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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“Without doubt the greatest triumph in the science of acclimatisation the world has yet seen has been achieved by these colonies. At the ice-house in Franklin St. on Saturday last 7th May was born a veritable salmon. We shall hardly render ourselves obnoxious to a charge of irreverence if we say that no more important birth has taken place in the colonies.”

The Argus Newspaper 9th May 1864 on the hatching of the first salmon in Victoria

Editorial

This edition of Around the Jetties features a number of items of a historical nature and I thank readers who have contributed to these items. Of course many anglers are still greatly concerned at the Future Fisheries Strategy, and the fact that decisions are likely to be made without adequate research or consultation. Little can be done about that, however it is worthwhile remembering that changes will need to be legislated in our state Parliament, so it might be a good idea for anglers to send their submissions to local parliamentarians so they get an indication of the recreational anglers reaction to the current proposals. I have had several readers indicate a similar strategy was introduced in Western Australia, and this resulted in anglers paying for fish caught, however I have not been able to obtain any firm details. I understand it was removed and of course there is some evidence that a similar approach in the USA drew massive protests of recreational anglers. It would seem of some importance for Fisheries Victoria to indicate where a similar strategy has been introduced and the reaction of anglers and commercial fishers.

Future Fisheries Strategy Proposals for Reform

An Extraordinary State Council Meeting of VRFish will take place on February 18th to discuss this document. Anthony Hurst, Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, will attend the meeting in the morning to answer questions, and hopefully, a statement outlining the attitude of the Peak body of recreational anglers to the somewhat radical proposals in this document will be published soon after and given the widest coverage. At the time of writing this newsletter, no information has come from VRFish to the anglers of the state. I have no doubt at this time 95% of recreational anglers have not heard of the Futures document and the proposals contained within it. Whilst it is recognised that the catch of the commercial sector can be calculated there is no indication of how the recreational catch can be determined other than the statement of the Director of Fisheries Management Travis Dowling that, “our boat ramp surveys give us a bit of a handle on how many fish are coming out from the recreational sector.” I cannot believe this is the approach of Fisheries Victoria to determining the catch of over 700,000 recreational anglers. As well as the insurmountable problem of determining the recreational catch, no information is supplied at all as to how the indigenous sector catch is to

be determined, other than to indicate consultation will take place on the provision of customary fishing rights to the indigenous sector. I find the lack of information on the most basic requirement for this strategy, that is determining the current catch of the sectors, undermines the entire strategy and for that reason alone, anglers should examine very closely their attitude to this document.

As a final comment, two interesting matters associated with the “Proposals for Reform,” should be given some thought by anglers.

Firstly, I feel sure the document prepares the ground for an increase in angling costs through an increased licence or other approach. The document acknowledges the contribution to fisheries costs through the current licence but adds, “albeit partial contribution,” which in itself seems to suggest a greater contribution should be considered, given Fisheries acknowledge, “the alternative is that the cost of fisheries management are paid for from general taxation.” The possibility of cost increases becomes even more likely when the document indicates that the current funding does not enable “thorough and ongoing estimation of recreational catches or assessment of fish stocks for popular recreational fisheries such as snapper, King George whiting or black bream.” This is priority research needing to be undertaken on the three key recreational species and for which no funds currently exist. I would think only one conclusion could be drawn and that is an increase in funds to carry out this urgent research. The document specifies that Fisheries would work closely with the recreational sector to “**review the contribution made by recreational anglers to cost recovery.**”

A final thought. Costs do not decrease, they never do, they just rise and so will angler costs under the cost recovery in this strategy.

The other aspect worth reflecting on is the attachment of compliance as part of management, with compliance basically being the cost of employing Fisheries Officers. When the General Angling Licence was introduced, one of the areas of expenditure was the cost of employing ten Fisheries Officers and that move was opposed by many anglers but supported by VRFish at that time. I understand VRFish is now questioning this use of licence funds. The cost was approximately \$1m to employ ten Fisheries Officers, however some ten years later that same \$1m only employed seven Officers due to inflation cost increases etc. Fisheries Victoria then sought additional funds from the Fisheries Licence Trust Fund to employ a further 6 Officers and that was approved and recommended to the Minister. The cost of now employing 13 Fisheries Officers paid for from angler licence fees is \$1.9m or 20% of the total receipts annually from the General Angling Licence. It now seems established policy that anglers will pay for the policing of their sport or compliance, **but to what degree** is the question that remains. Given that there are some 66 Fisheries Officers, and if they were all to be funded under cost recovery, from anglers, it would be a charge of some \$24m. The precedent has been set and nowhere in the “Futures Proposal” does it suggest that only a percentage of compliance costs would be charged to anglers. Given the recent history of the introduction of compliance costs without real consultation anglers could wonder at what part of the cost of compliance they will have to meet. The current Governments commitment prior to the recent election to “reinvest all revenue raised from fisheries licences back into the recreational fishing industry” has seen the inclusion of compliance, as part of the fishing industry. I would think this matter needs clarification before negotiations proceed very much further.

