

# FLY LINES



NOVEMBER 2022

## Mark Turner at our November meeting

Mark Turner is currently the River and Wetland Health Program Manager at the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, where he has worked for the past 14 years. He has a Bachelor of Applied Science (Natural resource Management) from the University of Melbourne (Dookie College) in 1998. His career has focused mostly on waterway management within Victoria. He spent the early 2000's in the Otways, working for the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, before making the move back north of the divide in 2008.

During his career he has spent time working in the delivery of erosion control, stock exclusion, and revegetation to, in more recent years, the management of environmental water, waterways strategy, policy and program management.

Mark has a passion for getting out into the great (Australian) outdoors, occasionally wetting a line. He will talk to us about the management of waterways in the Goulburn Broken region.

Members are reminded that our November meeting will be preceded by a guided tour of the Shrine by Peter Whitelaw, commencing

Thursday, November 17,  
12 noon at the  
**Kelvin Club**

at 10:15 am (details of this function are given on page 2). Following our visit to the Shrine members will travel to the Kelvin Club for lunch and the presentation by Mark Turner.

We would encourage all members to join us for lunch, but PLEASE make a booking for this meal by Monday, November 14, by emailing Terry Rogers at [terryrogers@bigpond.com](mailto:terryrogers@bigpond.com) and leaving a message.



*Mark's Personal Best? A fabulous capture.*

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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## We welcome another new member

Again this month it is our great pleasure to welcome a new member to the Association. James Gray has asked to join our ranks and we welcome him with a great deal of pleasure. James is the son of past president Chris Gray and has already demonstrated rapidly developing skills in fly tying and fly casting. James caught his first trout on a fly at the recent VFFA trip to Thorpdale.

We trust that James’s membership brings many years of enjoyment and pleasure, along with lots of great memories.



## Notice of Event for VFFA Guided Tour of the Shrine of Remembrance on November 17

**The Event:** Peter Whitelaw, a VFFA member, is a Life Governor of The Shrine. He has very kindly offered to take members on a guided tour prior to our November lunchtime meeting at the Kelvin Club.

**Date:** Arrive at the Shrine at 10:15am on Thursday, November 17.

Peter will conduct a short briefing in the Visitor Centre at 10:30 and then escort members to the Crypt and up to the Balcony. People can then self-guide through the Galleries of Remembrance.

Peter will be conducting the Shrine Monthly Remembrance Service at 11:30. This usually lasts about 15 minutes, and then members will make their way to the

Kelvin Club by catching the tram up St Kilda Road.

**Address:** The Shrine of Remembrance.

**Travel:** You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements.

**Cost:** There is no cost; the usual fee has been waived.

**Event Registration Form (ERF):** There is no need to register, but when replying to Terry Rogers regarding Lunch, please indicate if you will be joining us at the Shrine.

**Event Co-ordinator.** David Hooke, mobile 0411 683 684, and email: [dhhooke@icloud.com](mailto:dhhooke@icloud.com)



*Nicely hooked*

# President's Message

*People willingly surrender their freedoms in return for security (Thomas Hobbes 1588 - 1679)*

There are currently two major political issues of interest to the VFFA and the fishing community more broadly. The first is access to Crown Land leases.

As fly fishers, we are as keen as any to have access to the many thousands of kilometres of waterways in Victoria. Indeed, in conjunction with the ATF, we have been involved in riparian works to enhance those waterways. However, we are also mindful of competing responsibilities to farmers/lessees concerned with safety and biosecurity.

Whatever the law or the regulations might mandate, it remains courteous and proper to seek the permission of the landowner prior to fishing through a lease. There are any number of reasons why it may not be prudent or safe to proceed without consulting the landowner.



*Dr David Hooke*

The second issue relates to the Draft Rules and Regulations for Metropolitan and Regional Parks.

Reading the summary one gets the impression that all is reasonable and rational, but it is misleading. The detail includes broad, ill-defined powers delegated to “land managers” which, in my opinion, are a gross over-reach, reminiscent of the gross overreach perpetrated by the Andrews Government under the guise of “keeping us safe” during the pandemic. The Shergold report tabled in Parliament this week confirms what many epidemiologists and commentators have been saying since early 2020. Not simply hindsight.

How is it that we ended up succumbing to these bizarre excesses. The answer is chilling in its simplicity. Professor Neil Ferguson, Imperial College London, an epidemiologist with a track record of greatly over-estimating the impact of epidemics, observed in the

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*Hugh Maltby- a very experienced auctioneer*

very early stages, that the Northern Italians had “got away” with previously unthinkable lockdowns. This observation informed his advice to the UK Government. Advice that was taken up with even greater zeal by the Victorian Government. All in the name of keeping us safe.

*History may not repeat, but it often rhymes.  
(Mark Twain)*

Closure of schools; locked down in home, no travel beyond 5km; no flying (what could be more socially isolated); no golf clubs on golf courses; no weddings, no funerals, no visiting dying relatives; not allowed home from interstate and so the list goes on. Outrageous curtailment of our freedoms.

No fishing except in designated areas; no walking off designated tracks; no filling a chainsaw except over an impermeable surface; no swimming except in designated areas; no camping except in designated areas; the list goes on... and the penalties...10 - 20 penalty units,

which equates currently to \$1800 - \$3600. Outrageous curtailment of our freedoms.

And why? Because they know they can “get away with it”!

Over the last month or so there have been a number of successful activities.

Our quarterly trip to Millbrook was well attended and by all accounts yielded some sizeable fish. The next trip to Millbrook will be Wednesday, January 11, weather permitting.

Our trip to Thorpdale as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers was a great day as always, with a more detailed account elsewhere in this issue.

The Bruce Whitehead Trophy, for which we compete with Bairnsdale Fly Fishers, was a fun weekend although a bit chilly. While there was a sizable turnout from the VFFA we were beaten by the sole attendee from BFFC – our congratulations to Rob Morecroft. More details on this in a separate report.



*Just some of the items to be auctioned*

The Annual Auction was conducted by the indefatigable Hugh Maltby, ably assisted by Peter Clayton and our Librarian Bill Jeans. Bill and Peter are both members of the Joseland Society (Bill is President), and we lean heavily on their knowledge and expertise in regard to fishing literature. As a result of their efforts, Hughie was able to sell 110 items in 2½ hrs and made some \$1,200 for the Association - a sterling effort. Thank you.

Next month's meeting is a luncheon at the Kelvin Club, starting at 12 noon on Thursday, November 17. However, this will be preceded by a guided tour of the Shrine by Peter Whitelaw, commencing at the Shrine at 10:30 am, and the plan, after the short remembrance service, is to take the tram up St Kilda Road to the Kelvin Club. Our Guest Speaker will be Mark Turner, Deputy Director of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. Mark will be addressing issues dear to the hearts of our members who regularly fish the waters for which GBCMA is responsible.

The VFFA is predominantly involved in freshwater fly fishing, but over recent years there appears to be increasing interest in saltwater fly fishing. Some of our members have recently returned from a marvellous trip north, and Josh Hutchins and Gavin Hurley have recently spoken of the fine saltwater fly fishing

to be had off Northern Australia and overseas in the Pacific Islands.

Council has been discussing the place for a "library" of saltwater fishing gear either permanently housed or more broadly distributed / available for members taking what might be a once in a lifetime trip. The postulate is that some members might contemplate such a trip if equipment was available for hire. Similarly, there might be a place for some freshwater equipment for potential members. Council member Dan Lovecek has taken the lead on this initiative and will circulate members with the proposal and a short survey to gauge interest.

