



VICTORIA Inc. Regional Group VICNEWS

Number 139 February 2025

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AUSTRALIA NEW GUINEA FISHES ASSOCIATION INC.

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Our 7th February guest presenter is Jade Tramontana with “Caring for Macquarie Perch at Deakin University, Warrnambool”



Jade Tramontana is an aquaculture technician at Deakin University and also the primary technician caring for the Macquarie Perch. She studied at Deakin University's Warrnambool campus, where she earned a Bachelor of Fisheries and Aquaculture, followed by a Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) where she focused on genetic expression during Smoltification of Atlantic Salmon exposed to different photoperiod regimes.

She began volunteering at the Deakin Aquaculture Futures Facility (DAFF) in 2016 and then was offered a position in 2019. She has

Top and bottom left: Macquarie Perch. Above: Jade Tremontana.

worked with Atlantic salmon, Murray cod and most recently the Macquarie Perch. The Macquarie Perch trials at Deakin are part of a larger project called Cracking the code on Macquarie Perch which is a collaborative project that brings together fisheries experts from across Australia and abroad to work jointly on re-establishing wild populations of the endangered native Macquarie Perch by closing the loop on captive breeding and removing the reliance on catching wild broodstock annually.

Our next Field Trip is: Joint ANGFA / NFA Murray River field trip Friday 7th to Monday 10th March 2025



When: March 7th -10th 2025

Where: Murray River downstream of Yarrawonga on the Victorian side of the river at Bourkes Beach #1 (there are three beaches total). If you put these coordinates into Google Maps <http://maps.google.com.au/> or Google Earth it will show you the final destination -35.976863 145.835180. See map attached to this post.

Fishes: this region provides excellent opportunities for collecting smaller and larger native fishes. Many smaller native fishes are present including: Murray Rainbowfish, Unspeckled Hardyhead, Smelt, various Carp Gudgeons (4 types), Flathead Gudgeon, plus we usually see lots of small cod and a very occasional River Blackfish. There are lots of exotic fishes like Carp, Goldfish, Weatherloach and Gambusia too. The folks from NFA are usually happy to take some folks out on the boat for cod fishing as well as other large natives like golden perch. Note you will need a NSW fishing license.

Accommodation: Camping is permitted at Bourkes Beach #1 and most other places in the forest. Other options include caravan parks, hotels, etc in Yarrawonga.

Directions: Heading east on the Murray-Valley Highway there is a "way side stop" on the left shortly after the big bend in the road. At the back of that rest stop is the start of Bourkes Bend Track, follow that through the forest (see maps) until you see the turn off for Bourkes Beach #1. As long as conditions are fairly dry then any vehicle can make it to the beach.

For more information: contact Greg Martin on 0407 094 313 or gregmartinfishman@gmail.com.



You must be a current financial member of ANGFA Victoria Inc. to attend an ANGFA Victoria Inc. field trip.

It is a requirement of ANGFA Victoria Inc. that any persons under the age of 18 who wish to attend an ANGFA Victoria Inc. field trip must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

ANGFA Victoria Inc. operates its field trips within the rules of our General Research Permit (RP1559) being Catch-Photograph-Release. All non-noxious fishes caught shall be returned to the water immediately after being photographed.

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President's Report February 2025



Welcome to VICNews 139! Happy new year to everyone, and I hope your holidays have been refreshing and enjoyable. Our ANGFA Vic committee has had its first committee meeting and we are preparing for a busy and rewarding year ahead!

At our December club meeting, Glenn Briggs gave a superb mini presentation on Cairns Rainbowfish, an often overlooked species. Following that, I gave a presentation on our four day East Gippsland field trip to Cape Conran and surrounds. Thanks again to David DeAngelis for such a great opportunity to see some not-often-visited sites in East Gippsland - an area he is very familiar with from the many field surveys he has conducted.

On 23rd January, we took up Victorian Fisheries' Dylan White invitation to visit the Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery for our first field trip of 2025. It was a most enjoyable day with a guided

tour of the facility and then we checked out a couple of rivers on the way home. Read all about it in our field trip report starting on page 4.

Our next field trip is the Murray River over the Labour day weekend. See promo on page 2 and photos below for inspiration to attend.

