

# FLY LINES



November 2023

## The November Meeting with Dr John Morrongiello

Dr Morrongiello is a Senior Lecturer in Marine Biology Biosciences at Melbourne University. He is a quantitative ecologist investigating how fish respond to the impacts of, and adaptations by fish, to natural and human-induced environmental change.

He is enthusiastic about the opportunity to present to the VFFA an account of some of the work his group is doing on trout ecology here in Victoria and beyond.

His talk is titled:

**‘Big fish, small fish, shy fish, bold fish’.**

He continues: “We all have our favourite waters to fish. Sometimes we choose these because they are close to home or provide a unique fishing experience, while for others they might have strong sentimental value.

One thing many of us can relate to is the desire to go fishing in a place where we are a chance to catch ‘a big one’. Why then do some streams consistently produce big fish while others only small? How can we explain that one trophy fish amongst a sea of tiddlers? In this presentation I will explore the local- and regional-scale factors that affect how fast a fish grows, which in turn can go some way to explaining the size differences we observe in our catches. I will finish by discussing how

Thursday, November 16,  
7:30pm, at the  
**Kelvin Club**

fish personality, and a fish’s learning capacity, can affect how fast they grow and how willing a fish might be to take your fly.

We would encourage all members to join us for a meal beforehand, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by 5:00pm on Tuesday, November 14, by emailing Terry Rogers at [terryrogers@bigpond.com](mailto:terryrogers@bigpond.com)



*Dr John Morrongiello*

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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# President's Message

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Dear members,

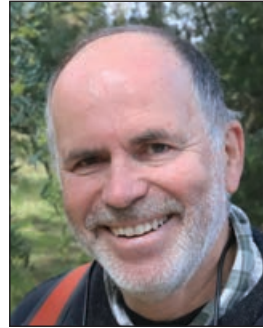
I feel honoured to have been asked to serve as your President, and I want members to know that during my term I intend to focus my efforts on members' events and participation. I've always enjoyed our regular social, outdoor fishing and non-fishing up-skilling events, and am keen to enhance these opportunities wherever possible.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that my success is largely dependent on the work of your Councillors and event co-ordinators, so I urge you to support them with your participation at VFFA events.

My predecessor, David Hooke, has been an exceptional president, and following in his footsteps will not be easy. I would like to acknowledge David's contribution to the VFFA and his many achievements during his term, and in particular the unprecedented challenges that Covid created. He has reinstated our member activities, and our relationship with the Kelvin Club, magnificently.

The Kelvin Club is an important social hub for the VFFA for our meetings, our library, and as a home for donated memorabilia. I'm very confident that we will enjoy the club's hospitality for years to come as we all come together to celebrate the sport of fly fishing and share our individual pursuits and successes.

Our recent Millbrook and Thorpdale events were both fully subscribed, and member's feedback has been incredibly positive. Many attendees not only voiced their pleasure about the fishing, but also the opportunity to meet (and fish with) like-minded fellow fly fishers.



*Simon Joel*

I would like to take this opportunity, as your President, to remind you of some of the other upcoming events your fellow members are busily organising for your enjoyment. I urge you to add these events to your calendar. I have added the event co-ordinator's details to make registering your interest easier:

- Warrnambool in November (Event Coordinator being Hugh Maltby - redtag@hotmail.com),
- Millbrook in January (Event Coordinator: Lyndon Webb 0488 555 724),
- Peter Hayes - Tasmania in February (Event Coordinator: Chris Gray chris@graysmail.com.au)
- New Zealand North Island in March (Event Coordinator: John Spragg: john@bellingham-marine.com.au) - this trip is filling fast, and you should contact John quick smart if you're interested.

Of course this now leads me to talk about our "indoor" events, including our monthly meetings that have been designed to bring us together to chat, compare notes and enjoy the presentations of our esteemed guests.

Here are two upcoming events:

- In November Dr John Morrongiello, a freshwater biologist from Melbourne University, will be speaking to us;
- In December at our much-anticipated Christmas function Tom Jarman will present "A Year of Fly Fishing in Victoria".

I invite all VFFA members to contact me directly with suggestions for future events; my contact details being mobile - 0419 368 391, or email President@VFFA.com.au

Going forward I know there will be a number of challenges for us all, and your Council is mindful about the Association's future, and it's past, and

in fact we've already started thinking about commemorating the VFFA's one hundredth anniversary in 2032. The centrepiece will be to update Tony Brothers' book with a collection of oral histories collected from long-standing members. Again, I'm very happy to receive any suggestions you might have about must-include members or other prospective activities.

In conclusion, I want say again how honoured I am to be your President, and to assure all members that I am here to listen to your needs and wishes, and in conjunction with the Council will do my best to build on the successes of the past.

Simon Joel

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## The October Auction

The VFFA auction on October 19 was not well attended, but despite this it was a very entertaining evening with all lots sold, thus creating a healthy donation to the Association's finances. Most of the lots were sets of book, so some of our members now have their collections of fly fishing tomes seriously enlarged.

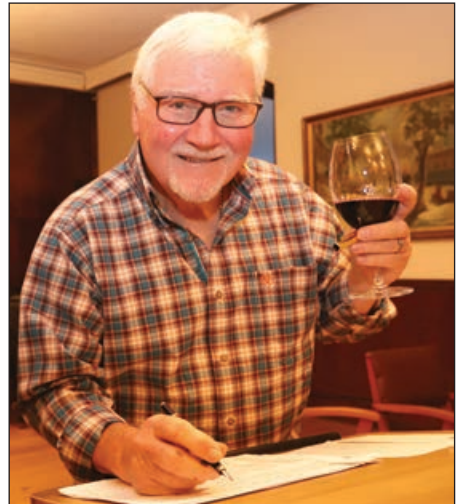
Auctioneer Hugh Maltby was in top form, pushing up the winning bids

vigorously, and he was very ably assisted by Peter Clayton.

Our thanks to Hugh and Peter for their labors on the night.

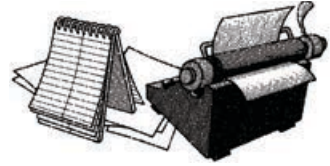


*Peter Clayton and Hugh Maltby are a great team*



*Hugh is our very experienced auctioneer*

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"I learned how to fly fish in the hit-and-miss, trial-and-error way that makes things stick, and I learned patience, persistence, acceptance and probably a few other good things, too." (John Gierach: Another Lousy Day in Paradise)*

*"There is no substitute for fishing sense, and if a man doesn't have it, verily he may cast like an angel and still use his creel largely to transport sandwiches and beer." (Robert Traver: Trout Madness)*

*"There is only one secret in dry fly fishing, which is to make an artificial fly float over a trout in such a way that it looks appetising enough for him to swallow." (Dermot Wilson: Fishing the Dry Fly)*

*"The most indispensable item in any fisherman's equipment is his hat. This ancient relic, with its battered crown and well-frayed band, preserves not only the memory of every trout he caught, but also the smell." (Corey Ford: "Tomorrow's The Day")*

Actually there are a number of indispensable items (depending on your outlook) in our fly fishing paraphernalia. In our September issue Jim Allen spoke about three essentials – the rod, the reel, and the fly line. I guess we should tuck a box of flies in there, too..

When I was teaching in the Western District I often had a rod, a reel, a box of flies and a pair of old gumboots tucked in the boot of my car. Then if I felt the itch on the way home after a day's work I could call in briefly and interview some of the trout in the lower Merri, which flowed right through the town and had excellent fishable water just a couple of kilometres from where we lived..