One could raise many more issues associated with this document, and in some ways what is left unsaid provides the most disturbing aspect of this 31-page document

Whilst in America

“Plans set for March national fishing rally in DC.

Commercial and recreational fishing interests today announced plans for a March 21st mass demonstration at the US Capital in Washington DC to energise the push for amending the law that directs regulation of America’s fisheries, a little more than two years after the 2010 “United We Fish Rally” turned up the national heat on regulatory and enforcement issues.

The most hotly disputed policy is the administration’s effort to transform fishermen’s catch into tradeable commodities through an allocation of catch shares.”

Thanks to Trevor Buck (VRFish Board) for this information provided independent of the Board

“First-Ever Large Scale Estuary Perch Stocking in Victoria.”

This was the heading of a media Release on the 11th January from the Minister the Hon. Peter Walsh indicating that Lake Bolac in the Western District had been stocked with 7,000 estuary perch fingerlings.

(Photo of the Minister releasing small perch into Lake Bolac)

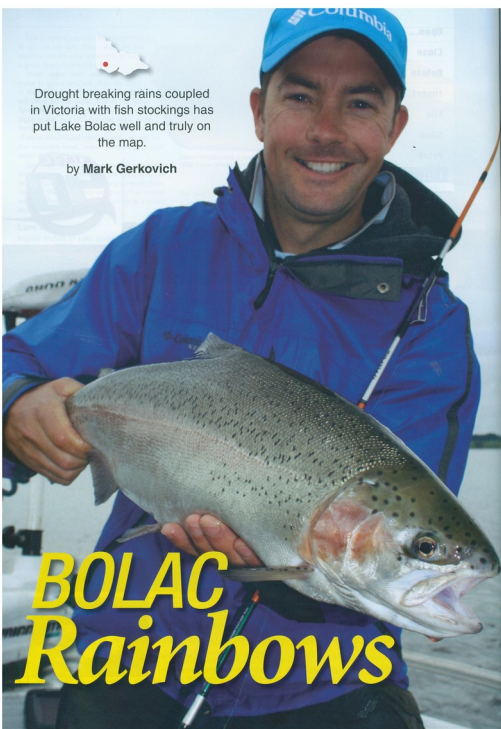


The press release also came up with an interesting concept when it added the heading “**Lake Bolac receives the barramundi of the south.**” Fisheries Victoria is to be congratulated on this stocking however it is acknowledged that a previous stocking of 2000 fingerlings took place in 2000 in Lake Hamilton, and this was not successful.

Mr Walsh indicated that in November last year “some of Victoria’s best estuary perch anglers caught 31 ripe broodfish from the Hopkins River” and this broodstock were taken by chartered aeroplane to a leading bass farmer in NSW, which led to a successful spawning and the growing of larvae in saline plankton ponds. It is thought the Narooma hatchery, which has been the source of previous purchases of bass fingerlings for Victorian waters, was the supplier of the estuary perch fingerlings. This introduction followed advice from the Translocation Committee 25th February 2009, which was accepted by the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria that Lake Bolac be stocked with estuary perch when the lake recovers from the 2009 drought conditions and perch become available.

This is a notable achievement that may have long term benefits for other areas of the state, however it is unfortunate that a TAFE fish breeding facility at Bullock Island, Lakes Entrance has not been capable of providing fingerlings for Victorian waters such as bass, estuary perch and black bream

Readers will recall that black bream were successfully bred at the Lakes Entrance TAFE facility and then 30,000 were euthenised and previous to that unfortunate episode, bass were successfully bred but were lost with the parent broodfish when a water problem was thought to have killed all the fingerlings and broodstock. Some publicity was given to this project however the source and amount of funding invested in the project was, I believe, never publicly released, although I understand Fisheries Victoria, the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, TAFE and RMIT amongst others contributed to this project. I have been informed that Bullock Island facility is now in a state of disrepair, and that considerable expense would be needed for it to be used successfully in the future.



The Minister stated in his Media Release that, “today’s fish stocking event is an historic occasion because very few estuary perch have been successfully bred, and used to create a new recreational fishery.” The Minister is right in noting the importance of this event, however, the release of these fingerlings into Lake Bolac does create some questions that have not been answered in the Media release or by Fisheries Victoria.

In Issue 51 there was a report on the excellent fishing for rainbow trout in Lake Bolac. The lake had been stocked as part of drought recovery in December 2010 with 5000 trout fingerlings and twelve months later (November 2011) these fish according to verified reports were between 1.5kgs(3lbs) and 3.5kgs(7lbs).

It is also worth remembering that Steve Cooper in the Weekly Times described the rainbow trout fishing in Bolac “as the hottest bite in the south west.”

I wonder whether estuary perch fingerlings might provide a further boost to the diet of these rainbow trout, and remembering the lake has almost no snag or wooden debris protection for the fingerlings. This will make this stocking a most interesting event.