As always, a big thank you to the ANGFA members that continue to attend our field trips - it is always great to get out into the natural world and field tripping is so much fun!

Enjoy this edition and we'll see you at on Friday 7th February at our first club meeting of the year. As usual it will be a relaxed evening of learning, of fun and with plenty of chat time and catching up with fellow fishos!

Greg Martin



Some photos taken on field trips to Burkes Beach on the Murray River over the last 10 years. Lots to see. Lots to do. And always a great time had. Photos: Greg Martin

Field Trip Files: Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery

23rd January 2025



Above: Victorian Fisheries Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery. Below right: Vic Fisheries' Dylan White. Photos: Greg Martin

Our October 2024 guest presenter Victorian Fisheries' Dylan White, spoke to us about the enormously ambitious and important job Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery has with what started as their "10 Species in 10 Years" (saving 10 species from extinction in ten years) conservation plan, but has become well over 30 species, with more species being added to the list every month.

The \$2.7 Million Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery, built with funding provided by the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA), Victorian Environmental Water Holder and the Albanese Labor Government, is part of the Victorian Government's work to combat the decline of Victoria's native plants and animals through the landmark 20-year Biodiversity plan, and the VFA operates the hatchery alongside its existing fingerling production facilities at Snobs Creek,

Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery, part of the Fisheries Victoria's long-operating (over 74 years) trout, Murray Cod and Macquarie Perch fingerling hatchery, sits beside pristine Snobs Creek which originates near Mount Bullfight Nature Conservation Reserve, north of Lake Mountain. Below the Snobs Creek hatchery complex, Snobs Creek joins the Goulburn River.

Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery is equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The facility has equipment for monitoring and controlling water and air temperature, light intensity and photoperiod, flow patterns, and automated feeding equipment. This helps give the flexibility and precision required to breed a wide range of species from small-bodied native fish to mussels and even freshwater crayfish. Some of the species they are currently working on: McDowall's Galaxias (*Galaxias mcdowalli*), Moroka Galaxias (*Galaxias* sp. nov. 'Moroka'), Flathead Galaxias (*Galaxias rostratus*), Glenelg Freshwater Mussels (*Hyridella glenelgensis*), Murray Spiny Freshwater Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*), South-Gippsland Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus neodiversus*), Freshwater Blackfish species (*Gadopsis* spp.), Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon (*Mogurnda adspersa*).

So, inspired by Dylan's presentation, we had to come up and have a look!

For our first ANGFA Vic field trip of the year, on Thursday 23rd January, we headed across the Great Dividing Range to Snobs Creek Conservation Hatchery. Dylan White had offered ANGFA



Vic a guided tour of the facility, and organised the field trip for a weekday so that we Dylan, Sam Fawke and Mark Adams would have the time to take us round *and* be able to get the required (never-ending I assume) work done on the day. Weekends were not a possibility as staffing is reduced to the minimum required to complete the husbandry tasks only.

Mid-morning, due to the almost two-hour commute from Melbourne, a nice sized group of ANGFA Vic members met up in the carpark adjacent to the Conservation Hatchery. Chris Lamin, having already travelled several hours from Briagolong to deliver fish to a buyer, decided that another couple of hours "would be nothing", so she joined us as well. Furthermore, Michael Jones (MJ to his friends), a Canberra-based, keen ANGFA field tripper and ANGFA Convention attendee, joined us as a welcomed guest of ANGFA Victoria. Several of us had taken the day off to attend this field trip and there was much excitement as everyone caught up on the last couple of months.



Within a few minutes a very welcoming and chatty Dylan White and Mark Adams came down from the office precinct and, once our final attendee had arrived, we began the tour.

Before you even enter the Conservation Hatchery building, one cannot fail to be impressed by the expensive-looking equipment and lots of beautifully installed pipework that sits outside the building. To your right as you walk up to the front door is a bank of water chillers. To provide fully temperature-controlled water to the facility, effective chillers are required, and interestingly these chillers are fitted with hot

air deflection shields to direct waste heat up and away from the water storage tanks that sit adjacent to the chillers.

These water storage tanks, complete with Cyclone Vortex particle separation units and other filtration apparatus, are accessed by impressive galvanised iron steps and gantries. It was not clear (or I missed it) as to whether these tanks store ambient temperature water prior to being used in the facility, whether they store pre-chilled water or, whether they are part of a huge recirculating water system of chilled water.



