

FLY LINES



NOVEMBER 2021

The November Meeting with Rick Dobson

The guest speaker for our November meeting is Rick Dobson, well known to many of us as the very friendly and helpful proprietor of the Aussie Angler tackle store.

Rick has been a keen angler for nearly all of his life. As a highly skilled and experienced fly fisher he has visited top locations all over the world. He likes to keep it uncomplicated, so at our November meeting will give us some proven strategies and tactics for catching trout in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand.

Rick has spoken at VFFA meetings on a number of occasions and is always entertaining and informative. His topic for our November meeting is: "Best fly fishing techniques, including some thoughts on modern nymphing."

So mark it in your diary – Thursday, November 18.

We are hoping that this will be our opportunity to meet again at the Kelvin Club. However, if Covid restrictions and concerns prevent this happening then Terry Rogers will notify us all by email in the week prior to November 18.

We need to inform the Kelvin Club of numbers for catering purposes, so

Thursday, November 18,
8:00pm at the
Kelvin Club

members who plan to have dinner prior to the meeting need to email Terry Rogers and inform him of your intentions. Terry's email address is terryrogers@bigpond.com

A final important note - current government Covid protocols and regulations require all members attending the Kelvin Club to be vaccinated against coronavirus.



Rick captures large salmon too

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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Covid Vaccinations

Members are reminded that there are now government regulations and associated penalties in relation to Covid 19. As a consequence, members and visitors attending VFFA meeting and functions must be fully vaccinated

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Index

The November Meeting with Rick Dobson.....	1	Australian Trout Foundation Fry Stocking Trial Continues.....	18
VFFA Office Holders.....	2	Notice of Event for VFFA November 2021 Nymph Fishing & Stream Craft Techniques.....	19
We welcome a new member.....	3	Cooma Notes by John Killip.....	20
The October Meeting – Fishing the Otways with Tony Stewart	4	The North-East.....	21
President's Message	11	This Year’s Warrnambool Trip.....	22
From the Editor's Desk.....	13	Fly Tying Report for October	22
The Christmas Dinner with Jim Allen ...	15	Spey and Switch Casting is Easy and Really Cool - Peter Hayes.....	25
Millbrook Lakes – November Visit.....	16	Joining The Brotherhood	28
November 29 is VFFA Dam Day with the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers	16	Sunken Ants.....	32
The Perils Of Angling.....	17	Fly of the Month.....	33

We welcome a new member

Again this month it is our great pleasure to welcome a new member to the Association. Tom Camp has recently asked to join our ranks. We trust that

his membership brings many years of enjoyment and pleasure along with lots of great memories.

The October Meeting – Fishing the Otways with Tony Stewart

... here is a summary of Tony's presentation

Thank you for your words of introduction. Tonight we are fly fishing for trout in the rivers in the Otway Ranges. This is not a highly-documented area. In fact some of our fly fishing journalists dismiss the location as not worthy of a visit. Well, you be the judge after seeing some of the pictures I will share with you tonight.

The area that I am focusing on is that between Lorne and Apollo Bay - about 40 km of coastline and five of the small streams in that region. These are small streams by any standards. The focus of attention here tends to be on the coastline and the beaches, but these streams offer a wealth of opportunities from a fly fishing perspective.

I have a passion for waterfalls and this area has lots of them, with some of these small streams having half a dozen quite formidable waterfalls. These of course affect the range of trout, but we will come to that. Nothing pleases me more than being able to fish the pool below a waterfall in some remote part of the Otway Ranges. That's my passion.

The fish here are relatively small, but I think that what we lose in size is made up for in appearance. Some of the brown trout in this region are splendid specimens of the species.

There are only brown trout in these streams, and what we are fishing for are the progeny of fish that were placed there in the late 1960s and early 1970s. To my knowledge there has been no stocking of trout since then, so it is a testament to the durability of the species that they can survive the bushfires, droughts and the floods that occur all too frequently in the region.

In my fly fishing endeavours I try to capture my experiences on video and in

pictures. In the early days this entailed carrying a wide range of gear, including tripods and lots of other bits and pieces. It does require taking a lot of gear when you have the competing objectives of trying to capture some images as well as trying to capture some fish. When it all works – well, that's the challenge that keeps me going back.

I mentioned that these rivers are relatively short in their range and the storm fronts that come up the West Coast can unload a fair amount of rain, with up to two metres being recorded in the highest points in the Otways. These storms can cause the streams to rise dramatically and very quickly, making them completely unfishable and very dangerous. So fishing the area needs a keen eye.

Fortunately though, because the rivers are short they also abate over a few hours, or at the most over a couple of days. Then I'm back again looking at bubble lines and somewhere to cast a dry fly in the hope that one of the resident browns will be tempted by my offering.

Most of these streams are relatively shallow, so I use small rods – usually 6 or 7 foot 2-weight and 3-weight rods loaded with a tippet of maximum size 6X.

Let's start at Apollo Bay where we find the Barham River, one of the most accessible in the whole region. It has a road following it in the valley floor for almost the whole length of the river. Despite lots of blackberries you can fish most of this river, and the fishing extends right up to Marriner's Falls. In fact there are fish right underneath the waterfall.

It is a very easy river to fish with a gravel bottom which makes it very comfortable in most sections to wade. It is relatively shallow, and the water is very clear most

of the time, particularly in the summer months when it is easy to polaroid fish (well, the ones that you haven't already spooked). This is one of those ideal places to use small emerger-type fly patterns and have them immediately taken. The location in the photo on the screen is just upstream from where the tourists mostly gather, and you can see the water clarity. In the summer months it is absolutely beautiful. It's a pleasure to catch the fish here and it's equally a pleasure to photograph them.

Our next river going north is the Kennett River, one of the smallest in the region and a significant tourist destination with the Kennett River Koala Walk. There is a wildlife sanctuary along the riverside which is well-maintained, and this allows an easy walk up the length of the river.

I was walking up the Kennett River on one occasion and was passing through an area I wouldn't normally fish when I looked down and saw a rise at the top of the pool below me. It was a fair way down to the river, but I thought it worth an investigation to see what was happening. So I scrambled down into the water a couple of pools downstream to ensure I didn't spook anything that might still be about. I had my 2-weight rod with me and it was clear behind me, so I was able to send a cast into the top of the pool. I had tied on a Purple Haze fly, and it was sucked down very subtly after a couple of moments on the water – a good sign on any river, as sippers tend to be bigger fish. And that proved to be the case here. He was soon in the net. Now 10 - 12 inch fish are the usual size in these Otway streams, and 14 inch trout like this one are not common.

A comment that applies to most of these rivers is that the only access is by walking up from the coast. So if there is someone ahead of you then you have to go and find a different location, because there is no way of sharing the river. I have spent

a lot of time bushwalking in the past, so I've used some of my bushwalking skills exploring options to access these rivers in their headwaters.

There are lots of tracks and fire trails through the Otways, most of which are gated and don't allow vehicle access. But by studying maps and bushwalking guides, particularly the Topo maps, I have identified a couple of ways of accessing the Kennett River further upstream. With some bush bashing and a bit of work I was able to plot a few courses and put them into my GPS unit. We've also put some climbing lines into a couple of sites because the understory of the bush is very soft and gives away quickly in any sort of a slope, making it difficult to walk through, so these climbing ropes give us access to the river and also make it easier to get out at the end of a day's fishing.

Once you are down into the gorges the rivers open up and the small pools and shallow pools with bubble lines at the top of them are always worth a cast with a dry fly. If conditions are right you always catch fish.

I'm very passionate about coffee and it is most important to reward myself with a coffee before I make the climb back up. In the Kennett River the range of trout is limited to only 6 km of the 10 km of the river. There is a large cascade well up the river. Don't bother going above it because I have never seen a sign of trout upstream of it.

Let's move on to Wye River, which is very well known and even has a pub. The Wye has a fabulous estuary which is well worth fishing for bream. It is a shallow river which has a large camping ground at the entrance that draws hundreds of people in holiday periods. I don't fish the Wye in the holidays, but outside holiday period I do. In fact I was there last week doing some research for this presentation and was welcomed by some of the locals, including a 2 metre snake. >>>

I continued on up the walking track that runs for several hundred metres up the side of the river before you have to get into the river and wade to fish beyond that point.

This river is very different from the Kennett, which is a freestone river and a bit slippery to wade. But the Wye has a shingly bottom which is comfortable to wade. Even with high water you can fish the undercuts and deeper channels. Mostly we're searching with a dry fly in the deeper channels. I was pleasantly surprised last week to put a fly into a cut on the left-hand channel where multiple currents were coming in, and the fly disappeared. I was very happy with the fish that came up and took it.

In the upper reaches of the Wye there is a large waterfall in a narrow gorge that provides one of the most formidable bushwalking challenges anyone could undertake. The river in fact disappears

on a few occasions. There are some logjams here that are 10 metres high and require quite a degree of skill and effort to navigate.

