

# Bushwalk Australia



Borderless Bushwalking

Volume 44, December 2020



Bushwalk Australia Magazine  
An electronic magazine for  
<http://bushwalk.com>  
Volume 44, December 2020

**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.**



Gillen Sunset  
Brian Eglinton

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

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

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

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

BWA Advisory Panel  
North-north-west  
Mark Fowler  
Brian 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 2021 edition is 31 December 2020.

#### 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.

Mount Snowy from Hartz Peak  
Andrew Strikis

6

**Ettrema Wilderness**  
**Beautiful boulder-strewn waterways**

12

**Tripping in NSW**  
**A series of day trips near Sydney**

19

**Calendar 2021**  
**Available now**

Competition: Australia December 2009



20

## Western Macs

Majestic rock faces  
and magical waterholes

28

## Photo Gallery

More outstanding  
pictures

46

## A symbol of survival

The extraordinary story of  
Wollemi pines

50

## Rubbish!

If you carry it in, you  
should carry it out

56

## Keep my bushwalk satisfied

A song for when I escape lockdown



## From the Editor

Hi

I hope this edition finds you fit and well.


This time last year we were all in shock with the fires raging around Australia and had no idea about the pending storms, flooding and pandemic. What a year it has been. I was spoiled to have squeezed in 20+ days on track in Tassie between all that.

Each of the articles in this edition are about places and topics that are dear to my heart. Some amazing wilderness areas and some stunning dry landscapes. Hopefully, they can help inspire you in your next adventure. Thanks so much to our authors for their dedication in sharing these stories.

Let's hope that 2021 is a better year for our broader communities and getting out bushwalking generally.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)  
matt@bushwalk.com



### Declaration

The opinions stated in articles are those of the authors and not of those involved in the production of this edition. If you are worried about transparency or any editorial aspect please either write to me or raise the issue on Bushwalk.com. The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my main associations within the outdoor community.

I operate [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com), [Wildwalks.com](http://Wildwalks.com) and [Overlandtrack.com](http://Overlandtrack.com), a number of other smaller websites (and related apps) and have written several walking guide books, published by Woodslane. I contract to National Parks Association NSW and I am a member of the Walking Volunteers. I have had contracts with state and local government departments regarding bushwalking and related matters. I have also partnered with a large number of other organisations in environmental campaigns. Any commercial advertising or sponsorship will be clear in the magazine.



# In the News

## Snowy 2.0 scheme

Former federal Liberal leader John Hewson has cast [serious doubts](#) on the proposed Snowy 2.0 scheme. The [NPA](#) has similar views.

## Campfires in Victoria

Authorities found [87 unattended or abandoned campfires](#) in Victoria on the weekend of 14-15 November 2020. It seems that the lifting of stage 4 restrictions led to people going bush.

## Malbena update

On 9 November 2020, Sussan Ley MP, federal Minister for the Environment, said that Wild Drake's plans to privatise and develop Lake Malbena is a controlled action under EPBC Act. The Statement of reasons are [here](#). Point 79 says:

"Having considered the advice in the recommendation brief and the attached material, I found that the impact on the world heritage values of the TWWHA from the use of helicopters is likely to be significant."

The Wilderness Society website has a [summary](#). TNPA has a [Statement of Reasons](#) why Malbena proposal is a Controlled Action. The [next stages](#) of the process are environmental assessment and approval, similar to what has happened to date but at a federal level.

It would be good if as many people as possible wrote to the Minister thanking her for her decision. It's important to use your own words. Sussan Ley can be contacted at [sussan.ley.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:sussan.ley.mp@aph.gov.au) After that, be involved in the process, again in your own words.

Bushwalk Australia has discussed Halls Island in the past, the most recent being [October 2020](#).

## Falls Creek to Mount Hotham track upgrade

As part of an [economic recovery plan](#), the Victorian government has allocated \$15 million for the Falls Creek to Mount Hotham track. Details are unavailable as we go to press. While there are sections that need attention, many hope that this is not an attempt to construct a track like the one that was [heavily criticised](#) in 2018. It seems that the funding will be for track work and maintenance, not the overdevelopment planned several years ago.





# Ettrema Wilderness

Rob Wildman



The Ettrema wilderness is 120 kilometres south of Sydney in the coastal hinterland south-west of Nowra.

This area, which gently slopes to the north and east from a height of around 750 metres, is characterised by huge rock platforms split by streams which inevitably fall over high waterfalls on their way to meeting the Shoalhaven. The gorges are steep sided and rough but the boulder-strewn waterways which run through the middle of these are some of the most beautiful you will see in Australia.

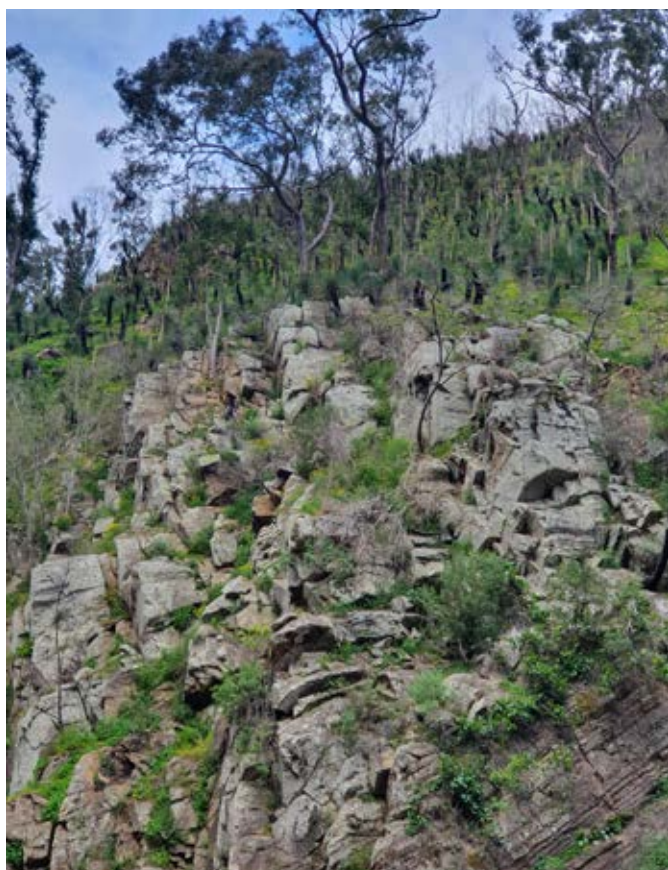
Near Camp 2  
Helen Jones



The Shoalhaven River starts its relatively short journey from the hills south of Braidwood and grinds its way north through a magnificent gorge until it swings east to the Tallowa Dam and finally Nowra. The high country to the east of this forms, in part, the Budawang and Ettrema Wilderness. The main road linking Nowra to Braidwood and Canberra cuts these areas in two, and the tableland north of this road is where you find the wonderful wild Ettrema Creek.

The political battle to ensure this area was declared a wilderness has been ongoing since 1937 and was fought at every turn by miners, dams and loggers. There are still many areas not included in the park because they are freehold farms or reserved by the government for potential gold mining or possible dams. However, the wilderness we do have is magnificent and well worth a visit.

A word of warning for your adventure; there are effectively no tracks throughout the whole of Ettrema, Tullyangela and Bundundah gorges and navigation can be difficult because of some extensive areas of scrub and unexpected cliffs. The best seasons for visiting this area are spring and autumn as summer can be too hot. But the water's nice then!



Burnt out Xanthorea above the creek near Camp 1  
Helen Jones

## The walk

Walk dates 10-12 September 2020

Walkers Rob Wildman, Josh Neri, Helen Jones, Max Dona, Clay O'Brien

## The descent

We had three days to cover what, in the final analysis, was a very short distance of about 20 kilometres. I decided to take the extra time because on every other trip in this area I had simply run out of time and energy. This time I was the only member who had actually been in this area before and so I wanted the group to enjoy this beautiful country as much as I had.

Given that the National Parks Service had opened up Morton National Park north of the Braidwood Road when pretty much everything else was either closed or access roads were cut, and that the fires had burnt this area to a cinder only a few months earlier, it seemed like a good option for a slightly extended walk. A few weeks before the start, we saw this part of the south coast receive something like 300 mm of rain in two days. The national parks workers were getting bogged on the access road so we really didn't know what to expect.

“... fires had burnt this area to a cinder only a few months earlier ...”



Max, Rob and Clay about to deep wade  
Helen Jones



I was particularly keen to get into the area because normally the scrub found on the high rock platforms can be impenetrable. So much so, trips in here need to be carefully planned to allow for this. This time we found vast swathes of open country with lots of spindly blackened stalks of *Banksia* and other scrub typical of this area. The ground was often soft underfoot as well.

The starting point was Quiera Clearing, a small privately owned basalt outcrop in a sea of agricultural desert. Since I had been here last, the clearing was no more a clearing; the owners had decided to fence the open grassy areas and then carve a new track around the property. Instead of heading across the clearing to join the initial open ridge, the new track takes you straight down to the gully on the northern side of the ridge. The effect of this is that it actually cuts off quite a bit and you get to the top of the slot into Myall Creek earlier than expected. Whether this will remain as scrub free as it is now will be interesting to watch.

Myall Creek, one of the traditional routes into the gorge, was quite changed, with many of the original large logs gone and many more new ones in their place. The fire must have been fierce here since the ground on



Sundews (*Drosera*) on the ash-filled plateaux  
Clay O'Brien

the slopes of the sides of the creek was pretty broken up and loose with lots of sharp rocks. Heading to Jingles Pass was a cinch as there was hardly any of the typical scrub in our way. You could almost see the path from halfway across the plateau. It was a good spot to train young Max in using a compass. While my own reliance on modern electronic equipment has grown over the years, reminding oneself on how these work is still important. A compass doesn't usually run out of battery.



Just before Camp 1 - first mandatory wade  
Helen Jones



Rob and Helen leading the way to the ridge down  
Clay O'Brien





Copyright: Crown Lands NSW

Coming through the pass, we saw a lot of fire damage with split boulders and many new burnt logs across the path. We headed to our right to gain the top of the ridge before the descent and there was no trace of the old pad which guided you there.

As usual the descent to the creek was steep but this time there was the added danger of not being able to see where your next footfall was going to be. After the fires, there had been a spurt in small green wide-leafed growth covering most of the ground so each step had to be tested for a hole, a log or just nothing. I think it took about 1.5 hours to reach the creek this time. With the first pool providing a place to stop and look around, the whole group were now starting to see why we had come to this area.

The walk down Ettrema Creek always had lots of crossing and wading through pools. There had been a party down before us and they had constructed the strangest "house" of stones just past the junction with Myall Creek. I wondered if they actually used this for a camp, ignoring the now weed-infested original camp site just back at the same junction.

