

Kilwell 2017 Lower Waikato river trout contest results.

The Kilwell Lower Waikato river trout contest was again a great family event, this year the 9 day long contest attracted 46 keen experienced anglers from Cambridge to Te Kauwhata, nearly the same as the 2016 numbers. With 18 juniors under 17 and 28 adults including 3 in the women's section, there was strong competition for the \$6,000 plus in prizes (sponsored by locals, corporates, and businesses), which also included the teams and ladies section. Kilwell NZ featured strongly in the prize selection and were a valuable sponsor, the remainder was mainly sourced from our local Sweetman's Reel Fishin' Huntly store and Holiday Fishing.

The river was alternating between high and low levels throughout the 8 ½ day contest run from Saturday October 7th to Sunday October 15th, and there were 64 trout caught, with 58 being browns and 6 rainbow trout.

This compares with 114 trout in 2016, 125 caught in 2015, 112 caught in 2013, 97 caught in 2012, 126 in 2011. Although the numbers were well down, many more fish were caught than were entered, and overall they were in better condition and bigger than the previous year.

The river was badly coloured mid contest, however this cleared and apart from the usual wind and a few showers there were reasonably good conditions otherwise, the last Saturday was very sunny.

TVNZ's Breakfast Show came through on Wednesday the 11th and did 6 live crosses between 6 and 9 am after the sports news segments as Brodie Kane tried to catch a trout at Tainui bridge in Huntly (with Keith Handley as her guide). This was great PR for the competition and the crew got to taste some hot smoked trout from Tainui bridge browns that Keith had caught on the first day of the comp. Many thanks to Brodie and Selena Hawkins, the producer, for their involvement, plus Tracey and Dylan Farrar, Kiennan Wilson, Steve Sharpe and William Van Zyl as support. See our facebook for some short videos of the best bits!

<https://www.facebook.com/lowerwaikatotroutfishingcontest2017/>

With the contest area being as usual the main stem of the Waikato from below the Karapiro dam to the Waikato heads, the fish were caught from Karapiro dam to Mercer, with the browns chasing the annual whitebait migration. This year, a majority of fish (by numbers) were caught in the Huntly (15), Cambridge (11) Ngauwahia (9), Hamilton (7), and Rangiriri (6) areas. Next were Ohinewai (4), Taupiri (3), Mercer(3), Karapiro(2), Horotiu (2) and Hopuhopu (1).

This year the high rainfall through winter made tough fishing for Cambridge/Karapiro fishermen, and the trout condition in that area was largely inferior to last year's fish as there were few resting areas in the heavier current. Huntly, Mercer and Rangiriri areas produced all of the best fish over 50 K factor (including the 2 best condition factor). Accounting for 15 fish from the total (8 from Keith Handley), Huntly still deserves the title of "Brown trout central".

While most of the fish were caught from shore, some anglers used their boats to access good areas or fish from their anchored boat, and one was caught trolling. Condition of fish in the middle areas of the competition was above average, probably due to large areas of flooded grassland available to the fish at times (worms). Many anglers released any under size and low condition fish during the week.

This is a top spin fishery, and a simple spinning rod with the right tackle will deceive the fish, but this year the most popular terminal tackle by far was still softbaits (50), followed by large wet flies with splitshot (4), rapalas(3), then spinners (2), veltics (2) worm or bait (1), tassie devils (1), Tokoroa Chicken (1).

Most trout were caught early morning or at dusk and into the evening, but a surprising amount were also taken in the middle of the day. The more successful anglers targeted the very edge of the river, using short casts or even just trailing a lure off the rod tip to probe likely brown trout lies behind and under cover, along banks with good current. From analysis of the total catch data this year, the average trout in this area weighs about 1.325kg, (well up on last year) and has a condition factor of 40.56, which is a nicely coloured trout.

Weigh stations were at Sweetman's Reel Fishin' in Huntly, Taupiri Tavern in the evenings, plus Waikato Hunting & Fishing in Te Rapa and also Sportsworld Cambridge.

