



## Marlborough Freshwater Anglers' Club Inc

[www.marlboroughfreshwateranglers.co.nz](http://www.marlboroughfreshwateranglers.co.nz)

<https://m.facebook.com/marlboroughfwa>

### Club Patron

Roger Winter QPM, NZDSM

**Club Rooms:** Whitehead Park Bowling Clubrooms, Whitehead Park,  
Brooklyn Drive, Blenheim

**Club Nights:** February to December  
Second Tuesday each month, starting @ 7.30 pm



# *"The Cast"*

News, views and items of interest for members

March 2017

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## President's Comment

Well, here we are in March and it feels like only yesterday I was espousing the joys of a new season, and we have less than 2 months left in this one. February has finally delivered some of the lovely summer weather we've been waiting for. The trout have been going mad feeding on cicadas and continue to do so; a cicada splatted down near a feeding trout can produce some spectacular takes. The river is currently in ideal condition for stalking and casting to feeding fish with the mornings being most productive as the trout feed before water temperatures climb.

The Taylor River clean-up day organised for the 26<sup>th</sup> of February went very well. Despite having to compete with the Whites Bay beach day, Tuamarina Rodeo and Picton Foreshore clean-up we had a total of 16 volunteers show up on a cloudy, damp Sunday morning to assist with cleaning up the Taylor. Only 7 of these were club members so the event provided a great opportunity to promote our club and its ideals to other members of the general public.

A large variety of rubbish was collected, sorted for recycling and disposed of. Items recovered included a shopping trolley, road works signs, gumboots, jandals, plastic food packaging, glass bottles, aluminium cans, timber and road cones. In all around 100kg of waste was removed from the river. See below for the photos of the team and what they recovered.

Tight lines and I'll see you all on the 14th.

*Paul Watts*



## Editor's Comment

I have just returned from a trip away during which time I attended the funeral of a fellow angler. Growing up beside the mighty Clutha River, Ray had learned to fish for trout and salmon with spinning gear as a boy before developing his flycasting skills in order to catch the very large browns which used to feast on the evening caddis hatches of the day, before the building of the Roxburgh dam put paid to them. In more recent years he had targeted the salmon of the Canterbury rivers during breaks away from his Central Otago crib, built beside a small lake where the rises to cicadas are often something to behold, and other stays at his Lake Brunner cottage from which he ventured down to the lake in the evening as the big fish moved into the shallows to gorge on bullies. He was also a keen whitebaiter and a great exponent of 20-gauge shotgunning when feral pigeons flock to the grain and seed paddocks of the plains. Ray had just turned 68, and was apparently fit and well, when he suffered a stroke a week or so ago. This sad event gave me cause to reflect on a comment that Tony Orman has often made, along the lines of "don't put off until tomorrow the fishing you can do today".

On a lighter note, I spent some time in Kaikoura while away. A couple of fin-clipped (released) salmon were caught in the surf early last week, before I arrived, and three good salmon were caught at the end of the week, after I left. None were caught while I was there! However, I spent a wonderful couple of hours casting into the clear blue water at the mouth of the Kowhai River, with the sun on my back and a gentle NW breeze over my shoulder, watching the glint of the lure as it arced out over the small swells which eventually hissed onto the gravel beach. I've been told that, three days later, this area was alive with huge schools of baitfish and the dark clouds of kahawai shoals pursuing them. As has often been said, fishing is a great place to be.

*Tight lines folks!*

*Barrie Clark*

### Next club night!

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March – Whitehead Park Bowling Clubrooms**

**7.30p.m. Club night speaker**

Our guest speaker will be Richard Cosgrove, who is Fish & Game NZ's communications advisor for the South Island. This role involves him in dealing with national issues in a regional Fish & Game setting. He provides a full media advisory service to Fish & Game's six South Island regions, including strategic media advice, media relations, writing media releases and articles, editing newsletters and taking photos and videos for sharing widely (eg. Reel Life). It's an interesting job which provides him with access to a huge range of information about Fish and Game affairs; Richard is at the heart of Fish & Game's wider publicity efforts and has gathered together some excellent visual material to share with us.

