

River Histories

BOAT TRIP ON GOULBURN.

JOURNEY OF 160 MILES.

SEYMOUR, Monday.—A party from Seymour, comprising Messrs. M. Geoghegan, F. Young, H. Gates, and A. Walkingshaw, undertook a trip down the Goulburn River during the holidays. They launched their boat above the Acheron River, beyond Alexandra, and proceeded down stream to Seymour, a distance of about 160 miles. The journey was undertaken by some of the members of the party in the Christmas of 1914, when the river was very low, and difficulty was experienced in getting through. On this occasion no trouble was met with, the stream being navigable the whole distance, although a little rapid in places, where care had to be exercised. The country presented a striking contrast to its condition at the same time last year. The grass along the flats on the Upper Goulburn has scarcely lost its verdure, and the stock are in splendid condition. A marked feature of the journey was the absence of rabbits along the banks of the stream. The trip was a sporting one, fishing being the main amusement. Each day "spinning" was indulged in whilst the boat was drifting with the stream. In all 88 cod were secured, the weights ranging from 2½lb. to 18lb., as many as 18 being caught in a morning's fishing. The party arrived at Seymour on Sunday evening.

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Figure 8.1 **The Goulburn River Catchment showing major waterways and key localities**



8.1 Early European Accounts

The Goulburn River has the greatest flow of any of the Victorian tributaries of the Murray River and effectively bisects northern Victoria. It rises in the east at the foot of Mt Buller, flows west collecting water from the Great Dividing Range, then turns north near Seymour to flow towards the Murray. As a consequence of its size and proximity to Melbourne, the Goulburn River and its well watered catchment was settled early in the history of Victoria. It has, for the same reasons, been one of the most popular inland angling waters in the state.

The first Europeans to encounter the Goulburn River were Hamilton Hume and William Hovell, reaching it near the present site of Molesworth on December 3, 1824. Hume originally named the river after the Colonial Secretary Frederick Goulburn. Later, Hume learned of the naming of another river in New South Wales after Goulburn, and with the agreement of Charles Sturt it was decided to name the river after Hovell (Bland, 1831). The latter did not gain general acceptance, and today the river retains its original European name.

In their first encounter with the Goulburn River, Hume and Hovell recorded catching fish, an activity they talk about on a number of other occasions during their time in the catchment. After arriving at a stream termed the 'Muddy Creek', now known as the Yea River, they caught 'several fish similar to those found in the Lachlan' (Bland, 1831). On December 11, members of the expedition fished the King Parrot Creek near Strath Creek where 'they caught a couple of Lachlan cod fish', and on the return journey northwards on Christmas Eve, they camped on the Goulburn near Seymour 'in order that they might avail themselves of the fine fish which abound in its waters' (Bland, 1831).

Twelve years later, Major Thomas Mitchell drove cattle to Portland in Victoria. During the return journey on October 8, he camped on the Goulburn River near the current locality of Mitchelton and recorded the presence of fish, as well as an indigenous name for the waterway:

This river has been unfortunate in obtaining a variety of names and therefore less objection can be made to my preference of the aboriginal which I ascertained through Piper to be Bayunga. We already have a River Goulburn in New South Wales / In this river we caught one or two very fine cod-perch, our old friends *Gristes peelii* (Mitchell 1838).

Mitchell travelled during the wet months of Victoria's spring, and the ruts left in the mud by his dray were literally a road map recording his route.

On New Year's Day 1838, Joseph Hawdon set out to follow those ruts droving cattle and sheep, reaching the same spot on the Goulburn on January 17. He then followed the river downstream and, on January 23rd 1838, in the Murchison area he wrote:

In the evening we amused ourselves with bathing and fishing for cod, which very much resembles the English fish of the same name, except that on the back the former has a sharp fin. Those we caught generally weighed from 6 to 15 pounds, but they were caught sometimes weighing 30 pound (Hawdon, 1952).

Settlers progressively established sheep and cattle stations in the Goulburn Valley. In 1854, alluvial gold was discovered in the upper reaches of the catchment at Rations Point, near the junction of the Goulburn and Jamieson Rivers. Major goldfields were established at Jamieson and Woods Point on the Goulburn River, and at Enochs Point on the Big River, with lesser workings on the Howqua River, near Alexandra and in the Gobur area. Minor workings occurred at various other localities throughout the catchment. Eventually, by the late

1870s, the alluvial workings declined in activity, as much of the gold had been extracted from the streams and the quartz reefs containing lodes were discovered leading to underground mining (Flett, 1979).

In 1849, it was recorded that the Goulburn River near Seymour 'abounds in fish, mostly cod and bream, also crayfish' with cod up to 43 lb. (19.5 kg) being taken at that time (*Argus*, 31 October 1849). In 1923, one angler caught 30 fish weighing a total of 158 lb. (71.7 kg) in one day (*Argus*, 13 December 1923). Further upstream at Alexandra (1868), a catch 'included two cod about 30 lb. each', and 'about a dozen smaller ones from 3 to 15 lb., and about half-a-dozen perch averaging about 3 lb. each' (*Alexandra Times*, 21 August 1868).

At Thornton in 1902, a party of anglers 'caught upwards of 120lb. weight of fish, chiefly cod, bream, and perch, being the biggest day's haul this season for three lines' (*Argus*, 7 January 1902). In 1916, the result of a boat trip from the Acheron River to Seymour was 'in all 88 cod were secured, the weights ranging from 2½lb. to 18lb., as many as 18 being caught in a mornings fishing' (*Argus*, 5 January 1916). Robert Forsyth at Maintongoon on the Delatite River near the Mountaineer Creek junction regularly recorded in his journal catches of cod (Forsyth, 1899). In the mountain goldfields, newspaper accounts reported large catches of both cod and 'bream' in the Jamieson and Goulburn Rivers (*Jamieson Chronicle*, 14 November 1885, 10 December 1909).

As the owner of the *Argus* newspaper, Edward Wilson was a prominent figure in early Melbourne. He was an early and active proponent of the introduction of exotic plants and animals to the continent, founding the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria in 1861. In 1857, Wilson organised the translocation of cod and bream from the upper reaches of the King Parrot Creek to the Plenty River, a tributary of the Yarra River (Wilson, 1857). The translocation of these fish, along with additional cod sourced from the Murray and Goulburn Rivers, and Macquarie perch periodically sourced from the Goulburn and Broken Rivers, resulted in the establishment of Murray cod, Trout cod and Macquarie perch populations in the Yarra catchment (Acclimatisation Society of Victoria, 1864; *Argus*, 8 September 1898; Trueman, 2007). The Goulburn River, principally at Wahring and to a lesser degree Tahbilk and Kerrisdale, was the source of many thousands of Macquarie perch that were translocated across the state (Cadwallader, 1981).

At the time of European settlement in the Seven Creeks upstream of the Gooram Falls near Strathbogie, the only fish of angling size were Blackfish, though 'cod and bream' were caught in numbers up to the falls (Halsall, 1979). In early 1921, a public meeting was held at Strathbogie to make arrangements for the 'procurement of cod and bream' for release in the Seven Creeks (*Euroa Gazette*, 8 February 1921). During 1921-22, hundreds of cod and bream were transported from the Goulburn River at Cathkin, and the Seven Creeks between Euroa and Gooram, and released into the Seven Creeks at Strathbogie. By the late 1920s both species had become established, and the stream became well known for the cod fishery which existed amongst the many falls and rapids that characterise the creek (*Euroa Gazette*, 3 May 1921, 17 May 1921, 21 March 1922; Cadwallader, 1979).

John Langtry provided a brief account on the lower Goulburn River fishery c1950 reporting that it carried the best population of native fish in the state at that time. He relied on second hand accounts from fishing inspectors and anglers and reported that large numbers of Murray cod were being caught below the Goulburn Weir. Upstream of the weir Golden, Silver and Macquarie perch were present, as well as Catfish. He also stated that Macquarie perch were more abundant below the weir at that time, and that Redfin perch were particularly prevalent upstream (Cadwallader, 1977).

In 1969, Dr. Tim Berra and Prof. Allan Weatherly collected specimens of cod from the Seven Creeks as part of their study to determine if two cod species existed in the Murray-Darling Basin. They ultimately concluded that

there were two species, and that the Seven Creeks contained one of the last populations of Trout cod (Berra & Weatherly, 1972). Cod, including Trout cod, as well as Macquarie, Golden and Silver Perch were translocated above waterfall barriers in the Hughes Creek near Ruffy during the 1920s, and although subsequent captures occurred, they failed to establish (Argus, 30 September 1939; Halsall, 1979; Cadwallader, 1981; Cadwallader & Gooley, 1984).

In 1982, a detailed oral account of the fish present in the first quarter of the twentieth century on the upper Goulburn River and some of its major tributaries, was provided by angler R. D. (Bert) McKenzie. Bert, a long-time resident of the Ruffy area, and former secretary of the Ruffy Angling Club, lived next to the Hughes Creek, and retained knowledge of some fisheries in the catchment back to as early as 1908. The author and Colin Luker of *Native Fish Australia* met Bert quite by accident, and returned the following weekend with a tape recorder to record his recollections. These were subsequently published in *Freshwater Fishing* magazine (Trueman & Luker, 1992). Bert provided a compelling account of 'bluenose' (Trout cod) being common in the upper reaches of the Hughes and Seven Creeks upstream to major waterfall barriers. Bert recounted that in the 1920s 'bluenose' were present in the Big River above Eildon Weir, as well as being abundant in the Goulburn River between Thornton and Molesworth.

8.2 The Past Distribution of Fishes in the Goulburn River Catchment

The *Sustainable Rivers Audit* (Davies *et al.*, 2008) divided the Goulburn River Catchment into a lowland zone (downstream from Thornton), a slopes zone (upstream to near Knockwood), an upland zone (upstream to near Woods Point) and a montane zone beyond the latter location. However, the use of these altitude-defined zones in the catchment provides an inaccurate description of the habitat. The changes in river morphology occur at lower altitudes than those in the Murrumbidgee catchment, which were used as the basis for defining habitat zones in the audit. The valley of the Goulburn is confined, with a relatively narrow floodplain dominated by coarse gravel substrates as far downstream as Seymour. These features are typical of slopes habitats elsewhere in the Murray-Darling Basin. Below Seymour, the river enters a wide floodplain with extensive billabongs, taking on the physical form of a typical lowland river. Upstream of Seymour, slopes-type habitat extends to the Eildon area where billabong habitats largely disappear. The river originally flowed through a much narrower valley with extensive exposure of bedrock, and delineating the start of the upland zone. In the following discussion, the lowland zone is defined as downstream of Seymour, the slopes zone downstream of Eildon to Seymour, and the *Sustainable Rivers Audit* definition of the upland/montane zone boundary of 700m ASL is retained.

Most of the historical research in this catchment concentrated on the Goulburn River and its tributaries upstream of Nagambie. Limited research was undertaken in the lower reaches of the catchment, and additional research to locate oral, written and photographic records of native fish in this area is warranted. Much of the information presented is sourced from an extensive oral history (mainly OH 114-132), supported by information recorded in the journals of early European explorers, as well as a significant number of detailed newspaper accounts. A considerable number of old photographs of catches of native fish in this catchment have been located, including some excellent images of Trout cod.

8.2.1 The Montane Zone

Few historical accounts exist of the larger native fish species penetrating into the montane zone of the Goulburn River catchment. In-stream barriers in the form of waterfalls and steep gradients, prevented access to much of this zone. A newspaper article suggests that Blackfish were present and widespread, but were not

considered to be abundant (*Argus*, 20 January 1910). Cod and Macquarie perch in the early twentieth century were reported to have been present near the bottom of this zone up to a waterfall near the Dempsey gold mine at Gaffneys Creek (Mathews, OH 114), and probably reached a similar altitude in the nearby Goulburn River. This suggests that they probably had small incursions into the lower reaches of montane habitats where accessible.

8.2.2 *The Upland Zone*

Both cod and Macquarie perch were common in the upland zone of the Goulburn River at Knockwood in the early twentieth century, and in the middle Jamieson River upstream to Mitchells Creek up to the 1930s (*Jamieson Chronicle*, 14 November 1885, 10 December 1909; Mathews, OH 114). In the middle Jamieson River, Trout cod were taken, while in the lower reaches both types of cod were present. Cod were common in the Goulburn River near Jamieson, and in the early years of the twentieth century Trout cod were prevalent (Mathews, OH 114). Macquarie perch and Trout cod had been common in upland habitat in the Big River upstream to a waterfall barrier just above Enochs Point (Mathews, OH 114). Downstream near Taponga, Macquarie perch and Trout cod had been very common along with some Murray cod (Mathews, OH 114; McKenzie, OH 116 & 117; Stillman, OH 119).

In the Howqua River, Macquarie perch and cod were common upstream to at least the Sheeppark Flats area, and Max Mathews recalled that his father referred to the cod as 'bluenose', a name he also applied to Trout cod, which Max witnessed him capture in the nearby Goulburn River (Mathews, OH 114). Frank Moore recalled the capture of cod and perch in the Howqua River at Tobacco Flat (Moore, OH 115). In the Delatite River, cod were very common at Maintongoon (Forsyth, 1899), with fish as large as 57 lb. (25.9 kg) being taken near Bonnie Doon (*Argus*, 28 April 1874). In the 1930s, Trout cod and Macquarie perch were abundant in the Delatite River near Bracks Bridge, with Murray cod being commonly caught in this area as well (Mathews, OH 114). Photograph 8.1 dates from c1900 and shows of a catch of cod and Macquarie perch taken in the area, it may well contain images of both cod species (State Library Victoria H96.82/4, pi000763).

Cod and Macquarie perch were present in the Delatite River at least as far upstream as between Piries and Delatite (Moore, OH 115). When the original Eildon Weir filled in the early 1930s, Murray cod and Macquarie perch were abundant, and one of the people interviewed suggested that Trout cod were also present near the inflowing rivers (Mathews, OH 114; McKenzie, OH 117; Stillman, OH 119).

To the west, cod and perch penetrated into upland-type habitat in the King Parrot Creek. The 'cod and bream' translocated from the upper King Parrot Creek to the Yarra River catchment via the Plenty River in 1857 were sourced upstream of Hazeldene. In excess of 60 cod and 37 bream were collected in three trips, indicating that cod and Macquarie perch must have been common at that time (Wilson, 1857; *Argus*, 10 March 1928). The species of cod that was present is unknown, though ultimately both Murray cod and Trout cod established populations in the Yarra River (*Argus*, 8 September 1898). 'Bream' are recorded in a newspaper account as having once been present near Kilmore at the top of the Great Dividing Range, suggesting that Macquarie perch were also present in the area (*Argus*, 27 October 1929).

Blackfish were widespread and very common to abundant in the upland zone. Many small streams near Kilmore contained Blackfish, including the headwaters of the Sunday Creek (*Argus*, 27 October 1929). They were also abundant in the Seven Creeks and its tributaries on the Strathbogie Tableland (Halsall, 1977, 1979), as well as being common in the Howqua River (Mathews, OH 114; Moore, OH 115), the Big River at Taponga and Enochs Point (Mathews, OH 114). Prior to the First World War, Blackfish specimens taken from Hughes

Creek near Ruffy were up to fifteen inches in length (*Argus*, 1 January 1918), as well as being found in small creeks near Terip, Ruffy, Dropmore, Caveat, Tarcombe and Kobyboyn, along with 'silver minnows' (McKenzie, OH 118; *Argus*, 1 January 1918). Eels have been recorded in the upper reaches of the King Parrot Creek (*Argus*, 16 January 1917) and Acheron River (*Australian News for Home Readers*, 20 February 1867). One account suggests that Pygmy perch (*Nannoperca australis*) may have been present in a tributary of the Delatite described as 'Homes Creek', probably Howes Creek, near Mansfield (*Argus*, 6 March 1908). Overall, the historical evidence suggests that Blackfish and Macquarie perch were originally abundant in the upland rivers, with Trout cod being very common and Murray cod also having a significant presence.

8.2.3 The Slopes Zone

Cod were abundant in the slopes zone of the Goulburn River between Eildon and Seymour (*Argus*, 31 October 1849; 7 January 1902, 13 December 1923; *Alexandra Times*, 21 August 1868). They were also very common in some of the tributary rivers in the slopes zone. In the Acheron River cod were said to 'abound', and were found at least as far upstream as Buxton (*Argus*, 29 January 1867, 26 December 1922; McKenzie, OH 116; Kerr, OH 120). They were also common in the Rubicon River being taken up to 16 lb. in weight from that stream (*Alexandra and Yea Standard*, 29 January 1897, 24 December 1909; McKenzie, OH 116). Cod were recorded in the Yea River by Hume and Hovell (Bland, 1831), and newspaper accounts reported frequent captures of cod (*Yea Chronicle*, 27 February 1908), with one in 1898 stating that 'cod up to 25lb. weight being frequently landed from the Yea River, while lighter specimens are obtained in large numbers from the Murrindindi River' (*Argus*, 20 October 1898). They were common in the upper Yea River at Glenmore Station near Glenburn (*Yea Chronicle*, 27 February 1908).

Cod were also abundant in some of the larger creeks, including the Hughes Creek as far upstream as Dropmore and the Seven Creeks at Gooram (*Argus*, 1 January 1918; McKenzie, OH 116 & 117; Bain, OH 121; Jones, OH 128) *Euroa Gazette*, 30 April 21, 17 May 1921; McKenzie, OH 116 & 117), where one account records two anglers catching 30 lb. (13.6 kg) of small cod in an afternoon (*Argus*, 18 February 1915). They were also common in the Connellys Creek upstream of Acheron (Stillman, OH 119), the King Parrot Creek near Strath Creek (Bland, 1831; Bain, OH 121), and the Home Creek (Nicholson, OH 125). Small cod were very common in the Sunday Creek at Broadford (*Broadford Courier*, 22 January 1892; *Broadford Courier & Reedy Creek Times*, 15 December 1893) and it was reported that 'numerous' cod died at Broadford after a bushfire (*Argus*, 15 February 1890). They were also taken in the lower reaches near Seymour (Bell, OH 127). Cod were also common in the Sugarloaf Creek between Pyalong and Tallarook (*Broadford Courier & Reedy Creek Times*, 20 May 1904), with one angler in one day taking over 100 lb. (45.4 kg) of cod up to 28½ lb. (13 kg) each (*Broadford Courier & Reedy Creek Times*, 25 May 1906). Overall, cod were very common, and in some cases, abundant in lagoons along the Goulburn River, including some very large specimens (*Alexandra and Yea Standard*, 10 November 1877; Bell, OH 127; Stillman, OH 119).

Two individuals provided detailed accounts describing Trout cod as being far more common than Murray cod in the Goulburn River between Eildon and Trawool during the 1920s to early 1930s (McKenzie, OH 117; Bain, OH 121). A third person further supported their accounts (Bell, OH 126) and is provided from the oldest oral account recalling the species as being prevalent near Tallarook in the 1920s (Grattidge, OH 97). The presence of Trout cod in this section of the Goulburn River is confirmed by a museum specimen obtained near Thornton in 1960 (Berra & Weatherly, 1972; Photo BERRA7). Several high quality photos clearly record Trout cod captures at the time stated in the oral history at the 'Breakaway' between Thornton and Alexandra (State Library of Victoria, H2005.88 237-1), and near Molesworth (GR1-3) with lower quality images recording captures at Alexandra (GR22-23) and near Homewood (GR13).

In these random photographs from the 1920s, Trout cod appear to be prevalent and support the oral accounts on the abundance of Trout cod in the area. At Alexandra, Murray cod were very common in the larger, slower holes, with Trout cod being more prevalent in areas of moving water (Russell Stillman, pers. com.). Trout cod were also reported to be the prevalent cod species in the Acheron River, Seven and Hughes Creeks, though Murray cod were also taken (McKenzie, OH 116-118), and in the Yea River near Devlins Bridge (Hopkins, OH 122). The evidence points to Trout cod being abundant in the slopes zone upstream of Seymour, with Murray cod also being common, at least in the larger holes, with specimens up to 117 lb. (53.1 kg) being taken (Bain, OH 121).

