

Bushwalk Australia



Alpine Adventures

Volume 37, October 2019

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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



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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 2019 edition is
31 October 2019.

Warning

Like all outdoor pursuits, the
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in the forum at BWA eMag.

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From the Editor

Hi,

I hope this edition finds you fit and well. Aussie alpine areas often hold a special place in the heart of bushwalkers. The crisp air, the open vistas, variable weather, the complex history and hills to climb all make for great adventures.

This edition we have focused on NSW and Victorian alpine adventures. Roger Caffin and his wife guide us from Cesjacks Hut across the Great Dividing Range then down the newly cleared track on Hannells Spur. Mark Oates and his brother undertake a 35 day winter crossing of the AAWT, no mean feat. Mark shares the highlights and struggles of the journey and details of the preparation - a helpful guide for anyone planning long adventures. Our regular contributor Sonya not only gives us some yummy meals but also takes us for a great ski trip from Mungyang to the summit of Jagungal. In this edition, we also celebrate with MUMC as they turn 75. My mind always switches to their amazing geodesic dome hut that I just love, but there is so much more to MUMC. It is always encouraging to see what can be done when a group of bushwalkers get together behind a common goal.

Finally, we explore two environmental topics. There is a chance for bushwalkers to get involved in a novel soundscaping project looking at how recorded native soundscapes from around the world can improve the health of enclosed animals. We also look at the role climate change is already playing in altering the face of bushfires across our landscape.

I want to say a big thanks to all our authors and photographers who go that extra mile to share their adventures with us all. Also a big thanks to Stephen Lake, who works hard on every edition, but this one he has gone that extra mile, shaping this edition to be one of my favourite editions of the last year.

Happy walking
Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
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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.

In the News

Aboriginal name for Kosciuszko

Toomaroombah Kunama Namadgi Indigenous Corporation have [submitted an Aboriginal name](#), to be used alongside to Mount Kosciuszko. The 4000 year old name Kunama Namadgi wasn't adopted by everyone though. It is supposed to mean snow and mountain, but in other languages of Ngarigo people it means something completely different.

Kosciuszko horses

Call on the NSW Government to repeal the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*. [Take action](#).

Warragamba Dam

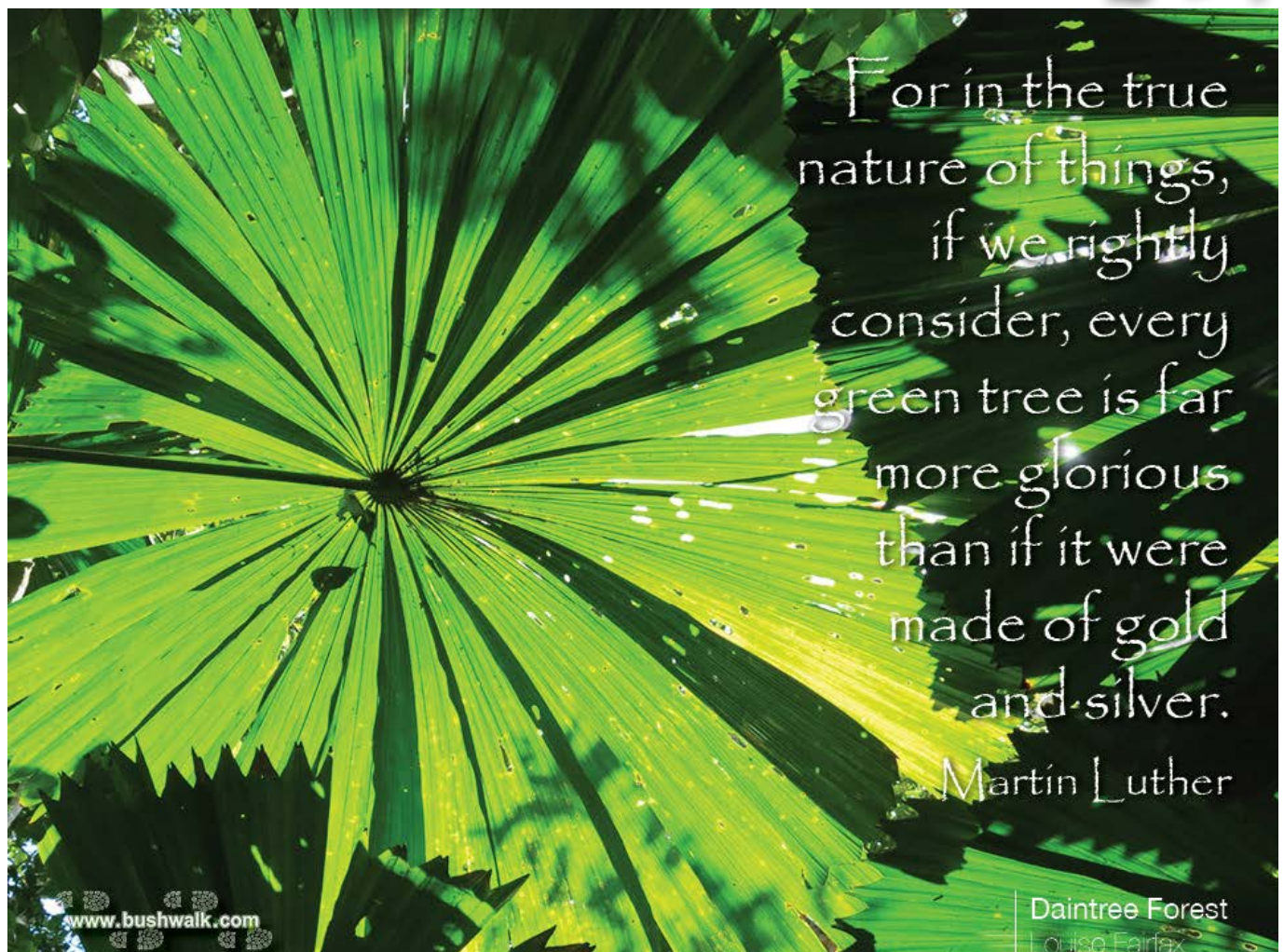
A 14-metre lifting of the wall provides [moderate benefit](#) during the biggest events.

Draft plan of management amendment for Ben Boyd National Park and Bell Bird Creek Nature Reserve

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is seeking [public comments](#).

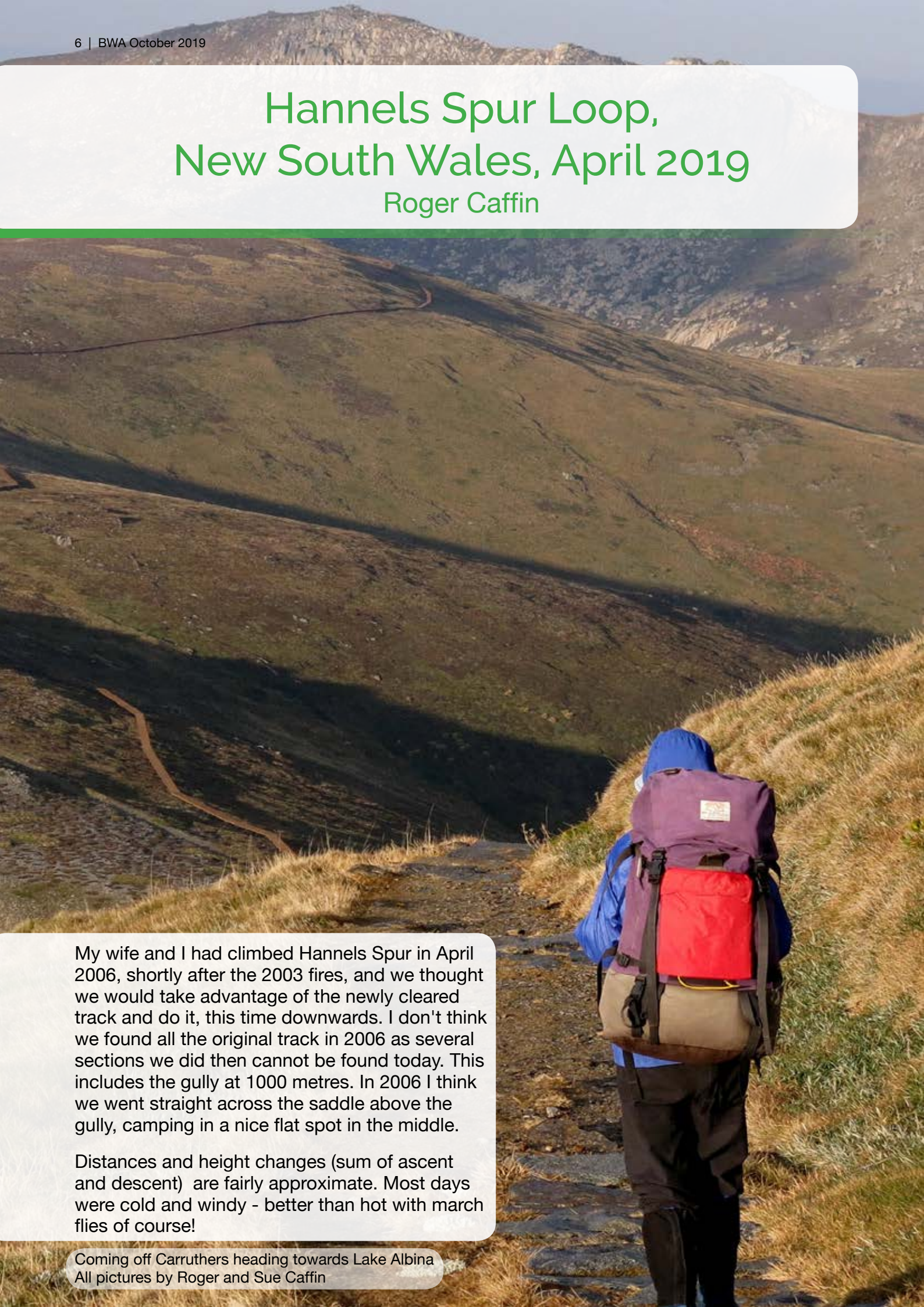
Light to Light Walk, Ben Boyd National Park

Better management of the Light to Light Walk visitation will protect park values and environmental issues.



Hannels Spur Loop, New South Wales, April 2019

Roger Caffin

A hiker wearing a blue jacket and a large purple and red backpack is walking away from the camera on a dirt trail. The trail is on a grassy hillside, and the hiker is heading towards a valley. The background shows a vast landscape with rolling hills and a distant mountain range under a clear sky.

My wife and I had climbed Hannels Spur in April 2006, shortly after the 2003 fires, and we thought we would take advantage of the newly cleared track and do it, this time downwards. I don't think we found all the original track in 2006 as several sections we did then cannot be found today. This includes the gully at 1000 metres. In 2006 I think we went straight across the saddle above the gully, camping in a nice flat spot in the middle.

Distances and height changes (sum of ascent and descent) are fairly approximate. Most days were cold and windy - better than hot with march flies of course!

Coming off Carruthers heading towards Lake Albina
All pictures by Roger and Sue Caffin

Day 1 – Cesjacks gate to Bulls Peak, 9 km, 150 metres ascent/descent

After driving from Sydney to Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) we started from the “Cesjacks” gate near Jagungal at 1415 and followed the old 4WD track along the Great Dividing Range to Smiths Perisher (a widely-used local name, referring to the knoll at 290957). The old 4WD track up Smiths Perisher seems lost now, so we went up at an angle to pick up the remains of the track at the top. A bit of scrub. We crossed the unnamed valley between here and the Bulls Peaks and camped in a nice spot at the top.

Day 2 – Bulls Peaks to Schlink Hilton, 18 km, 350 metres

An early breakfast and we were away heading along the Valentine valley just below the peaks. There used to be the remains of a reasonable 4WD track along here, but it was not visible today. Instead, a rather gross feature of today was a heavy smoke haze from farmers burning off outside KNP. We zipped past the Brassys at some speed.

After passing Tin Hut at a distance we made a poor tactical decision to angle up the hills (to reach the watershed) to Gungartan Pass. The scrub was very heavy, and we did not enjoy that at all. A better route would seem to be weaving through the grassy patches up the bed of the Valentine. Over Gungartan Pass we skirted hard left above the top edge of the huge scree field to hit grass on the side of the spur from Gungartan and followed that down the true left bank of what we call Schlink Hilton Creek, to the hut. It's not a



Camp the first night near the Brassys

bad route. Old maps suggest there used to be a stock route from here to Schlink Pass, but we saw no signs.

The Schlink Hilton has been rearranged internally a little and it now has mattresses on some of the wire stretchers. Oh WOW!

Day 3 - Schlink Hilton to near Blue Lake, 22 km, 400 metres

The forecast for Perisher had been for overnight temperatures in the 2-3 °C range. They were not too far wrong: -1 °C actually, with serious frost. We were up at 0545 and away before 0700 for Whites River Hut - which also lives in a frost hollow! A lot of white around.

There's a mesh bridge across Munyang River now, and the 4WD track up onto the Rolling Ground is quite visible. We followed that up: it gets a bit vague and then disappears near the top, but no matter. A little bit of compass



Whites River Hut in a good frost

work had us at Consett Stephen Pass in short order (in fine weather). Guthega Dam below us looked a bit empty. There are even traces of a pad (or very old 4WD track) in places on the Rolling Ground, but they don't persist. In fine weather it's very nice country.

We followed the fair track (remnant 4WD in places) around the side of Tate for a while, then climbed up on top and went over Mount Tate. From here on there was a visible foot track all the way. The Feldmark above Blue Lake seems to be doing well, now that there is a visible track to stay on. A number of day walkers were headed for Mount Twynam in the cold wind.

Day 4 - near Blue Lake to Hannells Spur, 16 km, 1500 metres (mostly down)

A change in the night had brought much higher levels of cold humidity with it, so we had condensation inside the tent on the windward side. Some of it dripped onto my quilt, making it look a bit wet, but the Durable Water Repellent held and I was able to mop most of it up. Another early start saw us keeping our thermal tops on for a little while.

From the saddle above Blue Lake there is now a stone-flagged path for much of the way to the summit road. This is deplored in principle but the Great Lakes Walk sees 1-2000 or more day walkers every year. What else can the NPWS do?



The original benched track above Lake Albina

Now, laying all these flagstones is hard work, so the NPWS was using two Bobcats for the heavy lifting. The effect of the rocks on the rubber tracks is apparently severe, so maintenance is needed. Both machines were missing their tracks. At least they used tarps under the machines to keep the oil off the ground.

“... long steel boardwalk, installed with really minimal damage to the surrounds.

There used to be some foot-wandering across the (very rare) Feldmark patches on top of the ridge, and the damage was getting worse with the increased traffic, so today Lee and Northcote are bypassed by a rather long steel boardwalk, installed with really minimal damage to the surrounds. We could not see any damage.



The Main Range Walk with erosion-proof paving stones

Again, a steel boardwalk is to be deplored in the abstract, but the traffic levels are very high and at least the vegetation is now protected. Fortunately the interesting rocky bits above Lake Albina are, for the moment, preserved. I hope that continues. If you fall off here they might need a chopper to fish you out of the lake.

From Mueller Saddle we took the rough track to Mount Townsend to go over the top of Abbott Peaks and down to Byatts Camp. This was a *really* big mistake, as it took us over the granite boulders of the Western Fall. It also took us a long time to get down! But we did, picked up the cut track from Byatts Camp and followed that to the Hannels Spur signpost. The signpost does seem to be a trifle old ... especially compared to the shiny new one at the bottom.

Then down the cut track for a late lunch at Moiras Flat, picking up water at the signposted spring nearby. I can't say the Moiras Flat is all that flat: a clearing maybe. The track-work they have done is valuable, but it will need to be repeated every year or two. The dead trees are still falling.

From Moiras Flat down to the saddles around 1000 metres the track is very steep and is covered in much bark and dead leaves. Traction was very poor and I landed on my



Dr Forbes Hut at the bottom of Hannels Spur, rebuilt after the fires

bum several times. Sitting down did not hurt too much, but getting back up without sliding was sometimes tricky. It also took some effort. We reached the first saddle about 1630 and stopped there. It is the one before any of the bumps. My knees were a bit jelly-like at this stage. There was not a lot of room in the saddle for a tent, but we managed.

Day 5 - Hannels Spur to the Pinnacles FT, 15 km, 1500 metres

The track after the saddles is much easier - mostly. It does a lot of sidling around the steep hillside in places, which can be a bit slippery. I am sure when we came up in 2006 we missed a lot of the sidling and went straight up the crest of the spur. Anyhow,



The Pinnacles Fire Trail, covered in fallen trees from the fires

we eventually hit the old 4WD track at the bottom and cruised happily down to the rebuilt Dr Forbes Hut. The interior is a bit spartan - a plain concrete floor - but there is nice grass outside for camping.



