



Lynton G. Barr

Post Office Box 23,

Swan Reach 3903

Phone 03 5156 4674

Email www.delbarr@bigpond.com

Around the Jetties 2

Fishing News

This is the second news sheet now called "Around the Jetties" providing fishing news that is probably not readily available to all anglers. The first issue featured information on tracking Black Bream and from the responses, it created considerable interest, and as a result of that response I determined to provide an occasional news sheet on issues that perhaps are not given publicity. This is just printed as a personal commentary on local fishing matters, and hopefully anglers might find some of this information interesting. If you have a friend who might like a copy of this little publication, just let me know and I will add them to the small mailing list.

Survival Rates for Black Bream

In the Lakes Entrance Post of the 28th December an article appeared taken from a press release from Dr Peter Appleford, Director of Fisheries Victoria. This press release and article stated that only 3% of the black bream caught by commercial fishers in mesh nets do not survive. Seventy percent of the black bream caught were over 28cm, and of the 30% released 27% survived. I won't go into details of the methods used in this study, as I would accept this finding, however it is somewhat different from previous statements of commercial fishermen and this is puzzling.

Commercial fishermen had previously indicated the deathrate in mesh nets was much higher as shown in the following statement in the same paper on the 12th November 2003 when a commercial fisherman speaking of bream is quoted as saying **"that over the summer period (due possibly to increased water temperatures) there is a higher mortality rate for fish caught in gill nets. This was estimated at around 40% of netted fish."**

Now they can't both be right and I wonder whether the Fisheries Victoria study was undertaken in the summer when the commercial fisherman quoted suggested a 40% deathrate due to warm water temperatures. Interestingly at the Black Bream Stock Assessment in 2005, the only two commercial fishermen present suggested the deathrate could be as high as 60%. Something just does not seem right, and I wonder at this discrepancy at the deathrate of bream in mesh nets.

This matter of the black bream deathrate in mesh nets was raised at the 2004 Stock assessment and I raised the same issue in my book "The Challenge to Save a Fighting Fish- The Black Bream of the Gippsland Lakes" Published 2005

Another offer to Commercial Fishermen

I am informed that a meeting took place some two or three weeks ago when another offer was discussed by the remaining commercial fishermen. I am unaware of the results of this offer or who made the offer, but I do know that some commercial fishermen expressed interest. It is worth remembering that prior to 1998 there were 32 licence holders in the Gippsland Lakes and this has now been reduced to 10 with successive offers that have been funded from the General Angling Licence and not all these ten licences are operated full time.

Gippsland Lakes Fishing Statistics

Whilst these statistics have not yet been published I was able to obtain a photo copy of the Gippsland Lakes Statistics with the kind assistance of the Catch and Effort Unit at

Queenscliff. These are the latest statistics and a number of interesting facts emerge from these figures.

Dusky Flathead

The commercial catch of dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes in 2005/6 of 47 tonnes was the second largest in the last twenty-eight years, and indicates a complete change in the last decade. In the years 1990/91 to 1999/2000 the commercial catch averaged less than 2 tonnes per annum. In other words the dusky flathead fishery has dramatically changed in the Gippsland Lakes, and stocks should suggest a greatly improved recreational fishery in coming years, however we do not know the effect of the commercial fishery on this species and whether this is sustainable, remembering the bag limit of 5 fish per day for recreational anglers. We also need to remember this that bag limit was urgently introduced due to concerns for dusky flathead stocks with the introduction of soft plastics. The big question is whether this fishery can be sustained given there is no limit on the commercial sector catch, and little is known of this species. The return to commercial fishermen for dusky flathead was less than \$3 per kg.

European Carp

The catch of European Carp in the Gippsland Lakes in 2005/6 was 93 tonne, and apart from 1984/5 this was the lowest commercial catch of European Carp in the last twenty-eight years. I contacted Keith Bell whose company runs the commercial carp fishery as I wondered if this low catch was a result of carp numbers being reduced. Keith Bell indicated that this low figure was a direct result of the current drought. Water in Lake Wellington with a current salinity level of 24 parts per million is too salty for carp and these fish have retreated to the rivers. Carp will survive in water up to 19 parts per million, salinity. This current abnormally high salinity level is a direct result of the low inflows from the rivers into the Gippsland Lakes. Currently Bell Industries are sourcing carp from other areas with an expectation that a normal catch in the Gippsland lakes will occur when the drought breaks.

