

FLY LINES

Official monthly newsletter of the Victorian Fly Fishers' Association



VICTORIAN
FLY FISHERS'
ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2026



Fifty years a member and eighteen years the editor of Fly Lines: Lyndon Webb collects his plaque and Lifetime Achievement Award at the Annual Dinner, The Cricketers, Port Melbourne.

September Meeting:
the Annual General Meeting
and election of Council

Thursday 17th September
6pm
online via Google Meet

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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Position vacant

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HONORARY LIBRARIAN

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HONORARY EDITOR

Position vacant

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Welcome to Your New Look Fly Lines

from your Council

With Lyndon stepping down, this issue kicks off a new chapter. For years he has turned out something close to a masterpiece, and without doubt one of the premier fly fishing club newsletters anywhere in the world. Big shoes to fill is an understatement. They are so big that nobody was confident or willing enough to step into them.

So Council got creative.

We asked ourselves, what if we could digitally bottle up the Lyndon genius? An AI Lyndon brain that lives on for another hundred years and keeps editing in the style we all know and love.

So here we are. Meet AI Lyndon. He never sleeps, he does not drink coffee, and while he has never picked up a fly rod, he has researched them to the nth degree.

Lyndon could not help himself this issue either, so you will find some of that original magic mixed in with AI Lyndon's spark. If you can pick which is which, let us know.

Now the important bit. Lyndon's most notable effort over the years was getting content out of members, and that needs to continue. That is where you come in. We have put together a simple template for your articles. Write it up, drop it into the template, and email it straight to info@vffa.com.au. Simple.

Let us all pick up where Lyndon left off, keep producing the best fly fishing newsletter there ever was, and stay the envy of every other fly club.

Enjoy your September issue of Fly Lines.

Email your contributions to info@vffa.com.au



From Council

the Annual Dinner, the trout conference, cane on the water and a full season ahead

The absolute highlight of August was our Annual Dinner, held for the first time at The Cricketers in Port Melbourne. I believe it was one of our best.

We recognised a group of members for their years of membership. The following all received their 25 year badges and certificates, either on the night or by mail: Clive Allison, Randall Trethewei, Hugh Foxcroft, Hamish Hughes, Mike Jarvis, Richard Kos, Terry Rogers, Mike Stevens and Peter Whitelaw. We had one 50 year presentation, to Lyndon Webb, who also received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his 50 years as a member and 18 years as editor of Fly Lines. A well deserved acknowledgement, and he is already a Life Member. What a sensational group of long time members we have.

I would personally like to thank the 75 members and guests who made the dinner such a success. A special thanks to Scott Raggatt, who picked the venue, did a lot behind the scenes and MC'd most of the night. To Andrew Fuller, who added humour with a trivia quiz that tested many of us. And not forgetting Rod Hirst, who also did a lot to make the night the fun it was.

A few of our members and I attended the trout conference run by the VFA in Ringwood on 1st August. There were some interesting presentations featuring scientific data showing that our trout population has evolved and is able to survive in our conditions better than their American and European cousins. Tom Jarman gave great insight, sharing tips and fishing seasonal systems. The day also included updates on fisheries management, habitat restoration and angling techniques for lakes, rivers and streams. Joe Dobson also gave a great presentation. Well worth the time spent, and I recommend getting to the next one in 2027.

Sunday 30th August was our cane casting day at the Fairfield Pool. Unfortunately it clashed with soccer grand finals and what looked like a netball carnival, and there were hundreds of cars parked legally, illegally and wherever a vehicle could fit. Some members went home because of the diabolical parking and came back later. Jim Higgs and I parked the other side of the freeway in Kew and walked to the pool. Even so, we still had around 18 practising their casts, most with their cane rods. Peter Clayton had numerous cane rods for sale in

differing conditions, along with several interesting books. I noticed a lot of anglers proudly showing other anglers their prized cane. The parking is a giant problem that we will address, as the large Polytechnic School car park was locked and had only a handful of cars in it. Everyone who turned up enjoyed their time there, and special thanks to Ray Goddard for setting up our gazebo and cooking snags and onions on the barbecue for everyone.



Ray, Mick and Peter enjoying the new marquee.



Rodger "Laser Loops" Muir putting on a clinic.

5th September saw the opening of trout season in our rivers and streams. I want to see pictures of plenty of catches, before they are released, from as many members as we can get on WhatsApp.

17th September is our AGM. It will be virtual, and the details are in the notice that follows.

We will have another practice casting day on 20th September, this time at the Red Tag Pool, and we will make sure it does not clash with any other events.

4th October is the annual day trip to Thorpdale, where we are hosted by the Latrobe Valley club. It is a great day fishing stocked dams in the area, then a barbecue put on by the Latrobe boys, then a large raffle. Be sure to bring plenty of cash, as the proceeds are used to stock the dams. Contact John Spragg if you are coming or need a lift.

15th October is our General Meeting and annual auction. Hugh Maltby has kindly offered to run it. If you have fly fishing items you wish to donate, or items you want a reserve on but would like to auction off, let Hugh know and he will add them to the catalogue. No books, please.

The Warrnambool trip is on again, 6th to 8th November. Contact Hugh Maltby for details if you are interested, but

hurry, as accommodation is limited.

Tuesday 1st December is our Christmas Dinner. Again we are having it at the Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club, at the end of Kerferd Road.

Hayes on Brumbys has already had some interest. Contact John Spragg if you are interested in a great week, as I hear the lakes and rivers are back to where they were a number of years ago. It is always a fun week with Peter.

The Taupo trip arrives Tuesday 2nd March and leaves on 9th March, or the 12th for those really keen. Rodger Muir will release all the details shortly. Again, if you are interested, get in quickly.

Fly fishing is the most fun you can have standing up.
Arnold Gingrich.

Regards and tight loops,

John Spragg



VFFA Annual General Meeting 2026

Thursday 17th September, 6pm, online via Google Meet

Our Annual General Meeting is on Thursday 17th September at 6pm, online via Google Meet. Every member can join, see the meeting and have their say from wherever they happen to be.

It will not go for long, there is no drive into town, and it is the one night of the year where you get to see exactly what your association has been up to. The year in review, where the money has gone and what it is being spent on now, what is coming up for the season ahead, and the chance to ask Council a question or have your say on the things that matter to you.

The association needs a hand

The VFFA is in good health and heading somewhere good. The only thing we are short on is hands.

All Council positions are declared vacant at the AGM. Every member is entitled to nominate for a position and to vote for the nominated applicants.

The Secretary role and the tasks around it need an owner. Lyndon Webb is also stepping down as newsletter editor after doing an outstanding job over many years, so that seat is open too.

John Spragg has agreed to nominate for President, and the rest of your current Council are likely to sign on for another twelve months.

Most of the Council lead busy professional lives, which is exactly why we need a hand. If you are retired, or you just have some time and want to put it somewhere worthwhile, this is something you could really sink your teeth into. Good

company, plenty of laughs, and a genuine say in where the association goes next.

Participation and membership are growing. Now is the best time to get involved and help shape it.

AGM details

Thursday 17th September 2026, 6pm, online via Google Meet.

Video call link: meet.google.com/vea-kfqo-rwq

Or dial (AU) +61 2 9051 4009, PIN 162 923 864#

Have not used Google Meet before? It is very easy. Click the link and follow the prompts. There is a [short tutorial](#) that covers everything you need.

Papers

- [Notice of AGM and agenda](#)
- [Minutes from last year's AGM](#)
- [The Association's Rules and Appointment of Proxy](#)
- [Council nomination form](#)

The nomination form can be filled in on screen and emailed straight back to info@vffa.com.au. No printing, no scanning. Send it in early rather than on the night, as it gives Council time to confirm your proposer and seconder.

If you are weighing it up but are not sure what is involved, have a chat with one of your Council members or with John Spragg. There is no obligation in asking.

We hope to see you online on the 17th.



Lyndon's Web

a regular column from Lyndon Webb

I arrived late at a recent Council meeting, and when I finally located where the Council members had gathered I discovered that the discussion was about some geriatric member who had joined the VFFA some 50 years earlier.

My immediate reaction was: "Good heavens, this bloke must be absolutely ancient!" Then I discovered that the aged member they were talking about was actually myself.

So how on earth did this happen? Did I really join the VFFA in 1976?

