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# **Around the Jetties**

## **September 2012**

### **Issue No 61**

#### **An Anglers Newsletter**

“Maybe it has taken us a thousand years to find it out, but there’s something about a mountain stream or the rhythm of the sea that washes away the anxieties of life. You can enjoy the stream or the bay without a fishing rod, but that length of split cane gives you an excuse for being there.”

**Lance Wedlick... “Fishing in Australia” September 1959**

#### **Editorial**

The question as to what is the value of recreational fishing in the Gippsland Lakes is a matter that needs urgent investigation, as little is actually known of the economic importance of this fishery to the region. We do know that in 2009/10 the commercial catch less the value of carp was less than \$1million, with the value of black bream taken in commercial nets being \$418,000 and the value of dusky flathead being \$56,000, these being the two main species sought by recreational anglers in the Gippsland Lakes. Compare this economic return with a survey by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (1997), which suggested the financial contribution of recreational fishing to the Gippsland area, was in the vicinity of \$144 million annually. The survey indicated that recreational anglers expend around \$200 on goods and services per kilogram of fish caught and kept.

The Gippsland Lakes is the largest estuary in this state and the key to attracting recreational anglers to the Gippsland area. The financial contribution of recreational anglers and water activities to the Gippsland area could be as high as \$300 million today, however this can only be an estimate. For this reason it would seem essential that the research of 1997 is undertaken again to determine the 2012/13 contribution of recreational fishing to this area of East Gippsland. Only when this research is undertaken can decisions be made that will encourage angling, boating and tourism activities in the Lakes area. Commercial fishing in the Gippsland Lakes in 1997 provided less than 1% of the amount contributed in goods and services to the East Gippsland community by recreational fishing. It would certainly be true that this percentage has considerably declined today. A priority for the Ministerial Advisory Committee should be research to provide sound facts upon which future decisions can be made.

It is hoped that Fisheries Victoria might now be in a position to look at the recreational catch of key species and take steps to ensure the growth of fish stocks to encourage the continuation of a strong recreational fishery based on the Gippsland Lakes. Currently black bream numbers would seem to be at an

all time low and anecdotal information suggests recreational catches are similar to 1997 when Dr Murray MacDonald reported “ in a study over the past two years, over 1200 recreational anglers were interviewed and approximately 60% had not caught a fish.” The dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes have shown a marked decline since 2005/6 when the commercial catch was 48 tonnes whilst today its in the vicinity of 15 tonnes. Research is urgently needed into fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes and the catch rates of recreational anglers. Only then can steps be taken to adequately protect and improve the black bream and dusky flathead recreational fishery, which is the major attraction for anglers visiting the Gippsland Lakes.

As far as I am aware the last major survey of recreational fishing in the Gippsland Lakes was undertaken by D.N. Hall and M.MacDonald in 1985

## Casanova Cod

I thank the ABC for allowing the reprinting of this report by Bridie Smith Science and Technology reporter. Its well worth reading and provides an intimate understanding and admiration for this iconic native species that captures the imagination of all anglers.

*“He keeps returning to his lucky love hotel. For the past four years fish ecologists have tracked a large Murray cod, which leaves his home to keep an annual river rendezvous.*

*Dubbed Casanova cod, the middle-aged fishes romances have been monitored by an electric tagging device. Be it drought or flood he makes the pilgrimage with clockwork regularity. “He’s been very consistent,” said fish ecologist Jarrod Lyon. “He did go slightly earlier in drought years when the water temperature was warmer earlier, but otherwise he’s been very reliable.”*

*Fish ecologists from the Department of Sustainability and the Environment’s Arthur Rylah Institute will soon learn if Casanova makes the 160km round trip for the fifth year with his departure from Lake Mulwala due between now and mid September. While travelling for love is not unusual for the nationally vulnerable species, the distance is considered notable for such a big fish- he weighs about 25kgs. It is unusual to have such extended data for Murray cod and researchers are hoping to learn more about the life cycle of the fish, which is listed as endangered in Victoria.*

*Measuring one metre long and estimated to be about 25 years old, Casanova is thought to use the same spawning site each year. Researchers believe this is near Tarrawingee on the Ovens River. His river romances last for between a month and six weeks. “That tells us that it is a successful spawning spot and he’s guarding the eggs,” Mr Lyon said.*

*Female cod lay the eggs, which are then fertilised by the males. It is the males who remain on duty guarding and fanning the eggs with their fins to keep them free of sediment, until they hatch into larvae 25 days later.*



