

AMATOLA FLY FISHING CLUB

Incorporating the Frontier Acclimatisation Society and the Stutterheim Trout Angling Club



NEWSLETTER – SUMMER / NOVEMBER 2019

Hello All, some of the the latest club-related news in point-form ...

1. For our annual fundraiser day on the 10th August we had 38 people who joined us at Gubu Dam. Not all entered the competition though and strong winds made sure only the hardcore fished long hours. 214 Trout were caught and Gubu stalwart, Glenn Raath, won the day with the longest cumulative length of 1057cm made up of 29 fish. David Taylor was 2nd, with 30 fish, but from Mnyameni Dam. Richard Field caught the biggest rainbow, a beaut of 56cm. The Gubu browns were conspicuous by their absence. Two were caught by David Taylor at Mnyameni though.
2. I have just returned from spending 9 days at Gubu on the back of the FOSAF-EC AGM. Gubu's level is currently 62%, which many folks are calling 'very low', but truth be told, the dam has been much lower than this. The interesting thing to note is that new weedbeds are establishing in new areas and established weedbeds are rapidly expanding, which is all a huge plus. If the new weedbeds can maintain themselves when the dam fills, we will be in a very good situation. What I'm trying to say is that although the drought is horrific and crippling for just about everything around us, it has not been all-bad for Gubu. The level is dropping quickly now though, and that is concerning.
3. Related to the drought conditions, I believe, is that snails are making a comeback in Gubu. This could be as a result of reduced runoff and seepage through the pine needle carpet and a resultant rise in the dam's pH above the threshold required for the local snail species. There is reason to believe that it was a flooding event, coupled with the immersion of pines growing in the dam (during an extended low water period) that pushed the pH in the acid direction, below the pH required for the snails, that caused the near disappearance of snails from 2007 onwards. Snails are an important trout food and really help the trout put on weight and maintain their condition.
4. Fishing at Gubu right now is good. The surface temp is 20 - 23 deg. C., which puts the slightly deeper water in the 16 to 18 deg. C bracket, and which coming out of the colder temps of water puts the fish in a very active state. During my recent visit I averaged 10 to 15 rainbows per session, most fish were the 2 year olds which are in the low to mid-40cm range, The stockies are in the mid to upper 30cm range. I caught few 3 and 4 year old rainbows, but numbers of them were caught during spring including a fish of 63cm.
5. Some sizeable browns have also shown up since winter, and I've seen a number of photos of fish in the 50 - 56cm class, Robin reports catching two recently (one estimated at 2.5kg), and then I got one measuring 60cm and estimated at a solid 6lb-plus. What impressed me about the 60cm fish was its incredible condition factor (see photo below). It was one of the most impressive trout I have ever seen and the cellphone photo does it no justice. The exciting part is that the bigger browns seem to be maintaining their mass, which implies they should keep growing at least for a while, and considering that they are only three and a bit years old, they still have four years to go! So, as Rob Scott recently mentioned to me, there are going to be some broken hearts at Gubu in years to come.

6. On a side note, if you do fish our waters from now until Autumn, please work very quickly with the fish at the surface. As the surface water temp heats up, the lack of oxygen in the surface zone puts a lot of extra stress on the fish during the release process.
7. The bad and sad news is that the Sandile Hatchery with whom we have had a very close association for the last six years, recently lost most of their fingerlings due to a power surge on the back of a load shedding event frying critical circuitry in the middle of the night. Our condolences to Andre and his team at Sandiles for the heavy losses that they had to endure. The implication for the club is that we have had to source our fingerlings elsewhere and Mark Andersen, who operates a hatchery on his farm in Hogsback, has agreed to provide the rainbows that we will need. Stocking date to be announced.
8. I just heard that Rooikrans Dam is at 27% capacity and that if it drops to 20% will require the release of water from Maden, which won't be great at the height of summer. The state of global weather patterns and climate change is very depressing and it's hard to say if our weather of the last five years is not the start of a new norm. Support climate change mitigation measures in whatever way you can.
9. We recently had the FOSAF-EC AGM at Gubu, during which Reg Morgan (chairman of the Q.F.F.C.) became the new chairman taking the wheel over from Brian Clark's many-many years of very active, eyes-on-the-road driving. On the subject of FOSAF, the NEMBA debate and status of trout has not yet been resolved, however, national FOSAF chairman, Ilan Lax, reports that Ms Barbara Creecy, the new minister involved with it, at least appears to have an open and engaging mind, which will help greatly in finding balanced and practical solutions to the problems.

