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## **Around the Jetties**

### **No 33**

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Fly-fishing may be a very pleasant amusement; but angling or float fishing, I can only compare to a stick and a string, with a worm at one end and a fool at the other.

Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

#### **Editorial**

I would like to thank the many readers who contribute to this publication. In this issue alone there are a dozen contributions of information and items of interest and this in turn adds great variety to the publication. I would also like to acknowledge the scientific reports that are provided by fisheries scientists and others, which we summarize hopefully into a readable document for our readers. In the next issue we will feature a summary of a report "Estuary perch movement and habitat use in the Snowy River." This report was released in February 2010, and given the current discussion on estuary Perch and Lake Tyers this report will provide additional information for anglers to consider. In this issue I would like to thank fisheries scientist Daniel Grixti for information on a research project where fisheries scientists work with research anglers to establish the best method to determine fisheries status so that effective management plans can be developed. I would also like to thank research angler Bob McNeill for notes on his impressions of this project in Lake Tyers. Similar projects are being undertaken for estuary perch in Andersons Inlet, and Murray Cod and Golden Perch two kilometres below Mulwala. I often think that many anglers are unaware of the work angling colleagues and fisheries scientists are undertaking to provide long term benefits to this great sport. It is also worth remembering the ever greater pressure being placed on the sport of angling by increased population and the enormous growth in the number of boats and sophistication of equipment.

#### **How Important are our Rivers for Black Bream Spawning**

Some short time ago it was suggested by fisheries scientists that black bream spawn in many areas of the Gippsland lakes, and this was a reason why any closed season was considered difficult to implement, and this view did not seem to change even when the black bream stock collapsed in the period from 1996. The increasing salinity of the Lakes and the declining fresh water inflow may now see the rivers entering the Gippsland Lakes assume far greater importance as the nursery for black bream.

The following small excerpt was taken from the study "**Habitat Utilization and Movement of Black Bream**" by **J.S.Hindell, G.P.Jenkins and B.Wolmersley published August 2008**

"Throughout the present study, freshwater discharge to the rivers was at historically low levels, because of an extended period of drought and salinities of 17-20 that are appropriate for spawning were restricted to the uppermost regions of the major tributaries such as the Nicholson, Tambo and Mitchell Rivers. Whilst there was a clear movement of fish into the upper reaches of rivers in winter, around the time that Black Bream begin to spawn, there was also a brief period in summer when river flows increased(due to localised heavy rain in the catchments)

and fish use of the rivers increased.” “Most spawning is restricted to the July to November period with a peak in October.”

This study seems to support the movement of black bream into rivers to spawn. This in turn raises several concerns.

1. The commercial netting within 400 metres of the mouth of rivers would seem to be totally inappropriate given the movement of black bream into the rivers to spawn.
2. A closed season and the protection of spawning fish to include both recreational and commercial fisherman becomes an option that should be considered.
3. Given the removal of water from the Thompson River, and the increasing salinity of the lakes, due to a more effective opening and inflow it would seem to indicate that the lakes will not return to an estuarine environment in the future, and this may mean special consideration should be given to the maintenance of the bream stock, if a bream fishery is to be maintained into the future.

### **West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Snapshot Oct-Nov 2009**

From the CEO Geoff Hocking

We recently finalized a significant piece of work detailing the issues being faced by the Gippsland lakes from an Environmental Water requirements Perspective.

This work formally recognises that the Lakes will never again be a freshwater system and that the priority for effort needs to be around ensuring the shallow lakes and fringing wetlands in the system are able to adapt to the changing nature of the lakes.

**Editor** It is to be hoped that the changing nature of the lakes is recognised when any assessment of black bream and their future is considered. Perhaps we should be planning now for the next decade, given our current knowledge of the threats to black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.

### **Dollar for Dollar Native Fish Stocking Program**

I read recently of a dollar for dollar fish stocking program that was introduced in NSW in 1998 which allowed community groups to apply to the NSW Recreational Trust Fund (funded by the recreational licence fee) for matching funds to purchase native fish from licensed commercial fish hatcheries for the stocking of rivers and dams across NSW. The program has been very well received and to date around 4.1 million Golden Perch, 1.8 million Murray Cod and 1.2 million Australian bass have been stocked since the program began.

