



MAFRI Research & Education

Reel Science - anglers help vital to fisheries scientists

Simon Conron, Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute

24 February 2003

FN 0542

ISSN 1329-8062

For the past seven years, two hundred and forty Victorian anglers have been 'adding value' to their fishing experiences. These anglers have been volunteering information on their fishing activities and catches to fisheries scientists from the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute (MAFRI).

This volunteer program is known as The Diary Angler Program and is jointly funded by revenue from the Recreational Fishing Licence and Fisheries Victoria.

Each volunteer angler is supplied with the two pieces of vital 'scientific' equipment they need to successfully undertake the survey – a special diary and a fish ruler!

Armed with this equipment, their fishing gear, and their fishing knowledge, MAFRI's Diary Anglers turn their normal fishing trips into valuable research expeditions.

The Diary Anglers keep details of each of their trips, including how long they spent fishing, the number and size of the fish they caught, and whether they were kept or released. All this information is recorded in their diary.

MAFRI's Simon Conron, Robin Cameron-Smith and Andrew Kidd, who oversee the Diary Angler program, keep in regular phone contact with each of the diary anglers, offering assistance with any queries, checking on the progress of diaries and reissuing new diaries as required.

The Angler Diary Program runs from the start of September through until the end of April. At the end of each season the volunteers return the diaries to MAFRI for data collation and analysis.

At MAFRI the information in the diary is entered into a database and analysed to help assess fishery trends and the status of fish stocks.

So successful has the program been that the database now contains approximately 80,000 capture records including 40,000 fish measurements from 150 species in 190 different Victorian water bodies.

The information on the fish released is particularly valuable. In some fisheries (eg snapper and bream), this information has been instrumental in providing early indicators of strong or weak year classes well before they reach legal size and enter the fishery. Apart from assessing fisheries, the Diary Angler Program can be also used to evaluate the success of fish stocking or fish habitat rehabilitation programs.

The types of research projects the Diary Angler Program data can contribute to include:

- Assessment of the trout fishery in the Goulburn River.
- Assessment of black bream fisheries across the State.
- Assessment of King George whiting stocks in Port Phillip Bay and Western Port Bay.
- Assessment of 'pinkie' snapper fisheries in the Portland area and in Port Phillip Bay.
- Investigation of hook types and handling practices that could maximise the survival chances of undersize snapper caught and released by anglers.
- Monitoring of Australian Bass fish stocks in East-Gippsland.

The Angler Diary program is designed to be flexible, encouraging the volunteers to follow their interests. As part of the Angler Diary Program, participants can choose to undertake fish tagging work. Really keen anglers, who wish to run with additional diaries over the cooler months,



particularly trout and bream enthusiasts, are encouraged to do so.

Diary Anglers all receive a copy of the annual report to view first hand how their data have been utilised.

For more information on this project or how to become a “Reel” scientist as please contact Simon Conron at MAFRI on 5257 0235.

The advice provided in this publication is intended as a source of information only. Always read the label before using any of the products mentioned. The State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.