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# **Around the Jetties**

## **August 2012**

### **Issue No 60**

#### **An Anglers Newsletter**

**Fishing.** “It gives pleasures of anticipation and memory. The dullest and most uneventful day can suddenly be brought to life by catching a fish. No single moment exists that isn’t bursting with promise, and possible excitement. What is more, just often enough to keep you a slave to your addiction, something does happen, something quite unlikely, something that starts the blood and heart pounding again.”

The Anglers Companion (1978)

#### **Editorial**

Included in this edition is a summary of the suggestions put forward at the Bairnsdale Anglers Forum held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May. Over the state hundreds of suggestions have been made at these forums. Now Fisheries Victoria after taking such a statewide approach must deliver on some of the suggestions provided by recreational anglers. Perhaps in the months ahead as suggestions are met Fisheries might provide a report on the practical results of this process. Of course, recreational anglers realise that given the vast number of suggestions only a few suggestions may be met, however it is important that both Fisheries Victoria and the recreational anglers of the state see some result from the forums. Perhaps at the next round of forums in 2013 a release could be made available providing an indication of the positive outcomes from this year’s forum.

With any attempt to achieve outcomes, funding becomes an issue. However given the effort and organisation of Fisheries Victoria and the response of anglers across the state to the forums, surely our politicians and Minister might see that the funding of key suggestions from the forums is money well spent on a rather unique collaboration between Fisheries Victoria and the anglers of this state, and goes to the heart of this vast recreational fishery. This would be a massive endorsement of the approach of fisheries management.

#### **Carp Explosion**

A landline program on ABC television 22<sup>nd</sup> July reported on an expected explosion in the numbers of European carp in Murray Darling waterways following the breaking of the drought in 2010 and the heavy rains that followed creating perfect conditions for the breeding of the species. (The carp explosion was reported with photos in Issue 51 November 2011)



Kylie Hall of the DPI reported that given the conditions in the waterways numbers of carp in some areas were likely to increase by up to 4,000%. She added that a 3kg carp could produce 3 million eggs and may spawn twice in a single year, and they live for 30 years. Native fish of the same age produce around 70,000 eggs, and whilst they survived well during the drought, the carp will again assume the biggest biomass (90%) of fish in our inland waterways according to Dr Ron Thresher of the CSIRO.

Of even greater concern is that financial cutbacks by both Commonwealth and state Governments have caused the daughterless carp project to be dropped, from July 1st after a number of years of research. This research was taking place in the CSIRO in Hobart. Dr Thresher had achieved a daughterless fish program in Zebra fish and he believed that within two years it could have been applied to carp. Dr Thresher also pointed out that the work being undertaken to breed only male offspring could also have been applied to other species such as cane toads.

As well as the daughterless carp program work is being carried out on a biological approach using herpes virus and this work is being undertaken in Geelong. The disease is deadly only to carp and destroys their vital organs, and currently testing is taking place on this disease.

Scientists spoken to on this program believed that an integrated approach using the herpes virus and the daughterless carp program could have been tested and available within 5 years and the integrated program using both approaches could have not only controlled carp but also eradicated them from our waterways within 20 years.

Dr Thresher said an integrated program would make a substantial difference to carp numbers but more dollars are needed to complete the current research. Without this scientific approach the only methods of control are electric barriers and fish traps with a small amount of carp being caught for industries such as Charlie Carp to utilise in the production of fertiliser. Anglers and environmentalists should be very angry at the lack of funding for such a vital program when we read of some of the funding allocated by our Governments to projects that would have less chance of making an impact on our environment.

The following item was published last November and gives a local perspective on the carp issue from Keith Bell of K & C Industries based in Sale and this industry is based on catching carp.

