

FLY LINES



September 2023

The September AGM

The notice papers required for this year's Annual General Meeting were emailed out in August, these being the Nomination Form, Appointment of Proxy Form, and Meeting Agenda. They are also included with this newsletter, or can be downloaded from the VFFA website.

Again this year the VFFA is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting:

Topic: VFFA Annual General Meeting

Time: September 21, 2023, 8:00 PM
Australia/Melbourne

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83707816705?pwd=UkJWVGROtkV1MmliVUwwdGszcmFwUT09>

Meeting ID: 837 0781 6705

Passcode: 943434

Thursday, September 21,
8:00pm, and a
Zoom Meeting



Kristina Placko is a top South Island guide

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VOL. 71 NO.11 - SEPTEMBER 2023 Organisation No. A0024750J
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Jason Platts ties superb dry flies

President's Message

Thus – *“One thing becomes clearer as one gets older and one's fishing experience increases, and that is the paramount importance of one's fishing companions.”*
(John Ashley-Cooper)

The highlight of VFFA life this month was, without doubt, our Annual Dinner.

Guest Speaker Christopher Bassano captivated the audience with a fascinating talk on the complexities of managing the Tasmanian Fishery. And it was not just the diehard Tasmanian devotees who found it interesting; several of our non-fishing partners approached me to say how much they enjoyed the talk, not to mention the whole evening. There is a detailed rendition of Chris's talk elsewhere in the Newsletter.

We had 72 members and friends and partners at the Dinner, and it really was a marvellous night. The Kelvin Club staff have put their catering issues well behind them; I only heard complimentary remarks regarding the meal. To top it off, the auction and the raffle raised \$2,500 for the Association, which is extraordinarily generous.

Chris Bassano joined us at the Red Tag casting ponds on Sunday morning for a couple of hours, before catching his flight back to Tasmania. The weather was fine with minimal wind, and a number of our members came down for a cast, a chat and a snag. We watched in awe as one of our youngest members, Social Media Co-ordinator James Gray, soaked up the tuition from James Norney. Oh, to be that age again... (Then again, maybe not; but it would help with my casting!)

My thanks also to Louise Christison for sharing her expertise and guidance with her, now, fellow members. Welcome to the VFFA Louise and James.

With Opening Day just around the corner, our winter activities are drawing to a



Dr David Hooke

close. That was our final casting day for 2023 and we will have our final fly tying session at the Botanical Art School on September 14 (please note the change of date).

I worry a little about the fly tying evenings. Moving the venue to a more central location; to an inviting classroom setting, ideal for teaching; and providing a pleasant ambience, hasn't translated into increased attendance. To be frank, it feels as though we have the formula wrong. Over the next few months, indeed prior to next winter, please provide feedback to any of us on Council regarding the structure of our fly tying evenings and the format you would prefer.

Our next meeting, on Thursday September 21, is the Annual General Meeting. Papers have been circulated. The season will have opened and many of you will have things on your mind other than an AGM. Hence, we will hold it on Zoom so as many as possible can attend with minimal disruption to fishing preparations. The Zoom link will be circulated to the full membership

via a Terry Rogers email on Monday, September 18.

The October Meeting will be our Annual Auction, held at the Kelvin Club. As I mentioned on Friday night, we have a lot of books to auction, but little in the way of equipment. If any of you have rods, reels, lines, flies, vices, fur, feathers, waders, boots, wading sticks, indeed anything that is now surplus to requirements, please be in touch and donate to the VFFA for auction... a worthy cause. Perhaps contact Hugh Maltby or Peter Clayton direct or failing that, anyone on Council.

The National Entomology Insect Expo will be held in Woodend over the weekend September 22 - 24. Organisers are expecting 30,000 attendees over the three days. The VFFA will have a small presence to demonstrate flies and fly tying techniques. Some more volunteers to help man/woman the stand during some part of the three days would be welcomed with open arms! Aside from our involvement, it looks like a fascinating expo!

Millbrook Lakes will once again be hosting the VFFA on Wednesday, September 27. Always a great day's fishing and great value for 10 members; no more, no less. Terry Rogers will email members in mid-September with details and an invitation to attend.

Congratulations to our Honorary Librarian, Bill Jeans, on being awarded Honorary Life Membership of Southern Fly Fishers at their AGM last month. Our Council meeting was scheduled for the same evening so we deferred our meeting to remove any conflict; and absolutely delighted to do so!

Council has been well occupied with preparations for the Dinner over the last few months. Other matters to which we will now turn our attention include organising a beginners/streamcraft/euro-nymphing day which will probably be held in early October; a complete revamp of the website to give it a more central role in the affairs of the Association, and pursuing the Closer Economic Relations agreement with New Zealand.



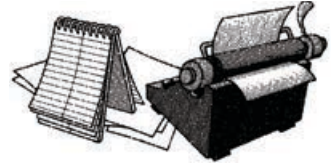
Our president caught a number of fish at a recent day at Millbrook Lakes

Speaking of New Zealand, the time has come to give serious consideration to the planned VFFA trip to Taupo in March next year. We need confirmation and 50% deposit prior to the end of the year to be able to confidently reserve accommodation and guides. Please contact Councillor John Spragg (0407 555 621) for further information and to pay your deposit.

I look forward to speaking with as many members as possible via Zoom at the AGM on Thursday evening September 21 at 8:00pm.

David H. Hooke

From the EDITOR'S DESK



Everything about our sport is beautiful. It's more than five centuries of books and manuscripts and folios are beautiful. Its pristine rivers are beautiful, and the riverscapes that surround them are beautiful. Fly fishing is an old and honourable sport. Its roots are literally found in the mediaeval codes of chivalry. Our methods of fishing are beautiful. Its artefacts of rods and beautifully machined reels are beautiful. Its wading staffs and landing nets and split-willow creels are beautiful. The best of sporting art is beautiful. The delicate artifice of dressing flies is beautiful. Such confections of fur, feathers, and steel are beautiful, and our worktables are littered with exotic scraps of tragopan and golden pheasant and blue chattering and Coq de Leon. Our sport is awash in such things, with bright rivers tumbling swiftly towards the salt, and the deft choreography of swifts and swallows working to a dancing swarm of flies, and the quicksilver poetry of the fish themselves. And, in times of partisan hubris, selfishness and outright mendacity, beauty itself may prove the most endangered thing of all." (Ernest Schwiebert)

I find it easy to agree with Ernest Schwiebert. The gear we use, especially our rods and reels, can be quite attractive items. They are a delight to own and enjoyable to use. Buying and collecting expensive fly fishing gear can become an addictive pastime, as owning good gear is a delight, even if it doesn't get used as often as we'd like. Having a cast on a river or lake with well-made rods and reels and lines that work superbly is immensely enjoyable, whether the fish cooperate or not.

Of course arriving home with a fabulous new acquisition needs some negotiation and a sympathetic wife. I was told some years ago that a Melbourne tackle shop (which must remain nameless) ran two sets of receipt books – one that showed the correct purchase price of an item, and another (referred to as the 'wife's receipt book') that provided receipts for purchasers that displayed purchase prices which were about one fifth of the actual price paid. Not that I'd personally be party to any of that sort of unscrupulous activity.



Tasmania's St Patricks River – a delight to fish

But on the subject of confessions, I have one I must offer. Last month's newsletter carried a delightful article by Jim Allen which was selected for us and provided by Philip Weigall. Jim's article had originally been published some years ago in Philip's digital fly fishing magazine *FlyStream*. Unfortunately the August newsletter files were raced off to our typesetter without a proper final check, and thus the



Sunset at Bronte Lagoon

acknowledgement of Flystream as the source of Jim's article was overlooked. My apologies to Philip.

The inclusion of an article by Jim reminded me of a truly fabulous talk Jim gave at a VFFA meeting in May 2009. Jim was asked to speak about 'Shark Fishing on the Great Lake in Tasmania' but broadened his topic to talk about

lake fishing in general. Jim's talk proved incredibly popular, and there were many requests for copies of the text of Jim's presentation. It's now 14 years since this talk was printed in our newsletter, so it's well worth another read and is included in this newsletter. Those who fish lakes, and Tassie lakes in particular, will find this article immensely instructive.

Another article included in this issue is a superb review by Rick Wallace of Greg French's new book "*Wild Heart of Tasmania – a living history of Lake Malbena and the Western Lakes*".

