

Bushwalk Australia



Ridges & Valleys

Volume 31, October 2018

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**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



Lake Pedder
from Western
Arthurs'
Submitted by
Nick S

Editor
Matt McClelland
matt@bushwalk.com

Design manager
Eva Gomišček
eva@wildwalks.com

Sub-editor
Stephen Lake
stephen@bushwalk.com

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

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

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

The copy deadline for the
December 2018 edition is
31 October 2018.

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
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accuracy or completeness. There
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concerned should make their own
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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

Hi

I hope this magazine finds you well.

Please join us in this edition as we head to Mt Buffalo with Brian, Carnarvon Gorge with Peter and put on your skis for a trip over Schlink Pass with Sonya. Check out the great images from our amazing photographers and a nifty ultralight pack review by Zach. There is always more, including the ever yummy meals from Sonya's pack kitchen.

We live in a big country where currently much of the centre and east coast are experiencing drought. There have been warnings of a potentially hazardous fire season this summer. NPWS in NSW has already declared park fire bans for the rest of the fire season, covering many big parks including the Blue Mountains. Expect to see fire bans in many parts of the centre and eastern states if the risks continue to rise. Remember to check weather and fire conditions as well as park closures before heading out. If in doubt change or delay your trip. Consider non-cook meals for overnight trips and other ways to protect yourself and the bush.

I trust that you find some great adventures and have fun out there.

Happy walking

Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
matt@bushwalk.com



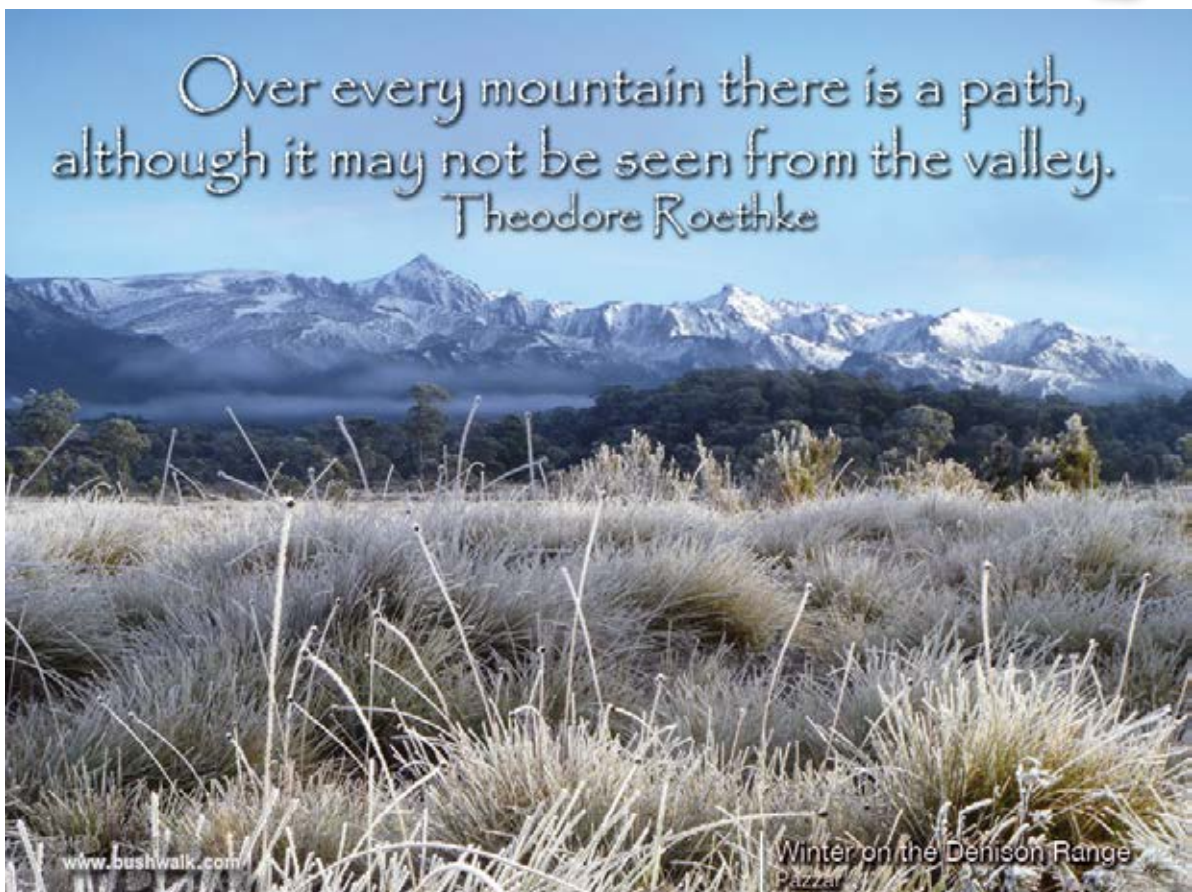
Declaration

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. 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.

Videos

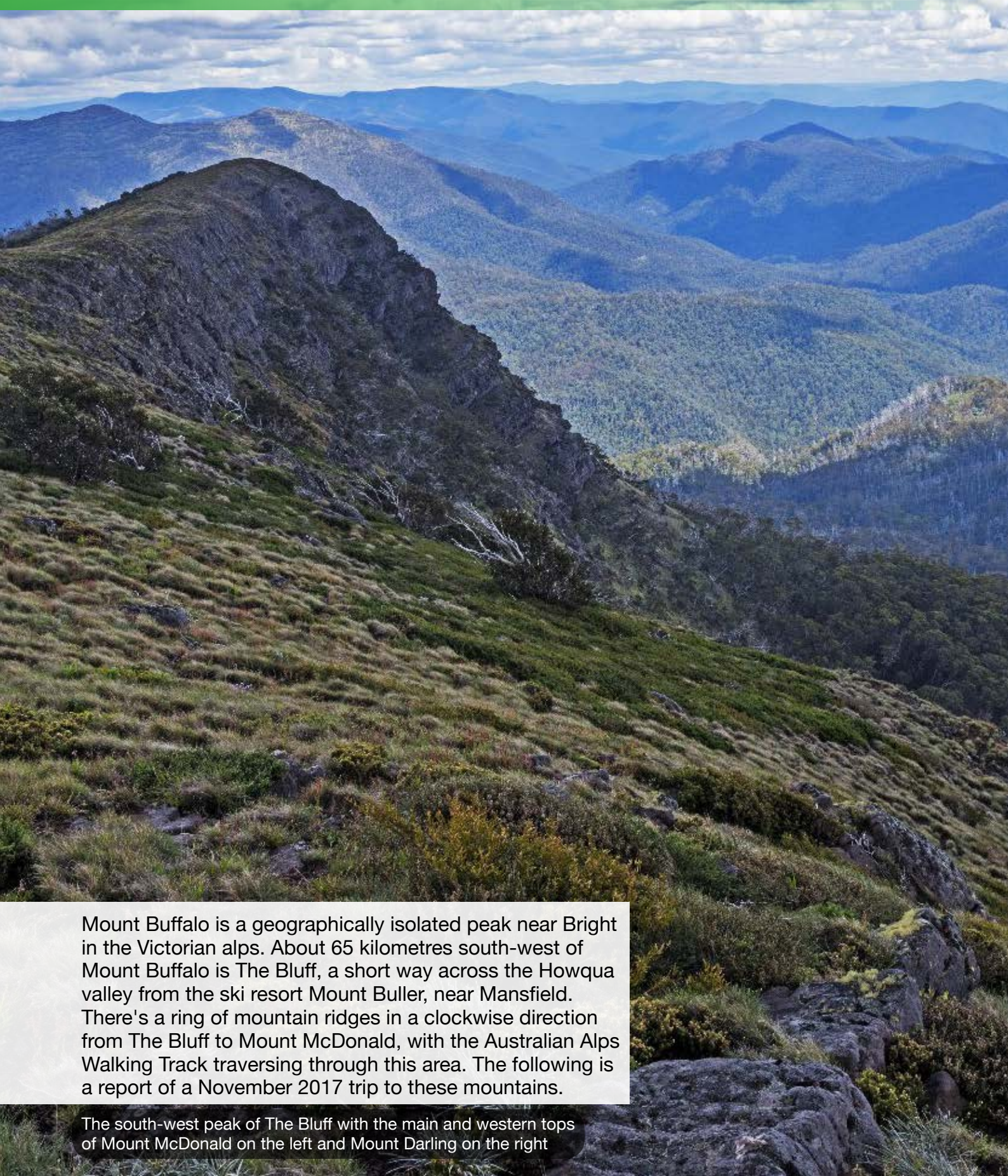
Did you know that trees secretly talk to each other?

Check out this [BBC News video](#) on how trees talk and share resources right under our feet, using a fungal network nicknamed the Wood Wide Web. Some plants use the system to support their offspring, while others hijack it to sabotage their rivals.



Buffalo, The Bluff and Mount McDonald

Brian Eglinton



Mount Buffalo is a geographically isolated peak near Bright in the Victorian alps. About 65 kilometres south-west of Mount Buffalo is The Bluff, a short way across the Howqua valley from the ski resort Mount Buller, near Mansfield. There's a ring of mountain ridges in a clockwise direction from The Bluff to Mount McDonald, with the Australian Alps Walking Track traversing through this area. The following is a report of a November 2017 trip to these mountains.

The south-west peak of The Bluff with the main and western tops of Mount McDonald on the left and Mount Darling on the right

Given the long drive from Adelaide to the Alpine National Park, I like to have some breaks to stretch the legs. I chose Mount Hope near Echuca on the way over and I dropped in on the Grampians for a quick walk after some heavy rain on the way back.



Exploring the granite boulders at Mount Hope

But once in the alps area it was back to Mount Buffalo to start. I find it is a delightful and easy place to get around and would like to bring the grandkids up there one day. The morning was spent checking out Mount Dunn, Eagle Point and the giant Og, Gog and Magog boulders. The afternoon saw me throwing on the pack and heading out to the Mount McLeod campsite.

That day set a pattern that was to be repeated throughout my time in the area. I had generally hot and clear mornings, with cloud building up to afternoon rain and thunderstorms.

So there was a little light rain on the way in and after settling in to the fantastic grassy area at the campsite, I did the quick walk to the top of Mount McLeod and watched storms to the north and south. Rising early the next day I was able to watch sunrise from a fair way up McLeod. There was enough cloud still around to add character to the sunrise, and the lighting up of the plateau did not disappoint.

This day was the worst on the BOM forecast and it proved to be that. There was steady rain on the walk out and the drive around to Mansfield was through heavy rain and lightning. I had pencilled in a car camp in the mountains that night, but due to the weather I piked out and stayed in a Mansfield motel.

The Bluff to McDonald

The next day was another early start to drive over Eight Mile Gap to the Jamieson River where I parked my Yaris at the bottom of the Refrigerator Gap road in lovely clear weather.



Sunrise on the Buffalo Plateau

It was a steady but sunny and humid climb of about 500 metres elevation along the road to Refrigerator Gap as the clouds were growing. The Refrigerator Gap Track looked okay to drive for 2WD at the time. I suspect the major threat would be tree fall, and don't know how often this road would be maintained.

I had a chat to a guy in a 4WD at the gap who was dropping water off. He informed me that there were about 260 school kids spread through the mountains at the time. I kept on the road the short distance to the Bluff Track junction and had lunch there.

Climbing the face of the Bluff involves a steep slope with a few scrambly bits - but I made good time and was thrilled to break out onto the tops. The clouds had been steadily building up and now it was apparent that there were a number of storms around.

I initially went to the south-west to check out the southern arm of the mountain before heading back to the top cairn. A few ranges to the north there were heavy rain showers and lightning.