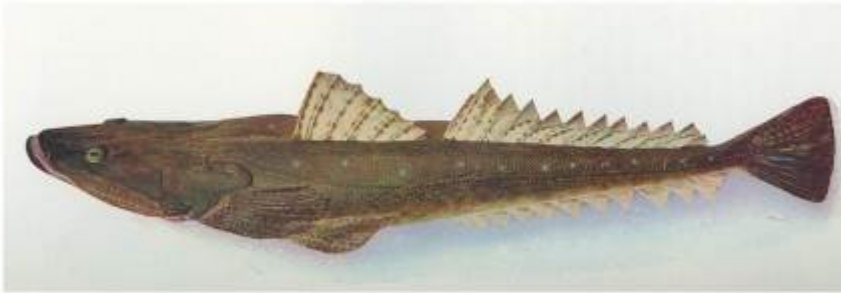
### **A Local Perspective on Carp**

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

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

information on these large schools of carp such as those shown in the photographs are not always communicated directly, and the opportunity for a major impact on their numbers can be lost in a few days.

## New Size limits Proposed for Dusky Flathead



The Department of Primary Industries is seeking feedback from Recreational fishers on a proposal to introduce new size limits for dusky flathead to boost the fishing opportunities and help safeguard the sustainability of this iconic fishery.

Member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull said the new limits had been proposed in response to the increasing popularity of dusky flathead fishing in the area.

The recreational fishing community has expressed support for action to provide more protection for large breeding dusky flathead particularly females in East Gippsland estuaries. Fisheries research through boat ramp surveys and angler diary information collected in Mallacoota Inlet and Lake Tyers suggest catches of large females have declined since the 1990's. To boost fish stocks Fisheries Victoria had issued a draft Fisheries Notice to introduce a maximum size limit for dusky flathead of 55cms for recreational anglers and the new maximum size limit will produce a no take refuge for large fish and help rebuild breeding stocks. Mr Bull said.

The notice will also increase the minimum size limit from 27cms to 30cms and the new minimum size limit reflects the views of recreational fishers that the current minimum size limit of 27cms does not provide a fish of suitable size to eat, he said.

Recreational fishers supported these proposals at forums in Lakes Entrance and Mallacoota. The Fisheries notice will apply to recreational fishers in all Victorian waters.

Mr Bull said the implementation of the Victorian notice would not change the current daily bag limit in Victorian waters. The new slot size limit will not apply to commercial fishing to avoid the wasteful discard of large flathead.

Fisheries Victoria is seeking public comment on the draft Fisheries Dusky flathead notice until Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

To comment on the Fisheries Notice please provide comments in writing to Zac Lewis Fisheries manager PO Box 4440 Melbourne 3001 or email [zac.lewis@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:zac.lewis@dpi.vic.gov.au)

The above media release is a most important announcement, and Fisheries Victoria are to be congratulated for listening to the concerns of anglers regarding the decline in the size of dusky flathead, in the key areas of Mallacoota Inlet and Lake Tyers, and then conducting meetings with anglers to discuss the issue and reach consensus on a solution.

It is hoped anglers will see this as a step to protect this species to ensure angling for dusky flathead will continue far into the future remembering that every dusky flathead over 60cms is almost certainly a female upon which the future fishery is based.

### **Gippsland Lakes**

Whilst the above is a major achievement the fact that it will not apply to commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes is disappointing. In the media release of the local member Tim Bull, he indicates that the reason for this is "to avoid the discard of large flathead." This reason presumes that the large flathead caught in nets will be dead, and therefore need to be discarded, however most flathead caught commercially in the Gippsland lakes are taken in seine nets, and recent research has suggested the fish taken in these nets can be released. This research (Research into Commercial Discard rates 2005) was undertaken after an article on the front page of the Advertiser (November 2003) suggesting a high level of fish deaths in commercial nets. If this research is to be believed then the large dusky flathead, all of which are females, could be released from seine nets and would produce between 300,000 and 4 million eggs as they spawn in the lower reaches of estuaries, according to NSW research. (Barnes and Grey) The declining numbers of dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes as evidenced by the commercial catch statistics of 48 tonnes in 2005/6 to 14 tonnes in 2009/10 are cause for real concern and the protection of the large females could have a significant effect on the population

of this iconic species in the largest estuary in Victoria. The application of previous research to the discard of dusky flathead should be examined and a response provided.