Greg has written a number of books, and they are all immensely enjoyable. His latest – *Wild Heart* – is big (440 pages) and another fabulous read. Read Rick's review, and then buy yourself a copy of



Tasmania's Nile River – another stream that provides fabulous fishing

Greg's book. There will be a copy in the VFFA library soon.

Members hardly need reminding that the new season has already opened in Tasmania and the season for Victorians opened on Saturday September 2. It will be good to have the rivers as well as the lakes and stillwaters accessible, though we all know it will take a few more weeks for most of our rivers to drop and clear. The worm drowners can fish high flowing and badly discoloured rivers, but us fly fishers need to wait a few more weeks for better conditions.

Where will you head? I find it intriguing that some of our members who would be categorised as our most skilful river anglers rarely fish our Victorian rivers. Some do most of their fishing in Tassie and others focus all their attention on New Zealand rivers.

Sadly the rules in New Zealand are changing, to our disadvantage. A note that arrived on my computer a few days ago says this:

"A heap of Designated Waters Licences have also been sold. The Designated Waters system has replaced the Backcountry system and is designed to see Kiwi anglers get a fairer share on some of the waterways that Fish & Game's research has shown are subject to too much pressure - around two per cent of the country's rivers. The new licence category will help us manage angling pressure by spreading angling effort around so that it isn't concentrated in certain areas, which detracts from the angling experience and also has the potential to negatively impact the fisheries.

Over the past ten years, Fish & Game has received increasing complaints from resident and non-resident anglers

regarding overcrowding in a small number of fisheries that will now be managed through the Designated Waters Licence.

Our research and monitoring show that a small percentage of non-resident anglers will intensely fish in a local area, putting pressure on the fishery and displacing other anglers. We've implemented this new fisheries management tool to help address that imbalance.

In some fisheries, angler use has gone from a roughly 50:50 resident-to-non-resident split (in the early 2000s) to an 80:20 split favouring non-resident anglers. In most cases, pressure-sensitive fisheries, now managed through the Designated Waters Licence, share common features. The rivers have very clear water, offer excellent sight fishing, hold large average-size trout, have high scenic value, and are often located in a wilderness or backcountry setting."

Details of higher costs and the new rules and restrictions applying to non-resident anglers can now be found. Sadly, New Zealand's fabulous stream fishing is now a whole lot more expensive and less attractive to us Australian fly fishers.



More of Jason Platt's superb fly tying

The August Annual Dinner

This year's Annual Dinner, on Friday August 18, was a very successful event, with over 70 members and guests attending.

Our guest speaker for the night was Chris Bassano, recognized and justifiably ranked as one of our finest fly anglers. Chris now works with the Inland Fisheries Service in Tasmania, and in his presentation he explained to us how the IFS now manages the Tasmanian trout fishery. Chris's knowledge of the structure and functions of the IFS was clearly evident and his presentation had us fascinated as he explained how the IFS works hard these days to improve the state's trout fishery.

Chris explained that Tasmania is predominantly a wild brown trout fishery, though rainbow trout, brook trout and Atlantic salmon are also present in some waters.

There are now some 26,000 anglers holding a Tasmanian trout fishing license. Of these 21,000 are Tasmanians, and 2,000 are Victorians. It was agreed during Chris's presentation that in both Tasmania and Victoria trout licenses are far too cheap. If we paid more for the privilege

of fishing for trout then our trout fishing would be so much better.



Chris Bassano was our guest speaker

The IFS in Tasmania manages the trout fishery through legislation, through manipulating water heights and levels where appropriate, constantly improving spawning facilities for trout, controlling and removing pest species such as carp and redfin, and through stocking and transferring trout to improve various fisheries.

The stocking of fish is guided by a number of factors and government regulations, including the Tasmanian Inland Recreational Fishery Management Plan 2018-28, Fisheries Performance



Annual Dinners are great occasions for catching up



Ex-President Chris Gray presented David Grisold (also an Ex-President) with his 25 year's membership award. David and wife Rhonda were both delighted with this acknowledgement.

Assessments (FPA), The IFS Policy for the Translocation of Freshwater Fish in Tasmania (February 2016), the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Biosecurity Strategy 2021-2031, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) Management Plan 2016, the IFS Assessment Criteria and Guidelines – Private Dam Stocking for Public Fishing, Angling Club Activities and Exclusive Fishing, and the IFS Recovery Plan for Tasmanian Galaxiidae 2006-10.

Other practical issues to consider in the stocking of trout are the availability of fish (wild or domestic), the number of fish that can be transported in the vehicles used, the average weight of the fish being transported, the water quality and water levels of the receiving lakes, the location of the receiving lake in relation to the origin of the fish, and various water and land manager agreements and plans.

The waters that are selected to receive stocked fish depends upon their priority in the list of all potential waters, this being determined by a number of factors including angler survey data, the

popularity of the fishery, the (new) angler diary data, on whether the water received its full allocation of fish the previous year, on feedback from stakeholders, on historic stocking data, and on spawning opportunities for the stocked fish.

The Tasmanian Inland Recreational Fishery Management Plan 2018 – 2028 addresses issues such as the timing of seasons, bag limits, and permissible angling methods. It also addresses recreational stocking requirements, fishing for non-salmonid species in inland waters, and infrastructure issues relating to angler access to fisheries.

As an example of Fishery Performance Criteria and Assessment Chris gave us this example:

Water	Average Weight (gram)	Catch Rate per Day	Large Fish (percent)	Population Size at full lake supply
Penstock Lagoon				
Brown trout	>400mm 1.5kg	1.0 +/- 0.2	>600mm 5%	11,000 – 14,000
Rainbow trout	>400mm 1.4kg	0.3 +/- 0.1	>500mm 3%	
Tooms Lake				
Brown trout	>400mm 1.2kg	1.0 +/- 0.2	>500mm 30%	15,000 – 22,000
Rainbow trout	>400mm 1.2kg	0.5 +/- 0.1	>500mm 15%	



Guest speaker Chris Bassano had a very attentive audience

Fisheries Performance Assessments (FPAs) are prepared for all waters as an ongoing process. Chris discussed this in some detail, then to conclude his talk gave an example of the prioritisation of some receiving waters:

Chris finished his talk and then answered a number of questions from his audience. His presentation was excellent.

Water	Number	Priority	Environmental Values	Controlled Risk Level	Preferred Origin	Notes
Curries River Reservoir	2,400	1	1,200 as priority 1, rest as priority 3	Low	yingina/ Great Lake	(various lengthy notes were given for each of these waters)
Lodge Dam (Miena)	30	1		Low	Liawenee Canal, yingina/ Great Lake	
South Riana Dam	480	1	240 as priority 1, rest as priority 3	Low	Liawenee Canal, yingina/ Great Lake	
Bradys Chain of Lakes	3,000	1	Redfin perch present. King William fish only	Low	yingina/ Great Lake	
Craigbourne Lake	2,400	2	1,200 as priority 1, rest as priority 3	Low	yingina/ Great Lake	
Brushy Lagoon	1,200	2	600 as priority 2, rest as priority 3	Low	yingina/ Great Lake	
Lake Dulverton	120	3	End of spawning run if numbers available	Low		



It was an enjoyable occasion in great company



Andrew Mossman and Richard Kos were our two highly skilled fly tyers who tied the flies for the presentation packs given to those attending the dinner



The meal was good

The 2023 National Entomology Insect Expo

The 2023 National Entomology Insect Expo will be held on September 22 – 24, from 10:00am to 5:00pm each day at the Woodend Buffalo Indoor Sports Stadium, 1-29 Forest Street, Woodend. Victoria.

The event is Australia's largest exhibition showcasing the entire Science of Entomology (Insects) to the general public.

Featuring Entomologists, Insect Researchers, Breeders, Spider and Scorpion Keepers, Insect Educators and Specialist Insect Retailers, this amazing event also brings together a large number

of static Entomological Collections, 'Live' Insect displays, Spiders, Scorpions and Related Invertebrates, Children's Workshops, Entomological Merchandise and the ongoing research work of the C.V.R.I.C.

Over 60 exhibitors from all over Australia will feature spectacular displays, many of which have never been seen by the public. The VFFA will have a stand at the Expo. We are in desperate need of some volunteers to man the stand and (preferably) tie flies. Please contact our president on 0411 683 684 if you can help.



