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Around the Jetties

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An Anglers Newsletter

“When we sit in a boat on any Australian bay, feeling the rhythm of the tides beneath us and smelling the salt spray in our nostrils, we are aware that the water between us and the land is a barrier cutting off the trash of life. Somehow when we nose our boat back to the jetty, we realize that we have found something money can’t buy- peace of mind.”

Lance Wedlick “Fishing in Australia” (Published 1962)

Editorial



Two readers who wrote raising a number of issues, to the Hon Peter Walsh, the Minister responsible for recreational fishing, provided a copy of the Ministers response to Around the Jetties. With regard to the proposed revision of the recreational fishing licence the Minister wrote in his response on the 27th May stating *“While there have been discussions, including input from a stakeholder reference group, regarding a proposal to revise the structure and pricing for the Recreational Fishing Licence (RFL), at this stage I have decided to defer the proposal. I note your comments regarding exemptions to seniors and pensioners and the use of additional funds being proposed for the purpose of buy back schemes.”*

We are aware that the proposal for change is to be put in June 2015 in a Regulatory Impact Statement, for anglers to consider. As anglers, we are also aware that less than 50% of the 740,000 anglers in this state are required to purchase a licence and most of those who do not have a licence are the elderly and handicapped in our community. I think we also know that the licence will be extended to all anglers in one form or another. This will probably take the funding received from the Recreational Fishing Licence from \$6 million currently to well over \$12 million and should provide a major input into recreational fishing, however that input is dependant on how these funds are allocated.

It seems reasonable to expect a statement from the Minister prior to the November election to clarify just what advantages will accrue to recreational anglers with the increase in the cost of a licence and the extension of the licence to cover those who currently are not required to purchase a RFL.

In other words, an increase in the RFL could be seen as an increased tax on recreational anglers. How this funding is to be spent should be indicated prior to the November election, so that the 740,000 recreational anglers may make an informed decision on the merits of any proposal, and how any proposal involving increased funding from anglers will enhance recreational fishing in this state. In 1999 when introducing the All Waters Recreational Fishing Licence, the following specific statement gave an indication to anglers just how the funds would be used namely-

“The all-waters licence is linked to the State Government buy-back of commercial fishing licences from Victorian bays and inlets.” Recreational anglers in this state would welcome a similar statement.

Planning for the Future

I recently read a VRFish monthly report of the North Central Catchment Management Authorities presentation of the Gunbower / Lower Loddon Native Fish Recovery Plan presented to a public meeting.

I researched this brief outline and found this plan was a long-term project aiming to achieve improvement of fish habitat and fish movement. The plan is to increase native fish populations, to lead a recovery of threatened species and improve natural values. Anna Chatfield of the North Central Catchment Authority suggested they had the potential to develop a world class Murray cod fishery. She indicated the challenges include the low flows of the local rivers, weirs preventing fish migration, livestock erosion and pollution of the local streams. Ms Chatfield the Project manager said, "The good news is that all these issues can be fixed with existing technologies." She further added "Together we can bring fish back to the region and create a world class recreational fishery to drive increased tourism to the Gunbower/Lower Loddon system."

Dallas D'Silva, VRFish General Manager stated of this presentation that, "this is one of the most exciting habitat improvement proposals we have seen and VRFish will be working closely with the North Central CMA to make it a reality." This is a project with a vision for the future.

I look at the enthusiasm and the planning for the future in the North Central and see excitement in the realisation of the importance of recreational fishing and its influence on the economics and tourism of the area. (VRFish Report May 2014)

I cannot help comparing the North Central project with the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee, which seems to have no long-term plan for the development of recreational fishing and restoration of depleted fish stocks in this states largest estuary, nor any vision for the future.

In November 2013, the **Gippsland Environment Group** wrote of the strategy of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, "the entirely flawed process can only come down to the fact the committee is stacked with members of the business community such as land developers, tourism operators and the ports manager who have commercial interests, and steers away from the complex issues of the lakes."

The Ministerial Advisory Committee is a group of local citizens selected by the Government and funded in excess of \$10 million over four years to introduce projects, that in the words of the Deputy Premier, the Hon Peter Ryan, "would restore and protect the Gippsland Lakes." A major difficulty is getting any progress reports of projects that are taking place to achieve this aim.

It is now over two years since the Ministerial Advisory Committee was formed and I have not seen one mid term report nor seen any interim reports on the website, remembering the initial funding was \$10 million and at least another \$1.5 million has been added to the original sum. Martin Richardson, Executive Officer of the Ministerial committee writes in a letter (11th June 2014) "Any advice provided by the Ministerial Advisory Committee is confidential under our terms of reference," so the decisions made by this small community committee will not face the scrutiny of the wider community nor interest groups such as anglers or environmental bodies. It would also seem the evidence on which this advice to the Minister for the Environment and Climate Ryan Smith is made will not be available to the community. Given the make up of the committee, I and others are concerned at the advice that may be provided to the Minister.

As a recreational angler I want to see plans for the restoration and protection of black bream and dusky flathead as key species, and I see no hard evidence of any long term plan to achieve this outcome.

Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee In Action

On January 6th I received a Media Release from the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee indicating that new methods were being trialled in assessing fish numbers in the Gippsland Lakes, and the release also indicated that the assessment of the economic value of the Gippsland Lakes fishery is also being undertaken to put a figure on the return to the Victorian economy provided by fishing in the lakes.

Unfortunately the media release did not seem to be published, and certainly angling clubs were not made aware of the release. This has been the only notification of these fish associated programs being undertaken by the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee. Apart from information sourced by this publication, and a Catchment Management Open Day, most Gippsland anglers and clubs are unaware of this research and will have no input into the recommendations that are made to Minister Smith.

I am pleased that the Executive Officer has clarified that "the study of the value of fishing distinguishes between commercial and recreational fishing." I find it somewhat interesting there is no specific recreational angler having input on the committee. However, a leading commercial fisherman is a member of the committee that will make these final recommendations.

Fisheries studies are being undertaken by the DEPI who, according to the Executive Officer, “have the appropriate expertise and functions to undertake the work and make recommendations on future fisheries management.” I would expect the Ministerial Advisory Committee would take the results of the research and then make recommendations to the Minister. Recreational anglers may never see the results of the studies and certainly will have no access to the recommendations on “future fisheries management.” I believe recreational anglers, together with environmental groups, have every right to be concerned.

The Licence History

[A little history on the introduction of a fishing licence in Victoria](#)

Perhaps what is not known is that the 1933 introduction of an angling licence brought great debate to the issue. It was described by the opposition of the day that “the introduction would tax schoolboys,” or “it is close to introducing transportation for poaching” and it could be regarded as “Class Legislation.” Despite the opposition the trout licence was introduced and 10,000 licences were sold in the first year.

The following is a poem published in the papers of 1932

“Must you tax us gentle sir” Cried the sad eyed men who angle “Then perforce we will concur, Far be from us to wrangle.”	“We will bear it, if not grin. In a fashion brave and manly; Only do not rub it in, When you fix the fee Sir Stanley.”
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(Sir Stanley Argyle was the premier of Victoria in 1932 and was himself an angler.)

My reading suggests the first angling licence on mainland Australia was set by the Ballarat Water Supply Committee on Kirks Reservoir with an open season from December 1st to the 31st of August.

The cost to be one pound and the species sought in this water was English Perch. (Redfin) On opening day in 1870, “some 20 odd gentlemen availed themselves of the privilege, and with very good results catching some several hundred fish.” Probably only 20 could afford this very steep cost. Kirks Reservoir was stocked with redfin that multiplied at an extraordinary rate. One angler suggested the growth in the numbers of redfin was similar to the growth of rabbits that were imported into the colony in 1859.

Source- [“Salmon and the Antipodes by John Clements. 1988”](#) (A marvellous book on the history of trout and salmon fishing in Victoria. I discovered this self-published book in the Swifts Creek second-hand bookshop some years ago. It was formerly in the Nagle school library.

The above report is interesting given the lack of information available to anglers regarding proposed changes to the current licence cost and its scope. We are aware this was being discussed at the State-wide Recreational Anglers Roundtable and that the Minister had set up a committee to advise on this matter. It was suggested that a Regulatory Impact Statement was imminent and this would provide the opportunity for anglers to comment on any proposed changes. **However, the release of such a statement will not take place until June 2015** as indicated in the last issue of Around the Jetties.

[The 1999 introduction of the “All Waters Licence” was strongly linked to the State Government buy-back of commercial fishing licences in bays and inlets](#) this may still be an option in 2015 to make the introduction of an extended fishing licence of increased cost acceptable to anglers of this state. A great deal will depend on the strength of the negotiators representing the recreational anglers of this state.

Bob McNeill’s Lake Tyers Report 28/2/2014-16/5/2014



Bob writes- “What a mix of locations I have recorded in this Angler Diary from the Eastern end of the bottom lake through to the trident then back to both ends of the bottom lake, and with all these shifts fish numbers varied from 0 to 14. Surprisingly with the dirty water from the rain came a resurgence of hungry flathead, but as the dirty water settled I found the live bait did not survive very long so I decided it was time to start chasing bream for the winter.

As I was a little later than usual making the change I missed the annual bream movement from the bottom lake into the arms, and this resulted in a couple of mornings with no fish being caught

I am very pleased to have recorded quite a number of undersized dusky flathead particularly during May. In an unusual catch of 14 flathead on the 20th May, six were under 30cms and one returned of 60cms. I also had a report from a reliable angler that when he was prawning he saw numerous small flathead in sandy areas of the

lake. I have also caught a number of small bream and on the 21st March, I caught seven bream with only one being a size fish (31cms) however, on the same morning I caught seven dusky flathead of which six were between 43 and 47cms. Hopefully, the numbers of small flathead are a good sign for future fish stocks. There does not seem to be any reports of large numbers of ocean fish, which normally enter the lake after such a good opening, which is disappointing.

Just to finish on a friend and his wife in mid April fishing in the area of the Glasshouse caught five large bream from 35 to over 40cms and six flathead from mid 40's to over 70cms. They were using whole pilchards on a number 4 hook, slack line, no sinker with the bail arm of the reel left open."

