Give South Gippsland a go

Steve Haughton | August 2008 » Regular Features / Freshwater /

It's that time of year when I sit in front of the laptop for an hour or so without typing anything. Blackfish anglers are hard to find because they're usually wetting a line after sunset. And I haven't had any reports come through from mates because they're complaining it's too cold. So I thought I would talk about the beautiful blackfish I landed in June, then divulge some of the hot spots around South and West Gippsland that I rarely talk about.

In winter, I donned my thermals and a headlamp, then grabbed my rod and a box of basic tackle and hit the Bunyip River, just out of Labertouche, after dark. My plan was to catch a blackfish or two after last year's dismal efforts.

Using a ball float with a 30cm leader and a size 6 baitholder hook, I baited up some wriggly garden worms. Within two minutes of casting I'd already had a bite. The next cast I was on and the blackfish gave a good fight on the light gear. When I got it home it weighed in at 700g, making it a personal best for me. I'm told that blackies of this size are quite common around waterways in West and South Gippsland, it is just a matter of finding those deep, rarely fished deep holes.

Fishing is getting more expensive, with petrol prices increasing every time we fill up. This is putting a lot of pressure on how often and where we can go for a fish. West and South Gippsland offer some great and adventurous fishing locations that won't cost you an arm and a rod.

Since I started writing for VFM, I have focused a lot on the rivers around Neerim and Noojee. These are truly fantastic trout streams, but there are some great waterways worth targeting from Warragul to Wonthaggi. It is important to note that even though some of these waterways don't offer the same clear water, they still hold numerous fish species and crayfish.

North of the Strzelecki range, a stone's throw out of Warragul, there is a beaut little stream called Hazel Creek. Without giving too much away, there are plenty of good-sized trout around 200-400g, as well as crayfish during their active season.

Head east along Old Sale Road and you'll reach the bridge over Shady Creek. This stream boasts a number of deep, long pools that are great for trout, eels, carp to 5kg and the odd blackfish, I'm sure.

Heading southwest, the Lang Lang River between Yannathan and Athlone is another spot worth trying. There are small rainbow and brown trout of around 200g, blackfish, eels and carp. The following rivers all have these same five species swimming around. Don't discount the odd Australian bass turning up, either. Historically, this species was quite common in these areas.

The Powlett River between Kongwak and Wonthaggi, the Tarwin River between Mirboo North and Meeniyan and Bass River between Poowong and Almurta are all good rivers featuring deep pools, rapids and runs, so most techniques will be successful. Access can be difficult in places, but they are certainly worth a challenge for the young at heart. There are plenty of road crossings and bridges so I certainly recommend having a map on hand.

Just a quick reminder that the trout season re-opens on September 6. If you have any reports, questions or photos, please don't hesitate to email me.

The author caught this good blackfish in the Bunyip River. It took an earthworm after dark.

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