Bushwalk Australia

Act Now

Volume 29, June 2018

Bushwalk Australia Magazine
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Volume 29, June 2018

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

Footsteps from Freycinet by Doogs

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

The copy deadline for the December 2017 edition is 31 October 2017.

Warning
Like all outdoor pursuits, the activities described in this publication may be dangerous. Undertaking them may result in loss, serious injury or death. The information in this publication is without any warranty on accuracy or completeness. There may be significant omissions and errors. People who are interested in walking in the areas concerned should make their own enquiries, and not rely fully on the information in this publication.
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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.

6 Viking Circuit
A debt cleared

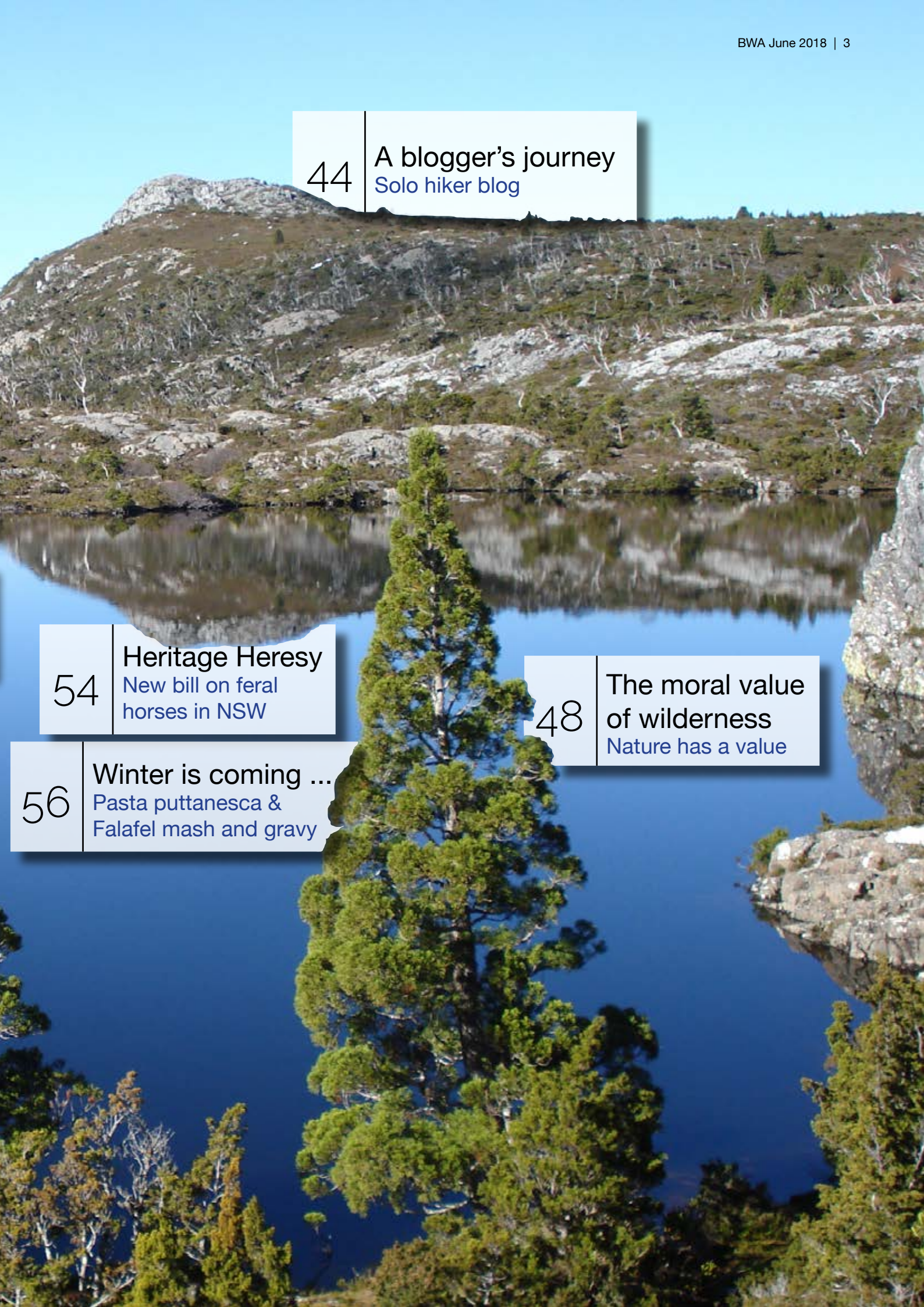
14 Teddy goes trekking
A cautionary tale for all freeloading bears

18 Overland Track
It's good, but could be better

26 Photo gallery
Beautiful photos to enjoy

Afternoon reflections on Twisted Lakes
Nigel Baptist

Competition: Tasmania May 2010



44 A blogger's journey
Solo hiker blog

54 Heritage Heresy
New bill on feral horses in NSW

48 The moral value of wilderness
Nature has a value

56 Winter is coming ...
Pasta puttanesca & Falafel mash and gravy

From the Editor

Hi

I hope this winter has found you well. I love this time of year and I am getting excited about possible snowshoe trips as the white stuff starts to fall.

Reading through this edition and reflecting on issues around the world the phrase "act now" just kept resonating. We all come to bushwalking for different reasons; with different gifts and motivations. Some of us dream of getting out there but spend too many weekends indoors. Other might read of damage to our environment but feel cynical about change for good.

Reading these articles inspires me to act more. I loved hearing about how people in the bushwalking community act - whether it is conducting a search and rescue for a lost Teddy, a long-awaited attempt to walk the Viking Circuit, a desire to make great walks even better, rallying against the protection of feral animals in national parks, capturing amazing images, promoting adventures through blogs or sharing the gift of food.

Happy walking
Matt :)

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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. I operate Bushwalk.com and 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.

Video

Naturally Accessible webinar: Wheelchair Bushwalking around Sydney

On the on 24 May the National Parks Association of NSW and Sargood on Collaroy hosted their second live webinar about how-to-go bushwalking in Sydney and the surrounding area for people in manual wheelchairs. Their next webinar will be on Thursday 14 June 6pm-7pm so tune in.

Viking Circuit

Anthony Kost

A failed attempt at the Viking circuit in the mid-nineties has haunted me for some time. I was younger, forgot the map, a terrific storm blew in and I exhibited the early signs hypothermia. It's taken about 20 years to stomach another crack at Victoria's premier wilderness circuit and so with a party of four chaps from the Blisters and Chafers Society and nineteen years more experience I have faced my demons. I have cleared a debt.

Michael Johnson, Anthony Kost and Julian Nikadie at Speculation summit at dusk on day 3
Patrick Platt

We mustered at my HQ at 1630 hours on Friday 15 December 2017. The weather outlook was too be fine. Hot weather in Melbourne and slightly lower temps up high. With Platt's car loaded we snaked through peak hour traffic on the freeway until it fanned out at Pakenham. Dinner stop was La Porchetta's in Traralgon. Unfortunately we cannot report good value for money at this establishment. A fuel stop at the Timberline garage in Heyfield at 9pm (just before the shop closed) and then onto Licola, and the mighty 72 kilometre Tamboritha road. Three or four big red deer were spotted on the road and they made no haste in escape as we drew close. We made Howitt Hut by 2330 hours, set up camp and retired, spent.

Day 1- Howitt car park, Zeka Spur, Wonangatta River

Rising at 0700 hours to a bright sunny morning we assembled for a cooked brekky at the table near the hut and then prepared for launch. After the short drive to the Howitt car park we donned gaiters and lengthened poles. A quick pack weight check revealed some awful truths.

Kost	27 kilograms
Johnson	24 kilograms
Platt	22 kilograms
Nikadie	18 kilograms

No time to dwell on mistakes, we signed the intentions book and took to Clover Plain. Time check 0937 hours.

At spot height 1640 and 2.7 kilometres on the plain we came to the sign indicating Old Zeka Spur Track. There is no discernible track or foot pad. With the Avenza map app on hand we located ourselves and set a course, looking for the spur-like features. It wasn't long before we found the remnants of the track being cut in, and followed it as best we could but we thwarted a lot of the time by fallen trees. Fallen trees became significantly worse and capped our pace. Every 10-15 minutes we verified our position with Avenza. After 5.2 kilometres and a spot height of 1380 metres we reached the Zeka Track at 1315 hours. We had a bite to eat and then slogged it out on the red dirt track for 4.9 kilometres. Whilst it may be a decent track for vehicles, walkers find it pretty dangerous, particularly those carrying first day loads. Steep and very slippery underfoot, much mental energy is expended as one tries to claim a firm surface to launch. The Helinox DL145's were capable. We did pass a flowing soak that

"Whilst it may be a decent track for vehicles, walkers find it pretty dangerous, particularly those carrying first day loads.

Razor on day 3
Michael Johnson

was a welcome relief and we all drank and dabbed our foreheads. At spot height 748 metres (no marker or cairn), you can spot the old Spec road that goes up to Catherine Saddle. With its Road Permanently Closed status, it is now pretty overgrown and we elected to go bush again following a rough bearing down the spur to the river about 1.5 kilometres.

We made the river flat by 1710 hours. There are suitable campsites by the river and we spread out to give the snorers their own space to practise. After hydration and bathing of sorts, we turned our attention to meal prep and whilst hunger was not foremost on our minds, post a very athletic day we knew an appetite would soon be stalking us. Pulled pork was heated in the bag, a coleslaw mixed and wraps laid out. A special tangy bbq sauce got those taste buds jumping. Mozzies were starting to bother us in the dusk hours, we cleaned up and retired to single man's quarters by 2030 hours.

Day 2 – Wonangatta River, Viking, Viking Saddle

We were all up by 0530 hours striking camp. One of those items that could have been left behind was the AeroPress, but alas it was not, so Johno and I enjoyed a triple shot coffee in the dawn. Weather was fine, not cold at all, in fact all the chaps reported that the sleeping bag was draped over their bodies, far too warm to be in it. By 0730 hours we were all across the river, booted up again, and drank our litre before departure. Some of the men were fortunate enough to be able to tend to ablutions which always make for a terrific start to the day. We picked our way through the river flat following deer pads which were quite obvious. A little machete work made getting through blackberries a bit easier. The deer pads led us to a couple of wallows and then conveniently started up the spur. We stumbled upon more of a human foot pad which we suspected goes down and meets the spec road. Someone had been along this pad in the last year or so with either a machete or shears cutting some of the woody regrowth at the base, making following the track a hellava lot easier. There is some fallen timber but not nearly as bad as old Zeka. By 1030 hours we arrived at spot height 1204 metres, doing a whopping 2.34 kilometres in distance. The spine of the spur is quite rocky, and there is some cairn work reassuring the walker. The cloud had now cleared and it was sunny. The humidity of river elevation (about 610 metres) was now past us.