Macquarie perch are reported to have been abundant in most habitats in the slopes zone. Newspaper accounts, supported by an extensive oral history, record 'bream' as being abundant in the Goulburn River at Thornton (*Alexandra Times*, 21 August 1868; McKenzie, OH 117), Alexandra (Stillman, OH 119; Photo GR22-23), Molesworth (*Argus*, 31 October 1867; McKenzie, OH 116-117) and Seymour (*Argus*, 31 October 1849; Bain, OH 121; Bell, OH 127). They were very common in the Acheron River, at least as far upstream as Buxton (*Argus*, 29 January 1867; Stillman, OH 119; Kerr, OH 120), in the Rubicon River downstream of Rubicon (*Alexandra & Yea Standard*, 29 January 1897), the King Parrot Creek upstream to near Hazeldene (Wilson, 1857; *Argus*, 8 November, 1910; Bain, OH 121), the Hughes Creek upstream to Tarcombe and Dropmore (McKenzie, OH 116), as well as in Connellys Creek near Acheron (Stillman, OH 119) and in the Sunday Creek upstream to at least Broadford (*Argus*, 15 February 1890; *Broadford Courier*, 22 January 1892; *Broadford Courier & Reedy Creek Times*, 15 December 1893; Bell, OH 127). They were abundant in the Yea River (*Yea Chronicle*, 27 February 1908; Hopkins, OH 122), with good catches being taken at Glenmore Station near Glenburn (*Yea Chronicle*, 27 February 1908). There were also present in the upper reaches between Kinglake and Glenburn (*Argus*, 22 January 1918). It was reported that near Yea 'it was not uncommon for half a dozen decent bream to be landed during the heat of the day' (*Yea Chronicle*, 16 December 1909), and in one account 97 fish were taken by a party of anglers in one day (*Yea Chronicle*, 23 December 1915). Macquarie perch were very common in lagoons near Alexandra, Molesworth and Seymour (*Yea Chronicle*, 6 April 1893, 4 February 1897; *Argus*, 25 January 1915; Stillman, OH 119; Bain, OH 121).

A number of newspaper accounts describe 'bream and perch' being present in the Goulburn River, suggesting that more than one type of perch was present (*Argus*, 22 February 1848, *Yea Chronicle*, 6 April 1893, 4 February 1897; October 1867, 7 January 1902). Langtry reported the presence of Golden and Silver perch upstream of the Goulburn Weir c1950, though he relied on second hand information (Cadwallader, 1977). There is a single first hand oral account of Golden perch at the bottom of the slopes zone from 93 year old Collin Bell, who caught a few in his youth at Seymour, dating the report to the 1920s (Bell, OH 126). Second-hand accounts suggest that Golden perch may have been captured near Thornton (McKenzie, OH 117), and a few fish were taken from the Eildon Weir in the 1930s when it first filled (Mathews, OH 114). Russell Stillman, says he never saw a Golden perch taken out of the Goulburn River near Alexandra until 2007, when he captured one himself. However, his father had indicated that prior to the First World War odd specimens were taken in this area (Russell Stillman, pers. com.). A newspaper account describes the species as having been fairly common at Seymour prior to the construction of the Goulburn Weir (*Argus*, 4 March 1913), but by 1911 they were so scarce that the presence of a dead specimen in the river at that location was considered newsworthy (*Argus*, 22 June 1911). A family oral history recalls that occasional Golden perch were taken in the middle reaches of the Hughes Creek, though Macquarie perch were prevalent (Wes Jeffries, pers. com.).

Silver perch were regularly taken at the bottom of the slopes zone in the Seymour area c1930 (Bell, OH 126). Russell Stillman in his lifetime did not see a single 'grunter' (Silver perch) caught near Alexandra, but recalled his father mentioning catching small numbers at intervals when he was very young (Russell Stillman, pers. com.). The rarity of Golden and Silver perch upstream of Seymour in the twentieth century may not be

indicative of their original abundance, as it has been suggested that the Goulburn Weir may have impeded upstream movement into this reach of river (*Argus*, 4 March 1913). There are early newspaper accounts of several types of perch or bream being regularly caught in small numbers in slopes habitat in the adjacent Campaspe catchment (*Argus*, 20 November 1908). The limited oral history suggests that both Golden perch and Silver perch were probably present, but relatively uncommon compared to Macquarie perch upstream of Seymour.

Oral histories record Catfish to have been very common in lagoons along the Goulburn River at Thornton (McKenzie, OH 117; Moore, OH 115), Alexandra (Stillman, OH 119), Molesworth (Moore, OH 115; Greg Dunkley, pers. com.), Tallarook (Bain, OH 121) and Seymour (Bell, OH 126), with these fish regularly taken from the Goulburn River itself (Stillman, OH 119; Bell, OH 126). Newspaper stories indicated that Catfish were the 'most numerous' fish caught in lagoons near Molesworth (*Yea Chronicle*, 6 April 1893, 4 February 1897). They were also present in lagoons adjacent to the Yea River (Evans, OH 90; Garlick, OH 123) as well as being in the Yea River itself (Moore, OH 115; McKenzie, OH 116; Garlick, OH 123; Hopkins, OH 122; Graeme Creed, pers. com.). Two photos record the capture of a Catfish at Alexandra, confirming the species presence in the slopes zone (GR22 & GR23). Blackfish were abundant in the Acheron River (*Argus*, 29 January 1867), and in lagoons adjacent to the river (*Argus*, 27 May 1927), as well as being found in the Rubicon River (*Alexandra & Yea Standard*, 29 January 1897), the King Parrot Creek (Garlick, OH 123; *Argus*, 8 November 1910), the Sunday Creek and tributaries upstream of Broadford (*Argus*, 22 October 1929), Whiteheads Creek and its tributaries near Seymour (Bell, OH 127; Ron Bell, pers. com.), the Goulburn River near Alexandra (Stillman, OH 119), Yark (*Argus*, 1 November 1929) and Seymour (*Argus*, 4 March 1913). They were also common in the Yea and Murrindindi Rivers (Garlick, OH 123; Evans, OH 90), as well as being abundant in lagoons and backwaters near Seymour (Bain, OH 121; *Argus*, 4 March 1913), Sheepwash Lagoon and other lagoons near Molesworth (Greg Dunkley, pers. com.; *Yea Chronicle*, 6 April 1893; *Yea Chronicle*, 4 February 1897).

8.2.4 The Lowland Zone

Cod were abundant along the length of the Goulburn River in the lowland zone with fish in excess of 120 lb. (54.4 kg) being taken (Hawdon, 1952; *Argus*, 5 January 1932; Cadwallader, 1977), and a fish of 190 lb. (86.2 kg) was found floating in the Goulburn Weir (*Argus*, 4 August 1953). In the major lowland tributaries on the eastern side of the catchment, such as the Seven and Hughes Creeks, cod were present in abundance with fish up to 56 lb. (25.4 kg) being taken. Even the smaller streams such as the Creighton, Castle and Faithfuls Creeks carried some cod (Halsall, 1979; McKenzie, OH 116-118). The western tributaries, including the Wanalta Creek and the Cornella Creek upstream to Ladys Pass near Heathcote, also contained good cod populations, including large fish (*Argus*, 28 January 1895), while creeks in the lower reaches such as the Warragul Creek near Stewarts Bridge also contained cod (*Argus*, 17 September 1929). There was an abundance of cod in larger swamps and lakes such as the 'Saltwater Lake' (Lake Corop) (*Argus*, 8 November 1881) and, after their construction and filling, the Goulburn Weir and the Waranga Basin had large cod, perch and Catfish populations, with the former supporting a commercial fishery (*Argus*, 3 December, 1914; McLeod, OH 130). Cod were also very common in lagoons (*Argus*, 1 January 1923).

The oral history suggests that at least since the 1930s Trout cod, while present, were taken in comparatively low numbers in the lowland reaches of the Goulburn River compared to upstream. They were caught between Seymour and Nagambie (Bell, OH 126; Bell, OH 127; Jones, OH 128; McLeod, OH 130), and at Murchison (Polkinghorne, OH 131), Shepparton (Trefall, OH 132) and near Stewarts Bridge (Laddie Clifford, pers. com.), but in all cases were described as less common than Murray cod. The main exception are the eastern tributaries such as the Hughes and Seven Creeks, where oral history suggests that Trout cod were abundant,

and Murray cod were present (McKenzie, OH 117 & 118). The recent (post 1930) oral history recalling a scarcity of Trout cod in the lowland Goulburn River contrasts with their recent successful reintroduction to the section of river between the Goulburn Weir and Murchison East, where they became common (Trout Cod Recovery Team, 2008). A newspaper article from the early 1920s describing the fishing in Lake Nagambie makes specific mention of the capture of 'Murrumbidgee trout', implying that they were not uncommon (*Argus*, 17 December 1921). Similarly, Bert McKenzie's recollections of small Trout cod being common in the faster areas of the irrigation channels near Shepparton in the 1920s, also implies a significant early presence (McKenzie, OH 117 & 118). Collectively the evidence, though limited, suggests that Trout cod may have originally been fairly common in the lowland Goulburn River, and were abundant in some tributaries.

The Goulburn River at Tahbilk and at Wahring just below the Goulburn Weir were the source locations for the translocation of thousands of Macquarie perch to other waters in the state (Cadwallader, 1981) clearly indicating that they were abundant. A feature article in the *Argus* on catching Macquarie perch at Wahring, estimated that on the opening morning of the season in 1921, three quarters of a tonne of Macquarie perch was angled from just one location (*Argus*, 3 December 1921). In the 1940s, Macquarie perch was one of the most abundant species in the Goulburn near Murchison and Shepparton (Fisheries and Wildlife Division Inspector Jim Crozier, pers. com.). Anglers recalled the species to have been very common at Tahbilk (Moore, OH 115), Murchison (Polkinghorne, OH 131; Hanley, OH 129), Shepparton (Trefall, OH 132) and near Stewarts Bridge (Laddie Clifford, pers. com.). They were abundant in some lowland creeks including the Seven and Hughes Creeks, and had a significant presence in the smaller tributaries such as the Creighton, Castle, Faithfuls and Majors Creeks (Halsall, 1979; McKenzie, OH 117 & 118; Moore, OH 115). Macquarie perch were very common in billabongs near Murchison (Polkinghorne, OH 131), and near Kyabrum 'bream, grunter and perch' were captured (*Argus*, 26 February 1918) implying that three perch species were present, including Macquarie perch. They were also present in large numbers in the Goulburn Weir and the Waranga Basin after their construction (*Argus*, 17 December 1921, 17 January 1923; McLeod, OH 130). A news article recorded that 'bream' were abundant in Lake Corop (*Argus*, 8 November 1881).

An early account originating prior to the construction of the Goulburn Weir, recorded the deaths of large numbers of 'perch and bream' in a lagoon at Nagambie (*Argus*, 9 April 1878). In 1895 out of a catch of 50 fish taken at the base of the Goulburn Weir only three were Golden perch the rest being 'bream' (*Euroa Advertiser*, 25 October 1895) but they had been 'very plentiful' in the Seven Creeks downstream of Euroa (*Euroa Advertiser*, 5 January 1917). Graeme McLeod recalled his father stating that Golden perch, while present, had not been very common at Nagambie c1920 (McLeod, OH 130). A newspaper account indicated that occasional captures were occurring in the lake in the 1920s (*Argus*, 17 December 1921). During translocation activities in the 1920s, Golden perch comprised about 5% of the perch captured from the Goulburn Weir (Cadwallader, 1981). Further downstream, Golden perch were abundant at Murchison, Shepparton and Stewarts Bridge (Polkinghorne, OH 131; Trefall, OH 132; Laddie Clifford, pers. com.). A newspaper article suggested that prior to the construction of the Goulburn Weir, Golden perch had been relatively common upstream (*Argus*, 4 March 1913). The overall evidence suggests that Golden perch had a modest presence at the top of the lowland zone, but steadily increased in numbers downstream, to become abundant downstream of Murchison.

A newspaper article in 1922 reported that one fish in 500 netted in the Goulburn Weir were 'grunter' (*Argus*, 28 July 1922), and during translocation activities in the 1920s, Silver perch comprised about 2.5% of the perch captured from the Goulburn Weir (Cadwallader, 1981). A newspaper account recorded that Silver perch were taken just below the Goulburn Weir in the 1920s (*Argus*, 3 December 1921). Oral history records that Silver perch were present, but uncommon in the Goulburn Weir in the 1920s (McLeod, OH 130). However, at times they were very common in the river and lagoons near Murchison (Hanley, OH 129; Polkinghorne, OH 131). At

Shepparton, they were present in such numbers that they were considered to be a pest (Trefall, OH 132). They were also abundant in the Goulburn River at Wyuna (Bell, OH 127) as well as being present in the Seven Creeks near Euroa (Halsall, 1979) and in the Waranga Basin (*Argus*, 17 January 1923). It appears that, like Golden perch, Silver perch also progressively increased in abundance downstream from Seymour.

Catfish were common in lagoons near Northwood and Tahbilk (Jones, OH 128; Hanley, OH 129), near Murchison (Polkinghorne, OH 131), and were described as 'plentiful' in lagoons near Toolamba (*Argus*, 18 November 1919) and 'abundant' in lagoons near Shepparton (Trefall, OH 132). In the Goulburn River itself, they were common at Mitchelton and Tahbilk (Jones, OH 128; Moore, OH 115) just below the Goulburn Weir (*Argus*, 3 December 1921), Majors Creek (Moore, OH 115) and the Warragul Creek near Stewarts Bridge (*Argus*, 17 September 1929). Catfish were abundant in the Goulburn Weir after it was filled, and it was recorded that on crosslines Catfish outnumbered the cod catch (*Argus*, 27 December 1921). Other accounts confirm that large numbers of fish were present (*Argus*, 21 October 1908; McLeod, OH 130). They were also present in irrigation channels near Shepparton (McKenzie, OH 117-118) and in the Waranga Basin (*Argus*, 17 January 1923). Overall, Catfish were abundant in static habitats such as billabongs, as well as being found within the river.

Blackfish were common in lowland creeks, including the Seven, Hughes Creeks, Creighton, Castle and Faithfuls Creeks (Halsall, 1979; McKenzie, OH 117-118), the Wappentake Creek near Costerfield (*Argus*, 1 February 1924) and the Warragul Creek near Stewarts Bridge where some large specimens were taken (*Argus*, 17 September 1929). They were also common in irrigation channels near Shepparton (Trefall, OH 132). Blackfish were also regularly taken from the Goulburn River in small numbers (Jim Hanley & Don Polkinghorne, pers. com.) and from Lake Nagambie (*Argus*, 13 December 1921). Bony Herring were present near Shepparton (Trefall, OH 132), and newspaper accounts reported their presence in lagoons near Kyabrum, as well as being in the Goulburn River at Warring (*Argus*, 23 January 1923, 3 December 1921). Two accounts record Lampreys, probably Short-headed lampreys (Lintermans, 2007), being taken from the Goulburn River in the Shepparton area (*Argus*, 7 April 1917, 6 May 1927), and Captain Cadell, one of the early pioneers of river navigation, observed a seal in the lower Goulburn River (*Hobart Mercury*, 8 May 1865).

8.2.5 Estimates of Native Fish Abundance in the Goulburn River Catchment at European Settlement.

Presented are the rarity scores used in the *Sustainable Rivers Audit* (Davies *et al.*, 2008) which were developed by an expert panel using historical evidence available prior to 2008. They indicate the probability of capturing a particular fish species using standardised survey techniques such as electrofishing. They are compared to those developed in the *True Tales of the Trout Cod* Project which uses more recently obtained historical evidence and is based on the typical size of angler catches in the oldest accounts.

Table 8.1 Goulburn River Catchment Rarity Scores (Main River Channels)

Species	Lowland (downstream of Seymour)		Slopes* (Seymour to Eildon)		Upland* (Eildon to 700m ASL)		Montane† (upstream of 700 m ASL)	
	SRA	True Tales	SRA	True tales	SRA	True Tales	SRA	True tales
Trout cod	3	3	3	5	3	3		L1?
Murray cod	5	5	3	3	0	U1		0
Golden perch	5	L5	3	1	0	0		0
Silver perch	3	L5	0	1	0	0		0
Macquarie perch	3	5	5	5	3	U3		L1?
Catfish	5	3	0	1	0	0		0
'Blackfish'	3	3	5	5	3	5		L3

Key

0 = Absent: no credible account reporting the species former presence

1 = Rare: a few individual fish could be expected to be taken by a resident angler each year

3 = Common: regularly taken by a resident angler in small numbers

5 = Abundant: frequently taken by a resident angler in good numbers

L = abundance at the lower end rating

U = abundance at the upper end rating

Ratings in bold type supported by multiple accounts or lines of evidence e.g. oral history, newspaper accounts, photographs

* Note: Some of the boundaries used for this zone are at a lower altitude than those used in the *Sustainable Rivers Audit*

† Note: The expert panel did not develop a set of species rarity scores in the montane zone in this catchment for the *Sustainable Rivers Audit*.

Figure 8.2

Historical Records for Murray cod and Trout cod in the Goulburn River Catchment

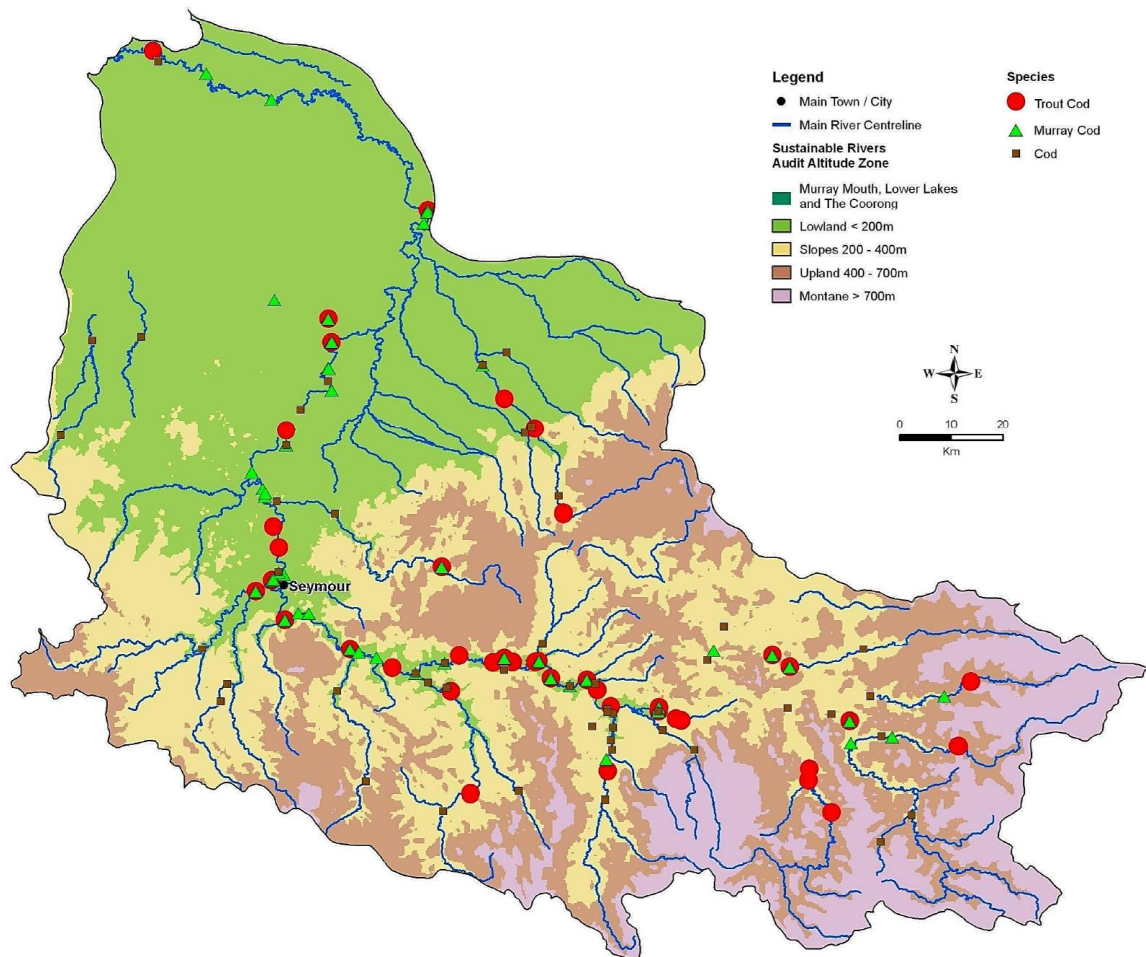
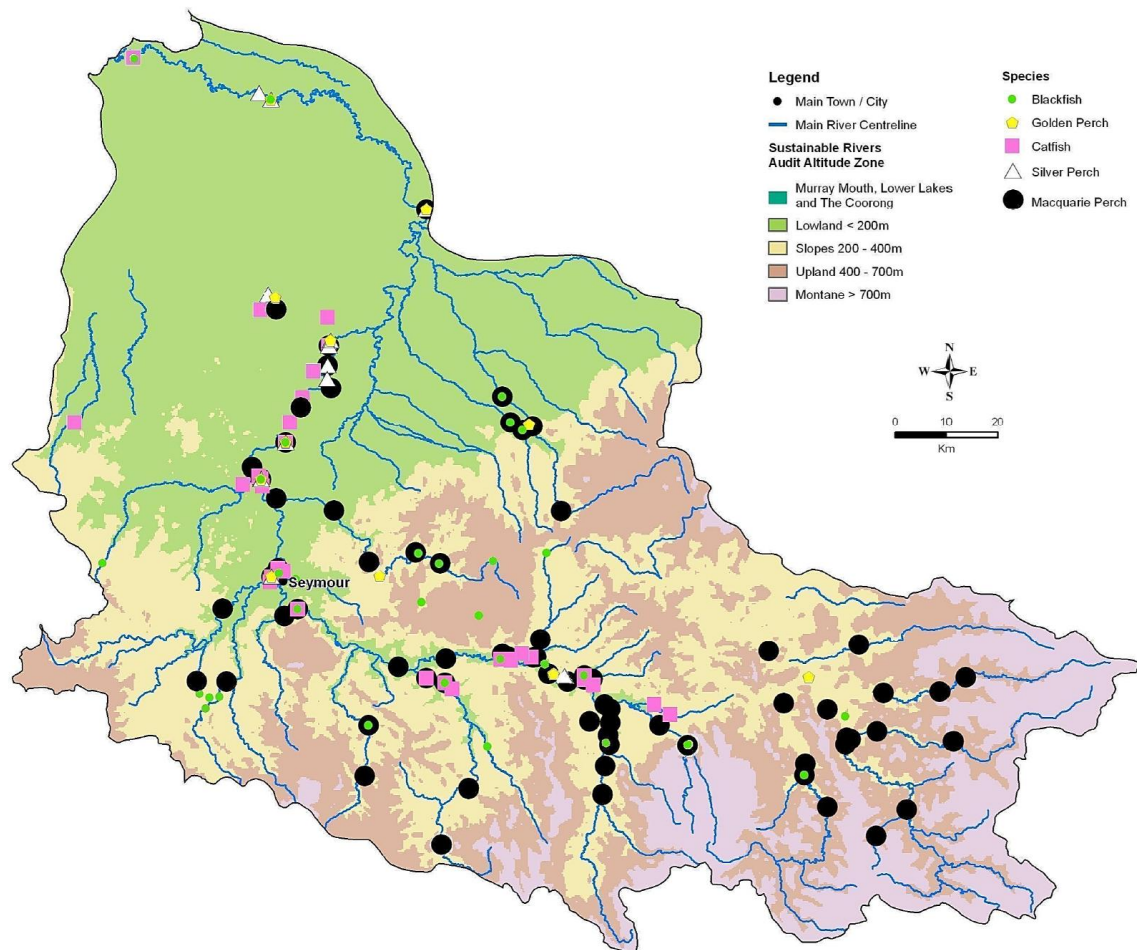


