

Issue 182, Spring 2022

TROUT FISHER

NZ's dedicated trout fishing magazine

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AN UNLIKELY CANDIDATE

WELCOME TO THE BLIND SIDE

CAPTURING THE HIGHS & LOWS OF FISHING

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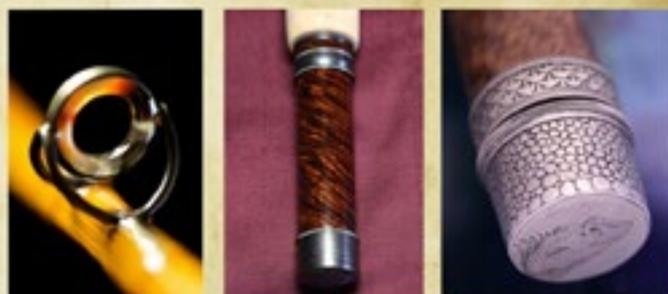
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Welcome to the BLIND SIDE

Andrew Harding talks blind nymphing

Playing Our Part

Reducing carbon footprints with Peter Storey

Take a Kid Swinging

By Simon Hoole

Stream Workshop

Nick Taransky attends a local streamcare seminar

Trout or Salmon baked in Filo Pastry

Wild to the Table with Tony Smith

CAPTURING the HIGHS & LOWS of FISHING

By Les Hill

NEW PRODUCTS

From Kilwell and I Love Fly Fishing

Better get tying

Pre-season musings from Zane Mirfin

Anglers Are Born Honest?

By Tony Orman

Rolling in Cass

By new Canterbury columnist, Andrew Young

An Unlikely Candidate

Peter Trolove is standing in the coming ECan election

A life, trouting

By Garrett Evans

Subscriptions & Classifieds

Cover

*Andrew Burden sends a small stream bow home
(Andrew Harding)*

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CARBON ZERO?

What has bothered me since the ERP came out is how little overt support either major political party is giving it to date, when they are committed to halve NZ's emissions by 2030 under the Paris Agreement.

We shouldn't need government prompting, of course. Mankind already has the ability to achieve global climate goals and here again it all comes back to each of us, playing our part. We don't need to give all the fun aspects of life away, when less than two children per couple globally immediately decreases demand and thereby, supply. We've had the ability to do this since the 1960s, yet in that same time frame the world population has more than doubled. Both the cause and solution clearly lie within us.

Besides, with schools now required to quantify their carbon footprints I sense a covert approach. Soon there will be questions around dinner tables, from children asking whether families too should play their part, decide what is essential to daily life, which nonessentials add to it and which do not, and get rid of as many irrelevant nonessentials as possible.

So far that (initially necessity-driven) process has proved entirely beneficial to this family. Over nearly 20 years it has not only reduced our carbon footprint dramatically but without question, improved our lives.



It's been nearly a year since Miri and I relocated from Australia to New Zealand. For her, it was coming home after more than 30 years. For me, as an Aussie, it's a fresh start.

Stream Workshop

By Nick Taransky

In Australia, a large part of my love for fishing was centred on the beauty of the natural environment and the native animals that live there. Not seeing platypus, echidnas, wombats, kangaroos, water dragons, and even snakes is something that I'm missing at the moment. (Believe me, if you think the sight of a large trout gets your heart pumping, imagine the adrenaline rush of having an animated serpent wrapped around your ankles!)

New Zealand may not have the diversity of native animals that Australia does, but I'm enjoying the birds and other new creatures that I'm coming across here. The awe-inspiring New Zealand environment is something I'm still mesmerised by, and feel incredibly fortunate to be in the middle of. And on the adrenaline side of things, scrambling cliff-edged climbs out of majestic canyons in the Rangitikei streams have presented enough near death experiences to make up for the absence of snakes!

I realise that like Australia, New Zealand has its share of environmental challenges, including many that impact us as trout anglers. Australia, with precious little water at the best of times, has allocated "paper water" several times over to unquenchable irrigators, to grow rice and cotton, while river systems and wetlands are sucked dry. And the response from the irrigation lobby when the subject of environmental flows is raised? "We won't give up a single cup of our allocated water. Ever." My home state of South Australia has lost several fragile trout streams to wineries that effectively deleted streams from the map. One of them even uses the former stream name as its brand, which rubs salt into the wound. It's hard not to get depressed by all the bad news stories. And from what I read, the thirsty push for industrial scale irrigation seems to be doing the same thing here.

Amongst the doom and gloom then, it gives a glimmer of hope to see groups and projects that are trying to make a positive difference in the environment and river health.

An example of this is a fantastic workshop I attended recently. The event was a Fish Monitoring and Stream Health Field Day, held jointly by the NZ Landcare Trust (www.landcare.org.nz), Rangitikei Rivers Catchment Collective (rrcc.co.nz), and Horizons Regional Council's Freshwater Team (www.horizons.govt.nz). The aim was to provide hands-on experience for landowners to assess stream health and biodiversity, and look at issues and solutions for native fish migration. It was inspirational to see a group of such passionate and knowledgeable young people running the day, as well as interested and caring sheep and beef farmers in attendance. It was obvious that these landowners wanted to improve the stream ecosystems on their own land.

