

Fishing the northern rivers

By Scott Marston

I was pleasantly surprised when our intrepid Secretary and newsletter editor asked me for a contribution towards 'Tight-Lines' that did not involve dollars and cents or politics!

Being of 'Northern' stock I have fished pretty extensively in all of the rivers that surround Launceston. The first thing that I must say is that when I was a youngster I found the fishing pretty easy. Dad would sit my brother and myself down at likely spots with a grasshopper or worm on the end of the hook and we used to do very well. Particularly when there was a rise in the North Esk that wound its way around where we used to live catching three or four fish in an hour or so was commonplace. These days my brother and I have firmly caught the fly-fishing bug and as a direct consequence have very rarely even frightened a fish in the Northern Rivers since!

Now as far as writing this article is concerned I feel very comfortable as I do far more fishing and are far more successful in my mind than I ever am on the water. Due to this fact this article is not meant to be a 'how-it-is-done' type and to be honest as much as I adore my passion of fly-fishing it is not replicated in fish on the bank so it would be foolish of me to even attempt to do so.

The North Esk has a sea-run trout fishery in its lower reaches and every year there are pictures in the Examiner of double-figure trout being caught at the picnic grounds at St Leonards. I do not know very much about this fishery but early in the season the number of anglers that frequent these areas suggest that the fishing is pretty good.

The fishing in the upper reaches is great all season round. If there has been enough rain for the river to break its banks the fish come out to play. There is a series of particularly good spots near the Burns Creek turn-off, as well as the Blessington ball-room (these spots are on the road that leads to Ben Lomond). With a worm these fish are suicidal, however with a fly they are 'harder than a cat's head'.

David Scholes swears by a Wigram's Robin, but I just swear!

In the summer there are always fish rising and polaroiding is an ever-present option. Long leaders, small fly's and plenty of patience are required here. Most fish are up to 1LB but some are much bigger. Anywhere from the Blessington ballroom is pretty accessible. Some stretches of the river suffer from willow choking but there are several stretches that 'farmer-brown' has really done wonderfully well with his irradiation program.

The Meander River runs into the South Esk at Hadspen.

About 1KM past the South Esk bridge at Hadspen there is a turn off to the right that leads to a bridge that crosses the Meander. If you park here you can walk as far as your legs can carry you. The fish tend to be of better quality than the North Esk. Once again the flood fishing can be fast and furious and the summer time rises are very reliable.

The Nile River has the clearest water that I have ever seen. It teems with trout. It is a great place to hone your polaroiding skills as the fish really stand out on its gravelly bottom. It does suffer from 'gorse' along its banks but it is one of the most visually magnificent waters that I have fished. It is worth the drive up there just to see how clear water can be.

There has been so much written about the Macquarie that I really could not possibly add to it. If you are travelling from Launceston and you pass through Cressy and over Brumby's creek there is a road that you turn left onto. About 3 km's along this road there is a bridge that crosses the Macquarie. I have had success just up stream from the bridge.

The Lake River runs into the Macquarie about 1 km's up stream from here. I have also caught trout in the main irrigation channel that runs parallel to the Lake River. When I met with David Scholes one day (yes I am capable of name dropping the best of them) he told me that he used a red spinner with an elongated orange tail in the morning (he used dyed paint brush fibres) and a small red tag in the

afternoon. I have followed this advice with great success (this for me is a couple of takes and a fistful of refusals!).

So there you have it. I have not even scratched the surface of the Northern Rivers. The Liffy, South Esk, and Brumby's creek are the most notable exclusions from my short piece.

All I can say is that within 30 minutes of Launceston there are many fine fishing locations and with the re-opening of Brushy Lagoon and the opening of Four Springs has added another dimensions to the Northern fishery. In fact those down South who have been bitten by the Northern fishery bug could live up there just so that after work they could wind-down on a world-class trout stream.

So in summing up if you enjoy the challenge of clear water stream fishing to our piscatorial foe a drive up North will do your soul no end of good.

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