I had hoped to camp somewhere on the back slope of Mount Eadley Stoney to get access to the top for sunset and sunrise. But proceeding north-east on the track it began to lightly hail. Foolishly I did not put on wet weather gear as I could not see anything



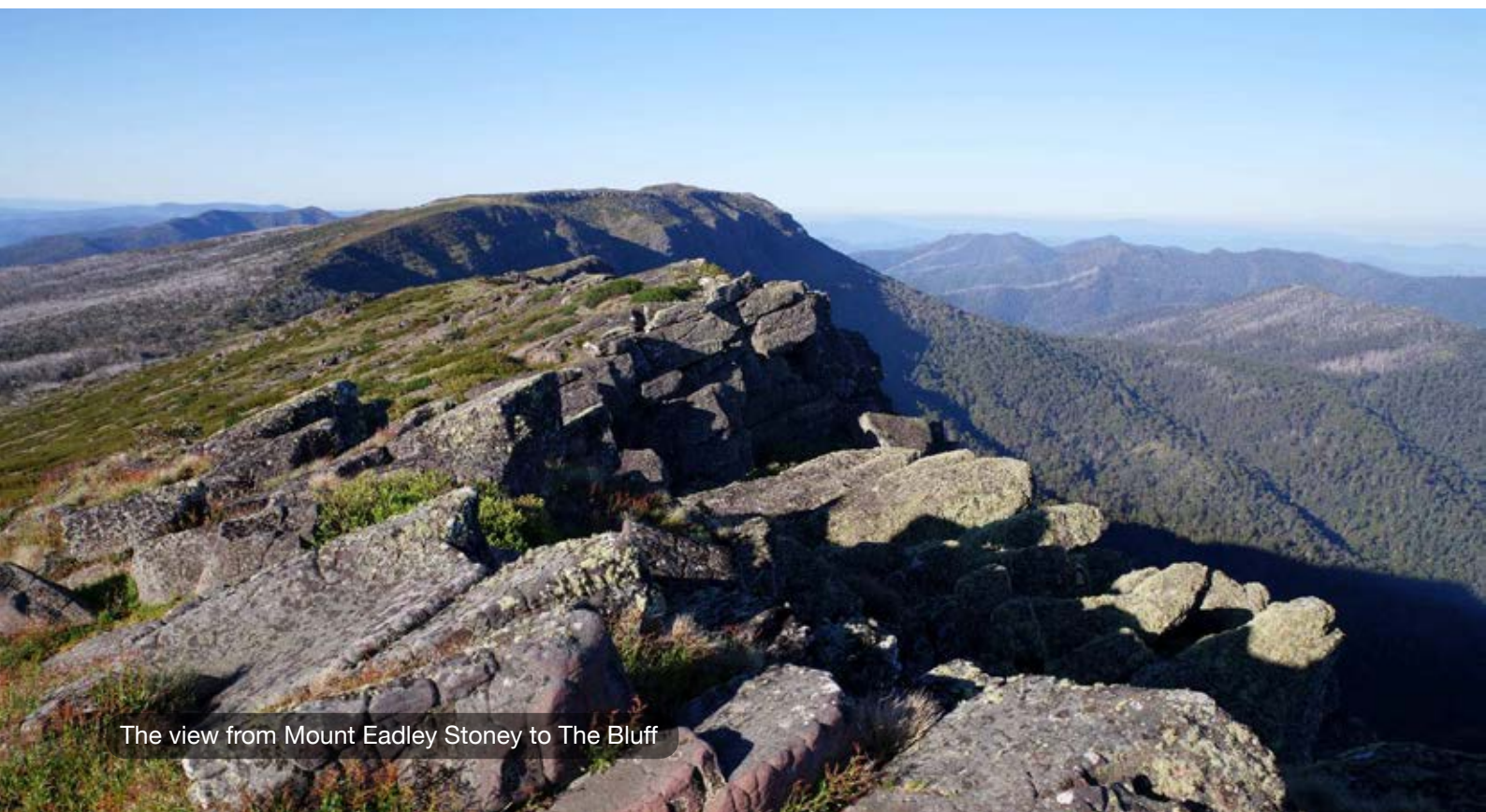
The Bluff camping shelf had a magnificent view

heavy headed my way and thought it would be short lived. But this weather was not like bands of rain sweeping through - they were like tropical storms where the weather is generated in situ.



On The Bluff it's about to get a lot wetter and more hail is coming

So the light hail then turned to rain, and then heavy rain. I was getting soaked and gave up thoughts of setting up camp in these conditions with Bluff Hut so near. The track was turning into a river and water was streaming down the mountain side. Rain



The view from Mount Eadley Stoney to The Bluff

turned back to hail again and was getting heavier. I eventually got to Bluff Hut just as the hail got bigger again and came down in a heavy torrent. The hut was empty but a group of school boys turned up just after that.

I stripped down and got into dry clothes and we waited. As was typical of these days - the storms eventually blew over and exhausted their energy. Then a girls group also arrived and as they set up next to the hut, I put up the tent on a higher shelf about 50 metres from the hut in sunshine and tried to dry some things out.

From this platform Mount Buller and Mount Stirling were just across the valley. Mount Stirling appeared white - like it had snowed - but I was confident that I was looking at thick remnants of hail.

Bluff Hut to Mount Clear

As was the daily pattern, the next morning was clear skies - so I went back to Eadley Stoney to get the views I had missed in the rain. I was a bit concerned to keep one set of clothes dry - so I put my wet clothes back on again to start the day.

Packing up on the return it was then onwards in warm and humid conditions. I visited the top of Mount Lovick which consists of



Approaching Mount Clear on its northern ridge is a nice example of a snow gum

a basalt cap. This basalt is apparent on a number of peaks in the ranges all the way to Mount Jim way to the north-east.

By lunchtime on King Billy No. 1 the clouds had built up again. I walked in shade and the odd light shower in the afternoon before a stiff climb up Mount Clear to camp for the night.

There was very big rain and lightning out to the east. Curiously, my photos indicate that 90 minutes after those storms were raging the skies had cleared right up.

Mount Clear to McDonald

Next morning was again a cloudless sky. This day was a shorter walk but the warm, sunny and humid conditions lasted later into



On King Billy No. 1 looking towards King Billy No. 2

the afternoon so it was very sapping. The small spring just after starting the descent off Mount Clear was amazing. The water was so cold and refreshing, just the thing for hot days.

I could not see where any bypass paths went for either Square Top or High Cone so I went over the top of both. About halfway across Square Top I lost the track completely, but realising I was diverging west, I fell back to using my Suunto Traverse that I had preloaded to get me back onto the AAWT.

High Cone was a curious top, very open with no shade but lots of flowering bushes. But I loved The Nobs, particularly the far Nob which is such a great platform to survey the area, with a gorgeous ridge back to the first Nob. This was again a basalt cap like Lovick and the King Billies.

The storms were building up later that day so it had all been in bright sunshine to The Nobs, but storms were raging over Mount Buller to the north-west in the late afternoon. I struggled to muster the will power to get up onto the Mount McDonald ridge and was fortunate to stop on a nice saddle and set up camp. I had planned on getting to the top, but it would have been far too exposed with what was coming.

From my sheltered saddle campsite I was watching the storm and lightning over Buller



The summit of High Cone with Mount Clear and Square Top behind

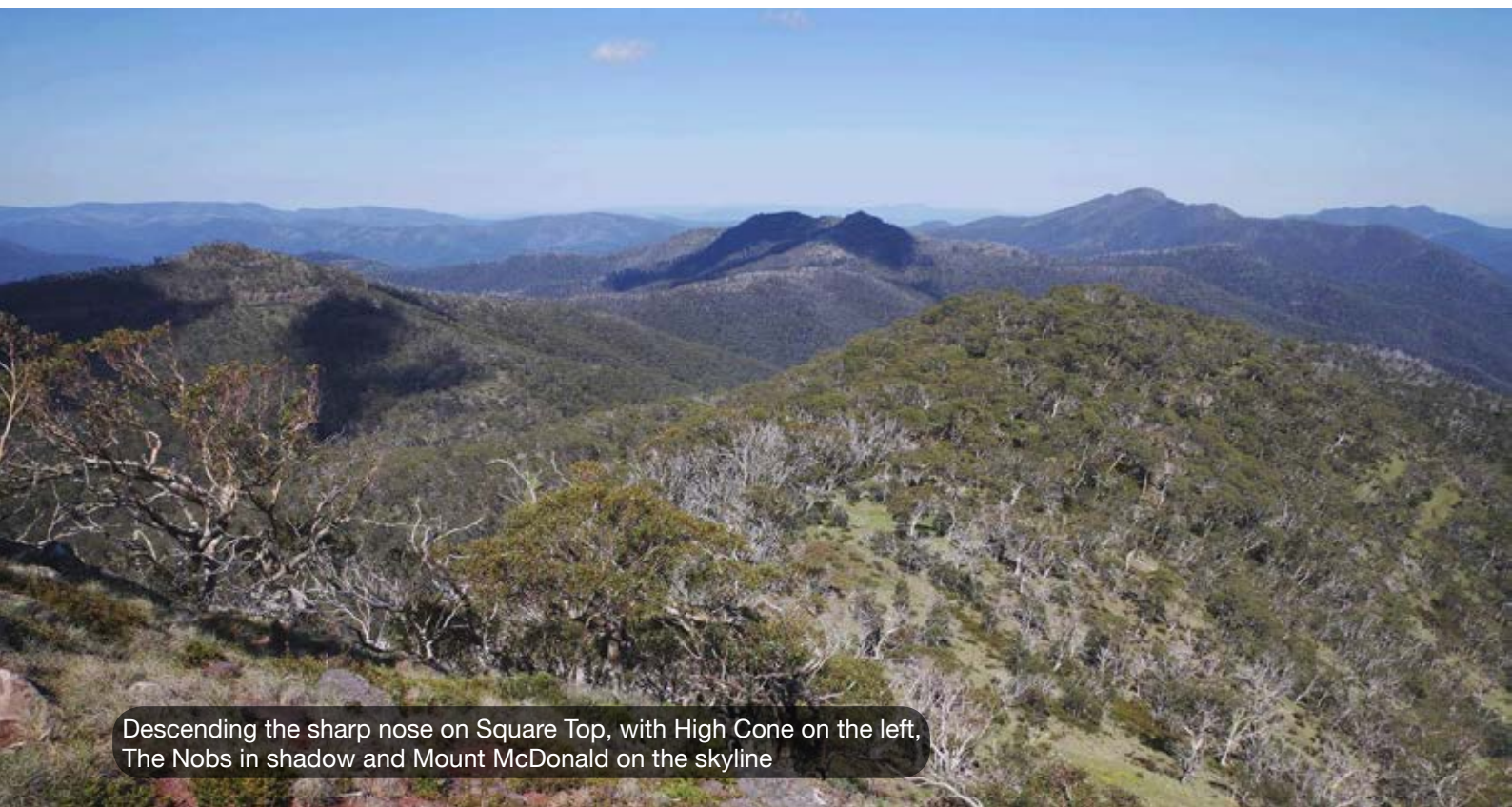
getting bigger when there was a crash of thunder from behind me. As light rain started I sheltered in the tent. For about an hour it was buffeted by heavy rain and short bursts of strong storm winds. At least three lightning strikes timed in at three seconds away, but with Mount Buller in line of sight I was able to chat over the phone to my wife during the storm.

Once again the storms cleared away to a calm night.

McDonald, Jamieson River and home

The last morning was very special as I started early to get as high as I could for sunrise. It was a magnificent clear morning and the ridge of Mount McDonald is a great walk.

Getting back and having breakfast, Anne happened to be walking past. My wife had heard her on ABC radio and wondered if



Descending the sharp nose on Square Top, with High Cone on the left, The Nobs in shadow and Mount McDonald on the skyline

we might cross paths. She was walking the whole Australian Alpine Walking Track from Canberra to Walhalla. We had a chat but after she left I was concerned for her due to the weather reports predicting significant flooding the next day. She did pull out the next day - and then went back a few days later to restart after the storms.

The return to my car involved a very steep and difficult walk down the 4WD Nobs Track. I have no idea how a 4WD could get up this road. I considered this the hardest part of my walk - and I was going down!




Back at the car it was time for lunch and I decided to freshen up by jumping in the Jamieson River. It was absolutely freezing and I could only submerge for about two seconds before getting out and drying off.

One lesson from my walk: I was very mindful of the weather reports, so my Bluff walk was revised from five days to four to avoid the heavy rain forecast on day five. However, the predicted 1-2 mm that the BOM forecast for Buller on a few of those days was a very inadequate description of what was going on. On each of the days out, there were thunderstorms, and depending on where you were, you could get drenchings and hail