*The 10cm long transmitter implanted into his stomach cavity in 2008 records his solo journey from Lake Mulwala near Yarrowonga along the Ovens River to Wangaratta. Each time Casanova passes tracking stations in Bundalong and Wangaratta his location is recorded for researchers. The data will not only help ecologists learn more about the fish, which can live to 45years old, but the conditions they need to spawn and survive.*

*“We’ll get information on the different variables in the environment when he moves such as water flow rates and temperatures” Mr Lyon said.*

*He said, “While the Ovens River was largely unregulated, the data could be provided to managers of other rivers such as the Murray, Loddon, Campaspe, and Goulburn”*

[www.abcforums.com](http://www.abcforums.com)

[/showthread.php?2260-Casanova-Cod](http://showthread.php?2260-Casanova-Cod)

**Editor** The story of this cod becomes even more remarkable when one considers the snaggy Ovens River, which he traverses annually to reach the spawning ground. Long may his annual journey continue! Undoubtedly, other cod

are making similar journeys to spawning grounds in streams such as the King River, which joins the Ovens River at Wangaratta. In the old measurement Casanova is around 55-60lb weight.

### Lake Eildon Providing Winter Sport

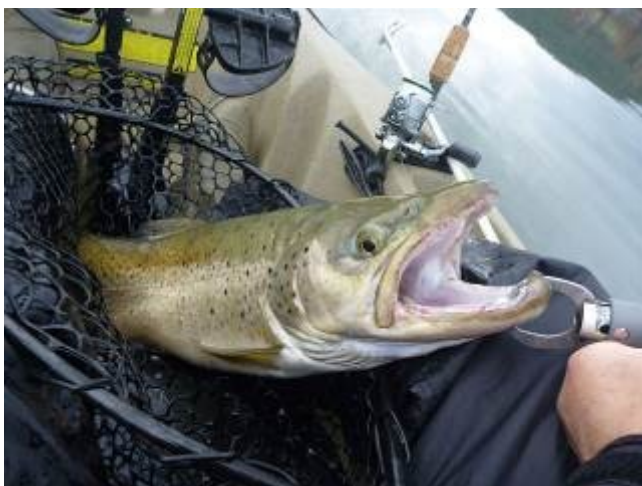


I have had a report from John Pincombe who fishes Eildon a couple of days a week. He has said that some good brown trout around 60cms a being caught, generally trawling soft plastics or other lures, with the occasional good golden perch being caught. John expects some top fishing with natives when the weather warms up, and he is expecting some good cod to be caught at the start of the season. Whilst the fishing is currently slow, the fish being caught are of a good size.

John with 62cm Brown Trout

A couple of weeks ago John and his mate caught and released 13 trout that were feeding on the surface of the lake. On this occasion they stopped and cast to the fish using blades and small lures. John has made the observation that almost all the trout have small roach in them, and enormous numbers of these bait fish are currently in the lake. Readers would be aware of the intensive stocking of Lake Eildon with natives and the Governments aim to stock Eildon over three years with a million cod.

In March 2012 it was announced that a further 330,000 Murray cod fingerlings had been released in Lake Eildon in addition to the 50,000 annual release. This took the tally of Murray cod releases to 660,000. First releases of Murray cod took place in this water in 1994 and now fish 55 to 65cms are becoming quite common. Of course as well as Murray cod, golden perch have been heavily stocked in these waters and in 2011 alone 200,000 fingerlings were released into Lake Eildon.



One of the exciting developments in fishing has been the ever-increasing use of kayaks for fishing lakes and streams and Lake Eildon is no exception. The attached photograph of a 7.25 lb brown trout is rather special in that Rick Formica who caught and released this beautiful fish in the Gough's Bay area of Lake Eildon caught the fish from his Hobie kayak. These kayaks with their electric motors and fish finders provide a perfect platform for anglers and are becoming more and more popular.

Again white lures representing roach seem to be the best option in Lake Eildon at the moment.

I am now seeing numbers of these craft fishing the Lake Tyers area.

Thanks to John Pincombe for this report and photos.