Do remember to put Friday, December 9, in your diary for our Christmas Dinner.

Finally, the forthright comments I have made above are mine, and mine alone. They may or may not reflect the views of other members of the Association and are not necessarily endorsed by the Council of the VFFA. Any discussion is welcome, addressed to my personal email at the front of the Newsletter. I leave you with the famous words of Benjamin Franklin:

*"He who would trade liberty for some temporary security, deserves neither liberty nor security."*



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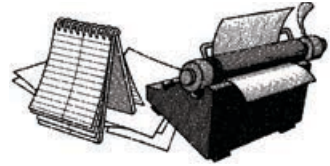
## Warrnambool Trip Cancelled

The annual November trip to Warrnambool is a fixture in the VFFA annual calendar, and we have enjoyed some fabulous times there in past years, hosted by the Warrnambool Club members. Sadly, this year's trip has had to be cancelled. Firstly, probably because of the weather, only a few members indicated their interest in

going, and secondly, certainly because of the weather, the report from the Warrnambool members is that the local rivers are flooded and high and very dirty.

So we've given up on this year, but will look forward very much to another fabulous Warrnambool trip next year.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"In this era of catch and release, it is critical to appreciate the many implications of the release. As an act it is about much more than simply returning fish alive to the water. Rather it takes each of us through the looking glass and into our own private angling wonderland."*  
(William Douglas: *Casting About In The Reel World*)

*"Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery elements are made for wise men to contemplate and for fools to pass by without consideration."* (Isaac Walton)

*"The trout that seem to stick in my memory the finest aren't the big ones. My most unforgettable trout all lived close to home. In fact when I take out my pouch of trout memories and spill them onto the table, it seems that the smaller ones shine the brightest."* (William Tappay: *Those Hours Spent Outdoors*)

*"There are times when it is enough that angling simply tends my spirit: just to sit beside the clear, flowing waters and hear the melodic call of a bellbird - and to see a trout rise."* (John Hayes: *The Artful Science of Trout Fishing*)

In this issue Jim Blakeslee describes catching a fine brown from the Moyne River. At 6¾ lb it was a very fine fish indeed. As it happens, the Moyne, which runs into the sea near Port Fairy in Western Victoria, regularly produces large browns.

But Jim also reports that on the same occasion he almost trod on a snake – a copperhead. Copperheads are quite common in this area.

This reminded me that my first serious fishing encounter with a snake occurred on this same river, the Moyne, back in the 1970s. It was a pleasant sunny day and I was fishing near the old railway bridge where the river is deep with a gentle flow. Not much was happening as I mindlessly flicked a weighted nymph upstream and retrieved it slowly. I just happened to glance down and saw to my horror that a snake (yes, a copperhead) was coiled up in a tight circle between my feet. One foot either side. I made a

very hasty retreat backwards. The snake remained unmoved. Perhaps it was dead, so I stretched out and poked it in the ribs with the tip of my rod. The head came up instantly, the snake glared at me furiously, then raced off upstream. I fished downstream.

I guess when you ponder the perils of fly fishing in Australia snakes would have to feature. We have lots, and they are dangerous. Yet when you look at the records you find that while about 3,000 people are bitten by snakes in Australia each year, the number of fatalities is typically one or two. I personally know of only two anglers (one a VFFA member) who have actually been bitten, and neither died.

Tom White, VFFA member and ATF treasurer, was telling me about a recent ATF Tree Maintenance Day on the Steavenson River. Oh, how we love the little Steavo – such a pretty little stream and so close to Melbourne. But as we

know, it's been raining, and the rain has forced the local Steavenson snakes out of their usual domestic arrangements. Tom writes: "A number of snakes were encountered during the day (including one on the roadway over the bridge). It would be wise to advise people to be careful. The snakes are being washed out from their hidey-holes and are quite active. The three snakes I saw on the day were all tiger snakes."

Of course our usual dress keeps us safe - thick socks, long trousers and waders provide good protection, especially as our most dangerous snakes have short fangs.

Like most other anglers I've come across plenty of snakes along our rivers. If you spot them well clear of where you are then you don't get too fussed. It's the ones that you didn't see that race out from the long grass under your feet that raise the blood pressure.

Snakes aren't our only concern. I commenced my fly fishing when living in Warrnambool, the centre of a major dairying industry. I soon learned to be wary of cantankerous and ill-tempered bulls. They're big and they run fast. I was evicted one day from a paddock by a cranky horse, and on another occasion a cow with a very young calf

took great exception to my presence. And on another memorable afternoon a herd of mad steers raced around me in decreasing circles, inspiring me to hop over a fence very rapidly.

But animals aren't our only danger. We can be the problem ourselves. I've embedded hooks in myself twice through poor casting. The first of these disasters occurred on a windy evening on Warrnambool's Merri River. A strong gusty wind was blowing hard onto my right shoulder, and at the same time a fairly large trout kept swirling and rising right out in front of me. So I kept casting and the inevitable happened - my large weighted Matuka got blown off course and buried itself in my neck. Fortunately our family doctor hadn't closed up for the day and did the extraction. He asked me if I wanted my fly back undamaged; I told him to throw it in the bin.

Rivers offer their challenges too. Some years ago I enjoyed some truly fabulous fishing with Hubert Reichelt in New Zealand's South Island. On one particular morning we headed off early and drove to a locked gate on a property. Hubert had a key, so we opened the gate and drove several kilometres through the property to a small hut - our accommodation for the night. The



*A Steavenson River tiger snake – possibly hunting for a new home*

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river that ran through the property was fabulous –full of 3 – 4 lb rainbows that were very keen to eat our flies. But progress up the river was a challenge. There were a number of cliffs that blocked our progress, so we had to make some seven or eight crossings. The river was about 10 – 15 metres wide at most points, perhaps a metre deep on average, and flowing strongly. The river bottom was the predictable collection of large slippery rocks, so wading across the river was daunting, especially as the camera I was carrying was not waterproof. I'm sure we've all got similar memories of rivers or sections of rivers that presented hazards.

Fences are another irritant. Near where the Mt Emu Creek joins with the Hopkins River just north of Warrnambool (an area I visited frequently in the 1970s) there was a long tired-looking electric fence that I found was never turned on. Until the day that it was, which I discovered when I was straddling it, one leg either side.

Barbed wire fences can be a pest too. Especially as they make big tears in expensive waders. In the 1980s I recall fishing a beaut stream in New Zealand. At one point I arrived at a high barbed wire fence that blocked my progress. The river on the other side looked very attractive, but I was wearing new and expensive waders. After pondering the possibilities I took my waders off and dropped them over the fence, along with with all my fishing gear. Then I laid on my back on the ground and wriggled under the bottom strand of the fence. Once through I reassembled my gear and fished the beaut water lying ahead. Yes, I was younger and a lot sillier in those days.

My worst fence encounter occurred in the 1970s on that Moyne River mentioned

earlier. I was fishing there with Jim Blakeslee, and Jim was upstream from me when he called out to say he could see two or three large fish cruising the pool he had reached. Naturally I was keen to catch up with him, and in trying to scramble over the intervening barbed wire fence I caught my foot on the top rung and fell headfirst into a concrete channel. I put my left arm out to break my fall and dislocated my elbow.

