

## The N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalking Clubs

### G.P.O. Box 2090, Sydney, 2001.

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### S & R ALERT 17TH - 18TH MARCH, 1983.

This call-out presented nearly the worst possible scenario. A couple were overdue two days on a two day trip in the Colo River Gorge. Their map was a photocopy. It had been raining in the area. Fortunately, being March, the weather was mild. Naturally our greatest concern was that since they were so overdue one or both of them were lying injured somewhere in the Colo Gorge.

Ana Herzec and Nick Gann left Sydney on Saturday night, 12th March, to drive to the Grassy Hill Fire road. They had photocopied a section of the Colo Heights 1:25,000 map that included this fire road and Canoe Creek. They had verbal instructions on how to get to the Canoe Creek and Colo River junction from this fire road.

The entrance to the Grassy Hill road is difficult to locate when travelling north, even for experienced walkers. Many walkers actually find this road by backtracking from the nearby Culoul Range fire road. Ana and Nick missed the Grassy Hill road and parked 1 km. up the Culoul Range road. They were now just onto the next map sheet; Six Brothers. The ridge lines that these two fire roads follow are significantly different. Nick and Ana failed to pick out their mistake and walked the Culoul Range road (at night?) and somehow entered the Colo Gorge.

They walked downstream and onto their map area although they may not have realised it since they walked past the unmistakable Colo River, Canoe Creek junction and its easy exit track.

They rationed their food and continued downstream. At regular intervals they would climb up a break in the gorge. Each time they found no fire road or other obvious route to habitation and returned to the river. Finally when they had nearly walked to Upper Colo they walked up Bob Turners track on Friday morning the 18th March.

The call-out was initiated at 6 a.m. Thursday morning. The base site was the clearing beside the Putty Road at the Culoul Range road turn off. This late call-out naturally reduced our effectiveness on the Thursday. The policy had already checked the Grassy Hill and Culoul Range roads on Wednesday night.

Seven parties were sent in to cover Boorai Creek, Dooli Creek, and the Colo River around the base of passes 6 and 7 (Colo Routes and Passes). The long drive along the Culoul Range road meant that some parties were not in the bush till nearly midday.

Due to the large distance the base was from the Colo River, the eighth radio was held back to establish a relay.

During the early part of the afternoon, media helicopters were able to fly into the gorge and the Colo River from Boorai Creek down to Canoe Creek was thoroughly checked. However the weather deteriorated with cloud filling the valleys and steadily blanketing out radio communications with increasing background static.

At 3.30 p.m. the call back was started but the static made this process unduly difficult. In particular I wanted some parties who were to return via their entry route to stay and assist parties coming to use that route.

The difficult communications made it almost impossible to explain why parties should wait while they could see that night was fast approaching.

As a result, one party spent an unexpected night on the Colo River. Another party equipped for an overnight stay could not be readily contacted on Friday morning. So although they were in a position to start searching straight away we could not give them instructions. The rest of the parties were not all out till 11.30 p.m.

These difficulties seemed more to strengthen the resolve of the walkers to find the missing persons and most walkers stayed to continue the search on Friday.

Friday's search pattern then was to continue checking the passes out of the Colo, bearing in mind that Ana and Nick did not have the Colo Routes and Passes Map, and to extend the search area with helicopters first, then walkers up to Howes Swamp and downstream from Canoe Creek.

Friday's weather was much better and after a 7 a.m. briefing, Polair and the Westpac helicopter ferried three parties into the Colo gorge while the other parties were sent in via the Culoul Range road.

The missing couple walked out to a farm at 11.30 a.m. and all parties were back by 3.30 p.m.

