

Lynton.G.Barr
P.O.Box 23
Swan Reach 3903
Victoria
Phone 03 5156 4674
Email- delbarr@bigpond.com

Around the Jetties 6

An East Gippsland Anglers Newsletter

Editorial

The permanent mailing list has now closed and only anglers or clubs recommended by current readers will be added to the mailing list. Thank you to those who were able to provide email addresses as it makes it much easier than handling hard copies. It appears we now have in excess of 70 readers. Thank you also to the many who provided positive comments about the material covered in this publication, and a number of readers indicated it is difficult to get such information as is contained in "Around the Jetties" from any other source.

Actually I had hoped that this newsletter would be forwarded when Fisheries Victoria released the draft of the new regulations on bag and size limits for Victorian Fish in the first week in August. *I am now informed that this important document will not be released until probably the first week in October, and there will be sixty days for anglers to respond to the proposed new regulations.* The next newsletter will provide details of this draft document on the catch and size limit information and hopefully will be out in the first week of October. I do urge anglers to read this material carefully and to respond, as this will be your only chance to provide input into these regulations.

Finally if you have a friend who would be interested in being included on the mailing list for this newsletter do give me details and we will include them in any future mailing.

A Heritage Native Fish?

The Eel tailed Catfish

I find it a little hard to understand why we are not seeing a breeding and release program for the eel tailed catfish, which were once so prevalent in the Murray system. I can recall in the early 1960's fishing in the delightful Frenchman's creek to the west of Wentworth and catching large numbers of catfish to 6 pounds. In the last decade I have caught one catfish in the Murray system and this seems to indicate the parlous state of this wonderful fish. When examining the stocking program of Fisheries Victoria over the last ten years, I was surprised to find only 300 catfish had been restocked in the last decade and Native Fish Australia and Wartook Native Fish Hatchery undertook this release. The catfish is considered endangered and anglers can only retain a catfish if caught in the Wimmera River with a bag limit of 2 fish. A paper written by W.T. Trueman and published by Native Fish Australia in 2006 suggests hatcheries can now reliably produce hundreds of thousands of catfish fingerlings. The question then arises why don't we have a program to re-establish this endangered species in the Murray system. Perhaps Native Fish Australia and VRFish representing recreational anglers should be demanding action from Fisheries Victoria in this area. Whilst not a native of Gippsland, I'm sure many anglers with memories of yesteryear would love to see the return of the eel tailed catfish to our northern rivers and streams of the Murray system. Interestingly this is a fish that builds a nest of pebbles and gravel, and after the female releases her eggs and the male fertilizes them, the male then guards the eggs against predators for seven days until they hatch.

Fish and Transmitters

Pirvic project leader, Dr Jeremy Hindell reports that he has no results on the dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes that have been fitted with transmitters. You may remember in September 2006 a grant of \$86,000 from Recreational Fishing License funds was made and announced by the Minister to specifically track dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes. The next down load from transmitters according to Dr Hindell is in September, when he will again dive to the transmitters and connect them to his computer to gain the information on fish movements and he suggests he is looking to some interesting results given the impact of the floods.

Dr Hindell reports that the bream research using transmitters, which began in 2004, has been completed and is just about to be submitted to Fisheries Victoria. He suggests I should contact Fisheries Victoria next month to see if they would be willing to release a copy of the report for public discussion. You may recall in an earlier report one black bream was found to have travelled 3200 kilometres mostly up and down the

Tambo, Nicholson and Mitchell Rivers. (Around the Jetties 1) The final report should provide fascinating information for anglers interested in the movements of black bream. *An interesting interim result for anglers was the discovery that black bream spend 60% of their time in rivers and according to Dr Hindell they appear to use the lakes system to move among rivers.* This finding reinforces the importance of the rivers for recreational anglers, and why few bream are taken in the lake system by anglers. Of course the movement between rivers by bream provides the opportunity for commercial fishermen to set gill nets within 400 metres of river mouths knowing this natural movement bream will assist their catches.

