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# Around the Jetties

## July-August 2014

### Issue No 82

### An Anglers Newsletter

“Trout fishing with fly rods, lures or bait is now a folkloric image in Victoria with tourism relying on it. It has been a bleak year, with fishing fanatics returning home with nothing.”  
Weekly Times

Editorial July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014

#### Editorial



This publication has raised the issue of trout streams in the Gippsland region with Fisheries Victoria, after a survey of North Eastern streams found that the lower levels of some of our great trout streams held almost no trout whilst the mountain areas held reasonable numbers of fish. Rivers in East Gippsland have exhibited the same tendency, but even the upper waters are showing a massive decline in fish. A number of reasons for this decline have been put forward including climate change and a rise in water temperatures from the loss of shade with the wholesale removal of willows. Mick Hall, past president of the Australian Trout Foundation, is quoted in the Weekly Times as saying, “no one is 100 per cent sure what is wrong, but the blitz on willows seemed the

most likely.”

I wonder whether the decline in stocking of trout streams and the increased fishing pressure of an affluent society might also add to the problem facing trout fishing in this state. Mansfield and District Fly Fishers President, Graeme Godber, said that any solution must include lower bag limits and an increased minimum size of fish. I must say that I find it hard to understand that **Fisheries Victoria who is primarily responsible for fish stocks in this state, has allowed the situation to deteriorate to the current level**, and I wonder if the decline in the Fisheries Victoria scientific staff might also be part of the problem. I wonder whether Catchment Management Authorities have been working closely with Fisheries scientists in the approach to the removal of streamside vegetation. We now have a situation where trout authority, Mick Hall, has been given estimates that it could be three to thirty years before streams would have “catchable” trout populations again.

In the Weekly Times article former Recreational Fisheries Manager, Ross Winstanley, is quoted as blaming climate change, “exacerbated by the removal of willows for the loss of high country trout.” After talking to numbers of trout fishermen and with my own fly-fishing experience, I would suggest the removal of willows and the destruction of riverbank cover **causes the heating of the rivers** and the destruction of those shaded pools so loved by trout. One only has to look at rivers like the Delatite with its bare banks to see a lovely



stream ruined by the interference of man. Perhaps as Mick Hall says, it might take thirty years to bring these streams back to supporting trout. This is a major challenge for Fisheries Victoria.

**It is great to see a paper such as the Weekly Times, feature on its front page this issue that is so important to rural areas and rural economies, but it is also sad to see the state of this once great recreational fishery.**

## **New Research on Dusky Flathead in East Victorian Waters**

It has just been announced that a research project on dusky flathead in East Gippsland waters will be undertaken as part of an **Honours research project by Tara Hicks** at Charles Stuart University in Albury. Dr Keller Kopf and Dr Paul Humphries, who will be responsible for the management of the research, and delivery of reports, will supervise this project. The research, costing \$54,600, is funded from the licence fees of recreational anglers and will provide valuable information on this East Gippsland species. In 2012, Victoria introduced regulations to conserve large and mature female dusky flathead based largely on the groundbreaking NSW studies of Barnes and Gray (2008). Anglers in Victoria readily accepted a slot size of 30-50cms given that the NSW research suggested 50% of female dusky flathead were mature at 56.8TL Whilst this was the NSW experience estimates in Victoria do not exist. Size limits were introduced in Victoria due to the increasing fishing pressure and this was evidenced in Mallacoota where recreational catches of dusky flathead greater than 60cms declined from 11% to 1% of the surveyed recreational catch. This has been a real concern for recreational anglers and regular dusky flathead anglers in other waters such as Lake Tyers were experiencing a similar decline in larger fish.



This study hopes to look at the Victorian experience and to examine the effectiveness of recreational size limits on the long-term sustainability of dusky flathead fisheries. This study will contribute to the improvement of the fishery by providing scientific information of the biology of the dusky flathead, which is currently non-existent in Victoria. It is believed the research will assist Fisheries managers formulate appropriate size limits using egg production methods of the species to evaluate changes in population. The study will be based on the Gippsland Lakes, Mallacoota Inlet, Lake Tyers and Sydenham Inlet. Sampling of fish is hoped to start in October or November. Dr Kopf has indicated that Around the Jetties may be used to obtain recreational angler assistance for the project at a later date.

**Around the Jetties provided written support for acceptance and funding of this study. I am delighted to see its acceptance with work beginning in the coming months. This project really marks the first biological investigation of this important recreational species in Victoria.**

## **Nowa Nowa Iron Ore Project**



On the 26<sup>th</sup> June, I had a one-hour meeting with Greg De Ross, Managing Director of Eastern Iron limited the company undertaking the development of the Nowa Nowa iron ore mine.

This meeting was at the request of Anthony Hurst former Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria who is now the Executive Director of Earth Resource Development in Victoria. The meeting was to answer any questions readers of Around the Jetties might have raised since the article on this development in the April issue of Around the Jetties. Actually, readers had shown little real concern at the release of water from the mine but some concern had been expressed at the increase in the traffic between Now Nowa and fishing spots along the coast. Both matters were explored with Greg De Ross.

