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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

Visitors who have explored Lake Tyers- for hitherto it has been almost unknown are most enthusiastic in its praises. It has been compared to the Swiss or Bavarian lakes but it has its own distinctively Australian features. Lake Tyers will bear comparison with all and allowing for difference of surroundings will suffer in comparison with none.

Glasgow Book Warehouse
15 Collins St West
January 1st 1886

Editorial

As you receive this copy of Around the Jetties black bream will be again making their way up the rivers that flow into the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. Some years ago I asked a fisheries scientist just where the bream spawned and he said that wherever conditions were favourable and spawning could happen in the lakes where the salinity was between 19 and 21 parts per thousand, which is about half that of saltwater and where the temperature was around 21 degrees. Added to this was the availability of seagrass. Today with the increasing salinity of the Gippsland Lakes it seems that mature fish are now making their way into the rivers to the salt wedge spawn as described in this edition by fisheries scientist Joel Williams as it's the only area where the salinity is suitable for spawning. Today much of the Gippsland Lakes have a salinity level around 30 parts per thousand according to EPA testing. This surely means that it is necessary for Fisheries Victoria and Government to examine how the spawning fish in the rivers can be protected between September and December given the new circumstances facing the spawning of this iconic species. This edition of Around the Jetties examines some of the research and writing on this subject.

It's That Time Again

Black Bream Move into Rivers to Spawn.

At this time of the year, the annual movement of black bream into the rivers of the Gippsland Lakes commences, and this raises concerns for some anglers whilst other anglers see this as their best opportunity to catch black bream. Commercial nets are still set just 400 metres from the mouth of these rivers and this species has to get through the nets entering the rivers to spawn and later leaving the rivers. As fisheries scientist Joel Williams says "during winter, fish begin migrating to the upper estuary in search of lower salinity salt wedge features and spawn from September to December." Williams suggests the drastic decline in recreational and commercial catches may well have been due to lower than normal freshwater flows into the Gippsland Lakes causing the fish to move further upstream to find the lower salinities in which to spawn. Williams research revealed that bream eggs and larvae "were highly concentrated around the salt wedge in the rivers' and around 99% of the larvae from spawning fish were found where the salt wedge occurred in the

Tambo, Mitchell and Nicholson Rivers. Anglers would be aware that the salt wedge is where freshwater flows over the top of the more dense salt water. With increasing salinity in the Gippsland Lakes and low freshwater inflow this salt wedge has been forced up the rivers and in recent times research has indicated in the Mitchell the salt wedge as high as Bairnsdale, and this is where a major black bream spawning took place in that river. This area of the salt wedge also is a source of food for the black bream larvae, which feed in this situation according to Williams largely on copepods (microcrustaceans) that occur in abundance at the halocline. Some year ago when fisheries scientists were asked could a closed season protect black bream, the answer was that such a move was impossible due to the fact it was never known just where black bream would spawn. This no longer seems the case and with increasing salinity in the Gippsland lakes it seems to be agreed that black bream now spawn at the salt wedge in our rivers. This may also mean that the reliance of black bream on sea grass may now not be as relevant as previously thought. It would seem that there are questions that need answers, as the stock of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes shows no sign of improvement from the initial collapse in 1996.

Salt Wedges and Stratification

The salt wedge is a layer of salt water that lies below the fresh water, as the salt water is denser. This wedge will extend up rivers at times of low freshwater flow, and move downstream at times of high freshwater flow. The wedge can protect eggs and larvae from entering the upward flowing water and being washed out of the river, and at the same time it can provide a source of food for the young fish. The wedge can also be dangerous to fish if it becomes depleted in oxygen, and this can cause fish deaths.

Source-Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

How Dire is the Current Black Bream Situation in the Gippsland Lakes



The question for many anglers is whether the situation with black bream stocks will get better or do we now live with a decimated fish stock that first collapsed in 1996. Now that was fifteen years ago and many are starting to believe that what we have now may be the future for recreational anglers who have loved the challenge of the black bream fishery.

Ross Winstanley a former Fisheries Victoria manager wrote in 2005 in an article “Managing the Gippsland Lakes Bream Fishery” that “since 2001/2 annual catch rates for commercial haul seines and mesh nets have been at the lowest levels since detailed recording began in 1978. In addition creel surveys confirmed anglers views that it **now takes on average 20 hours or more of fishing to catch a legal sized bream in the lakes system including the Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers.**” The article went on to say that since 2001 there had only been signs of a small spawning of black bream and of course this view is born out with recent statistics showing almost no improvement in the commercial catch in the last decade, and these statistics provide the only comparable method today of assessing any change in the stock of black bream

Winstanley suggested a number of management options that could be considered and these include a seasonal closure of the recreational fishery for four months from March to June. What I found surprising is his suggestion of a March to June closure, when it seems to be acknowledged that spawning takes place September to December.(See Joel Williams earlier) Secondly the application of seasonal closures to only recreational anglers seems difficult to understand given that recreational anglers have bag limits already and no such limitation applies to the commercial netting of black bream.

