



Our 6th December guest presenters are:
Glenn Briggs (mini) with “Cairns Rainbowfish”
Greg Martin with “Chasing gudgeon in remote east Gippsland”



Top: Dock Inlet, east of Cape Conran, East Gippsland. Above left: our crew waiting at the Parks Victoria gate to the 4WD track into Dock Inlet. Above right: preparing to set traps and fykes at Dock Inlet. Lower right: female Flathead Gudgeon from Dock Inlet. Photos: Greg Martin

Over the long weekend of 2nd to 5th November 2024 ANGFA Victoria, in conjunction with Senior Consultant Ecologist David DeAngelis from Abzeco, ran a multi-night field trip to far East Gippsland to look at a couple of sites: Dock Inlet to the east of Cape Conran and Ewings Morass to the west. Greg Martin's presentation will give an overview of the field trip including the sites, the fishes and other critters that we found on the trip. Glenn Briggs will give a mini presentation on Cairns Rainbowfish prior to the main presentation.



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President's Report December 2024



Welcome to VICNews 138! At our October club meeting, Victorian Fisheries' Dylan White gave us a comprehensive overview of the Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery. Tasked with learning as much as possible about a species in a short time, then successfully breeding and successfully raising the next generation, the responsibility felt by staff must be enormous! With more and more species landing in their care as more fishes and molluscs species need urgent conservation efforts, the number of species in breeding projects at Snobs Creek has rising dramatically since its opening. We have been invited to visit Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery and will do so early next year, but it will most likely be during the week as that is the best time for their staff to accommodate our group. I'll be posting more information closer to the date.

On the long weekend of the 2nd to 5th November we ran a multi-night field trip to far East Gippsland, based at Cape Conran. It was a fantastic trip - enjoyed by all and we found a good number of species. Read all about it in our article starting on page 3.

As usual, in our October club meeting we held our AGM. The

committee remains unchanged with the exception of Paul Byham leaving the committee and Matt Schreuder joining. Thank you Paul for your support, your ideas and your hard work over the many years you were on the ANGFA Victoria Inc. committee.

The ANGFA Victoria Inc. committee is:

- President - Greg Martin
- Secretary - Glenn Briggs
- Treasurer - John Lenagan
- Membership Officer - Rod Wubben
- Field Trip Coordinator - Greg Martin
- Field Trip Safety Officer - Rod Wubben
- Grants and Permit Writer - Tim Curmi
- Committee helpers - Chris Lamin, Matt McGee, Matt Schreuder, Peter Gauci, Sunny Syme and Gybe Forster
- VICNews - Greg Martin

In order for ANGFA Vic to continue to flourish, we encourage regular regeneration of our committee with new and enthusiastic members that represent the wider interest of the club (it's not unlike introducing fresh genetics into a conservation fish breeding program to get stronger fish, I guess). As running our club can be a demanding job at times, burnout at the 'top' is always a threat so we have to have succession plans in place for the future. Glenn indicated that he would like to hand over the baton of secretary possibly as soon as next year and John is also saying a similar thing about handing over the role of treasurer. Both John and Glenn have held those positions for many, many years. If you would like to be involved, have good people skills, are passionate about the conservation of our native fishes, and have ideas that will benefit the club, consider joining our committee at the next AGM.

As always, a big thank you to the ANGFA members that continue to attend our field trips - it is always great to get out into the natural world. Field tripping is fun!

Enjoy this edition and we'll see you at the first meeting of 2025 on Friday 7th February (or before at the field trip!). As usual it will be a relaxed evening of learning, of fun, plenty of chat time and catching up with fellow fishos!



