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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“The Lakes are becoming full of shags. They destroyed immense quantities of fish, and increased very rapidly. They were worse than rabbits, but a reward of threepence per head for them would clear them off.”

James Smith to the Select Committee upon the Fisheries Industry of Victoria 26th July 1892”
Peter Synan’s book “Highways of Water” Published 1989

Editorial

I was very pleased to receive on the 1st February a letter from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security the Hon. Peter Walsh MLA responding to some of my comments in the November 2012 issue of Around the Jetties. (Issue 63) This was a detailed 2-page letter and I will be providing some of the Ministers comments in this issue of Around the Jetties. I do thank the Minister for making a contribution to the discussion on matters raised, and I am sure recreational angler readers will appreciate the Ministers input. A matter that I have raised on a number of occasions has been the Government commitment to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers, and the lack of any action on this commitment. The Minister has written, *“The Victorian Government is committed to protecting spawning fish which aggregate around river mouths in the Gippsland Lakes. A range of voluntary or regulatory options to limit commercial harvest, particularly during flood events when fish are most vulnerable are being considered and will include scientific input and stakeholder consultation.”*

It is gratifying that this matter is being considered, however no information has been made available to anglers on this issue, and I feel sure that recreational anglers generally would hope that regulations are put in place as soon as possible to protect all species of fish that enter the lakes via the rivers to spawn. This of course includes the bass that are being stocked in the Mitchell and Nicholson Rivers as well as the black bream and estuary perch. I do not think that recreational anglers would be comfortable if voluntary options were imposed on commercial fishermen, rather than regulations that can be adequately enforced to protect fish at flood times and when spawning is taking place. Recreational anglers look forward to being consulted on this important matter.

The Minister raised a number of other actions that his Government had initiated including stocking the Nicholson River with bass, and the two million native fish stocked into Victorian waters, and the new dusky flathead regulations all of which had been dealt with in some detail in previous issues of Around the Jetties.

Cormorants on the Mitchell River

Reader Robert Rowe in a recent letter stated-
"I have one concern at the moment of black cormorants working the Mitchell River above and below the two bridges and also the backwater. I did a count of between 500 and a thousand in the area during the last month. I don't know what they are feeding on, but they must be taking a toll on fish stocks." I also had a phone call from Max Smith a well known Bairnsdale recreational angler who made the same observation but also noted the birds were at times heading further up the river.



I was interested in both comments regarding the number of Cormorants on the Mitchell River between the bridges. My initial reaction was to wonder given the recent work undertaken by Fisheries scientist Joel Williams that indicated that black bream were spawning very close to the Highway bridge on the Mitchell last year, then the cormorants could be feeding on very small bream or alternately there may be small fish from last years spawning event. There would be very little cover for these small fish as the Mitchell does not provide seagrass, and this is regarded as being most important for the survival of small fish and therefore cormorants working together in the Mitchell River may easily take the fish. It is surprising that pelicans working the same area are not reported as accompanying the cormorants as this often occurs on the Tambo River. I have seen no evidence of large numbers of cormorants working the Tambo, and this might mean that fewer bream are spawning in the upper reaches of the Tambo. There have also been authoritative sightings of large numbers of small bream and perch moving up the Mitchell River.



Whilst the problem of cormorant predation on fish stocks has been recognised for over 100 years, (see opening quotation from Peter Synan's book) it is only in relatively recent years that the problem has been studied

In 1957 a scientist John McNally reported on a survey of the large Black Cormorants that involved the shooting of 1995 cormorants and examining their stomachs over the period 1949-1995. This was important, as such a survey would not be carried out in future years and of course today the cormorant, is a protected species. McNally suggested from his research, that in the estuarine environment bream comprised 30% of a Great Black cormorants diet, and mullet also provided another 30%, with crustaceans and other small fish providing the balance of food intake. There is little doubt that the cormorant has an influence on stocks of black bream and mullet. McNally's research indicated that the large black cormorant weighed on average 5.5lb and ate around 1.5lb of food per day of which around half a pound was black bream. Of course cormorants with jaws that are capable of considerable distension, are capable of eating quite large fish, and I have an old photo of a cormorant with a 1.5lb brown trout that had been removed from its stomach, however it is generally agreed that cormorants favour small fish, and work as a team to catch them, and small fish depend on sea grass for protection, so it would seem to be easy for cormorants to obtain food in the Mitchell at the moment.