Thanks to Mark Gerkovich and Freshwater Fishing Magazine for this wonderful photo of a Lake Bolac Rainbow

Another aspect of this historic event that has not been mentioned is that the estuary perch are most unlikely to breed in Lake Bolac, as research indicates that breeding of this species takes place “in the lower reaches of estuaries in salt water at temperatures of 14-16degrees.” (A Guide to Freshwater Fish of Victoria.) This means that this fishery is a “put and take” fishery with expensive restocking needed to maintain the fishery if these valuable estuary perch fingerlings survive the marauding rainbow trout.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this announcement is that the release of these fingerlings opens the possibility of the stocking of this species in waters in East Gippsland that once had a substantial estuary perch population. This publication has long urged stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers with its arms that provide wonderful cover for the species with endless snags, and the prospect of the fish breeding in these waters. This lake has also a history of supporting this species in the past and records of considerable commercial catches of the species in the 1980’s are available and an odd recent catch of the species by perch anglers has been recorded in a previous issue of this publication.



(Photo of Robert Harvey with 46cm Lake Tyers Estuary Perch- featured in Issue 48 July August Edition)

It is also worth considering that the Tambo River has long had a small population of estuary perch, and with the many thousand of dollars expended on returning woody debris to the river there may now be a habitat that could support a stocking of estuary perch, which would in turn have access to salt water estuaries to spawn. The same argument could be advanced to improve the stocks of estuary perch in the Mitchell and Nicholson Rivers.

(This of course would only work if spawning fish were protected from commercial netting at the mouth of rivers. This was a commitment of the current Government prior

to the 2010 election.)

Finally when the Lake Tyers Management Plan was being developed 2006/7 several recreational angler submissions sought the stocking of this water with estuary perch. In the summary of responses to the submissions of anglers was the following statement from Fisheries Victoria. **“Feedback from recreational fishers indicated that estuary perch is currently not amongst the most popular target species in Lake Tyers. The limited resources for Lake Tyers have therefore been focussed on black bream and dusky flathead.”**

***This response came from the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria of the day Dr Peter Appleford and was dated 18/5/2007**

Now the question of why estuary perch is not amongst the most popular target species in Lake Tyers was simply that there were too few estuary perch for anglers to target and this was the reason a stocking of this lake with this species was requested. Makes you wonder at the logic applied by Fisheries Victoria, and of course today estuary perch are still not one of the most popular targeted fish in Lake Tyers because anglers do not target a fish that is an absolute rarity to catch.

- There was a report on the “Bass stocking program for the Snowy” (News Nov 14 2007) in which Graeme Dear executive officer of East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority said the authority was providing a grant for the project, (bass breeding at Lakes Entrance) and that funds were coming from the Victorian Government as part of the Snowy Rehabilitation Initiative.



Diarist Bob McNeill Reports on Lake Tyers Fishing

Bob is a Diary Angler whose diary reports go to Fisheries Victoria and are used in assessing the status of fish stocks.

The following is Bob’s report for the period 15th November 2011 to 13th January 2012, and in that period he fished on 21 occasions generally being on the water by 5.30am on

two mornings a week and fishing until 8.30-9.00am. Bob is a bait angler with his favourite bait being live mullet, which he catches himself.

In the designated period, Bob caught 189 flathead with an average catch of 9 fish each trip which is quite a remarkable return that this angler achieves. A couple of interesting statistics were that only 1 tailor of 40cms was taken, whereas in previous years in a similar period a number of tailor were caught on live mullet. I must add that this has also been my experience and I am yet to catch a single tailor, which may indicate the larger tailor left the estuary when it was open to the sea. Time will tell if this was the case, but there are numbers of small tailor in the lake at present.

Bob only landed 2 bream on live mullet, however the experience of anglers fishing down the arms has been that on most days several bream were included in their catch when using live mullet. Bob confines most of his fishing to a couple of locations in the main lake. A most unusual catch on a small live mullet in this period was a 40cm luderick.

Of particular interest was that only 4 flathead over 60cms were caught with the largest of these being 62cms. (See editors comment) In the latter weeks of the fishing period the number of flathead taken declined and Bob believed this may have been due to a seeming increase in the number of small fish moving, and also a seeming increase in shrimp, crabs and pawns in the lake, in other words the food source had increased.

Bob made a number of observations that included a report of two mulloway being caught in the Cameron's Track area and a number of pinkie snapper of around 30cms being taken in the bottom lake. Bob also observed that the best catches of flathead are taken when there is prolific small fish activity, and I would thoroughly agree with this observation. Bob also observed that a 49cm and a 50cm female dusky flathead that he caught appeared almost ready to spawn.

Of particular interest was the catch of a 46cm male with a tag. I am unaware of tagging taken place in the lake since the death of Peter Spiers in 2010. Would this have been one of the last fish tagged by Peter/ (Peter wrote for Around the Jetties under the pseudonym of The Concerned Angler) this fish was released by Bob and the tag was forwarded to Fisheries Victoria attached to his diary.

As always this report was a thought provoking contribution to this publication.

