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# **Around the Jetties**

## **March 2012**

### **Issue No 55**

#### **An Anglers Newsletter**

“As for fish the rivers are teeming with them, but here again a good deal of knowledge is required. In most of the rivers, the Gippsland Perch is to be found and it gives as true sport as any good fish in the rivers of Europe. The lordly salmon the pursuit of which now apparently lies in Norway, since the poisonous mills and print works have driven it out of England, is a game fish and a big one, but the Gippsland Perch can afford as good days fun at fly fishing if one gets among the big ones.”

Our Guide to the Lakes and Rivers of Gippsland  
Glasgow Book House January 1<sup>st</sup> 1886

#### **Editorial**

This edition of Around the Jetties contains a considerable amount of information you would not see in any other publication. I am very conscious that a number of issues we have raised and followed have been answered by Fisheries Victoria who have provided meetings with scientists to give us as recreational anglers a great opportunity of questioning and having our concerns answered. I must say this was consultation at its best, and certainly you will read detailed reports of this consultation in this edition. I took pages of notes over these meetings and I hope my report is accurate and interesting to recreational anglers reading this edition. The opportunity to meet Dr Matt Taylor of Sydney University, and discuss with him our concerns over the stocking of eastern king prawns was especially beneficial to all at the meeting. I would guess some who attended that meeting would still wonder whether the issue of eastern king prawns was the most urgent research need, however that and any other allocation to research will always be a matter for debate. I for the first time became aware that this research into king prawns could provide valuable information relevant to other species, whilst at the same time providing a beneficial fishery for families over the summer period and possible economic benefits to the local area.



I would like to acknowledge the work of Director of Fisheries Management Travis Dowling, left, who organised the Lake Tyers meeting with Parks Vic, the meeting with Dr Matt Taylor and Professor Neal Loneragan from Murdoch University in WA, to discuss the proposed stocking of eastern king prawns in Lake Tyers and the meeting with Simon Conran, Senior Research Scientist with the Victorian Fisheries research branch, for a detailed examination of the current position of dusky flathead in East Gippsland.

## Lake Tyers and Prawn Restocking



### Dr Matt Taylor Explains

Readers would be aware that \$232,000 was allocated to a study to determine whether Lake Tyers could be stocked with prawns and Dr Taylor, a senior lecturer at the University of NSW and also Murdoch University in WA, was asked to undertake this study by Fisheries Victoria. Dr Taylor had previously undertaken an assessment of the possibilities of marine stocking in selected estuaries in Victoria, and Lake Tyers was one of the chosen estuarine waters to be included in this study.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, Dr Taylor led a team that included Professor Neal Loneragan, Professor of Fisheries Science from Murdoch University in WA, and Chris Setio, a PhD student who was actually working on the Tyers project. Greg Liddell a recreational angler from Merimbula, who was involved in the stocking of Wallagoot Lake in NSW was also a member of the team. This high-level team spoke to a group of recreational anglers in Lakes Entrance that included the President and Secretary of the Lake Tyers Angling club.

Dr Taylor spoke of the world movement to marine stocking and the success of the Wallagoot Lake stocking. He pointed out that the original study of Lake Tyers suggested the lake could be stocked with Mulloway, estuary perch or prawns however given the lake with its abundant seagrass would provide ideal habitat it was thought that a stocking program of eastern king prawns would enhance a natural stock of eastern king prawns already in Lake Tyers. Dr Taylor provided an outline of the life of the eastern king prawn stating that prawns from Lakes Entrance have moved as far north as Tweed Heads in Queensland, where they spawn and the larvae then move with the current south looking for estuaries which they enter on the east coast. Recruitment of prawns in Victoria depends on the current off the east coast.

Dr Taylor said that the intermittent opening and closing of the Lake Tyers was a limitation to prawn larvae entry. This is different from Wallagoot Lake, which had been closed for 17 years. Prawns spawn in August and Lake Tyers needs to be open in Sept/Oct to recruit prawns naturally. The study in Lake Tyers at the moment, is identifying the habitat available to determine how many prawns Lake Tyers can support.

If the estuary were to be stocked, prawns would be obtained from the Rocky Point Hatchery in Queensland, which is regarded as a hatchery of high protocols. The prawns would be shipped south by air. Dr Taylor was quite open in saying Lake Tyers was a new experience for his team, given the nature of the lake to be open at times, however they hope to be in a position to be able to stock Lake Tyers in the summer of 2013.

Dependent on habitat it could be a stocking of 3 million annually over three years with an approximate cost of 1.3 cents per prawn or an overall cost of approximately \$60,000 per annum. Dr Taylor made the point that in the event of Lake Tyers opening all prawns do not leave, however the study will include a risk assessment and a cost benefit from the stocking of prawns. It would seem that prawns live for about 14 months after stocking. Of particular interest was that the work being undertaken currently could be relevant when considering stocking other species. An open discussion followed this presentation, and I would think those present would have a new insight to the approach of stocking Lake Tyers with Eastern King Prawns. The question was asked would the current 2 holders of commercial bait licences be allowed to commercially net stocked prawns. Travis Dowling, Director of Fisheries Management and chairman and organiser of the meeting indicated Fisheries Victoria would examine this aspect.

