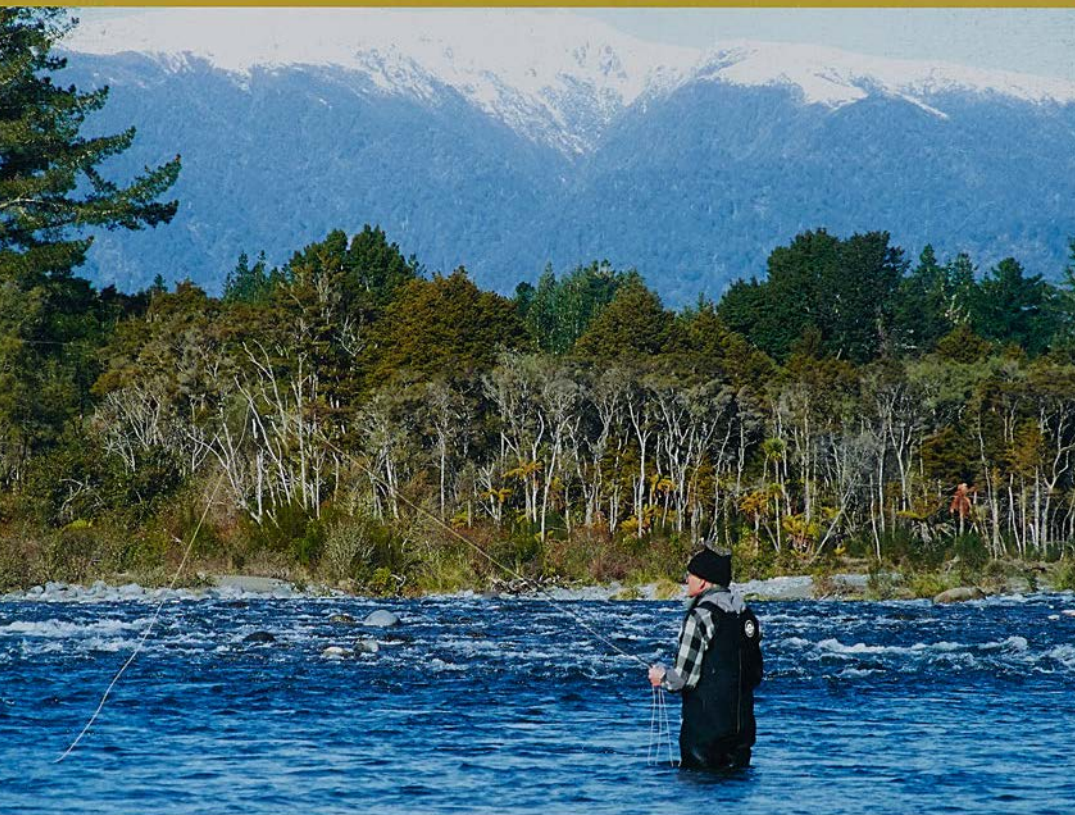


TARGET TAUPO

A newsletter for Taupo anglers

JULY 2009, ISSUE 59



Department of Conservation
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JULY 2009, ISSUE 59

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Summer angling Lake Otamangakau
Photo by Julie Greaves



Rainbow trout fingerlings
Photo by John Webb



Big brownie, Te Whaiiau trap
Photo by Julie Greaves



Lake Taupo Plankton
Photo by Michel Dedering



Wader safety training
Photo by Carolyn Newell

Target Taupo

A newsletter for Taupo anglers

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The views expressed in *Target Taupo* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect Department of Conservation policy.

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Fishery Foreword

By John Gibbs

Taupo Fishery Area Manager



WELCOME TO TARGET TAUPO

It's amazing how quickly fortunes change sometimes, and how slowly they do at others. The Taupo fishery is certainly experiencing its share of changing fortunes.

One of the positive but more gradual transitions is the improvement in trout condition and size following the slump of the last two years. I won't go in to the details as they have been pretty thoroughly covered before and again in this issue. Suffice to say, we are seeing yet again the variations that occur in a wild trout fishery subject to the vagaries of nature and, sometimes, the influences of humans.

Having experienced many of these changes over the past five decades, I'm not surprised by the recovery we are witnessing but I guess I'm also not surprised by the gloom and doom merchants who saw the fishery in terminal collapse. It just emphasises that we tend to see things in the light of our own experience and knowledge. If that experience is limited then of course we will be concerned that maybe this is the first time the fishery has been through such a cycle. If we don't have access to the facts, we also tend to rely on anecdote and sometimes less than reliable memory. So please take the trouble to read the valuable information you will find here and in earlier issues of *Target Taupo*.

We shouldn't be surprised that the declining economic fortunes of the country are being felt in the Taupo fishery also. With 80% of anglers being visitors, mostly domestic, a decline in participation is inevitable when discretionary spending is so constrained. After 11 months of this current season, we have seen year-to-date declines of 9%, 8% and 13% respectively for adult season, week and 24 hour licence sales. This has had a major impact on revenue and we have had to cut the fishery budget by over \$335,000 during the course of the year to keep expenditure within income.

Reducing expenditure by such a large amount part way through the year isn't easy. While we made several operational savings, the only way to really achieve these changes is by curbing fixed costs. We did this by carrying four vacant positions through the year, or 25% of our permanent staff. While we compensated to some degree with part-time temporary staff, we have still effectively run with 3.5 less staff.

Cuts like this have noticeable impacts on the level and standard of services provided. One of the significant operational savings was reducing the number of issues of this magazine from three to two for the year. Believe me, this has not gone unnoticed! All these decisions were made reluctantly but necessarily if we are able to undertake the essential activities to ensure fishery sustainability and still provide a reasonable range of angling opportunities.

The most unfortunate aspect is that most of these constraints will continue well into the new season. While there are as many opinions as to how long this will last as there are "experts", our best, albeit conservative, forecast is that licence sales will continue to decline next year. Some Fish and Game regions, especially those with angler demographics most akin to Taupo, are experiencing similar impacts and this indicates the nation-wide scope of the problem. It would be rash not to factor this into the new business plan. It is also unfortunate that, although angler numbers, and therefore revenue, are declining, few management costs decline at a similar rate if at all, as they are often externally-driven.

So it is likely that you may continue to notice the impacts of our reduced budget over the next season. I can assure you though, that the fishery team is totally committed to ensuring the sustainability of this country's premier trout fishery.

Hopes for the Hinemaiaia

By Glenn Maclean
Glenn is our Programme
Manager, Technical Support
and manages the research
and monitoring work done in
the Area

Prior to the building of the lower dam (HB dam) on the Hinemaiaia River in 1965, rainbow trout from Lake Taupo had access to the Pahikohuru and Kakapo spawning tributaries upstream. Concerns over the possible impact of this loss of spawning water on the trout population when the dam was built saw fishery managers permanently close 1.5km of river downstream from the dam, and institute a closed winter season upstream of the State Highway bridge. This represented a very significant reduction in angling opportunity.

When the Hinemaiaia Power Scheme was re-consented under the Resource Management Act in 2003, fish passage provisions were included. The objective of these was to require TrustPower to provide access for at least 200 spawning trout past the dam each winter. The intent to increase the spawning and rearing of rainbow trout in the Hinemaiaia River, with the underlying objective that if successful then we would look to increase the angling opportunity downstream of the dam.

TrustPower chose to trial a trap and transfer approach whereby the trout were trapped in the bypass channel, and physically lifted above the dam. This trial was successful and implemented as a long term approach in 2006, undertaken by DOC on contract over an 8 week period each winter. In addition the spawning streams between 2005 and 2007 were seeded annually with approximately 20,000 fry stripped from parents trapped in the bypass channel, and reared to swim up stage at Tongariro National Trout Centre.

However there is little point encouraging fish to spawn upstream if their progeny cannot survive passage back downstream past the dam to the lake. To this end we undertook a trial for TrustPower to investigate the mortality

of juvenile trout passing through the turbine in HB powerhouse. The outcome of this trial which involved releasing live juvenile trout down the penstock and recapturing them after they had passed through the turbine, was that survival was estimated to be in the order of 98%. In other words if the trap and transfer project made a significant difference to the number of juveniles produced upstream, then the vast majority of these should survive migration downstream past the dam and powerhouse.

Ultimately though the project will only be successful if it eventuates that more adult trout return to spawn in the Hinemaiaia River, and fishery managers can relax the restrictions designed to ensure the sustainability of the fishery, in turn creating more angling opportunity. However assessing the number of adult trout returning to spawn is where it gets more difficult.

Considerable experience indicates that for the most part it is not possible to routinely drift dive the Hinemaiaia River due to a combination of poor visibility and large amounts of instream debris. The exception is the bypass channel which has been dived monthly over winter since 1990. However the difficulty with counting the bypass channel is twofold. Theoretically it is not great spawning habitat being too shallow and the bed too coarse. That the fish previously used it in very high numbers may reflect more that the rest of the river may have been even more unsuitable for spawning due to the flow variability. This is now not the case since the scheme is operated under the new consents as a run of the river operation, rather than twice daily peaking station. Secondly if the trap and transfer project is successful and the fish are trying to return to their natal grounds upstream, then the 3 cumec or more outflow from the powerhouse

Opposite page:
The proposed Winter Limit
is at the Cliff Pool
Photo by Glenn Maclean



is likely to be more attractive than the 0.25 cumec flow in the bypass channel. There is some evidence of this during the very low flows that occurred during trapping in 2005. During this dry spell only a handful of trout were trapped each day in the bypass channel until the flows dropped to such a point that TrustPower were required to spill from the dam to meet their consent conditions as they were worded at the time. This stimulated a run of 152 fish over a two day period and then 193 fish over a three day spill. Prior to this these fish were not evident in the bypass channel and it appears they were holding in the main stream below the power house.

Therefore it is entirely possible that the fishery could improve significantly without this being reflected in counts from the bypass channel. This in combination with a short trapping period (8 weeks) also means that it is not possible to rely on the totals trapped in the trap and transfer project to indicate the fishery status.

Another option to assess the population size would be to operate a trap at a site previously identified close to the State Highway. This would provide very useful information on run timing and population size, but we simply don't have the significant resources required at present to run an additional trap. Neither could we run both traps on the Hinemaiaia from a single camp as the risks of vandalism, burglary and poaching at the unattended trap and the difficulty of operating both traps at the same time during flood flows precludes this.

Table 1. Average catch rate (per angler) of anglers interviewed on the Hinemaiaia River 2003 to 2008

WINTER	CATCH RATE ESTIMATE (PER ANGLER)
2003	0.28
2004	0.50
2005	0.45
2006	0.47
2007	0.43
2008	0.36

We could use angler catch rates as a surrogate for fish numbers. However catch rates are influenced by many variables, not just how many fish are present. For example a major factor on this river is the ease of fishing it which varies greatly depending on how much debris is in the pools. It would be difficult to attribute any variation in catch rate which is highly variable anyway (table 1) to the impact of the trap and transfer programme.

Finally we could use a tag recapture approach by tagging a number of trout in the lower river and then re-trapping a proportion of them in the trap in the bypass channel. Again it is very labour intensive to either trap or catch the fish for tagging and the fact that the trap is only in operation for 8 weeks is also a disadvantage in that we may miss a significant part of the run.

However there is another proactive option: that is to assume that the programme has been successful, and on that basis take a calculated risk and change the regulations to allow more use of the fishery. The catch rates above are high by Taupo standards, and given that the Hinemaiaia is generally a difficult river to fish because of all the debris present then it is likely that these catch rates represent that the run is considerable.

The risk is that the spawning population might then be subject to over harvest affecting its sustainability. However we believe this risk is small (depending on just how we relax the regulations) on the basis that the combination of flyfishing only and the amount of debris in the river makes angling relatively ineffective. In the worst case if overharvest was then to occur we should be able to detect it by a trend of low catch rates relative to other Taupo rivers and difficulty meeting the trapping target of 200 fish per 8 week period. We acknowledge that we can not be absolutely certain that the fishery can withstand additional angling, but short of running a trap

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SECTION	LENGTH (KM)	CUMULATIVE %
Bridge to suggested winter limit	2.75	50.5
Winter limit to closed water limit	1.20	72.5
Permanently closed (incl. bypass)	1.50	100

Table 2: Length of river between State Highway 1 bridge and HB dam

or other major tagging and recapture programme we are unlikely to ever get any better information.

It is also important to acknowledge that an improvement may not actually be necessary to support greater opportunity; the restrictions were originally put in place as a prudent but conservative approach to the building of the dam. It is entirely possible that more angling could have been permitted all along, and that the trap and transfer programme simply provides a greater buffer to allow for this increased opportunity.

How can we increase opportunity? There are a number of options but the demand from anglers is for more water to fish over winter. This could be achieved by either extending the open season allowing angling up to the permanently closed water limit (figure 1) past the existing closing date of 31 May, and/or moving the winter limit further upstream from the existing limit at the State Highway 1

bridge.

Currently the upper Hinemaiaia is heavily visited in the last two months of the open season and extending the open season would be highly valued. However the fish in the Hinemaiaia typically spawn a month or two earlier than other Taupo rivers and extending the season runs the risk of regular disturbance of spawning fish (and their redds) through almost the whole length of the river. To overcome this the season would need to be restricted to the end of June or possibly July, the downside being a return to the very limited opportunity below the bridge over the rest of the winter. Similarly having a winter season with a different start date to the rest of the eastern rivers risks confusion amongst Taupo anglers.

The alternative is to move the winter limit upstream, the advantage of this approach is that the increased opportunity is available over the whole winter. Any limit

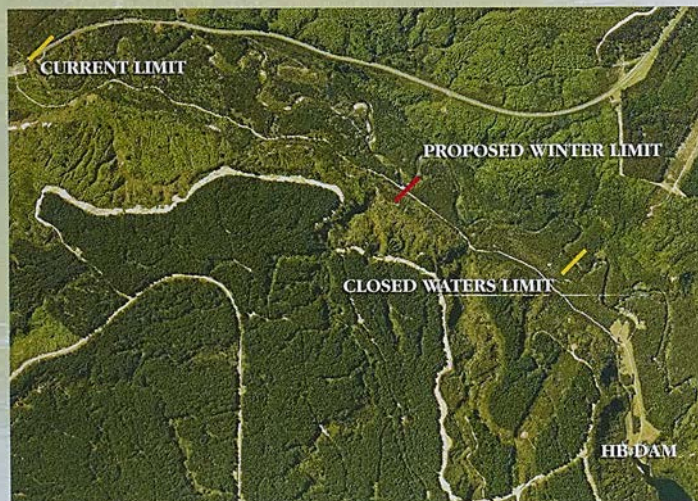


Figure 1: Hinemaiaia River between State Highway 1 bridge and HB dam

should be obvious and in such a location that an angler can not inadvertently pass upstream of this point without realising it. Several points were considered but ultimately we focused on the point shown in figure 1. This point around the Cliff Pool (where the river has previously undercut the road as marked with orange netting) is a common place for anglers to stop off to look at the river below. Putting the limit here would open up a further 2.75 km of river upstream from the bridge or 50% of the river currently closed over winter.

Moving the limit from the Highway Bridge where it currently is to the suggested point would therefore significantly increase angling opportunity on this river over the whole of the winter. The three hydro dams often allow the river to remain clear when other Taupo rivers have become unfishable due to heavy rain, and under these conditions the river is very highly valued. On the downside moving the winter limit increases the vulnerability of the trout population to excessive harvest. However we believe the contribution

of the trap and transfer programme in association with the very large amounts of in-stream debris which significantly constrains angling success act to reduce this risk to an acceptable level.

On this basis we have recommended to the Taupo Fishery Advisory Committee (TFAC) that now that the trap and transfer programme is well established that greater angling opportunity be permitted on the Hinemaiaia River AND this increased opportunity be bought about by moving the winter limit to the Cliff Pool AND this change be bought in for the start of the 2010/11 fishing season.

The committee have endorsed this proposal and we are now working to amend the Taupo Fishery Regulations 2004 for the start of the 2010 season. This does create an interesting situation in that the river will close at the highway at the end of May 2010 and then likely reopen up to the new winter limit on the 1 July 2010 when the new regulations come into force.

Genetic Study Update

By Glenn Maclean

The study into the genetic makeup of Taupo trout with particular emphasis on whether there are differences between early and late run fish continues to progress very well. Elizabeth Heeg is now halfway through her 3 year PhD study and we are delighted with progress.

We had a feature on Elizabeth's study in issue 57 of *Target Taupo*. The state of the art techniques she has employed have proven very successful and some significant results have already eventuated. It's early days and given the uniqueness of some of the results obtained so far we need to confirm these by taking repeat samples this year before jumping to too many conclusions. In addition Elizabeth will also look at some further comparisons between different groups of trout in the fishery over the next 12 months. At the end of this study we are very confident that we will have a lot better grasp of the genetic make-up of Taupo trout, and are hopeful it will highlight some valuable management opportunities.

Elizabeth is currently in California presenting some of her early results to an international forum.



Grandpa's Fishing Hat Trophy

By Callum Bourke
Callum is a Ranger in our
field operations work

My grandfather Jack Bourke is a passionate trout fisherman who has fished the Taupo region for many, many years. Originally hailing from Auckland and a builder by trade, Jack's first introduction to the Taupo Fishery occurred in 1948 while working for Fletchers Construction building the village at the old Te Rangita timber mill.

Jack used to tell me stories of how he and my grandmother Doreen would go down to the nearby Tauranga Taupo River and see pools "black" with trout that would gobble up anything that was thrown at them. From here developed a life long love of the Taupo region for my grandparents, and when the opportunity came to take over an old batch situated at Whareroa on the western bays of Lake Taupo they jumped at the chance. For the next 30 odd years the Bourke family holidayed at Whareroa and all the men folk learnt the art of fly fishing from Grandpa Jack who was a master angler. Night after night Jack would fish the mouth of the Whareroa Stream and often stroll back to the batch with a limit of fat Rainbows and Browns that were either bottled by grandma or smoked.