In the early 1970s I was working at a teachers' college in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, when the Whitlam Labor Government decided to declare Papua New Guinea an independent country. Up until then it had been an Australian Protectorate.

Things then deteriorated, so we decided to return home to Victoria. I wrote to the Victorian Education Department, was told they would have me back, and was offered a teaching position in Warrnambool, so we settled there.

I soon discovered that Warrnambool had some fabulous trout fishing. I joined the local fly fishing club, which was affiliated with the VFFA, and put in my VFFA member application. That was my connection with the VFFA, some fifty years ago.

But I did not actually have a fly rod at this stage, and they seemed expensive in the local sports stores. So on a trip to Melbourne to visit my parents we called in to Jimmy Allen's and I bought a cheap fibreglass fly rod blank and the necessary fittings.

Now I am a schoolteacher, not a tradesman. I can read books, but my manual skills are primitive. Back in Warrnambool I bought a tube of superglue and managed to glue and assemble all the bits of my new fly rod.

It looked appalling, but it worked. I could cast a fly line with it. I also tried tying my own flies, under the tutelage of the truly brilliant Jim Blakeslee, who had just arrived in Warrnambool from America.

We also discovered a shop in India that sold fly tying items and materials at incredibly cheap prices. I mean, I bought a quite serviceable dry fly cape for about \$5. And the local trout did not seem to mind at all.

Then my son finished his year 12 studies and was accepted into an engineering course at Monash University, so we packed up, sold up, and reluctantly came back to live in Melbourne. I could then of course start attending the monthly VFFA meetings.

How the editing started

I guess the second significant part of my VFFA membership is my 18 years as newsletter editor. How did that happen?

At the Melbourne secondary school where I was working as an assistant principal, one of my responsibilities was preparing a fortnightly newsletter to parents. I recall putting together a draft of my first such newsletter and deciding to run it past a teacher on our staff who also worked as an editor with a Melbourne publishing company that produced a number of popular magazines. She pulled out a fat Texta pen and savaged it. "The first page is atrocious, replace it. The second page is full of syntax and grammar errors, fix them. The third page is pathetic and lame. Re-write it or dump it." And so it continued.

She was brutal, but I was wise enough to appreciate that I could learn a heap about desktop publishing if I took note of what she was saying. I subsequently published a fortnightly school newsletter for a number of years.

About 18 years ago I was about to retire after 44 years of secondary teaching, and in the last few weeks of the year the VFFA monthly newsletter turned up in my mail. It was an A4 sheet folded over, with some writing on three pages and a poorly reproduced black and white photo. My reaction was, "Surely we can do better than this!"

So I phoned the editor, John Philbrick, explained that I had some experience with desktop publishing, and asked if I could assist in some way with the production of the VFFA newsletter. I would happily do some editing or processing of photos if that was helpful. John was a Melbourne based lawyer with chambers in the city, and he replied: "Yes, please come in and we can talk about it."

So over our morning cup of tea in the staffroom the next day I said to the school principal, a good mate: “Michael, you would not mind if I took a couple of hours off tomorrow morning?” He raised his eyebrows. “I have got an appointment to see a barrister in the city.”

Michael exploded and his cup of tea flew everywhere. “Lyndon, what on earth have you done! Can I get the Education Department legal department to help you?”

I rapidly explained that it was all about meeting a fellow fishing club member to discuss our monthly newsletter.

So in due course I arrived at John Philbrick’s chambers in the city. I thought I was there to offer my help with some basic editing, but it quickly became obvious that John had a totally different plan. He was very keen to offload the job, so I was suddenly the new VFFA editor. No interviews, no Council discussion. Just a very rapid promotion.

Where it went from there

Things changed, I hope for the better. Our newsletter got fatter, and was then printed in colour. Initially it was posted out to members as a magazine, but the cost of that became prohibitive, so now it is a PDF file emailed to recipients.

It goes to all members of course, and also to the secretaries of other local fly fishing clubs, and we get theirs. We now have keen recipients and readers in South Africa, the United Kingdom, Japan, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

Members might well say: “How come these freeloaders get our newsletters?”

Two responses. First, some of these overseas recipients also provide lots of fabulous articles that I have had permission to use in our newsletters. As an example, the famous South African fly fisher Tom Sutcliffe, who sadly died a few years ago, was a brilliant and prolific writer on fly fishing issues, and his material appears in our newsletters on occasions, with Tom’s permission.

Secondly, the VFFA is now not just another one of Melbourne’s many fly fishing clubs. Our newsletters are read, and the VFFA is recognised overseas as a significant Australian fly fishing organisation. So the countless great articles that our members regularly submit, describing our Australian fly fishing exploits and experiences, are read by interested fly fishers in several other places. I personally think this is a good thing.



SEASONAL FISHING INTELLIGENCE

Word on the Water

from Andrew Fuller

T rout opening has been and gone, and if the first weekend is anything to go by, we are in for a good season.

I spent the weekend out of Merrijig with a couple of VFFA members. Early on opening day the river was high and carrying a fair bit of colour, which made things hard work. But as it cleared through the day the fishing improved dramatically, and by late afternoon it was red hot. Squirmies and brightly coloured flies were the ticket.



Member Rob Scambler with a healthy Delatite brownie.

The Goulburn. The Goulburn got its regular stonker stocking in the lead up to opening, and plenty of those big

dopey fish were caught. Swinging streamers was easily the most productive method over the weekend. They are not subtle fish, but they pull hard and they are good fun.

Small streams. The Murrindindi fished really well. King Parrot Creek produced a cracking caddis hatch late on the Sunday afternoon of opening, and had fish rising straight away. The warm weather we are getting has spurred the fishing on quite early in the season. Insect activity is well ahead of where it normally sits.

The lakes. Rivers get all the limelight while opening is still fresh, but it is quite often the lakes that deserve the attention. This is arguably the best time of year to be fishing our Western Victorian lakes. Newlyn and Moorabool have started to fire up in a big way, with trout to 3 lb coming out of both. They are few and far between amongst the smaller recent stockies, but they are there. Lake Wendouree should really start to fire from here. Out in the west, Lake Bullen Merri has been the standout. Early spring is also a great time to head further west and explore water like the Hopkins and the Merri. From all reports, both are fishing quite well.

Something a bit different. If you are after a different flavour to your local fishing this early season, have a look at the West Gippsland streams. The Latrobe, the Loch, the Tanjil and the Toorong all hold a lot of fish, and it is some of the most beautiful country in Victoria.

Get on WhatsApp. If you are not already in our WhatsApp group, you should be. There is plenty coming up, including a Howqua trip that new member Rory is putting together for Grand Final weekend. The WhatsApp group is the best place to go to start planning a trip with fellow members.

The season is in full swing. Get out there and enjoy yourself.



FLY OF THE MONTH

*Crippled Pheasant Tail Emerger**from Richard Kos**The finished fly in the vice.*

A simple emerger that sits low in the film with the abdomen hanging below the surface, imitating a mayfly that has not made it out of the shuck. The bleached deer hair wing keeps it visible in broken water and low light, and the red hotspot gives fish something to key on.

MATERIALS

HOOK	curved shank emerger or Klinkhammer style, size 12 to 16
THREAD 1	fluoro red 8/0
THREAD 2	black or brown 8/0
TAIL	natural pheasant tail fibres
BODY	natural pheasant tail fibres
RIB	brown or copper wire
WING	bleached deer hair
HACKLE	natural brown cock

TYING SEQUENCE

- 1 Start with the fluoro red thread and build a small hotspot at the bend. Keep it tidy and do not let it creep down. Tie off and cut away.
- 2 Attach your black or brown thread just in front of the hotspot.
- 3 Tie in 6 to 8 strands of pheasant tail for the tail, a tad shorter than the shank.
- 4 Tie in a generous bunch of pheasant tail for the body, then your wire at the same point.
- 5 Wrap the pheasant tail forward in even turns. Take your time, an even taper makes the fly.
- 6 Follow with open turns of wire the opposite way. This locks the body in and gives that segmented look.
- 7 Stack a small bunch of bleached deer hair and tie it in on top of the hook, tips forward over the eye. A complete loop around the hair first helps keep it together.
- 8 Spread the tie in over roughly a third of the shank rather than one spot. That gives a flat bed for the hackle.
- 9 Clip the butts to length.
- 10 Tie in a natural brown cock hackle at the back of the deer hair bed.
- 11 Wrap forward with touching turns to just short of the eye.
- 12 Tie off, trim the excess and whip finish behind the eye.