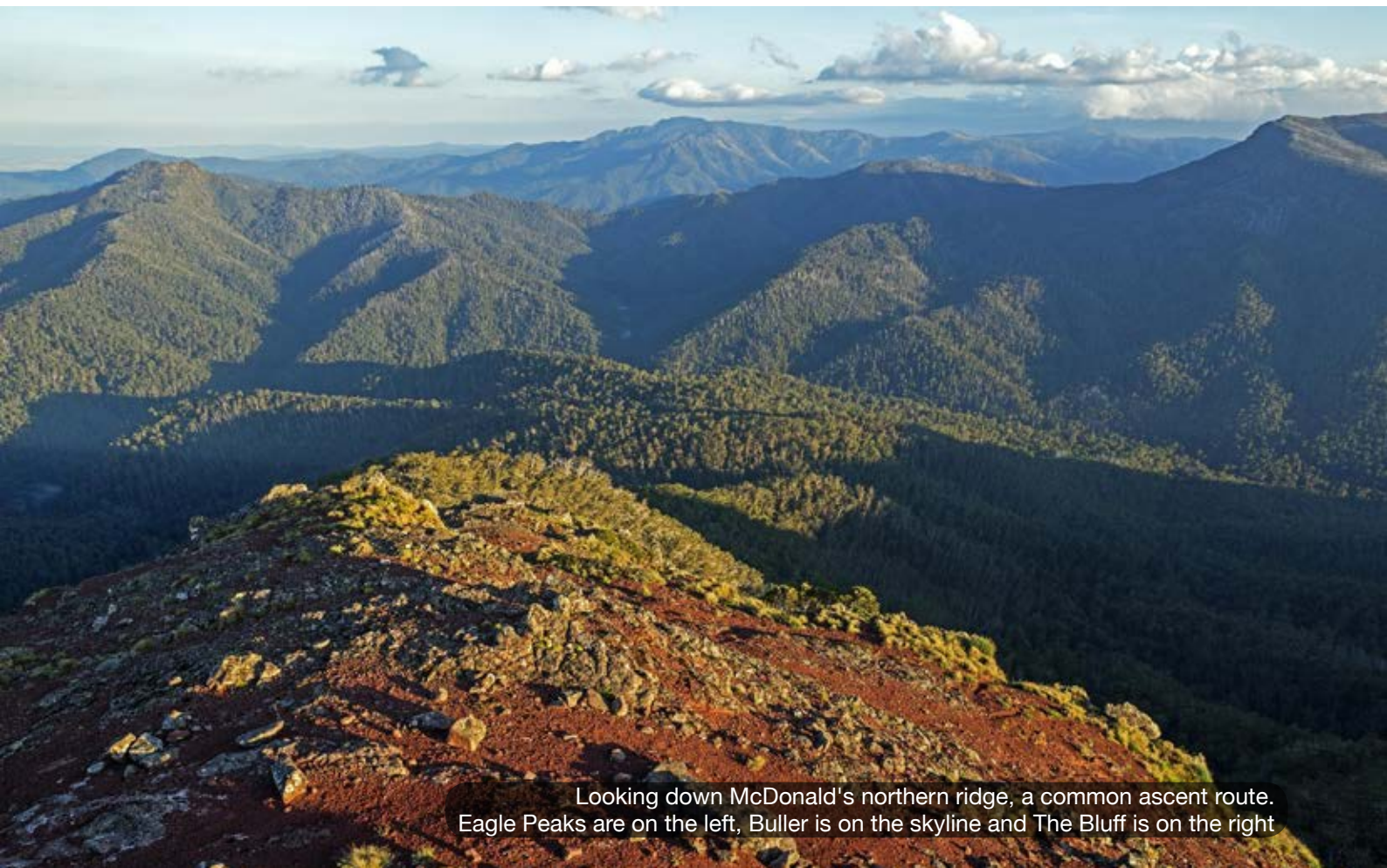
or you could miss out altogether. I believe some locations in the mountains got 200 mm the next day, so I was glad to be on the way home.

I stretched the legs with a short stop in the Northern Grampians, where they had 25 mm of rain that morning, to see Beehive Falls with a reasonable flow in it.

I was very thankful to God for a number of kind providences over those days - throwing a dry set of clothes in the pack at the last minute rather than going super light, being near a hut for shelter when I got caught in the hail on the Bluff, cold spring water on Mount Clear and stopping early on Mount McDonald and getting the tent up before the storm hit.

All up, I was very happy to have covered a bit more of the Victorian Alps - including a substantial portion of the AAWT.   

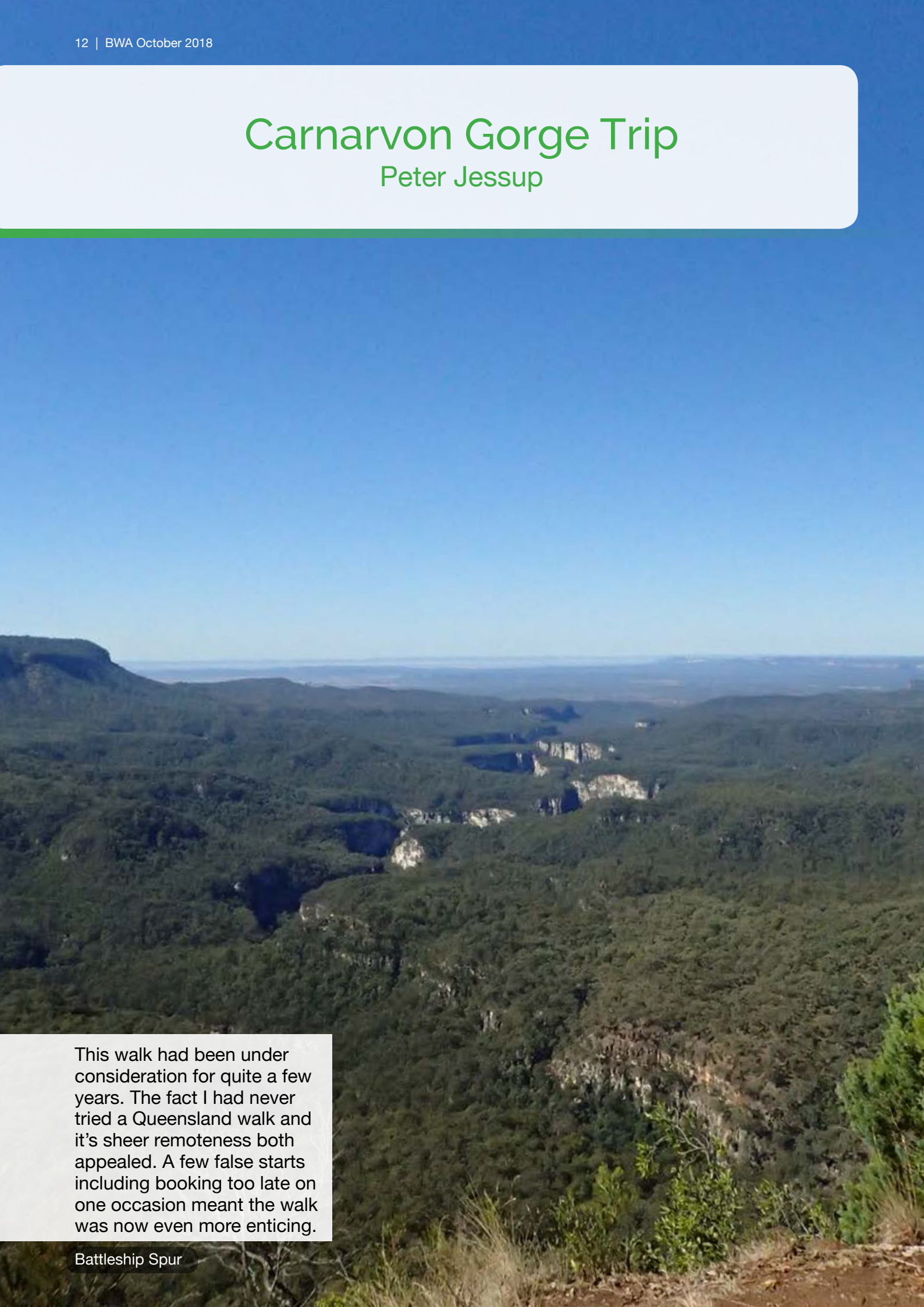
Brian (aka Eggs) is from Adelaide and enjoys walking and bush photography with his wife and friends and sometimes going solo. He has four children and with three married greatly enjoys time with them and his seven grandchildren.



Looking down McDonald's northern ridge, a common ascent route. Eagle Peaks are on the left, Buller is on the skyline and The Bluff is on the right

Carnarvon Gorge Trip

Peter Jessup



This walk had been under consideration for quite a few years. The fact I had never tried a Queensland walk and it's sheer remoteness both appealed. A few false starts including booking too late on one occasion meant the walk was now even more enticing.

Battleship Spur

The first thing one realises when travelling to the gorge is its remoteness. The gorge is between Roma to the south and Emerald to the north, some 720 kilometres north-west of Brisbane by road.

After being caught in Brisbane's peak traffic and buying cooking gas at the last minute it took me over nine hours to drive to the gorge. The drive west, passed through Toowoomba, a country town to rival Ballarat and possibly Geelong in size. Once through though, the road heads north-west into agricultural land, mostly cotton farms.

I reached Roma in late afternoon with another 200 kilometres remaining. The endless roadworks had slowed me somewhat. North of Roma the landscape turns to bushland and rolling hills, but I couldn't escape the damn roadworks. Stopped at a red light for 10 minutes in the middle of the bush and with the Takarakka Lodge reception closing at 6pm, by this time I was ready to just charge through.

As the light dimmed, bright ochre red beams struck the evening clouds on the horizon to the west, highlighting the mountain range I was slowly moving toward.

The road dropped sharply into a valley while twisting around rocky outcrops. Large brown rocks dotted the roadside and growing larger as I approached. One monolith moved onto the road! *&#\$ cattle! They were really hard to spot in the fading light and more so through an insect-encrusted windscreen. Slowing down I weaved through the "cow rocks," my presence and the vehicle not bothering them in the slightest.

“One monolith moved onto the road!”

After passing many more animals - including a pair of wallabies standing on the roadside as if they were waiting for a bus - I entered Takarakka Lodge. I missed the office by six minutes but thankfully they had left an envelope with booking details. I had been looking forward to a cold beer but this was not to be.

Takarakka Lodge is well stocked with general supplies but don't expect to buy screw bottle gas. They do sell metho though. It is a pretty place and very popular with caravanners. I was told cheaper camping was available back a few kilometres but my tent site only cost \$20 or so.



Wards Canyon

Day 1 – to Big Bend

Total time 6 hours

The next morning was sunny and still. Roos welcomed me at the empty Carnarvon Gorge reserve, where camping must be booked and it's only open school and public holidays.

The walk through the gorge is very popular and I pushed through a full bus of old folk as they decided whether to ford the first stream.

The gorge is heavily wooded at the start and the track twists through woodland and around rocky outcrops, making for some interesting walking.

“... the track twists through woodland and around rocky outcrops, making for some interesting walking.”

The first attraction is a 650 metre detour to the Moss Garden. It was a quiet and dark cavern with a small stream falling to the lichen-covered rocks below. Very tranquil and worth the walk.

There are similar detours further on including the, Amphitheatre, Wards Canyon, Art Gallery and Cathedral Cave. The latter two attractions have some well preserved indigenous rock art. There's also some more recent contributions from visitors who feel the need to advertise their visit. I wonder if they will call graffiti the carbon age rock art?

The Amphitheatre was visually stunning. A steep staircase leads to a narrow path through a crevice in the rock, and a few metres later it opens up to a cavernous, well, cavern. Apparently classical musicians used to lug their instruments into this open cave and play to audiences. It would have sounded amazing.

The first day was over by mid afternoon, with only ten kilometres walked plus side trips. Allow six hours at a leisurely pace.

Big Bend is a flat and shaded camp on the inside of a bend in the gorge. A beautifully cool waterhole was great on the legs. The towering sandstone wall is just the other side of the river and being a gorge, light is lost very early. There are good composting toilets and a picnic table.



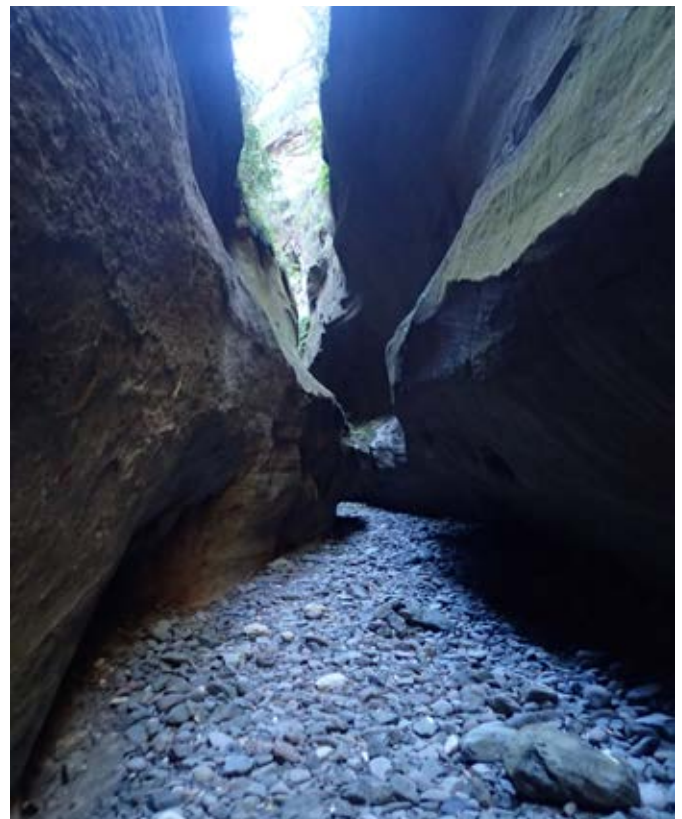
Entrance to “The Amphitheatre”

Day 2 – to Gadd’s walkers' camp

Total time 8 hours

Walking time - forgot.

The second day's feature is a 600 metre steep climb to Battleship Spur. To start the climb the walker needs to backtrack down Carnarvon Gorge and turn right into Boowinda Gorge - far narrower and darker than Carnarvon. This was an awesome start to the day. Boowinda Gorge runs narrowing and snaking through the sandstone, large basalt rocks littering the floor. Tree trunks piled like matchsticks against immovable boulders are an indication of the ferocity of this canyon in flood; today it was thankfully completely dry.



Boowinda Gorge

A collection of tarns and orange trail arrows marks the start of the ascent. The track starts with a rock scramble through a crevice, quite okay for a fit walker but definitely not for the tourist bus hordes!