Let's now examine the Cumberland. This is one of the best-known rivers and also one of the longer rivers in the Otways. While it's about 20 km in length it has the shortest range for its trout – just 2 - 2½ km up from the camping ground. On the other hand it has some magnificent scenery with deep gorges and towering sandstone cliffs. It also has some of the best waterfalls. There is a walking track alongside the river and it is not uncommon to be fishing there and have some family lean over the ferns and ask you what you are doing.

A number of years ago I was sitting beside a pool having a coffee and I just watched fish rising. There was a huge hatch happening with a hatch of duns and spinners in the air, so I just sat watching fish rising for half an hour or more. I set



Lower Kalimna Falls



Wye River estuary

up a couple of cameras around the pool then set about seeing what I could do with a small Humpty that I had tied and called the Cumberland River Beetle. I was able to pick up some of the fish on dries. Small fish they may be, but they certainly had the most beautiful colouration.

Most of the spots we fish in the Cumberland River are either pocket water or deep channels. The photo on the screen now shows a bubble line in high water. I put a dry across it and there was no response, so I put a nymph underneath and it was immediately taken.

This is typical water for this river. Some large rocks but with a walking path through, it is easy to navigate from one end of the fishing to the other. Dapping dry flies in and around likely locations in the reaches before the habitat runs out is something I never get tired of. The last couple of seasons have been relatively wet and the fish have consequently been in top condition. Those 12 inch fish were really fat.

Let's move now to the St George River. This is the one nearest to Lorne. There is a walking path that follows it all the way up and it is very popular with local walkers and holidaymakers. You can walk several kilometres up the river to Phantom Falls and this is a great pool to fish, though these days you have to cast in between people trying to take selfies in front of the falls.

In studying the Topo maps I found a fire trail called the Henderson Track that covers the ridgeline all the way along the St George River gorge. This is a 12 km walk from the nearest car park and has a 130 metre vertical descent into the gorge. It is one of the gems of the Otways.

Down in the gorge there is a stone bottom and it's a beautiful place to fish, with deep pools cut into the stone and fish all the way through in spite of the waterfalls. As long as you can follow a GPS and compass you can get to these sort of places. But the gem in my view is this particular pool, and it really epitomises what fishing the Otways is all about. It is a big effort >>>



Upper St George River, bedrock stream

to get there but well worth it, because Melba Falls has some of the best fishing in the Otways. The fish sizes are excellent too, and they respond well to dries.

At the height of summer when the water level is much lower, if you drop a fly near any rise you get an immediate response. And this area can produce some surprising fish. At one pool I didn't stay long, as it is a five hour walk in and back and that doesn't leave a lot of time to fish. After catching three or four fish I'm usually packing up to get back. While I'm sure there are small fish in there I have been rewarded on most occasions with those in the 12 – 14 inch size.

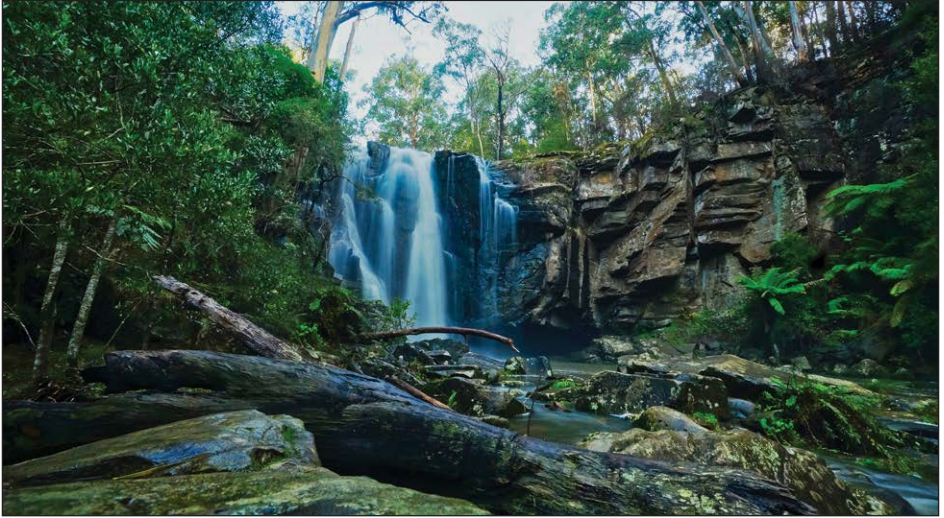
Let's leave the coastal ones and head inland to the Aire River where we find a completely different habitat. This river rises in a deep valley below beech forest and flows west, entering Bass Strait well beyond Cape Otway. It's a long river, being about 40 km. But the headwaters are surrounded by forestry and logging coops, so a lot of the riverside, and particularly the pools, have deep silt banks. There is freestone in between with lovely runs, but it can be tricky getting through some of the silt.



Better than average from the Cumberland

An area that many people will be familiar with is the Redwoods Road crossing of the Aire, almost at its source. There is a redwood plantation there and it's a lovely place to fish when the river is slightly high. But once again you need to fight the tourists trying to take selfies while you are casting to rising fish. It is probably one of the best-known places in the whole Otway area, with Hopetoun Falls a little way downstream from where we have just been on the river.

Care needs to be taken in getting to fish this particular spot. Fortunately the smaller fish here will willingly cooperate as long as you get the drift right. Much further downstream it becomes quite silty and on a number of occasions I have slid



Phantom Falls, St George River



Melba Falls pool, St George River

into these pools only to discover that I then kept sinking into the silt. That can be a bit disconcerting so you need to make sure that you have a hold on something that you can use to pull yourself up. Logjams are just one of those things that you have to put up with in these Otway streams, and overhanging ferns have got lots of my flies residing in them.

Our final river I want to make a mention of is the Barwon River which rises way up in the centre of the Otways and flows north all the way through Geelong and then to Barwon Heads – 160 km altogether. This headwater area above the West Barwon Dam is a delightful piece of water. But it's a challenge to get there. It's one of those spots where you really need to prepare well and know where >>>

you are going, as it's about a two-hour walk from the car to the nearest point in the river.

When you get there it can be a bit of silty with shingle and mud along the edges and undercut banks. This is the one river that has rainbow trout because they are stocked in the dam and spawn up in the west branch of the Barwon River. You can

spook them and occasionally even catch one.

And that should bring me to the end of my presentation. I hope that this has stimulated some interest in the area and hopefully it won't be too long before covert restrictions are lifted and you can come and sample the Otway streams for yourselves.



Redwood Crossing Aire River



President's Message

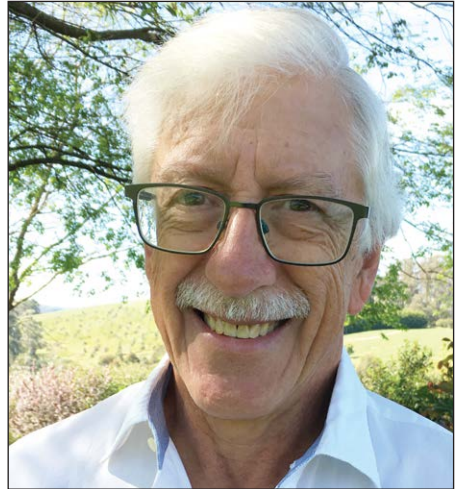
"It's not the government's role to provide freedom; people born in this country are by default free." (Dominic Perrotet; NSW Premier)

Melbourne is in the grip of "freedom fever" despite the fact that many restrictions remain and travel to the regions for fishing continues to be illegal for residents of metropolitan Melbourne. However, by the time this Newsletter reaches you, it is anticipated that metropolitan and regional restrictions will be aligned. Our meetings will be back at the Kelvin Club and many of our members will be off exploring the Victorian lakes and streams.

It was heartening to hear that the Tasmanian border will be open to both interstate and international visitors from December 15, provided they are fully vaccinated and return a negative COVID-19 test. That removes the uncertainty surrounding plans for the VFFA trips in February to Currawong Lakes and to Peter Hayes' at Cressy .

It is becoming increasingly apparent that government will mandate full vaccination for events, particularly indoors. With the lifting of most of the onerous restrictions from November 5, our November 18 meeting will be held at the Kelvin Club. Notable fly fishing identity Rick Dobson will be sharing his wisdom. Of particular interest will be his comments on nymph fishing which will tie in nicely with our scheduled trip to the Acheron on November 21 for practical instruction in nymph fishing by the Dobsons and in Streamcraft by David Grisold. Details of these events appear elsewhere in the newsletter. Numbers will be limited.

It is great to report that we have managed to resurrect the annual trip to Thorpdale



to fish the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers' dams. Hamish Hughes has maintained a listening watch with LVFFC and has negotiated Monday, November 29, as the day when we can head to Thorpdale. Bookings for this event can be made by contacting Hamish Hughes by email on hthughes@bigpond.net.au. Usual details as in the past apply to this event. Attendees meet at 9:00am in Thorpdale. Hamish will provide specific details to those who make a booking.