But then we moved to Melbourne, and I discovered that fly fishing was now a serious expedition. A day on a lake or stream was sandwiched between some hours of driving. My good friend Hubert Reichelt, a past VFFA President, tells me about the many occasions when he left home very early in the morning to drive to Howqua, a trip of nearly three hours. Then after a day fishing the Howqua

River it was the same long drive home. You had to be keen.

And Hubert also tells with some anguish of the occasion when he got up very early and drove to a favourite section of the Howqua, discovering when he arrived that his reel was still sitting on the kitchen table at home beside his breakfast dishes.

Which I guess is why I became a compiler of careful lists. If I was driving a couple of hours to the Goulburn to do some fishing then I was very keen to arrive with all that I could possibly need.

So as well as a rod or two (you might break one), a couple of reels (a floating line and a sinking line, or possibly a light line and a heavier one), the car was loaded with waders, boots, fishing socks, vest, hat, polaroids, fly boxes aplenty, a torch (I might fish into the evening), maps, iPhone, back pack, eats and drinks, snake bandage (if you take one you won't get bitten), net, first aid kit and suntan cream, wading staff, spare leaders and tippet material, toilet paper (good for lots of uses actually, including cleaning lines), nippers for tidying up tippets and

knots, ... What have I left out? The car was loaded. And putting it all away after arriving home was a lengthy chore too. You must of course wash your floating lines in some warm soapy water, then check your leaders.

I haven't actually done it, but have often thought that taking two rods with me offers some advantages. If I was fishing a lake, for example, then a rod with a floating line and another carrying a sinking line would increase the options and possibilities. But I do recall reading an article written years ago by Adam Royter. Adam took two rods with him up a river, then later when he arrived home he remembered that one rod was still leaning against a tree somewhere out in the bush.

I remember the first rod I ever owned. In my early teaching days I taught an evening class and one of the members of the class was a passionate fly fisher. He was a shrewd character who deliberately married a young lady from Tassie. Then of course every Christmas in his summer holidays he took his wife and family to Tasmania, where the in-laws happily looked after his spouse and the kids while he scooted off and fished his favourite Tassie streams.

During these evening classes I heard countless stories of his fly fishing exploits. His favourite Victorian stream was the Buckland near Bright which he fished it every weekend during the season.

At the end of the year he informed me that he was buying a new rod (cane of course in those days) so would I be interested in purchasing his old one. Of course I was. I think I paid fifteen hard-earned dollars for it. It was 8'6" from memory, took a seven weight line, and, as you would expect, was fairly tired. But it was my first fly rod and I was very proud of it.

I tried to learn to cast with it, but it was stiff and heavy, and half an hour of heaving and grunting and waving it like a windscreen wiper left me close to needing a shoulder reconstruction. It did cause pain. Years later I donated it to the Warrnambool Fly Fishers and it wound up tacked to the wall in their clubroom.

In those days you could buy brown fibreglass rod blanks very cheaply and with some superglue, masking tape and some bindings I could put together a rod that, while hardly an item of much beauty, could cast a reasonable line. And I caught a lot of Warrnambool trout on it.

Jim Allen in his article suggested that we should buy a new fly line every year, and a new rod perhaps every six or seven years as rod manufacturers come up with new designs. I started fly fishing when I was in my early twenties and as the years rolled by I somehow acquired a large collection of rods I loved buying them (many at VFFA auctions) but rarely sold one. They were all old friends with heaps of associated memories.

But when the total of my rods was approaching thirty (ouch!) I felt I really needed to part with some. So I put them all in sorted piles on the garage floor – the two weights, the three weights, the four weights ... all the way up to my seven weights. Then I picked out my favourite rod in each weight, kept this selection, and donated the rest to a very good cause.

All of which reminds us that ownership of fly fishing items – the gear, the books, the fly tying stuff ... is itself a great source of delight. Who can wander into a fishing store selling fly fishing gear and walk out without purchasing something. Anything.

Let's enjoy it all while we can.

Lyndon

## Tom Jarman in December

Many of us will have heard of Tom Jarman. He was born in Australia, but his family relocated to England where his father introduced him to fly fishing. He returned to Australia in 1999 and since then has spent extensive time fishing throughout Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.

After completing a Bachelor of Environmental Science degree specialising in wildlife and conservation biology Tom pursued a career in fly fishing. He now works as a fly fishing guide and coach and content creator, and is based in south-west Victoria.. He is a regular writer and contributor to *FlyLife* magazine and to other publications and books including *Australia's Best Trout Flies Revisited*.



*Tom on a local water in South West Victoria*



*Tom crossing the Bela River in Slovakia*

Tom is a passionate competition angler and has represented Australia internationally nine times. He is currently the Captain of the Australian Fly Fishing Team, and recently returned from the 2023 World Fly Fishing Championships in Slovakia where he was placed 4th individually.

Tom is guest speaker at our December Dinner on Friday, December 15, where his topic will be 'A Year of Fly Fishing in Victoria'.



*A big Kiewa River brown trout nymphed up in North East Victoria*

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## The October Trip to Thorpdale

This trip is a highlight in our calendar, and again this year a number of our members headed east to Thorpdale to be magnificently greeted and guided by the members of the Latrobe Valley Fishing Club. The Latrobe Valley Club members

stock a number of large dams on private farms around the Thorpdale district, and this year both the members and their stocked fish welcomed our group generously.



*Past President David Hooke caught this magnificent 7½ brown trout in one of the Thorpdale dams*

Retiring President David Hooke provided this note:

“Brian Chambers and I were fishing the Pumphouse Dam with Frank Kappl as our guide. Brian had already caught two good-sized browns before lunch and was terrorising another on the other side, when Frank spotted a large brown cruising the shallows between the bank and the reeds. Having tired of stripping wets, I had changed flies to a Royal

Humpy. My rationale was that if I was not going to catch any fish I would rather do so fishing a dry fly. (Apologies to Bob Lawless).

My cast landed slightly behind and to one side of this monster, which casually turned and swam over to inspect the fly. A slight twitch and it was convinced. It weighed in at 7½ pounds, thus capping off what was already a most enjoyable day - as it is every year.



*A number of VFFA and Latrobe Valley members gathered at Thorpdale for a delightful day's fishing in very pleasant weather*





*The Latrobe Valley members provided a superb BBQ lunch for their visitors*

Once again, our thanks to the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers."

Hamish Hughes added his report: We had a good turn up of VFFA members at Thorpdale last Sunday, and as always our hosts looked after us exceptionally well. And so did the weather; a lovely sunny day with little wind.

VFFA attendees included James Carter, Hamish Hughes, Ric Dugina, Richard Kos, Bill Thomas, Mike Jarvis, Ray Goddard, Brian Chambers and David Hooke.

LVFF President, Michael Morgan, with the help of James Hearn, Murray Jones, David Egan and other Latrobe Valley

members took us to various dams in the morning. Brian Chambers caught one brown and a lovely rainbow. Mike Jarvis was taken to Robinson's dam by Michael Morgan where he caught a 2 lb brown, and James Hearn took James Carter, Ray Goddard and myself to Lloyd's where I caught a 3¾ lb rainbow.

After a cheery BBQ lunch and raffle at the Thorpdale Park most of us set off to fish other dams in the afternoon, when Mike Jarvis caught a 4 lb brown at the Roadside dam

Doggie, thank you and all your members again for your very generous hospitality.

Hamish



*Some of the Latrobe Valley dams are physically quite attractive*

# Tasmanian Fishing Report

... from Chris Wisniewski (Inland Fisheries Service, Tasmania)

The dun hatch at Four Springs Lake has been spasmodic. The fish have been up in patches, so you need to be lucky and in the right place. There have been reports of fish taking the red spinners along the calmer edges, though most fish are still being caught sub-surface. A two-fly rig under an indicator with a weighted nymph on the point and a mayfly nymph fished sub-surface has brought some trout unstuck. Hopefully there will be better dry fly action in coming weeks.



