

FLY LINES



MAY 2024

Our meeting with Andrew Fuller from The Flyfisher Flyfishing Luck – The Fine Line Between Triumph & Tribulation

While experts may argue against the role of luck in fly fishing, seasoned anglers know better. Luck has almost certainly influenced your fly fishing journey. In this very funny and highly entertaining presentation, Andrew discusses some of the lucky (and unlucky) experiences he's witnessed in his fly fishing experiences. Furthermore, he will offer some tips on how to nudge luck in your favour on the water.



Drinks at the bar from 6pm, then dinner and presentation starting at 7:30 pm.

We encourage you to dine with us but you're very welcome to come just for the talk.

If you wish to enjoy a meal, please book by emailing Terry Rogers at terryrogers@bigpond.com before Tuesday, May 14.

Thursday, May 16,
7:30pm, at the
Kelvin Club

With over two decades behind the counter at The Flyfisher, Andrew Fuller is a familiar face to many in the fly fishing community. The Flyfisher dominates the Aussie fly fishing scene, with its South Melbourne store providing an immersive experience for fly fishing enthusiasts. Additionally, their online platforms, including the esteemed FlyStream magazine and The Flyfisher's Podcast, have become indispensable resources for fly fishers nationwide.

Come along to this fun social evening for a night you will remember!

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 72 NO.7 - MAY 2024 Organisation No. A0024750J

P.O. Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne 3001

info@vffa.com.au www.vffa.com.au

PRESIDENT

Simon Joel

Email: simonljoel@gmail.com

Phone: 0419 368 391

HONORARY LIBRARIAN

Bill Jeans

Email: b.jeans@bigpond.net.au

Phone: 0448 967 192

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

John Spragg

Email: john@bellingham-marine.com.au

Phone: 0407 555 621

HONORARY EDITOR

Lyndon Webb

Email: lgwebb@bigpond.net.au

Phone: 0488 555 724

JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Rod Hirst

Email: rodhirst@gmail.com

Phone: 0418 477 368

HONORARY SECRETARY

Beth Hourigan

Email: 14martinst@gmail.com

Phone: 0415 872 372

HONORARY TREASURER

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.com.au

Phone: 0407 309 797

Other Council members:

Councillors:	David Hooke (Immediate Past President)	(0408 256 525)
	Terry Rogers	(0438 553 326)
	Daniel Lovecek	(0407 291 200)
	Rod Hirst (Assistant Editor)	(0418 477 368)



Whats App Group "GRAB A MATE": Hook up with other members to join their personal fishing trips or to find a mate to share your next fishing adventure with. Text your email address or telephone number to Beth Hourigan on 0415 872 372

All material copyright © all rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent of the publisher. Published monthly by the Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Inc., PO Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Index

Our May Meeting with Andrew Fuller from the Flyfisher store.....	1	Tom Sutcliffe – a prominent South African Fly Fisherman.....	21
VFFA Office Holders.....	2	A Short Note from Rod Barford.....	22
President's Message	4	A Goulburn Report from John Douglas ...	24
June Meeting with Sam Fawke.....	5	Fly of the Month.....	26
From the Editor's Desk.....	6		
North-east Report.....	9		
Report on VFFA Taupo Trip – March 3 to 10.....	10		
Some Thoughts on the Taupo Trip.....	12		
VFFA vs Bairnsdale “Donger” Competition	15		
Official Invitation To Warrnambool Dinner	17		
Record fish stocking bonanza set to continue for Victoria	18		
Millbrook Report – April 2024	20		



Some of Bernard Holbery's Clever tying

President's Message

Sadly, our past president and long serving committee member Terry Rogers and his wife Judi lost their dear son Andrew this month after a long illness. Our sincere condolences to Terry and family.

April has certainly been a busy month for the club with lots of fishing and other activities for the committee and members; the late season trout fishing has not been easy though, and according to all reports, and my own observations, the rivers, streams and lakes of Victoria and Tasmania have been challenging.

Our member's survey has now concluded, having revealed some interesting insights about the needs and wants of members, and how the club can best serve their on-going interests. It's clear that our wonderful newsletter is a very much valued news source, and is considered by the majority as the glue that holds the club together. Other notable findings are that whilst many long-standing members continue to actively fish, the VFFA's on-water activities are no longer relevant to them; and similarly, our monthly general meetings, casting pool events, and fly tying aren't as important or relevant now as they were when members first joined the VFFA.

The survey also revealed that the Kelvin Club is seen as a positive club venue and convenient central meeting place for meetings.

Our Membership Sub-committee will now consider the survey results, and work on the development of a strategic plan for the club to increase engagement with existing members in line with their needs, and to attract and convert new members to ensure the club's long-term viability.



Simon Joel

Many members will be aware of the VFFA's involvement with the Australian Fly-Fishing Museum (AFFM) project, located at Clarendon House in northern Tasmania, and some will be aware of the struggle to reopen the museum post covid.

For many reasons your Council undertook to revisit the project again, and so I, as President, attended an on-site meeting with other stakeholders like The National Trust of Tasmania, Mike Stevens (previous committee chairman) and local volunteers, to determine the future of the AFFM.

I attended the meeting and was able to view VFFA's memorabilia on loan, and to tour the property, inspecting a new proposed exhibition space. I'm delighted to be able to report that a working party was formed (under the National Trust's banner), that VFFA member and local fisherman, Mike Stevens is the interim chairman, and that everyone is working toward reopening the AFFM in mid October 2024. I believe this is a great result for the AFFM and for many VFFA members who have donated money, memorabilia, and/or time to the project. I also wanted to mention that as the originally proposed Casting Pool is no longer viable, I am seeking return of the VFFA's original \$6000 pool contribution.