Sign at the bottom of Hannels Spur

We waded across the Swampy Plains River and had morning tea in the sun on the far side. Then we went up to the tarmac and

followed that over the Geehi Bridge. We could have followed the 4WD track across the grasslands from Dr Forbes and over the Geehi ford to the NPWS gate, but the Geehi is bigger. Then a road bash up the tarmac to the Geehi Dam road, and another boring six kilometres up that to the start of the Pinnacles FT. Snowy Hydro has markers at kilometre intervals up this road.

“The “Fire Trail” remains a “road” though: it was hard getting even Ti tent pegs in place.

I should point out two things here. The first is that this is not a fire trail but a seriously engineered SMA road,

“... this is not a fire trail but a seriously engineered SMA road, now abandoned.

now abandoned. The second is that for the full length of it, up to the Pinnacles, it is covered in hundreds of fallen gum trees: very large gum trees in fact. Shortly before the Pinnacles FT crosses Grassy Flat Creek (near the bottom) the hillside is covered in tree ferns: a spectacular sight.



The magnificent snow gum before Grey Mare Hut, probably over 50 years old

We wandered up the track continuously stepping over and ducking under the fallen trees. The NPWS does not have the resources to clear this track, and frankly I do not want them to attempt it either. It is impassible to feral horses, ridden horses, MTBs and trail bikes, and should stay that way - please.

Yes, it really is like this for much of its length! Anyhow, we managed to find a flat grassy bit of the track to camp on. We had carried water up from Grassy Flat Creek for this. The "Fire Trail" remains a "road" though: it was hard getting Ti wire tent pegs in place. There was hard rock under the green grass.

Day 6 - The Pinnacles Fire Trail to Grey Mare Hut, 25 km, 400 metres

We blithely stepped over and ducked under trees all the way to the top of the Grey Mare Range, for morning tea.

Mind you, beware of the ants at the top! From there it was a fast hoon to the north along the dry Grey Mare Range to reach the turn-off down to Grey Mare Hut. Along the way we passed a magnificent unburnt snow gum (previous page).

“Mind you, beware of the ants at the top!”

Grey Mare Hut is nice but is suffering from over-use. Apart from the lack of mattresses (there used to be at least one big mattresses there), the surrounds have been stripped of dead timber for quite some distance; what can be found is very old, lacks any volatiles and usually has a damp rotten core. The two saws at the hut are either very blunt or have an extremely bad set on the teeth. I found them useless.

We managed a small fire, but that was all. It was really appreciated by the solo MTB rider (legal I think) who turned up well after dark. He slurped up some energy gels or whatever and collapsed into his sleeping bag. He should have stopped earlier.

Day 7 - Grey Mare Hut to Cesjacks gate, 20 km, 250 metres

Up bright and early (0545), breakfast and quietly away - leaving the bike rider snoring. North on the Grey Mare FT to the cairn for the Strawberry Hills FT. Well, we found the cairn all right (because I knew where to look

for it), but we found zero traces of the FT up the hill - and we did look. In hindsight I think we were too low. The scrub up the hillside is a very solid mass and about 1.5 metres high. Progress was extremely slow. Eventually we dropped into the creek below to get some grass - we had skied down this a number of times and hoped it might be better. It was - a bit - so we made our way to the saddle at the top for morning tea in the shelter of some bushes. It was still windy.

“... we were now on our much-loved Strawberry Hills ...”

Anyhow, we were now on our much-loved Strawberry Hills, so we trotted across them, picking up faint traces of the old track in places. It was never a fire trail; it was a straight fencing maintenance track from the cattle days. Above the Geehi there is a prominent cairn on a boulder and some old fence posts. Last time across I found a cache of old fencing stuff somewhere near here: many bundles of star stakes, coils of #10 fencing wire, and of pig netting. Must have cost someone a bit.

We crossed the Geehi at one of the gravel banks (there may once have been some gold mining here) and headed over the ridge to McAlister Saddle, down to Doubtful Creek and back up onto the Great Dividing Range and the remains of the 4WD track there. That too is getting faint in places. We got back to the gate and car at 1600, which meant we were in time for steak and veg in Cooma.



Roger started bushwalking in Scouts. He is retired and still walking, generally with his wife, with trips ranging from day walks to several months at a time in Europe on alpine routes. In winter he and his wife also go cross-country ski-touring and snow shoeing. For many years he was the editor of *The Bushwalker*, the quarterly magazine of [Bushwalking NSW](#), and he was an editor with [BackpackGearTest](#). He is the author of the Australian Bushwalking FAQ web site. He is a moderator for the forums at [Backpacking Light](#), an ultra-light bushwalking website. He lives on a farm outside Sydney.

Australian Alps Walking Track Winter 2018

Mark Oates



We had walked and skied the AAWT before but the 2018 trip was to be our hardest yet.

Kosciuszko cornices, day 27
All pictures by Mark Oates

Previous AWT and AAWT trips

My twin brother Andy and I were at high school in the late 1980s when I first learned of the Alpine Walking Track. We were intrigued and inspired by John Siseman's guidebook and version of the "Alpine Track" that saw it unofficially go all the way through to Tharwa near Canberra rather than to its official finish point of Tom Groggin on the Victoria-NSW border west of Thredbo. Around that time we also discovered cross-country skiing, snow camping and ski touring so we soon formed the ambitious dream of some day completing the entire track in winter. First though we decided we should walk it in summer.

So it was in the summer of 1990-91 that Andy and I walked from Walhalla through to Canberra in 57 days. We were 18 years-of-age and only one week out of high school so it was a significant and life-changing experience for both of us. This was in the days before mobile phones, GPSs, PLBs or satellite phones so help was three day's walk away rather than simply a phone call or button click away as it is today. Despite or perhaps because of our age we prepared hard for the eight week journey, spending lots of time learning navigation and undertaking a remote area first-aid course. Back then our communication system was to carry a couple of stamped envelopes to give to other walkers or to passing motorists so that we could get messages through to our parents. It is such a different world today as on this trip we could post daily updates of our challenges on social media.

Soon after our summer escapade the Alpine Walking Track was officially extended to become the 660 kilometre tri-state Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT). It was fifteen years after we first walked it before we finally found the confidence in our skills and experience plus the drive and time to attempt a winter traverse. It was a daunting proposition as at that stage we did not know of anyone completing it to Tharwa in winter (even though Craig McVeigh had in 1997). It was a trip that we obsessed and prepared for over the year and a half leading up to the journey. Our 2005 winter adventure saw us leaving Tharwa in mid-June and finishing at Walhalla in early August, 43 days later.

Then last winter, at the start of August 2018, Andy and I again set out again to undertake another AAWT traverse but this time from south to north. Despite having completed the track twice this was to be our hardest journey. We had less time available for this traverse and feared that at 46 years-of-age we might struggle with the allowed timeframe. Our plan was to travel with much lighter gear as we hoped that this would see us, despite our increased age, travelling faster and achieving greater distances each day than the 18 kilometres we had averaged last time. With Andy's limited leave from work, time soon become our enemy and for a while it was a race to see if we could finish prior to our six week cut-off date.

Older but perhaps wiser, the question was, could we do it again?



Preparation, all gear, food cache locations

For us it was a solid 18 month commitment to undertake another AAWT winter traverse. First, time off work and away from family needed to be arranged. Then new gear needed to be researched, purchased, tested and modified. Lists, lists and more lists had to be prepared and worked through. Discussions and decisions on what not to take become just as important as what to take. Time for physical fitness and mental preparation needed to somehow be made although this was often the area that got sacrificed due to normal work and family commitments. Meals had to be purchased or made and then dehydrated. Older gear required checking and sometimes refurbishment. New maps and GPS data had to be sourced and sorted. Food and gear caches needed to be planned, prepared and then dropped – some of them prior to the seasonal closing of access roads. Others were dropped in the week prior to our departure.

While half our evening meals were commercial dehydrated or freeze-dried meals the other half had to be cooked, dehydrated at home and packaged. Our aim was to allow approximately 800 grams of food per day per person but in the end we averaged around 900 grams. This was definitely more than we took in 2005 when Andy lost 13 kilograms by

the time we finished while I had lost at least seven kilograms. For both winter traverses our meals and snacks were not exciting nor even delicious. We simply saw food as fuel and went for items that would be efficient to cook and eat so as to minimise camp time and maximise travel time. For the first two weeks with tough track conditions and then later when we needed to make up time with 30 plus kilometre days, this fuel was absolutely vital. On both trips we regularly experienced 12 to 13 hour days with few, if any, seated breaks. Lunch often had to be eaten on the move.

I was fortunate to have the two weeks off work prior to our departure and I think that this time was crucial to our success. I initially spent time cooking and dehydrating but also modifying gear while the last five days was spent with Andy doing our final packing and preparations. We had debated long and hard about what tent to take with the ultimate decision to use my Hyperlite Mountain Gear Ultramid for the majority of the trip and my brother's Wilderness Equipment Second Arrow for the more exposed Main Range section. This saw me having to design and sew a solid inner for my mid rather than go with the mesh inner that it came with. In the past we have also greatly benefited from wearing Berghaus Yeti gaiters in the snow but the new versions no longer fitted the lighter



Mark making a solid liner to go over the bottom half of the mesh inner

weight boots that we wanted to take on this trip. Thus I ended up making us each a pair of homemade Yeti gaiters on my sewing machine. As always, tasks like these and the many other modifications that I wanted to do took much longer than anticipated. I actually spent the entire night before I flew out of Hobart sewing and altering gear as I figured sleep was of secondary importance to customising our equipment. We had 17-21 kilograms plus about 3 kilograms of camera gear.

At the end of July I flew from Hobart to Andy's home in East Gippsland, Victoria, to spend a couple of days together on final equipment and food preparations. We then spent another two days driving 1200 kilometres to drop off our last food caches on the Benambra-Corryong Road near Omeo, at Dead Horse Gap and near Kiandra. With the help of his two kids, Andy had already dropped off food caches near Mount Skene and at Macalister Springs near Mount Howitt. A sixth food cache was given to a friend to transport to Hotham and store at a lodge where he was a member. For me, these periods immediately prior to departure on a major trip always feel chaotic and rushed but from talking to others who do similar trips this seems to be a common theme.

The trip at a glance

Our plan was to start on 1 August with exactly six weeks being available to us from then. As always, final preparations took longer than expected and so it was two days later that we departed. We chose this time period as we had previously started in late June and finished in early August and we felt that August provided the best chance of having the most skiable snow. With both of us being keen skiers it was all about maximising our ski time. Our hope was for a massive snow year and fortunately, this time we were not disappointed.

“Our hope was for a massive snow year and fortunately, this time we were not disappointed.”

In 2005 we deliberately chose to head south as we knew that this direction provided a much easier transition into the “track” than the Victorian end. By the time you hit the harder sections in Victoria you are fit, ready and keen for the additional challenges that the southern third provides. This time we wanted to head north, as apart from being different to last time, we knew it was likely to be more challenging. Our 2018 traverse proved this to be true.



Andy and Mark at the start of the trip

| Day | Km | Comments |
|-----|----|--|
| 1 | 22 | Walhalla to Mushroom Rocks, Mount Erica, 1000 metres of climbing. We reached camp at 8.30 pm, 3.5 hours of walking in the dark, a common theme for this trip. |
| 2 | 18 | Camped near the Mount Whitelaw turnoff, with 15 or so kilometres on skis. |
| 3 | 28 | Jordan River valley. Lots of road walking and a waist deep cold Thomson River crossing. |
| 4 | 32 | Black River, 10.5 hours of walking with minimal rests, arrived just after dark. Due to wet windy snowy conditions we took the longer alternative route(s). |
| 5 | 13 | Ascended 700 metres battling trees collapsed by snow. Skied from the Jamieson-Licola Road but camped short of our Mount Skene food cache. |
| 6 | 9 | Big snowfall overnight. Due to the snow it took 2 hours and 45 minutes to find our first food cache, very lucky to do so. Camped near Peters Gorge. |
| 7 | 18 | Snow conditions and lots of trees on the track made for a 12 hour day. Stopped short of the summit of Mount McDonald. The weather forecast was for 80 km/hour winds. |
| 8 | 13 | Extremely strong winds but beautiful sunshine. Challenging snow conditions for skiing. Camped in the saddle south of Mount Clear |
| 9 | 19 | Mounts Clear, Magdala and Howitt, the latter in whiteout and almost on dark, Reached Vallejo Gantner Hut at 7.15 pm. |
| 10 | | Rest day but skied several kilometres to collect the second food cache. |
| 11 | 7 | A late start from VJ Hut with challenging weather on the Crosscut Saw. This is the most difficult section of the trip to ski. Camped on the shoulder just short of the summit of Mount Speculation. |
| 12 | 8 | Great skiing off Speculation and over Mount Despair. Made it to Viking Saddle after 2 hours of clambering over and under many fallen trees in the dark. |
| 13 | 14 | Climbed The Viking in blizzard conditions then descended to Barry Saddle in the rain, walked a further 5 kilometres before camping. Falling trees a potential issue. |
| 14 | 19 | Skied and walked along the Barrys, climbed Selwyn and made it to Selwyn Creek Road. |
| 15 | 18 | Climbed The Twins in icy and windy conditions. Dangerous conditions along the road from St Bernard to Hotham so hitched. Then skied through Hotham Village to camp on the outskirts. |
| 16 | 5 | Mainly an organisation day – collecting food and gear cache, recharging batteries, drying gear and having ski boots re-shaped. Left village at 5.30 pm to ski out to Derrick Hut in the dark. Heard of the death of our cousin and that we would need to go back to Melbourne for funeral, date to be fixed. |
| 17 | 13 | Descended on skis to Dibbins Hut, which had 75 centimetres of snow. Ascended onto the Bogong High Plains to camp 1 kilometre from Cope Saddle. |
| 18 | 18 | Falls Creek via Pretty Valley and Ruined Castle. Left Windy Corner at 3.20 pm to ski out to Edmonsons Hut. |
| 19 | 13 | Nelses then opted to ski via Timms Spur and descend 940 metres to cross Big River, then a 600 metre ascent on Quartz Ridge. Camped at the treeline. |
| 20 | 26 | Crossed the summit of Mount Bogong and descended to Cleve Cole Hut then Long Spur and finally Big River Saddle. |

| Day | Km | Comments |
|-----|----|---|
| 21 | 16 | Mount Wills, Omeo Highway to Gill Creek. |
| 22 | 22 | Passed Taylors Crossing and camped at Morass Creek |
| 23 | 27 | A waist-deep crossing of Morass Creek, food cache #4. Decided to go fast, 120 kilometres in four days, so that time off could be taken for family funeral. Left Johnnies Top at 4.30 pm. Buenba Creek Hut at 9.30 pm, 13.5 hours of travel. |
| 24 | 31 | Dead Horse and Limestone Creeks and camped near Marble Quarry on Stony Creek. A 14 hour day. |
| 25 | 34 | Cowombat Flat and onto Tin Mine Huts. |
| 26 | 25 | Cascade Hut, Alpine Way, and food cache #5. Then picked up to travel to Melbourne for the funeral. A few days in Melbourne, then back to Thredbo. |
| 27 | 16 | After camping at Dead Horse Gap, skied up to Rams Head, over Kosciuszko to camp overlooking The Sentinel and Watsons Crag. Fine weather but icy. |
| 28 | 28 | Twynam, Rolling Ground, Whites River Hut and on to stay at Valentine Hut |
| 29 | 22 | Skied directly to the summit of Mount Jagungal and from there off-track to Mackays Hut, which we reached on dark. Superb skiing off Jagungal and nearby! |
| 30 | 23 | Patchy snow in places so some walking amongst the skiing. Camped on top of Mount Tabletop. A windy night. |
| 31 | 23 | Rain! Skied to Four Mile Hut where we hid from the downpour for an hour. Side-trip to Selwyn ski resort for a coffee. Then skied to Kiandra where the decent snow stopped. Recovered final food cache #6. Camped Chance Creek. |
| 32 | 32 | Heavy rain all night. Witzes Hut and a waist-deep crossing of the Tantangara Creek. The Murrumbidgee was too fast and too deep, so there was a long detour to the bitumen, arriving at Ghost Gully at 9.15 pm. |
| 33 | 34 | Oldfields Hut, Murray Gap camp, side-trip on skis to Bimberi Peak with ski descent in the dark. |
| 34 | 31 | Cotter and Orroral Rivers to camp at Honeysuckle Creek. |
| 35 | 16 | Tharwa, protracted stay at the Visitor Centre where Andy's car had been left. Then drove to Canberra and Kiandra to collect our food dump before returning to East Gippsland. Mark flew home to Hobart the following day. |



Lightweight alpine touring bindings

I have selected the highlights and lowlights of a few typical days, starting with ... the start.

