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# Around the Jetties

February 2014

Issue No 77

## An Angler's Newsletter

The Australian Salmon has been one of the most used and abused fish in this country. Hounded by spotter planes and ruthlessly purse seined almost to extinction. These fish are now making something of a modest comeback. This is great news for when caught by amateurs they generate a huge amount of money and when taken by rod and line they are a good food fish. It makes no sense to wipe out this great fish.

Source [Tamboon Salmon Rex Hunt's Fishing \(1995\)](#)

### Editorial



The Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable summaries of the September and December meetings are now available on the DEPI website.

At the December meeting a major discussion took place on the current **“Victorian Recreational Fishing Licence”**. I am indebted to [Ross Winstanley](#) a member of the Roundtable for making available the paper entitled **“Review of Victorias Recreational Fishing Licence”** that he presented at the September meeting of the Roundtable, and which has been referred to in previous issues of Around the Jetties. In this paper he examined the need for greater input of anglers into the decision making associated with the expenditure of funds derived from the current or future RFL. In addition, the paper draws the attention of anglers to the fact that anglers through the RFL are contributing to expenses that were formerly the responsibility of the Government and that might be considered cost recovery. Secondly, the fact that the RFL cost burden is being borne by less than 50% of Victorian anglers is unfair and needs to be examined.

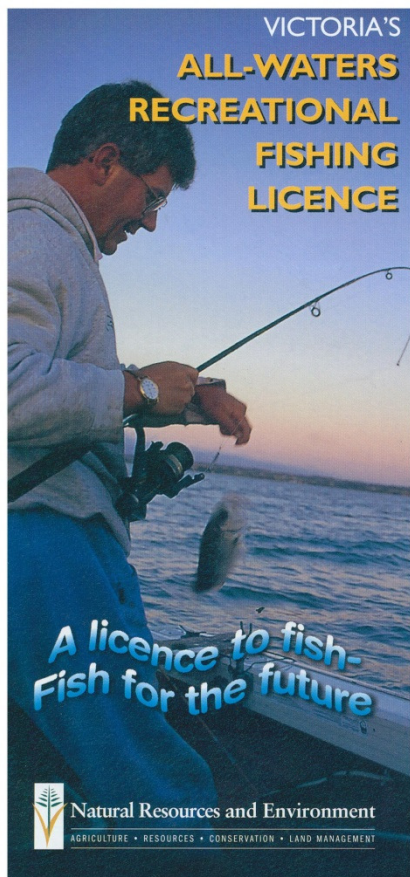
Angling clubs and fishers across the state should study this major issue and clubs should be provided with a clear and understandable paper on this subject setting out the options available. Perhaps also the [Regional Roundtables in 2014](#) could be devoted to a discussion of these options and speakers provided at each regional meeting to outline both the problem facing the funding of recreational fishing and provide suggested solutions for anglers to consider. In this way anglers may be brought together to examine the options available, and provide guidance as to the level of funding and responsible expenditure available from the RFL for recreational angling in the next decade.

I think anglers should be aware that it is estimated that there are over 700,000 anglers in this state and less than 50% of those anglers currently need to purchase a RFL. With an ageing population, unless changes are

made, the percentage of anglers needing to have a licence will decline further. It follows the funding available to support this sport will also decline.

This is a major problem facing recreational anglers and Fisheries Victoria and all clubs and anglers should be part of the discussion to resolve this problem.

## Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable Forum ( December 13<sup>th</sup> 2013)



This was the 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting since the formation of the Roundtable remembering that meetings are held quarterly. This is a brief report of a few of the items discussed that may interest anglers, however to get an indication of the full range of matters being discussed, anglers should go to the website.

[DEPI-Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable \(SRFR\).com](http://DEPI-Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable (SRFR).com)

- Ross McGowan Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria advised the forum that fish surveys are to be conducted on the North Eastern River systems namely the Howqua, Jamieson, King and Upper Goulbourn rivers to examine the apparent lack of trout in these important trout fisheries. (Given reports I would suggest that a lack of trout may also be indicated in East Gippsland streams such as the Mitta Mitta, Dargo, Livingstone etc.)
- Brian Mottram Acting Director of Fisheries management reported current fish stocking of 50,000 estuary perch (5 lakes) 82,000 bass (Gippsland) and 88,000 Chinook salmon (9 lakes).
- Fisheries Victoria is currently working on a draft Kayak Fishing brochure and Glove Box guides.
- Research is being undertaken on the recreational fishing catch, King George whiting recruitment and black bream. (The area of black bream research is not detailed, however it may be the assessment of methodology of determining black bream stocks currently being undertaken by the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory committee. See issue 76 for details)

- Dallas D'Silva Executive Officer VRFish gave a comprehensive presentation on the planned direction of VRFish in 2014.
- Considerable discussion took place on the RFL and a review of the way it is currently funded and the way it operates was sought.
- **Ross Winstanley** presented a six page document on the future revenue and expenditure from the RFL.

