

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

November 2007

Around the Jetties 8

An East Gippsland Anglers Newsletter

Editorial

After being concerned at the statement of May 2007 by Paul Mainey that the draft of the catch and Bag limit paper was **“scheduled for release in August 2007”** and several months passed with no further information, I contacted Paul Mainey Deputy Director Strategic Coordination and Policy of Fisheries Victoria, and have received up to date information from Paul, by return mail. In his email he indicated that the **Catch and Bag Limit draft will not be released until February 2008**, and there will still be a 60-day period available for public comment. Paul stated the delay is due to the size and complexity of the regulations and delays caused by workloads within the Office of Parliamentary Council. A case will be put to the Minister to extend the current regulations given that the current regulations expire in March 2008. I do thank Paul Mainey for directly providing this information. Anglers can now look forward to obtaining a copy of the new size and bag limits as well as other regulations and having sixty days to comment upon them in February. I understand the definition of Inland and Marine waters an issue raised in this publication will be examined in these new regulations. As a result of the above information the next “Around the Jetties 9” will be in February 2008, and it will feature the new proposed regulations including catch and bag limit recommendations? Robert Pierce president of VRFish has retired at the recent annual general meeting. Thanks are due for his efforts on behalf of anglers and the new “Fishing Lines” publication an achievement of note in his period as president.



Cormorants Continued.

In the last Around the Jetties you may recall we looked at John McNally's 1957 cormorant study in which over 1200 large black cormorants were killed and their stomachs examined. Over the years debate continued on the role of cormorants on the black bream population, so that in 1998 Patrick McNamara, Minister for Agriculture announced a new inquiry into the effect of the Great black Cormorant on fish populations in the Gippsland lakes and the black bream in particular. Fisheries scientist Patrick Coutin and wildlife expert Jim Reside undertook this study and their report was released in February 2001, however there was a vast difference from the McNally study of 1957 in that they were unable to kill birds to examine their stomachs as the Great Black Cormorant was now a protected species. Instead they studied the diet of the Great Black Cormorant by analysing regurgitated pellets from the birds

Black Cormorants regurgitated one pellet each day of the undigested remains of their food, and this generally included bones, tail and head of fish in a pellet. A total of 180 pellets were collected from under the trees at Salt Creek where the cormorants were nesting and analysed. Fish otoliths were collected from the pellets and these identified the fish being eaten and the size of those fish.

To verify these findings 7 cormorants were captured using cannon nets. This was not a highly successful operation as some birds escaped, some died and a couple regurgitated their stomach contents. In the end the catch was three cormorants, which were placed in individual cages and forced to regurgitate their stomach contents. It was assumed that what was in

the pellets and the stomachs of a couple of birds captured were representative of all cormorants in the Gippsland Lakes.

One can readily see that the ease with which McNally in 1957 obtained stomach contents of 1200 Great Black Cormorants was not matched with this 2001 study. Aerial surveys in 1998 indicated 3470 great Black Cormorants were on the Gippsland lakes and this did not seem to vary greatly between summer and winter. There were also over 2000 Little Black Cormorants, and about 700 Little Pied Cormorants.

These aerial surveys conducted by helicopter and fixed wing aircraft probably provided the most accurate census undertaken of cormorants on the Gippsland Lakes. The number of Great Black cormorants has varied from as few as several hundred in 1987 to some 7000 in 1992.

The numbers of Great Black Cormorants on the Gippsland Lakes would appear to vary according to water conditions in central Australia and even as far distant as Lake Eyre. During this study there were over 2000 Great Black Cormorants nesting in the Salt Creek rookery and anglers over the years will recall seeing large flights of cormorants returning to this rookery of an evening. In some years massive flights of the great Black Cormorant can be seen heading inland in a north westerly direction, and it would seem this relates to wet conditions inland.

Cormorant Breeding

Most Cormorant breeding occurs north of the Murray, and there is little evidence of a major breeding rookery on the Gippsland Lakes. Interestingly Rocklands reservoir in western Victoria provides a major cormorant rookery.