Tragically that ended the fishing for the day. We didn't bother with the fish Jim had just spotted. Instead he dropped me off at the Warrnambool general hospital and went to tell my dear wife that I might be held up for a bit.

Meanwhile back at the hospital a charming young nurse came along to get the medical procedures moving. I knew her well – she had been a student in one of my senior classes at the local high school a few years earlier. She explained to me that her job was to remove all my clothing and dress me in a hospital gown ready for my impending surgery. I mean, could the day get any worse?

We love our fly fishing, and a day on a river or lake is always something to be enjoyed. But there are hazards. Fortunately, with a bit of thought and care they won't bother us.

Cheers and tight lines,

Lyndon



## Alan Pilkington – Guest Speaker at our VFFA Christmas Dinner

Alan was born in Yea, in central Victoria, in 1943.

Graduating from Melbourne University, he worked in advertising, and after moving to the United States with his family in the 1980s, became Chairman of one of Chicago's largest and most respected advertising agencies. An active conservationist and environmentalist, he served as Board Chair of Defenders of Wildlife, a leading United States wildlife advocacy group, participating in the successful reintroduction of timber wolves to the Yellowstone National Park in the 1990s.

Since his retirement twenty years ago Alan has become a writer, publishing novels, collections of verse, short stories, and a memoir, all with outdoor themes or settings. In recent years has become a frequent contributor to *Fly Lines*.

His latest book, *Where Time Stands Still*, which was co-authored with his brother John, tells of his family's involvement with the Big River in north-eastern Victoria for almost a century.

He caught his first fish, a perch, on a worm in a billabong by the Goulburn River when he was five. A small rainbow

trout on a grasshopper on the Big River came a short time later. Graduating from spinning to fly fishing in his teens, Alan has been an addictive fly fisherman ever since, fishing in the United States, Canada, England, Iceland, the Caribbean, Patagonia, Central America, Fiji, New Zealand, and in Australia in Tasmania, the Snowy Mountains, the Victorian alps, and of course on his beloved Big River.

In his address to members, Alan will talk about why he loves fly fishing.



*Alan Pilkington (on the left) showing why he loves fly fishing*

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## Australian Trout Foundation – Stevenson River Tree Maintenance Day

... Tom White (ATF Treasurer)

I arrived at Maryton Park bridge at 9:45am in pleasant and sunny weather. There were some 10 - 12 vehicles already parked there and 18 people had arrived to undertake the work that had been planned. GBCMA had erected a 3m x 3m gazebo as a check-in station and BBQ preparation shelter.

Sue Kosch, from GBCMA, and two colleagues, Colin and Roscoe, took care of the food, tea/coffee, refreshments, etc. I introduced Sue and Colin to the group, and Sue then outlined the work that was to be undertaken.

Near the gazebo several brush-cutters were lying ready for use. Colin ran >>>

through a quick familiarization with the use a brush-cutters, and pointed to where the first aid kit was kept and told us who had first aid training.

We were then offered gloves and goggles, if needed, and a couple of people donned face masks to use with the brush-cutters. Others grabbed the large white bags for collecting old tree guards for recycling and disposal. I took my camera along to photograph proceedings. A trailer that had been brought along was almost full of used tree guards and other rubbish by the time we had finished.

A narrow track had been cut through the long grass well back from the river to give safer access for anglers along the river reserve. The track ran along the Marysville-Buxton Road side of river and goes from Maryton Lane bridge up to the farm bridge several hundred metres upstream.

By mid-day Sue was happy with the work that had been completed and called it time to finish up and have some food. A couple of bangers with onion on some bread, helped down with a cup of coffee and a chat with each other, and we were all done.



*Those old tree guards needed to be removed*

Time to go fishing! I asked Trevor Hawkins if he wanted to hang around for a few casts, and as everyone else had packed up and left, he decided he could spare an hour or so. Between us I think we landed three or four fish. My first fish was a nice little brownie of around 11 inches, which of course was my first fish on my first outing for the season and I hooked it on my first cast! Trevor posted a short video of me awkwardly releasing the fish on his Facebook page.

Tom White



*Plenty of tidying up to do (photo courtesy of Ray McMahon)*



*A welcome break*



*Removing tree guards*



*The Steavenson is justifiably one of our most popular trout streams close to Melbourne*



*Even the cows were keen to see what was being done*

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*Another load of tree guards being removed*



*The brush-cutters did much of the work*

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## Millbrook Report

In late September a team of VFFA members descended on the four Hillies lakes at Millbrook for a day's fishing. The weather was bleak – cold with gusty winds and frequent showers. But the anticipation was high and the ten members who were there tackled the challenge with enthusiasm.

Craig Coltman was our guide for the day, and it has always intrigued me that guides seem to have different optical equipment to the rest of us. At one stage late in the day I was standing on the jetty near the cabin with Craig at my side. It was still heavily overcast and the wind was gusting strongly, so the water in front of us was a mass of rippled grey waves racing from right to left. Craig's commentary went something like this: "Look, there's one there that just rose on your left, and there's another one



*The cabin on Hillies at Millbrook*

down on your right about 10 yards out. He's just risen twice." According to my optometrist my eyes are still in reasonable nick, and I was wearing prescription polaroids, yet I could not see any of this.

Certainly the guides that Mark Weigall provides are highly skilled and so helpful. We learn so much from them



*Dan Lovecek had a good day*



*Paul Squires landed some nice rainbows*



*Richard Kos was particularly successful*

and their contribution to our visits is immense.

Despite the wintry weather lots of fish were caught. Kossy had landed eight by lunchtime, and others were connecting fairly frequently too.

Here are some comments.

Brad Wilson: "As a Hillies first timer, the prospect of fishing four different lakes was exciting. There were some good fish midging at the top of the Cabin lake so Craig set me up with a midge rig consisting of a Claret Carrot dropper and a Diawl Bach on point. A slow figure-eight retrieve eventually enticed a lovely 50 cm rainbow. This technique then worked for a few tiger trout across the other lakes. Despite the challenging "winter" conditions, a fun day was had by all. Thanks again to Craig for the numerous tips and insights. Looking forward to the next trip!"

Hugh Maltby: "One beautifully conditioned rainbow about 1½ lb caught on a Sticky" (i.e. Stick Caddis pattern.)

Dan Lovecek: "I had a typically enjoyable time at Millbrook which far exceeded expectations, given the forecast for inclement weather and the warning that the typical early season dun hatches had been delayed.

I was very pleasantly surprised when I hooked up to the first fish of the day (a tiger trout of just over a pound or so and a new species for me) on a sparsely tied green damsel pattern fished in the marshes at the northern end of the lake by the cabin. After a shift of location I noticed a few large brown duns make an appearance and, as a dry fly tragic, tied on a dun pattern and shaving brush emerger combo with limited hopes of success, but figured it was worth a try. Not two minutes later I hooked >>>



*Dan Lovecek connected with a number of tiger trout*

up to a very large rainbow that engulfed the fly and quickly found its home in the reeds where it made its escape. My disappointment didn't last long, as that was shortly followed by the same fly combination cast at a cruising tiger trout

of 3 lb that subtly sipped the dun pattern and was landed after a nice tussle.

I caught another four decently-sized fish on the dun prior to lunch, which was great sport with the rainbows particularly keen to participate.

