

FLY LINES



SEPTEMBER 2024

September - Our AGM

The notice papers required for this year's Annual General Meeting, these being the Nomination Form, Appointment of Proxy Form, and Meeting Agenda, are included with this newsletter.

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

Topic: VFFA Annual General Meeting

Time: September 19, 2024, 7:30 PM
Australia/Melbourne

Thursday, September 19th,
7.30pm, and a
Zoom Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84181606297?pwd=LGoaZkIrL7b3mP1AFVb2grBI9o5NdS.1>

Meeting ID: 841 8160 6297

Passcode: 871458



From Mark Weigall's magnificent collection – fishing New Zealand's South Island

Index

September - Our AGM	1
President's Message.....	3
Three VFFA Trips 2024 and 2025.....	5
The Bruce Whitehead Western Lakes Competition	6
From the Editor's Desk.....	8
Cameron McGregor at the VFFA Annual Dinner.....	10
Fly Fishing by the Ladies.....	18
The November Warrnambool Trip	20
VFFA Notice of Major Event - Warrnambool.....	22
November 8 - 10, 2024	22
Detecting takes when Nymphing with or without Indicator Movement	23
Early Season Tasmania Reports	29
Victorian Fisheries Authority Wild Trout Conference	32
VRFish Survey of Recreational Fishers	33
VFFA 2024 meetings & other activities.....	36

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 74 NO. 11 - SEPTEMBER 2024

Organisation No. A0024750J

P.O. Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street,
Melbourne 3001

info@vffa.com.au www.vffa.com.au

PRESIDENT

Simon Joel

Email: simonljoel@gmail.com

Phone: 0419 368 391

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

John Spragg

Email: john@bellingham-marine.com.au

Phone: 0407 555 621

JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT & ASSISTANT EDITOR

Rod Hirst

Email: rodhirst@gmail.com

Phone: 0418 477 368

HONORARY SECRETARY

Beth Hourigan

Email: VFFA1932@gmail.com

Phone: 0415 872 372

HONORARY TREASURER

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.com.au

Phone: 0407 309 797

HONORARY LIBRARIAN

Bill Jeans

Email: b.jeans@bigpond.net.au

Phone: 0448 967 192

HONORARY EDITOR

Lyndon Webb

Email: lgwebb@bigpond.net.au

Phone: 0488 555 724

Other Council members:

David Hooke

(Immediate Past President) (0408 256 525)

Terry Rogers (0438 553 326)

Daniel Lovecek (0407 291 200)

All material copyright © all rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent of the publisher. Published monthly by the Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Inc., PO Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

President's Message

(This is the President's address from our recent Annual Dinner.)

Firstly, my apologies for not being with you this evening. I'm currently sailing the waterways of the Rhine River on a cruise that was booked a long time ago, so a big thank-you to my Vice Presidents, John Spragg and Rod Hirst, for representing me this evening, and for all the work you both have undertaken to make tonight a success.

Of course, tonight is an important event in our annual calendar, and it doesn't happen by magic. It takes a lot of work, and I want to thank everyone involved, starting with the Kelvin Club, Pearls and staff; the Guest Speaker, Cameron McGregor; our sponsors (for supplying an impressive array of prizes), and the worker bees – Kevin, Beth, Terry, John and Rod.

Tonight also gives me, as President, an opportunity to formally acknowledge all those who have supported me over the past 12 months. It's been a remarkably busy and rewarding time. Some of my original objectives have been achieved, some are works-in-progress, and some remain on my To Do List.

Tonight I want to thank several people.

Collectively - my fellow Councillors. You are the backbone of our organisation, your selfless work is greatly appreciated, and I believe the VFFA is most fortunate to have such a dedicated and talented Council. Thank you.

I also want to specifically mention:

The Library – it has now been culled and fully catalogued ready for members to access. Thank you Bill Jeans and Peter Clayton - your many hours of work are greatly appreciated.

Membership – new and existing membership has been a high priority this



Simon Joel

year. Thank you to the sub-committee - your work to develop and implement a strategic membership plan has already seen good results, with a significant number of new members joining the Association. Rod, Mike, Hamish, Bernard and John - Thank You.

And in talking about membership, I want to make special mention of John Spragg, who runs the VFFA's WhatsApp group "Grab a Mate". I think this type of social interaction is incredibly important to our Association's future, and I want to thank John for bringing the idea to Council, and for making it happen.

On-Water Activities - are being reviewed currently by a sub-committee of Dan Lovecek and Bernard Chu, who are looking at existing events and researching new opportunities aimed at rejuvenating our events calendar. Thank you both.

Fly Lines - of course my list of thank-you's would not be complete without acknowledging Lyndon Webb's long-term contribution. Lyndon works tirelessly to produce our newsletter. Thank-you Lyndon for your unwavering commitment and for producing such a valued publication.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to two long-serving councillors who, after many years of voluntary service, are retiring this year:

Tony Mitchem, who has been the VFFA treasurer since 2007, and Terry Rogers, past President, and email-communicator-extraordinaire.

Tony's and Terry's contributions to the business of running the VFFA cannot be over-stated. Their tireless work and sanguine advice will be greatly missed at Council. I thank them both, and wish them a good retirement and many many happy future fly fishing adventures.

In conclusion, and most importantly, I want to thank you, my fellow VFFA members, for your ongoing membership, fellowship and advice over the past 12 months. Being your president has been interesting, challenging and incredibly rewarding.

Thank you – and enjoy your evening!



President Simon Joel speaking at a recent meeting



Dickson Despommier sent us this fine photo recently of a brown trout he caught. Dickson is one of our very loyal readers in the USA.

Three VFFA Trips 2024 and 2025

from John Spragg

The 2025 Hayes on Brumbys trip will occur between January 31 and February 9. Peter Hayes is only available for guiding on the days February 1 to February 6. He will get back to me shortly to confirm arrangements. We are booked, but the dates need to be firmed up by Peter. Trip costs will be announced shortly.

The 2025 Taupo Trip will be from March 2 till March 9. So please let me know if you want to be included. We will indicate costs as soon as we have an idea of numbers, as the more who go, the cheaper it is per person.

Arcadia Hatchery Tour

Keep Sunday, September 29, free, as the Association has been invited to the Victorian Fisheries hatchery at Arcadia, 200 Ross Road, Arcadia, about 20 minutes south of Shepparton, and about a two hour drive from Melbourne. The Hatchery Tour starts at 11am. Apart from a tour of the hatchery there is a large stocked lake where you can try your

luck. Cod and trout, all of good size, are waiting for you. Bring your fly rods and gear.

Remember to bring your fishing licence, too. The Goulburn River is very close, so you may want to flick a fly in the river.

There are barbeque facilities and all amenities there, so bring the family and any grandkids. Pack a picnic lunch and enjoy a social fishing day. Kids might want to fish using spinning gear or bait.

There is a camping ground near the hatchery on the Goulburn River (also providing good fishing), and there are free showers and toilet facilities at the hatchery that opens at sun-up for those who may want to make a weekend of it. It is the Grand Final long weekend, and the Tigers, Dees, Saints and Pies are not playing, so a couple of days freshwater fishing will be good for your soul.

All the romance of fly fishing exists in the mind of the angler and is in no way shared by the fish.....(Harold F. Blaisdell)



Fishing Brumbys Weir in Tassie

The Bruce Whitehead Western Lakes competition

... report from Trevor Stow

This event is held annually between ourselves (the VFFA) and the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers. It is based on lakes at either Camperdown or Ballarat. This year it was at Ballarat. Members of both clubs arrived on Thursday afternoon (August 1) and the competition was conducted all day Friday and Saturday. A total of eleven members from both clubs attended and stayed together at the Eureka Caravan Park in excellent conditions.