## **Fisher loses boat for fleeing from Fisheries Officers**

**The following is a media release from Fisheries Victoria (August 22<sup>nd</sup>), which again indicates a successful case against a poacher, and a court sentence that reflects community concern at the actions of poachers. This is an interesting case.**

“A Melbourne man has had his boat and trailer forfeited after pleading guilty to trying to flee Fisheries Officers and driving dangerously on Port Phillip Bay earlier this year. Magistrate Noreen Toohey, described the behaviour of Long Phong Hoang, 37, as appalling and said he was a whisker away from an immediate jail term. The court heard that on Sunday, March 11, Fisheries Officers in a clearly marked patrol boat had spotted Hoang travelling towards Melbourne from Point Cook, on Port Phillip Bay. This area of Port Phillip is a known location for those targeting abalone and squid. Hoang had been snorkel diving for abalone and line fishing for squid and snapper, in the process taking and retaining onboard a quantity of abalone and squid. As he was returning to Altona he was approached by the Fisheries patrol boat and ordered to stop, but instead made an abrupt turn and sped away at 25 knots (46km/hr). The Fisheries Officers told the court Hoang repeatedly ignored calls and at one stage had to be warned to face the front of his vessel because he was fast approaching a vessel at anchor.

He swerved dangerously around the bow of the yacht and then slowed to throw a black fish bin over the side. The bin could not be recovered. Hoang then sped away again before he finally slowed down, preventing the officers from inspecting his catch. The court heard his excuse for speeding away was because he had an outstanding unpaid fine and thought it was the police chasing him. He said he discarded the fish bin because he was two squid over the limit. Magistrate Toohey banned Hoang from fishing for a year, suspended his boat operator’s licence for six months and ordered forfeiture of his fishing equipment and a boat and trailer worth \$7500. He was also ordered to pay costs of just under \$1000 and perform 100 hours of unpaid community service. Fisheries Victoria Director of Education and Enforcement Michael Hodder said Fisheries Officers had the power under the Fisheries Act (Fisheries Act 1995) to stop and inspect any vehicle or vessel to ensure compliance with the Act or Regulations. As you can see from the court outcome the penalties can be quite severe in not obeying these lawful directions, Mr Hodder said.”

## **Gippsland Lakes Seagrass and Fish Survey 2012**

Readers may recall that this publication has reported in the past on the snapshot reports on seagrass and fish assemblages in the Gippsland Lakes from 2008. These snapshot reports 2008-2011 were originally undertaken, by the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce. The current report provides the 2012 snapshot, which has been undertaken by the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory committee.

The following is a brief summary prepared by this publication of the 2012 report.

Between 2008 when the blue green *Synechococcus* bloom occurred and 2011 the seagrass condition had improved from the poor condition in 2008, however in April 2012 seagrass had declined at 43% of the sites. The study, because of the lack of base information, was unable to determine when the decline first registered in 2008 commenced, and have suggested differences in seagrass condition may reflect natural cycles or changes in environmental conditions.



Healthy Sea Grass Bed



Sea Grass Covered by Algal Epiphytes

The species of fish sampled using seine netting were generally consistent with those expected in shallow

Victorian estuaries. Overall 28 species of fish were sampled during April 2012. The use of electro fishing as well as seine and trawl fishing seemed to provide a better overall result. The report does state “black bream were noticeably rare in 2012 samples with only two individuals sampled.” No comment is provided in the report for lack of the most important recreational and commercial species in this assessment of fish assemblages. Looking back I wondered at this, given that in 2009 61 black bream were sampled over the same areas. This is a massive decline in black bream numbers from 2009. The question is not answered as to whether this figure is indicative of an overall decline in this species.

The report suggests the current study provides a valuable baseline for future studies in this area. This study now has five years of data and this may allow it to study seagrass growth and decline and the environmental effects on the seagrass. This will include investigating the effects of freshwater flows on seagrass, and the role freshwater plays in flushing the estuarine system.

**Editor.** Whilst these snapshot studies over 5 years are building up a bank of knowledge, little if any information on the current state of the black bream or dusky flathead stocks could be derived from the published information. The study of fish assemblages seems largely a comparison of the varieties of fish within the Lakes and provides no input as to the stock status of key recreational species. The study endorses the link between seagrass and juvenile fish but given the salinity level of the lakes it would seem the minimal research undertaken would suggest black bream are spawning well up the rivers and seagrass does not provide cover in this environment for small fish. Joel Williams a researcher from the Arthur Rylah Institute spoke in 2010 on his research into black bream in the Mitchell River and indicated that black bream were spawning at the syncline adjacent to the Highway Bridge.

He further indicated in an article entitled the Secret Lives of Black Bream that **in a 2007 study, the salt wedge was located within the Mitchell, Tambo and Nicholson Rivers and the majority of larvae, greater than 99% were found at sites where the salt wedge was in the upper sections of those rivers.** Perhaps with the increasing salinity and the movement of spawning black bream into those rivers greater emphasis might be placed on this movement, and the seeming fact that few black bream now actually seem to spawn in the lake system.