But the highlight of the day came towards dusk in the form of a fight with a very big rainbow of 6lb plus which ate a damselfished again at the top of the lake abutting the cabin. Having left my net in the car I failed to properly land it as it broke off as I tried to bring it to the bank. But the aggressiveness of the eat and the commotion in the very skinny water won't be forgotten!"

Paul Squires: "A very pleasant day on lovely water. I fished all day with a 3 fly rig - dun, possum emerger, and flash back nymph . Caught two on the emerger and dropped two. Enjoyed the day!"



*Kossy landing another one*

Mike Hitchen: "Nice to be out on the water, but I'm always happier when I see a few more fish moving. I managed one tiger trout on a para dun, and rose another. Hard work, but perhaps fairly typical for this early in the season."

So there you have it - differing tactics and varying degrees of success. It's intriguing that a team of anglers, all experienced and competent, fishing the same water can have such variable results. But regardless of the end count everyone enjoyed the day at Millbrook immensely.



*Brad Wilson enjoyed his day*

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## Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers – VFFA Day

... a report from past president Chris Gray

A number of enthusiastic members from the LVFF and VFFA gathered in the heart of Thorpdale on October 9, all eagerly waiting for the bakery to open and provide the coffees necessary to fire up the fishing engines for the anticipated wet weather. The two organisations were well represented in both numbers and banter, with the discussion focusing on what flies were needed and who had James Hearne's secret pattern. James was present when the food and drinks arrived and passed around some secret damselfly imitations. Then we headed off.

We were quickly divvied among the selected locations, with our LVFF guides taking us off in search of good fishing, all of which seemed to be located within 10 minutes of the town.

A possie of cars arrived at the various farm gates where we set up our fly gear, then walked up the lush green valleys, stopping at each dam in turn to discuss



*Chris Gray with a fine rainbow from the Thorpdale dams*

what was in there and who would fish it. A light southerly breeze and overcast conditions provided the backdrop.

Michael was our guide for the morning, and we stopped halfway up the >>>

valley where he directed us to a bank that had a steep drop off. He took young James Gray under his wing, giving him invaluable local knowledge on where the trout would be, what fly to use, and how to fish it in the wind lanes.

I managed to take on board these guiding tips and soon landed a respectable yearling rainbow. Not long after this James was hooked up to his first trout on a fly, and a third rainbow was soon reeled in. The attached photos highlight Michael's ability to cope with the blackberries in netting our fish. Thank you, Michael, for assisting James in catching his first trout on a fly!

When we headed back to Thorpdale for the BBQ lunch it was apparent that the three trout we caught were supportive of Michael's tactics, as no other reports were forthcoming. It's a good thing the BBQ lived up to the high standards of previous years. Doggie provided the entertainment

with a raffle while we negotiated plans for the afternoon as the clouds cleared.

Hughie, Gordon, Ray, James and I enjoyed the afternoon pursuing more trout, though the best we could manage was Hughie and Ray sharing untold volumes of wisdom and chasing daisies on the banks.

On behalf of the VFFA members I would express our gratitude to the LVFF members for another very enjoyable day and for their fantastic hospitality. For the VFFA members who did not make it to Thorpdale, the LVFF members have extended an invitation to join them on the first Sunday of each month to fish their local dams.



*James Gray connected with his first trout on a fly*

## This Year's Bruce Whitehead Challenge

The Bruce Whitehead Challenge is a relatively new winter competition between teams from the VFFA and the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club. The venue for the competition are the lakes around Camperdown with the main focus on Lake Purrumbete. We have two reports on this year's challenge, with Rob Tuck giving a VFFA perspective and Rob Morecroft representing the Bairnsdale team.

### **Rob Tuck:**

A group of VFFA Members travelled to Lake Purrumbete recently to compete against the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club (BFCC) for the Bruce Whitehead Trophy. Unfortunately, the weather was poor. There were two days of heavy rain and strong winds on October 12 and 13, followed by a day of even stronger wind on Friday, October 14.

However on the Saturday the weather improved and it was possible for some fishing to be done. Six members of the Warrnambool Fishing Club (WFC) joined us on the Saturday and four of them very kindly brought their boats so that anglers were able to pair up with experienced WFC members who know Lake Purrumbete well.

Notwithstanding the improved weather conditions on the Saturday, the fishing was very poor. Gordon Baker had landed a 2 lb 12 oz Chinook salmon on the Friday, so the VFFA team was initially ahead in the competition. However, Rob Morecroft, representing Bairnsdale, caught an 8 lb 12 oz brown trout on the Saturday, and apart from a redfin caught by Gordon Baker and a rainbow caught by one of the Warrnambool Club members, no other fish were caught on the Saturday. So consequently, BFCC retained the Bruce Whitehead Trophy.



*Gordon Baker with his Chinook salmon*



*Rob Morecroft's magnificent 8 lb 12 oz brown trout*

Despite the poor weather and indifferent fishing, all participants enjoyed the time together. Many thanks to Hugh Maltby for organising the event and for his excellent catering. Our thanks, too, to the Warrnambool members who joined us on the Saturday and made their boats available. And, of course, our congratulations to the Bairnsdale Club for retaining the Bruce Whitehead Trophy

>>>

**Rob Morecroft, BFFC:**

The Bruce Whitehead Challenge was not just a fishing event. It was also a challenge in reading the weather and a classic example of gracious hospitality.

It turned out that I was the only member available to represent Bairnsdale, and with the forecast predicting appalling weather I was not sure that I would actually make it to Camperdown, given the torrential rain that fell on the Thursday. Road closures appeared everywhere on the VicRoads website, but a close look on Friday morning showed the M1 and A1 were not blocked, so I jumped in the ute and headed west.

When I arrived at the campground I was immediately welcomed very warmly by Hughie and Peter. Hughie invited me to dinner and put on a very impressive feed. The red wine flowed freely with VFFA members topping up my glass at every opportunity.

On the Saturday I woke feeling a little dull in the head. This was going to be a tough day's fishing. I started at the gravel pit, meandering along the edge of the lake exploring possibilities when I remembered a location close by where

I had seen fish smelting several years earlier.

The reeds were much as I remembered them. A flick of the rod, then a surge of water created a rush of panic. I'd connected with a fish; a big fish. I fumbled around trying to get the knots out of the excess line, wound it all in past the end of the leader, then almost fell in trying to net the fish. It was PB for me at 8lb 12oz.

That evening at dinner the mood was more sombre and there was less red wine available. I indicated I might head off early Sunday morning to visit my daughter in Castlemaine, the VFFA members all agreed it was a very good idea. Having enjoyed the hospitality of the VFFA it was no surprise to see them in the rear vision mirror all waving me goodbye.

Rob Morecroft, BFFC



*Rob Morecroft with his winning brown*



*Gus from the Warrnambool Fly Fishers managed to land this fine Chinook salmon*

## Some Recent Reports

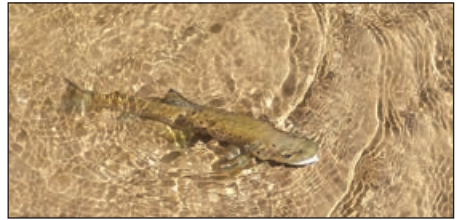


*Two views of the same section of the Owens River showing the a change after five days*

The recent weather has been very unfriendly for fly fishing with lots of rain and flooded rivers, but Brian Eddy and John Douglas have both managed some successful outings.