The track soon reaches a flat area with a sign, warning the ill-prepared to turn back. This stops day trippers walking through to Gadd's camp, but seems strange as the Battleship Spur is a good, albeit long day walk.

The climb to Battleship lookout took the best part of four hours, very steep and very long. Staircases avoid anything too treacherous but be prepared for a slog, especially with a full pack and a day's water. Battleship Spur is a slight detour off the main trail and a great place for lunch. Epic views of Carnarvon Gorge are laid out like a map below.

The remaining 10 kilometres to Gadd's walkers' camp is mostly overgrown foot track through grassland and cycads. The undulating track disappeared several times and a few more track markers could help. The grass is so dense, one can be 10 metres from the track and not see it.

Gadd's walkers' camp consists of a good long drop toilet, a shelter and an underground rainwater tank with two hand pumps, which makes a lot of sense as no one can leave the tap on and empty the tank, and the water is kept away from sunlight. Great idea.

“Epic views of Carnarvon Gorge are laid out like a map below.”

Day 3 – to West Branch camping area
Total walking time 4 hours 45 minutes.
Total time 6 hours.

The day is a 15.8 kilometre walk on 4WD management track and foot tracks, with a steep climb in the first seven kilometres past Angelina Creek.

The vegetation is a mixture of eucalyptus and cycads loosely dispersed through grassland. Once atop the first climb, there are great views east across the Carnarvon Creek gorge, 300 metres below, a good place for morning tea.

After a few more kilometres the track leaves the 4WD track, with a well marked left turn and onto single track. The track undulates



Boowinda Gorge

and descends into the Boot Creek valley where dry ironbark eucalyptus replaces the greener Cycad grasslands.

The West Branch walkers' camp is across a suspension bridge and is a 500 metre detour off the main track. This campsite is 200 metres from a drive in campsite, convenient if you have the need to beg a grey nomad for a beer! It is a very quiet spot with only one camper there on my walk.

Day 4 – to Consuelo camping zone

Walking time 5 hours 10 minutes.

Total time 6 hours 30 minutes.

The morning began with two inquisitive magpies just outside my tent and a grey kangaroo with an inverted joey just a few metres away. They must have been surprised to see a human appear from the strange blue orb - about as surprised as I was to awake to an audience.

Day four is the longest - 17.3 kilometres with two steep inclines. The track from West Branch ascends gradually through sandy ironbark country and up into the Cycad grasslands again.

All single track, it is in good condition and didn't disappear on me once, unlike day two. In good condition except for the pig's relentless digging. I reckon they use the track as a piggy super highway and every hundred metres or so, sniff a buried morsel, excavating six square metres in the process. This can be beside the track, or right in the middle. It makes the track very hard to follow and is a complete mess visually. Some hillsides are covered in these unsightly digs. There must be thousands of the little mongrels out here and they need to be dealt with. There, I feel better now.

The two climbs are not arduous and the peak of the second climb is a good place for lunch.

The afternoon walk passes through the "Mahogany Forest", a large area of enormous silver top stringybark - very similar to the alpine ash forests in Victoria. The height is now over 1200 metres which would explain such vegetation possibly.

Consuelo camping zone is a picturesque spot in a small valley and well protected. As with Gadd's walker's camp there is a shelter and underground water tanks.



Foot bridge to West Branch walker's camp

Day 5 – to Cabbage Tree

Walking time 3 hours 40 minutes.

Total time 5 hours 30 minutes.

A relatively easy and short walk across the Consuello Tableland, mostly flat and easy walking through more beautiful forest.

About to leave when a rustle in the nearby grass revealed a black pig walking my way. Being a greenhorn Victorian (yes I know we have pigs in Victoria) I tried my best dominant intimidation ... something like gooowwnnn uuuckkkkooffff getouttaeree. It worked. The pig took off for the hills.

In retrospect I was glad of this harmless initiation in pig scaring. The day saw two more surprise pig moments. Almost on top of one of them before we realised each other's

“They must have been surprised to see a human appear from the strange blue orb ...”

presence. Pig - “snort” and hasty retreat right across my path. Human “eek” frozen to the spot - replacement underwear please!!

For the remainder of the day I announced my presence with some cursing jibberish every few hundred metres. These pigs are huge and quite mean looking. The piggy excavations continued to be seen throughout the day.

I made camp at 2pm at Cabbage Tree. Another shelter and underground water tank but no toilets. The area is a camping “zone” which means you can pitch a tent anywhere in the vicinity but in reality options are limited as the surrounding grass is so thick and tall. A very tranquil spot though and one bar of 3G Telstra reception.

Day 6 – to the Vistors' Centre

The trail condition of the last day is in stark contrast to the virtual freeway of day five. Immediately from camp the walker is pushing through chest high grass - this continued on and off until the Demons Ridge climb.



Rock art

The walking on the last day is varied in track and contour, with some magnificent views to the East at the top of Demons Ridge. Further on the walker passes the Devil's Finger - a rock spire pointing at the heavens - also a good place to stop for lunch.

Soon after, the turnoff to Boolinda Bluff is reached. It is well worth turning left for the 750 metre easy stroll. Once there, the entrance to the gorge is visible, as is Battleship Spur, the peak I lunched on five days prior.

The remaining 2.5 kilometres involves a steep descent down rocky steps and ladders until the main gorge access trail is reached, then a 15 minutes walk to return to the visitors' centre.

That evening at Takarakka lodge, I enjoyed a few beers with the caravan set and had a really great night sharing stories. A few nights a week, they have a roast dinner special for \$25, which I highly recommend (need to BYO plate, bowl and cutlery). The crew really looked after this weary traveller and I thank the staff for their great hospitality.

“... The crew really looked after this weary traveller ...”

I really didn't know what to expect from this walk. It is rugged, beautiful and in some sections quite tough. It's something I would certainly not recommend for someone's first multi day walk. It's a stunning walk.

It is really two walks in one. The first an exploration of the magnificent gorge and the second a taste of the unique and varied Queensland forests.

Would I do it again? At the moment, writing this at the Takarakka bush resort with a coldie in front of me - probably not. But if a few mates showed some interest then who knows.

The best time to walk is definitely in the cooler months as later in the year it is just too hot to contemplate. I walked in late May and every day was in the low twenties and sunny, but beware the nights are very cold, with one night down to zero.

Access to Carnarvon Gorge is varied. I chose to rent a car from Brisbane and drive but it is such a long way. In hindsight, I should have flown from Brisbane to Emerald. The drive from Emerald is about three hours. I ended up spending \$150 in fuel, which is the discounted one way flight from Brisbane to Emerald. Or fly to Roma, but this seems to be more expensive. Alternatively, the drive from Rockhampton is only about five hours.

“In hindsight, I should have flown from Brisbane to Emerald.”

More information

- [QPWS Carnarvon NP website](#)
- There are also the following links which give more detail about each section of the park, [Carnarvon Gorge](#), [Mundi](#), [Rosa](#) and [Moffat](#).
- [Takarakka Bush Resort](#)
- [Carnarvon Gorge Wilderness Lodge](#)

Page 13 of the [Carnarvon National Park Management Plan](#) says:

"Carnarvon National Park has been gazetted to protect its diverse landscapes including spectacular gorges, its outstanding Aboriginal sites and a wide variety of plants and wildlife, many of which have special conservation significance. The park also provides substantial nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities, and plays an integral role in the protection of ecosystem services in the region, such as watershed protection (EPA, 2001). QPWS aims to conserve these values into the future."

“It is also called the "Home of the Rivers" ...”

Carnarvon National Park lies within Queensland's sandstone belt, located in the Central Highlands of Queensland, and is a part of the Great Dividing Range. It is also called the "Home of the Rivers", being the source of several major river systems - the Maranoa River and into the Murray-Darling catchment. To the east, water travels down steep-sided valleys, including Carnarvon Gorge, into the Comet and Dawson Rivers. These join the Fitzroy River, which meets the coast near Rockhampton. In the western sections of the park is the catchment for the Warrego and Nogoa Rivers.

The park is 298,000 ha in size, stretching about 220 kilometres. It encompasses a wide variety of rare and unique vegetation types from Brigalow/Belah and softwood scrubs through to open Queensland Bluegrass plains. It is also home to some rare and threatened fauna, with a number of new ground snails having been recently identified, as well as Glossy Black Cockatoos and Quolls having been found within the park. As well as finding unique flora and fauna within the park, there are a number of high-quality Aboriginal sites. These locations are important, and hold special significance to Aboriginal people, who still regularly visit these areas to conduct traditional activities.

“... there are a number of high-quality Aboriginal sites.

The only bitumen road into the park is the access road into Carnarvon Gorge, with access to all other sections being over unsealed roads of varying quality. These roads are impassable after rain.

The best time of the year to visit is between April and October. These are cooler months, and provide a much more enjoyable experience to the park. Be warned though, sections of the park can drop below 0 °C in the middle of winter, and in summer, temperatures can exceed 40 °C. It is always advisable to have large amounts of water with you when exploring these remote areas.



Alistair Hartley, Senior Ranger, Sandstone Management Unit, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, took time from a busy life – literally fighting bushfires – to provide advice about Carnarvon National Park.

Peter is from Eltham, Victoria and is an avid bushwalker. A fan of longer treks, he has completed the Larapinta Trail, Overland Track (in winter) and the Australian Alps Walking Track, north to south. His next challenge is hopefully the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia.



Skiing With the Bobs

Sonya Muhlsimmer



For many years I have made an annual winter pilgrimage to Kosciuszko National Park for back-country skiing. For the last three years this trip has been eight days with my friends Steve and Joe. Steve and Joe are actually known as the Bob-Brothers, yes that is right, the Bob-Brothers. You may have heard of them, or had the privilege of meeting them or even read their stories of travel and adventure in the KHA hut log books; they have been skiing together for many years.

There are a few Bob-Brothers in this clan, and this year Erica-Bob and Bruce-Bob came along. There are, of course other Brothers from way back but I have not met them. It is a tight-knit clan I must say as not everyone that comes skiing makes it into the brotherhood. The Bob-Brothers are not actually brothers by blood, they are brothers bound by adventure. Well, I am proud to say that I have become the new honorary member of the Bob-Brothers and I am now known as Sonya-Bob, and this is the Bob-Brothers story for this year.

Prelude

This year we thought we would try our luck with a pulk. According to Wikipedia a pulk is "(from Finnish pulkka) is a Nordic short, low-slung small toboggan used in sport or for transport, pulled by a dog or a skier, or in Lapland pulled by reindeer". However, Joe had a pulk last year but needed some modifications

“... I am proud to say that I have become the new honorary member of the Bob-Brothers ...

and I tried out a modified toboggan but it was not that good. I had a lot of hassles with it, spending most of the time carrying my pack and towing the empty toboggan. Due to last year's experiences, months of preparation went into the 2018 trip. First the pulks were ordered from Canada, then poles were needed to fit. Harnesses were also needed to fit our waists, then the connections to clip it altogether had to be



considered, and then to make sure the pulks actually worked. It was going to be a trip of trial and tribulation. Steve-Bob liked the modified toboggan idea so he embarked on his own version of that, christening his new modified toboggan as the PULK.GT, as it even had a number plate. Well, let's see how it all goes for all of us this time. Also for the last three years we have been aiming for Mount Jagungal, but we have not made it due to certain circumstances. Will we make it this year I wonder.

Day 1 – Guthega Power Station to Horse Camp Hut

With the new pulks clipped in and towed behind, we were off. The pulks felt quite good going up the hill, much easier pulling a pulk up a hill than carrying a heavy rucksack on your back, so far so good. But, with river crossings, you have to unclip the pulk from the harness, take off your skis, carry the skis then come back to carry the pulk across,



From the back, Steve, Bruce and Erica going up the hill from Guthega Power Station, day 1
Sonya Muhlsimmer

and then clip in again. The pulk does have its advantages and disadvantages, but it is only day one and I am still getting used to it. After the creek crossing it was an easy short run to Horse Camp Hut, made in good time. Lunch and a cuppa was had and then tents were set up for the night. The last few years Horse Camp Hut has been the first and last night of the trip, and that means food can be buried for the last night's meal, and less weight to tow during the trip - a bonus!

“With goggles on, faces and head down pushing through the wind over the pass ...

As there were five in the trip this year, two bottles of wine were stashed in the food drop for the last night, perhaps a bit excessive, or perhaps not enough ... Bruce cooked dinner for all and chilli con carne was on the menu.

Day 2 – Horse Camp Hut to Schlink Hilton

Snow was falling, and winds up to 75 km/h over Schlink Pass were forecast. Last year we experienced the worst blizzard in recorded history, with 95 km/h winds, so today should not be too bad considering. The Aqueduct trail was chosen so there was a short steep hill at the start. Today Steve struggled a bit with the pulk and had to stop to make repairs en-route, however Erica, Joe and I continued on while Steve and Bruce did a bit of maintenance. It was too cold and windy to hang around. With goggles on, faces and head down pushing through the wind over the pass, we got to Schlink Hilton,

home for the night. We did not know how far behind Steve and Bruce were, or even if they headed back to Horse Camp; time will tell. At least they are experienced, and if they don't turn up tonight it will be back to Horse Camp tomorrow for the rest of us. Ah, luck was on our side as we have the hut to ourselves, which means sleeping in the hut and out of the wind. After about an hour and a half Steve and Bruce turn up. It was Steve's turn to cook tonight but he was a bit exhausted from the trip - not only was his pulk an issue but he had not fully recovered from his flu. I decided to take my turn to cook, and dinner was an experiment with dehydrated vegetable and chorizo tagine and cous cous. Dinner turned out all right if I say so myself.