Figure 8.3
Catchment

Historical Records for Native Fish Species other than Cod in the Goulburn River



Photograph 8.1 An Upland Catch



Photo: State Library of Victoria, pi000763. Left: This photo is of a fishing party including Robert Forsyth Jnr. (back row, right) at Rosebank Farm on the upper Delatite near Howes Creek c1890-1910. The catch includes Macquarie perch and cod, probably both Murray cod and Trout cod. The fish held by the gentleman on right has a caudle peduncle covered in black dashes, the markings extend onto the belly, and the shape and proportion of the head all suggest it could be a Trout cod

Right: A close up of the fish in the box. It contains Macquarie perch, identified by their large scales and white eyes and a cod (bottom right), which has a straight head slope and is covered in spots and dashes, which is possibly a Trout cod. Max Mathews of Jamieson recalled the Delatite River to have once contained an abundance of 'bluenose' and Macquarie perch with Murray cod also being regularly captured. The photo demonstrates that cod and Macquarie perch were once abundant in the upland rivers of the Goulburn River Catchment. Photo from the collection of Robert Forsyth Jnr., reproduced with permission of the *State Library of Victoria*.

Photograph 8.2 Eildon Macquarie Perch



Top: Photo GR31. Part of a catch out of the original Eildon (Sugarloaf) Weir near Italian Gully by Ray Deal, Olly Johnson, Les Stillman and Russell Stillman from 10 am to 3.30 pm about 1930. In the photo are 61 Macquarie perch, 2 trout of about 8 lb.(3.6 kg) and a Murray cod. Large catches of Macquarie perch in later years on their spawning migration out of Lake Eildon into the inflowing rivers were legendary with catches at times being measured in tonnes. This photograph demonstrates that in the early years the Macquarie perch fishery in the weir was prolific.

Bottom: Photo GR28. A catch of trout and two 3 pound (1.4 kg) Macquarie perch caught on a Devon spinner at Savage's Flat, old Eildon Weir by Russel Stillman c1938. The lady on the left is Jane Mitchell. Both photos courtesy of Russell Stillman.

Photograph 8.3 Slopes Habitat in the Goulburn



Photo: State Library of Victoria, lc000065, H2005.88/66. This image taken by Lindsay Cumming records the Goulburn River between Thornton and Alexandra as it was around the 1920s. The *Sustainable Rivers Audit* classified the river in this area as being in the lowland zone though the habitat in the Goulburn River as far downstream as Seymour has all the key features of slopes habitats as apparent in this image. Bert McKenzie described how in the 1920s 'bluenose' were abundant in the rapid waters of the Goulburn River near Thornton. The Lindsay Cumming image of the catch of cod, including Trout cod, originated from this area. Clearly in the past this was excellent habitat for Trout cod.

Photograph reproduced with permission from the Lindsay G. Cumming collection, *State Library of Victoria*.

Photograph 8.4 Trout Cod on a Pole

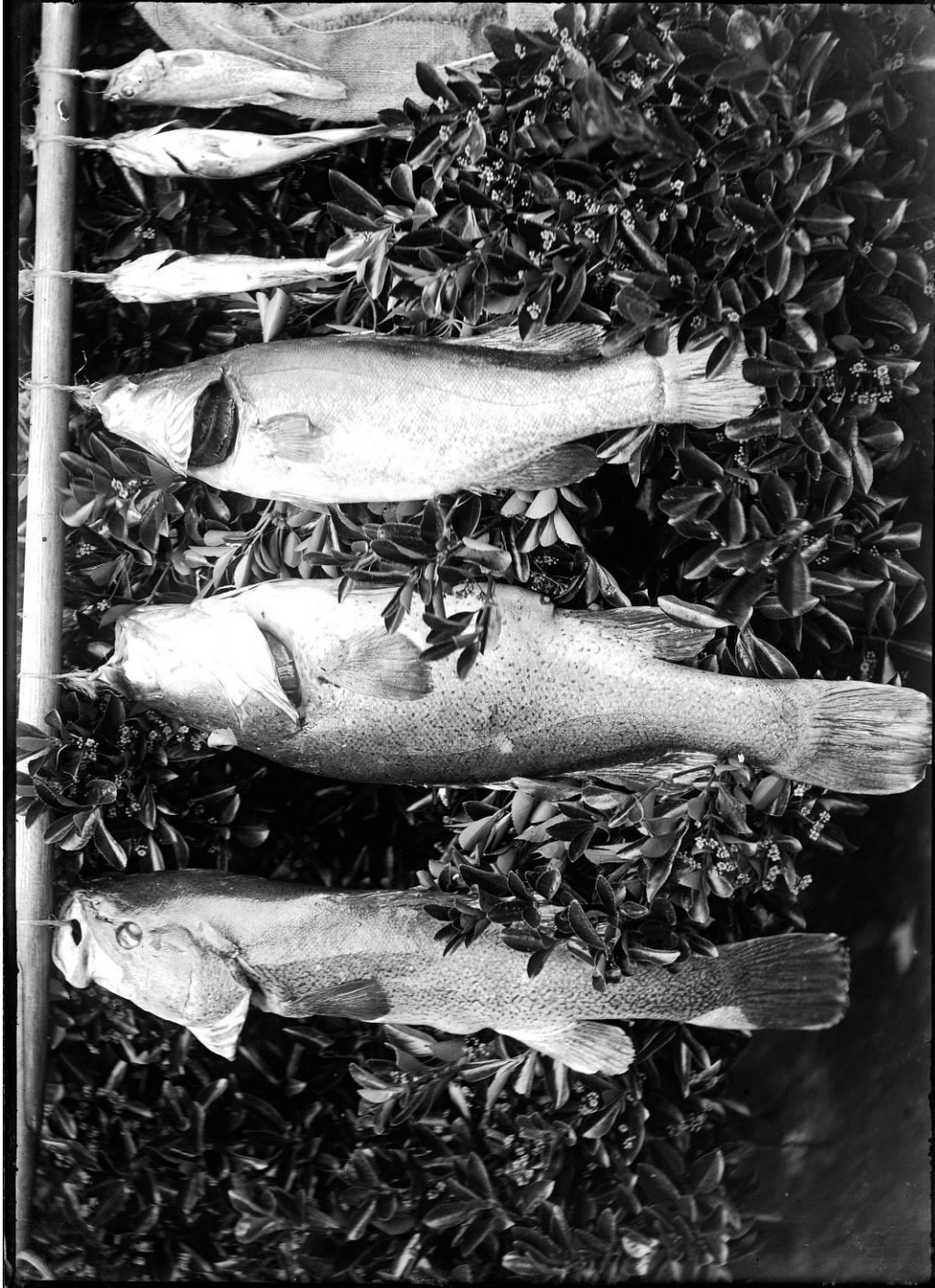


Photo: State Library of Victoria, H2005.88 237-1. 'Fish hanging on hooks on a pole'. This photo is from the Lindsay G. Cumming collection of glass negatives held by the *State Library of Victoria*. Advice from Russell Stillman, who was a friend of Lindsay, was that the photo was taken between Thornton and Alexandra on the Goulburn in the early 1920s. All the fish are cod and there are three Trout cod in the image being the 1st, 2nd and 6th fish from left to right distinguished by their markings as well as other features. The other fish cannot be identified with any certainty. This photograph is absolute proof of the former abundance of Trout cod in the slopes zone of the Goulburn River as described by Bert McKenzie and Ron Bain. Photo reproduced with the permission of the *State Library of Victoria*.

Photograph 8.5 A Morning's Catch at Alexandra



Photo GR 23. Contained in this historic photograph are images of all the larger native fish species once common in the Goulburn River at Alexandra. Dating from 1924, young Russell Stillman is present with his father Les Stillman on the right who angled these fish in one morning at Magee's Beach. Also present is Hector George on the left and Dorothy Fitzroy (Hill). Quite a number of Macquarie perch are visible on the left readily identified by their large scales and protruding lips, with a single Catfish present between Hector and Dorothy. The catch contains a mixture of Trout cod and Murray cod, the former being most apparent in front of Dorothy with their overhanging upper jaws, long pointed snouts and eye stripes visible. Russell recalled this catch to be typical at the time. He informed the author that, while he believed that Trout cod were prolific in the faster stretches of the Goulburn River near Alexandra, Murray cod were common in the larger holes. The image on the right shows a close up of the Catfish from a second photo of this catch (GR 22). These are the only surviving images of Catfish from the middle Goulburn River. Photo courtesy of Russell Stillman.

Photograph 8.6 Two Trout Cod at Molesworth



Photo GR3. The late Bert McKenzie recalled stories of Trout cod dominating the Goulburn River between Eildon and Molesworth during the 1920s. One of his favoured fishing spots was *Prospect Hill* near Molesworth. In this photo a young unknown visitor to *Prospect Hill* holds two Trout cod caught from the Goulburn River c1927. The photos in the Perry collection validate Bert McKenzie's accounts for the Goulburn River confirming his familiarity with the Trout cod and his status as a reliable witness. Photo courtesy of Muriel Perry.

Photograph 8.7 Prospect Hill Trout Cod



Left: Photo GR1. Thomas Bryan, original settler of *Prospect Hill*, Molesworth, with three cod caught from the Goulburn River c1927. The fish on the right is definitely a Trout cod clearly identified by the body markings. The fish in the centre is problematic, having a bleached/mottled area on its flank through contact with the ground or the other fish. Spots still remain visible in the dorsal region and on the head. Right: Photo GR2. Two more cod taken from *Prospect Hill* during the 1920s. The body markings apparent in enlarged images indicate that both are Trout cod. Both photos courtesy of Muriel Perry.

Photograph 8.8 Homewood Cod Catch



Left: Photo GR13. A catch of cod from Bryant's property near Homewood in the early 1930s titled 'The Fish Kings'. On the right is Arthur Bryant while the person on his left is a member of the Draper family. The cod on the left exhibit strongly pointed snouts while those on the right appear to have overhanging upper jaws (two fish enlarged, Centre & Right). The overall impression from their morphology is that most of these fish could be Trout cod. This photo appears to support angler recollections that small Trout cod were abundant down to Trawool c1930. Photo courtesy Yvonne Finch and Ray Hopkins.

Photograph 8.9 The McLeod's Livelihood



DEC 1945-6 Season.	1945-6. Season.
5 20. 9. 6. 5. 4. 4. 3	13 8. 5. 5. 3
6 7. 6. 4	14 7. 7. 4. 4
8 10	15 24. 7
11 6	17 17. 6
17 8	19 16
18 3. 2	20 5-
20 30. 22. 10. 7. 7. 5. 5. 3	21 9. 8. 8. 8. 8. 7. 9
23 30. 8. 7. 5. 4	22 6.
29 20. 7.	24 9. 7. 5
30 6.	F. 12. 5. 46
31 8. 7. 7. 7. 6. 4. 13	2 7
JAN 1946	6 8. 6. 8
2 13. 6. 5. 3. 2	9 11. 4
3 17. 6. 5. 4. 7. 5. 4	10 3. 6. 8. 9.

Top: Photo GR65. Commercial fishermen Andrew (left) and Graeme McLeod with two Murray cod caught from Lake Nagambie c1940. The McLeod's had no need for nets, angling cod as a livelihood.

Bottom: Photo GR70. Part of Graeme McLeod's fishing diary commencing in December, 1945. The figures record the weight in pounds of individual cod. The lake once supported a superb native fishery containing an abundance of Murray cod, Macquarie perch and Catfish, with some Golden and Silver perch and Trout cod. Both Photos courtesy of Graeme McLeod and Wally Cubbin.

8.3 The Changes

8.3.1 *Changes to Native Fish Distribution and Abundance*

In the montane zone, Blackfish declined in abundance early in the twentieth century (*Argus*, 20 January 1910) while cod and Macquarie perch had disappeared from Gaffney's Creek by the Great Depression (Mathews, OH 114). In the upland zone, Macquarie perch and cod have not been reported in newspapers or by anglers from the upper King Parrot Creek upstream of Hazeldene in the twentieth century. By the 1930s, a significant decline in the abundance of cod and Blackfish had occurred in the Jamieson, Big, Howqua and upper Goulburn Rivers (Mathews, OH 114). After the filling of the original Eildon Weir sometime in 1930, Murray cod were abundant, though by the 1940s they had become relatively scarce (Moore, OH 115; Stillman, OH 119). By the 1950s, cod were rarely taken from the upland rivers (Mathews, OH 114; Moore, OH 115). After the filling of the enlarged Eildon Dam in 1956, there was a substantial, but short lived expansion of the Macquarie perch population in the lake, though they still remained scarce in the rivers, except on their annual spawning migration (McKenzie, OH 117; Mathews, OH 114; Stillman, OH 119). Less than a decade after the enlarged Lake Eildon began to fill, small Macquarie perch had virtually disappeared from its waters, and most of the fish caught on their spawning migrations were large, old fish. Macquarie perch were effectively extinct in Lake Eildon by the late 1960s (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977).

In the slopes zone, Golden perch had become rare near Seymour by 1913 (*Argus*, 4 March 1913), and there are no reports of either Golden perch or Silver perch in this zone after the early 1930s. Trout cod rapidly declined in abundance in the Hughes Creek after a major flood in 1916, and were rare by the end of the 1920' (McKenzie, OH 117-118). Macquarie perch and Trout cod were abundant in the Goulburn River between Eildon and Trawool until the late 1920s. In 1928, cod were described as being 'numerous' at Thornton (*Argus*, 15 August 1928), while in the same year two anglers near Seymour caught 21 'large bream' averaging 2½ lb. (1.1 kg) (*Argus*, 19 September 1928). By the middle 1930s, Trout cod were scarce, and fewer, larger cod of both species were taken. Macquarie perch were still taken regularly, but in much smaller numbers with good catches being described as 'practically only a memory' (*Argus*, 21 August 1937; Stillman, OH 119; Russell Stillman, pers. com.; Ron Bain, pers. com.; Garlick, OH 123; Morris, OH 124). Attempts at collecting Macquarie perch at Kerrisdale in 1933 for translocation resulted in the capture of only 24 fish (Cadwallader, 1981). Cod and Macquarie perch also declined in the Acheron River after the 1920s, and had vanished by the 1950s (Kerr, OH 120).

Catfish underwent a serious decline in abundance, becoming scarce by the end of the 1930s (*Argus*, 10 December 1929; Bain, OH 121; Bell, OH 126; Bell, OH 127; McLeod, OH 130; Russell Stillman, pers. com.) with occasional captures near Seymour and in the lower Yea River into the early 1950s (Jones, OH 128; Graeme Creed, pers. com.). Small cod had become very scarce near Seymour and Alexandra by the 1950s (Bell, OH 127; Stillman, OH 119), and by the 1980s the cod fishery near Seymour had declined to the point where anglers no longer fished for them, with rare captures taking place upstream (Hanley, OH 129). The last reported capture of a Trout cod occurred at Big Hill near Thornton in 1960 (Berra, 1974). In the 1940s, Macquarie perch were rare near Seymour (Bell, OH 127) and uncommon at Cathkin, Alexandra and in the Yea River (Garlick, OH 123; Russell Stillman, pers. com.). By the 1970s, they had disappeared from the Yea River (Ray Hopkins, pers. com.), and were rarely taken near Ghin Ghin (Hanley, OH 129). By the 1990s, they were rarely taken at Trawool, and a relic population remained in the lower reaches of the King Parrot Creek downstream of Flowerdale (Authors pers. obs.).

In the lowland zone, cod had become scarce by the 1930s in the lower reaches of the Seven Creeks (Cadwallader, 1979). Murray cod were very common in the Goulburn Weir into the 1940s (McLeod, OH 130),

but by the 1950s, juvenile cod had become scarce between Seymour and Nagambie (Jim Hanley, pers. com.). A noticeable decline in catches of cod had also occurred in the Goulburn River downstream of the Goulburn Weir by the 1960s (Don Polkinghorne & Laddie Clifford, pers. com.). In the late 1920s, many hundreds of Macquarie perch were captured on several occasions near Wahring and Tahbilk for translocation, however, by 1934 only a few dozen were being taken (Cadwallader, 1981), and the species disappeared near Murchison and Shepparton during the 1970s (Hanley, OH 129; Polkinghorne, OH 131; Trefall, OH 132). Catches of Golden perch and Silver perch declined in the lower Goulburn by the 1960s (Jim Hanley, Don Polkinghorne, Ken Trefall & Laddie Clifford, pers. com.).

Catfish underwent a decline by the 1930s (*Argus*, 10 December 1929), but were still regularly taken in the Goulburn Weir until the 1940s, when a further decline was evident (McLeod, OH 130). Captures of Catfish continued in the Goulburn Weir until the 1980s, after which they were rare (Wally Cubbin, pers. com.; Author's pers. obs.). By the 1950s they had become scarce in the lower Goulburn River and billabongs (Don Polkinghorne, pers. com.). Occasional captures of Catfish occurred in the Cornella Creek in the 1990s (Author's pers. obs.).