### The Wallagoot Experience- Greg Liddell

**The Photo left shows Chris Setio, releasing prawn larvae into Wallagoot lake**

The Wallagoot experience was very good. Over three years, the lake was stocked with 3 million prawns annually, and this was funded from the NSW Recreational Licence Fund. Whilst the lake had not been open for 17 years, it opened a few days before this



meeting. The prawns introduced to the lake grew to very large sizes with some being 54grms and 30cm in length at 3 months, an increase of weight over 11,000 percent on the 0.0005grms at stocking. Of a night, hundreds of lights could be seen around the lake and all prawns were caught with nets and lights, and he was amazed at the rate of growth of the stocked prawn. He indicated that this stocking gave Wallagoot a new life as, in reality, it had been fished out.

Professor Neal Loneragan spoke of the world move to marine stocking and indicated brown tiger prawns and black bream were being stocked in WA, whilst mulloway and eastern king prawns had been stocked in NSW, and even lobsters in Tasmania. He spoke of the enormous development of aquaculture in China and Japan where millions of tonnes of fish are produced although for food rather than for recreational angling. He spoke in some detail of the stocking of brown tiger prawn and their harvesting in Exmouth Gulf and the increase of the natural stock by 100 tonnes by stocking. He also mentioned that one of the main predators of tiger prawns in Exmouth was the bream.

#### **The final speaker was Chris Setio, a PhD student**

Chris was investigating 15 sites in Lake Tyers for habitat and at the same time looking at possible predators such as bream and flathead. By investigating the stomach contents of sample fish, the level of predation can be determined. As part of his work, Chris is also measuring water quality at the sites. He suggested that his studies would suggest the stocking of Lake Tyers with 3 million prawns would double the amount of prawns already in Lake Tyers.

In the general discussion that followed it was suggested that, the stocking of the estuary with prawns could greatly add to tourism in the area. I believe that this is an experiment in Lake Tyers that has great possibilities. Whilst there is currently no long term commitment to annual stocking, the results of the three years of stocking will provide a guideline for the future in a number of estuaries.

This was a discussion organised by Fisheries Victoria and greatly appreciated by those who attended, and I am sure readers will have like myself, a far greater understanding of this experimental stocking of eastern king prawns, and will look forward to reading of the results. By the way, if prawn stocking takes place in early summer of 2013, you could be catching prawns in March/April of next year.

#### **Dusky Flathead and the Future**

In the afternoon on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March, a meeting was held at Lakes Entrance to discuss the current situation of dusky flathead in Lake Tyers, and to examine the current minimum lengths and bag limits of this important recreational species. Travis Dowling, Director of Fisheries Management for Fisheries Victoria, chaired the discussion.



#### **A presentation on dusky flathead was made by Simon Conran, Senior Scientist with Fisheries Research in Victoria.**

The spread of dusky flathead extends from Cairns to the Gippsland Lakes, and in recent years they have become a highly sought after by recreational anglers. With this increase in angler fishing pressure and the growth of lure fishing specifically targeting dusky flathead, this species has been subjected to ever greater pressure. Anglers in East Gippsland have become aware of a decrease in the numbers of larger fish being caught, and this view has been supported by the work of diary and scientific anglers. It was interesting that Simon Conran quoted recreational angler surveys, which indicated that a majority of anglers want an increase in the legal minimum size of up to 35cms. This has been the view advanced by this publication, on the basis of discussion with anglers.

The presentation showed again the discrepancy of growth rates and maturity of male and female dusky flathead. When 50% of the population is mature female dusksies are 56.7cms in length and the male is 31.7cms in length. The females grow to a considerable size (120cms) whilst the male fish seldom exceeds 50cms. **This means that any dusky taken over 50cms is likely to be a female.** Many anglers believe these fish should

have some protection to provide greater spawning opportunity. A male fish reaches 32cms in just over 1.2 years whilst a female takes 4.5 years to reach that 57cm where 50% of these fish are mature and ready to spawn. Some anglers over the years had suspected that dusky flathead changed their sex and the males became females when they reached around 50cms, however Simon Conran indicated that there was no evidence to support this view, and his statement is supported by NSW research.

A positive is that the dusky flathead can produce between 300,000 and 4 million eggs so that if females are provided with some protection the fishery should be self-generating. Spawning of dusky flathead takes place in January to March and it is thought mature dusky flathead spawn every year and move towards salt water to spawn. After a detailed and wide ranging discussion took place utilizing research material and the findings of the diary and scientific anglers, it was agreed that the **flathead legal minimum size should be increased from 27cms 30cms, and at the same time the maximum size should be reduced to 55cms**, and the bag limit should remain the same. If accepted this would mean the request of anglers for an increase in the minimum size would be met, and steps could be taken to protect the stock by providing some protection to the larger spawning females. This is a recommendation to Fisheries Victoria that seemed to have the unanimous support of this meeting. Recreational anglers in Mallacoota will consider the same questions and look at the research for their area, and their thoughts on this topic will be most interesting.

