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# Around the Jetties

## No 36

### July Special Issue 2010

The waters of the stream and sea are a great lottery. We may not always hold a winning number, but can get just as much satisfaction out of being in the draw.

Fishing Writer- Lance Wedlich 1959

#### **Editorial**

This issue of Around the Jetties is a special issue in that it mainly deals with the important Gippsland Lakes 2008/9 Commercial Fishing Statistics. These statistics have long been used as a basis for any discussion of the status of the fish stocks of the Gippsland Lakes over a number of years. Whilst the use of statistics is always dangerous these statistics do provide an overview of the current status of black bream and dusky flathead in this water. The interpretation of these figures are mine and of course are open to question, however I do believe they provide an indication of a black bream fishery at its lowest level in the last forty or more years with no indication of any improvement evident, and a dusky flathead fishery in rapid decline.

This raises the issue of the relevance of the current regulations in protecting fish stocks for the future and the continued commercial netting of those species, which are the basis of the estuarine recreational fishing.

#### **Bream Stocks in the Gippsland Lakes in Crisis.**

The commercial catch statistics for 2008/9 have just been released. Fisheries Victoria in the past have relied on these statistics of the catch of the commercial fishermen to compare the status of black bream stocks from year to year as there are limited other tools currently available to measure the black bream stock changes. For this reason the yearly commercial catch statistics assume considerable importance. The commercial black bream catch for 2008/9 was a low 36 tonnes. The catch for 2007/8 was 144 tonnes, however I am reliably informed that this catch was inflated by the 2007 flood, when freshwater forced black bream down out of the rivers and a substantial catch was taken by commercial fishermen in nets set at the mouth of the rivers. (See confirmation of this later) This catch was taken over a short period of time and would be regarded as an abnormal event that inflated the commercial catch for that year.

Excluding this event the average black bream commercial catch since 2002/3 has been 35 tonne per annum. This catch should be compared with the previous five years when the average commercial catch was 155 tonnes of black bream per annum.

In 1996/7 there was alarm and newspaper headlines when the commercial catch of black bream dropped from 130 tonnes to 89 tonnes the following year. Fisheries Victoria in an immediate reaction from the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1996 introduced a recreational bag and possession limit of 5 black bream per day and the minimum size limit was increased from 24cms to 26cms. Fisheries Victoria viewed the decline of the commercial catch so serious that it introduced a commercial catch limit of 730kgs or 22 standard boxes of black bream per month. Fisheries Victoria stated, “The regulations have been implemented to ensure conservation of severely depleted stocks of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes and inflowing rivers.” They went on to say that commercial catches and catch rates have declined by about 50% over the last six years. Perhaps the most relevant statement at this time was “urgent action is required to protect the small remaining adult bream stocks so that sufficient reproductive capacity is maintained to ensure stock rebuilding occurs when conditions are more favourable.”



Commercial Fishermen seine netting in the Gippsland Lakes

If the above actions and statement of Fisheries Victoria in 1996/7 are accepted as necessary to meet a crisis when the commercial catch dropped to 89 tonnes, then how much greater is the crisis today when the commercial catch has dropped to 36 tonnes.

This is a continuing crisis and apart from the increased size limit to 28cms little seems to have been done to protect fish stocks. Netting at the mouths of rivers by commercial fishermen continues, and no catch limit is placed on the commercial catch of black bream. No protection for small fish in rivers and of course it would seem with increasing lakes salinity the rivers may have become the spawning grounds for black bream, and the winter period is when most recreational anglers target black bream in the rivers.

It needs to be noted that the Gippsland Lakes are one of the largest sources of black bream in this state and of the 42 tonnes taken commercially in Victoria in 2008/9, 36 tonnes came from the Gippsland Lakes. This needs to be compared with the catch of [the 1980's when over 200 tonnes of black bream were netted annually](#) from the Gippsland Lakes whilst in 1983/4 alone over 400 tonnes of black bream were netted. It is probably fair to say the stock of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes has collapsed, and has shown no sign of any improvement, based on the commercial catch figures for the previous five years, and applying the assessment used by Fisheries Victoria to the perceived crisis of 1996/7.

