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Around the Jetties

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Issue 98

An Anglers Newsletter

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a major shift in Victoria's approach to fisheries research. Fortunately, our Queenscliff researchers and some dedicated anglers have been working together ahead of the changes that today see Fisheries Victoria's Angler Diary and Research Angler programs underpinning the essential roles of monitoring and assessment of our bay and inlet fisheries.
Ross Winstanley "Fishing Lines Summer 2015"

Editorial



Proposed Closure of Angler Access to the Mitchell River Mouth



Readers would be aware of the report in Issue 97 of this publication of rock walling of sections of the silt jetties on the Mitchell River by Parks Victoria to protect this international feature of the Mitchell River. In a largely unpublicised Media Release from Minister for the Environment, Climate Change, and Water, the Hon. Lisa Neville (the 30th October) it was indicated this was the first stage of a 3 stage project to be carried out by Parks Victoria on the silt jetties.

Now what is important to anglers is that the third and final stage of this development in the Ministers words, **"will remove vehicle access from the eastern two kilometres of the southern silt jetty. A shared pedestrian and cycle path will be built to provide public access to Point Dawson."**

For anglers this means the only access to the mouth of the Mitchell River will be if they are prepared to walk two kilometres carrying their fishing gear, and for the handicapped and elderly this wonderful fishing area will be out of bounds. Evidently, two consultative meetings were held in 2014 to discuss this process, but little publicity of those meetings has been made available. The minutes of those meetings were released on the 5th February. A VRFish representative attended both meetings.

This matter was brought to my attention by a reader who lives in the area of the silt jetties, and who was unaware of the proposed changes being instituted and was unaware of any consultative meetings. He took the matter to local member Tim Bull who made representations to Minister Neville on his behalf at the same time agreeing that the closure will affect elderly and disabled anglers and will stop emergency vehicles accessing the jetty at the mouth of the river. In the Ministers reply she stated, **"I note your concerns about this proposed change and recognise that some current users may be affected. I believe that other users will value the opportunity to enjoy this section of the structure without car traffic."**

The current users most affected are anglers who will be unable to access this area other than by boat.



These areas will be closed to all but pedestrian traffic and will exclude the aged, the wheelchair bound and handicapped anglers.

Neglected tracks and pot- holed road



This move seems strange when an important part of the **Target One Million project** (see **Government poster left**) is providing access to fishing areas, and here we have a restriction that will specifically affect anglers more than any others in the community.

At the two consultative meetings held in 2014 according to the press release, Fisheries Victoria was not represented or part of this discussion, and given the Ministers action to remove bank angling from this area this seems strange.

I contacted Dallas D'Silva Victorian Manager of the Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body, which was represented at the two consultative meetings, and he expressed his concern at the closure of this access to the Mitchell River.



Now what is very strange is that the closure decision was made without input from some of the residents of the area who were not informed of the meetings to discuss closure of the silt jetties. VRFish General Manager Dallas D' Silva was quite definite writing,

“VRFish does not support the closure of the 2 km stretch of road,” and VRFish represents the anglers of Victoria.

This 2 km stretch of road is controlled by Parks Victoria, and is in poor condition with potholes that makes driving to the mouth somewhat hazardous. Some fishing access areas are overgrown with weeds and it is obvious that this area has not had a high priority within Parks Victoria for upkeep and maintenance. Rather than remove the road perhaps, a better approach would be to redevelop the area including the 2 kms of road, and clear the river banks of weeds so that fishing platforms currently overgrown are available for wheelchair anglers. Of critical importance is the need to develop rehabilitation measures to protect the banks against erosion and to include a planned revegetation of the area, but this does not mean closing the area to sections of the community. This area has been fished for over 100 years.

The rehabilitation approach would then allow the entire community to enjoy all aspects of this special area including the elderly and handicapped, and also the bird watchers anglers and tourists. This area should be enjoyed by all rather than locked away for an active few to access.

Let us get this area redeveloped and protected for the community rather than closed to the community

What Can You DO

Anglers and others can write to Minister Neville, express their concern at the road closure at the address below, and perhaps send a copy of your letter to local member Tim Bull MP.

Hon. Lisa Neville MP

Level 17 * Nicholson St East Melbourne 3002

Email- lisaneville@parliament.vic.gov.au



Late News

A letter containing the minutes of the two stakeholder meetings was received two days ago by participants in those two meetings, held some 14-15 months ago. The minutes of meeting No2 was one page in length. The minutes were accompanied with the following comment from the firm employed to advance the project of road closure-**“Please note that these (minutes) are designed to provide participants with a record of sessions, rather than for broad circulation.”** There is no record of who attended meeting one however, the participants who attended meeting 2 are listed and named.