With regard to the issue of water, project water requirements will be obtained on site from rainfall and some groundwater and it will be collected and held in dams. It is not expected that any water will be channelled into Boggy Creek and thence into Lake Tyers. Environmental flows from the catchment will continue into Boggy Creek. Should flooding occur in the area so that operational dams cannot control the amount of water, this floodwater will be collected in the open pit mine. (Statistics suggest flooding of this nature has not occurred in the last sixty years.) It would seem that the mine even in a rare flood event would have no effect on Lake Tyers. Once the mine life (estimated 10 Years) is completed, the open pit will become a freshwater

lake and the area rehabilitated. Greg De Ross said that the company would provide a sum for this rehabilitation prior to mining commencing.

I pointed out to the Managing Director that local anglers travel to places like Marlo, the Bemm and Mallacoota on a regular basis as well as large boats going interstate to Eden and Bermagui and some concerns have been expressed at the increased traffic on the Princes Highway. Greg indicated that there would be about 74 vehicle return trips per day. He indicated that the modern B-Double trucks would move almost as fast as general traffic and the road is approved for B-Double use. The trucks will run 24 hours per day, Monday to Friday and with the decline in log truck operation, hopefully the overall use of trucks on this road may not be greatly increased.

I must say I was very pleased at the responses to the questions I asked, and I had the feeling this company was going out of its way to answer the concerns of the public and in this case of Gippsland anglers. Thanks to Anthony Hurst and Greg De Ross.

For any reader interested the [Project Description and Proposed Mine Plan](#) can be found on the Internet under **Nowa Nowa Iron Project**. This is a 69 page detailed document.

## **VRFish Monthly Report**

### **VRFish 2014 Election Wish List**

This list has been completed and circulated to political parties for consideration. The wish list has been developed over a two-year period through consultation with members and under the auspices of the State Council of VRFish. The document covers a range of issues and will be available on the VRFish website once the political parties have had time to respond with their policy positions.

**Editor-**I am surprised that recreational angler readers of this newsletter do not seem to have had an opportunity to contribute to this wish list and I wonder if Angling Clubs were invited to contribute. Most, if not all readers of this publication had not heard of the “Wish List” until it was brought to their attention in the May issue (80) of *Around the Jetties*.

### **Welcome to Senior Program and Partnership Manager**



After an interview process, Ms Michelle Wenner was appointed to this new position in the VRFish secretariat. Michelle has natural resource management and legal academic qualifications and has worked in a range of roles in fisheries and socio-economic positions. Michelle has a love of fishing and diving. General Manager Dallas D’ Silva stated, “I am sure Michelle will be a great addition to the team.” The other position to be filled under the new structure subject to available funds is that of Recreational Fisheries Liaison Officer.

### **Fisheries Patrol vessel**



Fisheries Victoria has welcomed a new patrol vessel to its Portland fleet. This boat will undertake inspections of recreational and commercial vessels from Yambuk to the South Australian border. The boat is an 8m rigid inflatable vessel, and is fitted with a hauler for inspections of lobster pots. Twin 200hp motors power the boat. It joins two similar vessels already in operation at Mornington and Altona.

### **VRFish Celebrates**

On the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> July, VRFish celebrated turning 20, with 70 invited guests from across the State. The Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, the Hon Peter Walsh attended the event held at the Albert Park Angling and Yachting Club. The Master of ceremonies for the night was Ian Cover from the “Could Have Been Champions.”

Geoff Cramer, former Chairman and Order of Australia recipient said, “Representing the diverse views of 720,000 recreational fishers will always be a challenge. We work with other users and managers to improve recreational fishing in Victoria.”

## Bemm River July Report by Don Cunningham



Winter fishing at Bemm has highs and lows, but the fishing can be great. The downside is the cold wind that can prevail for days on end. Rain usually has an effect, but the wind will make or break your trip to the Bemm.

When a break does come, I recommend you get out there. It is going to be different, the bream seem to school up at these times, so it is critical to fish where the fish are. I find that bream will be found in certain depths. Generally, fish move into deeper water as the water cools. At the moment, bream can be found in about 1.8 metres.

This winter the bream are biting best late in the day, and local prawn is the best bait.

I am having pretty good results using plastics and vibes. Bream will close down at times even though your fish finder is indicating lots of fish, so it is a challenge and I love it. Wintertime has benefits: it can be very quiet. I have been on my own out there, and had mornings where nothing happens, not even a bite.

This weekend we were able to fish, the water was very dirty on Saturday and fishing was tough. Sunday the water cleared up and I spoke to a group of happy anglers at the boat ramp who were cleaning some good fish. I had a productive afternoon and my biggest fish was a trevally of over a kilo.

The lake is open and we can only hope that during this time other species come in. Salmon, tailor, trevally luderick and maybe some yellow eye mullet. The days are getting longer, and I intend to patrol the channel on the full tide with a lot of hope.

