

# INLAND FISHERIES COMMISSION

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. VI No. 7

December, 1977

### FISHERIES BILL NO. 109

Royal Assent is expected to be granted to the Fisheries Bill on 14th December. There was prolonged discussion on the Bill in the Legislative Council following submissions from those eel fishermen who objected to the basic principle of the Bill which proposed a system of tendering for the right to fish for migrating eels in a specified river at a specific site.

The Minister's Second Reading Speech is attached to this Newsletter.

### FISHERIES CADETS

There were 150 applicants for the positions of Fisheries Cadet with the Inland Fisheries Commission. The successful applicants were Messrs. D. Fox, W. Thompson and E. Price. They are to take up their appointment on 5th December, 1977. The cadets will undertake all phases of activities within the Commission. Initially, one cadet is based at Corra Linn and two at Plenty.

### PENSTOCK LAGOON

The Fly Fishers' Club of Tasmania has advised that these of its members who fished Penstock Lagoon this season have had reasonable success and, in the opinion of that Club, adequate stocks of fish are present in the lagoon. This view has been supported by members of the Inland Fisheries Commission who fished Penstock Lagoon this season and who caught brown trout up to 2.26 kg (5 lb). A Hobart angler caught a well conditioned brown trout 4.08 (9 lb).

### CRESSY WEIR

Northern anglers who fish the weirs at Cressy are aware of a 2.369 (5 lb) brown trout which they consider is so knowledgeable that it can tell the maker of each fly presented to it. Many attempts to catch this particular fish have been unsuccessful.

#### ACCESS TO WOODS LAKE

Following inspections by members of the Commission with the property owner of land surrounding Woods Lake, successful negotiations have been completed. Mr. I. Downie has made access from the Steppes-Interlaken road to Woods Lake available to anglers.

Persons using this access are aware that it is ever-private property and that any damage caused to any of the property should immediately be reported to Mr. Ian Downie. Anglers could help by taking the number of the vehicle being driven by offenders. Anglers are requested at all times to see that gates are closed. As the opportunity permits the Commission hopes to improve certain sections of the access road and so make access easier at the southern end of the lake.

#### RAINBOW TROUT, LAKE GORDON

Following a request from an angling club in Southern Tasmania a further liberation of 200 000 rainbow trout fry was put into Lake Gordon in November, 1977. Rainbow trout from the previous year were up to 33 cm (13 inches) and 250 g (cleaned weight) after one year in Lake Gordon.

#### RAINBOW TROUT LIBERATIONS

Rainbow trout fry liberations for 1977 have been completed. Great Lake received most of the liberations. Among other storages to receive rainbow trout fry were Lake Kara and No. 1 weir Brumbys Creek.

#### CALVERTS LAGOON

The largest brown trout reported taken from this lagoon in recent years weighed 1.8 kg (4 lb). It was caught recently. The Commission restocked Calverts Lagoon with brown trout fry in 1977.

## ELVER PASS

A pilot elver pass was installed at Trevallyn Power Station on October 27th. Galaxias immediately attempted to use the pass and two species, Galaxias brevipinnis and Galaxias maculatus were sighted. The former was able to ascend the pass but the latter is not a climbing species. A considerable quantity of elvers have already moved up the pass into a trap. It is hoped that elvers will continue to use the pass. The elvers caught have been transferred upstream into the South Esk above the Trevallyn Power Station end intake.

## LAKE PEDDER

Anglers continue to catch large brown trout at Lake Pedder. One angler caught from one to three fish on each day he fished at Lake Pedder early in November. The fish weighed from 4 - 7.3 kg (9 - 16 lb).

## TROUT FARM

The Commission has received an application for a trout farm at National Park. It is proposed to issue a licence in due course.

## COMPLIMENTARY LICENCES

Six complimentary licences were issued to the St. Joseph's Child Care Centre following representations from the Glenorchy R.S.L. and Citizens Angling Club. The Club has taken the children on several successful outings. Other angling branches have similar projects and their interest is much appreciated by the children.

## CORMORANTS

Cormorants continue to prey on rainbow trout at Liawenee and the Commission has continued its policy of shooting cormorants at Liawenee Canal and at the Salmon Ponds. The Inland Fisheries Commission does not support a bounty for killing cormorants as the bounty system has been discredited as a method of predator

control. Bounties are not favoured by most authorities charged with the responsibility for predator control.

#### PROHIBITED IMPORTS OF FISH

The Commission has discussed with the Department of Agriculture the control of entry of fish and other animals used as live bait into Tasmania and further discussions are planned with airways and shipping companies with a view to detecting illegal imports and possibly the erection of signs in shipping and airways offices.