> "There are suitable campsites by the river and we spread out to give the snorers their own space to practise.

Between Razor and Mount Despair, day 3
Julian Nikadie

At about 1130 hours we stopped for lunch amongst a rocky outcrop. Ants were keen to traverse our sweaty bodies. We moved around. We continued the push, once again through fire regrowth, rocky outcrops, fallen trees. You get the lot when coming up this spur. It was getting hot. The men of stamina mantra was wearing thin. Up ahead we could see snowgums and snowgrass features in front of a protruding ridge behind which was blue sky. This was promising, a small sign that we were making good work of the spur. Upon checking our maps it was indeed the spur that directly connects with the South Viking peak. We consolidated in a flurry of breathing and wiping of brows and at 1425 hours we made the peak, spot height 1502 metres. A cairn was acknowledged and photos taken. The party was keen to make Viking Saddle and have the water question answered. We were sick of carting the water surplus if fresh water were to be available in the saddle. Views were spectacular.

We inched our way down off the peak and across the mini saddles and spot heights to reach the rocky on ramp of the viking. We tracked up on an angle with poles ever so helpful. At spot height 1519 metres, we removed packs, lapped up the intermittent breeze and took in the 360 degree views that the Viking offered the party. Whilst resting we searched for the track down as there are no AAWT markers or even a visible foot pad. The saddle and toil's end was only about a kilometres in distance away but we had to drop to spot height 1100 metres. The track down would be tricky, as we were all pretty spent. After some of our own track making, we came across the more substantial foot pad and followed its descent through both chimneys. The second chimney is more substantial with a rope permanently knotted. One of the chaps had a spill but was okay. As we dropped elevation we once again found ourselves dealing with fallen timber over the track that further sapped our weary bodies. At 1805 hours were welcomed into the grassy embrace of Viking Saddle. Packs were dumped at tent spots and those *&%$#! boots were removed.

> “We drank until we were silly with rehydration ...

Patrick set off in search of water with a radio. He would call us down with what we hoped would be good news. There was a faint but recognisable foot pad to the east that headed down into the gully for about 200 metres. At the creek crossing, which was dry, we crossed and then about 20 metres further down there is a small but usable spring with good flow. The water was icy cold; it was like drinking cold beer. We drank until we were silly with rehydration, loaded the bladders

Between Catherine Saddle and Speculation, day 3
Michael Johnson

then headed back to camp for evening duties. Our appetite was slow to peak, given the very physical day but by the time Patrick's mango cashew curry came around we were ready. We ate through dusk with the usual mozzies and flies and retired content by 2030 hours.

Day 3 – Viking Saddle, Razor, Despair, Speculation

It's another 0500-0530 hours start to the day, Glorious high country morning. Porridge, nose bags and AeroPress coffee. With morning ablutions taken care off we departed the saddle at 0700 hours with a warm northerly blowing. It would be a warm day on the track. It's about a 1.2 kilometres slog to The Razor and I would estimate the first 700 metres distance (uphill) is beset with fallen timber which makes for really slow going. And then a miracle. A miracle delivered to us humble tax payers from the very department to which sometimes we curse. Chain saw action. It would appear that sturdy folk from Parks Victoria are cutting their way through to Viking Saddle with a bit of strategic brush cutting and heavy chainsaw action. The cuts were fresh. We praise the department for their wisdom. Our pace and wellbeing picked up proportionally.

"It would appear that sturdy folk from Parks Victoria are cutting their way through to Viking Saddle with a bit of strategic brush cutting and heavy chainsaw action.

At 0830 hours we reached The Razor (1322 metres) and took a break. We took time to look back at from whence we came and wallow in pride. We harnessed up and navigated around The Razor towards Mount Despair. Lots of great views are afforded along the rocky spine and the track is easy to follow. As we wound our way up Despair we commented that the track clearing lads have not been through this section as it could do with a bit of pruning. We ran into a couple of blokes day tripping to The Viking, had a brief chat, offered some intel and continued our push to Despair and Catherine Saddle. Luncheon was looming. It's another steep slippery descent into the lovely grassy saddle at a spot height of 1200 metres. The old Speculation logging road is still clearly visible but I wonder what it is like further down as it reaches the river. It's 1150 hours at Catherine Saddle and we feast and water under shade. Some of the chaps enjoyed a 20 minute nap.

At 1310 hours we were harnessed. There are two options for the next leg. Take the walking track up Catherines pinch or walk the Spec logging road. We took Catherines pinch. It was hard, no real track, very loose, fallen trees and given the time of day hot and

Viking Saddle, The Viking and South Viking from The Crosscut Saw
Michael Johnson

sweaty. The logging road may be 30 minutes longer but contours around the hill and has a locked gate at Speculation. If I was going again I would probably opt for the road, even if it was just for the change of scenery. We dumped packs at the junction and with bladders in hand walked about 700 metres distance down to Camp Creek, which was flowing well. We filled water bottles, bathed, drank a fair bit before heading back up the hill to pick up our packs and lug all that water about 500 metres distance up to Mount Speculation summit, 1668 metres, where we camped. We had the top to ourselves and practised the society's dispersed tent policy with a designated camp kitchen established with a view. The official end of day time was 1710 hours. Johnson was on meal duty this evening and duly served a thai curry was a pearl couscous. A brew was boiled as dusk greeted sunset and we spent some time marvelling the peaks about us. Bed by 2030 hours.

Day 4 – Speculation, Crosscut Saw, Mac Springs

Routine dictated the 5 am start and so it was. Our luck with good weather afforded us a superb sunrise. It was now day four of the walk and we were well oiled. Striking camp by 0700 hours had become easy. We drank our excess water and begin our descent of the steps of Mt Spec. Our first stop was the Horrible Gap at 0805 hours, a packs on five minute breather before taking on Buggery at spot height 1608 metres. At Buggary at 0850 we had photos and pushed on towards the ever-visible Crosscut Saw. Divine walking with conditioned legs and our head pointed to Mac Springs, views either side in excellent weather conditions. We met a chap on his way to Canberra. Brief chat, but I suppose he would be in a hurry to beat the serious summer issues of lack of water. We crossed paths with a small snake sunning himself on a ledge that I was pulling myself onto. Alert to my presence he was keen to exit. As I pulled myself up onto the ledge the other chaps were standing behind, not moving, just chatting and I was using my pole to make some vibrations. Unbeknownst to them until it had passed, the snake had gone right through the legs of Patrick and down the hill. He was only a baby. The snake I mean, not Patrick.

> “The logging road may be 30 minutes longer but contours around the hill and has a locked gate at Speculation.

Julian Nikadie approaching the Speculation summit. Razor in the background
Patrick Platt

Anthony Kost at dawn on day 4. The Terrible Hollow his focus
Michael Johnson

Up and over and around the teeth of the Crosscut we made the junction and turned for Mac Springs. This last 1.2 kilometres was tough. Conversation had dropped and the men strung out, going at their own pace. Goal orientated. Gantner Hut 1300 hours, spot height 1604 metres. Dropped packs, lulled about bootless. It was the earliest time we had made camp and we were loving it. Some lunch, coffee in the hut. Life was good.

The balance of the afternoon was spent lounging around reading the hut book, the odd banter and waiting for someone to call dinner. The evening meal was a rehydrated dahl and couscous which was prefaced with a light voluntary contribution happy hour that was designed to assist with “ration zero”. Ration zero, not exclusive to the society, is the policy of making it back to the car with no food in your Dilly bag. We are always trying.

Near the end of the walk
Anthony Kost

Toilet at Mac Springs

By 2000 hours we were done. The weather was changing. Dark skies over yonder from the west. We retired to tents by 2030. Come 2045 hours all hell broke loose in the form of lightning, thunder, gusting wind and good solid rain. When one has confidence in one's single man quarters and you're buggered it is a joy just to lie back, watch and listen. Well, we did that for most of the night whilst this big storm rampaged through the lowlands and then up high. Listening to the wind come up the valley and through the trees was quite an experience.

Day 5 – Mac Springs, Howitt car park

A bit after 0500 hours and in calm conditions I came down to the hut. A new body was bunkered down. The sound of the door and the light streaming in awoke her. My apology was met with a calm admission of "I should be getting up anyway" With pleasantries out of the way I prepared the morning porridge and coffee. Marie came in from the car park last night and was set up on one of the top camps on the way to Howitt. Seeing the weather rolling in she elected to retreat and seek shelter in the hut. She was heading out to Spec and back.

All the chaps joined me at the table for breakfast noting good sleep in the midst of the light show. No tent damage and a dry night for all. By 0700 hours we were bidding farewell to Gantner Hut in sloppy drizzle, the stuff that just requires a raincoat. Pace was good and we made the car by 0800 ish. Mission Complete.

Anthony lives in Melbourne and walks Victoria when he is not working in IT. He has been walking with the Blisters and Chafers Society since 2005.

Howitt Car Park, the party jubilant. Julian Nikadie, Patrick Platt, Michael Johnson, and Anthony Kost
Patrick Platt

Teddy Goes Trekking

A Cautionary Tale For All Freeloading Bears

Sussan Best

We have been doing a number of one day bushwalks since the children were small and decided it was time to take the plunge and try an overnight walk. This is usually myself and my children, Sophie twelve and Euan, ten, as my husband is not enamoured with bushwalking. Sophie recently completed a three night camp for school in atrocious weather and we intentionally planned to take off when the weather forecast was good and pick a beautiful location to try to improve her overall impressions.

First ascent of Mount Jerusalem by a bear
Sussan Best

Being Euan's first night in a tent, he was somewhat nervous and insisted on bringing Teddy. This was strenuously objected to by myself and Sophie, who noted that this increased weight (100 grams) was the equivalent to most of a block of chocolate and what was he *really* bringing to the excursion? However, Euan was insistent and swore that he would be fully responsible for Teddy.

We set out early but an unexpected road closure due to the Targa Tasmania motor rally made us four hours behind schedule when we finally arrived at the Walls of Jerusalem car park. To try and make up time we pushed hard. Sophie was nursing a knee injury and the fast pace and unaccustomed weight meant that about a kilometre shy of Wild Dog Creek campsite she was limping, so Euan and I distributed most of her weight between us. We made camp and Teddy helped to get the sleeping bags ready. That night he cheated outrageously at cards before snuggling in to bed, firmly tucked under his

Teddy enjoying himself at Dixons Kingdom
Euan Best

The West Wall and Lake Salome from The Temple
Sussan Best

owner's arm. The following morning Sophie said her knee felt okay when it was strapped. Teddy insisted he needed to come too and was dutifully packed into the day-bag and we headed across to Dixons Kingdom under a clear blue sky with little wind and some lingering snow from a few days before.

