

FLY LINES



May 2023

May Meeting with Guest Speaker James Norney

James has possessed a passion for fly fishing since picking up a fly rod as a young teenager. Since then he has spent most of his waking hours thinking about fly fishing and continues to give most of his spare time to his passion. He has fished all around Australia and the world, and is continually searching for great fishing and photo opportunities.

James loves to teach others and is well equipped to help all levels and ages of anglers. He is a Fly Fishing International Certified casting instructor (CCI).

Along with exploring mountain streams James also has a passion for saltwater fly fishing, and hosts saltwater trips to the Cocos Keeling Islands every year. He enjoys sharing his knowledge and helping create unforgettable fly fishing experiences.

At our VFFA meeting on May 18 James will speak on the topic: "Taking advantage of ALL of our State's

Thursday, May 18,
6:00pm at the
Kelvin Club

North-East", because cod are being caught in the same water as trout.

We would encourage all members to join us for what promises to be a great evening. Those who would like to enjoy a meal beforehand need to make a booking for dinner by Tuesday, May 16, by emailing Terry Rogers at terryrogers@bigpond.com and leaving a message.



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Jason Platts photo. Jason fishes some fabulous streams.

President's Message

"Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs."

Norman Maclean, "A River Runs through It"

The incidental reports from members fishing all over South-Eastern Australia have been very positive. Chris Wisniewski's Tasmanian Autumn Report; Jim Blakeslee fishing for carp in Western Victoria; Chris and James Gray in West Gippsland; John Killip from the Monaro; Brian Eddy from the Northeast, and John Douglas reporting on the fishing around Thornton - all areas which have been enjoying good fishing throughout the season. And I know many of our members have been taking advantage.

Our VFFA trips to Tasmania, both Cressy and Currawong, have also been very successful and several of our members have recently returned from the South Island of New Zealand where they had a fine time despite the vagaries of the weather and high river flows. James Carter has kindly penned a report elsewhere in this issue.

At the risk of being repetitive, I remind you all to consult diaries and any necessary higher authority and make plans to join us in March next year for a trip to the Taupo area in New Zealand.

Our guest speaker for our April meeting was Mark Turner from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. Mark has a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Natural Resource Management, and has spent much of his working life involved in



Dr David Hooke

waterways management. His talk, the text of which is elsewhere in this newsletter, gave us a rare insight into the difficulties and successes he has had in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. There was lively discussion through the evening as much of the area is well known to our members and includes some of our most treasured waterways.

Progress is incremental and clearly is going to be more successful with a collaborative, rather than a confrontational, approach.

The plan is to have Mark back, perhaps next year, with an environmental lawyer to explore our woeful ignorance concerning the 'rights' of fishermen and lease/land holders.

Next month's speaker is James Norney, from Mountain Fly Guiding. Many of you will know James through his work at Aussie Angler, or have indeed fished with him. Although he is a passionate

trout fisherman, his specialty is catching Murray Cod on the fly, and he will be introducing us to this exciting variant of fly fishing. This will be at the Kelvin Club with Dinner commencing at 6:30 pm and the speaker addressing us from around 7:30 pm. The problems surrounding the catering at the Kelvin Club are behind us and I urge everyone to join us for dinner and a chat. (The Lamb Pie prior to our April meeting I can assure you was superb!) Remember, it's not all about "the fishing".

As we head towards the close of the season, our thoughts turn to the winter activities. Fly tying will be conducted in the evening on the first Thursday of the month, commencing in June and ending in September. The venue will be the Botanical Art School on the corner of Punt Rd and Shipley St in South Yarra. A more central venue hopefully will attract more participants.

The School is set up for teaching with individual tables and individual lights, and has a microscopic camera playing to a large television screen. Everyone with any interest in tying their own flies is encouraged to attend - experienced tyers to help with teaching; inexperienced tyers to help with learning! There will be a warm fire and a glass of red.

Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool will commence at 10:30 am on the Sunday after the Monthly Meeting, and I'm hoping we will have casting instructors from amongst our ranks to assist. Barbeque sausages, coffee, tea and any other beverages you care to bring. Last year the weather was mostly conducive, even when the forecast was lousy... the location is quite sheltered.

There are some changes to Council. Will Davidson, our Secretary for the last couple of years, has taken a position in New York and will be away for at least the next couple of years. We wish him well in the Big Apple and look forward



*Our president enjoying a very productive
Tasmanian stream*

to some correspondence after trips to Montana!

Dan Lovecek has very kindly agreed to take over the role of Secretary. This is particularly generous as I know he has a very busy professional career and a young family. Thank you, Dan.

James Gray (Chris's son) woke up one morning and said: "Dad I think I could help the VFFA with their Social Media commitments - I'd enjoy that." Being a complete social media troglodyte, this was music to my ears. Thank you, James. But, as I have stressed to James, his school commitments must take priority, so if we have gaps during the year, it is no matter ... the overall result will still be more streamlined and focussed.

We are duplicating much of our messaging to members, and we have yet to find an editor to take over from Lyndon, if and when he relinquishes his role. The Newsletter is our pride and joy, but if there is no-one coming forward to firstly assist, then eventually take over from Lyndon, we are going to need to develop an alternative strategy. Council have formed a small working group to put together a discussion paper to be presented to the May Council meeting.

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Suggestions are welcome; addressed to me.

It is also a delight to welcome John Spragg to a casual vacancy on Council. John has extensive experience at Board level in business and is already making significant contributions to Council. He has been enthusiastically involved over the summer in trips to Tassie and volunteering at the Ultimate Expo.

Welcome John and thank you for agreeing to join us.

Finally, I do encourage you all to return to attending our monthly meetings to renew old, and make new, friendships. I know you can read the transcript in *Fly Lines* but really, if that is all it's about, it defeats our reason for being.

David H. Hooke



Book Review: The Feather Thief

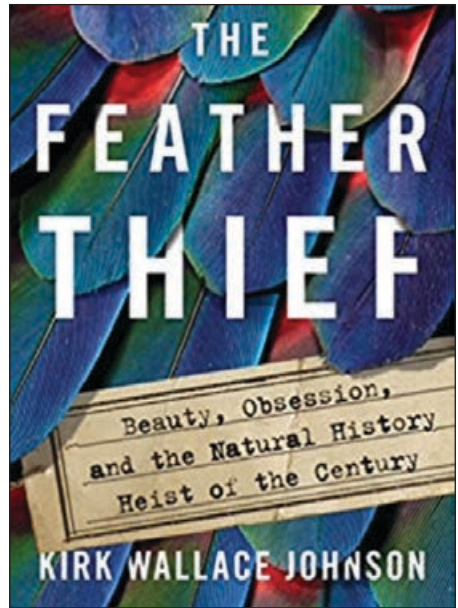
... by Rick Wallace

Kirk Wallace Johnson's *The Feather Thief* is difficult to categorize. Part autobiography, part ornithology, part true crime (minus the bodies) ... and with fly fishing and fly tying at its core. While it's an unusual mix, it really works.

Normally when reviewing crime writing, it's important to avoid spoilers. But with *The Feather Thief*, the basic facts are known. An obsessive young fly tyer called Edwin Rist stole priceless rare bird specimens from Britain's Natural History Museum and was ultimately caught, but not before selling off feathers from some of the birds to unscrupulous fly tyers desperate for illicit feathers to create their classic dressed salmon flies.

The real interest in the book, as it often is in real life, is in the nuances. What motivates someone to take these risks? How do they explain themselves? And what about those who bought the feathers? Is there a hidden subculture of illegality in fly tying?

All these questions and more are answered very capably by Wallace Johnson, an aid worker turned writer who took up fly fishing later in life. *The Feather Thief* allows him to display a lot of storytelling and investigative craft as he delves into the mystery of the missing



birds, which were specimens gathered by Alfred Russel Wallace, who developed the theory of evolution in parallel to his more famous compatriot, Charles Darwin.

The mania for feathers from exotic birds such as Bird of Paradise, Quetzal and Cotinga began in the late 1800s, when elaborate hats came into fashion and

resulted in these species being hunted to near extinction.

As a result, new feathers are impossible to get (legally anyway), and the finite supplies available legitimately to fly tyers have now been exhausted. The writer retraces the case from the scene of Rist's crime and examines the forces that led a hitherto cleanskin to commit such a brazen and selfish theft.

There's also a lively account of the police investigation and what led to Rist's apprehension. The book follows Rist's trial and how he escapes meaningful punishment on a dubious technicality. It all amounts to a compelling tale for both fly fishers and fly tyers and general readers.