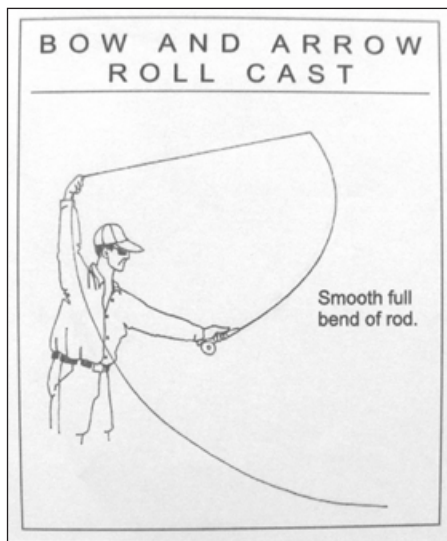
Insects are obviously immensely interesting

The Bow & Arrow Cast

... from Peter Hayes

This is a cunning cast that I have used for 15 years to catch hundreds of hard to get at fish, and they are often the big ones. I've never seen this cast used by any other fly fisher or caster in the world. Be warned though: I have seen half a dozen people break their rods attempting this cast after I have shown it to them. If you're not sure you understand it before you try, come along to a casting class and learn how to do it properly. It's worth the effort to learn because it's one of the most magical and most deadly casts we can perform with a fly rod.

Start with 10 metres of line on the water in front of you. Draw the tip back and up toward you until you can reach up and grab the line with your line hand about 2 metres from the tip. Pull the line back, loading up the rod as you do so. Keep your rod hand extended straight out in front of your body and below your shoulder. The line hand should be up above your head. Make sure you are focusing on the bend of the rod at this point. To be safe, the bend should be even along the entire length of the rod - if you



Caption

compress the tip by pulling at the wrong angles, you will surely break the rod.

Simply point the line at the target and let fly. I can throw perhaps 70 feet very accurately using this cast and it requires zero room behind - you can literally do it with your back pressed up against a cliff.

Fish Stocking plan for 2023/24

... from Taylor Hunt at the VFA

Over the past few weeks, the VFA have completed consultation and finalised the 2023-24 fish stocking plan. Some 64 submissions were received during the consultation and 54 changes were made to the plan through the Vic Fish Stock forums with recreational fishing representatives.

Big thanks are due to all Fisheries Officers who provided submissions and

feedback on other submissions. Some 10 million fish, across 12 species, are to be stocked into 244 waters all over Victoria – so there's lots to be excited about for everyone!

This year's plan includes:

- Flood and blackwater recovery native fish stocking in northern Victoria;

- Continuing the larger trout stocking trial in four waters in the Ballarat region;
- Continuing to build and expand the sensational estuary perch and bass fisheries;
- Establishing new Macquarie perch and trout cod populations in northeast Victoria;
- Pursuing fifteen new fish stocking opportunities to create fisheries and/or build native fish populations at Tower Hill Lake (Swan Hill), Fifteen



Beautiful brown trout being stocked into the Upper Coliban Reservoir by the Snobs Creek team.



Ollie from Ballarat helping stock brown trout into Toolondo last week!

Mile Creek (Glenrowan), Corryong Creek (Corryong), Broken River (Nillahcootie), Anderson Lake (Chiltern), Police Paddock Dams (Ararat), Norval Dam (Ararat), Nhill Lake (Nhill), Moora Moora (Halls Gap), Mill Swamp (Strathdownie), Kirk's Water Supply (Gong Gong), Green Hill Lake (Ararat), Dunkeld Aboretum (Dunkeld), Collins Lake (Edenhope) and Broughton's Waterhole (Kaniva).

The plan has now been handed over to the teams at Snobs Creek and Arcadia, to produce and deliver the fish all over Victoria. We'll now finalise and publish the 2023-24 Vic Fish Stock report to share the final stocking plan and other great fisheries initiatives, with all rec fishing stakeholders.

If you'd like more details about fish stocking in your patch, feel free to reach out to the freshwater fisheries management team!



Steve Eddy with Daniel and Phil who caught some quality brown trout from Moorabool Reservoir

The November Warrnambool Trip

Again this year the Warrnambool Fly Fishers invite us to spend a few days fishing their local rivers and lakes and enjoying some of their fabulous hospitality. The date for this trip is Friday, November 10, to Sunday, November 12, with the program being similar to previous years.

Jim Blakeslee will book a VFFA table at Bojangles (restaurant) for the Friday evening, and on the Saturday VFFA members will be guided by Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club members on their local rivers and lakes.

On the Saturday night members will enjoy the traditional barbecue at Jim's fabulous property on the upper Merri River, commencing at 6:00pm. This is always a magnificent occasion.

A Notice of Event for this trip follows.



Jim Blakeslee connecting with a local Merri River trout



A quick photo, then Jim released it



Jim and Tricia Blakeslee are fabulous hosts of the VFFA November trip to Warrnambool



The food and company were both great

VFFA Notice of Major Event

Warrnambool – November 10 - 12, 2023

The Event: Weekend visit to Warrnambool to be hosted and guided by the Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Club.

Event date: Check in Friday, November 10, check out Sunday morning, November 12.

Travel: Members are responsible for making their own arrangements to and from Warrnambool.

Cost/s: TBA, accommodation based on the number sharing cabins. Saturday night dinner to be hosted by Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Club at Napa Merri Vineyard.

Event location & address: Accommodation is likely to be at the Warrnambool Holiday Park, but not yet booked, pending confirmation of numbers.

Accommodation: Shared Cabin.

Sleeping requirements: Linen supplied.

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Self-catering Friday night, though the group usually meets for a meal at "Bojangles" Pizza Bar and Restaurant in Liebig Street, Warrnambool.

Dinner Saturday night will be hosted by The Warrnambool Fly Fishers' at Trish and Jim Blakeslee's beautiful Napa Merri Winery, BYO drinks, attendees will cover the costs for this great evening.

Description of fishing areas: Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club members will guide VFFA members on the Saturday.

We will fish a number of local rivers which may include the Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu, and the Moyne. These rivers offer a variety of fishing, both wet and

dry styles, depending on the height and clarity of the water.

Mobile phone coverage: Very good in most areas.

How physically challenging: Comfortable fishing in most areas.

Fishing license required: Yes, if applicable.

Strongly recommended personal equipment: waders/wading boots, gaiters if wet wading, brimmed hat, glasses/sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, wading staff, UHF/VHF radio, mobile phone, water, lunch.

Essential equipment when fishing out of sight of other participants: UHF radio.

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to Event Co-ordinator by Friday, October 27, 2023. Obtain an ERF from www.vffa.org.au

Event Co-coordinator : David Hooke – Mobile 0411 683 684, Email: dhhooke@icloud.com

Date of this Notice of Event: Wednesday, August 30, 2023



Another Jason Platt spinner

Taihape Report

... from Nick Taransky

Wet Winter ...

With a sample size of two, my Winters here in Taihape couldn't have been more different. Last year we were regularly greeted with dry crisp days, with the river below the house often running low and clear. This year has been incredibly wet, with rain or showers averaging six days a week. The river has been in nearly constant semi-flood, high and brown. Locals tell me that last year was unusually dry, and this year has been incredibly wet. Apparently, Taihape passed its average Annual Rainfall around the middle of the year, and it basically hasn't stopped raining since then. I say "apparently", as the actual figures are difficult to track down in the typical mess that is NZ-based and reporting. Weather recording where I live

seems to be split between at least four different agencies - Metservice and NIWA (both privatised National companies) and two overlapping Councils (Horizons Regional Council, and Rangitikei District Council). How I miss the good old BOM in Australia!

100% Pure NZ?

On the issue of weather, climate and the environment, it's been sobering to live here and see the state of the land. "100% Pure NZ" might be a great marketing slogan, but the reality seems to be a long way from that. Industrial scale dairying and other farming, massive pine forestry plantations along with other "go forward" initiatives have had the inevitable negative effects on many trout rivers and the environment in general. My hat goes off to Peter Storey at New Zealand Trout Fisher magazine, who has been brave in publishing many articles and letters (including from concerned Aussies) about these issues.