Editors Comment

The fact that only four dusky flathead of almost 200 or 2% of the dusky flathead caught by Bob McNeill were over 60cms would seem to indicate a very small percentage of mature female fish in the lake and the concerns of anglers at the decreasing general size and the lack of the large fish on which future spawning depends is again evident. This decline was recognised at a Lake Tyers Reference Group meeting in August 2010, when the group "highlighted the urgency of a review of current management arrangements for dusky flathead in Lake Tyers" with particular concern at the sustainability of the stock. Fisheries Victoria were to prepare a report or options paper to consider changes that are likely to be effective in sustaining dusky flathead stocks in this lake. Anglers on the reference Group are unaware of any action being undertaken to meet this requirement, however Fisheries Victoria has called no further meeting since August 2010.

With regards to the spawning dusky flathead of 49 and 50cms that Bob describes. A major study of dusky flathead in NSW in 2008 by Gray and Barnes showed that 50% of male dusky flathead were mature when they were 31cms in length yet for females the length when 50% were mature was 56cms. The research also suggested that approximately 5% of females were mature at 36cms, the NSW minimum length for dusky flathead. This probably means that the flathead that Bob observed in spawning mode were a couple of a very small percentage that spawn early.

The main contribution to the dusky flathead stock comes from females over 60cms and in the NSW study no dusky flathead over 62cms was found to be male. Female dusky flathead live longer and grow bigger than males and would seem to be the key to the future of a dusky flathead fishery. It needs to be remembered the minimum legal size for dusky flathead in Victoria is a small 27cms and recreational anglers have consistently asked for this to be increased. In NSW the dusky flathead size limit was increased from 33cms to 36cms in 2001, and currently there are proposals for a 40cm size limit.

In the late 1990's I would catch probably 6-10 dusky flathead over 10lb annually in Lake Tyers whilst in the last two seasons I have not caught one dusky flathead over 10lbs, and I think this is the general experience of dusky flathead anglers. Anglers continue to await some action from Fisheries Victoria.

As a general comment Victoria has very little research into dusky flathead and for many years they were treated the same as sand flathead with a 20 fish bag limit. The introduction of soft plastics and the effect on the Mallee dusky flathead population of soft plastics caused Fisheries Victoria to introduce the 5 fish bag

limit. Of course there is no bag limit on the commercial catch of dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes and perhaps the small 27cm size limit may be supported by the commercial fishery remembering in 2009 the immediate reduction in the silver trevally size limit at the request of the commercial fishery.

An Historical Gippsland Lakes Boat

I received this wonderful photograph from reader and contributor on a number of issues Norm Elliot. The photo is of the “Rahna” Lawrence Wackett’s boat reputedly the first fibreglass trailer-sailer built in Australia. Wackett built this boat when he was in charge of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fisherman’s Bend, about 1952. No expense was spared on this boat with all fittings stainless steel and copper alloy. Norm’s brother in law sailed the boat and said it was extremely heavy but sailed beautifully. Lawrence Wackett was said to be going to sail the boat around Australia. The whereabouts of the boat is not known today, however someone has a boat that is part of history. Thanks to Norm for the photo and boat information.



Sir James Wackett KBE, DFC, AFC 1896-1982 was widely regarded as the “Father of the Australian aircraft industry.” He was knighted for his services to aviation. Wackett graduated from Duntroon and joined the Australian Flying Corps, flying with distinction in the First World War whilst at the same time designing mountings for a Lewis gun on the wing of his BE2c plane. Wackett was just one of 21 officers who formed the Royal Australian Air Force in 1921. The Wackett story is amazing as he was involved with the design of watercraft in the 1930’s at Cockatoo Island naval Dockyard and commercial planes. He was General Manager of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and saw the introduction of the Wirraway fighter prior to WW2. After the Second World War, he was involved in the introduction of the sabre fighter to Australia and later the French Mirage. What is also of interest is that Lawrence Wackett was a keen angler and wrote two books on fly-fishing. His good friend Sir Hudson Fysh who was associated with the formation of Qantas, served with Wackett in the first war, and was also a keen angler and fishing author writing ‘Around the bend in the stream.’ (1968)

The State of the Gippsland Lakes

Environmental campaigner, Ross Scott, recently sent me information on mercury in the Gippsland Lakes. In 1998 Professor Graham Harris carried out an audit of the Gippsland lakes and in his report stated “the mercury level does require further investigation as the evidence indicates rising mercury levels in fish, and sediment concentrations are approaching alarmingly high levels.” In 2007 seven dolphins are thought to have died from mercury poison, and since 2006 the Gippsland lakes have lost 15 dolphins out of a population of 50 and this is a 30% deathrate of a new species of dolphin which is now being classified as a threatened /endangered species. Researcher Dr Ross Thompson said in a report in 2008 that, “mercury concentrations in 20 live and 8 dolphins that died after becoming stranded, collected over the last two years were measured by Honours student Alissa Monk.” She found that “mercury levels detected are sufficient to cause significant health impacts and were comparable to those found in areas of the world that are considered highly polluted, including the Mediterranean Sea.” Dr Thompson indicated historical gold mining, which up to the 1930’s used mercury in gold extraction, is the likely main source of the heavy metal.