They were-Bill Storer (DEPI), Melissa Birleson (EGCM), Ian Bate (EG Shire Council), Andrew Brown (Friends of the Gippsland Lake), Pat McPherson (Bairnsdale Field Nat’s), David Young (Bairnsdale Field and Game), Hilary Rigg (Eagle Point Landcare), Rob Caune (VRFish), Trevor Caldwell, Nancy McMurray (Friends of the Gippsland Lakes). **Six members of Parks Victoria** were listed, and two members of the companies employed to undertake this project.

Hardly a representative group with no local residents, Fisheries Victoria or interested members of the public and the most affected group the Gippsland anglers rated only one representative..

Carp in the Headlines

Weekly Times-“The rabbit of the river may soon be wiped out”



In the week commencing the 11th January, papers around Victoria ran articles with headings **describing the possibility of ridding this state of European carp with a Herpes virus** that was being developed at a CSIRO facility at Geelong. It was suggested that this virus was getting very close to release. Control of carp has long been an aim of anglers and environmentalists and that time might be much closer than was ever originally thought.

Whilst carp were first released in Australia in 1859, they did not become a plague until a strain was imported from Germany by Boolarra Fish Farms of Gippsland, which then advertised the availability of the strain in the Weekly Times. Despite being quickly declared a noxious pest by Fisheries Victoria this strain of carp were found in the Latrobe River and then in the Murray system and then over a short time almost every other river in Victoria became colonised with European carp. Carp today comprise 90% of the fish mass of the Murray Darling Basin.

Dr Ken McColl of the CSIRO has stated whilst more work needs to be done, after eight years of laboratory testing the CSIRO is convinced that it has a carp specific virus. Whilst the CSIRO believe they are close to having a safe Herpes virus that could kill 70-80% of carp in our rivers any release of the virus will require approval of both Federal and State Governments.

Carp have been closely associated with the Gippsland Lakes since they were introduced to Victoria in the early 1960’s and **it is as recent as 1998/9 that the carp catch in the Gippsland Lakes was over 600 tonnes per annum.** Carp were at this time the largest fish mass in the Gippsland Lakes and the commercial catch of carp was three times



greater than the commercial catch of black bream, which was around 150 tonnes per annum. It is at this time commercial fishermen sought from the Government of the day a subsidy of 50 cents per kilo to add to their return on carp. (Return on carp 1998/9 \$475,000) This proposal would have cost \$2.275 million over three years.

Well-attended public meetings were held in Bairnsdale to discuss the proposed subsidy, and the development of a community “Carp

Taskforce,” however the meetings resulted in little more than focus public concern on the problem of carp in the lakes system. Some commercial fishermen suggested the carp were becoming increasingly tolerant with greater levels of salinity. At this time the Bairnsdale Advertiser ran a photograph of a commercial fisherman holding a carp that was caught near the entrance to the lakes and suggesting it was spawning in this area, and commercial fisherman, “**Mr Mackenzie brought a carp to the public meeting that he had netted the day. The fish was caught in close proximity to Barrier Landing where salinity levels were very high. Mr Mackenzie showed the meeting that the carp was ready to spawn and that it was full of ripe eggs.**” (Bairnsdale Advertiser October 14th 1996) The commercial fishermen of the Gippsland Lakes were making their case for a subsidy on their catches of carp.

In late 1997, a grant of \$39,000 was provided by Bairnsdale and District Business and Tourism Association to the late Ms Andrea Brumley, to study the impact of carp on the wetlands and shallow areas of the Gippsland Lakes. This was the first positive step towards gaining an understanding of carp in the Gippsland Lakes.

In June 1998 when a flood occurred carp moved into the Gippsland Lakes and even through the entrance into the sea in the fresh water flowing from the lakes. Within a few days the freshwater flow declined and the carp were caught in water with increasing salinity levels and died. At that time, dead carp could be found on the surf beaches and the beaches of Lake King would be littered with large dead carp that needed to be removed for public health reasons. This has dramatically changed and carp are now found mainly in the rivers entering the lakes and the carp mass in the Gippsland Lakes has almost ceased to exist. **In the last three years the commercial carp catch in the Gippsland Lakes has been a meagre 35 tonnes per annum which is 5.3% of the 1998/9 commercial catch of this species.**

Salinity Changes Affect Carp Numbers in the Gippsland Lakes.

