

The 2019/20 Trout Season Report

Adrian Webb

Well another season has closed so here's my full 2019-20 trout season report on the rivers I fished & how many trout I caught & released in those rivers as well as my thoughts on the rivers fished. Before I get onto it here's a quick run down on the 2018/19 trout season when I had 76 trips to the rivers for a total of 573 trout being caught. It consisted of 548 brown trout & 24 rainbow trout with the seasons total average catch being 7.64 fish.

**** Below are the results of the 2019/20 trout season:**

**** Trips:** 61 in total. **** Trout caught:** "Brown" 402 "Rainbow " 12

****Total trout caught:** 414 **Seasons total average:** 6.78 fish

*** Mersey River:** 13 trips, 53 brown trout & 11 rainbow trout caught & released.

Best days catch: 12 trout. (8 browns & 4 rainbows) best fish: brown trout 705 grams.(22/11/19)
best rainbow trout: 295 grams. (22/11/19) average catch rate per trip : 4.9 fish

*** Leven River:** 6 trips, 18 brown trout with one being kept, this also includes one trip without a trout being caught. Best days catch: 9 Brown trout. (19/12/10) Best fish: 2 @ 535 grams. (8/10/19 & 24/12/19) average catch rate per trip: 3 fish

*** Meander River:** 11 trips, 113 brown trout & 1 rainbow trout caught, one brown trout was kept. Best days catch: 26 brown trout. (10/1/20) Best fish: brown trout 1.04 kgs. (20/2/20)
best rainbow: 355 grams (17/2/20) average catch rate per trip: 10.4 fish

*** Dasher River:** 3 trips, 11 brown trout caught & released. Best catch: 8 brown trout. (16/8/19)
Best fish: 320 grams (30/8/19) average catch rate per trip: 3.7 fish

*** Un-named Tannin streams:** 28 trips, 208 trout caught with one being kept. Best catch: 17 fish. (5/11/19) Best fish: 525 grams (7/3/20) average catch rate per trip: 7.4 fish

**** Equipment used:** Okuma Celilo Finesse ULS 1-3 kg trout rods, Okuma Helios SX20 & Okuma Inspira ISX20B spinning reels, Mepps inline spinners, Platypus Super 100 UHT mono lines, Platypus Pretest premium grade mono, Platypus Stealth FC lead line & Boomerang Tool Products.



So as you can see my season hasn't been all that good like previous years, yet in saying that my overall average wasn't all that bad overall. Less trips to the rivers due to health problems (lower back & hips) did see me missing quite a few days in the rivers. One thing I have done is spent longer hours and covered more distance in the rivers than previous seasons and that showed one thing, the trout numbers are down in two of the rivers I fished. The two rivers I'm referring to are the Leven River & the Mersey River, both didn't produce a lot of trout this season for the distance covered. With two to three kilometres of river covered both rivers didn't give up all that many trout. The lower reaches of the Mersey River in the Merseylea & Kimberley area fished the worst of all the rivers which is a shame as it used to be one of my favourite areas to fish. The river bottom in these areas

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is in very poor condition as well, standing up in the river is bad enough let alone catch a trout. Cormorants were in large numbers in this area too as they have been now for several years. I didn't even bother to fish the Liena area this season as it dropped off from mid season back in 2018/19. I found the best stretches of water to fish was the Weegeena area, the trout were in reasonable numbers there and in very good condition. The majority of trout were small to medium fish with the odd ones caught up to 705 grams, I did see & had a few follows from several larger trout in the area as well.



The upper reaches of the Mersey River was the best area to fish.