8.3.2 Changes to Habitat

From the 1850s onwards, extensive land clearing occurred throughout the Goulburn catchment (GBCMA, 1999) and these activities eventually led to serious silting problems in the northern half of the catchment with the Hughes Creek filling with silt after a flood in 1916 (McKenzie, OH 117-118). Other granite creeks suffered the same fate, the process continuing up till the present time (Davis & Finlayson, 2000). The silting of the middle Hughes and Seven Creeks was a major factor responsible for the decline of native fish populations in those streams (McKenzie, OH 117-118; Cadwallader, 1979). The gold rush also had a major impact on the aquatic environment, particularly in the upland zone in the Jamieson and upper Goulburn Rivers where extensive alluvial workings occurred (Flett, 1979). Hydraulic sluicing and bucket dredging occurred in the Jamieson area from 1907 onwards, though was not used as extensively as in the Ovens catchment (Victorian Government 1907). The 1939 bushfires impacted upon the catchment with increased silting of the rivers and the Eildon Weir (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977). In the lowland reaches of the Goulburn River de-snagging work was carried out to make the river navigable by paddle steamers at least as far upstream as Seymour. Extensive de-snagging took place in the Shepparton area during the mid-1870s (Mudie, 1961) and near Murchison in 1878 (Warwick Finlay, Murchison Historical Society, pers. com.) and some de-snagging occurred between Nagambie and Seymour in 1879 (*Australasian Sketcher*, 30 August 1879; Mudie, 1961). During the 1930s, trees and snags were removed from the Rubicon River and UT Creek (*Argus*, 26 March 1936), and in the 1950s snags were removed from the Acheron River as part of flood mitigation works (Kerr, OH 120).

The Goulburn was the subject of one of Victoria's earliest attempts at an irrigation scheme, including the construction of the Goulburn Weir near Nagambie between 1887 and 1891. The weir diverted water to a downstream irrigation channel system and into the Waranga Basin, reducing flows in the Goulburn River to such an extent that it made passage of river boats difficult (Mudie, 1961). It was suggested that the weir was responsible for the loss of Golden perch upstream (*Argus*, 4 March 1913). Mass deaths of Catfish were reported in the weir at Nagambie during 1908, with a description of the moribund fish having a slimy growth over their eyes implicating a disease agent (*Argus*, 21 October 1908), and another large kill occurred during the 1920s (McKenzie, OH 117-118).

Towards the end of World War One, construction commenced on the original Eildon (Sugarloaf) Weir and was completed in 1927. In April 1929, part of the rear of the wall subsided, sparking fears of the structure failing

and flooding the Goulburn Valley. Further slippages occurred, and for next two years remedial work was carried out to the wall (*Argus*, 29 July 1930, 8 January 1931). While cod and perch populations flourished in the early years of the weir, a number of contemporary newspaper accounts reported that it had a severe negative impact on downstream populations of native fish. In 1927 when the weir was completely drained, cod and other fish died in their thousands. The water that was released was described as ‘thick and turbid’ and ‘muddy’ (*Argus*, 8 July 1927; 9 July 1927; Russell Stillman, pers. com.). In 1929, a very large kill of cod occurred as far downstream as the Goulburn Weir, and this event may also have been associated with another draining of the weir for repair work (*Argus*, 24 July 1929, 20 November 1929, 10 December 1929). The poor quality of the water released in 1929 was linked to bushfire events the previous summer. These bushfires resulted in the deposition of nearly half a metre of silt in the weir, with the Goulburn being described as ‘heavily burdened with a load of silty mud’ (*Argus*, 6 April 1929). Pollution of water attributed to paper mills in Broadford generated an enormous fish kill in the Sunday Creek in February 1919 with the density of dead cod and perch recorded as 540 fish per half mile (*Euroa Advertiser*, 28 February 1919). After that time there have been few reports of cod or Macquarie perch in the Sunday Creek.

By the mid 1930s near Alexandra, Trout cod were rare, Macquarie perch scarce, and fewer larger Murray cod were taken (Russell Stillman, pers. com.). The *Argus* published a feature article entitled *Vanishing Fish: Goulburn River Mystery* and implicated one factor in the decline of native fish as being changes to flows in the river causing poor recruitment of native species, while favouring the proliferation of Redfin perch (*Argus*, 21 August 1937). Overfishing was also suggested as contributing to the decline of native fish in the Goulburn River (McKenzie, OH 117; *Argus*, 21 August 1937, 24 August 1937), as well as to the loss of Macquarie perch in Lake Eildon where at times catches of several tonnes per week were reported from the feeder rivers in the late 1950s (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977).

Major kills of Macquarie perch and cod occurred in the Eildon Weir during the 1930s and were attributed to outbreaks of ‘fungoid’ diseases and ‘white spot’ (*Argus*, 18 December 1937; Stillman, OH 119; Trueman, 2007). The original Eildon Weir was subsequently enlarged by the Big Eildon Dam project in 1956, making it one of the largest impoundments in the Murray-Darling Basin. It dramatically altered the flow regime in the Goulburn River downstream, which also experienced significant thermal pollution. Summer temperatures were variously reported as being reduced from about 5 to 11 °C. This resulted in the failure over many seasons in the river between Eildon and the Goulburn Weir to reach the temperature thresholds for some species of native fish to spawn (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977; Ryan *et al.*, 2001).

Trout were introduced to the Goulburn catchment in the Kilmore area in 1872, in 1881 into Snobs Creek, Little River near Taggerty, Fishers Creek near Narbethong, Taggerty River and the Delatite River, where they rapidly developed self-supporting populations (Ritchie, 1988). Early attempts to introduce trout to the Jamieson River were a failure, and it was not until just prior to the First World War that Brown and Rainbow trout became established (*Jamieson Chronicle*, 29 April 1910, 23 June 1911, 5 December 1913). Trout were introduced to the upper Seven Creeks in 1886, but did not develop into a self-supporting population, and had to be maintained by ongoing hatchery releases (Cadwallader, 1979; Halsall, 1979). The fish were also introduced into tributaries of the Yea River in 1898 (*Argus*, 20 October 1898), and were also regularly stocked into some lowland waters such as the Waranga Basin, where they were first introduced in 1908 (*Argus*, 25 May 1908).

In the slopes zone, trout had become abundant in the major tributaries by the end of the 1920s, and were common in the Goulburn River itself downstream to near Alexandra (McKenzie, OH 117; Stillman, OH 119; Kerr, OH 120). Downstream of Alexandra the river was marginal for trout, with only small numbers being taken from time to time. The construction of the Eildon Dam in 1956 changed this and trout became abundant to Yea, and regularly taken between Yea and Nagambie (Ray Hopkins, Ron Bain & Wally Cubbin, pers. com.).

The introduction of trout to the upper reaches of the catchment was associated with a decline in Blackfish populations (*Argus*, 20 January 1910) as well as negatively impacting on translocated cod and perch in the upper Hughes Creek (*Argus*, 30 September 1939). The decline of cod and Macquarie perch populations in upland areas was linked to the proliferation of trout, with evidence of predation of Macquarie perch and Blackfish (Mathews, OH 114). Cadwallader (1979) reported a negative correlation between the distribution of Trout cod and Brown trout in the upper Seven Creeks, and suggested that trout had played a role in the disappearance of the Trout cod population upstream of Polly McQuinn's Weir. Kearn (1994), relying on uncited anecdotal evidence, suggested that the Polly McQuinn Weir was responsible for the loss of the Trout cod population by inundating a breeding area. Polly McQuinn Weir was constructed in 1933, and the wall was raised slightly in 1949 (Halsall, 1977). However, trout cod remained common in the weir during the 1950s, with juvenile museum specimens being sourced from it in the 1960s (O'Connor, OH 111; Barnie Kipping, pers. com.; Berra, 1974), so the construction of the weir does not correlate with the disappearance of Trout cod. The weir was completely drained in 1962 and in 1963 was stocked with 3500 Brown trout yearlings (Halsall, 1977). The following year the upper Seven Creeks was stocked with 120,000 trout (Cadwallader, 1979). Trout cod have not been subsequently reported above Polly McQuinn Weir (Cadwallader, 1979).

In 1872, Redfin perch were first introduced to the catchment into two reservoirs at Kilmore (*Argus*, 2 March 1872). They were released into Lake Cooper around 1880 (*Argus*, 8 November 1881), and from 1893 were stocked in Goulburn River irrigation channels to control crayfish becoming established (*Argus*, 18 December 1893). By 1895, they were present in abundance in both Lake Cooper and the Waranga Basin (*Argus*, 11 February 1895; 3 December 1914). They were also released into the Seven Creeks at Euroa in 1903 (Halsall, 1979; Cadwallader, 1979), and local anglers released small numbers of Redfin perch into the upper reaches of the Seven Creeks during the 1920s. This time they failed to establish (Barnie Kipping, pers. com.). Redfin were also present in some farm dams upstream of Eildon prior to the 1950s (Mathews, OH 114).

At the start of the twentieth century, Redfin perch were widespread but uncommon below the Goulburn Weir, with the exception of the lakes near Rushworth. A specimen caught near Murchison in 1910 required assistance from a newspaper to help with its identification, and was obviously considered unusual (*Argus*, 16 December 1910), but by 1917 they were reported to be present at times at Wahring 'in thousands' (*Argus*, 31 August 1917). They were first reported at Seymour in 1911 (*Argus*, 5 May 1911), the following year were reported to be present but scarce in the Goulburn Weir (*Argus*, 2 December 1912), and by late 1926 only had a minor presence in the Weir (*Argus*, 28 December 1926). By the mid 1930s, they dominated the static waters of billabongs between Eildon and Nagambie, and the Goulburn Weir. The fish were very common in the river itself, and were associated with the decline of cod and perch populations (*Argus*, 27 October 1929, 10 December 1929, 21 August 1937, 5 November 1938; McLeod, OH 130; Bell, OH 126; Bell, OH 127). It has been suggested that Redfin perch appeared in large numbers after the filling of the enlarged Eildon Dam in 1956 and were one of the factors responsible for the subsequent decline of Macquarie perch (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977). A newspaper account indicates that Redfin perch were proliferating in Eildon Dam in 1947, well before its enlargement (*Alexandra and Yea Standard*, 28 November 1947). Redfin perch increased significantly in abundance in the middle Goulburn River during the 1960s when they came to dominate the river between Alexandra and Shepparton (Stillman, OH 119; Polkinghorne, OH 131).

Goldfish were recorded as being present in the Murray River near Barmah by 1873 (*Mount Alexander Mail*, 26 April 1873) and are likely to have been present in the lower Goulburn River after that time. Ongoing introductions took place, including Lake Cooper c1880 (*Argus*, 8 November 1881) and creeks near Violet Town during the late 1800s (Chambers, 1985). They were introduced into the Eildon Weir during the early 1930s to provide a food supply for other fish (Trueman, 2007). English roach were reported from the lower Goulburn

near Kyabrum in the 1920s (*Argus*, 23 January 1923), and in the 1960s appeared in Lake Eildon where they established a large population (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977). By the early 1970s, European carp arrived in the lower Goulburn River and eventually spread upstream to above the Goulburn Weir and to Lake Eildon (Cadwallader & Rogan, 1977).

8.4 The Current Situation

The Sustainable Rivers Audit concluded that 'the Goulburn Valley community had the equal-lowest Fish Index of all Valleys' of the Murray-Darling Basin, and that it in terms of the reference conditions for native fish that 'Extreme Differences prevailed in the Slopes and Upland Zones, and a Very Large (+) Difference in the Lowland Zone' concluding that:

the Goulburn Valley fish community was in Extremely Poor Condition. Alien species were 63% of total biomass and 58% of total abundance. The community had lost most of its native species richness and was dominated by alien fish, mainly trout (Davies et al., 2008).

Bert McKenzie found it inconceivable that the prolific numbers of fish between Eildon and Seymour were now gone; a sad reflection on what was once Victoria's most important native fishery. With a handful of small exceptions, the populations of Trout cod, Murray cod and Macquarie perch that inhabited the slopes and upland zones are now extinct. The translocated Trout cod and Macquarie perch populations in the Seven Creeks persists between Polly McQuinn's Weir and the Gooram Falls area, a relic population of Murray cod exists in the lower Delatite River, and relic Macquarie perch populations survive in the King Parrot and Hughes Creeks. The King Parrot Creek also contains good populations of River Blackfish in the lower reaches and Two-spined Blackfish in the upper reaches, the latter being the most westerly occurrence of Two-spined Blackfish. Translocations have also re-established small Macquarie perch populations in the Yea and Murrumbidgee Rivers and Lake Eildon. A relic population of Catfish exists in Tahbilk Lagoon, with occasional captures in the Goulburn Weir and the river downstream. Below the weir Murray cod, Golden perch and Silver perch have recovered to become common, though Macquarie perch are extinct.

From the 1980s, stockings have re-established a substantial population of Murray cod in Lake Eildon. Large numbers of Golden perch have also been stocked into the lake in an area where they were originally very rare. Trout cod were successfully introduced to the Goulburn River between the Goulburn Weir and Murchison during the mid-1990s with evidence of spawning and recruitment taking place (Koster *et al.*, 2004). A large fish kill which took place in January 2004 through uncertain causes (Perriss, 2004) impacted upon the population, though angler reports suggest that the population persists. Trout cod were also stocked into the lower Hughes Creek but failed to establish. Recent reports suggest that small numbers of Trout cod, possibly originating from the Hughes Creek stocking, are now present in the Goulburn River from Tahbilk to Molesworth.

The Black Saturday bushfires of February 2009 burnt out much of the headwaters of the catchment including the upper King Parrot Creek. A rescue operation was undertaken that resulted in 59 Macquarie perch being removed from the creek and housed in ponds at the Snobs Creek Hatchery near Eildon to prevent total loss of the population due to the anticipated reduced water quality. Since the fires, Macquarie perch have been detected as far upstream as Flowerdale, and there is evidence that the population has since reproduced (Ayres, 2009). The fish removed from the King Parrot Creek were returned in December 2009. A similar rescue operation was undertaken with Macquarie perch in the drought affected Hughes Creek, and with Barred galaxiids from some montane streams affected by bushfires in the Goulburn Catchment (Hames *et al.*, 2010).

8.5 Newspaper Highlights

Argus, 31 October 1849

A fish, weighing forty-three pounds, was caught by Mr. Smith, proprietor of the Seymour Hotel, about a week since, being the largest that has been caught in this neighbourhood for several years. The Goulburn abounds in fish, mostly cod and bream, also cray fish /

Argus, 29 January 1867

The Acheron abounds in a variety of fine fish—cod, black-fish, bream, &c.

Argus, 31 October 1867

We have received the following letter from our correspondent at the Palestine diggings. / I've fallen in love with these ranges. Besides, there's plenty of cod, and bream, and perch in the river, and lots of old 'covies' like him. I'm a sittin' upon to be got any day you like to go after them.

Alexandra Times, 21 August 1868

The lot of fish brought in from the Goulburn yesterday, to Messrs Hames and Asgbe's, was a treat to look at. There were two cod about 30 lb each, about a dozen smaller ones from 3 to 15 lb, and about half-a-dozen perch averaging about 3 lb each. There appears to be only one man employed in fishing at present. We imagine that there is plenty of room for another, as it is scarcely possible that one can supply the whole township.

Argus, 28 April 1874

Country News. / Says the Mansfield Guardian:- "We have had the opportunity of seeing a very fine fish of the cod species, on Thursday. It would appear Messrs. G. G. Clarke and Son have been prospecting for some time in the vicinity of the Devil's River, about 12 miles from Doon. / Upon being weighed it turned the beam at 57lb. Its length from snout to tail was 3ft. 8in., and the circumference at the shoulders 30in. / in the Devil's River the oldest resident in this district has never heard of one being hooked before that weighed near 57lb."

Argus, 9 April 1878

Country News. The Goulburn Valley Advocate states that on April 1 thousands of fish were caught in the Nagambie lagoon. It is thought that they found their way into the lagoon from the overflow of the Goulburn river during the late fresh, and were not able to return. They consisted chiefly of bream and perch.

Jamieson Chronicle, 14 November 1885

Another of the sporting expeditions which occasionally rally forth from Jamieson, took place on Saturday afternoon last, but this time the pleasure seekers were not after game, but displayed a number of fishing rods sticking out from behind the dray / and made a start early on Saturday afternoon, arriving safely at the fishing ground – just below Bryce's, on the Goulburn – about four, and, we are informed, a start was made to fish, with the result that by the time it got thoroughly dark, some nice bream had been bagged. / We are informed that some fine fish were on the lines and amongst them a cod of 15 7/8 lbs. / we saw the large cod, and though we also saw the whole of the fish, weighed – and they amounted to 40lbs. weight – still we did not see them actually taken from the water.

Argus, 15 February 1890

Country News. Broadford, Friday. Large numbers of fish in the Sunday Creek, which flows through the township of Broadford, have been sickened by the flow of burnt grass and ashes which were washed into the creek by a storm which broke on Wednesday over the area burnt by the late bush fires about four miles above

the township. Hundreds of fish could be seen swimming down stream on top of the water endeavouring to escape from the black inky-looking fluid. All sorts of weapons were brought into requisition to catch them with, such as garden-rakes, pitchforks, buckets, waddies, &c. Several large cod 10lb. and 15lb. in weight were shot with guns, 6lb. and 7lb. fish being quite numerous. Some splendid bream 2lb. in weight were raked out of the water. Crayfish in large numbers crawled up the banks and on to logs.

Broadford Courier, 22 January 1892

Fishing in the Sunday Creek. – Notwithstanding all that is said, fish do evidently manage to exist below the Paper Mill. On Wednesday morning Messrs. Eaton and T. Marchbank spent a very profitable hour and a half mile below it during which they succeeded in hooking out some 30 lbs of fine cod and bream, the largest weight 8 pounds. The anglers attribute their luck principally to the peculiar condition of the atmosphere prevailing at the same time. Another party caught 30lbs the same afternoon near the same place and they state there was practically no limit to the quantity obtainable.

Argus, 28 January 1895

The Rodney Fisheries. That the Cornella Creek contains some fine fish Mr. J. Furphy proved to his own satisfaction a few days ago by landing one of 38lb., two of 36lb. each, and one of 35lb., or an aggregate of 145lb. weight for four fish.

Argus, 11 February 1895

A Fishing Haul. Rushworth, Saturday. T. Williams and P. Spence had some splendid fishing on Lake Cooper on Saturday afternoon, they securing no less than 443 English perch, weighing 1cwt. 3qr. 5lb. A company of five from Rochester also managed to catch 227lb.

Yea Chronicle, 4 February 1897

Molesworth. / Fishing seems to be good just now about here, and I am more than surprised that some of your numerous ardent disciples of the sport do not try the lagoons. They are nearly always certain to yield fair sport – catfish, known as Murray ling, being most numerous of course, but I have seen some fine specimens of bream, blackfish (small) and perch got out of them.

Argus, 20 October 1898

Trout For The Yea River. / Already good fish are caught in the district, cod up to 25lb. weight being frequently landed from the Yea River, while lighter specimens are obtained in large numbers from the Murrindindi River.

Argus, 7 January 1902

Alexandra, — Messrs. T. Wood, A. E. Stillman, and H. Johnson, fishing in the Goulburn River, near Thornton, on Friday, caught upwards of 120lb. weight of fish, chiefly cod, bream, and perch, being the biggest day's haul this season for three lines.

Argus, 21 October 1908

An extraordinary mortality is occurring among the catfish in the Nagambie Lake, and at the last meeting of the Goulburn Shire Council it was stated that for half a mile along the lake frontage people could not approach because of the awful stench. It was stated in the Rushworth "Chronicle" that thousands of these fish have been stranded on the shore, and whilst many have been lifted out as many more have sunk to the bottom of the lake. "Stacks of dead fish have been piled up on the bank and covered with lime, and these will be burnt. A greater number of catfish have died that a person would estimate the lake contained of all descriptions. One authority says the fish have died from what is known as 'white disease'. This causes a scum to grow over the eye of the fish (only catfish have been affected so far), and this brings on blindness. The fish then die of starvation.

Jamieson Chronicle, 10 December 1909

Several good hauls of bream and codfish have been made from the Jamieson and Goulburn rivers, near the township, since the opening of the season, on Wednesday, the 1st inst. This is accounted for the fact, that the close season has been enforced for the last few years.

Argus, 5 May 1911

Perch In The Goulburn. Mr. R. V. Ramsay, of Seymour, writes: - "An uncommon fish was caught last week in the Goulburn by Mr. E. Jones, a local angler. It was about 12in. long, weighed 3½lb., and had black stripes across the back, with golden-coloured fins and tail, and a mouth smaller than a bream, which it somewhat resembled. Anglers do not recollect a similar fish being caught in these waters."