Wallace Johnson really hits his story telling straps when he strives to trace the movement of the feathers lifted from these magnificent birds and despatched into a shadowy and secretive world of reclusive tyers trading online in these illicit plumes. His twin aims are to try to recover as many specimens as possible and secure an interview with Rist to hear his own account.

It's a quest that takes him from online feather trading forums to fly tying conventions and on to Europe on the trail of Rist and his contacts. It doesn't end in a very satisfactory way - certainly for

Wallace Johnson, and for readers, as some reviewers have noted.

I don't entirely agree with them. The lack of genuine remorse from Rist and other fly tyers involved, the failure of online auction platforms to take any meaningful action, and the apathy of authorities to recovering the specimens are all frustrating, but part of real life.

And while *The Feather Thief* lacks the neat, "tie it all up in a bow" ending of a crime novel, it remains a gripping account of a fascinating crime that asks some broader questions about our society.

The Hatch Mag review of the book makes the point that highlighting the lack of any genuine accountability in the ending may very well be Wallace Johnson's point. Before he wrote the book he spent years of his life on a Quixotic push to get refugee status for Iraqi and Afghan translators and others resettled in the US to prevent them being murdered for their work with foreign forces.

Turning to fly fishing to escape the trauma of this venture, he stumbled across the Rist story by chance, after glimpsing a Victorian salmon fly in a guide's fly box. From this moment of fortune, he's managed to weave a tale that's every bit as complicated, elaborate and compelling as these flies themselves.

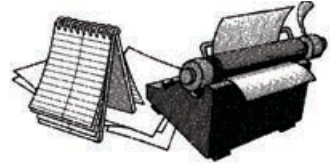
Barkers Creek Reservoir fish habitat installation project

Anthony McGrath, Senior Project Officer with the Victorian Fisheries Authority, provided us with the following brief report on Barkers Creek Reservoir.

Barkers was once an excellent trout fishery near Bendigo, but it was drained a decade ago to undertake infrastructure repairs. This meant the dense weed that provided food and forage for trout was

lost and it never recovered. Since then the fishery has been marginal and whilst I can't make weed grow, I can plant logs. So last week I installed 34 logs and rootballs into the reservoir to create fish habitat. The reservoir still holds plenty of trout and redfin, but now it is full of native species as well, making it a great location close to Melbourne to target cod and yellowbelly.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"It was late in April, with the river running fine and as clear as a young parson's conscience."
(Tom Sutcliffe: *"Reflections on Fishing"* 1990)

"If a new man is particularly attentive he can learn to fly fish in a half hour. But then he will go on learning as long as he fishes for trout." (Arthur MacDougall Jr: *"Rods and Rods - The Trout Fisherman's Bedside Book"* 1963)

"In 1918 I realised that the growing use of the automobile, with its easy transportation, would soon spoil all public trout fishing ..." (Edward Hewitt: *"A Trout and Salmon Fisherman for Seventy-five Years"* 1948)

"Those who become weary of angling are those who bring nothing to it but the idea of catching fish." (Rafael Sabatini, 1875 – 1950)

"Some of the best fishing is done not in water but in print." (Sparse Grey Hackle)

Alfred W. Miller, better known as Sparse Grey Hackle, was a prolific writer on all things related to fly fishing. And fly fishing has indeed proven a rich field for writers. The bookcase in my office here is loaded with fly fishing books, and when I can't get out to do some actual angling (way too often recently) I pull a book off a shelf and wallow in the wisdom and experiences of one of the many superb writers whose writings I so enjoy.

Recently I was again the recipient of an email from The Manic Tackle Project which included an article by New Zealand professional guide Adam Priest on *"Time Management in Fly Fishing"*. So again, with permission, I thought I'd pick over some of Adam's thoughts.

Adam commences with suggestions about the organisation of our gear, and makes the obvious comment that when your mate is parked outside with the motor running, waiting for you to bring out your paraphernalia for the day's fishing, this is not the time to be searching the house for your missing



Jason Platts with a fine brown trout from one of our streams

polaroids or fly reel. I guess as a hangover from my years of teaching I'm a persistent writer of lists, and even when I scoot off for a day's fishing by myself all the necessary items have been ticked off.

Adam's next point relates to the brightness and direction of the sun's light. If we choose water that is well lit then fish will be easier to see and the time spent fishing will be more productive.



Bernard Holbery fishes challenging places

Choosing the 'right fly' is also important for efficient fishing time. Adam says: "Be observant. When first turning up on the water check to see if there's any airborne insect activity, or insects on the surface film. If there are fish rising choose a dry fly or emerger pattern similar to these insects. If there's no airborne activity and no fish rising then have a look under a few rocks in the nearest rapids and choose a nymph pattern that resembles the nymphs you find. Change the pattern's weight for different depth scenarios. And don't forget attractor patterns if your more natural patterns fail."

The next point is: "Whose turn is it to fish?" Adam reports on witnessing some ugly displays between clients who were men in their 50s. His advice is to decide who is up first before you hit the water. This person will have first turn whether it is to a sighted fish or just blind fishing a run or pool. If this person hooks, catches or casts to a sighted fish it then becomes

the next person's turn. The second angler will start off where the first angler stopped fishing, and so on.

How much time should you spend trying to catch a particular fish? Is it really worth spending an hour casting to a two pound trout? If there is a lot of water ahead of you, you are likely wasting your time and being a bit selfish. Of course, if it's a big fish then maybe spending more time is valid, but ask your mate if he is happy waiting.

Should you split up to fish? Working as a team is more fun and if you're with an angler who knows what he's doing it is more effective working together than fishing alone. Also, if you split up and your mate walks ahead to fish this adds risk. He will spook more fish and many situations require two anglers for there to be successful captures."

Here's a thought - it's ok to swap rods! If one angler has a more suitable rig for a situation then use that rod. This will save a substantial amount of time.

Identifying the best holding water, and blind fishing it methodically and efficiently, will save time and increase success. Don't bother blind fishing every inch of a pool if you have a lot of water ahead of you.



A superb spinner pattern tied by Jason Platts

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When nymphing make sure you're using the right weight fly to get to where the fish are. It's no good using an unweighted nymph in a deep pool when the fish are on the bottom. By using a sliding indicator you can change the depth you're fishing for different pool depths.

Fly fishing fitness and experience matter. Your fitness and fly fishing experience will determine how much water you can cover in a day. In general, if you are fit you will be able to cover more water in a day and still have enough time to make it back to the car. If you're not so fit you may find it more enjoyable fishing just a short stretch of water and fishing it more thoroughly.

Adam says: "Experience is hard to beat. I have often been surprised watching very fit novice anglers struggling to wade up a river, whilst an unfit experienced angler can move upstream with ease. Once you become familiar with how to use a wading staff it will help save time wading and you will be safer.

Always take appropriate clothing to suit the conditions. This is a safety precaution. "Let's not get hypothermia." Also remember to take a first aid kit and PLB

if you're planning to fish an area that's isolated.

Take appropriate gear to suit the water you intend to fish. It's no good taking a spey rod to fish a metre wide crystal clear spring creek. Another waste of time!

Finally, and this seems obvious, but take into consideration the weather forecast. Think about where you are going to drive today to get more time on the water. Why fish a spot that will be in torrential rain by midday, when on the other side of the mountain or ranges there are clear skies and perfect fishing conditions? Also, consider the direction of the wind for your day out. Finally, seasonal changes and trout behaviour also need to be taken into account.

"In conclusion, while all these factors will play a role in how your day will pan out, there is no one right way in how to use your time. The way you plan and how you enjoy your time on the water is solely up to you. It's not just about catching fish, but if you have these thoughts in the back of your mind you will likely have more enjoyment - and catch more fish!"

Thank you Adam – some great advice.

Lyndon Webb



Some attractive water ahead

Our April Meeting with Mark Turner

(Mark is the River and Wetland Health Program Manager at the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority)

Our April Meeting with Mark Turner.

Thank you David for your introduction, and thank you all for inviting me here tonight. I've got a stack of slides here I'll run through. If you've got any questions then feel free to ask them.

This photo here on the screen is of a tiny fish, obviously taken for the plate. The story behind it is I did some fly fishing about 20 years ago. When I got the 30 I decided that life was over. I was old. It was time to learn fly fishing. So off to the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre to buy some gear and get some lessons. And that was my first fish.

But since that time I've had a couple of daughters, so the fly rod has taken a backseat for a while. I do intend to get it out again shortly.

As you can see from the photos, I've got my daughters into fishing and they've obviously outscored me by a long shot. Here's a photo of my younger daughter Marley with her first cod. This next photo is of my older daughter, Hanna, when she was about 8 catching an 85 centimetre Murray cod from the lower Mitta River using a Kmart rod she was given on her birthday. It cost about \$30. And she still holds the title over me. I've got three boats and thousands of dollars' worth of fishing gear - and she's still got it over me.