The Leven River wasn't all that kind to me this season either, though I didn't travel there all that often this season due to it running very high on and off throughout the season, not only that there were days I would loved to fish there but couldn't, health problems kept me home. The days I did fish there only one of them was a reasonably good one with nine trout caught and released, most were mainly all small trout, there was one decent fish that went 415 grams. That day I did spend over six hours in three different stretches of the river in Gunns Plains & Dobson's Flats. There's some great stretches of water to fish in those areas and wading is reasonable easy on the body most times. That one good day with the catch of nine trout I also lost several other nice well conditioned browns. On the other trips that didn't fair all that well the trout I caught were mainly small to medium size fish and they were few and far between, though I was still lucky enough to catch two trout that went 525 grams as per the stats. Last season fishing the very same area I caught sixty trout in six trips, for some reason or another this season they weren't here. The one thing I did come across was cormorants in the river & plenty of others flying overhead. That day (26th March) I didn't catch trout in the Leven, it was enough to stop me from heading back there. Over three hours spent in two separate areas for just the one hook up from a very small brown trout that I lost as quick as it took

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the spinner. That was the only trout seen in all that time in the two areas fished that day. I have spoken to others who have fished the Leven and they too have just about given up on fishing it. This was always one of my favourite rivers to fish for a long time, but now I have to write it off as one of my worst rivers. I still love being in it because of its beautiful scenic surrounds and tannin coloured waters, it's still a natural water without any dams on it, just a shame the trout are not there now like they used to be.. I feel stocking program should be introduced in the upper Dobson's Flat area as soon as possible, but that's just my point of view.



A nice few & far between well conditioned Leven River wild brown trout..

** Meander River was the best of the three large rivers I fished throughout the season and even though it's probably the most popular river fished in the North now days it still gave up a good number of trout. The long stretch of river above Barrett's Bridge to the Forico Angler's Access the fishing along the Longridge Road area was pretty average, the trout caught in this area were small to medium size fish with the odd one being in the low 400 gram range. Below the Chestnut Road Bridge the fishing was very average, in my three trips there I only managed to catch five browns, most of them being small fish. Twice I fished a small section of river above Chestnut Road Bridge only to find the trout there were pretty scarce at that time, I have had some very good catches in this area on previous seasons. Like the Mersey & Leven Rivers I did see quite a few Cormorants in this area and I'm sure they are having a impact on the trout in the wider slower flowing waters around the state. It was the fast waters above the Meander Township Road Bridge where the trout fishing was at it's best with a good variety of small/medium trout being caught as well as the odd larger trout being landed. Of the 114 trout I caught in the Meander throughout the season 85% of them were picked up above the Meander Township Bridge including the one rainbow trout. It was the fast waters above the bridge where the trout fishing was at it's best throughout the season, the lower and more open waters the fishing was where it was tough, the trout were fewer and far between. This report on the Meander is only where I fished from Barrett's Bridge to well above the Meander Township Bridge..*

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The fast waters of the Meander River was the best for chasing trout.

This season I only had three trips to the Dasher River with very little success, for some unknown reason the trout numbers were well down to what they normally are. I know three trips doesn't say why the trout were low in numbers either, but the trout just weren't there. On my first trip on the 16/9/19 did catch and release eight small browns, the following trip two weeks later I was lucky to catch the one trout and it was the only one I came across. On those two trips the water level was very low and the river itself wasn't in very good condition either. There is one property owner that has never replaced the cattle/sheep fences that were washed away back in 2016. Without the fences the cattle are in the river doing there thing and I'm sure the pollution & river bank damage they're doing to it isn't helping the trout's cause at all. After those two early season trips I didn't venture back there until the last day of the season when I fished the river above Claude Road. There was good flow because of recent rains but the trout were scarce and all I managed was two small browns from five hook ups. Hopefully the river will recover during the closed season, low water levels throughout the season may also have had an effect on this great little river.

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The Dasher River , good flowing water on the last day of the trout season.



