



• REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST: PUBLICATION NO. VBH 2899 •

VOL. 57 NO. 11

THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

SEPTEMBER 2009

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

**PRESIDENT**

Peter Boag  
20 Bridport Street  
South Melbourne 3205  
Tel: 9389 8003 Bus  
9690 1017 A/H

**HONORARY TREASURER**

Tony Mitchem  
PO Box 7424  
St Kilda Road VIC 8004  
Tel: 9832 8405  
0407 309 797 Mob

**HONORARY EDITOR**

Lyndon Webb  
1 Coachmans Square  
Wantirna 3152  
Tel: 9801 6151  
Email: lgwebb@bigpond.net.au

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

Rick Dugina  
12 Middle Street  
Ascot Vale 3032  
Tel: 0401 963 601 Mob  
9370 9328 A/H

**HONORARY SECRETARY**

Colin Morrison  
Apt 706/701 Mt Alexander Rd  
Moonee Ponds 3039  
Tel: 9375 2298 A/H  
0412 107 326 Mob  
Email: colinmo@attglobal.net

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

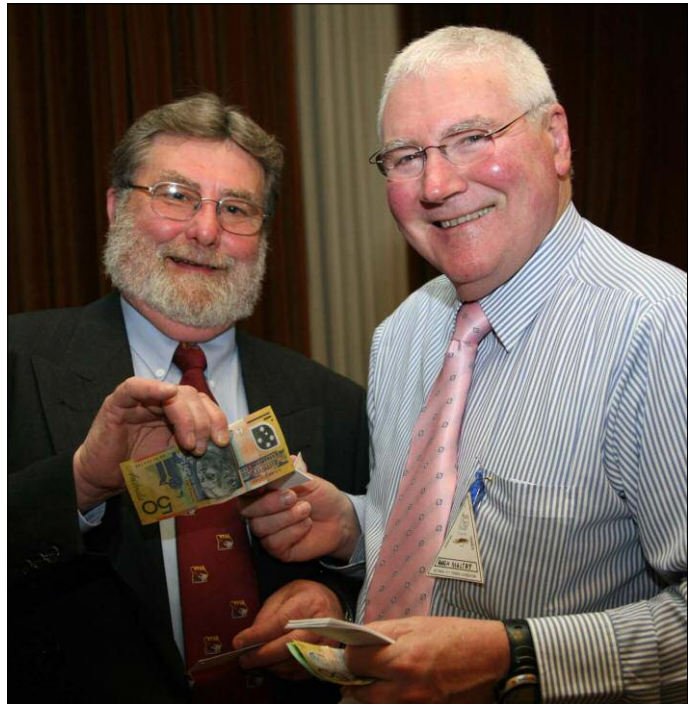
John Pilkington  
112 Hodgkinson Street  
Clifton Hill 3068  
Tel: 9225 8616 Bus  
9489 2186 A/H

**NEXT MEETING – THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
AT THE KELVIN CLUB, 8:00 PM, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 2009**

## The 77th Annual Dinner

On Friday, August 28, some 107 members and their guests gathered at the Kelvin Club for the Association's 77th Annual Dinner. All who attended would agree that it was a wonderful occasion. The food was excellent, the members and guests were in fine form, the service by the Kelvin staff was first class, and the prizes donated for the raffle were magnificent.

The guest speaker was Greg French, who has established himself as an outstanding writer on fishing matters and a recognised authority on the Tasmanian trout fishery. Greg was superb. His talk was informative and entertaining, and included an excellent PowerPoint presentation of photos illustrating some of his overseas travels. He spent much of the night moving around among members and guests, signing books, answering questions, and discussing angling and other issues with those who were present. An edited version of the text of Greg's speech is given in this newsletter.



*Rick Dugina investing heavily in the raffle*



*Fine fare and good company*



*Dr Tony Brothers presents a framed fly to Greg French*



*Ben Pilkington shares notes with Peter Campbell*

## VFFA OPENING WEEKEND

**Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th October, 2009**

Ray Butterworth's 'Tranquil Rises'

65 Collins Road, Flowerdale

(RACV VicRoads Country Street Directory – Map 61 F7)

Collins Road is just past Long Gully Road (marked on the map), and is the last road on the right before the main road makes a right turn into the Whittlesea – Yea Road.

Ray's mobile number is 0418 525 445 for those who find themselves lost.



\$25 per night

Convenor: Richard Kos

Please contact Richard on

Home: 9744 2375 or Mob: 0430 091 300

Don't miss this magnificent weekend

## New Member

Again this month it is pleasing to welcome a new member to the Association.

We trust that John O'Brien enjoys many happy and fulfilling years as a member of the VFFA

# President's Message

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The August Annual Dinner has always been a premier date on the VFFA calendar, and this year's dinner lived up to all expectations. With more than 100 members and guests present at the Kelvin, we were well fed and watered, and treated to an exceptionally good after dinner speaker in Greg French.

Greg spoke with real passion, and with a depth of knowledge which was both enlightening and educative. A lot of his talk centred on travel and the value of guides, taking us to New Zealand, Canada, America, Ireland and Slovenia, and regaling us with issues affecting their fisheries. Many of these issues are similar to the ones we experience in this part of the world.

Greg is a great believer in sharing knowledge, and enlightened self-preservation dictates that we need to have more fishing fanatics, not less. He is critical of people whoever they may be, who do not welcome anglers.

There is an edited report on Greg's speech in this newsletter, and I recommend you read it. Without a doubt, Greg was an excellent speaker for the evening, and proved he is not just an expert angler and a very good writer, but also an interesting and engaging after dinner speaker.

Tony Brothers, in his guest speaker "Thank you" role, presented Greg with his Wigram's Robin tie, which was much appreciated by Greg. Prior to the evening, Tony advised me he was doing the fly and presentation for the last time, and I want to put it on the record and thank him very much on behalf of the membership for this contribution to the evening over many years.

On the same note, I want to thank Dick Goodall, who is also putting the billiard cue in the rack. He has for many years prepared the attendees badges, but father time has also caught up with him, and he advised me 2009 was to be his last time.

Tony and Dick are fine examples of what the VFFA is about - great contributors over a very long time, with a love of the VFFA and what it offers to us as members. They will continue to be involved with other VFFA activities.

The raffle is a big part of the evening, and again 'thank you' to the donors. I encourage members to support our donors by going to the local tackle shops. We all know about the web, but nothing beats going to your local shop and finding out first hand where the fish are rising and what fly is working.

President's Casting Day was small on members, with only 25 passing through during the course of the day. Maybe the inclement weather late Saturday morning had something to do with it. We missed Malcolm Elms, but Joe Haslauer set up the rings to test us, and our congratulations to David Grisold on being the winner. Thanks to Peter Campbell who once again manned the barbecue and brought along his much appreciated fruit pies to finish off the day. Although few in numbers, the day was enjoyed by all.



There is a busy program ahead of trips and activities. Please read the newsletter for details.

Our September Meeting is the A.G.M. Being on Council and part of a great team is very rewarding. If anybody has any wish to stand for Council, or is interested in considering standing for Council at a future time, please feel free to speak to me. I look forward to seeing as many as possible at the A.G.M.

*Peter Boag*

## VFFA Meetings & Activities

### SEPTEMBER

- 9 Council Meeting
- 17 **VFFA Annual General Meeting**
- 23 Council meeting of the New Council

### OCTOBER

- 15 **General Meeting – Fly Tying Night**
- 18 Peter Hayes Casting Clinic
- 21 Council Meeting
- 24 / 25 Opening Weekend at Ray Butterworth's 'Tranquil Rises'

### NOVEMBER

- 7 – 9 Omeo Trip, staying at the Blue Duck
- 19 General Meeting – Film Night
- 25 Council Meeting
- 25 – Dec 3 New Zealand trip

### DECEMBER

- 9 Council Meeting
- 17 Christmas Dinner – Guest Speaker: Peter Dixon

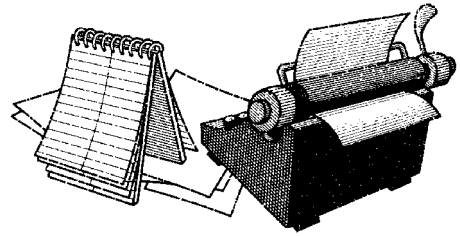
## President's Casting Day

The day following the Annual Dinner is, by long tradition, set aside for the 'President's Casting Day'. Thus some 25 slightly enervated but optimistic wavers of the long wand gathered at the Red Tag Casting Pools to demonstrate their form. The weather was not ideal, and a heavy shower at 12 noon had everyone scurrying for cover. The barbecue and its attachments, along with the day's meat supplies already arranged in neat rows on the hotplate, had to be feverishly manoeuvred into a nearby storage shed. But despite the elements being bleak and overcast, spirits weren't at all dampened (though a few were consumed) and the casting proceeded apace.