In the article Winstanley examines the option of a bag limit for recreational anglers **of 1 fish per day**, which he says may fail to have great impact, due to the fact that 80% of anglers fail to catch 1 bream per day. This was rejected as an option as it would be a disincentive to tourists and have an effect on the local economy. This very suggestion in itself is a serious comment on the state of the black bream fishery in the Gippsland Lakes.

The article suggests a maximum legal length might be an option worth considering as such a step would affect equally both commercial and recreational fisheries however due to the small number of larger fish this would have little effect as it would not achieve sufficient reduction in fish mortality.

The final option advanced in this paper is the use of stocking, but this is also discarded as not addressing the major causes of the black bream decline. Of course whilst it is not mentioned any restocking program funded by recreational anglers licence fees would need to be protected from commercial netting.

In the article a plea is made for commercial fishers to reengage in discussion and information sharing with other users of the Gippsland Lakes, however this has fallen on deaf ears and there has been no input from commercial fisherman in any meeting involving recreational anglers since 2005. This in itself is rather hard to understand.

This report is an interesting article, based on a black bream stock assessment meeting held in Bairnsdale on July 30th and 31st 2005 however one must say that since 2005 there has been no management decisions to my knowledge that have had any impact on the declining black bream stocks. In December 2003 the minimum legal length for black bream was raised from 26cms to 28cms in an attempt to allow black bream to at least spawn once before entering the fishery, but I know of no other specific measure being undertaken by Fisheries Management since 2003 and the problem has not gone away.

Finally Winstanley makes the following valid observation when he says “amazingly some local angling clubs still hold ‘catch and keep’ competitions targeting trophy sized bream in the Lakes system. The fact that specialist bream anglers are still prepared to selectively remove these large adult fish illustrates how much still needs to be done in the area of awareness.”

Editor

Whilst agreeing with this observation I would make the point that Fisheries Managers have been responsible for years for the protection of the black bream stock, and yet today we have the lowest level of that stock since records of the commercial catches began in 1978. Much of the decline can be traced to environmental factors, but much more could have been done through regulation. We still have recreational fishing targeting breeding fish in the rivers when fish have entered these streams to spawn, while nets are set at the mouth of rivers to catch those fish as they enter the rivers to spawn. We still have netting when a flood forces black bream from the rivers, and tonnes of fish are taken in one or two nights. We still have a bag limit of ten black bream for recreational anglers and unfettered commercial netting with no limit on the catch for commercial fishers. Perhaps there needs to be a greater awareness of these issues by Fisheries Managers, and Governments of the day of the now urgent need to protect our black bream in the Gippsland Lakes. There is a glimmer of hope with the current Government policy enunciated prior to the election, which stated “the coalition would protect spawning fish by introducing controls on the practice of commercial netting near the mouths of rivers.” This may be a first small step towards the recovery of black bream in the Gippsland lakes but more will need to be done.

[Research on the effect of the salt wedge on spawning bream was undertaken by fisheries scientist Joel Williams and reported on at the “Breaming with Knowledge Conference” October 2010 Lakes Entrance. This report was also in Fishing Lines the VRFish publication – Winter 2011](#)

[“Managing the Gippsland Lakes Bream Fishery” Ross Winstanley” November. 2005](#)

[Ross Winstanley is a fisheries biologist who was formerly Manager of Recreational Fishing in Fisheries Victoria, and in 2001 he retired from Fisheries Victoria and set up his own consultancy.](#)

Editor

I attended the 2005 Black Bream Assessment upon which the Winstanley report is based and actually put out a six page report myself to anglers some days after the assessment. This meeting on black bream in the Gippsland Lakes was interesting in that it was the start of the boycott by commercial fishers of any discussion with recreational anglers on the Gippsland Lakes, however Fisheries Victoria had a private meeting with commercials prior to the general two day assessment. Another aspect of this meeting was that any discussion on matters that would impinge on commercial fishers was vetoed by the Fisheries Victoria chairman, which is a reason why nets at the mouths of rivers and other such items were not discussed despite the efforts of recreational anglers. This decision in many ways destroyed any discussion on options to improve bream stocks in the Gippsland Lakes. The Assessment was attended by 34 persons, of which only 5 were recreational anglers. In the most recent assessment on “Other Species” in the Gippsland Lakes, only 2 recreational anglers and 13 department officers attended. (Reported on in Issue 48 of Around the Jetties)

It was interesting that the whole basis of discussion on this years "Assessment of Other Species" meeting was commercial statistics, and there was no veto on this discussion by Fisheries, even though no commercial fisher attended. What is of concern is the declining numbers of recreational anglers attending these days and having input into the discussion on issues associated with fishing both commercial and recreational. Some responsibility for this decline in attendance must rest with Fisheries Victoria, in that no material is provided to anglers prior to such assessment days and in the recent assessment on other species (18th June). No sheets of commercial catch information was made available either prior to or during the day, but rather a power point presentation that moved from one sheet of statistics to another with little time for note taking etc. If recreational anglers are to be really involved they must be provided with adequate information preferably prior to any assessment. At least one Fisheries Officer remarked on the lack of prior information at this assessment day.

In 2005, I wrote the following. "If these meetings are to continue and make a worthwhile contribution to fish stocks in the Gippsland lakes it is necessary that the format of these meetings is restructured. It is my belief that a small working party should examine the structure of both the assessment and management meetings with a view to making recommendations to ensure an open transparent structure of meetings, with representatives that have been provided with background information on the matters to be discussed."