There seems little argument that the mercury level in black bream has risen by at least 40% since the 1980’ and one study by G Fabris and others, suggested the rise could have been as high as 58%. In 1998 the CSIRO conducted an Audit of the Gippsland Lakes and also found a 40% rise in mercury levels in black bream bringing the species close to a level that was dangerous to human health. Gus Fabris conducted a further pilot study into Lake Wellington mercury in 2004, and concluded that a comprehensive survey is needed of the whole lake system.

Ms Dianne Rose, Manager of Marine Science (EPA), wrote to me in 2007 after I had raised the matter of mercury levels in black bream with the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings MLC.

In her letter of response Ms Rose stated that despite the need for a comprehensive survey of the lake system and mercury levels in black bream, “additional funding to undertake the recommended comprehensive investigation of mercury uptake into black bream has not been received as this is not identified as a priority issue in the Regional Catchment Management Plans.”

One thing the Fabris Pilot study did suggest is that flood events are a possible cause of elevated mercury levels in fish, and Ms Rose suggested it might be possible to obtain funds to investigate this given the large scale floods of 2007.

Issue 3 of this publication I listed the actions taken and letters written to get an up to date study into black bream and mercury levels, however the responses and referrals could well have provided the basis for a “Yes Minister” program and as far as I am aware nothing further has been done by any authority.

Meeting on the Health of the Gippsland Lakes

On Tuesday 17th April a public discussion will be held at the Italian Club Bairnsdale, at 7.00pm discussing aspects of the health of the Gippsland lakes. Speakers are Prof. Max Finlayson (Ramsar and the wetlands.) Fionna Warry (Black bream and seagrass.) Chris Healey, (water birds.)

“Odd Bits and More”

A Mornings Hatch

I was fishing with a friend on Lake Tyers below Devils Hole on Saturday 21st of January on what was a quiet morning with almost no baitfish activity and no wind. About 8.30 there suddenly appeared an enormous hatch of small moths in the area, and thousands of these insects surrounded the boat with many settling on the water. In response to this hatch, the water was suddenly disturbed by dozens of fish rising to the surface and daintily sucking in these moths on the water. At the same time eight grey teal moved to within 10 feet of the boat also feeding on the moths, and the surprising thing was that these normally timid duck took no notice of the boat or our actions. We watched this feeding frenzy of fish and ducks for probably fifteen minutes, and then the hatch was gone, the ducks swam off, and the feeding of the fish no longer rippled the water. We had witnessed a rare moment on Lake Tyers that added greatly to the enjoyment of the morning. As far as fish, the morning was the worst mornings fishing I have experienced in the last twelve months

Visit of VRFish CEO.

A small group of anglers met with Christopher Collins CEO of VRFish on Monday the 24th of January to have an informal discussion on the operation of the Lake Tyers Management Plan. General concern was expressed on a number of issues including the seeming lack of any activity to undertake a review of management arrangements for dusky flathead and the possible changes that are likely to be effective for their long-term sustainability. In August 2010 Fisheries Victoria was to seek funding to undertake a study, however nothing further has been heard of this project.

Discussion also took place over the inactivity of the Reference Group for Lake Tyers, which is supposed to meet as required “but not less than once every twelve months.” Since the Management Plan was introduced in 2007 only one meeting had been called by Fisheries Victoria in the five years the plan had been operating and as the plan was to cover ten years this was a matter for considerable concern.

Concern was expressed at the document Future Fisheries Strategies, and Christopher Collins indicated that the VRFish shared this concern and the Board of VRFish would be examining the implications of this document for recreational anglers. Members of the local angling club in this small group informed Christopher Collins that no consultation or information had been supplied to them on the proposal to stock Lake Tyers with eastern king prawns and the approach of local anglers to the stocking of Lake Tyers with estuary perch had been misconstrued by Fisheries Victoria. (See earlier) Christopher Collins undertook to follow up a number of these problems.



I took Christopher out for an early mornings fishing on Lake Tyers on the following day, and he landed a fine black bream and his bag of dusky flathead.

2011/12 Blue Green Algae Bloom

With the recent discussions on the algal bloom in the Gippsland Lakes, I was also reminded of a letter from commercial fisherman, Rob Moorcroft, to Brett Geddes writer on the Gippsland Lakes published in Fishing Monthly for May 2008 where Moorcroft states "I am of the view the longer this algae remains, the better for the bream fishery. I am predicting a spike in bream numbers comparable to the late seventies."

I must say the spike in bream numbers never seemed to eventuate, in fact the opposite was the case, and I have never observed any positive benefit for the fishery from an algal bloom. This statement of Rob Moorcroft would be at variance with the views of almost every angler and scientist, and it is hard to understand the reasoning behind such a statement. Professor Max Harris in a paper in 2006 *describes how the algal blooms of the Gippsland Lakes lead to shading of the seagrasses and ultimate death of seagrass beds, and he notes that it is very difficult for the seagrass to recover. Most anglers realise the relationship of seagrass to the spawning of black bream and the vital food chain for the fish population of the lakes, and of course after the bloom has run its course there are often fish kills that further harm the valuable fish stocks of the Gippsland Lake.

