



Lynton.G.Barr  
P.O.Box 23  
Swan Reach 3903  
Victoria  
Phone 03 5156 4674  
Email-  
[delbarr1@bigpond.com](mailto:delbarr1@bigpond.com)

# Around the Jetties

## June 2015

### Issue 91

## An Anglers Newsletter

#### The Macquarie perch

In Victoria in 2010 breakthroughs were made at the DPI Snobs Creek Hatchery resulting in the production of several thousand fish. In Victoria the intention is to create recreational fisheries and improve the conservation status of the species with the primary stocking sites being Expedition Pass and William Hovel Reservoirs, the Ovens and Buffalo Rivers, and the Goulbourn River between Yea and Seymour.”

River Histories of the Murray Darling Basin- Will Trueman-Published by the Murray Darling Authority



This small Trout Cod was caught in the King River near Cheshunt 1980 and given to author, Will Trueman as proof they existed in 1980. No records exist of other catches of this species in the King R. since that date



#### Editorial

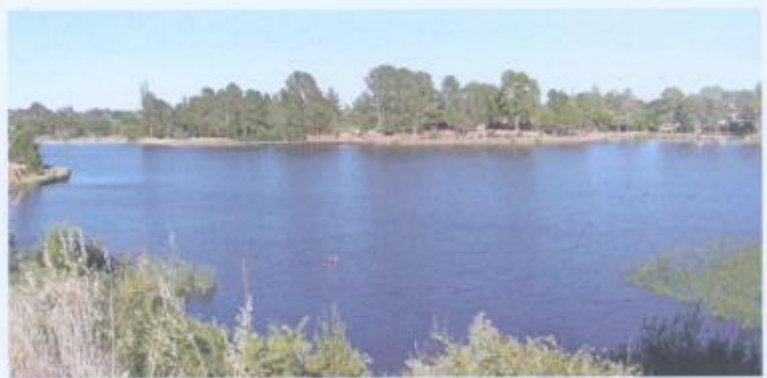
This newsletter looks at the fish that were once part of **the Mitta Mitta River and its tributaries**. These were native species such as the Murray Cod, Trout Cod, Macquarie perch, catfish and blackfish. They were numerous and provided food for the early settlers who started to settle the area in the 1840's. By the 1850's gold had been found in the Omeo area

and creeks and rivers began to change and become degraded as the miners worked their cradles and dug into the banks of the streams. This degradation of streams brought about the start of a decline in the native fish species that was to continue into the 1900's.

By the 1930' Macquarie perch had all but disappeared and the trout cod was in serious decline whilst small numbers of Murray cod were caught until the 1950's. Periodic stockings of trout occurred until 1969 and redfin were first reported in the catchment in 1922. Concern was expressed by anglers in the 1920's for this arrival of trout and redfin was associated with the decline of native fish. Today trout cod have gone as have catfish. A few Macquarie perch are thought to exist close to Dartmouth and Murray cod have almost totally disappeared in the Mitta Catchment.. The small blackfish continues to survive. This is the story of the main river system of East Gippsland and with the decline in trout numbers commented on in this publication previously, fish resources of the Mitta Mitta Catchment are at an extremely low level.█

It is pleasing to see the return of stocking of Trout cod in the Goulbourn River and Lakes Sambell and Kerford near Beechworth, and Macquarie perch in the Ovens River.

Photo - Lake Sambell.



However, an enormous challenge exists for Fisheries Victoria to turn this situation around particularly in East Gippsland given the current Government policy "Target One Million" which aims to have 1 million Victorian recreational anglers fishing our streams and lakes by 2020. Add to this picture a depleted Gippsland Lakes fishery with native varieties under some threat and the challenge to Fisheries Victoria is very evident. This is not helped when one of the iconic rivers that enter the Gippsland Lakes is dammed namely the Nicholson River is left with a decommissioned dam wall that stops the movement of bass to migrate to the Gippsland Lakes to spawn. This river was stocked in recent years with 35,000 Australian bass fingerlings above the dam, and these fish will never migrate to spawn, until this wall is removed. It was announced by the previous Government that the Nicholson River was to be stocked with 100,000 Australian bass however, this stocking was never carried out after it was pointed out that the bass could not reach the lakes to spawn. The removal of the dam wall or provision of a fish ladder together with protection at river mouths for spawning fish would add to current fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes and provide support to the "Target One Million" project..

## The Trout Cod and Macquarie Perch in the Mitta Mitta Catchment

### Omeo Fish Society

"In the early days the rivers and creeks around Omeo were stocked with bream, cod and perch; the streams were so clear and limpid that the fish could be seen in hundreds, disporting themselves in the many huge waterholes, most of which have ceased to exist. Even in the Livingstone Creek, when it was a pretty green banked stream, is a waterhole which existed in front of the township, it is recorded that a 13 lb cod was once caught, besides numbers of smaller weight. But the advent of the miner changed all this; the streams were rendered turgid and muddy with hundreds of sluice boxes and cradles that were winning gold from the wash, and the fish were naturally checked in their abundance by the muddy waters in which they had to live.