There are still quite a lot of tailor in the river as well as a few garfish and perch. Last Wednesday Don and Garry Soullier of Johnsonville landed 48 bream at Marshall's Flat the biggest being 480grms. Norm and Nola Miles of Warragul along with Baden and Christopher took 110 tailor last Wednesday and Thursday. Their catch weighed 20kgs. Also over 2 days Peter, Stephen, Stewart and Jonathon Risdale caught 210 tailor that weighed 32.5kgs. Roy and Edna McAuliffe regular visitors from Oakleigh, together with Max and Denise from Wodonga bagged 49 bream in two days fishing using sandworm. They also caught 20 tailor on lures."

Black Bream Growth Rate A Factor of Significance

A factor I found significant at the 2005 Black Bream Stock assessment was the increased growth rate of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes reported on by fisheries scientists. In the eighties it took 8-9 years for a black bream to reach 20cms in length whilst in the nineties fish reached the same length in 4-6 years. Amazingly the 2000 year class of black bream reached 20cms in 2-3 years. This would in turn suggest that black bream are growing three times faster than they were in the 1980's. This will have implications for fishery managers in that fish will reach minimum legal length 28cms in 4-5 years. It will also probably mean that these fish have fewer years when they are vulnerable to predators. This change in the growth rate of black bream does not seem to have been examined in any detail by fisheries scientists and it would appear the reasons are unknown. Previously it was acknowledged according to MAFFRI scientist Sandy Morison at the black bream Assessment Workshop of 2001, that the growth rate of the species in the Gippsland lakes was slowest of all Victorian estuaries. The question arises is this change in growth rate occurring only in the Gippsland Lakes or is it occurring in other waters such as Lake Tyers and Mallacoota Inlet. I am sure that many recreational anglers will wonder at the implications of this increased growth rate and why such a change has occurred. One of the implications would seem to be that these fish will reach maturity earlier and this should create more opportunity to spawn prior to female fish reaching minimum legal length, but then that is only a recreational anglers thoughts on the increased growth rate of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.

In 1995 a Gippsland Lakes black bream would have grown to 17cms in three years whilst in the Glenelg River in SW Victoria in three years a black bream would have grown to an amazing 29cms.

Information on the above growth rates supplied by S. Morison 2001.

Movement of Black Bream



These photos showing an Acoustic Tag, and Uploading to computer, and the following text are from the DPI Website Fish Tracking Black Bream

The information stored in listening stations is collected once each season. To collect the data, a diver descends to the listening station and inserts a probe into the transmission port of the receiver. The other end of the probe is attached to a computer. Data on the date and time that each fish has visited the listening station is uploaded to the computer and stored for analysis.

Quite a lot has been written about the movement of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes since the work undertaken by Dr Jeremy Hindell (2004) using transmitters to track the movement of this iconic species.

In the paper by fisheries scientist Joel Williams previously quoted he states “the study of movement patterns showed that black bream commonly moved between the rivers and the Lakes. Fish were highly mobile with some fish moving more than 3000kms in a year.” Williams went on to add “at particular times of the year, fish would move into the Lakes at night, before returning to large woody debris in the rivers during the day (probably for shelter.) While fish were shown to move in and out of rivers during the year overall bream spent more time in the rivers from June through to December and more time in the lakes between February and March.”

Given this movement of black bream in and out of rivers on a regular basis recreational anglers can only wonder at the continuation of commercial netting at river mouths, which target the movement of black bream.

Many anglers may have forgotten that from the 18th December 2003 commercial nets at the mouths of rivers were moved out from 400 metres to 500 metres for a period of six weeks in an effort to protect black bream. I think it is important that Fisheries Victoria as an action to assist the conservation of black bream instituted this extension, unfortunately no statement was ever provided as to the success of such a step and perhaps because of the short period of operation no assessment was ever made. Regardless of that it would seem this is recognition of a step that would assist the survival of black bream stocks and undoubtedly if the nets were located 800 metres from the mouths of river this would provide even greater protection.

The greatest damage of netting at the mouths of rivers is done when a flood occurs and black bream are forced from the rivers. This occurred when the commercial black bream catch jumped from 49 tonnes in one year to 144 tonnes in 2007/8 as the result of a flood event, and then returned to 36 tonnes the following year.



The photo left shows a commercial catch of black bream after a flood event. Fish were not even removed from the mesh net. A contributed Photo

It was estimated by reputable sources that over 100 tonnes of fish were taken in this one natural event, and the commercial statistics would support that view. Such

an event and catch of black bream could set any recovery of the species back years, and if the flood occurred at spawning the fishery might have trouble ever recovering from the loss of spawning bream.

Recreational anglers should consider whether netting the mouths of rivers is now an acceptable practice, when another flood could decimate the black bream stock of the Gippsland lakes.