*A superb brown from Lake Ada*

The mayflies have started hatching at Talbots Lagoon, and this hatch will strengthen through November, thus providing some of the most exciting dry fly fishing to big brown and rainbow trout. A small boat is certainly an advantage here. Upgrades have recently been undertaken to the car park and access tracks.

easier access for anglers who want to launch a boat on Double Lagoon.

With the water level low the fish have continued to show their tails at Little Pine Lagoon. Pulling wet flies has been productive. However the lake level is rising now and the mayfly fishing will start soon.

The track to Lake Kay is now in much better state, and the damaged crossing of Ibbotts Rivulet before Lake Augusta Dam has now been replaced with a concrete span bridge. Following several good spawning years there are now lots of fit healthy fish in the 800 gram to 1 k kilogram range in the Western Lakes.

The gate at Lake Augusta is now open, allowing vehicle access to the Nineteen Lagoons. The track maintenance and upgrades undertaken by IFS now allows

On calm cold mornings there have been some massive midge hatches on yingina / Great Lake and the smaller lagoons in the highlands. Tricky as they can be in these calm bright conditions this reminds us of just how many fish there are in our highland lakes.



*The boat ramp at Lake Crescent has been extended*



*The Great Lake Fly Tie In at Liawenee*

There has been some exciting fishing in the Mersey River to whitebait feeders in the lower reaches, and to small caenids further upstream.

The wild rainbow trout spawning run has continued in Liawenee Canal from yingina / Great Lake. The total count through the fish trap so far has been over 4,300. A report at the end of the spawning run is available on the IFS website (see <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au>)

Work has been completed on the construction of a one metre wide path and stair access to the levee bank at the bottom of Penstock Lagoon.

After an intensive 28-year program, European carp have finally been eradicated from lakes Sorell. The Lake Crescent eradication was confirmed in 2009. From 1995, 41,504 carp were removed from Lake Sorell and 7,797 from Lake Crescent. You can read about this in the 2022-23 Carp Management Program Annual Report.

Lake Sorell is full, and the marshes are flooded. The new generation of anglers

haven't yet woken up to the good fishing that is available in this lake. Camping is available at Dago Point, Lake Sorell.

An upgrade to the Lake Crescent boat ramp car park has just been completed to maximise the use of space. Lake Crescent has become very popular and has been fishing well in the last few seasons, with fish ranging from 4kg to 8kg.

Camping and access have been improved at Woods Lake. This includes the expansion of the boat ramp car park to cater for the number of vehicles and trailers in peak periods. Upgrades have been made to six formed tracks, and 14 camping sites have been levelled, drained and gravelled.

The Great Lake Tie-In was held at the Inland Fisheries Service Liawenee Field Station on Saturday, October 14. Fly tyers from across the country were in attendance. This event is very well organised by the committee. The highlight of the event was the Euro Nymphing class run by champion competition anglers Martin Droz and Chris Medwin.

## Trout Spey – by Peter Morse

Peter Morse is now one of our best known Australian fly fishing guides and writers. He has provided this fascinating insight into river fishing for trout.

The thread that runs throughout my fly fishing life, (which members of the VFFA have been subjected to on several occasions), is fly fishing diversity. We all have a different approach to how we can derive the most satisfaction from our particular journey. Some have a narrow focus, and working within that is where their challenge lies, and at the other end is an approach that says, "If it swims, I'll try and catch it". That's me, and provided that what I do fits into my own definition of fly fishing, I'm happy with that.

Fly fishing for me is defined by fly casting, and nothing else. The unrolling loop of line carries the fly to the target. What defines "fly" of course is another argument altogether, but I think that if the delivery system can present it using fly casting techniques, I'm OK with it.

But staying exclusively with trout, and sticking with the theme of diversity within fly fishing, there's of course a wealth of techniques we can employ to catch these creatures, and these will depend on circumstances, preferences, availability, and imagination.

Let's list these techniques for both still and running water:

- Upstream dry fly casting to rising fish.
- Upstream nymph under an indicator.
- Searching the water with upstream casts to likely lies using either or both dries and nymphs.
- Sight fishing only, using these techniques.
- Stripping wets.
- Deep midgeing.
- Casting for rising cruisers and wind lane feeders.
- Loch style with a team of flies.
- Swinging streamers.
- Upstream wee wets.



*Medium sized rivers such as New Zealand's Tongariro in winter is a great place to learn Spey. It is as near as this hemisphere comes to steel-heading*

- Swinging soft hackled wets. There's probably a few others as well.

As much as catching fish is the goal, I very much enjoy the casting aspect of fly fishing, so my trout fishing these days tends towards situations that require a lot casting. A good mate of mine, whom I consider to be the best fly fisherman I know, in answer to the question: "What's your favourite fly?" responded with: "A really good cast."

In Tasmania on the lakes I get a lot of satisfaction out of Loch style fishing, probably because there's so much casting involved. But when executed well, to be truly effective, you soon learn that it's a complex and challenging technique. It's a jigsaw of tackle, fly selection, knowing what is suitable water, drogues, drifts, leaders, casts, and retrieves and hangs - and they are similar, but oh so different to what we might already know as fly fishing.

And these complexities need to be learned for you to be effective. Fish next



*A tricky slow flowing glassy pool at the end of the season is safely and effectively fished with a slowly swung sub-surface soft hackle pattern:*

to someone (a Scot or an Irishman in particular) who's grown up with this technique, and you'll soon learn that this is a whole new game. I've gained immense satisfaction from learning and putting these pieces into place. Pulling an unseen fish to a surface fly is bewitching and for me deeply satisfying.

On rivers, my obsession these days has become swinging flies, especially using Spey casting techniques, and whether on single-handed or two-handed rods it doesn't matter too much. Swinging flies for trout is as old as fly fishing itself. I'll bet those ancient Macedonians didn't fish upstream dry flies, and nor did Walton or Cotton or any of their contemporaries. So no one can claim that this is something new; it's as old as fly fishing itself.

Several things have gone into the brew that set me off down this path, but over time I've mostly recognised it as just a desire to do something completely different in the fly fishing world.

Crowded waters have played a big part, and the BIG rivers of New Zealand that are so intimidating for most have become my favoured playground, though even the medium-sized waters have their swing situations if you're prepared to take them on.

In recent years I've discovered that effectively using swung flies is about as complex and challenging as fly fishing can get. Note the word "effectively". Casting a fly across the river, swinging it, and leaving it to hang in the current is a very basic beginner technique, but consistently catching larger fish from bigger waters is fly fishing's version of Rubik's cube. On a visit to Owen River lodge a few years ago it was explained to me that "80% of the fish are in 20% of the water, so that's where we look." Never one to toe the line, my interest became those 20% of fish that are in 80% of the water, and Spey techniques and swinging flies are what puts us into that space.

Glassy glides and slow moving bubble lines with delicate sippers inhaling size 18 spent spinners can have you wondering about how much time you might have left on earth, and how much of it you're prepared to expend on them. I've discovered what many have discovered over the centuries that a downstream presented, sparsely dressed soft hackled fly draws responses that most upstream presentations fail to attract.

It's a thing of beauty to see a well-seasoned solid brownie bow wave across the surface, or just about turn itself inside out, when a #16 Partridge and Orange swings into its window. I'm yet to come to grips with the difference between a fly swung from upstream that's clearly dragging, and a fly fished with an upstream presentation that moves unnaturally as a consequence of the tippet (also dragging), yet they eat one and not the other.