Day 3 – Schlink Hilton

Steve decided he was going to stay in the hut for the remainder of the week so the rest of us decided to stay for a day. Perhaps after a day Steve will change his mind and we can all continue together. Strong winds were forecast again today and another front was on its way, so we may not be missing out on that much anyway. After morning tea Joe, Bruce and I did a recce to see which way we can get up to The Kerries with a pulk in tow. Well the winds were not strong at all and blue sky was peeking through, it looked like it was trying to clear up. The snow was good except for a few big ice patches, it would have been a great day to ski to Mawsons over The Kerries. Sure it would have been a bit windy over The Kerries but it would have



Joe battling the blizzard at Schlink Pass, day 2
Sonya Muhlsimmer

been fine. Oh well, it was not to be, back to Schlink for lunch. In the afternoon Joe, Erica and I went for a bit of a ski along the road towards Valentine Hut and we could see a blanket of fog slowly closing in on us. Perhaps we missed our break in the weather and we will be stuck at Schlink for another day. We spent some time looking at the ice formations on the trees and leaves, and just enjoying being out, but then the visibility was getting pretty bad as the fog was starting to engulf us. Back at the hut, we had Phil and Mike from Canberra turn up, en-route to Mawsons Hut for six nights. They did a food drop to Mawsons a few months back so they have to make it there. Phil and Mike baked up some impressive looking damper, Phil is quite an expert of a foil oiler, he presented me with a business card that said "Whenever you need foil oiled, Phil da Man". He is a fellow of the Royal College of Foil Oilers. It must be true as he has a business card, right? But gee he could oil the foil, he was an expert ... Steve cooked pasta tonight and we had a choice of sauce of either rehydrated bolognaise, or puttanesca. Depending on the weather tomorrow our itinerary could be Mawsons Hut, preferable as it is closer to Jagungal, or Valentine Hut, wait and see what this front brings.

Day 4 – Schlink Hilton to Valentine Hut

A few things were certain today. The front has come as visibility was poor and the wind was strong. Steve is staying behind, Joe,

Bruce, Erica and I were off to Valentine Hut and Phil and Mike were off to Mawsons. After breakfast it was time to pack up, we said our farewells to Steve and into the blizzard we go. So it is a few days in to pulling the pulk, but today other challenges arose. Just after the weather station, we were trying to zigzag down the hill as much as we could to get to the creek crossing, but as the hill was quite steep the pulks were getting away from us, sliding to the side of us. It was a bit of a challenge to control the pulks, and then the unthinkable happened: Bruce's pole broke under pressure of the turning. What to do now ... It was discussed that the pulk could stay behind here, and we could pick it up on return, but we did not want to return this way so Joe and Bruce took out their repair kit to see what they could do. It was worth trying to fix it somehow than to leave it behind. The broken pole could not quite be repaired effectively so the last option to try was tape a tent pole around the break and see how far that would last. Well, that seemed to work but for how long? The next challenge was to cross the creek over the small foot bridge. After doing a lot of backwards and forwards, stepping the snow down, carrying the skis across and then carrying the pulks across it was time to climb the hill. Some tracks could be seen further down to the west and we

“... Bruce's pole broke under pressure of the turning.”



Joe, Erica and Bruce at Valentine Hut, day 4
Sonya Muhsimmer

had wondered where they came from. The next night at Mawsons after talking to other people we discovered there was a larger foot bridge on the creek north of the weather station, right on the Valentine Fire trail we could have used, never mind we made it across. I used this bridge in summer but I had forgotten about it. Later on, following Duck Creek along a slope towards Valentine Hut my pulk got away from me and did a "death turn", the pulk twisted and nearly pulled me away with it, Bruce had to help me untwist. Finally reaching Valentine Hut it was time to eat and rest, it turned out to be a beautiful afternoon with the sun coming out. Joe, Bruce and Erica went for a ski to collect some water and search for the next foot bridge while I rested. For afternoon tea we snacked on some rehydrated eggplant dip, goat cheese, sun dried tomato, biscuits and wine. Again there was no one in the hut so we took advantage of that and slept inside. Joe cooked a rich, traditional Italian ragout - gee things are tough out here.

Day 5 – Valentine Hut to Mawsons Hut

The sun was out, a few clouds were in the sky and it was a beautiful day as we left for Mawsons. Last year in winter Joe, Steve and I were looking for a foot bridge to cross Valentine Creek, we knew roughly where it was we just had to find it, and yesterday it was found when the Brothers were out

collecting water. The bridge is only a few hundred metres away from Valentine Hut and around 20 metres south-east from where the creek rising in The Kerries meets Valentine Creek and is so easily missed. It depends on the snow conditions of course but yesterday Erica was standing next to the creek looking for the bridge and could not see it. She took a step closer to the creek and what do you know, there it was right under her nose. After crossing the creek Mawsons is only a few kilometres away and then Jagungal will be within our sight. Mawsons is a popular hut at any time of the year, and there were 10 at the hut that night. The hut was cosy and we were all taking turns to sit in front of the fire, and Mike was reciting poetry. There was also discussion that high winds around 120 km/h were expected at Perisher soon. Joe and I wanted to summit Jagungal but Bruce and Erica were not so keen. They wanted to get back to Steve and have two easy skiing days, and avoid the strong winds where Joe and I were ready for two very long, tough days. It was already Wednesday and we had a time frame to be back at Horse Camp on Friday night, see what the day brings tomorrow. Needless to say, I am hoping to summit. Noodles with rehydrated sausage in a tomato sauce was for dinner.

“... the pulk twisted and nearly pulled me away with it ...”



Camp at Mawsons Hut with Jagungal in sight, day 5
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Day 6 – Mawsons Hut to Schlink Hilton

What a perfect day for summiting as there was not a cloud in the sky, I wanted so much to make Jagungal but only Joe wanted to come with me. I was reluctant to head back as I had summit fever, perhaps I could go with John and his son and catch up with the Brothers at Horse Camp on Friday night, but that makes two huge days for me and I will be on my own coming back and I am not ready to ski on my own yet. Oh well, Jagungal will have to wait another year as back to Schlink we go. With the sun shining down as we traversed The Kerries it was a dream day for skiing, and it was a winter wonderland through the trees, but admittedly looking back to Jagungal was hard as I so wanted to be up there. Only a couple of kilometres back to Schlink and we see someone in the distance, is it our fellow brother Steve? Yes it is, the Bob-Brothers are finally united and a lunch stop was called and stories started flowing from the last few days apart. Once we arrived back at Schlink chairs



Schlink Hilton resting, day 6
Sonya Muhlsimmer

were placed outside and the remainder of the day was for drinking tea and reading books, oh and playing with the pulks as Joe went for a slide then Steve pulled him along. Joe's home-made Italian sausage was for entree, vegetable stew with dumplings for dinner and finished off with chocolate cake for dessert. Yes things are really tough out here ...

Day 7 – Schlink Hilton to Horse Camp Hut

Tonight is our last night out. With a meal and two bottles of wine waiting for us, we head back to Horse Camp Hut but not until we have a bit of fun at Schlink Pass, one by one doing a funny pose for a photo under the Schlink Pass sign.

Again it was a beautiful day with the sun out and yes there was a bit of wind about but nothing too bad. Perhaps over The Kerries the winds would have howling which we would have been stuck in. I am not looking forward to coming home as it always takes me a while to adjust back to reality after a week out in the wilderness. As soon as you get back into reception the phone goes off, bad news is everywhere and there's that melancholy feeling of when a trip is over. At least we have started talking about our trip next year already. Taking the Schlink Trail this time back to Horse Camp and down near the Munyang River crossing we run out of snow. Off with the skis and pulks to carry them across the creek and back up to the snow line, luckily it was less than 100 metres.

“... looking back to Jagungal was hard as I so wanted to be up there.”



Mawsons Hut with Jagungal in the background, day 6
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Back at Horse Camp Hut there were around 16 people, a busy night. Bruce wanted to continue and go straight home but the rest of us were not keen, and besides with the amount of road kill and wildlife out it was not safe driving through the night as there was so much carnage along the road coming down. I was not keen on a near seven hour drive home dodging kangaroos and wombats, so we stayed. The hut felt like a pub with the fairy lights on and so many people, and then the weather took a turn for the worse as it started pouring with rain outside. I hope my tent does not leak. We were going to be up as early as we can and out of there so if things get wet it won't matter as the cars are only a few hours away. Still I hope the tent does not leak. In our food drop, Bruce had a chicken curry for dinner, and after we had a couple of mugs of wine (some drank more than others) it did not feel so bad being here. Well I can say that the tent did not leak and it held up pretty well in these conditions.

Day 8 - Horse Camp Hut to Guthega Power Station

We awoke early and the tent fabric had frozen solid, Erica and I were sharing the tent so we bashed the ice off the sides, and I punched a snow wall which formed overnight from the entrance of the tent to get out. Steve camped nearby and when he awoke and saw my tent he came and shovelled the snow off the back, so it appeared that there



At Horse Camp Hut, Sonya, Steve, Bruce, Joe and Erica, day 7

was a lot of snow overnight. We were quick to get ready and pack, and we were back by the cars in no time and made our way into Jindabyne for some real coffee. And the trip was over for another year.

Jagungal 2019

So next year we will try the trip again with a few modifications to the pulks and extra pieces in our repair kit. But overall the pulks were good, a few hassles but getting the weight off your back was good and it was much easier going up hills. I think Steve will try a pulk next year too. But it does give the illusion that you can carry more in your pack, like a few bottles of wine, goat cheese and of course extra chocolate. The talk of coming in from Cesjack looks promising too. That way we can summit Jagungal in two or three days and a greater chance that we make it. Overall it was a great week, and I am looking forward to next year.



Sonya at Schlink Pass, Dicky Cooper Bogong slope behind Erica Griffiths

Pulks When It's Wild

Stephen Lake

Tune: *Born to be wild*

Keep the pulks a movin',
KNP's a highway.
Looking for Jagungal,
And whatever comes our way.

Sliding fast is the way I want it,
Load behind me can make it easy.
On descending into warm Schlink Hilton,
Where we stay if the weather's breezy.
Pulks when it's wild.

Up we climbed that morning,
From the power station.
Road had many gaspings,
Sweat and dissipation.

So we stopped at Horse Camp,
Hut it was a filling.
In our tents we slept snug,
Weather was a chilling.

Sliding fast is the way I want it,
Load behind me can make it easy.
On descending into warm Schlink Hilton,
Where we stay if the weather's breezy.
Pulks when it's wild.

Wind was blowing Schlink Pass,
One pulk it was broken.
Later reunited,
And the wind had spoken.

Finally made Mawsons,
Jagungal it did beckon.
People were too tired.
Which we did not reckon.

Sliding fast is the way I want it,
Load behind me can make it easy.
On descending into warm Schlink Hilton,
Where we stay if the weather's breezy.
Pulks when it's wild.

Skied back over Kerries.
Sun it was now shining.
Lobbed into Schlink Hilton.
Where we had fine dining.

Last night was at Horse Camp,
Chicken curry dinner.
Even had a fine wine,
And it was a winner.

Now we're planning next year,
Come in from the east side.
Cesjacks we will get to,
Then to Jagungal we glide.

Sliding fast is the way I want it,
Load behind me can make it easy.
On descending into warm Schlink Hilton,
Where we stay if the weather's breezy.
Pulks when it's wild.



