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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

Experience must be the teacher in this game-not only your own, but the other man's; and in the winter when the tackle is put away there are always books with which one can live over again the thrill and joy of the rise and the quick rush of the hooked trout.

The Uncertain Trout by R.H. Wigram (1951)

Editorial

In this months anglers' newsletter several articles draw attention to the lack of full communication from Fisheries Victoria to the anglers of the state, and this seems be particularly evident when funds derived from the Recreational Fishing Licence are involved. An example of this is the announcement of the employment of six Fisheries Officers in a Fish Fax release. (September 2011) The cost of this project or the fact that RFL fees were already being used to employ seven other officers was completely omitted from this media release. In other words, anglers and the public were only provided with half the story.

In another article in this publication, a Fish Fax of July 2011 announced the Prawn Stocking of Lake Tyers Update, however there had been almost no previous information on this project and certainly no attempt to answer concerns of anglers or to indicate the costing of this project, which again was funded using RFL contributions. (Perhaps the fact that over \$300,000 expended in NSW on similar research, by the same recipient of Victorian money would have added to the full picture.)

The above items are just a few of many other examples that could be quoted to illustrate selective communication by Fisheries Victoria. Surely anglers deserve a full response rather than selective media releases that provide only part of the story.

In 2001 Fisheries Victoria produced a magazine for anglers called "Fins" and it was a glossy costly magazine that only ran to three issues. The magazine had the potential to provide anglers across the state with information, but its format was undoubtedly a costly option, that was used to sell Fisheries Victoria rather than provide factual information for recreational anglers.

Perhaps it is worthwhile recalling that in the 1990's Fisheries Victoria produced an excellent monthly factual newsletter. This was a 12-16 page publication without glossy photographs, but chock full of factual information. This was a far cheaper option than the Fins magazine and provided a host of information to anglers. It would seem that this might be an option if Fisheries Victoria were really intent on providing a serious line of communication with anglers rather than selective media releases. A simple case in point, is that currently odd selective cases of anglers breaking the laws are released via a media release to press outlets. In the 1990's a report called "Caught and Court" listed the cases taken to court for the month in question, and anglers saw the extent of angler infringements. In some months up to 30 court cases were listed. This seems to me to be open communication and Fisheries Victoria taking anglers into their confidence. Today a similar monthly factual magazine could be emailed to anglers

around the state for minimal cost, whilst anglers without email facilities could perhaps contribute to have a hard copy forwarded by post.

It is strange that as communication has become easier in our current age, the communication to anglers by Fisheries Victoria has become selective and markedly less, and this is at a time when anglers contribute approx \$6m annually via the Recreational Fishing licence to funding.

Fishing Platforms

Recently I contacted the East Gippsland Shire seeking information on the fishing Platforms built by the Shire on Clifton Creek. I had previously established that three platforms built on Clifton Creek did not meet the requirement that the platforms should be **suitable for persons of all abilities** and that the Shire had agreed with this requirement when it obtained \$22,000 of a anglers licence fees to construct the platforms, and then totally disregarded this obligation. I was informed that Fisheries Victoria was looking at what its position was when such a clause is ignored. Since that time, the East Gippsland Shire obtained funding to build a further fishing platform on the Mitchell River downstream from the Wyung Bridge. Again, the clause regarding “suitable for persons of all abilities” was ignored but on this occasion Fisheries Victoria brought the clause to the notice of the Shire. As a result according to the acting Executive Officer Fisheries Committees, the Shire sought further money from the licence revenue to complete this platform, which will now cost a massive \$44,858. This project according to Ian Gates of Gippsland Shire is about to commence with an expectation that it will be completed by Xmas.

Currently Fisheries Victoria is discussing with the client namely East Gippsland Shire, the fact that the three jetties on the backwater did not meet the specified requirements as to access. It will be interesting to see if the Fisheries Committee is able to take the matter of the three platforms on the Clifton Creek that do not provide for persons of all abilities, to a satisfactory conclusion.

In the Clifton Creek case it does seem that the East Gippsland Shire has totally ignored the aged and handicapped anglers of the Shire and even if the structure of the Clifton Creek platforms is changed it will have little effect on the aged and handicapped, whilst the council refuses to allow vehicle access.

This issue has been argued by this publication now over a period of two years. The matter came about when an 80 year old angler asked for the assistance of this newsletter to seek permission to drive to the fishing platforms as currently he had to walk 800 metres, and with his rods, bucket, gear and chair this was impossible. In a discussion two years ago, the Shire Officers refused to allow aged or handicapped anglers to drive to the fishing platforms, thereby adding to the problems of the design of the platforms that would not allow access for wheelchair or walking frame anglers. In an ageing local society the East Gippsland Shire has ignored the needs of the very anglers who have funded the construction of the fishing platforms.

Add to this situation the inability of the Shire to advise who has built and is responsible for the maintenance of fishing platforms on the Tambo River and one may be excused for thinking the issue of responsibility for fishing platforms, and their maintenance, is a matter that is beyond the relevant local authorities.

