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Around the Jetties

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Issue 94

An Anglers Newsletter

“It was Lee who raised my consciousness about giving something back to the resource; looking at the sport from the point of view of the fish. It’s about preserving their gene pools as well as their habitat. Lee’s wisdom as early as 1939, that “a good game fish is too valuable to be caught only once” has been the concept that has let growing numbers of anglers enjoy the sport with, perhaps, the same number of fish.

Take Me Fishing Published in 2007

Joan Salvato Wulff

(When writing the above Joan Wulff was over 70 years of age, and she had caught the largest Tarpon in her life in this year –125lbs. Her husband Lee was a great fishing writer and fly fisherman and she had written three books on fly-fishing and a column over the past 22 years in the Fly Rod and Reel magazine.)



Editorial

I hope angling clubs and bodies such as the Recreational Fishing Roundtable will join together to take action to bring the concern at the state of the Bemm River launching ramp to the relevant authorities. In the great perch search, anglers who were going to fish Bemm River for brood stock left the Bemm and travelled to Marlo because of the state of the ramp. In four month’s time, dozens of families will journey to the Bemm to fish and enjoy a family holiday and they will be faced with a ramp that is deemed unsafe unless you are a local and know how to access this ramp. It needs to be remembered that the Bemm River community are largely dependant on the fishing in the inlet and river for their economic well-being. Only now is the river getting a couple of fishing platforms after much of the river access was cut off, but little has been done to get a permanent, safe ramp that will provide access to the estuary.

More Northern Pacific Sea Stars Found



I received a media contact on the 24th August indicating that a further three Northern Pacific Sea stars had been found in the Gippsland Lakes.



Incident Controller Ben Rankin of the **Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning** said divers would continue to work in the coming weeks in an effort to understand better the spread of the pest.

There are healthy populations of native Sea stars found in the Gippsland Lakes including the eleven-armed sea star, which was found in the same area as the two pest Sea stars in the initial discovery.

The Northern Sea star is regarded as a voracious feeder that eats mussels, oysters, crabs, worms, barnacles and fish eggs. If food is scarce, they can become cannibalistic. The other aspect of concern with this pest is its ability to develop a large population quickly. In Port Phillip Bay two years after detection the population of the pest was estimated to be 12 million. Female Northern Sea stars are capable of producing 20 million eggs per annum, and these eggs disperse over a wide area. The Sea star is also known to live for around five years.

It is generally agreed the only way to control the Sea star is by removal of the species and this means the total population must be removed. This becomes a labour intensive operation. Sea stars were found at Inverloch in 2004, and concern was expressed that the pest may spread along the East Coast of Australia. An eradication program was undertaken and by 2008, this was declared successful. Whilst on the other hand, attempts to remove the pest from Port Phillip Bay have been unsuccessful.

The Northern Sea star is native to Japan and possibly arrived in Australia in ballast water. At the moment in Australia, the Sea star is found only in Tasmania and Victoria. However, there is an ongoing danger of the pest spreading to other Australian states. It is thought that the Sea stars in Victoria probably came from Tasmania, which has the highest density level of Sea stars in the world. (1100 per cubic metre of water)

Gippsland Ports and Parks Victoria will support the operation and all vessels involved in the operation will display the Code Flag for diver down, and a 5-knot speed limit applies within 100 metres of a vessel flying that flag.

People who have information about the Northern Pacific Sea star in the Gippsland Lakes are asked to contact DELWP Bairnsdale office on 5152 0400.

Source- Information and photos from the Department of Environment Water and Planning, and local research.

Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable Forum

This Forum was held on the 5th June 2015 and the summary of the meeting was received on the 25th August 2015.

- VRFish reported that the economic fishing survey by Ernst and Young examining the economic contribution of recreational fishing to Victoria is due out soon. RFL funding supported this project.
- It was reported that VRFish were not opposed to creating a scallop fishery in Port Phillip Bay but would prefer a greater level of consultation with recreational anglers.
- Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria, Travis Dowling, reported that boosting stocking from 3 million to 5 million fish of mixed species would begin immediately.
- Barramundi stocking of Hazelwood is on track with meetings between Fisheries Victoria and Hazelwood Managers taking place. (Working Group established and first meeting held 21st May)
- Toolondo, recognised by Fisheries Victoria as a fishery of excellence, but has limitations due to water availability.
- Craig Ingram will head up Fisheries Victoria team to change commercial fishing arrangements at select river mouths.