### **In this document he made the following recommendations.**

- (1) To extend licence fees to all 721,000 anglers by means of concessional fees.
- (2) To improve the governance of the RFL investment.
- (3) Identify specific projects for the expanded RFL investment.
- (4) To improve communication to recreational fishers outlining how these increases will benefit recreational fishing.

### **Editor**

There was no indication in the summary on the trend of discussion within the Roundtable on the Winstanley recommendations, however it would appear this matter is now in the hands of an **advisory committee, set up by the Minister**. Certainly an increase in the scope and cost of the licence will be a major part of discussions. I doubt if anglers would object to extending the scope or cost of the licence given that some concessions were directed to the elderly anglers. After all, additional funding well directed would improve angling in this state.

I personally see the greatest difficulty will be getting the Government to provide real improvements with increased RFL funds, rather than using them to cover normal budget shortfalls such as salaries for Fisheries Officers. I understand this is a very serious and sensitive discussion. If an increase in the RFL is achieved with

appropriate Government commitment to the maintenance of services and perhaps, as occurred in 1999, a commitment to the buyback of commercial licences from Victorian bays and inlets, then I feel sure there would be support from recreational anglers for the change.

### **Ross Winstanley**

Ross Winstanley worked with Fisheries Victoria for over 30 years, and when he retired he was Manager of Inland Fisheries for Victoria. He was involved in the introduction of the all waters Recreational Fishing Licence in 1999. Ross is an avid angler researcher and writer, and brings a wealth of experience to the administration of this sport. He has presented papers at the September and December meetings of the Statewide Roundtable. He currently believes there is the need for a review of the recreational fishing licence and the level of funding to Fisheries Victoria and has provided evidence and statistics to support this view.

The brochure accompanying this item was the 1999 brochure introducing the All-Waters licence. The following is a statement in this pamphlet **“The All-Waters licence is linked to the State Government buy-back of commercial fishing licences from Victorian bays and inlets.”**(It would appear that this link no longer applies.)

The angler on the front of this pamphlet is none other than a young Ross Winstanley (former fisheries manager) who today is researching the inadequacies that have developed in the Recreational Fishing Licence on behalf of anglers of this state.

### **Introduction of a Fishing Licence**

Today anglers and Government committees are examining the question of increasing the scope and cost of the angling licence. When the licence was first introduced in 1932, a large meeting was held at Traralgon and condemnation of the licence proposal was very evident. The following are some of the comments of the **Gippsland Angling Clubs Association**.

*“This is class discrimination of the worst type. For the Piscatorial Council to sponsor a move that will do away with the great spirit of sportsmanship among the rich and the poor of the country...Is against the spirit of the empire....In a few years the true angler would be as scarce as the bunyip or the dodo....would turn the honest angler into a poacher....And finally the next thing the Chief Secretary would want to do, if the tax becomes law ,is to find an island to which the breakers of the game law could be deported.”*

I am sure anglers today will take a responsible look at this proposal that could ensure angling was financed in the years to come in a way that will benefit all anglers.

Source- This information on the introduction of the first licence came from the book *Salmon at the Antipodes* by John Clements (1988) an excellent book on the introduction of trout to Victoria.

### **Looking Back to Lake Tyers in 2001**

After a two day **stock assessment in May 2001** I wrote and printed a summary of the meeting, which I made available to anglers. Recently reading this document written over a decade ago I found it surprising, for at this meeting the following comments were made by the small group of commercial fishermen who were licenced to fish Lake Tyers. **(Commercial netting ended in 2003)**

- Only 200kgs of dusky flathead were taken in nets in 2001, with the largest catch in recent years occurring in 1993 of 1.6 tonnes.
- Whilst salmon formed part of the recreational catch, they are not targeted by commercial fishermen, who suggested, only 50 bins of salmon had been taken from Lake Tyers in the last 20 years.
- Whilst luderick were not specifically targeted, almost 100 boxes were sent to NSW in 2001. Luderick were regarded as by catch with some very large fish being taken in the nets.
- In 2001 commercial fishermen caught only 3-4 estuary perch in 2001. One commercial fisherman stated at the stock assessment that he could get a couple of boxes, if he targeted them in specific areas in Lake Tyers.
- Black bream are the most important target species with the best haul seine shot yielding over 3 tonne.