Fly tying by Zoom has continued with a splendid presentation by Rob Bailey on October 14 aimed very much at neophytes and potential fly tyers who might not know a hackle from a bobbin. He covered hooks, tools, threads, dubbing materials, hackles, palmering and much more besides; all incredibly useful to those of us a bit embarrassed to ask questions we know are quite basic.

The last fly tying event for this season will be by John Pilkington and will be held at the Aussie Angler in Greensborough on Thursday evening, November >>>

25, where we have had several previous highly successful fly tying demonstrations. Fly tying activities will then cease, recommencing in the autumn of next year.

Our October meeting was an absolute pearler with Tony Stewart giving us a wonderful portrayal of his fly fishing in the difficult waters of the Otway Ranges. His videos were instructive and his photography of wild places in the Otways was reminiscent of Peter Dombrovskis photography of wild places in Tasmania. The streams and rivers Tony demonstrated all had quite different characteristics. Some were accessible, while others required difficult bush-bashing for hours leaving only limited time to fish.

He showed us the coastal rivers - the Barham, Kennett, Wye, Cumberland and Saint George, and then contrasted these with the inland rivers - the Aire and the West Branch of the Upper Barwon. Interestingly, his favourite fly is the Purple Haze (a Parachute Adams variant) and some of you will remember that this fly was also Tammy Fraser's favourite fly; something about the Western District!

It is not possible to do justice to Tony's presentation with words so I do encourage

those of you who missed it to log onto the website and watch the recording.

Our final event for the year, fittingly, will be our combined Annual and Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club on Friday, December 10, with Jim Allen reflecting on his fly fishing life. This will be a memorable night, I can assure you.

I should also mention that your Council is preparing a submission to the NSW Department of Environment regarding their Draft Plan for the management of wild horses in the Kosciuszko National Park. This is clearly controversial and it has been our policy to stay out of the political arena in deference to the broad nature and views of our members. However, I feel this issue strikes at the very heart of our reason for being, and is covered by at least four of our Statement of Purposes. It affects our members, many of whom have grown up fishing this area and have watched in dismay as the habitat has been devastated. The submission will be published in *Fly Lines* in due course.

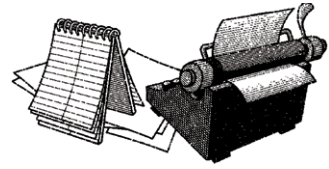
Stay safe; enjoy your new-found freedom, government granted or not!

David



A New Zealand South Island leaper. (Photo from Kristina Placko library)

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"The fly fisherman is a guy standing in cold water up to his liver throwing the world's most expensive clothesline at trees." (P.J. O'Rourke: *A Fly-fishing Primer*)

"There is always interest for trout fishermen in watching birds. This has nothing whatever to do with the fact that the artificial flies used are made of their feathers. If an angler is observant birds can be helpful to his or her sport... Generally where birds are plentiful fish food is also present in the form of moths, beetles, cicadas, or land grubs." (Greg Kelly: *The Flies In My Hat*)

"There is no taking trout in dry breeches." (Cervantes - Don Quixote 1605)

"The trout and salmon fisherman contrives to make a virtue, a fetish even, of this habitual scarcity, if not entire famine, of catchable fish." (Louis Rubin Jr: *The Even-tempered Angler*)

"It is the constant – or inconstant – change, the infinite variety of fly fishing that binds us fast. It is impossible to grow weary of a sport that is never the same on any two days of the year." (Theodore Gordon 1914)

At the time that I am writing this our hopes are rising. Restrictions are disappearing and in a couple of weeks we'll be allowed to head off to a favourite stream regardless of the distance. At last!

But where to go? For many of us a day out on a stream requires an hour or two driving (each way?), with associated costs in time and fuel. So we need to give some serious thought to this. After all, it would be good to start the season well with an enjoyable day out and at least a few fish hooked and released.

How do we choose our destination? Do we just head off to a favourite spot that has been kind to us in the past? Or make a few phone calls and chase up some reports. Perhaps pull out our fishing diary? Or check on Facebook?

There are certainly a heap of factors that feed into this decision. The weather is important, as is the time of year, the time of day we will be fishing, the likely river conditions when arrive (depth, clarity,

temperature), access, and of course the likelihood that heaps of other anglers will be there too wanting to share our water, ...

Past experience as recorded in our fishing diaries can be a helpful guide. I keep a fairly basic diary, so was hugely impressed when I read Greg French's description of his fishing diary in *FlyLife* issue 102 earlier this year. Truly incredible. I'm sure Greg is on first name speaking terms with just about every trout in Tasmania.

I first got excited about fly fishing when living in Warrnambool in the 1970s. I had some good days and others not so good and quickly came to the realisation that the weather had something to do with it. So I started cutting out the weather reports in the local paper and sticking them in the simple fishing diary I was keeping. My naïve thinking was that I could base my likely success in future fishing trips on days that had predicted weather reports similar to my >>>

previously successful days. Sadly, it didn't prove all that helpful because it overlooked other factors such as water level and clarity and temperature.

Day air temperatures matter too, as does the month of the year. And time of day. My evening sessions were often more successful than those during the middle of the day.

These days we have to believe that the increasing pressure on streams close to Melbourne has a significant impact on our fishing success. I think it unlikely that streams that are fished almost daily would have their fish stocks reduced to almost zero. I say this because many of the anglers I encounter on our popular streams are fly fishers, and I suspect or hope that most practice catch and release. But I also think it would be reasonable to suggest that the fish stocks in heavily fished streams will be reduced over time. And the other suspicion is that fish in heavily fished streams become smarter and harder to catch. Perhaps its natural selection – the dumb fish get caught and removed.

Earlier this year I caught up with Brian Eddy, a VFFA life member who lives in Harrietteville. Brian said that when covid restrictions were eased late last year anglers flocked to the north-east in big numbers, and the Ovens River copped very heavy pressure. As a result sections that were usually productive suddenly seemed barren. Brian speculated that fish were still there, though perhaps in lower numbers, but those remaining were hiding up during the day when anglers were stomping up and down the banks and were now feeding at night.

I recall listening to a Tom Rosenbauer podcast where Tom was interviewing a prominent USA fishing guide. Tom asked the guide how he decided where to take clients, and the guide responded

by saying that the most important factor in this decision was when a river was last fished. Apparently the guides communicated with each other, telling each other where they had taken their clients.

In terms of the best time of day, it is generally conceded that dawn and dusk are good times to fish for trout. In this regard I recall asking David Featherstone (sadly no longer with us) at VFFA meetings when he was going fishing next. David would often tell me that he was heading off the next morning to fish one of his favourite lakes near Ballarat. He would set his alarm for 3:00am and would then be driving up to the edge of his chosen water just as the first light was just appearing in the eastern sky. After a quick coffee David would be on the hunt. Why so early? Because the big ones are cruising the edges at first light. When the sun was up and other anglers were starting to arrive David would be packing up, ready to leave. And he caught a lot of very large trout, as we all know. But a 3:00am start? Is that too high a price to pay?

Water temperature is important for trout. I think I'm correct in saying water temperatures in the range 13°C – 17°C is ideal. Once the temperature sneaks over 20°C trout are not so comfortable and feeding slows down significantly.

Sunlight is good for polaroiding clear water, but I gather that generally trout are more comfortable with some cloud cover. As for wind, casting is easier if there isn't any, but everything from a light breeze to strong gusts have solid endorsement by various writers and experts. Just so long as it isn't an easterly, because as the old rhyme goes, 'when the wind is in the east, the fish bite least'. At least that's what some very serious and highly skilled VFFA members have told me.

The barometer and its indication of falling or rising air pressure draws lots of comment. Again a highly respected guide being interviewed by Tom Rosenbauer suggested that trout feed more enthusiastically and are easier to catch on a barometer that indicates slowly falling air pressure. However I've personally always believed that a fairly high and either steady or rising barometer reading gives better fishing. But what would I know.

Years ago I became fascinated with the predictions of the Solunar Tables. These purport to tell us the days in the month when the fish are most likely to be active, and the times in those days when our trout will be coming out for a feed. I've even wound up with three applications on my iPhone which supposedly give me this priceless information. Or I can look

in the early pages of AFN's *Freshwater Fishing* magazine for the same data. Is this stuff actually factual and helpful? I've read lots of opinions from supposed experts, some swearing that it works and others just swearing at it. Me? I just go fishing when I can. If I have a crummy day and the tables tell me the fishing was going to be hopeless then I've got my excuse.

As so many have said, the best time to go fishing is whenever you can.

It is my strong hope that all of our VFFA members get out soon and enjoy a great start to a wonderful fishing season. So tight lines and wet nets, and remember that the next fish you land might just be the biggest you have ever caught.

