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Around the Jetties

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Issue 89

An Anglers Newsletter

“The Gippsland Lakes is unquestionably one of the Garden States most significant fisheries resources.”

Steve Starling Fishing World Magazine June 1987

New Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria Appointed



It has been announced that Travis Dowling has been appointed the new Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria. Travis has had experience and involvement with Fisheries Victoria previously being appointed to the position of Director of Fisheries Management and Science. In a restructure in 2013, he was appointed Regional Director Pt Phillip DEPI, however with the recent change of Government in Victoria his contribution to Fisheries in this state was realized and the current appointment followed

Travis was previously involved in many aspects of Fisheries Management, and worked with recreational anglers to achieve positive outcomes. A simple example of this approach was the introduction of the dusky flathead slot size to protect large female flathead and thus ensure the stock, which was under pressure, were conserved. This was an executive Director working with anglers to achieve a positive outcome.

Travis is an outdoorsman who loves his fishing and who often holidays in East Gippsland and loves lure fishing in Lake Tyers. Recreational anglers in Victoria are very lucky to have this energetic and knowledgeable person appointed to this challenging position, particularly given the challenges that will face recreational fishing in the future.

A Message from the Director of Fisheries Victoria

Thank you. Lynton and Dawn for the opportunity to include a short message in your fantastic newsletter I am very happy to have been given the opportunity to take on the role of Executive Director of Fisheries. I look forward to getting out and about and listening to Rec Fishers about opportunities to build even better fishing opportunities.

I am a keen recreational fisherman and grew up in Euroa in North East Victoria. I have three children and we go fishing together a lot. They are much better fishers than I am.

There are many exciting commitments in the Governments "Target 1 Million" recreational fishing policy and I look forward to working together with recreational fishers from across the State in delivering all of them.



Editorial

I commend the intention of the Labor Government to increase the number of recreational anglers in the state to one million by 2020, with the proviso that fish resources will need to be massively improved to cater for the additional angler numbers. The current number of recreational anglers is thought to be close to 720,000, according to the Victorian Auditor General's Report 2013 into Freshwater Fishing. This figure is similar to the VRFish Economic Study of Recreational Fishing in Victoria 2009, which agrees with the Auditor's figure. Either way, to reach the figure of 1 million recreational anglers in Victoria by 2020, will mean the need for a massive increase in resources. Due to expressions of concern Statewide, at the decline in trout fisheries across the state, research is underway in the North East of the state in an attempt to establish the reasons for the decline of this important fishery. However, this is not the only fish resource in difficulties.

Perhaps the area of greatest decline in fish stocks over the last two decades is the Gippsland Lakes. In 1987, Steve Starling one of this country's leading fisheries writers, wrote, "the Gippsland lakes is unquestionably one of the garden states most significant fisheries resources." Sadly, this is no longer the case. The Gippsland Lakes, which is this state's largest estuary and lake system, has suffered environmentally and the two main recreational species, black bream and dusky flathead, are being commercially fished to dangerously low levels. (Stock assessments in 2001, 2003, and 2004 indicated the black bream fishery was at its lowest level in thirty years.) Despite this declining stock, commercial netting has continued with no quotas or catch limits on the sector as compared with the recreational sector that has willingly accepted bag limits in an effort to maintain fish stocks.

If the Government is serious about doubling recreational angler numbers in five years, then they will need to consider urgently what they are going to do to return the Gippsland Lakes to in the words of Steve Starling, one of this state's "most significant fisheries resources" to cater for the increased number of anglers. I have little doubt that the availability of fish stocks is the foundation block upon which to attract additional anglers to the sport thus increasing the numbers of recreational anglers. The Gippsland Lakes is the largest estuary in this state yet its fish stocks are in decline. In his 1987 article, Steve Starling provides a picture of the Johnsonville ramp on the Tambo River saying, "in a little under two hours we witnessed the cleaning of at least 1000 black bream with an average catch per boat of 40-100 fish." Today there are few cars or boats at the Johnsonville ramp and anglers generally bypass this area due to the massive decline in fish stocks.

Until the issue of fish stocks upon which to base this massive increase in recreational anglers is solved it is difficult to see how this target can be reached within the time frame suggested.

Seagrass and the Gippsland Lakes

Professor Graeme Harris in a paper to the State Environment Authority (2006) stated-"Seagrass beds are probably the most valuable ecological assets in the lakes because of their importance in promoting the breeding of fish. Most seagrasses will only grow well in clear water." He added, "Increased nutrient loads lead to increased frequency of algal blooms in the water, increased turbidity and the growth of algae on the leaves of seagrasses." All of the above are known to contribute to the death of seagrasses and affect the black bream and other fish of the lakes.



Healthy Sea Grass Bed



Sea Grass Covered by Algal Epiphytes

For the above reason it is most relevant to see the Gippsland Lakes Advisory Committee, indicating an aerial survey of seagrass in the Gippsland Lakes will take place in 2015, even though no details of the study has been made available to recreational anglers.

