

Lynton.G.Barr
P.O.Box 23
Swan Reach 3903
Victoria
Phone 03 5156 4674
Email- delbarr1@bigpond.com



Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“If the bass is a tempestuous fighter, and the rainbow trout a freshwater acrobat, the Australian salmon is an aerial show off. Nothing suits him better when not weighted down with 6ozs lead, to tail walk across the water in a flurry of spray. He can throw a spinner faster than you can blink the salt spray from your eyes. This all adds up to the fact that the salmon is a worthy quarry for the most experienced saltwater angler.”

Fishing in Australia by Lance Wedlick (1962)



Editorial

Almost certainly the biggest news for recreational anglers of this state is the late news (5/6/2013) indicating a restructure of Fisheries Victoria’s most senior management. This is a shock to anglers, many of whom had grown to admire the energy and enthusiasm of Anthony Hurst and Travis Dowling. We have seen the development of Eildon and Nagambie, as major freshwater fisheries, and of course the development of snapper fishing in Port Phillip Bay, but of great significance was their leadership in the recovery of so many waters after the recent drought, and probably Lake Bolac and Toolondo are fine examples of this recovery.

Having observed Fisheries Victoria, since Dunbavin Butcher, led this department in the early sixties, I would regard this current administration as one of the best. I am sure recreational

anglers will wish Travis Dowling well in his new position, and we may see him occasionally fishing on one of the arms of Lake Tyers, one of his favourite spots.

NSW Considers Review of Fishing Regulations

The NSW Department of Primary Industries has produced a discussion paper putting forward suggested bag limits for both saltwater and freshwater recreational fishing, and is calling for submissions from anglers to comment upon the discussion paper proposals. The following are a few items from the discussion paper that I thought would be of interest to Victorian anglers.

Concern had been expressed in NSW that since the regulations were last examined (2007) that bag limits for what they called “bread and butter species” was excessive and scientific surveys had indicated that these bag limits are rarely reached. (Less than 1% of fishing trips) This provided background for the discussion paper to look at bag limits.

For the following species it is proposed the bag limit be reduced from **20 to 10 fish** - Flathead (All species except dusky flathead) Yellow fin bream, Black Bream, Tarwhine, Tailor, **Trevally** Luderick.

It is proposed that the following species bag limit is reduced from **10 to 5 fish** - Dusky flathead with a minimum size limit of 36cms. (Victorian regulation Minimum size 30cms maximum size 55cms with a 5 fish bag>)

Snapper (Victorian regulation 10 with no more than 3 fish exceeding 40cms)

Generally deep-sea species have been reduced from 5 to a bag limit of 2

A Closed Season

Another proposal is to extend the closed season for Australian bass and Estuary perch in all NSW waters by one month to protect migrating bass and perch during their spawning season. The period May 1st to August 31st.

(In Victoria no closed season for either species.) Perhaps this option should be examined by Fisheries Victoria.

Fin Clipping

An option was proposed requiring recreational anglers to fin clip saltwater species retained that have a bag limit of five fish or less. Fin clipping was identified as a method to assist with stopping the illegal sale of high valued fish by recreational anglers. Fin clipped species would be easily recognisable as a recreational caught species. This currently applies to charter operators for fish such as Snapper, Bluefin Tuna, Black Marlin and Yellowfin Tuna. In NSW the right pectoral fin must be removed from these high value fish before they are removed from the charter boat. It is proposed that if an angler decides to keep a fish such as a snapper it will be humanely dispatched and then fin clipped immediately.

Bow Fishing for Carp.

The NSW Game Council and Australian Bowhunters Association have proposed that some waters of NSW be opened for bow hunting of carp in a controlled manner. Currently in NSW a bow and arrow come under the definition of a spear gun and cannot currently be used in inland waters. Carp are regarded as a noxious species in most states and there is a concerted effort by state governments to control carp. This seems a logical extension, and is certainly one that could be considered by Victorian authorities.

A Combined Saltwater Fin/fish Bag/ possession limit.

This proposal has two options. Option 1 a bag/possession limit of 20 fish per day and option 2 a bag/ possession limit of 30 fish per day. This bag/possession limit is aimed at conserving fish stocks. Whilst the NSW discussion paper suggests a combined bag/possession limit applies to WA, Victoria and the Northern Territory, it no longer applies to Victoria; however bag limits for individual species do apply.



Finally there is a proposal to reduce the bag limit for **Murray Cod** from 2 to 1, and the possession limit from 4 to 2 as well as introducing a catch and release requirement for all Murray Cod over 80cms.

This option is aimed at providing greater protection for Murray Cod and long-term sustainability of cod stocks. In the closed season 1 Murray Cod may be taken from listed recreational impoundments that are reliant on stocking. **(In Victoria the bag/possession limit is 2 with a minimum legal size of 60cms and a maximum size limit of 100cms)** Perhaps given the numbers of Victorian anglers fishing the Murray Darling area it might be reasonable to hope that after the NSW examination of

regulations common approach to bag and size limits for Murray cod might be negotiated between NSW and Victoria.