Pearl Point Track crosses the Yeerung River on the way to Dock Inlet in East Gippsland. Photo: Greg Martin

Field Trip Files: Dock Inlet and Beatle Lake, East Gippsland 2nd to 5th November 2024



Above: some shots from Chris Lamin's very productive Conservation Hatchery, Middle Creek Farm. Below right: Chris fed us a delicious lunch. Photos: Greg Martin

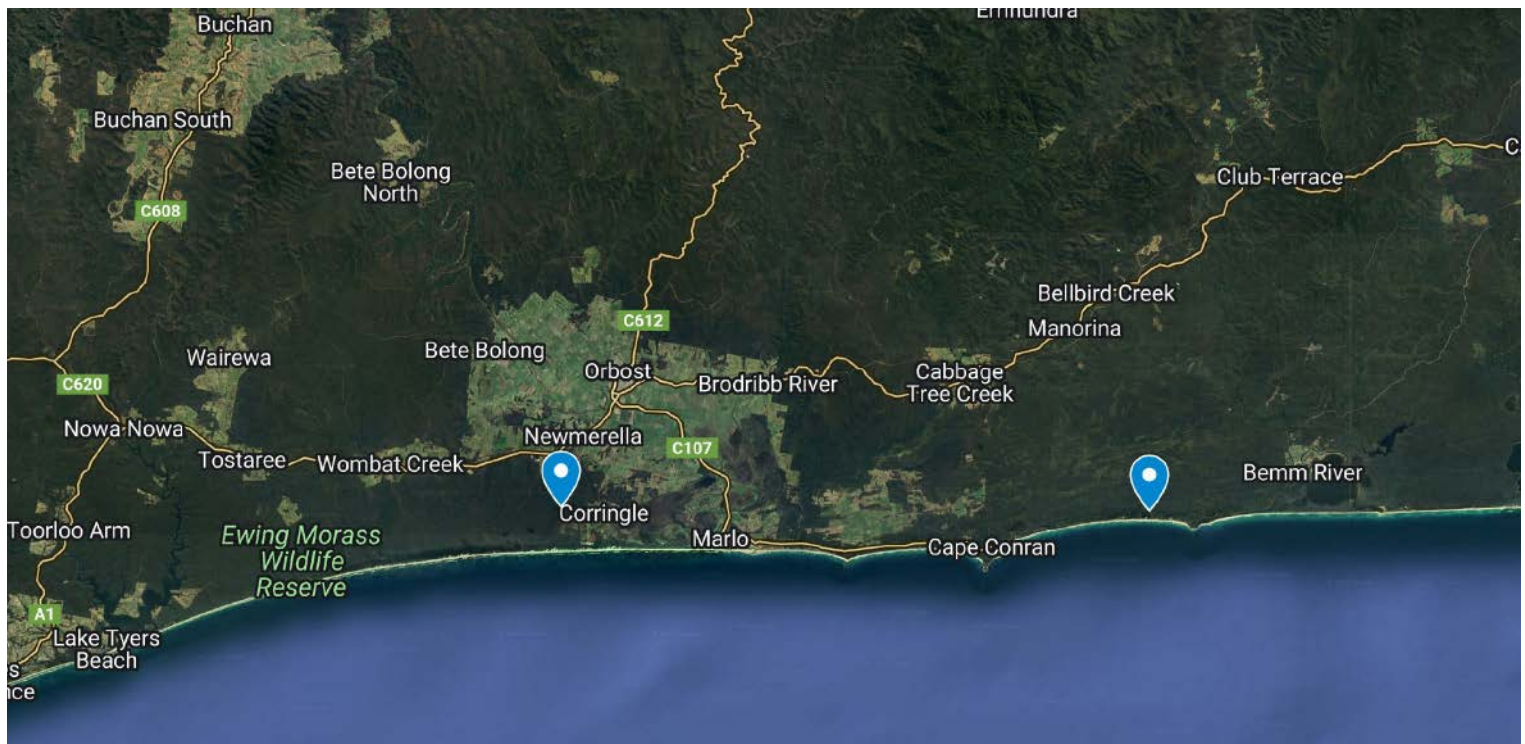
At our April 2024 ANGFA Vic club meeting Senior Consultant Ecologist David DeAngelis was our guest presenter, and during his talk he showed us a photograph he had taken of an unusual looking Flathead Gudgeon-like fish he had caught whilst conducting frog surveys near Marlo in East Gippsland. His photograph generated a lot of interest and speculation amongst members on the night and a conversation followed which Peter Unmack weighed in on telling us that the Orbost area of East Gippsland had not been thoroughly surveyed and furthermore there were weird genetics in the Flathead Gudgeon on either side of the area – an interesting situation where there could possibly be a new species hiding in plain sight. This was worth a closer look.