### **Movements of black bream during flooding in the Gippsland Lakes.**

The following is a report from the Department of Primary Industries entitled “Summary of movements of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.” 25/11/2007

One particularly interesting finding of this report was the timing of fish moving downstream and exiting the Nicholson River during floods. “On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June fish suddenly moved to the entrance of the Nicholson River, with all fish exiting between 6 and 8pm. The fish did not appear to be moving in a school-rather we suspect that stimuli caused by increased flows of freshwater were affecting all fish in a similar way, causing the mass exit within a narrow period.”

The above account from a research paper probably provides a most convincing case against commercial netting within 400 metres of the mouth of rivers entering the Gippsland Lakes. In 2007 the commercial catch of black

bream increased by 75% due to the flood event and the knowledge of commercial fishermen as to the effects of a flood event on estuarine fish and their ability to net the mouths of rivers to capitalise on this event. This event could have a long term effect on the black bream population that is the netting of black bream at the mouth of rivers.

### **Continuing decline on the Stock of Dusky Flathead in the Gippsland Lakes.**

In 2008/9 the commercial catch of dusky flathead declined from 30 tonnes in the previous year to 20 tonnes, however in 2005/6 it was 48 tonnes so the decline in four years is a massive 59%.

The following provides an indication of the dusky flathead commercial catch trend in the Gippsland Lakes.

2005/6 =48 tonnes 2006/7= 35 tonnes 2007/8 =30 tonnes 2008/9 =20 tonnes

The dusky flathead catch from the Gippsland lakes is the entire state commercial catch of this species which in the Melbourne fish market brought a mere \$4.40 per kilo. Concern has been expressed with the Mallacoota Inlet and Lake Tyers dusky flathead recreational catch due to a decline in large breeding fish and an overall decline in size of fish, and reduced recreational catches. Stringent regulations were introduced for recreational anglers of a bag and possession limit of five fish with one fish over 60cms. In other words the declining dusky flathead fish stock has led to the need for added regulations and these have been willingly accepted by recreational anglers. This needs to be compared with the commercial situation where in the Gippsland Lakes commercial fishermen can take all the dusky flathead they can catch with no specific regulation to protect a species that is under continuing decline. It is somewhat puzzling that recreational anglers accept regulation to protect the two major estuary species, whilst ten commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes have no regulations as to the size of the catch they may take.

### **Commercial Catch Statistics**

The commercial catch statistics upon which this material is based are almost twelve months out of date, as returns were required from commercial fishermen on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Previously these statistics were made available in November each year rather than June of the following year. Recreational anglers should take into account that the situation for black bream and dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes may be far worse if the trends evident in the statistics above are continued in the statistics for this year.

### **General Comment on the Statistics**

A number of interesting aspects are evident in these commercial statistics when the catch of individual species is examined. Firstly the total commercial tonnage has dropped by 30% on the previous year and by more than 50% on 2004/5. The total commercial catch is the lowest in the last 30 years.

The total commercial catch in the Gippsland Lakes of all species in 2008/9 was 254 tonnes of which 105 tonnes was European carp. The value of the catch less the value of European carp was \$832,000 or a return of \$5 per kilo of fish marketed. Of this figure black bream returned \$11 per kilo to the commercial fishermen, whilst on the other hand Luderick returned a mere \$2.16 per kilogram.

The commercial catch of luderick is only 25% of the catch of the previous year. Despite the increasing salinity of the Gippsland lakes there has been no substantial increase in the catch of Australian Salmon and tailor as might have been expected.

Finally I would think any examination of these statistics would suggest a major decline in fish stocks generally in the Gippsland Lakes, and a specific decline in recreational species. This should be a matter of concern for all authorities and within these statistics is a powerful economic argument for a buyout of the final ten commercial fishing licences in the Gippsland Lakes.

