

# FLY LINES



OCTOBER 2024

## “October – Our Annual Auction of Equipment and Books”

Our Annual Auction is always a very popular event in our annual calendar and invariably draws a large crowd of members. This year’s auction will again feature the sale of a number of prized fly fishing books and several items of gear, including rods, reels and lines, collections of flies, fly tying equipment and a number of other fly fishing and fly tying items. Auctioneer Hugh Maltby assures us that he and his team have been busy putting together the lots to be auctioned. It is anticipated there will be about 100 lots to go under the hammer.

Thursday, October 17,  
Meal at 6:00pm,  
Auction commencing at 7:00pm  
at the Kelvin Club

A catalogue of items to be sold will be emailed to all members by Peter Clayton.

We would encourage all members to join us for a meal beforehand, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by 5:00pm on Tuesday, October 15, by emailing Terry Rogers at [terryrogers@bigpond.com](mailto:terryrogers@bigpond.com) and leaving a message.



*Peter Clayton and Hugh Maltby – an experienced team at our auctions*

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# President's Message

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## President's Report 2023/24

### Membership

At a time when, according to data from the Victorian Fisheries Authority, many fishing clubs are suffering a significant decline in membership, our Association is no different with many of our older members no longer fishing, and a number have passed away. I am very aware of the need for constant renewal and attracting new members, and this has been a major focus in my first year as president.

With the assistance of past presidents, Hamish Hughes and Mike Jarvis, we undertook a survey of existing members to identify issues related to the retention of existing members. Following the survey a Membership Subcommittee was formed, and the results of our efforts have already seen a number of new members joining the Association, along with strategies for adapting to the changing needs of existing members.

### The Kelvin Club and AFFM

The membership survey confirmed a central location for our meetings was important and the Kelvin Club suits us very well.

The Strategy Room remains a spiritual home for our updated Honour Boards, some of our fly displays, and our library. Council thanks our Honorary Librarian, Bill Jeans, and Peter Clayton for their ongoing attention to the library. We have moved a major display cabinet into the Strategy Room, thus allowing memorabilia to be taken out of storage and put onto display.

The Australian Fly Fishing Museum (AFFM) in Tasmania will be reopening soon. I have been working with long-time member Mike Stevens to facilitate the reopening of the Museum, in which



*Simon Joel*

the Jack Ritchie cabinet and some of our memorabilia will be available to be viewed.

We have rekindled negotiations with the management at the Snobs Creek Hatchery regarding a further space to display other memorabilia. We're hopeful of a resolution and plan by year-end.

### Meetings

The Annual Dinner in August was a great event. It was a splendid evening, with a wonderful atmosphere, good food, good wine, a great speaker, and a very successful fund-raising effort. Our thanks to the myriad contributors who brought it all together, particularly our sponsors, several of whom were extraordinarily generous.

Our regular monthly meetings continue at the Kelvin Club. A highlight was John Pilkington's lunchtime meeting. The Christmas Dinner was also well-attended with a memorable talk by Tom Jarman.

The Council continues to review the monthly meetings. The timing (lunch time vs evening meetings), the venue (I was privileged to host one of our meetings at my home when John Spragg presented our first trip to New Zealand

for several years), and the guest speakers are all important in making our monthly meetings successful.

### **Events**

Hayes on Brumbys was once again a great week. Much fishing was had at venues all over North and Central Tasmania. The fishing was hard but always enjoyable, and the traditional Thursday evening dinner was a highlight when Tasmanian members and friends were invited to join in.

A Taupo, New Zealand, trip was organised in March 2024 by member and Senior Vice President John Spragg. John organised the trip with Rodger Muir, VFFA member and local resident of Taupo, who organised the accommodation and guides. The trip was a remarkable success, and planning is well underway for a repeat in 2025.

The Annual Big River trip courtesy of John Pilkington was held as usual on the weekend before Easter, and as ever was thoroughly enjoyable.

The Warrnambool trip in conjunction with the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club will be held from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. The organiser is Hugh Maltby.

The Bruce Whitehead Challenge and the Donger weekend, held in conjunction with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club, were again this year a lot of fun. The Bruce Whitehead Challenge was held in winter on the lakes around Ballarat, and the Donger weekend was held in autumn on the upper Mitta Mitta River catchment. Both events were well attended by VFFA members, though unfortunately we were not victorious in either.

Our trips to the dams around Thorpdale as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers are always enjoyable days and well attended, and although the catching was hard, the fishing and the hospitality made up for it.

The quarterly trips to Millbrook remain popular and are wonderful day's outing. Millbrook caters for both novice and experienced fly fishers and we are very fortunate to access such a productive fishing resource at an affordable price. Our thanks to long-standing VFFA friend Mark Weigall.

Our on-water activities are the life blood of a fishing club or association, and we have a new sub-committee in Bernard Chu and Dan Lovecek, who have joined me to review existing events and to look at new events. The first new event will be a Murray Cod Fly Fishing activity with recent presenter Cameron McGregor as our guide. This event is scheduled for February 21 - 23 in 2025 around Lake Mulwala. I will be the coordinator of this event.

### **Fly Lines**

The members' survey highlighted how important our newsletter *Fly Lines* is to the Association. Lyndon Webb, with the help of assistant editor Rod Hirst, produce a wonderful newsletter 11 times per year. It is truly part of the glue that holds the VFFA together.

### **The Website and WhatsApp**

Progress is continuing on our new interactive website, which is planned for launch soon after this AGM. Going forward the website will be our primary tool for communication across the Association. Our library catalogue will be available on the site (aiming to encourage members to use this valuable resource), and members will be able to register to attend meetings and events via an integrated events calendar.

John Spragg started our WhatsApp Group this year for members, and it continues to grow, allowing members to informally communicate on all things fly fishing. Members can engage in a lively and entertaining dialogue, swapping ideas

and opinions on many matters (including fishing).

### **Winter Activities**

Casting days at the Red Tag Casting Pool on the Sunday mornings have been well attended, as have fly tying evenings.

Richard Kos has been the stalwart leader of the Fly Tying group, and his teaching skill is appreciated. Our thanks also to Jenny Phillips and David Hooke for allowing us to use the facilities of The Botanical Art School of Melbourne.

### **Council**

The Council has worked hard for the membership and will continue to look at ways the Association can foster and improve our love of fly fishing. The newly formed Membership and On Water sub-committees will continue their work in 2025, focussing member engagement.

Retiring from the Council are three long-serving members who it will be difficult to replace. Tony Mitchem has been the VFFA treasurer since 2007. His 17 years as treasurer has been incredible and invaluable. He will be greatly missed, both for his skills at running the Association's finances and his wise counsel.

Terry Rogers was president of the VFFA in 2013 and 2014. He has served on the Council as long as anyone can remember. We all receive Terry's email invitations and reminders of upcoming events. His knowledge of all matters VFFA is truly remarkable, and his passion and enthusiasm will be greatly missed.



*President Simon Joel*

Dan Lovecek was secretary of the Association in 2023. He is a passionate fly fisher and his contribution to the Council has been greatly appreciated.

### **In Summary**

I have enjoyed my 12 months as your president, and I offer myself for re-election for a second term.

Many projects have been started and much work still needs to be done to move the VFFA forward. Membership renewal is a never-ending task for any club or association, and a fishing club or association is, after all, about the joy of fishing.

It is my aim that the VFFA will continue to foster fly fishing, serving its membership via an array of activities focussed on enhancing our mutual love of a unique sport with all its nuances and idiosyncrasies.