On the water

Fish it in the film on its own during a hatch, or hang it off the back of a dry as the point fly. It is at its best on flat water when trout refuse a standard dun, and the deer hair gives you enough to track in a bit of chop.

CLUB TRIPS, COURSES & EVENTS

VFFA Celebration

Annual Dinner 2026: a night to remember



Lots of smiles at this year's Annual Dinner.

Seventy five members packed into The Cricketers in Port Melbourne on Thursday 20th August for our Annual Dinner, and what a night it turned out to be.

Izzy and the team at The Cricketers looked after us. Glasses stayed full, the meals were outstanding and the service never missed a beat. All that for fifty bucks a head is a credit to Council, who managed to pull off a great venue with real ambience without blowing the budget.



The staff at The Cricketers were absolutely outstanding.

Once everyone worked out Hirsty's seating plan and found their tables, the night got underway. Spraggy opened proceedings, welcomed members and guests, and set the tone with a bit of light comedy before handing over to Scotty Raggatt as MC. Scotty kept things moving all night and presented our 25 year members with pins and certificates.



Terry Rogers reflecting on his 25 years as a member.

The standout was Lyndon Webb, recognised for 50 years of membership and for his long service on Council producing Fly Lines. Lyndon told the story of how John Philbrick talked him into the editor's job, and how it grew from a simple two page newsletter into the monthly booklet that used to land in your letterbox, and more recently your inbox as a PDF. He spoke about the international readers he built up over the years, including some genuinely big names in the sport, and how he turned readership into content by getting those same readers to contribute articles. That is a big part of why the quality has stayed so high for so long. Considering the production value Lyndon delivered, it is remarkable how little it cost the association. Lyndon has now stepped down from the role, and we cover what is next for the newsletter further down.



Lyndon makes his way to the stage to collect his 50 year plaque.

After the awards and the obligatory photos, mains came out and Andrew Fuller took the mic to run through how the Tasmanian trout season is shaping up. Andrew covered some of the best early season tailing trout options and the flies worth carrying. Recent trout seasons have been patchy by Tasmanian standards, and Andrew's message was clear: do not just fish the usual spots, get out and have a good look around. He rated Lake Burbury on the west coast as home to the best wind lane fishing in the state, something he reckons you need to experience to really understand. The fish are not easy, but casting to a hundred trout in a morning is a good time whether you are connecting or not.

Scotty Raggatt was up next, drawing on years of regular trips to the Snowy Mountains, mostly focused on the rivers. A few in the room walked away with some spots Scott looked less than thrilled to be giving up. Scott's trips tend to be more physical than most, so he spent time on safety, particularly the

risks of fishing alone. With the NSW season opening in October, he had the room fired up for a trip down there.



Scott Raggatt on the Snowy Mountains rivers, with safety front of mind.

Special guest Mick Harron then talked us through fly fishing in the North East. Working out of The Flyfisher Local in Yea, Mick fishes every vein of water he can find chasing trout. He explained how dynamic the Goulburn River is, with trout regularly pushing out of the main river and into the smallest feeder streams. When the Goulburn feels quiet, that is often exactly what is happening. He also noted the fish were not sitting on the edges this season, so working the middle of the river paid off, easy from a drift boat but a different proposition on foot. Mick touched on a productive winter chasing cod on Eildon, with trout sometimes rising and boiling on smelt while the cod fishing was on, and other days nothing at all. That is Eildon for you. He rated last season better than average, which is a good sign heading into this one. If you are up that way, drop into The Flyfisher Local in Yea and have a chat with Mick, it is well worth the visit.



Andrew Fuller on the Tasmanian season ahead.

Dessert came out and trivia kicked off. Kossy needed a quick tutorial, having never played before, but picked it up fast and cleaned up on the fly tying questions. The Woolly Buggers and Copper John tables tied for the win on 9 out of 14, and both walked away with two bottles of wine that did not last long.

With rain drumming on the tin roof and the room in full swing, Andrew had to fight the microphone for volume, which had a few members convinced he was about to break into karaoke on the song lyric question. He held it together, though one more red might have tipped the balance. There is always next year.



A full house at The Cricketers, with rain on the tin roof and the room in full swing.

Spraggy closed out the night, thanking everyone and flagging the upcoming AGM where we will elect a new Council. The association is in great shape right now, which makes this the perfect time to put your hand up and help shape where it goes next. Plenty of the longest standing members in the room said it was the best VFFA function they had been to. The reason is simple. It was fun. That is the whole point of fly fishing, and the whole point of being part of this association.



The Window in the Waves

a postscript to the Annual Dinner trivia, from Andrew Fuller

One of the questions at our Annual Dinner trivia was this: John Philbrick is widely publicised as having developed what style of fishing first in the Highlands of Tasmania? The answer we were after, and the one most tables got, was polaroiding.

Andrew Mossman collared me straight after the trivia and said the word “first” was doing a bit of heavy lifting there. He then went home and checked John Brookes’ book, which confirmed his memory.

In the 1930s Brookes fished regularly with Malcolm Gillies. They started out using Crooke’s smoked glass sunglasses, not polaroids, simply to see better into the water. Then in the late 1930s Gillies imported the first Polaroid glasses into Australia, and he and Brookes were using them from that point on. Page 162 of Brookes’ book sums it up, including this line from Gillies’ own catalogue of the early 1930s:

Dark glasses are extremely useful in keeping away the ultra violet rays from the eyes. Besides one can see farther into the water as the pupil of the eye is more open and admits more of the light rays of low intensity from below the water. A headache can often be avoided by their use.

Brookes reckoned he had a natural advantage polaroiding because he was tall, at least according to David Scholes. What surprised both of them was how slow fly fishers were to take it up once the glasses became available again after the war. Scholes covers it himself in *Fly Fisher in Tasmania*, writing about using polaroids in the 1950s.

So where does that leave John Philbrick? Jim Allen, who has done plenty over the years to publicise John’s polaroiding, puts it better than we could:

I’ve written before that I regard John as the father of modern day fly fishing with polarised glasses. It wasn’t that he discovered seeing through or into water with them, but all that had been written previously was about looking down from elevation or seeing into calm

water. John discovered that trout could be seen in rough water; the ‘window in the waves’ as he put it. In my view, he thereby revolutionised fishing in the many shallow lagoons of the Western Lakes in the highlands of Tasmania.



John Philbrick sporting some early polarised sunglasses.

That is the distinction worth making. Gillies and Brookes got the glasses here first and were using them on Tasmanian water in the late 1930s. John Philbrick worked out what you could really do with them, and changed how we fish the Western Lakes in the process.

So our trivia answer stands, with an asterisk. Polaroiding in Australia goes back to Malcolm Gillies and John Brookes. Polaroiding as we know it today, spotting fish in a chop rather than only in flat calm, is John Philbrick’s.

Thanks to Andrew Mossman for the correction and the references, and to Jim Allen for the context.



LVFF/VFFA Dam Day, Thorpdale

Sunday 4th October 2026

The Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers have invited VFFA members down to fish with them on Sunday 4th October, and it is a good one to get to.

The LVFF stock a number of large dams on private farms around Thorpdale, water most of us would never get a look at otherwise. Their members have generously offered to host and guide us for the day. We fish through the morning, come together for a barbecue at lunch, then head back out for the afternoon.



Past President David Hooke with a magnificent 7½ lb brown from one of the Thorpdale dams.

Where and when

Meet at Thorpdale Pioneer Park, opposite the bakery, at 9am for a 9.15am departure to the dams.

Lunch

The LVFF will put on a barbecue in the Thorpdale gardens. Bring your own drinks.

Cost

No entry fee. There will be a raffle over lunch to raise money for restocking the dams, so bring some cash along.

What to bring

A 5 or 6 weight outfit is ideal. Full length waders are not needed, though thigh waders are worth wearing for a bit of snake protection. Sunglasses, brimmed hat, sunscreen and a wet weather jacket just in case.

Registration

Let John Spragg know by Friday 25th September at john@bellingham-marine.com.au if you are coming, so our hosts can sort out guiding and catering numbers.

Event coordinator

John Spragg. John is happy to provide transport to and from the event if anyone needs a lift, just mention it when you register.