### **The Effect of Declining Fish Stocks on the Commercial Fishery**

Undoubtedly the long term effect of declining fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes and therefore declining returns to commercial fishing will need to be taken into account as this will affect the return to commercial fishermen, if in the future a buyout offer is made, and it would seem the current situation in the Gippsland Lakes may cause this issue to assume some importance in the future. For instance the decline is evident when the value of the commercial catch (excluding European Carp) for 2002/3 namely \$1.3million is compared with the 2005/6 catch valued at \$897,000 or the 2008/9 catch valued at \$832,000.

The method of determining the buyback value to the commercial fisherman is as follows and was a regulation introduced to State Parliament on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2003.

The sum payable to the commercial fisherman will be 3 times the average of the four highest net incomes from the previous 7 years returns, and is based on the catch records. There are other sections covering gear and a discount associated with receiving a lump sum, however the main determinant is the catch and a declining catch could substantially reduce a payment to a commercial fisherman. This information is provided to indicate how

the payment to commercial fishermen is calculated in general terms, and the importance of the size of the catch to commercial fishermen.

### What of the Future?

There is little to indicate any improvement in either black bream or dusky flathead recreational catches in the future. As far as I am aware there has been no assessment of the effects of increased salinity in the lakes and its effect on the spawning habits of the major recreational species.

Since 1987 it appears that successful spawning of black bream has only occurred in 1987, 1989 and 1995. The current low level of black bream stock may now be the norm, unless substantial changes in regulations take place. The environment cannot be changed but regulations to protect the stock provide an option that may give some hope for the future.

### Value of Gippsland Lakes Fishery

In 1997 the value of the Gippsland Lakes Recreational Fishery to Gippsland was estimated at \$144million.  
Source- For value of Recreational Fishery- Economic Impact of Recreational Fishing in Victoria 1997

### Angler Diaries

Over a nine-year period 1997-2006 anglers in the Fishing Diary program provided information from more than 14,000 fishing trips. Over the nine year reporting period anglers caught 6200 black bream in the Gippsland Lakes of which 77% were released with the average catch rates of retained and released fish being between 0.8 and 1.9 fish per trip. Perhaps this should be compared with diary anglers targeting black bream in the Hopkins River where the catch per fishing trip varied between 3.1 and 3.9 fish per trip and Lake Tyers, which varied from 2 fish per trip in 2000/1 to 4.2 fish per trip in 2005/6. Lake Tyers showed a continuous progression of one size/year group moving through the fishery from 2001-2005.

Catch information from the Angler Diary Program is currently the only tool used to monitor the status of black bream stocks in Mallacoota Inlet, Lake Tyers, and the Hopkins River where commercial fishing is not permitted.

In a report on **“Angler Diaries State-wide 1997-2006”** it is noted that **the more anglers reporting on a particular fishery, the less likely the catches of any one angler will bias the results, and the more anglers involved in the diary program the information on the status of fish stocks is likely to improve.** This is an example of anglers and Fisheries Victoria working together to achieve an outcome that will benefit all anglers in this state.

### Barramundi at Hazelwood

The proposal to stock Hazelwood Pondage with barramundi was commented on in “Around the Jetties (34)” following a statement from the Public Affairs Officer that International Power Hazelwood the owner of the pondage would be responsible for making the final decision as to stocking the pondage with barramundi. Anthony Hurst Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria had received an application from Future Fish Limited to stock the pondage.

Anthony Hurst in a letter dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of June has stated, “Fisheries Victoria is required to ensure that this proposal has the written support of the landowner as part of the assessment process. The Future Fish Foundation is endeavouring to obtain written support from International Power P/L as the landowner for the Hazelwood power station cooling pondage. In the interim the Translocation Evaluation Panel (TEP) has considered the risks associated with stocking this species in Hazelwood Pondage and has advised Fisheries Victoria that the risks associated with the proposed stocking are manageable.

