

Issue 194

TROUT FISHER

Fly focused but totally transferable

Spring 2025



WAIOEKA WEEKEND

North vs South ~ Our Backyard Spoils Us ~ Cressy Cane 2026

Modern Hollow-Built Bamboo Rods: Old Is New Again

My Nail Polish Collection ~ Three Mile Dam ~ Flyfishing in Wales

USE YA B\$0&*#Y INDICATORS!

Issue 194

TROUT FISHER

Fly focused but totally transferable

Spring 2025

ISSN 2230-6420 No part of this magazine may be reproduced without permission of the publisher. Any articles carrying a © copyright symbol also require permission of the author(s). All enquires to Peter Storey: peter@nztroutfisher.co.nz.

Cover: Ideal habitat for Rainbow Trout (John Gommans)



WAIOEKA WEEKEND

2

A report of John Gommans and Clive Shaw visit to the eastern Urewera National Park river last December.

Loops or Rings?

12

Peter Storey focuses on leader to tippet connections, aiming to land even larger selective Te Arawa Lakes rainbows with finer tippets, in 2025/26.



Our Backyard Spoils Us

16

French on Fishing with Daryl French features Lake Otamangakau, the Whanganui and Hinemaiaia river and the Ngongotaha Stream.

Modern Hollow-Built Bamboo Rods: Old Is New Again

22

Chris Fiddes explores the history of hollow cane rod building.



HOLLOWING: Cressy Cane 2026

30

Nick Taransky expands on the characteristics of hollow cane and how these will be demonstrated in next year's Cressy Cane symposium in Tasmania.

North vs South

34

Todd Storey compares Lakes Tekapo and Tarawera.



"USE YA B\$0&*#Y INDICATORS!" 40

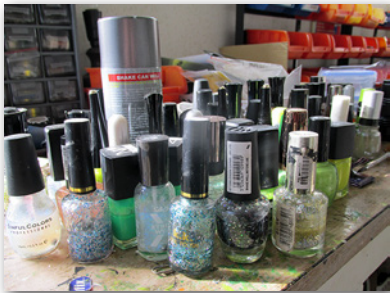
Andrew Harding features his sliding and 'shuttlecock' indicator setups, when and how to use them.



Fly-fishing in Wales

52

A visit to the River Usk with Nick Moody.



My Nail Polish Collection

62

Part 11 of Confessions of an Addicted Salmon Angler, by Larry Burke.

New Tackle

68

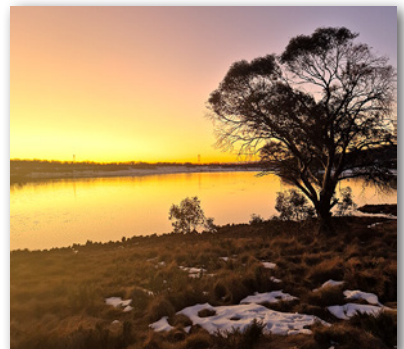
From Manic Tackle Project.



Waitaki One Pan Trout

70

Wild to the Table with Tony Smith features a simple one pot camp meal.



Three Mile Dam

74

Matt Hoole visits one of the lesser-known Snowy Mountains stillwaters in Spring and the depths of Winter.



Pools, boulders and rapids, ideal Rainbow Trout habitat . . .

WAIOEKA WEEKEND

By John Gommans ©







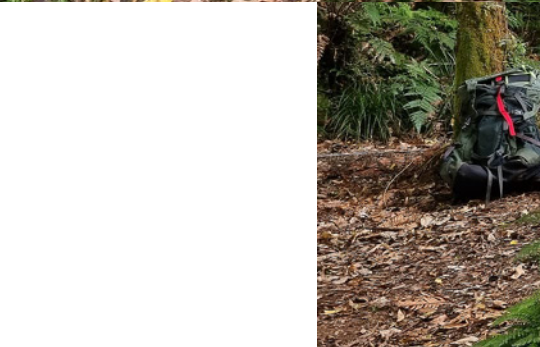
Clive's explorations of East Coast trout fishing options included the upper reaches of the Waioeka River, on the Bay of Plenty side of the ranges between Gisborne and Opotiki. He suggested this would be a suitable overnight trip to test how my back was recovering from a flare of sciatica.

So, despite an iffy weather forecast, early on a cloudy December Saturday morning we drove inland via State Highway 2 towards Opotiki, through the vineyards, past Matawai and over the ranges, following the road downhill beside the Opato Stream until its junction with the Waioeka River.

Here we turned left onto Wairata Road, swapping from tarseal to gravel, and after a couple of kilometres crossed to the true left via Redpath Road, continuing upstream until the end of the publicly accessible road. We parked our car in the designated area, donned our boots and packs, and set off; following the marked route across farmland toward the forest margins and the beginning of the track to Nikau Flat Hut.

Signs indicated that this was 'closed' because of a recent apparently impassable landslide on a steep section near the hut. However, our destination was a campsite Clive had previously found well before the obstacle, requiring only a short detour off the track to the river's edge. The tent was hastily erected, packs were abandoned and fishing could start.







The Waioeka River arises in native forest and its upper reaches clear relatively rapidly after rain. There are numerous pools, boulders and rapids; ideal habitat for rainbow trout and we had an enjoyable afternoon catching mainly 2-3 pounders. Despite their size they provided plenty of fight in the swift-flowing water. Late afternoon we exited the river, scrambled up to the track and walked back to the campsite with two pan sized trout. After collecting dry wood, lighting the fire, and cleaning and preparing the fish we settled in for a relaxing riverside dinner while watching three eels in the pool below; attracted by the blood from our dinner preparations.







*Despite their size they
provided plenty of fight in
the swift-flowing water.*









Sunday morning was overcast but dry with no significant wind. Perfect conditions, so we hiked up the track to yesterday's exit point and had another great day fishing our way further up river. Again mainly 2-3 pounders but with the occasional larger one for variety. We eventually passed below the slip that took out the track and stopped for lunch at the Nikau Flat Hut before continuing upriver. However, the clouds were steadily becoming darker with rain menacing, so despite many kilometres of fishable river available above us, we decided on an early turn around. We re-joined the track below the slip, hastily made our way back to the campsite, packed away our fishing gear and retraced our route back to the car, reaching it just as rain started. A great Waioeka weekend away.



Loops or Rings?

Talking Plenty with Peter Storey

It's been quiet here since the lake closed to boat fishing. After a relatively warm Autumn and early Winter, the lake finally turned over at the end of July and as at early August, even though Dabchicks are already nesting, there is still no obvious change in that scenario. Late August and September generally bring longer and warmer days, however, and typically, combined with many fish returning from local spawning, this creates better shoreline sport. However, I am definitely looking forward to Opening Day and currently far more comfortable canoe fishing. This update kindly provided by Matt Osborne at Eastern suggests everything is looking good for October 1 too . . .

'The trapping season at the Fish & Game fish trap (Te Wairoa Stream) at Lake Tarawera started on the 1st of April following trap installation. As of the 31st of July 2025, we have trapped 1957 fish. This compares to 1906 during 2024 to the same date. The average size of the trout running this winter (to the 31st of July) is 593mm and 2.62kg compared with 577mm and 2.52kg to the same period during the 2024 run. Wild origin fish have contributed 22% of the run to the 31st of July 2025 compared to 28% over the same period in 2024.

Wild origin fish this winter have been 558mm long and 2.22kg in weight. They are both significantly larger (12mm) and heavier (51g) on average than the 2024 wild fish ($P < 0.001$ for both variables). The hatchery marked fish up to 31st of July 2025 have been 602mm long and 2.74kg in weight, which is significantly longer (13mm, $P < 0.001$) and significantly heavier (69g, $P < 0.001$) than the fish running the Te Wairoa Stream during the 2024 winter to the same point. We have 1 fish exceeding 10 pounds processed through the trap this winter. This was the first through and officially weighed through Te Wairoa in the past 20 years. A total of 3 fish have exceeded 700mm in length with 8 over 690mm, so the frames are there – they just need some finishing.

We have had some mighty flows through the Te Wairoa Stream in late July that have caused some damage to the internal trap structure. We experienced 130mm on the 30th of June. When water level allows, we will attempt to straighten things up and continue the trapping through till the end of August.

Our latest drift dive tout counts at the outlet resulted in 1082 large size class trout recorded. This was well behind the record July 2024 count (1600), but just ahead of the past 15-year-average (932).

Monitoring points to the 2025 season being an earlier spawning run, quite possibly due to the excellent condition fish found themselves in during late autumn and early winter. Unfortunately, this meant some of the late season lake angling was challenging up to the close of play at the end of June.

We are expecting some very good fish across all the lakes fisheries at 1 October when the new season begins, so make sure you are ready along with the new licences which will be on sale from September.'

Larger, well-conditioned, selective rainbow trout present the greatest challenge when fishing the lake in daylight. Aiming to focus their first point of attention onto your lure, whichever direction they may approach it from, they force you to use finer tippet diameter than common sense suggests, attempting to make that tippet harder to spot while adding maximum freedom of movement to the lure.

Like most 'boomers', I began flyfishing using hand-built tapered nylon leaders. Then, during the 1980 and 90's, braided and then copolymer leaders arrived and I have used both ever since in open water. River or lake, whatever the material and diameter, they present a long tippet so well across the widest range of flyfishing scenarios. Recently, they have also replaced furred leaders in the tightest.



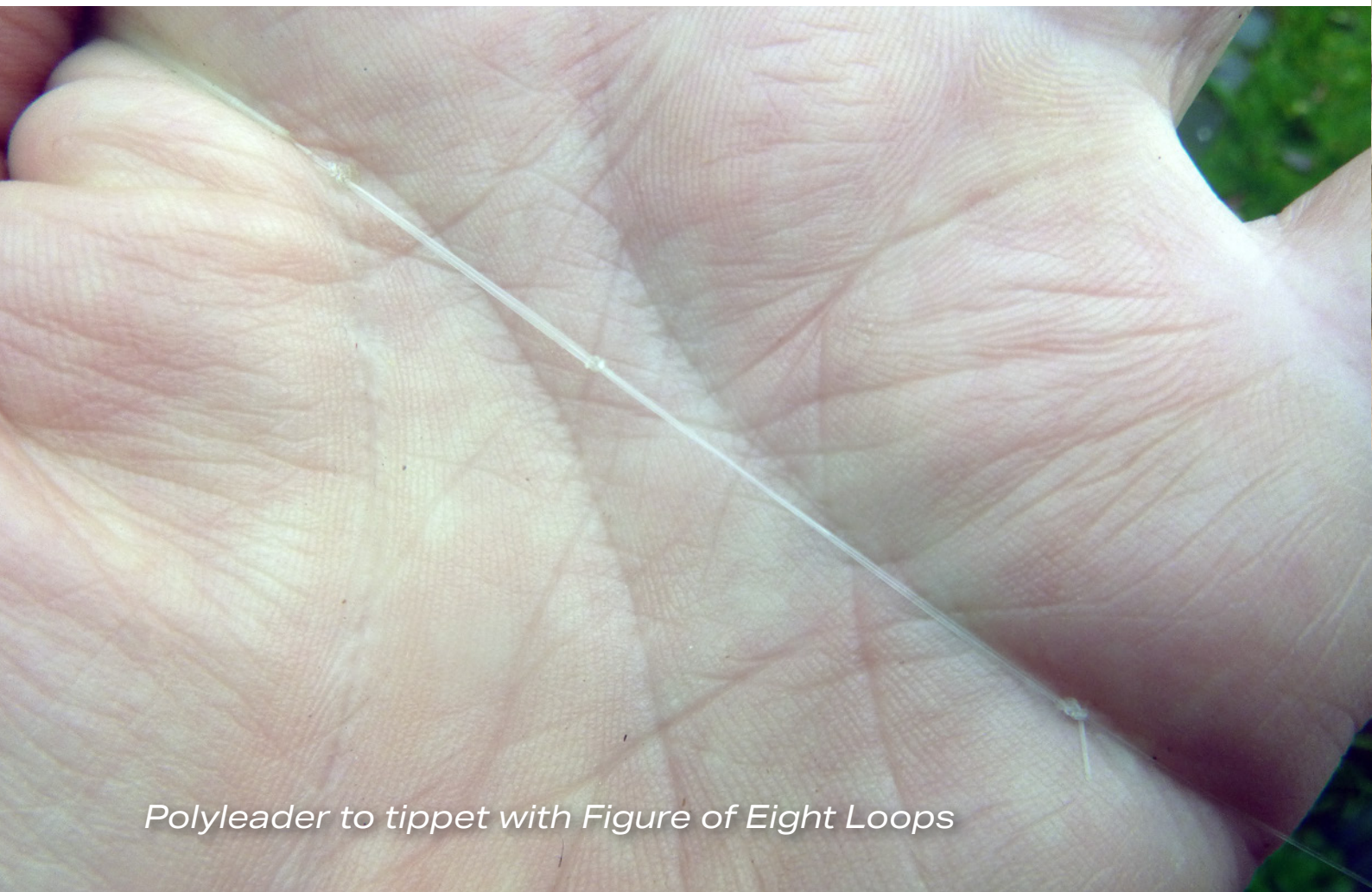
The condition of maiden rainbows in Lake Tarawera has been increasing ever since the 10,000pa stocking regime was adopted and Fish & Game monitoring, combined with another generally mild Winter and personal results, suggest this will continue next season. The bulge in this 2.6kg wild fish's gut was purely fat . . .



. . . and in its mouth, Ratropinna.



Braided leaders came with built-in tippet loops and are still unquestionably my preference for river fishing, because they are considerably lighter than polyleaders and therefore, create minimum impact. Polyleaders can be joined to tippet with a blood knot of course, but doing so immediately shortens their working life. At typically 12lb breaking strain, tying a loop at the tippet end solves this problem. You can also use a micro ring of course but, especially in a lake, that immediately introduces an eye-catching object into the possible strike zone, without a hook attached. Run pumice or similar lightly over loop to loop connections and they become about as passive as it's possible to get with synthetic materials . . .