Prawn Stocking in Lake Tyers

The following is provided to readers in an attempt to provide some added information on the question of stocking Lake Tyers with eastern king prawns.

The issue of stocking prawns in Lake Tyers received detailed coverage in Issue 40 November 2010, however a report has now been released on this project by Fisheries Victoria in the FISH-e-Fax Newsletter of the 18th July 2011. This really is the release of the first details of this project, but again the funding associated with the project is not indicated in the fisheries publication. Nor is it indicated that the funds to undertake a trial to stock eastern king prawns in Lake Tyers come from Recreational Fishing Licence Funds. Around the Jetties can state that the cost of this trial will be \$232,000.

(This figure was provided to readers in November 2010 in this publication.)

The Fish Fax report states

“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.” This report adds, “The production of a productivity model for Lake Tyers will be a key milestone to achieve for October 2012.”



A number of questions have not been answered with regards to this project and certainly the Lake Tyers Angling Club and local anglers have not been either consulted or informed as to the project. Some of the questions raised have been.

1. What happens when the Lake opens? Do all the stocked prawns move out to sea as has been suggested by many local anglers. I did read that the best prawning at the Merimbula Back Lake occurs when the prawns are heading for the sea.
2. What happens with regard to the two commercial bait licences in Lake Tyers? Will commercial bait fishermen be able to net stocked prawns in Lake Tyers?
3. What will be the ongoing cost of annual stocking of this lake with prawns, and will this be an ongoing charge on Recreational Fishing Licence Funds? The only information that I have been able to obtain is that in 2008 the cost of stocking the Wallagoot Lake was \$95,000.
4. Anglers have asked why was this project approved ahead of other projects listed in the Lake Tyers Fisheries Management Plan of 2007, such as research into the habitat of black bream and dusky flathead and also, to investigate the diet and ecological habitat dependencies of dusky flathead. In the 2007 plan it was suggested that such studies would commence within two years, and of course the current concern of declining size of dusky flathead seems to have been ignored in favour of stocking of eastern king prawns
5. Why was this project given priority over the urgent need for research into dusky flathead a premier recreational species in Lake Tyers, when 5 kms away a major recreational prawning area already exists in the Gippsland Lakes attracting hundreds of anglers, and this is a natural prawning area with no need for costly restocking.

As the prawns will be 12mm in length when stocked, they will be subject to predators both fish and birds. I understand a three-year study was being undertaken in NSW in Wallagoot Lake to determine the “**proportion of stocked prawns that are consumed by predators.**” The question arises has this study been completed and what were its results and can these results be applied to Lake Tyers.

Perhaps these are questions that should have been answered by Fisheries Victoria. Certainly the Fishing Grants Working Group that makes recommendations to the Minister would have had access to answers, given that its **NSW Chairman John Diplock was Recreational Fisheries Manager in NSW** when the Wallagoot Lake and the Back Lake at Merimbula were first stocked with eastern king prawns in 2007/8.

Undoubtedly there are many questions that anglers would like answered in association with this project, but perhaps the most important is why there was a **total lack of communication with local anglers** and in particular with the Lake Tyers Angling Club, and its members.

What I also found interesting, and this has not been generally discussed, was that the prawns for release in NSW could not be sourced in NSW and were therefore brought from the Rocky Point Prawn Farm on the Queensland Gold Coast. The prawn larvae were packed into bags of saltwater and shipped to Sydney by air. The bags of prawns in foam boxes then made the road trip to the South Coast via Canberra. I am wondering whether eastern king prawn larvae would have to be sourced from Queensland for any release in Victoria. According to a report by Dr Matt Taylor of the University of NSW six million prawns were stocked into Wallagoot Lake and two million into the Back Lake at Merimbula in 8 road trips in January and December 2007.

It should also be noted that over \$300,000 has been allocated in NSW to research on stocking prawns which together with the Victorian research funding of \$232,000 makes this project a very expensive exercise that recreational anglers know little about. (I understand that Mr Diplock travels from NSW to chair around 6 meetings per year of the Fishing Grants Working Group in an effort to ensure impartiality in the recommendations made to the Minister)



The following are two short reports from the Merimbula Angling Club recently published on the release of Eastern king prawns

Merimbula Angling Club Reports 25/9/2011

With regard to Wallagoot Lake

"Good news is that the prawn stocking of the lake has been a huge success, and will more than likely continue. Wallagoot Lake can be fickle at times and again you don't know just when the best time is apart from sticking to the basics and trying from a few nights before and after the new moon from the months of October through till July."

With regard to Merimbula Back Lake.

"Merimbula Back Lake fires up mainly from November through till April and if a good night is encountered anglers using dip nets can expect to catch from 1-3kilos of greasy back and king prawns for a couple of hours work. People use boats and usually try to anchor up near the causeway as all prawns are heading to sea (usually a few nights before and after the new moon) must pass under the bridge on the outgoing tide."