So take care and stay safe,

Lyndon



The Christmas Dinner with Jim Allen

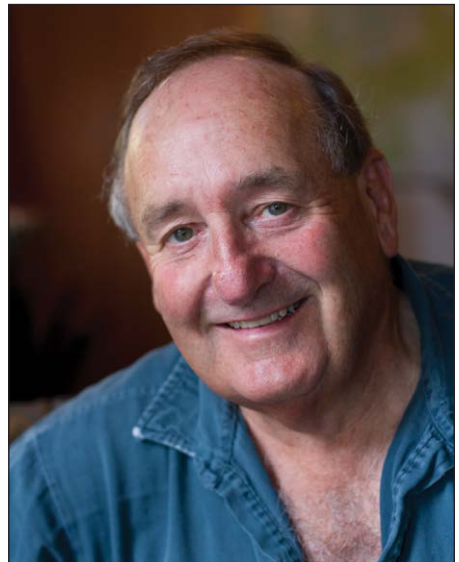
This year's Annual Dinner was to be in August. But the Covid lockdown restrictions forced us to abandon this date. So our Annual Dinner, always a highlight in the VFFA program, has been rescheduled for December, when it will also be our Christmas Dinner. Let's keep our fingers crossed for this event.

Jim Allen is our speaker. He has been a very popular and entertaining speaker on so many previous VFFA events. We can look forward to hearing him in December, when he plans to speak on the topic: "Reflections on a Fly Fisherman's Fortunate Life".

This will be a fabulous opportunity to hear one of our best, so mark it in your diary – Friday, December 10.

The official invitation to attend, giving details on costs and times, will be emailed

out in late October to all members by Terry Rogers.



Millbrook Lakes – November Visit

The VFFA has four visits to Millbrook Lakes each year, and over the past few years many of our members have enjoyed this opportunity to fish a fabulous fishery. The lakes we fish are very attractive and well-stocked, and our past visits have been productive and very enjoyable. We are grateful to Mark Weigall for providing this opportunity for us.

The future dates for our remaining visits are November 17, January 12 (2022) and March 9 (2022).

So our next visit is very soon – Wednesday, November 17. It looks like this visit will now go ahead. Terry Rogers has sent out an email, dated November 1, inviting interested members to apply. Applications to attend this event should be emailed to Terry at email: terryrogers@bigpond.com and needs to include your mobile telephone number. Applications will be assessed on a “first in best dressed” basis. Successful applicants will be notified regarding the cost and payment details.



Professor Kevin Hindle casting to a Millbrook riser

November 29 is VFFA Dam Day with the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers

As we will soon be out of Lockdown the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers (LVFF) have invited VFFA members to fish their stocked dams around Thorpdale on Monday, November 29. VFFA members will need to be at the park opposite the Thorpdale Bakery by 9:00 AM.

Latrobe Valley members will meet us there and escort us to various farm dams where they will act as our guides. At lunchtime everyone will return to the park for a barbecue lunch and chin wag about the morning's fishing. After lunch it's off to another dam for the afternoon



Frank Kappl organizes the stocking of trout in the Latrobe Valley Club's dams. He is also very skilled at finding and connecting with them

session for those who wish to stay on a bit longer.

Given good conditions and friendly weather the dams are attractive and interesting fisheries. The water is often clear and can be polaroided along the banks. Occasionally there is a dun hatch. There is a good opportunity to connect with a 3 or 4 lb brown or rainbow to get the season underway.

VFFA visitors should take at least \$10 cash on the day for raffle tickets, with proceeds to go to LVFF dam stocking expenses. To enable the LVFF to plan for both guiding and catering VFFA visitors are limited so first in best dressed. Rollups on the day will not be welcome.

Hamish Hughes is the coordinator. Please email him at hthughes@bigpond.net.au if you wish to attend. Hamish will confirm your acceptance beforehand.

The perils of Angling

... by David Scholes. Yes, David did indeed write some of this article. It was given by David to Andrew Braithwaite, a regular fishing companion of David's in his last years. Andrew tells us that David wrote the lead-in paragraph but it's obvious the remainder of the story was not his. This explains why he never signed his name to it.

Although nobody likes to admit it, there is no doubt that the cow has saved many a good trout from landing in the frypan. Precise identification from a distance, particularly when the animal is head on, is always a bit tricky. And there is always the suspicion that the placid, apparently indifferent, 'don't mind me - I'm busy-munching' attitude, is just a ploy to lure you within striking distance, when the realisation that it's not the model you thought it was comes too late.

City dwellers, whose problems of identification are normally confined to 'rare', 'medium rare' and 'well done', are particularly vulnerable in this respect, for to them a steak is a steak, even if it has four legs and is actually moving!

For their benefit – and all those who think they know better but don't – we produce below, with the usual acknowledgements and apologies – an extract from *The Fishing Handbook to End all Handbooks*, by Cliff Parker.

Points of Recognition:

Cows come in four different types –

1. Cows
2. Heifers
3. Bulls
4. Bullocks

Identification is important if avoidable complications are not to set in at a point where it is difficult to do anything about them. All cows have the same basic identification points: a tail with a tuft at the end, a leg at each corner, and a head which carries a pair of horns and a gormless expression.

A **cow** can be recognised by her udders which are slung between her hind quarters and look like a water-filled rubber glove or a pair of plastic bagpipes, depending upon whether the animal is a B or a C cup. The udders are where the milk is kept. (This is for the benefit of town anglers who think it comes from the fridge in the deli.)

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A **heifer** is a teenage cow and can be differentiated by her Junior Miss udders and an expression of trusting virginity.

A **bull** is a different kettle of tea, not to say cup of fish. In place of udders he has a rather enviable set of what used to be described in pre-permissive days as 'wedding tackle'. His expression can range from bleary to ferocious, depending on his luck, and he generally wears a ring through his nose.

A **bullock** is something which would have grown into a bull if his prospects had not been nipped in the bud. He can be recognised by his lack of recognisable points, pained expression, and a high-pitched moo. A bullock with long legs and no horns is very likely to be a horse.

So there you have it. But the real answer to this problem of identification was best expressed by the wife of one of our Council Members, who said: "I don't care what it is, I'm not going into that field while it's still there!"



Australian Trout Foundation Fry Stocking Trial Continues

The following note is from a recent VFA Freshwater Fisheries Management Update, dated September 10, 2021:

- 150,000 brown trout fry are set to be released next week continuing the fry stocking trial initiated the Australian Trout Foundation.
- The trial aims to understand whether stocking brown trout fry can help accelerate the recovery of high-country brown trout populations following environmental events such as bushfires and floods.
- This year's fry will be released into the Jamieson River, Macalister River and West King River.
- The success of fry stocking trials is being evaluated by fisheries scientists using follow up electrofishing surveys and genetic identification analysis.
- Results of the fry stocking trials will be shared at the Talk Wild Trout Conferences.
- Fry stocking trial is just one of many initiatives the Australian Trout Foundation are progressing under the Victorian Wild Trout Strategy to support a healthy sustainable wild trout fishery for all Victorians.



Small but great colours



Notice of Event for VFFA November 2021 Nymph Fishing & Stream Craft Techniques

The Event. A day with fellow VFFA members on the Goulburn River, learning some techniques of short line nymphing or stream craft. Jo & Rick Dobson will present various nymph rods and rigs, theory behind techniques and casting on the Goulburn River. David Grisold will present a session on Streamcraft. These sessions will run at the same time.

A BBQ lunch will be provided after the sessions.

Dress to fish whether its Nymphing or Stream craft! Fly Rods and wading gear essential as there will be river time included.

As this is a "hands on" event, numbers are capped at 18 people for each session.

Date: Sunday, November 21, at 10:30am.

Address: Acheron – confirmed participants will be notified of the address closer to the day.

Travel: You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements to and from Acheron.

We suggest pooling cars where possible. We will share details of attendees to assist with car-pooling.

Cost: \$30 paid prior to the day. Includes BBQ lunch & refreshments. Any special dietary requirements, please advise the convenor when booking.

Direct debit to: VFFA bank account: BSB 182 512, account number 9605 47289

Include your name and "Tech2021"

Other Fishing locations: There are many other rivers in the area to fish in the afternoon, including the Steavenson, Acheron, Yea, Murrindindi and Rubicon if you wish to continue fishing.

Fishing license: A current Victorian license is required. Purchase via the Victorian Fisheries Authority website, or a tackle store.

Mobile phone: Coverage is patchy. Good in most townships and on major highways but poor or non-existent in many angling areas.

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

Essential equipment for Remote Locations: (if you're planning to fish later in the day) Compression bandage, UHF handheld radio, water, prescribed medicines for those with a medical condition which could re-occur, mobile phone if coverage available.

Weather: Expect good fishing weather!

Victorian Government Covid rules apply to this event including QR Code check in and full vaccination.

Event Registration Form (ERF): Not required for this event.

