

The Bushwalker

Newsletter of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs (NSW) Inc
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Warragamba Dam Raising to Proceed Despite Labor Promises

Despite a Labor promise suggesting otherwise, the planned 23 metre raising of Warragamba Dam will still be the Government's preferred solution to guarantee dam safety. Andrew Cox reports.

This option, which will increase the storage capacity of the dam by more than 50%, is to be presented in the Environmental Impact Statement now due for public comment in July.

At a meeting in early May with the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, Craig Knowles, Kowmung Committee representatives called on Labor to honour its pre-election promise to modify the dam design, to hold a full public review and to release claimed confidential information on the project.

Mr Knowles refused to respond to these requests. However he signaled that his final decision following the close of public comments may rely on further studies and serious consideration of substantiated objections.

STOP PRESS

Victory Against Wollemi Threat

A large fertiliser plant proposed to be established in a Wollemi national Park inholding has been abandoned.

Situated near Mellong on the Putty Road, the operation was threatening to pollute Wollemi Ck with highly concentrated runoff. Local residents and the Tinda Ck Progress Association were taking court action to require the developers to prepare an EIS.

In a sudden withdrawal, in June, the company now seeks to construct the fertilize plant near Mudgee. Thanks to all clubs who assisted in the fundraising appeal. - A Cox.

Paul Broad, Managing Director of Sydney Water, was keen to experience the Kowmung for himself the following week. The 10 km daywalk with Andrew Cox, Kowmung Committee President, was an ideal opportunity to see the most popular area at stake and to talk openly about the dam raising issue. Fortunately, the morning mist lifted, and the warm day that followed allowed frequent swims and an ideal chance to soak up the stunning qualities of the lower Kowmung Gorge.

If more decision makers came to visit the areas impacted upon by their actions, perhaps they will become advocates for the natural area's protection. With Paul Broad, it still remains to be seen.



Premier Bushwalker. Bob Carr crossing the lower Kowmung River on a recent walk with Conservation Officer Andrew Cox.

No Walking Allowed in Kowmung and Coxs Rivers

by Andrew Cox

Signs have appeared over Summer in the vicinity of the Coxs and Kowmung River junctions that restrict access to the Mt Cookem and White Dog Ridge corridor. Bushwalkers walking down the Kowmung or Coxs River towards White Dog Ridge will now be greeted with a "No Entry" sign several kilometres away. This is despite long established access routes through the lower Coxs and Kowmung River Gorges.

Already, Confederation has made

initial contact with Catchment Protection Officers who confirmed the new restrictions and their intention to enforce them. They intend erecting a new sign at Medlow Gap clearly marking the single access corridor. The old sign permitted access to the lower river gorges and to Mt Cookem.

It is ironic that some of the most accessible areas under threat from the Warragamba Dam raising cannot be viewed by concerned bushwalkers. Perhaps it is an indication of further restrictions if the dam raising proceeds.

NORLD

- Should we be involved?

By Maurice L. Smith

NORLD is an FLA (five letter acronym). It stands for National Outdoor Recreation Leadership Accreditation.

Confederation has been involved in the issue of outdoor recreation leadership accreditation for some time now. Refer to articles in the previous issues of May 1993 and November 1994.

There has been a request by The Sydney Bush Walkers that Confederation withdraw from the leadership accreditation consultative process. The reason for this request is that participating in the consultative process could be detrimental, especially if insurance companies impose accreditation on bushwalking clubs. We reiterate that the concept of leadership accreditation is entirely inappropriate for any voluntary organisation.

Based on our participation to date we understand that the commercial outdoor adventure industry has the need for leadership accreditation. Confederation's policy is that we oppose leadership accreditation in any form for any voluntary groups, such as bushwalking clubs.

Our motivation for involvement in the process of defining the skills requirements for competent leaders is, firstly, to ensure that the skills set for activity leaders of commercial operators are technically and administratively appropriate, secondly, to

influence the process to the extent possible with the aim of ensuring that leadership accreditation does not become mandatory for voluntary groups. Our involvement is, primarily, an insurance measure.