The last detailed study of seagrass in the Gippsland Lakes undertaken in 1997, resulted in a 48-page report. The study, undertaken using aerial photography and the survey vessel “Koorong” which was leased from Melbourne University included Lake Tyers. The study used current aerial photographs to compare the extent of seagrass with historic photographs dating from 1968. This report indicates that the distribution of seagrasses has varied significantly over this century. The report indicated that worldwide there are 25 species of seagrass of which four are found in the Gippsland lakes.

The Report suggested that further regular monitoring be undertaken to provide a broader understanding of changes in this marine eco-system.

In 2007, the Gippsland Lakes and Catchment Taskforce were concerned at the potential decline in seagrass and associated fish numbers. A study, introduced in 2008, 2009, 2010, produced a Snap Shot view of Fish Assemblages and Seagrass Condition at around 30 sites. In each of these years, this snapshot procedure conducted by Dr Jeremy Hindell and Fiona Warry of the Arthur Rylah Institute, provided a quick report for the Gippsland Lakes Taskforce. The status of seagrass seemed to vary from year to year with 75% of the sites showing some decline in seagrass when compared with the 1997 study.

In June 2006, a report on seagrass, commissioned by Gippsland Ports in four defined areas that were in close proximity to Lakes Entrance, was a detailed and definitive report. However, it had the disadvantage of dealing only with four specific areas in close proximity to Lakes Entrance.

In 2012, this publication met with experienced Gippsland Lakes bait Fishermen, Kevin Barling and Roger Smith. Over coffee I asked the following question.-

Question –What is the current situation with the level of seagrass?

Kevin B-There was a massive die back after the 2007 flood and I think the die back was as much as 90% of seagrass.

Roger S. There are some signs of a small improvement; however, the effect on the catching of shrimp with reduced weed beds has been another difficulty for bait fishermen as well as the pressure from the number of bait licence holders fishing for shrimp and the effect of shrimp netting on the sparse seagrass areas has not helped. What shrimp that have been caught are generally very small.

I wonder when the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee will take recreational anglers into their confidence and provide information on who is undertaking the research into seagrass in the Gippsland Lakes. It would also be helpful if interim media releases were provided to those concerned with the state of the Gippsland Lakes such as recreational anglers.

Bastion Point Launching Ramp



Bastion Point Boat Ramp and Car Parking facilities, Mallacoota

Parking zones on the approach to the ramp are well designed for consideration of others if you need to rig a boat and also for later retrieval, allowing ample space to facilitate the time taken in launching and retrieval.



Victoria is on the verge of something great, however we are being held back from fulfilling our potential by lack of ocean access. There is a need for a quality boat ramp. **Anton Vogcatzis -President Victorian Game Fishing Club**

The above was the comment of the President of the Victorian Game Fishing Club in an article he wrote for the 2013 issue of the VRFishing publication Fishing Lines. At this time, the Bastion Point launching ramp was nearing completion. On a recent visit to Mallacoota, we decided to have a look at this new development. The attached photographs give an indication of these ramps and parking facilities and the rock wall protection provided to those launching at Bastion Point. We were most impressed with the way this structure blends into the landscape, and the number of large boat trailers in the car park showed how locals and visitors had readily accepted this development.

The President of the Victorian Game Fishing Club in that article wrote, “The Everard Canyon, a large kink in the continental shelf is located only 15 nautical miles (28kms) from Point Hicks in Victoria’s East. This is only 8kms more than the distance travelled to the continental shelf from Bermagui, which is the closest point to the continental shelf on the Australian mainland.”

In his article in the Fishing Lines magazine, Anton Vogcatzis added, “there have been talks of a proposed safe boat ramp at Bastion Point near Mallacoota in Victoria’s east, **but this reality seems unlikely that this will ever happen.**” As this was written, the magnificent structure in the photographs was just on complete. The writer concluded his article saying “If it did eventuate we could potentially see a new game fishing Mecca with offshore species like yellow finned tuna, blue, black and striped marlin and broadbill sword fish within six hours drive of Melbourne. We can only hope.”

Perhaps the President of the Victorian Game Fishing Club might be invited by the East Gippsland Shire to preview that **unlikely event of a double ramp development at Bastion Point.**

If visiting Mallacoota do visit Bastion Point and have a look at this excellent development.

Bemm River Anglers Offer Assistance

Readers will remember that in the last issue of Around the Jetties, Don Ellis of the Metropolitan Anglers Association indicated that, at the March meeting of the Statewide Recreational Roundtable, it was announced that funding was available for the provision of angler access to the Bemm River. This publication worked with both the MAA and Don Cunningham to bring this project to fruition. Fisheries Victoria are to be congratulated for working on this important development of providing better access to the Bemm River with fishing platforms and stiles to make fishing of the Bemm River a pleasant experience for anglers, particularly the aged and handicapped anglers who no longer wish to fish from boats on Sydenham Inlet.

Don Cunningham sent the following letter on the 15th March to Don Ellis, President of the Metropolitan Anglers Association offering local assistance and advice on the access proposal. Don Cunningham writes

“Thank you for the work your group is doing towards better angler access to the Bemm River. It would seem that the proposals as outlined would provide long term angling opportunities for land based anglers.

