



Lynton.G.Barr  
P.O.Box 23  
Swan Reach 3903  
Victoria  
Phone 03 5156 4674  
Email- [delbarr1@bigpond.com](mailto:delbarr1@bigpond.com)

# Around the Jetties

## June 2011 Issue No 47

### An Anglers Newsletter

For my part, I was always a bungler at all kinds of sports that required either patience or adroitness, and had not angled for above half an hour before I convinced myself of the truth of Izaak Walton's opinion, that angling is like poetry- a man must be born to it.

“A Born Bungler” Washington Irving 1820

#### Editorial

This edition raises two current issues for anglers. Firstly the recognition of a key recreational species the dusky flathead, and this is currently most confusing as it seems that neither Fisheries Victoria nor anglers are able to clearly identify the species. One angler has written to the museum of Victoria seeking information on identification. This of course has implications for enforcement. The other issue that continues to be a problem for anglers is access to our rivers and lakes, and this is especially so for bank anglers in the area of Lake Tyers and the mouth of the Tambo River. Lake Tyers has been declared a fishing reserve but the tracks into this wonderful estuary are almost impassable and this affects in particular the aged anglers who do not have access to a boat. Whilst an orphan road provides access to the Tambo River mouth. Orphan because no authority accepts responsibility for its maintenance

#### What Fish Is That?

##### Identifying a Dusky Flathead

After the last issue of Around the Jetties (Issue 46), two of the most experienced local recreational anglers have raised the issue of identification of the dusky flathead. What has seemed a simple matter seems to be an issue that needs clarification, and is assuming a problem of major proportions. For instance if a dusky flathead cannot be satisfactorily identified, then this poses enforcement problems for Fisheries Officers. The problem is outlined in the following angler comments.

**Ron Brymer** has written-

“Dusky or not dusky in the Gippsland Lakes

On the matter of paying attention, I don't spend any time checking the tail colorations of my flatties and rely more on overall appearance, coloration, body shape, eye placement, to distinguish duskies from blue spots. **I am convinced there are hybrids out there.**

Now to a little challenge you might issue in the newsletter-results can come to you or direct to me, it matters not- I'd like to see evidence (date, size, tail photos etc) of “dusky” flathead caught in the **main** Gippsland Lake system that **exhibit the single dark spot on the tail** (as per the Fisheries ID document.)

This spot is one of the key distinguishing factors in the Fisheries identification material as shown again in the newsletter, but I'll be surprised if many (or any) fish coming out of the main lake system show it. The spot is clearly evident on duskies further east however, and particularly Mallacoota.

I've often thought that I could (not would) bring in 20 duskies from the Gippsland lakes and if challenged by Fisheries could successfully argue that based on their published identification information, that these fish were not duskies.



**These tails are part of Ron Brymer's Pambula catch and show the distinctive dark spot**

I wonder therefore if the identification material is either complete or adequate to identify all dusky species/sub species, and if it is doing the job sufficiently to protect this valuable recreational species.

The tail spot is the quickest and easiest identifier for the novice, and if the spot is not there, it's "officially" not a dusky and the bag limit is 20.

Food for thought and this one has been bugging me for some time. Anglers comments appreciated."

And **John Harrison** writes-

"In the recent Around the Jetties the question of identification of Dusky and Yanks (blue spot) flathead is raised, and I have raised this previously with Compliance Officers and a Fisheries Scientist.

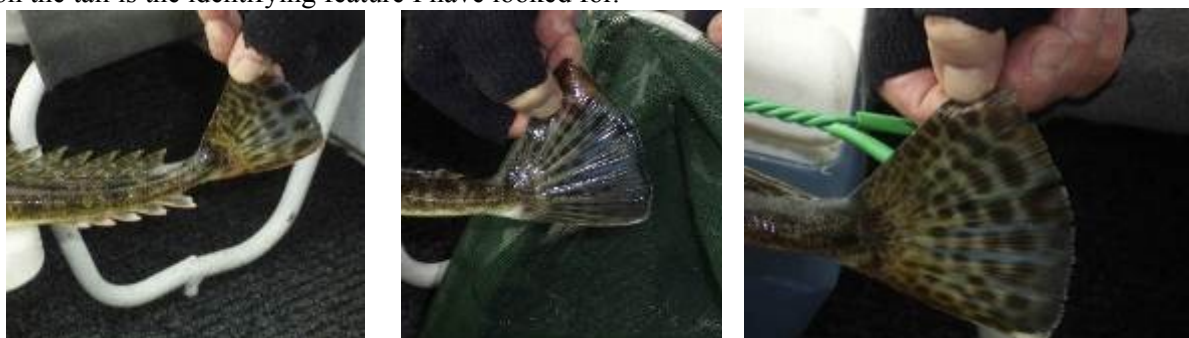
When the bag limit for dusky was reduced to 5 fish in late 2006 the DPI produced a leaflet which describes dusky as having two spikes of roughly equal length, and the Yank as having the lower spine noticeably larger than the top spine. This was the definition also in the 2006/7 Recreational Fishing Guide. The following year this was reversed, and has been ever since. I believe the original definition is correct and subsequent publications, including the current Recreational Fishing Guide have it reversed and incorrect. As a research angler I have to identify every flathead that I catch and since 2006 there have been a lot of them. Every one has had two spikes of equal length and by the current definition would be a yank."

