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“He that hopes to be a good angler, must not only bring an enquiring searching observing wit, but he must bring a large measure of hope and patience.”

Izaak Walton 1653



A Massive Change

European Carp and the Gippsland Lakes.

I had a reader forward me an article in the Weekly Times of January 14th on K&C Fisheries in Sale. I have provided information previously on this interesting industry based on the harvesting of European Carp. Keith Bell started his fishing career on a Lakes Entrance trawler and began fishing for carp in 1984. His catch in the Gippsland Lakes in that first year was 105 tonnes. This catch rose and he was harvesting 350 to 400 tonnes annually in the 80's,-90's, **with a haul of 658 tonnes in 1998/99**. It was at this time that concern was expressed at carp numbers and a working group was established in Bairnsdale who came up with a suggested need to harvest 1500 tonnes of carp annually if numbers were to be reduced. It was proposed that commercial fishermen netting the Gippsland Lakes be provided with a Government subsidy of 50 cents per kilo for carp caught to encourage action on their part reducing carp numbers, as well as providing a boost to their incomes. In 1997 the Gippsland Lakes Catchment Action Group described the numbers of carp as “an environmental disaster on our doorstep requiring instant attention”. **At this time about 85% of the carp caught in Victoria were caught in the Gippsland Lakes.** In 1996/7 the catch of carp (478 tonnes) was worth \$364,000. The Government of the day refused to provide a subsidy. The last big haul of carp was **2004/5 when the catch was 439 tonnes.** **In the few years since that time the catch has dramatically declined, and 2012/13 was a mere 29 tonnes.**



Few would have dreamt of a possibility that carp numbers in the Gippsland Lakes would have massively declined within a decade. This of course has been as a **result of the increasing salinity** of the Gippsland Lakes. Carp can survive in water with a salinity level of 15-19 parts per thousand but move up the rivers when the level rises to around 20 parts per thousand. Today with increasing depth at the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes and the change to a marine environment of the lakes, carp have retreated up the rivers and are only seen in the Gippsland Lakes if there is a freshwater flush from the rivers that reduces the salinity levels. Anglers still see large carp cruising above the highway bridges in the Mitchell, Tambo and Nicholson Rivers. However, they will now only enter the Gippsland Lakes with fresh water in a flood event reducing the salinity level of the Gippsland Lakes.

This has meant that Keith Bell's company now sources its carp by catching them around Victoria and into NSW. This industry produces a diversity of products including garden fertiliser manufactured in Deniliquin, carp fillets to overseas markets, animal and aquaculture food supplements, and surprisingly the company exports 10 tonnes of carp caviar to Germany each year. In recent times, Keith and wife Cate saw an opportunity in the US carp market and have built a factory in Minnesota where they buy carp from 140 fishermen, and supply markets in the Northern Hemisphere.

The increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes may have had an adverse effect on species such as black bream, however a positive result has been the rapid decline in carp numbers until today few carp are caught in the lakes.

The Interesting Biology of Carp

Carp can grow to a large size with reports of fish as large as 1200mm and weighing 60 kilograms. Fish up to 10 kgs are relatively common in SE Australia. Male carp have been found to mature at 2-3 years of age although in Victoria this was as low as one year. The number of eggs produced by a female fish varies according to size. Female carp produce from 80,000 eggs for fish of 1.25kgs to 1.5 million eggs for fish of six kilograms. Spawning generally takes place between September and December. Juvenile mortality of carp is generally quite high. Carp have a life expectancy of 15-17 years although a study carried out in 2003 by MAFRI indicated that some carp have exceeded 25 years of age. There is evidence of increased carp spawning during flood periods when carp move into a variety of areas some quite shallow to spawn. Carp are a mobile fish and migrations of over 200kms in the Murray River have been recorded.

Some Odd items on Carp

1. In a fishing competition held in Canberra in 1999, 3,600 kilograms of fish were caught by 50-60 anglers, 95% of these fish were carp, with an average catch of 15 kilograms per angler per day. **These fish were then released back into Lake Burley Griffin.**

Sources

["Managing the Impacts of Carp" Koehn, Brumley, and Gehrke \(The best study of Carp I have read.\)](#)

["Weekly Times- \(Wednesday\)" 14th January 2015\).](#)

["Black Bream in the Gippsland Lakes In Crisis? Fact or Fallacy" \(2000\) L.G.Barr](#)

Maasbanker and VRFish in Discussion

As a result of representations and letters by readers to this newsletter, I took to VRFish the issue of the Maasbanker netting in close proximity to local beaches. I am pleased to share with readers this letter from Dallas D'Silva General Manager of VRFish (received Monday 2nd February) and included as a late item in issue 87 of Around the Jetties, the last newsletter.



