

Deniliquin to Fish Camp

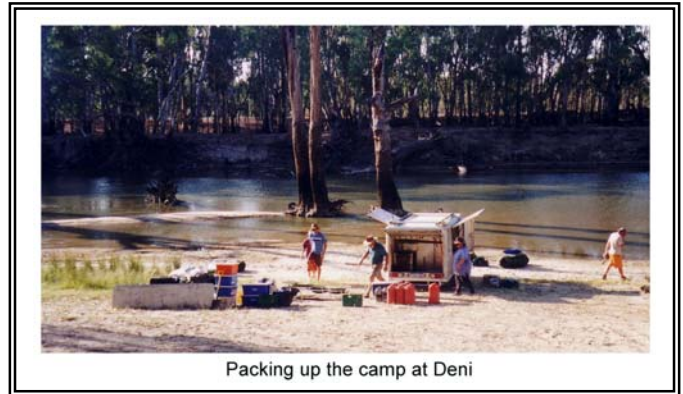
Day Two Monday 3 February 2003

Who needs an alarm clock when Kevin's swag zip heralds the dawn?

Only two boats took off from Keith and Barb's property. Ian, Todd and Leah drove Keith's Jackaroo into Deniliquin to purchase a driveshaft for their gearbox and machine the back of their props to preclude them locking onto the prop shaft.

The Support Crew travelled to Stevens Weir, crossing Colligen Creek. The boats had to be loaded onto the trailer to transport them below the weir. It wasn't considered necessary to tie the boats (it was to be a journey of only a few hundred meters) and as Kim powered the Cruiser up a steep slope they slipped back and off the trailer. Urgent cries and yells of Stop! Stop!! Perhaps a few tie downs might be in order.

The diminished Boat Crew had a good run to the lunch stop at the site of the old Morago Hotel site. 148 was going well. Fred ran over a couple of red-bellied black snakes. Keith reckons beanbags in a boat are great and suggested that there should be a PDRC beanbag class.



Packing up the camp at Deni

Red-Bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyricus*)

One of eastern Australia's best known larger venomous snakes.

The common name originates from the slightly pinkish colour of its underside scales and the first row of its topside scales. It is jet black in colour with a paler brownish snout. The underside of the tail is blackish.

It is not aggressive. When provoked it will recoil into its striking stance as a threat but will try to escape at the first opportunity. There is no record of any human ever having died from the bite of a Red-Bellied Black Snake.

It is a diurnal snake usually associated with streams and water bodies. When not hunting for frogs, snakes, lizards, birds, mammals and some fish, or basking, it may be found beneath timber, under rocks or down holes and burrows.

Adult red-bellied black snakes average 1.5 meters in length and healthy specimens can reach 2.5 meters.

Ian, Todd and Leah caught up with the others at lunch. Ian's announcement that he paid only \$20 for machining amazed everyone. He further amazed Keith when he asked him whether he had noticed the whine in his Jackaroo at 160kmh, but said it was not a problem as it stopped at 180!

The lack of coffee at lunch continued to disappoint Keith throughout the trip.

Wildlife was plentiful – both dead and alive. Leah saw eagles, kangaroos and pigs.

Ian's motor played up intermittently during the afternoon but the overall speed of the expedition was little affected. During one of the "slow periods" they were the last to pass three grumpy old fishermen who asked, "What's the rush?"

The Support Crew found the planned overnight stop near Barratta Station about 2.00 p.m. After a short recce to find a way in around a downed tree, which, according to Leah, was like "Rally Australia", Kim and Leah located a good campsite by the river's edge. It was very hot – high 30s or perhaps even 40 plus.