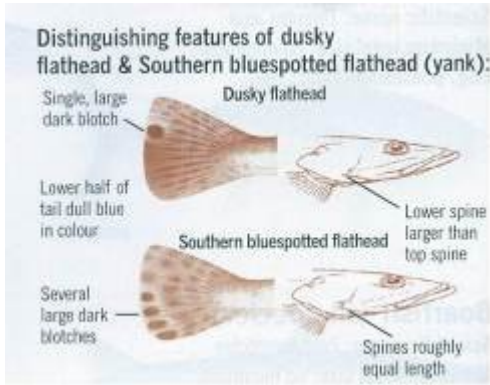
### **Editor**

John has contacted Fisheries seeking the appropriate documentation to identify the dusky flathead taken in Lake Tyers. It is true that the 2006/7 Fishing guide provides a guideline for identification, but then this is reversed in the following years recreational Angling Guide and this remains the instruction to this day. In reality for me the only way of identifying the two species is the spot on the tail of the dusky. Now if as Ron Brymer suggests this does not occur in the Gippsland Lakes, then anglers are in real trouble with identification, as are Fisheries with enforcement. I am hopeful that when John Harrison receives a definitive statement from Fisheries he will make it available and we will publish that advice for anglers generally. On the matter of dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes I would be happy to take information on the flathead from the Gippsland Lakes exhibiting the "spot on the tail, and will pass this information including photographs of the "spot" on to Ron Brymer. This is probably the easiest approach, as all readers will have access to my address or email. Unfortunately we are reaching the close of the dusky flathead period when most are caught (November to June) however I will provide a reminder to recreational anglers in the November issue of Around the Jetties. For me this raises the question of whether the blue spot (yank) flathead should be treated the same as the dusky flathead with regard to bag limits. The similarities are so great and the Yank grows to 90cms and 10lb in weight. It does seem strange that a 20 fish bag limit applies to this species. This discussion causes one to think of the Ron Brymer comment 'I am convinced there are hybrids out there.'"

Now as an exercise I have carried out my own test on identifying dusky flathead in Lake Tyers in a recent two outings, and this involved over 25 so called dusky flathead. I again include the identification method published in the Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide 2010/11 to compare with the photographs

Now the following three photos were of dusky flathead tails and are representative of all fish I have recently caught. Like John Harrison I find it almost impossible to identify dusky flathead from the length of spines on the head. So the splotch on the tail is the identifying feature I have looked for.





On none of these fish is there a large identification splotch but rather a number of small splotches at regular intervals. These photos were taken within minutes of the fish being taken from the water so that any identification marks would not fade. These photos support the contention of Ron Brymer with his identification of similar flathead from the Gippsland Lakes, with no identifiable splotch.

**It would seem given this evidence that in Lake Tyers it is impossible to identify these fish as dusky flathead, and given the Brymer report it would seem the same evidence would apply to the Gippsland Lakes dusky flathead.**

## What is the Answer to this Dilemma?

There does seem a relatively simple answer to this problem facing Fisheries Victoria, and that is to apply the same rules to both dusky flathead and southern blue spot flathead, namely a bag limit of five fish per day with only one over 60cms. The current regulations that allow a bag of 20 blue spot flathead given the marked similarities with dusky flathead seems difficult to understand. Currently the blue spot is treated the same as the small sand flathead rather than a species that provides regularly fish over 50cms and with the possibility of a fish in 8-10lb size range. Whilst we seem to have no research on this species it would seem given the similarity to the dusky that the NSW research by Gray and Barnes might be relevant to the blue spot. Perhaps given the current recognition problems a research project on this species is warranted but in the interim, perhaps the same regulation could apply to both species.

## Blue Spot Flathead in Lake Tyers

In the last Around the Jetties the question was asked as to whether any reader had caught a blue spot flathead (Yank) in Lake Tyers.

