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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“No other saltwater fish tests the anglers’ ingenuity more than catching a big bream. And in no other angling does success depend so much on the size of the line used. It’s the use of these fine lines, plus the fact that the breams first run is fast, powerful and deliberate that finds the faults in an anglers bream fishing techniques. For most anglers a light line is imperative.”

Lance Wedlick “Fishing in Australia” September 1959

Editorial

Of recent weeks I with many others have observed the fishing in the Tambo by hundreds of anglers. I must say it worries me to get reports of fish heavy with spawn or milt being taken, and most bream caught were in the river to spawn. I think the number of fish in the river this year was due to the increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes and this has provided the opportunity for many anglers to catch large numbers of fish including large spawning bream over 40cms. I have had it passed on to me that some anglers have taken over 40 of these fish in a week. On the positive side I have had numbers of very experienced anglers both young and old asking why isn’t there a closed season when this spawning activity takes place. This is a question that this publication has asked regularly with no positive outcome. It is almost impossible to understand why we allow commercial netting of a species under threat and allow the wholesale slaughter of spawning fish. This is a question our fisheries administrators must address or at the very least seek the feedback of anglers on whether they would support a closed season for black bream, when the fish are in the rivers spawning.

Understanding the Water Requirements of the Gippsland Lakes (Scoping Study)

This study by Tilleard, O’Connor and Boon is the first stage in a project to determine the environmental water requirements of the Gippsland Lakes. The report identifies the need to understand the water requirements of the lakes system and the impact of further water extractions from the catchments.

The main findings of this report were that the Gippsland Lakes has a high regional, national and international value and is listed as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention. It supports an abundance and diversity of vegetation, waterbirds and fish. The system provides a direct economic benefit and recreational opportunity to Gippsland and this state.

The Gippsland Lakes receives freshwater inflows directly or indirectly from one or more waterways, whilst the Latrobe catchment in the west contributes 44% of annual inflow to the lakes and the Mitchell catchment in the east contributes 35% of freshwater inflow. On average 20% of natural stream flow to the lakes is extracted upstream and in the case of the Latrobe this is 33%. The report suggests that worst-case climate change may account for another 34% decrease. With the permanent entrance to the sea freshwater inflows are principally responsible for variation in salinity, and thus the ecological condition of the lakes is linked to freshwater inflows. Seasonal flow pulses below riverbank height are necessary for fish breeding and migration in the estuarine river reaches and the main lakes.

The combination of decreased inflows and the permanent entrance to the sea has resulted in increased salinity throughout the Lake system. The future state of the system with climate change and in addition continued water extraction is likely to be predominantly marine. Freshwater inflows will play an important role in the future of the

lakes system whether the long-term management decisions are to protect existing values or to manage a more saline system.

The salinity regime of the lakes depends on the incoming saltwater from the ocean and its dilution by freshwater inflows from the rivers that discharge into the lakes. The worst-case scenario is that in the future climate change and greater water use will add to the problems of the lakes with a suggested 68% reduction in freshwater inflow for Lake Wellington and a 28% reduction for Lake King. Added to this with climate change there will be increased bushfires in the catchments and increasing sea levels all of which will pose greater problems for the Gippsland Lakes.

The report concludes that there is justification to maintain water use caps on the catchments of the Gippsland Lakes given the very high values of the lake system and their demonstrated reliance on freshwater inflows.

This report provides a detailed examination of the importance of freshwater inflows on fish breeding and in particular the black Bream of the Gippsland Lakes. Accompanying this 83-page report is a 400 page technical report.

Philip Davis MP for Eastern Gippsland recently undertook a large survey of 22,000 residents of the Mitchell River Basin on the question of building a dam on the Mitchell River. Over 5,000 or (23.5%) of residents receiving the survey responded with 90.7% opposing a dam on the Mitchell. Only 459 or 8.7% of respondents supported the construction of a dam. This response strongly supports the view that residents of the Mitchell River basin believe the Mitchell River is critical to the environmental health of the Gippsland Lakes, and should not be dammed. Mr Davis stated "as a direct consequence of my survey the position of all parties is now that there should not be no dam" on the Mitchell River.

New Funding Agreement for VRFish

Readers of this publication would have seen in the last issue that VRFish in 2009/10 received \$377,000 from the Fishing Grants Working Group according to the Report to Parliament of this group. In a media release on the 5th of October the following statement appeared.