Top: Dylan explains how important the chillers are to this facility. Above: Large capacity water storage for the building. Photos: Greg Martin



Walking through the unassuming front door you enter the first room. Straight ahead is Brett Ingram's lab/office, complete with microscopes. Brett is a senior scientist with Victorian Fisheries and has extensive experience with many fish species, including Striped Catfish in

Vietnam and two species of Mahseer in Malaysia.

To the left of Brett's lab is a large pin board with information sheets depicting many of the species they are working with.



Top: Dylan showing us the species sheets and describing how the number of species needing urgent help has vastly increased since the opening of the facility. Above: Chris catching up with Brett Ingram. The two of them have shared a lot of important information about breeding endangered fish species recently. Photos: Greg Martin



Turn right and the next door to the left is a temperature controlled live food room. Once again, this room showcases much state-of -the-art equipment for raising Brine Shrimp on the left of the room, and planktonic

cultures on the right. There was interest from our attendees in this room as everyone is interested in the way live food is cultured.



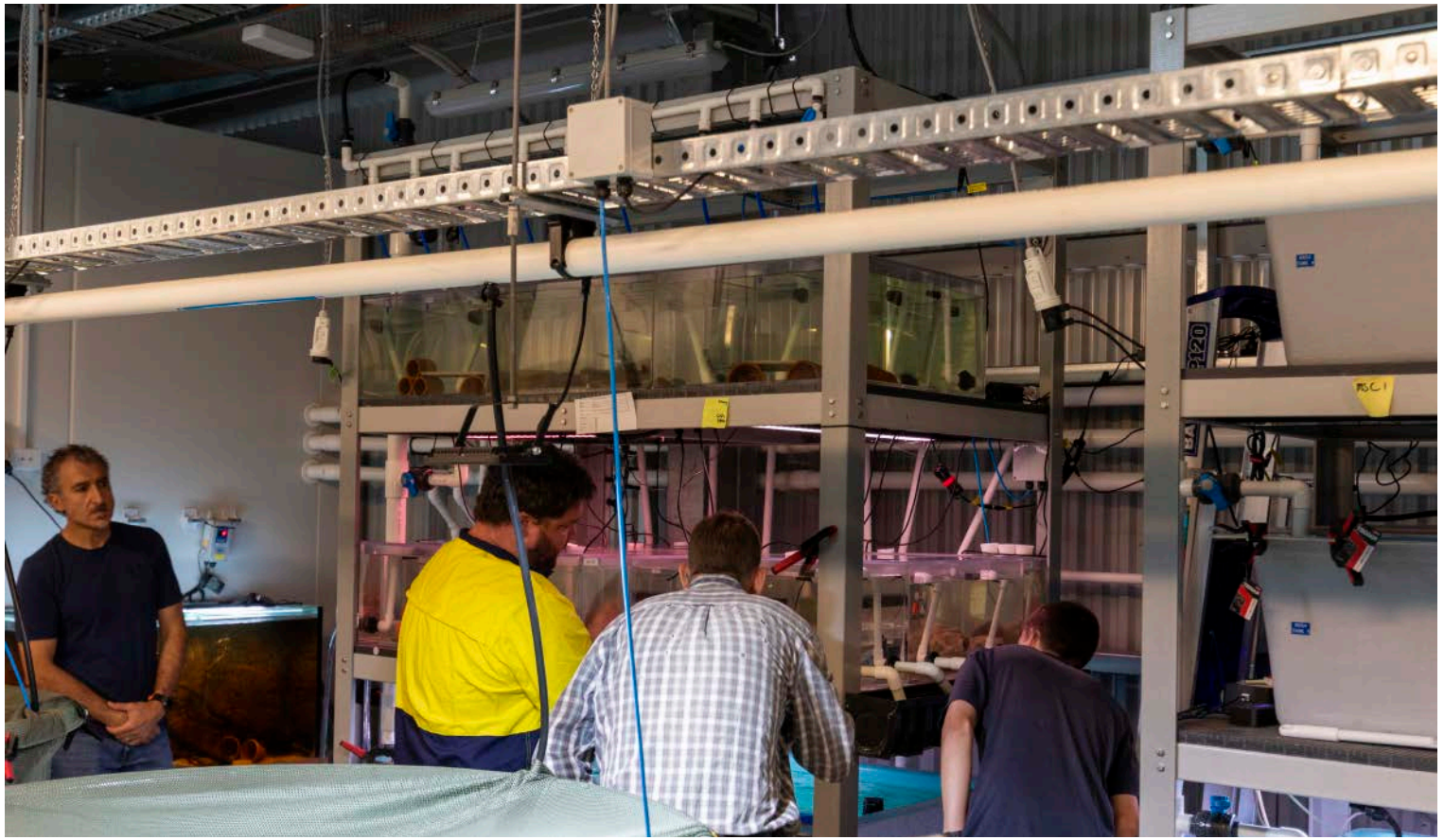
Top: Dylan showing us the live food room. Above left: Brine Shrimp hatchery. Above right: Plankton raising apparatus. Photos: Greg Martin