Polyleader to tippet with Figure of Eight Loops

What's the best loop knot? In my opinion it's the Figure of Eight Why? Well, firstly because I learnt it as a 16 year-old Outward Bounder for mountaineering, have fallen on it while climbing many times and so, trust it. Secondly, because it's easy to tie into fine nylon in poor light without glasses. Thirdly, because the just-as-easy Surgeon's Knot creates an offset loop (with less knot strength in my opinion). Lastly, because it carries double strands throughout the knot, where the far-too-complicated-for-poor-light-and-no-glasses Perfection Loop does not. There's an excellent video of it being tied in fishing nylon linked to the photo to the right.

Tie it carefully, moisten the knot before closing tightly and test as close to breaking strain as possible. If this knot keeps breaking, buy new tippet.

October 1 is now weeks away and only two things are going to keep me off the lake that day, bad weather to make using the canoe unsafe and the operation now needed to make wading lakes and rivers fully viable again.

Loops or Rings, Tight Lines in 2025/26!





Surgeon Knot Loop



Perfection Loop



Figure of Eight Loop



Our Backyard Spoils Us

French on Fishing with Daryl French ©

I haven't written much for a while, as I been happily hunting here in the Bay of Plenty, and fishing around the Taupo region. Spots that have been treating me particularly well are Lake Otamangakau, the Hinemaiaia and the Whanganui.

Lake Otamangakau has treated me very well over the last 12 months, with boating as the preferred method. One of the best boat or float tube rigs is as follows. Tie your bottom fly, a yellow snail – yes, believe it, that fly imitates a snail, about 3 feet below a damsel fly or blood worm, then add another 7 feet to your indicator, which is made of mic fly foam, and then another 2 feet to your main line. Ideally your boat will have a Minn Kota to control your drift, but at a minimum you will need a drogue to slow you down.



But where to fish? The lake has large patches of weed, with channels and holes in between. It's these channels you want to drift through, so study the wind to allow this. If the sun is out, then watch out for the deeper holes and cast to land in them as you go past. The fish normally take slowly, so strike hard if you see the slightest movement of the indicator. Even if you do land in what you think is a bit of a weedy patch, just don't move it, as often your flies will sit just in between the weed, and only hook up when you move them. If you are





Clockwise:

*Daryl and Murray Denyer with
Otamangakau rainbow and brown;
Don't for get the Whanganui;
A good snail pattern.*

having no luck after a decent go, check the water temperature and if needed, go to another part of the Lake where the temperature is a little higher.

To end on a note that might just get you a bit keen to give Lake O a try, in the last 3 trips we have taken a double figure fish, or near to one every trip. The one I am pictured with towed us 150m and took 25 minutes to get to the net.

Also, when over that way don't forget the Whanganui. This river often doesn't colour at the same time as some of the other central North Island rivers, and for some reason a dry-dropper will take fish like this most of the year round.



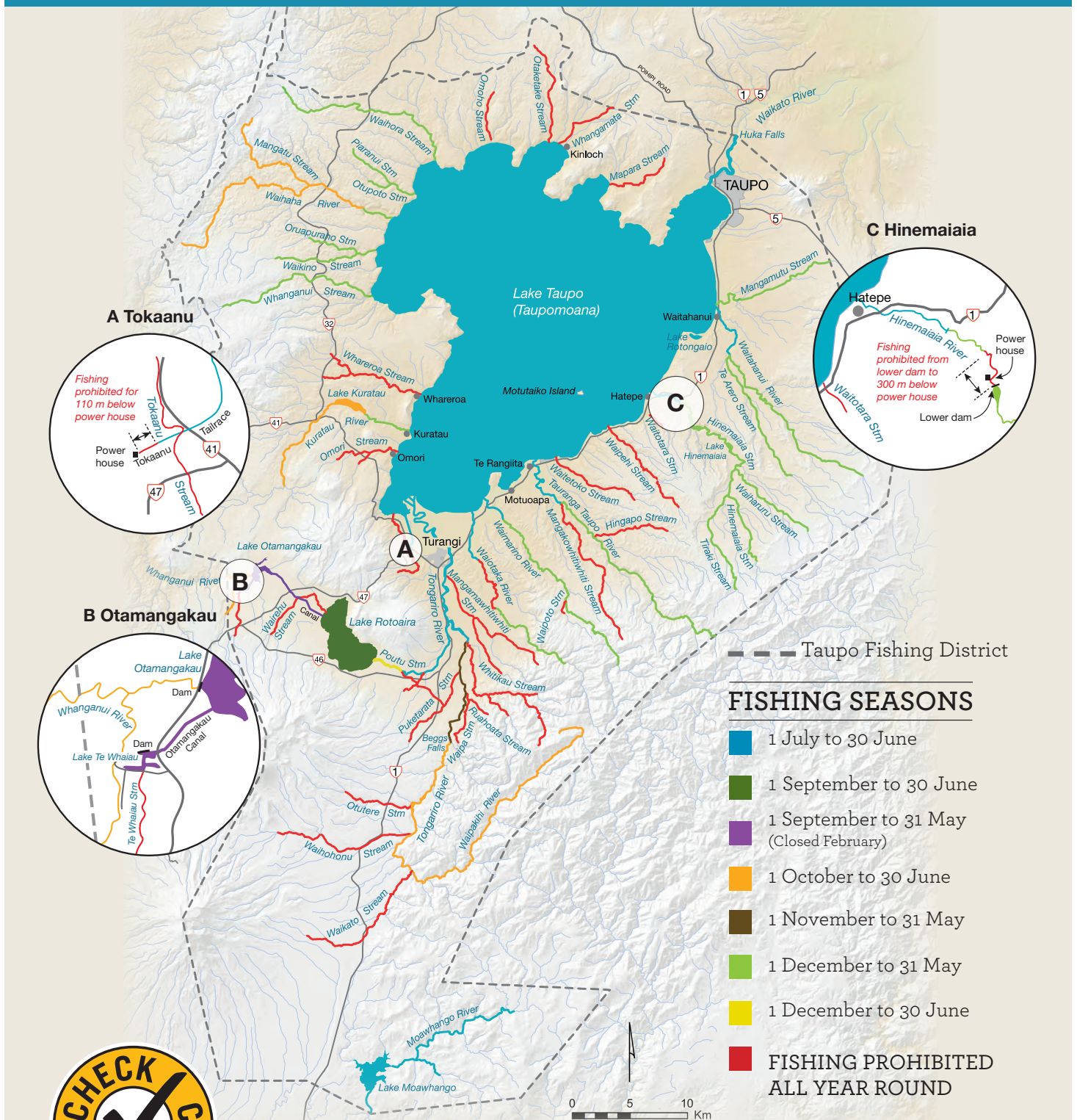


The Hine has provided a lot of sport. The fish are not as big as Lake O, but normally you can hook up over a dozen in a decent pool and some of the larger ones will leave you reaching for some new nylon to replace what has just been busted off. Even when you do get one to the net, photographing it proves a very slippery affair, as my wife attests to in the photo.



TAUPO FISHING DISTRICT

A Taupō Fishing District Licence allows the primary licence holder access on foot over the designated lakeshore and riverbank rights of way. It does not permit access or fishing rights to Lake Rotoaira, or access over any other private land including Motutaiko Island.



BETWEEN WATERWAYS



www.facebook.com/FishTaupo



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Now with all this good fishing around, I must admit I haven't paid enough attention to what is right in my backyard, and that is the Ngongotaha. Recently a marketing colleague of mine was engaged by Paradise Valley Lodge to look at extending their reach into the overseas visitor market. I was invited along by new owner Heather to check out the Lodge, and of course the fishing.

Well, I was very pleasantly surprised on both accounts. The main lodge is a fisherman's dream to hang out and even in the attached Homestead, I could find a fire and a red wine to relax, and when I was finished with all that there was a nice hot Spa to top off the night.

The fishing was also rewarding. I have fished this river for years, but I had never fished through the water that borders the lodge, and so all the pools were new. Staying right on onsite meant I was first on the river and had three good hits right off the lodge track.

I landed one typically Lake Rotorua-sized feisty rainbow, dropped another, and had a trophy brown break me off after a 30m run up stream and around a few well-placed logs. There were probably another three good pools I didn't touch, as they needed a bit of studying to work out how to fish them. They can't have been fished much in the past, as they were full of fish. However, maybe if I engaged one of my guiding mates to help sort out the technique, I could have had more luck sooner than later.

Finally, I have to say the total experience at the Lodge is way ahead of what I expected. The fishing is all within easy reach, and plenty of it. The place has its own charm and so, good luck to Heather and her team in their future endeavours.







Modern HOLLOW-BUILT Bamboo Rods: OLD IS NEW again

By Chris Fiddes

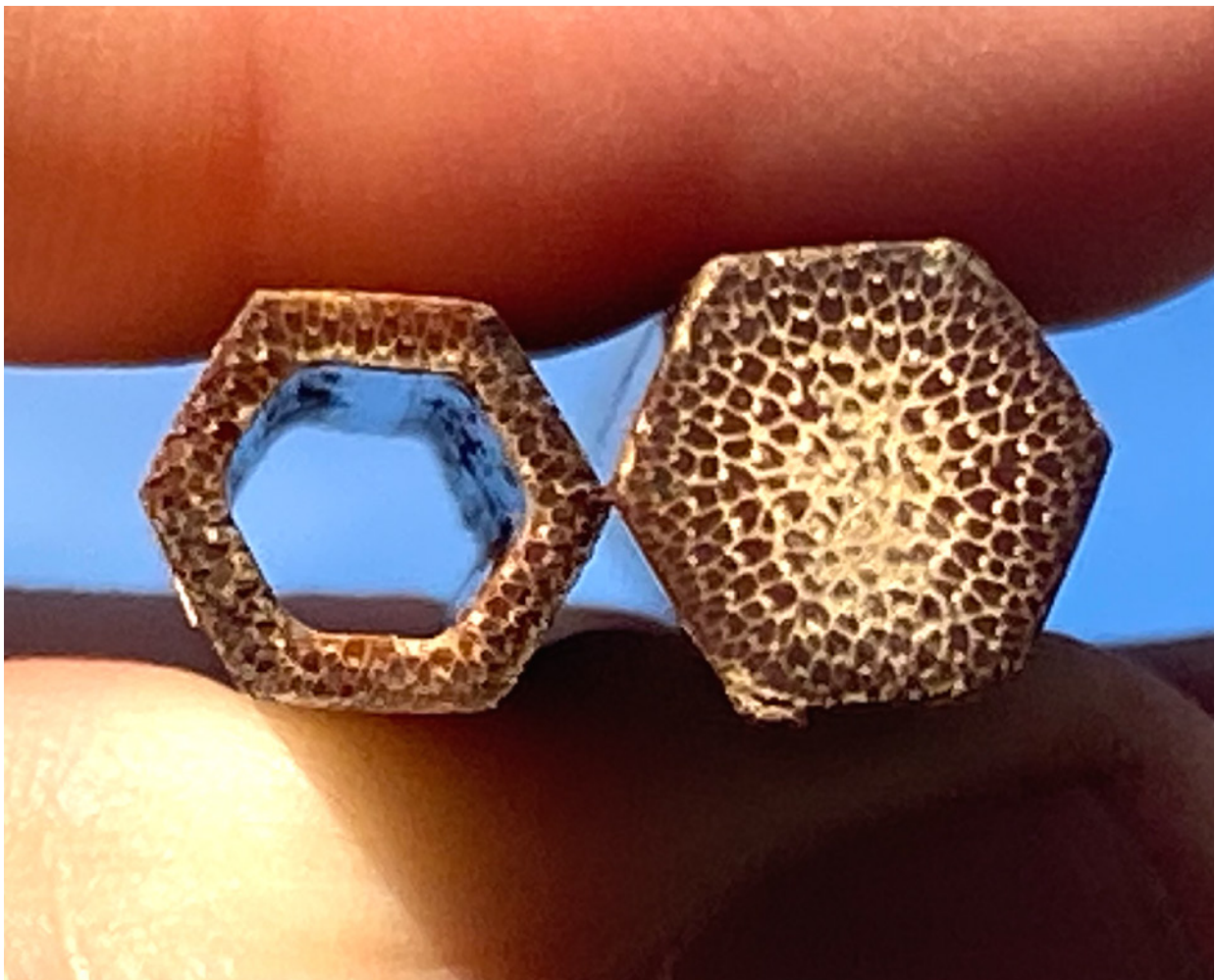


This century has seen a renaissance of Bamboo Fly Rods as serious angling tools. It's been driven by a growing body of professional and passionate amateur makers and by anglers who place a premium on things crafted and handmade, that are natural and renewable, both having a growing desire for a more ethical approach to their interactions with nature in the pursuit of their favourite sport.

Where once bamboo was the epitome of ancient regime and establishment there is now more than a hint of counterculture, significantly in modern building techniques, and especially hollowing. These have allowed longer lighter bamboo rods with a crisp action that still maintain the classic bamboo feel and shine at presenting the fly.

Hollow building as a technique has likely been practiced ever since the 6 strip hexagonal bamboo rod was invented. It involves basically what the name implies, removing part of the apex of each of the six equilateral triangle bamboo strips that comprise the rod to leave an internal hollow. This preserves the crucial external power fibres which do the work while removing the unnecessary central pith that contributes little.

Hollowing really came to prominence in the 1930s casting competitions in California, however. Here, weight restrictions on competing rods led inventive makers to experiment, seeking longer rod that still came within the target weight. The results were astounding and swiftly, two Californian makers registered patents; the Winston Rodshop, for a fluting method of hollowing and *EC Powell*, for the Scallop and Dam method. Commercial success followed and very soon after Hardy's in England, Pezon et Michel in France and Sigurd Vangren in Norway were also offering commercially hollow rods. This continued until fibreglass and then graphite sounded the death knell of split cane, or so it seemed.