Simon Conran indicated that the survival rates of hooked and released dusky flathead are quite high and that a mouth hooked flathead has a 96% chance of survival whilst a gut hooked fish has around a 70% chance of survival. Cutting the line rather than attempting to remove the hook of a gut hooked fish increases the chance of survival.

The question was raised in discussion as to whether we can be sure that the flathead caught in Lake Tyers are dusky flathead and not the southern blue spot or yank. Simon reported that the late Peter Spehrs, who many will recall wrote for this anglers newsletter, caught and tagged 5105 dusky flathead in Lake Tyers between 2004 and 2010, and only positively identified one flathead as a blue spot flathead. It was suggested that all flathead caught from Lake Tyers to the border in estuaries should be recognised as dusky flathead.

Evidence suggests that we will have ever greater numbers of anglers coming to Lake Tyers, and it is important that we take steps to ensure this recreational fishery is able to withstand the pressure and continue to provide top fishing. It was thought regulations such as these suggested size limits will help sustain the Lake Tyers dusky flathead fishery into the future.

This was a great example of recreational anglers and Fisheries Victoria working together to achieve a result of benefit to all. I found it interesting to see the discussion on dusky flathead led by our fisheries scientist Simon Conran, and drawing together the NSW research by Gray and Barnes (2008) into dusky flathead, together with the detailed information provided by diary and scientific anglers, and it was on this research that this discussion on dusky flathead in Gippsland waters was based.

I think all who attended would thank Travis Dowling and Simon Conran for bringing this together.

### **Is it Worth It?**

In July 2011, Dawn and I went to Cherry Tree for one of those quiet afternoons fishing, where one can unfold a chair and sit in a spot of beauty for an hour or two with a rod in the water and with the hope of a fish. Cherry Tree is in the bush at the bottom end of the Toorloo Arm of Lake Tyers. It is a spot that abounds with birds, many of which like the bush wren seem totally unafraid and move around you in an inquisitive manner, whilst the beautiful kingfisher darts up the narrow waterway and even on rare occasions disturbs things by sitting for a moment on the rod tip. Most anglers experience a quiet afternoon like this when catching a fish is a bonus, and just enjoying the bush is the real aim of the afternoon.

Parks Vic. had only recently upgraded this area prior to our visit, with a launching area for canoes, logs to sit on and a beautiful barbecue for the use of visitors. As we arrived a family had just finished lunch using the barbecue and were packing up.

We settled back and I did manage to catch a bream of about 33cms, and we did enjoy the day with that winter sun filtering through the trees. It was getting cool about four so we packed up and headed home. Parks had also put a barbecue with picnic tables and car parking at Burnt Bridge some kilometre or so up the Toorloo Arm working with the local Lake Tyers Beach Fishing Club to beautify an area where a bridge had been

damaged and removed. Both these areas provide spots for families and the aged and handicapped anglers to fish in an environment of beauty, and such accessible spots are difficult to find in the Lake Tyers Park.



**Cherry Tree Creek Picnic area**



**Burnt Bridge Facility**

Last week I was at a lunchtime meeting with the local Parks Vic, Regional manager and rangers only to be told both barbecues had been removed due to extensive damage to them by vandals. To damage these steel barbecues on a concrete base heavy tools had been employed and it was suggested a vehicle could have been used with winch to damage them beyond repair. Now in both areas all that remains of this community facility is the concrete block upon which the barbecues were attached.



**As they are now!**

We had been talking at this meeting about providing signage for visiting anglers, to indicate where small boats and canoes might be launched and areas for camping that were available in the Lake Tyers Park. The ranger in charge commented that given the experience at Cherry Tree and Burnt Bridge one can only wonder how long signs would remain in place.

I can imagine that both Parks Vic. and the Lake Tyers Angling Club can only wonder whether working for improvements in facilities is worth the effort, when a few vandals can create such havoc, and it was suggested they had come prepared with equipment to wreck this facility. The old chaps and families who enjoyed these areas can only wonder at the mentality of some in our community.

A real attempt is being made by Fisheries Victoria, Parks Vic. and the Lake Tyers Angling Club to improve access for anglers and others and to provide facilities at Lake Tyers whilst at the same time being aware of the difficulty of obtaining funding. Currently, given funding problems, Parks Vic is wondering should the barbecues be replaced, and would they be subject to similar vandalism. Perhaps the concrete bases will be a reminder of what could have been, in two delightful family areas of this park.

## Local Boat Ramps

Readers will be aware of the issue of dangers associated with the use of local boat ramps at Lakes Entrance and Metung described in the last Around the Jetties, and the petition organised by Marc Frost of Lakes Outboard and supported by this publication.

I received the following email from reader Geoff Trusler on the 27<sup>th</sup> February.



"Regarding your article on dangerous boat ramps in Around the Jetties 54, I witnessed a rather unusual sight at the Shaving Point ramp at Metung last Wednesday after returning from a mornings whiting fishing at the barrier landing.

A fairly large Whelan's tanker was partly submerged on the left side of the ramp. I have no idea what happened, but after reading your article I would assume that the driver had the same problem that Mark Frost had with his truck at Lakes Entrance. The driver had reversed the tanker down the ramp and it just kept going. The water was up to the front wheels of the truck. I think the driver had to go for a swim to get out of his cabin, as when I arrived he was standing on the jetty, soaking wet. There were several onlookers standing on the jetty, many of whom were taking photos."