"The Brumby Labour Government has granted VRFish, the body representing Victoria's recreational fishers, funding of \$423,000 a year from the Recreational Fishing Licence Revenue."

Now this publication has no difficulty with this 11% increase in funding for VRFish, and supports increased funding, however the method of the increase is somewhat worrying. The increase comes only weeks before a State election, and the money is drawn from the anglers licence fees Trust Fund by the Government. This method of funding increase ignores the Fishing Grants Working Group who were put in place to allocate the licence fees without fear or favour and to achieve this, the members of this Working Groups names were not disclosed to anglers of this State. It would seem they have been bypassed by this decision.

Now the real concern of this decision is that VRFish by this action may become far less critical of Government when the survival of VRFish and its funding depends on the current Government attitude. It would seem to me that it is vital that VRFish should be independent of the Government of the day in order to provide fearless advice when representing 700,000 recreational anglers. The question arises will VRFish be critical of a Government in the lead up to an election when their future funding is dependent on that Government.

An alternative proposal could be that \$2 from each licence fee be allocated to VRFish to fund administration of the body representing recreational anglers across this state. Given that 270,000 anglers bought licences in 2009/10 this would yield over \$500,000 to VRFish and make it truly accountable to anglers and not the Government of the day. It would also clearly indicate where the funding is coming from, rather than a Government allocating and granting funding provided by recreational anglers. Worth a thought?

Funding for Recreational Fishing

On the 7th of October the Minister for Agriculture Joe Helper announced by media release \$3.2m to improve recreational fishing. This of course was an allocation from the Working Group for 2010/11 and encompasses 21 projects funded from recreational anglers Licence fees and no Government money was provided for these projects. I was disappointed to see that \$1m will be spent on compliance, or in other words recreational anglers are funding Fisheries Officers whose main task will be to police the recreational anglers.

\$750,000 was to be spent on research and this is less than the money allocated to fisheries compliance. Surprisingly the three major research projects were (a) \$187,000 to monitor the southern bluefin recreational fishery, (b) \$300,000 to investigate sand flathead stocks in Port Phillip Bay and most **surprising of all (c) \$232,000 to provide research into king prawn stocking of Lake Tyers.**

I would have thought with the current problems associated with the major recreational species, the dusky flathead and black bream and their importance in estuarine waters such as Lake Tyers would mean that, research into these species would be of far greater priority than any research into king prawns in Lake Tyers. Most regular estuarine anglers and I believe most researchers are concerned at the declining size and numbers of dusky flathead in estuaries. This is a

recurring theme when anglers get together, and one can only wonder at the allocation of such funding to researching king prawns in Lake Tyers.

I also find it surprising that this funding has been allocated to the University of NSW after being recommended by the Recreational Grants Working Group, and approved by the Minister. I wonder does this mean that no research grants were sought by Victorian fisheries scientists for areas such as the dusky flathead, which as stated have been acknowledged as an area needing urgent research. The Lake Tyers Fisheries Management Report 2007 stated that Fisheries Victoria would seek funding to investigate diet and therefore the ecological dependencies of dusky flathead. This research, subject to funding, would commence within two years of the 2007 Management Plan. There was also to be an inquiry into spawning, recruitment survival and growth and movement of dusky flathead and this was listed as a responsibility of Fisheries Victoria in the Management Plan for Lake Tyers. Nowhere in the Management plan, prepared with input from recreational fishers and other interested parties, is research into eastern king prawns even mentioned. This 2007 management plan request for research programs into dusky flathead seems to have been ignored.

Research into King Prawn Stocking of Lake Tyers

The question arises as to how this funding allocation came about. In 2009 Fisheries Victoria undertook two workshops to investigate the possibilities of marine stocking in Victorian waters. As a result a number of estuaries were listed as possibilities for further investigation and a small number of species were suggested. These included Mulloway, Black bream, Estuary perch Dusky Flathead and Eastern King prawn.



As a result of the two initial meetings and it would seem at the invitation of Fisheries Victoria, Dr Mathew D. Taylor of the University of NSW carried out a preliminary assessment of a number of Victorian estuaries selected as suitable for fish releases including Lake Tyers and the Snowy/Broddribb estuaries.

This report suggests that mulloway whilst having been captured in Lake Tyers are unsuitable for this water, as are estuary perch and the report suggests that there is only **“a small interest of recreational anglers in estuary perch”** and for this reason and the lack of deep channels, the stocking of this species in Lake Tyers is not justified.

