



Lynton.G.Barr  
P.O.Box 23  
Swan Reach 3903  
Victoria  
Phone 03 5156 4674  
**Email-**  
**delbarr1@bigpond.co**  
**m**

# Around the Jetties

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**An Anglers Newsletter**

“There is certainly something in angling... that seems to produce a gentleness of spirit, and a pure serenity of mind.”- Washington Irving.

## **7th July-Lake Tyers Estuary Opens to the Sea**



Following heavy rainfall from an “East Coast Low” that brought 3-4 inches of rain to the East Gippsland community, whilst in the higher areas 8-10 inches were recorded in a number of locations. This has meant the major rivers entering the Gippsland Lakes were in flood and significant stream rises were experienced throughout East Gippsland. In the case of Lake Tyers, judging by the debris left at the top of the main Launching Ramp, I would believe the estuary rose over ten feet from the inflow of streams, and this ultimately caused the estuary to break out between 8.30 and 9.30am on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July.

The big question that every recreational angler will be asking is, what will happen to 11,000 mulloway and 20,000 estuary perch fingerlings that in 2015 were stocked into Lake Tyers. Will they leave this estuary as some anglers have predicted or will Lake Tyers become known as a mixed marine fishery of excellence. Time will tell but this estuary will probably remain open to the sea for around the next twelve months.



My thanks to John Harrison for this report on the opening times

## **Fishing licence fee changes to boost investment**

On Wednesday June 16<sup>th</sup> a Fisheries Victoria Media Release announced rather surprisingly changes in Fishing Licence fees to boost investment in fishing across Victoria.

Changes to Victoria's recreational fishing licensing system, **effective from 1 July**, will increase investment in projects that improve fishing opportunities.

Fisheries Victoria Executive Director, Travis Dowling, said the changes included a rise in the price of fishing licences with every extra cent raised to be spent on projects that benefit recreational fishing.

“The extra revenue generated by these licensing changes will boost investment meaning more fish stocking, more improvements to angler access and facilities, and more community fishing events where newcomers can come and try this popular pastime. Certainly recent times have seen a major boost to fish stocks and these investments require added funding added to this recreational fishing licences have not increased since 2008.

### **The Changes**

**“From 1 July 2016, the two-day licence will be replaced by a three-day licence for \$10 and the 28-day licence will cost \$20.**

**“A one-year fishing licence will cost \$35 and a three-year licence will cost \$95.**

**“If purchased online, the one and three year licences will be discounted to \$33 and \$90 respectively and anglers will continue to receive a plastic licence in the mail, as they have since November 2015 when plastic licences were introduced.**

**“There will be no changes to exemptions and children under 18 will continue to fish for free.”**

Mr Dowling said “That’s why we’ll continue to invest fishing licence fees into worthwhile projects that really make a difference to fishing opportunities, whether that’s in Port Phillip Bay, Lake Eildon or an East Gippsland estuary.” An example of this commitment is the 200,000 Australian bass released in East Gippsland since 2002 and recent exciting marine releases as well as 126,000 trout released in May alone into 16 Victorian waters. This is part of the State Governments Target One Million Plan.

## **2016 Gippsland Lakes Stock Assessment Meeting**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June the 2016 Gippsland Lakes Stock Assessment meeting was held in Lakes Entrance where it was hoped to assess the current stock status. Anglers were invited to join with Fisheries scientists in examining the current situation. I was unable to attend this assessment, and was very

pleased to have **Rob Ward Editor of the Lake Tyers Beach Newsletter**, attend the meeting and provide a report on the discussion that took place. This was the first Assessment meeting attended by Rob.

**Rob wrote,**

“I got to the meeting and was very pleased with the time there. The talk was very informative and for me as a new comer quite interesting. There was not anything much I could contribute and generally just soaked up information, and I hope my report will try to be not too authoritative and just give people an idea of the worth of attending these meetings. Fisheries scientist Simon Conran will also send you a full rundown of the presentation and eventually the whole report. . I thoroughly enjoyed the Biology and the challenge of doing really good science in the real world!!