Status of Black Bream In the Gippsland Lakes

Commercial Catch of black bream 1983/4 = 446 tonnes

Commercial Catch of black bream 2002/3 = 28 tonnes

Commercial Catch of black bream 2009/10 = 36 tonnes

Is Restocking of Black Bream in the Gippsland Lakes an Option

In the Herald Sun newspaper on the 23rd of June 2000 an article written by Steve Cooper suggested “Fisheries Victoria is bream full of optimism over its breeding program for black bream. The article followed the release from the Queenscliff Marine and Freshwater Institute of 1000 hatchery bred black bream into Swan Bay.

The next venture into restocking of black bream in Victoria occurred in 2004.

This publication has previously noted the release of 14,000 black bream fingerlings into the Gippsland Lakes on the 7th April 2004 by then Minister for Agriculture Bob Cameron. Whilst this was undoubtedly a media and publicity action and nothing further has been heard of restocking to this day, it did indicate that a breeding program for black bream had again been undertaken at Queenscliff and it was possible to consider this as an option for the future. Fisheries Victoria at the time suggested that the release was part of a long term program to ensure supplies of bream, for both recreational and commercial fisheries. This publication more recently advised readers of the black bream breeding that took place at Bullock Island as part of a TAFE course and the tragic conclusion to the course when some 30,000 black bream fingerlings were euthanased. Given the state of black bream stocks over the last decade and the West Australian experience it is a wonder that the issue of restocking has not been revisited.

The West Australian Experience

Species whose whole life cycle is within estuaries such as black bream are especially vulnerable to recreational and commercial fishing, as their numbers are not enhanced from outside the estuary. A successful stocking was first undertaken in the Swan River. This was also the case in the Blackwood estuary in WA where the abundance of black bream had declined since the 1970's. Again it was found that the black bream moved up the estuary in the spring to spawn in the upstream waters of the Blackwood River.

For stocking 56 female and 50 male black bream were collected from the estuary. As a result of this program 70,000 (2001 year class) and 150,000 (2002 year class) were introduced into the estuary at 6 months age. Studies showed that native black bream grew more rapidly than stocked fish, however growth rates were satisfactory. These stocked fish survived well and were 75% and 92% of the 2001 and 2002 year classes that were caught.

In a report on this project is the following **statement “the ease and relatively low cost of culturing black bream, the hardiness of the species and its restriction to its natal estuary make the stocking of black bream an economically viable and valid proposition when a stock of this species has become highly depleted.”**

This small summary of the report on the Blackwood restocking is quoted, as it does seem to have some similarities with the Gippsland Lakes although on a far smaller scale.

(Stocking the Blackwood Estuary with the Black Bream- G.I. Jenkins and Associates.)

Are Bank Anglers Getting a Fair Go?

In recent years I have become concerned that bank anglers are the poor relations, when it comes to facilities and in many cases the bank anglers are the elderly who like to take their chair rods and bucket to the banks of the river or lake or in some cases the handicapped who need a spot where secure access is available. As I've grown older the issue of access has become far more relevant than it was some twenty years ago, and whilst I still fish from my boat, the day will come when I will be happy to have a spot where I can pull up my car and fish a local stream or lake without having to walk long distances. Perhaps it might be worthwhile to again visit some of the issues that this publication has raised on behalf of anglers, and to examine the outcomes.

1. Perhaps one of the worst matters of discrimination against anglers was the East Gippsland Shires attitude to local anglers after building two fishing Jetties on the backwater of the Mitchell River just below the Eastwood estate. These fishing jetties were built using \$22,000 of anglers licence fees and part of the rules of allocation of such funds was that the facility provided using these funds should be suitable for anglers of all abilities. On the 15th of October 2009 I met with East Gippsland Council officers for over an hour to discuss access to these fishing platforms. It was brought to my attention by

an 80-year-old reader who indicated that he could not take his car to the platforms but had to walk 800 yards carrying his rods, bucket chair and gear. This was impossibility for him and would have taxed the fittest of us. Secondly the platforms had access by steps, which meant wheelchair anglers were



unable to access the platforms. Officers of the shire refused to allow any access to the platforms by car and stated changes could not be undertaken to allow access for wheelchair anglers. In reality these platforms funded by anglers licence fees were totally outside the use of the elderly and the handicapped. These platforms today add to the ambience of residents of Eastwood estate but discriminate against the elderly and handicapped anglers. A strange attitude indeed in a retirement area.

2. Recently John Harrison and I have had discussions with Parks Victoria on access to

Lake Tyers by recognised tracks. Again the argument advanced was that these tracks provided great access for the aged anglers to access a lake that has limited access for bank anglers. Whilst we negotiated for a couple of tracks that were under threat to remain open, Parks Vic indicated that no maintenance could be done on the tracks at this time and no guarantees of maintenance in the future could be given. Fisheries Victoria has declared this area a Fishing Reserve but access will be almost impossible without a four-wheel drive. Again bank anglers needs have been almost totally ignored, apart from Crystal Bay and Long Point where some work was done to provide access with Catchment Management Funds, however access to these areas will also be difficult without road maintenance and again access to the water is by a series of steps.