**In view of the above, Fisheries Victoria intends to authorise the stocking of Hazelwood Pondage with barramundi, subject to obtaining written support from the landowner.** The Future Fish Foundation is working closely with International Power P/L in relation to this matter.”

### Editor

The ball would now appear to be firmly in the hands of International Power P/L as to whether Gippsland introduces the first barramundi fishery to Victoria. Congratulations to Fisheries Victoria for carrying out its responsibilities so quickly and to the Future Fish Foundation for taking the initiative in this major development.

### Murray Cod

I was reading a research paper on Murray cod recently and was startled to discover that Murray cod are the most long lived native freshwater fish in Australia, with the oldest fish caught being 48 years of age however the paper added “the even larger specimens of years past leave little doubt that the species can reach



considerably greater ages of 70 years or more.” Murray cod do not reach sexual maturity until 50- 60cms in length and being between 4 and 6 years of age and like many species large female Murray cod between 15-35 kilograms are the most important breeders because they produce the most eggs and for a number of other reasons. Very large female Murray cod can have egg counts as high as 80-90,000. This of course is relatively low when compared with black bream (up to 3 million) or dusky flathead. (300,000-3 million) I was particularly interested in the diet of Murray cod, which included introduced fish such as carp and redfin, golden perch, catfish, yabbies, shrimps, and river crayfish. This report adds, “Murray cod have also been known to eat, ducks, cormorants, freshwater tortoises, water dragons, snakes, mice and frogs.” What is most pleasing are the reports of more young cod in the rivers of the Murray Darling system, and the wonderful sport from cod in waters such as Lake Mulwala. When we seem to hear of rapidly declining fish stocks in our estuaries and in particular black bream and dusky flathead it is heartening to hear consistent reports of improving Murray cod stocks in the north of our state.

### **Murray Cod Study**

A three year study involving interviews with 1400 anglers between Yarrawonga and the SA Border funded in part by licence revenue found that anglers released 90% of cod caught, most of which were undersize. The voluntary release of size fish in the Murray between Yarrawonga and Torrumbarry was 32%. Another finding was that most anglers use bait 87% in preference to lures, although lure anglers had greater success catching large cod.

**Source Angler Diary Program Newsletter No 6 June 2010**

### **Twenty Years Ago**

Taken from Press releases of 1989 contributed by Geoff Trusler  
29/5/1989

#### **Tambo River**

Steve Robinson of Elwood Angling Club fished on Friday at the mouth of the river for 23 bream the largest weighing around 1 kilogram, the total weight was 6.5kgs. Marl and Fred Luxford of Toora on Thursday took home 22 bream, the heaviest weighing 840grams. Most were over 450 grams. Gwen Billing and Gordon Rickard of Phillip Island landed 70 bream and Tailor over Friday to Sunday, the heaviest weighed near 700 grams. All were taken on local prawn.

#### **Mitchell River**

Tom and Marg Vandenberg of Eagle Point landed 66 Tailor in Lake King trawling. Ray Chirjwin of Parkdale hooked 40 bream in the Mitchell River over the weekend on worm and spider crab. Bairnsdale RSL Angling Club also tried their luck on Sunday with 15 anglers fishing the Mitchell for 74 fish mostly bream weighing in a total weight of 24.7kgs. The heaviest bream was taken by Ron Turner and this fish weighed 800 grams. Norm Anderson hooked the heaviest bank fish weighing 510 grams.