Not one to hide his light under a bushel, Teddy was the first to pose for a photo when we arrived, sitting himself on a handy direction sign. Euan had climbed the Temple, scrambled up Solomons Throne to enjoy the view and joined Sophie to explore the pretty Pool of Bethesda. He had generously carried the larger pack with the extra weight and was tired and sore, with the earlier exhilaration of both children giving way to tiredness.

> “... we headed across to Dixons Kingdom under a clear blue sky with little wind and some lingering snow from a few days before.

Teddy was so eager to be photographed that he forgot to remind us to collect him when we left Dixons Kingdom, and so it was that we returned back to camp, packed up and walked out without him. It wasn't until we arrived home that we realised that the freeloader had decided to remain playing with the possums. Euan was tired, sore from carrying the extra weight and now distraught. Luckily, we had the photo and with the help of social media were able to send out an SOS. Nearly 48 hours later and although people were very supportive there was still no bear.

With the weather forecast holding, I decided to launch my own rescue mission. Euan was miserable and like any good team you can't leave a boy or bear behind. Euan also helpfully pointed out that even if I didn't find Teddy then paradoxically this would still be a worthwhile excursion, as it would mean someone else had. Armed with this logic, I set out at 5am from Launceston and unfettered by overnight gear was able to make good time along the track. I met a couple of hikers on their way out who said they had seen Teddy loitering around Dixons Kingdom hut the day before. Not long after a large

> “I met a couple of hikers on their way out who said they had seen Teddy loitering around Dixons Kingdom hut the day before.

Damascus Gate, Solomons Throne and the West Wall
Sophie Best

group that had stayed the night at Dixons hut campsite came past. While the adults denied knowledge of Teddy the youngest amongst them, with a child's unerring instinct for these things, affirmed that he had seen the bear and he was still posing for photos on the sign. Spurred on by the positive sightings of a truant, dillydallying bear, I kept moving.

The day was again perfect, light winds, clear skies and a mild temperature. At 9am I was at ground zero and sure enough there he was, albeit looking slightly sheepish for all the trouble he'd caused. A quick jaunt up Mount Jerusalem and then back to the car park, with Teddy firmly attached before a joyful homecoming reunion.

Teddy is sorry for the angst and stress he caused and has now learnt his lesson. He has promised to not add unnecessary weight to our packs in future and will simply stay home and guard the bed. He assures me that I am a certainty for the Teddy owner's mother of the year award.

Sussan is from Launceston. When not being a wife and mother (which includes SAR missions) she enjoys spending time with her family, travelling, orienteering and generally being active. She, Sophie and Euan are already planning their next walk whilst Dad is starting to wonder if he is missing out.

Sophie, Euan and Teddy at Wild Dog Creek
Sussan Best

Overland Track
It's Good, But Could Be Better
Stephen Lake

Tasmania's Overland Track (OLT) in Cradle Mountain Lake StClair National Park is perhaps Australia's most well known bushwalk. The OLT goes for 74 kilometres from Cradle Valley in the north to Cynthia Bay in the south, although most walkers stop at Narcissus Hut at 58 kilometres. Each year 8-9000 people walk the OLT, and nearby walks in the national park are very popular with day trippers and overnight walkers. Several aspects of the OLT are discussed in this article.

Barn Bluff from the Overland Track
Stephen Lake

Background

Aborigines have occupied the area for at least 10,000 years. In the 1820s, several surveyors explored what is now the Cradle Mountain—Lake St Clair National Park (CMNP). As the land was opened up, graziers and miners visited.

In 1912 Waldheim Chalet opened. Gustav Weindorfer led walks to nearby features as far south as Barn Bluff, and, of course, up Cradle. In 1922, 64,000 ha on what would later be the CMNP was gazetted as Scenic Reserve. In 1928, a Major Smith devised the term "overland track" to assist with seeking funding for the two reserves, Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair. The Boards of the two reserves supported an overland track to link them. In 1935 funds were available to create a track that would be viable for guided tours and pack horses. When works were finished in 1937, the track was unofficially named the "Overland Track".

In 1936 the first Overland Track hut was built at Pelion, followed by Pine Valley Hut in 1942. A lot of the older huts on the track burned down over the years due to walkers leaving wood fires unattended. Modern huts are much better than those of the early days.

It is estimated that in the 1971-72 summer season, nearly 1500 walkers completed the OLT. Numbers are currently in the 8-9000 region. There's also thousands of tourists who do short walks at the Cradle and Lake St Clair ends. Visitors have a significant local economic impact. Numbers have increased, which means that there are more funds for maintenance and improvements, which may be a driver for more visitors.

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA) covers about 1.38 million hectares. The WHA includes CMNP. In 1982 These and other areas were placed on the World Heritage list, international recognition of their natural and cultural heritage values. The WHA was expanded in size in 1989.

The OLT has a significant national and international profile. It has become an icon as one of the most popular overnight bushwalks in Australia, and is the best known of Tasmania's overnight bushwalks. Part of the appeal is that while the terrain and weather may be a challenge, the distances each day are short, the huts are mainly quite good, the track is easy to follow, and – above all – the scenery is spectacular.

Overland Track bookings

OLT walks must be booked for trips commencing between 1 October and 31 May. For this period there's a limit of 34 walkers per day, all southbound. The weather for 1 July to 30 September ensures that not many walk during winter.

The booking system has scope for improvement. I've suggested changes since mid-2016 and nothing has happened. The most obvious issue is that bookings open at 9am on 1 July each year. I asked the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) about this and was advised: "The current system of bookings opening on 1 July each year is linked to our Departmental financial reporting system and our business planning cycle. This system has existed since the booking system was introduced in 2005." This seems to me to be a dusty answer. Every other holiday entity that I have dealt with can take payment in one financial year for use in the next financial year, so why can't PWS do this? PWS said that "improvements to the booking system are also under way." However, PWS declined to give details or a timeframe.

If bookings were able to be made prior to 1 July, then people who need or want to get a particular date can do so much earlier, easier and with more certainty. The 2017 bookings opened on a Saturday, so if there was a problem it was not possible to call PWS. Also, some days booked out very quickly. PWS said that the 2017 bookings were faster than usual. Bookings for 2018-19 open on a Sunday, so obtaining PWS advice on that day is impossible.

2017-18 booking pattern

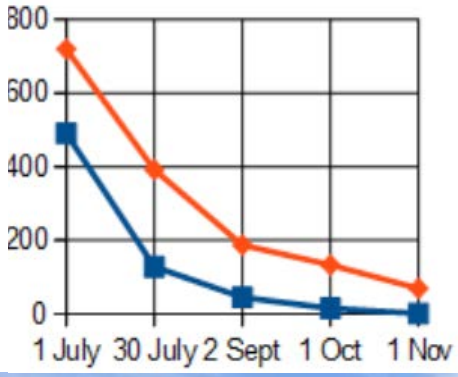
Starting late on 1 July 2017 every ten days or so, about three times a month, I took screen shots for the peak OLT months of December 2017 and January 2018. When most days were booked out. Here are the figures.

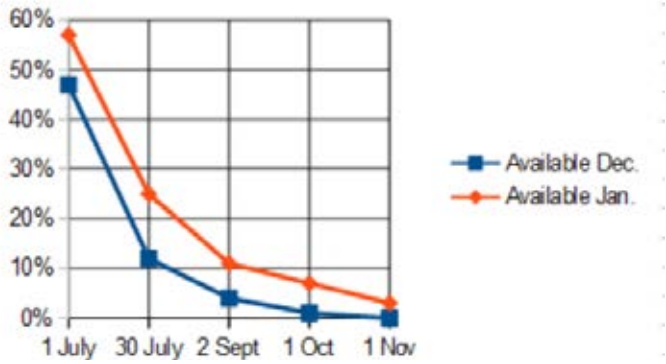
	1 July	10 July	20 July	31 July
Dec available	47%	30%	21%	12%
January available	68%	51%	45%	37%
Total booked	43%	60%	67%	75%

By late on 1 July there were four OLT places left after 25 December. By 10 July there were just five OLT places left after 21 December. Bookings continued at a more or less steadt rate until November, with the booking rate easing slightly in September. It's similar for January bookings, although not as pronounced. On 1 July, five days in the first two weeks of January had no or a small number of spaces. By 10 July there were five places available for 1-11 January inclusive. At 5.48pm on 1 July 2017, nearly nine hours after bookings opened, 43% of places for December and January had been booked. The demand is there for OLT bookings to be opened earlier.

Here are the figures by the month showing the number of places left for each month out of 1054 (34 a day for 31 days), that expressed as a percentage, and the total booked for both months combined.

Checked on	1 July		31 July		1 September		1 October		1 November	
Available December	491	47%	128	12%	45	4%	15	1%	1	0%
Available January	720	68%	392	37%	187	18%	133	13%	69	7%
Total available	1211	57%	520	25%	232	11%	148	7%	70	3%
Booked	43%		75%		89%		93%		97%	





Barn Bluff looking south
Stephen Lake

The cabins

Waldheim cabins are within the national park, and are very conveniently located for an early start on the OLT. At $95 for a four person cabin for one night they are excellent value. The Waldheim booking pattern is similar to that of the OLT. By late on 1 July, three cabins were booked for 14 December, and 28 December had just one cabin available. Ten days later all the cabins for 28 December were booked. By the end of July, from 12 December there were 44 vacancies out of 168 possibles, 26% vacant, with just three vacancies after 23 December.

The cabin keys are available after 1.00pm, which does not assist walkers who come on the bus arriving at 11.20am. The reason for the 1.00pm key collection is due to the huts needing to be cleaned. With a checkout time of 10.00am and a few hours to clean the huts, the 1.00pm time makes sense. One option to make an earlier key collection viable is to have a checkout time of 9.30am, which seems reasonable for people going bushwalking. Also, have the booking form state when they party intends to leave. If bushwalkers leave at 8.00am then cleaning for that hut can be started first. Finally, ask

Waldheim cabins bookings for December on 31 July
Stephen Lake

Waterfall Valley Hut from the helipad

when a party will arrive. If the party is on the 11.20am bus, then their hut could be cleaned first.

I was quite shocked to see that the water in the huts is unfit for drinking. I saw no advice about this on the booking form or the website. I asked PWS for the science behind the warning about the water, and PWS did not reply.

Non-potable water at Waldheim
Stephen Lake

I was advised that there was a bus shuttle to the huts. No. it goes to Ronny Creek. The driver could have stopped at the Waldheim turnoff, making my walk much shorter, but he kept going.

The website

The PWS website is not as good as it might be. Like so many other websites it has fallen victim to fashion and has small typefaces with low contrast. I'm probably a bit more demanding than most people as I have worked in graphics for decades and have written about this.

The PWS information sheets are also quite hard to read. For reasons that are unclear, PWS have abandoned accepted graphics rules and use faded typefaces. Information that works well when printed may not work very well on a screen. I sought advice from PWS about this but there was no reply.

