

“Ripples”

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

February 2025



www.southlandflyfishingclub.org.nz



*Southland Fly
Fishing Club*

President's Report by Dave

Since the last Ripples I have been pretty busy although some of it has been other than fishing. You will recall that the last Ripples was early as I was heading away to Mavora with Julie and Cole, then we had the Fly Fishing Course and I have had a trip to the Worsley River. I have had other activities on during the other two weekends, both of which required quite a bit of preparation time.

The trip to Mavora meant no mid-week trip for January as I was away and I missed the Sunday Club Trip while at the Worsley but Gerda looked after that for us. Some members are away at Lake Alexandrina as I write this and have reported good fishing with some nice fish being caught.

We have the Gore District Council "On the Fly" Festival on February 23rd and we will be doing a fly tying demonstration there. This runs from 12:00 noon to 4:00pm and is held on the banks of the Mataura River off River Terrace. Unfortunately, the tent we used last year was destroyed by wind at another event but Gore District Council have a new one for us to use. Hopefully it will be light enough for us to see well enough to tie flies.

On the 25th February we have our Club barbeque at Coal Pit Road. Chris will be doing the cooking and he will need to know who is coming so he can cater with the right amount of food. The following day is the February mid-week trip and this should go ahead as I don't have anything else planned and I have ordered good weather. Call me on 027 201 6722 if you want to come.



Worsley Arm, Lake Te Anau from the beach in front of the hut.

February Meeting—BBQ on the River

Our February Meeting (25th February) is on the Mataura River at Coal Pit Road. As usual we will have a barbeque tea that Chris will cook for us. The Club will provide food and drink. If you are coming please let Chris know on 027 423 7016 by Sunday 23rd.

Before and after tea you will be able to fish. Coal Pit Road is the last road on the left before the Wyndham Bridge on the road from Edendale to Wyndham. We go in at the anglers access that is marked by a Fish & Game sign.

Cover Photo by Dave

Course participants practising casting on the Fly Fishing Course.

Mavora Trip (by Dave)

The last few years, Julie, Cole and myself have headed off to Mavora Lakes for a few days fishing, staying at Careys Hut near the top of North Mavora Lake. This gives access to good lake fishing and the Mararoa River is not far away.

Prior to the trip I gave the boat a good check over and clean out to ensure it was ready to go. The trailer failed its wof on the first attempt as the inspector didn't like the wear on one of the tyres. Unfortunately, the spare tyre, which serves both of my trailers and was in good condition, was leaning against the garage door at home, so I had a second trip into town with the boat after changing the wheel.

We set off with the first stop being the supermarket where we bought too much food and then headed up to Mavora. On arrival we found the lake very low. There was another trailer parked in the water at the launching site but it is plenty wide enough to allow us to launch alongside. Turned out the other boat belonged to an old workmate of mine who I hadn't seen for many years. He was ferrying family across to a beach on the other side of the lake. He had a small step ladder to assist less agile members of the group to get into the boat and maybe this is something I can do in the future.

We headed up the lake and there was no-one else at the hut when we arrived so we had a choice of bunks. Once we had had lunch, we headed to the top of the lake to go fishing. The wind wasn't really in the right direction with an on-shore breeze rather than the preferred off-shore breeze that brings terrestrial insects on to the water. We managed to catch some fish before heading back to the hut where we had company and more was to arrive. This hut is on the Te Araroa Trail so has a lot of tramping visitors. There was also a family camping near the hut and they were happy as the young girl had caught her first trout.

The next two days we mainly fished the lake although we had a couple of expeditions up the river. The river was lower than I had ever seen it and there wasn't much sign of fish although I did catch a nice rainbow at the top of the last pool in the river. As a result, none of us ventured far up the river.

I fished mainly using a small madame x dry rather than the royal wulff that I normally use there. At one stage I fished with both a madame x and a royal wulff at the same time. I caught two fish with this arrangement and both took the madame x. I am not sure what the third fish took as it broke me off and I lost both flies.