From that time the fish have been decreasing until there were only a few left in the Mitta, the Morass, and the upper waters of the Victoria, Cobungra, and Wentworth Rivers."

Omeo Standard, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1902

### Editor

The above was published in a booklet entitled "True Tales of the Trout Cod" that deals with the Mitta Mitta River Catchments and uses the oral history of the early days to give us a picture of what the fishing was like prior to 1900 in the Mitta Mitta River and tributaries. Thanks to fly fisherman and reader John Scott who discovered this booklet published by the Murray Darling Basin Authority and provided a copy to Around

the Jetties. This publication indicates that the Mitta Mitta River provided regular catches of trout cod, (called blue nose) by the early settlers and Macquarie perch or (white eyes) as well as the Murray cod and these fish were found as far into the system as Anglers Rest. These species were also found in the Livingstone and Morass Creeks in the Omeo area. Gold was discovered in the Omeo area in 1851 and locals saw the degradation of the streams dating from that time, and it was to change further in the 1970's with the construction of the Dartmouth dam.

- The Omeo Standard newspaper reported in December 1902, that the Omeo Fish Acclimatisation society operated at this time with the intention of breeding trout for release in local rivers. This was an attempt by local anglers to restore the local fishery to its former importance to the community. There was also an attempt in the late 1880's by a Mr. Easton to restock the streams of the Omeo area using salmon ova, however this was not successful although it was reported that "some tourists caught a couple of dozen at the Cobungra bridge" in 1900. This book provides a picture of what the fishing was like in the Mitta Mitta and tributaries, as seen by old timers who fished these rivers at that time for native fish.

The real story is the decline of trout cod, Macquarie perch, Murray cod and catfish in the Mitta Mitta catchment and the following interview provides a picture of that decline



**In the words of George Murtagh of Mudgegonga aged 90 when interviewed for "The True Tales of the Trout Cod" book in 2006.**

Speaking of the Mitta Mitta "the river was full of cod and bream. You could catch them all year round though they bit in some months better than others. Back in the 20's when I was young we used to get both types of cod. The second was darker, longer, usually thinner without the gut of the normal cod. It was marked finer like a trout. We called them "rock cod," though some called them "trout cod." They always seemed to be feeding in those places around the rocks. The biggest was about 12lbs, most were about 8-9lbs. The rock cod seemed to disappear during the 1930's. The Macquarie Perch would come on the bite for a while about ten in the morning, and again a bout 4 in the afternoon. You got sick of catching them. The first trout was caught at Dartmouth when I was about six years old. The locals didn't think much of them, they thought they were killers; they didn't have a high opinion of them. I saw trout used as bait for cod. I remember in the late 1920's, certainly by the 1930's big shoals of hundreds of redfin coming up the river, all 6 inches long. The locals went mad about the redfin as they thought they were eating the other fish out. The 1939 bushfires killed a lot of fish. A big storm washed down all the charcoal. You could see all the dead cod and bream on the bottom and

washed up in the ripples. Then afterwards there was a drought, the water became so shallow; it killed cod, bream and trout. After that they never really came back in numbers."

The photo above shows Jack Franks with a 40lb (18.2kg) Murray cod caught from the Mitta Mitta near Tallandoon December 1964 (True Tales of the Trout Cod)

**Trout Cod and Macquarie Perch Today.**

The trout cod is currently totally protected, however there are small self-sustaining colonies of trout cod in the Ovens River, near Wangaratta and in the Murray River below Yarrawonga. Fisheries Victoria since 2008 have stocked this species in Lake Kerferd and Lake Sambell, which are close to Beechworth. **25,000** trout cod were stocked in the following Victorian waters in 2013/14 Goulbourn River 15,000, Lake Kerferd 5,000 Lake Sambell 5,000. As well in 2014 **40,500** Macquarie perch were stocked in the Ovens River and 26,000 in the Goulbourn River. These stockings mark a significant effort to return two key species of native fish to our rivers. Photo - Macquarie Perch



In 1928 70 trout cod and Macquarie perch were caught by locals in the Ovens River and relocated to Lake Sambell. The cod thrived but the Macquarie perch failed to survive. In 1970 a massive fish kill in Lake Sambell killed the trout cod and other species in the lake. History of the successful transfer of trout cod in 1928 may have inspired Fisheries Victoria to stock these two small lakes in 2008. A survey is being conducted at the moment by Fisheries Victoria regarding the possibility of opening Lake Kerford and Lake Sambell to trout cod fishing, with a possession limit of 1 fish per day, and this opening would be based on the stocking of these two lakes since 2008, and would require continued stocking into the future

Perhaps in the next decade we will see the return of trout cod and Macquarie perch fishing in the Ovens, Goulbourn and Murray Rivers and then ultimately we may see them return to the Mitta Mitta River and tributaries, to provide a sustainable native fishery.