## **Stock Assessment: Consultation and Feedback Meeting**

**Presented by Fisheries Scientists Simon Conran and Bill Lussier**

### **Rob's Report**

The presentation tackled Stocks in three areas, Black Bream, Fish other than Black Bream and Bait. Simon predicated his observations with how our data often limits how much can be interpreted and today he was looking for people to help expand the worth of the data with local observations. Simon began by outlining some of the Black Bream life cycle to highlight how water conditions (eg rain in autumn and salt wedges in estuaries) can greatly influence the survival of fish larvae, and even with the 20 or so years this information has been collected, there is great variability. A major source of the variability in the data also comes from the very nature of fishing in itself. Trying to apply a general analysis even from good commercial fishing data that takes into account the number of active fishers, size and type of net, how often is shot and how long it takes to complete the netting and then compare that from year to year is a huge task and extremely difficult. Picking a trend to justify stock preservation in certain species, or areas is very hard to do. We seemed to hit a low point in our stocks about two to five years ago with some recovery in process at the moment.

However the data and graphs presented for yearly catches of wide number of important species did illicit many good contributions from the audience and helped focus in other important influences like water quality (especially possible contamination from mines) effecting both table fish and bait catches. Another observation was the effect of algal blooms on sea-grass cover and the development of prawns in the lake system. Even our Gippsland rivers vary greatly in the amount of pollution form different sources they carry.

**Appreciation was expressed by Simon for the efforts of the Fishing Diarists for their data, and he expressed the hope that this valuable source of information should continue.** However even the differences in these people from year to year, should some people leave and new recruits arrive, can also introduce variability in the data that makes comparisons and trend spotting difficult as well. (Even the details of the gear, down to the types of hook, needs to be prescribed, even if there are better ones today! Such is Science!)

The exchange of information was very good and supplemented by the pro's and amateurs alike, and official representatives such as Craig Ingram.

As a very broad generalisation the stocks overall began a decline about ten years ago (floods?), and have been struggling up to about 5 years ago with small improvements since then. The improvements though have not been uniform across all species, and very strong local concern was expressed about the quality of the water in our rivers and lakes (eg mines, floods and algal blooms) having huge, and largely unpredictable effects on stocks of all our fish and lake biology. Simon Conran will be releasing the official report on the Stock Levels later this year.



Rob Ward.”

Editors Comments

\*Special thanks to Rob Ward for this report. We hope to forward Simon’s report to readers at a later date.

- Of particular interest was the attendance of the commercial fishermen. This is the first such meeting they have attended with recreational anglers since 2005 and this may have some significance.
- According to Rob Ward, Craig Ingram said at the meeting that the only thing he was looking at at the moment was “The banning of netting across the mouth of flooding rivers.” This is a major issue for fish stocks in the Gippsland Lakes.
- For some reason, whilst this meeting was taking place a flurry of rumours were reported and I received several phone calls and emails from anglers with rumours regarding commercial buybacks and collapses of black bream stocks. I believe none of these items were discussed at the Assessment meeting and none of the rumours emanated from the meeting, but the response at such a meeting taking place, from recreational anglers illustrates their current concerns at the state of the black bream fishery in the Gippsland Lakes.
- In the following days the rumours ceased

## Snapper Measuring in Port Phillip Bay .

It has been reported in the Fish-e-Facts (Issue 391) publication June 2016, that more than 70 volunteer angler diarists have measured over 6000 snapper in Port Phillip Bay to monitor the health of the fishery. It was stated that this work provides a rich source of data for scientists to better understand what is happening to fish stocks. The catch information suggests an abundant amount of 20-30cm snapper entering the adult fishery in the next 5 years. This is regarded as the best increase in snapper in Port Phillip seen in the last ten years.



This report adds that this news is made all the better “given 33 netting licences that existed in the Bay fishery in April caught 87% of the commercial catch of fish targeted by recreational anglers.”

