



## More Places to go – Eucumbene Spawning Run 2016

Well what an absolute ripper of a season! Easily one of my best on record.

It started off in April when I got word there were fish starting to stack up at the mouth of the river, down on the Providence Portal flats. Myself and a mate headed down there after work on a Saturday afternoon. When I got there it was just getting on dark, and I couldn't believe the amount of flickering headlights down towards the river mouth. As the lake was so low at the time (42%) it was impossible to drive down there, so we had to park up near the actual Providence Portal, the pipeline that heads out of Tantangara and runs into Eucumbene.

So we made our way down towards the masses across the mud flats. We made a huge mistake by crossing the river the first time, and heading to the opposite bank where the majority of anglers were, as it was muddy as hell! Ended up going knee deep in mud on several occasions. We persisted for an hour or so, but the mud getting stuck on the fly line was getting almost unbearable, not to mention my mate who was a raw beginner to fly fishing, was struggling a lot. So we made the call to regroup and have dinner, whilst I gave my mate a short, but intensive casting lesson. It would've been about 9:30 by the time we decided to head back down to the mouth for the remainder of the night, with the decision to go for the long haul and try to pull an all-nighter. More people had left by then and the crowd had considerably subsided. We ended up jumping in the tail end of a run where there was a queue of people who had waded out in the lake and were standing on the edge of the river channel, and swinging wets. It didn't take long to get my first hookup which turned out to be a fish of about 7lbs!







It was so exhilarating! I continued to hook another 3 fish before my mate was starting to get frustrated, so I ran over his rig, and put a poly leader on his rig to help him get a bit deeper, and the results were almost instant. He landed his first fish on fly, which was a nice hen brown of around 6lbs! Not bad for a first fish! The time absolutely flew after that as we continued to hook fish after fish! We were both using size 4 Black Woolly Buggers, with a bit of UV Thread tied behind the bead, on 8lb Fluorocarbon, Fast Sinking 5ft Polyleaders on a WF Floating line.

The sunlight appeared in no time as we lost track of time completely! The hot run would've been around 3-4am. The fish were going ballistic! They were thrashing around the surface, and the edges. I hooked around a dozen of my eventual 20 fish for the night in that hot period. It was my goal to finish on 20 fish, so as soon as I hit that figure, it was lights out! I was completely knackered!

So that was the one and only session down at the mouth. After that the following weekend they had one good dump of rain up in the headwaters, which was enough to push up a good wave of fish into the river, so...up I went again! This time I left early Monday morning and I had a quick look around the portal flats, to only be frustrated once again by the mud, so I made my way up to Denison, to be greeted yet again by another hoard of people! Fished a few of the runs that were vacant for a couple of hours, to no avail. I then bit the bullet and made the decision to head up into the tree line above Denison. For those that have been up there before will know how rugged the country is. THERE IS NO TRACK! You pretty much have to make your own by weaving in and out of the scrub with your fly rod. Can be quite frustrating! Anyway, it was completely worth it as we only saw one other one other person up there, and pretty much had the river to ourselves.



It didn't take long until I spotted the first few fish sitting underneath a bit of shrubbery on the far bank. I got myself and a good position and picked one off first cast!

I then gave my mate a shot at them to see



if he could catch them. After many wayward casts, and hooking trees, I snuck in a perfect low trajectory roll cast under the bank to hook the next fish whilst my mate was still untangling his mess. I copped a bit of abuse after that one I can tell you! I then proceeded to pick off a few more fish working my way upstream in the runs. The fish were getting progressively bigger.



It was getting towards the end of the day and had 10 fish or so under my belt (all released of course) until my indicator disappeared out of sight and I proceeded to strike. I knew straight away it was a horse! Ran me up into the next pool, manoeuvring it's way in and out of the boulders. After a 5 minute or so fight, and unintentionally spooking the fish my mate was targeting, I got it in the net. My heart was racing and I was shaking like a leaf! I had landed my personal best trout at 68cm and just over 9lbs! Definitely one of, if not the highlight of my fly fishing career. To say I was exhilarated would be an understatement. You'll see just some of the pics I got before I spent a bit of time reviving the fish and making sure it had gotten its breath back before releasing it into a calm pool where it could really recharge the batteries.

After that my mate was super frustrated, and almost felt like snapping his rod.

I tried to explain that I had got my fish by putting in a lot of hard work with my casting, and just general on-the-water experience. I had some pretty terrible spawning runs when I was learning, and just explained to him that he'll be all the better for the experience. This calmed him somewhat until not long after he slipped and fell in the river. I could see the steam coming from his ears! On that note we called it a day, and made our way back to Canberra.



I've since had 2 trips up there since that weekend and have continued to get some nice fish up to about 7.5lbs each time. I also hooked, but lost after a lengthy tussle, what would've been easily been in excess of 10lb! The fish just dominated the fight and had run me around boulders and up into the next pool. It had eventually had enough, and after one big head shake, snapped my 8lb fluorocarbon like cotton. I was actually depressed after losing that fish! I was also shaking for a good 5 minutes with the adrenaline still flowing through my veins! It's things like that, that keep me coming back for more!

Just for everyone's interest the rig I was using in the river consists of a 10lb 9ft tapered leader with about 1ft of the really thin stuff at the end, and then tied onto a micro ring. I then run about 4ft of 8lb fluorocarbon to a weighted Glo Bug. I then tie about a foot of line off the bend of the hook onto a size 16 black tungsten beadhead nymph. I run one of the 'New Zealand Strike Indicator Tool' indicators. They are basically just a piece of sheep's wool held on the leader by a small piece of plastic tubing.

The key to my success also was the ability to get my flies to drift very naturally. For the presentation I deliver the flies upstream using a tuck cast. An absolute must for nymph fishing! For those that would like to learn, I would be more than happy to show you, but it basically consists of overpowering the forward cast so that the leader tuck underneath the fly line, and make the nymphs dive bomb straight down the water column, with a good amount of slack behind it, so that it drifts drag free.

When I couldn't get in a position to cast directly upstream, I would cast across, still with the tuck cast, but I would add in a reach mend. This basically repositions the fly line upstream so that it once again, drifts DRAG FREE. By using these casts I was able to considerably reduce the amount of weight and split shot that you would otherwise need to get to the bottom of the river.

The river has had a good dump of rain over the last few weeks and continues to flow really well. Should make for some really successful spawning. As you all probably know by now, there have been more and more people heading up there by the day. Some accounts of around 100 cars parked across the Denison area! Just crazy! I may have one last crack before the rivers close on the long weekend. I keep telling myself, that's my last trip! But when I get back, all I can think about is getting up there again! Once you take a look at the photos, you'll see why!