This email followed a meeting with Dallas D'Silva when the issue of the operations of the Maasbanker were again raised. VRFish provided an immediate response to the concerns we raised and this was printed without comment. I thank VRFish for taking this issue up and negotiating with the owner of the Maasbanker and certainly the transiting of the Maasbanker 1 km of shore when returning to Lakes Entrance, provides less spooking of salmon and a greater opportunity for anglers fishing the surf.

This was the VRFish Response

"As you know, VRFish managed to negotiate this last year after talking to the licence holder.

I spoke to the licence holder again today and I can confirm that the above agreement with VRFish remains in place.

The licence holder has acknowledged that transiting close to shore can 'spook' schools of salmon and he has agreed to transit at least one mile from the shore to minimise this risk.

We are also pleased to announce the licence holder has once again voluntarily agreed not to fish near areas that are hosting large fishing competitions along the beach.

Finally, it would be good if you could inform fishers that the vessel in question is not a trawler and it is not trawling when it is transiting offshore.

I will be in touch again soon on the other issues such as EPs in Lake Tyers, commercial netting near river mouths and the quality of Fisheries Victoria scientific reports.

Best regards

Dallas."

Editors Comment,

Whilst anglers fishing the surf will be pleased to see the Maasbanker transiting 1 Km off shore when returning to Lakes Entrance, this does not provide an area where the netting of the Maasbanker is excluded, giving recreational surf anglers priority access to an area of beach. This could be achieved by changing the licence regulations under which the Maasbanker operates and this is a Government responsibility. Over recent years the sharing of fisheries resources between recreational and commercial fishers has been a theme of Fisheries Victoria, however the current regulation under which the Maasbanker operates provides access to the entire fish resource to one boat that may net the entire 90 mile beach mainly for pilchards and salmon. The VRFish email acknowledged that in the past, transiting close to shore has spooked salmon. This has been a normal movement of the Maasbanker, which has often infuriated recreational surf anglers. The offer not to net areas hosting large surf fishing competitions, on paper appears a reasonable offer however, I am unaware of any large annual surf fishing competition that is hosted locally. I believe along with many recreational anglers that the only equitable answer is the provision of some negotiated surf fishing zones from which the Maasbanker is excluded from netting. This would mean recreational anglers and tourists would share the local fisheries resource, fishing separate beaches to those netted by the Maasbanker. This result is surely not too hard to achieve and would ensure an equitable sharing of the resource. The current VRFish negotiated agreement provides little joy for recreational surf anglers. Provision of some beaches for surf angling, protected from commercial netting seems a relatively simple agreement that could be negotiated by Government on behalf of surf anglers.

Commercial Netting in the Gippsland Lakes

It was reported in the Age newspaper of the 17th February that the Labor Government would allocate \$20 million to halt commercial netting in Port Phillip and Corio bays over the next 8 years. This is the first public announcement on a buyback of commercial licences since it was announced as being a commitment of the Labor Government prior to the election. The Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford, said "this will increase recreational fishing numbers and economic activity leading to more jobs in the sector." The commitment to increase the number of recreational fishers to 1 million by the year 2020 is also referred to in this article.

Unfortunately, no mention is made of phasing out commercial netting in the Gippsland Lakes even though the fish stocks in this estuary are under constant threat, and the two major recreational species namely black bream and dusky flathead are in decline. This is not considered to be the case in either Port Phillip or Corio bays, where the recreational fishery is largely based on excellent stocks of snapper with research suggesting a long term sustainable stock into the future.

It is to be hoped that the new Government will look into the situation of continuing to allow netting in the Gippsland Lakes given the recreational angler concern at the status of fish stocks in this the largest estuary in Victoria.



Bemm River Fishing Report

The following is the Bemm River fishing report from Don Cunningham received on the 13th March.

"The Lake remains closed with good fishing to be had around the edges. Fresh and live prawn have been a good choice of bait, mainly taking bream, with the odd flathead and trevally coming in. Live prawn are being used for the estuary perch, which can be found on the weed bed in front of the channel.

The strong winds before the long weekend caused a huge build up of kelp at Pearl Point and cut away the sand at all beaches. Access to the beach was almost impossible for a few days. Anglers had to walk a long way to get past the kelp at Pearl Point, however they did land some salmon. Binn Beach is now accessible and is producing the odd trevally and salmon. Prawning looks to be promising, with small bait prawns to be had. The nights have cooled off now and water temperatures will determine how large the prawn will grow.

Visiting anglers will have many options as plastics and hard body lures are working well. I suspect the fresh and live prawn for bait will keep providing good bags over the autumn.

Good fishing to all Don Cunningham.

