

The Biggest Trout in the World

The creation of the 'World's Largest Trout' was a combined effort between the then Adaminaby Lions Club which was formed in 1969 with Leigh Stewart as president throughout the project, artist and sculptor Andy Lomnici, the Snowy River Shire Council and the then Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority. The Lions Club initiated the idea of a "jumping trout" as the feature of a picnic park and raised the money for the material by way of normal fund-raising activities.

Lion Athol Sawyer did most of the stone work surrounding the BBQ, assisted by some other Lions. Lions planted the trees and shrubs. Andy Lomnici designed and built the Trout, and at some times had a little assistance from some Lions as well as some High School children. At the time when the Club was wondering about who they could get to build the Trout and the then Anglers Reach builder Don Nichols began investigations in Melbourne. Meanwhile Lion Harry Chilton had been telling Andy about the project and as a result, Andy showed great interest and said that he would be prepared to build the structure with a fibre glass finish in the rainbow colours of a female trout, requesting only a small fee. The Lions Club couldn't refuse. The Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority provided the plan for the layout of the Picnic Park, as well as providing engineering advice in relation to the internal frame to cater for wind stress. The Snowy River Shire Council provided the means to erect the Trout in its position as we see it to-day.

Andy commenced the project by freezing a trout in a particular position from which he made sketches from at least two angles. At the Adaminaby Bowling Club a sketch was transposed onto large sheets of newsprint, the actual size of the sculpture that he envisaged. At Anglers Reach, Andy and several fishing friends shaped reinforcing steel the length and breadth of the trout and then brought it to Darcy Pateman's shed in Adaminaby. There the frame was covered with wire netting and kept under cover to protect the fibre glass/resin mixture from the weather whilst work was being carried out. The external scale affect was achieved by wrapping wire netting around the outside with a mixture of resin which was then raked-out from the netting holes. Then before the resin was too dry, the netting was carefully removed giving the scale affect. The final Rainbow markings were achieved by mixing paint with the surface resin. Once complete the sculpture was taken to the Adaminaby Swimming Pool grounds to await its installation.

On 3 November 1973, the Adaminaby Lions Club Picnic Park featuring the "World's Largest Trout", was officially opened by Mr Tom Lewis MP, the then NSW Minister for Lands. This day was also the commencement of the First Adaminaby Trout Festival, the forerunner of the present Snowy Mountains Trout Festival and was co-ordinated by the then Adaminaby & District Progress Association, and the Trout Fishing Competition was organised by the Adaminaby Fishing Club. (Leigh Stewart, 2008)

When the Trout needed to be upgraded 1983 or 84 it was redone by Andy and John West in slightly different colours. With an almost olive green back with dark spots it looked like a cross between a Brown and a Rainbow. For its second upgrade it was redone as a Rainbow. Lake Rainbows change colour and get a lovely olive green back when there is plenty of food and conditions are good. (Jan Leckstrom, 2011)

Weighing approximately two tonnes and rising 10 metres she has become not only an iconic sculpture for Adaminaby but also well known throughout Australia, gaining fame internationally, but being particularly dear to trout fishermen and women. Council's art advisory panel have rated it as the most important outdoor sculpture in the district. Further it is on the Council's LEP heritage schedule and is recognition of the effect of the Snowy Scheme on the region, the moving of the town, the creation of Lake Eucumbene and new recreational opportunities such as fly fishing.

Three years ago, and in good faith with the financial assistance of the local Snowy River Shire Council, the community of Adaminaby worked together recruiting assistance from various sources to renovate her as a Rainbow. She was truly glorious but the job couldn't last for more than a short while, and she now needs the attention of professional restorers in order to gain longer lasting effects. Her rapid deterioration has been the cause of great distress in the community who love her so much, and visitors were throwing their cash into the stones around her base as if asking for some way to help.

Now that she has been officially recognised for her heritage significance she has attracted a wide range of attention from many sources including conservation experts, artists, fibreglass repairers and industrial coaters from far and wide. In November 2010 the group 'Friends of the Fish' was formed as a working party under the auspices of the Lake Eucumbene Chamber of Commerce. It is made up of local and regional communities, council workers and business people. They have done wide research and examined a quote of \$60,000 from a very reliable expert in repair of outdoor fibre glass monuments who visited the site from Queanbeyan. They all agree that this is a very reasonable assessment of the cost for a lasting guaranteed job.

However this is completely beyond the fund raising capabilities of Adaminaby's small rural community and wider assistance is needed. Friends of the Fish have applied for a biannually available dollar for dollar grant from the NSW Heritage Branch with the aim of meeting the \$30,000 up front requirement. The success of the application should be known sometime in March.

On 22nd December 2010 Cecily, Dan and Ben Russell donated and installed a steel donations box on site and the income from just this has generated \$200 in five weeks. In addition we have received pledges that total \$18,000, including \$10,000 from the Snowy River Shire Council and the rest from generous local donors.

If all goes well we hope to have her back to her original and beautiful condition by November 2011 in time for the Oceania Fly Fishing Championships that are being held in the region based in Adaminaby.