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Bushwalk.com Magazine

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Cover shot

Top of Euro Ridge at dawn

Nathan Stuart (aka Forest)

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Warning

As with all outdoor pursuits, the activities described in this publication are dangerous. Undertaking them can result in loss, serious injury or death. The information in the production is provided for interest sake, there may be significant omissions and errors, the publication is provided without any warranty on accuracy or completeness. Under no circumstances will the publisher, editor, authors or any other entity involved in this publication be liable for any loss, injury, claim or liability of any kind resulting from people using information within (or omitted from) this publication. Please consider joining a walking club or undertaking formal training in other ways to ensure you are well prepared for any activities you are planning. Please report any errors or omissions to the editor or in the forum at [BWA eMag](#).

Please send any articles, suggestions or advertising enquires to the editor.

'Lake Myrtle on a Very Cold Morning'

Adam Holbrook (aka Tasadam)

BWA Photo Competition

2008 - Water

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FROM THE EDITOR



Hi

I hope this magazine finds you fit and well.

I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of this vast land on which we explore. I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present and thank them for their stewardship.

I really enjoy the community at bushwalk.com and thought that this magazine could be a great way to recognise, celebrate and share our adventures. It is a chance to pull together some of our random conversations, highlight some stories and reflect on a few wider issues.

Producing this emag has been a fun process and I have learned a lot. My hope is to produce a new one every couple of months. You can find a new [BWA eMag](#) forum to chat about this edition and share ideas about the future direction of the magazine.

This magazine was written by the community to serve the community. I hope it helps fill the gaps between your walks and helps make your future adventures a little bit more enjoyable.

I want to thank the people who contributed articles and the companies who advertised. These articles take a great deal of time to write. I appreciate the authors care and effort in sharing them. The advertising has helped reduce the cost of pulling this together and I also hope the ads are relevant and of interest. Also a big thanks to Eva who spent a bit over a month managing the process, creating the final layout and putting up with me saying - 'almost, but can we...'.
Do you want to get involved?

Do you want to get involved?

I would love to hear from you, let me know what you think and what will make the mag better.

If you have something to share but writing is not your thing - that is okay. Start with bullet point list and email it to me, I can help pull it into shape.

Once you have had a read, please complete this [quick survey](#) to help make the next one better.

Thanks for reading

Happy walking

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matt McClelland'.

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

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Declaration: The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To help improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my associations within the outdoor community. I have personally approached the authors of the articles included in this edition and suggested the topics. These are people I know through bushwalk.com, Except the Koala article which is from someone I work with. I operate bushwalk.com and wildwalks.com as well as being the author of several walking guide books (published by Woodslane), I have also written for Great Walks. I contract part-time to National Parks Association NSW on an ongoing basis to coordinate their activities program. In the past I have had a partnership with NPWS NSW and have hosted advertising for Wild magazine. I have also partnered with a large number of other organisations in environmental campaigns and have a regular bushwalking segment on ABC regional radio. Obviously there is some advertising through the mag which the companies have also paid for. I have probably forgotten something - if you are worried about transparency please either write to me or raise the issue on bushwalk.com.

WHAT IS "BUSHWALK AUSTRALIA"?

Bushwalk Australian (BWA) is a friendly community of bushwalkers dedicated to sharing information. Most of this sharing takes place through the forum hosted at <http://bushwalk.com>. People share tips on gear, specific walking routes, fitness, food ideas and also debate ethics. We have a monthly photo competition as well as very a popular (and highly addictive) "Where am I?" photo game.



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10 days - Larapinta Trail NT

July 2013 - Light, Fast and Spectacular
text & photos by Nathan Stuart (aka Forest)

This was an epic trip to complete in 10 days but I loved every minute of it. Some might say that's rushing it (most guides suggest 20 days), for the main part I'd disagree. But I guess it's walk your own walk. I travelled quickly in the open, easier sections and smashed out some massive 30 + km days. But I also slowed right down in some of the more remote tricky sections.

Having a light pack made a massive difference in the trickier gorges, very rocky ridges and all those big old hills. I rock hopped my way through those bits which with a lighter pack was achievable. I wouldn't have had a hope at all on those big distance days carrying 20-25kgs or in the rocky gorges/hills keeping any pace up.

Now I love my bushwalking but the main drive for me to complete this walk was related to my family history. The trail crosses some of the country first explored by John McDouall Stuart. As a JMD descendant there were some pretty special places out there to be.

I thought 'Alice Springs' - desert, flat.... man that's a fail. It's more akin to NZ or the Aussie Alps, but red of course and no snow. It's very hilly!! This trail had something like 5500m elevation gain to walk up and down. People say this track is hard on shoes/boots and feet. Yep, I'll pay that.



Fortunately I managed to scrounge up 5 other people to share the transfer from Alice Springs to Redbank Gorge from the wonderful forum at Bushwalk Australia (BWA). To those guys and girls it was great to meet you and share a few days together at the start.

Day 1 - 27.6 km

Dawn from Mt Sonder was an amazing start to the walk. Dawn out there really is a special thing. Amongst other things standing on a 1500m mountain gives you a pretty good idea of what's about. Irrespective of which direction you looked there was something to see. The one thing that stood out more for me was the massive silhouetted shadow of the mountain that is cast in the valley. It just looked like this huge pyramid shadow covering the desert. All the surrounding range and peaks were also in view. I managed to find myself a nice little quiet spot just down from the peak. Within 15 minutes the pinnacle filled with a guided group and the other BWA walkers. It had been quite a warm night ~10°C but the summit, while not freezing, was definitely fresh in the slight breeze. Most people quickly rugged up in down jackets, gloves and hard shells. A few phones came out, it was nice to call Katrina when I didn't expect reception until about day 4.

I was probably the last to leave the summit after enjoying a good 1.5hrs up there but overtook a

heap of people on the way down. I woofed down a bit of a hot brunch then wandered into Redbank Gorge for a quick look before heading off for Rocky Bar Gap which was this night's destination. Most of the walk to Rocky Bar Gap was shared with a few other BWA walkers. It was a pretty easy section but quite desolate as it looked to have been burned off last year. I was tempted to continue on to a dry campsite 4km further called Hilltop Lookout but made myself stop, 27km was far enough. I wandered down to the dry creek and then through the actual gap to the other side looking for a better spot and found a great camping spot with excellent views of Mt Sonder from the East. Should be a great spot to capture the first rays of light on Mt Sonder. I waited around the water tank and passed the info onto the other BWA walkers and by 3pm there were 4 tents nestled in enjoying the views. It did rain on and off between 4-5pm but after that it stopped to give us some nice sunset photos over Mt Sonder. I heard a few dingoes way off in the distance, howling just on dark and then it was off to bed.

Day 2 - 23.3 km

We woke early for the Mt Sonder sunrise photos we were hoping for. Fail, Cloud cover low on the horizon. Stood on the rocky ridge above camp waiting, waiting. Nothing. Oh well. Very scenic day,

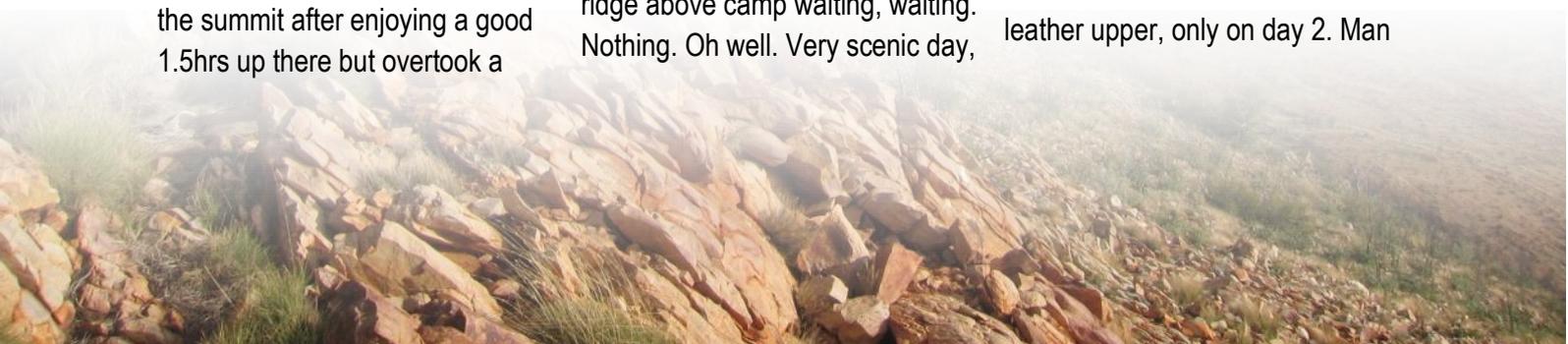
“ I heard a few dingoes way off in the distance, howling just on dark

that track was excellent. Bit of a bump up over hilltop lookout but even that was pretty good.

Lots of sharp rock on the hill though. I caught Bellie (BWA member) at the lookout taping the soles of his boots back on (again). The tape was just getting shredded on the rocks. The Finke River was very lush and green. Had an interesting run in with a scrub bull standing on the track just before the river. Probably could have gone round him, nah not my style. He wasn't impressed when he realised I wanted to walk where he was eating lunch, lots of snorting and stamping. Great idea Nathan, No large trees within 100m, Images flashing through my head of me and this darn bull running round and round a small shrub till he tramples me. Ah good he's running off, ah no he's not, he's coming back. Nope he's just snorting at me now from 50m. Keep moving towards the river Nathan, that was dumb.

“ Poor bugger wandered into the shelter with his sole in his hand.

I arrived at the Finke River campsite in 3 hours and used the gas hotplates in the solid shelter to brew a quick coffee and soup for lunch before moving. Bellie caught me just as I was leaving. Poor bugger wandered into the shelter with his sole in his hand. His boots finally quit on him with total delamination of the rubber sole from the leather upper, only on day 2. Man



that must have sucked. He was positive though and being only 3.5km from Glen Helen Resort, in a good place to hopefully get back into Alice Springs, get new boots and get back on the track.

The walk from Finke River to Ormiston Gorge was very pretty with great views of the range and some nice dry rivers. Loved the hot shower at Ormiston Gorge, Just walked in clothes and all, great chance to clean some gear. No shower between here and the end. Ormiston Gorge itself is stunning, It's so hard to respect the scale of the place just looking at pictures but it's massive. It was a pretty social afternoon here for me chatting to the other walkers. Had a chance to meet some other BWA members who were walking the opposite direction. Good chance to relax as tomorrow is going to be massive with a 5am start. I have a very sore big right toe tonight, I must have scuffed it 4 times today.

Day 3 - 34.2 km

Darn it's 6am, plan was to be already well gone by now as I had slept through the alarm for 5am. I quickly smashed some breakfast and coffee and I was off at 6:30. Great sunrise with speckled clouds scattered in the sky.

Straight up the ridge and along to Giles Lookout, Rough walking, or more small bolder hopping for 8km on the soccer ball sized rocks that cover the ridge top, Hard on feet/ankles especially in runners. Great campsite up on the ridge

halfway along, nice sheltered rock edge and some small trees, I'd recommend that to people over Waterfall Gorge. Fortunately I could again call Katrina, I didn't expect that and it was a big bonus to see how my girls were going at home so frequently early in the walk. The drop down from Giles Lookout to Waterfall Gorge in a word is

treacherous. I have been on worse tracks/scrabbles

elsewhere but it's hard not to be conscious that as a solo walker it's all on you not to stuff up. It's just a whole steep section of very loose rock switchbacks etc, Problem is if you easily tripped it's going to hurt, badly at the least. Not life threatening but enough to make you very conscious of all those sliding, moving sharp rocks you're walking down on.