Recreational Round Table

I recently wrote to Merve Maguire, Chairman of the Recreational Anglers Roundtable seeking information on the current status of this body, given the change in Government and questioning whether they met in December. No information has been available since the meeting in September 2014. I received a reply from the Chairman indicating a further meeting had been held in December 2014, but no report had been made available in the past three months. A further meeting was held on Friday 13th March. Merve Maguire indicated he has handed his report of the December meeting to Fisheries and in his words, “no doubt they will post it on their website as soon as they can.” He also confirmed Government support for the Roundtable.

The Chairman commented, “I’m surprised with your comment that rec anglers have heard nothing about the position of the Roundtable under the new Government.”

I would comment that communication does not seem to be a strongpoint of the Recreational Roundtable and it is now six months since any information has been made available to anglers on matters discussed by the Roundtable. I refer to the “Terms of Reference” for the Roundtable which states the Chairperson of the Roundtable will produce a report which will be circulated to participants. In addition, “a summary of meeting outcomes will be circulated publicly via Fisheries Victoria website.”

The chairman in his response to my questions did make the following important statement. “Minister Pulford



is meeting with the Roundtable tomorrow, this being the first time a Minister has done that. This is a great move forward by the Government to further enhance communications between the Government, Fisheries Victoria and the recreational fishing community.”
(The Hon. Jaala Pulford is Minister for Agriculture/Fishing.)

Scientific Projects affecting Recreational Anglers in Gippsland.

Bream Tracking in the Latrobe River

This project, according to Principal Research Scientist Jarrod Lyon, is where “the bream are being caught, tagged, released and tracked to discover how they will respond to environmental water releases in the lower Latrobe River.”

Local anglers have been working with researchers to capture large bream for tagging. Jarrod Lyon said that, “environmental water releases have been planned by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority into the Latrobe, Thomson and Macalister rivers in the coming months.” Bream in the Gippsland lake system regularly move into rivers like the Latrobe to spawn and it is believed according to Mr Lyon that the eggs and larvae drift to seagrass habitats where young fish are protected from predators.



In summing up this project Mr Lyon stated, “the tracking project will allow us to measure the effects the environmental water releases have on the breams’ breeding cycles which will help to determine strategies to bolster bream stocks.” The President of the Sale Fly Fishing Club, Peter Murray said he is excited to be part of the project that, “will boost and sustain bream populations for generations to come.”

This research is funded by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and the West Gippsland CMA.

Source Media Release 17th February 2015

Editor

This project might also help us to understand the effect of freshwater releases on the movement of black bream out of rivers. In a previous tracking project it was found that spawning black bream moved from the Nicholson River in a matter of a couple of hours when a fresh flow of water occurred.

The method of tagging black bream with small acoustic transmitters and then recording the movements of these fish was first published in 2005 and created great interest. The project was led by Dr Jeremy Hindell, (PIRVIC Queenscliff) and was supported by members of the Nicholson Angling Club who caught the bream that were to be tagged. One of the amazing things that was discovered was the extensive movement of black bream throughout the Gippsland Lakes.

The following was a comment by Dr Hindell who said “at present black bream are spending more time in the rivers than in the lakes of the estuary. They appear to be using the lakes system to move among the inflowing rivers.”

Regarding movement of black bream the following is a summary of the movement of one fish

“Fish 1219 travelled 10km, from the entrance of the Tambo River to the southwestern edge of Raymond Island in just over 3 hours (average speed 3km per hour). The same fish then swam 26km to Holland’s Landing at an average speed of 1km per hour, and then after a short rest, swam back to Paynesville in 11 hours (average speed 2.5km per hour) before returning to the Tambo River entrance.”

In 2006, Dr Hindell received funding from RFL funds to apply the use of tracking devices to determine “The habitat preferences, spawning locations, and movements of dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes.”

A report on this study was released in 2008. Forty fish were implanted with acoustic transmitters and as a general comment the study suggests, “that many of the fish were largely sedentary and remained in single regions of the Gippsland Lakes for extended periods (up to three months) No dusky flathead moved from the Gippsland Lakes in this project.

Source [Tracking the movement patterns of black bream in the Gippsland Lakes. 22/9/2006 DPI Gippsland Lakes dusky flathead tracking project. Hindell J.S. \(2008\)](#)

Reproductive Mysteries of the Dusky Flathead



The above was a heading in the Charles Sturt News describing the study being undertaken by Tara Hicks an Bachelor of Science (Honours) from Mallacoota who is undertaking research into the reproductive biology of dusky flathead in Eastern Victoria. Major research was undertaken in NSW by Grey and Barnes (2008) but it is not known if the findings in NSW apply to Victoria.