### **Special raffle!**

**(continuing from February meeting)**

We have received two generous donations of **outstanding books to be raffled** in support of club funds. Jim Anderson has donated a new copy of his friend the late Norman Marsh's classic "Trout Stream Insects of New Zealand" while John Hayes has gifted us a copy of his own fine volume "The Artful Science of Trout Fishing". Both authors are without peer in their respective fields. The committee has decided that these will be prizes in a raffle (in addition to the usual members' raffle table) for which tickets will continue to be sold at club nights until all tickets have been taken. There are 50 tickets to be sold at \$2 per ticket; some of these sold at the February meeting. The raffle winner will choose which of these two books they will take and there will be a second draw made for the remaining book.

**Thank you to both Jim and John for their kind donations!**

### **Checking River Levels**

You can check water levels in Marlborough rivers by visiting the Marlborough District Council's web site <http://hydro.marlborough.govt.nz> (click Environment – click River Report)

### **The Goulter River flows are now live on the MDC website and FloodWatch**

Go to <http://hydro.marlborough.govt.nz/environmental> and look under Flow

or go to <http://hydro.marlborough.govt.nz/floodwatch/>

### **Coffee mornings**

The coffee mornings are popular with those free to meet in this way. All members are welcome if they can make the time. They occur twice per month at **10.00am at Mega café at MITRE 10**, with **the first on the Wednesday immediately following the club night and the next two weeks later.**

### **Tying great knots**

Practising over the winter months during the television advertisements? Don't forget to consult the user-friendly resource [www.animatedknots.com](http://www.animatedknots.com). It's fantastic.

### **Recent messages from two of our "kaumatua"**

Hi Barrie,

Most fly anglers will have been vexed by fickle winds and fluctuating river levels since the start of the 2016/17 fishing season but, looking through some old records for the month of February, I received some surprises.

For the same month during 2015, the Wairau dropped to just 5.7 cumecs but last year, 2016, the river rampaged along at a whopping 2,588 cumecs!

So, if you haven't had conditions to suit you of late, be patient. It can only get better – or worse!

Frank Cartwright (Life member)

Barrie

During my 36 year trout fishing "journey" I have found numerous "items" of "lost property" including a kayak paddle, 5-tiered compost bin, towels, various tools, items of clothing, an aluminium beer keg and even one of Jim Anderson's fly boxes.

Today, while fishing the Wairau above SH 1, I found a 2 foot radio-controlled hydroplane floating down the river towards me! At the same time, I saw a male person downstream on the opposite bank frantically waving his arms in my direction. It was too deep for either of us to cross but it was evident that he was the craft's owner. I managed to get the message to him that we should meet up further downstream.

He had recently purchased the hydroplane and had been testing it upstream from where I found it when the motor failed. His lucky day I guess!

Roger Winter (Club Patron)

23/02/17

## **Our annual photo competition!**



**Our photographic competition is on again! The three categories are Fish, Fishing & Landscapes. Hopefully you're taking your camera to the river and collecting some great images to enter and to share with fellow members. The competition closes at the end of April – the season's great photos will feature at our May club night. You can send your images to the secretary at any time. There will be some excellent prizes.**



# How to Catch Salmon – 7 Tips to get you started

by Allan Burgess



Lyndsay Bishop (left) and Allan Burgess with limit bags of salmon

How to catch salmon comes down to knowledge and persistence. No matter how knowledgeable you are in the ways of the salmon it still takes time and sustained effort to catch them.



This brace of salmon was caught at Macintoshes Rocks near the Kaiapoi River mouth in Canterbury. Persistence is the key to successful salmon fishing. You have to be there and doing the right thing at the right time. The more times you go salmon fishing the luckier you get.

Salmon angling takes one of two forms; up-river fishing, which involves a certain amount of scouting and travelling and lower river fishing, which includes the river mouth and surf! The difference between the two is best explained like this. You can either find a good hole to fish up-river, which generally takes more travel time to find and access or you can fish in the lower river and at the mouth, waiting for the salmon to come to you! The best places to fish in the lower river will also be more obvious because other salmon anglers will be fishing there.