Coalition Abolishes Limits on Redfin in Victoria



I was surprised to receive notification that the Victorian Coalition Government had abolished the recreational bag limit on redfin. (English Perch) I must confess I did not know there was a bag limit on redfin, not that I have pursued this species in recent years, however I certainly spent many hours in my younger days chasing redfin in the lagoons along the Ovens River and in later years fishing for them amongst the snags of Lake Eildon, and netting them in Lake Albacutya in the Mallee. (In those days we

were able to have a netting licence for Lake Albacutya and Lake Hindmarsh.) Looking back at Victorian Recreational Fishing Guides I found there was no bag limit in 2007/8, however there was a bag limit of 30 fish in 2009/10, which would seem to indicate that a bag limit was introduced with the 2008 Regulations.

The Minister, Peter Walsh, indicated that VRFish had supported this change, and that a major reason for the change was to bring the Victorian regulation into line with the NSW regulation. I doubt that anglers will be too concerned with this change, and I would think most Victorian anglers would not in the last few years have been overly conscious of the Victorian bag limit.

There are many arguments for reducing the number of redfin in our waters and I would support these views, however the redfin is still a fish that has provided a starting point for young anglers, and led to a lifetime enjoyment of the sport of fishing. The removal of this regulation will not change that and anglers on Lake Eildon and other waters will enjoy fishing for redfin in the years to come.

By the way, it is now illegal to be in possession of live redfin in NSW, which means redfin cannot be kept alive in a keeper net or live fish well. Your catch in NSW can only be kept dead so it is into the esky rather than the keeper net. NSW Fisheries have indicated concern at what seems the deliberate introduction of redfin into waters that were previously redfin free and the effect on native fish in these waters and they quote the Hawkesbury, Nepean and Lachlan catchments as areas where this has occurred.

A report of the NSW Department of Primary Industry provides the following statement on the effect of redfin predation on other species. "Redfin were recorded as eliminating 20,000 newly released rainbow trout fry from a reservoir in south western Australia in less than 72 hours." This reservoir is not named in the report.

The Economic Impact of Recreational Fishing in Victoria.

In November 1996, Fisheries Victoria appointed the National Institute of Economic and Industry research to undertake an economic evaluation of recreational fishing activities in this state and its contribution to the Victorian economy. Now an Australian wide report on recreational fishing was undertaken in 2001, whilst VRFish engaged Ernst and Young an economics advisory group, to undertake a study in 2009.

The 1996 study provided some interesting figures.

- In the previous year, \$1.037 billion was spent on recreational fishing activities in Victoria.
- The survey suggested that recreational anglers spent \$200 for every kg of fish caught and kept.

- The provision of recreational fishing related goods and services generates 27,000 jobs annually in Victoria.
- The contribution of the recreational fishing sector to the Victorian economy is estimated at \$1.265 billion.
- In the southeast region of the state the contribution to the local economies was \$144 million.

Of course these figures have grown greatly in the intervening years, however I have used this economic study as it was commissioned by Fisheries Victoria and received by the Victorian Government of the day. As far as I am aware it is the only economic study of recreational fishing in this state in the last twenty years initiated by a Government Department.

The VRFish study suggested that 721,000 Victorians participated in recreational fishing in 2008/9 and the direct expenditure on this sport was valued at \$2.9 billion in 2008/9. In other words, the amount spent on recreational fishing activities had doubled since 1996.

When anglers consider the billion-dollar contribution of their sport to the states economy, they must wonder at the need to take \$1.9 million from the Recreational Licence Fund to allow Fisheries Victoria to employ 13 Fisheries Officers.

More Fisheries Officers for Victoria

The following is a summary of an item that appeared in the Fish Fax Newsletter of the 14th September 2011 headed "More Fisheries Officers."

"Ten new Fisheries Officers have been deployed across Victoria. The new recruits will enforce fishing laws and regulations around our rivers, lakes, bays and coastlines. They bring the total number of Fisheries Officers and investigators operating across the state to 77. The ten recruits were chosen from more than 700 applicants. The ten new officers completed their training in July and have been deployed to Mallacoota, Traralgon, Melbourne, Apollo Bay, Horsham and Tatura. Six of the new recruits were funded by recreational fishing licences."



Around the Jetties and I am sure anglers around this state congratulate Fisheries Victoria on the appointment of a further 10 Fisheries Officers.

BUT

The article from the Fish Fax publication does not provide the full story of the financing of Fisheries Officers using funds provided from the licence fees of Recreational anglers. The article notes that six of the Fisheries Officers would be funded using recreational fishing licence fees. The article does not indicate that this will amount to some \$900,000, but more importantly also what is not mentioned is that when the All Waters Recreational Fishing Licence was introduced in July 1999 around \$1m was allocated for the employment of 10 Fisheries Officers. Over the years, the number of officers who can be employed from that original annual allocation has declined until today it employs seven Fisheries Officers. The above article does not indicate that already 7 Fisheries Officers are employed using recreational licence fees and the 6 Officers specified in the article will be in addition to the current 7 employed, using the anglers Recreational Licence fees. Thus, the actual number of Fisheries Officers employed and paid from recreational licence fees is 13, and the amount of funding derived from licence fees to employ these 13 officers is approximately \$1.95m.