This study estimated that in 1998 the Great Black Cormorant population (3470 cormorants) consumed a total of 531 tonnes of fish comprising 31 species of which 340 tonnes were small black bream. **(Coutin and Reside stated this represented 3.3 million fish.)** This black bream tonnage taken by Black Cormorants was more than twice the amount of black

bream taken by the commercial fishery in 1998/9.

It is interesting and somewhat disappointing that European Carp was not found in the diet of the cormorants. The amount of black bream in the diet would seem to vary according to the successful spawning of this species. This study suggested that cormorants ate 18.6% of their body weight and the average body weight of the Great Black Cormorant was 2.25kgs.

***Comment-** These results seem to me to be very similar to those obtained by John McNally some 50 years earlier.*

Now there is no doubt that the Great Black Cormorant has a profound effect on the population of black bream, and it has been suggested that the combined recreational and commercial catch of black bream is equalled by the cormorant consumption of this fish species. The results of a successful spawning of black bream may be considerably altered by the predations of the Great Black Cormorant.

***Comment** Given the collapse in bream stocks in recent times and current drought conditions it would be interesting to have an aerial survey to determine numbers of Great Black Cormorants on the Gippsland Lakes, and a sample of pellets to determine whether their diet has altered in the current conditions.*

A Little History

Up until the 1920's a bonus of 4pence per bird was paid, and men were employed to destroy cormorants and their nesting habitat. On the 27th April 1921 the Chief Secretary reported that 10,166 cormorants were killed and 5000 eggs destroyed. There was no indication that this program improved fisheries of the day.

An Amateurs Calculation.

Given that the Coutin- Reside report found that in 1998 there was an average 3470 Great Black Cormorants on the Gippsland Lakes who consumed 531 tonnes of fish of which 340 tonnes were small black bream. My estimate is that in 1998 each Great Black Cormorant ate 156kgs of fish

annually of which 100kgs or 64% were undersize black bream. Whilst this is not an accurate figure, it does provide a rough layman's estimate of the role of the Great Black Cormorant on fish populations in the Gippsland Lakes. This assumes the cormorants fed every day and this is yet to be verified in further studies.

The above is my simple calculation based on the figures in the Coutin-Reside study.

Control of Black Cormorants

Today culling is not a possibility, however in eastern New York and Vermont, a novel method of control has proved successful. In this area great Black Cormorants eggs have been oiled, and this stops the eggs hatching, but it also encourages the birds to continue sitting on the eggs as they continue to believe they will hatch. In these American states 7,500 cormorant nesting pairs had their eggs oiled and their hatching eggs nullified. Now this would be acceptable to all members of the community if adopted in Australia. The only problem would be to locate breeding rookeries, most of which are in northern Australia, and to have volunteers with ladders to reach the nests and oil the eggs. *(Oh well it was only an idea, but it does work!!!!)*

Finally a vision from the Past

F.Bury wrote in 1900 "These were giant Melaleuca's and were the haunt of hundreds of cormorants which nested in the trees-magnificent shooting as they kept on flying around and would not go away, (and cartridges 8/- per hundred.)"

Taken from Gayle Hallstead's book "History of Metung."

Orange Roughy Under Threat

The Orange Roughy, or Deep Sea Perch as it is also called, is currently under considerable threat from overfishing. We can probably remember when this fish was first marketed only a few years ago with vast hauls from very deep waters off the Australian coast. It is little wonder that suddenly this amazing fish is under threat as it is thought to live for 150 years and not breed until it is 30 years old. Australia's Marine Conservation Society

states, “ this species may not be able to recover from fishing impacts and should not be fished.” It will be a long slow recovery from overfishing for this unique deep-sea species, a recovery that we may never see in our lifetime.

Ghost Nets

According to the Waves magazine of 2007 ghost nets are nets that have been abandoned lost or cut free deliberately by deep-sea professional fishermen, often with buoys attached.