Submissions on this discussion paper Close on the 31st July and currently there seems to be substantial opposition from anglers to suggestions of reduced bag limits on the common species.

My thanks to reader Dick Hargreaves who drew my attention to the NSW Discussion paper on recreational fishing regulations. In addition, to Deb Cole, Fisheries, for Photo.

Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee

The Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee, that makes recommendations to the Minister on the allocation of the Gippsland Lakes Environment Fund, is seeking proposals from a broad range of organisations for funding of projects in the “category of community knowledge and awareness raising.” It is stated that funding will be generally up to \$10,000 with a total of \$100,000 allocated. Proposals for projects are to be lodged prior to the 21st June.

This type of open process for projects is most welcome, and I would imagine the projects would be listed with the funding allocated so that the community can see the results of this process.

I would draw reader’s attention to the issue raised in the previous Around the Jetties when \$1.67 million was recommended to the Minister by the Ministerial Advisory Committee and allocated. However,

- the community in this instance is unable to ascertain whether a call for proposals was made.
- or whether funds were allocated by the Minister on the advice of this committee without applications for projects being advertised.
- The public has not been made aware of the scope of these projects in improving the health of the Gippsland Lakes
- nor the funding allocated.

This does not seem to be a transparent process open to public discussion, and surely this is needed when \$10 million has been allocated over three years to improve the health of the Gippsland Lakes.

Many questions remain to be answered, such as

- when will the public see the scope of the projects allocated funds,
- and the amount of funding allocated to each project.
- Will each of the projects funded be required to provide a detailed report,
- and will these reports be available to the public to ascertain the success of the funded projects and their impact on improving the health of the Gippsland Lakes.

At the moment it is difficult for the public to see how many of the projects allocated funds will improve the health of the lakes and some areas allocated funds with the information provided are impossible to understand. A number of projects have been thoroughly covered by other authorities over recent years.

So much for involving the public! These are questions that deserve an answer and I invite CEO Martin Richardson to provide information to readers of this newsletter on these matters.

Actions that Could have made a Difference to Recreational Fishing

For many authorities the 30th of June marks the end of the financial or business year, and businesses look back over the past year with accounts and balance sheets. I thought it might be an interesting exercise to look back at some of the items that could have made 2012/13 a better year for the recreational anglers of this area.

1. Undoubtedly, anglers are concerned at the delay of the Government in providing protection for spawning fish at river mouths entering the Gippsland Lakes. Already this delay has cost in excess of 50 tonnes of spawning black bream taken in nets at the river mouths in the 2011 flood event. This delay may have been responsible for a reduction in the stock of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes.
2. In Around the Jetties of March 2012 I reported that a request to local member Tim Bull MLA had been made by some local commercial fishermen for the buyback of commercial licences to be put back on the table. Tim Bull reported, "I have advised the Minister of this and asked that it be considered." Here we are in June 2013 and no response on this request has been forthcoming. The buyback of any commercial licences would assist in reducing the pressure on fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes. In the past, recreational anglers have funded this buyback through their licence fees, so it has been cost neutral for the Government. It is very hard to understand this total lack of action to a proposal that would cost the government nothing.
3. It has been evident that in recent years the actions of the Maasbanker in netting in close proximity to the local beaches has had an adverse effect on surf fishing and tourism. This matter was raised at the 2012 angler forum in Bairnsdale and even a video has been provided by one of this publications readers, graphically showing the actions of this boat. The request has been made for an exclusion zone on either side of the entrance for 10km. This would not stop this boat from taking pilchards and salmon in large tonnages but simply provides a reasonable area for surf fishermen to pursue their sport without competing with a large boat netting in close proximity. This is a matter of an exclusion zone being negotiated by the government to the satisfaction of both the commercial boat and anglers who represent a considerable element of tourists to this area.
4. Netting in the Cunninghame Arm has long been a concern of anglers. This narrow arm with its jetties and wharfs has long been a fishing spot for the young and elderly and those who do not have access to a boat. This is realised by the regulation that prohibits netting between November 30th and May 1st, or the holiday season. However, between May and November, commercial fishermen are able to seine net the arm at night with a 730 metre seine net. This is the winter period when the elderly come to Lakes Entrance to holiday. With the reduction of commercial fishermen from 32 to 10, it seems more than reasonable that the area available for commercial netting should also be reduced and the Cunninghame Arm should have an immediate priority to be netting free.
5. The Liberal-National Government introduced the first buyback of commercial fishing licences in the Gippsland Lakes in 1998, and the number of commercial fishermen declined from 32 to 18. On the 29th May 2005, a further buyback was announced by the Labour Government of the day and 8 licence holders took advantage of this announcement leaving 10 active commercial licences working the Gippsland Lakes. Despite the decline in the number of commercial licences, there has been no corresponding decline in the areas available for commercial netting. It would seem reasonable that areas of the Gippsland lakes should now be declared recreational fishing only and a reduction in the area available for commercial netting should be negotiated. Areas such as the Barrier, Cunninghame Arm, Jones Bay with the cut, and Bancroft Bay come to mind as areas that

should now be protected from commercial netting. This would increase access of recreational angling to fishing grounds formerly regularly netted.