The second night we were joined in the hut by the family that had camped in their tent the night before (and there were no TA walkers). I smoked the girl's trout for them as it wasn't going to last until they got home.

The children weren't keen on it so the father ate it all.



The Mararoa River above North Mavora Lake

The third night the hut saw a number of TA walkers, with one couple being a bit unsociable, especially in the morning when they got up very early and showed no consideration for others that were still trying to sleep. I got a bit grumpy with them.

Overall, a good trip, although I have had better fishing there. The low river was a bit of a disappointment and some northerly winds to blow insects out on to the lake would have been good. We all managed to catch fish. Mainly on dry flies which is always good.

Fly Fishing Course by Kim

Day 1 – Theory. When I first heard that the initial day of the course would be dedicated to theory, I was a bit sceptical. I thought to myself, "Theory? Say what? I'm here to learn to fish, not sit and listen to someone talk all day." However, my scepticism quickly turned into fascination. The information presented was incredibly engaging, and I found myself so absorbed in what Mike was saying that I initially forgot to take notes. It became clear why the theory side of things is essential.

Mike did a fantastic job of sharing a wealth of information. He covered everything from identifying insects and understanding what the fish are likely feeding on, to choosing the right fly for different situations, and pinpointing where the fish are likely to be in the water. There was so much valuable information to absorb that I realized I needed to take notes. I found it quicker to swipe words on my phone than to write them down, so out came my digital notebook.

When afternoon tea time arrived, I discovered that Mike had authored several books. I eagerly purchased one of each, thinking, "Signed copies, thanks! These could be collector's items one day." I was sure that much of what Mike had discussed would be in the books, providing a solid basis for comparing my sporadic notes and filling in any gaps I might have missed.

After the theory session, it was time to head out for casting practice on a field. I had a slight advantage because Mike had already given me some tips and instruction during the Casting Day on September 29, 2024. However, it was great to receive even more tuition from Mike, along with tips and pointers from Chris and Julie. "Too far back, Kim" soon became a common phrase I kept hearing. For some reason - perhaps muscle memory - I struggled with the vertical stop/pause or the flick up, and a lot of the time all the above. Occasionally, I would hear a "that's great," but those moments were few and far between. I know my casting still needs a lot of work, and I looked forward to practising on the river as often as I could. On the bright side, my arm and shoulder didn't hurt as they did after the afternoon at the cricket grounds at Queens Park.

I spent a good couple of hours after Day 1 just doing a brain dump of everything I had learned. This helped me make some notes of what Mike had said throughout the day.

Day 2 – Out on the River

Meeting at Wyndham Bridge at 9 am, I had no clue where "Wyndham Bridge" was. To be sure I was heading to the right place, I emailed Chris on Saturday evening to confirm the location. Fortunately, I was in the right area on the map. I also saw in a community group that there was a public event happening in Edendale. Not knowing the area, I assumed traffic would be heavy and that it would take longer than what Mr Garmin estimated, so I set off around 8 am.

As I was about to turn onto the main road towards Edendale, I quickly realised how wet it was - the rain only seemed to be getting heavier. I started to think this could turn into a rather miserable morning, but I figured I'd just go with the flow and see what happened.

I arrived just after 8:30 am - nowhere near as long a journey as I had expected. Chris was already there with one other person. I found a spot to park, and the rain just kept coming down. What had I gotten myself into? At this rate, I was going to be drenched before even getting near the river.

By 9:00 am, as more people started arriving, the rain eased to a light drizzle. Chris had initially planned to fish before everyone got there but decided instead to sit in the car and chat due to the weather. For most of the day, the weather remained overcast, with occasional drizzle and scattered showers.

It was time to gear up. After assembling my rod and attaching my leader, I tied on a hare and copper nymph - an exciting moment, as it was the first fly I had ever tied, crafted during my very first club meeting. By this

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Fly Fishing Course (cont)

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time, a running joke had emerged that I was racking up a lot of firsts: the first to sign up, the first to tie a fly, the first to sign in on Day 1, and the first to win the backpack courtesy of Hunting & Fishing Invercargill. It seemed I had set a high bar for myself!