Registration of your attendance: Register by sending an email to: chris@graysmail.com.au

Event Co-ordinator. Christopher Gray

Date of this Note of Event: 26th November 2021

Cooma Notes by John Killip

... many of our members will recall John Killip as the owner of the motel at Nimmitabel in the Snowy Mountains. John provided a superb guiding service on the rivers around this area. He also wrote a number of articles on aspects of fly fishing for the Australian angling magazines of that time. John recently offered to provide some contributions for *Fly Lines*. Here is his first report.

October has always been a mixed bag in the Cooma region. It is exciting when the rivers open at the beginning of the month, and after winter any fishing is good.

There are two distinct options when it comes to deciding where to try first. The bigger rivers feeding the Snowy Mountain lakes should be holding plenty of trout following their spawning run during the previous months, while the smaller rivers on the tablelands are beginning to warm up and produce some fly hatches with trout rising to them.

A few years ago it was an easy choice to make, because the lake spawning rivers were invariably full of feisty rainbows. Opening day on the Providence Flats of the Eucumbene was crowded with anglers, but even so it was not difficult to have a lot of fun. I caught and released over 40 fish on opening day of the 2006 season. The lake rainbows continued to provide that kind of sport for the next few years, but then seemed to disappear. People fishing the lakes during the summer had similar complaints.

Now the word is that the rainbows are coming back. Last season on the lakes there was excellent fishing. So it was very disappointing this year that heavy rain in late September and early October saw the Eucumbene River flowing over its banks when it opened for fishing. Margaret and I were there on the Sunday, but didn't bother getting the rods out. The Providence Flats were deserted.

The tableland rivers are also flowing very high, and to make matters worse it has generally been extremely cold and windy, with only the occasional day of fair weather.

While we both love dry flies, it seemed like a good idea to fall back on traditional wet fly fishing. Traditional in Scotland and Northern England that is. Small soft hackled flies, sparsely tied, with the only weight a heavy hook and maybe some copper wire for ribbing. I don't usually mount a team of three flies in the time honoured fashion, but prefer to stay tangle free with just a single fly at a time.

You may think this fishing method is too simple. Cast across and down the current and let the line swing the fly back to your bank. Something for beginners to practice. Well, let me assure you there can be a lot more to it than that.

First you must grasp the principle that while the line is slack, drifting freely downstream, the fly will likely be sinking. Then when the line tightens the fly will swing across and upwards, suggesting a hatching insect. A very active insect, admittedly, but it does seem to attract the trouts' attention. So the strategy is to work hard at manipulating the line to produce this sort of action in the places where you think the trout may be. Now we are getting into all sorts of clever tricks. Reach mends, mid-air mends, feeding line, ... plenty to keep you interested.

Our first outing of the season was on a tableland river that was flowing hard but

just about clear enough to fish. Frankly, I was not very enthusiastic about our chances. So I was greatly encouraged when Margaret called that she had one

on after only a few minutes. That one got away, but we both caught a few nice trout to make it a good start to our season.

The North-East

Brian Eddy, our VFFA member living in the north-east of the state has provided a brief report...

Just arrived home last night so haven't had a chance to do much fishing yet. However, I saw a couple of keen anglers "out the back" this morning and they obliged by taking a nice brown each (on nymphs) before they moved past my place. They allowed me to get a photo or two of the action.

The river (the Ovens) is looking really good - lots of fresh, clear, oxygenated water, and it has finally dropped to a much more fishable level. And the browns are beautifully marked.

With the easing of Covid restrictions and state-wide travel now permitted the next few weekends will be absolute bedlam here. There will be long queues of anglers waiting for their turn to have a cast – a bit like queuing for Covid testing.

Cheers Brian



These photos are of two anglers capturing trout on nymphs in the Ovens River at the end of Brian Eddy's back lawn.



This Year's Warrnambool Trip

The VFFA has traditionally enjoyed a trip to Warrnambool each year in November. Members head off to the Western District, fish some of the great trout streams in the area guided by members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club, and then gather on the Saturday night for a meal that is always magnificent. Jim and Trish Blakeslee are fabulous hosts.

Our president has been in touch with Jim Blakeslee and the good news is that we can now go ahead with this trip. The date is Friday, November 12, to Sunday, November 14. David Hooke is convening this trip, and those wishing to attend need to contact David by Sunday, November 7, either by email: president@vffa.com.au or Mobile: 0411 563 684. Attendees need to make their own accommodation arrangements. They also need to bring drinks for the Saturday night BBQ and \$35

cash to cover the cost of same. David will provide more details when you book.



David Coutts caught this 6 lb brown from the Moyne River near Port Fairy a couple of years ago. The rivers around Warrnambool consistently produce very large browns.

Fly Tying Report for October

On October 14 Robert Bailey gave a very helpful and informative presentation on some of the basics of fly tying. This was a Zoom production watched by a keen and attentive audience. Such was the interest that a presentation scheduled for an hour actually lasted for over two hours.

Robert talked about hooks, necessary tools, threads available for fly tying, dubbing techniques, and tying in dry fly and wet fly hackles. Here are just some of Rob's many suggestions:

Barbless hooks are to be preferred these days.

Have two pairs of scissors - one (a 'best' pair) for cutting thread and soft materials and for fine work generally, and a second pair for cutting wire and coarse materials.



Rob Bailey is a highly skilled and well-organised fly tyer

A long-bladed pair is also useful for cutting straight edges with foam.

Acquire and use a whip finisher tool, but also learn to use your hands to whip finish, as then you can use bigger loops which can be useful sometimes. But a whip finisher tool allows you to be more precise.

Dubbing needles are useful – their sharp point can be used for lots of important jobs. Buy a craft scalpel and replace the blade with a needle.

Hackle pliers are necessary, and smaller ones are better for precision.

Keep some wax handy to wax your tying thread. You can warm it and peel off a lump about the size of a baked bean. Wax protects the thread, and the grip or friction helps hold materials in place while you're tying. Well-waxed thread and a whip finisher are all you need to finish a fly.

Keep a set of sharp blades and a steel ruler for cutting foam.

If you're not satisfied with a fly that you are tying then use a blade to clear the materials from the hook so that you can start again.

A small eyebrow brush is useful for brushing out materials. Also, a fine wire brush or some Velcro glued to a flat stick are good for brushing out material to make a body more bushy.

Buy some test clips (small items from an electrical store) to hold flies while they are drying. These are also good for tying in small hackles. A big clear plastic paperclip can be used for constructing hair hackles.

Superglue in a bottle with a brush is very handy and useful.

Small plastic cups are good for dropping flies in as they finished, and also useful for separating materials.

UV resins add weight to dry flies – so be wary of adding too much.

Cheap long sewing pins are great for practicing your tying skills on. You can try new fly tying techniques on these pins, and if what you're trying doesn't work then just drop the pin in the bin. You can also use them for saved examples of tying procedures you are experimenting with.

Threads:

These can be traditional silks or standard Unithread in 6/0 and 8/0. Flat threads, gel spun polymers and nanosilk 12/0 (very thin and strong) are all useful.

The most useful and common thread size is 8/0 and you can tie nearly all your flies with this size thread. Start by using 8/0.

The best thread colours to have are black and white. You can then use marker pens on white thread for any other colours you need. Other important colours to have are light and dark brown and olive. Use alcohol-based markers for marking your flies.

Keep a small distance – 1 to 1½ inches between your hook and your bobbin – the closer you work the more precise you will be when you are tying.

When you start tying have a long tag of thread that you can hold up at 45° to the hook shank. Then as you add turns of thread they will slide down this tag and lay very close to each other and be even.

Note that winding thread on a hook adds a twist to the thread, so you need to untwist it every so often. Spinning the bobbin counterclockwise can untwist the thread. Then you can use a dubbing needle to flatten the thread.

Flattening the thread and using this flattened thread to tie your fly produces a body which is very smooth.

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You can split your thread. Use a dubbing needle to flatten the thread, then use the dubbing needle to separate the thread into two thinner strands. (You can always spin your bobbin to re-wrap the thread.)

Dubbing:

With hare's fur it's better to take the hair off the mask rather than out of a packet, because then you have a choice of the colour and style. Use a small tool with a saw tooth edge to scrape fur off a hare's mask.

Natural squirrel and possum are also good materials to use.

You can use a tacky wax to hold materials on the thread for dubbing, but it can leave a residue. (Rob doesn't wax the thread when he is adding dubbing. He adds small bits of dubbing and slides them up the thread. This gives more control of the amount of dubbing and thus the thickness of the body.)

Remember that a small amount of dubbing goes a long way. So take some dubbing and halve the quantity - and you'll probably be close to what you need.

When adding dubbing take a small pinch and twist each bit on always rolling it in the same direction. If you need to you can always untwist some dubbing and then re-twist it.

Use superfine dubbing for dry flies, and coarser materials for nymphs.