- Grants and criteria will be available before the end of the year re strengthening Fishing Clubs.
- Recognised boating access problems and ramp availability are problems that must be solved.
- Fisheries Victoria is open to suggestions re minimum size limits for trout.
- Minister Pulford has written to her NSW counterpart re a dual NSW/Vic licence, and there will be no increase in the cost of Victorian fishing licences during the current Governments term.
- Planning is underway for the transfer of Fisheries Victoria into a Statutory Authority that will deliver greater opportunities for recreational anglers. (We will seek more information on just what that will mean for anglers.)

Wild Trout Fisheries Management Plan

Four north East trout streams were surveyed in 2014. The results of this survey led to a RFL project called “The Wild Trout Management Plan.” This involved eight projects aimed to improve trout fishing. Twelve priority rivers have been surveyed to date including two East Gippsland rivers namely the Dargo and Upper Mitta Mitta. Part of this program is the full day Trout Conference at Mansfield on Saturday 21st November.

Estuary Perch Update- Since 2012, 220,000 estuary perch have been stocked in ten waters in South West Victoria. Some of the perch in Lake Bolac have reached 29cms.

Murray Cod Research Programs-Anglers have assisted in the capture and tagging of Murray cod to assist researchers in monitoring cod populations over time. Two events to tag Murray cod took place in the Ovens and Goulbourn Rivers where teams of anglers fished over two days. Further, such events will be held across the Murray Darling Basin

Report on Coarse Fishing- The Federation of Course Fishing explained course fishing and the difficulties it faced with current regulations. Equipment and techniques were explained and the targeted removal of carp in the Ovens River. Fisheries Vic to work with coarse anglers to enable competitions to be held.

Access on the Mitta Mitta River- Don Ellis reported on the denial of access to anglers on the Mitta Mitta River at a number of locations. Fisheries Victoria to investigate.

New Research Unit- Ross Winstanley advised of the development of a new marine research unit- More information at the next Roundtable.

The next meeting of the Recreational Fishing Roundtable is scheduled September 11th 2015

Great Estuary Perch Search

Two teams of recreational anglers took part in a search for estuary perch brood stock to provide fingerlings to stock Lake Tyers and Tamboon Inlet with perch. This was to be an effort to restore estuary perch to Lake Tyers in sufficient numbers for the species to add to the current stocks of black bream and dusky flathead. The attempt to catch brood stock took place on the weekend of the 21st August, with one team of recreational anglers led by Rob Caune fishing in the Marlo area, and a second team led by Don Cunningham was operating at Bemm River. I was informed the team at Marlo caught nine estuary perch (7 female 2 male) whilst none were caught at the Bemm River.

Inland Fisheries Manager, Anthony Forster, reported on the search saying, “Over two days we had a fantastic group of local and well travelled expert fishers and some electro-fishers who put in a huge effort. Despite this the required minimum number (20 pair) of perch brood fish was not caught.

We are planning to return and try again in 4-5 weeks. We have run perch searches in the Glenelg and Hopkins River for the last four years at this time and always met our targets. We now think the fish in Gippsland are still well upstream and haven’t yet begun their spawning aggregation run to the estuary. I am confident we will find brood fish in the future. We are now getting weekly reports from anglers which are really helpful.”

As a result of the small catch, the fish were released on the Sunday.

This short report should be read in conjunction with Ron Brymer’s interesting letter below on the same topic.



I received this letter and photo on the 18th August. **█**
G’day Lynton,

Great newsletter as always.

Greetings from Tuross where Kath and I are on the fourth week of our winter sojourn where the fishing is average, and the weather is great (and the golf not so good)

Excited to read about the stocking of EP's in Lake Tyers. Now we need to convince the "catch and kill" anglers at Lake Tyers to start practicing "catch and release" with this species. This is a bit unfair I suppose but I am sick and tired of reading the local paper regarding how many were killed in their most recent competition.