*Sometimes you just need to go deep. Tube flies are another exploration*

Big rivers are the usual domain of Spey techniques and a large broad body of moving water is a very complex and intimidating thing. From a Spey and swing perspective, to get a presentation that fish are going to eat consistently there's a myriad of interdependent considerations and calculations that require your attention, and often re-adjustments come with every cast. You're not just blindly swinging a fly across the



*Discovering older traditional wet fly patterns and adding a new twist is part of the joy of this exploration*

current hoping for a grab, and if you are, you're nowhere near the game.

These considerations are:

- Wind direction – most important because this is the primary determinant of which cast you use.
- Water depth.
- Current speed.
- Current shapes and complexities.
- Current seams.
- Water clarity.
- Water temperature.
- Shape and type of the substrate.
- Shape of the pools.
- Species (browns and rainbows are usually quite different).
- Time of year – i.e. food source (or not).

All of these will affect your choices of:

- Rod weight and length – determined by size of fish and how far you need to cast.
- Fly line, tip section, and leader make-up - these determine delicacy, distance, depth, and the size of fly you can deliver.
- Fly selection - insects, forage fish, or straight out attractors.

Then there's the casting angle and the line mends you make that affect the speed of the swing, the depth of the swing, the shape of the swing, and the angle the fly is presented at. And much of this is determined by such subtleties as where you stand in relation to the current, because this has a big impact on the swing, the hang phase (the end of the swing), and your next cast: how often you take a step downstream, and how far you move with each step.

I'm looking for the 20% of fish that are in 80% of the water. They're not tucked up on the edges out of the flow, they're holding in the heavier deeper flow, and their behaviour is usually not observable. Swinging requires you to use your imagination. I find myself constantly trying to picture what's going on under the water, where the fish might be, what they might be feeding on, and how that fly (or those flies) are behaving as they drift and swing, and how the fish might be reacting.

And then there's dealing with the bumps, the swipes, the nudges - what salmon fishermen call an "offer". Hard to believe that fish can so often miss the hook. And when you do get a proper "grab" they are often violent hook straightening and tippet snapping affairs. If you haven't been caught out and the line does tighten, you have to resist doing anything at all. Nothing! Do not lift, do not strike. Just hold your breath and wait until you think the time is right to lift the rod.

So that's what's been occupying my time on trout water. Like all of us in all fishing situations its often one step forward and two back, then three forward and none back. Those are the great minutes that become great hours and then great sessions, and eventually days, and these days gradually become more frequent. The thoughtful repetition becomes intoxicating, mesmerising. And at times I can even imagine I'm on some great anadromous river of the world.

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## Catch and Release

(Here is an article written for the October 1995 VFFA newsletter by Rick Keam, who was encouraging all members to practice catch and release.)

Looked upon as virtual lunacy by many anglers until recently, catch and release may help save our fisheries in the future.

Thirty years ago in *The Way of an Angler*, David Scholes lamented that the remotest spots he had once fished in Victoria had become common ground to armies of anglers. That era itself is now remembered as a halcyon period of light fishing pressure. Our streams and lakes have continued to degrade and there are fewer fish to meet a greatly increased demand. In another thirty years, how will our streams in particular survive

the onslaught to provide an angling experience of any sort of quality?

Think of how waters close to Melbourne and Sydney will fare against the certainty of continued population growth, suburban expansion and rural subdivision. In Victoria, even the Goulburn's trout can and will replenish from spawning in its variously degraded tributaries, if not in the main river. The fact is that we have no systematic knowledge of how much successful spawning is taking place and where, yet at the same time unrestricted exploitation

is allowed, and there is no plan to ensure supply meets demand in future.

It is clear that habitat restoration is critical to one side of the equation. As to the other, the writing is on the wall: if anglers value wild-trout fisheries they will have to limit their catch, whether voluntarily or by regulation. The extreme form of such regulation - 'no kill' or 'catch and release' — has a proven record in the USA in restoring quality fisheries on a number of heavily pressured streams.

Ideally, fisheries management should be custom tailored to the needs of particular waters on the basis of sound data. Catch

and release is not an across the board panacea. But a realistic look at the future dictates that, as one management tool among others, it is a practice whose time will come.

Give thought to Izaak Walton, who shed no tears at the loss of a good trout because "he was never mine to take." Our fish are a communal resource. Unnecessary kills work against our collective interest and, as a result, our self-interest. Catch and release should no longer be regarded as something for tweedcapped eccentrics, but rather a realistic means for all anglers to help preserve our trout stocks.

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## Australian Trout Foundation Report

... Terry George (President)

### Habitat and Trees for Trout 2023.

As I am writing this short report there's a dozen dedicated volunteers beavering away planting 700 trees and sedges at Sheeppark Flat. There was to be an additional 200 planted at Tobacco Flat, but it was too wet at the present time to do this.

This Howqua River project, plus other planned future Howqua events, together with a significant future Delatite River riparian and in-stream restoration project,

all resulted from a tour initiated by Chris Gray and myself, and which included Beth Millstead, Simon Cowan and Corey Wilson, the Water Health Managers from GBCMA.

2023 has been a busy and highly successful year for our habitat volunteers, with projects on the Nariel, Cobungra, Ovens, Delatite, Upper Goulburn, Wonnangatta, Macalister and Howqua streams.



*Volunteers at Macalister River, Glenfalloch Station*



*Macalister River - trees and guards in place*

Our Harrietteville Champion, Brian Eddy (ATF Delegate, Alpine FF, and VFFA Life Member) managed the RFL grant, and the Ovens River project works at MayFly Rise, which involved considerable in-stream and riparian restoration works. A fantastic project involving a working partnership that included the North-East CMA, Alpine Fly Fishers, ATF and VFFA.

Further good news is that the same team, including Wangaratta Fly Fishers under the guidance of Scott McDonald



*MayFly Rise - Installation of woody habitat*



*MayFly Rise Partnership Team - Alpine FF; ATF, VFFA & NECMA.*

(NECMA), is in the final stages of submitting plans for a further in-stream and riparian restoration project that's to be located in the Ovens above MayFly Rise. This will be jointly funded by NECMA and we trust a grant from the new \$2.5m Habitat Fund that will be managed by Andrew Briggs VFA (formerly NECMA - and a more passionate person on river and fisheries health could not be found!!).

Bless our significant group of habitat restoration volunteers and our Catchment Management Partners; we'd be floundering without them.

My next report will cover the findings of the recent Trout and Habitat Symposium covering the current threats to our waterways and fisheries, and possible funding sources for the ATF.

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## Taupo Trip – March Next Year

The VFFA trip to Taupo next year has been advertised in recent newsletters. A number of members have already asked to be included, but there is still room for more.

For those still pondering the possibility here is the essential information:

**The Event:** A week at Waitahanui Lodge, Waitahanui on the shores of Lake Taupo, New Zealand, at the height of the Brown Trout season. Nymph or wet-line fishing up and down the local rivers, or on the lake in groups or individually during the day (and night) and sharing stories of the events of the day over dinner in the Boiler Room at the Lodge.

**12 positions are available.**

**Dates:** Arrive Sunday, March 3, 2024, and depart Sunday, March 10.

**Address:** Waitahanui Lodge, 116 State Highway One, Waitahanui, Taupo RD 2, 3378 Waitahanui Lodge | Lake Taupo, New Zealand.

**Travel:** You will need to make your own travel arrangements to and from Waitahanui and arrange any travel insurance cover you feel necessary. Taupo Airport is 5 kms north of Waitahnui

Lodge. Air New Zealand has daily flights from Auckland of about one hour duration.