When the Dartmouth dam first filled a population of Macquarie perch provided good fishing but over the years this has deteriorated. Today there is a catch limit of one Macquarie perch in Dartmouth dam and its tributaries. As well as Dartmouth dam the Yarra River and Coliban dam have a small sustainable population of Macquarie perch with a one and two fish bag limit. Again history shows us that many Victorian rivers had substantial quantities of Macquarie perch prior to the 1950's and these streams included East Gippsland Rivers and the streams of the North East,

In eight years fishing in Lake Eildon in the early 1960's I caught one Macquarie perch, fishing from the bank of the lake. This was a fish around 3lb and was a lovely specimen however this is a closed water today for Macquarie perch. But history again tells us that into the 1950's thousands of Macquarie perch moved each year from Lake Eildon into the Jamieson River to spawn. This no longer occurs nor do any catches of this wonderful species in the Eildon system as far as I am aware. .

The "Tales of Trout Cod" is a 38 page booklet that provides a wonderful picture of the Mitta Mitta Catchment as it was ninety years ago and the decline in the interim. The responses from old anglers in this book suggests that mining, bushfires, construction of dams and drought brought about the depletion of both the trout cod and Macquarie perch, and a number of these old anglers put the introduction of trout into the Mitta Mitta system as having an adverse effect on the native species.

#### In the words of an old timer

**"The way things were in the past are gone. Those times won't be back. But people should know how it once was."**

**George Murtagh**

Source-"True Tales of the Trout Cod" by Will Trueman 2012 (Murray Darling Basin Authority )

**Sources** "True Tales of the Trout Cod ".Ovens River Catchment" by Will Trueman (Murray Darling Basin Authority.)

True Tales of the Trout Cod "Mitta Mitta Catchment" by Will Trueman (Murray Darling Basin Authority.) **(Electronic Copies of these booklets are available at [www.arrc/mdb/troutcod](http://www.arrc/mdb/troutcod))**

## Commercial Catch in the Gippsland Lakes for 2013/14

The catch of **black bream** for 2013/14 in the Gippsland Lakes dropped from 83 tonnes in 2012/13 to 40 tonnes in 2013/14. This is a substantial decline however, the catch in 2012/13 may have been influenced by several flushes of fresh water which could have forced black bream from the rivers and into commercial nets at river mouths. The average catch of black bream since 2002/3, excluding years where flood events occurred, is 38 tonnes per annum. For the previous thirty years from 2002/3, with the exception of one year, the catch of black bream has annually been over 130 tonnes with the largest catch occurring in 1983/4 of 446 tonnes.

At the same time, the commercial catch of **dusky flathead** dropped from 9 tonnes in 2012/13 to a mere 8 tonnes in 2013/14. The catch of this species has consistently dropped every year from a peak of 48 tonnes in 2005/6.

Given the vast expanse of the Gippsland Lakes, 340square kilometres, this 8 tonne catch of dusky flathead is a very small return, that continues to decline despite this species being regarded as one of the iconic



Gippsland recreational species. Added to the concern of declining numbers of this species is the fact that commercial nets can remove the larger female fish which are the breeding stock of the species, according to a study undertaken by Gray and Barnes in 2008 (Reproduction and Growth of Dusky Flathead in NSW Estuaries).



This is an amazing anomaly in that recreational anglers willingly accepted a slot size for dusky flathead of 30-55cms to protect the breeding females and ensure continuation of fish numbers, whilst this protection of breeding female dusky flathead was never applied to the commercial fishermen. What is not known is the effect of this anomaly on the Gippsland Lake dusky flathead fish numbers. Perhaps a comparison study should be undertaken comparing Lake Tyers with the Gippsland Lakes.

Lake Tyers is under intense fishing pressure being a small estuary of 25sq kms yet it continues to provide good fishing for dusky flathead and black bream, and anglers would suggest in the case of dusky flathead much of that success is due to the introduction of the slot size. Added to the protection of large females, dusky flathead in the Mallacoota estuary and Lake Tyers is the fact that the two major recreational species are protected from commercial netting nets, which were removed in 2003. It is also significant that Mallacoota provides a far better recreational fishery, and a major difference between the Gippsland Lakes and Mallacoota has been the removal of commercial netting from Mallacoota.

Up until a couple of years ago it was a regular sight to see anglers in waders casting soft plastics for dusky flathead around the Metung area and particularly in Lake King, and regularly catching nice flathead. This was a pleasant way of fishing, however it is at least two years since I have seen anglers fishing in this way, and the simple reason is lack of fish. Of course, one regularly sees seine nets being run in these areas and this is incompatible with recreational angling. It is worth noting that in this area some years ago that dozens of lies of dusky flathead were seen in the sand as one looked for bait prawns, however today one seldom sees such indications of dusky flathead populations.

If we are serious about increasing the number of recreational anglers in this state to 1 million by 2020, then one can hardly allow the largest estuary with the greatest potential for recreational fishing to decline.