My late father Paul used to tell me that there was nothing else to do at Whareroa but go fishing so it wasn't long before he and his brothers Ross and Lewis became

proficient anglers who were ready to take on Jack's tallies.

When we were old enough and had "served our time" it was our turn to go fishing and we quickly realised that it was wise to select our own flies without grandpa's help, otherwise you were often given a barbless hook or a fly devoid of any feathers. Needless to say these "flies" didn't catch a lot and not surprisingly grandpa would win the competitions. We quickly wised up to the old boys tricks!

After many glorious years fishing the "Whareroa" grandpa and grandma moved permanently around the bay to Kuratau where they happily reside to this day. This opened up a whole new fishing experience for us all as we now had the Kuratau, Omori and Pukawa mouths to fish which were all within close proximity of the homestead. Using one of grandpa's homemade silicone smelt flies during the day then moving to a Craigs Nighttime or Scotch Poacher fly at night was always productive, and I still use similar patterns at these same mouths today. As a kid I used to fish day and night at these mouths and nothing would frustrate me more than the sight of grandpa casually strolling in beside me to cast out his line and pull out a fish within 5 minutes, when I had fished that same spot unsuccessfully for several

Grandpa Jack would often stroll back to the beach with a limit of fat rainbows and browns and photo supplied



hours. Jack certainly had that uncanny ability of being able to catch fish when no one else could. He just seemed to know where they were and everyone in Kuratau knew that if Jack was at the mouth then the fishing was on!

The years have rolled on and Jack (now in his 88th year) doesn't get out fishing

much these days so has decided to give up his famous fly-laden fishing hat as a family fishing trophy for the heaviest trout landed over the year. The flies on this old Svandri hat have caught hundreds of fish over the years, and a few times I have had to "borrow" the occasional fly. Grandpa would often comment that my hat seemed to be thickening while his thinning and wondered why!

The family has grown significantly over the last few years due to marriages and births so Jack now has several great grandchildren who he would dearly love to see take up the art of fly fishing. With the advent of this trophy I am sure there will be many friendly battles ahead as the young attempt to take on the old and have their names permanently etched on this special trophy.

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HAINES HUNTER



Let's not be complacent!

By Nic Etheridge
Nic is the Conservation
Support Manager for
the Pongāhoro Taupō
Conservancy

Going to a friend's wedding in Blenheim was a fine excuse to fish the upper South Island afterwards, which is exactly what my brother Mark, partner Mike and I decided to do.

After trolling through guide books and recollecting where we had all fished in the past, we decided to base ourselves in St Arnaud in the Nelson/Marlborough region. We booked a guide for the first day in the hope that some expert local knowledge would put us in good stead for the rest of our trip. As luck would have it the heavens opened and the

river discoloured fast, thus we put our guide off for as long as possible and set about to find clear water to fish. This led us to the virtually floodproof upper Buller which drains from Lake Rotoiti. That plan was great - had the mighty Buller not been riddled with didymo!

Fishing amongst didymo was a new experience for us. We were really nervous about using our gear and taking didymo back to the North Island. The sense of responsibility we felt for not transferring didymo to the North Island overshadowed our fishing experience on the day. For those of you who haven't had the



Left and above: Do you want this in your river?
- didymo in full bloom near St Arnaud
Photos by Mike Bodie

(dis)pleasure of fishing in rock snot, it is surprisingly grippy when wading. Almost like walking on carpet. But apart from that the downsides were obvious. The surprisingly tough didymo filaments hooked our flies on almost every drift, there was a reduction of fishable water due to shallower slower runs where trout would otherwise take refuge being clogged with didymo blooms, and it simply looks ugly.

During our travels we were impressed with the vast number of "Check, Clean,

Dry" signs dotted about the countryside. However, despite Fish and Game's best efforts at informing people didymo still seems to be spreading fast through the South Island.

Depending on what you value when fishing, didymo may not completely diminish your experience. But it sure did in our case! We felt an incredible sense of appreciation that it wasn't in our local rivers back home in the North Island. I'd like to believe that all anglers value our didymo free waters here. With the economic downturn and the Taupo fishery recovering after some below average seasons, the last thing the fishery needs, or any other region for that matter, is didymo! We, and when I say "we" I mean all of us - users, fishery managers, visitors and locals alike, must not be complacent. We must remain ever vigilant to ensure and dry our gear, inform visitors and ensure all agencies involved take the risk of didymo arriving here very seriously.

Going back to the South Island, there are of course some rivers which have managed to escape the clutches of didymo. The Wangapeka is one such river. Our trusty guide got us onto a number of brownies, despite the high and slightly discoloured water. So didymo aside you can still find top quality fishing with trout aplenty, but lets all do our bit to

We got onto a number of brownies despite the didymo and discoloured water
Photo by Mike Bodie



Large hungry eels
at St Arnaud
Photo by Nic Elzeidige



Despite the best efforts at
informing people didymo still
seems to be spreading fast
through the South Island
Photo by Mike Bettle

keep it that way.
Finally a tip for anyone visiting St Arnaud - if trout prove hard to tempt due to flooding, didymo, or whatever, there is a wonderful group of tuna, or long fin eels, that live under the boat ramp at Lake

Rotoiti! These large fish are not shy and are very hungry. But remember, because these beautiful fish live in Nelson Lakes National Park they are fully protected, so no hooks, photos only.



Looking after the Lake

5 Keep to five knots (walking pace) within 200m of the shore, or within 50m of another boat or swimmer.

Waterski beach starts are only allowed at the waterski lane, which is marked with black and orange striped poles.

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Ataturangi

Stop the spread of waterweeds. Protect the lake by cleaning your boat and trailer before launching.

No eel fishing. Eel (tuna) are protected in the national park. The oldest eels in the country live here. The eels do not reach maturity until 90 years of age.

Jet-skis and other personal water craft are not permitted on Lakes Rotoiti and Rotorua.

PROTECT OUR WATERS Help stop the spread of Didymo and other aquatic pests

CHECK Remove all plants, animals from boots, shoes, gear, and clothes before leaving the water.

CLEAN Soak and scrub all boots, shoes, gear, and clothes with 6% bleach or 10% bleach solution.

DRY Allow to dry for 72 hours in a well-ventilated area. Do not store gear in a boat or shed.

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may not be mental giants, but sometimes they can be the devil to catch. And when they're playing hard to get, you need every advantage. To be precise, you need the "Precision" advantage! The new Cortland Precision Series fly lines can give you the edge, with a line to meet almost any fly-fishing challenge.



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The "Western Drifter" was engineered to meet the challenges of "big water". The modified Pocket 2 Taper loads with a minimum of line for easy pick-ups and quick shots to those fast water pockets, but will also reach out with ease for longer casts.



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Access for every Angler...and Fish

By Julie Greaves
Julie is our Technical Support
Area Asset Planner and
looks after visitor assets and
structures for this Area

We have been working hard over the 2008 summer season to not only ensure you can access your favourite fishing possies, but also to clear the rivers ready for the influx of spawning trout this winter.

You would have to agree it was a fantastic summer weather wise. Lots of sun and the right amount of rain which made for great growing weather. While a hot summer is perfect for holidaymakers it means a lot more hours behind a scrub bar for our rangers. The weeds just go crazy!!!

We started before the Christmas period clearing popular tracks where the vegetation growth was rampant. These included

tracks along the Tauranga Taupo and Hlitemaiaia rivers. The Tauranga Taupo track travels mainly through blackberry and grassy areas and they can become completely overgrown in a single summer season. It is very difficult to navigate your way up a trail when the grass and blackberry is up to your arm pits, let alone trying not to get your fishing rod and waders snagged - so it's out with the scrub bars.

A few days on the end of a scrub bar and we were walking up the TT track more freely. At the same time more trespass signs were erected along the track to help remind anglers to stick to the

Top: Log jams such as this one in the Waipā Stream are a serious barrier to spawning trout.

Photo by Julie Greaves

A few days on the end of a scrub bar opened up the Tauranga Taupo track.
Photo by Julie Greaves



track and not take short cuts across the adjacent private land. Once the Tauranga Taupo was completed we dealt to the Hinemaiaia which is also a popular track for anglers and walkers over the Christmas holidays.

New signs were erected on the Tongariro River. Some signs must have a habit of jumping out in front of mountain bikers. We also installed steps down to the Major Jones Pool to make it easier to get down the bank. The Red Hut and Major Jones bridges as well as the Kowhai board walk had their decking replaced or repaired and we took the opportunity to make other minor repairs.

Other work over summer included having more visible lake edge marker posts for boat anglers. These white/black/yellow poles indicate the 300m exclusion zone around the mouths of many tributaries and streams. During the summer season many of them need to be repositioned or replaced depending on the level of the lake or where the stream mouths have shifted to. Encroaching vegetation can also limit visibility to hatches so this gets cleared at the same time. The back of your fishing licence or the Taupo Fishery regulations informs you about the streams and rivers where these fishing restrictions exist.



Not the place to be working without a harness and well anchored rope. Waioataka Gorge 2009.

Photo by Julie Greaves

As we hit autumn we concentrated on the track vegetation clearance again ready for the influx of winter anglers. This year the tracks were maintained by our rangers instead of contractors to cut costs. The Fishery Area was very fortunate to have our neighbours up the hill at Whakapapa give us as helping hand this season. Whakapapa Area in the Department of Conservation employs a dedicated team specialising in maintaining their assets on the mountain, including the tracks and structures. Whakapapa staff indicated they would like the opportunity to experience working in other areas of the department and the Taupo fishery were delighted to accept their offer. On one hot autumn's day in the middle of March a team of ten DOC staff from Whakapapa nailed the vegetation cutting along the entire length of the Tauranga Taupo Track. A big thanks is owed to the track team at Whakapapa for this.

At the moment Taupo Fishery staff are continuing to work hard cutting tracks. Work along the Tongariro and Hinemaiaia rivers was completed by the end of April. This included

extending the track below Delatours Pool on the Tongariro River. With the willows removed in the lower section of the Tongariro this created the opportunity to cut a short length of track from the end of Graces Road adjacent to Delatours Pool and link directly with the cleared banks downstream. This will create further angling opportunities downstream, a quiet place to go for a walk away from the crowds.

While it is important to clear access tracks for anglers it is just as essential to ensure access for trout to their spawning habitat. Regular inspections on the spawning rivers and streams take place several times a year. Often sections that have to be checked are located in the upper parts of the rivers where the flow has carved deep gorges. River gorges are susceptible to trees and other debris falling from above or being swept down in a flood creating log and rock jams. These can often become impassable for trout preventing them from swimming further upstream to prime spawning areas.

When a log or rock jam is found I organise a small specialised team. This team

consists of Glenn Maclean, Callum Bourke, Rob Hood and myself. Our mission: to search and destroy any barrier that might block the way for the annual spawning migration!!!

Two separate operations took place just after last winter and this summer a further one was undertaken to remove a log and rock jam discovered in the Waitotaka Gorge.

Removing log jams consists of either cutting them up by chainsaw or using explosives. Getting into the gorge to remove these log jams is not a simple matter. Luckily we have the expertise of a professional abscil contractor Terry Blumhardt. Having a very reliable and thorough person like this on board means piece of mind for all of those involved when you are hanging off the end of a rope.

Finding the best place to drop into the gorge can be tricky enough let alone finding suitable anchors to tie ropes to. Generally only two or three staff are sent down the cliff to the cold depths of

the gorge. Once they have reached the bottom Terry himself traverses down to set up more ropes and anchors in the gorge. In turn these ropes ensure we don't get washed away if we lose our footing or the log jam collapses while we are working on it. It is often hard, cold work clearing such blockages though it's every boys dream (and some girls!!) to blow things up and very satisfying to see trout surging upstream within minutes of clearing the obstruction.

As you can see it is very important to us that you can access your favourite fishing spots. Unfortunately, over the winter period we expect tracks to be affected by floods and high winds. We have staff out through the winter covering the rivers checking licences and surveying anglers and they often discover these obstacles. However if you find something, perhaps part of the track washed away for example or blocked by a fallen tree, just let us know. That way we can keep the fishery as open and accessible as possible for all anglers....and fish.

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On the Way Up

By Glenn Mackean



A typical fish
so far this winter.
Photo by Glenn Mackean.

As discussed in *"From One Extreme to Another"* on page 51, the winter spawning run in 2008 was a low point in the recent history of the fishery. Despite some encouraging indications to the contrary early last winter, it ended the lowest rainbow run with the smallest, poorest fish. The question being was this the bottom or is worse to come? Fortunately all the indications are the former.

The reasons for the decline are reasonably well understood, at least in terms of what happened. In 2005 the lake didn't fully mix over winter which meant that the large amounts of nutrients stored in the bottom waters were not returned to the surface where all the life is. If you like this particular farm missed out on being fertilised in 2005 with the inevitable result. Nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus are important building blocks for life, without them the small plants in the water (phytoplankton) can't grow. Fewer plants mean less for the little animals (zooplankton) to eat, and in turn less zooplankton means less prey for the smelt. Inevitably the smelt population crashed and as the staple diet for Taupo trout then so did the trout population.

There weren't huge numbers of trout but there were too many for the available food. These trout did poorly and so had no extra to put into growth, and many never reached the then minimum size limit of 45cm. It was frustrating, we needed to increase the harvest of trout to improve the condition of the remaining fish, but in fact having got into this situation the size limit protected them instead.

One thing we learnt was that this check on production took longer to work through the system than we initially would have thought, taking three years to come to a head. With the benefit of

hindsight this is most likely a consequence of smelt having a 2 year life cycle and so two year classes were impacted by the shortage of food in 2006.

However since 2005 the lake has mixed again each winter, and so we would expect the lake ecosystem to be returning to normality, much like the ripples from a stone cast into a calm pond will quickly recede into the distance. And this is what we are seeing.

For the first time in several years smelt (often in dense shoals) were apparent around the shoreline through spring and summer. It is difficult to compare the average size of trout in the lake last summer as we had a 40cm size limit in place for the first time, but anglers regularly commented on the improved condition of the trout they were catching. It was also noticeable that these fish fought hard as we associate with Taupo



Things are looking up on
Taupo rivers
Photo by Glenn Maclean

trout, and this was not the case the previous year. This improvement was reflected in the creel data we collected which showed an average condition factor for the fish kept by anglers of 41.1 compared to 39.6 the previous summer. While many of these trout were small as a consequence of being the progeny of late spawners and therefore younger than they would have been a decade ago, the fact that they are in good condition means they will grow.

In turn this improvement has also been evident amongst the early run spawning fish in the rivers. By and large they

are not big fish though amongst the catch are some very solid fish. However they are generally in good to very good condition albeit there is still an occasional maiden fish which has struggled, indicating that the recovery is not complete yet. At the end of the day some tired specimens will also have survived from last winter so we expect some poor fish to still be present. In terms of the winter spawning runs small flurries have occurred when conditions have been conducive over recent months, particularly in the smaller rivers. However as I write this on the 11th June a damp 24 hours has caused the Tongariro to spring to life. Given the move over recent years towards later spawning and the small size of the fish in the lake over summer then it is highly likely that the main runs are still several months away.

This pattern of later spawning causes several issues, not least that the fish are younger and therefore smaller in the lake over summer. However it is important to realise that this is a separate issue to the poor growth that occurred in the last couple of years as a consequence of the lake not mixing. Depending on the outcome of our genetic studies and what anglers ultimately want we may be able to do something about this issue but that's a year or two away yet.

We are not suggesting the improvement is complete but it's definitely well underway and things should continue to get better. As highlighted in "Are Early Run Trout Larger?" page 36, the young fish in the lake will continue to grow over winter and the average size of maiden trout in the spawning runs steadily increase as the year slips by. Time to get out and enjoy the Taupo Fishery.

Steve Dickson from Drury with a typical Lake Taupo rainbow this summer
Photo by Julie Greaves



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Fish that go “Beep”

By Mark Vennart
Mark is our Programme
Manager, Field Operations
and manages our day to day
activities in the field

The rate at which trout grow always generates interest amongst both scientists and anglers alike.

Although trout in Lake Otamangakau originated largely from Taupo stock they have tended to grow much larger than those in Taupo. Its not so much a case of them growing faster but living longer, continuing to grow after each spawning event unlike their Taupo cousins.

In order to measure the growth of trout in Lake Otamangakau we have over recent winters captured several hundred rainbow and brown trout in our fish trap on the Te Whaiiau Stream and inserted PIT (Passive Integrated Transponders) tags into them. Each fish is then individually recognisable with its own specific number. These fish were then released to continue on their spawning migration and after a year “on the run” re-measured when they returned to the fish trap once again. Not only does this allow us to see how much they had grown over the year, but we can also determine what percentage of tagged fish survived and compare the date they return with when they were tagged amongst other things. This programme is ongoing but this article provides some initial answers to these questions and attempts to unlock further some of the secrets of Lake Otamangakau trout, and make some comparisons to their cousins in nearby Lake Taupo.

During winter 2007, a total of 202 rainbow trout were tagged by fishery staff. Each fish was measured, weighed, sexed and classed by maturity before having a 23mm PIT tag inserted under their skin to the side of their dorsal fin. All of this information was then transferred to our data book in the caravan. We were also keen to know how long they spent spawning above the trap and so scanned the kelts (spent trout) as they collected in the downstream pen on their way back to

the lake. On average the rainbows spent 24 days (+/-4.5 days) spawning above the trap. Having run a similar project in the Waipa Stream (tributary of the Tongariro River near Rangipo) we found that rainbows there spent an average of 28 days (+/-1.5 days) but were much more influenced by floods when choosing to return downstream. The difference of course was that rainbows spawning in the Waipa stream had already spent several months in the Tongariro River to get there, where as the fish captured in the Te Whaiiau trap are fresh from the lake.