These funds will be used toward another VFFA membership project.

I will keep you informed of further developments, and of course, I welcome members to contact me directly about any related issues.

Work is well underway on our revamped website and we're still working on a late May relaunch.

Our WhatsApp is working well thanks to Senior Vice President John Spragg, and it has already been a very useful tool for both general communication between members about fish restocking, and proposed regulatory changes, in addition to organising ad hoc fishing trips. To join the group, download the WhatsApp app, search for VFFA Grab A Mate send a request to join the group, it's well worth the effort.

Our on-water fishing events this month (Donger weekend and Millbrook) have full attendee reports in this newsletter,

but I understand that the fishing was not easy at either event, and unfortunately, the Donger Trophy remains with the Bairnsdale. Better luck in 2025!

Two final mentions, firstly, I want to thank John Spragg for a thoroughly entertaining (and amusingly frank) overview of his Taupo trip at our last general meeting. Although the member numbers were a little disappointing, John was in fine form and by the end of the meeting we were all lining up to put our names down for the next NZ trip (hopefully this year). Well done John.

Secondly, a small group of councillors are going to Snobb's Creek Hatchery later this week to explore the possibility of housing VFFA's memorabilia at the old hatchery. This would be in addition to the selected items we have on display in the Strategy Room at the Kelvin Club. More to come.

Tight Lines

Simon Joel

June Meeting with Sam Fawke

(Senior Technical Officer – Conservation Hatchery)

Sam was scheduled to speak at our March meeting but unfortunately, due to the unavailability of the Kelvin Club, this meeting had to be postponed. Sam has agreed to speak at our June meeting, on Thursday June 20.

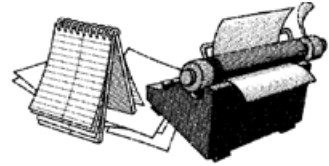
Sam has over 16 years of experience in the aquaculture industry, and water and animals are his passion. He has a new role at the Victorian Fisheries Authority focusing on the conservation of some of Victoria's most threatened and endangered freshwater species.

So mark this date in your diary and come along to hear Sam speak about his work in our state's fishing.



Sam in action

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"The wise fisherman knows that satisfaction is not always measured in the size of the catch."
(Lao Tzu)

"All the romance of trout fishing exists in the mind of the angler and is in no way shared by the fish." (Harold F. Blaisdell)

"The best time to go fishing is when you can get away." (Robert Traver)

"The two best times to fish is when it's rainin' and when it ain't." (Patrick McManus)

Fly fishing is truly a delightful and enjoyable (dare I say addictive) pastime, and we usually don't need much encouragement to grab our waders and flies and race off to a favourite river or lake. A casual glance at our fishing diaries invariably brings back countless memories of fabulous days.

But if your diary is like mine, it's a mixture of successful days and others that weren't. Mind you, we can still enjoy an outing even if the trout aren't co-operative. A pleasant day on a favourite stream in delightful weather, shared with a good mate, can be totally pleasurable, even if the fish don't contribute much.

But we're fishermen, so our success is inevitably measured by the catch. Good days are days when we catch fish. On rivers I'd suggest that our success is generally measured by the numbers, even

if on our local Victorian streams the bulk of our catch is likely to be trout of just 10 to 12 inches. I recall a day on the Steavenson some years ago when I fished with Milton Zeuschner (a regular companion) and we finished the day with a combined tally of some 40 fish either landed or hooked and lost. Nearly all on the dry fly too. We enjoyed that day immensely, even if the largest fish was just 15 inches from stem to stern.

On stillwaters I guess we could still measure a good day by numbers caught, but here I suspect that size might be a significant measure. Big fish are easier to come by on lakes and reservoirs, and a couple of four pounders would be a top day, at least for me.

All of which got me to thinking about how we might deliberately plan for more successful fishing days. How could we



The Yarra River

identity ahead of time days that are likely to be good?

A major issue in trout fishing of course is the water temperature. Trout are cold-blooded and their body temperature is the temperature of the water they are swimming around in. And the research is clear – if the water is cold, say less than 10°C, then trout are fairly sluggish. As the water temperature gets into the teens then things liven up, and I think that about 17°C has been measured as the temperature when trout are most happy and active. But hotter still – over 20°C – and they become decidedly unhappy.

So what months are likely to provide our best fishing? As a very crude starting point perhaps spring and autumn are the two seasons most likely to provide more days of good fishing, though years ago I spent a lot of days in January fishing the Acheron River. (Well, I was a schoolteacher and January was the long holiday.) In January the paddocks surrounding the Acheron were often well populated with grasshoppers, and the trout in the Acheron loved a good hopper pattern.

What days in the week are best for fly fishing? The weekends are the times when those still working for a living have a couple of days free for flogging the rivers, so us retired gents should avoid the weekends and give the trout a few days to recover before we move in. So can I suggest that Wednesdays, Thursdays and



Some of our creeks are rather tight



Milton Zeuschner fishing the Yarra near Warburton

Fridays are our best days in the week to fish.

What time in the day should we visit our fisheries? Any time is good if the fish are out and about and active, but it's generally accepted that dawn and dusk are good times when trout are very likely to feed.

VFFA member David Featherstone was a very skilled and successful angler, and I recall speaking with him at VFFA meetings years ago when he would tell me his plans for the following day. He was going to leave home at 3 am and drive to one of his favourite stillwaters near Ballarat, arriving just as the sun started creeping over the horizon. David would then fish (usually with success) from crack of dawn until about 9 am, then pack up and leave just as other anglers were starting to arrive.

Evenings too are often great times to fish. The pity is they seem too short. But evenings are good because when conditions are right (try a warm still evening) trout will be rising and can be deceived with a suitable dry fly.

