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Around the Jetties

ISSUE 50

An Anglers Newsletter

September-October

The words of fishing have given me and thousands of others immense pleasure to read; they have lasted through the ages remarkably well; and they often hold much that speaks of matters far beyond the waters, but about the heart and eye, the ways of human beings and their passions.

Nick Lyons "the Quotable Fisherman" 1998

Editorial

In this issue of Around the Jetties I have retraced a couple of issues that this publication has undertaken over the last five years and I have provided an indication of just how this publication began, with of all things a letter to a few fellow anglers. The result has been over 300,000 words in fifty issues covering a diversity of topics, almost all of which are not covered in regular fishing magazines, but have some importance to the serious angler. The number of readers has grown over those years and is somewhat hard to evaluate, however we believe it is close to 1,000 anglers who regularly read this publication and more angling clubs are taking Around the Jetties and distributing it to members. From its inception we have attempted to put current fisheries research into a form that is easily understood by anglers and this would not have been possible without the support of Fisheries Victoria who have readily provided this publication with research papers and information, which in turn have created great interest among the serious anglers who are our readers. So now a little from those earlier issues and then the September news from Around the Jetties.

That First Issue of Around the Jetties

Issue 1 February 2007

In Issue 1 February I wrote a letter to a number of angler friends describing the surprise of angler Murray Scott with what he found in a bream he caught in the Mitchell River. The following is an excerpt from that letter and this was the commencement of Around the Jetties "I recently had a call from recreational angler Murray Scott, who had caught a black bream in the Mitchell River, and when filleting this fish he found a tag in its back and a black cylinder about the size of a cigarette seemed to have fallen out from the fish's body cavity. I confirmed his suspicion that this was likely to be a transmitter being used in a \$100,000 project to map the movements of black bream around the Gippsland Lakes. I contacted the project manager Dr Jeremy Hindell who was most appreciative of the recreational anglers actions, however he indicated he would like the frame or remains of the filleted fish. When I conveyed this information to the Murray he was not able to specify which fish the transmitter was attached to as it was caught the

previous week and he had buried the remains. At the request of the project manager he dug up the remains of the five fish he had caught on that fishing trip, and placed the skeletons in a plastic bag, which I delivered that same day to the project team. This project team certainly deserves a medal for commitment in attempting to identify the relevant fish and obtain otoliths from the partly decomposed mess I delivered to them. Jeremy Hindell sent me a statement on the movement of this black bream between October 2005 and July 2006. This made amazing reading and certainly the transmitter was able to follow every move of this fish, and even gave the depth of the water, the date, and place where the fish was recorded. I think when a report is released on the movements of black bream it will make fascinating reading and surprise most of us. By the way the transmitter is inserted into the body cavity of the fish through a small incision, and according to Dr Jeremy Hindell "we use a couple of sutures and some super glue to seal the wound, then wait for the fish to recover before release. All pretty straight forward."



Murray Scott is still a reader of Around the Jetties and is one of our top local anglers

The Hindell research provided fascinating information on the movement of black bream and many anglers became interested in the research and information that underlies the sport of fishing. This was the start of Around the Jetties that attempted to provide that information and comment on angler issues to its readers, the recreational angler.

A Few Items from the Past Five Years.

Areas of Angler Interest

Issue 3 May 2007

Part of the role of the publication was to visit areas of interest and the following short item was one of those in issue 3 of May 2007 is one of these.

Atlantic Salmon in the Gippsland Lakes

I was interested to read a report in the Victorian Fishing Monthly magazine quoting Gary Leonard, a local commercial fisherman that he had caught an Atlantic Salmon in his nets. On talking to other anglers and a fisheries scientist we agreed this report was most unlikely to be factual as no one could see how an Atlantic salmon could enter the lakes system given that most are produced in Tasmania in fish enclosures. The general view was that he had netted a sea run trout, which are occasionally caught in the Mitchell River. These fish are silver and generally similar to an Atlantic salmon.

Decline in Size of Tyers Flathead

A major issue raised by anglers in May 2007 in Around the Jetties was the decline in the size of dusky flathead. The following item draws attention to this concern raised by anglers and may have been the first occasion that this was publicly discussed. This has become a matter of continuing concern amongst recreational anglers

Several regular dusky flathead fishermen, myself included, have noticed a marked decline in the general size of dusky flathead caught in Lake Tyers. Currently the average fish is probably 38-42cm, which is considerably less than four years ago when my diary suggests the average size was 45-50cm. There are also far less large flathead being caught. Most years I would catch and release about ten flathead between 8-12lbs, but this year we have not boated a flathead over 60cm. Does this mean the lake is under pressure with a vastly increased number of fishermen or is it environmental caused by the fact that the lake has not been open for almost four years?

In this issue the discrepancy between dusky flathead regulations in NSW and Victoria were noted and the lack of any restriction on commercial fishermen of dusky flathead were noted. Little has changed since 2007

In NSW for long-term sustainability of dusky flathead the minimum size limit was increased to 36cm and a further increase to 40cm is proposed. In Victoria the current minimum size limit is 25cm, and that is for all flathead including dusky flathead. Surely Fisheries Managers in Victoria should be providing better protection to Dusky Flathead by having a more realistic minimum size limit, comparable with NSW. It is also rather strange that recreational anglers in this state willingly accept a bag limit of five fish, for long term sustainability of the species, yet there is **no catch limit for commercial fishermen**. These current regulations make a joke of sustainability.

