"Limit your catch.
Don't catch your limit."

Bemm River Angling Club Inc. Newsletter

ISSUE 25- November 2026

Website www.bemmriverangling.com.au

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General News

Background Watermark

Do you recognise the long-time Bemm River Angling Club Member in the background watermark of the Newsletter? We will put a different member in each Newsletter in future.

Our Sponsors include the following businesses and Departments

Victorian Fisheries
Bemm River Caravan Park Bemm River Bait and Tackle Bemm River Bungalows
Bemm River Hotel Hooked on Bemm Bemm River Holiday Accommodation
Bemm River and District Neighbourhood House Bemm River Men's Shed
AFN Fishing Show On the Edge Lures

2026 Membership and Renewals

The membership list for 2026 has surpassed that of 2024 and 2025 combined with 91 Adult members and 44 juniors. Membership forms can be downloaded from the internet at http://www.bemmriverangling.com,.au/ or are available from some of the accommodation houses in Bemm River or on the last page of this Newsletter. Junior members are persons under 16 years of age on the 1st January 2026.

What the Bream are Eating at Bemm

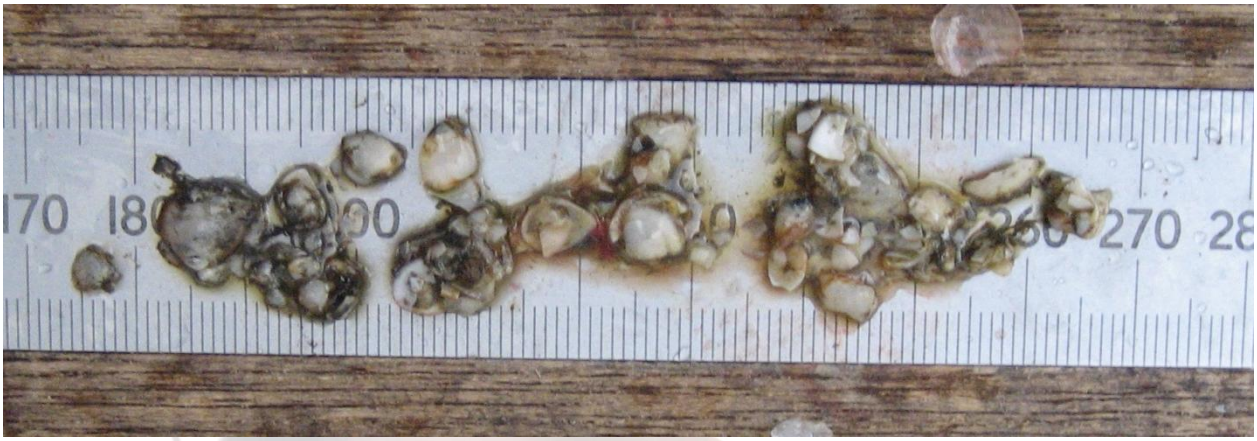
Black bream (and bream species in general) often vomit or regurgitate their stomach contents when hooked and brought to the surface. This is consistent with my experience when looking at stomach contents. It is not common to find much in their stomach. Most of the contents analysed so far, come from the intestine and consist of shell and other non-digested food. Like many fish, bream may purge their digestive tract if they are extremely stressed or handled roughly.

Bream have a tendency to swallow bait deeply, which can lead to being "gut-hooked" (hooked in the stomach).

- **Gut-Hooking:** Studies by the NSW Department of Primary Industries show that while 98% of mouth-hooked bream survive, only 13% survive if a gut-hook is physically removed.
- **Best Practice:** If a bream is gut-hooked and you intend to release it, it is best to **cut the line** as close to the hook as possible rather than trying to pull it out. Research indicates survival rates jump to 70–85% when the hook is left in, as many bream will eventually eject or pass the hook naturally.

Last newsletter, we had the seventh in our series of what the bream are eating. AI indicated it appeared to "be a seed pod, specifically known in some regions as a *Caja-manga semente* or a type of water caltrop seed. Not too sure about that.