The fly rod is back in the cupboard for now, I've had a little bit to do with Merv Hughes in the fishing scene, and Merv calls this live bait trolling for crocodiles. So, there's a little bit about me.

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and acknowledge



Mark Turner speaking at our April meeting

their elders, past, present and emerging. For me in the Goulburn Catchment I would like to acknowledge the two traditional owner groups that we work with in our catchment, which is probably an area that most of you guys would be interested in, particularly those who fish for trout. There is now a massive increase in the partnering with traditional owners, in their words "to heal country". In the Goulburn Broken Catchment they are the Yorta Yorta nation in the north and Taungurung in the south. We do a lot with them and there's more to come in that space.

And talking about great partners, we've had a partnership with the VFFA for quite some time now. I met with Dermot O'Brien about 10 years ago for a coffee and we talked about things we could do. We arranged a time for me to meet him and I walked up to the table and he stood up and said: "Now, do you f---ing >>>



A very relaxing dinner preceded the April meeting

hate trout?" And that's where our great relationship started. I said: "I love trout – they taste fantastic. I see no problem with trout." Since then we've had a great relationship, I think, in improving river health.

The photo on the screen now shows our patch as far as the rivers are concerned. Lots of native fishing, but also lots of trout territory, too, that you guys know in the Murrindindi, the Acheron, Rubicon, Big River, Goulburn River, Delatite and Howqua. All these rivers and creeks are in the patch that we have management oversight of in respect to the waterways.

In terms of water management, we have stuffed around a bit over the last 100 or so years. When we came here we did all sorts of wonderful things to our

waterways. We had a red hot crack at straightening them, and we put in lots of channels, and we put dams on them.

I think this photo is of Casey's Weir on the Broken River near Benalla. And here we are dredging the local Broken Creek. I've actually got this one on a postcard - it's called 'Snagging the Goulburn'. It must have been in the mid to late 1800s. The Goulburn weir on the Goulburn River was the first piece of irrigation infrastructure nationally, and it was dated around 1880.

Prior to that the Goulburn had been de-snagged and they used to run paddle steamers then up as far up as Seymour. It never really took off that much. It obviously wasn't that viable.

So that's where we, the CMA, come in. Catchment Management Authorities were brought in around 25 years ago to try to repair some of the wrongs of the past and make them right again. And put some focus on rivers and their health.

When I talk to people I try to nut things down to the core. For me, in managing rivers you want them healthy. There are two key things here - flows and vegetation. If you want to muck around



Members enjoying a fine meal in very pleasant company

with things, then get the flows right and get the vegetation right. What do we end up with then? Healthy rivers and healthy fish! That's the motto for us, and the fly fishermen are also happy if we get all that right.

Here are some photos of Gilmores Bridge over the Goulburn. Let's cover a bit on the flow side of things. If you go back more than 10 years the environmental flow was whenever you got rainor it was minimum passing flows. In the last 10 years we've now got some more water that we can play with for better river health.

The photo we're now looking at is the section near the bridge. There really is a lot of river bed exposed at that level and the water flow is just a trickle. We're now starting to look at what flows we could provide there for better river health more generally, and we are actually getting pretty close to it.

I had Philip Weigall ring me and he said: "We need to get that minimum flow up a bit." Good timing Phil. We're about to announce putting on a 400 Meg/day flow. There's still that 120 Meg/day minimum passing flow and we can now put some extra flow on top of that. And this coming year, for the first time, we might actually lift it even higher – closer to 1,000 Meg/day through winter.

So that's one of the things we now have that is relatively recent. We're still learning about applying environmental water flow, and what it does. We are using it there to try and cover more of that river bed, which should be covered more throughout the year.

This is a hydrograph. We use them a lot in water management, and I love them because they explain a lot to me. It may gel with you, or it may not. This is the Goulburn further down from Shepperton over the years 2019 into 2020. And here

is minor flood level of about 30,000 Megalitres a day.

The green line is what would have happened across those years if we had no regulation. Lower in summer and higher in winter. A lot of people call that the heartbeat of the river, up in winter and down in summer.

The blue line is what actually happened. And the colours below the line are for when we had consumptive water going through - water for irrigation, and things like that. The green bits are environmental water. So if we didn't have environmental water we'd have none of those green bits.

The red bits, as you can see, is what we've done is sort of flatlined the river away. If you look at the heartbeat analogy, we can take out the high flows and capture them in dams and then we let them out in long, slow stints in summer where the river should be lower.

We add little bits around autumn and spring and winter. Put down some pulses, try to wet some of the vegetation and provide stimulus to breed. We are adding some variability, some natural cues for fish and some sort of some replication of that heartbeat back in into the river - lower in summer, higher in winter. A big part of what we look at are wetlands in the landscape as well. This is Doctor Swamp just out near Murchison and that's what it looked like in April 2022. A lot of vegetation was sort of stripped and looking pretty ugly. In August 2022 you can see the vegetation and the foliage coming back again.

I've got nothing against cattle, I love steak and I love a coffee and I love milk for my Wheaties in the morning.. I've actually married a dairy farmer's daughter so I've got to support the dairy farming industry. But I just don't think that cows have a place in rivers. >>>

Someone did a study about cows standing on land versus in water, and apparently they crap five times more when they're standing in water compared with on land. A terrible habit, isn't it? Interesting correlation in Melbourne down here. Your drinking water catchments are all protected. I live in Shepparton and it's all upstream where I get my drinking water from, and none of it is protected whatsoever. This is on the mid-Goulburn and I think that's the Broken River. It's not real good management of waterways is it.

So that's one of our major things about trying to get stock out of water for the vegetation outcome. For a variety of reasons there are also pathogen issues here and all sorts of other issues.

So for a solution, Chris touched on this a little bit, and we might have a bit more of a chat later. A lot of people come to us and to see that sort of stuff. And it's terrible. I think that at some time in the future we might get there. It takes time for legislation to catch up.

We can offer people incentives, but it's voluntary. I do hope that at some time we will catch up to New Zealand, as they're a long way ahead of us. Maybe this is because their recreational fishing industry dollar is so much bigger there than it is on our rivers. So part of what we do is offer incentives to people.

We can pay all the upfront costs to get it down to something like this. This photo is of the Acheron River with the Cathedral Ranges in the background there. This is a site we did quite a few years ago, and here it is now. The good thing about some of these areas is that they really respond well. The vegetation grows quicker and comes back quickly, though maybe not so good for your back cast. But anyway, if you've got a healthy river full of fish and

are having a bad backcast, you'd rather have that than a crappy river, I think.

We've been doing this for a while now, and as an example here is a photo of the King Parrot Creek. In some areas we are starting to see landscapes change, with good connected sways along rivers and we've got the cattle out and vegetation happening. I don't want to bore you with figures, but we've done some good work in the last few years. We're like the kids in the back seat of the car asking: "Are we there yet!" Try to understand how far we've come. Here are percentages showing where we've got stock out of waterways. It's around 60% for the Rubicon, 90% for the Howqua and 68% for the Delatite having stock out of these rivers and being able to work on the vegetation side of things.

We've done it for 20 years, and we've got all the easy ones. Most of what we pick up now is when we get a change of landholder or something similar. As I said, I'd like to think we've got a lot of people like you here tonight who will advocate for this.

Twenty years ago it was probably just greenies out there on the fringe. But now we're getting more people into the centre of this issue. Now I think we just can't have crappy looking waterways. It's just not acceptable. I think we'll get there but we've got to have the community with us and swing the balance. The Bemm River and a few others like it have seen a dedicated focus on them.

I was supposed to come to your November meeting, so I still owe you an apology for that. Part of that was because of a flood event we had in October through November. Seymour copped it. The third highest flood level on record – a one in a hundred year event. But some of the records go back to prior to Eildon, so you are comparing floods when Eildon

wasn't there. Eildon didn't play a role in these recent peak floods. All that water came in below Eildon, so Eildon didn't play any part.

Murchison - second highest flood on record. Shepparton, near where I live - highest on record. Yea River – an interesting one. At Devlins Bridge it was the highest on record. The one in a hundred year flood level there is 4.53 metres and we've got to 6.29 metres at Devlins in Yea. Broken River was not so big.

The flood was definitely dominated by the Goulburn system and not by the Broken River system. The Avenel township on the Hughes Creek was about one in 500. And if anyone's been there, the Hughes Creek is one of those catchments that's got granite – a real sandy granite catchment. There were some parks in Avenel on the Hughes Creek that were covered in really deep sand that had blown out of those valleys. It had some power and blew some sand out of that valley, and this is the sort of stuff you were seeing on the news.