It seems that funding is available for these projects, and I would hope that local contact would be made so as to get the best locations for the fishing platforms. Water depths vary, and it will be important to pinpoint the areas in the River that combine a suitable depth and a snag free location. As roadside parking is available for a large section of the designated area, disabled access could be set up and maintained for the long term.

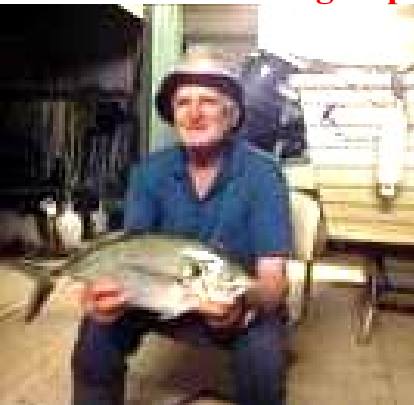
We offer any help that may be needed, i.e., survey of sites or any work that would help to achieve the best outcome
Kindest regards Don Cunningham.

Editor

Don Cunningham is President of the Bemm River Angling Club, and a key member of the Bemm River Progress Association. He was approached by Duncan Hill of Fisheries Victoria regarding details of the proposals for improved Bemm River access, including stile and fishing platform placements. Anglers and clubs from East Gippsland will watch these developments with interest.

This is a great result for anglers.

Bemm River Fishing Report from Don Cunningham



This report received on the 16th April.

“Due to recent heavy rain, the lake was opened on Saturday 11th April and this has changed the conditions in the lake. The water is still coloured and shallow, and visitors must take care not to run aground.

Fishing remains very productive, and some trophy bream have been landed. One of our special groups, who have had a long association with the Bemm enjoyed great weather and weighed in quality bream. This group celebrated 28 years of fishing the Bemm and it is fair to say they have put all their experience to work each year. Bream well over a kilo were weighed in for their Bream Classic Competition. With a big group like this, some bait fish and some lurefish, so it is

interesting to compare the results. Bream are still taking frozen prawn, although some anglers have used yabbies, spider crab and sandworm.

The surf has settled down, and great sport can be had using laser type lures. Pearl Point is holding good numbers of salmon, which vary in size from 1-3 kilos.”

Editor

Thanks to Don for this report. I found it interesting that according to the Bairnsdale Advertiser (24th April) six men were required by the Catchment Management Authority to dig a channel to open the Bemm to the sea. Now this was a very different approach to the opening of Lake Tyers, which was an unauthorised opening, carried out in full public view. We would still welcome a report on this opening of Lake Tyers and any aftermath, after all a committee had been set up under the Catchment Authority to authorise such openings.

Gippsland Reefs Update

During a recent visit to Gippsland Lakes, Fisheries scientists inspected the reef modules placed in the Gippsland Lakes at Metung and Lake Tyers in March 2014. In just twelve months the modules have been stocked by mussels, algae, sea squirts and seahorses. Divers also observed a number of fish species including black bream around the modules. The reefs were funded by the state Government and recreational fishing licences. In Victoria, we have some work to catch up with the NSW Fisheries Department which introduced artificial reefs to estuarine waters in 2005, and which has placed large reefs (400 reef balls) in waters such as Merimbula Lake and Lake Conjola. They have completed a number of years of scientific analysis, which indicates a diversity of fish species inhabiting the artificial reef areas. The Victorian estuarine reefs in Lake Tyers (three reefs) and the Gippsland Lakes (two reefs) are very small when compared with the NSW reefs.

Source- Fish Fax Publication April 2015.



Bob McNeil's Lake Tyers Report.

This report prepared by Bob McNeill as part of the Research Angler Fishing Diary Project covers the period from the 16th January 2016 to the 7th April 2015.



Bob commences his report noting that, “another flathead season has finished.” Readers might remember Bob caught his first dusky flathead in October 2014, and he makes the point that his favoured bait the live mullet by late March is no longer being trapped. For many anglers live mullet have disappeared with the onset of cold weather. Over the diary period, Bob caught several large flathead around 80cms and makes the point that “there are still a good number of breeding fish in the lake. In January the flathead fishing was good with some days yielding around 6-8 fish however he said he had to work for them with numerous moves. Over the four months recorded, Bob caught 98 flathead, 32 bream and 4 tailor with one tailor being 59cms. Bob believes both bream and flathead started to move up the arms in early March and he writes, “Reports of flathead being caught at Mill Point indicates fish have started moving up the arms.” On his last four early mornings fishing ventures in his diary, it is recorded that no flathead were taken at all.

Anglers can really see the movements of fish and the seasons for the Lake Tyers species

by following these diary reports.

Thanks to Bob for his interesting reports and he may now be able to sleep in a couple of mornings when it is particularly cold although I doubt this will occur.



The Law and Recreational Anglers.

Fisheries Victoria Officers are warning anglers to measure carefully Murray cod after a West Wimmera man faced hundreds of dollars of on the spot fines after being caught with three undersize Murray cod allegedly taken from Lake Charlegrark. The fish had been filleted which is not allowed. with a fine of \$443 for removing the fillets and a further \$443 fine for taking undersize fish.