If we do not participate and if eventually the leadership standards become mandatory for voluntary groups, there is the risk that the standards may be set by people who do not have the relevant outdoor experience. Yet by participating in the consultative process it could be seen by some that we, despite our strong protestations to the contrary, implicitly agree that club leaders should meet minimum standards appropriate to the level of the activity.

Currently, Confederation's insurance policies are silent with respect to the issue of leadership accreditation. However, it is possible that in the future there may be some form of leadership accreditation added to our policies. But, would our non-involvement in the leadership accreditation process influence our insurance company?

This important issue will be debated at Confederation's Annual General Meeting in August. I ask that every club committee discuss the matter, giving it a great deal of thought and giving appropriate instructions to your club delegates.

Labor in Power - A Green Government?

After the special analysis of the environmental policies of the major political parties in the last issue of the "Bushwalker", a final flurry of policies designed to win the green vote were launched in the last few weeks before the election. With such a close result, it is likely that Labor's courtship with green voters may have dragged it over the line. This is especially so in the Blue Mountains, a traditionally pro-environment stronghold, where the now Labor minister, Bob Debus, won the seat by a few hundred votes. This seat is one of only four seats that changed hands during the election.

The pressure is on for the new Government to deliver its promised agenda of environmental reform. Reading its policies on Nature Conservation, Greening of Sydney, the NSW Coast and Forestry is sometimes like reading an environment group's policy. This is truly heartening. Unfortunately, implementing its promise will be politically unpalatable in many cases. Keeping the business community happy, which demands less restrictions and more incentives for growth, and the green lobby at bay is a juggling act. Even within Labor, there will be strong resistance to some policy measures.

Many election promises will be broken, twisted or not implemented in the hope that they will be forgotten. Already, we have seen a half hearted attempt to stop the M2 freeway, the Warragamba Dam raising is still planned, contrary to policy, and most other changes await implementation. For a policy to be fulfilled, the Government must be constantly reminded of it and given little room to side-step. It is up to all voters to spell out to their local member (of any persuasion) the Labor promises they support and to ask what steps they will take to ensure its kept.

If you need more information about Labor's environmental promises, contact Confederation's Conservation Officer, Andrew Cox.

Rocky Creek Canyon - Not Quite National Park Yet

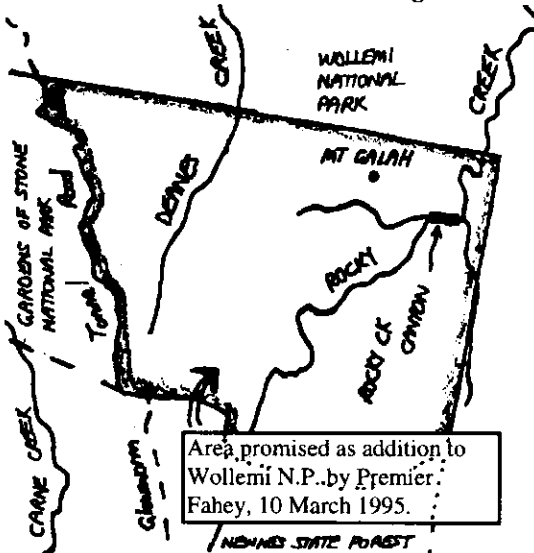
Andrew Cox reports:

After strong lobbying from Confederation, the Fahey Government promised to add Rocky Creek Canyon to Wollemi National Park. This new national park addition was announced two weeks prior to the March election.

Environment Minister, Chris Hartcher, personally assured Confederation's Conservation Officer that the gazettal of the addition would occur before the election. Unfortunately this never happened.

Now we must begin again and convince the new Labor minister, Pam Allan, about the importance of Rocky Creek to canyoneers and to ensure that

the catchment is converted from State Forest to National Park management.



The Bushwalker is the newsletter of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc. It is published quarterly. The aim of the newsletter is to provide articles and information of interest to the members of clubs affiliated with the Confederation. Any opinions expressed by individual authors do not always represent the official views of the Confederation.