The event is officially the 'Handicap Event for the Tom and Frank McDonough Memorial Trophy', and accordingly there was plenty of serious casting towards hoops and rings. It is pleasing to report that the eventual winner was our previous president, David Grisold.

The day provides a delightful opportunity to enjoy the company of fellow anglers, to review the various post mortems on the Annual Dinner, and to appreciate the magnificent work of chef Peter Campbell, who never fails to impress. The success of the occasion was due to some hard work by a number of members, and particularly Joe Haslauer, who set up the casting materials, Peter Campbell, who cooked the lunch, and Colin Morrison, who acted as chief scorer. Our sincere thanks to them all.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



Spring has sprung, or so my desk calendar tells me. As of September 4 the rivers and streams are again open to fishing, so we now have access to the full range of trout fishing options. The early reports are promising and the rivers should be in good nick for the spring and early summer fishing. Make the most of it.

To help things along Fisheries has dropped 2,000 trout of around 300 gram in size into the Goulburn River – the first stocking of the Goulburn in over 20 years. For a river the size of the Goulburn, 2000 is not a lot of fish, but the reports indicate that this was all Fisheries had available. The plan is to stock the Goulburn again next year, and with a much larger number of fish. It is a pity that stocking is seen as necessary, as the ideal situation is a trout population that is self-sustaining. Unfortunately the effects of the drought and its impact on the natural spawning of the resident trout population has resulted in a perceptible decrease in overall stocks. Hence the need for a top up.

Fiona Gavine, senior scientist at Snobs Creek Hatchery, was to provide us with a follow-up report on the effect of the 2006 bushfires on our trout fishery. Fiona has been enjoying some annual leave, and has just returned to work. She assures me her second report is well on the way, but not yet ready for publishing. It should be available for our October issue. In the meantime we have obtained details of a study undertaken on the Rubicon River to determine the effect of willow removal on fish stocks. A summary of the main findings is given in this issue.

Finally, Jim Harmon has kindly given permission for us to publish his editorial from the September/October 2009 issue of Freshwater Fishing magazine. The editorial says it all and is a fascinating and alarming read. There are those in Parks Victoria who were intent upon having angling banned from rivers and streams in Victorian National Parks. Do you ever fish the Buckland, the Ovens, the Kiewa, the Mitta Mitta, the Big or the Howqua rivers? These are just some of the names on their hit list. Fortunately this catastrophe has been averted, due mainly to the efforts of VRFish, the Australian Trout Foundation and Futurefish Foundation. It was a close thing though, and another reminder that trout anglers in Victoria are always having to fight to preserve what we have.

*Lyndon Webb*

## September General Meeting – The AGM

Members are reminded that the September meeting is the Annual General Meeting. Included in this newsletter as inserts are the Order of Business, Nomination Form for positions, and the Appointment of Proxy form.

All members are encouraged to attend.



## CASTING TUITION WITH PETER HAYES

Sunday October 18, 2009

Commencing at 10am and finishing at 4pm

\$100.00 per member, BBQ Lunch & Drinks provided

### Fairfield Casting Pool

(This day was originally totally subscribed, but there are now 5 more spaces available, for those who are quick to contact Richard Salvado)

So come along and learn the techniques that Peter has perfected from over 20 years of competing in casting and fishing competitions.

If you are attending, please bring your favourite casting rod, matched with a bright coloured easy to see fly line, a chair, and some eye protection (eg sunglasses).

If you don't have a bright coloured fly line you can buy one on the day from Peter – one of his special 'dogs balls' practice lines at a special VFFA members' price of \$25

To book your spot please contact: Richard Salvado - Home Phone: 9817 5252

## The October Flyfishing Conclave

The Melbourne Conclave will be held at Cammeray Waters, Woodend, on October 3 & 4.

As Peter Hayes says: "I have assembled tutors that I call '*THE BEST OF THE BEST*' from all over Australia to deliver a variety of exciting and informative workshop programs for you to participate in. I guarantee you won't be disappointed. I guarantee these two days will change your fly fishing destiny!"

Workshops include the following: all levels of fly casting tuition, fresh and saltwater fly tying, fly fishing, cane rod casting, two handed Spey casting, angling entomology, children's learn to fly fish programs and fishing photography classes are amongst some on offer. Joint discussions and demonstrations on many important aspects of fly fishing and casting are part of the weekend. In addition to the workshops you can fish at these venue too.

The events starts at 9am each morning and conclude at 5:30pm. Included each day are two x 1-hour group discussions/demonstrations and tutorials on topics that your instructors consider of vital importance for all fly fishers.

Lunch, morning and afternoon tea is provided. Ideally participants will attend the weekend as a '*Live In*' guest. Alternatively you may come for the day on Saturday or Sunday or both.

Bookings are absolutely essential and can only be booked online at [www.peterhayesflyfishing.com](http://www.peterhayesflyfishing.com)

***Venue : Cammeray Waters Convention Centre, Taylors Road, Woodend.***

# TRAVEL and TROUT GUIDES

(Greg French's speech to members and guests at the VFFA Annual Dinner)

In the middle of July, a mate and I walked out to Christy's Creek (in the Western Lakes) to photograph spawning fish. It was the middle of winter and the season had been closed for six weeks. So, too, had the boom gate at the Augusta Dam. Consequently we had to walk the Lake Augusta Road, and thus were exposed to the full brunt of the wind-driven snow. We walked past Howes Lagoon and Carters Lake, and after ten kilometres of pure hell, had just got past the end of Lake Paget, when my mate said, "You know what? I bet when we get to Lake Botsford we'll still find six effing Victorians flogging the guts out of it." It was joke, and I laughed, but there was a hint of animosity in his voice. You see, as a rule, anglers don't like other anglers fishing their 'patch'.

A classic example of this attitude recently appeared on the *FlyLife* forum. Responding to an article on Lake Eucumbene in issue #56, 'Snapoff' wrote:

'I find it very disappointing to note the current trend of budding angling journalists to write up fishing locations in such intricate detail. I appreciate that these people have a desire to make a name for themselves, but I believe they need to consider the impact such articles have on both the fisheries they write about, and the respect they lose from other anglers who fish these locations. The detailed descriptions and glossy pictures of flies leave nothing for the budding fly fisherman to discover. From boat types to leader lengths, to the when, where, and how, these articles leave no gaps to fill or theories to ponder.'

Clearly Snapoff doesn't like other anglers fishing his patch. But for heaven's sake, it is *Eucumbene* we're talking about. If you can't promote a lake like that, what the hell can you promote? It is understandable that anglers don't want to share water, but it is also selfish and ultimately self-defeating. In this talk, I want to discuss the dangers of minimising the angling presence, and the advantages of optimising it.

## A Note On Economics

I suspect that most of us here tonight believe that the primary importance of maintaining vibrant fisheries is that they make us happy. However, the overwhelming majority of politicians are primarily interested in 'the economy'. The easiest way to protect a fishery is to demonstrate its economic value. If you Victorians come to Tasmania occasionally to fish, and we Tasmanians go to Victoria occasionally to fish, we become bigger drivers of our economies than if we only fished in our home states.



*Greg French with a fine  
Canadian Rainbow*

In 2007–08, Tasmania’s IFS registered about 28,000 licensed anglers. Of these, about 5900 (21%) were interstate anglers, and almost 3000 (10.5%) were Victorians. Without you, Tasmania would not be able to support its IFS. Nor would we have much in the way of political clout. So please come and fish my favourite trout waters more often than you do. Unlike the friend that accompanied me on that long snowy walk along the Lake Augusta Road, I love to see you all wading around in Lake Botsford, catching fish, and having a great time.

### **A Note On Tradition**

The best thing about travel is the broadening of one’s horizons. But before I elaborate, I am going to offer a cautionary note: a story about fishing in Ireland.

