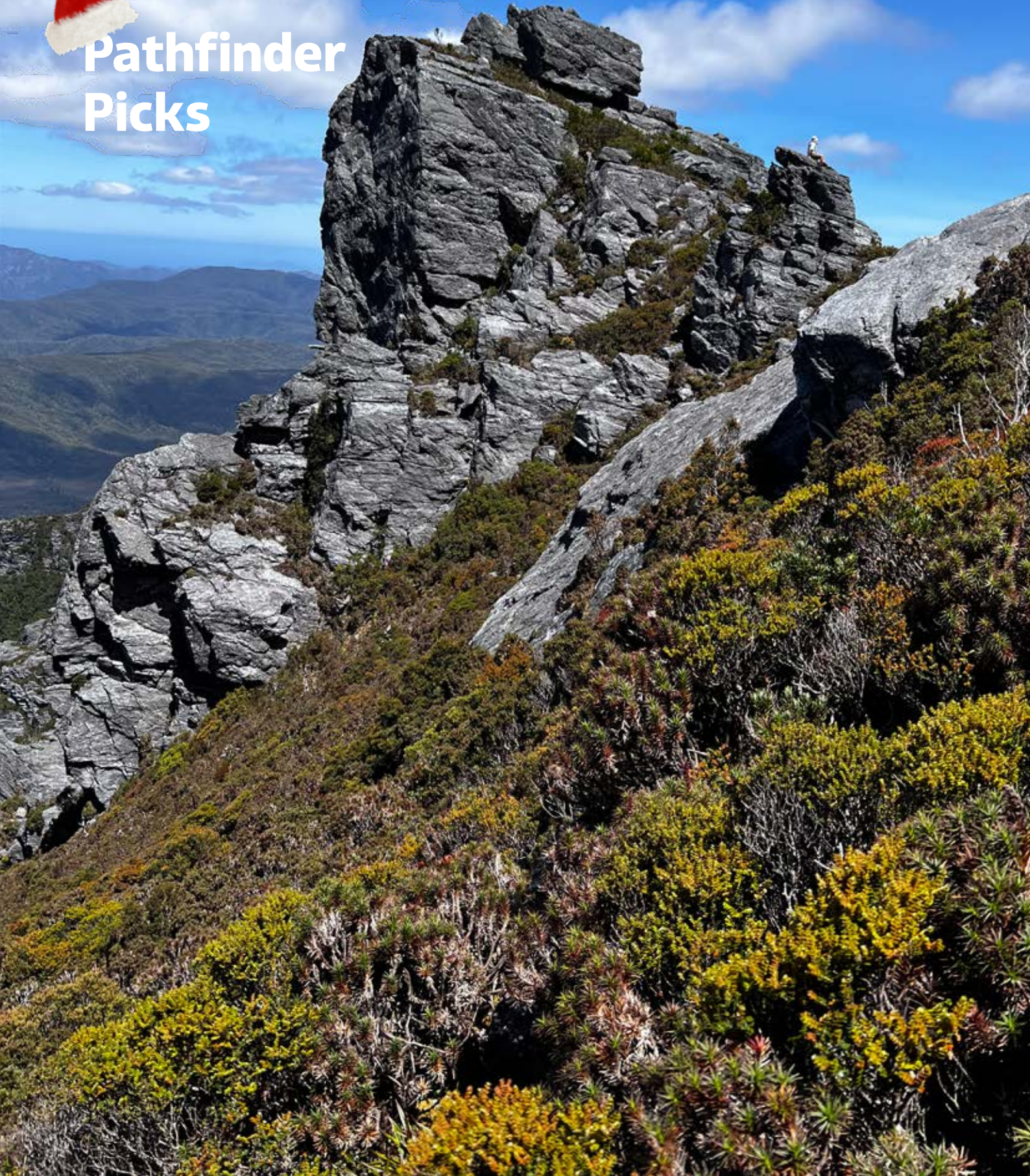


December 2023

Rushwalk

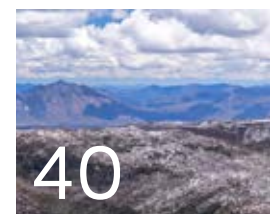
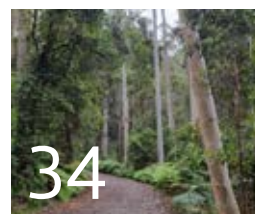


Pathfinder
Picks



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**Always Was
Always Will Be
Aboriginal Land**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Owners of this vast land on which we live and explore. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present and thank them for their stewardship of this great south land.

Editor's Letter



Hi all,

As 2023 comes to a close, join us in this edition on a journey through Australia's stunning landscapes. Tyrone uncovers the hidden gems of Victoria's Mount Clear region, while Bernie explores the spectacular Budawangs. Matthew introduces a newly crafted map for your next Budawangs adventure. Timothy and his party, all over 60, walk Tasmania's Lake Oberon area, encouraging us toward a long life of bushwalking. Closer to Sydney, Ian guides us through the serene Blue Gum walk, Hornsby, a personal favourite of mine.

Tracie presents a creative way to observe and record our adventures. I have become a little obsessed with Alone Australia, so I enjoyed Lily van Eeden et al. exploring how the series may change the way our community connects with nature. Sonya is back with a delicious twist on our favourite tasty bushwalking snack, scroggin. You will also find our regular photo competition, news articles and more.

Happy walking and reading

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
matt@bushwalk.com

Cover image

Tim standing on a rock pillar on
day 2 of Lake Oberon walk
Jen Merrett



Bushwalk Magazine

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Please send any articles, suggestions or advertising enquires to Eva. We would love you to be part of the magazine. Read our [Writer's Guide](#) to get started, and we are here to help.

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, Wildwalks.com and 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.

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 Bushwalk magazine.

Mount Clear Traverse

After a few nice winter snowshoe hikes I was happy that a warmish spring weekend was forecast.

Text and photos
Tyrone Boi



North-west from near The Nobs



The Nobs



High Cone from the west



Clear Creek and the Jamieson River from Mount Clear

The Mount Clear loop had been on my radar for a good 2-3 years, so I thought why not tackle this more remote isolated part of the Alpine National Park. The route would take in part of the Australian Alps Walking Track.

Day 1: Clear Creek to Mount Clear Saddle 15 km, 8 hours

As I wanted to get an early start walking and taking in account the tedious drive from Merrijig to Clear Creek, I left Melbourne at 4.30 am. This gave me plenty of time to think about what I was expecting on this hike. I was a bit nervy and also excited to be back into into a remote place.

After an hour and half of bumpy slow drive in my VW van from Merrijig I finally reached Clear Creek. It felt like I was driving into the void as I descended into the Jamieson Valley. As I was getting ready I met deer hunters in their big ute tanks, reminding me of the horror movie *Wolf Creek*. After a quick chit chat, assuring me I wouldn't be shot mistaking me for a deer, I headed up The Nobs 4WD track which led to the start of walk proper on the AAWT 440 metres higher.

I had read that the 4WD track from Clear Creek to below The Nobs track was quite steep, and with a loose rock surface I was blowing steam already. One of the deer hunters was driving up the track, and this is where *Wolf Creek* thoughts crept into my head and thinking this is it for me. He offered a lift up to the top to the AAWT turn off, saving me the last kilometre of this road bash. I was happy to jump into back of his ute which was covered in blood from a fresh kill. It all added to the adventure.

I started walking on the faint footpad eyeing off The Nobs in the distance, two craggy peaks. The walking was beautiful with stunning Aussie bush all around me. I had six litres of water with a loose plan for a dry camp at one of the many saddles, so the extra weight was affecting my progress.

“

I had six litres of water with a loose plan for a dry camp at one of the many saddles ...

Mount Clear Traverse

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 km



Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)



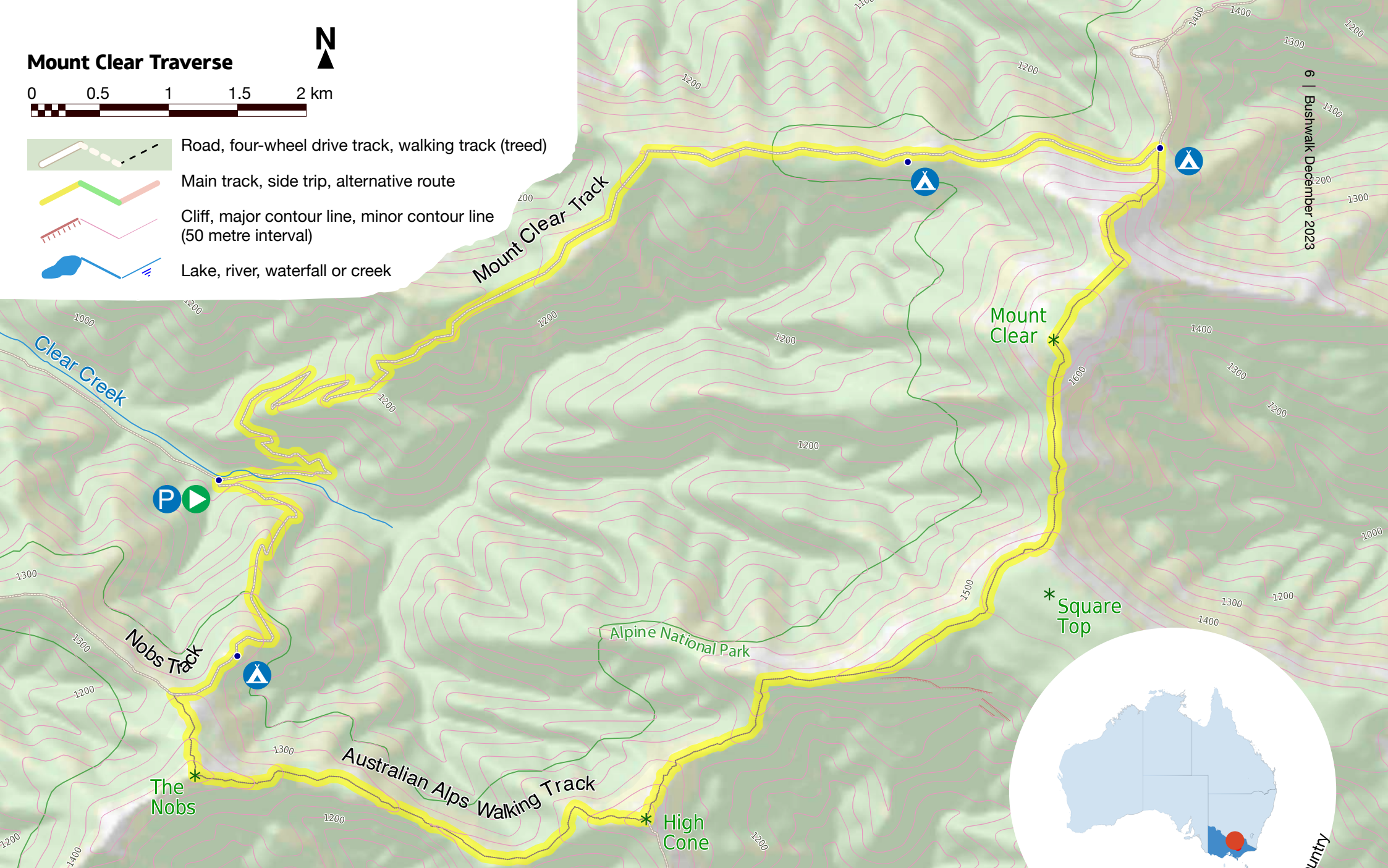
Main track, side trip, alternative route



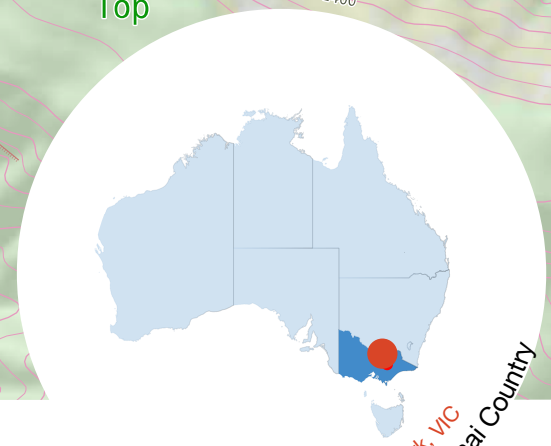
Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



6 | Bushwalk December 2023



Alpine National Park, VIC
Taungurung and Gunaikurnai Country

Bushwalk.com notes and maps on [webpage](#), [GPX](#) and [PDF](#)

This map is © [Bushwalk.com](#) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors



Start of the walk



Parking



Campsite

After a short scramble up The Nobs I could look down and see the spurs and ridges as shown on my paper map very clearly. As I headed towards High Cone the wind was blowing at around 40 kilometres an hour, and with a blaring spring sun I wasn't sure if I was cold or hot.