Individuals, community groups and local Councils may apply for dollar for dollar funding. Stocking may take place in dams and rivers subject to an assessment of suitability. Proposed stocking sites must be within the natural distribution areas of species, have good water quality and suitable forage food with natural protection from predators.

**Given the success of this program in NSW, perhaps it is worthy of consideration for Victorian waters, and what an outstanding project this would be for a secondary school to stock a small lake or dam, and involve the students in practical fisheries conservation.**

### **Market for Live Bream**

I had a reader contact me recently with the report of a commercial fisherman operating in what seemed a different manner in the Newlands Arm. The difference was the commercial boat had aerated tanks on the boat and the bream netted in a seine net were deposited in these large aerated tanks alive. Our reader got talking to the fisherman and found he had a market for good sized bream and alive they brought around \$30 per kilo. The commercial fisherman indicated that he had caught around 100kgs on that day. I found this approach to netting black bream interesting and contacted Fisheries at Lakes Entrance wondering how such a commercial catch is included in the annual statistics for black bream. I was informed that the fisherman would be required to provide a statement of the weight and value of the catch and this would be included in the overall statistics. I was assured that random checks by Fisheries from time to time would ensure that the commercial statistics were kept accurately. I would imagine these fish were going to Asian restaurants, and they appeared to all be good-sized bream. This raises in my mind the \$3,000 value of those fish to the commercial fisherman as compared with the potential of those fish to produce over 7.5 million eggs, given suitable conditions in our rivers for spawning, and remembers this was just one day on the Newlands Arm.

### **Prawn Catcher**

The question as to a prawn net was raised by Keith Richmond of Torquay. Keith had seen this net, which was a square netting box that could be put over a prawn and was highly successful in capturing the prawn, even if the prawns went into the sand, and he wondered where such a net could be obtained. This simple query led to a number

of readers calling and adding information and the outcome was as follows. Some years ago a chap living in the Nicholson area came up with this net design. Whilst successful when prawns are on the bottom it was impossible to use when the prawns were on the surface. The nets he made out of aluminium cost about \$60 and there was a ready local market for these locally designed prawn nets. Three to four years ago the designer died and anglers since that time have made their own nets to the same design, most working from memory and thus nets of all shapes and sizes were developed. These nets were painted with anti rusting paint and had varying levels of success. One chap made a net out of stainless steel then found the net too heavy to use. I still have not seen one of the original stainless steel or aluminium nets.



**The photos above show the work of Clive Blackwood of Johnsonville who has manufactured several prawn nets based on his memory of the original box net.**

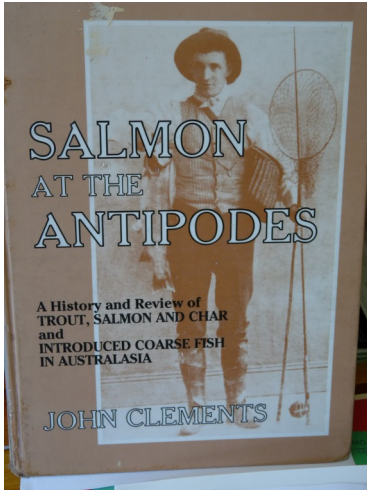
**Clive says the nets work wonderfully well and several friends have made similar nets.**

**John Delzoppo who made the net below, says he tried a fencing wire frame first but it was not strong enough so these are 3/16 steel rod. Note there is a sinker at the bottom of the net, near the post, which is stitched into the net**

**Thanks to Keith Richmond, John Delzoppo, Geoff Trussler, Clive Blackwood and others for information on the origins of this prawn net.**



## A Book Worth Having



When reading *Around the Jetties* you probably realise that I have often quoted from John Clements excellent book “*Salmon at the Antipodes*” John Clements was a Fisheries Victoria officer who joined the Department in the early sixties, and this book was a limited edition published by John Clements in 1988. A couple of years ago I was browsing in the Swifts Creek second hand bookshop (it has over 20,000 books) when I discovered this book with a price tag of \$30. On further investigation I found it was copy No1, and had been in the Nagle College library at Bairnsdale. School libraries do from time to time discard books and this book had obviously been discarded as being of no further use, and was probably sold to the second hand dealer for about \$10. Just out of interest after again referring to this book as I so often do, I thought I would look on the Internet to see if any other copies of this edition were available. I was somewhat surprised to find two second hand copies available and both had a price of \$200 attached to them. This book has become a very precious addition to my library and provides the most wonderful story of the introduction of trout to this state. I highly commend this book to any trout fisherman or anglers interested in the development of recreational fishing in Victoria.