Our trout methods booklet for the Waikato river (Trout on your doorstep) was quickly snapped up for information, these are also available in pdf form on the Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game website.

Competition started in earnest at 5am on the Saturday 7th Oct. During the 9 days fish were weighed in steadily with the usual flurry in the weekends.

The prize giving was held at Taupiri Tavern on Sunday 15th in the garden bar, and free barbecue provided by owner Bob Gamble, plus some smoked trout from Mike Lynch kept the crowd happy.

Kevin Hutchinson spoke for Waikato RiverCare, who had supplied a large amount of potted native trees as prizes. These were very popular with everyone, and will be planted along selected river and stream edges. RiverCare caps were also popular. This year the competition committee made a donation to RiverCare for their Te Onetea Stream planting at Rangiriri, any individual or group is invited to help fund this worthwhile project on their website.

This year we again had a wide ranging prize selection of fresh and saltwater fishing related products- bags, rod/reel combos, smokers, nets, lure packs, knife sets, clothing etc, plus plenty of spot prizes for all including caps, lures and manuka sawdust.

Results for the 2017 competition;

Juniors (18 entries, 17 fish caught)

1st heaviest brown trout- Ocean Leigh Cocup (Taupiri) 1.936 kg- \$250 package
2nd heaviest brown trout- Levi King (Hamilton) 1.926 kg- \$150 package
3rd heaviest brown trout- Zyon Cocup (Taupiri) 1.726 kg- \$100 package
Heaviest Rainbow- David Geelen (Waingaro) .920kg- \$100 package
Best condition factor trout- Levi King (Hamilton) 45.19 condition factor, \$250 package.

In the juniors, the entry draw prize went to number 126, Keinnan Wilson of Huntly, he was the happy recipient of a \$250 package, sponsored by Huntly Fish Game and Clay Target Club.

Ladies (3 entries, 4 trout caught)

Heaviest trout- Tracey Farrar (Huntly) 2.044 kg \$200 package
Best condition factor trout- Sharnay Cocup (Taupiri) 43.27 condition factor \$100 package

Adults (28 entries, 47 trout caught)

1st heaviest brown trout- Steven Sharpe (Hamilton) 2.720 kg \$350 package
2nd heaviest brown trout- Graham McHaffie (Hamilton) 2.370 kg \$250 package
3rd heaviest brown trout- Asher Morley (Huntly) 2.330 kg \$100 package
Heaviest rainbow trout- Stephen Butcher (Hamilton) 1.460 kg \$200 package
Best Condition Factor rainbow- Asher Morley(Huntly) 40.87 factor, \$200 package

Best condition factor brown trout adults section- Michael Lynch (Huntly) 55.37 condition factor. He won a major prize of a \$500 sporting voucher to be redeemed at Sweetman's Reel Fishin'. This is co-sponsored by Sweetman's and Taupiri Tavern. Keith Handley was a close second with a 55.11 factor fish.

Kotare Ventures Best Condition Factor overall trophy- Presented for the sixth time, the stunning trophy donated by Kotare Ventures (John Charteris) was won by Mike Lynch.

Team Section

The 4 person teams section drew 6 entries, with Steve Farrar's "Flyz R Down" weighing 2, Clive Poultney's "Flying Fush" 2, Jeremy Johnson's "Trout Ticklers" 2, Sharnay Cocup's "Mangawara Trout" team 3, Steve Sharpe's team "Fish Magnets" 6, and Michael Lynch's team "Hack n' Flash" 13. To qualify, team fish had to have a condition factor of 36 or above, so some fish were excluded from the "bag".

The prizes are for the best average weight of the total fish caught per team, with the prizes going to-

Team Section 1st – Fish Magnets (Hamilton) - Average weight 2.007 kg, \$500 prize of 4 x \$125 packages

Team Section 2nd – Flyz R Down (Huntly) - Average weight 1.782 kg, \$200 prize of 4 x \$50 packages

Rest of teams in order- Mangawara Trout 1.707 kg, Flying Fush 1.570 kg, Hack n' Flash averaged 1.170, Trout Ticklers .843 kg.