**A variety of tannin streams I fished early and late in season really gave up some beautifully coloured wild brown trout in small and medium sizes. At the start of the season they had good flow in them right up to the 11th November and the trout fishing in them was great with some solid fish up to 515 grams caught in them. Once the weather warms up and water levels drop I keep well away from them unless we get a good dose of rain and they're up and running, otherwise I don't fish them. Low water levels in small tannin streams the trout tend to get very stressed so to me they're best left alone until March when the Autumn rains arrive and they start to run freely again. I really love fishing these small tannin waters mainly because they're in areas that most people won't venture into due to the amount of time and effort one has to put into getting to them. My 400th trout of the season was caught in a small tannin stream on the 28th April, and my 10,000th trout was also caught in a small tannin stream on the 3rd Nov. 2019. Some of these small tannin streams don't have trout in them, but unless you check them out you'll never know and to me that's what makes them all the more challenging. Any way that's only my opinion, I also love the tranquil, scenic settings in them, sometimes it's not all about trout fishing, it's the pleasure you get from just being there and the sounds of silence that comes with it.*

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My 10,000th trout since moving to Tasmania in March 2000 was caught in a small tannin stream.



So there you have it, another trout season is over and done with, was it a good one for me, that I'm still not sure of. I think the most disappointing aspect of my trout season was the fact my body wasn't up to it like previous seasons due to lower back and hip problems being more frequent. Throughout the trout season I would have had around 800 injections to keep me going, there comes a stage when one gets sick & tired of the injections. Thankfully heat patches helped me quite a lot and got me through many long hours spent chasing trout in the rivers. At the start of the 2019/20 trout season I set myself a target as I always do, this season like the last it was set at 600 trout. Halfway through December I could see I was never going to get close to it so I revised the set target to 500 trout, even then I had doubts about that target too. I thought if I could get enough trips in and catch five to six trout per trip it was reachable. But poor weather and health problems soon put a end to that and I had to settle for the 400 target. Even that looked a little doubtful, it wasn't until the 28th April when I reached it and what a relief it was when the 400th trout was in the landing net. To finish up with 414 trout for the season at a average of 6.78 fish per trip probably wasn't all that bad after all seeing as last seasons average was 7.64 fish with fifteen more trips.

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My 400th trout of the 2019/20 trout season..



As for the rivers, well the best of the large rivers was the Meander River, it did perform very well, in saying that it was only the fast waters that gave up the majority of the trout caught. It was also good to catch one of a very minority of rainbow trout in the Meander River too, I'm sure they would do well in this river if given the chance. Then there's the small tannin waters , they were great in giving up just over half of my seasons total catch. As tough as it is to get into some of them it was certainly well worth the effort & time I put into it. Better still was the fact that once in them they were quite easy on the body with the stream bottom in most of them being light on boulders & rocks.

The little Dasher River I can't say all that much about it due to the fact I only had the three trips to it, low water levels has probably had a impact on the trout in it. Hopefully it will return to a good little trout water in the next year or two. The Leven River, well it didn't perform all that well for me in the few trips I had to it and as much as I love this large tannin water I doubt I'll be heading there all that often next season. Then there's the Mersey River, another one that's gone downhill in the lower reaches over the past few years. Some say it's due to the record 2016 floods that the fishing is poor, then there was and still is the problem with Cormorants in the river, they have to be having a big impact on the river for sure. There's also a problem with the water quality of the heavily silted river bottom, it's so heavily silted there's no where for trout to spawn anyway. Any release of trout in the lower reaches would be a waste of fish, the upper reaches in the Liena area would be a good area to start a restocking program with adult browns & rainbow trout from Liaweene/Great Lake. One of the

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biggest disappointments this season was the lack of rainbow trout in the Mersey River, their numbers and sizes have been dropping over the past few seasons now.