### **Identification of the Dusky Flathead.**

Regular readers would be aware of the problem of identification of dusky flathead and the Eastern blue spot flathead, and the work undertaken by angler John Harrison on this issue. The following appeared in Issue 51 November 2011. -

*The Australian Museum has taken this matter to a Japanese world authority on flathead at the request of John Harrison. Whilst he defined some variations between the two species of flathead, at the Fisheries meeting it was agreed it would be unrealistic for anglers to apply the "complex criteria used by the Japanese expert to correctly identify the two species."*

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

The resolution to this dilemma was believed by many anglers to involve placing the dusky flathead bag and size limit on all estuarine flathead caught in estuaries from the Gippsland Lakes to the NSW border. It was felt this would make enforcement possible whilst at the same time protecting dusky flathead from being identified as Southern blue spot. This dilemma is a matter for consideration in the future.

### **Editor Comment**

What is not mentioned in the press release is the work of the Director of Fisheries Management Travis Dowling in gaining agreement on the new dusky flathead sizes. He organised the meetings with recreational anglers listened to their concerns, and then put forward the agreed position to protect this wonderful species for the future. He is to be congratulated on his efforts in the interests of angling.

## **Major Changes in Fisheries Management**

Internal changes are currently taking place in Fisheries Victoria that will change the emphasis and direction of Fisheries Victoria, and these changes will have an impact on the knowledge basis of our fish stocks

Fisheries Management, headed by Travis Dowling, will now include the scientists and direct much of its energies **to an assessment of the main fish species sought by anglers.** An attempt will be made by the Management/Science Branch to look at the total catch of these species and provide an assessment as to what is sustainable. This will be a pure fishery assessment and the Management/Assessment branch will move to Queenscliff where currently scientific facilities are based which in turn will consolidate the facilities and workforce of this area. The core role of the Management Assessment Branch will be monitoring the catch of the main species of recreational and commercial fish, and examining the sustainability of that catch.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to recall there has not been a stock assessment involving anglers dealing with black bream since 2005, and it is often the 2001 National survey has been quoted when discussions of fish stocks take place. It is also worthwhile noting that the recreational catch of black bream is unknown and very little work has been done on this species in recent years. Most times the recreational catch is quoted as being between 100 and 200 tonnes but these figures are open to question and are not scientifically based.

I would think this change would provide anglers and commercial fishermen with a far better understanding of the current fish stocks and what the future may hold. This information has really not been readily available on some species, which in turn makes decision-making difficult for Fisheries Managers. The linking of management to science will overcome many of these difficulties.

Anthony Hurst, the current Executive Director of Fisheries, will have a much broader responsibility under this new structure, being responsible for Game Victoria, Fish Victoria and Forestry regulations. I would imagine these responsibilities would be spelt out in more detail in the future.

### **Editors Comment**

I think most recreational anglers would applaud this move and the increased emphasis on the assessment and sustainability of the major recreational species. Readers may recall in the last issue of Around the Jetties the lead item referred to - the Australian Conservation Fund declaring black bream a sustainable species, and - the commercial industry capitalizing on that declaration through a media release from the Seafood Industry of

Victoria, despite the questions this publication raised. I hope that Fisheries Victoria will make a detailed assessment of the stock of major recreational species, and then **they** will determine if a species is sustainable based on this research, rather than other bodies making this determination. This is the core responsibility of Fisheries Victoria as the body responsible for the fisheries of this state.

### **Improved Boating Facilities for Lake Tyers**

I received the following important statement from the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club last week

“Work will soon commence on two projects which will result in improved access to the Lake Tyers waterway. A floating pontoon will be constructed at Fisherman’s Landing and a second pontoon to complement the existing pontoon will be constructed at boat ramp No 2.

The projects are the result of a successful application made by the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club and the East Gippsland Shire for funding under the Recreational Fishing initiative scheme which is a program established by the Victorian Government to provide \$16.2million over four years to improve fishing opportunities for recreational anglers.

A spokesperson for the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club, John Harrison said the Fisherman’s Landing area already had a good single ramp, a large trailer parking area and public toilets, but that anglers currently had to ground their boats on the ramp and stand in the water to launch and retrieve their boats.

As a result the area was under used. The construction of a floating pontoon adjacent to the ramp would improve safety, enhance access for all anglers including the elderly and disabled and ensure better utilisation of this area, and so remove some of the pressure from other ramps.

