

# Bushwalk Australia

A full-page photograph of a person rappelling down a steep, wet rock face. The rock is covered in moss and has a waterfall on the left. Two other people are standing at the base of the rock face near a pool of water. The scene is dimly lit, with a bright light source from above illuminating the rappelling person and the rock face.

Bushwalking Heritage

Volume 26, December 2017



Bushwalk Australia Magazine  
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Volume 26, December 2017

**"We acknowledge the  
Traditional Owners of this  
vast land which we explore.  
We pay our respects to their  
Elders, past and present,  
and thank them for their  
stewardship of this great  
south land."**



Cover picture  
In the  
cathedral by  
Tom Brennan

Editor  
Matt McClelland  
[matt@bushwalk.com](mailto:matt@bushwalk.com)

Design manager  
Eva Gomišček  
[eva@wildwalks.com](mailto:eva@wildwalks.com)

Sub-editor  
Stephen Lake  
[stephen@bushwalk.com](mailto:stephen@bushwalk.com)

Please send any articles,  
suggestions or advertising  
enquires to Eva.

BWA Advisory Panel  
North-north-west  
Mark Fowler  
Brian Eglington

We would love you to be part  
of the magazine, here is how to  
contribute - [Writer's Guide](#).

The copy deadline for the  
February 2018 edition is  
20 December 2017.

#### Warning

Like all outdoor pursuits, the  
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Undertaking them may result in  
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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.

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## From the Editor

Welcome to summer. In this edition we look back and reflect on some recent history of bushwalking and our remote areas. Marcus Garvey once said 'A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.' As bushwalkers, the clearest view comes with a better understanding of where we have come from. I hope these articles give you ideas for new adventures and more grounding to better appreciate your walks.

Joanne Bell takes us for a walk to Kidmans Hut in Kosciuszko NP. Andy Mathers re-creates a walk in Megalong Valley in the Blue Mountains, following his father's footsteps from 60 years before. Robert Green shares some of his insights into the heritage tracks and huts around Kosciuszko and how we might protect them. Harry Burkitt discusses the risk posed to wild areas by the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. Andrew Morse shares five surprising benefits of bushwalking in silence. We also have an overview of John Chapman's latest books for Tassie and Melbourne. NNW shares her poetic dream to live life in the wild. Sub-editor and regular contributor Stephen Lake highlights ongoing concerns over the Falls Creek to Mount Hotham Track proposal in Victoria. Sonya, as always, shares some more mouthwatering and heartwarming treats for your next walk. We also have lots of amazing photographs and other articles.

A big thank you to our authors, photographers, editor and designer who put in huge amount of effort for our benefit. Hundreds of hours go into crafting each edition. It is a great joy to see all this work come together in each edition.

I wish for you a very Merry Christmas, Happy new year and some wonderful bushwalking.

Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)  
matt@bushwalk.com



### Declaration

The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my associations within the outdoor community. In many cases I approached the authors of the articles included in this edition and suggested the topics. The opinions stated in articles are those of the authors and not of those involved in the production of this edition. The authors are mostly people I know through [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com). I operate [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com) and [Wildwalks.com](http://Wildwalks.com) and have written 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. 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. There is some commercial advertising through the magazine. I have probably forgotten something - if you are worried about transparency please either write to me or raise the issue on [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com).



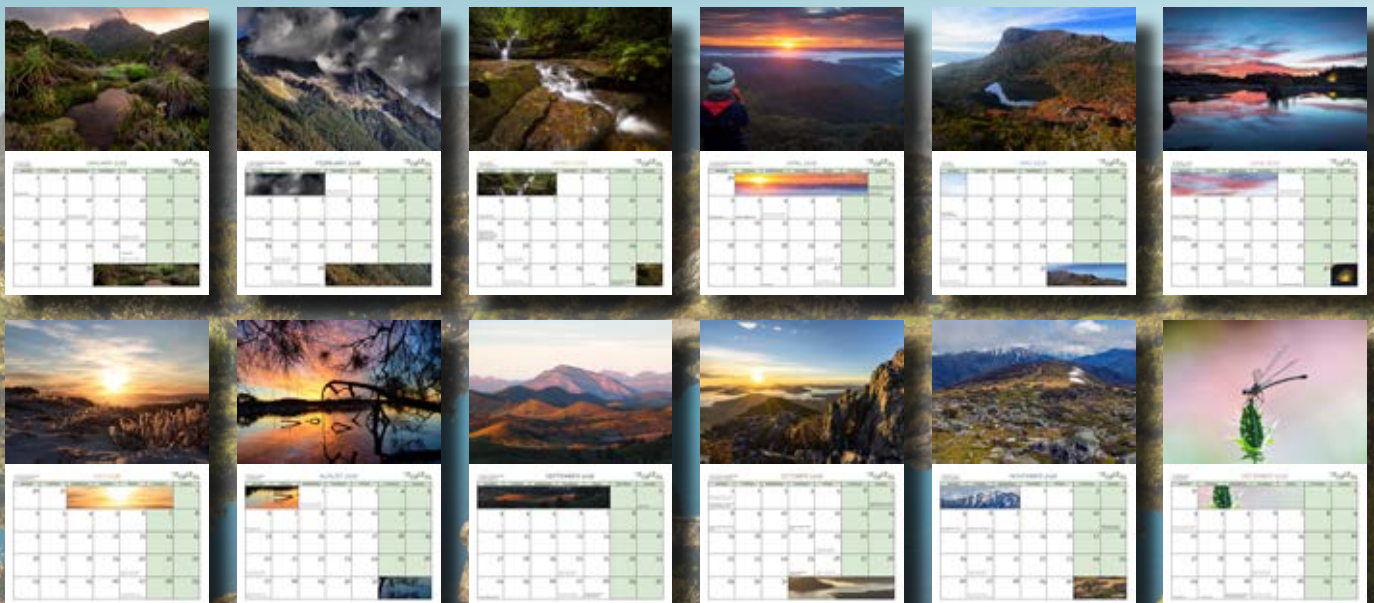
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# Kidmans Hut Walk

Joanne Bell



The Jagungal Wilderness area of Kosciuszko National Park has great appeal for me as a bushwalker. I love the remoteness, the lack of access by four wheel drivers, the potential for a cooler walk at higher altitudes in the warmer months, the abundant availability of water and most of all I love the high country huts. The character, the history, the interest as well as the facilities; somewhere to sit, somewhere to shelter, somewhere to cook and somewhere to enjoy a fire perhaps on a cold night. These huts become points of reference for me as I am sure they do for many other walkers; we plan our walks around them.



In early 2017 I was delighted to discover that a [Bushwalk Australia forum](#) member Robert Green had written a book *Exploring the Jagungal Wilderness*. I wasted no time in contacting Robert in Canberra and obtaining his book. The natural progression from there was of course to plan a walk. I had not done much off-track walking in the Jagungal area, but armed with the notes from Robert's book, the relevant topographic map and a quick revision of my navigation skills I felt confident I could find my way and was ready to seek out some of the huts which I had missed on my previous "on-track" visits.

In February it so happened that I had a few days to spare, and a friend who I had promised to introduce to overnight bushwalking and an upcoming longer walk where I wanted to test out some gear. I chose Kidmans Hut as our destination and plans were made.

We set off on a Tuesday morning and drove from our home town of Walwa, in the Upper Murray region of Victoria up over the Alpine Way. We passed Thredbo and stopped at Jindabyne for a quick coffee, then drove north out of town towards Lake Eucumbene. We turned off the Eucumbene Road onto the Nimmo Road then enjoyed some mild four wheel driving along the Gungarlin Powerline Trail to the Gungarlin River camping area.



Joanne at Daveys Hut  
Patrea Cook

This camping area was the start of the walk, and we reached it around midday. We set off with high energy along the trail across open plains to our first stop at Daveys Hut, where a few adjustments were made to make shoes and packs more comfortable. From Daveys Hut we made our way to Teddys Creek and followed this on a four wheel drive trail for a few kilometres. Overall it was fairly easy walking and navigating to here.

From a junction of Teddys Creek with Collins Creek we then went uphill to an area called Mill Flat. It was from here that the trail became a bit more challenging to follow, although we knew that as long as we continued up the ridge we were walking on we were going in the right direction. We did end up off track a bit and I took the easy option and made full use of my GPS (which I had programmed with waypoints prior to the



Patrea as we ascended ridge near Mill Flat  
Joanne Bell



walk) to put us closer to where we wanted to be. We eventually emerged out of the bush onto Little Brassy Gap saddle, from which there were views to the west to the Brassy Mountains.

It was from the saddle that the walk became more challenging. At this point there is no track left to follow and the route requires that you descend to the west, more or less following a creek valley down towards the environs of the Burrungubuggee River. It's not a long distance and more than not there are clear views of the route ahead and even Kidmans Hut (if you know where to look!), but the going is made much slower by the knee to waist high heath, boggy ground and creek crossings. My friend Trea and I took it in turns to pick out a route around the obstacles which helped with my morale; I'm not a huge fan of not being able to see where I put my feet, especially when the ground is less than solid and there's the potential of wriggly creatures hidden below. We tried to hug the sides of the valley, walking between the tree line and the heath but even this wasn't as easy as I expected.

We arrived at Kidmans Hut with the last of the light, just in time to find a small flat area of ground not too far from the hut for my two person tent. We didn't have a lot of time to enjoy the evening as the dark set in,



Kidmans Hut  
Joanne Bell



Patrea closing the Kidmans Hut door  
Joanne Bell



it was all about having a feed and getting into our sleeping bags before it got too cold. On the upside we were tired enough by our efforts that we both slept pretty well. I remember waking once in the night to a dingo's particularly mournful howl; it seems I'm accustomed enough to those sounds that it didn't occur to me to be worried by the sound, more so I had a brief moment of concern wondering what terrible event had befallen the beast as to make it sound so sad.

When planning the walk I had initially thought to make it a round trip by continuing our walk south along the Burrungubuggee River corridor to Island Bend and then back along a four wheel drive track to the campground but a quick search of the [Bushwalk Australia forum](#) revealed that the river route was particularly overgrown and thus not an attractive option. Instead I had determined that we would exit via the same route that we had used to access the hut. This meant that with the confidence created by the relative ease of retracing our route from the day before that we could take our time the next morning and enjoy our surrounds before we needed to leave. It was lovely to watch the day dawn and the light

“... I had successfully navigated my way to an off-track hut ...”



The plains below Daveys Hut  
Joanne Bell

reach across the valleys around us. We sat out in front of the hut and had a leisurely breakfast before packing up and starting back up the hill.

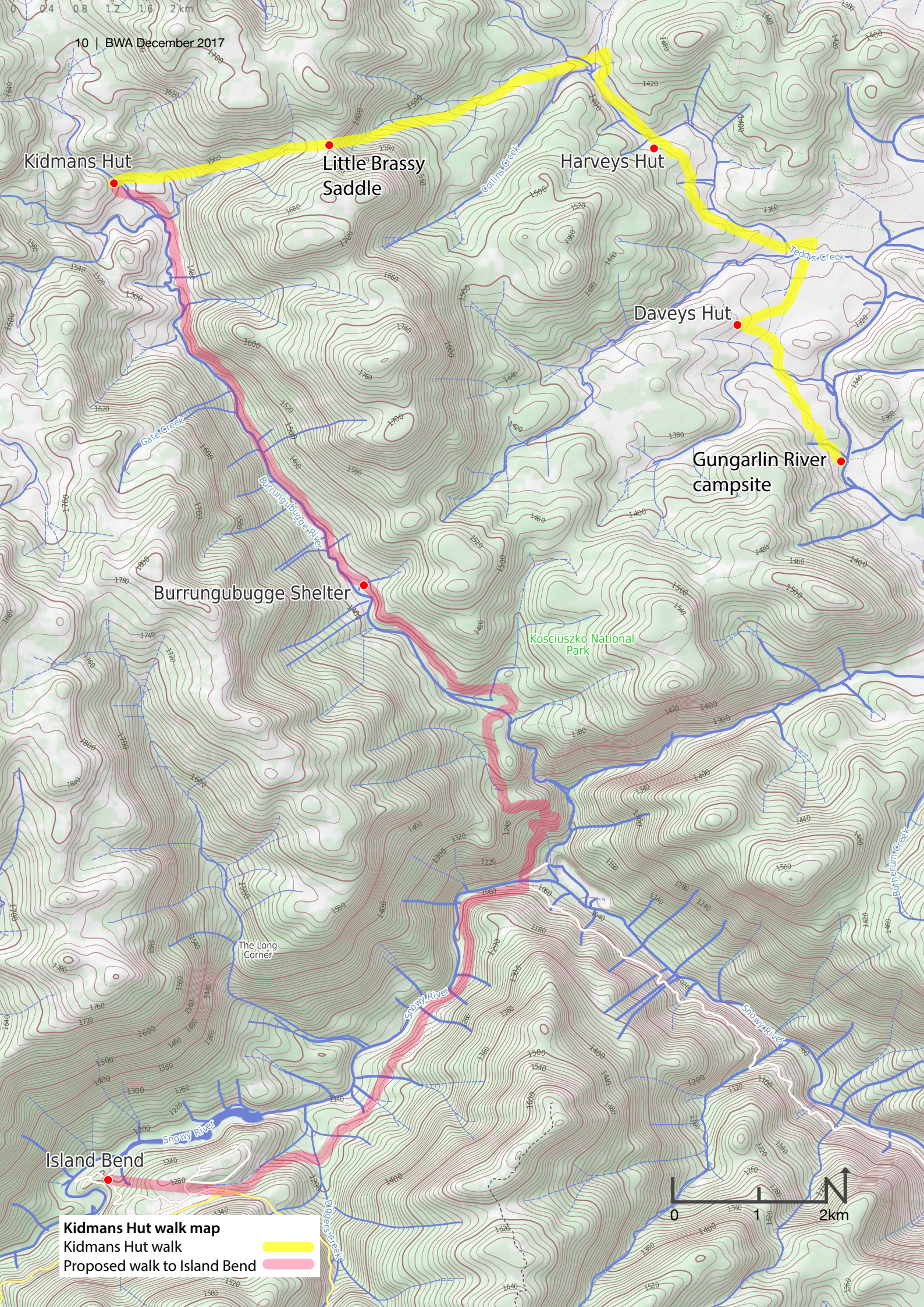
Despite our familiarity with the route we had to follow it didn't really make the progress up to the saddle any quicker. The going remained tough and a small brown snake sighted disappearing into the ground where our feet were equally hidden by brush made for a few nervous moments. Once up on the saddle though we made quick time down the ridge and onto the four wheel drive track and before we knew it we were back at the campground and enjoying a very chilly but equally refreshing swim in the Gungarlin River.