Lake Charlegrark is an interesting case of anglers and Fisheries Victoria working together to develop a fishery in a small lake in an area with few local fishing locations. Lake Charlegrak near Edenhope in the West Wimmera was going dry in the recent drought, and attempts were made to relocate the small population of Murray cod to other waters. When the rains came Charlegrark was stocked with juvenile Murray cod in 2010. The fish have been growing steadily since release and it takes four to six years to reach the legal slot size of 55-75cms. The slot

size and the bag limit of two Murray cod were designed to protect the cod fishery in inland lakes. The fish this West Wimmera angler caught were 45, 48, and 51cms in length. It is somewhat sad to see an angler operate outside the regulations in a small lake that had its fishery being re-established, with local anglers and Fisheries Victoria working together to achieve this result.

The following is an article that was published in the VRFish magazine Fishing Lines in June 21004.

A Case of Shrinkage By Lynton G. Barr

Have you ever walked through the Fish Market, or looked in the window of a fish shop and seen trays of small black bream that appeared to be barely size. I have, and I often have wished I had a measuring tape with me. It is the Gippsland Lakes which supply 90% of the black bream sold at the Victoria Fish Market and it was stated in the Fisheries Assessment Report of 1996 that most of the commercial catch "now consists of fish just above the minimum legal length."

Given this fact, it was therefore not surprising that a commercial fisherman in late 1999, when checked by fisheries officers was found to have a considerable number of undersize fish in his catch, and as a result he was charged with being in possession of undersize fish. What is surprising is that the case was withdrawn on the grounds of fish shrinkage after death. In the interim there has been little publicity at this action, yet it would seem that considerable legal implications flow from the decision by Fisheries Victoria not to actively pursue the case.

A study undertaken by A.K. Morison on the "Post Mortem Changes in the Length of Black bream" which was an internal report for Fisheries Victoria, dated December 1999, supports the proposition of fish shrinkage after death and indicates the average shrinkage on a sample of 71 Black bream was 5.0 mm after 24 hours. The treatment of the fish and whether they were iced or not had little effect on the rate of shrinkage. Importantly for recreational anglers the rate of shrinkage within one or two hours of capture was 2.5mm.

This report indicates that fish within 5 mm of legal length have a high probability of shrinking below legal length within 24 hours, and further the study suggests that the issue of shrinkage has legal implications for the enforcement of the legal minimum length of Black bream.

Mr Ross Winstanley, former Manager of Recreational Fisheries Victoria, indicated at the time that the information from Morisons paper "appeared to influence the outcome of this case" He went on to indicate in writing that the outcomes of this case would be made available to commercial fishermen through the Seafood Victoria Newsletter, however" similar advice had not been prepared for recreational fishers."

To my knowledge this advice has never been made available to recreational anglers of this state or discussed with VRFish.

Mr Tom Speedie, Manager of Fisheries for Gippsland indicated that he believed the issue of shrinkage could apply to King George whiting, and that he had instructed Fisheries Officers in Gippsland to operate using a tolerance level to allow for shrinkage in fish measurement. A fisheries scientist I spoke to believed that fish shrinkage would apply to all species, and some work undertaken on freshwater species supports this view.

I believe this defence has been used successfully by at least one other commercial fisherman in the Gippsland Lakes since the original case in 1999, yet the same advice has not been made available to the almost one million recreational anglers in this state or their Peak Body.

This raises the issue of one set of rules for the commercial sector and another for recreational fishermen. It also raises the issue as to whether recreational fishermen taken with undersize fish since 1999 have had access to the study on shrinkage that may have meant charges being dropped as they were for commercial fishermen.

The Future of the Nicholson River

Anglers would be aware that in 2012 the minister announced that 100,000 Australian bass would be stocked in the Nicholson River. After the announcement, the authorities realised that a dam wall left in the river and no longer used for water storage by East Gippsland Water, would stop the access of bass to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. Consequently, only 35,000 bass were stocked and nothing further was heard of the promised stocking of this river.

In Issue 74 of Around the Jetties (Nov. 2013) I put the following question to local member Tim Bull MLA-

“You are on record as strongly supporting the stocking of bass in the Nicholson River, however this was before it was announced that funds were not available for the removal of the dam on the Nicholson and therefore denying these fish the opportunity of moving to the Gippsland lakes to spawn. Will you be seeking the removal of the dam or the provision of a fish ladder or bypass of the dam prior to further stocking? Have you or the Government made any plans to support the removal of the dam? Finally will stocking of bass above the dam continue?”

The following is the local member’s response, which was published in Issue 74 of Around the Jetties.

“The background to this is that the State was contributing \$2 million to an East Gippsland Water proposal to remove the dam, with East Gippsland Water and the Federal Government also contributing. This did not eventuate as a result of the Federal funding being withdrawn. The announcement to stock bass was made when the decommissioning was still on the table. Despite the dam removal not going ahead, I support the stocking, as it will provide a bass population above the dam and hopefully create excellent fishing opportunities. Fisheries Victoria stocks many waters that have obstructions to spawning for sports purposes. I will again revisit this with our state water and environment Ministers as I did in the past.”