A Rare Travelling Dusky Flathead

The following item appeared in Issue 5 of Around the Jetties and was of interest to Gippsland anglers and reinforced the need for additional research into this species, which spends its entire life in our Gippsland estuaries.

T.C. Roughly in his wonderful old reference book "Fish and Fisheries of Australia, states the dusky flathead " spends its life in estuaries and very rarely leaves them." This has been the general opinion of anglers and researchers and I think this view is still generally accepted. Given the number of small 10-15 cm dusky flathead caught in Lake Tyers prior to its opening there is no doubt the species was breeding in Lake Tyers. It is interesting that the first record of a dusky leaving an estuary and undertaking a significant movement before capture occurred in 2005 when a tagged dusky (Tagged December 2004) left Wingan Inlet and was recovered fifty miles distant off the entrance to the Mallacoota Lake. This movement is the only reported movement of dusky flathead outside its estuary according to Vic Tag.

Issue 6 August 2007

Comment on the Teredo Worm

A reader had written to Around the Jetties saying that he stood on one of snags placed in the river and it collapsed as it had been eaten by a teredo worm and he wondered would the snags serve their purpose in the future. Dr Jeremy Hindell reading this question provided the following valuable comment

Dr Hindell did provide a comment on the Teredo worm, and indicated that the worm reducing the snag structure was not necessarily bad, as it created more micro-habitat to support other invertebrates and small fish. Dr Hindell had dived around the snag structures previously and made a very positive observation on the fish that were using these structures including mulloway. I wonder when was the last occasion a mulloway was caught in the Tambo River? Dr Hindell is now Senior Estuarine Ecologist at the Arthur Rylah Institute.

Issue 8 November 2007

Memories of Crouch Reels

Items of historical interest were often included in Around the Jetties remembering that many of our readers have had a long association with the sport of fishing. The following item brought back memories for many anglers and we received some wonderful letters on the topic of the historic Crouch reel.

"I think many older anglers reading this publication will remember with some affection the Crouch reel, produced in Dunolly Victoria and manufactured from aluminium. This was a beautifully engineered fishing reel that in the right hands could cast a mile, but in the hands of the unwary could provide a classic birds nest tangle of line, that could end your days fishing.

The Crouch reel company was bought out in 1962 and the reel vanished from the fishing shops. Today these reels are a rare collectors item. In the early sixties I had a schoolboy in a school-angling club, that I coordinated in Mansfield, who could handle this reel, and he spent hours casting a Devon spinner from the banks of lake Eildon with wonderful success. This same lad now in his early sixties has recently bought two Crouch reels through computer marketing and paid \$160 for one of these reels. I noted another reel offered for \$200. It seems the old Crouch reel can still be part of the modern anglers life. Since early 1900 over 120 Australian companies have produced fishing reels. Today the main, and possibly the only company remaining is the Alvey Company in Brisbane that commenced business in 1920. This firm produced side cast reels with an emphasis on surf reels although it now produces 100,000 reels a year with at least 50 different types."

Many of the older fishermen might remember the wooden side cast reels manufactured from cedar and last produced in 1974. Since that date the reels have been Bakelite or compression moulded. If you have an old Alvey wooden reel in your shed, you have a reel of some historical value.

In June this year Jack Alvey died aged 77 and he was the grandson of the founder of the business and inventor of the reel.

Issue 10 March 2008

Fish and Blue Green Algae

This publication has been most interested in the comments of commercial fishermen and again the following comment seemed to be at odds with current science. Both views are provided in the following item.

“Commercial fisherman Arthur Allen in the first weeks of the algal bloom suggested in an interview on the ABC that the algal bloom was good for black bream and other species and there had never been more young fish around than was being seen during this bloom. He went further to suggest that small fish actually ate the algal bloom. Listeners I am sure would have had the impression that algal blooms are good for fish stocks of the Gippsland Lakes. I would make the comment that I find this hard to understand, given that science suggests when the algae eventually decomposes, the decomposition of the algal cells consume oxygen and can lead to massive fish deaths due to a lack of oxygen in the water. Of more lasting concern is the adverse effect of algae on the seagrass beds. The algae can kill seagrass beds due to turbidity and these beds are important habitat for fish, and provide cover and protection during the breeding cycle. Given these facts it would seem that blue green algae has an adverse impact on the fish species of the Gippsland Lakes.”

Professor Graham Harris in a paper to the State Environment Committee (2006) stated-

“Seagrass beds are probably the most valuable ecological assets in the lakes because of their importance in promoting the breeding of fish. Most seagrasses will only grow well in clear water.”

“Increased nutrient loads lead to increased frequency of algal blooms in the water, increased turbidity and the growth of algae on the leaves of sea grasses.” All of which contribute to the death of seagrasses, and affect the black bream and other fish of the lakes.

Issue 12 May 2008

Estuary Perch

This publication has been vitally interested from the earliest issues in estuary perch, particularly in Lake Tyers, and this was one request for information from recreational anglers.