Over the years the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes has regularly been dredged. However, in recent years this has meant an increased depth, with the use of a hopper dredge, which in turn has meant **an increasing salt-water flow into the lakes causing an increase in salinity in the Gippsland Lakes.** Scientists established that carp can survive in water 10-19 parts per thousand saline but when the salinity level increases to over 20 they retreat and with any higher salinity level they die. With the increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes, the European carp have retreated to the rivers where they can access water below 20 parts per 1000 salinity. Anecdotal reports would suggest the carp in the rivers are large fish but are not in the numbers evident ten years ago when anglers would see extensive schools of carp slowly moving past anchored boats. **Whilst the Gippsland Lakes are now largely free of European carp it will be a major achievement of science and the CSIRO if the same result can be achieved in the rivers of Australia.** This new biocontrol agent has been named CyHV-3. It has been used overseas devastating some carp populations. Dr McColl suggests that other methods such as the daughterless carp technology should be used in conjunction with CyHV-3 as well as continued trapping of carp in the Murray Darling Basin and the commercial capture of carp. Dr McColl also noted that vigorous testing had been carried out on native species and CyHV-3 has been shown to be no threat to 13 native species of Murray fish, eels and crustaceans such as yabbies and non-native species such as rainbow trout.

It appears this virus is not going to be released immediately and work is still being undertaken with non-target fish to ensure the virus remains species specific to carp, but there is now hope that carp numbers will be drastically reduced within the next few years.

Dr McColl stated in the Australian newspaper “we expect 70-80 per cent mortality in the first instance, which is huge when we are talking the number of fish, and then we will have a one to four year window to do other things like netting and genetic work to keep the carp population under control.”

A Couple of facts-

*Lock 1 on the Murray at Blanchetown in SA between 2007 and 2011 removed over 300 tonnes of carp in its Williams trap.

*It is estimated that it will cost the Federal Government \$50-\$100 million for the next step in the biological control of carp, which is the actual release of the virus.

Sea Grass in the Gippsland Lakes

As all anglers are aware, seagrass is most important to the health of the Gippsland Lakes and the living creatures including fish that are part of the lake system. Anecdotal information from anglers and environmentalists would suggest that seagrass has declined over recent years. This view is supported by evidence of the lack of seagrass washed on to the shores of Lake King. A decade ago thick mounds of seagrass were washed onto the Lake King beaches and gardeners would bring their trailers down and salvage this seagrass for their gardens. Today the beaches are almost bare of seagrass even after strong SW winds.



The last major study of seagrass in the Gippsland Lake took place in 1997. This report indicated that there are 55 species of seagrass in the world, with 25 occurring in Australia and only 4 species being found in the Gippsland Lakes. The dependence of black bream on seagrass in the Gippsland Lakes was demonstrated in the 1920-50 period when seagrass almost disappeared and the black bream commercial catch dropped from 352 tonnes to just 12 tonnes. In 2008 Dr Jeremy Hindell provided the first of a number of snapshots on the seagrass condition within the Gippsland Lakes, which found that there had been a seagrass decline at 75% of the sites studied, however this provided a snapshot of conditions rather than a definitive study,

Currently a study involving seagrass mapping is being carried out by Fiona Warry of the Arthur Rylah Institute, with aerial photography being carried out by Monash University and underwater video and photography being undertaken by personnel from the Arthur Rylah Institute. The team at Arthur Rylah are processing maps and these maps will be made available when the work has been completed.

Perhaps it will then be necessary to assess the effect of increased salinity on seagrass in the Gippsland Lakes and the effect on black bream spawning in the Gippsland Lakes.

Taken from the 1997 Report-

“Most species utilize the seagrass as both a source of prey species for their young and also for shelter. Seagrass meadows provide a suitable substrate for the deposition of eggs and a habitat for larvae immediately after hatching.”(1) Add to this the work of Dr Joel Williams who has shown black bream are now moving up rivers to spawn due to the increased salinity of the Gippsland Lakes. The lack of any seagrass in the rivers to provide protection to the larvae and small fish would seem to be a problem for the future of black bream. Also of interest is the publication “Allocation of Fish Resources in Victorian Bays and Inlets’ (1998) which states Lake King and Lake Victoria have traditionally been the most important nurseries in the Gippsland Lakes. This is no longer the case,

Source

(1) Victorian Marine Habitat Database-Seagrass Gippsland Lakes November 1997 Fisheries Victoria



The Law and Recreational Anglers

Over the years this publication has publicised the illegal actions of dozens of anglers and offenders in the area of fisheries. At no time in the last decade has the name of an offender been released by Fisheries Victoria although in the nineties the release of offenders names was a normal procedure. I would suggest fisheries offences like those quoted in the attached article do not warrant protection of the identity of the offender as the naming of the

offenders in serious cases and the shame associated with an offence may well be a penalty in itself.