**Snapshot Studies.** These are short studies, at the same locations previously studied, to build up data in this case of sea grass and fish assemblages that can compare change. These snapshot studies were introduced by the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce and are an alternative to an expensive major study. For example, the last major study of sea grass in the Gippsland Lakes was undertaken in 1997.

## **Can Recreational Anglers Have Confidence In the Ministerial Advisory Committee?**

It is probably too early to answer this query however there are grounds for initial concern, and several readers have raised it with me. The area of concern is the specific area of the status of the fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes, and the advice from some members of this committee that may be at variance with the views of the thousands of recreational anglers who fish these lakes. I would suggest the interests of the ten commercial fishermen will be well represented, however who will speak for the interests of the vast number of recreational anglers who fish the Gippsland Lakes, and how will their views be sought?

When this body and its membership was announced I wrote to local member Tim Bull seeking his views on this question with particular emphasis on any discussion of protection of spawning fish at the mouth of rivers. You may remember the response of the local member was published in Issue 56 of this publication and it stated “it’s my belief that specific fisheries matters would be left to Fisheries Victoria where the expertise and knowledge of fisheries exists.” This is acceptable however there are already indications that the Ministerial Advisory Committee will make recommendations on fisheries.

At the launch of this body in Paynesville and reported in the Lakes Post Wednesday August 8th the Executive Officer Martin Richardson stated that **“the local fishermen and fishing industry can be better assisted on the Lakes by ensuring the right research was undertaken.”** And further the committee should **“make sure people are well informed about the economic importance of the fishing industry and that it relies on good quality water and good fish habitats. This will ensure that we can sustain industry into the future.”**

Now considering there are only 10 licensed fishermen on the Lakes and yet thousands of recreational anglers and tourists come to the Gippsland Lakes for the boating and fishing the lakes can provide, it would seem the major emphasis at this launch was directed to an industry that is somewhat in decline. It is the view of this publication that the best starting point for this Advisory Committee would be to apply

some of the \$10m funds committed to it over the next four years, to research the economic value of recreational fishing in the Gippsland Lakes, a study that urgently needs to be undertaken. This could then form a starting point to discuss the preservation of fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes. One might be a little alarmed that the early direction of this advisory committee might seem to be towards the preservation of commercial netting in the Gippsland Lakes.

A new website [www.gippslandlakes.net.au](http://www.gippslandlakes.net.au) “will provide a resource for community members to be better informed about ongoing research and more actively participate in discussion of the issues affecting all aspects of the Lakes,” according to Dr Peter Veenker chair of this new Advisory body.

See the letter from the Executive Officer Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee later in this issue.

### **An Impact of Recreational Fishing**

**Editor** It is necessary to keep in mind that in the five years to 2006 the number of powerboats in this state increased by 12,000 and most were associated with recreational fishing. This brought the number of powerboats in Victoria to almost 150,000, and if registrations are maintained at the same rate this could mean 200,000 powerboats on our waters in the next decade, and most are associated with recreational fishing. Whilst this increase in boat registrations will provide a boost to local economies it will also place enormous pressure on fish stocks in waters such as the Gippsland Lakes.

## **Odd Bits and More**



### **Craig Ingram Takes up a New Position**

I was interested to hear that former local member Craig Ingram has taken up the position of Executive Officer of the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory. (AFANT) He commenced in this position on Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> August.

This body is recognised by the NT and Commonwealth Governments as the peak body representing recreational fishing interests in the Northern Territory. This body represents a wide diversity of interests from shark fishery management to the NT mud crab advisory committee, and covers amateur fishing interests throughout the diverse NT area.

Craig brings a range of special skills and background to this position. He was originally an abalone diver, and then became the Australian President of the Native Fish Association, which was responsible for work on many species of threatened fish. Craig was a keen bass fisherman and journeyed to the backcountry fishing for this species on a catch and release basis. With his parliamentary background Craig would seem an almost ideal executive officer for this position, and this publication wishes him well.

### **Back from the Dead**

New research has found that the trout cod has come back from the verge of extinction and has been successfully re-established in the Ovens River. Arthur Rylah fish biologist Jarrod Lyon said “research shows that, thanks to the restocking program, the trout cod has come back from the verge of extinction in the late 1980's to now having a naturally reproducing, self sustaining population in the Ovens River as well as other sites within its former range.”