Recreational anglers congratulate the volunteer diarists, and those associated with this highly successful buyback of commercial licences in Port Phillip Bay. It is to be hoped similar efforts will be directed at the Gippsland Lakes in the future, and I am sure recreational anglers from the area will

support any initiative to improve this fishery. Anglers have watched the deterioration of this fishery over the last twenty years with a sense of continuing dismay.

**Editor**

I have included this excellent photo of a Port Phillip Bay snapper taken from the Fisheries Victoria publication "Fish e Facts." This was issue 391 and over many years this fortnightly publication has provided up to date information to anglers. You could become a subscriber by contacting Fisheries Victoria on [www.depi.vic.gov.au/fishing](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fishing) or by phoning **Information 136 186**.

**Case of the Koi Carp**



An unusual recent case in the Geelong Magistrates Court saw an Ocean Grove man fined \$1745 for possession of a number of Koi carp. This fish is declared a noxious aquatic species that has the potential to spread quickly in local streams, and competes with native fish outperforming the native species. The person charged had a makeshift pond with 19 live Koi carp. There were also a number of boxes marked "Live Fish" with one box showing International Flight details from Bangkok. Regional Supervising Fisheries Victoria Officer Paul Millar indicated that these fish posed an ongoing threat to native species.

**Editor**

The threat of carp is real, and it should be remembered that carp were brought into Gippsland in 1958 and spread from this location. An application had been made at this time to import European carp, but this was refused by Fisheries Victoria, however a few months later carp were being advertised in the Weekly Times as being available from Boolarra Fish Farm in Gippsland. By 1960/61 carp were in the Latrobe River and the Murray system and the spread of the progeny of the initial fish from the Boolarra Farm was colonising the waterways of South Eastern Australia with dire results to our waterways and native species.

For the above reasons I was surprised to find that Koi carp are offered for sale in Victoria, at some ornamental fish outlets, and they are also advertised on E/Bay. I noted that some Koi carp were advertised with a \$50-\$200 price tag. **Photo from FisheFacts 392**

**Expired Flares a Problem for Anglers.**

Under recent legislation anglers face an infringement notice for not having flares on their boat, and for producing old flares, which are expired. If you are required to have flares then they must be in date. Flares that are expired are no longer regarded as a pyrotechnic but are classed as an explosive. It is therefore an offence to possess expired flares without a permit. Some insurance companies have stated that if there is a fire on your vessel and expired flares are found on board, your insurance claim may not be recognised.

To assist vessel owners, most coastal police stations have a flare collection facility, where anglers with expired flares can drop them off. They are then collected and disposed of by Work Safe Victoria. Gippsland Water Police encourages people to expose of expired flares in a safe and responsible manner.

Source -East Gippsland News 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016



**Bob Mc Neill's Lake Tyers Report  
A Glimpse of the Future**

In this report our regular diary correspondent Bob McNeill provides a picture of a large year level of undersize black bream. In Bob's words "an

incredible number of undersize fish has been recorded in this book. Most of the fish were caught North of Lake Tyers House in one to two metres of water.”

In this period March to June Bob caught 255 bream of which 185 were undersize bream. Most of the undersize fish were feeding on small white shell, however Bob caught almost all his fish on prawn, which is his standard winter bait.. These undersize fish were almost a standard size between 23 and 27cms. Most mornings Bob caught up to twenty bream, almost all undersize. Bob made the observation that “water throughout the system has been very clear which indicates to me late afternoon fishing may be the answer.” In the same period only four dusky flathead were caught, and the expectation of most anglers is that regular catches of this species will start again in early October. When rain occurred in early June, and water became discoloured Bob had the only morning where he did not get a fish and could not even raise a bite fishing from 7.15 am to 10.30am.