Friday morning dawned overcast with a moderate northerly wind that blew all day. Coupled with an air temperature of seven degrees that the Bureau of Meteorology said felt like two degrees, conditions could reasonably be described as challenging. Puffer jackets, beanies and thermals were the order of the day.

Members spread out over the many stillwaters that are located in this district,

these including Wendouree, Newlyn and Dean. There was no insect activity, so fishing was confined to pulling wet flies and hoping for the best. The Bairnsdale team, who fished Wendouree, fared best. Steve Pyke drifted through a channel in the rushes where he hooked and landed a lovely 3¾ pound brown on a Shrek pattern. Bairnsdale President Phil Jones had his chances, hooking and subsequently losing two good fish. As it turned out, these were the only fish hooked for the day.

That evening all members visited the Ballarat Fly Fishers Club rooms on Lake Wendouree to expedite some male bonding over a frothy or two. This is one of the highlights of the trip. It is great to spend time socially with like-minded people and discuss the next day's prospects.



A superb brown from a Ballarat lake



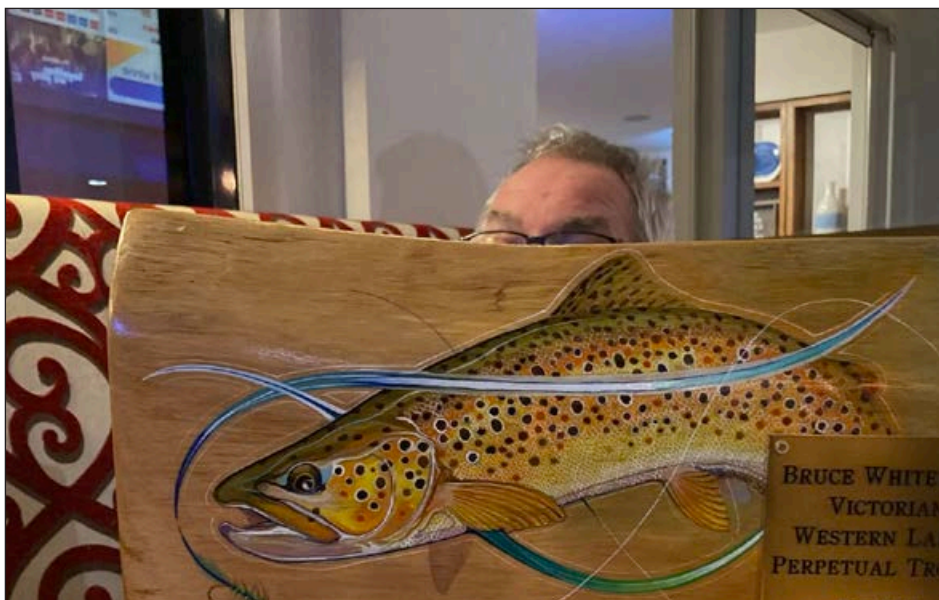
Trevor's "healthy" rainbow

Sunday dawned fine, with no wind but featuring a frost that registered 1°C on the car gauge. Again, members dispersed. Steve and his partner Leigh McVeigh returned to Wendouree, following their success the previous day. They were to

be disappointed, not seeing a fish all day. Kossy also headed to Wendouree and managed to hook a sizeable fish in the rowing lanes. Unfortunately it didn't stick.

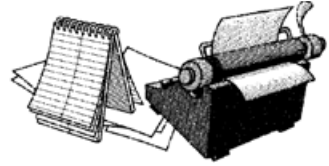
Trevor Stow and Phil Jones headed to Green Hill Lake where they found some rising fish. Trevor hooked and landed a very fat 3½ pound rainbow on a Magoo. So things were looking up, they thought! They fished there for another five hours without seeing another fish.

Presentations were held at the Red Lion Hotel where the Bruce Whitehead Trophy was presented to Steve Pyke. We shared a drink and remembered Bruce in fond terms. We all look forward to next year when we hope that the fishing will be a little better. But the mateship will continue between the two clubs.



To the Victor go the spoils

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"More than half the intense enjoyment of fly fishing is derived from the beautiful surrounds, the satisfaction felt from being in the open air, the new lease of life secured thereby, and the many, many pleasant recollections of all one has seen, heard and done."

(Charles Orvis,
Founder of the Orvis Company, 1856)

"I hooked a fish bent on changing postcodes."
(Thomas McGuane: "Upstream")

"There is no more graceful and helpful accomplishment for a lady than fly fishing, and there is no reason why a lady should not in every respect rival a gentleman in the gentle art."

(W. C. Prime, 1888)

"I salute the gallantry and uncompromising standards of wild trout, and their tastes in landscapes."

(John Madson: "Up On The River")

"What pays off is just that strange mix of patience and impatience that keeps fishermen coming to the water."

(Jeff Hull: *Streams of Consciousness*)

Good heavens, it's September already and thus the start of Spring. And Saturday September 7 also sees the official opening of river fishing in Victoria. Whether we like it or not, the seasons and the regulations together do define and shape our trout fishing. In the winter months our trout fishing is confined to the stillwaters, but come September we have fishing access to it all.

Mind you, the trout fishing in the rivers in September can be a bit bleak. In normal years the rivers in spring are often running high, fast and a tad dirty. Not easy or all that pleasant for trout fishing. Those of us who subscribe to the very popular *FlyLife* magazine will find in the most recent issue (Spring 2024) a top article by Tom Jarman on how to fish these high flowing and dirty streams.

But the stillwaters are still available, and one of my favourites is in fact a private fishery. Some years ago I discovered the fishing in a couple of stocked dams in a country town about an hour's drive from where I live in Melbourne. One dam in particular was particularly attractive. In size it's a bit short of two footy grounds put together. A few years ago some of us put in \$150 each and purchased a pile of trout fingerlings. We stocked the dam with a mix of browns and rainbows, and for a few years the fishing was really good. The average size of fish grew a bit each year, and of course the numbers

decreased to the point where I think it might now be time to start thinking about replenishing the supply.

The other thing we can do in the winter months is enjoy some reading. Those cold winter nights are a great time for curling up in a comfortable chair with a book or magazine. Both are good, and we can revel in the fishing adventures and skills of David Scholes, or Philip Weigall, or any of the countless other skilled angling writers. Or these days, we can wander around the internet, and find countless short or long fly fishing videos on YouTube and other sites.

Of course the other winter time fillers include fly tying and fiddling with our gear. We can check and grease our reels and ensure the lines on them have been washed and polished, and the leaders fixed. I have a nearby footy oval a couple of streets from where I live, and every so often I'll grab a rod and reel I haven't used for a while and wander up there to have a cast. How far can I cast this line, and how accurate can I be with it?

Mind you, even this tame activity has its traps. I recall an evening some years ago now when took a rod and a shopping bag with two or three reels up to the oval for a bit of relaxing practice when a lady with a dog of some foul breed came wandering across the grass. The dog raced up to my bag of reels, cocked a rear leg, and emptied a fairly full bladder on the contents. The owner immediately defended the dog – it was all my fault for not closing the bag properly. Ah well, the lines could do with another good wash and the reels needed a drop or two of grease.



Ammunition – two popular nymphs



But as I said, it's September and the start of a new season. Time to do some planning. Let's list some places we could fish prior to Christmas, including rivers or lakes we know well and are very familiar with, but also including some venues we haven't ever fished before.