Some important aspects of this search were:

- 1) the high quality of co-operation between police and bushwalkers. This was a result of using the Police Rescue Squad and in particular Sergeant Don Coates who was in charge.
- 2) the fine line between responding too soon and waiting too long to respond. Normally we wait for a party to be 24 hours overdue before searching for them. This avoids many needless call-outs. In this case, the alarm was not raised till Wednesday afternoon so that two days had elapsed. Our search patterns would have found the missing couple but in four days they had travelled so far that our searching was really trying to catch up on them. If S & R had been called in on Wednesday the missing couple would have been confined to a smaller area.
- 3) the good use that can be made of helicopters if they are integrated into the pattern of ground searching.
- 4) the value of radio communications. Late Thursday afternoon the only message consistently getting through was "I cannot understand you" and probably only because it was said so often.
- 5) a reminder to all walkers that press enquiries must always be directed to the committee. Even when details are given to the press by the committee errors and misrepresentations occur. The last thing we need is a bad press.
- 6) the need to be extra careful in radio conversation. While the media do not have a licence to transmit on our frequency they certainly are listening!
- 7) a reminder of the commitment that attendance on an alert carries. In the same way that we are looking for missing persons NO searcher goes home till we are sure that we have no missing searchers left behind in the bush. This only seems unfair when you're not the one struggling to get back to base!
- 8) this search had its difficulties but if it weren't for these difficulties e.g. weather, terrain, late call-out, etc., it is unlikely that S & R would have been called out at all. So while we made every effort to avoid people bivying there was a party caught out overnight. In future we would ask all walkers to have a bivy bag and enough extra clothes and food on a day search so as not to be too uncomfortable if caught out overnight.

A total of 60 walkers were present one or both days of the search. The work done was tremendous and will ensure S & R's continued use in the future.

My sincere thanks go to walkers who responded from the following clubs: Sydney Bushwalkers, Sydney University Bushwalkers, Macquarie Mountaineers, Span Unlimited, Ramblers, Three Peaks, Camden, University of New South Wales, Sutherland, Western Suburbs and National Parks Association.


KEITH MAXWELL  
FIELD OFFICER

# EXPLORE

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#### WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE

At the March meeting of F.B.W. the matter of member clubs in the "country" (viz outside Sydney) was brought up.

Suggestions of regional meetings, annual conferences and possibly "sub" F.B.W. meetings were made and it was decided that our country cousins would be asked for their opinion.

In the meantime however it would be interesting to hear of some of the exploits of these clubs. So how about it(??), we've heard all the local news.

BRAD PHILLIPS

# GOOD GEAR LOW PRICES

HIGH TOPS EQUIPMENT is a recently formed business run by bushwalkers with extensive walking experience in The Blue Mountains, Central Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and Nepal.

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## F.B.W. BALL

This year's Federation Ball will be held at Lane Cove Town Hall, the same location as last year, on Friday, 23rd September.

Clubs will be reminded later, but all clubs should make a note of it now and advise their members.

Once again, Gordon Lee is organising the activity.

Admission will be \$7 per person.

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## TASSIE SLIDE SHOW

A new slide show of Tasmania's beautiful Wilderness will be touring the eastern states later this year. These slides have not been shown before. It does not concentrate solely on the Franklin River area.

Keep an eye out for dates and venues and help keep the support for these and other wilderness areas alive.

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## SPIRIT OF THE FLAME LIVES ON

On an Easter trip, Fairfield Bushwalking Club removed a large amount of rubbish from the area of the Coal Seam Cave at Kanangra. Only by constant vigilance can bushwalkers

## SOUTH WEST TASMANIA

Work in the river area and Crotty Road continues at a furious rate, despite terrible weather. The H.E.C. are working from dawn until after dark.

The upriver vigil continues as surveillance as well as a political statement. If any walkers want to be part of this vigil please contact the T.W.S. office at 362 Pitt Street, Phone 267 7929.

An injunction seems unlikely at this stage. The National Parks legislation on which the publicised regulations are based would probably not stand up to challenge in the High Court. The World Heritage Properties Protection Bill would survive much more easily, however it will not be passed for several months. After this time more months will be required to pass through (and hopefully survive) the High Court process. September seems a likely date for success. Yes, that long!

Members of unions and Labor Party should ensure motions are passed calling on the Federal Government to stop work as soon as possible. Other people can write to Federal Ministers and their local members. Visits to local members and Senators are particularly productive.

Work at the Sydney office of the T.W.S. and in the various branches continues. Workers are required both during the day and in the evenings. Please ring up and volunteer if you would like to help now and then. Call in and see the volunteer co-ordinator if you have some spare time. Plenty of stalls are happening and people are needed to run them.