Waterfall Gorge was eh, okay. After a short stint over the ridge it's just a long walk up the large open valley to a small saddle, then another open valley with the walk down to Pioneer Creek (which had some brackish water) and then into Inarlanga Pass. The pass was very pretty after all the red open valleys so I found a nice ledge and settled in for a short lunch. After the gorge it's just a straight forward trail to Serpentine Chalet Dam where I planned to camp the night. Well I had planned a long hard day and I'm not saying it wasn't hard but I arrived at Serpentine Chalet Dam around 1:30pm and just wasn't enthused by the

campground. Or the weird fellow walker there complaining about the lack of any water at Waterfall Gorge and how he thought he would die from thirst, um it's a dry section, well and truly known publicly and in all trail notes and maps. The scary thing was this guy was meeting a school group to lead them for a week trip at Ellery

Creek in 2 days, Man I wouldn't want him looking after my children. Then he started asking me questions like I should hope it doesn't rain as I would

get wet, what it is like eating cold food all the time. He just couldn't get it that I actually had a shelter and cook kit etc plus my gear in such a small pack, I still think he thought I was full of it and didn't believe a word I said. So I loaded up with water for the night/next morning and continued a further 5.6km to Lomandra Gully and found a great spot just behind a natural rock spine for the night, great little campsite. Didn't plan to put in such a big day, but I felt good and the weather was great for walking. Anyway tomorrow should be heaps easier and I shaved some distance of that with my bigger day today. I'll sleep well tonight. I'm really starting to miss my girls though.

Day 4 - 21.6 km

First up in the morning was the short steep section from camp up to Counts Point. *%\$#! freezing on the exposed ridge top and I guess about 80km wind gusts, light drizzle. Full wind gear, beanie, shell gloves etc and still freez-

“ I'd recommend that to people over Waterfall George

ing even when on the move. I was colder than in the snow last year at 0°C all day on Barrington Tops. Ah I have to put up with this for the next 5km. My world has changed from rocks crunching underfoot to wind gusts and flapping nylon. Crunching rocks are much better IMO. On the upside I could call Katrina again, albeit briefly in the conditions, I had to duck down into the rocks downwind for a little shelter. Once the decent started though off the ridge an hour later it was the strangest sensation to not have all that wind noise, felt kind of peaceful all of a sudden. Bam kicked a rock (again), that will teach me to not focus on foot placement. The drop down into Serpentine Gorge was straight

forward, The gorge nice but the designated walker campsite nothing exciting at all, just a rocky clearing with a tank and food drop shed.

I didn't enjoy the walk between Serpentine Gorge and Ellery Creek much at all. I know I was tired after the buffeting I received on the ridge but what's with the trail going up and down every insubstantial hill for the next 6kms. I mean the whole walk has no shortage of hills, why pointlessly run the track up then straight down every little bump when 250m to the right is a nice open valley system. The walk could have simply followed that to Ellery Creek with just a few small saddles to cross. In the end I just did that, I'd rather put up with

the spinifex off trail than stupidly go up 50m, then down 50m only to repeat again and again for no point. It's a complete waste of energy with views only of lowlands which were pretty much unchanged for this section. (Rant over, Like I said, I was tired).

The food drop at Ellery Creek was a nice incentive though. Tim Tams and Iced Coffee. Ellery Creek was nice but the day was still cold and overcast so I in no way felt like a swim in the cold water. Oh well, that's why I packed wet wipes in each food drop. Tonight I'm just camped on an undercover platform in the caravan area, nice to not set-up the tent. Chatted to some friendly grey nomads interested in my walk, what I was



eating etc.

Day 5 - 31.2 km.

It rained until about 2am, very nice to be under the shelter for a hot lunch at Rocky Gully then load up with water and continue to Ghost Gum Flat 8.7 km away for the night. So I cranked up the wood cooker and made up a nice big coffee and soup, just as I mixed it all in my cups along wanders this old Kiwi man walking the trail solo

“ It's not like food is free out here

too. Picture this, Middle of nowhere,

mulga bush and small eucalyptus trees everywhere in a semi cleared camp area. In wanders old mate and amongst his cries of exhaustion half throws his massive 90ltr pack straight on the small tree I'm sitting next too. Well of course his pack instantly topples over and squashes my just made hot lunch, sprays food and *%\$#! all over my pack and gear. I will not write what I said but I think he got the idea I was far from impressed, It's not like food is free out here. He did offer me some canned fish of some type (WT *\$&#), no thanks. I'm sure he was a nice man and just made a bad call on dumping his pack haphazardly on a tree next to me, but I don't have a huge patience for this kind of thing when solo walking. Anyway that concreted my decision to move on to the next camp.

I left Rocky Gully about midday and again, easy walking, high speed for me. It only took me 1hr 20mins to get to Ghost Gum Flat, Or should I say I hobbled into the campsite. Just before the campsite the trail crosses a dry sandy river bed, It's just a narrow footpad between the long river grass. Or so I thought. Midway across at full stride I kicked the mother of all half buried/hidden rocks. Bam, straight over headfirst into the sand. Not good, sand in mouth and lots of pain in right foot. Have I broken something on that stupid rock ?? I must have sat on the single camp platform at Ghost Gum Flat for about 45 minutes playing with my foot. It hurt like mad to do toe crunches, any flexing etc. I wasn't even paying attention to my now semi detached toenails as they kicked the rock first. I knew that there was 4x4 access to the Hugh Gorge campsite 7.2 km away and I also was thinking what might happen if I had broken something to-night/tomorrow morning once my foot had cooled down etc. So a few Nurofen plus and some Panadol for extra measure and I continued to Hugh Gorge, gingerly at first until the pain killers started working. 5 minutes later I remembered I had carried water into Ghost Gum Flat for the night's dry camp, 2 litres I don't need now. So I tipped

“ Not good, sand in mouth and lots of pain in right foot

that out as it was 2kgs I needed not be carrying. No real issue with the foot now whilst walking and I can feel the effects of the codeine, again an easy walk to Hugh Gorge.

It's been great walking today meandering across this huge valley that joins the 2 ranges slowly watching the Chewings Range get closer (and bigger) all day, at the far right I believe I have picked out Brinkley Bluff. Around 3:30pm I arrived at the water tank and the start of Hugh Gorge. A nice couple had already just set-up near the tank and they commented about finding some nicer tent spots after they had already set-up about 500m into the Gorge. It was an

“ One of the nicest campsites I have had the privilege to spend a night in.

obvious choice for me so up the gorge I toddled and sure enough there was one of the nicest campsites I have had the privilege to spend a night in. Small, flat sandy raised bank just screaming "camp here". Soon after setting up, boiling water etc a few people from a guided walk start crunching through the gorge below my tent.

Gees they were a bunch of sooks complaining about walking all day (with a tiny day pack) and how far was it to their pick-up car at the end of the gorge. Get real people, you're on a walking tour, yes - you have to "walk". Not





BRINKLEY BLUFF

quite sure what they expected but I just politely smiled and pointed them down the gorge. I did laugh though at the 2 guides who loved my Hexamid tent and both rolled their eyes at a few of the clients. Luckily my foot was feeling heaps better by now and shortly after I climbed into bed to read my Kindle for a while and write some track notes. Wow so much for my rest day, I have ended up covering 31km but I feel it was a good section to do it on, pretty easy walking. I'd recommend that others do the same for this section if they are inclined to do the trail quickly. In my mind I picture now skipping the camp at Fringe Lilly Creek and continuing all the way to Brinkley Bluff tomorrow. Quickly that though is dropped as what's the rush. I'm already ahead of my 10 day plan and it will be nice to have a super short day tomorrow and enjoy Hugh Gorge at a relaxing pace.

Day 6 - 8.5 km

Last night I slept okay but needed some more pain killers about 2am to dull the ache in my foot. That *&#\$#! super moon was so bright last night, it's like sleeping in the daytime under the sun, for a 12 hour stint. Lots of dew on my tent this morning and some light condensation inside for the first time on this trip. Also the shell of my quilt was damp. Today I very much enjoyed the leisurely walk up through Hugh Gorge. It's a very pretty place with those huge red rock cliffs and ridges either side of you. Reflecting on the long day

yesterday and the shorter day today I'm positive I made the right call as I could explore the Gorge with no rush at all. Upper Hugh Gorge was great and it's one of those places that's just too hard for the mainstream tourists to get to. It was absolutely freezing in the final gap of the gorge with an icy breeze that just cut through my sweat damp shirt. The walking up the gorge is very slow going as there is no real trail, It's just free-for-all boulder hopping anywhere that looks clear and easy. I shared a nice morning tea with a couple from WA walking the track in the opposite direction. It was quite funny as the ladies plastic camp cup split when her husband poured hot water in it. I insisted that she take one of my wax paper cups as I had 2. She felt so bad that someone with a pack half the size of hers was giving her stuff. After smoko it was just the short steep stint up over a rocky saddle and then down to Fringe Lilly Creek. The waterholes at Fringe Lilly held a good amount of water but it didn't look that great to me with some oils etc floating on the top. Probably from people having a small wash in the pools. I double sterilise piller all the water there just to be safe. Basically I just spent the afternoon reading, airing out gear and having a good "chucks" wipe over to clean as much red dust off me as I could. There was also a fresh fire scar in the campsite which was disappointing to see considering it's in an area where open fires are band. A nice campfire would be

nice though and there is no shortage of fuel but hey, them's the rules. The couple camped last night at Hugh Gorge wandered in late afternoon and set-up just down from me.

This would be my first night not using the tent, just sleeping under the stars. I

picked a nice sheltered spot next to a large green Spinifex

bush and constructed a little rock wall around my head to stop the breeze hitting me all night. One thing I'm learning out here is most nights it's calm until about 2am, then a breeze/wind kicks up for a few hours. Just on actual darkness I heard rocks tumbling down the ridge above camp, quickly pumping the power to full on my H31 headlamp and sure enough about 60m up the ridge in the rocks a lone dingo is sidling around the hill. Wait a minute, (insert swear words) just on the other side of my protective Spinifex bush (which by now is looking rather small) two pairs of illuminated eyes stair back at me. *&#\$#! hell there are two dingoes 1.5m away in camp and I hadn't even heard them. Sneaky buggers eh, Oh well they were soon seen on their way with a few shouts and rocks thrown for good measure. I didn't want them back in the night while I was asleep. Mmm is this cowboy camping idea such a good one after all?

Day 7 - 16.4 km

Up early, 6:30am, to climb Razorback Ridge for sunrise. The

“ “ The view was great along the ranges in that dawn light

view was great along the ranges in that dawn light, the climb up the ridge steep but not all that bad. I had thought it would be worse than it was going off track notes and I was slightly disappointed it wasn't that hard. The trail that drops down to Spencer Gorge on the other hand would be a *&%\$#! to climb up. It's just a narrow, steep, mini gorge kind of thing with plenty of large boulders to shuffle down. There is no real option for different routes, It's just straight down and I was glad not to be climbing up it. Spencer Gorge was nice but again slow going, this particular gorge has lots of fallen timber and spiky shrubs everywhere in the mix of boulders large and small.

The walk into Birthday Waterhole is taxing in all that soft river sand but pretty all the same. I had a nice hot lunch there in the soft sand and again, another fresh fire scar was evident. Walk time from Fringe Lily was 3:15.

Now I was really getting excited as the next few features on the walk just up the trail were the main reason I was out there, Stuarts Pass and Brinkley Bluff. My father's side are "McDouall Stuarts". John McDouall Stuart led the first successful expedition to traverse the Australian mainland in the 1860's from south to north and return.

Stuarts Pass was a key point in his exploration as it enabled him to get through the McDonnell Ranges. I could be wrong but I believe I

am the first "McDouall Stuart" to go to Stuarts Pass. Even if not, it was an emotional place for me. The whole way walking from Birthday Waterhole I was starting to well up knowing what's just around the corner, Come on Nathan, get a grip, you're a man, harden up princess. Upon sighting the Stuarts Pass sign I wouldn't say I cried but I was very wet eyed and emotional with pride, I have never been to a location with such family significance as this (I need to travel more I know). Yeh yeh it's just a sign but to me it was so much more. How those early explorers endured what they did is beyond me completely. Brave men they all were, to be directly related to one such person is humbling standing in Stuarts Pass.

Anyway enough sooky stuff (for now) as I have a hill to climb directly above the pass called Brinkley Bluff. This is another of many places in the area named by John McDouall

Stuart during his explorations. Regarding Stuarts journal (which I was reading on the walk each night) the section on Brinkley Bluff reads "Friday, 13th April, 1860, Brinkley Bluff, McDonnell Range. At sunrise I ascended the bluff, which is the most difficult hill I have ever climbed; it took me an hour and a half to reach the top. It is very high, and is composed principally of igneous rock, with a little ironstone, much the same as the rang-

es down the country". Well he sure wasn't wrong about the climb, I'm not sure on his route but if he went straight up the bluff from the pass that must have been very difficult. The Larapinta Trail winds its way around the hill before dropping into a steep gully then straight up for the last section, I know I was fairly well puffed out when I reached the top. It was very warm too on all the rock which didn't help.

