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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

OCTOBER 2011

Organisation No. A0024750J

C/- The Kelvin Club, 14-30 Melbourne Place, Melbourne 3000

www.vffa.org.au

October General Meeting – Andrew Mossman

Thursday, October 20, 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club



Andrew Mossman – expert fly tier

The Meeting will be preceded by Dinner at the Kelvin Club, commencing at 6:00 pm.

All members are invited, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking prior to the meal by –
Phone: 9654 5711 or Email –
bookings@kelvinclub.com

THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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The September AGM

This year's Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday, September 15, and was attended by 22 members. Unfortunately President Rick Dugina was still in the early stages of recovery following major surgery, so Senior Vice President Terry Rogers chaired the AGM in Rick's absence.

Full minutes of the AGM are available from Secretary Richard Garvey.

Terry delivered the Annual Report on the Association's activities over the past 12 months. This report was prepared by Rick Dugina prior to his time in hospital and published in the September issue of the newsletter. It is also included in this newsletter as an insert.

The Treasurer's Report was circulated at the meeting and presented by Treasurer Tony Mitchem, who informed members that the Association has had a very solid year financially and finished with a surplus of \$8,722 - a very good result due to sales of the VFFA History and excellent support of the raffles at our Annual and Christmas Dinners.

Whilst the Association continues to be in a solid financial position, this will only continue with strong member support. The costs associated with the production of the Newsletter have risen in line with the content, but the VFFA is in a strong financial position to face the challenges of the future.

Tony thanked the Independent Auditor, Jim Overman, for auditing the books.

Stan Lancaster, acting as returning officer for the Election of Office Bearers and Councillors for the 2011 - 2012 Year, advised that he had examined the Nomination Forms and found that all was in order. He then declared the following to be duly elected:



The Treasurer reports

President:	Rick Dugina
Senior Vice President:	Terry Rogers
Junior Vice President:	Hamish Hughes
Secretary:	Richard Garvey
Treasurer:	Tony Mitchem
Editor:	Lyndon Webb
Librarian:	Marty Rogers
Councillors:	Bernard Holbery, Kevin Finn, Hugh Maltby, John Pilkington, Jon Kenfield, Joe Haslauer, David Grisold, Rick Williams and Peter Boag

Special thanks were extended to the retiring Councillors, Richard Kos and Dermot O'Brien, for their service. Retiring Auditor, Jim Overman, was standing down after five years service, and this was gratefully acknowledged by the meeting. It was then moved by Tony Mitchem, seconded by Richard Garvey, that Robert Wald (a retired accountant) be appointed. The motion was carried.

At the conclusion of the remaining items of business the chairman, Senior Vice President Terry Rogers, thanked all members present and closed the meeting at 8:45 pm.

New Members Welcomed...

It is our great pleasure to welcome Iain Clarke into our ranks this month. We trust that his membership of the VFFA brings many years of pleasure and fulfilling involvement.

October Meeting: Andrew Mossman - on Fly Development

Andrew is well known to us all. As an angler he has a wealth of experience fly-fishing for trout in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania. He recently fished in the UK (and a report on his experiences fishing the famous Test River in Hampshire is included in this newsletter). Andrew also fishes New Zealand's South Island rivers every year, and is a recognised authority on the Mataura. He manages three or four trips to the Gore area each season, and his catches there are legendary.



Andrew always has a keen audience at fly tying nights

Andrew is also one of our master fly tiers, and is invariably seen demonstrating his skills at VFFA fly-tying evenings. Accordingly, his talk at our October meeting will focus on recent developments in fly-tying. He will start with the flies that were commonly used in the 1950s, and will explore just how and why flies have changed and developed to where they are today. So, starting with those wonderful old Royal Coachmans and Red Tags and their ilk, he takes us through to modern nymphs and emergers, no hackle duns, varieties of new spinners, and many of the other new and innovative flies that we regularly use now. He will discuss the use of CDC and other relatively modern materials, and especially the new American

hackles, furs and synthetics, and how these materials are being used in our modern flies. His presentation will include slides of insects and the flies representing them, along with photos of modern tying techniques. In developing his theme Andrew will draw upon a wealth of anecdotal experiences, and we look forward to hearing tales of his exploits that illustrate how his theories have developed.

In a recent note to the editor, Andrew said: "I have not finished my presentation yet, and I suppose it might change a little, but hopefully these notes will indicate the scope of my talk. I only hope that members will find what I have to say interesting." Andrew is an excellent speaker who prepares thoroughly, and there is no doubt that we will find his presentation both fascinating and informative.

VFFA Fly Book

Following the success of *Geehi to Great Lake* and *The Country For An Angler*, the Association has begun work on the long-planned third book of the series — an anthology of fly patterns originated by or associated with VFFA members over the years.

A good amount of historical material is already in hand, but suggestions, ideas and samples will be gratefully received by the steering committee of Peter Boag, John Pilkington and Rick Keam.

Advance Notice – November Meeting: Julien Thomas

Julien is a very enthusiastic fly-fisher who grew up in the Limousin region in France. Limousin is located in the centre of France, and is a prime location for trout fishing. In the old provincial dialect Limousin was described as “Milles Vaches”, which translates as “One Thousand Creeks”. The pristine creeks of Limousin are a paradise for the brown trout and thus for fly-fishers, and is the home of the famous French Nymphing technique.

Julien now lives in Melbourne, and runs a fabulous tackle shop –Exclusive Cast, with website at <http://www.exclusivecast.com.au>



He has provided the following notes on his background in fly-fishing and his talk:

When talking about the French countryside, regions like Provence, Normandy or the Riviera come to mind. But we never hear about the Limousin region – well, except for its breed of cows by the same name. Limousin is a hidden jewel where nature is untouched, with a landscape overflowing with pure creeks and rivers full of brown trout. This is where my family resides, and where I grow up - catching trout from as soon as I was able to hold a rod in my hand. I caught my first trout on a dry fly under the proud eyes of my Grandfather. This very fly was hand tied by my Grandfather, using the hackles from “Le Coq de Pêche” (local rooster), and was cast using a 1954 “Pezon et Michel” bamboo rod, paired with a silk line. This memory will stay with me forever.



A Limousin trout

I have been living in Australia for almost nine years, working in the agriculture industry. But my passion for fly-fishing followed me. As an entrepreneur I created a fly-fishing business, *Exclusive Cast*, to share with keen and passionate Australian fly-fishers what the Limousin region has to offer. My presentation at the November meeting will reveal how the Limousin region is the home of the famous French Nymphing technique, and how over the last 150 years local anglers have developed and improved this technique. I will be talking about the equipment used, with a detailed description of the leader, the rod action and the cast, and how to present the fly.



*Coq de Peche rooster –
ready for de-hackling*

The Limousin region is also privileged to be the habitat of the ‘Coq de Pêche’, an endemic breed of rooster that lives only in this region. Why only in Limousin? This is a mystery that I will expand on during my presentation. But what makes the Coq de Pêche so special is that these roosters produce the most beautiful hackles in a full range of greys just perfect for tying flies; something the old local Limousin fishermen have understood since the mid 1850’s. I will have samples of hackles and flies to look at, so be prepared to be blown away by their immaculate sheen.

Last but not least, I will be very happy to talk to you about the exclusive product range available at *Exclusive Cast*: silk lines, custom made rods, and geared reels. I will also have with me some display products for everybody to have a close look at. I look forward very much to meeting you and sharing with you my passion for fly-fishing, and I hope my presentation will inspire you to visit the Limousin region and see what it has to offer.

Christmas Dinner: Guest Speaker - Travis Dowling

Our guest speaker for this year’s Christmas Dinner, on December 15, will be Travis Dowling – who holds a pivotal role in the management of our Victorian trout fishery. Travis’s official title is ‘Director of Fisheries Management – DPI Fisheries, Victoria.’ So this is an occasion you would not want to miss.