Re the EP brood stock, Tyers would be great but the fish are hard to find- a much better choice in the Bemm and the Snowy. The problem in the Snowy though is that there is a lot of hybridisation with bass. I'm surprised the Mitchell was not mentioned as a stocking source-good stock of EP's and no hybrids in those I have caught.

Not sure about the Mulloway stocking- I guess we will have to wait and see.

Let's hope some good fish enter Tyers with the opening of the Lake.

Lastly, hope some day we can see EP's like the one in the picture caught in Tuross River last Saturday evening.

Regards

Ron Brymer

Editor

Ron Brymer caught a number of estuary perch in Lake Tyers, which provided a strong indication of a small number of this species surviving in Lake Tyers and the variety in the size of these fish would seem to indicate a small colony might be spawning in Lake Tyers. Ron's comment on seeking brood fish in the Mitchell River and the lack of hybrids provides a possible option for the next search for estuary perch brood fish, and to this end, any reports of estuary perch catches in the Mitchell River could be provided to this newsletter, and they will be forwarded to Anthony Forster of Fisheries Victoria. In the last week or two I have received quite an amount of anecdotal information on catches of perch in the Mitchell River.

It's up to readers now to provide firm reports on estuary perch catches in the Mitchell River and the size of the fish caught. This will provide additional information for options as to where the next Great Perch Search in East Gippsland should be undertaken.

Update

I received the following email from Anthony Forster freshwater Fisheries Manager on the 2nd September.

Hi Lynton

We have been overwhelmed by the goodwill and support of fishers looking to help us collect brood fish. Yes, the Mitchell River has been suggested. We also have an electro fisher team lined up to fish East Gippsland for five days leading up to the next event.

Regards

Anthony

What a lovely estuary perch from the Tuross River caught and released by Ron Brymer. Readers look forward and hope to see and catch fish like that in Lake Tyers one day in the future..

That Nicholson River Dam.

I have received a number of letters regarding the dam on the Nicholson River and the need for an answer to be found for the current problem, namely this decommissioned dam, which is no longer required now stops Australian bass, which have been stocked in the Nicholson River, from moving to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. It needs to be remembered that 35,000 of a planned 100,000 Australian bass, have been stocked by the previous Government in the Nicholson River.

The dam was constructed in 1976/77 by the Lakes Entrance Waterworks trust at a cost of \$873,000. It would seem reasonable that if an authority constructs a dam on a local river, at the end of the life of that dam the same authority should be responsible for the removal



of that dam and that funds, for the removal should be incorporated in the financial return to that authority over the life of the dam.

I find it puzzling that no information is made available to the public on the options for the removal of the dam or alternatively providing fish ladders for the bass to gain access to the Gippsland Lakes.

The dam was decommissioned in 2011 and it appears “that future directions for the dam will clarify over the next twelve months or so.” This means that the dam will have blocked fish movements for around six years and with no current definitive plan, the dam may continue to block fish movement beyond next year. I thank Dean Boyd, Executive Manager Infrastructure, for the basic information on the cost of the weir, but I do believe East Gippsland Waters should be providing a plan to remove this decommissioned structure and making that plan public.

I must say I find it disappointing that successive Governments seem to have almost no interest in this problem.

Please see the letters on this topic in the Letter section of Around the Jetties.

Protection of Spawning Fish at the Mouth of Rivers.

The protection of spawning fish from commercial nets at the mouth of rivers has been a major concern of recreational anglers for a decade or more. Introduction of this protection was a pre-election commitment of the Coalition Government prior to the 2011 election, however after four years nothing had been achieved despite the firm commitment of the Government, and for recreational anglers this was a bitter disappointment.

With the election of the Labour Government a major commitment was made to protect spawning fish from commercial nets at the mouth of rivers, and in addition to ensure this commitment was met Craig Ingram, Coordinator of the “Target One Million” program was given the task of introducing this protection for spawning fish in the Gippsland Lakes. Currently Craig is negotiating the buyback of commercial licences in Port Phillip and Corio Bays, and this project has initial priority. However, the next major step will be to tackle the protection of fish at river mouths.

The question arises as to what is the best method of protecting fish from commercial nets at the mouth of rivers.