- The commercial sector has had good catches of snapper of around 40cms in 2001. In 1999 these fish were 18-20 cm so the growth rate has been excellent. These fish were thought to have entered the lake in 1998.
- Silver trevally to 2kgs, have been taken in substantial numbers, and with no evidence of small fish they are thought to have entered the lake when open.
- Tailor have been a worthwhile species for commercial fishermen with the largest tailor taken being 77cms in length and weighing 5.5kgs or 13lbs.
- Garfish although in reasonable numbers have not been targeted by commercial fishermen and were regarded as not worth netting.

In the 1991 report on Fish Resources in Bays and Inlets, it was claimed that recreational anglers caught yellow eye mullet, dusky flathead, tailor and trevally in addition to the major catches of bream and garfish. This would again indicate a major change in the fish stocks of Lake Tyers. Does any angler now catch Yellow Eye mullet in Lake Tyers?

This summary tends to show a change in the Lake Tyers fishery over the years and it was stated at the 2001 stock assessment that a feature of the Lake Tyers commercial fishery was its extreme variability, and it was suggested this was associated with the opening of the lake, and the species entering the lake. What I find surprising is the seeming lack of other species entering. In 2005 I caught eight snapper 38-40cms in two days in Lake Tyers whilst on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2007 I landed a 50cm 4lb snapper in the Nowa Nowa Arm. Since those days I have not had a single keepable snapper in Lake Tyers despite the lake being open on several occasions for an extended period. Have any other anglers had the same experience? I would be interested in hearing your experiences in Lake Tyers over recent years with species other than bream dusky flathead, tailor and salmon.

## Tarwhine



This photo was supplied in April 2008 for this publication by Peter McDiarmid.

The fish was caught in Lakes Tyers Has anybody caught or heard reports of Tarwhine being caught in Gippsland waters recently?

Tarwhine belong to the snapper, yellow fin bream family. They range from northern New South Wales to the Gippsland Lakes in Victoria. It is an inshore species found in estuaries and on coastal reefs. In NSW it reaches 45cm in total length.



Distinguishing features are yellow rib lines on a silver body and it has a rounded head. Lives mainly on molluscs, crustaceans and worms. Legal length in NSW is 20cm with a bag limit of 20.

NSW commercial catch is incidental and mainly in estuaries with a total catch between 30 – 80 tonnes per annum according to NSW Fisheries



## Finders Keepers - an Anglers Contribution

A number of years ago I was walking back to my car on the banks of Lake Eildon after a session of fishing off the bank. I was cutting across country rather than following the edge of the lake. At the time, the lake was very low and I was probably 200 metres or more from the water line.

I was following a high water line obvious from the amount of stick litter and other rubbish that had been washed up forming a path of debris. As I walked, I was looking down and noticed a bit of colour. On closer examination I realised it was a bibbed lure that had been washed up. I started to pay more attention to the wash line and by the time I had reached the car I had found another three lures.

From that time to today, I have made a habit of looking for lures and have now three Plano boxes full of lures of all shapes and sizes all found on wash lines. (See attached photo)



I really enjoy strolling around the edge of the lake and it is quite productive.

I have recently noticed a larger percentage of purple coloured lures washing up and not being a big user of purple lures in the past decided that if this is what the locals were using I should give it a go. I had found a purple Golden Child deep diving lure that morning so on evening I put it and another lure out the back of the boat and started trolling the steep banks of the Bonnie Doon arm. I had travelled about 1 km when I had a great strike resulting in my first Eildon Cod of about 45 centimetres. The next evening saw me out again in the same area and the same lure caught another two cod one 45 and another 48 cm's, all released of course.

I find it very satisfying to catch fish on lures I have found. Occasionally they might need some new trebles or rings but often they can be put straight into the tackle box.

Another bonus of this fossicking for lures is that you find all sorts of useful things, golf balls, tennis balls, boat fittings, rods and reels, floats, caps and things.

I have attached a picture of some of the things found fossicking on the banks of Eildon. In the photo there is a pair of Bolle Sunglass's, a rod holder, a Teflon trailer strip, a cap and a condom (still in its packet wo

hoo!!). Seek and the lake shall provide.

I keep two pairs of sunnies in the boat all the time. The pair of Bolle's in the picture and another pair of Oakley's both of which I found on the banks of Lake Eildon.

I also make a point of carrying a supply of plastic shopping bags in the boat and I pick up all the plastic and glass containers as I walk along, taking them home to the recycle bin. This serves two purposes, firstly improving the environment and secondly if you are in the area where the rubbish has washed up then you are also in the right area to find the lures.