Sandworm

Can you remember back to 1986 when sandworm according to my fishing diary was \$2.40 per box. This last Xmas sandworm reached \$8.00 per box at some outlets. Now I do have some sympathy with a price increase for sandworm given the declining number of bait fishermen and the reduction of sandworm in the Gippsland Lakes but the real question is whether the increase in price is reasonable given the circumstances. In the 1980's the sandworm was unavailable one day per week with the idea this would rest the worm beds, and all commercial bait fishermen agreed to this day of no pumping. Perhaps Fisheries Victoria should look at the long term maintenance of Gippsland Lakes sandworm with a study of the resource and industry. Several top bait fishermen are no longer pumping sandworm because of the small return for a very physical task. The bait situation could get far worse according to some in the industry, and that will only mean higher prices for sandworm.

2005/6 -5 tonnes sandworm were pumped in the Gippsland Lakes valued at \$170,000
This equals a small return of \$34 per kilo to the commercial bait fisherman or \$3.40 per box.
According to my advice each box should contain 100grms of sand worm

Black Bream Stock Assessment

The Black Bream Stock Assessment has been held for a number of years, and it has been an occasion when the commercial fishing industry gets together with representatives of the recreational sector and fisheries scientists to examine and assess the black bream situation. This was an excellent forum, however when the bream stock collapsed 2002/3 and the minimum size was increased to 28cm for the Gippsland Lakes the Commercial sector undoubtedly felt threatened. Their reaction in 2004 and 2005 was to boycott this forum. In 2005 the Fisheries Department held a private meeting with the commercial fishermen, but they did not attend the Stock Assessment, or have any communication with the recreational and community members who attended the assessment. In 2006, Fisheries Victoria did not call for a Stock Assessment, and no meeting to discuss the current state of black bream in the

Gippsland Lakes was held. I regard this as a very sad result, and it would seem to me that Black Bream Stock Assessments should continue, with invitations to the parties involved, and whether they attend or not is up to them. One might argue that Fisheries Victoria have bowed to the commercial sector boycott of black bream stock assessments and in doing so have ignored the recreational fishing community and anglers concern at the decline in this premier sporting fish. **I would hope VRFish representing recreational anglers would protest strongly at the dropping of the Black Bream Stock Assessment and perhaps we should also look at an assessment of dusky flathead in the Gippsland lakes.** Of course with no stock assessment the current status of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes is largely hidden from the recreational angling community.

Current Status of Black Bream in The Gippsland Lakes

The best guideline to the current status of Black Bream in the Gippsland Lakes is the commercial catch statistics published annually

Compare the record year for the black bream commercial catch 1983/4 with the current situation, and remember it is suggested the recreational catch probably equals the commercial catch.

<p>Commercial catch of Black Bream in 1983/4= 446 tonnes Commercial Catch of Black bream in 2002/3= 28 tonnes</p>
--

When one looks at these statistics it is not hard to understand why it is difficult for recreational anglers to catch black bream in the local rivers or the Gippsland Lakes, and there is no marked indication it is getting better.

<p>Latest Unpublished Figure- The 2005/6 commercial Black Bream Catch in the Gippsland Lakes was 37 tonnes, valued at \$386 000 or \$10.44 per kg.</p>

This of course indicates only minimal improvement in the black bream commercial catch since 2002/3.

Catch and Release

Fisheries researcher Simon Conran reported at the 2004 Black Bream Stock Assessment that his research had shown that a shallow hooked bream, carefully released by a recreational angler had a survival rate of 98% after a detailed study involving 1300 black bream in the Glenelg River. A deep hooked fish with the line carefully cut, has a survival rate of around 70%, and the hook would dissolve in the fish in a short amount of time. It was hoped at the Stock Assessment that this information could be released through an advertisement showing the correct procedure to release a fish on television in rural areas at holiday time. Unfortunately this has not occurred but it is an option that should be examined..

