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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“Science underpins all the decisions we make about identifying opportunities to boost recreational fishing opportunities across Victoria. The combination of the fieldwork undertaken by our scientists, coupled with the huge efforts by angler diarists across the state build that knowledge base. Based on that work we can now go ahead quite confidently and design a program of building artificial reefs across Victoria for the benefit of all fishers.”

Anthony Hurst Executive Director Fisheries Victoria 11/6/2012

Editorial

There has been a massive amount of publicity and interest with the release of 300,000 prawn larvae into Lake Tyers a week or so ago. The Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria Anthony Hurst, was heard on Gippsland Regional morning radio discussing the release of prawn larvae in Lake Tyers. The release was actually written up with a photo on page 3 of the Age newspaper, and of course, regional newspapers had their reports generally accompanied by a photo of popular local member Tim Bull, in shorts, helping to release these larvae. (Most were released on the previous two days with a bucket kept for this morning release with the press and local angling club members in attendance.) All this went well and it is hoped that a further 1 million prawn larvae would be released at the end of this year. Two things occur to me. Firstly, Professor Suthers at the release suggested the catch from this stocking would be somewhere between 3,000 and 10,000 prawns. These figures suggest that between 1% and 3% of the larvae stocked will be taken by prawners if all goes well. To me this seemed a very small return. Secondly, if this is a highly successful stocking, then there will be demand for the stocking to continue annually, as this is largely a ‘put and take’ fishery. The question then arises would funding to maintain this stocking be available and from where would it be sourced. What would be the annual cost, remembering that this stocking and associated research was costing \$232,000. Only time will answer these questions, but I was surprised that they were not asked at the time of the release. Perhaps this release may provide information on estuarine stocking of fish species, and there seems little doubt that this may be the way of the future. However, commercial netting in the Gippsland Lakes will hold back any consideration of this important next step in this State’s largest estuary.

Prawn Stocking of Lake Tyers

On Friday 22nd February at 8.15am, on a morning when Lake Tyers was clouded in a sea mist, a release of Eastern King Prawn larvae took place at the number 2 boat ramp. This was the first release of Eastern King Prawns in Victoria and was part of a total release of 300,000 prawn larvae over the previous two days. At this

time it was expected that 1 million prawns would be released however due to unforeseen difficulties at the Queensland hatchery, 300,000 larvae were released on this occasion, with a further 1 million larvae hopefully to be released in October/November 2013.

Member for East Gippsland, Tim Bull, speaking at the release stated, “This is very much a stepping stone for Fisheries Victoria who will assess the success of the stocking to inform future projects of this kind, including fish species.”

The stocking was undertaken by the University of New South Wales and overseen by Fisheries Victoria. As noted previously in this publication the project was funded from the sale of recreational fishing licences, so the anglers of Victoria have a real stake in the success of this project. Prawns had previously been successfully stocked in Wallagoot Lake north of Merimbula and in the Merimbula back lake. Tim Bull bravely in shorts entered Lake Tyers and with Chris Setio from the University of NSW performed the final release of larvae before a representative gathering of local anglers, Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club members, Fisheries Officers scientists, and a member from the aboriginal community.



Chris Setio, centre and Tim Bull, MLA, right, release prawn larvae assisted by University of NSW Scientists. Below left, Professor Ian Suthers, and small prawn larvae.



Photos by Zac Lewis/Abalone Fisheries Manager/Fishery Management and Science/Fisheries Victoria and Editor, Lynton Barr.

Professor Ian Suthers from the Sydney Institute of Marine Sciences spoke at the release, and indicated that it will be of importance for local anglers to keep records of the prawns caught and sizes to indicate growth rates, and later to provide prawn heads for research. Further information will be provided to anglers on how they can help in future months. Professor Suthers stated that the worst scenario would be massive rainfall that filled the lake and caused a breakout. The prawns, he said, would immediately leave the lake and head north to spawn. Of the 300,000 prawn larvae that have been released Professor Suthers expected between 3,000 and 10,000 would survive and reach 12cms in size by Christmas 2013. A couple of months after Christmas those same prawns could reach a length of 15-17cms. The program for Lake Tyers involved Dr Mathew Taylor and Chris Setio from the University of NSW with Chris working at Lake Tyers periodically over the last eighteen months undertaking the necessary research prior to this release.

Agriculture Minister Peter Walsh has announced that Lake Tyers would be temporarily closed to commercial bait fishing until the 31st January 2014. I understand that two commercial bait licences apply to Lake Tyers. The cost of this project was \$225,000, and of course, if deemed successful to maintain an Eastern King prawn fishery in Lake Tyers further stockings would be required. I think the real value of this project may be in determining the value of stocking estuaries with not only prawns but with other species of fish. During the morning, I was informed that the stocking of NSW estuaries had ceased and an inquiry was being undertaken to examine the broad range of salt water stocking which included fish in NSW. On contacting NSW Fisheries,

I was informed this stoppage was to undertake an Environmental Impact Study on marine stocking and it was hoped that once this impact statement had been undertaken stocking would resume.

