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# **Around the Jetties**

## **December 2013**

### **Issue No 75**

#### **An Anglers Newsletter**

“The black bream is an iconic species, and very popular with recreational anglers, from die hard anglers to families, making it a cornerstone of tourism in estuaries throughout the state”

Dr Joel Williams Murdoch University WA. (Former Victorian Fisheries

Scientist)

#### **Editorial**



I was not surprised to hear that **20%** of the population of Victoria is now over 60 years of age, nor was I surprised to hear that **25%** of the population of Lakes Entrance was over 60 and increasing. This publication has attempted to bring to decision makers the need to cater for the increasing number of elderly citizens in this area. Readers might recall the battle we had with the East Gippsland Shire when using RFL funding they put two fishing platforms on the backwater of the Mitchell River with steps down and a walk of 800 metres to reach the platforms. This was against the funding conditions and precluded the handicapped and elderly from access. In recent times, we have looked at access to the eastern side of Lake Tyers with both Fisheries Victoria and Parks Victoria, as access is limited for both the

elderly and handicapped. We have seen jetties in Lake Entrance closed to anglers on the Cunninghame Arm, netting continues in this arm, and yet this is the accommodation hub for elderly tourists. At the same time, the river mouths continue to be netted. This impinges on the recreational fishing in the rivers and these riverbanks do provide access for the elderly and handicapped. With the changing population demographics of this region, we perhaps need to rethink our priorities and provide greater access for the elderly and handicapped to fishing in our communities.

#### **Word from the New Executive Officer of VRFish**

I asked newly appointed Executive officer of VRFish, Dallas D’Silva, pictured right, if he would provide a little of his background and a little of his aspirations for VRFish. I am delighted with the response that will give readers an indication of the experience that Dallas brings to this position, and a little of his hopes for the future. I believe we can look forward to the future of VRFish with some confidence.



*“Lynton,*

*Firstly, let me say how grateful I am for your efforts to help communicate with recreational fishers, Government Departments and the community. As the new Executive Officer of VRFish, the peak body for recreational fishers in Victoria, I welcome the opportunity given to me by the Board and chairman, Russell Conway. I am a keen angler and spearfisher, having grown up on the Mornington Peninsula. One of my fondest boyhood memories was catching a 5-kilogram Murray cod when I was 13 years old. I am married with two young boys, who I hope will also enjoy fishing, as they get older.*

*I have worked in fisheries management and policy for over 15 years in Queensland, Torres Strait, New South Wales and Victoria. Prior to me taking on the VRFish role, I was the Industry Liaison Manager with NSW Fisheries. I have been Executive Officer of the Australian Fisheries Managers Forum, which comprises all State and Federal fisheries directors from around the nation.*

*I recognise the crucial role VRFish plays in representing recreational fishers in Victoria and the value fishers place on having an effective voice to all levels of Government and the community. This is a responsibility that I and the Board take very seriously and we will continue to explore new ways to improve how we go about our core functions. It is great to see continued Government support for recreational fishing in Victoria and commitment to fund a peak body consultative structure. It is vital we make best use of the current model that empowers VRFish to be a single, unified voice. We need to ensure we continue to consult widely and effectively represent freshwater, estuarine and marine fishers, whether they are young or old, regardless of their cultural background or whether they are regional or metropolitan based.*

*There are huge opportunities for the sector. There is major potential to grow recreational fishing in the State and position Victoria as the premier fishing destination in Australia. This can be achieved through a combination of tools - managing our wild fisheries, reducing illegal fishing, smart stocking, habitat improvement, improving angler access and infrastructure, fishing clinics, promotion and marketing.*

*We need to get better at promoting the great fisheries we have, just like the Northern Territory does with barramundi...after all, we have a diverse array available including Murray cod, Golden perch, redfin or salmonid fisheries in inland waters, snapper in Port Phillip Bay, gummy sharks and King George whiting in Western Port or black bream in Gippsland. Let's not forget recreational diving for seafood delicacies such as scallops, abalone and lobster. We are also fortunate to have a resurgent kingfish fishery in Victoria and a Southern bluefin tuna fishery that has been estimated to contribute \$9 million to the Victorian economy. And of course there are seasonal fisheries for mako sharks, mahi mahi and albacore – now that's a pretty impressive list of species to fish for.*

*One of my first tasks is to review our governance model and our communication processes. Recreational fishers are a diverse group, and like the community, their demographics, values and behaviours will continue to evolve. VRFish is well aware of the need to stay in tune with ever changing fisher expectations and attitudes. On this front, it has been almost 5 years since the last structured survey of Victorian recreational fisher attitudes and values. A new survey would serve as an important test of what we perceive to be our future priorities and where our valuable resources should be invested. The socio-economic value of recreational fishing has been documented in the past but this was more than 5 years ago now. The previous study was also done at a time when much of Victoria remained drought affected and it is surely an underestimate of the current value now that many of our inland water storages are full. VRFish is keen to work with Fisheries Victoria and a reputable service provider to ensure we have up to date information on the sector and assist future planning.*

*There are other opportunities with respect to marine parks and the review by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council. Keeping in mind other Governments such as NSW have recently allowed recreational fishers back into many marine parks by line fishing methods from the shore. The NSW Government agrees with anglers that marine conservation and recreational fishing values should not be mutually exclusive. Earlier this year, recognising the limited science that underpinned the parks in the first place, they announced an 'amnesty' that seeks to restore the balance. We should not forget recreational fishing by line and hook is a benign, low impact method and that we have sustainable fisheries in Victoria. It*

is also worth noting the sector was the only group not compensated when the parks were first introduced in Victoria in 2003.