This edition we have small cockle type shells in the bream stomach and intestine. The shells do not appear to be broken up by the bream and presumably the digestion process kills the inner contents of the shell and it is digested by the stomach juices. In my experience, these shells are found in bream coming from the middle of Sydenham Inlet where there must be an area where these shell fish are found.

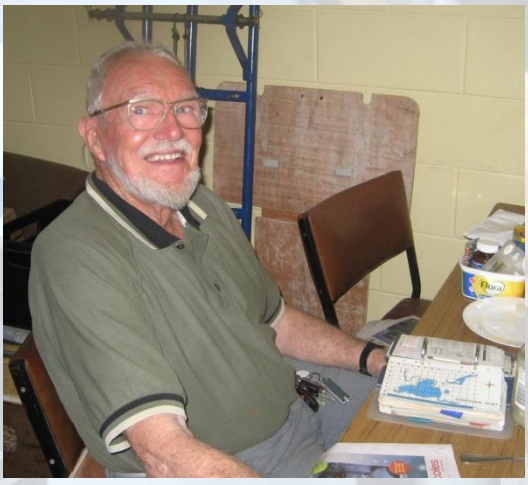


John Kirk's Bream Records

John Kirk was a well-known identity at the Bemm and had been fishing here since he was a boy in the 1940's. He recalls the trips with his father the first when he was about 8 years old. They used to stay at the Hotel as there was no other accommodation in town. In those days, there were no refrigerators and so the fish caught could only be transported to Melbourne immediately. In even earlier times, fish would be kept in cages in the Inlet to keep them alive until the trip home. Many a catch arrived in Melbourne smelling and had to be thrown out.

The guests at the Hotel would all fish for the person going home next day. The fish would be cleaned and packed in bracken to try to keep them fresh. May of the fish would go off before they arrived home. In John's time, there was ice available at Orbost and so they would put their fish on ice.

John lost his leg in an accident when he was at school. He was rowing with the school and after having rowed up the river the boys went ashore to play. John climbed a tree but lost his footing and got his leg caught between two branches. He was stuck and in pain with a broken leg and a teacher had to climb up and release him. He went to hospital to have it set but apparently it became infected with a gas forming bacteria. It was decided to remove his leg to save him from dying of the infection.





He started keeping records of his fish catch rates in 1968 and John and his books are shown above. On one trip, he thought he had hit a pole left in the Inlet by some previous fisherman. He was saying they put them in they should jolly well take them out. However, on closer inspection, the anode had worked loose and had fouled the propeller and taken a chunk out of the prop and bent the propeller shaft quite a lot and twisted the splines on the shaft as well. I had the same model, Mercury 25 HP two stroke and indeed my anode was also loose. I suggest Merc owners should check that the anode is bolted on tightly.

The Victorian Fisheries became interested in his records and, in 1972, he included the length of undersized fish as well. The Victorian Fisheries recognise the value of his records and, since 1972, he had been conducting survey work with them on the growth rates and spawning years of Black Bream at the Bemm. Fish typically are 10 cm at one year, 16 cm at 3 years and take 8-9 years to reach legal limit. Larger bream of 36 cm or more are some 20 – 30 years old.

