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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“There is no magic connected with the extraction of trout from their natural element. It is an art and a science. It can be learnt without difficulty. The fact that perfection can rarely be attained is because man’s life span is too short to allow him to work out all the answers.”

R. H. Wigram “The Uncertain Trout” 1951

Editorial



In this issue, the matter of Fisheries Victoria’s communication with anglers is raised again, and the point is made that many anglers who contribute to the state fisheries via their licence fees have little real knowledge of the issues facing recreational fishing in Victoria or even who are the key managers and their roles in Fisheries Victoria. Senior Project Officer Chris Padovani alerted me to a new website this week, with the heading “DEPI Fisheries is on Facebook.” Actually, this month’s publication has used some photographs from this source. This is a good site that provides valuable information, **however it takes no account of the fact that many anglers, particularly the older anglers do not have access to the internet much less Facebook.** It would not take Fisheries Victoria a great deal of effort to provide, in addition to the internet services, a monthly hard copy made available to anglers who do not have ready access to internet facilities, after all an excellent monthly hard copy was

available to anglers in the 1990’s.

The new website is <https://www.facebook.com/DEPIFisheries>. On several occasions, I have alerted anglers to the Fisheries Victoria’s Fish Fax Newsletter, also online. Readers with computer facilities can get this simple sheet of information by going online to emmayoung@depi.vic.gov.au and this publication is available by mail; however, it does not replace the Victorian Fisheries Recfish monthly newsletter of the 1990’s with its reports from Fisheries managers and research information. .

Increased Fines for Boating Infringements

In the last Around the Jetties, I provided an indication of the increase in fines for boat infringements. I now provide a more detailed list of the increase in fines applicable to boat owners, and point out the fines listed are only a small sample of those I believe would be applicable to recreational anglers. I should also point out the Coalition Government **has not provided these details or produced a media release** alerting anglers to the new fines. These new fines became law from July 1st 2013, only it would seem somebody forgot to provide details to anglers.

Some of the increased fines that may impact on angler’s are-

1. If the owner of a personal watercraft fails to ensure the identification number is painted or displayed on a vessel. Fine was \$98 now **\$289** up188%.
2. Operate a vessel at a speed greater than 5 knots within 50 metres of another vessel. Fine was \$195 now **\$289** up 46%

3. Operate a vessel at a speed exceeding 5 knots within 50 metres of the waters edge or a structure. Fine was \$195 now **\$289** up 46%.
4. Fail to give way to other vessel when departing from shore on a vessel with an engine. Fine was \$195 now **\$289** an increase of 92%
5. Operate a vessel in an access lane and fail to give way **\$289 (New fine)**
6. Operate a vessel in an access lane and fail to keep right or left as required **\$289 (new Fine)**
7. Being owner of a recreational vessel, cause or allow the vessel to be operated with required safety equipment that has not been maintained as required. **\$289**
8. As master of a recreational vessel or hire and drive vessel cause or allow the vessel to be operated when persons on board are not wearing required flotation devices. **\$180**
9. As master failure to ensure the vessel displays navigation lights at night. **\$289 (New fine)**
10. As owner of a registered recreational vehicle fail to fix registration label in a conspicuous position. **Was \$90 now \$144**
11. Fail to operate vessel in a manner which creates minimal or no wash in a no wash zone **Was \$195 now \$289**
12. Operate a vessel at a speed exceeding 5 knots within 50 metres of a person. **Was \$195 now \$289.**

These fines together with those identified in the previous issue of Around the Jetties would seem to cover the major areas of concern for recreational anglers, however if you tow a skier you would need to examine both the current fines and the new fines operating since the 1st July 2013.

I thank the Victorian Labour Party for this information via a media release from the Shadow Treasurer on the day after the fines were introduced (July 2nd 2013)

I have received no information from the Coalition Government on these fines and simply wonder how boat users are expected to comply with current and new fines without being made aware of any changes.

An Independent Recreational Fishing Body

In 1994 a report was accepted by the Minister for Natural Resources, Geoff Coleman to form an independent fishing body to provide a voice for recreational anglers in this state whether they belong to an angling club or not.

It was stated at the time that independent meant, **“Although the Department is facilitating the establishment of the peak recreational body, it will not have any membership of the body or control over it. The peak body is to be truly independent in its operations, its issues it takes up and the actions it takes regarding those issues.”** This peak body was to be functioning by March 1995.

Some of the issues this body was to address included,

1. Allocation of fish stocks between recreational and commercial fishing sectors.
2. Fisheries legislation and regulations.
3. Fisheries Management Plans.
4. Blue green algae
5. Enforcement of Fisheries regulations.
6. Impact of recreational fishing on fish stocks.
7. Species fishery management (trout and snapper)
8. All waters recreational licence.

Now the question arises how independent can a peak body be without control of its own funding.

VRFish is the peak body that was established and its funding comes from anglers recreational licence fees and is an allocation made by the Minister through the DPI subject to either a rise or fall with negotiation. This really means that VRFish cannot be truly independent, and certainly can never be critical of Government policy without risking a decline in its funding allocation. When questioned why action including public comment on issues associated with recreational fishing have not seen VRFish providing leadership, the answer is always that VRFish board and Executive Officer believe they cannot be critical of the policy of the Government of the day and maintain current funding levels.