A feature of the 2013/14 statistics is the 119 tonnes of **other fish** species. This is an increase from the previous year 2012/13 when the tonnage of **other species** was 33 tonnes and 20 tonnes in 2011/12. In other words, there has been a massive increase in these other species. **This has been due in part to a 45 tonne catch of Eastern King prawn** in the Gippsland Lakes in the 2013/14 year, and this would have provided a considerable boost to a commercial fisherman's income. Unfortunately, in the last four years the Melbourne Fish Market has not provided information on the value of the catch from the Gippsland Lakes, and this has meant we have no indication of total value of the commercial catch from the Gippsland Lakes. In addition Fisheries Victoria does not provide the tonnage of fish caught where less than five commercial fishermen are fishing for that species so this in turn further reduces information available on species being caught and the size of the catch.

Whatever way you consider the catch in the Gippsland Lakes, the most obvious conclusion is that black bream and dusky flathead are in decline and the dusky flathead is at considerable risk. Anglers anecdotal information on dusky flathead in the Gippsland Lakes provides a disturbing picture of a massive decline in this species.

The commercial catch statistics for the Gippsland Lakes can provide considerable information as to the status of fish species in the lakes and really over the years these statistics have provided an indication of the health of the Gippsland Lakes fishery, and this together with recreational anglers anecdotal information and diary information provides a picture of the recreational fishery. There is no doubt the **total catch** of commercial fishermen has declined dramatically (by more than 50%) in recent years and the catch of low value individual species, like yellow eye mullet and luderick, have shown a major decline. The real area of concern is the pressure of commercial netting on black bream and dusky flathead, the iconic species of East Gippsland. The Gippsland Lakes is the last area where black bream and dusky flathead are targeted by commercial fishermen in estuaries. This means less recreational fishers coming to these waters and less economic input into the local community. The Gippsland Lakes are being bypassed by recreational anglers

for other waters in East Gippsland. This is placing considerable fishing pressure on waters such as Lake Tyers, Bemm River, Tamboon and Mallacoota.

[A statistical sheet of the commercial catch in the Gippsland Lakes for 2013/14 accompanies this newsletter.](#)

## **Rock Walling and Wooden Debris in Local Rivers.**

The question of the value of rock banking in local rivers has been discussed for some time by anglers and others. In 2005 at a Regional Forum held at Lakes Entrance in the Fishing Club rooms the issue of rock walling was discussed. The VRFish Chairman Patrick Washington OAM writing in "Fishing Lines" the VRFish magazine in 2005 wrote the following.

*"The banks of the Mitchell River in Bairnsdale have recently been rocked and the question was asked as to the effect of this on the fish population as the rocks remove a lot of the cover that the fish require for protection. There appeared to be no knowledge of the effects of dumping rock on the sloping banks and this needs to be established."*

This statement was written ten years ago and I am unaware of any information being provided to anglers on the long-term effects of the use of thousands of tons of rocks to strengthen the banks of rivers. In the case of local rivers, the Catchment Management Authorities have responsibility for this work and I wonder whether they liaise with Fisheries Victoria as to the effects on fish populations of the massive tonnage of rocks placed on the banks of our rivers.

This question was asked a decade ago and we do not seem to have a definitive answer as to the effect of rocks on fish populations when used to strengthen the banks of rivers. The rivers have changed in the last twenty years and much of the beauty has changed with the tonnage of rocks being dropped into the streams.

I wonder if there is any research that examines the long-term effect of rock walling on fish populations. The same question may be asked regarding the reintroduction of wooden debris into local rivers entering the Gippsland Lakes.



Over \$1 million of recreational anglers' licence fees have been spent in the reintroduction of snags and wooden debris in rivers, and yet we have not had any definitive research on the effects of this wooden debris on fish populations in the rivers. Dr Jeremy Hindell undertook the only study I have found on this topic, in 2006 in which he states, ["to date there has been little assessment of the use of artificial structures by estuarine fauna particularly fish."](#)

Perhaps it is time for an independent look at the results achieved by Catchment Management Authorities. I have read some interesting and positive reports on the reintroduction of wooden debris into the Murray River and the effect of this work on habitat of species like the Murray cod and Golden perch, but, these fish are very different from the species of the Gippsland Lakes and it would seem unlikely that the Murray River research could be applied to rivers entering estuaries.

An excellent book "Resnagging Revolution –Bringing native fish back to the rivers" was published some years ago however, it deals with the Murray Darling Rivers. The movement of fish in estuarine associated rivers may well provide different questions and answers when considering fish habitat.

## **Cormorants and Local Rivers**

I have been contacted by a several of anglers with reports of large numbers of cormorants feeding on small fish in the rivers. On the Tambo River near our home there have been hundreds of cormorants mixed with pelicans feeding on fish, and of an evening we have seen hundreds of cormorants flying from the Jones Bay area to nesting spots for the night. We as anglers can do little to prevent this large scale removal of fish.