In a few hours I reached High Cone, happy with my progress and really enjoying the wild remote feeling on this route. After a short snack break of dried fruits nuts and a banana I was on my way. I could see Mount Clear in the distance, and nearer there was another bump, Square Top. I'm unsure how the name came about as it looked more like a pointy triangular shape.

Navigation so far had been quite straightforward, following a faint footpad. I had read a report that the track was overgrown in places, and I got cocky and ahead of myself thinking, "Meh, a walk in the park!" So I went down from High Cone, but after about 20 minutes I lost the track, back on course soon after checking the GPS. This went on for another half hour, losing the track, checking the GPS, repeat ...

Things took a turn and soon I was trying to locate the trail and finding no track, just overgrown waist-high shrub with fallen trees to climb over and under. I soon found myself choosing my own path through thick scrub for two hours or so. I was trying to follow the middle of the spur to get onto Square Top but somehow ended up sidling around it. I found a flat ledge clear of scrub and thought this is too easy to be true. I walked it anyway as it gave me a short sense of relief until I reached a scrubby dead end. I checked the GPS and to my surprise saw how far down the north-west side of Square Top I was. By this stage I was feeling tired and exhausted, and looking straight up to where I had to go to get back on top of the spur was soul destroying.

“

... looking straight up to where I had to go to get back on top of the spur was soul destroying.



The south ridge of Mount Clear



Tarns just south of Mount Clear summit

I scrambled up a very steep slope over fallen trees and thick scrub. I got somewhere near the top blowing a lung out or two and as I looked down a fat long copperhead snake lay there basking in the sun, scaring the crap out of me.

A sense full of self despair overcome me!

After a short regroup to check the map and GPS I found that I wasn't too far from the saddle before Mount Clear, still with no track. It was somewhat easier as I was on the middle of the spur heading down hill and finally a clearing was in sight of the saddle between Mount Clear and Square Top. I was much relieved and feeling parched I guzzled down a good half litre of water. Fair to say I was really buggered, sore calf muscles, sore shoulders etc ... I was thinking it would be tempting just to set up camp now at 3 pm and relax for the rest of afternoon, or I could try and make a dash to the intended campsite just north of Mount Clear. I figured out that this would be an hour up to summit of Mount Clear, then an hour on the summit plateau and

down other side. I could see that the scrub was not dense upon the southern slopes so I figured that the bush bashing was behind me. With a choccy bar and another banana to give some last energy boost as I felt I was running on vapours I decided I would go for it and have an easy walk back down to car the next day.

“

Tunnel vision had set in for reaching camp as I was racing against the sun ...

Climbing Mount Clear involved 200 metres ascent from the saddle, steep in places. The wind had picked up speed by late afternoon and I wasn't too interested in hanging out on top of Mount Clear's flat open area for too long. Tunnel vision had set in for reaching camp as I was racing against the sun as I didn't want to be navigating in the dark.



A lonely tree on Mount Clear



Campsite with Mount Clear behind

And sure enough just after 5 pm I stumbled and limped into the camp spot at the 4WD junction, feeling awesome but bugged .

Dinner of penne pasta with meatballs I had cooked before the trip went down a treat followed by some fruit, cups of tea and Lindt dark chocolate and a beautiful sunset. I was in my sleeping bag by 7.30 pm, all cozy with 127 hours which I started in 2016. I only read it on hikes.

“

I would bend my legs up and would be in agonising pain.

Around 9.30 pm I started to experience painful thigh cramps. I would bend my legs up and would be in agonising pain. I felt like my thighs were going to pop out of my skin. I slowly crawled out of the tent to stand up and massaged my legs and thighs in particular, and gobbled down a pack of Pringles. I figured that I lost too much salts and didn't drink enough water during the day.

Day 2: Mount Clear Saddle to Clear Creek, 8 km, 4 hours

I woke up at about sixish feeling good, leg cramps gone. I broke camp a bit after 7 am and headed down the Mount Clear Track.



Morning view from my tent

Today was a relaxing cruise on an open clear track with nice bush around me, a big contrast to yesterday's walking. The track runs parallel to yesterday's route, about 3 kilometres across the valley and the same height at first, so I could see across from afar at the undulating ridge where I had walked. It was quite rewarding reflecting on that hard day with spectacular views. I do and enjoy these tough adventure hikes but won't be in a hurry to do this one again!

I reached the car by 11 am and headed to Melbourne via a lunch and coffee in Mansfield.



Tyrone Boi works as a tradesman in the building industry. He is open minded to different experiences. He loves the outdoors and the sense of adventure it brings. He is also an avid cyclist. You can find him on [Instagram](#).

Six Days in the Budawangs

I acknowledge the Budawang people of the Yuin nation, traditional owners and custodians of the land we walked.

Text and photos
Bernie Quirke



Monolith Valley from Shrouded Gods Mountain



"Clearing" in the upper Broula Brook

June 2007 was my first trip into the Budawangs and, despite the tribulations endured I was hooked. Four days of unrelenting deluge saw Wog Wog Creek, usually a step-across stream, become a 40 metre wide raging torrent. How we managed to cross is another story. September 2023 presented a much more benign forecast and, after a 10 hour drive from Melbourne, the four of us camped at the [Wog Wog campground](#) (303931 drop toilet, no water tank) in preparation for an early start.

Somewhat of a mecca for bushwalkers, the northern Budawang Range is inland from Ulladulla on the NSW south coast. A wilderness of towering sandstone cliffs, deep ravines, mesas and sculptured pinnacles makes for great exploring. A tortured topology and thick vegetation, particularly regrowth after fires, are limiting factors. The many caves and overhangs provide a welcome haven in stormy weather.

Day 1: Wog Wog, Corang Peak, upper Broula Brook, 12.5 km, 5 hrs

I'd read a 2013 trip report of a Batemans Bay Bushwalkers group exploring the upper reaches of Broula Brook, citing a clearing beside the brook, conjuring the image of idyllic camping. It's the deep ravine skirted when approaching Corang Peak. Their route headed north from Corang Peak, down a steep unnamed pass (366922 Corang Pass?), more steeply into the main gully then back up through a narrow gap, along the cliff base and down into the brook. We followed this route, a hard slog, and finally reached the former clearing beside Broula Brook and pitched tents in thickish scrub. We were too knackered to do much exploring.

The evening was filled with the magic of competing lyrebirds and the burble of the brook. On exiting the next morning, we found a much easier route - for the next time.

Day 2: Upper Broula Brook to Mount Cole overhangs, 11 km, 7 hrs

We climbed back up onto the Corang Plateau then down to Canowie Brook and were on the well-trodden track. Such had been the dry recent months that usual water sources were reduced to trickles so we picked up a few spare litres from the pools at Burrumbeet Brook and pressed on up the valley towards Bibbenluke Saddle. As it turned out the additional water wasn't necessary as pools persisted at both the campsite beside the Corang River (419939) and at Viney Creek (430927). Very recent track work provided an easy passage and we arrived at the base of north-west cliffs of Mount Cole in the early afternoon. We dropped packs and went south-west for water at Viney Creek then returned and continued to the most north-east of the overhangs (434930) for a leisurely evening. A colourful sunset ensued and, later, a surprising burst of hail.

Day 3: Mount Cole, Shrouded Gods Mountain, Cooyoyo Creek, 5.5 km, 4.5 hrs

Next morning we were greeted with blue sky, light winds and good visibility, ideal for an assault on Shrouded Gods Mountain.

From our Mount Cole overhang campsite it's a delightful walk up and down, into narrow gaps, below towering rock faces, with remnant beech, mosses and ferns, to break out into the open and confront the Seven Gods, then plunge down into the Green Room and Monolith Valley. A short distance further on we reached the point from which to attack Shrouded Gods Mountain (445921), dropped packs, stuffed the necessities into daypacks and headed for the east-west gully that provides access.

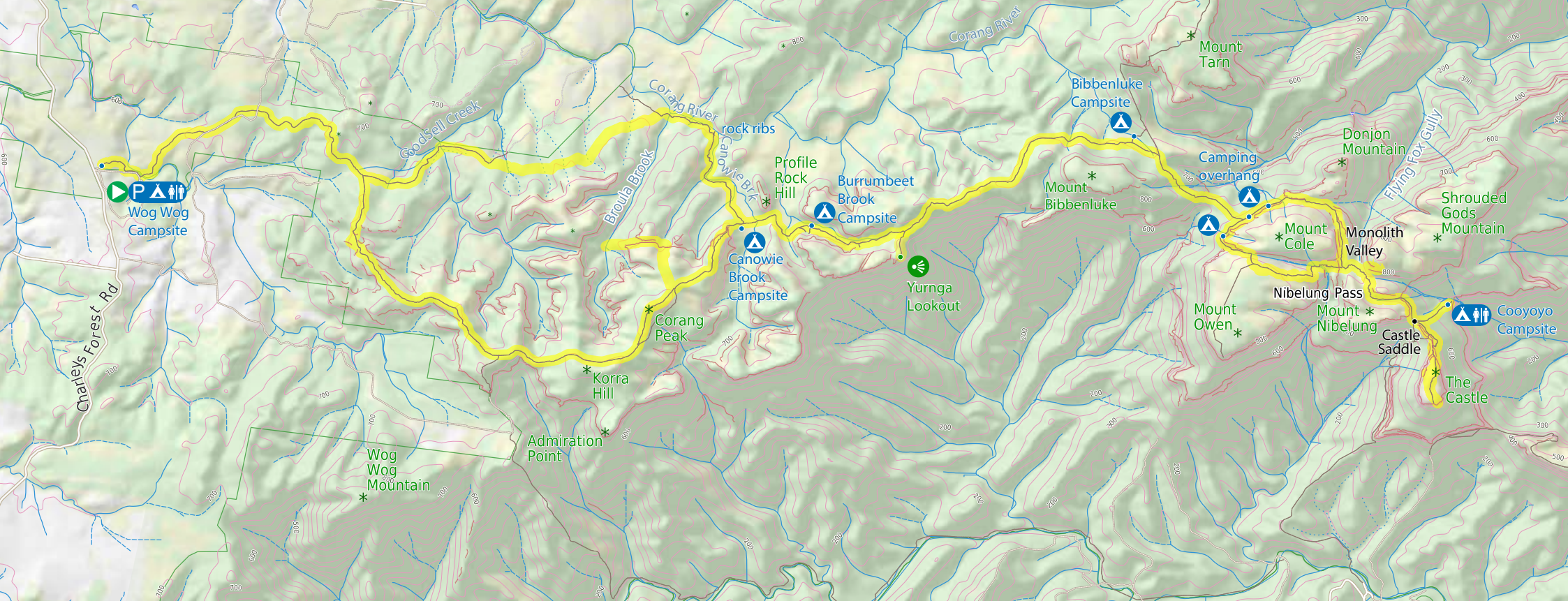
The route into the gully is marked with cairns. As you enter the gully the sheer wall of Shrouded Gods is on your left. Keep to the



Route into Monolith Valley



Route into Monolith Valley



Budawang Bushwalk



0 1 2 3 4 km



Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Parking



Toilet



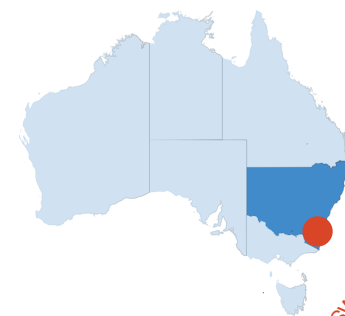
Campsite



Picnic shelter



Lookout



Morton National Park, NSW
Yuin Country

This map is © [Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](https://openstreetmap.org) contributors

south (right) side and look for a near-vertical cleft on the right that had a black knotted rope when we were there – such fun! It's a simple climb with a couple of rest points. From the top of the cleft, edge around to the left, then keep climbing. When possible, cross to the other side of the east-west gully. Now the route leads back along the side of Shrouded Gods and begins climbing again until the plateau is gained. Compared to The Castle it's an easier climb with much less exposure. The views, however, are at least as spectacular.