This means that 23% of the total annual receipts from licence fees are expended on paying for Fisheries Officers. The Minister has stated in a letter to this publication that in 2009, in a survey conducted by the DPI 4,400 anglers when purchasing a licence had ranked "Enforcing fishing rules" as one of the three topics rated as important to improving fishing in this state. Whilst I think most anglers would agree with the importance of enforcing the rules, what was not asked was "Do you support the use of Recreational Anglers Licence fees to pay for the employment of Fisheries Officers." The use of 23% of the annual receipts from Fisheries Licences to pay for Fisheries Officers means less restocking, less research, and less grants to regional projects as well as less funds available for the buyback of commercial licences. From my discussions with anglers, the employment of additional Fisheries Officers is supported but it is believed that this is a normal charge on the fisheries budget, and the use of licence fees for the purpose of employing Fisheries Officers is difficult to justify when one considers the huge financial contribution that recreational fishing makes to this state.

The Flathead Dilemma for Anglers and Fisheries Victoria



Readers of this newsletter would be aware of the excellent work undertaken by research angler John Harrison on identifying the dusky flathead from the Southern Blue Spot (yank) flathead. The need for this approach arose from the fact that anglers found it almost impossible to identify the dusky flathead from the Eastern blue spot flathead.

Senior Fisheries Managers at a Fisheries conference in Bairnsdale in June agreed that the features identifying dusky flathead and eastern blue spot flathead in the anglers handbook were incorrect. The Australian Museum has taken this matter to a Japanese world authority on flathead at the request of John Harrison. Whilst he defined some variations between the two species of flathead, at the Fisheries meeting it was agreed it would be unrealistic for anglers to apply the “complex criteria used by the Japanese expert to correctly identify the two species.”

Now the dilemma is that we are almost into the next period when Dusky flathead and Southern Blue spot flathead become sought after species in Gippsland waters. (Late October to June) and if the two species, according to the best advice available worldwide, cannot be specifically identified then a problem exists for both anglers and Fisheries Victoria given that the bag limit for dusky flathead is 5 fish with one over 60cms whilst the bag limit for Southern blue spot flathead is 20 fish. This problem would seem to make the enforcement of the regulations associated with dusky flathead almost impossible.

John Harrison provided an answer in Issue 48 July/August “Around the Jetties” which is provided again for consideration.

“My personal view is that there should be one set of regulations applying throughout Victoria. Extensive research from NSW indicates that all large dusky flathead are females and that the majority of females do not reach sexual maturity until 56 cm length. Fisheries Victoria also acknowledge that the numbers of breeding age females in Lake Tyers and in Mallacoota Inlet have been reduced to such an extent that they are on the point of impacting on successful breeding and hence fish stock survival. In fact, it is my understanding that an internal fisheries working party has recently been established to identify strategies, which might protect the few remaining breeding females. In the absence of information to the contrary I would have thought that the breeding patterns of yank flathead could be assumed to be similar to those of the dusky flathead and that therefore the same restrictions to protect the breeding yank females should also apply.”

It would seem that it is now up to Fisheries Victoria to provide anglers with advice to resolve this current dilemma.

Further Artificial Reefs to be Funded



Following the trial of three artificial reefs placed in Port Phillip Bay in 2009, Fisheries Victoria will trial further reef programs to enhance recreational fishing. The furthering of this program was a commitment of the Coalition Government. Recreational Fishing Licence Grants will fund the program. Fisheries Victoria has identified an opportunity to extend reef structures to areas that will enhance shore based angling. Unfortunately the decision has been made to place a further three reefs around Port Phillip Bay and it would appear that estuarine areas such as the Gippsland Lakes will have to wait until an evaluation of these new reefs is provided in 2013.

A statement from Department of Primary Industries suggests, “Depending on the outcome of programs in Port Phillip Bay, the program may be extended to other key Victorian recreational water