A further survey was undertaken in 1997, and published in 2001 by Jim Reside and Patrick Coutin, however because the birds could not be shot, the survey largely consisted of obtaining the regurgitated stomach pellets of cormorants from the Salt Creek roost, and examining these pellets to determine what the cormorant was eating. This survey reported that in the previous ten years the population of Great Cormorants varied from 200 to 7,800 around the Gippsland Lakes with at least 70% of the population nesting at the major Salt Creek roost, close to where the three major rivers including the Mitchell enter the Gippsland Lakes. This 2001 survey indicated, *“In 1998 Great Cormorants may have consumed about the same weight of black bream, yellow eyed mullet and luderick as the combined commercial and recreational catch.”* In 1998 based on stomach contents of the few birds captured with cannon nets the total fish consumption by black cormorants was estimated to be 261 tons of which black bream accounted for 126 tons. (The commercial catch of black bream in 1998/9 was 164 tons.) It should be noted that cannon nets were used in an attempt to catch Great Cormorants, however only three were caught and four drowned. These birds provided the basis for determining stomach contents, however a study of regurgitated pellets provided other evidence. This demonstrates the difficulty of getting information on the effect of the great Cormorant on the stocks of black bream, and perhaps the increasing importance of the 1957 McNally report given the number of cormorant stomachs that were sampled. The McNally report concluded stating, *“In estuarine waters the Great Black cormorant could be a predator of some significance on commercially valuable bream and mullet in the Gippsland Lakes”*

The 2001 report suggested annual surveys of cormorant populations and more surveys of regurgitated pellets to establish an estimate of fish consumption in the Gippsland Lakes should be undertaken but I am unaware of any further research on this question.

Large numbers of Great Cormorants breed along the Murray River and in inland lakes such as Lake Eyre and the Menindee Lakes after flooding, and then disperse to waters such as the Gippsland Lakes when the inland waters dry up.

The daily consumption of food is relatively similar in the two studies referred to here with McNally suggesting the great Cormorant having a daily intake of 1.5lbs, whilst the work of Reside and Coutin would suggest that the Great Cormorant would consume between 15% and 18% of its body weight with only a portion being black bream and mullet, however both studies found small black bream the predominant food.

I have attended Fisheries Victoria black bream stock assessments for the Gippsland Lakes over many years, and the impact of Great Cormorants on stocks of black bream has never been discussed in any detail, as far as I am aware, although the issue has been raised by recreational anglers on a number of occasions, the last being the 2012 Black Bream stock assessment. Given the lack of sea grass cover where the black bream are now thought to be spawning and the historically low numbers of black bream, the impact of Great Cormorants on this important species of fish should be considered as a priority. Whilst there are a number of species of cormorants on the Gippsland Lakes the Great Cormorant is the most abundant according to Reside and Coutin

Reside and Coutin concluded their study saying, *“Fisheries management plans should allow for sudden increases in predation of pre-recruits that may reduce the biomass of black bream and impact commercial and recreational catches.”*

The question is unanswered as to whether any fisheries management plans currently take account of the effect of the Great Cormorant on fish stocks and particularly black bream,

Control Of Cormorants

McNally in his research in 1958 indicated that no evidence existed to prove the culling of the Great Cormorant by shooting had any effect. This had been tried in the past, and a scheme for providing a bonus for birds shot had been discredited both in Australia and overseas. There does not seem at this time any method of controlling the predation of the Great Cormorant on fish stocks, and it needs to be remembered that cormorant predation applies to trout streams and inland waterways. I am aware of a program undertaken in Vermont and New York in the United States of oiling cormorant eggs. This was carried out on 7500 pairs of birds, and this eliminates the process of hatching. The eggs must be left in the nest otherwise more eggs would be laid. Whilst successful it would seem this would be labour intensive and thus very expensive and very difficult to organise given the areas where cormorants nest including areas along the Murray Darling Basin.