## Spraying Along Our Rivers.

Another reader reported that recently there was a boat moving along the north bank of the Mitchell River, and the two chaps in the boat were spraying weeds along the waterline. I contacted the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority who informed me that this was Parks Victoria who is responsible for the north bank of the river from the cut to the mouth. The weeds that were targeted were Box Thorn, Spiny Rush, New Zealand Mirror Bush and New Zealand Flax. The weedicide being used were Round Up, and Brush Off and the action was part of Parks Victoria’s Good Neighbour Program.

### Editor

Thanks to Parks Victoria for spraying plants like the Boxthorn along this section of the Mitchell River however we must be extremely wary that the chemicals being used are safe and will not affect the delicate riverine environment. Now this comment is in no way critical of the recent spraying but is made simply to bring to the attention of all how an action may affect rivers. In the Weekly Times of March 2009 it was stated that a 1997 study by the Marine and Freshwater Institute found “all of 300 black bream sampled had elevated levels of pesticide”. This is not an authoritative statement but is a warning that perhaps we should be watchful.

## Habitat Policy Workshop

On the 13<sup>th</sup> March I had an invitation to the Regional State council of VRFish which was conducting a Workshop to examine a policy on Habitat. One of the key speakers was Dr. Ian Rutherford, Director of Integrated River Health with the Department of Sustainability and the Environment, which has a \$20million budget for work on the 85,000kms of river in this state. Dr Rutherford indicated that in 1973 22,000 snags were removed from our rivers mainly concentrated on the Murray River. This removal was aimed at flood mitigation, and few rivers along the Murray escaped snag removal. Today we are putting those snags back to restore habitat at a cost of \$1000 per snag. At the same time fishways are being installed to give fish access to move to spawning areas and over 600kms of rivers have been opened to fish movement. Dr Rutherford stated that with the completion of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline the water savings from this project, enabled water (2.6 Gegalitres) to be released into the Wimmera River and this will assist to alleviate salinity and also to support the catfish population in that river. Another project described was the positioning of carp screens on the Glenelg River. Carp are in the Rocklands Reservoir, but are not in the Glenelg River system. To stop the spread of carp into the Glenelg carp screens have been constructed and placed.

Perhaps one of the most interesting comments of Dr Rutherford was the policy to remove barriers on the Victorian rivers. Over 2,700 barriers have been constructed on Victorian streams over the years, many of which are now in poor condition and have little value as well as retarding the fish movement in streams. In some streams where weirs are useful and are to be retained such as the Broken Creek, seven fishways have already been constructed to support the movement of native fish. Dr Rutherford also indicated that planting of willows along stream banks had taken place until 30 years ago and now these same willows were being removed as they posed a threat to both the health and flow of streams and the native fish populations.

Dr Rutherford stated that the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is the biggest investor in the long-term health of our rivers and is involved in consulting with the stakeholders, and this includes taking into account the views of recreational anglers

Another speaker was Bob MacDonald who is acting as a consultant on the development of the Long Jetty and observatory in Westernport Bay. Bob had been involved in many projects extending from Northern NSW and he described a number of incidents where habitat had been damaged by human activities including the use of pesticides. I think the one thing I would remember from Bob MacDonald's talk was his ability to relate to a wide community and this included the aboriginal community of Lake Tyers. I had been invited to speak and spoke briefly on the changes I had perceived in the Gippsland Lakes over recent years.

## River Access

A few weeks ago I drove to the mouth of the Tambo River along the gravel road on the North bank. An excellent fence had been built along the river bank, by the River Trust and the river bank had a planting of trees all the way to the mouth. Access to the river was catered for with a series of stiles probably every 500 metres apart. This should have been a project that was complete and at the same time provided access for anglers and improved habitat along the river bank. I was surprised to find that in thirteen places the wire near the stiles had been cut and that section of the fence in some cases had collapsed. Many stiles had the wire at the stile tied down to provide easier access for anglers. I would like to suggest part of the reason for this situation. This area of Gippsland has a high level of retirees who have moved to the area for the fishing and climate, and these people are major users of this delightful river. I believe the stiles that have been constructed along the Tambo River are totally unsuitable for elderly anglers and their wives to use to gain access to the river, and that when a project such as this is undertaken, suitable and safe access must be provided. Perhaps the authorities undertaking such projects should adhere to a standard stile that would cater for people of all ages or provide small gates to give access to the river. There does seem to me to be discrimination against the elderly by some authorities and one only has to look at the fishing platform issue, where the East Gippsland Shire ignored the need of the elderly and handicapped to have access to fishing platforms even though those same platforms were financed by anglers licence fees.