Once at the top the 360° views just smack you straight in the face, literally. One minute your puffing away on the steep climb, the next you just pop straight out on the top. Tonight I would also cowboy camp with no tent. I was fortunate enough to have great phone service again

“ At the top the 360° views just smack you straight in the face

and made a few phone calls to friends and

family to report in where I was and how I was travelling. Sneakily I also called Tiger Airways and moved my flight home a day early to surprise Katrina as it was at this point I knew I would finish on my planned date and didn't require the "extra" day in Alice Springs. At the rock cairn marking the top of Brinkley Bluff there is a kind of visitors book marked "Galactic Mail". So I thought I better write a fitting entry to my visit. It read "Today I, Nathan John McDouall Stuart stand atop the hill named 153 years ago "Brinkley Bluff" by my great grand uncle John McDouall Stuart. It is an amazing feeling to be here and the views are epic". Kind of corny I know but I was approached by the

“ I wouldn't say I cried but I was very wet eyed and emotional with pride

walking club camped up there questioning my claim with interest in the history of it. No one would get sick of spending time in a place like this, with these views. For me camping on Brinkley Bluff would be the biggest highlight of the trip. Stupidly a walking club made a bonfire that night, at least I know now who it was leaving fire scars along the trail. Very irresponsible of them and I would expect more from an organised club walk.

Day 8 - 24.1 km

Last night around 2am the winds really kicked up. I was sheltered between the bushes but still it was very gusty, I did get some decent sleep but it was scattered sleep once the winds blew up. The dawn and sunrise views were just as spectacular as the sunset the day before. I ate my breakfast before first light then just spent the next hour watching things illuminate with the vast orange glow. I also took some great photos from the western end of the bluff down over Stuart Pass and just like Mt Sonder there was a perfect pyramid silhouette of Brinkley Bluff in the valley. I shouldn't

snicker but some of the campers up right next to the rock cairn in the exposed sites had very flat tents in the morning, collapsed poles etc. It's a slightly amusing sight to see people emerge still drowsy from a miserable night amongst a pile of nylon and tent poles. Thanks to my friends who made me aware of the sheltered sites just down the ridge.

I was mostly packed up anyway so once the dawn light was fully diminished and the sun was up proper I donned the pack and tot-

tled down the 10 km to Standley Chasm in just over 2 hours. Once there I raided my food drop and ordered from the kiosk the most deciduous piece of lemon pie complete with 2 huge scoops of vanilla ice-cream, washed down with a tub of mango ice-cream. Yeh okay I lashed out, give me a break, this was real "fresh" food and I always crave fresh dairy on a bushwalk. The walk along to the actual Standley Chasm is a real tourist trap complete with electrically pumped flowing stream, but it looks nice and the masses would just think it's

a pretty place. Just before the chasm along looms the Larapinta marker pointing straight up the rocky hillside to what I could only relate to as the "stairway to doom". After all that junk food in the kiosk it was a hard slog up and down those first few ridges that's for sure. It is scenic though and so is the whole walk to Jay Creek. It took me 3hours 20mins to Jay Creek but I was stuffed when I arrived.

Today sure had been tougher than expected and mostly due to the later section between Standley and Jay Creek. At the hard shelter I finally caught up with Bellie (The guy who's boot lost the sole at Finke River) He had managed to get back into town, get new boots and return to the trail at Ellery Creek the next day. He missed about 75km of the trail but good on him as it was a massive effort to return so quickly. Bellie did have some epic blisters though from his replacement boots. I'd slowly caught him over the past 3 days. It was nice to spend the evening in camp sharing stories with a "known" person for once other than being alone.

“Yeh okay lashed out, give me a break, this was real "fresh" food



Day 9 - 34.8 km

Best night sleep yet in the hard shelter, I was told the wind kicked up a storm around 2am (as usual) but I haven't heard a thing. Slept solid from 7:30pm to 6:30am. That's something this new father hasn't done in oh, I guess 10 months now..... I left Jay Creek at 7:15am and the walk to Mulga camp (arrived 9am) was okay but I knew all the bigger elevated mountain scenic stuff was behind me so that's fine. Quickly filled up on H2O and I continued on to Simpsons Gap arriving right on 12 midday. I had a nice relaxing lunch there for about an hour, chatted to some nice travellers interested in what this dirty, smelly backpack carrying person might be up to.

“...interested in what this dirty, smelly backpack carrying person might be up to

My plan was to spend the night here at Simpsons Gap but I was feeling fine and it was only early. So again I continued onto Wallaby Gap for the night, arriving at 3pm. I chatted to Katrina most of the way into Wallaby Gap on the phone, Nice to have decent phone service and the time for a decent run down on home life while I've been away.

I'm really starting to look forward to surprising my girls on Wednesday with my day earlier arrival. Today has been easy walking all day, well easy compared to the last 8 days. It's looking like rain again tonight and I just put my ground sheet down under the little roofed sitting shelter there. Three nice VIC teachers wandered into camp around 4pm and this was night 1 for their walk in the opposite direction. I think they thought me mad for walking this track in the speed I have but I can live with that. I'm telling them I think it will rain but they assure me whilst setting up under the stars it's not forecast to rain for another 2 days.

Day 10 - 13.5 km

Well it did rain last night around 1am, so the VIC teachers shuffled under the small roofed sitting area keeping me awake for about half an hour, I hope they didn't get too much wet gear on night 1 of their walk. They surprisingly stayed up playing some type of game until about 10:30pm (That's late for Larapinta walkers), I can't say they would have been impressed with me getting up at 6am and waking

them all up whilst I packed up. Oh well, no hard feelings guys but I did suggest it could rain.

I walked out of camp under headlight straight up to Euro Ridge above Wallaby Gap for my last sunrise. It was fantastic with scattered clouds and all the lights could be clearly seen in Alice Springs. It was nice and fresh though in the early morning breeze. Plenty more pictures and then it was just the walk straight into town, right?.....Wrong. For some reason (probably fair) the walk kind of loops around Alice Springs and finishes at the Telegraph Station. No big deal but there were plenty of little hills and it's frustrating to be so close to town and not the end of the walk. But then end did arrive soon enough. At 10:00am on my 10th day walking I wandered into the last trailhead at the Telegraph station. All done, all finished, all completed.

Would / will I do it again, you betcha. This time in the opposite direction, probably from Standley Chasm to Mt Sonder.

Nathan Stuart (aka Forest) is married with 1 child, living in the NSW Hunter Valley. He enjoys bushwalking, trail running, rogaining & hunting. Nathan really enjoys bushwalking because it gives him the chance to explore new places he hasn't been before. When you chat with Nathan you will see that he is a bit of a gear junkie and likes the latest / lightest equipment so he can move fast and light.



HISTORY OF BUSHWALK AUSTRALIA

text & photos by Nik Sands (Son of a Beach)



During the summer of 2007 a couple of keen fly fisher friends asked me if I'd like to join them on a walk to 'The Blue Peaks' in Tasmania's central highlands. I immediately replied in the affirmative, being keen to take up any opportunity for a bushwalk (one of the first topics on the forums is about this walk: <http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=42&t=7>). However, I was a little put out that I'd never even heard of The Blue Peaks, and had no idea what kind of bushwalk it would be. I searched for information on the internet and the only information that I could find was the discussion by my fishing mates on a fly fishing forum.

So I then changed my internet searching to look for bushwalking forums so I could post questions about the proposed walk. I found none. At all. I was quite surprised. If there were any out there, they were simply too difficult to find.

As an IT professional, I thought it would be fairly easy to establish a site to fill this void - at least technically. So I downloaded the open source 'phpBB' forums software installed it on my own web site, became familiar with how to set up a forums site, and then created a custom theme to set the new forums apart visually from other sites.

At that time, my idea was merely for a Tasmanian bushwalking forum and therefore I decided to name the site

'Bushwalk Tasmania' and registered the domain name, 'bushwalk-tasmania.com' ('bushwalktasmania.com' was already owned by a gentleman in Hobart who was not currently using it, but was also not interested in parting with it).

On the 1st of March, 2007, I re-installed the software from scratch on the new website, configured it with the new name and DNS and the site was born.

That was the easy part.

The next challenge was to get people to join up to a site that was clearly new and had very little content. How do you get people to join a forum with virtually no content? How do you get content on to such a site without any members to write it? Which came first, the chicken or the egg? I attempted to recruit a few friends to join up and encouraged them to start posting interesting bushwalking-related information there. But I didn't have a lot of bushwalking friends and they didn't have a lot of time to devote to the cause and for the first 10 days most of the topics consisted of just me talking to myself.

Then a link to 'Bushwalk Tasmania' was posted to the fly fishing forum by one of my friends and about 20 members signed up over the next few days. This was enough to create a critical mass for genuine discussion, and the site began to grow steadily from that time on.

When the site was first established, the logo was a photo

of the bridge over the Mersey River near Lees Paddocks with my wife holding our 4 month old baby. After several months, the members suggested that we should have a proper logo. We held a competition in which we received many entries for a new site logo. The winning entry, which is still the basis for the current boot-prints logo, was submitted by 'Speculator' and was a good match for the boot-prints rank icons that the site was already using.

The site now had its own identity, and a community of members who were providing useful information to each other and who's questions were getting great answers from knowledgeable and experienced bushwalkers.

In fact within only 6 months of the site first going live, the DNS name 'bushwalkaustralia.com' was registered and redirected to the site, due to the large number of 'mainland' Australians using the site. The site was modified in such a way that when people logged into the site using that new URL, it would have the title 'Bushwalk Australia' instead of 'Bushwalk Tasmania'. I had tried to buy the DNS name, 'bushwalk.com' instead, but the owner at that time said that he would only consider offers over US\$20,000 which was something I couldn't even vaguely consider.

On the 10th of March, 2008, the site had its 1st anniversary bushwalk on which a small



number of members walked into Lees Paddocks for a couple of nights, visiting Lees Hut, Wadleys Hut and Ladder Falls while we were there. Anniversary walks in subsequent years have varied greatly in numbers of attendees, and included locations such as Lady Lake (including 40 Lakes Peak), Fergies Paddock (including Mtns Little Hugel and Rufus), Silver Lake (including Pine River) and the Arm River track into Oakleigh View (Pelion) Hut. These walks have always been a great time to meet up with people who would otherwise be faceless (and 'nameless?') names on the forum, and it has been great getting to know some of the members that way and to bushwalk with them.

Site member, 'Joe' started up what it now a very popular series of photo competitions on the site in 2008 as a simple monthly poll. It was later turned into an automated photo competitions system with four different competitions running each month, as well as annual photo-of-the-year-competitions, including a back-dated 2007 photo-of-the-year competition to make sure we covered every year since the forums had been running.

As time went on, it was becoming clear that the Tasmanians on the site would soon be outnumbered and that the focus on Tasmania may have to change to a more nation-wide outlook in order to suit the majority of the members. In October 2009, the number of 'mainlanders' outnumbered the Tasmanians in

the members list and in terms of active users were far more dominant. When I realised that this was going to happen, I again made enquiries into purchasing the DNS name 'bushwalk.com'. This time the owner was quite agreeable to selling at a price far less than the US\$20,000 that had been suggested earlier.

So in November, 2009, the old URLs were redirected to <http://bushwalk.com> and the 'Bushwalk Tasmania' site name was dropped in favour of 'Bushwalk Australia'. In some ways this was a bit of a sad moment, because the site had outgrown the purpose and community for which it was originally intended, but I was hopeful that it could continue to serve all members well, and to serve the majority of members better than before.

Would you believe that I read every single post to the site for the first 4 years? After that it became impossible to keep up and I relaxed my monitoring of the site somewhat.

Even after reducing the extent to which I was monitoring posts to the site, I realised that my passion for running 'Bushwalk Australia' was dwindling and that I was not giving it the attention it deserved. I was also finding that I simply couldn't devote the time to it that I should do, due to changes in the nature of my job and commitments to other projects. I wanted to make sure that the community that used the site would continue to be

well served and I knew that it was time to find somebody else to take on the job. After discussions with a few interested parties over a long period of time, I eventually came to an agreement with Matt from the 'Wildwalks' site to take over 'Bushwalk Australia'. The site officially changed hands in mid-2012 and a few months later was running on his computers.