It would appear that the problem of cormorant predation of fish stocks, which has been with us for over 150 years, would remain a talking point when anglers meet. It seems there is considerable evidence of what is happening but Fisheries Victoria and recreational anglers have no current means of controlling

cormorant predation of valuable fish stocks, and they provide an added threat to black bream stocks in the Gippsland Lakes in particular

“New members on Fishing Grants Committee”

This was the heading on a Media Release from the Minister Peter Walsh MP on the 29th January. The media release went on to say “*three new appointments to the Recreational Fishing Grants Working Group will help provide the best advice to the Victorian Coalition Government on how to spend fishing licence revenue.*” Now what is different about the information contained in the media release is that the members of the Working Committee have actually been named. Readers of this newsletter would be aware that on a number of occasions this newsletter has been critical of the practice of keeping the identity of members of the working group confidential, in the belief that if they were named they might be lobbied on the decisions they made by recreational anglers. Whilst there was a VRFish member on the working group representing anglers his name was not generally available to anglers, and to maintain independence the chairman of this working group travelled from Sydney to chair meetings. **I believe this newsletter is probably the only fishing publication to publicly criticize the confidential nature of the Working Group and to argue it was an insult to Victorian anglers who through their licences contributed the funds to be allocated, and was certainly not an example of open Government.**

This Fishing newsletter congratulates the Minister on making the membership of this committee public.

The Working Group consists of seven members appointed for a three year term along with a VRFish representative and a person representing fishing businesses. The following is the membership of the Working Committee.

Independent Chairman Rob Loats,

Reappointed members-Russell Conway, Phillip Weigall, and Jennifer Allit.

New Appointees- Mathew Harrington (Inland Fishing) Neville Dance (South West Victoria) John Higginson (Marine Coastal Fishery) Stephen Relf (VRFish representative) Lynette Hogan (Business sector representative)

This group assesses applications for funding from angling clubs, community groups, councils and other agencies and advises the Minister on how if funded from recreational licence fees these projects would improve recreational fishing opportunities in Victoria.

What is not indicated in the Ministers press release is that Rob Loats is a 2012 Board member of VRFish, Russell Conway is the 2012 Chairman of VRFish and Steven Relf representing VRFish is a 2012 Board member and has previously served on this Working Committee. No background to the other members has been provided. This newsletter believes the naming of this committee is a substantial win for common sense however a small pen picture of the members and their background in recreational fishing would also be valuable rather than in some cases just being a name.

Editor

I was surprised at the cost of running this small committee. In 2011/12 only four meetings were held. One in Bendigo, one in Warrnambool and two in Melbourne and the cost including sitting fees, accommodation, air fares etc was \$22,739 or \$6,000 per meeting. This of course is funded from angler licence fees.



IMPORTANT

Artificial Reefs in East Gippsland

Readers will be aware this publication has on many occasions urged action on the provision of artificial reefs in estuarine areas and in particular the Gippsland Lakes.

Minister Walsh in his letter wrote “**Fisheries Victoria will undertake a consultative process to determine the location of inshore recreational fishing reefs in early 2012. The Gippsland lakes will be considered as a location for one or more of these inshore reefs. I understand Fisheries Victoria has invited you and others to suggest potential locations for reef installation.**”

The Minister is correct and I received this important letter from Richard Rogala of Fisheries Victoria on the 30th January.

Hello Lynton

As part of the recreational fishing initiative, Fisheries Victoria is progressing plans to deploy an additional; eight recreational fishing reefs in Victorian estuarine waters.

Following feedback from recreational fishing stakeholders, and internal discussions between Fisheries management and Science staff, a number of potential locations in the eastern half of Victoria will be considered for the deployment of the first four of the next eight reefs. Potential locations include Mallacoota Inlet, Lake Tyers, Gippsland lakes, Corner Inlet and Anderson Inlet, however preference will be given to those sites, which would provide maximum benefit to recreational anglers while minimising any impact on existing commercial operations.

In order to facilitate the selection process, Fisheries Management and Science staff will hold a series of consultation meetings with recreational fishing stakeholders in early February.