Day 1 – Walhalla to Mushroom Rocks

Finally the day had arrived! As with all major trips we would have loved more preparation time but in the end we simply had to commit and go. Our parents kindly drove us to the beautiful historic gold mining town of Walhalla, nestled at the base of the Baw Baw Plateau. It really is a fantastic place to start or finish a trip such as the AAWT. After playing too much with recording footage on my new Sony mirrorless A7iii camera and eating delicious home cooked food, it was after midday by the time we eventually started walking. We departed Walhalla and headed along the route of the old timber tramway to cross the Thomson River on the historic Poverty Point Bridge. This steel bridge was originally built in 1900 to serve the Long Tunnel Gold Mining Company mine in Walhalla during the town's gold rush.

From there it was 1000 metres of ascending up scrubby tracks to our intended campsite at Mushroom Rocks below Mount Erica.

The weather started great but turned to rain from 4 pm. Given our noon start, the climb and 23 kilometres to walk, we didn't get into camp until 8.30 pm. With our keenness for winter trips, walking or skiing in the dark was something that we were well accustomed to. And once again this became the norm for this trip with our first day involving almost 3.5 hours of it. Despite the long day and the sore muscles it was worth it as Mushroom Rocks was a beautiful place to camp, particularly when the weather cleared and the stars came out.

“Despite the long day and the sore muscles it was worth it ...”

Day 2 – to near Mount Whitelaw

After a small climb up Mount Erica we spent the day skiing almost the length of the Baw Baw Plateau. We saw a few other skiers out on cross-country gear near the Rock Shelter and enjoyed the great snow cover. Normally we would also be on XC-Telemark gear but despite 30 years of experience with it, for this trip we had alpine touring (AT) gear, lightweight alpine touring bindings (Dynafit Speed Radical and Speed Turn 2.0).



Our mid on the first night, surrounded by granite boulders and myrtle beech at Mushroom Rocks

We had riskily chosen AT over XC-Telemark despite having spent only a limited time skiing on AT gear. In fact both Andy and I had only managed to get out for a few days prior to this trip on our very new AT setups. I would not normally recommend anyone start such a major trip with relatively untested gear, however, I was confident that our system would work as well, if not better than our previous system. We chose AT gear because it was 2.8 kilograms lighter than XC-Telemark and because we believed it would potentially be more efficient. Although I absolutely loved my new setup Andy wasn't at this stage fully convinced as his default turn is a telemark turn whereas these days my default is a parallel turn. We loved the toe tech system but almost never locked our heels in.

Firm conditions initially made for good travel and we had great fun slaloming through the snow gums as we headed north. The snow line was at 1350 metres however some areas in southern Baw Baw still had minimal snow cover requiring a short walk between skiable sections. Fortunately there was an excellent cover north of the Rock Shelter where we stopped for lunch. We ended up camped 600 metres north of the Mount Whitelaw turnoff after travelling 18 kilometres with happily at least 15 kilometres of these on skis.

Although the weather was mostly great for the first three days conditions over the next 10 days definitely deteriorated. It was tough going with heavy snowfalls and a huge amount of timber lying over the track,

creating tediously slow progress. Several times we could only move at 600 metres an hour as we clambered up and over or crawled awkwardly underneath the hundreds of fallen or low hanging trees. Most days saw us travelling the last few kilometres under torchlight and it was a rare novelty to start pitching our tent before dark.

Day 6 – Searching for our food cache at Mount Skene

By the time we arrived at Mount Skene where Andy had hidden our first food cache there was five feet of snow on the ground. Despite having the apparent GPS coordinates we simply could not find where he had hidden it. We moved many cubic metres of snow and were almost at the point of giving up after a couple of hours of fruitless searching and a huge amount of digging. This was an incredibly stressful few hours for us, as we figured not finding it might cost us the chance to make it all the way to Tharwa. With our 6-week window every day was vital and losing 3-5 days to exit towards Jamieson and somehow obtain additional food would likely have cost us the trip.

Miraculously I somehow by chance spotted the small piece of ribbon that Andy had placed at head height (and now at ankle height) when he dropped off the cache. It was perhaps 30 metres from the GPS coordinates we had and with so much snow and thick vegetation we were lucky to find it. From this experience we learned several valuable lessons.



Andy skiing to Low Saddle, day 6

Day 11 – Mac Springs to Speculation

We crossed Mount Howitt in terrible conditions in the dark on day nine and then took a rest day on day 10 at the awesome Vallejo Gantner Hut. This gave us a chance to ski out a further two kilometres and collect our second food cache (buried this time under four feet of snow) and to dry all our gear including our boots prior to attempting the challenging Crosscut Saw.

From my perspective the Crosscut Saw traverse when it is under heavy snow (or ice as it can be) is one of the most technical sections of the AAWT in winter. The consequences of taking a slide while skiing or walking across it would be dire. Although the Main Range in NSW can be icy and battered by 100+ km/h winds you are never forced to ski directly above cliffs as there is always an easier route (however long) around the trickier sections. For the Crosscut there is no real option but to cross it and traverse its narrow spine, which at times is only a few metres wide.

To make matters worse there were a number of avalanche warnings out for the Victorian Alps exactly when we intended to cross it, along with a forecast for some strong winds!

In places the narrow ridge of the Crosscut Saw between Mount Howitt and Mount Speculation has cliffs and bluffs on one side

and steep slopes the other side. With the predominant wind hitting the ridge from the west, the east side can have large cornices and there is some definite potential for avalanches. It can also often be incredibly icy in places, particularly through the numerous wind-scoured saddles. We were really hoping for good weather for this section!

Andy and I were happy to wait out a number of days at Vallejo Gantner Hut for a good weather window even though we couldn't really afford the time. However, the forecast showed no ideal conditions within the next week. While the forecast for the following day looked like the best time to cross there was no guarantee it was going to be better. So we packed ready to go and hung around at the hut most of the morning hoping that the sun might eventually manage to burn off the thick cloud and also that the wind might dissipate. Unfortunately, neither happened but we decided to depart regardless, to at least have a look at the start of the ridge before committing to the full traverse.

We headed off relatively late at 11.40 am with the option of returning if we felt unsafe. Conditions were not ideal with very limited visibility, sleet (and sometimes hail), wet snow underfoot plus 45+ km/h winds. Luckily though it wasn't icy so we did not need to use the ice axes and ski crampons that we were carrying after collecting them from our



Andy on one of the final "teeth" of the Crosscut Saw under heavy snow conditions, day 11

Macalister Springs food and gear cache. Most of the day we managed to stay on skis although a few times we had to remove our skis and kick steps due to the steepness and the fact that we wanted to stay on the ridge rather than traverse the potentially avalanche prone slopes. It was certainly a challenging and adventurous ski but one that we still felt comfortable with. We were fortunate in that just as we were finishing the final critical section the weather improved and even cleared ahead of us.

It was great to be able to look forward and see Mount Speculation and the next day's route along the Razor towards the Viking. While it was disappointing to not have any views of Mount Howitt and the southern end of the Crosscut on this trip we were happy to have crossed safely without incident. Thus just on twilight we happily ended up in the comfort of our tent slightly short of the summit of Mount Speculation. It was definitely a relief to have this difficult section out of the way.

Day 12 – Speculation to Viking Saddle

We hoped to wake to fine weather and magnificent views but it was not to be. We slowly traversed towards the summit of Mount Speculation, or “Spec” as it is affectionately known, trying to delay our progress in order to capture some views. On a clear day the views of the cliffs and steep slopes below plus those of the Crosscut and Howitt are spectacular. Spec also commands tantalising but distant views of Hotham, Feathertop and Bogong. Occasionally the sun managed to somehow get through the persistent cloud but the views were always fleeting and promised more than they delivered.

It was a fun ski down from the summit to the treeline and it was great to throw some actual turns down for a change rather than simply use survival skiing techniques. We skied all the way to Catherine Saddle, carefully but awkwardly stepping over rocks, dirt and fallen trees still with our skis on before continuing up onto Mount Despair on them.



Andy on The Razor, day 12

Our assumption was that the track would be poorly marked and poorly defined, so we made our own way directly straight up the side of the mountain. Our mistake, as when we got to the top we found a well-marked track that we should have followed from the start in the saddle as it might have saved us considerable pain and frustration.

The skiing across Despair was great but on the descent towards The Razor it was again time to start carrying our skis. This time we were impressed with the track as it appeared much more defined than when we last crossed it in winter. Thankfully we only struggled to follow it a couple of times and this was simply due to the 30 centimetres of snow on top of the route. With some reasonable weather we were enjoying ourselves. That is up until the descent into Viking Saddle. It started well and we excitedly put our skis on before having to remove them a hundred metres later. By this time it was getting dark but we were still in a happy place as we only had 1.2 kilometres to go. However, the state of the track soon changed our demeanour. With major trees down every few metres it took us almost two hours in the dark to travel little more than a kilometre to get to the Viking Saddle. It was a relief to finally get there!

Day 13 – Viking Saddle, the Viking

Day 13 was a decidedly unpleasant experience! We woke to a wonderful sunrise and an amazing view of The Viking above us. Looking into the forested section ahead it didn't even look that bad, certainly nothing like the horror of the final two hours we completed in the dark the previous night.

The beautiful start to the day evaporated at 7.45 am when we got hit with what were essentially blizzard conditions. Suddenly the sky darkened, the wind picked up and started plastering everything in large wet snow flakes. The annoying part was that we were almost packed up but not quite.

With heads down we set off for The Viking and although steep it was not too bad. The weather was wild and seemed to increase in intensity the higher we got. Eventually we made it to The Viking chimney and although there are better routes that avoid it, all the rock was caked in snow, making route finding and scrambling very awkward and incredibly slippery. We briefly sheltered inside the cavern at the base of the chimney then struggled awkwardly up it. Unfortunately I took the least ideal route from there making for some challenging and potentially risky climbing moves as I scrambled to find a safe route to the top.



Andy at Viking Saddle shortly prior to blizzard conditions enveloping the area, day 13

On The Viking we were initially in waist deep snow. We could have skied across it however it was too difficult to transition into ski boots from hiking boots in the blizzard conditions and we knew we would have to descend pretty soon anyway. We managed to find the descent track and were impressed with the amount of markers and work completed by parks track crews. By 2.30 pm we staggered into Barry Saddle although we knew we were at least a day behind our planned schedule so we quickly continued on. The track started well then deteriorated with more fallen trees and overhanging bushes. Combined with the steady rain we were soon soaked from pushing hard through all the wet bushes.

With the high winds and fresh trees down everywhere we were really worried about trees falling on our camp so for once we started looking for suitable sites early. Over the past two weeks we had heard numerous trees fall, more than we had ever previously experienced. We initially went past a pretty safe spot hoping to cover greater distance but soon the track deteriorated even further with no signs of a possible clearing so we back-tracked to it and made camp. With the AAWT route being along a ridge we had no easy access to water but we were able to leave some containers at the base of a large mountain ash and they soon filled from the rainwater pouring down its trunk. It was a relief to get into the tent and get into dry clothes and to warm ourselves as we were exhausted.

Day 18 – Near pole 267, Falls Creek, Edmonsons Hut

We woke to a beautiful day and soon had sunshine warming and drying the tent. The latter was an amazing feeling and not one that we had experienced on this trip.

For this section from Hotham to Falls Creek we were trialling Andy's new mountaineering tent for two nights. I absolutely love my Hyperlite Mountain Gear Ultamid tent; in fact it is probably my favourite bit of kit along with my packraft and

skis. However, as good as it is, Andy kept reminding me before the trip that as good as pyramid

tents are, they are not four-season rated and are not designed for 100 km/h winds. So the plan was that if Andy's Wilderness Equipment Second Arrow went okay for us for these couple of nights we would take it on the extremely exposed sections above the treeline along the Main Range. Theoretically its low profile would be able to handle the ridiculously strong winds that the NSW alpine environment was notorious for. It was interesting along the journey to see Andy's reaction to my pyramid tent as he had rarely used one prior to this trip. By the end of the AAWT he was in agreement at just how good they are (in the right situation). That said, pyramid tents need to be used with care and lots of thought on campsite selection, particularly in alpine environments.

“... its low profile would be able to handle the ridiculously strong winds ...”



By surprise, at Falls Creek we met one of our great friends, Bernie Mills. Andy, Mark and Bernie, day 18

We skied up Pretty Valley and from the top of Ruined Castle got a spectacular view of Mount Bogong, where we hoped to be the following night. It was a joy to briefly get on the groomed runs and race down into the village in order to find a new telescopic pole for me. This was because I had broken one the day prior when I unexpectedly dropped one and a half metres off a hidden cornice just after the sun set. We were also there to collect a couple of packages from the post office. It would have been nice to be on patternless skis but our Voile Objective pattern-based touring skis handled the high-speed run down the groomed trails extremely well. Despite being a light ski they excel on the descents and in challenging terrain such as heavily forested slopes. We absolutely loved using them on this trip. Although many others have said that they would use a traditional long narrow touring ski for winter AAWT trips, our preference is for a short wide and light agile ski like the Objective BC.

It was 3.20 pm by the time we left the very busy Windy Corner but we were able to move along the groomed cross-country Hoppet ski trail at over 5 km/h, our fastest average speed to date on this trip. Thus we arrived at Edmonsons Hut and set up the

Ultamid before it got dark. Amazing! Then I discovered that a ski party at the hut were from Tassie so had a great chat with them. It was cool to think that this was the same spot where Andy and I undertook our very first snow camp, 30 years ago when we were 16 years old.

Day 19 – Crossing from the Bogong High Plains to Mount Bogong

We left Edmonsons and headed up above the treeline onto the shoulder of Mount Nelse. This is an incredibly exposed section where we experienced very strong winds. The sun was trying to poke through which did create some beautiful effects, however, it wasn't having any real success. The snow was very firm, with windpack and some ice. This was actually great for us as it made for fast ski travel. We soon left the main Hotham-Bogong pole line and instead headed out to Timms Spur so that we could descend to cross the headwaters of Big River and then ascend Mount Bogong via Quartz Ridge. In my opinion this is a much better way for those on skis than to descend Duane Spur and ascend T-Spur and have to do a side trip to summit Mount Bogong. Quartz Ridge, although a lot more exposed than the alternative, offers amazing scenery



Andy crossing Big River, day 19

and an incredible alpine atmosphere unlike the route from Ropers Hut which involves dealing with a lot of scrub and wet bushes plus the potential of higher water flows on the river crossing due to being further downstream.

Unfortunately, visibility was poor which was a shame as normally the views from Timms Lookout of Cairn Gully, Quartz Ridge and West Peak are magnificent. It was cool though to check out, from a safe distance, the huge cornice that was there. The 600 metre descent was tedious as the snow was quite slow and sluggish once we hit the tree-line. By the time we got down to Big River it was sleeting rather than snowing making for a very chilly and damp lunch and for a cold river crossing. Later on in the trip we would again cross this river but further downstream where its name changes from Big River to the Mitta Mitta River.

Fortunately the snow was much better on the Quartz Ridge ascent. It was great to get to our intended camp spot at the edge of the treeline with just enough time to dig a large shelf into the slope and get the mid up before dark.

Day 20 – Mount Bogong to Big River Saddle

Finally we got lucky with the weather, views and our timing matching up! After light snowfalls throughout the night I wasn't expecting to wake to fine weather although I had been really hoping for it. I felt as though we had missed out on showcasing much of Victoria's amazing alpine environments because of the poor weather we had experienced for a lot of the first two weeks. So to wake to mostly clear skies, with clouds in the valleys below us, was incredible. I took hundreds of photos resulting in us not leaving camp till much later than normal. We also spent considerable time filming the final climb up Quartz Ridge, further contributing to our delay. It was worth it though as views such as these were the reason we were doing the trip.

There were quite a few smallish cornices on the ascent and I managed to get too close to one while trying to get the right angle for a shot. Suddenly there was a "woomph" sound as the snow dropped out from under me. Fortunately I only dropped two metres while the main cornice section (an area about five



Camp at the Quartz Ridge treeline, day 20

metres wide) rolled another 10 metres down the hill. No harm done but it was a good reminder for me about being too complacent in an environment such as this.

We ascended to the 1986 metre summit of Victoria's highest peak and took the obligatory photos of us and the summit cairn then started our traverse and fun ski descent out to Cleve Cole Hut. Conditions were firm but not as icy as the day prior so we made good time and got some fun turns in on the final descent. This hut is probably the best public accessible hut in Victoria, so we spent way too much time enjoying its comforts. It was after 2 pm by the time we departed and we were still keen on achieving another 16 kilometres as we hoped to try to get to Mount Wills.

