

FISHING IN TASMANIA - 2009/10 Season

Member Euan Leckie fished in Tasmania several times this season.

This is some of his experiences. As I nosed the car into the small parking space my wife asked "where are we"? When I replied "Penstock Lagoon" she said "well! you don't have long otherwise we will miss dinner". (In Miena there are only two places to eat, both close orders at 8.00pm when it is still daylight! They don't cater for fishermen there.) We were there in late November and had enjoyed a nice touristy day in the Derwent Valley.

The road back to where we were staying in Miena went right past Penstock Lagoon, what a surprise! Penstock is a small dam, it is stocked regularly with both browns and rainbows, contains some nice fish and has good dun hatches.

Walking up onto the low dam wall I noticed a few duns on the water and some rises further out. The stiff breeze meant the duns were drifting quickly but my flies (Possum Emerger (PE) on point and a Highland Dun on a dropper) weren't moving much so didn't look natural beside the duns. Then I watched rises which showed fish were gradually working closer to the shore. Finally one took a dun right between my two flies which remained untouched! What an insult! After a while I gave up, later thinking about the incident I thought I should have pulled the flies, this may have induced a take.



Little Pine

The next morning was fine and clear, I fished Little Pine in front of the shacks and was rewarded by two strikes, one lost and one landed. The PE worked fine here. But I had to leave early as we had to go to Launceston to collect my friend from the plane that afternoon. Shame to leave the water on such a nice day. Wednesday was also fine and clear. Polaroiding the north-east beaches of Lake Ada didn't show any fish, all we saw was a big platypus. We called into Howes Lagoon Bay on the way back, saw some fish and I was rewarded by two takes, one lost after some aerial acrobatics (a rainbow?) and one nice brown landed. It had taken the black Bobs Bits on the dropper. Made a nice breakfast the next day. Thursday dawned with strong southwesterlies, a change had come through overnight. We were collected by local guide Christopher Bassano and taken to Woods Lake. Christopher explained that with all the rain the big lakes like Arthurs had risen a long way but the fish were still out in the deeper water. A constrained water like Woods was OK though. It was windy and overcast with no surface food so he set us up for nymphing. Two smallish bead-head nymphs, cast ahead and retrieved slightly faster than the boat drifted. It took us a while to key into the striking with very subtle takes but we caught fish. Then we tried slowly cruising around the standing dead trees and caught fish there too. Drifting "loch style" with dries also worked. We both caught our bag limit of 5 fish each, all browns, but not really a bag as we only kept two.

Friday was still windy, looking out over breakfast we saw white flakes of snow falling. A good day for staying by the cosy fire with a good book.



But we had Christopher booked so had to go out in the snow and sleet. We fished Little Pine and caught some nice browns. Later we went to Penstock, Christopher explained that the only reliable dun hatches so far this season were late in the day on this water. Which they did, right on cue, but in quick bursts. The wind had reduced somewhat but we still had trouble landing our flies in front of the fish as they worked up the foam lines. We caught a fish each, a small brown and a smaller rainbow but should have had more (I must practice casting in the wind **before** I go down there). Saturday came with friends visiting from Launceston we tried a number of locations. With the shocking weather the nearest we came to catching a fish was when I got a strike just as I was watching a heron fly overhead. Missed the strike of course, what a klutz. The fly? A PE what else! We flew home on Sunday thinking we had a good time, but the weather and the fishing was tough. Tasmania had lived up to its reputation. We would have been lost without the expert guiding of Christopher with his very stable boat. Sure, I did catch a few fish on my own but it was hard work.

But I am coming back!

I returned to Tasmania in late January 2010.

I had originally booked two days guiding with the intent of then rolling into our annual blokes fishing trip. However the others in the team had to defer this till mid-February and work required me to be in Perth on 1st January. So I had a quick trip down there and back.

The first morning was clear and calm, Christopher Bassano picked me up and we headed out on the Great Lake. He had a couple of friends who came with us in his second boat. We headed out looking for slicks and soon found one, no fish feeding in it though.

The next slick had some action and after a bit of stalking using the electric outboard I had a nice brown in the boat. The other boat was fishing nearby and we could see a bent rod there too.



That slick closed off so we looked around and found another with a lot of action. Here the fish were rising and moving on quickly, they were easily spooked in the calm conditions.

I could have presented to a lot more fish if I could have cast another 5 meters or so, very annoying. We hunted around that slick for a while, plenty of fish rising but I found it hard to get a good presentation to these.

Lots of adrenaline involved in this sort of stuff, lots of frustration too. We met up with the others for lunch. By now the wind had got up from the north-east.

We were drifting along, talking together when Steve in the second boat stood up saying "I wonder if there are any fish around here". He got a quick answer, dropping his sandwich and grabbing his rod he got off a quick cast for a hookup on a nice fish.



We then drifted down the foamlines which had formed, casting to fish which were working up these lines.

The action was quick and soon there were quite a few fish landed. I had all browns, the others had a mix of browns and rainbows. Good fish in this lake, good fighters too. Then the clouds came over and polaroiding was gone. We persevered for one more fish fluked casting to a foamline.

The Great Lake is a great place to be in a boat on a clear day when the fish are feeding on top. Those of you who have seen Christopher's DVD, Highland Gold #2, will have seen this. In other conditions it is tough fishing out there.

The second day was the opposite, a cold front had come through overnight and we had wind and rain.

Back to the reliable Woods Lake and nymphing. When the wind fell a bit and the sun came out we had a few duns hatching and a few rises. We were having lunch in the weeds near the shore when one rose 2ft from the boat, dropping a fly nearby I got a strike but missed him. Then I hooked another dun feeder which buried itself in the weeds.

Christopher jumped overboard, the water being only 3ft deep, and dug him out. After doing this a few times we got him in the net. Another nicely conditioned brown. As we let him go I asked what would it weigh, three and three-quarter pounds was the reply.

Then the wind got stronger and we had more rain. The dun hatch was over but we got a few more trout by nymphing.

Another successful day on Woods Lake.



I had to return home the next day but stopped off at Brumby's Creek en route to the airport. Christopher had suggested I try a weighted woolly bugger with an unweighted fly tied on behind. Fished across and down I landed a small rainbow on the tail fly.

Use a weighted nymph with another tied on behind was his second suggestion. I tried that, again across and down, let it sink, another success with a somewhat bigger fish, a brown this time.

I then went to the airport happy that the system worked.

Another successful Tassie trip with very different styles of fishing in two days of very different weather. The good fish caught were a tribute to the guiding skills of Christopher and I have to improve my casting.

As a former Tasmanian I love it down there!

Euan Leckie.