Boat Ramp No2 is the most popular ramp and is frequently very congested. A second pontoon on the north side of the ramp should significantly improve efficiency and reduce waiting times.

The projects will be managed by East Gippsland Shire. Projects Officer Anthony Nelson, said that work will commence shortly and that it is expected both projects will be completed in time for the summer tourist season.”

#### **Editor**

This is a magnificent achievement by the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club and the Shire in supporting the club’s submission. Both are to be congratulated in obtaining funding for a project that will provide vastly improved facilities for all local and visiting anglers to Lake Tyers.

Additional information provided by John Harrison indicated that the intention for the additional pontoon at Boat Ramp No2 is to be on the northern side of the existing ramp and to be a reflection of the existing. The club hopes that one pontoon will be designated for launching boats and the other for retrieving boats, as this will prove most efficient in peak times. It is also the hope of the club that the parking area at boat ramp No 2 can be improved for more trailer parking, and the club intends to investigate this next project in the future.



**Fisherman’s Landing Ramp, Lake Tyers**



**No2 Boat Ramp Lake Tyers Beach**

## **Twin Rivers 2012**

Perhaps the Twin Rivers Bream Competition is now more rightly an open waters competition with the recent inclusion of Lake Tyers in the waters to be fished over the two days, and most anglers would realise that in general Tyers provides a far better chance of catching fish, than the local rivers. Over a number of years I was provided with statistics that allowed me to provide a calculation of the hourly catch rates in the rivers, during the competition which in turn provided a rough guide to the availability of black bream in these rivers, and these figures were accepted as providing some evidence of the catch rate in black bream stock assessments, the last of which was held in 2005. The slow catch rate of up to 15 hours per fish supported the concern expressed at the black bream stock assessments as to the status of black bream.

The two rivers have been regarded in the past as premier bream streams. In 1998, the Fisheries and Wildlife Department when making a submission to the Tambo River Trust declared, "The estuary portion of the Tambo River is of the highest possible value in supporting an amateur fishery for bream. The Tambo is considered by the division to be the second best bream water in Eastern Victoria."

Prior to 2010, in Twin River competitions, the catch rate of competitors was around one keep able fish for each for each twelve hours fished. This in itself was probably a reason to include Lake Tyers in the area to be fished. Sadly with such a catch rate few anglers would today regard the Tambo River as one of the best streams for black bream, however the inclusion of Lake Tyers does take some pressure off the breeding bream in the local rivers.



### **Fishcare Volunteers Weighing and Releasing Bream at the Twin Rivers Competition July 2012**

Given the increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes it would appear that the rivers have become critical to the successful spawning of black bream. This in turn raises the issue of having such a competition when the small number of mature bream are making their way into the rivers to spawn. There is little doubt that the Twin River event supported by the Shire Council has become a successful and extremely well organised event, which provides an important economic stimulus to local businesses. However it needs to be kept in mind that this success is based on a catch of spawning fish and this raises the question as to whether 600 anglers fishing in this competition at this time, is the best approach to protecting a scarce resource. Whilst some returned fish, only 80 fish had been weighed and returned by 11am on the Sunday and most anglers were retaining the fish caught.

Perhaps the timing of this event should be considered given the seeming parlous state of the black bream stocks. Perhaps an answer to the concern for the stock of black bream is to have a genuine Catch and Release event similar to the Bream Classic series being run around Australia. It's an issue that deserves debate and perhaps when Fisheries Victoria determines the true status of black bream under the aims of the new Fisheries structure it might be appropriate to return to discussing the timing of the Twin Rivers event.

A future consideration might also involve using a portion of the funds generated from the Twin River event to purchase black bream fingerlings to stock the two rivers, remembering that on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2004, the then Minister, Mr Bob Cameron, released 14,000 fingerlings into streams entering the Gippsland Lakes, so stocking could take place. Few could object to the Twin Rivers event if 5,000 black bream fingerlings were released in the two rivers as a result of that event. It's also worth remembering that 30,000 black bream fingerlings were produced in a TAFE course at Bullock Island 2010 using brood stock from the rivers. Readers might recall that this newsletter reported the successful breeding of black bream at the TAFE facility and the fact the fish were euthenised at the end of the course.