Tara says “I am looking at the relationship between the body size of dusky flathead, egg quality and fecundity or egg numbers.” It is noted that despite being a recreationally and commercially important species the dusky flathead hasn’t been well studied and this is a reason for the current research. Ms Hicks is collecting samples from recreational anglers who have been concerned at the long term sustainability of the species. It is also hoped that this study will determine if current size restrictions are

an effective long term management strategy.

[This information was taken from the Charles Sturt University News of the 19th January 2015.](#)

Editor

The Gray and Barnes research in NSW involved sampling over 7,000 flathead. With the largest female being 98.5cm total length, weighing 7.5kgs and an estimated age of 13 years. The largest male dusky flathead sampled was 61.5cms total length weighing 1.58kgs and an estimated age of 11 years. The NSW research suggested that evidence showed the dusky flathead had multiple spawning throughout the year however their research paper suggested additional investigation is required to determine the spawning mode of dusky flathead. Hopefully the Victorian research will add greatly to our understanding of the dusky flathead.

Towards an Understanding of Estuary Perch in the Gippsland Lakes

Just recently I had an email from Dr Joel Williams indicating that he had applied for funding to undertake a study of estuary perch in the Gippsland Lakes. The project aims to work with recreational anglers to establish catch rates to determine the status of estuary perch in the Gippsland Lakes. Included in the study would be mapping of seagrass to determine the distribution of estuary perch and other species such as whiting, luderick and flathead. The study would also examine the impacts of reduced freshwater flow and increasing salinity on the status of estuary perch,

It is hoped that one of the project outcomes will be to provide information on the restocking of estuary across estuaries. Dr Williams adds “This research is directly aimed at improving recreational fishing through significantly increasing knowledge of a data poor species.”

Dr Williams concludes his application by noting “the results of this research will be directly communicated to recreational anglers by working closely with recreational anglers who are assisting with data collection”. Dr Williams make the point that this research is important as very little is known about the ecology and biology of this species with much of the information being over thirty years old, and based on NSW.

Editor

I think Victorian Fisheries research is very lucky to have such an eminent fisheries scientist prepared to undertake research on one of the prime sporting species in this state, and at the same time provide information on the Gippsland Lakes. It has been suggested one of the key elements associated with stocking estuary perch is to determine whether estuary perch in the east of the state have the same genetic background as those taken from the Hopkins and Glenelg rivers which have provided the brood stock for releases in the western lakes. If the genetic background is the same this may mean the stocking of waters like Lake Tyers will have a greatly reduced cost factor as the brood stock currently providing estuary perch larvae could then be used for all Victorian waters.

This newsletter supports the suggested groundbreaking research that could be undertaken in Victoria by this experienced fisheries scientist

Dr Joel Williams was responsible for the research paper entitled “The Secret Lives of Black Bream” which involved research in the Mitchell, Nicholson and Tambo Rivers which indicated the eggs and larvae of black bream were concentrated around the salt wedge in the upper sections of these rivers.

Working Together

In each of the research projects above, recreational anglers are currently working with scientists or will work with a scientist if funding is approved for the project.

In recent years recreational anglers have worked with researchers on many projects, and this was evidenced almost a decade ago when Dr Jeremy Hindell worked with members of the Nicholson Angling Club in the groundbreaking use of transmitters to discover the movements of black bream and dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes. This research work was accompanied by regular media releases that kept anglers informed of work being undertaken to maintain and improve fish stocks. Recreational anglers were actively involved in the introduction of the new policy of slot sizes to protect dusky flathead, arguing that with the introduction of soft plastics the stock of dusky flathead were in danger of being overfished.

I think it fair to say that research assistance prior to 2005 was provided by the commercial fishing industry of the Gippsland Lakes. However, after a confidential meeting between four commercial fishermen and five Fisheries Victoria Officers Victoria held on the 30th July 2005 this changed when commercial fishermen argued that black bream were available in the Gippsland lakes, only they were not accessible to commercial fishermen. Fisheries Victoria were proposing the 28cm size limit which had been trialled and commercial fishermen were opposing this protection of black bream and **wanted the return of the minimum size limit to 26cms**. The commercial industry indicated that they would not be interested in assisting Fisheries Victoria in any fisheries research unless the minimum size limit was returned to 26cms. Fisheries Victoria did not accede to this threat and as a result commercial fishermen withdrew practical assistance in research projects and have not returned to any Gippsland Lakes stock assessment meetings since that date.

Recreational anglers have willingly filled in this void by providing research assistance to the scientists working on the maintenance of fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes wherever possible.

In each of the above research programs recreational anglers have been invited to be partners with the researchers and assist in the provision of research material. This approach means anglers have the feeling of being in a partnership with researchers working to protect fish stocks.