3. The road to the mouth of the Tambo on the east bank was originally constructed with a grant obtained by recreational anglers, however today neither the Department Sustainability and the Environment or the East Gippsland Shire will accept responsibility for its maintenance so it is referred to as an “**orphan road.**” This road is almost impassable yet it provides some of the best river access for elderly and handicapped anglers. I was informed that the road may get a “touch up” if a grader is available prior to the Twin Rivers weekend, and the last time any maintenance was done was prior to the 2010 Twin Rivers event. This in itself is an interesting approach, which ignores the needs of locals but may provide for a fishing competition.
4. Fishing Jetties on the Tambo have been a source of concern, and this was first raised in this publication by the late Don Jolly OBE, a wheelchair angler who was having difficulty accessing some of the platforms on the Tambo due to erosion of paths. This publication approached East Gippsland Shire in May 2008 to seek an answer as to who is responsible for the construction and maintenance of fishing platforms on the Tambo River. Despite a number of letters the last just over four weeks ago no answer as to whom is responsible for maintenance of such platforms has been forthcoming. The East Gippsland Shire has indicated it is responsible for fishing access on the silt jetties of the Mitchell River, but it would seem it has no knowledge of who is responsible for the building or maintenance of platforms on the Tambo River.



Many readers I am sure could quote difficulties with accessing areas of East Gippsland rivers and estuaries and my mind turns to a stream like the Broddrib at Marlo, where bank anglers have almost no access to one of the most delightful streams in Gippsland. With an ever increasing aged population component it would seem that Councils and Government Departments should be providing ever greater opportunities of access for the

aged and handicapped to our rivers. At Eastwood we have a developing retirement village and it does seem a strange approach by the Gippsland Shire Council to basically refuse access for the many at this village who would like to spend a nice afternoon fishing the backwater by expecting aged anglers to walk 800 yards to fishing platforms constructed with these anglers licence fees.

One aspect that is often forgotten by councils and government is the economic contribution of recreational anglers. In a national survey in May 2000, anglers across Australia spent \$1.8 billion in a year on fishing related activities and equipment, an average of \$552 per angler, and it is thought this figure has trebled since 2000 and according to a VRFish funded economic study the recreational fishing industry in this state was valued at \$825million in 2008/9 and would rise to \$10.6 billion over the next twenty years. Now wouldn't you wonder why authorities local and state would not be pulling out all stops to encourage recreational fishing in this area, which is already blessed with the natural asset of great rivers and estuaries but lacking local council and State Government support towards providing access for the many who would pursue this wonderful sport. Surely this is a shortsighted policy that is currently being pursued.

Silver Trevally in the News Again.

In issue 47 we indicated that Fisheries Victoria were seeking a continuation of the 20cm minimum legal size limit and had approached VRFish for their views. Anglers will remember that under the 2009 regulations the size limit was 23cms but at the request of commercial fisheries the size limit was reduced to 20cms, and this reduction has to be reaffirmed annually. This process is currently under way. Initially it was stated that recreational anglers had approved the original size reduction, however I believe VRFish has been debating the issue, and I understand a decision has been made. I would hope that in the near future VRFish's decision would be made available to the Recreational Anglers they represent, as this was not the case when the original change to 20cms was made. As stated in the previous item in issue 47 the size limit in NSW is 30cms.

I received a letter from former VRFish chairman Bob Pearce on this matter, and he indicated that he felt that amongst VRFish members there was support for a 29-30cm minimum size limit.

He writes "as a matter of interest, the Gippsland Lakes used to have excellent stocks of silver trevally, and I have caught a lot of them around Lakes Entrance, but quite a few years ago. They were usually good sized up to 1.5kgs, and regardless of what some say, they are good to eat. I suspect they are not so readily available in the Gippsland Lakes now, as they once were, given all the environmental problems that exist in the lakes. I have also caught some good size trevally at Apollo Bay and seen other catches there to 3kgs, so they can grow



to a good size in Victoria. Also I have caught some really large Silver Trevally off Lord Howe Island and been busted off by bigger fish as well. Silver Trevally are a great fish resource and with appropriate management regimes in place, there should be plenty of these fish for both recreational and commercial fishers, so lets hope that common sense prevails on this issue."

Silver Trevally
Photo Courtesy of Frank Molito

The commercial catch in the Gippsland Lakes is currently under 15 tonnes with the average catch of the last five years being 10 tonnes per annum whilst in the five years 1988-1993 the average was 40 tonnes per annum and this decline in the commercial catch supports the view of a decline in the availability of Silver Trevally in the Gippsland Lakes. In 2009/10 the return to commercial fishers per kg of Silver trevally was \$3.40. Some excellent trevally exist in Lake Tyers however the catch of this species is somewhat irregular and regular anglers may catch a fish a year but generally the fish are large and in some cases close to 3kgs. The best Silver Trevally fishing I have experienced in recent years was in the Marlo estuary and this species provide excellent sport and I regard the fighting qualities of this fish highly. As stated previously the NSW experience shows a decline in the size of Silver Trevally in the commercial catch, however I have not seen any research on the Victorian experience with this species and I understand little if any research was available when the size limit was originally set at 23cms in 2009.