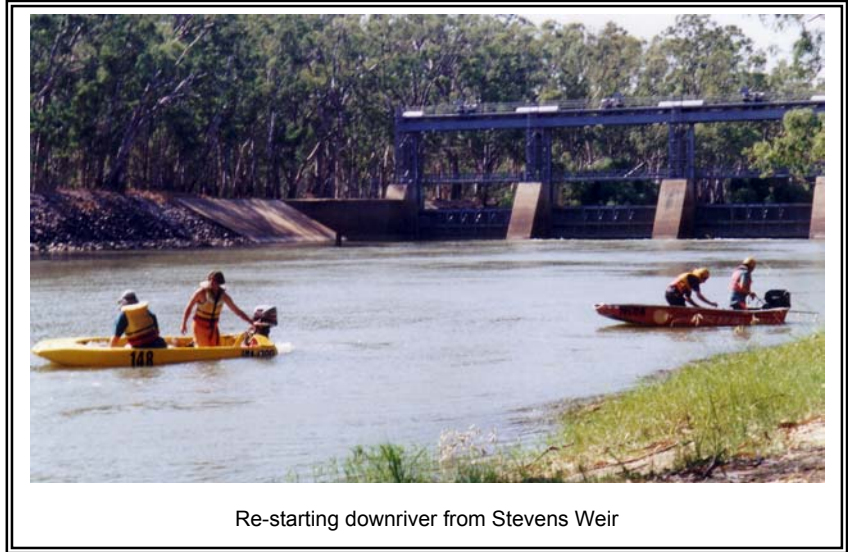
As soon as the site of the camp was decided, Barbara and Joshua got lines into the water. The fish started biting straight

away.

Joshua's line jerked, the bell rang and Barbara ran to the rod. After a few nervous moments and cries of, "It's a Murray Cod", Barbara reeled it in close to the bank.

Kim and Josh grabbed it in the shallows and threw it onto the bank. Joshua's first fish – a 550mm Murray Cod. Time for photos.

The Boat Crew arrived and Graham decided to do a beach landing. His boat finished less than a meter from a massive red gum 10 meters from the water's edge. Keith was a little nervous.



Murray Cod (*Maccullochella peelii peelii*)

The Murray Cod is Australia's largest and best-known freshwater fish.

Murray Cod commonly grow to about 600mm and 3-4 kg, occasionally 1 meter and 28 kg. The maximum-recorded size is 1.83m and 113kg. They are very territorial and are believed to live for as much as 80 to 100 years. The Murray Cod is generally regarded as Australia's premier freshwater angling species.

The Murray Cod is the top predator. It has a varied diet of other fish, crayfish, yabbies, shrimp, freshwater mussels, frogs, waterfowl, small mammals, tortoises and other reptiles. Virtually anything within its realm that moves and is small enough to fit in its cavernous mouth is considered fair game!

Murray Cod are widespread throughout the Murray-Darling system, although greatly reduced in abundance throughout its range when compared to the original population. They were originally extremely common and supported a substantial commercial fishery in the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth. Before European colonisation, Aboriginal people exploited the species as a major food source.

Regulation of the majority of the rivers in the Murray-Darling basin has resulted in substantial alterations to the natural flows and a decline in Murray Cod numbers. Loss of riverside vegetation, physical damage to stream banks and increased silt inflows have led to major changes in much of the system. The removal of in-stream debris, such as fallen trees, has resulted in a reduction of suitable habitat for native fish in general and Murray Cod in particular. Angling and commercial fishing is insignificant next to the other factors and is not considered to be of concern, under the current regulatory regime.

Everyone was keen to have a swim. Cameron went into the water and was nearly cleaned up by Todd in 166. Graham, not to be outdone, joined the fray. Between the two of them they scared away the fish, and snagged lines. Kim put up \$50 to anyone who could catch a fish in the next 30 minutes. After 28 minutes without success he announced "\$100 to anyone who catches a fish in the next two minutes!" Only seconds later Keith's line jerked and he furiously reeled it in. He caught everybody.

Graham brought out his boogy board, realising that it would be probably get damaged but sacrificing it to an afternoon of fun. Keith wagered Kim and Ian \$50 each that they could not kneel and stand, respectively, on the boogy board. To quote Keith, "Epton and Williamson were legends on the boogy board" (He lost the bet).

Merinos and the Riverina

George Hall Peppin and his two sons were experienced English sheep breeders who settled at nearby Wanganella station in 1858.

Dissatisfied with the yield and quality of wool from the merino, they channelled their efforts into developing a new breed that was better adapted to Australian conditions, larger of frame and able to yield a greatly improved quality and quantity of wool.

Their successes constitute the foundation of Australia's reputation as a quality wool exporter. Peppin sheep now predominate among the flocks of South Africa, New Zealand and South America and 60-85 % of Australian merinos have Wanganella blood.