One of the questions we found interesting was whether trout return to spawn again the next year on or near the same date or whether environmental factors such as floods or colder temperatures are the key stimulants. By looking at the dates fish were tagged in 2007 and the dates that fish returned to the trap in 2008, we were surprised to see that most fish return after an average of 359 days (+/-1.7 days). On average this is just 6 days short of 1 year and tends to suggest that it is more of a “body clock” than an environmental influence. There is no doubt that fish move as flood levels rise and recede and as temperatures drop but they seem to know when to return with a couple of fish returning after exactly 365 days! Interestingly, this is almost identical to the time taken by Waipa fish to return which overall was 359 days (+/-4.4 days) with the Waipa fish having to complete a much longer spawning trip.

In terms of survival, 33 of the 202 fish tagged were detected alive one year later but this is likely to be a significant underestimate as we had technical difficulties mid way through the project which meant some fish were not scanned. Other fish may also have spawned downstream of the trap and remained undetected or passed over the trap during the six sig



PIT tags allow us to monitor fish growth rates and spawning duration
Photo by John Webb

nificant food events last winter. It will be interesting to see how many of these missing fish in fact show up this winter. However, on the up-side we managed to build an easy to use measuring board with an inbuilt scanner that could scan the fish while its length was being recorded. Only 2 tagged fish were captured and killed by anglers that we know of, with one being captured in Lake Te Whaiau during January 2008 and the other in the Te Whaiau canal during May 2008. However as these fish were not marked externally it is likely that a number of them were caught and released again without anglers knowing that they were tagged.

From our trapping data we know that mature trout grow from one year to the next. However, how much individual fish grow was an unknown as we couldn't identify specific fish, and so could only look at the data grouped by year classes. By PIT tagging these fish we can calculate individual growth rates and split these by the maturity of the fish to see at which stages the most growth occurs. As expected, the great-

est amount of post spawning growth occurs after the first spawning event and although fish continue to grow after each spawning event, this drops away as the fish gets older. Regaining condition is more of a challenge for older fish and so the drop in growth is not surprising. Maiden fish spawning for the first time in 2007 grew by an average of 43mm (± 7 mm) and increased in weight by an average of 0.36kg (± 0.06 kg). Some fish however managed to increase in size from 50-80mm with one female rainbow increasing by 130mm and 0.95kg during 348 days. This equates to a growth rate of approximately 11mm per month on a largely insect based diet, and highlights the variation that occurs between individuals. This is one of the aspects we are keen to get a better grasp off as the programme continues, are these particular individuals that grow faster the key to the trophy fishery or not? Only 2 maiden fish shrunk in size but this was by no more than 10mm during the 1 year period.

In comparison, a sample of maiden Waipa

fish that returned again in 2008 had only grown on average 11mm (+/-3.6mm) during the entire year! A small number also shrunk slightly by a few millimetres, but overall the post maturation growth was nowhere near as good as that of Lake Otamangakau fish. Given the poor conditions that existed in Lake Taupo in 2008 it is perhaps surprising that they even grew at all. The best increase in growth was 35mm by a male that happened to return to the Waipa trap site in the fastest time - 319 days.

It was encouraging to see that despite a lot more smaller fish (410 to 430 mm) in the run in recent winters that these fish grow by an average of 80mm over the next year. However, there was a noticeable difference between fish spawning for the first time when they were between 400 & 500mm in length and those greater than 500mm in length. On average, maiden trout less than 500mm increased in length by 64mm while

those larger than this only increased by 26mm. This would tend to suggest that although some fish are bigger when they first spawn, growth is limited afterwards while good growth can be obtained if you spawn while still reasonably small.

During winter 2008, we also PIT tagged 200 brown trout to help us further understand this population. These fish are now returning to spawn again in the Te Whaiiau Stream and so we will be able to record when they arrive and also how much they have grown, just as we have done with the rainbows.

The ongoing plan is to continue to tag 200 maiden rainbows and 100 brown trout each winter. As the number of tagged fish increases along with the number of records for individual fish this should allow us to further unlock how these trout grow over their lifetime and hopefully better understand what makes for a trophy fish in this lake.

The pit tag is gently inserted
below the dorsal fin
Photo by Mike Nicholson



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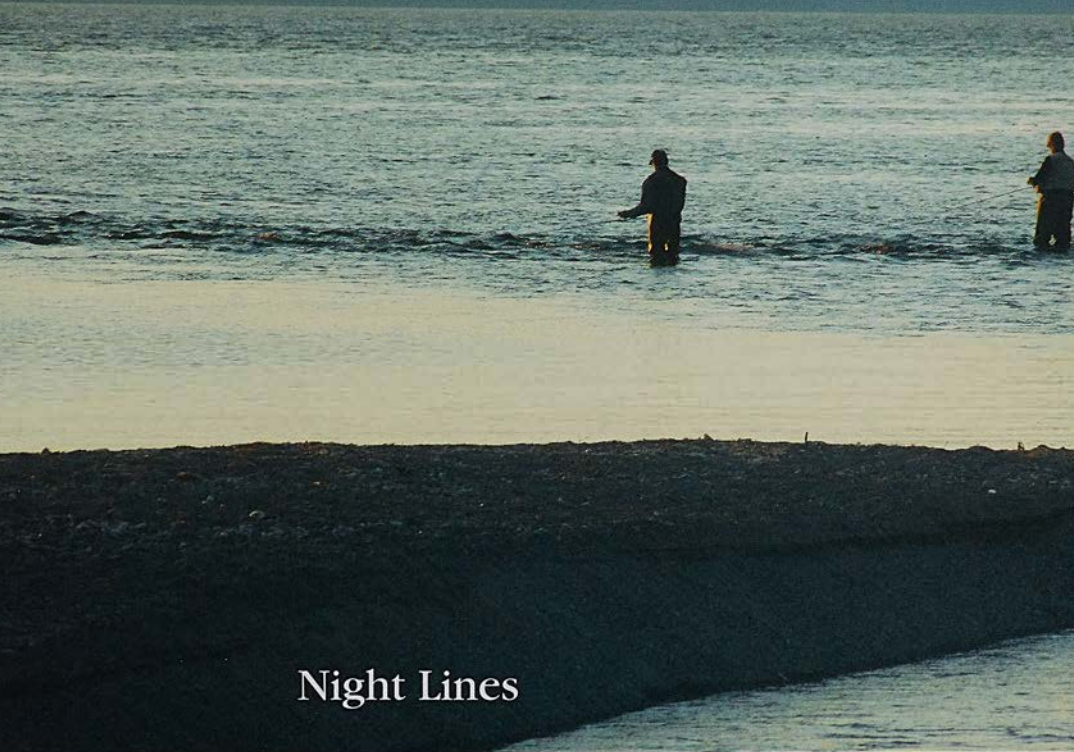
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Night Lines

By John Webb
John is the Programme
Manager, Community
Relations

There can be little doubt that the Taupo region offers a wide variety of trout angling opportunities. During the winter there is exceptional wet fly and nymph fishing, top quality wilderness and dry fly fishing in the summer with the region's lakes offering a wide array of angling for boat owners. However, there is another form of very successful angling that a smaller group pursue - river mouth night fishing.

Although night fishing is not for everyone, it can be a very exciting and productive way to catch trout. Generally speaking most night anglers target the currents or 'rips' where streams or rivers

enter the lake. These do not have to be large. A culvert emptying storm water into the lake will be enough to entice trout into the shallows at night.

From a trout perspective, frequenting these rips is beneficial for a number of reasons - food, oxygen and water temperature are three of the key ones. Small fish and smelt will often shelter within the mouths of rivers and streams and they sometimes carry large quantities of aquatic and terrestrial insects. All of this is prime trout food. If stream catchments begin in the high country or are spring fed (which many Taupo rivers are) the water will often be cool and carry good



quantities of dissolved oxygen. This is of particular significance in the summer when the fringes of many lakes warm. In this circumstance, trout will seek the cooler water either at greater depth or in these rips. There is however a trade off to be faced by trout at river mouths. Rips are often shallow making them more visible and therefore vulnerable during the day. However, all this changes when night falls and they can hide under the cover of darkness.

Many of the rivers and streams that enter lakes in the Taupo region are denoted by a marker pole of black and yellow or black and white stripes. This indicates that nothing but fly fishing is permissible within 300m of the where the stream enters the lake. With the exception of the deepwater mouths at the Tongariro and Tauranga Taupo deltas fly fishing from a boat is not permitted either. As a consequence night fishing rips in the Taupo fishery is almost solely a foot-based fly fishing pursuit. In fact this is why the restrictions exist, to give shore anglers a fair go. There are many places that are renowned for good night fishing. Some of the more popular rips around Lake Taupo include the mouths of the Waihaha River, Whangamata Stream (Kinloch), Mapara Stream (Whakaipo Bay), Waitahanui River, Waipehi Stream, Tauranga Taupo River, Waiotaka River, Waimarino River, Pukawa Stream, Omori Stream, Kuratau River and the Whareroa River. A few hardened anglers also make the most of the Tongariro Delta but this is more of an adventure in the dark.

Safety is of the utmost importance when night fishing. It is dark and many stream mouths have sharp drop-offs into the lake. This, coupled with the current created by the rips themselves, means that caution should be exercised when night fishing. Prior to night fishing, visit the rip during daylight hours or go with an angler who has first hand knowledge of the rip to get an understanding of

the environment and its dangers. As discussed later, this is necessary anyway in order to decide what fishing tackle and flies would be most appropriate for that particular rip. Also, wear a wading belt, particularly if you plan to fish the drop-offs.

If there is one drawback with night fishing it is that it tends to be governed by conditions more than other angling types. Most anglers that enjoy night fishing will always be looking at three things, the phase and rise times of the moon and the wind conditions. It is a myth that you will not catch trout when there is a moon, however fishing will definitely be a lot harder. Just as trout feel vulnerable during the day in the shallows, they feel so at night on a bright moon, particularly in the smaller rips. In larger rips such as the Waitahanui or the Tauranga Taupo where there is a greater area of ripple and greater depth, trout will feel more hidden and therefore safer during the day or on a moon. The rise time of the moon is also critical when considering a night fish. In Taupo waters fishing must cease between midnight and 5am. Therefore, if the moon rises after midnight, its phase is irrelevant and fishing can proceed. Furthermore as fishing is permissible from 5am and if you are a morning person, an early morning night fish can be excellent. As a rule of thumb though, if you are fishing a small to medium rip and the moon phase is anywhere between quarter and full, the fishing will be hard.

Wind is the other major factor to consider when night fishing. If the wind is in your face and it is strong enough to put a chop on the lake, casting will be difficult and particularly if you are using a floating flyline it will be pushed in the direction of the waves, and a strike can be difficult to detect. Fishing is also unpleasant in these conditions. At small shallow rips the wave action also creates a surge under the water surface

that trout do not enjoy. They will therefore remain deeper and fishing will be harder. Some anglers prefer to fish on nights when there is a light breeze blowing that puts a small ripple on the water as they believe trout will feel safer under the ripple. This preference is not without merit because trout will often 'hide' under ripple particularly in the river environment. However, in my experience so long as the night is dark it makes little difference to the fishing success.

So the best nights for fishing are those that have light winds, or the wind behind you and it must be dark, the darker the better. Nights with no moon and an over-cast cloud cover are best.

When trout come into rips at night they tend to feed throughout the water profile. In this way, it is not critical that your flies are on or near the bottom as is the case during winter river fishing. This has an effect on the choice of equipment you use. It has already been established that night fishing at rips is primarily a fly fishing pursuit but the type of rod, flyline and terminal tackle can be as varied as with any other form of angling. The key thing when choosing the correct rig is the type of rip you are fishing, primarily its size and the type

of lake bed. In general, if you are fishing small shallow rips with a rocky bottom you will need a floating flyline with a short leader and small flies. In large rips with a sandy bottom you would use a medium-fast sinking line with a longer leader and large flies. These are the two extremes and you will find there is everything in between.

Personally, I try to match the length of my leader to the depth I am fishing - especially when using a floating flyline. This will cover the water profile from top to bottom as the fly slowly sinks. I seldom drop below a 1.0m leader length (about one third of a rod length) or exceed a 2.5m leader length (about three quarters of a rod length). Leader material varies between anglers and comes down to personal preference. As fishing is being carried out at night, there is little point in using fluorocarbon leader and I generally use standard 3.5kg mono for all applications. If you are targeting large brown trout lifting the test weight to 4.5kg might be preferable. You should always have a small torch or headlamp with you. This is essential for re-rigging, landing fish and if you are using them, making luminous flies glow.

Many different fly patterns are successful as night flies. Woolly Bugger,

Commonly used night flies
(from left to right)
Craigs Night-time,
Fuzzy Wuzzy,
Luminous Dollfly,
Black Marabou,
Woolly Bugger.

Photos by John Webb



Fuzzy Wuzzy, Craigs Night-time, Scotch Poacher, Booby flies, Marabou flies and Rabbit flies are all well proven night patterns - and there are others. Smelt flies such as Ginger Mick, Grey Ghost and Jack Sprat can be very effective at twilight, particularly during the summer months. Black, olive, brown and red are the best colours to employ for a night fly. Size tends to vary depending on where you are fishing although most patterns used for night fishing are tied on a size 6-10 hook. Flies tied on large hooks are heavier and will sink more quickly. This may become a factor for snags if you are fishing a rocky delta like the Mapara or Waipahi mouths. A very successful pattern, particularly on rainbow trout is the luminous Doll Fly. This is simply a standard Doll Fly but tied with luminous tape for the body that glows in the dark when held closely under a light source. In fact, luminous tape or beads are often incorporated into many patterns by night anglers and they definitely add a new dimension to the attractiveness of a fly. For example a long shank size 6 Black Marabou tied with luminous tape for the body is long and sleek in the water and the luminous body shining through the marabou filaments gives the fly

the illusion of movement. It can be a lethal pattern, especially during the late summer when trout are feeding voraciously on smelt.

Many anglers only use one fly when they night-fish, but I prefer to use two as long as too much gear isn't being lost to snags. As is the case in the many forms of fly angling, providing choice to the fish can improve success. A good example of this is when targeting both brown and rainbow trout at the same time. Although brown trout can be caught with a luminous fly, this doesn't happen often. If browns are known to be in the area you should try fishing a trailing size 6-10 Woolly Buzzer or Fuzzy Wuzzy 30-40cm behind the luminous fly. These will catch the browns but the rig will also be attractive to rainbows giving the best of both worlds.

Where you fish in relation to the rip is largely a matter of personal preference or which spots haven't been taken by others. However, it is important to 'read' the rip and place yourself in the best position possible. One of the first things to look at when you arrive at a rip is which way it is moving into the lake. Always stand on the side to which the rip is turning if you can. For example if the rip goes out into the lake and turns



to the left, fish on the left hand side, your flies will then either cross the rip or be on its edge during the retrieve. Some anglers like to fish right in the rip itself and this can be very productive in the winter when the fish are running to spawn. The fringes of rips can be very successful also. Here, trout can gain the benefits of the rip but do not expend great quantities of energy by sitting in the main current. Because of this, standing just outside of the main rip and casting along its edge is a good choice of position.

When you first arrive at a rip there is no need to wade deeply – knee deep

is ample. There is an old saying among night anglers – “fish your feet first” and this is very true. On a dark night trout become very brazen and will come right in to very shallow water. I have seen many good fish taken in less than 50cm of water and very close to the end of the rod. Generally speaking, wading deeper than mid-thigh is not necessary and in fact can be detrimental to the fishing by spooking fish out into deeper water. There are exceptions such as targeting drop-offs, and if you fish the shallows without success then slowly moving deeper can be explored.

The basic method of fly fishing at night

A brace of nice Taupo rainbows taken night fishing
Photo by John Webb



is to cast out into the lake, wait 10 to 15 seconds for the flies to get below the surface and then employ a slow retrieve. The process is then repeated. To this end a weight forward floating flyline or shooting head if you are using a sinking flyline are the best choices. The butt of the rod will be held under the elbow and the retrieve will be performed by the opposing hand. The tip of the fly rod should be kept close to the surface of the water so that the flies behave as naturally as possible.

The retrieval of the flyline is an essential part of night fishing. Finding the right speed of retrieval can take a little time but is worth it. Sometimes a retrieve is not necessary at all. At large rips 'have and leave' is sometimes employed where the cast is made and the flies are

left to sit and bob in the current until a strike occurs, although a very slow retrieve will usually be more successful. Usually however, a retrieve is undertaken and if the retrieve is too slow or too fast, fishing success can be limited. In general a slow figure 8 retrieve at around one hand cycle per second will be successful. However this may need to be varied. For example if targeting brown trout with a large dark fly a very slow retrieve can be more successful, or, if you are targeting rainbow trout on the edge of darkness with a smelt fly a very fast retrieve using the line stripping method can reap rewards also. If you haven't had a strike for some time, try varying the retrieval speed - it will often have the desired effect.

As with other fly angling, striking to set

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the hook is also important. Most of the time a fish take will be very aggressive at night and there will be no mistake. However soft takes do occur regularly, brown trout are renowned for them. If you feel an increasing resistance on the line while retrieving, it will generally just be a snag or the weight forward end of the line reaching the rod but sometimes it is a curious trout 'mouthing' the fly and lifting the end of the rod sharply will result in a hook up. Trust your instinct, sometimes you won't really know why you struck but a fish thumping on the end of your line tells you that you got it right.