The above response was made in November 2013, and unfortunately no further information on this issue was provided to this publication nor were the results of revisiting this issue with the water and environment Ministers.

As the removal of funding for this project by the Federal Government of the day seemed to be the key to inaction by all parties, I wrote to Darren Chester, Federal Member for Gippsland seeking his support in obtaining Federal funding for removing the dam.

I received a response on the 18th of March from Darren Chester in which he stated-

“I have written to the Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt seeking his advice on the Federal Government funding component of this project which I believe was from the Smart Water Australia program. In addition I have forwarded your letter to Tim Bull, Member for Gippsland east, for his information.” Darren Chester concludes indicating that Around the Jetties will be contacted when the Minister for the Environment responds.

I have also had a letter from Tim Bull, Member for East Gippsland, indicating that he will contact the current State Government to see if funding is available for removal of this weir wall.

The local member added to his letter the comment, “The reason it (removal of the weir wall) did not proceed initially was because Federal Labor pulled its funding and although I may have missed this in your publication, I don’t believe the blame was ever laid at the Gillard /Rudd Governments feet as it should have been.”

Editor

The local member Tim Bull is right, when he suggests this newsletter did not blame the Gillard /Rudd Government for this project not proceeding. In the same way no blame was apportioned to the State and Federal Governments for their non-action on this project, even though the Coalition was in power at both levels of Parliament and the National Party represented East Gippsland at both levels. The simple matter is that a river such as the Nicholson needed this dam to be removed, or fish ladders and bypasses being introduced as they have been on other rivers in this state to benefit specifically the river and its fish stocks. The Nicholson River an iconic river of East Gippsland seems to have been totally forgotten by all authorities over recent years.



This Photo was provided by Ronan Carrol, Communications Manager East Gippsland Water.

As Readers can see, it will be no simple task to demolish the wall.

Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable

I would draw the attention of readers to the fact that we still have no indication of what was discussed at the December 2014 Recreational Round Table Meeting and it follows of course that no information is available to anglers from the March Roundtable meeting.

I contacted Merve Maguire, Chairman of the Roundtable seeking information and he replied, “Yes the December Roundtable did occur and it proved to be a very informative and productive meeting. My Chairman’s summary has been produced and delivered to Fisheries and no doubt they will post it on their website as soon as they can.”

This is how we get information as to what was discussed at meetings of the Roundtable.

The Chairman went on to say that it has been confirmed the Roundtable would continue under the new Government as it is regarded as “a vital link in the communication process providing all participating parties deliver their expected roles i.e. keeping their members abreast of the latest information.” I would suggest it is impossible to keep anglers informed when no details of a meeting held five months ago are available to publications such as Around the Jetties.

This situation is not new, and this publication had to draw to the attention of the Roundtable Chairman in 2013 that the Chairman’s Summary had not been made available in previous months and anglers had no idea at what being discussed at these meetings. I suggested at that time this body seemed a secret society. As a result of the actions of this publication, Chairman Summaries again appeared on the Fisheries Victoria website.

In the Terms of Reference for this body the following statement appears “A summary of meeting outcomes will be circulated publicly via Fisheries Victoria’s website. In addition, the Chairperson will produce a Chairman’s report of the mutually agreed outcomes for each forum meeting, which will be circulated to all meeting participants’

It is strange given the Terms of reference that recreational anglers have to wait five months to find out the matters discussed at a quarterly meeting of this body that in recent times has been discussing major issues such as increases in Recreational Fishing Licences. Communication does not seem a strongpoint of this body nor Fisheries Victoria.

I wonder how long the items discussed at the Roundtable meeting in December 2014 remain relevant to anglers around the state, when information on what was discussed is only made available to anglers some 5-6 months later.

Sea Eagles Face Threats

One of the delightful experiences for an angler is to be fishing in the early morning and to hear across the water the sound of two sea eagles calling to each other. We are lucky in that anglers fishing Lake Tyers will regularly see this magnificent bird and the sea eagle is seen daily over the waters at Mallacoota. Recently I read in the Weekend Australian 28-29th March that that the white bellied sea eagle population in South Australia was plummeting. Between 2008 and 2010, the number of sea eagles in this state dropped by 20% leaving only about 70 pairs scattered across the state. The white bellied sea eagle is listed as threatened in Victoria with fewer than 100 breeding pairs. Tasmania has around 1000 birds and the species is listed as vulnerable in Tasmania. I found it surprising that whilst there was a general decline in some areas the number of birds in inland areas and along the Murray had shown some increase with the dams and weirs that have been constructed providing habitat and the availability of European carp as an easy food source.