As it had been eight years since we had run a field trip to the Cape Conran area, we decided that there were some very compelling reasons to go back. The idea of a combined field trip, comprising ANGFA Vic members and David and some of his friends, was floated at that meeting and it was decided to lock it in for the Melbourne Cup Long Weekend in November.

In late September ANGFA Vic had applied for a Research Permit from Victorian Fisheries, to use box traps, fyke nets, seine nets and dip nets to improve our Catch-Photograph-Release fish surveys. Fortunately, this permit was granted a few weeks prior to the East Gippsland trip so we now had an opportunity to conduct our most thorough surveys yet.

Further to our Research Permit, permission had been given to David DeAngelis to collect a limited number of samples of any unusual fishes we might come across. We were set and the final details of the trip were quickly sorted. The ANGFA Vic team consisted of myself, Glenn Briggs, Rod Wubben and Norm ElCrab. David was bringing Jesse Eelsley and a friend of David's Bryce Watts Parker, who is based in Mallacoota, was meeting us in Cape Conran.





Map showing the two sites we sampled. Beatle Lake west of Marlo and Dock Inlet east of Cape Conran. Map: Google Maps

Saturday

We met at Middle Creek Farm on Saturday of the long weekend and Chris Lamin gave us a tour of the hatchery and then fed us a beautiful lunch. Our original plan was to stay in Briagolong on Saturday night, but we decided to push through to Cape Conran that day and get a good night's sleep before the next three busy days of surveying.

We arrived later that afternoon at Jungle Beach Caravan Park in Cape Conran. After unpacking and settling into our cabins and tents we headed across to the Marlo Hotel for dinner. This popular eating spot has a beautiful southwest-facing vista where every evening one can watch the sun set as you slowly get pickled. We weren't getting pickled as we had work to do! We formulated a solid plan for the next few days and returned to our base for the night.

Sunday

After a relaxed breakfast of chatting, getting to know everyone a bit more and drinking coffee we decided to do an exploratory walk in the morning to look at a local wetland "just up the beach" ... David told us... "It is about a km's walk and then its just over the dunes". Easy Peezy... Starting at the carpark at Salmon Rocks Cape Conran, off we went. Walking on soft sand in the already very hot sun was taxing on all of us and Rod was beginning to feel it in his knees; so he decided early on to head back to the vehicles and wait this one out. Probably



a good call as "about a km" turned into around 3 kms and the dunes were steep, hot and exhausting to climb! But the view from the top was wonderful: a stunning blue wetland, seemingly a stone's throw from our base camp Jungle Beach Caravan Park. In truth, it *was* close as the crow flies but the coastal heath surrounding the wetland was an almost impenetrable barrier to get through! Shortly after scaling this amazing dune, David informed us that in fact, he had muddled up the locations and we were in the wrong spot! No harm done. At this moment the weather turned (literally) and a strong south westerly sprang up. We decided to head back and have lunch and prepare for the trip to Dock Inlet.



Middle right: heading off down the beach for a 'short walk'. Above left: half way up the sand dune. Above right: we paused frequently to catch our breath. Photos: Greg Martin



View from the top of the dunes: a stunning wetland! Note, Jungle Beach Caravan Park upper left of the picture. Photo: Greg Martin



Above: David plucking up the courage to tell us that we had scaled the wrong dune and were in the wrong location. Photo: Greg Martin



Above: view from within the dunes looking east - dunes are a fragile and amazing habitat. Below: the strong southwesterly added chop to the azure blue ocean on our walk back to our vehicles. Photos: Greg Martin.





Top and middles: on the way back along the beach we found this small creek, blocked off from the sea (bottom photo). The presence of Dragonfly larvae told us the water was fresh. Photos by Greg Martin.



On the walk back along the beach to our vehicles, Jesse and I dawdled looking at and photographing the many fascinating beetles and other bugs that were being washed up along the wet line on the sand as the

waves washed back. These included a stunning Long Horn Beetle, several different Leaf Beetles, Green Flower Chaffers, Rove Beetles, Ladybirds and Sawflies.