In recent times in the south, such a floating net entangled a whale off Warrnambool, however most of these nets are found in the Gulf Carpentaria area, due to prevailing currents and fishing intensity. These floating unattached nets can become loaded with fish, turtles and other marine life, then sink to the bottom with the weight of the catch. When the catch rots, the buoys cause the net to rise again and the cycle of death continues, as these nets have a life of decades. Only 5% of nets originate from Australian sources with the biggest net retrieved being a Taiwanese 6 tonne 19 kilometres net. In the Gulf Country eighteen indigenous Sea Ranger groups are retrieving these nets and transporting them to landfill. In the past twelve months these enthusiastic aboriginal groups have removed almost 60 kilometres of net in over 2000 individual pieces. This is a wonderful project involving the indigenous inhabitants of the area that gets little publicity.

Fish-e-Fax

A fortnightly two page electronic newsletter for recreational anglers is available from Fisheries Victoria, covering a wide range of interesting matters including fish stocking and latest information from fisheries. This simple publication is free, and whilst it rates only a couple of lines in the Recreational Fishing Guide, and specifically describes the publication as an electronic newsletter; Fisheries Victoria would prefer to send this publication electronically; I have been able to establish that hard copies will be made available for those readers who do not have access to a computer.

To get your free copy of Fish Fax either as a hard copy or by email

Phone 03 9658 4361 **or**

Write to Fisheries Victoria

GPO 4440

Melbourne 3001

Once on the mailing list you will receive your free two-page newsletter each fortnight and it is very worthwhile being on the mailing list.

What's fishing Cost You?

The 2001 National Survey of Recreational and Indigenous Fishing indicated there were 550,000 recreational anglers in Victoria who annually spent \$396 million on fishing related equipment at an average of \$721 per fisher. Fishing in estuarine waters such as the Gippsland Lakes attracted 35% of anglers.

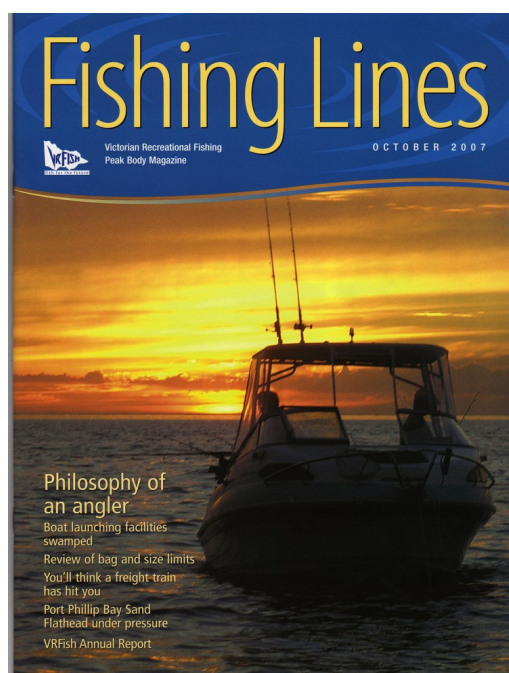
Another Thought

A couple of mornings ago I was catching live mullet for bait at Lakes Entrance when I got talking to a professional licence holder that I know. He made the observation that if professional fishermen could retain their licence to prawn, and in his case fish for bait, he does not believe, any commercial fisherman would object to a buyout of a scale fish licence. This would be a win situation for the commercial fishermen and also for the recreational anglers of the state. Perhaps this is too difficult for the bureaucrats to implement.

A Great Catch

On the 26th October I had local angler Graeme Merryfull drop by to get me to weigh a silver trevally he caught earlier that morning in Lake Tyers. This fish went 2.45kgs or almost 5.5lbs in the old scale, and was caught on a glassy. Graeme used light gear and it took almost an hour for him to land this super fish. Graeme said the car park at the launching ramp was almost full, and this gives an indication of the importance of having these recreational waters catering solely for the vast recreational angling community.