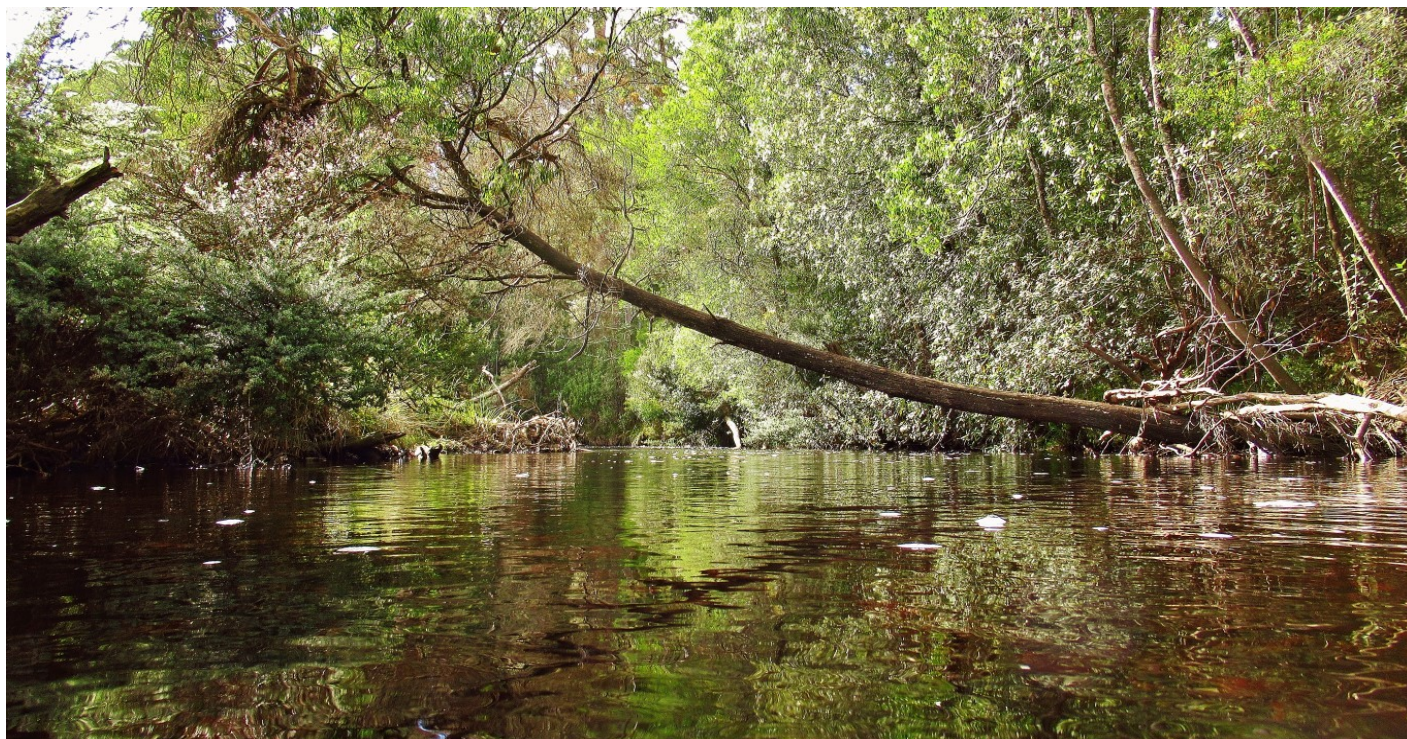


Yes, that's Cormorants flying over the Mersey River at Merseylea..

There's a couple of things that I feel I should mention, firstly it's the size limit for trout in our rivers across the state. A size limit of only 22cms is way to small and should be lifted to at least 30cms for every river across the state. The bag limit this season was dropped to five trout per day which was good, but the size limit must also be increased to match it. Secondly, with thousands of trout being put into the Highland Lakes every year on a regular basis I can't see why we can't add a few hundred into our rivers too, not every licensed trout person likes to fish lakes, I for one don't fish the lakes. When the IFS get back their end of season trout survey that is sent out to licensed trout persons and they see how many trout are caught in each river, then why not replace that amount of adult trout back into the each of those rivers. I know that it won't replace all the trout that are caught and kept that aren't reported, but it will at least get some trout stocks back into them.