Once everyone was ready, we crossed a paddock and made our way to the river. Mike showed us where to find some of the food sources that fish would likely be feeding on under rocks. He then demonstrated casting and retrieval techniques. As he did, we could see and hear fish rising. After the demonstration, we were let loose on the river to practise our casting.

At first, I was convinced we would scare off any fish with so many of us splashing around. I wasn't expecting to get close to anything. After a few rounds of feedback - "Too far back, Kim", "Don't forget to pause, Kim", with the occasional "That's great, Kim" - I suddenly spotted a fish rising directly in front of me. A perfect target to aim my casting at! I didn't expect much - surely, I'd just scare it off - but after a few casts upstream from where the fish was, low and behold, it took my fly!

Mike helped me land it, and soon enough, the paparazzi appeared - this was now officially the most photographed fish in the Mataura River. Another first: my first trout, the first catch of the day, and caught on the first fly I ever tied! Steve followed shortly after, making the second catch of the day. I was overjoyed, absolutely buzzing from the experience. It wasn't a huge fish, maybe lucky to be 1.5lb, so after plenty of photo ops, it only seemed fair to release it.

Around midday, we stopped for lunch before breaking into smaller groups for more fishing. I saw some fish rising afterward, but I suspect I spooked one that Chris had spotted. About an hour later, I saw another fish spit my fly out just as I was about to strike. After that, everything went quiet. Nothing else seemed interested in what I had to offer.

Ironically, the dedicated "fishing" time was the least productive in terms of actual catches!

Still, it was a fantastic day out on the river with such a great group of people. It was a pleasure meeting everyone who took part in the Learn to Fly Fish course. Investing in the course was one of the best decisions I've made. The knowledge shared by Mike and the club members was invaluable. Had I gone out on my own to

'give it a go,' I probably would have struggled, gotten frustrated, and potentially given up.

I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the course to anyone new and keen to learn fly fishing. I'm also glad I now have my own rod and reel, because I'm hooked! I can't wait to get back out on the river as often as possible



Kim and Steve with their fish caught on the course

Worsley Trip by Dave

I had a call from Nigel Juby, who is chairman of the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council, suggesting putting in for a ballot on the Worsley River for the first weekend of February. He had business down here so that set the timing. He also had two others, his son Leo and Dan who had been on the Central South Island & New Zealand F&G Councils. I told him four was too many for my boat but it turns out Dan had a boat he could bring so that would work.

We put in our application and were fortunate enough to win the ballot. However, it turned out that Dan couldn't make it so there would only be three of us and I could manage that in my boat.

I had a Southland F&G meeting on the Wednesday night and from here headed to the Club Lodge where we all stayed for the night. Thursday morning it was off to Te Anau to get food and then to Outdoor Sports for Nigel and Leo to get a clean gear certificate (I had got mine at F&G on the Wednesday). Then we headed to Te Anau Downs to launch the boat. The lake was very low and the new ramp was hardly long enough but we got the boat in the water and were soon heading up the lake. The lake wasn't completely flat, with a southerly causing some waves. This restricted our speed a bit but we were comfortable at about 20mph and got to the hut in about an hour without any problems.

After unpacking we decided to walk to the river to have a look at it. We weren't able to fish on the Thursday as our Controlled Period Licence was only for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I lead the way and managed to get off the track where there was a fallen tree and I headed around the top instead of the bottom. We managed to find the track again and got to the river without any further problems. We spotted fish straight away and then spotted another group of people further down the river. Once back at the hut the other group joined us. It was a group who were part of the Wahine & Wapiti, an event organised by the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation. There were five ladies and their guide. They told us there was another group of seven up the Worsley River and they might arrive at the hut as well but they didn't turn up. The hut has 12 bunks so plenty of room for all.