Top and above: Some of the 1,000 litre tubs. Photos: Greg Martin.



Top: a mature female Murray River Spiny Cray held in this facility for breeding purposes. Above: the many moults a spiny cray sheds during the early part of their life. Photos: Greg Martin.



Straight ahead is the entrance to the business end of the facility. Up a couple of steps and you are in the main facility. On the left are six 1,000 lt tubs, plumbed into filtration 'plants', housing various fish and crayfish 'under production'. On the right, are three 1,000 litre tubs. Everything here on the floor looks like it is designed for easy water changes, easy access, and I imagine the day-to-day tasks would be a pleasure to perform.

Behind the right-hand three 1,000 lt tubs is a 3 high rack of aquariums, and several shallow flat tubs, plumbed in recirculating systems. Here are housed some Galaxias and crayfish. Interestingly, the walls of this part of the facility are NOT insulated! I asked Dylan what they do to combat the heat that must radiate from these walls in a hot weather spell, and he replied, "the chillers work harder!"

Beyond this collection of high-tech tubs, tanks and trays are four temperature-controlled insulated rooms (Coolrooms). Each room

contains two racks of aquariums in a recirculating aquarium system. These house the more temperature sensitive species of Galaxias and Blackfish and Mussels. I wasn't allowed to use a flash in these rooms as the fish can be frightened by the sudden bright light.



Top: one of the multi aquarium RAS racks. Middle and lower right: Multi aquarium racks inside one of the controlled atmosphere rooms. Photos: Greg Martin



Left to right: John Coates, Peter Gauci, Brett Ingram, Norm El Crab, Peter Richmond, Dylan White, Mark Adams, Phil Littlejohn, Gybe Forster, Michael Jones, Bill Buhagiar, Chris Lamin and Sam Fawke. Henry Albert missed the shot as he had to get something from his vehicle. Photo: Greg Martin

During this part of the tour someone called my name and said that I was wanted outside. I made my way through the back door and was greeted by two Fisheries officers. Initially, being unfamiliar with their uniform, I thought they might be the Police, but they quickly introduced themselves and said they were Victorian Fisheries officers and had some questions for me. Was I the man in charge? I replied, "Yes, I organised the event". I was racking my brains trying to think of what I may have done wrong...? They asked me if we were conducting any fish surveys today and I replied, "Yes, two". I told them that we were going to have a look at the Rubicon River at Kendalls Campground on Rubicon Road, and then we were going to visit the Acheron River at Granton Streamside Reserve on the Marysville Road. They asked how we conducted our surveys? I replied, "With dip nets and, if the conditions are right, we hope to use a seine net as well". They asked what we do with the fish we find, and I replied, "We catch, photograph and then release them, as per the stipulations of our permit". They asked what we expected to find in these two rivers? I replied, "Most likely trout, but we are hoping to see some Riffle Galaxias and Murray Spiny crayfish!". Then the conversation turned to talking about Riffle Galaxias and we chatted about where we'd seen them with a mention of King Parrot creek behind the Flowerdale Hotel. They seemed pleased to hear that there was good diversity in that location. Lastly, I asked

them, "Why, in 2025, are people still allowed to catch and consume Murray Spiny Crayfish??" They agreed that there were (still) problematic fishing practices perpetrated by some folks, but that most of the generational cray fisherman along the Murray River were (they think) quite responsible. The real issue they said, were day trippers that come up from the city and fish indiscriminately and unsustainably – just wanting a big feed of crays. We both agreed that Facebook and other social media platforms probably don't help with people posting photos of huge crays (*E. kershawi* for example) and boasting about teaching their son how to catch a big feed!