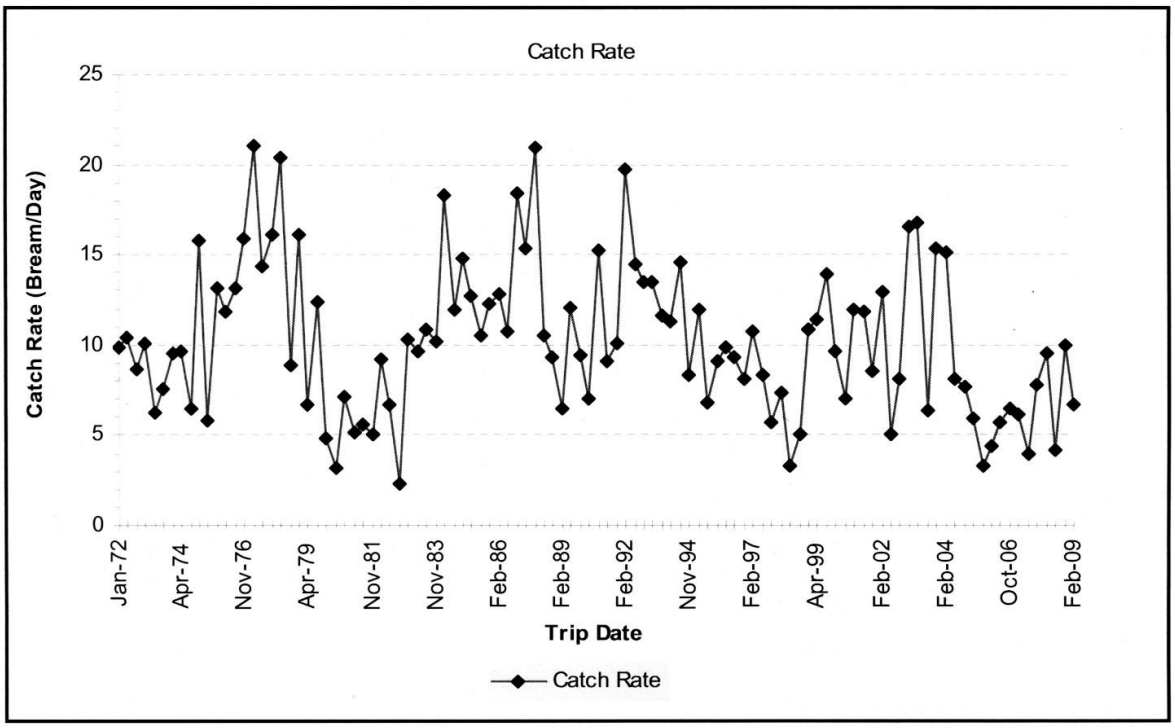


Figure 3. Black bream catch in Syndenham Inlet between 1972 and 2009.
Data courtesy of John Kirk, research angler diarist.

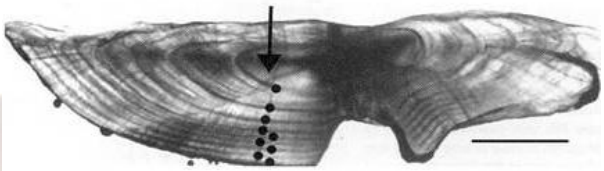
You can see the period from 1979 to 1983 where John's catch rates were lower than average. I can recall that, after the Javis Walker Bream Fishing Competition in 1979, catch rates did fall off. Many blamed the competition but it was probably a co-incidence. Toward the end of his recordings, his catch rates have also been lower than the long-term average.

Even so, since the 1960's, the fishery has been sustainable at similar catch rates and sizes with variations occurring depending on successful spawning cycles. In the 1990's, there were 7 years where John did not catch a new class year of undersized fish indicating a lack of successful spawning runs. Catch rates were lower toward the end of his recordings and this could be either a part of a cycle or the start of a decline. However, he caught a majority of sized fish and in average numbers in the final trip recorded above. It is important to gain information on undersized fish and John had authority to have up to 60 in his possession for the whole trip.

John's records became the precursor for the Research Angler Diary program in Victoria and other Fishing Departments. John received an award from Victorian Government for his records.







The fish carcases were taken to Queenscliff and the fish sexed, measured, the otolith removed and sectioned. The growth rings of the otolith can be measured using a microscope revealing the age of the fish and therefore the year it was spawned. You can see in the above photograph an otolith which has been removed from inside a fish just behind the head. In the second photo you can see the rings in the otolith which, like rings in a tree, can reveal the fish's age. The dots indicate the yearly rings and so the fish was nine years old.

Also, in the photograph above is John and Dr Murray MacDonald, who was Bay and Inlet Fisheries Manager, DPI, Victoria. He had been working with John on these records for some 30 years or more. I recall Murray encouraged me to keep similar records on estuary perch some 40 years ago. Three papers have been published using my data.