Currently stiles being placed along the Snowy River where the Catchment Management Authority of East Gippsland has fenced off the banks of the river, pose the same problems as those experienced on the Tambo River and these stiles, see left, are unsuitable for elderly or handicapped anglers.

Now I am aware stiles cost, however my costing suggests that stiles similar to the one pictured, right, could be obtained for about \$800, and hopefully little maintenance on fences along river banks would be necessary, and most importantly the ageing angler would be provided with safe access to his favourite fishing spots.



Inland Fisheries Service (IFS) and Anglers Alliance Tasmania (AAT) have completed the Anglers Access project on the River Leven. Significant funding has been provided from the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Recreational Fisheries Community Grants Program. Angling Clubs have provided local knowledge and will provide volunteer labour to assist with the installation of stiles and signage. This info came from Anglers Alliance Tasmania Inc. website. This is an interesting project.



I spoke to Bill Storer of the Department of Primary Industry who was looking at gaining funding to put 4ft gates along the Tambo River, and this would be an excellent outcome for all. I am pleased to say that solid posts to handle small gates have already been put in place by the Department of Primary Industry and they should be congratulated for the prompt response to problem of river access  
However that small group of anglers who cut the fence to get their vehicle to the river bank destroying fences and vegetation will still pose a problem, and continue to give recreational angling a bad name.

## **Early days of Fishing in Australia**

The first reference to fishing along the east coast of Australia appears in the “Journals of Captain James Cook.”

“April 30<sup>th</sup> Monday 1788 after I returned from sounding the Bay I went over to the Cove on the north side where in 3 or 4 hauls with the seine we caught about 300lbs weight of fish.” These fish were equally divided amongst the ships companies. John White Surgeon General to the first fleet recorded in his journal “The fish caught were bream, mullet, and large rays besides many other small species.”

The first professional fisherman was convict William Bryant. He was provided with a fishing boat to provide fish for the colony. On the 28th March 1790 he escaped in the boat with his wife and children and several other convicts and eventually arrived in Timor.

## **The ‘Concerned Angler’s’ Views Regarding Lake Tyers**

### **Estuary Perch**

“Regarding Estuary Perch, I have a contrasting view to yours. I find it incredibly interesting that EP have strong populations in the Gippsland Lakes and Marlo, the nearest waterways, and historically Lake Tyers has never been a strong EP environment as a naturally occurring fish population. It is now reasonably established that EP run up and down the coast, particularly on flood events, based on tagging data, so why don’t they establish in Tyers?”

I suspect it is the quality of water being too saline for the EP to comfortably establish a population and want to stay. The Lake Tyers catchment is so small that the salinity level is reduced for such short periods that it is not conducive to the long term establishment of an Estuary Perch population. For most of the season EP like to live in waters far less saline than Lake Tyers, and only come down to the more saline waters during their spawning aggregations. In other words the water is not of enough quality for the population to establish, and I don’t think stocking EP is the answer. Even if the first stocking survived, I think they would leave the system at the first opportunity and move to a more congenial system.

I have three incidents where EP has been caught in Lake Tyers in the last eighteen months. One is a photo posted on a chat forum, the second is a work colleague caught one, credible although I have never seen the photo and another that doesn’t specifically come to mind re the detail. They are there but it is a species in Lake Tyers that continues to elude me.

### **Dusky Flathead**

I strongly agree that dusky flathead recruitment is solely dependent on recruitment within the system. Our tagging shows no coastal migration and recapture at all, not even one event. I think this contrasts significantly with the Queensland experience.