**Ron Brymer** reports-

“I brought home four smallish flatties from Lake Tyers the other day as I just love them “sweet and sour”. While deboning them ready for the freezer my wife commented “was one of these fish a blue spot, the flesh is so white?” Now I can’t confirm it was a blue spot as it was skinned at the ramp, but as Kath has caught and eaten many yanks over the years, it is quite possible the fish was a blue spot, and this might go some way to answering the question of their presence in Lake Tyers- after all it is open to the sea on occasion and holds snapper etc, why not blue spot- I’ll pay more attention in the future.”

And **John Harrison** reports-

“I have never caught a yank flathead since 2006 (didn’t check earlier) and I had numerous discussions on the matter with the late Peter Spehr who claimed he had only ever caught one in Lake Tyers. Then again, if I have been identifying them incorrectly perhaps I have caught many.”

Editor,

I like the above anglers catch what I thought have been dusky flathead and either release them or put them in the fish box. From now on I will be spending some time identifying them, and perhaps if they are a Gippsland Lakes flathead with a spot on the caudal fin, taking a photograph for Ron Brymer.

## An Exciting Report

### Estuary Perch and Lake Tyers



Whilst I have not seen the fish I have had a confirmed report that a small number of Estuary perch have been caught in Lake Tyers using hard-bodied lures. These have not been big fish with most being in the mid 20cm range. Now whilst this is great news there have been similar reports previously. In mid 1994 John Moore a Fisheries Officer and keen angler spoke to me of catching estuary perch around the snags in the Tambo River and also amongst the snags in the area of Cherry Tree on Lake Tyers. He spoke publicly of this at the Johnsonville Angling Club, and his talk, which emphasised the importance of snags led, to a riverbank meeting on

the banks of the Tambo at Rough Road to discuss with parties involved the possibility of the introduction of snags into the local rivers as habitat, specifically to encourage estuary perch. In both cases John Moore quoted, the numbers of fish were small with only a very small number of anglers targeting these fish. Readers will also be aware that we have

reported in past issue of “Around the Jetties, that in the late eighties 1.5 tonnes of estuary perch were netted in the area close to Blackfellows Arm, and this is a confirmed report. In that year 1989/90 7 tonnes of estuary perch were recorded in the commercial catch, however this included both the Gippsland Lakes and Lake Tyers. The Lake Tyers Fisheries Management Plan states that between 1978 and 2003 the greatest annual commercial catch of estuary perch in Lake Tyers was 1.5 tonnes and the average annual catch with an average annual catch over this period was 129kgs which means given the large catch taken in one year few estuary perch were caught in other years.

## **The Special Estuary Perch**

**“Over exploitation by commercial fishermen in the past caused numbers to decline.”**

Cadwallader and Backhouse in “A Guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria.”

The estuary perch is said to grow to 10 kg according to Cadwallader and Backhouse in that excellent book “A Guide to Freshwater Fish of Victoria” and they further indicate that they frequently grow to 54 cm and 4 kg. In my experience an estuary perch in this area is noteworthy if it is over 2 kilograms. It is thought to be in most Victorian estuaries, but is most prominent in those with a tidal influence. Estuary perch appear to spawn in the lower regions of the estuary in November- December and produce several hundred thousand eggs. Its diet includes shrimp, prawn and varieties of fish including mullet. The estuary perch grow fastest in their first three years and enter the fishery at 27cms. The estuary perch is a fine fighting fish and is readily taken on lures and flies. Recreational anglers fishing in the Marlo estuary, and inflowing rivers are often pestered by many small estuary perch removing baits, but then at other times trophy perch are taken in this area.

At the 2001 MAFRI assessment of “The Fisheries of Lake Tyers” I was interested when talking to a couple of commercial fishermen that they intimated that they had only caught three or four of this species in that year, however one commercial fisherman with a long association with Lake Tyers suggested that if he targeted perch he could get quite a few boxes by directing his energies in specific areas, which seems to suggest that the perch in this area are localised but again supports the idea that a small number of estuary perch remain in Lake Tyers.. In the old days, in most estuaries large catches of estuary perch were normal for both commercial and recreational anglers, and no better illustration of this exists than a photo in the Marlo Hotel of an estuary perch catch at the turn of the century of 154 large estuary perch taken in a days fishing by five rods. Those days are gone forever, but it’s worth having a bite of lunch in the Marlo Hotel and seeing some of these photos.