An example of the inability of VRFish to speak out publicly on an issue of concern to anglers was when fisheries scientist Joel William alerted the public to a 50% decrease in staff at the Queenscliff research facility. A public gathering was held to protest this reduction in scientific fishing programs that would directly affect recreational angling in this state. VRFish made no public comment on this matter despite its long-term effect on the anglers VRFish represents.

Another example of a lack of independence was the March /April Newsletter which was received on the 19th of April. Four hours after it was received a recall was sent out unsigned from VRFish. In this issue under a heading **“Breaking News”** a short item on the merger of the DPI and DSE and it included this statement. **“There were 200 job cuts from the DPI and 400 to go from the DSE through voluntary redundancies.”** Two days later the same newsletter was reissued with the information on job cuts removed. Now I am unaware who ordered the removal of this section but it

is a prime example of the lack of independence of the peak recreational angler's body, and the need to ensure the government is not offended. This year there have only been two monthly newsletters to anglers in seven months.

Most anglers could think of examples of the inability of VRFish to represent forcibly the interests of anglers, and locally the buyback of commercial licences would be a case where VRFish is currently silent, even though some commercial fishermen have requested to have the offer again tabled. I believe the removal of commercial netting from Victorian estuaries is a policy of VRFish, although I have never seen any publicity on this important issue.

Perhaps it is time that the independence and financing of VRFish is again the subject of discussion with the Minister.

In short VRFish needs to be a critical friend of the government of the day rather than a silent acquiescing body, if it is to represent the interests of over 700,000 recreational anglers in this state, and independent funding is critical to this role.

Perhaps a method of gaining financial independence would be for the Government to allocate \$1 from each licence to the peak body and to enshrine this in regulation, so that it is not subject to debate regardless of the government in power.

(Source -1994 Victorian Fisheries Notes)

A Personal View of Fishing Competitions

I must state here that I have difficulty in supporting fishing competitions generally and particularly in the case of black bream competitions unless they are catch and release. This of course means that I have doubts about the value of the annual Twin Rivers Black Bream Competition. (Fished over 2 days in the Mitchell, Nicholson, and Tambo Rivers in July) I find it difficult to support a competition that will remove a large number of black bream that have entered local rivers to spawn. In some ways this seems that competing anglers are using a species that is under considerable threat to win prizes, and to me this does not seem what recreational fishing is about.

It may also be that this type of event does not help the recreational angler's argument for the protection of black bream at the mouth of rivers from commercial netting. The action of hundreds of anglers using this threatened species to win valuable prizes seems very little different to commercial fishermen taking spawning fish entering the rivers in their nets.

The Twin Rivers event started basically as a result of the decline in black bream stocks, and a resulting decline in bait sales and the use by anglers of local accommodation resources. The event was an attempt by Twin River businesses to bring anglers back to the area.

In 2005 Pearl Findlay-James, President of the Twin Rivers Business and Tourism Association wrote: "Over several years of running the Bream Classic, this organisation has seen the steady decline in catchrates by recreational fishermen. As businesses involved directly in tourism we can testify to the loss of customers who are passing through our area in search of bream in waters further to the east of the state."

As I write this item on a miserably cold Saturday the current Twin Rivers event is taking place and the banks of the Tambo River in the area of the river mouth have numerous camps and cars on both banks, whilst the river has perhaps 80 boats or more fishing the 600 metres to the mouth. Many anglers will fish both day and night over the period of the competition.



The no camping signs and no fire signs at the entry to the area of the river mouth are totally ignored and on this weekend unpoliced, whilst no toilets exist

for the hundreds of anglers congregated in the area. This means that the vegetation and the health of the area are threatened by this event, and this seems an unfortunate by product of the fishing competition.



Undoubtedly the event means motels, hotels and a small number of businesses will have a bonanza, but the cost in terms of the fishery may be long term. It is worth remembering that a black bream of 34cms could have as many as 1.3 million eggs and the removal of numbers of these fish could have a profound long-term

effect on the black bream fishery of the Gippsland Lakes. This is an argument often used to argue against netting at the mouth of rivers. It is unfortunate if the argument is applied to recreational angling.

I must say I have no concerns with an angler going to the rivers at this time of the year and fishing, my concern is the congregation of perhaps 600 anglers all fishing on this weekend for a fish that many believe is threatened. This view put forward in this item may not be popular with some readers, however I view angling as a passive sport best enjoyed in the quiet of the stream, or estuary, rather than with hundreds of competing anglers almost shoulder to shoulder. Perhaps that is a reflection of many years of fishing the mountain streams and rivers, and early mornings on Lake Tyers, fishing a quiet arm alone and enjoying the environment. In this situation any fish is a bonus. For me that is the serenity of fishing.