Get the gear out, tie some flies, pull out the maps, and head out for some pre-Christmas fishing. And remember – if you catch a lot, or even a few – that's great. But even if you catch nothing (and that happens to us all!) it's still relaxing and refreshing to spend some time on a stream or lake.

Cameron McGregor at the VFFA Annual Dinner

Firstly, thanks for having me as your guest speaker a second time. It's an honour to be here tonight, especially as it's your Annual Dinner. So yes, thanks.

First, a little about Katie and me. I came down from New South Wales after spending a while working with New South Wales fisheries as a field researcher.

Some of you may remember that Snobs Creek wasn't purely about producing fingerlings. There was quite a good research component there as well, so I took up a position there.

Then this girl called Katie arrived to do some PhD field work, and somehow one thing led to another, and this crazy romance somehow developed. It was the last place on earth either of us thought that we'd find anyone.

Unfortunately Snobs is now just back to being a pure hatchery, and doesn't have a research capacity.

I had studied at La Trobe University at Wodonga, which was very handy for me. I was pretty much tied to home in those days, growing up on a small farm just out of Corowa. So my misspent youth was spent on the Murray River. I was the kid with a tinny who fortunately got all the wild stuff out of his system when he was still a teenager, and now drives boats with clients in them.

Katie's actually a full-time fisheries researcher, so if anyone wants to get really nerdy tonight, feel free to talk to her.

Freshwater research and now guiding has basically been my life since leaving school. Probably my most interesting recent research was getting a population of Macquarie Perch on Mannus Creek, which is an upper Murray feeder. It's



Cameron McGregor

actually the only remaining breeding population of Maccas left anywhere in the Murray catchment. So it's a pretty important one from a genetics point of view purely from the species hanging on.

We thought we had lost them after the last big fires. It was pretty apocalyptic. The river ran black with mud and ash, and we thought we'd never get to see these guys again. We had no idea where they went, but somehow they came back in there. In some way at least two fish managed to come back after the fires. Some fish have hung on and successfully spawned there again, which is pretty cool.

Another recent project down in the lower Murray was basically proving how bad dams are for Golden perch. The State Water apparently doesn't have enough in its budget to lift the gate up and down a couple of times a day.

So we went down there and put trackers (acoustic receivers) and tags into fish caught below Euston Weir. Basically any



The Swampy delivers again

bit of water that runs into the Murray has now had fish go up it.

We're now based in Myrtleford, and if anyone's familiar with downtown Mudgegonga, a farming community halfway between Yackandandah and Myrtleford, we've got a little bit of paradise there with some cattle that keep me occupied when I'm not on the water. It's just a great area.

We didn't plan this back in the day, but some of my first trout were caught on a fly rod five minutes down the road from my grandparent's old farm. So we somehow managed to end up in the same valley, and thus there are a lot of personal ties there for me with the local area.

And it's basically the playground where we take our clients. So I spend a lot of time there at Khancobin every year drifting the Swampy with clients. With our clients we fish up into the upper Murray area, into the Kosciuszko



Bass from the Snowy

National Park. We do a lot through the Alpine National Park each season. That's what Rod Hirst was hinting at when he said that you can go to some pretty crazy places with me. It's probably me wanting to get as much out of the day as the clients. But I do know I really enjoy taking people to places that I know they haven't been to before.

I'm going to focus a little bit tonight on catching cod on a fly, because since the inception of our business I know for a fact that this is doable. I'd had enough success on my own to know we could start to put people onto these fish. Initially I struggled a bit with the fact that cod can be buggers if they're not in the mood. If they're not in the mood it doesn't matter what you throw at them.

And from a guiding point of view, I was struggling with this mindset: are people going to be prepared to come out and potentially get their butts kicked? So I looked overseas and heard stories of people standing in a river for weeks on end just to catch one steelhead, and things like that.

But before all that happened, there was this little brat running around the Murray River at Corowa, and he caught fish in every way possible. And I'll be honest, a lot of these were not legal. That was just the way we did it back then. I'd already started fly fishing when I was 10. I had started fly fishing for trout but then wanted another challenge.

I'd already caught cod on lures by that stage, so I started fly fishing for them. I think I was 12 or 13 at the time, and to be honest it was next to impossible to get good information back then. I was a member of Greenwell's Fly Fishing Club in Albury, and as a 12 year old I used to shovel manure from under a shed to fund my fishing and tackle addiction.

It's amazing where we've got to now in a pretty short space of time. We've gone from getting a fish every few trips to now being disappointed if we don't catch one more often than not. Now one reason why you didn't catch a fish on a trip, if you're a competent angler, is that the cod were just having one of those off days, when they decided to feed at two o'clock in the morning for just 15

minutes, and you just weren't there ready for it. And there's not much you can do about it. Katie and I watched fish in a tank for over a week, and even a small fish, for whatever reason, indicated "I'm not eating". But when they do want to feed, they feed in a big way. So, as I said, they're a challenging species.

We've now got this recovered fishery with record numbers of fish getting stocked, which, to be honest, is the main reason we have this recovered fishery. We have had a few glimmers of hope from a wild fish point of view, but largely you can say that the reason Murray cod are now back to where they are is because they are a fairly easy fish to spawn and stock over a big range of water types. So we spend a lot of time on rivers like the Ovens, which is clear water. The most common thing that clients say as they jump in the raft for as drift is: "Are we a chance to see a trout today?" Because that's literally what it looks like. It looks like trout water early season.

We do get a bit of an overlap with trout. There are plenty of clear water options on foot or when drifting. And we've obviously got larger rivers like the Goulburn and the Murray, and impoundments now as well. If you want to see how successful stockings have been, you've only got to look at this range of impoundments that we've now got all through the basin.

I'm old enough to remember when the closed season was first introduced, and that was almost a last ditch effort to save these fish from a fisheries management point of view.

Well, the trout season's now about to open, but we know that the Murray cod season's closed, and then we go again come December. So all of our river fisheries are still bound by that closed season period. Lake Mulwala has a



A Murray cod approaching a metre. Let's go!

closed season. But places like Eildon and Nillahcootie have come online, and you can fish for Murray cod in these places right through 12 months of the year. The reason why we can do that now is because we know that these fisheries are based pretty much on 100% stocked fish.

Murray cod are a nesting species, and the male fish actually guards the nests. Two weeks after the female has laid her eggs the male will fertilize the eggs and then he will defend that nest. That's a reason why we have a closed season on the rivers, because we now know that if that fish eats a lure or a fly or a bait it's highly unlikely he will actually go back to the nest to defend those eggs. So that's why we still need that closed season period for the rivers.

But in somewhere like Eildon, if those eggs hatch out successfully the missing ingredient is that there's actually very little chance that the plankton that these tiny little cod need to feed on when they



Three of Cameron's cod patterns

leave the nest, and that they need to eat and eat and eat and eat to survive, but it's just not there. So we're having fish successfully spawn, but not recruit, if that makes sense.

Just going now into a few of our cod season highlights, if you're out there for the daylight hours, at least go early and late in the day, as you really need to be out there if you can in at least one of those

times of low light. Then you're going to be typically casting at structure during the day, especially if you're out there on a river.

Surface fishing is now something that people crave. It's very addictive if you get a Murray cod blow up on a surface fly. I used to ask people if they had any pre-existing heart conditions. And then one day I did have a guy who just froze dead. The fish just blew up on a fly right in front of the raft, and he hadn't moved. Then he turned around in his chair and there was absolutely no colour left in his face. But we got him to go again, and he did actually catch that fish. The fish came back for another go, which was good.