Regional Fisheries Officers will be invited to attend the following meetings that will be scheduled with recreational fishing stakeholders and the general community in their locality.

Tuesday 19th Feb 7.00pm Mudbrick Pavilion, Maurice Avenue Mallacoota.

Wednesday 20th Feb 7.00pm Gippsland Lakes fishing Club, Bullock Island, Lakes Entrance

Thursday 21st Feb 7.00pm DSE Offices 130 Commercial Rd Yarram,

Tuesday 26th Feb 7.30pm Anderson Inlet Angling Club, 88 The Esplanade Inverloch.

Discussions will also be held with commercial fishing stakeholders during February.

Editors Comment

These meetings are important, as this will be the first time that artificial reefs have been introduced into estuarine waters. Given the parlous state of fishing in the Gippsland Lakes I would hope this estuary would receive special consideration, however it will be up to the recreational anglers to put the case for reefs on the Gippsland Lakes. Readers might remember a letter I published from David Strange in January 2011. David has a jetty off Metung and he wrote-

“Out of frustration with the lack of action I have taken a different approach (approved by Gippsland Ports and the DSE) and have built my own artificial reef out of commercially available and environmentally approved “reef balls.” I have had these balls in the water for about eight months and after a slow start the amount of fish now populating my reef is quite noticeable, and I am really happy with the result.”

This reef was built under David's jetty. David's business is the Gippsland Lakes barge services and so he was able to actually build the reef himself, and he also had experience of constructing 150 fish habitats in the Brodribb River at Marlo. **This raises the interesting concept of jetty owners building reefs under jetties to improve fish habitat. Perhaps this is an option that might be discussed at the above listed meetings.**

A Major Project on the Tambo River

A major project has commenced and is being undertaken by the Lower Tambo Landcare Group on the lower Tambo River. This project is being undertaken on the eastern side of the Tambo River for 2kms to the river mouth. This is one of the most beautiful sections of the river and provides wonderful access to the river for anglers, especially the aged angler who wants to fish in close proximity to his vehicle with no steep banks to provide access problems.

The aim of the plan is to provide a basis over the next five years for rehabilitation and continuing development of the south bank and to mitigate the impacts of high pressure usage, and enhance recreational fishing, bird watching, and nature walking opportunities for people of all abilities.

This enthusiastic Landcare Group has a major task and facing challenges of poor track maintenance, poplars taking over the river bank, uncontrolled blackberries and other weeds, prolific numbers of rabbits,

erosion of river banks, and rubbish left by recreational anglers. What is most impressive is the plan to tackle these problems over 5 years at an estimated project cost of \$67,000+ of which \$15,000 has been funded from other sources in 2012, and \$4050 of recreational licence funding by the Small Grants Program is already in hand. There is in excess of 800 hours of voluntary labour associated with this project.

What is particularly pleasing for anglers is that a total of 25 sites have been identified for rehabilitation, and many of these sites will enhance safe all weather access to the river.

The following provide some examples of the work to be undertaken and the thoughtful approach to a major community project

Site 1 Area 3

Locals have developed this dinghy/kayak launching area. There is good parking for vehicles on the other side of the track. It is recommended that the site be retained for small boat/ kayak launch & retrieval.



Site 3 Area 2



Backfill with heavy gravel to provide level, stable fishing area. Place rock bollards to prevent vehicle access beyond existing post and level with gravel to provide stable area for vehicle parking

Site 2 Area 1



Popular fishing spot. Provide parking area close to bollards and widen track to compensate. Add extra rock to base of bank and level to provide safe fishing area. Provide bench seating

Site 5 Area 8

Raise track level with gravel and direct runoff water away from straight river access. Trim vegetation to provide safe pedestrian and management vehicle access



The above photos and commentary form part of **the Lower Tambo River Project Development Plan 2011 –2012** that will change completely the vision of this section of a beautiful river. Already some clearing has taken place and a fish cleaning facility has been installed.

I think all recreational anglers would want to congratulate Robert Irvine, President of the Lower Tambo Landcare Group and his workers. The planning for this major project is excellent and deserves the support of the community.

Editor

If you are interested in lending a hand with revegetation of denuded sites, planting shrubs and ground covers, Lower Tambo Landcare are always ready to welcome new members. Visit the Website Lower Tambo Landcare.com for further details and contacts.