Editor

In a short report in the Gippsland News Wednesday July 24th, the Twin Rivers Bream Classic had 683 registered entrants, and 668 bream were weighed in. Two competitions were held namely catch and release and retained fish. The heaviest team bag in retained fish was 7.48kgs whilst the heaviest bag in the catch and release section was 9.19kgs. The organiser stated that the catch and release section was steadily growing, which is pleasing at such an event. This event when examined illustrates the decline in black bream in the key rivers of the Gippsland Lakes. It would be reasonable to suggest that over two days anglers would have fished for at least ten hours per person and some for many more hours, yet less than one fish per angler was weighed in. As the organiser stated “all the local accommodation providers were full which is good for business here,” but no comment was made as to the paucity of spawning black bream caught over the weekend, and the exceptionally low catchrate and its implications for the future of black bream.

A View of the Black Bream Problem in the Gippsland Lakes from the Past.

The late Peter Spehrs wrote the following item, after the **2008 draft of Fisheries Regulations** had been published. In this draft it was recommended that **the minimum size limit for black bream be confirmed at 28cms and the recreational bag limit be reduced to 5 fish**. Peter wrote-

“A commercial catch greater than 200 tonnes per annum was made from 1981-91 and this has dropped to an average of 31.75 tonnes per annum over the last four years.

The status of the fishery is under a cloud and until there is sustained and substantial evidence that the bream fishery is recovering we must apply ourselves to conservative harvesting regulations. After all, a personal bag of 5 bream in excess of 28cms is more than adequate to meet the “immediate personal needs” of an average family.



I believe that recreational anglers will embrace this change and give a clear message they care about our bream stocks. The commercial sector needs to show a similar acceptance of the changes such as limiting areas open to commercial netting and applying realistic black bream harvest quotas. Netting restrictions should be applied to a kilometre from river mouths, with the barrier, the area around Metung and all Cunninghame Arm totally restricted from netting.

If the bag was reduced to 5 harvested by recreational anglers. Additionally protection could be afforded by a “no take” bream fishery for the designated 3 month window that would enable overlapping fish species in the same area to be targeted.”

Fisheries Victoria withdrew the 5 fish bag limit suggested in the 2008 draft of the final regulations. Many local anglers regarded this back down as a great disappointment, whilst in Peter Spehrs words “unfortunately our policy makers went “weak at the knees” despite initially proposing a 5 bream per day limit.

Editor

Peter Spehrs was a great angler who was also known for his tagging and releasing of almost 6,000 fish in Lake Tyers and Mallacoota, mainly black bream and dusky flathead. His writing, advice and vision were based on this experience. He wrote for this newsletter under the pseudonym of the "Concerned Angler." In this short article **he recommended a kilometre exclusion zone for commercial netting at the mouth of rivers well before protection of spawning fish became a government commitment**, a recreational bag limit of 5 black bream per person per day and a 3-month closed season for spawning black bream. He also suggested catch quotas for commercial fishermen and limitations on areas they could net. It should be remembered that this was written almost five years ago, and yet if these suggestions had been introduced then, today we might be taking the first tentative steps towards a black bream recovery. At the very least these options should be reconsidered by all associated with fishing in the Gippsland. Lakes and tributaries. The photo above supplied by John Scott, Bairnsdale Angler, Mitchell River Bream 2013

Quotas On Netting in the Gippsland Lakes

Coastal commercial fishing is controlled by the use of quotas, and these quotas are set with a view to maintaining the fish stocks, and ensuring an ongoing fishery. This approach using available science is regarded as a sound base for commercial fishing, is world's best practice, and is rigidly applied with the support of the fishermen themselves. Such an approach does not apply to commercial fishing in the Gippsland Lakes where there are no quotas and commercial fishermen can take and market all fish they can catch as long as they are legal size, regardless of the status of the fish stocks.



The introduction of quotas in the Gippsland Lakes based on available scientific information would be a positive step, and would be one way of controlling the massive black bream catches that occur in flood events, for if large numbers of bream were taken in such an event then the catch would be compensated by less quota available being available over the rest of the year.

Quotas were introduced in the Gippsland Lakes for a short period in 1996 when the commercial catch declined from 130 tonnes in 1995/6 to 89 tonnes in the following year. Fisheries Victoria were alarmed at this decline, and urgently introduced a number of measures to protect black bream. These included increasing the size limit to 26cms, and reducing the recreational bag limit to 5 fish. For the first time a quota was introduced for commercial fishermen of 730kgs or 22 standard boxes of black bream per month. The rationale for these urgent measures was "to protect the small remaining adult bream stocks."

What was particularly interesting was that the quota for the commercial fishermen according to Rex Hunt writing for the Sun Herald, translated to 192 tonnes of black bream per annum, and this was a commercial catch that had not been achieved in the previous five years. In reality this was a quota for public consumption only, whilst providing absolutely no protection to the black bream of the Gippsland Lakes. Six weeks later the quotas were dropped.