President's Report

Do you sometimes get the feeling that many bushwalkers only pay lip service to nature conservation?



Has it ever occurred to you that the ultimate in Minimal Impact Bushwalking is to stay at home?

In April I participated in a twelve-day epic called the Great Kowmung Biodiversity Walk, described in a separate article in this edition.

For me, a major bonus of the Walk was the communication that opened up between the bushwalkers and various National Parks staff who participated. The bushwalkers realised that the rangers were real people with best intentions for park management, but hampered by funding problems and politics. (I won't venture to guess what the rangers thought of the bushwalkers!)

I came away convinced that it's time bushwalkers stopped bagging the NPWS so much, and got in there to do more for our parks. It's no good taking the holier-than-thou attitude: the fact is that we are simply one of several parks users, along with the four-wheel drivers, the commercial groups, the helicopters and so on. The parks are not there just for bushwalkers' recreation and we have no special right to them.

As pressure on our parks mounts, we must seek to become more than just one of the user groups. Each of us needs to get in there and do his or her bit for the parks, whether that means pulling weeds, helping to map rare species, collecting carnivore scats, educating other bushwalkers on MIB, or simply reporting unusual animal sightings and calls.

Discussions have commenced with NPWS staff, to explore ways in which Confederation members can take an active role in the management of our precious resource. I hope this will lead to some practical schemes whereby we can all get in and help.

- Andy Macqueen.

The "Volley" Ball

It's on again - the annual Confederation Ball (well, bush dance really). This year's theme celebrates the quashing of the rumour that our most popular footwear is going to be extinct.

Come along and be part of our great tradition which goes back to 1932. Get your club together and make up a party.

Friday 22 September

8 pm

Petersham Town Hall

Band - The Currency Lads

Bring your own sustenance

Dress: Casual. But wear your best Volleys, of course!

Prizes for best table, dress, and so on. Bribery and corruption encouraged.

Bookings not necessary - pay at the door
\$10 or \$25 for families

For more details ask your club secretary

Farewell Tom

With sadness we report the passing earlier this year of a past-president of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, Tom Herbert, OBE, at the age of ninety-one. Tom was an early member of the Sydney Bushwalkers—at one stage their president—and a foundation member of the River Canoe Club. Along with Wally Roots and Harold Chardon, he was one of the 'Orang Utans' of the Sydney Bushwalkers, so called because of their build: they were all surf life-savers as well as bushwalkers!

The writer had the privilege to interview Tom last year: at first his memories were a bit distant (could you remember your bushwalks of sixty-five years ago?) but as he warmed to his subject the gleam came to his eyes, the pace quickened and his chuckles frequent as he

recalled how the Orang Utans descended the pass to Blue Gum which took their name; how he earned the nickname 'Mandelberg' because he always had gear hanging from his pack, how he led a large group of girls to Red Hands Cave... Most of all, he spoke of his great love of bushwalking.

The nineteen-thirties might be described as the golden age of bushwalking. We owe Tom Herbert and all his contemporaries a great debt: for the rise of the clubs, for the saving of walking areas, for the establishment of our Federation, and, especially, for the growth of the whole ethos of recreational bushwalking.

- Andy Macqueen

Conservation Clippings

Newnes - Forest Sludge dumping

The dumping of Sewerage Sludge in Newnes State Forest reported in the last Bushwalker, has developed into a major issue in the Lithgow area. Publicity generated by Confederation and the Central West Branch of the National Parks Association highlighted risks to the adjacent Wollemi National Park and its pristine creeks from potentially high levels of heavy metals, nutrients and pathogens.

As a result, the dumping site was closely monitored by the Environmental Protection Authority and a second application of the sludge delayed until it was confirmed that the operation met pollution guidelines. Confederation is now working to ensure that general guidelines and conditions are adequate given that disposal of sewerage sludge will become more widespread and threatens to be a major environmental threat to bushland areas.