We also need to make sure we continue to advocate for good habitat and waterway management in inland waters. There is lots of scope to continue to grow the amount of fish in our waters through a combination of stocking and improved habitat management by working with local councils and environmental agencies. VRFish has long been an advocate for this cause and our resources will continue to be devoted to this priority.

Another priority is about how we grow future leaders in the sector. This is a pivotal part of succession planning and it is great to see national recognition and support from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. We are hosting a 5 day workshop in mid December this year, in conjunction with South Australia.

Finally, with the snapper season now in full swing it was great to be able to attend the western snapper stock update run by Fisheries Victoria on 23 October. The latest snapper research and monitoring was presented by Dr Paul Hamer and the overall report card is that snapper stocks are in good condition. Of note, we were given a 'heads up' that the initial King George whiting survey results for 2013 are amongst the highest on record. This is indeed excellent news for the future.

I feel privileged to be in the position of Executive Officer of VRFish. I will be working hard to deliver positive outcomes for the Victorian recreational fishing community. Don't forget that the organisation is here for the fishers and we value your ideas and feedback."

See later in this issue for a report on current activities and issues being undertaken by VRFish. This will be a regular feature of this newsletter in the future, thanks to Dallas D'Silva's emphasis on communication with anglers.



### Estuary Perch in Lake Tyers

This estuary perch was caught recently in Lake Tyers by Ray Clissold of Sale. The fish was caught in Fisherman's Arm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November using a vibe lure. The estimated length of this fish was 27cm. The fish was released.

John Harrison, who is collating details of all estuary perch caught in Lake Tyers in recent and past years as a part of a study into the feasibility of stocking the lake, said that from information so far received, Ray Clissold's fish is only the second estuary perch landed this year. John said that it appears that estuary perch numbers have not recovered from the period when they were commercially netted and the

study may show that a supplementary stocking could assist with rebuilding stocks to a sustainable level.

**John requests that anyone who has ever caught an estuary perch in Lake Tyers contact him (telephone 5156 5648) so that details of the catch can be included in the study.**

### Editor

Further to the above item, John Harrison reported that the estuary perch released in Lake Bolac in the Western district have grown to 20cms in twenty months, which is a great growth rate. Ross Winstanley, former Inland Fisheries Manager, reported as a result of the 2000 Lake Hamilton stocking, a couple of the fish caught had reached 2.2kgs after 12 years. So far, John has had reports from eight anglers who have caught perch in Tyers in recent years and two have been caught this year and reported to John.

Recently John had discussions with Fisheries, and he made the observation that **Fisheries Victoria was keen to look at the stocking of Mulloway in Lake Tyers**, and they made the comment that **some mulloway had been caught in Lake Tyers in the past.**

## Mulloway in Lake Tyers?

Now I have heard rumours of an odd mulloway being caught in the past, but this has never been verified, so if any anglers have more information in this area please let us know. It is not inconceivable that the odd mulloway could have entered Lake Tyers as I have seen verified reports and photographs of 2-3kg mulloway that were caught in the Marlo estuary. This project of the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club is being researched and evaluated by Fisheries Victoria in some detail and it will be well into 2014 before any decision is made.



In 20010 a report was prepared for Fisheries Victoria, by Dr Mathew Taylor of the University of NSW on the feasibility of stocking Victorian estuarine waters. The species examined as suitable for stocking were mulloway, black bream, estuary perch, dusky flathead and Eastern King prawn. With regard to Lake Tyers, Dr Taylor wrote, “Larger mulloway have been captured in the estuary, but there are no records of juveniles occurring here. This is not surprising as mulloway traditionally recruit to riverine estuaries as juveniles, and rely on substantial areas of deeper structured habitat—the lack of key juvenile habitat within the estuary means that mulloway releases are unlikely to improve recruitment and **should not be undertaken in this estuary.**” It was largely as a result of this research that Lake Tyers was stocked with Eastern king prawns a project initiated by Fisheries Victoria costing \$225,000.



### Bob McNeil's Lake Tyers Diary Report August- October

Bob is a Research Diary Angler who allows us to look at his diary report before it is forwarded to the Marine and Freshwater Fisheries Research Institute at Queenscliff.

Bob writes-“ *I have had a long and unproductive winter for fishing with lots of strong winds, no rains or insufficient rain to bring fish down from spawning areas. There does not appear to be any substantial influx of ocean fish into the estuary, which is unusual when the lake has been open for a considerable time. Bream caught in the past month had not released spawn. Only one dusky flathead in the period in the bottom lake, however some catches have been reported above the Trident to Devils Hole.*”

This is an amazing report that reflects on the very quiet nature of the fishing in the Lake Tyers estuary in the diary period. Bob had 21 mornings fishing the lake with his usual early morning starts, and fishing on most mornings for at least 3 hours. In that winter period he landed 45 black bream, of which 11 were under size, and one dusky flathead. On six mornings Bob did not land a fish, and in Bob's diary reports this is almost an unheard of event. On one morning Bob was caught up in heavy fog and ended up in the Fisherman's Landing area, and this brought back memories of my running aground in the Nowa Nowa Arm on a foggy morning several years ago much to my personal embarrassment. Bob's diary has succinct notes that give an indication of the difficult fishing conditions like “only one bite for the morning” and “never had a bite” and these were on successive outings.