The release of black bream fingerlings at an event such as the Twin Rivers would provide wonderful publicity for both the event and recreational angling generally. Perhaps these are matters that could be discussed with Fisheries Victoria in the future, as both the Twin Rivers event and Fisheries Victoria would benefit from such a joint approach.

## **Suggestions from Bairnsdale Recreational Anglers Forum**

I wrote of this meeting and the issues raised in a previous Around the Jetties however that was my summary from notes I took at the May Anglers Forum. The following is the Fisheries Victoria published summary of items provided to Fisheries Victoria at the Bairnsdale meeting on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May, remembering that the Bairnsdale meeting was just one of 13 meetings around the state conducted by Fisheries Victoria.

What is particularly interesting is that of the seven suggestions on **Regulations and Compliance** at the Bairnsdale meeting five of these related to concerns regarding the operation of commercial fishing in the Gippsland Lakes.

### **Communication**

\* Suggested that a DVD summarising Fisheries Victoria programs be distributed to anglers.

#### **Editor**

(Actually this item raised the fact that Fisheries Victoria was providing funding for programs being shown on Aurora 183 pay TV. An example quoted was the tagging of snapper. It was suggested DVD's of these programs be made available to angling clubs. This could provide programs for club nights and provide information to anglers on Fisheries programs.)

### **Access and Facilities**

- \*Suggested that a fish-cleaning table be installed on the Mitchell River near Eagle Point.
- \* Suggested that the Teflon cutting surface on fish cleaning tables be replaced with wood.
- \* Suggested that the boat ramp at Holland's Landing be upgraded.

### **Fish Stocking**

\*Suggested that estuary perch be stocked in Lake Tyers.

### **Regulations and Compliance**

- \* Suggested that commercial netting in the Gippsland lakes be subject to exclusions during flood events
- \* Suggested that commercial fishing practices be banned in Jones Bay
- \* Suggested that the exclusion zone around river mouths be extended.
- \* Suggested there be a stronger fisheries compliance presence in Omeo and surrounding areas.
- \* Suggested that a regulation be introduced limiting the distance that commercial fishers can set nets from the shoreline along the 90 mile beach.
- \* Suggested signage displaying marine park boundaries be improved at Boggy Creek.
- \* Suggested that a closed season be placed on rivers during peak spawning seasons.

#### **Editor.**

The item referring to Boggy Creek was actually a request for signage to indicate the boundary of the marine area and the commencement of the inland fishing area. I would suggest most anglers are unaware of this boundary.

#### **Research**

Suggested that Fisheries Victoria encourage the involvement of angling clubs in the snapper-tagging program and better communicate the results of the research.

### **Editor**

I was reading an old Fisheries Victoria Newsletter (July 1999 publication) recently, and it was noted that snapper “Had been tagged by VICTAG angler’s charter boat operators and researchers at MAFRI. In the period 1994-1999, VICTAG anglers had tagged more than 5,000 snapper—mostly in Port Phillip Bay (2500) and Portland (2000).” Anglers it would seem have been involved since 1994, I wonder if there has been a change, and I also wonder again why VICTAG anglers are not currently involved. Of course we have commented on the lack of the minimal funding required to support VICTAG and the positive results that could be achieved for a small investment of funds. Perhaps someone can provide information on the lack of support for VICTAG, and answer the question as to whether Fisheries Victoria would regard its work today as being relevant.

## **Odd Bits and More**

### **Abalone Poachers in Gippsland Apprehended**

A 23-year-old man has been convicted in the Melbourne Magistrates Court for trafficking abalone after he was extradited from NSW according to a DPI Media Release July 25<sup>th</sup>. Anthony Muir was given a one-month prison sentence suspended for 6 months for trafficking abalone in 2007.

Covert surveillance identified Muir and five other co-offenders as trafficking 135kgs of abalone after the offenders were seen operating at Cape Liptrap in Gippsland in April 2007. Muir’s role consisted of taking the abalone from two divers and assisting in shucking them placing the meat in backpacks and transporting them to other locations. The value of the abalone taken in two days was estimated at \$17,550. One of the ringleaders of this operation was previously jailed for two years three months and was ordered to pay \$44,000 as compensation as well as receiving a lifetime order preventing him from being within 1km of Victorian waters. The other offenders found guilty received a variety of fines, prohibitions etc. The extradition of Muir from NSW is the third undertaken by fisheries investigators. This was a team of NSW poachers systematically raiding Victorian waters.