Thanks to Geoff Trusler for this information and we have been able to get a photograph from an onlooker, and it provides graphic evidence of the danger associated with these ramps.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> March I received a call from Mark Frost indicating East Gippsland Shire had notified him, that both ramps would have urgent temporary repairs immediately and that the ramps would have major structural changes in the near future to overcome the smooth concrete finish and give a grip to vehicles and the public who use these ramps

This publication congratulates East Gippsland Shire on taking this urgent action before a major accident occurred and to Mark Frost of Lakes Outboard for his initiative in marshalling public opinion through the widely supported petition on the subject. I believe there is now no need to present the petition as the East Gippsland Shire immediately recognised the need for action.

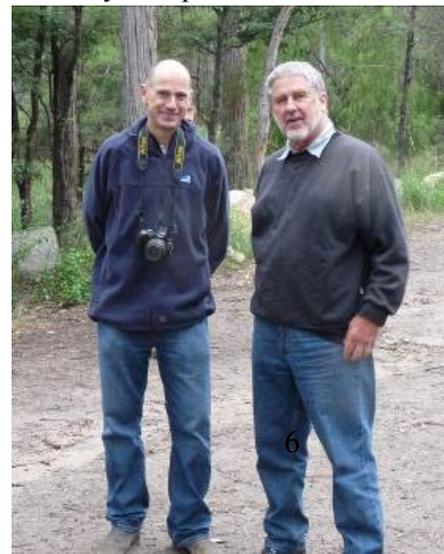
## Fisheries Victoria and Parks Vic. Examine Lake Tyers



On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March a team led by Travis Dowling, Director of Fisheries Management and Will McCutcheon Head Ranger of Parks Vic. (Eastern) accompanied by Tim Bull MLA, and Brian Mottram, Manager of Recreational Fishing Improvements, visited a number of areas on the eastern bank of Lake Tyers looking at possible developments that may take place to improve facilities for anglers.

Left-  
Will McCutcheon and Tim Bull  
Next page- Travis Dowling with  
John Harrison

John Harrison, secretary of Lake Tyers Angling Club, and myself, accompanied this party, as we



were both members of the Lake Tyers Fisheries Reserve Reference Group. This party together with rangers and Fisheries Officers visited a number of areas and examined possible improvements that might be considered. Travis Dowling indicated that some funding might be available from the Governments Recreational Fishing Initiative which is part of the \$16.2 million being invested in recreational fishing over four years.

Areas visited included the Glasshouse, Trident area, Morgan's Track, Cameron's Track, and Ironbark Track. The Glasshouse whilst providing a good camping area had problems with boat launching and was an area of high heritage issues. It was decided because of the special nature of this area further meetings between the parties involved would need to be held in the future. It was concerning to see the damage along the waters edge with deep wheel marks destroying areas of fragile water edge vegetation.

The area that had very close examination was the Trident where launching of light boats already takes place. The possible development of limited camping areas at the Trident was examined, and it was felt this area had potential for further development.

The other tracks such as Cameron's No1 and Morgan's with further work could offer water access for day anglers, and access for the elderly angler was examined at each venue. One of the rangers accompanying this team was Kathryn Mullet who was a Gurnai-Kurnai person and she was able to point out elements of the cultural heritage of the areas examined.

This is a first step in the examination of creating better access and facilities for anglers and other users of Lake Tyers and in the next few weeks Parks Vic and Fisheries Victoria will be getting together to carry this discussion further. I should say to readers that there was great goodwill and a determination to improve facilities for anglers and visitors, and all parties accepted the angler input into discussions on this day, and the input of local member Tim Bull, himself a keen angler, was most valuable. Readers will recall the improvement in tracks and facilities has been an issue canvassed by this publication, and the leadership of John Harrison in taking several groups over these tracks previously has raised considerable interest in the problems that anglers have with accessing Lake Tyers from the eastern shore.

Of course, the issue of tracks into some of these areas may still be a problem, as it would seem that Parks Vic. is struggling for funds to even maintain the current tracks. This is a key issue that will need to be overcome.

### **Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club Seeks Estuary Perch Stocking**

Readers of Around the Jetties would be aware of the interest of this publication in restoring estuary perch to the snag infested Lake Tyers.

Estuary perch, such as this one caught by reader, Matt Leach last year could be the future of Lake Tyers. (Matt tells us this is not a Lake Tyers perch but what a beauty)

In 2009, several of the submissions from anglers, including this publication, urged a stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers, however this only resulted in an amazing statement from the Director of Fisheries Victoria, Dr Peter Appleford, 2007, in response to those submissions that, "the feedback from recreational fishers indicates that estuary perch are not amongst the most popular target species in Lake Tyers." Of course the species was not amongst the most popular target species because they were so few in number that most anglers had never landed an estuary perch in Lake Tyers. This newsletter also reported in Issue 54 that the Gippsland Angling Association had requested had requested an estuary perch stocking for Lake Tyers in 2011.