This diary report really tells a story of very difficult winter fishing months, which would test the enthusiasm of most anglers, but provides a picture for many of us who did not brave the conditions under which Bob fished. This publication is delighted to receive Bob's diary reports and we look forward to the next report indicating a vast improvement in fishing conditions over the summer period. A big thank you to Bob McNeil and for the chance to look into his Research Angler Diary. This is a very popular segment of this publication.

### ACCESS AT BEMM RIVER FOR ROUNDTABLE CONSIDERATION

I recently had an interesting item from Don Ellis of the Metropolitan Anglers Association who in his own words stated, “members of my angling club, Ormond and many other anglers fished the Sydenham Inlet/Bemm River waterway over the recent Melbourne Cup weekend.

*On the Sunday, they experienced particularly inclement weather which made it unsafe to go out on the inlet by boat. Therefore most anglers in the area were restricted to bank fishing. As you are well aware, Bemm River access is greatly restricted by*

1. Lack of a navigable track along the river bank
2. Few bank access points.

### 3. *Luxuriant riverside vegetation which greatly restricts access.*

*Since some years ago, a local landholder closed off access to the river this problem has continuously been a bane to recreational anglers. I intend to really stir up the issue at the next Fisheries Roundtable Forum, in an endeavour to once again open the riverbank access.*

*Input and support from anglers would be most welcome.”*

#### **Editor**

My understanding of this issue is that the access to the river was closed in 1995 following application by the landholder that was supported by the DSE and East Gippsland Shire with little community consultation. Up until that time anglers could drive along the riverbank and park and fish within metres of their car. This provided wonderful access for the elderly and handicapped in particular. On several occasions, I had lovely days fishing that area but that quickly changed with the denial of ready access. Given the increasing numbers of retirees and the ageing of the population, the closing of access has had a marked effect on elderly visitors to the Bemm. Don Cunningham of the Bemm River Bait and Tackle tells the story of a ninety-year-old chap from Orbost who regularly fished the river, and when access was closed used to ring Don seeking to know when the road would again be opened. Up until the closure, Don Cunningham had a key to the gate to the riverbank track, and when conditions became wet he would lock the gate to protect the track. This was local community action to maintain access for anglers, who could ring the Bemm to ensure the gate was open, before travelling and organising accommodation at the Bemm for a weekends fishing.

This is one of the great iconic fishing areas of this state and it unbelievable to see river access denied to anglers of this state. Given the weather conditions that can regularly make boating on the inlet difficult, river access provides an alternative for those days as well as providing an opportunity for the elderly and handicapped to enjoy the fishing that the Bemm can offer in its river. Anglers from around Victoria would appreciate access to the Bemm River being achieved and vehicular access along its banks again being available

In May 2003, VRFish sought access advice from Hall and Wilcox Lawyers and part of that advice was, “as a basic principle, the Crown owns the water, bed and banks of all tidal and non tidal naturally occurring watercourses in Victoria. Implied as an incident of Crown ownership are public rights of access, use and relevantly, of fishing and navigation.”(This was part of a ten page legal advice to VRFish)

Perhaps the Roundtable should be considering obtaining a legal opinion on the status of the Bemm River and the rights of anglers to access. Secondly, given the importance of this area, a large grant should be sought by Fisheries Victoria, or VRFish or some similar body, as one of the categories associated with large grants is to provide fishing access and facilities and I doubt anglers could think of a better area to achieve this result. *This would seem to be an area that the Minister and local member should be consulting with the local community and anglers across the state through the peak body VRFish, to see if river access can be obtained with its economic benefits for the local community, and fishing access for recreational anglers across this state.*

**Don Cunningham of Bemm River Bait and Tackle writes-**

*“River access was deemed inappropriate around 1995 and Bemm has suffered since then. Proposals within the foreshore management plan do little to address what is a major issue for our town.*

*The intent seems to be to restrict car access anywhere along the Bemm River. I believe it would take minimal bank clearing to establish opportunities for anglers to fish along the road into Bemm River. All riverbanks are subject to flooding and would require careful vegetation removal.*

*Since the fencing of the riverbank further downstream, vegetation has taken over and there is almost no angler opportunity. There are three fishing platforms on the river with only one of these able to be used effectively.” Don added “to remain viable these areas would be required to be kept tidy: rubbish and regrowth removal.”*

Don said the town is desperate to regain a local worker who used to do mowing, clean up storm damage etc. This would also be cost effective and could ensure riverbank areas opened up to angling were cared for.

## **ODD BITS AND MORE**

### **Additional Fisheries Officers Appointed**

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Peter Walsh announced on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November that 12 new specially trained Fisheries Officers had been appointed, trained and posted across the state to ensure bag limits and size limits are adhered to as well as providing education and promoting fishing opportunities. A Fisheries Officer has been appointed to Mallacoota, however it would appear this is the only appointment in East Gippsland.