Perhaps all minimum legal lengths of Victorian species should be based on scientific information available rather than the request from commercial fishers or the requirement to set regulations that are easier to

understand or even social requirements of the day. Perhaps the first and most basic requirement in setting a MLL should be that a majority of fish within a species have the opportunity to at least spawn once before entering the fishery for either commercial or recreational fishers and any other requirements are secondary to this. This was accepted by Fisheries Victoria when the black bream MLL was increased to 28cms to allow fish to spawn at least once before entering the fishery in an attempt to conserve stock and it seems reasonable to suggest this could be applied to all recreational species

Just a Memory

Some years ago I took Fred an elderly angler to Marlo to fish the Brodribb from the riverbank. Those were the days when one could take your car through a gate and down along the bank of the river, and park beside the stream. I had recently won a rod in a fishing competition and this was the first day of using this bream rod. I baited up using sandworm and put the new rod into the river and set it on some rocks, and then went the 10 yards to get my second rod and chair when I heard a rattle and looked around to see my new rod head into the river. With a feeling of despair I grabbed my second rod and quickly put a set of treble hooks on the rod and a lead sinker and began casting in the direction I had seen the rod take off. After probably five minutes of casting I hooked my line and then retrieved 200 metres of monofilament followed by the rod and reel, and ultimately the culprit a Silver Trevally of about 2lbs. That day dear old Fred and I caught 14 lovely trevally and a couple of bream. All the trevally were good fish, and in many ways it was a memorable day for both Fred and I.

The gate to drive into the river is now locked as some months later a couple of anglers drove across the dairy farmers property after rain cutting up his tracks, and the ultimate irresponsible act was to let their dog chase some of his dairy herd. That gate has been locked to all anglers for ten years and I can understand his concern, but it is a shame when the actions of a couple of chaps can reflect on us all.

Prawn stocking in Lake Tyers update

Catching prawns at night is one of the great highlights of many family fishing trips and holidays, but being in the right place at the right time when the prawns are running has always been a challenge. So the Department of Primary Industries has engaged the University of New South Wales to conduct a trial to stock eastern king prawns in Lake Tyers, Victoria.

This follows the success of a similar trial run in the coastal lakes on the NSW South Coast.

Planning for the Lake Tyers project started in January 2011, with the first field trip to identify suitable sites and collect habitat information undertaken in March 2011.

The experimental design for the trial is currently being developed by the University. The design aims to: prepare a production model for Lake Tyers to guide the number of prawns to be stocked; evaluate the growth and survival of released prawns and detect potential effects of prawn stocking and prawning on the lake ecosystem. Initial sampling trips have been completed in Lake Tyers. A

detailed habitat map for Lake Tyers is now being produced, and preliminary samples are being sorted to provide an initial description of the lake's marine ecosystem. Sorting of preliminary samples and the final experimental design will be completed in July. The August field trip will see the full roll-out of the design.

The production of a prawn productivity model for Lake Tyers will be a key milestone to achieve for October 2012. This will provide the necessary information to estimate the best stocking density for the lake in late 2012, and for other Victorian lakes in the future. (Source -Issue No.298 July 2011. Fish Fax)



Editors Comment

The above item in a recent Fish Fax is the first time that I have seen the \$223,000 expenditure on research into the stocking of prawns in Lake Tyers acknowledged by the Department of Primary Industry (Fisheries Victoria). What is not acknowledged in this media release is that the funding for this project has come from the Recreation al Fishing Licences Trust Account. What is also not recognised is that generally local anglers seem to have little support for the expenditure of licence fees on this project, and there has certainly been no consultation with recreational anglers on this project. For anglers the question arises as to what happens to the stocked prawns when the estuary opens. To be successful this will require an annual stocking of eastern King prawns. The question of whether the prawns will be subject to commercial fishing given 2 commercial fishermen with bait licences can currently fish Lake Tyers has not been discussed. Generally in discussing this issue with recreational anglers the question arises as to why such funding has not been applied to restocking Lake Tyers with estuary perch, but then the recipient of this grant Dr Matt Taylor in his report on Marine Stocking prepared for Fisheries Victoria 2010 stated that currently there was small interest by recreational anglers in estuary perch in Lake Tyers. It has never been established what were the grounds for this comment which seems far from the current feelings of Lake Tyers anglers.

Odd Bits

Fishing the Gippsland Lakes in Early Days

“As for fish the rivers are teeming with them, but here again a good deal of knowledge is required. In most of the rivers the Gippsland Perch is to be found and it gives as true sport as any good fish in any of the rivers of Europe. The lordly salmon the pursuit of which now apparently lies in Norway, since the poisonous mills and print works have driven it out of England, is a game fish and a big one, but the Gippsland perch can afford as good a days fun at fly fishing if one gets amongst the big ones. Here again knowledge is required and by dint of asking it can be acquired, the right fly got and the modus operandi described. Other baits are cricket, frog, grub, shrimp, dragonfly, and worm.

Bream are found in the Mitchell, in Lake King, the Reeves River, at the Lakes Entrance, and at the Snowy and may be taken on usual baits. Blackfish abound in all the rivers and small creeks. In a very short time it is hoped there will be grand trout fishing in all the rivers they having been well stocked with the brown variety which are sure to give a good account of themselves.

Eels grow to a great size in the lakes. We saw one caught weighing 19 1/2lbs but were told they had been caught 48lbs in weight.