My involvement has gradually decreased since then and these days I'm now very much enjoying browsing the site as a 'normal' member. I am very grateful to the members of the site who have posted such a plethora of useful bushwalking information. It is the members who have made the site what it is today. Thanks too to the moderators over the years, from 'wotrack?' (the first moderator) and 'tasadam' (the first to actually do any moderating and still the most active) and to the others. Their job is a very difficult one and I commend them on doing it so well over the last 6 years and for putting up with me for that long!



OUR ADVENTURER

Peaks bagging the 26 Australian peaks over 2000m

How did I end up here? I knew exactly where I was, but where did the trail go? Instead of a small track I was climbing up a hill through dense overgrown bush. I was trying to average 4.5 - 5 kph, but now I was lucky to be doing 2kph. I took another few steps, ducked under a low tree branch, stopped to catch my breath then dragged my feet out of undergrowth that clung to me like zombies trying to pull me down into hell. All that effort and I had just climbed only a few metres. Valentines Hut was only just over this ridge. I knew it would be a place to reevaluate, look at my progress and update the support crew who were now preparing to meet me on the main range which was still a long way off. But I was going to be late. Very late.

The A2K Peaks

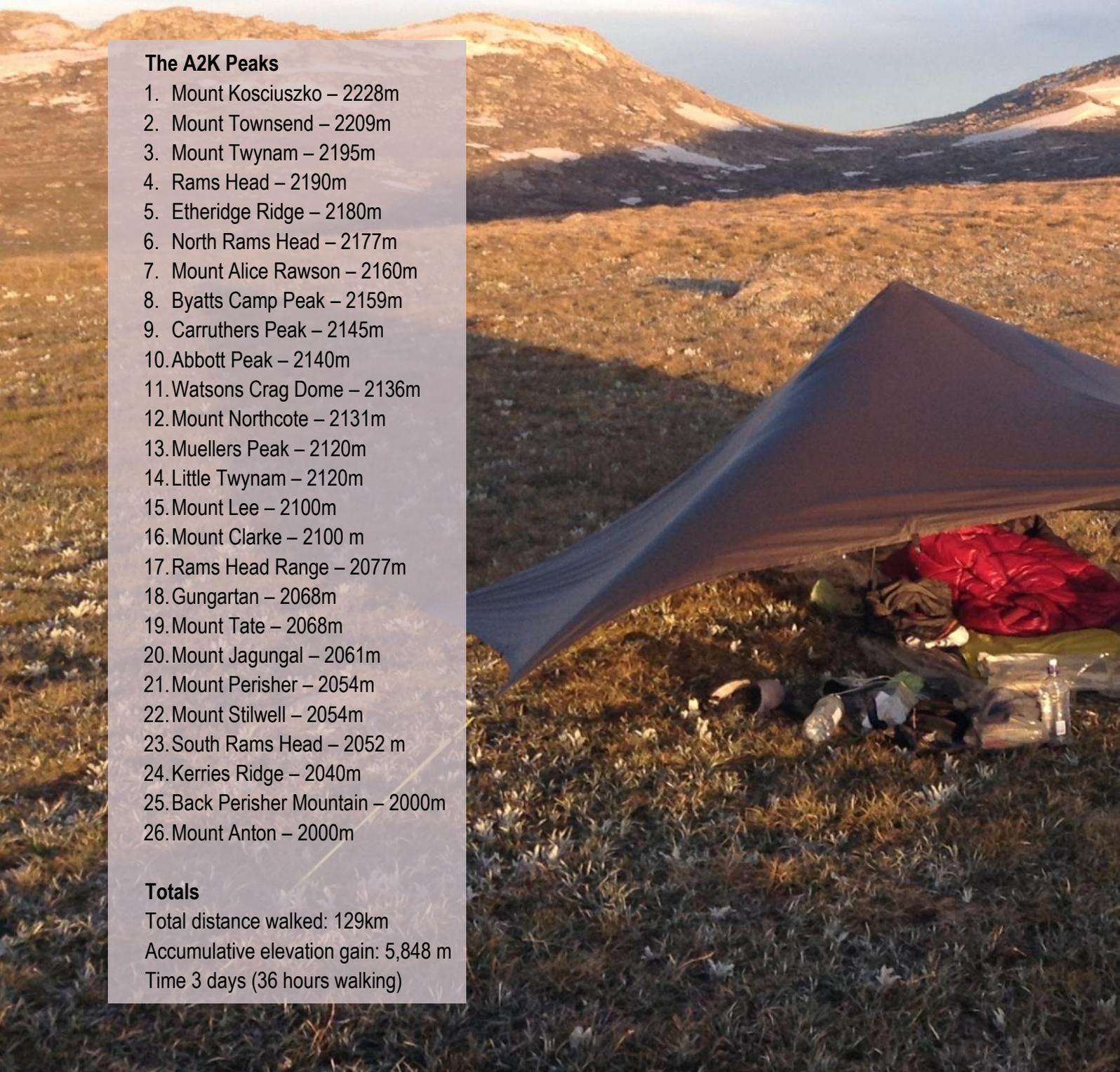
1. Mount Kosciuszko – 2228m
2. Mount Townsend – 2209m
3. Mount Twynam – 2195m
4. Rams Head – 2190m
5. Etheridge Ridge – 2180m
6. North Rams Head – 2177m
7. Mount Alice Rawson – 2160m
8. Byatts Camp Peak – 2159m
9. Carruthers Peak – 2145m
10. Abbott Peak – 2140m
11. Watsons Crag Dome – 2136m
12. Mount Northcote – 2131m
13. Muellers Peak – 2120m
14. Little Twynam – 2120m
15. Mount Lee – 2100m
16. Mount Clarke – 2100 m
17. Rams Head Range – 2077m
18. Gungartan – 2068m
19. Mount Tate – 2068m
20. Mount Jagungal – 2061m
21. Mount Perisher – 2054m
22. Mount Stilwell – 2054m
23. South Rams Head – 2052 m
24. Kerries Ridge – 2040m
25. Back Perisher Mountain – 2000m
26. Mount Anton – 2000m

Totals

Total distance walked: 129km

Accumulative elevation gain: 5,848 m

Time 3 days (36 hours walking)



A2K

text & photos by **Geoff Mallinson (aka Geoffmallo)**

At Valentines River just below the hut I pulled out my cheat sheet, sat on a rock and pulled out my fuel fudge, the recipe comes with the warning "not for recreational eating". I didn't need to worry about putting on weight this trip. I had started in the morning from Derskos Hut to the north climbing the first of my 26 peaks, Mt Jagungal at 2065m. This is the most northerly and remote of all the peaks I was attempting to climb in one go over 2000m (A2K), and one of my favourites.

I came up with the idea of peak bagging all of Australia's peaks over 2000m in one go, on foot, when I was hiking with some friends trying to 'bag' a few peaks and we were heading up to Rams Head Range (a nondescript bump somewhere between Mt Stilwell above Charlotte Pass and Thredbo). Many have climbed the top 10 with car shuffles over a weekend, but somehow there was something missing, those exciting remote pieces in between. So I set out some simple rules.

- All peaks over 2000m (Using the standard peak bagging rules of prominence - 60m)
- All on foot (no cars or mountain bikes to help)

- In one go. I didn't want to section hike, or slowly tick off this list.
- Ideally I wanted to do this in 24 hours

After the rules I spent hours looking at maps, Google Earth and scraping anything I could off Bushwalk.com and other sites. I needed to work out some key information, how far was it, and how much accumulative elevation gain was it. Matt spun the Wildwalks engine into gear and we came up with some numbers.

I continued hiking, Kerrie's Ridge was next on my list, a long fire trail walk from Valentines, with a nice bit of off track up to the summit. Here was my chance to make up some time due to the overgrown track up to Valentines. I put my foot down and pounded along to Schlink Pass.

The pain in my right foot started to develop on the way to Schlink. As I pulled on a thermal top I took some pain relief. The pain continued to grow and was beginning to severely affect my walking. I summited Kerries Ridge and started towards Gungartan. But my foot pain was too much. So I sent a SPOT message and managed to get some phone coverage. I was pulling out at the

power station. Christie and Sann met me with beer and pizza. I felt disappointed. I'd made so much of this and I had failed.

After my first attempt I was desperate to try again. I think I was so desperate because I kept wondering if I could have kept going on the first time. Everything was perfect then - except a swollen injured foot.

So I threw out the idea of doing it non-stop in 24 hours. Instead I was going to fast pack. I'd sleep at night putting a little less strain on my slowly healing foot. I'd wear some different footwear. I'd carry a little more gear including a tarp and a sleeping bag. Winter was coming fast but perhaps I'd have just one more chance before the snow arrived.

The weather forecast gave me hope I'd get a couple of days before a cold front was coming in. I armed myself with a heavier shell and down jacket and I set off from Cesjacks Hut, the closest staging point to Jagungal.

After climbing Mt Jagungal early in the morning I set about the road bash south again. This time I avoided heading up near Valentines Falls and instead took the much longer fire road route. At Valentines Hut the sun was

shining and I felt good. I sent out a SPOT message "all good heading to Twynam" to Christie who had dropped me off. About then further south, Christie was beginning to be hit by the storm front coming through early.

Still hoping to beat the weather I continued up Kerries Ridge for peak number two, only 24 mountains to go. The temperature was dropping fast. I stopped to put on my beanie, mitts and jacket before looking over to what had been the summit of Mt Gungartan. It had disappeared beneath a heavy and dark cloud. As the weather worsened and realising I still had a lot of ground to cover up high, I decided to head to Whites River Hut for the night. I didn't want to make a decision too quickly to pull out again like last time, somehow I still felt cheated about my decision. Logically I had made the right decision, but....

I let everyone know my plans as snow began falling at Whites. I was going to make a decision in the morning whether to continue on. Meanwhile Christie was copping a beating near Little Twynam. The morning brought more snow and high winds. I didn't have snow shoes or skis with me. It was time to retire a second time. I managed to get a weak phone signal and called my wife to bounce the idea off another head. Saying something out loud to someone makes it more real, and can help me process the idea. I was making the right decision. A2k would have to wait for spring or I'd

need snowshoes for a winter attempt.

Winter was spent skiing and allowing my feet to heal but as the days got longer in September my mind turned back to the mountains. What had I learned? Firstly I think walking solo for a long time was a good opportunity to think, but I needed something else to focus on too. Audio books were my solution. They'd make the long days walking fly by. I'd learned to listen to my body a bit more. I also decided that section hiking A2K would be better than not climbing all the peaks, so a route change was on the cards. If I started on Back Perisher and walked for a day I'd at least tick off a bunch more peaks. I'd also put the long fire trail at the end, so if injury was to occur again I'd be near completion. Mentally I was starting afresh. My footwear choice changed yet again. I needed something with better plating protection for the fire trails but still light and flexible, a set of Innov-8 212s fit the bill. I wanted a simple trip this time. No fanfare, no support. Just a lift to the start and a ride from the end.

Scarce in time I hatched a crazy plan. I had only a few days I could get off work and I had a social engagement on Saturday night which went late. Being far less than ideal I left at midnight with Christie driving me down to Perisher while I caught some sleep in the car. We headed up Perisher Valley as the sun rose, perfect timing. I felt I had a better

idea this time of where I'd be when. Within the first 15 minutes I had two mountains down, Back Perisher and Mt Perisher. I headed down the ski slopes and along the road to Charlotte Pass. I still needed to do this on foot according to my rules. I passed Christie trying to catch up on sleep on a picnic bench and then I headed to Mt Stilwell. Now let the fun begin, off trail across the ridge to The Rams Heads via Rams Head Range. This is truly what I wanted A2k to be about. The sun was out and I was walking above tree line making good ground. I passed the top of Thredbo feeling glad to be enjoying more than just a Kosciuszko lookout or Summit Walk, this was an adventure into places I hadn't been.

South Rams Head was the furthest south I needed to go. I dumped my pack on a prominent place on a boulder, grabbed some essentials like my iPod (I was deep into my book by this stage), nav gear and SPOT (I needed to check in at every peak). Matt McClelland was providing interpretation of my SPOT locations on my Facebook feed, keeping my friends and family in the loop. South Rams Head was an absolutely glorious place, I could spend quite some time exploring here.