Like you I am wrestling with this term “Robust Indicator” and also with “Tipping Point” Do we fish on when fishing for a species is poor as is the case with dusky flathead and then do something about it where recovery could be slow and long? Whilst catch rates are one indicator of the stock status, perhaps another is the capture of potential breeding stock. For example if the dusky flathead in Victoria is similar to the NSW study where the average age for breeding females has been found to be 56cms, then if these fish are absent from the angler catches perhaps that is a predictor of future populations. There needs to be some robust discussion on these terms and perhaps it will become clearer to all.

I have seen some interesting contents in dusky flathead stomachs before my catch and release days. I have no doubt small bream feature in the food chain for many species. One year there was a bloom of 20 cent sized flounder and

every dusky was gorging on them. Why they were still taking live mullet confounded us. I also caught a mid 90cm flathead one evening and it regurgitated a 7" bream. It made an interesting photograph. We have to accept that bigger fish will eat little fish but if there is a good enough spawning quality fish will get through.

#### Black Bream

I am not convinced anything has happened with the bream apart from the fact they have just gone "cranky" Despite the fact that some bream were not well last year there is no evidence of much of a fish kill, let alone a massive fish kill that some suggest went unnoticed. Some good bream are starting to be caught now and they are exceptionally clean and healthy fish."

#### Editor

Thanks to the 'Concerned Angler' for his thoughtful comments on issues discussed in this publication. They are always appreciated. I would make the point that the commercial catch of Estuary Perch in the Gippsland Lakes has been only 33 tonnes total over 29 years or an average of 1.1 tonne per year. I would believe this is not a strong population and a case could be developed to examine this species in the Gippsland Lakes. I doubt any figures could be obtained for Marlo but based on anecdotal information the recreational catch of Estuary Perch in the Snowy and Brodribb Rivers would be greater than both the Gippsland Lakes and Lake Tyers. It is true the average annual commercial catch of Estuary perch for Lake Tyers would be considerably lower than the Gippsland Lakes however in 1989 1.53 tonnes of Estuary Perch were taken in commercial nets in Lake Tyers and I was informed that in one seine shot over 20 boxes of estuary perch were taken close to the entry to Blackfellows Arm. In 1991 commercial fishermen took just on one tonne of estuary perch from Lake Tyers and it is catches such as these that lead me to think at some stage Lake Tyers had a small population of estuary perch and perhaps it would be worth examining whether estuary perch could be reinstated as a sporting species in Lake Tyers.

I was driving past Lake Bolac in the Western District a week ago, and took the opportunity to take a photo of this dry lake bed. Readers may remember in the last issue of "Around the Jetties" I noted that an application to stock Lake Bolac with estuary perch had been approved by the Director of Fisheries Victoria in February 2009, following an application from the Lake Bolac Angling Club, and this restocking to take place when the lake again has water. This lake in years past has been known as an outstanding eel fishery, and would seem to me to have little to recommend it for estuary perch.



### **Congratulations to Fisheries Victoria on the Release of Macquarie Perch**

It was announced in the Age newspaper of March 13<sup>th</sup> that Macquarie Perch had been released into selected Victorian waterways. The paper notes 500 fingerlings were released into the Expedition Pass Reservoir at Chewton near Castlemaine. This makes 3,300 that have been put in this reservoir and a further 250 into Holland's Creek near Benalla. These fish had been bred at Snobs Creek. Currently small populations of Macquarie Perch can be found in the Yarra River, Lake Dartmouth and the Upper Coliban Reservoir. I would hope that in the future Fisheries Victoria will give consideration to releases in the Eildon Reservoir from where in the 1950's massive migrations of

Macquarie perch entered the Jamieson River to spawn. Those were the days when no restrictions applied and over a ton of Macquarie perch were removed from the Jamieson swimming hole by anglers fishing shoulder to shoulder according to Melbourne newspapers of the day. Within a couple of years the move of this fish to the Jamieson River to spawn no longer took place and the stock of Macquarie Perch in Lake Eildon had been decimated. Perhaps in the future we may again see the movement of this special fish to the rivers to spawn, and the current releases provide a first step towards that day.