*A Dying Shame -Australian Coastal Freshwater Lakes- Professor Max Harris 2006

An Old Fishing Guide Discovered.

Reader, Nick Fordham, has sent me a scanned copy of the 1963/4 Fishing Guide published by the Victorian Piscatorial Council in conjunction with the Fisheries and Wildlife Department and issued free to every holder of an Inland Angling Licence. This was the property of Nick's grandfather and provides a picture of recreational angling 48 years ago. In 1962/3, 95,000 of these guides were issued to licence holders, and trout production had reached the record figure of 2 million fingerlings. In 2011 560,000 brown and rainbow trout were stocked in Victorian waters however 1.6m native fish were stocked into Victorian waters and this represents a substantial change in focus.

The role of the Piscatorial Council in representing anglers was important and it seems to have been an independent body as shown in the following statement in the Guide-

"The Council seeks to protect the interests of anglers as boat owners and to this end has actively co-operated with the authorities charged by the Victorian Government to co-ordinate a plan mutually acceptable to all interested bodies." This is somewhat different to the current approach of Fisheries Victoria to the Future Fisheries Strategy.

The foreword to the guide has been written by Dunbavin Butcher and the patron of the Piscatorial Council was the Premier of Victoria the Hon. H.E.Bolte, himself a shooter and fisherman.

Of particular interest in the guide are the published minimum lengths of fish. The minimum length for black bream in 1963 was 10.5 inches as compared to the current minimum length of 11 inches or 28cms whilst the flathead minimum was 10 inches or 25.5cms as compared with the current minimum length of 27cms.

The names and addresses of the 20 Fisheries and Wildlife Officers across the state were published in the Guide, and in most cases these officers were well known and worked closely with anglers. As Nick commented the Guide in its approach **"treats anglers as enforcers of the regulations not potential breakers of them,"** and perhaps that is a major change with attitudes today. As a young man, I well remember several of these named Wildlife Officers and recall the respect in which they were held in the community, and the way shooters and anglers worked with these dedicated chaps.

Thanks to Nick for his contribution of the 1963/4 Guide and how it has stirred memories and thoughts. I imagine many of the older readers would have memories of the Wildlife Officers of the 60's and the Piscatorial Council and its role in representing anglers. I would be pleased to hear of those days from any of the older readers.

By the way, it was the Piscatorial Council in 1932 that met with the Premier of the day, Sir Stanley Argyle, to put the case for a fishing or rod licence and by January 1933, all Victorian anglers had to have a trout licence. Anglers fishing for other species did not need a licence and in its first year some 10,000 5 shilling licences were sold. Opposition parliamentarians had a field day calling the licence an "iniquitous proposition" and "back to transportation" and it was suggested it was class legislation.

Estuary Perch Stocking in 2011

The Gippsland Angling Association requested an estuary stocking of Lake Tyers for 2011. The response from Fisheries Victoria was that there “was no commitment to stock estuary perch into Lake Tyers in 2011/12. Estuary perch were not available for stocking and more information is required to understand any decline in stock numbers in this water.” I would have thought given the commercial records of the 1980’s that it would have been relatively easy to obtain information on the decline of this species in this estuary. The same answer exactly is given to the Bemm River Angling Club’s request for a stocking of estuary perch in the Bemm. I am also aware that the decline has been noted over the last 4-5 years and surely the angling club could provide Fisheries Victoria with information to understand the decline. And yes, estuary perch fingerlings are available, only they have been allocated to Lake Bolac as previously described.

Anglers Diary

“Last year a big stock of anglers diaries was issued so that many thousands of anglers could easily provide the correct and detailed information without which it is not possible for Fisheries Officers to place fish to the best advantage for quick and satisfactory results; or to properly manage your fishing waters.”

This is not a report of angler’s diaries today but rather the 1963/4 Fishing Guide was seeking angler input through the diary program of the day.

As was said in the 1963/4 Guide “If you want better fishing in the future, HELP NOW, and encourage your family to do the same.”

Record Trout Caught in Tasmania

A whopping 27lb 7.5oz brown trout was caught by Matty Dayton of Hobart who landed the brown in August 2011. This catch was reported in the Freshwater Fishing Magazine Jan/Feb 2012. He used 6lb mono leader and 4lb braid line and a smelt minnow plastic. This was one of a number of fish over 10lb caught in the Tyenna River since the opening of the trout season. This trout was very close to the all time Australian record, which dates back to 1887 in Tasmania. This will attract anglers to Tasmania in search of that once in a lifetime fish. The picture of the fish in the Freshwater Fishing magazine is amazing.