The day was getting late now, and I was in very familiar territory having just 'climbed' Australia's highest mountain. There were still a lot of snow drifts around, making getting water easy. Camp was

made after Kosi. Day one was down. The weather great, clear and stable.

The second day began with a new audio book. Today I was going to summit a lot more peaks including one of the most interesting and the second highest, Mt Townsend. I'd complete the main range up to Tate and hopefully get to Whites River Hut. I used the main range track as much as possible, ducking off to the side to pick up some summits along the way. It's striking how different the peaks can be from the round grassy smooth summit of Clarkes to the ragged granite of Townsend.

From Twynam (third highest) north was new off track territory for me. I choose to go around the East side of Twynam picking up Little T (that's Little Twynam - I've been up this little gem so many times I feel like I'm on a first name basis with it). I found a less than ideal route and lost more altitude than I had intended. I found myself crossing what seemed like moraines, which saw my average speed dropping.

The afternoon passed by with some great walking. I ran into a school group doing a D of E walk near Tate. I made a mental note I need to come back here and explore that east side of Tate, it looks impressive. After crossing Stephen-Consett Pass, walking became a bit more of a drag. It kept going and going. Finally I arrived at a bustling Whites River Hut with more schools groups. So

far everything had gone to plan. I'd been exactly where and when I'd expected to be everywhere. The distances were closer to what we thought they should be after refining our process.

If I managed to crawl up Gungartan tomorrow then I would have climbed all the A2K peaks. If I add Kerries Ridge and Jagungal to the list then I would have accomplished what I set out to do.

The morning began with the usual gear chat about how little I was carrying. No stove, cold food was fine for this. I have a tarp, sleeping bag, mat, vapour barrier, light weight shell, nav gear including maps, GPS and compass and a little food. All this totalled to less than 6kgs.

The sky had changed colour, it was darker this morning. I was praying that we wouldn't get any electrical activity. I've been on Mueller Pass during a lightening storm, it was frightening, I wasn't about to head up into that again. Fortunately some very light rain was all I had to contend with. I took a longer round about way up Gungartan after feeling a little too familiar with the area. Note to self: pay more attention to nav, you know how to do it, don't be lazy.

Kerries Ridge quickly passed and I was at Valentines Hut in conditions similar to what I had experienced before winter. I was tempted to head down next to the falls, but decided to be conservative and use the fire trail. There were still dark clouds to the

west threatening to dampen my day.

The slog along the fire trail to the west of Jagungal went reasonably fast. I knew this terrain pretty well now. I dropped my pack at the turn off, grabbed a few items and ran up the mountain. A few drops landed on me as the skies became dark with clouds. There was little rain. I did a little song and dance on the summit. This was the 26th mountain over 2000m I'd hiked in one go. I'd finally done it. I hastily sent a SPOT message letting the world know, which later I discovered was never sent. Note to self: the SPOT won't send when clipped into your belt and not facing the sky.

I walked back to Round Mountain car park in what seemed like the longest 22km ever. I was tired and the adrenaline had worn off. It was dark. Christie was there waiting for me. No beer or pizza this time, but she did have a gluten free wrap.

Next challenge? Well there's still the 24 hour version, and a winter option on skis. Perhaps both together?



9 IMPROVEMENTS @



Most of the activity on bushwalk.com is from you kind folk writing great posts and sharing with each other. Each month we write more than 4,000 posts and share them with over 30,000 unique visitors. To keep all these people happy we serve them more than four million pages each year. On the back end there is a small team of volunteer moderators who spend their time helping solve issues and keep things humming along well. A big thanks to them especially Tasadam and Nuts who put in a huge amount of their time.

There are nine main changes, tweaks and other new stuff that we have implemented over the past six months. I hope they all help improve the community for you.

1) Mobile Skin

I installed the new program in May that gave us a nice mobile skin for the forum. I hope you are happy with the result, I find it fast and easy to use. If you don't like it there is a little button at the bottom of the page to switch back to the normal desktop version. We chatted about some of the issues, that are now fixed, in the [Mobile Skin](#) forum. I have placed an ad at the bottom of the page for people who are not logged in -- so make sure you log in to get the ad free version. Some people like using the tap-a-talk app to access the forum, I continue to maintain that

feature on the website.

2) Book store

The [Shop link](#) at the top right of the website once linked to a store where you could buy a bushwalk.com t-shirt, hat or mug. It now opens a bushwalking book shop. This is still very new and I am still trying to grow the stock of books. There are traditional paper based books and also a few PDF books for instant download. Check it out and let me know how it can be improved. You can still get your bushwalk.com t-shirts, hat or mug by following the link in the store. Hope it is helpful.

3) Server stability and speed

At the beginning of September I moved bushwalk.com to a new computer in Australia (from the USA) -- gee wiz, it is now heaps faster. A few months before this, the computer that the website ran on had a catastrophic hardware failure (I suspect that is IT talk for 'someone spilt a can of coke on it' :). We had the site up and running again in an hour or so, but since then there has been a huge number of network issue and DOS attacks that have really slowed the server, caused it to crash and go offline a lot. We chatted about the issue in the [Site goes down for hours](#) thread. With the new server build in Australia - it looks like we can say goodbye to these issues. The migration caused a few new

issues, we temporarily lost some images but the main issue was that people stopped receiving notifications when new posts were made - sorry for the hassle.

4) Spam blocking

One of the many jobs the moderators do is keep the website spam free. We manually read and approve the first post of all new members to ensure they are not someone trying to sell something dodgy. We tried using a few different spam filters but discovered that spammers quickly found their way around them. This meant the moderators would wake up each morning to a large list of spam to remove - it was frustrating to say the least. So we coded a new custom spammer detection system and the problem is now mostly gone. The new system blocks over 8000 attempts of spammers trying to register new accounts each month - that is more than 250 attempts a day. We now only need to manually remove about one spammer a week.

5) New sub forums

As people share in the forum the threads and ideas grow. Once there are enough people interested in a specific topic we will create a new sub forum. In the past few months we have created one specifically for walking in [New Zealand](#) and another for [Ultralight backpacking](#). These have proven

popular and its great to see the new discussions. A special thanks to the the Robert H, Tasadam and Nuts who did a lot of work to migrate the NZ topics from the general overseas forum. Oops I almost forgot - a new [BWA eMag](#) forum to discuss this magazine and ideas to help make it better.

6) Friendliness

Not all the work is technical. When Nik established bushwalk.com he had the foresight to establish a great set of rules. The first rule means that we need to be friendly, polite and clean in all our interaction on the website. This is not some fluffy dream but central requirement to build a healthy community. If people breach this rule then it usually leads to conversations closing down and people leaving. Most of the time, posts on the website are great but occasionally people report posts that clearly breach this important rule. As moderators we take the reports seriously and try to address them as quickly as possible. Sometimes it is careless typing and sometimes it is deliberate bullying. We don't discuss the outcomes of these moderations publically but some people have recently faced long bans. We don't like banning members - it is so much better when we all just play nice. I would like to encourage everyone to use the preview button and re-read their posts to ensure they are friendly before you hit that submit button.

7) Edit Button

It is a great thing when people self moderate and clean up their own comments. But a few people have left nasty posts then changed them in a time that suggested they were trying to bully then avoid moderation. As a result I limited the ability to edit to within 5 minutes of the original post. A bunch of people kindly let me know in the [Edit button disappearance](#) thread that more time is required to be able edit posts. It took longer than I hoped but I organised for a new tool that now stores the history of all posts. With this in place we could return to the old system of allowing edits of posts up to 30 days from the original post. With edit history now stored we can take moderation action if it is ever needed -- but lets hope it is not needed.

8) Business in our community

A few people have asked about the rules around people from companies joining our forum. People from different outdoor companies are more than welcome to join our online community. We do check usernames when people register and if it is a familiar company name then we ensure that the person registering is from that company. I think using the company name as a username is a helpful way to let other members quickly spot and understand the members background. People are also required to complete their 'Associated Organisations' field on their [profile page](#) to improve

transparency. Somebody from 'rain-coats-are-us' is encouraged to respond to members questions or comments in general posts. If they want to start a new post to plug a product there is a [Specials, Discounts, Adverts](#) forum set aside for that.

9) Bugs

From time to time bits break or broken things become obvious. Search engine: A bug with the search engine on the forum was reported. The search engine was returning very weird or empty search results. For example "first aid kit" found nothing. So I switched to a new search algorithm and built a new index which seems to be working well and even faster. Special thanks to [GPSGuided](#) and [icefest](#) for reporting and helping solve the issue

Tap-a-talk: Since upgrading to a new version of the tap-a-talk server software we have lost the ability to send push notifications to your device. The new code needs greater integration to send these notifications and I am trying to find a better way so as not to cause issues with future upgrades. Tap-a-talk is also changing their platform to have more advertising, we will have no control over that. Sorry to [Picaro](#) that I have not solved this one yet.

Have other issues, suggestions or comments? Please let me know in the [Forum & Site](#) forum.

Matt :)

HOW TO SAVE THE REAL TREE HUGGERS?

by Dr Gráinne Cleary

Koalas are a much loved Australian icon. Who didn't have a Koala teddy bear when they were growing up? An undeniable part of Koalas' appeal is the fact that they look like living teddy bears! This combined with their unique behaviour has contributed to the Koala playing a large role as an overseas ambassador. In fact, they have become a major tourist pull for Australia, bringing in over 2.4 billion dollars year. The world's love affair with Koalas goes back a fair while, with the first official record of a Koala being purchased by a zoo dating back to 1880.



A sad history

Could you imagine an Australia without the Koala? In fact, we nearly faced this reality due to the fur trade that saw millions of Koalas slaughtered for their fur. By the early 1930s, Koalas had been hunted so indiscriminately that they had disappeared from many of their natural habitats. The resulting storm of public outrage at the loss was eventually responsible for a cessation of Koala hunting. However, by the time this happened several million had been killed for their fur. While hunting is no longer an issue, Koalas still face a range of threats, include disease, dog attacks, vehicle strikes and clearing of native vegetation for urban and agricultural development. Koalas tend to live in close proximity to human settlements and consequently fall prey to these and many other human induced threats.

If humans are so dangerous, why do Koalas live so close to us? The reason for this is simple: Koalas select eucalypts growing on fertile soils, because these plants produce leaves with higher level of nutrients relative to plant defence mechanisms such as tannin. Since National Parks and State Forests are typically on land deemed un-farmable due to low soil quality and other factors, Koala populations now are dependent upon Eucalyptus trees found on agricultural land.

A worrying future

A more recent threat to Koalas is increasing hot weather and

drought due to climate change. In 2009, the IUNC Red List of Threatened Species listed the Koalas as a species that “has very limited capability to adapt to rapid human-induced climate change, making them very vulnerable to its negative impacts”. This means as our climate grows hotter and dryer, Koalas are at risk of becoming one of Australia’s first *climate change refugee species*. *73% of eucalypt species will become threatened as temperatures continue to rise, meaning important feeding trees will be lost. Climate change will also increase CO₂ levels in Eucalyptus trees, reducing the quality of the leaves as a food source. This will result in seriously stressed Koala populations. Stressed Koala populations suffer increased disease and death. We have already seen this in the 2009 New South Wales and Victoria bush fires where many Koalas died.*

The power of Citizen Scientists: A new hope?

In order to protect the Koala we must reinvigorate their habitat. But where *is their habitat? And where should it be?*

If we can get enough Citizen Scientists involved in the Great Koala Count to record where Koalas are (and indeed where they are not), we can then identify and protect populations on fertile sites. In addition, we will work with our partners and landowners to dedicate additional fertile sites as part of their conservation estates. We can then rehabilitate those sites with an appropriate mix of

trees species and genotype. However, before we can do this we need help from the public to record where they see Koalas and where they don’t.

So what is Citizen Science and how will it help Koalas?