Lough Corrib lies almost at sea level on the west coast of Ireland in County Galway. Although there are good numbers of Atlantic salmon, the lake is predominantly a brown trout fishery. Most weigh 0.5 to 1.3 kg, though some exceed 5 kg. In summer there are good rises, and wet flies are supposed to be effective throughout the rest of the season. But the news, when I made contact with one of Corrib’s most renowned ghillies last September, wasn’t good. ‘The weather’s shocking,’ he lamented. ‘Hopefully things will improve in a day or two, but don’t hold your breath.’ I told him we wanted to go anyway.

The traditional Irish lough boat is a long, narrow, clinker design constructed from larch. The boatman sits in the middle, with an angler at each end. The craft always drifts square to the wind, at a perfect speed so there is no need for a drogue, and the oar on the windward side is used as a rudder, enabling the operator to deftly tack this way or that across the breeze. The system is charming and efficient, and I silently cheered the Irish for so doggedly maintaining tradition and spurning soulless aluminium dinghies.

Our ghillie knew his craft well. He explained that patchy sky was problematic because the trout feed predominantly on daphnia. ‘If there’s a uniform layer of strata cloud, making the day relatively dull, great clouds of daphnia migrate to the water surface. Even if the trout are not actively searching for stuff on top they tend to notice your flies. As soon as there’s a bit of sun, the daphnia go deep, the trout follow them, and the fishing stops.’

‘What about today?’ ‘Today is pretty cloudy, but not cloudy enough.’ (It was also pretty damned choppy.)

We began fishing with a team of three Irish wet flies. These are worked in, or faintly below, the surface film. Tom (my son) and I splashed, retrieved and dabbled for several hours without any result. Periodically, for no apparent reason, a giant salmon would launch itself skywards, but we were assured that they were not worth chasing after. Eventually our ghillie said, ‘Look, I know you’re keen, and I can see you’re experienced, but honestly, there is absolutely no chance of catching fish in these conditions. Why don’t we go home and see if things improve over the next few days.’

Finally, on the last day, we managed to talk our ghillie into taking us back out on Lough Corrib. ‘It won’t be good,’ he warned. ‘Things are calm but too bright.’

We ended up pottering out to an island, Inchnagoill, where fish were rising sporadically in a

sheltered bay. Out boatman didn't chase them. He just got us into a drift and made us sit our team of dries lifelessly on the water in front of us. Once, I attempted to dabble the flies in the English style, but this caused our ghillie to have a small coronary. 'Don't! You'll spook the fish!'

'What fish?' I thought. Mind you, the water wasn't too tea-coloured out here, and when we drifted over some shallow reefs, I managed to spot a trout or two cruising close to the bottom. The ghillie wasted no time contradicting me. 'Don't be stupid, you can't possibly see anything down there.'

It took enormous self-restraint to remind myself that I was here to experience the Irish way of doing things; to try and be positive about our ghillie's tactics. I noticed that he would tack the boat towards a fish that rose reasonably close by, and that he gave chase to any sort of shade cast by a passing cloud. But that was pretty much it. Froth lines and wind-lanes were ignored, as were the currents that swung off the ends of islands. Polaroiding was a mystery not worth bothering with.

At one stage I said, as humbly as possible, 'Does anyone ever try to get their flies down in amongst the fish? You know, with a team of buzzers or something?' 'The English come over here and do that sort of thing. Me and a lot of other guides would like to have it banned.' 'They catch too many fish?' 'Not all the time, but on days like today, yes.'

Despondency is too gentle a word. 'Perhaps you blokes should ban fishing during mayfly hatches too,' I proposed. At least he had the grace to laugh.

Late in the day, just before Tom finally managed to boat a good trout, our ghillie praised him for 'raising' seven or eight fish during the session. 'You've done much better than your father, or any of the anglers in other boats nearby.' Apparently *not catching* more fish than someone else was something to be proud of.

Later on, when I lamented the situation to Rob Sloane, he reminded me that the value of Irish flyfishing lay in its tradition. 'You have to remember that your ghillie's da was probably a Corrib boatman, and his da before that. Blokes like him are desperately trying to preserve a way of life centuries old, to hold on to something unique in an increasingly homogenous world. You're the same. I mean, you wouldn't go to Arthurs and spin with soft plastics, even if you thought you might catch more fish than you would on the fly.'

In the colonies—Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina and Canada—we also have our traditions. Essentially they revolve around problem-solving and innovation, so I guess what happened to me at Corrib was a classic example of culture shock. I have forgiven the Irish for being protective of their traditions. I won't forgive you if you aren't protective of ours.

### **More About Guides And Guiding**

Almost exactly ten years ago, in *Fish and Game* magazine #21, the director of Fish and Game New Zealand, Bryce Johnson, gloated that fishing guides 'are hardly the most popular group within the angling fraternity', then added insult to injury by suggesting that the guiding industry needed 'to pay more attention to its image with ordinary Kiwi anglers'. The

thing was, the image problem was largely fostered by ongoing anti-guiding sentiment presented in the management authority's endorsed magazine. Things were so bad that the president of the guides' peak body (NZPFGA) 'emphatically refused to be interviewed by *Fish and Game*'.

Back then I had hoped that institutionalised distrust of guides would fade with time, but if anything, it's gotten worse. A decade of belligerence is enough! Let's have a look at the objections to tourists and guided fishing and see how they stack up against common sense *and* the common good.



*Magnificent water*

### **Fisheries Should Be Mostly Managed For Locals, Not Visitors, and Especially Not Guided Ones**

This is the same as suggesting that anglers should mostly confine themselves to waters close to their place of birth or residence. For proponents of this view, travel and the desire to broaden one's horizons are things to be discouraged.

On the Westslope of the Canadian Rockies, I met a bunch of anglers who felt that only people born and raised in the Elk valley should be allowed to fish there, yet these same anglers made late-autumn pilgrimages to the distant west coast to fish for steelhead. Steelhead fishing was a Canadian birthright, they insisted.

The law that was eventually adopted for Westslope streams of the Rockies was implemented by city-based bureaucrats. So today, if you are a Canadian citizen living in Vancouver, more

than 1000 kilometres away from the Elk valley, your access is essentially unregulated. If you are a Canadian citizen living in Coleman, barely thirty kilometres away, you are required to submit to substantial fees and quota restrictions. How close to home do you have to be to qualify as local? In my experience, it is as close as the protagonist can be without excluding himself.

I consider myself to belong to a global fishing community, and firmly believe that petty parochialism is no basis on which to manage recreational fisheries.

### **At The Very Least, Visitors Should Pay More Than Locals**

The usual argument in favour of this view is that it helps gain money for fisheries management without making the experience too expensive for locals who might not be as wealthy as travellers. Another is that outsiders tend to fish intensively for a week or two, whilst locals fish in shorter bursts throughout the year. I'm not convinced of either argument. It seems to me that charging overt fees for visitors—guests—is downright rude. I suspect fees are primarily intended as a discouragement, and that they are a roundabout way of institutionalising the idea that fisheries should be managed for local use. Rather than give money to city-based bureaucrats to squander in middle management, I'd prefer to give my money to local service providers and retailers who might then invest it in their local communities.

I concede that tiered fees can be implemented innocuously, mainly by charging proportionately more for daily or weekly licences than annual ones—and that most of us can live with this arrangement—but I still question its rationale. People from mainland Australia or New Zealand should not pay through the nose to fish in Tasmania. I encourage anglers to fish my island paradise, and I expect the same courtesy in return.



*Another magnificent Canadian Rainbow*

### **Guides Are Popularising My Favourite Places**

A common lament in *Fish and Game* magazine is that guides are popularising backcountry rivers. Why then does almost every issue of the magazine feature a huge backcountry trout on the front cover? Think about how you got to know about your favourite places. Did someone tell you about them? Did you read about them? Find them on a map? Our information resources are diverse—we rarely find out about anything on our own.

When I published an article about Lake Meston in *FlyLife* #40, I had six wilderness anglers ring up and criticise me for ‘popularising such a special place’, but everyone happily admitted that they had originally learned about Meston’s existence through my guidebooks. Go figure.

Popularisation is important! A proposal in the 1980s to restrict access to Little Pine Lagoon and log the nearby forests was scrapped when a majority of the 1700 anglers that fished it, including the guides, lobbied the State Government. The private land around the lagoon was subsequently acquired by the State in order to create a special fishing reserve. On the other hand, fishing has been banned at Lake Fenton in Mt Field National Park because, as far as I know, I was the only one who lobbied against the regulation. I should have popularised it more intensively than I did.