You are also responsible for arranging your transport while in New Zealand. 4WD vehicles are not required. By road, the lodge is about 3½ hours from either Auckland or Wellington.

**Cost:** \$1,100.00 (Aus) per person for shared accommodation, linen including towel and face washer, breakfast and dinner. A deposit of 50% (A\$550.00) is to be paid by January 12, 2024, and the balance (A\$550.00) by February 16, 2024.

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

Include your name and "NZ2024" or post a cheque to Tony Mitchem, VFFA Honorary Treasurer, PO Box 18423, Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3001.

**Accommodation:** Five 'Kiwi Bach' cabins at Waitahanui Lodge are available for accommodation, each with several

bedrooms and three or four separate beds. You will be expected to share a cabin with other members for the week, and depending on numbers, you may be required to share a room. All cabin facilities are shared for the week.

**Meals & Drinks:** It is expected you will be involved in purchasing the ingredients and cooking a meal for one of the nights, purchases will be reimbursed. Each cabin has cooking facilities. Breakfast will be supplied with a range of cereals, toast, juice, coffee. Lunch will be your responsibility each day. BYO wine, beer, spirits.

**Fishing locations:** Waitahanui Lodge is located on the lake front of Lake Taupo, and is 120 metres from the mouth of the Waitahanui River ('the Rip'). Upstream of the river mouth this river offers some 5 to 6 kms of fishable waters, all readily accessible on well-defined tracks, with few sections of terrain more than 'moderate' in difficulty.

Other well-known trout waters within a 30 minute drive include the Hinemaiaia River (12 kms south), the Tauranga-Taupo River (25 kms south), the Tongariro River (40 kms south). For those wishing to travel a little further, Lake Rotorua (and associated waters) are 75 kms north, Lake Otamangakau is 65 kms south, the headwater of the Whanganui River (100 kms south west), and the Rangitikei River (135 kms south).

**Fishing license:** A current Taupo District fishing license is required. Before departure to Taupo, you may purchase one via the Internet on Buy a Taupō fishing license online ([doc.govt.nz](http://doc.govt.nz)). Those wishing to fish outside of the Taupo district will need to acquire a separate fishing license for adjoining fishing districts - see Fish & Game website General Fishing License Info ([fishandgame.org.nz](http://fishandgame.org.nz)). Note - there is

a separate category of license for non-residents of New Zealand.

**Mobile phone:** Coverage is good in most townships and on major highways. However, it may be poor/non-existent in more remote angling areas.

**Guiding:** There are numerous experienced fishing guides available. If you are wishing to be guided for a day (or days) over the time at Waitahanui, please indicate this by email to Rodger at [rodger-muir@bigpond.com](mailto:rodger-muir@bigpond.com). Depending upon demand, Rodger will arrange/facilitate guide/guides for pairs of anglers on a daily basis. Pricing to be established, and is in addition to and independent of the costs set out above.

**Event Registration Form (ERF):** Register by sending the Event Co-ordinator a completed and signed copy of the ERF by email as an attachment or a hard copy via the post. "First in best dressed". Obtain your ERF from the VFFA website [www.vffa.com.au](http://www.vffa.com.au) or request a copy via email from the event co-ordinator.

**Event Co-ordinator:** John Spragg, Mobile 0419 368 391, email [john@bellingham-marine.com.au](mailto:john@bellingham-marine.com.au)

### **What to do next:**

Please register your intent to attend ASAP as we have a number of interested people. Do not book travel to New Zealand until you receive VFFA confirmation.

If you are intending to participate, please check that your passport will be current for travel as of March 2024. If not, begin the renewal process now – there have been lengthy delays in obtaining a new Australian passport.

The VFFA will advise if you have been successful in obtaining a place in the group trip.

Book your travel to/from New Zealand/ Taupo – once you have received VFFA confirmation.

Pay your deposit to VFFA by January 12 and the balance in February.

Complete the Event Registration Form and email to John Spragg prior to arriving in New Zealand.

**In summary** – there are still some places available, so please phone or email John to indicate your interest in this trip.



*Fishing the Tongariro in winter – it was flowing strongly on this occasion*

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## Cooma Notes

... from John Killip

The week before the NSW rivers season opened Margaret and I made our usual pre-season visit to the Eucumbene River above the lake to check out the conditions. The first bit of good news, for river fishing enthusiasts like us, was that the lake level had dropped a little since last season, so there was more river available to fish on the Providence Flats.

The second bit of good news was that we saw a lot of rainbow trout in the river. They weren't actively spawning, as that had probably happened earlier in the

winter, but they were still occasionally chasing each other around. We even saw a few fish rising to take something off the surface.

I used to make it an annual event to fish there the first day of the season, which this year was September 30, but in recent years it has become too busy on the opening weekend. So we will hold off on the Eucumbene for a few days.

Instead, we went to the Murrumbidgee River to open our season. We were

surprised to find that it was very busy too, but eventually we found an access point without others already there.

Snowy Hydro controls the water levels in the Bidgee by releasing water from Tantangara Dam. They have a website where one can see what has been released and what is planned. We found the river in excellent condition, flowing well and quite clear. The weather was warm and mostly sunny, with a breeze from the north-east. It was a bit early in the season to expect mayflies to be hatching, but there were occasionally a few stoneflies and caddis fluttering off the water. But not enough to encourage us to tie on dry flies. Instead, I suggested the traditional wet fly approach as used in the north of England and Scotland for centuries.

When I mention this style of fishing to other anglers they almost always think it is a simple technique suited to beginners. Just cast across the stream and let the line swing the fly back across the current. Nothing to it.

How wrong they are. On a river or stream with a good current and plenty of broken water between the pools it is every bit as absorbing and challenging as any other fishing method.

I usually like a wet fly tied on a size 14 heavy wire hook with a wrapping of copper wire under the body to provide a bit of weight. Then a simple dubbed body and a sparsely wrapped soft hen hackle or partridge feather. Keeping to the traditional theme, I selected one of my favourites, a Partridge and Orange.

The thing to remember is that while the line is slack the fly will sink, and when the line is tight the fly will rise towards the surface. Then it is a matter of manipulating the cast and the line to get the fly to swing across and up in the places where you think trout will be holding station.

There was a likely looking stretch of broken flowing water right near where we parked the car, so we waded in several metres apart and began fishing. I was into my first trout on the third cast, and Margaret was hooked up a few minutes later. We went on to have a great time, catching and releasing several rainbows each over the next couple of hours. Not big trout, but very frisky. Mostly 20 cm to 30 cm, with one brown of 35 cm.

A lovely way to start our season.

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## From Luke O'Sullivan – Director of Fisheries Management.

(Hopefully we will be able to organise a fly rod for Luke sometime soon.)

I have loved fishing since my early childhood. I have fond memories of catching small reddies in the dams on the farm that had found their way down the immense channel system in the Mallee. It was a rare treat to be able to even catch one.

Each summer the family would camp up at the Murray River near Hattah and we would busily catch shrimp and dig worms to try to catch an elusive yellowbelly (Golden Perch). In those days



back in the 1980s even catching a carp was a thrill.

Throughout my teenage years the prospect of catching a Murray cod was merely a dream. In fact I had never actually laid eyes on one. Yabbies were plentiful and seemed to be the height of fishing success in the dams around the district.

