

Bushwalk Australia



Hills & Valleys

Volume 38, December 2019

Bushwalk Australia Magazine
An electronic magazine for
bushwalk.com
Volume 38, December 2019

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



Camping high has its rewards -
Crepuscular rays over Pokana Peak
MJD

Editor
Matt McClelland
matt@bushwalk.com

Design manager
Eva Gomišček
eva@wildwalks.com

Sub-editor
Stephen Lake
stephen@bushwalk.com

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

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

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

The copy deadline for the
February 2020 edition is
31 December 2019.

Warning

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

The publisher, editor, authors or any other entity or person will not be held responsible for any loss, injury, claim or liability of any kind resulting from people using information in this publication.

Please consider joining a walking club or undertaking formal training in other ways to ensure you are well prepared for any activities you are planning. Please report any errors or omissions to the editor or in the forum at BWA eMag.

Evening wonder
Louise Fairfax

6

Orange Bluff via
Great Stony Mountain
[Best resting spot](#)

12

Two State 8 peaks
[Two of the highest peaks in Australia](#)

18

Sassafras to Wog Wog
[The Budawangs - where you can get lost in time](#)

24

Grose Valley
[A bushwalk in Blue Mountains](#)

26

Photo Gallery
[Get to know this amazing country](#)

Competition: Tasmania December 2015

44

Walking on fire

Do you have a survival plan?

50

Hand hygiene in the bush

Dirty hands can cause serious issues

53

Tjorita

A poem from central Australia

54

What Happens When Magnetic North and True North Align?

58

Malbena - appeal

An update on the Malbena issue

From the Editor

Hi,

I hope this edition finds you well.

It has been a few months of extreme weather. In Tassie, Lake St Clair saw the hottest October day on record. Then in November, there was a significant amount of snow on the Overland Track with many rescues to help walkers not coping with the conditions. Sydney had its first Catastrophic Fire Danger day ever, in spring. As I write this, more than 2% of NSW has burnt, and it's not summer yet. All Australian states and territories have experienced fires that have devastated communities. Meanwhile, there is fresh snow falling at Thredbo, dust storms blowing across multiple places, flooding and damaging winds.

Spring really did sprung. The forecast for summer is for hotter and drier conditions than normal. Let's hope the forecast is wrong.

Climate change is starting to have impact on many aspects of our lives, and our world of bushwalking is also affected. Australia is a big place and always has been home to fire and floods, but they are getting bigger and more frequent.

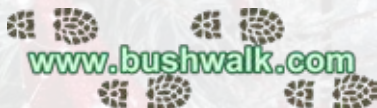
I hope you enjoy this edition, a bunch of interesting walks and articles to help you find and enjoy your next adventure.

Have a great summer, stay safe.

Happy walking
Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
matt@bushwalk.com



Declaration

The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my associations within the outdoor community. In many cases I approached the authors of the articles included in this edition and suggested the topics. The opinions stated in articles are those of the authors and not of those involved in the production of this edition. The authors are mostly people I know through Bushwalk.com. I operate Bushwalk.com and Wildwalks.com and have written several walking guide books, published by Woodslane, I have also written for Great Walks. I contract part time to National Parks Association NSW on an ongoing basis to coordinate their activities program. I have had a partnership with NPWS NSW and have hosted advertising for *Wild* magazine. I have also partnered with a large number of other organisations in environmental campaigns and have a regular bushwalking segment on ABC regional radio. There is some commercial advertising through the magazine. I have probably forgotten something - if you are worried about transparency please either write to me or raise the issue on Bushwalk.com.

Videos

Bushwalking and fire

Exploring tracks and trails during summer (and now also spring) can be risky. Please ensure you plan ahead and thoroughly prepare before your bushwalk, and check fire alerts regularly for the latest fire information. Here's a video by [DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service](#).



Bushfires in Australia seen by satellite

The current fires in Australia are so huge, they're visible from space, as can be seen on [Space Videos](#).



Orange Bluff Via Great Stony Mountain

Rob Wildman



Orange Bluff has been deservedly described as one of the best resting spots in the Kanangra Boyd National Park. A full day's walk from the famous Kanangra Walls, it is a classic river flood plain stretching some 100 metres along a rare grassy bank of the Kowmung River and overlooked by an imposing but beautiful orange sandstone cliff stretching up to the start of the ridge on the other side. Our walk involved retracing a much earlier one along the same route, but things went a little differently to the last time.

The steps to the Walls
All pictures by Rob Wildman

Over the top

As we rolled over the crest of the Great Stony Mountain and headed down what I thought was the simple ridge to the Kowmung River at the bottom of the hill, we suddenly came upon a jumble of rocks where I couldn't see over the lip. I'm used to "features" like this not appearing on topographic maps, but where did this cliff line come from? It was now nearly 4:30 pm on the shortest day of the year and that meant only one thing – it would be dark very soon and we were still a long way from the bottom.

I hadn't walked in this part of the Kanangra wilderness for quite a while but the planned route was mostly on tracks and my memories of walking in this area involved long mostly clear ridges which descended to a river somewhere. As with all memories, the good bits stuck and the other bits were always eclipsed by the memory of a wonderful camp site at the end. I had forgotten that in the past I had nearly always walked in this area in September or October where the daylight lasts till well after 6 pm.

In proposing a walk like this, I was, I suppose, attempting to be everything to everyone. I love to invite new people out into wilderness areas such as Kanangra and this time I had asked two people, Joan and Steffen, with whom I had never done an

extended walk, to come along. This could have been a big risk. I had also cherished memories of this area from long ago and, feeling my age, had a desire to get into it while I still could. As well, I had decided, after campaigning recently on some environmental issues around the election, I would try to make a video explaining how national parks should not be taken for granted, ever.

Could I possibly include all these wishes in the one walk?

I had planned to take the group out to the Walls, down past the Coal Seam Cave and Cottage Rock, turn right toward Bullhead Mountain, swinging off at its summit and crossing over Great Stony Mountain, down a ridge which hovers over the Bulga Denis Canyon and on to meet the Kowmung only about a kilometre from Orange Bluff. On the map, this is about 11 kilometres.

I had actually done this walk some 30 years ago with another friend and it was the first walk I had attempted to go off track. I still remember the thrill and the fear of heading through the bush being guided only by a compass. I had no recollections of this off track section being particularly difficult so I treated the walk as a casual stroll in the mountains, suggesting it was only going to be a 4-5 hour downhill romp. First mistake!



Soaking up the views before heading down

How it unfolded

Rounding up Michelle and Steffen in Sydney's inner west, we drove out to meet Joan at Glenbrook and then on up to Oberon and Kanangra. Stopping only at Blackheath for a quick coffee, we arrived at the Kanangra car park at about 11 am. We bustled around checking all the gear inclusions and exclusions and making sure we had all the food and essentials. There had been a lot of borrowing of gear and lots of bags with the "just-in-case" material as there always is at the start of these ventures. When we set out at 11.25 am everyone looked like they did this sort of thing every weekend.

We made quick time down to the Walls lookout and took the southern branch of the track over Mount Maxwell and down off the Murrarang Tops to the Coal Seam Cave for lunch. There was very little water in the famous plastic tank and no dripping off the overhang which indicated that this area was still in a very dry spell. Flying past Cottage Rock, we took the turnoff for Bullhead mountain and within 300 metres we had fallen into the trap of taking the wrong ridge, climbing back up and reorienting ourselves on the correct one. There are a number of false leads off this ridge and we had done what many others had done before.

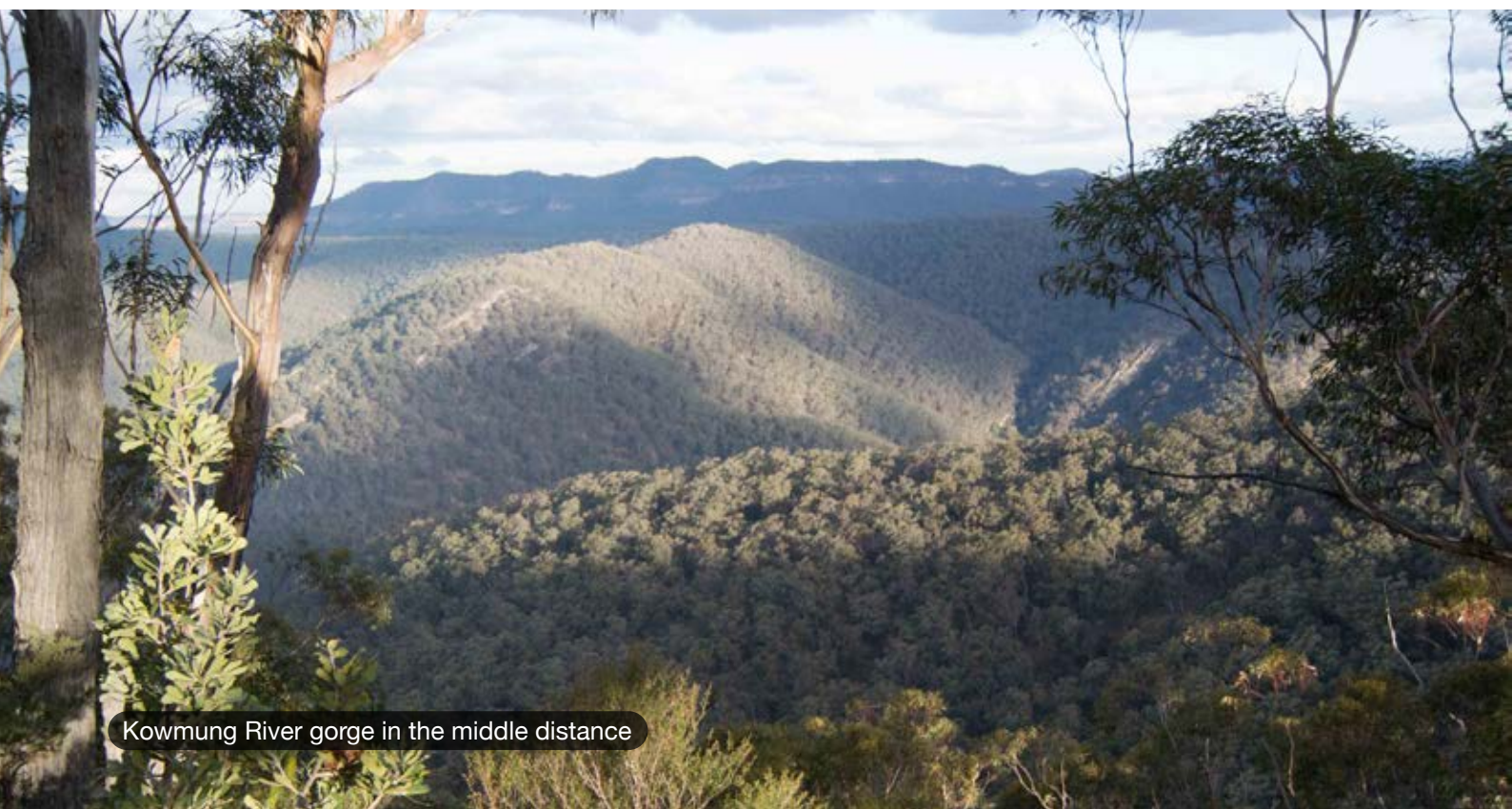
“There are a number of false leads off this ridge ...”

The trek down to Bullhead is a long affair going down and up over several rocky points in the ridge, but after about one and a quarter hours we figured we were at the point where we needed to launch off. Here the bush is light and we made quick progress to the edge of the mountain and saw our route across the saddle to Great Stony Mountain. Dropping down to the saddle was precarious and the scramble up Great Stony was steep and slow. Did I say I had forgotten how hard this was?

We crested and then found the correct ridge on the other side. This rolls gently down to a pinnacle which opens up a vista of the river far below and in the distance along the river, Orange Bluff. Now this is where it got interesting. Here the hill just disappears. You can see the ridge you need to be on but there doesn't appear to be a way down.

At this point we did exactly as I had done some 30 years before – we veered off to the left onto another less steep ridge where the going was a little easier. But unlike the earlier time, we kept heading down the same ridge. I realised later, when looking closely at the topo, we had previously traversed back onto the correct ridge and came up to some magnificent views of the canyon below.

Going down rough, flinty, scrappy hillsides is not in Michelle's list of likes so we had to drag her along to what she must have



Kowmung River gorge in the middle distance

thought was certain death. Everyone was getting tired and it was now nearly 4:30 pm with sunset about to happen. The bush on the ridge thickened just as we started to hit some steeper sections and we couldn't see ahead, fearful of ending on a hidden cliff or dropping into a ravine.

We just needed to get down. We sidled into what appeared to be a dry creek bed as the head torches came out. Somehow, there was a new level of calm about the situation we were in. We all just settled down to the task of making sure everyone was safe and getting to the river together with no accidents. The bush thinned out a little as we got further down but creeper vines kept tripping us all and just increasing the frustration. How far did we need to go? We couldn't see further than the headlight allowed so we had no idea how far up the hill we were. The blind bush bashing went on for about the next 1.5 hours until we finally found ourselves in a kind of no-return slippery dip, sliding down some 20 metres to land on the first flat land we had seen for some time.

We had landed in the dry Bullhead creek bed but we still didn't have a clue as to how far the river was away. The creek twisted and turned down a tight valley until after nearly an hour we broke out onto the Kowmung proper. I know this must have been extraordinarily frightening for some of the group who negotiated gingerly each slippery slope to the to the next dry waterhole.

Where to stop?

My memory of this junction told me that we would have to wade across the river to get out of the creek mouth, so I had told everyone to be ready to get wet. Poor Steffen, who had no experience of this dry continent and its lack of water, had visions of a chest deep river much like what he was used to back in Denmark. He was a little concerned, understandably, especially trying to do this in the black of a moonless night. As it turned out, the whole river topography had changed and we just walked out onto a dry rocky river bed, incredibly relieved to be there.

So now do we go on to Orange Bluff or stay where we were? The decision was quick particularly as it was approaching 7:30 pm and I had no memory how good or bad negotiating the river would be.

Across the river was a flood plain overflow and this provided a fabulous level camping spot. After clean warm clothes, lamb curry and Persian rice, a cigar and a shot of whisky, all we could manage was crashing into beautiful warm sleeping bags.

The exit

The next morning was grey and overcast and it had started to spit. With the prospect of the day being a lot easier we didn't actually care about the rain. The short trip down to Orange Bluff turned out to be all out of the river as there are banks on either side with grassy tops. Too easy.