These are just my views on what I think could and should be done to give our rivers across the state some chance of building up the trout stocks, natural recruitment to me doesn't seem to be working all that well now days. We pay for a trout license to fish the rivers & lakes and I like many other river fisher's believe it's time to do something about the trout stocks in the rivers, it's not all about filling the lakes up with thousands of trout all the time. It's time to give the river fisher's a fair go at catching some decent trout again.

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Just one of many scenic areas on small tannin trout waters..

On page 10 are my full season stats since moving to Tasmania back in March 2000. The first four years were a little on the slow side (catch rate) due to me getting to know the rivers and where I could access them. After getting to know several farmers & landowners plus the purchase of a decent pair of waders the trout fishing really picked up from there on. Having the access to many more sections of river and wading them made for many great trout seasons for me.

*My trout season stats from March 2000/01 to 2019/20.....
p10*

2000-01 Season :	Trips: 76..	Total Fish : 57 browns..		
2001-02 Season:	Trips: 54..	Total Fish: 63 browns..	2 rainbows..	
2002-03 Season	Trips: 66..	Total Fish: 93 browns..	13 rainbows..	
2003-04 Season	Trips: 48..	Total Fish: 98 browns..	2 rainbows..	
2004-05 Season	Trips: 96..	Total Fish: 347 browns..	35 rainbows..	1 blackfish..
2005-06 Season	Trips: 107..	Total Fish: 652 browns..	24 rainbows..	1 blackfish..
2006-07 Season	Trips: 87...	Total Fish: 354 browns..	83 rainbows..	2 blackfish..
2007-08 Season	Trips: 109..	Total Fish: 629 browns..	74 rainbows..	1 blackfish..
2008-09 Season	Trips: 106..	Total Fish: 599 browns..	67 rainbows..	2 Atlantic Salmon.(7 kgs ea)
2009-10 Season	Trips: 126..	Total Fish: 1167 browns..	89 rainbows..	2 blackfish.. 5 redfin perch. 1 Australian Grayling (protected species)
2010-11 Season	Trips: 91..	Total Fish: 819 browns..	52 rainbows..	

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2011-12 Season	Trips: 81..	Total Fish: 481 browns..	33 rainbows..	1 Atlantic Salmon..(9kgs/19lb 13oz)
" " "		1 brook trout (Meander River)		
2012-13 Season	Trips: 75..	Total Fish: 318 browns..	52 rainbows..	
2013-14 Season	Trips: 65..	Total Fish: 320 browns..	77 rainbows..	
2014-15 Season	Trips: 91..	Total Fish: 405 browns..	78 rainbows..	1 redfin perch.. 1 Aust Grayling..
2015-16 Season	Trips: 106..	Total Fish: 744 browns..	78 rainbows..	(same last season)
2016-17 Season	Trips: 79	Total Fish: 575 browns..	71 rainbows..	
2017-18 Season	Trips: 92	Total Fish: 586 browns..	62 rainbows..	
2018-19 Season	Trips: 76	Total Fish: 549 browns..	24 rainbows..	
2019-20 Season	Trips: 61	Total Fish: 402 browns..	12 rainbows..	

** Less than 1% of my catch is kept, all Blackfish & Aust. Grayling caught are released. ** Only trout are counted in my total catch & averages. ** Biggest trout: Brown @ 3.85 kg (8lb 8oz) on 27th April 2018.
 ** Since moving to Tasmania to live (March 2000) and trout fish I've had 1692 trips to rivers for a total catch of 9358 brown trout, 926 rainbow trout, 1 brook trout, 3 Atlantic Salmon, 6 blackfish, 6 redfin perch & 2 Australian Grayling. **

** Average for trout caught (10,285 in total) over the 1692 trips = 6.08 **

**** Since moving to Tasmania in March 2000 I caught my 10,000th trout on 3rd November 2019 ****
**** Ulverstone Angler's Club Vic Whitehouse Memorial Trophy holder for most trout caught in rivers & streams 2006/07, 07/08, 08/09, 09/10, 10/11, 11/12, 12/13, 13/14, 14/15, 15/16, 16/17, 17/18, 18/19, ????**