

“Ripples”

The Official publication of the Southland Fly Fishing Club. The club was founded in 1974

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www.southlandflyfishingclub.org.nz



Southland Fly Fishing Club

President's Report by Dave

Well I haven't managed much fishing in the past month. I was away in Australia for 12 days (less than planned) and as such I have been in isolation at home in case I contracted covid-19 somewhere along the line.

Before going I had a few trips out but fish seemed to be hard to find. I suspect this was a result of the February floods. Since I got back, I have managed a couple of outings (keeping well away from other people) and have managed to spot a few fish (a lot in one place), so it looks like there are still fish out there to be caught. The first of these trips on the Upper Oreti, the weather was not very co-operative but the sun did come out later in the day which allowed me to spot some fish. I didn't see anything that looked to be feeding and couldn't find anything that was interested in my flies. Most of the fish departed on seeing the fly so I suspect they had seen plenty already. The second trip I did find a big lot of fish – I could see at least 25 at one stage in the same pool. Most were just lying on the bottom but some of the smaller ones were moving around. Unfortunately, they were below me and the water was way too deep for wading and there were willows behind me. To make it even worse there were some bad backflows. I had a go at them and managed to land a couple of little ones but the second one raced all around the show and spooked everything. I checked out the pool at the end of the day and none had returned. I am not sure why there were so many fish in one spot, it is way too early for spawning but maybe there had been some salmon spawning just upstream and they were waiting for more. I have seen salmon in this area before and I know they spawn here but didn't see any on this trip.

As requested by the Government there will be no Club activities until further notice. Chris and I will sort out the flies for the fly competition and the first fly will be in the April Ripples. When we can get back together we will judge all the flies in monthly groups.



A nice brown I caught and released in the Oreti above Lumsden

February Meeting - On the River

We had our annual Club Barbeque on the Mataura at Coal Pit Road on February 25th. There was a good turn out of 11 adults and three children. We all enjoyed a good barbeque cooked by Chris and Tim.

River conditions were surprising good but the river was quite different to what it had been before the flood and there was a lot of debris to show just how high it had been. There were some interesting looking new drop-offs etc but someone forgot to invite the fish.



Members at the BBQ. Note the debris in the tree in the background.

Waters Of The Maniototo - March 2020 by Chris

After hearing about the Maniototo dams from Mike Weddell at his courses for many years it was time to fish them with him.

Mike arrived at the Bookabach in Naseby at 7.30am on Saturday morning. Apparently five minutes less driving than from Mosgiel to Wyndham Bridge. The thick fog didn't encourage a quick start but we soon arrived at Mathias's Dam. Mathias's is apparently one of the few dams that still has both browns and rainbows. One problem with fishing irrigation dams is you don't know how full they will be until you get there. Mathias's was extremely high. We were generally knee deep before we got to the edge of the grass.

Just as well Mike knew his way around cos in the fog there was less than 100 metres of visibility. Due to the height of the water and the amount of weed and algae there were not too many fishable spots on the way round to the dam. I did however manage to land a small feisty fat rainbow. Once the fog lifted, we could see the whole of the dam. It wasn't very big.

We walked across the dam and a little further round I spooked a couple of nice browns in a corner. Mike had a break off and that was as good as it got. We were due at Rutherford's Dam for lunch at 1.00pm, so had to head away.



Rutherford's Dam was also quite small and very weedy round the edges. The good news was there were a number of swirls on the far side of the weed. Mike and his damsel fly were quickly into a nice 4.5lb rainbow. I cast a few times near a swirl and hooked up with a 4.75lb rainbow. Mike was about to release it and I told him to put it back in the net. Our waitresses were coming through the gate with our lunch and it had been some time since they saw me with a good sized fish. Of course, because Mike had it in the net, they thought he had caught it. I immediately corrected them.



Mike and I carried on fishing while the ladies set up the tent and sorted out lunch. After lunch another fish swirled where Mike's first fish came from. Another hook up and Mike had problems landing it in the weed. The fish buried itself in the weed and Mike couldn't get it into the net. So he grabbed it by the tail and weed. At last after 40 years fishing, I finally saw a real weed fish. There was so much weed around the fish that you couldn't see the fish until Mike came to shore and removed the weed. A very nice 5lb fish.



Things quietened down so Mike and I headed around the dam to an inlet where fish were swirling. The fish kept teasing us out at the end of Mike's casting range, which meant I didn't have a s---t show of reaching them. Mike had some hook ups but nothing came to the net. We didn't go too far as the sun was fairly bright and would have been behind us.