Perhaps it is time realistic quotas for Gippsland Lakes commercial fishermen were re-examined and applied to that other iconic estuary fish, the dusky flathead as well as black bream. Recreational anglers have long accepted, bag limits for black bream, and recently accepted a slot size for dusky flathead to protect this species as well as a 5 fish bag limit. The 55cm dusky flathead maximum size limit does not apply to the commercial fishermen of the Gippsland Lakes. Many anglers are of the view that the savings in fish stocks generated by the recreational acceptance of the black bream bag limit and the slot size limit on dusky flathead are eroded by the total lack of controls on the catch of the same species by commercial fishermen. The introduction of a reasonable negotiated quota for commercial fishermen would mean the effort to protect these two estuarine species would be a shared responsibility between the recreational and commercial fishery of the Gippsland Lakes. Perhaps the start of cooperation between the two sectors remembering commercial fishermen have not met with recreational anglers for over 7 years or at a Gippsland Lakes fish stock assessment meeting, yet a commercial fisherman is on the Ministerial Advisory Committee.

(The 89 tonne commercial catch of 1996 that inspired the drastic measures of that time to protect the small remaining population of adult fish is twice the average commercial catch today.)

Bob McNeil's Lake Tyers Fishing Diary Report for May-July



Bob's total catch in this period was 41 size bream, 16 undersize bream and 1 dusky flathead. Bob says 'for me it has been the usual quiet time. I moved around a lot, up to Devil's Hole, Cameron's Track, Black Fellas Arm and Toorloo Arm. Fish if found were usually in singles and were in good condition with the average size being 30-35cms. Most were caught in 2-3 metres of water and had been feeding on small shell. Hopefully fish will soon finish their spawning games and start feeling hungry again.' Bob was putting more time into his mornings fishing commencing regularly at 6.30am and fishing to 10.30, which gives an indication of the slow fishing at this time of the year. As normal his winter bait is prawn although on a couple of mornings he also used glassies. His average catch from 22 outings was 2 size bream per trip. During this fishing period Bob fished just over 80 hours, which equates to a catchrate of 1 size fish every two hours fished, and this really illustrates the decline in fish action in these winter months in Lake Tyers. The one flathead caught in this period was taken on the 17th May and

was an excellent fish of 64cms, however again this report demonstrates that flathead are not an angling option over the winter months, and can again be expected to become active in October. The material Bob provides allows us to see the full picture of the Lake Tyers recreational fishery. Bob heads out on the lake two mornings per week before daylight even on these freezing mornings and always alone in his boat. All details of his catches are sent to the Research Angler Diary Program of Fisheries Victoria to provide base information for research. All anglers are indebted to the work of these fellow anglers statewide. (Biggest bream in this report 37cm (4) and no other species despite the opening.)

Odd Bits and More

Fishing as a College Sport

College fishing in the USA is a sport, and in 2008 some 90 colleges bass fishing clubs were scattered across the country and by the end of 2012 there were 610. The team that won the national title took home a \$27,000 bass boat plus \$3000 in cash. The winning team was also able to compete in the Super Bowl of bass fishing with its first prize of \$500,000. As well as the prize money many college anglers can get individual sponsorships, whilst the Bethel University of Tennessee offers fishing scholarships. Bethel coach Garry Mason says, "The students I recruit are coming here to fish, just like the kids go to Alabama to play football."

"College fishing. Yes it's a sport in the U.S. though it might not carry a ton of clout on campus. 'Telling a girl you fish for Auburn is not a good pick up line,' says Auburn angler Jordan Lee."

Editor

I doubt this will be a picture of University Education in this country in the future

(Source a Time Magazine article forwarded by reader John Delzoppo of Neerim South.)

A Note from Fisheries Victoria



Whilst browsing a couple of days ago I came upon this report, under a large heading of "**Eastern King Prawn Stocking in Lake Tyers**" and thought it would be of interest to recreational anglers.

"In February 2013, 300,000 Eastern King Prawns ere stocked into Lake Tyers. The project was funded entirely by recreational fishing licence fees. The release of these prawns is accompanied by a monitoring program, to determine how these prawns survive and contribute to the fishery.

Researchers with the help of recreational anglers will differentiate the stocked prawns from wild ones that naturally occur in the lake through genetic profiling. **Hopefully anglers can look forward to great prawn fishing at Lake Tyers towards Christmas 2013 when the first 300,000 prawn larvae will reach a table size of around 10cms.**"

Editor

Perhaps this item on the Fisheries Victoria web site now needs some adjustment, as it would seem that most of the prawns vacated Lake Tyers when the lake opened on the 18th June. A further 1 million prawns were to be released in the lake prior to Xmas as part of the **\$225,000 experiment**, but this must now also be questionable if the lake remains open. Fisheries Victoria, initiated this project with no consultation with the local Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club, and no information was forthcoming from VRFish and of course the opening of the lake was always a risk to the program. The intent of the program was to use this stocking to determine whether further stockings should take place including the stocking of estuarine fish species, and was based on a paper by Dr Mathew Taylor from the University of NSW, which assessed the opportunities for the release of marine species into selected Victorian estuaries.

Fishing Definitions.