Background to this Release

Three million juvenile eastern king prawns were released in Wallagoot Lake and one million in the Back Lake at Merimbula in 2007 as the second part of a three year research project being carried out by researchers from the University of NSW. In that program, fish were caught from the prawn-stocked area and fish from a similar area only it had not been stocked in an effort to determine the amount of prawns consumed by predatory fish. About 18 million prawns are harvested Australia wide by recreational anglers with about 65% of these taken in NSW, and the eastern king is by far the major species of these prawns caught. Eastern King prawns have been the species normally caught in the past in Lake Tyers.

In 2010, Dr Mathew Taylor from the University of NSW released a study providing a preliminary assessment of the capacity of Victorian marine waters to support stockings of selected species and Lake Tyers was included in this study. He reported, *"that Eastern king prawns are occasionally captured in good numbers within the estuary, but such events are dependant on the recruitment of juvenile prawns to the estuary from Bass Strait waters."* He then made the statement that *"Eastern king prawns would make an ideal candidate for release in Lake Tyers and releases would be most ideal when the estuary had remained closed during the months of spring and early summer."*

Those conditions were met during this recent period.

In Dr Taylor's 2010 report, he made several observations on Lake Tyers that included *"larger mulloway have been captured in the estuary, but there are no records of juveniles occurring here."*

I would be interested if any of our readers have caught a mulloway in Lake Tyers, as I am totally unaware of such catches, however Dr Taylor added that mulloway should not be released in Lake Tyers because of its lagoonal characteristic. Another interesting comment was that *"because of the current small interest in estuary perch by recreational anglers, releases of this species in the estuary might not be justified."*

(This statement was made despite two submissions requesting stocking of estuary perch from submissions to the Lake Tyers Fisheries Management Plan in 2007.)

I spoke to Dr Taylor on this matter and he suggested the information regarding lack of interest, was given to him by a local Fisheries Officer. He does suggest that recruitment of dusky flathead from Bass Strait is limited because of the long closures of Lake Tyers and he adds, *"there is some evidence that the species has reproduced within the estuary."*

Now I think that every dusky flathead angler in Lake Tyers would be aware of the massive breeding in this estuary of this species, and with thousands of dusky flathead tagged in Lake Tyers and other waters there is evidence of only one dusky moving from Lake Tyers to another estuary.

Artificial Reefs for Lake Tyers and the Gippsland Lakes?

On the evening of the 20th February, a meeting was held in the Gippsland Lakes Angling Club rooms to look at the possibilities for artificial reefs in lake Tyers and the Gippsland lakes. The previous evening a meeting had been held in Mallacoota to discuss the same issue and in the next week, evening meetings would be held in Yarram and Inverloch. The Lakes Entrance meeting was attended by almost forty recreational anglers, all of who had hopes of artificial reefs being constructed in local waters.

This meeting came about as a result of an announcement in March 2012 by Agriculture Minister Peter Walsh of a *"huge \$1 million oceanic reef structure off the cost of Anglesea and Torquay, the first offshore reef in the state."* This major reef structure was financed by recreational licence revenue. In this statement Mr Walsh said, *"Another eight recreational reefs in addition to the three already deployed in Port Phillip Bay, would be constructed over the next four years using \$900,000 from the Governments Recreational fishing initiative."*

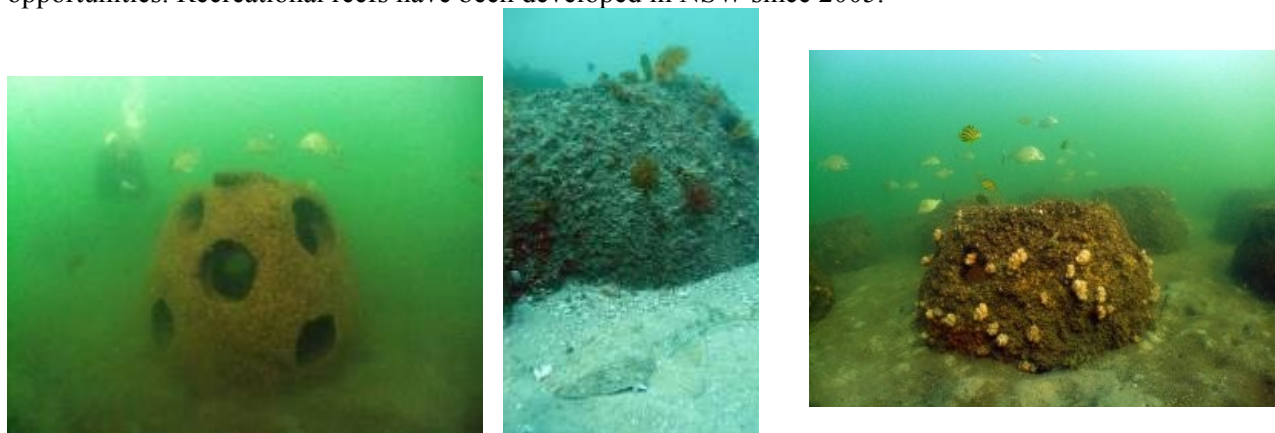
This statement provided the reason for this meeting as local anglers gathered to discuss the best options for reef placement in local areas and particularly the Gippsland Lakes