What are the best days in the month to fish? Surprisingly a lot has been written about this. Each month encompasses the full cycle of the moon, and this, according to many, has a bearing on fish activity. On my iPhone I have two programs that tell me what days in the month will provide the best fishing, and what times during



An evening on the Yarra

these days the fish are most actively feeding.

This raises the topic of those Solunar Tables, which are very popular and which tell us on what days in the month fish will feed most actively and at what times on those days they will be feeding. How good is that?

I checked a couple of websites. This from one of them:

“John Alden Knight in 1926 described his Solunar Theory. Knight was an avid fisherman who lived in Florida and noticed that there seemed to be certain times of the day when fish seemed to feed more voraciously than at other times. He began to take careful note of both weather and environmental factors in an attempt to determine the cause, and thus created a list of 33 factors which he felt either influenced or controlled the feeding behaviour of fish. He eventually discarded all of them except for the influence of the sun, the moon and the tides.

Knight concluded that it was the movement of the earth around the sun combined with the movement of the Moon

around the Earth that was responsible for the peaks in fish feeding behaviour. Based upon his own observations and the information that he had gathered from other local fishermen he created and published a set of "Solunar Tables" that provided anglers with the ability to accurately predict the peak periods of fish feeding activity. Knight's Solunar Tables demonstrate that fish feed most actively when the Moon and the Sun's gravitational forces are strongest, and this occurs when both bodies are directly above, or directly below, a given location.

“Solunar Theory is now widely accepted as an accurate method of predicting periods of peak fish feeding activity and Solunar Tables are widely available both in print and on the Web. Therefore, knowledgeable fishermen now consult these Solunar Tables to plan their fishing trips to coincide with times of peak fish feeding activity in order to be on the water when the fish are feeding most actively.”

However, in May 2023 three scientists in the USA carried out some serious scientific experiments to determine whether the Solunar Tables do in fact predict optimal dates and times for catching fish. They

tested the efficacy of the Solunar Tables by comparing catch per unit effort (CPUE) results in a recreational freshwater trout fishery with daily solunar values and the coincidence of fishing trips with peak solunar times.

They concluded from a huge volume of experimental data they gathered “that solunar rating was not an effective measure for predicting fishing success in recreational freshwater trout fisheries in Utah. None of the daily ratings from seven of the most popular solunar table services

showed any significant relationship to increased CPUE.”

Of dear! And I was hoping that those applications on my iPhone were going to help me catch more fish. Perhaps not. So is it possible to predict when the fish are going to be feeding strongly? I suspect that many highly skilled fly fishers would contend that it is. However, for me personally many of my best days were simply delightful surprises. And perhaps that’s just the best way for it to be – for me at least. I’m quite fond of unexpected pleasant surprises.



The Ovens River in Autumn looking a tad low

North-east Report

... from Brian Eddy

The season here on the Upper Ovens is nearing its end. Days are much shorter, nights are cooler, and the sun is lower in the sky and without much warmth. All this means a lot less insect activity and hence less action for us fly fishers. There has been little to no rain over the past month, so water levels are well down and the water is very clear. It’s becoming increasingly difficult to not spook the trout.

There are still some fish about though, and the perception many have is that the first decent rains will see a real burst of activity. Cormorants have been active in both the Buckland and the Ovens, and it seems that with the low clear water fish are tending to remain in under banks and cover during the day to avoid the cormorants. Consequently, successful fishing requires careful searching and accurate casting.

Report on VFFA Taupo Trip - March 3 – 10

... by John Spragg

(Members attending: John Fasso, David Wakefield, Rodger Muir, & John Spragg)

David started with cancelled flights by Air New Zealand, but still arrived on Saturday, March 2. John Fasso and I flew into Auckland on the March 3 and drove to Waitahanui, just out of the township of Taupo on the shores of Lake Taupo. Rodger was already there in his house 100 metres from Waitahanui Lodge where we were staying.

Sunday

David and Rodger, while waiting for the two Johns to arrive, fished the river that adjoins Rodger's property, fishing mainly the area below the main bridge on the Waitahanui River. They had success with Rodger landing a 600 mm brown that was smoked and provided a pre-dinner snack for a couple of days.

Monday

After breakfast we all fished different sections of the Waitahanui River close to Rodger's property with mixed results. The afternoon was spent tying knots or studying entomology and the area's history, as persistent and heavy rain was falling.

Tuesday

Rodger and I with a local guide headed to the Waipunga River. The Waipunga was a beautiful stream and reasonably clear. It was fairly difficult to wade due to its many polished boulders. We fished a nymph under a dry and in the first pool I landed a rainbow of around 1 lb. I then did fairly well with another three or four rainbows, but all were small fingerling to half a pound size. Rodger connected with a really nice fish that he landed after a number of leaps. It was just over 2 lb. All fish that we caught that morning were rainbows.

We did check out another stream, but the rains had spoiled any chance of good fishing. So we headed back to base and fished the lower sections of the Waitahanui. I was learning to fish a wet line (a sinking main line with leader and tippet) casting across the stream and letting it straighten, then stripping in the line. This was very successful later in the trip.

John Fasso and David Wakefield had fished Lake Taupo at Kuratau.

Wednesday

John Spragg, John Fasso and Rodger Muir fished the upper Waitahanui with some success, with Rodger scoring the most fish released. I think he knows many of them on a first name basis. It was a beautiful area to fish. David Wakefield fished Lake Taupo at Waitahanui.

Thursday

John Fasso and Rodger Muir went to the Whakapapa River with a local guide. They had a good day. John Fasso hooked a monster trophy fish, and Rodger also had a great day landing a number of fish.