After exploring the immediate area, we descended, collected packs and continued through Nibelung Pass and down to the Cooyoyo campsite. As it was the beginning of the school holidays, we expected a good number of bushwalkers and 13 of us shared a modest campfire, trip information and a few tall stories. A Dad and 11-year-old were planning on tackling The Castle the next morning and I wondered how they would go. Silly me! They passed us half way up, the 11-year-old scuttling up a rock face with the confidence of a spider.



Cleft to Shrouded Gods Mountain



Seven Gods



Pigeon House and Byangee Walls from Cooyoyo Lookout

Day 4: Cooyoyo Creek, The Castle, Mount Owen, Mount Cole overhangs, 8 km, 9 hrs

The route onto The Castle was first documented in 1948 and remains a challenging undertaking. Although The Castle can be climbed without ropes, one section near the top is very exposed and a rope is certainly useful. On this trip we saw ropes had been secured by others in at least six places. Take note, however, of the sign at the base of the climb warning that the ropes are *not maintained* by NPWS and should not be relied upon.

“

The route onto The Castle was first documented in 1948 and remains a challenging undertaking.



The start of The Castle climb

Having attained the summit, a stroll to the south end was well rewarded with the view of Byangee Walls stretching out to the very distinctive Balgan aka Pigeon House or Didthul. My understanding is that Balgan is the Budawang people's name for the mountain named by James Cook as Pigeon House. Didthul is the Murramarang people's name. Both mobs are of the Yuin nation.

Climbing back down and returning to Castle Saddle, we retrieved our packs and headed back into Monolith Valley. We had a choice of retracing our steps to the overhangs or taking the shorter route up over Mount Owen. I'd climbed Mount Owen as a day trip, but with a full pack and more than a few years older, this time it proved to be a challenge. Shorter doesn't always equal easier.

We lunched at a creek (442922), topped up our water then started the first climb. I'd forgotten this bit – straight up! With lots of hand and foot holds, this climb was quickly done but, with full packs, required some determined effort. Heading west but, with a lot



Exposed section climbing The Castle



Pigeon House and Byangee Walls from the south end of The Castle



Monolith Valley from Mount Owen

of scrambling up and down and surrounded by towering walls, it's easy to become disorientated. Memory, aided by frequent cairns, brought us to the second climb.

A fallen tree made the climb more difficult but we squeezed our packs through the tangle of branches and continued up to a wide ledge that led to the third and biggest ascent. The steeply sloping gully ended in a final five metre rock face that can be climbed directly or skirted on the right. Hot and wet, we enjoyed the breeze, snapped the classic

Monolith Valley panorama, then set off across the Mount Owen Plateau. With cairns in almost every direction, the route becomes confused but we just headed west to the well cairned descent point into the gap between Mounts Owen and Cole.

With full packs the route up Mount Owen was challenging enough, but the bouldering coming out of the gap was tedious indeed. We were glad to see the first overhang (429926) unoccupied, unlike the group of four that arrived in the dark later that night.



Mount Cole overhang

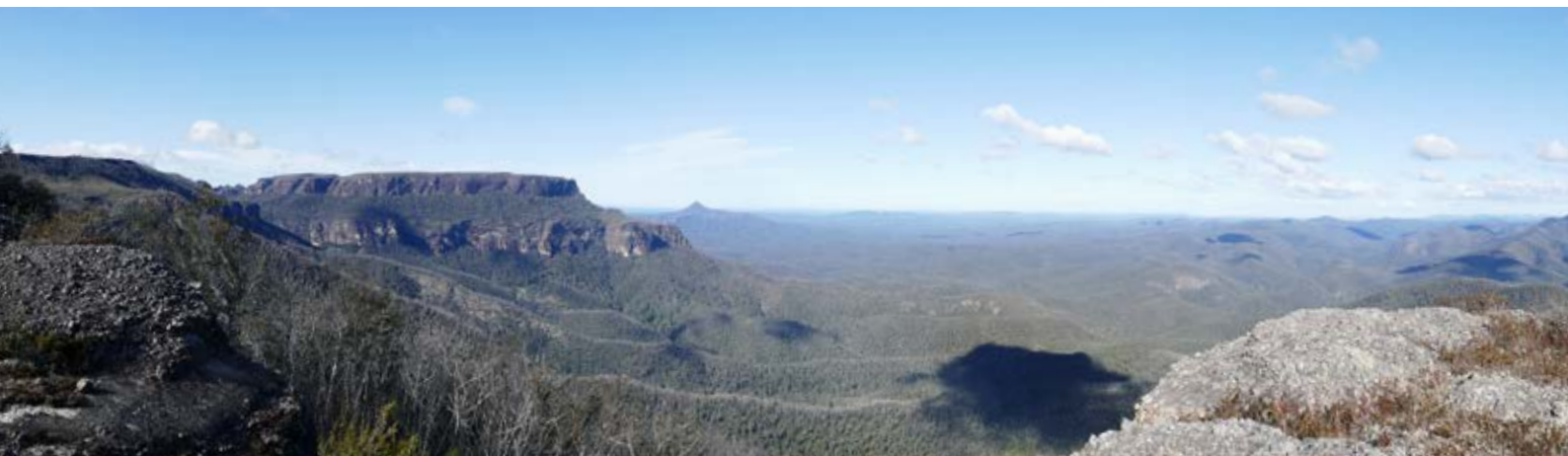
Day 5: Mount Cole overhangs to Corang River, 11 km, 6.5 hours

Next morning, finally feeling the benefit of lighter packs, we followed the track back to Canowie Brook, pausing to search for an overhang noted on the [CMW](#) Northern Budawang map and mark it for a future trip. As visibility was good, we walked out to Yurnga Lookout to capture the 180° vista of Cole, Owen, Pigeon House, Wirritin and Currockbilly. When weather permits, this short diversion is well worth the effort. We also checked out the best of the Burrumbeet overhangs which, I imagine, would have been an oft frequented camp in pre European days.

We followed Canowie Brook to the rock ribs at Corang River, looking for a campsite beside the water and, a short distance further on, found a sandy spot with shade and pool – bliss. With a short last day ahead, we sat up to the late hours and hit the tents at 8 pm :)



Pultenaea baeuerlenii (vulnerable)



Mount Owen and Pigeon House from Yurnga Lookout



Burrumbeet overhang

**Day 6: Corang River to Wog Wog,
10 km, 5 hours**

A part of the usual track back to Wog Wog crosses private land, but until recently this hasn't been an issue. Sadly, the current owners are enforcing their rights, so after crossing Broula Brook, we headed off track to skirt the boundary, rejoining the track near Goodsell Creek.

Back at the Wog Wog campground we talked through the high points of the trip, congratulated ourselves on summiting Shrouded Gods, The Castle and Mount Owen, put names to the many wildflowers we'd photographed and, of course, started planning the next Budawang's adventure.

Map references are GPS recorded by the author, UTM/WGS84.



Chloanthes parviflora



Blandfordia nobilis



Thelymitra ixioides



Caladenia fuscata



Bernie in New Zealand on Sunset Peak with Fohn Lake below



After returning to bushwalking in 2006, having allowed work and life to intervene, Bernie has walked over 6000 kilometres in Australia and New Zealand, averaging more than a month of overnight walks each year. He has a preference for multi-day, off-track, remote walking.

Paper Maps in the GPS Era

Today's bushwalkers have more choice in navigational aids than ever before.

Text
Matthew Hollingworth



Budawangs: Pigeon House, Byangee Walls and The Castle from the Folly Point track
Mandy Creighton



As technology progresses, handheld devices have supplanted traditional maps and compass for many of us, and with good reason – these devices are convenient, reliable and utilitarian. So what role remains for our beloved fold-out bushwalking maps? A meaningful one, as it turns out.

Mapping GPS units and smartphone apps have a lot to offer. They can load new maps in seconds, with no shop visit or online order required. In use they directly answer the most important questions: *Where am I? Which way now? How far to go?* At the end of the day and after the trip they provide a useful record of your travel which can be loaded onto your computer.

Some people question the technology's reliability. Flat batteries, cracked screens, and buggy software are proffered as deal-breakers. But these quibbles are arbitrary – after all, a map and a compass are a more basic technology. A crack in the capsule can quickly disable a compass, and a dunk in a stream renders a map useless.

Instead, physical maps should be seen as a complement to a GPS, or vice versa. Paper maps show us the shape of the land at large in a way not possible on a device screen. By showing us the big picture, maps encourage contemplation and planning. We build our understanding of the country by tracing the interconnection of its ridges, peaks and valleys.

A paper map will often be carefully curated, with close attention paid to everything it shows. Copious aerial imagery and GPS recordings can be aggregated to produce a ground-truth for important trail locations. Lidar, an airborne laser surveying technique, allows landforms and elevation to be presented with superior accuracy.

Forest canopy and vegetation cover can also be extracted from lidar and depicted on paper. These modern techniques contribute to the production of a dependable, accurate and informative map.

“

... physical maps should be seen as a complement to a GPS, or vice versa.

In contrast, digital maps are often produced in bulk, with no manual verification. Their most common data sources are government datasets and volunteer-sourced [OpenStreetMap](#). In either case, the data's provenance is uncertain and its quality may be variable. Contours and watercourses on digital maps are often derived from coarse elevation models, or digitised from decades-old maps, leading to noticeable deviations from the actual terrain. Vegetation layers are usually an afterthought, if they're included at all.

The paper has also improved in modern maps. Pulp-based maps that are susceptible to the vagaries of weather and misadventure don't measure up to modern expectations of our gear. Synthetic paper can solve these shortcomings. Printed on a lightweight polymer substrate, synthetic maps are durable, waterproof and tear-resistant. Forget your laminator or map case - these maps are pack-ready.

So next time you're lost, by all means, pull out your GPS; that's what it's for. But at the campsite, put away your device, gather round a map, and imagine what tomorrow holds.