On 24 August, I received a letter from Dallas D’Silva, General Manager of VRFish, indicating VRFish’s interest in this pledge of the Andrews Government. In the letter Dallas says-

“I am sure you have read the 2014 study from Fisheries Victoria on this issue. It raised more questions than answers, and has not been well received by recreational fishers. Our expectation is that for the policy to be properly implemented it must include new and additional controls, not just signage describing the current limit of 400 metres.

We are hoping we can assist by asking our members to have a say on what they might like this to look like. I have written to the local VRFish Delegate and head of the local angling association on this matter.

We see this as a good opportunity for the Gippsland Angling Clubs Association to help shape the implementation of the Government policy.

I would be most grateful if you could direct comments from your local contacts and readers to VRFish in the meantime.

Regards Dallas.”



Bass



Bream



Perch

CAN YOU HELP

This publication is also interested in your views, and would publish any proposals from readers, for protection of fish from commercial netting at the mouth of rivers and forward those proposals to

VRFish for consideration. This is most important and is a first step to reclaiming the Gippsland Lakes for thousands of recreational anglers.

In 2007 I received a letter from the late Peter Spehrs. Now Peter was a marvellous fisherman who had tagged over 5000 fish in Lake Tyers and the Gippsland Lakes. His suggestion was that netting should be prohibited within 1000 metres of river mouths and that "The Cut" on the Mitchell River should be treated the same as river mouths. He also made the point that such areas that are prohibited to netting should be clearly marked. **This newsletter supports a 1000 metre no netting zone at the mouth of rivers and includes The Cut on the Mitchell River, which acts as a river mouth for fish movements. See scale diagram setting out this proposal, however this may be one of many proposals that will ultimately be considered by Craig Ingram and his team.**



Diagram drawn to scale -Blue dots represent 1000 metre zones at the mouth of the rivers including The Cut and the end of the Silt Jetties on the Mitchell.

A study by Dr Joel Williams of the Rylah Institute, found that due to low freshwater flows and high levels of lake salinity, black bream had moved higher into the rivers seeking lower salinity levels and salt wedge features to spawn. **Williams suggests up to 99% of black bream may now be spawning in the rivers in the period September to December.** As well as bream entering the rivers to spawn, other species need access to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn..

The exciting stocking of Australian bass in the Mitchell, Tambo, and Nicholson Rivers has meant this species on reaching maturity will move to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn and added to this is a sustainable stock of Estuary perch in the Mitchell River and smaller numbers in other rivers that also require access to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. In other words, there is a considerable movement of key species between the Gippsland Lakes and rivers. These fish need protection from commercial nets. Currently commercial catches of estuary perch/bass are around 2 tonnes per annum and this catch will increase as the bass fingerlings stocked in local rivers reach maturity.

Proposed Cap for Commercial fishers in Port Phillip Bay

Fisheries Victoria met with the Seafood Industry of Victoria on the 24th August to advise them of the proposed sliding catch cap on the harvest of fish in commercial nets that would prevent any increase in commercial fishing effort during the eight-year phase out of commercial fishing. The cap will place an annual catch limit on each fishing licence based on the average catch of the five years prior to the Governments announcement to remove commercial netting from Port Phillip and Corio Bays. New reporting requirements will be

introduced for commercial fishers to enable effective enforcement of the cap. A four-week consultation period, which includes the public, closes on the 25th of September.

Fisheries Victoria Executive Director, Travis Dowling said, "Phasing out netting in Port Phillip Bay will improve recreational fishing opportunities and help increase the number of anglers to one million, growing tourism and strengthening our rural and regional communities."

Editor

This would appear to be a sound move that will control the level of commercial catches in Port Phillip Bay. It also indicates the commitment of the Government to remove commercial netting from Port Phillip Bay, and recreational anglers will welcome this approach. It is however difficult for recreational anglers who compare the energy and commitment of the Labor Government being applied to the removal of netting in Port Phillip Bay and the lack of any action in the Gippsland Lakes. Here, ten commercial fishermen have no quotas and take all they can catch and are targeting a declining fish stock of black bream and dusky flathead. **(The commercial catch of dusky flathead in 2005/6 was 48 tonne and has declined every year since, until now it is a small 8 tonnes.)** This fish is a magnificent recreational species that extends north as far as Mackay but is confined in Victoria to East Gippsland. It has the capacity to be sustainable, but not while being netted. Anglers realise that protection for spawning fish at the mouth of rivers will be introduced but the fishery will still be under severe pressure from commercial netting.