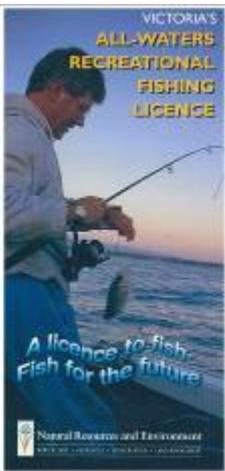
I was amazed at the report of Don Cunningham from Bemm River at the recent Fishing Forum held at Lakes Entrance, and his assessment that 20,000 dusky flathead were taken from Bemm River in the last Xmas holiday period, and his concern that many of these fish were taken by anglers over the current strict catch limits. This assessment was supported by a case reported in this newsletter (Issue 69 June) where three Sale anglers were apprehended with 57 dusky flathead in their boat. I know that many anglers when they go to a fishing spot for a couple of days face the situation where they may have over the bag limit in their icebox and as such might be thought to have an illegal catch. It is important that anglers are aware of the rules regarding possession limits as well as bag limits.

Bag limits –are the maximum number of a particular type of fish that an angler may take on one days fishing.

Possession Limits. -The maximum number of a particular type of fish that a person may possess at any time on or next to Victorian waters. A person may be able to possess a multiple days' catch if they can prove they took no more than the catch limit on each day. People fishing on multiple days should place each day's catch in a separate bag or container and mark it with their name address and date the fish were caught.

Editor

I think this item provides an important clarification for anglers as to how they identify the legality of their catch, and is a procedure all anglers should take into account to ensure their catch is legally identified as being within daily bag limits. Some plastic bags and tags could save considerable embarrassment, and remember that each angler has to prove that his daily catch was not over the daily bag limit.



The Victorian All Waters Fishing Licence

On the 19th November 1998 the government of the day announced that a recreational fishing licence would be required for all Victorian waters from mid July 1999. This annual licence was to cost \$20 with the moneys raised to be directed towards improving recreational fishing opportunities and conditions in Victoria.” It was further stated that the new licence is linked to a **“voluntary buy-back of commercial licences from bays and inlets from Port Phillip Bay to Mallacoota.”**

Community surveys of the day showed 84% of people supported an all waters angling licence **“provided the resulting funds went to improving recreational fishing.”** This licence was to replace the former inland waters licence.

The introduction of the new licence also had the full support of the Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body, VRFish. The State Government advanced a \$6 million loan to finance the buyback with the loan being repaid from anglers licence fees. This licence covered all marine as well as inland waters with persons under 18 years exempt as well as persons who are 60 years of

age or older and who hold a seniors card. It was projected that the number of licences sold would rise from 90,000 to 400,000.with the introduction of the “all waters” licence.

It was suggested that as well as buying back commercial licences the additional funds would be spent on fish stockings, additional junior fishing events and new facilities on piers and jetties.

All the above was taken from the Fisheries Victoria Regulatory Impact Statement of Fisheries Regulation Amendments May 1999.

This raises the question are the agreed clauses advanced for the introduction of the All Waters angling licence currently still being met.

1. Funding for the buyback of commercial licences no longer seems to be available despite this being one of the basic agreed clauses for the introduction of the all waters licence. This is most evident when the Minister was requested to put the voluntary buyback back on the table for discussion, as three Gippsland Lakes commercial fishermen were interested. The Minister provided no response to this request that was forwarded by the local member some 18 months ago.

2. The removal of almost \$2 million or 33% of angling licence revenue to fund the salaries of Fishing Officers was never considered as part of the agreement for the introduction of the all waters licence. This removal of funding is having a variety of impacts on the provision of facilities and the continuation of the buyback program both of which were integral parts of the understanding reached for the introduction of the all waters licence.

It would be fair to say that anglers and the community agreed to the all waters licence on the basis of a number of clauses and the goodwill of the government of the time and succeeding governments. It might be reasonable to suggest anglers have been let down, and the Peak Body VRFish has not intervened on behalf of anglers in these matters.

Editor

When introduced in 1999 the All Waters licence cost \$20. Today some thirteen years later the licence is \$24.50, which is a very small increase over those years, and as our population ages a greater percentage of the angling fraternity become over 60 and do not contribute to the cost of providing fishing stocking and facilities. It is therefore easy to understand why governments quietly look at a possible increase in the cost of an angling licence. There is a case for anglers over 60 to contribute to the costs of their sport and I doubt too many of us would object to a reduced licence fee, particularly if the funds again went to reducing commercial netting in bays and inlets, and if the funding of Fisheries Officers again became a cost on the Fisheries budget rather than a charge on licence contributions. It might also mean that all anglers would be licensed, and the provision of a monthly on line and hard copy newsletter would cover the entire angling community, and this would have great benefits, particularly if it was non-political in content.

A Delightful Story.



This item comes from a delightful book published in 1951 and written by R.H Wigram called the “Uncertain Trout.” Wigram was one of this countries early authors on fly-fishing, with his first book Trout and Fly being published in 1938. This is his story of his first fish caught at the age of four in England.

“I caught my first fish at the age of four with my nurse’s large hand maintaining a firm grip on the slack of my breeches. It was not a large fish, I should say somewhere in the vicinity of two ounces. My tackle consisted of an ordinary garden cane about five feet in length, a piece of string and either a bent pin or hook, a small detail not worthy of remembrance. Our cook an unpleasant woman with a mole on her chin, refused to cook it: so it was returned whole to my trouser pocket to be taken and inspected at regular intervals. Authority in the person of my sister’s governess, eventually smelt it out, and my first catch with my breeches, was taken away from me. I cried bitterly and refused to be comforted.