VRFish Publishes "Fishing Lines"



I was pleased to have a visit from Christopher Collins CEO of VRFish who dropped by on his way to the opening of the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Clubs new lodge. Christopher came with copies of VRFish's excellent publication "Fishing Lines" launched by the Minister on the 17th October and available at the Fishing Show on the 26-28th of October. VRFish have kindly provided copies for any reader who might wish to see the annual reports and a host of short interesting articles that this publication contains. **Simply send me \$1 to cover postage and I will happily have a copy of this publication back to you by return mail.** Christopher indicated that he hoped ultimately to have 3-4 "Fishing Lines" published each year to provide a communication link to the anglers of the state. This is a major move in my view that will harness the dormant power of the vast angling community. Congratulations VRFish.

Lake Tyers Openings

John Harrison of Lake Tyers kindly sent me a comprehensive list of the opening and closing of Lake Tyers since 19th May 1963 with much of the recording

undertaken by local identity Jack Whadcoat. From this material one can see the longest time the lake remained open was 273 days in 1985, and the average length of time the lake has remained open from 1963 is 164 days.

I found it particularly interesting to note the lake had been artificially opened on 14 occasions since 1963, whilst it had opened naturally on eight occasions in the same period of time. As I write this item the lake has been open for 122 days and, given the strength of water movement, it would appear that the current opening may not be of a lengthy duration.

Memories of Crouch Reels

I think many older anglers reading this publication will remember with some affection the Crouch reel, produced in Dunolly Victoria and manufactured from aluminium. This was a beautifully engineered fishing reel that in the right hands could cast a mile, but in the hands of the unwary could provide a classic birds nest tangle of line, that could end your days fishing.

The Crouch reel company was bought out in 1962 and the reel vanished from the fishing shops. Today these reels are a rare collectors item. In the early sixties I had a schoolboy in a school-angling club, that I coordinated in Mansfield, who could handle this reel, and he spent hours casting a Devon spinner from the banks of lake Eildon with wonderful success. This same lad now in his early sixties has recently bought two Crouch reels through computer marketing and paid \$160 for one of these reels. I noted another reel offered for \$200. It seems the old Crouch reel can still be part of the modern anglers life. I have an old Crouch reel on my shelf, but I must say I was never able to totally master this beautifully engineered reel.

ALPHA Best value on the market

SPINNING REELS

are precision-made from light weight aluminium castings and are finished with even baked shining enamel. All brass parts are beautifully chrom-plated and the pick-up wire is electric insulated stainless steel. The metal main gear runs on a brass pinion to ensure long life. Spare parts are always readily available.

Always ask for **ALPHA** because it's Australian designed and **FULLY GUARANTEED** against defective materials or faulty workmanship.

REELS

\$5.80	ALPHA 414	170yds	9lb nylon
\$6.75	ALPHA 416	200yds	9lb nylon
\$7.50	ALPHA 418	250yds	12lb nylon
NEW MODELS (Not ambidextrous)			
\$2.20	ALPHA 390	100yds	9lb nylon
\$4.80	ALPHA 392	170yds	9lb nylon

**One of the many Australian reels that are no longer manufactured today.
Taken from a 1960's fishing magazine.**

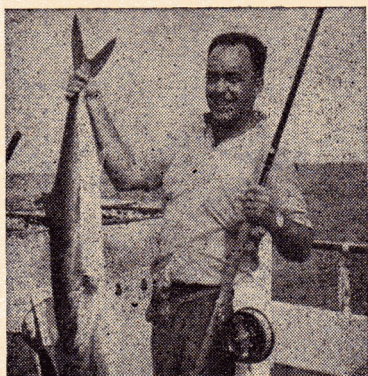
Since early 1900 over 120 Australian companies have produced fishing reels. Today the main, and possibly the only company remaining is the Alvey Company in Brisbane that commenced business in 1920. This firm produced sidecast reels with an emphasis on surf reels although it now produces 100,000 reels a year with at least 50 different types.

Many of the older fishermen might remember the wooden sidecast reels manufactured from cedar and last produced in 1974. Since that date the reels have been bakelite or compression moulded. If you have an old Alvey wooden reel in your shed, you have a reel of some historical value.

