

AMATOLA FLY FISHING CLUB

Incorporating the Frontier Acclimatisation Society and the Stutterheim Trout Angling Club



NEWSLETTER – WINTER / JULY 2020

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

1. I'm sure that everyone's tired about hearing about you know what, so no more about that.
2. Good news is that I spent some time at Gubu Dam during the first two weeks of June and the dam was looking great. Weedbeds the likes of which I don't think we've had in Gubu before have established during the long period of lower water. Otters Creek now has some weedbeds reminiscent of a Winterberg dam. There are also significant columns of weed growth between The Drift and the campsite, along the eastern shore opposite the mouth of Otters, and a number of other new areas. And amongst the weed in Otters as well as some other sheltered locations, there was a soup of daphnia, an indication that nutrient levels are at least ok. The very strong winter winds we have been having will further help to move nutrients from the exposed banks and bottom sediments into the water column. Plus, there will be additional nutrients available from the rise in the water level during the second half of summer that has flooded areas where grasses and ground covers had started to grow, and areas with abundant cow dung.
3. Further positive news is that the fishing was good. I averaged 8 - 15 rainbows per session, which are satisfactory numbers for me as Gubu still cuts me down to size the majority of the time. Most of the fish were 38 - 43 cm, but I did get three over 50cm. Gut contents indicated the fish were making good use of the daphnia as well as eating a lot of phantom midge larvae.
4. I also caught a few stockies, which are currently fit, fat and feisty and in the mid 20cm range. On that note, our last stocking was significantly less than 13 500 fish we had planned for due to the load-shedding issue that wiped out most of the Sandile hatchery fingerlings. Fortunately Mark and Kurt Anderson's Glenara Farm (Hogsback) hatchery still had some fingerlings in their system and on February 1st we were able to stock with 3 650 mixed sex rainbows averaging 9cm (6,6g).
5. A special thank you to the folks who came to help on stocking day, and a 10X big thank you to Duanne Bennet for helping us at the last minute by providing of his time, resources and a stocking-boat when none of the 'usuals' could make it due to unforeseen circumstances.
6. Due to changes in management and the Sandile property being let to a new tenant, the Sandile hatchery will not be producing fish this year, and most likely not after that either. This is a sad development as the owner, Grant Wylie, and the team of very competent staff that he trained over the years did an excellent job above and beyond expectations. Grant's involvement and drive on establishing the hatchery was one of the very significant factors in helping to start rebuild the club through providing affordable fish. Grant moved on to other business ventures in Langebaan in the Western Cape some time ago but I would like to make it known that we sincerely appreciate what he achieved with the hatchery at Sandile's Rest.
7. But all is not lost as Mark Andersen and his son, Kurt, operate a hatchery on their Glenara Farm in Hogsback. Mark and Kurt are fishy folks and Kurt has an ichthyology degree from Rhodes University. I am helping Mark and Kurt in the small ways that I can to facilitate their hatchery and fishery and future plans. I have also, as I regularly do, engaged the advisory help of the ever generous Mr. Trout Fingers himself, Hylton Lewis (now involved with a massive salmon hatchery

operation in New Zealand), so thank you Hylton. Additionally we always have the advice and physical assistance of another of the Rhodes University trained ichthyologists, Devin Isemonger. Actually Devin and a small team of our club members have been helping Kurt catch brood stock in the Hogsback over the last few weeks. One of the exciting plans for the Glenara hatchery is to work on developing an “Amatola-strain”, and which will hopefully incorporate a component of the wild-rainbow genetics present in Amatola streams for stocking Amatola stillwaters in the future.

