbow – this one from Rotoaira. Rodger saw the fish feeding, so cast a dry fly, and it was promptly taken*



*Rodger broke the tip of his cane rod, so it's good his hobby is building cane rods*

Off the water, Bron and Anthony at the Waitahanui Lodge did a truly magnificent job of looking after the group. From an excellent breakfast ready right on the dot of 7:00 am to set everyone up for the day, through to setting up a gazebo on the lake's edge under which the tired but victorious fishers relaxed over drinks and nibbles at the end of the day, and then tidying up after most had headed off to bed. Cabins 'turned over' with towels replaced every few days, common areas kept neat and tidy – truly outstanding hosts.



*Lakeside pre-dinner drinks, nibbles, and (some) lies*

They also facilitated this photo of a member of the local constabulary arriving at the Lodge to discuss driving protocols and potential failure to abide by the local rules with our Senior Vice President. Being a man of great loquaciousness, our Vice President negated the criticism of his driving, and turned it into an opportunity to encourage the members of the local



*Local constabulary visiting for a chat*

constabulary to join the Victorian Police Force. A win for John Spragg!

And then the food – Dustin's partner Marie Legoux provided most of the evening meals, each of which were stand-outs in terms of quality, variety, and taste. There was a BBQ at my place on the first night, which I've been told was up to standard, and for a bit of variety we had a catered 'Curry Night' which met the approval of the curry aficionados.

So, it all went really well, and we will do it again in 2027. Perhaps a little later, to be able to add Lake Otamangakau (which opens on 1 March) as another stillwater guiding destination, and with both a 7-day and a 10-day option, for those keen to put in more time on the water in this great fishing location. (More details in due course).

# Notice of Event - VFFA Event - Taupo NZ Trip Winter 2026



*Anthony Bell – a skilled New Zealander angler with a huge prize-winning rainbow he caught*



*Rodger Muir has a habit of catching large fish New Zealand. This photo shows two he caught in 2025*

**The Event.** A week at Waitahanui Lodge, Waitahanui on the shores of Lake Taupo, New Zealand, at the height of the Rainbow Trout season. Nymph or wet-line fishing up and down the local rivers, or on the local lakes in groups or individually during the day (and night) and share stories of the events of the day over dinner in the Boiler Room at the Lodge.

10 positions are available.

**Dates:** Arrive Sunday 21, June 2026, 2:00pm - depart Sunday, 28 June 2026, 10:00am.

**Address:** Waitahanui Lodge, 116 State Highway One, Waitahanui, Taupo RD 2, 3378 [Waitahanui Lodge | Lake Taupo, New Zealand](#)

**Travel:** You will need to make your own travel arrangements to and from Waitahanui, and arrange any travel insurance cover you feel necessary. Taupo

Airport is 5 kms north of Waitahanui Lodge. Air NZ has daily flights from Auckland of about 1 hour duration. You are also responsible for arranging your transport while in New Zealand. 4WD vehicles are not required. By road, the lodge is approximately 3.5 hours from either Auckland or Wellington.

Once attendee numbers are confirmed, arrangements can be made to share vehicle hire. Vehicles can be hired from either Taupo or Auckland airport.

**Cost:** A\$1,700.00 *per person* for shared accommodation; linen including towel and face washer; breakfast and dinner; daily fishing update; one day guided fishing (in pairs) with a local guide.

A deposit of 50% (A\$850.00) is to be paid by 1 May 2026 and the balance (A\$850.00) by 1 June, 2026. Details of

payment arrangements will be circulated to participants in due course.

**Accommodation:** Five 'Kiwi Bach' cabins at Waitahanui Lodge are available for accommodation, each with several bedrooms and 2 or 3 separate beds. You will be expected to share a cabin with several other members for the week, and depending on numbers, you may be required to share a room. All cabin facilities are shared for the week.

**Meals & Drinks:** Attendees do not need to buy food and prepare an evening meal. Two course evening meals will be provided by an external caterer, served in the Boiler Room at the Lodge at 7.00pm each evening. A continental breakfast will be supplied with a range of cereals, toast, juice, coffee, tea. Lunch will be your responsibility each day. BYO wine, beer, spirits.

**Fishing locations:** Waitahanui Lodge is located on the lakefront of Lake Taupo, and is 120 meters from the mouth of the Waitahanui River ('the Rip'). Upstream of the river mouth this river offers some 5 to 6 kms of fishable waters, all readily accessible on well-defined tracks, with few sections of terrain more than 'moderate' in difficulty.

Other well-known trout waters within a 30-minute drive include, the Hinemaiaia River (12 Kms south), the Tauranga-Taupo River (25 Kms south), the Tongariro River (40 Kms south). For those wishing to travel a little further, Lake Rotorua (and associated waters) are 75 Kms north, the headwater of the Whanganui River (100Kms south west), and the Rangitikei River (135Kms south). Note, Lake Otamangakau is closed for fishing between 1 June and 31 August, but Lakes Rotoaira and Kuratau are both open until 30 June.

**Fishing licence:** A current Taupo District fishing license is required. Before departure to Taupo, you may purchase one via the Internet on [Buy a Taupō fishing licence online \(doc.govt.nz\)](#). Those wishing to fish outside of the Taupo district will need to acquire a separate fishing license for adjoining fishing districts - see Fish & Game website [General Fishing Licence Info \(fishandgame.org.nz\)](#). Note - there is a separate category of licence for non-residents of NZ.

**Mobile phone:** Coverage is good in most townships and on major highways. However, it may poor/non-existent in more remote angling areas.

**Strongly recommended personal equipment:** Waders/wading boots (Hard sole wading boots ONLY permitted – felt/absorbent sole boots are not permitted.), gaiters for wet waders, brimmed hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, insect repellent, wading staff, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), torch, mobile phone in waterproof container, handheld UHF radio, first aid kit. For those interested in fishing any of the river deltas, given the currents and shifting surface materials, a lifejacket is strongly recommended.

Note - all fishing gear (particularly waders and boots) will need to be clean and dry before it will be allowed into NZ.

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

**Essential equipment for Remote**

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

**Weather:** The weather in June will vary from cold to very cold. Frosts are common, and it can be windy and wet.

Updated forecast will be at the Lodge every morning.

**Guiding:** As noted above, the cost of the event includes one day of guided fishing along with another participant. This year the guide will be able to offer pairs a limited number of days of boat still water fishing (conditions permitting). In your email registering your intent to participate in the event, please indicate if you are interested in boat fishing for your guided fishing day.