First of all, Citizen Science is volunteer based research where members of the public collect data over a broad geographic area for a predetermined time. The studies are usually repeated annually allowing for data collection over several years. We want to use Citizen Science to empower people to actively contribute to Koala conservation. By taking part in “The Great Koala Count”, running from the 7th to the 17th of November 2013, you can make *your research count!*

During the Count, we are asking our Citizen Scientists to record the location of any Koalas they find and answer a few observational questions about the Koala, its habitat and threats. The questions are specifically chosen for scientific analysis, and when we get the numbers in volume, we’ll be able to get some pretty important (and unprecedented) Koala information, which will be vital for conservation efforts. 2013 is year one! We’re running the Count indefinitely into the future, which will help tell us how our Koalas are doing over time. For example, how have they reacted to threats identified in the Count, or how is are they utilising new tree plantations? In order to assess the effectiveness of our conservation strategies, this time

based element is essential.

Ok, so where do I sign up?

To become a Citizen Scientist, simply register as a member on our online data portal (www.koalacount.org.au). Once you have done that, you can start to record your sightings immediately online. Easy! But we wanted to make it make it even easier for you! So we made Smartphone App, 'BioTag' to collect data on Koalas you may see during the 10 days of the Count. BioTag works on all Apple and Android phones, using the GPS technology to locate where the Koalas are. Simply snap a photo, answer a few multiple

choice questions and hit upload.

Then what?

Once we have all the data, we're going to share it... with **EVERYBODY!** We will analyse the data collected and publish a report following the Great Koala Count. This report will be freely available to all our Citizen Scientists and serve as an important resource for Koala conservation. In addition we will make all the raw data available to the world, via our data portal. You will be able to see, plotted on satellite maps, not just your own sightings, but the entire survey's data set. We will also provide some online tools for

you to play with the data and understand your own local population of Koalas.

By participating in the Great Koala Count, you will help build a more detailed picture of Koalas and their habitat use, providing an invaluable resource for planning future Koala conservation projects. This means Citizen Scientists can play a serious role in the conservation of Koalas. Remember, the power of this initiative lies with the people who contribute.

Dr Gráinne Cleary
Wildlife Ecologist
National Parks Association NSW

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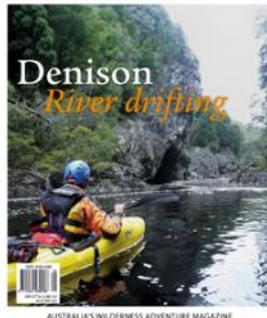
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3 AUSTRALIAN WALKING MAGAZINES

In Australia we have a rich history of exploration and sharing adventures. For thousands of years traditional owners have shared their songlines. More recently we have shared stories through print, video and the web. Many clubs produce a journal to record and share their adventures. And of course a few thousand people each day use bushwalk.com to share their journeys, skill and knowledge.

We have the privilege of standing on the shoulders of those who paved the way. People who protected these wild places and people who have written about them since. In Australia we have three large circulation magazines that serve the bushwalking community. Here is a quick summary of their latest publications as provided by the editors.

Wild 137



Wild... Australia's wilderness adventure magazine

Inside the September/October issue:

- Kayaking south-west Tasmania
- Hitting the Larapinta Trail
- Snowshoeing in the Yukon
- Canopy climbing
- Kangaroo Island track notes
- WA's wildflowers

Coming soon: The NZ Issue

Price: \$47.95 for one-year, **Subscribe:** <http://www.wild.com.au/subscribe>

Happy camping – the ultimate overnight gear list



Great Walks

The Great Walks Oct-Nov 2013 issue features post-winter walks such as the Snowy Mountains, Bruny Island, the Great North Walk and the Cape to Cape walk in Margaret River. Overseas we take on the world's most famous pilgrim walk, the Camino de Santiago then head to Canada for some wilderness adventures. The magazine also showcases 30 new outdoor products for 2014 and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay's grandson Tashi Tenzing talks about life and death above 8,000m.

Price: \$55.00 for 7 issues, **Subscribe:** <http://www.greatwalks.com.au/>



AG Outdoor

It's been 30 years since Tasmania's Franklin River was saved from being dammed. In our Sept-Oct 2013 issue, AG Outdoor celebrates this milestone by tackling the nine-day rafting trip down the Franklin with World Expeditions. Also: Spain's fantastic Camino Trail is a hugely popular walking destination but AGO Senior Contributor, Andrew Bain, takes a different approach and cycles this route. We also explore one of Australasia's most iconic outdoor adventure regions – New Zealand's Fiordland – and follow three outdoor athletes' daring attempt to climb each of the highest peaks in every Australian state and territory.

Price: \$42.00 for 6 issues, **Subscribe:** <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/outdoor/>

PHOTO GALLERY



Sunrise from the top of Ossa - Pity all those down in the valley!

MJ Doran

BWA photo Competition

2008 - Why I Walk

BWA Photo Competition

Photography has been a key motivator for many bushwalkers over the decades. Even as cameras have become cheaper, lighter and smarter it is still the artist behind the lens that makes any image sing. Capturing a stunning image of a great subject is a real art form, that requires patience and care. The photographer must choose the best framing, timing, exposure, depth of field, colour depth and the many other factors that allow us to see through the eye of the photographer.

Images of wilderness help me stay a little sane between walks. Nature has a weird kind of transformative power that endures in the two dimensional world.

Since early 2009 there has been regular photo competitions on bushwalk.com. Each month inspiring images are shared by photographers from within our community. Then we have the pleasure of enjoying them and voting on our favourite. It only makes sense to include some of the images in this mag. To keep images relevant to the season as we read this magazine I have skipped back 1 year in the comp, but you can always checkout the latest competitions online.

Voting on competitions starts on the 20th of each month - so make sure you check them out and have your say.

A big thank you to all the photographers who have shared their art with us. I hope that you have enjoyed sharing them as much as we have enjoyed seeing your view of the world.

Over the next bunch of pages you can see the runners up and the winner from each competition. The runners up images have been cropped and most comps had even more great entries. I wish we had more room to include all the images - It is worth visiting each competition online.

Matt :)

Other States

October 2012

WINNER (over page)



Into the Void
north-north-west

The loner also known as north-north-west currently resides (for her sins) somewhere SE of Melbourne. Favourite pastimes include caving, technical diving, bushwalking - preferably somewhere high and open - and trying to move back to Tasmania.

This shot is from a 4 day snowshoe loop from Munyang, which had everything from thick fog, snow & gale-force winds to clear blue skies. It was taken during one of the in-between moments, up on the Main Range. The cloud was always somewhere ahead that day . . .



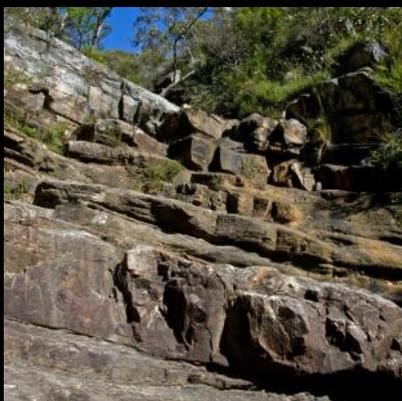
**Martins Falls on Magdala
Creek**
John Walker



A Grass Tree on The Pinnacle
phan_TOM



Paperbark grove
Tom Brennan



Dry Fall, Horsnell Gully
Brian Eglinton



Frill neck lizard
iandsmith



**Almost sunset near Mt
Bushwalker, Budawangs NSW**
Mandy Creighton



Tasmania

October 2012

WINNER (over page)



Evening light on Mt Hugel
MJD

Martin (aka MJD) lives near the Baskerville Raceway on the northern outskirts of Hobart. He prefers off track walking in small groups, camping high in good weather, and even heading off on solo trips. It's hard to pick a one or two highlights but this year's trip along the Prince of Wales Range with four good friends was a true epic. And finally getting up Geryon South was also great fun and much easier than it looked

The picture of Mt Hugel was taken from the western slopes of the Hippogriff on a three day solo trip that took in the Hippogriff, Mt Gell, the Cheyne Range and the Chimera. It's a great walk even if you aren't peak bagging or climbing Abels. The little tarn near to my tent was well placed and it was just a matter of waiting for the evening light to catch the mighty Mt Hugel.



**Frenchmans cap in spring
chill**
ILUVSWTAS



The Archer
Dan Broun



Spring in the Pelions
Marco D'Alessandro



Pandanni Paradise
Son of a Beach



**Late afternoon at Cooks
Beach**
Graham51



Barn Bluff, ascending
Louise Fairfax



Landscapes

October 2012

WINNER (over page)



Hissing in Defiance
Dan Broun



Moonscape
north-north-west



Onward to Pelion
Marco D'Alessandro



**Brindle Creek, Border Ranges
national Park**
phan_TOM



Solitary sunset
Tom Brennan



Mt Olympus
Son of a Beach



Beyond Hanging Rock
John Walker



Non-landscapes

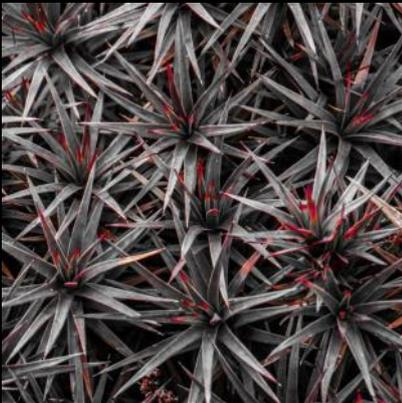
October 2012

WINNER (over page)



Lewin's Honeyeater
phan_TOM

Tom lives and works in the Northern Rivers of NSW with his partner and trusty dog. He loves to combine his passion for the natural world with photography and spends as much time as possible bushwalking, exploring coasts and waterways by kayak and camping in the regions National Parks. The 'Lewin's Honeyeater' photo was taken in the Border Ranges National Park just after setting up camp one afternoon – they are gorgeous little birds and he was lucky to have this one sit still for more than a second or two while he took the shot. He really likes the detail in the breast feathers and the inquisitive look in its eye!



Awaiting the next Victim
Dan Broun



Curra Moors Eucalypt
John Walker



Icicles
Marco D'Alessandro



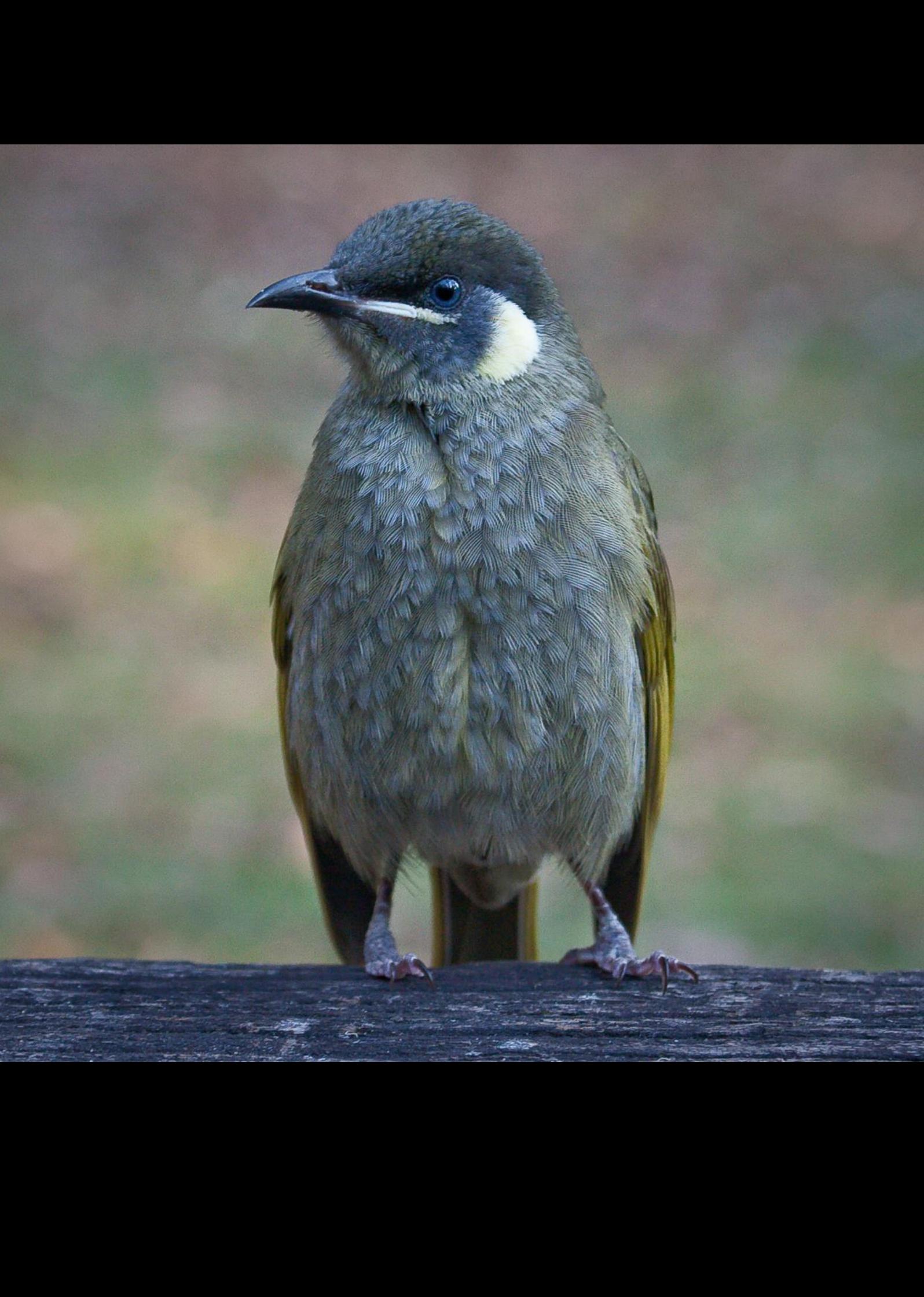
Snake eating frog
Mandy Creighton



Sunset companion
north-north-west



Frozen vegetation
Louise Fairfax



Other States

November 2012

1st WINNER (over page)