Now of particular interest to Gippsland's recreational anglers is that trout cod were found years ago in the Mitta Mitta River and according to Cadwallader and Backhouse in their book, “A Guide to

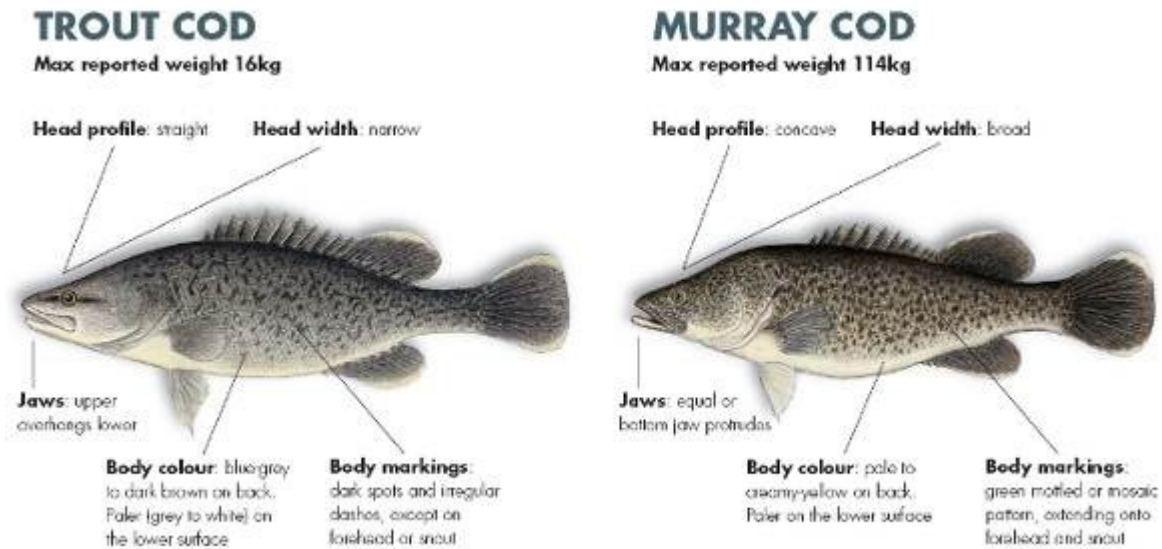




Freshwater Fish in Victoria” a trout cod was reported in the Mitta Mitta River in recent years. Trout cod were known to inhabit the upper reaches of the Mitta Mitta River as far as Blue Duck. This species is also known to be in the Upper Murray waters and in the Seven Creeks River system near Euroa as well in the Murray River below Yarrawonga.

The re-establishment of trout cod in the Ovens River and the natural breeding in that water is a major achievement in Victorian waters. Perhaps in the future the species may be re-established in the Mitta Mitta River. Trout cod are known to grow to 16lb and 85cms however most previously caught were between 2 and 3lb.

Trout cod today are a fully protected species, but perhaps in the future anglers may again have the opportunity to fish for this species.



I am sure our readers would be interested to hear if any anglers have in the past had experience of trout cod in the Mitta Mitta River.

### Lake Bolac and Estuary Perch

In a communication from Mark Ainsworth, of the Communications Branch of Fisheries Victoria, Marc



provided information on the monitoring of the 7000 estuary perch stocked in Lake Bolac. He provided photos that showed that these 1-gram fish when stocked were now in the vicinity of 9cms in length.

Readers will be aware that this publication had some doubts as to whether these small perch would survive given the 4-6lb Rainbow trout that had rapidly grown from fingerlings stocked some 12 months prior to the release of the estuary perch.

Marc in the message indicated “more estuary perch stockings are planned for Lake Bolac and other waters using fishing licence fees.”

Now this becomes very important for East Gippsland, as the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club has requested a stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers, as has the local Association of Angling Clubs. It is also noted that at the launch of the Lake Tyers Fisheries Management Plan in May 2007 recreational anglers had requested that Lake Tyers be stocked with estuary perch. Perhaps Lake Tyers will be one of the “other waters” to be stocked with estuary perch given the detailed background information provided to Fisheries Victoria of the existence of estuary perch in Lake Tyers in the mid eighties. Readers might recall that in the eighties in one year 1.5 tonnes of estuary perch were removed from Lake Tyers in commercial

nets, and the species never seemed to recover. We look forward to hearing in the future that Lake Tyers is “one of the other waters “ to be stocked.