Snapper Fishing off Portland Trawler Wharf

Five Melbourne men have been caught fishing off the Portland Trawler Wharf with 38 undersize fish including 36 snapper, after Fisheries responded to a 13Fish call from a member of the public.(January 4th) These men will aged between 23 and 53 will be collectively fined \$2731 for offences including fishing without a licence and taking undersize fish. (See photo)The catch included 36 snapper, one King George whiting and one flathead in a total bag of thirty-eight fish of which all fish with the exception of two were undersize. Acting Regional Supervising Fisheries Officer Joshua Hannaford said Portland was a nursery ground for small snapper at this time of the year. Members of the public are encouraged to report suspected illegal fishing activities to the 24 hour fisheries offences line 13Fish (133474).



Editor

Some years ago Fisheries Victoria published bimonthly a **RECFISH Newsletter** of around 7-8 pages which was posted out to recreational anglers with details of regulation changes fish releases, development of facilities and reports such as the VICTAG program report etc. This informative document was available at a cost of \$15 per year as an information service to anglers and angling clubs. A section of this publication was headed “**CAUGHT and COURT**” and listed those persons taken to court and fined for fisheries offences. In Issue 21 November 1997, which I have in front of me, 31 names and addresses of those convicted are published with a brief summary of the offence and fine. In this 1997 issue 25 of those convicted were for offences associated with abalone.

I wonder why today those convicted for fisheries offences are no longer named and shamed in a media release listing the names of those recreational anglers and commercial fishermen convicted of serious fisheries offences together with a summary of the reasons for the fine. Being anonymous does little to shame the person involved.

I would consider the taking of 36 undersize fish by recreational anglers as a serious offence, and I wonder have they been convicted of a similar offence in the past.

Syndicate Members Jailed for Illegal Abalone

Ten divers from an illegal abalone harvesting syndicate were convicted and sentenced on the 11th January to various penalties including jail for some members of the syndicate, indefinite bans on fishing, orders to pay up to \$16,500 and two months jail. All ten of the divers pleaded guilty to taking abalone for sale without a licence and several pleaded being guilty to possessing the proceeds of crime. Four of the men were jailed immediately for periods up to two months, however these sentences are being appealed.



The investigation into this syndicate over a ten-month period involved investigators and fisheries officers across the state. During the investigation twelve vehicles and associated dive equipment were seized and most have been forfeited to the state. A number of residential premises are restrained under the proceeds of crime legislation and await further court hearings.



Acting Director of Fisheries Enforcement and Education, Bob Hutton, described the operation saying, “The divers would drive for three hours in pairs, meet at various dive sites around Warrnambool and Port Fairy, then take quantities of abalone and other shellfish. They would then drive back to Melbourne then sell the harvest to the two ring leaders who would allegedly on sell the seafood at a discounted rate around St Albans and Sunshine.” Mr Hutton said that this was a well-organised syndicate that took significant fisheries resources on a regular basis. One of the syndicate leaders who pleaded guilty in December 2015 was remanded in custody for further sentencing in February 2016.

[Source *Details of both the above cases were obtained from Fisheries Victoria Media Releases in January.](#)

And the Result Is

On the 3rd February Fisheries Victoria in a media release provides the conclusion to the court case against the “Abalone Syndicate.” The ringleader a 41-year-old woman from St Albans was sentenced in the county Court to 23 months and 14 days in jail with a non-parole period of twelve months. This ringleader was also banned from all fishing activity and ordered to pay \$18,007 and had her late model Toyota forfeited. The woman who pleaded guilty in December has been remanded in prison awaiting the court case. Four of the ten divers were jailed last month however these sentences are under appeal currently. The other six men received were given unpaid community work orders and fined between \$220 and \$16,500. During the investigation twelve cars and dive equipment was seized and most have been forfeited. Several residential premises are still restrained under the proceeds of crime legislation.

Congratulations to Fisheries Victoria and the court system for this result, which sets a new standard for this State of fisheries protection.

Late Item

On the 30th January I received a report of a Melbourne couple who were apprehended at Lakes Entrance with more than 1100 oysters and 20 litres of mussels. Fisheries Officers seized their car and the shellfish. The catch limit for oysters is 50 per person per day and the catch limit for mussels is 10 litres per person per day. These two people took the oysters and mussels off the Kalimna rocks, and travelled from Melbourne to Kalimna with the intent to remove these crustaceans. The catch and the offenders car was seized by Fisheries Officers Taking into account previous fines for excess catches of crabs in Lakes Entrance this alleged offence should result in a heavy fine. **This is another fine achievement by Fisheries Officers.**



Dusky Flathead in the Cunningham Arm of the Gippsland Lakes

Over the years I have heard Charter boat skippers, and bait fishers talk of large dusky flathead being in close proximity to the boardwalk that crosses the Cunningham Arm to the beach, and possibly spawning in that area, and every year a number of large dusky flathead are caught in this area. This week in the Bairnsdale Advertiser is a photo of a young angler holding up a 75cm dusky flathead he caught in the same area on a blue-bait and the question again arose as to whether this area is a spawning ground for this iconic fish.