As an instance of the abundance of fish in the Lakes it may be mentioned that 360 baskets weighing 10 1/2tons were carried by the “Bogong” on our return to Sale, the result of one mornings take. And on October 1st 1885, Mr William Carstairs, a well known and respected fisherman, took 107 baskets of fish principally perch in one haul equal in weight to about 4000lbs and worth 70-80 pounds. We were informed that up the North Arm 160 baskets chiefly bream and perch were taken at once near Hunters Bay, which is a little further up than Beauchamp’s Point.”

Glasgow Book Warehouse
15 Collins St West
January 1st 1886

Anglers of today can but dream of days of old on the Gippsland Lakes

Calamari

I recently had a confirmed report of a local angler catching a couple of fair sized calamari in the Gippsland Lakes. This got me reading about calamari and I found some interesting facts. Calamari grow to 55cms and 3.6kgs but only live for twelve months. (According to one article the oldest recorded calamari was 291 days old.) Their spawning like a number of other species is associated with seagrass with the eggs attaching themselves to the seagrass. Extensive areas of seagrass are found at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay and Western Port and this would seem likely to also occur off Lakes Entrance. We know they prey on other fish and recently this publication showed a calamari with a sand whiting inside its stomach. In recent years



calamari fishing has become very popular and it has been estimated that the recreational calamari catch in Port Phillip Bay has been up to 100 tonnes annually. Years ago calamari were only regarded as suitable for bait, however today most restaurants feature calamari on their menus. Perhaps with increasing salinity of the Gippsland Lakes we will see more calamari entering these waters. I would be interested on any other reports on calamari in the Gippsland Lakes.

This photo was taken from the website [Site as a Calamari by Fishing Monthly](#) and includes a report on this amazing creature by [Ross Winstanley](#)

A Comment on the Cape Barren Goose of Lake Tyers.

Environmental consultant **Bob McDonald** wrote regarding the item on the Cape Barren Goose in front of the Lake Tyers Tavern in the last issue. Bob writes, “On Cape Barren Geese the Readers Digest is perhaps the slackest reference on birds. Cape barren Geese are common in South Gippsland especially around Yanakie and Sandy Point where there are as many as 200 at a time. They are found throughout the Bass Strait Islands – especially on Flinders Island. It’s common for a single bird to take up residence –and then be joined by a mate. Though geese were a common source of food throughout their range it was only the organised shoots on Flinders Island for sporting shooters that attracted public condemnation. The decline in overall numbers like that of the orange bellied parrots and other salt marsh coastal meadow species is related to the loss of habitat with the post war grazing of many of the Bass Strait Islands supported by shipping subsidies. I eat meat and have just written on the Bass Strait traders so I am not blaming anyone.”

[Bob provided a photo of a pair of Cape Barren Geese at Sandy Point](#)

Lake Tyers and Estuary Perch

I was reading reports as supplied by Geoff Trusler (see earlier) on fishing in the late eighties. In the Tourism fishing report for the week ending 26 June 1989 the following appears. “Some flathead, perch, and bream have been caught high in both the Toorooloo Arm around Long Point and the Trident in the Nowa Nowa Arm using prawn. Burnt Bridge and Cherry Tree have also shown good catches of perch and flathead.” In the eighties Lake Tyers did not receive very much publicity, however, given the recent information of estuary perch in Lake Tyers, I found this report most interesting and it supports the contention that Lake Tyers could support an estuary perch fishery, and stocking of the lake should be a considered option particularly given the ever increasing fishing pressure on this small estuary.

European Shore Crabs and Lake Tyers

I understand that Fisheries Victoria have received an application from a local commercial fisherman to set pots in Lake Tyers to capture European Shore Crabs. He is alleged to have cited the case of declining numbers of shore crabs in the Gippsland Lakes. The Lake Tyers Angling Club opposes this application, and is unaware of a problem with shore crabs in this estuary and recreational anglers see few of this crab.. Previously the same commercial fisherman broached the possibility of netting poddy mullet in Lake Tyers, saying this would improve the fishing, however due to the recreational and public reaction this application did not proceed. It is to be hoped that Fisheries Victoria will consult with recreational anglers and particularly Lake Tyers anglers before proceeding with the shore crab application, and at the same time undertake an assessment of the shore crab population in this estuary and perhaps it should also determine whether the population of this crab has actually declined in the Gippsland Lakes. By the way on the 16th of April 2011 regulations were passed making it an offence to use “live” shore crabs for bait and it was also made an offence to return live shore crabs to the water plus there is no limit to the quantity of shore crabs that can now be taken. I doubt that many local recreational anglers would use live shore crabs in this area.

Minister Lists Projects that will be funded with Licence Fees.

On the 27th June, the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Peter Walsh stated that money from recreational fishing licences would be used to fund 10 projects across the state The following are a couple of the items approved That would be of particular interest to local anglers.

- (a) \$133,920 over three years to help develop a reliable supply of catfish fingerlings based on appropriate genetic composition and to establish stocking based recreational fisheries in selected northern Victorian waters.
- (b) \$65,000 over three years to help re-establish Victoria's recreational fishery for Chinook salmon.
- (c) \$186,000 over three years to determine the spawning sources, movement and nursery replenishment of King George whiting in South East Australia.
- (d) \$181,386 over three years to better understand the ecological processes that underpin the recruitment of snapper into this important recreational fishery in the bay and elsewhere along the Victorian coast.