So I will tell you now that if you're going to go out and fish impoundments you are going to be throwing larger flies. But we fish small flies on somewhere like the Ovens. For me, small flies are probably tied on a 2/0 to 4/0 hook. That's a small fly. You can throw it all day.

But if you are out on an impoundment then keep in mind that the fish in those places are not used to eating small yabbies. They're used to eating a small fish, or a carp, perhaps even a trout in somewhere like Eildon. So we may be throwing quite large flies, which you can still cast on a 10 weight rod. But if you go any higher than a 10, you will be beating yourself up a bit.

So, if you're fly fishing rivers, you're going to be in that 8 - 10 weight range. I've always said that if you only own one rod for cod fishing, it should be a #10. I know there's a few wives here in the audience tonight, but I'll never stop anyone from buying new gear. But on the same side of the coin, if you did that trip to Christmas Island or somewhere else up north, I guarantee you've already got a rod at home now gathering dust that you could go out and chase cod with.

You may have to go and buy a new fly line, and we all know how cheap fly lines are these days. If you can only own one line then you should have an intermediate sink tip line. In Victoria and in Southern New South Wales we have this amazing thing - rivers that flow more often than they don't. So what that means is that the more you get into it the more you're going to notice that there's so many situations where a faster sinking line is going to be very worthwhile owning. During the day you may well want to get a bit deeper down into the structure, so you want that fly to sink just that little bit more.

And you can only really achieve that with a good cast with your sinking line. When we're trout fishing, we're constantly mending line. Often we've got that beautiful fish sipping dry flies, so we need a nice drag free presentation. If you are competent at throwing a cast into the bank with a sinking line using a reach cast, (preferably a reach cast because it's pretty hard to mend a sinking line) then casting with that reach cast will buy you just a little bit of time from a sinking point of view, and will put a lot more fish in the net.

We've still got that 8 - 10 weight range when I'm talking larger rivers. I'm thinking, "You guys are in Melbourne, so you know the Goulburn River". I spent way too much time there, but I'm further down - near Seymour where it opens up a bit.

I'll personally fish it with the 10 weight rod because we're throwing bigger flies in one of those areas where the fish are used to eating bigger items.

I didn't cover leaders before. My leaders are about five foot total in length with three feet of 50 or 60 pound butt section, and the rest of it is 30 to 40 pound. That's it.



Cod are such a beautiful fish

Remember, if you can get a half decent cast with a fairly large air resistant fly then that's the key. It needs a nice firm stop to get the line to roll out. Probably the biggest thing I see with people when they are fishing for cod is that they struggle with casting. It doesn't matter if they've got the right line and right rod, because more often than not they've gone too long with their leader and thus they're turning that air resistant fly into a bit of a parachute.

Cod aren't leader shy. If there was any fish on the planet that I think we could tie our fly directly to the end of the fly line, I think that with cod we'd still get a hit.

There's a bit of a sleeper that's come on the scene with the whole 12 month cod season - Nillahcootie has been added to the list of impoundments. It's on the Broken River between Mansfield and Benalla. I can tell you for a fact that it's got a lot of big fish in it. And the fact that

we can fish it now right through winter is really exciting.

So having put Mulwala on the impoundment list here, we're going to be using the same gear as on the rivers leaning more towards that 10 weight, especially you're throwing bigger flies. For people who know what I'm talking about, we're basically getting five or seven inches of sink per second.

Keep in mind that Murray cod love structure, and that means that especially when the sun is up you're going to have to cast tight to that structure all day, which means that if you hook a fish it can easily cut you off.

I've been an avid fly tier since I was that little 10 - 12 year-old kid. I was tying flies like a madman back then, often getting sprung when I was supposedly doing homework. But I'd be down in my bedroom tying flies, and there are fishing hooks still stuck in the carpet of that house. I had more than one chook pen

where I could get my own feathers and stuff.

But if anyone's tying their own flies, and especially for fish like Murray cod, we all have this idea that we need to jam as much material on a hook as possible to try to create this bulk in a fly, to try to get it push water. But the last 10 years has seen my views change to the point where, like that fly there now on the screen, that's a 6/0 hook in the front and a 3/0 at the back. But that fly is very light in the hand, and we're trying to create an illusion of bulk and mass when if you actually pick that fly up and strip it back, there's really not much to it. So just keep that in mind. Think of materials like rabbit fur, marabou, and other things that will move under water. They basically kind of breathe while they're underwater.

Let's talk about trout. We live north-east of Tatura and we've got trout up there too. I'm going to rattle off a few things from a guiding point of view that I personally look forward to each year that I think you should be putting on your calendars. The early season is only really in a 'typical year', but there's really nothing like a typical year anymore. For example I don't think we're currently going into Spring this year, as nearly all the snow has disappeared already. We're way down on rainfall and we've got low rivers everywhere.

Normally I'd say we're going to spend a lot of time on our tailwaters, because we've still got big dams holding water back. So the tailwaters are going to be running nice and clear and low. And then I expect that even a river like the Ovens is going to be high and running hard. So I'll spend a lot of time on tiny feeder creeks that you might not fish again for the rest of the season. But then this year we don't have that, so not yet.

It could all change very quickly, and if it does change into a more typical early season then just keep in mind, especially when you have got a small stream with a small catchment that runs out of a forested area, it's going to run clear even after a lot of rain. I'm going to spend the first two months of the season up there this year. And big fish in tiny water can be a lot of fun.

Now I'm saying that from November to April there everything is firing. Let's face it, everything doesn't fire on a 40 degree day, so just go higher. Just drive that extra 10 minutes up the road, get into a shaded section of stream, and it's amazing how different the day will be. Don't get me wrong. If you get a week of hot weather, then you're probably better off chasing cod rather than trout. It's as simple as that.

Now as much as I geeked out on cod fishing before, there's one other thing that I really geek out on, and that's macro invertebrates, or "bugs" as we like to call them. And this is probably what keeps me so keen on trout fishing. Our hatch-based fishing really ramps up in late October and will go really well right through into early December.

If you've ever been privileged to fish a Kossie Australia dun hatch then just go and do it. Bit it's not as reliable as what it used to be. In fact a lot of our hatches aren't as reliable as what they used to be. I think there's a lot of human intervention there that we just haven't accounted for yet from an agricultural point of view. So the rivers that you want to be looking for early in the season are those cold flowing streams.

We're going to mention that river called the Ovens again. But even somewhere like the Buckland will get duns. There will be hatches there in mid-October for a couple of weeks. We've created

an artificial cold water environment there. So think of the Kossie dun - it is a cold, fast water specialist insect.

December to March, from a guiding point of view, is probably my favourite time of year, drifting rivers and throwing grasshoppers and cicadas. There's definitely a pattern there now. In the last five or six years, probably because I've spent more time there and pushed more people to do it, come March (even into April), we are seeing our biggest fish consistently for the year. And it's all because of this insect - the grasshopper.

And especially on a river like the Swampy where we can get nice long drifts really close to the rock wall structures. Those rocks have been put there to hold the banks, and our biggest fish of the season consistently coming off there to take a big grasshopper. If you go to a river like the Goulburn or up our way somewhere like to the Mitta or the Swampy and have the mindset that you would have when you're going cod fishing (but you're going trout fishing instead), you will see some really outsized fish.

But keep in mind that you might only see one or two or even no fish for the day. It's a mindset. It's a point of view. Alternatively, you can go out and have a great day catching smaller fish, either nymphing or with a nymph under a dry.