I had to wait until I was 25 years of age to catch my first Murray cod - on a warm evening from the Murray River up near Colignan. While it was only some 56 cm in length, to this day this has remained the biggest thrill of my fishing life. Since then, over many trips away, I have continued to enjoy fishing and recently landed my first big one, a 103 cm Murray cod from the Darling River up at Pooncarie. There is now a photo of this magnificent fish on my iPhone that I have shown more than a thousand times, and am sure it will get a lot more views before its done.

Having grown up in the Mallee in North-West Victoria, most of my fishing has been bait fishing for the warmer weather species of fish. Since joining the Victorian



*The Goulburn River is one of my favourite places to catch cod*

Fisheries Authority in early 2023 I have broadened my horizons and am now a keen lure fisherman, I have even begun to venture after the cool water species.

Recently, I had the pleasure of trout fishing near Eildon; a wonderful experience and I was thrilled to hook a few rainbows and take a couple home for dinner.



*Finally joining the one metre club*

Prior to joining the VFA my background has been in the regional development space through working in government at a state and federal level, as well as working with the Regional Australia Institute.

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## Lake Eucumbene

... by Trevor Stow

For the past 50 years Lake Eucumbene has been one of our premier trout fishing waters. Fishing was seriously good when the lake was filling in the 1960's, and again excellent in the mid-1970's when the lake filled for the first and only time in 1975.

Well let me tell you - I doubt that trout fishing in Lake Eucumbene has ever been better that it has been over the last two years. The last two years have been particularly wet with plenty of snow, and this has seen the lake rise last year to 69% capacity. This compares with only 7% capacity in 2007, when old ruins, roads and fences were seen for the first time in decades.

The water level now has been climbing continually over country that has not seen water for decades, and the food chain has exploded. In addition, Fisheries



*The Magoo, fished very slow, accounted for this fine fish*  
has stocked 150,000 fish into the lake since 2018.

I have just returned from a short trip to Eucumbene and the fishing was excellent. The majority of the fish caught were in



*The lake is producing both browns and rainbows*

the 1-2 pound range with 3 pounders common. It seemed like every day somebody there lands a stonker. Fish of between 5 and 8 pounds are being caught almost daily. And we are not talking here about flogging the lake at night; this is daytime fly fishing. My forecast is that the fishing will continue to improve over the next few months. WOW!

The food chain in the lake is interesting. Over the past few years the midge population has exploded. When the conditions are right the lake is covered in them, and the trout love them. As there is a lot of dry vegetation close to the water, stick caddis are also featuring heavily in the trout's diet. Although we didn't see them, I've been told that there have also been a few mudeyes in the trout stomachs.

A good midge rig is a size 16 Griffith Gnat dry fly with a size 16 midge pupa two feet below it. Or substitute the dry with an indicator, and hang the pupa and a stick caddis underneath it. The caddis can be fished at a depth of only 6 inches.

Anybody heading to Eucumbene should make sure that they have plenty of midge patterns in size 16, stick caddis in size 10, and mudeye patterns in size 6. Now having said that, I fished a team of flies and was very successful using a Magoo with an orange bead. A Woolly Bugger would work just as well. It is always good to have a nymph on board. Again, a



*Trevor's fly box for Eucumbene. The midges, in particular, are simple to tie and very effective. brown nymph with an orange bead takes some beating.*

I covered quite a lot of the lake during my stay, and it didn't seem to matter where we fished. They were biting everywhere, including at the boat launching ramp at Buckendarra, where a bait fisherman landed a 5 lb beauty.

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## The Warrnambool Fishing

The current fishing around Warrnambool is of interest to VFFA members – particularly those heading west in the second weekend of November to be part of our annual trip to this wonderful part of our state.

Jim Blakeslee has provided some photos of recent successes by the Warrnambool fly fishers. They have been catching fish.

# Warrnambool Fly Fishers at Lake Fyans

... trip report by David Coutts

The club trip at the weekend was another great trip with 14 members in attendance.

Gus, Anton and myself went a day early so we could check out the McKenzie River. The weather was fantastic and we had a great day fishing the small stream. It was challenging at times, but we ended up with seven browns and a rainbow between us to about 2 lb in size.

We arrived back at camp around 6 pm to find most of the team were out fishing in the glorious conditions. There were a few fish reports around the group campfire later that night, with it being a fantastic setting on a balmy night.

Saturday morning was a different story with a bit of wind around which was forecast to strengthen through the day. Breakfast followed and we then paired up in the boats. There were a few fish moving with the odd one hooked, but conditions deteriorated through the day with most pulling the pin by 4 pm except for Kurt, who is a fishing machine.



*Trevor Roberts with a lively little rainbow from Lake Fyans*

Huss was his usual helpful self, helping people load their boats in quite trying conditions. Beer o'clock came early but great restraint was shown by all. The communal fire was started early and it was needed in the cool conditions. Pre-dinner nibbles were shared around with Ellen providing the bulk.



*A Jim Blakeslee photo – a magnificent brown from the upper Merri*



*An attractive little brown from the McKenzie River*

Jim added some interesting beetles, snails and stick caddis to the nibbles, but it was generally agreed that they should have been roasted and not eaten a la naturelle.

My cast iron frypan did a few shifts cooking a variety of meals over the fire. The fire was stoked up to increase the warmth for the 14 members huddled around it. A very pleasant evening followed with Jim entertaining us with stories from his years of fly fishing, Hughie told some good stories and Darren offered the odd bit of advice.

Sunday morning arrived somewhat gloomy so the majority headed home. I talked Gus into spending a couple of hours on the NW wall as a few fish were moving, and we picked up a couple of small ones between us.

Hopefully others will add some more thoughts on the weekend.



*Trevor with another Lake Fyans rainbow*



*Dave Couatts fishing the McKenzie*



*Gus Turiello heading into some tight water on the McKenzie River*



*Gus Turiello hooked up to a surprise rainbow on the McKenzie*

## Learning to fly fish sixty years ago

(A fascinating talk given to the VFFA by John Brookes on December 8, 1995)

The fly fishing industry we have today is quite remarkable. You can be taught to cast properly and fish properly. The array of good gear is immense and you can be taught to tie flies and be guided from fish to fish – though at some cost. The glossy magazines are mind boggling.

It was not always so easy! In the 1930s it was 'do it yourself learning'. A competent, patient friend was an immense help but they were rare. The blind often led the blind. Professional guides were very rare, and generally wanted to fish with you rather than teach you to fish.

Fly casting skills were not well developed. Gear was mediocre mostly. Traditionally we got our know-how and gear from the U.K. Some worked well, much did not. To catch our trout consistently we had to develop our own techniques and flies.

How would F.M. Halford, the father of Dry Fly Fishing, have regarded us standing in full view of the trout, belting it with a Shannon Moth for hours on end? Or the dancing Dunny Brush in the evening at Rocky Valley Dam? Not quite the done thing, old chap!

Tasmania was always a major trout fishing state, though few mainlanders went there to fish pre-war. The licence census showed this. Like their Casino, nearly all locals! It was an important centre in skill development across the range of fly fishing.

Much is written about the current Tasmanian scene. The very early days are also quite well known, but little is known about the 1930s. It is to me a fascinating time, not only because I was there, but because it was a time when the rate of

change in technique and equipment used by the lake country fly fishers was very rapid, laying the foundations for post war development.

Though it is hard to believe it now, Miena was the premier place in the lake country. No city, no pub, no school, just a grotty guest house by the dam, a policeman's cottage nearby and some Fishery's Commission sheds and a few huts in Swan Bay.

But at the doorstep was the Shannon River and Lagoon and the Great Lake. You did not need a car in those days but if you had one you were only a few miles from Penstock Lagoon, Tods Corner and Christmas Bay, and if you could row, there were boats for hire. (If a northerly got up when you were out, you got a quick ride home and fun beaching the boat on the exposed lee shore of rocks).