Meanwhile Nicola and Helen had set up their spinning rods while Carolyn had her rest in the tent. First cast with the black and gold toby and Nicola had a very nice 2.5lb rainbow. The girls spent considerable time casting off the dam wall as it was the only place conducive to spin fishing. The fish Mike was targeting quietened down so we headed back

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Mike's weed fish

Waters Of The Maniototo - March 2020 (cont)

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to the dam wall as well. I crossed the dam and stalked the other side but only managed to drop a fish on Dave's damsel.

Eventually we gave up and headed back to Naseby for a BBQ tea.

Sunday was just as foggy as Saturday but not quite as cold. Off to Blakey's dam. Blakey's dam is no longer used for irrigation and it was very high. Again, lots of weed and not many places where I could cast. One of the highlights of casting at your extreme is the number of tangles you get. I spent as much time re-rigging as casting. One bow wave and the rare swirl was as good as it got. Back to Rutherford's.

Mike was back into another fish where he got yesterday's pair. He also landed one further down near the inlet but nothing was working for me. After lunch we headed further round to the other side of the inlet as there was less sun than the day before. Mike landed another fish and I dropped one before we stopped for the day. Nicola and Helen had thrashed the dam wall for a while then fished around the other side with a worm and a bubble. A friendly fish took the worm and the bubble so they didn't have a good day.

We told them their fish must have swum up to our end as there had been something in the water that appeared to be being dragged along. They were not impressed.

The weekend ended with Mike landing six fish, me two and Nicola one. Not a bad result considering how little fishing I have done this season.



Blakey's dam - Mike Weddell setting up



Chris's rainbow



Nicola's rainbow

Sarah's Aparima Brown



A nice 3lb brown from a nice afternoon on the Aparima at the Wreys Bush bridge.

Nitrates - Today's hemlock by Rex N. Gibson

Are our nitrate laden water supplies killing us? Sadly, New Zealand now has one of the highest bowel cancer rates in the world; and it is growing. (Canterbury and Southland lead statistics). How is "God's Own Country", of just 4.8 million people, which markets tourism, and its primary sector exports, as "100% pure" (and "clean and green") in such a medical crisis? This nitrate issue has been highlighted also by the Canterbury Medical Officer of Health, Dr Alastair Humphrey.

It's the sort of statistic - along with other unenviable ones - which belies the marketing claims. All is not well in "God's Own". Governments, local and national, may turn a blind eye to statistics like bowel cancer rates but many, including independent scientists, are deeply concerned.

On a dull spring morning a small group of like-minded folk met in my garage. No we weren't plotting "the revolution"; or were we? You decide. The bench had been cleared and Victoria University's newest scientist recruit, Dr Mike Joy, led us through the process of determining nitrate levels in bore water samples. The study was commissioned, commendably, by Fish & Game NZ.

Mike had previously alerted me, another executive member of the NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers, Fish & Game NZ HQ, and the news media, to a Danish study published in the International Journal of Cancer, relating to nitrate concentrations and a significant health issue for New Zealanders; colorectal cancer (often referred to as bowel cancer). New Zealand has one of the two highest colorectal cancer (CRC) rates in the world. The question is "Why?" CRC is the second highest cause of cancer death in New Zealand, over 1,200 a year.

In New Zealand, Colorectal cancers cause as many deaths each year as breast and prostate cancers combined. It also kills more than suicides and the road toll combined.

Our eclectic group around the garage bench included a Fish & Game staff member, a sculptor and environmentalist, a Fish & Game councillor (also a dairy farmer), a retired vet with aquiculture degree qualifications, and yours truly. We all share a commitment to improving the quality of our water resource. We had collected or received 114 samples of bore (drinking) water from across Northern Canterbury (Loburn to Ashburton, Christchurch to Methven), several were dropped off during the morning. Mike had brought and set up a portable apparatus (a Nico real-time test unit) for measuring nitrate levels.

So, what did the Danes find? Dr **Jörg Schullehner's** team from the Department of Public Health at Aarhus University said "Our study shows that people who were exposed to the highest concentration of nitrate in drinking water (above 9.3 mg per litre of water) had a 15% greater risk of getting CRC".

They assessed nitrate exposure among 2.7 million adults based on 200,000 drinking water analyses from 1978 to 2011, and included 1.7 million individuals with the highest exposure levels in their main analysis. That was a very robust study. The cancer risks remained significant even at low levels of nitrate deemed acceptable by current drinking water standards.

This standard was 50mg nitrate per litre of water, but the increased risk of cancer started at just 3.8mg/L of water. Schullehner added "**Today, the problem is mainly concentrated in the small private wells, as well as places with high nitrate leaching and where the local soil and geological conditions mean that nitrate can more easily be leached to the groundwater**". This exactly parallels the problem in New Zealand's intensive dairying areas.