My friend Trea had survived and perhaps even enjoyed her first overnight bushwalk



Joanne descending just out of Little Brassy Saddle towards Kidmans Hut  
Patrea Cook





Kidmans Hut

Little Brassy  
Saddle

Harveys Hut

Daveys Hut

Gungarlin River  
campsite

Burrungubugge Shelter

Kosciuszko National  
Park

The Long  
Corner

Island Bend

**Kidmans Hut walk map**

Kidmans Hut walk

Proposed walk to Island Bend



and I had successfully navigated my way to an off-track hut so I deemed our efforts a success. We stayed that night in the campground and made our way out the next morning in time to enjoy a cooked lunch at the café in the Visitors Centre in Jindabyne. Another few hours later and we had driven over the Alpine Way and crossed the Murray River back into our home state of Victoria.

On reflection, the only disappointment in this walk for me was just how much evidence I saw within the Jagungal Wilderness area of feral animal presence. There were brumby droppings, brumby tracks, rabbits, rabbit holes and droppings, more than one wild dog howling in the night (although to be fair these could be dingoes rather than their feral counterparts) and most disturbingly wild pigs had turned over more ground than not all the way down the valley from Little Brassy Gap to Kidmans Hut. Conversely, the only real evidence we saw of native wildlife apart from birds sightings were plenty of wombat droppings and holes; they certainly seem to be thriving up in the high country away from their not so natural enemies - farmers and roads.



Follow Joanne at:

[www.ratherbebushwalking.blogspot.com](http://www.ratherbebushwalking.blogspot.com)

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Joanne lives in a tiny Upper Murray town in Victoria, where she and her partner Chris are renovating a former trucking depot to serve as a home base between adventures. A health scare in her early thirties meant a change of lifestyle, where making dreams a reality became more important than a career or a regular income. This led to her becoming a uniformed police officer in her mid-thirties and working in Australia and the Solomon Islands then resigning after five years to travel the country in her restored VW Kombi campervan. Joanne counts amongst her lifetime achievements paddling the length of the Murray River in a sea kayak and aspires to completing many more long-distance walking tracks in Australia and overseas.



The last night at Gungarlin River Camping Area  
Joanne Bell



# Conquering the Giant

Andy Mathers



This article describes two walks in the Megalong Valley in the Blue Mountains. The first walk was in winter 2017, and the second one was in winter 1957.

Ben on Krungle Bungle Ranges just past Mount McAviney with Mount Jenolan behind  
Andy Mathers



I was talking to my father in early 2017 and he showed me a 1957 trip report he had written for the monthly magazine of the Coast and Mountain Walkers (CMW) of which he was a member. He's still active with CMW. He had at times also been the editor and club president. His walk was in winter 1957, which gave me the idea of redoing it in winter of 2017.

The walk started at Carlons Farm in the Megalong Valley, goes down Breakfast Creek, crosses the Coxs River and then up to Scrubbers Saddle. It then followed the ridge over a number of mountains including Mount O'Reilley and Mount Jenolan to Mount Guouogang.

We planned/hoped to do the walk in two days like my father did, but we allowed for three. (We actually finished about 10am on day three instead of 6pm on day two.) We took extra food and allowed an extra day. This is a good lesson because, as it turned out we needed the extra day and so allowing for it meant we weren't tempted to take risks to finish on day two. I had a few friends lined up, but by the time the walk came around all but one had

“... we both fell victim to stinging nettle attacks.”

pulled out, Ben Whiting, a TAFE friend. This is ironic because as it happened there were only two on the 1957 walk, my father and fellow CMW member Peter Reis.

By doing this walk I proved to myself that, although I wasn't an experienced bushwalker like my father and somewhat older than he was at the time, with basic skills and proper planning it is possible to do walks such as this one.

We left the cars at Carlons Farm at around 9am and headed off down Breakfast Creek. We were familiar with this section as a number of our TAFE walks started and ended at Carlons Farm. The report we used didn't mention the stinging nettles in what has become known as Nettle Gully, the lower section of Carlons Track beside Breakfast Creek. Prior to the walk, I checked with my father about the presence of nettles in the gully and sure enough they were there in 1957, but didn't rate a mention as it went without saying that there were nettles in that part of Carlons Gully. I imagine they wouldn't have been as bad back then. Despite hacking at any protruding on the track and doing our best to keep arms and hands well above them, we both fell victim to stinging nettle attacks.



The Coxs River crossing just after Breakfast Creek  
Andy Mathers



Breakfast Creek was slow going with the track continually disappearing from one side and appearing on the other. We were aware that our progress was slower than our target. How did the 1957 party get to the Coxs in an hour and a half we pondered? They must have been running we concluded.

We missed the short-cut track across a spur which Breakfast Creek snakes around, giving us some unintended scrambling to do to get back down to the creek. On our return trip we found the short-cut track a little further down the creek.

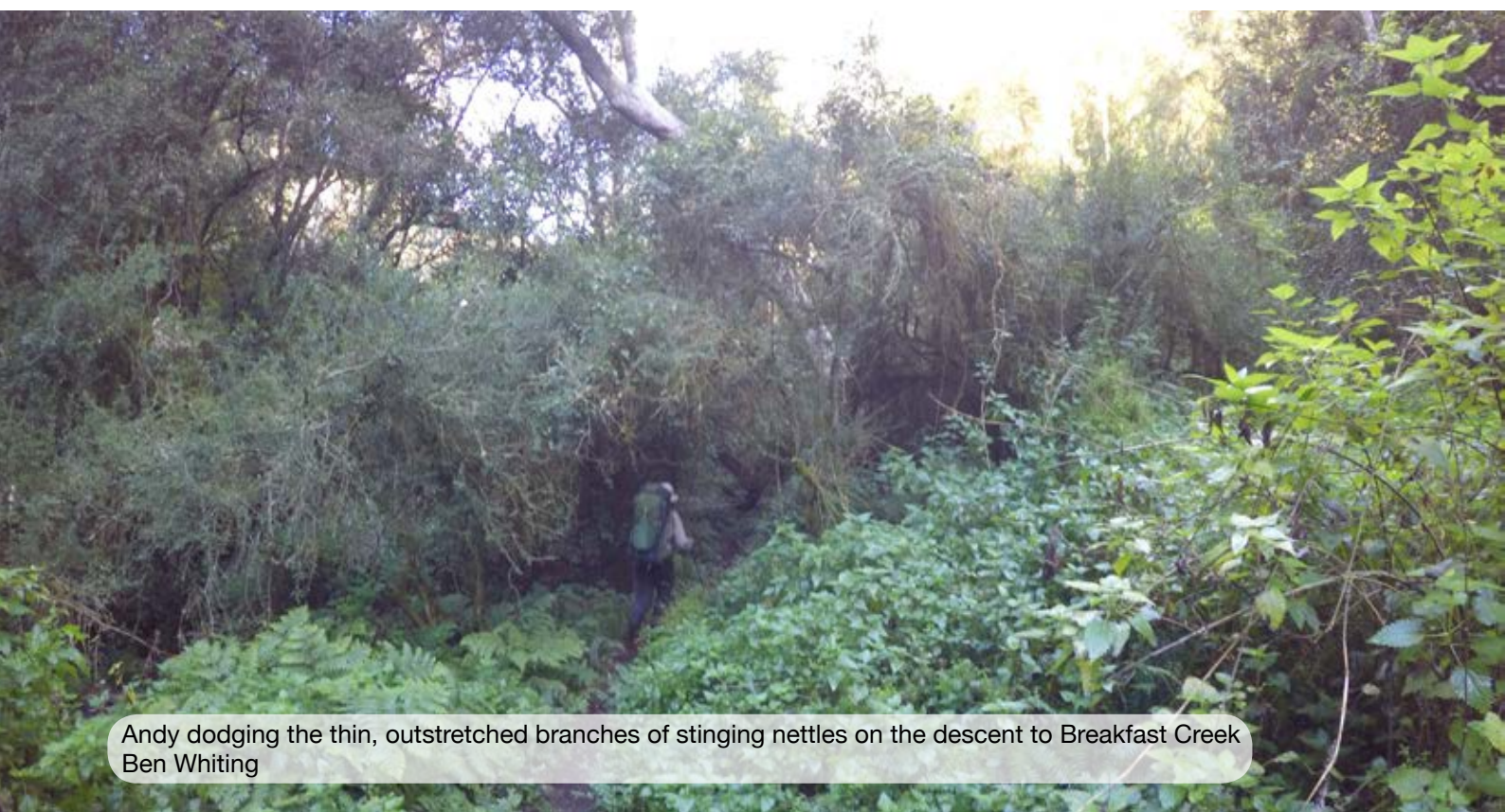
At about noon we reached the Coxs, almost an hour and a half after our target time. At this point I began to wonder if we would reach our goal before having to turn back. Luckily we had allowed an extra day, I thought to myself.

We wandered a short way downstream and found a place where the river was shallow and wide enough to be crossed without getting much more than our calves wet. The policy we learned at TAFE is that if you can see the bottom and it is sand or small river pebbles with no risk of cuts or sprained ankles then it is okay to remove shoes. The section we found met the criteria and so we removed shoes as neither of us had river crossing shoes. The upside of this method is that the shoes are dry for the remainder of the walk, and the downside is that it takes

some time to dry feet and remove sand from the feet and between the toes. The water was extremely cold and painful, however not as cold as in 1957 when the Coxs was frozen. The warmth of the sun soon relieved the painful feet as we dried them.

“... if you can see the bottom and it is sand or small river pebbles with no risk of cuts or sprained ankles then it is okay to remove shoes.

After a quick bite to eat we were ready to take on the ascent to Scrubbers Saddle, a 250 metre rise over 450 metre distance. It was pretty tough going up to the saddle, with trees and scrub often blocking our view of our objective so at times we weren't sure if we were still aiming at the middle of the saddle. There was no clear track to follow and the tracks that were there were possibly animal tracks and not necessarily going where we wanted to go. At times I was questioning my fitness level and wondering if this was too much; after all, the 1957 group were about 30 years younger than I was. How much more difficult it must have been for them to have to contend with the cold wind and snow as well! We were pleased to see a stone cairn right in front of us as we arrived at the top of the slope confirming that we were exactly where we were aiming for, the middle of the saddle. We stopped and had a well-earned, belated lunch. I had



Andy dodging the thin, outstretched branches of stinging nettles on the descent to Breakfast Creek  
Ben Whiting



planned to have wraps with salami, salad and cheese but all I could get my head around was the old staple of crackers, cheese and vegemite. As it happened, Ben had the same thing.

After lunch we set off along the ridge with Mount O'Reilly as our next objective. We couldn't have asked for better weather to walk in and before long we were on the summit of Mount O'Reilly looking along the Krungle Bungle Ranges toward Mount Jenolan. Ben and I had a special reason for getting to the summit of Mount Jenolan as it had been the objective of one of our TAFE walks that was cut short due to a classmate spraining an ankle.

The Krungle Bungle Ranges are like nothing I've seen anywhere. The ridge is quite narrow and is made up of varying sized chunks of granite. Vegetation is quite sparse and so we made good time along the ridge despite the trip hazards due to loose rocks and fallen trees. We felt quite satisfied when we reached the summit of Mount Jenolan, an achievement we had been denied last year on our TAFE walk.

The sun was setting as we reached Mt Queahgong, our last big climb for the day, approximately 1000 metres higher than we were at the Breakfast Creek junction.

We spent what was probably a bit too long taking photos and admiring the view as we ended up making our way to Hawk Fell Saddle by head torch. At about 6pm we found a suitable place to camp on the saddle at the base of the spur leading up Mount Gouougang and settled for the night. We were still about an hour and a half behind our target time. Not bad, I thought to myself.

“The Krungle Bungle Ranges are like nothing I've seen anywhere.”

We weren't in too much of a hurry to set off the next morning, still feeling the strain of all the climbing the previous day. We had decided to leave the tents set up to dry and headed off with just food, water and the essential emergency equipment at about 9am.

The summit of Mount Guouogang was as we expected from the trip report, with small saplings making it difficult to move and visibility of the summit obscured and not very





obvious due to its domed top. We were quite pleased to come into a clearing and see a huge stone cairn marking the summit of Mount Guouogang.

After taking the compulsory photographs and signing the log book we returned to our camp around 11am to pack up and commence the downward journey home.

We took longer than anticipated getting back to Mount Jenolan due to some navigational errors, largely because we were making better time than expected and went over Mount Queahgong without realising it. From Mount Jenolan we ran and skated down the scree slope of Gasper Buttress. The northerly sun was beating down on us as it moved to the western horizon in a race against us making our way back to the Coxs River and ultimately our cars.

The Coxs River was a welcome sight as the sun began to drop below the mountain range we had walked along the previous day. This section of the river was deeper than the section we crossed the day before but was still easily crossed with shoes off, however we ended up wet almost to our hips which was even more painful. The walk back along the Coxs was hindered in parts where we chose to do some scrambling, almost rock climbing, to avoid sections where the track end and the only other option was getting back in the river.

The last of the light was fading as we arrived back at Breakfast Creek. Before long we were finding our way along Breakfast Creek by head torch light which made it nearly impossible to find the track when it appeared to disappear and reappear on the other side. Progress was slow and we still had the tricky short cut to negotiate, which we had trouble with in broad daylight, so when we came across a suitable reasonably flat area we decided to call it a night and make camp. We treated ourselves to a camp fire as compensation for spending the extra night.

“... we ended up wet almost to our hips which was even more painful.”

The next day we continued to make our way up Breakfast Creek. We found the short cut track quite easily and saw where we went wrong the previous day. We had headed up what looked like the track too soon, the track we wanted was further down the creek.

From Breakfast Creek we headed back up Carlons Gully to the cars. It seemed to take ages, so close and yet so far, more uphill, again and then, at last, the car park was in sight. Back at the cars we were feeling quite pleased with our efforts. We congratulated each other on our achievements, reaching not one but two objectives, Mount Jenolan and Mt Guouogang.





The following is the report that inspired me to do the walk. It was written by my father, Kevin Mathers, in 1957. He did the walk with fellow Coast and Mountain Walkers member Peter Reis. As it turned out, due to the weather conditions it was quite a different walk to the one I did in 2017.

### Conquering the Giant in 1957

It was indeed an ominous sign, thick ice on a puddle in Carlons yard at 9am With hands in pockets, woollen berets pulled over our ears and a frozen nose a piece we were on the move to conquer the giant of the Mountains - Mount Guouogang. Overseer of the Wild Dog Mountains it soars to 4300 feet and commands an unsurpassed view over much of the area.

The route was by way of Breakfast Creek Coks River, Scrubber's Hump and the Krungle Bungle Range including Mount Jenolan and Mount Queahgong. The journey down Breakfast Creek was highlighted by fantastic patches of frost, with spindly ice crystals up to half an inch long crowded on logs and stones.