In that excellent study on dusky flathead by Gray and Barnes (2008) "Reproduction and Growth of Dusky Flathead" they noted that the predominant spawning period of this species was between November and March and may be from September to March in some areas. It would seem the catching of large dusky flathead in the Cunningham Arm fits this spawning period and the large fish are not evident in this area at other times. Gray and Barnes also make the observation that spawning takes place in the lower reaches of estuaries, and the Cunningham Arm would seem to satisfy "the general hypothesis that dusky flathead spawn in the lower reaches of estuaries and in near shore coastal waters."(Gray and Barnes Study)

Could it be that large dusky flathead are spawning in the Cunningham Arm? We know from the NSW study that large dusky flathead spawn 3-4 million eggs and may have multiple spawning events, so it is important the spawning fish be protected. In Victoria steps have been taken to protect the larger dusky flathead. (Over 55cms), however should we be protecting areas in the lower reaches of estuaries?

Perhaps it is time that a study was undertaken to establish whether the large dusky flathead found in the shallow waters of the Cunningham Arm are entering this area in the period November to March to spawn.

The Gray and Barnes study was undertaken in NSW however, I am unaware of any similar study in Victoria, and NSW study has certainly had an influence on our thinking when it comes to dusky flathead and protecting this species. It should be remembered that the commercial catch of dusky flathead has dropped from 48 tonnes in 2005/6 to 8 tonnes today. This has been a continuous decline in this species in the Gippsland Lakes. **It now seems rare for recreational anglers to catch dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes..**

Sources

**** A study is currently being undertaken by Tara Hicks of the Charles Stuart University in Albury as to whether the slot size introduced in Victoria 30-55cms is supporting the long-term sustainability of this species. This was a one year study with sampling taking place in Oct-Nov 2014, however no reports have been made available on the progress of this study.(This project is funded by Recreational Fishers Licence fees) Perhaps progress reports should be part of these studies that are funded by anglers.**

**** There was no indication in the Dr Jeremy Hindell Gippsland Lakes Tracking Project Study of 2008 of dusky flathead exiting the estuary.**

Meeting of Fishing Diarists



A meeting of a small number of active diarists took place (Jan 6th) at the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club rooms. This meeting was chaired by Craig Ingram, Chairman of the Fisheries Victoria "Target One Million Project. The meeting was to assess the views and promote discussion of the current diarists, and to explore ways to provide added support to diarists in their role of recording fish catches **which provides the raw data for considerable research.**

In 2014 a study was undertaken that found the **Research Angler Diary** and the **General Angler Diary** programs were innovative approaches to monitoring recreational fisheries. **This method of monitoring recreational fisheries has been supported by the general angling community, fisheries managers and researchers as a suitable method of monitoring recreational fishing and fish stocks. Of particular interest is the fact that the diary approach initiated by Fisheries Victoria has now been accepted by researchers in most states.**

This meeting discussed lines of communication and the need for some aspects of support for diarists. It was suggested diarists should have a jacket, which identifies their role in this states fisheries, and this would assist angler recognition of diarists and encourage an understanding of their important role in this states fisheries.

A number of similar meetings are being held around the state with diarists, and I hope this may result in additional support of this unique program. In general discussion at this meeting the importance and interest in VICTAG was also acknowledged by diarists.

In 2014 a quite substantial study into the use of diarists to monitor recreational fisheries was undertaken by Fisheries Victoria. In this study a Queensland case study had demonstrated how a “tag and release program” could be incorporated into the diarist program and this would provide additional data, not currently available.

“Victoria’s ongoing ‘angler diary’ programs won two prestigious awards as part of World Environment Day Awards 2011: the United Nations Association of Australia’s Excellence in Marine and Coastal Management Award, and the Victorian Coastal Council Awards for Excellence 2011 Community Action and Partnership.” (1)

These awards indicate the important role of anglers in monitoring fish stocks in recreational waters, however little information is provided to the public on this role, and even some angling clubs are unaware of the work undertaken by anglers to protect their sport.

This was a worthwhile meeting where diarists had the opportunity to share their views.

Source

(1) New and innovative approaches to monitoring small-scale recreational fisheries. April 2014

Simon.D.Conran, Daniel Grixti, Therese K. Bruce, Natalie F. Bridge, Khageswor Giri, Jeremy S. Hindell, and Terence I. Walker.