## Editor

Fishers will support this action, however it is to be hoped this will be part of the Fisheries Victoria budget and not another charge on the Recreational Fishing Licence Fees, which already is controversially used to fund 13 Fisheries Officers. This media statement gave no indication of the source of funding for these appointments. It is somewhat puzzling to see these appointments whilst at the same time seeing a dramatic decline in the scientific staff of Fisheries Victoria. When the current Coalition Government came to power the number of scientific staff was 47, and I have recently been informed that this has now declined to 14. (In 2008/9 there were 60 scientists working in this area.) As was stated in a previous issue (No.63) one scientist stated when predicting cutbacks, "With these cutbacks I can be fairly confident that there will be no black bream research in East Gippsland coming out of Fisheries Victoria."

[A Historical Note- the famous Alf Butcher was appointed as the first biologist with the Fisheries and Game Department in 1941, and his first major study was the bream fishery of the Gippsland Lakes. He became the first Director of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife in 1949.](#)

## A Loss for Fisheries Victoria

In Issue 63 November 2012, this publication reported on the alarming prediction of fisheries scientist Joel Williams that the number of scientists would be reduced from 30 at that time to 14, and we understand that represents the current strength of the scientific branch of Fisheries Victoria today. Joel Williams was the author of that research paper "Secret Lives of Black Bream" linking freshwater flows to the spawning of black bream. Joel Williams in 2013 completed his doctorate on the estuarine fisheries ecology of black bream linking the freshwater flows with the spawning and larval ecology of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes. Dr Williams is now undertaking a three-year study with Murdoch University to future proof black bream against environmental change in [Western Australia](#). In the course of the study involving recreational anglers, over 4000 black bream would be caught and tagged in the Swan and Canning Rivers. Dr Williams said "the black bream is an iconic species and very popular with recreational fishers, from die hard anglers to families making it the cornerstone of tourism in estuaries throughout the state." **How is it that a fisheries scientist with the black bream background of Dr Williams moves to Western Australia to undertake research that undoubtedly would have been considered vital for the Gippsland Lakes and the future of the black bream fishery in this state. Is this a result of the reduction in fisheries scientists in this state?**



## High Court Decision May Have Implications for Victorian Anglers

On the 7<sup>th</sup> November the front page of the Australian newspaper an article indicated that the right of "aborigines to take any fish caught for traditional purposes from waterways and oceans after the High Court handed a father and son victory in a four year legal battle, [ruling that native title meant state fishery laws did not apply to them.](#)" As a result of this ruling the South Australian Attorney General was ordered to pay legal costs to the two men estimated at more than \$400,000. The case involved the two men taking 24 undersized abalone on the Yorke Peninsular in South Australia. The High Court found that the states fishing laws did not extinguish native title rights and as a result, the Narrunga men had done nothing wrong.

This decision now raises this issue in other states, where areas of Native Title have been declared, and the Australian newspaper in the following days indicated that Victoria and NSW were examining this judgement. I hope that Fisheries Victoria and VRFish will examine this decision and indicate to anglers the implications of the decision on this states non-indigenous anglers.

## Boating Plan Released ??????

I noticed in the Lakes Entrance Post of 6<sup>th</sup> November that Cr Ellis, Acting Chairman of the Coastal Board, announced the Gippsland Boating Coastal Action Plan had been released after waiting 18 months, and that it could be accessed by downloading from the Gippsland Coastal Board web site or by collecting a USB stick at the Love our Lakes Forum. Readers might remember we looked at the delay in the release of this boating plan in Issue 73 October, and the fact that at that time the Coastal Board was discussing whether it would release the plan as it may no longer be relevant.

It would seem the Minister requires an overarching plan that subsumes the 2012 Boating Action Plan, so the plan released in Cr Ellis's report may no longer be relevant. To all the 300 persons who provided

submissions this has been a sad episode. The statement on the Coastal Boards website over the last eighteen months that submissions would be summarized and it would be indicated how these submissions changed the boating document concluded, “these will be included on our website in the near future. Watch this space for the announcement” has quietly been removed.

I think a final insult is the fact that those who provided submissions can only obtain a copy of the report by downloading 69 pages or by spending \$180 to attend the Love our Lakes Forum. Surely hard copies of the final report should be sent to all who provided submissions and it also should be made available for the general public, after all, probably \$100,000 has been spent on consultants preparing the plan.

#### **Late Note**

After 18 months, the sixty- nine pages BCOA plan coincidentally appeared on the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Board website on the day of the “Love our Lakes Forum.” In the Report, there was no indication of the input of 300 submissions just an acknowledgement, in three lines, that they were received.

### **Round Table Summary Still Unavailable to Anglers**

I received the following note from the Chairman of the Roundtable, Merv Maguire, 4<sup>th</sup> November

“With regard to the Fisheries website and the inclusion of the Roundtable minutes, I have received the following advice from Fisheries-

‘Please note our website is currently undergoing a major upgrade to transition from DPI to DEPI. This means we are unable to upload any content during the next 2-4 weeks until the transition is complete.’”

I also had the following note from Brian Mottram, Acting Director Fisheries Management and Science, in which he stated- “*Since the merger of DSE and DPI the websites have been undergoing major review and the merging of the two sites. Fisheries Victoria have put a lot of resources into this and are looking forward to the outcome. Unfortunately this /will cause delays with availability of various information including the roundtable documents on the web. Apologies for any inconvenience.*”

### **EPA Report on the Gippsland Lakes**

Correspondent Ross Scott, has provided the following interesting item.