The following is a direct quotation from this report on the eastern king prawn.

“The eastern king prawn fishery in Lake Tyers fluctuates substantially as a direct result of periodic limitation of prawn recruitment from Bass Strait waters due to closure of the estuary entrance. Released prawns grow well within NSW estuaries where there are abundant habitat and food resources within the estuary to support the population. Lake Tyers appears to have abundant food and habitat resources, however this should be further investigated in a quantitative fashion.”

The above would seem to provide the reason for the Fishing Grants Working Group allocating \$233,000 to a **quantitative investigation.**

This report goes on to say “Recruitment of dusky flathead to Lake Tyers from Bass Strait waters is potentially limited because of entrance closures, although there is some evidence that the species has reproduced within the estuary.” It does say that dusky flathead may have a potential for release in Lake Tyers.

In the Snowy Broddribb the report suggests there is little need of any release of estuary perch due to the wild spawning, meanwhile the dusky flathead may be a potential species for release in this estuary. It makes the point that little is known about this estuary, other than “dusky flathead are targeted by anglers within this estuary.” (Senior Fisheries Management Officer Dick Brumley is acknowledged as providing direct observations on the Snowy/Broddribb fishery.)

Editors Comments

I must say I find some of the above report confusing. To suggest as Dr Taylor does that the dusky flathead population of either the Snowy/Broddribb or Lake Tyers is limited by entrance closures seems to take no account of the fact that Vic Tag has only one instance of a dusky flathead moving between estuaries, which would seem to indicate that dusky flathead spend their lives within an estuary and certainly Lake Tyers anglers have regular evidence of the spawning of this species within the lake and I think this is an accepted fact. I must also suggest that mulloway catches within Lake Tyers are extremely rare and I have not had one confirmed report or photo of this occurring. I do not know where Dr Taylor found evidence of a lack of interest by recreational anglers in having estuary perch in Lake Tyers, or where he obtained evidence that dusky flathead are targeted by anglers in the Snowy/Broddribb estuary. I have fished this estuary for many years and targeted a number of species but never dusky flathead. I have heard of the odd catch of a flathead but under no circumstances could it be considered a dusky flathead fishery.

It is also worth remembering that in 1989 the commercial catch of estuary perch in Lake Tyers was 1.53 tonnes, and there is other anecdotal information on estuary perch in Lake Tyers. Given this information it would appear that this lake can support estuary perch and has done in the past, which makes Dr Taylor’s assertion that the lake is unsuitable

for estuary perch difficult to equate with the previous history of this water. A full report on “Estuary Perch in Lake Tyers” appeared in Around the Jetties issue 32 putting forward the case for stocking of this species in this lake. This is hardly a lack of interest by recreational anglers.

These comments relate to just a few of the many inconsistencies in this preliminary assessment which make me wonder at the validity of allocating almost a quarter of a million dollars to a project based on this report. Anglers have long been urging that research be undertaken on the problems faced by dusky flathead in our estuaries, but this has seemingly fallen on deaf ears.

And Another Thing

I understand there are three current commercial bait licences for Lake Tyers. Does this mean that any prawns stocked in Lake Tyers will become available to the commercial bait fishermen to catch and sell? This will perhaps create an interesting issue for Fisheries Victoria to resolve if stocking of Lake Tyers with king prawns is approved.

An Episode of Trout Fishing

I was reading the Weekend Australian Magazine for October 9/10 when I came across the following. -

“The pristine rivers of the Snowy Mountains have been full of fly fishermen trying out their new kit since the NSW season opened last weekend. But if you are a broke fisho and you feel like you’re missing out on the fun, don’t despair, you don’t need a \$1000 rod and reel to catch trout. Infact you don’t need any equipment at all.

Trout-tickling is a technique that relies on a curious aspect of the fish’s behaviour; if you can creep close enough to slip a hand into the water and gently rub its belly with your fingers, it will soon go into a kind of stupor-at which point it can be scooped up onto the riverbank.” (Ross Bilton)