As far as flooding, there's this concept in Europe about there being 'room for the river'. It's very much a European river setting. We have some settings here where we've developed right to the top of the bank, partly because when we settled there the river was nice so we wanted a view over it and we wanted to recreate along it. So the river doesn't have much room, and when we have a belter of a flood come down, we are right in the middle of it.

So Europe has done a lot of things now trying to push back and create things like wetlands and a wider flood-plain that the river can manoeuvre in. Even things like placing sporting fields and those sorts of things in these areas that can more easily

cope with a flood, rather than putting housing areas and residential areas there. There's a lot of inquiries going on now looking at flood planning. You would have heard what's happening at Lismore in New South Wales - flooded three times the last few years, so now starting to look at how we how we plan around rivers and floodplains. There's a lot more of that to come.

I might leave it there and am more than happy to chat with you for as much as you like.

[Following the meeting Mark sent this note:

As discussed, I'll work with you on an angler access education piece.

As a start see this link for a great read: https://www.land.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0038/498926/RiverBoundaryDetermination.pdf

Also, check this link where you can zoom into an area of interest to see if crown frontage exists. The Goulburn Breakaway is a good one to look at to see the difference between where the original course still has crown land, but the new course has none i.e. it is private land to the top of the bank: <https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/mapsharevic/>

Here is information on the crown frontage camping issue including a list of the sites deemed suitable:

<https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/managing-crown-land/camping-on-licensed-crown-water-frontages>



Big River Trip - March 31 to April 2

... from Peter Joseph

Having read about this fabulous weekend for many years as a South Australian member of the VFFA, I at last had the good fortune to attend this year. The reality was so much better than the expectation that it had me wondering why.

When I joined SAFFA in 1964 the fly fishing within an hour's drive of Adelaide was excellent. However, our members always believed that the fishing was better further afield, so we became great organisers of trips to supposedly greener pastures. From my reading of *Fly Lines* there never seemed to be any difficulty gathering a crowd for the Big River trip.

David Hooke had loaned me "*Where Time Stands Still*" (by Alan and John Pilkington) when I visited Melbourne last year, so I had some appreciation of Enochs and its history.

I am not as agile as I was, so had decided to fill a vacant spot on a SAFFA trip to Millbrook Lakes to test myself. Then I saw that a place was still available for this year's Big River trip, so I phoned John (Pilkington) and asked to come, as

I would already be halfway there from Adelaide.

There was one intervening day between the end of the Millbrook visit and the official start of the Big River weekend, so John kindly invited me to come a day earlier. The guides at Millbrook suggested a route from Bacchus Marsh through Yea. I saw a lot of magnificent scenery on the way, which only kept on getting better. The Eildon–Jamieson road was great and the Big River Road was awe inspiring. The towering blue peaks were a serious distraction, as were the infrequent glimpses of the river below.

The directions I was given saw me safely there by mid-afternoon on the Thursday. The descent into the car park revealed the unobtrusive huts in a sloping grassy glade surrounded by tall Eucalypts, Sequoias, and Beeches and smaller natives. Other huts nearby are screened by the trees, and the wood-fired burner and Pizza oven are in the sheltered area. King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas competed noisily on the slope leading to the very discreet long drop toilet which utilises an old mineshaft. Wonga pigeons,



Scrubbing the Big River evening meal dishes



A very pretty rainbow from the Big River



Saturday's evening meal was eaten out under the stars



Sharing information before venturing out to tackle those Big River trout

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The birdlife along the Big River is both a plentiful and colourful

Bronzewings, Yellow Robins, Scrub and Blue Wrens and Kookaburras were all frequent visitors.

After meeting old and new friends it was time to go fishing. John provided me with some beautiful Palmered Red Tags. We drove down to the river, which was a little discoloured but quite fishable. Having been shown the water I was left to it.

This medium-sized river, with pools, runs and ripples, is truly a dream stream for fly fishing. The difficulty of access no doubt ensures a large population of trout. The wading was safe enough for the surefooted. However no longer being



Part of the huge collection of carefully stacked empties

so, my trusty Folstaf wading staff was needed.

The day was cool and overcast. The fish were not rising. I fished some promising foam lines carefully, using the Red Tags, then Stimulators, and then a small Peveril. There were several very attractive pools from which my reasonably well-presented dries elicited no response, and one turbulent pool with multiple back eddies which had to hold good fish needed further thought and experiment. A Prince Nymph dropper eventually resulted in a small fish in a ripple. Then back to the Country Club for refreshments and a marvellous dinner prepared by John.

John returned from his early morning shopping trip to Alexandra for our provisions before most members arrived. The clouds cleared so I returned to the pools I had fished on Thursday at about 11:30 am, managing to catch a tree almost immediately on the Red Tag. Nothing rose to my dries, and a pair of beaded nymphs ended up in another tree, so I resorted to a size 6 green sparkly bodied Cat Fur Fly with Jungle-Cock eyes and cast it under the cliff.



This small brown was deceived by a dry fly pattern



Why stand when you can sit? Rocks bordering the river were very conveniently placed.

As it appeared out of the depths a fish I guessed at over two pounds took it so well that my habit of snatching the fly away did not matter. My nine foot 5-weight SP only just turned it as it charged for the tail of the pool. I like to net and release fish quickly, but despite a 7 lb tippet, several attempts failed before it came to the net. Only then did I realise how big it was. I had left my phone in the car as I had nearly drowned it previously, so I weighed the fish in the net, then slipped out the barbless hook and released it. It weighed 5¼ lb, equal to my best Australian stream fish from the Little Plains. I couldn't believe my



Morning tea time?

luck, and started work on the swirly pool upstream, missing a reasonable fish in its tail.

I was still smiling when John and Kossy appeared half an hour later. Kossy took me in hand and taught me some of the finer points of fly fishing whilst sharing my rod. We both caught fish despite the afternoon turning gloomy again.

Kossy showed me the drag-reducing advantage of greasing the leader right to the fly when fishing a dry fly with a dropper nymph off the bend. He also demonstrated the need to match the length of the dropper to the depth and speed of the water, and the advantages of jig heads for nymphs. I then caught a fish on one he had given me. Kossy described the technique as Euro-style rather than Czech-nymphing, and how to do it. Not bad for one afternoon!

We returned to the Country Club for a beer and a catch-up as people arrived: Peter Whitelaw, Peter Clayton, Terry Rogers, Andrew Stoney, Gordon Baker, Mike Jarvis, Alf Priestly, Jon Kenfield, Ray Goddard, and Bruce and Corey Houghton.

Gordon had had the misfortune to shred a tyre on the way in, so had to use a temporary spare to drive out.

I was made to feel very welcome, and was given a lot of good advice and shown what boxes of expertly tied flies look like.

A late arrival on Saturday was new member Mitchell King, from Mansfield, who had a red letter day on the stretch below Enoch's Point.

The late afternoon was spent relaxing and chatting and refreshing with a variety of beverages and pre-dinner nibbles, then a barbeque, with the red wine and conversation both flowing freely. Also, some robust badinage, which might have sounded hostile to those unused >>>

to fishermen who are friends having a good time. There were even terrible conversations about fishing the river with spinning tackle!

After another peaceful sleep Gordon and I were directed to Railway Flat, where we fished several pools, rising and missing and catching fish, Gordon doing the better job. He wisely decided we should go back to the promise of sausage rolls for morning tea and pizzas for lunch; a treat not to be missed.

John had mixed a large quantity of pizza dough and prepared the filling for the sausage rolls while most of us were breakfasting. He and his accomplished helpers spun and filled the bases. He then managed the oven, a masterly performance all round. Several bottles of red wine appeared, but Gordon and I returned to the stream after only a small sample.

Gordon went downstream and caught fish. I had a rest and watched.

We returned to find another convivial pre-dinner gathering, with the more experienced hands contributing to the meal preparations. John again used the oven, this time to perfectly cook two legs of lamb and vegetables. This was followed by sticky date pudding for which Peter Whitelaw was responsible. The weather was good, and the outdoor table was large enough to seat the crowd in comfort.

After another enjoyable evening and sleep it was time to breakfast, pack, and depart, taking with me a bottle of Peter Clayton's delicious plum sauce.

John's generosity and organisation and culinary skills were as unobtrusive as they were responsible for the success of this event. The chores were done without fanfare: wood gathering, storing, cutting and carting, setting tables, filling water



A fine selection of nymphs suitable for the Big River

containers for heating, washing up, meal preparation, getting rid of piles of wine bottles and beer cans, and all else that made the event so comfortable.