In mid-2017 PWS advised that the website was being reviewed. There has been no change since then. In April 2018 PWS advised that "A new look website is under development" but again declined to give details or a timeframe.

From Pine Forest Moor looking south past Mt Pelion

OLT booking

The booking page is marginal. It took me a little while to determine how the bookings status works. It does not assist that the typeface and background are similar shades, and that it's hard to see which availability numbers belong to which dates. The thicker line under the dates seems to rule off the dates, but in fact the dates have their available spaces underneath. Odd. There is no clear explanation about the numbers. The figures for 31 December did not show on a number of computers, seems to be a coding bug.

Booking Waldheim cabins took a bit longer than I would like, a slightly obscure process. However, once done the advice from the booking agency was swift and quite clear.

Waldheim booking

One point that I missed was that when selecting a time period, say four days, this means that the screen will show four days from the start date.

Summary

It seems to me that PWS can do better. The website is hard to use, bookings should open earlier, and information should be clearer. Waldheim keys should be available earlier.

The track

I found the variety of tracks fascinating.

1. Basic track, earth, no treatment.
2. Basic track, rocks. This varies from broken rocks on a steep ascent, crazy paving, a very rocky track, and steps that range from quite big to narrow and potentially slippery in the wet.
3. Probably the first treatment, split timber, 40-60 years old, slowly rotting and being replaced.
4. Modern default boardwalk, about 1200 mm wide, laid across the length of the track. Some of these are curved and quite pretty.
5. Modern lengthwise boards, in a variety of sizes and formats. The most common is two boards 240 mm wide beside each other. In some places there is only one board, which is a bit hairy in the wet and wind, with a potential to fall off. Some lengthwise boards are 180 mm wide, laid as a pair. Where lengthwise boards come to a creek, invariably they change to 1200 mm wide across the creek. One creek had a single board 240 mm wide. Near here the wind grabbed me and I fell off the 240 mm track, missing having concussion by a very small margin. In my view PWS has a duty of care to have safe tracks, and at this place that duty was not met.

Wombat on a board track

Rough track

6. The top may be bare, chicken wire, or bitumen.
7. Steps range from fairly shallow to quite deep, The latter would be easier with a walking pole. Some steep rocky steps are probably tricky in the wet.

It was nice to see the new track next to a slowly recovering old track. Forty or more years ago the OLT was very muddy, now thankfully gone. Those with long memories will be happy to consign Pigsty Ponds and other places to history. The new boardwalk to Mount Oakleigh is most welcome. Other places like parts of the South Coast Track have been similarly treated, to the advantage of the environment and walkers.

However, the downside is that if it's too easy then more people will be attracted, some of whom may be ill-equipped, unfit, lack adequate experience, or lack adequate gear.

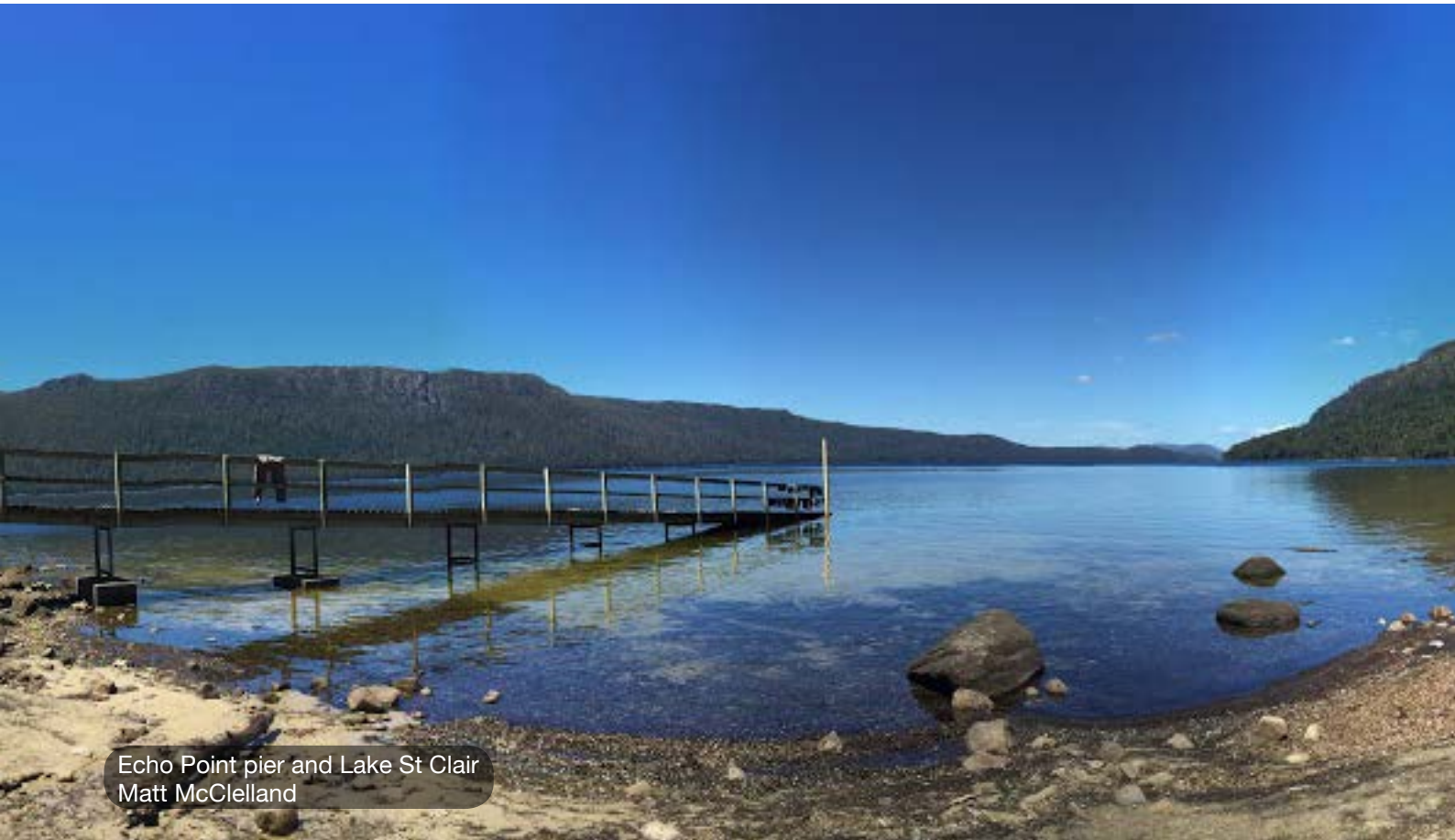
Camping platforms

There are focal points on the OLT and elsewhere, notably at huts, where platforms have been installed. Unfortunately the platforms lack two subtle aspects that would improve them. The platforms are built flat, which is not to my liking. A few years ago when I camped on a platform at Windy Ridge I became quite wet, with a lot of water flowing under the tent. A better design would be to have the boards slightly sloping so that water runs off the long edge of the boards. In the opposite direction, if the boards were slightly curved then water would run away from the tent. The angles do not have to be much, just a few degrees. Sadly, the platforms will last for ages. Another solution is to cut shallow grooves in the boards to make water stop on its journey to the tent floor.

Windy Ridge Hut

This hut was purpose built about 10 years ago, and does not meet contemporary standards, never has, and, without modifications, never will. Basic designs that have been know for a century or more were ignored. There is no effective airlock on the main door; a futile attempt has been made to combine an air lock with a drying room. This space has mesh about 100 mm high around most of the walls.

There is no air lock on the common room door, so warm air is easily lost to the outside. The common room heater is a few metres up a wall, nearly totally ineffective. The common room ceiling is a massive five metres or so high, quite foolish. The bunk rooms are on a different level to the common room, with the drafty air lock aka drying room between. The lower bunks are on the floor, next to cold air, which sinks. I'm advised that in winter



Echo Point pier and Lake St Clair
Matt McClelland

the bunkroom celings drip, making only the cold lower bunks viable. The bunk rooms are gloomy. It would have been easy to build a raised path between the hut and the toilet. Instead, users must go down steps, along a short series of paths, then up steps.

The hut quickly obtained a new name – Windy Fridge.

A far better design is for a hut on one level, with contiguous entry, common and bunk rooms. Air locks should be on all external doors. Ceiling at about 2700-3300 mm work. A heater at floor level is best. Have a separate drying room. Older OLT huts have superior designs, and are much warmer. Windemere was about 12ºC on a cool day. Once people came in the temperature rose to 15ºC. When people were cooking it was very nice, 20ºC. Windemere has a large porch, no air lock, contiguous common room and bunk room, and ceilings up to about 3 metres high.

Over several years a number of PWS staff have been asked in person about Windy Ridge. The above shortcomings were cited, and all staff declined to respond, to defend the design. A few just rolled their eyes with an expression that spoke volumes. When asked about Three Capes the PWS staff were very descriptive, advising that while several things could have been done better, overall Three Capes has been a huge success. No such comments were made about Windy Ridge.

I asked PWS why Windy Ridge was so badly designed. I asked about having an airlock installed on the common room door, and having the drafty main entry "air lock“ made more airtight. A satisfactory answer was not received. The matter is being investigated by the Auditor General.

Post trip

PWS sent a survey to me a few weeks after ending the OLT. I found the survey somewhat long with questions that were hard to answer or seemed to me to have limited relevance. For example, one question asked if the OLT was easier or harder than expected. The answer surely reflects the level of experience of the walker. The survey had a lot of questions, and in the end I gave up. It was taking too long to complete. A survey at Cynthia Bay may lead to more respones. It would be much faster and easier to do the survey on paper. While this may get more responses, PWS resources would be needed to key the results. A scanner that recognises text may work.

Tasmania PWS were sent a late draft of this article and declined to comment in detail on any of the matters raised.

Windy Ridge Hut front door, no airlock
Stephen Lake

Photo Gallery

The Mighty Western Arthurs
Dan Broun

Competition: Tasmania June 2011

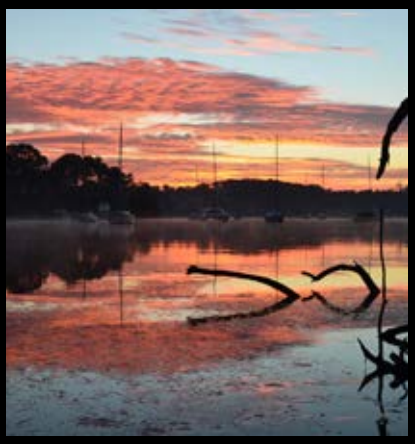
BWA Photo Competition

Landscapes June 2017

WINNER

Kimberley sunrise
Tom Brennan

Camped at the top of Garimbu Falls in the remote Prince Regent River National Park. I looked out of the tent to see the sky starting to colour and grabbed my little camera. The torch on in our trip leader's tent was the icing on the cake for the shot.