Again the strange response from Fisheries Victoria that "estuary perch were not available for stocking and more information is required to understand any decline of stock numbers in this water." Fish were available for stocking and there is considerable information on the history of this species in Lake Tyers.

This publication drew the attention of anglers to the 1.5 tonne commercial catch in the early 1980's indicating that there were substantial numbers of estuary perch in Lake Tyers at this time. Dr Matt Taylor in his study Marine Stocking in Victoria 2010, stated there was a "a small interest in estuary perch by anglers fishing in Lake Tyers." I actually asked Dr Taylor the basis of this statement in his study, and he said the information came from a Fisheries Officer.



Now added to the original submissions by anglers and the Gippsland Angling Association, there is a well prepared submission from the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club seeking a stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers. This submission suggests a “a supplementary stocking over, say, a two or three year period to re-establish a viable population.” The writer of this submission John Harrison, Secretary of the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club, states “the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club has consistently argued for stocking of the lake for many years.” The submission also argues that the lake is a suitable environment for a self sustaining perch population given the rocky habitat in the middle reaches of the Nowa Nowa Arm and the extensive fallen timber providing sheltered habitat. An interesting suggestion in this submission is that “should a decision be made to stock Lake Tyers with estuary perch then consideration should be given to marking the fish in order that caught fish can be identified.”

The Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club deserve the congratulations and support of anglers for this submission which adds to the submission of the Gippsland Angling Association. Together they make a powerful argument from the recreational angling clubs of East Gippsland for a stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers, a water that once supported a stock of this species whose decline seems to date from large commercial catches of this species in the 1980’s.

### **Editor**

This submission will go to the Translocation Committee of Fisheries Victoria who will make a recommendation on the restocking of Lake Tyers. In 1989/90 over 7 tons of estuary perch were caught in commercial nets in the Gippsland Lakes and Lake Tyers. The actual amount in Lake Tyers is not indicated just simply a total for these waters. The most recent commercial catch was 2 tonnes in 2007/8 and this came from the Gippsland Lakes. A few years ago I was talking to a local commercial fisherman who fished the Gippsland Lakes and Lake Tyers. I asked him did he ever net estuary perch in Lake Tyers. He answered that he didn’t chase them as he caught more of other species far easier than estuary perch, however he believed he could get a box of estuary perch if he applied himself to that species. Dr Matt Taylor is currently undertaking a study on the movement of estuary perch. This is a problem in the Gippsland lakes as perch move to the lake to spawn according to current research and therefore can be taken by commercial nets at the mouths of rivers.

## **Odd Bits and More**

### **That Trout Again**

In the last Around the Jetties reference was made to the record brown trout caught in Tasmania. This fish was featured in an article in the Freshwater Fishing Magazine for January/February 2012. Now reader and contributor Geoff Trusler sent a couple of pictures of this fish that he obtained from Fishnet member Tyenna Dave and we are pleased to be able to give readers a glimpse of this wonderful fish. Some statistics are that the fish was caught on 4lb braid with a 6lb mono leader and using a 3” smelt minnow squidgy. The fish weighed 27lb 7 oz.



Now the Freshwater Fishing magazine states the biggest trout ever caught in Australia was a 29lb brown trout caught in the Huon River by Governor Hamilton in 1887. However I have read in that wonderful book “Salmon at the Antipodes” that in 1888 Sir Thomas Brady, Chief inspector of Irish Fisheries in Tasmania after accompanying ova shipped to Tasmania commented on a 39 inch 28lb salmon, caught by his Excellency Sir Robert Hamilton saying “a true salmon...that no practical man who would see the fish would ever think of calling it but a salmon.” Perhaps after all the catch of Governor Hamilton may not have been an Australian record. Was it a salmon rather than a brown trout? Perhaps some of our trout fishing readers might explore this matter and add their views to this matter.

### **The Humble Toadfish Can Cause Trouble**



I have had a report from a reader that three anglers had been apprehended by a Fisheries Officer with a couple of toadfish they had caught, which were left on the bank in their close vicinity. According to my information each angler was fined \$130. No warning was given to these anglers two of

whom were ladies. This report was accompanied with the names of those fined and the circumstances in which they found themselves and as a result I have little doubt as to the accuracy of my information. I contacted Fisheries Victoria at Lakes Entrance and whilst they were unaware of such fines being applied, I was informed that it was the duty of the angler to return unwanted fish to the water in an undamaged condition, and this was part of the current regulations. I inquired whether this advice was currently in the handbook and was referred to page 20 of the 2012 Recreational Fisheries Guide, where the following is stated.

**"You are obliged to return any fish that you do not intend to keep to the water immediately. Unwanted fish must be returned to the water with the least possible damage. This does not apply to \*fish declared noxious or \* live baitfish.**

**While toadfish, rays and native seastars are not desired species to keep, they must be returned to the water unharmed."**

In the case quoted, one of those fined was fishing at Point Ricardo for mullet and had left two toadfish on the beach rather than returning them to the water, and the other two instances were similar although they occurred on the Marlo estuary. Now as my informant said "many other anglers would have been guilty of this offence in a lifetime of fishing." Recreational anglers should be aware of the prosecution of anglers who have not returned toadfish to the water.