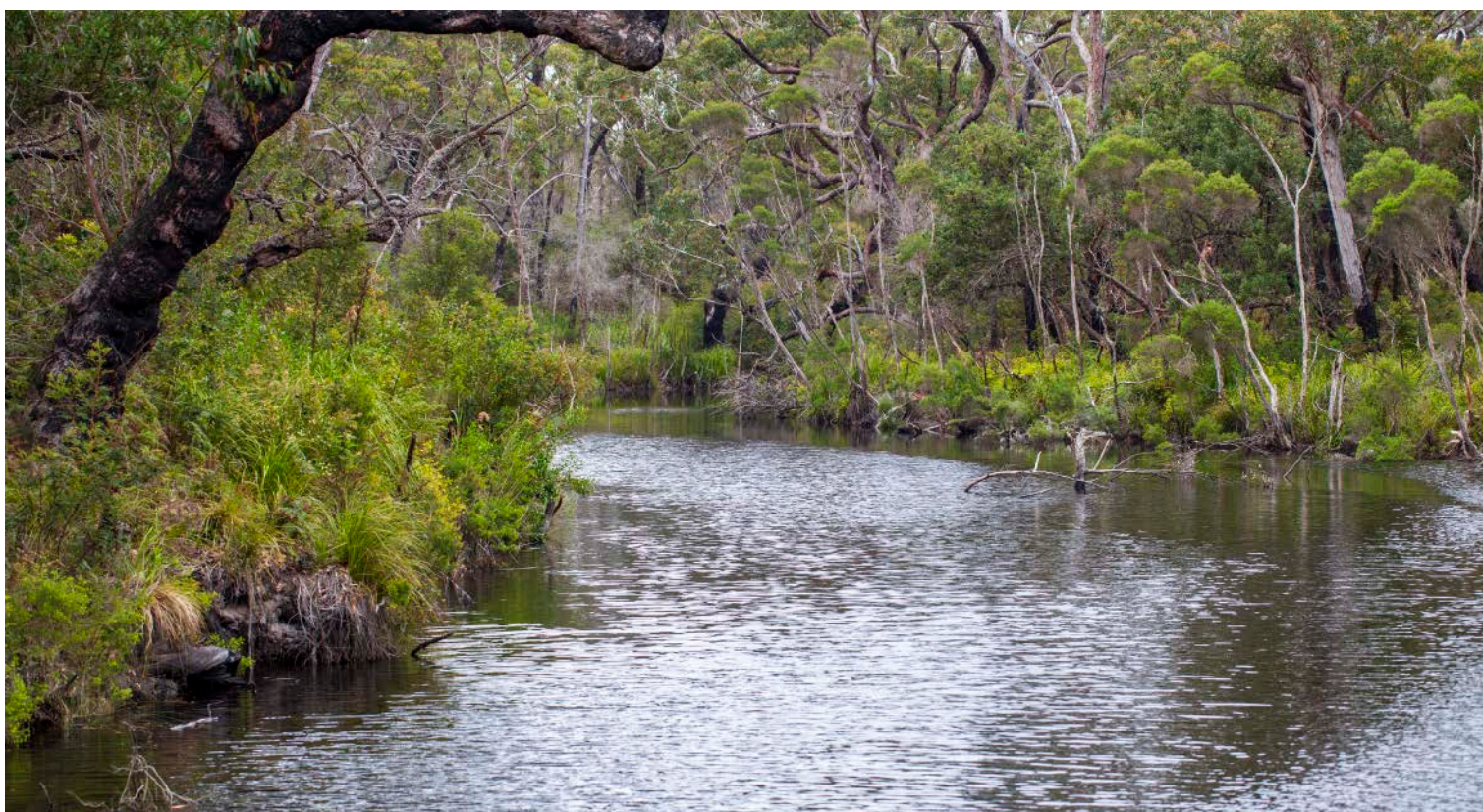
Beetles and other critters found along the shoreline at the high wave line on the way back to our vehicles. Photos: Greg Martin



Above: a very relaxed Jacky Lizard sunning its self in the Salmon Rocks carpark. Bottom: Yeerung River. Photos: Greg Martin