Should you want additional guided fishing, there are numerous experienced fishing guides available. If you wish to be guided for an additional day (or days) over the time at Waitahanui, please indicate this by email to Rodger at [muirrodger@gmail.com](mailto:muirrodger@gmail.com). Depending upon demand, Rodger will endeavour to arrange / facilitate guide / guides for pairs of anglers on a daily basis. Pricing to be established, and is in addition to and independent of the costs set out above.

**Participation:** Members wishing to participate in the event should send the Event Co-ordinator an email registering their intent to attend. A number of members have already indicated they wish to participate – **those members need to respond to this notice confirming they still intend to participate.**

**Event Co-ordinator.** Rodger Muir

Mobile +61 414 253 890 or +64 224 585 128

Email: [muirrodger@gmail.com](mailto:muirrodger@gmail.com)

Postal address: 501 / 25 Windsor Terrace, Williamstown, 3016

**Event Registration Form (ERF):** Event participants are required to provide to the Event Coordinator a completed and

signed copy of the VFFA ERF before the event commences. This can be by downloading, completing and signing the PDF version of the ERF available on the VFFA website (Under 'Club Forms' in [The Club Room - VFFA](#)) and either emailing or posting that to the Event coordinator.

Date of this notice of event: 1 March 2026

### **What to do next:**

Please register your intent to attend **ASAP**. As noted above, we have a number of people who have already expressed interest.

In your email please also include your intentions with regard to:

**Local transport:** Do you **intend to hire a vehicle or do you have access to a vehicle in NZ?** We have a few people with access to vehicles in NZ and they may like to share fishing time / transport during the week. As noted above, once attendees are known, arrangements can be made to share the cost of hiring a vehicle.

**Guided Boat fishing:** Subject to suitable weather and water conditions. the guide is able to offer a limited number of days of still-water boat fishing as an option for pairs being guided as part of this event. Please indicate if you are interested in this option for your guided fishing day.

**Using the services of a fishing guide in addition to the day already included:**

Do you wish use the services of a **Fishing Guide** and if so, how many days over the week in addition to the day included? (Availability and pricing to be determined).

**[Do not book travel to New Zealand until you receive VFFA confirmation](#)**

If you are intending to participate, please check your passport will be current for

travel as of June 2026. If not, begin the renewal process.

VFFA will then advise if you have been successful in obtaining a place in the group trip

**Book your travel to/from New Zealand/ Taupo** – once you have received VFFA confirmation. Note, your travel bookings

for Australia/NZ and NZ/ Australia should take into account travelling to and from Taupo.

**Pay your deposit to VFFA** by 1 May 2026 & balance by 1 June 2026.

Complete and sign the **Event Registration Form** and get that to Rodger prior to arriving in New Zealand.

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*The cabin at Millbrook, where lots of us have relaxed with a coffee after a few hours of fishing*

## The VFFA in Tasmania in February

An intrepid (decrepit, as it turned out) band, some earlier and some later, invaded Hayes on Brumbies for the first week of February 2026.

### Attrition:

On the second evening John Fasso nosedived in the shower, dislocating his shoulder and suffering a head laceration. Thus in hospital overnight, then with his arm in a sling. Was not supposed to drive, but did to the boat for the trip back to Melbourne. Next day in Melbourne - medical treatment, no work for a couple of weeks, arm and shoulder immobilised. For John very sadly – a very short trip.

Richard McCormack tripped on the disabled ramp, thus badly straining his knee and calf. Appeared to be mending, but two days later was on an aircraft back to Melbourne. Was partially immobilised with major damage, but was still able to wear his kilt to his youngest daughter's pending wedding four weeks prior to the event.

Then there was Hissing Goddard's flat tyre at the bottom of Tod's corner on the Great Lake. Tragically the jack sank slowly in the sphagnum moss. Eventual tyre change advice and common sense, along with horizontal assistance provided by Jeff Allan (see below). Expert commentary by Wakefield and Eddy. Fish caught – nil.

The hero was Jeff Allan from Southern Fly, who was our go to MICA ambulance officer trainer. In much demand, and should be included in all future VFFA trips as a precaution.

**Feeding and Imbibing:** The Ringwood Hotel Cressy for dinners, the highlight being eight vegetables served with each dish. Some delicious barbecue



*David Wakefield with a fine brown from a Tasmanian lake*

steaks appeared for the Thursday night invitational, with guests including Ray Brown, Mike Stevens, et al.

**Buying:** The *Essential Angler* in Launceston lightened several wallets, with purchases including rods, lines and other bits no one really needed. The consensus was that nothing purchased or acquired actually improved angler skills in the week. A magnificently stocked shop with Mike and Jules and staff offering great advice and superior salesmanship.

**Casting:** Pierre (i.e. Peter Hayes) - between watering gardens and lawns, making lunches, picking blueberries, cleaning equipment, handcrafting his single morning cup of coffee for all, arranging trysts in Ballarat ... still managed to work on the casting disasters presented by some of our crew. (Our compliments here to Brian Eddy - a beautiful caster.) Hamish's casting technique improved with each session, and with significant signs of improvement even leading to some fish being scored by Hamish.

**Fishing:** A bit of floating on Brumbies, poking about on the Macquarie, but mainly back to Penstock Lagoon again



*They fished hard and worked up a keen appetite and again - hot initially and then cold. Dun's were hatching, nymphs were being taken, and of course fisheries inspectors appearing regularly. The fishing was often firing one day (with Hayes claiming Wakefield's rainbow trout was the season's largest fish), then moribund the next, with the only evidence of life being the odd rise and one or two long-distance releases.*

The first Saturday on Lake Leake with Wakefield and Spragg was a foretaste. Each was fishing with a guide in the boat and using identical techniques and identical flies. Nothing was rising, and flies were bobbing under indicators. Spragg caught two around the 3½ pound size, while Wakefield managed a six-inch perch (redfin) with the attached weed providing animation.

Brumbies was well worked, with some days having excellent rising fish. Thus the Purdon Dinghy with a rejuvenated battery had some good workouts. Plenty of fish were seen, but not many were taken. A visit to the 19 Lagoons by Wakefield, Eddy, Goddard and Allan (the MICA man - if you're smart make sure he's in your fishing pod so when it's your turn to be disabled he's on the spot).



