

FLY LINES



MAY 2022

Peter Morse – our guest for the May Meeting

Peter grew up in Fiji, where from an early age he fished from the family boat trolling handlines for mackerel, trevally, tuna and coral trout.

He has fly fished in both freshwater and saltwater since the early 1970s, and has written extensively on the sport for magazines. He has also authored three books.

These days Peter is a Sage and RIO Ambassador, and is a certified Master



Peter Morse has caught more than 300 species on the fly

Thursday, May 19,
8:00pm at the
**Botanical Art School of
Melbourne**

Casting Instructor with Fly Fishers International. He conducts fly casting clinics all over the country, from novice level through to training other potential instructors.

Peter has landed more than 300 different species on fly. He is a highly entertaining, well-informed and engaging speaker, so this meeting is one not to be missed.

But Note – an important change! This meeting will not be held at the Kelvin Club. Instead it will be held at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne at 1A Shipley Street, South Yarra. Details on page 2. Mark it in your diary – Thursday, May 19, at 6:30 pm for the pre-dinner meal.

We would encourage all members to join us for what will be a fabulous meeting, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by Thursday, May 12, (i.e. one week before the meeting) by emailing Terry Rogers at terryrogers@bigpond.com and leaving a message. The catered meal available at 6:30 pm will cost \$30. Payment details on page 2.

Meeting Details for May Meeting on Thursday May 19

Due to circumstances beyond our control the Kelvin Club has become an inappropriate venue for us to hold the May meeting. The Club has double booked the dining room with 60 Greens supporters to be addressed by Adam Bandt! It has been suggested that we could dine in the bar (along with everybody else in the bar) and then be shunted upstairs to the President's room and squeezed in there. It would likely be a complete shambles.

Jenny Phillips has very kindly offered to host us at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne, where she is the Principal, and there are adequate facilities for 50 - 100 people. We will provide a catered meal at a cost of \$30 per head.

All those wishing to attend are asked to notify Terry Rogers by emailing him at terryrogers@bigpond.com and leaving a message. Please indicate whether you plan to partake of the meal, which will commence at 6:30 pm. Peter Morse's presentation will commence at about 8:00 pm.

It should be a very interesting evening in a relaxed atmosphere.

It is important that we have reasonably accurate numbers for catering, so I would ask all attendees to be in touch with Terry Rogers by email to register your attendance by close of business on Thursday, May 12.

Those wishing to partake of the meal are asked to transfer payment of \$30 per person to the VFFA account - BSB 182-

512 and Account Number 960547289 by Thursday, May 12. We ask people to bring their own beverages. Please note that there will be no facility for paying for the meal on the night.

There is a small car park in Shipley Street opposite the Art School. If you park there then press the green button on the parking machine and ask for a free 2-hour ticket and leave this on your dashboard. There is another even smaller carpark further down Punt Road at Northumberland Street, but this can only be entered from Shipley Street, not Punt Road.

The Art School is on the corner of Shipley Street and Punt Road and is easily accessed from the Toorak Road tram. It's also only a 10 minute walk from the South Yarra railway station along Toorak Road and then up Caroline St.

We look forward to hosting you at this venue just for this month to allow the Kelvin Club the opportunity to get its act together. Hopefully we will be able to return to the Kelvin Club for our June meeting.



Brown trout are a very attractive fish

Andy Zarro Has Died

It is very sad for us to report that Andy Zarro passed away yesterday after a long illness. Andy had been a VFFA member for 15 years. We will publish a tribute to his life in our next newsletter.

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From Bernard Holbery's collection, showing us that Victorian streams can be in challenging country

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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The April Meeting - Kiel Jones on Mayflies

Mayflies are the one insect that draws all of us trout fly fishers from around the world together.

The life cycle of mayflies consists of four stages: as eggs, nymphs, duns (the subimago) and spinners (the imago). In fishing for them we can target them before the hatch, during the hatch, and after the hatch.

The number of life cycles they go through makes them a perfect insect for fly fishers to imitate. We can fish for them when they are nymphs, emerging nymphs, duns drying their wings on the water's surface, and as spinners and spent spinners, because trout feed on all stages of the mayflies life cycle.

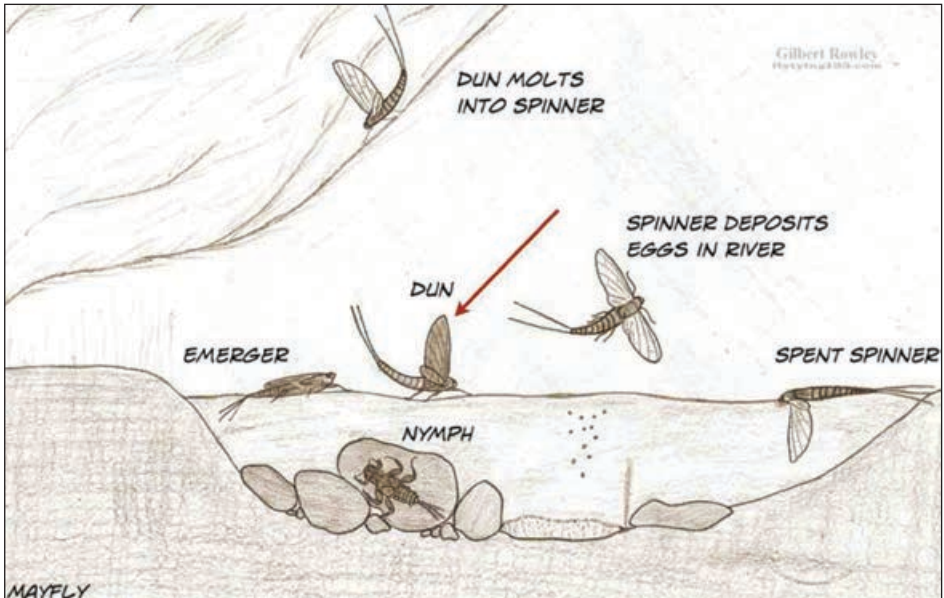
Mayfly nymphs live under rocks or in the reeds or grassy bottoms of lakes and rivers for as short as two weeks or as long as two years, though an annual cycle is the most common. Water temperatures can aid their growth.

In imitating the nymph stage of mayflies it is important to have a variety of colours and sizes, and both unweighted and weighted flies.

Nymph Fishing Techniques

When their growth is complete the nymphs leave the bottom, reeds or rocks, and slowly make their way to the water's surface. Their nymphal skins then split down the back and a winged form, called a dun, emerges. During this process we can use a variety of techniques to imitate the swimming nymphs. We can do some indicator fishing, using one or two flies. One fly, or a team of flies, can be slowly retrieved. We can also sight fish to subsurface rises and feeders, or fish blind in likely spots.

When indicator fishing, with either one or two flies, we need to set the indicator to suit the depth we're fishing. We can fish unweighted nymphs, or weighted or beaded nymphs, using very slow draws and drops, or static fishing >>>



allowing wind drifts. Sight fishing is another possibility. In all cases we need to fish or retrieve our nymph as naturally as possible. Hook sizes for nymphs are 12s, 14s, or 16s, and best colours are browns, black, claret, natural greys using hare's ear or possum dubbing. (Claret is proving a particularly effective colour. Trout seem to love it.)

When To Look For A Hatch

For the Central Highlands of Victoria, the Ballarat area and Millbrook, hatches usually start at the end of September and continue through to the end of November. There is also an Autumn hatch around mid-April.

With the right water and air temperatures duns can hatch, dry their wings and complete that stage of their life cycle.

To quote Mark Weigall: "The best day for a dun hatch is the day you hang your clothes out to dry, but they won't!"

A light breeze and overcast conditions are best, but there are no rules - if someone says they've got it figured out they're kidding themselves.

What To Look For During A Hatch

When you are looking for rises keep a keen eye on the water. Look particularly for 'flat spots' in the regular waves, noses breaching the surface, splashy clips and/or subtle swirls. But don't just look for rising fish - birds love feeding on mayflies. So keep an eye out for teams of swallows and other birds diving to snatch



A typical lake nymph

mayflies. Also keep an eye on the time of day.

When trout are feeding on emergers you need to look for subtle rises such as small rings, or water bulges or eddies.

When trout are feeding on duns you need to look for noses breaching the water's surface and aggressive splashes.

When trout are feeding on spinners you need to look for fish leaping for mating spinners, and for fish sipping the spent spinners.

The Emerger

Emergers are a series of flies we use to imitate the nymph hatching into a dun on the water's surface. This is when the Mayfly is most vulnerable - it is stuck in the water meniscus hatching, then trying to dry its wings before being eaten by a trout or a bird.