**Currently a bag limit of 1 fish over 35cms applies to Lake Dartmouth and tributaries whilst a bag limit of 2 fish over 35cms applies to the Yarra River and Upper Coliban with a closed season from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December in each of the above waters.**

### **Salinity of the Gippsland Lakes**

Ross Scott reports that the Environment Protection Water Quality report for December 2009 clearly demonstrates that the lakes are now marine. He states the salinity scale now only goes to 28psu and not to 32 being seawater. Lake Victoria is shown at the maximum 28 and may well be in excess of that figure. What this means is that the Gippsland Lakes are very close in many areas to seawater and in some cases there is evidence that the level of salt is greater than sea water. Ross says that small things like a stingray under their jetty in the Newlands Arm, the explosion in the numbers of European Shore Crabs, and even a Balmain bug found on the shore of the Newlands arm all indicate the change that is taking place before our eyes.



Ross suggests that perhaps State and federal Governments should match the funding for dredging the opening with equal funds towards saving the lakes and its fringing wetlands and the often discussed barrage to separate marine and estuarine water should be examined.

#### **Editor**

From another point of view it seems that with this current salinity level black bream will not spawn in the Lakes but rather seek water with a salinity level between 17 and 20 in the rivers. This is a new environment, and fisheries scientists should be funded now to examine the options available to protect breeding black bream and to ensure a stock that may even now be under direct threat survives.

### **Good News for Lake Boga**

I have fond memories of Lake Boga as I was a small boy in Swan Hill during the war when Lake Boga was a Catalina Flying boat base and my father was a builder in essential services of the time, building facilities for this base. In later years Lake Boga became a rather special fishing area stocked with Murray cod and golden perch and it was a disaster when channelled water ceased to flow and resulted in a major fish kill. A former student of mine who was a commercial fisherman was employed to catch fish as the water dried up but despite this a large fish kill took place and Lake Boga became a dry lake. The Victorian Government and Goulbourn Murray Water are congratulated by VRFish for their initiative in filling the lake “and recognising its social and economic value to the local community.” Whilst this is great news I think it should be recognised that a lake such as this should not have been denied water and allowed to dry up with a staggering fish kill. Perhaps the question should be asked why this lake was denied water by Murray Goulbourn water in the first place given its social and economic value. VRFish



chairman Geoff Cramer is now asking Fisheries Victoria to resume stocking Lake Boga with Murray Cod and Golden Perch and it is to be hoped that this will take place immediately and the lake will be restored. It is rather sad to see decisions made at Lake Mokoan and Lake Boga both of which have the effect of destroying a popular fishery and killing hundreds if not thousands of stocked native fish.

### Reports from Readers

**Norm Elliott** reports that when prawning near the glasshouse in Lake Tyers he was surprised at the considerable numbers of small dusky flathead he observed. These fish were about 15-20cms in length.

**Bob McNeill** was reported and this was confirmed as catching a lovely 2lb luderick on peeled prawn in Lake Tyers. This is unusual for the weed eating luderick to take prawn

**Max Scott** has reported that a mate fishing in the Paynesville area when pulling in a luderick, saw the fish attacked by several kingfish.

**Alex Milledge** reports that fishing from his jetty at Shaving Point has this year seen almost no dusky flathead taken. This is totally different from the last couple of years.

### Now this is a Fish

Recently whilst travelling at American River on Kangaroo Island I came across this photo at a launching ramp. The following was the printing that accompanied the photo.

“This whiting caught off Rocky Point July 1957 by Horrie Ratcliffe weighed 4lbs 10 1/2ozs. This was the largest caught in over 50 years of fishing, and the largest caught on Kangaroo Island in the last 20 years.”

Now that's what I call a good whiting, and can only imagine feeling him on a light whiting or bream rod. By the way the size limit in South Australia for whiting is 31cms and the bag limit is 12 fish. Another little secret, at Vivonne Bay Dawn and I had lunch. Now nothing unusual about that except it has only one small store, and they feature a lunch of a whiting burger. A friend of ours had said if you visit Kangaroo Island you must try a Vivonne Bay whiting burger, and he was right it was superb.



### Those European Shore Crabs Again.

Little did we know that when I wrote an article on European Shore Crabs in the October 2009 Around the Jetties it would create such debate and interest. It was my intent to highlight the growth of shore crab numbers and hopefully to bring this development to authorities notice with the possibility of a scientific research project to examine this phenomena. The following is the interest that developed.

October 2009 Around the Jetties features an article on European Shore Crabs

14<sup>th</sup> January 2010 Fisheries Victoria publishes advice on Shore Crabs. Fish Fax 261

12<sup>th</sup> February Melbourne's Sunday Age publishes article and photo on European Shore Crabs.