The flood had appeared to have risen quite high in this narrow gorge, for when we finally arrived at the Jones Creek junction camp site, the water had clearly been running freely over this area, some two metres or so above the normal river height. The old camp site was still usable but sites had to be selected carefully. There are very few camp spots on Ettrema Creek and this is usually one of the best, being right beside the stream and under the magnificent rising wall of Thompson's Cliff. Helen even spotted a bounding wallaby high up on the scree slopes in the burnt out grass trees.

### Reflecting time

The next morning, we decided to wake late and wander up Jones Creek returning before lunch. This tributary to Ettrema Creek, full of beautiful cascades, pools and even a very high waterfall, had been the centre of one of the big fights over the declaration of wilderness, only being settled as late as 1979. There are still well documented mining shafts and relics further up the creek.

After a short stroll you arrive at the first wonderful big pool, which had native orchids, almost in bloom, hanging from a nearby



tree. We decided just to laze around it was so lovely. Josh even dived in but came up with a mouth full of expletives so cold was the water. He says he was just chilling out. Retracing the creek, we returned to the tents, packed and started on the dawdle down to ... well, we didn't know where we could camp again. Who cared anyway as the weather had gone cloudless and warm and Ettrema Creek was just too inviting.

The amble down the creek was glorious and we spent quite some time just being amazed by the water and the steep inclines on both sides. This section is a mixture of boulder skipping interspersed with mandatory wades. Everywhere there was evidence of how the creek must have roared through this defile when full of water.

Reaching the junction of Transportation Spur and Ettrema Creek by mid afternoon, we set up camp, in what was, the only other camp spot in the whole day's walking. Again, we started a fire, cracked open the wine, cheeses and cigars for a relaxing end to the day. Laid out in front of our sandy camp, was another emerald pool sitting under an earth red cliff which was adorned by a set of fig roots stretching metres above to some tree we couldn't see.



Ascending the first cutting onto Pardon Point  
Clay O'Brien

## Day out

Next day, Transportation Spur was an absolute grind but the hill gives you a break about half way up when the slope becomes gentle and the soil stops slipping from under your boots. Going up this spur was a lot easier than coming down from Jingles Pass in terms of visibility of the ground in front of you. The final climb up to Pardon Point is a little tricky and requires some initial scrambling to take you to quite a narrow ledge but beyond that the final slot is easy, although now filled with a tree requiring some pack passing. At the top, we saw our third soaring wedge tail eagle as we took time to rest before the last section.

The trip back to the car was a wonderful meandering stroll around the low edges of the high plateau. Here we were very glad to have had the services of the fire for the scrub was thin and easily navigated. And this time, because of the earlier rain, there was so much water just seeping out of the soil and so all the normally dry streams were actually flowing with lovely clear and cold water. What a surprise.

The area is always spectacular, still one of the treasures of Morton National Park.



Rob is 67 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.





On the creek below Camp 1  
Helen Jones



# Tripping in NSW

Yvonne Lollback

In September my partner Richard and I decided it was time to get the camping trailer out of storage and GO somewhere. We'd bought it early last year and used it for three months in NT and Queensland but, since then, for medical, as well as all the well-known reasons, it hadn't been out. Since we could only go within NSW, that's where we went. Besides, that's what the ads tell you to do - see your own state. So I thought I'd share our trip in case someone else needs ideas. Also, as nowhere is more than a day's drive from Sydney, this trip can be done in stages as time permits.

Sandstone Caves Circuit

All photos by Richard Graylin and Yvonne Lollback



### Working with friends of the Colo

It started with a weekend late in August on the Putty River with [Friends of the Colo](#) doing some planting and removing weeds. This group has been working at ridding the Colo River and tributaries of various weeds for over 20 years since someone decided willows needed to be treated. They are a group which show what sheer determination can do. We had numerous visits from a swallow checking out our annexe to hang its nest from, if only the wind would stop moving the canvas. Some mice had also decided our peg bag might make a cosy home.

### From Cassilis

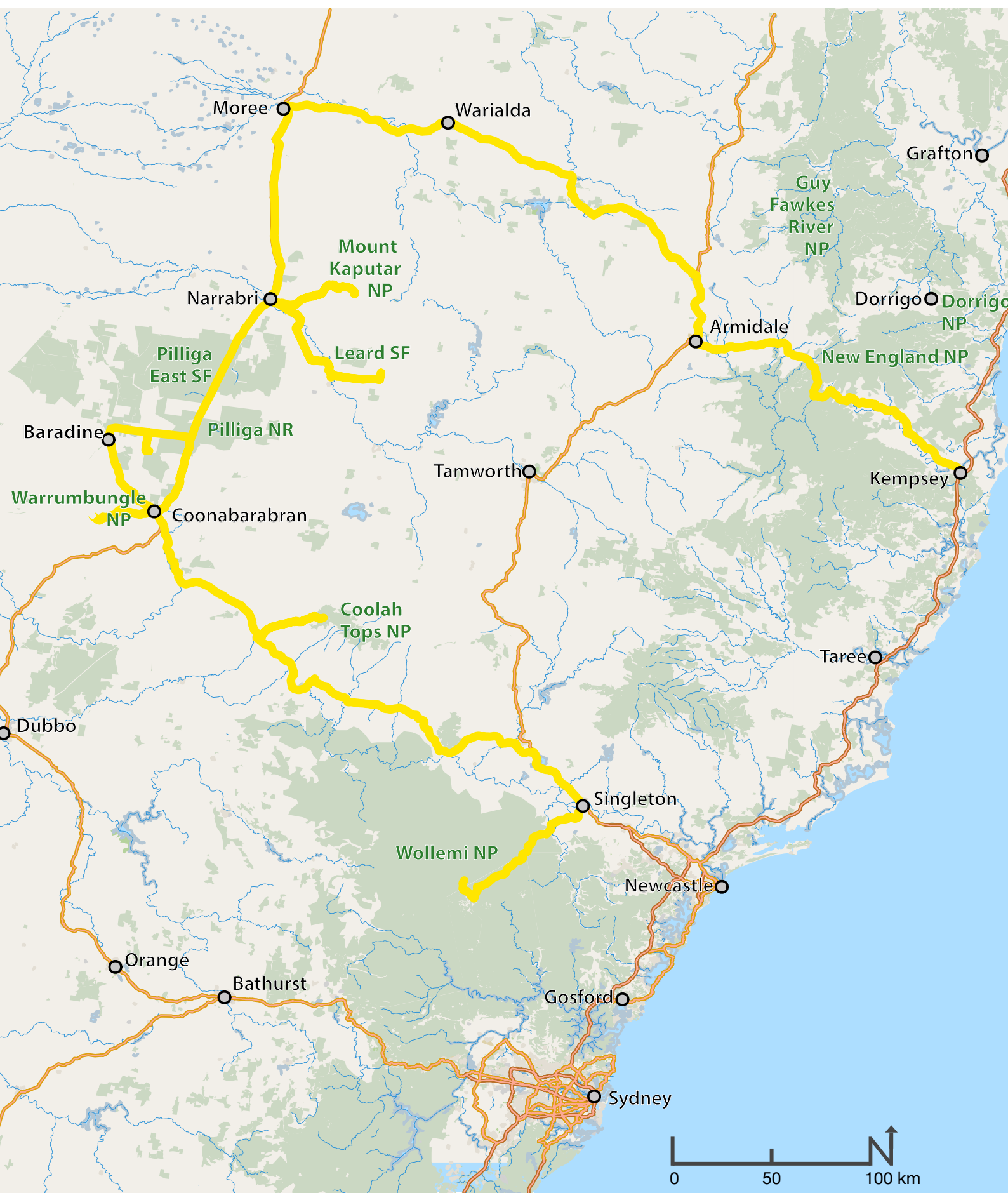
After we left there we continued up Putty Road to Singleton and a base camp at the bowling club campground at Cassilis for three nights. It's a lovely, very cheap, rural little camping place. From there we were easily able to visit [The Drip](#) south of Cassilis near Ulan.

This is a very long, tall cliff wall dripping with ferns, mosses and lichens beside the beginning of the Goulburn River and is now protected as part of that national park. Though the return walk is under three kilometres, allow plenty of time to just be in awe because it really is beautiful. Nearby is the Hands on the Rock Aboriginal site which has numerous hand prints believed to have been done by women and children. Coolah Tops, north of Cassilis, was our next port of call though the eastern end was still closed. However we filled the day nicely with a walk taking in Norfolk and Bald Hill Falls both of which tumble down basalt columns. The Pinnacle Lookout was our lunch spot and then a visit to the Giant Grass Trees topped the day off beautifully, particularly as the trees were all flowering. For those wanting more there's the Goulburn River National Park and the Widden Valley.



The Drip







## The Warrumbungles

From there, we headed up to the [Warrumbungles](#). I discovered all sorts of fascinating geological facts through my geologist partner and via an [app](#) which tells you what to look out for as you walk along. It is well worth getting, not my Richard who is mine to keep but the app. The first walk, of course, was the Grand High Tops Walk which was just mind-blowing again even though I've done it several times. The app made it so much more interesting as well. You can stand at a feature, study the rocks and know how they ended up there looking like they do. Split Rock was another half day's walk and there are several other short walks nearby. For the really fit there's Mount Moffatt but we decided to leave it. I won't go into more details as excellent brochures are available. We learnt that this area, and [Mount Kaputar](#), were created as Australia drifted north and passed over a particular hotspot in the earth's crust. Mount Warning and others were also made from this same spot which is now under Bass Strait.

“ You can stand at a feature, study the rocks and know how they ended up there looking like they do.

## Sandstone caves and sculptures

Next was Mount Kaputar but, on the way, I took Richard to the Sandstones Caves which are well worth the short circular walk. They are not signposted but are 35 kilometres north of Coonabarabran on the way to Narrabri. Look out for the Yaminbah Trail which is on your right. It's only one kilometre to the carpark. The track head has information boards and the track is well made and easy to walk as it goes round. The sandstone cliffs change in colour and the weathering has caused stunning shapes with arches and caves further around.

There is even a viewing seat over the Pilliga Forest and some Aboriginal rock art. This is well worth a few hours of your time.



Sculptures in the Scrub



Above The Breadknife, Warrumbungles



Further up the road you can turn left on No 1 Break Road for about 20 kilometres and left again onto the Top Crossing Road to see the Sculptures in the Scrub set above Dantry Gorge. These are a group of five sculptures done by local indigenous artists with boards telling about them and explaining the art. They are really magnificent with each set being totally different from the others. A very pleasant walk takes you past the works, down into the gorge, which is not deep, and back to the carpark. I'd been there before but it was worth this second visit. There is also a very nice campsite nearby. The long drive to the marked Salt Caves is not worth it - there's nothing really to see.

### Mount Kaputar and surrounds

We ended up spending five nights in Narrabri because we really loved this friendly little town. We spent two separate days in Mount Kaputar NP though, of course, you can camp up there too. Some walks were still closed after the devastating fires of late 2019 but two walks I really recommend are The

“ This latter walk has brilliant dripping rock faces studded with lichens, mosses and ferns.