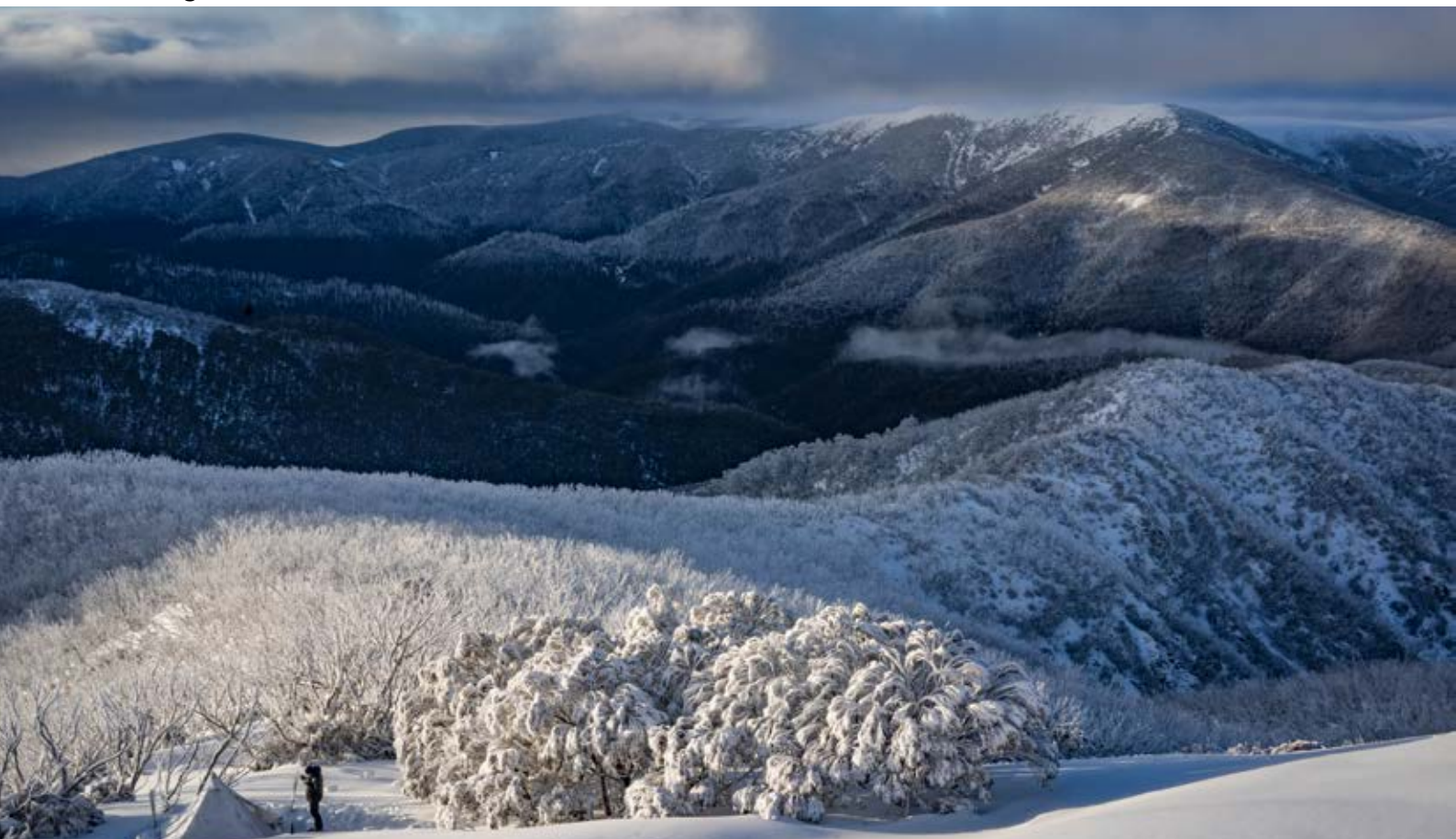
After bumping into a couple of solo skiers we skied down Long Spur but as the name implies it is a long way and eventually darkness descended. An hour into the night, after walking off and on snow in our ski boots for the last two kilometres we finally made it to Big River Saddle. Although several kilometres short of our ambitious goal of Mount Wills we were happy to make the saddle and to actually camp off snow for a change.

Day 26 – Tin Mine Huts, Dead Horse Gap and Melbourne

Prior to reaching Dead Horse Gap we learned that a close relative had lost his life and that a funeral would be held in the following week. So we pushed hard from the Benambra-Corryong Road with several 30 kilometre days. This enabled us to get to Dead Horse Gap early and get collected thanks to another family member. Next morning we caught an early train to Melbourne for the funeral. A couple of days later we made our back to Thredbo via bus and walked up towards Dead Horse Gap.



Andy and Mark at Cascade Hut, day 26



Quartz Ridge treeline camp with Timms Spur and the Bogong High Plains behind, day 20

Day 27 – The Main Range

We climbed out of the Thredbo valley on skis to a glorious sunny day. It was a joy to emerge from the tree-line and to then crest the main ridge near the Rams Head. From there we skied down into the headwaters of the Swampy Plain River just south of Lake Cootapatamba so that we could head directly up towards the summit of Australia's highest peak, Mount Kosciuszko, at 2228 metres. In good weather conditions, the next couple of days are the most spectacular part of the Australian Alps and the AAWT. At times we could see the highly prominent Mount Jagungal jutting out in the distance and it looked like a great cover of snow extended all the way there. We were super excited and thankful to have such good views and such a great snow cover.

As Andy had to be back at work in another 11 days our schedule for this section and final third of the AAWT was still incredibly tight. With 200+ kilometres still to go we were really hoping that conditions would allow us to tour decent distances each day. If not we would not have time to complete the full traverse from Walhalla to Canberra.

We finished the day camped above extremely steep icy slopes overlooking The Sentinel and Watsons Crag. It was an incredibly beautiful outlook and sunset and we were so happy to be there. The next day would see us travelling across the Rolling Ground and down to Whites River Hut and then beyond to stay at the homely Valentines Hut.

Day 33 – Climbing Bimberi Peak

Despite the day prior finishing at 9.15 pm after a very long 32 kilometres, we got away early and set ourselves an ambitious goal

of getting to and climbing the Australian Capital Territory's highest peak. We saw lots of brumbies out and the walking was straightforward and relatively easy. After 20 kilometres we stopped for lunch near Pocket Saddle at 12.15 pm, our earliest lunch yet. We then set off for beautiful Oldfields Hut and then onto Murray Gap, another 8 kilometres away, where we planned to camp. We met a group of three young guys who were similarly ambitious with a huge day trip from the other side of Murray Gap to Blue Waterholes and back.



Andy and Mark at Oldfields Hut checking the logbook, day 33

It was almost 4.30 pm by the time we had set up our tent and departed Murray Gap for an evening ascent of Bimberi Peak. The guidebook suggested three hours for the 6 kilometres return trip and the 400 metre ascent but we only had two hours of light remaining. So we were expecting a slight challenge. We weren't disappointed.

After walking for 750 metres it was time to put skis on and outfit them with our kicker skins. We almost always carry these short lightweight skins with us when touring with



Ascending towards the Rams Head out of Dead Horse Gap, day 27

a pack as they have proved advantageous innumerable times. The climb was arduous due to tough conditions with only 30-40 centimetres of snow and lots of trees and scrub to get around. We really wanted to make it the summit in time to capture the sunset so pushed hard. We almost made it but not quite, missing it by 5-10 minutes.

The ski back under torchlight was hairy and definitely a real challenge but was also great fun. Surprisingly, we managed to ski in the dark through all the trees and scrub and almost all the way back to the very edge of the snowline. In the end the guidebook was spot on for the time it took us. If we hadn't carried our skis from Kiandra though we suspect it would have taken us twice this time. So from Andy's and my perspective this short but fun ski made it worth carrying our skis on our packs for the additional 105 kilometres. Understandably I cannot imagine any of my ski-touring friends agreeing with this perspective.

Days 34 & 35 – Finishing the AAWT

At this stage we finally knew that barring an incident we would make our end goal. Our last day and a half were about cruising and savouring our final time on the track as we travelled through Namadgi National Park towards the end of the AAWT at the Tharwa Visitor Centre. The differences in park management strategies between Kosciuszko NP and Namadgi NP were highly noticeable. While horse manure covers



ACT sunrise from Murray Gap, day 34

much of the ground in Kosciuszko, we saw absolutely no signs of feral horses at all in Namadgi. We also went from only seeing the occasional kangaroo and wallaby south of the ACT border to walking past hundreds of kangaroos in the Orroral Valley.

We camped at Honeysuckle Creek, near the site of the former space tracking station, and the next day enjoyed the final 16 kilometres of the track down to Tharwa. Just prior to arriving we sat down and savoured the view for 40 minutes as we contemplated what we had just achieved. For much of the trip we were unsure whether we would make our cut-off date or whether we would run out of time. So it was satisfying to acknowledge that we had finally completed the 660 kilometres in five weeks despite some really challenging conditions early in the trip and the need to leave the track for a few days to attend our cousin's funeral.



Andy and Mark in front of the Namadgi sign, day 35

Our planned short stay at the excellent Namadgi National Park Visitor Centre in Tharwa (and the official conclusion of the AAWT) turned into a long stop as it was great to meet the generous rangers and to learn more about the area. Andy's car was at the Visitor Centre so we dismissed our great intentions to stay lean and fit and headed for iced chocolates, coffee and chocolate in Canberra. Then we headed south and home via a detour to Kiandra to collect our northern-most food and gear cache. This involved torchlight crossings of fast flowing thigh-deep water across Head Creek and the Eucumbene. It was 1 am before we finally rocked up at Andy's home in East Gippsland. The next day I flew home to be reunited with my wife Jen in Hobart. Sincere massive thanks to our wives and families for giving us the opportunity to attempt and succeed on this journey!

Reflections on the trip

For us the trip was always about being on snow and ideally skiing as much of the track as possible. We were fortunate that it was such a good snow year. Although we were off snow for much of the last 100 kilometres it still felt like a highly successful trip with our bodies holding out, our relatively lightweight gear systems working well for us and due to the fact that we actually really enjoyed the majority of the challenges and difficult weather that we faced.

Long trips such as this always teach you valuable lessons. It was great to be reminded of just how beautiful our Australian alpine and sub-alpine environments are. These days the emphasis of backcountry skiing seems to have shifted from touring on light gear towards charging super steep slopes on heavy gear but this trip showed us just how good we have it in Australia for ski touring. The combination of rolling terrain, pockets of weathered snow gums, beautiful but basic backcountry huts and unpredictable weather make for some excellent touring opportunities. I hope that our trip inspires others to explore and tour our unique alpine environments in winter whether it be on snowshoes, cross-country skis, alpine touring gear or through split-boarding or snowboarding. Because there is nothing

quite like travelling through a pristine area with 20 centimetres of fresh snow lying on the ground feeling as though you are the first person to have ever been there. Likewise, waking to sunshine, fog settled in the valleys below and a view of places like The Sentinel or Mount Bogong is an incredible experience not to be missed.



Mark

Andy

After a short career as an Outdoor Educator and sometime ski addict, Andy has been working as an Ambulance Paramedic for the last 20 years including a number of stints volunteering in Vanuatu and East Timor. He is a member of Ambulance Victoria's Wilderness Response Paramedic program and has been heavily involved with Alpine Search and Rescue Victoria as well as a member of Bush Search and Rescue with Bushwalking Victoria for the last 15 years. Andy lives on the edge of the Gippsland Lakes in sunny Paynesville and enjoys introducing his two children to Victoria's beautiful mountains and coast.

Mark is an Outdoor Education Teacher in Hobart who seeks to combine his own passion for outdoor adventures with that of teaching young people about the outdoors. In addition to a love of snow covered mountains Mark and his wife Jen are always keen to explore wild rivers and undertake alpine bushwalks particularly in their adopted state of Tasmania. In his non-existent spare time Mark runs courses, specialising in whitewater packrafting, for Paddle Tasmania.

A full trip report and images can be found here markoates.exposure.co/australian-alps-walking-track

Skiing With the Bobs – Take Two

Sonya Muhlsimmer



Each winter I make my annual pilgrimage to the snow for an eight days back country skiing trip, and if you remember me from last year, I go with my brothers, the Bob Brothers that is. You may have even seen our entries in Kosciuszko Hut Association logbooks. Each year since I have been skiing with the brothers, which is now four years, we have been trying to reach the summit of Mount Jagungal.

An hour's skiing from Mawsons Hut, Mount Jagungal
Sonya Muhlsimmer

A lot of work goes into these ski trips such as the introduction of a pulk to the group two years back. The pulks are modified, ski gear is repaired and prototypes of ingenious equipment are designed and developed, like the addition of a cart this year. Joe has been working hard designing and building a lightweight cart. The plan was to use them if there was not enough snow for skiing from where we left the cars and to use them for as long as necessary along the Snowy Mountains Fire Trail. The carts would be left at the locked gate a few kilometres from Cesjacks, returning this way on the way out. This way our overloaded rucksacks would not be on our backs. This cart idea was great, and we were all keen to trial this design, and to reach the summit of Mount Jagungal ...



Erica modelling the cart and pulk
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Day 1 – Nimmo Road, Snowy Mountains Fire Trail, Cesjacks Hut

After breakfast at the Lake Jindabyne Hotel we were off with a convoy of three cars: Joe and Erica, Bruce, and Steve and I. Getting to Cesjacks Hut from the east requires navigation of a few fire trails and we were not sure how much snow there was on the ground, and how far we were to get in the cars before the snow got too deep to drive. Bruce and I have 4WDs and some recovery gear so we felt confident there would be no problem reaching the gate, or at least getting a good distance in. Joe had an All Wheel Drive and he was confident he could make it; he did a recce a few weeks back and got through. The road was good for a while but then the snow started getting deeper in some

patches. There were a few cars parked at around two to three kilometres past Nimmo Bridge so we were anticipating lots of snow ahead. Onwards we travelled. At around eight kilometres from the locked gate, Joe got bogged. Everyone got out of the cars and started to dig him out. After about an hour or so of trying to dig him out Bruce got the heavy artillery out and dragged Joe's AWD out of the hole. This is where the cars were parked.



Bruce and Steve digging Joe out
Steve Buchert

The pulks were loaded, cart on top of the pulk, skis were put on, and off we went. Well, after about a kilometre the snow ran out. The skis came off and the carts were loaded and off we went, again. It took us nearly two hours to walk two kilometres to the Gungarlin River, tough with the heavy packs and carts, and we still had quite a few kilometres to walk to the locked gate, so we decided to turn around and go in via Munyang. We would stay in Cooma for the night and have an early morning to make Mawsons Hut the next night, well at least to Schlink Hilton, see how the day goes.



And we are off to Cesjacks Hut
Steve Buchert

Day 2 – Munyang to Schlink Hilton

There were a lot of cars at Munyang and there was a bit of organising to do. Drive in and drop the gear off, drive back to the car park and then walk back down to the start of the Schlink Fire Trail. It was around 10 am by the time we were ready to ski. There was a bit of water in the creek but we did not get wet feet, but once we crossed we looked back and saw a snow bridge we could have skied across. Horse Camp Hut turnoff was reached in about two hours and it was time for lunch and to do a food drop for our last night feast. This is one reason why the rucksacks were heavy: too much food, and a little bit of wine for the last night celebratory meal. Okay, there were a couple of bottles of wine to share, for the five of us mind you.

The weather turned for the worst in the afternoon and just before Schlink Hilton Joe's pulk poles snapped right in half, oh dear, and at this time the snow was coming thick and fast. We finally made it to Schlink but were not alone - there were 16 people in the hut. This is the most I have seen here, with just two brave girls in a tent outside. Hardly any sleep was had by most of us as there were some loud snorers, people going to the toilet at random times, and the rats. There were about six rats stalking us I swear. I kept waking up with the rat right next to my face and one of the guys said that the rat was chewing his hair through the night. A few people let out little screams of terror as well. It was a very long night indeed.

“I kept waking up with the rat right next to my face ...”



Nothing to see here
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Day 3 – Schlink Hilton to Mawsons Hut

It was a picture perfect day with about 20 to 30 centimetres of new snow on a solid base. Joe was busy fixing the poles, I was busy drinking coffee to keep me awake and I dare say that everyone was feeling kind of sleep deprived. The girls in the tent survived the storm, and I would not be surprised if they had more sleep than all of us in the hut. After a long morning getting ready, it was over The Kerrys and down to Mawsons Hut. We spent the night snug in the tents at Mawsons Hut, away from the rats, quite a peaceful night. Crazy Karen was here as well and with her handy satellite device she gave the weather forecast for the next day, and it was looking pretty good during the day with an afternoon storm predicted with lots of snow, but we should be back at Mawsons by that time.

Day 4 – Mount Jagungal and back to Mawsons Hut

This is Jagungal day, and it has been a long time coming, well for me anyway. However as the quote goes “In order to succeed you must fail, so that you know what not to do the next time.” Well, here goes, and at 8.00 am we were off. After an hour of skiing we had clear sight of our mission. There it was, right in front of us and the skiing was good with lots of snow. All the creeks and rivers were bridged so there was no problem crossing anywhere. About two hours into the journey, and with a bit of wind about, Bruce discovered he had left his wind jacket behind, so without wanting to risk summiting and getting frost bitten he turned back, however the remainder of us continued. At 12.30 pm we made it, and gee it was cold and windy up at the summit. At the summit,



Erica, Joe and Sonya on the top of Mount Jagungal
Steve Buchert

there was only enough stamina to take a few pictures and we were out of there but the feeling was pretty good to have finally made it. In the distance the sky was turning black and heading our way; it was the snow storm as predicted, but there will be enough time to make it back to Mawsons, hopefully. Back at Mawsons, Erica Steve and I decided to sleep in the hut due to the weather, with Joe and Bruce remaining in their tents. At around 2.30 am Joe came in the hut as his one man tent was closing in on him and he was worried that he would be suffocated, or we would have had to dig him out in the morning if he had remained in his tent, if we could have found him that is.