Interestingly, the modern rediscovery of hollowing has occurred spontaneously in several different parts of the world, more or less contemporaneously, with at least 4 separate schools of hollow rodmaking now recognisable in recognition of the unique casting characteristics of bamboo and the advantages offered by modern hollowing techniques.

Most prominently on the West Coast of America is a school of longer lighter trout rods for mainly Western US and Californian angling, with rods up to 9' for 4-6 weight lines. Well known makers of this school include Per Brandin, Jim Reams, Mario Wojnicki, Jim Hidy, Chris Vance, AJ Thrasher, Eugene Powell, and groundbreaking experimenters like *Wayne Maca* (completely hollow rods with space age glues), Mike Montagne (rectangular quad configuration), Tom Morgan Rodsmiths (inventors of the famed HandMill) and of course the *Winston rod shop*, now based in Montana, which remains the only commercial company with a continuous tradition of hollow built bamboo. It is worth noting that classic hollow rods from the 30s casting competitions built by Winston and Powell very rarely come up for sale ... their owners hold onto them.

Quite separately in France Daniel Bremond and Jocelyn de Lespinay experimented in the 1980s & 90s with hollowing as documented in Jocelyn's 1990 book *La Cane a Mouche* (written in French) with shorter, stiffer bamboo rods and a hollowing method known as Alveolaire for a casting action similar to Charles Ritz's High Line High Speed method. These rods proved a natural partner for the modern Italian Casting School that has swept European dry fly angling and many rod makers in the Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association, especially Alberto Poratelli, who pioneered the *Shark Tooth* method of building. These rods tend to be around 7'6" with a stiffer, faster action designed for the long leaders and Italian style slack line and fly first presentations ... some see the Italian Style Casting Dry Fly school as the less well known sibling to the Euro nymphing techniques .



Classic Italian Style Casting water in the French Pyrenees



In Japan, the rise in popularity of fly fishing found in bamboo rodmaking a natural affinity with the Japanese respect for skilled artisans and natural materials. Many self-taught makers of the highest calibre experimented with more flexible rods in very light line weights suited to native trout species and waters, while at the same time maintaining an international outlook. Half of the modern rod makers profiled in Yuki Bando's book, *'Mostly Bamboo'* employ hollowing. Japan has also seen significant experimentation with hollowing methods including the T construction method of *Masaki Takemoto*, and the A8 rod of *Hidenobu Kotake*. These Japanese rods, which often utilise traditional methods such as the beautiful Urushi lacquer and indigenous bamboo species like Madake, are highly sought after by collectors and casting fanatics.



On the Mataura with a 8'6 hollow bamboo rod made by the author based on a Powell A taper





TroutSpey in NZ



*Bamboo on classic NZ
freestone water*



In the Pacific Northwest many dedicated Salmon and Steelhead anglers recognised the unique characteristics of Bamboo rods for anchored casting techniques and developed modern hollow Spey, Switch and TroutSpey rods, often utilising spliced joins or lighter weight composite fibreglass ferrules. This trend is exemplified by rod makers *Bob Clay* of Riverwatch rods and *James Reid* in British Columbia, whose rods have a cult following worldwide amongst Spey casters .

Here in the Antipodes the Bamboo renaissance has a strong strain of commonsense utilitarianism focused on local conditions. This has been driven by the Cressy Cane gathering, Nick Taransky's rodmaking classes and recently, KiwiCane in Ohakune.

To generalise Antipodean rodmaking, it would be the search for the universal rod suited to both Backcountry NZ and to stalking the lakes of Tassie's central plateau, with some very interesting makers focusing on Switch, Spey and Saltwater rods. There have been torchbearers in both countries in the preceding years as documented in Jim Jones's upcoming book. Special mentions here should go to Nick as the premier maker in the Antipodes, whose craftsmanship has an international reputation and whose classes taught so many of us, and to passionate amateur makers such as Ian Kearney in New Zealand and Peter McKean in Tasmania.

So what are modern hollow bamboo rods like to cast? Firstly, it is important to say they are neither Graphite nor intending to be so, and will never match Graphite for ultra long Euro nymphing rods or super-fast heavy line weight rods .

Bamboo, however built, will always be more flexible and this imparts feel into casting, probably the most desirable characteristic to bamboo aficionados. Even when hollowed bamboo will still be a little heavier than graphite, and this can have some advantages, especially for anglers like John Geirach who like a little swing and momentum in their rod actions, making casts more adjustable at regular trout distances and protecting tippets better than stiffer rods.

Relative to a solid bamboo rod there will be a weight reduction in the blank of up to 30%, depending on the degree of hollowing, and a flexibility increase of ~5%, resulting in a reduced swing weight and moment of inertia (i.e. a better power to weight ratio), improved damping and rod recovery, and a lighter line weight as per the *Common Cents System* ... all desirable casting characteristics. Importantly, if done in the mid and tip sections, these increases are multiplied by the lever effect, being further away from the rod's fulcrum at the grip, and will allow generation of higher line speeds with less tip bounce than with solid bamboo rods, especially in longer rod lengths.

Consider the opinion on hollow bamboo rods of the great Glen Brackett of Winston, in Ed Engles book 'Splitting Cane' ... "I think they are a far better fishing tool. You don't have to beat yourself up all day trying to make the rod bend. They are also much better for Roll casting and Spey casting than graphite... Doug Merrick used to say the test of a well designed rod is how it roll casts ... Bamboo is just a great material if you design around it properly. It has that reserve power that graphite never has. It loads smoothly over a continuum."

This smooth loading over a range of casting distances is a feature highly sought by anglers casting bamboo fly rods and is wonderfully suited to modern Antipodean angling ... short casts on bush creeks, stalk and snipe on clear rivers or lakes, or taking a once-only shot at distance.

It is worth noting a bamboo rods action will still be primarily determined by its taper (the angle of change from thick butt to thin tip) and here modern hollow building allows the maker greater scope to adjust the taper in achieving desired rod actions. So for example, increasing the taper by ~ 5% will yield the same flex curve but still have a substantial weight reduction, whereas increasing the taper a little more produces a stiffer but still lighter rod, and reducing it, a much more flexible rod. An amazingly wide range of rod actions can be achieved. The key for hollowing is a thorough understanding of taper design.



A photograph of a person holding a rainbow trout on a rocky riverbank. The person is wearing a green long-sleeved shirt and a fishing vest. A bamboo fishing rod is lying on a large grey rock in the foreground. The background shows a river and a forest of evergreen trees under a clear blue sky.

Professional makers have historically closely held their techniques and degrees of hollowing, known as the “internal taper”, as proprietary information that they have invested considerable R&D into, a large part being safety margins for a rods intended use and making the rod flex or resist where they want it to during a cast. This if you like is part of the mystery and allure of bamboo, the synergy of maker and taper that is so addictive for bamboo fans .

For the amateur these gaps in our knowledge have prompted the Cressy Cane group to propose a hollowing experiment at the next gathering where attendees have the opportunity to compare rods made with identical external parameters but varied hollowing techniques. As far as we are aware this has not been publicly attempted before and we are very excited to see what the measurable results and subjective casting evaluations of casting experts will be .

And we hope to have as many fans of classic rods and curious anglers attend as possible, to try a cast with them. It should be a great event, lots of fun, and contribute substantially to our knowledge. We hope also to present a selection of these experiment rods at the following Kiwicane in NZ, for makers to cast and consider

The author on the Tongariro in 2024, fishing a Jim Reams hollow bamboo rod







HOLLOWING *Cressy Cane 2026*

By Nick Taransky

*Adjusting the power to
weight ratio of bamboo
to optimise performance
and comfort . . .*



After the successful 2024 Kiwi Cane rodmaking gathering, we made the decision to alternate the event with the Cressy Cane event, as well as a year's break in between. This gives time for people to make new rods and come up with a fresh program.

With this in mind, we have a really exciting agenda for the upcoming 2026 Cressy Cane, to be held from the 17th to 19th of April. Chris Fiddes has taken a very keen interest in hollow building bamboo, so he has taken the lead in organising a hollow building project. This will take the form of people making variations of two alternative E C Powell "B9" Tapers – one an 8 footer, and the other 8'6". E C Powell made rods based on 3 different taper regimes, A, B and C. "A" tapers had increasing taper down the rod (concave profile), creating a more powerful butt and lighter tip. "B" tapers were essentially linear. "C" tapers had reducing taper (convex profile), with a flatter butt section and heavier tip. More can be read about EC Powell, and his tapers and rods in Per Brandon's excellent book, "A Fly Rod with Soul".

From my perspective, I see hollowing as one of many variables that can be incorporated into making a quality rod. These include, bamboo species and quality, base taper, heat treating regime, adhesive type, bamboo surface finish, number of sections, ferrule type, and more.

In specific regard to hollowing, I believe that there are some rods that benefit from hollowing, and some where hollowing doesn't result in an improvement, or can even be a negative. Shorter rods, say under 7 feet, can benefit from the extra weight of solid construction helping to "pre-load" the rod during casting. Weight can also help to sync the rod cycle rate with the unrolling of the loop and extension of the line. I also personally prefer the feel of momentum and "drive" in a solid, heavier rod in some mid length rods up to 8 feet.



Where I think hollowing has real application is in longer rods, of 8 feet or more, where the weight of solid rods can become a negative factor in both performance and fishing comfort. Obvious cases are Switch and Spey rods, where the higher power to weight ratio from hollowing can improve technical performance as well as comfort. I spent a fantastic session recently with Taupo-based guide and two handed casting guru, *Kunio Oshini*, on the Tongariro, with my prototype 10 foot, #4 weight "Trout Spey", hollow made in Tonkin Cane. I look forward to doing more of

it, both on the Tongariro and closer to home on the Rangitikei. My casting could do with a little practise! Kunio said something along the lines of, "how can such a bad Spey caster make such a nice rod?"

A question that comes up often is whether hollow bamboo rods are more fragile than solid rods. To me, to a large extent, it's about the degree of hollowing and the rod wall thickness. I met a commercial maker in the USA whose hollowing was so extreme that the bamboo walls were translucent in the sunlight. As impressive as this seemed, his laments that a customer had broken no less than 6 tips suggest that this was taking things a bit too far! Similarly, I know someone who purchased a hollow rod with very thin walls who had a tip and then the butt explode during routine fishing. So at some point, the hollowing comes at a cost.

On the other hand makers like *Bob Clay* in British Columbia, are renowned for making resilient double and single handed hollow rods, capable of handling large Steelhead in heavy water. That has to be some testament to hollow rod resilience. Bob was kind enough to show me his hollowing process. This involves removing the apex from the bamboo in sections, creating small hollow "chambers", while leaving small solid "dams" to prevent the rod from deforming into an ellipse under load, which





Bob Clay in British Columbia . . . was kind enough to show me his hollowing process. This involves removing the apex from the bamboo in sections, creating small hollow "chambers", while leaving small solid "dams" to prevent the rod from deforming into an ellipse under load . . .



can lead to failure. He also keeps some other parts of the blank solid in areas of high stress, such as nodes, under guides, and section joints.

I have modelled my own hollowing on Bob's method. I am extremely grateful to have had the benefit of his experience as a base to work from. To date, I've only made around 15 hollow rods, starting by retaining around 30% of the wall thickness, with a resultant weight reduction of around 15% and have yet to have a failure. This is pretty conservative, and I've gone further with recent experiments. I plan to fish these rods hard through the coming season... We'll see!

This, to me, is the full benefit of projects like the one that Chris is leading for next year's Cressy Cane. All sorts of claims can be made about performance, feel and resilience, but there is no substitute for casting multiple rods, in a variety of hollowing amounts and types, side by side with some solid versions too as comparison. We stand to learn a lot from each other's work. I am really looking forward to it!

More information and updates can be found on the website: www.cressycane.org





North vs South

By Todd Storey

What do you get when two university students on study break need to rest their brains and get away from the university scene? A spontaneous road trip down to Lake Tekapo to try and catch some fish and explore the Central South Island.

On an early morning of the first day of June, my best mate Blake and I packed our gear into my small but sturdy Ford Fiesta and took the 4-hour drive down to Lake Tekapo, to spend some time together and hopefully catch a fish. The entrance to our fishing spot tested my hatchback's off-road skills, controlling a 2WD car on gravel roads and an interesting decision on my part to go down a steep break off-road meant for utes and caravans. However, we made it to our spot unscathed.

After setting up Blake's gear and making sure mine was all correct, we headed down to a small beach strip just in front of the Motuariki Island and began casting. The first few casts were uneventful for Blake, but for me it was a different story. My reel was making strange sounds as I reeled in my line, almost impossible to describe, but I was sure this was abnormal. As we carried on, the fish began to jump, some big, some small, but there was no denying that the activity was lively and in the cold winter air, this was our best shot to hook something. For me, it was a tree branch, hooked and unable to pull it without risking a break in the line, my brain turned to the one thing that would save me from losing my fly. Get into the water. So, with nothing but my old rugby boots and a pair of shorts on, I had to venture into the frigid water and try and get to a point where I could dislodge the fly or end up swimming with the fishes to get my fly back. Luckily, I reached a suitable point for myself and the rod to become free without having to submerge and potentially get hypothermia. Note to future Todd: take a towel and extra clothes just in case this happens again. This show grabbed Blake's attention and took some lovely photos of me now fishing without a shirt in around 3°C. At least the sun was shining.

After a while, I was getting a bit concerned with my spinning rod and the sound the reel was making, so I contacted Dad to get his opinion and see what he made of the situation. While trying to explain the noise and even trying to get the sound to pick up through the phone. Bang! A fish jumped onto my hook and jumped up as I tried to reel in the line. My excitement caught both Dad and Blake's attention, only for it to be a tiny fish, barely a year old, I would say. Note to future Todd again: Call Dad when fishing, might bring you more fish, whatever magic that might be.

(The running line may simply have been threaded incorrectly. An all-too-frequent performance limiter – even after 60+ years at it! Ed.)