Sonya (or her Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle double)
and Steve approaching Guthega Power Station, day 8
Erica Griffiths

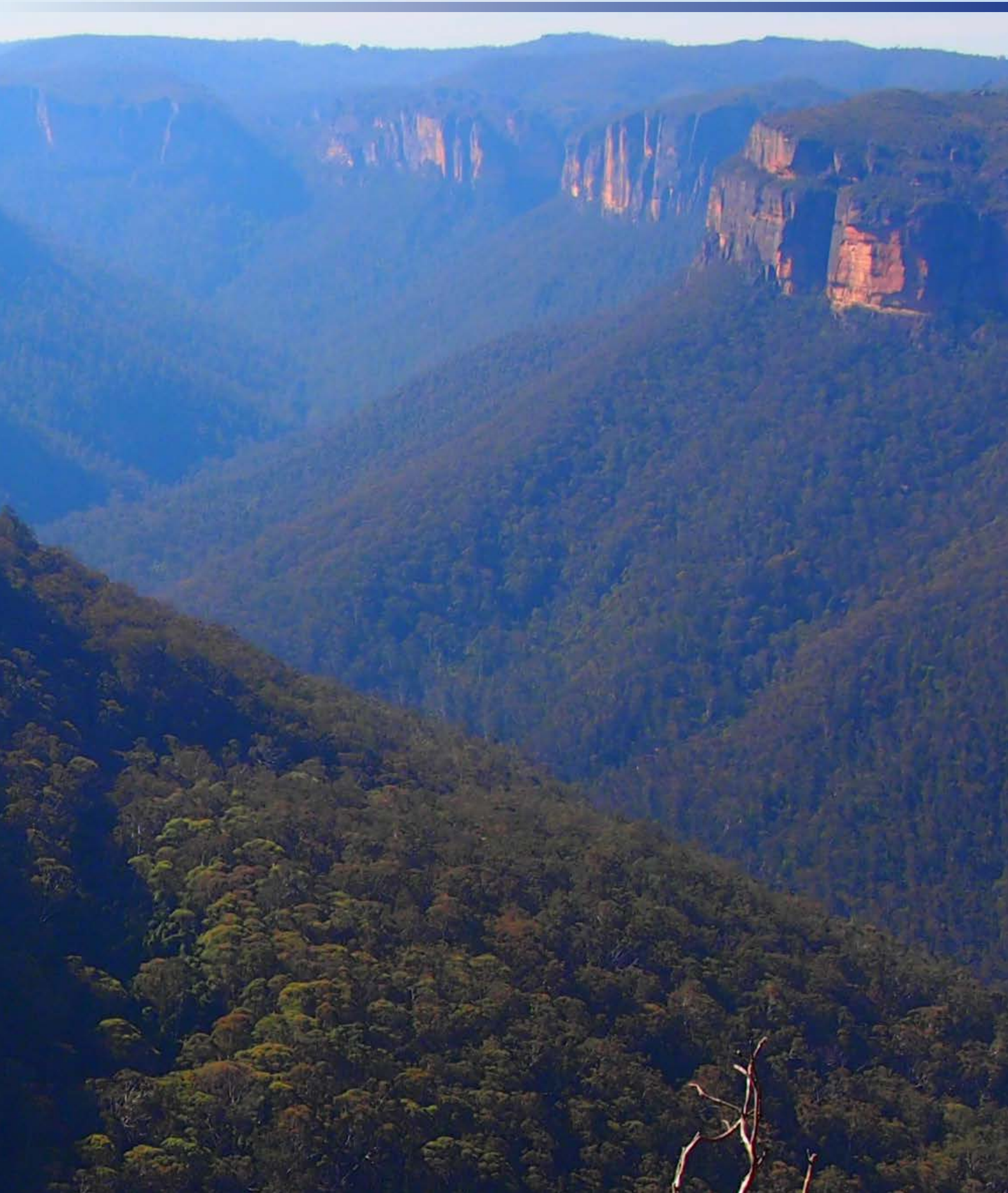
Photo Gallery



Beyond Hanging Rock
John Walker

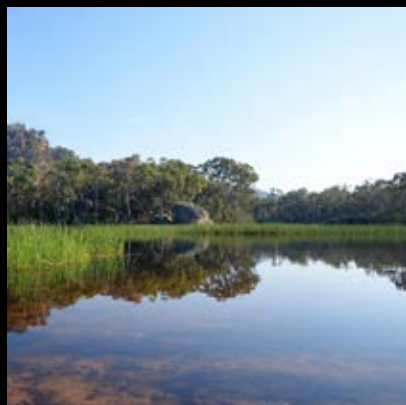
Competition: Landscape September 2012

BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes October 2017

WINNER



Dunns Swamp, Ganguddy
landsmith

I'd viewed this outcrop with more than plain curiosity but, sadly, it was on the other side of the weir. Then a gentleman came down to the water's edge and we got talking and I mentioned how I'd love to get over there with my camera. He immediately offered me a loan of his kayak and thus I was able to make the journey. There are panoramic views and interesting rock formations to be had here and I spent about 20 minutes just wandering around.



Incoming...
North-north-west



Amphitheatre Looking
Glass Canyon
AJW Canyon2011



Mount La Perouse
Zane Robnik



Pictures speak a
thousand words
ILUVSWTAS



Early morning
cliff top walk
Lorraine Parker



Mt Remarkable scree
Brian Eglinton



Non-landscapes October 2017

WINNER



Elabana Falls
Caedo12



Kelp Folds
on Granite Beach
Zane Robnik



New Holland Honey Eater
Lorraine Parker



Glossodia detail
North-north-west



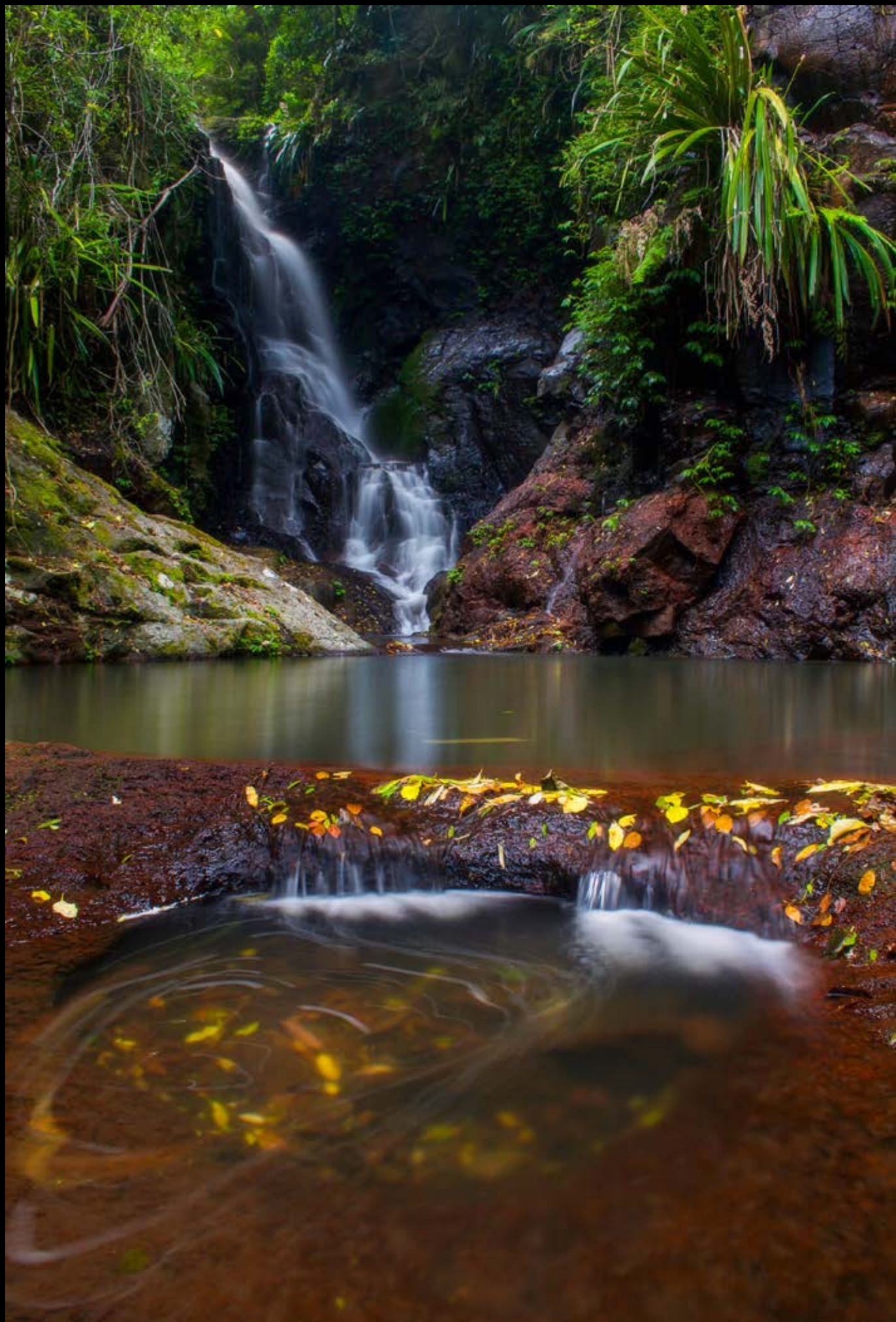
There is beauty in death
ILUVSWTAS



You speak English?
landsmith



Into the looking glass
John Walker



Tasmania October 2017

WINNER



Backlight
North-north-west

Sometimes the most wonderful moments occur when you least expect them. Early morning walk up to Projection Bluff through the beautiful twisted and stunted forest, as the sun slowly climbs over Liffey Bluff and I climb up to meet it and ... *voila*.



Mt Picton spring snow
ILUVSWTAS



Across the plains
Iaindtiller



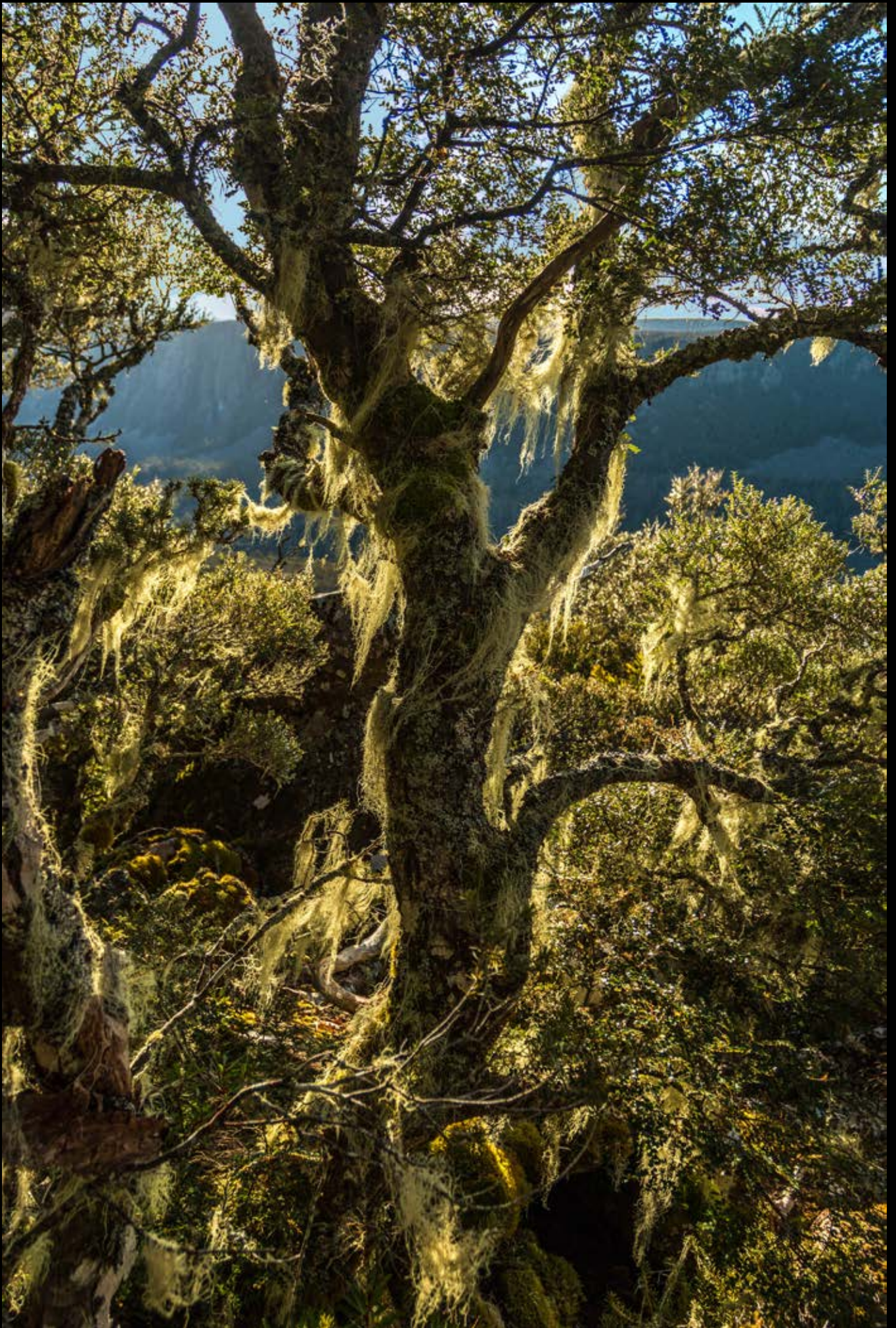
Misty Craggs
near Agamemnon
Zane Robnik



Meandering up
to Cathedral Mountain
Teak



Cradle Mountain exposed
Lucas Chamberlain



Other States October 2017

WINNER



The Dry Swamp
John Walker

Despite its seeming remoteness this is actually close to a very urban location. The swamp is located along the Hanging Swamp track in Sydney Harbour National Park at North Head. I have been walking there a couple of times and it's sometimes surprising how you can find small gems like this close to a large city. On my previous visit to the same spot this area was completely inundated, as you may expect of a swamp. I applied a dramatic filter to this shot, which helps illustrate the drought conditions that have prevailed in recent times.