A popular possum fur emerger pattern

Note: Mayflies will still hatch on rainy days. This helps us as fly fishers as the mayflies struggle to dry their wings and are trapped on the water surface for longer.

To imitate emergers use flies such as the Possum Emerger or Shaving Brush. You can cast at rises or sub-surface rises, or just fish blind. You can also trail an unweighted nymph under the emerger. This technique covers both the rising nymph and the hatching mayfly.

The Dun

Once the nymph arrives at the water's surface the nymphal skin splits down the back and a winged form emerges. This is the dun. It sits high on the water with wings pointing up like tiny sail boats.

Note that the dun has to dry its wings before it can fly, and this happens as it drifts along the water's surface, or rests on rocks or weeds. A mayfly will remain as a dun for hours, or even for a few days, before it sheds its skin for the last time and becomes a spinner.

The dun and the spinner don't ever feed, as their only purpose is to breed.

Fishing to duns is much like fishing for emergers – so cover rises, fish to sighted fish, and fish blind.

Fly patterns to use include full hackled flies and parachute hackled flies.

If in doubt, or if you can't tell what stage of the hatch the fish are feeding on, then hang your nymph off the back of the emerger or dun pattern - this covers all scenarios.



The real thing – a natural dun

The Spinner

This is the last stage of a mayfly's life cycle. Mayflies are the only insects that moult after developing functional wings. Mating takes place soon after the final moult. In most species the death of

the spinner follows shortly after mating and egg deposition. Mating occurs on the wing, as both males and females dance, flying up and down close to the water's surface. This usually happens in late afternoon. After mating, the female releases her eggs into the water and then dies, thus becoming a Spent Spinner.

The dun most typically makes this last metamorphosis whilst in reeds or the lake's bank. Mayfly spinners are usually brighter in colour than the duns, and have translucent wings and longer tails. The most common spinner in our mainland lakes in the Ballarat district and at Millbrook is a bright red or orange spinner. The most common in Tasmania is the black spinner. With only a few hours left to live the spinners swarm over the lake's surface in clouds of mating mayflies. This is when we see leaping trout - jumping out of the water to feed on the flying spinners.

Note: the duns and spinners don't have functional mouths, and therefore can't eat or drink. This may be a main reason we don't find them hatching on bright, hot, sunny days. They also release scent to attract their mates.

When we find trout leaping to these spinners we opt to use higher floating flies such as the Macquarie Red Spinner. Parachute styles still work well, but colour here is important: bright orange flies for our Ballarat district lakes. Also a darker head than body, as pictured in the photo on the next page of spinner patterns.

The Spent Spinner

Once mating has finished, the female moves to the water's surface to disperse her eggs. Some dive bomb the water to deposit eggs, while others lay dying as a 'Spent Spinner', releasing eggs as they go.

>>>

Usually at dusk we find hungry trout clipping up these spent spinners. Flies of choice here are still the full hackle flies mentioned earlier, but also patterns with wide spread wings imitating the dying mayfly. Look for windward shores, where the spinners are being blown to, and also calm bays. you can also get early morning rises to spent spinners from the day before.



The naturals are small and eye-catching



The Gear for Lakes

Use 5-weight or 6-weight rods, either 9 foot or 10 foot. Use floating lines with monofilament leaders and fluorocarbon tippets (so the tippet sinks below the water's surface). Also use floatants and Dry Shake to keep your flies floating well.

(Following his presentation Kiel participated in a very lively Q&A time. Here are a few of the issues raised and discussed:

Kiel indicated he prefers 10' length fly rods for lake fishing – they give extra distance with less false casts.

For leaders Kiel uses monofilament for the body of the leaders with fluorocarbon tippets. His leaders are 9 to 12 foot long with often as much as a 3 foot tippet then added. Kiel uses commercial tapered leaders rather than tie his own, but cuts them back to particular lengths and thicknesses for his requirements.

Kiel dresses his dry flies with floatant and dry shake powder (i.e. desiccant powder), and noted that in a recent article Peter Hayes wrote that he put floatant on his dry flies then added dry shake, and they subsequently floated for much longer.

Kiel recommended the use of those tiny tippet rings for tying on the tippet. If the line to the ring is, say, 3X and your tippet is 4X then if you get broken or snagged



Flies tied to represent spinners



A collection of flies representing nymphs

the 4X will break and you won't have to reconstruct your leader.

There was some discussion about the necessary conditions for a good dun hatch, with Kiel suggesting that overcast conditions are best and UV levels are a factor. Hatching duns need to dry their wings before flying off. If it's too hot they die, and if it's too cold they can't dry their wings.



Members attending the April meeting were absorbed and pensive. Kiel gave us much to think about.

Kiel uses flies tied on barbless hooks, and he ties droppers off the shank of these flies. He noted that very occasionally the knot will slip off these hooks. He has a friend who ties all his droppers off the eye of the hook, but Kiel doesn't recommend this practice.

On evening trout will rise to midges and these are tough to catch. If all else fails Kiel's 'go to midge' is a large black Woolly Buzzer which will often undo a midging trout. Kiel personally fishes size 18 dries with a post, but not when he's guiding as they can be too hard to see in the fading light. He will also use sizes 12 – 16 Milly Midges under an indicator, and large red buzzers too. Another strategy he uses is to fish two well-greased Milly Midges – a size 12 and a size 14 or 16, separated by about 18 inches. He casts these out and then very slowly figure-eight's them back in the surface film. This has often proved to be particularly successful.



President's Message

"I fish and I vote." (Anon)

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the April meeting due to having become a COVID close contact. Simon Joel very kindly agreed to chair the meeting in my absence, and I understand it was a very interesting presentation by Kiel Jones. It was comprehensive and full of new information, and the subsequent discussion demonstrated Kiel's considerable depth of knowledge. Elsewhere in this newsletter, of course, you are able to read a transcript of his presentation. Hopefully he will return at some stage in the future to talk to us about saltwater and estuary fly fishing, another of his passions.

The Kelvin Club, disappointingly, is still having problems with its hospitality and its chef. This made for a most disappointing experience for those who dined prior to the April meeting. A number of members were quite angry and have been in touch to voice their dismay, so Terry Rogers and I are dealing directly with the management in an attempt to make sure this doesn't happen again. It was particularly galling for this to happen when we had a visiting speaker, a new member, and an excellent turn out. Miss Pearls has written, apologising for the debacle, and has promised to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The May meeting promises to be special with Peter Morse as our guest speaker. Peter is currently a Sage and RIO Ambassador and is well known worldwide through the *Wildfish* TV Series produced in the 1990s. He is an entertaining and knowledgeable speaker, as outlined in the April Newsletter and on the front page of this issue. This should be a very memorable night.

Unfortunately, indeed surprisingly, the Kelvin Club has booked a political meeting for the Greens with Adam Bandt for that



Dr David Hooke

night! It was suggested that we might like to dine in the Bar and then proceed upstairs to be squeezed into the President's room... it would likely be more of a shambles than last month.

As a consequence your Council has decided to give the Kelvin Club a rest for a month to allow them to collect their thoughts and hopefully get their hospitality in order.

Jenny Phillips has very kindly offered to hold the meeting at The Botanical Art School of Melbourne at 1a Shipley St, South Yarra. We are expecting a bumper turnout to meet and hear a world famous and celebrated fly fisherman. Google very easily provides further information regarding the venue (www.jennyphillips.org).

The annual trip to Enoch's Point, as guests of John Pilkington, was a cracking weekend just prior to Easter. All except for the sticky date pudding! A more detailed report appears elsewhere in the newsletter. I was the only newcomer as it was apparent that those who have been before remain addicted to what is a marvellous weekend,

and those members who have yet to visit should speak to Pilks about attending next year.

As I write, the "Donger weekend" is about to commence with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing club hosting nine members of the VFFA, all competing fiercely for the Dudley Lee Donger. The weather is a little suspect, but I do hope our members and the Bairnsdale members have a great weekend.

On the morning of Wednesday, April 27, Judith Oliver and Jo Dobson were to host a fly casting session for female members at the Southern Fly Fishers' casting pool in Oakleigh. As I mentioned in the April Newsletter, this was to have been a fairly low-key introduction to casting, gear, lines, leaders, tippet, flies, etc, and we are hoping that later in the year we will have a more advanced session and over time gradually

encourage more of the female members with an interest in fly fishing to participate in VFFA events. Unfortunately Covid took out half the participants, so in conjunction with Judith and Jo we decided postpone this event till the early Spring.

A reminder to keep in mind is our next trip to Millbrook on Wednesday, June 1 ... always a splendid day and great value in many different ways.