Once hooked up things become quite exciting. Apart from locating the general direction of the fish via the odd splash in the distant dark everything is done more or less by feel. If the fish wants to run, it is generally easy to let it do so - one of the advantages of fishing lake edges. They will usually run straight for deeper water once hooked. If you intend to release the fish it is important that you play it gently but quickly to the shore and employ proper fish handling and release techniques to ensure as little trauma to the fish as possible. Obviously this means turning on your torch or head lamp when the fish is close to the shore.

Some anglers prefer to use a landing net to capture the fish while still in their fishing position and deal with the fish there. Although this may make sense, you have to see what you are doing, hold the rod, line, net, fish and disengage the fish from the hook. Furthermore, not dealing with a fish at the shore will mean greater disturbance to other anglers. This cannot be good for the fish, other anglers or equipment if release is intended - there are simply not enough hands. However, so long as the right technique is employed, a landing net can be particularly useful for landing large fish at night. Bringing large fish into the shallows or beach

ing them can damage them or cause a breakoff and loss of the fish. In this circumstance, gently using a soft, small mesh landing net to secure the fish in deeper water then keeping the fish and the end of the landing net in the water while bringing it slowly to shore to deal with is the best course of action.

The primary quarry and the one you will catch most often when night fishing at Taupo is rainbow trout. However from mid-January to late March brown trout will start turning up at river mouths in preparation for their spawning run which is generally earlier than for rainbows. Some of them are very large and a number of trophy sized fish are taken on the night fly during this time. Some night anglers specifically target browns and usually, large dark flies are used to catch them. Contrary to popular belief, brown trout can occasionally be very feisty and can even become aerial when hooked at night but this is unusual. It is only experience that will tell whether you have hooked a large brown trout, but generally they will stay deeper and although heavy may initially be quite docile to handle. But beware, once a brown gets into shallow water and touches the sand they will run like a rocket. This is where most are lost. If you are fortunate enough to hook a large fish at night be patient, play it and only bring it to the shore or net when it is ready.

Night fishing the rips is another excellent angling opportunity that Taupo has to offer. So if you only enjoy winter river fishing but want to do more, don't have a boat or want to catch trout consistently throughout the year, give night fishing a go. I almost guarantee that you won't be disappointed.

Have you enjoyed reading *Target Taupo*?

By Carolyn Newell
Carolyn is our
Programme Manager,
Service and is
responsible for
licensing and co-
ordinating services
for the Taupo Fishery
Area

If you have enjoyed this issue and would like to receive the next one then read further From the start of the new season (1st July 2009) we will be changing the way in which we collect the postal information we need to distribute *Target Taupo*.

Previously we used to compile the address list from the duplicates of all our whole season licences sold. However due to major ongoing issues of illegible scribe, incorrect or incomplete addresses and in conjunction with the very considerable staff resources to transcribe the 11,000 or so names and addresses, we have looked at new ways to collect this information.

Instead we are requesting that you send your contact details in via email or phone us. Receiving your postal information this way will also give us a point of contact to follow up on any vital information that may be missing, increasing the likelihood of you receiving your valued issues of the magazine. We need your full home postal address rather than your holiday home address. Similarly if you are Rural Delivery, as many homes are, please remember you have to be registered for Rural Delivery with New Zealand Post to receive mail.

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Are Early Run Trout Larger?

By Glenn Maclean

A long held view amongst many anglers is that early run trout tend to be larger but is this in fact the case? Data from the Waihukahuka Stream (Hatchery Stream) fish trap which was operated between 1963 and 1995 provides an interesting insight into this question.

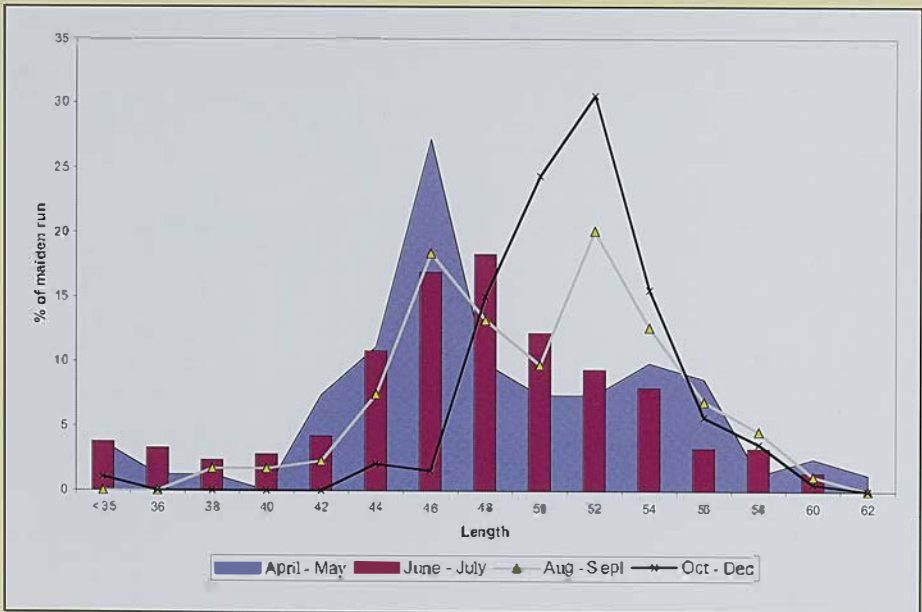
In 1990 the fishery went through a significant decline, not too different to what we have just experienced. However in the early 1990's the angling harvest was much larger and impacted dramatically on the relatively small numbers of trout in the lake at this time. The outcome was that the chances of a fish not being caught and surviving more than one year living in the lake were almost nil. Therefore when the fishery rebounded in 1991 it meant that nearly all the maiden fish in the spawning run were of the same age (3 year old trout which had

spent just one summer in the lake). This allows us an opportunity to look at the growth of a group of fish without the data being clouded by trout of widely different ages.

Looking at the size distribution of these fish in the Waihukahuka spawning run in 1991 it is very evident that the fish grew larger as the winter progressed (figure 1). Look at how the peak of each curve moves to the right over time.

Figure 1 highlights that whereas in April/May many trout tended to be around 46 cm in length, by June/July they had grown to around 48cm and by late in the year were in the order of 52cm long. This corresponds to an increase of 6 cm in 6 months (an increase of about half a kilogram or 1 pound in weight) reflecting that the trout that remained in the lake continued to grow over winter. Note this growth rate is less than the often quoted

Figure 1: Length distribution of maiden trout (in 2cm intervals) in the 1991 spawning run through the Waihukahuka trap.



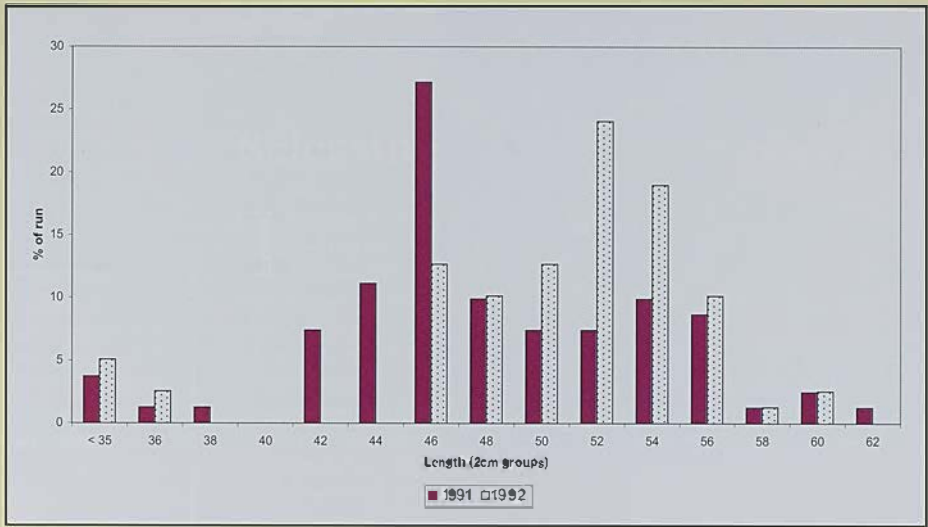


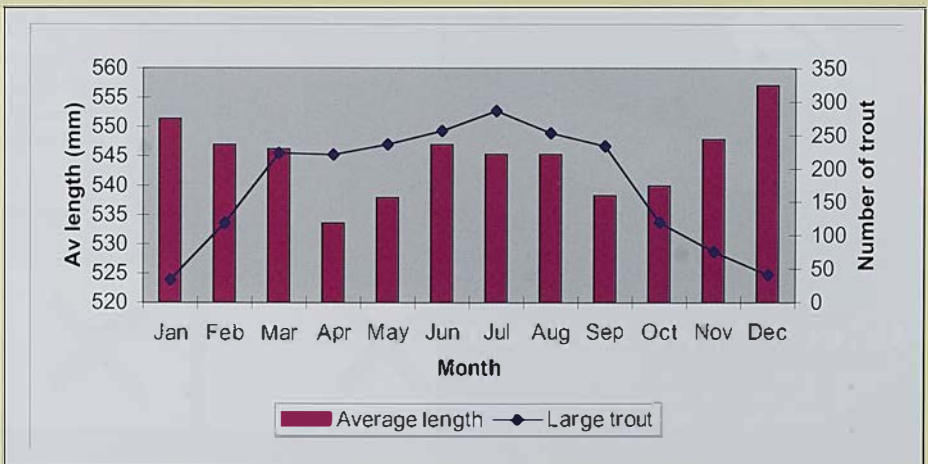
Figure 2: Length distribution of maiden trout (in 2cm intervals) in April and May spawning run through the Waikabuka trap in 1991 and 1992.

1mm a day which applies to immature fish less than 45cm in length.

From this it is evident that amongst fish of the same year class (albeit they will have been born over a range of months within that year) then the later they run from the lake the larger they are likely to be on average. However what the right hand end of figure 2 also highlights is that there are a few very large fish present at any time.

In a more typical year when we look at the length distribution of early run maiden trout (fish spawning for the first time) we usually see a bimodal (2 peaks) distribution of size. Even in the 1991 data for April and May we can see a second small peak around 54 to 56 cm, but if we look at the same period the following year (1992) then there is a dominant peak around 52 to 54 cm (Figure 2). This peak is most likely to reflect a second

Figure 3: Average size and number of rainbow trout longer than 575 mm trapped monthly in the Whitikau Stream 1995



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year class of older fish which have spent a longer period in the lake before spawning for the first time.

Another way to look at this question is to compare the average size of all trout in the run for each month of the year. This we did for the Whiti kau Stream in 1995 (figure 3).

From this graph it is apparent that the largest average size of trout occurs at the beginning and end of the year. However this needs to be balanced by the fact that the major runs occur outside this period and that these runs are typically dominated by young smaller maiden fish, which in turn reduces the average size through this period. As figure 3 shows the average size may be less through the middle of the year but the actual number of large fish (longer than 575 mm) is at its highest.

In summary trout of the same year class will get larger as the winter progresses and so we should expect the average size of spawning trout to increase. However early in the run are often a group of older larger fish which hadn't spawned the previous year. In some years like 1992 these fish may dominate the early run consistent with anglers' perceptions that the early fish tend to be larger. Nevertheless as the data shows there are some very large fish present in the run at all times of the year. Realistically you are more likely to catch a truly outstanding fish over the peak of the runs simply because there are more present. Conversely the chances of the fish you hook being a trophy is higher at the beginning and end of the season because a higher proportion of the run at this time are large fish. All in all seems like a good reason to go fishing at all times of the year.



Releasing Trout so they Survive

By John Webb

TROUT are fragile organisms and they live in an environment that can often be quite hostile. To aid their survival, they have a number of highly developed physical mechanisms such as a protective slime that prevents infection and sensitive internal organs that enable them to thrive in cold water. These tissues are easily damaged and if the intention is to release a trout back into the wild, as much care as is practically possible needs to be taken to prevent damage and ensure their continued survival.

All anglers need to release some fish they catch due to regulations such as the size limit. Anglers may also choose to release a fish because it is not of sufficient quality to eat. Often these fish are kelts recovering from the rigours of spawning. If they are handled well, kelts stand a much better chance of survival, regaining condition and returning again to both spawn and provide sport for another angler.

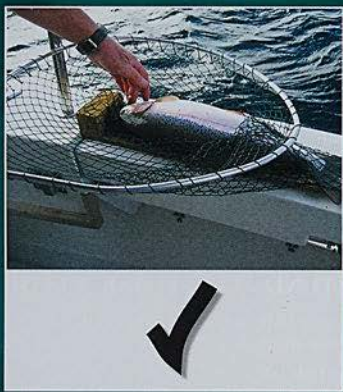
Even when sensitive tissues have been damaged, trout will often appear to swim away quite happily giving the angler a perception that the fish will survive, but nothing could be further from the truth. In reality they will usually die within a few hours.

There are a few basic rules that should be followed when releasing trout.

IF YOU INTEND TO RELEASE A FISH:

- Never squeeze a fish or rip the hook out.
- Never put your fingers in the gills.
- Never throw fish back into the water.
- If you must handle them, always use wet hands.





A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER TO MAXIMISE TROUT SURVIVAL WHEN FISHING FROM A BOAT ARE:

- **Never let a fish flap around on the floor of your boat.**
- Lean over the side and use long nosed pliers to twist the hook free while the fish is in the water.
- If this isn't possible, use a net with a soft, knotless mesh and carefully lift the fish into the boat.
- Leave the fish in the net and without touching it remove the hook using long nosed pliers or forceps.
- If you must handle the fish, hold it gently, upside down with wet hands. Trout lie more quietly in this position.
- Measure the fish by laying it on a simple measuring board. Make sure the board is damp and ideally leave the fish in the net so it can't flap wildly. If necessary support the fish gently upright in the water until it swims away.

If you intend to release most of your fish, and many anglers do, then consider using barbless hooks. Not only is the hook easy to disengage from the fish but it will test your angling skill trying to stay attached to the fish while it is being landed. An easy way to make barbless hooks is to squeeze the barb of an ordinary hook flat with pliers.



All photos Petrina Francis and Glenn Maclean

IF YOU INTEND TO RELEASE IN A RIVER FISHING SITUATION:

- Never kick a fish onto the beach or let it flap around on the rocks or sand.
- Bring the fish carefully to the edge and unhook it while it remains in the water.
- Land the fish as quickly as possible to minimise stress and exhaustion.
- If necessary, use a knotless net, to control the fish and remove the hook using long nosed pliers or forceps.

Releasing fish so they survive will help to protect the resource. Many trout die unnecessarily, victims of poor release techniques and therefore cannot be caught in the future. Past studies have shown that nearly half of the fish caught in the Taupo fishery each year are released. If these fish don't survive the total harvest is effectively doubled and more restrictive measures may have to be put in place to protect the fishery.

So next time you are on the river or out on the lake and intend to release a trout, endeavour to do so correctly, both for the sake of the fish and for the benefit of your future fishing.

A pamphlet called 'Hooked - Releasing Trout So They Survive' is available from the DOC fishery office on request.



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Rob McLay Retires

By John Gibbs

Long-serving staff member Rob McLay retired late last year after 34 years in conservation work. Rob is well known to many *Target Taupo* readers from his long association with the Taupo fishery as well as his avid trout fishing exploits and gregarious nature.

Born in Adelaide, South Australia, Rob was raised with trout fishing in his blood. His Scots father, Bill, was a passionate angler and hunter, active in the South Australian Fly Fishers Association. The family moved to New Zealand in 1966 and took nearly a week to drive from Picton to Dunedin as Bill insisted on stopping at every bridge to look for trout. Rob recalls that they saw a lot of fish and caught a fair few of them. "I don't think Mum was impressed but she didn't complain and us kids thought it was a hoot. Welcome to New Zealand, yessiree!" Bill became deeply involved with the Otago Acclimatisation Society and was later elected to the National Council of Acclimatisation Societies.

With this example it is hardly surprising then that Rob began a traineeship with the NZ Wildlife Service in 1974.

Like most Wildlife Trainees, Rob was involved in all facets of the department's work, including endangered species recovery, forest fauna survey, offshore islands biodiversity protection, gamebird management and of course, trout fisheries management in the central North Island and Southern Lakes fisheries.

After completing his 4-year traineeship, Rob's first permanent posting was in 1977 as Assistant Manager of the Wildlife Service Ngongotaha trout hatchery, which was operated in concert with the Tongariro hatchery to rear most of the rainbow trout distributed within New Zealand and overseas. In 1979 he moved to Turangi as Fishery Officer. It was during this latter period that Rob was involved in monitoring the construction impacts of the soon to be completed Tongariro Power Scheme and ensuring the fishery was adequately protected. He was also the key fishery

Top: Only 8 years after Lake Otamangakau was formed, Rob was catching brown trout like this from it.
Photo Supplied

representative during the height of the conversion of much of the eastern and southern catchment of Lake Taupo into today's vast pine forests and again was responsible for many of the fishery protection measures applied.

Always strongly drawn to his adopted southern homeland and with his father in failing health, Rob took up a position as Senior Wildlife Officer at Wanaka in 1986. Here he worked in the Lake Wakatipu, Wanaka and Hawea fisheries, as well as with Chinook salmon in south Westland. A feature of the Wanaka hatchery at that time was that it held the only broodstocks of the remnant NZ populations of Atlantic salmon and lake trout (char). When the Wildlife Service was incorporated into the new Department of Conservation in 1987 Rob moved to Hokitika as a Conservation Officer before returning to Turangi and the Taupo fishery in 1989. His key role then was in developing the Taupo Sports Fishery Management Plan which was the first such plan eventually approved under the Conservation Act.

I think one of Rob's strengths is his ability to look at an issue, discard the fluff and see the truly important bits. He, his colleagues and I had innumerable discussions about problems and projects we were facing. Whenever we came up with ideas we knew they still had to pass Rob's "so what?" test. So what if you did that? Would it make a difference? Would it actually get to where you wanted to be? Is there a better way? And I know that helped us to make better decisions.