#### **Editor.**

My first reaction is, haven't Fisheries Officers got more important work than this, and perhaps a warning might have been far more appropriate than imposing a fine. If Fisheries Victoria intends to pursue such actions, perhaps a warning in the Fishing Guide that anglers face fines by not returning unwanted fish to the water, even if only a toadfish would seem a reasonable initial approach.

#### **Artificial Reefs a Possibility the Gippsland Lakes.**

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> The Hon. Peter Walsh the minister responsible, announced the construction of a \$1 million oceanic reef structure off the coast of Anglesea and Torquay, "the first offshore reef structure in the state." Mr Walsh stated "this is a fantastic example of recreational fishing licence revenue being put straight back into projects that improve fishing in Victorian waters" and few anglers would disagree with that view. This large structure is to be deployed in two years time.

Of great importance for regional anglers and in particular Gippsland anglers is the ministers statement indicating another eight recreational fishing reefs, in addition to the three already constructed in Port Phillip Bay, would be constructed over the next four years using \$900,000 from the governments Recreational Fishing Initiative.

Currently locations such as the Gippsland Lakes, Western Port and Port Phillip Bay are being assessed. Currently three pier-based reefs are also being planned for Port Phillip Bay using \$400,000 of fishing licence revenue.

#### **Editor**

This newsletter has long argued that fishing reefs should be tried in regional areas and given the importance and size of the Gippsland lakes it would seem several reefs in differing environments should be built and the results of reefs in estuarine waters assessed. Readers would be aware of the artificial reef constructed by jetty owner David Strange in Metung under his jetty,

I have also been informed that Fisheries Victoria has taken an interest in this local effort to establish a reef, and the positive results obtained with congregating luderick and bream in particular. Considerable local interest exists in the possibility of reef construction, and I have had discussions with a number of very keen Metung folk who support such a development. When one thinks about such a proposal, its hard to think of a better spot to trial an artificial reef that can be used by bank anglers and perhaps a second reef in recreational fishing waters that can be accessed by boat. This is a proposal of this government that will attract interest and perhaps our Gippsland Lakes need a bit of a boost after the latest algal outbreak.

**Late News-** Fisheries Victoria has informed me, that in the next month a meeting will be held in Lakes Entrance to discuss the possible location of an artificial reef in the Gippsland Lakes

#### **Will a Buyback of Commercial Licences be considered?**

It was reported to me that the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, Anthony Hurst, when speaking to a special meeting of VRFish on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February indicated there had been a request from some or all of the commercial fishermen of the Gippsland Lakes that the offer of buyback be again made available. There seemed to be some confusion as to whether this was a request from some or all of the commercials, however it would appear that a request has been made. I contacted Tim Bull MLA who sent me the following statement.

“Through my office there have been approaches to have a voluntary buyback of commercial licences put back on the table for consideration. I have advised the Minister of this and asked that it be considered.”

I thank Tim for his clarification of this request, and would believe this request, would be supported by recreational anglers.

In the past the buyback of commercial licences has been cost neutral for the Government, as funds derived from recreational licence fees have been used to finance the buyback, however as has been stated by this publication previously that the use of 20% of licence receipts to fund the employment of Fisheries Officers might mean less funds being available for any proposed buyback.

The amount payable to a licence holder on buyback in the 2003 Fisheries Compensation and Procedures Regulation was a payment of 3 times the average of the four highest net incomes before tax from the 7 fishing seasons immediately before the cancellation of the licence, with amounts for gear and a solatium of not more than 10%.

This has meant that a fishery with declining catches reduces the return payable to commercial fishermen. In the period 2002/3 to 2008/9 the commercial catch of black bream has averaged 50 tonnes per annum, however without the 2007/8 year when with floods the catch was 144 tonnes the average would have been 30 tonnes per year of black bream. The previous 7 years from 1995/6 to 2001/2 yield an average catch of black bream of 142 tonnes per annum. These figures provide a rough calculation as to why there is increased interest being shown by commercial fishermen in a buyback option with a declining catch of the most valuable species namely black bream.

## Vegetation and Waterways

On Tuesday March 6<sup>th</sup>, the Age newspaper had a front page story of a plan to clear vegetation from the states waterways “in a bid to cut the risk of flooding for regional communities.” Whilst the initiators of this plan are not specifically named, a state government enquiry was set up, according to the Water Minister Peter Walsh, specifically to consider removing vegetation from waterways. The Victorian Farmers Federation supported this action, however the action has been opposed by the NSW government who argued vegetation was essential for healthy rivers. From an anglers point of view it is hard to understand removal of vegetation on the one hand and hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent to restore woody debris to rivers to provide habitat for native fish, after years of removing snags by government authorities. On the Murray River between Lake Hume and Yarrawonga in the period 1976- 1987, 24,500 snags were removed. At considerable cost this area is now being resnagged.

Closer to home the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority in 2010/11 received \$180,000 over three years for habitat restoration, and all anglers would be aware of the authorities work on the Snowy, Tambo and Mitchell rivers in providing snags or woody debris to support fish habitat and restore rivers after years of neglect. The point for anglers is that native vegetation along the banks of waterways creates the woody debris and fish habitat of the future. Current experience suggests if we remove it now we will probably pay to restore it in the future. The photo shows a large woody debris structure on the Tambo River.