The day frowned miserably with overcast skies and valiant attempts by Hughie to send down rain. All of these ended in showers of "sago snow", the temperature being far too low for puny rain to survive its long journey without freezing. There was, however, no suggestion that the climb be abandoned due to the inclement weather, because climbing was the only alternative to freezing.

The Coks was crossed at 10.45am accompanied by the usual "Tail down, feet up in the air draining ritual" before which Piere shot off into the scrub like a rocket with legs flailing the ground in an effort to recover his "lost" feet.

A little further downstream, the surface of a backwater attracted our attention. "That's ice" saith I. "Rats and other things" saith he, "anyone knows the Coks doesn't freeze". However, after bouncing numerous small stones off the surface, the point was conceded. The ice was about as thick as a dinner plate and covered an area about the size of the clubroom floor and this was almost mid-day!

Leaving the Coks we headed up the side of the "Long Ridge", the warmth generated by the steep climb to Scrubbers Saddle being quickly dissipated by the icy blast blowing across the ridge from the west.

Lunch, in the lee of a groundsheet, was quickly removed from the agenda and the climb resumed up the easy and comparatively open ridge.

The grade steepened as the rocky slopes of Mount Jenolan fell underfoot, and the patched of mountain holly and springy saplings made progress even more painful than before. The broken, rock strewn peak was reached at 3 o'clock and after a hurriedly eaten orange we turned to face Queahgong, linked with Jenolan by a saddle 500 feet below.



North from Mt Jenolan towards the Jenolan River, Kanangra Boyd National Park on day 2  
Andy Mathers



As we pushed our way through the stinging scrub on the side of QUEAHGONG, light snow began to fall “you beaut and wacho” I said, little knowing that I’d wish the stuff to blazes before the weekend was over.

At about 4.30pm with a gale blowing across the ridge, we decided to call it a day. Camp was made in the lee of a clump of trees on Hawkfell Saddle over a thousand feet below our goal.

As time was running out, it was decided that an early rising on the morrow was necessary or we must surely turn back – only an hour away from the summit.

Like true C.M.W.s, the improbability of this early rising was the cause of a fitful sleep highlighted by yours truly announcing with great gusto “arise, it’s 6.15am and we must away”. A sleep-soddened face with a bristling leer scornfully replied “Silly clot; It’s half past three, the hour hand is the shorter of the two.”

A fire was painfully coaxed alight at 6.30am in the gloom of a frosty dawn and daylight made it apparent that the snow was starting to fall heavily. Breakfast was finished with a steaming cup of tea, the last of our precious quart of water from 3000 feet below.

“After being showered with snow from these saplings, the trig was mounted in clear sunshine ...

We moved off without packs just after eight o’clock in the face of a howling westerly blowing snow across our bows like vast squadrons of miniature jets.

The snow was quite thick on the saddle below the peak, covering the ground with a thick white carpet and at the risk of being called uncomplimentary names I would like to clearly state that snowmen, although not quite the size usually encountered were built on the slopes of Mount Guouogang in the winter of 1957.

The summit of this particular mountain is characterised by the interminable forest of saplings planted six inches apart. After being showered with snow from these saplings, the trig was mounted in clear sunshine, a few snow splashed comments made in the visitors book and our leave taken from this frozen and forsaken spot.

The ridge between Guouogang and Queahgong was quickly being covered with heavy snow and likewise the two unfortunate bods stumbling along it as we made our way back to the Cox via Mount Jenolan and the Gasper Buttress.

While slithering down the endless scree slope of the Gasper, visions of great pots of tea loomed in front of us and the thirst so effectually suppressed for the last two days took complete charge.



Ben walking through head-high grass trees on the ridge near Mount Jenolan  
Andy Mathers



We loafed for an hour or so by the Coxes, drinking numerous cups of tea and basking in the warmth of the glorious winter sunshine. This was obviously turned on either as reparation for the constant buffeting dealt out to us or to engender kind thoughts of this country in our friend who would be leaving it for some time.

As we staggered up Carlons Gully by torch light, it was apparent that we had tarried too long over our delayed lunch by the banks of old Father Cox.

Spurred on by the incentive under the front seat of the car, we raced past Carlons Farm and collapsed in a smouldering heap, the journey finished.

This was truly a "Swan song" in more ways than one I thought, as two pairs of boots were thrown into the car never to be used again.

In 2013 Andy took a voluntary redundancy from his corporate job and began his journey to work in outdoor recreation, which got him into bushwalking. He now has qualifications as an outdoor guide, in abseiling and in canyoning. He works as an outdoor guide and outdoor education instructor. Andy has always enjoyed the outdoors and was encouraged by his father's passion. Through his father he was introduced to skiing, camping and the beach. He is a member of a ski club that his father established. In the late 2000s he got into kayaking, the highlight of which was a crossing of West Bass Strait in 2010.

Kevin Mathers was the editor of the CMW magazine *Into The Blue*. In the late 1950s, probably 1959, he wrote an editorial *Why is a Bushwalker* below.



## EDITORIAL.

### WHY IS A BUSHWALKER.

This pertinent question has often arisen and will always arise while there are bushwalkers and I am sure there is a deep and profound answer.

Why will man suffer pain and privation, be battered by the elements and seemingly enjoy it, all for the glimpse, the smell, the touch of something really quite commonplace.

In this world of change and decay man is constantly striving for security, security in society, security in mind, security in life in general.

We as bushwalkers have been given the opportunity to move and live amongst, to observe things secure and everlasting aye almost eternal, the land we walk through, its mountains and valleys, the skies above us, the birds, animals and trees we see on every hand. The great power of the universe is there for us to see, even capture and carry into our workaday lives, the fury of the storm, the awesome heights and depths, the steadfastness of the forest giants, the rejuvenating power of the burnt out bush. These are the things that will not change, the things to which we can tie our flimsy craft and as with most great gifts, this gift is accompanied by an obligation, the obligation to recognise these things, preserve them and hand them down unspoiled to those who follow.



# Heritage Tracks

## Robert Green

The 2003 fires in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) destroyed 23 huts and did enormous damage to ecosystems, but it's an ill wind that blows no good.

Main Range from Jagungal  
Robl



There were some beneficial side effects. One of these was to bring about a general recognition, by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and others, that the high country huts had a real heritage value which was in danger of being lost, and that greater efforts had to be made to protect that heritage.

A second benefit arose out of the nature of the fires themselves. Because they were so destructive, a substantial amount of regrowth was removed which revealed geographical features, such as tracks, which had become overgrown. This meant that, for a whole generation of bushwalkers, tracks were revealed which, although not forgotten, had largely disappeared. This gave an opportunity for the old tracks to be rediscovered and recorded by GPS, so as to know precisely where they went.

Separately at first, but, later, together, a number of bushwalkers worked with Graham Scully of the Huts and Heritage Section of Kosciuszko Huts Association to search for and record the old huts, other ruins, graves and mine sites which had been exposed by the fires.

This led to an effort to “ground truth”, i.e., verify the precise location of many of the old sites in KNP. Several hundred sites have been located and recorded but there is more work to be done. The work so far has led to the rediscovery of old tracks, lost huts and other features. It was assisted by the work of David Scott, a conservation architect who had amassed thousands of records about the park and its people, including many old maps.

That work led to the publication of [Exploring the Jagungal Wilderness](#) which aimed to fill a gap in the literature by identifying routes, tracks and places of interest in this part of KNP. It was hoped that by putting these old maps in front of the bushwalking public and including precise GPS positions for the tracks shown on them that this would open the park up to long and short walks, many of which are off the beaten track.

“Several hundred sites have been located and recorded but there is more work to be done.”

One thing which became clear was that the old routes chosen by the stockmen made perfect sense. They had the benefit of seeing a countryside which had been cleared by stock. Their bridle tracks followed logical and reasonably direct routes to their destination. Even if the tracks faded away, as many have, we at least now know where they went. That makes it a lot easier for us to traverse the same country. The book recorded those routes.

It was hoped that the book would encourage walkers to make use of them, but it was also acknowledged that the omission from modern maps of the old tracks might result in their disuse with the result that regrowth would reclaim them and they would disappear again.

As mentioned above one of the beneficial results of the fires was the recognition by NPWS of the heritage value of the huts. This has led to NPWS now taking an active role in preserving that heritage. What is now clear is that the huts never existed in isolation and that the tracks which joined them are part of our heritage too.

As John Blay’s book on [The Bundian Way](#) shows, the tracks used by later European settlers often followed the routes used for thousands of years by Aboriginal people. His book dealt with the routes between Twofold Bay and Dead Horse Gap, but other, more northern, Aboriginal people undoubtedly used other routes to access the more northern parts of the park.

Of these the routes along the Burrungubugge River and the Gungarlin River were logical accesses to the Jagungal area, which like the Main Range further south were used by seasonal moth hunters. The names Dicky Cooper Bogong, the Big Bogong and Jackys Lookout are evidence of this.

Later, these routes were used by the graziers. The Snowy Plains Fire Trail and the route through Kidmans to Mawsons both follow such logical routes that it seems likely that they were used by Aborigines long before Europeans arrived.







Other tracks were connected with the mining heritage of the area. Equipment was taken to the Grey Mare Mine by way of Snowy Plains and then by a route south of Mt Jagungal, which was later used by the Snowy Mountains Authority becoming, in the process, the Strawberry Hill Fire Trail.

Early prospectors, going to Kiandra, used tracks from the south which led through Doubtful Gap, along Diggers Creek and up Arsenic Ridge.

The [NPWS website](#) explains the role of national parks in the following way. "NSW national parks not only provide areas for social and recreational use, they also preserve biodiversity, heritage sites and Aboriginal culture." In line with this policy, at some sites in the park, like Boltons and Naphthalis homesteads near Diggers Creek, NPWS has erected boards with photographs and an explanation of the site. In much the same way, the tracks also need to be marked and, where appropriate, explained.

The position today is that walking pressure alone will not be enough to keep these old routes open. What is needed is for some minor work to be done on strategic tracks to keep them open for walkers. What is being

suggested is that for a few tracks and for relatively short distances work be done to clear regrowth so as to maintain walking tracks just wide enough to enable walkers to follow the tracks in single file.

This map shows many of the old tracks but not all of them. There were also tracks from the Pretty Plain area through Ryries Parlour to the Grey Mare Fire Trail.

The benefits will be that this part of our heritage will be preserved and access will be given to part of the national park which is likely to become inaccessible for all but a hardy few. If the following tracks were given minimal attention, several circuit routes would be opened up which would give access to parts of the park which are now receiving fewer visitors than is warranted. In the case of Pretty Plain Hut a large amount of time, effort and money was spent on rebuilding it. However, without access from Grey Mare Hut and the creation of a circular route passing through Pretty Plain, it is likely that an interesting part of the park is likely to be under used.

“What is needed is for some minor work to be done on strategic tracks to keep them open for walkers.”



Pretty Plain Hut  
Stephen Lake



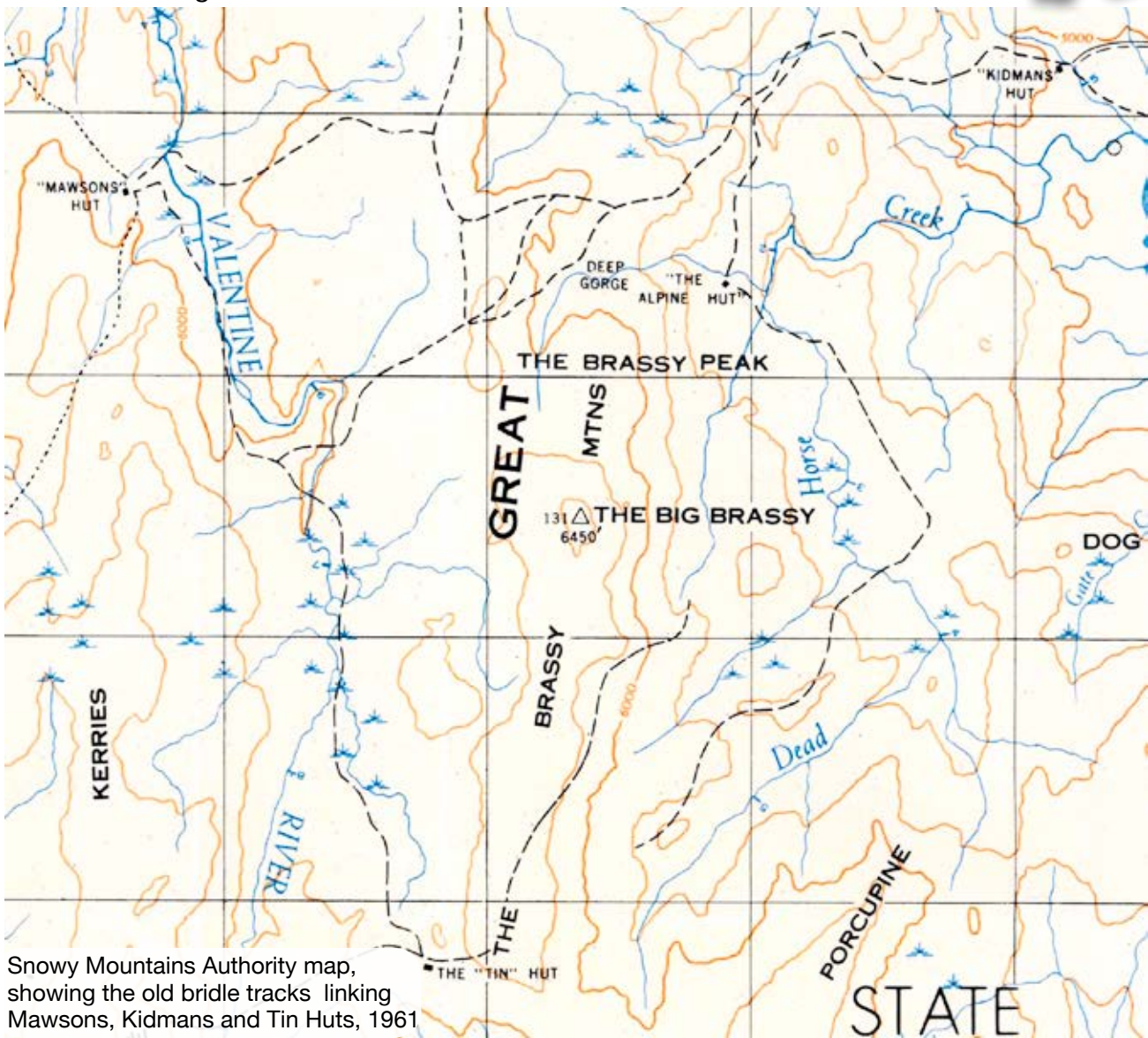
The following tracks, a good number of which are shown on the map, which need attention are:

1. Strumbo Hill, east of the Grey Mare Fire Trail, for about 700 metres along the alignment of the overgrown, but still visible, Strawberry Hill Fire Trail.
2. The track from Grey Mare Hut west along the old Strumbo Fire Trail (to give access to the Pretty Plain area).
3. The Bulls Peaks Fire Trail south of Cesjacks Hut up Smiths Perisher for about 500 metres.
4. The track up a specific ridge west of Kidmans Hut from the Burrungubugge Gorge to the plateau above for a distance of about 500 metres. The benefit is to improve access to the Mawsons Hut-Tin Hut-Valentine Hut areas. The route leads past an old stockman's camp found by Greg Hutchison after the 2003 fire.
5. Arsenic Ridge.