A surprising feature of Bob’s fishing is the almost total lack of other species in his catch over the fishing period. The other species were made up with a couple of poddy mullet and a couple of tailor. It would appear that when the estuary was last open almost no other species entered the estuary. In the past numerous small snapper entered the estuary, and became a key species for anglers, as well as gurnard, leather jackets, salmon and large schools of tailor. It is to be hoped that in the future mulloway and estuary perch will add variety to the Lake Tyers recreational fishery.

Bob concluded his Research Angler Report saying “with so many small fish around the future looks good for the bream fishery in Lake Tyers.” In twelve months many of this year level of undersize fish will reach minimum legal length and become the basis of the fishery in the future.

A special thanks to Bob McNeill for his regular reports as a Research Angler and making those reports available to anglers generally through this newsletter.. His reports have been of great interest to readers, and have added greatly to recreational anglers knowledge of Lake Tyers. I am sure anglers will join with me in wishing this intrepid angler well in the future.

“Once an angler, always a fisherman. If we cannot have the best, we will take the least, and fish for minnows if nothing better is to be had.” Theodore Gordon

### Estuary Perch in Lake Tyers

My Thanks to John Harrison for providing the following information.

John Harrison has undertaken the task of recording catch data of fish recently stocked in Lake Tyers in the 2015 marine species stocking. The following was a report he received on the 7<sup>th</sup> July.



“My name is Bryan Mathews and I heard you were involved in recording EP data from Lake Tyers and that you might be interested in my catch. I have been targeting EP’s and Bass for over 20 years and have now heard there are EP’s in Lake Tyers but have never caught one. So when I caught this fish on

Sunday I was very excited. I caught the EP in the Toorloo Arm on a plastic. I was hoping there was a school of them but only the 1 fish. The EP was 35cm FL and was in very good condition. I released this fish, and are now hoping that with the stocking of EP'S in the lake there will be plenty of them to be caught.

Hope this information is useful.”

### **Editor**

Thanks Bryan for this report and in particular the accompanying photos. I believe that the fish you caught is most likely to be one of the rare estuary perch that have spawned in the estuary rather than one of the recently stocked fish. The reason I suggest this is that estuary perch fingerlings stocked in Lake Bolac in 2012 had by 2015 grown to a length of 28cms. It was suggested that given this growth rate Lake Tyers estuary perch from stocked 2015 fingerlings should be available to anglers around 2019. I think the estuary perch you caught is a very rare catch from the small estuary perch stock in Lake Tyers. Most anglers who have fished Lake Tyers over many years have never caught one of these EP's .

### **Barramundi at Hazelwood Pondage**

A survey of Hazelwood Pondage last week by Fisheries Victoria captured 20 stocked barramundi, the biggest of which weighed more than 6kgs.

Eighteen barramundi measuring about 33cms were stocked into the pondage in September 2015. These fish were followed in April 2016 by three class sizes consisting of 1000 fingerlings of 5cm, 500 fish of 10cms and 100 larger barramundi of 30cms. Fisheries Victoria Executive Director Travis Dowling said “we believe that the six largest barramundi surveyed last week including the thumper over 6kg, were all from the first small stocking in September 2015.” The barramundi in the Pondage have thrived in the warm water, and with a variety of exotic fish to feed on.



### **The 6kg Hazelwood Pondage Barramundi Fish eFacts**

The performance of the stocked barramundi has been monitored with leading fisheries research methods including acoustic tagging and the use of listening stations. Recreational fishing in the Pondage remains closed until at least October 20th 2016 to enable further fish surveys to be undertaken.

Fisheries Victoria and a working group of anglers, the land owner and the Latrobe Council are looking at ways to ensure the fishery is well managed prior to any re-opening of this special fishery.

[Source- Fisheries Media Release Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016 Photo Fish e Facts 392 7<sup>th</sup> July](#)

## Gippsland Lakes and Mulloway

Readers will remember that startling report of the two mulloway that were caught in the Gippsland Lakes by Mark Ramsay and Stuart Hinson earlier in the year. I have just had a message from Mark Ramsay that will be of interest to anglers who fish the Gippsland Lakes.