It's a mixed situation here in the Rangitikei region where I live. The hill country isn't conducive to massively intensive dairying, and most farms are still of modest size, with sheep and drystock cattle. I've seen some really



*There will be plenty of fishing opportunities around
Kiwi Cane*



*The bad/ugly... unfenced winter grazing to the
river's edge*



A nearby trout stream – and very handy



The good: local residents plus Rangitikei District Council (staff and Councillors and Mayor) planting thousands of trees in the river park

responsible and progressive practises here. The work done by the Rangitikei Rivers Catchment Collective is an example of this (<https://rrcc.co.nz>). I have also seen cases of some pretty terrible treatment of the land and waterways. It's interesting to see that the Hautapu River, that I live on, runs clear only 15 km upstream, even after heavy rain. But runoff, particularly from some small tributaries draining heavily grazed farmland, mean that any rain at all results

in the river here at home running dirty. I hope to be involved in some constructive actions to improve this, without being run out of town! We'll see...

Not to be all doom and gloom, of course there is and will continue to be some very good fishing to be had around the place. The environment and the trout are both resilient, and given a chance will recover from a multitude of sins. We are lucky to have a wonderful river park through Taihape. While the park contains a large number of native trees and other vegetation, lots of willows and other exotic trees have been removed. I've attended three planting days where passionate locals have planted thousands of new native trees to further enhance the park and river environment.

Kiwi Cane is coming!

And for another Good News story...

For ten years the Annual "Cressy Cane" gathering at Peter Hayes' Lodge has been a resounding success. Cressy Cane will continue to be a focal point for bamboo rods and rod-making, but we've decided to change the timing to make it a Bi-Annual Event, and alternate with a new Bi-Annual New Zealand-based sister

even – “Kiwi Cane”. The first Kiwi Cane will be held in April 2024, and will be a similar three-day format to the Cressy gathering. The timing will mean that attendees will be able to fish the local region before (and/or) after the bamboo event.

Details are still being worked through, and will be advertised on the Kiwi Cane website when available: www.kiwicane.com

The Cressy Cane website gives an idea of the type of activities to expect: www.cressycane.org



Bamboo rodmaking is now up and running in New Zealand...

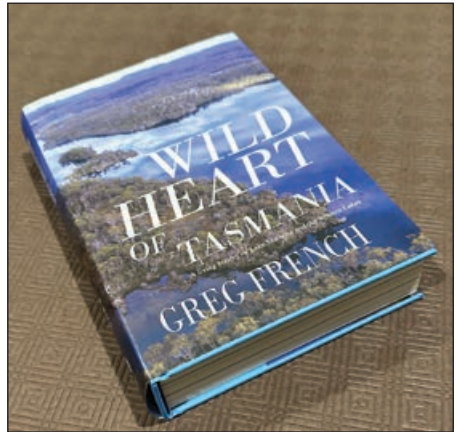
Greg French – “Wild Heart of Tasmania”

... a Review by Rick Wallace

There is a scene in *Wild Heart of Tasmania* - Greg French’s latest work - that captures the essence of this book. Three men – conservationists, explorers and anglers – sit around a campfire on Tasmania’s beautiful Central Plateau sharing a bottle of wine when talk turns to the loss of one of the men’s wives to cancer.

“Bob suddenly becomes quiet,” French writes. “Ric empathises by talking of his deceased wife Debra. I empathise by talking of Frances. It’s a bit teary and a lot cathartic. (Lake) Malbena, we agree, is yet another loss – but one that’s far from inevitable. In solidarity there’s hope.”

Wild Heart of Tasmania is many things - a tribute, a call to arms, an expose, and a history of the Western Lakes and its characters. But at its core, it’s a book about loss – actual loss and the threat of loss. The loss of Frances, the love of French’s life. The loss of a friendship over the Malbena proposal. And the potential loss of a way of life if we surrender to the twin perils of allowing overdevelopment of wilderness areas, or acquiescing to plans that would shut out the very people



who love and care for these precious wild lands.

There’s a lot to unpack here, I know, so bear with me. Let’s deal with Malbena first. *Wild Heart* tells the story of the fight to prevent helicopter access to Lake Malbena, a remote lake in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park on Tasmania’s Central Plateau, from the perspective of one of the main protagonists.

French describes himself as a reluctant activist. He's a conservationist, yes. And beyond passionate about Tasmanian wilderness and the Central Plateau in particular. But the tactical elements of activism - speeches, meetings, lobbying and all the organisational mechanics of campaigns - fill him with dread and fear.

He is, however, thrust into the thick of all this after his friend and employer, fishing guide and businessman Daniel Hackett, lodges a proposal for a fly-in fishing operation to Lake Malbena traversing the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Malbena is of significance for French having first visited it in 1985, rowing across to the historic hut on Halls Island in the middle of the lake, which served as a base and place of refuge for him and various friends during more than 100 trips in subsequent years.

French is blindsided by the emergence of the proposal, having been the one to have facilitated the transfer of the lease of the island from its holder Liz McQuilkin (whose father, Reg, built the hut) to Daniel Hackett, who he had fished with on the plateau for years, under the auspices of ensuring the protection and upkeep of the historic hut.

As French tells it in *Wild Heart*, he'd assured himself that Hackett was opposed to helicopter access to the Western Lakes fishery, and was happy to help him develop a walk-in guiding operation centred on Malbena to the extent of helping him scope out foot access.

News of the proposal filtered out to a worried community of Western Lakes devotees when a thread appeared in the *FlyLife* forum about it, prompting French to ring Hackett to protest.

"After the phone call finished, I carefully replied to the *FlyLife* forum thread. I reiterated that, while Daniel Hackett was a long-time friend, I had never supported the idea of helicopter fly-outs and luxury huts in the Western Lakes ... Shortly after I made this post several friends called me to say my profile as a guide on the RiverFly website had been taken down. I guessed I had been sacked."

And so battle was joined with French finding himself at the forefront of a grassroots movement of walkers, fly fishers and conservationists, and traditional owners dedicated to stopping the Malbena proposal.

I dare say *Fly Lines* readers will be familiar with the fight over Malbena and the reasons it is being opposed, which centre around the impact of the proposal itself (the noise associated with flights and the way it allows for preferential access to the wealthy) and the potential for it to be used as a stalking horse for further development within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

For his part, Hackett feels he's been vilified during the long and bitter battle over his development proposal, which is supported by the current Tasmanian government under its push to encourage tourism in and near national parks, reserves and on Crown land. He's pushing on with the proposal, but is fighting a broad-based coalition of opponents who are resourceful and backed by groups including The Wilderness Society, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, the Environmental Defenders Office and Fishers & Walkers Tasmania, a community-based group established in response.

Hackett's stance is that the proposal involves a small camp using

accommodation pods dropped in from the air and would entail no more than 30 trips a year, although he suggests it would preclude public access to the hut during these periods.

I don't want to dwell on the twists and turns of the as-yet-unfinished fight for Malbena, as there's so much more in this book. However, it does an excellent job of explaining why the Western Lakes are worth fighting for, as French, who's fished all over the world, explains in the foreword:

"The Western Lakes wilderness, I now know, offers the most easily accessible self-reliant camping in the world, and also the best trout hunting. Nowhere else can so many different waters be so easily reached on foot by myriad routes. Nowhere else are the great majority of lakes located just a few minutes to a few hours walk from road ends ... when we walk from a road end we all want to feel that we are headed deeper into wilderness, not towards helipads and development."

At heart, French is a pragmatic conservationist who understands that to protect wild areas you need to get people passionate about visiting them. That's why he publishes locations in *Trout Waters of Tasmania* and other writings - it's on the basis that the more people who visit special spots, the more people who care about them and will protect them.

In the middle section of *Wild Heart* he writes about the threat to enjoyment of the wilderness that exists on the other side of the conservation/development continuum, when he and other folk passionate about the Western Lakes have to fight a movement within the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to radically slash visitor numbers to the areas via a quota system.

French knows you have to cater to people who want to explore these areas rather than lock people out. Along with fighting for access, he and others of a like mind fight to preserve the highland huts that are a part of the plateau's history and vital refuges for anglers during the frequent shifts in the weather.

In the book he tells of the indigenous history of the region and the efforts of the early pioneers of exploration of the Western Lakes: anglers, aviators, walkers, poachers, trappers, rangers and graziers who traversed the wilds of the Central Plateau and built many of the huts used by visitors today.