Morning on the unexpected flood plain of the Kowmung

Orange Bluff, when we arrived there, turned out to be as beautiful a camp spot as I had remembered it and so we devoured the thought of what a night here would have been like.

The return trip up Brumby Ridge was uneventful, just endless up with the first section being the most arduous. We all settled in and plodded our way to the First Top, arriving about three hours after we had started. The rain had held off for most of this section but as we got higher the temperature dropped quickly and each slight breath of a westerly wind reminded us that it was winter and we were in Kanangra.

The height gain on the second day was about 840 metres which is quite a climb, not quite in the league of the 1800 metre Hannells Spur, but a hard day anyway. We ended up taking about 6¼ hours to do the whole thing so we were ready for a short stop at the kiosk at Jenolan Caves. The leg muscles were now like Plasticine and when we stopped at the Caves, we all hobbled across the road to the cafe, like geriatric cowboys. And the cafe was about to close so no hot food. The growling waitress behind the bar upstairs, who poured our drinks belligerently, made sure we were not going to outstay our welcome any time soon.

I got very little imagery recorded and nothing about the conservation fights which had been so much on my mind before the walk. I guess I had been concentrating on the wrong things again! The funny thing is though, now that the first day is well behind us, there was

a kind of re-assurance that we actually did well in getting down to the river all in one piece. Wrapped up in the little puddles of light that were our torch beams, the bush was somehow comforting and safe, allowing us, this time, to celebrate our success.



Rob is 66 and is based in Sydney. He has been bushwalking since the age of twelve, when he was dragged up The Castle and into a casual love affair with the bush. For years his stomping grounds were the Budawangs, Blue Mountains and Kanangra but Tasmania and the Snowies have been poking their nose in for a while. He often tries out poor unsuspecting first timers on impossible routes but somehow always makes it back to safety. Well, there was that one time with the helicopter ... For Rob, going bush is where the rejuvenation of the senses and the intimacy with nature always happens.



Stefan, Joan and Michelle at the end of the walk



Two State 8 Peaks

Rob Collins



Climbing the highest peak in each Australian state or territory is a challenge many people take on. The peaks are listed on [State 8 website](#). In May and September 2019 I climbed two of these peaks.

At the top of Mount Woodroffe
All pictures by Rob Collins

Mount Woodroffe, South Australia

In May 2019 I went on the annual [SEIT trip](#) to climb Mount Woodroffe, the highest peak in South Australia. There were 15 guests on the trip and everyone was on a State8 quest of some kind - why else would you climb such an obscure mountain? SEIT only run the trip once a year and cap it at 25 guests (or 15, as they use 10-seat offroad buses). You need to book well in advance through their travel agent [Diverse Travel](#). I asked a few of the tour guides if the trip was an annual pain in the butt, or something they looked forward too - the answer was universal that it was a major highlight and something the SEIT team all tried hard to get on to.

We were picked up in a 4x4 Mercedes bus from Yulara on Friday morning and driven south on various unsignposted tracks over the border into SA where the APY permit-only lands begin. SEIT has an exclusive use of the area, being the only permit holding tour group. I learned that the owner of SEIT has spent many years touring the area and had gained the trust of the local land holders, and he works hard to maintain that trust.

Our campsite was about 10 kilometres from the base of the mountain, and you can see the now-abandoned aboriginal community below, with the peak to the left.

Recent fires and then rain had changed things up since the 2018 tour. The toilet facilities had burned to the ground, but so had much of the spinifex on the mountain, which made climbing so much easier. SEIT

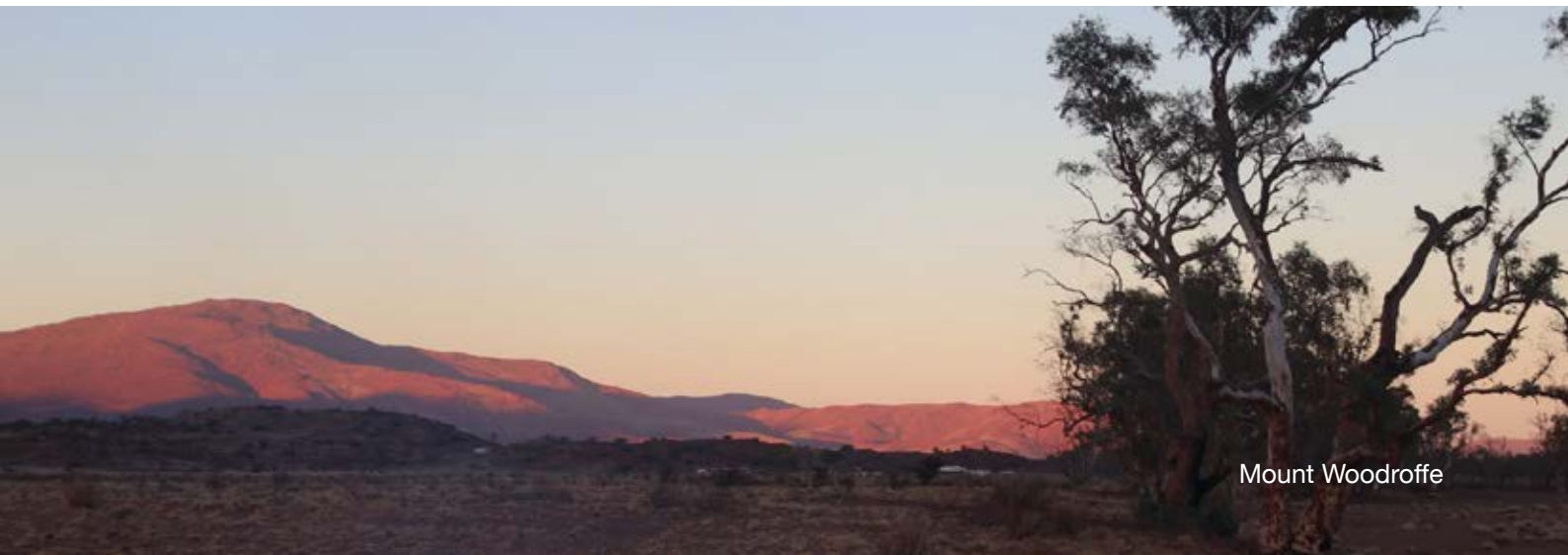
has a semi-permanent camp setup with a shipping container kitchen, rain water tank and even showers.

Camping was in provided swags with your own sleeping bag down in the river bed. We were told there would be plenty of notification if it rained, since we could see the source!

Morning tea was provided en-route and lunch was had at the camp. In the afternoon, we were driven out to have a closer look at the mountain and plan our routes for the next day. There is no marked trail or even a commonly used "goat track" (except the ones used by the local wallabies, donkeys and camels) - it only gets climbed once a year by humans. Noting that the spinifex had burned away, the direct approach looked like a good option, so I checked around to the south anyway to see how that looked.

Next morning, we were up at 5 am to maximise the daylight. We were told that climbing times varied from just over four hours to 13 hours up and back (there are only 10 hours of daylight in May). UHF radios were part of the packing list, and most of us had one. Some small groups were formed and we all hit the mountain just as the sun came up. Myself, a fellow guest and one of the newer SEIT tour guides went up a little to the north for a mostly direct route up. The climb is only 750 metres, and the route we took was good - no real scrambling, hardly any spinifex and the top was generally in view most of the way with a few false peaks. Some climbers reached the top almost an hour before us as they called into base that the top was windy and covered in cloud. By the time we reached the top the cloud had cleared.

“There is no marked trail or even a commonly used “goat track” ...



Mount Woodroffe

One thing I learned coming down, is that it's best to use the same route. We didn't, and took the "scenic" route south, following a creek to keep away from the spinifex. It was a more arduous trek, but certainly more scenic. Almost at the bottom is a waterfall that is just that bit too high to negotiate, so backtracking was required to find another way down.

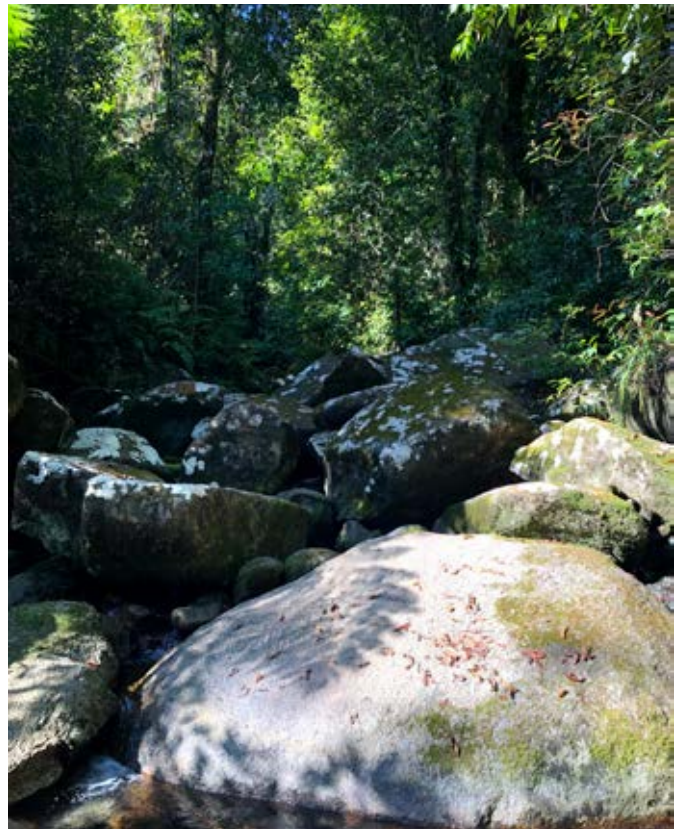
Everyone made it up and back safely, with only a few cuts and scratches and spinifex thorns. That night, we were fed BBQ corn, vegies, Northern Territory steak and stewed apples with custard and we all slept really well. The SEIT team were awesome and I would highly recommend the trip. The area is very typical remote, outback, red dust Australia, but there is 3G reception from the top of Woodroffe.

Mount Bartle Frere, Queensland

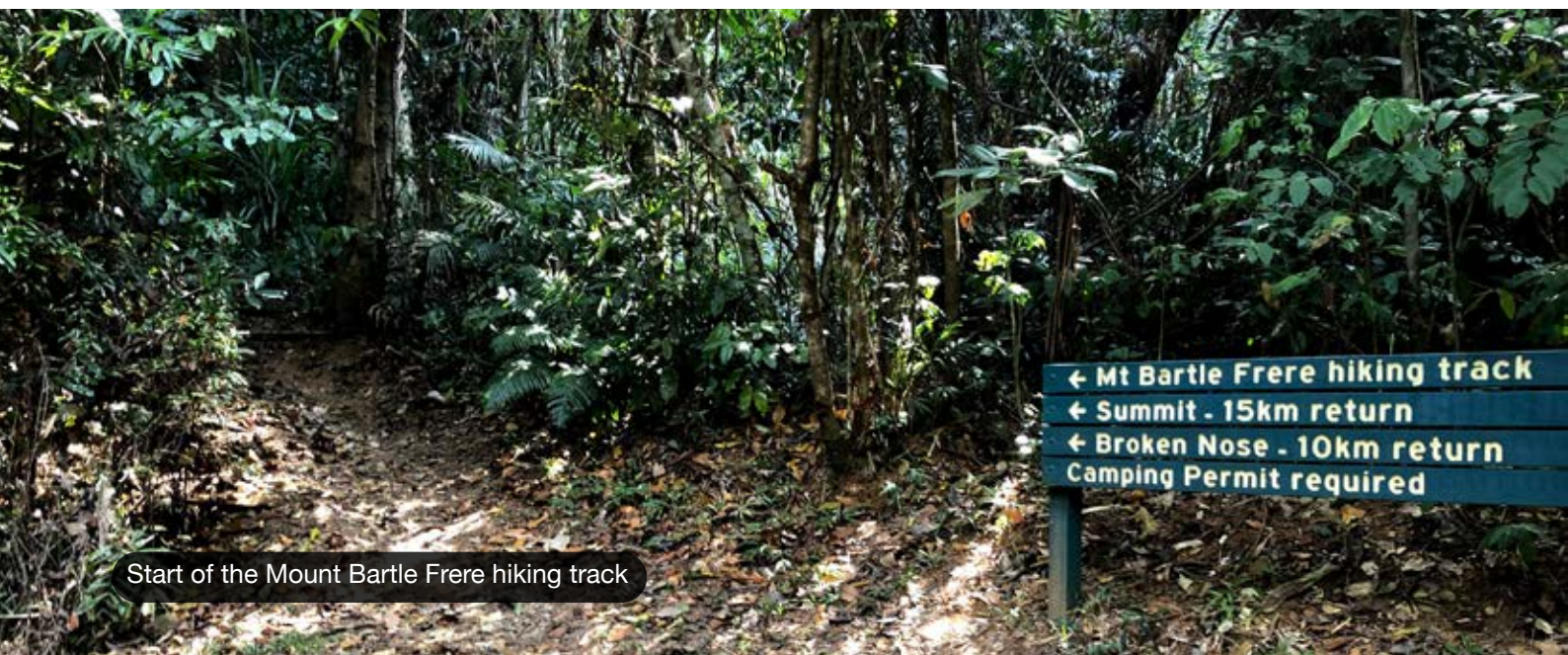
Of the State 8 peaks, I was least looking forward to this one and didn't really have a plan to do it soon. However, an opportunity came up (via a work offsite in Port Douglas - tough days at the office!), it was the right season and it had been a dry, dry season so I figured low leech population and less chance of rain. I arrived in Cairns at 12.30 pm, picked up a rental car and a bottle of stove fuel from the local Anaconda, had lunch and drove down to Josephine Falls car park. Being a Sunday, the car park was full, but someone was leaving as I arrived. My original plan was to camp at Big Rock on Sunday night, then at the Eastern Summit camp on Monday night and walk out Tuesday. I headed off, everything packed into a Gossamer Gear Mariposa pack.

Day one – To Big Rock camp

I'd read somewhere about stinging trees and a sign at the start of the track talks about neurotoxins that cause pain for months - there were plenty around, but I avoided them all. The track to Big Rock camp (and the turnoff to Broken Nose lookout) is not too bad for a barely maintained earth track in an FNQ rainforest. It's not too steep during this part, with only a few steeper sections. There is a spot where two or three creeks come together and must be crossed via slippery boulders, which I expect would be just basically swimming across in a wet season.