A Discussion with the Chairman of VRFish



I recently had an interesting discussion with Russell Conway the chairman of VRFish the recreational anglers peak body. Russell indicated that Government generally used the number of fishing licences (260,000 annually) to indicate the number of recreational anglers in Victoria. However, studies undertaken in recent years show there are over 700,000 recreational anglers in Victoria, a large percentage of whom are retirees, and this percentage is likely to increase.

Russell posed the idea of a retiree’s licence of perhaps \$10-\$20 payable upon retirement with all funds derived going towards the General Angling Licence Trust for use in developing fisheries. This would have an

immediate effect of giving a more accurate indication of the number of recreational anglers in the state. I would tend to think retirees might well support such an approach, particularly if they could see the money derived from the “retirees fund” used for programs such as restocking of Victorian waters. I doubt if such a fund would receive great support if the funds were used to employ Fisheries Officers, which has occurred with the current General Angling Licence fees. (Approximately 20% of funds derived from current licence fees or \$1.9m are used to employ 13 Fisheries Officers.)

“Our Fisheries are Very healthy.”

These were the words of Travis Dowling Director of Fisheries Management in Victoria in an ABC interview on the 24th January when discussing the “Futures” document, and he went on to say, “there has been some excellent stewardship and husbandry of those fisheries from all involved in the sector. The recreational anglers are very good at bag and size limits.”

Many black bream and dusky flathead anglers would question the statement of a healthy fishery when applied to the Gippsland Lakes and the fact of “excellent stewardship and husbandry of those fisheries.” Just consider for a moment the massive decline in the commercial black bream catch in the Lakes from an average of over

200 tonnes in the 1980's to the 36 tonnes of 2008/9. Remember in 1996 Fisheries Victoria urgently introduced regulations dropping the recreational bag limit to 5 fish per day in their words "to ensure the conservation of the severely depleted stocks of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes and inflowing rivers." The commercial catch rate when this urgent action was introduced was 87 tonnes, which is double the commercial catch today. The decline was put in context by marine scientist Dr Murray MacDonald, at a public meeting in Bairnsdale where he said, "in a study over the past two years over 1200 recreational anglers were interviewed and approximately 60% had not caught a fish." The survey indicated in the Gippsland Lakes from the 1980's to 1996 the recreational catch rate had dropped 40%* John Strong Fisheries Planning Officer suggested in 1996 that the black bream stocks were close to collapse, and there has been no indication of improvement in the last decade. Commercial fishermen still take fish with no catch limits, and still have their largest catches when flood events occur and spawning black bream are forced from the rivers into nets set within 400 metres of the river mouths. Strict bag limits have been introduced for recreational anglers catches of dusky flathead, but no such limit is applied to the commercial sector. Travis Dowling is right, when he says recreational anglers are very "good at bag and size limits" but they can only wonder why no catch limitation is applied to the commercial fishery. That would be "stewardship and husbandry" of a precious resource and receive widespread support from recreational anglers

Research by Simon Conran and Patrick Coutin of the Victoria Fisheries Research Institute into the 1995 recreational fishery of the Gippsland Lakes indicated a 52% decrease in recreational catch rates between 1982 and 1995, and a 66% decrease in the commercial catch rate for the same period. The following statement summed up the situation "this decline increases the concern for the state of the bream stocks in the Gippsland lakes. Our black bream fishery in the Gippsland Lakes could hardly be considered a "healthy fishery" and the fishery has declined further since that study.

DANGER



Boat Ramp Marine Parade
Lakes Entrance



DANGER



Boat Ramp Shaving Point
Metung

THESE RAMPS ARE DANGEROUS

PETITION

Angler's, boat users and tourists who use the Metung and Marine Parade launching ramps have been aware of the danger created by the smooth concrete finish, and when covered with slime they are incredibly dangerous to users. The Metung ramp has been a danger for a decade and only over the Xmas period we witnessed a middle age woman lose her footing on the Metung ramp and slide with no control down the ramp until totally immersed at the rear of the boat being retrieved. We have regularly seen users slide and lose their footing. Recently Mark Frost of Lakes Entrance Outboards Services backed a boat into the water using his truck, and whilst stationary he got into the boat to test a motor. He was suddenly alarmed to feel the truck and boat trailer sliding back into the water on the slippery ramp. Mark was able to use the boat motor to hold the truck and boat, and he then attempted to retrieve the boat. This was impossible, as the wheels of the truck could not get a grip on the dangerous ramp. Ultimately another vehicle had to be attached to his truck and the truck and boat

on the trailer were retrieved. This was another dangerous situation created by ramps that are poorly designed. As a result of this event Mark Frost has organised a petition to be circulated in the Lakes Entrance, Metung and Bairnsdale area seeking the East Gippsland Shire to take urgent action to rectify the problems at these ramps before someone is seriously injured.

This publication supports this action and I know all boat users will support the petition. For too long we have had to risk falling every time we enter the water when retrieving our boats, and this in particular applies to the older boat users who do not drive directly on to their boat trailer. Keep an eye open for that petition.

In the Beginning

Alfred Dunbavin Butcher is a name associated with fishing the early days of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department in this state, and he is closely associated with Gippsland undertaking the first detailed study on Black bream in the Gippsland Lakes in 1945.