Cormorants working the Tambo River

A reader sent me the following article from the **Argus newspaper of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1920.**

*“Sir,- The Campaspe river, from the Coliban, near Redesdale, right through to Echuca, where it flows into the Murray, was always up to within four years ago, one of the best rivers in Victoria for bream angling, cod flashing, and blackfish. But now a man might flash from daylight to dark, using spoon, kidney or propeller spinner without a touch. If the northern streams are to be stocked with fish (as they should be) the first thing to be done is to get rid of the gormandisers- shags and cormorants. A genuine offer of two cartridges for each shags head ( to be destroyed at once to prevent duplication) would be effectual. I shot a couple last week, and opening them up discovered a golden perch, 11/2lb weight, with a small cod about ¾ lb, partly digested. The week previous two were shot which had a good supply of blackfish and a very small cod (each about 5oz). I would like to see this suggestion carried out, and feel sure it would meet with success, I find No 8 shot very deadly at short range, as the larger number of pellets get home. Yours, etc”*

#### **Editor**

The problem of cormorants has been with us for a long time as shown by the following. This was James Smith’s evidence to **The Select Committee upon Fisheries 26th July 1892**

*“The lakes are becoming full of shags. They destroyed immense quantities of fish, and increased very rapidly. They were worse than rabbits, but a reward of threepence per head for them would clear them off.”*

I think we may have to live with the current problem, until perhaps some control of cormorant breeding is discovered. Up until the early 1920’s a bonus of 4 pence per bird was paid and men were employed to destroy the cormorant nesting habitat. On the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1921, the chief Inspector of Fisheries and Wildlife reported that 10,166 cormorants were killed and 5000 eggs destroyed. **Scientist J.McNally concluded there was nothing to show this reduced cormorant predation.** The problem remained.

Anglers expressed concern at the numbers of cormorants as black bream numbers declined in the late 1980’s and a study was funded led by Patrick Coutin and Jim Reside. The research findings of Reside and Coutin (1998) largely support the McNally work. The importance of this study is that the average population of cormorants at that time was assessed at 3,470 cormorants in the Gippsland Lakes. The Reside/Coutin study found that cormorants eat daily 418 grams of food, or 14 ounces, of which small bream make up 50% of the daily intake whilst small luderick are also important with a range of other fish and crustaceans.

**The cormorant study by Coutin and Reside in 1998 arrived at a figure of between 261 and 531 tonnes of fish are taken by cormorants based on 3,470 cormorants in 1998. This is a figure of real concern to all recreational anglers across the state.**

**“In 1998 Great Cormorants probably consumed the same weight of black bream, yellow eyed mullet and Luderick as the combined recreational and commercial catch.”(Reside and Coutins Study.)**

*Note-Source Information-For the McNally 1958 Report, 1995 cormorants were shot and their stomach contents examined. For the Coutin and Reside 1998 Report rather than shooting cormorants the scientists examined regurgitated pellets collected under cormorant nesting trees to analyse diet, for the cormorants were a protected bird species in 1998.*

Sources “Highways of Water” –Peter Synan.

J.McNally “Cormorants Their Feeding habits in Victoria”1958

Preliminary estimate of the population, diet and fish consumption of the Great Cormorant. (J.Reside and P.C.Coutin 2001)



## VRFish Expresses Concern at Large Trawlers Operations

I received a media release from VRFish general manager Dallas D'Silva indicating the concerns of the peak Body at the failure of the Small Pelagic Fishing Industry to accept any limitation on where it can fish in Australian waters.

VRFish has expressed concern with other fishing bodies at the industrial scale of commercial operations in the small pelagic fishing operations and the possible effects on this states recreational fisheries. Meetings have been held with the Small Pelagic Fishery Association, however discussions have collapsed.

The collapse of discussions means the Geelong Star a 90 metre industrial vessel (Pictured Opposite) can fish anywhere at anytime. The VRFish approach was to protect the high value recreational Southern Bluefin tuna industry in areas such as Apollo Bay, Warrnambool, Port fairy and Portland.



Dallas D'Silva, VRFish General manager said, "it is most disappointing that the Small Pelagic Fishing Industry has not agreed to stay away from these high value recreational areas."

"The failure of the talks to make progress on key issues means that Victoria's 721,000 recreational fishers will now have to pursue other avenues to ensure their concerns are addressed and will ramp up opposition to the controversial trawler's plans to operate in Australian waters." VRFish has worked closely with the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, and the Game Fishing Association of Victoria.

## VRFish Seeks Information

General Manager VRFish Dallas D'Silva is seeking information from any angler in the area of the Gippsland Lakes who is a private jetty owner. Have commercial fishers netted around your jetty and what is your feeling about such intrusions. This follows the report on netting of private jetties in the Paynesville area in Around the Jetties 89. If any anglers have strong view on such actions by commercial fishermen, please send your thoughts to this publication, and they will be forwarded to VRFish.