When I wrote in the Visitors Book I could only quote Douglas Stewart in *The Seven Rivers*: "How complex a blending of landscape and rivers and weather, and people and wild creatures and trout, are the attractions of any place where you go fishing". The weather may not have been perfect but the other criteria were all well met.

I was surprised and honoured when John asked me to provide an account of the weekend on the Sunday. I hope attendees will forgive any inadvertent omissions or errors.

Peter Joseph

Here are some reports from others who attended:

From Jon Kenfield: "I landed six fish on Saturday and eight on Sunday- almost all on a large black cicada ... that probably

shouldn't have worked! Saturday was a McKean cane day, Sunday was a Waggoner cane experience. All far off and fine on the dry."

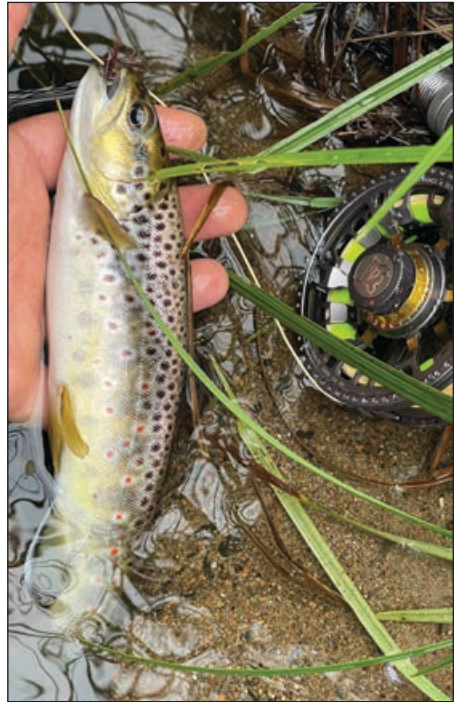
From Peter Whitelaw: "I can report that Kossy was kind enough to provide me with several hours of coaching on fly casting and rivercraft. As a consequence I caught one and half smallish rainbows. Kossy said the half a fish was only counted because it performed a self-release. A most enjoyable weekend and many thanks to Pilks for his hospitality."

Mike Jarvis: "Hi Peter, glad you enjoyed it and that you were made to feel welcome. The most successful flies for me were a Parachute Cinnamon Dun, a Royal Wulff and a Brown Nymph."

Corey Houghton: "Hi Peter, my experiences visiting Chateau de Pilk's have a varied. This year one of the newer members was discussing the most common species when fishing this area and suggested that brown trout seemed the most prevalent. I have also had this experience, with browns sitting in the pocket waters and cruising the lengths of shallow sections between rapids. Most times when wading from the car park towards the falls small browns, many 6" – 8" in size, would be breaching the surface under over-hanging trees and in deeper pockets.

This trip however the eight fish I landed were mainly rainbows, with the largest almost 12 inches. Most of the rainbows caught were in their favourite haunts, in faster narrow deep channels.

On the way out my dad Bruce and I stopped off at the Taponga Creek which held loads of small browns. We thoroughly enjoyed this long stretch from the bridge but again small fish. As always the Pilks's Big River trip is a gem."



Another pretty little Big River trout

Ray Goddard: "It's pretty clear that the river is holding good numbers of fish. Due to a knee injury which is inhibiting free movement, I restricted myself to one short session adjacent to Pilk's EPCC in the vicinity of the day visitor parking area - an area which undoubtedly experiences a lot of fishing pressure. In a short one-hour period I adopted a Euro-nymphing strategy and managed to land three smallish fish - one in a deepish drop-off and two in a fast flowing riffle not calf deep. Deeper pools which would normally tend to lift the excitement levels produced nought.

Please add my word of thanks to Pilks for his efforts and hospitality.

A terrific weekend that might have benefitted from more (or less) drinking."

Cheers, Ray Goddard

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Peter Clayton: "I managed to catch six trout and about ten small to very small redfin – most on a beadhead beadhead nymph under a dry."



Regards, Peter Clayton



A small one about to be returned



Two views of the Big River – a delightful and productive trout stream



New Zealand South Island Fishing Report – For March - April 2023

... from James Carter

VFFA members Cam Johnston, Hamish Hughes, Rick Dugina and I booked for a week with Gavin Hurley at his Lumsden, Southland complex from late March. We were spoilt rotten in the newly completed complex built adjacent to the Kiwi fly fishing shop run by Gavin and wife Deb. Gavin had another group of Victorians already ensconced at his other cottage at Lumsden.

On our arrival in Queenstown the trip to Lumsden was not good news - the

Mataura was high, flowing fast, and heavily discoloured.

The fishing arrangement was simple and very effective - the four of us were paired for two days with a guide (Gavin Hurley or Brendan Shields) and we alternated guides with the pairs every two days.

On our first day the Mataura at Balfour was too high to cross and far too discoloured to fish; so plan B took us further upstream to Nokomai to find less

flow and clearer water. Productive fishing was encountered.

Tuesday took us to the famed Oreti River, and Southland did not disappoint - a day of driving wind, rain showers, hail and snow, with intermittent glimpses of blue sky. We sighted plenty of fish in the clear deep water of that wonderful river, but were unable to even achieve a strike. Given the size of the fish sighted it's little wonder this river is under pressure and with 'nominated beats'.

On Wednesday we were back on the Mataura, starting downstream from the Athol bridge and working back upstream beyond Athol to reach the footbridge at the end of the day. After more rain overnight the water was cloudy at the start, but improved as the day progressed, as did the weather. It was productive fishing with all fish caught being above 4 lb. This included netting a couple we caught on dries in a brief mayfly hatch. Then to top it off Hamish netted a 6 lb fish in the late afternoon to end a great day's fishing.

Thursday started with a cracker frost in Lumsden, and it was back again to the Mataura, fishing from where we left off the previous night and continuing on towards the footbridge. The river was lower and a little cleaner. The day started well, as we opened with another 6 lb fish netted just 100 metres above the spot where Hamish hooked his 6 pounder the previous evening.

Friday commenced with a thick fog that lifted around 11 am as we reached the Waikaia below Piano Flat. The river was still dirty, but Gavin sorted the 'rock fish' from some nice browns that were netted. On the way back to the car we spent another productive hour or so on the clearer Gow Stream, where a number of



Hamish with a superb Mataura River brown

sizeable fish were spotted and most (by Rick) were netted.

Saturday saw the Mataura at Nokomai at its best - down by perhaps 50 cm from the start of the week, making it easy to cross and gin clear. Rick and I netted fish on long extended leaders.

Rick was keen to return to Garston after lunch to revisit the Brightwater Stream. He had fished there earlier in the week and it was clearly a favourite of his over the many years he has fished in Southland. This was my first visit to Brightwater, and I was not disappointed as I enjoyed an entertaining afternoon endlessly changing nymphs and dries to cast to highly tolerant feeding fish; but all to no avail.

To summarise the week, we were introduced to some wonderful waters and country. The fishing was challenging, especially at the front end of the week. My notes record 12 trout of 4 lb or better netted and two broken off - way beyond my expectations, as I was more than happy to enjoy the company of the group, sighting fish and learning more and more by the day from two very patient guides.

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A postscript:

There is some discussion in Southland now about introducing 'a designated waters licence'. The key points are an annual fishing licence which will cost New Zealand residents NZ\$145, and non-residents to be charged a 72% premium (= \$250).

Perhaps the most disturbing point is the question that this is the 'thin edge of wedge', given the fact that so many Southland rivers are considered to be 'under pressure'. Once established, where will 'designated waters' end?



The 'designated water licence' schedule of fees is being floated. In summary the proposal is:

Status	Cost/day	Frequency in days	Premium %
Southland residents	Nil	Unlimited	
Any other NZ resident	\$5	Unlimited	
Non-Resident	\$50	3 - 6 days/year	x 900%

Donger Trophy Weekend Report

... from Simon Joel

Five members - Peter Clayton, Cory Houghton, Brian Eddy, Trevor Hawkins and Simon Joel represented the VFFA at the annual Donger Trophy weekend on the Mitta Mitta River. We were hosted by the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club (BFFC) at their new club house on the Mitta Mitta River just outside Omeo. Seventeen members represented our hosts, with club president Colin Bellfield and vice president Ingomar Matthes both present.

It was a sensational weekend.