Items of Interest Affecting Recreational Angler

Bemm River Access

Readers will recall that the Metropolitan Anglers Association through its chairman, Don Ellis took the issue of river access at the Bemm to the Recreational Round Table at the March meeting of this group in 2014. The problem was that after travelling the long distance to the Bemm and running into bad weather on Sydenham Inlet anglers found that access to the river for alternative fishing was not available due to access being denied, and the banks of the river being overgrown. On Friday March 13th at the Recreational Round Table Meeting, Fisheries put forward the following proposal to satisfy this concern and indicated they have the funding available. Don Ellis, Chairman of the MAA, supplied this information.

“Good news re Bemm River access. Fisheries have funding to do the following.

- 1. Clean up the access track along the river. This does not mean it will again become available for vehicle access.*

2. *Install stiles across the fence line along the river to at least three places and open access direct to the river at those places. Additional fishing platforms may be installed adjacent to those stiles.*
3. *Along the road between Dolly's Garden and the upstream road bridge, it is proposed to remove vegetation to allow access and install a minimum of three fishing platforms adjacent to the access areas.*

This has been negotiated with the landholder and he has agreed for the work to go ahead. Whilst not a total win –win situation at this stage this is the best result anglers can hope for, however Fisheries informed me that this is only the finish of Phase 1 and the situation will be kept under review.”

Editor.

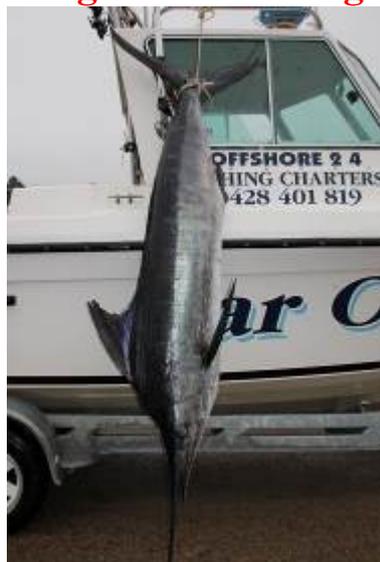
Congratulations to Don Ellis and the MAA for bringing forward this access proposal. I would have only one concern and that is access for the handicapped angler. On the Tambo River stiles were changed to provide better access for the handicapped and elderly and this has been a major improvement on this river. Congratulations to Fisheries Victoria for resolving this long term access problem and providing access to this wonderful river.

Large Trawl Fishery off the Australian Coast

It is likely that a large trawler will return to Victorian waters to fish for small pelagic species such as the jack mackerel, red bait, and blue mackerel within the next six weeks. This trawler will not only catch these fish but will also process and freeze its quota of 16,566 tonnes. This ship is 93 metres in length and on the world scale is classed as a medium size trawler and has been renamed the Geelong Star with its home port being Geelong. Research has shown that its catch will be around 7% of the small pelagic fish mass and this figure is regarded as being a safe sustainable catch according to Prof. Colin Buxton of the Fish Research and Development Corporation. VRFish representing Victorian recreational anglers is not convinced about “the net benefits of the Geelong Star”. VRFish is suggesting that discussions should take place with the Small Pelagic Fishery to establish a code of conduct that would provide protection to recreational game fishing species. This trawler operated by Seafish Tasmania will fish at least 3 miles off the Australian coast between Queensland and Perth.



Large Marlin Caught off Lakes Entrance



It was reported with the attached photo in the Lakes Post (February 25th) the catch of a 110kg striped Marlin offshore from Lakes Entrance. Franco Maisano caught this fish off local charter boat “Far Out Charters”. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this catch was the report from “Far Out” skipper Tony Kemna that over the past week “there has easily been 20-30 striped marlin caught (some tagged and released)” Boats are being launched at Lakes Entrance to travel to the oil rig areas where bait fish and the warm currents attract these sporting fish.

This catch and the number of hookups of marlin indicate the possibility of a developing big game fishery off Lakes Entrance The economic possibilities are great given that the blue fin tuna catch off Portland brings over \$9 million annually to local businesses with up to 200 boats being launched from Portland boat harbour in the blue fin season.

Anton Vogiatzis, President of the Victorian Game Fishing Club in an article in the VRFish Fishing Lines magazine also makes the point that the continental shelf is only 28 kms from Point Hicks in the east and this could herald a game fishing Mecca off Mallacoota if the Bastion Point ramp is completed.

The writer was unaware of the completion of the Bastion Point ramp by the East Gippsland Shire at the time of providing the article to the Fishing Lines magazine. He suggested that with the completion of the Bastian Point ramp Mallacoota could develop as a game fishing centre and the article concludes

suggesting, “we could potentially see a new game fishing Mecca with offshore species like Yellowfin Tuna, Blue, Black and Striped Marlin, Broadbill Swordfish and Cobia.”