“Some years ago at a conference on black bream I was talking during lunch to a commercial fisherman who fished Lake Tyers. During this discussion he stated that estuary perch were in the arms of Lake Tyers and he could get a couple of bins of this species by netting in places in the Nowa Arm of the lake. I also talked to a fisheries officer who was in this area some years ago, who fished the snags above Burnt Bridge and caught estuary perch. Now I have fished this lake over fifteen years but have never caught an estuary perch and this despite using live mullet over many of those years. I wonder if any other anglers who read this publication have recently caught estuary perch in these waters.”



In recent issues photos of estuary perch caught in Lake Tyers have been published and this publication brought to the attention of anglers the catch of 1.5 tonnes of estuary perch in Lake Tyers in the early 80’s. Unfortunately Fisheries Victoria indicated in 2007 that anglers fishing Lake Tyers had little interest in estuary perch. This is far from an accurate statement. This will be an ongoing issue.

Tambo River Sand Slug

This publication has raised the issue of the sand slug in the Tambo River and the possibility that in the next 50 years the river will not be navigable and this will have a profound effect on fish breeding.



“A sand slug that has travelled down the Tambo River was almost at the Gippsland Lakes and would threaten the breeding habitat of bass fish.”

Professor Ian Rutherford

(Age Newspaper 2003)

As many readers would realise the Tambo River is under long-term threat from a sand slug that is between 3 and 5m deep and stretches from Bruthen to the Cliffs area, a distance of 15 kms. This slowly moving body of sand will pose a threat to boating and fishing in the future.

The Tambo River Improvement Trust was formed in 1953 with its first objective being "to control sand deposition in the Tambo River."

In 1900 large boats could travel this river from the Gippsland Lakes, through the cliffs area to Mossiface. Much of this section of the river now only has a depth of 30cms, and from research it would seem likely that this level of water could extend to the lakes in the next 50-100 years.

What is urgently needed is a Government financed study to determine what can be done to protect this river in the future, and to determine the rate of movement of the sand. The Tambo River has long been regarded as one of the finest bream waters in this state and in 1985 the Arthur Rylah Institute in a submission to the Tambo River Improvement Trust stated, "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."

Any reader interested in a paper on the "Tambo River Sand slug" that I wrote several years ago, can obtain a copy by simply contacting me and a copy will be mailed to readers. This paper gives an outline of the problem and a couple of possible solutions for consideration.

This was an item that has been given little publicity apart from Around the Jetties, but it may have long-term effects on fish and river navigation.

Issue 14 June 2008

Treatment of Dusky Flathead

In 2009 new fisheries regulations were gazetted after submissions had been called for from anglers, however much of what anglers suggested was ignored and the treatment of the dusky flathead in the published regulations is a prime example. Perhaps the same could be said of the treatment of Australian salmon.

"The treatment of dusky flathead in this regulations draft is almost inexplicable. With a 27cm size limit these fish would be taken before they had spawned, and given our general lack of knowledge of this species it seems strange that this fish is treated in the same manner when it comes to size limits, as the prolific sand flathead where it is estimated it yields over 400 tonnes of fish to anglers in Victoria bays. The dusky flathead on the other hand has the ability to become a trophy species that should be protected and allowed to develop its full potential. The only reason for the treatment of this fish with a 27cm size limit would seem to me to be an attempt to cater for the commercial estuary fishery which in the last few years has targeted this fish as bream stocks have declined. Logic suggests that we as recreational anglers should demand a minimum size between 30 and 36cms to ensure the survival of this wonderful species, which given recent history will come under considerable threat in the next decade. I would consider that 35cms would be an almost ideal minimum size limit taking into account the criteria of having the species spawn prior to reaching a minimum length."

Roughley "Fish and Fisheries of Australia"

The dusky or estuary flathead is the largest of all the flatheads; It occurs in all states, and, as the name implies it spends its life in the estuaries, and very rarely leaves them.

It grows to a length of about 4 feet and 28 pounds in weight."

Treating this fish the same as the sand flathead shows little understanding of recreational fishing, particularly when compared with NSW and its 36cm minimum size limit.

Salmon Size Limit

By the way were you aware that in 1998 the salmon size limit was 21cms. Today the Draft Fishing Regulations suggests no size limit for this species. This is hardly progress.

Issue 15 August 2008

Did You Know

The publication always looked for those odd facts that make fishing such an interesting sport and this was one of those facts.

"According to the book, "Sea Anglers Fishes of Australia" by Arthur.W, Parrott published in 1959 "the largest known species of black bream was obtained at Lake Tyers in 1918 weighing 7lbs 61/2ozs and measuring 21 1/2 inches in length. This fine specimen may be seen mounted in the Melbourne office of the Victorian Fisheries and Game Department."

I wonder where this fine specimen is today.

An Amazing Event

Occasionally I took the liberty of writing of a personal observation and this was one such case, and I imagine all anglers have similar memories of notable events on the water.

"When fishing with my son in Lake Tyers this week, as a last spot to fish before we headed home, we boated into Blackfellas Arm, and as we quietly entered the arm my son drew my attention to a large Sambar deer in the water, not 20 yards away from us. We boated into the arm and he stayed in the water just moving his head and watching us as we went past, and we wondered at his actions, when we saw the reason for his lack of movement. Above him on the bank about 30 metres away in the bush were two large black dogs, which we presumed were wild dogs and they quickly moved into the bush. We stopped and fished 100 metres into the arm and watched as eventually the deer left the water shook himself and moved into the bush. As we left the arm we motored over to the spot where the deer sheltered in the water only to discover another decayed Sambar deer body floating near the bank of the arm. We left Blackfellas Arm wondering about the story relating to the second large deer body floating in the water."

