

AMATOLA FLY FISHING CLUB

Incorporating the Frontier Acclimatisation Society and the Stutterheim Trout Angling Club



NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN / MAY 2016

The weather has finally cooled and not a day too early. I last fished Gubu on the 24th of April, and the water surface temperature was 19.5 °C; that's hot! Usually, by the end of April, one can expect a much cooler 15–17 °C, and which typically makes for active fish. The latter part of our summer was one of the warmest in recent history and it will have an impact on our waters. Most of the two and three-year class fish that were caught during my visit were lightweight for their length and in less than ideal form. Their condition is directly linked to their feeding activities; water temperatures over 19 °C are not good for trout health and metabolism. In most dams, the shallows generally have the highest concentrations of larger food (e.g. gobies on the clay banks, damsel fly and dragonfly larvae and crabs in the weedbeds, etc.), but if the shallows remain outside of the trout's temperature comfort zone, then the trout will not spend much time hunting there and instead stay deep. The deepwater however has fewer large-food organisms, though often abundant small-foods like bloodworm, phantom midge larvae, daphnia, etc., but bigger fish still have to have the opportunities to eat lots of the small stuff to stay in good condition. The same doesn't apply as much to the smaller stockies, as they require less food to maintain their body mass, and explains why they're still looking good. All of that said, there may also be too many fish in the dam for what the food chain can sustain. If that's the case, we'll see it come spring if the fish haven't managed to gain condition during the cooler winter temperatures when our trout can spend all day cruising the shallows. Time will tell, and we must simply do our best to try and observe and listen to what Nature is telling us.

Fortunately, Maden always seems less affected by the warm temperatures and continues to produce well-conditioned fish (see the pic at the end). On the subject of Maden, I was recently approached by a concerned member of the public who visits the dam regularly for some quiet time and the odd bit of fishing, a Mr. Morne Venter, of the Red Alert Alarms security company in King William's Town. Morne explained that he was unhappy that some loud and unruly local folks had repeatedly been behaving badly at the picnic area late last year and that the grounds were looking unkempt and not being cleaned. Morne also said that he was willing to get involved in aiding the authorities improve the situation. I gave Morne some names and numbers to work with, which he followed up on, but it seems that as of now, the authorities have managed to affect some work on their own and Morne reports that all has looked and been as it should in the last while.

No-one likes being around, booze-fueled, puerile behaviour, and I heard of a bout of it at the Gubu clubhouse recently. Seriously, it's a lot cheaper on petrol to get paralytic-smashed at home and where your wife will make you clean up your mess. So best you do it under your own roof and don't mix it with your fishing-break in a public space or you'll get your overly-drunken, unwanted butt booted out for good (read the membership renewal small print).

Our financial year ended on the 31st of May and you should have received a subs-renewal form alongside this newsletter. The subs have been increased by 6% in accordance with the annual CPI increase, as was decided at the last AGM. If NONE of your details have changed, then it's okay to

renew your membership via e-mail, stating your name and forwarding your proof of payment, to stac.trout@gmail.com rather than completing the PDF form. You'll need to look at the form however to see the updated amounts and bank account details. The form is also always on our website.

Those who have visited the Gubu clubhouse in the last month will have noticed that all of the windows and window frames have been refurbished. Our clubhouse has plenty windows, and it was a mammoth task, all arranged and co-ordinated (as usual) by Shaun Petersen and his two-man team of putty-and-paint guys with the Minister of Finances, Glenn Raath, handling the financial admin. We owe them all a massive thank you. There's still other major maintenance issues but we're getting there, step by step. We do have a very nice gas stove now, a gift from Sandile's Rest's Grant Wylie; the gas bottle setup is still coming. The Gubu clubhouse lawn has also been taken care of lately courtesy of the staff who keep the campsite trim, thank you there to Amatola Forests and Rance Timbers club-stalwarts, Francois Sparks and Craig Rance, and to Craig Warren too, for a recent firewood donation for the SAFFA Ladies Nationals event co-ordinated by AFFC secretary, Ryan Smith.

I'm still awaiting the complete catch returns for the SAFFA event from Ryan but if memory serves correctly, some bigger fish in the 47-49cm class got caught between all the usual stockies and two-year olds. Ryan also said that the ladies had a really fun time visiting our waters and thank you to him and his team for being good ambassadors for the Eastern Cape. I saw a few pics of the get together and in all of them, everyone was smiling.

AFFC will be hosting the PE and surrounds fly fishing club, the Eastern Province Freshwater Fish Conservancy, over the weekend of the 17th to 18th June. Friday afternoon the 17th will also see the scattering of the late Ronnie Pitt's ashes along the banks of Gubu. Ronnie Pitt, who was an honorary member of AFFC, was the initiator of the idea of a coalition of fly fishing clubs that eventually became FOSAF, and in the early days, Ronnie went to great lengths to help create the federation.

FOSAF's work continues right up to the moment and I attended a meeting on the 26th May where representatives of FOSAF, trout-related parties, government, and the scientific community, met in Grahamstown to come to an agreement on the trout areas for the Eastern Cape in the context of future trout-control legislation. The meeting was held in a very positive, balanced, and constructive atmosphere and we're hopefully one step closer to a final resolution of the process.

In closing, remember to diarise the weekend of the 2-4 September as our annual get together and AGM at Gubu. More details down the line.

Fair winds & tight lines,

Edward Truter



Pic: Ryan Smith with a late-summer, Maden rainbow.