David and I drove to Lake Rotorua at the mouth of the Ngongotaha River. We waded out in thigh deep water around 150 - 200 metres from the shore and fished some 50 metres apart. David landed a 5 lb brown and three or four others around the 1 - 2 lb mark. I also landed three around the 1 - 2 lb size. We were using floating lines with a streamer or Woolly Bugger style fly - letting it sink and then a slow strip back in.

That night we had an exceptional guest at dinner - Alan Simmons. Alan is an amazing raconteur. He left school early, was a deer culler in areas around New Zealand's North Island, then started timber planting and finally working as a fishing guide. He has guided in the US Lorne Green (Ben

Cartright Bonanza) and others, in NZ Rob Sitch, Rex Hunt, David Wakefield and Gary McDonald were amongst his clients. He was renown as the best guide in NZ but has now stopped he said due to the large numbers of dills now setting up as guides. He fitted in starting the political Outdoor Party also appointed in 1990 to set up NZ fish and Game Council. His book "Born to the Outdoors" is well worth a read, I enjoyed it immensely.

Friday

John F and Rodger fished the big Tongariro River, Blue Pool and Sand pool for a good days fishing.

David and I fished the Tongariro River below the main bridge and various stream outlets in Lake Taupo. We did not have much success but covered some magnificent water and scenery.

Saturday

We all fished the mid-waters of the Waitahanui River.

I had a great day and fun. We all separated and picked our runs. I had decided to give wet lining a serious work out I had a couple of hairy wet flies with red heads and Alan Simmons had given me a tip, it is something we all know but he reiterated it for me, you need the fly near where the fish are. If they are taking food from the surface that is where your fly needs to be, if they are taking nymphs bouncing near the bottom again that is where your fly needs to be and if fish are sitting on the gravel waiting for a smaller fish or food, get your fly there. I had sighted fish on the bottom of the river and Alan had mentioned placing a swivel before the tippet to get the fly down quickly and deep.

I set up this way with a fairly large barrel swivel and proceeded to cast my sinking line across the current and let the fly be taken downstream. Once the line was straight, I slowly stripped it back in. I was on a good stretch of river that had a few

boulders, fairly strong current and a deep pool at the end.

I was about 3 metres into the stream and had cast across and had made a couple of retrieves from different areas. I then cast out again and stripped a few extra metres of line out so that my fly covered an area a little further downstream. I had stripped just a few inches of line when whack - I had a fish on, and it was a big one and it was downstream.

I played the fish for what seemed like 20 minutes, though probably only 5 or 6. Luckily most of the runs it made were upstream and I was able to turn it away from any obstacles. I saw it was a sizeable fish when it jumped. It was a brown trout and looked around 5 lb. (I had seen other 5 lb fish caught during this week).

Then the fun really started. The fish started to tire and I was getting ready to net it with my small net. On my third try I finally got it in the net. What a beauty.

Now my excitement overtook sensibility. Instead of throwing my rod onto a flax plant a couple of metres away on the shore, I tucked it under my arm. All good - I got the fly out of the fish's jaw and got ready to release it. But when I got my hand under the fish and started to raise it the fish jumped. I raised my arm to stop it escaping, and upon raising my arm my rod dropped into the current and off it went attached to nothing.

I released the fish and took off hurriedly on two bionic hips in an area where there was both strong current and lots of boulders. I hadn't moved this quickly for some 40 or 50 years.

I actually ran. Luckily I caught up with my rod and then sat on the bank, firstly checking to see I had not been filmed for Funniest Home Video by anyone on the bank, and then let the adrenalin drain out of my system. The fight had drained me,

the release unsettled me, and the race to rescue my rod exhausted me. I sat on the bank and after a few moments laughed my head off. What a silly old fool I was, but had loved every second with a passion.

I landed another couple of fish that session around the 2 lb mark, but this was uneventful compared to the battle with the big one.

The others had a reasonable day.

The Waitahanui River is a beautiful stream, with many easy access points to get to the water, good tracks along its banks, and a lot of good wading. It does see a lot of anglers, but only fly fishing is permitted. We walked along a short area compared to the available length of the stream, and could see many fish sitting on the bottom of the stream, generally in areas very difficult to fish. There were fish there in the 4 - 8 lb size.

Below one particular cliff face we could not believe the size of two fish just lazing on the gravel bottom. They were in the 10 - 12

lb size range. They were in an area I could not have got to, as there was a 40 foot cliff straight to the water and very dense bush on the other side with deep pools stopping any wading unless you had scuba gear. I know how these fish got so big - they were very smart.

The Waitahanui Lodge is perfect. It backs onto the Lake and is 100 metres walk from Rodger's place. It can accommodate around 21 guests in single bedrooms spread over five cottages. It has a guest laundry, a fish cleaning area, a barbecue area, free internet and a fishing shop with tackle and licences, and you can hire fly rods and waders.

There are dozens of places to fish in the area and the fishing is great.

Rodger did a wonderful job organising this memorable trip and should be congratulated. He had all bases covered and was the perfect host.

Some Thoughts on the Taupo Trip in March

... by Rodger Muir, who was one of the four members attending the Taupo Trip

I think the Council will be very interested in aspects of the participant experience – food, accommodation, organisation, fishing locations, transport, and the fishing itself. The Council will also be interested in thoughts regarding changes that might be made to future Taupo events.

From my perspective, I really enjoyed the week. It was hard work, but I felt there was great cooperation within the group, excellent camaraderie, and the participants all appeared to enjoy themselves.

Should the event be run again, and if so, in 2025?

If the Council is supportive of a 2025 event at Taupo, I am willing to organise it. I don't believe there were any problems with the accommodation, and I believe the location and standard are perfect for what we are doing.

From this year's event I certainly learned a lot about what works in an organisational sense and what could be changed to make the event even better.