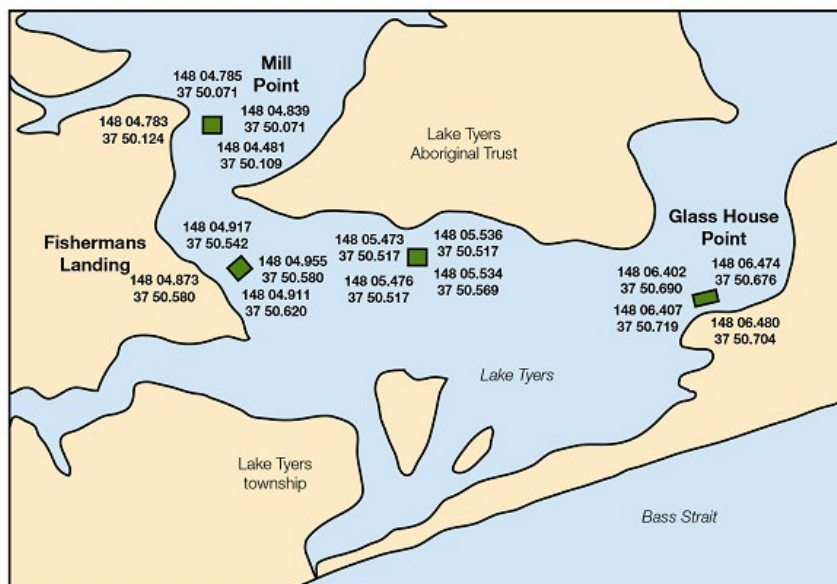
### Editor

This report was provided by Don and dated the 21<sup>st</sup> July. Readers will be aware that following the June State-wide Recreational Roundtable meeting that Fisheries Victoria was to investigate access to the Bemm River, an area that had been largely closed to anglers since 1995. We will wait for any reports on the progress of this investigation. Again, it's thanks to Don for these great reports that provide a window on the famous Bemm for readers of this newsletter.

## Artificial Reefs set to improve fishing.

This was the heading of a **Tim Bull media release** on Friday June 27<sup>th</sup> at 2.00pm, following a photo opportunity at 8.30am on the same morning at Lake Tyers to mark the last of the reefs deployed in the Gippsland area. The media release indicated the four artificial reefs for Lake Tyers completed a \$400,000 project to install eight reefs, with two at Mallacoota and two in the Gippsland Lakes. This announcement is at variance with the original announcement of 3 artificial reefs in Lake Tyers. It now seems according to this media release that 4 reefs are to be placed in Lake Tyers. **Local member Tim Bull MLA responded to this query stating, "The additional reef is at the Glasshouse, one of the locations identified during the stakeholder**

**identification. It is an additional site due to the original seven being done under budget."**

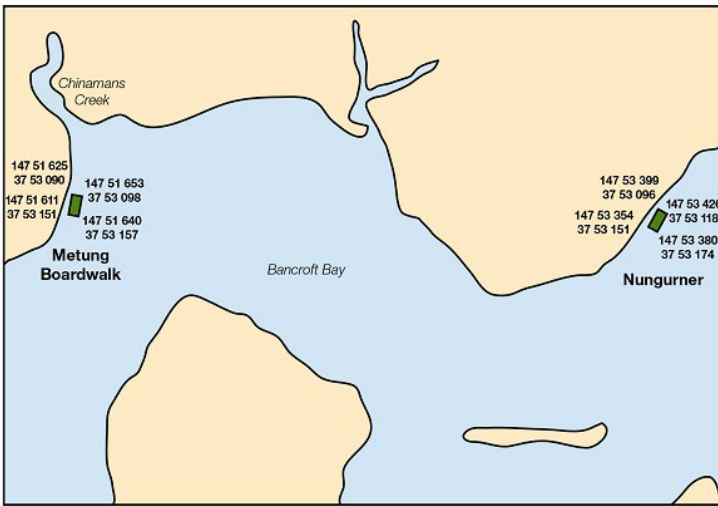


### Map opposite Lake Tyers

**I would again draw the attention of readers to the very small reefs** that are currently being placed in our local estuarine waters (50sq metres) in Gippsland. That is each reef is only 5 metres by 5 metres.

I mentioned at the time of the original announcement of the location of the reefs that I believed the Gippsland Lakes with just two 50sq metre reefs in a 400 kilometre square estuary

was treated rather poorly, when compared with Lake Tyers, a small 25 kilometre sq estuary receiving 200sq metres of artificial reef in four locations. Tim Bull responds to this observation saying **"following inspection of sites in the Gippsland Lakes a number of sites were ruled out due to unsuitable substrate, unsuitable currents or their proximity to busy boating zones."**



I understand that Fisheries Victoria met with the commercial fishermen prior to the meeting with recreational anglers to discuss reef locations in the Gippsland Lakes. Several recreational anglers have raised with me the prospect that this meeting may have influenced locations of reefs in the Gippsland Lakes.

This view was advanced given the location of the two reefs in the Gippsland Lakes. (see **Map opposite of Bancroft Bay**)

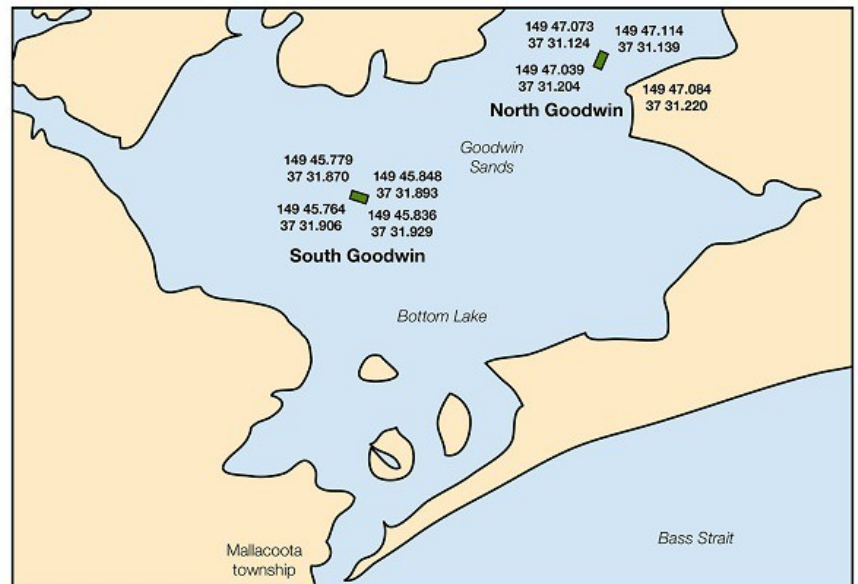
Both reefs have an exclusion zone around them of 100 by 200 metres so recreational fishermen can only fish close to the reefs.