Simon Joel

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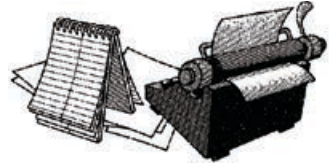
## **Paying our VFFA Accounts**

There were some recent concerns over the new payment system. Some members found it difficult or confusing.

Our secretary reminds us that all the old payment systems can still be used – cheque and money transfer are still options.

The new system doesn't replace them.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



... Rod Hirst

*"Golf is a compromise between what your ego wants you to do, what experience tells you to do, and what your nerves let you do."* Bruce Crampton

It is my turn again to contribute to this section of our newsletter, and as I reflected on what makes fly fishing so amazing it became crystal clear to me. The quote above will make more sense as you read on.

We certainly have amazing locations both here and around the world, trophy fish, the joy of a new rod, or tying your own fly and landing a fish on the first cast.

All of these are worthy of an Editor's Desk exploration. But in the end I decided it was fishing with your friends and mates.

I used to be a handy golfer and can see many similarities between golf and fly fishing.

Here are some examples.

The concept of small margins making a huge difference in the result is no better illustrated than in both golf and our wonderful pastime.

Or the requirement for different equipment to be used in different conditions.

The necessity to "manufacture" a different swing or casting options due to trees or wind.

The fact that one day the golf ball or your fly lands perfectly where you had intended ... and the next, the club or rod feels like a snake in your hands.

A new driver is just as good as a new rod - as long as it performs as you had hoped.



*Hamish, Michael and Hugh – all good friends*

Most importantly for me is that both allow you to meet and make new friends and mates, and both are invariably a better experience with a friend or mate.

I began my fly fishing adventures on my own with guides. To this day we are friends who fish together almost every year.

My fly fishing went to a new level when I was asked to join a group of sectarians on an annual trip to the Providence Portal on Lake Eucumbene. One of the established members had ridden on ahead and as someone under 60 I fitted the profile the group was looking for.

Hamish, Mick and Hugh had established a well-trodden path by the time I was lucky enough to join them. I happily tagged along and tried to not rock the boat. Dinners were planned to within an inch of their lives, evening charcuterie boards were world class, and for the next five years we had the same dinners each trip in the same order. We also fished the same locations, shared many of the same stories, and I loved every minute of it.

Snowy 2.0 has caused a few problems with our accommodation, so we now explore different locations but still yearn



*Lunch on the Dargo*



*Craig Kennedy in his happy place*

to go back to our original spot. Traditions with friends is always a good thing.

Looking for some new mates to fish with is sometimes like breaking into a golf foursome. But over time you find a home and new adventures emerge. As with life, each friend or group brings new energy and new inputs that often lead to different outcomes.

As you finish this piece I commend that you take a few minutes to reflect on your own fishing to see whether you agree that it is the friends you make that are the jewel in the crown, as much as if not more than the sport itself. Now, having said all of this I do have many cherished memories of playing golf and fishing on my own, but we will leave that for another time.

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## Angling Archery

How's your Bow and Arrow cast?

In his October Western District report Jim Blakeslee referred to his bow and arrow cast to

'ping' the fly into the path of cruising fish at close quarters. A few year's ago I came across a couple of articles by the master caster, Peter Hayes, suggesting that if you do it correctly, the bow and arrow cast will shoot flies out 8 - 10 metres

with no risk to life or limb or rod tip. The vital clues were these - firstly, don't hold the fly when executing this cast. Rather, hold the fly line about 2 or 3 metres up from the nail knot, so that the fly, leader and some fly line are all coiled neatly at your feet. And to avoid damage to your rod you keep your two hands widely separated - as the diagram shows.

So grab an OLD rod, load it up with a suitable line, tie a tiny piece of red wool

on as a fly ( saves hooking the dog or the washing) and head out into the backyard.

Shake some line out so that you have 6 or 7 metres of line out beyond the rod tip. Then hold your rod near your right knee with the line from the reel firmly wedged between your right hand and the cork handle.

Take hold of the fly line with your left hand about 2 or 3 metres up from the nail knot, and raise your left hand high above your left shoulder. With about 2 metres of line between your left hand and the rod tip pull back on the line to create a gentle curve in the rod. Keep those two hands well separated! Release the line, and all of the free line will shoot out, giving you a cast of 7 - 10 metres - more than enough in the sort of places where this cast is needed.

Obviously the important variables are the amount of line you have on the ground at your feet - too much or too little and the cast doesn't work very well, and the amount of bend you put in your rod. So do some experimenting until you find your 'fly' shooting out nicely.

The danger in this cast is in putting too sharp a bend in your rod tip and hearing the dreaded snap. However, provided

you keep your hands well separated and don't pull back too far the stress in your rod will not be catastrophic. Ensure that the entire rod is bending, and the bend in the tip section is not too sharp. The diagram above looks about right.

One of the articles I read on this cast was in the FlyFisher magazine - Issue 2, January 2007. Peter Hayes has given us permission to use some of his casting material in our newsletter, and our good friend Bill Classon didn't complain when I pinched his diagram from the Fly Fisher magazine. And by the way, Peter Hayes can cast 20 metres using this cast, with great accuracy. But then he's Peter Hayes.



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## An Old Yarn

(Members of many years may recall those delightful, whimsical, quirky, mischievous little tales that Ron Mackenzie wrote for the newsletter back in the 1960s and 70s. The following yarn is from the July 1965 Newsletter)

"Have you ever set a night-line when you've been camping?" asked Alf, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, which McTaggart apparently didn't notice.

"Yes," replied McTaggart seriously, and just as seriously pushed his lunch glass forward for replenishment.

"Funny," he went on, "I had a somewhat unusual experience last time I set a night-line. It was years ago. I was coming down from Western NSW with a mob of sheep, and one night we stopped beside a Murray billabong. We were short of tucker, so I thought I'd throw a line in. We only had one fishing line in the outfit - a thick flathead line with three hooks."

"I baited them up using a dead rabbit we had found, and threw the line out into a patch of water near a large gum tree. It

looked a good spot for catfish, if nothing else, and they're not bad eating."

"When I went down in the morning I couldn't find the line at first. It wasn't in the water."

"Then where was it?" asked Alf.

"It was going straight up the gum tree," replied McTaggart. "The business end was out of sight up among the branches, so I gave it a pull. For a while nothing would budge, but fortunately it was a strong line and suddenly it came adrift. There was a loud plop and a scurry on the ground near

me, and then I saw what had happened. There was a small platypus on one hook, a water rat on the second, and a big goanna on the third. I figured that the platypus had swum ashore with the line, the water rat had taken the second bait and carried it up the bank, where the goanna had swallowed the third hook and run the lot up the tree."

"So your night-lining didn't do much good," remarked Alf.

"No, not a great deal," said McTaggart. "The platypus was quite inedible."

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## The Taliban's Trout ... Searching for Dinnawah in Afghanistan

... from Tom Gregg

(This article was used in our newsletter in 2015. It deserves a reprint.)

The day would be typically warm, but morning sunlight on the peaks towering above Ghazni Province, in south-eastern Afghanistan, did little to remove the previous night's chill from the valley floor. I waded into the cool clear stream that snaked through the valley, my fly rod tucked under my right arm. The water quickly penetrated my leather boots and socks and sent goose bumps up my legs. A light mist hung over the stream. Smoke rose from mud chimneys in a distant village across the water before meeting the crisp air and sinking back down to the ground. A rooster called and a dog barked an answer. It was just as Izaak Walton described in *The Compleat Angler*—this was the "study of being quiet."