Today we have a catch limit of five fish per day, of which no more than 2 can be bass, which may help to protect this species. This catch limit was unfortunately not introduced until the year 2000 and was introduced at the request of recreational anglers after reports of massive catches of estuary perch in some of the Gippsland estuaries. The best estuary perch area in East Gippsland is thought by many to be the Bemm River, and this is probably due to the habitat and snags of the river, and the fact that the fish in this area are not subject to commercial netting. One of the interesting aspects of fishing for perch has been the success of the plastic prawn, used as a lure, and at times this has had a deadly impact on this fish. In recent years fly and soft plastic fishermen have centred their interest on the Bemm River, and the Snowy and have targeted estuary perch with great success. Cadwallader and Backhouse suggest that estuary perch stocks are under-exploited by recreational anglers, but this view may be changing with the development of the interest in fly-fishing for this species and the ever-increasing use of soft plastics.

In May 2009 a Fishing Forum was conducted by Future Fish Victoria, and three groups of participants when asked “What species would best be stocked?” each group indicated that estuary perch in Lake Tyers and each group gave Lake Tyers the top priority for a restocking program although one group did suggest King prawns should be stocked in Lake Tyers. A speaker at this forum was Dr Matt Taylor from NSW who stated in a report on Marine Stocking for Fisheries Victoria that given-

**“The current small interest in estuary perch by anglers fishing in Lake Tyers, mean that costs and benefits of estuary perch releases would need to be carefully assessed, and may not be justifiable.”**

As reported previously in this publication Dr Taylor is the recipient of \$230,000 from recreational angler licence fees to study the stocking of Lake Tyers with Eastern King Prawns with a suggestion from the Marine Stocking Forum that this stocking should “coincide with peak tourism times to provide a boost to participation by families in recreational fishing.”

It would seem that according to the Saltwater Trust Allocation report attached to the final report of the forum, that Dr Taylor since 2006 had received over \$300,000 from the NSW Saltwater Trust Allocation and as a result prawns are being stocked in the Wallagoot Lake and in the Back Lake at Merimbula. With the Victorian allocation from recreational angler licence fees it would appear that over \$500,000 had been allocated between the two states towards Dr Taylor’s research into the stocking of eastern King prawns. From comments by many anglers to this publication I would tend to believe that local recreational anglers would far sooner have seen research undertaken into the stocking

of estuary perch in East Gippsland estuaries and as Dr Taylor states in his report to Fisheries Victoria, “This species is poorly studied throughout south-eastern Australia and there are no existing stock assessments for the species.”

### **A Previous Stocking of Estuary Perch.**

I found it surprising that Fisheries Victoria on the 22nd March 2000, stocked Lake Hamilton with 1000 Estuary Perch. This man made lake in the Western district town of Hamilton is small and has not one snag so this would have been a “put and take” fishery. The lake a few years later almost emptied and I am unaware of any of these fish being caught. Currently Fisheries Victoria has approved Lake Bolac in the Western District for the stocking of estuary perch when this lakes water level returns to a satisfactory level after being dry during the recent drought. Already 5000 trout have been stocked into this lake. Lake Bolac would seem to have no habitat suitable for estuary perch and no possibility of estuary perch spawning in this water. Over the years Lake Bolac has been known as a home for good redfin and eel fishing, and is said to hold the record for a short finned eel of 7.8kgs. (Caught by Bernard Murphy in 1998.)

There is little doubt that this species could be stocked in the rivers that flow into the Gippsland Lakes, and with snags to support the stocking and the ability to move to the mouth of estuaries to spawn. This of course is not an option whilst commercial netting continues in the Gippsland Lakes, however it may now be an option for Lake Tyers and would provide an interesting experiment for the future, and it may also support the very small numbers of this species in the lake. At least it is known this species had reasonable numbers previously in Lake Tyers and a small remnant of that stock from this report may remain. To this angler it would seem that the option of stocking Lake Tyers has many advantages over stocking Western district lakes.

### **Editor From my Fishing Diary**

“On February 26th 2002 I fished with two long time angling friends (John and Rowan) on the Tambo River, following a neighbour indicating he had caught some estuary perch at a snag above the Highway Bridge. One of these chaps was a top fly fisherman, the other a former student. (Now close to 60) In an hour fishing that snag from my boat we caught 15 estuary perch on the fly and also prawn slacklining. Whilst these perch were not large we did keep 6 between 29 and 33cms. This was a wonderful period of fishing and gave an indication of the action a stream containing numbers of these fish could provide anglers, and in particular what lure, fly and bait fishermen could expect. This was also evidence of what habitat snags and woody debris could provide.”

John my fly fishing friend used a Crazy Charlie fly and cast into the centre of the snag with a sinking fly line.”