Argus, 22 June 1911

Sheep Rescued in Boats. Seymour, Wednesday. / The flotsam and jetsam of the flood comprise small fish and a few snakes. Included in the fish caught was a golden perch weighing 10½lb. This is the first golden perch seen here for many years.

Argus, 2 December 1912

Good Fishing. Seymour. / What is believed to be a record catch for the district was taken from the Goulburn weir / When they ceased fishing on Sunday evening they had caught over 3cwt. of cod and bream. Included in the haul was an English perch of about 4lb., caught by E. Jaensch. This is the first perch caught in the district for some time.

Argus, 4 March 1913

Goulburn Fishing Queries. "T.C." writing from Seymour, says:- "Golden perch used to be plentiful in the Goulburn, but none are caught now. Local residents say none have been caught since the weir was constructed at Warranga. / 3. A little fish is caught in most still waters about the Goulburn called a blackfish. It never exceeds a few ounces".

Argus, 25 January 1915

Lagoons Drying Up. Seymour, Sunday. – The continued dry weather is having a serious effect on many of the lagoons in this district, which are now drying up. As the result, fish are dying in large numbers. At what is known as "the Shepherds Hut" lagoon, near the town, numerous fish up to 8lb. have been found dead. This lagoon has never been known to dry before. At Maher's lagoon many bream, all over a pound weight, have died.

Yea Chronicle, 23 December 1915

The Fishing Season. Further good catches are reported. Mr J. McIntosh of "Glencoe," Whittlesea road, Yea, reports the he and his party grassed 97 bream and 5 cod fish aggregating 140 lbs., and Mr Stan Oliver and party, 17 bream and several small cod, aggregating 50 lbs in all.

Argus, 5 January 1916

Boat Trip on Goulburn. / They launched their boat above the Acheron River, beyond Alexandra, and proceeded downstream to Seymour, a distance of about 160 miles. / In all 88 cod were secured, the weights ranging from 2¼lb. to 18lb., as many as 18 being caught in a mornings fishing.

Argus, 18 November 1919

Catfish. "New Chum" (Toolamba) is wholly astray as to the merits of catfish. / If, as "New Chum" says, catfish are very plentiful in the lagoons about Toolamba, they need never go short of fish.

Euroa Gazette, 3 May 1921

Another link to the district's history was added on Saturday, 23 rd April when, through the agency of the local Anglers Club, the first consignment of Murray Cod and Bream was liberated in the Seven Creeks. A party of ten anglers made the trip to the Goulburn river at Cathkin and by means of light hooks and a lot of hard work secured a nice lot of young fish ranging in weight from two pounds down to three inches in length. They were transferred by means of special cans (supplied by the Fisheries Department) and arrived in good condition with no losses. Several members again tried their luck below the Gooram Falls on Saturday last but, so far the result is not known.

Euroa Gazette, 17 May 1921

Those fishermen who tried for young fish below the Gooram falls on April 30th were fairly successful and brought back about fifty nice little cod and bream which were duly liberated. On the same day, Mr. E. Charman of Euroa, promised to try also and two fish cans were sent to him. He secured about a dozen fish, seven of which were well grown, and bream quite large enough for the fry pan.

Argus, 17 December 1921

The Spinner's Lake. A Nagambie Waterfront. / But the mixed fisher – perhaps the majority – who welcomes the smaller cod, the Macquarie perch, or an occasional "golden belly" / Many of the Nagambie fishers – like those of the Murrumbidgee – maintain that there are at least two species of cod in these waters – the one narrow in the snout and more trout-like in shape, the type called Murrumbidgee trout; the other, blunt-nosed and of heavier build, which they identify as Goulburn and Murray cod. These distinctions, at once noticeable in a big bag, were long ago investigated by the late Professor McCoy/

Euroa Gazette, 21 March 1922

On Saturday (11th inst) a party of three car loads from the local anglers club went to the Goulburn at Cathkin for the purpose of securing further supplies of young cod and bream for liberation in the Seven Creeks. As a result about 200 young fish were safely transferred to the government fish cans which had been lent by the Fisheries Department. A few nice sized cod were also taken and the party had an enjoyable outing.

Argus, 28 July 1922

Murray Bream. / Mr. W. McLeod, of Nagambie, should, Mr. French thinks, be able to clear up the confusion as to which fish was netted there for introduction into the Yarra. In netting, they would probably not get more than one silver perch or grunter to 500 of the other species, and he has heard the grunter misnamed Murray bream all through the Goulburn Valley.

Argus, 8 July 1927

Fish in Goulburn River. / Thousands of fish have died in the Goulburn river below Sugarloaf weir. For miles down from the weir fish of all sizes up to 56lb. are to be seen dead from either bank, and the small fish have died in thousands. / T. H. Carter, Thornton.

Argus, 9 July 1927

Since the water in the weir has been released and the huge basin drained hundreds of dead fish have accumulated in the river around the outlet pipe of the weir. It is surmised that these fish became caught in the current of water passing into the outlet pipe and were then forced through the control dome and release

valves, where they were suffocated by the muddy water in the river below. Some very large fish have been killed, some of the cod being 30lb. in weight.

Argus, 17 September 1929

Goulburn Blackfish. Referring to a note on the insignificant northern blackfish called "slimey," S. Musselwhite (Koyuga) says:- "I have got them in Warragul Creek, which empties into the Goulburn just above Stewart's Bridge. The best fish I have seen caught weighed 1lb. 11oz. A good many ranged from 1lb. 4oz. to 1lb. 6oz." "This creek also teemed with English perch. I got four weighing 5lb. each, also catfish, cod, and carp.

Argus, 22 October 1929

Blackfish And Slimeys. Contributing his experiences to the discussion on this subject, J.E.C. (Hawthorn East) says that it brought back to him many pleasant recollections of his boyhood days, which were spent in Kilmore. / We used to fish in the Dry Creek and the Railway reservoir in Kilmore East, and Sunday Creek, between Kilmore East and Broadford. In all these streams we got the blackfish which you now call slimeys. In the Kilmore reservoir, near the hospital—then the only water supply for the town—we got slimeys, bream, and perch. At Logie's dam, a few miles to the west of Kilmore, we got very large perch in some of the holes from the overflow. These overflow holes were, however, quickly fished out every season." / "All that was 42 to 46 years ago."

Argus, 10 December 1929

I am told about the Nagambie weir and other parts of the Goulburn where so many Murray cod are being found dead the redfin are numerous, and while the stream was still closed for the native fish large bags of redfin were being got, with fish up to 3lb. and 4lb. in weight. Only this week I heard an expert prophesy that in the course of years the redfin will take complete possession of these northern streams. / I asked a Goulburn River angler about catfish, last week, and his opinion was that "something had happened to them." Because they are now few and small. I have seen some very fine ones taken out of the pool at the foot of Nagambie weir on the opening day of the season, and wonder whether a thinning down of the catfish has been noticed by fishers in other parts of the Goulburn.

Argus, 18 December 1937

Murray Cod Fishing. / It was reported by two delegates at the Piscatorial Council's meeting that Macquarie perch ranging from 1lb to 4lb were found floating in the Delatite and Goulburn arms of Eildon weir. The fish were numerous and in a helpless condition, and at first sight appeared to be injured. When taken from the water they died immediately. There were marks not unlike scars on the fish. As the fish rapidly decomposed it was thought that they were afflicted with a fungoid disease.

Argus, 5 November 1938

Anglers. / From the lagoons between Molesworth and Alexandra Mr. E. T. Gardiner and party at the week-end caught 138 English perch up to 3lb. on yabbies and worms.

Alexandra and Yea Standard, 28 November 1947

At the close of last season's fishing in Eildon reservoir Jack Burness and Bill Higgs observed a new type of minnow, to which they pointed out to me and which I recognised as a small Red fin. For confirmation, these fish were sent to Mr. Butcher and he recently confirmed my fears by letter to Jack Burness. Red fin (English perch) are now in Eildon reservoir in countless millions. Eildon has in the past put up with all kinds of abuse, but I am afraid this will be the final blow to the reservoir fishing. C. R. Lyne.

8.6 Goulburn River Catchment Oral Histories

The following oral histories (OH 114-132) mostly discuss the Goulburn River Catchment.

OH 114

Max Mathews of Jamieson was interviewed in November and December 2006 at an age of 82 years. Max provided additional thoughts and memories in January 2007 before passing away in February 2007.

I'm the oldest one left in the town. The others, 87, 90, 93, they're all gone, I'm the last. Born in this house in 1925, with a midwife. I got the nickname 'Darb' off an old aboriginal bloke, his name was Darb. I left in 1960 to educate my kids, went to Melbourne, then came back. Still got a house there in Croydon. In the rivers around Jamieson were the cod, silver bream, black bream and the slimies. The silver and black bream were crosses of the same, Macquarie perch. I saw my father catch cod; some were on the saddle, with their tails on the ground. That was out of the Goulburn here, and out of the Howqua. Back in those days a horse was the only way you could get around. You could catch the big cod on parrots. We used killed sheep's heads that were fly-blown to attract the cod. Hang them over the water, the maggots brought them in. My father did that. Then you would use the parrots for the big ones. The smaller ones wouldn't touch it. For them you would get them on the crabs for bait.

In the Goulburn I caught cod up to the one mile peg, not much past there, as far as I know, didn't go much up there. The older people talked about a lot of cod caught around Knockwood before the lake first filled. There was a waterfall on the Goulburn there, just up past Dempsey mine, past Trentfield's house¹. The cod and bream didn't get past there. The Goulburn is a cold river up there, through the forest it runs in shade. And there weren't many deep holes, the cod needed them. Maybe the mining filled the holes, I don't know. The Jamieson was different, I fished it a lot. It was warmer, a lot warmer; it had lots of sun, and plenty of deep holes. The cod and the bream they went right up to the start, up to Mitchells Creek. I used to go up there mustering, about when I was 14. They went up that far, caught plenty there, but they couldn't get up the 11 foot waterfall². Later on when they were put in, some of the trout made it up there, past the falls. The bigger ones did, the rainbows used to climb better than the spotted. Laurie Hoskins and I used to fish it a lot. His father had the homestead there.

My father grew up at Aberdale Station, up at Sheepyards Flat, on the Howqua. My grandfather was up there too. The Howqua was the same, in fact it had more cod and bream in it than just about any of the other rivers around here. They were all the same, full of the cod, silver and black bream, and the slimies. They used to catch big cod right under the Howqua Bridge. Further up the river, at O'Leary's, there was a lot of sticks and timber, and I used to get a lot of the silver bream and the black bream up there. Around Jamieson the cod, you could catch them all year round. In the winter, anytime. They bit well in spring, in the spawning season, but then they brought in all the rules about 1934, like they had for the trout, so you had a season on them then, you couldn't fish for them. The biggest cod I caught in Jamieson was 27 pound at Kewshwin's Hole, Frank Galbally the solicitor was with me, though when I was a kid I saw 50 pounders caught. I saw Mark Foots and Webby Foots catch them. The biggest cod I saw was caught by Max Sullivan, out of the Delatite in 1943, it was 108 pound, it was in Nolan's butchers shop for months. He caught that below Brack's Bridge, it took him three hours to land it. He thought he was going to run out of line!

The other type of cod the bluenose was caught in Jamieson. Very different head, looked like a cannibal, different colour and markings, a long dark nose that was blue, like the name, and marked different. My father showed them to me first, when he caught a couple that were 15 pound. They were caught up to 20 to 25 pound, but they were tougher to eat. They were not that common in the Goulburn here as far as I remember,

not as common as the Murray cod. My father told me that they used to be very common in the Goulburn here, the most common cod caught, before the weir got built. Maybe the weir affected them; the still water might have helped the Murray cod move up here. They were a lot faster than the Murray cod. The Murray cod liked the big holes in the river here; there weren't many big holes past here in the Goulburn. With the Murray cod it was a case of keeping the pressure constant on them, bring them up and burst the air sac. But I had a bluenose straighten a hook out, near Kewshwin's holes.

My father-in-law, Percy Newman, was born on the Big River, one of four brothers, they were all born there. He showed me the old wheel tracks of where they used to go in and out, bringing in the flour and other things. It was cleared then, you wouldn't know it now. They grew oats in there in one spot. There are trees now as wide as the wheel tracks! That's near where the Taponga comes in, at the Taponga junction. Showed me where the old antimony mine was. He talked about catching lots of the cod, the bream and the slimies, there were no trout in the river back then. He talked about a lot of bluenose, in the Big River, they handled the faster water. That was back before the weir went in. The cod, bream and slimies went all the way up to Enochs Point; I caught them there, the bluenose, plenty of them! And there was heaps more there when Percy was young. When I was a kid I saw them slip over the rapids, moving between holes. That was right, the bluenose and the bream were so common there.

The bluenose were more common, very common in the Delatite, than in the Goulburn in Jamieson, it was a smaller river. That's where I met my wife. I caught cod below where Brack's Bridge is on the Delatite up past the main road. That's near where Newman's house was Bracks Bridge; they moved over there from the Big River, my wife's a Newman. They were all good fishermen. There were bream there too, the Murray cod and the slimies. The cod high up the Howqua and Jamieson might have been mostly bluenose too, but I was a kid back then, it's a long time ago. My father talked about them up at Sheeppark Flat as bluenose, but I can only just remember them being cod. I think there were plenty of bluenose up at Mitchells Creek too, I remember some of the fish, though I am sure we did get some Murray cod closer to Jamieson. But in the Big River and the Delatite well there was heaps of them, definitely.

The black and silver bream were all through here. The silver bream, there were a lot around 9 to 10 inches long, but when I was a kid I caught a hell of a lot of the black bream around a pound and a half. They were crosses of each other and different sizes. They were very fat, but had awful fins, could do some damage. They used to come up the river out of the weir, yes, heard the stories about them stopping the stage coach. In the new weir, well they came out of it and up the river; they used pitchforks to fish them out. Had my neighbor, Henry Brooks, borrow a pitchfork! He was throwing them up on the bank. My dog Darkie, he could smell them, he was trained to find them, then he would bark like buggery, gospel truth! Poor old Darkie, he is dead now, but he could find them. When there were the big runs out of the new weir, even the people could smell them. In different years they went to different holes, one year at the hole at the junction, the next year to Italian Camp on the Goulburn, the next year they were in the swimming hole in the Jamieson.

I've got pictures of them building the old weir, that's from 1916. It only backed up the water up to Peechy's Bridge at Darlingford, on the Goulburn. There was a lot of cod caught out of it after it filled. There were no yellowbelly or Catfish caught here in Jamieson, though a few yellowbelly did come out of the old weir early on. In 1933 they started putting a lot of brown trout in. Up at Laidlaws Road, up past the cemetery there was a working bee, that's where they made the hatchery. There was Dick Dale; he paid for it, John McCormick, 'pop' Hoskins and my dad John Mathews. Dad didn't too much on it, he leant them his scoop, showed them how to use it. They built a dam, lined it with saplings, had trays to hatch the eggs. They did everything themselves, had to use the bush materials, what they had. They released them there. Later on they brought in the rainbows.

When they let the trout go, when they were let in they were a cannibal fish, well that eventually did away with the bream, and the slimies, in the rivers here, well mostly, though they were still in the lake. You would clean the trout and they would always have the slimies in them, and sometimes the bream. They were only little bream, about 6 inches long, but I did see a lot of them in the trout. I didn't see many small cod in the trout, maybe odd ones. They were full of small crays, and sometimes even birds. I was told there were trout in the river before the hatchery, but after the hatchery was put in the bream got scarce, saw them mostly when they came out of the weir. There were still big holes in the river then, down below here that suited them, but they became less common.

After the second weir filled there was just a few yellowbelly caught, they came out of the farm dams, along with the redfin. The State Rivers were going to poison the dams to kill the redfin, but the water came up too quick. It came up so quick there were water tanks, fuel tanks, even tractors floating around. The crabs weakened the walls with their digging and they let go, putting the redfin in. The redfin helped the cod and bream disappear. But the cod liked the running water with the big deep holes, and the weir covered most of them.

1. The Dempsey mine was located on the east bank of Ryans Creek, near its junction with Gaffney's Creek, about 600 m south west of the township of Gaffneys Creek.
2. The falls discussed by Max in the Mitchells Creek area have not been visited by the author. An examination of topographic maps suggest that they may be located approximately 2 km downstream of the junction of Mitchells Creek with the Jamieson River.

OH 115

Frank Moore of Macs Cove was interviewed in December 2006 at an age of 82 years.

I grew up early on in the Wimmera; my brother was 20 years older. We started off fishing the Wimmera area, later on moved on, fished quite a few other areas. Lived around Bonnie Doon, Barjarg, been in the Delatite area more or less since 1948, fished in and around this area before and since, just about every bloody inch of it! When I was a boy I used to see native cats, I'd get them in the rabbit traps, they gave me hell. I suppose I was one of those that knocked them on the head, but really what did them in was the change of conditions through intense farming.

When I was a kid we used to get big Blackfish out of the Sassafras Creek, that was about 1935/36, and I've caught good ones out of the top of the Dandenong Creek as well as nice ones at Wesburn and the Doone Reserve. I've caught them to 2 pound, maybe more out of the Britannia Creek. Norm McLeod and I used to give them buggery, blackies and trout, in the Tarago River. That was later, 38/39 right up till about 1948, apart from the war years. The biggest blackie was about 4 pound out of the Sassafras, my grandson got a good one last year in the Woori Yallock Creek near Macclesfield, about 4 pound. Norm and I used to get some good bags of them, from about 2½ pound to 4 pound from the upper Thompson, around 'Swindlers', 'Napping,s' and 'Bell's Flat', old mining towns. We would always get them in the evenings, from say 7 p.m. to about 11 p.m., and good bags too! Up to 20 fish, but then you could catch them in plenty of places. My dad and brother frequently caught them, as well as cod, in both the Yarra, and the Plenty River.

We used to get Catfish out of the lagoons along the Goulburn, when I was a kid in the mid 1930s, at Thornton, Alexandra, around Cathkin and Molesworth, no worries. Actually I've caught some out of the Yea River itself. They varied from 2 to 6 pound, we used to like eating them, they were as good as cod. My brother used to get a lot of bream at 'the breakaway'. We caught plenty of cod out of the Goulburn along there too. We camped out there at Thornton with Harold Sweeny, Jack Bliss, used to catch the cod and pack them in damp sawdust.

Harold used to get the cod frozen at Sennet's ice cream works. Once the cod had nearly thawed out we would get them sawn up into chops at the butchers. Old Dr. Box used to fish with us, he knew all about the two types of cod there. He could pick them from slight differences in the tail as well as all the other differences.

Jacky Stillman, born and bred at Crystal Creek, he cleaned a 27 pound cod and it had a 2 pound bream in it! Got a photo of him with a 23 pound cod out of the Acheron in 1938. He got it on a green tree frog on a hand line, next to Pat Noonan's place down towards 'the Breakaway'. I've caught cod in two foot of floodwater, pulling an aeroplane spinner over the paddocks. I've caught little ones, which were taken by the big cod! We used to get a lot of good cod out of the Delatite arm of the old weir. My father and my father in law Syd Moss caught heaps, lots of good ones.

I used to get the cod and the perch out of the Howqua. At the time they went up as far as the big holes below Tobacco Flat. The original Bridge at Sheepyard Flat had washed away once, and I used to go down through Whiskey Flat and at the end of Tobacco Flat is Weirs Creek. Down a little I caught the cod, downstream from Weirs Creek to Dry Creek. From Dry Creek down there were hellish big cliffs, and from there down there were some excellent holes. Mostly the ones I caught, I suppose a good one was 10 pound, mostly 7 to 8 pounds. We also caught what I called yellowbelly back then, though others called them perch (Macquarie perch). They were mostly a small fish, about a pound and a half, though I know blokes that got bigger ones up there. In the top of the Howqua 10 to 12 pound was the biggest cod. They didn't really go up further than those holes near where the cliffs were, not when I fished it. A few redfin and tench got up there too, and the slimies, well we used to catch a lot of them¹. For the cod, we nearly always got them on scrubworms, though we used cockies breasts too. They probably bit at all the shrimps on it.