Editor

Thanks to Bob for this report and making his diary available prior to sending it to the Marine and Freshwater Fisheries Research Institute at Queenscliff. It is unusual to hear of the very poor fishing in the latter half of May, when Bob had several mornings with no fish. A number of other anglers had a similar experience, and this paucity of fish was very evident in the Hobie Competition held on Lake Tyers on the 23rd and 24th May. (See later Report). Undoubtedly the most pleasing aspect of Bob's diary report is the evidence of numbers of small flathead seen, and the small flathead included in his catch. According to that important study by Gray and Barnes on dusky flathead in NSW (2008), the dusky flathead reach 30cms total length in one year, and 42 and 59cms in total length for males and females after 5 years. In other words, the small dusky flathead identified in Bob's report are likely to have been the result of a spawning within the last twelve months. Bob in his diary made the observation of large amounts of weed both on the surface and on the bottom. The only other species included in Bob's catch over these months was a gurnard and a tailor, and the lack of other species following the opening of the lake as Bob suggests is hard to understand, as is the lack of tailor in the lake. The lake rose by almost a metre following the April rain due particularly to the heavy falls in the upper Nowa Nowa area.

Hobie Competition on Lake Tyers

On the weekend of the 24th and 25th May, a Hobie pedal kayak competition was held on Lake Tyers with anglers fishing from 7.00am in the morning to 2.00pm in the afternoon. This was the seventh competition of the series of seventeen similar competitions held throughout the year in various locations that have included Marlo, Lake Tyers, and Bemm River. This was the second year the competition was held on Lake Tyers, and the car park was filled with competitors and viewers of this event. A competitor can weigh in only three fish each day. Whilst local papers provided an excellent pictorial coverage of the event, no analysis took place of the actual results of the two days competition.

On the Saturday 58 anglers fished and 34 caught 55 black bream with 22 anglers in the allocated time of competition fishing not landing a fish. On the Sunday 63 anglers fished with only 38 fish being weighed in. A summary of each days fishing can be seen at the bottom of this item. The poor result is somewhat surprising, and not what anglers have come to expect with Lake Tyers, however following a rise in the lake of almost a metre in April the fishing seems to have markedly declined.



This photo shows the tank at the rear of the Hobie for storage of live fish prior to weigh in and the tall black rod at the rear is an electric anchor which can be raised and lowered to hold the craft in water between two and three metres deep. An interesting invention, particularly for waters like Lake Tyers where edges are muddy.

Statistics.

Saturday

Total Number of anglers=58
Number of anglers who caught fish=34
Number of anglers catching 3 fish=9
Number of anglers catching 2 fish=3
Number of anglers catching 1 fish=22
Total fish caught 55

Sunday

Total Number of anglers =63
Number of anglers who caught fish =21
Number of anglers catching 3 fish =7
Number of anglers catching 2 fish =3
Number of anglers catching 1 fish= 11
Total fish caught =38

Winner over the two days was Chris Burbridge who had a bag of three fish on both days for a total bag weight of 5.96kgs. On the Saturday Chris fished the main lake in only 2-3 feet of water and had his three fish before 8.00am using a Norrie's Laydown Minnow. Chris ventured up the Nowa Nowa Arm and caught a number of other bream. This was the second win for Chris as he was also successful at the year's first competition held on the Glenelg River. The heaviest bream was caught in Black Snake Bight. It weighed 1.48kgs and had a fork length of 40cms. Research angler John Harrison commented that this fish was almost certainly from the 1998/99 year class. I was intrigued at the amount of equipment installed in these kayaks and the technical nature of this equipment, which on many kayaks included a pole that at the flick of a switch lowered into the water to anchor the kayak. All kayaks were equipped with fish tanks to keep catches alive. This is a most interesting form of boating and fishing that has expanded dramatically in recent years.

Whilst catchrates would appear to be very poor in this competition, it is difficult to get a true catchrate given that many anglers catch a number of fish in an effort to upgrade their catch. Of most significance is the percentage of anglers who weighed in fish after seven hours fishing. On the Saturday 58% of anglers had caught fish whilst on the Sunday only 33% of anglers weighed in a black bream.

Talking to anglers, I was surprised to hear from one angler that he caught and released 4 nice flathead on the Sunday. There is no doubt the arms of Lake Tyers provide wonderful waters for kayak fishermen.

[Special thanks to research angler John Harrison who provided a statistical spreadsheet covering every anglers catches over the competition. This detailed document provided the basis for this item.](#)

Gippsland Trout Stocks Questioned

Reader John Scott, an avid fly fisherman, provided the following information to Fisheries Victoria and also VRFish on his experiences fishing the East Gippsland trout streams over the last twelve months.

"I have recently retired to Bairnsdale after an absence of some 18 years living in WA. During those years I spent at least a week each year fly fishing in New Zealand. So you will understand that I have been spoilt for quality fishing.

I grew up in North Eastern Victoria (Mansfield) and fished most of the State with a rod reel and for the last 30 years with a fly rod, so I have a background of past knowledge and experience of these streams. One of the reasons for our return to Bairnsdale was its proximity to the trout streams of the Omeo area.

My first season back has been very disappointing. The quality of the fishing, numbers and size is of great concern to all the fishermen that I speak with. That includes fishermen from the following disciplines, bait, spinner and fly.