Against the picture of unfettered commercial netting with no quotas, the recreational anglers of East Gippsland have bag limits and, in the case of dusky flathead, a slot size 30-55cms which aims to protect breeding female fish over 55cms. The irony of this regulation, which was actively supported by recreational anglers is that it has never been applied to commercial netters by Fisheries Victoria.

[It needs to be acknowledged that the Port Phillip Bay fishery with its key species snapper and whiting is not regarded as being under threat. However, this is not the case with the Gippsland Lakes and tributaries, and if the removal of commercial fishing were based on need, then the Gippsland Lakes would be a Government priority for the removal of commercial netting.](#)

Reunited after 20 Years

The Commission for the Conservation of Blue Fin Tuna and CSIRO announced on April 26th 2015 that a blue fin tuna tagged in 1993 when she was approximately 2 years old, (photo below) was caught a week ago after travelling the oceans for 22 years, by two anglers fishing near Port MacDonnell and the tags returned to the CSIRO. At that time scientists were teaming up with the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Blue Fin Tuna to tag over 11,000 southern blue fin tuna in the Great Australian Bight.



When originally tagged this fish was 60cms in length, however when caught she had grown to 191cms in length and weighed in at 102kgs.

She was caught around 800 kms from where she was originally tagged.

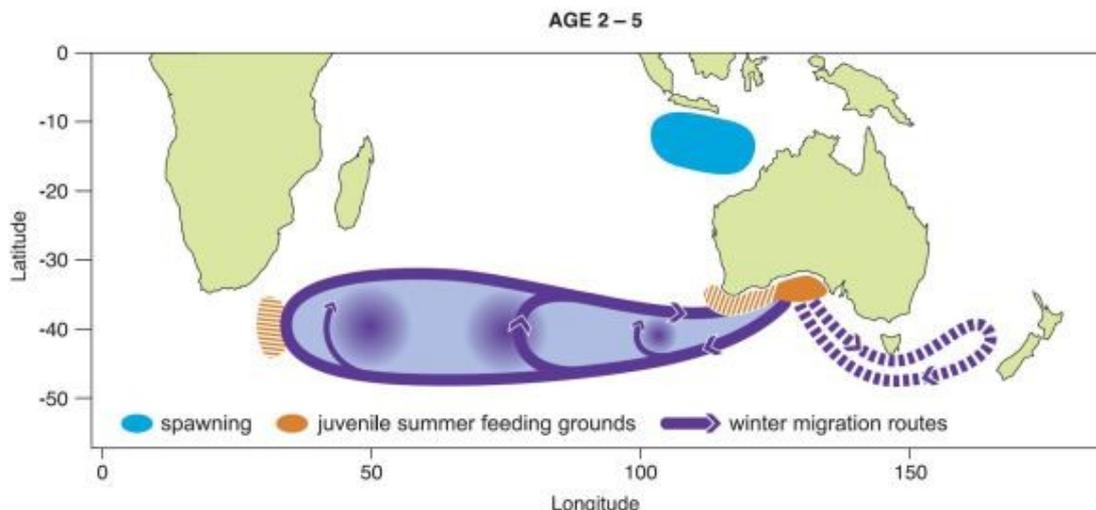
In the twenty years since the original tagging she has been undertaking large migrations from the Great Australian Bight to the Indian Ocean and to just south of Indonesia where as an adult she spawned.

Scientists say catching a fish like this after that time is like finding a needle in a haystack.

Scientists by looking at the otoliths of the fish can determine and verify her age and by examining the ovaries her

reproductive history can be determined and analysing the composition of the fishes muscles her diet can be determined.

This catch has demonstrated the great value of fish tagging.



This newsletter has commented over the years on the lack of support for fish tagging of marine species. Long-term readers will recall the reports of the late Peter Spehrs on tagging of marine species, particularly black bream and dusky flathead.

(Peter tagged over 5000 of these species as a member of VICTAG.)