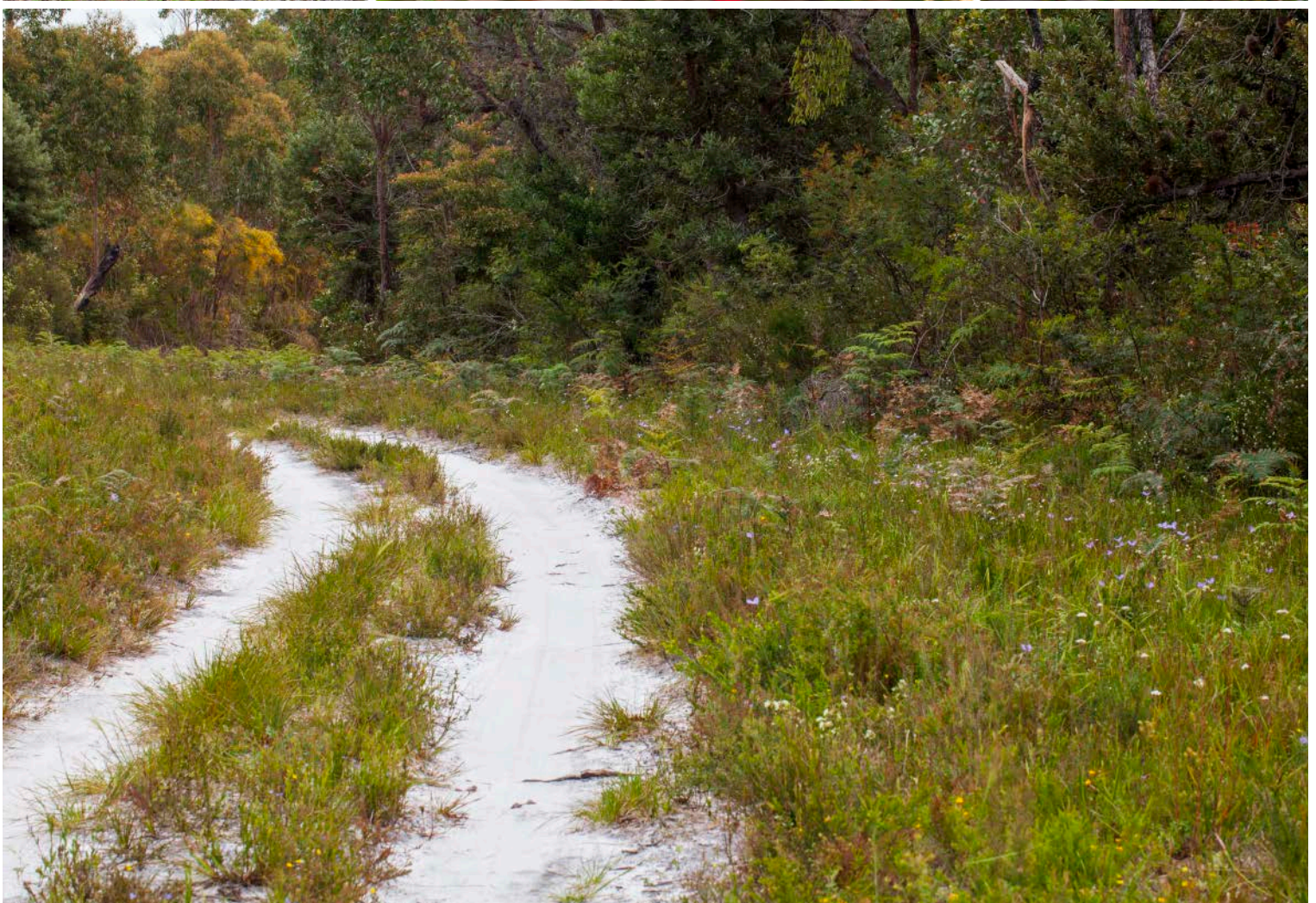
Refreshed and refueled after a delicious lunch we compacted into four 4WD vehicles and headed to Dock Inlet. The road Pearle Point Track crosses Yeerung River before climbing up and into the coastal Banksia scrubland. We shortly arrived at a locked gate which we had been given permission by Parks Victoria to open and pass through. We then travelled about 6km along Pearle Point Track to Dock Inlet.