Bob McNeil’s Lake Tyers Report

This report from Lake Tyers diarist Bob McNeil covers the period from the 20th October 2015 to the 15th December 2015. Early in this period Bob noted that a veritable plague of swimmer crabs in Lake Tyers was making bait fishing very difficult and this particularly applied to bait fishermen using mullet or prawn. In this period, Bob fished mainly in the bottom lake and he observed most other boats were targeting this area. Despite commencing fishing around 6.00am, Bob remarked there were numbers of boats and it was not unusual to see 25 parked boat trailers at the

ramp by 10.00am. Over this period Bob caught 55 flathead with three between 55-60 cms while on a morning in December Bob caught 2 flathead of 72 and 75 cms and on another morning one of 80cms, however the average flathead he caught was around 45cms.

In this period 45 bream were caught but it needs to be remembered he fished mainly for dusky flathead. In the period he caught as well four trevally and they averaged 35 cms.

Bob still shares with other anglers concern at the pressure that is being exerted on Lake Tyers by increased numbers of anglers due to the continued poor fishing in the Gippsland Lakes. Over the 20 mornings fishing reported in this diary, 100 flathead and 45 bream were caught or on average 5 fish per morning and almost exactly 50% of the bream caught were undersize. Bob fished almost exactly 4 hours each morning 6.30am –10.30 am and this suggests a catch rate of 1.25 fish per hour. This would seem to be a considerably reduced catch rate that is taking place in Lake Tyers.

As always thanks to Bob for his report, which I know readers find most interesting. Perhaps in a later issue we may compare Bob’s catch rate of five years ago with his catch rate today to see what change has taken place.

Don Cunningham’s Bemm River report



Don reports that Bemm River is alive this weekend (February 5th and 6th) with kayaks as it is the venue for a qualifying round for the Hobie bream championship with over 100 entrants competing. Don reports that the community is still waiting for some action on the fishing platforms in the river, which have been approved but not commenced. It had been hoped that they might have been in place for this last Christmas. With regard to the ramp on Luderick Point the community is hopeful that funding will be brought forward this financial year. The Bemm River Angling Club has a project displayed on its website entitled “**We want your story.**” If any readers would be interested in adding their story they would be welcomed, so have a look at the Bemm River Angling Club site.

The Bemm Fishing report

The lake has closed and water is rising rapidly. Recent good catches from the shallows should continue and the channel continues to fish well. Anglers have been catching fish off the platform. As the lake rises good angling should be a feature, although best results will be achieved early morning or towards evening. A few flathead have come in close to the banks and there is a good opportunity to walk the shallows to find them. Bait fishing around the edges is a very relaxing way to fish, but gumboots or waders will be needed, as it is muddy in some areas.

The prawns are bait size and in good numbers. Avoid the full moon period if chasing them. The surf should be worthwhile during these less windy periods, as salmon are coming on the bite. The next club meeting will be held on the 9th February. Dinner at 6.00pm followed by the meeting.

The next event for the club is the competition against Stratford Angling Club on the 20th and 21st of February to be held at Bemm river. This is a heaviest Bream competition , fishing for the shield.

Don Cunningham

Items in Brief

Mansfield Trout Conference

After some trial and error I found that if I Googled on my computer “Wild Trout 2015 Proceedings” it was the easiest method of getting to the report on the November Mansfield Trout Conference. This document provides 60 pages of information on the conference including summaries of the papers presented by researchers to the 150 anglers in attendance. Printed off the proceedings make a booklet of fascinating information on trout that angling clubs might print and make available to members. I believe it is the intention of Fisheries Victoria to run a further conference towards the end of the year.

A Wonderful Story

In early November 2015, a large fish was seen in the waters around Merimbula. After some time this fish was identified as a large dugong. During December and in the following week’s newspapers along the NSW South coast and Merimbula in particular were covering the story of this and its movements in the Merimbula area. Victorian papers did not seem to cover this story at all.

This tropical creature is normally found in sub/tropical waters in the North of Australia. Marine vets from Sea Life and Sea World on the Gold Coast were on standby for several weeks ready to assist any rescue attempt that may be undertaken whilst at the same time assessing the health of the dugong, which was deteriorating. The dugong entered the Merimbula Lake and under the causeway and was seen to be eating seagrass in the area near the causeway.

Hundreds of people were watching the dugong, which experts suggested, would not survive the winter in the cold southern waters. When after several weeks the dugong entered shallow water in the Merimbula Lake rescue teams were able to safely catch the dugong and gently place it in a prepared tank for transportation. Vets examined the dugong and it was given a good chance of survival.



On hand at the Merimbula Airport was a large RAAF Hercules transport plane and the dugong was transferred to the plane and flown north for release in tropical waters.



