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Editorial

General Information for Readers

Initially in the first issue of "Around the Jetties" I sent out 20 copies to people I thought might be interested in material I researched and angling issues raised. I am pleased to say that now circulation has risen to over 45 copies with more people contacting me to obtain copies and even back numbers. As a result I am asking that if you wish to remain on permanent mailing list would you please send me a the attached note, either by email or simply in the mail giving contact details. This will allow the establishment of a permanent mailing list of interested readers. Emailing of "Around the Jetties" is by far the easiest method of communication.

Lynton Barr

Bream Classic at Metung

On the 16th and 17th of June the Bream Classic ventured to Metung. There were 47 teams of two anglers or 94 anglers who fished for 7 hours on Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday 10 fish were weighed in and on Sunday 14 fish. On my calculations, that is 97 hours fishing by the best bream anglers in the country for each fish weighed in. Talking to one official he indicated this was the poorest result he had experienced in this Australia wide fishing classic. Is this an indication of the current status of bream in the Gippsland Lakes?. Some of these anglers travelled to Paynesville and Hollands Landing in their search for fish. Now many of the readers will remember a decade ago in the months of June and July when launching ramps were crowded, and angling clubs booked accommodation months ahead to fish in the local area and all caught black bream in the bountiful rivers. It is worthwhile repeating that despite these indications of a total collapse in the Black Bream stock according to Dr Murray MacDonald, Director of Bays and Inlets, there will not be a Black Bream Stock Assessment this year. In other word there has been no assessment of black bream since 2005 when that meeting was boycotted by commercial fishermen.

Portland and Game Fishing

Following last years outstanding fishing, Portland is again experiencing a game fishing boom according to VRFish. A number of blue fin tuna over 100kgs have been landed in the area, as well as Dorado or Dolphin fish generally regarded as a sub tropical species. This is creating a boom in sport fishing in this area.

New Initiatives for Recreation Anglers.

The following are some of the new initiatives announced by the Minister responsible for Fisheries Joe Helper.

1. Creating a new recreational fishing haven in Westernport Bay by banning all commercial fishing in the bay and buying back the licences at a cost of \$5 million.

2. Providing \$1.2 million to increase the stocking of native fish and trout into Victorian waterways by 30%. This is an additional 430,000 fish to the 1.3million stocked this year.

3. A fish hatchery dedicated to native fish production in Northern Victoria at a cost of \$1.3 million.

These and other initiatives totalling \$42 million are to be highly commended, and they also include \$20 million from boat licence fees to increase boating safety with the development of search and rescue vessels, pontoons and ramps.(It should be remembered that this \$20 million is contributed by boat owners and is costing the Government nothing.) I wonder whether there will be consideration of increasing the single ramp at Metung to a double ramp. This is urgently needed as is illustrated each holiday weekend when long lines of vehicles wait for an opportunity to launch at the single ramp.

Mercury in Fish in the Gippsland Lakes

As mentioned in the last Around the Jetties I had written to the EPA regarding mercury in Gippsland Lake fish following the CSIRO Audit of 1998 which described levels of mercury in sediment was up to 400 times the

recommended level and that the mercury concentrations in fish have risen 40% since the 1980's. The 1980's audit recommended further investigations into mercury sources and levels. I am finding it exceedingly difficult to get an answer on this matter even though I first raised it in 2004 and was given an assurance I would be kept informed of the studies being undertaken. I am currently writing my third letter seeking an answer to the matter of mercury levels in fish of the Gippsland Lakes, and remain hopeful of an answer on this important issue.

Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence

In April it was announced that John Ariens from the Bairnsdale Scuba Club has received a Victorian Coastal Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on the Aware Reef off Cape Conran. His award noted " he has spent thousands of hours in the water surveying wrecks, counting fish, identifying marine invertebrates and working diligently to protect our marine assets." John has spoken to numerous groups and showed his wonderful photographs publicising the beauty of Aware Reef, which is a very special area of our local coast. Congratulations on a wonderful achievement.

Fishcare East Gippsland was commended on its community fishing clinics including its primary school visitation programs.

I must confess I have some doubts at the value of the Ladies Only Free Mystery Fishing Days' run by "East Gippsland Fishcare" and wonder at their overall value but that's a personal observation.