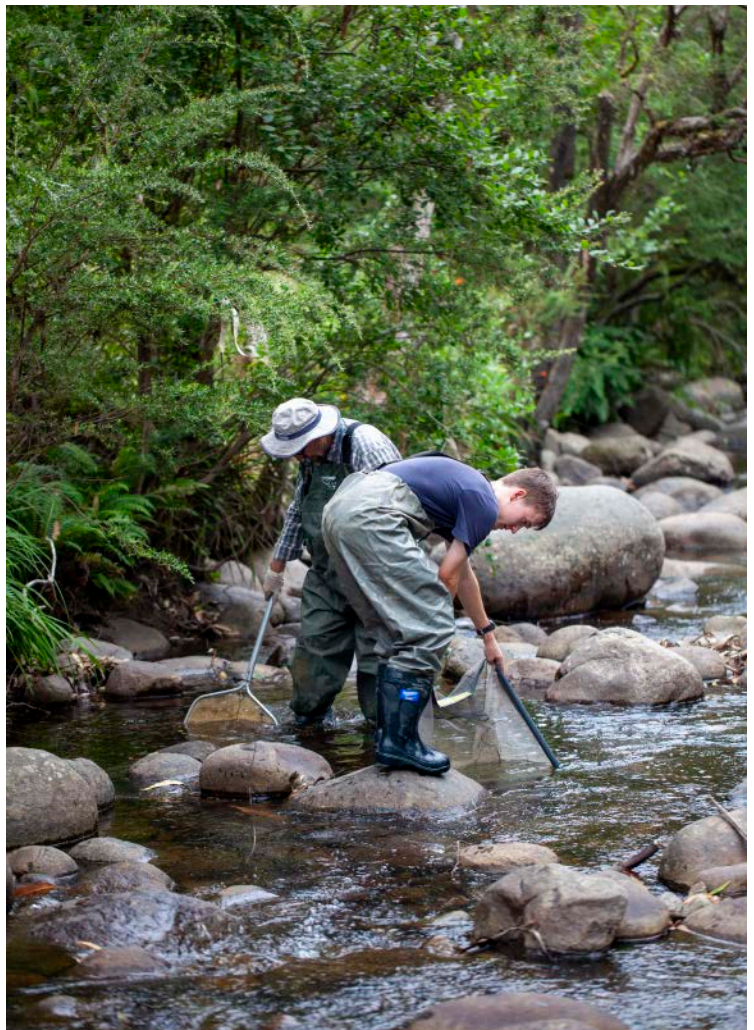
I finished my conversation with the two Fisheries officers with them asking me if we could please include specific times as to where we would be, on our notifications of intention to conduct a survey in the future. This would help them a lot, as they would then know that if anyone were to ring in suspected "suspicious activity", they would first be able to rule out any pre-planned surveying before having to send out a vehicle to check it out. Good to know!

Our tour of the Conservation Hatchery now finished, we posed for the obligatory group photo, thanked Dylan, Sam, Mark and Brett and left to meet up for lunch at Thornton.



After a nice lunch and lunchtime chat, we headed off to the Rubicon River with me leading the convoy the wrong way! Norm alerted us. We turned around. I apologised and reset the GPS.

Kendalls campground is located on the Rubicon River up the Rubicon Road a little way and upstream of what looks (on Google Maps) to be a trout farm. The river at the campground is composed of boulders, some of them huge, which makes surveying tricky. However, Henry and Phil still managed to find juvenile Murray Spiny Crays and Riffle Galaxias! We photographed the catch and carefully released them back into the river, and headed to our next location.