The "venue" for the day was the upper stretches of a Rangitikei River tributary, by generous invitation from the farmer. There are trout in this river, further downstream, but the stretch used for the field day was above barrier waterfalls, preventing access to trout. For me, this was a good thing on a couple of counts. Firstly, there was no temptation to get distracted and look for trout instead of focusing on the workshop activities. Secondly, with so many places with trout already in existence, it was nice to experience a "native" New Zealand stream with a diverse and dense native fish population, including the rare and declining dwarf galaxias.

The day was organised into a number of sessions and discussions, each long enough to be interesting and informative, but not too long to get boring. There was plenty of time for questions and answers, and the inevitable diversion into marginally related topics... But mostly we stayed on track!

The first session involved classifying and counting macro-invertebrates, from a collected river sample, to produce a score for stream health. The collection was done by disturbing the streambed – moving rocks and agitating the bottom with boots, with a fine meshed net positioned downstream to capture the flushed macro-invertebrates. (I'm going to incorrectly refer to them as "bugs" from here on for simplicity sake – apologies to all scientists out there!)





Top: the group meets

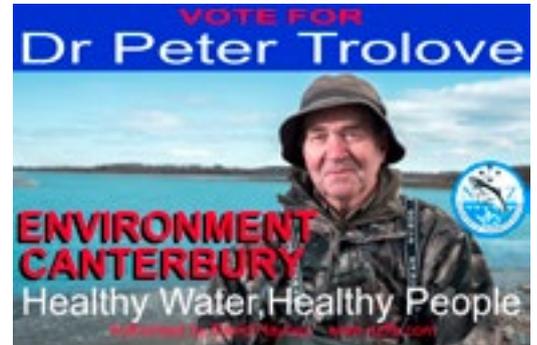
*Centre: Siphonuridae swimming
mayfly nymph – it's amazing
how fast these move (probably
Nesameletus, Ed)*

*Left: extracting drift-sampled
larvae with a pipette*



An Unlikely Candidate

By Peter Trolove, President, NZFFA



Why would a 70 year old semi-retired veterinarian chose to give up precious remaining angling time to stand as a candidate for Regional Council, risking the possibility of a commitment to several days a week of seven hours of meetings for the next three years? – In response to the undemocratic privatisation of a common (freshwater) by a privileged few for the benefit of a privileged few. Adding insult to injury those consented to take braided river water for private profit are consented to return it to Canterbury's groundwater aquifers polluted with nitrate and cattle pathogens. In many parts of Central Canterbury the groundwater is so polluted with nitrate that the connected lowland springs are toxic to trout eggs and fry. Many permanent drains and springs on the lowland Hinds Rangitata plain contain levels of nitrate above the 1957 WHO toxic limit for drinking water (11.3 mg/L NO₃-N).

Emerging concerns about bowel cancer, premature babies, short term pregnancies, and (rare) "blue baby" deaths are rationalized against increased GDP! It is a condition of CPW consents that CPW Ltd must supply bottled water to mothers who drink from polluted private wells and require safe water to mix with baby formula to feed babies 0 to 6 months.

Once the polluted water reaches the groundwater the problem ceases to be that of the polluter, the cost is passed back to the public to remedy. Consents for the use of out-of-river water are a shield against the Common Law liability that should rationally apply. Presently there are no practical means to manage this pollution at a catchment-wide scale. In other words, intensive irrigated dairy farms are environmentally unsustainable on Canterbury's vulnerable porous soils

Environment Canterbury (the Canterbury Regional Council or Ecan) promoted the success of the recent Central Plains Water Enhancement Irrigation scheme, (completed October 2018), as a \$350 million dollar increase in GDP. CPW Ltd received around \$300 million of public subsidies to become established. Apparently the consents for CPW are "owned" by the people of Canterbury and are held in trust by the CPW Trust. CPW Ltd has borrowed a further \$360 million from International banks against these consents.

A subsequent scoping study indicated it would cost approximately \$500 million to restore Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora. This is the justification for doing nothing other than to double the allowed tons of nitrogen to enter the Lake, (4,800 tons N/year), around 5 to 6 times the levels this vast water body can accommodate.

Canterbury anglers are hit by a triple whammy. The lowland groundwater streams and rivers that still maintain a permanent flow, despite over-allocation, have few or no trout. Signs warning of toxic algae and water-borne pathogens are placed at popular camping grounds. The once prolific sea trout at the river mouths of Canterbury's larger braided rivers have disappeared, along with the IC UN Red Listed Endangered native fish, Stokell's Smelt. Stokell's Smelt were until 5 or 6 years ago by far the biggest fishery by mass, supporting larger native and recreational fish, and large breeding colonies of threatened White Fronted Terns and Black Billed Gulls. Finally eutrophication of Canterbury's High Country lakes is occurring as intensive farming is allowed on land privatised under the High Country Tenure Revue. Not a bad effort for a Regional Council charged with maintaining or enhancing the region's freshwater under the RMA 1991.

We are repeatedly informed by Ecan's Director of Science that nitrate pollution is a legacy issue of past farming practices, that it will take 20 to 60 years to improve.

No mention is made of the toxic legacy that is presently occurring.

No mention is made of peer reviewed studies indicating it takes two to five years for polluted water to reach rivers in the shallow (0 to 50m) aquifer layer.

No mention is made that it takes two to fourteen days for surface flows in the inland Selwyn River to make an underground connection with the lowland flowing river.

In lieu of expertise the New Zealand way is to "manage the story". An Ecan trust has