We all arrived on Friday afternoon at the clubhouse. Dinner Friday night was at



Nice water, but a bit complicated



Competitors in the Donger gathered for the presentation after the fishing was completed



A fine brown hooked, netted, then released

the Benambra Pub, a short drive from the clubhouse. The pub is a typical country town pub with a great atmosphere and fabulous food. We all sat at the one table and the conversation was lively, with talk of prospects for the next two days. Many fishing venues were mentioned, fly selection and techniques discussed, and nobody spoke the truth. Our hosts (the current holders of the Donger trophy) were very keen to capitalise on their home ground advantage and keep the trophy, so they were not letting anything slip that might help their visitors!

Saturday morning dawned cool, but the clouds soon burnt off to give us a magnificent day. We divided into pairs, with Corey and Peter going off together to fish Middle Creek and Brian taking me under his wing to show me the ropes. The fishing was magnificent, with good



*The presentation of the Donger award to the winner
– David Usher*

water levels after recent rains and a warm sunny day to entice the trout into looking up for food. By early afternoon the nymphs were all taken off as the fish were rising to hopper pattern dry flies. The Big River, Middle Creek, Bundara River, Cobungra River, Victoria River, Livingstone Creek and the Mitta Mitta River were all fished over on the Saturday and Sunday, with over 200 fish (yes I did say 200) fish caught.

Our hosts went out their way to make us very welcome with accommodation in the new club house, while the locals slept in tents, swags or trailers outside. On Saturday night our hosts put on magnificent BBQ dinner, and Sunday lunch and presentation was also well catered for.



The Donger drew a large crowd of participants this year



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Complicated water



The Omeo area offers some superb panoramic scenery



A careful competitor



David Usher receiving the Donger as winning competitor

The Donger is awarded to the angler catching the largest fish (not the most fish). David Usher, a member of both the

VFFA and BFFC caught a brown trout of about 2½ lb on the Victoria River. Unfortunately David was fishing for the Bairnsdale Club, so the Donger remains in the custody of the BFFC.

The weekend was a huge success with good company, great fishing and wonderful hospitality provided by our hosts. I would encourage all members to think about attending next year’s Donger, putting the date in their calendars as soon as it is announced!

Simon Joel



A Rite of Passage through Fly Fishing

... Jon Kenfield

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” (Charles Darwin)

Rites are solemn or ceremonial activities. They can be publicly prescriptive, as in religious ceremonies, or privately improvised in personal development activities.

Rites of Passage originated as ancient, critical markers of personal growth, development, and achievement. They’ve been used for all time to recognise the progressive personal development stages individuals need to move through to achieve their highest potential and to make optimal contributions to the survival of the tribe.

Age encourages us to relegate rites of passage to the young and inexperienced, for example: baptism, confirmation, bar mitzvah, marriage, educational graduation, career qualification, and so forth. In so doing, we deny ourselves new opportunities to question, learn, and grow by seeking new challenges.

As a result, we may start to stagnate, or fossilise, as we become increasingly resistant to personal adaptation, evolutionary improvement, and change.

Sound like anyone you know?

Psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University created the concept of: “Growth Mindsets” vs “Fixed Mindsets”:



[Credit: Knoldus / Nash Tech]

In essence, people with Growth Mindsets remain forever curious about the world. They’re motivated to keep on learning, and they embrace challenge, change, and the excitement of doing stuff. In

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contrast, individuals with Fixed Mindsets accept their own perceived limitations as defining what they can achieve, and won't push the envelope, even when they obviously should.

My Fly Fishing Rite of Passage

At the age of 50 I decided I was ready to become a real fly fisherman. I'd fished since childhood and felt comfortable that I could catch fish in most situations. I recognised that fly fishing required specialised knowledge, a different attitude, and a whole new set of skills. I was ready and willing to start as an egg.

For many years I'd seen myself as being, more or less, the master of my own life - as a parent, leader, manager, and teacher of others. I had now to become a humble student - learning through research, practise, and the generous sharing of knowledge by others with the wisdom, experience, and skills I desired to acquire.

Time was precious, and for over two years I grew increasingly frustrated by my profound lack of success. A creature (trout) with a brain the size of a pea, was besting me. I knew I could turn the tables by reverting to my old techniques



When life gives you rainbows

(or gelignite), but I persisted, and eventually began to catch trout on the fly - occasionally in decent numbers.

The first day I caught three little wild trout in a small stream was a minor rite of passage - a form of birthing into the fly fishing fraternity. Thanks Bill! But fast forward almost 20 years: despite catching thousands of trout (and other fish), I still felt I'd not "arrived" as a fully-fledged fly fisher. Yes, I could bullshit with the best of them (it's a skill, and I'm not in the law or politics), but in my heart of hearts I didn't feel I'd been truly tested, and therefore couldn't have been legitimately approved. I hadn't proved to myself (even if I'd fooled others) that I was good enough to deserve a place alongside real fly fisherfolk.

Pre-covid, Woody and I planned to fish Patagonia - home to the world's largest and wildest trout. Alas, it was not to be, as post-covid prices had skyrocketed enough to punch a hole in our bucket. By way of compensation we booked ourselves onto two weeks in February 2023 with Bruce Leitch (Dreamwaters) in New Zealand's South Island.

In the event we avoided crowds and cyclones; missed predicted cicada and mayfly hatches; competed for the trout's attention with tiny willow grubs and yet managed to prevail. We caught



In a past life our trusty guide was a restaurateur and chef - lucky us!

seriously big, beautiful bruisers – both browns and rainbows – in a series of seriously gnarly situations. I could feel the benedictions of the fishing gods: I was really there, and I was really doing it ... the way it was supposed to be done.

I was at peace. Although I craved success, I wasn't afraid to fail. I was where I needed to be, following the rules of ritual that would earn me the right to success: right time, place, and attitude, more patience, better fish spotting eyes, longer leaders, more accurate casts, better presentations, and appropriate fly selections (from the fish's perspective).

With Bruce's help I made it happen as it needed to happen, and I was rewarded. And somewhere along the way I realised ... it wasn't actually about the fish. In reality, we didn't catch that many – four fish landed per day, per person, was a good day. But on most days I struggled to recall how many fish I'd actually caught, or even what they looked like, once caught. I was just aware of being "in the zone": being precisely where I needed to be; doing what I needed to do; the way it needed to be done. The whole thing was bigger than me, and I was fine with that. I owned my own place and I belonged right there, even if just for a short while.



Matura beauty on willow grubs

I could finally accept that I'd done my time and had arrived, worthy of my place as a fly fisher, after a journey that began as a teenager holidaying in Scotland, and then recommenced, when the time was right, more than 35 years later.

I'm curious. Did it take me so long because fishing formed no part of my blood tribe's rituals? Did I have to create my own rite of passage because I didn't recognise any of my own tribal elders who were qualified to accept me? Nobody could doubt that we have plenty of elders in the VFFA who graciously accepted me long ago (and commenced their sledging well before then), but somehow that wasn't enough to check me through.

I pray the journey isn't anywhere near its end. There's so much fishing left to do, so much learning and experience before me, and I now feel I have some sort of legacy to pass on - my oldest grandson may be showing signs of the passion for fishing I've had since I was a small child, much to the bemusement of my parents, who could never work out where, how, or when the fishing bug bit.

I just need to organise his rite of passage a bit quicker if I'm to be there to share it!

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Brightwater (Spring Creek) prize (#1).



Secret Men's business behind the lonely hill.



Bruce Leitch, guide extraordinaire (with a few worrying tendencies)



Room with a view?



The North-East Fishing – Report from Brian Eddy

We're into the "back end" of the season here in the Upper Ovens. Days are noticeably shorter, nights are cooler, and insect activity has tapered well off. But it has been, again, a great season in

terms of trout numbers in our rivers, and their condition has been exceptional. As for the previous two seasons we have consistently had above average rainfall throughout the year, and this has kept

flows up, temperatures down, and the water well oxygenated. The period around Easter in past years has often been the time for the lowest flows and the highest water temperatures, thus resulting in stressed trout no longer in peak condition. But not this year!

Insect activity over the season has been quite different from the norm. There were reasonable numbers of hoppers about in the summer, but not enough to get the trout excited. And evening caddis hatches were "light", to say the least. Is it because ground conditions were a little damp for hoppers and evenings were not quite warm enough for the caddis? Who knows? It's just speculation on my part.