*“East Gippslanders will be pleased to hear that at long last a credible investigation into the increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes was carried out by the Victorian EPA. The EPA report presented in May 2013, clearly stated that the deepening of the entrance by Gippsland Ports was responsible for the increased salinity of the Gippsland lakes”. Namely “The Gippsland lakes are characterised by a strong east to west salinity gradient corresponding to the increased influence of ocean waters. Salinity levels are driven by proximity to the entrance, and is produced by the saltwater input at the entrance.*

The report further stated, *“The lakes have been modified, the entrance has been dredged even deeper, and this has had a profound modification. Increased salinity stimulates the release of dissolved nutrients from the lake’s system” and “the high levels of surface water salinity threatens the surrounding freshwater swamps and wetlands.”*

This was the introduction in a letter to the Editor of the Bairnsdale Advertiser over five weeks ago, which has never been printed. The letter went on to say the opening at the entrance was deeper than had been previously indicated and this was causing profound changes in the lakes system. Ross suggests the need for a skills based Gippsland Lakes Management Authority to replace the numerous bodies that currently are funded to look after the health of the Gippsland Lakes.

Ross Scott is a former engineer who has worked with water bodies both in Australia and overseas and brings considerable knowledge and experience to the subject of changes to the lakes, and the causes underlying these changes. It seems very strange that a letter quoting the EPA from an experienced engineer is ignored, given some of the other letters that are printed. Surely a letter such as this is an important part of any debate on the health of the lakes.

### **Protection of Spawning Fish at the Mouth of Rivers**

It has been suggested, *“Fisheries Victoria has recently commenced a review of netting around river mouths...and will be looking at the relationship between floods commercial catch rates and spawning periods.”* Whilst it is pleasing that this issue is being examined after two years and a number of flood events, it is concerning that it has been suggested that commercial netting at the mouth of rivers might be connected to weather reports indicating possible flooding.

I think it needs to be kept in mind that black bream move in and out of rivers regularly, and move in greater numbers in the spawning period. In other words there is constant movement of this species. On the

other hand bass and estuary perch move from the rivers to the lakes to spawn and then return to the rivers. In 2012/13 over 2 tonnes of bass and perch were taken in commercial nets in the Gippsland Lakes, and it is known they enter the estuary to spawn in November-December, whilst bass enter the estuary to spawn between July and October, and bream will enter the rivers to move upstream to spawn from June.

It would seem almost impossible to protect spawning fish unless a blanket protection at river mouths is applied all year round. **It has been suggested by a number of experienced anglers that the best protection for these species would be if a ban on commercial netting in the eastern half of Lake King were introduced.** This would protect all key river mouths, and not be subject to Government Departments predicting flood events to close off netting at river mouths. Anglers need to be involved in the current discussions, and they need to be aware that only closing river mouths to netting when floods are predicted may well be on the table as a suggested answer. This would provide limited protection to spawning fish entering and leaving rivers, when only based on the unreliable prediction of flood events. It does need to be remembered there are only ten commercial fishermen, several of whom would like to see a buyback on the table again, and thousands of recreational anglers who travel to Gippsland to fish the lakes. Perhaps it is time the wishes of the recreational anglers of this state were considered, when it comes to protecting spawning fish.

References Research Reports-Australian bass Movement in the Snowy River (Paul Brown) Estuary perch movement and habitat use in the Snowy River (John Douglas) Cadwallader and Backhouse "A Guide to Freshwater Fish of Victoria"

## A Most Unusual Catch

I was reading the fascinating SEFTIA (South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association) monthly newsletter when I was astounded to read of the catch off Portland of the pictured fish. The stern trawler *Castella Rose* was working in 420 metres off Portland when it captured a prehistoric Greenland Shark. Generally, this shark species only occurs off Greenland and they are the only shark comparable to the Great White Shark in size. This specimen was 4.8 metres long and was estimated to weigh in the vicinity of 1.5 tonnes. This species has been reported to reach 5.8 metres, and whilst it preys on fish and squid Eskimos have reported having found seals, reindeer, polar bears and horses in its stomach. We have reported previously on some of the wonderfully odd catches of the SE trawlers working off our coast, but this is something special.



*(Simon Boag the editor of the SEFTIA Newsletter is CEO of SEFTIA, a member of the Ministers Fishery Advisory Council and runs a consulting business in Lakes Entrance.)*

## Artificial Reefs

Local member, Tim Bull, has indicated that he is pleased that the Government is delivering on artificial reefs, and this action, however small is to be applauded. I must say I have doubts on whether two reefs 50 metres square in an estuary of 400 square kilometres will be able to provide evidence of whether reefs in the Gippsland Lakes can be a success. In real terms, these two reefs measure a mere 7 metres by 7 metres in the Gippsland Lakes. In comparison Merimbula Lake (NSW) has had artificial reefs for over ten years with the last installation (2009) a reef, of 2600 square metres.

## Waterways Strategy

At a meeting held in the Lakes Entrance Angling Club Rooms on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> of December, Fisheries Victoria inland waters managers, Anthony Forster and Taylor Hunt, and East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA) CEO, Graeme Dear, led a discussion with a group of recreational anglers on improving riverine habitat as part of the East Gippsland Regional Water Strategy. The strategy is to be announced in 2014 and operate for eight years. This meeting was part of a state-wide consultation involving nine previous meetings. The meeting drew together recreational fishing objectives and the waterway health objectives, for healthy river habitats support more fish. This meeting drew up a list of seven priorities to be investigated that would improve habitat.