This past week I spent 4 days at Eildon and in total found about 28 lures. I used one of these, a Stump jumper that is a very common to find, to catch a lovely 40 cm Yellow belly. (Picture attached) Finders and Keepers, its great fun.

Roger Barr, Lancefield.



### Editor

**Background facts-** In the period 2011/2013 the following number of Murray cod were stocked in Lake Eildon 1.1 million, with the millionth fish being released in January 2013. In the same period 553,000 golden perch were also stocked in this lake.

**This stocking was funded entirely by recreational anglers through their licence fees.**



## European Green Crabs



The numbers of European Green crabs in the Gippsland Lakes seem to be on the rise again. In the last month I have had a report from a reader who indicated that one of the commercial fishermen is taking over a tonne of this pest species per month and the crabs had moved as far as the Avon River. It is thought by many that the European Green Crab entered the Gippsland Lakes in 2008, which coincided with increasing the depth of the opening and increased salinity in the Gippsland Lakes. The photo

accompanying this item was taken at Nungurner in recent days and shows a commercial boat equipped with pots to trap these crabs. I believe Around the Jetties was the first angler newsletter to raise the problem of this invasive crab. (Around the Jetties Issue 29 October 2009.) The following is the item that raised awareness of the dangers of this crab.

### A Disturbing Report (October 2009)

I have had drawn to my attention by several sources the growth of vast numbers of crabs in the Gippsland Lakes, and when I suggest vast numbers I am informed the crabs are in hundreds of thousands. These crabs have been identified as the European Shore Crab or Green Shore Crab. This crab is a native to the Atlantic coast of Europe and northern Africa; but in the last fifty years it has rapidly spread further particularly into North America. The first of this species was documented in Australia in 1900 in Port Phillip Bay, but the species has now spread to all states except the Northern Territory. The crabs have been documented in 11 estuaries on the NSW south coast.

The European green crab lives in a variety of habitats and is often observed on mud flats or amongst rocks or seagrass in protected bays and estuaries. In NSW this crab is regarded as a class 1 noxious fish, and the movement of crabs is strictly regulated. No such steps have been taken in Victoria. The crab breeds up to three times per year, and females may carry up to 200,000 fertilised eggs underneath her abdomen and the crabs grow to about 8.6 cm or 2.5 inches. These crabs vary in colour from dark green to almost orange.

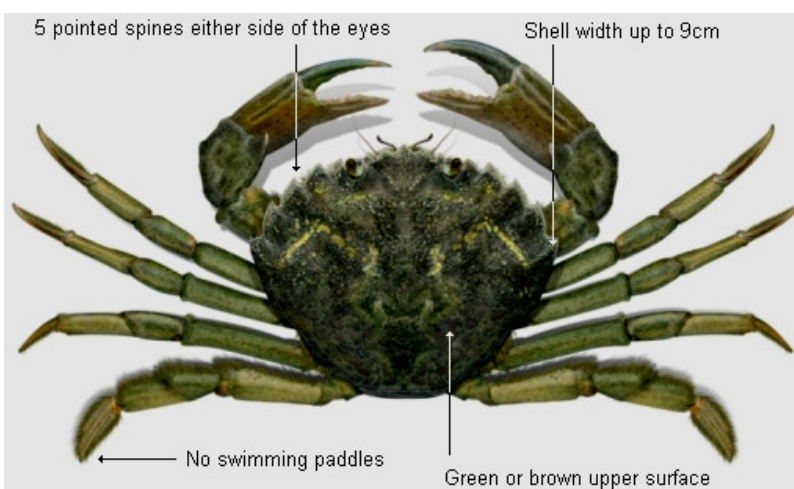


Diagram from NSW Department of Primary Industries Web Site

The Crabs are voracious scavengers and wreak havoc on native bivalve populations. They use their front claws to break open shells of mussel's, barnacles, and bivalves, and they are known to have had an impact on oyster farming. In some cases they have destroyed native fisheries by removing food that would normally be available for scale fish as part of the food chain. The crabs have been noted to have a marked effect, destroying seahorse populations, and it has been suggested by some observers they may have an impact on seagrass



although this claim has not been scientifically verified. Overseas this crab is regarded as one of the world's worst marine invaders and has been dubbed the "cockroach of the sea."

The crab has not been declared noxious in Victoria and is harvested by commercial bait fishermen. The crab has not spread west of Melbourne but with the movement of live crab for bait within the state this protected area may not last long. This is a matter that warrants investigation and at the very least information being provided to recreational anglers and the regulation of bait sales of this noxious crab. . The only method of control that I have been able to find is the use of crab traps and given the vast population of this crab in the Gippsland Lakes this method of control would have no effect. Perhaps the European Shore Crab is now a permanent part of the ecology of the Gippsland Lakes.