Issue 20 December 2008

The following item appeared following information supplied by anglers. This also raised the issue of netting in the Cunninghame Arm and the response indicated many readers were unaware of the commercial netting regulations that apply to this section of the Gippsland lakes.

Dusky Flathead in the Cunninghame Arm

I had a report from a reader that last month there were a large number of very big dusky flathead in the Cunninghame arm near the footbridge and this reader had caught a number between 60 and 84cms all of which were returned to the water. Another reader indicated that a large number of flathead were in the same area in the previous year, and both readers believed these fish were spawning in this area. We have not publicised this in this newsletter previously to ensure some protection is provided to these fish. There is a strong case for the Cunninghame Arm to be protected from commercial netting and perhaps areas such as the one described with the possibility of flathead spawning should be closed to all fishing. Of course some work needs to be done to prove these fish are spawning and I would have thought this would not have been difficult. The Cunninghame Arm is a most interesting case. Commercial fishermen may use a seine net not exceeding 732 metres but may not net in the arm between the 1st of December and the following 30th of April. This means the arm is not being netted when holidaymakers are present in large numbers. Between the 1st of May and the 30th November the arm can only be netted at night between sunset and sunrise on any Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. I would again believe that this is to ensure the netting of this popular fishing area is not obvious to the elderly holiday makers who fish in this area. If these rules are to protect commercial fishermen from conflict with the public, then the area should not be commercially netted at all, and this act would be a positive encouragement to tourists."

A Couple of other Items

In conclusion to our quick read of a few of the past issues that appeared in *Around the Jetties* it should be noted that probably the issue that had the biggest impact was the item on **European Shore Crabs** which was first published in *Around the Jetties* in **Issue 29 October 2009**. This would go on to be a major news item in papers radio and TV. This was a full-page report and although material from this report was widely used the source that is *Around the Jetties* was never acknowledged.

Perhaps one of the most disappointing issues for recreational anglers was raised as an item in **Issue 27 July 2009** which brought to public attention the building by the **East Gippsland Shire** of two fishing platforms using **\$22,000** of anglers licence fees on the backwater of the Mitchell River that could not be accessed by handicapped anglers. This matter was first raised by an 80 year old angler who could not walk to the platforms carrying his fishing gear and sought assistance from *Around the Jetties* to get approval to drive to one of the platforms. The former AFL umpire, the late Don Jolley, AM, himself a wheelchair angler, also raised the matter of access for the handicapped.

I had a meeting with Shire officers during which they acknowledged that anglers would have to walk 800metres to get to the platforms and that steps would exclude wheelchair anglers. They refused to make any changes despite when accepting anglers' funds they had agreed to the requirement that when using anglers funds, "facilities must be constructed to a standard that is suitable for persons of all abilities," and despite the fact the structures built discriminated against handicapped anglers. It was disappointing that local papers or radio did not comment upon this matter and this publication was unable to change the stand of the East Gippsland Shire.

Readers would be aware of the reports on **the bass breeding** attempts at the TAFE facility on Bullock Island and the euthenazing of 30,000 black bream at that facility with both items reported in some detail only in *Around the Jetties*.

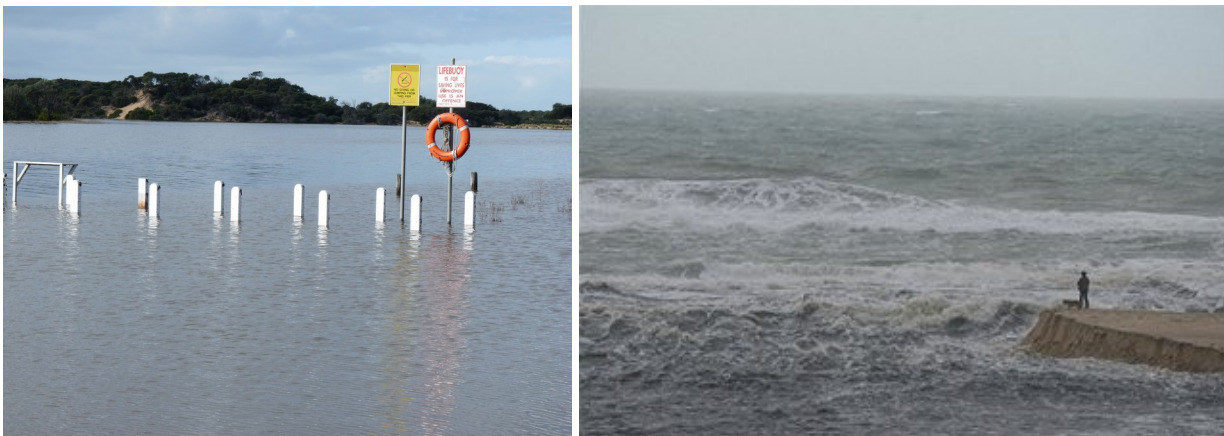
Perhaps one of the most interesting recent items has been the recognition of Blue Spot Flathead (Yank) and the almost impossible **identification problem of separating dusky flathead and blue spot flathead**. This again has been an issue raised in this publication.

Finally my thanks to contributors such as Scientific angler John Harrison for his work in many areas and recently on the flathead recognition issue and to Diary angler Bob McNeill who has been a contributor over a long period of time, Ron Brymer for his observations and to the many others who have contributed to the success of *Around the Jetties*.

