



TFFC NEWSLETTER

FROM THE CHAIR

TFFC- March 2010 NEWSLETTER: From The Chair

Hi All,

I cannot believe Easter is just around the corner and have not visited the farm this year. Amazing how time passes us by. I hope the rest of you have not been as disorganized as me.

Over recent months a number of snakes (mainly cobras) have been spotted at the farm, some of which have been close to the house, the shareholders block, around the firewood stacked outside and in the wooded area to the left of the gate down to the wall of No 7. Occasional puff-adders have been seen on the rocky hillside above No 7 and on other rocky outcrops. This increased activity is something of a change for us for though in past years we have seldom seen snakes at the farm. It may well be as a result of the extensive rains and an increase in available food. This certainly is a concern as we have a lot of young children playing around our dwellings. We would hate for one of them to be bitten. Please be vigilant.

All outdoors people are at risk for snake bite in Southern Africa, although this occurs rarely. Be careful where you walk and put your hands. Wear long boots or long baggy trousers and thick socks to act as a barrier and to enlarge the target with air.

If you see a snake, freeze, and then move away slowly without any sudden movements; AND NEVER play with any snake, alive or (apparently) dead.

John Carter and I are investigating the options of keeping anti venom at the farm. We are not sure this will be a solution as it has a fairly short shelf life and can be fatal if the patient has allergic reactions or if the snake has not been positively identified. In addition we will contact GP's in Belfast and Dullstroom and establish if anti venom is freely available and where to go for the best treatment. We will communicate the outcome of our investigations.

At least 7 trees around the farm had been struck by lightning and needed to be removed. Please be careful when there is lightning around as your fly rod is a great conductor.

A large branch has fallen from the oak tree where most of us park our cars. I think it would be wise to find alternative safer parking.

Complaints have been received that double adapters have been removed from the farm bedrooms. They were for the two pin bedside lamps, as a result the bedside lamps do not work. The adapters will not be replaced and 15 amp plugs will be fitted to all lamps. PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN adapters should you wish to charge cell phones or computers. PLEASE LEAVE CLUB PROPERTY AT THE FARM.

On a lighter note please enjoy the upcoming long weekends and drive carefully.



Regards,
Vic

Editorial

Well it is already the end of the first quarter of the year and I feel that it is flying along.

It would seem that there are an unusual number of Snakes at the Farm. Please take care and discuss with you kids proper snake etiquette on the journey up to the farm.

Cameron has asked me to thank all of those kind people who helped him when his car broke down over the Christmas holidays.

Lastly, this newsletter is put together to be visually colourful and is not designed to be printed. Be kind, save paper and ink, view it on your computer.

Regards,
Steve Meyer

reasonably confident that we will succeed particularly as we have a number of powerful allies lining up to support us. However, one must understand that this will be a long drawn-out process and might possibly continue for several years. Rest assured that the DTF have already invested considerable amount of money and time in this issue which includes hiring a very experienced consultant. The DTF are not prepared to have a mining company backed by the notorious Dept. Mineral Resources wreck our environment.

Weeding

Last year we purchased a new weeding machine (see pics) and in mid-December Len van Deventer organised a team to clear parts of Dams 1 and 3. The system worked very well when used in specific and important fishing areas like the walls, corners of dams and off the jetties. A second weeding party will be organised by Len in early March prior to the busy Easter and autumn holidays. At present it looks as if the focus will again be Dams 1 and 3 as the other dams are reasonably accessible.



Piscatorially speaking

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The Mining Threat

Many members have asked about the threat posed by the diamond miners who were prospecting on our North West border overlooking the vlei above Dam 3. The position at the moment is that we were able to halt the prospecting in August 2008 and the miners were then asked to submit an application for a water use licence to Water Affairs. If they succeeded they could then re-apply for a prospecting licence with the Dept. Mineral Resources. The application for the water use licence was recently submitted and our aim is to make sure this application is rejected after which we will ensure that they are forced to undertake a complete rehabilitation of the site. We are

Catch & Release

In the last newsletter we cautioned anglers about C & R (catch & release) during the hot months when water temperatures reached 20° C and above. With autumn and cooler weather approaching it is worth mentioning the value of C & R at Middelpunt when correctly practised. Currently 60% of the catch is released and only 40% killed. The total recapture figure (% killed + % C & R) has exceeded 100% for Middelpunt for the last 3 years and for Dams 1 & 2 for the last 5 years. In fact it

has been as high 174% for Dam 1 and if one considers that up to 20% may be taken by predators in the first couple of months it would mean that some of our fish must be released several times over. Therefore, many of our members must be practising catch & release correctly and more importantly ensuring that you have a good chance of taking good-sized and even trophy-sized trout. This is why Middelpunt has a reputation for quality fishing despite relatively high fishing pressure.

We have debated several times a reduction of the bag limit of 6 fish killed per person or 10 per party per day, but we have to remember that we have a fair number of members who manage only one visit per year while others might not even average that. And in any case the vast majority of our members do not abuse this very generous bag limit.



To provide quality fishing we also have to take into consideration the carrying capacity of our waters. It is generally accepted that the average is about 20 kg per hectare in the higher rainfall areas of SA. It may be a bit higher in some of our dams and lower in dams like 5 and 6 where trout have to compete with bass, or No 7 which is overgrazed and the grass carp compete with trout. This is why we look carefully at the average CF figure (condition factor) and rely on some of you to weigh your fish correctly. Rather leave the weight column in the record sheet blank than try and guess the weight. In the metric system a CF of 118 to 119 is taken as an average conditioned trout (neither thin nor fat) so we aim for about CF124 as we want our fish to grow out reasonably fast. Also do not expect our fish to grow out at the rate they do in the mineral rich waters of the Karoo (Dordrecht etc) or even KZN dams surrounded by heavily fertilized pastures or below dairies. In any case some of the latter waters can be unstable resulting in major fish kills.



Lastly [**but VERY important**], a few rules about effective C & R:

1. De-barb [flatten the barb on] your hooks with a small pair of pliers when practising C & R. Barbed hooks increase the injury rate and therefore the survival rate, and many experts are convinced that barbs do not increase your chance of landing a trout. It certainly reduces the injury rate when you hook yourself and in any case it is irresponsible to allow young kids to use barbed hooks.
2. Get the trout in as quickly as possible. The longer you fight the fish the greater will be the build up of toxic lactic acid. If necessary use a higher breaking strain tippet or heavier rod, particularly in summer.
3. Try and unhook it without taking it out of the water. **Do not touch it with dry hands and do not use a net with synthetic fibres as these are highly abrasive on the protective mucous membrane and abrasion or lost membrane leads to infection and premature death.**
4. Do not squeeze your fish or dangle it from the



line. If you must take it out of the water support it under the belly and return it to water asap.

5. After you have unhooked your trout support it gently in an upright position, away from the weeds and warm water, until you feel it is strong enough to swim away. This may take a couple of minutes, especially for the larger browns, which do not seem to be as robust as

the rainbows. If your fish is bleeding or has been hooked in the eye or the gills or it turns over, despite a lengthy revival procedure, rather knock it on the head; it is better to eat it than have it die in the water.