In no particular order, some of the things I would like to explore to see if they might work for a future Taupo event:

- Outsource the evening meal catering – there are a number of providers



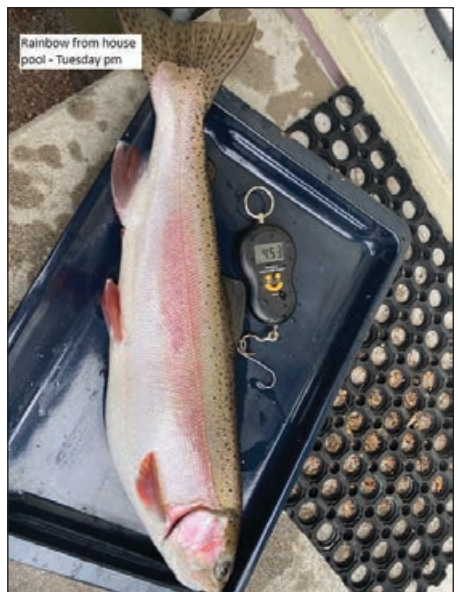
John Spragg enjoying success on the Waipunga

in Taupo that we could approach to prepare and deliver a meal to the Lodge at a set time each evening. There may be a couple of variations to that – a barbeque at my place one evening, perhaps a meal in Taupo one evening.

- Make a day of guided fishing a fixed part of the event costs on a shared basis – negotiate with a guide (or guides) for pairs of participants to be taken out each day. As part of that, the guide(s) could provide, say at 7:15am, a daily update on fishing conditions around the area when they arrive to pick up their clients for the day. In that way, all participants have up to date information each morning to assist in determining where they might choose to fish.
- Try to source a (relatively small) boat suitable for otherwise inaccessible waters – for example, Lake Otamangakau, Tongariro River delta, etc. Consideration needs to be given to whether VFFA insurance would then be needed.
- Organising vehicle transport, rather than leaving it to individual participants. It may be that there are

VFFA members with vehicles in the North Island that they would make available to the group. Alternatively, include vehicle hire on a shared basis as a fixed part of the event costs.

- Provide more detail around the travel options to get from Melbourne to Taupo and back.



A fine rainbow hen from the Waitahanui



Rodger with a beautifully coloured rainbow from the Whakapapa River



Another fine, big shouldered rainbow from the Whakapapa

Another aspect that should be considered is that of timing. The 2024 event (March 3 to March 11) was aimed at having participants able to fish the Waitahanui River (if they so wished) while there were reasonable numbers of brown trout running up the river to spawn. There were certainly plenty in the river early on, but by the end of the week the fish numbers had thinned out considerably. My feeling is that a week or two earlier there would have been more browns in the Waitahanui.

However, the group all caught fish in a number of locations, and John Spragg landed three rainbows in the river on the last Saturday, so the waters were not bereft of fish, and I know from personal experience that the local environmental conditions (weather particularly) play a huge role in the presence/absence of fish in the Waitahanui.

Given the timing of the annual VFFA Tasmania event in early February, it is not realistic or practical to schedule the Taupo event any earlier than the beginning of March. An alternative would be to time the Taupo event to coincide with the rainbow spawning season – generally

from late May / early June through to late July / August.

Many of the rivers flowing into the Lake provide great sport when conditions are such that the rainbow trout run up them in large numbers, and the event could be held any time during this 3-month period. However, while there are runs throughout this 3-month period, they generally occur most frequently around July of each year. This suggests that an event targeting rainbows would be best held somewhere between late June and early August.

However, Lake Taupo is 360 metres above sea level and the mid-winter climate can be very cold, with frequent frosts. The ‘mid-winter climate’ factor may discourage members who would otherwise participate in the event if it was held in early March when the temperatures are in the 12°C to 25°C range.

I would be happy to organise an event either in March or midyear, and suggest thought be given to canvassing views of members as to preferred timing.

Rodger Muir, Sydney, April 5, 2024



John Fasso hooked into a seriously big fish on the Whakapapa River

VFFA vs Bairnsdale “Donger” Competition: April 12 – 14

(... report from Peter Clayton)

By Friday evening eight VFFA members had gathered at the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club’s Mitta Lodge at Omeo Valley in preparation for the annual Dudley Lee “Donger” competition. They were to be pitted against a similar number of Bairnsdale Club members, and to start proceedings dinner had been booked at the Benambra hotel so nearly all headed there to socialise and enjoy a meal and a couple of drinks.

As I emerged from having a quick shower I saw cars heading to the gate, so decided to stay at the lodge with one of the BFFC members who had decided to stay on at the lodge too. We shared a bottle of red and spent a pleasant couple of hours discussing all things fishing and life in general.

The competition time is from 7:00 am Saturday until weigh-in and trophy presentation at 1:00 pm on Sunday. A couple of very keen younger Bairnsdale members left early on Saturday morning, and after driving for an hour proceeded

to bush-bash a couple of kilometres to reach water that is rarely fished. They returned to the Lodge in the early evening after having caught more than a dozen fish each, and laid claim to the largest for the day - a brown of just on 2 lb. VFFA members had fished the Mitta and Livingstone near the Lodge before heading further downstream to the Cobungra, the Victoria, and a few other waters as well, but the best anyone caught was about 1½ lb.

The Bairnsdale Club provided a most enjoyable BBQ meal on the Saturday night where countless tales were told of lost opportunities. Most were keen to hook into something larger the following morning.

On Sunday morning a number of participants journeyed into Omeo to start proceedings with a sedate breakfast and coffee, while the keener ones headed off to innumerable locations. I fished the Mitta upstream of the Lodge, but only landed one fish - a rainbow of about 22



Donger Winner 2024 – Leigh McVeigh

cm. I was somewhat puzzled with this result as I had covered some very “fishy” water. It wasn’t until sometime later that Steve, one of the early starters, arrived back and revealed that he had fished the same stretch earlier and had caught seven fish.