### Brian Eddy

What a difference a day makes" (or five days in this case). The first pic below was taken on October 14 and shows the river running high, fast and dirty. You would think it would take weeks to recover. The second shot is the same section five days later. It's still high and fast but clearing nicely. Clear enough to spot this brown trout tucked into the little amount of cover below the tree in the water. And



*The water was clear enough for Brian to spot this small brown in the shallows along the river's edge*  
then I spotted a nice rainbow also near the edge a little further downstream on the same day.

My thanks to John Pilkington for his CPD (Cinnamon Parachute Dun) that enticed the brown, and to Glen Cox for the Owens Purple Nymph that the rainbow fancied.

We've now had quite a bit more rain (but no flooding like there has been further downstream) and it's still fishable on the edges at least. Casting to anything out mid-stream is pointless, and wading is strictly below the knees only!

With all the water about I'm hoping for a really great season to follow.

Cheers, Brian

>>>



*Brian caught this rainbow trout on Glen Cox's Owens Purple Nymph*

**John Douglas**

Plenty of rain and high streams! The Goulburn has been running mostly out of its banks at up to 38,000 Megalitre, so fishing has been difficult. Access is limited to a lot of the river, so I've not bothered with it. The smaller streams are all high, but if you fish the quiet water the fishing is really good. Plenty of fat fish keen to eat the nymph or a squirmy. The trouble is there is a bit of walking required to find the softer water, so there are limited opportunities. Or, just as the streams are settling down, it rains again and the flows increase. But the condition of the fish is fantastic.

Then - some later breaking news! The Goulburn has dropped and the fishing is ok. I had a good session last night. The photos are of Mark who works for the VFA at Snobs Creek with an ex-brood fish he landed on his 3 weight rod.



*A handsome brown from early season in the Goulburn River*



*A small brown taken by John on a Squirmy Worm pattern*



*Mark's superb Goulburn rainbow*

# Tasmanian Fishing Report – Spring 2022

... from Chris Wisniewski, Tasmania Inland Fisheries Service

Are you a regular visitor to Tasmania fishing for trout, or have you thought about but are yet to visit? At present the trout fishing is spectacular, and with the amount of water about it will continue to be so right through the 2022-23 trout season.

As predicted, Lake Crescent is fishing particularly well. The lake has been spilling for the past two months, which means the extensive wetlands have been flooded and so food abounds. Lots of brown trout in the 4 – 5 kg range are being caught and fish to 8 kg have been reported. There have been up to thirty boats a day on the lake, but don't let this put you off. If you would like to catch a trophy trout there is plenty of room as it's a big lake (23 square kilometres in area). With the marshes full of water there are lots of options for the shore-based anglers too.

October and November are always the best months to fish Four Springs Lake. The fishing has been good through October, though a little patchy at times, possibly due to the easterly weather and the rain. The dun hatches have been steady with the fish switching off and on. It is just a matter of putting in the time, as it has been varying from day to



*A flood feeder from Four Springs*

day. Fishing with a nymph has proven very effective. When the wind drops there have been fish in close hunting red spinners. The heavy rain caused the water level to rise quickly and there was good fishing around the edges to flood feeders for a period.

With a fast-rising water level Arthurs Lake has fished well through October and this is likely to continue. The brownies were making the most of the freshly flooded ground and the food that came with it. The trout were in good condition, as would be expected, and were the strong fighters that Arthurs is known for. The level is now getting back into the bushes, so a boat will be an advantage.



*A 4 kg brown recently captured at Lake Crescent*

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There have also been good reports of nice fish being caught by anglers fishing loch style.

Little Pine Lagoon has gone from spilling, to very low, to now spilling again. If you time it right and fish it when it is spilling there have been lots of fish in amongst the bushes. They have been willing to take a dry fly, but as you can imagine, have been difficult to land among the sticks. At the low level hundreds of fish were tailing around the exposed edges feeding on scud. These fish are known to be hard, but persistence pays off. The fish had their heads down in the grass with tails waving. The sheer number of them allows you to pass up a difficult fish and try the next one. The fish that changed from tailing to cruising along showing their dorsal fins were the ones to target, and could be tempted with a small wet scud imitation fished inert.

With a rising level there have been lots of fish in on the shore at Bronte Lagoon. Good fish, too. Success here is a matter of timing and watching the weather and water levels at <https://www.hydro.com.au/water/lake-levels>.



*A low water scud feeder from Little Pine*

High water levels have also seen some great visual fishing both to tailing and cruising (polaroiding) fish in the Nineteen Lagoons. The road in has been washed out badly just before Thousand Lake Lodge, thus preventing vehicle access, so this will slow up all but the keenest for a few weeks.

Most northern rivers have been in flood. This has provided good backwater fishing if you are prepared to seek it out.

#### **Places to think about:**

A rising level in yingina / Great Lake is flooding new ground. There will be fish in most corners and where water is flowing in from the surrounding terrain.

Woods Lake is filling fast and will be worth a look now and over the coming months as things warm up. No reports at present, as everywhere else is fishing too well.

Tooms Lake has been spilling for some time and the water is clearing up after being dirty for the past few years. There will be some good fishing here over summer.

Talbots Lagoon is a place you must fish if you like big dun hatches and big strong fish.

Waters in the north-east are all brim full, so Blackmans Lagoon, Waterhouse Lakes, Curries River Reservoir and Camden Lake are all worth thinking about as alternative options.

This may sound like a tourist advertisement, but now is the time to plan a trip to trout fish Tasmania. But note that in planning any Tassie trips it's also important to check weather conditions and road closures. This Website will give road conditions:

<https://www.police.tas.gov.au/alerts/statewide-road-conditions-2/>

## Travis Dowling, Head of Victorian Fisheries, Recently Fished the Howqua

The Sea she was angry my friends, or the raging Howqua. Not really sure how that yarn goes. But with family in tow I headed up to the Howqua and camped at 7 Mile in the last week of September. The river was high but clear. My daughter Lily and wife Katy were very keen for a fish, and both landed trout, both rainbows and browns. They smashed me. Terry George has advised me that my purple beanie probably scared every trout, deer and wombat away over about a 100 km radius.

We stayed for three nights, trout for dinner each night and wonderful fishing and memories. Look forward to bumping into VFFA members across our incredible rivers this spring and summer.

Cheers Trav



*Travis retired without catching a fish – an experience we are all so familiar with*



*Travis Dowling casting a fly on the Howqua*



*Daughter Lily and wife Katy, on the other hand, were quite successful*

## Report From Way Out West - A Day On The Moyne

... from Jim Blakeslee

Rain is coming. BOM says so. It has forecast a week of heavy weather again and possible flooding throughout Victoria. The rivers around Warrnambool have been high and brown for a couple of months, but a two-week respite in the weather with some warm, dry, sunshiny Spring days and northerly breezes has allowed the Moyne enough time to settle and begin to clear. Will it be enough for a trout to see a fly? I'm determined to find out. This is a short window of opportunity too good to waste.

So, I loaded the bike on the rack at the back of the Forester and headed off for my favourite access point on the Warrnambool-Port Fairy Rail-trail. It takes 20 minutes to get there from home. I park, unload the bike, don my hat, polaroids, thigh waders and vest (with lunch and water bottle in the back), rig up the fly rod, sling the landing net over my shoulder, climb on the bike ... and I'm off. It takes five minutes to get to the bridge over the Moyne. Along the way I meet a couple of riders going towards Port Fairy who ask why I'm riding with a fly rod fully assembled. "Goin' fishing!" I reply as we pass each other.