It would be very strange if this were the case, given that recreational anglers provided 50% of the \$400,000 needed for this project through their licence fees. It is true that the details of Fisheries Victoria's discussions with the commercial sector were not made available to the over 50 recreational anglers at the meeting with Fisheries Victoria to discuss reef locations.

Another question arises as to whether the reefs with access to bank fishermen are going to provide large numbers of resident fish however only time will tell.

### Map opposite Mallacoota

It is worth comparing the Victorian development with that of NSW, and the Merimbula Lake in particular provides a comparison. The Merimbula Lake is only 5.6 square kilometres in area, yet NSW Fisheries have provided an artificial reef in this lake of 1600 square metres using 400 reef balls. Anglers can readily understand a reef of this size having an impact on fishing in Lake Merimbula, but one can only wonder whether the two small reefs in the Gippsland Lakes will have any impact on the recreational fishery. The Merimbula reef follows the construction of reefs at Lake Conjola, Lake Macquarie, Botany Bay and St Georges Basin commencing in 2005.



Whilst this media release provides a starting point, we have a long way to go to provide worthwhile artificial reefs in the estuaries of Gippsland that will influence fish numbers.

The provision of artificial reefs is part of the Coalition commitment to **“protect spawning fish by introducing controls on the practice of commercial netting near the mouths of rivers, and expand the artificial reef program.”** Recreational anglers would realize that after three years the commitment to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers has not eventuated, despite continuing angler concerns.

### Maps

In September 2013 I provided maps of the artificial reefs, however these improved maps (above) are now available. Reefs in Lake Tyers will be at Fisherman's Landing, Mill Point, Alan's Point, and Glasshouse Point while in the Gippsland Lakes the reefs will be at Nungurner and off the boardwalk at Bancroft Bay. (It is suggested shore-based anglers can fish both of these reefs.) I have also attached the map with references for the two Mallacoota artificial reefs.

**Thanks to Tim Bull for his assistance in clarifying reef locations.**

## Odd Bits and More

### “Beginning of the End”

A biologist at Macquarie University has come to the conclusion that fish have feelings and intelligence on a par with other animals.

Dr Culum Brown came to the conclusion after reviewing scientific evidence on fish capabilities. He found that fish have good memories and live in social communities. He also discovered that fish were able to build complex structures and even use tools. Dr Brown’s research also suggested that there was mounting evidence that fish felt pain in the same way humans do. He wrote in the journal of Animal Cognition that the considerable evidence of pain perception and fish behavioural sophistication suggests that best practice would be to lend fish the same level of protection as any other vertebrate.

Source-Herald Sun June 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. Reader John Murray, who brought this cutting to our attention, provided the heading for this item “Beginnings of the End”.

### Congratulations to Local Commercial Fisherman

Local offshore fisherman, Wayne Dredge was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship in September 2013, and has visited fish markets in New York, which is regarded as the second largest fish market in the world. A report was provided in the SEFTIA magazine and the Lakes Post of the 25<sup>th</sup> June provided part 1 of a two-part report on the trip and the changes that could be introduced in the marketing of Australian fish. A result of his study in every country he visited was that New Zealand seafood was present whilst Australian seafood was not seen in any markets he visited. Wayne’s study indicates changes that are occurring in seafood retail and wholesale marketing that perhaps the Australian industry should examine. Wayne is the owner /operator of the Opal Star that operates in the Commonwealth Southern shark fishery.

### Growth in Barramundi Aquaculture

Cone Bay, Australia’s only saltwater barramundi farm is on Turtle Island, 160 kms off the coast of NW Australia. This farm produces 1,000 tonnes of barramundi per annum and is set to increase this to 7,000 tonnes in the next few years. These fish are living in a wild environment and not a tank, and as a result have a wonderful clean flavour. Simon Little of the Marine Produce Australia Company says, “about 50% of barramundi sold in restaurants is not from Australia,” but is part of the 70-80% of fish imported into Australia each year to meet local demands.

Source Australian Newspaper 28-29<sup>th</sup> June 2014

### New Murray Cod Limits proposed



Freshwater anglers have sixty days to provide Fisheries managers with feedback on proposed changes to Murray cod size limits that are designed to improve stocks significantly.

It is proposed in a July Media release that a slot size for Murray cod of 50-70cms and a reduced bag limit of one fish per day for the rivers. Fisheries Executive Director Ross McGowan indicated, “narrow slot sizes are increasingly used around the world to improve the sustainability of long lived fish and the quality of fishing for anglers.”

The proposed slot size would protect the large breeding cod that produce more eggs while allowing the limited take of smaller fish between 50 and 70cms. Murray cod take about ten years to grow from 60cms to 100cms, however they grow faster when younger taking around three years to grow from 50cms to 70cms. It is suggested that this slot size would permit anglers to harvest Murray cod at the best eating size of between 2-3kgs. It is proposed the bag limit for lakes such as Eildon would remain unchanged given that these lakes are mostly stocked annually.