The longjawed galaxias is easily and immediately distinguished from all other galaxiids by the obviously protruding lower jaw. (R.M. McDowell)

Soon afterwards, as I was walking along the shore of the lake, searching for one of my flies which had disappeared from my bag, I encountered a small creamy greyish (almost transparent) fish which had found its way onto the shore. At first I thought it was a young trout or smelt but after discussing with my dad and checking *New Zealand Freshwater Fishes* (R.M. McDowell), with its prominent lower jaw, broad head, 5-6cm length and colouring, we suspect it may have been a long jawed galaxias, which are rarely seen but known to be in the area. After getting these photos and admiring its ability to come ashore, I guided it back to the water by creating a small channel for it to travel into without touching the fish. After a bit of hesitation, the fish made its way back into the lake, and while in no obvious hurry to leave the shore it finally swam its way back into the deeper waters.

It was afternoon before Blake was finally able to hook something. It was the damn tree branch I had got snagged on before but this time Blake reeled it in, to my amazement! We laughed and decided to move to a new spot. Especially since it was getting a little less active on the fish side of things. So we moved just south of the lake to the river. A plan we thought would work due to the connection between the two and since the below the power station was still open. This also turned out to be unsuccessful; a dirty flow coupled with a large amount of weed in the river, made for another unsuccessful fish. In hindsight, we should have tried Lake Pukaki, which is only another 41-minute drive east of Lake Tekapo, but at least we know the venue for future trips.

Finally, we decided to chance our hand with the Rakaia River mouth, at the Rakaia campgrounds. By the time we made it there, the ocean was vicious, with waves crashing every which way, while the entry to the mouth had already been tidally affected, making fishing around the area difficult and slightly unsafe. So, back to our respective flats to grab dinner and head back to the books, to study for our exams.



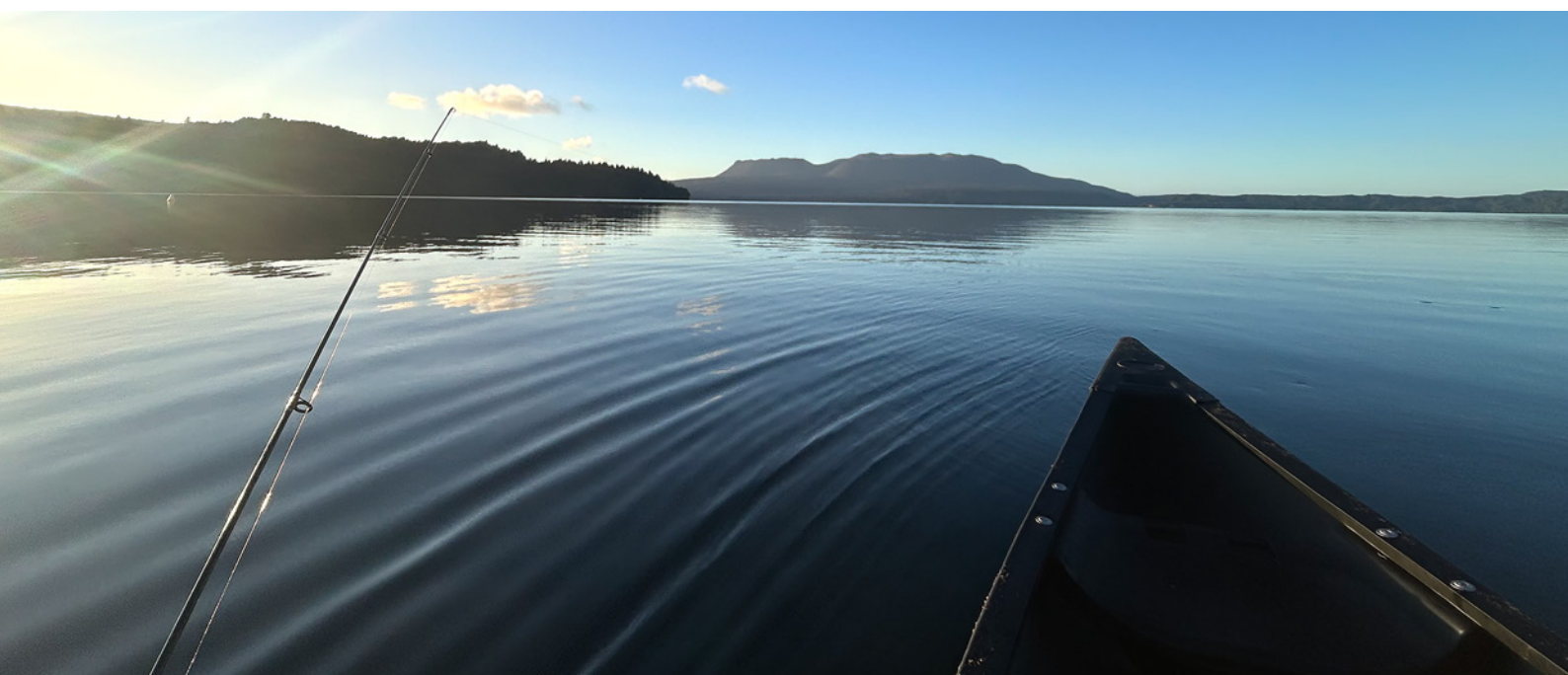




After my exams were complete, I returned home for the mid-year university break. After the fishing trip with Blake, I was extra keen to get back to fishing out on my lake, Lake Tarawera. After readjusting myself to life back at home and getting some good weather, Dad and I headed off onto the lake, to stroll around on the trusty canoe and wait for the evening fish to come. With only a slight cold breeze and the sun starting to set, all we had to do was sit and wait for any action. We chose to stroll around Te Karamea Bay, testing different areas which Dad and I had found successful previously. Sadly, that evening was uneventful for fishing. The fish just did not seem to be as energetic as I was about fishing. Maybe they had heard my loud footsteps or maybe someone had already been around to pick up the active ones. With no activity but multiple questions and stories being asked and told, we chose to pack it in before it became dark. But not everything was a miss, for this evening allowed me to spend some quality time with the man who raised me and took me out fishing since I was a baby. Someone I looked up to and cherished every moment with, especially with the longer-than-usual time away from home.

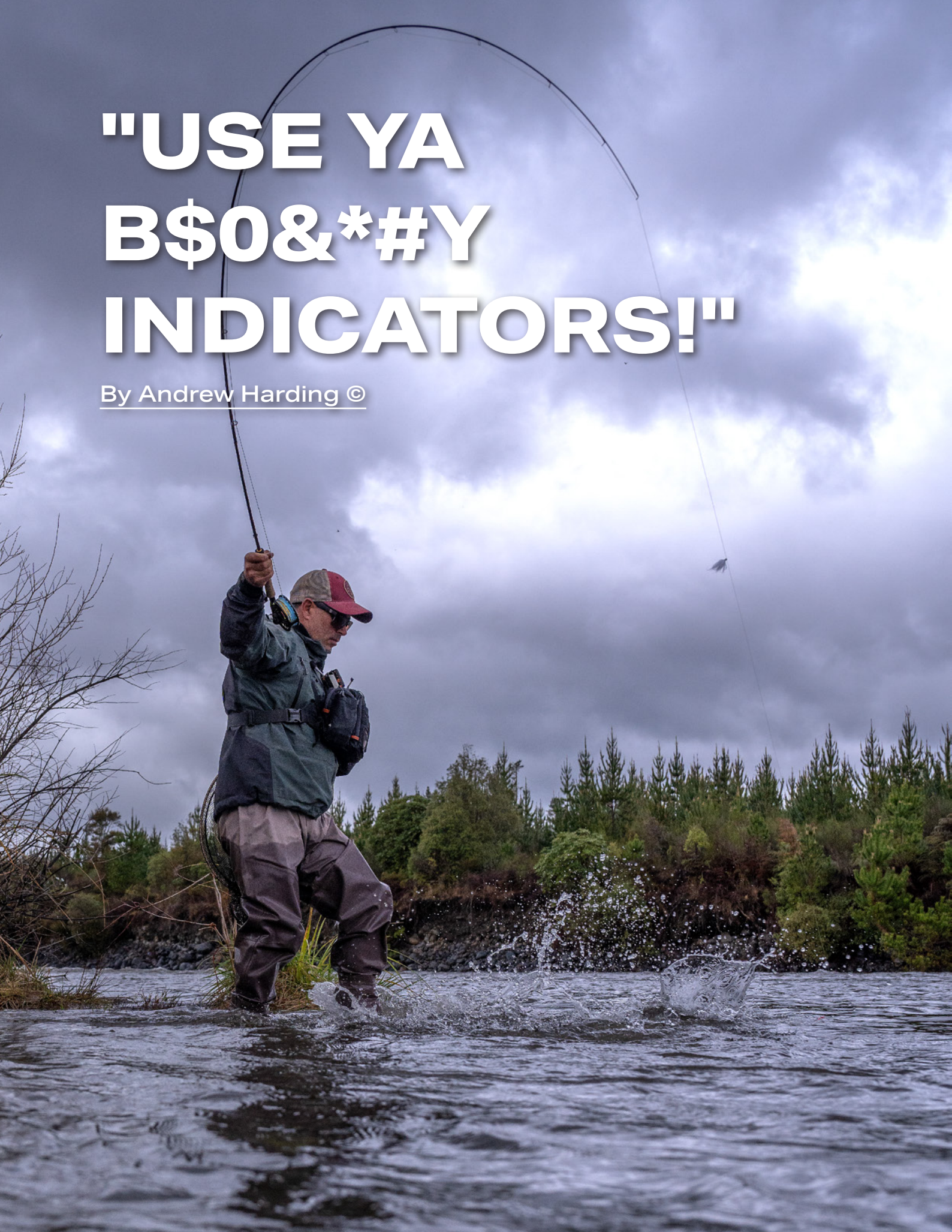
The next morning, 30 June, Closing Day for boat fishing, Dad decided to let me go out in the canoe by myself to try the waters alone while he walked the shores in his trusty waders and stick. With a coffee, net and rod in the canoe, I was off. I chose to follow a similar path we took the previous night but also towards a personal favourite area of mine where I had success in the past. The early morning sunrise combined with the quiet echoes of the canoe moving on the water, allowed me to really take in the beauty of the day and release the stresses of university. These are the moments that I missed the most. With the fish starting to get more active all around the canoe, I thought to myself it was only a matter of time until something would happen. Then, a quick pull, my mind was racing – was it a fish or was it just weed – and then it was gone, a split second of thinking what it was could have been the difference between having a fish on the hook or having an empty return. After more time on the lake with fish jumping up and down, the sun had risen, and soon after the activity began to lower. Time to return to the shore, home, more coffee and some breakfast.

All in all, while both of my fishing trips and multiple North vs South attempts resulted in a scoreless draw, my determination to continue fishing is at a new high. The ability to spend time with some of the best people in my life in a way that required nothing much other than a rod and net cannot be valued. While a fish here and there to bring down the cost of living would be preferable, it's the relaxing moments in peaceful settings that are a blessing in the busy world we live in. These small fishing events will be the most cherished parts of my life.



"USE YA B\$0&*#Y INDICATORS!"

By Andrew Harding ©



No, I'm not talking about the frustration when following a Ford Ranger driver, completely oblivious to the function of that wee stalk on their steering column... but rather the trance-like fixation we get watching a tiny piece of fluff bobbling down a rivers' current!

I was first introduced to indicator nymphing as an eager teen in the early 90's. Back then, indicator nymphing was a dirty word; it was a method that took a back seat to swinging lures on heavily-weighted shooting heads flung on broomstick 9 weight rods. Those "hoity-toity yuppies from the city and their new fan-dangled methods have no place on the mighty Tongariro with their gaudy fluffy shuttle-cocks! Trout eat meat, not tiny insects!" How far we've progressed.

More recently, we're seeing a noticeable shift from the precise, technical world of indicator nymphing, back toward the more traditional appeal of swinging large lures down and across; many anglers rediscovering the thrill of aggressive strikes, the satisfaction of covering huge amounts of water, and the simplicity of casting and letting a big fly swim with purpose. But make no mistake, there's a unique thrill in watching an indicator suddenly dip below the surface on a well-placed drift, a moment of anticipation met with surprise! As a kid I can well remember float fishing for herrings at the local wharf, the excitement when, blip... it's gone! Much like float fishing, the indicator becomes your visual lifeline to the unseen world below. Trout often take nymphs softly, without a visual cue, and these takes can easily go unnoticed. Your flies silently drifting until that subtle twitch or sharp plunge of the indicator signals a trout has taken your nymph. It's a heartbeat moment where instinct kicks in and lightning quick reflexes take over, unless you snag hard into a submerged branch, then the expletives fly...

Besides, the simple reality is, for the vast majority of the time on NZ rivers and streams, that we simply cannot see trout due to a myriad of reasons; most commonly, glare from lack of streamside vegetation, or roily fast water heads making spotting virtually impossible in the tumultuous whitewater.



When and where to use an indicator while nymphing? Do you in fact need to use one at all? I must confess to using indicators less and less each year, rather relying on a lifetime of experience and instinct in examining a trout's behaviour, scanning for the subtle clues a trout has taken your nymph, such as the flash of the mouth, the weave, the lift, or the turn and follow, all signs you're in for a hookup. Eliminating an indicator completely also has massive benefits on sighted fish where wind and tricky currents come into play. Here, going indicator-less allows a nymph to drift FAR more naturally WITH the current rather than being pulled AGAINST a current – we see this all the time, and seasoned browns can often sense an unnatural drift a mile away! Rainbows are slightly more forgiving... in fact... a LOT more forgiving! Trout are highly tuned to the way food moves in the current, and if your flies don't drift naturally, they're far more likely to be ignored. Position yourself to match the current, mend your line when required, and adjust your indicator and fly weight so your flies are ticking just above the riverbed. A convincing drift is what turns interest into takes.

But we all have to start somewhere and using such a visible clue to a take as an indicator is a godsend for new anglers to the sport; also, for those getting on in years and any others whose lesser level of eyesight can really put a downer on their time on the river.