In the Delatite we got a lot of perch up to 3 to 4 pound, in the good holes, where there were 3 or 4 good bends between Piries and Delatite. You could almost always be assured of getting one. And the trout too, there were lots of them. We caught a lot of cod too, but not the big ones. The common size was about 8 pound, though we got broken off by bigger ones. In the Delatite, that was before the mid 1950s, before the new weir went in. The Delatite now is nothing like it used to be back then. The river was deeper and had much greater flow, maybe the flow was 25 times what it is now. It's changed all right, it used to be pretty much gravel and sand. A lot of it is now mud and big boulders. You look at it and it's not the same river any more.

In the Broken I caught the cod and the perch way up past Nillahcootie, up around Stockyard Creek, up from Barwite. It used to be a bloody good river, that was not long after the war. The cod weren't big; a big one was maybe 15 pound, with a few at 8 to 10 pound. You didn't catch a lot of them, didn't catch hundreds of them. During the season, in three days, you would catch maybe a cod, maybe not. The perch were about the same, you'd get one like the cod. They were up to 4 pound. Some holes were much more productive than others. But as the river shrank so did the fish, not just in weight but in numbers. Other places, well in the Indi we used to catch a lot of trout and in the pools the Macquaries. At Tahbilk in the Goulburn we caught lots of cod, Macquaries, lots of catties. And in the Majors Creek too I caught a cod once, perch and 3 or 4 nice catties.

The cod we got out of the Howqua and the Delatite well they were different to those in the old weir. They were a dirty sort of a grey colour, not like the ones in the weir which were a lot brighter green, the proper Murray cod. No they were like the ones we used to get in the Goulburn, like in the photo with Jack Stillman, the heads were different. Others called them bluenose or rock cod but they were just cod to me. I suppose they were all Trout cod in those rivers, different to the normal Murray cod. I feel really bad; people are going to blame me for wiping them out. But I honestly think it wasn't the fishing, it was what we did to the rivers. The native fish lasted so well until we came along. When I was very young we used to get lots of little ones, then they just disappeared. You would get the bigger ones, 8 to 30 pound, but the little ones were gone. They tried to turn the

rivers into channels, pulled out the snags. They tried to charge me a levy for pulling out the snags, but I refused to pay. And then the redfin and trout were put in, and later on the carp. We only kept the fish we needed to eat, so it wasn't the fishing. It was what we did to the rivers.

It's no use blaming what happened, in a lot of cases it was sheer ignorance, not knowing a new country. When you look at the rivers and see what's happened, well, they're not the same. I think we need to fix some of the rivers for the natives. One man can't make a difference, but a lot of men can.

1. Footnote: in a latter conversation Frank clarified that the redfin and tench were captured in the Howqua River after the filling of the enlarged Lake Eildon in 1956.

OH 116

The late Bert McKenzie of Ruffy was interviewed in July 1983 at an age of 83 years.

Bert McKenzie was interviewed by Collin Luker and the author after a chance meeting during July 1983. The interview was tape recorded, typed up and published a number of times in Freshwater Fishing magazine, most recently in 1992 (Trueman & Luker, 1992). Some original notes of his recollections recorded from the first meeting have survived and are presented below in point form. The following weekend during the tape recorded interview he elaborated on many of them but a few points were not discussed again. In particular these relate to fish in the Buffalo, Yea and Acheron Rivers and some memories of catches of trout. These points are included for completeness:

- *Caught Trout cod from the Hughes Creek at Dropmore in 1908 when 8 years old. Father called the fish a 'bluenose'.*
- *When he was young there was a pro in Avenel that used to catch heaps of bream and cod and send them to Melbourne*
- *Bluenose disappeared from the creek in the 1920s after it silted. Macquarie perch were still caught at Tarcombe, odd ones caught at Dropmore*
- *Biggest trout taken from Hughes Creek was 12 pound, used to get a lot fly fishing. Best catch of trout was 100 up to 7 pound out of Eucumbene*
- *In the 20s the angling club shifted cod, yellowbelly and bream from Nagambie and released them at Ruffy*
- *The Goulburn at Molesworth, Cathkin, Alexandra and Thornton was full of bluenose. Used to fish it with uncles in the 1920s.*
- *Yea, Acheron, Rubicon had a lot of bream and cod were caught. Big bream were caught from the Yea, and Catfish. Uncle fished at Glendale Road at Taggerty before the war (first) caught bream and a few bluenose there.*
- *The Big River had bluenose in it and a lot of bream, fished it from the weir up to the Jamieson Road*
- *Bluenose in the Goulburn were common from six inches up to about ten pounds, lots of small ones. By the war (second) the small bluenose and bream were gone, big cod were caught, mainly Murray cod.*
- *Biggest bluenose from Goulburn caught in the 20s was 20 pound. Later one or two up to 50 pound were seen. Biggest bluenose from the Murray at Cobrawonga Creek in 1944, weighed 66 pound. When bluenose get big covered in lots of small spots, like big Murray cod, head still different, snout sharp and longer than jaw, blue or grey/green sometimes black*
- *Caught bluenose from Buffalo River in the 30s. At Nug Nug caught both types of cod, up further cod were mainly bluenose*

OH 117

Below are the recollections of Bert recorded the following weekend (July 1983) for the Goulburn River system: *The cod were down in the Hughes Creek. When I was eight years old (1908 - WT), my father took me down on horseback and he caught some to four pounds that particular day. Bluenose cod they would have been, they were all bluenose down there, except one, a six pounder, I think was a Murray cod, a much deeper fish in the*

body than the bluenose. And little ones well they would tig tig tig away on the worms. I must have got twenty or thirty on that particular day though I only kept two that were over a pound in weight. Apparently the hole I was fishing in wasn't any good for bigger Trout cod. I had several trips down there that was about two miles above Dropmore Station. But everybody fished it; they were caught up to twelve pounds there and all on bait at that time. I don't think the aeroplane spinner had come in till about 1920. One old chap told me that it started from somebody crumbling up a jam tin lid and throwing it on a line with hooks on it. That could be hearsay. We would go down there on and off and we never came back without cod. But we never caught any bream there. The bream didn't get up further than Tarcombe.

The Trout cod was present in Hughes Creek up till about 1923-24. A flood had gone through the beautiful holes, stretches of them, I suppose as nice a creek as you could possibly have for Trout cod, you know, with deep rocky holes. There was a terrific rain storm up here and it took out every fence between here and Avenel and also cut a gutter from the falls down below here right through to Dropmore and into the Tarcombe area. And of course that probably did away with the breeding grounds that were down there. There would have to be a breeding ground there somewhere for them. That was the beginning of the end for them. They didn't last more than four years after that. Later on I brought seventeen Trout cod over from Gooram on the Seven Creeks and let them go in my dam over here. I put them into the dam to start off with but it burst and let them go into the Hughes Creek. They stayed around there for two years and I would only use a fly when I fished that area and I remember one little chap would come out from the water only about three feet deep and he would come out from under a ledge. I would throw a fly in and boom and then let him go again. He never learnt and would still get caught again. And another one further down got caught several times as well as others. I caught them on the red tag which seemed to be one of the best flies up here.

I caught a cod of six pounds down at Molesworth on the Goulburn River and I tethered him up down there and I put him in two wet bags to bring him home. I had the idea that I'd let him go in the creek and tethered him up in the pool in my paddock and he was lively as a cricket, so I released him. Whether he is still there in the stream or someone caught him I don't know. My parents rented a farm about six miles below Euroa and the Seven Creeks there was full of little bluenose and the Macquaries. One was caught that weighed fifty pounds and had a rabbit trap inside him. The poor rabbit must have pulled the trap free of the stake and fallen in the creek and the cod got him. I don't know whether that was a Murray cod or a Trout cod. I can't guarantee they were all bluenose as it didn't matter much at the time. Bluenose was the title we used for the Trout cod back in the twenties. That seemed to be commonly used bluenose cod and Murray cod. And they were all the way right up Seven Creeks to the Gooram Falls just as they were right up to the falls in the gorge of Hughes Creek. At Hughes Creek there was a whole series of steep falls up to ten feet high which they never negotiated. Except the first fall which was only a few feet high which a few fish would get into.

It was about 1921 that the Strathbogie crowd took their wagons and all, cream cans and everything, down to the Goulburn at Cathkin and angled a whole lot of Trout cod and some Macquaries and released them at 'Bogie'. It was 1927 that I first caught them there down below Polly McQuinn's, a dozen to fifteen little chaps on the grasshopper. And didn't they take it! Later on I went into the Seven Creeks where the Euroa waterworks pipe comes out and I didn't have any bait with me. It was just a spur of the moment thing that I went in. But I had the spinning rod with me and I had with me the silver Mitchell spinners with the two wing things on them. Didn't I have sport! They were up to about three pounds. Sometimes away they would go and you wouldn't hold them on the trout tackle. They would hit it so hard and you could only break it if you tried to put the strain on. That was the best fishing I ever had I think. I never kept one because the silly twenty one inch size limit was on them. Everyone else took them at any age. I was the secretary of the angling club over here so I didn't want to get caught with undersized fish. Later on I went down and angled with bait for them and got seventeen. I

hadn't kept any the other time as I wasn't prepared. I had only gone up as I had heard about them up there. You have got to believe that the Trout cod is the fastest there is on your line at the start.

In the early twenties the angling club brought loads of cod over from Nagambie to Terrip. I didn't see the actual fish but I believe there was also quite a number of yellowbelly and bream with cod up to four pounds. I later caught yellowbelly from three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half pounds and quite a number of bream which established themselves all up these tablelands. They just seemed to follow up somewhere to go and down through here. And one yellowbelly of twelve pounds was caught a few years later. It had stopped in one of the pools in Hughes Creek.

It would not have been till about 1921-22 that I fished the Goulburn. Prior to that my uncles fished the Goulburn at Cathkin very solidly. I hadn't been there; I was too young at the time I suppose to risk the river. It took them nearly ten years before they got a twenty pounder on the spinner. It was a bluenose and I saw it, it was a beautiful fish. Of course the river was so full of cod, small stuff at the time. The food supply was good and they should have been able to gobble other cod. There didn't seem to be any great big fish like there was in later years. I went down to Molesworth where Ian Perry has the property now and I didn't go too well that time as I caught quite a few small ones and had one line broken. I had put a green frog on that line and the line wasn't good enough! They were bluenose cod, they were nearly all bluenose upstream from Molesworth. That would have been about 1922-23.

It was about 1927 that all the channels around Shepparton were full of small cod and Catfish. We had sheep over at Dhurringile where we had a hundred acres rented around the big house and in the evenings I would go up to the national channel and I would fish under the drop bar and get quite a lot of bluenose cod or as you know them the Trout cod. The national channel was so fast you wouldn't think it was possible for cod to stay in it. But half way up it there must have been a ledge or something, probably a step and I would fish in that with a great heavy sinker. If I got a four pounder cod on I would have to go down to the bottom to land him so that he weight of him would not break the line. And that was like that in all channels around Shepparton at that particular time. The bluenose were in the fast running water but there was also the ordinary Murray cod and Catfish.

Something happened to the Catfish. A disease or something wiped them out in one season really. There were dead Catfish everywhere. They built the Goulburn Weir at Nagambie first then the Eildon Weir. In the Nagambie Lake the fish just bred up. It was just ting ting ting with bites from Catfish and cod. The uncles used to fish it and I saw the fish they caught. I think that most of them were Murray cod. Of course Mulwala Lake on the Murray did the same sort of thing when they built that Yarrawonga Weir. I missed out on that one too. The people that were fishing it were getting twenty or thirty cod on the spinners to about seventy pounds. That was the pattern at Nagambie too. These patterns are weird. Whether the spreading out of the water over shallow ground created temperatures that were conducive to cod breeding I don't know. I think that's what happens. When they built the big Eildon and Hume Weirs that breeding pattern ceased altogether.

The old Eildon Weir used to go up to the Big River which was one of my fishing spots. We used to use bardie grubs for the trout as using worms the little bream about four to five inches long would just bang bang and you would have no worms left. So apparently there used to be a breeding spot in the Big River for the Macquaries. There were some bluenose caught there as well. I fished the UT creek at the time of the old weir and the young cod five to six inches long were thick. You would always catch a dozen in the evening. You didn't seem to catch any trout because they would not come around to where the cod were feeding. And quite a few other places were the same in the weir. But as soon as this later weir was put in it stopped all the breeding, both in the weir and in the Goulburn downstream though I believe there is still a bit of breeding that goes on in the Delatite at

the moment though not much. In the Big River there is now no small bream being caught that I've heard of and no small cod, There were a couple of cod caught at Bonnie Doon which must have bred up about four or five pounds. They could also have been bred up on the Merton Creek.

The era I remember is about 1924. The old weir was really a bonanza as far as trout went. The brother-in-law and myself were on the way up to the weir one trip and we stopped at Thornton to boil the billy and have some dinner. I was looking over in the water and I saw a big four pound rainbow trout come swimming up. I called my brother-in-law over and we caught four good fish there. They were all rainbows and we saw a couple more. We then went on up to the weir. That was in the Jerusalem Creek that night. We didn't catch any bream there or cod. I believe there was big breeding grounds they had, a bit like the salmon, that they had to come back to get the urge to breed. Whatever it is I don't know. While the old Eildon Weir was going apparently the conditions were still right for Macquaries to breed and right for the cod that were there too; they were bluenose but I am not saying that the Murray cod were not there because they should have been.

There were also Catfish all the way up to Eildon in the lagoons near the Goulburn. All those were full of Catfish. One old chap - Christie from Thornton - was telling me that the yellowbelly were up there. I never saw a yellowbelly in that area. He told me about a sheep dying on the bank and maggots rolling down into the water and floating away and he'd say that there would be five hundred yellowbelly coming along feeding on these maggots. I've never sent the yellowbelly there, Macquaries yes. He might have been mistaken though the yellowbelly's a pretty distinctive fish in the water. If you can see him in the water he's a dark colour whereas the Macquarie was really white up in the Thornton area. Above Thornton in the rapid waters the small bluenose were just as thick there as they were at Cathkin and I caught them there about 1924, I took some Melbourne visitors staying up there and take them around to the Eildon Weir which of course was the show place, and we would always go fishing on the way back. Several times I stopped at this particular rapid, and I still fish it too as a matter of fact for trout and it was the same there as at Cathkin. Small cod in abundance. If you can get the cod breeding they'll overwhelm every other fish in the streams. The cod at Thornton, they were all Trout cod.

In the 1950s there were quite a few big cod caught up at Jamieson and of course quite a lot of good bream. I've seen several four and a half pounders come out at Jamieson and also the Howqua and at Bonnie Doon. I caught two myself one trip. I thought I had a six pound trout on! A four and a half pound bream takes some landing. Macquaries I suppose I should say. The cod at Jamieson were mostly fifty to sixty pounders and I would say that they were from the old weir. Both of the Yea and the Acheron rivers were known as good bream rivers, that's the Macquaries actually, and some cod but I didn't fish them much. I've fished the Acheron down there where it runs into the Goulburn, a beautiful hole there, and I stayed there to try and catch trout. I was a trout man then actually. I used to catch trout, browns and rainbows, near the bridge for the Taggerty-Alexander road. That was a great spot for trout.

I believe that the breeding grounds have been destroyed. In Eildon it is too deep and the Goulburn of course is now too cold. This I do believe. If given the chance to acclimatise they'll breed in colder water. You'll have to establish breeding grounds for the Macquaries up in the Big River and in all the others. The same will have to apply for the cod too, where the water is warmer. I think that the trout and redfin are a factor, a big factor. I'd say it's the trout more than the redfin. I think the redfin feeds mainly on baby redfin and school whereas the trout's a nomad, he moves everywhere. Any predator in a pool and you're going to have less fish aren't you? That's just simple arithmetic. So the release of lots of trout may have affected the bluenose in the stream.

OH 118

A letter from Bert McKenzie

Jennifer Davis and Brian Finlayson (2000) in a report on the granite creeks in north-east Victoria published as an appendix a letter written by the late Bert McKenzie recounting some of his memories of the fish and streams of the region. Professor Finlayson has kindly granted permission to reproduce the text here which is of value because Bert provided further detail:

*Recollections of Streams in the North East Victoria. By Mr Robert (Bert) McKenzie
Years 1906 to 1913*

All the creeks of the Tableland (i.e. Terip, Ruffy, Dropmore, Caveat, Tarcombe and Kobyboyn) were packed with Black fish and Silver minnows. All were crystal clear and it was possible to see to the bottom, down to six or eight feet at midday and (as a cousin and I used to do), it was possible to grind up a few worms with sand and drop them in the pool. We would fish for the bigger ones. Fourteen inches was our best. Most of our haul would be round 13 inches down to 9 inches. However, someone caught one 15 inches.

In 1912 or 1911, Mr Jimmy Hobart acquired, from Ballarat, 2000 brown trout and, from somewhere, 6 tench which were all released at the Boathole, Hughes Creek, Ruffy. They spread and bred rapidly down stream and were being taken up to seven pounds by 1914. In 1912, 2000 rainbow (trout) were released. In the spring of 1914, I landed my best some twenty yards behind me and about the same height.¹ and by the autumn was handling fish up to four and a half pounds. Prior to this, in 1903, my father had taken me down twice to the Dropmore on the lower Hughes Creek, just a mile above the Homestead, and using worms and caught small cod (Trout cod) up twelve inches and saw my father take several of two and three pounds. On a later trip with a party of four, everybody caught cod up to six pounds and every hole had six to ten inch fish galore if worms were used. Our next trip in 1913 was a disaster. A cousin was killed and virtually ended our Cod trips. The Hughes Creek for two miles above Dropmore up until 1916 was a slow running stream with a series of very deep holes mostly edged with Capungi reeds. In 1916, a flash flood ripped through and tore the creek bed down to bedrock and left a long channel of sand and in my opinion swept away the Trout cod breeding grounds in those Capungi edged pools for the whole of the Hughes Creek. Whether or not that flood carried the whole of the Cod population down into the Goulburn and the Nagambie Lake area, I do not know. But around 1918 to 1924, Nagambie was the Mecca for Cod fishermen from all over and in that period and was probably the supply area for all the Trout cod that inhabited the National Channel which filled Waranga Basin and the Wilson Channel feeding Shepparton, Tatura, etc. Even the smaller channels carried small Cod and an occasional four pound Catfish. I had Cod to four- and- a- half pounds from both the National and Wilson.

Old Nagambie residents could probably supply the exact dates of this era when suddenly the whole Catfish population were wiped out in the Goulburn River system. The same thing happened in the Murray River system, I think after the second stage of the Hume Weir or when??? Anyhow that flash flood was the end of the Trout cod in the Hughes Creek in the Dropmore area. I certainly caught a few while fishing for trout in 1919 to 1934 or 1924. These were mainly around the four to five and a half pound weight and an odd two pounder, suggesting that there may have been some fluke breeding. In 1920/21 we had one hundred acres rented around the Dhurringile Homestead, Toolamba, hence the fishing in the channels. At the same time the home base was one farm on the Sevens Creek followed by one on the Castle Creek in the Branjee area. The Castle Creek had quite a lot of Macquaries and Blackfish and the Seven Creeks, from the farm, five miles from Euroa was loaded with small Trout cod, Macquaries and Blackfish. The Seven Creeks in drought years often stopped running from Euroa down, concentrating the fish in the deeper pools and for a few weeks the fishing was fast and furious. Fish in the main were Trout cod and Macquaries to two pounds. In those days there were miles of those waters, all heavily stocked with Trout cod (small) and Macquaries likewise.

In those days it seemed impossible that mere fishing would overtake supply in the Goulburn River which I fished at Molesworth, Cathkin, Alexandra and Thornton. In these stretches of the Goulburn in those days at Christmas and Easter, it was estimated that the campers numbered 500 to the mile of river. They came from Melbourne by train and the local farmers carted their camping gear to the river and I have no doubt profited considerably by doing just that. It would seem at the time that it would be utterly impossible to eliminate the Trout cod and the Macquaries from the waters they inhabited. But around 1922 or 1923, the old Eildon Weir was built and acted, I believe, as a settling dam and the water became crystal clear and I believe the smaller fish became easy prey for the large Trout cod and Redfin then inhabiting the river. In the Eildon itself, various stretches were teaming (Big River) with small Macquaries and in the UT Creek area, I landed at least 20 small cod proclaiming at least two breeding grounds for Trout cod and Macquaries. The Cod fishing deteriorated in the Goulburn and the Macquaries to a lesser extent, but after the greater Eildon Weir was built in the late Forties, both fish have been practically wiped out, at least as a fishing proposition. In so far as the Macquaries are concerned, the breeding grounds have been destroyed by the colder water or siltation. I believe that where the main streams enter our reservoirs, new breeding grounds will have to be established not by releasing fry but establishing natural breeding places by the use of spawn or eggs in a natural setting in the river beds to which mature fish will return when their turn comes to drop their spawn.