There was a daily bus to Hobart and Launceston.

There was no Little Pine Lagoon and, until the late 1930s, no road from Swan Bay west to Bronte. The road builders camped on the job near the present Little Pine Lagoon and the 'cricket ground' is about the only reminder of the camp. The Little Pine River under the lagoon was like the same river above Lake Kay though bigger, and like today, full of cranky fish. There was a small lagoon located then in about the middle of the present lagoon.

The now famous Western lakes were virtually unknown. The road head was Liaweenee Homestead – you walked from there and it was a long way to the first lake and even further back to the car! Try it sometime and carry your fish back. The route was Liaweenee to Double

Lagoon to Eastern Rocky Lagoon to Lake Chipman and back to Liaweenee in thigh boots!

Rainbows were the dominant fish in the Great Lake and browns elsewhere. Anglers fished for years without catching a brown in the Great Lake.

There were fewer accessible waters, far fewer anglers, and you knew most of them. The only crowded place was the west bank of the Shannon River at "Rise" time, as the westerly winds ensured the east bank was vacant. Often in January, I was the ONLY angler on the whole Shannon Lagoon!

And now, something about the anglers who used this resource. As is the case now there were grubbers, trailers, spinners and assorted fly fishers. Grubbing was illegal in the Great Lake. A sad, lonely pastime to me but it even went high tech.

Arthur Fleming, the Fisheries and Fauna Inspector, told a story about an innovative grubber who made a number of "rods" with powerful springs which were tripped by a vigorous pull from a fish. The fish was thrown onto the bank - like a land-based version of a Tuna boat.

Trollers were not high tech and often rowed. The spinners were interesting. They used revolving drum multiplier reels. In 1936 I took over a Hardy "Altex" fixed drum reel. They had never seen anything like it.

Dr Terrence Butler, a well-known Hobart fly fisher, told a delightful story about Lake Leake in the 1920s. The lake is surrounded by forest which is rough walking, but shore fishing was quite good. One day the proprietor of the guest house told him he was needed as two spinner fishermen had just walked in, one with a spinner caught in his nose. When he went outside, there were two men, one

holding his nose, the other leading him with his rod and the line still attached to the spinner. They had travelled in this mode for some time through the bush. Dr Butler promptly cut the spinner loose. The unfortunate man said, "Thanks Doc, that is a relief", or words to that effect.

The fly fishers were a mixed lot - wet fly only, dry fly only, both, and both plus nymphs.

What Jim Allen calls 'bait fishing a dry' produced consistent results in the Great Lake rainbow fishery. It was a good restful holiday with an odd golden day.

Flogging a wet was hard work, especially off the rocks into the wind, but often productive and exciting. And good exercise, especially with an old fashioned heavy rod!

A lot never learned more than one method. Things moved slower in those days. Most people used their holidays for a rest, not just as a way to exchange one stress for another, which, I fear is the case quite often today.

But things were changing. There were fly fishers who wanted to do better under all conditions and sought better ways to fly fish - and they found them. And all conditions meant the full range of weather conditions known to civilised man! The weather in the lake country is the great leveller and fish protector.

Trout are sometimes accommodating and will swim a long way to collect your fly or even suffer being hit on the head by a beetle, but not often enough. The basis of success under all conditions is good presentation - accurately both near and far, up, down, and across the wind with quick direction and distance changes thrown in, plus delicacy.

In the 1930s, this meant generally finding new gear and learning a new method of casting. And I would remind you there

was not a lot of trained consultants, guides and the like to turn to.

My own experience will illustrate what happened. I got my first fly rod when I was eleven years old from an old Scotsman who lived nearby, plus a free casting lesson and two fly fishing books.

The rod was a monster - an old Hardy, 10 foot 6 inch H.C. Cholmondeley-Pennell, 3 piece, close bound, heavily varnished with spiral "Lockfast" ferrules. Weight - about 9 ounces. Action like a length of tripe! Line provided about 4-weight on a large early model Hardy "Perfect" reel.

I was made to hold one of the fishing books by Earl Hodgson, *'Wet Fly Fishing'*, a dreary book, under my elbow by pressing it to my side. Imagine the loop, the entry, the power!

And that was still the way a lot of people cast in 1933!

Fortunately, an indulgent Aunt gave me a 9'6" Hardy De Luxe - only 6½ oz. Oh, what a feeling! "Palakona".

But my real luck came when I was introduced to J.M. Gillies who convinced my parents to take me to Miena in December 1934. Naturally Malcolm criticised my rod, and in a year or so I had two beautiful Gillies models designed for the conditions in the Lake Country. And so began a long time fishing at Miena with Malcolm.

He taught me to cast his way - high line speed, tight loops, high back casts, minimal false casting, accuracy, quick direction and length changes - and a free elbow!

A lot of anglers used his rods with their heavy lines, but I don't think any reached his level of casting perfection in the 1930s.

His rods excelled on the Shannon River: light weight, high power, with the ability to pick up and put down long lines with

no false casting - the ruination of many a promising evening on the Shannon.

There were, of course, other makes of rods with stiff actions, but I think the important influence on rods and casting techniques in the Lake Country came from Malcolm who was there to practice what he preached. I was immensely lucky to have such a good teacher.

Not everywhere are the conditions so tough, and softer action rods give good service to those with good casting technique when the conditions are easy. But I have never seen a really successful angler who has not got an effective casting technique, whatever the action of his rod. And in passing, I will say tournament casting is an immense help in building technique. I was introduced to it my Malcolm in 1946.

It is hard to comprehend today just what an immense leap forward were the light, quick action rods with their heavy lines. Bigger probably than the leap from them to today's carbon fibre rods.

With the heavy, slow rods with a 'tripe-like' action, no matter how good your technique was, you could not cast into a strong wind, or accurately across one, or change length and direction quickly, or do without false casts. But there is not much my 5 weight Sage IV or 7 weight Fenwick can do that my Cane J.M.G. rod cannot do - easier yes, a bit quicker, perhaps more precise, but still in the same ball park.

Funny, I never thought the J.M.G. was heavy. What you don't know about, you don't miss.

With a reliable effective presentation method, it was time to look at what was on the end of the line and how it should be presented for greatest success. In the 1930s, and even much later, a dry fly sat still on the water and a wet fly was

moved under the water. Moving a wet was persevered with even when it was obviously not working.

In the early 1960s an angler came into the Miena Bar. He had caught no fish in Little Pine but he 'had been followed for a week.'

Belting a dry beetle at shrimping or caddis hunting rainbows in the Great Lake was something the dry fly only boys and girls could persist with all day.

Very few Tasmanians read Skues in the 1930s. Those that did developed their own nymphs and methods of using them. Dick Wigram was the best known. Doug Hollis was another innovative angler. He made buoyant nymphs held near the bottom by a lead shot and upside down nymphs to clear the obstructions on the bottom.

Nymphs, brown seal's fur and conventional black, did not really make an impression in the lake country until post-war, which of course was the time of change from the rainbow Great Lake fishing to the brown dominated lakes and lagoons.

I fished a size 0 Greenwell wet like a nymph in the Shannon Lagoon in the '30s. I also carried some rudimentary stick caddis that I had tied when 12 years old to use in the dam at home.

For some reason, I did not use them in the Great Lake until December 1945. It was a memorable day - 10 rainbows in 100 minutes. I can think now of other times when I did not use the caddis, and if I had I would have filled a 10 tonne truck.

You all understand nymphs and how to leave them drifting quietly minding their own business. In those early days the subconscious urge to move the wretched things often won through.