### **Disillusioned**

Despite a considerable effort by Fisheries Officers, and research scientists to improve and maintain fish stocks, plus increases in legal fish sizes and the introduction of bag and possession limits and research into fish spawning, and then I hear of cases where Fisheries Officers do not regularly work weekends due in part to insufficient finance and lack of staff. A few days after the long weekend in June I was in a Lakes Entrance shop and I got talking with the manager on fishing. He explained that on the Sunday of the Long Weekend he was taking his dog for a walk on Bullock Island and during this stroll he decided to see how much success a group of anglers were having catching crabs with hoop nets from the jetty. As he watched few crabs were being caught, but each net when retrieved contained a few undersized fish, which were placed in the buckets on the jetty. He was also surprised to see another chap using a long mesh net, and towing one end out in a canoe and bringing the other end to shore from where the net was retrieved and again numbers of small fish were placed in buckets. These were the observations of just one person and it raised the issue of compliance inspections of areas like this. Perhaps Fisheries Officers should target weekends and especially long weekends, and anglers should indicate to politicians the need for a greater number of Fisheries Officers and the funding to support them. The number of anglers has greatly increased in recent years and most anglers feel sure that the number of Fisheries Officers have not been relatively increased.

#### **Editor**

Bob McNeill who wrote this contribution is one of a group of anglers who have recently worked with Fisheries Victoria in Lake Tyers and he is a fine angler and most concerned with the maintenance of fish stocks in local

waters. In talking to him he indicated that the person making these observations, as he was not an active angler, did not know what number to call to report what he observed.

Many anglers now have cards in their wallets with numbers to call if a fisheries offence is observed. Perhaps similar cards could be sent to members of the public living in close proximity to fishing areas and seeking their support to report activities that threaten our fish stocks. These cards with an accompanying letter might get a large swell of public support for Fisheries Victoria and provide a large number of observers who could report directly to Fisheries Victoria. Alternatively plastic wallet cards with the offence reporting number could be included with Fishing Guides, which should mean many more anglers have access to the State-wide fisheries offence reporting line. This should not be an overly expensive exercise. The quoted example is not the first case of illegal fishing activities in this area. In Issue 35 of *Around the Jetties*, I reported that a chap using hoop nets in the same area fishing for crabs had two Seahorses together with crabs in his esky. Local Fisheries Officers picked this offence up and this case went to court on the 7<sup>th</sup> April and was reported by Fisheries Victoria on the 8<sup>th</sup> April through a Media release. The chap was fined \$400 for the illegal catch of the seahorses, which are under threat in the Gippsland Lakes.

This publication strongly supports the provision of increased numbers of Fisheries Officers.

The fisheries offence reporting line is **13 3474**

## Odd Bits

The following involves a number of short but hopefully interesting topics

### Federal Move on Mako Shark

An amended Bill was passed in Canberra on the 21<sup>st</sup> January allowing recreational anglers to resume fishing for Mako sharks. The government said that the original decision to ban recreational fishing for this species was based on concerns for Mediterranean stocks. The Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria Anthony Hurst stated, "this is good news for Victorian recreational fishers, as Mako sharks are an important game species in Victoria's marine waters."

### A Commercial Report

Recently whilst browsing the Internet I came across a comprehensive fishing column produced by Rob Morecroft a commercial fisherman based at Paynesville. In his report he stated a commercial fisherman on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009 caught an 11kg Gummy Shark in the Bunga Arm and a day later a Big Eye Tuna was caught off Nungurner. Rob wrote, "I think the key to this is just how salty the lakes are."

### European Shore Crabs Still in the News

The issue of European Shore Crabs raised in this publication last October (Issue 29) is still in the news. ABC News reported that local Independent MP Craig Ingram had spoken in Parliament suggesting the banning of these crabs as bait, to protect pristine waters in East Gippsland that may at this stage not be infested with crabs. This follows Darren Chester MHR in February 2010 urging Federal and State research to develop control strategies to overcome the "plague of crabs." In March 2010 Greg Hunt MP opposition spokesman on the environment on ABC spoke of the need for research, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010 the Hon. Phillip Davis MP suggested that shore crabs could be the basis of a commercial fishery which in turn may reduce crab numbers. On the other hand Fisheries Victoria is encouraging anglers not to use this crab as bait, and if you do only use it in areas where it has been caught, whilst commercial fishers are allowed to remove and sell the crab to bait or seafood markets, and of course we have a totally different approach to the problem of these crabs between Victoria and NSW. It would seem a firm policy is needed on the Shore Crab issue, which takes into account the many views that are creating news at the moment.

