

## Four Days in the Mountains

18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> January 2012

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Bill and I decided that a short trip to the Snowies for a bit of practice before we headed to NZ in early February would not be a bad idea. We met at the Bakery in Goulburn because it was easier for Bill to get there, via Oberon and Crookwell, than to come east over the Blue Mountains, from his home in Hartley Vale, then join the M7 and the Hume Highway.

On arrival at our accommodation near Adaminaby, we had a quick lunch, rigged up, then headed for the Murrumbidgee River. We had a not very successful couple of hours fishing, then, after a coffee stop, we went to another section of the river. It was late afternoon, the wind had dropped and the water looked great. An area where a slow section dropped through a riffle soon had a few fish of about 25cm caught and released. The fish were looking up, so dry flies were the way to go. Bill moved on ahead while I fished a likely corner that had a fast run. Six fish later, all on a small caddis pattern, as well as the Ross Salvato designed Twilight Caddis, I moved up to meet Bill. Suddenly, fish were rising everywhere in a slow run. A hatch of blackish, small midges was underway and we had great fun pulling in active fish, all rainbows, on #18 midge patterns.

Next morning we went to Denison on the Eucumbene River and drove to Gang Gang Creek. There were no other fishers in sight. We walked down to where, previously, had been a great run into a slow pool. We found that the lake has now risen substantially and it is slow water all the way up to Gang Gang Creek. There were fish there though. Their rises indicated that they were possibly sipping emergers in the early morning. Not splashy, just gentle swirls. Bill walked to the edge of the water to fish on a point while I waded out to a likely spot. I saw a fish rise about 10 metres away and put a cast nearby. I was using a #10 Stimulator and a #16 Red Tag dropper on a two dry rig on my 4 weight Loomis. As my flies drifted slowly towards where I had seen the rise, I saw a big trout nose lift out of the smooth water, right behind the Red Tag. I waited for a second, lifted slowly and was rewarded by a tight line and a big commotion. It was clearly a good fish, so I just let it run and gradually retrieved line. Soon, a 4.5 pound, 53 cm beautifully conditioned brown buck was in my new, laminated timber net which my son Jared had given to me for Christmas. What a christening for the net!! Bill took the obligatory photo and soon the brown was back in the water, no doubt ready to sulk down low for a day or two.

I reckon that very early morning and late evening fishing in this area would be very productive because the lake has now risen over areas that were grassy plain. Foraging trout would go onto these areas and feed on the new ground, so stealthy polaroiding should be rewarding.

Bill and I walked slowly upstream, he on the high right bank, while I waded up close to the left bank. At the corner and riffle near Gang Gang Creek, Bill picked up a very nice brown and dropped another. This fish was 45cm and a bit over a kilo or 2.4 pounds. I walked up a little further to a long, slow pool. We had seen a couple of rises along the far, steep bank, in deep water. Bill unfortunately missed a good strike, however, he managed a nice fighting but smaller brown. I was lucky enough to catch a 43cm rainbow that was secreted in a low reef near the opposite bank. Further along, in a faster run, I picked up another rainbow. Both fish were taken on either the Red Tag or the Stimulator, both of which, by now, were starting to look a bit worse for wear.

I may be wrong, but I've found that most of our Aussie mainland trout are not as selective as Tasmanian, NZ or USA trout. I had a situation on the Madison River in Montana where trout would

rise up to critically inspect a fly, especially the big Salmon flies, and if it was not perfectly to its liking, turn away. Sometimes, a change of fly in the same run can coax a fish to strike where previously there had been a refusal.

We tried unsuccessfully again in the deep pool, before walking back to the car for lunch. Our next area was the braided section of river that has been very prolific during the brown's spawning run, but no luck there. We drove up past the old bridge pool and tried several likely areas. Bill missed a good fish in a very nice pool while I was unsuccessful in attracting anything of substance. I tried several fly combinations—two nymphs, a dry and nymph dropper, a Woolly Bugger and nymph as well as two dries, but no joy for me, except for a smallish rainbow and a splashy take or two.

Dinner at the Adaminaby pub was starting to sound like a very good idea. It was hot and very windy on the river, so a cold beer or two was very much on our minds.

Next morning, we looked again at the Gang Gang creek area, but decided to fish above the old bridge. We crossed the river in the Land Rover and drove up 300 metres or so, before cutting across to the river. Bill went downstream and I started wading in a likely area just near the car. A riffle at the end of a long, slow pool was very productive. Good sized rainbows were secreted in the fast water and rose eagerly for a dry fly. My #14 caddis pattern accounted for 4 fish in quick time, several around the 35-40cm mark. Good fun!! Bill was not having such a successful time downstream. We moved up a bit, had some lunch, then Bill went to the river directly in front of the car and I walked downstream about 400 metres. Again, it was a lucky choice for me, with three nice rainbows caught.

We decided, with thunderstorms looming, to head back to the Murrumbidgee near Bolaro. By the time we got there, rain had set in and lightning strikes were around, with cracks of thunder. Bill couldn't be encouraged out onto the river, but I decided to tempt fate. The action was certainly not as prolific as a couple of days ago, but it was still interesting fishing, with a few more smaller rainbows caught and released.

Our last morning was fogbound but warm. Bill had been suffering with a bad back, so I hit the river early. It was again very productive, with my first 32 cm rainbow taking a dry---in the fog. They were definitely looking up. My next fish, using a caddis dry and nymph dropper, I thought was a beauty. A big, splashy take, line being ripped off the reel and the fish darting from one side of the river to the other. I gradually retrieved line and found, not one fish, but two. One had taken the dry, the other the nymph. This had happened to me once before on the Madison River in Montana. Quite exciting!!

Bill joined me a little later and we moved upstream together. I wanted to try a section of river that we hadn't fished before on this trip, so I moved ahead. Bill's back prevented him from being so adventurous so he stayed behind. Time was getting away, so after another couple of 25cm size rainbows, I headed back to Bill. He told me of his lost fish. A big one had taken his Stu's (Tripney's) Worm pattern so hard that it snapped his line right at the hook. Earlier, he had caught two nice rainbows, one on the worm, the other on a Royal Wulff.

It was a great few days away. Good company, good food, a few beers and a bottle of red or two made for some pleasant memories. Now for NZ!!!