Reading this brought back a fishing episode about sixty-five years ago. At that time the Rose River above Whitfield had stopped flowing and was essentially a line of pools. An old chap who was a well known local fisherman and shooter probably in his early seventies invited me to join him “fishing” the Rose, and I was delighted to accompany old Mr McKay. When we got to the river, which was quite a drive in those days I was surprised he suggested we get into the water and leave our rods and bags on the bank. In this way I was introduced to tickling trout by carefully and quietly moving around the banks of the hole with ones hands feeling under the bank until the body of a trout was felt. It was then a matter of getting the fish to relax on your hands and in due course throwing it onto the bank with one hand at the head and the other gripping the tail. We probably got a dozen or so trout, and on the way home Mr McKay explained that he had done this since he was a boy when the river was so low as to be just a series of pools. His argument was that the trout would die as the pools heated up and the fish would be food for scavengers. In a few of the deeper pools that could not be waded some fish would survive in the cooler water and these fish would be the stock that would provide a recovery when the rains came again. I never tickled trout again in my life, but I well remember my day fishing the Rose River with old Mr McKay and his logic for fishing in this manner when the weather was hot and the Rose River was just a series of pools. By the way Trout tickling is illegal!

A Response to Last Months Editorial.

Readers may remember last month’s editorial, which provided information on the netting by commercial fishermen at the mouth of local rivers when the Mitchell flood took place. Following that editorial I had the following email from an “Interested Reader.”

“When we had all that rain in the mountains recently and experienced a flood in the Mitchell River that cut the Wy Yung road near the Lind Bridge, I heard an item on the morning Gippsland news bulletin on ABC radio that featured an interview with a Lakes Entrance professional fisherman who, in effect, said that the fresh water from the flood had been of great benefit to fish stocks in the Lakes and that his catches had not been so good for quite a while. My wife

and I listened intently and got the impression that the flood had caused an influx of fish stocks from the sea into the Lakes and that professional fishermen were doing well in the Lakes Entrance area.

Admittedly he did not actually say the fish were coming in from the sea but that was the general impression and he certainly did not make the slightest mention of fish being pushed out of the rivers or of operating anywhere near the rivers. My wife's father and grandfather were both life-long professional fishermen, mainly based in Paynesville, and I lived with my parents on the Mitchell River silt jetties below Eagle Point for the first fifteen years of my life. We both have a pretty good idea of where the pro's liked to operate when the rivers were in flood."

The Greens and Recreational Fishing

In the Australian newspaper of Monday 11th of October I read that Victorian Greens MP Greg Barber, " said yesterday his party would push for up to 30 per cent of the state's coastline to be covered by marine parks if his party held the balance of power after the November 27th poll." (Victorian State Election.) Whilst this publication does not support any political party but rather attempts to provide information for others to make informed decisions, it is important anglers are aware of the intent of political parties that may impact upon them. "Mr Barber told the Australian yesterday that marine reserves were an effective way of replenishing fish stocks and that unlike NSW, Victoria did not employ enough fisheries officers to enforce quotas."

The paper went on to say that "of the 30% figure Mr Barber said 'It is a good international benchmark that has proven successful at protecting fish stocks and other values around the world. I fish and I vote Greens. So do a lot of people. If you want your grandkids to have a lot of fish to catch, you would support our policy.'"

Material for this section was taken from an article by Chip L Grand on page 8 in the Australian Newspaper.

Editors Comment

Mr Barber's statements may be true however I would simply point out that I am unaware of any authoritative published research on the effectiveness of recently declared marine parks in this state, and perhaps the effectiveness of these marine parks should be examined before declaring 30% of the Victorian coastline a marine park.

Victoria's coastline currently includes 13 Marine National Parks and eleven smaller marine sanctuaries. These parks and sanctuaries account for 5.3% of Victorian coastal waters.

In the Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide is the following statement-

"All forms of commercial and recreational fishing from sea or shore are prohibited including collecting bait, line fishing, setting traps, netting and the use of spears. Heavy penalties apply"

Marine parks in Gippsland include

Beware Reef (Cape Conran) 220 hectares

Cape Howe Marine Park (Mallacoota) 4050 hectares

Corner Inlet Marine Park 1550 hectares

90 Mile Beach National Park 2750 hectares

Point Hicks Marine Park 4000 hectares

Wilson Promontory National Park 15,500 hectares

Currently neither the Labour Party nor the Coalition supports any proposal for further marine parks.

Fish Cleaning Tables



A \$75,000 program to install ten fish cleaning tables is being undertaken in the local area. Each fish cleaning area includes a stainless steel cleaning table and is roofed, and as can be seen from the photograph of the cleaning area being constructed at Johnsonville boat ramp they are a neat addition to fishing areas. The land managers of the areas upon which these tables are located will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the tables which in most cases is the East Gippsland Shire.