#### FISH DISEASE EXPERT

Dr. Ken Wolfe, a fish disease expert from Virginia, U.S.A., is expected to visit Tasmania and to spend some time with the Inland Fisheries Commission and the Veterinary Section of the Department of Agriculture in 1978. Dr. Wolfe has already advised Australian authorities on the dangers to its fisheries through importing diseases with live fish or fish eggs.

#### ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

In October an unlicensed angler was detected at Lake Crescent using unattended set rods and two persons were intercepted using more than four lures here. At the Forrester River a fisherman was intercepted taking whitebait in the closed season.

National Parks and Wildlife Service Officers have detected three persons for alleged breaches of whitbait regulations and three unlicensed anglers.

Tasmania Police have detected one unlicensed angler and two persons fishing for whitebait. Prosecutions for these alleged offences are pending.

#### EEL TRAPS IN RIVERS

Originally it was intended that eel fishermen be required to use

traps for catching feeding eels in specified places in rivers. Following consultations with eel fishermen and angling associations, it is now agreed that it would not be unreasonable to allocate a distance of about one kilometer for professional eel fishermen to use mobile, portable traps to take feeding eels in rivers.

In the North Esk river, the use of eel traps is not allowed before the 1st November each year. This would allow reasonable opportunity for anglers who enjoy early season fishing for trout here and for others to catch eels on rod and line.

#### TROUT POPULATIONS IN RIVERS

The Commission is concerned at the apparent lack of recruitment of trout in some nursery streams and proposes to electro-fish a number of streams in various waters throughout the State in the summer months. Angling associations are being asked to submit lists of streams which they consider should be investigated. Following consultations with Fisheries Authorities in other States, it has been reported that there has been a failure for three years for recruitment of brown trout to take place in some streams in Victoria. The reason for the failure has not been explained.

#### LAGOON OF ISLANDS

Even though the level of water at Lagoon of Islands must of necessity be lowered during the very dry spring and summer which the State is experiencing, the lagoon continues to provide good fishing and anglers have reported good catches of both brown and rainbow trout from this water.

#### LAKE LEAKE

There was an excellent hatch of Red Spinner at Lake Leake this spring and anglers report catches of well-conditioned fish up to 1.2 kg ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb).

A number of anglers reported the presence of many small brown trout which would suggest that a successful recruitment of brown trout occurred in 1976 and 1977.

#### EDGAR DAM BOAT RAMP

The Commission would like to alert anglers to the fact that it may be dangerous to retrieve boats at Lake Edgar in all west to northerly weather and the Commission hopes that protection in the form of a breakwater may be considered to make retrieving boats in this area less hazardous.

#### LAKE PEDDER

Facilities for anglers and campers at Lake Pedder are available at the Scotts Peak end of Lake Pedder but, unfortunately, in the short-term, anglers may have to suffer some discomfort. The long term plan envisages the provision of camping facilities at Strathgordon.

#### RESEARCH OFFICER

The Commission has advertised the position of Research Officer for Freshwater and it is expected that an appointment would be made early in January.

#### RETIREMENT OF MR. P. WALLACE

Mr. Wallace is not seeking re-appointment in 1978 to the Inland Fisheries Commission. At the close of the Commission meeting held in December the Chairman referred to the long and valued service which Mr. Wallace had given to trout fisheries in Tasmania. He stated that it had been a pleasure to work with Mr. Wallace and he wished him well in the greater opportunity to pursue his favourite sport of trout fishing. The Chairman's remarks were supported by Mr. Bridges and Mr. Wallace suitably responded.

D. D. Lynch  
Commissioner

6th December, 1977

SECOND READING SPEECH

FISHERIES BILL NO.109

1977

The Bill is to amend the Fisheries Act 1959. The Purpose of the amendment is to provide authority for the Inland Fisheries Commission to sell a right to take eels in specified inland waters during a specified period.

The Bill is intended to give power to the Commission to make Regulations with the approval of the Governor to invite tenders for the exclusive rights to fish for a prescribed fish, i.e. migrating eels in a specified water.

In the overseas study to examine eel fisheries, the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries noted that, in Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland and Holland, there were fisheries to catch migrating eels. The fisheries use fixed weirs or structures set across rivers to catch eels as they migrate downstream. Operators had an exclusive licence to use this gear in a particular water-way for a fixed period, i.e. when the eels were moving towards the sea. Only one set of this type of gear can be used on one water-way. A fisherman with this right would not wish a competitor to be allowed to set similar gear further upstream to catch eels moving down.