Mark writes

“G’day Lynton, we have just had contact with Dr Lauren Veale. She tells us that the second mulloway was definitely in spawning mode, which is totally different to mulloway in other estuaries.(December and November)

So this is the question. Are the Gippsland Lakes fish a different subspecies that have adjusted to the Gippsland Lakes, or are they the same as the rest and they come in and wait for the right conditions/

It will be interesting times in October and November when I will be targeting them next.

Regards Mark Ramsay.”



Mark with his Gippsland Lakes Mulloway caught earlier this year

“The contentment which fills the mind of an angler at the close of his days sport is one of the chiefest charms of his life.” ...William Cowper Prime

### Editor

Readers will recall that Dr Lauren Veale is an aquatic ecologist who is currently undertaking a three year study of mulloway financed by Recreational Licence fees. This study involves using the frames of mulloway to determine the boundaries of the mulloway and genetic background of this species. Readers might remember that Mark Ramsay noted that one of the two mulloway caught in the Gippsland Lakes was carrying eggs and this raises the question as to whether the mulloway were going to spawn in the Gippsland Lakes. It does seem possible that other anglers might catch a mulloway in the coming season and it would add to the research work of Dr Veale if the frame of any mulloway is kept and we could organise for it to be collected and the information obtained added to the important research work being carried out. It is worth remembering that large mulloway have been caught in the Mallacoota Lakes, and the Gippsland Lakes have a remarkable history of catches of large mulloway.

## Bonanza for Commercial Fishermen

### Flood Event Means Major Fish Kill 6/7/2016

In the last week East Gippsland has suffered from an “East Coast Low” that brought 3-4 inches of rain locally and 6-8 inches in the surrounding hills. As a result the three rivers (Tambo, Mitchell and Nicholson) are in flood and roads have been cut. The Tambo River has broken its bank and stretches over a wide area of flats and at the same time cutting the Metung Road flooding the Johnsonville Launching ramps and surrounds. I have just been to the Johnsonville area and watched several concerned boat owners who were using long poles to deflect logs and rubbish that was currently being pushed down the river by the severe current.

These conditions of course mean that recreational anglers will expect the commercial fishermen of the Gippsland Lakes to move their nets to the mouth of rivers to net the black bream forced from the rivers by the flooding flow of fresh water resulting from the rain of the last three days.

The last major comparable flood in these rivers was in 2007/8, however there have been many small rises in the rivers that have resulted in increases in the bream catch. It would appear that the current flood will lead to a major fishkill in commercial nets.

#### **The 2007/8 Flood Event**

The commercial catch of black bream in 2006/7 was 49 tonnes.

**The commercial catch of black bream in the 2007/8 flood event was 144 tonnes.**

The commercial catch of black bream in 2008/9 was 36 tonnes.

From these official catch statistics it would seem clear that almost 100 tonnes of black bream were netted at the mouth of the rivers as a direct result of the 2007/8 flood event.

#### **The 2016/17 Flood Event**

**It would seem highly possible that the current flood will result in a similar fish kill as that which occurred in 2007/8.**

It is not just the weight of fish taken in nets at the mouth of rivers that troubles anglers it is the fact that these fish entered the rivers to spawn and a mature female may release between 300,000 and 3 million eggs in a season. No fishery can survive this loss of mature female fish.



The Tambo River out over its banks. This view is from the Bluff at Johnsonville and

Below- the Johnsonville jetty underwater



Left- The Tambo River below our home at Swan Reach. The road under the bridge and the Metung Road were both closed for two days until water receded. The River is still very high and very dirty.

**Around the Jetties on Line [www.laketyersbeach.net.au](http://www.laketyersbeach.net.au)**

**Your editor is slowly mending and we hope to be back to a full issue next month. Keep your photos and reports coming in. Many thanks for all contributors.**

**Good Health and Good fishing. Lynton Barr.**