A special thank you to Fisheries Victoria for the wealth of information readily provided to *Around the Jetties*, and this has led to discussion, debate and above all a greater understanding of the issues facing this wonderful sport.

Now For This Months Around the Jetties

Lake Tyers Opens



The Jetty under water before we went on holiday and Andrea Lane's photo for the ABC of the Breakout

The entrance at Lake Tyers opened naturally at approximately 7.00am on the 11th August after heavy rain. Since 1983 the entrance has opened 15 times and this is only the 5th time it has been allowed to open naturally. The lake had been closed for 902 days, and this compares with the average of 527 days closed since 1983.

The current opening coincided with a full moon and high tides and there was also a very big sea running, and these factors resulted in the lake draining relatively slowly with limited scouring of the channels and mud islands. The water at boat ramp No 2 is consequently very shallow.

Bream require appropriate conditions for successful spawning and the absence of these conditions means that significant year classes do not occur every year. Past evidence indicates that successful spawning occurs when the entrance is open during the spawning season as this provides the necessary salt water/fresh water wedge necessary for the survival of the larvae during the first few days. Bream currently caught in Lake Tyers are ripe with spawn so there is every indication that this could be a successful breeding year providing recruitment to the fishery in future years.

The above report was supplied by John Harrison (Scientific angler) whose home overlooks the entrance to Lake Tyers. John together with Jack Whadcoat has put together details of every opening since 1983, and this document provides material for comparison of openings. The average length of time the lake has remained open from 1963 is 164 days with the longest period open being 273 days in 1985.

A Memory of Past Openings

In the past I have been fascinated with what occurs when the lake has opened for it has often meant the movement of other species into the lake and perhaps the best known have been small snapper. After the opening 1998/9 (157 days open) my fishing diary records that fishing opposite Lake Tyers House on the 7th January 2000 and using whitebait Dawn and I landed 12 gurnard up to 36cms in length, four salmon up to 38cms and 4 small snapper of around 22cms. I regard these fish as having entered the Lake Tyers system during the open period. Over coming months I caught considerable numbers of small snapper, and in the years that followed these fish grew to legal size and provided great sport in the lake culminating in a 4lb 50cm snapper caught in the Nowa Nowa Arm in 2007. The gurnard seemed to only remain for around six months, and then only isolated fish were caught, perhaps they were fished out. It will be interesting to see what fish enter the lake with this opening and how long the lake remains open for this to happen. The lake also after being open introduces its oddities, and one of these for me was a barracouta of over a metre in length I caught off the mission on a live mullet in February 2000. It was at the same spot that I watched Graeme Merryful play what he considered was the biggest dusky flathead ever hooked, and after 20 minutes brought to the side of his boat a large stingray which he promptly cut off.

Yes a lot of interest will be associated with how long the lake is open and whether a channel provides access for other species to Lake Tyers. The months ahead will tell.

Gippsland Lakes Taskforce Rates Fishing in the Lakes as Poor

The Gippsland Lakes Taskforce led by Professor Barry Hart has published what they have called A Report Card of the Natural Assets of the Gippsland Lakes. This report card lists the fish of the Gippsland Lakes as poor. The following is the summary of the fish report.

“There has been a general decline in the commercial fish catch since the early 1990’s and evidence that recreational fishing has declined. Therefore the indicator has been rated as poor.”

This reports main value is that the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce for the first time has publicly recognised and stated that fish stocks in the Gippsland lakes are in poor condition, and it would seem they have used commercial catch records to provide the basis for this statement. Recreational anglers can only wonder why this taskforce has not been prepared to recognise this fact previously, given the wealth of information available.

Perhaps the Taskforce could have considered that in the decade 1986-1996 commercial nets removed 1836 tonnes of black bream from the Gippsland Lakes, with an annual average catch of 183 tonnes per annum whilst in the recent period 2002-2009 (excluding 2007 which was a flood year) the average commercial catch of black bream was a mere 35 tonnes per annum.

Perhaps this is the first step in awakening authorities to the poor condition of fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes and the continued commercial netting of these stocks with absolutely no catch limits.

Another aspect of this report that is of interest to recreational anglers is that seagrass is only given a moderate rating with the following summary.

“Seagrass density and condition is fluctuating with no discernable trend over the period and has been rated as moderate.”

The lakes feature extensive seagrass meadows but these have been under threat following algal blooms in recent years and particularly with the *Synechococcus* bloom of 2007. Seagrass is acknowledged as being significant “serving as a nursery for juvenile marine fauna.”

The above rating of the Gippsland Lakes should be compared with published comments of leading commercial fishermen.

Estuarine Fishers Association spokesman Arthur Allen.

Bairnsdale Advertiser Friday 29th August 2008

Speaking of Juvenile Fish.

“There are literally millions and millions of them, I would see them day after day, showing there is little or nothing wrong with lakes. Anyone who says there are no fish or recruitment is very uninformed.”

Or

“Mr Allen has taken numerous photographs to show last summers spawning success, proof to the scientists that “that we may know a bit more than them.”

Melbourne Herald Sun October 2008

Speaking of Algal Blooms

“All this talk of algal an bloom is just nonsense spouted by people who don’t know or understand the lakes ecology.”