In June this year Jack Alvey died aged 77 and he was the grandson of the founder of the business and inventor of the reel. Today his sons continue the business. Jack Alvey was a great fisherman and in 1959 set a world casting record using one of his sidecast reels with a throw of 700ft or 213 metres. In 1999 he was awarded the Order of Australia for services to recreational fishing.

In NSW and Queensland the Alvey side cast reel is the most common surf reel used, and in the hands of a good fisherman it can cover vast distances, but it never gained the same popularity on Victorian beaches.

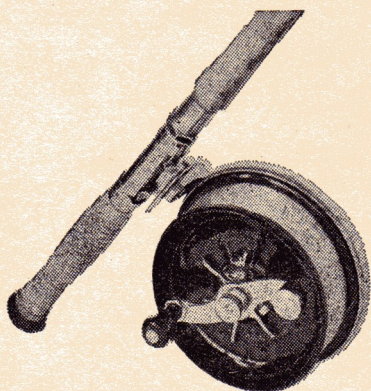
SPORTFISHING WITH AN ALVEY IS FUN



To obtain the most desired features of every other type of reel choose an



the world's best
sidecast reel



- * Trouble-free ease in casting
- * Positive line recovery
- * Power to control that fish
- * Simplicity in longlife construction
- * Reliability under all conditions
- * Absolute minimum, of maintenance

Models available with the smoothest-acting, most easily adjusted multiplate star drag, for protection of your light gear.

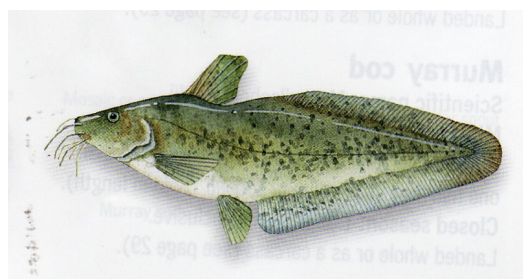
**You can buy a dearer reel
but you can't buy a better
reel**

**REMEMBER... IT'S THE ALVEY
REEL THAT FILLS THE CREEL**

The Advertisement on this page is from a 1969 edition of Australian Sportfishing Magazine

Eel Tailed Catfish

In "Around the Jetties 6, I wrote of the decline of the Eel Tailed Catfish under the heading "A Heritage Fish" and described how this important native fish had almost reached extinction in many of the rivers where it was once so important. Today only the Wimmera River has a population where anglers have a bag limit of two fish.



I was delighted to get a phone call from Christopher Collins CEO of VRFish (The recreational fishing Peak Body) indicating that after talking to Board member Robert Loats, VRFish would as a result of this article, and the success of the trout cod project be putting to the Minister a suggestion that a small lake be stocked with eel tailed catfish as a trial area, and if successful this may in the future be the first step to the reintroduction of this native fish to its former rivers.

I congratulate VRFish for taking up this challenging project, and hope Fisheries Victoria and the Minister will support the project to see ultimately the reintroduction of eel tailed catfish to our rivers. The successful reintroduction of the Trout Cod shows what can be achieved in our rivers

Sorry No Report Available. Black Bream and Transmitters

Readers will remember that this publication arose as a result of the interest created when one of our readers caught a black bream with a transmitter in its stomach, and Dr Jeremy Hindell provided

photos and information on this exciting project.

Well Dr Hindell has submitted his final report to Fisheries Victoria in September and he suggested I contact Dr Murray MacDonald, Manager Bays and Inlets in a month or so to see if he would be prepared to release either the report or a summary so we could follow this project to its conclusion. I sent an email at the end of October seeking information on the project, but so far Dr MacDonald has not been able to reply. I find it interesting that a project funded by recreational anglers licence fees does not warrant a response.

Dusky Flathead and Transmitters

Dr Hindell has been providing milestone (interim) reports on the progress of the dusky flathead transmitter project to the Fisheries Allocation Committee. He suggested I contact this body for interim information on the project with the words "they should be able to help."