Travis grew up in Victoria’s north-east, and tells us that he was fishing as soon as he could walk, targeting the many species, including trout, in the streams to which he had access. He was educated at Melbourne’s La Trobe University, and then worked within the Department of Justice in Victoria before moving to the Northern Territory. He fished (very successfully) for barramundi, whilst writing the recreational fishing policy for the Northern Territory’s opposition party. He also worked for the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries in the Northern Territory.

He returned to Melbourne, worked for the Environment Minister for some time, and then moved to Fisheries in the DPI. He is married with two young daughters and a son, and describes himself as ‘a very keen, but limited by talent, recreational angler’.

His talk at the Christmas Dinner will cover such topics as the State’s very successful ‘Fish Stocking Program’, the implementation of the Victorian Governments new \$16.3million ‘Recreational Fishing Initiative’, Victoria’s consultation arrangements with the recreational fishing sector, the creation of new fishing access to waters, and the success of the recreational fishing license fund. These are all matters of great relevance and keen interest to VFFA members. We are most fortunate to obtain Travis as our guest speaker, and would encourage all members to attend.

President's Message

(Report by Terry Rogers as Acting President, October 3, 2011)

At the time of publication of this report our President, Rick Dugina, is impatiently recovering from surgery, and advises that he expects to be fully fit and back on deck for the Warrnambool Weekend, November 4 – 6, and the New Zealand Trip, November 24 to December 8. All members wish Rick a speedy return to duty.

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Kelvin Club on September 15. I would take this opportunity to thank Dermot O'Brien and Richard Kos for their past valuable service as Council Members, as they did not seek re-election to the new Council. I would also welcome Jon Kenfield and Kevin Finn as new members of Council for the coming year.

The Peter Hayes Casting Day was held on Sunday, September 25, and as in previous years, was a great success. I am not sure of the total number of attendees but I think it was well in excess of expectations. Thanks go to Hugh Maltby for his skills as Convenor and Master Chef.

Members will recall that our guest speaker at the May General Meeting was Geoff Hall, a Director of the Goulburn Valley Fly-Fishing Centre along with many other roles in the world of fly-fishing. Geoff delivered a very interesting and thought-provoking address on the serious issue of the ongoing invasion of European Carp into our fisheries and what we need to do about it to protect the future of fly-fishing in Victoria. Members can go back to the June 2011 issue of our Newsletter to read a summary of Geoff's address.

As a follow up to his reference to the need to introduce the Koi Herpes Virus (KHV) into our waters to eradicate the European Carp, your editor, Lyndon Webb, and I attended an Information Presentation Session at the Department of Primary Industries Offices on Thursday, September 29.

A major focus of the session was to advise that the body that has been conducting all the research into KHV, the Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre, only has a life span of 5 years, after which time it has to compete with several other bodies seeking funding for a further 5 years for their various Research Programs. The Invasive Animals CRC current 5-year period expires in June, 2012.

What is now needed in order to guarantee the success of the Program in defeating the European Carp invasion is for as many members of the VFFA as possible to pen a personal letter to the responsible Minister, supporting the Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre's 5 year re-bid for funding.

Letters should be addressed to:

The Hon. Tony Burke. M. P.

Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities.

Parliament House.

Canberra. ACT. 2600

Letters should ask at least one question in regard to the program, which then obliges the Minister to respond directly to the writer.

Some suggestions as to possible letter content might be:

- An outline as to why Carp management is so important.
- An indication of your support for the proposed IA CRC extension, particularly the work needed to finish research on KHV to enable government approval to release the virus nationally in 2017.
- An expression of support for the proposed IA CRC extension work being conducted on new and emerging fish pests. Some of this work concerns DNA detection tools for tilapia and other new fish pests.
- An expression of concern in regard to the millions of dollars that will have been wasted on the KVH project if new funding is not provided to see the program through to a successful conclusion.

I beg members to spare 30 minutes of their time and the cost of a postage stamp to protect our fisheries not only for our use, but for generations of fly-fishers to come.

Letters should be sent as soon as possible, as the decision that will determine the future of the Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre will be made before the end of December, 2011.

If any members require further information on the program, I have spoken with Wayne Fulton who is the Program Leader, Freshwater Products & Strategies at IV CRC and he is happy to respond to any emails seeking further details. Wayne's email address is: wayne.fulton@invasiveanimals.com

Gentlemen, pick up your pens.

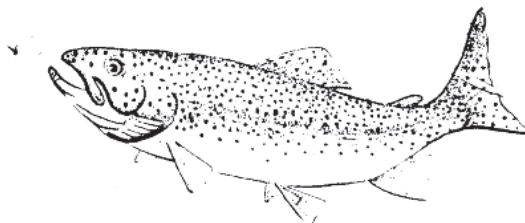
Our next General Meeting will be held at the Kelvin Club on Thursday, October 20, at 8:00 pm. The Guest Speaker will be Andrew Mossman, who will impart some of his vast knowledge on the subject of Fly Tying and its development over the past 50 years.

Please remember that those wishing to dine at the Club before the Meeting must advise the Kelvin Club directly, no later than Wednesday, October 19, either by phone on 03 9654 5711 or email at: bookings@kelvinclub.com

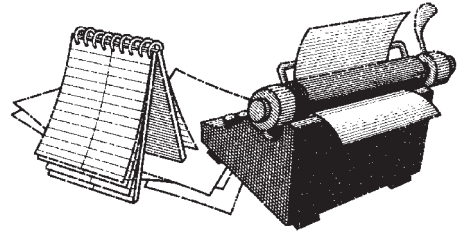
I hope to see as many as possible on the October 20.

Best Wishes,

Terry Rogers
(Acting President)



From the EDITOR'S DESK



As Terry Rogers mentioned in the 'President's Message', he and I had the privilege of representing the VFFA (and the Australian Trout Foundation in my case) at a recent meeting organised by the DPI to report on steps currently being undertaken to deal with the European Carp problem. It was interesting to note that Australia is one of the few places in the world where having too many carp is seen as a problem. While research in many other countries is focusing on dealing with the challenge of combating diseases affecting carp populations, here in Australia we are contemplating introducing a virus that we hope will decimate our carp numbers. And with good reason – the explosion of carp populations in our Australian rivers and lakes is a very serious threat to our native and salmonid fisheries.

As Terry indicated, Geoff Hall spoke at our May general meeting on the threat posed by the exploding carp numbers, and mentioned two strategies being investigated – the 'Daughterless Carp' project and the possibility of introducing the Koi Herpes Virus (KHV) into our waterways. Of the two, it would appear that the introduction of KHV is closer to being used – if all goes well, possibly in 5 – 6 years. In many ways the meeting at DPI headquarters was very reassuring. The carp problem is not being ignored, and many millions of our dollars have been spent in recent years investigating potential solutions and controls. The Koi Herpes Virus certainly seems to be the most likely to succeed, but of course before we go releasing a new fish disease into our waterways we need to be absolutely convinced that it has no unwanted side effects. So the past few years have seen an exhaustive amount of testing and evaluation, and thus far KHV has had no detectable effect on any species other than European Carp. Our research scientists have been both cautious and thorough, and every effort is being made to ensure that the use of this control is safe. They are not working in isolation – carp and their diseases have been extensively studied world-wide for decades, and there are truckloads of scientific papers and research reports to draw on, as well as the research currently being undertaken here in Australia.

The findings thus far are that KHV only affects European Carp, and for this species the virus is lethal, with the data showing very high mortality rates across all age groups. There is no doubt that the introduction of KHV into our carp populations would almost completely remove the problem.

Much of the material presented at the DPI meeting will be available soon for public dissemination, and will be featured in our November newsletter. But as Terry indicated in his message, the organisation carrying out this research, and thus critical to its success, is the Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre, based in the ACT, with some work also being done at Snob's Creek. However, funding for the CRC is allocated on a five-year cycle, and the current cycle finishes in June next year. Decisions regarding which organisations and which projects are to be funded in the next cycle are being made in the next few months. If funding for the continuation of the KHV project is not allocated, then the process stops, and European Carp will continue to flourish in our waterways. So, as Terry has suggested, it really is important for individuals to put pen to paper, or phone, or email local members, State

ministers, and particularly The Hon. Tony Burke. M. P., Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities, to voice our concern and ensure that this vital project continues.