As well as the ten above projects, the Minister has announced that \$228,000 will be spent over two years earmarked for "recreational fisheries communication products." These products will include 300,000 copies of the 2011/12 Recreational fishing guide, 100,000 fish length rulers, 3000 abalone, rock lobster, and spiny crayfish measures, 200 metal fish length rulers, and 17,000 "Know your fish limits" pocket cards in four different languages.

"Mr Walsh said the funding was in addition to the \$16.2m investment the Coalition Government made in this years State Budget."

Editors Comments.

I am sure recreational anglers generally will be delighted to see funds from their licence fees allocated to the above projects, a number of projects not specifically listed. Certainly the funding to attempt to revive the catfish population in northern waters will be one project that is watched with great interest by anglers in the north of the state. (A detailed item on recent research on catfish was included in the March issue of "Around the Jetties" issue 44.)

This allocation to projects totals almost \$1.3m of recreational licence funds. Several issues arise from the Ministers Media release. **Firstly, I wonder why those bodies initiating projects and receiving funds from the licence fees are not named in the Media release.** It would be of great interest to anglers to know who is undertaking research or building fishing platforms etc. using the funds they have provided, and in addition it would be great publicity for those undertaking projects whether research bodies or angling clubs. On another matter, a recreational angler contacted me and raised the issue that given some of the research into species like King George whiting and snapper would benefit the commercial sector, does the commercial sector make any contribution to this research or alternately does it rely on such research being funded by the recreational angling community. I think this is a fair question and I would be interested to receive any information on the financial contribution of the commercial sector to such programs.

It also does seem strange that funding for communication is a charge on the licence contribution of recreational anglers. I would have thought that this would have been a normal budget expenditure of Fisheries Victoria rather than anglers licence fees funding Fisheries Victoria's communications with anglers.

Finally whilst the Minister has correctly stated that the funding above is in addition to the \$16.2m from the Coalition Government, it should be remembered that the \$16.2m is over four years, so that the Government is funding recreational fishing to the extent of \$4m per annum, as was indicated in the Ministers answers to queries raised in the last issue of Around the Jetties.

Perhaps the most unusual item listed by the Minister as a funded project is-

\$34,000 over two years to install a further 40 "Seal the loop" recreational fishing line disposal bins around Victoria. Do we need special bins to dispose of fishing line?

Small Grants Program

The Recreational Fishing Grants Program for small grants under \$5,000 can be applied for by any angling club and used for projects benefitting public recreational fishing in this state. Really the only requirement is that those applying should be incorporated or individual applications may be made using an incorporated body to make the application. Projects could include signage, events, stiles or other fishing access projects etc. Applications will be received year round and Tim Bull has informed that the acceptance rate is a high 75%.

For further assistance ring 03 9658 4779 for the Secretariat Recreational Fishing Grants program

Visit to the new Mallacoota Fishing Platform

Recently the Minister responsible for fishing Peter Walsh and Tim Bull local MLA visited the Mallacoota



Fishing Platform to see the change it has made in providing opportunities for bank anglers. Almost as a gift for a publicity photo angler John Baratta fishing on the platform at the time of the visit was able to display two nice salmon that he caught. It is great to see bank anglers catered for in this way and Tim Bull made the point that such platforms in this area, and this is one of four, make a wide range of species available to shore anglers.

This fishing platform was a development undertaken by Future Fish and cost \$81,181. The Director of Future Fish David Kramer said

of the Mallacoota development that it “will complete a land based fishing precinct of a magnitude never seen in Victoria before.” The full funding for the project was derived from the contributions of recreational anglers through the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Fund.

Recreational Fishing Guide

I wonder if readers have noticed that the 2010/11 Recreational Fishing Guide does not have a list of the regional projects funded with recreational licence funds. Is this a new approach, as it seems to me this was always an important element of the Fishing Guide. The 2009/10 guide featured an excellent section showing the projects funded and the regions, as well as photos of some of the projects. I think it is important that the use of anglers licence funds is available to anglers in this form

Special thanks

To Robert Edgar, Principal of Prime Focus, a leading Melbourne IT firm. Robert is a reader of Around the Jetties and has registered a web site for Around the Jetties so the name cannot be taken and used by others. In due course Rob’s company will design a web site for Around the Jetties.

ABC and Around the Jetties

On the 11th of July I was interviewed on the ABC Breakfast Program by Gerard Callinan, and as a result we have a further 15 email readers who we welcome to Around the Jetties. **Remember you as a valued reader can recommend new readers to this publication.**

Contributions- Your 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

Late Note- The roads along the banks of the Tambo River were graded for the Twin Rivers Competition. It’s a great pity that local angler access to the river during the year is not as highly valued.

Fishing Gear on Line

Recently I discovered that Rob’s Warehouse a Bairnsdale fishing tackle shop has set up a web site and anglers can purchase tackle on line. Try www.robstackle.net.au or www.buyselltackle.com.au Personally I like to browse a tackle shop but then on line shopping seems the new world.

Editor-This was to be the September issue however we had so much information we thought we would print an early August issue. Now it’s off on a cruise around the top of Australia and home by Indian Pacific Rail. The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the Special 50th September Issue.