The reefs are made out of environmentally friendly concrete in the form of domes. Already an additional three pier based reefs are planned for Port Phillip Bay using \$400,000 of recreational fishing licence revenue. Obviously, Port Phillip Bay is now well catered for with reefs and the next step will be to provide reef structures for areas such as the Gippsland Lakes.

Richard Rogala of Fisheries Victoria introduced the discussion on the location of artificial reefs and fisheries ecologist Paul Hamer outlined the specifics that need to be considered in making any decision regarding reef location. The basic proposal was for those in attendance to develop a list of prospective locations that in turn would be examined by Fisheries Victoria taking into account any specific restraints such as the depth of the water, the substrata on which the reef balls would sit, and the general usage of the area suggested including boating movements and tidal pressures.

Paul Hamer pointed out that reef structures had been developed in Asia for hundreds of years and Japan had an annual expenditure of almost \$40m on further development of reef structures. Basically, in East Gippsland it would be expected that \$100,000 would be allocated to each structure. Questions were asked as to the perceived purpose of these structures and it was suggested that small fish and food sources such as crustaceans and crabs inhabit the structures initially, and once this occurs the larger fish follow to provide recreational fishing opportunities.

It was pointed out that the basic aim of developing these reefs was to improve recreational fishing opportunities. Recreational reefs have been developed in NSW since 2005.



A school of yellow fin bream on a newly developed reef, Dusky Flathead beside artificial reef and Barnacles, seaweed and schooling fish well established fifteen months after deployment. (Photos NSW DPI website)

The development of artificial reefs was aimed specifically at improving recreational fishing and involved funds from recreational fishing licences and the Government's \$16m over four years Recreational Fishing Initiative. With this in mind I found it just a little surprising that prior to the meeting with recreational anglers, a meeting had taken place with representatives of the 10 commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes. Despite several questions, no information on this meeting was supplied other than the fact that commercial fishermen had no opposition to a reef being introduced into the Gippsland Lakes close to the boardwalk at Metung. What was intimated following a question was that a commercial netting exclusion zone of between 400m metres and 1 km operated in Port Phillip Bay and a similar exclusion zone would probably apply to artificial reefs in the Gippsland Lakes. I find it somewhat difficult to contemplate that Fisheries Victoria needs to take into account the wishes of ten commercial fishermen when considering steps to improve the recreational fishing of thousands of recreational anglers who fish the Gippsland Lakes, the largest estuary in this state, (370square kilometres) particularly when those same fishermen have refused to meet with recreational anglers on matters associated with the Gippsland lakes since 2005.

The evening's discussion concluded with large aerial photographs being laid out, and anglers present had the opportunity to mark on those photographs where they thought reefs should be placed. Fisheries Victoria would examine the suggested locations and arrive at a priority list of locations. Some of the suggested locations included at the mouth of rivers to provide protection for fish vacating the rivers during flood periods as well as being an ideal location for fish in their movement into the rivers and from the rivers. A number of anglers suggested Bancroft Bay and the Barrier as areas providing great potential for artificial reefs. The main lake of Lake Tyers was also canvassed by a number of anglers as providing a good location for a reef arguing that the main lake had little natural habitat.

I raised the issue of private reefs under jetties financed by the Jetty owner, given there was already one example in Bancroft Bay of this taking place (with Gippsland Ports and DSE approval). I was informed that

Fisheries were unaware of DSE approval and it was obvious from the response that it was felt that such a development at no cost to the Government in the Gippsland Lakes was not an acceptable option. No reasons were given for this view.

As I left the Gippsland Lakes Angling Club rooms, the local anglers and the leaders of the evening program were in deep discussion as to the merits of areas for local artificial reefs. I think all who attended and Fisheries Victoria would have a sense of satisfaction, as anglers and Fisheries Victoria worked together to achieve a positive outcome on the location of artificial reefs in estuarine waters.

Surprisingly this innovative project by the Coalition and Fisheries Victoria received almost no publicity in the local media.