In 1996 we grew from seed almost 5000 native plants including wattles and eucalypts in our back yard and then planted these trees with the cooperation of the Johnsonville angling club and the entire Swan Reach Primary school who were bussed to this area, planted the trees and then enjoyed a barbeque and cold drink before heading back to school. I obtained a grant for track upgrade and fencing of the plantations, which was carried out by the Tambo Nicholson River Management Board. This project cost \$14,000 excluding voluntary labour. For those remaining who were part of this initial 1995-1996 project, the current Landcare project provides a sense of fulfilment.

Fish Health Concerns at Lake Tyers.

Concern has been expressed at the health of some black bream in Lake Tyers in recent days. Bob McNeill fishing diarist reported that he had a number of reports of black bream with lesions on their bodies and a few with opaque eyes, and I have had one or two reports of seemingly a small number of fish kills. Research angler John Harrison reported on the 30th January that he had taken ten black bream that when filleted appeared okay, but on cooking had to be discarded as they went soft and “mushy.” John said that prior to this he thought mushy fillets were because caught fish were kept in keeper nets in lake water which is very warm (>24c) however he put his fish immediately on ice and yet had the same result of soft mushy flesh. He said he had reports from other anglers who described the cooked fillets as being like “mashed potato” and he described this as an apt description. Now this problem does not apply all bream and I have a number of reports that the black bream that were caught were in fine condition. There have been no similar reports associated with dusky flathead.

John Harrison reports on the 30th January “On two of my past three fishing trips I have been accompanied by a PhD research student (Studying stress indicators in bream) and we have been collecting blood, liver and kidney samples of bream within two minutes of capture. He has indicated to me that many bream show haemorrhaging of gills, and of fins and blood indications around the anal vent. Also indications of an enlarged spleen which he says are an indicator of stress.” John also noted that the eyes of the fish did not look normal to him although they were not opaque.

It is thought that this may be a parasitic infection of copepod (*Caligus epidemicus*), which is similar to an infection in black bream in the Lake Tyers estuary in March 2009. This is thought to occur with elevated water temperatures and increased salinity and a lack of oxygen in the system.

Currently John Harrison has been provided with dissecting equipment, by Fisheries Victoria and he is gathering samples from bream for further analysis in Melbourne. Certainly the temperature of the water in the lake is elevated and the salinity is high and oxygen levels are low and this is a factor in the current situation. When a definitive report is obtained, we will make it known to recreational anglers who fish Lake Tyers and hopefully this will be in the coming issues of this newsletter.

Thanks to John Harrison for the work he has undertaken to identify just what is happening to the black bream of Lake Tyers.

Odd Bits and More

Draft Gippsland Boating Action Plan 2012

Readers will recall the furore that developed with the release of the Draft Gippsland Boating Coast Action Plan by the Gippsland Coastal Board in early 2012. Meetings took place around the area with some of the greatest concern being at Bemm River where a recommendation in the draft plan could have meant limited access to this pristine fishing and boating area. Submissions from the public closed in June 2012.



Bemm River High Water Ramp under threat in this plan.

It was suggested in the plan that this ramp be only available for use by Kayaks and Canoes.

The following statement was then made-. "All submissions will be considered and summarised on our web site, with a discussion of how changes have been made to the document based on each of these submissions-Watch this space for announcements."

No announcement has been made nor has any comment on the submissions from anglers, clubs, and the general public been provided. It is stated the intent of the Draft Coastal Action Plan after the above procedure was for it to be forwarded to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. In the intervening eight months membership of the Coastal Board has changed including the chairperson. I just wonder will submissions ever be summarised and published on this website. An enormous amount of work from hundreds went into providing detailed submissions most opposing aspects of a most controversial Boating Action Plan. It is to be hoped that the Gippsland Coastal Board will make a response to those who provided submissions.

