

# Best spots for trout fishing

By PETER SHUTT - The Timaru Herald    Last updated 18:02 03/03/2009

Low river flows and large mats of algae combine to make many coastal rivers unattractive to trout anglers at present. Lakes, canals, and high-country headwaters those are the places to fish for trout while down-country waters are contaminated with algae, didymo, and phormidium.

You probably saw a photo of John Meyer holding this 13.49kg trout in the Timaru Herald last month. He captured it from the Tekapo Canal. It was an excellent conditioned hen fish that many described as being football shaped.

Today's photograph clearly reveals that shape in much better detail, and should provide encouragement for other anglers to fish the canals.

Algae, phormidium, and didymo have created an environment in down-country waters that is toxic and not to be trusted.

In coastal rivers, as if to emphasise its presence, phormidium creates a significant smell in the water and trout flesh becomes tainted and unfit for consumption.

Only a significant fresh or flood will clean the shingles of these nasties.

In the meantime, I believe canal or lake fishing will be much more productive and pleasant for trout anglers.

The Rangitata and Waitaki Rivers are not yet badly affected, and salmon fishing, particularly at the river mouth, should remain free from contamination.

Keep a watching brief on the Ecan website for reports of contaminated or toxic waters and wish for a deluge of near flood proportions.

It's recently been reported that most young people are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family and relatives. Most youth aged six to 12 are introduced by family members and relatives, and most youth aged 13 to 17 are introduced by friends.

That's understandable and they all need experienced mentors and outdoor education programmes to provide the motivation to begin participating in outdoor recreation.

The North Canterbury Fish and Game schools' programme aims at encouraging school students to appreciate the aquatic environment through a hands-on approach to learning. I note, too, the work of Central South Island Fish and Game in introducing students to the outdoors. The success of these programmes shows clearly on the faces of these young anglers as they cast a line into a South Canterbury river.

It's from participating schools that future anglers will come, and with them will come the knowledge of how the health of local waters dictates the quality of the fishery resource and its worth as a recreational and tourist attraction.

American studies due to be published in the journal Fish and Fisheries confirm that rising ocean temperatures will cause marine life to move from lower latitudes toward the colder poles at an average rate of 25 miles per decade.

The report could be an important pointer to how New Zealand marine and freshwater fisheries could change. The study, led by William Cheung of the University of British Columbia, projected the movements of more than a thousand marine species based on fisheries records and climate change computer models.

According to the study, 50 years from now, most nations may be targeting completely different species than they currently fish for.

Tropical nations will likely be the hardest hit. As equatorial ocean temperatures become too hot for more and more species, catches drop steeply, resulting in food shortages for millions of people.

Not only will fishermen have to travel further into unfamiliar waters to track down fish, they may be blocked out of a traditional fishery altogether if the species drifts into another country's Exclusive Economic Zone.

Another big loser in the ocean warming trend will be any species that already thrives in the coldest of water conditions.

With nowhere to migrate to when their home waters warm up, species like striped rock cod in the Antarctic and St Paul rock lobster in the Southern Ocean may face extinction.

The authors of the study were careful to emphasise the level of uncertainty in their findings. Since their task was so complicated, the goal was more to shed light on the scale of the problem than to quantify it precisely.

The scientists hope that their results can help policy-makers predict and prepare for some of the new challenges that these migrator will present.

The study also brings into focus one of the problems with Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The boundaries of MPAs are fixed, but the habitats they are designed to protect are not. If marine species migrate but MPAs remain stationary, they may accomplish little as a conservation tool.

Cheung says he hopes the study will help governments address such management issues.

Acting on advance information from the report described above, the USA North Pacific Fishery Management Council approved a moratorium on fishing in the US Exclusive Economic Zone of the Arctic Sea. Around 200,000 square miles off the coast of Alaska will covered under the ban.

Currently, there is no commercial fishing in this area, but many anticipate that species like pollack, cod and flounder will migrate north due to rising ocean temperatures, and that the major fisheries they sustain will follow.

The vote was notable not only because conservation groups and industry aligned to impose the ban, but also because, according to the New York Times, it was "the first time the United States had acted to close a fishery as a result of climate change instead of in react to overfishing".

The council's decision includes procedures for beginning the commercial fishing process once research has provided a better picture the region's ecological limitations.

Marine Conservation Alliance executive director David Benton said in the Washington Post: "I'm excited about the opportunity this vote presents for the United States to go to other countries and say, 'look at what we are doing in the Arctic, and we want you to join with us to do the right thing'."

Watch this space for how New Zealand interests will fare in the Antarctic.