Most participants arrived back at the Lodge for the 1:00 pm weigh-in, BBQ lunch and trophy presentation. No-one bettered Leigh McVeigh’s fish from the previous day, so Bairnsdale retained the Donger.



The fabulous Mitta Mitta River

Our thanks to the Bairnsdale members, especially President Phil Jones, for organising the weekend and supplying the food for Saturday dinner and Sunday lunch, and for making beds in the Lodge available to us. It was another very enjoyable weekend for us VFFA members, despite being unable to wrest the trophy away from the locals.

Peter Clayton



Livingston Creek at Omeo – very tight water



This year's Donger competitors

OFFICIAL INVITATION TO THE 2024 WARRNAMBOOL FLY FISHERS CLUB INC. 55th ANNUAL FISH AND GAME DINNER

Dear Fellow Fly Fishers and Guests,

Here is the official invitation to you and your guests to join us at our 55th Annual Fish and Game Dinner. It will be held much earlier than in recent years. In 2024 we will be dining together on Saturday, May 25, at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion, on Grafton Road, Warrnambool. This year, the cost for non-WFFC members it will be set at \$100.

I can confirm that it will be a BYO wine and beer night. Before dinner drinks with deep-fried crumbed abalone and whitebait will begin at 6:00 pm. We will sit down for the first course at 7:00 pm for the start of what should be another night of fine food and cheerful company.

I urge you and others who you invite as your guests to contact me at my email address jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au or by calling me at 0437 983 421 before April 25 to book a seat if you/they will be attending. After that date, for bookings please contact our President, Adrian Jacobs. His email is adrianj6@bigpond.com and his phone number is 0437 620 972. Since this is our one and only fund raiser for the Club, we



want to fill every available seat and trust that people who book a seat and say they are coming will show up on the night. If you need to cancel your booking, please let us know ASAP so your place can be offered to others. There is a capacity limit of 70 persons who can fit into the venue at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion and places will start filling up fast, so a prompt response is recommended.

Sincerely,

Jim Blakeslee

Social Committee Member
Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club Inc.
112 Bridge Road
Woodford, Victoria 3281
Mob – 0437983421
e-mail – jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au

Record fish stocking bonanza set to continue for Victoria

... from Taylor Hunt, Victorian Fisheries Authority

As part of the Victorian State Government's Go Fishing and Boating Victoria Plan, a further 10 million fish are planned to be released in 2024/25 into over 220 Victorian waters - to improve recreational fishing opportunities and to rebuild native fish populations.

Recreational fishers, angling clubs and associations are invited to provide their feedback on the 2024/25 Draft Fish Stocking Plan, which has been developed based on several decades of annual Vic Fish Stock consultation feedback, angler catches, fish population survey data and fisheries research.

Some of the highlights in the 2024/25 draft stocking plan include:

- Over 80 Family Fishing Lakes to be stocked with catchable rainbow trout in June and September school holidays;
- Over 1 million fish into Lake Eildon, including 220,000 brown and rainbow trout;
- Eildon Pondage to receive 14,000 catchable rainbow trout, 1,000 ex-broodstock brown trout and 1,000 ex-broodstock rainbow trout;
- Lake Hume to receive 150,000 brown trout;
- Lake Purrumbete to receive 6,000 tiger trout, 10,000 brown trout, 10,000 rainbow trout and 40,000 Chinook salmon;
- Lake Bullen Merri to receive 4,000 tiger trout, 10,000 brown trout, 25,000 rainbow trout, 50,000 Chinook salmon and 10,000 Australian Bass;

- Wurdiboluc Reservoir to receive 30,000 brown and rainbow trout;
- Goulburn River – upstream of Kevington to be stocked with trout cod;
- Over 1 million native fish to be stocked into Rocklands Reservoir;
- 800,000 native fish into Lake Eppalock;
- Lakes Kerferd and Sambell to be stocked with silver perch, golden perch and rainbow trout;
- Gippsland Lakes to receive more than 100,000 estuary perch and dusky flathead;
- Campaspe River to receive 215,000 native fish including 15,000 trout cod;
- Barwon River stocked with 70,000 estuary perch;
- Lake Elingamite to receive 15,000 Australian Bass;
- Kiewa River to receive 30,000 Macquarie perch and 20,000 trout cod;
- 16 metro lakes and the Goulburn River to be stocked with stonker rainbow trout.

The full plan can be viewed here and submissions are sought by 26 May 2024 by emailing taylor.hunt@vfa.vic.gov.au

All submissions will be considered by the VFA and tabled with regional recreational fishing representatives at the annual Vic Fish Stock meetings, planned to be held in May-June 2024.



Millbrook Report – April 2024

... by Rick Wallace

The autumn VFFA Millbrook trip saw the weather gods smile on us, but the trout just not playing ball. A party of 8 anglers set out in clearing skies and cool to mild temperatures to tempt some of the large trout Millbrook is known for. Our guide for the day Craig Coltman advised fishing buzzers under indicators - either a buoyant dry or a strike indicator.

By lunchtime, though, no one had been fortunate enough to see their indicator dip, although a couple of inquisitive trout in the Gully Lake came up for a look at the indicator. While the day held some promise of a mayfly hatch, it never occurred, with scarcely a dun sighted all day.

As the afternoon wore on a few trout were spotted moving and feeding on midges, but they proved hard to track with the cloud cover hampering

polaroiding and their rises being quite sporadic.

Some of us burnt a few hours trying to tempt these fickle midge feeders on the Top Lake, only to have our offerings ignored.