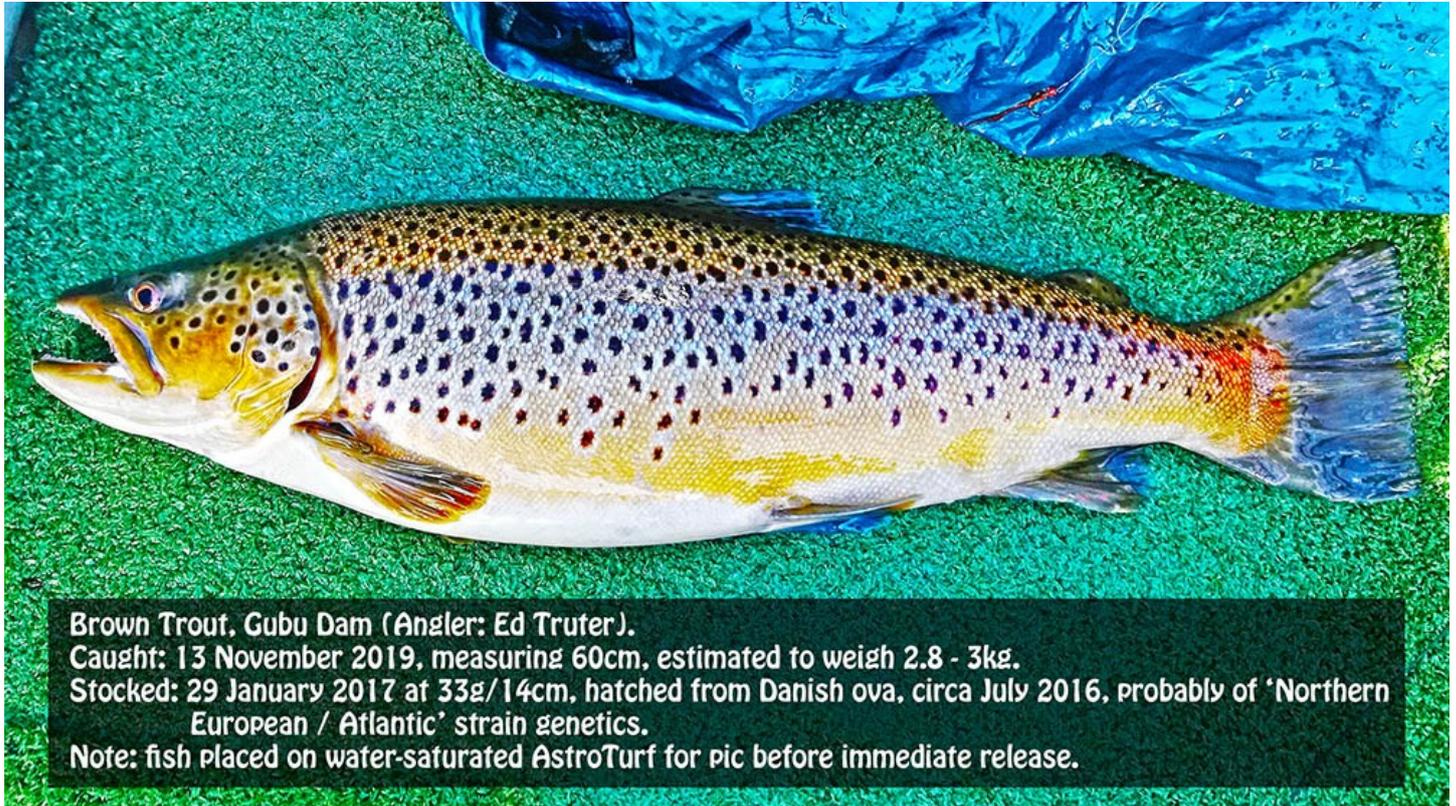
There are also some new murky waters to navigate though, and the drafts of a newly proposed Inland Fisheries Act contain some clauses that are a threat to some of our fisheries. The new act aims at making all inland fisheries accessible to all and especially to previously disadvantaged communities, such that fishery resources can contribute to commercial and subsistence livelihoods. There is nothing wrong with sharing resources amongst all, but there are proposals that include the legalisation of gill netting and some grey areas regarding access to private waters, amongst other things.

Anglers need to be made aware of this so that they may act accordingly through supporting FOSAF and being involved in the public participation and comment process, all to better ensure that the final draft is in the interests of truly sustainable fisheries. Remember that you can join FOSAF as part of your AFFC membership renewal process, or join directly here <https://www.fosaf.co.za/join.php> . FOSAF undertakes many issues on our behalf, most of which goes unseen below the radar, but there are teams of FOSAF representative out there who are really putting enormous time and energy to try and do what is best for the future of fly fishing.

10. Some more members have paid their subs since my last mail, but there are a whole bunch of Gubu and Maden regulars still sitting on the fence. Fishing is important, and so is paying your subs!

Happy fishing and hope you catch a big one for Xmas.

Ed Truter



Brown Trout, Gubu Dam (Angler: Ed Truter).

Caught: 13 November 2019, measuring 60cm, estimated to weigh 2.8 - 3kg.

Stocked: 29 January 2017 at 33g/14cm, hatched from Danish ova, circa July 2016, probably of 'Northern European / Atlantic' strain genetics.

Note: fish placed on water-saturated AstroTurf for pic before immediate release.