If you split the thread into two halves then you have two options. You can add pinches of dubbing between the two threads and then spin the bobbin to lock the fibres in. Alternatively, you can add dubbing to just one of the threads, then bring the two threads together and spin your bobbin to trap the dubbing tightly. A tightly dubbed body doesn't need ribbing to keep it all together on the hook shank.

All of this applies to working with dubbing loops. These can be created by forming a 3" loop and then trapping it at the hook shank with a couple of turns of thread. Then add small bits of dubbing at a time. You can always go back and add more dubbing to thicken the body you are creating. If you don't wax the thread you can always take some dubbing off and start again.

Ribbing

Ribs can be wire or tinsels. It is better to tie ribbing in on the far side of the hook shank, then make the first turn under the shank and then over - this gives a neater appearance with even turns. However it's also important to wind the rib in the opposite direction to the direction the dubbing was wound. This stops the rib from sinking into the dubbing.

Adding Hackles

Cock hackles are tied in at the butt rather than the tip. Before tying the hackle in strip away fibres from the butt until you have a 'good section' of top fibres to tie in. As you tie in turns of cock hackle use your fingers to lay the turns neatly side by side.

Wet flies (spider patterns) have soft hackles from typically partridge, starling or hen. Soft hackle fibres move in the current and this movement suggests the presence of food and is therefore very attractive.

Soft hackles are usually tied in by the tip. Start by cutting fibres at the tip to create a small triangle, then tie this triangle onto the hook shank with two turns of thread. Then grab the stem with some hackle pliers and carefully tie in two or three turns of the hackle. This is usually sufficient. The stem of these hackles is often quite delicate, so tie these turns in gently and carefully. The length of the hackle fibres should be about 1½ times the gape of the hook.



Spey and Switch Casting is Easy and Really Cool - Peter Hayes

... Mike Stevens, a VFFA member well known to many of us, is editor of the *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating* magazine. Mike has generously invited us to use articles from back issues of the magazine. This particular article was written by Peter Hayes for the June 2015 issue, and Peter has also given us permission to use it. Spey casting for trout (with two-handed rods) is growing in popularity. Recent issues of the UK *Fly Fishing and Fly Tying* magazine have included articles on this style of fishing, and Peter Morse in issue number 99 of *FlyLife* magazine wrote an excellent introduction to catching trout on the long rod. The following article by Peter Hayes also provides a very informative and helpful introduction.

Whilst I've been familiar with spey casting for many years it wasn't until just three years ago that I realised the full potential of it, the forthcoming groundswell towards it and the usefulness of it for Tasmania. During 2011 Marc Bale, Sage's International Marketing and Sales Manager, visited Tasmania and stayed at my Cressy lodge. Marc was in town to help build brand awareness and one night, during the dinner conversation, I asked Marc a few questions about fly rod sales.

You might be interested in this, as am I, and you might be surprised at some of the answers.

My first question was: "Marc, which company supplies the most fly rods in the world?"

His answer was that Sage sell more than anyone else – they are head and shoulders above all other companies.

Another question that I thought would get a straight forward answer was: "Marc, what is the biggest selling fly rod in the world?" I assumed, probably like you will, that it was going to be a #5 weight 9 foot. You could have picked me up from the floor when he said that it was a #5 weight, 11'6" Switch rod.

Marc went on to explain that people all over the world were learning to fly fish

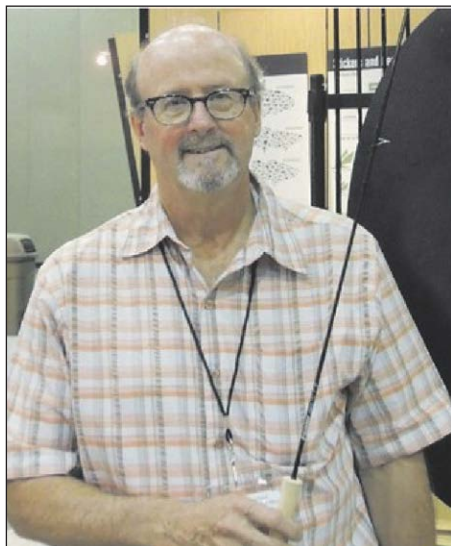


Spey casting – long rods and long casts

using two handed rods or 'switch rods'. It had not occurred to these people that fly fishing could be done with a single hand! Get that! My Tasmanian crystal ball tells me there might just be something in that. So, for the past three years I have put an enormous amount of time and effort in perfecting Switch casting and Spey casting. This winter I am going to do a road trip through the North-West United States focussing solely on Spey casting.

So, what is Switch and Spey rod casting?

Let's look at the line weight issue first. For some reason that I don't understand in regard to line weights for switch and spey rod lines you need to add three line weights above the single >>>



Marc Bale

hand rod line weight. So, when I talk about a #5 weight Switch or Spey rod line, I am talking about a normal single handed line of #8 weight. A #8 spey rod would use a #8 spey line but it would be the equivalent to a #11 in the single-hand world.

Switch Rods

A switch rod is a rod that can be used by switching to either single-hand use or two-hand use. Typically, they are lighter weights and shorter lengths than normal two-hand Spey rods. One that I favour is a #4 weight 11'6" Sage One. The line for this rod is similar to a #7 weight line for a normal fly rod, and as such can carry relatively heavy flies. In single hand use prodigious distances can be achieved using the Sage switch rod because of the length of this high tech lever. If I were to switch over and use two hands the casting becomes effortless (for the technical-minded the rod becomes a type one lever instead of a type three. If my top hand simply operates as a pivot point on the upper cork grip my lower hand

only needs to pull in toward my body perhaps 10" at 20 MPH and the rod tip goes forward 10 feet at 200 MPH).

Spey Rods

Normal Spey rods are designed to be used only with two hands. The most powerful one I own is a 15' #10 weight. It is scary how easily, and how powerfully, I can cast long distances with it. The fact that the line is equivalent to a normal #13 weight means that it can carry huge, heavy flies with ease. The thickness and strength of the rod means I can play big fish too.

Of course this is what the Spey rod was designed for. My understanding is that Spey rods and Spey casting were developed on the River Spey in the UK. It is a big river and has a run of big salmon. Long casts were necessary to cover the water. Heavy flies were mandatory and the fish were big and powerful.

The benefits of Switch and Spey Rods:

- A relatively small back cast area is required.
- Quick casting cycle times are possible – ideal for fast saltwater school species.
- The relatively heavy line can cast heavy flies.
- Long distances are possible.
- Greatly reduced effort - ideal for young, old or injury prone anglers.
- A dynamic roll cast delivery is safe as the fly never passes your body.
- Changes of direction are easy and instant.
- It is a fun way to fish compared to a single hand rod.

Prominent Spey casters visit Tasmania. How lucky are we here in Tasmania to have visits from two of the highest profile fly fishers on the planet, and all in this past year.

April Vokey

April is a great Spey casting exponent. She has fished that way in her native British Columbia, Canada, since she was young. April would have to be the most prominent female fly fisher in the world and she built her world-wide reputation on the back of Steelhead fishing with a two-handed rod. Her recent Spey demonstrations in Launceston were well received. For her diminutive size it is remarkable how far, and how easily, she can cast. It is interesting that April loves her Bob Clay bamboo Spey rod like no other. (I know how she feels - maybe it is like how I love my Nick Taransky bamboo Spey rod.)

Simon Gawesworth

I first met Simon in 2000 when we competed against each other in the World Fly Fishing Championships in Bristol, England.

Like me, Simon had come from a long and successful tournament casting background. He is one of only a handful of people to represent his country at world level in both fly fishing and fly casting championships. He was a formidable competitor! What Simon does not know about fishing is not worth knowing.

Simon recently visited Northern Tasmania where he spoke at an Australian Fly Fishing Museum cocktail party and demonstrated Spey casting on the South Esk River the following day. His appearances were well attended, and I for one was super impressed with his ability to inspire, to teach, and to cast a Spey rod. At day's end Simon and I cast

together under the moonlight on my casting pond. We shared a gin and tonic and he continued to cast. I didn't think there was anyone on the planet more passionate about the cast than me – I was wrong.

A recent saltwater trip

There I was, a month after April's and Simon's visit, standing knee deep on a sandbar. The wild southern ocean pounded just a kilometre behind me, huge rugged peaks of the southern Tasmanian wilderness were in front, and a channel full of clear blue incoming tide was at my feet.

The casting was beautiful. It felt beautiful, it was effortless and fluent - smooth. I am sure it looked good. I can truly say that it did not matter if there were no fish there. But then ... it happened. I should have known better. In a spot like this it was impossible to pull a chartreuse and white Clouser for any great distance through the water without it being eaten.

Cast after cast was eaten until the fish became a distraction and I happily cut off the hook so that I could keep up the casting practice. Watching those super smooth, powerful Vee loops sail off into the distance does more for me than pulling in fish. Then came the garfishing. I bet the dozens of gars I caught using the switch rod were the first ever gars caught this way in Tasmania. I don't mind saying it, but my two companions would not have caught a quarter of the fish that I caught. In this case the long fine tip 4 weight 11'6" switch rod and fly line was a superior gar fishing pole than the conventional spin rods.