Suddenly the possibilities for game fishing out of Lakes Entrance and Mallacoota are going to create great interest amongst game fishermen statewide. For many metropolitan anglers it may not mean a long trip to Bermagui bit rather a four hour trip to Lakes Entrance or five hours to Mallacoota.

Concern for the Future of the Tambo River



Recently (26/2/2015) I received a Victorian National Parks Association news sheet which was headed “Leaking tailings could harm the Tambo River.” Attached to this article is a photo described as the current leaking dam at the headwaters of the Tambo River The article suggests that it is proposed “to extend the dam wall to an additional 25 metres in height” and the dam is expected to protect the toxic tailings from entering the river for a thousand years.

It is expected that the current wall will only last for thirty years. The question is asked as to what happens if the mining company leaves the site when mining copper and zinc deposits are no longer economic to mine. It is expected in this article that when that occurs a dam with a 45 metre wall will be expected to store up to 7 million tonnes of toxic waste, “around ten times the volumes held by the original dam.” This plan was proposed by a new company, Independence Group, and this mining proposal, according to this article now has Federal Government approval.

Already the Tambo River is under considerable threat from silting and in the next fifty years it is unlikely that boat access will be available above the highway bridge due to sand movement. This has and will in the future adversely affect spawning black bream access to the river. It would be a tragedy to have a dam of toxic waste with a 45 metre wall sited at the headwaters of this iconic river. This toxic waste would also be a further threat to the health of the Gippsland Lakes according to the article.

Editor

I contacted the Executive Director of Earth Resources Development, Anthony Hurst, who was the former Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria for his comment, which he quickly supplied. Anthony in his role as Executive Director of Earth Resources Development has visited the site of this dam. The mine is the Stockman mine at Benambra and yes, the Minister approved this mine after a detailed Environment Effects Statement and an independent public enquiry process. The enlarged tailings facility would be constructed up to the latest standards for such structures and as a result of the application of these standards residual risks become quite acceptable. To monitor and maintain this storage facility a “Post Closure Trust” will be established to fund the monitoring and maintenance of the dam. There is more work to be done on the final terms for this trust, which will monitor the dam in perpetuity. After the mining is complete, the site is to be rehabilitated. The stockman mine is estimated to generate 250 jobs and run for ten years and community discussion has taken place at both Omeo and Swifts Creek.

I thank the Executive Director of Earth resources Development for his response to my questions.

King George Whiting Catch Trending Upwards but not in the Lakes.

A Media Release (18th February) from the office of the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Jaala Pulford provides information that the annual survey of King George Whiting is indicating increased catches in Port Phillip Bay from this summer and autumn. Juvenile whiting detected in the 2013 survey, was the third highest number since surveys began in 1998. The fish from that 2013 survey will be size and available to anglers this year.

This year in the Gippsland Lakes it would appear that almost no King George whiting have been caught by recreational anglers, however the forecast for King George in Port Phillip and Western Port is for good catches now, moderating over two years and then rising sharply. The release states, “this means the fishery is highly variable and peaks and troughs in abundance generally only last a few years.” Currently research is under way to understand this species better and to assess spawning grounds of King George whiting off North West Tasmania.

An ongoing problem in the Gippsland Lakes is that when King George whiting appear, it usually means that the recreational fishing for this species only lasts a week or two in areas such as the Barrier and off Rigby Island and then these areas are commercially netted depleting fish numbers. Of added concern must be the decline in seagrass in the Gippsland Lakes given its importance in the life cycle of the King George whiting. However on the basis of this research, anglers in Port Phillip Bay and Westernport would seem to be able to look forward to a number of good years fishing if targeting King George whiting.

Tenders Called for Lake Tyers Boat Ramp

In the Lakes Post (February 25th) tenders were called to design and construct a boat ramp at Lake Tyers Number 2 boat ramp. This will mean the current ramp structure will be redesigned to cater for the building of a double ramp, with floating jetties servicing both ramps. This development will assist recreational anglers with retrieving and launching boats. The East Gippsland Shire will supervise this development and it is hoped construction will commence soon after Easter. The Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club is to be congratulated for representing the concerns of anglers and achieving this positive result working with the Shire.

Luderick Catch in the Gippsland Lakes

The following is an **unconfirmed** report provided by a recreational angler. In recent times I have had reports of recreational anglers having good catches of luderick in the Gippsland Lakes. My informant states one of the local commercial fishing boats had a large catch of luderick. (35 Boxes) in recent times. Luderick is not a good fish to sell and when this catch was put on the Sydney market the return to the fisherman was 15 cents per kilo. The question is often raised at the return to a commercial fisherman as compared to the value of those same fish if available to the recreational fishery. Generally, Luderick, a great sporting fish bring around \$1-\$2.00 per kilo to commercial fishermen with a return of 15 cents per kilo if a glut on the market occurs. A study in 1997 by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, suggests that anglers spend \$200 on goods and services for each kilo of fish caught and kept. That figure could have doubled in the last fifteen years with decreasing fish stocks and increasing numbers of anglers. Luderick in NSW are known as blackfish and are a highly prized sporting fish.