*David Wakefield is a highly skilled angler*



*Tasmania produces some splendid rainbow trout too!*

A two-hour session on Botsford was where Wakefield managed five presentations. He dropped two fully-sighted takes (each like a David Attenborough high definition slow motion nature documentary), and is still pondering whether he was too fast or too slow. There were fairly regular late evening or nocturnal wanders along the wall at Brumbies - particularly by Ray Goddard who was anxious to emulate the fabled 2½ pounder he caught several trips back (this event just occasionally peppering the conversation to stimulate the sceptics' enthusiasm). The odd cooperative brown was taken on dusk,

provided the accursed easterly had not arrived, which it did far too consistently.

Some diversions included a visit to the flyfishing museum at Evendale, and regular maintenance excursions to the Cressy Bakery are mandatory additions to a visit.

There was now much less evidence of cormorants, and consequently a resurgence of better quality and increased numbers of Tassie trout augurs well for next season.

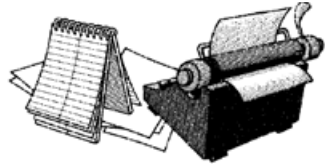
All in all this was another excellent trip with top quality hosting. By the way, a disaster happened on the final day. Hayes in bare feet managed to smash several drinking glasses from a great height onto the kitchen floor. He remained immobilised while the rest of the crew swept up the shards around him, It was probably the longest he'd stood in one spot for the entire week.

(Photos supplied by Pierre Hayes)



*Delightful weather on a Tassie lake*

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



... from Lyndon Webb

I recall that in the ten years I lived in Warrnambool I nearly always fished alone. I would occasionally encounter a fellow member of the local fly fishing fraternity when I was out flogging one of the local rivers or lakes, and these were invariably very pleasant encounters, though totally coincidental.

When I moved back to Melbourne in the 1980s that changed. The good trout angling venues I was told about invariably involved an hour or two of driving, both before and after the casting and wading. So a travelling companion, a fellow fly fisher, was always very welcome company, especially when the two-hour trip home involved driving at night.

Milton Zeuschner, the proprietor for many years of the Hook Up Bait & Tackle store in Ferntree Gully, became my regular fishing companion, and Milton and I have now shared countless fishing trips over the years and have had some great times together.

Mind you, fishing a river with another angler requires some thought. Do you fish alternate pools, or fish each pool together, casting in turns. Can it become competitive? It might, though never with Milton. He is an excellent angler, and his captures frequently exceeded mine. And good luck to him - I shared the pleasures of his many successes.

I recall a fascinating excursion some many years ago fishing with another VFFA member. When we arrived at our venue,

the fabulous little Steavenson River, my companion for the day discovered that he had left his fishing reel at home. Did I have a spare reel with me? It happened that I did, so I passed it across. But he then discovered to his consternation that I, as a right-handed caster, wound my reels left-handed. But he didn't - he cast with his right hand, then swapped his rod to his left hand when fishing in order to wind the reel with his right hand. So what should we do?

My companion and good friend of many years had an obvious solution - under instruction I took the end of the line on the reel I had just loaned him and trotted up the road about 60 - 70 metres until all the line was peeled off the reel and lying along the road. Then he rewound the reel with his right hand, as his normal preferred fishing routine required. And there must have been some subtle tactical advantage to all this, because when we finally made it to the river for a couple of hours fishing my fellow member caught twelve fish to my three.

Yes, our fishing memories are innumerable and a fascinating source of reflection and deliberation. Many years ago I paid a quite modest fee to join a fishing club based in Leongatha. This gave me access to some great lakes and dams in the surrounding area, one of these being the Western Reservoir. It was stocked regularly by the Leongatha club members, and I enjoyed some very pleasant and successful visits there over the following years.

According to my diary I visited there in May 2012. When I arrived I found that some workmen were doing maintenance up at the far end. No problem. I parked at the dam wall (the southern end) and happily fished the water there. At about 5 o'clock the workmen left, and I fished on. At 6 pm it was time to leave for the trip home, so I packed up my gear and drove to the entrance gate – which was now locked! Locked by the workmen when they left. And I didn't have a key.

So I left my car, climbed over the gate and walked about a kilometre to a nearby farmhouse that had some lights on. The people there were very sympathetic –

offering me a cup of coffee while they phoned one of the officials involved in the administration of the local water supply. He was having his evening meal with his wife and kids, so would drive around and let me out just as soon as he had finished his dessert. Which he did.

So I arrived home much later than I had planned.

Yes, our fishing memories are indeed innumerable and a fascinating source of reflection and deliberation. And one of the few advantages of getting older is that you accumulate more of them.



*Rodger Muir repairing his broken cane rod. One of Rodger's hobbies is building high quality cane rods.*

# Australian Fly Fishing Centre Master Plan Ready to Launch

*Fairlea Road precinct set to become the national home of the sport*

... by Chris Gray

The future home of Australian fly fishing is a step closer to reality, with the master plan for the Australian Fly Fishing Centre (AFFC) Red Tag Pavilion at Fairlea Road now complete and a public launch imminent.

Backed by the Red Tag Fly Fishers' Club, the project will transform the long-standing casting pool at Yarra Bend into a nationally significant fly fishing and casting precinct. The initiative has drawn strong sector-wide support, including formal backing from the Victorian Fly Fishers Association, Mending Casts, Fly Fish Australia and the Victorian Fisheries Authority.

In late 2025 Red Tag members formally endorsed the Club's leadership role in developing and managing the Centre on behalf of the broader fly fishing community - a mandate that has underpinned a year of intensive planning.

By December 2025 all key technical investigations including Cultural Heritage Assessments, Architectural Design Development and Geotechnical Surveys had been completed. With those foundations in place, the project is positioned to move from planning into delivery.

An official on-site launch at Fairlea Reserve in the coming months will unveil the full vision and formally introduce the AFFC to the public. Details will be provided when a date is finalised.

Following the event, detailed plans and supporting materials will be published via the Red Tag Club website and a dedicated AFFC website.

## **Construction Impacts: Eastern Freeway Upgrades**

The announcement comes as construction begins on the Eastern Freeway Upgrades – Hoddle to Burke Road. A construction compound has been established on the southern side of the current Fairlea Road casting pool, reducing access for fly fishers for a minimum of 18 months. Increased construction traffic is also expected in the precinct.

Further information is available through the Victorian Government's Engage portal, with updates to be provided as details are finalised.