The shop at the Wilderness Centre is doing well. A new book by Dombrovskis will soon be available. There is a good range of books, badges, t-shirts, sloppy joes, stickers, soft toys, mobiles, kites, posters, cards, etc. It is a good place to buy gifts and helps support our work.

HUGH PATERSON

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## SOMEWHAT GEOGRAPHICALLY EMBARRASSED

Two walkers of a Sydney club while completing their walk through Galah Canyon during December, found, to their delight, a new pair of leather gloves.

However, upon reaching the "Swamp" on the Rocky Creek Road, an owner was found in the form of a ██████ member. The significance of this find only became obvious when it was later announced that the party had in fact set out to Contradiction Canyon.

Moral: if you stuff it up, first check to see that you have left no clues behind.....I know I do.

## REUNION PRIZES

The stores below all generously donated prizes for the F.B.W. Reunion competition. Unfortunately, the weather on the reunion weekend was not the best so many of the traditional competitions were not held.

The remaining goods will now be used as prizes at the F.B.W. Ball later this year.

### Southern Cross Equipment

Optimus 77A Stormstove \$33.95

### Paddy Pallin

Bleuet Stove \$18.50

Billy 6.75

Set 800 - Knife and Fork Set 9.75

2 X Crabs @ \$6.50 13.00

\$48.00

### Mountain Design

Bushwalkers First Aid Kit \$19.50

### Eastwood Camping

3 X \$10 Vouchers \$30.00

### Mountain Equipment

1 Billy \$ 7.75

2 X 1 Litre Water Bottles 6.70

1 Esbit Fuel Tablets 4.25

2 X Richmoor Dehyds 11.45

6 Satchells of Gatorade 8.40

6 Alliance Yogurts 9.00

6 Shortbread 2.70

6 Survival Biscuits 1.80

\$52.05

TOTAL \$183.50

## CONSERVATION NEWS

- June 5th is World Environment Day and this year's theme is "Save Our Soils". Government and non-government conservation bodies wish to highlight the degradation that has occurred, and is still occurring, to our soils. The Australian Conservation Foundation is concentrating a lot of effort on the subject this year, in order to educate the public as to urgent problems such as salt-scalding and accelerated erosion (e.g. gullyng). This is of direct importance to bushwalkers, in areas such as erosion in forestry areas, as well as the erosion caused from overuse of tracks and firetrails by four-wheel drive vehicles in National Parks.

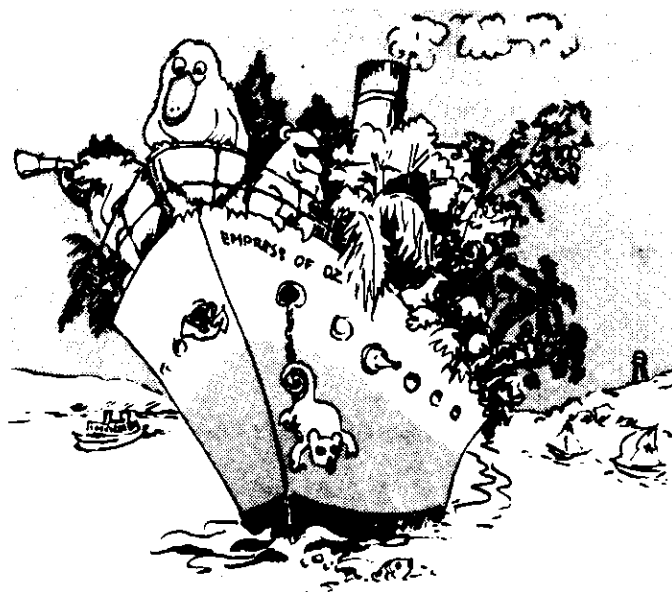
The Department of Home Affairs and Environment has published a report: Land Degradation In Australia. This describes the general condition of the soil and is based on data derived from the 1975-1977 Commonwealth/State national survey of soil conservation. The A.C.F. also has informative publications dealing with land degradation and soil erosion.