In late 2004 I accepted a job as a Political Affairs Officer for the United Nations in Afghanistan. The job took me to far-flung pockets of the Pashtun tribal areas along Afghanistan's southeast border with Pakistan. It entailed conflict mediation and negotiation, human rights work and coordinating with the United States

military and Afghan government. So it was with those loose but exciting "terms of reference" that, in January 2005, I arrived in Gardez, a mountain town in eastern Afghanistan where remnants of Alexander the Great's empire can still be seen.

Unlike some other countries in the region—Pakistan, Mongolia and India, for example—Afghanistan is not a well-established fishing destination. The decades of conflict that started with the Soviet invasion in 1978 certainly haven't helped. Even as far back as the 1850s, Henry Bellew, a British army officer, reported that in Afghanistan, "Fish are not very abundant nor varied in species." Hence I had neglected to pack my fishing gear when I left my hometown of Melbourne, Australia.

On my second day in Gardez the region's gravel roads were blanketed in several feet of snow. Regardless of the storm, I was sent on a field mission to acclimatize myself to the place I'd call home for the next three years. Wearing my warmest winter clothing, and with two armoured United Nations vehicles and four escort vehicles with 20 heavily armed soldiers,

I took a look around the provinces on the border with Pakistan that were dominated by conservative mountain tribes. As we set off I attempted to wind down the SUV window, but couldn't. My driver, Wahid, explained the windows couldn't open because they were bullet-proof. He assured me that if we were attacked, the windows could withstand 25 rounds from an AK-47 before the bullets started to penetrate the glass—great!

The region had a dramatic beauty I could never have imagined. Snow-capped mountains form the border of long desert plains that stretch to the horizon. Nestled in the foothills of the Banoozai Mountains are villages that look like a scene from a bygone era—mud huts with smoking chimneys, donkey-drawn carts, traditional blacksmiths huddled over glowing hot irons and children queuing to collect water from communal wells. I also saw that the area was covered in streams.

Obviously, I needed to find out if there were fish. I went with Wahidullah, my translator, to a local village to consult with the elders. To my dismay, the answer was invariably that the streams stopped flowing after the snow melted in spring and didn't start again until the following winter. In some areas the rivers were permanent, but after years of drought, fish stocks were chronically diminished. However they told me that there were still some areas where streams kept running throughout the drought and were able to sustain viable fish populations. A few months later I had my first glance at such a river.

As the June sun was setting late one afternoon over snow-capped mountains, I came across a stream not far from the border of Pakistan. I had just had green tea with a local warlord. He had been a key asset of the U.S. Special Forces in their hunt for al-Qaida operatives in the wake of 9/11. Fresh off the U.S. payroll and without a job, he had arms, men

and plenty of spare time. It was a typical meeting where you talk politics, share stories, have a laugh, assure each other of the need to continue to work together and then, as you're about to depart, lie about the road you're taking home so his men don't set up an ambush or plant an improvised explosive device to detonate under your vehicle.

As I drove away after the meeting, escorted by 20 Afghan soldiers clutching AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades, I was reflecting on just how extreme everything is in Afghanistan. Its climate, its poverty, its hidden beauty, its history of war and fundamentalism, and more recently, its reputation for harbouring al-Qaida makes it a place unlike any other. Lost in these thoughts, I was distracted by the shimmering sunlight on the water in front of me—the convoy had hit a river crossing. On the bank was a shepherd boy watching over his herd of goats. When Wahidullah asked about fish, he replied, "I slept here last summer, and during the day my uncle and I saw some fish."

I needed to establish what type of fish he had seen. We stopped at the next village to ask the tribal elders if they could confirm what the shepherd boy had told me. Yes, there were fish in this river. With excitement, I asked whether the fish were trout. "Yes" was the answer. However, to be hospitable to visitors, Afghan villagers tend to say "Yes" or "OK," whatever the question. I decided to probe a little. No matter what the species - bluefin tuna, Spanish mackerel or humpback whale - the villagers were able to confirm that all the fish I inquired about resided in their little river. Trout or not, it was time to have my gear sent over and, when the snowmelt was complete, to try my luck.

I was unwilling to wait the five weeks it would take for my rod, reel and fly box to travel from Melbourne to New York with Australia Post; New York to Dubai via Diplomatic Pouch; Dubai to Kabul via the

United Nations Humanitarian Air Service; and Kabul to Gardez via donkey. Instead, I decided to make my own.

Needless to say, in south-east Afghanistan you cannot simply walk into a shop, pick up a few flies, test a new rod and inquire about which streams are fishing well and what fly patterns the trout are taking. Instead, you need to find a tree, approximately eight to nine feet high, which is not too brittle but not too malleable either. This sounds easy, but is extremely difficult in a place where there are almost no trees left because of severe deforestation, and those that remain belong to tribesman who carry Kalashnikovs rifles, hand grenades and possibly a rocket-propelled grenade. However once a tree has been acquired, the rest is relatively easy. In every bazaar, in every village throughout Afghanistan, cobblers ply their trade. For 50 Afghani (one U.S. dollar), it is possible to buy more thin, strong, boot-making twine than a boot maker would use in a year.

Fish hooks are harder to come by. Over the next week, I sent drivers, translators and soldiers out to dusty old bazaars in Gardez and Paktika to source some hooks, confident I would have a complete setup before my fly fishing gear arrived. Sadly, the search proved futile. Save for some clothes hooks a shopkeeper had cunningly assured a soldier were perfect for catching fish, the men came back empty-handed.

I had returned to Paktika to meet the governor who had requested I investigate reports of a mass grave. After the meeting, I lamented the difficulties of my hunt for hooks to John, a former British SAS soldier who was providing private security services to the United Nations. He replied, "If only we had a survival kit— every military-issue survival kit has some fish hooks."

So I needed a survival kit, and knew exactly where to get one. About 25 minutes away along a sandy desert

track was a U.S. Special Forces Base, and if the Special Forces guys didn't have survival kits, no one would. I contacted the base to inform them of my impending visit, and despite nightfall, jumped in a vehicle with John and we headed out to get some hooks. United States bases are hard to find at night because, for security reasons, they're in total blackout. When we eventually found the base, we pulled up to the perimeter razor-wire fence and pondered our next move. I suggested we move the razor wire away from the path and knock on the base's big steel gates. We managed to move the wire and take two steps before several spotlights lit the desert night as bright as the midday sun. I turned and noticed my colleague's head and body had several small, bright red dots trained on it and, sure enough, I too was in the line of sight of several powerful rifles from the towers. A rich southern drawl from a tower above shouted out, "Don't f—king move! Put your hands up!"

I froze every part of my body as my arms levitated above my head. Moments later several well-armed soldiers opened the gates, searched us and decided we were, in fact, U.N. workers and not some al-Qaida operatives in a bright white, armoured Toyota Land Cruiser with "U.N." painted on the side. "You guys scared the shit out of us," the sergeant said. While in the ensuing months I would experience some fairly close calls, this was the closest I'd come to being shot. It would be tragic irony if we were to be killed by U.S. soldiers while trying to obtain a U.S. military survival kit. Fortunately, the Special Forces guys had exactly what we were looking for and I left the base half an hour later.