I must admit I am just a little pessimistic about the future of estuary perch in Lake Bolac given the size of the Rainbow trout in the lake and the fact that most are caught on trolled lures representing baitfish. This lake was totally dry during the recent drought and one of the most amazing aspects of the lake since filling has been the growth rates of the fish stocked. Formerly the lake provided great eel and redfin fishing, however this has all changed with the introduction of Rainbow trout that grew to 6lbs in twelve months. The future of Lake Bolac will be fascinating to observe and I feel sure that anglers and researchers will, closely observe the fish stocks of this lake. It needs to be remembered that the estuary perch will not breed in Lake Bolac because they have no access to a saltwater estuarine environment. This means the estuary perch fishery in Lake Bolac if they become established, will be reliant on annual restocking. There is solid evidence that in the past estuary perch have spawned in Lake Tyers, so that hopefully in the future a stocking of Lake Tyers will lead to a self-sustaining fishery.



Would it not be beautiful to see the Minister, Mr. Peter Walsh, releasing perch into Lake Tyers as he did in Lake Bolac, as this photo shows?

## Lake Tyers Management Plan

### Response of Fisheries Victoria 18/5/2007 to a request for stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers.

“Feedback from recreational anglers indicated that estuary perch is currently not among the most popular target species in Lake Tyers. The limited available resources for lake Tyers have therefore been focussed on black bream and dusky flathead, which were clearly highlighted as the most targeted recreational species.”

#### Editor

What a strange response this was from the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, Dr Peter Appleford. Of course estuary perch was not one of the most targeted fish in Lake Tyers because numbers since the 1980’s had so declined, and this was the reason to seek a restocking, and the same argument applies today.



### Sea Spurge Follow Up.

The issue of the weed sea spurge affecting areas of the Gippsland Lakes was raised in the last issue of Around the Jetties by a reader who suggested if nothing were done about this weed within two years there would be a major infestation.



We followed this up contacting the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, and Bec Hemming a team leader stated the Authority was concerned at the spread of sea spurge and had mapped its spread. The Department of Primary Industries Emily Baggs, Bio Security Area Leader was concerned at the spread of this weed, however it had not been declared noxious and there was no eradication program being undertaken by the DPI. Parks Victoria was emailed and I received a reply that a person from Parks would get back to me with answers to my queries.

Gerard Callinan of the ABC morning breakfast program raised the matter of this weed as an issue of public concern in an interview with me. Following this broadcast Will McCutcheon Head Ranger



Parks Victoria (Eastern) provided a short report on the following day on the same ABC program. I wrote to Parks Victoria on the 4<sup>th</sup> August seeking to find out if Parks Vic was responsible for the areas of the Gippsland Lakes where this weed was occurring, and whether any eradication program was being undertaken. **I still have not had an answer from Parks Vic to these questions other than the radio response.** David Ellard, immediate past president of Friends of the Gippsland Lakes, did contact me and informed me that he was concerned at the reports and his group would investigate the issue of sea spurge.

## **Lake Tyers Reference Group**

The Lake Tyers Management Plan specifically stated that a Reference Group would be formed to “primarily oversee the implementation of the plan.” All submissions collected through the development of the plan would be made available to the reference group. It was specified in the plan that this Reference Group was to meet at least once every twelve months.

The first meeting was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and went from 9.30 to 3pm. This meeting was chaired by the Senior Fisheries Management Officer (Eastern)

**Fisheries Victoria has called no further meetings of this body since 2010,** and no submissions or correspondence has been supplied to committee members since that inaugural meeting. This raises the issue as to whether a reference group is needed and what is the situation with regards to other Management Plans or is this lack only associated with the Lake Tyers Management Plan. One meeting in four years almost certainly means that Fisheries Victoria sees little need for this body and community input into the implementation of this Management Plan, as Fisheries Victoria is responsible for calling meetings and providing material to the Reference Group.

I must say I do not think Lake Tyers has suffered from the inactivity of the Reference Group, due to the energy of local recreational anglers and clubs who have pursued issues such as track access, stocking of estuary perch, size limits of particular species such as dusky flathead, and boat access with great vigour, and the commitment of Fisheries Management to these issues, however the position and relevance of Reference Groups could do with some clarification.

### **Editor**

**(John Harrison represented local recreational anglers and I represented VRFish on this Reference Group.)**

## **Some Facts**

### **Black Bream and Fish of the Gippsland Lakes**

The largest commercial catch of black bream occurred in 1974/5 when 548 tonnes of black bream were caught. The commercial catch in 2009/10 was 36 tonnes. When considering other species, the commercial catch of estuary perch in 1988/9 was 24 tonnes and this declined to 2 tonnes in 1997/8 and nil in 2009/10. In 1915, 336 tonnes of yellow eye mullet were taken in commercial nets, whilst in 2009/10 the catch was a mere 10 tonnes.