## Recreational Anglers and the Law

### \$37,000 Fine for Anglers

"Four men have been fined a total of \$37,000 for possessing a commercial quantity of Southern Bluefin tuna after being intercepted by Fisheries Officers near Dennington last year." This statement was part of a Media release of the 10<sup>th</sup> June which provided this information. The four men were intercepted at Dennington near Warrnambool on June 9<sup>th</sup> last year after being seen fishing at Portland over two days.

"Officers found 37 whole tuna in the back of their utility of which 23 were Southern Bluefin Tuna and 14 albacore."

Fisheries Officer Cameron McCallum said the four men pleaded guilty under the Fisheries Act to possessing a commercial quantity of a priority species. They are all now subject to an order which stops them from fishing or possessing fishing equipment in or next to Victorian waters in the next twelve months.

The Media Release stated "It is disappointing to see people still flaunting the rules around priority species such as Southern Bluefin Tuna, especially given Fisheries officers from Portland spoke to these men after their first fishing day, and explained the possession limits."





The Fisheries Officers are to be congratulated on the apprehension of these men who in real terms are offending against fellow anglers with little thought for the future of a magnificent fishery in this State. It is also most pleasing to see the level of the fine imposed for this infringement.

## **New Plastic Fishing Licence and More**

Anglers who buy a 1 or 3 year recreational fishing licence online will receive a plastic licence in the mail to be introduced later in the year. Fisheries Victoria Executive director Travis Dowling, said the new plastic licence would be welcomed by keen anglers who wanted something durable for longer term licences. The plastic licences will only be available online and if you buy a licence across the counter at a tackle shop it will still be the paper format licence. The cost of the licence will remain at \$24.50 for one year and \$66 for a three year licence. Mr Dowling stated "All revenue from the sale of recreational fishing licences would continue to be placed in a Trust Account from which it is disbursed to fund projects that improve fishing opportunities such as stocking, fish habitat improvement, and better access and facilities."

The Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria reported at the March Statewide Fishing Roundtable Forum that the new Government had committed not to increase the price of licences, so the cost will remain the same for the next four years. Readers would be aware that the previous government was looking to increase the cost of licences this year with an announcement in June.

## **Don Cunninghams Bemm River Report Monday 15th June**



The lake remains closed, and fishing has been very slow in the bream, but good news is that Luderick are in good numbers in the river. With the lake closed access by boat gives no problems. I have used my fish finder to find the schools of Luderick. Sandworm on a jig head, or lightly weighted hook works well. Luderick put up a very powerful fight, and as most are half a kilo and upwards you need good gear to succeed.

The surf has produced a few salmon for those who have put in the time. Despite recent high seas, most beaches look great with decent gutters clearly visible. Early morning is best

## **Update on River Access**

I have had a call from Duncan Hill of Fisheries who has made considerable progress towards the establishment of Fishing Platforms on the Bemm River. These would be constructed on the road below the bridge. Funding is available for the platforms depending on a survey to establish the cost. Work would begin in the early Spring and could be functional fairly quickly. This is good news as these waters are virtually unfished until now.

**Editor** This is great news and will mean elderly and handicapped anglers will have access to Bemm River and its great fishing as well as general access when the lake is rough. Congratulations to Don Ellis who brought this issue up at the Recreational Round Table meeting some eighteen months ago, and to Don Cunningham who has worked for a number of years to obtain angler access to the river. I wonder will the fenced off section of the Bemm River be open to angler access in the future. Thanks to the work of Duncan Hill and Fisheries Victoria on this project.

## **Letters Letters Letters**

### **The Nicholson River Dam**

Dear Lynton,

*I refer to my letter dated March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 advising I made representations on your behalf to Greg Hunt. Minister for the Environment. The Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce has responded to my representations regarding the decommissioning of the Nicholson Dam and restocking the Nicholson River with Australian Bass, which I enclose for your interest..*

*Darren Chester MHR*

The following letter from Barnaby Joyce Minister for Agriculture was dated 12<sup>th</sup> May was received on the 19<sup>th</sup> May by Darren Chester MHR. (The following is a summary of the main responses in the letter of Minister Barnaby Joyce.)

Dear Darren

The matters Mr Barr refers to are the responsibility of the Victorian Government. If Mr Barr has not already done so I would suggest he contacts the East Gippsland Water regarding the decommissioning of the Nicholson River dam and the Victorian Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) regarding the stocking of the Nicholson River with bass.

I note that East Gippsland Water and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority are in the process of assessing alternative cost effective options for the removal of the dam and possible funding options. The removal of the dam may include benefits such as the improvement in the health of the river and native fish populations.

While the management of water infrastructure is the responsibility of state and territory governments, the Australian Government is open to supporting innovative ways to address water issues.