Millbrook Lakes

Thursday 8th October 2026

Members are invited on a guided day on the lakes at Millbrook, out past Ballan on the Old Melbourne Road. It is private water, well stocked, and fished from the bank, so it suits everyone from newer members through to those who just want a solid day chasing good fish without a long drive.

We fish from 9am through to 6pm with guides on hand all day.



As well as the regular trout, Millbrook is full of these hard fighting tigers.

Where and when

Meet at 2054 Old Melbourne Road, Millbrook at 9am. Drive yourself. There is good mobile coverage on site and the going is easy underfoot, so it is not a physically demanding day.

Cost

\$300 per person for the full guided day. Payment is due by Tuesday 6th October to the VFFA account, BSB 182512, account 960547289. Please put your name in the reference so we can match it up.

What to bring

Bring your own lunch and drinks for the day. Waders are strongly recommended, mostly for a bit of snake protection around the banks. A net is worth having too.

Registration

Registrations close Tuesday 15th September. Let John Spragg know at john@bellingham-marine.com.au or 0407 555 621. Numbers need to be locked in early so the guiding can be organised, so do not sit on this one.

Event coordinator

John Spragg, 0407 555 621. Notice issued 8th September 2026.



VFFA Annual Auction

our General Meeting and auction night, Thursday 15th October, 6.30pm at The Kelvin Club

It is that time of year again. Our annual auction is one of the most popular nights on the VFFA calendar and always pulls a good crowd.

We are now looking for donations of fly fishing gear to go under the hammer. Rods, reels, lines, vests, flies, fly boxes, fly tying gear, boots and waders, and anything else a fly fisher might bid on. No books this year, and please, no boots or waders that are past their best.

How it works

Items donated outright: 20 per cent of the winning bid goes to the association. Items with a reserve: if the item sells above reserve, 20 per cent of the total winning bid goes to the association and the rest comes back to you.

Money raised goes straight back into running the club and supporting members.



Hughie in full flight.

Hugh Maltby is running the gavel again and is putting the lots together now. If you have got gear sitting in the shed that deserves a better life, get in touch with Hugh at redntag@hotmail.com so it can go in the catalogue.

A full list of lots will go out to members before the night. We hope you can make it.



The 2026 Warrnambool Trip

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th November, from Hugh Maltby

Our annual trip to Warrnambool is happening again in November, where we will be hosted by our friends from the Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club and will have the opportunity to fish the district's fabulous trout streams, including the Merri, the Mount Emu, the Hopkins and the Moyne.

These rivers offer a variety of fishing to some very large brown trout. We will be guided in groups of two on the Saturday, and will return in the evening to Jim and Trish Blakeslee's fabulous Napa Merri Vineyard to enjoy a wonderful meal prepared by Jim and Trish and the local members. This is the highlight of the trip and is always a truly delightful event. A donation of \$30 per person is required to cover the costs, and bring your own alcohol.

The weekend will commence with our arrival at the Surfside Park caravan park on the Friday night, when we will then head off to Bojangles Pizza Bar and restaurant for dinner, again bring your own alcohol. Saturday is the opportunity to enjoy the fabulous local fishing and then the meal at the Blakeslees'. Sunday is free.

The four rivers in Warrnambool have traditionally offered fabulous fishing over the years, and spring is a good time to be there and enjoy the fishing that is available, guided by some very experienced local members. I would extend a special invitation to recently joined members, and to members who have never experienced the fishing in this district, to take the opportunity to fish some fabulous new water.



Peter Whitelaw got the chocolates last year with this superb brown.

Accommodation is limited, so do not delay. Contact Hugh Maltby at redhtag@hotmail.com to secure your place.



Notice of Event: Taupo, New Zealand

Waitahanui Lodge, Lake Taupo, March 2027

A week at Waitahanui Lodge, on the shores of Lake Taupo, at the height of the brown trout season. Nymph or wet line fishing on the local rivers and lakes, in groups or individually, during the day and the night, and sharing the stories of the day over dinner in the Boiler Room at the lodge.

Fifteen positions are available.



The reason we keep going back: a Taupo district brown from the 2026 trip.

Dates

Arrive Tuesday 2nd March 2027 in the morning, depart either Tuesday 9th March 2027 or Friday 12th March 2027, so either seven days or ten days.

Additional days have been added to the 2027 trip to accommodate those who wish to spend more time fishing the waters around Taupo, and to allow as many as possible to access guided still water fishing, which proved a very popular guiding choice on the 2026 trip. The dates have been chosen

to give participants the opportunity to access Lake Otamangakau, which is generally closed to fishing for the month of February.

Where

Waitahanui Lodge, 116 State Highway One, Waitahanui, Taupo RD 2, 3378, New Zealand.

Cost

Seven days: AU\$1,700 with a guided river day, or AU\$1,745 with a guided still water day. Ten days: AU\$2,430 with a guided river day, or AU\$2,475 with a guided still water day.

This provides share accommodation, linen including towel and face washer, breakfast and dinner, a daily fishing update, and one day of guided fishing in pairs with a local guide. The amount is payable on or before 1st February 2027. Payment arrangements in the form of a bank account or card facility will be provided when places are confirmed.

Travel

You will need to make your own travel arrangements to and from Waitahanui, and arrange any travel insurance cover you feel necessary. Taupo Airport is 5 km north of the lodge, and Air New Zealand has daily flights from Auckland of about an hour. You are also responsible for arranging your transport while in New Zealand. By road, the lodge is approximately 3.5 hours from either Auckland or Wellington. Once participants are confirmed, arrangements can be made to share hire vehicles. Vehicles can be hired from either Taupo or Auckland airport, and four wheel drive vehicles are not required.



Waitahanui browns run thick through March, and the lodge sits 120 metres from the mouth of the river.

Accommodation, meals and drinks

Five Kiwi Bach cabins at Waitahanui Lodge are available, each with several bedrooms and two or three separate beds. You will be expected to share a cabin with several other members for the week, and depending on numbers you may be required to share a room. All cabin facilities are shared for the duration of your stay.

Two course evening meals will be provided by an external caterer, served in the Boiler Room at 7pm each evening. A continental breakfast will be supplied, with a range of cereals, toast, juice, coffee and tea. Lunch will be your responsibility each day. Bring your own wine, beer and spirits.

Fishing locations

Waitahanui Lodge is on the lakefront of Lake Taupo, 120 metres from the mouth of the Waitahanui River, the Rip. Upstream of the mouth, the river offers some 5 to 6 km of fishable water, all readily accessible on well defined tracks, with few sections of terrain more than moderate in difficulty.

Other well known trout waters within a 40 minute drive include the Hinemaiaia River, 12 km south, the Tauranga-Taupo River, 25 km south, and the Tongariro River, 40 km south. As well as Lake Taupo, local still water fisheries include Lakes Rotoaira, Kuratau and Otamangakau. For those wishing to travel a little further, Lake Rotorua and associated waters are 75 km north, the headwaters of the Whanganui River 100 km south west, and the Rangitikei River 135 km south.

Licences

A current Taupo District fishing licence is required, and can be [bought online](#) before you leave through the Department of Conservation. Those wishing to fish outside the Taupo district will need a separate licence for adjoining fishing districts, available through [Fish and Game](#). Note that there is a separate category of licence for non-residents of New Zealand.

Equipment and safety

Strongly recommended: waders and wading boots (hard sole boots only, felt and absorbent soles are not permitted), gaiters for wet wading, brimmed hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, insect repellent, wading staff, personal locator beacon, torch, mobile phone in a waterproof container, handheld UHF radio and a first aid kit. For those interested in fishing the Waitahanui River delta, the Rip, a lifejacket is strongly recommended.

All fishing gear, particularly waders and boots, will need to be clean and dry before it is allowed into New Zealand. A UHF radio is essential if you intend to fish out of direct sight of other participants. For remote locations, carry a handheld UHF radio, water, any prescribed medicines you need, and a mobile phone where coverage allows. Coverage is good in most townships and on major highways, but can be poor or non-existent in more remote fishing areas.

Weather varies from very hot to very cold, and it can be windy and wet. An updated forecast will be at the lodge every morning.