Now of note is the fact that after living close to the Tambo River for almost twenty years that was the only occasion I had caught estuary perch in the river. In 2000/2001 the first snags were returned to the Tambo River and \$96,000 was allocated from the recreational Licence funds for this project, which was carried out by the East Gippsland Management Authority. In the following years there has been a considerable effort to add woody debris to this river following almost a century of removing snags by Ports and Harbours.

### **Reel Scientists**

An interesting article was published in the Age newspaper recently (Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011) entitled “Dangling a Line to Save their Sport” and told the story of the army of recreational anglers who are diarists and scientific anglers who work voluntarily to ensure the sustainability of the harvest of fish from Victorian waters.



In Victoria 296 anglers keep diaries and provide their data to the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute. The anglers are supplied with their diary and a fish ruler and the article goes on to say, “armed with this equipment their fishing gear and their fishing knowledge they turn their normal fishing trips into valuable research expeditions.”

The program is unique in Australia and serves as a model for other diary programs in other states. The information obtained “is fundamental to Fisheries Victoria’s stock assessment process” according to Simon Conron, one of the institutes scientists and responsible for overseeing the program.

Recreational fishermen have recorded 18,000 trips and 107,000 fishing hours and have provided 190,000 capture records that include 108,000 fish measurements from 160 species in 350 different bodies of water.

Collectively the reel scientists have collectively contributed 1620 years of fishing experience.

Senior Fisheries Scientist Simon Conron said that “in some fisheries involving snapper and bream for instance it has been vital in indicating strong or weak year classes well before they reach legal size and enter the fishery.” Project data has also enabled an investigation of hook sizes and handling practices that maximize the survival chances of fish released by anglers. Since 1997 the program has been funded by the Victorian Government, through “revenue collected from recreational fishing licence fees.”

**This program was one of the finalists in the United Nations Association of Australia Environment Awards. In June it was announced that the program was the winner of the Marine Environmental Award. This was a fitting acknowledgement of the program and the work of scientist Simon Conron**

This publication regularly records the reports of Bob McNeill who fishes two mornings a week and provides a record of his diary to the Marine and Freshwater Institute, whilst John Harrison a contributor to this publication is the only scientific angler providing information from Lake Tyers. John fishes numerous mornings each week, in specific areas and for specific species. He removes the otoliths from bream and these together with details of the fish caught are forwarded to the Marine and Freshwater Institute.

**Congratulations to all involved in this program and particularly senior fisheries scientist Simon Conron who has been a powerful advocate for the involvement of anglers in working for the sustainability of recreational fish species in this state.**

### **A Product for the Bank Angler**

This is a product that I have not seen on the market previously. When I first looked at this I thought it was a rather strange tackle box. It is well made, solid and would hold a multitude of gear, and yet is lightweight. On looking closer I found the real innovation. This round tackle box fits into the lid of the normal anglers white bucket. This would be great for surf anglers as the bucket could take bait, a thermos and all your hooks lures etc. I also thought it would be a great asset for bank anglers as it would take bait and could be used for any fish caught as well as holding all the essentials for an afternoons fishing.



This item was on display at the Alpine Angler Sale, and I bought one of the boxes to use on the surf with my bait bucket. The cost of the tackle box was \$24.99. It is not often you see specific gear for the bank angler.

### **Trout and Salmon Closed Season Begins June 13**

The Department of Primary Industries has provided a Media release on May 16<sup>th</sup> reminding anglers of the closure of the trout season. Executive Director of Fisheries Anthony Hurst said during the closed season which extends to September 2<sup>nd</sup> anglers were not permitted to take or possess trout or salmon in rivers and streams throughout Victoria with the exception of waters classed as “sea run trout rivers.” Mr Hurst said, “the 2011 spawning season is vital for the recovery of wild populations of trout species which will deliver excellent fishing opportunities and the associated economic benefits to local communities over the next few years.” Fishing in lakes and impoundments are still available to anglers over the closed season.

In our area the Mitchell River downstream from the highway bridge and the Tambo River downstream from the Bruthen bridge are classed as sea run trout rivers.

In issue [29 October 2009 of Around the Jetties](#) I raised the issue of sea-run trout with local fly fisherman and trout fishing writer Trevor Stow as to sea-run trout in local rivers. The following was his response.