The theme of World Environment Day will only be a success if everyone (and that means YOU!) becomes involved. Become informed on the matter and get your friends involved. Our quality of life depends ultimately on the soil; be it for the food we eat, or the forests we walk in.

- In line with the above, why not become involved in the greening of Australia by planting some native trees or shrubs in your local area. Disused grassy parks or paddocks may be transformed into an oasis for birds, as well as providing shade, and binding the soil. In line with Clio's article in the last Newsletter ("Year of the Tree") this does not mean that you should plant exotic fruit seeds in National Parks! Whilst most exotic fruit seeds will not germinate in the bush, I make a habit of either burning them or taking them out whenever I'm in a National Park - just in case.

A more fruitful (no pun intended) idea, is to assist in the regeneration of areas of damaged bushland. If you use the Bradley Method of weeding and regeneration, with a little effort and time, you will be rewarded with success.

If you can, make sure the plants you use are indigenous to the area, rather than just being native to Australia.



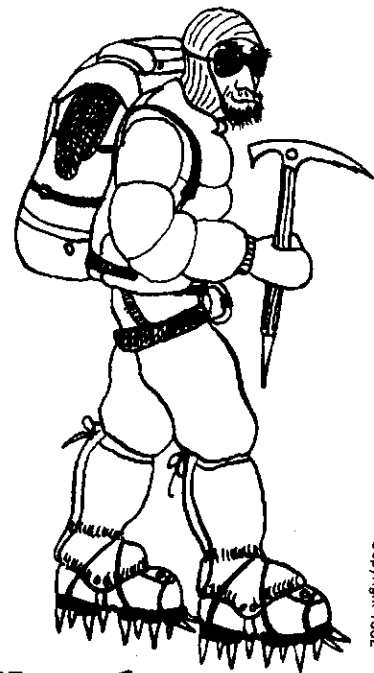
## South-west Tassie comes to Sydney!

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society now has a Sydney Shop.

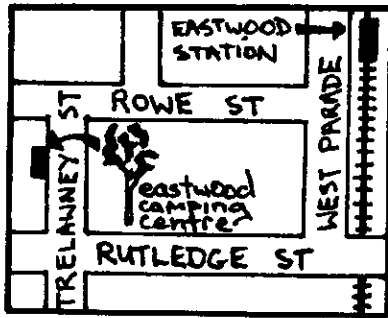
We have lots of full colour posters, books, screen printed T-shirts, kites, badges, stickers, hand-made toys and even Tasmanian honey.

Your support will help save the south-west Wilderness.

Drop in to the **Tasmanian Wilderness Centre**  
362 Pitt Street, Sydney  
Phone 267 7929



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eastwood  
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- The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has recently published their annual report for 1981-82. Copies may be obtained from their offices throughout the state or at their head office in Sydney.

- Everyone is invited to comment on the Draft Plan of Management for Yuraygir National Park, on the North Coast of New South Wales.

Copies may be obtained by writing to:

G. W. Vincent  
 Senior Ranger  
 Grafton District  
 National Parks and Wildlife Service  
 P.O. Box 97  
 GRAFTON NSW 2460

Phone (066) 42 0613  
 (066) 42 0593

Most clubs (if not all) should already have received information in the post by now anyway.

- The Australian Conservation Foundation is mounting a campaign this year, to stop the woodchip industry and to help save areas of native forest, such as the Conondale Ranges in Queensland and the forests of East Gippsland in Victoria. It is titled "Save The Bush" and is complementary to the theme of "Save Our Soils". Your support is needed, both monetarily and by volunteer work. Further information may be obtained from the A.C.F.

- Walkers are requested to report sightings of feral animals in National Parks. I would like to know the species sighted, where it was sighted (as accurately as possible) and when it was sighted. Particularly, I would like information on feral cattle and horses in the Southern Blue Mountains area.

MICHAEL DOHERTY - CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

CLASSIFIED

"Paddymade Explorer rucksack bag. Will fit old style Paddymade Mountaineer rucksack steel frame. Nominal price only. Phone Keith Maxwell 622 0049 (h)".

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Please send articles, correspondence, book reviews, details of unusual or epic walks etc. to

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