## Angler Forums

13 forums of recreational anglers will take place across Victoria between April and May, Anthony Hurst Fisheries Victoria Executive Director said “we want to hear ideas from fishers at a local level to better align our programs, including recreational licence fees to improve fishing opportunities.” This is the fourth year that Fisheries Victoria is holding community forums, listening to recreational anglers and updating them “about what is happening with their freshwater and marine fisheries.”

**The Bairnsdale Forum will take place on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm in the DPI offices, 574 Main St**  
Recreational anglers should mark this meeting on their Calendar

## **The Futures Strategy**

I prepared a response to the Futures document which was sent to all readers on the email list, however I must apologise to readers who receive their Around the jetties posted that I was unable to get this response to them. This was largely due to the fact that I had hoped to include the VRFish response so that readers would have a full range of opinion to consider. Unfortunately I did not receive a copy of the VRFish response. I did receive a number of notes of appreciation from readers who receive emails. The following is but an example of those responses.

Lynton.

I am the incumbent President of the Metropolitan Anglers Association. (MAA) The MAA is a representative association of some 30 metropolitan based angling clubs. The association is very pleased to gain access to your comments on the Fisheries Victoria reform proposals for the **Future Fisheries Strategy**. Our club delegates have recently participated in a full blooded discussion on this issue. Your comments were of considerable help in deciding the association position on this matter. Resulting from this discussion we formulated a final submission in response to the FV proposals.

A copy of the MAA submission is attached.

Regards

Donald (Don) T. Ellis

## **Poachers Caught**

(Victorian Fisheries Photo of Poachers at work)

### **Three Abalone Traffickers jailed.**

Three Malaysian nationals were jailed after they pleaded guilty in the Latrobe Magistrates Court on February 13<sup>th</sup> relating to abalone trafficking at Cape Liptrap. Magistrate Steven Raleigh sentenced the convicted men to 90 days jail terms with 14 days to be served and the remainder wholly suspended for one year. The men were apprehended in a car at Inverloch after being observed diving at Cape Liptrap. Two backpacks recovered from the boot of the car contained 26.75 kilos of abalone meat. Diving equipment was not in the car but was discovered in the bush near the diving site. The diving gear and the car, a Honda Civic, were ordered forfeited and at the end of the prison sentences the men will become the responsibility of the Department of Immigration.



## **Pipi Collectors Convicted**

A Lynbrook woman was convicted in the Magistrates Court at Dandenong and fined \$700 and also ordered to pay \$113 in costs. She was one of a family group of five that took between them 80 litres of pipi's when the daily catch limit is 2 litres per person. All five adults pleaded guilty to failing to hold recreational fishing licences. Earlier two other members of the group who had previous fisheries offences were fined \$700 and ordered to pay costs.

## **Fined for Over Snapper Limit**

A 55 year old man was found guilty in the Portland Magistrates Court of taking 45 undersize snapper when the bag limit is 10 with no more than 3 fish being over 40cms.. Following the guilty verdict the man was fined \$1,000 and ordered to pay \$1755 to the crown in compensation for the fish taken. In addition all fishing gear was forfeited. This apprehension followed a call on the 13FISH number by a member of the public.

The magistrate Ms Virgona stated “ this is a perfect example of how by making a simple phone call an observant and dedicated recreational fisherman can make a significant contribution to the sustainability of the Victorian snapper fishery”

## **Lake Tyers Shows Rapid Rise**

I went out to Lake Tyers this morning and was amazed at the rise in the water level of this estuary following the heavy rains of early March. I went down to the Toorloo Arm at Burnt Bridge and I could understand why the lake had risen so markedly as this arm was wide and a considerable flow into the estuary was taking place. As can be seen from the attached photo of the jetty at No2 boat ramp the water is very high and the jetty is almost under water, and according to some locals Lake Tyers might break out again. It is worth remembering

that the estuary only closed to the sea on Dec 18<sup>th</sup>. It was obvious that the fresh water had forced fish down into the main lake and a number of anglers were catching bream and the odd flathead near the jetty. I was lucky as Bob McNeill, a regular contributor to this newsletter was at the ramp, and I was able to have a good talk to him. Bob had a nice bag of bream and a couple of flathead, (see photo) but we were both surprised at the fish biting, given the water was so dirty. The next couple of weeks are going to be somewhat intriguing as we watch whether the lake will break out again.



### **Seems I was Not the only one caught out!**

My adult son, granddaughter & I experienced one of those pea soup fogs on the Nowa Nowa Arm some 2 years ago, we dropped anchor as we did not know the area at all. Imagine how my son felt as this was precious fishing comp. time. Dawn Norman.

### **And While we are on Weather!**

Wayne Moon emailed me about a site for Checking the Weather before you go out in your boat. Wayne suggested a Vic Roads site. If you Google into your search engine 'Check the Weather Before you go', you will be offered a plethora of sites that give winds, tides, temperatures, possibility of rain, phases of the moon etc. Lynton uses the Nowa Nowa forecast regularly but it does not always tell you there will be fog. The Bureau of Meteorology site is a good one too, radar and satellite image included. Thanks Wayne for the thought. Dawn.