My career as an angler had begun, and from that day to this I cannot see water in the form of lake, pond or river without the desire to fish in it.”

Snags Survey

Fisheries Victoria have just announced by means of a media release that the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) has completed an assessment of the amount of wooden debris (snags) in 27,700 kilometres of Victorian Rivers using aerial photography and on ground mapping.

Fish ecologist Zeb Tonkin from the DEPI’s Arthur Rylah Institute has said, “our modelling shows that the amount of wooden habitat in our rivers was an average of 41% below natural levels and we know that is having a significant impact on freshwater species.” He said, “We know that numbers of threatened species such as Murray Cod and Trout Cod do increase in response to habitat restoration and the same applies to many other species.”



There has been a major investment in the return of snags to the local rivers after a hundred and fifty years of removing snags, and CMA’s have played a leading role in this restoration and in this area the funding has largely come from recreational licence fees. Given over a million dollars of expenditure on the restoration of snags, it has been suggested by some scientists that perhaps there should be an examination of the part played by these snags in improving habitat and returning fish to rivers such as the Tambo, Nicholson and Mitchell rivers. This matter was raised in Issue 69 June 2013 when the research of Dr Jeremy Hindell was quoted as suggesting the results of his initial work on the effect of snags on black bream were inconsistent.

In another media release on the 18th June researchers from the Arthur Rylah Institute are using video to assess the effectiveness of putting habitat into rivers for native fish. Fisheries ecologist Jarod Lyon said “we know that instream habitat is important for a range of native fish species but want to assess how they are being used by the different species so we can provide better guidance to river managers on maintaining snags.” Much of this work is currently associated with Murray cod and Trout cod and also involves assessing the health of the native fish population at the sites being visited. (The photo above of natural ‘in stream’ woody debris is courtesy of Zeb Tonkin, DEPI)

The Law and Recreational Anglers



A 31 year old Springvale man has been convicted and fined \$1,000 after DEPI Fisheries Officers detected him with eight times the legal catch of pipis at Venus Bay. He was in possession of 17 litres of pipis and did not produce a valid recreational licence when the catch limit was 2 litres per person per day. Fisheries Victoria is putting considerable effort into protecting the intertidal zone. The intertidal zone is defined as from the high tide mark to where the water is 2 metres deep. All the pipis seized at the time were returned to the water alive. Acting Fisheries Officer Chris Angwin said that the majority of pipi collectors adhere to the regulations and the compliance rates monitored from 2008 are around 90%. Pipis were a favourite bait of anglers for whiting in particular, but also for most estuarine species, however the cost of this bait has risen in recent years as pipis became a recognised food source and today most anglers look for alternatives such as mussels.

On August 1st Fisheries Officers inspected a vessel at Mordialloc boat ramp and found 42 snapper of which four measured less than 28cms. The two persons on the boat were interviewed and made a number of admissions as a result of which two men, one aged 56 and the other 40 received on the spot fines of nearly \$1900. The daily catch limit for snapper is ten fish per person with no more than 3 fish exceeding 40cms.



A Product Review-Frozen Sandworm



A couple of years ago I was having coffee and a yarn with a couple of old fishing mates, when we got to talk about the price of sandworm. In a quiet and confidential way they let me into a little secret. They had been catching their own sandworm for years and freezing it successfully. I have kept their confidence but now bait outlets are selling frozen sandworm, and this is even taking place in Bemm River.

The frozen sandworm comes in a small container (see photo) and when weighed I found it contained almost exactly 1 ounce of sandworm or 30 grams at a cost of \$7 which is approximately the same price as 100 grams of fresh sandworm although it is doubtful that fresh sand worm will be available in the future. This means that for 1lb of sandworm the return by converting it to a frozen product is \$112 per pound. The sandworm appears of a good colour and is firmer than fresh sandworm, and at the end of the day it can be refrozen for your next trip. Certainly there are not many worms in a container and I would estimate you would get about 25 worms for your \$7. There is a smell of methylated spirits associated with the product but this does not seem to deter fish in local rivers. Talking to a commercial bait fisherman friend, he explained that by processing the sandworm, there is no loss compared with heavy loss rates with the sale of fresh sandworm. My bait fisher believes that the processed sandworm in the very near future will be the only sandworm product available

My two friends described to me the process they had used for years. They caught their sandworm, and placed it in a shallow tray of methylated spirits, for about one minute, and then placed the worm on a piece of blotting paper to dry for a minute or so and then into a container and freeze. They had been catching bream on frozen sandworm for years. I am informed that all commercial bait fishermen are currently processing sandworm, and this approach helps the sustainability of this product, which many bait fishermen believe is currently under threat.

Estuary Perch and Lake Bolac

Inland Fisheries Manager Anthony Foster visited Lake Bolac with a local commercial eel fisherman, and caught 11 estuary perch in the fyke nets used to catch eels. These fish were part of the 7000 stocked in Lake Bolac in January 2012. I found it surprising that in the eighteen months since this stocking these fish had reached 20cms, I also found it surprising that these fish had survived the predation of large rainbow trout of over 4kgs from a previous stocking. In the accompanying article with the estuary perch photo it is described as “the development of estuary fisheries in inland waters.” Perhaps it is more necessary and more important to consider the development of estuary fisheries in estuary waters rather than stocking estuary perch in a Western District lake.