6. The 2002 paper, “The effects of haul seining in Victorian Bays and Inlets” (See issue 68), would seem to suggest that survival experiments on fish captured in haul seines, including flathead, had a 90% survival rate. It also suggested, “the low level of wastage is a positive feature of the fishery that is probably an important contributor to the overall sustainability of the fishery.” Given this study undertaken by Fisheries Victoria, there would seem little reason for the non-application of the recent dusky flathead regulations to commercial fishermen who may currently take the breeding female dusky flathead over 55cms. This may provide a level of support to the dusky flathead population of the Gippsland Lakes.

The introduction of these six actions to support recreational fishing in the Gippsland Lakes would give an enormous boost to recreational angler confidence and would provide a boost to tourism. Above all these steps in the main involve a change in regulations by Government and could be introduced at almost no cost to the Government of the day. All that is required is initiative and drive, and a realisation of the importance of recreational fishing to this area of East Gippsland. It would be hard to understand why any Government would not grasp this opportunity. Perhaps in the next twelve months with a new Executive Director of Fisheries in this state the challenge will be met. After all, we will be approaching the next state election.

Wooden Debris Does it Make a Difference?



Readers would be aware I raised the issue of the need for research into the value of wooden debris creating fish habitat, given that over \$1million had currently been spent providing wooden debris in the Tambo Nicholson and Mitchell Rivers, and a further \$300,000 had been allocated in a recent announcement to the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. (For details see the last issue of Around the Jetties.) This funding has almost entirely come from the sale of recreational anglers fishing licences. My concern was heightened after speaking to two fisheries scientists who had been working on the Nicholson River and whilst there was evidence of fish using the introduced snags, both spoke of the need for a definitive study on the effects of wooden debris. (Around the Jetties Issue 67)

When I wrote on this subject I had a note from fisheries scientist Dr Jeremy Hindell who stated that in 2007 he had undertaken a study on the use by black bream of re-established or introduced habitat. In brief a number of bream were implanted with acoustic transmitters in December 2004 and March 2005 and monitored for twelve months, and their use of regions with wooden debris and areas without debris were compared in the Mitchell and Tambo Rivers.

It was found that large wooden debris (LWD) in the Tambo River had little effect on the movement of bream into the river and the length of stay in the river. However, in the Mitchell River visits of black bream to wooden debris was greater during the winter and spring. In a short summary of this study the following was concluded “The perceived benefits to black bream of re-establishing large wooden debris within estuarine systems of south eastern Australia depended strongly on the time of year, the time of day and river system, but acoustic telemetry was a useful method of evaluating the use by fish of these artificial structures.” A conclusion to this report suggests that LWD is used by black bream, and “whilst preliminary, the findings provide a starting point for determining how the structure placement and timing of artificial habitat in Victoria’s rivers and estuaries influences fisheries productivity.”

I have not been able to find any definitive information that LWD builds fish populations as was suggested as the reason for the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority receiving \$300,000 for LWD structures in the most recent allocation from the sale of recreational fishing licences.

Dr Hindell provides support for further research with this statement “future studies should attempt to collect data before the artificial structures are placed in the system” given that no information exists of the movement of black bream prior to LWD being added to the system.

A consideration with any discussion on LWD is the acknowledged life of these structures is around 10 years, which in turn would seem to suggest \$100,000 per annum would need to be invested into LWD in structures in the future just to maintain the current level of structures. It is now over ten years since the first funding was provided to the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to establish LWD in local rivers. The first funding I can find was \$96,000 in 2000 when most of the funding was used “to introduce large wooden debris along the banks of the lower Mitchell and Lower Tambo Rivers.” Associated with this “as part of the project the authority will undertake a fish monitoring program to assess current fish stocks, and then compare the data in five years time.” I have not been able to find any evidence of this fish monitoring program or its results.

Editor

The research of Dr Hindell does provide us with a starting point when examining the effect of LWD on black bream, however it provides no evidence on the use of this artificial habitat by other species and **even in the case of bream, the results are inconsistent.** Fish such as luderick, estuary perch and Australian bass are species that are associated with snags, however their usage of LWD is anecdotal information, and a research project to examine the influence of LWD on fish species in our estuaries and rivers would seem to be required, given the level of funding now associated with LWD. I, like most anglers, love fishing the snags and feel sure that they play an important part in providing habitat for our estuarine species. However, when spending over a million dollars in this area I would hope we had the research supporting this expenditure. It just seems good sense to listen to fisheries scientists on this matter to be sure we are getting the best outcome for the dollars spent.

Source-Recreational Fishing Grant Program Research Report “Fishing for new ways to sustain aquatic habitats.”

Dr Jeremy Hindell (2006)

“Determining patterns of use by black bream of re-established habitat in a south-eastern Australian estuary.”