So, give it some thought. Get in early - my crystal ball is not often wrong.



Joining The Brotherhood

... Alan Pilkington. Alan recently had the delightful experience of introducing a keen young teenager to the attractive but challenging art of fly fishing. Here is Alan's account ...

If we're lucky, we get started fly fishing early, with a teacher, and we hear grateful stories of those who first went astream with a father, an uncle, or a brother with a fly rod in hand. They were taught to cast, wrist locked, and book tucked under their elbow, with a mental metronome ticking and timing their strokes, like Paul and John McLean in *A River Runs Through It*. Then they learned knots and streamcraft, and later to tie flies, all in a nice orderly procession. When, after they'd hooked their first trout on a dry fly they'd tied themselves, 'played' it, and brought it to the net unassisted, they were welcomed to 'The Brotherhood' - that mysterious, motley band who pull on rubber pants and wade in cold water and cast tiny, feathered hooks to some of nature's most exquisite creatures - wild trout.

That didn't happen with me. I expect like many, I progressed from a hook on a line with an insect or a grub for bait, to spinning, eventually to trying my hand with a fly rod, and essentially teaching myself to cast. But I did have one advantage - a father who was a trout fisherman. He had shown my brother and I where the trout lay, what easily caught insects they ate - like grasshoppers, mudeyes or cicadas - and how to handle the fish once it was hooked.

And I was lucky that my learning to cast a fly, quite distinct from being a fly fisherman, came in my late teens when I was full of energy and juice and confidence, my eagerness overcoming early shortfalls in casting technique. I quickly understood that fly fishing is best not learned at the same time as learning to cast, but once this simple conundrum was solved, I forged ahead and by my



Pupil and teacher - Van with Alan

early twenties I considered myself a fairly competent fly fisherman. Now, fifty years later, I'd say I know perhaps ten percent of what there is to know, at best, even though I've fished solidly every year since I took up the fly rod. There is no greater teacher of humility than fly fishing for wild trout.

I'm fortunate to have a home on a *cul de sac* beside a small forest by Puget Sound, in America's Pacific Northwest, and I practice casting there without concerns for traffic. It is a place where I spent some time doing this during the pandemic, and a neighbor's son and aspiring fly fisherman had observed this. One day his father told me of his son's interest in learning to fly fish, but that not being a fly fisherman himself he couldn't help getting his son started.

That was all I needed. I told him I was willing to teach him to fly cast and we'd think about getting on the water if he made some progress. This started one of the best times I've had in a long while - passing on a useful skill to an eager young learner and introducing him to the

wonders of trout and salmon and moving water.

Van is fifteen, a keen athlete, thoughtful, observant, a quick learner with good coordination. Before long he'd learned the basics – a brisk back cast, stopping the rod when it was vertical, letting the line straighten behind him, then powering a forward stroke in the same arc as the back cast. Next, I put him to work on a nearby grassy park so as not to abrade the finish on my fly lines on the *cul de sac's* gravel, and through the pandemic he became proficient with the basic strokes and techniques – how best to hold his hand on the rod's grip, how to strip the line from the reel and feed it to the stripping guide, how to shoot line on the forward stroke, and so on. As he progressed, I thought how I would have liked to have had a teacher when I was his age! Through winter, when it rained, we started some fly tying instruction, and by the time the

northern summer of 2021 rolled around it was time to go fishing.

I wanted to put Van on a river where I knew he'd catch trout. There's nothing better for a beginner to see it all come together, to see that first fish take the fly and feel it run. So we planned a camping trip to southwest Montana and my American home stream, Rock Creek. Some of you may be familiar with my writing about this magical stream – medium-sized by western standards, a mixture of long runs and riffles with deep pools, gravelly corners, rock walls and back eddies. It holds brown and rainbow trout in all the lies you'd expect along with a good population of native cutthroat trout - fish that come eagerly to the surface for a floated fly, so a good fish to learn fish craft from.

Rock Creek flows in a valley of great natural beauty, rich in pioneer history and with its wildlife intact. Seeing

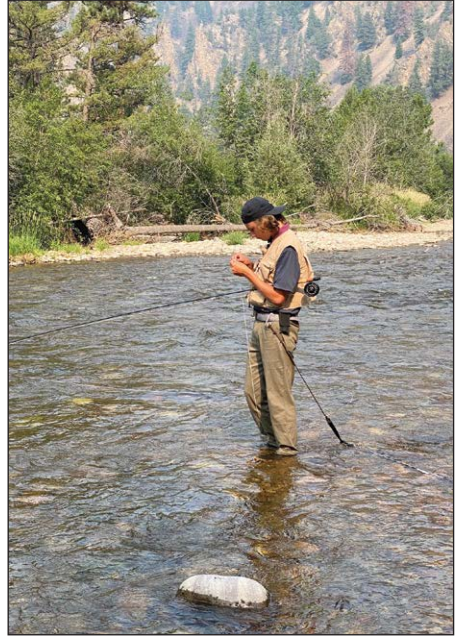


A nice 14" rainbow on Van's second day on Rock Creek

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moose or deer or bear is not uncommon, sometimes at streamside, and a nesting pair of bald eagles raise their young from a tall ponderosa pine near camp. There is still a sense of wildness there, which greatly enhances the experience of being on its waters with a fly rod.

By chance, Van's grandfather was a long-retired fly fisherman, and hearing of Van's progress gave him his twenty-year-old 9' #5 Cabela's graphite rod and reel with floating line to match. Not a Sage or a Winston, but not a wet noodle either. A good outfit for this river early in the season when the water is higher. Included was the gift of his grandfather's old fishing vest, replete with all its memories of the storied Yellowstone, Madison, and Big Hole rivers. I'd found some wading shoes I no longer used that fitted him. For Van's birthday I'd given him a decent folding belt knife I hope he'll have forever - perhaps through him I was vicariously reliving my own teen age coming-of-age fishing days. By the time we'd made camp, after a five-hundred-



Van's first morning on a trout stream

mile drive from Seattle, and walked into the water Van looked and felt the part, and had a smile like a new moon.

He quickly learned that casting upstream on moving water was a different kettle of fish to casting on a grassy lawn: the line floating towards you, winding around your legs, or dragging across the current and sinking the fly, the wind, overhanging branches, and so on. And before he started, we had a refresher course on knot tying I'd taught him at home, again the basics - tying the fly to the tippet, the tippet to the leader and the leader to the casting line.

After a while on an open pool with a steady flow and some words of advice and encouragement, Van started to translate his winter instruction into a halfway decent casting stroke, and we moved upstream to the next pool. I pointed out where I thought the trout would lie, where the current riffled into



Instruction from Don on where to cast

deeper water. I told him to cast the fly into the riffle, and when it slowed as it entered the deeper water to be ready. He made a good cast, the fly floated well, and a nice cutthroat came up. A too-fast strike, like we're all guilty of, and the fish was missed. Another was missed a few casts later, but Van was putting the fly in the right places and learning that getting the fish to come to the fly is only part of the story.

When Van hooked his first trout on the next pool, it turned out to be a strong twelve-inch rainbow, and new lessons followed. Keep the rod tip up, keep the fish on a tight line but not too tight, let it run when it wants to, play the fish with the line out of the reel (until you've learned to play it and put slack line on the reel at the same time), only bring the fish to the net when its ready, but don't tire it out too much if you're going to release it. The lovely fish came to my net, and I showed Van how to remove the fly after I'd wet my hands before handling it. Then I slowly revived it in the net, took a photo, and set it free. Van had a quiet smile on his face, we fist-bumped; twelve months of learning had paid off. I had my own rod, and I walked upstream to new



Van's 14" rainbow taken on a #14 Pale Morning Dun

water, and left Van to his own devices, to turn his learning into new experiences, alone.

The next morning Don, a friend with a ranch nearby and who is an accomplished fly fisher, took us onto some private water where his ranch land meets the river. He waded into the stream with Van and asked him if he could reach cast. Van looked at me quizzically, and I shook my head. There was a nice run on the opposite side of the river, and fast water between us and a drag free drift was impossible without a fast upstream mend on the water or in the air. Don took Van's rod and cast, mending the line in the air, and getting a good drift for a few feet before the fly dragged. He did it again, then gave the rod to Van, who, after a few tentative waves of the rod started to get it right. Don pointed to where he wanted Van's fly to drift, and sure enough, with a nice reach cast, the fly drifted over a cutthroat. Van lifted the rod when the fish rose and hooked it. A little later, on a stretch with overhanging

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Van took a nice cutthroat trout like this on his first day on Rock Creek

bushes, Don showed Van how to roll cast, not easy with an old weight forward line, with a similar result - this time a fourteen-inch rainbow.

On the third morning I asked Van where he'd like to fish – the same water we'd been on, or new water. "New water", he said, "And I'd like to fish alone, if you don't mind."