This work which needs to be done is relatively minor. It would not require machinery other than hand-held tools. If NPWS agreed, there would doubtless be enough volunteers to do much of the work under NPWS supervision. The cost would be low and fund raising would no doubt be available to minimise cost to government.

The 2003 fires made it possible for the old tracks to be recorded and it is now time to take some small steps to prevent the loss of that heritage.

Robert has written a book [Exploring the Jagungal Wilderness](#). Klaus Hueneker described this book as "The most detailed coverage of track and hut sites in the Jagungal Wilderness ever compiled. Chapter after chapter, map after map, reveal numerous routes and sites between Snowy Plain in the east and the Grey Mare Range to the west, and between Island Bend in the south and Happy Jacks Plain to the north."



Snowy Mountains Authority map, showing the old bridle tracks linking Mawsons, Kidmans and Tin Huts, 1961





Mawson Hut with Mt Jagungal in the distance  
Tony



# Photo Gallery



The disappearing sun from the middle of the Prince of Wales Range  
MJD

Competition: Tasmania January 2013



# BWA Photo Competition





# Landscapes

## December 2016

### WINNER



Evening mists at Pigsty  
North-north-west

The first of three attempts to redo the Southern Range - South Coast circuit started with beautiful weather and inevitably went downhill from there. But the bits that mattered - Alexandra, revisiting Hippo and La Perouse - were done in almost perfect conditions. At least I made the most of the last bit of good weather before it all went pear-shaped.



Towards triumph  
and tragedy  
John Walker



Rare summer flow  
Brian Eglinton



The aftermath  
landsmith



Hazards from "behind"  
Cameron Semple







# Non-landscapes December 2016

## WINNER



Dragonfly daze  
liandsmith

I was house sitting in Gloucester and daily went down to the river in the park to try and shoot nature. There were varied dragonflies aplenty, including this one, one of the few I've never managed to get identified. The reason I like the shot is the lighting but it's also the reason why it's difficult to single out what type it is.



Enfolded  
Snowzone



*Blandfordia Punicea*,  
south-west Tasmania  
John Walker



White-bellied Sea-eagle  
Cameron Semple



Summer hiking in Tassie  
Andrew Smyth



Blasted hitchhikers!  
North-north-west



Torrens River cascade  
Brian Eglinton







# Tasmania

## December 2016

### WINNER



Avalanche Couloir  
Cameron Semple

Avalanche Couloir on Kunanyi/Mt Wellington is a section of The Organ Pipes cliffs. Despite the feel of this image, it was actually quite a nice day to be up the mountain. This shot was snapped while waiting to climb a nearby route on the cliffs.



Reynolds Falls  
Caedence Kuepper



Another change  
approaching  
North-north-west



Solitude of  
the south-west  
John Walker







## Other States December 2016

### WINNER



Orange threadtail  
damselfly  
landsmith

This is a not uncommon damselfly that I first shot on Tamborine Mountain in Queensland, obviously distinguished by its bright orange stripes. Damselflies tend to stop a lot more than dragonflies so, once you see them, it's often easier to get a shot.



Brightness  
Snowzone



Pooraka Wetlands  
Brian Eglinton



*Wollemia nobilis*  
John Walker







# Landscapes January 2017

## WINNER



A little hungover in the  
morning  
North-north-west

A walk I had long wanted to do was to approach Ironstone from the west, drop down the northern face to pick up the track, then follow it down and link up with the other Smoky Creek tracks to spend a night on Mother Cummings. Finding a campsite was tricky as the plateau was wetter than I'd ever seen it, with barely any flat open ground between the pools, but oh so worth it when the morning clouds shifted and lifted to give another bluebird day.



Osmiridium Beach bluff  
Andrew Smyth



Hanging garden  
Tom Brennan



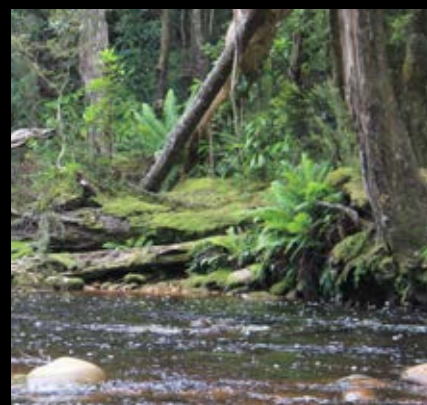
Through the arch  
John Walker



Battlelines  
Brian Eglinton



Lake Parramatta Reserve  
landsmith



Louisa River  
Graham51







# Non-landscapes

## January 2017

### WINNER



Australian tiger at Lake  
Parramatta Reserve  
landsmith

This reserve sits right in the middle of suburbia. You'd never know it was there unless you went looking. I was lucky to have a friend take me there. I had seen lots of tigers up at Woolgoolga on the golf course I used to play at and the attendant rainbow bee eaters that feast on them, but I'd never seen them this far south. Lake Parramatta is an old water supply dam with history going back over 100 years and a lovely sandstone wall.



Bug spotting  
Geevesy



Vanishing Falls,  
SW Tasmania  
Andrew Smyth



Some colours of scoparia  
Graham51



Get your own rock  
John Walker



Delights of  
a foggy morning  
North-north-west



Calculating...  
Tom Brennan







# Tasmania

## January 2017

### WINNER



In the garden  
Wilkography

"A Day In The Garden" - it had been a while between walks for me when I created this image. However, I found my way to a spot that I have wanted to visit for a while.

A fairly strenuous hike is quickly forgotten when you arrive at a scene like this, pitch your tent and spend a day exploring its many wonders. With so much going on in my life at the moment I had forgotten how much it meant to be able to visit the wilderness areas of Tasmania.

The emotional high from achieving a goal that takes a fair bit of physical effort, combined with the clear mindedness from leaving the world behind, was exhilarating.

This image reminds me whenever you get caught up in the whirlwind of life, don't forget to get back to what makes you happy. If its a day in the garden or a three day hike, don't forget there is more to life than the walls our mind constructs for us.



*Aurora Australis*, Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair NP  
Azza



Good morning, Anne  
Thornbill



Towards The Thumbs from  
Mount Wright at sunset  
Doogs



Nothing like a bit of fog  
during waratah season  
North-north-west



And did those feet  
in ancient time  
Geevesy



Mist on the New River  
Andrew Smyth







# Other States January 2017

## WINNER



In the cathedral  
Tom Brennan

The bottom of the 40 metre abseil into Heart Attack Canyon hardly sees the sun, but does glow from the light reflecting off the dripping walls.



Last light on  
Walk the Yorke  
Brian Eglinton



Twin Falls,  
Springbrook National  
Park  
Caedence Kuepper



Female wandering  
percher  
landsmith



Below the old weir  
John Walker

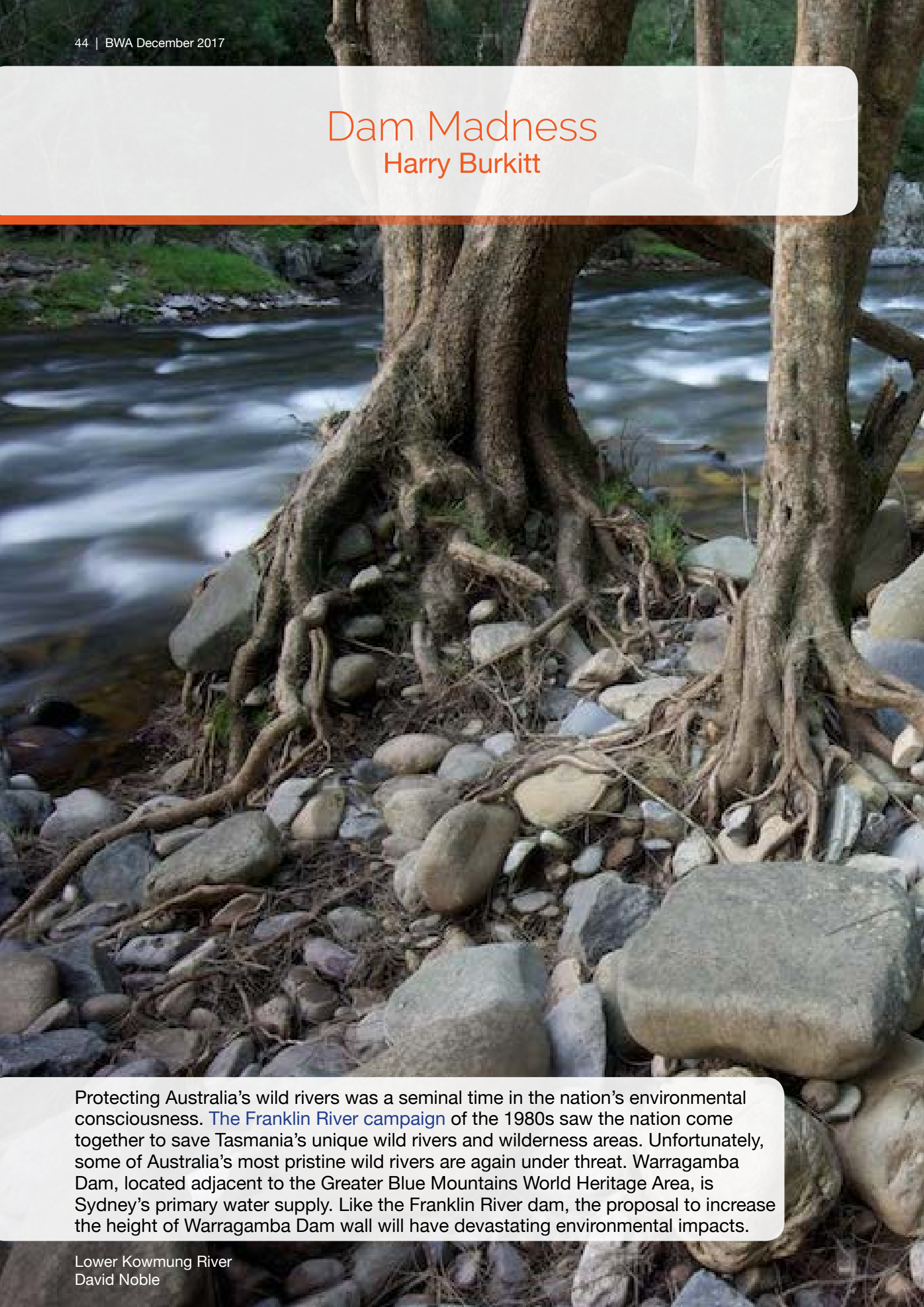






# Dam Madness

Harry Burkitt

A photograph of a riverbank with large, exposed tree roots and rocks. The roots are thick and gnarled, extending from the trees down to the rocky shore. The river is flowing in the background, creating white water rapids. The foreground is filled with smooth, grey and brown rocks.

Protecting Australia's wild rivers was a seminal time in the nation's environmental consciousness. [The Franklin River campaign](#) of the 1980s saw the nation come together to save Tasmania's unique wild rivers and wilderness areas. Unfortunately, some of Australia's most pristine wild rivers are again under threat. Warragamba Dam, located adjacent to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, is Sydney's primary water supply. Like the Franklin River dam, the proposal to increase the height of Warragamba Dam wall will have devastating environmental impacts.



The dam forms Lake Burragorang which can hold 2000 gigalitres of water, equivalent to four Sydney Harbours. Lake Burragorang currently inundates large areas of the Burragorang, Coxs, and Kedumba Valleys.

In June 2016, then NSW Premier Mike Baird announced that the Warragamba Dam wall would be raised by 14 metres for flood mitigation. The cost of the project was said to be close to \$1 billion, with cost blow-outs likely given the record of many government infrastructure projects.

There is a very good reason why large dams have not been built in NSW for the last 30 years. By their very nature, dams have devastating impacts on the natural environment. Unfortunately, from time to time, governments still see political opportunity in announcing environmentally destructive dam projects when viable alternatives are available. The raising of Warragamba Dam wall typifies such political opportunism.

### **Damming destruction**

While at first glance a 14 metre raising may seem small, the increased height of the dam would hold 1000 gigalitres of water - the equivalent of an additional two Sydney Harbours on top of the existing dam. It would inundate and destroy 1000 hectares of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, 4700 hectares of national parks, and

1800 hectares of declared Wilderness Area. Five kilometres of the Kowmung River, one of NSW's few remaining wild rivers, will be frequently drowned under Lake Burragorang.