26<sup>th</sup> March ABC's television program Stateline runs with a section on Shore Crabs.

Following Stateline-Celine Foenander ran interviews on the Shore crab on ABC morning Program 30<sup>th</sup> March the Federal Opposition spokesman Greg Hunt called for research on the increase in Shore Crabs in the Gippsland lakes.

31<sup>st</sup> March Professor Barry Hart Chairman Gippsland Lakes Taskforce interviewed in the Gippsland morning program on the impact of shore crabs.

I found it interesting that at no stage has anyone referred to the original article or sought the reason for writing article, however I wanted publicity on the issue and we certainly achieved a considerable level of state wide publicity on an issue that should be examined.

### **Working Together - Lake Tyers Research Project**

The Lake Tyers bream assessment was chosen because there was a commitment of recreational anglers to the project, and it is an area where Fisheries Victoria are interested in developing a management plan, and additional information is needed to manage local fish populations. This study involved using recreational anglers and independent netting to determine the best method for use in full field trials. Similar trials are taking place at Andersons Inlet on estuary perch and in the Murray River targeting Murray cod and Golden Perch, in the Mulwala area.

Field trials for black bream in Lake Tyers compared catches by five recreational anglers with experimental otter trawl shots run off a small vessel using multi panel mesh nets across four areas of Lake Tyers. (Later the netting was changed to seine netting) Sampling will consist of four consecutive day events with one area sampled each day on three separate occasions. Recreational angling and independent netting was run in one area each day with the methods separated by approximately 100 metres. Sampling in Lake Tyers was conducted in the 3.5 hours following sunrise. Two rods one with a size 2 hook the other a size 6 baitholder hook and 2-4kg line were used by the recreational anglers on each morning. All fish caught were measured and recorded. In the actual project Bob McNeill reports four rods were used.)

The above is a summary of fishing scientist Daniel Grixti's paper on methods for this research project.

#### **An Anglers report.**

The following report has been provided by Bob McNeill, one of the research anglers taking part in this project. "What has been happening in Lake Tyers? Who are these people who arrive with seven boats at the launching ramp before daylight and return around 10 or 11 o'clock? The research arm of Fisheries Victoria have nominated Lake Tyers as their designated area for research into black bream. Five volunteer anglers of which I was one fished in a restricted area of the lake system changing the area for each of three days. Anglers could fish in any part of the gazetted area using four rods each identified with numbers 1-4. Two rods used size 2 hooks and the other 2 size 6 hooks. Bait of prawn and pilchard was provided as was boat fuel.. The rod number hook size, bait and length of each fish were recorded in a book specifically designed for this research whilst waterproof paper showed the designer of the book had consideration for the anglers with wet hands. I had spent from late October 2009 chasing flathead in Lake Tyers with one rod always baited with prawn hoping to catch the odd bream. I caught very few. As a regular angler in Lake Tyers I was amazed at how wrong my assumptions could be. There were obviously several good spawning years represented in the anglers catches and in the net catches. Large numbers of last years bream spawning can be seen in the lake and are recorded in the fine mesh netting catches. Shoals of bait fish and shrimp have also been observed by anglers in the past few weeks. So in a very short time my pessimistic outlook for bream has changed to an optimistic view and the same could be said about the general health of the lake. One of the research anglers caught 49 black bream in a session and while most were undersize this catch does provide an indication of the fish numbers for the future. Large numbers of bream were netted and this was in a similar ratio to the catch of research anglers. We got together with fisheries officers on two occasions for lunch which was provided and discussed the project, and this was most valuable for all involved.

#### **Odd Spot**

Over lunch at the Habitat Seminar I was talking to Pat Washington former VRFish chairman who was describing recent trout fishing in New Zealand. He indicated that he didn't fancy eating New Zealand trout as New Zealand was suffering from a mouse plague and trout that were caught were gorged on mice to such an extent their stomachs were bloated and mice parts often hung from the fish's anal vent when caught.

#### **Good health and good fishing**

**Lynton Barr**

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author unless otherwise acknowledged.

MATERIAL FROM THIS NEWSLETTER MAY BE REPRODUCED BUT IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THE AUTHOR AND PUBLICATION WERE NOTED