Yours sincerely

Barnaby Joyce MP



#### **Editor.**

According to the response of Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce, it would appear that the removal of the dam on the Nicholson River is a state responsibility. **It is a great shame the previous State Government did nothing about the problem of the dam on the Nicholson when it was in power.** It also appears that East Gippsland Water and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority are assessing cost effective options for the removal of the dam. I would hope these two bodies might in the near future provide this newsletter with what those options they are actually assessing . **Hopefully Federal member Darren Chester MP will follow this matter further with the Federal Government as well as East Gippsland Water and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.** Tim Bull MP has written to the State Minister for Environment and Climate Change Lisa Neville (3<sup>rd</sup> April) but has not received a detailed response to his letter on the Nicholson River dam.

#### **From Around the Jetties Issue 58 June 2012**

A spokesman for East Gippsland Water has indicated the removal of the dam on the Nicholson River would allow bass to move into the higher reaches of the river has not yet commenced and when commenced is still likely to take three years to complete the removal. Research is taking place on the movement of sediment, and the design of just how the dam will be removed. No money has yet been allocated to this project, and it was suggested when the DSE resolves these issues work may begin. Representatives of Fisheries Victoria recently examined the dam site but no announcement has been made following the inspection.

**Editor-This is a sad tale and we seem to be little advanced with a further 3 years to remove the dam wall if it was approved today. It is a tale of lost opportunities under the previous State Government, and the removal of the dam would add to restocking in the Gippsland Lakes and also to the current Governments "Target One Million."**

#### **A Note from the Executive Director of Fisheries Travis Dowling**

This note was received 22<sup>nd</sup> May after the publication of issue 90

*“Another fantastic newsletter. I look forward to a visit to Lakes soon. Lots of exciting things to do, including some unfinished business on access track improvement at lake Tyers. I really liked your thoughts re bullock Island and it’s something I’m going to ask the team to follow up on EP stocking into Lake Tyers is a priority. Take Care*

*Cheers Travis”*

**The Photo shows Travis with John Harrison back in 2012 when inspecting Lake Tyers Access Tracks**



### **Editor**

I doubt anglers could have had a better response from the Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria to items raised in Issue 90 and earlier. Readers will recall that I suggested in issue 90 that the Bullock Island hatchery should be examined to see if it could be reinstated for the breeding of marine species. It is great to see this being examined. The comment re tracks into the east side of Lake Tyers emanates from the Directors Fisheries Managements full day visit examining the tracks on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2012, and reported on in detail in issue 55 of this publication. The aim was to develop areas like the Trident and provide some tracks so that the elderly and handicapped could access safely some fishing spots on the East bank of Lake Tyers. Finally, many anglers will be delighted to hear that the stocking of Lake Tyers with estuary perch is a priority. This has long been an aim of anglers from submissions provided to the Management Plan Committee for Lake Tyers in 2006, and in recent times has been led by an active Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club. Anglers have a great deal to look forward to should these projects come to fruition.

### **Meeting with Craig Ingram**



On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, John Harrison and I had a morning cup of coffee at the Waterwheel Tavern with Craig Ingram recently appointed Coordinator of the “Target one Million” program, a key commitment of the current Government. This was a low key meeting providing a chance to meet up with Craig and hear of his priorities.

The first priority will be to organise and negotiate the buyback of commercial fishing licences in Port Phillip and Corio Bays, a pre election commitment of the Government.

Another priority will be the protection of fish at the mouth of Gippsland Lakes Rivers. This was a pre election commitment of the previous Government, which despite its urgency was

never introduced, but is a high priority for the current Government.

Craig is looking forward to the challenges his new position will bring. We talked about local fishing conditions and the decline in the Gippsland Lakes. I was surprised to learn from Craig that Mulloway have entered Tamboon in the past and provided wonderful sport, and the discussion turned to Mulloway in Lake Tyers. We talked about the pressure on waters like Lake Tyers and Mallacoota with the poor fishing in the Gippsland Lakes, and recreational anglers bypassing the largest estuary, in the state for other East Gippsland waters. We also discussed whether the quality of Lake Tyers fishing can survive, given the pressure it faces and the small nature of the estuary. A brief discussion also took place on the projects about to come on line sponsored by the Lake Tyers Beach Angling Club that will providing better facilities for anglers. A considerable amount of this work will be undertaken in the next three months.

After an hours talking Craig was on his way to Marlo to undertake another meeting, and we were left with the feeling that it was good to have a man with his knowledge and enthusiasm coordinating this major program of the current Government.

### **Items of interest**

These items came from Media Releases and information made available to the editor from readers.



## Rocklands Reservoir Upgrade

Two new boat ramps have been installed in Rockland Reservoir in the South west of the state. Rocklands was very nearly dry on the 2008 drought and this had a major effect on waters into the Mallee. Balmoral Angling club supervised the building of the ramps using local labour and materials much of which was donated by members of the angling club and the local community. Together with this development Fisheries Victoria, according to Executive Director Travis Dowling, since 2013 have stocked “more than 21,000 brown trout, and 25,000 rainbow trout yearlings “into Rocklands to improve fishing opportunities for anglers. The trout stocking will complement a self -sustaining redfin population.”