### Aboriginal Fishing

Fisheries Victoria is developing an Aboriginal Fishing Strategy to develop the approach to Native Title, customary fishing, and development opportunities for aboriginal communities. This will be a State-wide effort that will involve working with aboriginal community representatives to develop policies to facilitate Aboriginal involvement in fishing. The strategy will apply to all Aboriginal Victorians interested in the use of fisheries resources. According to the information on Aboriginal fishing the State Government is committed to amend the relevant act to recognise customary fishing as part of the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy. Fisheries Victoria will be engaging in discussions with people about customary and traditional fishing, and Aboriginal interests in Victorian Fisheries. **Customary Fishing = based on custom rather than law.**

**Source- Department of Primary Industry**

### **Trout Cod Fishery At Beechworth**

Lake Sambell at Beechworth has been stocked with Trout Cod. Nearby Lake Kerford has had an annual trout Cod stocking program for the last three years, and in that time 6000 trout cod have been stocked in the lake. 3500 trout cod have this year been stocked into both lakes as part of a new research and monitoring program. Fisheries Victoria Executive director Anthony Hurst said that whilst Trout Cod are currently totally protected it is hoped “this iconic fish will be ready for anglers in years to come.” I am aware that currently the Ovens River near Wangaratta with its snaggy environment has trout cod in substantial numbers and I understand it is one of the few areas where this species is spawning.

By the way a Guide to Inland Angling Waters in Victoria is now available online at [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/angling](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/angling) This online Guide will be updated regularly and should be of great interest to anglers.

**Source- Issue 103 Freshwater Fishing Magazine.**

### **Sand for Melbourne Beaches from Gippsland.**

I heard on ABC Regional News that sand was being sourced from Gippsland to replenish Melbourne beaches that had been eroded. I immediately thought that this might be an opportunity to remove some of the sand slug from the Tambo River and this could be a win for Melbourne beaches and also a local river. I contacted both Gippsland Ports and the Department of Sustainability and neither department was aware of this movement of sand. A further contact with ABC regional News and they sent me information on which this report was based. I then had the tender form which indicated that a massive 104,000m was to be obtained however it was specified that this would be quarry sand and did not specify where in Gippsland it would be sourced. It seems rather unfortunate that this sand was not sourced from a river that is under long-term threat from the movement of this sand slug.

“It is estimated that there is some 1,500,000 square metres of sand in the Tambo River between Bruthen and Swan Reach. If sand extraction was carried out at the rate of 50,000 square metres per annum for six years, it is anticipated that a significant drop in the bed of the river would occur over this reach.”

**Source- River Improvement Trust Master Plan 1985**

In other words this sand if removed from the Tambo River rather than an unnamed quarry could have made a substantial difference to the sand slug and the future health of the Tambo River.

### **Successful Action by Fisheries Victoria**

A 51 year old man from Epping was fined \$800 and his companion from Mill Park was fined \$400 when apprehended fishing the Little Stevenson River with one man having 22 trout in his possession the other 11 when the bag/possession limit is 5 trout. The river they were fishing in had been devastated by bushfires and the fish population had not rehabilitated. They were also using ova as bait, which in itself is illegal. Most anglers would deplore the action of these anglers and feel that the fines for such an act should be greatly increased, as a warning of the seriousness of the offence in the eyes of the community.

**Source Fisheries Victoria Media Release 28<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

### **Improved Habitat for East Gippsland Rivers**

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority is applying for funding to install a total of 60 log structures in The Tambo, Nicholson and Mitchell Rivers. This would increase the in stream habit used by key recreational species and build on work already undertaken by the Authority. Funding is being sought from the Recreational Licence Trust Account and is for a three year program. This program seeks to restore some of the structures in the rivers that were for many years removed by local authorities. A similar major program is taking place on the Murray River.