An Angler reports

A couple of days ago I had a phone call from Murray Scott a long time reader of this newsletter who reported that recently whilst quietly fishing on the backwater of the Mitchell River he was suddenly disturbed by a 5ft seal surfacing a short distance in front of him. Now Murray is 87 years old and he confessed that he had never seen a seal this far up the river. This might also be connected with the cormorants fishing in this area, and certainly it indicates the salinity in the river. Murray also reported the regular sightings of a stingray in the Bluff area on the Mitchell River. I said to Murray "well I imagine that was the end of your fishing" to which he replied "no strangely I caught an undersize bream soon after the seal left the area." Thanks to Murray for this fascinating observation.

Fisheries Victoria science capacity at Queenscliff

Readers of issue 63 November 2012 will remember the letter from fisheries scientist Joel Williams alerting recreational anglers to possible changes at the Queenscliff research centre which may adversely affect future research. Minister Walsh has provided the following statement on this matter.

“There has been a restructure of the science roles at DPI Queenscliff. Fisheries Victoria will now be focussing on priority fishery monitoring and reporting initiatives and will defer environmental aquatic science to appropriate University’s and Environmental agencies with expertise in these fields.”

Editor

My reading of this comment is that work formerly undertaken by fisheries scientists for other Government agencies will now be sourced from Universities and Environmental agencies with the fisheries scientists dealing only with specific issues affecting recreational anglers. Hopefully any decline in the number of fisheries scientists predicted by Joel Williams will be compensated by the changed role of fisheries scientists.

Final Report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee

I have just today 7th February seen on the internet the final report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, which was sent to me by a reader. This is a document of some 90 pages of photos and diagrams and what I would consider general comments in the area of fish stocks, and actions for the future fishing health of the Lakes. I will provide an outline of this glossy document in the next issue of Around the Jetties. I was surprised to read “*that overall most species though fluctuating significantly from year to year have not changed in abundance in the last thirty years. Exceptions to this include a rise in the number of European carp, and a decline in black bream,*” when the exact opposite has occurred and carp numbers have dramatically declined over the last eight years , The commercial catch in 2004/5 was 439 tonnes whilst in 2009/10 it had dropped to 25 tonnes, and this was put down to the increasing salinity of the Gippsland Lakes.

The document suggests supporting infrastructure such as filleting tables and other on land structures and I would have thought this was the least of infrastructure needs, to support a fishery in decline in this states largest estuary. I look forward to obtaining a copy of this document and providing a report in more detail for recreational anglers, but on the basis of what I have quickly read this morning I would not expect too much.

Moment in History

Photograph courtesy of the East Gippsland Historical Society.

Photo shows the Carstairs’ Brothers packing fish at Lakes Entrance in the 18909’s



“In the early days fishing in the lakes about 1881, garfish, at first very small but soon grew larger and became very plentiful and most of the fishermen started to work on them and some huge hauls, at times up to 100 buckets being caught in one night by one boat but 20-30 buckets caught in a night was most common.

There were also for a year or two, a great quantity of King fish, which were nuisance in the light mesh nets giving plenty of mending. The seine netters getting a few, but the most of them breaking through, being up to 70lbs in weight.

Capt Leggat and his son the late Tom Leggat with a short seine net in one haul on the bank where the fish pens now stands caught 500 baskets of luderick and chartered the steamer Lady of the Lake to take them to Paynesville to catch the steamer running to Sale.

My father and self with six perch nets about 300 fathoms in all by fireballing around fish we saw breaking the water in the channel opposite Frazer Island got 140 baskets of perch. It took two days unmeshing them.”

Extract from Lakes Fisherman John (Jock) Carstairs (1869-1952) Published Lakes Post June 2 1999

Editor

An interesting insight into what the Gippsland Lakes were like over 100 years ago. Perch are now seldom caught in the lakes by recreational anglers and luderick have become the quarry of the specialist angler.

Buyback of Commercial Licences

On January 11th 2006 the Government of the day put out a major media release headed “**Voluntary Buy-Back Big Win for Recreational Anglers**” This buy-back reduced the number of commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes from 18 to 10.

The buy-back was funded over five years using funds derived from recreational anglers licence fees, and as a result this buy-back cost the Government nothing. The Minister of the day stated “this is a significant windfall for recreational anglers who enjoy fishing in the area and make a big contribution to the local economy.