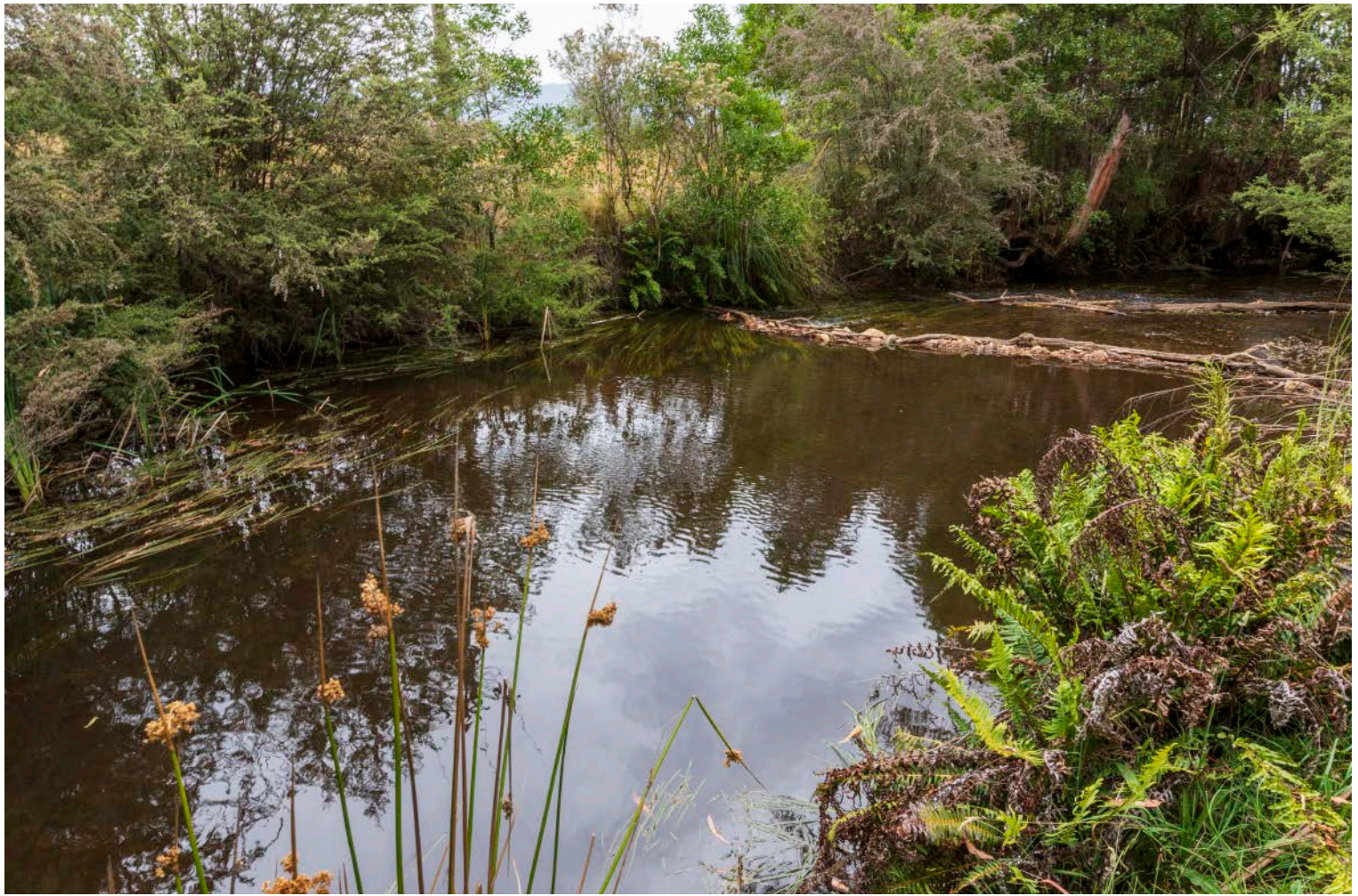
Top: The beautiful Rubicon River at Kendalls Campground. Lower left: Pete, Henry and Norm retrieving Riffle Galaxias from the net. Lower right: Phil and Henry dip netting amongst the boulders. Photos: Greg Martin



Clockwise from top left: Peter Gauci and Bill Buhagiar, Michael Jones, Phil Littlejohn, Gybe Forster, Norm El Crab, Henry Albert and Pete Richmond. Photos: Greg Martin