## **A Site Steeped in History**

The Red Tag casting pool sits within Yarra Bend Park, Fairfield, on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung People. Managed by Parks Victoria, the site is subject to multiple planning controls, including a Heritage Overlay administered by Heritage Victoria and designation as an Area of Aboriginal Cultural Sensitivity under the City of Yarra Planning Scheme.

A detailed investigation by cultural heritage advisors and archaeologists determined that the lease area has experienced significant historical disturbance and does not require a Cultural Heritage Management Plan prior to development.

Infrastructure assessments have confirmed that existing power, water and sewer services can be extended to a new pavilion, minimising ground disturbance beyond the lease boundary. Consistent

with contemporary sustainability practice, no gas connection is proposed.

The current site is accessed and used for social and competitive fly fishers refining their skills or merely catching up with few friends to share some banter. While home to the Red Tag club, it is also the most centrally located casting pool with easy access for all fly fishers.

### **Parking and Access Challenges**

While event frequency may increase under the new development, organisers anticipate visitor numbers will generally mirror current usage, aside from occasional major events. Liaison with other user groups and advance notice of large gatherings will be essential, with alternative parking options along Yarra Bend Road to be promoted where necessary.

Improved pathways and universal access design are central to the master plan, ensuring inclusive participation for anglers of all abilities.

### **What the Master Plan Will Deliver**

The AFFC precinct will include:

Upgraded Casting Pool with improved filtration and reconfigured layout for competition and training;

Lighting for evening use;

Universal access pathways;

A new Pavilion and Community Hub featuring a multi-purpose event space, with kitchen and storage, meeting rooms and three lockable club rooms;

Non-gendered amenities including an accessible toilet and shower;

Entry foyer with exhibition space;

Simulated stream feature for demonstration and education;

Heritage and interpretive displays celebrating Australia's fly fishing story;

Ancillary storage sheds and an expanded casting pool footprint.

The building's architectural language is intended to sit lightly within the park setting, drawing on colours and textures of the Australian bush while prioritising durability, low maintenance, non-combustibility, environmental credentials and cost efficiency.

### **A Legacy More Than 70 Years in the Making**

For more than seven decades the Fairlea Road casting pool has been a quiet cornerstone of Melbourne's fly fishing life. Generations of anglers have learned their first roll cast there, refined their technique, and prepared for state and national competition.

The new precinct builds on that legacy. It aims not only to modernise facilities but to strengthen community by creating a welcoming home for beginners, club members, elite casters and families alike.

The project has been shaped by an extensive advisory group, drawing on expertise across sport, architecture, engineering, education, communications and public sector management. Stakeholder engagement has included surveys, club briefings and collaboration with RMIT vocational students contributing design ideas.

An initial grant through the Victorian Fisheries recreational fishing grants program has provided seed funding for the master planning phase, reflecting government recognition of the project's significance.

## **Celebrating Australia’s Strong Fly Fishing History — Beyond Infrastructure**

Fly fishing in Australia is more than a pastime. It is a cultural thread woven through generations of anglers, waterways and communities, shaped by shared knowledge, quiet dedication and a deep respect for the natural world.

Supporters of the Fairlea Road redevelopment are clear that the project is not simply about bricks and mortar. At its heart, it is about continuity honouring the community of mentors, innovators and volunteers who have shaped fly fishing in Australia, and about inclusion ensuring that future generations find a place within the sport.

For decades, local casting pools and clubrooms have served as the quiet laboratories of Australian fly fishing. At the long-standing Fairlea Road facility within Yarra Bend, beginners made their first tentative roll casts, experienced anglers refined competition techniques, and mentors passed on hard-earned insights into entomology, watercraft and ethics. These spaces have been as much about learning and connection as they have been about casting accuracy or distance.

Australia’s fly fishing history is therefore not defined solely by fish caught or competitions won. Instead, it is grounded in:

Volunteerism and strong club culture;

Technical innovation in fly design and casting technique;

Leadership in conservation and stewardship;

Intergenerational mentorship;

Community gathering around shared waterways.

In time the Fairlea Road Fly Fishing Centre is expected to host state and national competitions, training programs and community events, thus reinforcing Melbourne’s place on the national fly fishing map while remaining true to the spirit that has defined the site for generations.

As new infrastructure and national coordination efforts emerge, they stand on the shoulders of this legacy. Celebrating Australia’s fly fishing history is not an exercise in nostalgia; it is a recognition of a resilient, evolving sporting culture that blends camaraderie, precision, patience and respect for nature.

The next chapter will continue that tradition honouring the past while equipping future anglers with the skills, facilities and stewardship mindset needed to sustain fly fishing in Australia for generations to come.

### **Join the Advisory Panel**

The AFFC is calling for passionate volunteers to join its Governance Committee. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to a landmark national facility and help guide its future. Committee members will advise on strategic direction, governance, financial oversight, and programs while representing the broader fly fishing community.

Volunteers from all backgrounds: fly fishers, VFFA members, and professionals in management, communications, finance, or legal fields are encouraged to assist in the next phase. This is more than a role; it is a chance to leave a lasting legacy on a facility that will serve generations of anglers.



*Views of the new (still to be constructed) buildings that will be part of the new Australian Fly Fishing Centre*



# Fly Fishing for Cod

... by Rhonda Grisold



*The first one - off to a good start*

David and I headed off on our annual Cod drift with James Norney of *Mountain Fly* with weather warnings of thunderstorms and most of the state on flood watch.

We were on the move well before dawn and met James out on the river. It was still quite dark. After setting up our rods with surface poppers we hopped into the rubber raft to start the day's drift. This involved standing up in the dark and casting to hear our poppers hit close to the bank, then quickly stripping line back in and waiting for a strike. James reminded us to 'not trout strike' when it happened.

When you do connect with a cod and manage to keep it on, the excitement doesn't happen until you know you have it safely in the net. You need to hold the rod strongly and avoid slack, or your hooked cod will be gone and swimming safely back into its hiding place.

When we safely landed one and had it in the boat - then it was time to celebrate, take photos to remember the event, and then watch this beautiful fish swim away unharmed, ready for someone else to have the pleasure of catching it.

The rivers were crystal clear and had only risen slightly with the light rain which was not even heavy enough for us to need our jackets. It was tempting to just sit in the raft and marvel at the beautiful scenery and enjoy the peace and quiet as we drifted slowly along.

Then we would arrive at the next spot in the river which we were sure would hold a cod to cast to. Time to stand up again and start casting, hoping for another connection.