Governor and Mount Coryah. This latter walk has brilliant dripping rock faces studded with lichens, mosses and ferns. Around the other side is a Grass Tree alley ledge which you have to walk through to believe. Again they were in flower. What a bonus. Good brochures are available as there are many other great walks. Another day we drove to Sawn Rocks, rhyolite columnar cracking at its most magnificent, best seen in the morning light. Huge chunks have fallen from the cliff face into the creek and look like piles of enormous logs stacked up. Then we continued to Waa Gorge which is well worth the four or more gates you need to open and shut. This return walk of 2.5 kilometres has short canyon sections, waterfalls and pools and ends in a really huge amphitheatre, again with rhyolite columns lying around. With care it is possible to climb up a fair way but getting down wasn't quite so easy. We had a quick look up at the other tributary which ends in a short canyon and waterfall. Really pretty and worth a visit too.

“ Then we continued to Waa Gorge which is well worth the four or more gates you need to open and shut.



The approach to Mount Kaputar



From the tourist info book we found out about [Dripping Rock](#). It's towards Boggabri, turning left towards Manila after Gins Leap Rest Area on the right - a big cliff you can't miss. There are good signs after this though the last section does cross a creek and will need a higher clearance vehicle. Anyway the "rock" itself is only a very short walk and is actually another huge amphitheatre but with sheer walls this time, much of it dripping. We were lucky as the waterfall was flowing and the pool below would be great in the summer. This is a lovely place for a picnic and explore though the numerous snake warnings are a bit off-putting. A small cave up on the left is worth the short climb.

### Hot artesian pools

Heading north we decided to try out the hot artesian pools at [Moree](#). The waters are supposed to have healing properties but I found the heavy use of chlorine very off-putting. However, if you love hot artesian bores, Steve Lambert has put out a book called Australia's Great Thermal Way.

“The waters are supposed to have healing properties but I found the heavy use of chlorine very off-putting.”

### Armidale and surrounds

From there we headed east to [Armidale](#). On the way we stopped at [Cranky Rocks](#), east of Wyallda, again a short walk to a pool surrounded by huge granite impossibly-balanced boulders piled up. There's also a viewing platform overlooking the pool. The camp ground looked very inviting but we decided to press on. Once we had set up in Armidale, we spent the next few days visiting all the fabulous gorges and waterfalls of this area - Dangars, Wollomombi and Bakers Creek. Most have lovely rim top walks with great views. Armidale Tourist centre has brochures on each one as well as history walks. This whole area has been tilted vertically so the gorges look very different from the gorges in, say, the Blue Mountains. We also went to Gara Gorge for an interesting walk looking at the flume line and gorge where a hydro power station was built in 1895 to power the antimony mining town of Hillgrove, seven kilometres away. This was a first in Australia. How they managed to build and maintain anything at the bottom of that steep, constantly eroding gorge is beyond me. The next day we went to Hillgrove itself which is a remnant of what it was, but plaques help you to visualise it as a



Wollomombi Falls



thriving place even bigger than Armidale was then. There's also a museum but it wasn't open just then. I also had to do a walk down memory lane in Armidale itself as I went to Teachers College there 53 years ago.

### Dorrigo and surrounds

Leaving my memories, we headed east again along the Waterfall Way with a stop at the New England National Park and Point Lookout where we did the beautiful 2.5 kilometres Weeping Rock/Eagles Nest circuit. This takes in dripping basalt rock faces and amazing lookouts over the Macleay Valley filled with Antarctic Beeches. Surprisingly, two different types of white everlasting daisies were flowering profusely on the cliffs - last flower I would have expected in a rainforest. The Cascades Walk was next but it wasn't quite as beautiful as the brochure boasts. That night we stopped at the Little Styx River camping site just before you enter the park. It's free, grassy, shady and beside a babbling brook. And we had it to ourselves. What more could you want?

The next day we stopped at Cathedral Rocks to do the 5.8 kilometres round walk of these magnificent granite tors. A 400 metre climb takes you right to the top for wonderful views but this is not for the timid. Then on to Ebor Falls with its lookouts over the upper and lower falls. These were sort of closed because of the fire damage but were still easily accessible. The rocks at Ebor Falls were created when Ebor Volcano, which last erupted only 19 million years ago, was active and has left layers of basaltic rock behind the upper falls and interesting basaltic columns near the lower falls. These falls are part of



Cathedral Rocks

the Guy Fawkes National Park which has more to see but we'll do them another time when we include the whole Grafton area and surrounds.

Dorrigo was our next stop for three nights to do some beautiful rainforest walks in the Dorrig NP. The rainforest information centre alone deserves some time to go through and the raised bird observation walk is wonderful for bird lovers. We were lucky enough, on The Wonga Walk, to see a goanna, and later a mullet lizard, just resting beside the tracks. I was even able to photograph them. Dangar Falls nearby, is also a pleasant spot especially if you like to swim. The round drive north of Dorrig to Platypus Flat had some short walks to giant Tallow and Carbeen Trees but, again, the recent fires have really scarred the area.

“... the raised bird observation walk is wonderful for bird lovers.”

### The coast around Kempsey


After Dorrig we went to Kempsey to do some walks along the coast at South West Rocks, Hat Head and Crescent Head. The Hat Head circuit includes a fabulous narrow tunnel chasm into which the sea surges. We were lucky enough to see dolphins playing just below us. We thought of going back up towards Walcha for more waterfalls but decided we'd had enough. Besides, last September was one of the coolest, blowiest Septembers I could remember. Time for our home comforts and to plan our next trip.



Yvonne started bushwalking as a child with her mother, who loved exploring new areas, later taking her infant's class on small Katoomba walks. Yvonne has lived in the Blue Mountains since 1983. Canyons were always a great thrill, with overnight walk favourites being the Grand Traverse above Newnes and the Budawangs. It was a pleasure to take her children and family members on walks and go walking overseas. Now in her early 70s her body is starting to tell her she's ageing, but she's inspired by those in their 80s still walking. She only wants to go to Heaven if there are lots of great walking tracks.



# Calendar 2021

The 2021 Calendar is printed and orders may be placed now. As always the selection of photos was made from the winners of Bushwalk.com photo competitions. To enjoy this amazing imagery the whole year long, order your copy by emailing Eva at [eva@wildwalks.com](mailto:eva@wildwalks.com) or click  to order it straight away.



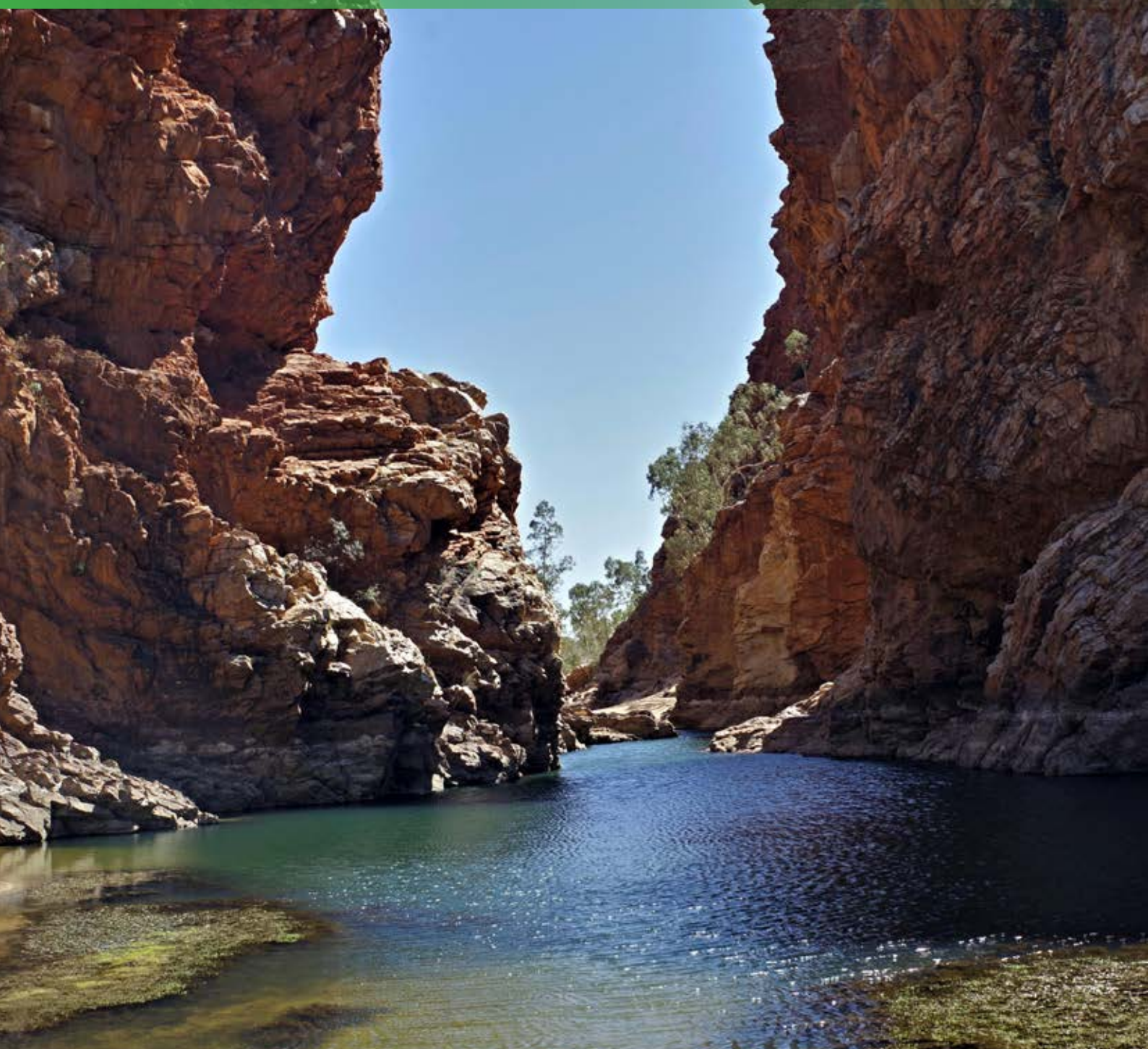
## BUSHWALK AUSTRALIA 2021





# Western Macs

Brian Eglinton



The MacDonnell Ranges are a long chain of mountains stretching about 150 kilometres west of Alice Springs, desert country where water can be scarce. The winter months have very mild to freezing temperatures enabling multi-day walking. My walk was in September, and a run of warm weather made it a challenge. Despite its harshness, the majestic rock faces and various colours combine with magical waterholes to make it a place worth the effort to explore and that live long in the memory. The long-distance Larapinta Trail runs along this range.

Ellery Big Hole  
All photos by Brian Eglinton



### Changing plans

As with most of my trips, it was a case of reworking the plans on the run.

Ribuck has spent a lot of time in the area and it was under his excellent guidance that I was able to get to the top of Mount Giles.