Slippery boulders across the creek



Start of the Mount Bartle Frere hiking track

← Mt Bartle Frere hiking track
 ← Summit - 15km return
 ← Broken Nose - 10km return
 Camping Permit required

It's a magic spot, deep in the rainforest there. I hadn't seen any leeches, so didn't bother putting my gaiters on. I'd treated my clothes with pyrethrin. Last time I was bitten by a leech, I nearly passed out the next day as best man at a wedding. I have pretty thin blood and once they let go, I keep bleeding for hours.

I arrived at about 4 pm and set up camp. There are three lovely clear spots and one or two smaller ones, and the nearby creek provides plenty of white noise and is the last reliable water before going on.

At this point, I found out that my stove did not work - I think a small piece of wax or grit got into when I first attached the fuel canister. I also found out that not every Victorinox army knife includes the pin under the corkscrew - I couldn't get the stove to go no matter what. (At home I fixed it in a second.) So I changed my plans - up and back to the campsite the next day, leaving the tent set up. Walk out early Tuesday morning for a big brekky in Innisfail. I had salada with cheese and salami for dinner ... There were a few mice around, but my food was hung up in a tree.



Ladders made of tree roots. It's steeper than it looks.

Day two – The summit

I took my Mike's Undercling sleeping bag and S2S Ultralight insulated mat in case I had to sleep in the emergency shelter. I also had four litres of water - three in a bladder with some electrolytes and a litre bottle of fresh water for the return trip. A fellow hiker (in jeans) startled me at 7 am as I was getting ready to head out. He was local and does the trip a couple of times a year, whenever the weather is "just right". He'd started from the car park at 5.30 am. I passed him just a few minutes later. The hike from Big Rock to the first boulder field is steep, at times just ladders made of tree roots, often along a ridge with steep drop offs and no more water.

I met a couple of guys coming down who had camped up top. They did not have a good night - very windy and cold, and I was glad I decided to camp lower down. The first boulder field is over quickly and I reached the emergency shelter around 10.30 am and had some morning tea. There is a lot of rubbish around, which is a real shame - broken tents, a 3 kilogram gas bottle and lots of empty plastic water bottles. About 11 am I headed on up into the second boulder field - it was a little windy, but otherwise perfect. The scrambling required is pretty tricky and there are big drops where it would be hard to get back. There are steel bars in some of the harder spots. Before I knew it, I'd reached the summit about an hour later. A few metres away is a boulder affording a nice view.



Rob at the top of Mount Bartle Frere

A few selfies, then it was time to head back down. Again through the boulder field, I found a couple of easier routes this time and going down is always easier. Back at the emergency shelter I met up with Mr Jeans who was just about to head off to the summit, so he was about 90 minutes behind me. I also spotted someone in green shorts who had skipped the hut and was ambling up the track. With my hiking pole out, I headed back down to camp. I got back about 3 pm and Green Shorts came through about an hour later - a Swedish girl just smashing the mountain out. Mr Jeans came through at 6 pm - he had a torch, so he was good to finish in the dark, but it was a 14 hour day for him!



Back at the place where the creeks meet, I'd thrown my hiking pole across and the handle landed in a swampy area, which is probably how I got a leech on my little finger. I flicked it off before it got too settled and didn't see any more. Back at the car park on a Tuesday morning, and my car was the only one there. I changed in the toilet block and headed to Innisfail for one of the best big brekkys I've ever had.

In general, the track is reasonably well marked - if you can't make out the track, there is usually an orange marker somewhere. My legs hurt for the next three days, mostly lactic acid in the quads. I try and always use a hiking pole for descents to prevent knee soreness after learning the hard way on the Milford Track 20 years ago.

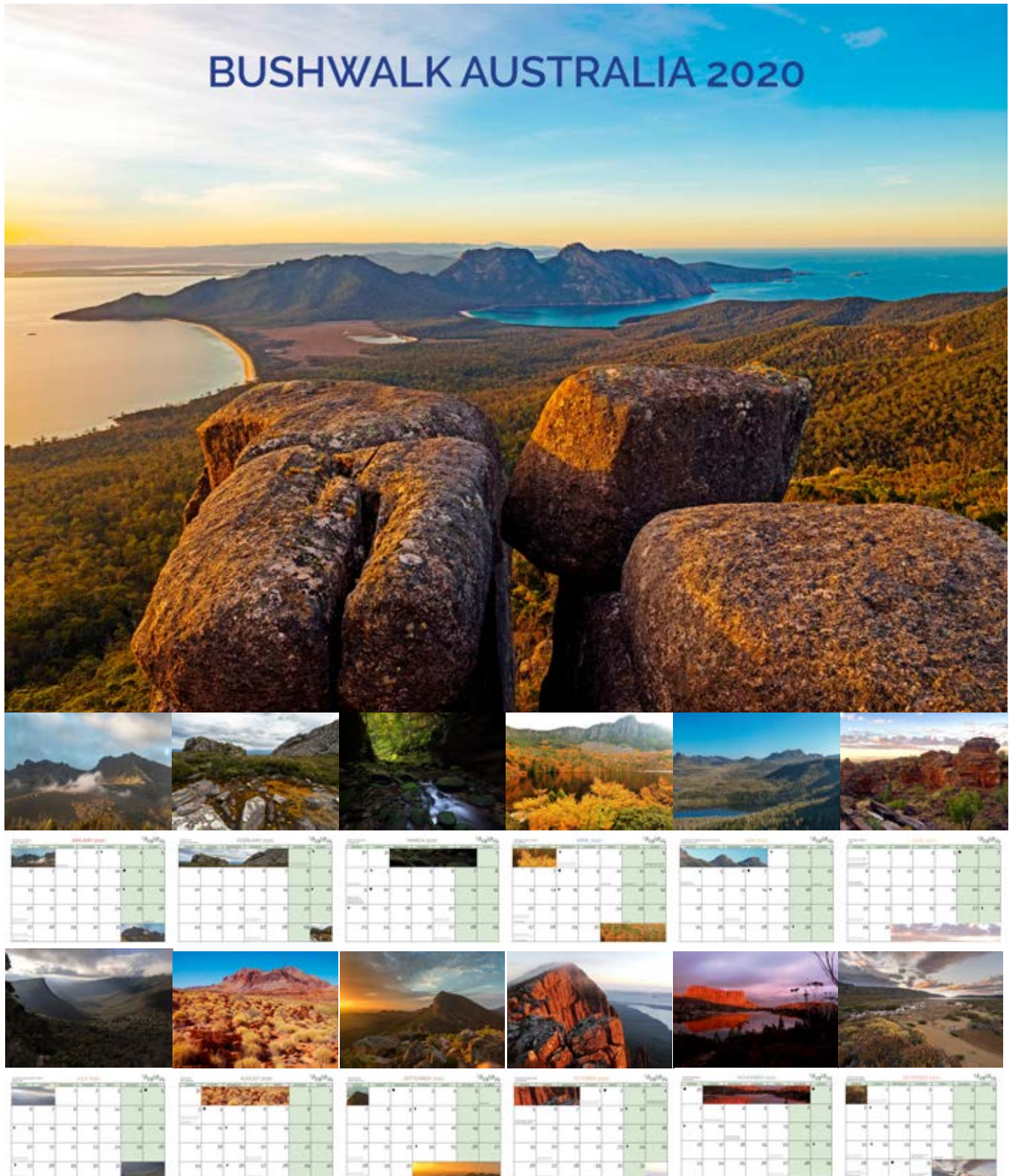


View from the top of Mount Bartle Frere

2020 Calendar

The 2020 Calendar is available now

We've created another bushwalking calendar, full of beautiful photos by our great [Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com) photographers. To enjoy this amazing imagery the whole year long, order your copy by sending an email to Eva at eva@wildwalks.com or click  to order it straight away.



Sassafras to Wog Wog

Daniel Toplicescu



Designated as a wilderness area, Morton National Park is one of those places where you can get lost in time and is more commonly referred too as The Budawangs. It is located approximately 2-3 hours from Sydney as there are numerous ways to gain access to the park. The most popular access seems to be via The Castle at Yarboro just inland from Milton. But you can also gain access from Wog Wog, Neriga and Sassafras. The latter being closer to our objective, was our chosen entry point. You can access all of the locations with a 2WD but most of the roads can get rather rough and it's much more pleasant in a 4WD.

A misty morning looking out to the rock ribs and listening to the soundtrack of cascades and birds.
All pictures by Daniel Toplicescu

In the first week of May 2019 I led two people from Sassafras to Wog Wog going through Hollands Gorge. I've always been curious about it and it surpassed expectations.

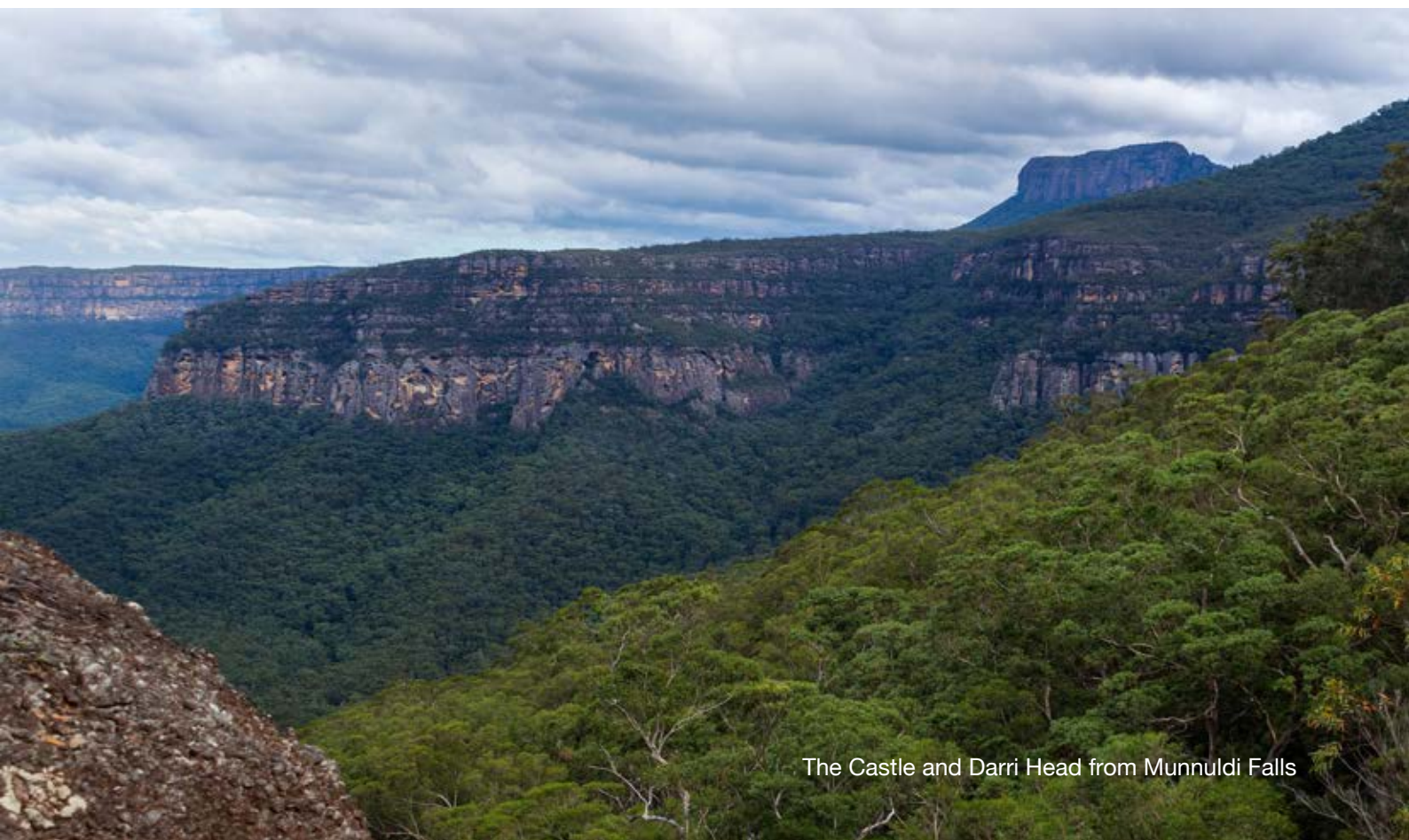
I decided to splurge on luxuries this trip. Despite my base weight being in at around 10 kilograms, my pack was around 24 kilograms once camera gear, luxury food and gear was included. It's been a while since I've had that much weight but it was worth it - or so I kept telling myself as I sat on my chair every night and enjoyed some good red.

Day 1 – Sassafras to Watson Pass camping cave

We started walking in from the Sassafras entrance at 6.30 am. About 8.30 am we turned off the fire trail and headed down the foot pad towards Folly Point. Bits of pink ribbon, not tape were cut at lengths of about 15 cm stuck only on obvious parts of the trail at every turn. After the first couple, I decided to carry them out. The foot pad is well defined and easy to follow for the most part, but a lot of trees are fallen making walking with a pack a bit more awkward. Where the grass was longer I managed to step on the head of a large snake (tiger? maybe). It was barely moving after that ... Poor thing. Glad I decided to stick the gaiters on early.

We arrived at Folly Point at lunchtime where we planned to set up camp on top. But after consulting the forecast while we had the reception at the lookout, we learnt that we'd get rain later that afternoon till the next day. So we opted to go find the camping cave south-east of Watson Pass.

So after an extended lunch, we left to go look for the camping cave. After Watson Pass, there is a cairned route to the camping cave after following the cliff line east a little but not completely to the end of the trail. It's easy to miss as the well-defined track continues. We missed it the first day and ended up bashing a good part of the way down and having to navigate some small cliffs to the creek at Endrick 490960. We dropped into the creek a bit too upstream and had an interesting time getting past the slippery drops and waterfalls in the creek. It was starting to get rather dark when I noticed a faint track heading back up out of the creek which funnily enough led to the camping cave. This was a bit after 5 pm, so it was a long day. Glad we didn't have to settle for whatever spot we could find because the forecast was right and we were able to stay dry. There is a small creek next to the cave that had about 20 semi-continuous drips going for it. We filled up our bottles with ease using an emergency blanket as a funnel.



The Castle and Darri Head from Munnuldi Falls

Day 2 – Watson Pass camping cave day trip

We planned to do a day trip and go see sluice box falls but when the weather is really rubbish and you're in a dry cave by a nice fire, the idea of bush bashing all day through steep terrain is not overly appealing ... So we opted to eat food and relax. By lunchtime, the weather cleared up and I'd had enough relaxing so we decided to go part way and at least see Munnuldi Falls. This trip took us about 3.5 hours. We headed up towards Watson Pass again following the cairns this time (way easier). From Watson Pass you head straight down where if you have a keen eye you can find a bit of a route but that's on and off. Just before Munnuldi Falls, there is a lovely camping cave very close to Camping Rock Creek which I believe is also the access into the creek if you want to cross it. But that's as far as we decided to explore, settling for a swim in an awesomely large and deep pothole in the creek. How it feels to be clean!