During the current season, I have made 9 trips to the Mitta Mitta, 4 to the Cobungra, 5 to the Livingstone, 2 to the Gibbo and 2 to the Timbarra.

The average catch has been 2 fish per trip, with two fish exceeding 30 cm. There have been five days without so much as seeing a trout, not something that I have been used to.

I spent three days fishing in NZ in March (Twizel area) for a catch and release of 37 trout the majority in excess of 1.5kgs, also hooking and dropping a similar number. I am not trying to compare apples and oranges but show that my angling expertise is such that if the fish are present I catch my share.



A fishing companion who has been on most trips with me has only had 6 fish for the season, all small fish.

John's photo shows a specimen of these small trout.

This fish was about 25cm which was standard fare for the fishery. Beautiful coloured fish and good fight gram for gram. I would like to say Kg for Kg??

I suspect that the poor fishing is due to a number of reasons, which I will put forward for your consideration:

- Deterioration of streams and habitat due to uncontrolled grazing in areas outside State Forrest and National Parks (supported by DEPI stream side data)
- Stream side degradation is at catastrophic levels in areas of the Mitta Mitta, Livingstone, Timbarra and the Bundarah
- Trout streams that relied on an active stocking program has been discontinued since the early 90's
- There is no requirement for landowners to install or maintain riparian strips along the banks of streams where farm stock has unfettered access
- Banks have been badly eroded on the lower Mitta Mitta with deep silt covering what once were freestone sections of the waterway, with banks so badly eroded that they are collapsing into the stream.

With the issue of climate change knocking at the door, we have a small window and opportunity to secure our precious waterways. If it is not done to support the fishery then it must be done to ensure that the precious resource of clean water and environment are secured for future generations.

The maintenance and upkeep of streamside riparian vegetation needs to become a priority of government policy, together with a return to stocking and managing our fragile streams. The areas in the trout enquiry may not be suitable for stocking cod, perch, bass and other native sporting fish, so let us start to resolve this issue with good planning that will in turn lead to supporting sporting and recreational tourism in our State."

Editor

Have you or your club written to Fisheries Victoria providing your experience fishing the East Gippsland trout streams. Remember a survey was conducted in the North East of the state and lower reaches of trout streams were found to have few fish, as a result further studies are being undertaken to provide answers and initiate action. This could happen in East Gippsland with the support of anglers. Contact Anthony Foster by mail at DEPI or by email to Anthony.Foster@depi.vic.gov.au and please send a copy of your letter to VRFish and Dallas d'Silva at email info@vrfish.co.au or drop a note to VRFish Marine House, 24 York St, Sth Melbourne Vic 3205.

Thanks to John Scott for his letter that illustrates the problem in a number of East Gippsland streams.

Where to from here

This is Fisheries Victoria's immediate response to the action of North East anglers.

"High levels of angler concern about the status of river trout fishing in North East Rivers and the social and economic contribution that trout fishing makes to the regional economy warrants further attention. Fisheries Victoria is proposing to initiate a research program to better understand how the trout fishery is responding to summer conditions and what if any interventions are appropriate. By June 30th 2014 a detailed research and monitoring proposal will be drafted."

Perhaps the next step is up to local anglers. I can provide a copy of the results of the NE Trot Study to any interested angler. Thanks to John Scott

The Bemm River Report by Don Cunningham



Fishing at the Bemm

Bream were hard to find during the first week of June. We have seen this before, and what do you do? Never got a bite one bloke said to me, another angler reported two bream 37 and 43cms. Bites were hard to come by then the word got out, the lake had closed.

The weather over the June long weekend was disappointing with wind and rain dictating where anglers could fish. Saturday morning was fine and some nice bream were landed. Reports improved, the channel produced and the river mouth became the focus for some. Given the lake was rising fast, it was great to hear of productive sessions in the shallows. Luderick in the river turned out to be the bonus visitors were hoping for, and some very encouraging catches were reported. This also happened last year, so maybe this will give anglers an option for when the weather is too rough for the lake. Surf fishermen have endured tough conditions so far, but good catches of salmon are to be had if conditions improve.

Conditions at the Bemm

It is hard to believe that the lake has closed and during this unexpected time bream are very hard to find. I have come to understand that there have been changes in this wonderful estuary and one example at this time, is the strong river flow does not mean the lake will stay open.

The main visual factor is the massive amount of sand that has built up in recent years. Despite some big floods, this sand build up is proving hard to shift. It is very noticeable that the sand is creeping further up into the channel, which seems to create a wide shallow flow.

This season has been very mild, with one outstanding feature being the strong Southerly winds that have prevailed and good falls of rain. Since then the tidal flows have been minimal because of the huge amount of sand that has come in, therefore water levels have held up about 30cms above low tide levels.

When this happens, combined with the last quarter and before the new moon, it is a time when the sand movement is relentless. Despite strong river flows, the lake has closed.

Editor

Thanks to Don for this picture of the changes taking place at the Bemm River and the massive increase of sand. A short time ago I went to Pettmans Beach for a spot of surf fishing with two friends, and was amazed to see the massive change in the beach. What was once a reasonably gentle beach now had a sand cliff three to four metres above the high water mark, which made fishing almost impossible. It now occurs to me that perhaps the massive amounts of sand being dredged by the hopper dredge Pelican and taken a kilometre or so offshore and dumped, might now be changing our beaches. Perhaps it's a question worth considering.