Bruce Robinson VICTAG Coordinator in 2011 in an article entitled **VICTAG Tagging Facts** wrote –“A recent record sea swim for a black bream was one tagged and released by the late Peter Spehrs in Lake Tyers on the 2/12/06. It was caught 783 days later on the 23/1/09 in the Marlo system at the mouth of the Snowy River. It had grown 30mm in length. So many questions spring to mind, like “How long did it stay in Lake Tyers before it moved on to Marlo?” and “How many times has it done this before?”

This report is very interesting and it indicates possibly the first proven movement of a black bream from one estuary to another.

VICTAG commenced in 1994 and by 2011 it had tagged over 70,000 fish. This body was seen as contributing to Fisheries Research, and at the same time involving anglers. Bruce wrote, “Most new taggers report great satisfaction in tag and release.”

What is surprising is that VICTAG, since the advent of the Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Funds, has not received a project approval or “one cent of these funds,” according to Bruce Robinson. Yet, over \$2 million of Recreational Fishing Licence funds are directed to the employment of Fisheries Officers and an annual allocation is made to Fishcare, amongst other funding allocations from the \$6 million received from recreational fishing licences..

I have seen the enthusiasm and commitment of fish taggers and the great interest that tag results create amongst anglers, and certainly I have read with great interest of tag results similar to the blue fin tuna story above. Currently Fishing Victoria works with anglers on specific tagging projects such as the tagging of Murray cod, however for all intents VICTAG no longer exists.

Don Cunningham’s Bemm River Report



Fishing at the Bemm 31st August

The last week has seen nearly 100mls of rainfall at the Bemm, and conditions have been cold and windy. Prior to the rain fishing had improved and good quality bream and luderick were caught in the river using sandworm. The surf fished well before the rain and we expect it to be a good option once the weather settles down.

Visit to Blue Rock Lake,

Last week the Angling Club was invited to a function at Blue Rock Lake to witness the release of some tagged Australian bass as well as bass fingerlings

and trout. The tagged fish each carry a prize of up to \$500 if caught. The function was well attended, and we had a great opportunity to chat with the local member, as well as Lisa Neville, Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change. Jaala Pulford, Minister for Agriculture, was also present and both indicated how important recreational fishing was to the Victorian economy, adding comments that support the family connection to angling. Good communication links with these Ministers has been established. A big change in boating restrictions on the lake has taken place, and this will encourage fishermen to travel to the lake. Boat and motor size restrictions have been lifted with a maximum 15kph speed limit in place.

River Access and Fishing Platforms at the Bemm

Surveys are being carried out by the East Gippsland Shire, with a view to create access to two new fishing platforms on the river, and restoration of an old platform. These platforms will provide disabled access as well as sheltered areas for anglers in rough weather.

Editor

Thanks to Don for this report. Don did not mention in his report his concern at the state of the boat ramp. When the search for estuary perch brood fish took place a week ago some of the anglers who came to the Bemm to assist with the capture of brood fish, left the Bemm and travelled to Marlo where launching facilities were more adequate and safer. The ramp has been a long-standing problem, and this marvellous and historic fishing area deserves a safe boat ramp, particularly for visitors travelling considerable distances for the fishing at the Bemm. Angling Clubs around the area should be writing to the East Gippsland Shire seeking their urgent support for an upgrade of the launching facilities at the Bemm.



Recreational Anglers and the Law

Eel Nets Seized from Farm Dams

An investigation by Fisheries Officers has found numerous commercial eel nets known as fyke nets illegally set in farm dams in the Ballarat area to catch eels.

A man is being interviewed in relation to fishing for

eels commercially using nine nets without being the holder of a commercial licence. The nets contained a number of eels and yabbies.

The photo provided by Fisheries Victoria of this fyke net in a dam shows how far poachers will go in pursuit of fish and other species.

Senior Fisheries Officer at Ballarat, Stephen Eddy, said this illegal fishing has the potential to threaten the commercial eel industry across Victoria.



Sand Crabs in the News Again



Fisheries Victoria Officers at Ocean Grove on Monday night the 24th August intercepted a vehicle and a search revealed an esky and two buckets containing 285 sand crabs. Three females, aged between 47 and 53, have been charged on summons to appear in court at a later date. The legal daily limit of sand crabs is 30 per person. The catch was seized as well as the equipment used to catch the crabs. The crabs were caught in the Barwon River using hoop nets.

