

Last chance for a trout

WST/STH GIPPSLAND

Steve Haughton

steve@habitatcreations.com.au



This will be no ordinary month as we may or may not be in lockdown, and how that looks for recreational fishing is unknown.

As of late March 2020, Southern Rural Water have closed off access to the boat ramps and recreational areas of Blue Rock Lake. For updates on when the restrictions will be lifted, follow SRW on social media or on their website.

May is the last full month of stream trout fishing before the trout season comes to an end in early June. The 2020 trout and salmonid closed season on rivers and streams is from 12:01am on Tuesday 9 June until 11:59pm on Friday 4 September. This is a good chance to remind anglers that if you are fortunate to be out and about to catch and release stream trout, particularly this time of the year, as the streams and rivers are not stocked with trout and rely solely on natural spawning. A lockdown and some hopeful winter rain may provide local trout a reprieve from angling pressure and a

good spawning season ahead.

This region received above average rainfall but has been followed by a dry autumn, so a late autumn break is wishful thinking. The migration run is usually triggered by the first decent rainfall topping up the catchments and a signal for trout to make their journey upstream.

It is likely as the month ends, stream trout will become more difficult to entice with lures as their focus shifts from feeding to making the spawning run. Many catches late in the season tend to be trout aggressively protecting their spawn territory rather than the need for a feed. Well-presented live baits and natural fly patterns or nymphs will out-fish your traditional spinner blade or hardbody lures. As an angler that appreciates trout not just for the sport of catching, stumbling across a spawning ground is an exciting spectacle.

There are other options for stream fishing too and if you are local to some nearby streams, then eel and blackfish are good targets and in plentiful numbers throughout the streams of West and South Gippsland. These target

species provide a lot of fun for anglers of all ages using light gear, similarly to what you would use trout fishing.

Blackfish are an exciting winter target species in streams and can be caught using the same techniques for targeting eel. Target slow moving or still ponds and use a rig that presents the bait at the bottom of the streambed. Eel and blackfish live in in-stream structure, like fallen timber, large rocks and bank cutouts, therefore ensure your bait is presented within their feed zone.

Eels in these streams commonly grow to up to 70cm. Blackfish vary in greatly size, and there are some big specimens to be found. Both species are best targeted late afternoon into the evening. Best bait by far for both species is the trusty garden worm.

Blue Rock Lake turns on the trout action in May with lots of surface activity. Currently the lake is sitting at or near 100% but, as mentioned above, it will likely only receive local fishing pressure from the shoreline over the coming months if we are in lockdown.

Stream trout may start shutting up shop as they shift their attention from feeding



Stanley Haughton managed some bass action from the shoreline at Blue Rock Lake. His first fish was easily a keeper at 35cm+, but someone forgot to pack a landing net! Luckily, he landed this one for a photo before releasing.

to spawning, but the lake fish are still on the prowl. Trolling is the preferred late autumn/winter technique for trout so, if fishing from the shoreline, the next best thing will be casting and slowly retrieving lures.

Fly fishing is also a great way to get amongst the

lake trout action and very achievable from the lake's shoreline.

Bass are still active this time of the year and are generally found schooling out in the lake on the points and can be targeted from the bank by casting out baits, such as worms. If boating

and kayaking is allowed, then sound up schools and use ice jigs or soft plastics to entice action.

Feel free to send me a report or photo particularly if you managed to get out during these challenging times. Please email me any questions. Happy fishing!

Bounties before the ban

EILDON

Peter Burtchell

Craig Parker from Eildon Bait and Tackle caught the last of the big metre-plus surface Murray cod before our fishery shut down amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Bob 'The Legend' with another Murray cod he caught around lunchtime trolling the west side of the Lake from Jerusalem Creek.

Craig hooked up the green demon within four minutes of beginning his trolling session in the late afternoon at the dam wall.

During March, the Goulburn River at Eildon was producing well with 1-1.5kg brown and rainbow trout being landed. The fish preferred spinnerbaits in black, red and green

colours. The lakes and other surrounding rivers also produced well as the trout began to gain weight prior to their upcoming spawning migrations.

Bob and two friends from Papanui Houseboat spent several days fishing mid week out of the Jerusalem Creek Arm and ended up

measures will reduce the virus transmissions. By remaining at home we will help to eliminate accidents associated with sports and travel, thus reducing the burden on what appears will be overrun emergency departments and hospitals. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those combating this pandemic and to all that will be affected by these unprecedented events.

Let us all live in hope that we will learn from this crisis so that our nation and others can be better prepared in coping with both pandemics and economic crises in the future.

We wait for the day when the bans are lifted and the rested fish can once again thrill us with their aggressive



Craig Parker and the last of Lake Eildon's metre-plus cod landed before the non essential travel ban.

feeding and fighting action. • Jerusalem Creek Marina & Holiday Park is a friendly, family-orientated caravan park, and makes the perfect home away from home. While

there you can opt to hire one of their Boatel floating apartments, hire a boat or book a fishing guide at competitive prices. For more information on all of these services and

other attractions in the area, visit jerusalemcreek.com.au, or give them a call on (03) 5774 2585 or email info@jerusalemcreek.com.au.



This is just one of 12 cod caught over a mid-week mates' fishing trip.



The boys from Houseboat Papanui had a productive time on the water.