8. Brown trout news is that the ova that was on order for the Glenara hatchery was cancelled at source just as the world went into the virus spiral. But at least the browns stocked into Gubu in July 2018 are starting to put in an appearance (see photos below) and quite a few have been caught of late. The 2017-stocking browns are all properly big fish now, I'd imagine that none of them are under 5lb and a lot are over 6lb. Quite a few have been spotted lately (pun intended) but have been no pushover in getting them to eat a fly, and there've been some teary got-away-at-the-net stories. So have your wits about you when fishing Gubu, because they're there.
9. Those who have visited Gubu lately will note that the Amathole Forestry Company have almost completed the clearing of the non-commercial stand of pines that was between The Drift and Green Banks (Doctors). I would like to thank Andre Van Deventer and Gideon Van Lill for mobilising their teams to get the job started. The moment a stand of pines like that are removed, a positive change begins from the soil up, which increases over time as the area restores itself and with repercussions right through the terrestrial and aquatic ecology. Further to this, Andre and Gideon continue to be extremely open and supportive in listening to the club's concerns and assisting with balanced solutions, making it always a pleasure to engage with them.
10. In early June we finally got around to erecting the club's sign at Mnyameni Dam. The sign was manufactured free of charge for us by one of our always-generous members, Malcolm Klein and his team of graphic design and printing pros at CB4 Retail. We have also made a modification to the original AFFC-Mnyameni agreement in that the agreement is now directly between the club and the Mnyameni community. This was done after it came to light that the original intermediary, the East London-based NPO, the Border Rural Committee, had not paid to the community any of the two-years worth of funds that we had paid to them for the community. I have attempted to follow up on this very untoward situation but with no success. It angers me extremely that this appears to be another NPO with too many salaried mid and senior level personnel lazing in city-based offices ripping the arse out of the system at the expense of poor, rural communities.
11. Fishing at Mnyameni has produced some bigger than average wild-rainbows for the dam (up to 45cm), though none of the visits have yet produced the high numbers of some days last year. David Taylor recently put in a session on the dam and got 14 rainbows. The browns that were stocked in Mnyameni in July 2018 have done well and I had a report late last year from one angler who got a good number of browns on dry fly during an evening rise.
12. The only news that I have for Maden is from Scott Blair. Here in his own words: “Dean Stoltz and I went up to Maden on the 8th March for the morning. The dam looked amazing with water clear and cold and the weed looking healthy. We fished for about 4 hours and landed 11 fish between us. All fish were in the mid 40's and in good condition - slim but not thin. Almost all were taken mid water along the weeds on brown and green damsel/dragon nymph patterns. The access road was in good condition.”
13. There have been some horrific winds at Gubu of late, including a day when it seems gusts well exceeded 100km/h. Fortunately, during the last really big storm, Malcolm Klein and Andre Van Zyl were present and reported that the roof was starting to lift at a weak point along the trusses. We called Justin Du Preez and he rushed out there with a team to install some emergency tie-downs.

So a really big dollop of gratitude to Malcolm for calling it in and to Justin for agreeing to go on the spur of the moment and getting the job done in apocalyptic weather. Scott Blair went up afterwards and affected additional repairs and strengthening.

14. Speaking of Scott Blair, he is already our very efficient treasurer, which is a proper heap of admin work on its own, but he also undertakes near constant maintenance and serious, technical manual labour at the Gubu clubhouse, which goes WAY-WAY BEYOND the call of duty. On top of that he is always planning and arranging improvements, like the additional smaller fridge, the new couch, etc., with much more to come. When you next see Scott, please tell him thank you personally. Gerald van Loggerenberg is one of our members who's an electrician and who has also been at the clubhouse helping us out with the electrics.
15. After a lot of deliberation, discussions and in the field 'testing', we now have a braai area modification plan that has been drawn up by our in-house design professional, Mandy Isemonger. Rob Scott will be getting local quotations for the job and then we will present it to our members for comment. Finances may dictate though that the work be completed in stages.
16. With 2020 being in a total state of flux and none of us knowing what is going to happen re official restrictions on movements and activities as well as the personal risks of moving around, etc., our annual fundraising event has been put on hold until such a time as a clear picture emerges. Richard and Cindy Field and the planning committee that they set up were having regular meetings to brainstorm the 2020 event before 'The Nasty' struck, so hopefully it will all be able to be picked up sometime in the future. In the meanwhile we will have to rely on what has been accumulated from subs for our budget, so paying your subs is important.
17. Renewal and/or new membership subs for the new financial year (June 2020 - May 2021) are currently at 36 memberships. Thank you to those who have paid up already. We have not increased the subs and though times are very tough, we do hope that the historically other 40 to 50 memberships that we usually get will stay with us. Remember, you can download a membership form anytime from our website, or if you're just renewing your subs and your details haven't changed, check for the relevant amount on the membership form on the website and then just send us an e-mail with your name and proof of EFT payment.

Happy fishing and stay safe, Ed Truter



DEAN STOLTZ FISHING AT MADEN IN MARCH AND A TYPICAL MADEN DAM RAINBOW IN SCOTT BLAIR'S NET.



THE NEW CB4 RETAIL-SPONSORED SIGN ERECTED AT MNYAMENI DAM. ROB SCOTT, DEVIN & MANDY ISEMONGER, KIRSTIE EASTWOOD, AND FIONA CLARK ALL HELPED GET THE JOB DONE. I WAS THERE JUST FOR SHOW.



RYAN PICKERING (ABOVE) AND JACQUES BEZUIDENHOUT (LEFT) WITH RECENT GUBU BROWN TROUT. THESE WERE STOCKED AS VERY SMALL FINGERLINGS IN JULY 2018.