Salmon run the river when the flow rate best suits them. They need the flow to be high enough so they won't find themselves stranded. When the river is low they will tend to congregate in the surf off the river mouth waiting for a fresh before running the river. Once in the river they will in general swim up-stream from one deep part of the river to the next. As the river drops they may hold up in deeper holes waiting for the flow to increase. They will move quickly across thin water where their backs are out of the water and rest in deeper holes.

So the name of the game when up-river salmon fishing is to fish the holes where the fish are resting. This means recognizing likely holding water, and also necessitates a good deal of travelling. When the river floods everything can change. Following a flood, that good salmon hole, which until recently had been so productive, may now be by-passed altogether by the river's main channel, leaving it high and dry. Spotting the best places to fish for salmon up-river also requires more knowledge and experience.



Salmon anglers straddle the main flow fishing from their anchored jet boats on the lower Waitaki River. The lower river is like a lake with a river flowing through it. Here jet boaters have a considerable advantage. This stretch would be unfishable otherwise!

A jet-boat is an obvious advantage for up-river salmon fishing but is less of an advantage near the mouth. The Waitaki River is something of an exception as the huge wide flows in the lower river often make it impossible to gain access to the main channel. A jet-boat is a big advantage for gaining access where the main channel passes across the lagoon – a bit like a river flowing through a lake! You will often see a line of jet-boats anchored along the main flow in the lower Waitaki River. In these big flows salmon can easily travel in through the mouth and head upstream without shore-based anglers getting a shot at them.

Having a jet boat, knowing where to look up-river, and finding good holding water, then fishing at first light, will be way more productive.



The author with another salmon from the Waimakariri River. In those days I would travel far and wide in search of fish.



## **Occasional Anglers and the Hardcore**

Salmon anglers fall into one of two groups. The first group is composed of the occasional angler. He or she might catch the odd salmon, perhaps no more than one or two each year. Some years they will take none, despite many fruitless hours on the water. Frustratingly, they may go several years without taking a fish! For salmon are, as we all know, hard to catch.

Our second, smaller, group is composed of experienced and successful salmon anglers, some of whom will go on to catch several dozen, or even more, fish in a good season. Just as importantly they will still catch their share of salmon even in a poor season. But, they work at it!

I have often heard even experienced anglers say things like, "I've been out fourteen times this season and haven't had a salmon yet!" Or worse, "I've been out twenty five times this season, still haven't touched a fish, am sick of wasting my time, so have given up!" This sort of thing can happen at times to the best of us. It is often the first fish of the season that is the most difficult to catch. A second fish will often follow straight after the first.



The real secret to catching salmon is persistence. Sometimes it seems hopeless. Sometimes it seems everyone can catch a salmon except you. Keep at it. Eventually you'll be catching two at a time!

## **Time on the Water**

Rule number one is that you have to put the time in. Sure, if you know what you are doing it will take a lot less time to get a fish on the stones, but you are still going to have to put the time in to catch salmon. When the salmon are running you need to drop what you are doing and get down to the river. Salmon won't wait while you mow the lawn!

Being able to drop everything and spend some of that precious time casting a line mid-week, when you hear the fish are running, gives you a huge advantage in the salmon angling stakes.

Getting together to share information about when the salmon are running with a group of mates is a great idea. Another tactic is to keep in touch with the top tackle stores. Try to use your salmon angling time wisely. The more time you can afford to put into it during the peak of the salmon season the more fish you are going to catch.