Then we headed back to our camping cave and got ready for an early start. The scrub can get really thick between the falls and Watson but if you stay on the spur the vegetation is pretty open by Budawang standards.

Day 3 Watson Pass camping cave to Angels Creek

We followed a track on the southern side of the creek next to the camping cave keeping elevation till it disappeared. After five minutes of searching, I opted to just find our own way instead of fluffing around to find where this track goes. Funnily enough, this was the last bit of pink tape we saw too for at least a day. I'd accumulated half an A4 ziplock bag full of pink ribbons and tape by this stage! We started to head down toward Camping Rock Creek and eventually followed the second tributary down to it. From here on it was surprisingly easy going by Budawang standards again. Just follow the creeks and at times walk alongside it needed switching sides as needed. Absolutely stunning gorge scenery at this point. I will definitely be back. There were a few campsites before the junction of Camping Rock Creek and Hollands Creek. Otherwise, the only flat spot is at the junction of Angels Creek and Hollands Creek. This campsite is absolutely superb but it was only after lunch. At this stage one member of the group was struggling and was rather tired. But we needed to make our pick up so we pushed on. From that campsite, we followed the ridge straight up which saved us dealing with scrub. This took as a while.



Doing our best to keep our boots dry. The full force of the water can be seen along the banks of Hollands Gorge.

A lot of time was spent waiting for our tired party member. I was particularly not looking forward to this bit due to the rapid climb in elevation but even though steep, if you're reasonably fit it isn't really that bad. The lack of scrub bashing made it relatively easy for a steep climb. Even with my pack – now 20 kilograms – I never felt like I needed to stop going up the ridge.

At the cliff just north-west of Crooked Falls we found a track that follows the bottom towards Angel Creek and an abandoned pack which turns out was left there a few weeks prior when a guy got airlifted out with an ankle injury.

The track hugs the cliffs turning west where we left our tired party member to take a look at the Crooked Falls lookout. What a steep descent to the lookout – 100+ metres loss in about 50 metres. It's well worth it though! Not the place to have a tumble.

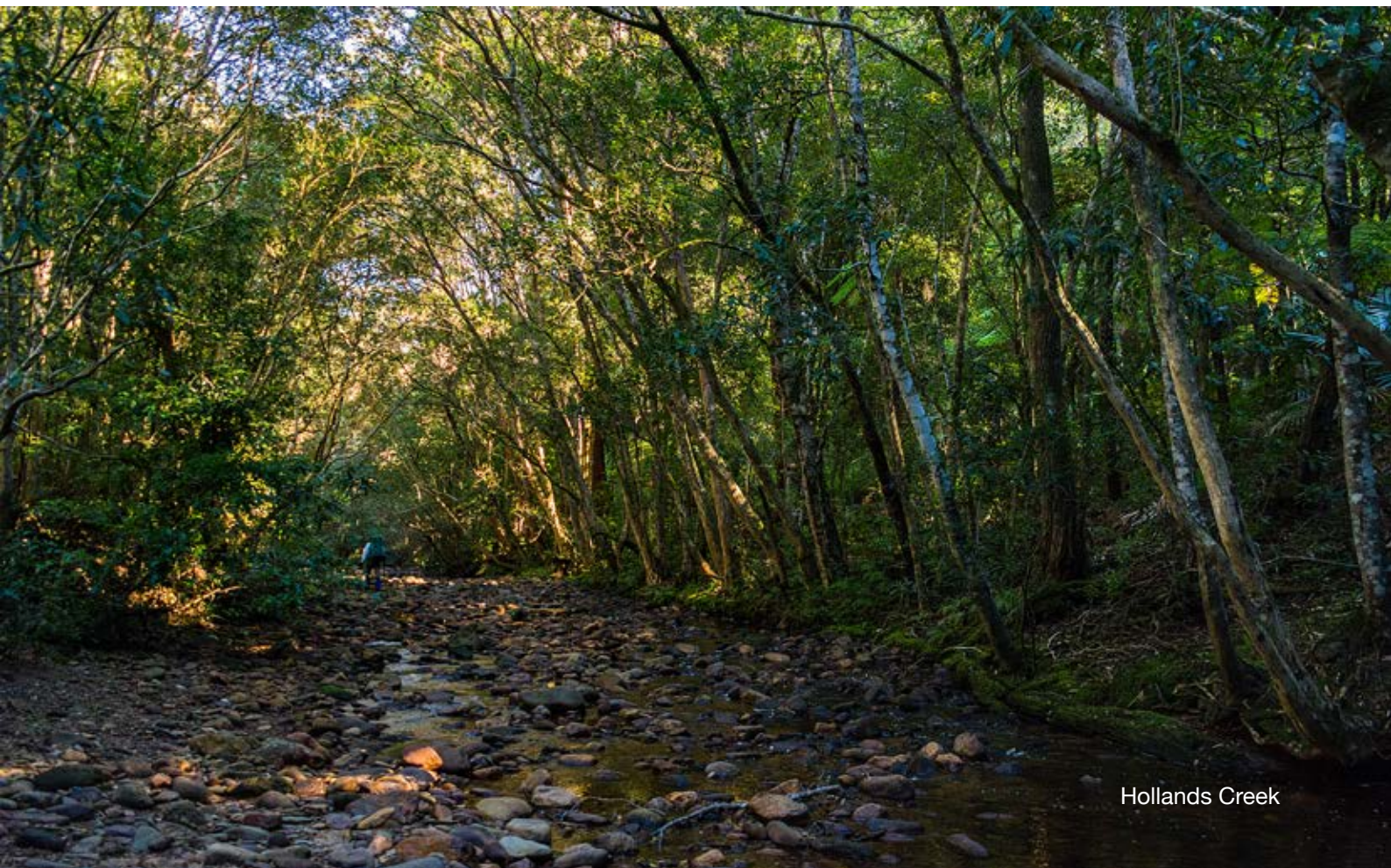
Once we got back to our friend and packs we continued to follow the track. But it was getting rather dark at this stage. The track seemed to disappear we made our own way again but it was pretty open rainforest so not too bad. We came across a lovely flat bit near Angels Creek which was as far as we

got. Although we had planned to get to Mt Cole, by the time we took our packs off it was dark and we needed headlights. It was only about 4.30 pm but the canopy and the steepness of the gorge made it dark a whole hour and a half earlier.

Somehow the red tasted so much better after the steep climb.

Day 4 – Angels Creek to Corang Ribs

The next day we went and checked out the top of Crooked Falls before pushing on. I'd planned a shorter day as I was unsure of the terrain in Hollands Gorge and the fitness of the party. You would do well to have good navigational skills before going off track in these parts. We continued through Angels Creek until the cairns stacked in the middle of the creek indicated our ascent. These days there is a reasonable track from Angels Creek up to the track going to Donjon's base. The pink tape began again but you'll be glad to note that the area is free of it once more. Water from the camping cave at Watson Pass up to the ascent at Angels is pretty solid. Next time I think I'd bring a little carabiner and leave the water bottles empty for that stretch and just use my cup; attaching it to my pack.



Hollands Creek

There was a bit of water to be heard between the "splendid" camp cave described in the Rod Doughton book and the small sandy overhang further up toward Donjon's base. The next water we came across was on the outskirts of Mount Bibbenluke in the rainforest area between its two spurs. From the intersection of the Mount Cole-Monolith-Donjon tracks its pretty well defined footpad as most probably know already, all the way out to the Wog Wog car park. We headed west past Cole and Bibbenluke. I wanted to go check out Murrumbooie Falls but no one else in the party was up for it so we kept on going.

Just before the intersection arriving at the intersection to Yurnga Lookout at about Corong 396927 there is a very well maintained track heading south-west. Very interested as to where it goes. The first 20 metres seems scrubby but the more you follow it the better it gets. We didn't have time to explore it further.

We decided to push on to camp near the Corang ribs after taking a look at Yurnga Lookout and skipping the Corang Arch as those in my group were pretty wiped. Has anyone used the pass just below the lookout? Looks like you could use the ridge below it to make your way to the Yarboro River.



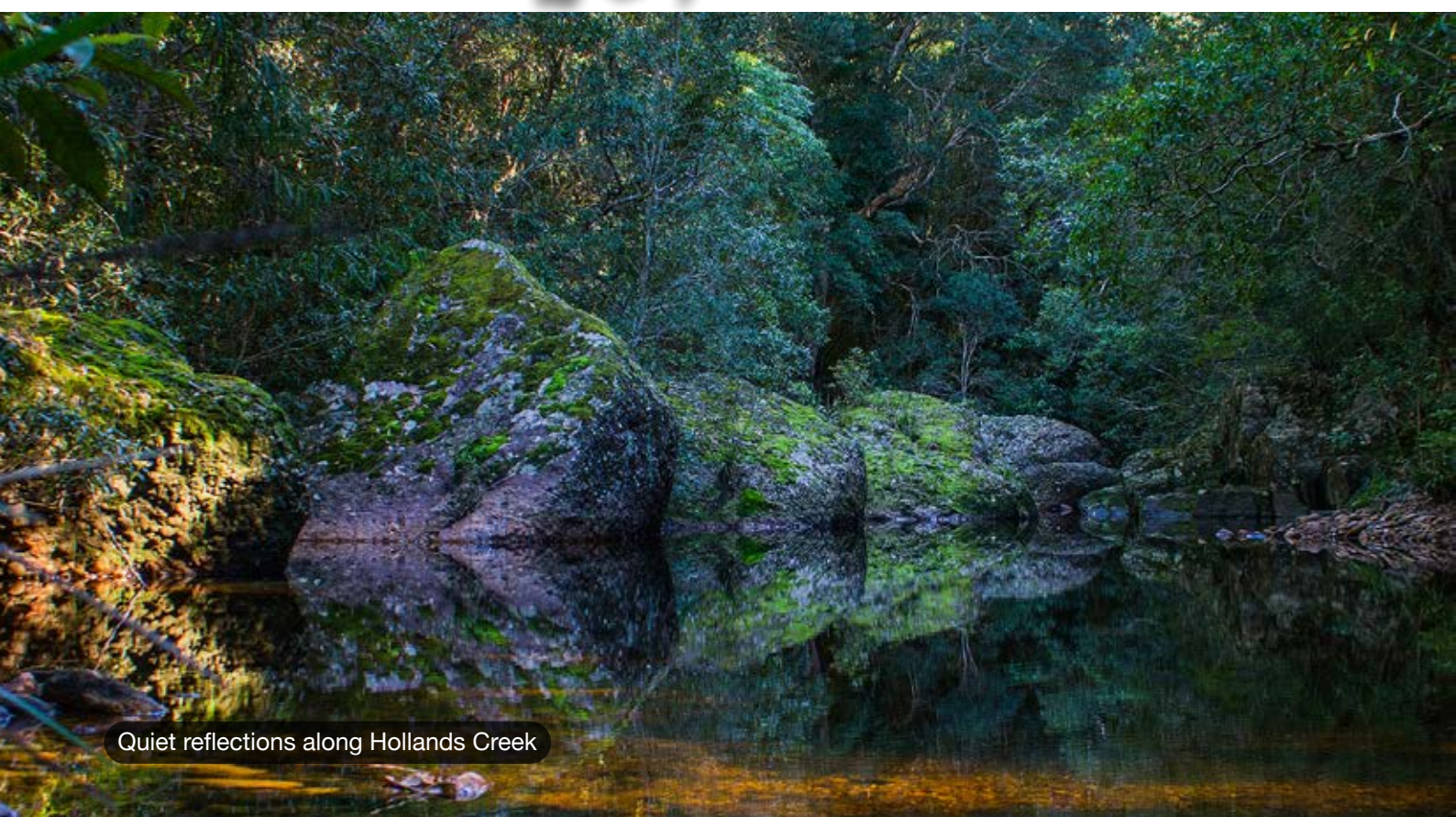
We got to our camp just before dark and had a fantastic view of the night's sky. We saw lots of meteors from the meteor shower we just had and not a single cloud to contend with.

Day 5 - Corang Ribs to Sassafras

We had a lazy morning and was planning to go for a swim in the morning but it was a bit fresh so we decided to walk to the Corang Lagoon for a swim after warming up first. Glad we went for a warm up as the water was an invigorating 7.1 degrees according to my watch. We had lunch and dried off in the sun before heading off and getting to the Wog Wog car park by 2.50 pm. No signs of signs or anything from the property owner at the lagoon. Day 5 was the easiest day by far.

Daniel is a graphic designer and budding landscape photographer who likes to go bushwalking instead of just talking about it. Popular places do not appeal to him and is always looking for remote places to explore. Although living on the coast he prefers the mountains and is always looking for a walking buddy that isn't turned off by scratchy leaves.

He is always looking for an opportunity to wear a down jacket and find an icy swimming hole. He knows that a mountain can take your breath away twice.



Quiet reflections along Hollands Creek

In the News

2019 Kakadu NP Visitor Survey

If you visited Kakadu in 2019, it's very important for that you fill in the [2019 Kakadu National Park Visitor Survey](#). It should take about ten minutes, a bit longer if you give detailed answers. Management doesn't get much bushwalking feedback so the more they have the more likely it is that we'll be able to continue the wonderful walks we do there.

Lauch of Great West Walk

A 65-kilometre walking trail from Parramatta to Penrith is now open. It's the longest continuous route through western Sydney, passing through protected woodlands, bush corridors, local river systems and regional parks. More information about the walk at greatwestwalk.com.au/.

Spirit of Adventure Award 2019

In August 2019 edition of BWA we had an article about the blind Nick Gleeson who walked across Island Lagoon. In November Nick and his dog Unity received the [Spirit of Adventure Award](#) given by Australian Geographic for the second time. You can check his interview on [Weekend Breakfast ABC News](#).

The faster you walk, the better your brain works

Researchers at the University of Queensland found a correlation between the speed of your walking and your brain performance. "Slower walkers were shown to have 'accelerated aging' and their lungs, teeth and immune systems tended to be in worse shape."

World Heritage Areas open to tourism

The Tasmanian Liberal Government's plan to open up the state's World Heritage Area and national parks to more tourism developments has always been contentious. The auditor-general will investigate the controversial Expression of Interest process, which conservationists have long argued lacks transparency and proper scrutiny. [ABC News](#) and [The Advocate](#) report this. See the article on [Lake Malbena](#).