A public meeting on this proposition is scheduled for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August at the Bendigo Legion Angling Club at 7.00pm.

**Submissions on this change close on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August.**

### Editor

I think most recreational anglers would agree with this proposal, and certainly, the Gippsland anglers have been very happy with the slot size that was introduced for dusky flathead. I have had a number of anglers in recent times talk to me about the introduction of a slot size for black bream of 28-38cms and given the state of the black bream fishery particularly in the Gippsland Lakes this seems a reasonable proposition that

should be considered. Such a move would protect the larger fish that have a major influence in spawning and egg production.

Of course, a major problem associated with such an introduction is that any such regulation would most likely not apply to commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes. Currently the slot size for dusky flathead is not applied to the netters in the lakes. I believe that given that the dusky flathead regulation is not being applied to commercial netters, recreational anglers would see any savings they achieve in fish stocks by the introduction of a black bream slot size, rather than helping protect a threatened species, the larger fish would be taken in commercial nets. **The non-application of regulations to commercial fishermen in the Gippsland Lakes is a severe handicap to any discussion on stock protection and recreational fishing enhancement.**

### **Lake Tyers Openings Controlled**

It is pleasing to see that openings of Lake Tyers artificially will be controlled by a formal arrangement between the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria, the East Gippsland Shire Council and the Department of the Environment and Primary Industry.



The Catchment Management Authority will monitor the estuary and with its partners determine if an artificial opening is required. Ken Judd of the EGCMA says, “there is no intention to artificially open the estuary at this time. We are hoping this will occur naturally in the short term.” Generally if the opening occurs naturally, it will be a far more effective opening than an artificial opening and this means a deeper opening with better recruitment of other species to the estuary. Currently John Harrison who keeps records of

the opening and closing of the estuary has indicated that the estuary is only about 18 inches from breaking out, and with the heavy sea action, this could occur at any time. (this photo taken 1<sup>st</sup> August shows the narrow sandbank holding the lake back)

### **The Dam on the Nicholson River ??**

This year only 10,000 bass were released into the Nicholson River instead of the 35,000 promised at the announcement of 100,000 to be released over three years. Readers might recall that 35,000 bass were stocked in the Nicholson River on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 as part of \$100,000 stocking program. When in this publication, Anthony Foster, said at that time, “it was always envisaged that the population of bass in the Nicholson above the weir would create “a mountain to the sea” self sustaining fishery over time in the event that the weir is eventually removed.”(Issue 64 January 2013)

We all realise that the development of a self-sustaining bass population in the Nicholson River is doomed to failure unless that dam is removed or alternatively a bypass or fish ladder is installed to allow the bass to move to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn.

In the Lakes Entrance News May 2012 local member Tim Bull was quoted as saying “with the decommissioning of the Nicholson Dam, this news to stock 33,000 fingerlings per year over the next three years is very good news.” Tim Bull when informed of the likelihood that the dam would not be removed stated “It is my intention to follow up on the situation with the dam in the coming weeks.”(Issue 66 May 2013) Recreational anglers have heard nothing more on this follow up, and can only believe that with only 10,000 bass being released in the Nicholson River this year the plan to develop a self sustaining bass population is on permanent hold. Perhaps with an election in four months it would be good time for the local member and Minister to resolve the Nicholson River fiasco by allocating funds to remove the dam and restoring the release of bass fingerlings to the river.

### **Fishing and your Health**

Alexandra McManus Director of the Centre of Excellence for Science, Seafood, and Health at Curtin University says the popular outdoor pursuit of fishing has helped young people develop new skills and provided a physical and social activity. For seniors, the researchers found fishing not only provides an opportunity to increase their physical activity while boosting vitamin D production, but also enables them to share their knowledge with young anglers. In addition, another initiative identified in the study was “Pink Fly Fishers” a program developed to help women recovering from breast cancer. Alexandra McManus says

fly-fishing is an excellent form of rehabilitation. In another case, a father observed that angling (beach and estuary fishing) was one of the few activities that gave his schizophrenic son happiness and peace. Alexandra McManus hopes to take this study further and ultimately nationally.

“I’d like to develop programs that encourage more people to go fishing” she says. “It’s a good way for people to get outdoors, improve their fitness, interact socially and enjoy themselves.”

#### **Study funded by the-Fisheries Research and development Corporation**

**Editor** –Now this study should make it far easier to convince the wife that fishing is good for you, may be even essential to release that stress and boost that Vitamin D!

#### **Portland’s New State-of-Art Boat Ramp Opened**

Fishermen can now launch boats with little delay following the opening of a new 4-lane boat ramp, which is part of a \$7.1 million Portland harbour upgrade. Premier Denis Napthine said, “as one of Australia’s premier locations Portland is better prepared than ever for the influx of fishermen who travel from all corners of the country for the lucrative tuna catch each year.” The boat ramp will be able to handle 300 vehicles per day and the port upgrade will include additional parking facilities. The boat ramp is part of the Governments Boating Safety and Facilities Program. This development will not only support fishermen but also support new tourism opportunities, and it already is having a positive impact.