There are practical reasons to use an indicator too. In many situations, using an indicator is a fantastic method to regulate the depth you wish to present your flies – it really does have so many similarities with traditional float fishing. This is particularly true when nymphing lakes, where you need to set your nymphs at a certain depth to be suspended just above bottom features like dense weed beds, or through a particular column of water – this can be as little as a few centimetres in some situations.







This is where sliding indicators such as the NZ Strike Indicator system come into their own, allowing, with tapered leaders, for infinite adjustment of the indicator to assist depth regulation. Of course, if you are using a multi-segment leader you cannot slide past the knots, so often, a level leader of around 0.20mm in diameter or around 5X tippet is required in stillwaters.

For rivers, the sliding indicator system is equally effective in regulating depth. Traditionally on larger river systems, like those featured in the central North Island winter rainbow runs, huge fluffy indicators tied to the loop in the end of your fly line are commonplace, often utilising hard brass clips which can damage fly line coatings very easily – unbelievably these over-sized monstrosities are still sold today in most North Island tackle shops! These clip-to-the-end-of-line indicators can work in deeper pools and in low light, because well, they are so visible! However, this comes with a trade-off... being so incredibly air resistant! It's little wonder that new anglers struggle with casting them so much. A smaller indicator, whilst slightly less visible, can be oh sooooo much easier to cast, especially in any breeze which is commonplace in high altitude fisheries.







I do on occasion use these larger “shuttle-cock” type indicators depending on conditions like high and/or discoloured water, and low light conditions, but eliminate the brass clip, instead opting for a small Dacron loop which is simply looped through the end of the fly line loop. I find with this short length of 20lb Dacron, the indicator will “follow” the direction of the line during casting, laying somewhat flush with its direction of travel, rather than standing stiff and proud constrained by the non-flexible brass clip, and the difference in castability is huge. One additional benefit is in your haste to land a fish at close quarters, where there is a steep bank behind you and you’re not able to get near the fish for netting, if your indicator is small enough, they can easily be wound through the rod tip eye and rings to allow for a better net shot. Just be aware if a large fish does a last-minute dash for freedom, that if the indicator is too big it can snag on the guides and even pop them off!









Running or stillwater, I am continually chopping down my indicator and adjusting its position in a typical day to suit individual fish at varying depths. It amazes me how rainbows especially, are so often completely oblivious to a piece of bright fluff drifting overhead; on occasion, even rising up in the water column to actually engulf the indicator! The sliding indicator system is very simple due to the fact it allows you to swiftly and cost effectively (due to the minimal amount of yarn used) change out a piece of yarn if getting too bedraggled, or you need a more visible indicator. The latest crop of pre-soaked fully synthetic hydrophobic yarn is a game-changer in regard to floatability, easily outlasting natural wool yarns 10 to 1! One of this material's other benefits is in freezing conditions, when I find the fully synthetic yarn far more pliable in sub-zero temps than traditional indicator yarns. This yarn can also be used in flytying – Glo Bugs for example – which become easily waterlogged after a short period of casting.





Technicalities aside, the most important piece of knowledge learned from years on the river and much of that time indicator nymphing is once it's drifting... **DON'T MOVE IT!**

This is simply the most common mistake anglers make indicator nymphing... throwing a mend mid-drift, but overshooting, flicking the indicator and subsequently their flies in a most unnatural manner, often smack-bang in the middle of the strike zone – mid-drift! Naturally drifting nymphs don't suddenly rise up in the blink of an eye, they can however rise slowly through the water column at times, but a sudden darting of your nymphs from a messy surface mend, will even send any trout scurrying for cover.

Instead, learning to “shoot in the bucket” is one of the most valuable nymphing techniques you can master. This involves flicking small-but-fast micro-loops from the wrist directly **AT** the indicator; specifically, throwing these small balls of slack but not moving the indicator at all in the process, hence the name “shooting in the bucket”. The benefits are you’ve now perfectly setup your drifting indicator for a larger overhead, arm-length mend whilst the nymph(s) continue to drift naturally and not moving your indicator. I really do shudder when I see anglers moving their indicators wildly, particularly on the Tongariro, when they are right in the strike zone.

Indicator colour is a personal choice. Some favour bright yellow, or chartreuse, green, pink, red and some even black for maximum contrast on the glary overcast days. I personally find it hard to go past yellow or bright green. I actually struggle to see pink on the water for some bizarre reason – perhaps why I've never been a fan of pink post dry flies! We all interpret colour differently, so there is no right or wrong in your selection. Wishing you all a drag free drift and dipping indicators this winter season and remember, once it's drifting . . .





DON'T MOVE IT!



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a brown trout vertically in a river. The person is wearing blue and white plaid trousers and camouflage-patterned socks. The trout has a brown body with numerous dark spots. The background shows the river water and a large, dark rock.

*In July 2023, I had
the privilege to fish
the famous River Usk
in South Wales . . .*

Fly-fishing in Wales

By Nick Moody ©



Driving into Wales, the first thing you notice is the trees. Great green oaks adorn the valley walls, their leafy canopies shading the sheep below. The lush green pastures are divided by rows of trees, and even the hills are a patchwork of deep green forest and the sun-tanned fields of Summer. Then you notice the special, soft quality of the light.

Crossing the medieval stone bridge, the river lay hidden beneath a veil of morning mist. I drove through the ancient farming town of Crickhowell and down the long, meandering driveway, past the white-washed farmhouse, standing out clean and bright against the soft blue sky. I parked behind the stables and walked across the lush fields towards the river, tall green trees marking its path.

The quiet of the morning was disturbed by the putter of an engine. Turning, I saw an old farmer on a red quad bike making a bee-line for me. He looked to be well into his seventh decade, silver-haired and weathered by many seasons. He stopped a few yards away and greeted me in a thick Welsh accent. I didn't catch every word, but his tone was warm and welcoming.

'I'm from New Zealand,' I offered, explaining that this was my first day ever fishing in Wales.

His eyes brightened. His daughter had lived in New Zealand and had even worked for the Government in Wellington – just as I had. It was a familiar story. Everyone I met in the United Kingdom had either worked in New Zealand or had a son, daughter, cousin or close friend living in my little country. It was a wonder anyone was left in Britain at all.

'In New Zealand, there aren't trees on the farms. We cut them down to make room for more grass,' I ventured. 'How come you have so many beautiful trees on your farms here?'

'Well, last century the Government paid me a subsidy to remove the trees, and this century they're paying me a subsidy to plant them back!' he explained with a wry smile.

I laughed at the irony, but he shook his head. 'You can't farm trees', he explained, 'but the Government has a target that ten percent of each farm should be natural woodland'. That is amazing I thought to myself, that the Government is willing to pay farmers to retain natural biodiversity, and compensate them for the temporary loss of earnings, but I just nodded and laughed along.

He was easy to talk to, reminding me a bit of my late Grandfather – warm and welcoming, quick with a joke. The sun was rising higher, so we shook hands, and he told me his name was Ifor. I hurried on, feeling both heartened by the chat and worried that I might miss the morning's hatch.





THE FIRST POOLS

There wasn't a breath of wind and the innocent, fluffy clouds floated in a baby-blue sky. On my side of the valley open pastureland stretched down to the bankside trees, with no fences between me and the water. The far bank was a steep, luxuriously forested hillside – the eastern edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The river was a Welsh beauty, and I stopped on the high bank and admired her through a gap in the trees. Dressed for Summer, a brown bikini of water immodestly stretched between her pools accentuating the smooth pale curves of her banks, but the taut slip of water still left some things to the imagination. I was captivated. This was a river made for fly-fishing.

I strung up my rod and walked downstream one more pool, to start at the very bottom of the beat. The water was tannin stained yet clear, and I could see every stone in the shallows. I spotted a large brown trout in the tail of the pool, but when I slowly moved up to cast, he slowly moved up too, disappearing into the opaque deeper water. The next two trout went the same way, and I felt the prickle of frustration at the back of my neck. My over-full pack started to feel heavier. Perhaps this first pool gets hammered, I told myself. I retreated back the way I had come, following a cattle track up the bank, and went upstream in search of easier quarry.

Here the river was almost seventy feet wide, its surface smooth as glass, and it flowed beneath large overhanging oak trees. The glass was disturbed by the quiet swirls of rising trout, dinner plate sized eclipses appearing and then disappearing just as quickly as unseen trout took something beneath the surface. I could see some mayfly duns on the water, and they looked big, so I tied on a large Adams dry-fly and hung a weighted Hare's Ear Nymph under it.

I scrambled down through some brambles, careful to protect my waders, and lowered myself gently into the water beneath the trees. I cast this contraption up to cover the swirling trout, or at least to cover the spot where they had been rising,



as the nearest couple of fish seemed to have stopped rising. No matter, there were some a bit further out, and they didn't look too big. But they too shut down before I could cover them. There were fish rising below me, right under the wide spreading branch of an oak, so I tried a downstream presentation, with more than a little desperation. The fish had to take it on the first drift, otherwise it would be exposed to the dragging flies. At the end of the drift the line tightened and an abrupt bow-wave headed downstream in response, spooking right out of the run! There were no more rises, and my defeat was reflected in the polished mirror. I waded through the thigh-deep water back to shore, and struggled up the steep earth bank, brambles catching at my arms. It was trout two, angler zero.

By lunch time all I'd caught was a mayfly. I had reached the head of a long pool with a deep run which trembled down its centre. The morning hatch had petered out, and I was feeling frustration, bordering on panic. My expectations for the River Usk were high – its Welsh name 'Afon Wysg' means abounding in fish – and they had said this was one of the best beats in the business, new to the foundation and rarely fished. The fish were there and had been rising, but I was not measuring up to my own expectations.

I forced myself to stop fishing and take a break. It was hot now, and I sat in the shade on a sandy beach. I had some bread and wondered at the words on my packet of Welsh cheese, "Caws Cymreig – Aeddfed wedi ei sleisio". I drank a cup of black tea from my trusty Chilean thermos flask. The river sung a song as it poured down the riffle from my right and rushed past into the deep dark pool on my left. The river was as old as the hills, but it sounded young and happy, a bit like Ifor. The forest opposite me was in full mid-summer glory, each towering tree bursting forth in a celebration of life, resplendent in every shade of green, each leaf shining and dancing.

A large fish broached under the shade of the far bank. It was in a strange place, and it was a strange time for a rise. There had been no trout rising for some time, and there were no insects on the water. Could it be a salmon? The Usk is the best river in Wales for Salmon, and although it is the longest river which flows wholly within Wales, I was only a day's journey from the sea. It's a new world here I thought, a wondrous new world. Of not just brown trout but also Atlantic salmon. As I drank my tea I thought back to my mate Justin's advice from the night before.

'Although there's often a hatch of olives in the morning and evening, the trout will continue to feed on nymphs in the deeper water, where they can be caught throughout the day. Don't be afraid to snip off your dry and fish a weighted nymph right on the bottom'.

He had said something about swinging streamers in the deeper pools too, 'There's some big fish in the Usk!' I wasn't desperate enough to try his South African tactics, just yet.





SEA TROUT

With Justin's wise words in mind, I put a heavier Hare's Ear Nymph on under my dry fly and started at the tail of the run along the true left bank where I sat. Halfway up the run the dry went under and I hooked a spirited trout of around fourteen inches. As I led it back down towards the sandy beach where I'd had lunch it came off – but no bother – this was progress!

I walked back to where I had hooked him and carried on up. When I reached the mid-section of the run I got the drift just right and another fish ate! This one was bigger, perhaps eighteen inches, but we'll never know for sure because although I brought it right back under the rod tip it too inexplicably escaped! It had been fat, around two pounds, and feisty in the fast water.

Right at the head of the run the biggest fish came up through swirling water. The yarn indicator moved sideways but didn't dip so I hesitated – until I saw it shaking its head from side to side – I lifted into the fish and saw deep dark brown and gold sides with a lot of black spots before it turned and rolled off the hook in the fast water. He who hesitates is lost, or at least his trout is. The wise fish had allowed itself to be carried back towards me when it felt the prick, rather than holding its position or swimming forwards and with the tension off the line it had thus shaken out the fly. It had looked three pounds – an old and experienced trout – and it had taught me a new trick.

For me, finding and deceiving the trout is more than half the challenge and I felt pleased for that success, but also frustrated that I hadn't landed a single fish. I was having a terribly unlucky run, the pressure of paying forty quid (around \$90) and having just the one day to fish the Usk was showing, and my timing was perhaps just ever so slightly out. But I was encouraged by the action – surely I would land a fish soon! But the rest of the afternoon was quiet. A few size sixteen brown mayflies came off around two o'clock, but the trout continued to lie low, and no more trout came to the nymph.



My tiny hire car was a metallic blue bauble which would have looked more at home on a Christmas tree. I leaned on it to eat my dinner and tried to take my mind off the fishing. I needed a mental break. But I was still watching the deep and wide pool by the carpark, and in the shadow of the tall trees I became aware of two large trout working over an almost unreachable spot of gravel, slowly grazing nymphs off the bottom, ghosting away into the opaque shadows of the tall trees, but regularly returning to this sunlit spot.

I saw one roll, in a way that was strange for a brown trout – surely it didn't need to roll like that to feed in the slow thigh deep water, flashing its silver sides and belly? And then I realised – they looked and acted exactly like the sea-trout back home! I had read an old fishing book about the sea trout of Wales, and how they could only be caught at night, but I knew how to catch these fish in the day at home, so maybe the same technique would work here!

There was a very high bank of thistles right behind me, and yet on the first accurate cast with the heavy nymph, the indicator went down firmly. Unfortunately the trout was swimming straight towards me and was not hooked. He swam out of the halo of light back into the underworld, there to live on eternally with all the big ones that get away. He had looked around 4-5 pounds. I changed out of my hot waders, dumped the backpack and set off back up-river almost at a trot.