Beyond the reserve
landsmith

Pink peninsula
Cameron Semple

Reflecting on a worthy objective realised
John Walker

Passing storm,
Point Leseur
North-north-west

Afternoon light at Morialta
Brian Eglinton

?

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26102

Non-landscapes June 2017

WINNER

Yellow-faced honeyeater
landsmith

Since I moved to Buttaba I've been exploring the local bush and there are a number of honeyeaters around, though not all at the same time. These have an established presence in the area and I hope to get some even better pics in the future.

Fungi Pseudohydnum gelatinosum
Bastiaan Kleynendorst

Into the storm
Cameron Semple

Rock detail,
Bluff River Gorge
North-north-west

A solitary flame on
Walshs Pyramid
John Walker

Cool currants
Peter Grant

Moon, nest, boab
Osik

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26103

Tasmania
June 2017

WINNER

On the rocks
North-north-west

Maria, after a 35 year absence, was both familiar and strange. But Haunted Bay and its surrounding coastline are timeless.

Looking east from the rock platforms east of the bay itself.

Cape Hauy
Graham51

Rocky Cap
Cameron Semple

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26104

Other States June 2017

WINNER

Goorrandalng
(brolga dreaming)
Osik

Garimbu Gorge
Tom Brennan

Scribbly gum
landsmith

Sentinel
Brian Eglinton

Exploring gnarly Marley
John Walker

Mangrove Boardwalk
Wynum
Lorraine Parker

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26105

Landscapes July 2017

WINNER

It's always like this on the West Coast
Geevesy

This picture was taken the morning of our ascent of Mt Murchison, last year. The night before there was a huge dump of snow while we were at Cradle (the west coast link road was almost closed), so the climb was a bit of a slog, but the day was perfect. This view is from Tullah where we had stayed the night before the ascent.

Gould and the Minotaur from a snowy Labyrinth
Peter Grant

Moonrise over Katherine Gorge
Tom Brennan

Russell Falls reflections
Caedo12

An idyllic day
John Walker

I left my pineapple around here somewhere
Doogs

Looking across the valley
Andrew Walker

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26281

Non-landscapes July 2017

WINNER

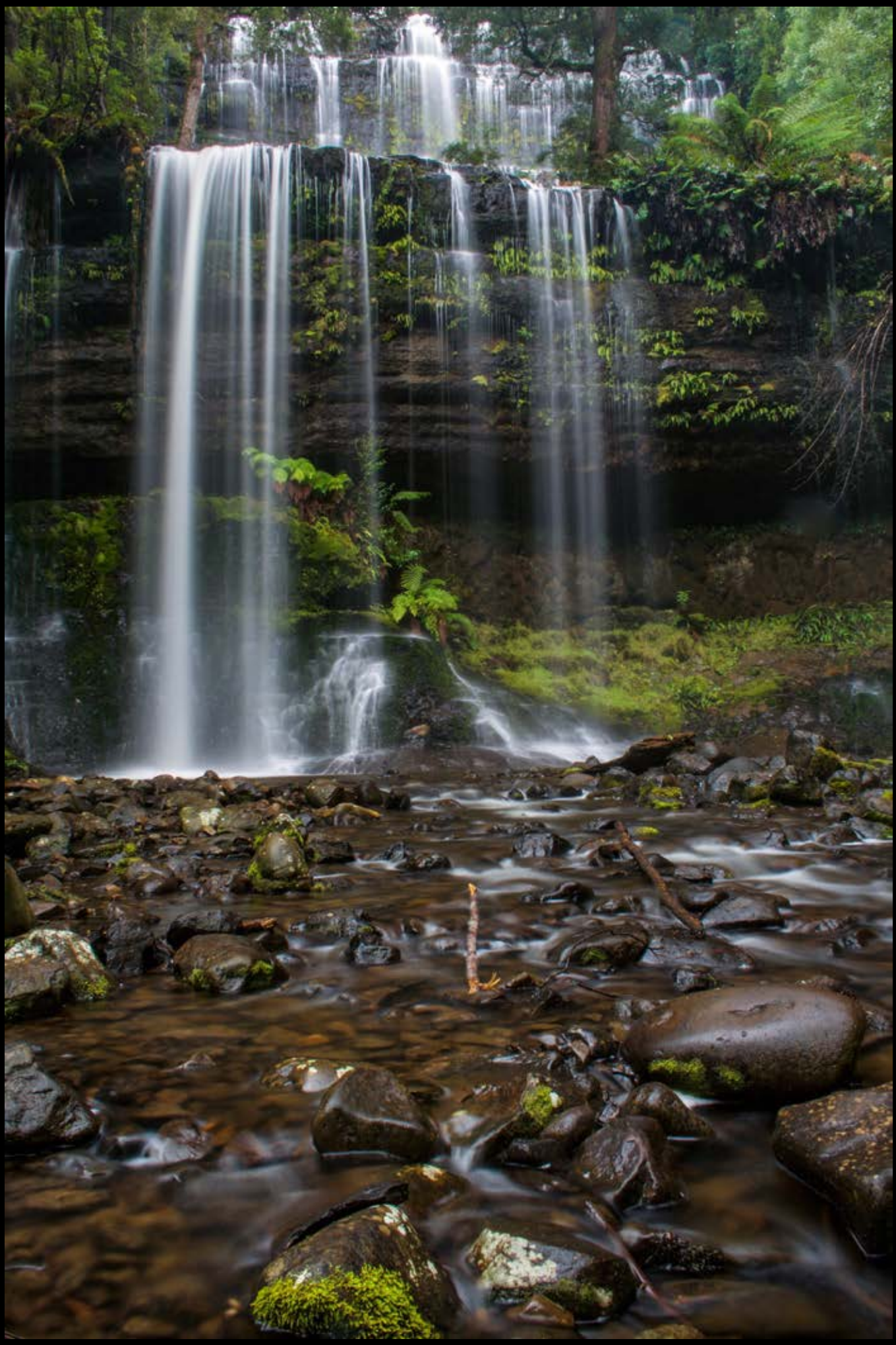
Russell Falls
Caedo12

Mertens' Water Monitor
Tom Brennan

Snow melt drops into a shaft of sun, Pine Valley
Peter Grant

An intimate study
John Walker

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26280



Tasmania July 2017

WINNER

Sunrise over the Huon
SergeantMcFly

Hartz Peak has always been a favorite of mine for an early morning run and seemingly the only time I've been able to get good weather. I always throw the camera in the backpack for some quick snaps and it paid off this winter morning when I was able to pick up some great rays through the frosted scrub.

Winter perfection:
the Labyrinth
Peter Grant

Snowy ascent
Geevesy

Tarn on Blue Peaks track
Teak

Regnans Falls,
Styx Valley
Caedo12

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26279

Other States July 2017

WINNER

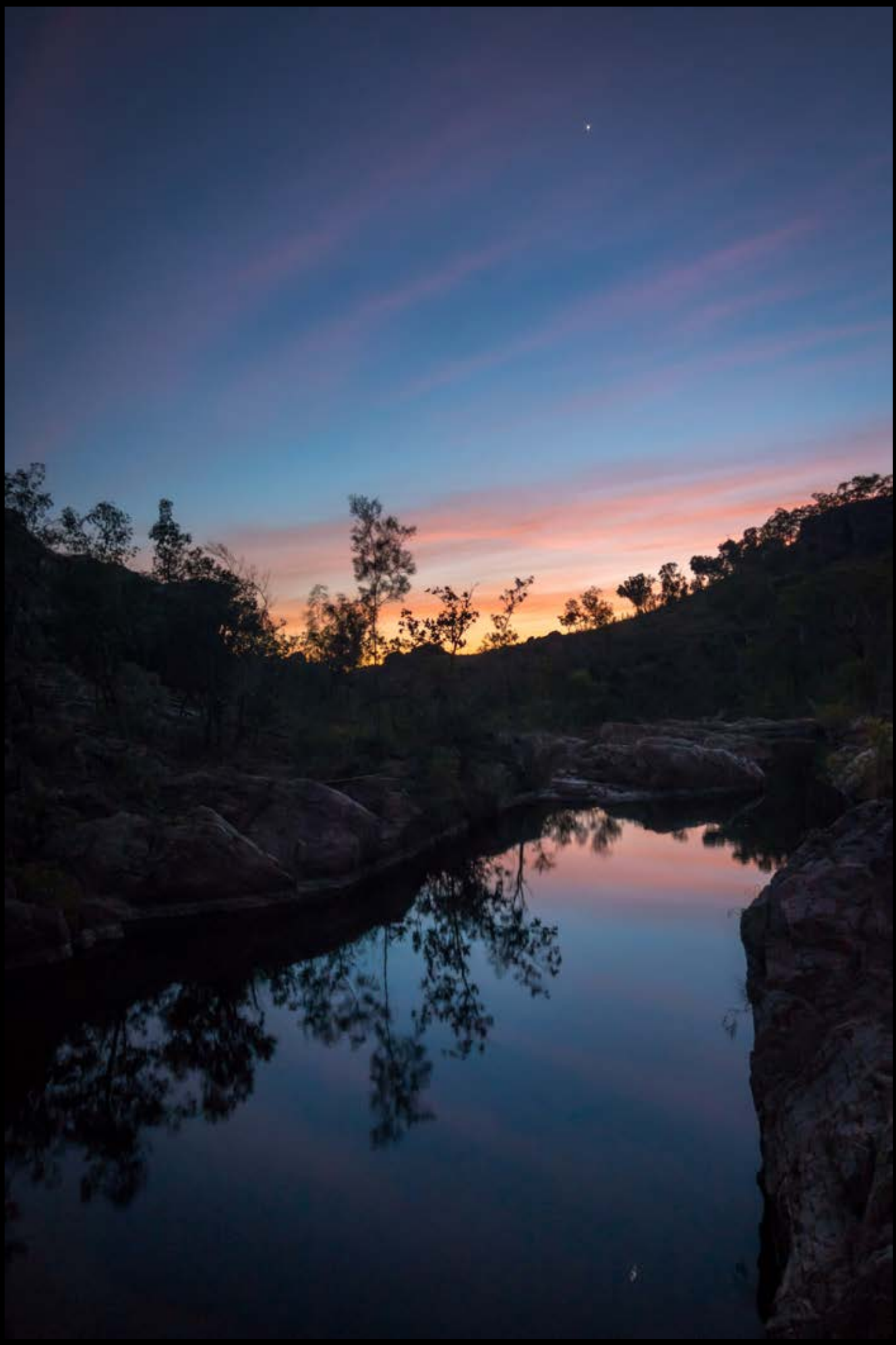
Star of the morning
Tom Brennan

Venus, the Morning star, was rising just ahead of sunrise over the deep pool below our campsite on Gronophyllum Creek in Kakadu National Park.