Rob has always had a rare breadth of interest and involvement in fishing and hunting. An accomplished wing shot, both in the field and at the skeet tower and a very successful deer hunter, he has also bred and trained some great gundogs, from the legendary Mike, a German Shorthaired Pointer, to successive and equally capable Labradors. His innate hunting skills saw him become something of a specialist in hunting sika deer and I have enjoyed many trips in the bush with him after these prized animals. Less well known

was Rob's passion for racing pigeons and his loft vied with many in the country for their performances. But it is his accomplishments as a fly fisher that he is most known for. Serving his apprenticeship on the rivers and lakes of the Waitaki, Taieri and Clutha has made him a true expert in catching brown trout and few North Island anglers can match him in their territory, whether it is stalking the shoreline browns of Lake Otamangakau or the night time monsters of the Tongariro.

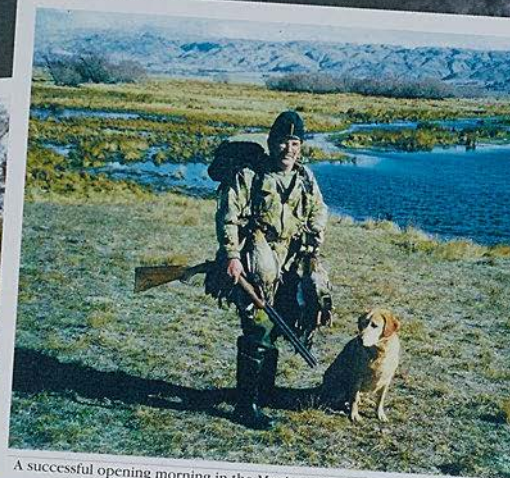
Perhaps Rob's most remarkable fishing achievement was the landing of a 7.5kg (16.5lb) rainbow trout in the upper Ruakituri River in 1980. Rob laconically recalls: "The fish was caught upstream of the Anini confluence. There was no authorised helicopter access in those days and The Captain, JC and I walked up from below the Waitangi Falls and tent camped. I took the fish specifically to put it on the wall. It rained bucket loads in true Urewera style the night I caught it and the river was in flood the next morning. We couldn't get out with the fish so it never got mounted. I've always felt bad about that; killing it was a waste but the adventure of catching it was a great memory all the same".

About 15 years ago Rob and I and two others began developing ponds on my brother's Taihape hill country farm. Over the years we turned barren grass-girt stock ponds into duck hunters' havens surrounded with food, ornamental and native trees and shrubs. Despite Rob's apparently-casual approach to fencing and planting, the success of his trees have left the rest of us somewhat in the shade.

After 19 years as Programme Manager responsible for Fishery field operations and 26 years working in the Fishery, Rob again found the draw of the South Island and has now settled in tiny Mossburn in northern Southland. We should all be grateful for his long and valued contribution to the management of the Taupo Fishery. I'm sure we all wish him the best for his future and many happy seasons to come amongst the trophy brown trout of the Oreti and Mataura.



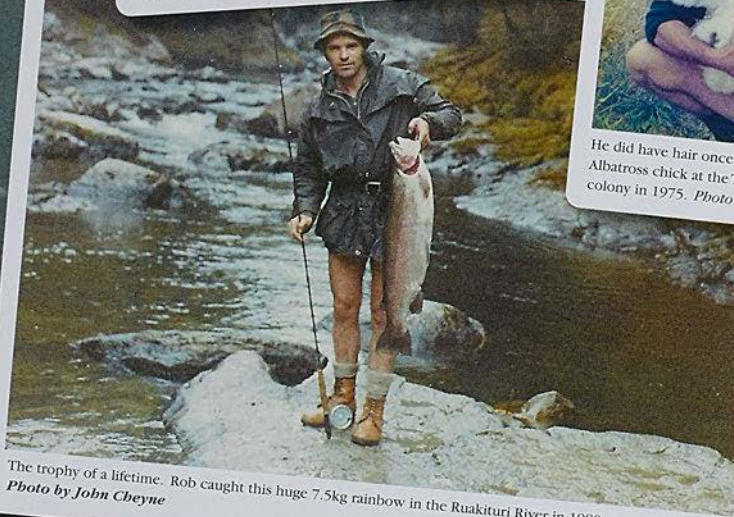
Another Kaimanawa sika off to the freezer. *Photo Supplied*



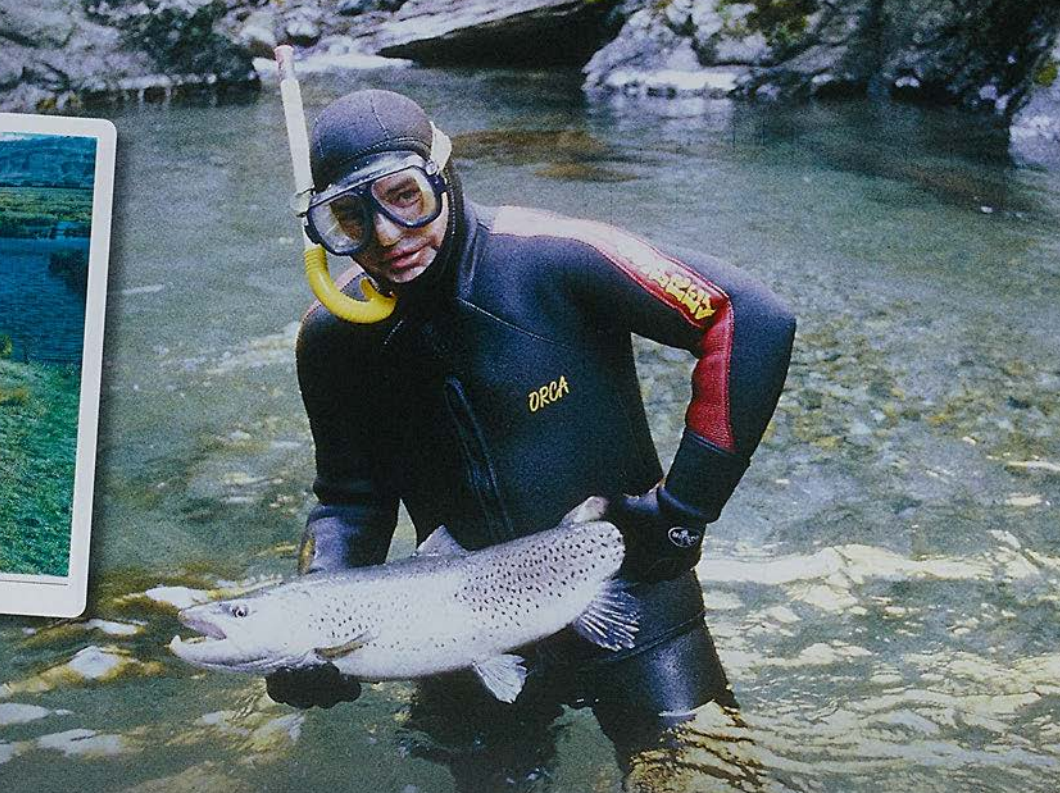
A successful opening morning in the Maniatoto in 2005. *Photo Supplied*



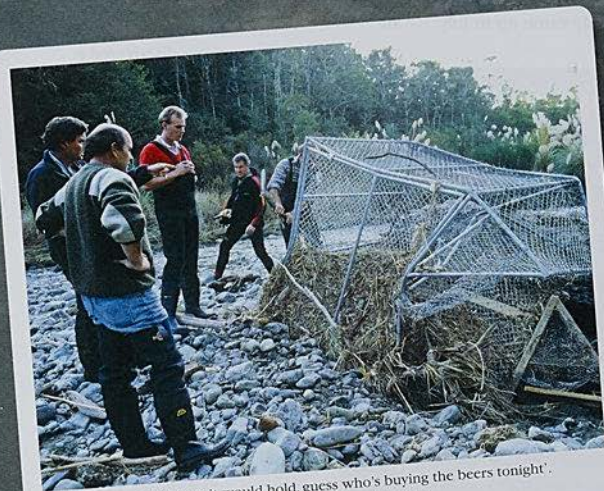
He did have hair once! A young Rob with a Royal Albatross chick at the Tairua Head albatross colony in 1975. *Photo supplied*



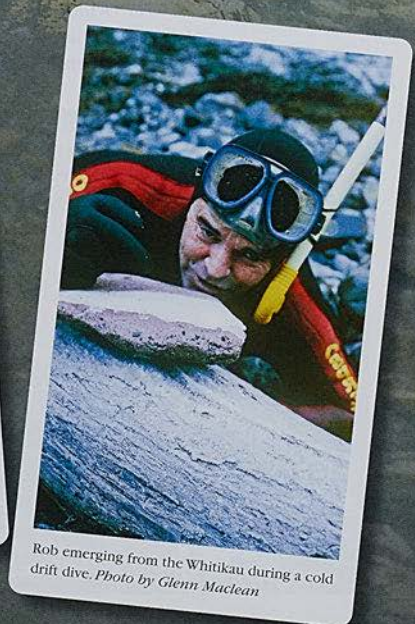
The trophy of a lifetime. Rob caught this huge 7.5kg rainbow in the Ruakituri River in 1980. *Photo by John Cheyne*



Who needs a fish trap! Rob had a great affinity with fish and caught this big brown by hand while drift diving.
Photo by Glenn Maclean



'Well boys, you told me it would hold, guess who's buying the beers tonight'.
Whitikau Stream fish trap 1994. *Photo by Glenn Maclean*



Rob emerging from the Whitikau during a cold drift dive. *Photo by Glenn Maclean*

When all else fails, target resident fish



By Gerald Lewis
Gerald is a keen angler of the
Taupo fishery

My brother Paul from Christchurch has enjoyed his annual fishing fix on the Tongariro River for more than 20 years. He usually fishes the first week in October but in 2008 his wife was taking him to Europe at that time. Not to be denied he simply came up in July instead.

July is a month of shorter days and colder nights. This encourages spawning trout to move upstream in droves from the Lake Taupo. However, it is seldom consistent and there is always a shiver of anticipation as to whether you have chosen the right week. That anticipation was there for Paul.

A bit of rain always helps and the falling barometer took away the element of surprise when it arrived. Falls were heavy enough to colour up the Tongariro to a dirty brown but interestingly the river only rose slightly. This didn't upset anyone. It is good to get a fresh when the river has been low and clear for a couple of months and it wasn't so serious a day or two wouldn't put it right.

The rain made us full of hope that the Tongariro and other rivers in the Taupo fishery should at last be filling up with trout. The recent action had actually been quite patchy to say the least. It also meant that Paul might have struck it lucky with his choice of week after all.

When we hit the water we discovered a big flood earlier in the year had altered the river dramatically. Water that was holding fish and firing well last October was now a completely different kettle of you know what!! So with the short lived flesh having been and gone the Tongariro was quickly becoming clear again and the whereabouts of the fish remained largely unknown.

There was nothing else for it but to start 'walking the river'. Out came the heavy bombs and nymphs that were of the natural variety. But the fishing was hard. There was a lot of effort going in with not a lot to show for it. Then the doubts started creeping in and excuses began to emerge. At night back at the batch around the wood burner, a warming

Top: Paul Lewis and the
'resident' rainbow jack
Photo by Gerald Lewis

whisky supported more theories than you can shake a rod at. However we knew much of the spawning run is later now and that Lake Taupo did not mix properly if at all in 2005. Smelt have been in low numbers and as a consequence of these things the fish that were about were small.

The following day we started working the river from below the main SH1 bridge right up to the Stag Pool. This takes some time if you do it properly. The odd fish was forthcoming and finally at the Stag Pool Paul hooked a nice resident fish on a hare and copper nymph. How could we tell it was a resident fish you might ask? Well not very easily actually except for the presence of the acoustic transmitter when we cleaned the fish.

DOC Scientist Dr Michel Dedual had caught a lively 34cm trout on a dry fly on the 4th of January 2006 at the Admirals Pool, and before releasing it unharmed he surgically inserted an acoustic transmitter, ID No 1617. This

procedure was part of an ongoing experiment to monitor movements of juvenile fish between the river and Lake Taupo. Receivers were monitored from the point of release down to Lake Taupo over the next few months but contrary to what any young Taupo trout should do #1617 did not show up. That was until 2.30pm on 17 July 2008 some 2.5 years later when Paul landed this very fish at the Stag Pool suggesting this had been a resident fish in the river all that time. DOC was pleased to receive the transmitter back and record this information. It shows that some resident fish are always there in the rivers.

So what is the moral of this story? When all else fails, target the resident fish – especially when DOC can actually prove it!!

Nobody is totally sure how you do that, but it seems like a great idea anyway.

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Waiotaka Willows Wasted

By Glenn Maclean

Felled willows were stockpiled well away from the rivers edge.
Photo by John Webb

Those of you visiting the Waiotaka River above Hautu Ford this winter may not recognise this section of the river. Gone are the overhanging willows crowding in on each bank, the dead trees lying in the stream and the impassable blackberry thickets. Instead the stream meanders through open plains, the debris from the cleared willows stockpiled back along the edge of the fence. The stream margins may look a bit bare though they will quickly re-establish in grasses and native shrubs, but even so the true character of the stream is once again evident.

This work is an initiative by Ngati Rongamai to protect their marae just downstream from the ford from flooding. Over the years the willows along the stream have become more dense and typical problems associated with unmanaged willows have developed. Along the stream the willows have trapped sediment and the banks encroached reducing the width and capacity of the channel. Similarly the roots have grown across the

channel linking up with the roots from trees on the other side, to form a fibrous red mat which traps the gravels building up the bed and reducing the capacity even further. The net result that even a small flood spills om of the river which is further exacerbated by the tangled mass of vegetation along the river banks. This slows the flood flows causing the water level to back up further. All in all a problem for the low lying marae but also for the ecology and health of the stream and for anglers seeking to access and fish along the river.

As a consequence when Ngati Rongamai led by chairman Les Owens raised their concerns there were a number of other stakeholders including private landowners, DOC, the Department of Corrections as the neighbour upstream and Environment Waikato (Regional Council) who were keen to see an effective solution. Collectively the group identified what needed to be done and worked with the marae committee to prepare a funding application to

the Genesis Tūwharetoa Environmental Fund. The group also provided additional funds and technical and practical expertise to assist the project. The funding bid was successful and the work to clear 3.8km of river work began in March.

The work involved an operator cutting the willows in conjunction with a large digger which physically lifted the trees away from the river, from the ford up to the prison boundary. Nominally, this was for a width of 20 metres on each bank but in practice it was back to the boundary fence over most of the stretch. The felled willows were then stockpiled along the fence. Several debris blockages within the stream were also removed but otherwise there was no work in the stream itself, the digger fitted with a grapple claw was able to work from the banks and lift the trees away from the stream. As a consequence while the margins appear quite raw the actual banks are essentially untouched apart from the stumps left behind.

The banks will quickly revegetate, indeed there is a prolific seed source

of desirable native species like manuka, cabbage trees, karamu and pittosporum already sprouting. However equally there is an ongoing issue with willows sprouting from fallen crack willow shoots and stumps in particular, which needs careful management. Therefore a key component of the work is follow up spraying over the next couple of summers to control the undesirable species and let the natives come away. Similarly, the isolated remaining willows well back from the stream will be killed also.

In conjunction with this work the Department of Corrections is undertaking an equally significant project to remove the willows within the prison land upstream, and DOC Tūrangi/Taupo Area are eradicating willows along the river within Kaimanawa Forest Park. The outcome should be essentially no willows above Hautu Ford.

There are two species of problem willows in this catchment; crack willow *Salix fragilis* and pussy willow *Salix cinerea*. In the case of crack willow this species

Below: Willows were choking the Waiootaka River
Photo by: Kim Alexander-Turia





Above: Overhanging branches caught debris and made dams in the river.
Photo by Kim Newmules-Toria

Below: The stream meanders through open plains now.
Photo by John Webb

spreads from broken shoots which if left lying on the ground will root and develop into new trees. Therefore it tends to spread downstream as shores are dispersed by flood waters and the like. However in the case of pussy willow these spread

from wind blown seed and so can spread upstream readily. For this reason pussy willow is viewed as a greater threat in the Timpo catchment and it is important to keep on top of new plants on an ongoing basis as they re-establish in this area.

It does look a bit bare at the moment but it is very much a case of having to break a few eggs to make an omelette. However, as past experience indicates, the fertile banks will quickly recover. From an angling perspective the river has a whole new character, in fact it's real character as any of you familiar with the river within the prison boundary will know. Initially the fish will tend not to hold in this open stretch but it is now very easy to access and fish and well worth a visit if you like the smaller Taupo rivers.



From one extreme to another

By Mark Verman

Last year was certainly a mixed bag. After an extremely dry summer and drought conditions over large parts of the North Island, we were then subjected to an extremely wet winter which saw Lake Taupo rise considerably during July and August. It's funny how it all balances out in the long run. Our two fish traps, Waipa (on the Tongariro river system) and Te Whaiiu (Lake Otamangakau) also experienced two extremes with the former recording the lowest run on record and the latter the highest. This article summarises the

data from each trap and makes some predictions based upon our monitoring data to date.