Dr Jeremy Hindell (2007)

Sustainable Lakes Commercial Fishery.

I was surprised to read an article on the front page of the Lakes Post, Wednesday May 29, headed “**Regions Finest Seafood at Noosa.**” Evidently, Lakes Entrance Fisherman’s Cooperative (LEFCOL) participated in the Noosa Food and Wine festival promoting its seafood products from “**local sustainable seafood fisheries.**” Luderick, yellow eye mullet and black bream were the featured fish, and Mr Sumner LEFCOL General Manager said the Gippsland Lakes has long been a provider of sustainable healthy food for generations of Victorians. Mr Sumner went on to say that Victorian Bays and Inlets including the Gippsland Lakes provide a large range of the Australian Conservations third party assessed sustainable seafood products.

Mr Sumner stated that the ACF’s Seafood Assessment Program is an independent rigorous scientific assessment to inform the community about making sustainable seafood choices. This is very true. It just so happens that whilst black bream has been declared a controversial sustained seafood by the ACF, luderick, black and yellow eye mullet are not listed as one of the 17 sustainable species in Victoria according to this rigorous scientific assessment. Actually, I had three phone calls and one email to ACF in researching this item. I found it surprising that one of the sustainable seafood’s listed by the ACF was Goulbourn River Rainbow Trout Ltd. Hardly a seafood. Four of the sustainable species come from Corner Inlet and include rock flathead, silver trevally, Southern calamari and King George whiting. The ACF also has a Seafood Guide and the black bream is one of a hundred fish on that guide with the attached statement “**black bream is environmentally limited in Victoria**” and yet it is listed as a **sustainable seafood.**

Given my previous research, I somehow doubt you would see Gippsland Lakes luderick, black bream or yellow eye mullet filets readily available in Lakes Entrance fish shops.

The following are just a few of the statements on black bream in the period 1995-2012.

- “In a study over the past two years, over 1200 recreational anglers were interviewed and approximately 60% had not caught a fish.” (Lakes Entrance News April 9th 1997)
- “New regulations have been implemented to ensure conservation of **severely depleted stocks of black bream in the Gippsland lakes and inflowing rivers.**”
- “Commercial catches and catch rates have declined by about 50% in the last ten years” (Victorian Fisheries Statement 1996)
- And from the 2003 Black Bream Stock Assessment report on the front page of the Bairnsdale Advertiser under the heading “Bream Fishery Crisis” the following statement from the Black Bream Stock Assessment meeting “a range of data was presented which supported the belief that the bream fishery had collapsed.” Further “it was stated at Saturdays meeting the commercial catch of black bream had dropped from 154 tonnes in 2001/2 to 28 tonnes in 2003/4. This represents a drop of 82% and is the smallest commercial catch since 1959.” (Bairnsdale Advertiser October 17th 2003)

It is almost impossible to understand how the ACF or Mr Sumner are not aware of the recent history or the current state of the black bream fishery in the Gippsland Lakes or how anyone can call it a sustainable fishery.

The issue of this ACF classification of black bream was dealt with in some detail in issue 59 of Around the Jetties (July 2012)

Odd Bits and More



The Law and Recreational Anglers

Stiff Penalties in Warrnambool Abalone Case

Three men appeared in the Warrnambool Magistrates Court this week according to a media release on the 24th May. Three men were observed by Fisheries Officers, at Griffith, Island Port Fairy carrying mesh bags full of abalone. Later that evening the men left the bags hidden with diving gear, and returned after dark to claim them, when they were apprehended at their car by watching Fisheries Officers. The men had a total of 304 abalone, of which 173 were undersize.

The men were interviewed at the Warrnambool Police Station and their equipment mobile phones and car were seized. Later in a search of the mobile phones images and video of further offences involving the use of commercial fishing nets and large quantities of bream were discovered. Two of the men were charged with further offences relating to the possession of commercial nets.

Magistrate Klestadt convicted and fined two of the offenders \$7,500 with costs while the third offender \$5,000 with costs. In addition to the fines all three were sentenced to one months jail, wholly suspended for two years. In addition the motor vehicle, mobile phones and dive equipment were all forfeited to the crown.

Fisheries Victoria reminded the public that taking abalone from the intertidal zone (Waters less than 2m deep) is prohibited along the entire Victorian coast and that a possession limit of 10 abalone applies anywhere in Victoria.

Editor

Congratulations to Fisheries Victoria and the magistrate for supporting action against poaching with a strong response from the courts of this state. I still wonder why the names of the apprehended and fined poachers are not included on media releases. This was not always the case. In the 1997 Victorian Fisheries RECFISH NEWSLETTER No 20 September 1997 there were two pages listing the names of those fined, the amount of the fine and the costs involved. I wonder why today the names of offenders should be hidden from the public. By the way this Fisheries Victoria publication was an excellent method of communicating with anglers.