### **A Clarification on Dusky Flathead**

At the meeting described in this issue on dusky flathead, almost all discussion took place on Lake Tyers and Mallacoota stocks of this species. After the meeting, I was contacted and asked did the suggested size limits apply also to the Gippsland Lakes. I contacted Travis Dowling Director of Fisheries Management who chaired the meetings and put to him the question as to whether the suggested size limits, if accepted would apply to the Gippsland Lakes. He said the size limits if accepted would apply to recreational angling in the Gippsland Lakes; **however, they would not apply to commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes.**

He indicated that if applied to commercial fishing the change could involve a costly change in gear, and create wastage and given the interest of some commercial fishermen in a possible buyback, applying any change to size limits for commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes would not be supported.

I know that recreational anglers who fish the Gippsland Lakes will be most disappointed at this decision, and it would appear that any savings recreational anglers fishing the Gippsland Lakes achieve with the suggested changes to size limits, would simply seem to be providing more fish for the commercial nets.

Perhaps of consideration should be the declining catch of dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes. In 2005/6 the catch was 48 tonnes with a value of \$145,000, or \$3 per kg. However, since that peak it has declined every year until in 2009/10 it was only 14 tonnes, valued at \$56,000 or just \$4 per kg. It is expected to decline further given the extremely poor recreational catches of this species in the Gippsland Lakes according to anecdotal information. I think most recreational anglers would believe that this decline

in catch of dusky flathead should be the first consideration for applying the suggested size limit to commercial fishers, rather than the cost of changes to nets caused by size limit changes that benefit the species and its future in our estuaries.

I think recreational anglers should be happy, given that if this size change is introduced, it will assist dusky flathead stocks in Lake Tyers and Mallacoota, which no longer have commercial nets.

The real loser here is the Gippsland Lakes. However, let us not forget the positive step that would be achieved if the suggested changes to size limits are accepted.

### **It's Up to Government Now**

The commitment of the Coalition Government to its pre election commitment that-

**“The Coalition would protect spawning fish by introducing controls on the practice of commercial netting near the mouths of rivers.”**

Perhaps it's an appropriate time to introduce this change to protect black bream in particular, given that recent floods have led to a surge in the commercial netting of river mouths targeting this top recreational species, and compensate to a small degree for the lack of protection afforded to dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes.

### **A Meeting of Interest for Anglers**

#### **Community Forum; Gippsland Lakes; Community Awareness Evening**

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012 7.30 Start

Venue Bairnsdale Sports and Convention Centre

Organised by the Habitat Network East Gippsland

Object of the Evening- To inform the East Gippsland Community of the rapidly changing ecological conditions of the Gippsland Lakes

Speakers

**Prof. Max Finlayson** -Charles Stuart University

**Fiona Warry** -Estuarine Scientist Arthur Rylah Institute

**Dr Chris Healey**- Australian National University; Birds Australia;

**Contact Ross Scott** [rosscot@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rosscot@bigpond.net.au)

### **Next Issue of Around the Jetties**

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the April/May Issue and we aim at ten issues per year.

**Contributions-** Your 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**

### **Fisheries Victoria State Wide Forums**

Fisheries Victoria is Fishing for ideas about improving angling.

Updates on fisheries matters and the opportunity to make suggestions.

Those who cannot make it along on the night can send in their ideas online via [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/fishing)

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Venue</i>
Torquay	Tuesday 17 April	7pm	Torquay Angling Club, The Esplanade, Fisherman's Beach
Warrnambool	Wednesday 18 April	7pm	Warrnambool & District Anglers Club, Cnr Simpson St & Otway Road
Nunawading	Tuesday 24 April	7pm	Laburnum Angling Club, 4 Silver Grove
Wodonga	Tuesday 1 May	7pm	DPI Offices, 1 McKoy Street (Kiewa room)
Nagambie	Wednesday 2 May	7pm	Nagambie Angling Club, McLeods St, Kirwins Bridge
Eildon	Thursday 3 May	7pm	Eildon Community Centre, Cnr Centre Avenue & Riversdale Drive
Kerang	Tuesday 8 May	7pm	DPI Offices, 26 Wellington St
Bendigo	Wednesday 9 May	7pm	Bendigo Legion Angling Club, Gateway Rotary Park, 26 High St, Kangaroo Flat
Bairnsdale	Tuesday 15 May	7pm	DPI Offices, 574 Main St
Ballarat	Thursday 17 May	7pm	Ballarat Fly Fishers, Cnr Wendouree Pde & Pleasant St, Lake Wendouree

### **Female fishers forum**

Darnum Wednesday 23 May 7pm Darnum Football & Netball Club, Shady Ck Rd

### **Multicultural forums**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Venue</i>
Dandenong	Tuesday 22 May	5.30pm	Migrant Resource Centre, Level 1, 314 Thomas St
Melbourne	Thursday 24 May	5.30pm	Multicultural Hub, 506 Elizabeth St, CBD