### **Guides Are Overfishing Our Waters**

Generally guides don’t fish - their clients do, and exactly why a guided visitor should be considered less tolerable than an unguided one is beyond me. Most wild fisheries in Australia and New Zealand are surprisingly robust, and when they’re not it’s usually because of environmental degradation rather than overfishing. The reality is that you can manage trout fisheries effectively simply by increasing size limits and reducing bag limits. (See my article in *FlyLife* #26).

Of course overfishing doesn’t necessarily mean overkill. In an effort to prove that trout become intolerably educated, *Fish and Game* (#26, 1999) published the results of a crude experiment in which they flew Tony Entwistle and Peter Boyes into the remote Kahurangi National Park, and got them to fish the same stretches of river on consecutive days. Typical results per kilometre were: ten trout landed on first day, five on second, four on third — ‘conclusive proof’ that backcountry rivers need to be protected from guides.

Numerous studies in North America, and some in New Zealand, demonstrate conclusively that trout quickly become accustomed to increased fishing pressure. This is why popular streams in New Zealand continue to deliver big bags of well-conditioned fish rather than small bags of undernourished ones. The real problem, I suspect, is a perception of overcrowding, though this is a relative measure. In New Zealand it can mean that someone visited part of the valley two months earlier.

The difficulty of regulating visitor numbers for social reasons is that the definition of ‘acceptable use’ changes with time. If you ask a population of anglers what they want, the great majority say that they want visitation to stay ‘the same as it is now’. In the 1950s, if a bureaucrat had asked anglers to nominate a cap on the number of people allowed to fish Tasmania’s Little Pine Lagoon, it would have been set at one or two hundred people per year (well below the critical mass of public support required to save it from environmental destruction in the 1980s). If you asked the same question today, the cap would be set at 2000 anglers. The devotees of the 1950s probably wouldn’t much like the ‘crowded’ social conditions that apply today, but equally modern anglers enjoy the water every bit as much as the pioneers did.

With world population increasing the way it is, we're just going to have to get used to sharing water. The good news is that for the foreseeable future, fishing in Tasmania and New Zealand is completely sustainable.

### **Okay, But More Anglers Means Broad Environmental Degradation**

The basic tenet of fisheries management (and wilderness management) is that there is no single carrying capacity. Bag limits and size limits are all you need to maintain quality of fishing. You can harden tracks and campsites to withstand any amount of pressure. It's social conditions that change, and it's extremely difficult to assess whether or not these changes will be acceptable to future generations.

Strangely enough, environmental conditions are sometimes enhanced through increased angling pressure. Consider Little Pine Lagoon: without the harvest that occurs today, fish stocks would be so high that the average size would be well below acceptable standards for a premier fly water.

### **Coaching is Cheating**

Virtually every fly fisher I know has been coached, and coaches others. How do we learn if not from our fathers, uncles, mates and friendly strangers?

Why do so many fly fishers take umbrage at the concept of professional coaching? For heaven's sake, even Tiger Woods acknowledges the importance of coaching to the quality of his game and, more importantly, to his enjoyment of it.

### **Recreational Fisheries are Social Assets, Not Something to be Commercialised**

Think for moment of all the people who make money out of fly fishing: tackle-shop proprietors, rod manufacturers, journalists, editors, fly tiers—the list is endless. Why pick on guides? The reality is that we need dedicated craftsmen, researchers, writers and coaches to provide us with the means to enjoy our sport, and they can't deliver the goods if they work only a few hours every week for no money.

John Horsey, the English master, honed his skills by being part of the competitive English competition scene, where the pressure to perform has resulted in a hothouse of innovation. When he visited Tasmania in 1999 he changed attitudes to lake fishing overnight, enabling many more Tasmanians to catch good bags, vastly increasing their enjoyment of the sport (see *FlyLife* #16). These advances could never have been made by people who only had the opportunity to fish occasionally. We all benefit from fulltime anglers and writers—just look at the exceptional articles written by guides for *FlyLife*.

### **Part Of The Joy Of Fishing Is Finding Things Out For Yourself**

None of us invented flyfishing. If we didn't learn from others, we'd still be using greenheart rods, silk lines and horsehair tippets. Guides and writers cannot exhaust the pool of knowledge, simply because the more we know, the more there is to learn. Guides and writers can teach the basics and some innovations quickly, but that just means that their clients are left hankering for more.



*The Irish Ghillie*

One of the truly crazy things about Snapoff's lament about the article on Eucumbene was the idea that the authors had divulged all that there was to know. Flyfishing is a science. It relies on the scientific imperatives of observation, theoretical explanation, and experimentation. Explanations that survive experimental analysis become 'laws', and laws that fail to cut the mustard in new situations are adapted or abandoned.

Science could not work if there were not systems (and traditions) that emphasise the critical importance of sharing knowledge. So too it is, or should be, with flyfishing. With travel and guiding, it's the learning and exchange of ideas that are really important. At least they are to us in Australia, where the tradition of flyfishing is different to that in Ireland. It is not just the time you spend away, but the insights you gain that can be applied at home. The more you know, the more there is to learn, and the more fun you can have.

### **It Took Me Years To Gain The Knowledge I've Got And I Value It More Because Of That**

With respect, if you think you know most of what you need to know, you probably don't know as much as you think you do. I can't think of a single angler, myself included, who couldn't benefit from specialised tuition. I will say it again. Without a continuous flow of new ideas, our fishing tends to stagnate. The great thing about coaching is that it can kick-start a renewed enthusiasm in flyfishing.

### **Guides Are Privatising A Public Resource**

The great majority of guides and clients who fish public water abide by all the same regulations and access laws as the rest of us. Most guiding associations prohibit their members from paying landowners to exclude public access to public water. Even *Fish and Game* has conceded that 'while many people say it is big problem, nobody seems to do it or knows anyone who does.'

### **What Are The Advantages Then?**

In the end, it's not really guiding that anglers are afraid of, it's about having to share water

with other people. Not only is this mean-spirited, it's narrow minded and counter productive. If you read magazines like *Fish and Game* and *FlyLife* you are essentially being guided, and if you refuse to read you are simply bigoted.

Flyfishing is my life, and I'm not embarrassed to say that it gives me a thrill to pass on my knowledge to my children, friends and strangers. Reciprocally, I value learning from other people's experience. As I've said many times before, if we are to protect our fishing from the anti-fishing lobby and environmental destruction, we need all the political clout we can muster. We need to encourage more anglers, not marginalise them.

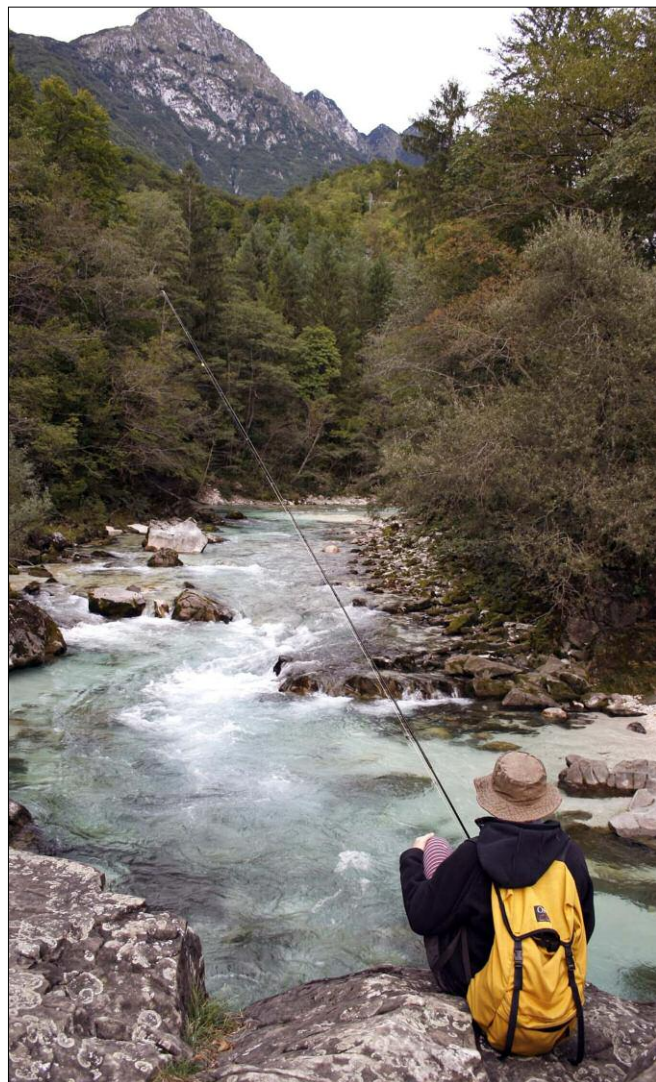
Guides work on our behalf. Instead of criticising them, try tapping into their talent once in while. I guarantee that you'll come away with new insights and a renewed enthusiasm for flyfishing.