I wheeled the bike off the trail, chained and locked it and stashed it in the tall grass beside the river. As I tie on a #4 black bead-head Woolly Bugger I can see that the water is still up a bit and flowing strongly, but the clarity is good enough to see into it for about a metre. I reckon that will be good enough for a trout to see a big wet fly as it swings past and have a go at it.

I started fishing, casting the fly across and down, swinging it through the pools and runs. After an hour of fishing all the likely holding water it has been nothing, nothing, not a swirl, not a sign, NOTHING. So I reeled in and walked half an hour to the big pool at the bottom of "the beat" and sat down on a rock. I tied on a #4 weighted Sandy that represents a gudgeon, small tupong or bully. I watched the water in the pool as I had lunch. MORE NOTHING.

Now the real fishing begins. I turned and started "nymphing" the Sandy upstream. The first cast is where the water from the run above cascades into the top of the big pool. As I raised the rod tip and begin to lift the fly back towards the surface a



*Lake Cartcarrong, just north of Warrnambool, is a popular local stillwater fishery. Last August Fisheries stocked 3,500 fingerlings in it, thus providing some great future fishing.*

fish smashes it. The brown tears off down current and into the centre of the pool. It jumps, so I lower the rod tip and “bow to the fish” to reduce tension in the line so the hook doesn’t pull out. After some serious head shaking the brown rips more line off the reel and jumps again. I bow to the fish,” of course. It eventually tires, I reel it in, net it, briefly admire the handsome 1.5 kg buck brown that fell for the Sandy, slip the fly out of its hooked lower jaw and set it free to be caught another day.

I nymphed the Sandy upstream through the next half dozen pools and runs with no further action. When I get to one of my favourite sections I fish with extra care. I remind myself “there has to be a fish here somewhere.” I finally got to the head of the pool where the run above pours into the top of the pool and creates a swirling eye. I cast the Sandy well up into the run and watch my leader carefully as I lift the rod tip so the fly drifts back and drops into the head of the pool. I let it sink into the eye of the pool, began to lift the fly when suddenly it stops and I feel a heavy weight on the end of the line. I started to think I was snagged, then I think not as “the weight” steams off downstream.

“I gave the fish as much stick as I dared but can’t stop it. It chugged past the middle of the pool and I was getting worried. What if it races down through the run at the bottom of the pool? Big trouble if that happens. It would be like hooking a steam train going full-throttle downhill. I started getting ready to run after it. The backing was beginning to run through the guides as I raised the rod to reduce drag on the line.

Then a bit of luck. The fish turned and moved back into the middle of the pool where it hugged the bottom. Suddenly the line seemed to go slack as the fish raced upstream and leapt out of the

water, thrashing in the air before crashing back into the pool. I frantically reeled in line and found that I was still fastened to the fish. We slugged it out for another 10 minutes. The trout peeled line off the reel, then sulked on the bottom for a while. I hung on, then pumped and wound a few turns onto the reel, then a few turns more. Back and forth we went.

The fish began to circle and gradually came to the surface. I can now see that it’s a serious fish. I pulled out the net, held it out as far as I could and skidded the fish over it and lifted. It’s with a mixed feeling of relief, satisfaction and triumph as I carried it to the bank. A beautifully conditioned 3.2 kg hen brown lay on the grass. It’s hooked very deep and bleeding badly, so the priest is called for to administer the last rites. The fish is now destined for the smoker and presentation at the Christmas Dinner table.

A few minutes later, as I’m striding back towards my bike, my mind wandering and I’m not watching where I’m putting my feet. I jumped sideways as I almost stepped on a copperhead! Heart attack! I stand still as the snake flares its neck, hisses its annoyance at my clumsiness, then quickly slides away to its hidey-hole in the rocks.

An exciting way to finish a day on the Moyne!”



*A superb brown from the Moyne River near Port Fairy*

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*The local browns provide a fine meal when prepared properly*



*Jim Blakeslee with yet another magnificent brown caught locally. The rivers around Warrnambool consistently provide the best stream fishing in Victoria for large trout.*



*A very angry copperhead snake that Jim encountered on Moyne*

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## Cooma Notes

... by John Killip

When the rivers opened for fishing in NSW on the October holiday weekend, the rivers were all much too high for fishing. We were hoping for a return of the spawning run of rainbows that we used to get in the rivers feeding the big lakes. The Thredbo River was high but clear enough to see that there were a lot of rainbows in it the week before the opening, but at that time the Eucumbene river was too high to see anything.

Following the good snow season, there is a lot of snow melt coming down those rivers and they will probably stay quite

high for some time. There have been recent reports of successful fishing but it has been hard work. We have not tried them yet.

The rivers and streams flowing from the coastal side of the Monaro tablelands have not received as much rain as those to the west. These are some of the streams we used to enjoy when we were still running our motel in Nimmitabel. They were badly affected by the drought and the hotter summer weather in recent times, but the cooler wetter weather of

the past couple of years has seen them recover.

We must thank the guys at the Gaden Hatchery who provide the fry and fingerlings for the Monaro Acclimatisation Society to restock the rivers. Based on our experiences recently this has been very successful.

There haven't been many days yet when the weather has been kind enough to encourage the aquatic flies to hatch and the fish to rise to them, but I have been reminded that fishing these streams is not the same as fishing the faster flowing larger rivers. The water chemistry is alkaline, probably from a combination of limestone springs and fertiliser run off from the grazing country. That results in heavy weed growth and lots of food for trout, especially the prized mayflies. One doesn't have to be an entomologist, but it does pay dividends to know your aquatic insects and have convincing imitations in your fly box.

On a recent trip, Margaret and I had both caught trout fishing an Elk Hair caddis blind. They are easy to see and float well on any runs and streamy water. Early afternoon we came to a long pool where a

few trout could be seen rising. I left Marg to try the fish near the top of the pool while I walked further down. Looking at the water, I noticed a few small light olive mayflies on the surface, so without further ado changed my fly for a suitable artificial. The first rising fish I cast to took my artificial confidently and was duly landed and then released.

I shouted to Marg that she was using the wrong fly, but she had confidence in the caddis and was too busy anyway. I went on to catch two more trout in quick succession. Marg didn't.

On our next trip there were caddis hatching, as well as Black Spinners hovering overhead. Trout love Black Spinners, so that is what I tied on for both of us. The river was still higher than normal, so there were plenty of places where the current was concentrating the drifting insects, and that tended to be where the trout were rising most often. Casting to rising trout sounds easier than it is. They do move around, and they won't take a fly that is not drifting freely. But when we were able to present our flies correctly, they were taken. It turned out to be an excellent day.

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## The Black Beetle

David Scholes wrote about fishing the Black Beetle in his book *Trout Days*, published in 1986. The following is a slightly abridged version, used with permission.

Some fly anglers regard the use of the Black Beetle under any conditions as a somewhat second-rate method of fishing, even a shade underhand. There is, I will concede, a difference between using the Black Beetle to catch rising trout and using it successfully when there is not a rise to be seen anywhere - conditions which pretty well rule out the use of anything else.

In the first case there is something to be said for this attitude. Rising trout should certainly be undone by means of a floating fly, the use of the Black Beetle being a last resort — an admission of defeat or compromise as it were, a decided lowering of standard. But not in the second. Oh no, there is much to be said in favour of the Black Beetle under such circumstances, as I will report presently.