Lake Tyers Fisheries Management Plan.

I have just received my copy of the final Lake Tyers Fisheries reserve management Plan, following its declaration on the 17th May. It would appear that only 7 submissions were received after the publication of the draft in October 2006, and I can see no substantial amendments to the draft from the submissions, and nowhere does it list those who took the time to make a submission.

Four submissions raised the matter that the report **did not use local knowledge** or **angling clubs** to prepare this report. The final draft answers this by saying local and visiting anglers will be part of a periodic creel survey in the future.

The closure of the lime kilns area was raised in two submissions as this was regarded locally as a black bream spawning area. The answer to this concern was to use angler diary and creel surveys to collect information on black bream.

In both the above cases shown, the action cited to be undertaken by Fisheries Victoria is no more than one would expect of a fisheries manager in the normal scope of operations and can hardly be recalled a response to submissions.

I made the comment in the last Around the Jetties that this management plan was drawn up by a group who had almost no real knowledge of Lake Tyers and chaired by a person who publicly stated he had no knowledge of recreational fishing. At no stage was the local angling club or its members consulted other than at the original public meeting to launch the project. The number of submissions received initially (20) written and oral, and the number of submissions (7), relating to the draft, indicate a tragic lack of community involvement in a plan that was to direct the management of this wonderful lake over the next decade.

This current system of developing a management plan and attempting to involve the community urgently needs revision if the recreational fishing community is to be taken as serious partners in such a project.

I would hope that VRFish on behalf of recreational anglers would be entering into discussions with fisheries Victoria to overcome what in many ways is a gloss operation totally lacking in real substance and above all lacking any transparency.

An Interesting report

Teredo Worm

I had a call from one of the readers of Around the Jetties who indicated that a friend fishing near an introduced snag (woody debris) in the Mitchell River stepped on the snag and it broke away as it had been eaten by Teredo worms. I found this an interesting observation and undertook some research. This grub is known as a shipworm, and was responsible for copper sheathing on the early sailing ships and prior to that the hulls of ships were coated with tar to deter this worm. It was certainly present in the Gippsland Lakes and was first noted in 1896 when it began to play havoc with wharves jetties and bridges. The Swan Reach Bridge with its span that lifted to allow boat traffic upstream collapsed in 1925 a victim of the teredo worm. Most in water structures following 1896 and the recognition of the damage this worm could do, meant solid concrete was the preferred option.

Given this background it is not inconceivable that the teredo worm could at this time be into recent woody debris placed in the rivers to increase fish habitat. The worm is infact a mollusc with two small shells on the front of the

body that act as a tool for boring into timber. Actually the teredo worm is an elongated clam rather than a worm, and in the Atlantic Ocean it grows to 2ft in length (60cms).

I have talked to a spokesperson of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority who has confirmed that teredo worms are actually present in the woody debris that has been placed in local rivers. He indicated that the worms eat the timber from the outer tips so that the woody debris sinks lower in the water as it is shortened. He was unable to indicate the life span of the timber placed in the river, however the first logs were placed in the river in 2000, and could well be highly infested with worm. He indicated further that the worm in the rivers was a result of the increasing salinity of the water as they were a marine mollusc rather than a fresh water clam. He also stated that the threat of the Teredo worm was considered when the proposal to place woody debris in local rivers. He expressed concern that anglers may be standing on logs that are unsafe as a result of worm action, so its probably a good idea to steer clear of standing on these logs at any time. It does appear to me that before further logs are placed in the river an assessment should be made of the current status of the timber, and maybe if the logs are determined to have a short life, then perhaps another form of material should be considered that would provide habitat and a long term future.

By the way my fishing reader indicated that the Teredo worm is a wonderful bait for black bream if you can keep it on the line. This reader suggested the use of tyres wired together to create habitat that would be safe from the teredo worm. I understand tests on the use of tyres to create fish habitat are being undertaken in Port Phillip currently. Interestingly a further allocation of \$110,000 was made from the Recreational Fishing Licence in the 2005/6 year for fish habitat in the Mitchell and Tambo River.