Release of Trout

Fisheries released more than 40,000 trout and salmon into lakes this week, and this follows several weeks where similar releases have been made across Victoria. This stocking is funded by the State Governments \$16m Recreational Fishing Initiative and anglers licence fees. I noted that it was stated that Snobs Creek Hatchery is almost at full capacity at the moment

From Latest Fish Fax Newsletter – Twin Rivers Bream Classic

Twin Rivers Bream Classic

Fishcare East Gippsland Inc. recently continued their long standing relationship with the Twin Rivers Bream Classic on the Nicholson and Tambo Rivers. The Fishcare Group manage the live release stations where competitors can come and have their fish processed and recorded before being released back into the water.

This year over 200 bream were released with the Fishcare volunteers noting the due care taken by the anglers to keep the fish in good condition prior to processing and release.



The Classic also gives Fishcare Volunteers a great opportunity to continue to spread their messages of sustainable and responsible fishing techniques to competitors, spectators and other members of the community. The live release stations offer a unique opportunity to demonstrate best practice handling and releasing techniques to the large crowds that gather around by the end of the day. Fishcare looks forward to continuing the partnership into the future.

For further information on [Fishcare in Victoria](#) please contact Dave Cleeland, Fishcare State Coordinator - 0400 882 851, dcleeland@fishcare.org.au.

Letters Letters

Letter from Trevor Hawkins

The following is a summary from a detailed and thought-provoking letter from Trevor Hawkins (12th July) who has resided in the Paynesville area for the last two years and been an angler for some 40 years mainly but not exclusively trout. Trevor says

“Over that period I can’t remember there being another period where there has been such a commitment to furthering recreational fishing and the money available to do so. I also can’t but shake my head at what I feel is the ways that some moneys (not insignificant) are being spent.

I’m struggling to understand the reasoning behind the stocking of what I would describe as ‘exotic’ native fish into waters where in my opinion it’s hard to justify. I’m all for stocking sympathetic native fish species into waters where it is logical to do so offers environmental benefits, and offers value for money, but for the life of me I can’t understand stockings such as estuary perch into Lake Bolac, bass into Lake Glenmaggie, or prawns into Lake Tyers.

Dare I say, given the decision to stock slow growing natives such as bass into waters that are environmentally damaged by the abundance of carp or other factors etc. or where they can’t even reproduce, seems to me not very productive.

Perhaps introducing quicker growing (and more appropriate for the water) larger predators such as Murray cod and yellowbelly would be more appropriate, instead of introducing estuary perch into waters such as lake Bolac because local anglers asked for it. More thought could be given to reintroducing these fish into their natural environments such as Lake Tyers, and introducing water specific, protective bag and slot limits etc. to do so. We have nearby waters

such as the Mueller where the fishery could be grown and recognised as iconic fish specific waters. If we can do it with dusky flathead (which I think is a fantastic initiative) then surely we can do it with other iconic regional fish such as bass, perch and dare I say it black bream.

Black bream are the iconic fish of the Gippsland lakes, and yet it seems to me that fisheries are intent on growing and supporting Australian bass while not recognising (through regs and limits recreational and commercial) the value of this fish that the majority of anglers visit the region to catch.

Perhaps its time for us as anglers to take control of our fisheries and demand that 'the powers that be' start protecting the natural recourse with water specific bag and slot limits that reflect the recreational (and economic) value of our recognised regional fish.

Let's protect what we have first and then do the research into exotic stockings.

Keep up the great work -Trevor Hawkins."

Editor

Thank you for a great letter Trevor that raises a number of issues. I hope this letter will arouse considerable discussion amongst anglers concerned for the future of our recreational fishery. Like you I have been concerned at the value of stocking Lake Bolac with estuary perch when the lake one year after being stocked with Rainbow trout has this species reaching 4kgs and providing a wonderful quick fix fishery that is attracting anglers from around the Western District, whilst a former estuary perch area, namely Lake Tyers is ignored despite this stocking being requested in submissions to the 2007 Management Plan.

Regarding bass I again agree with your comments and wonder at the value of stocking this species above the dam on the Nicholson, that limits this species access to the Gippsland Lake and spawning. The question of course is will the remaining 60,000 fingerlings be stocked. I would have thought when spending \$100,000 on stocking this stream it would have been important to ensure the stocking was providing the prospect of a self-sustaining fishery.

With regard to your comments on black bream, I am in the position to remember the fishery of 25 years ago and in comparison the fishery of today has almost totally collapsed. One only has to look at the recent competition on the rivers where the catchrate would seem to be around 1 fish per ten hours fishing and these were some of the best anglers of the region. It's unbelievable that anglers have had to wait for going on three years for the protection of spawning fish at the mouth of rivers, a government commitment, that has still not been met, and yet we continue to permit the netting of this iconic species in the Gippsland Lakes with no quotas. With this situation I am totally unaware of any action being taken on any of these issues by the recreational angling Peak Body. Our fishery needs far more regulation before it is too late, and I think we may be close to it being too late.