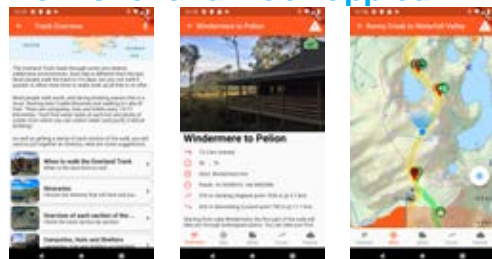
Fastest known time AAWT- a new record

At 6 am on Friday 15 November 2019 John Riley, Kylie Salm and Phil Robinson left Walhalla on John's second attempt to break the AAWT Fastest Known Time record of 11 days and 18 hours. They zoomed through the very rugged and slow Victorian sections, continuing to move quickly in NSW and ACT. They reached the end at Tharwa at 3 pm on Tuesday 26 November taking 11 days and 9 hours, an average of 58 kilometres a day, beating the record. There's a topic on this on [Bushwalk.com forum](#).

Sydney Coastrek - get ready for a new route and a new challenge

The Coastrek on 27 March 2020 is filling fast with the event already at a record 70% full. Don't miss out on this life-changing adventure! Organise your team of four and [register now](#) for the 60km, 30km or 15km route along the majestic Sydney - Northern Beaches.

New Overland Track app out in December



If you're planning on walking the Overland Track, make sure you keep an eye out for the new app that is coming out in December. Check Google Play Store or App Store to find it.



Grose Valley

Stephen Lake



Sydney has a lot of options for bushwalking close to everything, a short train or ferry away. On my last visit I went into the Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains.

Grose vista
Stephen Lake

Day one – down and out in Victoria and Grose

Access was by train to Mount Victoria Railway Station. From there it's a dogleg walk to the point where the Western Highway is crossed. Finding this point was a little tricky but eventually it was spotted, and I was unhappy. The crossing is on a curve, busy, and very scary to get to the north side. Next time I'll take a taxi.

Across the highway one car went past, and despite having space did not pick me up. I plodded on. It was 90 minutes walking from the rail, most on a good dirt road, to the start of the walk proper at Victoria Falls picnic area. A short way from the start the Victoria Falls Walking Track dropped steeply, although not as steep as later. A few minutes into the descent I saw a junk food bag, complete with rather a lot of uneaten food. Not good.

After 45 minutes the base was reached, and I then did a short side trip to the falls. Amazingly, the base of the falls was littered with toilet paper. While flat ground is unusual here, some people ... Back to the pack, then downstream on a pad that was a little hard to follow at times. Lunch was at Burra Korain Camping Area, pretty enough except for the litter in the fireplace. Snooze in the warm sun with a lizard for company. Creakingly I continued downstream, with a track that was reasonably well defined.

I met a few parties here, all going upstream. It will be a bit squashed camping at Burra Korain.

One thing in at least a few parts of walks around Sydney is very different from the places I usually visit – Sydney water is often not potable. On all my Sydney walks I had to carry water from start to finish. At least the pack got lighter quicker.

The track notes said that Hat Hill Creek was the best water around, that is, least polluted, so I topped up here, keeping the known clean water separate. A short way after this I stopped at the Hungerfords Track junction, where there's a pleasant clearing with no litter. Peace descended in the quiet of this majestic setting.

Day two – Up, up and away

It would have been nice to stay but I had to be back, and it seemed there was a small climb at the end. The track kept getting better until it became a veritable bushwalking four lane highway approaching the Blue Gum Forest. This is very pretty – big straight trees in a huge clearing with minimal understory. There were a few tents, and – to my amazement – people setting an orienteering or rogaining course. This is a very steep place way from the valley floor!

Govetts Creek had a few bumps and one section that needed steps to manage the erosion. Junction Rock has lovely cascades; it's a pity that the water is polluted. The track is about 350 metres above sea level, and the destination – George Phillips Lookout – is 980 metre. So, 630 metres of climbing, rather a lot but I've done more.

From Junction Rock the track slowly got steeper and steeper, twisting in the forest, crossing the creek many times. Then it became steeper, with steel steps on scaffolding fixed to the cliff. The track was often wet, with waterfalls and groundwater creating mud. There were many rests. I've done steep, done big climbs, but this was a challenging combination. I like the usual way I do walks. Climb the mountain one day, downhill on the second day.

“I've done steep, done big climbs, but this was a challenging combination.”

A stream of bushwalking parties went down, morphing into tourist day trippers as I staggered higher. The views were spectacular, with the Grose Valley laid out before me, blue haze mellowing distant peaks.

I wanted to have lunch on the top. To have lunch and then face more steepness did not appeal at all, so I plugged on, reaching the car park at 12.45 pm, wrecked.

The Blue Mountains has enough bushwalking for a lifetime.



Photo Gallery



A Serene Place
Ashley Thomson

Competition: Landscape January 2015



BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes December 2018

WINNER



Golden arch
Bogholesbuckethats

Passing through a weathered arch along Mars Bluff.



Lunch views
IainDtiler



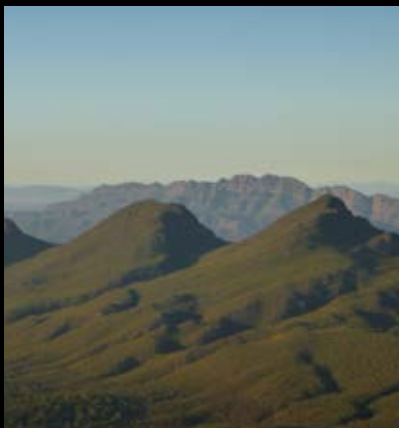
Coronation sunrise
North-north-west



Scoparia time
Tortoise



Sunbow around
Mount Manfred
ILUVSWTAS



Green in the desert
MountainMadness



A tarn nice discovery
John Walker



Non-landscapes December 2018

WINNER



Citadel sunset
North-north-west

I have never regretted not taking a tripod more than on my traverse of the Wilmot and Frankland Ranges. Two nights were spent on Citadel Shelf, with the first night probably the most significant of all the times I needed a tripod. The Gell River fires had started but the smoke was only visible from the shelf as a filter for the sky. And what a sunset it produced.



Living colours
laindtiler



Fiery skimmer
landsmith



Richea scoparia
in orange flavour
John Walker



Snow Gum,
Dead Horse Gap
Keith Dyson



Magic in the trees
ILUVSWTAS



The swallows have
moved in
Bogholesbuckethats



Tasmania

December 2018

WINNER



Sunrise at Lake Youl, the highest lake in Tasmania. One of the few moments when the wind was not screaming up through the valley.

You'll be back again
Bogholesbuckethats



Peaceful Pedder
laindtiler



Twisted sister
of the Southwest
John Walker



Summer storm
North-north-west



The easy bit
Tortoise



Sunset over the
Gould Plateau
ILUVSWTAS



Sunset over Pindars
Geevesy



Other States December 2018

WINNER



Wind blown
Brian Eglinton

It was a pleasant surprise when visiting Anna Bay in New South Wales to find a 32 kilometres long beach backed by extensive sand dunes. This is Stockton Bight Sand Dunes in Worimi Conservation Lands. They are rated as the longest moving sand dunes in the Southern Hemisphere.

Deciding to explore in late afternoon, we climbed up and down various lines of dunes back of the beach before ascending steeply up the biggest 30 metre high dunes. On occasions the wind whistled through forming a sand haze over the dune crests. In parts wetter sand portions would be exposed. They appear as wind scored base layers over which the drier sand would pass, covering some while exposing others. A fantastic place to sit and watch the sun setting over dunes as far as one can see.



You talkin' to me?
landsmith



Hyacinth Orchid
(*Dipodium punctatum*),
New South Wales
John Walker



Mount Townsend
reflection
Keith Dyson



Landscapes

January 2019

WINNER



Morning on McKays
North-north-west

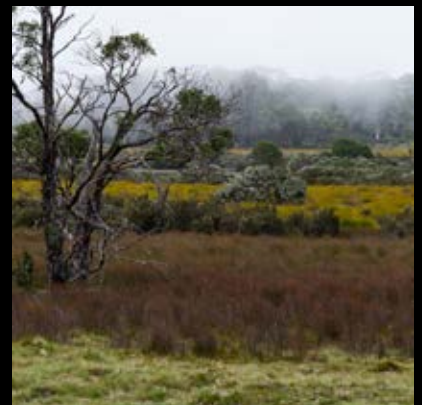
A very long time ago I walked the Port Davey Track. It's surprising and gratifying to see that the old line of McKays that we followed past the seismic research station and down to the plains still exists, and in places is a similar standard to the current track. One of the best things about it is the views it gives you of the Western Arthurs, especially early on a clear morning.



Waitpinga cliffs
Brian Eglinton



A route less travelled
John Walker



Bands of colour
Bogholesbuckethats



Swamp life
landsmith



Riverview
Andrew Smyth



Non-landscapes

January 2019

WINNER



When I grow up
I want to be tall
John Walker

I've always enjoyed and admired ramrod straight tall trees, from *Eucalyptus Deanii* in the Blue Gum Forest relatively close to home, to magnificent mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*, the world's tallest flowering plant) further afield in the high country and Tasmania. It's disappointing that so many tall trees have been destroyed over the years through ignorance or otherwise. Tassie has an accessible grove of the most spectacular *E. regnans* at Mount Field National Park. I've been there many times on different trips and took this shot during a circuit walk through Lady Barron Falls. Sadly, bushfires were impacting alpine areas nearby at the time and I changed my more remote walking plans as a result. That led to the opportunity to photograph this wonderful tree, taking advantage of the prevailing light and aiming to emphasise its height.



The best kind of fire
Bogholesbuckethats



Wandering pennant
landsmith



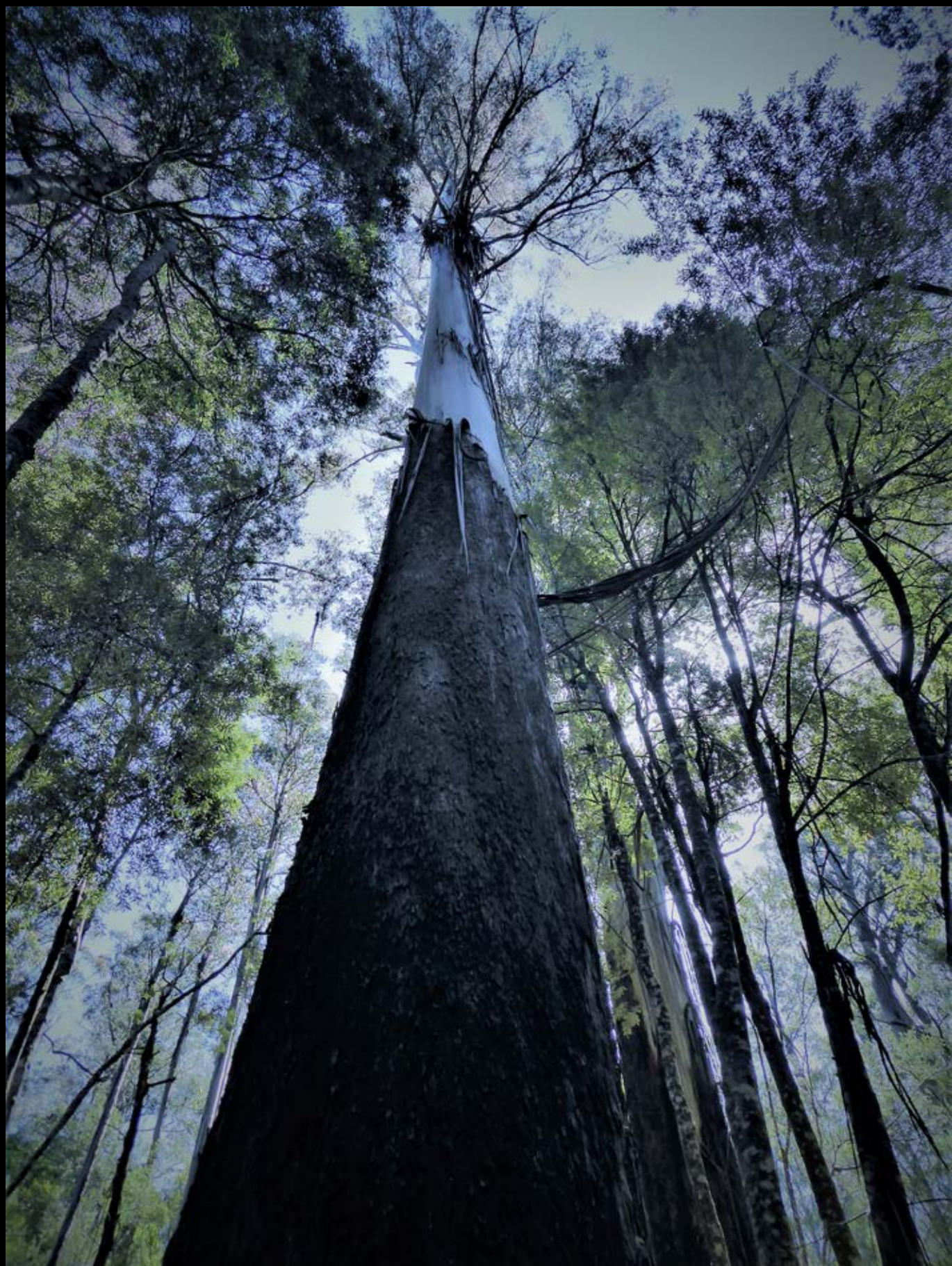
Just another drip
on the wall
North-north-west



Flotsam
Brian Eglinton



The watcher
Andrew Smyth



Tasmania January 2019

WINNER



The Eye of Sauron
Andrew Smyth

A bloated red sun sets over the Huon Valley, Tasmania, during the bushfire emergency of January-February 2019.