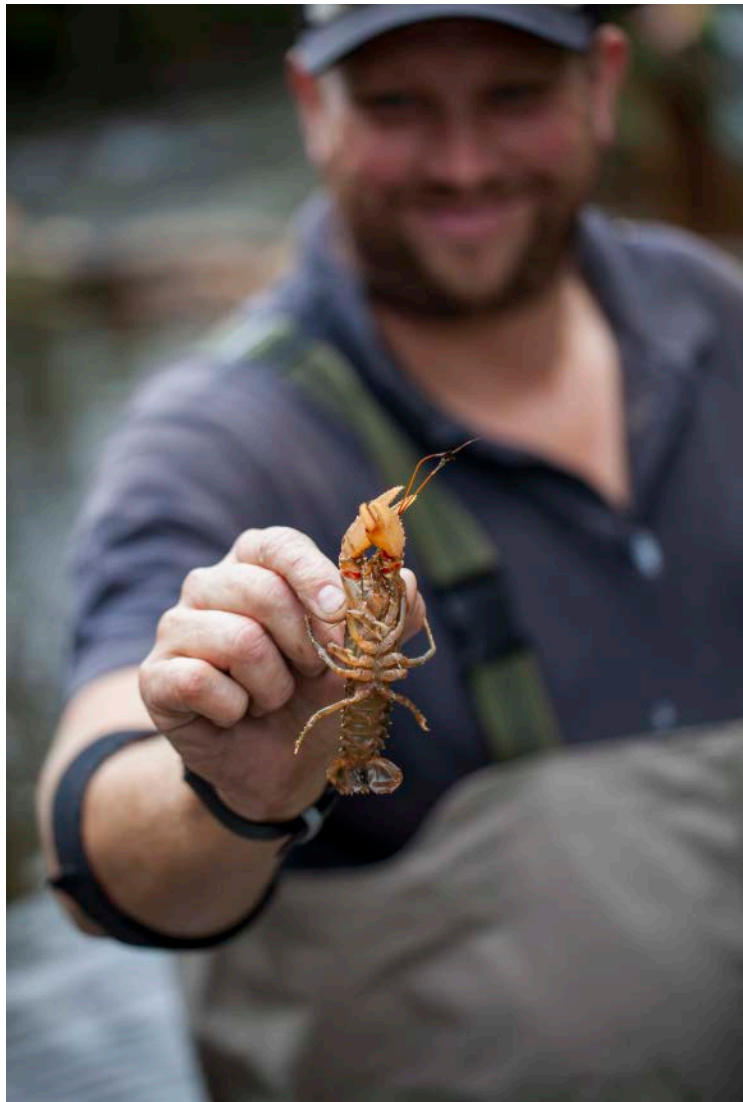
Top: Henry taking a photo of a juvenile spiny cray in the field tank. Photo: Greg Martin Middle: Riffle Galaxias. Photo: Henry Albert. Lower left: Riffle Galaxias in the net. Lower right: Dragonfly larvae. Photos: Greg Martin



Top: The Acheron River: Above: Phil and Henry dragging a seine net. Photos: Greg Martin