On a totally unrelated matter, Kevin Finn, newly elected to the VFFA Council, is working very hard to revitalise and update our VFFA website. One of his objectives is to have all recent newsletters issues available on the Website so that members will be able to peruse back issues, chase down articles and files of interest, and generally enjoy the offerings of our rich heritage of newsletter material. Very soon all issues back to February 2008 will be available, and we're hoping that we might even be able create an archive of past newsletters back to at least the mid-1990s, and perhaps even further.

A final note – Travis Dowling has agreed to be the guest speaker at our Christmas Dinner. Travis is 'Director of Fisheries Management – DPI Fisheries, Victoria', so his role is critical in the development of our State's trout fishery. He is also a very keen (and successful) trout angler, as well as being a very competent and energetic head of Fisheries Management. He has indicated that his presentation at our Christmas Dinner will cover a range of topics of direct relevance to trout anglers. He is in great demand as a speaker, and we are very fortunate to have him with us at our December Dinner. It promises to be a very informative and entertaining occasion, and Travis deserves our support. Invitations for this occasion will be included in our November newsletter.

Tight lines, *Lyndon Webb*

VFFA Glasses

The VFFA has a very innovative and energetic marketing man. Hugh Maltby organizes the stocks, and is always on the look-out for new items to attach a VFFA logo to and sell to members. Thus we have badges, caps, shirts, polarfleece jackets, cloth badges for fishing vests, ties, diaries, and even a fine BBQ apron decorated with the VFFA logo.

And the latest addition – superb sets of wine glasses or whisky glasses. These are of excellent quality, and come in a set of six, for the modest sum of \$40 per set. A excellent gift – for yourself, spouse or colleague.



Coming Events

Season Opener

Following a magnificent visit to Warrnambool and district last year we will do it all again for this year's opening weekend. Accommodation has been booked at the Surfside Holiday Park. This complex is very comfortable and in a magnificent location. The accommodation has been booked in cabins from arrival on Friday November 4 until departure on Sunday November 6.

We will fish a range of local rivers including the Merri, Hopkins and Moyne. These rivers offer a wonderful variety of fishing - both wet and dry styles, depending on the height and clarity.

The President and members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers will again guide us, and host dinner at Jim Blakeslee's Winery on the Saturday evening with Jim and his wife Tricia. Members will each share the cost of this meal and provide their own drinks.

This will be a great weekend, so reserve your spot now by contacting Hugh Maltby on: - Mob 0423 283 079, Home 94592241 or by email redhtag@hotmail.com



New Zealand 2011 Southland Trip



Now leaving on November 24 and returning on December 8. Expressions of interest and bookings are now being taken for this year's New Zealand trip. Call or email Rick Dugina asap on phone: 0401 963 601, or

email: edugina@bigpond.com

The base for operations this year is the Lake Wanaka district, which offers fabulous fishing in a number of nearby rivers and lakes. Several members have already signed up, but we are assured there is room for a few more!

Christmas in July – Part 2

(From Jon Kenfield, aka “gadget”. Our August issue gave the first part of Jon’s report, describing his fishing experiences at Christmas Island. In this second part he offers some sage advice to those who might be considering a similar excursion.)

Flies and Sundry Advice

I initially thought that fishing Christmas Island was going to be an exotic adventure in a remote location, but the more people I mentioned it to the more seemed to either have just come back, or were just about to go. There was certainly no shortage of good advice, most of it contradicting the equally sound advice received just beforehand. Topics covered everything from flies and tackle, to hats and shirts; from bum bags to fishing vests to taking my own bread; and from drinking to washing in the local water, and even what vitamins to take.

On the fly front there was no argument: everybody told me to take Crazy Charlies, tied very sparsely, in sizes 4 and 6, in a variety of colours and weights (with the weight provided by bead chain or dumbbell eyes). Since shop-bought saltwater flies cost around \$5 each, and I was told to take a couple of hundred, I went weak in my wading socks.



Perhaps fortunately, none of the local tackle dealers had many flies in stock, so Rick Dobson suggested I have a crack at tying a few. Being but an embryonic duffer at fly tying, this was quite challenging, but then I discovered the true value of YouTube. It seems there is nothing you can’t find and learn about through this medium. I was spoilt with choice on how to tie

Crazy Charlies, with excellent instructional videos on how to use every fly tying gadget at my disposal, and a few that weren't. Combined with a \$10.00 DVD picked up from Compleat Angler, which had Nario (soon to be one of my Christmas Island guides), demonstrating how he ties his Crazy Charlies, I felt empowered to devote many a happy night in the months before the trip, tying flies - both conventional and experimental.

In the event, over the week I only used about a dozen flies in total, and lost only two or three on around 60 bonefish. My impression was that the size and colour of the fly was less important than the timing and quality of my presentation, and the strip. Having said that, the one fly I had that was monstered the moment it hit the water was tied with UV Krystal Flash, on a day when every sighted fish had been especially spooky - following, but not often taking, a varied collection of conventional pink, orange, gold and brown flies.

Unfortunately my UV Charlie, which was otherwise identical to all the others, was pounced on by what looked like one of the best bonefish of the week. It snapped my 12lb fluorocarbon tippet on the take. I was mortified to discover that I didn't have any other UV Charlies in my box and I continued to struggle to hook-up for the rest of that day. When I return, I'll definitely have at least a dozen UV Charlies in a couple of different hook sizes and weights.

The guides rejected all of my shrimp, crab and other flies, including my Flashabou Crazy Charlies, which looked a bit more heavily dressed. They wanted me to use only a narrow selection of Crazy Charlies in pink, bonefish tan, opal, gold and orange Krystal Flash. Next time I may (but probably won't!) limit my flies to these colours, plus some yellows and greens.

The only colour whipping silk anybody wanted to use was fiery orange, flat waxed. Hook sizes are four and six, and they should be sharp, because bonefish have tough mouths for crunching crustaceans. My impression was that a committed fish was not hard to hook, and there was no downside to going barbless.

Fishing Tackle

The standard wisdom for Christmas Island is that a 7 or 8 weight rod is about right, depending on wind strength, with a 9 weight being an option for less confident casters. I decided to play it safe at the start and used a Winston II-MX 9 weight with matching SA bonefish taper line and 12-pound tippet. My Danielson reel carried a highly optimistic 250 metres of 50lb braid backing. At no time did I feel over-gunned for the bonefish I caught, which were mainly in the 2 - 4 lb range. Some fish peeled off the entire 120ft fly line plus around 50 metres of backing, usually on two similar runs, sometimes on three or even four. I found this outfit comfortable to carry and cast all day, and it dealt admirably with every wind that I encountered, including some fairly feral stuff. I did use a 6 weight Winston XTR rod with an SA 7 weight bonefish taper line for half a day and while it was nice to use the lighter rod, I didn't feel it offered any real advantages over the 9 weight, and it was considerably more difficult to fish with it effectively when the wind got up.

I didn't unwrap my 8 weight rod at all, so can't tell you whether SA's new saltwater shark skin taper is as good as it's supposed to be. I was always happy with my bonefish tapers,

which were quiet to use and cast well in the wind. Without any over-lining they enabled me to get my flies to the fish as quickly as I could physically manage. I waded with a meter or so of fly line out of my rod tip, plus enough loose line sitting ready to shoot in my stripping basket, rather than over-lining the rod. I found it useful to wear a “Flexi-Stripper” basket dashingly tied to my left thigh. Notwithstanding it looked like a cheap Swedish sex toy with its forest of silicone fingers, the Flexi-Stripper allowed me to keep 10m of line at the ready. I found I could shoot all of this with a single flick at need - most of the time!

My 9 foot, 13 lb Rio bonefish tapered leader, with 2 - 3 feet of 12 lb fluorocarbon tippet, worked fine and although I used a small Lefty’s loop most of the time, I suspect that a conventional Blood or Penny knot would have done just as well. The bonefish didn’t seem to be particularly leader shy, excepting during the session with the UV fly, mentioned above.