And then that magic time of year for us who live up in the bush when Parks decide to open the gates and let us in. We all try to get in early before the mad rush of Melbourne anglers. So those gates are opened. They're management gates, and



They do grow bigger than this!

we then get to see country that we just don't see at any other time of year.

Katie and I love to travel. I know a lot of you here will happily travel to some far flung destination such as the tropics, to stand with water around your knees and hopefully catch a fish like a permit or a bone fish.

Well, you've got a fish that does all that here already. I'd argue that carp are probably harder to get to eat a fly than the average bone fish. Carp don't always want to eat. You've basically got to feed them. So you've got this amazing resource here. We've only got to look to the states to see what carp fishing has become now. All I'm trying to encourage you to do is get out there and give it a go, because it's pretty amazing. You'll see big fish in clear water. And it's dead set flats fishing, if you pick the right impoundment.

Now, any questions?

Fly Fishing by the Ladies

... by Jenny Singe

Our rural fishing club is holding a “Ladies’ Day” with a view to encouraging women to take up fly fishing. As I am the only female club member, I thought I should give some thought to both what might encourage women to love fly fishing, as I do, and what impediments there could be to women taking up the sport. I wrote this article for our club newsletter, hoping that members might show it to the women in their lives and encourage them to come to club events.

Certainly, more women are fly fishing than when I first started. It is now not a rarity to see women casting a fly on our streams and lakes. There are well-known women who fly fish, such as Joan Wulff (an absolute legend), Jan Spencer (an Aussie icon), Heather Hodson (United Women on the Fly), April Vokey (a well known guide), and Karen Brooks, to name a few. Karen was the captain of the Australian Women’s Team that came third in the Women’s International Fly Fishing Competition in Czechoslovakia this year, winning the bronze medal.

If you don’t know these fabulous women and their contribution to fly fishing then I suggest you look them up on the Internet. These are just some examples; there are so many more.

There are now many websites devoted to women’s fly fishing. Also, through the important program called *Casting For Recovery*, many women post breast cancer have participated in fully-funded retreats where they learn to fly fish whilst mixing with others who have been on a similar cancer journey.

So what are the attractions of fly fishing? For me, one of the main attractions isn’t actually about catching fish. It’s

where it takes me - outdoors in natural surroundings near water and away from all the hassles of day-to-day life. It is so absorbing that you are just in the moment and nothing else matters for a while.

Fly fishing is a skill where you never stop learning and trying to perfect your ability to catch those elusive trout. You are not just sitting on a bank dangling a line. The kind of fly fishing I like is more akin to hunting. I fish almost exclusively for brown and rainbow trout, and these two types have different behaviour patterns that you need to know about.

You search for fish, watching for telltale rings or disturbances on the water that show you that a trout is there. Then you plan what you need to do to entice your quarry to eat your tiny fly. You have to understand what the fish are likely to be eating. To do this fly fishers need to study entomology. They watch insect life, turn over rocks to see what food is in the water and what insects are hatching – and then they “match the hatch”.

You need to learn streamcraft, i.e. where in the water (particularly in streams and rivers) is a fish likely to be? Fly fishers also study the seasons and the weather, as water temperature, wind direction, and the time of year will all alter trout behaviour.

One of the lovely things about fly fishing is learning to cast a fly. (But it can be very frustrating). It is all about timing and grace, and not brute force. It has been said that women can learn to cast more easily than men, as they are less likely to overpower the rod and ruin their cast. It is such an amazing feeling when you make a good cast and the line flies effortlessly from the rod and your

fly lands exactly where you want it to. It doesn't always happen though!

When I'm fishing with other women I notice that we are more collaborative and possibly more appreciative of all that is around us. We tend to be a bit less "blokey" about catching the biggest fish and lots of fish. However, you'll not hear the end of it if I catch a 10 pounder! (Note that both trout and babies are still measured in pounds.)

Another advantage of taking up fly fishing is that it's something you can share with your partner. This can be for a weekend away locally, but trout fishing can also take you all over the world. It is so much better when you get away from the usual tourist trails to beautiful places and meet people with a common interest. My late husband, Joe, was a passionate fly fisher who was told numerous times by other men how lucky he was to have a wife who fly fished. They said they

would love to have had wives/partners who would go fly fishing with them and share the experience. I know I would not have missed for anything both the quiet times and the thrilling trouty times on the water with Joe.

There is a potential downside to fishing if you are a female. Going to isolated places on your own might feel risky. Nevertheless, many women I know do this. Having a partner, or a fishing buddy, or joining your local fly fishing club or a women's fly fishing group are ways of overcoming this – as well as learning more and sharing your experiences.

Finally, one thing I have observed is how often women I meet who fly fish say it was their fathers who got them interested in fly fishing in the first place. Perhaps our male club members need to get their daughters and granddaughters into fly fishing early - before someone tells them fly fishing is for boys!



Karen Brooks – a top fishing guide and champion fly fisher

The November Warrnambool Trip

... Hugh Maltby

Again this year the Warrnambool Fly Fishers are inviting us to spend a few days fishing their local rivers and lakes and enjoying their fabulous hospitality. The date for this trip is Friday, November 8 to Sunday, November 10, with the program being similar to previous years' visits.

We will start the weekend with dinner at Bojangles in Liebig Street, famous for its Pizza and Italian fare.

On Saturday we will be guided by Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club members on their local rivers and lakes.

On Saturday night we will enjoy the traditional barbecue at Jim and Trish Blakeslee's fabulous property on the upper Merri River, commencing at 6:00pm. This is always a magnificent occasion, and a donation of \$30 to the Warrnambool Club will be appreciated and collected by the co-ordinator.

A Notice of Event is attached.

This is a fabulous weekend – and it fills quickly. To be a participant members need to fill in an Event Registration Form (ERF) and return it to the Event Coordinator. You can obtain an ERF from www.vffa.org.au, and the Event Co-ordinator is Hugh Maltby – Mobile 0423 283 079, and email: redntag@hotmail.com



Jim Blakeslee with a fine brown from the upper Merri River"



The traditional evening barbecue at the Blakeslee's property



The Merri River a long way upstream



Warrnambool angler Dr Bob Loch fishing the upper Merri out near Grassmere



VFFA Notice of Major Event - Warrnambool

November 8 - 10, 2024

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

Event date: Check in Friday November 8, check out am Sunday November 10.

Travel: You are responsible for making your own arrangements to and from Warrnambool.

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

Event location & address: Accommodation is confirmed at the Surfside Caravan Park.

Accommodation: Shared Cabin

Sleeping requirements: Bring your own bedding and towel

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

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

Description of fishing areas: Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club members will each guide two VFFA members on Saturday. We will fish a number of local rivers which may include the Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu, and the Moyne.

These rivers offer a wonderful variety of trout fishing, both wet and dry fly styles, depending on the height and clarity of the water

Mobile phone coverage: Most areas is ok.

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, torch at dusk onwards, mobile phone, bottled 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 October 27, 2024. Obtain ERF from www.vffa.org.au or pick up one at a General Meeting.

Event Co-ordinator: Hugh Maltby - Mobile 0423 283 079, Email redntag22@gmail.com

Date of this Notice of Event: August 26, 2024

Detecting takes when Nymphing with or without Indicator Movement

(... an article used with permission from Tom Sutcliffe's book *Hunting Trout*)

Detecting takes is as important to catching fish on nymphs as sugar is to shortbread. And detecting takes with anything like consistency isn't easy. The theory and practice of indicator nymphing works on the simple principle that by mouthing the fly the trout momentarily stops its drift, while the leader carries on until. If the fly is static for long enough, the nylon straightens and tugs the indicator.