Harder still was to learn to let a nymph/shrimp imitation rest on the bottom in front of an approaching snuffling shrimper. I used this method on the difficult fish in the Shannon Lagoon particularly. Great fun but it required very accurate casting and patience on the strike. I developed a primitive fly I called the Snymph about the same time as Stuart Napier invented the Nymbeet, which was used as a conventional nymph. I suppose Jim Allen would call my method 'bait fishing a nymph'.

Strange though it may now seem, twitching a dry did not come easily to the old school. This was a time for the development of new flies, like Malcolm Gillies' beetle series, better Shannon moths, and dun imitations like his Penstock Brown. And dry flies became noticeably smaller by the end of the 1930s.

We copied the New Zealand Matuka in various ways. The most startling was the Red Peril invented about 1930 by Critchley Parker. He had fished in the very early days of the Great Lake. He was old when I knew him and mostly fished a wet from the Multi-arch Dam. Like any wall, it attracted fish that were often clearly visible in the waves. His original Red Peril was just a few yellow and red dyed cock neck hackles tied in at the eye only - no body. All these refinements came from other tyers. His fly worked and he caught quite a lot of fish.

When he hooked a fish he hoped it would run away from the wall so he could walk along towards the end of the wall without ruining his line on the rough concrete circles. He had a ladder in place and climbed down it to the beach, facing out from the wall. He claimed he wore out the seat of his trousers doing this and had the seat padded, though I don't think he caught enough fish to trouble the seat of his trousers!

He told me a delightful story about the early fishing. In the early days at the Great Lake most anglers fished with spinners. One day two anglers were in a boat near the Beehives, in those days a high basalt cliff. A shepherd saw them and enquired how the fishing was going, to be told they had not caught any. He told them that right below him were two nice fish and he directed them where to place their spinner. A fish promptly took it and the shepherd from on high announced: "You've got the little 'un!" It was eighteen pounds.

There was another quantum leap in the 1930s at Miena. Malcolm Gillies used to recommend wearing Crooke's smoked glass sunglasses. They did help, especially down sun and downwind in a good ripple, but even in sunny weather you were fishing blind most of the time. Then Malcolm got some of those new Polaroid glasses from America. We used them a lot, particularly in the Shannon Lagoon on the spits along the old river banks. The effect was truly remarkable - there was a blank sunny ripple; then on with the Polaroids and there they all were like a mob of sheep!

What became obvious was that in lagoons a big proportion of the browns on a shore were lying still. Only a few were cruising and even fewer rising. But when you could see the stationary fish with Polaroids, you could put a proposition accurately to them (like a small dry or nymph) and most of them would accept it.

And, as my diary shows, the day's catch in sunny weather went up from three or four (the risers plus a fluke or two) to eight to the bag limit of twelve. Fortunately for the fish clear sunny Polaroiding days are not that common in the Lake Country.

But like most big changes, Polaroids took quite some time to come into general use after World War II. I think David Scholes was the first to explain Polaroiding in his first two books in the early 1960s.

We had immense fun learning how to spot fish. But sight fishing is not new despite what is said in some modern angling literature.

"The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish cut with her golden oars the silver stream, and greedily devour the treacherous bait. So angle we for Beatrice."

Thus spoke Ursula in *Much Ado About Nothing* where Shakespeare shows he is master of yet another sport.

When I think of the intensity, magnitude and persistence of effort, the application of mankind's ingenuity and intelligence, the industry which has been built up worldwide just to help us catch a few trout, I am firstly reminded of what Richard Brookes M.D. (no relation that I know of) said at the end of the 18th Century:

"Remember that the wit and invention of mankind were bestowed for other things than to deceive silly fish. And however pleasant angling may seem, it ceases to be innocent when used otherwise than as a mere recreation."

And secondly and particularly how apt is that old expression: "POOR FISH!"



*A quiet pool on an English river*

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Kate McLaren*



What a superb name for a fly.

The Kate McLaren is a Scottish wet fly. By reputation it is extremely effective for both rainbow and brown trout. While its traditional use is on stillwater, it can be fished successfully on rivers.

Another source asserts that the Kate McLaren is one of the most successful brown trout flies ever devised. Thus, "to go fishing without a few Kate McLarens in your box is to be improperly dressed". It is a great top dropper fly and is usually fished with a floating line. To fish it, pull the fly through the waves on a windy day, or figure of eight it on calmer ones.

The fly was invented by William Robertson for John McLaren and named after John's wife Kate. It was made famous by their son Charles. Charles McLaren wrote extensively on the subject of salmon and sea trout fishing, including two seminal works, *"The Art of Sea Trout Fishing"*, published in 1963, and *"Fishing for Salmon"*, published by John Donald in 1977.

Tasmanian angler Jan Spencer says: "The Kate McLaren was given to me by a friend from Scotland, and I rate it very highly as a bob fly. It can be used on both floating and sinking lines. On a floating line when there is a good wave pull it quickly. On a sinking line retrieve halfway and then lift the rod high, bringing the Kate to the surface and creating a wake through the surface."

**Materials:**

- Hook:** Size 8, 10, or 12 wet fly hook.  
**Thread:** Uni-thread 6/0 or 8/0 black thread.  
**Tail:** Bunch of golden pheasant crest tips.  
**Body:** Black seals fur or black wool.  
**Rib:** Fine oval silver tinsel (or fine gold wire).  
**Body Hackle:** Black hen.  
**Head Hackle:** Brown 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 to create a smooth and even base for subsequent components. Take the thread in even turns back to the bend.
2. Tie in some golden pheasant crest tips at the bend for the tail, then cut away any excess feather. Then tie in the gold rib firmly at the bend.
3. Dub some black seals fur on the thread and wind forward, finishing a little back from the eye.
4. Take a black hen hackle and tie it in just behind the eye so the curve of the feather is back towards the bend. Wind the hackle along the shank to the bend and then wind the gold rib forward through the hackle to just behind the eye to pin the hackle firmly to the shank.
5. Bind the rib in just behind the eye with thread. Then cut away the tip of the hen hackle at the bend.
6. Take the brown head hackle feather and tie in closely in front of the body hackle, then wind forward to the eye and then back again to where the thread is hanging. Bring the thread through the hackle to the eye, then cut away excess hackle.
7. With your fingers pull the hackle back and hold it so you can form a nice head that pushes the hackle backwards. Whip finish and varnish.

## VFFA 2023 meetings & other activities

### November 2023

- 10 Fri – 12 Sun Annual trip to Warrnambool
- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – Dr John Morrongiello (Topic: “Big fish, small fish, shy fish bold fish”)
- 29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

### December 2023

- 15 Friday Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club  
Speaker: Tom Jarman  
(Topic: “A Year of Fly Fishing in Victoria”)

### January 2024

- 10 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes, provided summer temperatures are not too high.  
Event Co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
- 31 Wednesday First Council Meeting for 2024 – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.

### February 2024

- 3 Sat - 11 Sun Tasmanian trip to Hayes on Brumby’s.  
Event Co-ordinator – Chris Gray (chris@graysmail.com.au.)
- 22 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
“Liars’ Night” – reports from members on their summer fishing.
- 28 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom.

### March 2024

- March 3 – 10 VFFA trip to Taupo in the North Island of New Zealand  
Event Co-ordinator – John Spragg (John@bellingham-marine.com.au)
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Speaker – Sam Fawke, Senior Technical officer –  
Conservation Hatchery, Victorian Fisheries Authority
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club.
- 29 Friday Easter - Good Friday
- 31 Sunday Easter Sunday

### April 2024

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
(Speaker – TBC)
- 24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm, Zoom meeting.