A Great Catch

Jan Kerrison a reader from Tasmania sent me this great photo of husband Graeme with this superb Atlantic Salmon caught at Lake Rosebery on the North West coast of Tasmania. Jan and Graeme live at Burnie on the North West Coast of Tasmania, which is only about 1 hours drive to Lake Rosebery.

In February, Graeme took his 3.75 Quintrex dingy to Lake Rosebery and had one of those memorable days of fishing that will always live in ones mind.

In four hours of fishing Graeme caught three Atlantic salmon but only landed one as the other two escaped from a landing net that was too small for them. In each case it took about twenty minutes to bring the fish to the boat. Graeme was fishing trolling an orange Rapala lure on 15lb line and the fish he landed weighed 5kgs (11lb).



One of the surprising things is the Atlantic Salmon were stocked in Lake Rosebery and most fish at the time of stocking were between 2 and 3kgs in weight. The most recent stocking was in 2012 when 540 3kg fish were released into Lake Rosebery. The damming of the Pieman River created Lake Rosebery, and on the bank of this beautiful lake is the Tullah Lodge with its restaurant and accommodation that varies from budget at \$78 to the standard room at \$129. Lake Rosebery is also known for its trout fishing but the chance of catching an Atlantic salmon always adds another dimension to the excitement of fishing this lake. Atlantic Salmon are said to grow to 32kgs, and many photos of salmon caught in English streams attest to the size this species can reach in good conditions. The early history of the introduction of salmon to Tasmanian waters is a story of attempts and disappointments in the 1800's; however

today Tasmanian Salmon are produced commercially in great numbers and Tasmania finds the Atlantic Salmon a valuable aquaculture product.

In Australia apart from Tasmania where escapees from the aquaculture industry add to catches, the only other places to catch an Atlantic Salmon are Jindabyne and Burrinjuck dams, which are regularly stocked with Atlantic Salmon, however the best fishing is the day after broodstock are released in Lake Jindabyne according to the AFN Australian Fish Guide.

Back in Time

Some 29 years ago we were travelling to our home in Wangaratta when we passed the Waranga basin. My son saw in an overflow lagoon what appeared to be large numbers of fish. We stopped the car and went for a look, only to find a massive number of large carp. As we travelled home my lad determined to take his bow over to the lagoon on the following day and for a sporting challenge shoot some of these noxious fish. The next evening he arrived home thrilled at the results of his day. He had nine massive carp probably around 15lbs each and we had to use the wheelbarrow to take them around the back of the house. We hung them on the clothesline and they dripped piles of eggs from their bloated bodies.█

I rang Fisheries Victoria to see if these fish could be isolated from returning to the Waranga Basin, which would only have required wire netting to be placed across the culvert separating these fish from the Basin.

The Officer I spoke to was totally uninterested in restricting the movement of these fish, however when I told him my son had used a bow to get eight of these fish he warned that should he be found shooting carp he would be brought before the courts and would face a substantial fine.

I took this matter up with a friend David Evans, a long serving MLC for our area, and he raised the matter of shooting noxious fish with a bow and arrow in question time in the Victorian Parliament and pleaded for a sensible approach. Sometime later he received a letter from the responsible Minister saying that the regulation would not be changed, as it was feared that bow hunting might be used on other species of fish.

It is with considerable interest that nearly thirty years later, I read in the proposed changes to NSW Fishing Regulations the possible introduction of bow hunting carp in declared waters.



NSW South Coast Estuaries Under Attack

In disturbing news recreational anglers suggest NSW south coast estuary systems are under attack from commercial netting of black bream. Coila Lake near Turoos Heads regarded as a fragile system but regarded as a sustainable sport fishery according to observers had around 150 boxes of bream netted over three nights. This same approach has applied to other small estuaries. Whilst this is not illegal, recreational anglers are asking how is this fisheries management. Recreational anglers have contacted NSW Fisheries, seeking answers as to how the use of haul seine nets in these small and fragile estuaries is allowed. The so called netting scandal in these small estuary systems has resulted in the call for the affected lakes to be immediately gazetted as recreational fishing havens with restocking programs instituted to regenerate fish stocks.

(This is a summary of an article from Fishing World Magazine 23 May 2013 provided by Geoff Trusler)

SEFTIA Slams NSW Flathead Decision

The South East Trawl Fishing Industry brought to the notice of the NSW public that the on the 3rd May the Minister removed the catch limits on flathead and other species. SEFTIA made the point that allowing NSW vessels to take unlimited catches of flathead was “unsustainable.” Local Simon Boag, who is CEO of SEFTIA, said catch limits for flathead were imposed on recreational anglers and that limits applied to Commonwealth commercial fishers operating 3 kilometres off the coast. He added, “It amazes us that NSW

would allow their commercial fishers to take unlimited catches of many species including flathead.” The furore from the public that followed SEFTIA’s action of bringing the decision of the Minister to the notice of the public caused the Minister to ask the NSW Fisheries Department to reinstate the former catch limits. It was argued that the Ministers



action of removing catch limits from commercial fishing vessels operating within the 3 kilometre limit contrasts with the reduced catch limits suggested for recreational anglers in the Recreational Discussion paper. (See earlier item.) Jim Harnwell editor of Fishing World says, “Does the Minister not see the hypocrisy of allowing netters to take whatever they like whilst imposing tough limits on mums, dads, and kids who enjoy sustainable rec fishing?”