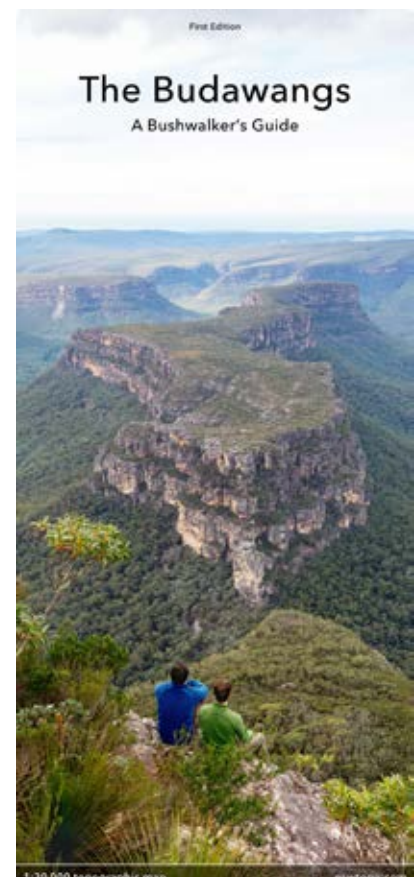
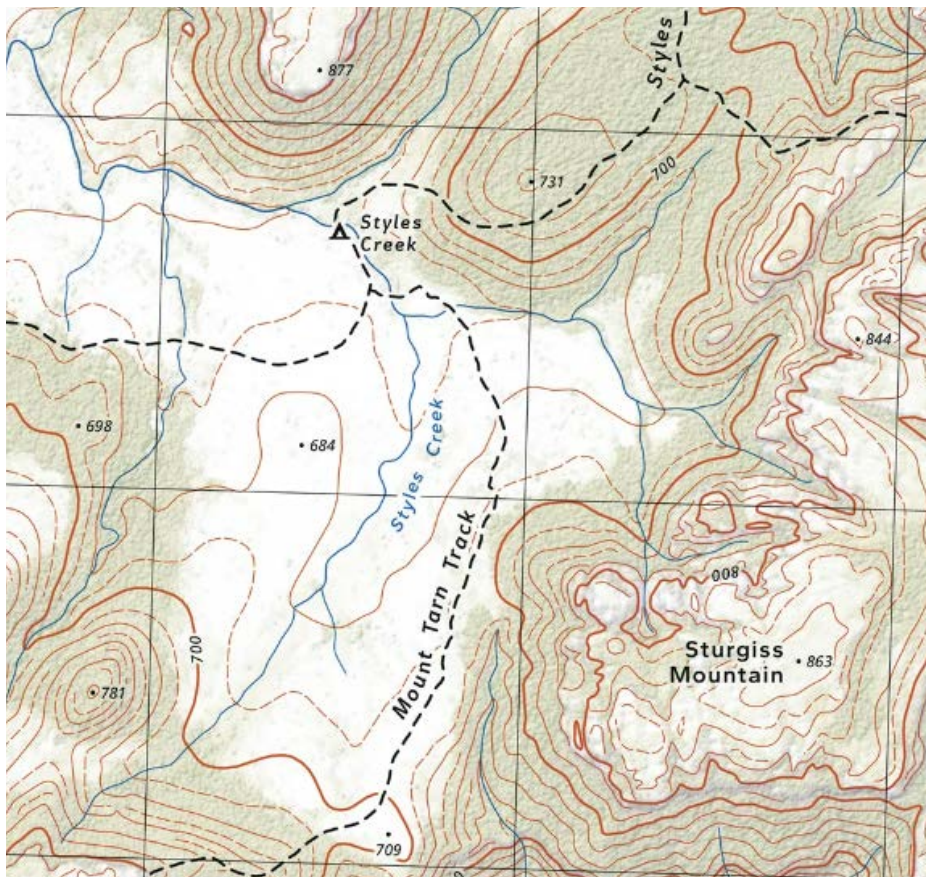
A new Budawangs map

The Budawangs: A Bushwalker's Guide is a new 1:30,000 topographic map for the renowned Budawang Range, a breathtaking coastal escarpment between Sydney and Canberra. A storied map has long inspired bushwalkers in this area, and The Budawangs map aims to update that tradition.

The new map covers the full extent of the Budawangs between Braidwood Road and Yadboro River, including trailheads at Long Gully, Wog Wog, Nerriga, Sassafras, Mount Bushwalker and Pigeon House. Both sides of the map are used, one showing western access and the other featuring the entire Clyde Gorge and Little Forest Plateau. A thoughtful layout allows maximal coverage and minimal refolding in the field.

Established walking tracks, fire trails and campsites are all clearly depicted on the map. For those venturing off-track, accurate contours, watercourses and vegetation will help to navigate the challenging terrain. A durable synthetic paper is used to ensure the map's longevity.

The Budawangs: A Bushwalker's Guide is the second map published by Matthew Hollingworth, a cartographer working out of Canberra.



A part of the map and the cover of *The Budawangs, A Bushwalker's Guide*

Published

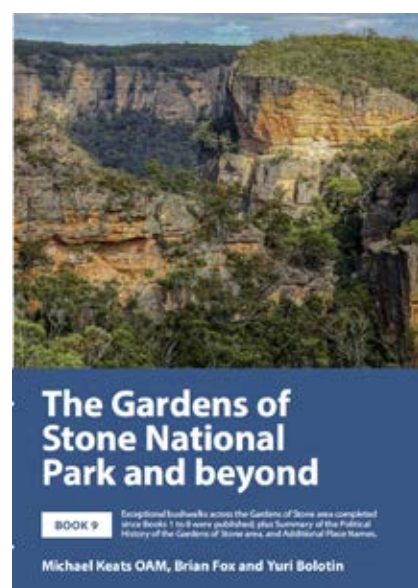
Gardens of Stone and beyond, Book 9

Michael Keats OAM, Brian Fox, Yuri Bolotin

This book is the culmination of 14 years of work by the three authors, featuring 30 previously unpublished exceptional bushwalks in the Gardens of Stone. The history of the political campaigning to preserve this unique landscape for future generations is also included. The book takes you on adventure after adventure, exploring hidden gems in one of the more exotic and less known parts of the Greater Blue Mountains UNESCO World Heritage Area, the Gardens of Stone.

Paperback, 668 pages

A\$66.00



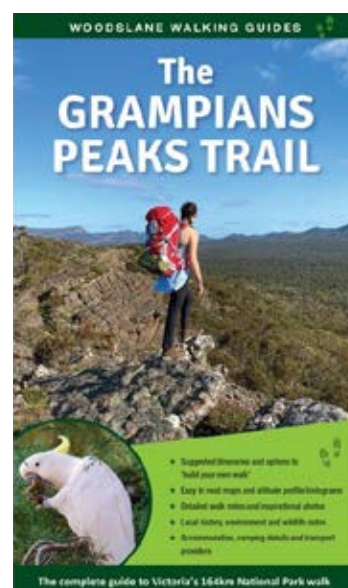
The Grampians Peaks Trail Guide Book

Julie Mundy and Debra Heyes

Victoria's Grampians Peaks Trail goes from from Mount Zero to Dunkeld, traversing three major mountain ranges. This book is richly illustrated with colour photographs and detailed maps for each section. As well as extensive planning notes, there are detailed walk notes for both day walkers and campers, and optional itineraries for 4-9 days, with flexible "build your own walk" options. The book also contains much information on the local history, environment and wildlife.

Paperback, 174 pages

A\$29.99



Lake Oberon

Text
Timothy Bunge

Photos
Jen Merrett

Fulfilling a dream at Lake Oberon in Tasmania

Jen Merrett invited 12 female friends to walk the Three Capes Track in Tasmania to celebrate her sixtieth birthday in 2018, including long-time friend Nicole Brieese and my sister Julie Krause.



Lake Oberon, a long way down. We camped at the big clearing



Nicole, Tim and Jen ready for the adventure on day 1

For her birthday one friend gave Jen a book of beautiful Tasmanian wilderness photographs by acclaimed photographer Peter Dombrovskis, the first Australian photographer to be inducted into the International Photography Hall of Fame. It was called *The Photography of Peter Dombrovskis: Journeys into the wild*.



The photograph in the Peter Dombrovskis book that inspired Jen to complete this walk

Addition to the bucket list

Jen opened the book and was enamoured by Peter's memorable photograph of Lake Oberon nestled among rugged peaks in the Western Arthur Range. She turned to her friends and exclaimed, "Where is that place? I must go there!" Lake Oberon was immediately added to Jen's bucket list ... without the knowledge of the challenge this would pose!

Jen does not make bucket list pronouncements glibly! Since her retirement as a creative leadlight and stained-glass window artist, Jen has completed key items on her bucket list including watching her beloved Geelong Cats handsomely win an AFL grand final at the MCG in September 2022 and visiting Antarctica. Jen joined a voyage to the Antarctic Peninsula south of Ushuaia, Argentina in March 2023 and helped scientists gather data on water clarity, depth and microorganisms! Penguins!

Lake Oberon ... or not

Reaching Lake Oberon proved the most challenging item on Jen's list. Jen researched the fabled Western Arthur Traverse, considered the best walk in Australia, but not

for the faint hearted, inexperienced, unfit, or poorly prepared. Most walkers take 6 to 8 days for a walk to the range from Scotts Peak Dam at the southern end of Lake Pedder in Tasmania's south-west, the ascent of Moraine Alpha, and the rugged traverse east to a descent on Moraine Kappa. Some take a few extra days for the full traverse beyond Moraine K to the range's highest peak, West Portal with an exit via the Craggs of Andromeda and the soggy Arthur Plains.

Jen wisely decided that she should just tackle the least arduous and most improved section of the traverse, from Moraine A up Mount Hesperus and on to Lake Cygnus then to Lake Oberon, returning via the outward route. The traverse gets a lot tougher beyond Lake Oberon, and there are guided walks available for less gung-ho walkers just to Oberon and back.

Jen paid a deposit for herself and friends to join a guided walk company for the walk to Lake Oberon. However, COVID-19 caused the planned walk to be delayed, and delayed, and delayed. By the time it was possible for the walk to be undertaken, the company said there were insufficient walkers, and they would hold the deposits until a quorum of walkers was reached.

Jen tried hard to find that quorum, but to no avail. Her long-time fit mutual friend Nicole Briesse from the Sunshine Coast in Queensland had just completed the 1001 kilometre Bibbulmun and 150 kilometre Cape to Cape walks in Western Australia with me from October to December 2022. Nicole suggested that Jen ditch the dithering walking company and utilise my experience to complete the walk safely. I had climbed all but two of the peaks in the Western and Eastern Arthur Ranges and was very familiar with the challenges and fickle weather encountered when walking in the Tasmanian wilderness.

“

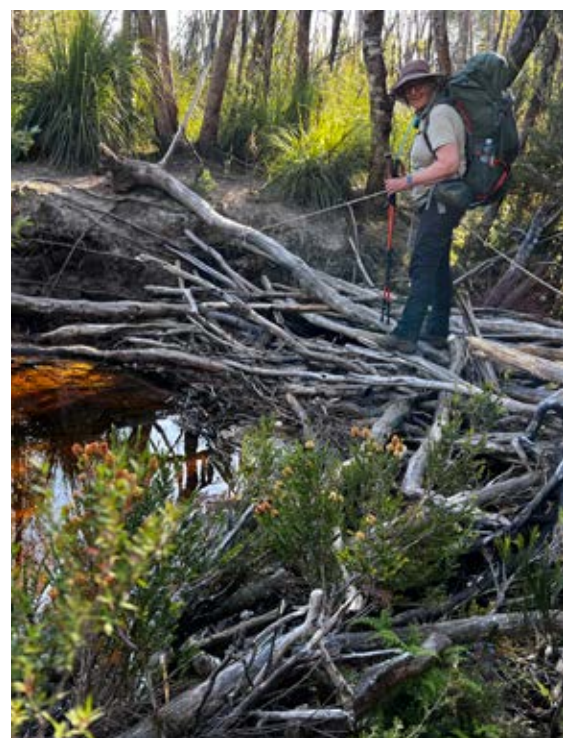
Nicole suggested that Jen ditch the dithering walking company and utilise my experience to complete the walk safely.

