

Post Lyle Knowles Trip Analysis¹ (Jason M)

Following on from Ben's great presentation at the last meeting, a plan was developed how to approach a day on the river for the outing. A late arrival the night before, combined with an early morning reconnaissance and some helpful feedback from early arrivers and others anglers cruising. With Dennison looking quite low, it confirmed the plan to try some more remote areas. The particular spot I had in mind has been almost unfishable on previous visits over the years (Lyle Knowles in Octobers and other pre-Christmas visits). So after a few cuppas, boiling the billy to refill the thermos, and some having some late bacon and eggs, about 9:30 we hit the trail with tyre pressures lowered for the trek ahead.

Proceeding down from the road, some parts enabled a high elevation view of the river and the binoculars were out to survey the water below. Some fish-like rocks were noted, but no rises were spotted, and no cruising fish seen. With the high angle, the glare wasn't too bad, enabling us to



estimate the depth and identify the likely fish lies. We opted to split up for an initial fish, rendezvousing for morning tea/lunch before working further upstream in tandem. We selected the approach based upon our casting, being left and right handers, enabling better attack at the shadowy edges

on the opposite sides as we worked upstream.

Seeing some caddis the night before, early morning, and even on arrival, an Elk Hair Caddis was selected about the same size. We also saw some big dragonflies dapping the water, and some brown grasshoppers near the river but these didn't have the presence the caddis moths did.

A combination of drifting and dapping was used, similar to the caddis spotted. The wind was a little gusty. Working up from a lower run, getting the feel for the wind and water, the earlier fish-like rock and the surrounding deeper water and shadowy edges around the rock were fished.

Without luck, and deciding these constantly wet rocks would have been better to use felt soles on, the runs upstream were worked. The odd small fish was spotted, and then dropping the fly onto the flow coming into the top of the pool, it was gulped down and the fight was on. About ten

¹ A short description of how we approached and executed fishing for Lyle Knowles, putting some knowledge and a little luck into a successful day out

seconds later the rainbow was off the hook, but appeared about a handwidth in height and around 30cm, a good sign of the approach used.

A couple more casts in the water above this saw a nice brown come out from under the grass tufts on the slight bend, with the EHC in the front top of his jaw. My landing net appeared stuck behind a buckle in my new belt, so with the fish worn out near my feet it was landed by hand.

With lovely light red spots, it was a nice pan sized fish. Later stomach inspection showed some snails and more recently two green hoppers. I never saw the green hoppers when walking the river, but assume they were in the green tufts next to the water whilst the brown/tan ones were away from the bank so didn't really get blown into the water with the warmer weather.



Working up the rivulet to the top of the run, a smallish fish about 12-15cm came at my fly at the end of the pool above. The pool didn't appear to draw any more fish out, but the dead branches overhanging the water were likely territory and a fish was possibly spotted. As this was just above the RV location, it was left for later, and a few more casts planned before a late morning tea.

Inspecting the fly, it was a bit worse for wear. The reddish wire and hackle were coming undone at the bend, creating a paddle tail. With likely hook-ups in the vegetation, a few last casts with the fly was planned before replacing it over a brew. Peppering a likely pool with a rock channel allowing fish good access to the outflow from a run, and ending in a perpendicular rock channel, I refused to believe there wasn't a fish in these deep channels. One more short drift, and a nice fish came up from just above the junction of the two channels and the fight was on. I scabbled at the radio in my vest pocket and called out "Fish on!"

The fish went up and down the upper channel, taking line off of my reel before going into the cross-stream channel after it tried for some dead branches on the opposite side and I encouraged it into the deeper water. A slightly smaller brown came out of the channel and almost confused me – did I just get wrapped around a rock as this fish is heading downstream? But no, my fish was in the depths and it spooked the other trout out. My trout came briefly near my feet (this time my net was in arm's reach), but entering the water I slipped a little on the rocks and the spooked fish made a dash into the top of the run below, aided by my dropping rod as I slipped.

Some quick rod work and acrobatic balancing kept it at the top of the run below me (and myself upright), with the fish into a pocket of deeper slower water on the edge under the grass

tussock where it appeared “content” under line pressure. I quickly stood below it, to discourage it from going further downstream, and approached it with the net from behind. A quick, deep sweep



had the fish – and a hand-sized rock – in the landing net. The deep bronzed brown came out at 47cm, with thick green tinged shoulders and big black spots with circles of red along its length. Its girth of 20cm was double checked, and with my portrait photographer unlikely to catch up any time soon as he was still fishing well

downstream, some quick grassy shots were taken of the fish before it was swum in the slower water, aiding his biting of the grass and weed with the net to save him bouncing downstream until he had recovered.

Adrenalin still pumping, it was midday and time for that “brew” to celebrate the fish (and let the nerves calm down), lunch, and with the hackle and wire completely gone a change flies at the same time. We reviewed our observations so far, developed our plan from this and worked upstream for the afternoon in tandem, spotting and landing a few more fish.