The following item was taken from an article, by a young Steve Starling in the Fishing World Magazine of **1987**. The article was entitled "[Spring Time on the Tambo](#)."

"The concentration of bream in the upper reaches at spawning time increases their vulnerability to fishing pressure. In a little under two hours one busy Sunday evening in late August we witnessed the cleaning of at least 1,000 bream at one ramp on the Tambo. Average catch per boat was about 40 fish. Watching the number of fish being taken one wonders if a generous daily bag limit might not be of some benefit." Perhaps that was the time when Fisheries Victoria should have introduced controls to protect fish stocks given the history of this species in the Gippsland Lakes, and evidence of the unregulated catches of those years. Perhaps we are paying for this neglect today.

This 1987 vision should be compared with the catchrate of the recent bream competition of one bream per 10-12 hours fishing. Times have changed!

A great letter that will cause anglers to think deeply on the matters raised.

Letter from Chris Hoyne

I received the following letter from Chris Hoyne on the 9th July.

Hi Lynton.

"I fished Lake Tyers this past summer and Easter and was surprised at the lack of flathead-given everywhere else had good numbers (22,000 at Bemm River and good numbers in lakes Entrance) could it be that the Lake Tyers Flathead went out on the last opening in around October 2012 and did not get back in and went elsewhere?

Interesting to see if they come back now it is open again. I know the perch can move from McLaughlin's to Seaspray easily so don't see it too hard for flatties to move up and down the coast for another entrance.

I also have a view on estuary perch in Lake Tyers-they are bound to be there but lack of consistent openings means they struggle to spawn effectively and get big numbers- even if there were thousands in lake Tyers most people would have little chance of catching them other than the odd fluke. Whilst they might be a good stocking project for an open dam where they can't hide, I doubt whether you will ever see them again in Lake Tyers given the habitat available, also you would need to put millions of fingerlings and like the little prawns they would vamoose on the first opening. Chris."

Editor

Some comments on the matters raised in your interesting letter. The dusky flathead and the black bream are species that spend their entire lives in the estuary and there is almost no evidence of movement between estuaries. I think that in the case of dusky flathead, despite thousands being tagged, there is evidence of movement between estuaries of only one fish. In recent research, both black bream and dusky flathead had transmitters attached and over several years although there was considerable movement around the Gippsland Lakes there was no evidence of either species leaving the lakes. The lack of movement between estuaries was commented on by Dunbavin Butcher in possibly the first research papers on black bream in 1945, when he said commercial fishermen seine netting the beaches never caught a black bream even though the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes was close at hand. In many ways the fact that both species live their entire lives within an estuary makes them a very special species.

Re your comments on the stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers. Estuary perch are present in most Victorian coastal rivers and estuaries, and are today regarded as a top sport fishing species. In 2003 John Douglas fisheries scientist undertook research of estuary perch in the Snowy River using transmitters and his research has shown movement occurs within the river, with the fish moving to the lower sections of the river to spawn. The seasonal closure of estuaries such as lake Tyers may have some effect on the spawning of the species, however in the 1980's there was a substantial population of estuary perch in this water. It is recorded that 1.5 tonnes of perch were taken in seine nets in the area of Blackfellows Arm. I have not been able to find any evidence of movement between estuaries however this may occur. In the book "A Guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria" by Cadwallader and Backhouse the following statement is made. "The estuary perch supports a sport fishery, although many stocks in Victorian coastal rivers are greatly under exploited by anglers. It is a good fighting fish and is readily taken on artificial lures and on bait such as worms and prawns." I hope that any stocking of Lake Tyers with estuary perch will see the restoration of this species in waters that previously held considerable numbers, and that in time they will spawn and become a self sustaining species for future generations of anglers.

Thanks for your letter Chris.

Late News

It was announced in a Media Release (Wednesday 7th August) from the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security that a Fisheries Advisory Council had been formed to "restore effective and proactive consultation that involves all fisheries sectors." This was an election commitment. The Minister has indicated he will be seeking advice from this Council on management of fisheries and maximising the value of fisheries resources. There are fourteen voting members serving on the inaugural Council, which will be chaired by Peter Neville. There will be five members representing commercial fishing interests and five representing recreational fishing. Further details including membership of this body will be included in the next newsletter.



House Keeping from Dawn.

We recently had a glitch with our computer and lost all our email system. The good boys in Leading Edge Computers got us working again but in the process some emails and some addresses from our lists were lost.

I have used what back up I had to try to restore the Around the Jetties lists but some names were guesswork.

It seems the few names we may have lost were very recent ones from the last twelve months. If you know of a friend to whom you recommended this newsletter would you mind checking that they received their copy and if not get them to contact us with their email address. Thanks for your patience. Dawn

Special Thanks to John Delzoppo from Neerim South and a former member of the Legislative Council for his donation of \$100 towards the publication of this Newsletter. This support is very much appreciated

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.

By the way your contributions and letters are greatly appreciated

Good Health and Good fishing
Lynton Barr

Source of Material – Media Releases, Fish Fax Newsletters, DEPI Facebook, Contributions from many sources, research reports etc. Your contribution would be appreciated.