That was day two of a nine day plan, but with 30 degree plus temperatures during the day, the drain due to lots of sweat and muscle fatigue led me to parting ways after day three.

So when this report is finished, it will be of two divergent tales. My tale is of a five day trip with a rest day, followed by a three day trip.

### Starting out

We met up the day I flew in, and checking the time I suggested a quick run up the local exercise route at Mount Gillen, a short distance out of Alice Springs.

Next day was a drive out to Ormiston Gorge to start the walk. This first five day walk involved passing through a lot of burnt out country, and the start of the popular Pound

walk was very black. We took a very direct route to the base of Mount Giles, which meant some scrub bashing up a winding valley and then climbing to a high ridge. This then drops through an easy wide open valley which had also been burnt recently.

There were more places holding water when I went through late August in 2013. I was feeling the conditions and needed to have rests, so we settled with camping near the first waterhole off the Giles massif. Despite incredibly dry conditions, this consisted of a number of pools leading back to a waterfall pool and then more in the gully above that. I cramped that night as the body relaxed, but that had happened on a few of my more recent trips after a hard first day. So I was hoping to bounce back on day two.

The plan was to go over the top of Giles with full packs to camp at a canyon some distance east along the northern edge of the range. The day was warming quickly and I could feel the strain of the climb and decided it would be best to rethink the plan. It was decided to drop packs but finish the climb of Giles and then return and continue to Giles Yard Springs.



Ormiston from Giles



So with light day packs we continued up the relentless very rocky climb to the top and enjoyed the vast vista on offer. The top of Giles has little level ground, but people have made small clearings at various levels to allow overnight bivouacs. And all the approaches to it are steep. We took lunch at a lovely waterhole in the gully adjacent the climbing ridge.

We then made off in the heat aiming for Giles Yard Springs. It was getting quite late and I was really struggling, so when we arrived at Oasis waterhole we had to camp. It had a delightful pool but not much clear ground for camping. Upstream was a constricted gorge that hid a large basin with several creeks leading up the sides of the range. We did not try a wade to see beyond.

That night I had severe cramping in both quads of the upper legs. This was a new spot for me and a bit disturbing. I had been taking magnesium, staminade drinks and straight salt, but still suffered on these first two days.

Ribuck was happy to go with a rest day - which for him was providential - as he accomplished his great goal of getting

“... he accomplished his great goal of getting into the upper Canyon of Defiance ...

into the upper Canyon of Defiance on this day as a solo walk over the top of the range and then dropping down. In retrospect he thought that this task was probably best done from exactly where we camped.

I slept till 11 am (it was getting very hot in the tent) and then took a day walk to Giles Yard Springs and explored. The high route along the southern edge of the Giles massif was burnt and is quite bare, crossing a lot of saddles before working along some valleys.

But Giles Yard Springs was exceptional with lots of pools connected by flowing water.

Camping is not allowed in the main spring area, but the flowing water and pools extended past the fence and the burnt out sign that marks the boundary. This is where people camp.

Heading upstream to the main spring, despite the fires that went through the gully becomes lush and after a series of rocky pools ends in a large pool below a waterfall. The afternoon light was on the fascinating upper reaches above Oasis on my return Ribuck returned late afternoon. It was a very peasant spot apart from some windy gusts and given the area had been burnt out, a lot of fine black soot got into my tent and gear.



Oasis



### Decision to return and rest

Next day I decided I was not confident I would not cause more trouble if I went to a point three days from the car, so with Mount Giles under the belt, we decided to part company. Ribuck went on to explore his canyon in more detail and I retreated for a day's break.

We planned to meet again at Bowmans Gap - Ribuck would be traversing the Redwall ridge over two days. I retraced my GPS back along the face of Giles.

Given a relaxed schedule, I decided to explore two of the streams coming off Giles. In each case, they begin with a small gorge which opened out into some valleys behind before heading steeply up the slopes. The first one led to a series of four dry waterfalls which I climbed.

The second led to a dry waterfall which became impassable with a large boulder to skirt before ending under a large chockstone bridge. This stream also had some flowing water in it - as well as a deep worn rock basin with water in it at the entrance gorge. I then proceeded more directly to the day one Giles campsite, passing the climbing ridge on the way.

My plan was to take an hour's rest at the waterholes here and stock up with water before using the last light of the day to head out into Ormiston Creek East branch to camp.

I was pleased to meet NNW here. She had been exploring extensively and was planning on using the waterhole gully to climb Giles probably the next day.

“I was pleased to meet NNW here.”

I said my farewells and headed off towards the Pound. Next day was another warm one and I made my way along Ormiston Creek to Ormiston Gorge. Early on I picked a straighter path a little higher on the northern bank through a flat section of spinifex. Dropping back down into the creek I found Ribuck's "where is this" waterhole - now very dry and sandy.

Ormiston Creek has a lot of ups and downs as it alternates between sand (which is like walking in molasses) and very rocky outcrops. I found two spots with water prior to reaching the junction of the East and West branches as they combine to flow through Ormiston Gorge.



Ormiston Hill



I cut through some spinifex just before the junction of the two arms, dropped into the creek for a while and then climbed out before intercepting the official Pound Track. I then began to meet day walkers in the area. The pools in Ormiston were dry or very low. The walk out had been in good time, but the heat had still taken a toll and I was happy to take things a bit slower and relax. It is possible to get a shower at Ormiston and I made use of that. I drove the 130 kilometres back to Alice and booked two nights.

Next day was my rest day - but after a slow morning I did a tourist run dropping in on Simpsons Gap and Glen Helen Gorge. It was fascinating to see a swarm of Zebra Finches at Simpsons Gap; I saw another lot drinking at Ellery the next day. I saw a number of different birds while in the area. The Northern Territory has more diversity of birds than any other state except South Australia.

“It was fascinating to see a swarm of Zebra Finches at Simpsons Gap

I had not decided exactly what to do the next day, but started with more tourist activities - Ellery Big Hole and Serpentine Gorge, which demonstrates a tremendous amount of folding in the strata. Here as in many places such folding indicates a plastic condition in the rock which results in no cracking. This would be consistent with the whole stack of layers being contorted while they have still not solidified into hard rock.

The view from the upper lookout is into a valley with three major ridges. Access is currently restricted into the inner gorge, but the second ridge is highly constricted. Along with places like Redbank Gorge, these water gaps (where the stream runs through a mountain range rather than flowing around it) look very young. A slow carving out over millions of years would not leave such steep vertical walls.

## The second trip

I was feeling pretty good by the time I got back to Ormiston (I did the 130 kilometres drive six times over the 11 days) and decided to go for Bowmans Gap in the late afternoon. I had already greatly reduced my pack weight based on lessons from the first hike and knowing from Ribuck that Bowmans Gap had good water.

There had been a change in weather and the maximum for the day was forecast as 24 °C - much cooler. Once again I chose to go through Ormiston Gorge but starting with a high route past the Ghost Gun lookout which drops down mid gorge. After stumbling and almost breaking the camera (again?), I took off my graduated prescription dark glasses. I rarely used them on this walk, but this stumble emphasised how they distort the view of my feet.

The official pamphlet shows an unmarked track over the hilly shoulders rather than following the creek. This route was initially quite good, though it is full of spinifex, but it does come to a very rocky and steep section which slowed me down. Having spotted a lone walker, I dropped down to ensure they were okay. It was a lady who was local and very well prepared, carrying nine litres of water. We passed two waterholes on the way there, but it was certainly much drier than my trip at a similar time of year in 2013.

There are two waterholes in Bowmans Gap itself; the first is very large but not flowing.

We parted here as I wanted to go on to the second waterhole at the other end of the Gap.

This one appears to be a spring out the cliff face and while shallower is extensive and flowing in parts. It was my camping spot for the next two nights.



Pound Panorama





## Sonder Zeil Panorama

The next day I wanted to get the early sun on Mount Sonder. Assuming the northern slopes would get me a view, I was early climbing. It was a big mistake to have left the gaiters off.

These slopes are covered in spinifex, so it was a careful climb. I also discovered that west of Bowmans Gap is a quite high area, meaning I had to go a fair way up to see Mount Sonder.

Having gone that far I decided to carefully press on to the very top, and from there I decided to push all the way along the ridge to the top of the big waterfall about 1.5 kilometres distant.

This is a complex and difficult place to get views. I tried a few exposed spots from the very top before getting into the gully itself. Climbing down this, I was reluctant to go the very lip of the fall, as the rock was polished and very steep. Taking a line across the slope

to a higher point on the edge, it was clear an unobstructed view was not available.

On the return leg, I managed to very carefully work to a spot more directly above it - and with camera suspended over the void got a shot with most of the waterfall in it.

It is a four drop waterfall - the first drop lining up with the valley into a good pool, then it turns 90 degrees to go over a small drop to a small rock pool before going over a larger drop to a bigger pool. It then angles around to again follow the valley line over a rocky drop that can be climbed from the bottom.

I retraced my steps on the return journey, with most things now in good light. Breakfast was still waiting. The views back along Waterfall Valley were great.

“ Assuming the northern slopes would get me a view, I was early climbing.



Bowmans Waterhole



After brekky, I decided to check out a waterhole I had seen from up top. Apparently named Whistling Kite Waterhole, it is a bit over a kilometre upstream from Bowmans Gap. Ribuck wandered into camp around lunchtime. We used the afternoon to explore up Waterfall Valley from the bottom. It was my second time up this valley, and it is a scary place. After working up a broad creek valley, it rapidly narrows and forms a very sharp V. A large cliff towers over the left-hand side, while a very steep and broken rock shelf slopes in on the right.

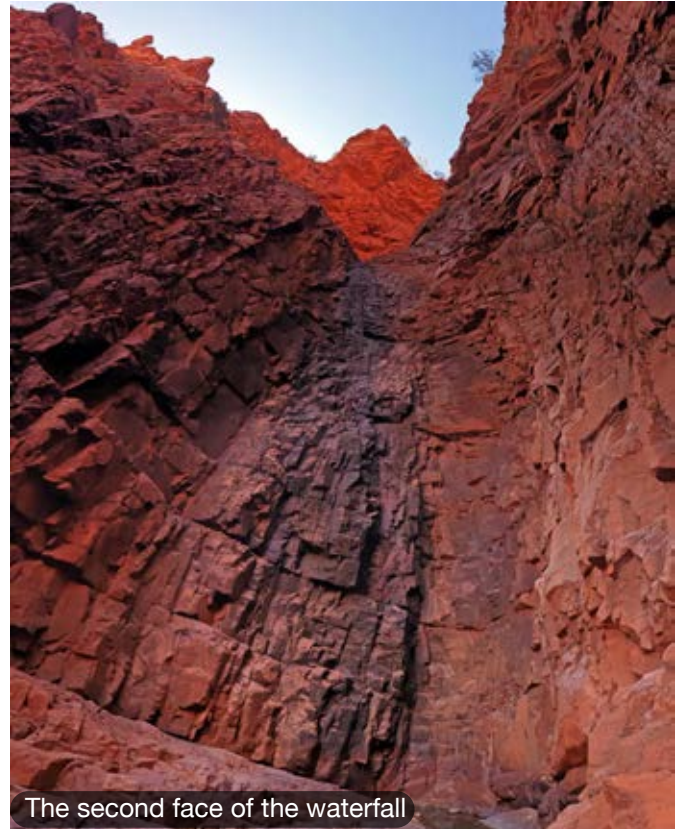
The slope angle can vary, but looking up at various places there are line after line of thick rock slabs just perched waiting to break off and slide down to crush anything in its way as it hits the cliff on the left. If this had been eroded slowly over time, there should have been a substantial pile of debris lining the bottom in various states of wear.