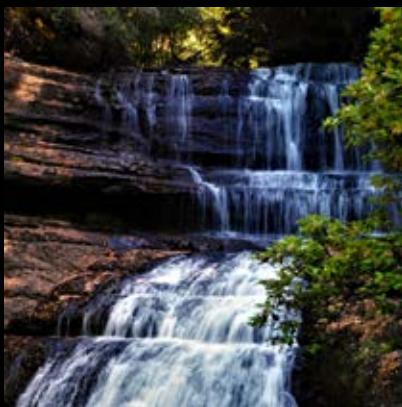
Home of the gods
Bogholesbuckethats



Clouded water
North-north-west



Timeout to ponder
Pat Brennan



A nice flow
John Walker



Other States January 2019

WINNER

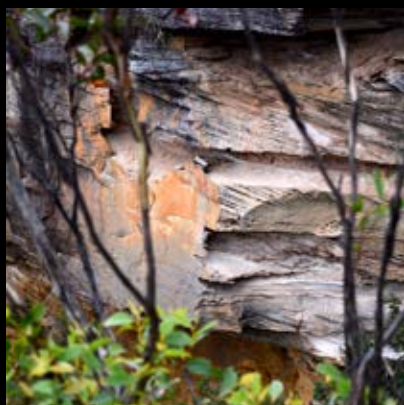


Sand and rock
Brian Eglinton

The long-distance Heysen Trail runs along the southern coast of Fleurieu Peninsula for several sections before heading inland to the hills.

The last beach on this part is Kings Beach which looks across to Rosetta Head near Victor Harbor.

This beach is a picturesque mix of boulders and sand. On this sunny day the wash of the waves had left pristine patterns in the sand among these rocks.



Wall art
Andrew Smyth



The last glow
John Walker



On reflection
landsmith



Walking on Fire

Matt McClelland



I could not imagine anything more terrifying than having a bushfire bearing down on me on a hot and windy day. On such a day the fire front can throw hot embers many kilometres from the main fire, starting new fires and causing the fire to spread rapidly. The radiant heat from many fires is so intense that even 100 metres away it can cause serious burns to your skin. There is no jumping in a creek or wombat hole to avoid this fire. The only way to ensure your survival is to have planned to be somewhere else. This can happen on a day only halfway up the Fire Danger Rating scale, and, although rare, it can get very ugly out there.

As technology makes bushwalking safer, lighter and easier, climate change is leading to much more hazardous fire conditions for bushwalkers. Although relatively few bushwalkers have been caught up in bushfire emergencies, the bushfire season is becoming longer, and the fires are getting bigger and more fierce. It is something we all need to get our head around.

Changing conditions

We all know that the climate is changing. We are witnessing mean average temperatures rising. So far the temperature has risen by about 1 °C and we are looking at another degree soon. It does not sound like much, but those few degrees indicate that a huge amount of extra energy has been stored in our atmosphere and oceans. This energy is what powers our weather systems, and with all this extra energy our weather systems are given a massive boost. This is why weather becomes more extreme as the climate warms; we not only get more hot days, but we get more record hot days. We also experience more extreme cold, more heavy rainfall and longer more severe droughts. Australia has been a land of extreme weather for a long time, but buckle up because it is getting more extreme.

About fire ranger ratings

The Fire Danger Rating (FDR) gives the community a sense of how difficult it will be to control or suppress a bush or grass fire. The FDR is mostly based on the Fire Danger Index (FDI) for forest or grassland (or moorlands in Tasmania). The FDI is a scale from 0-200, with zero being very difficult for a fire to take hold to fires being more aggressive as the numbers rise.

The FDI was developed by the CSIRO in the 1960s. The index considers the dryness of potential fuel (based on rainfall and evaporation) and then forecast or current wind speed, temperature and humidity. Increase the wind speed, temperature, or dryness, or decrease the humidity and the FDI will increase.

During the 2009 Black Saturday fires, the forest FDI was over well over 100 (which was the top of the FDR at the time). After the Black Saturday fires “Catastrophic” (code red in Victoria) was added to the FDR.

The basic mapping for FDRs and FDIs is as follows. There are other factors but this will give you a sense of general relationship.

Category	Fire Danger Index	
	Forest	Grassland
Catastrophic (Code Red)	100 +	150 +
Extreme	75–99	100–149
Severe	50–74	50–99
Very High	25–49	25–49
High	12–24	12–24
Low–Moderate	0–11	0–11

The FDR is not based on existing fires. It is a general prediction of fire behaviour for existing or new fires. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions are likely to be. At higher ratings, any fire that starts will likely to be fast-moving and difficult to control. No matter what the forecast Fire Danger Rating, if you live in or are travelling to an area that could be affected by a bushfire you need to have a bushfire plan in place so you know what to do if a bushfire starts.



FIRE DANGER RATING table

FDR	Likely Fire Behaviour	Impact Potential	Your Action
CATASTROPHIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and very fast moving. Highly aggressive flames extending high above trees and buildings. Thousands of embers will be violently blown around starting more fires up to 20 km ahead of the main fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire can threaten suddenly, without warning and be incredibly hot and windy making it difficult to see, hear and breathe as the fire approaches. People in the path of the fire will almost certainly die, or be injured and significant numbers of homes and businesses destroyed or damaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that your survival is the primary consideration in any decision. The safest option is for you and your family to leave early, hours or the day before a fire occurs. Under no circumstances will it be safe to Stay and Defend. Ensure you stay well informed of current fire activity by monitoring local media and regularly checking for updates on the RFS website or Information Line.
EXTREME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires will likely be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving with flames in the tree tops, and higher than roof tops. Thousands of embers will be blown around and into homes causing other fires to start and spread quickly up to 6 km ahead of the main fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire can threaten suddenly, without warning and it will be very hot and windy making it difficult to see, hear and breathe as the fire approaches. There is a likelihood that people in the path of the fire will die, or be injured and many homes and businesses destroyed or damaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that your survival is the primary consideration in any decision. Leaving early (hours before) will always be the safest option for you and your family If your Bush Fire Survival Plan includes the decision to Stay and Defend, only do so if your home is well prepared, specifically designed and constructed for bush fire and you are currently capable of actively defending it. Stay well informed of current fire activity by monitoring local media and regularly checking for updates on the RFS website or Information Line.
SEVERE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires will likely be uncontrollable and fast moving with flames that may be higher than roof tops. Expect embers to be blown around and into homes causing other fires to start and spread up to 4 km ahead of the main fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire can threaten suddenly, without warning and be very hot and windy which will make it increasingly difficult to see, hear and breathe as the fire approaches. There is a chance lives may be lost and people injured and expect that some homes and businesses will be destroyed or damaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that your survival is the primary consideration in any decision. Leaving early (hours before) is the safest option for you and your family. Follow your Bush Fire Survival Plan. If your Bush Fire Survival Plan includes the decision to Stay and Defend, only do so if your home is well prepared, and you are currently capable of actively defending it. Stay informed of current fire activity by monitoring local media and regularly checking for updates on the RFS website or Information Line.
VERY HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can be difficult to control and present a very real threat. Embers may be blown around homes causing other fires to occur up to 2 km ahead of the main fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire can threaten suddenly, without warning and it may be hot and windy and it may become difficult to see, hear and breathe as the fire approaches. Loss of life or injury is unlikely though some homes and businesses may be damaged or destroyed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that your survival is the primary consideration in any decision. Be prepared to implement your Bush Fire Survival Plan. Stay informed of current fire activity by monitoring local media and regularly checking for updates on the RFS website or Information Line.
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can be controlled but still present a threat. Embers may be blown ahead of the fire and around homes causing other fires to occur close to the main fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire may threaten suddenly and without warning. Loss of life is highly unlikely and damage to homes and businesses limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure your family, home and property is well prepared for the risk of bush fire. Review and practice your Bush Fire Survival Plan. Monitor local media for fire activity and regularly check the RFS website or Information Line.
LOW-MODERATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can be easily controlled but can still present a threat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no risk to life or homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure your family, home and property is well prepared for the risk of bush fire. Review and practise your Bush Fire Survival Plan. Refer to the RFS website or Information Line for changes in fire activity.

For more information check

http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/file_system/attachments/Attachment_FireDangerRating.pdf

Total fire bans

Total Fire Bans (TOBANs) are determined by the commissioner for bushfire in each state and territory. The decisions are based mostly on the FDR but also emergency service resource demand and other factors. Total fire bans are generally announced mid-afternoon the day before and are in effect for 24 hours from midnight to midnight.

Can I use my fuel stove?

Generally speaking, no you can't use a portable stove outdoors during a Total Fire Ban outdoors. In all states and territories the rules are very clear: you cannot use any solid fuel stoves or campfire outdoors during a Total Fire Ban.

The use of other stoves is a little unclear. Most agencies only speak about solid fuel or gas barbeques, not about bushwalking stoves or liquid fuels such as metho fuel stoves. Their intention is clear, a bushwalking stove is a barbeque. Always assume the safest option and don't use a stove unless you are sure it is allowed and safe in your context.

The rules vary between states and territories. The minimum rules are set by the agency responsible for bushfire management in

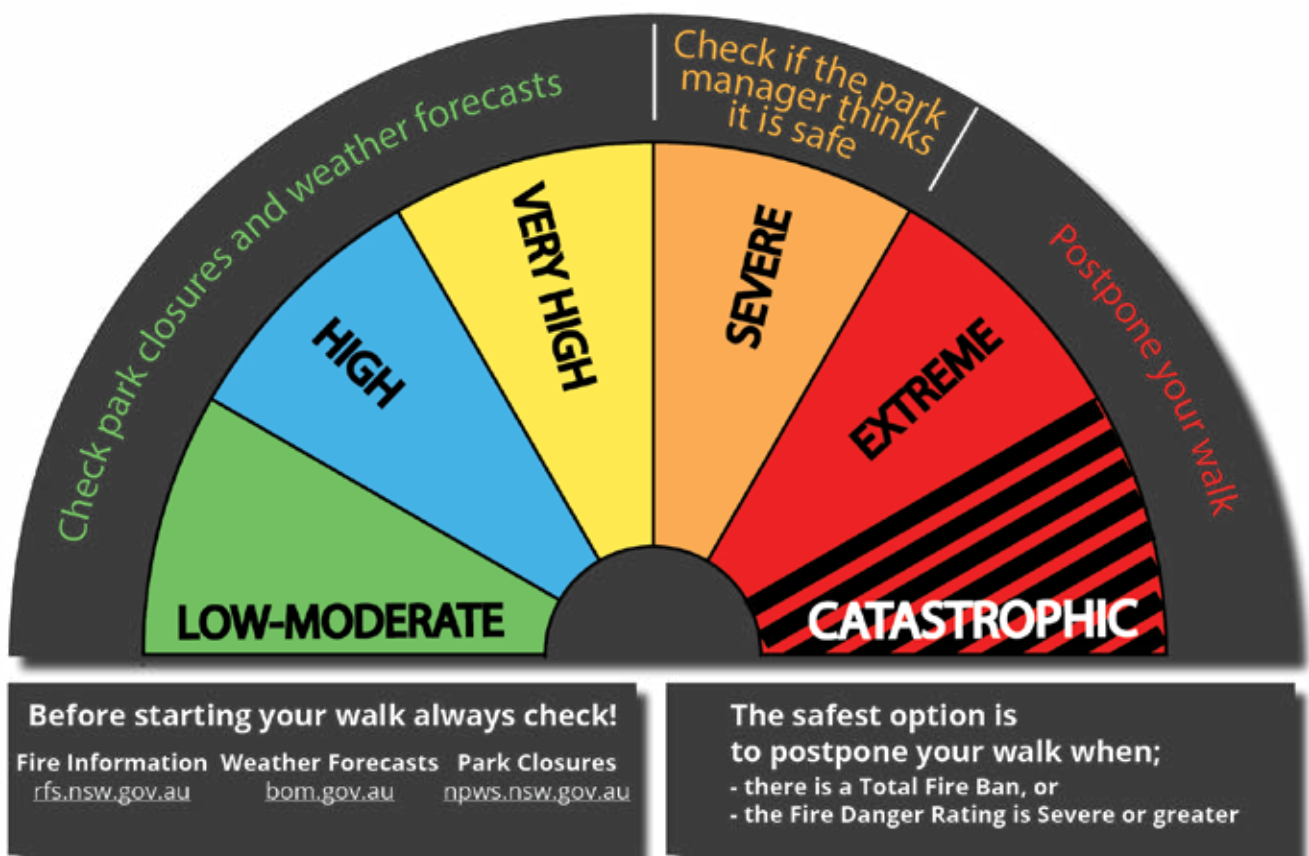
each state, not the land manager. The land manager can set extra rules on top of this, so check the rules for the place you are visiting.

In [Western Australia](#), [New South Wales](#), [Victoria](#), and [Queensland](#) you can't use your bushwalking stove during a Total Fire Ban.

[Australian Capital Territory](#). Generally, you can't use portable stoves during a Total Fire Ban. They do say you can use a barbeque for cooking if the area around is clear of any flammable material for a distance of three metres, is under the control of an adult, and there's a continuous supply of water. However many parks and reserves will also be closed during a Total Fire Ban.

[South Australia](#). Generally, you can't use a gas stove, except on a coastal foreshore. You still need the area clear of any flammable material for a distance of four metres, and be under the control of an adult with an appropriate fire extinguisher.

[Tasmania](#) is the only state with a general exception for bushwalkers. In Tasmania, only LPG (butane or propane) cookers or stoves can be used, providing that they are clear of any flammable material for a distance of one metre.



Total Fire Bans are not just about fires as we normally think of them. In Western Australia, for example, it is [illegal to drive off a road](#) into the bush or paddock due to the risk of the car's heat starting a fire in the grass or scrub. So be aware of your responsibilities with anything hot during total fire bans.

On longer walks, you may not be able to get the latest forecast and Total Fire Ban information. You can carry communications gear, or try using your mobile phone or AM radio to check. If you can't know exactly, you will need to make a judgement based on the conditions, erring on the side of caution. During the bushfire danger period be prepared with non-cook meals.

Go or No Go decision

Deciding to cancel, change or postpone a walk can be very difficult. During elevated fire danger periods the park service may close the parks making your decision for you. The general advice on days of Extreme or Catastrophic (code red) Fire Danger ratings is to stay out of bushfire prone land altogether, cancel you bushwalks. On days of Severe Fire Danger Ratings, or when there is a Total Fire Ban, start with the assumption you should cancel and then look to see if your specific plans are safe considering the specific conditions.

Always have a Bushfire Survival Plan for your walks.

Especially on multi-day trips, leave your walk plans with the local police and the land manager's office. Also, tell a responsible

person at home your plan and they can contact the fire service if they have concerns for your welfare due to bushfire (or other) conditions whilst your walking. You should not rely on such rescue, but proactive rescues have happened in the past.

What to do if caught in a fire?

It is always best to avoid getting caught by changing you walk plans when there is an elevated risk of fire, but sometimes fires happen. NSW RFS have a [Bushwalkers bushfire safety brochure](#). These key points by no means guarantee survival or an injury-free outcome, but they may help reduce the severity of the outcome.