We stopped for breakfast on the banks of the river and changed our flies to sub-surface flies. We were using 10 weight rods with sinking lines, and large flies with two small ball sinkers to get them down quickly.

David (Choco) had always told me: "Cod are the fish of a 1000 casts!"



*A small cod – but still very welcome*



*These cod have big mouths!*



*Another superb specimen of one of Australia's most popular freshwater fish*

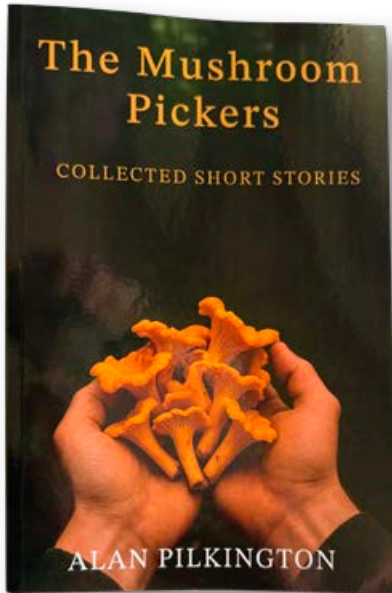
Well, I'm sure that's an understatement, because by the end of a 12-hour day the muscles are aching in your arms and back, you have blisters on your hands, and with luck you've got a 'cod thumb' from catching plenty. It is certainly worth every ache and pain.

I had a very successful trip this year and can highly recommend being guided by the best. James never stops working for you to catch that next cod. I caught my best fish in the last 10 minutes of the second day. So - just keep on casting.



*The last fish of the day – just keep casting!*

## The Mushroom Pickers



Alan Pilkington has just written another book.

*The Mushroom Pickers*  
~Collected Short Stories~

Alan has written a number of books, some related to fly fishing and others not.

He has just had his most recent book published and his brother, VFFA member John Pilkington, has copies for sale for those who enjoy Alan's writing.

Alan's writing style is very easy reading, and I know that members who have purchased any of his previous books will thoroughly enjoy this fine collection of short stories.



*Somewhere in New Zealand's South Island*

# Polaroid Magic

... an edited version of a superb article on using polaroid glasses for fly fishing written by Greg French some year ago and published in *FlyLife* magazine.

If, like many Victorians I fish with, you're often forced to rely on "chucking and chancing". Fishless days can be very disappointing. If you normally rely on hatches and the hatches fail, ditto. But if you are good at polaroiding, every day is a good day - you always end up seeing fish. This is why in places like Tasmania, New Zealand and Patagonia, which have plenty of clear cold water, polaroiding quickly becomes the default position.

And yet I've recently been reminded that for many anglers, the proper use of glare defying Polaroid glasses remains somewhat of a mystery, especially among young shore-based still water enthusiasts.

## History

The first polarising sunglasses came on the market in the mid-1930s. In *Lifelong Pleasure - 70 Years of Fly Fishing* John Brooks described Polaroiding Shannon Lagoon with legendary tackle maker Malcolm Gillies in the late 1930s, but polaroids remained little more than a novelty until after World War 2. Revered Tasmanian fly fisher Dick Wigram used them in the 1950s, and David Scholes wrote enthusiastically about them in his books *Fly-Fisher in Tasmania* and *The Way of an Angler*. Even so, it wasn't until Rob Sloane published *The Truth About Trout* in 1983 that most fly fishers came to think of polaroids as indispensable.

## Basics

Nothing I write is any substitute for being on the water. Practise and practical experience are everything.

## Choosing a venue

Another disclaimer - if you can't find perfect water to practice, wear polaroid glasses anyway, and make do with whatever you've got. I know that's easy for a Tasmanian like me to say when we've never had to do it tough. With a plethora of small, shallow clear waters and generally sunny summers, polaroiding here is as easy as it gets. And once you get the bug you'll discover that trout can also be seen in tea-coloured water, quite milky water, appalling light and heavy wind.

My go-to waters are Lake St Clair, St Clair Lagoon, Lake Echo, Little Lake, the Brady chain of lakes and Talbotts Lagoon, all of which are clear and have lots of fish. From a technical point of view, the Western Lakes are the epitome, though you generally see fewer fish. The biggest advantage of the Western Lakes is that they are so small and so close together that you can encircle several in a day, thereby getting a real feel for the dynamics of the craft.

(In order to be able to consistently pick up the best venues and shorelines, you will need to develop an intimate understanding of the myriad ways trout respond to light, wind, habitat and food.)

## When to go

Perfect conditions occur when the sun is high in a blue sky, and are most likely from late spring through until mid-autumn, between the hours of 10:00 am and 4:00 pm. Early and late in the day, or whenever the sun is low in the sky, you

will have to tilt your head towards the sun to optimise your vision.

Yet another disclaimer: if the weather isn't perfect, go polaroiding anyway. Polaroiding is effective most of the time, unless the water is extremely dirty.

### **Be Bold**

Brown trout in particular tend to cruise small beats, so the more water you cover the more fish you'll see. Many people are scared of spooking fish and hunt too slowly. Don't overthink things. Just be bold and slow down only if you start spooking fish. You learn much more by flushing out fish than you do from seeing nothing.

If you cover lots of water you'll quickly work out for yourself that trout are almost unspookable when the sun is high and bright, and the fish are preoccupied with abundant food. And that I can be very spooky and low light (heavy fog, dawn or dusk) especially if there is too little food to distract them from the threat of potential predators.

### **Fishing from well-defined banks**

Polaroiding is easiest when fishing from elevated banks with the sun and wind behind you. In summer in Tasmania this usually means that the north-eastern shores are good in the morning and the north-western shores are good in the afternoon.

The thing is that while these shores can be extraordinarily good when trout are feeding on insects that like calm water (such as mayfly spinners), or that get funnelled into oil-slick currents (like most terrestrials), the best fishing often occurs on wave-washed shores where currents dislodge food from the lake bed or foreshores, or where foods like mayfly duns or gum beetles get blown onshore.

The more you fish, the more you'll be able to judge where the best foods will be. If you plan on fishing new water then read lots and make a point of talking to informed locals. In any case, extra height is always an advantage, and you will often find yourself clambering onto rocks and up trees to get a better view.

On southern shores, if they are shallow enough, it is often best to wade offshore and polaroid back into the bank. If fish are not onshore, it pays to concentrate on drop-offs and weed beds. And it pays to practise looking into shadows. And always be primed to make a quick cast.