Main drop long gully
Andrew Walker

A winters afternoon
John Walker

To see the all the entries check out
http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=22&t=26278



A Blogger's Journey

Nathan Rogers

We all have a story to tell and a blog is an incredibly rewarding way of telling it. I created Solo hiker blog to share and remember my bushwalking adventures. It is a great motivator to plan future trips and a fantastic way to reflect on journeys completed.

A glorious Main Range Circuit view, from near Carruthers Peak into Lady Northcotes Canyon, The Sentinel on the right

Beginnings

I developed my love of walking when I was 12 and living in England. My Dad took me out exploring the hills around Leek, our home town in the Peak District. There was so much to discover! Old World War II bomb craters, a long-forgotten plaque laid by the Queen set in a grove of trees overlooking the town, and the ruins of an old abbey were all hidden in the hills. He told me of the Pennine Way, a long trail that passed near the town. I loved being out there. After moving to Australia in 1989, all that fell into the past. I felt trapped in suburbia, and the occasional trip to the *same* Blue Mountains lookout always left me wanting more.

> “I decided to stop wishing to be out there and started planning my first walks.

Thankfully, I met my future wife and we decided to walk the Inca Trail in Peru. Our training walks in Sydney took us from the mountains to the coast and were exactly what I needed. Two of our tour companions shared their travel blog with us, the first time I had seen one used to record a personal holiday. I thought that capturing the experience with the pictures was a fabulous idea, and it sat in the back of my mind for many years.

When I had my own children, I kept imagining them asking me, "What do you do Daddy?" and all I could answer them was "work" or "watch telly". That couldn't stand and my mind turned to walking. I became obsessed with reading blogs about walking the Pennine Way. Such a walk was unrealistic with young children, so I looked for somewhere similar in Australia and discovered the Kosciuszko National Park. I decided to stop wishing to be out there and started planning my first walks. The blog would be my way of remembering my journey and something for my children to look back on.

I took early inspiration from solo travelling bloggers of long trails around the world. Jason Reamy walked 17,000 kilometres over two years to complete the US triple crown and blogged every day of it! Alexandra Mason walked the Pacific Crest Trail in the west of the United States, 4279 kilometres, and Te Araroa in New Zealand, 3000 kilometres, then cycled across Australia! Terra Roam walked completely around Australia, 17,000 kilometres over four years! All these people

> “I felt trapped in suburbia, and the occasional trip to the *same* Blue Mountains lookout always left me wanting more.

Berowra Creek from a trail that joins the Great North Walk

recognised their limits but, by keeping it real for their readers and staying determined, found a way to go on and do something amazing! Their blogs were not turn by turn guide books, rather they described the experience of being there, and I decided I would do the same.

Solohiker

The first two years of Solo hiker blog saw me overreach and injure my knee repeatedly! My first trip to Kosciuszko in April was cut short by snow and I hobbled my way back to the car. I gained my first followers and they left such nice comments that I was motivated to keep going. I walked along the Great North Walk, symbolically from my old home in Sydney to my new home near Berowra Valley National Park. My Dad joined me the following March for my second trip to Kosciuszko, but it turned into a disaster. I lost him in dense fog and after a worrisome few hours he popped out at Thredbo while I was at Charlotte Pass! Still, it was nice to be walking with my Dad again.

> “I was on a grand adventure - everyone else was just out walking their dog!

I climbed the three highest peaks in Australia for my 12 hike challenge

In the third year I took on Caro Ryan's "30 Days to Overnight Hiking" challenge. This encouraged me to explore the trails around my new home town. I was on a grand adventure - everyone else was just out walking their dog! Significantly, I completed my first charity walk, raising money for the OneSight Foundation. I was astonished that half of the funds raised came from the bushwalking community, whom I'd only ever met online.

Overnight at North Rams Head

Inspired, I set up my own challenge for 2018. The 12 Hike Challenge encouraged walking at least once a month, using a list of walking themes that had to be completed throughout the year. I shared this challenge with the bushwalking community and had a fantastic response! Everyone had a unique list, from sunset walks, to cave trips, to coastal strolls and multi-day adventures. It has been amazing seeing others share their pictures and stories.

> "I'm finally living the life I have always wanted to live and my blog lets me relive it.

In the future, I would like to take all this experience and write a few books. I need to do a lot more walking to make that happen! I'll soon complete the Great North Walk and I want to thoroughly explore Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. I have my eye on the Australian Alps Walking Track and the Hume and Hovell Track. I'll keep the 12 Hike Challenge going and use it to motivate me to complete these trails.

Sharing my blog has allowed me to connect with my community, and inspire and be inspired by others. My local community know me as a walker. My kids know what to answer when asked what their Dad does. I'm finally living the life I have always wanted to live and my blog lets me relive it. Why not give blogging a go? You'll soon find that a walk doesn't feel complete without sharing!

See my blog or connect via Instagram @solo_hiker.

Nathan was born in England and works as an inventory planner for a major sunglass retailer. He lives near Berowra Valley National Park in New South Wales and enjoys writing and exploring the bush with his family.

View from Mt Townsend on my 12 Hike Challenge

The Moral Value of Wilderness

Janna Thompson

Let us imagine that humanity has almost died out and only a few people remain. Out of resentment or despair, the survivors cater to their destructive urges by destroying as much of the natural world as they can. They poison rivers and lakes, drop napalm on forests, set off a few nuclear warheads. They are at ease with their conscience because no one will ever be in the position to use or appreciate the nature they are destroying.

They are harming no one. But surely what they are doing is wrong.

Behive yourself
Tom Brennan

The Australian environmental philosopher Richard Sylvan used this story to try to persuade us that nature has a value that is independent of our needs and desires, even our existence.

The predicament he imagines is a fiction. But the ethical problem is very real. Experts tell us that human activity is causing the world's wilderness areas to disappear at an alarming rate. In 100 years there may be no wilderness left.

Those who deplore this development usually focus on the negative implications for human well-being: increasing environmental dysfunction, loss of species diversity and of the unknown benefits that wilderness areas might contain.

But Sylvan's thought experiment – involving the last people alive, and therefore removing the consideration of humans' future well-being – shows us that much more is at stake. It is morally wrong to destroy ecosystems because they have value in their own right.

Questions of value

Some philosophers deny that something can have value if no one is around to value it. They think that ethical values exist only in our minds. Like most philosophical propositions, this position is debatable. Sylvan and many others believe that value is as much a part of the world as matter and energy.

But let us assume that those who deny the independent existence of values are right. How then can we condemn the destructive activities of the last people or deplore the loss of wilderness and species for any other reason than loss of something useful to humans?

> "... human activity is causing the world's wilderness areas to disappear at an alarming rate.

The kind of experiences that something provides can be a reason for regarding it as valuable for what it is, and not merely for its utility. Those who appreciate wilderness areas are inclined to believe that they have this kind of value. Henry David Thoreau wrote

The Great Barrier Reef near Cairns, Queensland
Toby Hudson

in Walden: "We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life posturing freely where we never wander."

The Great Barrier Reef "is the closest most people will come to Eden", said the poet Judith Wright, who helped to lead a protest movement in the 1960s and 1970s against the plans of the Bjelke-Petersen Queensland government to drill for oil on the reef.

Thoreau and Wright value wilderness not merely because it the source of enjoyment and recreational pleasure, but also because it can teach us something profound – either through its astonishing beauty or by putting our own human lives in perspective. In this way, wild nature is valuable for much the same reasons that many people value great works of art.

If the last people had set about destroying all the artworks in all the great museums of the world, we would call them vandals. Objects of great spiritual or aesthetic value deserve respect and should be treated accordingly. To destroy them is wrong, regardless of whether anyone will be here to appreciate them in the future.

Like nowhere else on Earth

Wright and her fellow protesters aimed to make Australians realise that they possessed something remarkable that existed nowhere else on the face of the planet. They wanted Australians to recognise the Great Barrier Reef as a national treasure. They were successful. It was given World Heritage status in 1981 and was listed as national heritage in 2007.

> "This gives us an even stronger moral reason to ensure the survival of our remaining wilderness areas.

The Great Barrier Reef is also recognised as the heritage of more than 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. Much of what Westerners think of as wilderness is in fact the ancestral territory of indigenous people – the land that they have cared for and treasured for many generations.

Recognising a wilderness area as heritage gives us another reason for thinking that its value transcends utility.

Heritage consists of objects, practices and sites that connect people with a past that is significant to them because of what their

Caribbean reef shark
By frantisekhojdysz

predecessors did, suffered or valued. Our heritage helps to define us as a community. To identify something as heritage is to accept a responsibility to protect it and to pass it on to further generations.

We have many reasons to recognise wilderness areas like the Great Barrier Reef as heritage. They are special and unique. They play a role in a history of how people learned to understand and appreciate their land. They provide a link between the culture of Aboriginal people – their attachment to their land – and the increasing willingness of non-Aboriginal Australians to value their beauty and irreplaceability.

> “Heritage consists of objects, practices and sites that connect people with a past that is significant to them ...