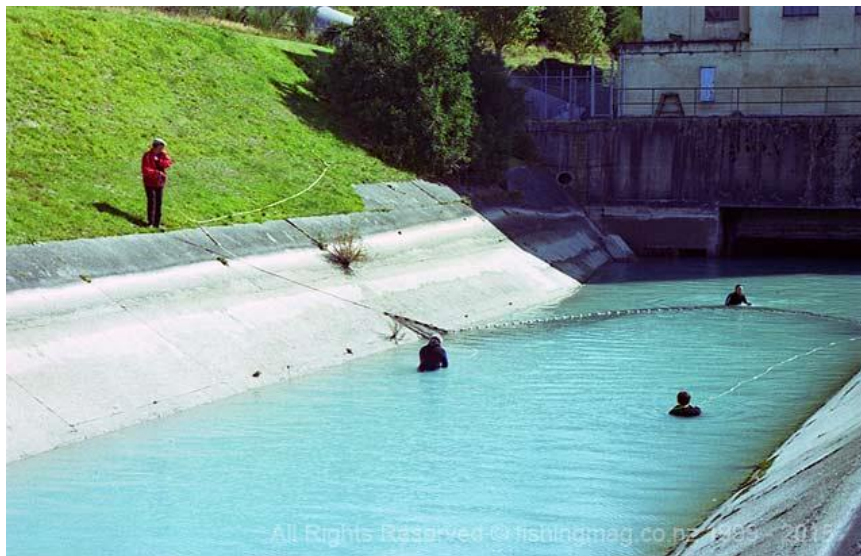
## **Winding Speed**

It is surprising how many salmon anglers adopt the least productive fishing methods without realizing it. Chief among these is winding the handle on their reels far too quickly. If you turn your handle at half the speed of the bloke next to you, you are more likely to be on the right track.

The salmon will be down on the bottom. I mean right on the bottom. Sure you'll find the odd fish jumping out of the water. But the majority of salmon will be down hard on the bottom. The only general exception to this rule is when fishing for salmon in the surf off a river mouth. In that situation the salmon gain no advantage by hugging the bottom and fish are often taken near the surface. In the river, if you wind too quickly, your zed spinner will plane to the surface and you won't catch many fish.

### **Salmon will be close to the Bottom**

Back in May 1996 I was helping to remove salmon from the dead-end of the Highbank tailrace and transfer them back to the Rakaia River so they could continue their upstream journey. The water in the tailrace was just waist deep. Even after the salmon were herded down to one end by the net, there was still no sign of fish at the surface. Yet well over 100 big salmon were lifted out. All had been milling around on the bottom. Even when chased they stayed hard down.



If fishing in the river, cast upstream to give your zed spinner time to sink. Even when you think it will be on the bottom, wait a second before putting your reel in gear. Then wind very slowly. About two turns every five seconds is somewhere around the best speed – though obviously water speed and depth must be taken into account. As mentioned earlier, many start winding the moment the lure hits the water's surface, and then wind flat-out. You should be able to feel the lure hit bottom every now and again as you wind, depending on the flow rate. Sure, you are going to lose a bit of gear from time to time when you snag a branch or get stuck behind a big rock but if you aren't dropping a bit of gear you are most likely winding too fast.

If you can afford it, always buy your zed spinners in bulk. Get a dozen tigers or zed spinners at once. Losing the odd one seems somehow less painful if you still have plenty more in your bag and back at the car!

### **Upstream or Down River?**

You can change tactics within the same river. It is at times possible to fish the pocket of clear water in the surf even when the river is in flood. You can, of course, fish in the river when the sea is rough.

On the morning of the final day of the 2015 Rakaia Salmon Fishing Competition there was a run of salmon taken in the surf on the south side near low tide. Late in the day there was a run of salmon taken on the north side of the gut at high tide. Having a long rod to fish the surf adds another string to your salmon fishing bow. To be able to take advantage of both options you really need two fishing rods. For river work a graphite rod of around seven feet in length is best for the job. Such a rod is also ideal when salmon fishing from a boat. It pays to buy the best salmon gear you can afford because the constant casting and continual use required of salmon tackle will soon show up the short comings of lesser quality products.

## Final Thoughts

At times it seems like catching a salmon is impossible while other anglers catch their first one almost immediately. If there is just one tip I can give you when it comes to catching salmon it would be persistence. Good anglers are always optimistic. We all have blank days. Even the very best salmon anglers don't catch a salmon every time they go out. We all tend to be very good at remembering the good days when we catch a fish but quickly forget how many blank days it took to catch it. Above all be persistent. Stick at it and you will catch one. The more times you go salmon fishing during the season (between December and April), the greater the chance you will find yourself in the right place, at the right time. Good luck!