It had taken five weeks to pull together my homemade kit, but three days before the first opportunity came to test it on a stream, a package arrived from home. My beloved gear! It was time to wet a line. I would be in Paktika province for a week and hoped I'd find time to fish in the

neighbouring province of Ghazni. Over lunch I informed an Afghan colleague who specialized in clearing land mines and unexploded ordnance of my fishing plans. He laughed and warned that riverbanks are known to collect land mines during periods of flooding. He gave me an updated map of minefields and with a thick, red X, marked a safe access point on the banks near Bande Sarde, which straddles the provinces of Ghazni and Paktika.

Friday came, and before daybreak I drove along the dusty road out of town toward the historic city of Ghazni—once home to Mahmud Ghazni, the first sultan of Afghanistan whose small empire stretched across Afghanistan, northern India and eastern Iran. Due to the Taliban presence in the area, I had decided to take a lower profile and rent two old Russian jeeps from the chief of police. I would drive one and five soldiers would escort me in the second jeep. When we arrived it was still only 7 a.m. and the sky was burnt orange.

In very bad Pashtu I asked the soldiers to stay behind me so as not to spook the fish. I carefully cast a size 12 Red Tag out on the water in front of me; the soldiers laughed and shook their heads at my elaborate cast. My fly danced across the surface of the fast flowing stream but did not attract any attention. Before the fly hit the water from my second cast, a loud burst of piercing shots tore through the still morning air. Startled, wild ducks scrambled across the water, desperate to get airborne. I dived onto the bank for cover, smashing my kneecap on a rock along the way. A second burst followed, then a third. Dogs barked in the distance. I pressed my face hard into the dirt. This had all the hallmarks of a fire-fight—except for the laughter that followed. Then music and another short sharp burst from an AK-47, followed by singing of the attan, a tribal song of the Pashtuns. This was not an attack.

With my heart racing I clambered up the bank to discover the soldiers dancing together in a circle. I asked what the hell had happened. The soldier's commander told me one of the soldiers in my security detail had been overcome by the beauty of the morning. He had fired his gun out of happiness and three of his colleagues had returned fire. I asked that he tell his men to please not fire anymore and returned to the stream. I waded shakily back into the cool water and cast a fly toward a fast-moving run in front of me. The silence had returned but the stillness had not, nor had the ducks.

I changed to an Adams after having no luck with the Red Tag and after 25 minutes came across a small run leading into a deeper pool. I launched a cast near a rock on the edge and a silver flash darted up from the depths and struck my fly with an explosion of water—I was on! After a quick fight, I had a fish cradled in my hand that looked nothing like any trout I'd seen. It looked like a silver-coloured brook trout, but with a more angular head that resembled a bonefish and a mouth that had migrated below the snout. I decided it was a keeper—there are no such things as bag limits, licenses or size limits in Afghanistan.

I gutted the fish and brown caddis in different stages of decomposition filled my palm. There were also some bright yellow remains from the wings of a beetle. I washed my hands in the crystal stream, rinsed my catch, and searched through my fly tin to see if I could match the yellow colour I'd seen in the stomach. A yellow humpy was the best I could manage, so I tied it on and continued upstream. With the new fly I had much more success—it seemed irresistible to these strange fish. Pool after pool, run after run, I pulled out eight of them; sizes varying from 6 to 12 inches.

The late-morning sun warmed the back of my neck and the valley around me. The

soldiers called out that it was time to leave. Their radios had picked up some Taliban chatter. Paktika was a stronghold of the Taliban-led insurgency. It wouldn't be long before news spread of our presence in the area. I rushed back along the leafy bank to find the fork in the river where we'd parked earlier that morning. I threw my gear on the backseat and we started along the bumpy road, radioing in my location and my expected time of arrival. I still had 90 minutes before I'd reach the relative safety of Sharan. "You bloody idiot," I said aloud as the car lost traction and slid sideways before correcting itself. In my pursuit of some escape from daily stress (and a trout), I had taken an unnecessary risk. In southeast Afghanistan, it's the Taliban that own the roads.

We made our way to Sharan, collected our U.N. vehicles and headed north to Gardez and the relative safety of the fortified U.N. compound. I cooked up my catch over the glowing coals of a fire. The meal was a feast.

That evening, as the sun was setting and the wailing chorus of the call to prayer rang out over crackling speakers, I sat on

my terrace with my laptop open to see what I could learn about the mysterious fish I had just caught. I eventually made the match on an obscure Food and Agricultural Organization document from the 1980s. I had just caught my first Dinnawah snow trout (*Schizothorax progastus*). I learned these trout are found in the high-altitude rivers and streams of the Himalayas including in Nepal, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Iran and Tibet. I read that they are particularly well known in India and Nepal for being an excellent table fish. The last bite-sized piece of meat was sitting in a pool of lemon juice and olive oil. I put it in my mouth and swallowed. It had been the most carefree and enjoyable day I had experienced since arriving in Afghanistan.

I closed the laptop and looked up at the star-filled sky. Despite two decades of fly fishing rivers and streams across Australia, the United States and Europe, it was through flyfishing for Dinnawah snow trout in the Taliban heartland that I understood what Walton had meant in 1653—I'd never known such quiet in Afghanistan.

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## VFFA Tasmania Trip - February 2025



*Peter Hayes doing what he does best*

### **Event Co-ordinator:**

John Spragg (mobile 0407 555621;  
email: johnrs3175@gmail.com)

### **The Event**

A week with fellow VFFA members at *Hayes on Brumbys Fly Fishing Lodge, Cressy*. Fishing in groups of two or more during the day and sharing tales of the day's adventures over dinner.

**Dates**

Arrive on Friday, January 31, and depart on Saturday, February 8.

Longer accommodation is available – just let John know.

**Address:**

Hayes on Brumbys, 1696 Cressy Road, Cressy, Tasmania 7302.

**Travel:**

You will be responsible to make your own travel arrangements to and from Tasmania.

You are also responsible for arranging your transport while in Tasmania. The buddy system works well with fellow members, including transport of gear to Tasmania if you plan to fly.

4WD vehicles are not required. The lodge is about a 30 minute's drive from Launceston and 2 hours from the Devonport Ferry Terminal. If you're planning to travel by Spirit of Tasmania, then book early to ensure you get a car space and cabin.

**Cost:**

\$1,320 per person for twin share accommodation, linen, breakfast, and dinner.

\$660 deposit is to be paid by December 30, 2023, and the remaining \$660 by January 20, 2024.

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

Include your name and "TAS2025".

Alternatively post a cheque to Tony Mitchem, VFFA Honorary Treasurer, PO Box 18423, Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3001.

**Accommodation:**

Hayes on Brumbys has twin rooms and you will be expected to bunk in with another member for the week. All facilities are shared for the week.

**Meals & Drinks:**

You will be involved in purchasing ingredients and cooking a meal on one of the nights; purchases will be reimbursed.

Breakfast will be supplied with a range of cereals, toast, juice, coffee.

Lunch is your responsibility each day. BYO wine, beer, spirits.

**Fishing locations:**

Mainly in the North and Midlands for streams and the Central Plateau for lakes. Select from a wide range of streams from small creeks to large rivers, local weirs, and small to very large lakes. Some are in remote and physically challenging locations for which you must be properly prepared. More information will be sent closer to the time. It is recommended you purchase "Tasmania Trout Waters" by Greg French.