### **Editor**

It appears to me that we know little more of this invasive species than we did in 2009, and it continues to grow in numbers. The real question is what is this species doing to the fish, grasses and crustaceans of the Gippsland Lakes, and it may be we do not have the scientific resources to examine the problem of the European Green Crab in our estuaries.

### **An Informal Meeting**

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> of February, research angler John Harrison, diary angler Bob McNeil and I had a two-hour discussion with the Chair of VRFish, Russell Conway and the Executive Officer, Dallas D'Silva, over a cup of coffee at the Lake Tyers Tavern



Dallas D'Silva, John Harrison, Bob McNeil and Russell Conway

The discussion covered a wide range of topics that included-

- (1) The possibility of a negotiated exclusion zone for the Maasbanker, providing a protected area for surf fishermen. This has been raised numerous times in this newsletter by anglers and tourists. This will be examined by VRFish with the hope that such an exclusion zone can be achieved.
- (2) I raised the issue of trout numbers in Gippsland streams. Russell Conway indicated he also had complaints from several trout anglers regarding declining trout numbers in Gippsland trout streams. Russell will approach Fisheries to see if a fish survey similar to that currently being undertaken in the North East could be undertaken in Gippsland.
- (3) The issue of protecting spawning fish at the mouth of rivers and the Government commitment to achieve this result was discussed. Considerable discussion took place on the fact that this commitment must cover both bass and estuary perch that move to the estuaries to spawn. It was noted that bass stocking is funded from anglers' recreational licences and that in 2012/13 over 2 tonnes of estuary perch were taken in commercial nets. Note –estuary perch and bass are classed together in commercial statistics. 82,000 bass were currently stocked in Gippsland waters funded by anglers and these fish should be protected from commercial netting

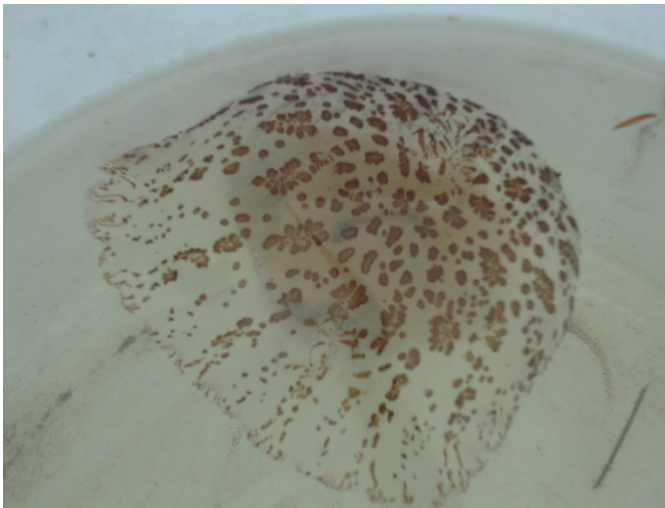
- (4) The issue of commercial netting in the Gippsland Lakes was discussed, and the need for the buyback to again be available to commercial fishermen, as well as the economic benefits of recreational fishing to communities. The point was again made that lakes fish do not appear in local restaurants or fish shops.
- (5) Discussion also took place on the need for VRFish to develop better lines of communication with anglers and use local anglers on committees to discuss local issues. The lack of local angler membership on the Lake Tyers Management Plan Steering Committee (2006), even though an active angling club existed on Lake Tyers, was noted. It was also noted this was a key action that the new Executive Officer was already examining.

This open discussion of issues gave VRFish representatives an indication of the concerns of anglers, and it is hoped this discussion might lead to the matters being raised with Fisheries Victoria and other relevant bodies. It is also hoped that further similar informal meetings would take place in the future.

## Odd Bits and More

### A Strange Visitor to the Gippsland Lakes

The attached photo is of a species of jellyfish that was given to environmentalist Ross Scott by a commercial fisherman friend. In an effort to get this jellyfish identified Ross approached Dr Lisa Ann Gershwin, research scientist with the CSIRO with this photograph. The following was the response from Dr Gershwin-



*“The critter in your photo looks an awful lot like Chrysaora wurlerra, a species I named and classified a few years ago from Hawkesbury, NSW. It has since been found a few times in N.NSW and S Qld. I don’t know its normal environmental preferences; there are no studies on it of that sort. But the genus and family tend to prefer coastal oceanic habitats, i.e. open coast not embayments.”*  
 Dr Gershwin added, *“as a stinger it is in the Sea Nettle family. Not life threatening but quite painful. This family tends to cause a lot of bloom problems around the world so it is probably not good news that it has decided to be in the Gippsland Lakes. They are able to eat fish much larger than themselves. They do not need to take fish into their mouth they just digest it externally. If there are no fish they eat truly massive quantities of plankton.”*