## Fishing Tips for Catching Salmon

1. Up-river salmon fishing means finding fish holding water. Generally requires more travel and reconnaissance.
2. Fishing near the mouth offers easier access, the company of other salmon anglers, regular updates about fish caught.
3. Only a wet line catches fish! No matter how expensive your fishing gear it won't catch fish unless you use it.
4. Try to fish hard during the peak of the season between January and March.
5. Salmon may be present even if you can't see them. Expect a fish on every cast.
6. The salmon are almost always near the bottom. Cast upstream and don't wind too fast!
7. This is a bonus tip: keep you hook points super sharp. Better still use chemically sharpened hooks. Often salmon will "mouth the hook" and not give a sharp tug. It can be more of a gentle increase of weight on the line, not unlike snagging the bottom! Strike if you suspect a touch from a salmon.



Problems! - Some fishing days are better than others!

## NELSON/MARLBOROUGH FISH & GAME REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2017



### 'EXHILARATING' CICADA SEASON IN FULL SWING

If you step outside on a warm February day, the cicada choir will fill the airwaves around you, in some cases drowning out normal domestic sounds like traffic or the barking of your labrador. This raucous chorus, made only by the male of the species in search of a mate during its short time above ground, is like music to the ears of the trout angler.

Cicada fishing is exhilarating, where trout can be seen abandoning their post at the bottom of a deep pool, skyrocketing towards the surface and literally smashing the fly.

The takes are spectacular, splashy and loud. Often the angler will have to do nothing in return to set the hook; mutterings of "God save the Queen" are generally not required. Trout love them, and why shouldn't they? After all, there must be the equivalent of a hundred or more mayfly nymphs to a single chorus cicada, which fills up the palm of your hand and has the wingspan to boot.

The ripple they make on the water when haphazardly blown on the surface is like a moth to the flame for trout, who are wise to take advantage of the terrestrial bonanza which occurs this time of year in order to pack on condition for the winter ahead. Even wary selective trout, will lose their cautious ways and move metres for your cicada pattern.

Some anglers may not know that there are many different species of cicada of all different sizes, so that anglers, when selecting suitable imitations, should have an array of sizes in the fly box. Back-country rivers are famed for their cicada fishing. However lowland rivers are also excellent locations to ply your trade. The Wairau for example, willow-lined in many places, has excellent cicada fishing; just find a suitable willow lined run and slap down a suitable imitation. Don't be too worried about delicate presentation.

When a cicada hits the water in the wild, it does so with speed and gusto, and this action in itself will draw in a trout from distance. So you should reflect this in your presentation. Subtlety and accuracy are hardly paramount here, and watch that fish streak to your fly and wolf it down.

### Willow grubs a no show?



Whether it's a seasonal anomaly, or the effect of the giant willow aphid (and resulting wasp problem), it appears the willow grub is not making up a significant portion of the trout diet in many rivers this summer. Staff and concerned anglers are noticing a distinct lack of blisters (galls) on the willow leaves, which house the willow grub pupae. This is a real concern as the willow grub is an excellent food source for trout which, in the summer months, seek out the tiny pupae.

Left: Willow grubs are an important food source for trout. However, they appear to be present in low numbers this season.

'Grubbing' trout make for excellent (and at times frustrating) fishing, depending on the mood of the fish or the quality (and presentation) of your fly. Patterns are easy to tie, and it pays to have variations in colour in the yellow to green range.

The semi-translucent grubs are generally taken by the trout in the surface film, so your imitation should be light enough to remain within the film. You can do this by applying dressing to your nymph or tying/buying flies that float – foam, CDC. Somehow imparting movement into the flies is a good idea. CDC feathers work well here and will give your fly the ‘life’ that other materials cannot.

When seeking grubbing fish, the first obvious step is to fish willow-lined waters, where willow grubs will be regularly falling into the water. Foam lines can be useful indicators of where the grubs will end up along with willow bays – these provide some diversity in currents allowing the fish to reside in slacker water adjacent to faster currents where more food is found.