Editors Comment

I recently read in a file I had put away but reopened when examining this topic that in 2009 the installation of the fifth artificial reef in NSW took place *“located in the depths of Merimbula Lake, and measuring approximately 1600 square metres.”* Over 400 reef balls went into this reef, and it was expected that it would take 16-18 months to see large numbers of resident fish. Fisheries NSW expected recreationally important fish such as bream, tarwhine, flathead and leatherjackets to inhabit the reef. Reef balls in three sizes were used to create a complex fish habitat with the largest reef balls weighing 1,000 kilograms and being a metre high.

Bob McNeill's Lake Tyers Report



Bob McNeil is a diary angler who fishes Lake Tyers two mornings a week and he makes available to this publication his diary entries and his views on the period he has fished. This report covers the period from the 25th December to the 2nd of March.

Bob describes this period as a ‘good couple of months fishing using mullet.’ All fish were caught at the eastern end of the bottom lake and best results occurred when the flathead were feeding on small black crab. Bob also noted that he had a few poor mornings “when the weather was hot and calm.” Whilst not specifically fishing for bream in this period he did catch “the odd good sized bream on mullet. Bob makes the following observation that “flathead appear to be on the move similar to last year when about this time it was difficult to find

any concentration of fish.” Bob has also noted that the fish seem to stop biting at around 8 o'clock, and this is an observation that would be supported by early morning anglers, and is certainly my view.

In this period, Bob caught 151 dusky flathead and 11 other species. Only two dusky flathead were over the 55cm size limit with the largest flathead being 65cms. It was most unusual that not one flathead under 30cms was caught, and this has been my experience. The flathead were generally between 40-45cms and would appear to be from the one spawning. The other species caught were 9 black bream and 2 poddy mullet, and this again seems to indicate that very little in the way of other species entered Lake Tyers during the recent open period. Whilst I have done little fishing in recent weeks, I have had two outings and the flathead I have caught have been between 40-45cms, but what was surprising is that 50% of these fish were carrying spawn. Special thanks to Bob McNeill for his thought provoking observations on the fishing in Lake Tyers. By the way, the catch of two poddy mullet is quite rare with one of 45cms taking a live mullet and being hooked in the mouth

Ministerial Advisory Committee and Fishing and the Gippsland Lakes

In April 2012, I wrote to the Member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull MLA, raising to issue as to whether the newly formed Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) would be advising the Minister on issues associated with recreational and commercial fishing. Issues such as the protection of spawning fish at the mouth of rivers, given that there may be a **perceived conflict of interest** with some of the members of the Advisory Committee. Tim Bull replied *“my view is that this is an issue for Fisheries Victoria to consider rather than the committee, as Fisheries Victoria has controls over various fishing regulations, like closed areas, seasons, size and bag limits etc,”*

I raised this matter again with Tim Bull and Fisheries Victoria on the basis of quotes from the draft and on the response to my submission.

A couple of the statements of the Ministerial Advisory Committee are appended below, and there would seem little doubt that they see themselves as commissioning research, and examining fisheries management. (These are just a sample of a number of similar statements.)

* “Support and commission ongoing and new research into fish assemblages. Population dynamics, and habitat to inform and refine management of fisheries.”

And

* “Advocate for effective licensing rules to support a sustainable fishery.”

And

* “The management of the fishery will be considered in consultation with the DPI and the industry.”

The following response from Travis Dowling, Director of Fisheries Management and Science provided Fisheries Victoria’s view of the question I raised.

“The intent of the Strategy is to inform the MAC in making recommendations for managing the health of the lake system using the Gippsland Lakes Environmental Fund. Fisheries Victoria (DPI), however, has the ongoing legislative responsibility for managing all fish resources in the Gippsland region and the state of Victoria. Fisheries Victoria will continue work with the MAC, recreational and commercial fishing representatives and other relevant stakeholders when managing fisheries resources in the Gippsland region.”

This response would seem to indicate that the MAC will be responsible for the \$10m allocated to it over four years, and some of that funding may be directed to exploring aspects of the Gippsland Lakes Fisheries including its management. Recreational anglers should be aware there is a commercial fisherman on the MAC, however there is no specific representative of recreational fishing.

I have sought a copy of the recommendations that are being made to the Minister by this local committee and also a list of those who have provided submissions to the original draft, but have had no response to this request. I would hope VRFish would seek a copy of the recommendations made to the Minister. I doubt that VRFish the peak recreational body is even aware of items in the original draft that may affect recreational anglers. Recreational anglers should be made aware of just what is meant by “effective licensing rules,” and what is meant by action to “refine management of fisheries.” Does licensing need changing or fisheries management need refining?

There are many questions that need to be answered by this local committee of thirteen members as to how their advice affecting recreational fishing, fisheries management and research will involve actual recreational anglers and their clubs. Full details of the membership of the Ministerial Advisory Committee were published in Around the Jetties Issue (56 April 2012.)