#### **Editor**

The blue fin tuna bonanza is providing wealth for the entire Portland community, and the support of the Government in this project is recognised and welcome. The influx of anglers to Portland adds \$9 million to the local economy of Portland and this will continue to rise. Compare this with the Gippsland Lakes and the approach of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. There is no attempt to improve fish stocks or examine the effect of commercial netting on black bream and dusky flathead or even regulate the commercial netting of the Gippsland Lakes. The Advisory Committee on the other hand sponsors art shows, book publications and a host of small local programs without meeting the real issues facing the Gippsland Lakes, such as increasing salinity and stock decline. Many would believe the funding of the Advisory Committee, some \$12 million over four years could produce a far better result if applied to the removal of commercial netting and a scientific approach to the restocking of the Gippsland Lakes so that the lakes become a drawcard for estuary anglers from all over the state. This was the case in the mid 1980’s when Steve Starling leading fishing writer suggested at that time that a bag limit of 30 bream should be introduced for anglers, given the fishing bonanza available in the Gippsland Lakes.

#### **Black Bream in the Market**

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Box Hill Central market, and there in this area several very large fish stalls. I noticed on two of these stall black bream. On the first stall there were probably 20 black bream that would have been barely size fish however these were \$17.50 per kilo whole whilst at the second stall about half a dozen black bream of about 30cms were an amazing \$18.99 a kilo whole. I would suggest that if sold as filets these fish would yield \$50 per kilo.



I have been asked by a number of readers just where the black bream that are caught in the Gippsland Lakes are sold, and this market provides an indication. Despite statements that black bream appear on local restaurant menus, two surveys conducted by this publication found that not one restaurant in Lakes Entrance had black bream listed as a dish for visitors to Gippsland to enjoy. Flathead tails at the market were \$42.99 per kilo and they were certainly not dusky flathead but rather the offshore variety. Sea Bream were \$15.99 per kilo and whole flathead \$16.99 per kilo. Two weeks previous to my visit to the Box Hill Market I had a report of barely size black Bream at Victoria Market at \$15.99 per kilo. What was intriguing was that at both stalls in the Box Hill Market black bream were called “Golden Bream.” I can’t account for the marketing of this fish under this name. Actually I did not see a single yellowfin bream, but then the commercial catch of these fish is in NSW and Queensland.

One can only come away from such markets wondering at the reason for allowing continuing netting of black bream and dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes by the last of the commercial netters, and the effect of this commercial netting on the economies of villages and towns around the Gippsland Lakes and the long term bream stocks.

It is worth remembering that in the last ten years excluding the two flood years, the commercial catch averaged only **38.6 tonnes** per annum and remembering that at its peak the commercial catch of black bream in **1983/84 was 446 tonnes**. The catch of dusky flathead over the same period yielded an average 22.6 tonnes



per annum, however this may drop as the over 55cm breeding females are not protected from commercial netting. Both dusky flathead and black bream can readily be replaced on dinner plates by sea bream and offshore flathead caught under quotas that protect the stocks for the future. You then have to ask why commercial netting continues in the Gippsland Lakes.

### **News from the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association**

The following information is taken from the Southeast Trawl Association Newsletter, which regularly provides items of interest to recreational anglers.

#### **Mangrove Jack caught in Eden**



In February, the Eden trawl vessel Imlay caught a Queen snapper and this extended the range of that species, however on this occasion they caught a Mangrove Jack fishing on the NSW South Coast. According to the Australian Museum the Mangrove Jack occurs in tropical and warm temperate marine waters of the Indo West and central Pacific. This fish is known around the tropical north of Australia and South to the central coast of NSW. This species is a popular recreational catch and according to Tackle World are “capable of lightening fast strikes and strong and violent runs for cover.”

#### **Survey finds 10 million orange roughy off eastern Tasmania**

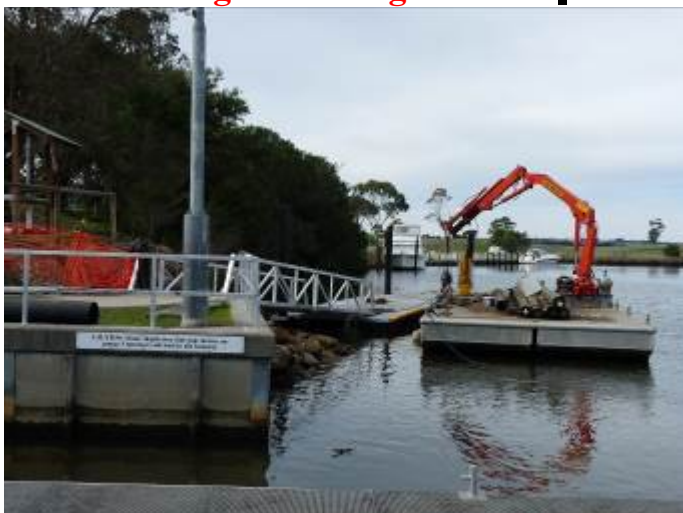
The CSIRO have released preliminary survey results of the orange roughy zone, which is in an area between 600 metres and 1,100 metres deep. Previous surveys have found between 18,000 and 27,000 tonnes. The following delightful note in the South East Trawl Newsletter gives an indication of the stock of orange roughy.

“To give readers some context about these numbers, 40,000 horses weigh about 20,000 tonnes. Interestingly there are about 30,000-registered racehorses in Australia. It is fair to say that roughy inside the eastern zone weigh more than all the Australian race horses combined. Neither roughy or race horses are going extinct any time soon.”