Sunrise at the Skillion
iansmith

2nd WINNER



Mountain evening
north-north-west

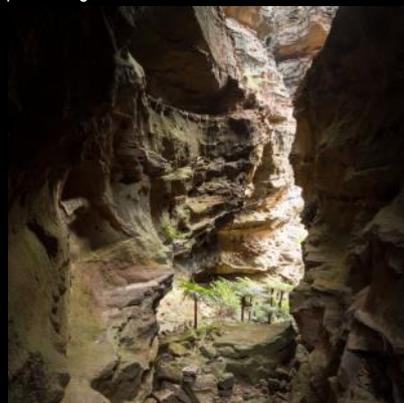
This was taken on The Viking - probably Alpine Victoria's most awkward summit - from just above my campsite. It's the view I went to sleep with and woke up to the next morning. Worth all the tree scrambling and scrub-bashing through the (at that time) unmaintained track from and back to Selwyn, just to be up there for that one perfect night.



Valley of the Waters
Vern



Hilary Falls
John Walker



Fern refuge
Tom Brennan



Horsnell Gully Fall
Brian Eglinton



Tasmania

November 2012

WINNER (over page)



Only in Tasmania
Dan Broun



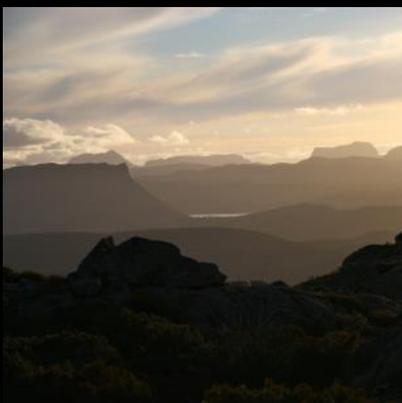
Mt Gould
ILUVSWTAS



YOU Tomorrow!!
doogs



**Early evening light on Geryon
from Lake Elysia**
MJD



Dusk from the walls
Louise Fairfax



**Morning Light Towards
Precipitous Bluff**
Marco D'Alessandro



Between Spires
Colin Locke



Landscapes

November 2012

WINNER (over page)



Walled Mountain aglow at dawn
MJD

The shot of Walled Mountain was taken from a small tarn near to Lake Elysia in the Labyrinth, which is a magnificent spot and one well worth exploring. Most people concentrate on shots across Lake Elysia looking towards the peaks of Geryon and the Acropolis but wander around and you will find that Walled Mountain and Mt Gould can also be quite captivating.



Lake Elysia Sunset, Labyrinth Tasmania.
ILUVSWTAS



Gould morning to you.
doogs



Mt Cook Range
Vern



Mt Barney
Andrew Smith



First Light Myrtle
Colin Locke



Morning mists
north-north-west



Non-landscapes November 2012

WINNER (over page)



The Hive
Marco D'Alessandro



**"I don't care if the sun is up,
it's still damn cold out there!"**
MJD



Gooley Garden Droplets
Colin Locke



Ancient Labyrinth
doogs



**Orange threadtail damselfly at
Joalah NP**
iansmith



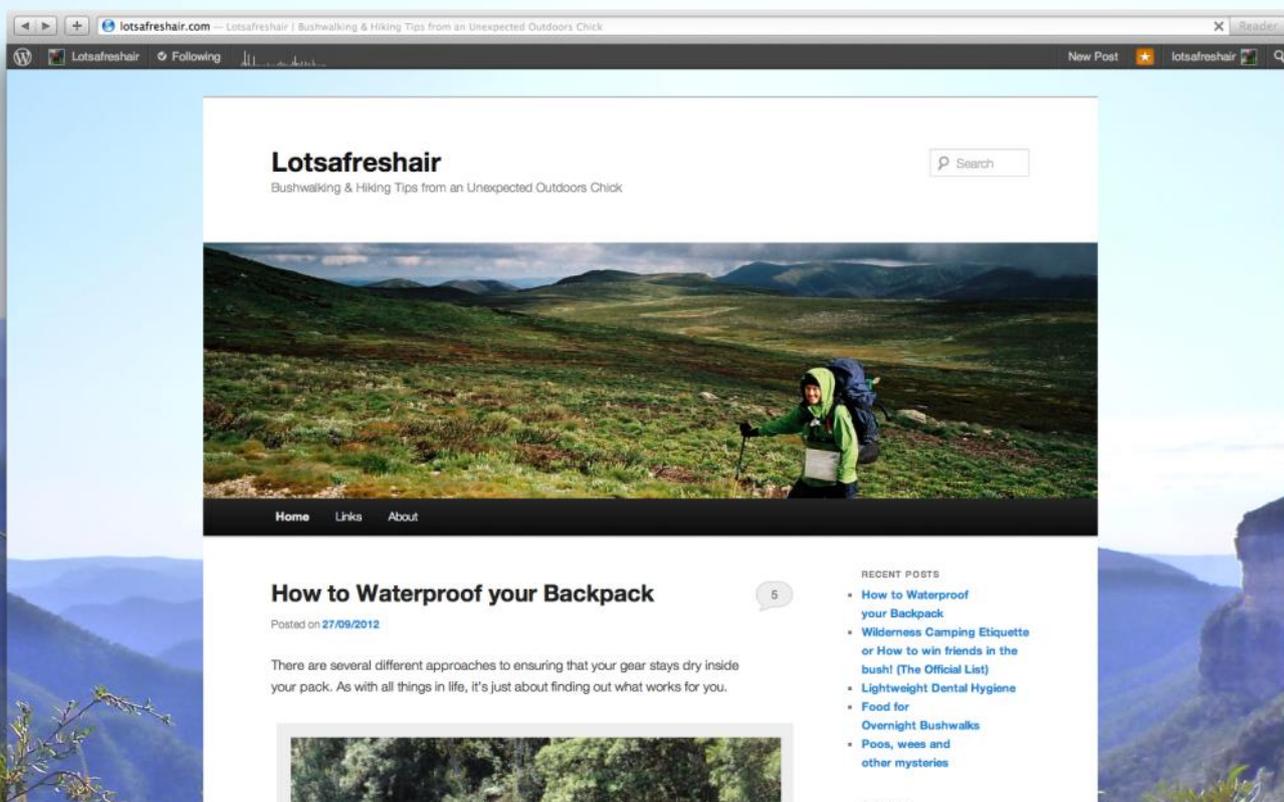
New River Lagoon driftwood
Nicholas Clark



Out on a limb
Brian Eglinton



E-WALKING



“ The bush has changed my life in so many ways, and if they're into it, I want to be able to help others do the same.

lotsafreshair.com

text & photos by Caro Ryan (aka lotsafreshair)

Packing for an overnight bushwalk

Posted on 11/04/2012



Starting anything new is always a bit of an adventure. A journey of discovery, making mistakes, figuring out what works and what doesn't, until suddenly, you realise that the new thing doesn't feel so new or unknown anymore. Before you know it, you feel at home in the new.

So it was when I finally found a way to satisfy my inner adventure gland when I discovered bushwalking about 13 years ago. (I'm forever thankful to that SMH Good Weekend writer who went on a

day trip with the Sydney Bush Walkers Club and lived to tell the tale, albeit feeling like he'd gone ten rounds with Tyson.) Without realising it, it was what I'd been looking for all these years without realising it. Heck, I come from a family who's sense of adventure was a hotel that didn't supply hair dryers.

As much as I love my club, when I first joined, I think that the novelty of them having a new member under the age of 60 threw them a little. I was not easily dis-

suaed by the men with beards (and some of the women too) aka PWB's (People with Beards) and was determined to learn everything I could about this wondrous new Utopia that they were introducing me to.

Thirteen years on and things have changed a lot in the club. 20% of our 900 ish members are now in their 20s and 30s and a new enthusiasm for handing on the knowledge to the newbies is evident through training days for the very green, to leadership

training days to raise up new trip leaders.

It's pretty safe to say that us bushwalkers are an opinionated bunch. You don't have to look much further than the bush-walk.com forum to prove this theory and I certainly experienced this when I first got started. Everyone has their own way of doing things and what works for them. And there are some who believe that their way... Is the only way!

The idea for starting the blog came about as I wanted to create

a non-threatening, easily accessible way for people who are new to the outdoors, to get all the answers to some of the questions they have (ie. all the ones I had when I started!) but were too afraid to ask.

Things like, how to poo in the bush, or for us girls, how to deal with having your periods in the bush.

I found that these are some of the barriers that stop people from venturing out into our amazing outdoors, spending time in

the bush and discovering another world.

How many of us have had our non-Bushie friends ask us:

- but what about snakes? (insert various critters here: ticks, leeches, men with beards)
- what do you mean you sleep in an open fly? Aren't you scared of spiders?
- but how do you go to the toilet?

These questions may all seem like second nature to some of us, but if we think back to our



first adventures in the bush, everything had a giant question mark looming over it.

I've learnt so much over the past 13 years (and am still constantly learning) through asking lots of questions of PWB's and a hell of a lot of trial and error. By compiling these tips into one place, I hope it will make the journey for others less daunting.

The other thing that inspired me to start the blog was the lack of well produced outdoors how-to videos on YouTube, with much of the existing content being from the USA and aimed more at PWG's (People with guns). (Coincidentally, many of these also were PWB's).

I work as a Producer in my day job, running a production company in Sydney, and after hiding behind the camera for the last 14 years, I felt so strongly about demystifying a life in the outdoors, that I finally jumped in front of the camera and with the help of one of my regular freelance cameramen, shot the first series of How-To videos in 2012.

Since then, I've been shooting regular "Selfie" style videos out on walks and posting these as either trip reports or handy, quick tips along the way.

The second "pro" series is now in the planning and I hope to have these coming live in the next couple of months. Please feel free to

drop me a line if you think there's something that I should cover to lotsafreshair@gmail.com.

The message I always push is that this is the stuff that I've discovered works for me. I don't assume it's one size fits all and I encourage people to keep trying until they find what works for them. Until they find their "home" in the bush.

The bush has changed my life in so many ways, and if they're into it, I want to be able to help others do the same.

I want to help remove some of those barriers, answer some of those questions and give people the confidence that they can give something new a go.



Caro is a Macpac Ambassador and you can see her blog and videos here:

Blog: <http://lotsafreshair.com/>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/lotsafreshair>

GEAR FREAK

text by Wayne Clark (aka Wayno)

10 THINGS

that ensure your

RAINSHELL

is up for the walk

So, you want to get yourself a rainshell?

Maybe you'll only settle for the best money can buy, but what is the best?

The most expensive rainshells may not actually be the best jacket for you.

When looking for a bushwalking rainshell you should consider a few points in choosing your jacket.

- What is your budget?
- What conditions are you walking in?
- What will your ratio of walking on trails versus off trails?
- If you are walking off trail how damaging will the vegetation be to any rainshell you will be wearing?
- What will the climate be like where and when you are planning to walk?
- What other activities will you use the jacket for? ie mountaineering; running; cycling, bushwalking.