Clothing

I was strongly advised to get a very broad-brimmed hat, somewhere just short of a Mexican sombrero, with a dark underside to help fish spotting. I bought a great one from Paddy Pallin – the flamboyant bigger brother of the waxed cotton Watership hat I use for trout fishing. However, on Day 1 the wind was too strong for it and I spent most of the time looking like someone off Gilligan’s Isle. This didn’t worry me too much from a fashion or aesthetic point of view, but it did mean that I wasn’t getting any of the benefit I needed from the broad brim.

Rick Dobson recommended Frill-Neck headgear - essentially a baseball cap with a non-detachable skirt that covers the back and front of your neck, ears and almost everything south of your eyes and north of your nipples. I did buy one because it looked effective, but couldn’t bring myself to wear it because it looked like a polyester burqa and an excessive overkill. However, several people in the group had them and they all seemed happy. I just regretted that they made them look so unphotogenic, even if they did successfully avoid instant melanomas and burning to a crisp.

I was very comfortable in a Simms Flats cap, which has an extra long, heavily curved bill and a generous detachable flap that covered the back and side of my neck. I used a cap keeper cord to secure it to my head in the wind and to keep the flaps covering my neck. Combined with a neck “Buff”, long sleeve shirts and long legged, quick drying ExOfficio pants I remained very comfortable in all conditions with minimal need for sunblock, other than on my nose and cheeks. I also used lip balm all the time. I’ve always been a bit suspicious of sunblock, feeling that it has to be a con – something like the Emperor’s new clothes. I just can’t buy the idea that rubbing a bit of cream on your body gives you armour plating against sunlight, without some other dire consequences.

Everybody was wearing Columbia’s nylon shirts, like our VFFA shirts. I allowed myself to be persuaded to get another of these shirts on the basis it would be wet, sweaty and windy on the flats, where cotton would get clammy and cold. I must confess that I have yet to find the nylon or polyester shirt I can wear comfortably - they all feel clammy to me. Unfortunately my new Columbia shirt was no exception and I gave it to my guide at the end of Day 1. Fortunately I’d also taken two Simms quick drying cotton shirts with me. They were exceptionally comfortable at all times and very fast drying when I got drenched in a couple of showers.

I used sun gloves which, despite their having had very little use in the past, began to dissolve somewhere around Day 3 and barely managed to make it to the end of the week. When I go again I'll take a spare pair with me, as they're definitely worth having. While having adequate sun protection is clearly essential in this sort of environment, with rays coming at you from all directions, I urge you to make sure you'll be comfortable at the same time. Be careful with the clothing you choose, and don't believe all the advertising about miracle fabrics.

Footwear

I was advised to get a pair of lightweight flats booties - neoprene boots with reasonably solid soles and cuffs that would grip my legs to keep out sand. I had thought of taking my old Korkers felt-soled boots that I'd retired in favour of Simms rubber-soled boots, but I was concerned these would be too heavy. I then speculated that with a lot of wading on sandy flats, rocks and corals, my easily rolled ankles would need something a bit more solid and supportive than neoprene boots. Everybody in neoprenes seemed perfectly happy with them, but personally I wouldn't dream of going back without my trusty Simms Flats boots, which are sturdy and light-weight walking boots designed for flats wading. They were great with wading socks rolled over the tops to keep the sand out.

Polaroids

Good polaroids are essential for successful bonefish fishing, period.



I have a pair of amber Spotters, which are pretty good but are a few years old. A while before the trip I had an eye test and OPSM suggested I needed a slightly different prescription. I had my doubts, but was ready for some new shades and went along for the ride. I ordered new specs and examined their polaroid offerings. I then discovered that OPSM don't actually supply the original manufacturer's polarized

lenses if you need prescription lenses, they just supply the original frame with their own lenses. This was not at all what I had in mind, so I took my new prescription to a local optician in Hawthorn who arranged for the Maui Jim rep to meet me there a couple of days later with around 700 frames! I explained exactly what I wanted and we quickly narrowed things down to a choice of two frames with amber lenses. Maui Jim prescription lenses are manufactured on a computer-controlled rig somewhere overseas and once the order is flashed off, the completed glasses arrive back within about five days. I find that exceptional, even if it's expensive. Unfortunately, the supplied lenses were optically quite weird, so I rejected them. Then for reasons I still don't entirely understand, rose-coloured lenses were supplied in their place. These gave sharp focus and good contrast, but I was a little dubious

about how they'd work on Christmas Island, having never used rose-coloured lenses before. In the event, I found that my old Spotters were better (for spotting fish) than my new Maui Jims, so I used them for most of the trip. I've been back to the optician to explain the issue and now await a response from Maui Jim.

Guides

The guides speak reasonably good English. They are delightfully gentle and certainly have phenomenal fish spotting skills, but they don't display the sort of initiative that gives you confidence they're helping you to catch fish. I'm convinced that on my best bonefish day, the main reason I eventually found fish was because I kept pushing my guide, Oteo, to move from one barren flat to the next after giving it a reasonable prospecting. Left to his own devices, I suspect we'd have kept wandering the first flat we arrived at, hoping that fish would eventually arrive, and who knows – that may have worked – although it would have sorely tried my patience.



The guides are also less than adventurous when it comes to fly choices. This was the only other thing about them that really gave me the yips: when I opened up my magnificent fly boxes, bursting with the untested potential of the 200+ flies I'd tied, and with my 10 or so shop bought flies sitting unobtrusively in the shadows of my hand in the lower right corner of the box, the bastards kept selecting the shop bought flies! I guess I was tested and I was found wanting. I know I must forgive them in my heart, but ...

Scenery, flora and fauna

The island itself is low, flat and rather uninteresting, at least in a topographical sense, both around the shoreline and in the interior. Even the abundant coconut palms fail to create a sense of "Pacific Island Exotique" to relieve the visual monotony. A half metre tidal wave would probably wash most of it away; so global warming and/or rising sea levels are a real threat. The beaches are harsh coral sand and rock and they present little more than a divide between land and sea. The bush is low and scrubby and the abundant rain and sunlight encourages green growth, but low soil fertility means that nothing is really lush – it's just surviving.

There's a decent sprinkling of sea birds along the shores, including red-tailed tropic birds, frigate birds, boobys, gannets, shearwaters and terns, but I saw no endemic land species, other than village chooks. There were very few insects and no sign of rats, mice or other small mammals, although they apparently exist in relatively limited numbers. The feral cat population is not huge, but it's been enough to drive most of the bird life off the main island. The most commonly seen land-based fauna, beyond the 7,000 islanders and Columbia-

garbed fly-fisher folk, are the land crabs, some of which grow to a considerable size. They live in permanent holes on dry land, and only go into the water to mate.

But, come to the end of the land, and look out across the flats and the Ocean, and it's a whole different story. The dreadful weather of our first few days gave us heavy cloud cover that made everything look flat and unappealing, and quite impossible to sight fish. However when the clouds broke and we had sun and blue sky overhead, there were many times when I froze in mid-step, gob-smacked by the incredible scene of white to yellow sand shading across the littoral zone to a deepening green water, with a colour and intensity unlike any I'd seen before. Said water then stretched away to a far distant horizon which separated, and then graduated upwards into a colossal and gorgeously blue sky, contrasting with tastefully placed, fluffy white clouds that filled my visual and sensual universe. Often I found myself frozen in time and rooted to the spot, with lungs and eyes just sucking it all in. The images burned themselves into my memory with more intensity than ever a camera sensor could manage. For these moments alone it would be worth going back.

Conclusion: would I do it again?

Half way through the week, confirmed optimist though I be, I felt frustrated and disappointed. The weather was lousy, the fishing was poor, the guides were uninspiring, and there was nothing to suggest that things would improve before we had to leave. Nothing had gone terribly well to this point, and my sky-high expectations were fast disappearing down the toilet, mainly because we had so little time for things to improve, and no power to improve them ourselves. For a declared control freak this was hard to bear and I felt pretty sad. But the planets kept turning and the weather and tides improved. I started fishing with people who were fun to be with, and I began to find and catch some fish. Eventually Christmas Island "turned on" to show me what it was capable of ... and the place left me wanting more, much more.