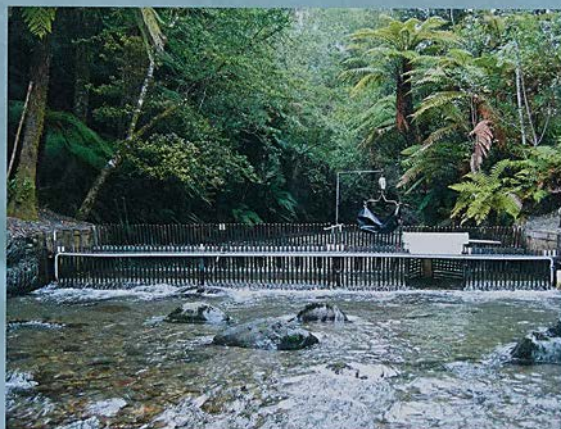
Waipa

By running a trap in the Waipa Stream, which is just south of Rangipo Prison, we are able to get a feel for how the Taupo Fishery is doing as we trap anywhere between 2,800 and 8,000 fish a year. Handling such a large number of fish not only allows us to assess their size, condition and age but it also tells us when the main runs are occurring throughout the Tongariro River. The previous winter of 2007 was not a good one with trout numbers down and the size and condition of rainbow trout in particular being on the low side. It is thought that this was a result of the poor mixing of Lake Taupo back in 2005 which in turn affected the phytoplankton, zooplankton and the ultimately the smelt, the predominant food of Taupo trout.

By physically handling such a large sample of fish we are able to get very robust data with which to make important decisions to manage the fishery effectively. A good example of this was the recent reduction of the size limit from 45cm to 40cm brought into place on the 1st of October 2008. Data from the fish trapped in the Waipa Stream gave a very good breakdown of the size of trout available to anglers in Lake Taupo and also the Tongariro River.

As it turned out both the estimated rainbow run (2780 fish) and brown run (277 fish) were the lowest recorded since trapping began in the Waipa Stream in 1998 (Figure 1).

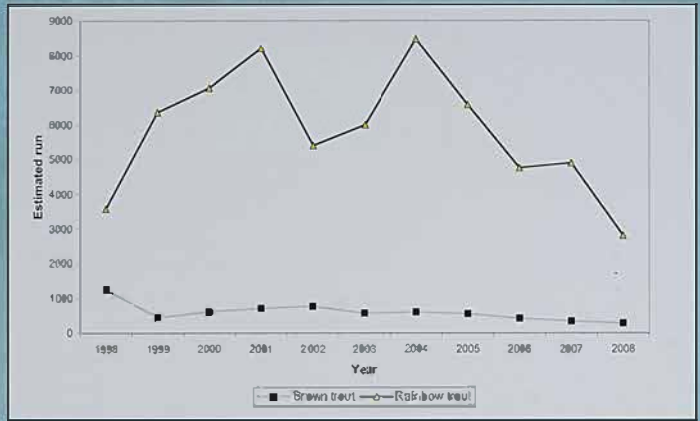
Similarly, the average length (478mm), weight (1.3kg) and perhaps not surprisingly condition factor (41.1) of the rainbow trout was also the lowest recorded. Over the 11 year trapping



Above: Waipa trap. Below: Te Whaiiu trap. Photos by Callum Bourke



Figure 1
Estimated total run of
rainbow and brown trout
through Waipa Trap since
1998



period (excluding the one off peak in 1998 which was attributed to the impacts of the eruption) rainbow trout have averaged 520mm, 1.65kg and with a condition factor of 42. On this evidence it's pretty hard to argue other than 2008 was a low point in the Taupo fishery. Fortunately, as we discuss later, there is a very evident improvement in the lake fishery since then so we are confident that the low point has passed.

The brown trout were also the smallest recorded (average 560mm and 2.2kg compared to the long term average of 595mm and 2.65kg). However, in contrast to the rainbows, their average con-

dition factor of 45.6 was higher than the long term average of 44.6. In other words they were small fish but in very nice condition.

The very low runs through Waipa were not mirrored by anglers' catch rates on the Tongariro River. The estimated catch rate for the Tongariro River last winter was 0.26 fish per hour (1 fish every 3.8 hours) which was down on the previous five winters but consistent with the long term average since 1985 of 0.27 fish per hour. Rainbows kept by anglers averaged 494mm & 1.3kg which was also the lowest they have been for a long time.

Out on the lake we predicted that the reduction in the size limit last October should see a number of additional trout kept during the summer, that were previously protected under the old size limit. Out of a sample of 126 rainbows caught and killed by anglers on Lake Taupo during summer 2008/09, 42% would have been illegal under the old size limit of 45cm in place the previous year. This increased harvest coinciding with an improvement in the smelt population should result in more food to go around. As a result we expect an improvement in the average size of fish through the trap this coming winter.

Overall, anglers kept nearly 70% of their catch that was legal sized (>40cm)

Ranger Paul McDonald places
another Te Whaiju brownie
on the measuring board.
Photo by Mike Nicholson



between December and February. Maiden rainbows averaged 440mm & 1.0kg with an average condition factor of 4.1.1. This is an improvement over the condition of these fish last summer when the average condition factor was calculated at 39.6.

Te Whaiau

At the other end of the scale there was no shortage of fish through the Te Whaiau trap with the runs in 2008 being the highest on record. In this case a climate and environment that was not good for the lake Taupo fishery was obviously very favourable for Lake Otamangakau just over the hill. This is a very good example of the intricacies of the interactions between wild fisheries and their environment and habitat. Over 5,000 fish were physically trapped with the adjusted run of rainbow trout accounting for 4,370 trout which is more than double the peak run observed during winter 2007 (Figure 2). Despite the larger runs, the fish were still in reasonable size and condition although double-figured fish were scarce. The 3,600 rainbows weighed and measured this year averaged 530mm & 1.8kg (approx. 4lbs). Coincidentally brown trout averaged exactly the same weight and size also. The adjusted run of brown trout (1290) was also the highest on record though only slightly higher than the record set last winter.

The average length of both species is similar to what we observed during winter 1999 despite both populations being significantly smaller a decade ago (Figure 3). This time at least this likely reflects a large number of young smaller

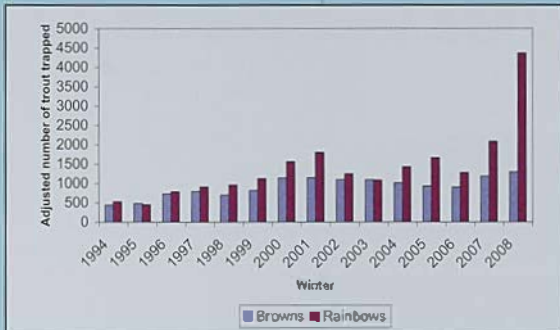


Figure 2: Estimated run of rainbow and brown trout in Te Whaiau Stream since 1994.

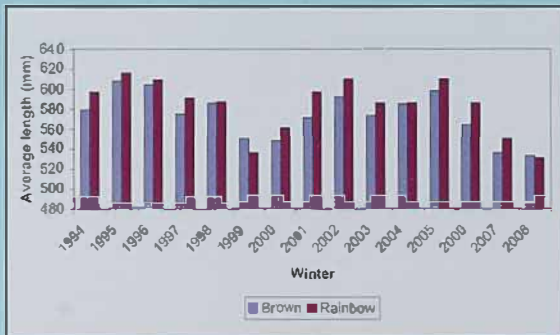


Figure 3: Average length of rainbow and brown trout trapped in Te Whaiau Stream since 1994.

Yet another balmy 9°C May morning at Te Whaiau trap. Trout love it!
 Photo by Mike Nicholson



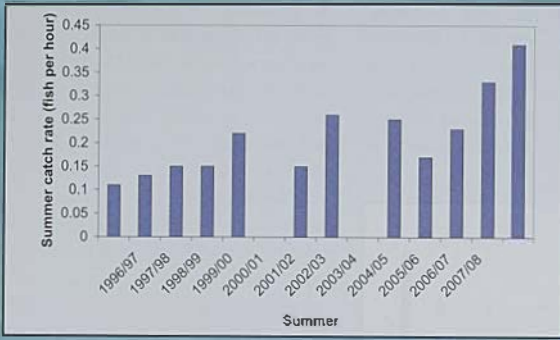


Figure 4
Average catch rates at Lake Otamangakau since 1995/96 (where data exists).

fish in the run as the population expands. Whether the very large numbers are affecting growth is unknown but as we get more results from our pit tagging (see page 24), which allows us to follow fish from one year to the next, we will be able to monitor their growth rates.

The fishing this summer at Lake Otamangakau was very good with an estimated summer catch rate of 0.41 legal sized fish per hour (1 fish every 2.4 hrs) (Figure 4). Although the size limit was dropped this summer (which is likely to have had the effect of increasing the catch rate of 'legal-sized' fish) it was not surprising to see an improvement in catch rates with such an increase in the number of trout present within the lake system.

In many ways the lake is back to how it was in its early days when it was characterised as a lake of high catch rates and

small fish. Indeed it was a place locals would take their kids because spinning was legal and success likely. In the intervening years it swung completely the other way, characterised in the 1980's and 90's by very low catch rates but extremely large fish.

The reason for the explosion of rainbows last winter is not known but anglers have certainly enjoyed some great fishing this summer fighting these strong fish, although the fish themselves haven't been huge. Maiden fish formed the majority of last year's winter rainbow trout run and so it will be interesting to see whether many of these fish return again this winter, but also whether another strong year class of maiden fish will come through or if the population has peaked.

Based on last year's winter run and some great fishing at Lake Otamangakau this summer, we expect another good run of trout this coming winter. As a result, the average size is still likely to be at the lower end of the scale although fish in the 6-8lb range shouldn't be too uncommon. What will be of most interest is how well these fish have grown. Are the very large numbers taxing the available food or is the lack of trophy fish in excess of 4.54kg (10lb) due to other possible causes? Interesting times indeed.

Are those your teeth chattering Michel? Fishery scientist Dr Michel Bédard prepares to weigh fish.

Photo by Mike Nicholson



Does local knowledge count?



By Dr. Michel Medual
Michel is the Fishery Scientist
for the Taupo Fishery Area

Lake Otamangakau, also known by its shortened name as Lake "O", is populated with large hard fighting trout. These fish, however, also have a reputation for being difficult to catch

and fishing success on this lake can be either "feast or famine". When the fish are biting, and the right techniques are used, this lake can produce some of the best trout fishing in the country and probably in the world. But, more often than not as attested by our routine angling surveys, anglers report days of fishing with poor success. Yet many of these same anglers keep fishing the lake because when success occurs the reward is generally exceptional.

However despite the challenging nature of fishing Lake O, there is a small group of anglers who consistently fish there with great success. We will refer to these anglers as the "locals". Why then is there such a wide discrepancy in success amongst anglers fishing Lake O?

Of all the factors that affect an angler's success, luck is the most common explanation. However, luck doesn't have any units and therefore it is not a measurable element. We presented the difficulties associated with the concept of luck on pages 40-45 in issue 34 of *Target Taupo*.

On top of a dose of luck; experience, knowledge, persistence, and proper



Is local knowledge (above) really an advantage against highly skilled anglers (top)?
Photos by Mark Vinman and Julie Greaves.

tools are also required to achieve consistent success on Lake O. Experience and local knowledge work hand in hand but what is local knowledge? The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) defines local knowledge as being the human capital of both urban and rural people. It is the main asset they invest in the struggle for survival, to produce food, provide for shelter or achieve control of their own lives. In this article we'll define local knowledge as the 'effort' invested in the pursuit to catch fish in Lake Otamangakau.

Knowledge useful to anglers encompasses biological truths such as when the fish are active, what water temperatures they prefer, what and how they eat, and what worries them. It is also critical to know what techniques to use to fool them. Experience is a big part of knowledge. It will tell the angler where to start looking for fish and what fly to use under certain conditions. This is probably why we always hear that of all the variables contributing to fishing success, nothing beats local knowledge.

Local knowledge is part of the theory of evolution and a phrase largely used to explain Darwin's theory on the survival of the fittest. Darwin's theory suggested that the species which are able to adapt to their own natural environment are successful because they have the inherent ability to survive. Thus surviving is about adapting and mastering the environment around us. In a competition, whether formal or informal, the focus is on learning the ways of the environment and controlling them in a way that could be most beneficial for the individual.

How good are the "locals"? To try to answer this question we will dissect the catch data and compare in a loose statistical way the success achieved in 2008 by the "locals" (who have local knowledge) and the participants in the World Fly Fishing Championship (WFFC) that was organised in the Central North

Island. It's difficult to compare actual catch figures, but we thought it would be an interesting exercise to try and ferret out how well locals would have done during the last world fly fishing championship leg on Lake O.

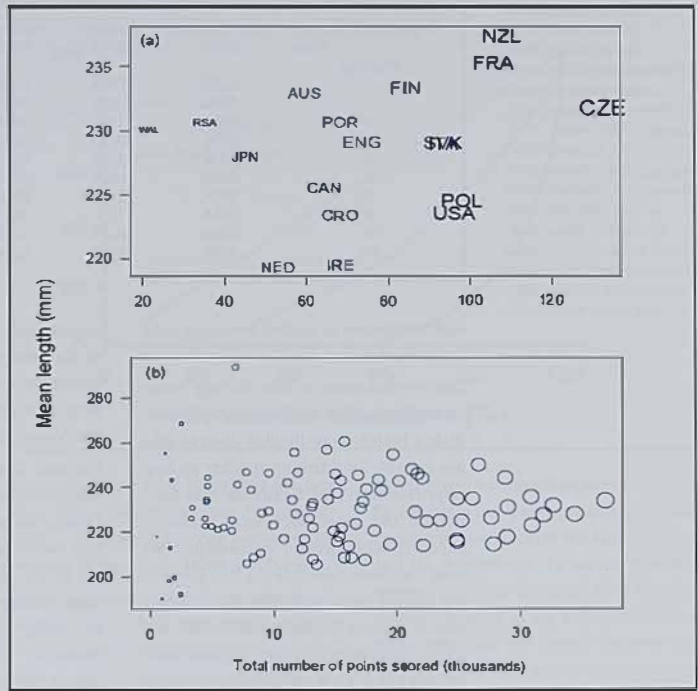
To make the comparison statistically defensible would have required the locals to be fishing at exactly the same time as the competitors. Unfortunately this was not the case as the locals data (obtained from angler surveys) was collected over a much longer period in late summer than the 3 days of the competition.

The 2008 contest on Lake O, was held over three consecutive days (28-30 March), with two sessions held each day, one in the morning (9.00am to 12.00pm) and one in the afternoon between 2.30 and 5.30pm. The weather was, by and large, good throughout that period. Locals may fish when the weather is bad but they will certainly fish more often when the weather is favourable. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that competitors and locals had similar overall fishing conditions, at least in terms of climatic conditions, making this side of the comparison realistic.

The world fly fishing championship scoring system allocated 100 points to each eligible fish (minimum length of 18 cm) and 20 points for each cm of its length. This means that catching two fish 18 cm long scored the same as a single fish of 41 cm. Because there is a relatively higher reward for catching a small fish, competitors tend to target them. Indeed, this could be a very good strategy as it means using lighter gear and less visible line that would enhance the fishing efficiency and catch rate. Furthermore, small fish can be landed quicker so that more time is spent actually fishing increasing the catch per unit effort. Looking at survey data it appeared locals not only target large fish but also avoid small fish if possible. This different approach between the two types

Figure 1: Mean length of fish versus total points scored. The size of each text/circle is proportional to the number of fish caught. Data is from two

small rivers only.
 (a) For each country.
 (b) For each individual.
 Figure provided by
 Thomas Yee, University
 of Auckland.



of anglers may potentially prevent making any valid comparison.

Fisheries science uses a wide variety of quantitative methods ranging from simple data tabulations to complex statistical models with hundreds of estimated parameters. Dr Thomas Yee a statistician from Auckland University and a keen angler has used the catch data from the championship to test the hypothesis that competitors were targeting smaller fish by plotting the mean length of the fish caught in two rivers during the 2008 WFFC and the points awarded (Figure 1).

There appears to be little to no association between mean points and length per fish. Further statistical analysis indicated only weak evidence that bigger fish were caught by the better anglers. In fact the data suggested that competitors were catching every fish they could! Thus a comparison between

locals and competitors is reasonable.

Next we looked to see if there is any discrepancy in success between the different teams taking part in the Championships? If local knowledge is the single most important ingredient to achieve good success then we would expect to see the team of the country organizing the competition among the top teams. This seems to be the case to some extent as in 4 out of 5 competitions the organising country team finished within the top 5 (Table 1).

However, the same data clearly identifies some heavy weight teams like France (FRA), and the Czech Republic (CZE) who between them have won all the competitions since 2003. Italy (ITA) who finished in the top 5 on 4 occasions and Slovakia (SVK) are the other top performing teams. The presence of such data suggests that local knowledge is not an important factor in explaining the level of success and the

Table 1: Placings of the national teams at the last Fly Fishing World Championships. Legend: the countries represented in 2008 were Australia (AUS), Canada (CAN), Croatia (CRO), Czech Republic (CZE), England (ENG), Finland (FIN), France (FRA), Holland (NED), Ireland (IRE), Italy (ITA), Japan (JPN), Malta (MAL), New Zealand (NZL), Poland (POL), Portugal (POR), South Africa (RSA), Slovakia (SVK), USA (USA), Wales (WAL).

Organizing country Year	New Zealand 2008	Finland 2007	Portugal 2006	Sweden 2005	Spain 2003
Placing					
1	CZE	FRA	CZE	FRA	FRA
2	NZL	CZE	FRA	FIN	BEL
3	FRA	FIN	SPA	CZE	SPA
4	POL	POR	ITA	ITA	ITA
5	ITA	SPA	POR	ENG	CZE
6	ENG	USA	SVK	SPA	ENG
7	SVK	ENG	BEL	BEL	POL
8	USA	ITA	IRE	POL	USA
9	CAN	AUS	CRO	SVK	SVK
10	FIN	SVK	USA	NOR	NZL

real contributor to angling success is to be found somewhere else

One explanation is that fishing many locations, under different conditions, makes better, more flexible anglers who are capable of adapting quickly to new opportunities. This flexibility may have helped the more successful teams to succeed with greater consistency. We won't elaborate further on this fascinating subject but it will make the comparison of success between the "locals" and the competitors at Lake O even more interesting. If we look at the distribution of the catch amongst the local anglers and the competitors in the Fly Fishing World Championship in 2008 then two major differences between the angler groups are obvious (Figure 2). First the distribution of the catch amongst the competitors is much closer to an equitable distribution (green line on the graph). Conversely amongst the locals a very few anglers catch nearly all the fish.