When it’s time to pitch your imitation to the trout, do so just a foot or so ahead of the fish, without worrying about landing the fly a metre or more ahead of the fish. Trout can get obsessively locked into willow grubs, and will often refuse any other offering no matter how small, meaning grubbing fish can be tough to catch. Patience is the key here, and you need to know that many casts may be required before a trout, having snubbed your previous two dozen casts, will suddenly grab your next one.

## **SALMON HEADS NEEDED FOR IMPORTANT RESEARCH**

Salmon heads are required for a nationwide study looking into genetic variations in the wild salmon population between different regions and catchments.

If you’ve enjoyed some salmon action on the Wairau or Clarence, please keep the head and record sex, fork length and weight, as well as the river in which it was caught.

Staff can arrange to pick up the frozen heads to make it easier, or you can drop them in to either the Nelson or Blenheim office.

## **CREASY'S COLUMN - BY HUGH CREASY**



The grass is green. I suppose that’s the way grass is supposed to be. But the tomatoes are green as well. And the grapes are still sour when they should be ready for the table. And the walnuts are still attached to the tree, unripened. It’s been a hard summer. When the rivers ran low, gales blew foam from the riffles and runs and the hardy souls who fished the valley’s rivers cursed their tangled lines and misdirected casts.

But the fish are still there, holding deep in the pools, feasting in the evening calm when the beetles fly and the mayflies rise. You can hear them – the slap of tail on water when they leap or the slurp of the take when insects are sucked from the surface.

Midges rise from backwaters, clouds of them, and they stick to the sweat on exposed skin. On the river’s surface they form a scum, a protein soup sieved from the water by ducks, geese and trout. There’s no fly that imitates them, but fish can be tempted by a larger fly, a change of diet fat with false promise.

Canada geese come to the water, skinny youngsters following their parents. They are fledged but lack the powerful muscles that will sustain them through winter storms. To gain condition they must feed, and rich pastures of clover and rye are too tempting. Farmers curse them. Hunters, if they want a good table bird, will wait until autumn’s frosts are chilling the ground. By then, the birds will have developed heavy, fat-covered breasts, and their flavoursome meat, slow-roasted, will fall from the bone.

Mallard ducks are the same. It is tempting to poach an early bird or two, but those shot later in the season are often in much better condition than birds shot over crops during summer. The same goes for trout. They must reach the peak of condition when it is time to breed. Their flesh will become a richer hue and the fat under their skin will melt as you cook them, adding to the flavour. It may take only a few weeks for this condition to be lost when they are fighting over the redds. Jack fish, especially, become spent and dark. Not worth the effort of catching them.

Now though, they feed voraciously, and will until they leave the lower river and swim to the redds, sides bulging with sperm, kype-jawed and angry with overflowing testosterone. The hens have an urgency about them. They will be heavy with roe in a month or two, and even now they spill the occasional egg from their vents. These small orange offerings are snapped up by other fish and eels and crayfish. Anglers imitate them on small hooks and take maiden fish, juvenile thieves that follow the hens to the redds and feast on an egg surplus.

If you catch and kill a gravid hen the roe can be eaten like caviar or, if still immature, the whole roe can be smoked in a hot smoker, lightly dusted with salt, sliced and served on water crackers, followed by a generous sip of Irish whisky. Some marriages really are made in heaven, and this one is blessed by St Patrick. Of course, a good riesling is the match for smoked trout, dry is best, but even a semi-sweet will bring out the best in a good fish.

We go to the river then, with appetites wetted and hearts filled with expectation. There is colour in the water, and a bleary sun shines with fitful glare. Weedy strings of algae line the shallows, so fast water is all that is fishable. Autumn frosts and cold rains will clear the weed but they may be a month away yet. There's a shadow, dark against the grey depths of fast water. It swings from side to side, then darts upstream and drifts slowly back. A fish, then, and not a knot of weed drifting in the current. There is no insect movement to gain a clue of its diet. On goes a small nymph, nondescript, but dark with peacock herl. It claims no imitation but a touch of red in the tail may draw a response. A cast and the nymph is ignored. Another draws no response. This could be a long process.

At home the green grass will be growing, the mower awaits and a wet summer is drawing to a close.

*(Photo courtesy Dave Shaw)*