Friday morning and we set off to the river. No mistakes this time and we were soon fishing to fish we could see. They were very spooky. I don't know if this was to do with the low river level or if they had seen too many anglers. As there are rainbows in the Worsley that can be hard to spot we also fished any likely looking water. It wasn't too long before a rainbow rose to my dry but it didn't stay on long. Shortly afterwards I had



my first rainbow in the net. We continued up the river in good fishing conditions. At one place where there are a number of large rocks in the river, we all managed to land at least one fish. I did spot one nice rainbow that rose to a kakaahi queen dry but came off before I managed to land it. We got up to about where I have stopped fishing when on the Worsley previously and Nigel managed to land the first brown of the trip. I decided I had walked far enough and headed back to the hut while the others continued up the river. The track back to the hut was much better than last time

Nigel (fishing) and Leo on the Worsley.

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Worsley Trip (cont)

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I used it and about an hour later I was back at the hut. Time for a swim in the lake. Eventually the others arrived back at the hut.

Next morning Nigel and Leo decided they would go further up the river and would walk to where I had finished the day before starting to fish. I decided to fish the same part of the river I had fished the day before. I was off to a better start with a nice rainbow straight away. Once again the spotted browns disappeared pretty quickly except for one which took a nymph but didn't stay on long. The wind was down the river and that was making spotting the fish a little difficult so it was mainly fishing likely water. I caught a few fish before turning back at about the same place as the day before. The others returned with stories of bigger browns and photos to prove it. They had been well up the river, past where the Castle River flows in.

The forecast for Sunday was for rain and it was raining when we got up. Leo needed to get back to Christchurch so we decided to pack up and head home. Fortunately, the rain eased. First part of the journey home was pretty good but then the lake started to chop up with waves coming up the lake so we were heading straight into them. The waves were well over a metre high and I was down to about 8mph and at this speed the boat uses a lot of petrol. About halfway home I found a sheltered spot and transferred most of the remaining petrol from the petrol can into the fuel tank we were using. Eventually we made it to Te Anau Downs and I stopped to give the auxiliary motor a run before we landed beside the ramp. When I backed down the ramp the trailer was off the end of the ramp before I got it as deep as I like it to be to load easy. I had to pull forward a bit as I didn't want to try and pull a loaded trailer up from off the ramp. We managed to get it loaded and it was time to head home.

It was great to be in real wilderness fishing. No other anglers, no helicopters and who flying up the river both days.

Southland Controlled Fisheries by Dave

The Ettrick Burn, Worsley and Clinton Rivers are controlled fisheries. These rivers are all tributaries of Lake Te Anau and are only accessible by boat. To fish all of these rivers you require Controlled Period Licence and a clean gear certificate. Details on the Fish and Game website.

The Ettrick Burn is booked on-line and you can not stay over night as it is in the Murchison Mountains, which is the takahe area and has restricted access. It is only available to fish on Wednesdays and Saturdays. You can make bookings five days in advance. It is not an easy river to fish. It takes about an hours walk to reach fishable water and then you will have about a two hour walk home. There is at least one river crossing that can be a bit tricky on the way. It is bush country so if you are not familiar with NZ bush, don't go there. You need a boat to get to the river. Booking can be made via the Fish & Game website.

The Worsley and Clinton Rivers are balloted and you have to apply for a ballot. Details on the Fish and Game website. The Worsley has a single beat so if you win the ballot you have the river and its tributary to yourself. Party can be up to four. The Clinton has two beats so you need to know where the beat boundaries are. The Worsley has a good DOC hut by the lake shore but the Clinton follows the Milford track and you will need to camp (away from the track). To fish the Worsley it is about 15 minutes walk from the hut to the river. There is a track back down the true left bank of the river but it is not well marked so you need to be able to find your way in the bush. I have not fished the Clinton but the main track you will need to follow is the Milford Track so that part should be easy. However reaching the river and finding a camping spot may be a bit tougher. There is scheduled boat access to the Clinton (Milford Track boat) but you need to either have your own boat or use a water taxi to get to the Worsley. Remember Lake Te Anau is a big lake and it can cut up pretty rough when it is windy, so be careful.

January Club Trip by Kim

I had no idea where we were headed, but I knew this trip would be a great way to learn the best fishing spots in and around Invercargill.