### **Sea Run Trout**

“When I asked Trevor about sea runs trout he suggested that sea run trout no longer exist in our local rivers, and this is due to changing water conditions. He said that originally trout entered the lower Mitchell and Tambo in August and September to feed on the spawning smelt, and a number were caught in the commercial nets at the mouth of rivers, however they are no longer taken in commercial nets or by recreational anglers. It would seem whilst we have an open season for sea run trout when all other rivers are closed, changing conditions mean we no longer have sea run trout in the Mitchell and Tambo Rivers as they were years ago.”

Of course the question remains as to whether the movement of sea run trout occur in other streams such as the Aire, Avon, Ford, Gellibrand, Hopkins, Merri or Moyle Rivers. This in itself is another of those interesting questions asked by anglers today, and it could make a great article for Fisheries Victoria.

### **Diarist Bob McNeill Reports on Lake Tyers Fishing**

Bob McNeill reports that he stopped fishing with live mullet in late March and of course this meant his target species of fish changed from dusky flathead to black bream. Bob indicated that the constant catching of mullet, often hours of work, and the chore of getting and changing water in the bait tanks becomes somewhat tedious towards the end of the flathead season, plus the flathead are now moving up the arms.

His fish catches since the 20<sup>th</sup> March has amounted to 130 fish of which 108 were bream and of these 75 were size fish. Other species taken included 17 dusky flathead, 4 tailor and 1 snapper. Bob reported that all bream caught had been in excellent condition and had been located in deep water. Apart from 1 bream of 38cms the majority of bream were 28cms –32cms, and the undersize bream were 25cms –28cms. Prawn alone was the bait used after the 8<sup>th</sup> April and on another morning Bob caught 9 bream between 29and 34cms. Odd flathead were taken on the prawn bait. On another morning 12 black bream were caught of which only 2 fish were size. In the last three trips of this report Bob only caught only a couple of bream on each outing.

Readers will recall that Bob fishes regularly two days each week, namely Tuesday and Friday and his hours seldom vary from 6.00am to 9.30am.regardless of the weather, and when I have launched at Lake Tyers in the early morning, Bob has invariably left much earlier. Bob fishes live mullet during the summer months targeting the dusky flathead of the lake and during the winter his bait changes to prawn and he targets the black bream. Every fish is measured and recorded and his diary is sent regularly to Fisheries Victoria.

This regularity of fishing provides a real guide as to any changing conditions in Lake Tyers, and fisheries scientists in assessing his diary can see the year classes that are providing the current bream fishery, and the effects on the dusky flathead stocks of the ever-increasing recreational angler pressure. All anglers owe a debt of gratitude to the dedicated diarists who play such an important role in this sport.

### **The Mouth of the Tambo**

The road to the mouth of the Tambo River on the east bank continues to deteriorate, and now additional tracks are being cut by four-wheel drives, as even they find the main track a problem. This is an area that provides wonderful access for the elderly and handicapped anglers, as cars can be parked right beside the river, which means a chair and rods can easily be carried to the water's edge. I have had an interest in this road as originally (1995) I obtained a \$7,000 grant to put the road in, and the Catchment Management Authority carried out the work, as a part of a revegetation of the area. Several thousand trees were propagated and grown in our back yard and students from the Swan Reach Primary School planted these trees. The Department of Primary Industry provided the seed and helped with the planning of this development together with the Johnsonville Angling Club with the specific view of opening this area to the ever increasing number of tourists and of course the local anglers many of whom are elderly.

Soon after the development of the track the Catchment Management Authority decided it had no longer any responsibility for maintenance, and since that time the road has deteriorated, with only an occasional touch up when the DPI has a grader available. According to the DPI this road is known as **an orphan road** as no one accepts responsibility for its maintenance. In speaking to Brad Fisher of the DSE recently and pointing out the Twin Rivers Bream Classic would be taking place in early July he agreed to get a quick run over the road with a grader before that event. He also acknowledged there had not been any work on the road since last year at the same time when visitors were coming to the area. Currently the discussion is between the East Gippsland Shire and the DSE as to who will accept responsibility for this track. In the meantime local bank anglers have the greatest difficulty getting to the river along a track that continues to deteriorate, and it would seem that neither the East Gippsland Shire nor the DSE wish to accept responsibility for this orphan road and local angler access. Brad Fisher did say the lack of any maintenance is due to budget and lack of resources problems but he was hopeful that by December 30<sup>th</sup> of this year the problem of who is responsible for this road may be finally settled, and then perhaps local anglers will have access to this section of river which was once considered by Fisheries Victoria to be the second greatest bream river in this state

**“The estuary portion of the Tambo River is of the highest possible value in supporting an amateur fishery for bream. The Tambo River is considered by the division to be the second best bream water in eastern Victoria.”**