After several phone calls I found the funding for these cleaning areas has come from the Enhanced Recreational Fishing Program, which is a Government funded initiative and is not part of the allocation of Recreational Licence fees. According to Roger Rogallo of Fisheries Victoria in Melbourne these tables are part of a

\$450,000 Cleaning Table program instituted by the Government across the state. These tables are being located at the Johnsonville boat ramp, Shaving Point boat ramp, Lake Tyers boat ramp, Fisherman's Landing boat ramp (Lake Tyers), Mallacoota Boat Ramp, Karbethong boat ramp (Mallacoota), Newlands Arm, North Arm boat ramp (Lakes Entrance), and Nicholson boat ramp.

Now whilst this is a good addition to local facilities it does need to be said that a number of these locations already have very satisfactory fish cleaning areas and at the Metung boat ramp the new fish cleaning area is being built alongside the current facility that has provided for anglers over many years.(photo right) The present Johnsonville fish cleaning area is on the jetty and is a fine area whilst the new fish-cleaning table is some distance above the launching ramp and next to the barbecue. Good fish cleaning areas already exist at the North Arm and at the Lake Tyers boat ramp and there are more. One can only wonder as to whether there was a better use of money. The siting of these tables was undertaken by Fisheries Victoria together with the land managers which, according to Roger Rogallo, was in most cases the East Gippsland Shire. As a spokesman for the East Gippsland Shire said we are delighted to get these facilities at no cost and without even requesting them.



Howqua River Trout Report (A New Research Report)

A report has just been released (September 2010) by Fisheries Victoria on a “Trout Stock Assessment” for the Howqua River prepared by Taylor.L.Hunt. The Howqua River is one of the great trout streams of this State and it flows into Eildon Reservoir. It contains both rainbow and brown trout with most fish less than 350grms.This area has been subject to bushfire impact in recent times 2002-2009. As a result concern was expressed at seeming low fish numbers. As a result Fisheries Victoria commissioned this survey.

In May 2010 thirteen sites on the Howqua were surveyed using backpack and boat electrofishing methods and covered 32 kilometres of the river. The findings of this research was that a self sustaining population of brown and rainbow trout were present in the Howqua River and the mean length of fish in this survey were consistent with previous surveys. Anecdotal reports of anglers supported the findings of this research. The range of different sized brown and rainbow trout in the Howqua River was also consistent or better than previous surveys.

Report On Eel Tailed Catfish

Following the comments in the last issue of Around the Jetties on the decline of catfish I received this note from Rob Loats of VRFish.

“VRFish have been progressing the freshwater catfish issue with Victorian Fisheries/DSE over recent months and I am pleased to inform both NSW and Victorian staff have been involved. Fisheries/DSE now have a genetic pool identified to provide the most viable fish for possible restocking, and provided funding is obtained we hope to progress the issue next year. Feel assured VRFish will continue to promote the rebreeding and restocking of this once prolific species. I am on the committee representing VRFish so will advise of any progress in the future, subject to confirmation with Fisheries Victoria.”



Editor

I am surprised that neither Fisheries Victoria, nor VRFish have advised anglers of the existence of this committee, its deliberations and its hopes for a future restocking of catfish. I have asked where any breeding program would take place, and where is the genetic pool of catfish maintained. I have also asked for any research material or additional information on this project, but was informed it may take a couple of months before this material is available.

Glenelg River Fires Up



I received a media release from Fisheries Victoria indicating that anglers could look forward to great fishing for black bream following a strong spawning in 2005/6 and these fish were now entering the fishery as they reached the 28cms in large numbers. Acting Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria Travis Dowling has said the “ability to monitor fish stocks and forecast fishing trends has been made possible by volunteer angler diarists who collect information during their normal fishing trips and pass it on to Fisheries Victoria.” Poor recruitment had occurred in the Glenelg River for the past nine years so it is most pleasing to see this fishery recover. It is also interesting to see angler diarists catching mulloway in the Glenelg River between 40 and 98cms and which were from 2-6 years old. The diary program is funded from angler licence fees and is now assuming vital importance and is largely replacing the former assessments based on netting.

Editor

I am delighted to see a black bream fishery recovering from poor spawning in one of our estuarine areas, and I compare this with the Gippsland Lakes and its continuing problems with both black bream numbers and the declining dusky flathead population. Angler diarists now play a vital role in assessing stock numbers and trends, and it has been fascinating in recent years to observe this development, which has not always been well received by some fisheries scientists who doubted its value. Those scientists who organised anglers and worked with them and stood by the results achieved should feel considerable pride in this development over the last decade. I like many anglers will be amazed at the fast growth rates of mulloway.