Great News On Bemm River Access

On Monday the 16th June, I received the following email from Don Ellis, Chairman of the Metropolitan Anglers Association and a member of the Statewide Recreational Fishing Roundtable.

“Lynton –Thank you for your wise words re Bemm River. A submission was given to Fisheries Victoria at the June Roundtable Forum. One of the senior Managers from Fisheries has been requested to approach the relevant land owner/s with a view to resolving the issue. He has Government backing towards providing angler access to the banks of the river. I will keep you posted on how the matter progresses. Initial interest by Fisheries indicated they are keen to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of recreational anglers. Without the input from you and Don Cunningham it would have been more difficult to convince Fisheries of the concern of anglers have on this issue. Once again the MAAA and its delegates express their thanks for the Gippsland input.

Regards

Don Ellis”

Editor- This is a major achievement and anglers can hopefully look forward to river access being achieved at Bemm River. The Sydenham inlet can at times be rough and dangerous and with access to the river, anglers will have an alternative option. Of special importance is that this access will cater in particular for the elderly and handicapped anglers who would like to enjoy fishing at Bemm River. Thanks to Don Ellis for taking this matter to the Statewide Roundtable on behalf of anglers from right across Victoria who love to fish the iconic Bemm River.

Late News

Sydenham inlet broke out to the sea late on the 16th June after a build up of water following flood conditions on the river.

Odd Bits and More

An Unusual Catch and Rare Sightings in the Gippsland Lakes

Some days ago I was talking to Alec Milledge of Metung, whose home fronts Bancroft Bay and he has his own jetty. Over the years, Alec has fished from this jetty and has had some remarkable catches including a 20lb mulloway caught quite a few years ago on a black bream rod and gear. During this last Xmas, he had several days of good catches of whiting off his jetty and in recent years he has fished with soft plastics and had good results on dusky flathead. His most recent catch was a barracouta around one metre in length caught on a soft plastic. This catch just adds to a history of fish caught off this jetty over the years, but it also indicates the changing nature of the Gippsland Lakes.

Talking of unusual catches, I had a call from Tim Waller who said that a couple of months ago whilst fishing with his wife on the Tambo River below Johnsonville, his wife caught and landed a blue swimmer crab. Unfortunately Tim did not get a



photograph of this rare catch. Blue swimmer crabs are found in coastal estuaries in NSW and Queensland and in both states they are a commercial species with over 100 tonnes per annum harvested in NSW. Blue Swimmer crabs are distributed from the Northern territory to the NSW-Victorian border.

Another amazing report is the sighting of a green sea turtle around 8.00am on the 4th of June by Lynda Young and friend in the area of the Metung Marina. This turtle had an estimated carapace of around 700mms and the turtle spent time diving and resurfacing in the area. Lynda has previously seen green sea turtles in both WA and Queensland. The green sea turtle lives on sea grass and algae, and while its area of distribution is not as far south as Victoria, they travel enormous distances in the Pacific area and one tagged turtle travelled over 4,000 klms from its nesting area. If you have an interesting sighting or rare catch please let us know as it is one way of seeing changes that are taking place in the Gippsland Lakes



Minister Comments on Fish Stocking in Gippsland Rivers

The Minister, the Hon Peter Walsh, on the 27th May wrote to two local anglers saying, “Regarding the release of bass and perch fingerlings, estuary perch have not been stocked into Gippsland Rivers, lakes or estuaries. Over the last four years limited numbers of Australian bass fingerlings were stocked into the freshwater reaches of Gippsland Rivers (Avon, Mitchell and Tambo Rivers) As these fish have not yet reached maturity, they are in the freshwater reaches well away from commercial fishing activity.”

What the Minister writes is perfectly true. But in the rivers he listed there is a stock of estuary perch and these fish have provided around two tonnes of fish per annum taken in commercial nets at the mouths of rivers as they move to the saline environment of the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. What he did not say was that the Gippsland Lakes tributaries have a long history of bass being in these rivers and they also move to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn.

Bass



Estuary Perch



Added to this is the fact that bass and estuary perch are difficult to distinguish between the species and they readily hybridise which adds a further problem. I recall being told that the attempt to obtain bass as brood stock in the Snowy River was an extremely difficult task due to the fact most of the fish caught were hybrids. The annual 2 tonne commercial catch listed as estuary perch almost certainly will include bass, and this will only increase as the stocked fish reach maturity and move to the lakes to spawn.

Whilst the Minister suggests numbers limited numbers of bass were stocked in Gippsland Rivers, the fact is that since 2010, 114,000 bass have been stocked in Gippsland Rivers, with a further 65,000 announced for the Nicholson River. (The problem here was that 45,000 were stocked above the Nicholson dam and could not access the Gippsland Lakes to spawn and this difficulty has not been overcome. Dams and weirs have long prevented downstream migration and spawning of this species.)