### **Fishcare Snapper Rulers**

These rulers allow anglers to estimate the weight and age of a snapper purely on its length. These rulers were developed using licence funds and are designed to stick on to the side of the boat. This means that snapper that are being returned to the water can have their weight quickly estimated with a minimum of handling. The rulers also contain valuable information on snapper. The weigh Your Catch Rulers are available free of charge from selected retail fishing stores in coming weeks.

**Source- Angler Diary Program Newsletter No 6 June 2010**

## **Fisheries Victoria Research Report**

**Detecting the impact of recent changes in fishing pressure on key recreational fish stocks in Mallacoota Inlet and Lake Tyers. June 2010 (Simon Conran, Natalie Bridge, and Therese Stokie.)**

In 2002 the Victorian Government announced its intention to close the Mallacoota Inlet and Lake Tyers to commercial fishing and to maintain these waters as Fisheries reserves for the use of a growing recreational fishing community. In April 2003 the Reserves were declared.

This study looked at the effect of the closure to commercial fishing on the key recreational species in these waters and the perceived quality of recreational fishing following the closure of these waters to commercial netting. An angler diary program and an angler satisfaction survey were undertaken to provide this information. The figures obtained suggested that in the case of black bream the annual mortality declined from 57% to 31-36% following the removal of commercial fishing from Mallacoota Inlet. Data collected in Lake Tyers suggested an annual mortality rate of 24%.

Anglers surveyed in Mallacoota and Lake Tyers were generally more satisfied “with the black bream and dusky flathead fishing in these estuaries compared with anglers surveyed in the Gippsland lakes where commercial fishing continues.”

The majority of anglers fishing in Mallacoota Inlet and Lake Tyers believed there were more or about the same number of black bream and dusky flathead during the four year period following the removal of commercial fishing. They attributed this increase to the removal of commercial fishing in these estuaries.

In contrast the anglers surveyed in the Gippsland lakes felt there were less black bream and they were smaller after mid 2003 and 36% of anglers attributed this perceived decline to increased fishing pressure from both the recreational and commercial fishery. Environmental factors associated with spawning success were also given as reasons for the perceived decline of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.

There was a 44-58% satisfaction level in anglers fishing Lake Tyers and Mallacoota Inlet in the twelve month period prior to being interviewed.

Research anglers began recording their fishing trips in Mallacoota Inlet in 1997, and in Lake Tyers in 2001 and otolith collection began 1998 for Mallacoota and 2002 for Lake Tyers. Catch rate, size, and age composition were provided through the angler diary program. Anglers also removed the ear bones (otoliths) from a sample of their bream for ageing purposes. These anglers were called research anglers and they participated in an instructed fish sampling program.

**Editor**

This report again indicates the importance of anglers and research scientists working together. Simon Conran and his scientific team are to be congratulated on the introduction of the Angler Diary program some years ago, and its growth in importance over recent years, and the encouragement of the Research Angler program. I am sure this development is providing statistical information to Fisheries Victoria in a most cost effective manner. I know a number of Research Anglers and they spend hundreds of hours fishing and recording their catches, obtaining information and providing otoliths to the scientists. In my view this has been one of the most important developments in recreational fishing and angler involvement in recent years.

**Readers**

Remember you may get an interested angler or friend on to our mailing list by simply sending us an email with details. Some angling clubs are using Around the Jetties as a news publication and are simply attaching a face sheet of club news for members, and this makes a simple club bulletin.

**Contributions**

Your contributions to this publication are most welcome, and we look forward to publishing your items of interest.

**Good health and good fishing**

**Lynton Barr**

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

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BUT IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THE AUTHOR AND PUBLICATION WERE NOTED