Dr Gershwin has asked that if any anglers get a specimen would they get it to Ross Scott who will forward it to the CSIRO. Now that was two weeks ago and Ross now has one of these jellyfish provided by the same commercial fisherman who provided the first specimen and this was accompanied by information that he could have provided twenty from the area in the Lakes where he was prawning. Ross is now attempting to get formalin to send this specimen to the CSIRO in Hobart for identification. Thanks to Ross for his work in obtaining an identification of this jellyfish now in the Gippsland Lakes.

### King George Whiting and the Gippsland lakes

In a media release from VRFish Executive Officer, Dallas D’Silva, relating to King George whiting, the point is made that a number of factors determine the success of the fishery. These include the spawning off Kangaroo Island in South Australia and the extent of winds and currents that will carry the larvae hundreds of kilometers to seagrass beds in bays and inlets. This year in the Gippsland Lakes it would appear that almost no King George whiting have been caught by recreational anglers, however the forecast for King George in Port Phillip and Western Port is for good catches now, moderating over two years and then rising sharply. The release states, “this means the fishery is highly variable and peaks and troughs in abundance generally only last a few years.” Currently research is under way to understand this species better and to assess spawning grounds of King George whiting off North West Tasmania. **The media release of Dallas D’Silva will be the focus of a feature story in a future issue of Modern Fishing.**



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

**Now this is a Fish-** Some readers may remember the attached item from Issue 39 of Around the Jetties in May 2010. I came across this photograph whilst travelling at American River on Kangaroo Island. The photo was displayed close to the launching ramp at American River. The following was the printing that accompanied the photo.



*“This whiting caught off Rocky Point July 1957 by Horrie Ratcliffe weighed four pounds ten and one half ounces. This was the largest caught in over 50 years of fishing, and the largest caught on Kangaroo Island in the last 20 years.”*

Now that’s what I call a good whiting and can only imagine feeling him on a light whiting or bream rod. By the way, the size limit in South Australia for whiting is 31cms and the bag limit is 12 fish. In Victoria, the minimum size is 27cms with a bag limit of 20 fish.

## **An Unusual Morning**

On Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> February, Graeme Merryfull and his fishing mate were sitting quietly opposite the green hut when two emus came out of the bush about 40 metres from where their boat was nosed up on the bank. Next thing they were surprised to see the emus quietly enter the water and proceed to swim to the other side of the estuary, a swim of at least 300 metres, which they accomplished with ease. Events such as this make a morning on Lake Tyers a special event to store in ones memory. Graeme and his mate took home four nice flathead over 40cms, but also released three under 40cms.

Bob McNeil and John Harrison have both reported catching and releasing small dusky flathead and these are significant catches, which would seem to indicate a later spawning of the dusky. Remember the Gray and Barnes NSW research into dusky flathead (2008) stated, *“Dusky flathead grow relatively quickly with fish estimated to reach approximately 30cms in one year and 42 and 59cms after 5 years for males and females”*

## **Some Thoughts on Fishing at Lake Tyers in the Years Ahead**

Whilst having a yarn the other day with research angler John Harrison, secretary of the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club, we had both noted the fishing in Lake Tyers seemed to have declined on previous seasons and this discussion was supported by the recorded diary results regularly published in this newsletter of Diary Angler Bob McNeil

John made the following observation- *“Fishing has been very slow from reports and it does not seem that things are improving. I suspect we are in for a few years of comparatively quiet fishing compared with the last five years. The 1998/99 year class of bream, which were present in such huge numbers, are now out of the system apart from the odd 42cm bream rarely caught. The 37cm bream now being caught I suspect are the 2003 year class, and this is a comparatively weak year class. Added to this there does not seem to be other strong year classes coming through in the years ahead, from what I can see. I will find it interesting when the results of this year’s analysis of otoliths are made available.”*

As part of his role as a research angler, John removes the otoliths from the black bream he catches and forwards them to the Queenscliff scientific branch of Fisheries Victoria for analysis. This analysis provides information on the age of the bream and given sufficient information also the strength of the year class, which in turn influences the fishing in 5-6 years. It would seem that Lake Tyers should be the subject of a further scientific investigation into fish stocks and its future, given the increased fishing pressure on this small estuary. (25 sq. kms) This fishing pressure is greatly increased by the lack of any reasonable recreational fishing in the large Gippsland Lakes. (400 sq. Kms)

This raises the question on the impact of fishing competitions other than catch and release in in the Lake Tyers estuary. The questions being raised at this time would have been relevant for the Lake Tyers Fisheries Reserve Reference Group, which under the 2009 Management Plan was responsible for ongoing implementation of the Management Plan. However, this body met only once in 2009 and did not meet again supposedly due to Fisheries Victoria being unable to provide support to this body of local community representatives. There was also to be an annual progress report on the implementation of the Management Plan, however, I doubt an annual report was ever prepared. Certainly no one on the reference Group ever saw an annual report. This raises the whole question of the value of Management Plans that do not deal with issues such as those facing Lake Tyers today.