There is clearly some debris in the slot, but some sections have none at all, and where it does lie, it is very thin. The valley looks like it was eroded very cleanly so that almost all of the rock removed was swept a long way away leaving quite a pristine rock surface. And the time since then has seen only a small amount of debris building up by normal erosion rates.

Early in this section, you need to get past a number of rock pools. Last time I had to work up the sloping rock shelves to get around, but this time the levels were low enough to get past all but the last one. We gave up the attempt to climb through it. But the slope we then climbed was steep indeed. And coming back down it was a careful exercise as well.

I had previously stopped just above this last pool, but this time we followed an easy line of cracks in the sloping rock and got the waterfall proper. The first face of the four drops can be climbed a couple of ways and leads to some large rock slabs and some gravel with a plunge pool. You cannot see the top two drops from here, but it is hard to get photos to give a true impression of the place.

Curiously, using my phone to take a vertical shot was about the best I could do.



The second face of the waterfall

I took to the slopes on the way back to see if I could get a vantage point in the late afternoon.

Next day was an easy walk out, this time sticking to the creek bed up to meeting the Pound Track.

After we had cleaned up at Ormiston Gorge, we had a relaxed drive back to Alice. We also dropped in on Standley Chasm on the way for an ice cream and to check out the Chasm in comparison with what Ribuck had seen in the Canyon of Defiance.

But this is the end of my part of the tale. A tough, but rewarding expedition.



Brian is from Adelaide and like to get out regularly throughout the year for some multiday hiking. The cool winter weather generally sees him heading north to the Flinders Ranges and Central Australia.



# In the News

## Parts of Royal National Park closed to avoid overcrowding

In early October, warm weather in Sydney and easing pandemic restrictions saw parts of the Royal NP closed to [avoid overcrowding](#).

## Victoria Government's strategy to protect national parks

Parks Victoria has released a [Grampians Draft Management Plan open for comment](#). One potentially contentious issue is that dispersed camping is banned. Submissions may be made until 24 January 2021.

## Deforestation in Australia

Australia is a world leader in chopping down trees and wiping out animals, [two questionable accomplishments](#) that are tightly connected.

## Weather predictions for this summer

The Bureau of Meteorology's [severe weather outlook](#) suggests there is an increased risk of flooding this summer in the east and north of Australia as La Niña makes its presence felt.

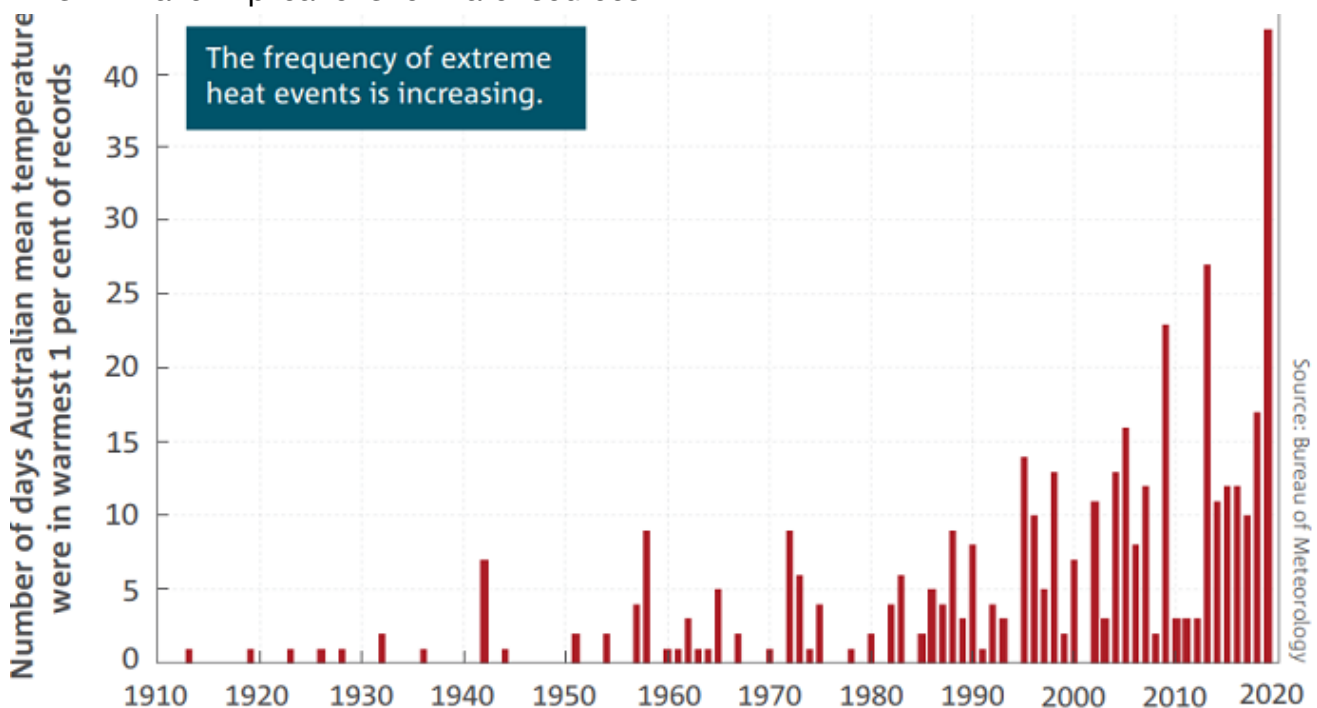
## Trailside Museum burnt down

On 16 November 2020 the [historic Trailside Museum](#) near Tasmania's Cradle Mountain was destroyed by fire following a recent restoration.

## Climate change

The Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO have teamed up for the latest biannual report on the climate, and the findings are clear: Australia is experiencing climate change now, and the warming trend is continuing.

This will have implications for water sources.



2019 saw the most extreme heat days on record  
Supplied: Bureau of Meteorology





# Photo Gallery





# BWA Photo Competition





# Landscapes

## December 2019

### WINNER



Upstream  
John Walker

My local patch of bushland, a brief walk from home, is often a welcome retreat for a short bushwalk when time or other factors prevent travel elsewhere.

This shot was taken during the horrific bushfire period of late 2019 in NSW, evidenced by the background smoke haze in this scene. Although everything was very dry we were fortunate not to be directly affected. The symmetry of this upstream view of the upper Georges River caught my attention, prompting me to compose the shot just as night was beginning to fall.



How green is my valley?  
North-north-west

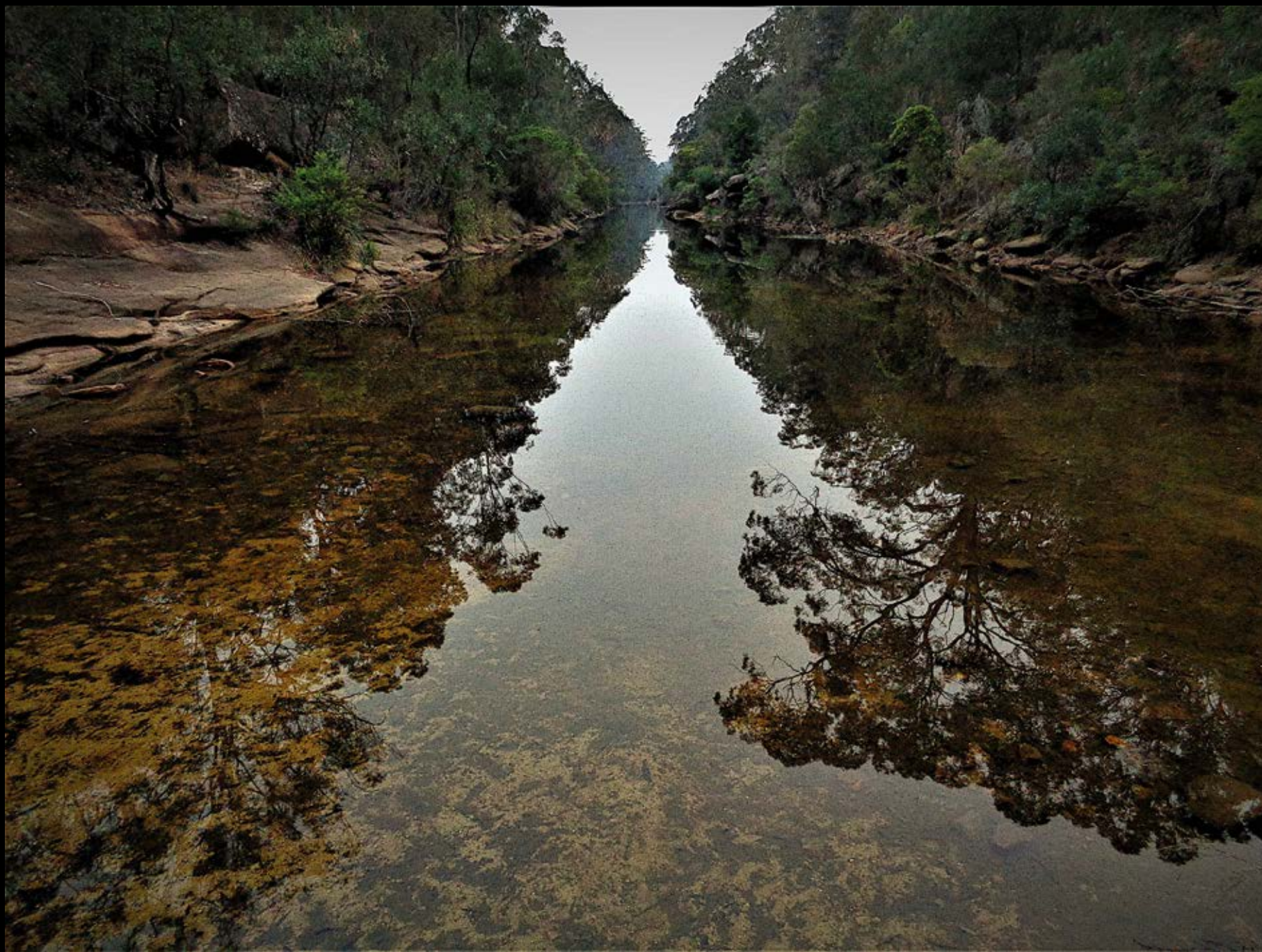


Western Arthurs has more to offer  
than the "Oberon" shot  
ILUVSWTAS



Lofty track  
Brian Eglinton







# Non-landscapes

## December 2019

### WINNER



Blondie  
North-north-west

Echidnas are one of my favourite animals. This fair-haired youngster knew there was something strange wandering around, but couldn't place the smell of sweat-soaked bushwalker well enough to know if it was a threat or not.