Were that always the case nymphing would be easy. In practice, whether or not the indicator moves depends on the nature of the take, how long the trout holds onto the fly before releasing it, and the depth and speed of the water. Consequently, and probably as you expected, there are endless variations on the theme.

For example:

- a) The fish hits the nymph while moving and with enough force to straighten the leader before it lets go, and you see obvious indicator movement. This is typical of rainbows in quick streams and, of course, fish feeding strongly in lakes.
- b) More commonly, trout swim slowly onto the nymph, mouth it gently, taste it and immediately spit it out (probably in the space of one or two seconds). In slow-moving water they will mostly have held the fly for less time than it takes to straighten the tippet and transfer movement to the indicator, so you see nothing. In faster water the leader drags and you may be lucky enough to see brief movement, usually a momentary slowing, or a brief stop or a short sideways tweak in the indicator.



A top New Zealand stream with trout being very easy to spot in the clear water



There's one!

c) Browns seem to take more time tasting a fly (don't ask me to explain why) and they rarely pounce on a nymph, so indicators are less reliable. Characteristically they wait for food to come to them. When an artificial nymph drifts past they lean across, mouth it gently, taste it, and then release it. What you see then is first just a slowing in the speed of the indicator as the tippet and leader pick up drag, followed by sudden acceleration back to the speed of the current if the fish lets go without being hooked. Rainbows more commonly swoop into a take, and indicator movement is therefore a more reliable signal with them.

The important principle to understand is that when any artificial nymph stops drifting, a degree of drag is immediately set up in the leader, and this drag slows the indicator's drift speed. It's only when a fish moves off with a fly, or when the nylon between the fly and the indicator straightens completely, that movement comes into the drifting indicator.

All these principles of strike detection are magnified in fast water because the current straightens the leader faster when trout mouth the fly and stop its free drift.

Putting Take-Detection Into Practice

Let's work on the hypothetical assumption that you're on an average freestone stream fishing through pocket water, riffles, glides, and that sort of thing, and that you're new to nymphing. The water is clear and you have an indicator on. Around you is a moving river, a tapestry that unfolds and changes constantly as you wade upstream. A tapestry of alternating highlights, dancing shadows, places where currents break in curling waves of white water, spots that are flat and glassy, places that are smooth and still and darkly inky with shadow, say under branches or near the bank - in other words, nothing different to any average freestone river, on any average day, anywhere in the world.

You struggle to see into the water, try hard to look beyond the wink and spin on the surface, and try to get your eyes to pierce the twists and curls as your nymph drifts through good-looking runs and glides. In the really deep stuff you can just make out the shape of stones on the bottom, and the flat water in the shallows is so clear that you imagine you'd see any fish if it moved. For the rest, well, you just accept trout will be tough to spot and tell yourself to watch the indicator and keep faith.

Your nymph drifts through countless runs, but in a solid hour's fishing the indicator hasn't moved, at least not that you noticed, and you begin to wonder if the fish aren't off or, more sinister, whether something fundamental isn't missing in your technique. All you see is your indicator floating past this mosaic of highlights on the surface, through twisting turns of contesting currents, over vague images of shadows that suggest boulders deep down, and through places where the sun bounces off the surface like a mirror. It starts to look as if nymphing



Drifting a nymph in the current

won't live up to the reputation for near-instant gratification you'd heard about.

But you fish on, keeping the bright orange indicator in sight, and straining to pick up any sign of a fish. And you've heard that can be pretty cryptic.

Then your pal arrives. He's been fishing downstream, and has a reputation as a crack nymph fisherman so you're keen to hear how he got on. He says he got four fish on the nymph and missed a few others. So you invite him to try the run you've just fished unsuccessfully for the last ten minutes. He hauls line off his reel, lifts the rod, and lays a casual cast across it.

You notice that his line speed is maybe a little slower than yours, that he throws an almost loose cast, certainly not perfectly straight, but otherwise you see no great revelations. He gathers in line evenly and quickly as his fly drifts back. He gets nothing on his first cast or his second. His third goes a yard further out, nearly to the opposite bank, but the angle is much the same, upstream and across, and it's still a loose cast. You see nothing in the drift, no movement in the indicator.

Suddenly his rod lifts sharply into a good fish. "Had to be a fish in there," he shouts, which under the circumstances you consider mildly discourteous, but

you're glad anyway to at last see a trout come out.

You wonder what made him strike, which boils down to what he saw that you didn't. I suspect this is one of the keys, maybe the key, to the art and science of nymphing fast water, certainly on difficult days. It's different when fish are popping. Then nymphing is about as complicated as entry-level dominoes, and anyone can catch them.

To get back to our phantom angler and what made him strike. The truth is he's likely not that sure himself anyway. If questioned, he'd probably have to think about it a little. He might have registered a sudden shift in a linear shadow on the riverbed (and linear shadows often equal fish). Or maybe he saw a brief shimmer of silver or gold somewhere deep in the run, the telegraphed sign of a trout twisting to intercept a fly. The light reflecting off a turning flank would have glinted brightly off a shallow fish, but would have been more a diffused glow if the fish was lying deep. Maybe he saw the fleeting pearly gleam of a turning trout's belly (whiter with rainbows, more a soft yellow with browns), or an opaque whiteness as it opened its mouth, like a scrap of white paper turning somewhere deep in the tangle of the run. Or maybe he saw the surface bulge slightly as a fish moved under it, or a smooth patch appear for an instant on a cobbled run. Who knows.

What we do know is that these are all valid signs of a take, albeit some of the less obvious ones. So, here's your first problem solved. Whatever the sign was, you missed it and our successful angler didn't. And you likely missed it not because you weren't watching the indicator, but because you were to the exclusion of everything else.

Which sounds Irish, but I'll explain. Watching only the indicator means your eyes focus only on the surface, and you see little else. You also need to watch the constantly changing 'window' drifting over the riverbed around your indicator. In other words, look through the window into the water beneath it and, if possible, bring the riverbed into focus. That way you might have seen the telegraphed sign of a fish and struck before the trout had the chance to let your nymph go.

Frequently trout show clearly enough on the take for there to be little doubt. But nearly as often they don't, especially when they're deep or not feeding strongly. When they're really on the prod they often take up feeding stations in shallower water and you easily see them going for a fly; or you spot them outright beforehand. But whatever sign a trout reveals, it's never as obvious as the nose on your face, and it lasts only a fleeting fraction of a second. And the actual take often doesn't register on the indicator at all. In fact, movement in an indicator is invariably not the first sign of a fish, but the last.

Sometimes the leader gives you the message. Rarely it's the way sunlight reflecting off the nylon suddenly changes; mostly a bright highlight disappears, or occasionally a new one arrives, but it's an obscure and unreliable sign.

An obvious early signal is when you see the end of your leader suddenly draw under - a sign Oliver Kite made a lot of, but then he was fishing smooth-surfaced English chalkstreams in mild sunlight where watching leaders was a walk in the park. It's different when the leader is bouncing on a rough, brightly lit surface.

Then, finally, the general rule is you strike the moment any change is convincing enough, or anytime anything looks even

mildly suspicious, or slightly out of sync with what you've come to learn is the natural sequence of things. Once you start doing that you're on track.

But I'd like to convince you to look through the window moving over the riverbed around your indicator, not to just watch the indicator. Rather, try to keep the indicator, the tip of your fly line and the leader in your peripheral vision. With practise it comes naturally, and even though you may at first feel uncomfortably unaware of the indicator, believe me, if that indicator moves even fractionally you'll know about it.