The election ... less said by me, the better. Surprisingly, I have yet to see Leigh Sales or Paul Murray explore fishing policies in depth with either Scott Morrison or Anthony Albanese. So much for the priorities of the mainstream media.

Once again – a reminder: the May meeting will be held at The Botanical Art School of Melbourne, NOT at the Kelvin Club.

ATF News - Brown Trout Kills

The ATF has just published the following very concerning report:

There have been some significant trout kills recently in the Howqua, Delatite and Lower Goulburn rivers. Only brown trout have been affected thus far to our knowledge, and we have been informed that both brown trout and rainbow trout are still being caught in the affected streams.

Our members at M&D FF first reported the Howqua problem to the VFA and ATF, and subsequently the Goulburn and Delatite situations.

Fisheries moved quickly to obtain dead fish from the Howqua, but unfortunately the fish that were recovered were either frozen or two far gone to be used to ascertain the cause of the deaths. The EPA were also quick to obtain some relevant water samples.

Accordingly, at this stage the cause of the deaths is a mystery. Is it something washed

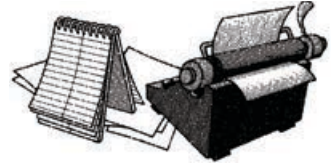
into the streams by a recent downpour, or is it viral? Will it spread? These are the issues we'd like to know more about.

If anglers happen to find dead brown trout in any of our waters, and if they seem to have died recently and are not in a state of decomposition, please refrigerate the fish (do not freeze) and contact Taylor Hunt at the VFA (0418 478 028), or Matt Byrne of the ATF (0412 338 600) or Terry George, the ATF president (0418 332 744). We shall keep you informed of any relevant information that comes to hand.

This is not a good way to end what seems to have been a sensational trout season with positive reports coming in from all regions. However, hopefully we'll uncover an explanation that will pinpoint a "one-off" event that won't be ongoing.

Despite the concern we trust that you have some great fishing in the remaining weeks of the season.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Fishing books, lit by emotion recollected in tranquility, are like poetry ... We do not think of them as books but as our companions, and not only river-side. Summer and winter they are with us and what pleasant company they are." (Arthur Ransome: *The Fishermans' Library*)

"The legend of the trout's sagacity arises from man's conceit. If the trout can outwit us, the lords of creation, he must be superior to us in cunning." (P.B.M. Allan: *Trout Heresy* – 1936)

Or – *"A trout's brain is very small. It is sometimes said that dry fly fishermen 'pit their brains against those of the trout.' No one has ever levelled a bigger insult at us."* (Dermot Wilson: *Fishing the Dry Fly* - 1970)

"... until a man is redeemed he will always take a fly rod too far back." (Norman MacLean: *A River Runs Through It*)

I receive Letters to the Editor every so often, and of course always appreciate their arrival. Following the publication of our April issue, which included an article by Fred von Reibnitz on cane rods, I received the following exquisite message from Alan Pilkington.

Alan wrote:

"I was particularly interested in the piece about Australian split bamboo rods. I have two - a J.M. Gillies "Peter Pan", two piece, 8'9", for a 5/6 line, with my name inscribed. I believe Jack Myles made it - I can remember him selling it to me.

It was a wedding gift to myself in December 1964, and is still in hardly-used condition. I smuggled it into my VW, down beside the driver's seat, so my new bride wouldn't get the idea that there would be distractions on our honeymoon in Thredbo Village.

I remember sneaking out very early a couple of mornings and christening it with Bredbo Hoppers and Royal Coachmen on the Thredbo River below the alpine village. But the gig was

up on my return to the lodge! On the second morning I bought a couple of nice little browns back and cooked them for Carolyn for breakfast. And all was forgiven!

The second is a lovely J. H. McGinn, 8' for a #5 line. He made it to my specs in the early 1980s. I wanted a dry fly rod with a quicker action for the Big River, similar to a bamboo dry fly rod Orvis were making at the time called the "Far and Fine", a 7' 6" #5 rod. Mr McGinn finished the rod with my name on it and called it "The Big River". It is a gem, but I have hardly used it.

As I will be fishing in Montana this summer I will take these rods with me and if anything interesting happens I'll write a piece for *Fly Lines*. They are both fine examples of Australian rod building craftsmanship, every bit the equal of the Hardy, Pizon and Michel and Orvis bamboo rods I own. Cheers, Alan."

I confess that I have only ever owned one cane rod, and it was a shocker. It all happened many years ago, back in the

1960s, very early in my teaching career. Part of my teaching program involved supervising an evening adult education class and one of the students in the class was a passionate fly fisher. He entertained me with countless tales of his angling exploits on the Buckland River. During the trout season he drove to Porepunkah nearly every Friday night, then fished all Saturday and Sunday and drove home late Sunday night to face work the next day.

In the summer months he fished wearing runners and a pair of old footy shorts, and one of his more memorable tales was of an afternoon when he was fishing his way up the Buckland and came across a large grassy hump on the edge of the river. He stepped onto the hump and immediately sank down to his waist. The hump was in fact the putrid rotting remains of a long dead cow. It had been there for quite some time and grass had grown all around it and up through it. Apparently it took many days and a lot of hot showers and scrubbing to get rid of the smell from his person.

He also revealed that in his younger days he had courted and then married a young lady from Tasmania - a calculated tactic because it meant that in his annual summer holidays he was obliged to take his wife to Tasmania to visit her family. So - free board and lodgings, and access to all those fabulous Tassie trout streams.

Towards the end of the year he revealed that he planned to purchase a new fly rod. Would I like to buy his old one? Of course I would, so parted with many dollars and took my new acquisition home to show my wife what she had just bought me for Christmas. It was a cane rod for a six or seven line, and I think from memory about 8'6" long. I didn't know any better at the time, and soon discovered it was like casting a rake handle. Half an hour's vigorous

practice with it and you were phoning a physiotherapist to get your shoulder put back.

I eventually got around to purchasing a much lighter and far more serviceable fibreglass rod when these appeared in the shops, and my precious cane rod was happily donated to the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club to be hung as decoration on the wall of their club room.

But having said all that, I did later get to cast some cane rods and agree that good ones are a delight to use. When David Grisold was VFFA president he organised some cane rod casting days, and I joined with other appreciative members at the Red Tag pool where generous and trusting members who owned cane rods had brought them along for the rest of us to try out. And yes, those magnificent 7' rods matched with a 3 or 4 weight line were truly a pleasure to cast with.

Not that I need any rods. I visited Mick Hall some years ago when he was living near Eildon. He took me out to his large fishing shed which, among other things, housed several rod racks, all loaded with fly rods. I asked Mick how many he had, and he replied by telling me that if you can count them then you don't have enough. It sounded like excellent advice. I confess that since then I have acquired many more.

A fly fishing friend of mine always buys one of the latest when a new (and of course improved) rod appears in the shops. His wife insists that with each new acquisition he must sell an old rod. Fortunately, my long-suffering wife hasn't come up with that strategy, though she does ask me fairly frequently if I really do need all those rods. I guess I could part with a few that don't get used all that often, but I don't enjoy the pain of flogging on Gumtree or eBay items that end up being sold at a fraction of >>>

their original cost. These rods hold a lot of memories for me; they have been dear friends for many years.

My son, who used to fly fish but now prefers surfing, has suggested that my rods will make great tomato stakes for his garden when I finally pass on. But my grandson tells me he is keen to give this fly fishing caper a try, so maybe there is some lingering hope for them.

Rods I would suggest are the most essential single item in the list of things

needed for fly fishing. Owning and using good ones is a huge pleasure. Enjoy yours, and I trust you catch some great fish on them at the tail end of our autumn.

Best wishes and tight lines, and just remember that your next fish you land might well be the largest one for the season.

Lyndon



Our June Meeting- with Gavin Hurley

Gavin is well-known to many of us. We have visited his fly fishing shop – Hurley’s Fly Fishing, in South Road Bentleigh.

Gavin started his business in 1995, and initially sold all types of fishing gear. But over a relatively short time the focus turned to be wholly and solely fly fishing.

As well as selling fly fishing gear, Gavin organises a number of fishing trips each year to top locations. What started as a simple holiday adventure has now turned into a major part of his business, organising travel to the world’s best fly fishing destinations.

Whilst he has taken groups to the UK, Scotland, Iceland, and Alaska, he now specialises in New Zealand where he has a base in Lumsden and offers single day to five and seven day fully loaded adventures. Add to this his Christmas Island bone fishing adventures that every fly fisher must do at least once in their lifetime, and you can see why the business is now called Hurleys Fly Fishing, Australia and New Zealand.