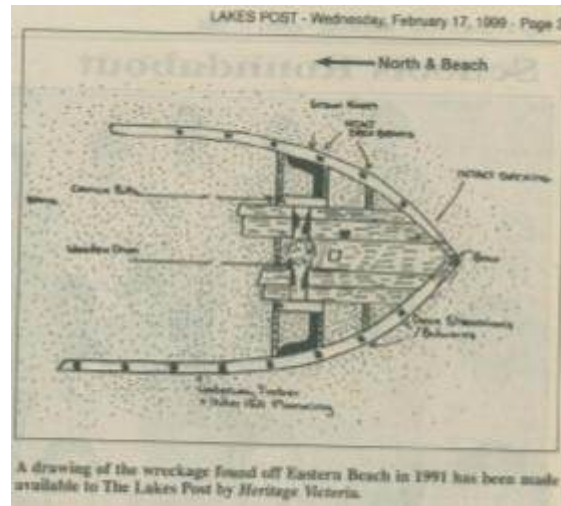
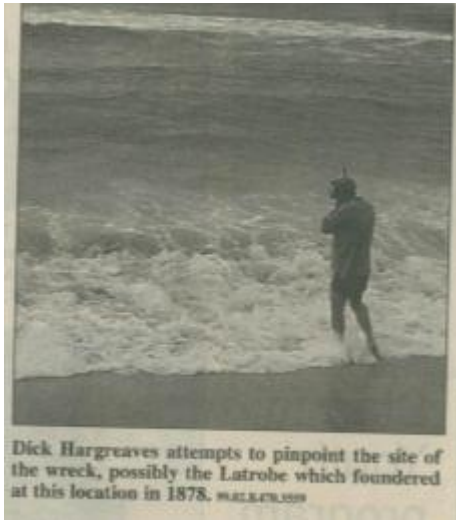
bodies.” It is rather disappointing that expressions of interest were not sought from angling clubs or communities in estuarine locations. It is also difficult to understand why all six artificial reefs are to be located in Port Phillip Bay. At this point of time I am unaware of the allocation of funding for these reefs or the expected location within Port Phillip Bay, nor have I seen any report on the evaluation of the reefs placed in Port Phillip Bay in 2009.

A Surf Fishing Discovery

A week or two ago I had a visit from Dick Hargraves who brought in a scrapbook with an array of wonderful newspaper cuttings, most on fishing. The attached newspaper photo from the scrapbook is interesting in that it is of the wreck of a sailing boat off Lake Tyers the remains of which Dick spotted in 1991 while surf fishing.

According to Heritage Australia, this was the Latrobe, a 37 tonne schooner. Jack Loneys book "Wrecks along the Gippsland Coast." provides the following information. "The schooner Latrobe was lost near Lakes Entrance on the 14th March 1878 when she struck the bar and drifted onto the western spit. Her crew stayed on board overnight as the life boat was washed away and they swam to shore next day taking shelter in a deserted hut."

The steamer Rosedale later pulled the Latrobe over on to her side in an effort to salvage her however, they discovered her back was broken, and the boat was left where it had foundered. The article provided by Dick Hargraves was published in the Lakes Post in February 1999



The Carp Explosion in the North

John Spirason, a reader of Around the Jetties, has sent in some startling photographs sent to him by a cousin from Broken Hill illustrating the explosion in carp numbers in the Menindee area of the Murray Darling Basin.



In the Dimboola Banner of September the 28th, it is suggested that there has been a 4,000% increase in carp numbers in the lower Darling River during the carp-breeding season of 2010/11. It has been suggested by Andreas Glanznig, of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, that if further floods occur or flows are increased in the Murray Darling Basin, then carp will spread and the problem will escalate. In recent times anglers in the north had reported more native fish and less carp in the Murray and tributaries but this may be about to change. The Canberra based Invasive Animals Cooperative centre has been working on a biological control of carp, and preliminary results suggest it can eradicate carp without affecting native fish, however the centre is only half way through the \$52m program with further assessment needing to be undertaken in enclosed waters. It would be interesting to know whether the floods and increased fresh water flows in the rivers entering the Gippsland lakes

have resulted in additional European carp breeding in Gippsland Rivers and to this end, I contacted Keith Bell of K&C Fisheries Sale.

A Local Perspective on Carp

K&C industries are the largest company in Australia specifically catching and processing carp from inland waters and this company is based in Sale. I asked Keith Bell whether there was likely to be a similar explosion of carp numbers in local rivers. Keith stated he didn't believe this would occur given the substantial numbers of carp harvested from the Gippsland Lakes followed by years of drought which had a profound effect on carp numbers bringing them to an all time low within the lakes. According to Keith this in turn means the rivers currently do not have a breeding base of mature carp for such an explosion to occur, however the prospect of an explosion in numbers can increase next year based on current breeding of carp. Keith believes that whilst this can happen it is unlikely that we will see an explosion of carp numbers in local rivers and lakes.

Currently Keith's company is operating in the north and is taking a large tonnage of carp all of which are under 50cms. On some days they catch 15-20 tonnes of carp in areas where they are thick. Keith says that his fishery can make a major impact on carp numbers with information provided on the location of the large schools shown in these photos. These fish if not fished at the stage shown in the photos will then disperse through the system making it more difficult to provide the same impact. Unfortunately, according to Keith information on these large schools of carp such as those shown in the photographs are not always communicated directly, and the opportunity for a major impact on their numbers can be lost in a few days.

A Pen Picture

K&C Fisheries were founded in 1984 and according to an ABC broadcast, since 1984 the company has removed over 27,000 tonnes of carp from southern Australian waters. In the early days, much of the fishing was located in the Gippsland Lakes. (1998/9 650 tonnes of carp were caught in the Gippsland Lakes) With increased salinity and drought, this catch has dramatically declined. K&C Fisheries are licensed to export processed carp and in recent times, the company has had a processing target of 1,000 tonnes per annum with 70% being exported to Europe and the Middle East.