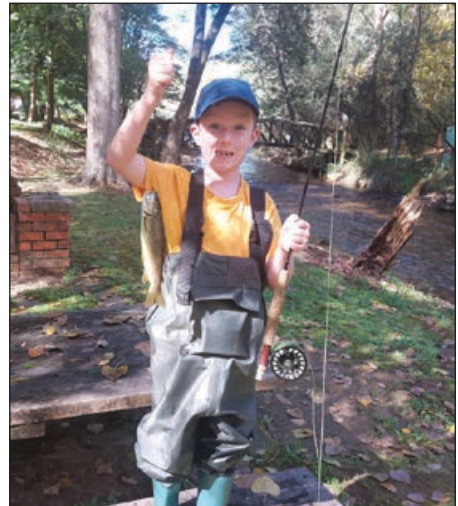
On the other hand, damsel and dragonfly numbers (and mudeyes and damsel nymphs) were much higher than I have seen before. Similarly, early season termite and ant hatches (flights? swarms?) were as thick as I have ever seen. I'm not sure what Nature has in mind with her "Grand Plan" but I'm fairly sure that whatever affected insect timing was also responsible for my tomatoes

being about two months late in ripening 😊.

This Easter, with a couple of wet days, the flows remained high (and wading more difficult) and the Ovens actually "coloured up" a bit a couple of times. Fortunately it didn't become unfishable, and cleared again by the next day.

Angling pressure has been high with plenty of visitors about, and most seemed to have at least some success (and most fortunately practised "catch and release"). One regular visitor from NSW consistently managed 15 - 20 trout in a session, mostly on heavy nymphs and the occasional dry. Another regular visitor used the Easter break to introduce his seven year old grandson to the wonders of the fly. He managed his first ever trout - a rainbow on a wiggly worm, and followed it up with his first brown - on a Copper John nymph.

Congratulations young Tom!! 🎉



Well done Tom – a young angler making a great start

Inland Fisheries Service

Trout Weekend

Liawenee, yingina/Great Lake
Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 May 2023
10am - 3pm daily



Trout Weekend celebrates the wild brown trout spawning run

- See hundreds of brown trout on their annual spawning migration in our Central Highlands
- There will be trout stripping and live fish displays
- Bring your walking boots and walk the **Wild Trout Trail** down Liawenee Canal to the working fish trap
- Check the weather and come prepared for the cold conditions of Tasmania's Central Highlands - snow, rain, hail and sun
- Food and drink available

More information?
1300 463 474
www.ifs.tas.gov.au

Please note that this is an alcohol, smoking and dog free event



Inland Fisheries Service



Tasmanian Fishing Report – Spawning Has Begun

... report from Chris Wisniewki (IFS)

The wild brown trout spawning run has commenced in Liawenee Canal. Brown trout have been running up out of yingina/Great Lake since the start of April. On each rain event there has been a fresh pulse of fish. So far over 2,500 trout have entered the fish trap. Early in the run the trout are eager, fresh and clean, and were displaying the wide range of natural colours that wild brown trout have..

We have collected ova, which has been bedded down in the incubators at New Norfolk. The resulting young fish will be stocked out before summer.

The transfer of these wild adult fish has also begun, with waters in the Nineteen Lagoons, Penstock Lagoon and Four Springs Lake being the focus of these first movements.

In addition to the Liawenee Canal fish trap there is also a fish trap on Sandbanks Creek on the north-eastern corner of yingina/Great Lake. There are also three traps at Arthurs Lake – these being on Tumbledown, Scotch Bobs and Hydro Creeks. Another trap is on the River Derwent above Lake King William. The traps are used to monitor the fish populations in these lakes. A ‘weigh and measure’ of 200 fish is done midway through the spawning run. This allows the monitoring of size and condition of fish, and helps advise our management strategies.

The transfer of adult brown trout underpins stock in a range of important waters. We recognise the value of maintaining our wild fisheries, as they are best suited to our environment and provide a much sought after angling



IFS staff working to ensure that next season's trout season is another good one experience. We only stock waters when wild populations are not adequately maintained by natural recruitment, and we use wild fish whenever possible. Stockings are guided by the Tasmanian Inland Fishery Management Plan 2018-28 (ifs.tas.gov.au) and risk assessments for each water.

If you would like to follow the progress of these transfers to waters around Tasmania, go to Stocking - Inland Fisheries Service (ifs.tas.gov.au), and to see how we do it check out <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au/about/video-library>

The brown trout season closed at midnight on Sunday, April 30. There are still plenty of fishing opportunities though, as a number of waters remain open over winter. Visit to the IFS website for more information on this.

Jenny Singe has been Out and About in Miena

Jenny is a very experienced fisher of the Tassie highland lakes. She writes this: Here is the fish I caught yesterday. Nothing moving. Just casting a wet when bang on about my fourth cast I caught it. Dumb luck but pleasing nevertheless!

Met Laurie Matcham, of fly tying fame, on the water soon after. I knew him well from when he guided us at London Lakes. It was great to catch up. Both Robyn and I scored one of his flies.

I haven't caught anything but annoying small redfin since. But mind you we enjoyed a feed of redfin and chips on Saturday. I've been surprised at the number of people who don't know that English perch are good eating.

Freezing here, but for a while we had sunshine. It's just wonderful to be here, and there will be more of it as I officially retire in two weeks. Yippee!

Best wishes, Jenny



Well done Jenny!

Autumn Grasshopper Fishing with Apologies to Freddie M. and Queen

... from Jim Blakeslee

Hop, hop, hop. Hop, hop, hop. Hop, hop, PLOP. Kick, kick, SLOP!

And another one bites the dust!

As another one falls, she's eating them all, the hoppers bite the dust!

(As I'm fishing today I just can't get that song out of my head). It's a fine warm day, the sun is behind us, we have a clear sky ideal for polaroiding, and the

grasshoppers are on the move. When they take to the air the breeze out of the west sends some of them out over the river, where they crash-land in the water.

The fish swims away from us, working her beat around the perimeter of the pool just waiting for another tasty morsel to land on the water. Graeme says: "That's one lovely brownie", as we watch her rise up from the depths and inhale another hopper. Now it's time for Graeme to have a go at catching her.

Keeping low to avoid being seen, Graeme creeps into position behind a screen of sedge. He waits until we spot the fish swimming back our way, then with one false cast splats his #10 Nobby Hopper on the water several metres in front of the trout. Graeme waits a few seconds, then gives the fly a couple twitches to simulate



Graeme connects to a hopper feeder

the kicks of a grasshopper struggling to swim to the weed on the edge of the pool and climb to safety. The fish senses the motion of the fly, accelerates, and glides up from beneath it.

She inspects the fly and finds the hopper to be to her satisfaction. She opens her jaws, the white of her mouth showing, and SLURP! The fly disappears. Graeme waits a couple seconds while the fish closes its jaws and turns down, then lifts and the battle is on. The trout races for the weeds and Graeme gives plenty of side strain to guide her back into open water. Then she jumps, thrashing in the air in an attempt to throw the hook. She jumps a few more times, then settles into a dogged effort to find a snag somewhere on the bottom to break the leader and be free. But to no avail. In the end, Graeme wins the struggle and leads the fish to the net. Yes, it is a very eye-catching brownie. We admire her, then let her slip back into the water and glide away.

I'm sure it's the same for fly fishers elsewhere in Australia, but the basics for anyone to have success in using a grasshopper fly to catch fish in our area are as follows:



Finally netted!

There needs to be lots of hoppers around, so late summer and autumn is the time. A warm breezy day gets the hoppers moving and taking to the air, and sometimes landing on the water where they attract the attention of resident trout.

Use a floating line with a 3 metre leader and strong tippet to turn over a reasonable size fly. I use 2.5 to 3.0 kg fluorocarbon tippet. Then tie on your favourite hopper pattern and fish it with confidence.

If you tie your own flies, as I do, make a variation of the Nobby Hopper as described on page 81 of Rick Keam's VFFA book *Time Flies*.

I tie it on a #10 dry fly hook. First, I tie in a tail of 10 red hackle fibres (this is in place of the red on a hopper's legs), then dub a body using yellow polypropylene (which is a water repellent fibre that helps float the fly). I tie in 10 golden pheasant tippet fibres on each side (these represent the hopper's flying under-wings that have distinctive orange with black bands) and two matched slips of mottled brown turkey wing over the top (representing the over-wings). Forget the red legs shown in the book. Finish with a muddler minnow style deer hair head. The resulting fly has the mix of colours and general size and appearance that match a dishevelled hopper that has crash landed in the water.

In an ideal world when you go hopper fishing it will be a warm, cloudless day, with the sun and wind behind you – great for polaroiding trout. Try to spot the fish first. If there is a current you may see it holding on station and occasionally rising to take an insect from the surface. In a still pool the trout may do laps, searching for hoppers unlucky enough to land on the water instead of grass. In either case, cast the fly a couple of metres in front of or to the side of the fish.