### **More about the wind**

Wind is the polaroider's friend – it generates currents, stirs up food, and makes fish less spooky. The best waves are moderately big ones (perhaps not whitecaps) that strike the shore at an angle, setting up a narrow, spiralling current known to surfers as 'longshore drift'. Sometimes the current can be identified by the silt plumes it generates, and at other times it can be identified by the parade of feeding trout. Simply look into the 'window' - the vertical face of the wave - and there they are. Sometimes you'll find them literally surfing down the faces of the waves. My favourite water for this type of polaroiding is the western shore of Great Lake, but it happens everywhere, even on small tarns in the western lakes.

### **Casting into the wind**

When polaroiding in Tasmanian stillwaters most casts will be short, and casting short lines into heavy wind can be hard. Instruction and practice are both vital.

The most common mistake I see is powering the back cast at 10 o'clock and stopping at two o'clock. This means that

on the forward cast the line will unfurl horizontally to the water, and the fly will be several metres above the target when it runs out of oomph. Then the wind will blow it all back into your face.

A good short-length back cast will be powered at 9:00 and stopped at 12:00 or 1:00 so that it unfurls at a high angle behind you. Now when you come forward the fly will hit the water the moment the line is fully unfurled in front of you.

Double hauling is definitely an assert, and it's easier than you think. Hauling vastly increases line speed, and makes it super easy to cast short lines into strong winds.

### **Blue Water**

Spotting fish on the surface in very deep water where you can't see any substrate is often excruciatingly hard for beginners. This style of polaroiding is most often associated with offshore boating (as commonly practiced at Gret Lake, Dee Lagoon and Lake Echo), but many lakes have 'blue water' shores which provide perfect training grounds. Lake Meston and Lake Skinner are classics. They are both rainbow trout waters, and because rainbows love to cruise long distances close to the surface, you can often station yourself beside a drop-off or wind lane and simply wait for the fish to come to you.

### **Wading**

When glancing over an expansive flat you might think that you can see most fish from the shore. You can't. You need to walk into the water and wade, preferably downwind with the sun over your shoulder. Remember, most fish will be cruising upwind towards you (against wind-generated current).

I wade with 5 to 10 metres of line laid on the water at about 30° from my line of

walking. The exact distance will be a bit short of the distance I'm sure I can spot fish, as I want to be able to pick up and lay down my line in one smooth movement, so that the fly lands a metre or so directly in front of my quarry.

If you have too much line out beyond the distance you can comfortably see, the fish will materialise halfway between you and your fly, and spooking the fish becomes inevitable.

I leave my fly on the water for 10 seconds or so at a time, before repositioning it, but I don't really watch it much – as I'm too busy looking for fish.

The speed I wade is the speed at which I am pretty sure I can see fish without stumbling into them. If I start spooking fish, I slow down. Again there is no substitute for practise.

### **Scanning versus Staring**

Central vision detects detail, peripheral vision detects movement. Staring is pointless, scanning is essential. And your scanning must be thorough and rhythmic, not fast and erratic. Practise, practise, practise - until it becomes innate.

We're not always looking for whole fish. Good polaroiders spend much more time looking for elongate shapes and anomalies, even whites of mouths or black tips of tails. To be good at polaroiding you must train yourself to look for such things.

### **Glasses**

I advocate the best glasses you can afford. The problem is that neither price nor brand is a reliable indicator of effectiveness.

I prefer amber lenses for freshwater trout fishing, but I'm red-green colour blind,

so I can't be certain that there the best for everyone.

Generally darker glasses are more effective at polarisation than very light coloured glasses. But after you hit 40 years of age, you need ever more light to see effectively, and compromise is called for.

These days I carry two sets of glasses - dark lenses for bright conditions and lighter ones for low light conditions. Remember, the more you Polaroid when you're young, the easier it is to compromise when you are older.

### **The Best Thing**

The best thing about Polaroiding is that you end up being able to see fish most

days. This year my friend Ric and I had a few sessions at St Clair and Talbots where we polaroided dozens of fish and fooled a good percentage of them. And inevitably we became a little too pleased with ourselves. The leveller was a day trip into Blue Peaks, where we spent eight hours spotting countless fish cruising deep down over offshore weedbeds, and ended the session without a single hookup. It was humbling but for sure but it was also fascinating and extremely rewarding. I couldn't wait to get back.

Like I keep saying, when you're polaroiding, everyday is a great day.



*Four very keen builders of cane rods*

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E-mail: [jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au](mailto:jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au)  
Phone: 0437983421

To John Spragg - Vice-President of the Victorian Fly Fishers Association Inc.

Dear John,

On behalf of the membership of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club, I am extending this invitation to you, or your nominee, to be our Honoured Guest at our 57th Annual Game Dinner to be held this year on Saturday, May 23rd in the Function Room under the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion on Grafton Road, Warrnambool. We also invite any other VFFA member who wishes to join us on the night to attend as a paying guest.

As usual, it will be a BYO wine and beer night. There is no bar at the venue. The cost of the dinner has been set at \$100 for non-members. The Chef is Robert King. Before dinner drinks with canapés will begin at 6:00PM. We will sit down for the first course at approximately 7:00PM for the start of what should be an enjoyable night of fine food and company.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience whether you will be able to attend this year, and regarding numbers and names of other VFFA members who will be attending. Because of the size of the venue, the total number attending this year is limited to 90, so it would be appreciated that VFFA members confirm their intention to join us for dinner a.s.a.p. but no later than May 20th. Up until April 20th I can be contacted at my e-mail address or by calling 0437983421 to make a booking. After that, please contact our President, Adrian Jacobs. His email is [adrianj6@bigpond.com](mailto:adrianj6@bigpond.com) and phone number is 0437620972.

Sincerely,

Jim Blakeslee  
Social Committee Member  
Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc.  
112 Bridge Road  
Woodford, Victoria 3281  
Mob- 0437983421  
e-mail -[jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au](mailto:jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au)

# Notice of Major Event (NOE) for Big River, March 2024

**VFFA Major Event:** Weekend trip to Enochs Point on the Big River.

**Event Co-ordinator (EC):** John Pilkington, phone: 0407 356 676

**Email:** jpilks@vicbar.com.au

**Event date:** Friday March 27 to Sunday March 29, 2026.

Arrive on the Friday in the afternoon, or earlier, for some fishing. Huts will be open from around midday. Leave on Sunday afternoon or stay on by arrangement.