### **A Final Note on the Professional, Social and Environmental Benefits of Encouraging Visiting Anglers**

I have already mentioned Horsey's contributions to Australian angling. Let me offer some more examples. After fishing with a number of American friends, both in Canada and in Tasmania, I have come to recognise the importance of fishing with very big flies and very small flies. I have also become a devotee of drift boating with big streamers when chasing sea trout in Tasmania's estuaries.

### **Polaroiding in the Kamloops**

In addition to befitting from overseas visitors to Tasmania, I have been able to offer Australasian perspectives that have changed the way my Canadian friends fish in British Columbia. In most lakes in the Interior, the locals blind fish deep down with leech patterns. I find such prospecting to be ineffably boring, so I started polaroiding from the banks. There were rainbows everywhere, cruising the shallows just like midge feeders in North Canterbury. Polaroiding from the boat proved just as effective. In light of my success, my mates have consigned their sinking lines to the dustbin of history.



## **Kokanee and Gerrards**

Kokanee, a landlocked form of sockeye salmon, typically average just twenty to twenty-five centimetres. In some British Columbian waters, notably Kootenay Lake, kokanee are a critical part of the diet of rainbow trout. Kootenay rainbows, the famous Gerrard trout, grow relatively slowly for the first couple of years of life. But as soon as they get big enough to feed on adult kokanee, their growth-rate accelerates exponentially. By first- or second-spawning, the fish average eight kilograms - and quite a few go on to attain fifteen kilograms or more.

You can hire a guide to take you trolling, and some guides guarantee you will catch at least one fish. But no-one flyfishes for Gerrards. The fact that the locals insisted that these fish were impossible to catch on fly was like waving a red flag at a bull.

Driving along the lakeshore in the evening, we noticed large areas of the lake alive with shimmering wavelets. It soon became apparent that these were giant schools of kokanee. We stopped and watched. Amongst the uniform shimmer of feeding kokanee, we could see lots of anomalies — giant streaks of spray and almighty swirls. These had to be Gerrard trout hammering the kokanee.

That night, when we arrived a friend's place, I suggested that he should get out on Lake Kootenay in a dinghy one evening and chase the Gerrards down. I felt sure that if he used a big enough fly, he would nail the odd rainbow. He took my advice, and quick accurate casts to big Gerrards resulted in many solid takes. Bryce and his mates have since become addicted to fly fishing for Gerrard rainbows. They tend to catch one or two per evening, and many that they have boated have weighed over 10 kg.

### **Last Word**

I want to reiterate that I consider myself a member of the global fishing community. I firmly believe that petty parochialism is no basis on which to manage recreational fisheries. I encourage anglers like yourselves to fish my home waters, and I expect the same courtesy in return. I think anglers everywhere should feel the same way.



# Willow Removal on the Rubicon River

Willows were introduced into Australia over a 100 years ago for a variety of purposes, including the control of waterway erosion. Unfortunately in many areas they took over and became something of a pest. As a consequence river management agencies began instituting a variety of management strategies, including their removal. Concerns were soon raised, however, that mass willow removal was likely to have an impact on stream ecology and thus a detrimental impact on trout populations.

To examine these concerns a study was carried out on the Rubicon River near Tumbling Waters from 2006 to 2008 to determine whether the removal of willows affected the trout population. Two scientists were involved in this research - John Douglas and Nigel Aberly, and their report was published in May of this year. The full report can be downloaded from the DPI website: <http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/fisheries>. A brief summary of their methodology, results and discussion is well worth reading.

The specific aim of the study was to determine the response of brown trout to willow management (i.e. removal) and habitat rehabilitation work on a 200 metre section of the Rubicon River, using two 'indicators':

- 1) population estimates of the brown trout present were obtained before and after the management works at two sites - a 'willow management site', and a separate 'control' site where no management works were undertaken;
- 2) the locations and movement of individual tagged brown trout were studied (using special acoustic tags) before, during, and after management works at the willow management site.

The two sites investigated were the 'treatment' site, where willow management and artificial habitat rehabilitation were undertaken, and a 'control' site where no management works were conducted. The treatment site was located upstream from the bridge at Tumbling Waters, and the control site was the section immediately downstream from this bridge. Prior to the management works, willows dominated the banks at the treatment site.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority carried out the works at the treatment site, which included removing willow trees along the banks, adding fencing to exclude stock, building stiles and car parks for easier angler access, revegetating banks, and installing 'lunkers', which are artificial undercut banks constructed of wood. Their introduction to streams in the United States of America had lead to considerable improvement in trout numbers.

## **Methods Used:**

Fish population estimates at the two sites were made using electrofishing to capture fish. The stream was blocked at each end of the two sites and repeated passes were made with backpack electrofishing units. Captured fish were removed from the stream, anaesthetized, counted, weighed and measured, and then held in an aerated fish bin to recover. They were then released back into the stream.

In addition, nine brown trout had 'coded acoustic transmitters' surgically inserted into their abdomens to track their movements. They were then released back into the stream.

## **Results**

The results suggested that willow removal and lunker installation were not detrimental to the trout population at the treatment site. There was a general decline in trout numbers at both sites between 2006 and 2008. At the control site, the trout population in November 2008 had declined by 50% from levels measured in May 2006, but at the treatment site the population was only reduced to 83% of its prior abundance.

In the 2006 pre-treatment survey sample, 23 fish over 25 cm in length which were captured in the treatment site were tagged with individually numbered dart tags. Three of these fish were recovered at the site in the 2008 post treatment samples, indicating that at least these three fish were still associated with their original tagging location. The remaining untagged population of large brown trout at this treatment site therefore comprised immigrants not previously encountered at this site.

## **Discussion**

The key finding from this study is that willow thinning and subsequent installation of lunkers was not detrimental to the brown trout population. It may in fact have resulted in 33% more trout moving into the treatment site.

### **Brown trout movement**

Brown trout, apart from spawning migrations, generally have a relatively small ‘home range’ that is related to the size of the fish and to stream size. Season, water temperature and flows can all influence the size of trout movements, and changes in water temperatures and flows can induce up and downstream migration.

Brown trout home ranges can be quite small. For example, in the Aberfeldy River in Victoria, home ranges were estimated at 60 m. Overseas studies have shown that most brown trout territories were less than 800 metres of stream. Although trout have home ranges, their sites are not necessarily permanent, as some trout will relocate to other areas for unknown reasons. In studies of the trout in the Goulburn River it was found that some fish changed the location of their home range by up to several kilometres. The majority of trout in the Rubicon study stayed within the treatment site in their small home range.

It is interesting to note that resident trout at the treatment site were exposed to considerable human activity associated with the willow removal and installation of the lunkers. The fact that the trout stayed in the area indicates that trout are quite tolerant of human activity in the Rubicon River. Previous studies undertaken in this river have shown that tagged brown trout remained in the Tumbling Waters area throughout the year, despite the fact that the area is adjacent to a popular reserve. Trout at this site are exposed to a range of human activity (especially in the summer months), including picnics, swimming, rock throwing, children’s “dam building” and angling—yet individual trout remained.

### **Brown trout distribution**

Fisheries and stream management agencies worldwide have promoted the importance of bankside vegetation as being vital for healthy fisheries. However, while bank vegetation is important for a range of ecological functions crucial to many aquatic organisms, the role it plays in influencing the distribution of brown trout may not be as critical as the in-stream habitat.

Recent studies suggest that the important factors determining trout location are stream width, abundance of large rubble and boulders, and stream flow. Water depth, water velocity, streambed substrate type and availability of cover have all been found to be important characteristics for brown trout habitat in river systems, although preference changes with size, age and season. Smaller fish prefer shallow riffle areas with cobble substrate, whilst larger fish prefer deeper cobble and boulder substrate, abundant cover and higher flow rates.

The idea that bankside vegetation may not be a critical habitat component can be seen in the many world class trout streams where tree-lined bank vegetation is not a dominant habitat feature. England's chalk streams, many rivers in New Zealand's south island, and numerous Montana rivers lack trees along their banks.