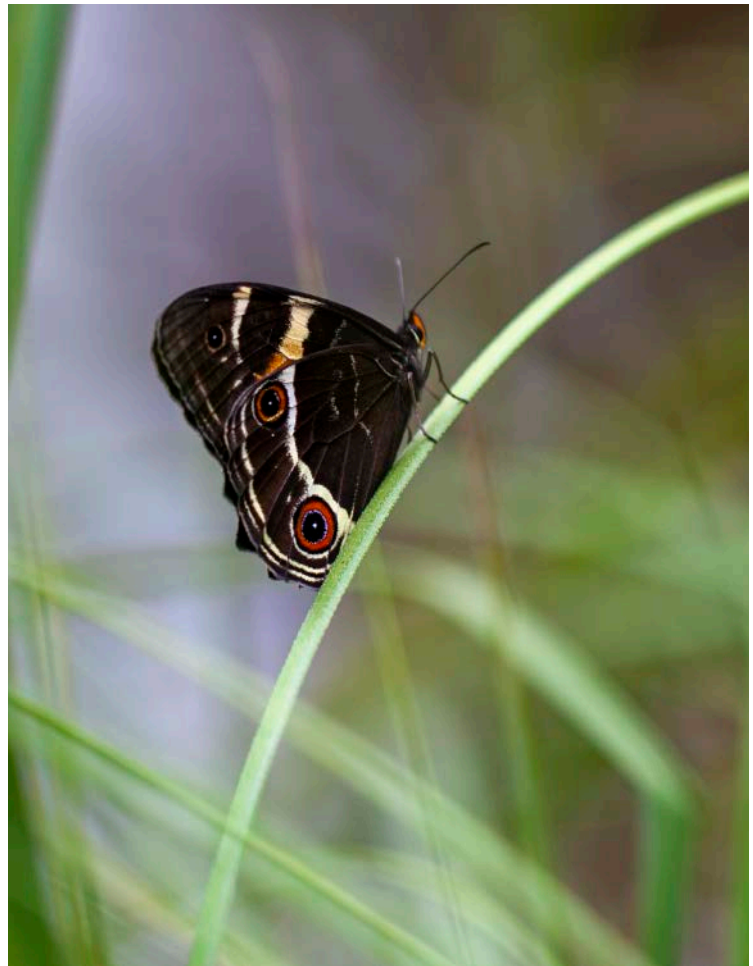
The Acheron River, a 30-minute drive back towards the Black Spur and Healesville, is less bouldery; being made up of smaller rocks and with a sandy substrate. Here we had the opportunity (a more open space) to use the seine net and Phil and Henry successfully brought up several medium sized Murray Spiny Crays. Gybe and Norm also got into the action dip netting. Henry eventually found a few Riffle Galaxias. After photographing the crays and Riffle Galaxias, and carefully releasing them back into the river, and after a few belly-laughs at Phil's unbelievable stories (!) we called it a day and headed home.



Clockwise from top left: Gybe setting up a tray to hold any spiny crays caught. Norm dip netting (note his floating bucket setup). Medium size Murray Spiny Cray in the net. Phil looking under a Murray Spiny Cray to determine its sex. Gybe with another Murray Spiny Cray. Photos: Greg Martin



Top and lower left: two Murray Spiny Crays. Photos: Greg Martin. Lower right: Phil holding a Murray Spiny cray so we could photograph it. Photo: Henry Albert



Thank you to John Coates, Peter Gaudi, Bill Buhagiar, Chris Lamin, Gybe Forster, Henry Albert, Peter Richmond, Phil Littlejohn, Norm El Crab and Michael Jones for a most enjoyable day.

Field tripping is fun!



Top left: Phil Littlejohn and Pete Richmond worked together for decades and always have a lot to talk about. Top right: Swordgrass Brown Butterfly *Tisiphone abeona*. Middle left: Henry photographs Riffle Galaxias in the field tank. Bottom: Henry finding Riffle Galaxias in the fast flowing water. Note the good growth of *Valisnaria* sp. Photos: Greg Martin

Club meeting details and key contacts of ANGFA Vic

Office Bearers 2025

President: Greg Martin 0407 094 313
Treasurer: John Lenagan 0413 730 414
Secretary: Glenn Briggs 0408 771 544
Grant Applications and Permit Writer: Tim Curmi 0417 419 765
Field Trip Coordinator: Greg Martin 0407 094 313
Field Trip Safety Officer: Rodney Wubben 0409 890 866
Membership Officer: Rodney Wubben 0409 890 866
Committee members: Chris Lamin, Gybe Forster, Matt McGee, Sunny Syme, Peter Gauci and Matt Schreuder
VICNews: Greg Martin

Other fish groups in Victoria

Aquarium Society of Victoria Visit: www.asov.com.au
Native Fish Australia Vic. Contact: Tim Curmi 0417 419 765

Victorian ANGFA National LIFE MEMBERS

Past

Ron Bowman, Barry Crockford and Tony Tucceri

Present

Neil Armstrong, Glenn Briggs and Ken Smales

ANGFA VIC CLUB MEETINGS

are held at the
Field Naturalists Club of Victoria
1 Gardenia Street Blackburn, Victoria

Doors open at 7.30pm

Dates for 2025:

Friday 7th February
Friday 4th April
Friday 6th June
Friday 1st August
Friday 3rd October (Includes our AGM)
Friday 5th December



Henry showing Phil his shot of a juvenile Spiny Cray at the Rubicon River field trip in January. Photo: Greg Martin