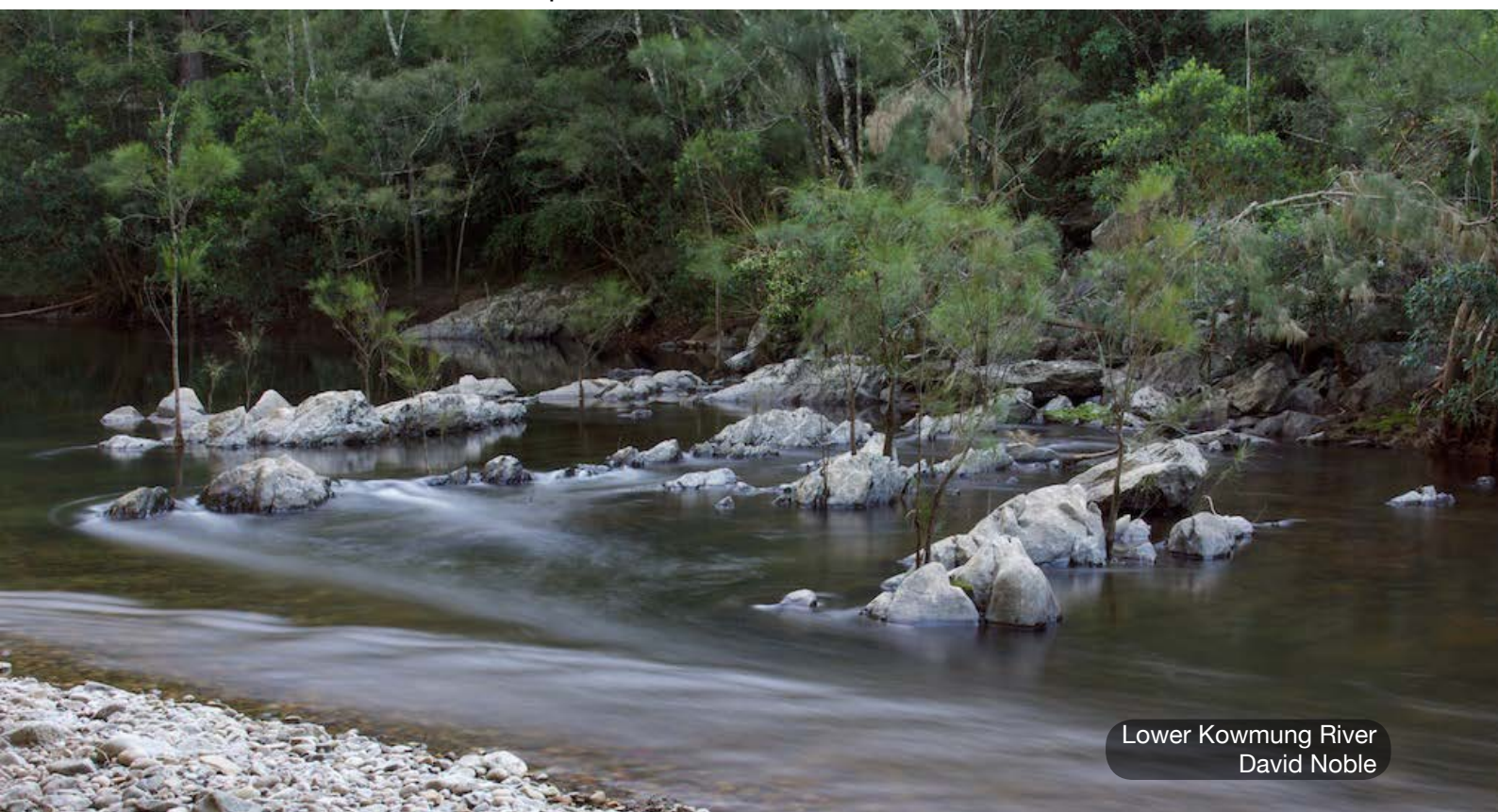
These precious and highly protected landscapes would be submerged for months at a time. Some of our most-loved Blue Mountains bushwalking destinations, including the Kedumba Valley, would be scarred by a permanent ring of weeds and sediment.

The denuded sediment ring would be visible from Echo Point, Katoomba, home of the iconic Three Sisters.

The raised dam would irreparably damage World Heritage Listed environments and put the Blue Mountains' \$400 million a year tourism industry at risk.

“These precious and highly protected landscapes would be submerged for months at a time.”

The Government is embarking upon an engineer's solution to what is a complex problem. Raising Warragamba Dam wall will not eliminate flooding downstream. The Warragamba River makes up only half of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley catchment area. Water originating from the south-eastern and northern half of the catchment would still cause flooding.





### Flawed reasoning

So, why is the government embarking upon such an expensive, ineffective and environmentally destructive project? We know from recent statements by Water Utilities Minister, Don Harwin, that the NSW Government plans to open 2355 hectares of downstream floodplains to property developers. The property developers want to build sprawling new suburbs across the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplains. This is a seriously dangerous idea.

Property developers think that raising Warragamba Dam will allow them to falsely claim that the thousands of new houses they build will be safe from flooding. Floods are a natural and unstoppable phenomenon in the valley. Raising Warragamba Dam will by no means stop floods from happening. At best, a raised dam wall would marginally reduce the height of some floods. Building houses on floodplains puts thousands of lives at risk.

In terms of managing floods in existing suburbs, flood levee construction, pre-flood release of dam waters and improved evacuation routes are all alternative options which can be implemented at less cost, while not destroying parts of one of the most protected natural landscapes in Australia. It's simply a no brainer.

Australia's international world heritage obligations cannot be a secondary consideration to an ill-considered dam proposal. The NSW and Australian Governments risk international embarrassment and ridicule if the dam raising proceeds. Rare eucalypt and dry rainforest communities found nowhere else in the world would die from sedimentation, erosion and weed invasion. At least 29 endangered and critically endangered native plant and animal species are found in the proposed destruction zone. A raised dam would put their very existence at risk.

Downstream environmental damage would follow the raising of the dam wall. Longer duration floods would cause river bank

erosion, resulting in a wider and shallower Hawkesbury-Nepean River. Downstream wetlands such as Bakers Lagoon depend on natural floods for nutrient replenishment. These wetlands and their associated wildlife populations would deteriorate.

### Protecting culture

Many Indigenous cultural sites would also fall victim to any raise of the Warragamba Dam wall. The Burratorang Valley was home to the Gandangara people long before Warragamba Dam flooded the valley in 1960. The dam drowned large parts of their land and precious cultural sites. We do not need to repeat this story of destruction with the remaining cultural sites in the rest of the valley.

### Action

Australian history tells us that only people power can stop destructive dam projects. Please, in the coming months, join with us to be part of a growing campaign to save our irreplaceable Blue Mountains World Heritage rivers. Head to [Don't Raise the Dam](#) to sign up, donate and spread the word about the campaign.



Harry is a keen bushwalker and devoted conservationist. He began his journey in environmental advocacy in the campaign to save the internationally significant Cliefden Caves from destruction by a proposed dam. Harry now coordinates the Colong Foundation's Blue Mountains Wild Rivers campaign and sits on the NSW Nature Conservation Council executive board. He is also a part-time history and geology student at the University of Sydney.

“Rare eucalypt and dry rainforest communities found nowhere else in the world would die ...



# Reincarnation

## North-north-west

### Part - The First

I'd like to be a wombat,  
And shit in khaki cubes,  
No need for tents or campstoves,  
Or bloody yabby tubes.

Oh, I'd like to be a wombat,  
'Cause the wombat travels light;  
Eats roots and leaves and then just  
Digs a comfy hole at night.

So I'd like to be a wombat,  
Even though they're rather dumb,  
Short-sighted and real hairy,  
With a body that's half bum.

Still, I'd like to be a wombat,  
'Cause they're built strong, wide and low;  
No scrub nor slope can stop them,  
Where they want to get, they go.

Yes, I'd like to be a wombat,  
And roam the mountains free;  
No passes and no permits,  
Nor damned park entry fee.

So karma if you're list'ning,  
And wish my pain to heal,  
I'd like to be a wombat  
On the next turn of the wheel.



Wombat drawing  
Sally Oakley



### Part - The Second

I still admire the wombat,  
As all true walkers must,  
For when the game's scrub-bashing  
They leave us in the dust.

But reality and karma  
Have conspired to call my bluff  
By reminding me that wombats,  
Just like people, do it tough.

Every inch of progress made  
Must be earned by sweat of brow,  
And sometimes I get lazy,  
(Like, for instance, just right now).

Now this lethargy and ageing  
Have lifted up my eyes  
To another aspiration,  
Which is taken from the skies.

No more earthbound existence!  
Give me feathers and hooked beak;  
I'd rather be a wedgie,  
And soar from peak to peak!

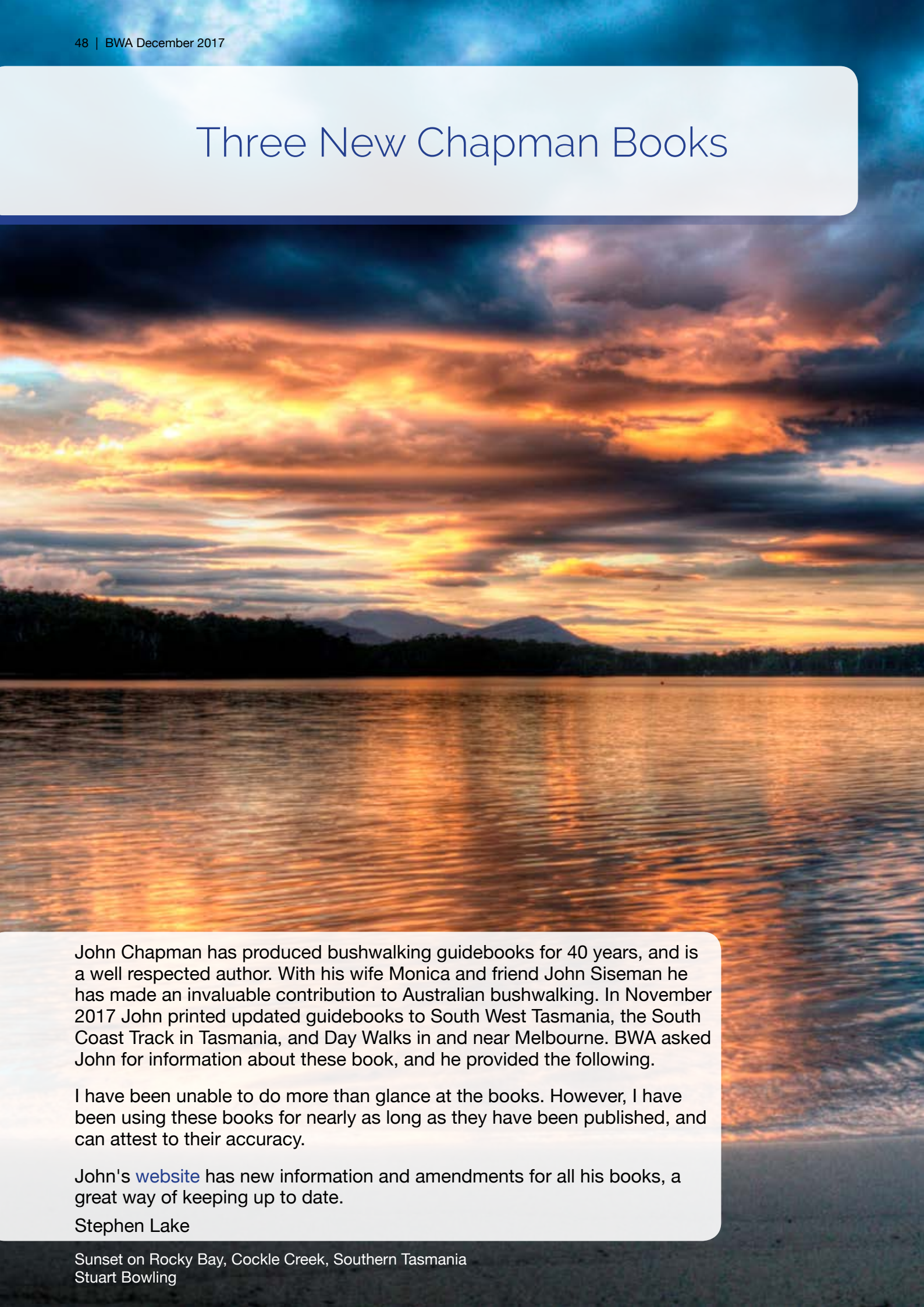
NNW is from Hobart and has spent a lifetime bushwalking. Her photographs often feature in the magazine and calendar.



Wedgie  
Kelly Nowak



## Three New Chapman Books

A full-page background image showing a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds that are illuminated from below by the setting sun, creating a vibrant orange and yellow glow. The sun itself is a bright, glowing orb partially obscured by the clouds. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky and the silhouettes of the distant mountains. The mountains are dark and jagged, with some peaks visible against the lighter sky. The overall scene is peaceful and majestic.

John Chapman has produced bushwalking guidebooks for 40 years, and is a well respected author. With his wife Monica and friend John Siseman he has made an invaluable contribution to Australian bushwalking. In November 2017 John printed updated guidebooks to South West Tasmania, the South Coast Track in Tasmania, and Day Walks in and near Melbourne. BWA asked John for information about these book, and he provided the following.

I have been unable to do more than glance at the books. However, I have been using these books for nearly as long as they have been published, and can attest to their accuracy.

John's [website](#) has new information and amendments for all his books, a great way of keeping up to date.

Stephen Lake

Sunset on Rocky Bay, Cockle Creek, Southern Tasmania  
Stuart Bowling



### South West Tasmania by John Chapman, Edition 6

The wilderness of south-west Tasmania contains some of Australia's most spectacular scenery and is a Mecca for bushwalkers from all over the world. Jagged peaks, massive cliffs, tannin-stained lakes, open plains and deep gorges are intermingled with forest and scrub for which the region is famous. Equally beautiful are the sandy beaches, sharp headlands and tranquil lagoons of the rugged coastline. It presents tremendous variety which has great appeal to those with a sense of adventure. The region contains vast tracts of true wilderness with no roads, few huts and only a few walking tracks. It is this undeveloped nature, as well as the beautiful scenery, which attracts bushwalkers to seek out and experience the isolation, beauty and challenge that is to be found in this corner of Tasmania.

“It is this undeveloped nature, as well as the beautiful scenery, which attracts bushwalkers ...

This book describes the major tracks and walking routes south of the Lyell Highway in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The Southwest and the Franklin Gordon Wild Rivers National Parks have a combined area of one million hectares – a staggering 15% of Tasmania. Within these two, huge parks, a large variety of both short and long walks is possible. While some day walks are described, the majority of this book details overnight and longer walking trips.

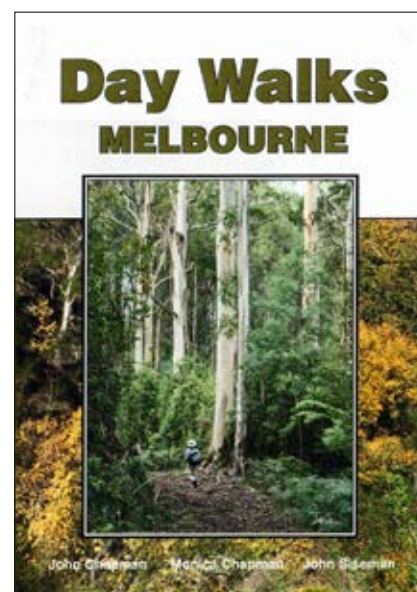
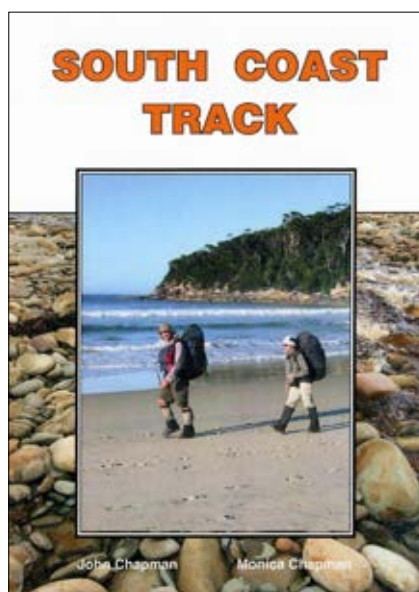
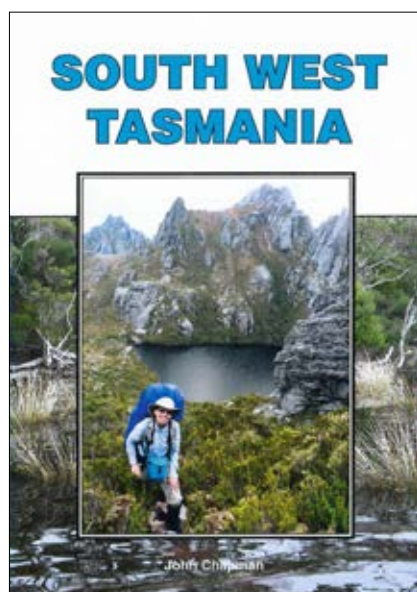
The isolation of the area, the extremely variable weather and roughness of some of the terrain, make many of the longer trips unsuitable for bushwalkers with limited experience. For a first visit, it is suggested to stay on tracked walks such as Frenchmans Cap and the South Coast Track. For a second visit, South West Cape and Mt Anne are suggested which have a mixture of tracks and rough walking pads.

