

# AMATOLA FLY FISHING CLUB

Incorporating the Frontier Acclimatisation Society and the Stutterheim Trout Angling Club



## NEWSLETTER – SUMMER / NOVEMBER 2017

For those who weren't at our annual get-together and AGM weekend in late-August, the news of how that went goes like this. 46 Or so folks came to join-in the festivities, and although there was heavy snow on the mountains overlooking Gubu, the weather wasn't too cold, just a bit gusty. 30 Anglers entered the fishing competition, and 17 of those partook of the option to record the size of of each of their fish (for a separate, sum-of-total-length prize). Those 17 Anglers caught a total of 98 fish. Brenton Freeman caught the most (19), and the average catch was 5.8 trout per angler. The longest measured fish by an entrant was 46cm but ironically the biggest fish of the day, a 50cm+ rainbow, was caught by a day-visitor, who hadn't entered the competition. At the prize-giving, everyone walked away with something, thank you to the generous donations of prizes that we received from so many people and businesses this year. Please see the minutes of the AGM on the AFFC website for a full list of everyone who helped make the event what it was.

As per usual, Dean Stoltz brought his guitar to the party and him and Jamie Renton, also on guitar, kept the tunes strumming until nearly everyone eventually found a bed of sorts, which hour wasn't much shy of sunrise. What I most enjoy at this event each year are all the smiling, weekend/party/fishing faces, some of whom only see each other once a year at Gubu. There were also quite a few new faces in the crowd and it shows how the club is extending its reach and says how more and more people are getting out there, especially with their families (which was very evident this year), and enjoying what we've been working at to bring this far.

I know that many readers will be saddened to hear of Mike Pautz's passing in October. As a King Williamstown local and a passionate angler who fished for everything, Mike was very much a part of the Gubu and Maden Dam scenes from the early '70s until 2000. Mike was instrumental in securing the Maden Dam hut from Lentz Forest Products and contributed his own handiwork to getting it physically set up, and so his part in our history lives on.

Some happy news is that the brown trout that were stocked into Gubu in February continue to show very good growth. From reports filtering in, they are currently in the 30 – 40cm length range and Robin tells of one he caught of 44cm.

In rainbow trout stocking news ... Maden Dam received 3520, and Gubu 12530, mixed sex, 5,3g/7–9cm fingerlings over the weekend of 3–4 November. The fingerlings came from Grant Wylie's Sandile Trout Farm, and just as during the last four years, these fish were as

healthy and feisty as can be, so we are all still set for the fishing future. A special thank you to Ryan Smith and Cameron Norton for bringing a boat out to Maden and helping to get the job done perfectly. And similarly a big thank you to Karl Krull and his boys, Victor and Noah, who unfailingly, as per previous years, brought their boat for the Gubu stocking. Also, a thank you to the rest of those who came to help with the manual labour of actually getting the fish into the water. They were Gareth Webster, Angela Bradfield, Devin Isemonger, Mekayla Enslin, Clint and Ross Du Plessis and the Sandile Trout Farm staff.

The FOSAF Eastern Cape Chapter AGM was held at Gubu Dam over the same weekend as the stocking, chaired by FOSAF-EC chairman, Martin von Holdt. Martin brought the delegates up to date with all that's been happening, largely under the radar, on the various FOSAF-associated fronts and especially with regards to the proposed new classification and legislation pertaining to everything to do with trout. While it is necessary to revise the legal framework governing the management of alien fishes this needs to be done in a way that balances important environmental dynamics with the socio-economic benefits. However, if balance, clarity of mind, and practicalities don't prevail in the law-making process it could be a problem for trout fishing. FOSAF is spending, and has been spending, considerable resources on ensuring that trout and trout fishing are being adequately represented. What also emerged at the meeting, was that very few non-FOSAF members have any idea of the amount of work and time that the various FOSAF executives devote to issues that ultimately affect all fly fishers. Subsequently, some solid ideas have been proposed to improve awareness about FOSAF's work and get more people involved in the federation

I just recently spent some time in discussions with Dr. Olaf Weyl and his post-doctoral student who will begin a study at Gubu Dam in early 2018 to understand, amongst other things, the food web of the dam, trout growth rates, comparisons between the rainbows' and browns' life strategies, etc. This will be the first time that this kind of work will be done on this detail, on trout for a South African stillwater, and the results will provide us with very useful fisheries management information.

On a related note, I am including a number of photos in this newsletter of Sandile Trout Farm (Molapong ova) trout from other waters in the Eastern Cape. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and what these photos tell me is that the growth-genetics of the Sandile Trout Farm rainbows are excellent and that we can thus put to rest the questions posed in that regard. It has also lead me to believe that the current lack of bigger rainbows in Gubu is therefore not genetics-related, but probably environment and stocking-density related. It remains to be proven, but I'm now of the opinion that starting from the 2013 (20,711 fingerlings) stocking we may have overstocked the dam and over-stressed the food web. What has surprised me is that the way we have stocked since 2013 (i.e. a very broad spreading of the fingerlings) appears to have resulted in significantly higher survival rates than those from the pre-2013 stocking method where the fingerlings were released at just

two or three locations. So, although the number and fish-size of the post-2012 stockings doesn't vary that much from the historical stockings, the survival rate probably does and hence the bigger resulting standing stock of fish and higher demands on the food chain. I do take 100% responsibility for the potential oversight of those earlier high stockings if it turns out that the lower stocking numbers of the last two years do start to bring about a resurgence of the numbers of 1.5kg and bigger rainbows that all of us are hoping for. Whatever happens, I remain committed to working through the variables that ultimately will make our club waters the best they can be for what the majority of anglers would like. Take a careful look at the pics below, most of which are of one-year old fish.

Have a happy festive season and holiday, and happy fishing!

Edward Truter



The adjacent photos are all of 12 - 16 month old, 1.8kg and bigger, Sandile Trout Farm rainbows, from various, nutrient-rich, high-altitude, Eastern Cape stillwaters.



A 3.4kg / 68cm, 4-year old Sandile Trout Farm rainbow from a Queenstown dam.