**Fishing license:**

A Tasmania fishing license is required, purchase one online:- <https://www.ifs.tas.gov.au/the-rules/angling-licence>

**Members & Friends Dinner:**

On Thursday, February 6, fellow VFFA members and friends living in or visiting Tasmania will be invited to join us for drinks and dinner from 6:30pm. Dress will be smart casual.

**Mobile phone:**

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

**Strongly recommended personal equipment:**

Waders/ wading boots, gaiters for wet wading, brimmed hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, insect repellent, wading staff, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), torch, mobile phone in waterproof container, handheld UHF radio, first aid kit.

**Essential equipment if intending to fish out of direct sight of other participants:** UHF radio.

**Essential equipment for Remote Locations:**

Compression bandage, UHF handheld radio, water, prescribed medicines for those with a medical condition which could re-occur, mobile phone if coverage available.

**Guiding:**

All Peter Hayes' guides are fully qualified and members of their professional body. Drift boats on Brumby's, the Macquarie and other rivers are a speciality. Depending on weather opportunities exist to be guided on one of the many highland lakes including "shark fishing" on the Great Lake. Those who love wading rivers and creeks will be well looked after.



*Chris Gray netting one for David Hooks*

Guiding with a Peter Hayes' guide on a river, weir or lake is \$600 cash per person per day, based on twin share, with payment to be made directly to Peter. Peter has kindly discounted the rate for VFFA members, so payment must be in cash.

Peter is only available to guide from February 1 to February 6. Please confirm with John Spragg if you would like to book a guiding day. **DO NOT BOOK WITH PETER.**

**Event Registration Form (ERF):** Register by sending the Event Co-ordinator a completed and signed ERF by email as an attachment. 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 coordinator.

**Date of this Note of Event: September 1, 2024**

**What to do next:**

1) Please register your intention to attend **ASAP** as we have a number of interested people.

**Do not book travel to Tasmania until you receive VFFA confirmation**

2) Book your travel to/from Tasmania.

3) Please let John Spragg know if you're taking a vehicle, as we have a few people who have already indicated that they are taking vehicles and may like to



*Tasmania has some superb trout streams*

share the fishing time/ transport during the week. It could also be a good way to get your gear across to Tasmania.

- 4) Pay your deposit to VFFA by the end of December and the balance in January.
- 5) Complete the Event Registration Form and email to John Spragg prior to arriving in Tasmania.
- 6) Let John know if you would like to be guided by Peter Hayes during the week.

### **An Opportunity:**

There is the possibility of enjoying two nights staying at the Derwent Bridge Hotel (Thursday February 1 & Friday 2)



*David Hooke connecting again*



*David landed then released this fine Tassie brown*

and fish the surrounding lakes and rivers - Lake St Clair, Derwent River, Lake King William, Bronte Lagoon, Bradys Lake, Pine Tier and Nive River to name a few.

This will be an additional cost for accommodation and meals.

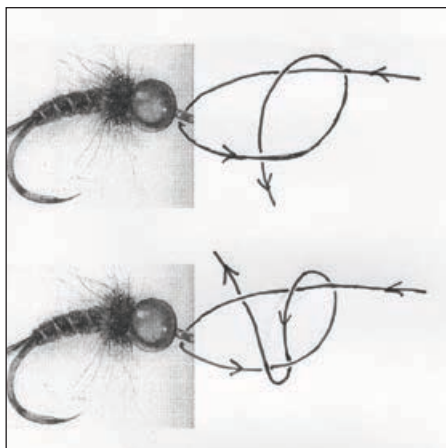
Please let the event co-ordinator know if this is of interest.

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## **The Davy Knot**

Us fluff chuckers are heavily into knots; they're an essential part of the craft.

Here is a new one to try – the Davy Knot. This knot is attributed to Davy Wotton, a British fly fishing expert now living in the United States. The positive aspects of this knot are its speed, size and strength – all necessary attributes for a fishing knot. It can be tied very quickly, thus getting you back to fishing in a minimum amount of time. It is also very compact, making it a suitable knot for small flies. Finally, tests have rated it as 85% or higher in terms of line strength. Give it a try and see what think.



## 5 Millbrook in Early Spring

... Lyndon Webb

Last Wednesday (September 25) was our last trip to Millbrook Lakes for the year, and ten keen starters gathered at the Gordon Hotel car park at 10 am to meet with Craig Coltman, our guide for the day. We were a good team – some long-standing members and two who had very recently joined the VFFA.

Craig led us into the Hillys section of Millbrook, where we parked at the cabin and prepared for a day's trouting.

At the outset the weather forecast was not very appealing. It was cold (and the Ballarat area specialises in cold), heavily overcast and threatening rain. Despite the forecast predicting showers all day we in

fact had some long periods without rain, and overall it was mostly a pleasant day's fishing. And the Ballarat weather didn't deter the trout – we saw fish rising and splashing in all four lakes during most of the day.

Richard Kos was again our top angler, landing five. But others in the group were successful too. Craig was again our very hard-working and helpful guide, and we all learned so much from his considerable expertise and knowledge of the lakes we were fishing.

Your editor even managed a couple. Late in the afternoon when we were preparing to pack up and leave I walked out onto



*Guide Craig Coltman netted this fine brown for your editor*



*Fishing the cabin pool (in the rain)*



*Millbrook has lots of fishy corners*

the small jetty beside the cabin to cast a line. The main reason for this was to get line off my reel in order to wind it back on more tightly and neatly. But I had managed only a few turns of the reel when something grabbed my fly (at this stage a fairly mangled and tired Shaving Brush) and belted off at great velocity. Hamish Hughes stepped in to help, eventually netting the fish for me (a very lively 4 lb rainbow), and releasing the exhausted fish back into the water. Thank you, Hamish.

The point here is that this fish was an unintended fluke. I was a very lucky angler, and luck is so often a component



*Waiting for the rain to ease a bit*

in our fishing. Of course experience and knowledge and skill are all vital and significant in our fishing success, but luck, too, often plays a part. There were some highly experienced members in our team who caught fish, and others who were equally experienced who fished hard and skilfully all day yet didn't manage to land any fish. Those Millbrook trout have seen a lot of flies, and they are not easy. Millbrook is a very attractive fishery, but it is also very challenging.

Our thanks, as always, to Mark Weigall who provides us with the opportunity to fish there at such a very reasonable cost.



*The cabin pool – with usually a fish or two rising*

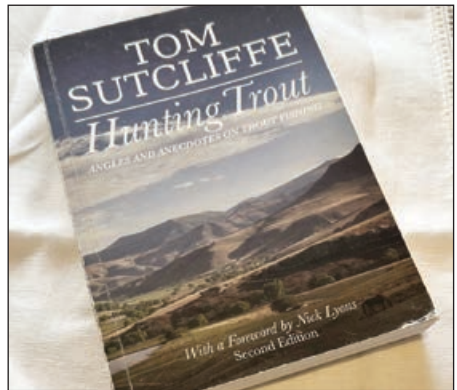
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## From Tom Sutcliffe's 'Hunting Trout' – The Dry Fly Strike

What we do a lot of in this country with dry flies on fast water boils down to what Americans call 'hot spotting', where you pepper the runs, glides, pools or pocket water right ahead of you with short casts. It's not deeply cerebral stuff, but we're not looking for that. And it's fun.

And since fish in quick-flowing water don't have all day to think things over before they decide to rise, when they do it tends to be sharply. So when you first try hot spotting it's natural that you miss a few fish striking too late. Trout in pastoral, freestone streams are generally more lazy in the rise.