There's sun on them hills,
Keep River NP
Osik



Pagoda land, Ganguddy
landsmith



Ingalalla Lower Falls
Brian Eglinton



Landscapes

November 2017

WINNER



Coast Track
southerly view
John Walker

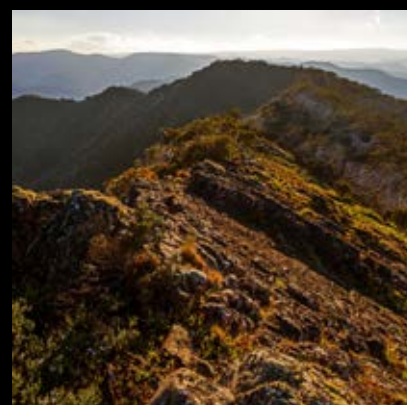
Discussion on the forum had aroused my interest in revisiting an old favourite custom circuit, which extends the Palm Jungle loop at the south end of Royal National Park, going from Otford via Garrawarra Ridge then off track near Governor Game lookout down Thelma Ridge to join the Coast Track, returning via Burning Palms. Those who know the track would be familiar with this classic view looking south just before entering Palm Jungle. There are many wonderful views along the Coast Track, and in my opinion this is one of the most inspiring.



The morning after
North-north-west



South Cape Rivulet
ILUVSWTAS



Morning on McDonald
Brian Eglinton



Reviewing our work
for the day
Geevesy



Walking by
the golf course
landsmith



The Green Room Portal
Tom Brennan



Non-landscapes

November 2017

WINNER



Sunlit Snowgum
Brian Eglinton

A November solo circuit over our days in the Alpine National Park was a tough and memorable trip. One feature was the hot build up to afternoon thunderstorms followed by the disappearance of clouds for still clear nights. I was taking in the still after the storms on Mount Clear watching the sun setting at the edge of the snow gums and thought this silhouette of an old and weathered tree suited the scene.



Flowering Tas-maniac
ILUVSWTAS



Wedding Lily
on Mt Gower
Geevesy



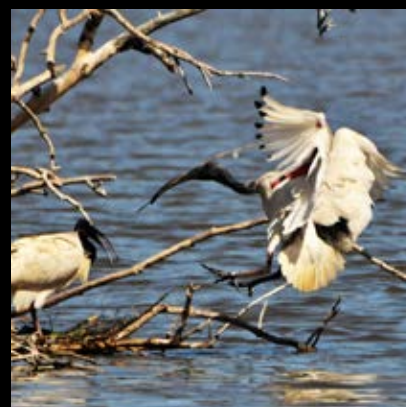
Dipodium variegatum
orchid
John Walker



Not a bad place to be
on a Tuesday morning
Zane Robnik



Rippled reflection
North-north-west



The flight of the ibis
landsmith



Tasmania

November 2017

WINNER



Rock garden
North-north-west

I have a love/hate relationship with the Pedder impoundment. Even when I most deeply grieve over what we lost when the old lake was drowned, I can't deny the beauty of what is there now. Especially on a quiet little exploration trip in the kayak.

From a ramble along the Frankland Shore, on one of those magical clear, still days the south-west so rarely sees.



Setting sun
Iain Diller



I declare!
It's Ida from St Clair
Zane Robnik



Schnells Ridge
ILUVSWTAS



Other States

November 2017

WINNER



Water was dripping from all the walls, making for some interesting effects, as we descended this little known canyon in the Blue Mountains.

Rain trails
Tom Brennan



Sunrise over the
Bogong High Plains
Brian Eglinton



Swamp fantasy
Lorraine Parker



Cloud burning off
Mount Lidgbird
Geevesy



On Thelma Ridge
John Walker



Elabana Falls
Lamington NP
Nik Bell



Last of the iris
landsmith



Superior Wilderness Design Pack Review

Zach Lawler



Sitting half out of your tent, you watch the morning sun rise while slipping on your favourite pair of boots. Your body is stiff and although eager to get back on trail, the kilometres ahead loom over you. Your feet settle into the boots and the familiar comfort reassures you that you can achieve anything. But with camp now packed up, you look forlornly at the pack you are about to hoist onto your shoulders. “I hate you”, you think before begrudgingly throwing it on your back. What if putting your pack on each morning could be the same experience as putting on those favourite boots?

Zach and his Superior Frameless, Razorback Ridge, Larapinta Trail
Zach Lawler

What if your pack was completely customised by you, to suit your needs? Because only you know what features work best for you.

Superior Wilderness Designs are a cottage pack manufacturer in Michigan, USA who are doing exactly that - made to order, customisable packs for ultralight and lightweight hikers. Three base models of packs are on offer which can then be customised to suit your needs:

- **Superior Frameless** with removable 25 mm web hip belt,
- **Superior Frameless** with padded hip belt and
- Long Haul - **Full Suspension**.

Choose the model that will work best for you and then pick your desired volume, material, colours and any or all of the accessories. You can also choose torso size and hip belt circumference to further perfect the fit.

“... made to order, customisable packs for ultralight and lightweight hikers.”

The packs are constructed out of a very durable and completely waterproof **X-Pac material** which is a laminated ripstop fabric. It comes in black, white, red, blue, teal and purple so you can express your own style by picking the colour of each individual panel and pocket.

Pack model	Volume [litres]	Weight [grams]	Comfortable carry capacity [kilograms]	Price
Superior Frameless with removable hip belt	30, 35, 40	355-411	9	From US\$190 A\$260
Superior Frameless with padded hip belt	35, 40	468-496	11	From US\$225 A\$310
Long Haul - Full Suspension	35, 40, 50	638-496	16	From US\$255 A\$350



Zach's 35 litre Cuben Superior Frameless next to his brother's 25 litre Superior Frameless
Will Lawler

If weight is an important factor for you, as it is for me, then super-lightweight, waterproof and yet still surprisingly durable Cuben Fibre is also available in black, white and army green. This option is not on their website so you need to enquire, but it was only US\$30 extra for my frameless pack. This is amazing value for Cuben.

If their listed customisation options don't meet the needs of your dream design, then send SWD an email and they will eagerly assist you with your design. For my Larapinta Trail thru hike I wanted a frameless pack with no hip belt that was as light as possible. I wanted easy access to snacks on my shoulders so I didn't have to stop every time I got hungry. And I wanted it in all black, because that looks awesome.

I sent SWD an email and was soon talking to co-founder, design specialist and responder of emails, Brandon McIntyre. With his expertise and my vision, we designed the perfect pack for when I'm carrying an ultralight base weight. With a minimalist

design and made from Cuben Fibre, my 35 litre frameless pack weighs a mere 365 grams yet has smoothly carried over 15 kilograms in a pinch.

Every morning on the Larapinta I effortlessly threw my pack on my shoulders and had that favourite pair of boots experience. It was not only comfortable, but had everything I needed exactly where I wanted it. In fact, I love that pack so much that after returning from the Larapinta I ordered a Long Haul for some upcoming hikes that will involve some heavier ... long hauls.

The two removable aluminium stays of the Long Haul direct the load into the padded hip belt which distributes the weight evenly across the hips. Fully loaded, I have crushed 40 kilometres in a day on the Great North Walk and woke up with shoulders and hips ready for more.

Customer service is where SWD really shine and played a big part in making me a return customer. As an owner of two of their packs I have had multiple interactions with Brandon, and he went above and beyond to help me design both of my packs. I originally feared that since each pack is unique and made

“... my 35 litre frameless pack weighs a mere 365 grams ...”



35 litre Frameless Cuben
Zach Lawler



to order, the build quality would suffer as a result. However, both of my packs (and also my brother's) are constructed to a consistent high quality. Structurally they can support loads far exceeding the listed capacity, which is more a guide of load distribution comfort.

When customising my 35 litre Superior Frameless pack, I chose to have: Black Cuben Fibre, roll top side compression, dual Lycra mesh shoulder pouches, no hip belt, no hydration port, and the bottom reinforced with durable VX21 X-Pac. As this design worked so well, I had the same options for my Long Haul. My brother designed his 25 litre Superior Frameless as a hiking pack that could double as a carry on for business travel. It is made from white VX07 X-Pac and has multiple internal pockets for his laptop and other electronics. Customisation is possible for nearly all design requirements.

The one downside of a made to order pack is that well ... it is made to order. Your pack will not ship once you place an order, and the lead time is on average around eight weeks. Add another week for shipping to Australia and the process can be a real test of your patience. Fortunately, the pay-off is worth it.

It is said that your most important piece of gear is that which connects you to the

ground. No expense should be spared, and no comfort should be compromised when choosing boots. Otherwise every step and every blister will make you long for your couch back home. We wear our boots all day while hiking and so demand perfection. Well we carry our packs all day and so should demand the same perfection. We shouldn't eye our packs with resentment. With a Superior Wilderness Designs pack, you can have that favourite boot experience.

For further details, design ideas and retro colour combinations, check out the [Superior Wilderness Design's website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

I am not affiliated with Superior Wilderness Designs in any way, and I paid for both of my packs. I am just a satisfied customer who wants others to have the same great experience.



Zach is an ultralight hiker and writer who is currently tackling some of Australia's long distance trails. A Quality Engineer by day, he applies his industry experience when choosing his ideal outdoor gear and technologies. When not in the office, Zach is an avid hiker and traveller who feels most alive [Amongst the Trees](#).



40 litre Long Haul Cuben
Zach Lawler

Five Reasons Not to Spray the Bugs

Lizzy Lowe, Cameron Webb, Kate Umbers



The weather is getting warmer, and gardens are coming alive with bees, flies, butterflies, dragonflies, praying mantises, beetles, millipedes, centipedes, and spiders.

Green Bottle Fly on white flowers
Randimal

For some of us it is exciting to see these strange and wonderful creatures return. For others, it's a sign to contact the local pest control company or go to the supermarket to stock up on sprays.

But while some bugs do us very few favours – like [mozzies](#), snails and cockroaches – killing all insects and bugs isn't always necessary or effective. It can also damage ecosystems and our own health.

“... killing all insects and bugs isn't always necessary or effective.”

There are times when insecticides are needed (especially when pest populations are surging or the [risk of disease is high](#)) but you don't have to reach for the spray every time. Here are five good reasons to avoid pesticides wherever possible, and live and let live.

1. Encourage the bees and butterflies, enjoy more fruits and flowers

Flowers and fruits are the focal points of even the smallest gardens, and many of our favourites rely on visits from insect pollinators. We all know about the benefits

of European honey bees (*Apis mellifera*), but how about our “home grown” pollinators – our [native bees](#), hover flies, beetles, moths and butterflies. [All these species contribute to the pollination](#) of our native plants and fruits and veggies.

You can encourage these helpful pollinators by growing plants that flower at different times of the year (especially natives) and looking into sugar-water feeders or [insect hotels](#).

2. Delight your decomposers, they're like mini bulldozers

To break down leaf litter and other organic waste you need decomposers. Worms, beetles and slaters will munch through decaying vegetation, releasing nutrients into the soil that can be used by plants.

“If there are fewer “bugs” in the soil, decomposition is slower ...”

The problem is that urban soils are frequently disturbed and can contain high levels of heavy metals that [affects decomposer communities](#). If there are fewer “bugs” in the soil, decomposition is slower – so we need to conserve our underground allies.



Male Cairns Birdwing Butterfly (*Ornithoptera euphorion*)
Johan Larson

You can help them out with compost heaps and worm farms that can be dug into the ground. It's also good to keep some areas of your lawn un-mowed, and to create areas of leaf litter. Keeping your garden well-watered will also help your underground ecosystems, but be mindful of water restrictions and encouraging mosquitoes.

3. An army of beneficial bugs can eat your pests

Mantises and dragonflies are just some of the hundreds of fascinating and beautiful bugs we are lucky to see around our homes. Many of these wonderful creatures are predators of mozzies, house flies and cockroaches, yet people are using broad-spectrum insecticides which kill these beneficial bugs alongside the pests.

It may sound counterproductive to stop using pesticides in order to control pests around the home, but that's [exactly what organic farmers do](#). By reducing pesticides you allow populations of natural enemies to thrive.

Many farmers [grow specific plants to encourage beneficial insects](#), which has been shown to reduce the damage to their crops.

This form of pest control is growing in popularity because spraying can result in insecticide resistance. Fortunately, it's easy to encourage these bugs: they go where their prey is. If you have a good range of insects in your yard, these helpful predators are probably also present.

4. Your garden will support more wildlife, both big and small

Spraying with broad-spectrum pesticides will kill off more than just insects and spiders – you're also going after the animals that eat them. The more insects are around, the more birds, [mammals](#), reptiles and frogs will thrive in your backyard.

Baiting for snails, for example, will deter the blue-tongue lizards that eat them, so cage your vegetables to protect them instead. Keeping your garden well-watered, and including waterbaths, will also encourage a balanced ecosystem (but change the waterbaths regularly).