For experienced walkers, the long, tough walks like the Western Arthurs, Federation Peak and the Southern Ranges are the most popular trips. These ranges have some rough walking with many ascents and descents of near-vertical cliffs and gullies. For the really hardy walkers there are even tougher trips to attempt like the West Coast, Vanishing Falls and the Prince of Wales Range.

First published in 1978, this sixth edition, has seen another rewrite and update. Track notes are provided at three different levels of detail and each is designed to suit bushwalkers of varying experience.

### South Coast Track by John and Monica Chapman, Edition 2

The South Coast Track traverses the magnificent southern coastline of Tasmania's Southwest National Park. It is one of the great wilderness walks of the world and is renowned for its pristine beaches, rugged headlands, open moors and dense rainforests. There are numerous rivers to wade and two mountain ranges to cross providing some unique challenges. This





park is an area of outstanding beauty and is a core component of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area which contains one of the largest regions of temperate wilderness in the world.

Eastbound walkers start at a lonely airstrip deep in the wilderness, five day's walk from the nearest road, then walk for a week meeting no other walking tracks until a gravel road at Cockle Creek. The track is generally not signposted, but is fairly easy to follow. The walk cannot be shortened.

While called a "coast" track, the South Coast Track does more than just follow sand dunes and beaches. Parts of it are rugged with high ridges and two mountain ranges extending into the Southern Ocean. The track crosses these ridges and ranges which have between them long stretches of poorly drained moors. Expect to get wet feet on flooded sections of track and when wading rivers and creeks. Calf-deep mud can also be experienced on

“With such diversity Melbourne is an ideal place to explore on foot.”

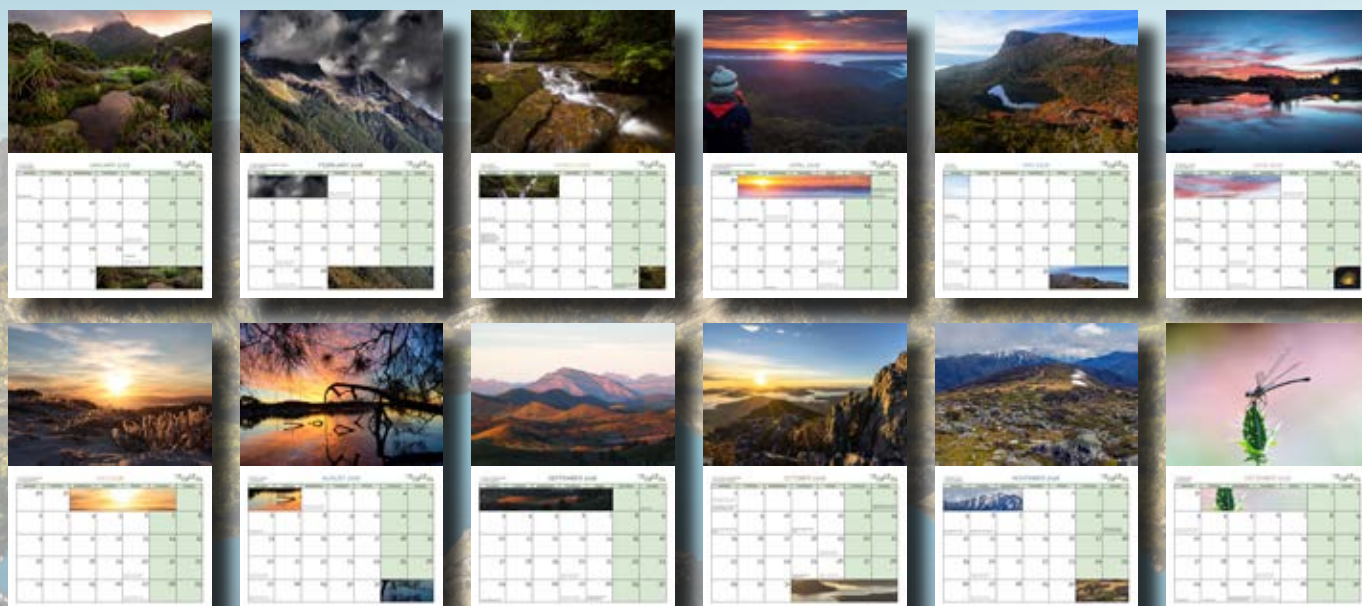
some sections. There are some steep climbs and descents along the way as well as easy walking on long, sandy beaches. Apart from open ground for camping and pit toilets at major campsites, there are no facilities along the track. All visitors must be fully self-sufficient with tents, stoves and all food.

### Day Walks Melbourne, by John and Monica Chapman, and John Siseman, Edition 2

While Melbourne is one of the world's large cities, the bushland in and around the city provides a diverse range of walking landscapes. Renowned for its parks and gardens, Melbourne's surrounding bushland also offers enjoyable walking destinations within reach of the suburbs. There is some beautiful and carried scenery, including sub-alpine forests, rocky peaks, waterfalls and sandy beaches, all within easy reach of the city. With such diversity Melbourne is an ideal place to explore on foot. This guide contains suggestions for walkers of all abilities, with walks in the mountains, parklands and coastal areas. The book has 40 different walking areas and 96 walk variations.



## BUSHWALK AUSTRALIA 2018 CALENDAR



Calendar costs \$15 (including postage in AU). Order your copy (or copies) at [bushwalk.com/store](http://bushwalk.com/store)  
Order early, numbers are limited. Shipment before Christmas.





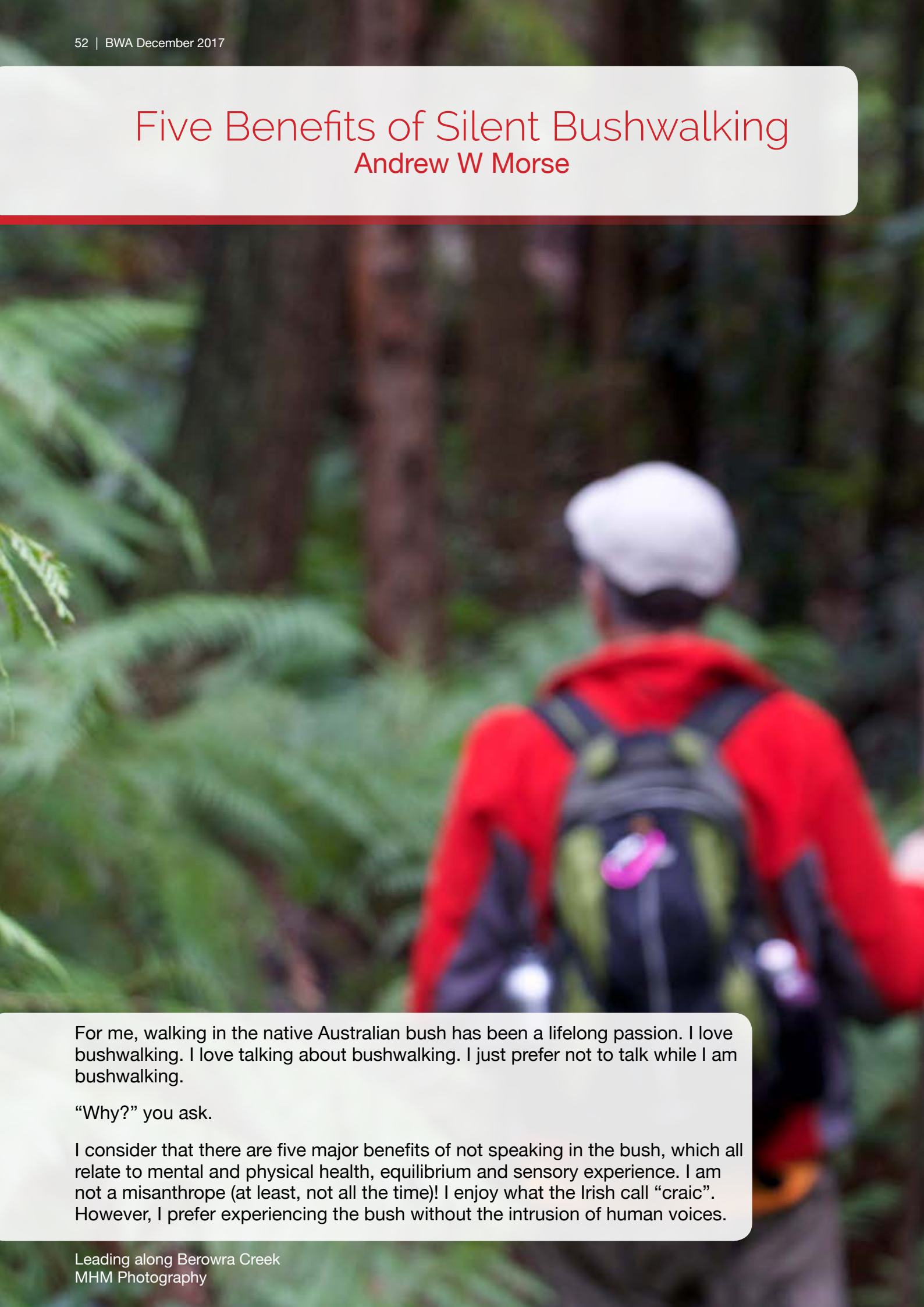


Morning walk along South Cape Bay  
Ian Ross



# Five Benefits of Silent Bushwalking

Andrew W Morse

A person is seen from behind, walking through a dense forest. They are wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, a white cap, and a black backpack with green accents. The forest is lush with green ferns and trees, creating a natural and serene environment.

For me, walking in the native Australian bush has been a lifelong passion. I love bushwalking. I love talking about bushwalking. I just prefer not to talk while I am bushwalking.

“Why?” you ask.

I consider that there are five major benefits of not speaking in the bush, which all relate to mental and physical health, equilibrium and sensory experience. I am not a misanthrope (at least, not all the time)! I enjoy what the Irish call “craic”. However, I prefer experiencing the bush without the intrusion of human voices.



## 1. You hear more

The first and most obvious benefit of not talking while bushwalking is that you hear more.

While walking on a high point of the Maclehosse Trail in the New Territories of Hong Kong, a large group was chatting normally until one person shouted, “Stop. Listen!” We all halted and were immediately alert to any unusual or alarming noises. We were perplexed at the lack of sound, even from the jet-skis, racing around on the waters of Tai Long Wan, far below, until one walker said “But I can’t hear anythi ...”. Only then, did we all realise the intent.

If we do not speak while walking, we allow ourselves to concentrate on the natural ambience. We hear insects, birds and even the rustling of leaves disturbed by a breeze. Who would have thought that you could actually hear the wind?!

“If we do not speak while walking, we allow ourselves to concentrate on the natural ambience.”

Even without speech, we cannot be silent. The unavoidable scrunch of boots on the ground; the swish of branches pushed aside; the rub of synthetic fabrics; the scratch of Velcro; the abrasive ripping of zippers and food packets; and the popping or unscrewing of drink bottle caps; all create unnatural noise.

Whenever my group stops for a short interlude, the lack of these sounds opens the opportunity to hear far more than when we are walking. A break allows us all to enjoy the silence in our own ways. Some favour Vipassana meditation, some look for birds

in high branches, some watch the clouds scudding across the sky and others simply close their eyes and listen.

Subtle birdsong becomes audible. Nearby insects and obscured cascades invade our consciousness. The longer we stand, still and mute, the more natural sounds become clear. By not generating noise apart from footfalls, we also are likely to see more.

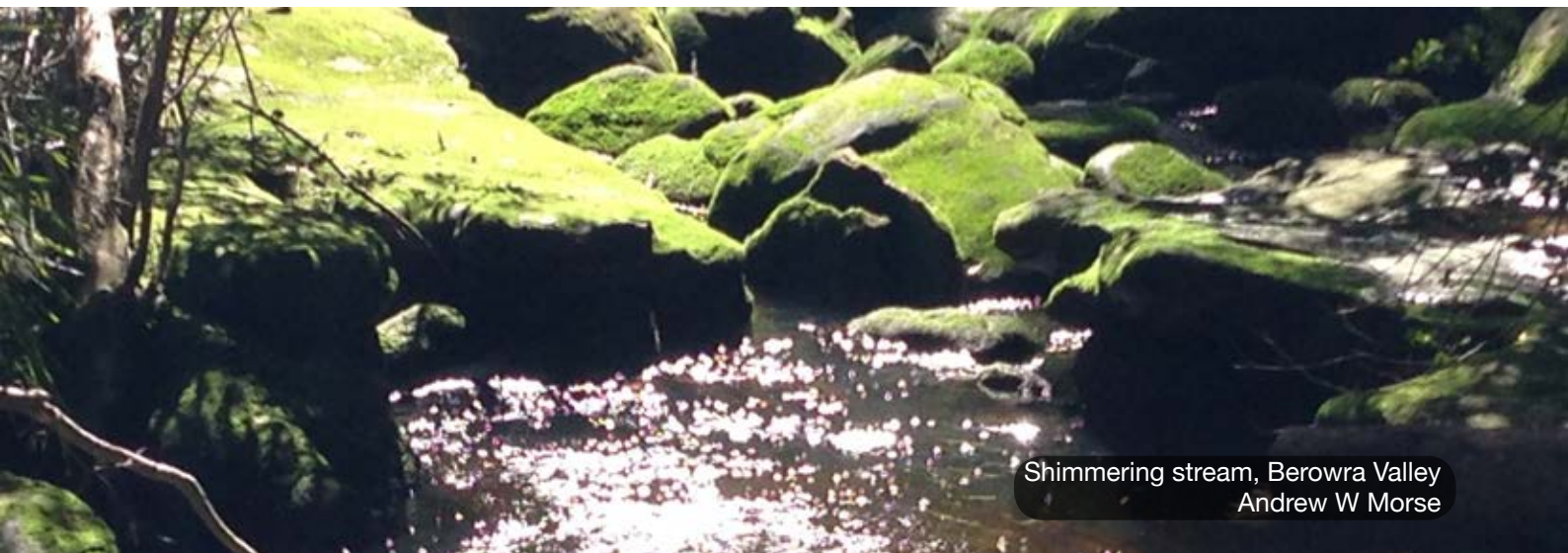
## 2. You see more

Pausing by the side of Berowra Creek, a dozen walkers sat silently. As we appreciated the sunshine, fresh air, tinkling waters and buzzing insects, a one metre-long Eastern Water Dragon appeared on the opposite bank. While these creatures are often wary of people, this particular lizard crossed the creek by rapidly running (on its two back legs) over large boulders. No one moved or spoke.