Each sample was tested and the results tabulated. Fifty-eight of the 114 registered readings were above the current threshold for potentially increased cancer risk; almost exactly half (50.8%). Aarhus University gave 3.8mg/L as the "lethal" point. Many of our Canterbury's samples exceeded this significantly! Dr Joy said "the sad thing was that the results of the random sample came as no surprise". Fish and Game's chief executive Martin Taylor stated that the results showed "*the cows are coming home to roost. Some detractors will say this is scaremongering. It is not!*"

If the drinking water (nitrate) levels have the potential to kill us, or at least give us cancer, then what are the rivers doing to kayakers, rafters, picnickers and anglers who use these waterways? Even worse; what is hap-

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Nitrates - Today's hemlock (cont)

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pening to the locals who drink it? The health risk arises when nitrate is converted into carcinogenic substances that are known as N-nitroso compounds in the body. Colorectal cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in Denmark and New Zealand, and the third most frequent worldwide.

The findings also back up Dr Alastair Humphrey, Canterbury's Medical Officer of Health, whose warnings over nitrate levels go back years, largely in regard to the acute effects of "blue baby syndrome". In this nitrates are converted in the gut of babies (and via pregnant women to foetuses) to nitrites which lock onto haemoglobin molecules and reduce the oxygen supply to developing organs, including the brain.

New Zealand's highest levels for CRC occur from Canterbury to Southland. The highest rates occur in "Pakeha" New Zealanders. This area is now also the heartland of "industrial dairy". Is industrial dairying "cancerous"? The Danish study gives us "direction". New Zealand just has to follow it.

Canterbury, Otago and Southland have regional councils who have often been considered AWOL when it comes to environmental health issues for the last couple of decades. Nitrate leaching into depleted water catchments has increased exponentially. Many of these areas rely on subterranean aquifers for drinking water. Most people living on the region's farms drink bore water from them, as well as those living in urban areas such as Christchurch and Ashburton.

The nitrate leaching from cattle urine and, especially, from over-application of water, urea and phosphate fertilizers on pastures is significant nationally. Is this a medical crisis; a true "time bomb" situation? CRC can take 20 years to appear. Perhaps the shareholders of the corporate farms (which dominate the South Island's east coast) who reside in Remuera, Karori, Fendalton, etc. are more concerned with "the bottom line", than the colorectal cancer levels in those who actually live on the land. It has an almost Dickensian feel to it. One commentator said "When they have felled the last tree, eaten the last steak, drained the last river, and poisoned the last aquifer, perhaps then they will realise that you cannot eat money".

Another F & G study, also led by Mike Joy, has now shown that Northern Canterbury's rivers are infected with two strains of anti-biotic resistant E. coli. Nick Smith's "swimmable rivers" targets were a joke. Now they are becoming a very sick joke (a deliberate pun). When will it stop? In a bizarre moment I recalled the old line about "Drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die". Just as Socrates was sentenced to death by drinking hemlock, will our nitrate laden water do exactly that to us?

Footnote: Rex N. Gibson is the Freshwater Spokesman for the NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers. He is an ecologist and scientist and with a deep personal interest in rivers and public health.

Journal Reference: Jörg Schullehner, Birgitte Hansen, Malene Thygesen, Carsten B. Pedersen, Torben Sigsgaard. Nitrate in drinking water and colorectal cancer risk: A nationwide population-based cohort study. *International Journal of Cancer*, 2018; [10.1002/ijc.31306](#)

Cover Photo by Dave

Cole Shirvell with a nice Mararoa rainbow taken on a dry fly in February.

For Sale

Simms wading boots. US size 10/ UK 9 and have adjustable wire lacing. They're in good condition, with a little bit of wear on the back of one of the ankles.

Contact Sarah on 021 044 2136.



Coming Events (MM=Monthly Meeting, CM = Committee Meeting)

All events are cancelled until further notice.

Club Contacts

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Club items for sale

Metal Badges \$15 ea.



Cloth Patches \$12 ea.



Club Meetings

The club meets at 7:30pm on the last Tuesday of each month (except December) at the Fish & Game building, 17 Eye St, West Invercargill, Invercargill 9810. [The February meeting is on the river.](#)

Executive Committee meets on the first Tuesday of the month following the general meeting, except for Dec/Jan, includes fly tying, so come along and bring your gear if you want help with a fly—all members welcome.

Club Resources

The club has an extensive library of Books and Videos, contact the Librarian

A blow up Rubber Boat and a set of five Radio's, which can be borrowed by club members, contact Chris McDonald.

Club Sponsors



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