Gavin will provide members with information, pamphlets and details for each of these trips, and his presentation will include lots of spectacular photos of the fishing opportunities at these venues, along with some stunning video material.

Gavin is keen to show us some of his new range of fly fishing equipment and clothing, and will bring samples of his stock for members to check out. He has also agreed to tell us about some local fishing – the trout streams in Western Gippsland.

This will be a great night, so mark it in your diary – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club on Thursday, June 16.



Our speaker for June is Gavin Hurley, who catches a lot of large New Zealand trout

Millbrook in the Winter

Many of our members have now enjoyed the experience of fishing Millbrook Lakes, undoubtedly the best stillwater fishing in Victoria. The lakes we fish are very attractive and well-stocked, and our past visits have been thoroughly enjoyable. We remain very grateful to Mark Weigall for providing us with this opportunity.

The date for our next visit is Wednesday, June 1, and our scheduled fishing time is from 10:00 am until dark.

The invitation to visit Millbrook in June will be provided by Terry Rogers via an email to all members, probably arriving in about the third week of May.

Keep an eye out for this email.

If you haven't yet made use of this fabulous opportunity, then be aware that

those who haven't been are given some priority over those who (like your editor) have been a number of times.



The lakes we fish at Millbrook are in attractive surroundings and the winter fishing there can be very good. First timers will be given priority



The Big River Trip 2022

*For long the river's keeper has been my brother John,
With Cara close beside him they have ushered it along;
Midst cabins built for families along its wooded track,
The river raised our children, and they all keep coming back.
Our friends have shared its pleasures, its fish and yarning nights,
When 'neath the high Cold Weathers with gold stars blazing bright,
They talked about the mountains, of the miners and their dig,
And they counted themselves lucky to have found the river Big.
(Alan Pilkington)*

(report by David Hooke)

It occurred to me that the road to Enoch's Point was much better than I had anticipated, until the bitumen ran out. After that it was a reasonable mountain road but low profile city based four-wheel drive tyres were not entirely appropriate and indeed one came to grief during the weekend.

It led one to wonder how the early pioneers from the 1860s managed to establish a thriving village with no better access than a dray road and bridle track. The answer came from the book *Big River Days* written by John Pilkington - a history of the Big River Valley and the long-gone mining townships of Enoch's Point and Darlingford. It's an absolutely fascinating account of the early days and subsequent development of Enoch's Point and the Big River valley during the gold rush. They were tough men and tough times, and in those early days not a place for women and children.

It was my first trip to the Enoch's Point Country Club, although I had been given a small taste of what to expect by Will Davidson's presentation in February. What a magnificent spot: walking distance to the river, a bush camp surrounded by abundant birdlife including lyrebirds, wonga pigeons, crimson rosellas, king parrots, satin



President David Hooke caught resting briefly between sessions on the Big River



A relaxing rustic setting for evening meals at Enochs Point

bowerbirds, scrub wrens (42 different species have been identified) - all within a seven-minute walk to some of the best fly fishing perhaps in the world. One of the attractions of fishing for trout is that they invariably choose some of the most attractive country in which to exist.

The fishing was challenging, though most of the group caught fish on nymphs fished under a dry. Pilk's favourites, the Cinnamon Parachute Dun and the Dr Wark were tried but the fish were found wanting! Interestingly, on one occasion I found myself casting into a school of small redfin and was pulling them in one after the other. So frequently in fact, that when Kossy upbraided me for allowing my dry fly to become saturated and suggested I dry it out, my comment was that I simply didn't have time!

The popularity of the Pilkington's bush retreat is evidenced by the fact that we were signing the fifth large bound

visitor's book. Flicking back through the comments, all reflected the sheer pleasure derived from spending quiet time in the bush, away from the worries, at least briefly, of city life. We had a great group of blokes but there is no reason why couples who enjoy the bush shouldn't enjoy similar weekends.

Highlight of the weekend was Pilk's culinary skills starting with homemade sausage rolls and pizzas for morning tea and lunch, culminating in a marvellous roast dinner washed down with splendid red wine and lots of conversation and banter around the campfire.

This particular weekend will forever be known as the "sticky date pudding weekend", but as you all know 'what happens on the trip stays on the trip'. The lesson (not the learning) is to never delegate the cooking of your sticky date pudding; particularly if there's any chance of the delegate leaving >>>



The Big River at Enochs Point runs clear through some magnificent Victorian highland country



Kevin caught this pretty rainbow on John Pilkington's very effective Cinnamon Parachute Dun

out the self-raising flour and substituting half the sugar with salt. It was hilarious, but completely inedible. As you might imagine, much mock dismay and ribbing ensued, all of which was taken in good part.

Sitting around the campfire singing to the accompaniment of Kevin's ukulele, and telling stories some of which may have resembled the truth, capped off a very memorable day.

Many thanks Pilks for sharing your patch of Nirvana on the Big River.



Kevin Hindle was in top form, catching a number of fish from the Big River



There's More Than Trout in Warrnambool

... a brief report from Jim Blakeslee.

I went out fishing for bluefin tuna off Warrnambool yesterday with my neighbour Paul Jones. He has a new 7 metre Stabicraft.

We trolled around at the 50 metre mark, looking for diving terns chasing schools of fish busting up. No luck trolling, so eventually Paul let me have a go with my fly rod, and first cast into a school of feeding fish it was FISH ON!

Twenty minutes later I landed a 14 kg bluefin. A good thing it wasn't a big one. (A 150 kg fish was landed last week!)

I was using a #9 Loomis rod, a Lamson reel with an intermediate fly line, 300 metres of 30 lb braid backing, a 30 lb tippet and a #2/0 White Clouser. First run it took 100 metres plus of backing.

Lots of fun and sashimi for dinner. And Tricia made Easter Doves for breakfast.

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Some of Tricia Blakeslee's magnificent Easter Doves.

Jim also offers this invitation:

My friend Randy Ishihara, who now lives in the USA, is looking for a fly fisher to share a room with him at Ikari House, on Christmas Island, (Kiritimati). Would any VFFA members be interested in joining us?

We have booked with Gavin Hurley for a week of fishing for bonefish in July. We depart Melbourne for Sydney on July 5, then Sydney to Nandi, Fiji, then Nandi to Christmas Island before midnight on the 5th. We land in Christmas Island at 6:00 am on July 6 and fish for seven days (6th to the 12th), then depart for Nandi on July 13. We spend the night there, then fly back to Melbourne on July 14.

The fishing accommodation, guides and meals, etc, are all part of the package booked through Gavin Hurley in Bentlygh. Flights are booked through Fiji Airlines.



Jim's 14 kg Bluefin – challenging work on fly gear

So, if anyone is interested in joining with our group then please contact me on jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au.



Rod Barford's Report

In mid-February I went to Eucumbene again, and returned to the same location I fished last year - on Rushy Plains Bay. The lake had in the meantime risen from 27% to 49% of capacity, so was still rising

over shores that had not seen water since the late 1990s. The fishing was tough, with the trout chasing damselflies all day and midges in the early morning and evening.



Eucumbene's levels were up but the fish were fussy; many shores hadn't been inundated since the late 1990s. Rod camped where you see his vehicle, giving a pretty outlook.



Rod describes this as one of several new beaches that make for great polaroiding. If you get up on one of the larger boulders the trout stand out against the sand.

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Several times I found myself crotch-deep in the thick sedge grass along the lake edge which contained many midging trout. I was casting a #12 Griffiths Gnat with a pupa below and a larva pattern below that. Most times they ate the Gnat, but the outcome was invariably the same – the trout towing my rig out to the depths while I tied on a new rig. I fished 6 lb tippet at first, then 8 lb, and finally 10lb. And still lost fish. They weren't especially big trout, but the combination of extreme fitness and thick grass was enough to break even 10 lb tippet. I had already tried them on a size 16 Griffiths Gnat, then went to size 18 - with zero results. Then my very first cast with the much larger #12 Gnat brought a strike.

I was catching about six fish per day, but wore out my casting arm in the process. It took a lot of quick casts to rapidly moving fish to find any success on the damsel chasers. At times I could see them zooming after the airborne insects, and some of the intercepts were spectacular with fish leaping a metre out of the water.

At the outset I had tied up 12 blue adult damselfly flies and 12 olive damsel

nymphs, but then I ran out and had to tie up more of both patterns. A good thing I always throw in my 'Car Fly Tying Kit' whenever I'm away for more than a day or two!

Next tying session will include some adult damsel flies in red and orange as both were in plentiful supply on the lake, and the trout seemed to target the blue adults during the middle part of the day and the red or orange ones later in the afternoon.