Letters Letters Letters

I have received this letter dated 24th August from Darren Chester Federal Member for Gippsland regarding the Nicholson River Dam.

Dear Lynton,

Thank you for your letter dated July 20th 2015 regarding the removal of the Nicholson River Dam.

I have again written to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, seeking his advice as to whether there may be some environmental funding program within his portfolio that might support the removal of the dam.

I will contact you again as soon as a response comes to hand. Kind regards

Darren Chester

Editor- Readers would be aware that a previous letter to the Minister for the Environment was passed on to the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, who responded indicating the State Government was responsible for the removal of the Nicholson dam.

The following letter was received on the 2nd September 2015 from **Dr Sharon Davis, Executive Director of Water Resources in the Victorian Department of Environment Land Water and Planning**. Again this was in reply to a letter I wrote to the Minister on the issue of the **Nicholson River Dam**.

Dear Mr Barr

Thank you for your letter dated 3rd August 2015 to the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water about the Victorian Governments position on the removal of the Nicholson Dam. The Minister has asked that I respond on her behalf.

The Victorian Government recognises that healthy rivers and wetlands in regional Victoria are important to the environmental and social fabric of local communities. We are committed to supporting and rehabilitating the health of our waterways and recognise the opportunities that they provide for communities to engage with the natural environment.

As indicated in your letter, decommissioning Nicholson Dam would provide benefits to the ecological health of the Nicholson River, including the movement of native fish species. A plan to decommission the dam was prepared by East Gippsland Water in August 2011. During the planning it was agreed that the cost was to be shared equally between the Victorian Government, East Gippsland Water, and the Commonwealth Government. In 2012 the Commonwealth informed the Victorian Government that it was unable to fund the project. The substantial funding shortfall could not be bridged by the Victorian Government and EGW at the time.

The DELWP is considering options for progressing the project in consultation with EGW, and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. Any future investment in the project will need to consider the costs and benefits and the willingness of stakeholders to contribute.

Thanking you again for writing.

Dr Sharon Davis.

Editor This comprehensive response by Dr Davis would seem to indicate that much of the responsibility for the non-removal of the Nicholson Dam resides with the Federal Government and its withdrawal of funding from the project. There is a need to reactivate joint funding for this project, as this river urgently needs rehabilitation, which in turn would assist in the sustainability of Australian bass in the river and the Gippsland Lakes. It would seem the removal of this dam is an important step in the Target One Million project with its previous promised stocking of 100,000 Australian bass. (Note 35,000 have been stocked above the dam.)

And another view point from a reader-

"In my simplistic reasoning I can't see why a centre section of the wall can't be removed from top or near top to the river bed or close enough to it rather than remove the whole wall. Monitoring devices of fish movements could be easily installed as fish would have to pass through a narrower opening.

For the moment I can't see the need in having to spend a vast sum of money to remove the wall in total.

Perhaps you can expand on the current issues around the Nicholson Wall."

Best regards,

Andre Bokos (Beaconsfield Upper).

Items in Brief

Calamari in Port Phillip Bay

A three-year study funded by recreational fishing licence fees has found that certain areas of Port Phillip Bay are much more important to calamari breeding than others. “Wetting a line for calamari has become increasingly popular in Port Phillip Bay for food and bait so we wanted to know more about when and where they spawn,” according to Fisheries Victoria Executive Director, Travis Dowling. Mr Dowling added, “We knew calamari grew very rapidly and completed their life cycle within less than a year but we did not know they exhibited movement patterns like these.” One tagged calamari travelled 51 kms throughout the southern parts of the Bay over eight days. The study found the southern and western areas of the Bay, which contained more seagrass, was the preferred habitat for egg laying by large female calamari.

Fisheries scientist Dr Corey Green said the study confirmed that calamari in Port Phillip Bay are capable of spawning throughout the year with a peak between Spring and Summer.

Source- Fisheries Victoria Media Release 30th April

Bass at Blue Rock Dam

Measures have been announced by the Andrews Government to help make Blue Rock Lake a premier

Australian bass fishery.