Dr Hindell stated *“bream are thought to have quite specific salinity preferences, especially for spawning. So the input of freshwater to the system and the associated effects of freshwater flow in the salinity profile of the estuary is likely to strongly influence the degree to which bream use the rivers.”*

Comment on the Teredo Worm

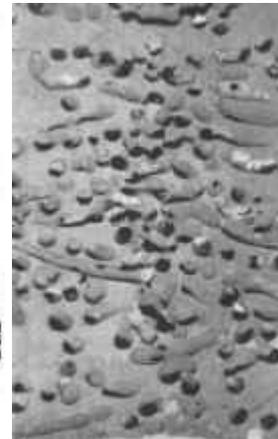
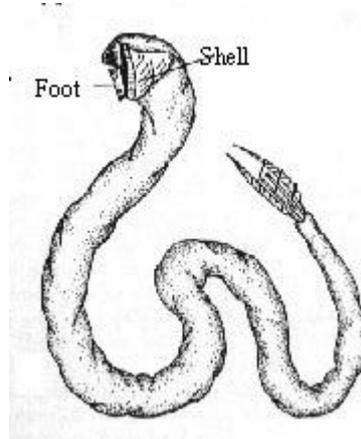
Dr Hindell did provide a comment on the Teredo worm, and indicated that the worm reducing the snag structure was not necessarily bad, as it created more micro-habitat to support other invertebrates and small fish. Dr Hindell had dived around the snag structures previously and made a very positive observation on the fish that were using these structures including mulloway. I wonder when was the last occasion a mulloway was caught in the Tambo River? Dr Hindell is now Senior Estuarine Ecologist at the Arthur Rylah Institute.

A Little More on the Teredo Worm

There has been considerable interest in the story in a previous issue of “Around the Jetties” when the issue of Teredo worm was raised by one of our readers, and we provide a couple of pictures of this mollusk. This creature bores tunnels into timber, and then typically spends their entire life in the tunnels they have bored. In addition to feeding off wood they also filter feed. The two shells enclosing the front end of the body function as a tool for boring. Of added interest Federal Agricultural Minister Peter McGauran has just announced a further \$100,000 for the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to install more log structures in the Tambo and Mitchell Rivers.



Head



Tubes

Dusky Flathead Research Project Mallacoota

Simon Conran, fisheries scientist at Pirvic, has put forward a proposal seeking funding from the Recreational Fishing License funds to conduct research into Dusky Flathead habitat in Mallacoota Inlet. Part of the project will be to determine which habitats eg seagrass/ algae beds, sand/ mud areas, are used by and are important to the various stages of life of the Dusky Flathead and particularly the juveniles. Associated with this program will be the incorporation of information that can be obtained from anglers diaries and the sampling of anglers catches, as to the diet of the larger dusky flathead. This project has been taken up as one of the recommendations of the Mallacoota Management Plan and will have direct relevance to Lake Tyers Dusky Flathead population. Anglers will undoubtedly totally support the funding of this study, given that so little is known about this important species that has such a prominent role in the recreational catch of estuarine anglers.

Pirvic = Primary Industry Research Victoria
(This covers fisheries)

Mercury in Black Bream

Mr Peter Hall, MLC, has taken an interest in this issue raised in recent "Around The Jetties" issue 5. He writes "I have made representations on your behalf, to the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Joe Helper, asking him to advise whether a study into this is feasible." You will remember in issue 5, the Manager of Marine Science in the EPA, Dianne Rose made the point that the mercury levels in fish are likely to increase when events like the recent floods occur. Readers will recall that the 1998 Audit of the Gippsland Lakes previously quoted stated "*there is evidence of rising levels of mercury in fish and sediment concentrations are alarmingly high. The latter are up 400 times the recommended lower sediment guideline concentration.*" This issue assumes greater importance when fish are being caught commercially and marketed to the public.