In East Gippsland, sea eagle nests can be found high in the canopy of trees, however on some of the islands off the coast of South Australia; sea eagles have taken to building large nests on the ground or rocky cliffs of islands that have been denuded of trees. Human disturbance is regarded as a threat to sea eagle breeding and in South Australia, the nests on some of the islands off the coast the location of nests are being kept secret to save the breeding birds from tourist impact. It was this sea eagle nest on the rocks on St Peters Island off the coast of South Australia that attracted my attention and interest, plus the fact we had a couple of days at Gipsy Point and watched two sea eagles daily, as they moved along the Genoa River. They are a stunning bird on our estuaries.

Source Weekend Australian March 28-29th and Wikipedia encyclopaedia.

Letters Letters Letters

That Mystery Fish in Lake Tyers

I received the following email on the 16th March from Rob Ward editor of the Lake Tyers Beach website. Rob writes-

Hi Lynton,

I too have heard of Mulloway rumours in Lake Tyers, and the only mention I attach to any credibility to, is a catch by Shawn at the Lake General Store. He is a keen fisherman and reported to me that he had caught an undersized Mulloway off the bank near Long Point, with a jointed fish like wobbler (last September/October approx). No photos I am sorry to say, but he does not overstate his catches. He may be worth a visit.

I have seen a very big ray swimming in shallow water at Burnt Bridge while kayaking. However, I doubt experienced fishermen would be fooled by a constant run off a ray or Skate as to whether it was a fish or a Ray. However, the Rays would be the first thing I would try to eliminate as a "Mystery Fish."

At Mallacoota we were fishing in the shallows recently and on the one day saw many Skates or (smaller rays) cruising around and they gave us no trouble. The next day we had four of five rods hook up with skates in 5-10 minutes. While trying to save line they kept us very busy. We suspect that the 5th line being pulled in quickly was the only thing that saved the perfect 5/5.!!! However, each of the Skate hookups had the same constant run out of line in a straight line.

Pretty easy to spot.

Thank you for your informative newsletter, your attention to detail and persistence.

Rob Ward (Lake Tyers Beach Website.)

Editor

Thanks Rob. Really, the information you have provided is the first information that provides a definitive mulloway catch in Lake Tyers, however I would still like to see a photo of a mulloway caught in Lake Tyers. Mulloway have entered the Gippsland Lakes and I have seen a 20lb mounted fish on the wall of Alex Milledge's study at Shaving Point. This fish was caught from Alex's jetty in front of his home when he was fishing for bream. I find his fishing most interesting and know he caught a number of good whiting some months ago. I have also had anecdotal reports of other mulloway caught off Shaving Point in past years. Your report of the ray at Burnt Bridge adds interest to the question of the unknown in Lake Tyers. By the way, I recall a report about five years ago from two different anglers of a shark in Lake Tyers and considerable speculation at the time as to the type of shark. These chaps were both members of an angling club and experienced anglers. This was reported in Around the Jetties.

Legal? But is it Right

I recently had a phone call from an angler upset at the fishing methods used by commercial fishermen. He put his concerns in writing and I publish the letter that I received on the 24th March on this topic.

Dear Lynton,

On Tuesday the 17th March, I observed a professional fishing boat with two local professional fishermen motor into the canal (at Paynesville) past the Cruiser Club. What they did shocked me. They put a lead weight on the end of a net over the bricks in the canal and ran the net with floats and weights out of the canal and into the straits. A boat coming into the canal almost hit the net. This was after dark.

On Wednesday 25th March, I went fishing with friends to the Country Club Jetties as we often catch a fish or two there. But not today. A local boat owner who lives on his boat told us that he had observed two professional fishermen. When I heard what they had done their actions stunned me and I had little sleep that night.

This is what the professional fishers did.

This action applied to one jetty at a time. The professional fishermen put a net completely around the jetty, isolating the jetty. They then walked along the jetty with a pole with chains on it, banging it on the bottom to frighten the fish from under the jetty and into the net as they had nowhere else to go except into the nets. The result no fish left for the rod angler.

Very worried

Local Observer

I thank this angler (who did not want his name disclosed) for bringing this information to our attention. I was concerned at this letter and decided to bring the actions of these commercial fishermen to the attention of Fisheries Victoria. I had a reply from Fisheries Officer, Matt Bateson who had been in the Paynesville area when these actions occurred and actually inspected the commercial boat as part of normal procedures.

Matt provided references to current regulations taken from the 1998 Fisheries Regulations. He summarised the regulation as follows-

"Basically what it is saying is that a Commercial fisherman cannot set a net within 30 metres of any public jetty. But if the jetty is private (like the ones along Fort King at Paynesville) then they can have their nets alongside the jetties. There would also be an expectation that common sense would come into this and they would not restrict access to owners of private jetties and any vessel they had moored there."

That Regulation

For the purpose of section 114, the use of any commercial fishing equipment or abalone equipment is prohibited in or on the following waters.

(e) Within 30 metres of any pier, jetty or breakwaters that is not privately owned

I thank Matt for the clear summary of the relevant regulations, which protect the actions of the commercial fisherman netting private jetties.