The company has diversified and now little of the carp is wasted with the skin being used for leather, and the roe (eggs) which can be 15% of the bodyweight being exported to Europe as a fish dip, said to be the poor man's caviar. Today Keith Bell provides consultancy services as well running this innovative company.



Carp Skin and Leather Products courtesy of K & C Fisheries website

Despite its reputation in Australia as a noxious fish, carp is the world's highest consumed fish with over 1.2 million tonnes being consumed in China alone.

Record Native Fish Releases in Victoria

The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Mr Peter Walsh announced in a media release on the 28th September that 2 million native fish had been stocked into Victorian Lakes and Rivers. Mr Walsh stated "This is a record: never before have two million fish been released into Victoria's waterways." Mr Walsh said the recovery of drought-affected fisheries had been prioritised with extra funds from recreational licence fishing revenue to boost numbers. About 1 million golden perch were stocked in inland waters with Lake Eildon (200,000) Nagambie Lakes (200,000) Lake Hume (150,000) and a number of other waters receiving over 50,000 fingerlings.

“More than 800,000 Murray cod were released over summer, nearly double the record of this iconic species freshwater species the increase in the Murray cod can largely be attributed to the start of a three year program to stock one million Murray cod into Lake Eildon.”

Mr Walsh reported the release of more than 102,000 Australian bass, 36,000 silver perch and smaller numbers of trout cod and Macquarie perch.

This newsletter congratulates Fisheries Victoria and the Minister on these releases.

I contacted the media person named on the release to establish over what period these releases occurred as no time frame was indicated in the media release, and she informed me that it was over one season, which makes the releases more noteworthy. I also sought to find out specifically what releases were funded from recreational fishing licence revenue. Mr Walsh did indicate that extra funds were drawn from licence revenue to assist drought-affected fisheries but no indication was given on the source of funds for other releases. The media person believed releases were funded from anglers recreational licence fees and Fisheries budget but stated she would check that matter and get back to me to confirm the source of the expenditure, however that has not occurred.

It is notable that the only species released in Gippsland was the Australian bass. Perhaps it is time to examine other species such as estuary perch for release in the southern rivers that connect with estuarine lakes and the sea.

I am sure anglers totally applaud the program to stock 1 million cod into Lake Eildon to establish a very special fishery, however many Gippsland anglers would like to see the same vision applied to the Gippsland Lakes in an attempt to restore the fishery of the largest estuary in Victoria to its former greatness.

Protection of Spawning Fish near River mouths

A commitment of the Coalition Government prior to the election was **“working with recreational and commercial fishers to implement measures to protect spawning fish stocks at river mouths.”** No information has been provided as to how or when this commitment will be undertaken. Currently black bream are in the rivers of the Gippsland Lakes to spawn having entered the rivers through the nets set 400 metres from the river mouths and in areas like The Cut on the Mitchell which provides another entry into the Mitchell River. (This would hopefully be included in any discussion on the protection of spawning fish.)

It will be interesting to see Fisheries Victoria working with the commercial fishers and recreational anglers to come up with a workable scheme to implement this commitment, given that the commercial fishers have boycotted any meeting with recreational anglers at any Fisheries Victoria Gippsland Lakes Fisheries Assessment days, and that has been the situation for the last five years.

In addition to the lack of communication between recreational anglers and commercial fishers it needs to be recognised that only ten commercial netters fish the Gippsland Lakes with a gross total income less than \$1m (excluding carp receipts) whilst the recreational anglers who come to the Gippsland Lakes fishing, according to the Recreational Fishing Survey of 2000/2001 total over 48,000, and in 1998 these anglers brought a financial contribution in excess of \$144m. (The Economic Impact of Recreational Fishing in Victoria July 1997.) Of course the figures for the number of recreational anglers and their financial impact on the region may have almost doubled in the intervening decade, whilst the numbers of commercial fishers have declined in the same period by 60%.

The problem that will be faced with regard to protecting spawning fish at the river mouths, will be the demands of ten commercial fishers who have their greatest commercial success whenever a freshwater flow occurs forcing bream from the rivers, and when fish move into rivers to spawn, and the demands of the thousands of recreational anglers who travel to this region in most cases specifically fishing for black bream in the Gippsland Lakes. Added to this is the dramatic decline in black bream stocks since 1996.

Resolution of this commitment will not be easy, and it can be readily understood why no action has been taken on this commitment despite a media release indicating it was a project that had been funded in the 2011/12 budget. (May 2011)

A Further Commitment

Another project announced as being funded in the same media release was the intent to **“investigate opportunities to stock black bream and estuary perch in the Anglesea River, subject to the scientific review of the estuary.”**

This project may be of some interest to Gippsland Lakes anglers given the declining bream stocks of the Gippsland Lakes and the urging of recreational anglers for the stocking of estuary perch in waters such as Lake Tyers. Currently it would seem that there are no hatcheries in Victoria producing either black bream or estuary perch although the Wartook Native Fish Hatchery in the Grampians has at times advertised the availability of estuary perch fingerlings.