Fisheries Victoria Executive Director, Anthony Hurst said this extradition and conviction was another example of the lengths Fisheries Victoria would go to in pursuit of offenders.

### **Editor.**

This publication congratulates Fisheries Victoria on this result, and also what is pleasing is seeing the courts of this state at last taking firm action against poachers. In the “recfish newsletter” a monthly fishing newsletter published by Fisheries Victoria until at least 1998 every person taken to court and convicted had their name, offence and fine published for all too see. Perhaps in this age that is not possible but I am sure in those years it acted as a deterrent. About the same time the South Australian Fisheries Department in their magazine featured a full colour front cover of the first person to be jailed in that state for poaching abalone, together with an article providing detailed information on the court case.

### **Gippsland Coastal Board and the 2012 Boating Action Plan.**



The controversial Gippsland Coastal Board Boating Action Plan was released for public comment, and submissions were received from the public. These submissions have been reviewed by the project Steering Committee and the Board. It was noted on the 12<sup>th</sup> July that submissions have been summarised and will be placed on the Coastal Board website in the near future.

(It is a great shame that these summaries and the changes to the draft are not sent to the providers of submissions by mail, as some submission writers may not have access to the web site.)

The revised document has been forwarded to the Victorian Coastal Council for comment, and will then be forwarded to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change Ryan Smith. I imagine it will be some time



before the Minister makes the final document public and we will have the opportunity to assess the changes made to the draft as a result of public submissions.

The entire exercise of introducing this Boating Action Plan was not a great success and caused great concern to communities and anglers in East Gippsland. This was an entirely unnecessary.

### **Changes in the Coastal Board Membership.**

The Minister for Climate and Environment Ryan Smith has appointed seven new members to the Gippsland Coastal Board. They are as follows-

Neville Penrose as the new chair. He was formerly a representative on the Board and is currently a member of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. Mr Penrose replaces former chairman Helen Martin. Other members are Richard Ellis, Paul Smith, Peter Jennings, Jacinta Mackey, Ian Needham, and Rodney Thomas. Michael Sinnott has been reappointed for another term. They replace Helen Bull, Shayne Haywood, Noel Maud, Katherine Nelson, Jane Rowe, and Dr Peter Veenker. (Dr Veenker has taken up the position of chair of the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee.)

The Minister in making this announcement said, "One of the Boards main responsibilities will be to develop an overarching coastal action plan for the region. This plan will help to balance protection and enhancement of the coast with recreation use and tourism."

Ports.

#### **Editor**

The Minister has stated that a main responsibility of the Coastal Board will be to develop an overarching coastal action plan. It does seem that we have endless plans in the past developed by Coastal Boards dating from the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Action Plan 1998, to the 2002 Gippsland Boating Coastal Action Plan to the 2012 Boating Coastal Action Plan, and many others. It is to be hoped that something positive will be forthcoming from the new Gippsland Lakes Coastal Board. Perhaps a good start would be linking fish stocks of the Gippsland Lakes to Tourism and undertaking a study of the fish stocks of the lakes and how they can be enhanced. Perhaps also undertaking an economic valuation of recreational fishing in the Gippsland Lakes.

#### **How Do You Value Recreational Fishing**

Research announced by the Murray Darling Basin Recreational Fishing Council on the 23/11/2011 found that on average recreational fishers go on average 12 times per year fishing in the basin and expend \$262 on each trip. With approximately 430,000 fishers in the Basin, recreational fishers spend around \$1.3billion each year when fishing the Murray. Mr Christopher Collins, chair of the Darling Basin Fishing Council said, "These results highlight that healthy fish and fish habitats are critical to the economic viability of our regional communities."

With a similar study of the value of recreational fishing in the Gippsland Lakes, decisions could then be made on the best economic use of the fish resource that is available. This would be a good starting point to achieve the Ministers wish of enhancement of the coast together with recreational and tourism development.