Source. Value of Recreational Catch per kilo 1997 “Black Bream in the Gippsland Lakes” By L.G. Barr

A Mystery Fish in Lake Tyers

One of the great attractions of recreational angling is that you always have the possibility of hooking into that special large fish from the waters you fish, and most anglers have stories. About twelve months ago I reported on a large fish that John Harrison hooked in Lake Tyers, and even though he followed this fish in his boat he was ultimately broken off. Bob McNeil, diary angler who provides reports for this newsletter in an interview reported he had been broken off several times by a large fish in Lake Tyers. Clive Blackwood recalls being broken off by a fish in Blackfellows Arm, and the most recent case was a fish hooked by Graeme Merryfull only a couple of months ago, and he was also broken off, despite attempting to follow the fish. Each of these anglers is highly experienced and has fished regularly in Lake Tyers over many years, and each has experienced a large fish that almost spooled their reels. Another factor is that none of these anglers could

identify the fish they had hooked. There has been talk of mulloway in Lake Tyers but in 25 years of fishing this lake and writing I have never had this verified with a photo. Dr Mathew Taylor in his 2010 study of selected **Victorian Waters Suitability for Marine Stocking** writes of Lake Tyers that “Larger Mulloway have been captured in the estuary, but there are no records of juveniles occurring here.” He provides in this study no tangible evidence of large mulloway. He suggested in his study that mulloway should not be stocked in this estuary as the estuary structure is unsuitable. Can any readers add some more information as to the identity of the mystery fish of Lake Tyers. Some years ago I watched Graeme Merryful fishing from his boat fight the biggest flathead he had ever hooked in Lake Tyers, only to find it was a large stingray that he brought to the side of his boat. You just never know!



Recreational Anglers and the Law

Netting the Maribyrnong

A 59 year old Bentleigh man has been charged with the use and possession mesh nets as well as taking undersize bream from the Maribyrnong River in the week ending 20th February.

Fisheries Officer Dane Robinson said the man was allegedly observed paddling across the river around 8.30 pm in an inflatable raft before being apprehended by Fisheries Officers. The man had been observed tending to plastic bottle floats with ropes attached, and was intercepted after he left the river and got into his vehicle. The accused had in his vehicle, a 30 metre trammel net as well as two other nets measuring 19 and 24 metres each. Seven bream were also entangled in the nets, and these fish were returned to the water. It was pointed out that mesh nets including trammel nets are prohibited as they can catch wildlife such platypus and cause them to drown.



Photo of illegal fishing net, and inflatable boat supplied by Fisheries Victoria.

Editor

The above case brings back memories of Eastern Gippsland Fisheries Officer John Moore speaking more than a decade ago to the Johnsonville Angling Club and asking the members of the club to be aware of small inflatable boats being used to place mesh nets in the three key bream Rivers namely the Tambo, Mitchell and Nicholson Rivers. John sought the assistance of anglers in protecting the black bream by reporting anyone using an inflatable boat on evening in these rivers. As a result of this appeal there were probably 30

local anglers watching for inflatable boats on the rivers of an evening, and several illegal netters were apprehended as a result of information supplied to our local Fisheries Officer by recreational anglers. This was an outstanding example of a Fisheries Officer working with recreational anglers to protect spawning fish in local rivers.

Letters Letters Letters

I received this most significant report in a letter I received from Ron Brymer on the 3rd February 2015. The information that Ron has provided on Estuary Perch in Lake Tyers has changed the thinking of many anglers. Now I'm one of those anglers who has fished Lake Tyers for 20 years and never caught an estuary perch, but then I have targeted dusky flathead and bream and as a result have seldom fished amongst the numerous snags in Lake Tyers. Now to Ron Brymers letter-

Hi Lynton,

The boat is out of mothballs now the tourists have departed. I have been fishing luderick over the last month or two but yesterday I headed out to Lake Tyers late, in overcast conditions, only to find the clouds had burnt off by the time I got on the water.

I persisted with my plan to fish the flats for bream but it didn't go well as the fish were there but spooking from 50 metres or so even with the ripple from the breeze. After my brand new Maria shallow runner was snaffled by a very large tailor in a foot of water, I decided to forget that idea and go in search of perch. Attached are pics of the best fish of the afternoon /evening and I must say I was surprised to land two such fine EPs at 39cms and 42cms. **These fish were caught approximately 2kms apart in different spots so definitely from different schools.** I missed a few other good takes when the hook ups failed.