Readers will be aware that this newsletter has brought to the attention of recreational anglers the request of several commercial fishermen to have their licences bought out. Twelve months ago on the 21st February 2012 local member Tim Bull wrote, “*Through my office there have been approaches to have a voluntary buy-back of commercial licences put back on the table for consideration. I have advised the Minister of this and asked for it to be considered.*” We cannot ask more of our local member than he take this request to the Minister however it is somewhat puzzling that there does not seem to be a response. Does this mean licence funds are not available to fund a further buy-back or does it simply mean this Government is not interested in reducing commercial fishing pressure on the Gippsland Lakes even at the request of several commercial fishermen. Recreational anglers would support the buy-back of any commercial licences and the previous Government put in place a system for calculating the payment per licence based on the individual commercial catch over a number of years. I think many recreational anglers look at the improved fishing in Lake Tyers and Mallacoota and wonder why there is hesitation in offering more opportunities for a buy-back in the Gippsland Lakes. Perhaps we might have a response this year with a similar media release to that of January 2006 after all it could be a win win situation for commercial fishermen seeking out, and for recreational anglers who view commercial netting as having an effect on black bream stocks.

Macquarie Perch Get a Boost

The Coalition Governments \$16m Recreational Fishing Initiative is funding the production of fingerling Macquarie perch at the Snob’s Creek hatchery near Eildon. This is the same hatchery that is producing Murray cod Trout cod and Golden perch. Recently 22,000 Macquarie perch fingerlings were stocked into Expedition Pass Reservoir (5,000) near Castlemaine, Lake Dartmouth (5,000) the Ovens River near Myrtleford (6320) and the Goulbourn River near Trawool (6320). This is a major achievement as this wonderful species was seriously at risk in this state. Lake Dartmouth has Australia’s largest population of Macquarie



perch. Fisheries managers hope the development of the Expedition Pass Reservoir will provide a limited Macquarie perch fishery in the future as previous to this stocking 10,000 had been stocked in this water and some of these are reaching 28cms and doing very well.

I have reported in the past that Macquarie perch were once found in Lake Eildon and in the 50’s they entered the Jamieson River in vast numbers. In the Sun Newspaper about 1960 over one ton of Macquarie perch were taken from the Jamieson swimming pool, and within a couple of years Macquarie perch no longer moved into this river. In those days there was no bag limit and the fish were taken in great numbers. In almost a decade of fishing Lake Eildon, I only ever caught one Macquarie perch and this was a fish of around 3lbs taken in the main Lake Eildon off the bank. I have often wondered if Lake Eildon were ever stocked with this species would they again enter the Jamieson River annually as they did all those years ago.

In the Mail Bag

Watch those Ramps

The following letter is from Ian Fletcher of Newlands Arm

“G’Day,

On reading your article in the latest newsletter, regarding the mats placed on the boat ramps. These mats were placed on the ramp at Newlands Arm and were a success, however after a few weeks I have noticed that the slime is slowly growing back. When retrieving my boat last week, I was about to hook the winch cable to the boat and nearly had a fall. After a closer look I found the slime is creeping back.

I think a word of caution is in order.”

Thanks to Ian for this information. I also contacted Mark Frost of Lake Marine as he was the instigator of the original petition after a number of problems with local boat ramps and he stated he had no reports of difficulties with the North Arm ramps since the fibreglass mats were installed.



This 90cm dusky flathead almost certainly over 10lbs was caught early morning in Lake Tyers by Lewis Maddern. The flathead held in a damp towel is about to be carefully released.

It is rewarding to release one of these large female fish with the thought they could provide up to 3 million eggs and assist in retaining a top dusky flathead fishery into the future.

Printing and Editing Department

I am pleased to report the head of our printing and editing Department (and the only worker) has returned after a total hip replacement, (17th January) and as a result, instead of fishing I am undertaking home duties. I am looking forward in three or four weeks time to heading again in the early morning to the estuaries. Dawn is doing wonderfully well and hopes to be on one crutch within another week. She has edited and done the setting of this issue of Around the Jetties.

Next Issue of Around the Jetties

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the March issue. .

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. Following the January edition six new readers were added to our email list.

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