Eastern water dragon  
Andrew W Morse

Despite our brightly coloured clothes, the reptile remained unconcerned and sat watching us almost within arms length of me, even as some sidled around to take photos. I have extreme doubts that we would have enjoyed such a close visit if we had been less sensitive and more vocal.



Shimmering stream, Berowra Valley  
Andrew W Morse



### 3. You sense more

When one sense is suppressed, the other senses are enhanced. Bushwalking on rough tracks requires constant concentration as to where you place your feet. Near unfenced cliff edges, it's not melodramatic to say that your life can depend on it.



Silence increases the chance of spotting birds  
MHM Photography

Walking into a remote village in rural China, we climbed for three hours, up rock steps on a 40° incline. While the scenery was magnificent, the demand on legs, heart and lungs was extreme. If nothing else, not



Wallaby in the Ku-Ring-gai Wildflower Garden  
MHM Photography

speaking conserved oxygen and ensured that we had a more efficient aerobic exercise. Three days later, walking down slippery stone steps and muddy ground in constant rain, was sufficiently dangerous to demand my absolute attention.

If you are walking *and* talking, your brain has a reduced ability to fully appreciate your surroundings. It is one thing to enjoy the sight of magnificent vistas, majestic trees, vibrant wildflowers, rushing streams and birds flitting around you. It is another to start to feel a part of the environment.



Native wildflowers in profusion  
MHM Photography



Extensive shell middens beside the Cowan Creek (and many sites around the coast) can stimulate imaginations of the lives of the first Australians. For millennia they sat in these precise spots; fishing, eating and sharing the land. Our tactile sense can reinforce this connection with the past by a direct bond with century-old trees and ancient rocks, and with the continuity of life reflected in the newest fern growth. The feel of rough rocks on the palms is like engaging with the vast history of our planet.

“... not speaking conserved oxygen and ensured that we had a more efficient aerobic exercise.



Berowra Creek  
MHM Photography

#### 4. You connect more

Rather than just walking through the bush, we can become more closely aligned with it, and even an integral part of it, if we occasionally stop and smell the acacias! Not all Australian native plants are fragrant, but to stop, examine and smell them is absorbing.

Bushwalking without vocalising, allows us to focus our senses on our surroundings. In a group, over hours of silence, a common bond develops and our connection with the environment around us strengthens.

#### 5. You appreciate more

There are many ways of sharing, independent of speech. One of the more rewarding aspects of silent walking is a shared appreciation. When we emerge from the bush and finally break the silence, the most common comments are of gratitude.

“... the enlightenment of walking in silence is serene.

Comparisons are made with “talking” walking groups and while we all enjoy chatting sometimes, the enlightenment of walking in silence is serene.



Delicate wildflower  
MHM Photography



As a boy, Andrew loved walking through native bush near his Central Victorian home. Since then, he has travelled the globe and led or joined walks in Australia, China, Hong Kong and Japan. After careers in education, media and marketing communications, he founded the Sydney MeetUp group “Bushwalkers United. Silent Harmony”. Each walk is capped at 15 people, mostly through national parks in the greater Sydney region. Andrew founded Digital Tsunami in 1996, and has been an international creative director, digital proselytiser, expat, video producer, writer and yachtsman.



## Aussie Backyard Bird Count

Kerryn Herman



The fourth [Aussie Backyard Bird Count](#) has just ended this October, with nearly two million birds from 635 species submitted to the [BirdLife Australia app](#). The count, which is in its fourth year, has created a national database of birds found in our backyards.

New Holland Honey Eater  
Lorraine Parker



We don't know yet exactly how many people participated this year, but more than 60,000 people submitted checklists in 2016. Participants span the whole country, though participation is highest in our urban areas. By surveying our backyards (rather than "good" bird spots), these citizen scientists provide ecologists – like me – with information from urban areas we would not otherwise sample.

This includes data on a range of common bird species that are not frequently analysed because these species are believed to be secure. One of the most surprising results is a decline in the frequency of occurrence of the laughing kookaburra across southeast Australia.

### Counting birds

Everyone has a bird story – and fortunately for ecologists, everyone is willing to share them. With 85% of Australia's population living in cities and towns, birds are an important connection to our natural environment.

But birds are also [good environmental indices](#). They're generally easy to measure, they respond quickly to environmental change and we know a reasonable amount about the ecology of most species.

Between 1998 and 2014, BirdLife Australia volunteers collected a significant amount of data. This was used to develop a terrestrial bird index in 2015 – a bird "Dow Jones" to track our biodiversity. It was here that the decline in kookaburras was first identified.

The data were drawn from BirdLife Australia's ongoing atlas project, now called [Birdata](#). However, there are biases in this data set, as people obviously like to go birdwatching where they will see more birds. This may inflate the frequency of encountering some species and decrease the chances of encountering others – particularly rare and cryptic species.

For the last four years, we've asked volunteers to add to this data by counting birds around their home for a week in October, when many birds are highly active and visible. These counts complement the data already available in Birdata by allowing

access to backyards across Australia, which are generally poorly represented in the larger data set.

While there are still limitations in the Backyard Bird Count data, such as the risk of mis-identification, for common species like the laughing kookaburra we can generally be confident that the identification is correct. Even if the same bird is counted multiple times, our models report only a species' presence or absence, so inflated numbers don't affect the trend.

### Are kookaburras really declining?

The below figures show modelled trends for the kookaburra across metropolitan Melbourne and Sydney. These figures are derived from the volunteer-collected Birdata, much of which comes from green spaces and remnant vegetation in these landscapes.

I wondered whether these declines are true changes in the populations, or reflect a change in the way kookaburras are using the landscape, possibly moving into the



Kookaburra, Bold Park, Western Australia  
Andrei Nikulinsky



matrix of urban backyards that just don't get surveyed. Looking solely at the backyard count data, I found similar trends in the reporting rates of kookaburras as those in the models, supporting that this decline is at the population level. What started out in 2014 as a way of engaging the broader community with their birds is now collecting useful ecological data.

Further exploration of the ABBC data across other capital cities found some interesting things. In both Perth and Hobart, where the kookaburra is considered an introduced species, the birds are recorded more frequently than in Melbourne and across the ACT. In Perth, increases in 2016 compared to previous years suggest an increase in the species there.

While three years does not make a trend, Aussie Backyard Bird Count data from heavily urbanised areas suggest we are seeing a decline in this iconic species in the eastern capitals. Likely reasons for this are the loss of nesting hollows and possibly reductions in the availability of prey as we increasingly modify our urban landscapes. We don't really know as this is not an area that has been researched.

### We need citizen scientists

Collecting enough data (especially from the backyards of towns and cities) to detect these kinds of changes can be an overwhelming task. This is where citizen science programs like the Aussie Backyard Bird Count can help.

As well as helping ecologists track large-scale biodiversity trends, it also gives people the chance to connect with their natural environment and gain a greater appreciation of our unique fauna.

As with all citizen science projects, there are limitations in the data being collected. However, the [Backyard Bird app](#) has been designed to make counting as simple and standardised as possible, providing confidence in the tally of common and "iconic" species, and filling in the gaps found in other data sets.

The good old kookaburra is neither rare or cryptic. If anything, if people are seeking out "good" bird habitat to survey we would expect that kookaburras would be one of those species subject to inflated reporting. But this is not what we encountered.



Kookaburra bath time  
Mandy Creighton



If we are starting to see declines in species that we have traditionally considered secure, what does this mean for those that are already at risk? Once all the data from the Aussie Backyard Bird Count have been collated and vetted we will continue to

**Kerryn Herman**

Research Ecologist, Deakin University  
Kerryn Herman is a research ecologist employed by BirdLife Australia. BirdLife Australia is Australia's longest running conservation organisation and works on the conservation and advocacy of Australia's native birds and their habitats.

explore the developing trends in Australia's urban birds. Increasing engagement and awareness in our communities can help ensure our backyard birds are still around to count next year.

The article was first published in [The conversation](#) (an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public) on 1 November 2017.



Eastern spinebill  
landsmith



# Falls Creek to Mount Hotham Track Proposal

Stephen Lake



In BWA December 2016 I wrote about the proposed Falls Creek to Mount Hotham track, Falls Hotham Alpine Crossing (FHAC). Briefly, the Victorian Government is looking at significantly upgrading some walking tracks, including going up Diamantina Spur, new campsites established, current users denied access, and what very much seems to be lodges in a number of places, including near the top of Diamantina Spur. The target market is relatively inexperienced walkers, commercial groups or both, all with more money than current walkers. In late 2016 there was a Draft Master Plan (DMP). Public comments were sought on this.

Federation Hut campsite and The Razorback at dusk  
Stephen Lake



In October 2017 I became aware that Parks Victoria (PV) released the *Summary Report of community response to Draft Master Plan* ([Summary Report](#)). As before there are serious shortcomings. Many objected to the DMP on environmental and economic grounds.

PV did not advise those who made submissions that the Summary Report was available. When there is public input then it's customary to advise people and entities who made submissions about further reports. I cannot understand why this was not done, and have asked PV for the reasons.

Normally a summary Report like this would list submissions and make them available. This too was not done, and again I cannot understand why. I've asked PV for a list and access to the submissions. There may be valid reasons for keeping part or all of some submissions private, such as commercial in confidence or if this is a requirement of the person or entity making the submission. However, my very long experience is that all or nearly all submissions are or should be made available. I cannot find any PV information that submissions would be confidential or that they would not be released with the next report. The default is release and have a list of submissions in the Summary Report.

On 19 October 2017 I asked PV:

1. Why were people and entities who made submissions not advised of the summary?
2. Can a list of submissions can be provided to me, and if not, why not?

PV did not reply by 30 November. I've made a Freedom of Information application.

Like the DMP, the form of the Summary Report leaves a great deal to be desired. There's no date, no name of the person authorising the Summary Report, and no signature. However, page two says that it was checked on 11 August 2017 by MW and CB. The latter appears to be Christian Borchert. The Summary Report can only be viewed two pages at a time, which makes it harder to read than if it could be viewed

one page at a time. I do not know if this was deliberate or if it was not realised that the format is poor. Neither reflects well on those involved. It would have been very easy to have hyperlinks in the contents, but this was not done. The intent seems to be to make the report hard to read. Again there are typos and poor forms of words.

Page 6 says "The purpose of this document is to summarise the key findings taken from community consultation workshops and community response submissions to the Falls to Hotham Alpine crossing Draft Master Plan (the draft plan)." This purpose has not been achieved. The Summary Report glosses over a huge number of major objections by many people. Some main objections are:

“Many objected to the DMP on environmental and economic grounds.”

1. The quality of the Draft Master Plan is abysmal.
2. There's no easy way to access references.
3. Figures are demonstrably false, out by 3-1000 times.
4. In a total DMP expenditure of \$22 million, expenditure of \$15-20 million for a road was missed. Some \$9 million for maintenance and management costs was not cited. The total cost over 10 years is \$59 million, far more than that cited in the DMP, with an annual shortfall of \$3-4 million.
5. The economic case is false. Jobs are massively subsidised, \$3-400,000 a year each.
6. The methodology is questionable.
7. There are adverse environmental impacts.
8. If adopted, the DMP will push existing bushwalkers out; expose people enticed by questionable and spurious advertising into danger, up to and including death; breach zoning requirements of the Greater Alpine National Parks Management Plan; change the character of the region; waste up to \$80 million in



public funds for minimal return, probably a \$60 million loss; and cause long-term damage to the reputation of Victoria and the region.

9. The route via Dibbins Hut suggested to PV is much easier, much less expensive, would attract more people, complies with the zones, and is safer. This should have been the route.

PV has had this information since January 2017, and has not denied any of it.

Page 6 says "Overall there was a positive response to the plan and its potential positive impact to the region." This does not work – for a consultation the number of votes do not count. The quality of the information in the submissions is what counts. As PV did not release the submissions or even a list of all the submissions the quoted PV assertion above needs to be backed up numbers and how PV weighted them. The submissions that I have seen are all strongly against the proposal, with views based on solid factual, environmental, economic and safety reasons. PV has not denied any of these aspects, or even cited them. Over a year, repeated requests to PV for information have not led to any response.

Instead, the Summary Report underplays the negatives. For example, page 87 of the DMP says "There are an estimated 17,000 walker nights per year on the trail", demonstrably false. This falseness is at odds with hut log books and bushwalker observations, and it's supported by closely reasoned logic. Page 17 of the Summary Report says "The numbers of existing and proposed walkers should be double-checked and sources should be provided." There is no transparency. It is difficult to trust the Summary Report as it does not match what I have seen, and they have not provided their methodology or evidence.

Page 22 of the Summary Report says "The engagement program provided an opportunity for the community and all stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to the development of the final master plan. All comments and feedback will be considered

in the preparation of the final master plan." I challenge the "meaningfully contribute" aspect. Considering a submission is not the same as acting on it. The Summary Report seems to be just a marker, a further step towards economic, aesthetic, recreational and environmental and destruction of a region as we know it. I'm very happy to be proved wrong if sanity prevails.

I could go on but I think that the point has been made. The Summary Report does not list all the main issues (some of which are cited above), does not show the passion of those who love the mountains, and has in effect dismissed most or all of their concerns, which have not been made available. All hard criticisms have been watered down to the point where they are sorely muted. As the submissions are not public documents

(yet – there's always FOI), criticisms identifying the extraordinarily low standard of the DMP cannot be seen. Why is PV hiding information? Are the submissions contrary to the FHAC proposal? Too accurate? Do the submissions cast doubt on the competence of those who prepared the DMP? I think so.

If this ill-advised proposal is adopted then it will be interesting to see who takes responsibility if things do not turn out as envisaged in the PV reports. It will be interesting to see who takes responsibility if there is a fatality or injury due to novice walkers being where they should not be. It will be interesting to see who takes responsibility if there is environmental damage. It will be interesting to see who takes responsibility if the walk runs at a loss. It's likely that the proponents will deny responsibility, and adopt the Men at work view:

Can't you hear, can't you hear the thunder?  
You better run, you better take cover.