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The action of the fly is very important. You can try a delicate delivery and leave the fly to dead-drift. But I find I get more consistent rises to the fly if I splat it on the surface. Let it sit a couple seconds, then give it a few twitches to represent the kicks a hopper makes as it tries to swim to the bank. This usually gets the trout's attention. They sometimes come up underneath the fly and seem to give it a thorough, sceptical inspection, but still can't help themselves and inhale it anyway. Usually, they just make a boisterous rise and smash it.



Jim Blakeslee frequently catches sizeable trout on hoppers

There are still plenty of grasshoppers around and some warm days ahead this autumn. So, get out there and cast a Nobby, Kelly, Joe's or Latex Hopper, or maybe a good old Muddler Minnow on your favourite river or stream. The trout are there waiting for you.



Graeme's fine brown

... from Rod Barford

I spent four days on the Goulburn last week just before the long weekend. I didn't catch a lot of fish, and what I did catch were mostly trout farm escapees I suspect – fully-finned rainbows from 1 kg to 2.5 kg. Nice looking fish, but almost certainly 'wash-outs' from Hugh Meggitt's trout farm. I heard that he lost somewhere around 300,000 fish, but that's not from a reliable source.

Browns were definitely in the minority, but surprisingly there were still a few reasonably sized ones about.

I was amazed at the changes to the Breakaway. The bridge survived but the rampart to it from the Alexandra side did not, leaving a 25-metre gap that needs to be urgently rebuilt. It will be quite a

job. I think that once it's been reinstated the flow will sort out the huge gravel deposits in the middle of the river.

There is a huge log jam against Gilmore's Bridge, and the anabranch just below (where I've been conducting my milfoyle experiments) has basically been filled in by the massive amounts of moving gravel - to the point I am certain I could drive my Landcruiser down the full length of it. I will be writing to Travis Dowling, asking him to speak to the GBCMA about reinstating the previous features, so that it will once again provide proper lies for the trout.

I did manage a few nice browns from it though, the largest being 1 kg. Naturally the majority of the brown trout are

now far up the tributaries, readying themselves for spawning. I did pay one small water a visit, and sure enough - lots of mature brown trout.

I do wish the VFA would give some serious consideration (again) to moving the end of the brown trout season to April 30, to protect them as it was sickening to see how many big ones were being ripped out by anglers.

I enjoyed a couple of classic autumn days, followed by some serious showers and then some heavy rain, but the river was fishable the whole time. I spent an hour watching from Gilmore's Bridge as a large school of rainbows moved all over the river, one minute under the bridge, the next 75 metres upstream and on the other side. These were most likely Meggitt's lost fish, going by their erratic behaviour. The only thing that distinguished them from wild rainbows was their behaviour. In all other respects they were identical.

All in all, a pleasant few days with little interruption from others. Most of the fish I caught took dries. I only caught a couple on the Green Matuka (my traditional start-of and end-of season fly), and a few others on nymphs. I had fabulous fun one morning catching fish after fish on a size 16 black flying ant. At first I thought they were taking emerging caddis, but then I spotted a few ants that had got past the feeding fish and had drifted down to me, so I quickly changed flies and my first cast brought instant success.

The one fish I killed for the table revealed an interesting dietary profile, with a mish-mash of ants, several mudeyes, four large corixidae, several 3 mm snails, a single smelt that looked remarkably like the Green Matuka, and the usual black sludge.

While sitting at the concrete picnic table I was visited by two Iranian gentlemen

who were keenly interested in what I was doing when they arrived. (I was tying flies.)

A lively conversation followed. I asked them how they were fishing, and one proudly produced a phone loaded with some very alarming photos. There they were with four large rainbows (in the 3 kg range) and 2 large spearguns! When I asked them where these fish came from they both pointed to the river! Of course another conversation followed, with me explaining that if they were caught fishing in that manner a very large fine would follow and possibly the loss of their vehicle. While I was explaining all this, one of them had been pulling out a couple of wetsuits and other gear from the car, so I had to become more forceful in my explanation and insisted they put that stuff back in the car before the VFA officers arrived. (They were at that very time in Thornton). Thankfully they fished with rod and line and bait for the rest of the day, but I have to admit I was keeping a very close eye on them.

One good thing to come out of the flooding was that a huge amount of that troublesome milfoyle weed has been swept away, but at the same time the area I had been using as a test bed has also been substantially changed. So now it's a matter of starting again gathering all the base data, finding new samples, and logging all the river changes. I think, by looking at all the new bottom profiles, it's mostly been a case of substantial amounts of gravel being moved during the peak flood and being swept over all the holes and pools and filling them in. So I would expect to find that large amounts of insectae have either been dislodged and moved downstream or simply buried.

Cheers, Rod

FLY OF THE MONTH

Pink Tag Jig Nymph



Richard Kos suggested this fly. It is described on the Fulling Mill website as Roza's Pink Tag Jig Nymph. And the Fulling Mill site tells us that:

"The Pink Tag Jig Nymph incorporates two of the best colours to fish close to the bottom – pink and peacock. This is an exceptional fly to fish during the spring for trout and the winter for grayling. It's a dark pattern that works well in clear or coloured rivers. A great addition to our Tactical range of flies from former multiple world champion, Lubos Roza.

The fly is tied on Fulling Mill BARBLESS Jig Force hooks in:
Size 16 with 2.8mm bead, size 16 with 3.2 mm bead, and size 14 with 3.8 mm bead"

Chris Bassano adds this information:

"This is a very good fly and the more people who have it, the better. The best size is 16 on a jig hook. The size 16 jig hook is similar to a 14 as the bead is around the bend of the hook, which means there is more shank to use than on the standard size on a straight shank hook.

Pink is a great colour, but the fly is probably more commonly used with an orange tag. Different brightnesses of orange can work on different days, so have more than one colour of orange. One of my absolute favourite flies has a chartreuse tag. For this you can use Chartreuse Glo Brite, or you can get chartreuse micro chenille and burn the tip. Then just tie it in."

Materials (suggestions from Richard Kos):

- Hook:** Hanak H450BL size 14 or 16, (or as suggested above use a Fulling Mill Barbless Jig Force hook)
- Bead:** Hanak Slotted Tungsten - 3.0 mm Silver
- Thread:** Black Veevus 10/0
- Rib:** Uni-French medium silver wire
- Tag:** Antron Yarn – Fluorescent Cerise (cerise being a vivid reddish pink) (But note the comments from Chris Bassano – orange and chartreuse are also very good tag colours.)
- Body:** Sybai Fine Spectra Flash, Peacock (this being available at the Aussie Angler store. Alternatively, just use some fine peacock herl).
- Hackle:** CDC black

Tying Procedure (from Richard):

1. Place the bead on the shank of the hook behind eye. I find it helpful to lock the bead in place with a drop of superglue and some turns of thread behind the bead.
2. Wind a layer of thread from behind the bead to the point on the shank above where the barb would normally be.
3. Tie in the tag and then the silver wire. Finish with your thread at the bend of your hook.
4. Apply the Peacock Spectra Flash dubbing to the thread, aiming to create a carrot shape, then wrap the thread with the dubbing all the way to the thorax.
5. Wind the ribbing on in the reverse direction to the way you wound on the dubbing. Four or five turns should do the trick. Tie off the wire.
6. Add the same dubbing to the tying thread and wind on a few turns to form a thorax, leaving a small space behind the bead for the CDC hackle.
7. The CDC hackle can be formed by tying the feather in by the tip, then giving it three or four turns, depending on the density of the CDC. (My personal preference is to use the split thread method that can be seen by Googling “How to use the Marc Petitjean magic tool”.)



VFFA 2023 meetings & other activities

May

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – James Norney – with topic: “Taking advantage of ALL of our State’s North-East”
- 31 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

June

- 1 Thursday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 7 Wednesday Winter trip to Millbrook Lakes
- 9 Friday The trout fishing season in Victorian rivers officially closes at midnight on Friday, June 9.
- 15 Thursday Lunchtime General Meeting – 12 noon at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Marian Miller, member of the Australian Women’s Commonwealth Championship Team.
- 18 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
- 28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

July

- 6 Thursday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 20 Thursday Lunchtime General Meeting – 12 noon at the Kelvin Club:
(Speaker – Bill Jeans: “A Flyfisher’s Trip to Cuba”)
- 23 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
- 26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

August

- 3 Thursday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 18 Friday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
(Guest Speaker - TBC)
- 20 Sunday President’s Casting Day at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

September

- 1 Thursday Last Fly Tying session at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 2 Saturday Trout season opens again for Victorian rivers.
- 2 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers’ Annual Dinner.
- 21 Thursday 2023 Annual General Meeting – 8:00 pm, and again a Zoom meeting.
- 27 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing, 10:00 am till dark.