This beautiful track, kept accessible by Parks Victoria for maintenance and fire fighting vehicles, is quite sandy in parts and all the way along there were myriads of wildflowers. These included a vivid red *Correa (Correa reflexa)*, *Patersonia fragilis*, *Dampiera stricta*, *Hibbertia* sp. and *Ricinocarpus* sp.





Top: our crew waiting at the Parks Victoria gate on Pearle Point Track. Middles: gate unlocking challenges - Norm got it in the end, phew! Bottom: Pearle Point Track winding its way through Banksia scrub with so many wildflowers (next page)! Photos: Greg Martin





Top: Hairy Fan-Flower *Scaevola ramosissima* with native bee. Above: Short-horned Grasshopper. Photos: Greg Martin



Above: Dock Inlet looking to the left of the natural 'beach'. Bottom: Rod and David prepare box traps to be set overnight. Photos: Greg Martin

We crossed a couple of small streams and eventually arrived at the small track that leads down to the campsite at Dock Inlet. Leaving two of the vehicles at the top due to little available space at the campsite, we walked down the short road to the water.

Dock Inlet is a stunning and untouched place. Only accessible by hikers, mountain bike riders or occasionally by Parks vehicles, everything looked pristine. No rubbish to be seen. The fresh clean water was a rich tannin colour and the fine sand was white underfoot.





The vegetation that surrounds the lake was alive with frog calls. By the campsite there is a natural 'beach' that cuts through the vegetation and this is where we accessed the water.

Whilst Bryce donned his mask and snorkel and prepared his fancy underwater camera gear, we set about installing our box traps and fyke nets. Bryce did see a few fish but the tea-coloured water made 'getting the shot' a challenge. As it was a hot afternoon Norm couldn't resist a swim and at one stage all I could see in the late afternoon sun's shimmer on the water was a slowly moving hat as Norm cooled off. Happy with how the traps and nets had been set for the night, we returned to base camp for the evening.



Top: the team about to deploy our box traps. The late afternoon sun was warm, the water was warm - it was a splendid place! Middle: Norm cooling off with a swim. Bottom: Bryce (left in the photo) with his underwater camera. Jesse and Glenn set box traps. Photos: Greg Martin



Top: Glenn and Bryce get a few drags of the seine in before we had to leave. Above: a quick photo looking into the sun as the day drew to a close. Photos: Greg Martin



Top three: after dinner relaxing around the fire. Below left: Glenn sorting the catch into different containers. Below right: fold-out table, a must have for making everything civilised and easy. Bottom left: Rod capturing the moment. Bottom right: Jesse and Glenn preparing to drag a seine net. Photos: Greg Martin

That night, over a few quiet drinks, we had some animated conversations around the fire before everyone eventually headed off to bed.

Monday

The morning started with a little light drizzle which quickly gave way to strong sunshine and we headed back to Dock Inlet to retrieve our traps, process the catch and take photographs, take samples of anything unusual before returning the catch to the lake. We were very lucky! There were a lot of fish in the nets and as each net was brought in Glenn sorted the catch into different buckets, trays and tubs.





The largest number of individuals of a species was Smelt, followed by Flinders Pygmy Perch and Flathead Gudgeon. We processed the Smelt quickly and carefully, taking a few out for photographing and releasing the rest without delay. With the other species we had a bit more time. Bryce and I took photos in his field tank and when we had photographed all the species they were released back to the water.



Top four: Bryce photographing Smelt and Flinders Pygmy Perch. Above: The Smelt from this tannin-stained water were very beautiful. Photos: Greg Martin



Top: Short-finned Eel. Middle left and right: Jesse Ealsey (eel in his name) was very excited to experience what an eel feels like. Photos: Greg Martin. Bottom: Greg photographing the eel whilst David prepares the fin clip equipment. Photo: Rod Wubben



There were two rather large Tupong, two Short-finned Eels and several Dwarf Flathead Gudgeon as well as a small number of Common Galaxias. Seven species! Fabulous.

for further testing to see if there was anything different about these species from this location. David DeAngelis also took some fin clips of some of the Dwarf Flathead Gudgeon.