The dugong when fully grown can weigh 400 kilograms and can be up to 3 metres in length. They are sometimes referred to as “sea cows” because they graze on sea grass. The female dugong gives birth to a single calf at three to seven year intervals and the calf stays with its mother for up to two years. This low birth-rate accompanied by dugongs being tangled in fishing nets, hit by boats and hunted by aboriginal hunters has meant a decrease in numbers and the authorities have been concerned at the survival of this gentle

creature. This was a massive effort by environmental agencies, the RAAF and the public including community members who in boats and kayaks monitored the movement of the dugong in the Merimbula Lake.

I think that all involved would be satisfied and even proud with this fine community effort.

Lake Tyers and Parking

Over the Australia Day weekend, an average of fifty cars with boat trailers parked at the number 2 launching facility at Lake Tyers. This number of vehicles totally filled the available parking space to an extent vehicles were turning away from attempting launching and parking. All these boats were specific fishing boats. As well as vehicles with trailers there were 12 vehicles in small parking spots and they provided transport for bank fishermen and tourists. This is intense fishing pressure on this small 25km square estuary. At the same time the Shaving Point launching facility at Metung on the Gippsland Lakes was home to 18 vehicles with boat trailers and they included general watercraft including jet skis and yachts. It appeared only a couple of these trailers were for fishing boats.

On the morning of the 24th of January I dropped into Fisherman's Landing and found 15 anglers fishing on the new fishing platform provided in this area, and amongst those fishing were youngsters and several elderly anglers sitting on their chairs and enjoying the sunny environment. This is obviously a venue that is growing in popularity for the bank fishers at Lake Tyers.

This fishing platform was jointly funded by the East Gippsland Shire (\$69,600) and the State Governments Department of Economic Development (via the boating safety and Facilities Program) (\$168,000). The initiative for this project came from a very active Lake Tyers beach Angling Club.



New Dredge for Gippsland Lakes

It has been announced in a media release 29th January that construction of the new dredge for the Gippsland Lakes has commenced at the Netherlands Company Damen's, Yichang Shipyard in China. This 60 metre Trailing Suction Hopper Dredge is expected to be operating in 2017. Gippsland Ports will operate the new dredge as it did with the April Hamer side-casting dredge for 34 years before its retirement in 2009. The Media release stated, "The new dredge will secure safe and reliable ocean access from the Gippsland lakes for commercial shipping vessels, tourism operators and recreational boaters and fishers."

Minister for Ports Luke Donnellan commented that the new dredge "is ensuring the future of the port by providing ocean access and reducing the risk of flooding for at least another thirty years." I wonder if reducing flooding means a wider and deeper entrance, and its effect on the estuary fish of the Gippsland Lakes. Increased salinity has already had a profound effect on the spawning of black bream.

Lake Toolondo Gets a Needed Drink

As anglers would know one of this states best trout waters is Lake Toolondo in Victoria's Wimmera Region where large brown trout have been sought after by both bait and lure anglers and fly fishers. In recent years Lake Toolondo's survival has depended on supplementary water supplies, as during the summer months Lake Toolondo can get very low. In 2014 one of the first actions of the incoming Labour Government was to authorise a water top up, and this has meant the fish stocks in this Wimmera Lake have been able to survive until now. Fisheries Victoria have been working in the area but were facing immense problems as the summer evaporation progressively reduced the water level of the lake.

On January 20th 2016 a top up of 5000 mega litres was authorised from Rocklands reservoir and this provided an increase of 10% to water levels in Toolondo. Premier Andrews and Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford were at Toolondo to see the water flow into this lake. Hopefully this top up will see this lake survive until winter rains come.

Coordination Committee for the Gippsland Lakes Announced

Minister Lisa Neville Minister for Environment and Water has announced her appointments after a six months wait, the membership of the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee. This committee will oversee the expenditure of \$2.5 million allocated in the state Budget to improve the health of the lakes. Readers will be aware that after the last election the Ministerial Advisory Committee was disbanded and this committee will replace the former committee.

This committee consists of ten members and will be jointly chaired by the West Gippsland's Catchment Management Authorities Angus Hume, and the East Gippsland Catchment Authorities Chairman Dr Peter Veenker. A full list of members of this committee will be provided in the next issue of Around the Jetties, however recreational anglers will be interested in the appointment of commercial fisherman Arthur Allen to this committee. He had been appointed by the previous Government to the now disbanded Ministerial Advisory Committee. There are ten commercial fishermen

operating in the Gippsland Lakes so their interests will be well covered by Mr Allen, however the same cannot be said for the hundreds of recreational anglers who fish in this large estuary. There has been no appointment of a recreational fisher to either of these committees yet it is acknowledged that recreational fishing in the Gippsland Region contributes over \$381 million in direct output to the State economy. It is also worth remembering that Mr Allen and the commercial sector have boycotted Gippsland Lakes Stock Assessment meetings for both bream and other species since 2005 as well as any meetings involving recreational anglers. It is strange that the recreational sector is not recognised by either Government when it comes to overseeing the health of the Gippsland Lakes or being involved in administration of resources