Regardless of these difficulties it would seem that any attempt to protect spawning fish at the mouth of rivers (A Government commitment in 2011) that does not provide protection for spawning bass and estuary perch as well as black bream will not be acceptable to East Gippsland anglers. It is worth remembering that when the current stocking of the Nicholson River is complete 179,000 bass will have been stocked in East Gippsland Rivers at a value of \$180,000 largely funded by anglers Recreational Fishing Licences. **This stocking is aimed at improving recreational angling rather than providing additional fish stocks for commercial netters at river mouths.**

A Historical Note.

Gilbert Whitley (1903-1975) Curator of Fishes at the Australian Museum Sydney for 42 years described catching bass in the early days of settlement as follows- “As long ago as the 1820’s Peter Cunningham wrote how his arms ached from carrying those he had caught. And ‘I often fed the dogs therewith while the farm servants feasted on them through the greater portion of the year.”

As early as 1827, surgeon Peter Cunningham's book "Two Years in NSW" mentioned that Australian perch (Australian bass) could be caught on a fly. [It is great to see the efforts being made to build up the stock of this wonderful angling species. It is hoped protection at the mouth of rivers will extend to this species.](#)
(In 2013-14 257,000 Australian bass were stocked in NSW impoundments and streams)

Boating on Lake Tyers



Boating on Lake Tyers is the name of a map, the first edition of which was produced in December 2008 by Gippsland Ports. This is a large map of the main lake and arms of Lake Tyers printed on waterproof paper. What I found particularly appealing about this map is that it provides the names of particular areas such as Station Bight and Black Snake Bight and Lonely Bay amongst others and this provides information on the names associated with specific areas. The colours on the map give an indication of water depths and no boating areas, as well as general information as to the locations of toilets and areas available for camping. The map also provides an indication of the tracks and their names providing access to the east side of the lake.

The map costs \$5.00 and would be a great present for a friend who is coming to Lake Tyers for the first time.

This map is only available from Gippsland Ports office in Main St Bairnsdale or Lakes Entrance. I am most surprised that many Lake Tyers anglers I have spoken to are unaware of the availability of this map but then I have seen little publicity for this product. In addition Ports has an equally good map on Fishing on Mallacoota Lake. These maps should be in Gippsland and visiting angler's bags.

Petition on Netting in the Cunninghame Arm

I was interested recently to hear an interview with John Fitzgerald of Lake Entrance on the ABC rural radio morning program. John has organised a petition seeking an end to commercial netting in the Cunninghame Arm of the Gippsland lakes at Lakes Entrance. John stated that he has close to 4000 signatures and that shortly the petition will be presented to politicians. This publication congratulates John on his efforts to protect the small arm from commercial netting at night between May and November. This publication believes that the Cunninghame Arm provides a wonderful area for the elderly and handicapped anglers many of whom come to Lakes Entrance for the winter months and this coincides with the commencement of the netting season. I feel it was somewhat unfortunate that John did not provide evidence of the support of angling clubs or of the recreational anglers peak body VRFish, but rather spoke as a private individual putting forward his views. (VRFish offered Support.)

Never the less it was a great effort for an individual to achieve the support he has for a closure of the Cunninghame Arm to commercial netting.

The Law and Recreational Anglers."



Seven Anglers face heavy Fines An Unusual Event

In a Media release on the 4th June it was revealed that Fisheries Officers have apprehended seven recreational anglers along the Rubicon River in North East Victoria for exceeding the bag limit of brook trout and other offences. A further problem was the circulation of misinformation on social media that there were no bag or size limits for brook trout. The offences also included the use of salmon ova as bait and exceeding the number of salmonoids over 35cms in length.

It was stated in the media release "brook trout are an unlisted species in Victoria as they belong to the genus of salmonoid fish known as char, which originates from North America."

They are subject to a bag limit or possession limit of 5 fish per day however there is no minimum or maximum size limit.

The media release also indicated that Fisheries Officers had seized a total of 94 fish taken from the Rubicon River in the past week and they will continue to monitor activity along the river. █



Editor

I found it surprising that I could find no mention of brook trout, in the Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide, but then after talking to Northern Region Fisheries Officer Mike Hosking, I discovered that these fish entered the Rubicon River as a result of pond malfunction at the Rubicon Fish Farm. This was the second such release in recent years and Fisheries Officers are most concerned at the escape of this species into the river. The brook trout is not a preferred species and is not stocked in Victorian waters, and for this reason is regarded as an unlisted species, but is still subject to bag restrictions. When this accidental release occurred some anglers ignored the bag limit requirements and fished the Rubicon in some cases having large numbers of brook trout in their bags. Fisheries Victoria is hopeful that the released fish will be fished out. It seems the brook trout are raised on the fish farm for restaurants and the food trade. The Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society introduced brook trout to Victoria in 1887, and to NSW in 1890. Whilst brook trout can be caught in some NSW streams and in Lake Jindabyne today, releases in the 1970's from hatcheries have not been regarded as successful according to John Clements book "Salmon at the Antipodes" and it has been suggested the future of this beautiful looking fish in Australia is doubtful. It has been regarded as a fish that is easy to catch and that provides little sport for anglers. Latest information suggests brook trout are now only stocked in Lake Jindabyne and 3 Mile Lake in NSW, from the Gaden Hatchery and in Clarence Lagoon and Lake Plimsoll in Tasmania.