He also shares a sprinkling of fishing stories touching on his own beginnings as a lure fisherman and how he discovered his love for polaroiding big brown trout. There are tales of tailing trout, trophy fish and memorable hatches and catches.

We're also introduced to some of the characters who've shaped French's life and shared his adventures, some of whom will be familiar to readers of *Frog Call*, *Artificial*, and some of his other works.

Some of the strongest passages in the book are about the person who shaped French's life more than any other - Frances. He writes of their early days courting on camping trips through to their last trip together to the Lake Ina region when he and friends carry an ailing Frances back into the lake for a final time in the final stages of her fight with cancer.

In exploring this theme of "loss", *Wild Heart* makes us think deeply about what's precious to us, what's special about it, and what we need to do to preserve it. And that's no small feat.

Jim Allen – Fishing Lakes

(On Thursday, May 21 in 2009, some 70 eager members gathered for the VFFA May meeting to hear Jim Allen talk about lake fishing in the Tasmanian Highlands, a subject on which he is a recognised authority. Jim was in sparkling form, giving a talk that was witty and entertaining, whilst full of practical advice based on decades of accumulated experience and wisdom. The following is an edited version of this presentation.)

While my task tonight is to talk about ‘Shark Fishing on the Great Lake’, I would like to expand on this to offer some thoughts on lake fishing in general, because I think that lakes are mostly misunderstood. In this room tonight there is probably a large smattering of anglers who would say: “Rivers are far more charming. I understand rivers, but I don’t understand lakes. Lakes are just huge paddocks.”

If tonight I am able to open up a slightly different vista into your world of fly fishing then I will consider that I’ve done a good job. Stream anglers do tend to knock lake fishing. Now I agree that streams are beautiful, and they are fun. But there is a world of lake fishing that is also very special, much of it based around sight fishing.

Let me start with the tackle – use a 9 foot rod, a 6 or 7 weight line, and a long-bellied tapered fly line.

The old adage suggests that 90% of the anglers who fish lakes get 10% of the fish, and 10% of the anglers get 90% of the fish. So it’s important that if you take on lake fishing you must understand what it’s all about. There are some excellent books on the subject, none better than David Scholes’ *A Fly Fisher in Tasmania*.

In my mind, it isn’t just about casting into a big paddock and hoping something gets on the end of your line. It’s trying to understand what it’s all about. Most of it is taking the cameos - the bits of the day that give you your best opportunity.

For me personally it all started as an eight-year-old boy sitting on the Portsea pier watching leather jackets coming out of the pylons and trying to catch them. And then I took up fishing with a fly rod. Bob Roles got me going with a fly rod at the ripe old age of 19. He was ahead of me. He worked at Turvilles and had a whole year ahead of me, so he was seriously advanced. He took me up to the west branch of the Kiewa River, and there with a cane ‘Victoria’ fly rod from Turvilles, a silk Kingfisher fly line, and a King reel I became a sort of fly fisher. But it didn’t take long for me to understand that there was a whole lot more to fly fishing than standing in the Kiewa River casting to little quarter pound trout.

Polaroid glasses were invented after the Second World War, and the first mention of fishing with polaroids that I can recall was in David Scholes’ *Fly Fisher in Tasmania*, which has a great photograph of David and a companion fishing an oily slick along the shore at Penstock Lagoon. But the world of polaroiding involves a whole lot more than that. Let’s first dwell upon polaroiding glasses. You may remember the early versions - looking like Elton John with a round bit of glass and a little lever you could move to the left or right to get the best view into the water. Today they are still made of glass, but some of the best lenses use a polycarbonate called CR39.

I wouldn’t even consider buying a cheap pair of polaroids. You might get them for \$9.95 at the local boat shows, but please go and spend some real money. It costs \$100 to fill your four-wheel-drive with petrol,

and it costs you only two or three times that to purchase the best polaroids in the world.

To my mind the amber brown colour is without doubt the best colour to buy. I also like the yellow lens colour, particularly on hazy cirrusy days when you are polaroiding, say, at Botsford, which has a light-coloured bottom. I always carry a couple of different colours with me. Now I'm not suggesting that you need to buy three pairs of polaroid glasses, but when you do buy a pair get a pair that are amber brown in colour. These, for most anglers, are the best.

Polaroiding started with people sitting on high banks along rivers and lakes and staring into the water. But then in the early 1980s one of our members, John Philbrick, made some significant advances. John is, I believe, the father of modern polaroiding. He should be recognized for the outstanding leap forward that he took at Penstock Lagoon in the early 1980s when he learned to polaroid into the waves. He said to me, "Jim you've got to come and have a look at this. Every single wave is a new window, and the bigger the wind, the better." And he had me polaroiding the edges of Penstock and discovering three pound trout in the waves, which I caught on a Red Tag.

But it wasn't long before the trout got educated, so John developed his Philbrick's Nymph. If any of you have the opportunity at one of our VFFA auctions to buy some of John Philbrick's nymphs, then do it, because they are an outstanding fly. [And *Fly of the Month* in this month's issue – editor]

The first licensee of the old Great Lake Hotel at Miena was Peter Wilson. In the bar one night he said: "Jim, you need to get out onto the Great Lake at 6 pm. The trout there get up in the waves." So out I went at six o'clock, and learned something

really significant – there were fish up in the waves. And I mean lots of fish. There were 30 or 40 that we could present to in an hour's fishing.

So with that I became a 'shark fisherman'. But I didn't really know what I was doing at the time. I just thought they came up in the waves at about six o'clock, but I subsequently found that they were up in the waves at any hour of the day - if there was food there. So, if you get out on the water at 9 o'clock in the morning in mid-summer, and certainly by 10 o'clock, you can polaroid trout still feeding on the remnants of the midge hatch from daybreak, particularly if it's been one of those super calm foggy mornings. When the northerly has gone by about 9:30 or 10 o'clock you can find yourself out in a boat in the middle of the Great Lake with 'golden sharks' all around you. All you have to do is cast at them.

I will dwell on casting for a moment. Many of you consider that you can cast, but I'll be rude and suggest that you can't. The yardstick of whether you can or can't cast, in my view, is getting 65 points out of 100 on a Skish Board. During the winter months this Association will run casting clinics, so get out onto that casting pool and learn to develop what I call 'line control'. Anyone can cast a line 20 yards or so. But to have line control is to be able, when you're out in a boat drifting towards a fish that is coming towards you, to make the first cast, then a second shorter cast, and then a third cast shorter still, so that you make three presentations to the fish and thus give yourself a real chance of catching it.

But if you haven't got line control and can't cast accurately, you give yourself the biggest handicap in trout fishing. So get out on that casting pool during the winter and get your casting right. There are many mates of mine who go out on that boat of mine, and at the end of the day they are

very aggrieved because I have blown the tripe out of them telling them they can't cast.

They probably can cast, but they can't cast well enough to get the fly accurately in front of a trout, and in all sorts of lake fishing you have to be really accurate. If you are in a mayfly hatch you have to get the fly in front of the fish. I have had guys on my boat and their third cast is still three foot behind the fish, and I'm screaming like some neurotic madman: "They don't eat the fly with their tail! They eat it with their mouth, so get it in front of them." So it's important that you gain that line control, because then you will catch a lot more fish.

Tonight I want to share with you the excitement that I find in lake fishing, because to me it is not a big paddock. It is a matter of looking for the best time of the day, looking for hatches, and polaroiding the edges if you are a shore wader.

I remember years ago that Lake Eildon was one of the great trout waters that we had in Victoria. Sadly today it is nothing like it was. But in the 1970s there was a great old fly fisherman from Geelong called Bill Ricketts, and he taught me about midge fishing on Tullaroop, Cairn Curran and Eildon – all wonderful trout fisheries then. We have just had 13 years of drought and things have been bad, but it will rain again, and we will have floods again, I'm sure. The midges will return in October, and at Tullaroop you'll see them ball up at sunset. At Eildon those little green chironomid midges will be eaten by the trout all over the lake – sip, sip, sip.

These fish are impossible to catch on a dry fly, but draw a chironomid pupa past one and they can't help themselves. Bill Ricketts taught me that. So the secret is to draw a nymph, and particularly a chironomid nymph, past a feeding trout. Let it sink three feet, and then as a trout

comes sipping up towards it, draw it and you'll have a trout on the end.