Joe nearly got buried in his tent due to snow
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Day 5 – Mawsons Hut to Schlink Hilton

A good decision by Joe to come in the hut as his tent was nearly swallowed up by all the snow overnight however Bruce was fine in his two man tent. Initially the plan was to head back to Horse Camp Hut and have a feast, as this is where the food drop was, but due to the bad weather conditions and low visibility we decided to go over the The Kerrys to Schlink Hilton, so it was an easy morning and no need to rush. As the visibility was minimal a compass bearing was taken to guide us back to Schlink Hilton. Up on The Kerrys it was a complete whiteout, well with about 15 metres visibility. Occasionally a few rocks could be seen in the near distance but apart from that it was quite hard to distinguish the features or the ground from the sky, quite a surreal feeling. Lucky I had packed my GPS so every now and again we would check the coordinates to see how



Whiteout on The Kerrys
Sonya Muhlsimmer

far we have skied and to find out where exactly we were, as there was no other way of knowing at all. Finally Schlink Hilton was reached, and can you guess who was there, it was Crazy Karen. It was good catching up with her again.

Day 6 – Schlink Hilton to Horse Camp Hut

Erica, Bruce and Joe had decided to leave two days earlier than Steve and me so it was time for them to go home. We skied back to Horse Camp Hut turn off via the fire trail, dug up the food drop and they were off. Steve and I spent the rest of the afternoon at Horse Camp Hut. We had a lot of housework to do such as collect the wood and water, build a large windbreak, pitch our tents then entertain the guests when they arrived later, if we get any visitors that is, oh and we had to check out the igloo that someone made. It was well made igloo, except the opening was facing into the wind. A few people came in and the rest of the afternoon was spent exchanging stories around the fire. A nice night was had by all.

Day 7 – Horse Camp Hut to Home

The last day's plan was going to explore the Rolling Ground, have some lunch and then a leisurely afternoon back at the hut. However there was a bit of wind and snow about so there would be hardly any visibility. Add bad weather at the top on the Rolling Ground, and Steve's huge blister on his foot, giving a bit of discomfort. We decided to leave today, and after breakfast we packed up our tents and off we went back home. Another pilgrimage complete. I can't wait to come back next year.



Photo Gallery



Morning light on the Razorback from Mt Bryan, South Australia
Brian Eglinton

Competition: Australia October 2010



BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes October 2018

WINNER



Southwest Tasmania
lights up
ILUVSWTAS

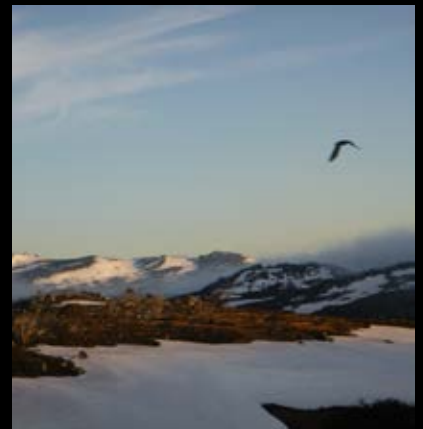
Walking the Southern Ranges in south-west Tasmania is always a treat, so when the sun broke through the cloud minutes before setting to reveal this light show, the next 10 minutes was extra special.



The sugar on top
Andrew Smyth



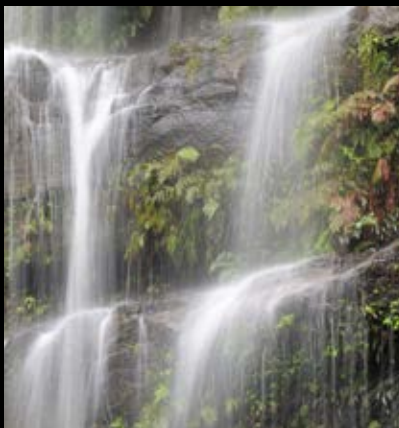
A not so little
ray of sunshine
North-north-west



Jagungal dawn
Lophophaps



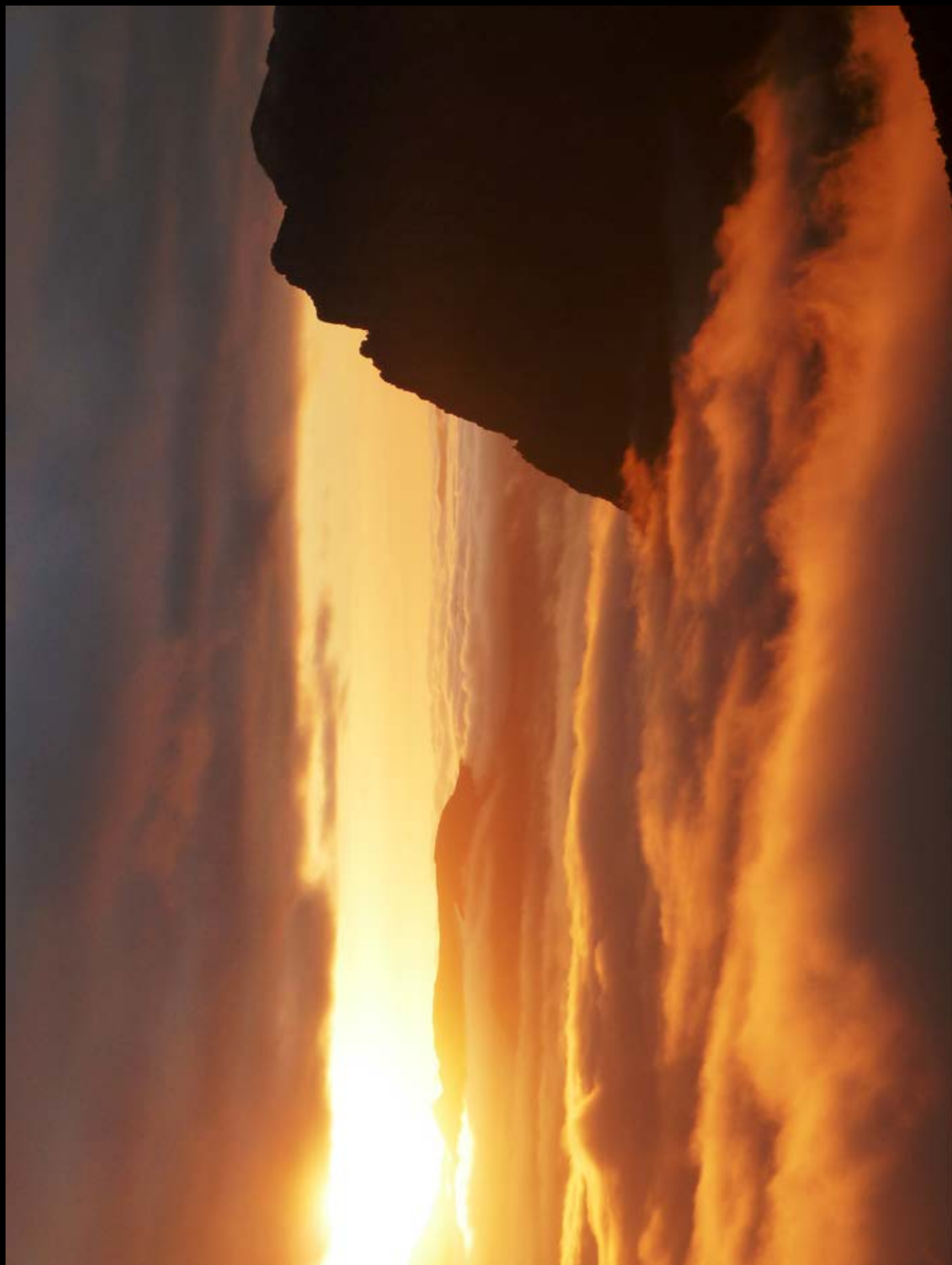
Mannum Falls
Brian Eglinton



Gap Creek Falls
landsmith



Moonset over Pantoneys
Tom Brennan



Non-landscapes October 2018

WINNER



Twisted King Billy
Bogholesbuckethats

This stand of King Billy pines was lucky to be spared from the 2019 wildfires that devastated the area. There was a genuine sense of walking back in time while passing through this forest.



*Hemiphaga
novaeseelandiae*
John Walker



Stop shoving
North-north-west



Fungi on the trail
in the Watagans
landsmith



The old man on the hill
Andrew Smyth



What lies beneath
Brian Eglinton



The Cerberus flowers
Tom Brennan



Tasmania October 2018

WINNER



Precipitous Bluff sunset
ILUVSWTAS

Anyone who has been lucky enough to camp on top of PB knows what a truly remarkable mountain it is. When you get treated to a red sunset like this one it is hard not to fall madly in love with this epic peak.



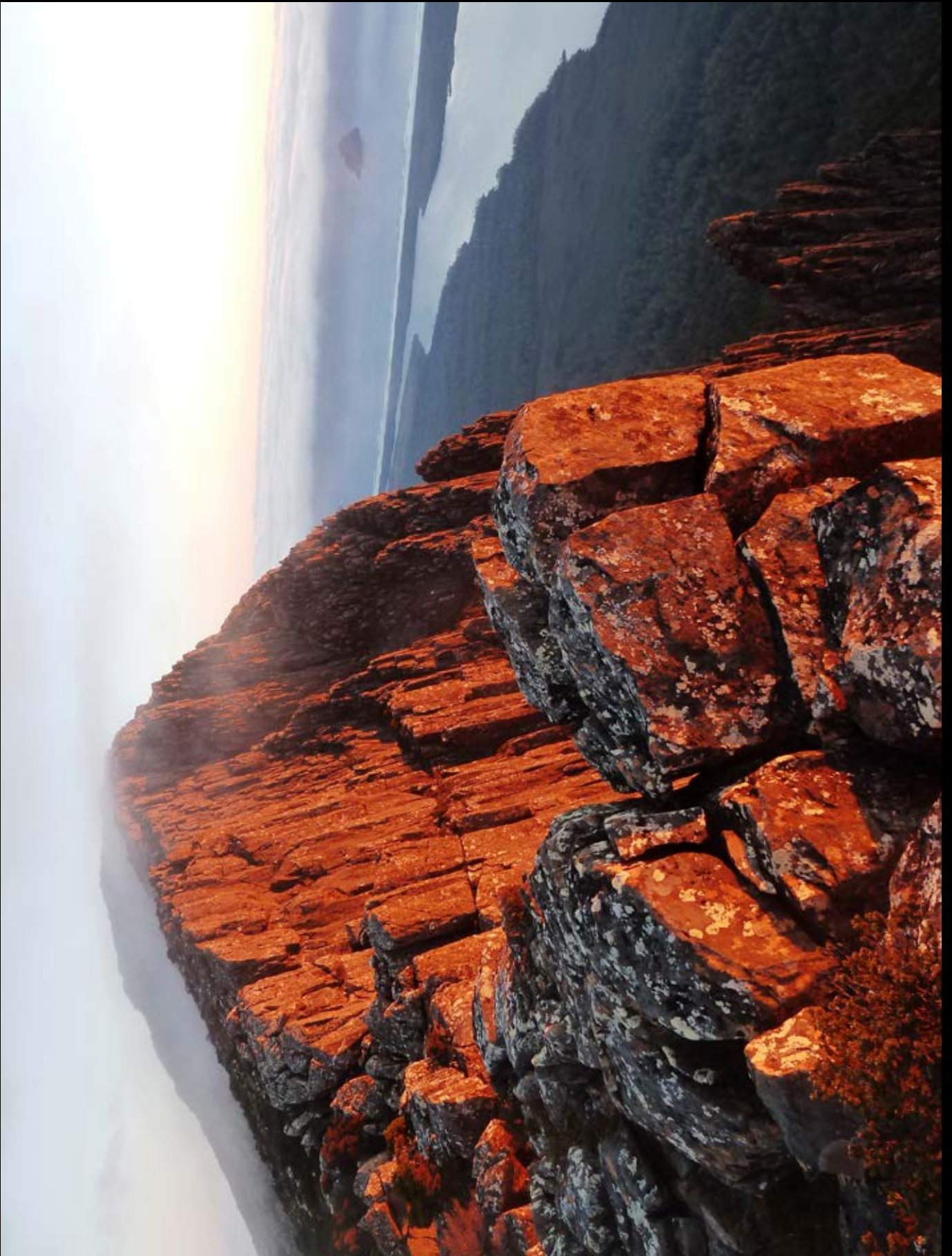
Giant Cushion Plant
Bogholesbuckethats



Not a bad little drop
North-north-west



Tilting totem
Andrew Smyth



Other States October 2018

WINNER



A moody morning looking across the pagodes near Point Cameron in Gardens of Stone National Park.

Dawn in the Gardens
Tom Brennan



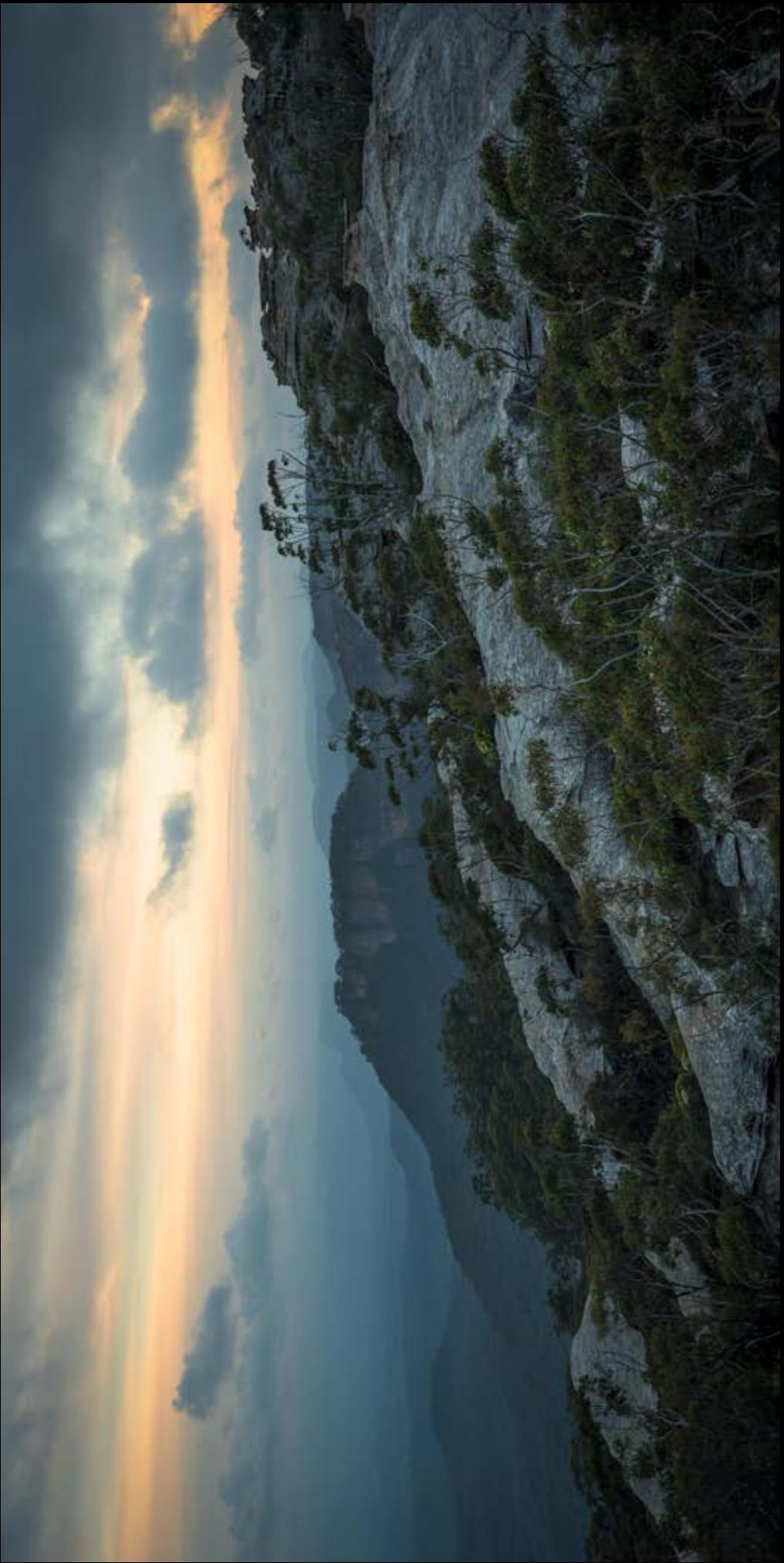
Gap Creek
landsmith



The things you find
in the bush
John Walker



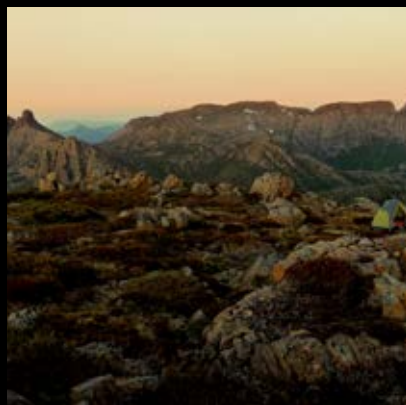
Mount Beavor
Brian Eglinton



Landscapes

November 2018

WINNER



Gimme a home amongst
the gum trees
ILUVSWTAS

I had this spot in mind to camp after three hard days walking, so on the third day it was a 12 hour slog to make sure this happened. I was not disappointed. A dead calm evening spent among many old friends in the surrounding peaks.