- Don't panic, don't try to outrun the fire.
- Call Triple Zero 000 (else trigger PLB assuming there is a grave and imminent danger)
- If you see smoke, turn back or find a safer alternate route.
- You will not be able to outrun a fire. Find a cleared area. Look for rocks, hollows, embankments, streams or roads to protect you.
- Head to lower ground, avoid going uphill and do not shelter in water tanks.
- Keep low and cover your skin.
- Drink water and cover your mouth with a damp cloth.
- Move to burnt ground when the fire has passed.

As a last resort, choose a place with a fairly clear ground and flames less than one metre deep and high. Take a deep breath, cover your face and run through the flames to already burnt ground.



Finding your FDR Forecasts

If you are in doubt play it safe: there are another 51 weekends in the year. Equally, don't let this scare you off - pick the days and have alternative activities planned during

fire seasons. By their nature, wild places present risks, so take them seriously but still enjoy them at the right times. I often have a backup trip plan, so if the conditions are not safe then I have an easy alternative option.

State	National Park	Fire Agency
New South Wales	nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/alerts/alerts-list	rfs.nsw.gov.au/
South Australia	parks.sa.gov.au/know-before-you-go/closures-and-alerts	cfs.sa.gov.au/site/home.jsp
Victoria	parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature/changed-conditions-and-closures	cfa.vic.gov.au/
Queensland	nprsr.qld.gov.au/park-alerts/	ruralfire.qld.gov.au/
Tasmania	parks.tas.gov.au/explore-our-parks/know-before-you-go/alerts	fire.tas.gov.au/
Western Australia	alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au/	dfes.wa.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx
Bureau of meteorology		bom.gov.au/



Hand Hygiene in the Bush

Sonya Muhlsimmer



Did you know that on 15 October it was global hand washing day? I bet you didn't, well unless you work in the food industry or you follow FSANZ, Food Standards Australia New Zealand. I will tell you a just a little bit about FSANZ before I discuss hand washing.

What, no hand washing sink? Toilet at Valentine Hut, Kosciuszko National Park, NSW
Joe Zappavigna

FSANZ is part of the Australian Government health portfolio which develops standards for the Australian and New Zealand food industry, regulates the use of ingredients in food, and sets requirements for labelling. FSANZ audits cafes, restaurants and food manufacturing sites too if required. FSANZ looks after complaints from customers regarding food issues, naming and shaming cafes and restaurants that are not doing the right thing in food safety that could potentially make someone very sick. The [NSW name and shame list](#) is very interesting reading and I encourage you to read it to find out if any cafes or restaurants in your area are not doing the right thing. FSANZ always advertises important allergen, nutritional and food safety information or even information of a newly approved food under the food standards code, such as hemp seeds, so they share a wealth of information.

Hand washing

Now I got that out of my system let's talk hand washing. As you go off into the wild blue yonder do you consider how to wash your hands when nature calls? Did you know you can spread diseases to other people by your dirty hands? You can pass on gastro infections such as salmonella and respiratory infections such as influenza. And did you know there have been numerous food recalls due to food handlers not following proper hand washing procedures, such as the Hepatitis A outbreak in berries in 2017? Dirty hands can cause serious issues.

Hand washing with soap can reduce the child mortality rate of related respiratory diseases by 25%. Also, death from diarrheal diseases can be reduced by 50%. Just to give you some figures about child mortality, in June 2019 the World Health Organization released a [Sanitation article](#). The article says that inadequate sanitation is estimated to cause 432,000 diarrhoeal deaths annually and is a major factor in several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, and trachoma. Poor sanitation also contributes to malnutrition - what a staggering fact. Think about that next time you wash your hands. I work in a food manufacturing plant and every time I enter the production area I have to make sure I



A travel towel, tissues, Wet Ones, hand sanitiser and travel soap that can be used to wash hands in the bush. There is no excuse for having dirty hands.

have washed and sanitised my hands. The company even checks food handlers hands to ensure their hands are clean. We swab the hands of food handlers and send the swabs off to a microbiological laboratory to detect the type and amount of bacteria present on their hands.

There is a saying that when you wash your hands you should sing Happy Birthday, as this is the time required to wet, lather, scrub and rinse your hands to ensure they are clean. This is all very good under normal conditions, but this cannot be managed in the bush, and being "clean" does mean something different to us when we are out hiking. So how do you wash your hands when you are in the bush?

There are a few options to consider and items for you to pack to ensure your hands are clean. Let's discuss the options.

Hand washing methods

Water and friction is a good method. The longer you do it, the better it is. Wash them under running water, such as a drink bottle, stream or creek. Rub the palms together, in

between the fingers, and over the top of your hands. It is as simple as that, and better than not doing it at all.

Snow is good too. Just pick up some snow and rub it over your hands, or push your hand through some snow for a good old clean. It has the abrasive quality and it is hardened water. Any method that uses abrasion will help. Food Code USA states that it is the abrasive action obtained by vigorously rubbing the surface being cleaned that loosens the transient microorganisms on the hands. Your hands might not be super clean but a lot of the microorganisms could be removed with a little rub, in water or with snow.

Tissues or travel towels moistened with some water may also be used if you need to remove some baked-on dirt. Wet the tissue or towel and rub it over your hands. The tissue may break apart, however, depending on how hard you rub your hands but it will work, and the towel can dry on the back of your rucksack while you walk.

Alcohol-based hand sanitisers come in a range of brands and sizes and are pretty good. All you need to do is flip the lid, squeeze some onto your hands, rub in and wave your hands around to air dry, then presto, you have clean hands. And someone will think that you are waving to them. Do these sanitisers really work, and can you really make new friends with your new air dry wave? Well they do not clean the hands as such so if the hands are soiled with mud or dirt, you won't remove that. But if the hands are not soiled, you will definitely be reducing the microbial load, and basically yes, they work. Alcohol is an effective germ killing agent as it breaks down the cell membranes of the bugs, thus killing them. So make sure you use the alcohol-based sanitisers. And the bit about making new friends, give it a go and see how it works for you. Alright, you can blame me if it doesn't work.

Alcohol wipes are similar to the hand sanitiser as above, but they have the additional ability to remove the soil from your hands with the use of the cloth. However, one drawback to these is they do not decompose easily and you have to carry

them out. They should not even be disposed of in a pit toilet. Carry a spare zip-lock bag to put them in and dispose of them later when you are out of the bush.

While some people suffer from dry hands due to the alcohol, I would rather have dry hands than suffer salmonella poisoning.

Travel soap sheets come in a small, convenient container which contains numerous strips of dry soap. You can get them in the camping shop. All you need is a little bit of water and you can wash your hands anywhere, anytime. I am sure you will always have a little bit of water in your drink bottle that you can use.

When to wash your hands

The obvious times you need to wash your hands are after you have gone to the toilet, and before you handle any food. But have you considered any other times like after you cough or sneeze, or before and after tending to a wound or even looking after a sick person? But wait, there's more. You also need to wash them before putting contact lenses in, after taking garbage out, touching animals, or any cleaning duties, and when they are visibly dirty of course like after scrambling up the side of the cliff.

Just think about this: your hands naturally harbour a wide selection of bacteria such as intestinal/faecal, oral, nasal and dermal. All the times you have touched something today, you have unwittingly picked up and dropped off a wide selection of bacteria from each surface you have come in contact with. How did you eat your sandwich today? With your hands right. Do you work in an office and share any space like door handles, kitchen appliances, and printers or phones, and with how many do you share this space with? Did you shake someone's hands today, where have all of those other hands been? Food for thought.

So there you have it, the choice is yours but please consider all of the options above to keep your hands clean, and more importantly germ free so you do not make anyone sick. Next time I am in the bush and I see someone waving in the distance, I will come and say hello to you. See you out there.



Tjorita

North-north-west

I tried to photograph the breeze
That lifted hair and heart
While trudging barren, burnt-black ground;
The wish surpassed my art.

I groped for words to somehow show
The empty skies at dawn,
After stars and before blue;
The phrases died unborn.

I tried to paint the chaos rocks,
Their opalescent shades,
The tortured lines, the polished sheen;
The portrait's still unmade.

I tried for song to give you flocks
Of twilight birds at springs,
Their caution overcome by thirst;
My throat's too dry to sing.

In vain I took the sketchbook out
Each evening and morn;
The dragon's skitter, eagles' soar,
The waving leaf, undrawn.

I hoped to bring these echoes back
To fill gaps on your shelf;
It cannot work, you'll have to go
And live it for yourself.



On the Chewings Range, looking north from
a knoll west of Ltharrkelipeke (Mt Giles)

What Happens When Magnetic North and True North Align?

Paul Wilkes



At some point in recent weeks, a once-in-a-lifetime event happened for people at Greenwich in the United Kingdom.

Magnetic compasses at the historic London area, known as the [home of the Prime Meridian](#), were said to have pointed directly at the north geographic pole for [the first time in 360 years](#).

This means that, for someone at Greenwich, magnetic north (the direction in which a compass needle points) would have been in exact alignment with geographic north.

Geographic north (also called “true north”) is the direction towards the fixed point we call the North Pole.

Magnetic north is the direction towards the north magnetic pole, which is a wandering point where the earth’s magnetic field goes vertically down into the planet.

The north magnetic pole is currently about 400 kilometre south of the north geographic pole, but can move to about 1000 kilometres away.

“The north magnetic pole is currently about 400 kilometre south of the north geographic pole ...

How do the norths align?

Magnetic north and geographic north align when the so-called “angle of declination”, the difference between the two norths at a particular location, is 0° .

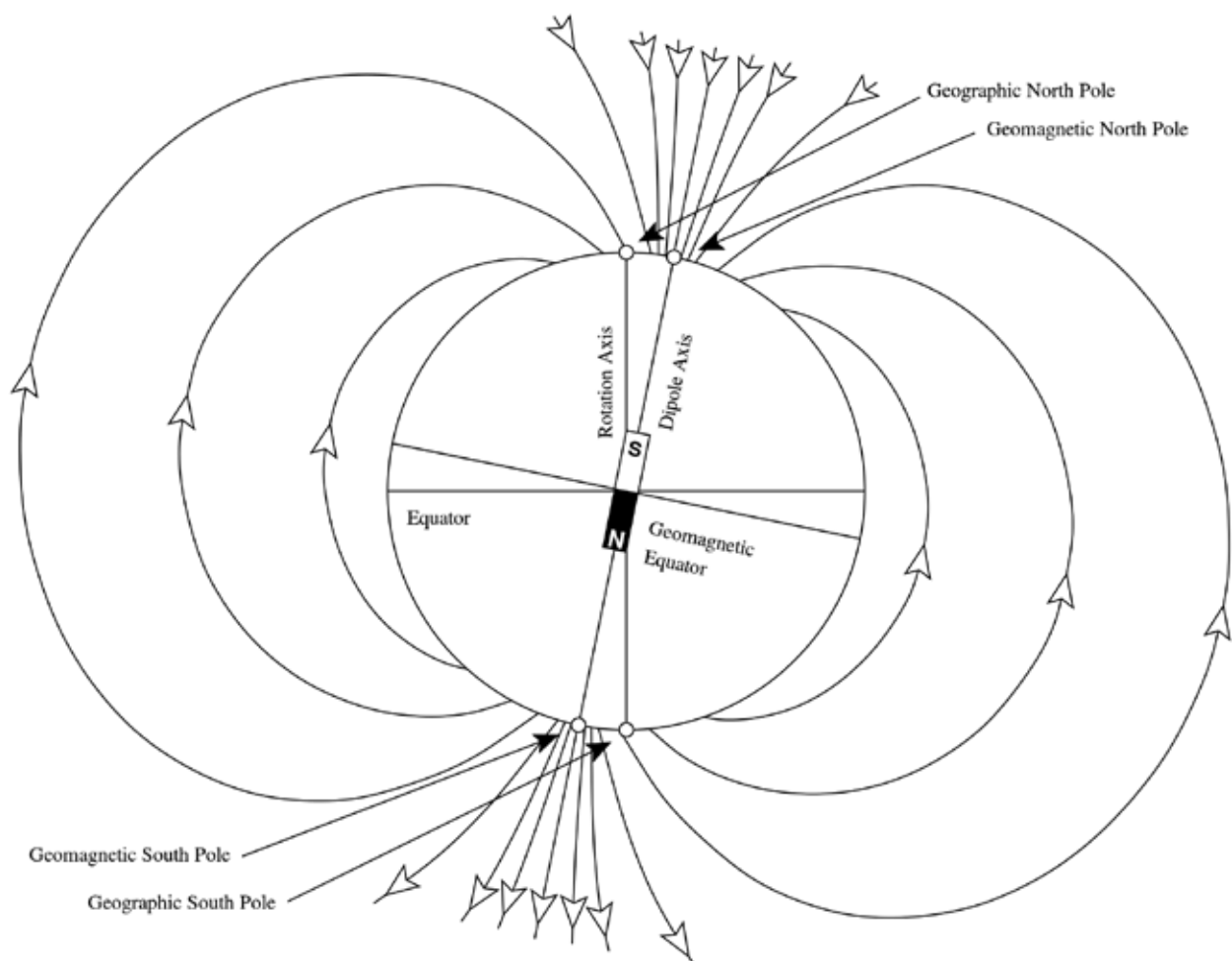
Declination is the angle in the horizontal plane between magnetic north and geographic north. It changes with time and geographic location.

On a map of the earth, lines along which there is zero declination are called agonic lines. Agonic lines follow variable paths depending on time variation in the earth’s magnetic field.

Currently, zero declination is occurring in some parts of Western Australia, and will likely move westward in coming years.

“Currently, zero declination is occurring in some parts of Western Australia ...

That said, it’s hard to predict exactly when an area will have zero declination. This is because the rate of change is slow and



Tilted dipole
Octupole

current models of the earth's magnetic field only cover a few years, and are updated at roughly five-year intervals.

At some locations, alignment between magnetic north and geographic north is very unlikely at any time, based on predictions.

The locations of the magnetic poles are constantly changing

Most compasses point towards earth's north magnetic pole, which is usually in a different place to the north geographic pole. The locations of the magnetic poles are constantly changing.

Earth's magnetic poles exist because of its magnetic field, which is produced by electric currents in the liquid part of its core. This magnetic field is defined by intensity and two angles, inclination and declination.

The relationship between geographic location and declination is something people using magnetic compasses have to consider. Declination is the reason a compass reading for north in one location is different to a

reading for north in another, especially if there is considerable distance between both locations.

Bushwalkers have to be mindful of declination. In Perth, declination is currently close to 0° but in eastern Australia it can be up to 12°. This difference can be significant. If a bush walker following a magnetic compass disregards the local value of declination, they may walk in the wrong direction.