Graeme Dear CEO (EGCMA) spoke of the need for community groups to become involved in taking responsibility for the riverine environment. The Waterways Strategy was aimed at maintaining and improving rivers whilst at the same time supporting community involvement with funding for projects. Graeme acknowledged that in the past we removed logs from rivers and planted willows to protect the banks of streams both of which made no contribution to a better river habitat. He also made the point that the Waterways Strategy will be looking to the future, and whilst 80% of the East Gippsland rivers were classed in a 2011 survey as being in good to excellent condition, there is still a massive community challenge to further improve our waterways. With that habitat improvement will come improved fishing opportunities for anglers. Discussion took place on the problem of rubbish on our riverbanks, camping close to waterways and river access. Whilst this is a very brief summary, the Waterways Strategy is a new approach and as anglers we will hear a great deal more about this in the future. It has the possibility of changing our approach to river habitat and health that will bring benefits to all.

### **Bass Stocking in Gippsland**

In a media release on the 5<sup>th</sup> December entitled “Bass stocks increased in local waterways” local member Tim Bull reports that 82,000 bass fingerlings have been released into nine Gippsland waters, including 10,000 into the Mitchell, Tambo and Nicholson Rivers. Tim added “Fisheries has now stocked more than 400,000 bass into Gippsland since 2002 and this investment is paying off with legal bass of 27cms becoming increasingly popular.”



#### **Editor**

Readers might recall that the 10,000 bass in the Nicholson River is down on the 100,000 bass expected to be released over the three years 2012-14, however this would seem sensible given the dam on the Nicholson is still a problem restricting the movement of mature bass to the estuary to spawn. Graeme Dear, CEO (EGCMA) indicated at the Waterways Strategy meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, that options were being examined to overcome this problem and connect the river again to the estuary. Such actions would be part of improving river habitat. On a positive note, it will probably be 4-5 years before these fish will be ready to move to the estuary to spawn.

### **VRFish News**

The following is a brief summary of the VRFish fortnightly report to members that covered five pages.

**Port Phillip Bay-** The Minister has advised that the Government will not close commercial fishing in Port Phillip due to the impact on fish supply and small business. VRFish is attempting to negotiate a better access arrangement for recreational fishers.

**King George Whiting Research-** Early results of monitoring of juvenile whiting in Victorian bays are very promising and one of the highest larval counts on record. Dr Greg Jenkins of Melbourne University is undertaking research on the link between the whiting spawning grounds off Kangaroo Island and the juveniles that settle in Victorian Bays and inlets.

**Snapper Season-** all reports indicate that the snapper season in Port Phillip Bay is one of the best in recent years. Important research is being undertaken to better understand the size of the resource, and the impacts of recreational and commercial fishing are on the resource.

**Meeting with the Minister-** VRFish executive officer and Chair, Rob Loats, met with the Minister on the 19<sup>th</sup> November, and amongst items discussed was the reduction of conflict in Corio Bay, and communicating better with fishers across the state.

**Raising the Profile of VRFish-** Consideration will be given to updating the VRFish brand. This may mean a name change and better communicating with anglers. Already the State Council of VRFish are examining the benefits of changing the name from VRFish to “RecFish Victoria” or some similar name.

**Annual General Meeting of VRFish** was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> November and Russell Conway was re-elected Chairman of VRFish. Ross McGowan, the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, attended the State Council and outlined his vision for Fisheries Victoria. The meeting went for 5 hours.

**Dartmouth Reservoir** Joy Sloan former DEPI staff member and now a member of North East Anglers Association is working with VRFish and local anglers to improve access to this important water. Anglers should watch this issue.

## News On Dusky Flathead

I received a note from the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, Ross McGowan, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November indicating that the retention of the current regulation of a maximum size of 55cms and minimum size of 30cms. Anglers will applaud this action of the Executive Director.

It is interesting that in November, I have released from my boat four dusky flathead in the 70cm range, and this compares with one similar fish in

2012. Travis Dowling, former Fisheries Director, suggested that the slot size appeared to be working, however I have not had one dusky flathead under 38cms, and speaking to other anglers their experience seems similar. Lake Tyers Angling Club secretary, John Harrison, raised the possibility that perhaps a year class is missing. The growth rate according to the research of Gray and Barnes indicates a dusky flathead is likely to reach 30cms in 1 year and 36cms in two years. The growth rate then slows with a male flathead reaching 42cms after 5 years and a female 59cms after five years. As anglers we need to watch this situation in Lake Tyers.

**Research Paper- Reproduction and growth of dusky flathead- (C.A.Gray and L.M.Barnes July 2008)**



## Letters Letters Letters

### RFL Small Project Funding

I received the following letter from Don Ellis, President of the Metropolitan Anglers Association, on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, and this was just a day after the November issue of Around the Jetties was sent, so consequently, here is that letter which is of considerable importance to angling clubs across the state.