Colliery Dam leaking

In what must be the final straw in a series of pollution outbreaks originating from Clarence Colliery on the south eastern edge of Newnes Plateau, it was confirmed that a major failure of a tailings dam occurred on the premises during January.

Bushwalkers during late January reported a thick black sludge lying on the bed of the upper Wollangambe River, many kilometres downstream from the mine. After investigation by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), it appeared that coal laden water escaped from a tailings dam designed to withstand relatively rare rainfall (up to 1 in 50 chance per year events). The rainfall in January that caused this was a much more common event.

Over the past seventeen years since the Colliery's opening, almost yearly sitings of coal based sediment clouding the waters of the Wollangambe River have been reported. One early event led to the company's prosecution. It is hoped that now, considering the recently approved expansion of its operations, authorities act to punish Clarence Colliery for its disregard of environmental controls and poor management in what must be its worst recorded pollution incident.

- Andrew Cox, Conservation Officer

Join Grose Gorse Walkers for a Weekend

Wanted Walkers keen to do something for the bush

Without the help of enthusiastic volunteers, the Grose River may one day be barred by impenetrable thickets of the noxious weeds Gorse and Scotch Broom.

Last year an enthusiastic group of volunteers and NPWS staff participated in the Great Grose Gorse Walk, removing or mapping the young weeds. The program was an initiative of the Friends of Blue Gum Forest, and was supported by NPWS. There is more to be done!

This year we want to control remaining infestations and search and map further areas. We plan to map the creeks from Govetts Leap, Horseshoe Falls, Beauchamp Falls and Arathusa Falls, to Junction Rock. We will control as many weeds as practicable as we go along.

The activities are again being organised by

NPWS and Friends of Blue Gum.

Experienced bushwalkers and bush regenerators will lead small teams to carry out the work, with training and guidance being given on the job. This is a good way for bushwalkers to learn bush regeneration principles and contribute practical protection of the bush. A rewarding social time is also promised.

The work will be in three stages: August 19&20; August 21 to 25; and August 26&27. People can take part in any stage (even for one day only). Base camps will be made at locations on Govetts Creek.

To register interest, write to Ranger Susan Luscombe, NPWS, PO Box 43, Blackheath (or phone her on 047-878877), providing name, address, phone number, bush regeneration experience (if any), and availability. Inquiries may also be directed to Hugh Paterson of the Friends of Blue Gum, on 047-512303.

INVITATION

Confederation Reunion & AGM

Sat/Sun 19/20 August 1995

All members of affiliated clubs are invited to have a pleasant weekend at Mitchell Park, part of Cattai National Park.

- *Camp in delightful surroundings*
- *Daytime nature walks; night possum-prowl and frogging*
- *Enjoy a barbecue and campfire with walkers all and sundry*
- *Hear what Confederation has been up to, and what is planned*
- *Attend the Annual General Meeting*

WHERE: Mitchell Park, near Windsor (Turn off the Cattai Road, 5 km from Pitt Town)

FACILITIES: Camping, kitchen, barbecue, toilets, hot showers

COST: A small park entry fee applies

PROGRAM:

Saturday

Midday or earlier: Arrive, set up your camp, have your lunch

2.00 Presentation and discussion of draft strategic plan

3.00 Afternoon tea (provided)

4.00 AGM: Presentation of reports; elections

5.30 Barbecue - bring your own food and drinks.

7.30 Possum prowling and frogging (with assistance of NPWS staff and volunteers)

8.30 Campfire. Bring your songs and yarns or just enjoy the company.

Sunday

Sleep in, then participate in a local nature walk. Pack up and leave at your leisure.