The Fisheries were interested in keeping such records going to monitor the fishery. John was in his eighties, and so Fisheries encouraged someone to continue the work. It is important to fish in the same manner during these periods where the records are being kept. John has not changed his fishing style over the years and so his catch rates are meaningful. If he had started drifting using vibes for example, the records would have little meaning as his catch rates would not be comparable. A replacement Research Angler would have had to fish for about 3 weeks over the year to obtain enough data for it to be statistically significant. No one was interested as John used old methods, fished the same areas, used set types of bait and the same fishing line and rigs

The Annual Biggest Fish Awards have in the past been a popular event. This gives every member who visits Bemm River a chance to participate in the Club activities. As we are now using longest fish to allow catch and release, it will no longer be heaviest fish. All members are eligible to measure a fish in the open category of longest fish. Make sure you are a member before you go fishing and when you catch that trophy fish, measure it on a brag mat and send the photo to 0429 411 530 (winners brag mats can be calibrated later). There will be minimum sizes for each class. Winners will have their names entered on the Boards in the Bemm River Hotel.

Bream – major prize, open to all members – current leader 42.5 cm,
Flathead – open to all member categories – current leader 82 cm
Estuary Perch – open to all member categories – No entry as yet
Salmon – open to all member categories – current leader 50 cm

The Monthly Junior Fishing Competition has seen a number of junior members win monthly prizes for the longest bream and the longest flathead. Go to the website for more details - www.bemmriverangling.com.au/events.

Fishing Report.

The weather has been sensational over the Cup week-end with the rain holding off until 5:30 pm on Monday. There have been some Easterly winds but the weather has been much better than predicted. There have been plenty of people in town. The fishing has been relatively quiet for bream as the water level has been too high for Mark at Bemm River Bait and Tackle to pump worm. Even the Orbost shop has had no worm on quite a number of occasions. The best bags of bream have been on sandworm with our secretary, Jayne, doing quite well having pumped worm in the deep water. The salmon have been unusually plentiful and many have enjoyed catching these fighting fish on light gear with prawn, lures and plastics not only in the channel but throughout the system. There have also been some great flathead landed. Don't forget to go the Bemm River Angling Club website at www.bemmriverangling.com.au for up-to-date information and fishing reports.

Programme of Events

Purvis Cup Results – Competition with Marlo Angling Club

This is a competition with the Marlo Angling Club in the latter part of each year with the event held in Marlo one year then Bemm River the next. In 2025, it was held in Marlo and there was a narrow victory to the locals. The competition is for the longest 5 bream where 5 different anglers from each club submit their best bream. Unfortunately, this event has to be postponed due to other commitments by the organizer but it was somewhat fortuitus as the weather was windy and wet.

Annual Trip to Lake Tyres

This is a sponsored event by the Bemm River Angling Club where members book and pay for their own accommodation commencing on **Friday 13 November 2026** and attend the Lake Tyres Hotel for an evening meal. On Saturday morning, the competition commences and prizes presented at a sponsored dinner in the caravan park. Next morning, breakfast is provided before we all depart

The Annual Christmas Competition will return this year.

This is the second occasion in each year where members get the opportunity to add their names to the Bemm River Classic Board in the Hotel. The Boards were donated by Wood St Furniture in Bairnsdale**. Date 27 – 29 December 2026** and includes longest bream, longest flathead and Senior, Ladies and Junior prizes.

Fishcare and Fun afternoon

On the afternoon of **29 December 2026**, there will be a lunchtime barbecue for all members followed by Fishcare for the Juniors then marshmallows toasting. There will also be a casting competition.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held on a date to be decided. All members welcome to join using Microsoft Teams or in person.

13 - 15 November 2026 – Annual trip to Lake Tyers
27 – 29 December 2026 – Bemm River Classic Christmas competition.
29 December 2026 – Fishcare for the juniors and Fun Day in Luderick Park.

Bemm River Angling Club Committee

The Bemm River Angling Club Incorporated (BRAC) held an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting in accordance with section 6 of the Constitution on 11 February 2026 at 7:pm and all resolutions were passed unanimously.