From what some of the older residents have told me in the Riverina, streams completely dried up in severe droughts (before Samuel McCackie built dams on them) but the small cod and big appeared back in the streams as soon as those streams began to flow again. Their breeding grounds would be headwater streams that did not stop flowing.

- 1. The author can recall Bert stating at the first meeting that the largest trout he personally caught from the Hughes Creek weighed seven pounds. The term 'similar height' may actually have been 'similar weight' in reference to the previously described capture of a seven pound trout.*

OH 119

Russell Stillman was interviewed in February 2007 at an age of 90 years.

Dad's Ford agency garage was originally my gran dad Stillman's stables and coaches. My dad, William Lesley (Les) Stillman, at 17 years old drove a coach with six in hand loaded with passengers and food and supplies for the gold fields at Big River. The trip from Alexandra took in Thornton, Eildon, Darlingford, Jamieson, Gaffneys Creek, Woods Point and back through Mansfield – a week's trip. I remember when I was very young my father used to go on Sunday mornings down to Magee's Beach on the Goulburn here and in no time he would have a collection of cod and Macquarie perch, a dozen or more of them. The old brown photo is my dad and the kid me, about 1924. Dad went to McGee's Beach on the Goulburn just below the bridge one Sunday morning and was home by one o'clock. He angled this bunch of small cod and bream on worms.

We used to get the Catfish out of the lagoons. They'd get in the reeds and pull very hard. We used to get a few in the river too, but they were very common in the lagoons. When I was 8 or 9 years old I got a big Catfish, it would have been 6 to 7 pound. I can remember about that time my father and his mate went down to Hall's Flat on the Goulburn. In the floods the water would go all over the flats, the lagoons would fill with water. This Sunday they went down to this hole in the lagoon, its still there, I look at it all the time. After a while we got a 3 pound Macquarie, then another good one, be a good three-and-a-half pound, and others. They would have got washed in there in the floods because it flooded nearly every year. They would have been there a year or two because they were very black. Floods were a problem. If the weir was holding good water and some years with heavy rain the overflow went over the spillway, sometimes two feet of water. As a result all the flats from Thornton to Seymour went under water and I remember some years Alexandra was cut off for a few days when Home Creek at Cathkin flooded the road.

In the river you used to get a lot of small cod, 3 to 4 pound, but you would catch big ones if you set lines for them. I remember my father set some lines and got a 12 pound cod and tethered it. When he went back he pulled in the line and there was a 40 pounder on it, he had eaten him! I went down to Brook's cutting with Ollie Johnson and pretty early on heard this wallop; it was a good cod feeding. Well I chucked in this line with a frog on it and got this fish, it was pulling hard. Ollie had to hang onto me, but eventually he broke the line. Back then in the Goulburn you mainly got the cod and the Macquaries, with an odd Catfish, and there were greasies or slimies too. I never saw any yellowbelly or grunter out of the Goulburn never saw them till I went fishing out past Conargo. There was a good fishing hole in the Goulburn on Ollie Johnson's property known by him and us as "the stump hole", near where the Dry Creek runs in before the road climbs to Brook's Cutting. When the floods receded and the top of the stump showed was the best fishing time. Ollie would ring and leave a message for me and after school I'd ride the bike down, about 2 miles. One evening I was fishing and I caught some nice bream and a cod about 10 pounds. Ollie arrived and fished the fast water off a gravel spit at the head of the pool. He told me he was off to Melbourne the next day and wanted a nice eating cod about 9 or 10 pound for some friends. He was courting a lady, who he later married. Using scrub worms he caught a 6 pounder which he put back. Then he got a good 20 pounder, which went back. After a bit of time his next bite was what he wanted, a good 10 pounder, and off he went. Ollie was my dad's best fishing mate, lived on a big holding of river flats on the Goulburn and hill country, originally the Hoglington selection. He had ferrets and would catch a dozen or so rabbits, tie them in a bundle, and from his flat bottomed boat suspend them from the trees over a favourite hole for a few days. On Sunday Ollie, dad and I would fish the hole and catch a nice lot of mostly bream, sometimes a small cod. The maggots in the water brought in the fish.

With the Macquaries the average ones out of the Goulburn would have been one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half pound, with the big ones being 3 pounders, though out of the lake I did get 4 pounders. There was a lot of them in the Big River too. I remember once the week before the season opened I went up there one Saturday. I'd been told you could see the bream in there, there was supposed to have been that many of them. About three weeks before then a 34 pound cod had been caught there, that was in the Big River near Two Bridges. It was crystal clear and I was on a sandy bank under the Teatree, and there was a gravel bank on the other side, so I threw out towards it. Then I looked over and the gravel bank was gone, the bank was a heap of 3 pound Macquaries, it had been a shoal! That was about 48 years ago, my son was with me. I can remember up at Jamieson Ron Henderson who worked for the CRB using a rake to rake them out of the Goulburn, that's how thick they were when they were spawning. The greasies we used to get out of the Goulburn, and they were in the weir, I've caught them out of the old weir up to 15 inches long, they're beautiful to eat. When I was a teenager my father took me fishing up to the weir. He believed the Macquaries bit best on the full moon, though later on I reckon they bit best when they were spawning. It was near dark and I had a scrub worm on a big cod hook, sat the rod down in a forked stick. Anyhow it was dark and I checked my rod and the reel had been pulled up to the fork and the stick bent over. When I wound it in there was no fight but there was a greasy on the end of it, about a foot long, it had been part digested, he was all soft and white. A big cod had grabbed him!

The cod and Macquaries went up the Acheron, I used to fish it about three quarters of a mile up from the 'Breakaway' and got them there, but they went up further. I had a friend Wilfred McColl, he used to catch them out of Connelys Creek, used to catch the Macquarie perch and cod in this hole on the farm, that's up past Acheron, they were common up at least that far, and as far as I know they went up past there. We caught bream up the Acheron on a property owned by Dad's mate Bill Keen, later known as "Squires", about two miles up from "the Breakaway" where the Acheron joined the Goulburn. Once we camped in Keen's hay shed and fished at night. We could handle the mossies but the tiger snakes were a different proposition. They came out at night and there were so many of them we gave that away! Snakes were everywhere on the flats in those

days. You would see half a dozen on the walk in and had to be careful fishing the bank. There was no development. Tea tree, rubbish, tussocks, thistles 6 feet high, everywhere. Now it's all ploughed, cleared, and cropped, and the poor old snake has nowhere to hide and breed. Ollie Johnson told me one flood time he was rowing the flattie over Magees Flats opposite his home getting flood rabbits hiding in the tussocks. In a hollow where the flood stream went through there was a wire netting fence across the stream. He counted about 200 half drowned snakes hanging in the netting! We gave that fishing area a wide berth that summer!

There was a bloke here, Eric Milroy a railway ganger; he was a really keen fisherman. He invented the first bubble, got a bit of beeswax, made it as big as marble; he could cast a mudeye out into the lake where the trout were feeding. He had a flat bottomed boat tied up at the bridge down there near Molesworth. He always had three or four setlines in tied to the Wattle trees with goldfish for bait. Every week he would catch two to three cod, 30 to 40 pound cod - that was back just after the war in the late 40s. The dark square photo has a story. The fish were caught on McRae's Bend on the Goulburn, in from Whanregarwen Road. A share farmer and his sons said they had a spare weekend on the property and would set a few lines on the bend to see if the cod were biting. They sure were! Comparing the size of the man there would be a couple around the 60/70 pound mark. The bait was yabbies, scrub worms and a couple of parrots. The same people caught a 60 pounder another time and when cleaned a tiger snake was in its belly. They refused to eat it and boiled the fish up in a drum and fed it to the chooks! We used to catch a lot of river cray in the Goulburn between Alexandra and Thornton; my memories are about 1929 to 1932. Each year after the floods when the river got back into its banks but still running yellow, my dad got some sheep's heads off butcher Bill Barton. Dad made some big mesh drop nets from twine or hay band around 3 to 4 feet across. Cut a few 8 to 10 foot suckers growing on the river bank as handles and dropped the nets of high banks. He would get 3 to 4 every lift and have several chaff bags full. Cooked up in a copper and kerosene tins and were delicious.

Work was started on the weir in August 1914 and finished in 1928. It was done with horses, drays and scoops, and fork and shovel. After the weir filled about 1927 for a year or so the water was black from the submerged eucalypts. We used to get a lot of cod out of the old weir, they bred up in there, and the Macquaries. About 1929 or 30 a rabbit trapper, Jonesy, who lived in a hut on the waters edge near the site of Collier's house, Fraser Park, came into my dad's garage on his monthly trip for a tin of kero. "Les", said Jonesy, "What sort of fish is this?" producing a 3 pound Macquarie perch, bream we called them back then. With great purpose and excitement my dad said "That's a bream". "Well" says Jonesy "One evening out from the hut on the flat I saw a few fish taking insects. I threw a line in with two hooks and caught two like this. Good eating too!" Next Sunday dad, a couple of his mates and me (about 12 or 13 years I think) made the tough trip over the rough access track. We fished what is now known as Picnic Point. We caught about 17 bream, which was a poor result back in those days. The next Sunday we fished further round in the bay opposite Picnic Point where the original road before the weir crossed the hill. A 40 odd result wasn't bad but the next Sunday we ventured further around Cooks Point to what is now known as Italian Gully. The result is seen in the photo. We got 117 Macquaries out of the weir as well as a cod and two trout each about 8 pound. I recall the full catch was 117 because we had given away a lot before the photo was taken. The picture was in the book "The Whole Dam Story". The fishing was about from 10 am to 3.30 pm. A local old time photographer with the camera on a trestle and black cloth over his head! The back drop was the garage doors and a few car lights as you can see. The two eight pound trout I tossed behind a log because I didn't want them in the bag with the good bream. The cod was caught by Ollie Johnson in the mouth of a seasonal creek which ran into the lake, the Mountaineer.

I can remember when the cod were dying in the weir; I reckon it was about 1932/33. I used to troll in the lake, rowed for them in the boat; there was only about three boats on the lake back then. I would have had to have been 12 or 13 when I had the boat. I remember seeing the carcasses in the lake, out near Forsyth's all along the

bank; they'd been dead for a few weeks. I remember seeing numbers of them, the ones I saw were cod though I think Macquaries died too. They were all over 10-12 pound, up to 30 to 40 pound, I saw 6 to 7 dead another day too. I remember about 1937/38 a workmate told me a couple of years prior a group of fellas gathered after work for a barbeque and booze up at Picnic Point at Fraser Park on the old weir. They put in a gill net to get a feed and camped the night through. In the morning they couldn't retrieve the net – reckoned it was snagged. They backed the car down near the water and towed it. My mate reckoned every second mesh had a fish! What sort, I asked? 'Don't know, all colours and shapes, I was just the car driver, not interested in fishing'.

I used to catch cod in the lake, not many, but you'd get them with the aeroplane spinner if you kept at it. Best run I had was in the old weir, I leant my boat to a friend of my dad's who camped at Picnic Point for three weeks every year. He fished around the big trees and a few days later I got a message from the butter factory from this bloke 'the cod are biting'. He had sent in a couple of nice cod for the factory cool room. The next seven or eight Sundays I fished the aeroplane spinner and caught a total of 13. Funny thing is they were all about the same size – 11 pounds. A bloke named Sonneting from Bonnie Doon was fishing at the same time and way as me, but in a different area. He was getting big ones often, 30 pound, in a very snaggy spot which I was avoiding. The blurry photo of the cod I caught with bait one evening. The larger one weighed 10 pounds but just made the legal length of 21 inches! I reckon the still lake water didn't give them enough exercise, no current to swim against. I've caught 3 or 4 by chance on a small "Reflex" Devon, with one set of treble hooks, when trout trolling. The one on the boat with the Sugarloaf background was one. Also one year when the weir was low I caught those two 3 pound Macquaries on the same Devon over Savage's Flats in about ten feet of water when trolling for trout. That was in the late 30s, about 1938 I think.

The cod and bream were still fairly common up until the new weir was built, then the cold water affected them, they rapidly disappeared. And the river going up and down for the irrigation. The redfin, well we never used to get them out of the river until the new weir went in, though we got them in the lagoons going a fair way back. The redfin in the river happened more recently.

OH 120

Peter Kerr of Taggerty was interviewed in December 2007 at an age of 69 years.

My father was born in 1889 at Taggerty, and my mother always talked about how common the cod and the bream were in the Acheron in the early days, he did too. Back then there were no trout in the bigger rivers, the trout first appeared in the smaller streams, the Rubicon, the Little River, the Taggerty and the Steavenson, but none in the Acheron and the cod and bream were still common. I think they were caught as far up as Buxton, there was a lot of deep holes, fast and slow stretches in between, all the way up to Buxton. Down from here was mostly slow moving. By the 1950s they were gone. My father later bought at property down the river at Kerr's Road, and they caught the cod and bream there too, they moved there about 1929. I'm sixty nine, an only child; my mother was forty three when she had me. The cod in the photo was caught just above Taggerty, about 1925, they were living in a house on that property, the old Kerr property was on the other side of the road, near where the power lines are now. The photo was taken because it was a big fish for the area; I was told it was nearly thirty pound. My mother knew all about the cod, she came from Renmark in South Australia, she lived there right on the river, one of her brothers was a Murray River captain.

Mrs Alex (Dorothy) Robinson, she used to talk about the cod and bream in the river, she came to Taggerty as a school teacher about 1924 or 25. She used to talk about how they always had a drum net in the river; they used to get a fair few. The other story she used to talk about, there was a fellow that used to live at Acheron, Eric Cumming; he was doing the bridge contract. He used to walk from Acheron and cross a large log down the river. Alex Robinson had his drum net in there and Eric found the drum net and stomped on it. He was telling her how pleased he was about it, and Mrs. Robinson said he didn't know how many times he'd had a feed out

of it at their place! By the early 1950s fishing parties would get big numbers of trout, up to fifty out of the river, by then the cod and bream had gone. The trout had got common in the Acheron by the war. Then they snagged the river because of the big floods in the fifties, they pulled the snags all out, my father was dead against it. It did nothing towards the floods and ruined the trout fishing.

OH 121

Ron Bain of Seymour was interviewed in January 2007 at an age of 88 years.

I was born in Seymour, grew up and went to school here. I was the youngest, one of ten. I started work at 14, did my time as a plumber with the railways. My dad, John Edward Bain, he knew the Hughes Creek backwards. He used to say about the cod and the bream being thick, around about Kulabah, used to go up through Tarcombe - that was a bit before World War 1. They weren't big cod. We knew all the people up around Habbies Howe, old Dick Webb bought the property during the wool boom, 9000 acres, between Dropmore and Tarcombe. The cod weren't big up there, dad said, and different to those in the Goulburn here. They put it down to the clearing of the land and the rabbits, and the creek the holes filled up with sand; they were up to 20 feet deep. I think it was back in the 1920s, I can just remember the change in the creek, we used to have picnics out there, further down the creek, just this side of Jeffries'.

We had bamboo growing in the yard; we would cut them down to make poles. Dad would tie a chord and a hook, and a cork for a floater. We'd go out on Telegraph Road, in the lagoons which went all the way around to the Trawool Bridge, and we used worms for bait. They were full of Catfish, bream and the greasies. The greasies we loved the best, up to 9 to 10 inches long, they were beautiful. The Catfish, all about the same size, about 14 inches, you could easy fill a sugarbag with them, no worries they were thick. We stunned them. The Catfish disappeared out of the lagoons towards the end of the twenties, maybe the early thirties. There was a cod or two in the lagoons, but we didn't worry about them much or never bothered much with the river. The bream, that's the Macquarie perch, were all the same size, no more than a pound and a half. A local butcher brought in a hundred pounder - a cod; mum put it in the bath till dad got home to clean it.

In the early thirties we used to go on holidays, dad made three flat bottomed boats. We'd go up to Alexandra by truck. We'd take two weeks, two in each boat, to get back home, fish all the way, spin and fish. We'd camp on the Islands, near Alex and along the way. At Alexandra we got mostly cod and the odd bream along the way. We never heard about many big cod up that way and never saw a yellowbelly. They were nearly all the bluenose cod up there, the biggest we ever got up there was 10 or 12 pound as well as smaller ones. The bluenose has a pointy nose, where the head on the Murray cod is like a shovel. The nose was a lot longer too, and darker, sometimes almost blue, but not always. What I noticed about them, they were darker, with spots similar to the trout we used to catch. The eyes were different, they sort of protruded more, and they were more of a greeny grey colour than the Murray Cod, and the Murray cod were lighter in the belly. They were really common down to Kerrisdale with the odd Murray cod amongst the bluenose, but you hardly noticed them. They used to get gold at Kerrisdale, there was a race, and they'd wash for gold in there.

The bream were usually a pound to a pound and a half, no bigger, never saw a decent sized one. They were very common, though they were more common in the lagoons near home in the early days. We took my future brother-in-law from here to Alex. He took a kerosene tin with cow dung to keep the mosquitoes away. We used to sleep on the gravel beaches, we would catch a couple of rabbits, we loved the holidays! The bluenose were not as fat and greasy as the Murray cod in Seymour, we use to get big slabs of fat out of the Murray cod, it was a lot thinner in the bluenose. I thought they were better to eat.

I'd say Kerrisdale was the start of the changeover; you got both types of cod there in fair numbers. The Murray cod at Kerrisdale - well the biggest one I saw, the caretaker of the property he caught a huge one on a cross line

made of electrical wire, it was 117 pound. It was bought up to the Kerrisdale railway station to weigh it on the platform scales, I saw it there. The Murray cod, well once you went much below the Trawool Bridge that's all I remember ever seeing, there might have been an odd bluenose amongst them, but not many. Once I started work I started fishing the Goulburn a lot. Dad built me a boat, a double pointer. We used to shoot Darcy's rapids, just down from the Trawool Bridge. I used to fish a lot from the willows at the back of Tallarook up towards Landscape; there were big holes in the river there. We used to get the big crays up there too. We'd go up to the slaughter yard, get a sheep's head, we made a drummy, and we'd get 20 to 30 big crays, no worries.

I mostly got cod out there, 40 to 60 pound; I was a bit of a terror, and 'ding dong' (Ron) Bell he was up that way too. I used to get little greasies and put them on, in later years bardie grubs and small reddies. And the crosslines, well you had to sink them at a sharp angle so that the aeroplane spinners wouldn't catch up on them. Being a plumber I made up special weights for them. Even though I was a bit of a poacher I always threw the small ones back. I had a mate; we would go out with aeroplane spinners. The best way was one casting in the front out towards the logs, and the other trailing. You would always get some parrot feathers to tie on them. We'd head out there all the damned time. You could really guarantee a cod, all year round. We used to go up behind the homestead at Findlay's; just behind there was an island in the river. We would go up there in the faster water, we hooked into one that was about 20 pounds, we were only kids then.

In the Yea River there were good cod. In the King Parrot I've only caught trout in there, but the old blokes told me that there were cod and bream in the early days right to the top of it. The redfin started about then in the thirties, they were first caught towards Nagambie, then came up the river. In the Sunday Creek, I caught the best redfin I ever caught. I got about ten of them, 6 pound and a bit over, every one, they were magnificent. There had been cod in it too, actually all the creeks in the district, well I was told in the early days they were full of cod and bream, up into the hills. The bream here got scarce about the war, and the cod fishing had started to back off. But the new weir was the biggest change. The river changed altogether, even in its appearance. We used to swim all of the year, now it's too cold, damned if I could get in it.

OH 122

Ray Hopkins of Yea was interviewed in October 2006 at 77 years of age.

Cod were caught in the Goulburn River near Yea, outside the rowing club, up into the 1950s. The biggest was 52 pound. My grandfather talked about how when he was young how he could catch the black bream up at Cathkin by the sugar bag. That's the Macquarie perch. That would be going back a while, yes, World War 1. The black bream, well the Yea River used to be full of them. Old Con Hildebrand used to talk about up the river. He lived near Devlins Bridge, opposite it. He talked about how any Sunday they could go down to the rocky pools up from Devlins Bridge, up through Glenburn way and catch the Trout cod, up to 5 pound, catch a 5 pound Trout cod any time. They were the Trout cod, lots of them, up to the 1930s. And the black bream in the rocky holes. They talked about the Catfish being around Yea too.