So when you first start nymphing you miss the fish you never knew had your fly until you begin to recognise the cryptic signs of trout. And you won't learn to identify them unless you risk a little, practise a lot, and put in your fair share of false strikes. Eventually you'll hook the odd fish you hardly saw, even the odd one you never saw, period. But then you'll also surprise yourself occasionally by starting to connect with fish you otherwise would never have got and, yes, still miss the dozens that took your fly and let go without a hint. Gradually though, fewer and fewer fish will get away with it that easily.

A few final words on this topic. First, indicators. Eventually you begin to interpret even the slightest of movements of an indicator, down to just the hint of a shiver, or the hundredth-of-a-second hesitation, or the slightest slowing in the drift. Indicators also help you to identify drag in a free-drifting nymph, they help keep the fly in the drift path you chose in the first place, and they also give a rough indication of where your fly is.

When you take all this in and actually expect to see signals from moving fish, the whole nymphing trip begins to unfold



*A rainbow trout from a South African river –
from Tom Sutcliffe's collection"*

and to take root a little, though I don't want to leave you with the impression that you're a day off becoming a master. Those who know will say it's only the start of what, from then on, is a lifelong learning curve in what undoubtedly is one of the most exciting and rewarding aspects in all fly fishing. Exact, pinpoint, needle-sharp nymphing is the most valuable ticket there is to a lot more trout.

Reflexive Strikes

A step ahead is when you find yourself striking before you actually register anything. The strike is so automatic, and so quickly executed, you could say it was maybe intuitive, or perhaps instinctive, though it's neither really, because instinctive behaviour is innate, or inborn, and intuitive responses are responses without reason. It's maybe best described as reflexive. What happens over time is that repeated experiences groove neuronal pathways to respond with a speedy strike to certain stimuli.

Anglers starting out river nymphing are dependent on first identifying something as unusual, then interpreting it, then consciously converting that information into a message that says: "Trout! Strike!" which, as we now know, is often too late. I call this the internal dialogue of beginners. Later, with

practise, there's no need for any internal dialogue - the processes of identification, interpretation and reaction happen almost simultaneously.

Sometimes (often actually) whatever it was that made you strike turns out to be a false alarm. But that's fine. It's part of the learning process. The more practise people put in, the more the pathways open up, and the faster they get. Finally, when the cryptic signals of trout are programmed - are part of the angler's 'oxygen' as it were - they really start taking fish on a nymph. They often end up not being that sure about what made them strike at a particular fish in the first place. That's a really good sign, and it's a stage of proficiency that for obvious reasons can appear vaguely spooky to outsiders; why less practiced anglers start to wonder if experts don't function on some lofty transcendental plane not frequented by ordinary mortals. And, yes, I suppose it's true to say that some experts find it tempting to perpetuate the myth.

Entry Level Nymphing

Most day-to-day nymphing isn't anywhere near as obscure though, and not nearly as testy. In fact, anyone who can cast a fly line ten feet in a tailwind can take freestone trout fairly regularly on a nymph. It's a case of pick a likely run, pitch a weighted fly - usually upstream, or upstream and across - let it sink, keep an eye on the indicator, and sooner or later it darts off so sharply even your mother-in-law would have spotted it.

All you need do is quickly lift into the fish (well, more like near instantaneously actually, though there are times when you get away with the odd bit of hesitation). That's the gist of any entry level nymphing contract on any quick

flowing stream with a decent population of averagely naive trout in it - but it really is entry-level.

Even then, a lot depends on the day. Sometimes trout are co-operative, and you score easily. Then sometimes they don't oblige with anything near the cavalier compliance they did, say, even the day before. But that's also a part of the contract, and you have to work through it.

If things are tediously slow you need to maybe give the size and weight of your

pattern some thought, and make sure it's reaching the riverbed quickly enough. If nothing works, try a dry fly for a bit just to ring the changes. (A little dry fly fishing between nymphing is like a sorbet between courses. It clears the mind, rather than the palate.) Or get horizontal for a while in the shade of a willow to see if the mood of the fish won't improve. From firsthand experience, it mostly doesn't, though occasionally getting horizontal on a lazy river has a lot going for it anyhow.



The summer sun setting on the fabulous Bronte Lagoon

Early Season Tasmania Reports

... from Mike Stevens

It was a great opening weekend all round the state relative to previous years.

Overall, the lakes have been the better option over the rivers, which is fairly normal for this time of year. Indeed, the lakes are fishing well. Opening weekend was marginally slow fishing, but that changed quickly. Current reports are good across the whole state.

The Lowlands

Four Springs is definitely the highlight lake at the moment, with plenty of good quality fish being caught on wet flies all over the lake. Sinking lines from Intermediates to Sink 3 have been the lines of choice, with fish regularly getting caught on olive Woolly Buggers in a variety of sizes and weights. On the more overcast days wet flies with small orange hot spots and flash have been doing the damage. On the calmer bright days, a more natural colour with a slower sink rate has been good.

Blackmans Lagoon is normally a great option for early season fishing. However, the lack of rain means that lake levels are low and thus the fishing is a little slow. There have been some good fish caught though, with a sinking line needed and Woolly Buggers in black or olive with a hotspot the best fly.

Big Waterhouse Lake has been a good option in the North East area, with plenty of fish coming to hand. On this lake you need a boat and a faster sinking line (5 inches/sec) in order to fish it with any hope of success.

Camden Dam is a great choice if you want to avoid the crowds and don't mind doing a bit of wading or can take your kayak for a paddle. Plenty of fish are getting caught on small black wet flies. This is great lake to fish with a floating line along the shores. If you are willing to do some walking around the shore you will find lots of fishy bays and corners.



A Tassie brown – hard to beat



But look out for the Joe Blakes!

The Highlands

Penstock Lagoon is always good, and this year is no different with some quality fish being caught. Fishing from a boat or kayak has produced great results all over the lake. However, with increasing warm weather on the way, we should start to see good numbers of fish mooching around the shallows, thus making for some great land-based wade fishing. Black and gold wets in a variety of sizes and weights have been getting fish.

Bronte Lagoon was slow on the opening weekend, but that has changed over the last couple of weeks with some great reports coming in. Whether you are in a boat, or fishing from the shore, there seem to be hungry fish all over the lake. Red and black flies have been the go to colours, as well as olive wets with orange hot spots fished on intermediate or sinking lines.

Great Lake has been fishing well! As the lake level is down it has opened up a lot of shore fishing options, and some fantastic ones. This is a great place to escape the crowds and have some solitude. Fish are getting caught on wet flies in a variety of sizes and colours, though black Woolly Buggers have been working very well, especially around the muddy shores.

There has even been some good polaroid fishing on brighter days in bays around the northern end of the lake. Keep in mind the closures around the creeks and rivers coming into the lake.

For further details on other waters and what to use, come in to our store and check the hatch board, or give us a call. Tight Lines!



Attractive water on Bronte Lagoon



Four Springs – a very popular trout water in Tasmania



The Great Lake – a very large and imposing trout water



Sunset at the popular Currawong Lakes in Tasmania



Penstock Lagoon – a justifiably famous Tasmanian fishery



VFFA member Dermot O'Brien connected with a sizeable brown trout on Tasmania's Four Springs

Victorian Fisheries Authority Wild Trout Conference

Freshwater fishers can learn more about Victoria's wild trout fisheries at a free one-day conference in Mansfield on Saturday, September 21.

Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) CEO Travis Dowling said the annual Talk Wild Trout Conference attracts anglers, scientists, guides and opinion leaders to share the latest in research, fisheries management, habitat improvements, and trout trends.