**Submission of the Fisheries and Wildlife department 1985 to Tambo Improvement Trust**

## **Tracks Into Lake Tyers**



On the 9<sup>th</sup>, June John Harrison and I had an 11/2hour meeting with Will McCutcheon Regional Manager of Parks Victoria discussing the tracks into Lake Tyers. Considerable work has been undertaken at Long Point, Crystal Bay and Blackfellows Arm and at each of these spots steps have been constructed to provide better access to the water, and provision for parking provided. In the discussion, we were informed that no funds were available for ongoing maintenance of tracks nor could any guarantees be given as to future maintenance and this was a constraint brought about by lack of funds. We were also informed that Lake Tyers within a couple of months would become a State Park, but this would not necessarily provide additional funding for track maintenance or improvement. Parks Vic did agree to the Morgan's Landing and Cameron's No2 tracks remaining open, whilst boulders would be removed from the Suzie Q track. The outcome for anglers is that whilst Lake Tyers has been declared a fishing reserve, access difficulties for anglers and visitors are only going to become more of a problem as the tracks deteriorate due to a lack of maintenance.

Parks Vic agreed to look at the parking at Long Point, which is minimal. Perhaps the most important outcome was the commitment of Parks Vic to consultation with the Lake Tyers Angling Club on any future works, and the possibility was raised of a joint approach to obtaining funding from the

Recreational Fishing Licence Trust for a future development. It was pointed out to Parks Vic that there was an increasing use of the tracks and increased camping in the area, and again it was agreed that this trend would only increase. A discussion took place on the need for camping facilities and boat launching at the Glasshouse, but again lack of funds precluded any time frame for such a development being discussed. We appreciated the time provided by Parks Vic for this discussion.

I was surprised to learn that the East Gippsland Catchment management Authority funded the works undertaken at Long Point, Blackfellows Arm and Crystal Bay.

## **Odd Bits**

### **New Ruler for Murray Cod Fishing**

When the 2010 Murray cod season commenced on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, Fisheries Victoria produced a ruler that allowed anglers to estimate the weight of their Murray cod based purely on the cod's length. The ruler was designed to adhere to the side of boats. The one-metre ruler reduced the amount of time a cod was kept out of the water, saves the business of weighing the fish, and at the same time reduces the risk of damage to the fish during any weighing procedure. This ruler is available free to anglers who contact Fisheries Victoria.

Around the Jetties applauds this initiative and raises the question of whether a similar ruler could be developed for dusky flathead. Dusky anglers are aware of the importance of the fish over 56cms, which according to recent research are all female, and more and more anglers are returning dusky flathead to the water in the hope of maintaining a sound stock of this very special species. The very nature of this fishery and the need to protect the larger fish would seem to provide a case for the consideration of a similar ruler for the estuary angler.

### **Sporty Abbot and the Wimmera River**



In Issue 38 of Around the Jetties September 2010 the story of Sporty Abbott a young man who loved his angling was told. Readers may remember that in December 2009 he and his cousin were fishing in the Wimmera River and had a great catch of several golden perch including a fish of 54cms and weighing 9lb. This was great as the Wimmera River had suffered badly from drought and it was immediately thought this was the beginning of a new era. They went back to the weir a couple of evenings later and were dismayed to find dead fish floating where they were fishing with yellow belly Murray cod and catfish coming to the surface as



if seeking oxygen. They reported this disturbing picture to the local Fisheries Officer who in turn reported the deaths to the Environment Protection Authority. When no action had occurred after almost twelve months this publication on behalf of Sporty contacted the EPA and were informed that an investigation was continuing and we would be notified when the investigation was completed.

The investigation has now been completed and the Horsham Rural City Council has been found guilty that on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2009 a slug of poor quality water was released into the Wimmera River causing oxygen levels to drop, fish to die and water to become foul smelling and discoloured. The Council had directed a contractor to remove an earthen containment causing the foul water from a billabong to enter the river. The Horsham City Council is required to convene a conference to develop better practices for stormwater and to pay the EPA costs of \$3000. This was not a big fine but it showed what an angler could achieve by following the issue of the fish kill in the Wimmera River, and bringing a City Council to court. This matter as a result of the actions of one angler became front-page news in the Wimmera Mail Times and other papers.

### **Leongatha Angling Club Letter,**

A couple of days ago I received this letter, which I think reflects the views of the many recreational anglers I have spoken to.

Dear Lynton,

The committee and members of the Leongatha Angling Club agree completely with your sentiments regarding the use of the RFL Trust Account to fund Recreational Fisheries Officers.

