

THE BENNETT-McGRATH STORY

By Fred Jobson

Bennett-McGrath lures are certainly one of the success stories in local lure production. This is apparently in spite of the lack of support from government in encouraging their industry to expand!

A look in most anglers tackleboxes will show a typical conglomeration of paraphernalia that accumulates over the years. I love to have a look in friends tackle boxes as it is the best indication of how they fish and what works for them.

Old battered veterans of lures lie beside lures that are just as old but look brand new because they did not work and were relegated back into the tackle box. A sure sign that a lure works is that there will be several of the same type ranging from battered to brand new as the angler makes sure that he will not run out when the fish are biting.

Another interesting point is that most tackle boxes have very similar contents as anglers try different lures and decide for themselves what is effective and what is not.

Over the past few years one brand of lure that has appeared in all my friends tackle boxes is the Bennett-McGrath range of minnows. This mini survey would indicate that in the few short years that they have been available they have won universal acceptance. They have certainly won their place in my tackle box.

The Bennett-McGrath story started off pre 1984 when John Bennett and Steve McGrath felt they needed a super light minnow to suit the fine line threadline fishing for the trout and freshwater natives that are available in the Albury/Wodonga area.

As they could not find a commercial lure that was really suitable they designed their own and came up with a beautiful little lure with its own characteristic shape and action that caught fish.

Due to a series of economic problems neither gentleman was employed at the time and trying to exist on the dole was not in character for them. As most of their spare time was being spent making their lures for all the fishermen of the area, they decided to have a go at commercial production.

In September 1984 they scraped enough cash together to go into full time production and for the next two years invested every cent and all their time in developing the lure and equipment. They were just making real progress when a disastrous fire in July 1986 wiped out their factory and everything they owned.

While many people thought this would be the end of the story, the phoenix arose, and the two boys just gritted their teeth, got back into production.

Now in 1988 things are looking good. Demand for their lures is enormous and goes far beyond their present technology

and production capabilities.

The lure is six and a half centimetres long excluding the bib and hardware, and, being made of balsa is very light weighing only four and a half grams. The minnow, which comes in both shallow and deep runner models, is available in five colours and patterns, yellow attractor, frog pattern, euro carp, tiger, and rainbow trout.

The finish is excellent, professional and at least the equal of imported lures.

The action is perhaps the best feature and their lures have their own characteristic shimmy. Being so light they are sensitive to alterations of the retrieve by the angler and can be made to look very lifelike. The action is also good over a fair range of speeds and they will hang in at a fair speed without popping out of the surface.

High speed is not what they are about however, but rather the fine delicate approach that finds favour with the trout and native fish.

Recent results include casting into the shoreline and trees at Dartmouth Dam in October 1987 when lots of big trout were taken by Albury anglers such as Russell Mason. The trout were feeding on small golden carp and obviously took the lure for this bait fish.

Hume Weir has also been the scene of many good catches with redfin and some big yellowbelly as well as some big trout falling to the lure.

One fault with the early lures was that big fish could damage them, however the new lures have a metal plate running through

the lure and have withstood even some Murray Cod into double figures.

Rod Harrison has tried them on some tropical species and if they will stand up to that they are solid enough.

I'm about to go up to Bathurst Island to try for Barra, jack, and figermark bream and there will be plenty Bennett-McGrath lures in my tackle box.

John Bennett has some interesting comments to make in regards the noise and sonic vibrations made by his lures. His theory is that plastic lures need a built in rattle implanted in them to attract fish, but wood lures have a natural resonance, just like a violin, which alters with the shape and type of wood. Whatever the reason his lures catch fish.

So far the Bennett-McGrath boys have been unable to get any Government assistance at all yet they have piles of orders including some from overseas that they cannot fill because they have not got the technology or capital to go further at a faster pace. I hope a fisherman in our Government reads this and gives the small business a hand to do some research and expand before some overseas company tries to imitate their product and we lose another vital part of our Australian fishing industry. Give them part of the money allocated to the radical greenie and animal liberation groups.

These beaut little minnows are available from Bennett-McGrath Lures, Factory 2, 400 Griffith Rd, Lavington and selected tackle stores.



Steve McGrath (taller) and John Bennett with racks of lures being painted - note the pictures of catches in the background.