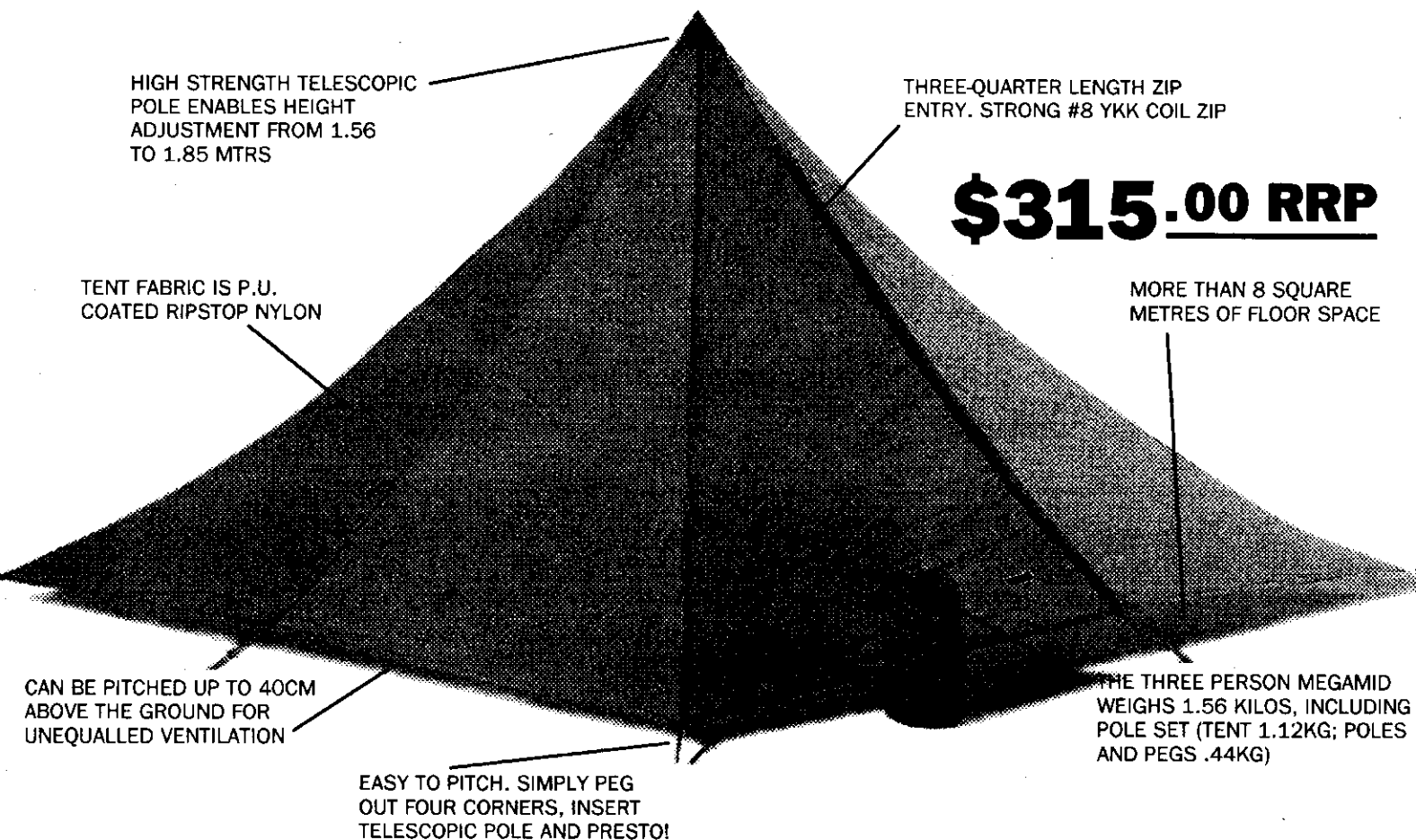
Consider spending some time at the nearby Cattai picnic area on the Hawkesbury River.

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Barry Higgins

S & R

A Short History of Bushwalkers Search And Rescue

Part 1 of a special feature by W. Blayden

"Hello Is that the Bushwalker's Search and Rescue? My son set off with a couple of mates to go bushwalking over the weekend and he hasn't returned home, and I'm worried that he may have become lost or injured in some way. What can you do? Can you go and find him?"

