



TFFC Newsletter October 2019

AGM

This year's AGM will be held on the 3rd of November at 12h00 at the Sandton Field and Study Centre, Corner Louise Avenue & 14th Street, Parkmore.

As usual we will provide chairs, tables and braais, but please bring your own food and drinks. If you are braaing please bring charcoal. Ivana has already been shopping and there are some awesome raffle gifts this year. Don't miss out.

Please make sure that you RSVP to Ivana whether you're attending or not.

Remember that your attendance means you hear about all the updated news of the farm, operations, stocking, etc. It is also the best forum to voice concerns, ideas and of course network with friends and your Middelpunt family.

TFFC Champs 2019

The Champs, now in its third year proved to be great fun once again. The top four teams selected over three qualifying weekends fought it out for the finals held on the 3rd of August. The quality of fishing caught on a catch and release basis during the Champs was testament to just how good the angling at Middelpunt is. 142 fish were taken and released in total over the three qualifying weekends and the final.

The Champs is not only an opportunity to bring a bit of fun competition to the club, but socially to spend time at the farm with other members. New friendships are made every year.

The final produced 59 fish with Hugh and Francis finding their luck on the day to claim the Champs for 2019 with 19 fish.

The four teams that competed at this year's finals were:

- 1st Place: Hugh Dean & Francis Sherwell
- 2nd Place: Luke van der Merwe & Gary Viljoen
- 3rd Place: Bryn Labuschagne & Seth Blakeney
- 4th Place: Waldt & Hugo Human

And more winners:

- Longest Day: Gary Viljoen
- Most fish lost: Seth Blakeney
- Biggest Fish: Waldt Human (55cm) and Luke van der Merwe (56cm)
- Best Fisherman: Luke van der Merwe

Hope to see some new faces for next year's event.





Membership

We are very happy to see several members who resigned some years ago have re-joined. Welcome back fellows. At the same time, we urgently need to recruit new members as the numbers have slipped over the last couple of years no doubt due to tough economic conditions. This matter needs urgent attention and will be discussed at the AGM, but in the meantime, we urge you all to try and help us sign up members.

Guest fees & Debit orders

We are indeed fortunate to have Ivana who on a voluntary basis does our booking and most of our secretarial work very efficiently. However, some members are causing her plenty of stress and additional work by not paying your guest fees BEFORE the weekend.

In addition, she is getting more and more debit order rejections on the monthly levies. This costs both the TFFC and you as we make you pay the rejection fees, (R50), and if you strike out 3 times your membership is cancelled.

Please make sure to pay your fees timeously.

Please make sure to pay your guest fees BEFORE going to Middelpunt with your guests.

The Fishing

At the time of writing, the rains have not commenced so the dams are low, but fishing results in the first 4 months (June to Sept.) of the 2019/2020 season have been up to normal standard. 123 rainbows have been kept and 345 returned. One of the features has been the good catches of brown trout. Of the 232 brownies stocked this winter 4 have been kept and 58 and released.



Seth Blakeney with a beautiful brown trout from Dam 1

Catch & Release

As water temperatures increase there is always concern about stress when releasing fish. Barbless or de-barbed hooks are mandatory for C & R and it is important to get your fish to the net as quickly as possible. Try and unhook it without removing it from the water and ensure that it swims away without getting entangled in weeds.

Grass carp news & weeding

A new batch of 100 X 20cm fish were loaded into our cages in late August while the 2018 delivery of 90 grass carp will be ready for stocking early next year bringing the total stocked into our dams to date (2015 -2020) to about 380. At this stage it appears that these stockings are already having an impact on the excessive weed growth in Dams 1 and 2 which were the first to be re-stocked.

Mechanical weeding was carried out in the week of September 3 and reports indicate that this significantly enhanced accessibility for bank fishers.

Stocking Practice - Questions & Answers

As we have had numerous questions about the fishery from new members about our stocking practice and the fishery in general, we have included the section below which we hope provides some answers.

1. ***What weight of trout can our Middelpunt waters carry?*** Dams like No 1 are quite productive by Mpumalanga standards and can carry up to 30kg/ha which means that our total of 20 ha when full can carry at least 450 – 600kg of trout. However, with losses due to fishing, predation and natural mortality we must replace this standing crop regularly to keep our membership happy.
2. ***What size do we stock?*** 30 – 40 years ago the average size was much less than 500g, but these days we try for a minimum of 700g (or nearly 1,5 years old) because of white breasted cormorant predation. Avg. size stocked currently is probably closer to 800g because the hatcheries have reasonable flows. However, during droughts the size drops because hatcheries cut back on feeding. We must also remember that the larger/older the fish are the longer they take to adapt after stocking. Some destinations buy fish as large as 2 kg but these seldom survive for long.
3. ***What are the predators?*** This used to be the White-Breasted Cormorant but in the last 5-6 years the Spotted Necked Otter has become a major problem throughout

Mpumalanga and has also had an impact on our waterfowl. The larger Cape Clawless is less of a problem and of course the fish eagles take their share, but fortunately they are very territorial so you will only have one family on our property.

4. ***How many fish do we stock per annum?*** This year it is about 1,4 tons of rainbow and 200kg of browns between mid-March and mid-December. It is usually a 100kg load on a Thursday.
5. ***Why do we not buy more browns?*** They are more expensive and often difficult to come by. Last year the best we could do was buy 55kg and these were not more than 500g in size. They are also more difficult to catch but they do live a bit longer than the 3 – 4 years for rainbows (males live a bit longer) and we stock some in Dams 5 and 6 as they are thought to predate better than rainbows on the bass fingerlings. Although they do not fight as well as rainbows many of our members enjoy catching them because of their scarcity value in the province and they are also a very pretty fish.
6. ***How do I identify browns?*** They have never been stocked in Dams 4 and 7. They do not have a crimson band on the gills and mid-line. They are never green in colour on the back. They tend to be fawn/brown to golden in colour and in addition to the numerous black spots they sometimes have some red spots. Watch out for the sharp teeth which rainbow females do not have. See also photo below.
7. ***Why is Dam 1 catch & release only?*** This is because it was felt that for marketing purposes we needed a “trophy dam”. Whether this no-kill rule benefits the fishing is debatable. It can be argued that it puts more pressure on other dams like 3 which also have the potential to grow out trophy fish, and without a percentage killed, measured and weighed it is impossible to measure performance.
8. ***Why is our fishing year 1 June to end May?*** If you go back 40 -50 years nearly all the fishing was in rivers so the closed season was end May to Sept 1. Then more and more dams were built and stocked, and the season remained Sept 1 to end – May until the dam owners pointed out that because trout did not breed in dams there was no reason for a close season.
9. ***How do I check the stockings?*** Ivana is advised in advance of the stockings who in turn advises people booked at Middelpunt. Also check the attached form which is posted almost every month on the board of the clubhouse stoep.
10. ***Why are some of our dams cloudy for most of the year?*** This is caused by the presence of red algae. Our dams are old, and the water steadily leaches iron ore

from the dam beds which in the presence of oxygen converts to iron oxide, takes on a red colour and then latches onto a species of algae.



Stunning colours of a brown trout caught by Hennie Viljoen from dam 3

[Book to go to Middelpunt](#)

OR

Call Ivana on 011 435 0503 / 082 521 5947



[Facebook](#)



[Website](#)



[Email](#)

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