Next time I'll be much better equipped, knowledge wise, and perhaps if I take two weeks, the weather/conditions/time pressures will be much less of an issue?

Another major improvement would be to go with a group that bonds together more happily. There were plenty of good, friendly, social folk on my trip, but I never felt that we were united in purpose or spirit. Perhaps this is inevitable in a tourist group comprising random individuals and couples, but I felt that stronger leadership, better information and more overt organisation would have made things work much better, without costing any individual freedoms.

I would love to see a VFFA group going to Christmas Island for a week, or preferably two, at a cost that would be in the ball park for a New Zealand trip of similar duration, at least while the Aussie dollar's strong. If we went with a knowledgeable and engaged tour leader (Rick?), it could be fantastic – especially if we get the weather and tides right!

So I haven't scrubbed Christmas Island off my Bucket List; I've just circled the tick and will wait to go once more before I cross it off properly. I'm looking forward to the day.

The Test, Mayflies, Kind People and some Wonderful Luck

(Andrew Mossman's report on his two days on the fabulous Test River)

We had decided that our family should go to England to visit our third daughter and her husband, who live in London. We also decided that we would take any of our other three daughters who chose to come with us, and in the end two of them came. My only contribution to this point was to suggest that we might call in at O'Porto in Portugal and have a look at the Portuguese Port Industry. So our plans were finalized and tickets booked. We were to fly to London, then on to O'Porto, finally returning to London in the third week of May.

About two weeks before leaving we were staying with friends near Mt Macedon. On hearing of our plans, Ian, who is English, said that he would contact his oldest friend David, who not only lived in an exquisite thatched village on the banks of the Test River with access to the fishing, but who was also married to a member of the Symington family who owned some of the most prestigious port houses in O'Porto. A phone call was made and our visit to Portugal went up a couple of notches. The situation regarding the fishing remained a little unclear, but that was to be sorted out when we had arrived back in London.

For a number of years I have been fishing and experimenting with 'soft hackle' ('spider') flies, both here and in New Zealand, and I decided that while in Great Britain I would try to get in touch with Phil Bailey, a VFFA member and past president, who lives in the UK and uses soft hackle flies extensively. I was keen to discuss some aspects of fishing these flies with Phil, so phoned John Pilkington for Phil's phone number. John didn't have the number, but on hearing that I was about to depart for England he asked me if I remembered an old school mate of his, Rodney. Apparently we had all gone to the same school. John informed me that Rodney was a member of the London Fly Fishers' Club, was a great guy, and if asked might take me to the club for lunch or a drink. I had never been to the club, but had known of it since my early teens and was well aware of its historical importance to our sport, so, "Yes, I would love to visit it." John then added, "Oh, and by the way, Rod has a couple of beats on the Test."

So there I was, off to England to visit my daughter, and suddenly, without any forethought or planning on my part, the trip had unexpectedly developed some very exciting possibilities. John emailed me Rodney's phone numbers, so when I arrived in London contact was soon made. Now Rod is a successful cardiologist and therefore very busy, so although welcoming and keen to meet me for a drink at the club, was not free for a week or so.

So Margot and I headed off to Wherwell in Hampshire to meet David and his wife Christian. As it happened David did not have fishing rights on the Test, but a friend who lived in a large Tudor house on its banks did own a stretch of the river, and David had arranged for us to have drinks on the river bank before going to dinner later that evening. The Test, like most rivers in England, is privately owned, so it is not possible to just walk into the river or along its banks without permission, so this was a wonderful opportunity to see it and take some photos.

When we arrived there just before 6 pm there was a very heavy hatch of mayfly underway. Conditions were perfect, the day being warm and humid with very occasional periods of light mizzle. I suspect that every trout in the river was 'up', as fish were rising everywhere. Most of us would have heard or read about the famous Hampshire chalk stream mayfly hatches, but to



Mayfly from the Test River

see a big hatch under way, and on the Test, was very exciting. Not having any expectations of fishing meant that I was just delighted to be there and to have the opportunity to photograph these enormous flies and this wonderful hatch.

We had been there for only about five minutes when a tall young man arrived and asked in very proper English if everything was all right. He was the landscape gardener and was also a friend of the owner, Nick. He jokingly commented that Nick had said a couple of days earlier, "If you see a rod on the river this

evening, turn the other eye". "A naval man!" I responded. "Did you bring a rod?" he asked. "No, of course not," I replied very politely, "We don't have fishing rights". "Would you like to borrow mine?" was his response. I looked at David, who was looking a little perplexed, so I suggested that we really couldn't fish without Nick's express permission. "Nick is in Florida fishing for tarpon", he said, and repeated, "So, therefore, would you like to borrow my rod?" This time David was giggling when I looked to him for guidance, so I replied, "Yes, please!" We quickly returned to the house and I was presented with a beautiful Orvis Graphite 6-weight rod, rigged, and with a mayfly pattern attached.

Now, as luck would have it, while we were having lunch earlier that day in a gorgeous local pub, I had had the good fortune to meet a friend of David's who had been fishing that morning. He said that there had been a heavy hatch of mayfly and that he had caught several fish. He then showed me the flies that had been so successful for him. They were huge, gaudy, and tied well enough, but I would never have purchased them in a fit without some prior knowledge. So, thus informed, when we visited Stockbridge later that afternoon, I had purchased a small collection of these flies, just in case an opportunity presented itself, or for no other reason than for my collection.

Back at the river, when I cast David's fly (The gardener's name was also David) it was taken short by the first two fish, so I replaced it with one of my new emergers. This fly was tied on a size 12 long shank hook, and was a little like a possum emerger, but tied more generously using off-white, light green, and brown Antron. It was now six o'clock, the hatch was heavy, and fish were taking ascending and emerging nymphs, as well as the odd dun that was resting on the water or trying to flutter away. However the trout, as they usually do, appeared to be concentrating mainly on the emerging duns. The river was boiling with rising fish. We were on a small section of Nick's water - just a couple of hundred yards of manicured bank complete with a "shack" (sorry, I mean "summer house") for the ladies and a refuge for the gentlemen if it rained. The river was classic Chalk Stream - the water being clear, not deep, with variable currents, and its bed mostly covered with long trailing weed. Odd fish could be seen in the few patches where there was a gap in the weed, and the pale chalk of the river bed was visible. At this point the river was a good cast wide. I fished only this small reach, and in one hour took four beautiful trout and had several others 'boof' the rise or come off. A 'boofed' rise is where the fish appears to take the fly well but rejects it at the last moment with a loud 'boof' or rush, a sure sign that the fly was almost but just not quite right. At one stage



Andrew enjoyed David's beat on the Test

David took the rod that I offered him and caught a small wild fish of less than a pound. But then Christian, his wife, said: "David, please give that rod back to Andrew. You can fish here at any time!" So on I fished.

At 7 o'clock sharp Christian announced: "One more fish only Andrew, it's time for dinner." So, with a tear on my cheek, as a plump fish of two pounds that had been rising on the opposite bank was landed and released, we headed off to Stockbridge for a delightful

evening meal. So ended a wonderfully unexpected hour's fishing. No amount of reading, and I have read heaps about the Chalk Streams, could have prepared me for the sight of that heavy hatch. To see the nymphs rising through the water and then hatching in clear view was simply wonderful. Although I had seen odd mayflies before I had forgotten just how big they are. They seemed larger than the ones I remember seeing in Ireland when I was fishing Lake Corrib a few years ago, and they are certainly bigger than our "Kossie Duns". The flies that I purchased were huge. Some were well tied but the emergers were not very durable and a little overdressed. I think probably a size too large too. Although the one that I was using worked reasonably well, I am confident that a slightly smaller and more elegantly dressed fly would have produced more 'hook-ups'.

