

## Lake Bullen Merri

**An old volcano, Lake Bullen Merri lies placid from any form of eruption for many of years now. However, with the stockings of brown and rainbow trout, Atlantic salmon, the newly released chinook salmon and the ever-elusive Australian bass, this lake holds the key to any angler who are chasing trophy-sized fish.**

### PRIME TIME

Winter is the go. The uglier the weather the better the fishing is normally on the Crater Lakes; overcast days with a bit of chop on the surface is ideal. The trout feel safe and tend to feed better under these conditions and aren't sulking down in the depths in the cooler water.

### THE RIG

An 8-10lb braid with a minimum of 10lb leader is a must. You wouldn't want to fish anything lighter when trolling the lake as there are some trophy trout pushing 5kg+.

The lake is stocked with Atlantic salmon, Australian bass (to 1.5kg) and brown and rainbow trout. In its heyday, salmon and trout of 6 and 8kg were caught here and the taxidermists were busy!

But today it has made an astounding comeback providing anglers with fish in excess of 4kg as I write this. With some sections of the lake exceeding 40 meters deep, a downrigger is a handy addition to a fishermen's arsenal.

Best flies include BMS (Bullen Merri Special), stick caddis and smelt imitations. Fishing after dark with live gudgeon under a float is very popular here for the lake's monster brown trout.

### Monitoring and adaptive management

[Local angling clubs have closely monitored the performance of the fishery since stocking recommenced thanks to funding from recreational fishing licence fees.](#)



The stocking of brown trout has been prioritised at Lake Purrumbete. Photo source: Andrew Kompa.

In 2015 fisheries managers met with freshwater anglers to consider the monitoring results that included a creel survey which had interviewed more than 1,100 anglers, and two years' worth of catch and effort statistics collected by members of the Lake Purrumbete and Camperdown Angling Clubs across both Lake Purrumbete and Bullen Merri.

The review found stocked Chinook salmon had performed well in Lake Bullen Merri, with high catch rates by anglers and some specimens reaching large sizes. In nearby Lake Purrumbete, Chinook salmon had also delivered high catch rates for anglers but had not grown as large as hoped.

Feedback from anglers at the review and via the creel survey had indicated a strong desire to maintain the high performance of the Chinook salmon fishery at Lake Bullen Merri and for increased stocking of brown trout in Lake Purrumbete.

Consequently, stocking plans were adjusted for the lakes to optimise what each can deliver for freshwater anglers and to provide range of high quality trout and salmon fishing opportunities across both lakes.

In 2016, Lake Bullen Merri will receive 20,000 Chinook salmon yearlings, 5,000 rainbow trout and 5,000 brown trout, while nearby Lake Purrumbete will receive 20,000 brown trout, 10,000 Chinook salmon and 5,000 rainbow trout.

The Crater lakes are the only reliable waters in Victoria that are capable of supporting a high quality Chinook salmon fishery. For this reason, particularly in Lake Bullen Merri, stocking plans have been designed to realise the unique growth potential of large Chinook salmon to the benefit of anglers. It is important to note that stocking plans for all stocked waters are reviewed annually at regional forums held in conjunction with angling representatives groups and water management agencies. Further information about fish stocking can be found on the [Fish stocking](#) page.

## **The future**

Fisheries Victoria are delighted with the exceptional fishing at Bullen Merri as a result of fish production and science efforts in strong partnership with anglers. Fisheries Managers are always working on ways to maintain and continue to improve fishing at Bullen Merri and other waters around the state. One strategy currently being trialled for Lake Bullen Merri is to on-grow Chinook salmon quickly using temperature controlled recirculation technology and stock them after five, rather than 13 months after hatching. These fish may grow faster and consequently bigger for anglers to catch in the future. Stay tuned for results of the trial.