New Zealand’s roughy stocks are estimated at 168,000 tonnes with an annual commercial catch of 7,000 tonnes. Australia has a less certain stock of orange roughy in the vicinity of 21,000- 48,000 tonnes and with the roughy conservation program the Australian roughy catch is only 200 tonnes in most years.

Recreational and commercial fishing in our estuaries has much to learn from the offshore industry, and perhaps the first step would be to determine the stock of black bream and dusky flathead in our estuaries.

#### **Johnsonville gets Rowing Pontoon**



I was surprised to see the floating jetty at the Johnsonville boat launching facility. This floating jetty has been specifically designed for rowers to launch their boats and also for kayak and canoe users and provides a worthwhile inclusion in this excellent area that is cared for by a committee of dedicated locals.

I was informed that there was some concern that the floating jetty may in a flood event be responsible for floating material being caught between the jetty and the bank of the river. I put this to the Shire representative who stated a debris deflector had been built on the upstream side of the pontoon and it was hoped this would deflect major flood debris.

In recent years many Melbourne public schools have used the Tambo River for rowing training with students using local facilities for training camps. This floating jetty will make Johnsonville a much more attractive centre for these schools and this in some way will assist local motels and caravan parks in absorbing the decline in the recreational black bream fishery and its effect on local economies. I spoke to Geoff Newton of East Gippsland Shire who indicated that the project costing around \$150,000 was undertaken by EBAZ Pty Ltd a Melbourne firm who were responsible for the design and construction of the Rowing Pontoon. The official opening of the rowing pontoon will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

## Lake Mokoan-Golden Perch Paradise

This was the heading on an article in the Fisheries Victoria "Fins Magazine" Issue 2 2001.



(There were only three issues before it was scrapped)

Recreational Fisheries Manager Marc Ainsworth was liberally quoted in this article describing the outstanding golden perch fishery. "The best in the state. On an annual basis 20,000 yellow belly and 20,000 Murray cod were released into Mokoan, commencing in 1988. There were no minimum size limits or bag limits and anglers could take unlimited quantities of golden perch.



**Now switch forward to 2009** and the decision was taken by the Labour Government of the day to decommission the 8,000 hectare Lake Mokoan, which meant no further water was made available and the lake began to dry. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January hundreds of dead cod could be seen. The Tatong and Goulbourn Valley Association of angling clubs offered assistance, but the offer was refused by the DPI.

Anglers regardless attempted to relocate cod to the Broken River, and many of these cod were over a metre long. One angler relocated 40 cod, which was almost half the entire DPI relocation. The fact that the DPI failed to work with anglers to save large breeding fish was a disgrace and thousands of fish perished.



**Now Switch to 2014** and the Fur and Feather magazine issue 79 2014 and today no shooting or fishing is allowed in this area. Victorians visiting the lake will now be charged for permits to allow a narrow range of activities. Visitors according to this article can be prosecuted for wrongly putting up a beach umbrella and schools will have to pay for permits to enter this wetland. The Feathers and Fur article is headed "**Lake Mokoan Stolen from the Community.**"

Readers might remember that **Around the Jetties** publicised the efforts of anglers to save cod and golden perch. (See Issue 26 June 2009)

## A Recreational Anglers Wish List

Readers of last months "Around the Jetties" would have seen that VRFish have prepared a "**Wish List**" that they intend putting to the political parties prior to the November election. This is aimed at providing a guide to recreational angler voters, and if this approach is supported, it will be one of the largest interest groups exercising their voting rights in the State, given there are 720,000 anglers in Victoria. I had one problem with this approach in that I, and readers of "Around the Jetties" had no opportunity to contribute to this VRFish wish list.

For this reason I have constructed a Wish List covering **our local problems**, and I thank several readers for **contributing to the following East Gippsland Recreational Anglers Wish List.**

### In Priority Order

#### **1 The buy back of Gippsland Lakes Commercial Licences.**

This is the item that has greatest support, particularly given that should the fishing licence change in 2015, the buy back could be achieved with no cost to the Government, and there is solid evidence that a number of commercial fishermen have requested a buyback of their licence.

### **Benefits of such an action would include-**

- (a) Immediate protection for spawning fish at the mouth of rivers would be achieved. This is a commitment of the current Government that has **not been met after three years** and despite flood events affecting spawning fish.
- (b) Black bream would be protected from netting during floods, and this would provide a larger stock for annual spawning.
- (c) Large female dusky flathead would be protected from commercial nets, and again this would greatly increase the breeding stock of large female dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes.
- (d) The removal of commercial netting would allow consideration to be given to larger levels of stocking in the Gippsland Lakes and tributaries. This could include black bream as they have been stocked in WA estuaries over the last decade.
- (e) Such a move could lead to consideration of a closed season for black bream and even the introduction of a slot size to protect the stock and increase breeding potential. The ten commercial fishermen would not support either of these steps.
- (f) Areas of the Gippsland Lakes such as the Cunninghame Arm would be protected from commercial netting and this could mean increased tourism in the winter period when the area provides mainly for the elderly tourist.
- (g) Local member Tim Bulls comment *“Any buyout needs to be funded and this has been a matter for the Minister and Treasurer to consider. I have had further ongoing discussions with the commercial fishermen on this matter following the original request last year.”* Around the Jetties Issue 74 November 2013 (No further information received from the local member.)