Guiding

The cost of the event includes one day of guided fishing with another participant, either river fishing or, at a small additional cost, still water fishing from a boat. In your email registering your intent to participate, please say which you want. If you would like guided fishing in addition to the included VFFA day, say so as well. Depending on demand, Rodger will endeavour to arrange guides for pairs of anglers on a daily basis. That additional guiding costs NZ\$1,100 per day per pair for river fishing and NZ\$1,200 per day per pair for boat still water fishing, in both cases in addition to and independent of the VFFA cost above.

How to register

Members wishing to participate should email the event coordinator registering their intent to attend. Please make sure your email clearly sets out whether you will participate for seven days or ten days, whether you would prefer still water or river guided fishing on your VFFA guided day, and whether you are seeking additional guided fishing days and if so how many river or still water days you want.

A number of members have already indicated they wish to participate. Those members need to respond to this notice confirming they still intend to participate, and provide the information above.

- Register your intent to participate as soon as you can, with the information above.
- Do not book travel to New Zealand until you receive VFFA confirmation.
- Check that your passport will be current for travel as of March 2027. If not, begin the renewal process now.
- VFFA will then advise whether you have a place in the group trip.
- Book your travel once you have that confirmation, allowing for travel to and from Taupo at both ends.
- Pay your share of costs to the VFFA on or before 1st February 2027.
- Complete and sign the Event Registration Form and get it to Rodger before you arrive in New Zealand.

The Event Registration Form is on the VFFA website under Club Forms in [The Club Room](#). Download it, complete and sign it, and email or post it to the event coordinator.

Event coordinator: Rodger Muir, 0414 253 890, muirrodger@gmail.com, 501/25 Windsor Terrace, Williamstown 3016. Notice dated 31st August 2026.



Being Better: Leaders and Tippets

by Peter Hayes, first published at FlyStream

I am regularly asked to explain leaders and tippets. So here we go on some of the basics, which I hope will help clear up the confusion.

Level leaders

As the name suggests, a level leader is constant thickness from the fly line to the fly.

On Tasmanian lakes, for example, we often use a 5 metre level leader with two droppers. Many anglers use 0.25 mm copolymer material like Maxima for this. All casting is done downwind with a relatively wide casting loop. Level leaders are a good option for downwind loch style fishing with droppers.

Now for a little bit of sophistication. Half a lifetime ago, I fished in the World Fly Fishing Championships in England. The lakes were heavily stocked with thumping big, fat, strong rainbows on steroids. Break offs were common, and at least once or twice a day you would hook two fish on the one leader. When that happened we would often find an entire dropper completely broken off.

Our English guide at the time, Martin Cottis, taught us to use a 0.25 mm level leader of 15 feet, then two 30 cm droppers of weaker 0.22 mm tied into the main leader with a surgeon's knot. Now, if a fish took the point fly, it was held on 0.25 mm. Any other trout that broke off would only break at the fly knot, leaving the dropper ready for quickly tying on another fly so you could get fishing again.

We frequently use a level leader when fishing wet flies or nymphs, sometimes on floating lines with a longer leader, but more commonly on intermediate or sinking lines with a shorter one. In either case it is best to use the thinnest diameter you think you can get away with. Fluorocarbon is often preferable because it sinks more quickly than copolymer. If you only have a floating line, you can still fish very effectively with a nymph slowly figure eight retrieved on a level leader of, say, 0.20 mm fluorocarbon.

Saltwater fish are not fussy about presentation, so a level piece of fluorocarbon is common. To fish for Australian salmon I would be happy with a level 8 kg, 1.5 metre fluorocarbon leader.

Tapered leaders, factory made

A factory made tapered leader is what you would expect to be given if you walked into a fly shop and asked for a leader.

They come from a variety of manufacturers, in a variety of lengths and tapers to suit given styles of fishing. Because most leaders are made for the United States market, they are often labelled by length first, in feet, followed by an X number that designates the tippet end thickness. So, 9 feet 3X, or 12 feet 4X.

The butt end will often have a factory tied perfection loop, meant to be loop to loop to your fly line. I personally do not like a loop to loop join, because the perfection knot often snags or catches in the rod tip. Instead, I advise my clients to cut the loop off and tie a simple three turn half blood knot to the fly line loop. It is strong, easy, and a much more streamlined connection.

I see no use at all for a tapered fluorocarbon leader in a freshwater environment.

Tippet

The tippet is the terminal piece of line the fly is tied to. The other end is usually tied to your tapered leader. Good anglers would have three or four different diameters of tippet material to choose from, designated by that X system. These spools are usually made from one of two materials, fluorocarbon or copolymer.

When you have just bought a spool of tippet material, pull half a metre or so off the spool in the shop and give it a steady pull with both hands. You are looking to make sure it is not rotten, weakened by UV light or just dying of old age. At the end of each season I chuck all my tippet out. Every spool of it. Shout yourself some new stuff at the start of the next season.

A long time ago a company in New York and a company in London together invented a plastic they called nylon. They wanted to turn a hard block of plastic into very fine string that could be used to make fishing line, or more importantly, stockings. They heated the solid block and pushed it through a very small hole drilled in a steel die block. The hole had a diameter of eleven thousandths of an inch. So 0.011 inches became the base diameter.

So if a leader says 5X on the packet, you subtract 5 from that base of 11 thousandths, and the leader will have a tippet of 0.006 inches, or 0.152 mm. I would personally prefer to have the diameter in millimetres printed on the packet and the spool.

Diameter, or X number, against strength

The X number can only tell us the diameter of the leader. Different brands, even different tippet types within a brand, can have the exact same diameter of line yet feature significant differences in breaking strain.

So when you buy a spool of, say, 4X tippet, be sure to also compare breaking strains of the different makes and models. Not all 4X or 3X is created equal. Personally, I would rather buy 3 kg 4X than 2.5 kg 4X.

Having said that, I often wonder about the accuracy of the breaking strains manufacturers quote. A breaking strength without knots, which is how they quote it, can be different to the strength with a couple of knots in the equation. For me it is a trial and error thing. What I do know after 28 years of guiding is that Maxima copolymer is the most bullet proof tippet I have used.

If you are new to fly fishing, then simply go and buy yourself some 4 lb, 5 lb and 6 lb Maxima. Maxima do not use the X system on their spools. Instead they quote a breaking strain and a diameter in millimetres. If anything, I think they understate their breaking strains.

If you are fishing for harder to catch and smarter fish, then maybe you need one of the more high tech, stronger for

diameter tippets. Shop around, there are heaps of them on the market with big claims and often big prices. Trial and error will eventually weed out the not so suitable ones and you will find one that works for you. Just be aware that most of these tippets are fragile if mistreated. Tie all knots carefully and wet them well before you slowly and smoothly cinch them down. Check often for wind knots if you think you have thrown a tailing loop or two, and get rid of them.

Fluorocarbon

Fluorocarbon is usually more expensive. Its density is greater than water, so it will sink if it is below the surface film. That is ideal if you want to fish wet flies, or if you want to tie a nymph dropper from the bend of a dry fly.

Fluorocarbon is supposed to be invisible in water. Well, I can see it in the water, so I figure the fish can possibly also see it. Be careful when you tie knots in it, as they are much more inclined to cut or break because of the tough casing on the material.

I personally do not think it is a good idea to use fluorocarbon as a material for dry fly fishing. It can sink dries, and it will sink deeply in the water if you leave your flies on the water for too long. That can result in missed strikes, especially if you use a short and soft action rod. In shallow water, you can be pulling your flies through weed on every pick up cast.

Copolymer, or nylon

This is your everyday run of the mill material, which most people use for dry fly fishing. My advice is not to buy anything that does not have a system for clipping the spools together, or a decent system for retaining the stuff on the spool.



What Fly Fishing Is Worth to Victoria

and why that matters to us

Most of us fly fish for the reasons you would expect. A morning on the Goulburn, a good hatch, the company. Not because we are thinking about GDP.