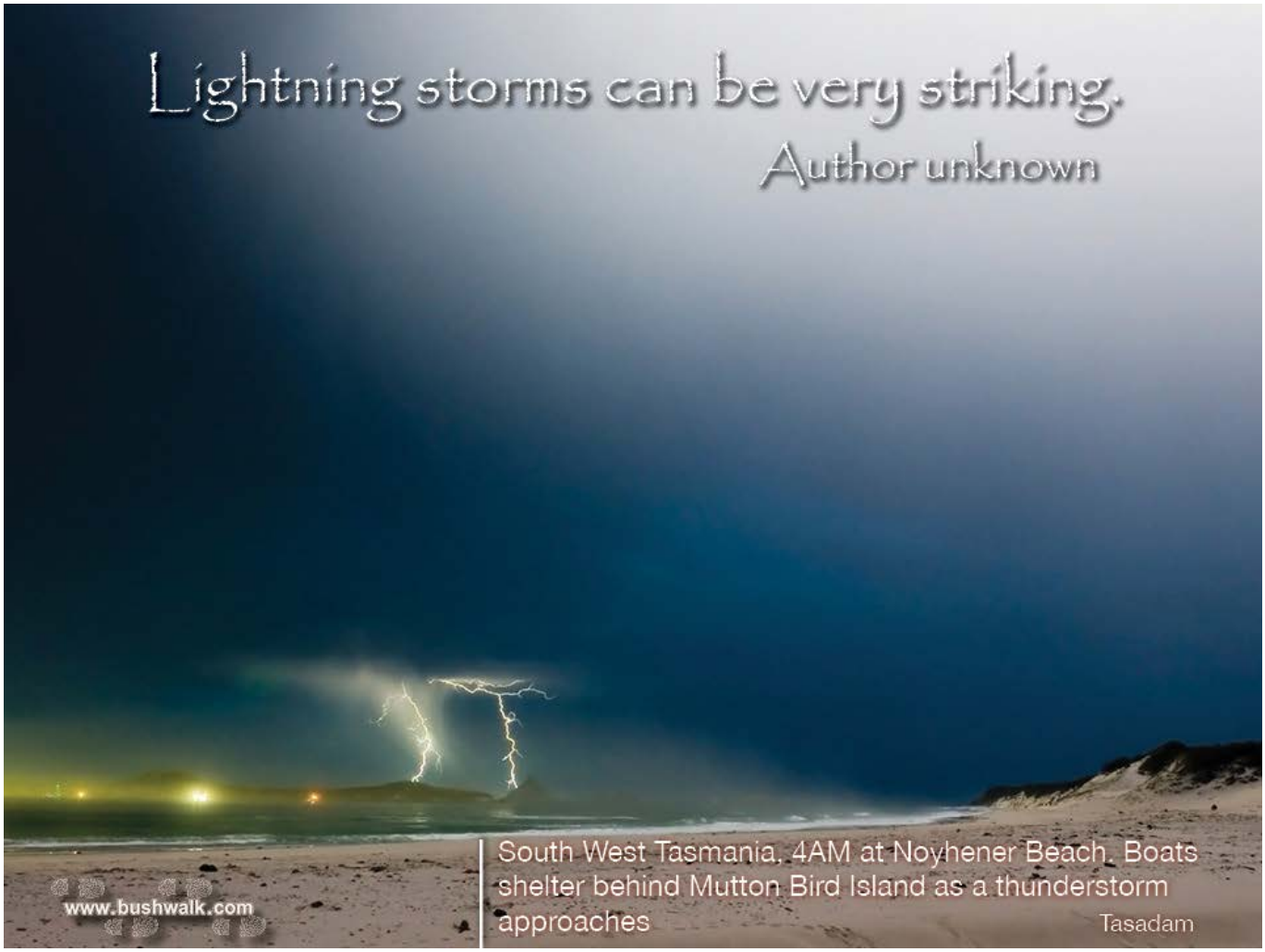
The last people cannot pass on their heritage to future generations. But valuing something as heritage makes it an object of concern and respect. If people cherish and feel connected to wild environments and the creatures that live in them, they should want them to thrive long after we are gone.

We, who do not share the predicament of the last people, have a duty to pass on our heritage to future generations. This gives us an even stronger moral reason to ensure the survival of our remaining wilderness areas.

> “Much of what Westerners think of as wilderness is in fact the ancestral territory of indigenous people ...

Janna Thompson
Professor of Philosophy, La Trobe University

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 23 January 2018.



In the News

Falls-Hotham Alpine Crossing Final Plan

Stephen Lake wrote about FHAC in April 2016, December 2016 and December 2017. A Final Plan was released in April 2018. In May 2018 Parks Victoria released the non-confidential submissions, under the heading *Phase 3: Draft Master Plan*. These submissions make interesting reading. PV advised that "Overall there was a positive response to the plan and its potential positive impact to the region." The submissions released in May show that this is false. Of about 195 published submissions just 10 support FHAC. The key issues remain – poor figures, poor economic modelling, no business case or EIS, the lodge on Diamantina Spur, bushwalkers' experiences compromised and more. Here's the link to the Bushwalk.com discussion.

The following are extracts from the Draft Management Plan submissions.

3 "Words cannot express my dismay".

17 "The draft plan does not provide sufficient baseline data on the specific ecosystems which will be impacted by the expansion in human use."

25 "31 new buildings, 21 deemed luxury huts and 10 large shelters which would destroy the peace and tranquility of the park, and threaten the environment both visually and literally.

28 "It is not possible to properly assess this plan as the environmental assessment and business case have not been released."

32 "This is pure nonsense from anyone who knows the Alps."

39 "The high plains are dangerous for the inexperienced on a long overnight walk."

58 "The business case as presented in the DMP is seriously lacking and does not include the rigour typically required for such proposals. It is based on limited data that has not been validated and appears to make wild assumptions about potential use."

82 "It is very misleading to leave off a figure for maintenance and operations costs. These will be very significant ongoing costs."

94 "The financial business case is dubious as I do not believe there are 17,000 walker nights on the track at present."

107 "The plan is essentially dishonest in nature."

172-74 "The reported current figure of 17,000 is equivalent to 70 people on the track every day for eight months, a simply incredible claim ... The headline benefit/cost ratio of 7.66:1 is ludicrous. No maintenance/operations costs are included, benefits are inflated by an arbitrary 25% ('consumer surplus') and a further 25% (approx) for 'Value added to the Economy'."

316 "Just piss off and leave the high plains to be seen by future generations, as they are now and before more molestation."

345 "The draft plan itself is sloppy in production and full of errors, typographical, grammatical and factual."

352 "The plan contradicts itself."

461 Email subject line "Surely you can't be serious."

Parks Victoria's site for the Diamantina Spur lodge
Taariq Hassan

In the News

Reintroduction of quolls into the wild

In May 2018 Arid Recovery released 10 Western Quolls in outback South Australia's inland deserts, the first time in over 60 years that quolls have been there.

Estern Black Quoll
Ways

10 Best Hiking Blogs for 2018

Top10travel announced their list of 10 top hiking blogs. Check them out.

Cable car at Cradle

A $60 million cableway at Cradle Mountain that will transform the iconic Tasmanian tourism experience is planned to start working in 2021.

Feral horses

NSW scientists proposing to list feral horses as a threat to the environment.

Development in Tasmania's national parks

7 June, 6 - 7.30pm, online
A range of development proposals are being considered in Tasmania's national parks – mountain bike and horse-riding trails, helicopter tours, fly-in fishing expeditions, commercial huts and more. Join EDO Tasmania for a free information session about development in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Colong Foundation for Wilderness Wild Light

Open daily, 5 -17 June, 10am – 5pm, Bondi Pavilion
A showcase of our natural heritage by Henry Gold OAM. For over fifty years Henry Gold has been and remains a respected photographer for the NSW environment movement, providing spectacular images to support protection of threatened wilderness across NSW and beyond. Henry knows wilderness as an avid bushwalker and photographer. As well as being artistically appealing, Henry's photographs have been influential in campaigns for wilderness preservation and World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains and the NSW rainforests.

Heritage Heresy

Matt McClelland

"There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around
That the colt from old Regret had got away."
Banjo Paterson

A new bill in NSW raises the debate as to how best we respect the heritage of this great land. Is it wise to have a law that protects of a population of feral animals in a National Heritage listed national park? Would such a law undermine the natural and indigenous heritage? Would such a law actually honour the heritage of the horses?

Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Bill 2018 says it aims "*to recognise the heritage value of sustainable wild horse populations within parts of Kosciuszko National Park and to protect that heritage*." The basic gist of the legislation will be to protect a population of horses in the national park at levels that will allow visitors to interact with them.

The legislation was tabled on 23 May 2018 just a month after the NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee issued a call to start the ball rolling on listing of habitat degradation and loss by feral horses as a key threatening process under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. The have found that hoses in the Kosciuszko National Park have an adverse effect through habitat destruction for the Northern Corroboree Frog (critically endangered), Southern Corroboree Frog (critically endangered), Guthega Skink (endangered), Alpine She-oak Skink (endangered) and more.

So what will this legislation mean?

- Creation of a Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel to provide advice on the management of a sustainable wild horse populations within Kosciuszko National Park.
- The development of a "wild horse heritage management plan" for Kosciuszko National Park. This plan is to identify the heritage value of sustainable wild horse populations within the park. The legislation mentions "ensuring other environmental values" will still be protected, but the wording suggests to me that some the native ecosystem values will be compromised.

Horse mustering within the Pilot Wilderness

It is also intended that the legislation will prevent that culling of feral horses within the park, meaning that horse populations can only be controlled by non-lethal in park methods. Research suggests in park culling is among the most humane methods in minimising horse trauma. The legislation does not provide funding for the much more expensive and traumatic mustering and relocation techniques.

What are other people saying?

"After eight years of ignoring the growing population and the damage the horses are doing to the Park, it is clear that this bill will make the problem worse, not better."
Penny Sharpe, Shadow Environment Minister

"The decision is an international embarrassment and another nail in the coffin for NSW national parks ..."
NPA Chief Executive Officer, Alix Goodwin

"We acknowledge the cultural and tourism value of the wild horses, but we must also acknowledge the science that tells us of the damage being caused. Damage that is threatening the unique ecosystem of the park – there is simply too much at stake to risk the benefits the park brings to our region for tourism and employment."
Country Labor candidate for Monaro Bryce Wilson

"This bill represents the greatest conservation threat in 75 years to one of the great national parks of Australia and the world, and a threat to one of the most sensitive, important and economically valuable water catchments of Australia. It would lead to destruction of Kosciuszko National Park as we know it today."
(Hon) Associate Professor, Fener School, ANU, Dr Graeme Worboys

Watch this drone footage from Cowombat Flat at the headwaters of the Murray River. The fenced areas are grazing exclusion enclosures, and the impact of feral horses is clear. You can even see just around the inside the enclosed areas where horses reach over and graze.

There was an article about Feral horse in BWA August 2016.