Oberon booked

Jen secured our bookings for mid-January 2023. The track has become very popular since John Chapman wrote a detailed route guide in his best-selling *South West Tasmania* in 1978. Coupled with the more recent



Day 1 - Looking back from the top of Moraine Alpha



Day 1 - Jen crossing Junction Creek

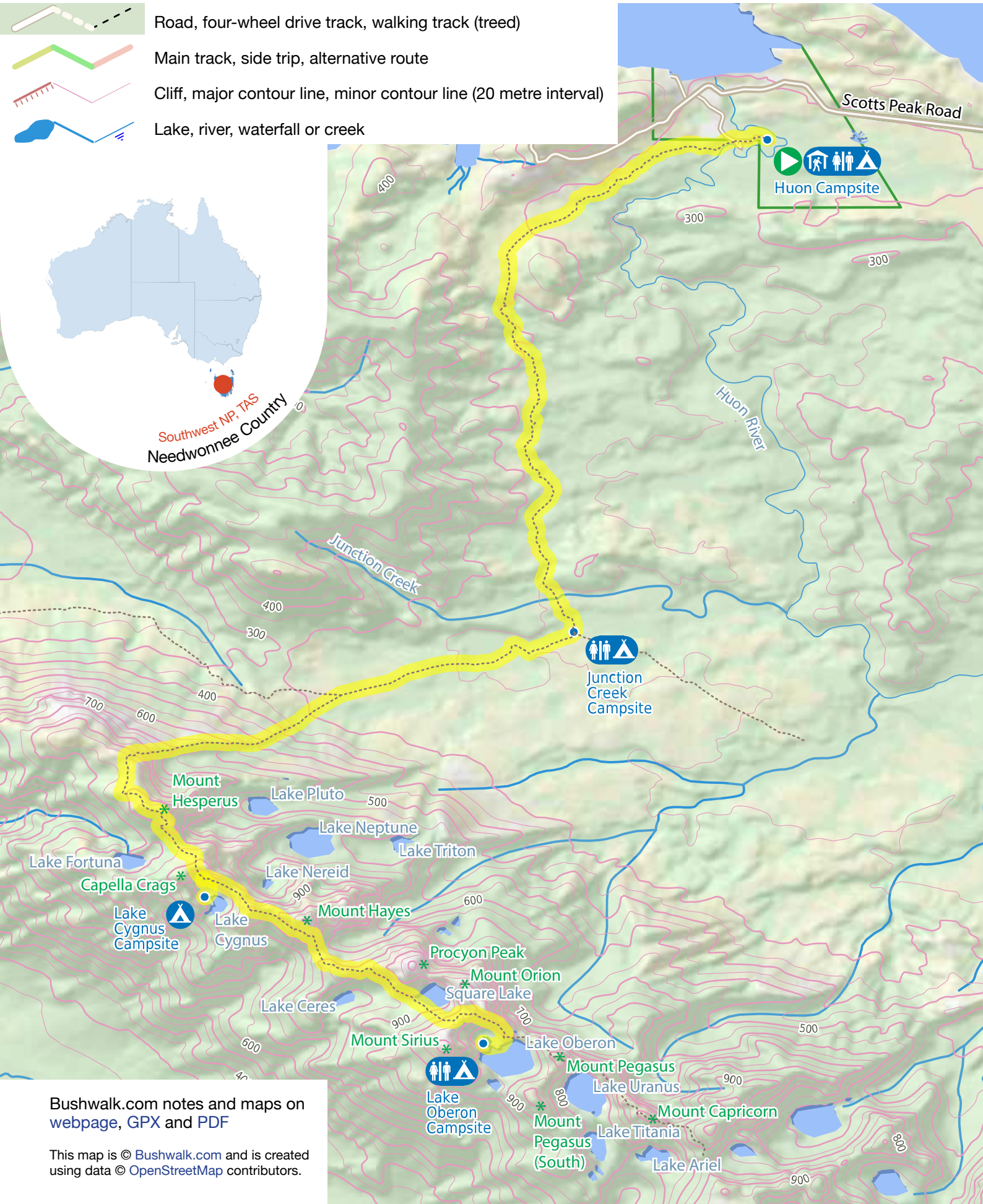
N ▲ Lake Oberon

0 km 1 2 3 4 5 km

- ▶ Start of the walk
- 🚻 Toilet
- 🏠 Picnic shelter
- ⛺ Camping
- ★ Peak

27

- Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)
- Main track, side trip, alternative route
- Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (20 metre interval)
- Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Bushwalk.com notes and maps on
webpage, GPX and PDF

This map is © Bushwalk.com and is created
using data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

“Instagram effect”, Tasmanian NPWS now require bookings for the Western Arthurs and several other popular walks in the south-west.

I had barely re-entered Tasmania after a wonderful six month break from work as a community mental health clinician, bushwalking 1700 kilometres across four states and the Northern Territory before I was joined by Jen and Nicole in Hobart for Jen’s bucket list adventure!

Jen, Nicole and I met in 1988 in Portland, an historic small city in south-west Victoria. I had worked as the senior occupational therapist in the local hospital and Nicole was employed as a teacher in the Lutheran Primary School where Jen’s sons were students. My sister Julie and brother Peter also lived in Portland at that time, and we were all friends. Portland is still home to Jen and her husband “Megsy”.

Day 1: Scotts Peak Dam to Lake Cygnus, 15.3 km, 11 hours

We drove from Hobart to Scotts Peak Dam and commenced the undulating trek from Huon Camp through attractive rainforest over

muddy buttongrass plains and scrubby creeks to Junction Creek. At the Junction Creek campsite we encountered an enthusiastic ranger giving a pep talk to walkers. We were warned not to take the route and the weather lightly. Tips were given on protecting the environment and a “poo tube” for carrying human waste was shown! Some young people scoffed at his warnings, but then proceeded to go the wrong way on McKays Track and did not arrive at Lake Cygnus until 10.30 pm!

At the base of Moraine Alpha, we met a pair of wise older walkers who decided they would tackle the climb first thing in the morning. We headed up. It is a steady climb that takes most walkers a few hours, and it has boulders and scrubby alpine vegetation to negotiate. We were blessed with warm weather during our six day walk; many hikers encounter rain, snow or fierce wind traversing the Western Arthur Range.

Almost 65 years old, Jen pushed on uphill with great encouragement from “young” 58-year-old Nicole. We finally made the alpine



Day 1 - Nicole ascending Moraine Alpha



Day 1 - Alpine meadow at the top of Moraine Alpha in the evening



Lake Cygnus campsite on days 1 and 4

meadow at the top of the range. We were treated to a beautiful sunset with golden light among the rocky tors as we followed the hardened path in an undulating route to Lake Cygnus. My experience on the range came in handy as we made the final descent to the Lake Cygnus campsite by torchlight in gathering cold and mist.

**Day 2: Lake Cygnus to Lake Oberon,
4.2 km, 8 hrs**

The rugged climbing up and down the range crest on Day 2 created a strenuous eight hour walk for Jen. After breakfast and visits to the “poo pod” that NPWS drop in by helicopter to protect the sensitive alpine environment, we ascended the steep track up to the main ridge for our walk sidling the slopes of Mount Hayes. I responded positively to requests to stand on rock pillars for photographs!



Day 2 - Swimming in Square Lake

A wonderful day's walking ensued up and down the ridge, with glorious views of some of the 32 glacial lakes along the range. They included Lakes Pluto, Neptune, Triton, Nereid, Ceres, and Square Lake. Square Lake is nestled under the cliffs of Procyon Peak and Mount Orion and invited a refreshing swim. There were myriad beautiful alpine flowers en route.

It was with a great sense of anticipation that Jen made the final climb up to the saddle between Mount Sirius and Mount Orion. This revealed the amazing view of Lake Oberon, Mount Pegasus South and Mount Sirius that had inspired Jen in the Dombrovskis book.

Jen was fit from swimming daily in the ocean at Portland (she is a member of Blue Tits International cold water women's swimming group) but slogging up and down steep mountains required a whole new level of exertion!

“

This revealed the amazing view of Lake Oberon, Mount Pegasus South and Mount Sirius that had inspired Jen in the Dombrovskis book.



Day 2 - Jen, Nicole and Tim on the Sirius-Orion Saddle, overlooking Lake Oberon and Mount Pegasus South



Sunset on Lake Oberon



Day 4 - Tim

I was able to assist with lowering the ladies' packs on some of the vertical sections of the descent to Lake Oberon, which is a taste of the "goat track" ahead on the range. We arrived at Lake Oberon and set up by the lake edge, as all the platform tent sites cut into the bushes were completely full. A swim in the beautiful lake and dinner by the beach created a wonderful finale to our day.

Day 3: Pegasus day trip, 10 km, 12 hours

Jen and Nicole relaxed by Lake Oberon and swam in a tarn full of tadpoles on the Pegasus Saddle, while I took the opportunity to complete a 12-hour hike over Pegasus, sidling past Lakes Uranus, Titania and Ariel and over Mount Capricorn to Dorado Peak, which lies an hour off the main track to High Moor camp via a scrubby peak. It was wonderful to reach one of two of my unclimbed peaks on the Arthur Ranges; Mount Shaula awaits another hike one day!

Day 4: Lake Oberon, Mt Hayes, Lake Cygnus, 4.2 km, 8 hours

This day dawned sunny and mild. We made the steep climb from Lake Oberon to the range crest and traversed back along the range, with a detour up Mount Hayes for amazing views. We had time for another refreshing swim in Lake Cygnus that afternoon after setting up our tents on a platform well

protected by the scrub. We chatted to a friendly summer ranger and other hikers. The sun setting over Lake Cygnus and lighting up the rugged peaks was sublime.



Day 4 - Ascending the steep track from Lake Oberon

Day 5: Lake Cygnus, Mt Hesperus, Junction Creek, 7.3 km, 5 hours

In hot weather we meandered past Capella Crags and Lake Fortuna to the summit of Mount Hesperus. Superb views were revealed south to Bathurst Harbour and Port Davey and north to Lake Pedder and the Mount Anne-Mount Sarah Jane massif. A steady descent down Moraine A brought us back to the Port Davey and McKays Tracks and a busy campsite on Junction Creek. A group of muscular SAS soldiers seemed a little bemused by the ranger's pep talk on bush safety!



Day 5 - Jen at Junction Creek camp

Day 6: Junction Creek to Huon Camp, 7 km, 3 hours

Day 6 simply required a final walk through the mud and on to the boardwalks with the two memorable sections of rainforest to enjoy. A planned postscript walk to Lake Judd was shelved when we heard the campsite by the lake was full. The sunset and sunrise reflections on Lake Judd of the cliffs of the Eliza Plateau and Mount Anne are sublime.

The Western Arthur Range has over 21 rugged peaks over 1000 metres in elevation. It should only be walked by people confident in navigating serious heights, steep descents, rock scrambling and extreme weather. Fortunately, there are always handholds, but care does need to be taken every step of the traverse. The return walk to Lake Oberon presents less challenges than the full traverse but is still a magnificent ramble that leaves the walker feeling very fulfilled.



Day 6 - Forest near Huon camp



Timothy is a 61-year-old writer, photographer and keen bushwalker from Bellerive Tasmania. He squeezes in wilderness adventures between working as an occupational therapist in three adult community mental health teams in Hobart, Tasmania, being a dad to three wonderful adult children, firefighting as a volunteer with the Tasmania Fire Service (Collinsvale Brigade and the Remote Area Team), completing Park Runs and fellowshiping at St Mark's Anglican Church. He cut his teeth wilderness bushwalking in the 1970s in the Grampians near his family's farm at Konongwootong North in south-west Victoria, and he loves to return to those beautiful mountains.

In the News

New South Australian park is a step closer

A plan to convert an environmentally significant 1000 hectare site near Burra into a [national park](#) has reached a significant milestone after the signing of an agreement to transfer ownership of the land to the state government.

Google maps leads people astray

Graham Anderson discovered drivers were following Google Maps across his cattle property in search of the spectacular [Isla Gorge](#), which had an entrance almost 20 kilometres further along the Leichhardt Highway.