Otoliths- Are hard calcium structures directly behind the brain of the fish, and are used in age determination. From these otoliths the maximum age of fish can be determined/ age at maturity/ and trends of future generations. The work undertaken by scientists on otoliths can be used to estimate mortality and stock structure of a species.

## Some Observations

### Another Factory Ship Close to Australian Waters

Readers may have missed an item in the Age February 17<sup>th</sup> which stated the worlds largest fishing vessel, a 49,000 tonne factory ship the Lafayette and six attendant trawlers has entered the south Pacific close to Australian waters. Readers will remember the furore when the Dutch factory trawler Margiris entered Australian waters to fish for oceanic species off the eastern coast, and this was stopped by the Government of the day. The Lafayette is five times the size of the Margiris. It needs to be said there is no intent for this factory ship to enter Australian waters however it is an indication of the size of some of the ships fishing the worlds oceans. This ship sails under a Russian flag and is Chinese owned.

### VRFish Summer Magazine Released

The magazine of Victorias Peak Recreational body "Fishing Lines " has just been released and can be found on the VRFish website [www.vrfish.com.au](http://www.vrfish.com.au) and I would imagine that a phone call to 03 9686 7077 would allow any anglers without computer facilities to get a copy of this glossy publication. The six main articles are dealing with game fishing in Victoria and of course it has a special emphasis on the Blue Fin Tuna fishery based on Portland.

The following is a statement from Anton Vogiatzis President of the Victorian Game Fishing Club.-

"In recent times another potential rising star in the Victorian game fishing scene is Lakes Entrance with the capture of and Striped and Blue Marlin and sightings of Yellow fin Tuna. The fish were up to 85 kms offshore from Lakes Entrance. It's a long haul, however the distance travelled is no further than many game boats already travel off Cairns or Portland."

The article makes the point that the continental shelf is only 28 kms from Point Hicks in the east and concludes with the statement that "there have been talks of a proposed safe boat ramp at Bastion Point near Mallacoota, but the reality seems that it is unlikely that this will ever happen." The writer seems unaware of the \$6 million dollar approval of this ramp by the East Gippsland Shire. I have seen no publicity of the development of Mallacoota as a game fishing centre with the improved launching ramp facilities, however the article concludes saying if the ramp did eventuate "we could potentially see a new game fishing Mecca with offshore species like Yellowfin Tuna, Blue, Black and Striped Marlin, Broadbill Swordfish and Cobia in less than six hours drive from Melbourne

These developments are a great boost to Game Fishing and communities such as Portland however in Gippsland we have the largest estuary in Victoria which provides little for recreational anglers, and there seems to be no long term plan to restore the recreational fishery of this estuary. It was once regarded as the finest bream fishery in this state and anglers travelled from all over Victoria to fish the Gippsland Lakes, however today ten commercial fishermen net these waters with no catch limits as far as all estuarine species are concerned and anglers have little return for hours spent fishing.

## Artificial Reefs

On February 5<sup>th</sup> in the Lakes Post was a photo of local member Tim Bull and Gippsland Ports Chief Executive Officer Nick Murray inspecting the concrete reef balls that will form the artificial reefs in the Gippsland lakes, Lake Tyers and Mallacoota. Two reefs are to be located in the Gippsland Lakes, one just off Nungurner, and the other just out from the boardwalk at Metung. Three reefs are to be located in Lake Tyers and two reefs at Mallacoota. On the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 a meeting of over 40 anglers met with Fisheries Victoria officers to examine locations for reefs. We understand a meeting had been held with commercial fishermen prior to the meeting with recreational anglers.

In the Gippsland Lakes the two reefs to be installed will be 50 sq metres each or cover 7 metres by 7 metres, which is an extremely small reef area in an estuary of over 400 sq kms. The funding of \$400,000 for these estuarine reefs comes from the State Government. The two structures to be placed in the Gippsland lakes should be compared with the large reef placed in the Merimbula Lake in 2009 which was 1600 sq metres and this was the fifth reef placed in NSW estuaries, prior to 2009. I wonder whether any assessment or evaluation of reef structures in the Gippsland Lakes can be obtained from such a small reef development.