The research paper “Marine Stocking in Victoria 2010,” prepared for Fisheries Victoria by Dr Matt Taylor recommends no stocking of any species in the Anglesea River Estuary. In his report on this estuary Taylor states due to long periods of closure and the presence of sulphur soils in the catchment water quality issues occur that lead to fish kills every few years, and as well the estuary is shallow without a well defined channel. It would seem unlikely given this report that a restocking of the Anglesea River Estuary would be likely. In 2010 there were multiple fish kills in this estuary. (Picture Left)

A Reel Coffee Morning

I recently had a cup of coffee and a yarn with one of our readers John Delzoppo a former member of the Victorian Parliament. Readers may remember that John was instrumental in providing information on the original Inland Angling Licence and when it was introduced. Readers may remember that it was established that the Inland Angling Licence was introduced in 1950 after research by Robert Krix and Natalie Pearson of Fisheries Victoria, and then John Delzoppo added to the information on licences with a trout licence from his collection dated 1935, and a copy of that licence was printed for anglers in issue 23 of Around the Jetties in March 2009.

On this morning over coffee, John produced two antique fishing reels as well as some wonderful old books on fishing from his bag. One of the reels was an Eildon Spinning Reel, made by H.R. Bain of Melbourne and this was similar in working to modern spinning reels.



The Eildon Reel
on the left

and

The Loncast Reel
on the right



I later looked for information on this reel and found an advertisement in the Gippsland Times of Monday September 9th 1946 for Len Robinsons Sports Depot in Sale offering the Eildon Spinning Reel for 11 pound two and nine pence. This was a very substantial sum at that time. This reel represented a time when local industries produced fishing reels and was before the mass of imports from overseas countries destroyed the Australian fishing reel industry, which saw reels such as the Eildon and Crouch no longer produced in this country.

Another most interesting reel that John produced was a reel that I had never seen previously. This was a Loncast, an S.E. Cooke Product made in England. A small reel it seemed to work on the same basis as the Alvey reel. (An Australian reel first produced in 1920.) The face of the small reel turned to allow casting and was turned back to retrieve. It seemed a wonderfully simple procedure with little that could go wrong, and one can only wonder why this design was not further developed. In London Antique Auctions this reel is in demand.

We spent several hours looking at old books and I had the pleasure of examining a beautiful Hardy deluxe split cane fly fishing rod in as new condition that John produced from his rod case. A couple of hours seemed to fly as a couple of old fishermen talked of names like Dunbavin Butcher, Lance Wedlich, and Wing Commander L.J.Wackett and others who had crossed our paths personally or in books we had both read on fishing.

What was obvious was the need for anglers to hang on to those old reels and gear as a basis for anglers of the future to look at the historical base of fishing in this state, plus you just might be surprised at the value of some of the old gear in your shed. This was a memorable coffee morning.

As reported in issue 28 of Around the Jetties the Crouch Reel Company of Dunolly was bought out in 1962, and cheap imported reels replaced most of the Australian industry. Today Crouch reels in mint condition have sold for up to \$800. John had a Crouch reel still in its original box.

Dusky Flathead Fishing News

As most flathead anglers know the season for this species generally commences when the water starts to warm up after winter. I normally start specifically fishing for dusky flathead in the first week of November, however I have started to receive reports of dusky flathead being caught in Lake Tyers and the movement of the species into the main lake. Almost all are being taken on lures, as live mullet are very scarce, and it is unlikely they will be available in numbers until winds decline and the water warms.

As far as the Gippsland Lakes are concerned I have had no reports of catches of dusky flathead or southern blue spot flathead. I expect that the numbers of flathead taken by recreational anglers in the Gippsland Lakes will be down this year and the scarcity of this species will be reflected in the commercial catch statistics when they are released and the decline in the statistics over the last four years will continue.

Recreational anglers fishing the Gippsland Lakes have difficulty given the bag limit they operate under, understanding how commercial netters have no bag limit and can market all the dusky flathead they can net with no control on the size of the catch. Of course another problem is the 27cm size limit when research in NSW indicates dusky flathead do not spawn until they are 36cms in length and full spawning occurs when this species reaches 56cms. This means that the regulations in Victoria have little influence on maintaining stocks of this species. Recreational anglers have urged Fisheries Victoria to consider an urgent increase in the minimum legal size to at least 36cms, however authorities have taken no action.

Of continuing concern is the decline in the general size of dusky flathead caught and this decline has been most evident in Lake Tyers and Mallacoota, which again is an indication of developing problems in this species. (Any statistics for the Gippsland Lakes are invalid due to the commercial netting of the species) Today it is rare for anglers to catch dusky flathead over 60cms, whilst a few years ago this was quite a common size to catch, in addition most committed anglers would catch numbers of dusky flathead over 10lb in each season. Last year I caught and released only one flathead over the magical 10lb and this was the experience of most regular dusky flathead anglers.

Today many anglers are taking positive action by releasing dusky flathead over 55cms as they are almost all female and will be the basis of the future spawning of the species.