THE RUINS

I retraced my steps through the lush paddocks, but this time I waded across the calf-deep tail of a pool to the true right bank. I cut into the dense green woods and followed a fox-trail into new meadows. With several hours of light left, I reached a great pool, more than a hundred feet long, wide and slow but with several foamy bubble lines down my bank. There were strange pieces of concrete out in the river, grey long and straight, but filled with fist-sized round stones. I'd never seen concrete with rocks inside it and remembered that in the twelfth century there had been a humorous incident where an incognito young Gawain had pushed his uncle King Arthur into the River Usk and the King was then forced to explain to his wife Guinevere why he was so wet! These foundations could have supported the very bridge in the story, they looked so ancient.

Then I saw a swirl behind the nearest piece of foundation. Then another rise on the outside of it, a second fish! I looked upstream, and still there was another trout rising upstream of it, and a rod length above that another, and then another rising in a work-man-like fashion! Lined up in a very British queue were perhaps 20 trout. I could see the small duns on the water, drying their wings before take-off. This time I cut off the nymph and tied on a little Zane Mirfin parachute mayfly, brown with an orange post. I slipped into the cool water and waded out to the sharp and improbable rock. I spooked the first fish, and the second... but there were plenty more. I kept low and cast from behind the relic and over the top of it, trying to intercept the moving targets beneath the surface.

Finally, I managed to hook one which dove for the sharp foundations, bending the rod deeply, but for once the hook held. Soon it was in my hand, ten inches of brown-spotted wildness. The trout was small, the relief immense. It was long and salmon-shaped, and strangely firm to the touch. I caught two more, hard and fast as spearheads, before a breeze descended the valley and swept the surface clear. They were as long as my rod handle, but my smile was as wide as the valley.





THE EVENING RISE

I hurried back downstream to where the woods came down to the river's edge. The leaves on the trees were still, and it was silent, hushed. It felt like entering a sacred grove. There were no fish rising in the tail of the pool, but right in the sheltered corner where the riffle trickled under a birch tree mayflies danced in a towering gyre, hundreds, perhaps thousands of glistening winged specimens. Pale watery colours, gossamer wings, the column whirled like a tornado, individuals breaking rank to cut across the vortex, dipping and diving, to then rise back up higher than my head. These must be the spinners! I had never seen this before. There were some bigger mayflies too, small flocks of pearl coloured giants, their bodies two inches long. These were *Ephemera danica* – green drakes! In fact there were at least three kinds of bugs in the air. With the size sixteen spinners, similar sized pale caddis flies, and the largest number and most impressive size of green drake mayflies I had ever seen!

Then the fevered dance began to break up, as the flies found a mate. Their last dance was over and something very special was about to happen. Some of the drakes moved to the tail of the pool, swooping and flapping their way through the air like little pterodactyls. As they dipped lower, trout began jumping to catch them. Small trout right in the tale of the pool at first, but as the light rapidly faded they were joined by some better fish just upstream. The fish moved around in response to the bugs – they too knew the steps of this ancient dance.

I looked in my modest fly-box and spied a fly that had been there forever but never been used as it was too big. A Green Mayfly, tied on an ancient barbed mustad hook, with large pale feather-point wing tips, a traditional stripped quill body and an over-sized hackle. First the trout ignored this imposter, but as it got darker they attacked this big dry. I landed four and missed countless others.

As the last light was leaving the world a large bird flew swiftly over me, cream-coloured and heavy, but strangely silent. It was an owl, powerful and magnificent.

*Nick Moody is a Freshwater Conservation Leader, Fish and Game Councillor and Fishing Instructor based in Christchurch. www.facebook.com/mrnickmoody
Nick is standing for election to Environment Canterbury Regional Council in the September 2025 elections - www.facebook.com/nickmoodyforecan*



Vote **Nick Moody**



for Environment Canterbury



Clean Water. Proven Leadership.

[Facebook.com/nickmoodyforecan](https://www.facebook.com/nickmoodyforecan)

I am a keen angler and have worked in river conservation for over 20 years.

With your vote, I will protect Canterbury's special places and support a sustainable regional economy.

Support my campaign by following me on facebook.

To host a campaign sign on your fence email nickmoodyforecan@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support.



Authorised by Nicholas Moody - nickmoodyforecan@gmail.com



My Nail Polish Collection

By Larry Burke ©



By 2000 the salmon fishing fraternity was becoming concerned about the falling numbers of fish and for me, this began the fourth stage of my salmon addiction, getting involved in the preservation and enhancement of the fishery. I thought joining the NZ Salmon Anglers Association would be a good move.

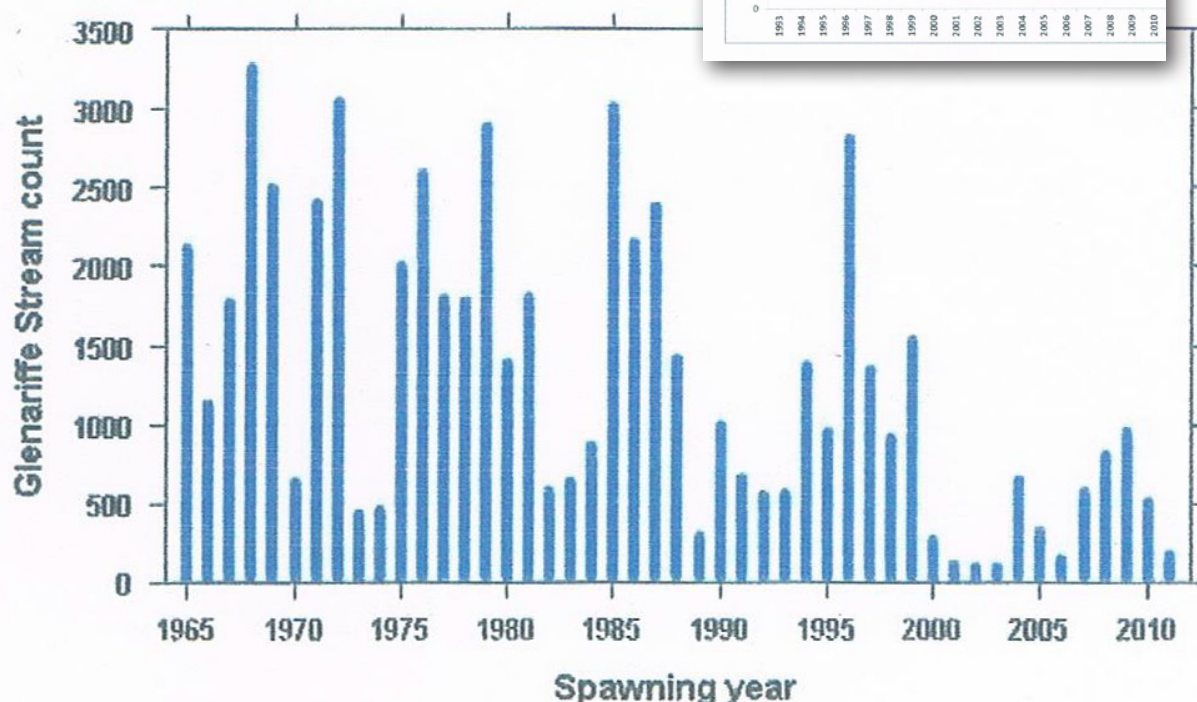
Then we started hearing about a meeting of tackle store owners and scientists wanting concerned groups to register. So I registered as the Burke Family group and was accepted. There was a lot of talk as to how to get the numbers of returning salmon back up after the closing of the Glenariffe hatchery on the Rakaaia the previous year and that perhaps explains why my contribution, that our group of Waimakariri salmon anglers would contribute \$10 a week towards stocking, provided that was where the funds went, was rejected without reason. The major thing I took away was a presentation by a climate scientist, however, around warming seas and their effect on salmon. He presented a graph of the salmon return to Glenariffe from 1960 to 1990 and said when first shown this graph he thought, "I have seen that pattern before". He then placed another transparency of the 11 year cycle of the sun on top and almost matched it. The height of the sun cycle causes an explosion of phytoplankton, the building block of the ocean food chain.

It was also around this time that the first F&G national freshwater angler survey was published. What it showed for salmon fishing was that in 1995 the Waimakariri had 100,000 salmon angler fishing days and the Rakaaia about 50,000, and that 80% of licences brought in NCF&G region were primarily for salmon fishing. These surveys are done by NIWA every 7 years, commissioned by F&G, and there have been declining salmon angler days on all rivers since then.

Like many other salmon anglers, it seems to me that F&G nationally are uninterested in supporting the salmon fishery, yet more than happy to use salmon angling licence fees for other purposes.



With the Silverstream Hatchery still operational and counted total (green), spawning (blue) and angler caught (red) Waimakariri numbers overset onto a comparable period, Martin Unwin's graph of counted salmon spawners in the Glenariffe Stream clearly suggests the overall effect of closing the Glenariffe hatchery.



That off season I got my salmon fix at the Silverstream hatchery, helping with fin clipping. Upwards of 50,000 smolt a day are herded into a small section of the raceway for easier handling. The clipping sites are stationed along one side of the race with plastic bins set on tables. Each bin contains about 20 litres of water with anaesthetic to make the smolt easier to handle. Two or three clippers man each one with small curved surgical scissors. Netters in the raceway fill buckets for runners, who refill each bin when empty. The smolt recover in a few minutes and will resume feeding straight away. You soon get into a rhythm and it is amazing how many you can do. Over the next 18 years fin clipping became one of the main NZSAA volunteer inputs to the salmon fishery

Meanwhile I was looking for more spinners, especially Black Zeds, adapting and refurbishing those I had. It cost a bit to get them replated and I had tried stick on glitter tape with little success. Shopping one night, with Hazel looking at makeup, something caught my eye – NAIL POLISH – with what looked like holographic bits in it. That would be good on spinners I thought and brought a bottle. It worked! And stayed on too! After finding \$2 Shops had a constant supply of colours at one stage I had about 300 bottles, not wanting to run out of the best ones. It got so bad Luana, my youngest daughter, would open the cupboard where I kept them and tell her friends, "This is my Dad's nail polish collection."

I was also looking at changing the spinner set up and one of the first things was to stop using swivels to make the spinner move a bit more, especially in slower flows. Another step was using double split rings in the hook set up. The edges of salmon mouths get hard as the season goes on and some anglers strike two or three times to set the hook. A double split ring got the hook into the softer part of the mouth but causes the hook to flap around when casting, shortening distance and sometimes hooking up with the front part of the spinner. Looking around a tackle shop one day



I saw oval split rings and Size 2 was the same length as the doubles we were using. That solved the problem. So I was ready for the up coming season but, due to work, had two less days to fish each fortnight and could not go to the high country opening at Lake Coleridge that season. Nonetheless, in the middle of November I made my usual trip to McIntosh's, to talk to whitebaiters and see if they have salmon rods with them, meaning they have seen salmon. None had and so this season I didn't start until 11th December.

First day at The Point I always take along a couple of old Zed Spinners, as there are a few things I want to find out. Is the hole still there? How deep is it? How wide is it? How long is it and lastly, where are the snags? Hence the old Zeds. This season everything seemed good and as I was doing the snag thing, SUDDENLY, a hit, some line taken, a large surface splash, a good size salmon tail appeared, and then it was gone. I stood there, a bit deflated but at the same time excited the fish were early. Next morning, towards lunchtime, I was back out there again, this time with the nail polish-enhanced spinners. After a few casts the line stopped, I struck, and was hooked up to a strong fish. As always with the first fish of the season it was all a bit nerve racking. There were several good runs on light drag and finger control before I was finally able to beach a gleaming silver fresh run jack - 15.5lb/7kg, 30.5"/77.5cm long, 19"/48cm girth - excellent condition. I was stoked and took a while to calm down. About an hour later I was hit again and into another good fight, thinking, "I can't believe this" and the few anglers on the other side saying much the same. Far more able to concentrate with this fish I landed another bright silver jack salmon, 14lb/6.36kg, 29.5"/74cm long, 18"/45.5cm girth. A limit bag on the real first day of fishing, in about 2 hours. What a great start!

I didn't get to fish again until January as it was a busy time at work until after the Christmas break and time and half pay, plus a day in lieu for each statutory holiday, added to the annual salmon holiday. Besides, in 35 years, my average January fish numbers are less than 1 fish. This season was a bit different and by the end of the month I had two more fish. The first was an afternoon fish, a small hen I caught in the Kaiapoi just up from the confluence when the main river was recovering after a fresh. The Waimakariri river was still unfishable but for about the last two hours of the tide we found there is always the chance of one or two salmon sitting in that clear water pushing down the Kaiapoi. This fish was a 10lb/4.55kg hen, 25.5"/54.5cm long, 17"/43cm girth - the type we call footballs as they are so round - and definitely a 2year-at-sea hatchery release. A week later, 17th January 11.20 am hooked and landed another salmon in the Kaiapoi. This fish another hen 11.5lb/5.23kg, 26"/66cm long, 17"/54.5cm girth. I caught this one on an ABU Salar, an older spinner, hard to get here, meaning there was little fish activity and I was trying various other gear in the hope of getting a strike, which often works surprisingly.

ABU Salars & a typical 'football'





Black & Silver spray-painted and nail-polished Zed Spinners with oval split rings

I was at the stage of the season that salmon anglers dread, a lean time that happens every season. It is usually longer than two weeks and can last for a month or two, and this one lasted until the beginning of March. Fish were caught and I netted a few for family and others. I was not too worried as I knew I had my month's salmon holiday starting end of February..

During this time, getting a bit bored, I was watching small school of yellow eyed mullet feeding and it dawned on me that fish are dark on top and white underneath. Maybe I could paint some Zed Spinners like that? In an auto spares shop the repair spray cans caught my eye and back later with one of the black spinners, I settled for Stratos Silver and Polar White, and tried it on a couple of spinners needing refurbishment. Looked good until I put some nail polish on when touch dry and they bubbled. Plan B, rough up the spinners before painting them use nail polish topcoat. That worked. Later I found Dulux clear plastic coating is even better.