Fish Kill Reported in Lake Tyers



Research angler John Harrison has reported a fish kill in the Long Point area of the Torloo Arm. "Flathead, bream, luderick and small bait fish, many floating and many gasping for air." John reports. He indicated "there had been a huge growth of weed in the lake in the last twelve months. John went on to say that, "weed was in places we have rarely seen it before." He has remarked that the rain of five weeks ago caused the lake to rise one metre from a very low level, and he suggested the weed dying and rotting might be taking the oxygen from the water. John took detailed measurements in the Toorloo Arm and in the

Nowa Nowa Arm and these measurements included the salinity level, the oxygen level and the water temperature. These measurements were forwarded to the scientific branch of Fisheries Victoria, for comment. I suppose the hope would be that this fish kill is not the forerunner of other such events given the weed growth and possibility of continuing rain. It is hoped that despite the drastic reduction in the scientific branch of Fisheries Victoria they will be in a position to comment on the current situation in Lake Tyers. I must say my experience over recent years has been that fish kills have occurred high in the Nowa Nowa Arm. I find the fish kill reported by John Harrison more disturbing given the area where this is taking place.

[Thanks again to John for the work he has undertaken on behalf of anglers.](#)

Editor

Simon Conran Leading Scientist Fisheries Victoria has responded to John on the fish kill in the Toorloo Arm.

Hi John

I passed your email to our Fisheries Manager (who is briefing Fisheries Victoria and has notified the EPA.) The EPA are the one who would respond to this, given from your information it looks like the fish kill is a result of poor water quality, not an infection or a disease issue. There is also a fish kill off the ninety-mile beach, which the EPA is responding to at the moment. I will make sure you get feedback. Thanks for the information on the bream and flathead too.... I would like to talk further on the phone about this."

VRFish Report May



Dallas D'Silva VRFish General Manager has welcomed to **VRFish State Council** Quy Van, a qualified fisheries scientist, Fishcare volunteer, and passionate angler and diver as well as having worked in the tackle industry. Quy is helping VRFish build its fishing network amongst the now culturally diverse community that enjoy the sport of fishing. Dallas concluded his introduction of Quy saying, "The future looks bright for recreational fishing and advocacy in Victoria." I am sure anglers around the state will welcome Quy's contribution on State Council given the wide experience he will bring to

that body. The fish Quy is holding is a 43 centimetre female estuary perch. This beautiful perch was returned to the water.

Kingfish stocks are on the increase at the head to Port Phillip Bay, however with the introduction of marine parks in the area of the heads anglers fishing in the area are posing a safety concern for the larger ships entering the Bay. VRFish will be meeting with the Port of Melbourne Corporation to address this issue.

Gippsland trout fishers and clubs are reminded to contact the DEPI to provide information on trout numbers in our mountain streams and to send a copy of the letter to VRFish. (See details earlier in this publication.)

VRFish has been successful in achieving funding from the Commonwealth Fisheries Research and Development to attend the next the next World Recreational Fishing Conference in Brazil in 2014. A group of young recreational fishing leaders will attend the conference along with mentors and then undertake a tour, meeting recreational fishing managers and researchers. This is part of leadership development in the recreational fishing area sponsored by VRFish.

The recreational fishing licence is funding research on calamari where calamari movements are being monitored through an acoustic tagging program. Dr Corey Green of Fisheries Victoria spoke recently to the State Council and this ongoing research. Calamari are known to require specific habitat for spawning, usually including algae and seagrasses. Divers in Port Phillip Bay have placed fifty listening stations and calamari inserted with electronic tags have been released. It is hoped that information obtained from the listening stations will provide an indication of the movement of calamari around the bay and the areas where they spawn. Anglers catching a tagged calamari should record the tag number, and location of the catch, ideally with GPS coordinates, as well as the date and time of the catch and contact scientist Corey Green by phoning **5258 0275**.

Is A Flood Event Possible?

It is the 16th June as I write and in the last four days we have had over 90mm of rain. There has been a flood watch announced for the following East Gippsland Rivers. (Mitchell, Snowy, Cann, Genoa, and Tambo Rivers) and boats on the Tambo have been shifted below the Highway Bridge to allow for lake access should the river flood. The Tambo River has flooded low-lying country above Tambo upper.

When an event like this occurs recreational anglers immediately wonder whether this will mean another massive movement from the rivers into the Gippsland Lakes by spawning black bream and what will be the kill in commercial nets set within 400 metres of the river mouths. In 2007/8 the extra take of black bream due to the flood event was over 100 tonnes and in 2011/12 50 tonnes.

At the same time as the rivers are on flood watch, Lake Tyers has risen and the jetty at the No2 boat ramp is now entirely under water. I think that a further rise of less than a metre would see this estuary break out again.

(Whoops! There go the prawns again!!!!)



VRFish in Canberra (Late

Item)

Dallas D'Silva
VRFish general

Manager reports from the AFMA fishing forum in Canberra that the latest aerial survey results from the Great Australian Bight show that juvenile blue fin tuna relative abundance is the highest on record and 2 times the long term average. Dallas writes that this "is great news and a clear sign of further steps toward stock rebuilding." Remember the blue fin tuna recreational fishery is worth over \$9 million annually to Portland.