Photos from Paul Sellars, Media Manager, Agriculture and Fisheries Department of Primary Industries.



Fishing in Lake Tyers May to August 2010

The following report was provided by Bob McNeill and comes from his Research Anglers diary just recently submitted to Fisheries Victoria and is provided here to indicate the fishing potential of Lake Tyers over the winter period. Bob normally fishes two mornings a week –Tuesday and Friday and commences his fishing at 6.00am and generally is retrieving his boat between 9.00 and 10.00am. Bob fished the Toorloo Arm and the Nowa Nowa Arm up to Cameron’s and Devils Hole.

Bob wrote, “Generally winter fishing in Lake Tyers is not very productive and this year was no exception. For most of the winter months no more than three boat trailers (for morning fishing) were parked at the launching ramp.” All fish taken were in excellent condition, clear eyed and silver in colour. A big percentage of the size bream were over 30cms and up to 43cms. Bob returns all fish above 38cms. In May-June he caught the odd flathead in the Devils Hole area but that was only 6 fish. In 34 fishing trips there were only three where he did not catch a fish and most times and apart from those three outings he caught at least one size fish every trip with five size bream on eight occasions. The average catch of size bream was just under 3 bream per trip while the average catch of undersize fish was just over 2 fish per trip.

Bob indicated that he used prawn as his bait for all trips and fished with an 8lb line, and used No2 (Gaikakatsu) hooks which he said are lovely hook. Almost all fish were caught before strong sun hit the water, and he fished in depths of from 2-5 metres. I found it surprising that no tailor were taken during these months, however Bob caught a couple of trevally in one of his last trips recorded in this diary period. One of these trevally was a 43cm specimen, which is a lovely fish.

Editor

This is an excellent report that allows anglers to see the change in conditions and catch rates in Lake Tyers during the winter months. Bob reported how he fished further up the arms during those months. I found it fascinating how the winter months depended almost totally on one species namely black bream, and that almost no by catch of other species occurred. The observation on the size of black bream would seem to reinforce the research which indicated the bream fishery is dependant on the year classes spawned in 1989/99 and 1999/00. Bobs catch rate over winter would seem to be lower than the stable catch rate of between 2.0 and-4.5 fish per hour as indicated from angler diarists since 2002/3. Perhaps Bob might provide similar information for the summer period of his fishing and anglers can then compare the winter fishing of Lake Tyers and the summer fishery. Special thanks to Bob McNeill, for providing this summary of his winter angling results in Lake Tyers.



Odd Items of Interest

40th Edition of Around the Jetties

This 40th edition of Around the Jetties is quite a milestone in that what started off as a three or four-page letter to a dozen anglers now goes to over 500 recreational anglers. When I say over 500 I am not sure just how many people get to read Around the Jetties as it goes to angling clubs and now sections appear on other angling websites. In the last 4-5 years over 300 pages, and over 250,000 words of this publication have been read by recreational anglers. Thank you to all readers and particularly those that have contributed to what has been an eventful forty editions.

Top Snapper Fishing in Port Phillip Bay

The good snapper fishing in Port Phillip Bay is likely to continue according to Fisheries Victoria Acting Executive Director, Travis Dowling, following receipt of the latest monitoring and research. This year's catch of "big reds" will probably date from the successful spawning of 2000-2001, however the snapper spawning has been smaller since 2005. The excellent spawning of snapper in 2003/4 and 2004/5 should indicate top snapper fishing in Port Phillip Bay in the next couple of seasons.

Wakool River in the News Again

In Around the Jetties issue 24 April 2009 we described a massive kill of Murray cod in the Wakool River. Local farmer Brian Hopper provided this original information including photographs. This event was said to be due to black water removing the oxygen from the local waters, and a fisheries scientist at the time said this would have a massive effect on cod breeding in the area. Unfortunately the Wakool area has had another massive fish kill with cod up to 80lbs dying from lack of oxygen.

Eastern King Prawns

In 2007 the University of NSW and the Department of Primary Industry developed a project to research stocking of Eastern King Prawns in NSW estuaries. Wallagoot Lake just north of Merimbula was one estuary and the back lake at Merimbula was the other estuary. Six million prawns were stocked in Wallagoot and two million into the Merimbula back lake. More details in the next issue of Around the Jetties.