A switch to stripping wets saw Dan Lovecek land a tiger trout and a rainbow in the afternoon. The best the rest of us had to show for our efforts was a couple of busts offs and near misses.

Craig got around to each of the groups a few times with some advice, and he walked the shores looking for fish moving, but the action never really kicked off this time.

The fishing wasn't anywhere near good enough to encourage us to stay on in the hope of a late midge rise, and we were all off the water and heading home by 5:00 pm.



The cabin at Millbrook – popular because there is always a coffee available



A delightful day but fish were hard to find



President Simon Joel again supported the event

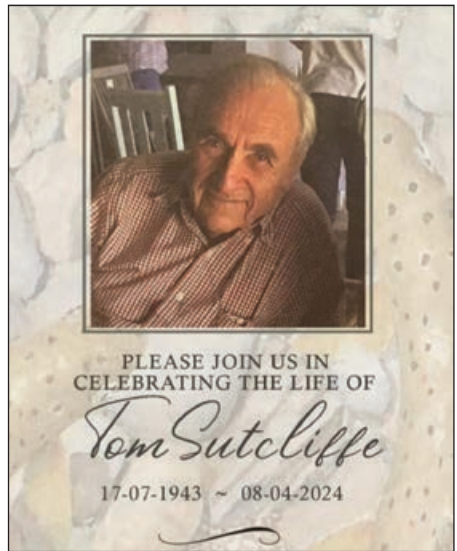
Tom Sutcliffe – a prominent South African Fly Fisherman

(I have a treasured painting of a rainbow trout hanging in my office. It was painted by Tom Sutcliffe. I also own two books – *Hunting Trout* and *Yet More Sweet Days* – both written by Tom. It was so sad to hear recently of Tom’s death. Your editor.)

Tributes to Tom’ life and contribution say this: An era has ended - but his legacy endures. Tom Sutcliffe, South Africa’s most influential freshwater fly angler, died peacefully on April 8 in the presence of his family. As cancer eroded his body he remained stoic.

He was not only a brave and principled man, he was also a very kind man. As a mutual friend remarked, “You never leave Tom’s presence without feeling enriched in some way.” In the 1990s he moved from Pietermaritzburg to Cape Town to become Director General of Health for the Western Cape – controlling a budget of billions and a staff of thousands. It was a poisoned chalice, as the toxic local politics increasingly impacted on his administration.

So he resigned without other employment in prospect. Then he was head-hunted by



the Western Cape Mental Health Review Board. His record there was stellar.

If one were to ask who the most influential freshwater fly angler in South Africa had been in the past half-century, there would only be one answer – Tom Sutcliffe.

The countless expressions of mourning reflected in social media posts are a manifestation of the esteem in which he was held and the sense of loss which his passing has created.

He authored seven books, and one of them, *'Hunting Trout'*, was reprinted three times, so great was the demand. His role in the Federation of South African Fly Fishers (FOSAF) was highly significant.

Initially as a founder member in 1986 he helped lay the foundation for fostering fly fishing interests in South Africa, and more recently as National Chairman and then National President. Tom provided wisdom and pragmatic leadership, guiding FOSAF over the last decades. We thank his family for sharing him with us.

A Short Note from Rod Barford

I would dearly love to feed you volumes of tales on my recent fishing exploits, but I'm walking around with my casting arm in a sling. I can barely manage to tie flies, being hamstrung with a crook shoulder.

I'm slowly making my way through all the flies featured in McCausland's colour plates in *Fly Fishing in Australia and New Zealand*, with the ultimate goal to mount them in a frame that resembles what you see in the book.

This was the first book I ever read on fly fishing. It belonged to Dr William Coates, GP in Nagambie, and privileged owner of the best fly fishing gear money could buy back then. It heavily influenced my fly tying for many years and was responsible for my eternal love of Green Matukas.

The doctor's four sons must have been a crushing disappointment to him, as none were even slightly interested in fly fishing. So from the day I caught my first trout on fly (a magnificent 3lb brown) I became his fishing 'son'.

I caught it whilst wagging school, and on the first Red Tag I ever tied. I saw a rise and by some miracle got the fly within a few feet of the rings. I looked down to ensure my line wasn't caught around my leg, then looked up to see spreading rings and discovered I was firmly attached to

a huge trout. I eventually landed it and immediately raced off to the doctor's surgery and rapped on his back door. The doc was so excited you'd think he had caught it.

He later posed very proudly with me for a photo in the local newspaper when he caught his Personal Best, an 8lb brown from the waters of Goulburn Weir. He had hooked the trout just as his boat started sinking, and he successfully played it out and netted it whilst standing on the rear seat of the boat which was now resting on the bottom.

I lost one of my oldest friends recently - Grant McCallum from Seymour. Grant, Mike Griffiths and I were inseparable through our high school years. We wagged school a lot! Always on the Goulburn chasing rainbows. Of course it was a totally different river back then, most notably without carp. It was the most delightful water with endless pools and riffles and lots of trout. And we seldom saw another angler.

Grant was a talented fly tyer and an accomplished landscape artist who churned out a number of brilliant oil paintings of the Goulburn Valley.

Cheers, Rod B



Corryong Planting

Volunteers Needed!

The Corryong Autumn Planting Season of Trees for Trout is on again. Planting dates are **Wednesday 22nd to Saturday 25th of May**. 5000 trees are to be planted on the Nariel and Thowgla Creeks. These plantings are assisting in bushfire recovery and bank stabilisation. We had a great planting crew in Corryong last year with over 40 volunteers for the duration. It is a great time with shared meals and conversations and enough time each day for a bit of exploring and fishing. Prepare your teams for the Trivia Night at the Corryong Hotel. Lunch will be provided each day. Accommodation is limited in Corryong so book early. Free camping is available at the Nariel Creek Festival ground. We will meet at the Festival Ground on Wednesday morning at 9:00am.