The Goulburn River to me, and to a few others in this room, was our university of fly fishing. We would go up there with Bob Roles and others, fish the day, and then come back to the roadhouse at Buxton to have a debriefing. We fished the lagoons along the Goulburn using our polaroids and learned a lot about stillwater black beetle fishing under the willows.

I remember our days on Leake's Lagoon. The floodwaters would come across the lagoon and we would follow the fish as they moved onto the newly flooded grass. You would see these trails of bubbles coming across the surface. They were trout feeding on worms, and you just needed to cast five feet in front of the bubbles and the fish would come up and eat your fly every time. I remember one particular day. Eildon had flooded, and filthy chocolate-coloured water from the Goulburn had flowed into the backwaters. Bob Roles and I followed the bubble trails, and we each took six or seven trout that were all two pounders, and we came home with an unbelievable bag of fish.

I first went to Tasmania in 1974 and fished with Greg Kelly, who is here tonight, and Graham Leith. In 1979 I purchased a shack there, and have been back there every year since. Tasmania has become my home of trout fishing. We were privileged to see the halcyon years of polaroiding the Western Lakes at a time when no-one else seemed to understand that the best conditions to be out on the Western Lakes was with a 25 - 35 knot northerly and a cobalt blue sky day. We would head off in my Suzuki and drive to Flora or O'Dell, or to Botsford, or any other lake in the Western Lakes. We had the whole system to ourselves because the Tasmanians said that you shouldn't go out west on a hot northerly. Well, we couldn't think of a better day. We kept it to ourselves until 1984, I think, and then

the world woke up. Now if you go out to Botsford on a hot blue sky northerly you'll have at least another 20 anglers with you.

Which leads me to how to fish it today. These days my knees are pretty ordinary, so I don't do much walking around the Western Lakes. So I'm in a boat most days. But when I do go out west, I don't waste the water. One of the great tricks for polaroiding Botsford is to zigzag with the wind behind you, and more importantly with the sun behind you. The important thing with polaroiding is to have the light behind you. Then if you zigzag the water, rather than just go straight down the lake, you will have another three hours of fishing.

So one of the great secrets, when polaroiding, is to zigzag across the lake, keeping the light at the right angle and in the right direction. And that's not hard to determine - you walk out into the water and look around, and one direction of vision will be six times better than any other. So concentrate on working with your best vision. From daylight to sundown there are times when polaroiding is best, and it is not necessarily from 10 am to 3 pm, which most people think. You can have some outstanding polaroiding in the early morning, or at five or six o'clock in the evening for what Billy Beck and I call the 'glowers'.

You can also have some outstanding polaroiding in a black cumulus nimbus cloud with a thunderstorm threatening. So, you don't have to have a hot northerly and a cobalt blue sky day, though that's the ideal. And you don't have to give up on polaroiding because the conditions don't seem right. Go and have a look.

At Little Pine Lagoon halfway up the western shore the soil is very black, and on some days at five o'clock in the afternoon with a westerly on it, you will see the 'glowers'. They are like gold bars - they

are three foot underwater and you can see them as bright as bright can be. And everybody else has left and gone home.

One of the tragedies of mainland fishermen is that they come and stay with me in my shack, and they start poking around the joint at 6:30 in the morning, waiting for Jim Allen to take them fishing. But my idea of a good fishing day is from about 11 am to 7 at night. It is certainly not at 7 in the morning. When I do yield to their demands and take them fishing early in the morning, by 2:30 in the afternoon they are itching to get back to the pub and have a couple of beers and a toasted sandwich in front of the fire. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon I'm still excited about the mayfly hatch that may still occur at Little Pine, but all they want is to race back to the pub.

So I tear my hair out. Those guys usually only come once because I'm too rude to them. The good guys take it easy in the mornings. We have 16 cups of coffee and lots of talk around the table, and then go out fishing at 11 o'clock to get the best of the day. Mayflies tend to hatch in the afternoon, although you might occasionally miss the odd morning hatch by not going early. However, if it is calm and there is fog on the water, I'm out of bed at 4:30am, because I want to pick the cameo of fishing. I try to get the best out of every day. There are those days when nothing is on, and you struggle all day. But then there are also those wonderful days.

Unfortunately, the good weather tends to give you a daybreak fishery, a beautiful polaroiding northerly for the afternoon, and then a wonderful evening. So you're up at four in the morning and you are still out fishing at 10 at night, because Tasmania's summer sun doesn't set until half past eight or nine o'clock. So you wind up totally stuffed after three days and looking for a break. Or at least I am.

Let me emphasise again the importance of light in polaroiding. If you are out in the boat you have to drift or cruise in a zigzag whilst looking for trout. Some days I'm out in the middle of the Western Lakes in a hot northerly and the trout are up on the beetles or the midges from the morning hatch. Other days I'll drift in a foam lane, and on yet others I'll zigzag across the lake. I love it when I've got two guys in the boat who are avidly looking for fish. And I hate it when I'm the only one looking and the other guys are sitting there just waiting for Jim Allen to find a fish for them. And the difference is passion - the good guys are passionate.

With polaroiding you have to believe in yourself. You have to believe that you are going to see fish. John Philbrick taught

me that many years ago – you have to believe that you are going to see fish. And then you do. On a green background they sometimes turn up olive, bright green, brown, or black. Trout can be any colour on any background, but once you have seen the first one they are usually all the same after that. They glow, or they are brown, or they are dark. You can follow their shadows on light sandy bottoms.

And you get the hang of it quite quickly. But if you don't have confidence in yourself with your polaroid glasses, you are gone. So concentrate. And at the end of the day, when you get back to the bar, or to wherever you are staying, and you feel totally stuffed with your eyes drawn out, then you've had a good day's fishing because you have looked hard and have



Bronte Lagoon – like many Tasmanian lakes is both attractive and productive

given it your best shot. And most likely you'll have some trout in the bag.

I still wade the shores of lakes, and sometimes the stick caddis feeders are in along the shore. Don't fish the lee shore where it is easiest to cast. Fish the shore that is beaten up, that's got a bit of mud along the line and the wind coming in on an angle. Polaroid along where the muddy water becomes clear and you will find stick caddis feeders there.

On so many occasions I see guys taking the easy option – wind behind them, clear water – and they don't see a fish all day. On the Great Lake and Arthurs Lake all the inlets that have black mud will have stick caddis at various times of the year. Sometimes they are prolific, and sometimes they are not. A 15 minute look at a corner will make the decision for you – you will either see three or four fish moving, or you won't see any at all.

I go into a corner and have a 15 minute look, and then give it away. Or I stay, and it is priceless. I'll see 10 or 15 fish in two hours of fishing. I use a Philbrick's nymph for stick caddis feeders rather than a stick caddis pattern, though I do know that the Muz Wilson patterns work very well. It is just that I am a Philbrick's nymph fan, and if I was to write up my list of favourite flies, the Philbrick nymph would be my number one pattern for sight fishing along the shoreline. You can also use a dry fly - a black spinner or a small beetle (not a big beetle). The fish will come up to them if they see the fly.

I've sold fishing tackle now for 40 years, and I've found one thing – trout are very keen eaters, and they are not particularly fussy about what they eat. There are times when you can't get them off ants, or you can't get them off a midge, or you can't get them off a mayfly, and they are being particularly fussy. But then I look at the 4,000 patterns that sit in the Compleat Fly

Fishers' drawers, all looking gorgeous, and all of which must be purchased. And when I go to New Zealand and walk into a fishing tackle shop there, I'm the same as you guys are in my store because we can't help ourselves. This or that fly is really going to make the difference. It's bulldust! A good presentation of your fly is sixteen times more important than a good fly. If you can get your fly in front of the trout you have a real show. But if you don't get the fly in front of the trout then you've got no chance - particularly if you cast to its tail.

Thunderstorms bring ants. Bushfires bring ants too - because of the smoke. So be on the lookout for thunderstorms and a midge or an ant hatch afterwards. Be on the lookout for a bit of smoke. If there is a bushfire around and the smoke drifts out across the lake, keep your eyes open.