Speaking on Seagrass and the Lakes

The grass beds took a battering after the fires and floods, but they are growing back so fast in a few weeks we’ll be fouling our props on grass every time we go out.”

The above predictions by the spokesman for the commercial fishermen of the Gippsland Lakes seems to have had almost no success regarding growth of seagrass, or the supposed millions of fish providing for the future of the Gippsland Lakes. In many ways the inaccurate assessment has done a disservice to debate on the future of the lakes by ignoring the statistical evidence of declining fish stocks.

Another commercial fisherman came out with this gem.

Rob Moorcroft (Commercial Fisherman)

“I am of the view the longer this algae remains, the better for the bream fishery.”

“The two floods in 2007 and the resulting algae bloom have been brilliant for bream spawning success.”

“I am predicting a spike in bream numbers comparable to the late seventies.”

Quoted from an email sent to Brett Geddes and published in Victorian Fishing Monthly May 2008

Finally ABC Rural News headed a report” Fish Flood into the Gippsland Lakes” and quoted Commercial fisherman Arthur Allen as saying 10/9/2011 that “its been a good week for lakes fishers who have enjoyed a boost to catches. The difference between fishermen and farmers is when it rains, farmers have got to wait for the grass to grow, but we get the benefits immediately.” He said “we’ve had a very good week, and very varied variety of fish too, and all in good numbers.

Recreational anglers and conservationists would be well aware that with the recent flushes of fresh water in our rivers, bream and other fish species would exit the rivers and of course commercial nets within 400 metres of the river mouths would take substantial catches of these fish. This movement of fish in flood conditions is an accepted fact, and certainly the netting of species leaving the rivers would take a substantial toll of fish. Perhaps what is not realised is that many of these fish have entered the rivers to spawn, and so an additional toll on black bream and the future of the species is taken. The current Government has a policy to re-examine the netting at river mouths but this has not yet been acted upon.

The commercial catch for 2007/8 of black bream was 144 tonnes whilst the average for the six years around that one year was 35 tonnes, the difference in the catch was entirely due to local floods in the rivers forcing fish to vacate the rivers and thus be taken in nets at the river mouths. This will occur again in this year’s statistics of the commercial catch in the Gippsland Lakes, and a fishery will suffer again from the netting of spawning fish.

13 FISH a Winner

In a recent media release Anthony Hurst Fisheries Victoria Executive Director said that since the inception of the 24-hour reporting line for illegal fishing activity almost 15,000 calls had been received from all over the state. Mr Hurst said “these calls have led to the prosecution of, or issuing on the spot fines to nearly 1,100 individuals.”

As a result of one call, fisheries officers were able to plan and conduct an operation that led to the arrest of three men for illegally using a mesh net to take 832 fish of which 709 were undersize. The three men pleaded guilty and were ordered to pay \$30,000 in fines and compensation.

The Government has committed \$500,000 to continue and enhance this program. (Up from \$300,000)

Attempt to Gain Approval to Commercially Net Shore Crab in Lake Tyers.

A Gippsland Lakes commercial fisherman recently sought a permit to net shore crabs in Lake Tyers. This follows a similar approach some months previously to obtain a permit to commercially net sea/poddy mullet in Lake Tyers. The approach to net sea mullet in Lake Tyers was withdrawn when it was realised the strength of opposition from recreational anglers and clubs to allowing netting in Lake Tyers. What I found surprising with the most recent request to net European Shore Crabs in Lake Tyers was the suggestion from the applicant

that the number of Shore Crabs in the Gippsland Lakes had declined and he wished to net in Lake Tyers as a result. It was also of interest that there was no evidence presented on the prevalence of shore crabs in Lake Tyers.

Recreational anglers immediately opposed this application generally, and the Lake Tyers Angling Club specifically led this opposition. The Lake Tyers Angling Club in a letter to Fisheries Management stated "it is accepted that the European Shore Crab is a pest, but no evidence has been provided that the crab is present in this lake in significant numbers to cause concern. There is concern that the by catch of other crabs will have a significant impact on the food chain." Concern was also expressed at the lack of consultation with relevant recreational stakeholders and the lack of detail as well there did not seem to have been any attempt to make the application public.

As a result of the lack of relevant information the Lake Tyers Angling Club took a stand on this issue, and it was evident that the application would be vigorously opposed by a large number of recreational anglers with notices of the application in shops and a meeting with the Senior Fisheries Management Officer organised to indicate the level of opposition to this request.

Twenty four hours before this meeting John Harrison secretary of the Lake Tyers Angling Club received a telephone call from Travis Dowling Director of Fisheries Management to say that in the light of the current opposition it had been determined not to grant a permit to net Shore Crabs in Lake Tyers.

Congratulations are due to the Lake Tyers Angling Club for taking the stand that commercial netting in a fishing reserve is an incompatible activity.

This means that in the last twelve months there have been two attempts to get commercial fishing permits to commercially fish Lake Tyers firstly for sea mullet and then European Shore Crabs. It is obvious that recreational anglers need to be very much aware of attempts to commercially net in recreational waters. What is of concern is the seeming lack of publicity and consultation associated with the request for a permit to net in Lake Tyers.