Editorial Comment

The actions of the commercial fishermen in this case would appear to be protected by a loophole in Fisheries Regulations that protects public jetties from netting but provides no similar protection to private jetties. Commercial fishermen have exploited this difference, with no thought for anglers who fish from these private jetties. It would seem reasonable that a private jetty should have the same protection as public jetties with at least a 30-metre exclusion-netting zone. The netting of these private jetties destroys hopes of reasonable fishing for anglers and particularly the aged and handicapped that relies on such jetties for the lake fishing. Another issue is the actual morality of netting these jetties, when the whole of the lake system is available for netting by commercial fishermen with no catch limits, and yet some commercial fishermen believe it is necessary to net areas that provide specific fishing for those recreational anglers who do not own a boat.

This is a matter I would hope that VRFish would investigate to protect the interests of anglers by arguing for protection of private jetties from the netting of commercial fishermen. I believe the actions of the commercial fishermen that took place at Paynesville although legal, add weight to the case put forward by recreational anglers for a buyback of commercial licences.

Source Thanks to Fisheries Officer Matt Bateson for drawing my attention to the relevant regulation.

Minister On the Mailing List

On the 18th March, I received the following letter from the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Jaala Pulford MP.

“Dear Mr Barr

Around the Jetties –Independent Newsletter to Promote Recreational Fishing.

Thank you for your letters of 14 and 29 January 2015 ,regarding the mailing list for the Around the Jetties newsletter and outline of issues of concern for recreational fishers in East Gippsland.

The Victorian Governments “Target One Million” policy statement provides a \$35 million plan to grow recreational fishing in Victoria. Under this plan, the Government will work with fishers to boost fish stocks, support local clubs and improve recreational access and facilities.

The plan includes a commitment to ban netting in the mouths of Gippsland Lakes rivers and I will be working with relevant stakeholders to progress delivery of this commitment in the coming months.

I would be pleased to obtain a copy of your newsletter and would appreciate being placed on your mailing list.

I look forward to working with you and other recreational fishers to improve recreational fishing opportunities in Victoria

Yours sincerely

Hon Jaala Pulford MP

Minister for Agriculture”

Editor

The Minister in her letter refers to an “outline of issues of concern” I had raised in one of my letters. These issues were basically items raised in letters by East Gippsland anglers to this publication. They included-

A. The banning of netting in Gippsland Lakes River mouths. This was an issue the previous Government **was unable to deliver to anglers of East Gippsland** even though it was a commitment made prior to its election.

B. Maasbanker and an Exclusion zone. This was a numerous request of surf anglers who have had this boat net directly where they have been fishing. An area for surf anglers would be simple to introduce and remove frustration and confrontation between recreational and commercial fishermen.

C. Removal of the Nicholson River Dam. This redundant dam now stops stocked bass from reaching the Gippsland Lakes to spawn.

D. Removal of commercial netting from the Gippsland Lakes. This is becoming more important with declining fish stocks and would be a major step in assisting the Government to reach the target of 1 million recreational anglers.

Estuary Perch in Lake Tyers.

Surprisingly almost no information is being made available to anglers on the request for a stocking of Lake Tyers with estuary perch. Just a quick look at the history of this request which dates back to the Management Plan for Lake Tyers of 2007 when several submissions were received from recreational anglers to have a trial stocking of estuary perch. This request was ignored by a committee that had little local representation. These submissions were largely based on the historical knowledge that commercial fishermen, working Lake Tyers, caught around 1.5 tons of estuary perch in Lake Tyers in 1989 and almost a tonne in 1991.

In 2010 Dr Mathew Taylor of the University of NSW, in a study examining the suitability of species of fish for release into Victorian estuarine waters, suggested there was little interest amongst recreational anglers in the stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers. Anglers understand that this information was provided by Fisheries Victoria but was at a variance with the actual situation. In 2013, Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club obtained a small grant and commissioned Fisheries Victoria to undertake an investigation into the historical abundance of estuary perch in Lake Tyers. Whilst at the same time, this newsletter called upon anglers to provide any details of catches of estuary perch accompanied with photographs. The result of this angler reporting was that a number of estuary perch of different sizes were caught by anglers, indicating a number of year levels of this species in Lake Tyers. While the number of perch caught was not large (30-40 since the start of the year,) there was definite proof of a small population still in this lake.

Estuary perch have been stocked in the west of the state in inland lakes and in some rivers such as the Werribee River. The brood stock for this stocking were largely caught in the Glenelg River by recreational anglers working with fisheries Victoria and sent to Narooma where they spawned at a hatchery and the young fish were returned to Victoria for release in the west. It has been suggested that estuary perch from Eastern Victoria might be genetically different from those in Western Victoria, meaning that hatchery facilities would need to be duplicated at additional expense. The Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club has suggested that the genetics of the Western Victorian fish should be compared to those of the Eastern Victorian fish. If no genetic difference is found then existing stocks of fingerlings could be utilised to stock Lake Tyers and this could be done immediately and in a cost effective manner. Unfortunately, little interest in this proposal has been shown by Fisheries Victoria.

