



Research & Education

Lake Wendouree – Angler survey results

John Douglas, PIRVic, Department of Primary Industries

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Lake Wendouree is a great place to fish! This is the opinion of the vast majority of anglers interviewed as part of a Fisheries Victoria funded survey into this fishery.

Lake Wendouree, a shallow (maximum depth of 2 m) artificial lake at Ballarat, was one of the first waters to be stocked with trout in Australia. In 1870 the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society (BFAS) was formed to stock the lake with a variety of fish to provide sport for local anglers and in 1872 they released the first brown trout.

The stocking continues today – though now it is a joint effort between Fisheries Victoria and BFAS. Normally, each year Fisheries Victoria stocks the Lake with 8,000 yearling rainbow trout, while the BFAS stocks 6,000 yearling brown trout.

As part of an investigation commissioned by Fisheries Victoria into the performance of Lake Wendouree's trout fishery, scientists from PIRVic interviewed anglers fishing in the lake between December 2001 and November 2002.

Anglers were asked about:

- the number and species of fish they caught, returned to the lake and kept,
- the size of the fishing party,
- type of fishing (boat or shore),
- type and quantity of gear,
- target species,
- the time they expected to spend fishing,
- their level of angling experience (occasional, regular or active), and
- their home postcode.

In addition the anglers were also asked about their views on particular management issues, such as closed seasons, minimum legal sizes and bag limits.

During the course of the survey 198 visits to the lake were made and 2,245 interviews conducted with 3,290 anglers. These data were used to estimate total catches from the lake and to indicate angler patterns and preferences.

Anglers on Lake Wendouree overwhelmingly (94%) target trout, with only about 4% fishing for redfin.

Most anglers fish from shore (74%) although boating is allowed. Fishing in Lake Wendouree lasts about 3 hours on average with 64% fishing alone and 28% fishing in pairs. The largest group encountered during the survey comprised six anglers.

Bait (72%) and fly-fishing (17%) were the most common methods of fishing on the lake. The remainder was made up of lure fishing, including trolling, or various combinations of bait, lure and fly methods.

The average time spent fishing by anglers at Lake Wendouree was between 2 and 3 hours. The shortest fishing trip recorded was just 30 minutes, the longest just over 11 hours!

Fishing success varied. About 65% of anglers, who had finished fishing for the day, reported that they had not caught a fish.

The longest time any angler spent fishing without capturing a fish was 11 hours and ten minutes! In contrast, several lucky anglers reported catching a fish within about 10 minutes of starting fishing.

It is estimated that anglers caught 9,449 rainbow trout and returned 3,524 (37%). In contrast, 1,040 brown trout were caught and 113 released (11%) during the survey period.

The vast majority of anglers (90%) released rainbow trout because they were too small. Brown trout were released either because they were too small (45%) or because anglers were fishing for sport (45%). These findings indicate that the majority of anglers have a self-imposed minimum size, even though there is no legal minimum length for Lake Wendouree's trout.

Most anglers fishing in Lake Wendouree did not take home the maximum allowable catch of 10 salmonids per person with no more than 5 salmonids less than 30 cm. Most anglers took home five or less trout.



Most anglers fishing in Lake Wendouree are local to the Ballarat area, with a total of 70% coming from Victoria. However the Lake does attract visitors from interstate, with Queenslanders and Western Australians most regularly encountered in the survey.

The majority (85%) are 'active' anglers who fish the Lake more than three times per month. Six percent are 'regular' anglers who fish the Lake up to three times per month, while 8% were classified as 'occasional' anglers who fish less than once a month. Active anglers were marginally more successful at catching trout when compared to regular and occasional anglers. Sixteen percent of surveyed anglers belonged to angling clubs.

Lake Wendouree anglers clearly value this fishery and have few serious concerns about it, with 88% rating it as 'good' or 'excellent'. Less than 1% rated the Lake as 'below average' or 'poor'. Problems that were identified by the anglers are related to ongoing issues with weed growth and control, and environmental issues such as siltation, water quality and water level.

Each angler interviewed was given the chance to make comment on their fishing experience at Lake Wendouree and to make suggestions for improvement. The most common suggestions and comments were:

- the need for improved weed control - particularly along the shoreline,
- support for the introduction of a minimum size for trout, and
- Lake Wendouree is a great place to fish.

For more information about this project, please contact Mr John Douglas at, PIRVic Snobs Creek on (03) 5774 2208.

Fisheries Research and Education Notes are available on the web at the following address:

www.dpi.vic.gov.au

Follow the prompts to Fishing and Aquaculture and then to Publications and Fisheries Notes. The notes are listed under the heading Research and Education.

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