Cape Barren Goose at Lake Tyers

Readers may remember in the September Issue 49 of Around the Jetties, Environmental Consultant Bob McDonald wrote regarding the Cape Barren Goose at the Lake Tyers Tavern. This has drawn the following response from Trevor Stow, fly fisherman, fishing writer and hunter

"I read with some interest the comments about Cape Barren Geese by Bob McDonald in your newsletter. I recently shot Cape Barren Geese on Flinders Island and I can assure you that they are not in low numbers. In fact, quite the opposite. They graze the farms on the Island and the shoots have an annual harvest that is based upon controlling the numbers. Without this harvest the numbers of Cape barren gees would be completely out of control. The hunters provide a welcome source of income for the Islanders. They contribute to airline, food, drink, car and guiding income as well as doing a good job for conservation. These birds would be seen more on the mainland, however I believe that foxes wipe them out. There are no foxes on Flinders Island. I can assure Bob that there is no decline in numbers dur to "loss of habitat". Quite the opposite. The geese love the farmland and the improvements that white man is responsible for. Perhaps you could pass this onto Bob.

Cheers

Trevor Stow.



How Many Rods are Legal?

Recently I had a phone call from one of our older readers concerned that a Fisheries Officer, had questioned him, over having three rods in his equipment on the banks of a local river, which was classed as inland waters where it is legal to only fish with two rods. There is no question that he was fishing with three rods, but rather he had a spare rod, which he carried when fishing. This question raised a number of issues for instance I have 8 rods in my boat and whilst it is legal to use four rods in marine waters there are always spare rods for use with plastics or with heavy lures for tailor etc. The question then arises is it legal for a boat fisher to have

more than the legal number of rods in his boat marine or inland waters or can an angler have more than the legal number of rods for that water on the bank of our rivers. I took this matter to the Senior Management Officer of Fisheries Victoria, at Lakes Entrance who had his Acting Operations Manager for East Victoria, Tim Hutton provide this definitive ruling.

“Thanks for your letter of the 22nd July 2011 regarding the number of rods an angler may possess. As you rightly point out in your letter, the Fisheries legislation does not limit the number of lines that an individual angler may possess. Many anglers do choose to carry multiple rig options with them so they can be responsive to the conditions of the day or to target a range of species.

However limits do of course apply to the number of lines that may be in use at any one time. In marine waters this limit is four lines and in inland waters the limit is two. Regulations also limit the number of hooks per line in both marine and inland waters. It is important that as anglers we make ourselves familiar with this and other fishing regulations.”

Tim also suggests the Current Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide is an excellent resource for information, and he made the point that any readers with a concern can contact directly one of the DPI offices listed on the back cover of the Recreational Fishing Guide.

[Thanks to Fisheries Victoria and Tim Hutton for this clear statement](#)

The Tambo River and Fishing Platforms

After over two years of correspondence on the issue of responsibility for maintenance of fishing platforms on the Tambo River, first raised by the late Don Jolley AM, I received a response from the Acting Director of Services of the East Gippsland Shire on the 13th July 2011. The response basically says that the East Gippsland Shire “has not received a response from any of the relevant authorities contacted in March 2010 regarding the aforementioned matter.” In other words the Shire does not know who constructed these fishing platforms and therefore who is responsible for maintaining these platforms. The Shire is responsible for 6 fishing platforms on Clifton Creek, 4 platforms on the Nicholson River and 3 on the Mitchell River, but seems totally unaware of who constructed platforms on the Tambo River and who is responsible for the maintenance of these platforms. Apart from the inability of handicapped anglers to access some of these platforms as paths erode due to lack of maintenance, the question arises in the case of an accident, as to who is legally responsible for the state of repair of these platforms.

Flesh Eating Worms in Northern Bream

Recently I received a cutting from Max Smith that he had read in a North Australian fishing magazine. The story indicated that a Victorian couple had been infected with a flesh-eating parasite from eating a bream they had caught on a West Australian camping trip. Alfred Hospital infectious disease physician Andrew Fuller said, “that when the couple ate the fish believed to be a black bream they also ingested the gnathostomiasis larvae.” The worms according to Dr Fuller are 1-3mm long and have got these sharp little teeth and they can go anywhere they like in the body.” The infected couple suffered muscle pain, fevers and vomiting. They were given antibiotics and have recovered according to the report. The fish was caught in the Calder River north of Derby and the incident was reported in the Australian Medical Journal.

On the basis of this report I wrote to West Australian Fisheries seeking more information on this report. I also questioned whether black bream are found as far north as Derby and could it be another species of fish that was eaten by the Victorian couple. As yet I have not had a reply to my questions.

Bob McNeill reports on Lake Tyers Fishing

Bob reports that the last month has posed considerable difficulties with heavy rain recorded in the catchment area of Lake Tyers, and this in turn meant that he along with other anglers had difficulty in locating fish, remembering that at this time of the year Bob was targeting bream. Despite the difficulties Bob’s Anglers diary recorded 55 bream caught for the month of which 41 were over size with 80% of these fish being in



the 30-40cm-size range. The majority of fish were caught in 4-5m of water and prawn was used as the bait over this period. The bream were in excellent condition and most still retained milt and spawn at the time of the lake opening. Bob fished on twenty mornings during the month between the hours of 6.00am and 9.30am and on six of those occasions he did not land a fish, however on the mornings when he did get fish he averaged 3.5 bream per morning. This report provides evidence that over this month fishing was very difficult, and that the opening of the lake on the 11th August made almost no difference to the general catches of this angler. Whilst Bob's catches over this month were black bream he did observe that several large trevally and other varieties were found dead in the bottom lake around the time of the opening. Just as a personal comment, we regularly see evidence of good trevally in Lake Tyers but catches of this species are generally rare. Bob's detailed report provides a picture of the poor fishing in Lake Tyers over the last couple of months, and his reports in the coming months will provide a picture of the changes that occur after the opening of the Lake. Bob's Reports of early morning fishing for the month are recorded in his diary, which is then sent to Fisheries Victoria and used as part of statewide research into recreational fisheries. I know many readers do enjoy hearing each month of this angler's early morning fishing at Lake Tyers.