Meeting Gerda at Fish & Game at 7:00 AM, the early morning air was crisp, and heavy overnight rain had left everything damp. As I packed my gear into the van, I couldn't help but question my own sanity - waking up at an ungodly hour on a Sunday just to stand in the cold and wet. But then I reminded myself: this was about learning where it's safe and ideal to fish in our area.

Arriving on time, I found Gerda already waiting. Fortunately, I hadn't kept her waiting long, as we were also expecting Zanda. A quick call from him, confirmed he was on his way, and by 7:10 am, we were on the road to our destination.

With weather apps in hand, we tracked the wind and rain as we made our way to Access Point 21 on Transmission Line Road.

Upon arrival, we discovered fallen trees partially blocking the path. Undeterred, we scouted alternative routes, noting where other vehicles had gone around or under the obstacles. At that moment, I realized my van would not be the ideal vehicle for this terrain. Clearly, I have a case to get a 4x4 now!

Gerda navigated around the trees, getting us to the end of the road. It was time to set up and explore the river.

Zanda generously shared some tips on setting up my line and fly before he seemingly vanished into thin air, only reappearing just before lunch.

As we observed the water, several fish were rising, but my go-to choice - the gold bead hare and copper - wasn't enticing them. Stoneflies seemed to be their preferred meal as there were plenty in the water, but not knowing what those looked like as tied flies, not sure I even have any, I stuck with my hare and copper, which had worked well during my fishing course. Maybe the fish here were just too well fed.

The river, while relatively clear, had a silty bottom in some areas and flowed fast despite being shallow in most spots. The heavy rain the night prior most likely played a part in that.

Deep pools hinted at possible hiding fish, but either they were well-fed and uninterested, or I was unknowingly spooking them. Overcast skies and occasional drizzle further limited visibility into the deeper sections.

I was getting quite adept at casting under the willows - until my beginner's luck ran out, and I lost a couple of flies to the trees.

Zanda found himself in a similar predicament, but his commitment to fly retrieval led him to strip down to his singlet and take a cold swim to reclaim his lost treasure. I wasn't quite that dedicated. I figured I could always tie a new one!

After a while, I finally felt a tug on my line - success! Or so I thought. As I reeled in my catch, my excitement faded when I realized I had landed a small brown... stick. It put up a good fight, though, I'll give it that!

With little luck at this spot, we decided to try another. Loading our gear into Gerda's car, we drove downstream. Zanda disappeared once more, Gerda went upstream, and I worked my way along a 1.5-kilometre stretch. I spotted a few more rising fish in the deeper pools but still had no takers. Maybe I was just spooking them.

By the end of the day, none of us had landed a fish, but I had an incredible experience, nonetheless. It was a fantastic day out on the river, full of learning, good company, and plenty of laughs.

A big thank you to Gerda and Zanda for making my first club trip such an enjoyable adventure!

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

23 rd Feb	Demo	On the Fly Festival – Gore
25 th Feb	MM	This meeting is “On the river” --- BBQ Tea about 6pm
26 th Feb	Fishing	Mid-week Trip – Dave Harris 027 201 6722
2 nd March		Teviot Fishing Competition
4 th Mar	CM	Fly Tying
9 th Mar	Fishing	<u>Club Day Trip</u> , meet at Fish & Game 7am
25 th Mar	[MM]	
26 th Mar	Fishing	Mid-week Trip
1 st April	(CM)	Fly Tying
13 th April	Fishing	<u>Club Day Trip</u> , meet at Fish & Game 8am

Club Contacts

- Address **Southland Fly Fishing Club, PO Box 1689, Invercargill, New Zealand**
- Website www.southlandflyfishingclub.org.nz
- President Dave Harris, 30 Baxter Street Invercargill (027 201 6722) daveharris823@gmail.com
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- Editor Dave Harris daveharris823@gmail.com
Items for publication must be submitted to the editor, prior to the 10th of the month
- Librarian Chris Cowie (027 236 9576)
- Lodge Custodian Dave Murphy, 35 Brown Road, Invercargill dmurphy@southnet.co.nz (03 230 4698) or (0276752324)

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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