The impact of willow removal on fish populations is not yet clear. In the Goulburn River, trout remained in areas where substantial willow removal had occurred, possibly because there was sufficient suitable in-stream cover available rather than the presence of bank vegetation.

It is important to note that water quality and water temperature have to be acceptable for trout. Where climatic conditions are not ideal for trout, particularly in areas where summer air temperatures are high, then trees are important in shading streams and keeping water temperatures lower. Warmer streams had, "at best, only marginal trout populations".

The construction and placement of structures in the Rubicon River increased in-stream trout habitat. The installation of lunger-type structures at the same time as willows are removed may be an important factor in maintaining trout populations where willow management is required. What is clear is that densely willowed areas can reduce a streams water transporting ability and hinder recreational access.

The willow debate will not be solved easily but this study indicates that willow removal and associated in-stream habitat construction is not detrimental to recreational trout fisheries. Such combined actions allow for successful willow management with no detriment to trout populations and provide additional access for recreational anglers.

## **Opening Weekend "Omeo Region" November 6 - 9**

You will recall that last year we ventured to the King River for our opening weekend.

Whilst we all had an extremely enjoyable time the fishing left a little to be desired.

After many consultations we have settled on the "Omeo Region" for this years opening.

At this time of year those wily trout should be looking up and feeding freely.

The trip committee will be visiting the area to seek out an appropriate base and will provide further information in the October issue.

In the interim pencil this weekend into your diary, and if you have any thoughts on where we should establish our base do not hesitate to contact

Hugh Maltby on 9455 9017 or mobile 0400 887 065.

# The UK Report

Late summer is with us here in the UK and we are now entering autumn. Fishing has been spasmodic on the Northern streams because of low and clear water conditions. Fly life has been subdued, and the fish have concentrated on feeding on midges and aphids right under the trees. I call these 'sippers', and it reminds me of those fish I regularly encountered on the Mitta Mitta. We are all using size 20 and 22 dries in order to catch them. September is our last month of legal trout fishing and normally we would see fly life increase as the water cools and the evenings become shorter (we can fish up to 11pm during July and August).

My trip to the Clyde River in Southern Scotland was a real eye-opener. This is an almost pristine river and I would rate it as one of the finest brown trout and grayling rivers in the UK. There is no silt in the river and it flows clean all year round, even when high. The cost to fish it for a single day is £8 (\$20) and a yearly ticket is only £40 (\$100). It does not have any salmon in the upper reaches, as they cannot pass falls in the lower section. If they could, the price would probably go up 1000%! How fortunate are we in Australia? I managed a good bag of fish on each of the three days that I fished.

Grayling are now very active and our daily catches are featuring a good number of these fish. They are truly beautiful and deserve their title of 'the lady of the stream'. They are a good fighting fish, and are supposed to be good eating - something I intend to find out this year. The grayling season overlaps the trout season and continues right through to the middle of March next year. Effectively we have 12 months of flyfishing, if you can brave the weather and very cold water.

Earlier on I mentioned the legality of trout fishing after September. Well, we will probably still catch trout right through to the end of November when we are targeting grayling. Next month I am returning to the Clyde for a few days, so I will be interested to see how it fishes later in the season.

*Philip Bailey*

*Hubert and Bernard*



**The President's Casting Day**



*A small but enthusiastic bunch of casters*

*Nice cast Mr President*

# ATF Report

The following statement is Jim Harmon's Editorial from the September/October 2009 issue of Freshwater Fishing magazine. It is reproduced with Jim's permission.

## *Parks Victoria threaten top fisheries*

It is no secret to anglers that Parks Victoria appears to be anti-angling. However, some years ago I found out that it's not anglers specifically; it can be anyone who uses 'their' parks.

When I started fishing in the Yarra for native fish decades ago, whenever I went to one of my favourite spots of a summer weekend it was always frequented by 50 to 150 people - families picnicking, youngsters being taught to fish - people having fun by the water. Then Parks Victoria decided that this was detrimental to the area and fenced it off about a kilometre from the river. Since then the only people I have seen there are dedicated anglers who are willing to put up with the walk over two very steep hills, and Parks Victoria officers who drive in - apparently their vehicles don't do any 'damage'.

However, when their latest plans and tactics came to my attention my already low opinion of them sank even further!

Does your favourite river or lake appear on this list?

Big River	Jamieson River	Mitta Mitta River
Buckland River	Kiewa River	Ovens River
Bundara River	King River	Rose River
Cobungra River	Lake Catani	Snowy River
Dandongadale River	Lake Dartmouth	Tanjil River
Dargo River	Lake William Hovell	Wellington River
Gibbo River	Lake Tarli Karng	Wongungarra River
Howqua River	Macalister River	Wonnangatta River

For most Victorian freshwater fishers - and even many from interstate - the answer is probably yes. All these waters flow through or lie in a national park and will be subject to the new management plan being developed by Parks Victoria; a plan and process that has alarmed anglers everywhere.

First, there was the timing of advertising for the advisory committee positions for the review of this plan. Parks Victoria chose Christmas Eve 2008 to advertise on their website for the committee, followed by an inconspicuous advert mid-holidays (January 10) in the Herald Sun. If anyone stumbled upon these ads, they were informed they had until just the end of the school holidays (January 27, 2009) to apply. Not surprisingly, this whole 'process' apparently went unnoticed by any stakeholder not first alerted to the positions by Parks Victoria. Extraordinarily, even the government's own Fisheries Victoria was left out of the loop.

On its own, all this is troubling enough, but things get downright worrying when you consider the new management plan has the potential to ban recreational fishing for the first time in the 150 year history of Victorian National Parks. It works like this: the developing

management plan can divide a park up into zones: zones for recreational activities, zones for conservation, zones that are mixed, zones for recreation development and last but not least, wilderness. These zones, along with their permissible activities, are then drawn on a map. So now you have a map with areas that let you know what can take place.

The devil is always in the detail. You might find that someone has decided recreational fishing is not considered a low impact activity in the park you're visiting. So whilst you can throw a line in at the camping spot in a recreational zone, you may not be allowed to fish your special spot in the conservation zone. And what about throwing on the pack and heading off into a wilderness zone?

If fishing doesn't fit, suddenly it's prohibited. Or if it does fit, but then another zone is applied, it isn't again. Confused? It could be your favourite bass water on the Snowy River or your favourite trout water on the upper Mitta Mitta - if it's zoned out, it's gone forever.

Freshwater angling in Victoria hasn't seen a threat like it. The loss of even a part of one water from the list in this editorial would be a catastrophe. As we go to press, Parks Victoria has acknowledged their failure in adequately notifying key stakeholders like recreational fishers about the new management plan, and it appears they are belatedly making provisions for recreational angling representation. However, there has never been a more potent sense of Parks Victoria as an organisation that keeps 'managing out' recreational fishing. Whether this push originates with the responsible minister, the Hon. Gavin Jennings, mid-level bureaucrats or green fundamentalists with the ear of Parks Victoria, we simply don't know.

So on the one hand, we have a government that applauds the economic and social benefits of recreational fishing, and promises better fishing access and opportunities. A government whose pre-election policies criticised the Greens for their '...extreme position on fishing which... advocates locking people out of many good fishing spots.' and '...go(ing) too far in backing absolute bans on recreational activities in parks.' Yet it seems the same government may simultaneously be overseeing a process that could inflict the worst damage to Victoria's recreational fishing in living memory.

There is a reason recreational fishing has always been permitted in National Parks here and elsewhere in the world: it is a licensed, regulated activity with a low environmental impact. It is therefore surely time for ministerial intervention to halt Parks Victoria's ever more frequent and unjustified attacks on angling in the face of the expressed position of the Brumby Government.

At the same time, recreational anglers must band together as never before to fight Parks Victoria's anti-fishing push. We need to ensure that recreational fishing achieves the status it deserves as a low impact activity compatible with any national park zoning. Meanwhile, keep up to date with what's happening by visiting the websites of VRFish, Futurefish Foundation and the Australian Trout Foundation. Write to your local state MPs, demanding that common sense prevail and recreational fishing be recognised once and for all as an activity permitted in all parts of our national parks.