I contacted the body with a request for interim information had an email from Robert Krix, Fisheries Statutory Support Manager, stating the milestone reports "are interim reports and final reports are not published until after the research has been fully completed."

In other words we will not release information on this project.

Now despite recreational anglers licence fees providing \$86,000 for this project no interim information will be provided to those anglers even though they worked to provide dusky flathead for the project. Early in the project Dr Hindell wrote "the next download of listening stations has been scheduled for mid March, so stay tuned to find out where these iconic recreational species move."

Despite Dr Hindell's intention to keep recreational anglers informed it would appear that Fisheries Victoria has no

intention of providing any information on the dusky flathead project until it is completed in two years time despite the willingness of Dr Hindell to share that information with recreational anglers today.

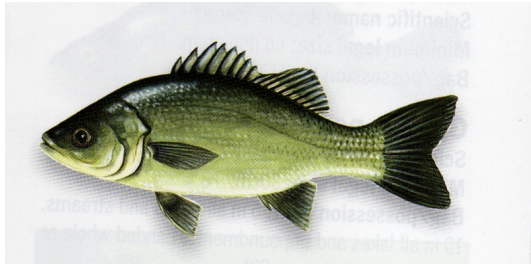
Finally in Dr Hindell's words "*Sorry its out of my control- I can't release information unless approval is given from the funding bodies.*"

A Good News Story Snowy River Bass

Dr Peter Appleford Director of Fisheries Victoria announced in October 2006 that the Gippsland angling community and Fisheries Victoria were working together to help Australian Bass stocks in the Snowy River by developing a breeding program. Initial funding for this project has come from the Snowy Rehabilitation Fund.

Craig Ingram, local member for Gippsland and National President of the Native Fish Association of Australia, stated that there had been no bass recruitment for 18-19 years and unless this project was undertaken there was a risk that within 5 years pure bass brood stock from the Snowy River may no longer be available. He made the interesting point that hybridisation had taken place between bass and estuary perch in the Snowy River. For this project brood stock have already been caught and DNA testing had taken place to ensure that fingerlings when released would be genetically pure Snowy River Bass.

Mr Ingram went on to say that whilst those involved were committed to the success of the project and the ultimate aim was the release of 50,000 fingerlings into the Snowy River annually, bass breeding is difficult and problematic, and it may take several years for success to be achieved.



A unique aspect of this project is the diversity of partners to the project, which include the Snowy River Native Fish hatchery, Fisheries Victoria, Orbost Angling Club, NSW Fisheries, the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, and the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority of NSW. The diversity of partners ensures that releases of young bass will be made in the NSW and Victorian sections of the Snowy River.

Dick Brumley, of Victoria Fisheries in Lakes Entrance assures me that in the coming months considerable publicity will be made available to recreational anglers and the general public on this project that has the potential to ensure the survival of one of the great sporting fish species of Gippsland.

However, Craig Ingram emphasised caution when he explained the difficulties that would need to be overcome to achieve ultimate success but again he indicated a belief that the enthusiasm and commitment between the partners would ultimately ensure that success.



I found this wonderful old photograph in a second hand shop and bought it for a dollar some years ago. It features a Marlin caught off Eden in 1938 and photographed outside the old Boydtown Hotel. The fish weighed 1226lbs. I doubt a Marlin like that has been caught off Eden in the last 50 years. There is a signature on the top of the photo an M.B. Whiter, an old Lakes Entrance name. Now did he catch the Marlin?

Conclusion

Don't forget if you have friends who you think would enjoy reading this publication just let us know and we will include them on the mailing list. You might like to send them a newsletter as a Xmas present and we can do this by sending the above publication under your name with Xmas Greetings and adding them to the mailing

list for 2008. On behalf of my wife Dawn who sets the format of this publication and myself, best wishes for a happy and healthy Xmas and expect the next Around the Jetties in February 2008. By the way the eight copies this year have involved 28,000 words or a small book of information and comments.

Until next time

Good health and good fishing.

Lynton Barr

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 were noted.