I find it interesting that most anglers I talk also do not keep dusky flathead under 36-38cms, and this seems to indicate a move by dusky flathead anglers to self regulate their catches, given the lack of movement by Fisheries Victoria in this area.

To our readers who fish for estuarine flathead, good luck for the new season.

Odd Bits

Barramundi at Hazelwood

In July 2010 this publication reported on the approval by Fisheries Victoria's of the stocking of the Hazelwood Pondage with Barramundi and it would seem that they were prepared to allow the stocking to proceed subject to the landowner International Powers approval. The Future Fish Foundation was, we believe, negotiating with International Power. As there has been no announcements or publicity since July 2010 one can only presume no agreement has been reached between the bodies concerned. In issue 34 June 2010 The Public Affairs Officer stated to this publication that the owners of the pondage International Power would make any decision to stock the pondage and not Fisheries Victoria, so the matter of stocking would seem to be firmly in the hands of International Power Hazelwood.

Trout Opening and Illegal Bait

A number of men will face court according to a Fisheries Media release for using fish eggs as bait on the opening weekend of the trout season in North East Victoria. (No names were provided in the release.) No other information was provided other than to say the opening weekend was a success.

Recreational Bait Nets in Tamboon and Sydenham Inlets

Travis Dowling Director of Fisheries Management has indicated that it is the intention of Fisheries Victoria to continue to prohibit the use of recreational bait nets in Tamboon Inlet and Sydenham Inlet. These waters have historically been closed to the use of bait nets and the wording of the prohibition is being examined to prevent any ambiguity. It is hoped this prohibition will become a regulation in the future replacing the current use of an annual Fisheries Notice. For recreational anglers bait nets are out in these waters.

Clamping Down on Litter

The Director of the Environment Protection Authority has said that the public reporting program of the EPA has resulted in 14,186 fines being issued across Victoria. This program allowed members of the public to report littering from motor vehicles and the majority of these have been throwing cigarette butts from cars. Fines for littering from a motor vehicle are up to \$244 for a lit cigarette or a maximum fine of \$4,885 if dealt with in court. Hopefully there will be increasing emphasis on littering our riverbanks. I am aware of a number of anglers who have plastic bags in their vehicles and clean up the area where they are fishing after others have left litter.

Flesh Eating Worms in Bream

In July Max Smith brought to my attention a report of a couple fishing in Western Australia who caught and ate a bream only to later find that they were infected with a flesh-eating worm. I wrote to WA Fisheries seeking information on this incident, however to date I have received no reply. The fish was caught in the Calder River and I wonder whether this is too far north for black bream and whether it might be another species of fish. The incident was reported on the radio and on the web. Both anglers were treated with antibiotics in Victoria and both fully recovered. Medical journals reported this incident.

Diary Program to Continue

The Fishing Diary program is now in its 15th year of operation and it will continue in Anderson Inlet, Mallacoota Inlet, Lake Tyers, Glenelg Estuary, Hopkins River Estuary, and the Kiewa River in the coming year funded from the Recreational Fishing Licence grant program. To date 206 anglers have undertaken 18,000 fishing trips surveying fishing populations, whilst 90 research anglers have undertaken 6,000 trips and provided 56,000 capture records. Bob McNeil who regularly contributes to this magazine is a diary angler, whilst John Harrison who also contributes is a research angler. (John did the outstanding work on the problems associated with the identification of dusky flathead.) Both anglers operate in Lake Tyers and provide an enormous amount of information to Fisheries Victoria on this special local water.

If any reader would like to get involved in this program contact Pam Oliverio at the Fisheries Research Branch on 03 5258 0111.

[This is a great program that deserves angler support.](#)

Proposed Marine Safety Changes in Victoria

Marine safety regulations are currently under review in Victoria and this is causing considerable concern. The chance to contribute to this discussion is passed however it has been very difficult to get a clear idea of the changes proposed in the mass of material. The Boating Industry Association of Victoria has expressed serious concern at some of the proposed regulation changes. Information is available on the BIAV website www.biavic.com.au.

This website suggests that costs of obtaining a boating licence will rise dramatically and also suggests a 500% increase in fines, although it is hard to determine what specific offences are included in this suggested increase. I am surprised that more information has not been made available to boat owners on the proposed changes.

Recreational Fishing Boats in Victoria

The 2001 National Survey of Recreational Fishing found that in 2000, there were 511,000 recreational fishing boats in Australia valued at \$3.3 billion. Most were between 4 and 5 metres in length and kept on a trailer, and about half of these vessels were equipped with a depth sounder. In 2011, the Boating Industry Association of Victoria stated the number of recreational fishing boats in this state was 132,000. Bob Pearce of editor of Recreational fishing and Trailer Boat Owners newsletter suggested the value of Victorian Recreational fishing boats would be approximately \$2 billion with most boats valued between \$10,000 and \$20,000; evidence again of the contribution of recreational angling to Victoria's economy.

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the December issue. We hope you enjoy the 51st 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**