I also resolved that after this trip I would tie some damselfly patterns using foam for the body and with a much smaller wing. The ones I have been using were great at enticing trout, but cause significant 'windmilling' in flight, thus creating terrible twists in my leader. A small upside to this was that often on landing the twists unravelled, causing the fly to flop around a bit on the surface, giving 'life' to the pattern that proved irresistible to the trout. But all that twist also weakens the leader and bust offs were the result more often than not.



A long day's fishing ends with a magnificent sunset

I didn't come into contact with anything bigger than about 4 lb this trip, but all the trout I landed were in great condition and full of fight. The average size of fish I caught was about 3 lb and that was good enough.

On my first night there I arrived just on dusk, camped at the end of the track where it met the water, and fished just 20 metres from the vehicle. I managed to net a 3 lb brown on my first cast of the evening, but then didn't see another rise or get another take for the rest of the evening.

Parts of the shoreline resembled some of the nicer ocean beaches I've seen, with huge sand deposits washed up by wave action and strong winds. The wind was from the south-east most of the time, but on a couple of days it changed to a light but steady south-westerly. On those days I caught more fish, as the food was being pushed into the bay and piling up near the shore. Most of the rises were well within easy casting range.

The photos give an overall view of where I did most of my fishing. I caught more than half of my tally along the shoreline up to the sedge grass. This level is approximately 15 metres higher than on my last visit, a massive increase.

(It always seems to take forever to reach 80% from 55% because the area to be covered increases exponentially. The 28% increase in volume from 27% actually represents 300% more water in measured volume.

I camped where you see my vehicle, a lovely outlook. On one afternoon, the wind picked up substantially, so I sat in the car tying flies for a few hours until it abated.

My 'Car Kit'. A couple of friends have said I have more in this bag than they

have in their total fly tying outfit! But it has always proven itself a real asset, especially when I run out of the effective fly of the moment.

I've utilised lure holders as material bags, as they have tough HD self-seal plastic pockets. One if for feathers, the other for dubbings, furs etc.



Rod's fly tying car kit

Coupled with my car tying bench, I want for nothing really. And to think it started out all fitting in the larger of the blue bags!



Rod's magnificent fly tying setup in his car – perfect for when the wind gets up

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Practically speaking, I could only tie a few flies of any one pattern, which I found to be too limiting, so this is the inevitable result.

I'm already packed for my next Eucumbene visit, most likely three weeks after Easter when all the hordes have left the mountains. Last year I fished the intense mudeye hatches during mid to late February, but this time around there were hardly any mudeyes to be seen. I'm hoping they're gathering strength for a mass hatch after Easter!

Cheers, Rod

Note: My mates in Cooma have been slaying them right through summer, and are still getting them on hoppers - even this late in the season. They have been fishing that stretch of the Snowy River between Guthega and Island Bend reservoirs and getting some handsome browns. But it's a game for the young and very fit, as the river level can rise a metre in minutes.

I've fished the Snowy down around Dalgety quite a bit over the past few years and have done quite well. There's more water coming down these days, so the trout are more active.



Tom Sutcliffe's Watercolours

It is pleasing to report that the two watercolours provided by Tom Sutcliffe (from Cape Town, South Africa) for auctioning to raise money for Australian wildlife injured in natural catastrophes have been purchased, and a very generous payment has subsequently been made by our Treasurer, Tony Mitchem, to WWF-Australia.

The response from this organisation:

Dear Tony,

Thank you so much for generously donating to help wildlife impacted by the devastating floods in Queensland and New South Wales. I'm sure, like me, you've found the images of communities and wildlife swept up in the floodwater truly heartbreaking. Many of these regions were hit by catastrophic bushfire just two summers ago, and this latest disaster will have pushed back much of the recovery made since.

It's so important that critical landscape projects, including those increasing habitat connectivity for koalas, can

bounce back. Your donation will not only help wildlife rescue partners to respond to the immediate need of animals in distress but will also support bush regenerators and Indigenous rangers to rebuild after this disaster.

I can't thank you enough for your support. Knowing how much you and other WWF-Australia supporters care for our precious wildlife and habitats warms my heart at this difficult time. We'll keep you updated on the impact of your gift over the coming weeks. In the meantime, I hope you're staying safe and well.

With best wishes,



Dermot O'Gorman
CEO, WWF-Australia

Fly Line Developments

... by John Killip. John wrote this article for *Modern Fishing* magazine some 30 years ago, and fly lines have come a long way since the braided horsehair and woven silk of yesteryear. In this fascinating piece John Killip briefly chronicles the history of their development and discusses the latest trends in fly line development.

Fly lines are easily taken for granted. They generate none of the excitement and animated discussion which occurs when someone draws from its case one of the latest whizz-bang rods. Yet each technological advance in fly rods has been paralleled by improvements in the lines used with them.

When split bamboo cane replaced solid greenheart and willow, plaited horsehair made way for braided silk. The glass fibre revolution happened at about the same time as Scientific Anglers sent shock waves through the establishment by launching the plastic-coated Aircel line. In recent years, while graphite has been taking over from glass in rods, improvements in fly lines have been no less dramatic, although perhaps less well understood.

All fly line developments may have changed line performance characteristics for the better, but not all these characteristics have an equal impact on the way lines perform. For example, the faster sinking rates of high density lines have allowed the introduction of fishing techniques to cope with water conditions previously considered unproductive. By comparison, improvements to casting made possible by the latest advances in line coatings are somewhat less significant.

In fact, any fly fishers desperate for an extra few metres of casting distance would do better to work on their technique than to buy a new line. Nevertheless, with the range of options increasing by the minute and new

materials to rejuvenate even the old standard lines, most fly fishers will find the latest lines have something to offer.

In this article, I shall try to explain how fly line design translates into practical fishing performance, and then review what is available to Australian trout fly fishers. The sources of my information are manufacturers' brochures, the opinions of knowledgeable anglers, plus my own experiences with many lines.

When plastic coated lines superseded the old lines made of oil impregnated braided silk, one of the features the old timers didn't like was the amount of stretch in the new lines. Whereas braided silk is fairly rigid, the plastic lines had a core of nylon or rayon, and both the core and the coating stretched when the line was loaded. A line that stretches is less efficient in transmitting messages from the fly to the angler when detecting takes and when playing a fish. The stretch also absorbs some of the energy put into a cast, so casting is less efficient.

The main difficulty in using a non-stretch core in a plastic-coated line is that the bonding between core and coating becomes a problem when the coating stretches but the core remains rigid. Only one manufacturer produces non-stretch lines. At present, the big fly line makers are showing no interest in reducing core stretch, possibly because their market research tells them that present-day fly fishers brought up on plastic lines know nothing better.

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Once upon a time, a fly line was simply a length of relatively thick heavy line to which the angler attached a thin leader. Then someone discovered that if the end of the line was tapered it turned over its loop slower, and delivered the fly more gently. This taper on the end of a fly line is called the front taper and is important in determining how the line presents a fly. But these days the word taper is used in a broader sense to describe the shape of the whole line.

There are three types of fly line available: double taper, weight forward taper, and shooting taper.

Double tapered lines have each end tapered so that they may be reversed after one end becomes worn out. They are a useful and versatile line for most kinds of trout fishing. Front tapers are usually around 2.4 metres long to give a smooth, controlled turnover, but there are a few variations. Longer front tapers result in a slower turnover and a more gentle presentation, whereas shorter front tapers are more abrupt. The short tapers transmit more momentum to the leader, so can be useful in turning over large flies or long leaders. They can improve presentations at extreme distances when the momentum of the cast is dying.

There are two main advantages of double tapers. Because the whole line is an even diameter and weight apart from the front taper at each end, there is no limitation on how much line can be picked up and cast. This means that accuracy at medium distances, about fifteen metres, is not compromised by the need to shoot a lot of line. Secondly, these lines may be roll-cast medium to long distances, which can be valuable under certain fishing conditions.

Weight-forward tapers have a front taper at one end only, followed by a length of line comparable in diameter and weight

to a double taper, and then a back taper in which the line reduces in diameter to be followed by thin line (often called running line) for the remainder of its length. The thick section of line, usually called the belly, is normally 9.2 metres long, and this provides the weight to load the rod in casting. Distance is achieved by shooting line, and the small diameter of the rest of the weight forward taper greatly reduces friction through the rod guides to increase distance.

The latest modifications to weight forward tapers involve varying the length of the belly and making the running line even thinner. The belly length determines the maximum length of line which can be picked up and false cast, or roll cast.