Forest art  
Brian Eglinton



Weathering  
John Walker







# Tasmania

## December 2019

### WINNER



Blustery Ball  
North-north-west

There are some places where the weather always seems to go off when I visit. Lake Ball is one of them, although at least this time it was just a strong gusty wind and not the usual nearly horizontal hail and thick fog.



High on High Moor  
ILUVSWTAS







# Other States

## December 2019

### WINNER



Downriver  
John Walker

The health of the river near my home was of great concern during this visit. Water levels were as low as I can remember, while bushfires raged in New South Wales.

I don't often present photographs other than in full colour. But I chose to use a near monochrome image for this downstream view of the upper Georges River.

I'm no artist but to my mind it highlights the starkness of the low water levels, contrasted with the positive aspects of the scene. Normal river levels have thankfully been restored since then.



Chambers Gully spring  
Brian Eglinton







# Landscapes

## January 2020

### WINNER



It's always satisfying to knock off another peak. It's heaps better to do it in perfect weather, with a beautiful campsite close to the summit and a view to die for. The cloud, by the way, was going. It just did a bit of decorative swirling around a couple of nearby ridges for a while and left me up there all alone.

Is that cloud coming  
or going?  
North-north-west



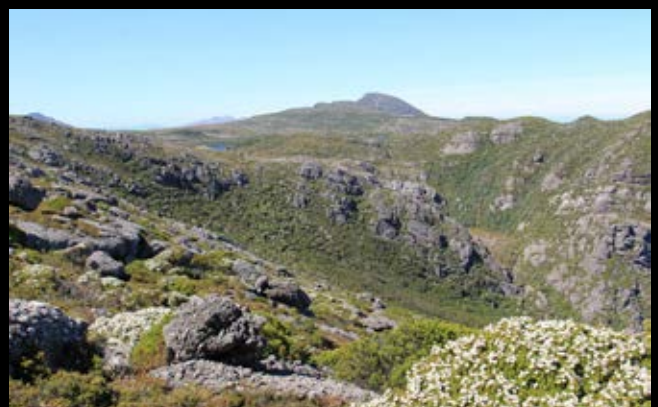
Nearing Refuge Cove  
Brian Eglinton



Who gives a fig  
landsmith



One Tree Point  
John Walker



Approaching the plateau  
Graham51







# Non-landscapes

## January 2020

### WINNER



Yellow Robin  
Brian Eglinton

A few days solo walking at Wilsons Promontory was a great way to get away, get some exercise, tick off the bucket list and see some great sights.

It was a good place for bird watching, and I was happy to get a few reasonable shots as they often flitted around.

This Yellow Robin was very accomodating as it perched next to the road down the centre of the peninsula.



Black necked stork  
landsmith



You can't see me  
Graham51



Eddies  
John Walker







# Tasmania

## January 2020

### WINNER



View from  
Mount Rogoona  
Teak

I took this photo on an overnight walk to Mount Rogoona. The plateau is quite open with good views in all directions. This photo is looking toward the central section of the Overland Track.



A convenient place for water  
North-north-west



Lake Tyndall  
Graham51



Rodondo  
Brian Eglinton







# Other States

## January 2020

### WINNER



Sealers Rocks  
Brian Eglinton

I had long thought of visiting Wilsons Prom, but knowing how busy it gets, I had never acted on it. Early 2020 was a summer with a lot of places closed due to fires and we were visiting Sydney.

So finding I could book some campsites, a long diversion to the southern tip of Victoria saw me heading off on a four day walk to Sealers Cove and down to the Lighthouse in quite mixed weather.

I knew the tide at Sealers Cove could be tricky, but was happy to cross the outlet at low tide. It also meant the large granite boulders at the southern end had their coloured bands on full display.



A grave place to find yourself  
(Camperdown Cemetery)  
landsmith



Perilous  
John Walker







# A Symbol of Survival

Josh Meadows

Media Adviser, Australian Conservation Foundation



Australia's dinosaur trees prove our determination to protect nature is far from extinct.

One of the many extraordinary stories to emerge from the brutal summer of 2019-20 was the tale of how the New South Wales parks service defended a grove of super rare Wollemi pines from a threatening bushfire.

Wollemi pine  
Acabashi, CC BY-SA 4.0



The Wollemi pine, a tree that coexisted with dinosaurs and is found in fossils, was long thought to be extinct. But that all changed in 1994, when an abseiler came across a stand of the trees in a remote canyon north-west of Sydney.

The discovery became front page news and caused an international sensation. The precise location of the trees was kept secret to try to prevent fungal diseases and trophy hunters finding them.

Authorities allowed cuttings from the trees to be propagated and sold in nurseries and you can now see them in gardens all over the place. I was given one of these propagated Wollemi pines for my birthday ten years ago. The tree is now taller than me and is thriving.

But in the wild, there remain only a few stands of the pines in the secret canyon.

People who have visited these isolated groves describe a deep gorge with a crystal-clear stream running through it. The forest floor is spongy underfoot with centuries of decaying leaves and branches. The huge trees, some believed to be one thousand years old, reach skyward. The bark of the pines is bumpy, reminiscent of Coco Pops or swarming bees. The foliage looks like fern fronds, but is surprisingly hard and fibrous to the touch. They really are like nothing else on earth.

When the Gospers Mountain megafire started burning through Wollemi National Park last summer, the NSW parks service took action to protect the canyon. Water bombers surrounded the gorge with a border of fire retardant and a team of specialised fire fighters went in and set up a sprinkler system to soak the soil and foliage.

Their mission was high risk and high stakes. And their efforts paid off. Fires raged on either side of the narrow canyon, but the ancient pines were saved.

People need nature and increasingly nature needs people.

James Woodford, the journalist who broke the story about the discovery of the Wollemi pines in 1994 and wrote a book about the

tree, was keeping a close eye on the 2019-20 bushfires. At first he thought the moist, hidden grove would not be in danger.

“Having been to the site, it seemed to me very very unlikely that a fire would get in there,” he told habitat. “So I felt quite comfortable they would be OK. But what I hadn’t factored in was just how dry it has been.”

That dryness has dramatically affected rainforests all over Australia. The Gondwana rainforests of northern NSW and southern Queensland contain species that have survived historic mass extinction events, but after Australia’s hottest and driest year on record, they are burning for the first time. More than 50 per cent of the Gondwana rainforests burned this summer.

The drying out of the Australian continent over many millennia is almost certainly what nearly wiped out the once-common Wollemi pines. Woodford said the pines are “only one catastrophe away from disappearing in the wild” and his book contains ecologist John Benson’s eerie prophecy that “one day people might need to intervene directly in the canyon to assist the trees.”

“... only one catastrophe away from disappearing in the wild ...”

But in this era of accelerating climate change, how realistic is it to think governments will deploy emergency rescue teams to defend every stand of rare trees or colony of endangered koalas or wallabies from encroaching megafires? And is this even the sort of future we want - lurching from crisis to crisis, sending in rescue teams to save tiny remnants of our once rich biodiversity while the continent turns to tinder around us?

“What we’re seeing is a transformation of the landscape towards species that love and need and thrive on fire,” Woodford said.

We are in a feedback loop. Bushfires wipe out ecologies that have not evolved to bounce back after being burned and they encourage the growth of plants that cope well with fire, which in turn makes our landscape more fire prone.



Historians like Bruce Pascoe and Bill Gammage have written about how this continent's landscapes have been shaped by humans for tens of thousands of years. That change continues — and now it is supercharged by global warming.

Permaculture co-founder David Holmgren, in a January 2020 essay *Bushfire resilient land and climate care*, says the “idea that our landscapes would naturally recover their pre-European characteristics by leaving them alone is ecologically naïve.”

Humans are part of the Australian landscape. The question is, how are we - and Australia's many unique and much-loved plants and animals - going to safely live here as the continent continues to dry out and becomes even more fire prone?

“... idea that our landscapes would naturally recover their pre-European characteristics by leaving them alone is ecologically naïve.”

Some people think the answer is more “fuel reduction” burning. Even Prime Minister Scott Morrison said, “hazard reduction is as important as emissions reduction.”

Controlled burning will remain an important tool for firefighters, but it's not the total answer. The window of time suitable for these fires is shrinking each year and, as David Holmgren has pointed out, there is evidence repeated fuel reduction burning depletes nutrients and reduces the land's ability to store moisture.

Rather than relying on burning, Holmgren advocates “a massive increase in research on fuel reduction by decomposition, drawing on Indigenous knowledge and the traditional knowledge of farmers and gardeners, especially those following organic principles.”

Holmgren also advocates a “return to Indigenous cultural burning practices, where canopy and soil organic matter are left intact.”

“Wollemi pines have become a symbol of survival and all that is good about what we can do when we are determined to protect something” - James Woodford

Then there's the thing that's driving climate change in the first place: our ever-increasing greenhouse emissions, derived largely from the continued burning of coal, oil and gas. It's the thing that, if addressed, would do the most to make Australia safer for all of us, yet our national leaders seem determined to avoid, evade, spin, confuse and delay acting on it.

“... if addressed, would do the most to make Australia safer for all of us ...”

But, as Al Gore says, in a democracy, political will is a renewable resource. In Australia, post-bushfire concern about climate change seems to be building quickly. Global communications firm Edelman's latest Trust Barometer has 89 per cent of the general population now listing bushfires, droughts, water shortage and global warming among their top concerns.

And if there's one thing we can take from the Wollemi pines story, as Woodford recently wrote in *The Guardian*, it's that it shows what we're capable of in times of crisis.

“The fact that out of this catastrophe, Wollemi pines have become a symbol of survival and all that is good about what we can do when we are determined to protect something, shows that all is not lost as human-made climate change tightens its grip.”

“... Wollemi pines have become a symbol of survival ...”

I'm very glad the NSW authorities winched in a crack team to save the Wollemi pines, but we can't sit back and expect governments will do likewise for the last colony of mountain pygmy possums, or glossy black cockatoos, or koalas.

The rescue team for our climate is all of us. Our mission is complicated and extremely urgent. And the stakes couldn't be higher. Are we up to the challenge?

This article first appeared in the May 2020 edition of the Australian Conservation Foundation magazine *Habitat*.





# Overland Track App

This app is to help you plan and prepare for the Overland Track in Tasmania, and then navigate this safely and enjoyably.

You will find detailed packing lists, information on each day of walking, itineraries, yummy recipes, a guide to flora, fauna, geology and travel planning, first aid and much much more. The app has a navigation section with topographic maps that will work offline, photos, terrain profiles, track notes and weather forecasts.