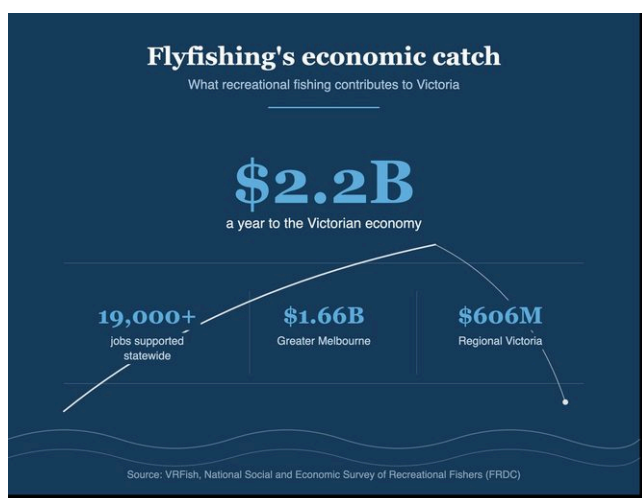
But it turns out our sport carries some serious economic weight, and the numbers are worth knowing next time someone asks why the club matters, or why that tackle shop down the road is worth supporting.

The bigger picture

Recreational fishing is one of the most widely enjoyed pastimes in the country. Roughly one in five Australians wet a line each year, and fly fishing sits inside that much larger recreational fishing world.

Between 2018 and 2021, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation ran the first thorough national study into the value of recreational fishing since 2001. It looked at everything from health and social benefits through to the hard economic contribution, and the results were bigger than most people would guess.

Nationally, recreational fishing generates more than \$11 billion a year and supports over 100,000 jobs. That is not just rods, reels and flies. It is fuel, accommodation, meals, boat repairs, and every other bit of spending that happens around a fishing trip.



What recreational fishing contributes to Victoria each year.

Victoria's slice of it

Closer to home, the numbers are just as striking. Victoria's recreational fishing sector supports more than 19,000 jobs and contributes over \$2.2 billion a year to the state economy.

Split that between city and country and you get \$1.66 billion and around 13,600 jobs in Greater Melbourne, against \$606 million and around 6,100 jobs in regional Victoria. Direct spending tends to land in the regions we travel to fish, while the flow on economic activity, wages, supplies and related business tends to concentrate in the cities.

Looking specifically at direct impact, recreational fishing supported 6,397 jobs in Victoria in 2019-20 across charters, tackle retail, and the accommodation and hospitality businesses that fishers use on trips. That direct activity then supported a further 13,338 jobs through wages, supply purchases and other flow on demand.

Of the state's \$2.27 billion total contribution, \$539 million came from direct spending and \$1.73 billion came from everything that spending set off downstream.

Why this matters for fly fishers

Over a million Victorians go fishing every year, and fly fishing is a meaningful part of that picture, particularly in the trout waters we all know well. The Goulburn, the Delatite, the high country streams, they all draw people, and those people spend money in towns that rely on it.

That is the practical case for supporting local fly fishing businesses, guides, clubs and events. Every rod bought locally, every guided day booked, every night in a regional pub after a day on the water, is part of an economic engine that keeps regional communities and specialist shops alive.

It is also the case for looking after the resource. Healthy rivers and healthy trout populations are not just good for us, they are good for the towns that depend on us turning up.

VRFish has represented Victoria's recreational fishers for more than thirty years, and their ongoing work is part of why this data exists and why our voice carries weight when it comes to river management, access and fisheries policy.

Source: VRFish, drawing on the National Social and Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers, FRDC, 2018 to 2021.

BEYOND YOUR NEXT FISHING DAY

Conservation, Access & Advocacy

news from the Australian Trout Foundation, VRFish and the VFA

Australian Trout Foundation update

The ATF have been busy on the rivers this month, and they need a hand.



AUSTRALIAN TROUT FOUNDATION

Bridging Waters 2.0 wrapped up on the Ovens River below Porepunkah on 23rd August, with around 20 volunteers from Alpine Anglers, Wangaratta Fly Fishers and Upper Ovens Landcare planting 500 trees and shrubs. Big thanks to NECMA for the trees and guards, and to Upper Ovens Landcare for the barbecue.

Next up is Jubilee Bridge on Livingstone Creek near Omeo, 9th to 11th September. The ATF are after volunteers to plant 2000 trees and shrubs, and they have sweetened the deal with \$300 in prize money for the biggest fish caught over the three days, carp excluded. It is a remote spot with real travel and camping involved, so the prizes are a thank you for the extra effort. Free camping is available at the Omeo Angling Club clubrooms, with the caravan park also an option. Lunch is provided each day, and there is time set aside for fishing too.

Registration matters for catering and camping numbers, so anyone keen should register through the ATF before heading up.

Trout season opened on 5th September, with Opening Day festivals at Eildon and Ballarat from 9am to 2pm. Good winter rains have rivers looking healthier than last year, so it should be a solid start.

If you are not already a member, joining the ATF gets you involved in this kind of work directly. Details for both membership and the Jubilee Bridge registration are on their website.

Outdoor Recreation Bill passes, new body FHOV on the way

VRFish has welcomed the passing of the Outdoor Recreation Bill, which paves the way for a new authority called Fishing, Hunting, Outdoors Victoria, or FHOV.

FHOV will take over from the Victorian Fisheries Authority and the Game Management Authority, bringing fisheries and game management under one roof. It will also cover boating and camping, with other outdoor activities set to follow.

VRFish Chair Rob Loats said the peak body is looking forward to working with the new department to keep improving fishing for Victorians and to push for better access to public land for everyone who enjoys the outdoors.

More than a million Victorians fish recreationally, and plenty of them are into other outdoor pursuits that will now fall under FHOV's remit too.

One of the bigger changes is the new Land and Aquatic Access Panel, which will feed advice back to the Government on community access to public land. Access has long been a sticking point for fishers, and Loats sees this as a real chance to tackle some of the bigger issues that have been raised over the years.

The changes also reflect just how much recreational fishing means to the state. It contributes \$8.14 billion in direct and indirect output to the Victorian economy each year and supports 36,000 jobs.

VRFish has been representing Victoria's recreational fishers for thirty years, and continues to promote responsible use of the outdoors through its Naturally Vic campaign, encouraging people to leave the bush and waterways better than they found them.

A thousand stonkers for the metro lakes

Victorian rivers opened to trout anglers on Saturday 5th September. As well as the streams, Victorian anglers are in for an interesting spring, with 1,000 trophy sized rainbow trout stocked into 17 metropolitan lakes across the city.

Victorian Fisheries Authority CEO Travis Dowling said the metro stonker stockings have proved immensely popular with anglers since they began in 2021. “From Albert Park Lake and Karkarook Lake to Lilydale Lake and Yarrambat Lake, the stockings provide excellent fishing opportunities close to home,” Mr Dowling said. “Many of the lakes offer easy shore based access, walking tracks, playgrounds and picnic facilities, making them ideal destinations for families looking to enjoy the outdoors.”

These ex-broodstock rainbows, weighing up to 4 kg each, have been released into family fishing lakes close to Melbourne. “The stocking gives metro fishers the chance to target the same ex-broodstock stonker trout that are released into iconic trout fisheries such as the Eildon Pondage and Goulburn River for the opening of the trout season each year,” Mr Dowling said.

The initiative forms part of Victoria’s fish stocking program, funded by recreational fishing licence fees and the

Victorian Government’s \$96 million package to improve fishing, boating, piers and aquaculture. Victoria stocks more fish than all other states and territories combined.

Large trout were also stocked around Eildon as part of the free Goulburn Fishing Festival on 5th September, with the free Ballarat Fishing Festival held the same day at Lake Wendouree. Each featured kids’ fishing clinics, opportunities to release fish and a range of family friendly activities.

The 17 waters, and their share of the 1,000 fish:

Albert Park Lake 120, Karkarook Lake at Moorabbin 150, Yarrambat Lake 120, Pakenham Lake 80, Quarry Lake at Ferntree Gully 60, Caulfield Racetrack Lake 50, Casey Fields Lake 40, Guru Nanak Lake at Berwick Springs 40, Rowville Lakes, being Sutton and Hill Lakes, 40, Don Lake at Healesville 30, Emerald Lake 30, Navan Park Lake at Melton 30, Roxburgh Park Lakes 30, Spavin Drive Lake at Sunbury 30, and Garfield Lake 10.



CVFFC Report

the August 2026 General Meeting of the Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs

The Council of Victorian Fly Fishing Clubs met by Zoom on 3rd August, with President Doug Braham in the chair. Here is what matters to VFFA members.

Getting new people into fly fishing

The big talking point was how to bring more women and younger people into clubs. Council has a \$7,000 Stronger Fishing Clubs Grant from the VFA and wants to spend part of it running Introduction to Fly Fishing days with member clubs.