Looking at this another way during the world championship 13% of competitors caught 33% of the fish but during our lake surveys 13% of locals caught 71% of the fish recorded. The old adage that 10% of anglers are catching 90% of the fish seems to apply more to the locals than the WFFC competitors!

Consistent with this, the proportion of competitors not catching anything (14%) although surprisingly high is substantially smaller than the proportion of locals having no luck (59%).

Another striking difference was that

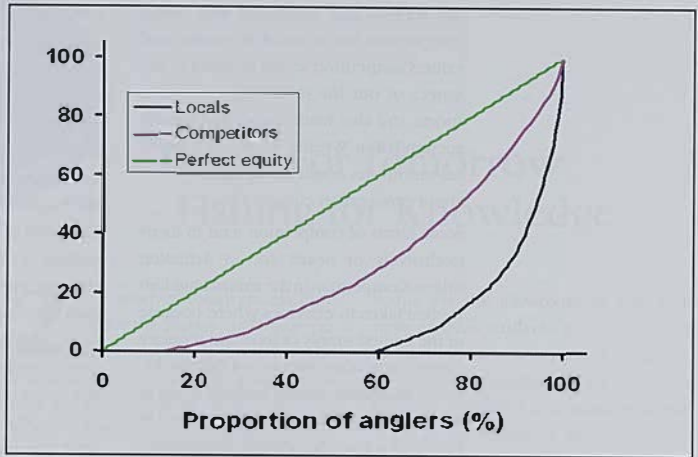
during our surveys 1 local caught 13% of the total number of fish caught, and during the world championship one competitor caught 6.25% of all the fish during the competition.

Further, during the WFFC 95 anglers fished for 285 hours and caught 272 fish. During our survey 179 anglers fished for 532 hours and caught 293 fish including those of sublegal size. We included these sublegal size fish in our analysis as during the world championship the minimum size was 18cm, a very small fish by Taupo standards.

The catch rates for the competitors and locals were 0.95 and 0.55 fish per hour respectively. The distribution of catch per unit effort (CPUE) reiterates that the main reason for the difference in CPUE between competitors and locals is due to the very high incidence of zero catch rates amongst locals (figure 3). Furthermore the competitors have a higher incidence of high catch rates than non-competitors. However, in both groups of anglers some individuals have achieved a catch rate well above the rest. In fact the highest two catch rates were achieved by locals who caught 6.9 fish per hour over a period of 1.25 hours and 6.2 fish per hour over 3.2 hours respectively!

Sustaining a catch rate of 6.2 fish per hour over a 3.2 hour period would have made this local the world champion of Lake Otamangakau if he had done it as part of the competition, because in comparison the best competitor caught (only) 5.6 fish per hour over a similar time period.

Figure 2: Distribution of the catch achieved by competitors and local anglers who fished Lake Otamangakau in 2008.



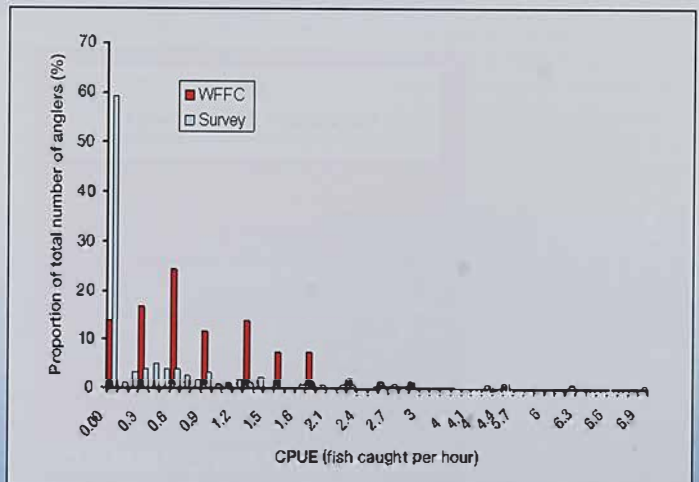
In summary we have identified the fact that less competitors are “skunked”. This is the main difference between the success of the competitors and locals. There is another complication here. Much of the locals catch data was collected from anglers practising for the World and other fly fishing championships in the weeks leading up to these events. No doubt this improved their local knowledge come competition time!

As an aside this discussion of WFFC raises some interesting questions about the

psychology of competitiveness. For many, fly fishing is not a competitive sport and they prefer just to enjoy the surroundings and the experience. However, people’s competitive side is never very hard to awaken. As soon as we are talking about how many fish we caught or how big they were, we have just entered into the “competitive” arena.

Competition is socially accepted and participation in competition increases the social acceptability of an individual. As social approval is essential to

Figure 3: Catch per unit effort (CPUE) distribution during the World Fly Fishing Championship (WFFC) and lake surveys on Lake Otamangakau in 2008.



our survival and emotional well being, competition has a social relevance and value. Competition seems to affect every aspect of our life including education, sports, and also work, career and wealth accumulation. Wealth, money and political ambitions could however, be more about power than competition.

Some forms of competition tend to focus exclusively, or nearly so, on defeating others. Competition in the animal kingdom is often taken to extremes where, because of the limited supply of food and territory, competition often becomes a fight-to-the-death encounter. Among humans living in a society of abundance, a different kind of fight-to-the-death desperation is sometimes seen—not physical desperation as animals might face, but psychological. Because of the anxiety that many people feel, “competitiveness,” or a desperate need to defeat others, becomes a defensive motivator.


Doing well takes a back seat.

Some people are more competitive for biological reasons. Certain hormones in our body make us more active and competitive. Research carried out by Robert Josephs and Pranjal Mehta at the University of Texas in Austin reveals that after a man loses a challenge, if he has a high level of testosterone he will be more willing to compete again. The two psychology researchers studied more than 60 men who competed against each other in pairs. Surprisingly the researchers found that changes in testosterone levels did not however predict who would want to compete again among the men who won the competition. The researchers speculate winners may not be interested in facing the same opponent because the re-match might result in a loss.




At the end of the day it is each to their own.

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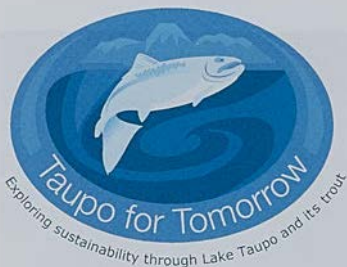

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Taupo For Tomorrow - Fishing for Knowledge

By Mike Nicholson
Mike is our Educator at the
Tongariro National Trout
Centre and runs our
Taupo for Tomorrow
education programmes

2009 is another vibrant and exciting year for the *Taupo for Tomorrow* programme. This includes the Wonderful Wai learning programme for year 3/4 students from within the Lake Taupo catchment area. A large number of local schools have already booked in for this opportunity and this year students will be able to catch a fish from the children's fishing pool at no cost. The focus of this programme is the long term health of our precious lake Taupo with an emphasis on storm water education. Many classes choose to make this programme part of wider inquiry learning in their classroom environment and take the opportunity to utilise the generous funding for the programme contributed by Genesis Energy. In addition, the Taupo District Council covers the bus costs associated with schools attending the programme. Importantly this means the barrier of cost associated with a valuable learning experience outside the classroom is lessened for students in our area.

The classroom and fishout
pond are the focal point of
the education programme.
Photo by Mike Nicholson.

The purchase of an interactive white board and associated digital micro-

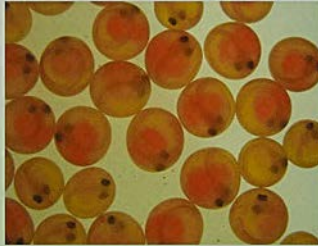
scope for the classroom in late 2008 now enables students the opportunity to capture, view and record a range of invertebrates present in the Tongariro River in a detailed and meaningful way. Many of these species are easily identifiable animals indicative of excellent water quality, so provide a fine context for water conservation studies. Our white board also allows learners to instantly view digital video in their chosen area of interest. In addition, the purchase of high quality water testing units provides children with up to date user friendly technology and data collection methodology when involved in field studies at the site. The LEARNZ programme is set to visit us again this year. During 2008 our field trip attracted around 1500 learners from throughout NZ who were able to ask fisheries staff questions about all aspects of the fishery and looking after the environment, as well as see videos of much of our work. We are hoping to build on this number this year with a range of new learning experiences able to be delivered to learner's right across the country. The videos captured during



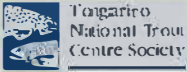
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Educator Mike Nicholson uses the electronic white board to teach students
Photo by Glenn Maclean



LEARNZ are popular with visiting school groups, particularly when looking at food chains/webs, life cycles; management of a natural resource and wider sustainability issues. In fact the beauty of the Taupo for Tomorrow programme lies in the ability of the trout and associated waterways to engage students on site and provide a deep and meaningful learning experience within a myriad of curriculum areas.



Once again the Tongariro National Trout Centre Society members are ready to introduce many young people to the joys of fly fishing, many for the first time and promote participation in this enjoyable and exciting outdoor recreation. Without the assistance of this group of dedicated volunteers we simply would not be able to offer this fantastic experience. Not only is it wonderful to see the excitement on the students faces when catching their fish, the interactions between the anglers and their younger counterparts can be truly memorable for both parties. Taupo for Tomorrow offers learners the opportunity to think deeply about some big issues. It provides an avenue for young people to learn about how we can best use and look after our renewable resources and engage with the aquatic animal life that relies on careful management and monitoring. Students engaging in deep learning

The electronic whiteboard and digital microscope enables detailed study of the Taupo fishery.
Top: Rainbow trout eggs ready for hatching
Middle: Newly hatched rainbow trout (alevins)
Bottom: Stonefly nymph
Photos by Mike Nicholson





Students and teachers from Wairakei School enjoy one of the FNZC education programmes

Photo by Glenn Maclean

demonstrate curiosity and a personal interest in developing their understanding. If the smiles and genuine enjoyment displayed by students observing trout in their natural environment and braving the elements to test for water quality and invertebrate life in the Tongariro River is an indicator of deep learning, then the *Taupo for Tomorrow* programme provides a great place for students to make sense of some increasingly

important environmental issues in an ever-changing world

Our vision at *Taupo for Tomorrow* is for young people to value the unique biodiversity and fresh water resources throughout NZ. Sustainability, and conservation of natural resources are hugely important concepts, and these same young people are the thinkers, problem solvers and decision makers of the future. See you in 2009.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TAKING PART IN *TAUPO FOR TOMORROW?*

CONTACT:

MIKE NICHOLSON
EDUCATOR

TAUPO FISHERY AREA

07386 9246

mnicholson@doc.govt.nz

By John Webb

It has been a busy time at the Tongariro National Trout Centre as we move towards a new era in its development. The event of most significance recently was the signing of the funding agreement between Genesis Energy, the Tongariro National Trout Centre Society (TNTCS) and Department of Conservation. In essence this has secured Genesis Energy as the primary supporter of TNTC with a funding package amounting to \$1m over 5 years. This is fantastic for the ongoing viability of the education program and will also allow progress on a number of TNTC projects.

Work for the new sewage reticulation scheme has been underway since February and is now approaching completion. The winner of the contract for the works was BEMA Contractors of Owhango. These are major works and involve the installation of a new water main and sewage pumping infrastructure along State Highway 1 into TNTC, as well as a gravity sewer and pumping station on the site. The sewage reticulation scheme will improve the quality and management of the sanitary functions at TNTC and pave the way for dealing with the increased demand for these facilities resulting from upcoming TNTC developments.

In conjunction with TNTCS the other major project underway is the construction of the new entry path which will be finished by the time you read this. This path winds its way from the top carpark, through the native bush beside the Waihukahuka Stream and emerges at the fish pass display crossing the stream via the dam at this point. The path provides a scenic



Installation of the rising main sewer pipe. Photo by John Webb.



A small group of TNTCS volunteers have done a fantastic job keeping the grounds work up to date around the site, particularly mowing over the summer. This has been a real help given staffing constraints faced by the Fishery Area team over the last 12 months. It has also given the opportunity for some members that want to participate in some of the more practical aspects of the TNTC site management to do so and their input is much appreciated.

The Christmas holiday children's fishing days trialled on the 11th and 18th of January respectively were successful with both days well booked as well as a good turn out of TNTCS volunteers and DOC staff members. Having these fishing days has meant that the trout in the pond have needed to be kept for an additional 2-3 months and as a result some of the fish were getting quite large by the final fishing day - making for exciting angling for the children. The remaining fish were removed from the fish out pond on 23 January by a combined DOC/TNTCS team and went to other children's fishing facilities in Taranaki and Wellington, administered by Fish and Game. Ordinarily the pond would be completely drained, dried, refilled and the raceway fish put in to restock the pond. However, due to the site works transfer of fish for the 2009 fish-out programme was delayed until early March.

There has been another staff change at TNTC also with Manager, Kim Yuria moving on to the Turangi-Taupo area and her role now filled by myself. This has left the TNTC Ranger position vacant and it will be filled in due course. In the meantime Harry Hamilton, one of the Taupo Fishery's most experienced field Rangers has taken on the temporary role of overseeing on site duties and fish husbandry responsibilities.

Call in and check out our new entry track, it makes for a great start to your visit.



Top: The new entrance pathway begins!

Photo by John Webb

Above: Concrete is poured to stabilise the viewing chamber platform

Photo by Julie Greaves

introduction to TNTC will greatly improve access for disabled visitors and create a much better flow of people through the site.

The foundations of the viewing chamber platform have also been repaired and strengthened after the Waihukahuka Stream had undermined the bank and foundations. A concrete abutment has been placed under the platform to strengthen existing foundations and prevent further erosion. This was a difficult job as wet concrete is toxic to fish so the boxing had to be water tight and pouring the concrete undertaken with caution.



Tongariro
National Trout
Centre Society

Flatfishing on Lake Taupo



The flatfish is very popular with Taupo locals for good reason
Photo by Callum Burke



By Michael Hill
Mike is a Ranger in our field operations work

Although there are many forms of boat fishing, trolling a stainless or copper wire line with a flatfish lure is one of the more unique ways to catch trout on Lake Taupo. This technique has been used since the 1960's and while distained by some, it is a favourite method among many locals - including myself!

My father taught me how to use a flatfish and still occasionally tries to teach me a thing or two about the technique today. When I was young we would either troll a wire line with a flatfish lure down deep on each side of the boat or use harling sets for shallow water. Sometimes we would use combinations

of the two. Most of the time the wire line and flatfish would catch good, well conditioned fish. It still does and it is still my first choice tactic when trolling.

If you are not familiar with wirelines and flatfish then this article provides a few basic pointers on their use. Let's start with the lure itself - the flatfish or as the Australians call it 'the quickfish'. It can be best described as a banana shaped lure, wide at one end narrowing to the other. The hook is attached to the narrow end via a split ring. Flatfish have a very quick erratic action in the water (hence their Australian name) and they come in various colours and patterns. Although colour and pattern is

largely a matter of personal preference, I have a lot of success using a silver one with a red tag. If silver is not catching fish a change to light gold can make a difference but the choice is yours.

Setting up the rig is fairly straightforward. You can buy ready made set-ups from local shops but any boat rod will suffice so long as it is not too flimsy. A couple of hundred metres of wire out adds up to

a reasonable weight and the rod needs to be able to handle this. Also choose a rod with sturdy metal rings as the wire can wear a groove in the eyes otherwise, risking damage to your monofilament leader and making it difficult to let out or retrieve the wireline.

You will be doing yourself a favour by using the correct reel. This is preferably one with a level wind guide. The reason

A levelwind reel and a reasonably sturdy rod are the ideal setup

Photo by Collum Botoke





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for this is that you must make sure the wire line is wound back onto the reel evenly. If it builds up in one spot it can crinkle over creating a nasty bird's nest. However make sure the small swivels used to make up the rig can pass through the level wind guide of the reel.

If making up your own line attach 50m of 15 to 20kg backing to the reel with a small swivel attached to the end. Tie the wire line to the swivel and backing using a fencing knot and wind the line onto the reel, 160-170m of wire line should be sufficient. Try and wind the line on with a slight tension and ensure the line goes on smoothly, if the wire crimps this will create a weak point. On the end of the wire connect a second swivel and to this attach 2m of 10 to 15kg trace and a flatfish of your choosing.

To let out wire line, loosen off the drag and pull the line off the spool by hand. Once you get a reasonable length of line in the water its weight will be sufficient to pull the rest of the line out. Do not click the reel into free spool without slowing the spool with your thumb, as it will run faster than the amount of line being released and you will be untangling for the rest of the day. One trick is to add a single colour of lead line (10 yards) between your wireline and trace which makes it easier to get your line started when you are letting it out.

Ultimately you can use a flatfish however you please although it is best trolled down deep. We often actually bounce the flatfish lure along the lakebed kicking up the sand. To do this it is essential you know the type of bottom you are dragging your lure across. One disadvantage of flatfish is their price and the novelty of hanging a flat-

fish and possibly your wireline as well up on the rocks soon wears off. This is also why heavy trace is required as the sand on the bottom will wear it down and you will definitely encounter weed and snags. Target sandy bottoms at 20 to 30m depth, or with the help of polarized lenses or a depth finder follow the drop-offs. You will need to let out at least 100m of wire line to achieve this depth depending on how fast you troll.