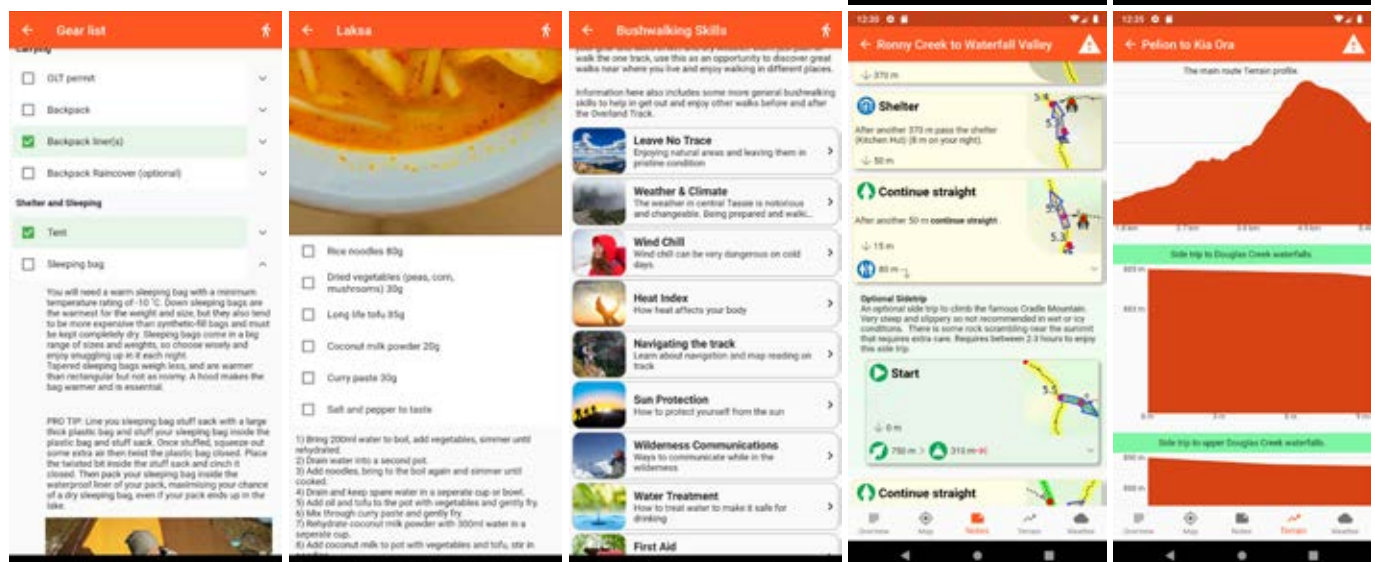
Think of this as the ultimate reference for the Overland Track, a happy marriage between a GPS and a bushwalking guide book.

Each section of the walk has an overview and a moving map (download the map tiles for offline use before hitting the track).

Information on bushwalking skills and equipment also applies to other parts of Australia to help you build your bushwalking skills before getting on track.

This app was made to help you get the most out of your time on the Overland Track, and is designed for all people: those new to bushwalking, hiking or tramping up to seasoned walkers.

More information at [www.overlandtrack.com](http://www.overlandtrack.com)





# Rubbish!

Sonya Muhlsimmer



I live in the Blue Mountains, NSW, and I have – well, I nearly have - the Grose Valley as my back yard. At the end of my street I can follow a track, and just past the track within a few hundred metres, at the reserve boundary is the start the Grose Valley, so it is very close.

A doggy bag full of doggy poo, in a tree  
All pictures by Sonya Muhlsimmer



This track has at least four good sized waterfalls, streams that run into the main creek with lots of yabbies and along the way, if you are lucky, you may just spot a lyrebird, and at night you will even discover an abundance of glow worms in the caves. Then down to the end of another street I get to another three waterfalls. But wait, there's more. On the other side of the highway I have another rather impressive walk which has even more waterfalls. If I say so myself the Blue Mountains is the most beautiful spot to live in, which makes me feel very privileged to be living here.

The Blue Mountains are a popular tourist spot, so on glorious days the mountains become pretty busy. These less well known tracks are a great chance for locals to disappear, away from the typical tourist destinations and madding crowds. Every time I go into the local forest I find more people exploring this area, which is good, especially seeing the little people out. These walks are awesome for kids. In fact I had my 11 year old nephew, Benjamin come and stay with me recently and I took him down to see the falls, then back again at night to see the glow worms, then again the next day to explore further down the side streams. What made it really special for him was when he saw not one, not two, but three lyrebirds in the bush. He was amazed and now is hooked and can't wait to get into the bush again. Oh, by the way, did you know glow worms are actually a larvae and not a real worm, they eat their own vomit and have four butt holes? Yes, really. After Benjamin went home and told his sister Annabeth aged six all about his amazing adventure, I now have Annabeth and my other nephew Samuel booked in for a weekend exploring the local bush tracks.

### Local tracks and more rubbish

What I am also noticing more in my local tracks is seeing more rubbish being dumped in the bush - not good. I have seen coffee cups, tissues, used doggy bags hanging in trees, food wrapping and bottles just thrown away. Well at least Benjamin got some bottles for return and earn and I do try to collect a lot of rubbish when I am down there to do my bit. But really, we should all know the motto "if you carry it in, you should carry it out", right?

Also when I go on bigger walks or canyons and especially known tourist walks, I sometimes see a lot of rubbish, a lot of tissues lying around in the bush or even food scraps. Sometimes when women go into the bush to do a pee, or even when anyone blows their nose, tissues can be left behind. I saw a tissue even in the middle of a tree fern, yes right in the middle of the fern. This really annoys me and it is not good the environment as there is an easy solution.

“... tissues can be left behind.”

My views are shared by my MP, Trish Doyle.

It was important - for some self care - to take a couple of days out of the office, away from emails, phone calls, problem-solving and walk. Given that school holidays and COVID-19 restrictions mean our local Blue Mountains bushwalks are much busier than usual at this time of year, I was keen (and surprised) to see how the tracks were coping with it all ...

Whilst some people don't mind the shrill sound of screeching children's voices or the very large and loud groups of Sydneysiders who haven't ever explored the bush, one must be prepared to encounter this! I met some lovely people, thrilled with the natural environment!

Sadly, though, I was gobsmacked by the amount of litter: chocolate and lolly wrappers mostly, but so much tissue and silky baby wipe rubbish throughout the bush. Chips and biscuits were thrown into our waterways ... and way too many people are using the bush as a toilet. Just awful.

Let's welcome people to our bush, to our local businesses and shops, for a break away ... but let's also respectfully remind people to:

- Leave nothing but your footprints;
- Take your rubbish with you;
- Spatial distance;
- Stop talking so loudly every now and again - hear the quiet of wilderness, waterfalls, wind in the trees, birdsong.

Enjoy!



### Benefit of the doubt or poor planning ...

Yes, some rubbish and tissues can easily fall out of your pocket, or rucksack, I get it as it can happen. As when you do look at some of the rubbish found like food wrappers and tissues in the middle, or just on the side of the track it looks like it could have easily fallen out of pockets. Other times, like when you see a full doggy bag in the fork of a tree, tissues in the middle of a fern tree and a coffee cup just off the track, this is blatantly obvious that it has been dumped. Now why would people do something like that? I don't know. I doubt those kind of people would be reading this emag. Perhaps seeing rubbish there, you think well they did it, so why not, or you don't care or simply poor planning and lack of care to carry rubbish with you, or as a friend says a lack of connection to the environment. The [psychology](#) and [reasons](#) for littering are in the articles.

### What we can do about it

We can do a lot about it, and it is pretty simple, really. Carry a biodegradable rubbish bag or spare zip-lock bags. Ensure your rubbish does not fall out of pockets and pick up what you can. There are so many articles on littering, it is a huge problem worldwide. You can even join an organisation, [Clean Trails](#). Another good friend told me a tip for rubbish for multi day hikes. Strap a two litre milk bottle to the outside of a pack as a rubbish bin. Take note, you need to empty out the rubbish after your hike as you can't recycle the bottle filled with rubbish.

Ladies, please carry a small zip lock bag in your pocket and when you pee take your tissue paper with you, pack it in the zip lock bag. Or even use a pee rag if you dare. Everyone, if you blow your nose or wipe your face, or whenever you use a tissue, ensure it is secure somewhere and carry it out with you please. This is a simple solution and yet so effective, the environment, and other hikers, will appreciate the effort you put in to keep the environment in its natural form. Depending on the environmental conditions some tissue paper will take from one to three years to decompose. Think of that next time you use a tissue.

### Rubbish breakdown – or not

I have compiled a table showing how long certain forms of rubbish break down in landfill conditions. The information comes from difference sources such as [WWF Australia](#), [New Zealand Science Learning Hub](#) and of course some other scientific journals.

You are probably asking me right now, how do we actually know how long this stuff takes to break down since plastic bags have only been around for about 60 or 70 years so we have not had a chance to wait 450 years to watch a bottle break down. Well, I'm glad you asked. Scientists do lots of experiments to measure biodegradability on different products, such as a respirometric test which measures the rate of respiration of microorganisms that break down the



Tissues in the middle of a fern tree



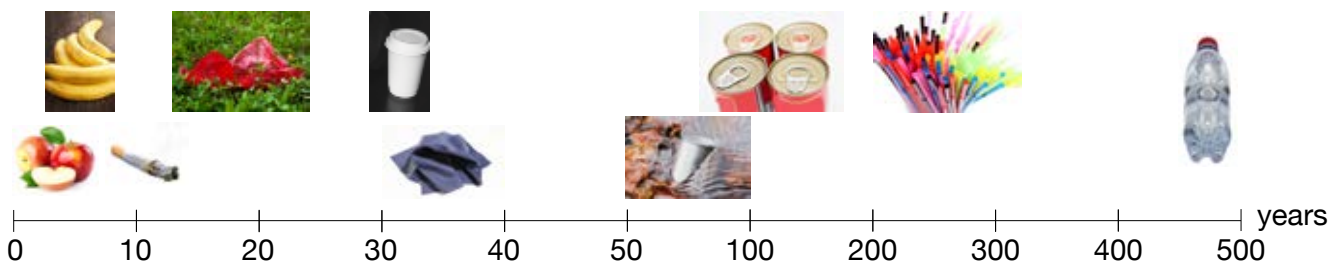
product. The microorganisms digest the samples and produce carbon dioxide which is measured as an indication of degradation. This is used on products such as paper, material and food scraps. Microorganisms don't recognise polyethylene (your typical plastic bag) harder plastics such as polypropylene (the material your toothbrush is made of), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), such as a typical drink bottle and other tough material such as Polyvinyl chloride (PVC), tin and aluminium as food source so the scientists have to estimate how long the materials break down in the environment.

The caveat to these products breaking down is ultraviolet light such as in the sunlight, in comparison to microorganisms eating organic products. Thus, the sun's ultraviolet light breaks the product down over a very long period of time. So really the figures from 80 years plus are an estimate based on known quantities of biodegradable material and environmental factors and it is a quantification of basically saying a very long time ...