Spawning Black Bream

In issue 38 of this publication I noted the TAFE two week course advertised for participants at Lakes Entrance to develop skills and knowledge for an indoor controlled hatchery operation for black bream. I understand the course was highly successful and that now Lakes Entrance TAFE has tanks with 50,000 3-10cm black bream, doing extremely well. Of great interest to anglers will be the ultimate destination of these fish. This course also illustrates the availability of black bream for restocking with appropriate hatchery facilities. Congratulations to all concerned.

Next Issue

More on Eastern King Prawns and Lake Tyers as well as a report on the two day conference at Lakes Entrance titled "Breaming with Knowledge," and run by Victoria University. Because of these issues there will be a November issue to complete 2010

Readers- Don't forget you may get a friend or an interested angler onto the mailing list for Around the Jetties by simply sending us an email with details of the person you are nominating and his email address or a letter with details of a mailing address.

Contributions- Your contributions to this angling newsletter 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

Material in this newsletter may be reproduced but it would be appreciated if the author and publication were noted

Special Report – The State Election and Recreational fishing

Policies of Candidates for the Seat of East Gippsland

I asked each of the candidates for the seat of East Gippsland in the State Parliament for an outline of their **Recreational Fishing Policy** for the coming State election. The following provides an outline of those policies. **I**

specifically asked each candidate ‘given the parlous state of black bream stocks would they be prepared to initiate legislation to buyback the remaining commercial licences in the Gippsland Lakes or, alternatively, would they support such a move.’ The following are the responses I received.

Sonia Buckley Liberal Party Candidate for Gippsland East

I spoke to the candidate on the 11th of October and she referred me to the media release published in the Gippsland Advertiser of October 10th. I also obtained a copy of the media release from the Liberal website.

The following are the items published in the media release as Coalition policy with regard to recreational fishing policy.

*The coalition would reinvest all revenue raised from fishing licences back into the recreational fishing industry, along with \$4m million over four years for the Recreational Fishing Grants Program.

*In Government the Coalition will target an additional \$4m towards building new infrastructure and improving piers jetties and roads to restore access for anglers to appropriate sites.

*Coalition Government would not create any more marine parks in Victoria and would make important changes to the management of the States fisheries resources to support Victoria’s recreational fishers. *The Coalition would protect spawning fish by introducing controls on the practice of commercial netting near the mouths of rivers, and expand the artificial reef program to increase fish habitat.

*In Government the Coalition will legislate to create a consultative body made up of key industry representatives to ensure future decisions on issues such as catch and size limits reflect the views of anglers.

*Funding will be focused on projects identified at a local level as priorities to ensure the extra money is allocated to infrastructure upgrades and restocking programs on a needs basis.

Ms Buckley declined to make any statement on the question posed as to commercial netting in the Gippsland Lakes, but rather referred me to another politician for comment. I did not follow this suggestion as I was seeking the candidate’s policy.

Tim Bull National Party Candidate for Gippsland East

Tim provided me with the National Party Policy in his own words however, in content the matters raised did not vary from the policy provided from the Coalition Media release of the 10th of October and specified above in the Liberal policy so, with the approval of the candidate, I did not repeat those statements. He did make the point that the Nationals have a survey out to give more anglers input on boat launching facilities and local fishing issues. These surveys can be downloaded from www.peterhall.com.au.

On the issue of commercial netting in the Gippsland Lakes Tim Bull responded-

“I shall start my response to this question by stating I would doubt there would be too many recreational anglers who have done as much prawning and floundering than me, every Oct-April over the last 25 years. I have been out three times since mid September and have been delighted by the health of the lakes-many early season prawns, large numbers of dusky flathead, plenty of gars and other bait fish, above average numbers of luderick, and to my delight a lot of juvenile bream in several sizes ranging from a couple of inches to legal size-indicating several successful recruitment seasons. For the first time in many years I have also been relatively easily able to catch my bag of bream, below my mother in law’s farm in the Tambo River on Metung Road, as have many other anglers. I must say I personally believe the health of the bream stocks, although far from perfect, is as good as I have seen in the past decade.

The presence of more squid, seahorses, and even rays (I’ve seen two this year) on the sand flats indicates to me the environment is getting saltier, but that is another issue with other implications. I believe there is a place for commercial fishing on the lakes. It is an issue of great conjecture and whether we have the balance right with ten commercial licences remaining is a matter I am happy to discuss along with quotas, but I believe with the right commercial restrictions in place commercial and recreational fishing can co-exist. I will conclude by saying the Nationals team in Gippsland are strong supporters of the recreational fishing industry and we are determined to ensure recreational fishers get a bigger say in issues that affect their interests and more funds are put towards improvements-these are our commitments.