As you are trolling you will notice the rod tip vibrating and shaking, a flatfish is a very active lure and even though the wire dampens their action it is still more than enough to register on the rod tip. This is a good sign, it means the lure is working well. If the rod tip ceases to shake it is likely some debris has been picked up off the bottom or it has snagged. Grab the line with your hand and try to pull it free otherwise wind in, clear the hook and start again. I like to hold the rod as I troll, the vibration keeps me interested and amused.

One tip with using flatfish is limit yourself to no more than two of these lures out at any time. As I have mentioned they are very active and move a long way sideways. Even with two lures well spaced there is a risk that one lure will zig while the other zags and an almighty tangle will result. Another option in these circumstances is to use 5 to 7 kg trace accompanied with a cobra lure. In this circumstance let out about 150m of wire line to achieve a depth of around 40m.

Hopefully I have given you a better understanding of flat-fishing it is another option to try and when the trout are deep in late summer and autumn a very effective way to target them. Go get 'em!!!

CLE Wrap Up

By Jill Larsen-Welsh
Jill is our Area Compliance
Officer and is responsible for
compliance and law
enforcement

Here we are again with another 'scorching summer' all but a distant memory. Winter for our Rangers' signals the start of river angler surveys and fish trap operations. This enables us to collect valuable information about the fishery, and also ensure angler compliance with basic rules and regulations. Here's hoping this winter will bring many fish through the traps.

Summer out on the lakes and rivers saw relatively good compliance, with only a handful of prosecution files passing over my desk since October 2008. However even though the minimum size limit for trout was reduced in October last year, we are still seeing people keeping trout under 40cm in length. Perhaps it is just one of those things, but I can't for the life of me figure out why someone would want to keep a fish THAT small. Even keeping a trout of 40 cm is border line for most of us - but 35cm?

Trolling on the lake seems to be as popular as ever, as unfortunately does trolling too close to the river mouths. There is a 300 metre radius from the centre of most river mouths where trolling and jigging is prohibited to allow wading anglers a fair go. The river mouths where this restriction applies are marked with a white pole that has yellow and black stripes on it. This pole is an indicator only, pointing out that the river mouth is there - and gives a rough indication from where to measure 300m.

I fished in the Motuopa Fishing and Boating Association's competition in January and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was great to see a room bursting with people who are like minded about our fishery and want to enjoy it to its fullest extent. At the main prize giving on the Sunday night it was good to see all the children receive a prize for their efforts to catch

catfish (one of the pest fish in Lake Taupo), 431 in total and interestingly enough one of the entrants brought in two goldfish he had caught that day as well. Didymo Dave (Dave Cade) gave a compelling speech, in a way that only Dave can, about the recent negativity about the fishery in general. He pointed out the absolute merits of the area and I have no doubt that most people left there with more positive than negative feelings. Dave does a great job out there promoting the Check, Clean, Dry message - doing his bit to help prevent the spread of aquatic weeds and pests including Didymo in our pristine fishing waters.

With the onset of the spawning runs and the increase of river angling it seems timely to remind anglers that felt soled boots are no longer permitted to be worn when fishing in this district. Felt soles are very difficult to decontaminate and this is a nationwide measure to control the spread of didymo and other aquatic nasties

Winter usually brings with it an increase in serious poaching activity. Spawning fish in the regions rivers and streams are vulnerable to netting or spearing and we are always on the lookout for suspicious activity. When someone sets a net in a spawning stream it is not only the fact that it is a very destructive and non selective way of gathering fish but it also can cause a large amount of damage to the redds already laid in the stream bed. If you do happen to come across a net in your travels please do not move it as much as you may want to save any further fish becoming entangled in it. At the end of the day the best way to protect the fishery is to apprehend the people setting the net. This will be best achieved by leaving the net where it is, quietly removing yourself from the

scene and immediately phoning our Duty Officer on the number listed below or on your licence.

Information received from the public is wherever possible acted on immediately and has seen a few baddies caught over the last year. However it's always a shame when we receive information too late. Time is of the essence when crime is concerned, and the earlier we receive the information and can respond then the greater the chance of apprehending the offenders. Our staff are on call to respond to incidents at any time of the day or night so ring us at midnight if necessary should you suspect any type of illegal activity. The maximum fine for spawning stream offences is 1 year in prison or \$10,000, so you can see it is viewed at the high end of the scale of offending.

Recently we have had success with a case of netting in a spawning stream that initially was heard in the 'faupo District Court. The defendant pleaded not guilty' and cited customary fishing rights as part of his defence. The District Court convicted the defendant on all charges who then subsequently lodged an appeal against the conviction and sentence with the High Court in Rotorua. The High Court, after hearing the evidence and submissions, dismissed this appeal. The Judge concluded that there are no customary fishing rights in respect of trout

that exist outside the Conservation Act 1987 which is the legislation that covers trout fisheries in NZ.

Like-minded would be offenders are warned that 'customary rights' is not a defence for gathering trout and any incidents of illegal gathering of trout will almost certainly result in legal action by the Department.

Car park crime is always a problem - maybe it's just a sign of the times. There is nothing worse than arriving back at your vehicle to find a window smashed and all of your gear gone. People are reminded to lock valuables safely in the boot, out of sight - or better still leave them at home. Thieves will take every opportunity you give them, so the short answer is 'don't give them the opportunity'.

On a much more positive note it is pleasing to see the very great proportion of anglers abiding by the rules. Winter is definitely a busy time for us in the fishery and we encourage anglers to check the rules and regulations prior to commencing fishing for the season. This not only refreshes your memory on the dos and don'ts but also serves to avoid an embarrassing encounter when you are stopped by a Ranger.

Here's hoping for a great season! If early indications are anything to go by, then we can look forward to increased fish size and quality and a good season overall.

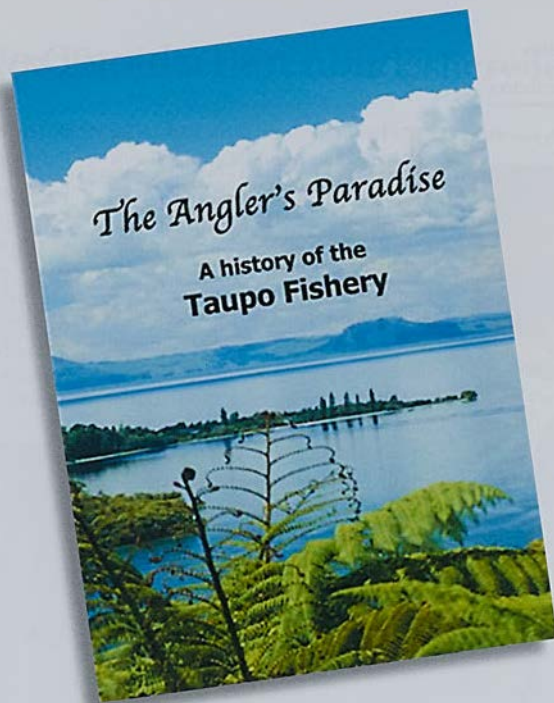
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Children's Fishing Days 2009

By John Webb



Volunteer Trent Corbett fillets fish ready for smoking.

Photo by John Webb

It has been an excellent start to the 2009 children's fishing days despite the large amount of site works occurring this year (see *What's Up at TNTC* page 64). The turnout has been great, the fish have been biting and the kids have been continuing to enjoy those smoked trout at lunch time! We have been fairly fortunate with the weather although the last fishing day on Queens Birthday weekend was a bit cool. The Tongariro National Trout Centre Society volunteers do an excellent job on these fishing days and they are essential to the success.

The programme now also includes fishing days during the summer. These were trialled in January this year and were a success. It also means holding the fish for a few more months so they are getting

BIG by this time and this gives some of the younger anglers a real thrill.

Bookings can be made by phoning the Tongariro National Trout Centre Society volunteers at the River Walk visitor centre on (07) 386 8085 between 10am and 3pm (1 May to 30 November) and between 10am and 4pm (1 December to 30 April) or by email troutcentre@rcap.org.nz, by website www.troutcentre.org.nz or by fax (07) 3868450.

REMAINING DATES FOR 2009

- Sunday 12 July
(School Holidays)
- Sunday 4 October
(School Holidays)
- Sunday 25 October
(Labour Weekend)

SUMMER FISHING PROGRAMME

- Sunday 10 January 2010
- Sunday 17 January 2010



A young angler plays a trout under the watchful eye of TNTCS volunteer Owen Dyce.
Photo by Kim Alexander-Duria.



Ready to eat. Trout emerges from the smoker.
Photo by John Webb

New Faces in the Taupo Fishery Team



CHRISTINE DALLY

Hello, I'm Christine Dally, I'm 41 years old and married with 3 sons and I have taken on the role of Ranger - Service until December 2009. I grew up in the Wellington area but my love for the lake and mountains brought me to Taupo on a regular basis. I met my husband while holidaying here in 1987 and have lived in the area since 1988.

When I was younger it was skiing on the lake and mountain I enjoyed. I have also enjoyed the tramping and running tracks that Tongariro National Park has to offer. My family also like the outdoors and my youngest son is a keen angler.

Since starting at DOC in April I have been amazed by the amount of work, data, science and organization, involved. The fisheries team put in an awful lot of time and effort to make sure everything runs smoothly and anglers have the best possible time fishing in our area.

I hope all the anglers out there have a great 2009-2010 fishing season.



PAUL MCDONALD

Hi, I'm Paul, I grew up in Hamilton spending most summers surfing and fishing on the Coromandel. Then I did my OE, spending 11 years in the USA building homes and as a fly-fishing guide in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

Returning to NZ I was very keen to work in fisheries and started working as a DOC Ranger in Obakune, which was an excellent base to fish the rivers around Tongariro National Park. Then recently I had the opportunity to become part of the Taupo National Park Fishery Area team as a trap operator. This is fantastic as I get to handle trout that many anglers only dream of - especially at Lake Otamangakau.

I am pleased to be working for DOC and especially with the great team that look after our wonderful lakes and rivers.



NEAL TURANGA

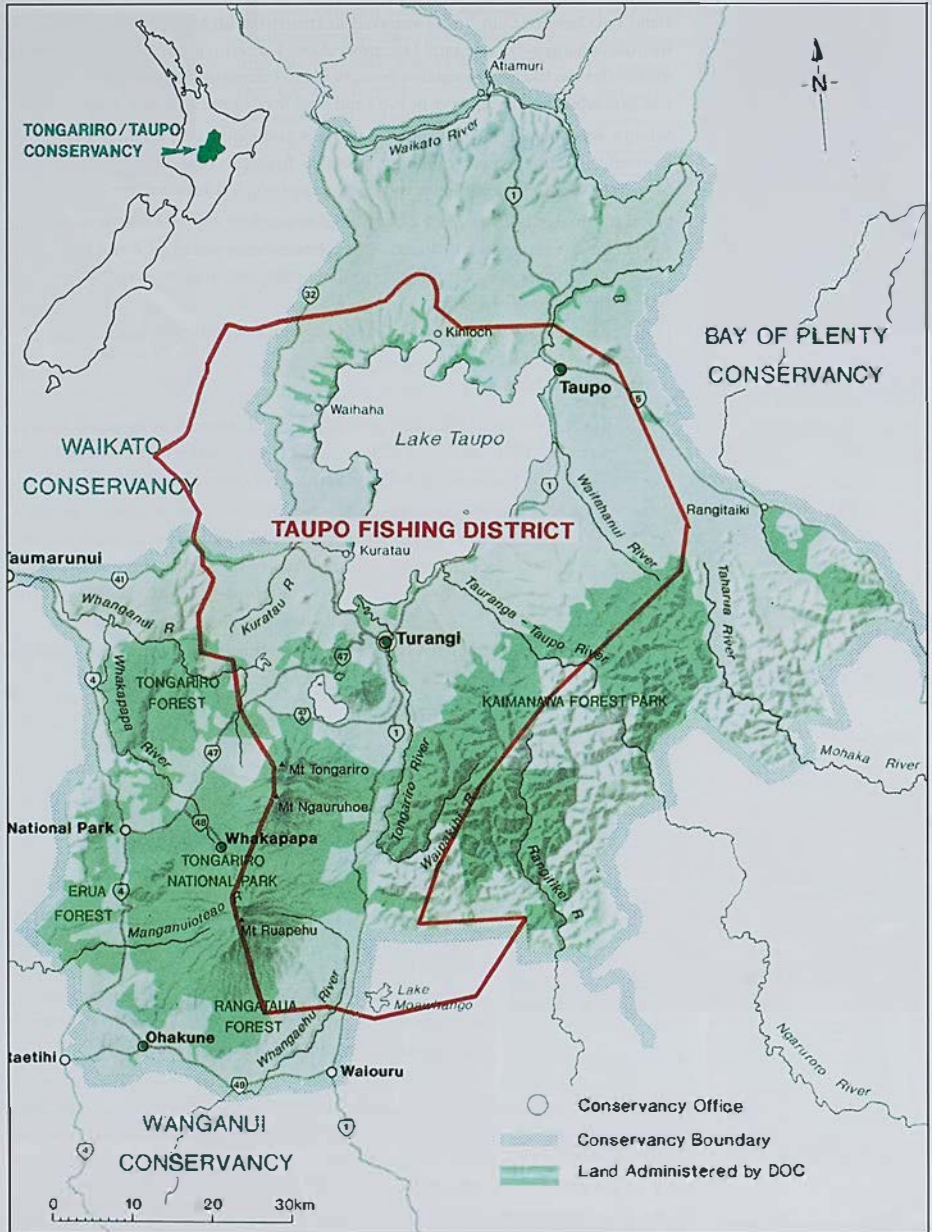
Ko Tongariro te Maunga
Ko Rotoāia te Moana
Ko Tuwharetoa te Iwi
Ko Ngati Hikairo te Hapu
Ko Papakai te Marae

Kia ora I am Neal Turanga. I am one of 25 Maori Cadets chosen for the DOC Ranger course - Kaitiaki Tangata Whenua which commenced in February 2009 for a term of 22 months. Since then I have worked in the Taupo Fishery Area team which has given me a broader understanding of how important the Taupo fishery is to the people of Ngati Tuwharetoa, and also all of Aotearoa.

Born and raised in Turangi, I finished my schooling in Central Otago where my father moved us when he went to work on the Clyde Dam. I lived in Sydney for 13 years during which time I became a qualified brick and block layer. I met my partner and had a couple of kids then moved home in 2001.

I have always been interested in outdoor, hands on Mahi. I am proud of my Maori heritage and grateful to represent my Iwi within DOC.

Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy



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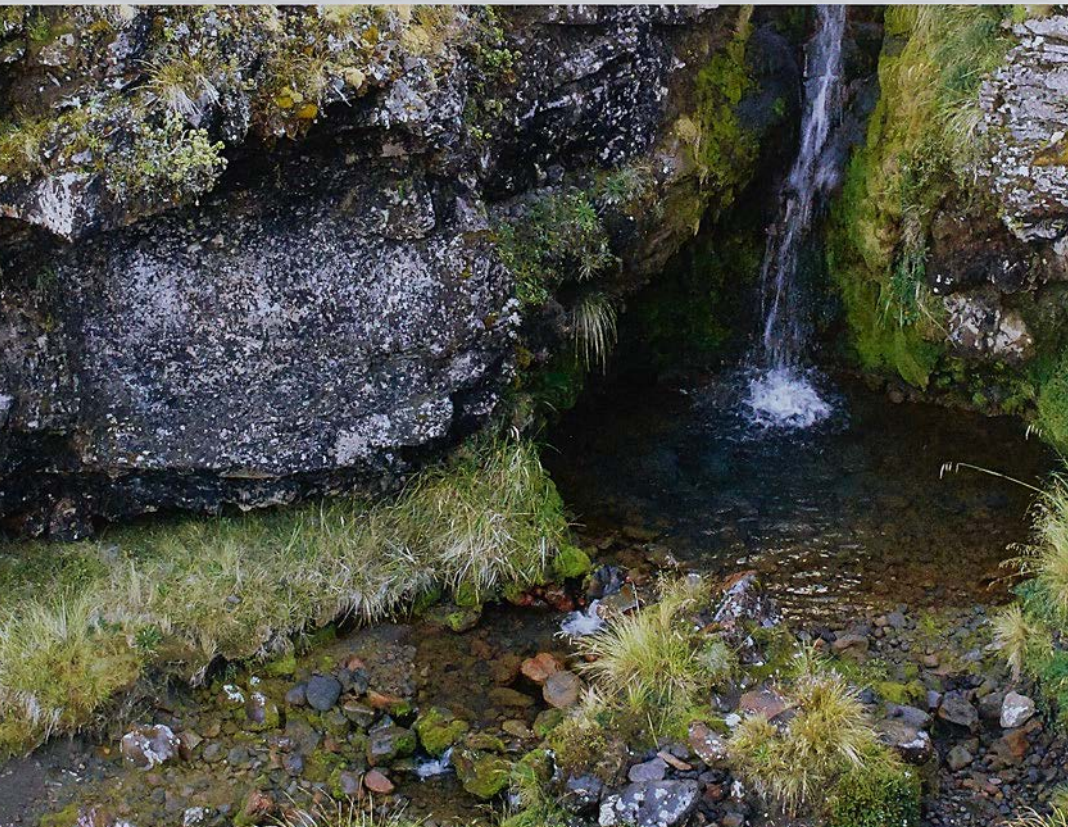
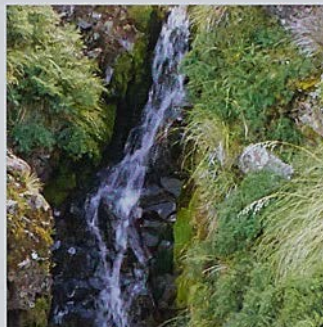
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