You need to strike the instant any of the following things happen in the vicinity



of your fly: a rise (obviously), but also any sub-surface flash (meaning a moving fish), any unexplained splash, a bulge, or

conversely just a sudden flattening in the surface. Of course, your fly must be in sight to coordinate all this, which is one good reason never to take your eyes off it.

In fact we could call it Rule 1: *"Never take your eyes off your fly and the water around it."* (There are other reasons not to take your eyes off the fly, but I'll get to them later.)

Rule 2: *"Don't strike too hard"*, as in don't rear back like a stallion stung by a swarm of wasps - not only because you snap off more easily, or tear the fly out of the fish's mouth, but worse - and I think about this - if you miss the trout the leader gets pulled back so fast it rips up a tiny sheet of water.

That disturbance invariably spooks the fish and ends any possible second chance at it. It could even spook the whole run. The truth is you don't need to slam trout. For a start, modern chemically sharpened hooks could be classified as dangerous weapons they are so sharp, and unlike a lot of other species of fish, the skin around a trout's mouth is easily penetrated.

To describe the power you need in a typical dry fly strike, think in terms of the force you'd use tugging someone's shirt to get their attention in a busy room. It's a brief tug, and above all it's light and transitory. A way to prepare for it on the river is to tell yourself beforehand to just lift into the fish until you *feel* it - no more than that.

In practise it's best to keep a stiff wrist and elevate your rod arm evenly and smoothly until you feel solid resistance. That way you remove the risk of wrist action and, with it, excessive power.

In time most people get sharp and controlled at it, and it can even look pretty in the way that a smoothly executed cast can look pretty. But - and it's a big but - whatever you do, don't whip the rod into a fish. There's too much latent power in fly rods.

Rule 3: *"Get the timing right."* Timing must be synchronous with the rise, but it must also mirror the nature of the rise, and the way a trout rises gives the cue. Generally, when trout float up lazily and slowly inhale the fly you want to pitch your strike in the same way - lazily and slowly. Where fish rise in a flash you want to strike in a flash. So - lazy rise - lazy strike; sharp rise - sharp strike.

On freestone streams the principal reason for missed strikes is *connecting too late* - either because there's too much slack fly line between the angler and the fly, or simply a lack of concentration, or both. The answer is simple:

Rule 4: *"Make a religion of watching your fly and gathering slack* as the fly drifts back towards you so that the slightest lift of the rod immediately transmits energy to the fly. The simplest way is to gather loops of line with your free hand as the fly rides back. Reach to the stripping guide with your spare hand, take hold of the line, extend your arm back fully keeping your hold on the line, hook the line over your index finger on the rod and keep stripping.

It amounts to retrieving large loops of line and storing them in your hand. The trick is to match the speed of your retrieve with the speed of the current - and to make certain that when your hand reaches up for the stripping guide *you don't take your eyes off the water to look for the guide!* You have to practise hitting the stripping guide blindfolded the moment you fly lands.

I have a rider to add: with short casts on really fast water simultaneously follow your fly during the drift with the rod tip while at the same time slowly lifting the rod. This takes up a lot of slack very quickly. It's a matter of timing your lift to suit the current speed - not sweeping too fast or too slow, but totally in time with the speed of the water. That's the important bit!

# Victorian Fisheries Authority – Media Release - Sept 2024: Clubs Given Grant to Reduce Carp in Lake Wendouree

Your fishing licence fees are being reinvested to reduce carp numbers in Lake Wendouree as part of a joint project between the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), Ballarat Fly Fishers, Ballarat District Anglers Association (BDAA) and the City of Ballarat.

Victorian Fisheries Authority Chief Executive Officer Travis Dowling said Wendouree was one of Victoria’s marquee trout fisheries, but increased carp numbers had been reported by anglers in

recent years, prompting the clubs to take action.

“The BDAA has got on the front foot and applied for one of our Recreational Fishing Grants to fund a carp investigation and removal project while City of Ballarat have also contributed \$10,000,” Travis Dowling said.

“Wendouree is one of the best trout fisheries in the state, with good access with several boat ramps, regular stocking, the productivity to grow trophy trout and it has been home to international fly fishing competitions for trout.”

The VFA will manage an electrofishing operation, which will be undertaken over several days from Monday, September 9. Electrofishing is both highly effective and has minimal impacts on other fish. Carp that are removed are likely to be transported to facilities where they will be made into a range of products including garden fertiliser.

City of Ballarat Mayor Des Hudson said that this important environmental



*Netting fish in Wendouree*



*Craig Coltman with a superb Wendouree brown trout*

initiative has been proven to be effective in reducing the carp population with flow-on benefits for other fish like trout. "The City of Ballarat is pleased to contribute to this VFA-led project which will work to control carp and improve water quality and ecology while also enhancing existing fish populations at Lake Wendouree," Cr Hudson said.

The project has been timed to occur after the period in which spawning trout regularly congregate at an outflow pipe near Windmill Drive and before carp begin to spawn in spring. "While the work isn't aimed at eradicating the carp, the plan is to reduce their numbers to a level that doesn't impact other fish or water clarity in the lake," Mr Dowling said. "This a great example of recreational fishing licence fees being used by local clubs to fund meaningful work that will



*A large carp from Wendouree*

protect one of our state's premier trout fisheries."

The VFA hosted an information session on Tuesday, September 10, at the Ballarat Fly Fishers Club where local residents and fishers learned how electrofishing works, what carp look like, and why they are declared a noxious aquatic pest.

For more information interested anglers can go to [www.vfa.vic.gov.au/wendouree](http://www.vfa.vic.gov.au/wendouree)

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## A VFFA Event – Taupo New Zealand in March 2025

It's on again!

As you may be aware, the VFFA Taupo trip is on again – March 2 – 9, 2025. A week at Waitahanui Lodge, Waitahanui on the shores of Lake Taupo, NZ, at the height of the Brown Trout season.

There will be a few changes this year, based on learnings from the 2024 trip.

Evening meals will be catered, meaning participants are free to fish all day, every day, without having to buy ingredients and cook meals. The cost of the trip also includes a day of guided fishing (in pairs) with a local guide. The guide will supply transport and lunch for the day. The guide will also provide a daily update each morning on fishing conditions around the area to assist participants in deciding where they might spend their day.

The cost will be \$1700 per person for accommodation and food. Airfares, Taupo Area fishing licence and car hire will be extra. Airfares to New Zealand are cheap at present, so do not delay. Note we will lock in car hire once we have final numbers and work out who shares with who.

There are nine positions available, and a number of members have already expressed interest. If you would like to participate, please contact either John Spragg (Senior Vice President, phone 0407 555 621), or Rodger Muir (Organiser, [rodger-muir@bigpond.com](mailto:rodger-muir@bigpond.com), phone: 0414 253 890).

**Here is the official Notice of Event:**

**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 wetline 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.

Nine positions are still available.

**Dates:**

Arrive on Sunday, March 2, 2025, and depart on Sunday, March 9, 2025.

**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 km north of Waitahanui Lodge. Air New Zealand has daily flights from Auckland to Taupo 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.

Once attendee numbers are confirmed, arrangements can be made to share vehicle hire. Vehicles can be hired from either Taupo or Auckland airports.

**Cost:**

A\$1,700 per person for shared accommodation; linen; breakfast and dinner; daily fishing update; and one day guided fishing (in pairs) with a local guide.

