

## **Five Days In The Snowies**

**5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

Kevin Gowen

Ron and I left early on Monday December 5 and, after Canberra, drove through Tharwa, on Bobeyan Road rather than the Monaro Highway and the Snowy Mountains Highway to our accommodation near Adaminaby. Bobeyan Road is the shortest and quickest way from Canberra to Adaminaby, but, in hindsight, I wouldn't travel it again. Even my Discovery was shaken around with some of the potholes and we found it to be a narrow and twisting road as well, with some dangerous sections.

Soon after reaching our base and having some lunch, we went to the Murrumbidgee River near Bolaro. The river was flowing abnormally high because of an environmental flow from Tantangara Dam, designed to flush out the river. The height of the river made access a little difficult, but soon after starting our fishing I saw my first brown---snake! A little later, a black snake tail disappeared into the long grass ahead of me. Ron picked up a few pan size rainbows on a nymph in a nice run and I had to be content with one.

Next morning we tried another section of the Murrumbidgee, again with nymphs. The fish were attacking the nymphs mostly at the end of the drift when the nymph tends to rise slightly. I caught four pan size rainbows and Ron caught three. In the afternoon, we went up to the Eucumbene river at Denison, parked at Gang Gang creek and walked downstream. Eucumbene Lake has now risen substantially. It is well past Providence Portal caravan park and we saw boats on the lake beyond that point. We went to an area where the river joins the lake. Good deep water and a slow flow. We saw some substantial rises and I soon had a hit from a good fish, but lost it after fighting it for 30 seconds or so. Ron picked up a nice rainbow on a nymph, then another, then a third. He gave me a nymph of the same type, but no joy for me. A few minutes later, Ron yelled "This is a big one"!! His rod was well bent and he was being taken downstream by what was clearly a big fish. He eventually brought a monster brown close to the bank and after a couple of attempts, I was able to net it for him. A 3 kilogram, 6.6 pound brown. After the obligatory photos, the big buck was gently returned to the water. Ron picked up three smaller rainbows on nymphs and I caught a couple with a similar fly.

I was able to land two medium size rainbows, both on elk hair caddis patterns a little further upstream. As we walked back to the car, I decided on one more cast into a likely looking run. A huge splash and a mighty take on the caddis was the start of a 100metre walk downstream to land an active 4 pound brown. A great day for both of us! Our next snake sighting was on the track in front of us—an Alpine Copperhead this time!

My caddis pattern was based on a design that I saw in Montana earlier this year. I was fishing on the Madison with a young American from California, who had studied trout feeding behaviour. The basic caddis pattern is fine, he said, but by adding some short rubber legs it makes the caddis look like it is heading to the surface, so the trout becomes very interested in catching it before it flies away. He kindly gave me a fly of his, on which I caught a few fish, then put it away for future reproduction.

On the Eucumbene, Ron and I met Brian Henderson (no, not the newsreader) who many may know as a local guide and flycasting tutor. Brian gave us some detailed information about local insect hatches and my caddis pattern with the rubber legs seemed to fit his suggestions.

Back at our cabin that night, after we had settled into our rooms, I heard a loud noise and a thump from Ron's room! He told me next morning, over breakfast, that he had been lying down reading a

trout fishing book (as you do) and had fallen asleep. In a dream about catching his big one, the trout took his fly and he immediately lifted his rod to strike. Unfortunately, the book that was still in his hands flew into the air and landed on his head -- book one, Ron nil!

Wednesday and Thursday was more of the same. The fish weren't as big as our two prize catches, but it was interesting and productive fishing. On one run I decided to try a new fly that I had made, coupled to my own Royal Wulff pattern in a tandem dry rig. Ron was persevering with a dry with nymph dropper. The new fly was on a #14 or #16 hook with a fine white deer hair tail, brown ostrich herl body and a sparse grizzly hackle. The fly floated low in the water and accounted for two 43cm rainbows in a shallow run. Both fish took the fly in more of a swirl than a splashy take, probably because it was sitting so low. Ron tried the fly on his rig and immediately caught another rainbow.

On another run, I tried another new, generic pattern of mine, again with rubber legs. It was immediately smashed by a big rainbow which went through the usual leaping and hard pulling routine for which they are famous. It's what keeps us coming back to fly fishing!!

Our last morning was on another section of the Murrumbidgee. We started fishing in thick fog, Ron on one side of the river, me on the other, so a nymph rig was used to start. I soon had a good sized fish on the bottom nymph, again just as it rose at the end of a drift. The fish was too smart though. It eventually went into a weed bed and broke itself off. Soon after, I had a pan-size rainbow in the net and Ron had also scored a small brown. As we moved up to a very likely looking corner, Ron had another snake encounter (we think it was a tiger) on his side of the river. We fished almost opposite each other, with Ron picking up another brown and I scoring another rainbow, this time on an olive Woolly Bugger. There was certainly plenty of fish in the area, but they were all down deep and attacking the nymphs at the end of the drift. Difficult to catch and we both found that timing the strike was paramount, so we didn't pull the fly from the fish's mouth.

All in all, it was a great five days away. Good mateship, good food and a few glasses of red at the end of the day made for a very pleasant time.

We now start to prepare for the NZ trip in early February, when Ron, Allan Gardner, Bill Torok and I head for a week at the Garston pub.

