

Walking the Western Lakes

by Allan Semmler

Part 2. Lake Ada, Tallinah Lagoon, Christy's Lagoon, Theresa Lagoon, Lake Antimony and Silver Lake.

Thursday the 7th. February dawned fine and sunny with intermittent cloud. Forecast weather was for fine conditions for the next few days as a high pressure system approached and crossed Tasmania.

The favourable forecast meant it was all systems go for Jeff Baldock and my self to continue our exploration of the Western Lakes.

Our cunning plan was to four wheel drive into Tallinah past Lake Ada and Ada Lagoon providing the creek crossing was passable at Ada Lagoon and then backpack into Lake Antimony by following the Jerusalem Walls track past Christy's and then turning south west down to Antimony.

Our intention was to camp one night at Antimony. Then walk back to Theresa or Christy's for another night before returning in time for Woolies promised roast dinner on Saturday night. We had set a return time of 8.00 PM Saturday and had agreed that the cavalry should turn out if we had not returned by 10.00 PM.

The creek crossing presented few difficulties to the mighty Rodeo so our first stop on our journey was at the southern end of Ada Lagoon where we had been advised to stop and prospect for some large rainbows with wets.

Some large rainbows were indeed sighted right in against the bank in shallow water but very quickly spooked into deeper water.

We continued to bump our way along the rocky track to Tallinah. Progress with the Rodeo in 4WD low first was at walking pace with the only advantage being that we were delaying the inevitable moment when we had to shoulder the weight of our packs.

We arrived at the Tallinah car park at 11.00 AM to find we had it to ourselves. The ever present wind was blowing from a quarter which would have meant a long walk around to the other side so we sorted out our gear, shouldered our packs which had become



Allan Semmler with a fine
Western Lakes Brown

which would have meant a long walk around to the other side so we sorted out our gear, shouldered our packs which had become

much heavier since our O'Dell walk and commence to trudge up the well defined Jerusalem Walls track. After we returned from our walk Jeff's friend Duncan informed us that he had fished Tallinah three times without any joy so we were pleased we had decided to walk on.

The track climbed on a fairly gentle gradient towards Christy's lagoon. As you approach Christy's the topography plateaus out and you walk past many little alpine bogs and reedy swamps which were all very low. It would be worth the walk in springtime just to see them at their best.

As you experience more of the Central Highlands you begin to appreciate why the Tasmanian trout fishery is so productive – lots of suitable habitat.

We walked on past Christy's and were within ten metres of the marker cairn for the track to Theresa and Antimony when Jeff's GPS began to beep.

We agreed that it was a good place to put the packs down and enjoy a snack and a drink but not without a sudden relocation following the discovery of a jumping ants nest.

After enjoying the vegetarian delights of a muesli bar and dried fruit and nut mix washed down with a drink of water we pressed on. The weather had deteriorated and we had a short stop to don our waterproof jackets to cope with the intermittent showers of hail and snow in between the periods of blue sky and sun. We were discovering another of the joys of walking in the Central Highlands.

Next stop was beside Theresa Lagoon. Again the wind was unfavourable and Theresa is surrounded by scrub so we continued on towards our destination of Hut 5 at Lake Antimony. We were soon walking beside the Pine River and looking forward to the simple pleasure of dropping the packs at the hut. Unfortunately the track became less clear and we were slowed by a kilometre of bush bashing down a thickly treed spur before breaking out on the river flat beside the hut.

We had arrived after three hours of steady walking. The hut was quite well built with a bunkroom and a sheltered kitchen/cooking area complete with stone fireplace and iron chimney.

After reading the hut book and the various comments about mosquito's Jeff and I set too putting



Jeff Baldock with another Western Lakes Brown. Note the beautiful and barren landscape.

our hike tents up and getting a good supply of wood.

When everything was shipshape we enjoyed a hot cuppa and then it was time to go and inspect Lake Antimony glinting through the trees a few hundred metres away.

Antimony was very low and shallow as we wandered down its south west shore to its southern end. We spooked a fish from beside a sunken log on our way. The southern end near the overflow had a little more depth so I began prospecting with a red tag around a number of large rocks while Jeff continued out along a spit projecting out into the lake and began to cast along a deeper channel on its eastern side.

After exploring the rocks without success I moved up onto the spit beside Jeff and also began to prospect the channel. A flash of gold beside my red tag was some welcome encouragement. When no further interest was forthcoming I decided a change of fly to one of Jeff's Killers (deer hair dunny brush) was worth a try.