This is how long it takes for some items to break down.

Product	Decomposition estimate
Cotton clothing	3 to 6 months
Food waste	Depends on the composition of the food and environment Orange peel up to 6 months Apples up to 1 month Banana up to 2 years
Cigarette butt	1 to 12 years
Paper waste	2 to 6 years
Plastic bags	10 to 20 years
Take away coffee cups	30 years as most have a plastic membrane to line them

Product	Decomposition estimate
Nylon fabric	30 to 40 years
Tin cans	50 to 100 years
Aluminium cans	80 to 200 years
Plastic straws	200 years
Plastic bottles	450 years
Plastic toothbrushes	500 years
Styrofoam	500 years
Sanitary pads	500 to 800 years
Nappy	450 to 600 years
Glass	Does not decompose, lasts up to a million years



Coffee cup, with the nearest cafe being two kilometres away



## Environmental impacts

Really, it is so hard to find where to stop with this article but I will try to keep it to a minimum. Apart from the obvious aesthetic unappealing sight of rubbish, the environmental impacts are significant even though most people can't see it during or after it breaks down.

Firstly, let's talk crap, dog poo in our urban waterways. Dog poo contains a lot of nitrogen and phosphorus. Nitrogen and phosphorous can strip oxygen from the surrounding environment. All creatures rely on oxygen so when poo runs down into streams it can deplete the oxygen in waterways and create a better environment for bacteria, thus contamination and sickness can occur when consumed. Disease from animals known as zoonotic infections, such as giardia can occur. Algal blooms can also occur, which can kill fish and wildlife.

Plastic bags break down into very small pieces over the span of years and they can wash down into waterways and the oceans. Animals and aquatic creatures consume this water with the particles of plastic. Plastic bags are made of polyethylene, which is derived from gas, petroleum, colours and

some pretty harsh additives. Would you like to eat this and think of what it can do to you if you do eat it? Then think of the ecosystem. I need not say more; there is already a plethora of information available if you care to research.

## Action

So, food for thought, please think of this next time you see some rubbish out on the trails and parents please ensure the kids, or you, don't throw your rubbish into the bush. Carry a spare biodegradable rubbish bag, or zip lock bags in your pack and after your walk, disposing of it thoughtfully in the nearest rubbish bin. However, don't think that if the bag is biodegradable it is fine to leave it in the bush to degrade. No way, that is so not cool, remember if you carry it in, you should carry it out.

If you see a tourist or someone littering in the bush, you can pick it up and say to them, oh you dropped this. In the case of doggy bag and doggy poo, and if you know who left this you can impress them with your knowledge and say "Did you know dog poo is bad for the environment because it harbours viruses, bacteria and parasites, excess nitrogen and phosphorous and the plastic bag you



Tissue on the track



stored it in will break down in about 10 to 20 years?" Also, for extra points, offer them a biodegradable rubbish bag. Or take photos of them and shame them on social media. The NSW Food Authority names and shames restaurants when they do the wrong thing and all the information is available for public viewing, so why not do it on social media for people who litter our beautiful bush? In fact the Thailand authorities will [ship rubbish back to you](#) and then you will be registered with the police for littering in a national park. Not a bad idea, I say ...

Oh, can you also be a role model and teach the next generation how special our nature is and always to do the right thing when it comes to rubbish and our environment? And you know what, the best part of this is, it's a win-win for the environment and people as we all benefit from it. So go out there and be responsible, teach a few people some lessons and enjoy yourself while looking after this planet we all live on.

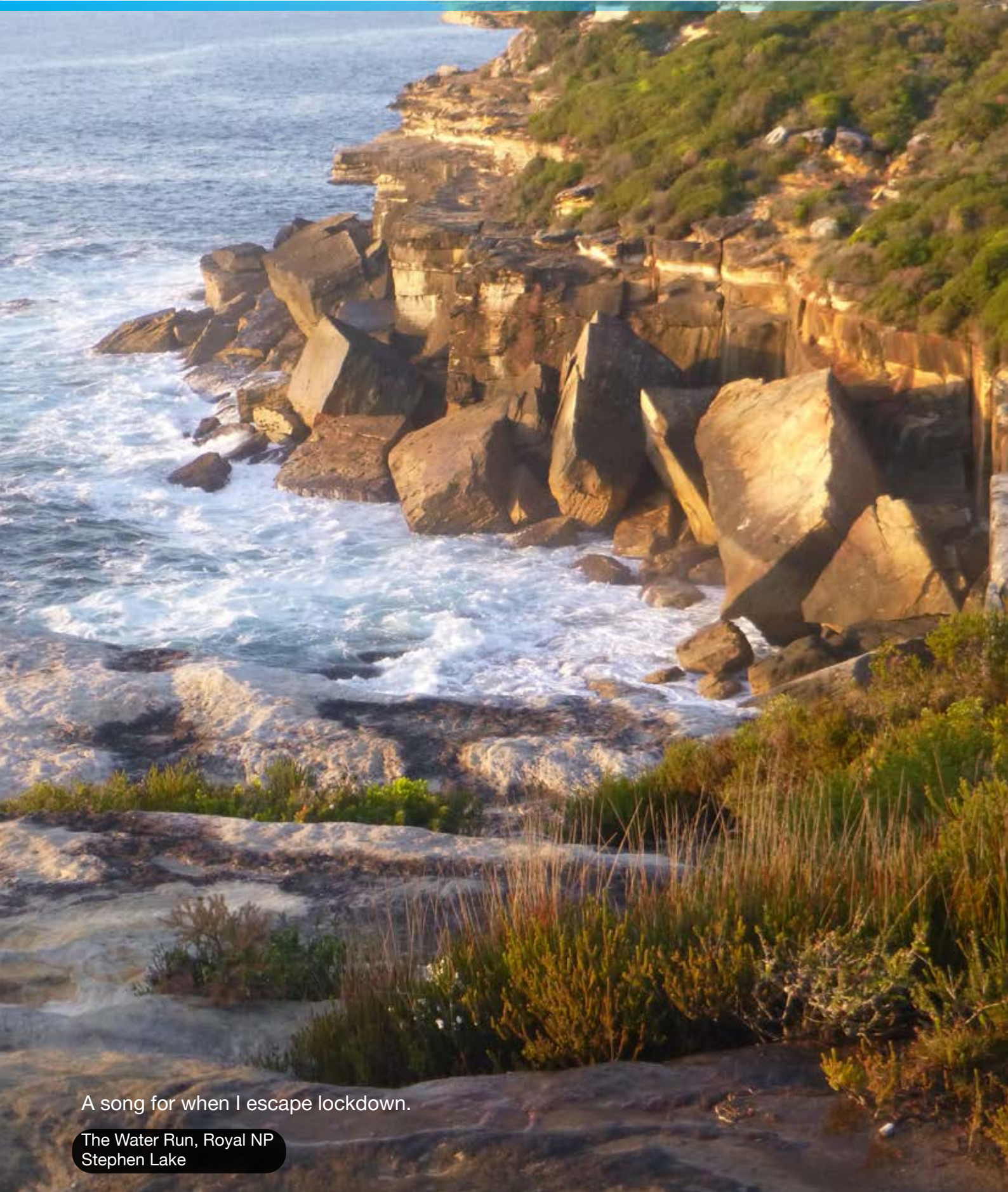


Oaklands Falls, or now named Lyrebird Falls by Benjamin due to sightings



# Keep My Bushwalk Satisfied

Stephen Lake



A song for when I escape lockdown.

The Water Run, Royal NP  
Stephen Lake





Tune: *Keep the customer satisfied*

Gee but it's great to be back home,  
Home is where I want to be.  
I've been on no walk so long my friend,  
And if you came along  
I know you'd like to be with me,  
It's the same old story.  
Every hill I climb,  
I get breathless,  
Tired,  
I see things that makes my heart so fired.  
And I'm too far away from the next rest,  
Killing march flies they are pests.  
Just trying to keep my bushwalk satisfied,  
Satisfied.

A bushwalker that I once met,  
Said tell me where your going to, man,  
You better get your pack, it's wet.  
You're in thick scrub man,  
And you're heading into more.  
Just like every scrub-bash.  
All the scrub I go through,  
I get scratched bad, all cut,  
I really need a track and a nice big dry hut.  
And I'm one step nearer the campsite,  
Plenty of time, it's quite alright.  
Just trying to keep my bushwalk satisfied,  
Satisfied.





# Bushwalk Australia



## Fire and Fury

- > Traversing the Winburndale Range
- > My Blue Mountains
- > Malbena Matters!



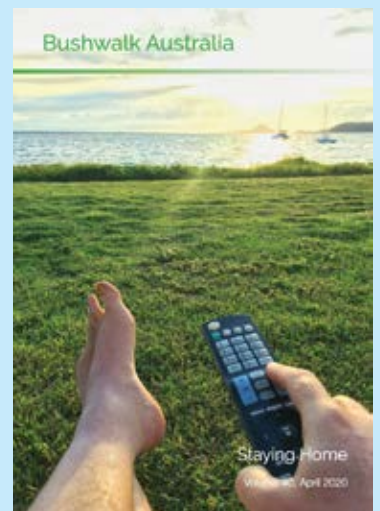
## COVID Contingencies

- > Barrington Tops
- > Mount Emmett
- > South West Cape circuit
- > Overland Track app



## Bushwalking Anew

- > Three Capes
- > Spirit of place
- > The butterfly effect
- > First aid kit



## Staying Home

- > Mount Giles
- > Southern Ranges and Du Cane Range
- > Bushwalking in a pandemic



## Fire and Fury

- > 2019-20 bushfires overview
- > In memory of Four Mile Hut



## Hills & Valleys

- > Orange Bluff
- > Two State 8 Peaks
- > Walking on fire



## Alpine Adventures

- > Hannells Spur Loop, NSW
- > AAWT
- > MUMC – 75 Years Old



## Awesome Adventures

- > McMillans Track, Victoria
- > Island Lagoon
- > Franklin River, Tasmania



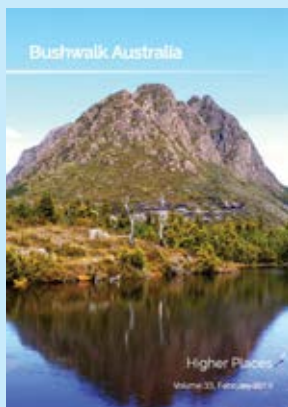
## Wild & Rugged

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



## Going the Distance

- > Mt Wills to Mt Bogong
- > Hume & Hovell WT



## Higher Places

- > AAWT
- > Tassie Winter Trip



## Peak Promenade

- > Pindars Peak
- > Cordilleras in Peru



## Ridges & Valleys

- > Buffalo, The Bluff and Mt McDonald



## Ambling Adventures

- > An Abel challenge
- > Pack hauling