*Jim Harmon*

(If you feel like giving the Minister a few of your thoughts and feelings on this matter, his contact details are – Email: [Gavin.Jennings@Parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:Gavin.Jennings@Parliament.vic.gov.au) . Lyndon Webb, Editor)

# Ants In Autumn

(from Andrew Braithwaite)

Over many years past I fished a large number of Victoria's waterways, mostly rivers, whilst always referring back to the books available at the time. Lance Wedlick was an angler I took note of when it came to streams in close proximity to the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. (I met him when I was in the process of establishing the Yarra Valley Fly Fishers, but that's a story for another time.) His books gave me an insight into stream fishing as it used to be in years gone by, and I followed his words religiously. Then a book came onto the market – I found it in the Technical Book Shop in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne – written by David Scholes and titled *Fly Fisher in Tasmania*.

This became my bible. I followed its teachings to the letter where possible, and utilized the readily given advice almost word for word. However, in looking back, ants were an issue on which no serious information was ever proffered to younger anglers, although a few theories were advanced over an extended period of time. Thus ants (as trout food) became something of a non-event to me in later years. They would often appear in late summer on those still, windless, warm days and if one was lucky to happen upon such an event, an angler might perhaps take one or maybe two fish on a small dry fly of some description. A small Red Tag might occasionally cause a feeding trout to change his diet for a moment, or very occasionally some tiny winged fly might bring about the downfall of a feeder. But generally the angler would bid the offending fish a brief "g'day" and move on.

Then there was always the matter of drag – invariably ant feeders would take up station in a small run which funnelled the ants into one constant line of food – good for the trout but a nightmare for the angler, as any fly offered would almost immediately drag, thereby instantly putting the fish down.

Fly size was also an issue. I recall one afternoon on the lower Macquarie when I tied on a very small black ant, size 24, which had been tied and given to me by a friend from Melbourne. It sat like a large black 'blob' on the water and it was obvious it was much too big to match the prevalent ants so readily being feasted upon. I was then still under the assumption that a dry fly was necessary to catch these fish feeding on ants floating in the surface film.

So, with all of the problems associated with ant-feeders, where do we go? Is there any answer that can be applied to this period of some two or three months during autumn – particularly for those of us whose sole focus are the creeks and streams of Tasmania – that may help achieve satisfactory results to one of the most perplexing periods of our fishing season?

Let me share with you incidents from a recent afternoon in late March on a small creek close to Cressy in Tasmania's northern midlands. Picture the warmth of the westering sun on a windless, sunny afternoon, as shadows from nearby trees create ever-growing patches of deep shade over the pools and runs; and the subtle smell of dry grass fills the air along with the noisy chatter of a flock of green rosellas, busy feeding in nearby hawthorn thickets. And what of the creek, flowing low and clear through the grassy paddock with no sign of any fly-life apparent at this late stage of the season, beckoning as always but sombre in its mood. Nevertheless, an angler always has eternal optimism, and so, after putting together my small creek rod and 3-weight line, I proceeded upstream.

There was nothing showing for the first hundred yards - that is until I rounded a bend in the stream and spotted, in the centre of a narrow current, a rise form I recognised from years ago but initially had me perplexed. What was this rising fish doing, and why did it continue to rise in the same spot with two-second intervals? I paused to watch, and think, and then watch some more. And it came to me after a few minutes – the lower Macquarie, similar confined current, same rise forms: “Ah huh”, I muttered to myself, “ant feeders!”

So, what to do! Fly box after fly box was pulled out and the contents perused and rejected, until a box of nymphs was opened. And there, amongst a small group of flies purchased many years ago, was a distinctly shaped ant-looking fly on a size fourteen hook. It had no hackle and it was apparent it would not float for long, if at all. I tied it onto the 4lb tippet and kneeling down, slowly inched forward to within casting distance.

The rises continued unabated, and although nothing could be seen floating on the water, it was plainly obvious there were ants somewhere out there! I cast a good twelve inches above the rise, hoping that the fly might float just long enough to cover the feeding fish. No such luck – it barely floated six inches and then disappeared. I watched the leader, let the submerged fly drift past the fish’s lie some nine inches, and then lifted, only to find myself hooked fast to a rather surprised and struggling one pound brownie. I remember thinking, “So they *will* take a sunken fly even when they are so obviously feeding in the surface film on floating ants.” The penny had dropped and a light globe had begun to flicker into life – how could this be possible? All those years of using a dry fly and the associated problems ... could it be ...?

The fish was duly landed and I moved on with a renewed feelings of hope. And of course, fifty yards further on, a similar fish was feeding in almost exactly the same situation. So I presented the fly, it sank, and after waiting a short time I lifted the rod and found that a second fish had taken the fly in much the same manner as the first. I wasn’t able to return again last season, due to other commitments, but am looking forward to the next ‘ant-season’ and to trying the same technique again.

In summary, I think fish feeding on ants will almost certainly take a small sunken fly of similar shape and size – fishing it is akin to fishing a sunken nymph or a small, sparse wet fly; a sixth sense tells you when to strike or that a trout has taken your fly. Secondly, thinking back to the rise forms on that day and previous days, I can’t recall actually seeing the fish break the surface – the rise was more of a ‘bulging-boil’ type of affair. So my questioning mind has posed the following conundrum – do trout actually take ants under the surface rather than floating on the surface; perhaps the ants are already drowned when they are taken and the rise we see is the top of the fish’s head as it turns to take another miniature insect. I wonder?

Has anyone ever cleaned an ant-feeder and found the ants to still be alive and wriggling inside its stomach? And, perhaps this is why it is seldom that ants are seen floating – they may have already been drowned further upstream before floating down the stream, channelled into a small run and eventually sunken prior to the trout discovering them.

*Andrew Braithwaite – July 2009*

## This Month's Yarn:

(... retrieved from August 1965, courtesy of David Featherstone)

“Some of those fellows who tow big heavy motor boats behind their cars,” said Alf, ordering two glasses of lunch, “must get into trouble at times, when they go into difficult places where there are no proper tracks.” “Correct. Some of them don’t show much judgment,” said McTaggart. “But yet,” he continued after a reflective mouthful, “I know of one case where a driver was fortunate that he had a big motor boat on a trailer behind him. He was also fortunate, of course, that he had my nephew Clarence with him - I think I’ve mentioned Clarence to you before.” “You have,” agreed Alf, “but this sounds like one of his experiences that you haven’t mentioned before.”

“Well, I’ll mention it now ... It seems that this motor boat addict, a wealthy grower named Ashby, decided to take his outfit to a little-known inlet of the Eppaldon Lake. He got it there all right, for the track - a rough earth one - was down hill. It rained while they were there, so the trouble started on the return journey. The track was both steep and slippery, and the car just refused to take it. The two passengers, Clarence and a friend of Ashby’s, got out and pushed, but they might just as well have tried to push an elephant through a keyhole.”

“Then Clarence - as I think I’ve told you before, an ingenious fellow - had an idea. Not far from the water was a windmill. You’ve often seen the type. Getting some tools from the car, Clarence climbed up the structure and detached the wind-vane wheel, which he lowered to the ground. It was about five feet in diameter. Then he replaced the propeller on the back of the motorboat with the wind-vane wheel, which, incidentally, just cleared the ground when it was in position. Ashby and his friend got into the car, and Clarence into the boat. Then Clarence started up the engine - of the boat. His idea worked perfectly. The wind-vane wheel, operating like the propeller of an aeroplane, took over, and pushed the car up the half-mile of slippery slope to the road at the top - where, of course, their troubles were over!”

## The President's Casting Day



*Ben and John Pilkington – a top team*



*Hamish throws a tight loop*

# The Trip to Bullen Merri

(report provided by Richard Kos)

When Richard Goodall and myself arrived on the Friday afternoon, we found that David Wakefield and Ray Boucher, from the Latrobe Valley Club had made themselves at home in the cabin next to ours and were already on the water. Next to arrive were Hugh Maltby and Tony Mitchem, followed shortly after by David and Ray, returning from Lake Purrumbete with a report of a couple of hits but no fish.

That evening found the six of us at Madden's Bistro in Camperdown, having dinner and a couple of drinks. During the dessert we decided that with no reports of fish coming out of Bullen Merri, we were better off plotting the

downfall of some Purrumbete salmonids. Accordingly we arrived at Purrumbete on the Saturday morning, and headed out in quite blustery conditions, Richard and Dave in Ray's boat, Hughie and Kossy in Tony's boat. After fishing unsuccessfully all morning, both from the boat and the beach, we decided to join up for lunch and try out Hughie's new portable stove, which turned out to be a winner.