### **Government Commitment on Protecting Spawning Fish.**

*This commitment of the Government, to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers has been regularly commented on in this newsletter, and is specific to the Gippsland Lakes where a number of rivers flow into the lakes and the area is currently netted by commercial fishermen within 400 metres of the mouth of rivers. This has long been a concern to recreational anglers in the Gippsland Lakes and a number of views of anglers have been published in this newsletter.*

*I was somewhat surprised to read in the VRFish monthly newsletter the executive officer reporting “We met with a member of the DPI’s Recreational Fishing Initiative team, responsible for the implementation of the coalition government’s election commitment of \$14.5m over four years. Our meeting focus was exploring the commitment to ‘Ensure commercial netting in the vicinity of river mouths does not interfere with spawning fish moving in and out of rivers during spawning season.’*

*This is a major issue for Gippsland Lakes recreational anglers, and what was an issue only associated with black bream now includes the protection of bass and estuary perch. What must also be included in any discussion is the practice of netting during flood events when commercial catches can drastically deplete fish stocks and impact on spawning fish.*

The above was a comment in the last Around the Jetties and is specific to a Gippsland Lakes problem that affects recreational anglers who fish the lakes and the inflowing rivers. It is unfortunate that no information has been forthcoming from VRFish or Fisheries Victoria on this meeting.

## Too Late to Protect Spawning Black Bream in 2012

It is unfortunate that the commitment of the Coalition to the protection of spawning fish at the mouth of rivers has not been introduced given that the movement of spawning black bream into the rivers is now well under way. Recreational anglers have strongly supported this move, however the black bream of the Gippsland Lakes, will again be harvested by commercial nets set within 400 metres of the river mouths. Fish entering the rivers to spawn and returning again to the lakes have to negotiate the nets to survive and remembering black bream are a species that cover vast areas of the lakes system. Perhaps we may see some protection for spawning fish before the 2013 spawning movement occurs. It would seem this protection is most necessary given the salinity of the lake system and the importance of the river for the spawning to 99% of black bream according to recent research.

## A Moment in Time

### Fishing Report for Week Ending 12 September 1988

#### Tambo River 24 years ago

*“The Tambo River is fishing well. Con Constantino and Sam Benenti of Preston caught 2 luderick, 5 mullet and 33 bream on worms along the Rough Road on Saturday; they were of good size weighing around 500grms. Pat Dunn and Judy Baldwin of East Brunswick hooked 11 bream and 1 luderick on sandworm at the mouth of the Tambo. Steve Cassar of Bacchus Marsh hooked 50 good bream on sandworm, the largest weighing 1.1kgs at the mouth of the Tambo over the weekend. Howard Charles of Frankston with John Campbell also of Frankston fished the Tambo for 75 bream to 620grms on sandworm at Marshals flat from Monday to Friday of last week. Terry and Mable Skeen of Williamstown landed 65 bream using sandworm at the Rough Road between Monday and Wednesday last week.”*

The above was supplied by reader Geoff Trusler from Weekly Fishing Reports published by Gippsland Tourism in the 1980's.

#### Editor

The above provides an accurate picture of what fishing was like in the rivers at this time of year, 24 years ago. Today very few anglers are fishing the Tambo and if you catch a keep able fish it is cause for celebration. We still hear suggestions from some that bream fishing has not declined, yet accurate reports such as those from this report really show the massive decline in black bream in the rivers and Gippsland Lakes. This report also indicates the numbers of visiting anglers coming to the area specifically for the black bream fishery. Today that is a rare occurrence. Unfortunately we have been observers of a massive decline in the black bream fishery over the last 24 years.

## Lake Hume Redfin



Over the winter months recreational anglers fishing Lake Hume reported that numbers of redfin had a skin condition, and gill problems. The DPI, CSIRO, and EPA undertook a detailed investigation, and it was discovered that the problem was not a viral infection but rather the fish were suffering from dermatitis and branchitis. Dermatitis was inflammation of the skin and branchitis is an inflammation of the gills and it was stated that there was no explanation for the problem, according to DPI Director of Fisheries

Management Travis Dowling. There was one report of a single yellow belly with some kind of a skin condition. Mr Dowling in a Media Release stated the DPI would closely monitor the situation, and any angler who finds something unusual should contact the DPI on 136 186.