While agreeing we need more officers, they should not be funded by recreational fishers, but by DPI Fisheries.

We look forward to reading future issues of Around the Jetties, and your column in Feathers and Fur.

Regards

Ross Drury  
Secretary

Thanks to Leongatha Angling Club for this letter and I wonder why this issue has not received more publicity. Currently I would think most of this states 750,000 anglers would be totally unaware of this use of recreational licence fees. Perhaps recreational anglers might send a letter to the Minister to bring his issue to this attention. \$1.95m is now being taken from the Recreation Fishing Licence Trust Account to pay the salaries of 13 Fisheries Officers. This amounts to about 30% of annual receipts from fishing licences.

### **It's Just a Matter of Understanding**

The following item was printed in the most recent issue of the **VRFish Newsletter 25/5/2011**. Now if any readers of Around the Jetties can understand this item, many others and I would undoubtedly appreciate a translation.

#### **“2012 Annual Competitive Round Call for Expressions of Interest**

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) is calling for Expressions Of Interest (EOI) against the priority areas for RD&E investment nominated below by the FRABs/Subprograms/Coordination programs and their alignment with the FRDC's R, D&E Plan (see [www.frdc.com.au/plans](http://www.frdc.com.au/plans)). Applications for the EOI are to be completed using the FRDC's online application software Fishnet (see [www.fishnet.gov.au](http://www.fishnet.gov.au)). All EOI must be finalised and submitted via email to the relevant Fisheries Research Advisory Bodies/Subprograms/Coordination programs that the application relates to by no later than the 30th June 2011”

#### **Now on a more positive note.**

The winter edition of **Fishing Lines** the VRFish publication has been released and it features items on Corner Inlet, Lake Tyers and an interesting article on catching luderick on a fly amongst others. The only difficulty is that the source of this publication is listed as the website [www.vrfish.com.au](http://www.vrfish.com.au). If this were the case then all recreational anglers without access to computers would not have access to this publication. I have contacted Christopher Collins,

CEO of VRFish and he has stated that anglers may obtain a copy of Fishing Lines by phoning Georgia on **03 9686 7077** and a copy of Fishing Lines will be posted out at no cost. This is a publication in colour well worth reading.

### **Is Silver Trevally a Special Case?**



Discussion has taken place recently on the continuation of the reduced size limit for silver trevally with Fisheries Victoria seeking written comments on the issue. Readers may recall that this publication reported on the fact that soon after the 2009 regulations were announced the minimum size for silver trevally was reduced from 23cms to 20cms, using the argument that the 23cm minimum size was causing an impact on the financial viability of some commercial operators. It was said that this reduction followed consultation with commercial and recreational

fishers, however despite questions VRFish has provided no information on its position on this reduction in size. The question arises was VRFish consulted and what was its position then, and what is its position now on retaining this reduced size limit?

In NSW the minimum legal length for silver trevally is 30cms and this minimum length was introduced in September 2007. The status of the fish in that state is “overfished.” Research has suggested that since the 1980’s the average size of fish taken in the commercial catch has declined, and fish greater than 30cms are poorly represented in the commercial catch. The silver trevally is regarded as a long living slow growing species. Most recreational anglers would regard this species as a fine fighting fish that provides wonderful sport. I have not been able to find research information on this species in Victoria. Some few weeks ago I spoke to a couple of recreational anglers fishing at Marlo who had taken several trevally around the 47-49cms on soft plastics and they spoke of the wonderful qualities of such sporting fish. It is quite difficult to see an argument to support a minimum length of 20cms for this species.

### **Next Edition of Around the Jetties**

The next edition of Around the Jetties will feature the detailed response of the Minister Peter Walsh to a series of questions I raised with local member Tim Bull who sought and gained this response from the Minister for which I am very grateful. These questions cover matters like the use of Recreational licence fees to fund Fisheries Officers, and the question of the faceless Working Party who make the recommendations as to the allocation of recreational anglers licence fees. This item has been held over, as I want to publish the full text of the Ministers answers to these important questions.



Also in the next edition will be an examination of a paper “**Keep Australia Fishing**” by Martin Salter. This document is a report prepared for the Boating and Fishing Council of Australia. Martin Salter is a retired member of the British Parliament, and a former British spokesman for angling. This will make interesting reading and raise important issues for those concerned with recreational angling in this state and also Australia wide.

### **Thanks**

To a number of readers who have made a contribution to the cost of this publication. Your support is greatly appreciated.

**Contributions- Your written contributions to this angling newsletter are most welcome and we look forward to publishing your items of interest**

**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.**

**Good Health and good fishing  
Lynton Barr**