Editor

This of course is a great result for sustainable NSW fisheries, but it puts into stark contrast the conditions that apply to the Gippsland Lakes commercial fishery where no catch limits apply to any species including flathead and bream. Surely this must make our legislators examine the introduction of quotas on commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes given the catch limits willingly accepted by recreational anglers of this state for both flathead, bream and other species, in an effort to provide a sustainable long term fishery.

(Information on the NSW Flathead Decision provided by Geoff Trusler from an article written by Jim Harnwell editor and publisher of Fishing World.)

Australian Bass in the Nicholson River

On the 4th December 2012 35,000 Australian bass were stocked in the Nicholson River above the dam. Originally it was thought the dam would be removed in the next two years ensuring that the bass when they reached maturity would be able to move to the estuary, to spawn and then return to the river. I understand that the dam may now not be moved due to the \$2-3million cost. This means these fish are isolated and will not have the opportunity to spawn and develop a self-sustaining fishery.



The question that now arises is whether the project to stock a further 70,000 Australian bass will proceed. Of course another possibility exists, and that is perhaps the Government might take responsibility for the removal of the dam and thereby ensure a successful Australian bass stocking. It would be good if the Government provided some information on what the future holds for this project remembering at the time of the stocking Anthony Foster, Freshwater Fisheries Manager, in a letter to this publication stated, “It was always envisaged the establishment of a population of bass in the Nicholson above the weir would create “a mountain to the sea” bass fishery over time in the event the weir is eventually removed.” Just another question requiring an answer and perhaps some action.

It occurred to me that if the weir is unlikely to be removed then perhaps a fish ladder might be installed to allow the movement of bass between the estuary and the upper river. Fish ladders have been constructed on the Murray River with great success, however these are major constructions, in this case a simple connecting link might be possible.

Future Snapper Bonanza In Port Phillip Bay

Snapper breeding recorded in Port Phillip Bay last year was the best in the last eight years. A survey of breeding in the bay discovered 322 juvenile snapper the third highest recording in the last twenty one years. The Minister Peter Walsh said, “the spawning success will be obvious over the coming years by the large number of snapper under 20cms and in 6-10 years by the increased catch rate of larger adult snapper.” Port Phillip Bay is the main spawning and nursery habitat for snapper in central and western Victoria “providing replenishment for the western snapper stock that extends from Wilsons Promontory to South Eastern Australia,” Mr Walsh said. Fisheries Victoria now has 21 years of survey data on snapper spawning success.

Source Media Release 28th May 2013 Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Editor

This is great news for metropolitan anglers but demonstrates the paucity of information on the spawning of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes and tributaries. The Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Committee is looking at reviewing stock assessment methods to improve information on the black bream population. Somewhere down the track when a method is determined it may be applied and then we can have an indication of the scope of the current problem. Assessment of black bream stocks in the past have been conducted by Fisheries Victoria at a one day meeting of recreational and commercial fishers, however since 2005 these meetings have been boycotted by the commercial fishers, and almost no pre meeting information or statistics have been supplied to recreational anglers. It's great that information is available for Port Phillip Bay I just wish similar information was available for black bream in the Gippsland Lakes, which was once the largest black bream fishery in this country. By the way almost no indication of juvenile snapper entering Lake Tyers prior to the last closure of this estuary.

Movement of Black Bream in Flood Events

I recently had a query from a reader as to how the exit movement of black bream from rivers entering the lakes at times of a flood event is known. Probably the best evidence of this emanates from the work of Dr Jeremy Hindell and the use of transmitters to follow the movements of black bream. In the words of his report of fish movement during the 2007 flood “One particularly interesting finding was the similarity in timing of fish moving downstream and exiting the Nicholson River during the floods....On the 19th June, fish suddenly moved to the entrance of the Nicholson River with all fish exiting between 6 and 8pm The fish did not appear to be moving in a school-rather we suspect that stimuli caused by increasing flows of freshwater were affecting all fish in a similar way causing the mass exit within a narrow period of time.”

Reading this report it also became evident that some of the bream re-entered the Nicholson River after the flood event. The real results of this event can be seen in a glance by comparing the commercial catch of black bream at this time. In 2006/7 the commercial catch of black bream was 49 tonnes. In the following year that included the flood event 2007/8 this catch rose to 144 tonnes and then dropped in the following year 2008/9 to 36 tonnes. This indicates the flood event increased the commercial catch by almost 100 tonnes of black bream, which were valued at this time at \$10.73 per kilo, and this would have added around \$800,000 to the income of those fishermen who were netting the river mouths. The real damage of course is that those bream had entered the rivers to spawn, and so the effect of this catch, on the future bream population of the Gippsland Lakes and the fishery could not be calculated, but would certainly affect recreational anglers in the next decade.