**Cost/s:** \$50 for the weekend to cover food and extras.

## **Event location & address:**

At Enochs Country Club, Enochs Point on the Big River.

## **Travel directions:**

Maroondah Highway, turn off just before Eildon on Jamieson Road and drive to the Big River Bridge, then drive 14 km upstream to Enochs Point. Detailed directions are available. Approximate travel time from Melbourne is three hours, and the distance is about 180 km.

**Transport requirements:** A four-wheel drive vehicle is not necessary.

**Accommodation:** In huts, basic but comfortable. Bring a sleeping bag, pillow slip, and a torch.

Bring your own food for a barbeque on the Friday night and for breakfasts. Lunches and evening meals supplied. Cooking is on an open fire and oven. Bring an esky for your food and drinks. All cutlery, crockery, and cooking equipment, etc, is supplied.

**Travel insurance:** NA

## **Description of fishing areas:**

Fishing is in the Big River, a medium-sized fast flowing mountain stream with rapids, runs and pools. The river is easily accessible around Enoch's Point, but more demanding (and productive) fishing is available by driving and walking down long spurs to the stream.

Dry and wet fly fishing. Wading is essential. Maps are available. It is a remote area.

**Weather:** Usually settled at this time of year, with lowish river flow. But it can vary if there is recent rain. Forecasts will be obtained closer to the event.

**Mobile phone coverage:** Mobile phone coverage is now available at Enoch's Point (but only for Telstra customers).

**How physically challenging:** Varies from location to location - from easy to difficult.

**Fishing license required:** a Victorian inland fishing licence is required.



## Liars' Night – Peter Whitelaw



*... and here they are, the incorrigible pair – Alf and McTaggart*

Peter is keen to revive the *Fly Lines* newsletter column titled 'This Month's Yarn' which appears to have commenced in 1955 by Jack Pyke. It was continued in the 1960s and 1970s by Ron MacKenzie. So Peter presented a couple of old yarns about McTaggart and Alf and their fly fishing exploits, and then added a couple of new yarns in the same style – created with a little help from AI!

Consensus from the audience was that we should continue with this tradition –

mixing new yarns with old ones from the archives. Here's one of the new yarns.

### This Month's Yarn - The Mystery Fly

McTaggart and Alf were fishing a bend that looked innocent enough - tea-coloured water, a soft riffle, and willows leaning in like they were trying to listen. Alf tied on a sensible little nymph. McTaggart tied on something that looked like it had been invented during an argument.

"What's that meant to be?" Alf asked.

"A local," said McTaggart. "Very rare. Only hatches when nobody's watching."

Alf snorted and cast. McTaggart cast too, but his fly landed with the quiet confidence of a thing that knew it didn't belong.

Nothing happened for ten minutes, which is when McTaggart decided to educate the river. He flicked his line under an overhanging branch, let it drift, and then his rod buckled like a man being asked to help move a piano.

Alf looked up. "Fish?"

"Could be," said McTaggart, straining. "Or a bicycle."

Whatever it was, it moved upstream - steady, determined, and with the sort of pull that suggested it had purpose.

McTaggart gained line, lost line, gained it again. A long, dark shape rolled just beneath the surface.

Alf leaned in. "That's... big."

"Yes," said McTaggart, "and it's behaving like it's been caught before."

They inched it into the shallows. It surfaced once - flat, pale, and oddly rectangular.

Alf blinked. "That's not a trout."

McTaggart stared, then lifted his catch with the delicacy of a man handling evidence. It was a pair of undies. Not just any undies. Large, determined undies. The kind that looked like they'd survived drought, flood, and at least one regrettable curry.

Alf howled. "You've landed someone's laundry!"

McTaggart examined them like a jeweller appraising a diamond.

"Ah," he said. "So that's what was hatching."

Alf wiped his eyes. "What are you going to do with them?"

McTaggart re-tied his leader, completely calm.

"Release them," he said. "Back to their natural habitat."

"And what's that?"

McTaggart nodded toward the willow.

"Where they can breed," he said, "and terrify other anglers."



*Mark Weigall with a magnificent New Zealand South Island brown*

## ... A Note from Travis Dowling, Our VFA Chief Executive Officer

Dear VFFA friends,

My wonderful family and I had the absolute joy to head to New Zealand in November 2025. It was our first time in New Zealand, and we only had a week. We landed at Queenstown and headed to Milford Sound, stopping along the way at Te Anau.

Now there was no way I could miss the opportunity to chase some monster New Zealand trout, so like all purists we hired a guide with a jet boat to fish the very high Waiiau River (it had been in flood). Our guide was a ripper bloke named Ken Mitchell from FISHJET NZ.

Ken knows how to find good fish. We were using weighted nymphs under an indicator and caught six cracking rainbows in under four hours, with lots



*My son Atticus Dowling with Ken our guide. Atticus caught four and showed us all up!*



*Me with a nice rainbow  
(I caught the last fish – my only one)*



*My wife Katy Sylvia with her first  
trout caught on a fly*

more fish sighted. We happily released all our fish.

It was a wonderful experience and I highly recommend it. My family had a fantastic time. I had a hard time convincing Ken the fishing in Victoria was better!!

Cheers Trav

TRAVIS DOWLING

Chief Executive Officer  
Victorian Fisheries Authority  
M: 0418 176 231  
Level 19, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne 3000  
[vfa.vic.gov.au](http://vfa.vic.gov.au)

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*Casting to avoid catching the trees behind*



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# FLY OF THE MONTH

## CDC EMERGER

*(Andrew Mossman is the 'Mataura Master', and his fishing exploits there are legendary. This month he tells us about some very effective patterns he ties using CDC feathers.)*



Many years ago I became aware of the growing interest in the use of CDC feathers in fly tying, but for the usual reasons, not the least of which being inertia, I did not do much with this information. I tied an odd fly or two and was impressed with their appearance, but found difficulty in fishing with

them. Once they had caught a fish they were almost impossible to clean and refloat. Standard 'gel floatants' were lethal, and in those days I had not heard about "Frog's Fanny", a brilliant colloidal silica powder designed for drying and floating CDC flies.

Some five or six years ago I purchased a copy of Leon Links excellent book, "Tying Flies with CDC, The Fisherman's Miracle Feather". This book describes the history of this tying development and the people involved, and describes the feathers and how to obtain them. Of course it also gives instructions on how to tie flies using CDC feathers.