“ The Summary Report does not list all the main issues (some of which are cited above), does not show the passion of those who love the mountains, and has in effect dismissed most or all of their concerns ...





# In the News

## GOTOKY - most advanced private off-grid communication network



Gotoky is a [Kickstarter](#) project that commences in April 2018. Your mobile phone connects into [Gotoky](#), which transmits messages to other Gotoky users you choose, thus creating your own little network. You can use it to make calls (like a walkie-talkie), text, and share your GPS location. It might be handy in trips where you are out of mobile coverage but want to stay in touch with others who are in about a 10-15 kilometre radius, or further if you

use one as a repeater. This device is not a replacement for a PLB that sends an emergency signal via satellite anywhere in the world. A Gotoky has a button that sends a message to the group if your phone is dead, using the last GPS location it got from your phone; there is no onboard GPS. These types of mesh-network devices are new and there seems to be many coming onto the market, creating a new way for bushwalkers to stay in touch, an interesting space to watch.

## Righting a historic wrong for Uluru

Uluru will be [closed to climbers](#) from October 2019 after the board of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park voted to close the climb to the summit of the rock.

## Changes to NSW Topographic Map prices

Maps will [increase in price](#) by more than 50% in February 2018, the first increase since 2010.

## Death of prominent Hobart aviation operator Roger Corbin

Roger Corbin saved many lives on search and rescue missions, but sadly [died in a helicopter crash](#) while conducting a training flight.

## Stopped logging

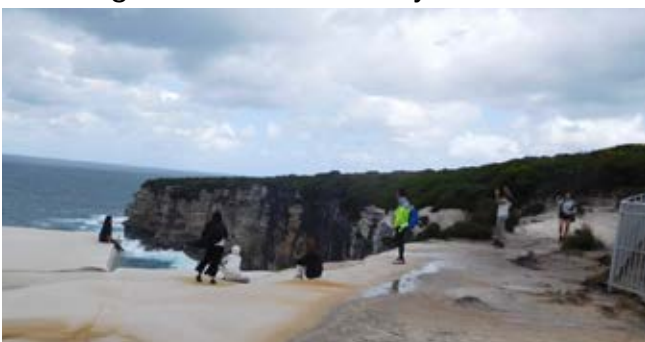
Logging has been [suspended at 34 sites in Victoria](#) following a legal challenge that, if successful, threatens the validity of controversial timber operations in native forests across Australia.

## Track collapse at Wentworth Falls in Blue Mountains

On 29 November a man died and two others were injured after a [rockfall near Wentworth Falls](#) in the Blue Mountains National Park, west of Sydney, a tragic loss. The men were working towards re-opening the National Pass track.

## Fence doesn't stop tourists climbing Wedding Cake Rock

Despite a new fence, some foolish people continue to risk their lives on the very unstable Wedding Cake lookout at Royal National Park, NSW.



Wedding Cake Rock  
Michael\_p



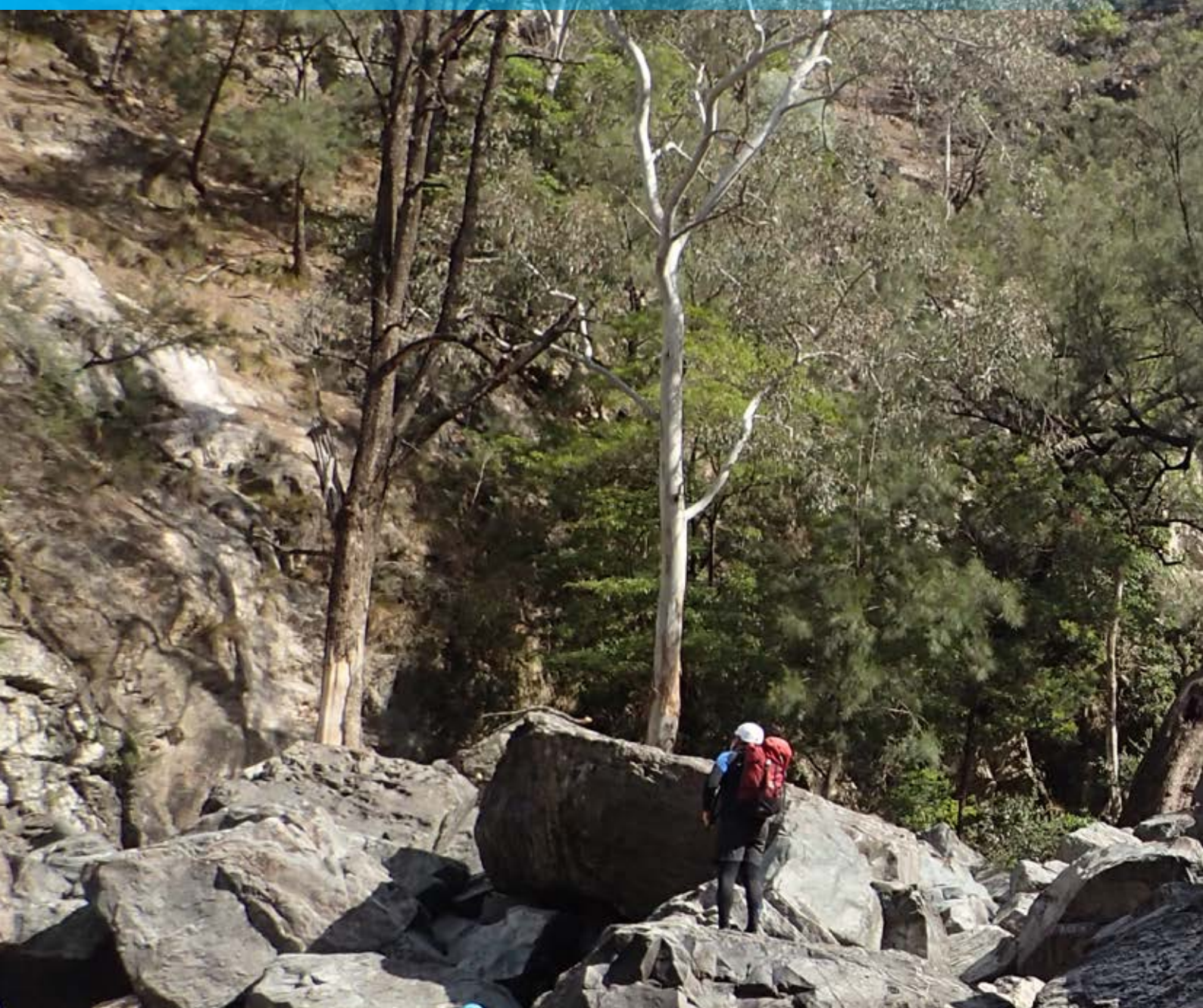
Wedding Cake Rock from the fence  
Tqc





# Christmas Celebration Treats

Sonya Muhlsimmer



What! It's nearly Christmas, again. Can someone please tell me where this year has gone? I seem to have lost track of time. But at least I got a few good adventures in this year. I conquered the Western Arthurs in Tasmania starting at Alpha Moraine and finishing at Kappa Moraine, I skied through the worst blizzard ever and survived, and spent eight days back country skiing in Kosciuszko National Park, I accomplished some amazing canyons up near the Blue Mountains, I explored quite a lot of The Gardens of Stone near Lithgow, NSW and even participated in an open day to protect the area, and went on an awesome multi-day hike down in the Morton National Park, West Ettrema along the Shoalhaven River. Now I am busy preparing for a five day hike over the New Year's break in Kosciuszko National Park. There is nothing quite like having a New Years Eve celebration out in the wilderness with a few friends. Well, in saying all of that, I guess that is where the year went ...



# Ginger Nut Biscuits

You may have guessed it already by my last name, but my father's background is German, and I have a few classic German recipes up my sleeve. So since it is Christmas and New Year it is time to celebrate, I want to share two of my favourite recipes that are fitting for this time, well I think so anyway. My Oma (Grandmother) taught me how to make these biscuits and gingerbread houses when I lived with her in Canada a long time ago, and when I was growing up we often had these ginger nut biscuits and Glühwein. Yes, I was even allowed a little Glühwein when I was a kid. The wine made me sleep well at nights! These ginger nut biscuits are so tasty with the sweet treacle and the spice of ginger, oh and a touch of cinnamon, yum. They taste so good and for me they bring back so many memories. They are a bit of a Christmas tradition with me, my family and friends and most of my hikes I go on I usually carry these biscuits for a quick snack.

## At home preparation

Preheat a fan forced oven to 160°C, and grease two oven trays. Cut the block of butter up into small chunks and let soften (or microwave on low for 20 seconds). Beat the softened butter and sugar in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy (about five minutes). Stir in the treacle and mix through, then add the dry ingredients in three small batches, till just combined. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface, using your hands knead the dough to combine fully. You may need to add more flour as you go to stop the dough sticking to the surface. Roll out to about five mm thick



and cut with a cookie cutter. Place onto the oven trays and bake in the oven for 18 to 20 minutes. Let cool on the oven tray for about five minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Pack into a container or some zip lock bags and eat on the go as a high-energy snack, or around camp with some Glühwein winding down for the night.

Butter	½ block	125 grams
Brown sugar	½ cup	90 grams
Treacle	½ cup	80 grams
Plain flour	2 cups	320 grams
Bicarb soda	½ Tbsp	6 grams
Ginger	1 tsp	2 grams
Cinnamon	½ tsp	2 grams



## Glühwein (Mulled Wine)

When I lived in Germany, I used to go to the night markets in town around Christmas and wander through the Weihnachten (Christmas) markets. They had stalls that sold Glühwein, ginger nut biscuits, and lots of other things of course. Gosh the wine tasted good. The Germans call it Glühwein (Glow-wine) due to the feeling you get when you drink it, it leaves you glowing. Although Glühwein is traditionally a winter drink, I think you can drink it any time. For example, not long ago I went for a weekend in Bungonia and we spent the day canyoning and at night we went caving. When we got back to the camp ground I brewed up some Glühwein and shared it around and yes we were all glowing, it went down so well and everyone came back for more. It is pretty easy to prepare with just a few ingredients and it is so worth having anytime, especially at Christmas or New Year's celebrations. As I said, although it is a winter German tradition around Christmas, why not celebrate it here in the Australian bush in summer? Prost, that means cheers.

### Method at camp

Put all the ingredients in a pot and stir through. Simmer for about 10 minutes stirring occasionally. Fill your cup and enjoy. You can serve the orange and lemon slices in your cup if you want to add decoration.



### Hints

This is to be shared with friends. A cup of this goes a long way, and when the alcohol is warm it gets absorbed into your body a lot quicker so drink in moderation. This recipe will serve two to three people. If you boil the wine, the alcohol will start to evaporate a little bit.

You can buy wine in pouches of 250 ml, perfect for hiking...



Dry Red wine	500 ml	2 cups
White sugar	100 grams	½ cup
Cinnamon stick	1 each	
Cloves	4 each	
Lemon slices	2 each	
Orange slices	4 each	

Water - ¾ cup

To read more about the author or find more delicious recipes check [xtremegourmet.com](http://xtremegourmet.com)





## South-west

Tune: *Wouldn't it be lovely?*

All I want is to go south-west,  
That's the country that I like best,  
And come home for a rest.  
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?

Lots of freeze dry for me to eat,  
Lots of mud and lots of sleet,  
Cold hands, cold bum, cold feet,  
Oh wouldn't it be lovely?

Oh, so lovely sitting'  
Abso-blooming-lutely still.  
While the rain and wind and snow  
Come over the nearby hill.

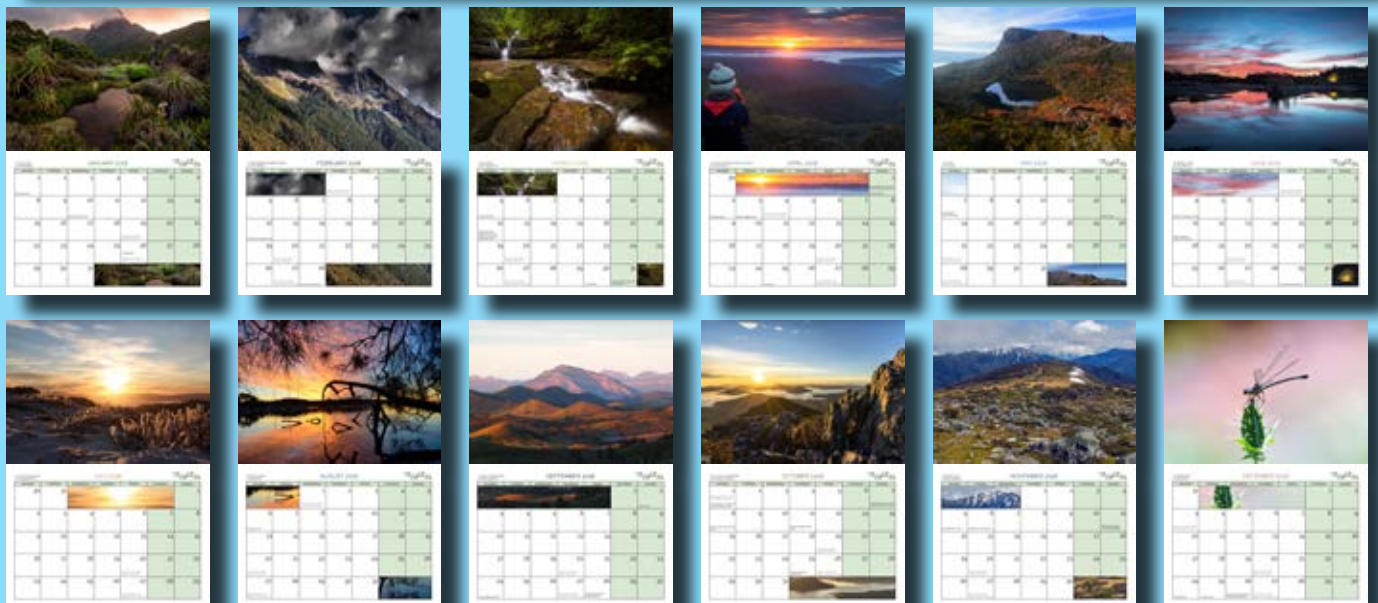
Someone's gear diggin' in my knee,  
Tent as cramped as it can be,  
With nowhere I can flee.  
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely?  
Lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely.

A trad song.





# Bushwalk Australia Calendar



Calendar costs \$15 (including postage in AU). Order your copy (or copies) at [bushwalk.com/store](http://bushwalk.com/store)  
Order early, numbers are limited. Shipment before Christmas.