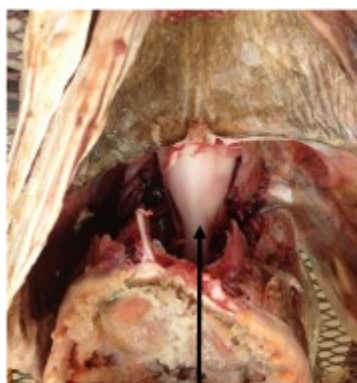
I feel sure the interest of recreational anglers that was displayed in 2007 with submissions for a stocking of estuary perch in Lake Tyers will continue. It is also a fact that fishing pressure on Lake Tyers has grown with the decline of fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes and the rivers flowing into the Lakes. With a Government commitment to increase the number of recreational anglers in Victoria from 550,000 to 1 million by 2020 it seems to indicate that stocking of Lake Tyers and other East Gippsland waters would provide a boost to fish stocks that will be urgently needed to cater for 1 million anglers in five years time.

Mulloway Research

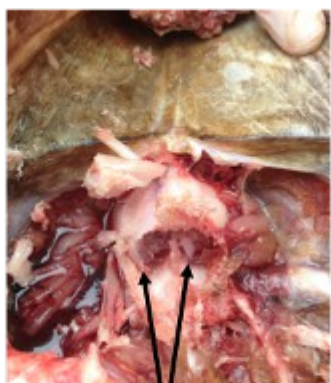


The Nature Glenelg Trust received a small grant (\$5,000) to undertake a project where anglers donated the frames of mulloway for dissection and research. Fisheries Victoria Acting Executive Director Mark Edwards said “Twenty three volunteer anglers fished the Hopkins, Barwon, and Fitzroy rivers along with the marine waters near Portland and off South Australia donated 77 mulloway frames to the study which began in August last year.” Scientists would take the frames and remove the otoliths, which would reveal the age of the fish.

A nice mulloway caught for the project



1. Underside of fish showing the skull.



2. The otoliths “float” beneath the brain inside the soft, transparent inner ear canals.



3. Otoliths are encased in a membrane which plays a vital role in the brains interpretation of equilibrium.

All of the 77 mulloway were between 3 and 8 years of age with most being between 3-4 years of age, which indicated the importance of the estuarine habitat in the early stages of the mulloway population.

The Glenelg Trust has undertaken studies previously of mulloway and hopes to undertake further studies in the future that can be used for monitoring and management of the species.

Source- Media Release 13th April | Melanie Curtis | Regional Media and Communications Manager | Barwon South West | Communications

Recreational Boating and the Gippsland Lakes.

The information in this section was provided some time ago to Around the Jetties by Ben Scullin, former CEO of Boating Victoria, and is part of the argument that the value of recreational boating is not fully recognised by Government.

In “the Victorian Recreational Fishing Study (2009), that found that the direct expenditure of recreational fishers totalled \$2.3 billion per annum across the state.” Boating adds a further dimension to this fishing study and Scullin noted that a “recent economic input into recreational boating found that boating in just Port Phillip Bay and Westernport Bay contributed \$1 billion per annum and supported 14,340 full time equivalent positions in the Victorian economy.” This was calculated as rivalling the contribution of Melbourne Airport to the state economy and seven times that of the Spring Racing Carnival.

One of the most thought provoking statements of Ben Scullin was that “our research shows 85% of all recreational vessel registrations are primarily for the purpose of recreational fishing.”

Recreational anglers are probably not aware that in 2014 a study was conducted by the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee into the economic value of boating on the Gippsland Lakes. No publicity was ever provided of this study or as to who undertook the study, other than a note that the study has been completed but not released. No statement has been made available by VRFish of any contribution it may have made to this study on behalf of recreational anglers. Recreational anglers have had no opportunity to contribute to this study and most anglers would have been unaware of the study despite the suggestion of the boating Council that 85% of all boating registrations are primarily for the purpose of fishing.

Stockman Mine Update

In the last issue of Around the Jetties, information was provided on the concern of the Victorian Parks Association at any extension to the tailings dam as being a threat in the long term to the Tambo River.

I had a note from Anthony Hurst, Executive Director, Earth Resources Development, indicating that the Independence Group will be starting geotechnical and water investigations at the Benambra site on Tuesday 14th April. Water monitoring bores and testing of the embankment of the existing tailings storage will be carried out as a follow up to the previous Minister of Planning’s assessment of the project and to inform the companies future decision-making.

This work is being co-funded given the work is on public land and the government has an interest in the results. It is expected this work should take 2-4 weeks.

Editor

Thanks to Anthony Hurst of Earth Resources Development for his ready co-operation in providing up to date information on this project.

And Finally a Commercial Bait Fisherman comments-

I get particularly annoyed as I read recently of a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee describing what great condition the lakes are in. It’s about time that bodies told it like it is rather than providing stopgap statements to support tourism. Over the years, 70% of tourists have travelled to the Gippsland Lakes to fish, and fish stocks are in decline, and there is no indication of improvement.

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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 postal address. We do not advertise but rely on readers talking to others and the number of readers just continues to increase.

You can find past issues at www.laketyersbeach.net.au

My thanks to those readers who support Around the Jetties with donations of stamps and envelopes.

Good Health and Good fishing Lynton Barr