My Test interlude, however, was not over yet. Margot and I, quite appropriately, stayed that night in the "Mayfly Room" of the Grosvenor Arms Hotel in Stockbridge. At about 10 am the following morning Rodney phoned to say that he was having difficulty organizing a day's fishing for the next Saturday. I thanked him and then indicated that we would be in Devon anyway at the weekend, at which point he asked, "Where are you?" When he learned that we were in the main street of Stockbridge and were planning a quiet day he simply said, "Marvellous. My lower beat, which is near Romsey, is free today, and this is how you get to it". Another unplanned and wonderful act of kindness!

There are two Fly Shops in Stockbridge, so this time I went to the Orvis shop to purchase an even larger box of mayflies, and although their emergers were a little different I decided to try them. As it happened, the emergers from the other shop, which had a dark brown tail, proved the more successful fly. We then drove on to Romsey, only a few miles down the river.

Rodney's beat is another classic stretch of the Test. The river here splits into two roughly equal channels several hundred yards apart. Rod is a member of a small group of friends who own the further channel. This lower section was similar in size to where I had fished the evening before, and we had the beat, almost a kilometre in length, to ourselves.

The day was warm and bright, with full sunlight, so obviously not as good for a hatch as the previous evening had been. As a result there was only a light hatch, but fortunately odd flies came off all day. We arrived at the water at about 11am and walked into a beautiful bend:

shallow, and mostly weeded with patches of pale gravel showing. In a riffing run between the weed on the far side a fish rose and took my mayfly emerger on the first chuck. It was a plump 1½ lb trout that I released. Further up the run the process was repeated, with this time a fish of 1¾ pound being released. The bend was wide and flowed out of a broad and deep gliding corner. As the water became shallower it flowed over clumps of weed, which broke up the current as the water entered the faster riffles below where I had just caught the first two fish.



The emerger pattern that Andrew used

A fish rose on the other side of the river. He was stationed in a runnel on the far side of some faster shallow water, and by throwing a long, slack cast I managed a good drift over him. I saw him coming, set the hook, and landed a 2 lb brown. Several fish were rising in the central channel, and the lowest one took my fly but was not felt. I think he ‘boofed’ the rise. I cast again, and again did not feel the take, despite the rise looking normal and the tippet being momentarily drawn under. “It had to be a ‘boof’,” I thought. I rested the fish for a few minutes and after he had settled down and resumed rising steadily I offered him my fly again. This time I was ready and as he took the fly I struck immediately and had him. “Gotchya!” I said, but sadly only for one good run and then he came off.

Further up I could see a fish holding in close to my bank. He took my fly at the first offer and was released, a 2¼ lb brownie. I was wearing the only pair of shoes that I had taken to England and was keen to keep them dry, so whenever I caught a fish I had to walk it down to the beach at the bottom of the lower riffles. This entailed walking through a large patch of nettles, and with casting and playing fish the backs of my hands were becoming painful. Apart from allowing me to land my fish dry shod, this manoeuvre had the advantage that any fish that had resumed rising below me was now accessible again, and one that had started rising again, well across the run, was caught and released.

Another fish started rising in the run-in to the deep bend and to took my emerger on the first offer. I had just released this fish when yet another fish started rising well over in the deep water. By throwing a long slack cast I managed a good drift and landed this 2 lb fish also.

What a river, and what a start to a very special day. I had been fishing for only an hour and had fished only one large corner pool and its run in and the riffing run out, and had caught and released 8 fish from 1 to 2¼ lb. Yes, I know that the fishing was very easy, that the fish were not wild and that as a result of fish releases, there is a very high density of fish in this river. But the fish were all in good condition and fought reasonably well. So how lucky was I? What a nice change, and what a lovely place to have an easy day.

Not surprisingly the fish had stopped rising where I had been fishing, so I walked upstream into some more beautiful water. Just as I was approaching the next series of runs and riffles a

mob of young cattle galloped past me and on up the river. I could feel the ground vibrating under my feet. There were no rises near where the cattle had been, so I went on up into a beautiful weedy run that flowed out of a large pool at the top of Rod's beat. Several fish were rising in this beautiful run, and I covered all of them and some others that I could see well enough, but could not get a rise despite several fish swimming over to and closely inspecting my fly or humping under it. I tried some other patterns, but without success. I could see the fish clearly in the water, and they were feeding, but they would not take my fly. The day was very bright, but nothing obvious had changed. I did think that a box of more sparsely and elegantly tied flies would have been more effective, but of course I had only what I had purchased in Stockbridge.

It was time for lunch, and so a sandwich with Margot in the shade overlooking this exquisite river was yet another joy on this wonderful day. A fish had been rising while we were having our lunch, and took my emerger on the first cast that I made to him. At ½ a pound this was the smallest fish of the day, but was the only wild fish that I caught.

After lunch I fished on. Wandering up and down the entire beat, I caught another 6 fish of similar size to the ones that I had caught earlier, and missed several others. They were much more selective in the afternoon and clearly my flies were not good enough. But by concentrating on individual fish, and changing flies, odd fish could be undone. I even caught one of those frustratingly difficult fish in the top run, and I suspect that it might have been the fish that came off after his first run in the big bend where I had started fishing.

Unfortunately we had to leave at 7 o'clock to pick up my daughter and her husband from a train station some two hours drive away. Thus I could not stay for the spinner fall that must surely have occurred later that evening. So I didn't get to use the many mayfly spinner imitations I had purchased that morning. I have been told subsequently that the spinners normally only appear fairly late in the evenings, unlike New Zealand where there can be a heavy fall of spinners at any time of the day when conditions are right.

And so ended a very special day on the Test, probably the world's most famous river in an historical sense. I know that the fish are mostly hatchery bred and released, and that during the mayfly hatch they are often easy. 'Duffers Week' they call it. However this river's historical place in dry fly fishing puts it above all others, with perhaps the exception of the Itchen. To have had the two opportunities to fish the Test that I have just described, and at the height of a great mayfly hatch, was a rare privilege indeed.

To complete the narrative, I did meet Rodney for a drink at the London Fly Fishers' Club, and also enjoyed a lovely lunch there with the secretary and some of the members. The Club has a huge and fascinating collection of books and fishing memorabilia, not to mention dozens of flies tied by Halford himself, along with some of Skues's fishing gear, and Izaak Walton's leather creel dated 1643. The secretary and the members were delightful and hospitable, and my visit to the Fly Fishers' Club was an especially memorable highlight of my trip to England, not to mention fulfilling a lifelong ambition to visit this hallowed institution. And finally, we did call into O'porto in Portugal. I think it is sufficient to say that we had a wonderful visit, which included tasting some extraordinary ports up to 50 years old.

Kossy's pics

(Richard Kos is a great supporter of the newsletter, and is always willing to bring a camera along and take photos that enhance our issues. Here are just a few of his images from the recent President's Casting Day)



The coffee was great!



The President goes for distance



Hubert and Choco



Malcolm and Joe



Keen observers of the casting



John Pilkington's fishing companion

East Gippsland Report

(by Humpy)

The 2011 season is now underway and the opening weekend was the best that I have seen. The water temperatures were low as usual, about 2°C, but all the rivers were running beautifully. Normally at this time of the year the rivers are high and often dirty. While September is traditionally a time of high snow melt and often heavy rain, this year we had quite a wet winter but so far only moderate spring rain. The snow has been melting gently due to air temperatures being above zero, rather than pouring down in a torrent due to rain falling on it. Fishing in September is never going to be a big numbers event, as the trout are not very active due to the cold water and lack of insect activity. However this year some reasonable numbers of trout were taken.

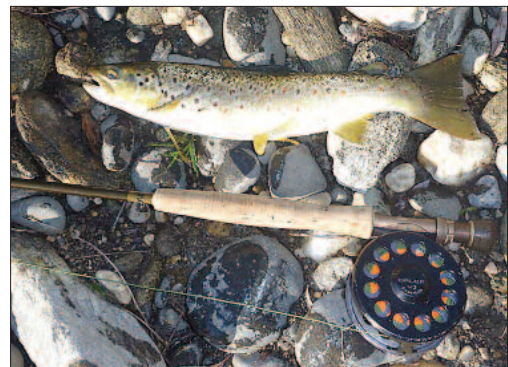
Livingston Creek fished well for Rod Brooker, fishing with beadhead nymphs. He took 7 browns up to 1¼ lb on opening day. Not to be outdone, Mick Rosenboom fished the upper Livingston on Sunday and caught 6 browns, including one on a Royal Wulff. The Bundarra River attracted a lot of fishermen for the opening and the fishing was good for well-conditioned browns up to 1 lb. Nearby Middle Creek produced a few fish of a similar size although the fishing was not as good as it could have been as two spin fishermen spun the entire length of the creek early in the day. Morass Creek was running discoloured as usual but the bait fishermen caught some nice fish there too.