Big Yabby Haul

A Wimmera man pleaded guilty to taking more yabbies than the catch limit and using more than the ten hoop nets allowed while fishing for yabbies at Lake Lonsdale near Stawell. He was ordered to pay \$500 to the court fund and \$75.50 without conviction. Fisheries Officers found 100 litres of yabbies on his boat when the daily allowable catch was 30 litres of whole yabbies or five litres of yabby meat.

This brought back vivid memories of the early 1970's when after terrific rains the lakes of the Wimmera Mallee all filled including Lake Hindmarsh and Albacutya. This was a time when everyone went yabbing for within a month of the lakes filling, yabbies after years of total dry started appearing. Within a couple of months a number of inland commercial fishermen were fishing Lake Albacutya for yabbies and sending them alive in bags to Victoria market. This year will again see hundreds of anglers out fishing for yabbies and camping overnight on the edge of Wimmera/Mallee lakes, and after many years of dry lakes these lakes will again produce a wonderful harvest of that special inland crustacean. Anglers will need to remember the regulations for yabbies, as the last time water occurred in these lakes there were no regulations on the catch of yabbies. Whilst Hindmarsh now has water, Lake Albacutya is yet to fill.

Mulloway Research in SW Victoria

Mulloway have interested local anglers with the occasional fish being caught in the Gippsland Lakes and odd reports of this species in the Marlo and Mallacoota areas. Undoubtedly the home of this species has been the Glenelg River estuary in SW Victoria. These fish, which can live up to 40 years and grow to over a metre in length have recently been electronically tagged and monitored. Thirty fish from the Glenelg estuary were tagged as part of a survey conducted by the Arthur Rylah Institute of Fish Ecology. One of these fish travelled from the Glenelg estuary to the Murray River mouth in South Australia and back again to the Glenelg estuary an oceanic swim of 800 kilometres.



Three fish made the trip to the Murray mouth but so far only one fish has made the return journey according to scientist Jason Lieschke. Another fish swam 50 kms up the Glenelg River and returned over a four-day period again showing the ability of this species to travel considerable distances. It is felt that the Glenelg mulloway may be part of the South Australian mulloway population whilst there may be a separate population in Victoria. Whenever this species is mentioned I recall having a cup of coffee with a chap whose home was on Shaving Point, and then seeing a 20lb+ mulloway mounted in his study. This chap was angling for bream off his jetty some years ago when this mulloway took his prawn bait. He managed to land this superb fish using a line he thought was around 10lbs breaking strain. And just another reminder, Dr Jeremy Hindell reported seeing a mulloway around snags in the

Tambo River some years ago, and of course the story the legendary Pat Milito one of the best fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes is said to have taken a 112lb mulloway at the entrance to Chinaman's Creek in the early 1950's while netting bait. Perhaps there is a chance for the recreational angler to again catch one of these great fish in the Gippsland Lakes and this would be a catch of a lifetime.

Report Released on the Survival of Rainbow Trout

An experimental trial funded by the Recreational Fishing Grants Research Program was undertaken comparing rainbow trout from the Snobs Creek hatchery with a Tasmanian strain from the Great Lakes. The two strains of fish were stocked simultaneously in a privately managed lake where only catch and release fishing was permitted. The trial compared the longevity, growth and catchability of both strains of trout. Both strains demonstrated similar longevity, similar growth rates, and similar catchability. Both strains of fish survived for 3-4 years when the trial ceased. This simple study showed no evidence that the Snobs Creek strain of rainbow trout were not equal to the wild Tasmanian strain and growth rates and catch rates were similar for both strains of trout. The high exploitation rate of fishing in Victoria is thought to account for the reduced longevity of Snobs Creek trout when compared with the Tasmanian strain although in this trial the both strains of fish survived until they were 3-4 years old when the trial ceased. This trial provided strong evidence that the trout from Snobs creek were genetically sound and compared well with the wild Tasmanian rainbow trout.

Next issue of Around the Jetties

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the November issue and we hope you have enjoyed this 50th issue of 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**



Now fellas! That's what I call a boat! It comes equipped with chefs, waiters, domestic staff, entertainment, peace and quiet, if and when you choose. It did have an internet café but no, I was not tempted to let his nibs write a newsletter or even to view emails. Bliss in other words. Sorry that you have had to wait for this newsletter, well not really, but thank you for your forbearance.

Can't wait for our next outing but I guess it will be in the tadpole not the mother ship. By the way, did you know that if you over indulge in shellfish you can develop gout. I shan't say who did but leave it to your imagination and no neither of us put on weight. Apart from the gout it was a wonderful adventure which I, indeed we, would recommend to anyone. Nice to be home though. Cheers from Dawn.