A very wise decision as my second cast again produced the golden flash as a wild brown accepted my offering, a lift of the Sage and it was game on.

After a spirited fight by a very fit fish I managed to beach the golden Antimony brown of about one pound.

The lakebeds of Antimony and Silver are composed of yellow sand and the fish adapt to the colour of their environment so they really do appear gold.

With evening drawing in, a cold wind starting to bite and no more fish to encourage us we trudged back to our camp.

A very cosy camp indeed with the fire going and the welcome shelter of the hut as the wind dropped away and the highlands cold began to settle.

After a tasty three course meal of trout entrée, some lamb stew with desert of a mug of Semmlers' antifreeze filling the belly we departed to our tents looking forward to visiting Lake Silver in the morning.

At 2 AM in the morning we were both driven out of our sleeping bags by a need to get more warm clothes on. The highlands cold had settled with a vengeance and our -5 sleeping bags were inadequate for the conditions. On our return to Miena we discovered the Liawenee weather station had recorded a minimum of -2 that night and we were at an altitude about 100 metres higher.

Breakfast of hot porridge bolstered with dried fruit and nut mix and a mug of steaming coffee beside our merrily blazing fire was much appreciated after our cold disturbed sleep.

With the sun breaking through the early morning cloud we set off to discover the joys of Silver Lake a kilometre south-west of the hut.

As we admired Silver from its southern shore a fish rose in front of us which Jeff promptly cast to with a possum hair shaving brush. In text book fashion a golden flash rose and took the offered fly, Jeff lifted his seven weight after the appropriate pause and again it was game on with a fit wilderness brown.

In due course a golden Silver brown of about 1 1/2 pound was brought to hand.

We continued along the shore to where the swallows were working an area on the western edge of the lake with an occasional dun lifting off the surface. Both Jeff and I had fish rise to our flies with several takes but neither of us managed to hook up. Most of the rises were just that little bit further out than we could cast.

We eventually moved on and after fishing several promising areas of channels and drop offs around the lake without success and without sighting any fish, adjourned back to the hut for a very tasty lunch of lemon trout roasted in foil over the fire. A big improvement on vegetarian hiking rations.

With the clouds starting to close in we decided we would fish Antimony again for the evening rather than pack up and walk back to Theresa.

We again fished the spit area of the previous evening but despite several rises to our flies were without success.

On our return to the hut rain showers began to come through with increasing frequency so we were very pleased to be still at the hut.

After another healthy dose of antifreeze we were again into our tents and sleeping bags as the rain settled in.

About midnight I was woken by the sound of billys rattling in the hut kitchen. Upon unzipping the tent and turning my headlight on I was delighted to see a very large black bushy specimen of Robert Chicks favourite Tasmanian marsupial inspecting our cooking utensils. Chicky's mate trotted off behind the hut after being very politely requested to do so.

Some time later I was woken by the sound of tearing plastic. Chicky's mate was back! After extracting my self from my sleeping bag and tent and a short session of rock and roll in the kitchen, Chicky's bushy mate was last seen rapidly departing the hut in a south westerly direction!

Saturday morning dawned foggy and cool but with the rain finished. After a leisurely breakfast we commenced to pack our gear and wet tents for the walk back to Tallinah with the intention of fishing Christy's on the way. We left the hut about 11.00 AM and arrived at Christy's with wet legs

and feet from walking through dripping wet shrubbery.

After observing Christy's for fish action for some time without success we continued on to Tallinah passing several groups of fly fishers and bushwalkers walking in on the way.

Arriving back at Tallinah we were pleased to stow our packs and gear and climb into the cab for the slow bumpy drive back to Ada.

One small problem though! The fuel in the Rodeo had waxed up from the cold and the motor would start, run very roughly for a short time blowing lots of white smoke and then stall. Finally after the judicious use of Jeff's gas hiking stove on the fuel tank and fuel lines we managed to get the diesel to fire up (literally) and we were away!

A lesson to be remembered when going to Tasmania is to fill up with fuel after your arrival as Tasmanian service stations sell winter mix diesel all year round to cater for the cold spells of the highlands. It is also possible to buy additives to ensure the diesel doesn't wax up.

We arrived back at Miena about 5.00 PM with tired bodies, more memories of the joys of discovering the Western Lakes and plenty of time for a much anticipated hot shower, shave and a cold stubby or two before sitting down to Woolies' roast lamb dinner.

Our next foray into the Western Lakes would be to make our acquaintance with the trophy trout of the Zig Zag Lakes.