A deposit of 50% (A\$850) is to be paid by January 10, 2025 and the balance (A\$850) by February 14, 2025. Direct debit to VFFA bank account: BSB 182 512, account number 9605 47289. Include your name and "NZ2025".

Alternatively, post a cheque to the VFFA Honorary Treasurer, PO Box 18423, Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3001.

**Accommodation:**

Three 'Kiwi Bach' cabins are available at Waitahanui Lodge for accommodation, each with several bedrooms and two, 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:**

Attendees do not need to buy food and prepare evening meals. Two course evening meals will be provided by an external caterer, served in the Boiler Room at the Lodge at 7:00 pm each evening. A continental breakfast will be supplied with a range of cereals, toast, juice, coffee, tea. 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 kilometres 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 km south), the Tauranga-Taupo River (25 km south), the Tongariro River (40 km south). For those wishing to travel a little further, Lake Rotorua (and associated waters) are 75 km north, Lake Otamangakau is 65 km south, the headwater of the Whanganui River (100 km south-west), and the Rangitikei River (135 km 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 licence online (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 the Fish & Game website General Fishing Licence Info (fishandgame.org.nz). Note - there is a separate category of licences 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.

**Strongly recommended personal equipment:**

Waders/wading boots (hard sole wading boots ONLY permitted – felt/absorbent sole boots are not permitted), gaiters for wet waders, brimmed hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, insect repellent, wading staff, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), torch, mobile phone in waterproof container, handheld UHF radio, first aid kit. For those interested in fishing the Waitahanui River delta (the Rip), a lifejacket is strongly recommended given the currents and shifting surface materials.

Note - all fishing gear (particularly waders and boots) will need to be clean and dry before it will be allowed into New Zealand.

**Essential equipment if intending to fish out of direct sight of other participants:** UHF radio.

**Essential equipment for Remote Locations:**

UHF handheld radio, drinking water, prescribed medicines for those with a medical condition that could recur, mobile phone if coverage available.

**Weather:**

Varies from very hot to very cold, and it can be windy and wet. Updated forecasts

will be available at the Lodge every morning.

**Guiding:**

As noted above, this year the cost of the event includes one day of guided fishing along with another participant. Should you want additional guided fishing there are numerous experienced fishing guides available.

If you wish to be guided for an additional day (or days) over the time at Waitahanui, please indicate this by email to Rodger at rodger-muir@bigpond.com. Depending upon demand, Rodger will arrange / facilitate a guide or 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.**

Rodger Muir, Mobile 0414 253 890,

Email: [rodger-muir@bigpond.com](mailto:rodger-muir@bigpond.com)

Postal address: 71 Kent Street, Millers Point, NSW 2000

Date of this notice of event: September 30, 2024

**What to do next:**

- 1) 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**

- 2) If you are intending to participate, please check your passport will be current for travel in March 2025. If not, begin the renewal process now – there

have been lengthy delays in obtaining a new Australian passport.

- 3) VFFA will then advise you if you have been successful in obtaining a place in the group trip
- 4) Once you have received VFFA confirmation Book your travel to/ from New Zealand/ Taupo . Note, your travel bookings for Australia/ NZ and NZ/ Australia should take into account travelling to and from Taupo.
- 5) Pay your deposit to VFFA by January 10, 2025, and the balance by February 14, 2025.
- 6) Complete the Event Registration Form and email it to Rodger prior to arriving in New Zealand.

7) If interested in participating, please email Rodger your intention with regard to:

- a) Local transport: Do you intend to hire a vehicle or do you have access to a vehicle in NZ? We have a few people with access to vehicles in NZ and they may like to share fishing time/ transport during the week. As noted above, once attendees are known, arrangements can be made to share the cost of hiring a vehicle.
- b) Using the services of a fishing guide in addition to the day already included: Do you wish use the services of a Fishing Guide and if so, how many days over the week in addition to the day included? (Pricing to be determined).

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## Some Late Season Reflections from Alan Pilkington (USA)

I'm back at the Rock Creek Montana cabin for a few days fly fishing with Seattle friends Ted Fortier and Van Hilgendorf. Here's Van with a nice cutthroat trout on one of our favourite evening pools.

Possibly my last trout of the season, a 15" rainbow taken on a small mayfly. Had a lovely morning on the river - a cool, gentle breeze and a clear sky but fish holding in the shady patches. Caught several like this, as did my mates Ted and Van. I am a lucky man, blessed with good friends, an exquisite, generous, undammed Montana river willing to share her bounty. I feel free here, with my dog and the wild animals. Home to Seattle early tomorrow.

Ben and I had some exceptional dry fly fishing yesterday evening. This lovely cutthroat was around 17"; Ben took it (and released it) on a #16 Adams.

I took this brown on a #16 Purple Haze. It was also around 17". We caught several



*Ben connecting with another one*

fish this size and many smaller ones.  
This lovely pure strain rainbow was about sixteen inches but ran me around a

big pool like a five pounder and had my reel singing like a choir of angels.



*A fine brown taken on a #16 Purple Haze*

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## Mike Stevens – A Recent Tasmania Report

The season is shaping up to potentially be great, with rains filling lakes and flushing rivers. Most waters around the state are full or spilling. This gets us very excited in the shop. The fish will put on some great condition over the next months, and with the increasing warm weather the fish will be very active.

### Lowlands Report

Most rivers are currently in flood and have broken their banks. This creates some fantastic tailing and flood margin fishing, especially if you time it right and get there as the rivers and creeks are still rising; as when the rivers are receding this type of fishing is not quite as good.

The lakes in the lowlands are going to be a fabulous choice throughout the next month. With plenty of water and flooded margins, combined with increasing warm



*Another fine Tassie brown*

weather, there will be some very hungry fish hunting around the edges. Places like Curries River Dam, Blackmans and Four Springs will be excellent options.

### Highlands Report

Lakes are filling fast or are already spilling. Recent reports have been very encouraging - even given the bad weather

over recent weeks. The reports from people braving the weather have been excellent. The Great Lake shores are still fishing well, especially in the southern parts. Penstock has been a reliable option from both the shore and from boats - not big numbers but better quality fish.

Arthurs Lake is rising fast and fish have been a little patchy, but when they are found the results have been rewarding.

An important point to keep in mind for the next month, wherever you are fishing, is to keep moving until you find the

fish. If you are finding fish in an area or starting to catch some, then spend time in that area. Given the late spawning we had this year a lot of the fish are still gathered together. Note that when fishing flooded lakes some bays will have more food than other bays, so thus they will have more hungry fish in them.

Also note that with good waders and a rain jacket there is no such thing as bad weather. It's amazing how comfortable you can still be in bad weather when you have the right gear.

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## Grab A Mate

John Spragg has been involved in promoting 'Grab a Mate' among VFFA members. As a response some members have been inquiring about how it all works. So John has given us a Web site to check - <https://chat.whatsapp.com/DbzKiFi06cH90tnYQzwrRY> and a very modern shortcut:



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## Trevor Stow Provided Some Memories Of The Old Eucumbene

These pictures may bring back memories for some members. "Crows" was an institution on Lake Eucumbene for decades. Now it is like a Ghost Town. The buildings are all still there, the knives, forks, plates, beds are also there. It's as though people just walked out yesterday and left everything as it was.

They are also 2 caravans still on site. They are likely to stay there permanently. One has no wheels and the other looks like its days of travel over.

The Ballarat Fly Fishers 'Fred Eva Lodge' still looks good. It looks as though we could still be used today. Sadly, that will not happen.