In Northern Ireland an exclusive licence to catch migrating eels is held by Lough Neagh Fisheries Co-operative and the co-operative pays annual licences.

The Commissioner discussed the merits of a fishery for migrating eels with eel fishermen and anglers in Tasmania with a view to

establishing a new fishery here. Anglers agreed to the proposal being tested and eel fishermen showed interest. The Commission considered that the fairest method of deciding who would have the exclusive rights should be decided by calling tenders and the successful tenderer, not necessarily the highest, should be allowed to operate the fishery for a number of years. This procedure appears to be desirable and equitable.

The Crown Solicitor has pointed out that there is power in Fisheries Act 1959, Section 36(1) (b) (iii) for the Commission, with the approval of the Governor, to make Regulations for the limitation to a prescribed number of the licences that may be issued to take any prescribed kind of fish.

It is possible to invoke this power to make Regulations to make an exclusive right to a fishery but there is not provision in the Act guiding the choice of who gets the right. The Commission feels that the right should be decided by tender and the Government supports this view.

Basically, the provision sought in this Bill provides that equal and fair opportunity be given to all persons or co-operatives wishing to enter this type of fishery.

I would point out that the fishery for migrating eels is a new one in Tasmania. At present, these eels are not being caught and used by commercial fishermen. Before 1965, eels were a natural resource which was used to only a limited extent by recreational interests in Tasmania. Anglers took eels for their own consumption. The Inland Fisheries Commission realised the advantage to the State of a commercial eel fishery



and introduced the fyke net for eels in Tasmania. In essence, the current operations of commercial eel fishermen are directed at catching the feeding eels which live in rivers and enclosed storages.

Between 1965 and 1970 there were teething troubles with this fishery in that there were conflicts of interest between the recreational fishery for trout and the eel fishery. However, these conflicts have now been resolved and eel fishing is currently not permitted in prime trout waters and eel fishermen are now able to use larger nets by regulations introduced earlier this year. Last year the Government funded a visit by the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries to a Symposium on Eel Research and Development held in Helsinki and provided for the Commissioner to inspect the eel fishery in Holland, North and South Ireland and New Zealand. The result of these inspections indicated that there is an unsatisfied world market for eels and that Tasmania should increase its efforts towards harvesting what eels there are in Tasmania.

Further, efforts are now in course by the Inland Fisheries Commission to rehabilitate eel fisheries which have dilapidated because of obstructions to their movements upstream. In co-operation with the Hydro-Electric Commission, the Inland Fisheries Commission has in course the installation of elver passes at Trevallyn Dar. Later, it is proposed to extend elver passes to other areas.

Experience in Southern Ireland has shown that eel fisheries can be rehabilitated within a few years by the establishment of elver passes and a system of trapping elvers and transferring them to suitable waters where they may grow to a large size before returning to the sea.

It is essential that provision be made to catch these fully grown eels in their best condition when they are preparing to return to sea.

Several proposals have been put forward to the Government and to the Commission by outside agencies wishing to catch elvers for export. But the Government takes the view that elvers should be grown in Tasmania until they are of mature size suitable for marketing so that Tasmanian fishermen may have the opportunity of catching them.

It is the intention of the Bill to preserve the rights of anglers and others who wish to catch a few eels for their own use and the right to use the gear to catch migrating eels at a specific point in a water system would not preclude anglers from continuing to enjoy their current right of catching eels by means of rod and line.

It is envisaged that, in the initial stage, an exclusive right would be granted for the operation of a structure to catch migrating eels in the South Esk River system, for it is in this system that the Commission hopes to rehabilitate the eel fishery by transferring elvers up through the Trevallyn Power Station by means of an elver pass and an elver trap.

Harvesting the migrating eels as they come down this system would prevent the wastage of eels which might be killed in power stations.

A feature of the Bill is that it limits the time which this gear may be operated. The limitation would take two forms:

One would be that the gear would be in operation only during the period of the run and the second provision would ensure that the successful tenderer or operator of the gear would be allowed some continuity of right to take migrating eels.

Obviciously, the cost of the equipment would be expensive and the operator should have the right to use this gear for a set number of years to allow him to recoup his outlay expended on the project and to make profit.

The Bill is a non-controversial piece of legislation and, in general terms, it provides for the harvesting of a resource which currently is not being harvested and provides a fair and equitable mechanism for deciding who shall have the right to harvest this resource.