“In 1941 he was appointed the first biologist within the Fisheries and Game department. His first major project was a study of the bream fishery of the Gippsland Lakes. He also became involved with the study of trout. In those early days, his ‘laboratory’ consisted of a small tearoom and sink at the Departments head office at 605 Flinders Street. On the 6th February 1949 his title of Chief Inspector was changed to that of “Director” and research became an increasingly important function of his Department.”

[The above taken from that excellent book “Salmon at the Antipodes” by John Clements a former Fisheries and Wildlife Officer at Ballarat.](#)

Butcher also wrote “Bream Tagging Experiments in East Gippsland April and May 1944” In that study Butcher wrote, “there was no evidence to show that bream moved out of the Gippsland Lakes and fishermen with more than 40 years off experience of netting along the ocean beach close to the entrance have never taken a bream in the open sea.” His 1945 study “Conservation of the Bream Fishery” was Pamphlet No1 of the Fisheries and Game Department. Butcher was involved in the establishment of the Snobs Creek Hatchery in 1946 and by 1960 the hatchery had a capacity for 5,000,000 ova and 2,000,000 yearling trout. The Premier of Victoria, Henry Bolte, officially opened Snobs Creek on the 14th October 1960.

Anglers in Victoria owe a great deal to Alfred Dunbavin Butcher and particularly anglers, who fish the Gippsland Lakes for black bream,

Marine Safety and Lifejackets

Recently water Police have commented on a number of boats with Personal Flotation Devices that had obviously not been cared for, and as such were placing the wearers life at risk. I determined to find out from Marine Safety Melbourne where I could get my PFD serviced and were advised to go the manufacturer. A bit difficult in my case as the PFD was manufactured in the UK. I have found out that Blue Water Marine, 35-37 Slip Road, Paynesville, will service your device, and they would require it for three days. The basic cost of a service is \$25 plus parts. For others with email facilities RFD Australia lists other areas of Victoria where service can be obtained. Just remember police and other Government services have their PFD’s serviced annually, so it might pay to get you flotation device checked.

Next Issue of Around the Jetties

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the March Issue and we aim at ten issues per year. Currently we have a growing number of readers and whilst this is great, it is starting to impose increasing costs. Any readers who are receiving hard copies but could receive Around the Jetties email we would appreciate this greatly. We are now approaching a mailing list of 80 hard copies each issue and the cost of postage and printing to get hard copies to readers is increasing all the time. Your assistance would be appreciated

Contributions- Your photos and contributions to this angling newsletter are most welcome and we look forward to publishing your items of interest. In this issue a number of interesting contributed items are included and they certainly add to the interest of the publication.

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**

JUST ARRIVED. Late Media Release from Minister

Media release

The Hon Peter Walsh MP

Tuesday 14 February 2012

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security
Minister for Water

Fishers urged to contribute to strategy

Agriculture and Food Security Minister Peter Walsh is encouraging those with a love of fishing to provide their ideas on the future of fishing in Victoria by 1 March. Mr Walsh said submissions were being sought as part of the Victorian Coalition Government's Future Fisheries discussion paper.

Agriculture and Food Security Minister Peter Walsh is encouraging those with a love of fishing to provide their ideas on the future of fishing in Victoria by 1 March. Mr Walsh said submissions were being sought as part of the Victorian Coalition Government's Future Fisheries discussion paper. He said the Victorian Government was committed to managing the community's fisheries so:

- we continue to have healthy fish stocks,
- commercial fishers and charter operators can run their businesses with greater confidence,
- recreational fishers can continue to enjoy great fishing, and
- all Victorians can fulfill their cultural traditions, recognising the historic link between fishing and sustaining communities.

"Recreational fishing is worth \$825 million to Victorian each year and creates about 5200 jobs, while commercial fishing was worth \$47 million in 2009-10," Mr Walsh said. "We want to slash red tape and remove any out-dated rules, and to give all fishing sectors the opportunity to take greater involvement in fisheries management. "Most importantly, we want to better protect the rights of commercial and recreational fishers to harvest fish on their traditional fishing grounds within agreed limits." Mr Walsh rejected deliberate misinformation circulating in parts of the fishing community about some of the proposals in the Future Fisheries Strategy discussion paper.

"The proposed strategy is not about marine parks, the Victorian Coalition Government has a clear policy of no new marine parks," Mr Walsh said. "Nor is it about setting individual quotas for recreational fishing. Fish bag and size limits will continue to be used to manage the fishery. "No changes are proposed to the process for allocating Recreational Fishing Licence funds in consultation with the recreational fishing sector."

Senior Department of Primary Industries staff are holding discussions with industry leaders and fishers across the state.

Submissions should be mailed to Future Fisheries Strategy, DPI Fisheries, GPO Box 4440, Melbourne Vic 3001. The discussion paper and a summary information sheet for recreational and commercial fishers are available www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing

Media contact: Stephanie Ryan 0488441 820

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