

Biteline

## Snapper finding way into bays

THE big fishing news this week is the annual snapper migration into Port Phillip and Western Port Bays, with snapper to 8.6kg hooked. And it isn't just close to Melbourne: Portland's Lee Breakwall has a run of snapper to 7kg.

Jim Credlin at Swan Hill reports yellowbelly on the bite in the Murray River. Top spots include Hattah, Belsar Island, Boundary Bend, Nyah, Swan Hill and Koondrook. Shrimp, yabbie and worm baits, small spinnerbait and hard body lures are producing results. Yellowbelly to 3kg were caught on worms in the Murrumbidgee River at Hay. Lake Boga produced Murray cod to 74cm, redfin and silver perch on bibless, vibe lures. Rainbow trout to 6kg and brown trout to 4kg were caught in Eildon Pondage on Powerbait, local dough and gold spoon lures.

Gary Constantine reports Fisheries Victoria continues to liberate brood stock trout to 4kg into the Pondage. Small hard body and bladed lures produced brook, brown and rainbow trout to 1kg in the Rubicon River, while anglers employing scrubworms and lures in the Goulburn River caught brown trout to 1.4kg.

In Lake Eildon, brown trout were caught in the Main Arm on trolled Tassie Devil lures; Murray cod to 9.5kg and yellowbelly were caught on lures near the Fraser Camping Ground, Gough Bay and the Delatite Arm.

In the southwest at Portland, John Johnstone reports snapper to 7kg, barracouta and salmon caught from the Lee Breakwater.

King George whiting, salmon and barracouta were caught inshore from Black Nose to the North Shore. Anglers fishing 50-70m of water caught snapper to 2kg, school and gummy shark, gurnard, flathead and morwong, while blue eye trevalla, ling, blue grenadier and gemfish were caught along the Continental Shelf.

In Port Phillip Bay, Alex Greer reports snapper to 9kg dominate the bay catch. Best reports so far have come from Frankston in 19-20m, Mornington to Mt Eliza in 21m, Altona, Web Dock, St Kilda and Clifton Springs to Portarlington. Pilchard, whiting and fresh squid are the preferred baits. It's a similar story in Western Port where snapper to 7kg were caught off Corinella, Hastings and Silver Leaves. King George whiting to 40cm were caught in good numbers along Middle Spit.

In the Gippsland Lakes, bream provided the bulk of the catch in the Mitchell, Tambo and Nicholson Rivers, Paynesville and Hollands Landing. Best baits were prawn, sandworm and shrimp. Soft plastic lures also produced results.

Surf beaches at Lakes Entrance were consistent for salmon. Bream and flathead were caught in Lake Tyers on sandworm, shrimp and lures. In East Gippsland, surf beaches from Marlo to Mallacoota were steady for salmon on pilchard baits fished in conjunction with a surf popper. Bream and estuary perch were caught at Marlo.

Bream was the mainstay at Bemm River while Tamboon Inlet had bream, pinkies and silver trevally. In Mallacoota Inlet, the Wallagarragh and Genoa Rivers produced bream, tailor, flathead and estuary perch on prawn and yabbie baits, and hard bodied lures.

— Steve Cooper



Welcome home: Sue Jardine, at Curry Flat, Nimmitabel, one of three stops on the Private Gardens of the Monaro, tour. Picture: SARAH HUDSON



# Monaro's green oases

Garden-loving friends open the gates for tours, writes

**SARAH HUDSON**

**D**RIVE on the Snowy Mountains Highway in the Monaro region of southern NSW and there's a glaring omission in the landscape.

In the far distance, the white peaks of Jindabyne and Perisher frame the Monaro's undulating, basalt hills, covered in pastures the colour of hay, munched by clusters of livestock owned by the region's large, historic landholders.

Apart from the odd cluster of cypress and gum, you'll be hard pressed to find a tree.

According to the locals, these hills are naturally treeless, thanks to the volcanic soil.

So it comes as quite a treat to find the Private Gardens of the Monaro.

Established four years ago by three horticulture-loving friends, the Private Gardens of the Monaro sees the doors of their historic properties opened on designated dates in spring and autumn to the public for self-drive tours.

Sue and Jim Jardine own Curry Flat, a 4050ha Merino and Angus farm that features a homestead built in 1895 and a garden designed and laid out by renowned landscape designer Claude Crowe in 1954.

"A lot of people take part in the tours because they are interested in the landscape in the Monaro," Sue says. "They remark that when you travel along the highway you don't see any of the historic homes or gardens, so the tour gives them that opportunity."

Curry Flat is normally the lunchtime destination for the tour, book ended by Hazeldean for morning tea and a property called Shirley for afternoon tea, with visitors spending about 90 minutes at each, including a garden tour.

Entering Curry Flat's dry-stone wall entrance, visitors are met with a vista of deciduous trees, conifers and evergreens — oak, elms and silver birch — all planted by Sue after she married Jim and moved to the historic property in 1967.

"When Claude Crowe created this garden it was very English with thousands of annuals such as dahlias and gladioli," says Sue, who studied several horticulture courses to help manage the vast garden.

"Even though we had a gardener it was too labour intensive and so we pulled them out and instead planted perennials such as roses, rosemary and lavender, and trees more suited to the area."

The Jardines have created several "rooms" around the garden, such as the sundial garden that features roses and a hedged escallonia.

A lilypond garden is best seen in summer when water lilies bloom, as is a snowball garden, with its pompom flowers on the viburnum opulus.

Jim and Sue retired from the farm last year, at the same time dividing the property between their two sons, who now manage the land.

This has allowed them to focus on managing the garden, including the creation of an extensive vegetable

patch, growing potatoes to grapes and kiwifruit.

"We have four trees that are quite unusual for the Monaro: lime, lemon, grapefruit and mandarin, which we can only grow because they're protected," Sue says.

She says the Monaro can be a challenging climate for a gardener, with its severe black frosts, temperatures that plummet to -12C including a thick layer of snow, and in summer, the mercury can spike in the high 30s or low 40s.

"I had two cumquat plants at the door that I thought would survive but a frost the other week ruined them."

Equally, the drought in NSW is hitting hard this year, and she says unfortunately not all parts of the garden will be on their best display.

The property receives an average annual rainfall of about 600mm, while they sustain the garden with bore and gravity-fed spring water, with a large lake on the edge of the garden, as well as generous layers of compost.

One of the highlights of the garden tour is the exterior of the homestead.

"A lot of people come just to see the house. Even this morning I had a phone call from a location spotter wanting to use the house in a movie."

The other two houses on the Private Gardens of the Monaro tour are equally impressive.

Hazeldean was settled by the Litchfield family in 1865 and is now home to six generations of Litchfields, who run one of