Just what is further confusing is that this committee will report to the Hon Ryan Smith, Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change, however the Minister responsible for Fisheries is the Hon Peter Walsh whose portfolio as Minister for Agriculture covers fisheries in the state of Victoria. Perhaps we might eventually see the recommendations made by this local committee to the Minister for the Environment and be able to assess those affecting the depleted fisheries of the Gippsland Lakes and tributaries.

Odd Bits and More

Eat More Local Fish?

In the draft prepared by the **Gippsland Lake Ministerial Advisory Committee** the following statement, dealing with commercial fishing in the Gippsland Lakes appears on page 48.

“The commercial fishery in the Gippsland Lakes provides fish to wholesale and retail markets in the Gippsland region (and elsewhere) which also provides an attraction (to eat locally caught fish and see the fleet in the harbour) to visitors and residents”



I was interested in this vision of local fish namely Gippsland Lakes fish on menus and available locally and thought I would test the accuracy of this statement. On Saturday the 23rd February, I approached the Omega 3

shop, possibly the largest fresh fish retailer in Lakes Entrance and asked for black bream filets or whole fish. I was informed that this outlet had not had black bream for some years and anyway the lady behind the counter quickly stated, “Omega 3 does not sell Gippsland Lakes fish.”

I then went to the Ferryman’s fish outlet and when I asked about the availability of black bream, I was told I was lucky because they had two black bream around 30cms whole and gutted. The price was \$19.95 per kilo whole, which would probably equate to over \$35 for a kilo of filets. In talking to the chap in the shop, he said there was very little demand for black bream, visitors would go and catch them with a line, but never seemed interested in buying black bream. You would need to order a fish to be sure of getting a black bream locally. They had a couple of whole flathead from the lakes and a couple of filets of tailor that had been caught in the lakes but little else. Both outlets had an excellent array and variety of fish from the trawlers.

It seems the vision of black bream and Gippsland Lakes fish in fish shops in Lake Entrance is somewhat of a mirage. It is equally difficult if not impossible to find a menu at our restaurants clubs or hotels with Gippsland Lakes fish regularly advertised.

This statement on the role of commercial lake fishing in the Gippsland Lakes and its effect on local fish supplies and tourism in the glossy draft of the Gippsland Lakes Environmental Strategy to be presented to the Minister is only a vision. The reality may be that commercial fishing is one of the greatest handicaps to the growth of tourism with its unfettered netting of key recreational species in this states largest estuary.

Fish Movements in the Mitchell River

In the last issue of Around the Jetties, I published angler reports of schools of fish moving above the highway bridge. Since then I have had a report from John Banks on the 12th of February that whilst walking in the area of Picnic Point seeing school after school of mixed size bream moving upstream. The fish according to John ranged from 10cms to over 35cms. John said he saw anglers in kayaks attempting to catch these fish using lures and bait however, they were totally ignored by the fish that seemed intent on the movement upstream. Talking to some anglers and scientists the question was raised as to whether with decreased river flows in a dry period the salinity of the Gippsland lakes had increased, and these fish were moving to find the brackish water that they normally inhabit.



In the minds of older anglers I have spoken with they all indicate they have never seen a migration like this. On the other hand, Rob Irvine reported he took his grandson fishing on the Tambo in early February, and the river seemed alive with small tailor of 10-20cms, Rob said they were in the river in thousands but again would not look at bait or lure. This would be a very interesting time to have the salinity levels of both rivers tested.

Relevant to the same question is the interesting call I had from angler friend Clive Blackwood who was fishing with Cyril Morgan up past the second bridge on the Mitchell when they came upon an “enormous” seal sunning itself on the riverbank. Clive suggested that this seal was half as big again as the seal that settled itself close to the Johnsonville ramp a couple of years ago) Fortunately I took a couple of photos of the seal at Johnsonville, see Photo at right, and if as Clive says, the seal on the Mitchell was half as big again this was a truly an “enormous seal.”



What this sighting does is it adds to the question of water salinity in the Mitchell River and its effects on the fish stocks.

It is plausible “ that as a result of the lower than normal freshwater flows into the lake, fish were moving further upstream to find lower salinities, and this may have been contributing to the decline in catches across the Gippsland Lakes.”

Fisheries Scientist Joel Williams in an article “the Secret Lives of Black Bream” 23/8/2012

Television-Tourism and the Gippsland Lakes

I was fascinated to read in the Bairnsdale Advertiser of the 22nd of February a report on Paul Worsteling's visit to East Gippsland for his IFISH television show. He and charter operator Frank Milito are pictured with a bream in each hand on their boat midstream above the Lind bridge on the Mitchell River. According to East Gippsland Marketing's Kadri Kutt, this current venture is one of great benefit to East Gippsland, and in particular the Gippsland Lakes area. I can accept this as a marketing statement, but then Ms Kutt enters an area where she has little knowledge when she states-

"It just shows how the Gippsland Lakes is a prime fishing destination, and I guess it highlights and confirms that the lakes are 100 per cent in a healthy state."