Lake Tyers Research Project

Congratulations to the Lake Tyers Angling Club, who together with the Catchment Management Authority has sought funds from the Australian Government Enviro Fund, to monitor the ecosystem health of Lake Tyers. The project will be undertaken over 12 months and will involve a complete survey of aquatic habitat in Lake Tyers. It will also mean the establishment of a water quality program, and the collection of fish and

habitat samples for chemical analysis. Dr Jeremy Hindell will be involved in training local volunteers in the use of sophisticated equipment including sonar to record the varying habitats, as well as monitoring water quality. Associated with this will be the collection of fish samples for chemical analysis. The project proposes to establish a baseline on ecosystem health in Lake Tyers. This research is endorsed by Fisheries Victoria and will add further to our understanding of dusky flathead and estuarine environments. The parties to this project are currently awaiting word on funding. Thanks to John Bourke for providing a copy of the application for funding so we could see the interesting project being put forward.

Myth or Fact

In the Lakes Post of December 13th 2006, a former offshore professional fisherman, Ron Grew wrote the following in a letter to the editor. "*It is well known by anglers and former netters that that fish in a bottled up lake (Tyers when it opens) would head out to sea clean themselves up in clean water, and sand of the ocean, and return to the lake with an influx of new fish anxious to enter the lake system.*" I had heard this from several sources and raised the matter of fish leaving the lake to clean up with Dr Murray MacDonald, Manager of Bays and Estuaries with Fisheries Victoria, at the public Lake Tyers Management meeting. Dr MacDonald indicated there is no evidence available to support this theory. I wonder if any firm evidence does exist to support this widely held view? Can you help?

A Short Report

Estuary Perch in the Snowy.

John Douglas, a researcher from Pirvic, together with others undertook work on estuary perch funded by \$80,000 from the General Angling License Fund. This report is due to be printed in October however John Douglas has provided this information from the draft of the final report on estuary perch in the Snowy River.

Kaz Busch and another angler provided the estuary perch for the project catching the project fish, using soft plastics with a barbless hook in one afternoon. This project was commenced in October 2003, when the 22 estuary perch were surgically fitted with acoustic tags. Transmitters to record movements were placed in the Snowy estuary, and as far up the river as Orbost. Fish were tracked for the next twelve months. Some of the findings of general interest to anglers were as follows. The aim of the project was to look at the seasonal and short term movement of estuary perch. It was found no perch moved up the river

as far as Orbost, and most fish spent their time in the estuary. Unexpectedly **there was no seasonal movement of fish**, however estuary perch were static in movement during the day, generally holed up in timber or in deep water and **then became most active at night** when they moved around the estuary. Only two fish were lost during the twelve months of the project, which concluded in October 2004. Of course the final report will be more detailed, but this preliminary information will be of interest to anglers. Special thanks to John Douglas, for providing this preview, prior to the publication of the final report.

Estuary Perch move from non tidal to estuarine waters to spawn, and in the case of the Hopkins River tagged fish have moved 29kms to reach the estuarine water. Fish become mature when males are 26cm in length but females do not reach maturity until they are 31cms. Mature fish are known to lay several hundred thousand eggs. .

Source of Information-A Guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria Cadwallender and Backhouse

(*Bass- a project researching bass in the Snowy is currently being undertaken and I hope a preliminary report on this work will be available for the next newsletter.*)

An Interesting Catch

I was interested in the catch of a tailor of 4.6kgs in Lake Tyers on the 18th August reported with photograph in the Lakes Post. This magnificent fish would seem to indicate that not all tailor returned to the ocean when the lake opened, and this seems to be somewhat different to previous openings. There have been reports of schools of tailor still active in the lake. This fish on the old scale would have weighed 10 pounds five ounces. I recall discussing tailor with a Lake Tyers commercial fisherman, and he indicated that he had caught tailor to 12 pounds in his nets, but we as recreational anglers could only dream of such fish. The reality is now, that recreational anglers may catch such fish, and particularly if a nucleus of these big fish remain in the lake. I recall probably 20 years ago, Geoff Brookes, fishing writer and restaurant owner, writing in a newspaper of a trip to Lake Tyers to fish for tailor. He described this trip as a great sporting occasion, and tailor as one of the most under

estimated sporting fish. I wonder when one of these fish over 10 pounds will be taken on a fly in Lake Tyers. I think it's only a matter of time that the dream of a 12 pound tailor taken on a rod and line will be realised.