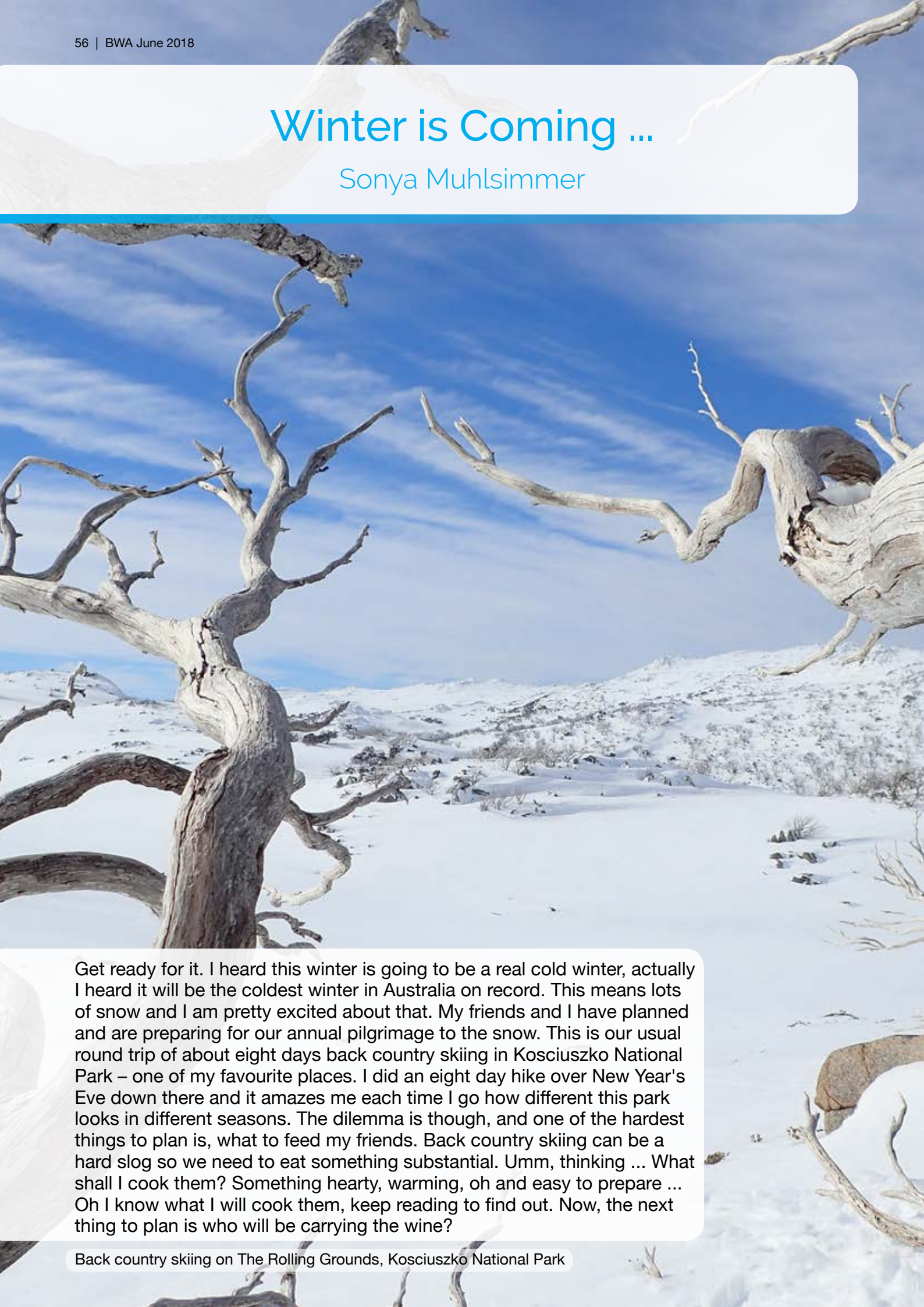
You can also read more the thread Horses and heritage on Bushwalk.com forum.

What to do?
No matter where you stand on this issue I urge you to read this proposed letter and consider writing to your local state MP. I wrote a letter and got an immediate personal response. The response was not what I wanted, but democracy is about having the people voice heard.

Creek damaged by feral horses on the Australian Alps Walking Track, Kosciuszko National Park

Winter is Coming ...

Sonya Muhlsimmer



Get ready for it. I heard this winter is going to be a real cold winter, actually I heard it will be the coldest winter in Australia on record. This means lots of snow and I am pretty excited about that. My friends and I have planned and are preparing for our annual pilgrimage to the snow. This is our usual round trip of about eight days back country skiing in Kosciuszko National Park – one of my favourite places. I did an eight day hike over New Year's Eve down there and it amazes me each time I go how different this park looks in different seasons. The dilemma is though, and one of the hardest things to plan is, what to feed my friends. Back country skiing can be a hard slog so we need to eat something substantial. Umm, thinking ... What shall I cook them? Something hearty, warming, oh and easy to prepare ... Oh I know what I will cook them, keep reading to find out. Now, the next thing to plan is who will be carrying the wine?

Back country skiing on The Rolling Grounds, Kosciuszko National Park

Pasta Puttanesca

Alone this meal is a hearty dish, but it also entitles you to a conversation piece about the name "puttanesca". The name I believe roughly translates to "lady of the night" or more colourfully known as either the Whore's pasta, tart's pasta or even prostitute pasta, take your pick. So, who will start the conversation about this I wonder? Either way, this dish filled with olives, anchovies, capers and a few other bits and pieces like tomato and a bit of chilli and garlic. It will give your taste buds a real treat. I wonder what the history of this dish is, I better find out.

At home preparation

Label the bags and place all ingredients into the allocated bags. Copy or print Method at camp and keep together with the bags.

Method at camp

In a pot add 2 cups of water and bring to the boil, then add Bag 1 (pasta mix). Bring back to the boil and then simmer for 5 to 12 minutes *(see Hints). After the cooking time of the pasta, take the pot off the heat and drain out half of the water into a bowl, keep aside for now (you may want to use the water for more sauce later). Put the pot back on the heat and add Bag 2 (herb mix), Bag 3 (olive mix) (and sun dried tomato for the vegetarian option) and the tomato paste stirring through. Cook for about 1 to 2 minutes. If you want more sauce add some of the water from the bowl, stir through, or if you think the sauce is thick enough, discard the water from the bowl. Serve.

Hints

*Note the cooking time of the pasta, it varies from 5 to 12 minutes, depending on the type. Try finding pasta with a short cooking time. Dried capers are available online through Tastebom. Otherwise capers in brine can be used, just pack them in a bag with the anchovies.

Bag 1 (pasta mix)

Pasta	100 grams *(see Hints)	
Dried capers	1 Tbsp	3 grams

Bag 2 (herb mix)

Fried shallots	2 Tbsp	12 grams
Brown sugar	1 tsp	5 grams
Dried basil	1 tsp	1 gram
Dried parsley	1 tsp	1 gram
Dried onion	1/8 tsp	1 gram
Dried garlic	1/8 tsp	1 gram
Dried chilli		few pinches
Salt, pepper		few pinches

Bag 3 (olive mix)

Dried olives	6 each	6 grams
Anchovies	3 each	4.5 grams

Tomato paste (Keep separate) - 25 grams

Water - 2 cups for preparation

Vegetarian option - Bag 1 (vegetable mix) (Keep separate)

Sun dried tomatoes	2 each	10 grams

Falafel Mash and Gravy

This dish is just soul food, well I think so anyway. Falafels are high in protein, carbs, iron, zinc and other minerals from the chickpeas. It is just what we need after a big day of skiing. Okay so just a bit of trivia from Wikipedia for you, and to give you another conversation piece, the current record for largest falafel ball weighs in at 74.75 kg. Now that is a big ball … Something to think about anyway, mmm I wonder how many people got fed off that one falafel ball. This dish also comes with an alternative, if you don't want the mash and gravy take some pita bread and hummus, it is just as tasty. This dish has it all don't you think!

At home preparation

Label the bags and place all ingredients into the allocated bags and container. Copy or print Method at camp and keep together with the bags.

Method at camp

In a bowl add the contents of Bag 1 (falafel mix) and add ½ cup of water, slowly mixing through to form a firm paste, then roll into quenelles with a spoon, keep aside for now. Place the contents of Bag 2 (mash mix) in a bowl, and set aside. Add ½ cup of water to a pot, and put aside to boil later. In another pot, place the contents of Bag 3 (gravy) and slowly mix through ½ cup of water, stirring constantly to make a paste. Put a pan on the heat, add some olive oil and fry the falafels for about 2 to 3 minutes on either side until crispy and golden brown. Take off the heat when ready and cover to keep warm. Put the gravy on the heat and cook for about 3 minutes or until it thickens then take off the heat. Then to the stove, add the pot of water to the heat, bring to the boil and then stir through the mash mix. Place the falafels over the mash and pour the gravy over the falafels.

Hints

This mix makes about 4 or 5 falafels. This dish is a bit fiddly to make but it is worth it sometimes for a feast. Make it with friends.

Bag 1 (falafel mix)

Falafel mix	¾ cup	140 grams

Bag 2 (mash mix)

Instant mash potato	¼ cup	25 grams
Dried chives	1 tsp	1 gram
Dried onion	⅛ tsp	1 gram
Dried garlic	⅛ tsp	1 gram

Bag 3 (gravy)

Gravy powder	2 Tbsp	36 grams
Onion flakes	⅛ tsp	1 gram
Garlic flakes	⅛ tsp	1 gram

Container

Olive oil	2 Tbsp	30 grams

Water

Water for falafels	½ cup	
Water for mash	½ cup	
Water for gravy	¾ cup	

When I'm 44

Stephen Lake

A friend of mine reached a certain age and I wrote this.
Tune: *When I'm 64 by Beatles*

When I get older, struggling up hills,
Many years from now.
Will you let me come with you bushwalking?
I can cope, no breath for talking.
If I'm in a blizzard, cold as can be,
Will you hold Schlink door?
Please don't forsake me, will you still take me,
When I'm 44?

You'll be older too,
And if you don't go fast,
I could walk with you.

I could be handy, mowing the lawn,
Working after dawn.
I could go with you to the Gardens of Stone,
Sunday walking, then we go home.

Fixing the lighting, painting the walls,
Who could ask for more?
Please don't forsake me, will you still take me,
When I'm 44.

Every summer we could walk in the Tassie
Wilderness,
If it's not too steep.
We shall plod along.
Down to Windy Ridge Hut,
Not too hard for song.

Send me an email, send me a text,
Saying what to do.
Give me an itinerary, holiday,
I'm at the laptop typing away.
I want to come with you, I can keep up,
Yours forever more.
Please don't forsake me, will you still take me,
When I'm 44?
Ho!

Gardens of Stone
Tom Brennan

Bushwalk Australia

Meandering Mountains

- D'Alton Peaks, Grampians
- Three mighty peaks
- Sleeping bags
- Our forests are worth standing

Wandering the World

- 10 reasons to Hike The PCT
- The Spires via Holley Basin
- From hiker to Globewalker Should they be stopped?

Bushwalking Heritage

- Kidmans Hut Walk
- Conquering the Giant
- Dam Madness
- Five benefits of silent bushwalking

Wonderful Walking

- Aussie 10
- Bushwalking Adventure Activity Standard
- Forests for all

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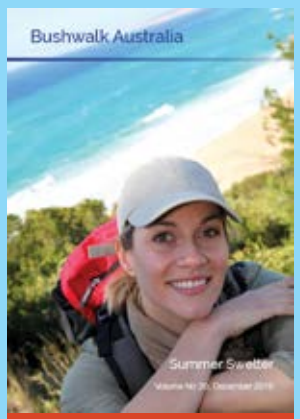
- The Great River Walk
- Mount Triglav, Slovenia
- First aid kit

Wandering the World

- 10 reasons to Hike The PCT
- The Spires via Holley Basin
- From hiker to Globewalker

Longer and Wilder

- The Western Arthurs
- Bibbulmun Track
- Skinners



Summer Swelter

- Desert Discovery Walk
- Rewilding
- Sun clothing

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- Six Foot Track
- Choosing a GPS
- Water requirements

Bushwalking Conservation

- AAWT
- High horses

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- Gear freak - footwear
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