Lake Hawea
landsmith



Perfect end
to a perfect day
Tortoise



Inspiration from the Pulpit
John Walker



Last light
Brian Eglinton



Hmmmm, where to next?
North-north-west



Non-landscapes

November 2018

WINNER



Spring in the Alps
Brian Eglinton

Getting to the Victorian Alps is a long drive for me, and especially so to take the road to Howitt Plains Car Park.

So after a 4+ day trek, it was good to add in the Bryces Gorge circuit as an early morning walk while in the area.

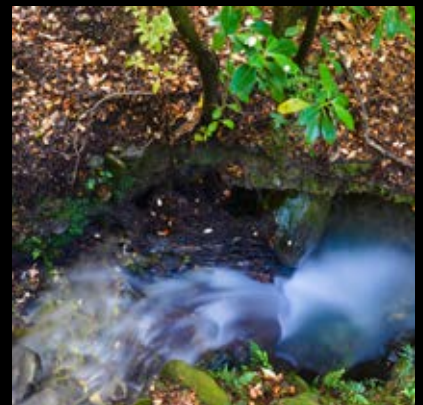
All was green and lush in mid November. The flowers were just coming on, and Guys Hut was a nice touch to the alpine meadow.



There's more to
Richea than scoparia
North-north-west



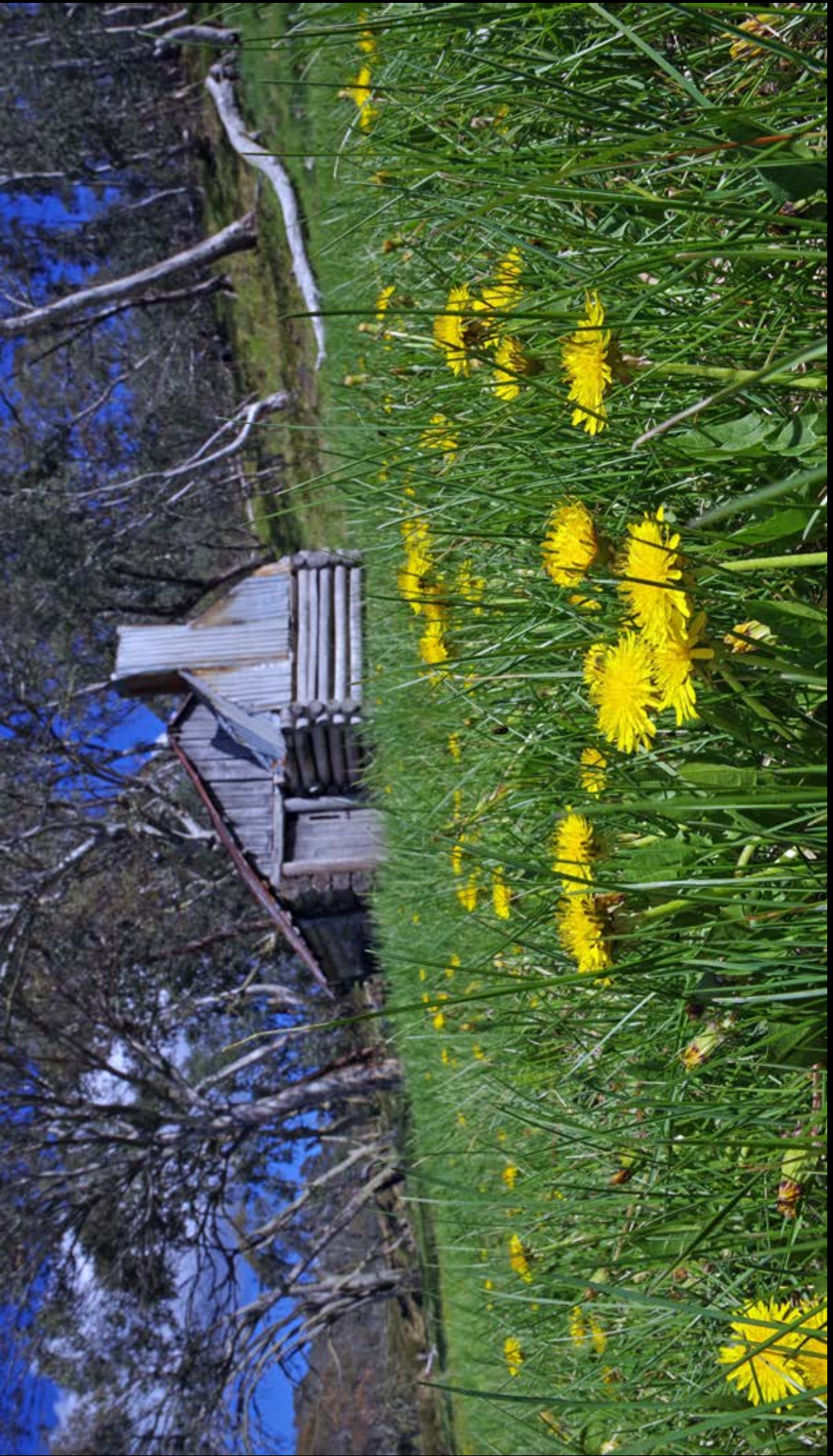
Together we can
Tortoise



Where waters run
landsmith



Spring is sprung
John Walker



Tasmania

November 2018

WINNER



Labyrinth alpenglow
ILUVSWTAS

Showers and cloud had threatened any chance of a decent sunset, but then without warning this happened ...



Been there, done that ...
and that, and that ...
North-north-west



Mountain moods
Tortoise



Other States

November 2018

WINNER



Misty portal
Brian Eglinton

Heading to Howitt Plains Car Park for the first time, it was in fact a second visit to the Crosscut Saw.

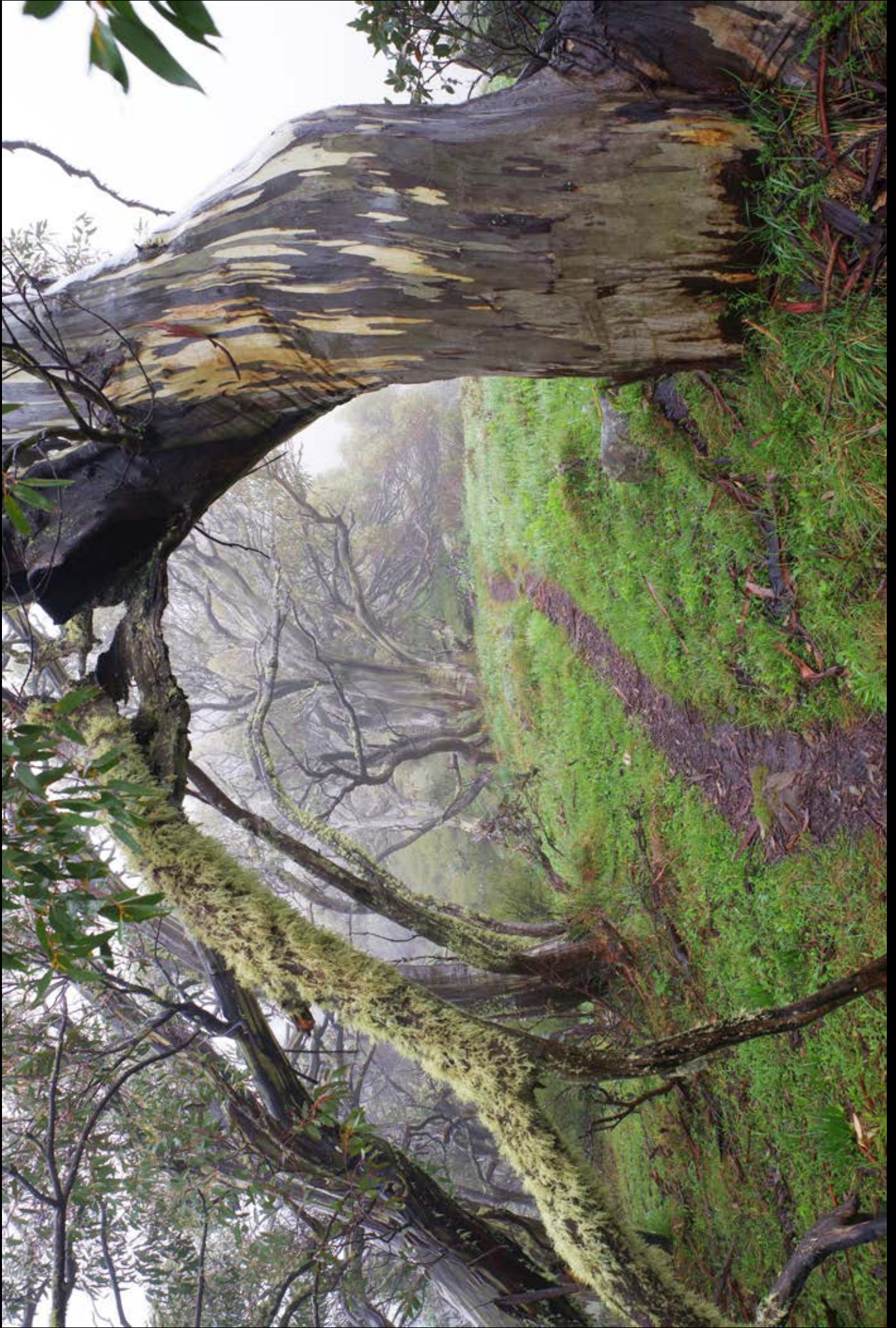
The four day trek involved crossing it twice, going out as far as Mount Speculation and the Razor before retracing the same path back. It is wonderful how a journey over the same path can seem so different due to changing weather.

There were no broader views at all on the way out, but the extensive fog made it a mystical journey of discovery with the wet and vibrant close-in vegetation and knife edge ridge line dropping into nothing.

The return journey was a great contrast with bright sunshine and extensive views all the way.



A leap of faith
John Walker



MUMC – 75 Years Old

Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (MUMC) was founded in October 1944, and is celebrating 75 years. The following describes some of the history of MUMC.

Navigator, grade 21, Grampians
Taner Kucukyuruk

MUMC – A brief history

David Hogg

Formation

The Melbourne University Mountaineering Club began its life at a meeting held on 9 October 1944 when World War II was still in progress. It was founded largely through the efforts of Niall Brennan, who was elected to the position of Secretary at the Club's first Annual General Meeting on 11 May 1945. Professor Thomas Cherry was elected as President and a formal Constitution was adopted.

With Australia recovering from the impacts of the war, the first couple of years of the club's life saw only a modest level of activity, but this changed in 1947 when Bill Bewsher joined the club. Due largely to the efforts of Professor Cherry and Bill Bewsher, in the next few years the Club was responsible for the introduction of organised rockclimbing to Victoria and played a key role, along with the Hobart Walking Club and the Geelong College Exploration Society, in opening up the Federation Peak area of Southwest Tasmania to bushwalking. It also initiated its annual 24 Hour Walk, and assumed an active role in the Federation of Victorian Walking

Clubs (now VicWalk), particularly in relation to establishing the Federation's search and rescue function at a time when the Victorian police force was limited in such expertise.

The 1950s and 1960s

During the mid-1950s, the level of adventurous activities declined, due in part to the introduction of compulsory National Service which occupied many club members during the summer vacation. That period nevertheless saw the first visits by club members to New Zealand for serious mountaineering, but also its first mountaineering tragedy when John Young, John Vidulich and John Hammond (a non-member) died while attempting a traverse of Mount Cook. One of the club's early New Zealand mountaineers, Faye Kerr, went on to become one of the world's most accomplished female mountaineers until her untimely death due to illness in India in 1980.

I joined MUMC in 1962, shortly before the club entered one of the most dynamic periods in its history. The Club had just acquired its first clubrooms, "Aikman's Road", a dingy basement beneath 21 Royal Parade, which became its centre of action for most of the 1960s and 1970s.



Climbing in Kyrgyzstan
Richard Bassett-Smith

The early 1960s saw a new crop of enthusiastic members join the club and embark on a number of ambitious projects to the benefit of both the club and the wider bushwalking and mountaineering community.

At that time the main social event of the year was the annual club dinner, a formal affair with toasts to the Queen, the club and absent friends, which carried over from the early days of the club. As the decade progressed, interest in the dinner declined and it was replaced by a dinner dance, held at a lively venue in the Dandenongs.

Another great tradition of the club which prevailed throughout the sixties was singing on club trips, either to break the monotony of a long van ride or around a large campfire in the days when firewood around campsites was plentiful and there were no regulations on its use. The most popular song was *La bella polenta*, a lively Italian folksong with accompanying actions.

By the start of the sixties, the annual 24 Hour Walk had become very competitive and there were many who awaited the next event with great enthusiasm. It was a natural progression for the club to take the leading role in establishing an intervarsity version of the event, and for the competitive urges of some members to be further satisfied when orienteering was first becoming established in Victoria, a process in which some club members played a significant role.

An exceptional characteristic of the club during the sixties was its enthusiasm for undertaking ambitious projects, including the publication of *Equipment for Mountaineering*



MUMC publications, 1974 and 1982

and the *Guide to the Victorian Alps*, both of which became best-sellers within the wider bushwalking community.

The most significant project of the 1960s was the building of **MUMC hut** on Mount Feathertop, conceived as a memorial to club members Doug Hatt and Russell Judge, who died on Mount Cook in January 1965. The hut was designed by Peter Kneen and its building involved a major effort by many club members who carried materials several kilometres to the site. The hut captured the imagination of a large proportion of the club's members and was truly an exciting project with which to be associated. Club bushwalking almost ceased while the hut was being built but was replaced by an experience which many participants long remembered and valued.



MUMC Hut
Luke Frisken

During the 1960s, the club expanded its activities from bushwalking, rockclimbing and the occasional caving trip to include alpine climbing, ski touring and canoeing. It extended the 24 Hour Walk concept to become an intervarsity "orienteering" competition (akin to contemporary rogaining) and several of its members were instrumental in the establishment of traditional orienteering in Victoria and Australia.

Conservation

Conservation issues began to attract the interest of club members, particularly the proposed flooding of Lake Pedder which was a popular destination for club members in summer. During the late 1960s and the 1970s, several club members became active in the affairs of the FVWC, holding office bearer or convenor positions and playing

key roles in establishing the Federation's newsletter, managing the Federation's Mount Feathertop hut project ([Federation Hut](#)), and organising a public rally in support of an alpine national park. It continued to play a major role in the Federation's search and rescue activities.



Federation Hut on Mount Feathertop
Jimmy Harris

During the 1960s, bushwalking was by far the dominant activity in the club, and an organised series of regular day or weekend walks was conducted, particularly during first and second terms when the pressure of end-of-year exams was not evident. Most of these trips were large, typically involving about 30 people, with transport by picnic van, which would pull up outside the front of the Union Building.

The other main club activity of the time was rockclimbing but, apart from the annual climbing course, most climbing trips were small, attracting the hard-core climbers and a few others committed to improving their climbing skills. Continuing the tradition of the earlier decades, climbing in the early sixties was focused particularly on the Cathedral Range, the Grampians and Hanging Rock, but in 1964 this changed when Mount Arapiles suddenly became Victoria's main climbing focus. Caving was a minor activity and, as the 1960s progressed, the club became involved in snow trips (including a basic alpine climbing course on Mount Feathertop), ski touring, canoeing and orienteering. In the summer vacation, the most popular destination was Tasmania, particularly the Cradle Mountain Reserve and the Southwest, where Lake Pedder prior to its flooding and Federation Peak were the main attractions.



Gondoliers on the Thompson River
Caitlyn Conway

The proposed flooding of Lake Pedder awakened the conservation interests of many club members, several of whom became involved with the newly formed Australian Conservation Foundation, whose headquarters were located a short distance up Royal Parade.

In summary, during the 1960s the club offered an enormous range of activities, projects and opportunities for external interaction. Most of its active members participated in a wide range of these. There were always new challenges emerging which attracted members to stay involved with the club and to contribute to it after their university days were over.