5. You and your family be happier and healthier

Engaging with nature [increases well-being](#) and [stimulates learning in children](#). Insects are a fantastic way to engage with nature, and where better to do this than in your own back yard! Observing and experimenting on insects is a wonderful [teaching tool](#) for everything from life cycles to the scientific method. It will also teach your kids to value nature and live sustainably.

It's also a hard truth that [domestic pesticides present a significant risk of poisoning](#), especially for small children.

In reality, the risk of exposing your children to the pesticides far outweighs the nuisance of having a few bugs around. Instead, integrated pest management, which combines non-chemical techniques like [cleaning of food residues](#), [removal of potential nutrients](#), and [sealing cracks and crevices](#), is safer for your family and your garden ecosystems.

Think globally, act locally

Your backyard has a surprising impact on the broader health of your neighbourhood, and gardens can make [significant contributions to local biodiversity](#). Insects are an important part of ecosystem conservation, and encouraging them will improve the health of your local environment (and probably your health and well-being too).

In the end, insects and spiders are not out to get you. For the sake of our kids and our environment, you should give them a chance.

Lizzy Lowe

Postdoctoral researcher, Macquarie University

Cameron Webb

Clinical Lecturer and Principal Hospital Scientist, University of Sydney

Kate Umbers

Lecturer in Zoology, Western Sydney 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 5 November 2017.



In the News

NSW Park Fire Ban in place until the end of March

NPWS has put in place a solid fuel fire ban (including campfires) across some large parks including Blue Mountains, Wollemi, Kanangra-Boyd, Yengo and Dharug and Gardens of Stone National Parks. There are more listed on their [alert page](#) and it is expected that there will be more park bans fire bans as summer approaches.

There are some exceptions in formal fireplaces in some established campgrounds. All remote walk-in campsites are affected. These bans are in place until 31 March 2019.

What does this mean?

This means no campfires or solid fuel (wood, heat beads, charcoal, briquettes, hexamine) stoves or BBQs in the affected national parks (outside the specifically lists campsites and picnic areas)

What about gas and liquid fuel stoves?

They can still be used during a park fire ban if all the following are done:

- They're under direct control of an adult,
- The ground within two metres of the barbecue is cleared of all flammable materials,
- There's an adequate supply of water (minimum of a bucket).

Consider reducing bushfire risk and pack weight by going stoveless this summer. (Check out [page 64](#) for some no cook meal ideas).

Please be aware that:

This is called a park fire ban. During the fire season, the RFS will declare days of Total Fire Bans (TOBANS). This means that camping stoves cannot be used in affected national parks.

Smoking is also banned at all times in all NSW national parks.

This is shaping up to be an ugly bushfire season. Let's take extra care and ensure that NPA members are leading by example to ensure safety and care for our amazing bushland.

The 'Save Kosci' protest walk

You are invited to a presentation on the 30+ days walk from [Sydney to Kosciuszko](#) to seek repeal of the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act and action on feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park. The walk will begin on 3 November. To register follow this link savekosci.org/the-walk/

Tassie rescue people training

Rescue paramedics endure wild conditions as part of [wilderness training](#).

Proposed protected forest from the mountains to the sea

Some community groups are calling for a continuous network of protected forest to be created, in far East Gippsland, from the mountains to the sea. The proposed "[Emerald Link](#)" would connect the alpine Errinundra National Park with Cape Conran Coastal Park. Some of the area between the existing national parks, that some community groups are calling to change to protected status, are state forest zoned for logging.

Belgian adventurer treks Tasmania in winter

After walking for 52 days in Tassie wilderness and losing 15.5 kilograms in body weight, [Louis-Philippe Loncke](#) finished his trek on 24 September.



Dehydrated Meals For Your Trip

Sonya Muhlsimmer

On my recent ski trip, for two nights I was designated cook for five people so I decided to experiment with some dehydrated recipes. I borrowed and slightly altered one recipe from my friend Lisa, who is a big foodie and experiments with a lot of dehydrating, and has done many multi-day hikes so I was pretty confident that the meal would be great. I also experimented with dehydrating some dips. Note, I do not carry fine crockery when out on the trails - the photos were taken at home in my kitchen. I didn't take a photo of the food on the trail, and I had to replicate the meals, you know to be sure, to be sure they worked out. Well I can say on the second time around trying these recipes I was still impressed, and I want to share them with you so you can have a feast on your next trip out. Enjoy, I know you will!



Breakfast with a view at Mawsons Hut, Kosciuszko National Park, NSW
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Vegetable Tagine

With Cous Cous and Chorizo

I have not included the weight of the vegetables for the tagine as that is quite subjective, but just a list and an approximate of the ingredients. The weight only matters when you come to dehydrate the meal, and for the side serving of cous cous. When I made this dish I made it for five people. The cooked meal was 1.75 kilograms, and after dehydrating it was 220 grams. That was only the tagine, without the chorizo, then I carried two chorizo and cooked them prior to adding the rehydrated tagine. I didn't add the chorizo to the tagine when cooking the dish as I thought the vegetables were going to be enough. But the night before our trip I was worried that this was not going to be enough for the five of us so I bought two chorizo to add to the dish, and I am glad I did this. With the side serving of cous cous, this meal was ample for five hungry skiers, oh also with a bit of chocolate for dessert of course ...

This recipe makes two serves.

At home preparation

Chop the chorizo and all vegetables into 1 cm x 1 cm chunks. Finely chop the mixed peel.

In a frypan, add the oil, then chorizo, onion and garlic and fry for 2 to 3 minutes or until the onion is soft. Then add the vegetables, spices and mixed peel and cook for about 5 minutes stirring occasionally. Now add the tinned tomatoes, stir through and cook for about 5 minutes. Turn the heat down and cook on a low heat for about 10 minutes or until the pumpkin is soft. Spread over baking paper and dehydrate for around 12 to 14 hours at 70 °C or until dry. Break up and place in a sealed container for about a week to condition the dehydrated meal. If droplets of condensation are found, dehydrate for a few more hours. Place into a zip-lock bag marking the bag as Bag 1.



Method at camp

Tagine In a pot add the dehydrated tagine and 2 cups of water, leave for about 15 minutes to rehydrate. Heat and serve over the cous cous.

If the sauce is too thick you can add more water, or if you want the sauce thicker, cook it for longer.

Cous cous In a pot boil 1 cup of water, add the cous cous and cover with a lid. Sit for 5 mins or until the water has absorbed.

Bag 1 (dehydrated vegetable tagine)

Chorizo	125 grams
Onion	1 each
Crushed garlic	2 tsp or 2 cloves
Carrot	1 each
Eggplant	1 cup of cubes
Pumpkin	2 cups cubed
Zucchini	1 each
Green beans	1 handful
Moroccan seasoning	2 tsp
Cumin	2 tsp
Mixed peel	½ tsp
Tin tomato	1 each
Chilli	few pinches
Olive oil	2 Tbsp

Bag 2 (cous cous)

Cous cous	2/3 cup	114 grams
Stock powder	1 Tsp	6 grams
Pepper		few pinches

Water

2 cups for rehydrating tagine
1 cup for cous cous

Eggplant Dip, Otherwise Known as Baba Ganoush

For lunch, the food was divided between the five of us, and gee we had a feast every day. We did not go hungry at all. I took this eggplant dip, some hummus dip and other food such as falafels – which I made into bite size bits, sun dried tomato and sun dried olives to add to the spread. By the way, I cooked the falafels at home before the trip as they will last a few days on the trail, especially in skiing weather. Can I just say that the bite size falafels went really well with the dips. When I made this dip, the starting weight was 700 grams, and it dehydrated down to 130 grams, a small weight to carry for some delicious food, it was a real crowd pleaser. By the way, this recipe will make a smaller quantity from the 700 grams that I made which was for five people. Serves two to three people.

At home preparation

Preheat the oven to 180 °C, or 160 °C for fan forced. Pierce the eggplant with a fork, place it on a tray and cook for 30 minutes, or until the eggplant is soft. Remove the tray from the oven and cool the eggplant for about 20 minutes or until you can pick it up and handle it with ease. Peel the skin away and discard of it, then add the eggplant to the blender. Add the garlic, tahini, lemon, cumin, chilli, salt to the blender and blend until smooth. Weigh the dip and take note of the weight, spread the dip over solid dehydrator trays or baking paper over mesh trays and dehydrate for about 10 to 12 hours at 70 °C, or until the dip is crisp, like corn flakes. Check your dehydrator settings and use the recommended settings accordingly. Then place the dehydrated dip into the blender and blend it till it becomes a powder. Weigh the dip again and take note of the weight. Place the powder into a bag.



Method at camp

In a bowl or the bag you are carrying it in, add about ½ to 1 cup of water to rehydrate the dip. Generally the amount of water will be the amount of water that was dehydrated out of the dip from the starting weight to the dried weight. Or as an alternative, and what I do, I just add enough water to make a smooth paste to the consistency you like dip to be. I start out with about ½ cup of water, mix the water through then add in extra water in increments of about ¼ cup till I get the dip consistency that I like. Note, it may not be the same amount that was dehydrated out of the dip, more than likely it would be less.

Bag 1 (dehydrated eggplant dip)

Eggplants	2 of	17 grams
Garlic	1 tsp	15 grams
Tahini	¼ cup	15 grams
Chilli	pinch	15 grams
Cumin	¼ tsp	12 grams
Lemon	¼ cup	10 grams
Salt	pinch	7 grams
Oil	2 Tsp	1 gram
Salt, pepper	few pinches	

Water - add enough water to make into a paste.



The Wombat On The Flat

Klaus Hueneke, AM

This poem is from the Pretty Plain Hut log book, Kosciuszko National Park, probably in the 1980s. The full version was lost for some time and was recently made known to the author, who kindly gave his permission to publish it in BWA.

The snow is heavy and wet this year.
For those caught out it will cost them dear,
Even down on the Pretty Plain
Where the flowers are struggling in vain.

What we saw was not a pretty sight,
For he died on the flat without a fight;
Not far from Bullock Dray Hut
And the ruins of Pugilistic Hut.

A trail of rest holes lies behind,
or was it feed he was trying to find?
His body outstretched, still on the go,
Alas he died on top of the snow.

Seems at peace, resting on claw
But for a tear in eye so raw.
The morning is young, and snow glistens
ahead,
But a blowfly has already discovered the
dead.

Organic stuff, we are all,
None of us like gods grow tall,
Wind ruffles his lifeless fur,
White under the ears, dotted with bur.

Adapted he was to the blinding sun,
But the snow caught him on the run.
Some say they crawl away when old
Instead of dying out in the cold.

So I photograph the icy tomb.
Move on I think, I too am prone,
But die like this from hunger.
I hope to be old when I go under.

Klaus has been writing books about alpine Australia for 30 years, including the best seller *Huts of the high country*. His latest book is [Charlie Carter](#). Klaus was awarded an AM, Member of the Order of Australia for recording the European history of the Snowy Mountains for many years.



Pretty Plain Hut in 1977 on a Kiandra to Kosciuszko crossing
Klaus Hueneke

Bushwalk Australia

 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Ambling Adventures Volume 30, August 2018</p> <p>Ambling Adventures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> An Abel Challenge> Triglav Lakes, Slovenia> Pack Hauling> Sleeping Mats	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Act Now Volume 29, June 2018</p> <p>Act Now</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Viking Circuit> A Blogger's Journey> Overland Track> Teddy Goes Trekking	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Meandering Mountains Volume 26, April 2018</p> <p>Meandering Mountains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> D'Alton Peaks, Grampians> Three mighty peaks> Sleeping bags> Our forests are worth standing	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Far-flung places Volume 27, February 2018</p> <p>Wandering the World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> 10 reasons to Hike The PCT> The Spires via Holley Basin> From hiker to Globewalker> Should they be stopped?	
 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Bushwalking Heritage Volume 36, December 2017</p> <p>Bushwalking Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Kidmans Hut Walk> Conquering the Giant> Dam Madness	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Discover & Explore Volume 24, August 2017</p> <p>Discover & Explore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> The Great River Walk> Mount Triglav, Slovenia> First aid kit	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Wandering the World Volume 30, June 2018</p> <p>Wandering the World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> 10 reasons to Hike The PCT> The Spires via Holley Basin> From hiker to Globewalker	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Longer and Wilder Volume 20, April 2017</p> <p>Longer and Wilder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> The Western Arthurs> Bibbulmun Track> Skinners	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Summer Swelter Volume 35, December 2017</p> <p>Summer Swelter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Desert Discovery Walk> Rewilding> Sun clothing
 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Walking Wisely Volume 33, October 2018</p> <p>Walking Wisely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Six Foot Track> Choosing a GPS	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Bushwalking Conservation Volume 34, November 2018</p> <p>Bushwalking Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> AAWT> High horses	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Winter Walking Volume 17, June 2016</p> <p>Winter Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Gear freak - footwear> 10 tips for snowshoeing	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Best of NSW Volume 16, April 2016</p> <p>Best of NSW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Best walks of NSW> Wolgan Gorge adventure	 <p>Bushwalk Australia</p> <p>Best of VIC Volume 15, March 2016</p> <p>Best of VIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Best walks of Victoria> Wilsons Prom