Talk Wild Trout Conference

On September 21 of this year the ATF and VFA will again host the Talk Wild Trout Conference in Mansfield. We are currently working on a program for the conference so stay tuned for more details. The conference theme will be:

Learning from the Past- Planning for the Future.

A Goulburn Report from John Douglas

The fishing continues to be good in the Goulburn and feeder streams. I've had a few mates up here over the past few weeks and they have caught some great fish, mainly on nymphs hanging under a dry fly in the runs. But some rising fish are also being caught on dries.

Our highlights have been the better fish in the eddies and backwaters sipping on some tiny stuff. These fish can be both frustrating and entertaining, and it can take many casts and fly changes until the combination of right fly in right current seam at the right time coincide in a take! I found it worthwhile slowly walking and looking in all the likely places, as the clear water helps you spot them. But watch out for wasp nests!!

There has also been some better evening rises of late, with some larger duns coming off. These events are short and sweet, but at this time of the year with the shortening days you are home at a reasonable time even if you choose to fish till dark.

My mates have used red spinners and similar variations for their success. I didn't have any, so had to watch them catch fish while my fly was completely ignored.

Goulburn water level remains pretty stable, the feeder streams are running clear, and the weather has been really good, so fishing days have been very pleasant.



A magnificent brown from the Goulburn River that has produced some fabulous fishing in recent weeks

A Brief Report from Chris Gray

My son James and I recently did a trip through Shipyard Flat to the upper Jamieson River, then across the western face of the Bluff and down the Sixteen



King River Hut

Mile Jeep Track to Pikes Flat. We pushed on to Bindaree Flat and camped there for the night. Next day we drove up to Bindaree Falls, then onto Craig's Hut and then down to the King River hut. We spent an hour or so fishing up the river and caught quite lots of smaller trout in the pools. The successful fly was a Parachute Adams. Then back on to Circuit Road around Mt Stirling and down to the Delatite river.

We travelled in our 1997 Hilux "JP" that had recently had a major rebuild to fit it out for trips like this, thus enabling our fishing trips beyond the bitumen.

Cheers, Chris



Settling in for the night at Bindaree Flat



Bindaree Hut at Bindaree Flat on the Howqua River



Upper Jamieson Hut on the Jamieson River North Branch



A beautiful morning on the Jamieson River North Branch

FLY OF THE MONTH

The Hairwing Coachman

(courtesy of Peter Leuver)



In searching around for a Fly of the Month candidate for this month I remembered a fly I came across many years ago. I had purchased a copy of John Turnbull's book, *A Fly on the Stream*, and came across a beautiful dry fly he described called the Hairwing Coachman. John Turnbull wrote about it with a great deal of enthusiasm, so I tied some up. And yes, it worked well for me too. The trout in the rivers around Warrnambool (where I was living at that time) were enthusiastic scoffers of my little Hairwing Coachmen. And it has continued to work well for me.

Of course I had a feeling that this fly would have been featured in an earlier issue of *Fly Lines*, and sure enough I found it written up in the November 2017 issue. But that's a while ago, and this great little caddis pattern is well worth another look.

It's not too hard to tie, and is well worth casting to rising fish on one of those warm still evenings when caddis are out and about.

I also discovered that this fly is written up in Peter Leuver's fabulous tome *Fur & Feather – fly tying for trout*. Pages 73 – 75 give a very comprehensive description of the history of and tying procedure for this beaut fly. The photo above is scanned from Peter book, so I sincerely hope he doesn't mind.

The dressing for the Hairwing Coachman:

- Hook:** Dry fly hook in sizes 16 – 20, preferably size 18. (I tied lots of mine on size 14 hooks.)
- Tail:** Golden pheasant tippets
- Body:** Peacock herl
- Wings:** White bucktail tied crosswise and trimmed
- Hackle:** Furnace (two turns only as a weed guard)

Tying Notes:

1. Wind thread along the shank and tie in a small bunch of golden pheasant tippets for the tail.
2. Tie in one or two peacock herl feathers and wind them forward along the shank to build up a nice fat body, but finishing so that there is plenty of room behind the eye for the bucktail wing.
3. Take a small bunch of white bucktail and place it horizontally across the shank behind the eye and in front of where the peacock herl body finishes.
4. Secure the bucktail wing by tying a few strong figure-of-eight turns to hold it in place. A tiny drop of superglue on the knot will also help keep things secure.
5. Trim the two ends of the bucktail so that the wing is the same length on both sides of the hook shank and its overall length is about equal to the length of the hook shank.
6. Tie in the hackle feather in front of the wing, and then make just two turns.
7. Tie off the hackle feather and whip finish to complete the fly.



VFFA 2024 meetings & other activities

May

- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Andrew Fuller from The Flyfisher Store
His topic: “Fly fishing luck: the fine line between triumph and tribulation.”
- 25 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers’ Annual Dinner. Those wishing to attend need to contact Adrian Jacobs (Warrnambool club President) on 0437 620 972 or by email – adrianj6@bigpond.com
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

June

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

July

- 2 Tuesday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 18 Thursday Lunchtime General Meeting – 12 noon at the Kelvin Club:
(Speaker – TBC)
- 21 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
- 31 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

August

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

September

- 3 Tuesday Last Fly Tying session at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
- 7 Saturday Trout season opens again for Victorian rivers.
- 19 Thursday 2024 Annual General Meeting – 7:30 pm, and again a Zoom meeting.
- 25 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing, 10:00 am till dark. Event Co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)

(Remaining Millbrook visits for 2024 will be on June 5 and September 25)