*I think it fair to say that given the comments of recreational anglers, this item is of the highest priority with recreational anglers and would strongly influence where they cast a vote on the November election.*

### **2. A Negotiated Exclusion Zone for the Maasbanker**

This issue has featured as a concern of recreational anglers over a number of years, and these anglers have provided graphic photos and even videos of the Maasbanker netting within 60 metres of the beach and directly in front of anglers attempting to surf fish. VRFish attempted unsuccessfully to negotiate an exclusion zone for recreational surf anglers so they could fish without direct harassment from this boat. This boat has access to the entire 90 mile beach, and all anglers seek is an exclusion zone of 10kms on either side of the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes. This would provide for the hundreds of surf anglers who come to this area to fish this wonderful beach and have little effect on the financial return to the Maasbanker. All anglers seek is an unobstructed share of this resource.

*Local member Tim Bulls comment “I am happy for discussions 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.”* Around the Jetties” November 2013 Issue 74 (No Action or further comment)

**This is a matter the Minister and Fisheries Victoria would need to negotiate on behalf of the hundreds of recreational surf anglers of East Gippsland.**

### **3 Removal of the dam on the Nicholson River.**

With due fanfare and photos it was announced that 100,000 Australian bass would be released in the Nicholson River over three years at a cost of \$100,000 of recreational angler licence funds. On the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 35,000 bass fingerlings were released into the Nicholson River above the obstructing dam. In 2013 only 10,000 were released and discussions have taken place over the removal of the weir and the inability of the bass to travel to the estuary to spawn. This matter has been taken up with the Minister, the Catchment Management Authority and East Gippsland Water with no action-taking place from any of these bodies. This is a relatively simple issue that would provide the chance for Bass to spawn in the Gippsland Lakes. A By pass could be considered or a complete removal of this redundant weir on the Nicholson River. Estimated expenditure \$2m.

Local member Tim Bull; said in 2012 *“It is my intention to follow up on the situation of the dam in coming weeks.”* Around the Jetties 2013 Issue 74 (No action or further comment.)

### **4 Funding Of Fisheries Officers**

Many recreational anglers believe strongly that the funding of Fisheries Officers is a budget responsibility of Fisheries Victoria, and the use of Fishing Licence funding to bolster the Fisheries budget is inappropriate. Today over \$2m of the \$6m licence fee receipts are directed to employing Fisheries Officers and this is around 33% of the licence receipts. A danger exists that any increase in fishing licence fees may be absorbed in funding the running costs of Fisheries Victoria rather than

providing direct benefits to recreational fishing and anglers will be very wary given the current experience of funding Fisheries Officers.

Former Fisheries Manager Ross Winstanley wrote **“back in 1999 when they signed onto the Recreational Fishing Licence deal, recreational anglers never envisaged that the slice of the annual revenue committed to Fisheries Officers would go up from 12% to 31% of a pie that’s grown from \$4 million to \$6.6 million.”** In other words the Government has taken an ever-greater percentage of licence fees to fund the salaries and equipment of Fisheries Officers. This is totally unacceptable to recreational anglers, but will the Government acknowledge this rip off and return licence fees to supporting recreational fishing in this state rather than providing salaries for Fisheries Officers, formerly a budget item in the Fisheries Victoria budget. **Perhaps we should be asking is this ongoing commitment of the Government or other parties after the November election.**

#### **Other Areas of Concern that have been raised in this publication in the past-**

- (a) Research Facilities and declining numbers of scientists at Queenscliff. Reduced from 67 in 2008 to 14 today.
- (b) Access and Camping at Lake Tyers. Despite days of investigation with Fisheries and parks no result.
- (c) Stocking of Estuary perch in Lake Tyers- Despite best efforts of anglers little in results achieved.
- (d) Trout in our Mountain streams-Both stream health and fish stocks currently in a disastrous state.

Now readers may add items to this wish list and seek the view of the local member and Minister and ask will they make changes to reflect better the wishes of the recreational angling community. This is the one chance that the average angler and club member will have to change a system that in many ways does not reflect their concerns. Above all remember that in 2015 if the current Government is returned there will be a major change to the structure of Fishing Licences in this state. . Perhaps we should look at the current system now before being faced with changes in twelve months.

**Why not express your concerns to the people making the decisions by simply asking the Minister and local member such questions as above..**

**Early Advice- Mark this event on your calendar.** The annual recreational anglers Forum will be held on the **20<sup>th</sup> August** in the **Gippsland Lakes Fishing Club Rooms** on Bullock Island between **7-9.00pm**

Fisheries managers will be present with information on research, stocking and news. Anglers will be asked to contribute ideas and provide questions. In the last two years over 50 anglers have attended each of these Forums.

### **Around the Jetties on Line**

We are pleased to announce that Around the Jetties can now be sourced on the Lake Tyers beach website- [www.laketyersbeach.net.au](http://www.laketyersbeach.net.au)

The newsletter will still be emailed to readers and of course those who do not have access to email facilities will still receive hard copies

**Readers-** Don’t forget you may get a friend or an interested angler onto the mailing list for Around the Jetties by simply sending us an email with details of the person you are nominating and his email address or a letter with details of a mailing address. We do not advertise but rely on readers talking to others and the number of readers just continues to increase.

**Good Health and Good fishing**

#### **Readers Please Note.**

**The next issue will be delayed as Lynton has to undergo medical treatment in Melbourne over the next sixteen weeks. We will manage a few days at home in that time so if you have any items that would interest other readers please keep them coming and we will store them for future use. We hope to have at least one issue of Around the Jetties before Christmas.**