I remember one day particularly when I arrived at the bottom end of Arthurs Lake and my dear friends David Wallace and Ian Taylor, who some of you may know, rushed off to get to a particular corner. And I said to my mate John Hannigan, "Take your time - there is no rush". It was one of those smoky, balmy days and I had looked out and could see heads and tails all across the lake. But these other two guys weren't looking – they just wanted



A fish just rose – always a captivating sight for a fly fisher

to get to the right spot ahead of Jim Allen, "Because we're going to catch fish if we can get on that really good drift in that corner where mayflies were hatching between 12 o'clock and 4."

John Hannigan and I drifted out from the boat ramp and ended up with 18 trout while my mate Slim came back with one. And I had great pleasure sticking it to him, because he was the farmer who said to me: "You city slickers don't observe nature; you don't understand it". But it was he who didn't understand it that day.

So the important message that I would leave with you tonight is to open your eyes. Keep a sharp eye out for what is going on, because there are times when you can't see the fish rise unless you really look hard. Sometimes on Arthurs Lake there is a little brown Jassid, and the trout are taking them with the tiniest of sips. You just can't see them, but once you've woken up to them and put a fly in front of them, you've soon got a 2½ or 3 lb trout on the end of your line. Sometimes the trout are very very shy.

One of my pleasures is wind lane fishing. I love wind lanes. Wind lanes are highways for trout and they will be rising up and down the wind lane. They love wind lanes. Wind lanes are slicks and the food accumulates in them. You should fish the windward side if you have a preference.

Let me talk now about mayfly fishing. Whether you are fishing from the shore on Little Pine or Penstock, or out in a boat, the secret for good presentations in mayfly fishing is to not fish with the wind behind you so that the fly is bobbing at the end of your line. Rather, try to fish side on so that there is a natural drift of your fly. If you look at a natural mayfly dun drifting in the water it is often moving quite fast. While we can't emulate that with a fly rod and a leader, we can get a good natural drift for



Fishing Tasmania's Lake St Clair

the first four or five feet, and this gives us our best chance of catching a fish.

A couple of my mates scoff because I fish with a nymph under an indicator. The nymph under an indicator is a technique that I learned in Alaska, but I have certainly done a lot of it in Tasmania. I fish with a little plastic indicator and a nymph three or four foot down, and perhaps even another one at nine foot down, depending on the depth of the water.

In a mayfly hatch the nymphs start moving around before the duns hatch, so fishing the nymph gives you another half hour's fishing. And when I start to catch a couple of fish with the nymph under the indicator at say 12 or 1 o'clock in the afternoon, I know there is going to be a dun hatch long before anybody else does.

Then again in the mopping up period you have another opportunity to fish with the nymph under the indicator. So you don't have to stay on the dry fly all of the time, though at the heat of the hatch if you're not fishing a dry fly you are just not fishing. There is nothing better than fishing a dry fly to rising fish. But be versatile – fish a nymph before the hatch.

In Tasmania the mayfly hatch is fairly reliable. It starts usually at about two o'clock (summertime) and goes through quite often until six o'clock. But I

have known it to start as late as 4:30. I remember Jack Madden, an old VFFA member of ours here, pulling the pin at 3:30 one day, saying, "We're giving it away, we haven't seen a fish all day." And as he and his mate walked over the hill to go back to the pub every trout in the lake came up.

Cold, overcast, windy, wet, rough weather provides exciting fishing conditions for those who fish with a sink-tip line and a couple of wets. Young Andrew Fuller, who works for us, loves to roly-poly a wet fly on a cold, wet, wintry day, and he is an expert at it. If you strip a wet fly fast through the water on these sorts of days, particularly early and late season, you will have a lot of success. So don't give up on the wet fly - give it half an hour, because it can be an exciting form of fishing.

I have been on Arthurs Lake and Little Pine Lagoon with Billy Beck using a wet fly. At the end of the day we had a dozen trout that we had no chance of catching fishing any other way. It is ordinary fishing if nothing is happening, but if you are getting a strike every third cast, with five or six fish in the morning and another five or six in the afternoon, then you've had a pretty good day. Wet fly fishing

is not for all times, but when conditions are grey and there is sleet around and it is windy, then it can provide some very special fishing.

In closing let me say that if you don't fish with passion, you're not fishing. If you don't feel an excitement in the day as you go out and you're just going through the motions, then you are never going to have a good day. But if you go out and your heart is pumping and you are seriously and intelligently looking for every single opportunity, you've got a very real chance.

Go back and read David Scholes. Read some of the great American writers. You will learn a lot. I remember once going to hear these galoos talking about loch-style fishing, and I didn't really want to be there. You are looking now at the worst loch-style angler in Australia. I just can't get my head around it, but I know guys who catch more trout loch-style fishing than in any other way. They drag three flies through the water and they have outstanding success. But I still say, it's not me - I can't do it.

But the bottom line is there is now a whole new world of loch-style fishing to be investigated, and back come the Mallard



Tungatindah Lagoon – another delightful Tasmanian place to fish



Penstock Lagoon – one of Tasmania's most famous highland lakes

and Clarets, the little Alexandras, and a whole pile of new loch-style flies.

So don't give up on lakes, and don't be rude about them, as lake fishing is a whole avenue of fly fishing that I think he is six times harder than fishing a river. I think there may even be new avenues of fishing to be opened up that we don't even know about yet. I still learn something new every year, and I'm sure those of you who are real fishermen in the room have the same feeling as I do.

Thanks for listening – I've gone too long.

Some Questions:

Why do you prefer the north wind when you are our polaroiding?

An excellent question. A northerly is warmer and it often brings on a beetle hatch, so consequently it is the best wind. It usually also brings with it blue skies with no cirrus. If it's a north-west or west wind it's odds-on that by two o'clock in the afternoon, which is your best polaroiding hour, you've got a westerly and a very rapid build up of cirrus cloud. I have the view that any wind is okay for polaroiding on the Great lake with a blue sky, but the northerlies tend to produce the beetle hatches, and is often a making wind.

It starts as a millpond calm morning, and by about 9 or 10 o'clock the first zephyr of northerly comes down the lake. I suspect that the Great Lake northerlies are a katabatic wind - a local wind, which you probably don't get through the rest of the State. The Great Lake will have a northerly when I speak on the phone to Billy Beck at Little Pine, and he'll say, "We've still got a south-westerly here blowing at 3 knots." And at the Great Lake it is a 15 or 20 knot northerly. While I like the northerly, it doesn't really matter – any wind with a blue sky day is ok. I don't like easterlies. The only time I like an easterly is with 100% cloud cover, drizzle, 6 knots, and I am at Little Pine looking for the next mayfly to get up, because when it's a drizzly easterly sultry sort of day, that's the day you want to be at Little Pine.

In fishing the dun patterns on Little Pine why did you refer to the first five feet of drift as being the critical time?

Because after that you get drag. If you are a shore fisherman you need to keep moving around. But if you find a spot along the shore where there is a little bit of an inlet, then concentrate on it, because quite often fish will come up a little creek bed. The other thing I didn't mention is

tailing in lakes, because time ran out. But tailing in lakes is super important early and late season, and when everybody goes home at five o'clock, get out of the boat, go up along the grassy shores of any lake, and you will find they will be tailing at 5 o'clock. The sun is still well up, but they do come in and tail, and if you get a grey sky they will tail even better. So don't be shy to look for tails at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, particularly at Lake Kay.

What were the best polaroids?

Get an amber brown colour – I can't emphasise enough that the amber brown or pinky brown lenses are the best lenses. I'll dwell on the issue of cost for a second. It costs \$120 or \$150 to buy the best flyline in the world – about the same price as it costs to fill a Toyota Land Cruiser with fuel. Today there are some outstandingly good long belly fly lines made by all the manufacturers, and you can do so much more with today's forward taper fly lines than what you could have done 15 years ago. They last longer, cast better and don't tangle up on the floor of the boat.

I have a common adage – you buy a fly reel to give to your grand-children – it should last you a lifetime. You buy a fly rod to last you 7 or 8 years. Technology is getting better all the time, and you'll pick up someone else's rod and say, "O my goodness, mine is like a rake handle. I need to do something about this." So a fly rod gets replaced about every 7 or 8 years. A flyline, however, is replaced every year. It's the same price as a tank of petrol, so just buy one and get on with life.