The polarity of earth's magnetic poles has also changed over time and has undergone [pole reversals](#). This was significant as we learnt more about plate tectonics in the 1960s, because it [linked the idea](#) of seafloor spreading from mid-ocean ridges to magnetic pole reversals.

Geographic north

Geographic north, perhaps the more straightforward of the two, is the direction that points straight at the North Pole from any location on earth.

Look up at the stars and not down at your feet.
Try to make sense of what you see,
and wonder about what makes the universe exist.

Be curious.
Stephen Hawking

When flying an aircraft from A to B, we use directions based on geographic north. This is because we have accurate geographic locations for places and need to follow precise routes between them, usually trying to minimise fuel use by taking the shortest route. All GPS navigation uses geographic location.

Geographic coordinates, latitude and longitude, are defined relative to earth's spheroidal shape. The geographic poles are at latitudes of 90° N (North Pole) and 90° S (South Pole), whereas the Equator is at 0°.

An alignment at Greenwich

For hundreds of years, declination at Greenwich was negative, meaning compass needles were pointing west of true north.

At the time of writing this article I used an [online calculator](#) to discover that, at the Greenwich Observatory, the earth's magnetic field currently has a declination just above zero, about +0.011°.



The average rate of change in the area is about 0.19° per year, which at Greenwich's latitude represents about 20 kilometre per year. This means next year, locations about 20 kilometres west of Greenwich will have zero declination.

It's impossible to say how long compasses at Greenwich will now point east of true north.

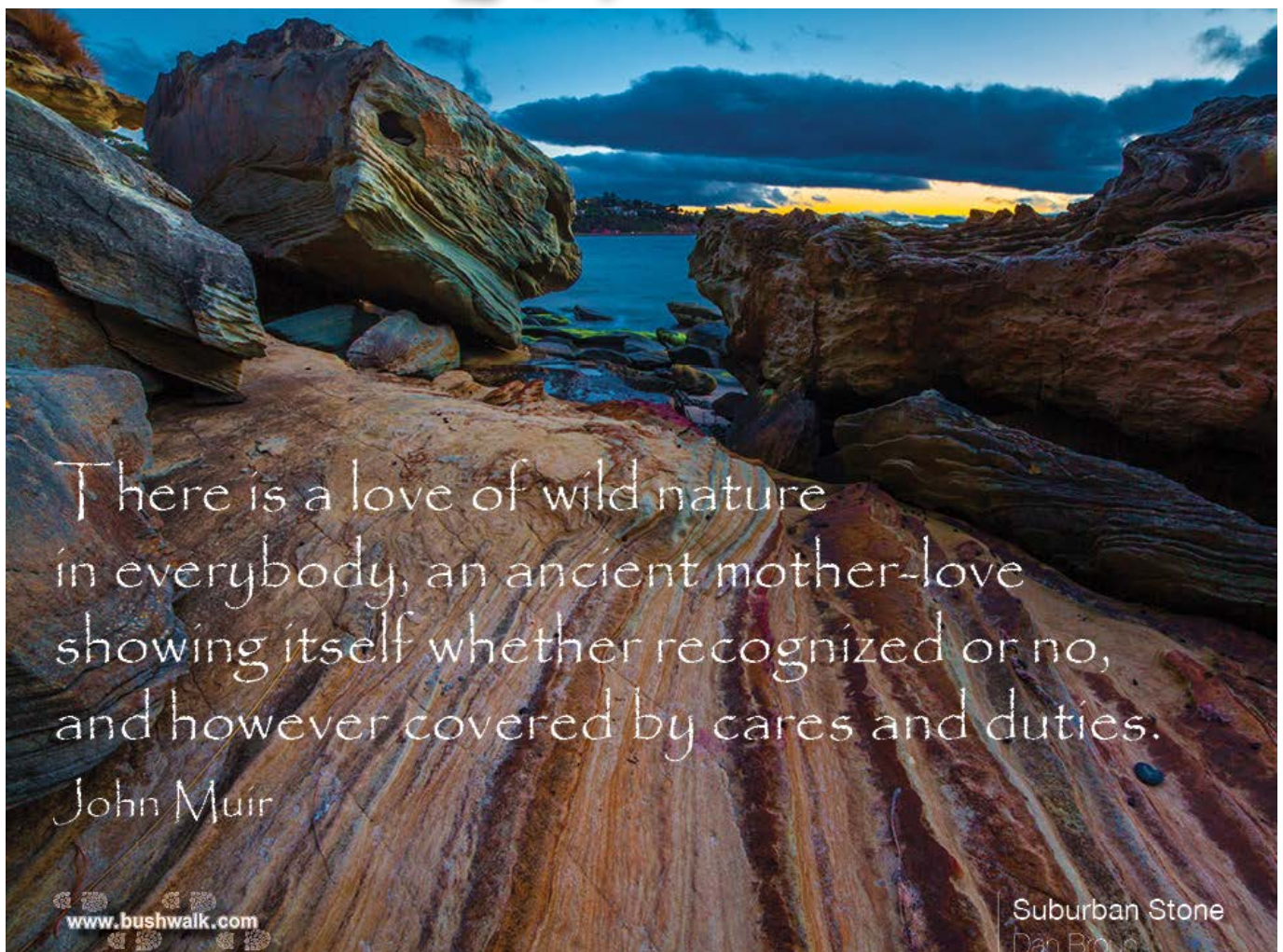
Regardless, an alignment after 360 years at the home of the Prime Meridian is undoubtedly a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence.

“When flying an aircraft from A to B, we use directions based on geographic north.”

Paul Wilkes

Senior Research Geophysicist, CSIRO

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 16 September 2019.



There is a love of wild nature
in everybody, an ancient mother-love
showing itself whether recognized or no,
and however covered by cares and duties.

John Muir

Malbena - Appeal

Loic Auderset

Halls Island is in Lake Malbena in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area on the Central Plateau. There was a proposal to effectively privatise Halls Island, and BWA had a [February 2019 article](#) about this. The Central Highlands Council (CHC) had a say in this proposal, and submissions were sought about the matter. There were 1354 submissions, with all but three strongly against the proposal. The developer appealed to the Resources Management and Planning Appeals Tribunal (RMPAT).

On Monday 21 October 2019, the RMPAT handed down the long-awaited decision on the proposed Lake Malbena development. During the appeal, The CHC, Wilderness Society Tasmania, and Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) were represented by the Environment Defenders Office (EDO) and gained success on two jurisdictional points relating to the application of the *Land Use and Planning Act* on reserved land; to the application of state legislation to matters protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act 1999*. However, it was ultimately found that RMPAT did not have the scope to assess the development against the existing management plan:

“The Tribunal has decided that it did not need to assess whether the proposal complied with the reserve management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, as that assessment has already been completed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service in the form of a Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA).”

“... it was ultimately found that RMPAT did not have the scope to assess the development ...”

Reserve Activity Assessment questioned

The legitimacy of the RAA process has been contentious since its introduction, as it is a non-statutory process that does not guarantee public consultation and does not offer any rights to appeal. Further, the RAA does not require independent assessment of impacts on wilderness or input from the State's own advisory bodies. As it stands, this is currently considered our “gold standard” for assessment of developments, yet as mentioned above is found wanting.

Changes to the state-wide planning scheme are to be introduced next year and will effectively mean development on reserved lands bypass local council approval. This means that any future development on reserved land would only require approval through the RAA process, and therefore does not guarantee any public input. The proposed changes to the planning scheme highlight why it is essential that the RAA

process is changed to allow community consultation and a right to appeal, essential components of a democratic process.

Though it may seem as though the proposal has been given the green light, the appeal is still ongoing and the Central Highlands Council has 14 days to lodge draft conditions on the planning permit. After that time, each party has an additional 14 days to file a response or appeal the decision in the Supreme Court. The lawyers representing the CHC are still in consultation to determine the most appropriate course of action, and it is critical to maintain the conversations around this to keep the issue in the forefront of people's minds and the media.

Strange, conflicting processes

In the days since the RMPAT decision was handed down, local newspapers have reported on the lack of transparency surrounding the Expressions of Interest (EOI) process as part of the national “Right to Know” campaign. This has been met with a number of retaliatory pieces from the Minister for Parks and Wildlife Peter Gutwein and Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania CEO Luke Martin, both of whom stated that the process is transparent, while somehow also arguing that it needs to be kept secret in order to maintain the intellectual property of the developments. Additionally, the Tasmanian Audit Office has announced it would conduct an audit into the effectiveness of the EOI process in relation to the development of sensitive and appropriate tourism experiences and associated infrastructure in Tasmania's national parks, reserves and crown land. The outcomes of the audit aren't expected until March 2020. Information relating to the audit can be found [Tasmanian Audit Office website](#).

Opposition continues

The Tasmanian Wilderness Guides Association, a representative body for 200-300 guides in Tasmania, are the latest group to come out and express their opposition to the Halls Island development. Spokeswoman Hayley Kingsley said guides were concerned about a lack of consultation surrounding the Government's EOI program for developments in national parks. Ms Kingsley said, “As stakeholders, we are

interested in maintaining the inherent values that pertain to these places, operating with environmental sensitivity while continuing to build healthy and sustainable tourism and wilderness industries". On 30 October, the Tasmanian Greens introduced a motion to halt the EOI process until a new statutory process - allowing public consultation and appeal on matters pertaining to compliance with a management plan - is in place. The result of this saw State Labor side with the government, and ultimately the motion failed. Later that day, The Wilderness Society, along with the TNPA, held a meeting to discuss the findings of the tribunal and were joined by representatives from the Shooter, Fishers and Farmers Party, The Greens and renowned fly fishing author Greg French, who announced a community sit-in for the 7 and 8 December at Lake Malbena to coincide with a proposed "Occupy Halls Island" protest. Those willing to join the rally have a number of options regarding their level of participation; this ranges from being present at the initial event site, through to camping on the proposed helicopter landing site as well as packrafting around Halls Island. Additional information regarding this planned action can be found on the Facebook page of The Wilderness Society Tasmania and Fishers and Walkers Against Helicopter Access Tasmania.

Positive news from the Federal Court

The long awaited ruling from the Federal Court was also handed down in November. The Federal Court challenge initiated by The Wilderness Society (TWS) was in response

to the Department of the Environment and Energy ruling that the development was not a "controlled action" and therefore did not require further assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC). TWS argued that the decision to not deem the proposal a controlled action was wrong; and were ultimately successful on two of three grounds. While the Federal Court did rule that the decision to not deem the proposal a "controlled action" should stand, they also outlined multiple failures in the decision making process, imposing strict conditions to be determined and agreed upon by both parties before the development can go ahead. "The Federal Court also found that the Federal Government cannot rely on the RAA to assess proposals in Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area" said Tom Allen, campaign manager for TWS. The outcome of the ruling will hopefully force the state government to alter the EOI process to be more in line with the expectations of the community and protect world heritage values.

More information

- [Bushwalk Australia discussion](#)
- [Fishers and Walkers against helicopter access](#)
- [FlyLife Forum](#)
- [Tasmanian Wilderness Guides Association](#)
- [TNPA](#)
- [Twitter Keep Tassie wild](#)

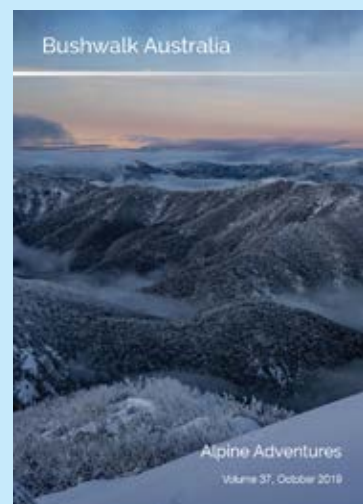


Lake Malbena with the southern side of the Walls of Jerusalem on the horizon



Blue Peak from an unnamed lake
Peter Grant

Bushwalk Australia



Alpine Adventures

- > Hannells Spur Loop, NSW
- > Australian Alps Walking Track
- > Skiing With the Bobs, take two
- > MUMC – 75 Years Old



Awesome Adventures

- > McMillans Track, Victoria
- > Island Lagoon
- > Franklin River, Tasmania
- > Long-Distance Walking Tracks



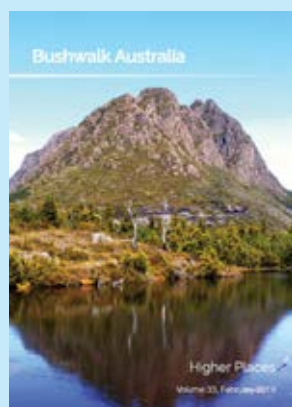
Wild & Rugged

- > Queen Charlotte Track, NZ
- > Huemul Circuit, Argentina
- > Never Say Never
- > 100 Man Cave



Going the Distance

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



Higher Places

- > AAWT - Past, present and future
- > Tassie Winter Trip, part 1



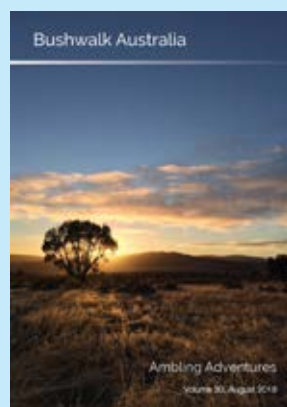
Peak Promenade

- > Pindars Peak, Southern Ranges
- > Cordilleras in Peru



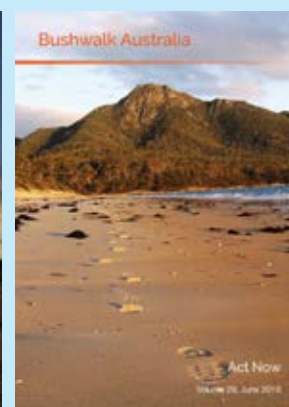
Ridges & Valleys

- > Buffalo, The Bluff and Mount McDonald
- > Skiing with the Bobs



Ambling Adventures

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



Act Now

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



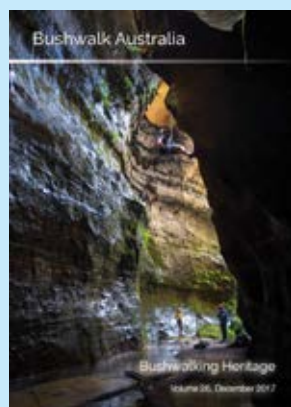
Meandering Mountains

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



Far-flung Places

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



Bushwalking Heritage

- > Kidmans Hut Walk
- > Conquering the Giant



Wonderful Walking

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



Discover & Explore

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