The Cobungra River runs off Mount Hotham and, like its neighbours, produced a reasonable number of browns. The Bairnsdale Fly Fishers' Club are undertaking a rehabilitation project in the Innisfail area on this river. They have fenced and replanted about 1 km of the river over the past few years. The final task is to remove the remaining willows and replant that section with trees and shrubs that are native to the area. The section that they have previously replanted looks great. Tussocks have re-established and some of the trees are now up to 4 metres in height. This has resulted in the banks being held together during the three floods that occurred earlier this year. Apart from the benefits to the fishing, this work has pleased farmer Alan Smith who was previously losing farmland due to the erosion.

The Mitta River could be crossed in many places, which is unusual at this time of the year. It fished well to all forms of fishing and most fly-fishermen caught a fish or two out of it. All fish were taken on beadhead nymphs. The fish are in great shape for this time of the year. Often early season trout are skinny and poorly conditioned in these early months, but this year they looked great and fought harder than normal. It was interesting to see midges and even the odd mayfly flying above the river.

Lake Dartmouth has risen over the winter months and now it is just below the Quarry, and anglers are launching their boats into the Dam from the Lower Tableland Road for the first time in many years. This is good for the bait and lure fishermen but not so good for the fly-fishermen as we have now lost a lot of productive water in the lower Mitta and Gibbo Rivers.

The photo is of a typical fish taken and released back into the Bundarra River.



Success Just One Step Away From Divorce!

(Or: The things you do to us!)

(The following intriguing contribution came from Jane McDonnell, the long-suffering and very patient wife of a Southern NSW member of the VFFA.)

Months it took, standing at the end of supermarket aisles and, after the first excursion inside a chemist shop, standing outside the door observing reactions. Absolute months to satisfy your needs!

It didn't take too many visits before I decided I'd had enough of hearing:

"I can get at least six out of each condom." "They must be pink." "I've already tried balloons, they're the wrong texture and are too thick to give me the flexibility, stretch and feel that I need." "I've already tried the exercise straps from the Physiotherapist." "They should be unlubricated." "No, I don't need Knobbly ones, or Ticklely ones, or Flavoured ones."

Then dearest husband, there were the reactions! From younger people looking absolutely askance at two grey-haired Great Grandparents sorting through selections of condoms and discussing the various merits of each style and your particular requirements, to the bawdy conversations you invariably had with pharmacy assistants who struggled valiantly to keep a straight face and cope with the nutty old fart they were dealing with!

"I WILL NOT sit outside Adult shops while you hunt to satisfy your needs! Go back to the local pharmacy and explain you've tried from here to Alice Springs to get what you need."

Thank you Lord – for a sales assistant who went the extra yard, and to Ansell who sent a goodly selection. The search is finally over! You've found the 'Perfect Pink Condom', been told the lubrication is very water soluble, and are satisfied! **Just in time!!**

(What on earth is this all about? Well of course – getting hold of the precise and correct requirements for an undoubtedly deadly fly – the Vladi Polish Worm! For those whose curiosity is piqued, please go to:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2M1CAagr_o

For the punchline go to "The Waterbug Book", by John Gooderham and Edward Tsyrlim, page 45: Class Oligochaete – Segmented Worms, Super Order Megadrili. Check out the translation!

Jane McDonnell, Long-suffering wife

In response, husband Ray offers the following quite measured and reasonable comments:

I would use this fly as the point fly on a two-fly nymph rig, with a beadhead pheasant tail on the dropper. Rivers where this rig could be effective include the Thredbo river, Khancoban tail race, the Goulburn in Victoria, Tyenna River - Tasmania, Huon River - Tasmania, and the Tongariro River in New Zealand.

Tight lines, *Ray*

PS: I'm going to Turangi on the banks of the Tongariro for 3 months. I'll give the fly a go and then let you know how it went on my return.

The Vladis Polish Worm



Report From Way Out West

(Report from our regular correspondent, Jim Blakeslee)

Fishing in springtime can be a hit or miss affair. Sort of a piscatorial version of snakes and ladders, I guess. I'll give you an example. Peter Hussey, Adrian Jacobs and I had a number of enjoyable outings on the Mount Emu Creek and the Merri River a couple of weeks ago. After a long wet winter we were experiencing a period of settled weather in mid-September. Let me set the scene.

It had been warmer and drier than the long-term average throughout August, but it had taken almost that entire month for the water-logged paddocks feeding the high flood levels and brown water of the previous months of June and July to finally drain away. September was looking good. The barometer was high and steady, the water level was finally dropping and beginning to clear, and the insects were starting to hatch. There were clouds of snowflake caddis and the earliest and largest hatching of black spinners in many years. The fish had decided to come to the party, too. The Mount Emu and Merri have always been our most consistent dry fly waters, so it was heart-warming to see the first head and tail rises of browns working along the banks and at their feeding stations in the current running into large pools. Instead of rugging up against the wind and gale and blind flogging the flooded river margins we were fishing in 20 degree weather, wearing short sleeve shirts and slapping on the sunscreen. What a joy. A nymph or dry fly cast ahead of a working fish usually resulted in a take, a tussle and a fat 1.5+ kg fish eventually flapping on the bank at the feet of a satisfied fly-fisherman. Things were beginning to happen on the lakes, too. For example, one of our new members, Phil Hoey, landed a 2.25 kg brown at Lake Gilliar.

Then it all came undone in the last few days of the month. We didn't have the hail and flash-flooding that affected other parts of the state, but a steady dumping of 46 mm of rain, accompanied by a plummeting barometer and cold windy conditions, really put the brakes on the fishing. This morning the Merri was dirty and had risen 2 metres. No insects hatching and no rising fish. I guess it's back to the lower parts of the rivers to flog the edges with a big wet fly for a while. At least there is the entire month of October for conditions to settle down, the water to clear and the bugs and fish to get back into action before the VFFA contingent arrive to sample our fishing during their November 4-6 trip.



A nice brown from the Mt Emu

ATF Report

Trout Fishing at Devilbend Reservoir

A new fishery is soon to become available for metropolitan trout fishers. In May 2010, Parks Victoria released the Devilbend Natural Features Reserve Management Plan, which established future directions for protecting the Reserve's values while providing for visitor use, including fishing. So recreational fishing will be permitted in several areas within the Reserve, and brown and rainbow trout were allocated for stocking in 2010. Estuary perch have also been approved for Devilbend, but won't be stocked in the short term.

The first rainbow trout and brown trout have already been stocked, but these fish are too small to fish for right now. The reason they have been stocked prior to the public opening of the Reserve is to allow them to grow to a catchable size. The present time estimate is for Devilbend Reservoir to open for fishing in early 2012.

With about 250 hectares of water surface area this fishery will be the largest inland fishery on the Mornington Peninsula, and is situated just 55 kms from Melbourne. The Mornington Peninsula Fly Fishers are to be commended for their persistent work over many years in agitating for the Reserve to include recreational fishing for the benefit of all Victorian trout fishers. In particular, Tom Camp, Mornington Peninsula Fly Fishers member and member of the Devilbend Advisory Group, has worked tirelessly, in the face of some very strong opposition from green groups, to ensure that Devilbend will be stocked with trout and open to recreational fishing.

ATF at the Annual Fishing Show

The annual Fishing and Boating Expo was held at the Melbourne Showgrounds from September 2 – 4, and again this year the Australian Trout Foundation was represented, sharing facilities with the Yarra Valley Fly Fishers. Membership forms were distributed, and casting and fly-tying lessons were given.