And I can't believe how many people have 30 year-old leaders in their box. They say: 'I've just lost the fish of a lifetime! I've spent \$2,000 going to Tasmania, and then I've put on a seven and six-penny leader that I bought from Turville's 25 years ago.' Plasticisers in nylon lines and nylon leaders die quickly, and don't last

long. You pay \$800 for an airfare to New Zealand and \$200 a night feeding your face, so don't scrimp on a decent fly line.

A question about the use of cane rods – are users luddites?

No. If you want to catch the most trout, then buy yourself a gill net. And if you want to go bait fishing with mudeyes and black crickets you will probably catch more fish than a fly fisherman. So we set up for ourselves a set of hurdles. Some of us like to fish a dry fly and never fish a wet. I think everybody is entitled to do what they want to do. I meet guys today who want to fish with a beautiful cane rod. I'm not going to knock it – it's your go. The only trouble for me is if I catch a 6 lb trout on a \$2,000 cane rod and it then looks like a banana, I'm going to be fairly aggrieved. So I use carbon fibre or graphite. I've got a museum full of old cane rods. I've got a Jenny Anne fly rod made by Maurie Turville that I bought when I first started fishing. It is without doubt the most beautiful rod that has been made in my totally biased view. I don't use it, but I treasure it, and would hate to wreck it. But I see Nick Taransky and these guys today building beautiful rods. It's your right to use them and fish with them. You're setting up your hurdles, so it's your go.

Tonight I've tried to change your thinking a bit, and if I've done half of that I'll be very excited about it. If one of you guys come up to me in a year's time and say, "I tried this suggestion of yours and it worked!" I'll feel intensely proud because I've changed you a bit. That was my task tonight and I hope I have excited a little gremlin inside each of your brains to go another yard harder, or perhaps even open up a new vista.

FLY OF THE MONTH

John Philbrick's Nymph



In this issue Jim Allen writes about fishing Tasmania's lakes, and a fly he strongly recommends is John Philbrick's famous nymph. We featured this fly a few times already (in fact in our February 2019 issue, and prior to that in September 2008), but with Jim's strong endorsement perhaps it's worth reminding readers again just how to tie it.

John Philbrick sadly died a few years ago. But prior to his death he spoke at a VFFA dinner and described the development of his famous nymph. He also tied up a pile of his nymphs and each member attending the dinner was presented with a small presentation box containing two nymphs tied by John. What a bonus!

John provided the following notes on his fly:

"This fly was devised about forty-five years ago at our camp at Beginner's Bay at Penstock Lagoon. It was to be specifically used when polaroiding large stick caddis feeding trout in the shallows of this famous water. The body was comprised of a dubbed blend of seal's fur - about 50% brown, 25% olive green and then equal quantities of black, yellow and red making up the residue. This blend produces a natural hue.

My first attempt at the fly had a skinny, slightly tapered body with a relatively normal thorax. I had some success with this pattern but found that it worked better after it had caught a few trout and the thorax became sparser. I then started

tying the fly with its characteristic skinny thorax. I also clipped the loose seal's fur and compressed the body with my thumb and finger so as to accentuate its thin appearance.

This is not a "magic" fly because magic flies don't exist. But for three main reasons it is a useful fly to use when polaroiding shallow lagoons. It is a light fly and doesn't sink quickly. (It is frustrating to make a good presentation to a cruising fish only to find that your fly has sunk and snagged something on the bottom.) It is equally frustrating if the fly does not sink. This nymph will sink, even if you have not made a presentation for hours on a hot, dry day.

And finally, the trout seem to like it.

Polaroiding for cruising trout in the shallows is technically difficult. First, you must spot the trout within sufficient time to make a good presentation. If you cannot do this, all is lost. And it is essential to get the first presentation right. Most of the time when wade polaroiding you do not get the luxury of a second chance. If you do make a good presentation, you must then discern if and when the trout takes the fly. If you see the white of the mouth of the trout when it is near your fly and strike you will usually connect with the fish.

If you don't see this sign, it is more difficult. In my heyday (which was too many years ago) I developed a seventh sense and found if I instinctively struck, I usually hooked the fish. But after hooking it I would be unable to identify what it was that made me strike. Jim Allen had the same experience. A useful tip is that if you lose your vision of the fish keep the line tight and give nymph a slight twitch or two. Often this results in a hook up.

I have also enjoyed success with this fly polaroiding the large trout of the sluggish rivers of the Monaro, the pastoral streams in the Southland of New Zealand, the famed chalk streams in Hampshire including the River Test and some of its tributaries, the San River in Poland, Brumby's Creek, and Leake's Lagoon on the Goulburn River.

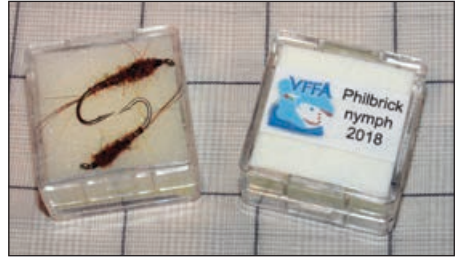
The shallows of Lake Hawea and the South Mavora Lake provide similar fishing to that which is to be found in the shallows of the lagoons of the Tasmanian Central Plateau. This nymph is very effective on these waters on bright, sunny, windy days. As always, the key factors to success on all these waters are spotting the fish, making a good presentation, and striking at the right time. It sounds so simple. Let me assure you, it is not!

Having the right frame of mind can be as important as the technical requirements of this style of fishing. In order to succeed one needs intense self-belief and faith that sooner or later the piscatorial stars will align and a fish will be seen and hooked. It takes a lot of faith and determination to persevere for hours on end without getting a single chance to cast at a fish.

But the rewards can be great. One day at Penstock when the water was slightly turbid and the fish were few and far between, the rest of our party went to fish the hatch at Little Pine. I persevered at Penstock, had three chances for the whole day and landed a brace of trout on my nymph which weighed in at 5lbs 2oz apiece. This feat gave me an immense feeling of satisfaction that I remember to this day.

Tying Notes

- Thread:** Brown or black. (Pearsall's silk thread was used on the original pattern.)
- Hook:** 10 - 14 nymph hook. (The original pattern was tied on a Captain Hamilton hook.)
- Body:** Seal's furs blended as described.
- Tail Fibres:** Brown cock



Presentation pack of Philbrick's nymph

1. Tie in the thread near the eye and wind it towards the bend of the hook, tying in the tail fibres and the copper wire rib.
2. Dub the seal's fur blend thinly on to about 6 centimetres of the thread and wind it on in a clockwise direction. Start the fly off extremely sparsely near the barb. If necessary, dub some more fur onto the hook to complete the body.
3. Rib tightly in an anti-clockwise direction and tie the rib securely down with the thread. The body should be very thin and the taper should be slight.
4. Progressively wind on more dubbed seal's fur to form the thorax. Then form a head with the thread, and tie off. Be careful to ensure the thorax is not too pronounced. Overall, the nymph should have a skinny appearance.

John's final note: This fly should be tied so that it is quite thin but with a noticeable but not unduly pronounced thorax. The tying thread should be well waxed and the fur dubbed on tightly to eliminate minute air pockets. I use fine tarnished copper wire to rib the fly as I have found on bright sunny days in Tasmania that trout will sometimes shy away from a fly ribbed with bright tinsel. Once the fly is tied, carefully clip off all the excess seal's fur so that it is a very tight, compact fly. This ensures that if it is kept moist it will sink, but at a slow rate.



Some Victorian streams are quite a challenge

VFFA 2023 meetings & other activities

September

- 2 Saturday Trout season opens again for Victorian rivers.
2 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner.
14 Thursday Last Fly Tying session at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
21 Thursday 2023 Annual General Meeting – 8:00 pm, and again a Zoom meeting.
27 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing, 10:00 am till dark.
27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

October

- 8 Sunday Annual trip to Thorpdale to fish with the Latrobe Valley Club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley members.
19 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Annual Auction of equipment and books
25 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

November

- 10 Fri – 12 Sun Annual trip to Warrnambool
16 Thursday General Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Kelvin Club: (Speaker – TBC)
29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club

December

- 8 Friday Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club
Speaker: TBC

March 2024

- Early notice - in March next year there will be a VFFA trip to New Zealand:
March 3 – 10, 2024 VFFA trip to Taupo in the North Island