The buildings are full of asbestos and in a pretty sad state of disrepair.

This area of Lake Eucumbene was prime Fly Fishing Country. Miles and miles of gently sloping banks and beautiful little bays. The fish are still there and they are often rising, but the fishermen can only access this area from a boat these days. RIP Crows.

These pictures may bring back memories for some members. "Crows" was an institution on Lake Eucumbene for decades. Now it is like a Ghost Town. The buildings are all still there, the knives, forks, plates, beds are also there. It's as though people just walked out yesterday and left everything as it was.

They are also 2 caravans still on site. They are likely to stay there permanently. One has no wheels and the other looks like its days of travel over.

The Ballarat Fly Fishers 'Fred Eva Lodge' still looks good. It looks as though we could still be used today. Sadly, that will not happen.

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*Eucumbene is a large windswept lake*



*... and it produces some superb browns*



*Crows at Lake Eucumbene – now just a tired rundown Ghost Town*

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *Kossy's Damsel Nymph*



Prior to our recent trip to Millbrook Lakes Mark Weigall, who owns Millbrook, made the comment that Damsel Nymphs are an excellent fly to use there, but that many of the Damsel Nymph patterns he sees are too fat. Thin flies better represent the naturals. So it's an appropriate opportunity to again feature Richard Kos's Damsel Nymph, a thin pattern that has been particularly successful for him. It is a bit more complicated to tie than the more pedestrian damsel nymph patterns found in books and magazines, but it's worth the effort because of its proven appeal to the trout. (Let's remember that Richard was our most successful angler during our recent trip to Millbrook, and he fished this fly for much of the day.)

Richard has provided these notes and tying instructions:

For fishing the lakes in the Daylesford and Kyneton areas I needed a good Damsel Nymph imitation, as this was one of the major food items available to trout throughout the year. I started by tying a very basic pattern, which produced only mediocre results. The need for a more effective pattern started an evolutionary process culminating in my Kossy Damsel. The fly in its current form has proven to be highly successful, consistently taking trout, redbfin, yellowbelly and carp in stillwaters, backwaters and the edges of slow-moving rivers and creeks.

One limitation in the design, however, is the poor quality of the commercially available eyes, as they are not very durable in the jaws of a hungry trout. I must find someone to teach me how to make eyes from nylon line.

**Materials**

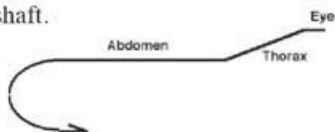
- Hook:** Daiichi 1770 #10 (Available from J. M. Turville's in North Melbourne. Tiemco make a similar-shaped hook – model TMC400T – which might do if the Daiichi model 1770 can't be obtained).
- Thread:** Olive Dun Uni thread 8/0
- Tail:** Olive marabou
- Upper Tail & Body:** Dark brown marabou
- Body:** Olive possum fur
- Legs:** Partridge dyed olive
- Ribbing:** Fine green wire
- Eyes:** Mono eyes - small black (WAPSI)
- Wingcase:** Dark brown pheasant tail feather
- Thorax:** Olive possum fur



*This one fell to a Damsel Nymph*

## Tying Instructions:

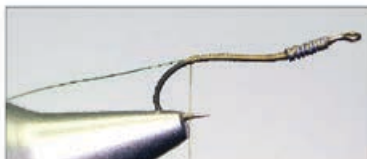
Step 1 Bend the hook eye parallel to the hook shaft.



The hook should now look similar to the shape above.

Step 2 Wind on the thread, starting about one third of the way along the Thorax section (leaving enough room to tie in eyes and wing case later) and winding down to the Abdomen section.

Step 3 Tie about ten turns of 0.010 lead wire along the Thorax section. Wind the thread back over the lead wire, then back down to the bend of the hook at the end of the Abdomen section. Tie in some fine green wire at this point. (Fig 1)



Step 4 Tie in some olive marabou for the tail, then dub a thin body of olive possum fur - just enough to cover the thread. The dubbing should cover the abdomen section, making it uniform in thickness all along. (Fig 2)



Step 5 Add a narrow piece of dark brown marabou so that it lies on the top of the tail and along the top of the abdomen. Tie it in by winding the fine green ribbing forward, about nine turns. Richard recommends wetting the dark brown marabou before tying it in, as this makes it much easier to manage. (Fig 3)



Step 6 Bring the thread forward to the front of the lead and tie in the eyes with some figure of eight turns to hold the eyes horizontal and firmly in place. (Richard also recommends a drop of super glue at this point to keep the eyes securely locked in place). (Fig 4)

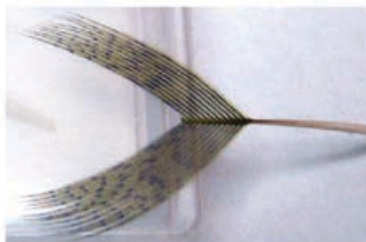


Step 7 Prepare the wingcase – a strip of dark brown pheasant tail feather just wide enough to fit between the two black eyes. The strip should be treated on the underside with clear nail polish (Manicare All-In-One) or fly tying Vinyl cement or Flexcement to strengthen it and stop it splitting or falling apart when it is tied in.

Step 8 Tie in the wingcase at the bottom of the Thorax section so that about 3 mm covers the start of the abdomen and the rest is standing up ready to be tied in later. See Fig 5.



Step 9 Apply a small amount of dubbing to the Thorax area, then prepare the legs by taking an olive-dyed partridge feather and removing the tip and upper fibres so that the feather looks like this:



Step 10 Tie in the legs on the top of the thorax area. (Fig 6)



Step 11 Finish dubbing the Thorax by adding more dubbing on top to produce a pronounced wing case. Fold the wingcase over and tie it off at the eye. Finish with a drop of All-In-One or other head cement. (Fig 7)



Step 11 Prune the tail by pinching out some marabou with your thumb and forefinger for a more natural look. Do not use scissors.

Step 12 Take your Damsel fishing! Good luck!

## VFFA 2024 meetings & other activities

### October

- 6 Sunday Annual Trip to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishing Club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley members.
- 17 Thursday General Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:  
Annual Auction of fly fishing books and equipment  
(Meal at 6:00 pm and auction commencing at 7:00 pm)
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

### November

- 8 Fri – 10 Sun Annual trip to Warrnambool  
Event coordinator – Hugh Maltby (reddtag@hotmail.com)
- 21 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club
- 27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

### December

- 6 Friday Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club – 6:30pm

### January 2025

- 29 Wednesday First Council Meeting for 2025 – 6:00pm at the Kelvin Club

### February 2025

- 1 Sat – 9 Sun Tasmanian trip to Hayes on Brumby's.  
Event coordinator – John Spragg (john@bellingham-marine.com.au)
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00pm at the Kelvin Club:  
"Liar's Night" - where members report on their summer fishing
- 21 Fri - 23 Sun Mulwala Cod Fishing Trip  
Event coordinator – Simon Joel (simonljoel@gmail.com)
- 26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00pm on Zoom

### March 2025

- 2 Sun – 9 Sun VFFA trip to Taupo in the North Island of New Zealand  
Event coordinator – John Spragg (john@bellingham-marine.com.au)
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 6:30pm at the Kelvin Club
- 26 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30pm at the Kelvin Club

### April 2025

- 17 Thursday General Meeting – 6:30pm at the Kelvin Club
- Fri 18 – Sun 20 Easter 2025
- 30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00pm on Zoom