### **Bass in the Nicholson River**

A spokesman for Fisheries Victoria has indicated that it is likely that the stocking of the Nicholson River announced by local member Tim Bull (May 2012) is likely to go ahead despite the Nicholson River dam not yet being removed, and the ultimate removal likely to take three years. This would mean the stocked fingerlings would not have access to the upper waters of the river. If the proposed stocking of 100,000 bass over those three years takes place it may only be that the final stocking of fingerlings will have full access to the upper reaches of the river.

### **Loose Ends and More Work**

I am aware of a number of matters that seem to require a response or further action from either Fisheries Victoria or the Ministers Office. The matter of artificial reefs has been talked of and particularly in an estuary such as the Gippsland lakes, and even a meeting was said to be going to be held, however, nothing further has eventuated. The commitment to protect spawning fish at the mouths of rivers, was part of the Coalitions Governments recreational fishing policy, but anglers have heard nothing. Of course the stocking of the Mitchell River with bass and the announcement of the Nicholson stocking have made this commitment more necessary as these fish move to salt water to spawn. Considerable time and effort was put into discussions

with Fisheries and Parks Victoria regarding eastern tracks into Lake Tyers and foreshore developments where possible, however again no firm proposal have been forthcoming. These items are challenges for the future.

## A Moment in History

“For the year ending February 1879, the total number of baskets, bags and boxes of fish forwarded from Sale was 22,400 equivalent to about 570 tons. The next 17 months yielded a further 56,593 baskets boxes and bags equivalent to about 1263 tons. In June 1880 there were 64 fishermen and 36 boats working the Gippsland Lakes.”

“Highways of Water.” Peter Synan (1989)

## Letters and Comments from Readers

### Reader Raises the issue of a Weed Threat in the Gippsland Lakes

*The following information was received from Shaun a reader and it raises several issues.*

*Recently on the Gippsland Lakes we saw 13 nets between the Eastern Entrance and the first blowhole in Lake Bunga. I had actually got caught in one net tied to the bollard at the Blow Hole and it had heaps of blue leather jackets in it. Also on a slightly different topic at the moment there is an invasive weed that is taking over our sand dunes in a huge way, and I have seen it from the entrance to Loch Sport and in the last twelve months it is starting to blank out entire areas, and we have also found some on Rigby Island. It is called Sea Spurge and it is a type of euphorbia, which comes from the Mediterranean Area. Given the spread and growth in the last twelve months this will be uncontrollable within two years.*

### Response to this Letter

Thanks to this reader for this information. The matter of nets in the lake is an ongoing issue when each licence holder can put out 1300 metres of mesh net. The leatherjacket has little commercial value but is a sought after species for recreational anglers. I had not heard of sea spurge and was unaware of its spread.

My first reaction was to phone the DPI for a comment and to find whether there was any eradication program for the Gippsland Lakes.

I spoke to Emily Baggs, Bio Security Area Leader, who knew of the weed and was concerned about it, however in Victoria this is not a noxious weed, and therefore there is no eradication program. I found this most surprising given the information of attempts in other states to eradicate this weed. Emily did say there is little alignment between the states on such issues. She did indicate that she would raise the matter and asked for a copy of this newsletter.



I contacted the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, and Bec Hemming Team Leader of the Water program indicated the weed was a concern to them, and they had done a survey (2010) on the location and spread of sea spurge and yes it was rapidly spreading. The Catchment Authority had not undertaken any control work on sea spurge.

It was also noted that Parks Victoria is primarily responsible for the Gippsland Lakes dunes, and at the time of writing although I had a response they had not answered my questions on the spread or control of sea spurge.

I have done some research on the weed (pictured) and it is thought to have been introduced to Australia some 70 years ago in ships ballast.