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As a saver of blank days, the Black Beetle is high on the list.

Of simple design, the Black Beetle is used widely throughout the world; I have some tied in North America, others from New Zealand, and they are identical to those made here. I have unusual faith in the hooking and holding qualities of the Black Beetle. Perhaps this is because of the bold way the trout usually takes it and, in consequence, the way the strike can be timed so exactly and the hook driven home so solidly. I always use polaroid glasses when fishing the Black Beetle; indeed if I was unable to see the trout come to the fly I think Black Beetle fishing would lose its interest for me.

Almost any stream can be fished blind, the Black Beetle simply replacing a nymph, the water being fished upstream searching out each likely corner and run dead drift as you move along.

But once you want to polaroid, the possibilities are limited. Normally only the open streams are suitable where you can fish from a slightly elevated bank which allows for far better vision. The leader is greased to within about ten centimetres of the fly, which is cast upstream. I like to see it land more forcefully than a dry fly, so that it makes a decided little ring on the surface. The Black Beetle is remarkably conspicuous as it drifts down with the current. As with the searching dry fly, cast it into each promising run, corner and eddy. Drag doesn't matter beneath the surface, indeed in still water it's a good idea to pull it gently towards you for up to a metre, then allow it to remain stationary for a few moments, before repeating the process.

Likewise the trout is most obvious, seemingly materialising from nowhere as it approaches. When it takes the fly you can often see the white inside its mouth as it opens and closes its jaws. Wait just a



*A very famous photo of David Scholes fishing one of his Tasmanian rivers*  
moment, then tighten firmly. When using the Black Beetle it's rare that you mistime the strike; excitement being the biggest problem and cause of "snatching" the strike.

Take, for example, my visit the other day to the lower Macquarie River near Cressy. On arrival about 10 o'clock conditions were quite fair. There was only a gentle and fitful breeze and the hill beyond the stream gave enough protection to the bend below it for a few black spinners to take flight. They danced over the placid surface along the edges in that most dangerous area for them between the bank and the weed line a couple of metres out. Here, between the two, the air is less disturbed by any breeze and the male spinners congregate in the shelter. Beneath them, waiting eagerly for every one that ventures a little too low in its spinning flight, lie the trout.

My plan was to walk downstream for awhile and then, when the rise I hoped for started, to fish back to the car with the dry fly. After walking for about a kilometre I saw the first rise of the day, close to my bank beside a thick clump of rushes. By the time I had moved down into position the fish had risen again two or three

times, taking, as I could now see, the odd black spinner that came within range.

I had put up a Red Quill in expectation of some red spinners, and this I flipped over the tussocks close to the last rise. There was no current at all here, simply deep still water right to the edge. His next rise was several metres to my left, which made me realise that he must have swum right under my waiting fly. He rose again a little nearer, coming my way. But since he must surely have seen my fly once already, my hopes were not high. However, the next moment, somewhat hidden by the tall tussocks, I saw a rise where I reckoned my fly sat. A short pause and then back came the rod, accompanied immediately by a hearty jump from the hooked trout.

He pulled well and I had to hang on tightly, giving no ground in the confined space between the bank and the weedline. But presently he came reluctantly to net, the Red Quill embedded so deeply in his upper jaw that I had to cut the cast near the eye intending to retrieve it later when I cleaned the fish. (All very well if your memory is good, but I forgot, only remembering after I'd given the trout to a local doctor!)

After the addition of a new fly I carried on downstream just as the first puffs of real wind came in from the west flurrying over the smooth river, driving the white thistle-seeds before it and changing the whole scene. With brief stops here and there as I went, to make a few hopeful casts in likely places, or cover the very occasional rise between wind puffs, I arrived at the downstream limit of the water I proposed fishing. Here I decided on lunch and to contemplate the situation, the outcome being the decision to change to Noel Jetson's grasshopper pattern and fish my way back to the car. I had noticed quite a few hoppers on the way down and, from previous experience, I thought

I had a fair chance of adding some weight to the bag — something I rather wanted to do because I had promised trout to several visitors.

There is no great skill or wisdom in what I proposed, simply the dropping of the artificial hopper into each likely place along the edge, where, through misadventure, some luckless natural might, after a lusty leap or gay flight, find itself struggling for dear life on the surface. Not a particularly grand proposed, it is true, but a far better way of returning to the car than just trudging along the bank. Accordingly, after a couple of fruitless flips into awkward corners, I faced up to the first rather promising edge. Here the bank on my side was clear of trees and the short grass grew right to the margin. There was a steady flow along this edge and the depth was only about half a metre. My first cast was a sighter, but the second I sent out into the current, covering the lower section of the run. Immediately the fly landed a nice little trout rose up to it eagerly, but turned quickly away, a clear and most emphatic refusal.

Undaunted, I turned my attention to the top of the run, dropping my first throw about a metre below and the same distance out from a tussocky outcrop. Nothing. Next cast I sent the fly further upstream and, as before, immediately out from the side came a hefty three-pounder, apparently with every intention of eating my grasshopper — until he was right on it. Then - a similar rejection.

"Ho, ho!" thought I, or something similar, and quickly reeled in Noel's hopper to change it. Now, believe it or not, I had left at home my box of mayfly artificials, so I tied on a Royal Coachman. Recently this fly had been remarkably productive on the Liffey, and this may have been instrumental in its choice. At any rate out it sailed, right over the spot where >>>

the first fish had appeared. Nothing. Then up it went to where his nibs had disclosed himself. Out he came to it lustily, but once again at the last moment the offering was spurned.

“Ho, ho again!” And in that moment I knew what to do. Into the boxes I dug and out came a handsome new Black Beetle. I was pretty confident of at least hooking the big fellow, but since there had been no response to the Royal Coachman, not so the smaller one before him. Yet, to my surprise, first throw he was on to it like a terrier, taking it with a flurry so that due to his racing about I was now doubtful of finding the big one still there.

Purposely hauling him downstream and accelerating his arrival in the net, I soon had him bagged, a plump little trout of just over a pound.

To my great delight and even more surprise than before, however, on about my third cast which I made right to the extremity of the run, the big fellow swaggered over to his left to take the Black Beetle in his stride. Of all the trout I have taken over the past year, regardless of size, this one holds the belt for performance and fight. Out towards the deep water he shot, clearly visible through the polaroids as he went, there to fling himself skywards with a great leap sending spray far and wide. Next came one of those dreadful soundings when the trout dives in the depth, when all you can do is hang on grimly, and wait. If you can win this round, then the fight is usually yours.

Up he came like a rocket into the air again. But now I rather counted him mine. We slogged out the final stages near the bank, at length the net lifting him clear with a violent splash, to lay him quietly on the grass. Three pounds easily, I could see at a glance. Two fish in two goes with the Black Beetle. Considering their

attitude towards it, I have grave doubts if the dry fly would have taken them, regardless of pattern.

But don't get the idea that the Black Beetle is always so deadly. Trout fishing, fly fishing in particular, is a mysterious business. As I say, the use of the Black Beetle to take rising trout is not altogether to be applauded. And, let me tell you, rising trout are sometimes the very ones that will refuse a Black Beetle! The two fish I had just taken were not rising; indeed there was no evidence of them at all. Since the Black Beetle is far more lifelike than a dry fly, the evidence still tends to add weight to the suggestion that when trout are feeding on surface food they are more easily taken on a floating fly.