Odd Bits

The other day whilst fishing in Lake Tyers in the main lake area we came across a playful seal lying on its back, thoroughly enjoying itself in the middle of the lake and taking little notice of our boat. I was able to take several photographs of this visitor. Peter McDiarmid, charter operator, reported this seal had been following in the wake of the charter boat and having a ball playing in the wash. I have also had a report of two dolphins in the lake. Historically this is interesting as in 1982 three dolphins entered the lake when it opened to the sea and for months were seen all over the lake. When the lake closed they were trapped and had to survive until the next opening. In October 1982 a young dolphin was born and this added to the local interest. In April 1983 this young dolphin was tragically caught in commercial nets shortly after the opening of the commercial fishing season, and died as a result. In 1984 another dolphin was born and a Lake Tyers Dolphin Protection Group was formed which indicated the public interest in these visitors to the lake. In July 1984 the lake again opened and the dolphin family returned to the sea. Historically it is possible we could again see dolphins as part of the Lake Tyers environment.

Warning- It is currently very difficult to launch any boat other than a light tinnie at the Lake Tyers Launching ramp due to sand build up and low water. Mill Point needs care as it is becoming very soft and four wheel drives are probably necessary. The best launching ramp is Fisherman's Landing, but care is also needed due to low water levels.

Believe it or Not!

In the latest Cyprinus Newsletter which covers Australian research on European Carp is the following "Over the past twelve months, researchers have found it very hard to find large numbers of consistent sizes and ages of carp for this research work. They are now looking to raise carp in breeding ponds."

The Curlip Project.

We have reported on the building of the paddle steamer Curlip at Orbost using local timber and the labour of voluntary workers, before in this newsletter. On the 1st August 2007 the Curlip had been under construction for just one year. This building project is taking place in the old Butter factory at Orbost and is well worth a visit. The plan is to put the Curlip in the water on the Brodribb river between July and October next year. To mark this year of construction we include a photograph of the Curlip after twelve months work. Congratulations to all involved.



Meeting with CEO of VRFish

Following the publication of the last Around the Jetties, in which I was critical of VRFish I had a lunch meeting with Chris Collins, the CEO of VRFish. Amongst the items discussed was the current challenge to VRFish as the peak body representing recreational anglers by groups with vested interests in recreational fishing who are not elected by the recreational fishing community.

(I note in recent VRFish minutes the Victorian Tackle Association had withdrawn from VRFish.) Chris was very optimistic about the future of VRFish but admitted communication with anglers was a major problem. He did indicate that a glossy publication "Fishing Lines" was being produced and would be available with annual reports after the annual meeting of VRFish. Chris wondered at the attitude of local anglers who wanted a complete buyout of commercial fishermen. I gave Chris a copy of my book "The Challenge to Save a Fighting Fish -The Black Bream of the Gippsland Lakes" which argues the case for this buy out, given the current status of the black bream stocks.

General Note

In recent weeks there has been publicity that Recfish was seeking to have a surcharge on fishing gear to fund its activities. Recfish is the Australian Recreational Peak Body, and VRFish, the Victorian Peak Body, is a member of Recfish together with the other peak bodies from other states. The Federal Government currently funds Recfish, however they would like to become independent of Federal funding. To this end the Federal Government provided \$200,000 to inquire into methods of gaining financial independence, and the issue of the surcharge was just one of a number of options being examined under this inquiry. Given the initial response of anglers, I doubt that a surcharge is an acceptable option. It probably is most necessary in the long term that both Recfish and VRFish have finances independent from Government handouts, to be truly independent and represent the fishing community with vigour.

**OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHOR
MATERIAL FROM THIS NEWSLETTER MAY BE REPRODUCED BUT IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THE
AUTHOR AND PUBLICATION ARE NOTED.**