Source- Summary of movements of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes (Victorian Resources Online)

Dusky Flathead are Tough

Throughout Australia approximately 13 million flathead are caught annually, and 6 million are released according to NSW research. Research had previously been undertaken on catch and release of flathead but this research looked into flathead that were caught and kept in a live bait tank on a boat during fishing tournaments etc. The results of this controlled research showed that with all anglers using lures or flies and the caught fish kept in a live fish well, and then monitored for five days after release, a survival rate of 96.43%. What was also discovered was that knotted landing nets caused more damage to fish than knotless nets, and live wells that did not have flow through systems had ammonia levels that were detrimental to fish health.

Source “Duskies are Tough” Butcher,P, Broadhurst,M, McGrath,S, and Brand,C, (2006)

Artificial Reefs

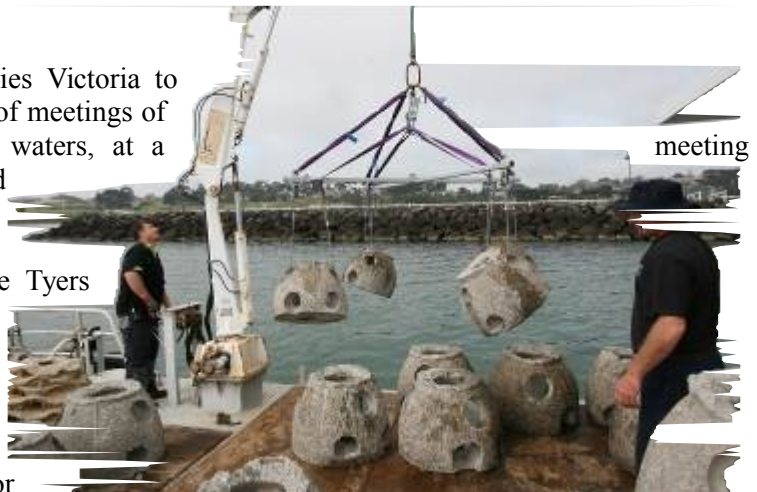
Currently the first steps are being taken by Fisheries Victoria to examine areas recommended by anglers at a number of meetings of possible locations for artificial reefs in estuarine waters, at a meeting held on the 20th February 2013. Paul Hamer indicated at that well attended meeting that approximately \$100,000 would be allocated to the structure of each reef. As I write this item Paul Hamer is on Lake Tyers accompanied by local recreational angler Alan Beveridge examining options for the placement of reef balls.

According to Richard Rogala who chaired the meeting of anglers at Lakes Entrance the depth of the water and the sediment base are two of the major concerns in any reef placement.

Already Paul Hamer has carried out an initial exploration of Mallacoota and in the next week it is expected that the Gippsland Lakes will come under scrutiny. It is hoped that in 3-4 weeks Fisheries Victoria will be in a position to announce where these reefs will be located in each of these estuaries. Other locations to be examined include Corner Inlet and Anderson Inlet, and it is hoped that nine artificial reefs will be constructed from the \$900,000 allocated to the project. This is part of a pre-election promise announced by the Government., and it has been eagerly awaited by recreational anglers.

The Photo above was supplied by Deb Cole of Fisheries Victoria and shows contractors installing reef balls near Port Arlington in September last year

We hope to see activity such as this in the Gippsland Lakes and Lake Tyers in the near future.



Changes at the Top

I have only minimal information at this stage of major changes that are currently taking place involving the most senior administrators of Fisheries Victoria. Anglers will be sorry to hear that both Travis Dowling, Director Fisheries Management and Science have been appointed to the position of Regional Director of Port Phillip Bay, Department of Environment and Primary Industries. No person has been announced to replace him in Fisheries Victoria

Anthony Hurst Executive Director Fisheries Victoria no longer has that position nor has he been announced in any other position. The replacement for Anthony Hurst as Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria is Ross McGowan who between 2002-2011 was Executive Director of the Seafood Industry of Victoria, and whilst in that position was a spokesperson for commercial fisheries for almost a decade including actions to support Gippsland Lakes commercial fishermen.

The Regional Director for Gippsland for the Department of Environment and Primary Industry (DEPI) is Mike Timpano who I understand has been in the DSE. Undoubtedly we will learn more as announcements of Regional Directors and any other staff changes are made

I must say that many recreational anglers were delighted with the approach of Anthony Hurst and Travis Dowling, and will be very disappointed to see these changes taking place, particularly given the internal restructure that recently took place in the research area. I understand that Travis Dowling will be attending the Angler Forum at the Lakes Entrance Angling Club rooms, on Wednesday the 19th June at 7.00pm, and I am sure many anglers will want to wish Travis well in what will be one of the last chances for local anglers to meet with the Director who played such a role in establishing these forums

Letter Letters Letters

An Example of the Damage Fishing Gear can Cause to our Birdlife

The following is a most disturbing letter from John Hutchinson a local bird enthusiast who provides photos that would make all anglers think very carefully about hooks and line and the damage it can cause to our birdlife. I will just leave this to Johns letter to explain.