But, wait a minute. Nobody has ever been able to talk to me logically about trout feeding on caenids, those miniature blackish short-lived mayflies that appear in huge numbers and lie flat on the water. The trout love these little beasts, rising to them like mad, but almost invariably you'll be driven crazy by their reaction to your dry flies. Yet, for reasons only known to them, trout will very often take a Black Beetle willingly. Why, when they are so fastidious about the floater, and are feeding so avidly on floating food?

Nymphing trout, or those feeding on snails, worms or “shrimps”, will all take a Black Beetle. One can only assume that the reason is because it is such a lifelike thing, and when confronted with it, the trout just accepts it as “some sort of easily-gained something worth eating”. In fly fishing so many hard and fast rules have an exception. The Black Beetle, it is said, is taken even when stationary because it so closely represents a beetle. In other words, it looks like a beetle to the trout.

I took three more fish between here and one of those woeful fences that just about

defy you to negotiate safely. This was one complicated by overhanging prickly hawthorn bushes and an odd strand of blackberry. Barbed wire surmounted it, the steel post wobbled and it bristled with jagged pieces of wire in the centre. But I went over it both coming and going. Anyway, the first of the three took me in a run of fair flow, rising to the fly in copybook style, with nothing notable to relate. And so did the third.

But the second was rather interesting. Actually, I was having one of those days when you get hooked up both in front and behind on even the tiniest projection. Each tussock head seized my fly securely and each thorny bramble. I intended casting into a deep flowless corner beneath overhanging rushes, but the back cast just tipped something enough to make the leader and fly land in a figure of eight — almost like a bunch of knitting.

Just as I was about to retrieve for another try, I caught sight of a fish coming to investigate from somewhere in the shadow of the rushes. He came right to the fly, examined it amongst the loops of leader, and then turned away in disgust. Now, had I moved things even the slightest bit it would have meant fright instead of disgust. As soon as he was safely away out of sight I lifted the muddled-up leader clear and returned it properly.

And about third cast — a little further in and a little further along — he came to it confidently and took the beetle well, all of a pound and a half.

Beetles, I should probably mention, make up nearly 50 per cent of the insect world. In Australia, out of an insect fauna of some 50 000 known species, beetles account for about 20 000. So that a beetle, in one form or another, is a fairly common sight to a trout and constitutes one of its most regular food items. How often

you find one or two beetles amongst a trout's stomach contents. Beetles vary so enormously in size (from say one to fifty millimetres in length) and colour, that there is almost limitless scope for the fly dresser. But a black fly or at least a black-bodied fly seems best. Trout show a certain selectivity, however, even with beetles and it is well to be armed with a range both in size and colour (sizes 10 to 14 and bronze, black, green and brown in colour).

And I'd rather fish a beetle than a nymph. Maybe that's just me, though, because I am fully aware of the real science that attends true nymph fishing, as its father, G. E. M. Skues practiced it. But out of all the umpteen anglers I've come across, I know two or three true nymph artists; to all the rest the nymph is but a lure and some of the large concoctions one sees, especially around Lake Eucumbene, are purely lures and are fished as such.

With less than 200 metres to the car I still needed two more trout to reach the quota required to meet my promises. I'm sometimes so serious about this, too, when I tell someone to get the frying pan out or cancel the butcher's order. Only three more runs appealed to me and I had visions of excuses and black looks, especially after fruitlessly working out the first one. But in the second I had success, just outside the weed-line, where a brown shape rose artistically up to the fly, the flash of white as the mouth opened and closed, and the solid hooking. Likewise in the last run only fifty metres from the car, past which I had decided not to continue, another brown shape materialised and I had my quota. Not another cast did I make.

The Black Beetle? Yes, I think you must always have a few in the box.



# FLY OF THE MONTH

## The Black Beetle ... *David Scholes*



Descriptions of this fly have been given in earlier issues – in March 1999, May 2000 and again in the November 2019 issue (which had details of Rick Keam’s wet Black Beetle). In David Scholes’s *Trout Days* he gives a whole chapter to his adventures and successes fishing a Back Beetle in the Tasmanian streams he frequented. A summary of this article is given in this issue.

David introduces the Black Beetle in this way: “Of simple design, the Black Beetle is used widely throughout the world; I have some tied in North America, others from New Zealand, and they are identical to those made here. The most popular size is a size 12 hook (with size 14 a close second), and I prefer a turned-down eye. The elongated oval body is of black wool, over which a strip of crow quill is drawn to the head after the hackle is put on. In this way it becomes a “throat hackle”, and is of soft red cock, or red hen.”

**Materials:**

- Hook:** Size 12 (or 14) wet fly hook  
**Thread:** Uni-thread 6/0 or 8/0 black thread.  
**Body:** Black Wool  
**Wingcase:** Strip of crow quill tied over the body.  
**Hackle:** Throat hackle of soft red cock or red hen.

**Tying Procedure:**

1. Wind thread along the hook from the eye down to the bend then back again to just behind the eye of the hook.
2. Prepare a narrow strip from a crow feather for the wing case and tie it in along the hook shank so that a short length (enough for the wing case) sticks out the back.
3. Now tie in some black wool for the body. Tie the wool in at the end of the hook shank and then wind turns back and forth along the shank to build up the oval body of the fly. Leave a space about two millimetres behind the eye for tying in the red throat hackle.
4. Tie off the wool just behind the eye, then pull the strip of crow quill over to make the wing case. Tie it in with two or three firm turns then cut away the waste.
5. Tie in a couple of half-hitches behind the eye to lock everything in place, then turn the fly over – either by rotating the head of the vice or by taking the fly out of the jaws and putting it back in with the point uppermost.
6. Now take a small quantity of red feathers from a cheap hackle (cock or hen) and tie them in at the eye.
7. Make a few firm turns now just behind the eye to lock everything in place, then use a half hitch or whip finish to complete the fly.

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## Professor Kevin Hindle – Final Farewell



The many friends of Kevin Hindle are invited to celebrate his life on Saturday, December 3, at 40 Yarravale Road, Kew. The celebration starts at 2:00 pm.

## VFFA 2022 meetings & other activities

(... all events subject to Covid restrictions)

### November

- 17 Thursday Guided Tour of the Shrine of Remembrance – 10:30 am. Peter Whitelaw.  
Then, general Meeting – 12 noon at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker: Mark Turner - Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm, Zoom meeting.

### December

- 3 Saturday Celebration of the life of Professor Kevin Hindle –  
2:00 pm at 40 Yarravale Road, Kew.
- 9 Friday Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club.  
Speaker: Alan Pilkington

### January 2023

- 11 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, provided day summer temperatures are not too high.  
Event Co-ordinator – Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 25 Wednesday First Council Meeting for 2023 – 7:00 pm, a Zoom meeting

### February 2023

- 4 Sat -11 Sat Tasmanian trip to Hayes on Brumby's. Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray (chris@graysmail.com.au.)
- 18 - 23 World Recreational Fishing Conference – Jeff's Shed
- 23 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
"Liars' Night" – reports from members on their summer fishing.

### March 2023

- 8 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes.  
Event Co-ordinator – Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 11 Sat – Sat 18 VFFA trip to Currawong Lakes  
Event Co-ordinator - Hugh Maltby
- 11 Sat – Sun 19 VFFA trip to Taupo, NZ  
Event Co-ordinator – Rodger Muir (0414 253 890)
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club: (Speaker – TBC)
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm, at the Kelvin Club