This note is provided for North Eastern readers and is of interest to anglers generally.

## Letters and Comments from Readers.

The following letter was received from Martin Richardson Executive Officer of the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee. This follows Martin's request to be added to the mailing list of Around the Jetties.

Thanks Lynton

It never ceases to amaze me how much knowledge exists out there that provides not only good anecdotal information about the Lakes, but also some fascinating stories. I look forward to future editions of your newsletter and would love the opportunity to make a contribution that might inform your readers of the early focus of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. I never hesitate to make it clear that the Committee's role is to advise the Ministers on the future health of the Lakes to support development, tourism, fishing, etc.

You may be interested in the recently completed report on seagrass condition and fish assemblages – it's quite technical, but part of the work that we want to maintain to better understand and respond to the environmental issues around the Lakes. We have also put a series of other key reports regarding the health of the Lakes on our website – it seems to me that if taxpayers fund this research, it should be as widely available as possible, within reason, for them to read.

<http://www.gippslandlakes.net.au/reports/gippsland-lakes-seagrass-and-fish-survey.pdf>

Our intention is also to seek suggestions as to future research that is needed to better understand the Lakes (including some of the matters you raise about fish stocks, movements, etc.) and to make sure that the research that is conducted is widely communicated to interested parties for information and discussion. We obviously won't be able to do everything that the community wants, but identifying research gaps and opportunities is a high priority.

You may also like to inform your readers of the survey we are conducting to help understand broad community perceptions about the health of the Lakes - it's a starting point for the Committee to seek community input.

The survey can be completed on-line, under the "Have Your Say" section of our new website:

[www.gippslandlakes.net.au](http://www.gippslandlakes.net.au)

or by contacting me for a hard copy for those without access to the internet (my contact details below)

Happy fishing.

Martin

**Martin Richardson**

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**Editor.** This publication and I am sure its readers, recreational anglers, will look forward to any contributions from the executive officer of the Ministerial Advisory Committee.

### **Video Tapes Available**

In recent years we have upgraded TV etc. and now find we have no method of playing videotapes. In the 1990's Fisheries Victoria produced a number of tapes under the title "By Catch" and "Fin Clips". I have fifteen of these tapes covering a large number of interesting fishing issues. Some angling club may find



them a useful program for a meeting night or just a borrowing library item, or alternatively some anglers may have facilities to play these videos and be interested in obtaining this collection. The collection is free to a good home so if interested give me a call. 5156 4674

### **Late Item 31<sup>st</sup> August**

Two NSW men have been charged with abalone trafficking after being found in possession of a commercial quantity of abalone from the Point Hicks National Park near Cann River. The men aged 31 and 27 were intercepted by Fisheries Officers and police near Cann River on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Officers found 276 shucked abalone with some below legal size. The daily recreational catch limit is 5 abalone. The vehicle used by the men, a twin cab door four wheel drive utility, together with a mobile phone and diving equipment was seized. The men who also face a range of other charges associated with the incident were bailed to appear in the Orbost Court on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

DPI Director of Enforcement Michael Hodder said trafficking a commercial quantity of abalone (over 100) was an indictable offence liable to a maximum 10 years imprisonment or a fine of more than \$150,000.

### **Reminder**

Have you responded to the draft Fisheries Notice proposing the introduction of a 55cm slot size for dusky flathead. Remember this was negotiated by fisheries with anglers at meetings in Lakes Entrance and Mallacoota, and was the request of anglers to protect this very special flathead fishery. Your comments are required by Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September. Full details in issue 60 of Around the Jetties.

Send your comments to Zac Lewis, Fisheries manager, PO Box 440 Melbourne 3001 or email [zac.lewis@dpi.gov.au](mailto:zac.lewis@dpi.gov.au).

### **Boating Safety and Facilities Program**

2012/13 funding is now available for boat safety and facilities programs. This program will fund a range of initiatives by making boating safer and more accessible for all Victorians This year \$4.25m is available. A copy of the program information book and application forms is available by calling the Grants Administration team on 1800 337 222 or by emailing [boating\\_grants@transport.vic.au/grant](mailto:boating_grants@transport.vic.au/grant). Applications close on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

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

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the November issue due to a planned October cruise to New Zealand with the publisher of this newsletter.(Dawn) She needs a break. We aim at ten issues per year and with this issue we have produced nine issues.

**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 and if necessary seeking answers to queries..

**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 and the number of readers just continues to increase..

**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**