ATF AGM

The ATF Annual General Meeting for 2011 will be held on Monday, November 21, and agendas and other documents have been distributed to all financial members.

Subscriptions have been increased for this year. There are obvious costs in the administration of an organisation such as the ATF, and the \$10 per year subscription, kept at that level for so long, is proving insufficient. Accordingly, at last year's AGM it was decided that the new annual subscription should be \$20 per year, or \$60 for three years. Renewal notices have been prepared and sent out.

Finally, all members are encouraged to check the ATF website often, as this is the fastest and most convenient way of distributing information to members. So log on to <http://www.atfonline.com.au> and check the latest news. Secretary (and now active VFFA member) Tom White is very computer savvy and regularly updates the site.

FLY OF THE MONTH

At last – the very famous Dr Wark



(The Dr Wark is a very famous Australian fly, so it was a surprise for us to discover recently that it had never been included in our newsletter Fly of the Month. We'll happily remedy that omission this month. John Pilkington has had a long association with the Big River and this fly, so it only appropriate that he provided the following notes for our Dr Wark)

Now here is a useful fly for our small broken streams during those summer evenings when insects abound and the trout are concentrating on a bit of surface fun. Whether it is a caddis imitator or simply an attractor, opinions are sharply divided, but one thing is certain - this fly really works.

The fly came to Australia in 1954, courtesy of Sir Ian Wark, a research scientist with the CSIRO and keen angler, particularly on the upper reaches of the Big River. He had travelled to Europe and, by chance, struck up a conversation with a local on a train bound for Trondheim in Norway. Fishing was discussed. The upshot was that he was given flies by his fellow traveller, and among them was an odd looking concoction - long pheasant tail, ribbed body of dark greenish floss, white wings of hen hackle tips tied back, long hackles of dark brown cock palmer, and tied and on a #12 hook.

When Sir Ian, who held a doctorate, returned home, he was soon up to his favourite haunts

on the Big River with his cronies Carl Ferguson and Eric Dadswell. The new fly, which floated high and was easily seen on the broken water, proved a huge success and arrangements were made with Maurie Turville to have replacements tied. A supply was kept under the counter at Turvilles and in time the effectiveness of the fly became known and the secret leaked out. Modifications were made over time and the fly was christened the “Dr Wark Special”, later shortened to simply “The Dr Wark”.

I have been throwing out this fly on the Big River for over forty years, having been introduced to it by my old friend David Wark, nephew of Sir Ian. When a feeding trout locates under a group of caddis typically fluttering and dipping for ovipositing it is not uncommon for the fish to eventually dispose of the lot. A carefully presented Dr Wark (and I use small hooks: #14, #16 or even smaller) invariably provokes an instant response. Other times on a quiet pool a feeding fish will take it when other flies fail, particularly if there are dragonflies about.

My tie is as follows:

Materials:

- Hook: #14, #16 or smaller down-eyed fine wire (Kamasan B401 are good).
- Tail: Six or so fibres of guinea fowl tied at least as long as the hook for balance; they can be longer.
- Wings: Two white hackle points tied upright and separated. I still have a few of the old Indian capes and the small feathers right at the base serve well, but I am fast running out of these! The length of these wings should be the same length as the hook.
- Body: Flat green lurex tinsel.
- Hackle: At the rear - brown cock tied palmer, with a length shorter than the wings. At the front I use a brown cock hackle the same length as the wings and tied heavily both behind and in front of the wings to help them to stand upright.

Tying Steps:

1. Tie in the tail first with the lurex and the shorter hackle for palmering.
2. Then (this is the finicky part) select the pair of wing tips, oppose them, and tie them in just behind the eye of the hook and pointing forwards so they are out of the way.
3. Wrap the lurex tinsel along the shank of the hook carefully so that it gives a flat, even appearance. Tie it off just behind the wings.
4. Wind the palmer hackle and tie it off, again just behind the wings. It should be wound sparsely and there should be about six turns.
5. Now tie in the front hackle starting at the eye of the hook and holding the wings upright with turns both in front and behind them so that they stand upright and are separated.
6. Snip off the excess hackle (it should be behind the wings) and bring the tying silk back through the hackle to the eye and tie off.
7. Finish the fly with a drop of clear varnish on the eye.



John tied some Dr Warks at a recent VFFA Fly Tying evening



There are therefore some differences in the above tie to the original as used by Sir Ian - guinea fowl fibres replace those of pheasant for the tail, lurex for floss, no ribbing, wings upright, smaller sizes and considerably less and shorter hackle. The net effect is a much more delicate offering but one that still sits up well in broken water, being much lighter than the original. I do hope that Sir Ian would approve. The trout certainly do!

John Pilkington

For those interested in reading a more detailed history of this intriguing fly see “The Flyfisher Volume 9 (2003) ‘From Norway to Australia, via Dr Wark’ and VFFA Newsletter Volume 51 No.3 December 2002 ‘Big River Caddis, Dr Wark and other Mysteries’ by Alan Pilkington.



LIBRARY NEWS

All members should remember that the Mick Martin Memorial Library is one of the most extensive collections of fly-fishing literature in Australia. It is valuable in its own right but is a great asset to members wishing to expand their knowledge or who simply enjoy sitting by the fireside and vicariously enjoying the exploits of others. In addition, the library boasts a number of videos on trout fishing. Our librarian Marty Rogers will be available prior to each general meeting to assist members wishing to borrow books or videos.

The library is divided into three parts.

Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.

Part 2 Books available for reference only and not to be taken from the library.

Part 3 Books bequeathed to the Association and not to be taken from the cabinet.

OVERDUE BOOKS

Our librarian reports that a number of members have failed to return library books on time. Could all those book loving members who have failed to return books promptly do so.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA).....	\$70.00 each
Book "Geehi to Great Lake"	\$45.00 each
Columbia Shirts	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo.....	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon).....	\$35.00 each
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
Diaries \$2.00 each	
<i>The Australian Trout by Jack Ritchie.....</i>	\$20.00
<i>(Special offer – buy one, get one free!)</i>	
V.F.F.A. car stickers.....	\$2.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Hugh Maltby prior to the monthly General Meeting on telephone 9455 9017.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2011 Annual Dinner:

- Armadale Angler • Aussie Angler • Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery
- Compleat Angler, Box Hill • Fly Life Publications • Hookup Bait & Tackle,
- Ferntree Gully • J M Gillies • Lowes Furniture • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall •
- Michael Steven's Publishing • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Nick Taransky - Bamboo
- Rod Maker • Peter Hayes, Cressy • Pro Angler Fishing Tackle • Ray Brown,
- Onkaparinga Flies & Cane Rods • The Flyfisher, Melbourne • Vision Fly Fishing

VFFA Meetings & Activities

October 2011

- 20 **General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin: Guest Speaker – Andrew Mossman (Fly development)**
26 Council Meeting – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

November 2011

- 4 – 6 Opening Weekend Trip – to Warrnambool again this year, with Hugh Maltby looking after the arrangements. (Phone Hugh on 9459 2241, or email him on reddtag@hotmail.com)
17 **General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin: Guest Speaker – Julien Thomas from ‘Exclusive Cast’**
23 Council Meeting – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
Nov 24 - Dec 8 New Zealand trip. Convenor is Rick Dugina – 0401 963 601

December 2011

- 7 Council Meeting – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
15 **Christmas Dinner – 6:30 pm for 7:00 pm at the Kelvin: Guest Speaker – Travis Dowling**

February 2012

- 8 Council Meeting – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
16 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Kelvin: Traditional Liar’s Night**
17 – 19 Bairnsdale Dudley Lee Donger Weekend and Bairnsdale Fly-fishers’ Annual Dinner
18 – 24 Annual Trip to Tasmania – staying at Hayes on Brumby’s

March 2012

- 15 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Kelvin**
21 Council Meeting – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

April 2012

- 19 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Kelvin**
20 – 22 Big River Trip to Enoch’s Point (Convenor: John Pilkington, phone 0407 356 676 or A/H 9489 2186)
25 Council Meeting – 7:00 pm at the Kelvin Club
(Note: Easter 2012 is April 6 – 8)