Firefly season begins in NSW

Macquarie Pass National Park south of Wollongong has a popular bushwalking track that, for a short period in November, turns into a [bioluminescent wonderland](#). While tourists hike to its tiered waterfalls during the day, the area comes alive after dark with fireflies and glow worms.

Tomaree Coastal Walk, NSW

The [Tomaree Coastal Walk](#) was recently completed, 27 kilometres on the coast from Tomaree Head, Shoal Bay to Birubi Point, Anna Bay. The [NPWS](#) has more details.

Alone Australia seeking participants

Alone is an international series with people left in remote places to survive for an extended period with no contact from anyone. [Participants](#) are sought.

How bushwalking can change your life

Listen to [Di Westaway's short story](#) on how she got hooked with bushwalking and why she started Coastrek.

Bibbulmun Track 25th anniversary

Western Australia's 1000 kilometre Bibbulmun Track is celebrating its [twenty-fifth anniversary](#). In 2023 there was a new record: the [youngest person](#) to have completed the walk solo, 17-year-old Zara White.

Burning the desert

The fire season has started in Australia's arid centre, to a large extent due to the invasive buffel grass. Dozens of Indigenous ranger groups across 12 Indigenous Protected Areas have collaborated, [burning to reduce the fuel load](#) before the summer's heat.

Feral horse culling at Kosciuszko National Park

Aerial culling of feral horses is [set to resume](#) in Kosciuszko National Park as part of a NSW government plan to manage growing numbers.

A legacy of logging

Analysis based on artificial intelligence of 20 years of VicForests' logging shows the scale of [failed regeneration](#) in Victoria's state forests. At least native forest logging will stop on 1 January 2024.

Blue Gum Trail Loop

Text and photos
Ian Smith

**Is this Sydney's best
walk?**

The weather forecast was four days of rain, so bushwalking thoughts were somewhere on the horizon.



Downstream from the Fish Ponds



The wonderful Blue Gums



The angophoras also have a presence

The first day came and went with little precipitation. During the night a few showers were heard but, by the time the second day rolled around, it didn't seem all that likely. I checked again: showers were only 12 per cent likely. The hours went by. Eventually I decided to risk it, but what walk would I do?

I'd done Waitara Creek the day before under threatening skies and that was nice. Today I needed to go a little further. I eyed off a waterfall on the map and decided to include it in the Blue Gum Trail loop, a 4.5 kilometre affair in the gorge below north-west Hornsby.

Looking at the flat map it wasn't that far away, five minutes' drive was all, just up the hill there somewhere. Except, it transpired it wasn't up that hill. Well, initially it was and then it plunged down what must be the steepest road in all Sydney, zig-zagging down an eyes wide open descent all the way to Ginger Meggs Park. Really?





At least I'd found one of the entrances and stepped confidently out, down a locked access road, across Waitara Creek to the

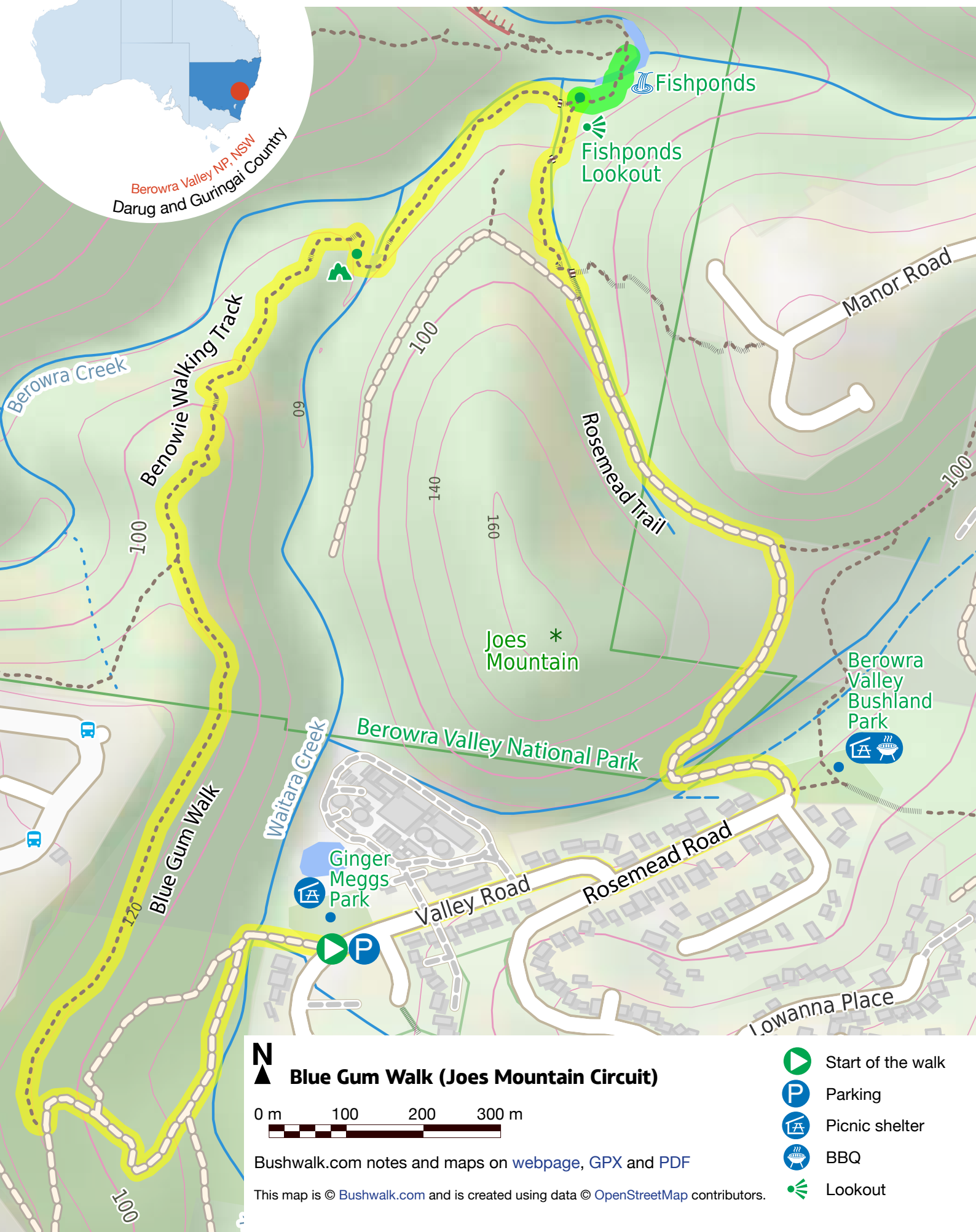
trail. Clockwise was my chosen direction and there's one thing you can't help but notice immediately, why the route carries its name. The Blue Gums (*Eucalyptus saligna*) are magnificent, there's a large stand of straight upright trunks with cascades of ferns below them right beside the trail. They are the last remnants, just 14 hectares, before felling ceased.

“

The Blue Gums (*Eucalyptus saligna*) are magnificent ...

Then I divert left on a smaller trail, because Wirrega Falls is on a side path somewhere around here. I follow for about half a kilometre, dip down into some small cascades and mossy rocks before conceding that it's not down here. Back to the main track. The next thing you notice is that the dirt road is suddenly concrete with ribs and it's heading almost skywards, so steep is the gradient.

-  Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)
-  Main track, side trip, alternative route
-  Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (20 metre interval)
-  Lake, river, waterfall or creek








Blue Gum Walk (Joes Mountain Circuit)

0 m 100 200 300 m

Bushwalk.com notes and maps on [webpage](#), [GPX](#) and [PDF](#)

This map is © [Bushwalk.com](#) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors.

-  Start of the walk
-  Parking
-  Picnic shelter
-  BBQ
-  Lookout



One of many eye-catching sandstone formations



Dramatic sandstone formation by the creek



The Washtub

Off to one side there's the Ginger Meggs Loop Trail where you'll see a row of English Oaks, put there as a lead-in to a dwelling, probably a farm house.

Shortly after, it's indicated that you should leave that and head up some well-placed (and new) wooden steps. Climbing, climbing, climbing until the trail turns right and you're ushered into a new world of towering cliffs and Sydney Peppermint Gums (*Eucalyptus piperita*) whose grey rough bark peeling off leads them to be called "ribbon gums". The sandstone ridge is impressive, to say the least. Though it's out of reach except for the truly adventurous, the eroded shapes, overhangs and caves demand your constant attention. They really are spectacular.

For me, the scenery has been so good I've ignored the energy I'm using up. The vegetation also changes, there's a turpentine or two and a couple of classic angophoras, whose holes in their trunks are a haven for many animals. Eventually, we're crossing over from the ridge and dipping quickly down to

another creek, except there's a negotiation required around a solid block of sandstone, or should that be "through", as the trail dips under a large pock-marked overhang and comes out the other side before the crossing is achieved.

Waitara Creek is a photographer's delight. It's called the Washtub where it struggles to navigate its way through the pockmarked Hawkesbury sandstone. I'm unsure where to point the camera first, so simply blaze away at whatever has potential. It's obvious that the crossing would be closed after heavy rain and dodgy after a medium fall. The trail would also be uncomfortably muddy and, judging by all reports, leeches abound. Still, a quick bit of Vaseline around your sock tops will alleviate that.

“

Waitara Creek is a photographer's delight.

The track then follows the creek for a few hundred yards and is decidedly scenic, a real snapper's delight, to the Fish Ponds of Berowra Creek where there's a neat man-made set of concrete stepping stones that you can cross to a fairly large cave where you could relax and keep an eye out for turtles and water dragons.

“

There's a couple of scribbly gums, so-called, whose marks are caused by the Red-Triangle Slug foraging on algae.

I turned around, back to the Blue Gum Trail intersection that heads uphill, but only for a short time in order to get around a tricky bit of the river. There's a couple of scribbly gums, so-called, whose marks are caused by the Red-Triangle Slug foraging on algae.

Then it's undulations for the next kilometre or so, past a couple of splendid angophoras, whose hollowed trunks are havens for animals; more rock formations until, finally, I can glimpse houses in the distance which makes me feel relieved as tiredness is rearing its ugly head.

Crossing Old Mans Creek (knew I was in the right place) I burst out of the bush into a park, but it's not Ginger Meggs, it's Rosemead Road Park! A consultation with a stranger walking his dog informs me that I've still got a 500 metre walk along suburban streets before I reach the car again where blessed relief takes over but I can't stop smiling. The walk had lived up to its reputation and then some.

“

The walk had lived up to its reputation and then some.



Crossing
at the Fish Ponds



The tricky bit through the rock



Gorgeous Coachwoods

2024 Calendar

Can't wait for the 2024 calendar with amazing bushwalking images? Here's the Bushwalk calendar with pictures from the winners of the Bushwalk.com photo competitions.

To enjoy this amazing imagery, order your copy at \$17 including postage in Australia by emailing Eva at eva@wildwalks.com or click **PayPal** to order it straight away.



Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



Check this and
other entries at
[Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com)
Photo competitions



The Blade
Dan Broun

Landscapes

December 2022

Winner
Morning smoke haze
North-north-west

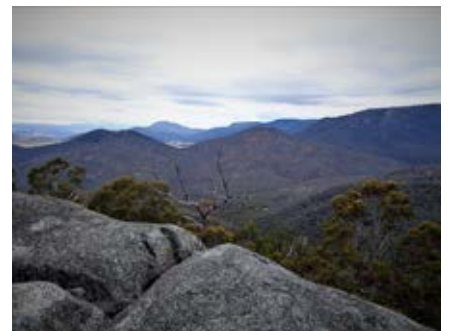
Returning to the scene of a crime (the weather on summits day, not anything I did) to see what this place is like without thick fog. The climb was torturous but worthwhile, the range traverse equally hard and rewarding. The smoke was a bit off-putting but the storm the next day put an end to it (and nearly me).