The plant first appeared growing in Western Australia, and is now found throughout south eastern Australia including Tasmania. Sea Spurge is a problem because a plant can produce up to 5000 salt tolerant seeds. Once established a colony can spread, rapidly displacing native vegetation and change the structure of our beaches and dunes. This in turn can destroy shorebirds habitat that use sand spits for nesting. (Hooded plover, little terns, and oystercatchers.) While not declared noxious in NSW significant efforts by volunteers and Government agencies are tackling the problem along NSW beaches, which are currently the frontline of defence against the northerly spread of this weed. A major area at Bermagui is currently being tackled using hand removal rather than spraying to protect native vegetation. Stuart Cameron a NSW botanist said that if not removed the beaches become a paddock of this weed. There is some evidence of it moving inland, and recently it was discovered at Lord Howe Island, and according to Stuart Cameron this infestation was a result of the seeds travelling via ocean currents from Australia.

**Editor-I thank Shaun for raising this matter, which has immediate implications for the health of the Lakes.**

**Please Note- Care should be taken if removing Sea Spurge by hand as its milky sap may irritate the skin and eyes. Gloves, glasses and other protective clothing should be worn and direct contact with skin should be avoided. If you get sap in the area of the eyes seek medical attention.**

### **Surf Fishing and that Trawler**

From Robert

*As with so many others we were just wondering if there had been any further information on trying to get the Maasbanker to trawl further out to sea. There must be some law or petition or something that we can do to stop this boat operator laughing in the face of surf fishermen. I have a photo of the Maasbanker just behind the breakers at eastern beach, netting in front of the frustrated beach fishers.*

*I for one moment do not deny the right to catch salmon and pilchard because this is his business, but I do fiercely defend the area in which he nets.*

*Let's hope that your many receivers of your newsletter can help this problem in some way.*

*Regards Robert*

### **Editor**

I think Robert has summed this matter up when he indicated he believes that this trawler has a right to ply its trade, but also recognition needs to be given to the rights of surf fishermen to enjoy their fishing without the area where they fish being constantly netted. In other words Fisheries Victoria should be introducing discussions between the parties to develop a shared resource based on some areas being excluded from trawling within kilometres of the surf beaches. In the list of angler suggestions from the round table discussion with Fisheries Victoria in Bairnsdale was "Suggested that a regulation be introduced limiting the distance that commercial fishers can set nets from the shoreline along the 90 mile beach." It does seem reasonable given



that the beach extends for 90 miles. Perhaps an exclusion zone could operate 10kms either side of Lakes Entrance, which would still allow 70kms of netting for this trawler.

Robert provided a video showing this boat netting in close to the beach and a flagged area and the concerns of watchers as dolphins appeared in close proximity to

the nets. No surf angler would fish in this area with a boat working so close to the shore, and this is a regular complaint in holiday periods.

I thank Robert for providing this video, which with his approval I will forward to Fisheries Victoria as evidence of an item raised at the Bairnsdale Round Table Discussion referring to the affect of this trawler on recreational surf fishing.

### **An Interesting Catch**

I had an interesting note from Anthony Guardiani whist requesting to get Around the Jetties he added, *“My parents have a holiday house in Nicholson, and I do a lot of fishing in East Gippsland. I just thought I would also mention that I caught an estuary perch off the Metung Boardwalk earlier in the year on a soft plastic, It was about 28cms and it was returned to fight another day.”*

#### **Editor**

Always interesting to hear of catches such as Anthony’s, and catches such as these whilst currently relatively rare cause anglers as to how the movement of these fish from the rivers into the Gippsland lakes to spawn will be affected by the commercial netting at the mouths of rivers.

### **For Sale**

A collection of fly tying material including Jungle cock feathers and pheasant skin as well as varied colour deer furs and sundry collection of feathers and tying materials. Great material for anyone contemplating tying flies for the coming season and a delightful hobby. \$85 the lot  
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### **Next Issue of Around the Jetties**

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

**Contributions-** Your contributions thoughts and letters to this angling newsletter are most welcome and important and we look forward to publishing your items of interest.

**Readers-** Don't forget you may get a friend or an interested angler onto the mailing list for Around the Jetties by simply sending us an email with details of the person you are nominating and his email address or a letter with details of a mailing address. We do not advertise but rely on readers talking to others.

**Thanks** To those readers of hard copy who have forwarded stamps or donated funds for printing. Your thoughtful assistance is greatly appreciated, as with the success of the publication the costs of production have greatly increased.

**Good Health and good fishing  
Lynton Barr**