Quote from the Commodore:

"I am the Champion, Stand Up Knee Boarder" (is that an oxymoron – Ed).

After telling Todd all afternoon to "be careful, don't go too close to the bank, don't go close to trees, be careful" Ian jumped a log while skurfing the boogy board!

Kim came back to shore and spent ten minutes telling anyone who would listen about the logs he jumped and swerved around like a real pro.

The boogy board mastered, it was time to take on the kitchen table. The cuts and scratches were disproportionate to the success. After losing one of the legs (table) it was time to find another distraction. Back to the boogy board. The sun set on a great afternoon of hazardous but enjoyable fun.

Leah was very busy putting Dettol on everyone after their boogy boarding and table skurfing exploits. Keith conferred legendary status on her for her dedication to the task. By the end of the night, Barbara and Leah were the only expeditioners without cuts or scratches. Graham had nine wounds requiring attention. And a bull ant bit Cameron.



Joshua "Schumacher" with his first Murray Cod



Ian and Cameron



Ian kneeling on boogie board



Kim kneeling on boogie board



Ian standing up



Kim and Graham preparing table



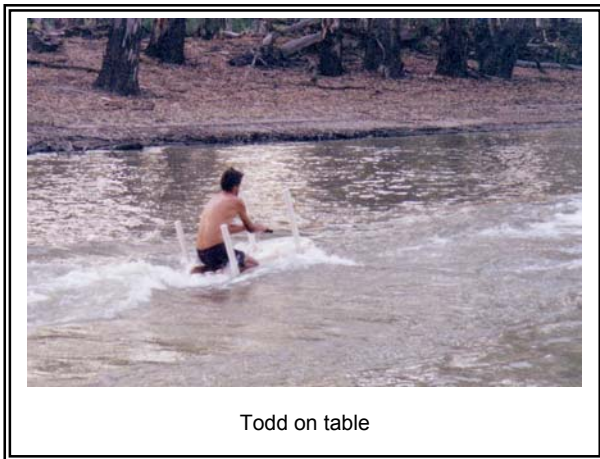
Ian kneeling on boogie board



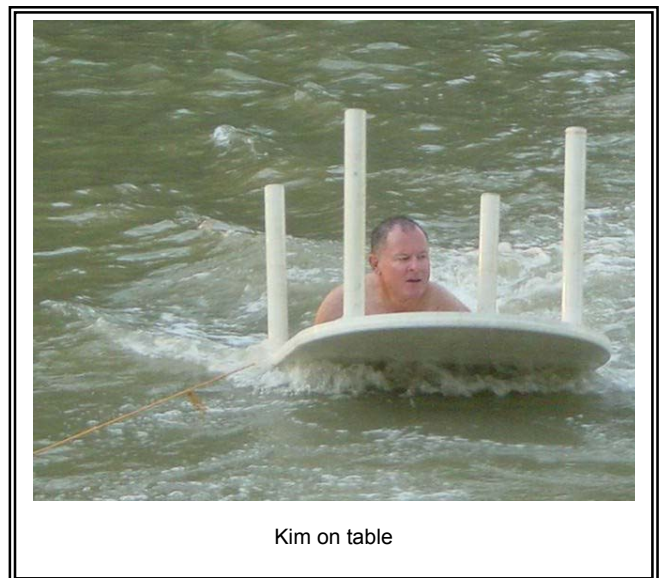
Todd on table



Todd and Cameron towing Kim



Todd on table



Kim on table

On a more serious note, Fred changed the pull start mechanism on his motor as a precautionary measure. Kevin was tireless, fetching buckets of water, washing dishes and generally helping around the camp.

Ian cooked the chicken that had been prepared for dinner. Kim prepared too much salad – again. The seasoned chicken and the potato salad served for dinner were very popular.

The evening's activities were varied. Leah is still trying to figure out how Kim told her what card she had selected. Barbara won Scattegories. The jokes were almost excellent.

Although carp are a declared noxious fish Cameron's despatch of one with a blow to the head from his maglite torch upset Leah and Ian.

It was still very humid at 10.30 p.m. The landing of a Murray Cod and the fun on the boogy board was propitious for the expedition. And then Cameron's Engel started working properly.