Sunrise from Anatoki Peak
Tom Brennan



Kangaroo Ridge
Brian Eglinton



On the rocks
John Walker

Non-landscapes

December 2022

Winner
Kaka on flax
Tom Brennan

Kapiti Island, off the west coast north of Wellington NZ is a bird sanctuary.
This was the best of many bird shots taken while doing the 500 metre climb to the summit of Tuteremoana and back.



One misty morning
Graham51



Orb Weaving Spider looking
radiant
Bushwalker Zane



Greeted by the mob
John Walker

Tasmania

December 2022

Winner
Lake Stuart
North-north-west

Sometimes people pick a theme when naming places in Tassie and run wild with it. The King William Range is one such place, littered with names from British history. This shot is from the delightfully named King Charles Head (not far from Cromwell Rise), looking down on one of the lakes nestled below.



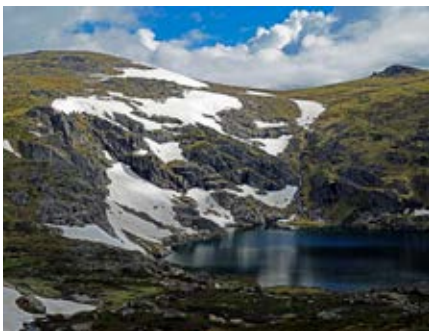
Climbing Mount Karamu
PhATty

Other States

December 2022

Winner
Adelaide Tarn sunset
Tom Brennan

After a misty afternoon, the cloud lifted near sunset to let the last light hit the tops of the nearby peaks.



Blue Lake
Brian Eglinton



A peachy view
John Walker

Landscapes

January 2023

Winner

Lonely Lake and valley cloud

Tom Brennan

After a drizzly rest day at Lonely Lake, the moisture around meant clouds in the valleys as we climbed out on the way to Fenella Hut.



One last gleam
North-north-west



Dry
Tortoise



Kaiser views
Brian Eglinton

Non-landscapes

January 2023

Winner
Bellbird/Korimako in the rain
Tom Brennan

We had a wet couple of days walking around Arthur's Pass. While the keas are probably the most well-known bird there, this Korimako (Bellbird) proved the most photographically accommodating, perching on the end of a flax flower.



Leave me alone, I'm busy...
John Walker



Catching some rays
David Edwards



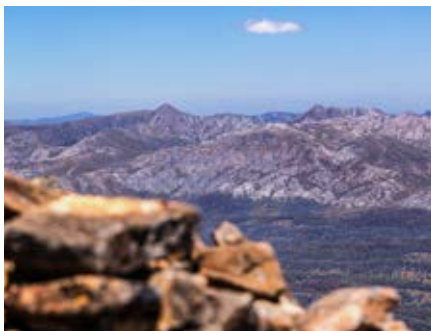
Should last a while
Brian Eglinton

Tasmania

January 2023

Winner
Stillness
Tortoise

I love the feelings this photo evokes for me, from a special time in a special place. Thanks, Joe, for the eminently sensible question at 5 am the day before, when I roused you guys, rain pattering on our tents. “Why don’t we take a rest day?” Hmm. Avoid a soaking scrub bash up Mount Curly? Make use of the spare day I had included in case we needed it? Spend the afternoon lounging in the sun on the beach after the rain passed? Take a rest after six long and challenging trackless days, with more to come? Savouring stillness of mind, body, spirit, lake and mountain. Perfect.



Far from the Madding Crowds
North-north-west

Other States

January 2023

Winner
Ramshead North
Brian Eglinton

I love the Main Range around Kosciuszko especially when water levels are recharged with the melting snows. My wife and I had climbed the pile of boulders making up Ramshead North one October in snow shoes when it was still completely covered in snow. But I was keen to get her back for a second visit in the summer when there are still some snow drifts and cool air. It is a fantastic "other world" away from home.



Alpine garden
Tom Brennan



Chambers Gully,
8 kilometres from town
Vagrom



Tidal forest
John Walker

Nature Journaling

Text and uncredited
sketches by the author
Tracie McMahon

Slow down and see

I started nature journaling out of a realisation that I was never going to be happy with any photo I took on a trip. I could blame it on poor equipment, poor light, or just not enough time, but really, it was a case of imposter syndrome.



Tracie journaling on a hot day in Kangaroo Valley, NSW
Ross Gurney



Journal samples, clockwise from top left: Grampians Peaks Trail, Victoria; Trondheim, Norway; South Coast Track, Tasmania; Drysdale NP, Western Australia.

There were so many beautiful photos out there – look at the winners of the competitions in Bushwalk Australia – how could I compete - why didn't I just buy a postcard or a published book of photos?

The answer is because they were not mine. They didn't capture how I felt when I collapsed at the top of the mountain, when I found an odd little flower huddled in a rocky cleft, or the colours I saw, made luminescent by my own joy.

“

They didn't capture how I felt ...

I'm a reformed accountant – trying to regrow the neural pathways pruned by the rigours of the business world. In 2019 I took a 12 month sabbatical from “left-brain thinking”. My list was bushwalking, camping, write a book and learn how to draw.

The book is still a work in progress, but I stumbled onto nature journaling – which combined everything. I enrolled in a six-week course, and despite the eyebrow-rise of the instructor when it was clear I had not held a paintbrush since primary school, I was hooked.

Why nature journal?

John Muir-Laws, the “godfather” of nature journaling says he journals for three reasons: “to see, to remember, and to stimulate curiosity. The benefit of journaling is not limited to what you produce on the page; it is rather found in your experience and how you think along the way.”

And so it began; my plan was to record the experience of the Larapinta Trail.

I have now filled four hard cover volumes of journals and numerous trip journals. The little trip journals are self-made to fit into a pouch I carry on my waist, with all my other essentials such as my PLB.

And this is the beauty of nature journaling. It is light, you can do it anywhere, and there are no rules. Nature journaling is not art. It is a capture of a moment: the light, heat, exhaustion, or wonder. It also makes me take a good break. My arthritic joints have decided that after a few hours of walking, I need to take a break, sit, and rest before taking on the next hill.

Each piece takes me about an hour. If it is complicated, or I need to look something up (like plant names), I will just sketch it out, make notes of what I was trying to do, take a few photos and finish it at camp that night, or at home when I can access my growing library of plant identification books.

I use watercolour pencils, mixed media paper and a good paintbrush. I particularly like working with materials I find on site, like the water in a creek or rubbing over the texture of bark. One of my favourite pieces is of Govetts Leap in the Blue Mountains during the Black Summer fires of 2019-20. I can still smell the ash in the page.



Burnt red gum on the Larapinta Trail, NT



Black Summer fires from Govetts Leap, Blue Mountains NP, NSW



Capturing clouds

Connecting to nature

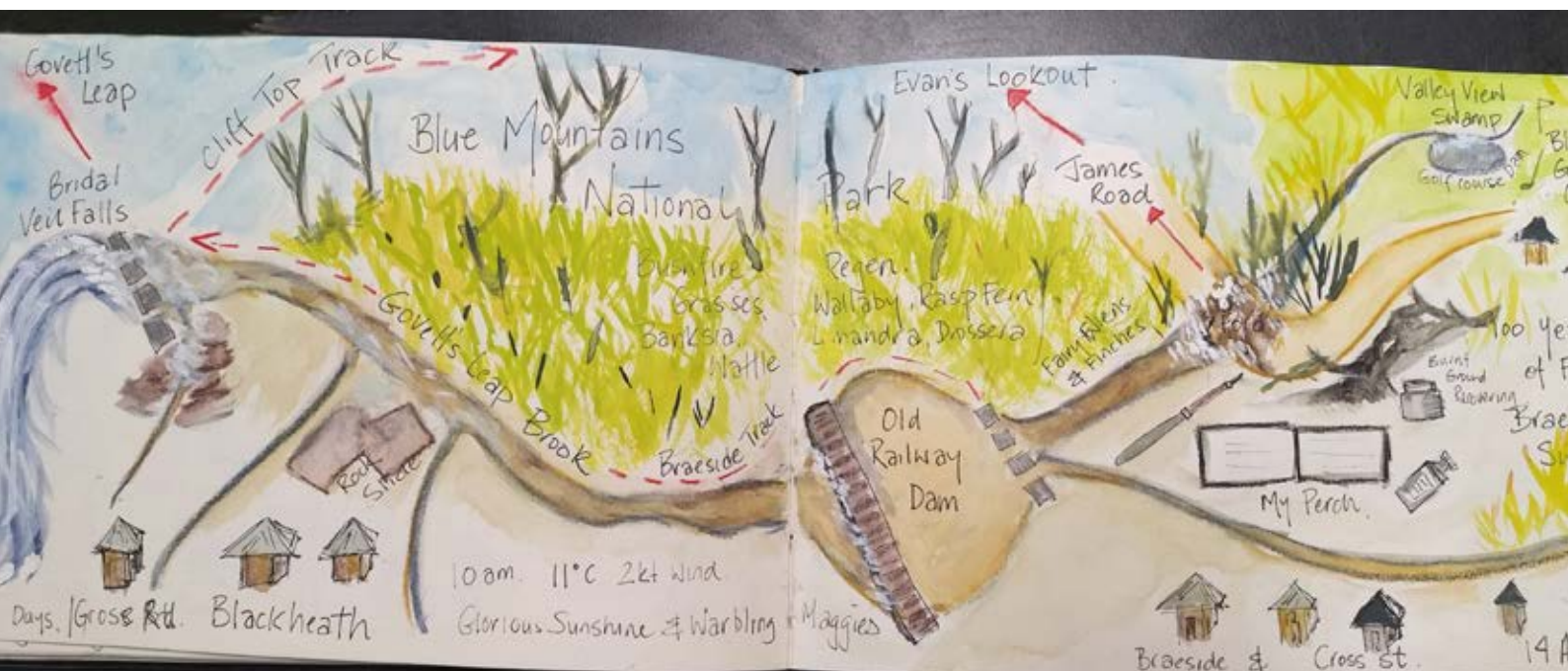
Nature can also paint itself. The piece above on clouds was made by painting cloud shapes with water and then mixing a few colours. The colours were dropped into the water and the sun and wind of the day did the rest. I took it home, did some Googling on clouds and labelled it.

Nature journaling has also trained me to take notice. One of John Muir-Laws exercises is perspective, in which you capture what

you see up close – say 10 cm, then 1 metre, then 100 metres. There have been so many occasions when I have found a tiny orchid right in front of me, that I am sure was not there when I sat down!

“

Nature journaling has also trained me to take notice.



Govett's Leap Brook, Blue Mountains NP, NSW

If my walk is an "out and back" exercise, I also find a stop involving nature journaling makes for a different perspective. I see so many more plants, birds and insects on the return journey and I am sure they didn't just turn up for the afternoon show.

Sharing the joy

While journaling lets me capture my own joy in nature, it also provides me with a way of sharing that joy with others – and it is infectious.

I volunteer at a local historical museum with extensive gardens and have had full houses for school holiday activities with kids making treasure maps of the plants of the garden or sensory maps of the seasons. Participants tell me they find it "accessible". There is a freedom to it, that allows them to record their personal connection to place. I have even managed to indoctrinate one of my

own children. My twenty-five-year-old son recently spent a few months thru-hiking in the US, keeping a nature journal, his "postcard" tells me so much about his perspective. He is a climber, so the rocky outcrops with their colours and contours feature. If I was there, it would be full of flowers.

“

And, unlike photography, you don't need expensive gear. Start small.

Have a go yourself

There are courses you can do to help you on your way, but it is not essential. You don't need to be an artist, or a naturalist, just curious. John Muir-Laws' web page



Inspiration Point, Santa Barbara, California
Max Arkley-Smith



Drawing tools, a map, and a North Lawson waterfall, NSW

[johnmuirlaws](#) has a wealth of information, how-to-guides and a lot of it is free. He also has a [Facebook page](#) which documents his own daily journaling. And, unlike photography, you don't need expensive gear. Start small.