*Hi Lynton,*

*The Metropolitan Anglers Association at a recent delegates meeting were concerned that angling clubs both metropolitan and regional areas were loathe to submit applications for Recreational Fishing Licence Grants for local projects. As a result funds are accumulating with a considerable amount unspent.*

*The MAA's concern is that as the grants fund accumulates more money, Fisheries Victoria will put their hand up to grab as much of the accumulated revenue as they can and recreational anglers and their clubs will miss out on receiving grants for worth projects.*

*One of the problems heavily discussed at the MAA meeting was the angler's reluctance to submit applications because of the complexity of the process, even though some attempts have been made in recent years to simplify the process.*

*MAA is endeavouring to set up a "Quick Start" application process that can be easily followed by anglers whether club based or unaffiliated.*

*Any thoughts anglers or clubs may have with this proposal would be much appreciated*

*Many thanks and regards*

*Don Ellis President The MA*

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### Editor

The small grants program is open year round for projects up to \$5,000. Grants will be offered to incorporated bodies, but if an individual has a great idea, and can gain the support of a local angling club or local council, then that idea can become a reality. Any steps to make this process simpler are to be applauded and supported.

## Note from Former Director of Fisheries Management and Science

I had the following interesting note from Travis Dowling on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November.

*“Great newsletter as always thank you Lynton.*

*Cheers Travis D.*

*(Ps good report from a mate who fished the Toorloo Arm this weekend. Lots of duskies, biggest 69cms and Perch!!! Fish caught on plastics)*

### Editor

What a fascinating report. Not only the indication of a good result with dusky flathead but the fact that one was a 69cm fish that would have been female and a breeding fish, but the incredibly rare report of estuary perch being caught. I have forwarded this report to John Harrison Secretary of the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club who have received funding to conduct a detailed investigation into the feasibility of stocking Lake Tyers with estuary perch.

## A Comment on the Maasbanker and Beach Netting

I received the following letter from John Blain on the 7<sup>th</sup> November

*Lynton*

*Thanks for putting those questions to the local member and publishing the responses.*

*I was particularly interested in the question and answer relating to the Maasbanker netting within 80 meters of the beaches.*

*I have been surf fishing on the beach on many occasions, rods in the sand, lines in the water and anxiously waiting for a rod to bend over for action to begin .....only to look up and find this boat, in close proximity of the shore steam past with net out, birds following and **no apparent thought** for those on the beach hoping to catch the illusive salmon. I shake my head in absolute frustration and disbelief!*

*Against these experiences, I am disappointed that the local member could only say he would be happy for discussion to take place relating to which areas are fished and not fished to see if a consensus can be agreed to between the recreational and commercial sectors. **I would like to have seen a statement that indicated an action and a time frame.***

*What I cannot understand is why the Maasbanker has to fish in those limited areas the recreational fishermen have access to (i.e. the beaches off Lakes Entrance, Lake Bunga and Lake Tyers) when it has ninety miles of beach to choose from.*

*I fully accept the Maasbanker's right to take fish and acknowledge that there are a significant number of local people employed with the Maasbanker's business.*

*I also know that there is an economy that surrounds the recreational fisherman, which includes the accommodation, retail and food industry. When fishermen witness netting in the same area they are fishing in, they are unlikely to want to return.*

*I am of the opinion that excluding the Maasbanker from the above-mentioned beach locations would bring about wide benefits to the local economy while not materially impacting on the viability of the Maasbanker's business.*

*Many thanks for the diligence and hard work that must go into the work you do. You are a great advocate for the amateur fisherman and your views and representation align well with those seeking a fair go for all and a sustainable long-term fishery.*

*Kind regards*

*John Blain*

### Editor

This letter sums up the attitude of many correspondents to this issue. We have received photographs and even a video of this boat operating in close proximity to popular surf fishing beaches, directly in front of surf anglers and almost within casting distance. The point has been made this is not an attempt to deprive this boat from its netting, but it is a request for an exclusion zone to be declared that allows surf anglers quiet access to their sport, given that this boat has unlimited access to vast stretches of beach. I think it is



important that the local members comment that he is “happy for a discussion to take place relating to which areas are fished and not fished to see if a consensus can be agreed to between recreational and commercial sectors.” I hope this response may involve him in initiating the discussion and resolving this long held concern of recreational anglers.

## A VRFish Report to Anglers

### New Emphasis Needed for Recreational Fishing

Dallas D’Silva the new Executive Officer of VRFish the peak body of recreational anglers has written this item drawing the attention of anglers to the fact that their contribution to the environment and maintenance of fish stocks is largely unrecognized by the public, and this needs to be addressed. Dallas writes-

*“I am writing regarding the important and complex issue of community acceptance of recreational fishing. This is vital as research shows 1 in 4 people have a negative perception about the environmental impacts of recreational fishing. It would appear we are not adequately telling the true story to the public.*

*That is, putting the immense socio-economic benefits aside, recreational fishers make a significant contribution to protecting and enhancing our fisheries resources in Victoria.*

*VRFish is developing a fact sheet that will give greater recognition to the significant investment by recreational fishers in the areas of enforcement, education, science and management paid for by revenue generated by the sector.*

- *For example, \$1.8 million of funding generated from recreational license fees were invested in research projects to support the sustainable use of our valuable wild fisheries for mako sharks, snapper, King George whiting and calamari between 2010/11 to 2012/13. This includes monitoring tools such as the internationally awarded scientific angler diary program, which complements other tools such as pre-recruitment monitoring and creel surveys in Victorian bays and inlets.*
- *Recreational fishing funds have also been directly invested in a suite of estuarine (e.g.-black bream, dusky flathead and estuary perch) and inland projects (e.g.- Murray cod, Golden perch and Macquarie perch) in recent years.*
- *Recreational fishers regard compliance of paramount importance in helping to protect our valuable fisheries resources now and into the future. In 2012/13 alone recreational fishers contributed more than \$2 million towards fisheries enforcement and education resources deployed by Fisheries Victoria. Of note, recreational fishers fund community based education/awareness programs such as Fishcare, habitat improvement works and a suite of stocking programs to help restore fish populations that are impacted by other non-fishing and environmental factors.*