Overall average weight trout for the whole competition- \$250 prize comprising \$150 Hunting & Fishing voucher from Flash Flooring, and \$100 product from Sweetmans- weight was 1.325 kg and nearest was Sharnay Cocup with a brown of exactly 1.300 kg. Congratulations to a very deserving winner!

Adults grand entry draw- this was open to all adult entries regardless of success, and was a \$1,000 Taupo package with a 3 hr fishing trip on MV Waimarie, accommodation for 2 nights at DeBretts Spa complex, and petrol vouchers to get there.

Number 122 won, and it was Vaughan McClure from Raglan, one of our sponsors and very keen fresh and saltwater fisho- well done.

Five \$100 "novelty" packages of assorted tackle were given to Keith Handley, Cruz Middleton-Puru Jnr, Kaea Wilson Jnr, Saibon Wilson Jnr and Bob Gamble. These were for a variety of deserving hard work or incidents during the competition.

The many remaining spot prizes from Sweetman's Reel Fishin' were then distributed- caps from Holiday Fishing and Waikato RiverCare, lures from Plant Talk, Kilwell and Holiday fishing, plus the plants for riverside planting from RiverCare.

2 good raffles were run at the prizegiving, (thanks for your support), the \$239 Shimano Baitrunner combo was won by Tahlia Rendall, and the popular \$100 meat pack raffle donated by The Meat Co Huntly had 3 draws, 1st Chase Baranyai, 2nd Kodi Malia, 3rd Mike Rutz.

The contest has been coordinated by the team of Peter Sweetman, Michael Lynch, John Charteris, William Van Zyl, Bob Gamble, Sharnay Cocup, and Steve and Tracey Farrar.

Peter Sweetman and the Reel Fishin' team liased with Kilwell, picked and packed some outstanding prizes for the competition, and handled the weigh station duties at Huntly. He also supplied many of his own product range at significant discounts and stocks a great range of freshwater tackle for the locals to buy, and displayed the big banner on his Main Rd frontage. Thanks too to the staff of Sweetman's, Peter Fletcher, Margaret Taplin for prize selection/packing and Sharon Mackie for handling the entries and finances (and sponsorship via Graham's Plant Talk)

John Charteris had major input before the competition but was unable to attend prize giving as he is recuperating from a car accident that occurred a few weeks before the comp. He's doing well now and we all wish him a speedy recovery.

William Van Zyl was official photographer and committee member, and has uploaded his wonderful images to our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/lowerwaikatotroutfishingcontest2017/>

All of the competition images are there, you can email him for full resolution pics at williamvzyl@xtra.co.nz.

Michael Lynch produced posters and entry forms, handled email lists, PR and paper publication, selected Kilwell prizes and handled most Taupiri weigh-ins and computed the results.

Sharnay Cocup handled weigh-ins on 2 nights at Taupiri Tavern, and Steve and Tracey Farrar were a big help on the day with raffles, all had good input at meetings and made prize decisions at the prize giving.

Bob Gamble helped set up the weigh stations, and he and his team took care of the venue preparation & barbecue at the Taupiri Tavern prizegiving and hosted us very well, including the 8 nightly weigh-ins.

Our 2 outer weigh station venues need a big vote of thanks- Sportsworld Cambridge (Blake and Stacey) & Waikato Hunting & Fishing (Scott Fraser).

Many thanks to the great media coverage we have had from local papers, especially Jim Richardson at the Chatter, and Caitlin Wallace of North Waikato News, this helped publicise the event.

Much appreciation to all the sponsors, contestants and families, for making it such a wonderful competition.

The following sponsors made the competition possible, so please support them...

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Don't stop fishing, plenty of action on the river from now till early December, then it will fire up again about May or before. Remember your licence lets you fish anywhere in NZ except Taupo fishery.

Michael Lynch, Peter Sweetman, William Van Zyl, John Charteris, Bob Gamble, Steven & Tracey Farrar, Sharnay Cocup.