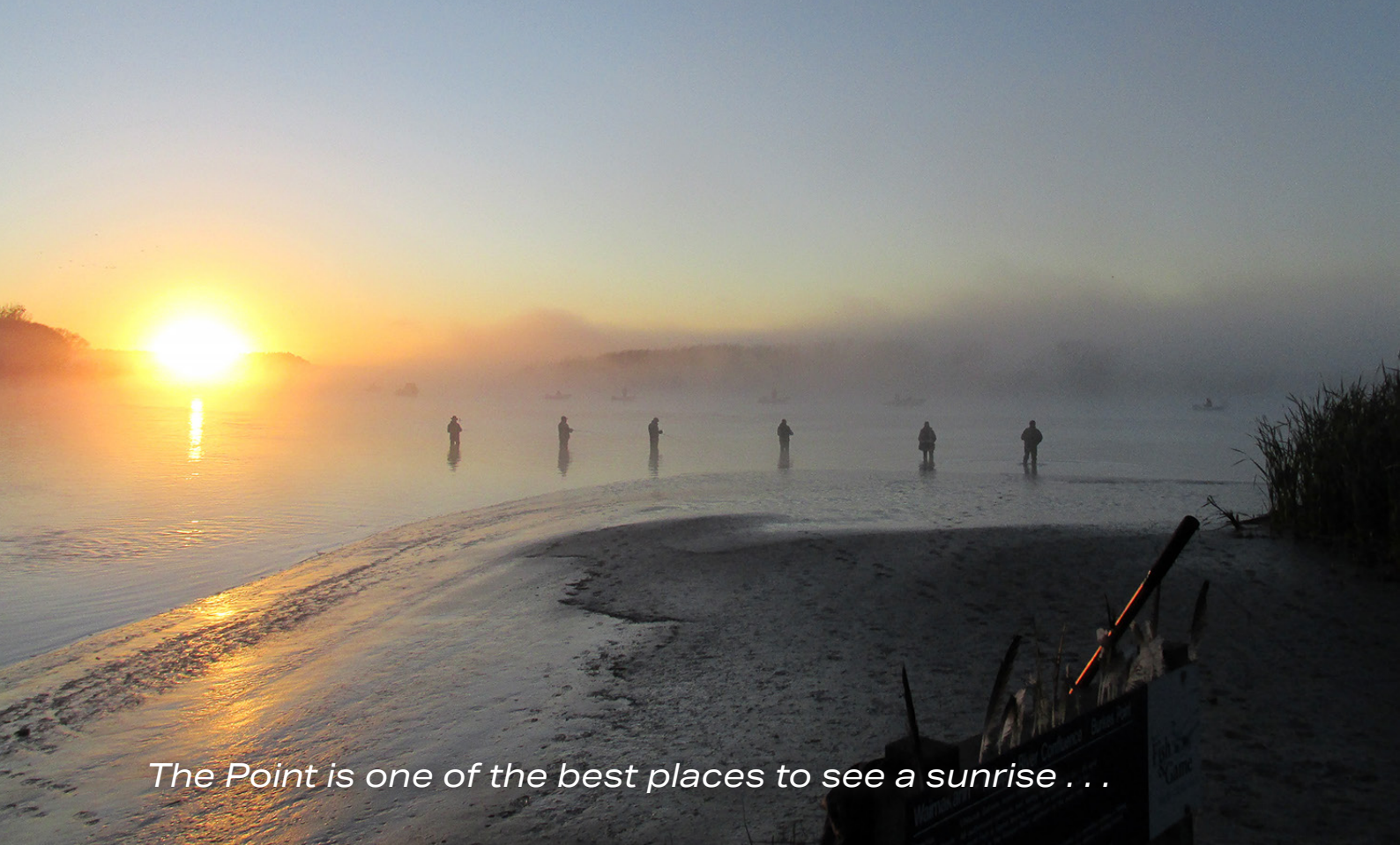
My Annual Salmon Holiday started in March. It was 3 days before I caught the first salmon, a really nice 15lb/6.8kg jack, 30.5"/77.5cm long, 19"/48cm girth on the Waimak side of The Point using a silver nail polish-enhanced 22g Zed Spinner. Next afternoon tide I was hooked up again and had a bit of struggle with this one. It did not want come to the surface and ran up and down The Hole. It can be difficult when a salmon does this as you are standing at the edge of a drop off that can be up to 4 metres deep straight down. Too much pressure can pull the hook, so it is a bit of a waiting game. Eventually I had a nice 13lb/5.9kg hen, 28"/71cm long, 18"/45.5cm girth, caught on one of the last black anodised spinners I had left.

I missed out again the next day, losing a fish hooked it right on The Point. After a couple of good runs it swam up the Kaiapoi close enough to see it was hooked in the roof of its mouth, not a good place for the hook to grip. Called for Colin to bring the net. He had not netted salmon and was a bit tentative; then the hook pulled and the salmon was gone. One of my philosophies is, 'If you land every fish you hook you would get bored with fishing.'

My next fish was another hatchery football hen, 8 lb/3.64kg, 25"/63.5cm, 15"/38cm girth on the black anodised again; a good conditioned little salmon. Some salmon anglers complain about these 2 year-at-sea salmon; scientists, however, say they a good pointer to the following year's run and that you need somewhere in the region of 10-18% of them in every run to have a healthy fishery. The tide was by now a morning one and we were out there at daybreak.

For a change I was fishing The Point at high tide, which meant there was very little water to get into, even with chest waders. It was Saturday and there were plenty of boats out, fishing anchored just outside our casting range as the local boaties do. Newbies often don't know the unspoken protocols and this day an angler in a tinny anchored about 10 metres in front of me. Other boat anglers told him to move. He wouldn't. I never said a thing. I knew something he didn't and carried on short casting around his boat. Soon I was into a salmon, had a good fight keeping away from his anchor rope, and landed a fresh run hen 12lb/5.45kg, 28"/71cm, 17.5"/44.5cm girth. Back to fishing and soon after hooked up again. This was another 2 year-at-sea hatchery hen of 8lb/3.64 kg, 25"/63.5cm, 15"/38cm girth. The boatie, seeing this, upped anchor pulled to the shore and started fishing from there. I explained to him that he was fishing right over the top of the salmon as they pooling





The Point is one of the best places to see a sunrise . . .

up there and that is why the other boats were further out. (I didn't tell him the river was too low further up and the salmon were hanging around waiting for a fresh!) Meanwhile one of the boat anglers and I had also worked out that the salmon were moving around the wider McIntosh's area at set times of the tide. He followed them in his boat and caught good numbers. For us on The Point, at high tide they were likely close to the top of The Hole and at half tide out to half tide in, at the bottom.

The next day saw me back out at The Point early morning. The Point is one of the best places to see a sunrise. On a clear day it seems the sun rises out of the surf at mouth about 2km down, partly cloudy days you get rays of sunlight through the clouds and other days in March are foggy with the mist drifting up the river, when you know if someone has caught a salmon from the distinctive smell on the breeze that has everyone sniffing the air. On flat calm days the occasional salmon will leap out of water and seem to hang suspended in the air for a second, water drops glistening from its body, and the sight is in your memory forever, like a video. By now the high tide was backing and there were only a couple of others fishing, which gave me a chance to fish differently, casting down along the edge of the drop off instead of casting out and swinging the spinner down. Salmon tend to use the edge when moving up the river whenever there is a stronger current such as an outgoing tide, and you often hook them at your feet. Holding on to them is a different matter. After a few casts along the edge I had a heavy strike and the fish gave a couple of shakes of its head, the weight telling me this was a good fish. I like to try a follow salmon a bit when playing them but the water I stepped into was above my thighs restricting me. So I had to let it run further than I like. This fish was strong. It came up along the edge, dived down deep, then shot across the river. I pumped it back and then it sat deep, shaking its head. I put more side pressure on, hoping I was pulling with the hook and not against it. That worked. Next thing was where to land it. Neither of the other two anglers had any netting experience so I finally managed to bring fish over the edge of The Hole and lead it into water shallow enough to turn it over on its side and get hold of the biggest salmon of that season for me, a Jack, 17lb/7.73kg, 33"/84cm long, 19"/48cm girth. This fish had been in the river a while, had lost its silver and was now the light grey of an upriver salmon with the dog teeth of a spawning jack I was happy and it was only 8.30 am.



Next day, 12th March, around the low tide this time, I was lucky enough to catch another 2 year-at-sea jack, the third of the season and a good sign for the next. 8lb/93.64kg, 25"/53.5cm, 15.5"/38cm girth; another football. This fish was a bit special as it was the first salmon caught on one of my black & white spinners. That was my last fish for the season. Rain came to the Southern Alps and the pooled salmon were off upriver. We came back when the river was fishable again but the fishing was slow with only the odd straggler still being caught.

I ended up with 11 salmon, average 12lb/5.45kg, 27.81"/69.53cm long, 17.27"/43.18cm girth. A good season and the next one only 6 months away. Time for a new fishing reel, tracking down and painting spinners, and back to work with some interesting stuff happening there.

One afternoon a new angler appeared at The Point. Andrew was his name, he had heard about these salmon, got himself a licence and arrived with a medium size sea fishing rod and reel. We gave him a few pointers. We had been fishing for several hours and nothing seemed to be around. Andrew had only been there about 15 minutes when suddenly he was into a salmon and tried to winch it in, as in sea fishing. We adjusted his drag, gave him some pointers on playing a salmon, and netted a good fish for him. He was over the moon and still talking about his amazing salmon when wouldn't you know it, he was into another. This fight went better than the first and he had a limit bag. Meanwhile none of us had even touched a fish. By the time the next season started Andrew had all the gear, including a four wheel drive truck. And he has been a great fishing mate in our crew ever since.

Then another two new anglers, Mike and Dave, showed up. Both lived in Kaiapoi, had previously fished at McIntoshs and, seeing the salmon we were catching, introduced themselves and immediately became a fixture at The Point from then on.

The Point was becoming popular. We could still drive down the stop bank, the stop bank was getting completely blocked, and that was being watched. The regional council put a chain across the Courtney Stream culvert where it flowed under the stop bank. That meant everyone had to walk a mile down the track and numbers fishing The Point soon dropped away. Worked it out one season that I walked 100 miles back and forth on the stop bank carrying 30lb pack and waders. It always seemed easier with a couple of fish, despite the extra weight

Another major occurrence for me around this time was Jeremy and Tina brought a new computer and asked us if we wanted their old one. I still haven't worked out if this was a good thing but what it did was open up for me the whole world of salmon. I could download stuff, read stuff and in a very short time found Trademe and started to buy fishing gear. More about this later.



Courtney Stream culvert, 27 7 2025



NEW TACKLE

TROUT HUNTER TIPPET

Trout Hunter tippet is a favourite among serious flyfishers and competition anglers for good reason. Whether you are using copolymer or fluorocarbon, both offer an exceptional balance of strength, suppleness, and knot integrity. It's easy to tie, holds tight knots, and turns over flies with precision. The UV and waterproof packaging and generous spool length give you great value, especially for New Zealand conditions where stealth, durability and constant adjustments to your rig are essential. Trusted by pros, it's reliable tippet you can count on season after season.



SIMMS SCOUT HIP PACK

Built for anglers on the move, the Simms Scout Hip Pack punches above its weight with smart design and rugged construction. Made from recycled Challenger Sailcloth, it's ultra-durable, lightweight, and water-resistant—ready for everything from city streets to alpine streams. The main compartment fits large fly boxes, with clever internal organization and external stash points. A Fidlock magnetic buckle makes it easy to secure on the go, and it can be worn around the waist or as a sling. Thoughtful extras like accessory loops, a cinch cord for jackets, and AquaGuard zips seal the deal.





*More info on all these products:-
<https://www.manictackleproject.com/>*

PRIMAL ZIP \$299.99 EURO NYMPHING SET

The Primal Zip Euro Nymphing Set is an ideal gateway into the world of euro nymphing. The 10' 3-4wt rod offers excellent sensitivity and reach, critical for detecting subtle takes and keeping tight line control. Paired with the lightweight FlyLab Exo reel, mono euro line, and 100M of backing, this kit comes ready to fish straight out of the box. Priced at \$299.99 whether you're just starting out or want an affordable backup rig, the Zip combo delivers impressive performance without breaking the bank. Great value, smart setup.

MANIC FLY COLLECTION'S HI-VIS RANGE

Manic Fly Collection's Hi-Vis range takes proven dry fly patterns and gives them a clever, practical upgrade—brightly coloured hi-vis wings that are much easier to track on the water. Classics like, from left to right, Parachute Adams, Peacock Madam X and Pheasant Tail Parachute have all been reimagined with visibility in mind, making them ideal for low light, choppy water, or those with aging eyes. You still get the same trusted performance and fish-catching profile, but now you can actually see the take. It's a small change that makes a huge difference.



WAITAKI

One Pan Trout

Wild to the Table with Tony Smith ©



We cooked this dish up in an Otematata cottage during a recent 'Canterbury Fly Fishing Club' winter fishing trip down to the Power Station lakes of Benmore and Aviemore. Brass Monkey starts to the day but a magnificent calm environment followed each day where we all enticed a mix of Brown and Rainbow trout to the fly, ensuring the weekend companionship of similar minded anglers would be treasured and remembered. Most were caught and released but we did put one of each aside for the table.

Simple ingredients and quick to put together, designed for a camp cook-up. Use a large fry pan, a wok is good and a paella pan, perfect.. The amounts are very flexible, the method of putting the dish together is the key. This recipe to serve 4.

INGREDIENTS

Trout fillets from a fresh trout, skinned or non skinned, your choice, cut into portions.

30 g butter, margarine or oil 'whatever you have'.

1 leek sliced into 1cm rounds.

3 medium sized carrots peeled and cut into rounds.

3 medium sized potatoes, peeled and cut into large dice.

½ tin diced tomatoes.