The facts are that the Gippsland Lakes are no longer a prime fishing destination, the health of the lakes with its increasing salinity and declining seagrass is questionable, and the fact that black bream who would seem to have moved from the lakes to escape the increased salinity, highlights not the health of the lakes, but the increasing problems facing the Gippsland Lakes most iconic fish. Perhaps if tourism and marketing of the Gippsland Lakes actually supported a recovery plan for the lakes and its recreational fishing opportunities then the Gippsland Lakes might return to being a prime location as it was in the 1980's, and tourism would be the major beneficiary. *(See the next item The future of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.)*

The Future of Black Bream in the Gippsland Lakes

A study published in the Marine Ecology Progress Series 2010 gave some indication of what the future may hold for black bream in the Gippsland Lakes due to decreasing fresh water flows. Sampling of the Mitchell, Tambo and Nicholson Rivers in the last dry period when fresh water inflows were low showed that significant black bream spawning occurred well upstream from the lakes, and the work of scientist Joel Williams showed black bream were spawning close to the highway bridge in the Mitchell River. Added to this acoustic tagging has shown that when conditions are dry black bream spend a majority of their time in the rivers. This paper suggests that because of the poor freshwater inflows and the spawning upstream there has been reduced black bream recruitment. This has been reflected in the commercial catchrates and also the catchrates of anglers. I provide a few lines from the conclusion of this paper that should be of concern to all Gippsland Lakes anglers.

"Decreased freshwater flows predicted for the Gippsland Lakes region under climate change are likely to lead to increased salinities and decreased stratification in the Lakes, limiting the spawning habitat to tributary rivers, and potentially reducing the bream population levels in the Lakes."

The paper also suggested that water managers should "aim to maintain intermediate flows into the Eastern Gippsland Lakes of at least 3000ml over the July- December period to sustain a healthy black bream population."

This paper was written by Gregory P. Jenkins, Simon D. Conran, Alexander K. Morison, of the Queenscliff Marine and Freshwater Research Department of the DPI.

Editor

Given the above research on the effect of the lack of freshwater flows into the Gippsland Lakes, and its effect on the spawning and overall black bream population of the lakes, and then add to that situation the ability of commercial fishermen to remove vast numbers of spawning bream from the mouths of these rivers during flood events, it would seem we have a recipe for the destruction of the black bream population of the Gippsland Lakes. Take the 2007 event. In 2006/7, the commercial catch of black bream was 49 tonnes, in the following year when the flood occurred this catch of spawning fish rose to 144 tonnes of black bream, and then the following year fell back to the normal 36 tonnes of black bream. Over 100 tones of spawning bream had been taken to boost the incomes of a few commercial fishermen, whilst the results of this massive catch may have a prolonged effect on black bream and recreational angling in the Gippsland Lakes into the future. The recent dry spell gives a glimpse of the future for black bream.

I have received information that West Gippsland CMA has retained a firm (Thiess Environmental) to establish six salinity-monitoring sites on the Latrobe River between the Swing Bridge and Lake Wellington. Perhaps the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority might consider a similar study of salinity in the Mitchell and Tambo Rivers.

Golden Perch for Lake Eppalock

The Premier of Victoria in a media release on the 13th February announced that Lake Eppalock would be stocked with an additional 130,000 golden perch this summer and next summer to accelerate its recovery after the drought. This will mean that the stocking rate will rise from 70,000 per annum to 200,000 per annum over the next two years. In addition to this, the Heathcote Angling Club will stock an additional 12,000 golden perch fingerlings with money they have raised themselves. Lake Eppalock was a premier golden perch fishery a decade ago and attracted anglers from a wide area and it is hoped this native fishery will be restored. Since November 2010, this lake has also been stocked with 125,000 Murray cod. This stocking has been funded by the coalitions Recreational Fishing Initiative, as well as the proceeds of recreational angling licences.

The Status of the Maasbank Trawler



Following queries by surf anglers regarding the Maasbank netting within 100 metres of surf beaches where anglers were fishing, I raised the matter of netting close to surf beaches and the regulations covering this boat. Travis Dowling Director of Fisheries Management and Science provided the following information.

“The Maasbank trawler is the vessel that operates under the only Purse Seine (Ocean) Fishery Access licence that is issued by Fisheries Victoria. The vessel operates out of Lakes Entrance. The licence holder is entitled to take a list of authorised species specified in the licence, which

includes pilchard.

Certain commercial fishing equipment limitations are imposed under the regulations. Once the pilchards (or any other authorized species) are caught they can be sold to any market locally, interstate or globally.

As Fisheries managers we believe industry should be provided the opportunity to source the best markets and achieve the best value for their product.”