"Make a weekend of it with friends and family by fishing the High Country on Sunday after you've learnt lots the day before at the conference,"
Travis Dowling said.

The event is jointly hosted by the VFA and the Australian Trout Foundation, supported by fishing licence fees and the Victorian Government's \$96 million Go Fishing and Boating Plan.

This year's keynote address will be provided by fly fishing instructor, author and photojournalist Philip Weigall, who will explore the nuances of Victoria's trout fishery over time. Philip has spent more than 35 years fly fishing for trout throughout south-eastern Australia, and is widely respected as an authority on Victoria's trout fisheries in rivers and lakes.

Terry George, from the Australian Trout Foundation, will explain how we can learn from the past and plan for the future, whilst Mountain Fly guide James Norney's presentation will highlight how environmental restoration plays a vital part in a healthy fishery.

The wellbeing benefits of spending time outdoors will be a topic covered by The Fly Program's Matt Tripet, who will reveal how his company's fly fishing adventures are improving the mental health of men. Similarly impressive work will be shared by Mending Casts, which is a group helping Australians recover from cancer by connecting with nature through fly fishing.

Karen Brooks, who captained Australia's first ever women's fly fishing team in Norway two years ago, is passionate about encouraging more women to cast a line. She'll propose ways we can all be more inclusive to boost female participation.

Dr Jarod Lyon from the Arthur Rylah Institute (DEECA) will outline how trout might be co-managed with native fish in a changing climate, while other talks will examine how agencies and anglers are working together to enhance streams, how the Women in Recreational Fishing and Boating (WIRFAB) network is leading the country to get more females fishing, and what secrets a decade of trout research has revealed.

Panel discussions will accompany sessions with questions from the audience.

The conference will be at the Mansfield Performing Arts Centre, between 9am and 4pm. Tea, coffee and lunch will be provided. Learn more and book a free conference seat at www.vfa.vic.gov.au/talktrout

Media contact: Joel Peterson, 0436 623 647

VRFish Survey of Recreational Fishers

Over a six-week period from May to June 2024, VRFish conducted a comprehensive survey of recreational fishers on their priorities to make fishing better in Victoria.

The survey was conducted to gather the views of Victorian recreational fishers and understand the issues that are deeply important to the recreational fishing community. The survey results will be used to inform VRFish's advocacy plan for the next 12 months and beyond.

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire. The questions collected information on fisher demographics and profile, together with data on fishing satisfaction and advocacy priorities. The survey was open for six weeks between May 7, 2024 and June 17, 2024.

A total of 4,927 people completed the survey. The total population of Victorian recreational fishers is 1,113,506.

Summary of results:

- 90% of respondents were male.
- The most dominant age group of fishers were between 55 - 64 years of age
- Marine and coastal waters were fished most frequently.
- The majority of fishers fished land-based, followed by from a boat.
- Trout and Murray cod were the two most targeted inland species.

Culling out the results for trout fishers we find that while about 56% of all Victorian fishers fished for King George Whiting or Snapper, trout weren't far behind with about 44% giving brown or rainbow trout as their preferred targeted species.

Respondents were asked to rate a range of recreational fishing issues from very important to not important. The top priority for inland fisheries was identified as 'trial new ways for stocking fish'. On a state-wide basis, litter and rubbish around waterways was identified as the most important issue.

Other issues ranked as important included habitat restoration to improve our wild trout fisheries, reciprocal fishing licensing arrangements with NSW, re-snagging of our rivers to provide more homes for fish, and more stocked family fishing lakes close to where anglers live.

A large majority of respondents (about 87%) were on the spectrum of being satisfied with the quality of recreational fishing in Victoria - being either very satisfied, satisfied, or somewhat satisfied.

FLY OF THE MONTH

The F Fly

... a fly from Craig Coltman



This fly was featured in our March 2009 issue. That's a while ago and this fly is an excellent pattern to have in our fly boxes. It is certainly worth another look.

What does the 'F' stand for? Fantastic, or Fabulous? The F Fly is one of the simplest flies to tie. It also travels under a few different names. In the June 2008 issue, John Philbrick gave details of a very similar fly – the CDC San Classic.

Before giving the tying details of the F Fly, it might be worth reading some of the history and properties of CDC. Cul de canard, or CDC, feathers may be used for the tying of tails, bodies, wings and legs of an insect as no other single material may. The versatility of CDC feathers, and therefore their use in fly tying, is unmatched. CDC feathers have inherent qualities that make the artificial fly look alive. By careful use of CDC an imitation fly can have wings that flutter, legs that tremble and gills that move within the current.

The first CDC flies were tied back in the 1920s, but it wasn't until the 1980s that serious international interest in the material was stimulated,

when Slovenian tyer, Marjan Fratnik, introduced his revolutionary F Fly. In the late 1950s, the Frenchman Henri Bresson coined the name 'Cul de Canard' (duck's bum) for his fly pattern tied with duck preen gland feathers. Some thirty years later, Anglo-Americans adopted the abbreviation CDC, and the new appellation has stuck, so the term CDC has become almost universal.

Birds living near water have a preen gland, and the secretions from this gland, which are strongly water-repelling, are spread through the plumage when the birds preen themselves. Thus, as well as being very light, CDC feathers are very buoyant, and flies tied with CDC do not need floatant. In fact, treating CDC dry fly patterns with floatant can ruin their properties and buoyancy.

Let's tie the F Fly

Materials:

Hook: Size 12 – 28, fine wire dry fly hook. (Sizes 14 – 18 are a good starting point)

Thread: Any colour to suit local mayflies or caddis flies. Colours used in descriptions of the fly given in textbooks and magazines include black and various shades of grey, brown and olive.

Body: In many references the body is simply the tying thread covering the hook shank. In other references dyed pheasant tail feathers or very fine dubbing are used.

Wing: Natural grey, white or brown CDC feathers.

Tying Instructions: (for a body of pheasant tail fibres)

Fix the hook in the vice and run the tying thread along the shank from the eye to a point opposite the barb. Catch in four pheasant tail fibres with firm turns of thread.

Allow the waste ends of the feather fibres to lie along the shank and cover them with thread to create an even base for the body. Apply a drop of clear lacquer.

Leave the lacquer to dry until it is slightly tacky. Wind the feather fibres along the hook shank, keeping the turns even.

Continue winding the fibres to form an even body. Secure the loose ends with thread just behind the eye and trim off the excess.

Take two or three small CDC feathers and place them together so that their tips are level. Catch them in as a wing with three firm thread wraps behind the eye.

Position the wing low over the body, then trim off the excess feather with scissors. Secure with further tight thread wraps before tying off with a whip finish.

VFFA 2024 meetings & other activities

September

- 3 Tuesday Fly Tying at the Botanical Art School of Melbourne – 7:00 pm
7 Saturday Trout season opens for Victorian rivers
19 Thursday 2024 Annual General Meeting at 7:30 pm - a Zoom meeting.
22 Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Casting Pool, commencing at 10:30 am
25 Wednesday VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes for some early Spring fishing - 10:00 am till dark. Event co-ordinator - Lyndon Webb (0488 555 724)
26 Thursday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm - a Zoom meeting

October

- 6 Sunday Annual Trip to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishing Club's stocked dams – Event Co-ordinator:
David Hooke (email - dhooke@icloud.com)
17 Thursday General Meeting – 6:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Annual Auction of fly fishing books and equipment
(Meal at 6:00 pm and auction commencing at 7:00 pm)
30 Wednesday Council Meeting – 7:00 pm on Zoom

November

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

December

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

January 2025

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

February 2025

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

March 2025

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