A few clubs are already doing this well. Ballarat's come and try days pull a good crowd, and their next one is on 12th September. Red Tag runs a paid four week development program that had 18 participants this year, mostly in the 27 to 40 bracket, and found people stuck with it because they had paid. Sunshine is planning something aimed at school aged kids in January.

Council is looking at a pilot day at Karkarook Park with Mornington and possibly Southern, plus a larger event under the CVFFC banner at the Red Tag Pool. Banners are being quoted. If the VFFA wants in on this, now is the time to say so.

New Zealand licence fees

Off the back of John Spragg's work for the VFFA, Council will write to NZ Fish and Game about the higher licence fees charged to Australian fly fishers. The VFFA's earlier approach through free trade channels is understood to have been knocked back. Doug is drafting the letter for executive approval.

Middle Goulburn thermal pollution

Warm water discharge from AGL into the Goulburn below Eildon is still a live concern. The river has been fishing poorly, with small and stocked fish largely gone and only bigger fish holding on. Ian Gibb reported it is not an immediate problem while the water is cold, but it will bite again from December. Council wants VRFish involved in getting AGL to the table.

Loombah Weir Macquarie perch project

Year one of the three year project is done. The trout capture and translocation process worked well, though numbers were down on expectations because of low inflows. Council is chasing a date for the Macquarie perch release.

Fisheries officers

Council has asked VRFish to keep the reinstatement of cut VFA Fisheries Officer positions on its state election wishlist. It was already on the CVFFC's own list.

Odds and ends

Geelong and District Casting Club has been formally accepted as a CVFFC member and promptly won the Bruhns Shield. Stuart Murphy is progressing the Australian Fly Fishing Centre, a long term push to build a national database and communication network for fly fishing clubs. Wangaratta is running Zoom fly tying sessions on the Council's account.

Council currently represents around 1,100 individual club members and is in sound financial shape at \$14,483.

Diary date: the CVFFC AGM is Saturday 24th October, in person in Melbourne with a Zoom option and lunch provided. Venue to be confirmed.



Monaro Acclimatisation Society Update

from Rod Whiteway, Kydra Kybeyan Branch, New South Wales

In last year's newsletter I said I was cautiously optimistic about the coming season, based on reasonable rainfall in the autumn and early winter and the Bureau's forecast of above average spring rainfall.

Well, that optimism was certainly misplaced. For the second year in a row we had low spring rainfall, in this case only 60 mm for the four month period September to December. Also, as in the previous year, none of the storm rain that in the past we associated with November and December. As I have said before, lower spring rainfall is in line with the findings of the analysis of Kydra rainfall from 1989 to 2020 done by Fred Von Reibnitz and friends, which showed a statistically significant downward trend in spring rainfall.

Spring rainfall is critical in setting up streams for the heat of summer. Some respite was provided by reasonable falls from late January into March, but since then the rainfall has dropped away again, and in the three months to June we only got 50 mm. It is funny, or maybe not, how drought can sneak up on you. Total rainfall for 1925-26 was only 549 mm, the second low year following the 513 mm received in 24-25. Streams and dams are now low and falling. Not a good situation to be in with an El Nino forecast for late winter and spring. But then again that assumes the Bureau is better at forecasting potential disasters than optimistic scenarios.

The fishing last season was disappointing for me. It was dominated by the weather and by falling and low stream levels. True, there was some good fishing early on in spring, but struggling streams seem to adversely affect my commitment and enjoyment. The season from my perspective was also fickle. Many of my angling days lacked hatching insects, and consequently opportunities to see moving fish, only for me to talk to other anglers who regaled me with reports of the hatches and fish activity and their catches the day before, often on the same water. I may be losing it of course, but there did seem to be a lot of days when a cold wind, often an easterly, shut down activity. Maybe I should have been on the water earlier before the easterlies set in, but my habit has been to be on the water at around 11am at the earliest, and it has usually been a successful one.

Before Christmas the Bobundara had completely stopped, with long stretches of bare creek bed between pools. This

persisted until storm rains in March got the creek flowing again, but left us with another problem. The storm rains were heavy enough to put vegetable matter into the streams but not heavy enough to clear it out. The result was a number of pools almost completely covered in a mass of rotting vegetation so thick that weeds started to grow on their surfaces. Even in pools that were not affected the water quality was less than ideal, and some fish that had made it through the dry succumbed at this stage, probably due to low oxygen levels. I took the new hatchery manager, Paul Sheather, out to the Bobundara at this stage and we both considered that it was unstockable. The MacLaughlin also stopped, but only for a short time, and it appears that fish losses were minimal. Neither the Kybeyan nor the Kydra stopped, but both got very low before the relief provided by the late summer and early autumn rain.

Late in the season I had a few short sessions on both the Kydra and the Kybeyan, popping out from the shed whenever conditions seemed all right, and each provided at least one nice fish. One session stood out. It was in the old pump pool on the Kybeyan just below the hall. You will know it, as it is the head of the pool extending down from the hall. Mark Sawa had told me that he had lost a nice fish in there earlier in the season. It is not overly deep but has nice shade and a lot of rocks and weed beds. The water was low on the day I fished it, and I wondered if the fish were still in there or had sought greater refuge elsewhere.

But I sat there watching, and after a while what I assumed was a small fish started sipping something along the opposite bank. I was mildly interested until it ventured over to my side and I got a good look at it through my polaroids. It was definitely big. I had on a black spinner pattern as there were a few around. It was coming back my way, so I put my fly 20 cm out from my bank, and as soon as it saw it, it charged over and ate it. It turned out to be a large male brown around 4 lb in the old scale, slightly skinny but not too bad. I thought this had to be the fish Mark had lost, and if so, it demonstrated the territorial propensity of brown trout. It had survived its interaction with Mark and me, and who knows how many other anglers, and low water levels, and yet still called the pool his home. He is still there for all I know, waiting for you to come along and spoil his day next season.

If you do, then respect his resilience and put him back unharmed, please.

Recruitment

Firstly, we have a new hatchery manager. Mitch Elkins, who did a great job overseeing the construction of the new hatchery shed and managing the hatchery through a series of difficult years, decided to move on to a position with Local Land Services in the Hunter region. Mitch produced quality fish and was easy to work with. We wish him well in his new endeavours.

The new manager is Paul Sheather. Paul has had years of experience as the assistant manager at Dutton Hatchery, and has been appointed for an initial period of six months until the position is advertised. I have already had the pleasure of working with Paul on the recent fingerling stockings and found him to be pragmatic and flexible in his approach to stocking. He has just overseen the construction of the new grow out facility at the hatchery, funded by the \$5 million grant from Snowy Hydro negotiated by the MAS, and the commencement of next season's production cycle. He has a firm idea about where he wants the hatchery to go, and has a new hatchery shed and grow out facility to work with.

Unfortunately, once again we did not get our full allocation of browns this season. Unlike last year this was not because of a lack of fish to strip from a poor run up the Thredbo River, but a result of losses of fish in the hatchery due to high water temperatures in the Thredbo, the source of the hatchery's water. The result was that there were no rainbow fingerlings available for stream stockings, though Lakes Eucumbene and Jindabyne got their full complement, while branches only got half of their allocations of brown fingerlings. The lower numbers were partly offset by the brown fingerlings' increased size, because of being held over in the hatchery until March. Our branch was also fortunate in that we received around 120 yearling browns. I arranged for these to be divided between the Golden Mile of the Kybayan and the Kydra above the Kybayan road bridge.

By the time we stocked the fingerlings, conditions in the streams had improved. The Bobundara still had some pools clogged with organic matter, but it was running quite well and water quality was good, so we were able to stock it. Because of the bans on stocking around 10 km of the Maclaughlin, and the fact that we had the 120 yearlings in the Kybayan and Kydra, we put a larger share of the fingerlings into the Maclaughlin as close to the upper and lower limits of the banned stretch as we could. The remaining fish were divided

equally between the Kybayan and the Kydra in all the usual stocking locations. Conditions were ideal for stocking, and I expect them to do well, though it is in the lap of the gods as to what next season will bring.