I am happy to discuss any fishing issues further and can be contacted on tim.bull1@bigpond.com.

Greg Cook, Labour Party Candidate for Gippsland East

Recreational fishing and marine tourism is really important for families’ right across Victoria. Our Victorian Labour Government Challenge is to get the balance right to ensure the fishing industry can stay sustainable into the future for both recreational and commercial fishing.

We need to maintain the overall health of our fish stocks right round Victoria so the families and the industry can keep on fishing for the long term. Our Victorian Labour Government should be rewarded for commencing the buyback of inland fishing licences that support the recreational fishing industry. The returns to tourism and recreational fishing from this approach have greatly exceeded the value returned from the gains from commercial fishing of inland waterways.

The recent suggestion from the independent organisation, the Victorian National Parks Association to expand on the 13 Marine Protected Areas established in the southeast marine region in 2007 was immediately rejected by our State Labour Government. "It is too soon to tell if the existing Marine National Park exclusion zones have had any influence on fish stocks and it would be irresponsible of a Government to expand on these areas until the benefits have been evaluated." says Labour Candidate Greg Cook.

Our Victorian Labour Government is already working through a thorough consultation process with the community designed to strike a balance between multiple use areas where both recreational and commercial fishing can continue and highly sensitive marine habitat areas are protected. "There is nothing fishy about this approach, our Labour Government has said a big fat "No" to expanding on marine protection areas and I will endorse and continue with this responsible path in managing fisheries in the future" says Gregg Cook Candidate for East Gippsland.

I contacted Greg Cook, as initially he did not answer the question regarding buy back. He responded-

In regard to the remaining ten (although I thought it was 8) commercial inland fishing licences. I am absolutely in favour and very supportive of the buyback and how it has progressed so far. I believe the approach by the current government to make this transition a gradual one gives the commercial fisherman and the communities they live in, the time to adjust to other options. The benefits of a healthier recreational inland fishing environment has greater returns for tourism for the Gippsland Lakes and estuaries.

Craig Ingram Independent Member for East Gippsland

As a passionate recreational angler, I am committed to improving the quality of our recreational fishing opportunities. Some of the positive actions I have been involved in since my election in 1999 are the creation of recreational-only fisheries at Mallacoota and Lake Tyers. These were extremely controversial and staunchly opposed -- both in the community and in Parliament by the Liberal and National parties. There has now been significant improvement in the quality of these fisheries and angler catch rates. There have also been important flow-on tourism benefits to these areas.

I have also delivered on improvements to boating access on the region's waterways -- including the safety of the Lakes Entrance bar -- and am working with council to improve the standard and usability of access to both our lakes and ocean fisheries.

During my time in State Parliament, I have a proven track record of supporting, advocating and achieving real outcomes for recreational anglers.

If re-elected, over the next four years I am committed to working to ensure that:

- No new marine parks are established in Victoria. I have led the state wide campaign and will continue to oppose the VNPA on this issue;
- I am committed to working with the East Gippsland Shire Council and the State Government to complete the Bastion Point boat ramp and improving the boat access at Cape Conran;
- I will continue my work to improve the health of the Gippsland Lakes and our region's estuaries and rivers to improve the quality of the fisheries;
- I am committed to working with both the East Gippsland and Wellington shire councils to improve local facilities for anglers across the region including boat ramps, fish cleaning tables, fishing access points and other important angling infrastructure;
- Work to increase the minimum sizes on key angling species like dusky flathead to sizes that will better enhance capacity to recruit and repopulate the systems;
- Improve the stocking of native fish (such as Australian Bass) in the region's impoundments -- Glenmaggie, Blue Rock and the Thomson Dam -- and lobby for access to the Thomson Dam for anglers using non-powered boats;
- Ensure that the recreational licence funds continue to be spent on projects and actions that directly benefit recreational anglers;
- Work to establish a nationally consistent angling licence system with interstate recognition; and
- Now that Treasury loan is payed back from the last round of commercial buyouts, I will work with commercial fishermen for further voluntary licence buyouts on the Gippsland Lakes.

Thanks to the candidates for the provision of their Recreational Fishing Policies