I looked at him and smiled. "Good idea", I replied.

"I think he's going to join the Brotherhood", I said to myself as Van walked to the track that took him upstream.



Sunken Ants

... a Facebook note from Philip Bailey, dated October 1.

Decades ago I was fortunate to fish with the late Noel Jetson in Tasmania. We were fishing the Brumby's Creek system just outside of the township of Cressy, which is where Noel lived and ran his business Jetfly.

There was a very good hatch of mayflies yet despite all of our offerings the fish were having none of them. "Give them something different," yelled Noel. I have always remembered those wise words and there have been many times when I have gone against the norm and "given them something different". Noel was famous for those words of encouragement to his clients.

So on went a #12 dry Red Tag. On my first cast the fish I was targeting gobbled it down. We went on to get quite a few fish that day, all on a large Red Tag in the midst of a huge Mayfly hatch.

I have heeded those wise words even when nymphing. Anyone who has fished with me recently would know that I like nymphing under trees, especially where a nice run sidles along the bank. Bow and arrow casting under the limbs, then gentle tracking of the fly(s) downstream often produces fish from those hiding spots, most of them large.

During summer and early winter many terrestrials drop from those branches and get dumped into the food chain. Aphids are the most obvious, but ants too as they hunt down food.

Only last week I heeded those wise words again. After fishing through a shallow run under some branches I took the advice. Leaves were dropping onto the water, along with hundreds of aphids and in amongst them an odd ant. So I changed to a small wet ant pattern, flicked it into the run, immediately hooked a very large grayling, and smiled as I again heard Noel say, "Give them something different".

So here is my simple Sunken Ant.



FLY OF THE MONTH

A Tale of Two Greenwells - Robert Bailey



In the September issue we featured the Greenwells Glory, tied and described by Robert Bailey. However Rob had prepared notes on two different examples of this fly, and this month we give you the second one.

Rob offered these explanatory notes:

This pattern has had many transformations over the years, responsive to the whim of the tyer as much as to the need of the angler. If you wish to learn more on the Greenwells, I would recommend the book *Greenwells: A Review* by Des Walters. Des's book covers the history of the Greenwells and its variations. A great read.

With this variation of the Greenwells, I've leant on a book called *Jim Wynn's Recommended Flies for the River Warfe*, edited by Martin Cross. Jim is largely unknown outside his native county, but as a tier he was never reluctant to try different materials or techniques when tying more traditional patterns. So, this second fly is my rendition of a Greenwells soft hackle; but using modern materials, perhaps some unusual techniques, and some inspiration from Jim Wynn.

Tying the Tussled Greenwells Soft Hackle

- Hook:** Pupa style in size 14 (I'm using a Dohiku Pupa)
- Body Thread:** Woolly Nylon Overlocker thread in white (decanted onto a bobbin). An alternative is to use Uni-Stretch, but it's thicker.
- Colouring Markers:** Graphic Pro 38 Pale Yellow (underbody), PrismaColour PM-192 Avocado (3/4 of the outer strand) and Sharpie Metallic Gold (1/4 of outer strand). Covered in UV resin of choice.
- Tying Thread:** Primrose Silk
- Thorax:** Dark natural Hare's Mask
- Hackle:** Greenwells Hen neck

Tying Procedure:

1. After securing your hook, catch in the Woolly Nylon about a third of the way down the shank with several turns. Trim away the waste.
2. Flatten the nylon a bit by spinning it counter-clockwise, then in touching turns run the nylon down the shank to about where the barb might be. Bring the nylon back up to the tie in point, then go back down again, extending further than the base layer. We're trying to build a thin taper with the nylon, ending with the nylon at the butt, with the last layer being the coloured layer on the way back up.
3. Colour the base layer with the pale yellow marker, and let it dry for a few seconds.
4. Spin the bobbin and flatten the nylon using a dubbing needle or similar. At this point you'll need about three inches of nylon out of the bobbing holder - any less and it becomes too difficult to achieve the next step, and too much will make it awkward to manage the final layer.
5. Using the needle, spread the exposed thread into 3/4 and 1/4, with the 1/4 strand towards the butt. Hold the bobbin in your left hand and insert a finger to keep these strands apart.
6. Take the pale yellow marker and colour the 3/4 strand. Then take the Metallic Gold and colour the 1/4 strand. Very slightly ease off the tension and let the marker dry a few seconds (gently blowing on it may help).
7. Gently take the tension again while trying to keep the two strands from mixing. You're after a two-tone effect. This is not critical, but the better you can keep them from mixing, the better the final effect.
8. While keeping gentle tension and trying to control the flattened nylon, wrap the nylon forward. The effect you are looking for is for the gold-coloured strand to form an open rib up the body. (Check the photo.) Once you have wrapped up to the body starting point, gently whip finish with two turns then trim the nylon away close to the wraps. Allow the markers to dry for a few more seconds.
9. Coat the body lightly with UV resin and let it set.

10. Now take your well-waxed silk, and catch in a turn or two in front of the body. Wrap back over the body with a few turns. Keep the tag end about two inches out of the way for the following step.
11. Select a hackle. The fibre length should be about one and a half to two times the hook gape, but this can be your choice. Remove the fluffy base fibres leaving an exposed stem. Using small fine hackle pliers catch the tip of the hackle and draw the fibres back away from the tip. You will need about 10 - 15 mm or so of fibres - enough for three to four turns of hackle. Then holding the hackle to keep the fibres back, nip out the tip to leave a small triangle about 1 mm long. This is what you will use to tie the hackle in with.
12. So, presenting the hackle with the stem backwards and the outside of the feather facing you, catch in that small triangle tip with two to three turns.
13. Take your hare's mask dubbing and dub a small pinch onto the thread. Tie in a dubbed thorax from the hackle and finishing an eye's length behind the eye. Wax your thread.
14. Take the hackle stem and the thread tag end together in your pliers (I find an electrical spring test clip better for this). Gently twist the thread and hackle together a few turns, taking care not to twist the hackle off.
15. Wrap the hackle forward over the thorax, making a full turn at the back of the thorax, and aiming to make a final full turn at the front of the thorax. Catch in the stem and thread with two turns. Trim away the waste and wax your thread.
16. Finish the head with a three or four turn whip finish. Trim away the waste thread.
17. Gently rub the hackle between your thumb and index finger to rough up the hackle and the thorax. You are attempting to crinkle up the hackle fibres a bit and generally mess it up. Massage the thorax and hackle fibres into the desired state.
18. Tie up a few and head to the stream.

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Harley's
FLY FISHING

VFFA 2021 meetings & other activities

(... all events subject to Covid restrictions)

November

12 – 14

Annual Trip to Warrnambool – if possible.

(This trip will depend on changes to Covid restrictions over the next few weeks. If we can go ahead with this event then Jim Blakeslee at Warrnambool will provide the necessary details. Terry Rogers will send out a Notice of Event email as soon as this is clarified.)

17 Wednesday

Millbrook Lakes – 11:00 am till dark

(This again will depend on promised changes to Covid restrictions. Details of arrangements will be given in an email from Terry Rogers about a week before the event.)

18 Thursday

General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

Speaker: Rick Dobson. Rick's topic is "Best fly fishing techniques, including some thoughts on modern nymphing."

(Members planning to enjoy a meal at the Kelvin Club prior to the meeting must email Terry Rogers and inform him of this.)

21 Sunday

Streamcraft session by David Grisold and Nymph Techniques session by Joanne and Rick Dobson. A 10:30 am start and barbecue lunch at 1:00 pm. Details in this issue.

24 Wednesday

Council Meeting – 7:00 pm – again hopefully at the Kelvin Club.

25 Thursday

Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm with John Pilkington as demonstrator.

29 Monday

VFFA annual visit to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers.

December

10 Friday

Annual & Christmas Dinner (combined) at the Kelvin Club.

Speaker: Jim Allen, who will bring some "Reflections on a Fly Fisherman's Fortunate Life". Details and the cost will be included in an email from Terry Rogers in late November. (Members can email Terry now indicating their intention to attend this dinner. A number have already.)

January 2022

12 Wednesday

VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, provided day summer temperatures are not too high.

February 2022

2 Wednesday

First Council Meeting for 2022 – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

6 – 12

Trip to Currawong Lakes private fishery in Tasmania (subject to border crossing regulations). Event Co-ordinator – Jon Kenfield (solutionist999@gmail.com)

12 – 20

Tasmanian trip to Hayes on Brumby's (subject to border crossing regulations). Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray (chris@graysmail.com.au.)

24 Thursday

General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:

"Liars' Night" – reports from members on their summer fishing.

(Our president David Hooke is asking that members who have some good stories to tell should contact him with the details.)

(VFFA events still to be finalised include Sunday Casting, casting tuition, winter fly tying, and classes on nymphing and river tuition on local streams. The date for this year's Donger Competition is also still to be settled.)