When using a double taper line, long casts are made by false casting a lot of line in the air, and shooting relatively little. As each 1.5 metres of line is approximately the equivalent of one line size heavier, this means that rods become overloaded, and their action slows down. This is why it is common to suggest a heavier size in a weight forward taper compared to a double taper. However, with the latest weight forward tapers becoming more 'radical' and more like a shooting taper, many casters find difficulty in adjusting to the fast-action, long shooting style. Of course, if you rarely cast further than 15 metres you will experience no problems, but then why buy a weight forward taper?

A shooting taper line is simply a front taper, a belly section about nine metres long, and then nothing. Whatever running line is preferred may be attached. Some people like flat monofilament, while others use specially designed plastic-coated line. The main challenge is to choose a running line that doesn't tangle too much, yet is thin enough to reduce friction.

Shooting tapers are the way to go for maximum casting distance, but running line tangles are a problem, and a short, heavy, shooting taper requires major adjustments in casting technique.

Whether a plastic-coated line floats or sinks is dependent on the density of the coating. For floating lines air is included in the plastic in some way, and in one case in the form of microscopic glass spheres. Sinking lines, on the other hand, often have lead dust included in the plastic formula.

The latest developments in density include floating lines which float even higher, neutral density lines which may be treated to float or left untreated to sink very slowly, and something called "density compensation" which ensures that the lines sink tip first rather than belly first, for better control of fly depth and improved detection of takes. Sinking lines are available in various densities, or sinking rates, up to those which make lead core trolling line redundant.

There is a big difference in fishing technique between floating and sinking lines. Floating lines allow flies to be drifted freely, or retrieved very slowly, and trout taking them are signalled visually by a movement of the end of the floating line, the leader, or an indicator attached to the leader for that purpose. Generally there is no feel of a take because of the slack line.

If sinking lines are used, there is no clear visual cue to strike, so the angler must rely on feeling takes. Therefore, the sinking lines cannot be allowed to have much slack in them. This means that flies must be retrieved fast enough to maintain this vital contact. In fishing rivers, the current may be used to maintain tension by casting across and downstream.

In an attempt to get the best of both worlds, most line makers produce sink-tip lines of one kind or another. These vary from floating double tapers with a couple of metres of sinking tip through to high density weight forward tapers with floating running line.

Sink-tip lines are popular with fly fishers who want a portion of fast sinking line to hold their flies at reasonable depth while retrieving, yet still enjoy being able to reposition the floating line, and the easier lift-off.

Apart from determining density, line coatings have many other functions. Some are quite important, like resistance to ageing and cracking, but have little to do with line performance.

The three most important ways line coatings affect casting and fishing are stiffness, slickness, and colour. Limp lines feel good to handle and lie nicely on the water. Stiffer lines reduce sag through the guides when casting, so they shoot better.

Slickness involves not only lower friction in the rod guides, but also allows lines to be picked off the water cleanly. A slick line picks up less dirt, too.

Colour could be the subject of an article on its own. Briefly, high visibility colours allow anglers to see what they are doing but are likely to be seen more easily by the trout. In fishing for spooky trout in quiet conditions, low visibility colours are better.

The Australian market for fly lines is probably not that large by world standards, yet lines are readily available in most sizes and shapes. The American Scientific Anglers company is the biggest manufacturer of lines in the world. Their range is extensive, covering a variety of weights, densities, and tapers. They have lines in a number of >>>

price ranges, too. I have used several Scientific Angler lines over the years, and have found them excellent products.

Scientific Anglers' main competitor in fly lines is Cortland. They also have an extensive range of tapers and densities.

While those two American companies dominate the market, there are a number of other makers whose lines find their way into tackle shops in smaller quantities. Some of them are very good, but there are others which are traps for the unwary. The most common problems, especially with cheaper products, are coatings that refuse to shoot no matter how much they are dressed and polished, coatings that peel off the core, coatings that crack at the tip after a few days use, and lines that retain their coils even after stretching.

However, there are three smaller manufacturers worthy of mention because they are producing lines which offer interesting features not found in lines from the big two makers.

The first is the Lee Wulff Triangle Taper line. The late Lee Wulff was well known to most fly fishers, even if only through the Wulff series of dry flies. He also developed a line with a radically different design. Basically, it is a weight-forward taper floating line, but with a front taper extending the full 12 metre length of the belly. The theory is that the heavier line is constantly turning over the lighter line ahead of it, for the most efficient transfer of casting energy.

Such a long front taper should produce a line which turns over smoothly for a delicate presentation. When I tried a Triangle Taper line, albeit only briefly, I found difficulty in loading the rod during short casts. Once the whole belly was being false cast, the line felt like a weight-

forward taper, but turned over very well in adverse conditions such as a head wind. Despite the long front taper, I don't think I would like to use it in situations requiring short to medium distance casts to wary trout.

Airflo lines are made in Wales by the Sue Burgess organisation, Fly Fishing Technology. They sell a full range of tapers and densities and are the only line maker offering non-stretch and low stretch lines. They also claim their line coating is revolutionary, guaranteed not to crack for two years, and they were the inventors of Density Compensation to ensure sinking lines sink tip first.

I have been using their top floating line this past season and have experienced none of the difficulties I was warned about in using a non-stretch line. On the other hand, I didn't notice any worthwhile benefits either! The Airflo line has served me well; it is a nice enough line. It is simply a case where the revolutionary improvements claimed in advertisements are not so obvious in practical fishing.

Jim Teeny is a steelhead fisherman from the U.S. Pacific coast. He designed a range of lines to do what he wanted. They are short, heavy, high density shooting tapers with floating running line built in. A very radical weight forward sink-tip, if you like. They have short front tapers to turn over big flies at the end of long casts. They work just as he says they should, loading up the rod with only one false cast and shooting like a rocket.

(Editor: These notes were written by John for *Modern Fishing* magazine in the early 1990s, some 30 years ago. Since then another significant manufacturer of fly lines has appeared – the RIO company, who make a broad range of fly fishing lines. They commenced manufacturing

lines in 1998. My favourite RIO line, and I have four of these, is the RIO In Touch Single Handed Spey Line. It's a line I thoroughly enjoy using.



I have also been told that in fact Teeny and Wulff were not line manufacturers – they had their lines made for them by Cortland or Scientific Angler.)



We're all familiar with these boxes



Peter Hayes on False Casting

Peter Hayes is undoubtedly one of our very best Australian casting instructors. Over the years he has written a number of articles on casting, and as your editor has attended some of Peter's classes, he has a collection of these articles. Peter has given us permission to use his material, so here is something for readers to practice over the winter months – your false casting. Put these suggestions into practice and your casting will improve significantly.

False Casting

All the good fly fishermen I know try to avoid false casting - for many reasons. False casting is a great way to scare fish, get tangles, hook your boat partner or the bushes behind, put wind knots in the leader, get tired muscles, and waste time in the air. The good casters are great at long line shooting from a single back cast. They are also great at getting the fly to the fish quickly. Hundreds of times in each guiding season I see perfect and accurate presentations made to a rise form five or six false casts after the event. The fish is 10 metres away by then!

Having said this, all the good anglers have the ability to false cast powerful yet smooth loops that are in control and appropriately sized. There are many times when it is good to false cast, and it is one of those activities that I am sure is good for the spirit. If you enjoy it you should do it. After all, we are supposed to be having fun. Let's get good at it but use it with caution when fishing.

The following exercises, done regularly, should really fast track your false casting technique. All casting to be done with the rod in a tilted-out manner, as a sideways stance with excellent views of

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both forward and back cast is absolutely essential.

Exercise 1 — Rod Loading

Objective: Learn to increase the bend in the rod as line length and hence line weight increases. Learn to increase stroke length and rod arc to achieve different bending positions. False casting using different length lines:

Short Cast – 6 metres

Use a small arc and short strokes. Sudden and abrupt stops. Little power. Cast tight loops. Produce casts at a 45° tilted-out plane in a side-on stance. We want it easy to watch and study both the forward and back-cast loops.

The feeling is to flip or flick little loops off the end of your rod tip.

Medium Cast - 13 meters

Here you need to use a larger arc and medium length stroke. More force

required over a longer length. Feel like you are trying to break the rod 4 or 5 feet below the tip. Start the stroke slow then smoothly accelerate to a thumping stop. Focus on pulling the butt into the forward cast, not pushing it.

Long Cast - 18 metres

Here you need a really big arc and very long stroke length. Obviously pull the bend into the butt of the rod. Learn very abrupt stops. Thwumping big stops. Obvious body weight transfer during the stroke. Definitely late wrist snaps.

Exercise 2 — Loop Control

Objective: Learn to produce narrow, medium and wide loops as required.