Editor

I thank the Director of Fisheries Management for the clear statement covering the licence of the Maasbank purse seine trawler. It seems to me that it should be possible that when Fisheries Victoria grants a licence for the Maasbank, to net along our beaches, that an agreed exclusion zone to provide surf fishers on local beaches a level of protection from the seine netting of waters where they are fishing. This exclusion zone in close proximity to Lakes Entrance should be included as part of that licence given that this trawler has almost 100 miles of beach available for netting. This would seem a small request given that Fisheries Victoria looks after the interests of anglers and the Maasbank and the development of an exclusion zone would provide for both anglers and define the conditions under which the trawler operates in proximity to local beaches. Perhaps as a discussion point an area of fifteen kilometres either side of the entrance at Lake Entrance should be free from seine netting by the Maasbank.

Dry Weather Affects European Carp.

Reader Ken Sherring provided the photos of dying carp in a swampy area at the end of the Clydebank Nature Reserve, Bengworden Rd, east of Sale.



Ken reported hundreds of dying carp, all large fish and a flock of pelicans enjoying the harvest.

VRFish and Communication with Anglers

During January I had a three-hour talk to the current chairman of VRFish, Ross Conway who had been fishing in Lake Tyers and dropped around home for a yarn and joined us for lunch. Ross pressed me for things that VRFish could be doing better, and I listed a number however the single most important need is for better communication. I indicated to him that anglers had heard nothing from the Peak body in the two months prior to Xmas, and I could add now, nor nothing in the almost three months since Xmas. I suggested a fortnightly email to clubs, interested individual anglers and newsletters such as Around the Jetties, and that this could be achieved at no cost and with minimal effort.. This would immediately provide a communication network. The average angler has no idea of the issues that VRFish are pursuing on behalf of anglers, and it would seem that any claim VRFish represents anglers is difficult to substantiate, if there is a total lack of communication. If anglers knew issues that were being undertaken they could respond and VRFish could take account of their views. I offered to provide publicity on issues being pursued by VRFish to almost 10000 readers, but again have had no response.

There are many other things that VRFish could do better, but until it develops a model of communication, and adheres to the need to communicate with anglers, it is difficult for VRFish to claim it represents the needs of anglers.

The next issue of Around the Jetties will be the April 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.*



Good Health and Good fishing

Lynton Barr

A Lifetime of Fishing

A Moment in Time with Allen and May Beveridge

Over the years I had heard of this wonderful fishing couple from numerous friends and their special relationship with Lake Tyers. I had met them both previously however I arranged a wonderful hour or so discussing with May and Allen Beveridge some of their memories of a lifetime fishing Lake Tyers and other East Gippsland waters.

Allen and May photographed with Jodie Simpson, Fisheries Victoria officer, at Lake Tyers Prawn Release.

This meeting came about after the response to an article on two other anglers, Jennie and Jimmy Crane, which I wrote for a previous issue of *Around the Jetties* and that item created great interest, and the simple fact is that I have a real interest in the early history of angling in our area. I sat at the kitchen table with Allen and May and we talked, commencing with their early memories. Allen was born in April 1925, and his early memories of fishing were riding his new bike, that had cost 18 pounds to Cherry Tree with his rod tied on to fish this delightful piece of water. I was surprised when he said the bait used was invariably shrimp they caught in the area, and they had a billycan tied to a tea tree that they boiled the shrimp in prior to using. I had never heard of boiling the shrimp prior to using. Allen said the shrimp were plentiful and they were also large and a top bait. Allen loved that bike and it gave him access to a wide range of areas for both his fishing and trapping rabbits. He quietly said he kept the bike in his bedroom as it was just so special and I imagine 18 pounds in those days would be a lot of money today. Allen remembered as a young fellow going up the Trident at night with an old battery and light, which he said did not give very much light and spearing fish in the shallows using a homemade spear. This was really young lads following in the footsteps of the local aboriginals who were expert at spearing fish in the lake for food, and for Allen it was just a great evenings fun with his mates.

In those years (the 1930's), Allen observed the great schools of bream returning to the main lake after spawning in the upper reaches of the Toorloo Arm. In the area of Cherry Tree and Burnt Bridge they could be seen as a massive body of fish breaking the water on their return journey to the lake, however they would not take a bait. My thoughts as Allen spoke went to the local request when the recent Lake Tyers Management Plan (2007) was being developed, to have the spawning areas in the upper reaches of the Toorloo Arm around the lime kilns closed to fishing, however the Steering Committee refused this request. Perhaps if this committee had included an angler like Allen they may have understood the annual movement of black bream to spawning grounds, but that's another story of a committee with little local knowledge making decisions that have long term effects.