The new Committee is

Liam Mansell – President	Andy Loizou – Vice president
Jayne Bailey – Secretary / Treasurer	Lindsay Williams – Weighmaster
John Roberts	Justin Mansell

Email for the Club is bemmriveranglingclub@gmail.com

Our Facebook Page is Bemm River Angling Club

We would be pleased to have any suggestions on how to improve the operation of the Bemm River Angling Club and very pleased to have new members on the committee particularly if you reside in Bemm River.

Background Watermark



The issue 25 photo is of Darren Dennys who has been fishing Bemm River since he was a young lad. He used to go fishing with Mark Cunningham walking down through the back of the farm when that was still permitted. You will see him in his bright red truck staying in the caravan park often around a fire at night drinking a bottle of red. Darren runs the Facebook page Bemm River Fishing Group and has been most co-operative to the Club.

Time to Laugh

Doctor, a lawyer, a priest and a male student are aboard a crashing plane with only 3 parachutes.

The Doctor grabs one saying “I save lives. I must live.” and jumps out of the plane.

The lawyer grabs another parachute and says; “I am the smartest man in the world. The world needs my brilliance!” and he jumps.

The priest turns to the student and says; “Son, take the last parachute”. The boy grins and says; “Relax Father, the smartest man in the world just took my backpack”.

A woman was absolutely fed up with her husband coming home from work late, night after night. So, she decided to make a point. She left a note on the dresser that read; “I have had enough. I have left you. Don’t bother trying to find me”. She hid under the bed waiting to see how he would react.

Not long after the husband arrived home and walked into the bedroom. She heard the footsteps stop by the dresser and then silence.

Moments later he was on the phone saying; “She has gone. Yep, finally. I will head right over now. Put on that French lingerie that drives me wild. Love you. Can’t wait.” He hangs up, grabs his keys and heads out the door.

She is destroyed, hardly holding back a flood of tears as she hears the car drive away.

Angry and heartbroken she crawls out from under the bed and snatches the note.

Under her message, he had written; “I can see your feet under the bed. We are out of bread – be back in 5 minutes.

A man was sitting on his porch when a stranger approached him.

“Sir, I found a wallet with your ID in it.”

The man checked his pocket and said;” Yes that is mine. Thank you so much.”

The Stranger said,” Is everything still there?”

The man looked in the wallet and said,” Wait when I lost it, there was a $1,000 note in it, but now it has fifty $20 notes in it.

The stranger replied,” Oh, that is because the last time I found a wallet the owner said he couldn’t give me a reward because he did not have any change.”

Come on, keep the jokes rolling in! If you have any stories, yarns or material of interest, please contact Lindsay on 0429 411 530

BEMM RIVER ANGLING CLUB

MEMBERSHIP NOTICE 2027

Membership Fees:

Single	$20.00 per year
Family	$30.00 per year (includes junior children under 16 years)
Junior	Free per year under 16 years on 1 January 2027

To renew your membership or to join the Bemm River Angling Club Inc (BRAC) please complete the form below and return it to Bemm River Angling Club by email to bemmriveranglingclub@gmail.com and deposit the money to the Commonwealth Bank Orbost Branch BSB 063731 ACC 101 360 74 in the name of Bemm River Angling Club Inc making sure your name is in the **Description appearing on their statement.** This form may also be given to a committee member with the payment.

Name:	
Address:	
Town and Post Code:	
Mobile	
E-Mail Address:	
Type of Membership (Please tick appropriate box)	Single Yearly ☐ Family ☐ Junior ☐
Family members please complete the list of members and indicate Juniors under the age of 16 years on January 1 2026.	……Mobile…….. …… Mobile ……. …… Mobile ……. …… ……..

By joining the Bemm River Angling Club (BRAC), the member agrees to follow club rules and accepts full responsibility for any risks involved in club activities. The member also agrees to indemnify the club against any claims, injuries, losses, or damages suffered by themselves, their family members, guests, or property while participating in club activities.
Junior Members will require their parent or guardian to sign below and must accompany the junior member at all times during BRAC activities.

NAME IN FULL: SIGNED:

Social Media Disclaimer. BRAC may use your photos of fish caught on our social media platforms. If you wish to exclude Juniors included in the membership please indicate below.