We decided to take a few live specimens of Dwarf Flathead Gudgeon and Flathead Gudgeon to pass onto Matt McGee at Monash University

Fish processed, we packed up and left Dock Inlet.



Top: a large Tupong - superbly adapted to blend in to the submerged vegetation in the tannin-stained waters. Middle left and right: some of the Common Galaxias had these *Estrongylides* worms under the skin. Bottom: Common Galaxias are such a wonderful fish! Photos: Greg Martin



Gudgeon from Dock Inlet. Top: male Flathead Gudgeon. Middle: female Flathead Gudgeon. Bottom left: female Dwarf Flathead Gudgeon. Bottom right: the Flathead Gudgeon were all very 'chunky' fish. Photos: Greg Martin



Top: Rod keeping records. The water was fresh (EC was 367 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$), David taking measurements with a pen style EC and temperature meter. Middle left: Water Scorpion. Middle right: egg mass, perhaps from a snail? Bottom: Yellow-bellied Water Skink *Eulamprus heatwolei* spotted by the side of the path. Photos: Greg Martin



After lunch back at base camp we discussed the issue of the possibility of spreading Chytrid fungus into the next site by transporting and resetting wet nets. Luckily, we had enough nets so that we could use completely dry nets at the next site. So, we drove back through Marlo and Orbost, across the Snowy River and then south towards Ewing's Morass. When we finally got to Ewing's Morass the low water level combined with impenetrable scrub prohibited us from getting to the water so, as the sun began to slide into early evening, we retraced our steps to Beatle Lake.



Upon arrival and as we took in the tranquil, deeply tea-coloured waters of Beatle Lake, David informed us that it was stocked in the 1990's with trout. Notwithstanding this little historical fact, we optimistically set our box traps and fyke nets and headed back across the Snowy to our base camp at Cape Conran for the night.



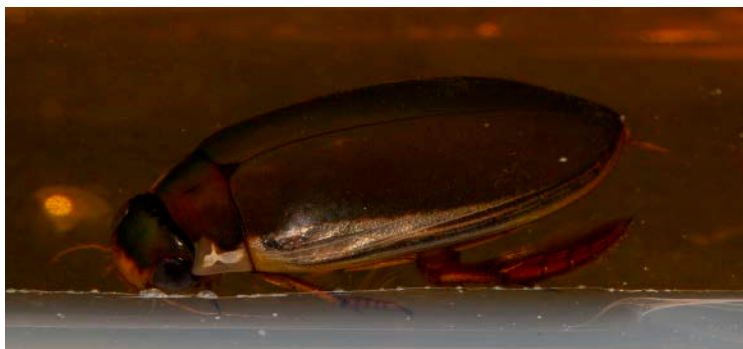
Top left: drying the nets overnight at our home base. Top right: beautiful bush on the drive in to Ewing's Morass and Beatle Lake. Middle right: unpacking our nets at Beatle Lake. Bottom three: looking under logs for critters is always so much fun! Photos: Greg Martin



Top: Greg, Jesse and Glenn inspecting the fykes prior to bringing them in. Middle left: Greg and Jesse. Bottom left: releasing the catch into a tub. Photos: Rod Wubben. Middle right: There were a huge number of tadpoles in each net. Bottom right: checking the box traps for dragonflies - some had 'hatched' in the traps overnight. Photos: Greg Martin



Top and middle left: Australian Emerald Dragonfly. Middle right: there were spent dragonfly casings encrusting branches above the water everywhere in the lake. Bottom left and right: David carefully identifying tadpoles and estimating their numbers. Photos: Greg Martin



Tuesday

After eating breakfast, packing up our camp and thanking the caravan park manager, we left Cape Conran to retrieve our nets at Beatle Lake before heading back to Melbourne. The fyke nets and box traps were full of tadpoles! No fish, but black with tadpoles. It took a long time to carefully estimate the number of each species and to log the results. Whilst David, Jesse and Rod undertook this arduous task I set about trying to photograph an example of each species. There were also water beetles and dragonfly nymphs to photograph as well. After limited success on my part we returned the catch to the water and began to pack up.