Just Released Report

A New and Innovative Approach to Monitoring Recreational Fisheries

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

The following is a brief summary of a very detailed paper released in April 2014 by scientists from Fisheries Victoria, which provides confidence in the recreational angler supported “research angler diary” (RAD) and the “general angler diary” (GAD) as an innovative approach to monitoring small scale recreational fisheries.

In Lake Tyers and the Gippsland Lakes both programs are supported by local recreational anglers, and in this months publication we have reports from recreational anglers associated with both programs. Both programs were found to be cost effective, scientifically robust, if well managed and supported by the recreational fishing community, fisheries managers and researchers.

It was also found that both programs can foster stewardship and engagement of anglers in the collection of information needed for fisheries management and the sustainable use of key fisheries resources. Whilst this system was found to be suitable for monitoring any recreational fishery, it was particularly suited to providing data in estuarine and inland waters.

This method is now accepted by researchers across Australia and this study resolved the debate about whether angler diary data provide scientific rigour in monitoring recreational fisheries. Both programs can incorporate routine tag and release and sampling for age determinations, which assist stock assessment. A guide toolkit provides for the establishment of both RAD and GAD programs and this will assist in providing a consistent national approach to monitoring and improved management of recreational fisheries.

Victoria’s ongoing “angler diary” programs won two prestigious awards as part of World Environment Day 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, Media coverage resulting from the awards widely promoted programs.



Environment and Climate Change Minister, Ryan Smith and Victorian Coastal Council Chair, Libby Mears, recognised the work of Reel Scientists at the Victorian Coastal Awards.

Simon Conron and Allan Rodgers, Reel Scientists, collected the award on behalf of all anglers.



‘Reel Scientists’ Keith Radley and Tony Ramunno together with ‘Reel Scientist’ program manager Simon Conron, accepting the United Nations Award for excellence in Marine and Coastal Management from Climate Action, Environment and Heritage Shadow Minister, Greg Hunt.

The diary program was compared with ‘fish independent surveys’ (FIS) involving creel survey, aerial and boat ramp surveys as well as the use of a variety of nets. It was found the FIS approach was

far more costly than the diary programs yet the results were comparable.

As part of the trial of these methods, sampling of estuary perch took place in Anderson Inlet, black bream in Lake Tyers and Murray cod in the Murray River. Both diary anglers and FIS methods were used and the results compared favourably.

As part of the study it was found that RAD and GAD methods could be applied to fishery management questions such as assessing the effectiveness of artificial reefs or as research taggers to tag and release large numbers of fish to determine patterns of movement of a fish populations

Local recreational anglers **Bob McNeill, Peter Spehr, Colin Hannah, Peter McDiarmid, and John Harrison** as well as a number of other anglers took part fishing according to agreed protocols. **John Harrison** and **Peter Spehr** were also members of the Technical Steering Committee.

This report also signifies that with the growth of recreational fishing a resource reallocation has taken place in many waters and commercial netting has been removed from some waters. This has meant that a source of data has been removed from these waters. It was found that catch rates derived from the RAD program in the Gippsland Lakes provided information comparable with the commercial statistic. Following this success the RAD program has been adopted as the principal method for monitoring the status of fish stocks in small estuaries where commercial fishing is excluded.

As well as the above research advantages of the diary programs, research is also taking place on the hook length and size which if ultimately applied could mean special hooks for individual species.

Editor

This report of 114 pages is a largely technical report, however it provides a wonderful outcome following the introduction of the angler diary program in this state in 1997. Today there are over 300 recreational anglers across the length and breadth of Victoria working to collect scientific information to ensure our fish populations are harvested sustainably. They are made up of research anglers (RAD) who fish under special permits and use a range of hook sizes and baits that allow them to collect information on both size and undersize fish. General angler diary (GAD) fishermen add value to their fishing by providing information on the fish they catch to fisheries scientists. They are armed with a diary and a fish ruler and are generally expert anglers who love their sport and wish to make a contribution by providing valuable data to the scientists.

I think all anglers owe a debt of gratitude to Simon Conran, leading Scientist at Fisheries Victoria, program manager of the diary program, and a co-author of this report for his vision and ability to work with and involve recreational anglers in this diary program. **As the report says one of the major outcomes of the diary program has been the involvement of recreational anglers and the feeling of stewardship it brings working with the scientists of Fisheries Victoria.**

This cost effective and scientifically robust program has now come of age and is playing a major role in monitoring recreational fisheries across Victoria. It is accepted by researchers across Australia and overseas, and it is a wonderful example of Fisheries Victoria and recreational anglers working together for the betterment of the fishery.

Note Just how different the approach in this report is to that of the Gippsland Lakes Advisory Committee in its approach to recreational anglers. One is inclusive utilising the talents of anglers the other seems totally exclusive in every aspect.

Thanks to all the anglers who have contribute to this newsletter

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

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

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

Early Advice- **Mark this event on your calendar.** The annual recreational anglers Forum will be held on the **20th August** in the **Gippsland Lakes Fishing Club Rooms** on Bullock Island between **7-9.00pm** Fisheries managers will be present with information on research, stocking and news. Anglers will be asked to contribute ideas and provide questions. In the last two years over 50 anglers have attended each of these Forums

Please Note- **There will be no July issue of Around the Jetties but we hope to return with the August issue.**