Subject: An example of the damage fishing gear can do to our native animals

Hi All,

I was out on the sand islands at the southern end of Jones Bay this morning and while trying to get some small wader flight shots came across a juvenile Silver Gull resting on one of the islands. When it did not fly off with some other gulls I thought it might not be well. When I moved over to take a look it stood up with its left leg in a contorted position, which I initially thought must be broken. The bird flew off a short distance and resumed its resting position again.

I crossed paths with the gull a few more times and each time it only moved a short distance before laying down again. On our last encounter I checked with my bins and noticed that a section of the birds neck or crop was stretched out and there appeared to be something connecting this to the birds foot.



I took a photo and enlarged it on the camera screen. It was clear that a fishhook was attached to the foot.

At home I enlarged on computer – (see photo). After some pondering on why there was a connection at both the foot and neck I think the following may have occurred:

(1) The bird has swallowed a fish hook including some attached line and possibly a swivel and/or sinker.

(2) This gear has lodged in the bird's throat or crop.

(3) The point of the hook has worked its way out through the wall of the bird's throat.

(4) The birds has then tried to remove the object by scratching with its foot and in so doing has run the hook through the foot and the barb has prevented it being removed from the foot.

(5) Some other part of the fishing gear still in the throat is preventing it from coming out and when the bird pulls on the hook it stretches the throat flesh out which can be seen in the photos.

There was no way I could catch the bird so this bird will no doubt die by slow starvation or be taken by a raptor. If the second option occurs then the raptor would have a real chance of also becoming hooked. In which case this fishing gear will have claimed a second victim.

This is the second gull I have seen recently with fishing gear attached. I have attached a photo taken at Port Albert of a juvenile Pacific Gull which has some fishing line very tightly wound around its right leg just below the knee (actually I think this joint is actually an ankle?). This bird will eventually lose the leg below this point.

Regards,

John

Editor

I thank John for this letter and the graphic photos, which do we see line left on the bank even with hooks attached. It is important that rubbish bags and get it to a bin. As anglers we are in the ideal place to be the to reduce the risk of bird entanglements with discarded line.



tell a sad tale. How often we put this in our first line of defence

A Mixed Bag

I received this letter in February this year from Max Smith, and somehow missed printing it, but it is a delightful note.

Hello Lynton

Just a few lines to thank you for sending a copy of Around the jetties to my friend Syd Adams. Murray Scott and I went fishing yesterday on the edge of Lake Victoria off the bank. Murray only had sandworm and he caught a couple of nice bream before the East wind caused the lake to become too rough to fish. I tried whistling up a fox and shot two so we both had a very good morning and were home by 12 o'clock. I go whistling on a small farm about a month apart and each time I have tried recently over two months I have shot four foxes. I have shot four from the one sit on one occasion. Don't want to bore you old mate. Good to receive Around the Jetties

Kind regards

Max Smith.

Editor

What a great story. I really enjoy a morning coffee when these two characters come to Swan Reach. The fishing knowledge and stories they bring brightens up any morning. Both are in there eighties and they could write a book of fishing and bush memories. Murray Scott some eight years ago contacted me following the discovery of an item in the stomach of a bream. I identified this as a transmitter and Fisheries were contacted. They were delighted to receive the transmitter back, however they indicated they would like the remains of the bream if that was possible. Of course it was possible only Murray had to dig up the remains, which had been buried for about ten days. This was done and Murray provided a smelly parcel containing the putrefied fish remains to Fisheries. I wrote a letter to a dozen local anglers with the story of Murray Scott's dedication. The letters were passed around and this was the beginning of Around the Jetties.

Surf Fishing and Tourism

Recently when reading from my file of newspaper cuttings I came across this letter printed in the Bairnsdale Advertiser 14th March 2003 from a H. Zudwig from Frankston.

Sir,

My family and myself have holidayed in the Lakes Entrance vicinity for 12 years now, our main attraction being fishing. We are getting very disheartened by the decreasing numbers of fish in this area. We feel something should be done about this before it is too late, both for the fish and the businesses of the area, which suffer great losses.

One of the solutions might be to regulate the distance of how close the netters can come to the surf beaches. We have witnessed many times netting boats very close to the beach and afterwards nothing can be caught surf fishing for days. Surely some compromise could be made, we know the netters have to make a living but the non- professional anglers spend a large amount of money on trying to catch a fish eg. bait and tackle, and food and accommodation. Are the days of catching a large salmon on the surf beach just a memory?. I'm no greenie just a holiday maker asking for a fair go! Small mullet and crabs do not make dreams. Casting at the trawler 100 metres off shore might be more fun,

I care do you.

H.Zudwig



Editor The Maasbanker in operation almost on the shore
Over a decade has passed and nothing has changed

Special Thanks

To the many people who have contributed to this edition of Around the Jetties.

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