Answering these questions lets you know the design features you will be looking for.

1) Design features to consider.

- fabric weight
- how much ventilation you will require
- location and no of pockets.
- overall design
- material type

2) Fabric weight

Weight is often the big trade off with jackets. You will need to decide how important saving weight is versus having various jacket features. The lightest jackets have the fewest features but also tend to be less durable.

Fabric weight usually is measured by Denier. Denier is a measure (in grams) of a single thread of material over a 9000m length of thread. Rainshell fabrics tend to range from 7 to 80 denier. 80 being at the heavy end of the spectrum. Some jacket designs will use different deniers in different areas of the garment. To complicate matters some materials will use two deniers in the same fabric. To save weight while maintaining a reasonable amount of strength.

In general light jackets aren't going to last as long as heavier jackets. Weight alone doesn't tell you everything regarding fabric strength, you also need to consider lamination.

There are two main designs regarding fabric laminate types. 2.5

and 3 layer. 2.5 layer jackets have less weight tied up in the membrane but are generally less durability than 3 layer jackets. If you have a 2.5 layer and a 3 layer jacket of similar design and weight the 2.5 layer will have a heavier face fabric and is likely to be a harder wearing fabric.

Improvements in fabric technology in recent years have brought down fabric weight while maintaining fabric strength. At the lightest end of the scale there are jackets weighing in at just over 120gms. At the other end of the scale are jackets weighing over 800gms

3) Waterproof rating

The waterproof rating is measured by "hydrostatic head". Imagine a vertical column of water above the fabric, how tall does this column need to be to force water vapor through the fabric?

Moisture permeable waterproof fabrics let water vapour pass through but water in liquid form can only pass through waterproof fabrics under high pressure.

Generally 10,000mm Hydrostatic head is the benchmark for a garment to be deemed to be waterproof under storm conditions. The higher the Hydrostatic head the more resistant to water penetration the fabric is. If its raining lightly with little wind it is possible to have a waterproof

garment with a rating as low as about 6,000mm. Make sure the jacket is seam sealed to be waterproof, over time a fair bit of water can enter an unsealed join in the jacket.

4) Durable water repellent (DWR)

This is a chemical coating on the outer fabric which helps repel water and makes it run off the fabric more easily. It does not make a garment more waterproof by itself but does help maintain the moisture permeability from the inside to the outside. DWR is highly fallible over time and a garment needs to be re treated. The retreatment has widely varying success rates.

5) Breathability

Here we are talking about the fabrics moisture and air permeability.

To confuse matters this can be measured in different ways. Most commonly measured by the number of grams of water that can pass through a square metre of fabric in 24 hours. Range of breathability can be anything from 1000gm/m²/24hr up to 45,000. But remember this is in the perfect and comfortable laboratory conditions. Breathability will seldom exceed 25,000.

The moisture permeability can vary massively from fabric to fabric, the cheapest shells are generally less breathable. Fabric

permeability isn't the only consideration in jacket performance. Not all moisture permeable fabrics are air permeable. Air permeable fabrics generally perform better for moisture reduction in the jacket than the non air permeable jackets for the same design features. Keep reading because the ventilation section will give a more complete full picture on moisture reduction.

6) Ventilation

You may grab a jacket with the most breathable fabric on the market and find you still build up sweat inside the jacket, the material just can't breathe fast enough for all conditions. The 'breathability' can vary greatly based on;

- how heavy the fabric is
- how breathable the membrane stuck to the fabric is
- how easily the fabric wets out on the surface?
and of course the
- air temp and humidity.

So to reduce the chance of sweat buildup you can look for a jacket that has extra ventilation. In bushwalking jackets this usually comes in two main forms, Pit (or Core) zips and Vented pockets.

Pit and core zips generally ventilate better than vented pockets depending on how big the pocket zips are and the location of the pockets ie are they free of your pack belt?

Vented pockets are a lighter

design, using lighter pocket fabric and are saving the extra weight of an additional pair of zips. It is also hard to rely on the pockets to hold items when you've got the zips open and it is a compromise if you want the pockets as hand warmers. Usually the lightest jackets have no additional venting.

Ventilation can often trump fabric moisture and air permeability by allowing moisture out of the jacket faster, especially in certain weather conditions. Buying a vented jacket can be a good way of buying a better performing jacket that is less expensive than the jackets with greater moisture permeability.

7) Location and no of pockets

If you need access to your pockets while on the move you will want them high up and out of the way of the hip belt. Do you need hand warmer pockets and gear storage pockets? Or just one or the other, or can you do without pockets to save some weight?

8) Jacket cut

Generally some of the best cut jackets can be the more expensive jackets,

It is better to get a jacket that is too loose rather than too tight to cover you for a range of motion in the outdoors, so if you can't afford the jacket of your dreams bear this in mind if you find you are having to compromise in the design cut..

Long or short? This is often a personal preference. In warmer

weather, a longer jacket can be handy to keep the water off your shorts. If you are more likely to be wearing over trousers, the extra jacket length may not be necessary and just add extra weight and cost.

Bulk of cut ? Are you likely to wear bulky insulation layers under the jacket? Is the jacket really cut for your body type?

How athletic will you need to be? Will you be rock scrambling and will the jacket cut cater for the full range of body motion you will be carrying out on your trips?

9) Price

Prices can vary massively. To a certain extent you can get what you pay for with more expensive jackets, although some brands carry a premium on their brand name. The cheapest jackets on the market will have a more basic cut and are less likely to be durable or very breathable. Dedicated outdoors shops generally carry gear of a reasonable quality and can go right up to the top end in quality. Department chain stores may carry a wider range of quality starting at the bottom end of the market and may or may not include quality garments in their range.

10) Different waterproof membranes

Probably the most commonly recognised membrane is the range of GORE-TEX® (non air permeable) membranes. Historically the king of membranes

in the market for performance and reliability. But recently challenged by eVent® and Neoshell® (air permeable).

There are pros and cons (and just not enough space here I am afraid) but it may be splitting hairs to call one particularly superior to the other. The air permeable membranes can be slightly better performing than the non air permeable membranes. But its not as cut and dry as that because of ventilation.

There is also a large range of cheaper membranes on the market which are polyurethane based. Their performance is generally less than the likes of GORE-TEX® and they can be very poor performing

so do look for the statistics on moisture/air permeability rating.

Clothing manufacturer brands

There are way too many to mention. Here are some of the main players in the outdoor clothing market for bushwalkers.

High quality brands

Arc'teryx, Montane, Westcomb, Mont-Bell, Swazi, Mammut, Rab, Mont, Outdoor Research, haglofs

Mix of High quality to average quality

The North Face & Marmot
And those generally making above average quality gear Kathmandu, Macpac and Mountain Designs

Wayne Clark (aka Wayno)
Wayno (45) started bushwalking in NZ in the mid eighties. The walking started around the mountains near Wellington all year round with the main stomping ground at Tararuas (the poor mans southern alps), a place that taught him a few harsh lessons about living in the mountains. He continued bushwalking on and off up into the alpine environment right around NZ till now when he walk much of NZ and parts of the west island. Wayne has dabbled in a bit of mountaineering and has experienced a massive change in gear technology during is walking carrer. Enough change to ensure there is no nostalgc for the old gear!

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BACKCOUNTRY BAKERY



With a little inspiration you can enjoy yummy, nutritious and light weight meals even on longer walks. here we will explore a few options for lightweight baking. Have a play these methods and see which works best for you. Phil shares some tips for dry baking muffins and Matt shows how to bake a bread roll in a plastic bag.

4 steps to yummy dry baked muffins

text & photos by Phillip Damiano (aka ULWalkingPhil)

I have been wanting to do some dry-baking on my overnight bushwalks for a while now. I thought I would share the results of my yummy experiments with you. My first attempt dry baking was with two Blueberry muffins and the result - fantastic. I have tried steam baking, I did not like it as much. I could not get the results as good as I can dry-baking.

I recently ordered a Batchstovez Dry Baking Pot set, which is a 12cm Aluminum anodized pot with handle and a 10cm dry baking pot that sits inside the larger one.

So here is how to do it yourself..

1) Choose your favourite mix - I used "Betty Crocker's Blueberry Muffins". The instructions say to use one egg and 180ml of water. The water is easy enough but I don't plan on carrying eggs (nor a laying hen) with me - but as luck would have it my local Woolworths sells powdered eggs.

2) At home - combine a quarter of the packet mix (100 grams) with 3 grams of the powdered egg in a snap lock bag.

3) At camp - empty the bag into the smaller pot and stir through 50ml of water. Place a wire rack or some small rocks in the bottom of the larger pot (to allow air flow), then place the smaller pot inside

resting on the rack. Place the lid on the larger pot (not a tight seal) - no lid on the inside pot.

4) Place the unit on a stove set on low heat. With my set up, the muffin cooked in 40 minutes using 45ml of metho fuel.

The muffins taste great. I was pleasantly surprised how well they turned out. But my Packafeather XL stove needs to be babied and monitored closely. I have ordered a Mini Heat XT stove which others have shown works well with dry-baking and its half the weight of mine.

Bon appétit

Phillip Damiano



4 steps to Fresh bread rolls in the wild

text & photos by **Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)**

Ever since I was a baby I have been addicted to food. Not just any food - there is something about freshly baked bread that just makes my mouth water. On my first multi-week walk I carried one of those stovetop oven things, it weighed a ton - now a plastic bag does the trick.

So, you want a fresh bread roll on day 4 of your next walk? It is easier than you think.

I have used this trick a few times for desserts like muffins - but whilst on a fairly lazy walk in the Walls Of Jerusalem this year I thought I would experiment with bread rolls. And wow - every experiment worked out yum. The smell of bread baking in a hut, as the snow falls, makes wild places feel even more like home.

So here is what I learned - play with it and see how it works for you.

1) Before you set off - preparation;

- Buy a packet mix of bread flour and yeast from the supermarket.
- Add a handful of the flour (about 40 grams) to a freezer bag
- Add a more yeast to the bag then suggest ratio (about 3/4 a teaspoon).
- Gently Squeeze the air of the bag and tie a tight slip knots in the neck of the bag.

2) Once in camp - make the dough

- Add a splash of water (add less than you think, and add a bit more if needed)
- Knead the dough (through the bag) for about 10mins until it is a sticky but firm dough.
- Leave a bit of air in the bag and tie off with a slip knot and let it rise in your pocket or under your sleeping bag for about 20 mins.
- Knead it a bit more and let it rise again for another 20 mins (optional).

3) Baking in the bag - the trick

- Squeeze the air out of the bag (without squashing your roll) and tie another slip knot.
- Place the bag & dough it in a pot of simmering water for about 25mins.
- The bread floats with about half under the surface of the water
- Leave a lid on the pot and turn the stove as low as you can to keep the water gently simmering
- Try turning the roll over about half way through the cooking (this can be a bit tricky - don't stress about it)

4) Serving - and eating

- Take your roll out of the water, let it cool for a bit before taking it out of the bag - careful steam burns.
- Enjoy the smell of the fresh roll.
- If you want to add a crust - a few seconds over a flame will do the trick. The crust adds flavour and texture - really worth the small effort.



Now you can use the hot water to make a tasty soup - spread a smidge of butter - sit back enjoy the stars (or snow falling in my case) and ponder how great life can be.

There is only one proviso with all this - if we meet in camp someday, please share :)

A few bonus tips

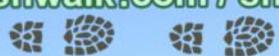
- Bake your first roll at home to get the hang of adding water, kneading and baking.
- Carry a small amount of extra flour in another bag in case you add too much water.
- Make sure you freezer bags are also okay for cooking in.
- Try to use the hot water for part of your meal so as not to waste the fuel.
- You can make longer thinner rolls - they cook faster, but can be a bit tricky in the pot.
- I use a Jetboil stove which has that fancy wetsuit insulation and simmers really well so it does not use a lot of fuel.
- You can get by with just one raising - but I prefer two - but their was little difference.

Use the same bag trick to cook muffins or biscuits but you don't need to let them rise (there is no yeast) - choc-chip muffins - yummmmmm

I want to try making a pizza pocket type meal the same way. I am thinking some cheese, salami or tuna. Maybe you want to try it and share some ideas?

Happy baking,

Matt :)

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