OH 123

Digger Garlick of Yea was interviewed in October 2006 at nearly 80 years of age.

My old man grew up in the area. He talked about catching the Catfish in the Yea River, and a lot in the lagoons. But I have never seen one here, or caught one at all. He talked about the cod and the bream or Macquarie perch being common in the Yea. When I was growing up there were all sorts of fish in the Yea, cod, redfin, trout, graylings. I never caught a lot of the Macquarie perch in the Yea, just a few, once in a while. Caught one not long ago, that was a shock. When I was young they were common in the Goulburn, only 4 mile from here. You could catch them in the morning or the evening; they were up to 3 to 4 pound. They were still caught till the weir got raised in 1956.

I did catch the Macquarie perch in the King Parrot too; my brother was on a farm out there. They were only small ones out there. It was a great place for the graylings, or some call them greasies or slimies. They are not the Blackfish; they're on the other side of the divide. Don't grow to any size. They were common in the Yea and the Murrundindi. The redfin in those days, well they would get into the lagoons in the floods in spring. In summer when they got low we would mud up the lagoons, get in there and stir them up. The redfin would come up, and we would stick them in a cage in the river to clean them up.

The cod in the Yea, the old man talked about catching lots. Any amount, any time. They were still around in the 1940s, most common about 3 to 4 pound. The biggest I saw was 12 pound. They went right up the Yea, way up, and up into the Murrundindi, way up, up to the cascades. There was a good one caught in the Murrundindi on a springer up past the Murrundindi Mill, but the cod were common in the Murrundindi a long time ago, back in the 20s. The cod when I was young were more common in the Goulburn. We used to fish from Molesworth down to Trawool, used to go a bit down Tarrangaville way. The biggest cod I caught out of the Goulburn was 63 pound; others I think might have caught bigger than that. The old man talked about seeing one swim over one of the sandbanks, talked about it being like a big pig.

I didn't know about the Trout cod back then, though I know about them now. I've caught plenty of them at Murchison in recent times; they've got the longer nose. We were working at Molesworth about 1945-46, and I remember we caught on a springer this 'cannibal cod'; it was long with a huge head with the nose, about 5-6 pound. It was a Trout cod, they were there, but we didn't take much notice back then. We caught trout at Molesworth too, plenty of them, and in the Yea.

The last cod I saw come out of the Yea was about thirty years ago, and that was the first for a while. When they raised the weir in 1956, well that bugged it for the cod in the Goulburn. It got too cold. All you could catch was trout. But that doesn't explain why they disappeared out of the Yea does it? They were going before then, and the Yea never turned cold. Then the carp came in, though there's fewer around now, but bigger. At the same time the cod have come back recently in the river down at Undera, down Shepp. way. We caught 70 in four days, from about a foot up to the 60 centimetres. And the grunter, they're great bait stealers. But hardly any yellowbelly. Caught lots of grunter in the Edwards these days. The old man never talked about seeing yellowbelly or the grunter in the Yea area.

OH 124

Bill Morris of Molesworth and was interviewed in October 2006 at 80 years of age.

There were lots of redfin and tench in the lagoons (c1945). When I first came here you could put a big drum net in the lagoons and catch lots of tench and redfin. The Catfish, well by then there were one or two, not much to talk about. Apparently there used to be quite a few around here in the lagoons. That was about the end of them. At the time the bream in the river, there were a few. You would fluke them. Just a few, nothing worth talking a lot about. They were caught on and off. At the time they were starting to get a few trout here. By 1945 the cod, well there were not many cod, just the odd ones. It was not like you caught them all the time. You had to work for them. Some were a fair size. I saw Jack Roberts catch a big one. Yes, about 50 pounds. With the weir, it stopped the floods. The cod would move into the lagoons and breed up, and leave. The last of the big floods were in the 1950s. The Yea River, well by 1960 there was just about only trout and redfin in it.

OH 125

Bruce Nicholson of Home Creek was interviewed in October 2006

About 1948 the Home Creek still had cod in it. We had a farm, 3 miles up the creek from Cathkin. I mainly got trout and redfin out of it. I once got a cod, be about 8-9 pound out of it, below Nicholsons Road out of the swimming hole in a drum net that was the only one I caught. There used to be bream in it, but I never caught

one. My grandfather settled it, and he used to say how years ago that before tea he could get a sugarbag full of the bream, in an hour before dinner.

OH 126

Collin Bell was interviewed in September 2006 at nearly 93 years of age.

My father was a mad fisherman and took me down to the Goulburn (at Seymour) when I was 5 years old. At Seymour 80 years ago we caught the Catfish, mainly in the lagoons, but I caught them in the river as well. We didn't have scales to weigh them. Yes, the biggest would have been that, about 3 to 4 pounds. We would catch the bream; they used to be very common. They would start biting early, before my birthday in October. We also caught the grunter around Seymour. They were fairly common. They were caught in early September, though nowhere near as common as the black bream, the Macquarie perch. I think we caught a few yellowbelly, not many. We would occasionally get a trout.

The cod were abundant. We caught two types, the normal Murray cod and the smaller type which was a different colour and markings and very different in the mouth. I think we called the smaller type "Trout cod". We mainly caught the normal Murray cod, not a lot of the smaller type, just some. There was a lot more of the smaller type further up the river. At one time my father was at Molesworth, we owned land over the bridge, I think the property was called Fernside. I saw a lot more of the smaller type of cod up there with my father. I remember my grandfather went up there for a week, up past what became the Perry's property. Father rode up there on the Bridle Track. That was 80 years ago; I remember having dinner with my grandfather.

I've fished down to Hughes Creek near the mouth, caught there mainly the bream and some cod. In 1934 I played in the football and we won the premiership. In 1935 I went away from Seymour, came back in 1946 after the war. The Catfish had disappeared; there was a lot of the redfin around. The raising of the weir in 1956 was the beginning of the end for the cod.

OH 127

Ron Bell of Seymour was interviewed in September 2006 at an age of 83 years.

When I was kid the black bream were in the river in droves. I caught them up around one-and-a-half pounds though I saw them caught up to 3 pounds. When I was about 20 they got replaced by the redfin. I never saw grunter in the river here, though I caught plenty below Shepparton way, down near Wyuna. At Wyuna I used to catch lots. The first time I saw a yellowbelly here was two years ago. That's the first time in my lifetime, here in the river. I remember when I was a boy the lagoon near the old weighbridge; it was a big lagoon when I was a boy. A fire had burnt the place out, then a thunderstorm washed all the ash in. I saw them cart all the dead cod out of the lagoon, they used pitchforks, used drays. Years ago the lagoons were full of Catfish. They disappeared within a space of 2 years. All the little creeks around here were full of greasies.

In the river here were the two types of cod, but mostly the Murray cod. Up at Molesworth when I was a kid in the old times we used to row boats down the river catching cod. Take 2 or 3 days to get to Seymour. Up at Molesworth we caught only cod, never big ones, not bigger than 20 lb. though we may have got busted off by bigger ones. I can remember clearly one fish that was 15 pound. It was definitely a Trout cod. Around here the biggest cod I remember seeing was caught by a local engine driver, Mick Lee, it was 96 lb. Can't remember the date but it would have been more than 45 years ago. I think I saw a 106 pounder in the butter factory with my son 40 years ago. He remembers it. The big cod were taken up to the butter factory as it was the only place back then that could keep them cold. Most of the cod I caught were on carp, yabbies, greasies, tench - any small fish. At Findlay's just north of Seymour I tied up my tinny to a snag about 10 yards from the bank. I used bardie grubs and within 7 minutes I caught two cod, the first 22 pound and the next 54 pound. Had them both in the boat by 5.05 am!

I had an old neighbour that told me that he used to catch cod in the Hughes Creek, but that was before my time. In the Sunday Creek there were cod and bream. They were caught as far as four to five mile up from the Goulburn. When I was a kid you could catch stacks of shrimp, big shrimp. But by the early 1950s, even before the new weir went in, there were not the small cod in the river like there once was. In one day I once caught three redfin over 4 pound, the biggest was four pound fifteen ounces. It was weighed on the greengrocer's scales. That was in Maar's Lagoon, near Dysart. The trout fishing, I used to do it in the hot months, I would spin for them, catch them 2 to 3 pound. My old boss was a fly fisherman; I cleaned them up on the flies!

OH 128

Keith Jones of Seymour was interviewed in September 2006 at an age of 74 years.

Prior to the 1914-18 war that there were tonnes of cod in the river around Seymour. He (Keith's father) told me the story about going up to the "Leg of Mutton" hole in the Hughes Creek below Ruffy. It was nearly dark, on dusk, and he threw his line in. He couldn't see how deep it was. Next morning he caught a cod, a 14 pounder and in the daylight he could see that it wasn't real deep, fairly shallow. He thought he had caught Goulburn Jack in that shallow water! He told me he used to catch a lot of cod up there, all small cod. Prior to the 1914-18 war my father worked at Northwood Park stud. He used to go to work on Monday and stay the week there, come home on the weekend. He would hop in the boat on the river there and row up and down the river. He did it for 2-3 weeks and one evening caught 14 cod, all caught on an old spoon. The last cod crumpled the spoon! He used to catch lots of the bream and the Catfish. He never mentioned catching grunter or yellowbelly here. He used to tell the story of catching a 60 pound cod out at Northwood at Aublong's, and it spat out a platypus!

50-60 years ago I saw some blokes fishing in the river here and as you do I asked if they had caught anything. They had caught a Catfish, the only one I ever saw caught here. I used to fish a lot around here. Caught lots of cod, mainly Murray cod. For every 10-15 normal Murray cod you would catch one of the "blue cod". They were smaller. The normal cod were up to 80-90 pounds. The blue cod were up to 40 pounds, maybe to 50. I fished a lot from Seymour down to Northwood. I used to fish mainly behind the pubs here for the next 2-3 miles downstream. That's where I caught the blue cod. "McClarty's" (between the Hughes Creek junction and Tahbilk) was famous for cod. In the Goulburn below Wahring, down to Murchison I caught Murray cod, yellowbelly, redfin and the silver bream. I had never caught a blue cod in the past down there. This past summer (2006) after a release of water from Nagambie the cod went mad. I first heard of it from a friend of mine, he had 5 mates, caught 40 for the day, they had 3 boats. His boat managed 3 keepers, this was at Toolamba, all caught on cheese. After that I fished at Arcadia, caught a mixture of blue and Murray cod, mostly undersize, I managed to hook one good fish. Using 30 pound line, had trouble turning him or lifting him off the bottom. The usual story! Yes, he got into a nest of snags and eventually broke off.

My nephew has caught odd cod at Tintaldra on the Murray. Years ago I used to go fly fishing up that way. At the time there was a lot of cod in the Cudgewa Creek. When I used to go fly fishing up there the locals told me there was a lot of cod in the area, mostly up to 15 pound, and how they used to move out of the Murray and into the creeks for spawning. I've caught the Trout cod down at Murchison. The Catfish may be coming back in the weir. I have heard of people fishing the backwater at Chateau Tahbilk at night time and catching Catfish.

OH 129

Jim Hanley was interviewed in September 2006 at an age of 65 years.

My father caught a "rock cod" at Coomb's, that's between here and Nagambie (c1951). It was a blue colour. Fifty years ago we used to catch a lot of cod here. I used to catch a lot of Macquarie perch in the Hughes Creek, and they are still there! The biggest Macquarie perch I saw caught was at Murchison East. They were up to four pound there. We used to catch them consistently at Smith's property. Robert Smith now has it. Used to catch a

lot of Murray cod there, the grunter too. I used to catch a lot of redfin, and a few trout there. The last Macquarie perch I caught there was back in 1972. That was also when I had my last good catch of grunter there. One was 3½ to 4 pound; after that they declined. I previously used to catch Macquarie perch from the same hole. There was a sandy beach off the beautiful deep hole. I spun that Macquarie perch on a Mitchell spinner near some logs. It grabbed it near the bank and was about 2 pound. That was the last one I saw there. After that time everything declined, that was about the time the carp arrived. Since then the silver bream have come back there but not the Macquarie perch. In April 2006 I saw cod being caught again at Murchison East. I know of Catfish being caught from the backwater at Tahbilk. That's the only spot. I've never heard of one from the river.

In the 70s, there's an anabranch out of the Goulburn, on a property called 'The Prim' owned by the Andersons on Ghin Ghin Road. We were fishing for trout in a row boat, and on worms we caught about half a dozen Macquarie perch. We normally caught lots of trout out of there, and the old man got a 35 pound cod out of it. More recently, about 6 – 7 years ago, Bob Homewood put a dead yabby on and lost a big cod, he said about 45 pound, out of there. Henry Royals, a train driver, was the last consistent cod fisherman in Seymour. He gave it away in the 80s; he said the trout were taking all the Bardies. Even Neil Attwater had given it away by then.

OH 130

Graham McLeod, former professional fisherman, was interviewed at Nagambie in January 2007 at an age of 84 years.

I was born in 1922, the McLeod's came to Australia in 1835, they arrived in the area not long after near Kirwan's Bridge, named after Joanna Kirwin. They built the weir here in 1898 that backed up the lake here. My father, Andrew McLeod was a professional fisherman; there was no greater fisherman than dad. He told me in past years here there were Murray cod, Catfish, yellowbelly though not much, the black bream were around. I did hear of a few grunter here, but never saw one. All the cod we caught here, they were the normal Murray cod. The other type was further up the river; we never saw them here in the lake. We fished all the backwaters, knew every stick, every log, fished up as far as where Mitchelton is now.

The Catfish there were a fair few around, quite a lot, beautiful to eat, they'd average about 4-5 pound, about 10 pound was the biggest we got. There were still quite a few around in the 40s, they got scarce after that. The black bream was also a good fish; we got them up to 4 pound. The Murray cod, we went after them with the spinner. Our market was for the Murray cod, didn't have to take any away to Melbourne, they were all sold locally. Mum was the fastest cleaner and scaler of fish. Mum used to lug them up and down the bank, after washing them. We caught them, the common size was 10-20 pound plenty of them, but we got them up to 70-80 pound. The biggest cod taken was 110 pound, but that is going back a long while. When the winter came it wasn't so good, you would catch the odd one, but not like you would catch them in summer. In 1916 there was the greatest flood in Nagambie. When there was a flood the cod could get all the tucker they wanted, they were harder to catch.

You could catch them any hour of the day. Dad went down early one morning; straight away he got a 37 pounder to start the day! That was our means of living. At lunch we would put a handline over the side, with a yabby. That was the best bait for the cod, and the redfin. I actually preferred the redfin. Real early on there were no redfin in the lake. It wasn't too many years later they came on the scene; they were cursed by the cod fishermen as before that there was so much feed for the cod. In the cod, well they ate yabbies, mainly; they would have small fish in them. They were cannibals, redfin and Blackfish were in them. You'd get tench, sometimes a bird in the cod. Got one with a snake in him one time. The cod used to scoop out hollows in the lake, near the willows, at the back of my place. We liked the windy days to spin for the cod; it broke the sunlight

up under the water. That's how got most of the cod, on a spinner with a feather on it. You could catchem any time of day. I gave it away in the early 80s; I was still catching cod then.

OH 131

Don Polkinghorne of Murchison East was interviewed in December 2007 at an age of 79 years.

My name is Don Polkinghorne; I'm seventy nine years old, born in Murchison, my father and mother were born in England. My father was a hairdresser in the town and was keen on being out in the open, he loved the river. There was a place called the Polkie's hole where they used to go swimming, that's where we left the boat to go fishing. The name of the boat was 'Largo'; it belonged to the local solicitor.

When I was a boy we mainly caught Murray cod, and yellowbelly. Nine times out of ten we'd throw the yellowbelly back. The fish that we caught back then they were three to four pounds. And grunthers, you never kept them; the story goes they were no good to eat. There weren't many grunthers in the river, not as many as there was in the lagoons. There were Catfish in the lagoons; I can't remember ever catching a Catfish out of the river. In the lagoons the Catfish were ugly slimy things, four to five pound, and the grunter they were about the same size. The Macquarie perch, they were just called a perch, they looked like a bream, we never caught them on the spinners, just on worm bait. The yellowbelly we got on worms too. The Macquarie perch were found in the lagoons were just called perch, they looked like bream, we never caught them on spinners, just on worm bait. The yellowbelly we got on worms too. The Macquarie perch there were a fair few around, but you just threw them back, we were only interested in the cod. The perch were usually about fourteen inches long, if you got one you seemed to get three or four.

Back then the average cod was seven to eight pound, the biggest ones, the biggest ones fifty pounds plus, well we never caught big fish. I've never bought one home ever in my life over thirty five pounds. The cod we mainly got on the old propeller spinners. A spinner on a ten foot bamboo rod with about ten foot of line off the rod. If you hooked something you threw the rod and everything back in then turned around in the boat and headed back to the rod. If it was still moving the fish was still on it. We always had white feather tail hook. I'd always have three or four in the bucket with the bardies, for the smell. The gully just down the river, we used to wait till the river rose to its full height. We used to drop the net in with big wings on it and we'd pull it up the next morning and got the cod and bream out of it, anything else, we threw them away.

I can't remember if there were two types of cod.... There was the one with bigger heads which could be as large as fifty pounds plus and the long trimmer ones, they came from further up the river. We usually only saw them after floods. That's the Trout cod that we caught then, back then they were usually up the river except after the floods, they're in the river here again now. The local cod was the stumpy ones; they were what we normally got. I remember when I hung a sheep's head off a tree limb; it got blown behind the football ground. I went back two or three days later and threw a line in and got cod and redfin. When I was very young there weren't a lot of redfin. They came in big numbers when I was about thirty five, they seemed to take over. The bream or Macquarie perch pretty well disappeared about then.

The holes in the river aren't like they used to be, they've all silted right up. Back when I was young it was a beautiful clean river, we used to go all the way down the river on a barge. The river boats used to come up the river as far as nearly Seymour in the early days, up to 'the crossing' at Mitchelton. I can go down and show you a spot, we called it Murray's hole, there was a beautiful big sandbar, and Campbell's fifty foot hole, there was a big sandbar there too, wasn't there ever! The holes with sandbars were mainly up the river. Now there's water weed right up to the edge of the water. The river used to be clear, after rains it would get a bit muddy, but not for long.

Ken Trefall of Shepparton was interviewed in February 2007 at an age of nearly 80 years.

I'm nearly 80, grew up here, same with my old man. He said how he used to be able to catch more fish than they wanted. When I was young the most common fish in the Goulburn here were the cod, the Murray cod. They were up to a hundred pound, back then you could get any size you wanted, there aren't so many big ones around now. They'll eat anything, golf balls; I've seen them with water rats in them. The Trout cod, they've always been there in the Murray, round Barmah, though years ago there was more Murray cod there than the Trout cod, a lot more. The biggest ones I saw there myself were 30 to 40 pound, though I've heard of them being caught bigger than that out of the Murray. Now there's too many Trout cod in the Murray, they've been stocking them. I only ever saw very few out of the Goulburn here when I was young, just odd ones. Since they stocked them they're catching them down here too, there was one caught a while back.

The yellowbelly were also very common, we used to get them out of the Nathalia Creek up to 13 pound. There was a ton of them here in the Goulburn. They had an open season on themselves, depending on the flow. You could catch any amount of them when they were on, from a pound up to 10 pound. The grunters were here, they were carpet sweepers. And they are worse now than they were back then. One fish I haven't seen for 30 years is the goggle eyes bream, they've died right out. They used to be in the Murray, and in all the creeks, up to 2 or 3 pound. They used to be common in the Goulburn here; they were real good to eat, not like the black bream or grunter. My old man said the goggle eyes was the best of the lot to eat.

The Catfish, there are still a few around in the Columbo Creek. You don't see them very often now around here, there used to be a lot of them in the lagoons; we used to get them up to 3 or 4 pounds, and in the channels. But they've drained everything out, emptied all the lagoons. The slipperies, when I was young they used to be common in all the channels around here, but they're not like they were. We got one that was stuck in the foot valve of a pump in a channel recently. The redfin, well the river used to be lousy with them, there used to be thousands from 2 to 3 inches long up to 4 or 5 pound, but there hasn't been the floods for them to breed. We never got many of the bony bream or herrings here, only a few, though there was plenty of them up in the Billabong Creek. There are still a few tench around, not as many as there were, there another useless fish. And those things a bit like a slipper, the loaches, well there's plenty of loaches in the channels.

