



Let's Get Started

Nick Kuch goes to school on the Goulburn.

Schools are by necessity, a constantly changing environment. Things have certainly changed dramatically since I made my way through the education system a few years back. Two and a half hours east of Melbourne, at Gippsland Grammar in Sale, Cass Booth's year nine Outdoor Education program presents a choice of activities once unimaginable. Scuba diving, horse riding, white water rafting, rock climbing, sailing. And most important of all, from my perspective, fly fishing.

This week-long program runs during mid-November and encourages students to experience a range of character-building exercises. In groups they need to organise menus, cooking and cleaning rosters, camping equipment and much more. It was fascinating to watch them encouraging each



Cameron's first fish on a fly rod.

other to embrace these roles and responsibilities. The groups were conveniently small, allowing the participants to extract maximum enjoyment, knowledge and experiences.

Gippsland Grammar's principles are strongly based on family values. Encouraging students to participate in the outdoors is a major component in building character and self-reliance. Fly fishing supports and complements these ideals. As a teacher myself, I see teenagers being hijacked by smart phones, computers, video games and the like. Getting them out into the natural environment to experience camping, wildlife, magnificent scenery and the adrenalin rush of catching a wild trout on fly is what it's all about.

Our destination was the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre, strategically located on the banks of the Goulburn River at Thornton in central Victoria. The main building is constructed from timber and rammed earth, creating a classic outdoor/fly fishing atmosphere. It contains a fly fishing retail shop,

office and conference centre and is large enough for a group to spread out and be thoroughly absorbed in the whole feeling of the sport. The Centre was founded on the remnants of an old trout farm. Its various ponds now provide casting practice, with the added advantage of being able to tie on a fly and catch large brown and rainbow trout.

The caravan park next door became our home base for the week.

GVFFC is owned and operated by David Pickering and Antony Boliiancu. They have a large guiding and teaching operation, extending from their local waters through to the Swampy Plains in NSW, and further afield to New Zealand and North and South America.

The Centre provided all equipment including rods, waders and flies for the duration of our visit. Instructors David, Werner and Geoff started the program each morning at 9 a.m., with casting tuition followed by a variety of topics such as knot-tying, streamcraft, fly-tying and much more.

Initial casting demonstrations and training began with pick-up and lay-down casts on the ponds. The students were encouraged to practice and maintain a high level of line control and casting accuracy, and were progressively taught a variety of techniques. Short bursts of theory were strategically intertwined with

Jack slowly brings a good fish to the bank on the casting ponds.



hands-on practice to create a larger overview.

Once the students had attained a solid understanding of casting, attention moved to fishing the evening rise to maximise the chance of catching trout. Fortunately, a number of students were able to achieve this early in the week. Their success created an infectious will to continue, and to improve casting and skills.

The session on streamcraft covered trout habitat, how to identify a likely holding lie, how the trout's food is delivered and how to approach a stream. The entomology session was

held on the banks of the Rubicon River, with dip nets, sampling insects from the stream bed before discussing their life cycles and stages. Werner enthusiastically involved all the students in a detailed demonstration of fly tying, before letting the students loose to create their own personally tied fly. Knot tying was closely followed, as the students were taught the basics like the nail, blood and surgeon's knots.

The owners and staff exude unquestionable passion for their craft and a wealth of knowledge and experience. Werner was a student favourite and a



Clockwise from left: Kyung and James discover what trout eat. Brad displaying his skills during a session on the Rubicon. Werner helps a proud Brad to display his first catch.

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Going through the fundamentals before hitting the casting ponds.

COSTS & CONTACTS

a Father/Son/Daughter program to encourage parents and their children to pick up a fly rod and get involved in fly fishing.

After being with the students for the entire time we were away, and watching their emotion and gratitude in the speeches and thank-yous at the end of the trip, I felt they had been transformed by the experience. Let's hope they all stick with it, and more young people are encouraged to get into fly fishing. **FI**

For information on schools, tuition and guiding phone 03 5773 2513 or visit www.gvffc.com
 At time of writing, the price per student for the week-long school program at GVFFC is \$358.
 For accommodation at the Thornton Caravan Park phone 03 5773 2305. A non-powered campsite is \$10 per adult per night. Powered sites start from \$25. Two-berth cabins start from \$77 per night.



Students spread out on the Rubicon.

character in his own right. With long wavy hair, goatee beard and over-worn Crocs, he could be easily mistaken for a character from the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Werner's past experience in stand-up comedy made him a hit from the beginning. His well-timed and controlled humour flowed freely during times of need.

The emphasis was on providing a solid grounding for a lifetime of fly fishing pleasure, and the results were soon evident. I have already had steady contact from enthusiastic parents enquiring about the purchasing of equipment. School holidays are a great time to get sons and daughters out on the river and GVFFC has



Geoff helps Tom land a nice fish.



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