The 1970s

From the 1970s onwards, community interest in outdoor recreation began to increase rapidly, as did the number of clubs catering for this interest and the number of commercial organisations servicing the outdoor recreation market. Publications

which served the wider community were now being produced commercially and there was a declining role for the club in this area. Places such as Southwest Tasmania, which the club was instrumental in opening up, were now attracting many walkers, and no longer held the same aura of exploration. With long-distance travel becoming cheaper and easier, however, other opportunities in Australia and overseas were offering club members new sorts of adventures.

Most of the established activities in the club continued during its later decades, with occasional new ones added, such as canoe polo, canyoning and proactive conservation activities such as tree planting and threatened species surveys. Having provided the impetus for the establishment of rogaining by others during the 1970s, the annual 24 Hour Walk diminished in importance and was gone from the club's program by 1989. Throughout its later decades, the club remained one of the largest at the university and, despite peaks and troughs in some of its activities, continued to remain vibrant overall.

MUMC after university

For many of its members, MUMC has been much more than a recreational club that just provided a break from the routine of academic study. For some, the experiences through the club have been a major factor in supporting or even changing the direction of their future careers. Such experiences have also resulted in some members playing key roles in other related community organisations later in life. The friendships



The first of many first descents in the Marañón River, Muro Poso Canyon (lower), Peru
Isabel Clare Cornes

that began in the club frequently developed into family relationships or otherwise into lasting associations built largely around ongoing outdoor activities. The days of the club loom large in the memories of many of its former members and are kept alive by the reunion dinners which are conducted to mark the significant anniversaries of the club's founding.



Fireside at the 2017 annual MUMC Intro Trip
Gina Snelling

On the Origin of Species: Oxo Dale Thistlethwaite

This is an edited version of an article that appeared in the [October 2014](#) edition of *The Mountaineer*, the magazine of MUMC.



Oxo man

All good scientists need research assistants, and I am no exception. My research for this study relied on the vast network of internet enabled oxos to answer one of the more vexing questions facing our species who named it? By tradition, the right to name a

new species is given to the first scientific describer of the species. Is there lurking out there in history a Bob or Barbara Oxo? As it turns out - no.

I consulted older oxos and found some assumed that the name came from the stock cubes, deducing that early MUMC members had backcountry cooking tastes that leaned invariably towards beef. However, I could find no scientific precedent for naming a species after its primary food source and so this line of reasoning was quickly, and thankfully, discarded.



Oxo Don Fell noted that he and his companions had used Oxo as a greeting when encountering other like-minded parties in the bush or mountains, and also for testing echoes, distinguishing themselves from the far calls of unrefined walking clubs. Other oxos concurred that they had used Oxo as a call, raising the romantic possibility that our species was named after its song like the Kea or the More-pork.

But oxo Tony Kerr cited an early recollection of the use of oxo going back to a trip to Matlock, led by Professor Cherry. Members of the trip had been using the response "Ox!" as a frequent retort to certain comments and claims made by other members this puzzled the Professor for a while. Eventually he turned to one of the party members and asked: What does this Ox mean? "Well Prof, you know that an ox is like a bull? To which the professor replied "Oh, I see &"

So it seems we must conclude that oxos are likely to have been named after their bullshit detector and from ox to oxo, from a retort, to a slang word, to a call sign the exact circumstances of these transitions are not known. But somewhere along the way, from its use as a bush call, to its first recorded association in the sixties with the Tyrolean mountaineer silhouette who would be-come oxoman, oxo became our name.



Crossing the Beansburn River, the Five Passes hike, NZ
Danielle Andreasen-Cocker

Reflections on MUMC of the 1960s and 1970s

By Michael Feller

MUMC was above all an integral part of the all-round education a university was supposed to provide. MUMC greatly enriched one's social, intellectual, and even spiritual development. It allowed one to develop self-esteem and important life skills, particularly those related to physical fitness, wilderness survival, social survival, and spatial navigation. It even provided many people with life partners and careers. Why?

MUMC members were very friendly and accommodating. Within three years, this rather shy person had found a place at Melbourne Uni that he could call home and on whose committee he could serve. The club rooms were in a rather dingy basement of a house across from Melbourne Uni in Royal Parade - Aikmans Road. Dingy, but warm and friendly. Trips to impressive bush destinations, mostly wilderness, became the weekend norm. Transport for these trips was by furniture van, fitted with rows of seats that faced one another, allowing much conversation, much camaraderie, much singing, and much meeting of people. Many couples formed and MUMC became known in time as the Melbourne Uni Matrimonial Club. Building of the Feathertop hut and the NW Spur walking track took up a year of my life and became another great friend-building, physical fitness-developing (some of us tried to see who could carry the heaviest load up - loads of 50 kilograms were not uncommon), and socialising experience. Mount Feathertop became my shrine. Covering over 160 kilometres in a 24 hour walk was an additional highlight. All these experiences complemented the intellectual education experiences of the university. Today's university web-based degrees provide nothing remotely comparable and such a university "experience" is hugely impoverished by comparison.

After five years of post-graduate work in Canada, I returned to Melbourne Uni as a lecturer in the mid-seventies. Naturally, I became active again in MUMC. By then van trips had been replaced with private car trips, but the basic physical, social, aesthetic and

educational experience that MUMC provided remained intact and MUMC continued its function as a Melbourne Uni Matrimonial Club. A highlight of this period was the running of ski trips rather than the desperate snow walks of the sixties. Skiing was greatly preferable to wading through deep snow (perhaps another disappearing feature of the Victorian environment), accompanied by camping using marginal equipment – a groundsheet or lilo directly on the snow with a flimsy cool sleeping bag, having to get up at night and go for a walk to warm up.

Another highlight of this period was the exploration of wilderness gorges throughout Eastern Victoria – Little River, Snowy River, Bryces, Jamieson River, Genoa River, etc. This, together with the expansion of logging and fire access road construction throughout the remaining bush, the formation of the

Land Conservation Council and the push for the creation of an alpine national park, raised an awareness of the need to protect our remaining wilderness and opportunities for our forms of wilderness recreation. MUMC was at the forefront of bushwalker's wilderness conservation activities, I became the club's first conservation chair and, in 1979, it was mainly MUMC members who produced the first wilderness inventory for Victoria.

It is said that one's life expectancy is enhanced by having a strong group of friends. A large group of 1960s MUMC members continues to regularly meet today and enjoy mountaineering experiences together, even with replaced hips and knees! What more could one ask of a university club?



Rafting and canyoning, Marañón River, Peru, to help conserve one of the last undammed rivers in South America
Anja Fuechtbauer

MUMC 75 years on

Alex Hormann, current MUMC Secretary

Seventy-five years since inception, MUMC is still holding strong and seems incapable of being knocked down, though that's not to say there haven't been attempts. Those well acquainted with the club know of the fateful incident back in 2015 that led to a university ban on all of our rope sports (climbing, caving, canyoning and mountaineering), leaving a significant dint in what kinds of trips we were able to run. But with over 70 years of experience, we were not a club that would be knocked down easily.

Since then we have been on a determined path to prove we deserve the sports back, through even further improved safety measures and consultations with safety experts. We are glad to say that we have our much loved sport of rock-climbing back and we are focussing on re-establishing the sport and training a new generation of climbing leaders. The future is looking bright.

Controversy aside, our club seems to still continuously pull in hundreds of members annually thanks to our active sports of paddling and bushwalking, alongside new weekly nights of "Monday indoor climbing" and "Thursday board games". Every new member is amazed at our relatively new (as of 2013) clubrooms, which, when I first saw it two years ago, I could only describe it as an "outdoor sports Mecca". MUMC Hut got solar panels earlier this year, our archives are now nearly entirely digitised and our library is continuously expanding! Our annual midnight ascent trip to the club hut is still running, this year with the addition of one makeshift inflatable pool spa thanks to some nifty organisers and keen pack mules. Our new 75th anniversary edition of The Mountaineer is coming soon and our annual "Pie and Slide" competition night is sure to attract a new batch of amazing photographs.

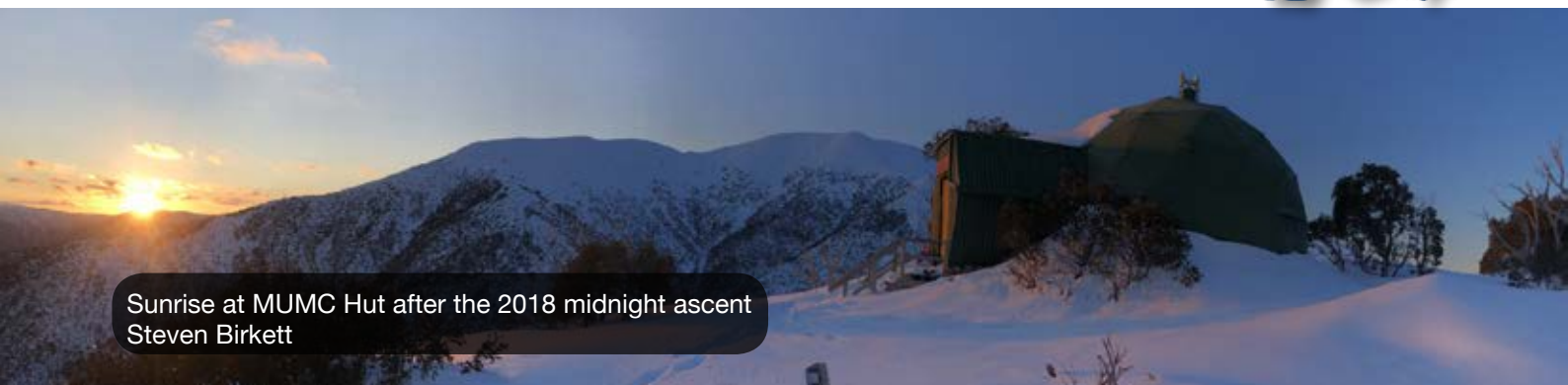
Even with the drama of the rope sports bans, keen senior members are still pushing the boundaries of what is possible within the sports. One only has to look at our past "Adventure Grant" winner's trip: where they kayaked across from Wilsons Promontory to northern Tasmania, setting up new climbing routes along the way in the Kent Island Group; to see that climbing within the club is far from dead. The thing about being knocked down is that there is only one direction to travel: back up. And if there is one thing the mountaineering club is good at, it's climbing up things! The current future goals of the club is to regain and rebuild our rope sports and to further correspond with and build relationships with intervarsity outdoors clubs.

The current access and conservation issue of climbing bans within Grampians National Park is also at the forefront of our minds as we continue to provide a leading voice in discussions on how to approach the topic. The club is looking good, both literally in our shiny new clubrooms and figuratively. We're looking forward to another great 75 years!

As for me? When I first joined the club two years ago, to somebody who had little experience in the outdoors it looked almost too good to be real. It provided me with experiences I thought I could never achieve in university. I have tried and enjoyed nearly every sport the club has to offer (except for mountaineering, but soon that will be ticked off the list as well) and gained amazing friends, amazing memories and skills in outdoor survival and leadership. Though the club has, and will always have, a large proportion of members who are "superficial"; for a number of us the club means much more than just a means for outdoor adventure. I consider the clubrooms my second home and MUMC my second family and I look forward to seeing through the future of the club.



Sunrise at MUMC Hut after the 2018 midnight ascent
Steven Birkett






Thunder Canyon after emerging from Claustal Canyon, Blue Mountains
Luke Frisken

Hearing, Seeing: Nature and Artificial Environments

Karen Allen, SoundProject 2019



We travel long distances to immerse ourselves in nature, far from our urban habitats. We see much and hear a little, then return refreshed. When we bring creatures from nature into our urban world, they see a little, hear the unfamiliar. Can recorded natural soundscape help them? Karen Allen shares her experience trekking in Nevada's Valley of Fire state park, and introduces the San Francisco-based SoundProject2019 pilot project that is betting on native sounds as a low cost and high impact quality of life improvement.

Moon rising over the Valley of Fire
Connie Combs

Nevada's [Valley of Fire](#) is about two hours drive north-east of Las Vegas. Trekking here includes practical survival considerations: summer daytime temperatures can exceed 45 °C. Sudden thunderstorms and flash floods sometimes submerge trails in the dry desert river washes. There are rattlesnakes and scorpions. But none of that should be beyond the skillset for an Aussie bushwalker, should it?

A place so dramatically visual

The park is named for red rock formations, imbued with oxidized iron, known as [Aztec sandstone](#). The *Valley of Fire* moniker describes an incredible visual blaze when the sun shines off these rocks, especially at a low angle of sun early or late in the day. The color is more vivid than a camera can grasp for a viewer's eye. Toward dusk, the visual effect in the park is beyond otherworldly, with the dusty green colors of sage and brush gently glowing as if lit from within, in sharp contrast to broad washes of red sand. It looks like an altered landscape from a sci-fi movie set.

Humans are a visual species, other creatures not so much

These pictures and words engage our visual imagination. People evolved in a way that prioritized vision. Our eyes have a high biological priority. As complex structures, eyes use about one third as much oxygen as our much larger and far more active hearts. Our vision communicates our external world to [the brain](#).

Unlike us, most native creatures in the Valley of Fire and elsewhere tend to be far less vision dominant. Many species evolved to prioritize sound, which is reliable in dusk and dark as well as daytime. Sound works when standing on a hilltop or when hiding under a rock. These creatures communicate with their external world through a soundscape.

Compared to people, they hear far wider ranges of frequency, and pick up sounds much [further away](#). Interestingly, lizards have the most specific directionality of sound detection of any terrestrial species that [has been studied](#).



People go bushwalking, creatures get collected

We leave our urban habitats to [enjoy natural spaces](#) like the Valley of Fire. We step away from urban environments that create a level of artificial stress for us, sometimes finding that modern civilization and its sensory thumbprint accompanies us with sounds of [airplanes or cars](#). We seek out natural, undisturbed places. We return refreshed.

In our nature explorations, we find creatures that intrigue us. Humans have been domesticating animal species or keeping pets for an estimated 11,000 years, often to their [advantage](#). We choose amazing representatives of nature for our homes, shops and public spaces. We bring them into the same urban environments that create varying levels of stress for us. We create artificial habitats for these animals that have potential stressors for them.

Animals in silence and noise: animal bioacoustics

The emerging field of animal bioacoustics evaluates (among other things) the stresses of silence or urban sounds for enclosed animals. Silence is an unnatural state for creatures that interpret the world through sound. In nature, a temporary, brief silence tends to happen in the presence of a threatening predator. In all other circumstances, the soundscape includes familiar activity, life and weather of the surrounding environment.

As an example, imagine a pet bearded dragon in a large aquarium, open in the front to view the lounge in a home. Glass surfaces of the tank reflect sound easily, which does not happen in nature. While the family is away work and school, the house is silent.

During the evening or weekend, the room has sounds of television, music, conversation and household chores. Neither silence nor urban home sounds are "normal" for the animal. Both the absence of native biological sounds and the presence of non-native sounds create stress.

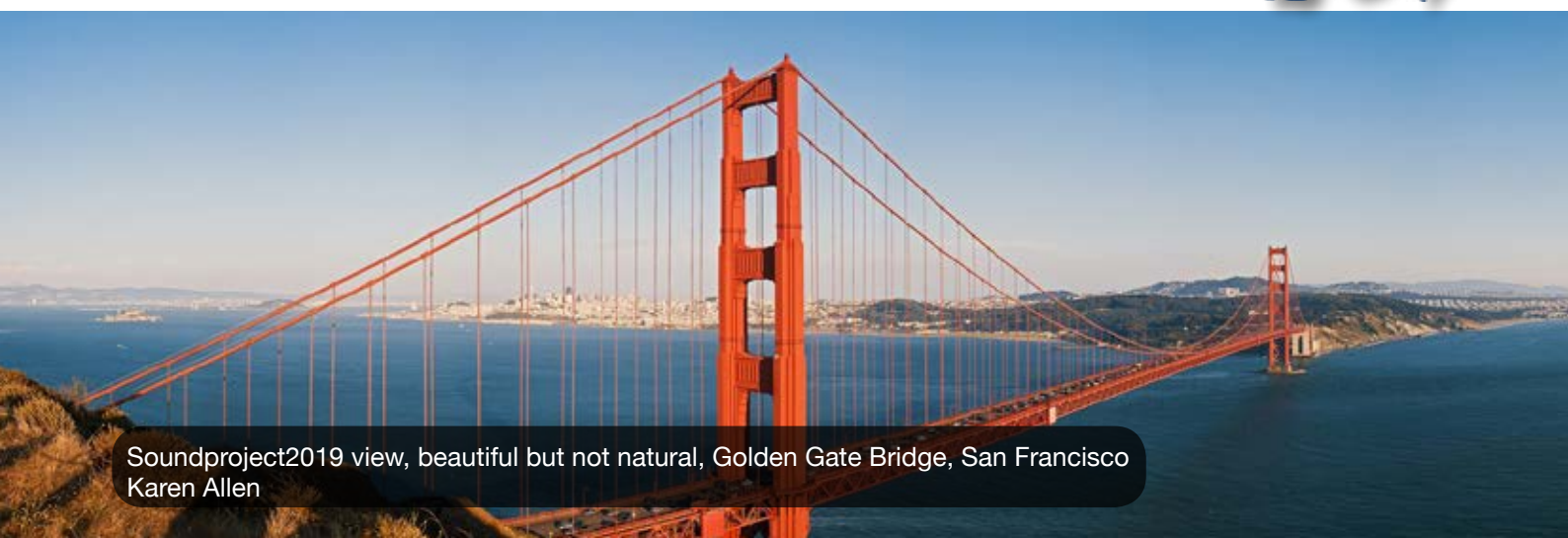
SoundProject2019

For the wide variety of animals kept by people - livestock, pets, inhabitants of zoos and research labs - this element of soundscape is a priority to explore and improve. Preliminary research has shown that captive animals hearing natural sounds have better health, improved reproduction, [less unnatural behavior](#).