## Letters Letters Letters

### That Commitment

In Issue 42 January 2011 I printed the Coalition Recreational Fishing Policy which featured the following-  
**“The Coalition would protect spawning fish by introducing controls on the practice of commercial netting near the mouths of rivers, and expand the artificial reef program to increase fish habitat.”**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of February I received the following information in an email from Local Member Tim Bull.

*“Lynton, just thought I would keep you up to speed on the river mouths situation, I will be seeking some more information over the coming weeks and happy to discuss further when I have more detail.*

*Tim Bull - Member for Gippsland East*

*Info on River mouths as requested.*

*Tanya Pittard -Agriculture Advisor -Office of the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security*

*Fisheries are currently reviewing the science and management options that will form an important part of a more detailed brief for your review.*

*Update for Ministers Office - An update on where the review process currently sits.*

*1. DEPI fisheries scientists have analysed flow in the rivers and commercial catch to determine what impact commercial fishers have on spawning black bream moving into and out of rivers during the spawning season in the Gippsland Lakes.*

*2. When will public consultation be conducted? DEPI will communicate the findings of this research and proposed management responses with key stakeholders as soon as possible following agreement with the Minister. This will include meetings with recreational and commercial stakeholders in Lakes Entrance.*

*3. What is the estimated conclusion date for changes to be made? DEPI will begin implementing any management changes immediately after consultation and a clear direction on the appropriate response is reached. The amount of time required to implement management arrangements will depend on their complexity.*

**Editor.** It must be remembered as well as black bream entering the rivers to spawn, bass and estuary perch leave the rivers to enter the estuaries to spawn, and then return. These fish must also be protected from commercial nets both leaving and returning to the rivers. **Bass stocked in Gippsland Rivers have been funded from Recreational Licence Fees and should be protected from commercial nets.** Already large numbers of bass and estuary perch are being taken in commercial nets and the catch in 2012/13 was two tonnes. Almost certainly those fish were moving to estuaries to spawn. As well as the normal movements of these species in and out of rivers, black bream in the rivers must be afforded protection at times of flood as they attempt to escape the fresh flow. The catch of this species in commercial nets is greatest at these times. Recreational anglers look forward to protection being afforded to spawning fish at the mouth of river but it must include protection of bass and estuary perch.



Thank you to Tim Bull for making this information available to anglers through Around the Jetties. Many anglers regard this as a most important issue affecting conservation of fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes.

## Sea Spurge Extends its Range



The following letter from Shane R 7<sup>th</sup> February raises a number of issues relevant to anglers

*“My company has just started fox baiting around the Boole Poole Peninsular and I have noticed some sea spurge at the northern end of Silver Shot Landing beach. This is rather alarming as this is the furthest I have seen its incursion in the Lakes system despite the fact that Parks Vic and Friends of the Gippsland Lakes have done some work on it on Rigby Island. I was recently up at Bemm River and saw heaps of sea spurge on either side of the entrance. It seems strange to me that despite the fact that it is going to dominate our shorelines displacing many threatened species little seems to be being done by those who are in charge of looking after our flora and fauna.*

*On another issue, I cannot believe the Ministerial Advisory Committee can give away \$3 million for projects when they could buy out all the lakes commercial fishermen for immediate environmental benefits, and economic benefits for the whole area. This would not only be of benefit for amateur fisher folk, but every business and home owner would benefit as property prices would*

*increase in value if this was the fishing Mecca it should be.”*

### Editor

Shane always provides thought provoking letters and on this occasion he has provided a graphic photograph of sea spurge taking over our beaches. It was Shane who originally brought the expansion of sea spurge to our notice and as a result of articles in Around the Jetties limited action was taken, however it is obvious that this is a growing problem that needs substantial resources to limit the spread.

On the matter of the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committees use of the \$10 million over four years, commercial fishermen could have been bought out with resultant benefits, and still money would have been available for other projects, but that was never a consideration.

**Thanks to those anglers who contribute thoughts and information to this newsletter. This makes the information in Around the Jetties more relevant to readers.**

### Around the Jetties on Line

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

The newsletter will still be emailed to readers and of course those who do not have access to email facilities will still receive hard copies. Now those with email facilities will be able to direct friends and other anglers to Around the Jetties on this website and they will be able to access back copies. Currently the most recent five back copies are on the website and future newsletters will add to this source of information.

This is a great site with fishing news; local accommodation available at Lake Tyers and local weather plus reports on the lake and this is always of interest to anglers.

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

**Good Health and Good fishing Lynton Barr**