Since 2002, more than 160,000 Australian bass fingerlings have been stocked in Blue Rock Dam, and the lake has a stock of brown and rainbow trout and a self-sustaining population of redfin. Recreational anglers will now have better access to the Lake near Moe. Fishing boats of any length and horsepower will now have access to the lake and a 15-knot speed limit has been applied to the lake. These new regulations are in hand for a twelve months trial period.

It was announced in the Media Release that “to promote **this fantastic Bass fishery** some larger bass were released and if caught will earn a lucky angler a fishing voucher at the local tackle store.

Editor- Perhaps it is just a little early to announce this as a fantastic bass fishery. Readers will be interested in any reports of this lake and the Australian bass fishing. See Don Cunningham’s report of the Blue Rock Lake event.

Source-Media Release 26th August 2015.

New Approach to Recreational Angling

I received the attached flyer indicating a challenge for bass fishermen, with financial prizes supplied by Fisheries Tackle

Blue Rock Bass Challenge

Addicted to bass

Catch one of 12 tagged Australian bass from Blue Rock Lake and win a fishing tackle prize.

To celebrate improved access for powered trailerboats at Blue Rock Lake, Fisheries Victoria is running a bass fishing competition.

Twelve tagged bass were released in August 2015 at around 30 cm each.

If you catch one, cut the plastic tag off and ring the phone number on the tag.

1st prize - \$500 gift voucher from Allways Angling, Trenalgon.

2nd prize - \$300 bass fishing pack from Australian Fishing Network (AFN).

3rd Prize - \$250 bass rod and reel combo from Tackleworld Cranbourne.

Other prizes include Casio sportfishing watches and subscriptions to Freshwater Fishing magazines.

For terms and conditions visit: www.vic.gov.au/bluerockbass

#target1million

Logos: AFN, Tackleworld, VICTORIA South Government

Suppliers and Publishers for any of the tagged Australian bass caught in Blue Rock Lake.

Mercury Levels in Black Bream and Dusky Flathead

A study to assess the mercury levels in fish of the Gippsland Lakes, commenced on the 24th May. This study planned to catch 100 black bream and 100 dusky flathead across 10 sites. These studies were to provide a baseline for any further studies and resolve the question of mercury levels in Gippsland Lakes fish.. These fish will be tested for mercury levels in their flesh, and the results will be assessed against national food safety standards. The fish study will provide a comparison to the earlier research and inform whether there is any risk to the public.

Source- Media Release May 23rd

Editor

This study has now been concluded and it has been announced that mercury levels of Gippsland Lakes black bream and dusky flathead fall within health guidelines.

This was an important study and most necessary given the concern expressed by a number of local doctors, but it goes back further. In 1998 Professor Graeme Harris of the CSIRO in an audit of the Gippsland Lakes stated, **“the mercury problem does require further investigation, as the evidence indicates rising mercury levels in fish and sediment concentrations approaching alarmingly high levels.”** He found a 58% increase in mercury levels in the flesh of black bream since similar work by Glover 20 years previous.

I think we are extremely lucky that local doctors and environmentalists argued strongly on behalf of the community in general, to have this important mercury testing undertaken. Anglers who regularly fish the Gippsland Lakes and tributaries can now have confidence that fish in their catches are safe to be taken home for the family to enjoy.

An interesting and disturbing aspect of this study was the fact that whilst 100 bream were caught at nine sites across the lakes for the study, it is reported that only ten dusky flathead were caught even though the aim was to catch 100 of this species for testing. **Perhaps this is another indication of the parlous state of the dusky flathead fishery in the Gippsland Lake.**

Work Underway at Lake Tyers



Work is well under way at Lake Tyers No 2 boat ramp where a second ramp is being installed to give a two-ramp access with attached floating jetties. In addition, the old jetty at No2 ramp will be replaced with a floating jetty to cater for bank fishermen.

At Fisherman's Landing, the old condemned jetty will be replaced by a fishing platform. These additions will add greatly to the fishing amenities of this delightful estuary. Project Officer John Harrison of the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club is to be congratulated, along with club members, for their work with the East Gippsland Shire to obtain this result.

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Good Health and Good fishing

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