Natural soundscape appears to be one of the most readily available tools to improve the quality of animal enclosures. In a pilot study, the San Francisco-based SoundProject2019 team is evaluating the biologically measurable indicators of health for three types of reptiles with acute hearing: salamanders, bearded dragons, and green iguanas. Through the use of recordings of native soundscapes, the sound element of a natural environment will be introduced to an otherwise foreign animal enclosure. Comparisons between sound-enriched and silent environments will provide guidelines for improving the quality of life for these and other of nature's creatures in our care.

Bushwalker involvement in SoundProject 2019

As part of SoundProject 2019, bushwalkers are needed to record sounds. Payment is A\$75-150 and depends on the length of the recording. On Bushwalk.com there is a [topic](#) on this, and you can contact me at soundproject2019@gmail.com.



In the News

Upgraded Mount Strzelecki walking track

After severe damage caused by erosion, the track has been upgraded. The project works are complete and the track is now open to the public.

Improved Park Pass System for Tasmanian National Parks

From 1 May 2020, Tasmanian national parks will have a [new park pass system](#).

Injured bushwalker got rescued

Brisbane Bushwalkers hiking guide Neil Parker fell down a six metre waterfall, fracturing his leg and wrist. After two days of crawling he finally [got rescued](#).



Climate Change is Bringing a New World of Bushfires

Dale Dominey-Howes



Spring has barely arrived, and bushfires are burning [across Australia's eastern seaboard](#). More than 50 fires are currently burning in New South Wales, and some 15,000 hectares have burned in Queensland since late last week.

It's the first time Australia has seen such strong fires this early in the bushfire season. While fire is a normal part of Australia's yearly cycle and no two years are alike, what we are seeing now is absolutely not business as usual.

And although these bushfires are not directly attributable to climate change, our rapidly warming climate, driven by human activities, is exacerbating every risk factor for more frequent and intense bushfires.

The basics of a bushfire

For some bushfire 101, a bushfire is "an uncontrolled, non-structural fire burning in grass, scrub, bush or forest". This means the fire is in vegetation, not a building (non-structural), and raging across the landscape – hence, uncontrolled.

For a bushfire to get started, several things need to come together. You need fuel, low humidity (which also often means the fuel itself has a low moisture content and is easier to burn), and oxygen. It also helps to have an unusually high ambient temperature and winds to drive the fire forward.

In Australia, we divide bushfires into **two types** based on the shape and elevation of the landscape.

First are flat grassland bushfires. These are generally fast-moving, fanned by winds blowing across flattish open landscapes, and burn through an area in 5–10 seconds and may smoulder for a few minutes. They usually have low to medium intensity and can damage to crops, livestock and buildings. These fires are easy to map and fight due to relatively straightforward access.

Second are hilly or mountainous bushfires. These fires are slower-moving but much more intense, with higher temperatures. As they usually occur in forested, mountainous areas, they also have more dead vegetation to burn and are harder to access and fight.

They burn slowly, passing through an area in 2-5 minutes and can smoulder for days. Fires in upper tree canopies move very fast. Mountainous bushfires actually speed up as they burn up a slope (since they heat and dry out the vegetation and atmosphere in front

of the fire, causing a runaway process of accelerating fire movement).

Climate change and bushfire risk

To be clear, [as previously reported](#), the current bushfires are not specifically triggered by climate change.

However, as bushfire risk is highest in warm to hot, dry conditions with low humidity, low soil and fuel load moisture (and are usually worse during El Niño situations) – all factors that climate change in Australia affects – climate change is [increasing the risk of more frequent and intense bushfires](#).

[Widespread drought conditions](#), very low humidity, higher than average temperatures in many places, and strong westerly winds driven by a [negative Southern Annular Mode](#) (all made worse by human-induced climate change) have collided right now over large areas of the eastern seaboard, triggering extremely unusual bushfire conditions – certainly [catching many communities unawares](#) before the start of the official bushfire season.

Different regions of Australia have traditionally experienced peak bushfire weather at different times. This has meant that individual households, communities and the emergency services have had specific periods of the year to prepare. These patterns now seem to be breaking down, and bushfires are happening outside these regular places and times.



Map of bushfire seasons
Source: [Bureau of Meteorology](#)

New challenges for the emergency services

While experts recently [forecast](#) a worse-than-average coming bushfire season, the current emergency has essentially exploded out of nowhere.

Many Australian communities do know how to prepare but there is always [some apathy](#) at the start of bushfire season around getting households and communities bushfire-ready. When it's still relatively cold and feeling like the last whisps of winter are still affecting us, bushfire preparation seems very far off.

“... bushfire preparation seems very far off.”

Compounding our worsening bushfire conditions, we are increasingly building in [bushfire-prone areas](#), exposing people and homes to fire. This tips the scales of risk further in favour of catastrophic losses. Sadly too, these risks always disproportionately affect the [most vulnerable](#).

With such extensive fires over wide areas, the current emergency points to an extremely frightening future possibility: [that emergency services become more and more stretched](#), responding to fires, floods, storms, tropic cyclones and a myriad other natural hazards earlier in each hazard season, increasingly overlapping.

“... making sure local communities are involved in actively planning for emergencies.”

Our emergency services do an amazing job but their resources and the energy of their staff and volunteers can only go so far.

Regularly the emergency services of one area or state are deployed to other areas to help respond to emergencies.

But inevitably, we will see large-scale disasters occurring simultaneously in multiple territories, making it impossible to share resources. Our emergency management workforce report they are already [stressed and overworked](#), and losing the capacity to share resources will only exacerbate this.

Immediate challenges will be to continue funding emergency management agencies across the nation, ensuring the workforce has the [necessary training and experience](#) to [plan and respond](#) to a range of complex emergencies, and making sure local communities are involved in actively planning for emergencies.



Dale Dominey-Howes

Professor of Hazards and Disaster Risk Sciences, University of Sydney

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 10 September 2019.





Mount Eadley Stoney from The Bluff, Alpine NP
Ian Foletta

Spring is in the air

Sonya Muhlsimmer

Now the weather is warming up it is time to pack the skis away and dust off the hiking boots. It is the perfect weather to get back into hiking. Oh, and it is a great time to get back into those wet canyons that are too cold to do in winter. The days are longer and the nights are warmer. This is the time to start thinking about where the next multi-day hike will be, then thinking about completing the next part of the Great North Walk – I am half way through as I am completing the walk in sections. There is so much to plan and look forward to in spring from day hikes, multi-day hikes and canyons galore, bring it on. So in planning for quick getaways, I have been trying out a few recipes lately in the dehydrator and starting to build a collection up, so when I get the opportunity to go walkabout for a few days, the food is ready to go. Enough reading already, I will see you out there!

The rock climb exit out of Butterbox Canyon, Mount Hay, Blue Mountains, NSW

Chilli Con Carne – the Vegan Version

One way to spice up the night is with a big bowl of chilli con carne. This dish is pretty versatile as you can serve it with some mountain bread, rice, cous cous or even some corn chips if you want to carry them, and it is really healthy for you. Kidney beans are packed full of carbs, protein, fibre, magnesium, iron, potassium, folate and lots of other really good stuff. Black beans, or otherwise known as turtle beans are also packed full of carbs, protein, fibre as well and calcium, magnesium, iron and zinc just to name a few minerals. So if you have chilli con carne with mince, make sure you add the beans. Oh, by the way, if you are going to dehydrate this dish make sure you buy the beans already cooked in a tin. The tinned beans rehydrate much better than if you were to prepare dried beans yourself. When I first did this recipe I soaked the dried beans then cooked them and used them in the recipe, then dehydrated the meal. But when it came to rehydrating the meal I found the beans were quite crunchy. The next time I cooked this recipe I used the tinned beans and they worked a treat. This quantity will serve around three to four meals, depending how hungry you are.

At home preparation

Soak the lentils in 1 cup of water for 10 minutes, drain and soak again for 10 minutes, then drain again. Drain and rinse the cans of beans. Chop the onion and garlic and fry in the oil. Add the spices to the fry pan and fry for 2 minutes. Add the water, vegetable stock, lentils and beans and cook for about 5 minutes. Now add the tin tomato, tomato paste and coconut sugar and simmer for about 20 to 25 minutes. Dehydrate according to your dehydrator's specification. Place the dehydrated meal in a container to condition for a few days then pack in a bag.



Method at camp

Bring a pot of water to the boil. The amount of water depends on how big the serving size is. Add the dehydrated mix to the water, cover and let sit for around 10 minutes till the meal is rehydrated.

Bag 1 (chilli mix)

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Oil | 2 Tbsp |
| Onion | 1 each |
| Garlic | 2 cloves |
| Ground cumin | 11 Tbsp |
| Ground coriander | 11 Tbsp |
| Paprika | 1 tsp |
| Ground cinnamon | 1 tsp |
| Ground oregano | 2 tsp |
| Chilli | ¼ to ½ tsp – depending on how hot you want it |
| Salt, pepper | Few pinches |
| Tomato paste | 1 cup |
| Vegetable stock | 2 tsp |
| Red lentils | 1 cup |
| Tin kidney beans | 400 g |
| Tin black beans | 400 g |
| Tin tomato | 400 g |
| Coconut sugar or brown sugar | 1 Tbsp |

Water

3 cups for cooking
2 cups for soaking lentils

Chick Pea and Potato Curry

This is a similar, but different dish than the chilli con carne. They both contain lots of spices and are based on legumes. Chick peas are a legume which are high in fibre, protein and lots of minerals and vitamins, very similar to the kidney beans and black beans. This curry is an aromatic dish that will have your neighbours popping over and wanting to try out your cooking, it smells delicious, and tastes good too. Just make sure you cook enough for everyone and you have ready some naan, mango chutney, cucumber raita and some pappadams as they would really compliment this dish. Again with the chick peas, or otherwise known as garbanzo beans, make sure you buy the tinned variety. A very hearty and healthy dish, enjoy! Again, this quantity will serve around 3 to 4 meals, depending how hungry you are.

At home preparation

Drain and rinse the tin of chick peas. Peel and dice the potato. Chop the onion and garlic and fry in the oil. Add the spices to the fry pan and fry for 2 minutes. Add the water, vegetable stock, potato and chick peas and cook for about 5 minutes. Now add the tin of tomato, sugar and coconut milk and simmer for about 20 to 25 minutes. Dehydrate according to your dehydrator's specification. Place the dehydrated meal in a container to condition for a few days then pack in a bag.

Method at camp

Bring a pot of water to the boil. The amount of water depends on how big the serving size is. Add the dehydrated mix to the water, cover and let sit for around 10 minutes till the meal is rehydrated.



Bag 1 (Chick Pea and Potato Curry mix)

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Oil | 2 Tbsp |
| Onion | 1 each |
| Garlic | 2 cloves |
| Ground ginger | 1 tsp |
| Ground coriander | 1 Tbsp |
| Garam masala | 1 Tbsp |
| Ground cumin | 1 Tbsp |
| Curry powder | 1 Tbsp |
| Ground cinnamon | 1 tsp |
| Chilli | 1 tsp |
| Salt, pepper | Few pinches |
| Vegetable stock | 2 tsp |
| Coconut sugar or brown sugar | 1 Tbsp |
| Tin chick peas | 400 g |
| Tin tomato | 400 g |
| Potato | 1 medium size |
| Coconut milk | 270 ml – small tin |

Water - 2 cups for cooking



Bushwalk Australia



Going the Distance

- > Mount Wills to Mount Bogong
- > Hume & Hovell Walking Track
- > Walk of Wonders
- > Energy needs



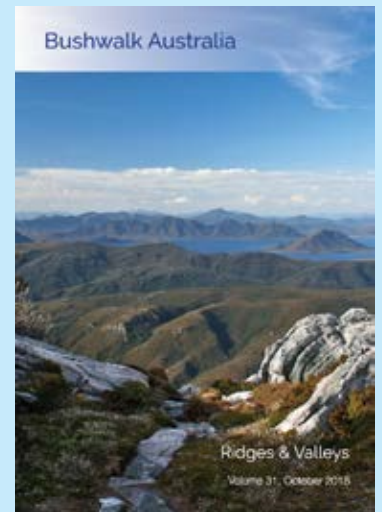
Higher Places

- > Australian Alps Walking Track
- > Tassie Winter Trip
- > Our High Country Lore
- > Vegan Food



Peak Promenade

- > Pindars Peak, Southern Ranges
- > Cordilleras in Peru
- > Brothers Point, Scotland
- > Staying hydrated on bushwalks



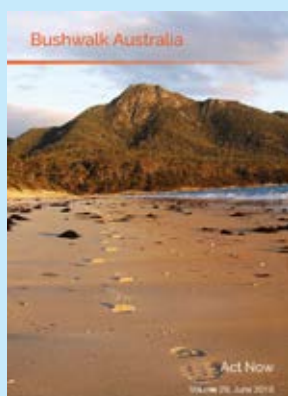
Ridges & Valleys

- > Buffalo, The Bluff and Mt McDonald
- > Skiing with the Bobs
- > Dehydrated meals for your trip



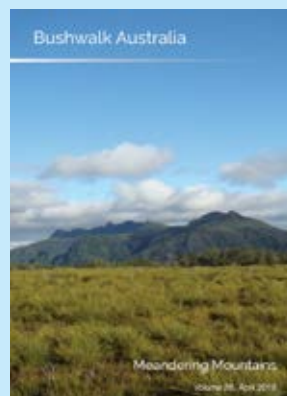
Ambling Adventures

- > An Abel challenge
- > Pack hauling
- > Sleeping mats



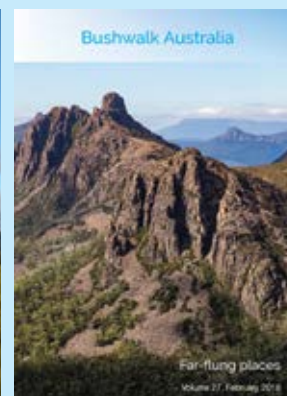
Act Now

- > Viking Circuit
- > A blogger's journey
- > Overland Track



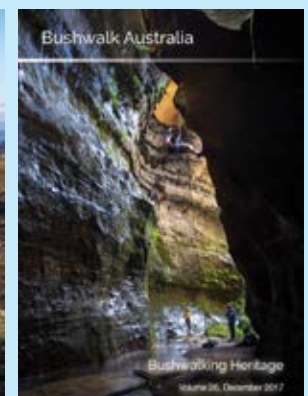
Meandering Mountains

- > D'Alton Peaks, Grampians
- > Three mighty peaks
- > Sleeping bags



Far-flung Places

- > 10 reasons to hike the PCT
- > The Spires via Holley Basin
- > From hiker to Globewalker



Bushwalking Heritage

- > Kidmans Hut Walk
- > Conquering the Giant
- > Dam madness



Discover & Explore

- > The Great River Walk
- > Mount Triglav, Slovenia



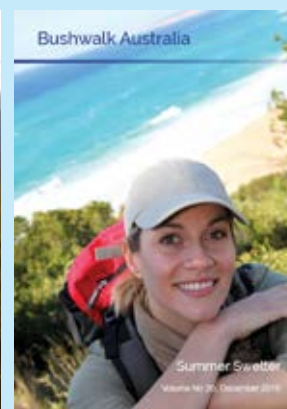
Wandering the World

- > 10 reasons to Hike The PCT
- > The Spires via Holley Basin



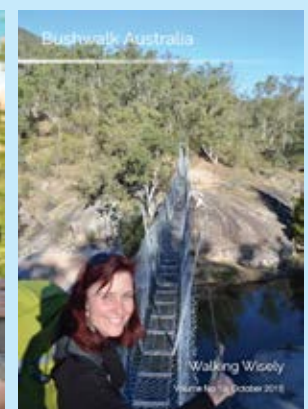
Longer and Wilder

- > The Western Arthurs
- > Bibbulmun Track



Summer Swelter

- > Desert Discovery Walk
- > Sun clothing



Walking Wisely

- > Six Foot Track
- > Choosing a GPS