Top: Haswells Froglet tadpole. Second from top: Pobblebonk tadpole. Middle left: morphing Southern Brown Tree Frog. Lower left: *Cybister* sp. diving beetle and larvae (bottom left). Photos: Greg Martin. Bottom right: Greg photographing tadpoles and other critters in the field tank balanced on a branch. Photo: Rod Wubben



Above: a very large Red Bellied Black Snake flattened out sunning its self near where we were photographing the catch in the field tank. Photo: Greg Martin.

As we were winding up, Glenn alerted us to an enormous Red-bellied Black Snake that was hunting a native rat a few feet from where the photographic tank had been set up so we transferred our attention to this beauty. With all this attention suddenly on it the snake lost interest in pursuing lunch and disappeared into a hole in a large stump. We waited patiently for it to re-emerge wondering exactly where it might appear. After a little while it did. As we remained quiet it slowly fully emerged and paused to sun it's self for quite a long time. After perhaps

30 minutes (and many photos later) it was warm enough and headed to the water. We watched it for a little while fossicking about under the water before it lost us in a jumbled maze of submerged branches. What a stunner! And what a lovely way to round off a great trip!

Thank you Glenn, Rod, Norm, David, Jesse and Bryce for a wonderful weekend!



Above: The Red Bellied Black Snake, after building up enough heat, made its way over to the lake and slid into the water. We watched it disappear amongst the submerged branches as it began hunting for lunch, then it reappeared again a little way off. Eventually we lost sight of it altogether. Photo: Greg Martin.

Our next Field Trip is: Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery Wednesday 8th January



Where: Meet at Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery, 455 Goulburn Valley Highway Eildon, Vic 3713.

Meeting at: 11.00 am on Wednesday 8th January 2025.

Bring: waders, buckets, nets, hat, wet weather gear, cameras, field tank, water bottle and snacks.

Fishes: Flat-headed Gudgeon, carp gudgeon, Galaxias, perhaps some larger bodied natives, who knows?

Note: this trip will begin with a guided tour of the Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery. After lunch we will check out some of the local creeks and rivers.

For more information: contact Greg Martin on 0407 094 313 or gregmartinfishman@gmail.com.



150 juvenile (2-3cm) Murray Spiny Crays that Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery released into the Goulburn River near Shepparton Victoria in 2023. Photos are from their facebook pages.

You must be a current financial member of ANGFA Victoria Inc. to attend an ANGFA Victoria Inc. field trip.

It is a requirement of ANGFA Victoria Inc. that any persons under the age of 18 who wish to attend an ANGFA Victoria Inc. field trip must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

ANGFA Victoria Inc. operates its field trips within the rules of our General Research Permit (RP1559) being Catch-Photograph-Release. All non-noxious fishes caught shall be returned to the water immediately after being photographed.

Club meeting details and key contacts of ANGFA Vic

Office Bearers 2025

President: Greg Martin 0407 094 313
Treasurer: John Lenagan 0413 730 414
Secretary: Glenn Briggs 0408 771 544
Grant Applications and Permit Writer: Tim Curmi 0417 419 765
Field Trip Coordinator: Greg Martin 0407 094 313
Field Trip Safety Officer: Rodney Wubben 0409 890 866
Membership Officer: Rodney Wubben 0409 890 866
Committee members: Chris Lamin, Gybe Forster, Matt McGee, Sunny Syme, Peter Gauci and Matt Schreuder
VICNews: Greg Martin

Other fish groups in Victoria

Aquarium Society of Victoria Visit: www.asov.com.au
Native Fish Australia Vic. Contact: Tim Curmi 0417 419 765

Victorian ANGFA National LIFE MEMBERS

Past

Ron Bowman, Barry Crockford and Tony Tucceri

Present

Neil Armstrong, Glenn Briggs and Ken Smales

ANGFA VIC CLUB MEETINGS

are held at the

Field Naturalists Club of Victoria

1 Gardenia Street Blackburn, Victoria

Doors open at 7.30pm

Dates for 2025:

Friday 7th February

Friday 4th April

Friday 6th June

Friday 1st August

Friday 3rd October (Includes our AGM)

Friday 5th December



The beach at Salmon Rocks, looking west towards Marlo at the mouth of the Snowy River, East Gippsland. Photo: Greg Martin