Primarily I want you to learn the three fundamental requirements for a good back cast loop - loop shape, position and speed. All are equally important.



Peter demonstrating some casting exercises at the February VFFA visit to Hayes on Brumbys in Tasmania

I call a good back cast loop an 'Elle Macpherson'. It is good looking, it is tight and tidy, and is long and slender and goes back quickly into the right place.

Elle comes from a well-loaded rod moving through the correct plane. Short power snaps combined with an abrupt stop tighten and speed Elle up.

The opposite of an Elle loop is a 'Fat Albert'. Fat Albert is a big round loop that often sags down close to the ground. He travels slowly and is very wind effected.

Loop Size

Learn that loop size or loop width is dictated by how low you dip the tip below the straight line forward movement at the end of the stroke. Loops can also be opened up by doming the rod tip. Try to avoid this method of opening loops.

Practice

Practice false casting with just 6 metres of line. Produce narrow loops. Then produce medium metre-high loops. Finally, dome the rod tip a little to produce really wide loops.

Primarily focus on tight loops with sudden rod stops in a controlled plane.

Trajectory

Learn to tilt the trajectory at different angles according to the length you cast.

A short cast requires a high back cast and low forward cast. A long cast requires a low or horizontal back cast and a high or horizontal forward cast.

Both your back casts and your forward casts should be on a perfectly straight line, no matter what the angle.

Practice picking leaves

With 8 metres of line out cast with good tempo and tight loops.

Stand in front of a bush or brick wall.

Aim at some leaves or bricks at varying

heights - get good at this. Aim at some leaves higher up and lower down.

You should also aim your back cast to varying points on a tree. On command you should be able to throw an Elle Macpherson directly at the second branch up or at the bark hanging off the trunk, etc.

Learn that an abrupt stop makes the loop travel faster and a slow lazy stop slows it down. The abrupt stop combined with a tight loop hovers the fly on the forward turnover giving you the sighting or judgement ability.

Tempo

Adjust the tempo for short, medium and long casts.

Learn that the tempo has to be faster with a short line and it slows as the line length increases. We can of course speed it up at will to cut through the wind, etc. We also need to speed up the tempo when side casting. This is because the line is low or close to the ground and it will easily drop and catch the bank if it travels too slowly.

Practice

With 10 meters of line out produce slow motion casting in a controlled manner. Speed up to a medium fast tempo, then speed up to as fast as you can manage without 'whipping' the line.

Exercise 3 - Tailing Loops

A tailing loop is a condition usually, but not exclusively, associated with the forward cast. On the forward cast the leader and fly travel forward below the main loop and catches on the line as it passes. It often causes wind knots and tangles.

The only possible cause of a tailing loop is that the rod tip path dips below the straight line on the forward cast. This can come about from several causes:

- If your back cast plane is high as well as your forward cast the tip >>>

will move in a concave manner. In my opinion this is a rare cause.

- If sudden acceleration is applied to the rod at the start or part way through the delivery stroke the tip will cave in and move forward in a concave manner. We call this 'shocking' the rod. This is a common cause, particularly when you are going for distance and trying that little bit too hard.
- If the rod angle is too close to vertical and too far forward at the start of the forward cast. (Too short an arc and stroke length for the given cast).
- This occurs with creep forward or whip forward stops. The problem is twofold. The forward throwing length is not long enough to produce the power required and the rod at this angle is too weak to resist the tip dipping. This is a common cause.



Peter demonstrating that good casting catches fish

Practice

With 10 meters of line out cast with good tempo and tidy Elle loops. Learn to cause a tail by shocking the rod with sudden acceleration at the start of the forward cast, or by creeping or whipping forward and shocking the rod.



Peter's casting pool at Hayes on Brumbys

Tasmania Fishing Report – Western Lakes (part 3)

... from Chris Wisniewski, Tasmania Inland Fisheries Service

Wednesday

The north-east breeze continued and was supposed to freshen during the day. At first light I went to check the submarines in the thick weed. In the half-light I could make out a couple of tents at the end of the bay and I could see a bit of movement. Some walkers had come in the evening before.

The fish were still doing their thing, pushing around in the weed with their fins protruding now and again. I persisted casting a small size 12 black Woolly Worm at any opportunity. One of the fish decided to leave the weed patch for a few seconds and was turning around to re-enter. I shot the Woolly Worm out, landing it six inches from his nose. There was a bow wave and the fish's tail tipped up. I tightened, and it was on. The water wasn't deep, so the fight was short and vigorous. The splashing drew the attention of the camping anglers, and I appreciated that they gave me my space. I used some forceps to release the fish while it was laying in the shallow water. It was able to right itself and swim away.

After breakfast the weather was closing in with low cloud and some drizzle. Leo and I headed to Lake Furmage where there was a good chance of seeing fish moving in the low light conditions. Duns will hatch at Furmage in cold, low light conditions and a rising fish, dorsal, tail or swirl can often be the only sign that a mayfly has been taken.

At the Julian crossing we encountered Andrew Summers and his mates from the Yarra Valley Fly Fishers. They had been out there for a few days as well, and we had a good chat about what we had been

up to. We invited them to our camp for beer and pizza that night.

Lake Furmage is about a one hour walk past Lake Field. It can get stirred up and dirty due to being shallow with a silty bottom. We walked in at the north-west corner and found the wind was steady from the north-east. It was stirring the lake edge as small waves broke along the shore.

Soon after we arrived we spooked a fish in the breaking slop along the edge. We then spotted a couple more but had difficulty getting them to see our flies. We separated. I went left around the calmer side and Leo walked down along the shore with the wind in his face. I walked a fair way and was surprised to not see any fish along the undercut bank. There were waves of low misty cloud rolling through, and at times visibility was down to 20 metres. I finally saw a fish rise off a small sandy beach so floated the Scruffy Dun out in the general area. After a short time the fish smashed the fly, breaking it off on the take.

I continued walking around the lake, spooking the odd fish in the low light but not really getting any opportunities to make a cast.

I eventually met up with Leo in the south-west corner where the wind was blowing strongest. We waded out on the sand and floated dry flies around the clumps of weed that were being exposed by the waves. There were quite a few duns on the water, but they were hatching and taking off quickly in the wind. It wasn't long before we started seeing dorsal fins and the tip of tails as the trout started working in, around, and over the weed clumps.

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Leo floated his dry fly near the weed and soon connected with a good fish. I followed soon after. In the dirty water it was hard to get them to see the fly, but by floating our dries through the general area where we had seen them moving we got some action. The fish didn't appear to be moving very far as they searched out mayfly nymphs and hatching duns on the weed clumps. They frequently showed their backs as they cruised about in the waves.

We saw a lot of fish, and a number took the fly and were missed on the strike. We were also broken off by a few that struck hard, pulling the line out of our hands. But we still caught and released nine fish in the next two hours. They were fit and strong, some pushing 2 kg. The Scruffy Dun or a Zulu did the trick.

We headed back to camp with a stiffening tail wind. The Yarra Valley boys arrived just as the hand-made pizzas went into the gas oven. They came out cooked two at a time from the oven to then have their tops browned with the gas torch. Garry is a plumber! We had a good time with plenty of fishing yarns.

Thursday

The weather continued to deteriorate with rain during the night forming puddles around our tent. The next morning the Yarra Valley boys headed off early in their 4WDs. We had trouble making a decision on where to fish in the trying conditions, with everyone lingering around camp, having another cup of hot coffee and more breakfast than we needed.

With all this indecision I decided to head back to Lake Furmage to see if the fish were still feeding on mayflies. I pulled the hood of my raincoat over my head and hiked off in the heavy drizzle and occasional rain up the hill from the Julian's crossing and across the plain



A Lake Julian submarine - he poked his head out from the weed

to Furmage. The rain was steady, the air temperature had dropped from the previous day, and the wind had increased though was still from the north-east.

With these conditions I knew what to expect at Furmage. The waves were belting into the shore and the water had dirtied up even more. I walked down into the south-east corner, but couldn't see any fish along the rocky edge or undercut bank as the water was too dirty. So I waded out to the patches of weed, looked and waited. There were odd duns coming off, but no fish were seen. So I floated a Scruffy Dun around the weed for a while, but with no result. I tried fishing a wet fly – a size 10 Mallard and Claret, pulling it in and around the weed. Again no luck. The fish either weren't there, which was hard to believe from the previous day's experience, or the water was just too dirty for them to see the fly.

I waded back to the bank and walked slowly around the shoreline, looking in likely spots where fish should be. In the low light, with rain fogging my polaroids and the water dirty, I saw no fish even on the sheltered side.