*Bob Loch motoring out*



*The lunch break*

The afternoon session proved to be as uneventful as the morning session, the only consolation being that the wind had abated, making it a comfortable run back to the boat ramp. On returning to the cabins, we were met by Bob Loch, from Warrnambool, and Rick Dugina. Saturday night's dinner, brilliantly organised by Richard Goodall at the property of Caroline and John Menzies, was, as usual, a beautifully presented and sumptuous affair.

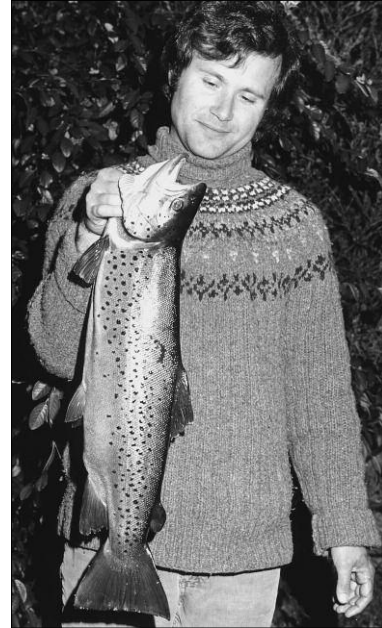
Sunday morning Bob Loch and I ventured out in less than favourable conditions, looking for a sheltered

shore. After fishing for a couple of hours with no luck we called it quits and headed home. The Bullen Merri weekend was, again, a great success even though the number of participants was down on the previous trips. Despite the fact no fish were caught, those who have joined us before know that 'there's more to fishing than catching fish'.

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Spuddler (or is it The Sandy?)*

(Rick Keam suggested in an email that there was a fly used down in the Western District called the ‘Spuddler’, which had earned a fearsome reputation for taking sea-run browns. As it happens, the angler who had most to do with developing this fly was our Warrnambool correspondent, Jim Blakeslee. The accompanying photo, taken in the early 1980s, shows him with yet another of the many 6 and 7 lb sea-run browns he had captured in the Merri River using the Spuddler. Jim has kindly provided us with the following background to this fly and the tying details.)



When I started to flyfish and tie flies in California, it didn’t take me long to learn that the big brook trout, cutthroats, rainbows and browns liked to eat freshwater sculpin, so it was a good idea to include an assortment of sculpin patterns in the fly box. So I tied and fished Dan Gapen’s weighted version of the Muddler Minnow and Dan Bailey’s Montana Maribou Muddler and Spuddler patterns to represent the sculpin in rivers of the Western USA.

When I first arrived in Warrnambool in 1976, I heard some of the locals rattle off the names they used for the minnows that Western District trout regularly included in their diet. These local names included “turkets” (galaxias), “cucumber fish” (smelt or whitebait) and “sandys” (gudgeon/toupong).

No one in the district seemed to use patterns specifically to represent the “sandys,” but when I opened the stomachs of winter sea-run trout caught from the murky floodwater in the lower reaches of the Merri and Hopkins Rivers, they were often full of these miniature flathead. I used the Muddler Minnow and Dan Bailey Spuddler with reasonable success, but not being totally satisfied, decided to improvise with the pattern and add a few variations while sticking to the basic theme.

When I first tried the new Sandy fly on the browns of the lower Merri, I had immediate success, landing a 7½ pound brown, and a couple of 5 pounders in one session. The fly later proved to be deadly (weighted or unweighted) when fished after dark in the Hopkins River estuary, where it took many bream, estuary perch and even some mulloway up to 22 pounds. Fellow Warrnambool flyfishers would sometimes ask, “What pattern are you using?” Initially I was somewhat coy, and for a while I simply said it was a “Spuddler.” Eventually some members asked for me to tie a few for them, and then my pattern for tying a Sandy was revealed.

Unfortunately, for the past 23 years the fly has been referred to locally by the name ‘Spuddler’. So, my apologies to Dan Bailey of Livingston Montana, but, being deceased, I don’t think he’ll mind too much if I ‘borrow’ the name of his fly pattern for a little longer.

The pattern (below) incorporates some of the features of the Spuddler described on pages 162 - 165 of Jack Dennis’s 1974 edition of the *Western Trout Fly Tying Manual*, and a few features of the Matuka pattern on pages 67 - 68 of Keith Draper’s 1971 edition of *Trout Flies in New Zealand*, as well as a few features of my own. If you can tie a muddler minnow head and a matuka, then you can tie the Spuddler. .



**Materials:**

- Hook: Size 4 or 6 streamer hook.
- Tying thread: Brown or tan 3/0 prewaxed monocord.
- Body: Dubbed hare body fur with colour similar to the feathers (below).
- Weight (optional): If tying a weighted version, wrap the rear 2/3rds of the hook with lead wire.
- Wing/tail: Two hen ring-neck pheasant flank feathers (from the sides of a skin under the wing) tied back-to-back and bound onto the body of the hook (matuka style). Make sure they are long and soft, and have well-developed “par-marks” or panels like you would see on a gudgeon or a juvenile trout.
- Pectoral fins: Two short hen ring-neck pheasant neck feathers with similar colour to the flank feathers.
- Head: Deer hair or antelope hair spun on and trimmed flat, top and bottom.

## Method:

1. Clamp the hook in the vice and then attach the thread to the barbed end of the hook leaving 10cm of thread hanging out the back. (This will be used instead of wire to wrap through the flank feathers to secure them to the body, matuka style).
2. Wrap the thread forward to the eye of the hook then back to the bend. This will provide a secure foundation for the body.
3. If adding weight, wrap lead wire forward from the end of the body of the hook until you are 2/3rds of the way to the eye. Over-wrap the lead with tying thread back and forward several times to secure it in position. Finish with thread at the back of the hook.

4. Dub a section of the tying thread with hare's fur and wrap it forward to cover the lead and build a fuzzy cigar-shaped body that is 2/3rds the length of the hook. Dub on more fur if you need to so you cover all the lead. Secure with a few winds of thread and a half hitch. (See fig 1)



*Fig 1*



*Fig 2*

5. Match the two flank feathers and hold them together back-to-back. Place them on top of the body (matuka style) with the tips of the feathers (which will become the tail of the fly) sticking out the back from the hook. Adjust the position of the feathers so the total length of the finished fly will be twice the length of the hook. Now secure the flank feathers to the hook with half a dozen winds of tying thread at the front end of the body and secure with a half hitch. (See fig 2).

6. Attach hackle pliers to the 10 cm of thread you left sticking out the back. While holding the flank feathers together, wrap this thread forward through the feathers in a spiral pattern so you pass through the feathers approximately 6 times until you get to the front of the body. Secure with a few winds of thread and a half hitch before you trim off the butts of the feathers. At this stage, the fly should look like a grey-bodied version of



*Fig 3*

Keith Draper's Matuku, especially if you are using real Matuku (Bittern) flank feathers, but you won't will you, because they are rare and totally protected! (See fig 3)

7. Tie a neck feather on each side at the front of the body (2/3rds of the way along the hook) so they "cup" and stick out from either side like pectoral fins on a little gudgeon. If held flat against the body they should be approximately 1/2 its length. Secure with a few winds of thread and a half hitch. Trim off the butts of the feathers. Add a drop of head cement to saturate the butts then immediately... (See fig 4)



Fig 4



Fig 5

8. ...Grab a generous "pinch-sized" bunch of deer hair attached to the hide and cut it off. Place the hair (with the pointy tips facing back) so the bunch covers the butts of the feathers. Wrap the thread a couple times around the middle of the bunch and then pull tight. The deer hair will "spin" and flare out (and stick to the glue). Push this bunch back and tie in another bunch of deer hair ahead of it so it flares, too. Wind the thread a half dozen times behind the eye of the hook, half hitch then finish the knot with a whip finish tool. Trim off the thread. (fig 5)

9. Now all you have to do is trim the flared deer hair at the head so that, viewed from the front, it is roughly convex on the top and trimmed flat on the bottom. Trim the sides so the head looks roughly triangular, when viewed from above, e.g. like a little flathead. (See figs 6 & 7)



Fig 6



Fig 7

10. Place a drop of head cement on the knot behind the eye of the hook and you're done!



## 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 "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
<b><i>The Australian Trout by Jack Ritchie.....</i></b>	<b>\$20.00</b>
<b><i>(Special offer – buy one, get one free!)</i></b>	
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 2009 Annual Dinner:

- Armadale Angler • Aussie Angler • Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery • Compleat Angler Box Hill • Compleat Fly Fisher Melbourne
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