Conditions were not so ideal for spawning. While streams were flowing reasonably, the drop off in rainfall in late autumn and early winter meant there was not a fresh to enable fish to easily move around. Consequently there were not as many redds in the usual sites, such as the head of the Golden Mile, but this could have been partly offset by a few more adventitious redds in sites requiring less movement. This was particularly evident above and below the Kybayan hall. The spawning was also more spread out in time, as if fish were holding out for a fresh. I found fewer redds than normal in the Kydra, which supports my feeling that the numbers of large fish are down. Also concerning is that I have not been seeing many small fish either. I think the cormorant plague of two seasons ago depleted the fish population in the Kydra dramatically. I hope that our stocking this autumn will help fill the gap.

Other matters

In last year's newsletter I mentioned that Fisheries were looking for a suitable site to establish a refuge population of Macquarie perch, to guard against the possibility of redbfin entering the Murrumbidgee because of the Snowy Hydro 2 development. They were looking at sites in the Badja, Kybayan and Kydra. Our preference was for a site on the Badja downstream from the Countagany Braidwood Road bridge, as it would not conflict with any trout fishery. I am pleased to say that this was the chosen site, and it has been heavily stocked with Macquarie perch over the past season.

Also in last year's newsletter I alluded to the fact that we should be encouraging anglers to practise catch and release in the Maclaughlin, particularly in the areas we are banned from stocking, to protect remaining stocks. We asked Fisheries whether they would support our request to encourage catch and release and supply some signage. They refused, citing a lack of regulation covering what we requested. The MAS then decided to have our own signs made and to put them up on access points to the river in the stretch we are banned from stocking. President Kerry Pfeiffer organised the signs, at some expense to the MAS I must say, and they were installed by members. The signs clearly state the reason for catch and release, including that it is a direct result of the effect the stocking bans may have on the trout population.

I also mentioned last year that the Federal Government had announced a review of the Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Deed, the document that sets the amount of water that can be allocated to environmental flows in the Snowy montane streams including the Murrumbidgee. I am pleased to say that the MAS had a representative on the Stakeholder Advisory Group that fed into the Independent Review Panel.

Guy Verney has worked tirelessly to represent the views of the MAS and of anglers in general, and I thank him for his dedication to the task. The Independent Review Panel released its draft report in mid July for public consultation by 4th August. So by the time you receive this newsletter the opportunity for comment will be past, but one can only hope that the report was strongly endorsed by the community and that the Government accepts its recommendations. The recommendations were good news for the Upper Murrumbidgee: a new deed, more water at the right time, catchment restoration, stronger governance, sustainable shared funding, and stronger compliance and enforcement. Of particular interest to anglers, it recommended that environmental flows be increased to at least 30 per cent of annual inflows to Tantangara Dam, staged, with an immediate increase to 23 per cent. Compare that to the 2 per cent currently forecast for this year.

The coming season

It is hard to be too positive about the coming season on the Monaro. The Bureau is forecasting an El Nino for the late winter and spring, with reduced chance of rain and higher temperatures. This might be bearable if the water table was in better shape, but the low rainfall of the past two seasons has had its effect, and as of now, late July, the streams are low. I do not think I have ever seen the Kydra's level dropping in the middle of winter as much as it is now. We need serious heavy rain to restore the water table, or else streams will be devastated before Christmas. Storm rains from around November could give some respite, but have been notable by their absence over the past two years. Storms from January onward may come too late. Of course, as the Bureau says, a forecast of El Nino does not necessarily mean it will be dry everywhere, just a reduced chance of rain overall. We may get lucky.

The Bobundara was hardest hit by last season's dry conditions and will likely be very low on fish of any size,

though hopefully the fish we stocked will grow quickly. The MacLaughlin still has a reasonable population of big fish, as it only stopped flowing for a short time. However, I saw very few small fish in the Mac last season, and I am still concerned that the stocking bans are hollowing out the fish population. Neither the Kybeyan nor the Kydra stopped flowing, although both got very low.

From what I saw towards the end of the season, and from spawning observations, I think the Kybeyan still has reasonable numbers of fish, though it could vary from place to place. For example, numbers of spawning fish were down at the head of the Golden Mile, but better than usual above and below the hall. The Kydra could be a different story. As I mentioned earlier, numbers appear to be down and it will take a season, if conditions allow, for numbers to recover.

The opening

The Annual General Meeting and barbecue will be held on Sunday 4th October, commencing at midday at the Kybeyan Hall. Bring your own food and drink. It is on the Sunday rather than the Saturday, as NSW Fisheries are holding another open day at Gaden Hatchery on the Saturday, including the cutting of the ribbon on the new hatchery and grow out facility.

Last year's meeting returned Kerry Pfeiffer as President, Rob Edwards as Treasurer, and me as Secretary. Dues for the coming year remain at \$20. If you cannot pay at the meeting, the Treasurer has requested that if possible you pay by electronic transfer to the National Australia Bank, account name Monaro Acclimatisation Society, Kydra Kybeyan Branch, BSB 082-535, account number 50-962 5740, reference 2026 Subs, with the names of the members remitting. Or pay by cheque made out to Monaro Acclimatisation Society Kydra Kybeyan Branch and sent to Kydra Kybeyan Branch, care of Rob Edwards, PO Box 2, Nimmitabel NSW 2631.

Hopefully most of you will get this by email. If you did not, it is because I do not have your email address. If you have one, you can send it to me.

Yours in angling,

Rod Whiteway

9 Thompson Drive, Tathra NSW 2550. Phone 02 6494 5758, rodney.whiteway@bigpond.com



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THE MONTHS AHEAD AT A GLANCE

Upcoming Events & Activities

unless otherwise notified, meetings are at The Kelvin Club, 14 to 30 Melbourne Place

September

Saturday 5th	Trout season opens for Victorian rivers and streams	<i>Victoria</i>
Wednesday 9th to Friday 11th	ATF Jubilee Bridge tree planting, with fishing prizes; register with the ATF	<i>Livingstone Creek, near Omeo</i>
Thursday 17th	Annual General Meeting and election of Council, 6pm	<i>Online, via Google Meet</i>
Sunday 20th	President's Casting Day, from 11am	<i>The Red Tag Pool</i>
Thursday 24th	Council Meeting, 6.30 for 7pm	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>

October

Sunday 4th	LVFF/VFFA Dam Day: fishing, barbecue and raffle as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers; register with John Spragg by 25th September	<i>Thorpdale</i>
Thursday 8th	Guided day on the lakes at Millbrook, \$300 per person; registrations close 15th September	<i>Millbrook, past Ballan</i>
Thursday 15th	General Meeting and Annual Auction, 6.30pm; donations to Hugh Maltby	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
Thursday 22nd	Council Meeting, 6.30 for 7pm	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
Saturday 24th	CVFFC Annual General Meeting, in person with a Zoom option, lunch provided	<i>Melbourne, venue to be confirmed</i>

November

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th	Annual trip to Warrnambool; contact Hugh Maltby, accommodation is limited	<i>Warrnambool</i>
Thursday 12th	Council Meeting, 6.30 for 7pm, the last for the year	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
Thursday 19th	General Meeting, 6.30pm, guest speaker to be confirmed	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>

THE MONTHS AHEAD AT A GLANCE

Upcoming Events & Activities

*continued***December**

Tuesday 1st	Christmas Dinner, guest speaker Travis Dowling, CEO of the VFA	<i>Albert Park Yachting & Angling Club</i>
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January 2027

Wednesday 27th	First Council Meeting for 2027, 6.30 for 7pm	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
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Sunday 31st January to Saturday 6th February	Hayes on Brumbys; register interest with John Spragg	<i>Tasmania</i>
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February 2027

Thursday 11th	Council Meeting, 6.30 for 7pm	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
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Thursday 18th	General Meeting, 7.30pm: Liars' Night, members report on their summer fishing	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
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March 2027

Tuesday 2nd March to Friday 12th March	VFFA trip to Taupo; coordinator Rodger Muir	<i>Waitahanui Lodge, New Zealand</i>
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Wednesday 10th	VFFA members visit Millbrook Lakes; coordinator John Spragg	<i>Millbrook, past Ballan</i>
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Thursday 11th	Council Meeting, 6.30 for 7pm	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
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Thursday 18th	General Meeting, 7.30pm, guest speaker to be confirmed	<i>The Kelvin Club</i>
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Friday 19th to Sunday 21st	Big River Weekend; convenor John Pilkington, 0407 356 676	<i>Enoch's Point</i>
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