*The ‘Your license fees at work’ slogan does not give due to recognition to fishers for this commitment and we believe this should be modified or enhanced to highlight that recreational fishers help protect our valuable fisheries.*

#### Editor

As mentioned in previous issues of Around the Jetties, on a local level Recreational Fishing License fees from anglers have contributed over \$1 million to the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to return wooden debris (snags) to local rivers. This is an attempt to return fish habitat to rivers such as the Tambo, Mitchell and Nicholson after years of bodies such as Ports and Harbors consistently removing trees and logs from these rivers with no thought for the fish populations or the river environment.

Currently anglers are seeking Government action to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers from being removed in commercial nets. Anglers not only provide funds to restore habitat they also seek protection for species such black bream whose numbers have dramatically declined in recent years. Little is known by the general public of the role of anglers, in protecting the environment of the lakes and rivers, and this approach by VRFish may help to illustrate the role of anglers today. A problem associated with the allocation of RFL fees to projects, is that projects are often announced by politicians and appear as if it is Government providing funding rather than anglers license fees. This seeming duplicity needs to be overcome for the public to understand the input of anglers.

## **Retirement of Dick Brumley**

At the end of this week Dick Brumley Senior Fisheries Management Officer at Lakes Entrance, Dick Brumley retires after almost 35 years with Fisheries Victoria. Recreational anglers will wish Dick well in his retirement. On looking back, Dick suggests he has had a most varied career with Fisheries Victoria, and it has provided an extraordinary opportunity for him to meet many wonderful people. Dick and his wife Andrea hope to spend some time traveling in the New Year. Andrea retired last year and is remembered for her work on the authoritative study on carp in our system.

See- "Managing the Impacts of Carp" – John. D. Koehn, Andrea.R.Brumley and Peter.C.Gerhke

**Thanks,** from Dawn, to those who helped with the restoration of our mailing files. I (Dawn) do have to say that some folk asking to be reinstated have new email addresses. If you want to stay in contact, you must let us know if you change your address. Computer glitches do happen but I cannot control change of address. So make it your New Year resolution to inform us if you still want the newsletter and are changing your email address. Enjoy the holiday break.

May the New Year bring you tight lines, joy and contentment.

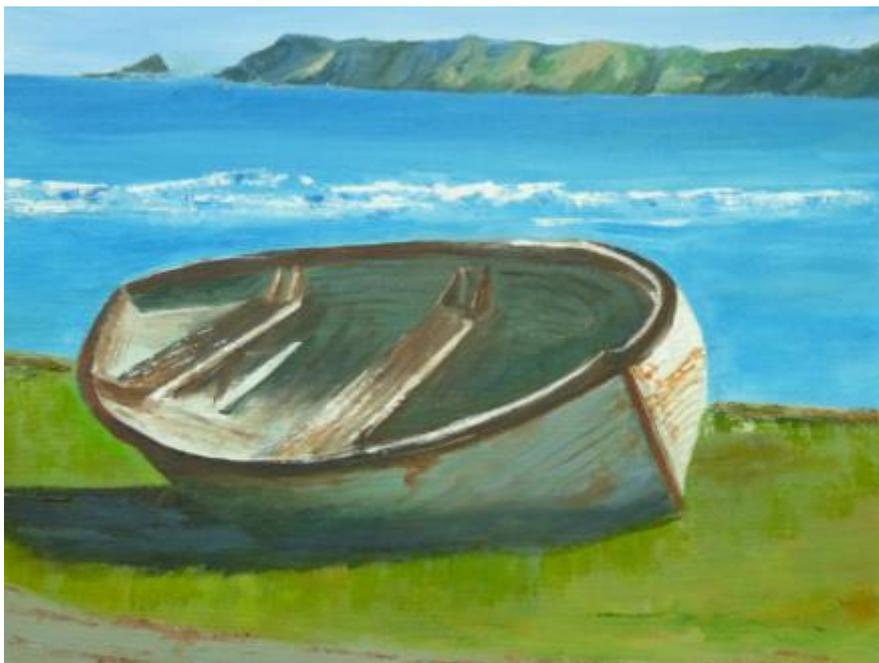


## **To all our Readers**

**May we take the opportunity of wishing you a very Merry Xmas and a New Year with good health and some wonderful days on the water. We hope you have found Around the Jetties in 2013 both interesting and providing information, and we look forward in late January 2013 to bringing you more information.**

**Our thanks to all who have contributed to Around the Jetties and particularly our Diary Angler, Bob McNeil, who shares those early mornings on Lake Tyers with so many readers.**

**A special thank you to our publication Department (Dawn) without whom we would not have this publication. She keeps my spelling and grammar in check, makes sure the publication looks good and that you receive it each month.**



**Norfolk Island Sketch of the style of boat used to unload supplies for the convict settlement in the 1800's. An L.G.Barr oil painting.**