Summer Issue of Fishing Lines

Fishing Lines is the free magazine of Victoria's Peak Recreational Fishing Body and has been produced over a number of years, but this Summer 2015 publication sets new standards of information for anglers. The emphasis on this issue is research and every angler who cares about his or her sport should find that this issue provides fascinating reading. Items include an excellent examination by Ross Winstanley into the decline of sand flathead in Port Phillip Bay and the part anglers can play in any recovery. Ross a former Fisheries Manager who since his retirement has devoted himself to fishing and researching issues that affect recreational fishers and added to that he provides an insight into his experience as a diary angler. Another article is on the translocation of blackfish in west Gippsland. Murray cod research, game fish tagging and an assessment of estuary perch stocking are just a few of the articles that are available in this top publication. VRFish deserves the plaudits of anglers across the state for the production of such an interesting and valuable magazine that will widen our understanding of a small section of the current research being undertaken.

If you would like to be on the distribution list contact VRFish –Phone 03 9897 6318 or drop a note to VRFish PO Box 538 Williamstown Vic. 3015 or email info@vrfish.com.au

Death of Local Angling Identity – Allan Beveridge 14/1/1925-12/12/2015

Allan recalled in an interview I had with him in May 2013, that as a lad riding his bike to Cherry Tree with his rod tied on his bike and invariably fishing with boiled shrimp as his main bait. This, with spearing fish at the Trident, were some of the early memories of an angler had fished Lake Tyers over a lifetime. In those early days, Allan used an old carbide lamp to catch large King Prawns in Lake Tyers. In 1947 Allen married May and in many ways this was a marriage made in heaven, as they were both anglers who loved the outdoors and fishing and Lake Tyers in particular. Allan and May had a special love of Devil's Hole and while fishing they loved to listen to Lyrebirds in the bush around them. At that interview we sat and talked fishing for several hours and a full report of this interview is in Around the Jetties Issue 66 March 2013.

As I left, Allan put into my hand a large tomato from his substantial vegetable garden. This tomato over recent years has provided me with seed for tomatoes in my garden and wonderful memories of an interview with an angler and his wife who had shared a life of fishing and enjoying the bush environment. Allan and May fished from their well-worn boat on Lake Tyers until the final years of Allan's life. Allan will be remembered as a gentle caring person, and for his great skill as an angler based on a lifetimes fishing experience. One of his last acts associated with fishing was to work with Fisheries Victoria in the placement of artificial reefs in lake Tyers.

Around the Jetties on Line

www.laketyersbeach.net.au

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

Good Health and Good fishing

Lynton G Barr

WARNING ON SHELLFISH IN THE GIPPSLAND LAKES

Recreational fishers have been advised not to eat mussels and other shellfish from the Gippsland Lakes until further notice.

This is due to the possible presence of a toxin produced by a particular algae present in the Lakes. Signs are being placed around the Lakes advising visitors of this precautionary advice.

The Department of Health and Human Services says the likelihood of a serious risk to human health is low but this advice has been issued as a precaution - until further testing has shown the shellfish are safe. Further advice will be provided to the community as soon as these results are available, probably by the end of the week.

There are no restrictions on water activity in the Gippsland Lakes including swimming, fishing and boating. Skin contact or swallowing small amounts of seawater containing this algae does not present a health risk.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has advised DHHS that levels of the algae *Pseudonitzschia delicatissima* were detected as part of routine water sampling at Eagle Point, Paynesville and Metung.

Pseudonitzschia algae species are commonly found in coastal waters at low levels.

Some, but not all, *Pseudonitzschia* species produces a toxin called domoic acid. Toxin producing strains to date have been uncommon in Australia, or have only produced toxins at low levels. This particular algae *Pseudonitzschia delicatissima* is less likely to produce toxin at high levels.

If seafood eat this algae, the toxin can accumulate and cause illness in consumers.

Mussels and other shellfish are more likely to accumulate this toxin as they are 'filter feeders' and should be avoided until further notice. This advisory does not include fish as they are unlikely to accumulate toxins to any significant level.

If I have eaten these shellfish what should I do?

If anyone has consumed mussels or other shellfish from the Gippsland Lakes and experiences symptoms which include gastroenteritis (usually within 24 hrs of consumption) nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, they should see their doctor.

Those who experience neurological symptoms (usually within 48 hrs of consumption) such as headaches, confusion, short term memory loss, breathing difficulties and seizures should seek immediate medical attention.

For More Information about this algae bloom contact Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186