Just past the point where the creek flows in from Franks Lake I waded out on the sand to some sparse weed clumps. The water was not quite so dirty here and was about knee deep. I watched for a while as the squalls of rain hit my back. There were a few duns showing, and then sure enough a dorsal fin cut the surface on the edge of a weed clump. Then another, and another. There were three or four fish working this patch.

Despite firing off some fast shots when a fish was spotted it was proving hard to get them to see the Scruffy Dun. The fish were moving backwards and forwards, in and around the weed, so I resorted to floating the fly closer to where they were. A large head came slowly out of the water and engulfed the fly. There is no better sight. When I tightened the fish went ballistic, charging away dragging line rapidly from the reel. After a tenacious fight the fly was finally slipped

from the mouth of a magnificent western lakes brown trout.

I managed to land another brown and had a couple more takes that didn't connect. With this I felt that by persisting and searching I had made something of a difficult day. I began the walk back to camp with a tail wind pushing across the plain towards Lake Field and down the hill to our camp. A pot of satay chicken thighs and rice was cooking slowly as we settled in for a rough, wet night.

Friday

The rain eased during the night, but with threatening skies we were all very keen to get the gear packed up and into the trucks following a quick breakfast. The wind had finally turned around to the west so there was a tail wind for the ride out on my mountain bike. I arrive back at Liawenee in time for a shower and quick coffee before the trucks arrived for the trip home.



Tassie highland weather – puddles in the camp. Rain has been an unwanted companion on many folks' fishing trips this season.



Backwater Tactics

VFFA member Andrew Braithwaite was an associate of David Scholes and was the recipient of a number of his articles late in David's life. Andrew has passed some of these Scholes originals on to us. Here is one of David's articles giving some suggestions for fishing Tassie rivers early in the season.

This has been a particularly good year for backwater fishing - certainly the best for five seasons - and quite clearly gives reassurance that there's many a good trout to be had still in our local streams. By good I mean fish of between 2 and 3 pounds in weight.

As usual I have fished a Robin exclusively and the first seven fish to be interested came to the fly with great enthusiasm and took well, to finish without much trouble on somebody's dining table.

There's not much skill in these takes; especially when the trout makes a lunge at the fly from about a metre, taking it savagely. He pretty well hooks himself and rarely comes unstuck.

But trout number eight was different and number nine not much better. And this is what I want to talk about for a minute.

Both of these were typical of the most difficult of all backwater workers - save perhaps those wretches always found in very high clear water that swagger about in the shallows so invitingly but will have none of you, no matter what you do. A good thing they are not met with often.

No, I refer to those much more sneaky individuals that show quietly in fairly shallow calm water, but without showing themselves and in much the same place so that you have no idea which way they are heading.

The temptation to drop the fly close to the fish must be resisted, which is much

easier said than done, as I know to my own cost with number eight. You are only moving the fly slowly. The fish moves again in the same place! And again. But you don't know if he's moving to your fly or not. Hesitation results. You strike uncertainly. The trout might have the fly in its mouth, but the hook is not set and soon comes away, or if not, the fish may be scared. It's all a muddle.

No, the best presentation is to drop the fly a metre beyond and a half metre to one side of the fish. Then retrieve attractively. Then repeat on the other side. Then, if there's no result, back to the first side again and repeat. The object is to get the trout's attention to a fly with desired movement to which he must make a dive to seize it. And he's yours.

Did I do it with number eight? I did not, and that's why I'm writing this. And regarding the Robin. Don't think that you have the answer by tying one of these on - even if it is made by Noel Jetson. Remember, it aint what you fish, it's the way what you fish it!

David Scholes



An old photo of David Scholes, who typically has caught yet another Tassie brown

FLY OF THE MONTH

Craig Coltman's Claret Shuttlecock Emerger



Some members of the VFFA visited Millbrook Lakes in March, and our guide for the day was Craig Coltman. At various times Craig opened his fly boxes and we had a glimpse of his magnificent collection of superbly tied flies.

At one stage there was a tentative beginning of a dun hatch and a few fish started rising, so Craig began distributing his go-to fly for the event – his Claret Shuttlecock Emerger.

Those members who subscribe to Philip Weigall's magnificent online magazine *FlyStream* will be aware that Craig has a regular spot in *FlyStream* demonstrating his fly tying skills in a series of YouTube videos. Subscribers to *FlyStream* can view the tying of this particular pattern at this website:

<https://flystream.com/video/flystream-15-claret-shuttlecock/>

So here is how we tie this fly.

Materials for Geoff's Reverse Hackle Dry Dun:

- Hook:** Hanak H230BL hook in size 12 because it's a mid-wire hook. Given that this is a dry fly we want something that's a strong hook, but not too heavy so it's not going to impact the buoyancy.
- Thread:** 8/0 thread, either black or claret.
- Tail:** Possum guard hairs.
- Body:** Dubbed fur – claret colour, and you can use dyed rabbit, possum, squirrel or hare.
- Rib:** Fine or medium copper wire.
- Wing:** Possum fur cut from close to the skin.

Tying Procedure:

1. Put the hook in the vise and run turns of thread from just behind the eye down to the bend, then back again to the just behind the eye.
2. For the tail use some possum tail guard hairs. Cut a small number of fibres off the tail and tease out some that are all roughly the same length. Use a little bit of hand stacking to produce the right number of tail fibres that are all about the same length.
3. Lay the fibres along the hook shank so that the tail fibres protrude out the back by about the same length as the hook shank. Run turns of thread along the shank to tie these tail fibres in securely.
4. Tie in some copper wire at the bend of the hook so that it is ready to be tied in as the ribbing.
5. Wax the tying thread and take a small quantity of the claret fur and wrap it around the thread, ready to construct the body. Make tight turns of the thread around the shank from the hook bend back along the shank to build up an even body, stopping about two or three millimetres from the eye so as not to crowd the eye.
6. Wind the copper wire in evenly spaced turns to form the rib. Make these turns in the opposite direction to the direction the claret body was wound. Take a couple turns of thread to lock the copper rib in, then trim away the waste copper wire.
7. For the first stage of the wing cut a small wad of the possum tail fur from right down near the skin. Tease out the loose fibres, then lay this tuft on the hook shank and lash it down firmly just behind the eye. Check the photo here. The wing protruding out in front of the eye should be almost the length of the hook shank. Trim away the waste.
8. Wind the thread back to just behind the eye. Then cut another tuft off the possum pelt about the same length and thickness as for the first tuft.



9. Turn this tuft around so that it points towards the tail of the fly and is quite long, then tie it in over the section that will be the location of the wingcase. Lash it down very firmly.
10. Dub a bit more claret fur here just behind the eye to make a thicker wing-case section. This should be a bit rougher, representing trailing legs sticking out.
11. Now take the possum fur pointing backwards at the bend of the hook and pull it up and over the dubbed fur just behind the eye to form a wing-case. Tie it in with four or five very strong turns immediately behind the eye.
12. Push the whole wing back and up to make room then make two or three firm turns of thread in front of the wing immediately behind the eye.
13. Whip finish and cut the thread, then trim the wing so that it all looks the same length



Our Sponsors

VFFA 2022 meetings & other activities

(... all events subject to Covid restrictions)

May

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

June

- 1 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for a Winter visit, 10:00 am till dark.
- 2 Thursday Fly Tying at Aussie Angler Store, 30 Sherbourne Road, Briar Hill, commencing at 7:00 pm.
- 5 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag casting pool at 10:00 am
- 15 Tuesday Trout season closes in Victorian rivers.
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
Speaker – Gavin Hurley, from Hurley's Fly Fishing, who will tell us about new fly fishing gear now available, the fishing in West Gippsland streams, and the Christmas Island and New Zealand trips that he organises.
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

July

- 3 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag casting pool at 10:00 am
- 7 Thursday Fly Tying at Aussie Angler Store, 30 Sherbourne Road, Briar Hill, commencing at 7:00 pm.
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
Speaker – Dr Peter Joseph AM, VFFA member and Patron of the South Australian Fly Fishers' Association.
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm Zoom meeting.

August

- 4 Thursday Fly Tying at Aussie Angler Store, 30 Sherbourne Road, Briar Hill, commencing at 7:00 pm.
- 19 Friday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Guest Speakers – Peter Broomhall and Joshua Hutchins
- 21 Sunday President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:00 am
- 31 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

September

- 1 Thursday Fly Tying at Aussie Angler Store, 30 Sherbourne Road, Briar Hill, at 7:00 pm.
- 3 Saturday Trout season opens again for Victorian rivers
- 3 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner
- 15 Thursday 2022 Annual General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 28 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing, 10:00 am till dark.
- 28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm Zoom meeting.