Well Worth a Look

Paddle Steamer Curlip

Recently I inspected an exciting project associated with our waterways. In 1890 the little paddle steamer Curlip was built to ply its trade on the Snowy River mainly from the mouth of the estuary to Orbost. This little steamer was 42'6" in length with a 6'10" beam and was powered by a 6hp steam engine. In February 1919 it was washed out to sea overnight during a flood on the Snowy, and was lost, just one of many boats lost on this coast. An exciting project being undertaken at the moment by a group of Orbost citizens led by Max Reynolds, is the building of a replica of the Curlip. This paddle steamer when built will be 65ft in length, flat bottomed and will carry 55 passengers. The boat is being built in the old Orbost Butter Factory using local timber, by a voluntary working group of enthusiastic locals under the guidance of shipwright Bill Jones. Gil Richardson, grandson of the original builder of the Curlip, Samuel Richardson is part of this team. The framework of this boat is almost

complete and it is expected it will be launched in two years. Students from Orbost Secondary College are doing up an old steam engine imported from England, and this will be installed in the steamer. Funding has been received from both State and Federal Government Departments for this project. An interesting aspect will be the move of this 65ft boat, which will weigh over 30 tonnes to the Broddrib River for launching. This will be a sight to behold and the Curlip will be a great addition to our waterways. If you happen to be passing through Orbost do drop in and have a look at this project. The building site is open for inspection from Wednesday to Sunday 10am to 4.00pm. Entry is free and the project gives an indication of the wooden boat building skills of the last century. Its well worth the drive to Orbost, to see this construction, and talk to the boat builders.

Just a thought- Can you imagine turning a 65ft boat on the Broddrib River.

I have written this project up in my page "Around the Waterways" in the Fur and Feather Magazine

Travelling Carp

The new fishways constructed on the Murray River locks to provide fish with the ability to move past locks, are revealing movements of fish in the Murray system according to the National Carp Task Force. Over 1700 tagged fish have been detected migrating through the new fishways, and one tagged carp moved from below Lock 1 to Torrumbarry Weir a distance of 1400kms. Other carp from Lock 1 were detected at Locks 7,8, and 9 or 400kms upstream. This gives an indication of the movements of carp and how they readily spread through our river systems remembering they were first released in Gippsland in the early 1960's.

Definition of Marine and Inland

A week ago I was talking to a friend at the launching ramp at Lake Tyers, when an angler who had been fishing from the jetty approached, and asked how many lines he could legally use in Lake Tyers.

Despite the written assurance of the Director of Fisheries in 2002, there is still no listing or definition of marine and inland waters in the 2006/7 Recreational Fishing Guide, and instead anglers are again advised to refer to the Fisheries Act, 1995 for this information. Few anglers would have access to this document, and this is hardly a user- friendly approach, so I readily understood this chaps problem. **Now the waters regarded as marine are, the Gippsland Lakes, Lake Tyers, the lower lake of Mallacoota Inlet, and Wingan Inlet and one can use four rods in these waters.**

Basically all other waters, rivers and estuaries including Marlo and Tamboon are inland waters and only two rods can be used.

Richard McLaughlan Director Fisheries Victoria in a letter to me on the 30th October 2002 stated

" I have noted the potential confusion that could be generated by not clearly defining the above terms in the guide. This matter will be rectified in future editions."

After five years, we still wait for that confusion to be rectified.

**Good Fishing
Lynton .G Barr**

Thought for this Issue

In 2005/6 twenty one tonnes of Luderick were caught in commercial nets in the Gippsland Lakes, remembering the minimum size for this sporting species is a mere 22cms. (This species is called a blackfish in NSW and is regarded as a premier sought after sporting fish.) The average return to the commercial fisherman for luderick was \$1.23 per kg. Perhaps one might raise the question as to whether this is an economic use of a public resource and an excellent sporting fish.