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of this development is the partnership between Balmoral Angling Club and Fisheries Victoria achieving a result that will not only improve fishing but will add to tourism and economic welfare in the region. Travis Dowling said of such projects, “that is why we are delivering the State Governments Target One Million Plan, which will boost participation in fishing to one million anglers by 2020 increase fish stocking from 3 million to 5 million.”

## Survey of Murray Cod in the Murray and Ovens Rivers

Scientists have started their annual surveys of the Murray and Ovens rivers hoping to confirm the findings of 2014, which indicated the highest number of cod since surveys started some 14 years ago. Most of the fish found were young and this survey will examine the level of maturity amongst the fish and if they are surviving. Murray Cod appear to be responding to the introduction of large wooden debris, removal of pest plants, the provision of fishways at instream structures (such as dams) and increased water flows. The 2015 survey will be conducted between Lake Mulwala and Tocumwal.

Murray Cod is listed as a threatened species in Victoria under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee. (In the report no mention is made of trout Cod being included in this survey, however I would suspect their numbers will be part of the final report for 2015.

## An Angler Reports

I received this report via an email from reader Tony Alevizopoulos on the 25<sup>th</sup> May. Tony with his son and two friends fished the Mitchell River on Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> May for five hours without one fish being kept. Tony’s party fished the Mitchell on Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> May for eight hours with four fish kept for the table, none of which were over 29cms. The following is Tony’s response in his own words-

*“What was disappointing was that we could not find any bream over 30cms during the two day period. Between the four of us that fished last week we all agree that the average size of the bream had definitely decreased. Another point of interest, we bumped into a commercial fisherman (netter) on the Thursday whom had just finished netting just outside the Mitchell River (Lake King Side) They had hauled in 230kg of bream and proceeded to inform us that they are currently netting this volume each day. What hope does the average angler have when commercial fishermen net such prolific numbers of bream. When will such practice cease?”*

**Editor-** Thanks Tony for your thoughts after your two days fishing the Mitchell. It needs to be remembered that commercial fishermen can run 1300 metres of mesh net if working alone, and if operating with the assistance of one or more people can use 2200 metres of mesh net and there are no quotas on what can be caught. This together with the ability to net within 400 metres of the river mouth is believed to put pressure on fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes and particularly fish moving into the rivers to spawn.

**This is a reason why the current Government has listed as a priority, the provision of protection for spawning fish at the mouth of rivers in the Gippsland Lakes. Perhaps things will change.**

## Around the Jetties on Line

[www.laketyersbeach.net.au](http://www.laketyersbeach.net.au)

**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.

## Commercial Catch in the Gippsland Lakes 2013/14

The figures below indicate the catches that make up “Other” species.

Year	Species	Catch (t)
2013/14	Prawn, Eastern King	45
2013/14	Anchovy, Southern	id
2013/14	Prawn, Other (Unspecified)	id
2013/14	Crab, European green	id
2013/14	Sandworms	4
2013/14	Shrimp bait	2
2013/14	Crab, Other Unspecified	2
2013/14	All Other	id
2013/14	Sole, Unspecified	1
2013/14	Mullet, Sand	id
2013/14	Crab, Spider	id
2013/14	Perch, Unspecified	0
2013/14	Flounder, Unspecified	0
2013/14	Crab, Sand	id
2013/14	Eel, Unspecified	id
2013/14	Shark, Thresher	id
2013/14	Garfish, River	id
2013/14	Calamary, Southern	id
2013/14	Crab, Blue Swimmer	id
2013/14	Shellbait	id
2013/14	Skate	id
2013/14	Mackerel, Unspecified	id
2013/14	Whiting, King George	0
2013/14	Squid, Goulds	id
2013/14	Snapper	id
2013/14	Leatherjacket	id
2013/14	Pike, Unspecified	id
2013/14	Morwong, Dusky	id
2013/14	Kingfish, Yellowtail	id
2013/14	Whiting, School	id
2013/14	Whiting, Unspecified	id
2013/14	Ling, Rock	id

### Actual Tonnages of Individual Species

2012/13	Gippsland Lakes	2013/14)
id	Anchovy (Whitebait)	id
1	Australian Salmon	4
83	Bream Black	40
30	Carp European	39
9	Dusky Flathead	8
id	Garfish River	id
id	Leatherjacket	id
7	Luderick	6
6	Mullet sea	5
16	Mullet yelloweye	15
1	Perch estuary	1
32	Tailor	26
3	Trevally silver	3
33	Other	113

Where **id** is shown it indicates less than five commercial fishers fishing for this species, and this is a policy requirement to protect commercial confidentiality. The catch data has been included in “**other.**”

The above “**Other**” items are listed from the largest catch to the smallest.

The commercial statistics for commercial fishing in the Gippsland Lakes are provided so that readers can assess themselves the value of commercial fishing when compared with an active recreational fishery in the Gippsland Lakes.

Thanks to Paula Baker- Manager -Catch and Effort Unit -Fisheries Victoria-for Commercial Fish Production statistics for 2013/14