My real breakthrough came at about that time when I met a New Zealander, David Murray-Orr, who lives near the Mataura River, and who was a keen user of

CDC feathers. I was impressed by David's beautifully tied flies, and in particular by his enthusiasm for the flies he tied incorporating CDC feathers.

Thus encouraged, I immediately started tying flies using these feathers, and was especially interested in imitating the hatching *Deleatidium Vernale* mayfly. This is the most common Mayfly in southern NZ. Many of these flies proved to be remarkably successful and my frequent inability to catch good bags of fish during a big dun hatch was reduced. In short, I was a CDC devotee and I was keen to extend their use.

For many years in late November and / or early December I have spent a week or two fishing in the Great Lake area of Tasmania, and like most of us, have had difficulty consistently catching rising fish that were taking either the Highland Dun or the Penstock Brown dun. I tied and used a large number of emergers and dun patterns, and had good results with most of them. But every now and then, for no obvious reason, they would all fail. As a result I started experimenting with CDC Emergers. I tied these more or less in the traditional ways and although they did not always solve my problems, they often worked when everything else failed.

The following is my standard tying and this fly works when either the Highland Dun or the Penstock Brown are hatching.

**Hook** Tiemco 102Y, sizes 13 or 15 (13 is my preferred size. I find 102Y hooks excellent, and use them extensively). Tiemco 2487, size12 (scud/shrimp) are also good, but I think that the 102Y model hooks and holds the fish better.

**Thread** Uni Thread #6/0 or #8/0 camel or any dull brown colour.

**Body** I use a number of furs, and they all work. Seal's fur - various shades of rich or greyish brown, Possum body hair - grey to brown, Hare's ear - darker rather than light.  
These days I almost always spin the hair on a 'dubbing loop' of the tying thread. I have found that this method gives me much better control, especially with seal's fur, and also enables more accurate body shapes to be made. The dubbed bodies are also more durable.

**Ribbing** Optional: sometimes I use fine copper wire (lacquered & reddish) and sometimes I use waxed dark sewing thread.

**Tail** Not normally included. If required some short and flexible possum guard hairs are excellent.

**CDC** Three large CDC feathers from a Black Duck, or from a New Zealand Mallard.

## Tying Procedure:

1. Start at the eye and wrap the hook with tying thread well down and slightly into the bend.
2. Tie in the tail and the end of the ribbing if required.
3. Spin the fur onto the thread in the normal way, and then make a dubbing loop and twist the loop to spin and secure the fur. Wrap the hook shank with the spun fur to where the thorax will start from.

4. If using ribbing, wind it backwards over the body. I always wind any ribbing in the opposite direction to the direction that the body was wound to hold the body material more securely. (Do not overdress this fly!)



5. Tie in 3 large CDC feathers with the tips to the bend of the hook. Try to get the tips of all the CDC feathers even and just slightly longer than will be required when bent forward to form the wings. Cut off the roots of the feathers.



6. Now with the remainder of the loop or with a new loop, wind a thorax, and tie it off. This thorax is vital and must be obvious. I sometimes use a slightly darker fur to exaggerate the thorax a little.

7. Take the CDC feathers and pull them forward over the thorax and tie them down immediately behind the eye of the hook. Then make a couple of turns around the hook in front of and under the CDC feathers to lift them up slightly. Then make one or two turns around the base of the CDC feathers to stabilise them and keep them away from the eye of the hook.



When pulling the CDC feathers forward I sometimes let a few shorter fibres remain behind to represent a shuck.

8. Whip finish behind the CDC feathers just in front of the thorax, and seal with cement. Trim the ends of the CDC feathers to the correct length, rounding the corners just a little to more closely resemble the shape of the newly hatched wings.

My preferred CDC feathers are from the New Zealand Mallard, a wild duck introduced into New Zealand many years ago. It is bigger than the Pacific Black Duck and as a result, the CDC feathers from it are larger. Black Duck feathers are fine if Mallard feathers are not available. To get Mallard CDC feathers one needs friends in NZ who know shooters.

The colour of both the Black and the Mallard Duck CDC feathers is a medium to darkish grey and excellent for most duns that hatch in Australia and NZ. For the Kosciusko dun I use Wood Duck CDC feathers as they are a much paler grey. I use these for some caddis flies also. I prefer wild duck feathers as they are not processed in any way and seem to float better. Domestic duck feathers are fine provided they are not dyed, but if you need some special colour then of course there is no alternative.

### **Fishing the CDC Emerger**

The CDC Emerger imitates the hatching nymph where the body of the nymph is below the surface of the water while the fly climbs out of its shuck to stand on the surface and extend and dry its wings before flying to the bank. At this time the insect is at its most vulnerable and that is almost certainly why fish concentrate on them at that time. When fishing CDC Emergers it is therefore essential that the body sinks below the surface, while the CDC wings are all that is above it. When using a new fly I often wet the body of the fly in my mouth to ensure that it sinks on the first cast. And as we all know, if that first cast is made well and accurately it is often our best chance of a rise.



*Some fish are bigger than trout, but can still be captured on flies*

## VFFA 2026 meetings & other activities

(Unless otherwise notified, all meetings are at the Kelvin Cub,  
14 - 30 Melbourne Place)

### March

- 18 Wednesday Prospective Members Dinner at Brewmanity Brewery,  
South Melbourne (Organiser - Andrew Fuller)
- 19 Thursday General Meeting – with Anthony McGrath from VRFish  
6:30 for 7:00pm (Organiser - John Spragg)
- 25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 27 – 29 Big River Weekend (Organiser - John Plikington)

### April

- 22 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 23 Thursday General Meeting – speaker TBA, 6:30 for 7:00pm  
(TBC) Donger Weekend (Organiser - Peter Clayton)

### May

- 2 Saturday First ATF Loombah Weir Project Induction Day  
(Organiser - Rodger Muir)
- 23 Saturday Warrnambool Annual Game Dinner
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – speaker TBA, 6:30 for 7:00pm
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 30 Saturday Second ATF Loombah Weir Project Induction Day

### June

- 21 – 28 Winter Taupo Event
- 18 Thursday General Meeting – speaker TBA, 6:30 for 7:00pm
- 24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
- 21 – 28 Winter Taupo Event (Organiser - Rodger Muir)
- (TBC) Fly Tying evening 'the Basics' (Organiser - Rodger Muir)

### July

- 16 Thursday General Meeting – speaker TBA, 6:30 for 7:00pm
- 22 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 for 7:00 pm