Lake Tyers Breakout

As I write this newsletter on the 26th June the rain is pouring outside my window (over 4 inches already) in our second east coast low. Last night Lake Tyers broke out to the sea.. The jetty near the launching ramp was completely under water yesterday and today it is over 4 feet out of water which indicates the vast movement of water. This is major event for anglers and many have been watching from the Tavern parking area as the event developed. From my fishing diaries the lake opened on June 23rd 1998, and then again on the 21st August 2001, but only remained open for a few months. The next major opening was on 26th April 2002, and it remained open for nine months closing in February 2003. If this is a major break out then we should see the lake remain open for quite a few months. We will lose those wonderful snapper who have resided in the lake since 2003, but then we will find many small snapper along with other species entering the lake and replenishing fish stocks and so a new era begins..

Flathead Survival Rates.

These fish are amongst the most targeted species by recreational anglers. In NSW it was estimated that 6 million flathead are released annually. In February 2006, at a Pro- Flathead Tournament, at Wallis Lakes, NSW. 53 anglers took part in a catch and release project using only lures flies or soft plastics. 50% of the fish were tagged and released whilst some were kept in tanks as a control group. During five days of monitoring the survival rate for the hooked and released fish was 96.43% A special note from this project was that knotted landing nets cause more damage to fish than knotless nets.

The conclusion of this project was "that dusky flathead incur minimal immediate and short term mortality after being released from live weigh in tournaments. However risks to fish health could be significantly improved by avoiding knotted landing nets." This comment regarding nets has some significance for all anglers.

Lake Tyers Assessment Day.

On the 20th June an Assessment day was held for Lake Tyers species. This day was organised by Simon Conran of Fisheries Research, and also in attendance was Dr Murray MacDonald director of Bays and Inlets for Victorian Fisheries. A feature of this meeting was the invitation to a number of local anglers to attend this meeting. I was unable to attend, but have talked to several participants and they indicated it was a very worthwhile day. General satisfaction was expressed at the level of fish stocks in Lake Tyers although there appeared to be some gaps in year levels. It was suggested that the opening of the lake would improve the dusky flathead stocks. I was interested in the view that with some species the opening of the lake was important for their survival and this included salmon and leather jackets.

Murray Cod Exhibition

The Gippsland Lakes Art Gallery at Sale will hold an exhibition featuring that great Australian icon the Murray Cod from the 27th August to the 30th September this year. This exhibition will feature works of art by 27 artists

including a photographic exhibition featuring 100 historic photos on the capture of this fish. I am sure anglers would enjoy an hour or so at this exhibition which commences in Swan Hill in the next few days and then tours around Victoria and NSW.

Bones of this great fish were found with the Mungo woman's remains confirming indigenous people have known this fish species for 25,000 years. Explorer Thomas Mitchell was the first person to describe the Murray Cod in 1839.

What's in a Name?

Recently on a trip to the territory, we visited the massive Lake Argyle.(21 times larger than Sydney harbour) I was surprised to see large catfish under the boat, and found out that two commercial fishermen net these fish for the commercial market. Initially when sold as catfish the filets of this fish brought about \$2.00 per kilo. The name of the fish was changed to Silver Cobbler and it is now a sought after fish that brings \$18 per kilo. Could this work for carp??

Carp and Inflows into The Gippsland Lakes.

As massive quantities of fresh water flows from the rivers into the Gippsland Lakes, large carp will accompany this water into the normally saline lakes. It has even been known that some carp will go out through the entrance with the fresh water. When the fresh flow decreases the carp will suddenly find themselves isolated in saline water and die, and as a result we will almost certainly see large numbers of carp dead on the fringes of the Gippsland Lakes. Carp will survive in the Gippsland Lakes as long as the salinity of the water is less than 20 parts per thousand. Thus they enter the lakes with the fresh water and die as the fresh dissipates and the water returns to its normal saline levels. By the way in a national opinion poll in the UK carp were voted the most popular fish for recreational angling.

That's all for now, and do remember to let me know if you wish to now be on the permanent mailing list for "Around the Jetties". If you have an email number then we can email the newsletter to you and of course this saves some postage costs.

Good fishing
LYNTON BARR

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AUTHOR AND PUBLICATION ARE NOTED.**

Cut off and return.....to **Lynton Barr**
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