I am used to pulling even large EPs from shallow water at other locations but not so at Tyers and my Lowrance structure scan unit is really earning its keep finding fish holding as deep as 20 feet.

There may well be more EP in Tyers than thought, and they seem fairly widespread in the lake but I don't think the numbers are huge. Certainly there seems to be many different year classes, which means they are breeding in the lake.

A stocking decision is therefore a no-brainer to me and a Fisheries electro survey in advance of any stocking decision might make sense - **there is no doubt the environment in Lake Tyers is suitable.**

Regards

Ron



Editor

Thanks to Ron for this report which adds interest to the question of stocking Lake Tyers with estuary perch. The result of this catch is the possibility that each of these large estuary perch could be responsible for introducing several hundred thousand eggs, which in turn may hatch and add to the number of estuary perch. There would seem to be little doubt that the environment and habitat of Lake Tyers would be suitable for the stocking of estuary perch. It is surprising that so little information on this proposal is being received from Fisheries Victoria. By the way according to the book "A guide to the Freshwater Fish of Victoria," (Cadwallader and Backhouse) male estuary perch are mature at 26cms and females at 31cms.

Access to Lake Tyers at the Glasshouse

I received a comprehensive four page letter from Bruce Robertson of Orbost (10/3/2015) raising the issue of angler access at the Glasshouse. Bruce is a 75 year old angler who loves this area and the ability of anglers to either fish from a boat or wade and flick plastics. The following is a summary of this letter.

"It all started when I went to the Glasshouse and only to find access to the water restricted by a 1 metre post with a no camping and no vehicle access sign attached. I rang Parks and indicated this was a low impact area where access to the water should be allowed. I was informed that all tracks on the eastern side of the lake would be closed in the next 2/3 years to driving to the waters edge. I then rang the Gurnai Kurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Co. who said they knew nothing about any changes of access to the waters edge. I contacted Parks again and was informed that it was illegal to use the track to the water at the glasshouse for vehicles and camping was prohibited past the sign. I am concerned at the effect of this ruling for school camps launching canoes, and in the case of the need for emergency services. We have a bus of elderly and handicapped persons from Orbost who have an annual trip to this area and it is one of the favourite spots for such trips. Surely a bus could go to the waters edge to allow these citizens some to enjoy the shallows. Surely

the access needs of the community and particularly handicapped persons should be examined and public views sought.

Bruce Robertson

Bruce provides the detailed case of a person in a wheelchair who could only access the waters edge with the help of others.

Editor

I drove around to the Glasshouse to have a look at the problem of access at the Glasshouse. There were around ten camps in the area, but none in the restricted area. There were five boats on the waters edge and they had been launched from trailers across the restricted vehicle area. I am informed there could be thirty camps in the area over the Xmas period. It would seem logical that a gravel access track and parking area bounded by bollards be provided to the waters edge (a distance of 50-80 metres) for these campers for the launching of boats and for the elderly and handicapped members of the public to reach the waters edge of one of the most beautiful spots at Lake Tyers. Perhaps Parks Victoria might even consult with the public and attempt to meet the simple needs of campers and the public before closing access to key areas of Lake Tyers. (Bruce provided the names and phone numbers of the persons he contacted over this issue.)

Thanks Bruce for bringing this issue to our notice.

A Day to Remember

I received the following surprising letter on March 15th from Geoff Fraser together with the attached photograph.

Dear Lynton

I would like to report an interesting recent catch at Lake Tyers by Lucknow resident John Fraser and myself Geoff Fraser –John's son.

Fishing in perfect weather on the Sunday of the Labor Day Weekend, we were battling to catch a size bream or two and the occasional undersize flattie. We put this unusually slow day down to boat traffic with scores of craft on Tyers.

Anyway, we had a change of luck when drifting in shallow water. A species of fish was hooked that we had never before caught in Tyers-a legal size King George whiting. We swapped bream hooks for smaller shanks and within 15 to 20 minutes we had a total of six the same size- before running out of prawn.*

So despite our slow start we had another great day on tyers, and one to remember with a new species on the scoreboard.

Lynton thank you for your efforts in looking after Tyers, recreational fishing and all it means for East Gippsland.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Fraser (avid Around the Jetties reader.)

Editor

Thanks Geoff for a wonderful report of what would be a very rare catch in Lake Tyers and would seem to indicate there might be a number of this species in the weedy shallows of Lake Tyers. I caught a size whiting near number 2 ramp about twenty years ago, but that's the only whiting experience I have had in Lake Tyers, however I would certainly like to hear of the catches of other anglers in Lake Tyers.



Around the Jetties on Line can now be sourced on the Lake Tyers beach website- www.laketyersbeach.net.au

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.

Good Health and Good fishing