1 tablespoon vegetable stock powder mixed into a litre of hot water. We used green herb stock powder in this one.

1 bay-leaf.

A few fresh herbs, whatever you have, parsley, thyme, rosemary, picked or chopped.





Put the leeks and carrots into your pan along with butter, fry gently for 5 minutes, add potatoes, stock, tomatoes and bay-leaf.

Season with a little salt and pepper, bring to a boil and simmer until the vegetables are cooked, if the liquids boil away too much just add a little more water, Check seasoning at this stage. Add any herbs you have on hand.

The consistency you are looking for is slightly soupy; that will happen when the liquids reduce. To adjust either add more liquid to thin out a little, or thicken by turning up the heat and reducing the broth to get that 'spot on' result

When you are happy with the consistency, season the trout fillets and add to the pan, simmer until the fish is cooked, around five minutes.

Place the pan onto the table and share. Serve with fresh bread, a spoon and fork is best used to enjoy the soupy broth.





Three Mile Dam

By Matt Hoole ©

The Snowy Mountains of NSW boast arguably some of the best lakes and dams to fish for trout in mainland Australia. The two giants, Lake Jindabyne and Eucumbene Dam are at the forefront; these two larger bodies of water typically reward all forms of fishing year round, as well as offering trophy fish.

However, it's some of the smaller and lesser-known lakes and dams that often entice anglers with exciting, action packed fishing. One such place that continues to lure us back to the mountains with anticipation, is Three Mile Dam.

Situated at an elevation of 1400 metres in the NSW high country, Three Mile Dam is a small impoundment of water surrounded by grassy sub alpine-woodland. Its snow gums are twisted and mangled by the heavy winter winds the Kosciuszko National Park has to endure, while alpine heath and tussock grass cover the floor. The dam is immersed in scenery and inhabited by a plethora of wildlife that gives a wilderness mood to the sights and sounds of the place.

Given the dam's elevation, the water's surface can freeze over and be covered in a layer of snow for several months when temperatures suddenly plummet, while extreme weather conditions commonly roll over in the blink of an eye. So caution is needed when fishing the dam over the winter period.

Access is easy from Adaminaby, following the Snowy Mountains Highway before

taking Link RD on the left, after passing the old abandoned gold mining town of Kiandra. If making the journey from the other side of the Kosciuszko National Park (Khancoban/Tumut), then a right turn onto Link road before reaching Kiandra.

As you wind your way up a sealed road gaining elevation quickly, a signpost to your right marks the entrance down to Three Mile Dam Campground at the bottom of the track. Here there is ample space to pitch a tent or park a camper, with picnic tables and barbecues on site to give some luxury.

The track can become very wet, slushy and muddy, especially during rain, snow or after the snow-melt, therefore take note of the conditions beforehand. Four wheel drive or all wheel drive vehicles with sufficient clearance and good tyre tread are preferred, especially in more adverse conditions.

In sequence:-

The road in with sleet starting to fall;

*full-on snow at Sawyers Hut
- rebuilt after the 2019-2020
summer bush fires ripped through
the Kosciuszko N.P;*

brutal conditions on the lake.





Our first trip to Three Mile Dam was in late Spring. The usual warm November weather had been replaced by a late cold snap that had just struck NSW and the ACT. As we reached the top overlooking the Eucumbene river near Sawyers Hill, snow began falling more intensely, turning the pale brown countryside snow white. Fortunately, we'd prepared for the rapid change in weather patterns that had been earlier forecasted, and were well equipped for the day.

Upon arriving, we quickly threw on layers, before snapping some good photos of snowflakes floating down around us, like a family of figures being trapped in a giant snow globe. I then stared down at the chillingly cold prospect of fishing this dam, contemplating if it's even worth rigging up the rod given conditions were teetering on freezing. But like the old saying goes, "If you don't give it a go, you'll never know."

Standing on the edge of the dam, I'll have to confess, conditions were absolutely brutal! A driving wind came through lashing snow and sleet into our faces, while I stood there tossing out a gold beaded ginger Woolly Bugger, retrieving it at the rapid speed required to keep my fingertips momentarily warm.

This is madness fishing here today in these conditions, I was thinking, when my fly was suddenly hit hard! Initially the fish just thrashed its head around vigorously side to side, before choosing to open the floodgates and ripping off for a few good runs. As it came closer, I gasped when identifying it as





a brook trout. It was beautifully marked with its distinct black mouth and mascara lathered around its eye sockets – well it looked a bit like that...

Although brook trout are commonly stocked in many lakes and dams in the Snowy Mountains, they're still genuinely a surprise catch and I always feel like they're a mini reward. There's something almost prehistoric-looking about 'The Chars', who make a habit of demonstrating ferocious fighting capabilities and from previous encounters, seem to be one of the most aggressive of the trout species on the fly, to my mind.

For the next hour and a half, brook trout after brook trout continued to come to the net, admittedly no scale breakers, but all wearing their Sunday best suits and each and every one of them putting up a scrappy fight on the 6 weight. I didn't have to cast far, sometimes just working the edges produced another tenacious hit.

The boys had a great time netting the fish and also had their first opportunity to feel a fish on the other end. However, as the cold sleet continued to whip onshore, splattering into our wet weathers, Maike and I couldn't help but worry about the boys standing there like frozen statues, net still in hand. It was time to retreat back to the car to thaw out and compartmentalise what had just happened.

As we warmed up in the car, the weather wasn't showing any signs of taking a break, with visibility decreasing and snowfall potentially beckoning a whiteout, the wind now howling so loud it could easily be mistaken for a yowie call. It was time to call it a day and head back to Cooma for well earned hot pies and coffee.



Our next visit to Three Mile Dam was after a morning of tobogganing on MT Selwyn Snowfields. Maike and the boys left to investigate a herd of brumbies, while I headed for the eastern border of the dam where I'd had the earlier success. The conditions were still fresh with patches of snow around that made a soft crunching sound under my boots, feeling akin to a hunter off on a winter excursion in the rugged Appalachian mountains of America.







Casting streamers out into the depths, I began varying the speed and length of my retrieve when my Woolly Bugger was once again smashed. No brook trout this time; a silvery rainbow leapt into the blue sky trying to shake my fly free.

After slipping the bow into the net and admiring its clean colours, I could hear cockatoos chuckling to each other in a nearby snow gum . . . just hopefully, the cheeky buggers weren't laughing at the size of my fish.

As the afternoon wore on, the warm sun began quickly melting the snow underfoot, recognising we'd timed the earlier session of tobogganing on the slopes to perfection. But I hadn't aborted the sledding for that reason alone, my six senses had told me that 'Three Mile' may still hold some secrets that I desperately wanted to uncover.

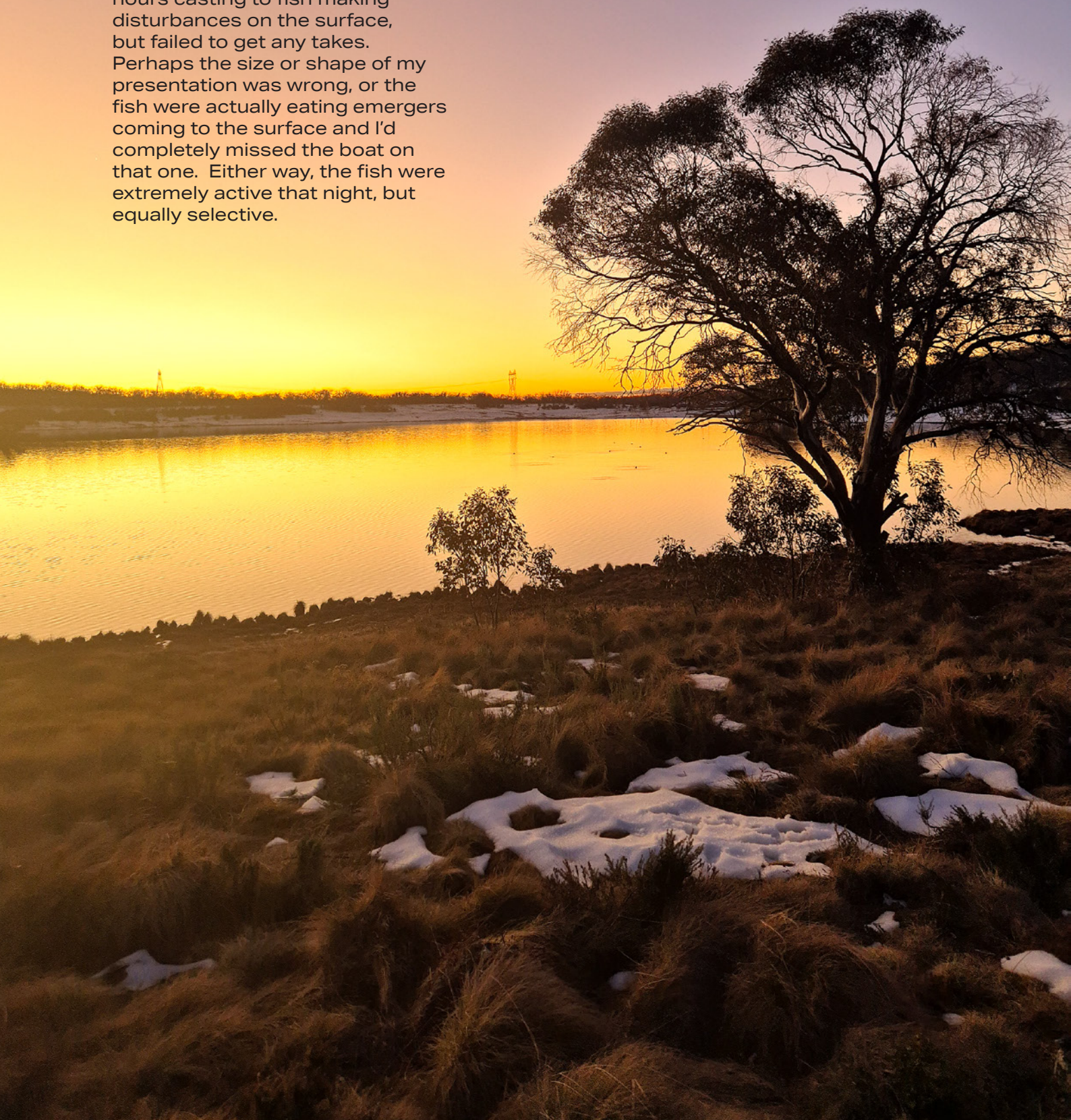
I found a nice sandy bay shielded by clay covered banks protecting me from the wind, which had suddenly kicked up a notch. Working casts on various angles around the bay, I let my streamer sink a touch more, before twitching it up sharply from the bottom, trying to imitate a yabbie with lots of life. Bang! Another strike, and another rainbow, hooked and off to the races.

The fish fought well, peeling line off the reel, before I finally had enough of its resistance and chose to show it who's boss, applying more flex to the rod. This was a better fish, with deeper colours, pinks and reds and sporting healthy condition.

I got one more rainbow that afternoon, before Maike and the kids arrived down to meet me on the waters edge keen to describe in detail the abundance of wildlife they'd seen. Brumbies, black cockatoo's, hares, various birds in great numbers and tiny fish in a small tributary of the dam. They may have rivalled some of the fish I'd just caught, but hey, I was catching them!



Three Mile Dam can also provide some great surface fishing on both dusk and dawn. One afternoon after arriving there later in the day, a manic rise began. I spent several hours casting to fish making disturbances on the surface, but failed to get any takes. Perhaps the size or shape of my presentation was wrong, or the fish were actually eating emergers coming to the surface and I'd completely missed the boat on that one. Either way, the fish were extremely active that night, but equally selective.



The average size of the fish in the dam is modest, however I have read accounts of 3lb-plus rainbow and brown trout making home in these waters. What's more encouraging is that fish numbers seem high and the dam's food source and supply supports three species of trout, rainbow trout, brown trout and brook trout (char).

The Dam has a number of small tributaries that allow habitual recruitment from the dam while also encouraging the natural production of spawning to take place. Some of these creeks are worth investigating with a flick, if you're up for a bit of tight water fishing and could be lively fishing with a hopper or other terrestrial imitation when it warms in spring, through summer. In saying that, I certainly wouldn't go bashing around in those small creeks and streams without waders or snake gaiters on, even if it means the thermostat does get a bit steamy under the radar. You need to tread around those highland copperheads with caution!

If you're after chasing trophy browns then Eucumbene Dam and Lake Jindabyne are your go-to places in the high country. Several other notable waterways also hold large fish, Tantangara Reservoir, Guthega Pondage, Khancoban Pondage, Blowering Dam, Murray Two Pondage, to name a few more.

If you're interested in a different type of experience, however, discovering smaller and more intimate waters with plenty of attractions to keep your wandering mind at bay, while also being a highly productive place to fish, then give Three Mile Dam a go. You won't be disappointed!

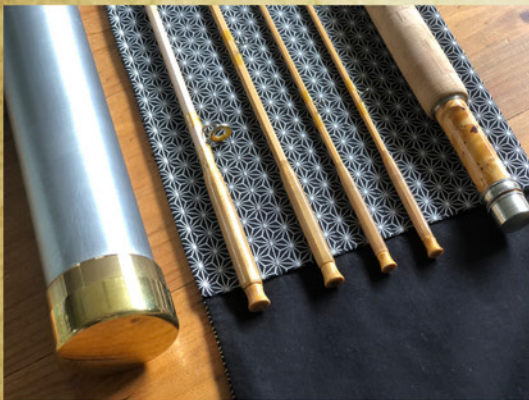


NA Taransky



Made To Fish

Handcrafted split cane fly rods since 2004
based in Taihape, New Zealand



Bespoke (custom) and Maker's Selection (ready to order) rods.
Available in Tonkin cane and Madake bamboo.

Made with the highest quality materials and components.



Handcrafted landing nets and other fine accessories.

Rodmaking classes - make your own bamboo rod.



www.taranskybamboo.com