Allen remembers large numbers of Eastern king prawns being in the estuary and using an old carbide light and a pipe made of chicken wire, putting the pipe over a prawn and then reaching in to retrieve the prawn. Alan made the comment that they didn't have prawn nets in those days but they could still often catch half a sugar bag of prawns of an evening. When he was around 14 Allen had an excess of fish he caught and he sold some of his catch for 6 pence per pound to local fish shops, It was a great life for a young lad. Allen also remembered Billy Wilkins a local professional fisherman, who took the fish he caught in Lake Tyers to Lakes Entrance in his horse and dray.

In 1947, Allen and May were married after an engagement that included evenings prawning and chasing flounder in the lake, a great way to begin life together. May was keen on fishing before she met Allen, and spent time trout fishing near Traralgon, so in many ways these two were made for each other. Since that time they have fished together, and still do. Allen said that in those days it was nothing for the two of them to go and spear half a sugar bag of flounder, and it was great fun. As he thought back on those days Allen said "its all changed" for in those days you would get a great variety of fish, when species caught included salmon, tailor leatherjackets, luderick, gurnard and even snapper and it was normal to have 5-6 varieties of fish in your bag from a days fishing.

Up until after the second world war, fishing was done from skiffs. These were wooden boats with a V bottom propelled by oars and they could easily cover a reasonable distances with one pull of the oars. Most anglers fished from skiffs and it was not until after the war that boats with outboard motors started to appear on the lake. Allen and May had a skiff, and of course as a family arrived from a very early age the children accompanied mum and dad in the skiff. Needless to say the interest in fishing has extended to sons and daughters and grandchildren.

Allen and May have a very special love of the Devils Hole area of the Nowa Nowa Arm, and May suggested it was wonderful to sit back in the boat in that area and listen to the Lyre birds in the bush. May said she counted 13 different sounds mimicked by one bird including a range of birds and even a chain saw. Allen remembers one early morning in winter the boat breaking a covering of ice on the water as they travelled to Devil's Hole. My immediate thought was that you had to be keen to fish in those conditions, and to be actually breaking ice on the water in that secluded area, fishing in the early morning. The other area that they loved to fish was Tamboon Inlet, and they bought a small hut in the area of Peach's Creek, which was later removed by Parks

Vic. This was a sadness as this area had many special memories for the family and wonderful days of fishing that included a 10lb dusky flathead caught by May.

In a lifetime of fishing one always has those special moments. Allen remembered at Mallacoota, the Betka River being closed to the sea, and yet at high tide some waves washed over the bar and into the Betka River. In these waves were dozens of yellow fin bream, and some were left high and dry on the sand bar waiting for the next wave that would hopefully wash them into the river. Allen pondered at the instinct of these fish to get into the river, and perhaps it was a spawning instinct similar to the bream in the Toorloo Arm, and this is but one of the many memories that two wonderful anglers shared with me.

I was taken into the lounge room where a large open cabinet had pride of place, and this cabinet was filled to overflowing with fishing trophies, including a Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club Life Membership award for May and Allen. May confided that they had both been Club Champions on eight occasions. We had afternoon tea still talking about the sport of fishing. It was at this time that May handed me a yellowed newspaper cutting of years ago. It described how an angler (Allen) whilst fishing had a tiger snake attempt to get in the boat. Our angler whacked the snake with an oar, which he thought despatched the reptile. He had the sudden thought that May would be interested in seeing this 3ft 6 inch snake, so he put it in a bag in the boat. When he got home he tipped the snake out on the lawn only to find the snake very much alive and very angry. According to May it was duly despatched a second time with some nearby barbeque tools. Allen commented on the fact that the fishing had improved since commercial netting was removed from the estuary, and he regards the fishing today as still very good in this beautiful estuary.



We talked about how one never really masters and totally understands this sport of fishing. As an example, Allen said with a grin that he had talked to a chap at the fishing ramp in the last couple of days who had caught 6 bream, 2 gurnard, 2 salmon and a tarwhine in Lake Tyers using salmon filets for bait, and this led talking about a young couple I described in Around the Jetties fishing in Lake Tyers and catching dusky flathead on chicken slices, and their catch included a luderick on the same bait. Fishing is a wonderfully surprising sport and one continues to be amazed no matter how long one fishes.

As I left this great couple, with a large seed tomato in my hand from Allen's huge vegetable garden, May said to me, "If you are going to write our story do mention how much we love our angling club, and how many wonderful friends we have in this club." I think any angling club would be proud to have members like Allen and May Beveridge. They are special people. In this next month both May and Allen will celebrate their 88th birthdays, and what is not surprising is that this celebration will take place at Bemm River.

Just a Note. Allen and May's estuary boat is a 4.8m wooden half cab powered by an outboard motor. This broad beamed boat built by a local, "Pop Harwood," was bought new for 500 pounds in 1965.

In a couple of years this boat will be 50 years old.