Grab the discarded paints, pencils, and paper from your kid's school year, throw them in a backpack and just sit in nature. My favourite companions are a scone and coffee. You never know what will end up on your page.



Tracie McMahon lives, walks and works on the unceded lands of the Dharug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri. She is a writer with the Blue Mountains City Council Planetary Health Initiative team at [Lithgow Area Local News](#) and [The Moving Pen](#) and a bushwalker with the [Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club](#).

Alone Australia Can Help

Text

Lily van Eeden

Christina Renowden

Fern Hames

Kate Lee

Melissa Hatty

Sarah Bekessy

More than a million Australians have tuned in to [Alone Australia](#), SBS's [highest-rating series](#) for 2023 to date.



Meet the survivalists of *Alone Australia*
Source: SBS

What is it about this program that's got us so hooked? And what can it tell us about our own relationships with nature?

The series started with ten contestants dropped off in a remote area of lutruwita/ Tasmania. The aim is to survive alone for as long as possible. Each contestant is relying on their ability to find food, create adequate shelter and contend with isolation from people.

Each contestant's experiences have been shaped, in part, by their unique relationship with nature. We all value and experience nature in different ways.

As [armchair experts](#) watching from home, we may reflect on how we would act if we had to survive alone in a remote place. How might our own relationship with nature shape our actions?

Nature is everywhere

Watching Alone Australia may generate the sense that nature, and nature experiences, happen "out there" away from urban places and other people. This narrative has been fuelled by media, including [David Attenborough's awe-inspiring nature documentaries](#), which paint nature and humans as separate. While this kind of media can inspire fascination with nature, it can be damaging if it perpetuates an idea that [humans are separate from nature](#).

Nature is all around us, including in our cities. Indeed, [one-third](#) of Australia's threatened species live in cities.

This means that what urban residents (that's most of us) actually do is important for helping nature to survive and thrive. And there are many [easy things we can do](#).

We shape nature, and nature shapes us

Your relationship with nature is part of your identity. This relationship is shaped by values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. It's personal and it's cultural.

Alone Australia demonstrates how humans value nature in different ways. The show helps us widen our view of valuing nature from

what it provides for us (instrumental/utilitarian values) to seeing beauty and worth in nature itself (intrinsic values).

Some contestants value nature from an even broader perspective ([relational values](#)) as they reveal their deep, caring, reciprocal and even spiritual relationship with the natural world.

Previous overseas seasons of [Alone](#) have highlighted [utilitarian](#) nature relationships, with most contestants being white male survivalists. This season, the first in Australia, includes people from different cultures and genders, including First Nations peoples. This has highlighted different types of human-nature relationships, including spiritual and nature-as-kin relationships.

Experiences in nature early in life shape these relationships. In their "flashback" footage, several contestants express gratitude to their parents for early experiences of nature.

For those of us with children, this might inspire us to help shape our child's "nature identity". Meaningful [nature experiences](#) can include looking after nature (gardening, indoor plants), bushwalks, visiting botanical gardens, or getting up close and personal with wildlife at your local zoo.

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Nature as medicine

Being in nature is good for us. It might seem like the [moments of awe](#) and self-discovery in nature that we have seen Alone Australia contestants experience can only happen in these "out there" places. But these experiences can happen anywhere - if we seek them out.

This will be apparent to many of us who sought solace in nature [during COVID lockdowns](#). Connecting with nature, [including](#)

in urban places, can help people feel less lonely and support their wellbeing in many ways.

For two Alone Australia contestants, in particular, their experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder (Chris) and the loss of a child (Gina) have been harrowing. Both describe how nature provides them with solace and healing.

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For several contestants, craving connection with people was the reason to head home. Others seek kinship with nature. For example, ecologist Kate befriends her local possum family and Gina delights in regular visits by a platypus.

For First Nations man Duane, the experience strengthened his connection to Country, but experiencing that connection with family was critical: It's about oneness with nature, but sharing it collectively – kindness, actions towards others, not being alone out there.

Learning about nature

TV nature content like Alone Australia is educational. As the remaining contestants find food and other resources, we learn about plant and animal species and their use by the palawa people, the Traditional Custodians of the land.

This might prompt viewers to find out more about the plants and animals in their own local environments. Indeed, recent renewed interest in urban foraging has been touted as cementing our connections to place and sense of belonging.

We need nature, and nature needs us

Alone Australia highlights our complete interdependence with nature. Ultimately, everything we need for survival, including clean water, shelter and food, is derived from nature, even when we live in a city.





Wombat pool, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania

The “successes” of the contestants are determined by their ability to understand their relationship to the land and how to meet their basic survival needs.

If we broaden our view of nature and see ourselves as interwoven in nature’s rich tapestry, as many of the contestants do, we can gain more than basic survival. We can improve our wellbeing while feeling kinship with the more-than-human, and a sense of responsibility to care for it.

Nature is in crisis, and that matters for all of us.

People who feel connected to nature are [more likely to protect it](#). If TV nature content such as *Alone Australia* encourages us to reflect on our relationship with nature and seek meaningful moments with nature and nature knowledge, then perhaps it might lead us to strengthen our environmental identities and act as nature stewards. And that’s a great outcome for people and the planet.

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Scroggin

Text and photos
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Do you carry scroggin on your hike and do you have a favorite recipe? There is no right or wrong with this, anything goes basically. It is whatever you like to snack on.



Ormiston Pound Walk. A rest day along the Larapinta Trail.



Scroggin mix

The definition of scroggin is a prepared mixture of dried fruits and nuts to eat as a snack while bushwalking. There are other names such as trail mix, gorp and schmogle. I have never heard of the schmogle, but according to google this is what the good New Zealand folk call it.

Scroggin stands for sultanas, currants, raisins and other good goodies including nuts and Gorp stands for good old raisins and peanuts. There is a wide variety already available in the supermarkets, or you can make your own. On my recent Lapapinta hike my friend made our combination. I was a bit skeptical of the combination at first but when I tried it, I was hooked. The scroggin had a little sweet, a little salty, a great crunch and a bit of a chewy combination. Wow, it was very tasty, I wanted to keep eating it. There have been some scroggins I have made but they just didn't have the more factor to it, I mean in that I wanted to eat more. I have tried to add a combination of nuts, dried fruit and seeds but they were a bit boring to eat and I always came back home with way too much that was not eaten. That is dead weight to carry and no one needs that.

The Lapapinta scroggin had four simple ingredients: nuts, pretzels, M&M's and frogs. Breaking this new combination down, the nuts were an Outdoor mixed nuts which have been roasted and sprinkled with a BBQ sauce. The nuts are a combination of macadamia, peanuts, almonds and cashews. These nuts are known as the healthiest type of nuts, but peanuts are actually a legume. They are full of fibre, magnesium, vitamin E, protein, energy and fat. So this part of the scroggin is the nutritional, high energy part with more of a sustained release of energy for the body. It will keep you going for a while. The BBQ spice gives a good flavor too.

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The Lapapinta scroggin had four simple ingredients: nuts, pretzels, M&M's and frogs.

Pretzels are next. They are generally covered in salt so this is good for hikers. We sweat out a lot of nutrients so a good intake of salt is recommended to replenish lost sodium levels.

Consuming salt will also aid in our hydration. As an average, most people lose about 1 gram of sodium per hour during sweaty activities, so times this over a few hours climbing that mountain.

Chocolate M&M's, the sweet stuff. The little hits of chocolate combined with a bit of salty pretzels and nuts is a match made in heaven, I think. To me, this is what makes it moorish, I just want to keep eating. Chocolate is an instant pick-me-up, it contains antioxidants, a little bit of caffeine and of course sugar. These ingredients are easily absorbed by the body so you will feel the effect of an energy boost quickly. M&M's should not melt like chocolate due to the coating, so that is the reason behind this type of chocolate is chosen. Otherwise you could have a melted chocolate type of scroggin if you use chocolate pieces.

Last but not least the frogs. No not real frogs but the sugary fun snacks that you buy from the supermarket. Again, this is an instant pick-me-up with the sugar. The body turns this sugar into glucose, the body thrives on glucose. Also the frogs bring to the mix a

different texture which compliments the other crunchy ingredients. So there you have it, a simple and yet so effective scroggin mix. Now get out there and enjoy your next scroggin mix.

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Consuming salt will also aid in our hydration.

Scroggin ingredients

- 1 pack of Outdoor mixed nuts
- 1 pack of pretzels
- 1 pack of M&M's
- 1 pack of frogs

Start with a handful of each ingredient, then mix all ingredients together at a ration you want to eat. If you like it more sweet, add more M&M's and frogs, if you like it more salty, add more nuts or pretzels. Pack into snap-lock bags. Enjoy on your next trip.



Videos



Hiking Alone, backpacking in a Wild River Gorge, Australia

Kate Grarock takes us on a solo overnight hike deep into a wild river gorge. This gorge is epic - it reminds her of Carnarvon Gorge in Queensland.



Five tips and five reasons for using trekking poles

This video demonstrates why you should hike with trekking poles and ways to use them better.



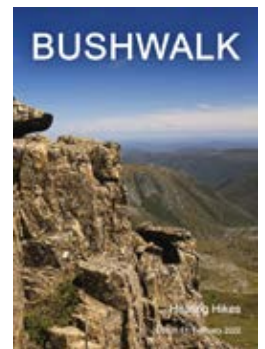
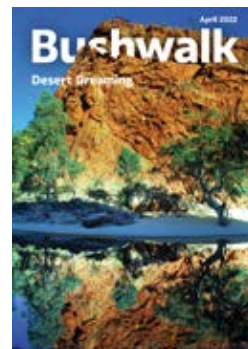
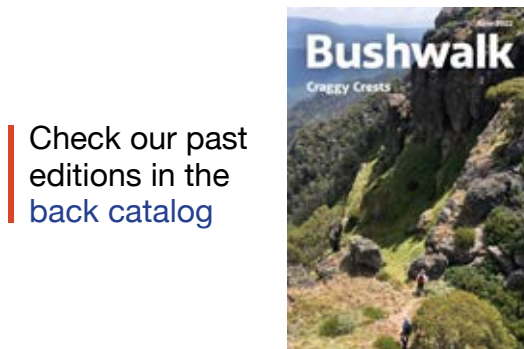
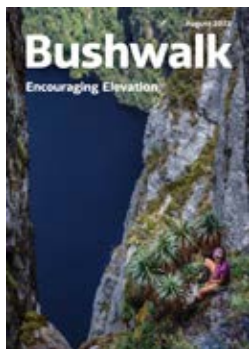
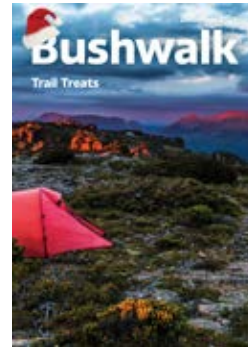
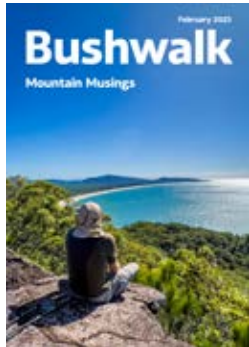
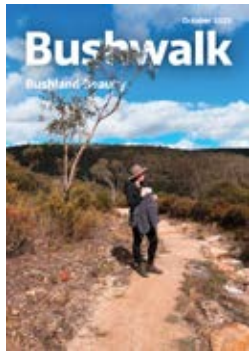
A 50 km training walk with tips for a 100 km walk or ultra-marathon

Stefan of [Healing Hikes Australia](#) has tips and tricks on training for a longer walk.



Hiking food list for an eight day walk

Hayley of [Set to Hike](#) has a video about food for eight days on the Great Ocean Walk. This can be a basis for many extended walks.



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