That's the sort of phone call a member of the Federation of Bushwalking Club's Search and Rescue Committee might receive late on a Sunday evening or early on Monday morning. A phone conference between the committee discusses the problem, and as an overdue party is usually able to make contact with home on Monday, there is a 24 hour deferment of action. This decision is based upon a number of criteria like bush experience, weather conditions and known medical conditions.

The first search exercise was held in 1932 at the height of the hiking boom. Members of Sydney Bush Walkers and the Mountain Trails Club carried out a practice search for three lost people near Royal National Park. Despite having trouble with mist the party was located using the recognised distress signal of three smoky fires. To that time no member of either club had ever been lost. Early in 1936 Ninian Melville, a club delegate to the Federation, proposed forming within Federation a Topographic Bureau with the intention of promoting bushwalking and being a source of all walking information. One of its goals was to record particulars of persons who would be available in cases of emergency, for search and rescue parties. Unfortunately Nin was transferred to the country before the idea could be implemented. In August that year the Sydney newspapers carried the full account of the rescue of Percy Hull (23) and the death of Cleveland Cole (37) following a blizzard in the Victorian Alps. This was the first time that a search/rescue incident had received such publicity.

Two months later, four young men chose the long weekend to undertake the popular walk down the Grose River valley from Blackheath to Richmond. Despite the use of a search aircraft, it took nearly a week for the party to be found. A party of about thirty bushwalkers lead by Messrs. Pallin and Smith entered the valley and located the tracks. They were in several kilometres

when a separate party of police were advised of the recovery from a search plane.

Later in October Paddy Pallin sent a letter to the Federation requesting that the whole question be referred to a committee and some permanent organisation be effected. A sub-committee was formed with Paddy the convener and assisted by Robert Savage, Herb Freeman, Tom Herbert and Bill Holesgrove. The Federation in November found the concept of a Search Rescue Section was acceptable and should "be empowered to act on its own initiative". Preliminary organisation of the Section was completed by February the next year and the Commissioner of Police informed of their presence. Assisting Paddy was Miss Jean Trimble as Secretary, and the only female member of the S & R Committee.

"Unfortunately the newly proclaimed wartime instructions ruled out the use of short wave radios and carrier pigeons"

Jean had participated in the Grose search. The big news for 1937 was the disappearance of a Stinson aircraft. One club, the Coast and Mountain Walkers made a precursory search of Ku-ring-gai Chase one weekend with the intention that S & R should follow up the next weekend. However wreckage was located at Lamington over the Queensland border. (Planes at that time did not carry radios and numerous reports came in from all over the State from people claiming to have heard the aircraft passing overhead). Later in 1937 a canoeing mishap on the Shoalhaven River, where a number of canoes entered a rapid together, had S & R issuing a set of rules for canoeists. Canoeing had become popular in the late 1920's and the first canoeing club had only been formed in the previous year. The Bushwalkers Federation was the closest organisation that that club could join (as it had Paddy Pallin as its co-founder).

A search was made at Easter 1938 in the Grose River valley for three men, and resulted in a 50c donation for the efforts of

searchers. About mid year a man fell to his death on one of the tourist tracks in the Blue Mountains. His relatives donated a winch, steel ropes, a bosun's chair and other apparatus to be a basis for a Blue Mountains Rescue Club. Membership was drawn from the inhabitants of the mountains and a year later they made their first rescue - two tourists delayed by flooded streams. A newspaper article in 1939 noted that the Federation was made up of twenty clubs with a total membership of 200. Their proficiency at locating lost persons was noted, and at a recent practice had 50 people in attendance. A practice weekend near Woronora Dam used carrier pigeons to let anxious relatives back in Sydney know that the 'lost' party had been found.

Between April and June, Ernest Hodgkins from the Lakemba Radio Club gave a series of lectures to bushwalking clubs on the use of 'field portable receiving and transmission radio sets'. A field day in July at Glenbrook Gorge used this 'two-way telephony' at which signals from search parties 18km away were received by the base radio. Base then passed details on to the home station in Sydney.

A third practice in September commenced on Friday night with the lost parties setting off ahead. Unfortunately the newly proclaimed wartime instructions ruled out the use of short wave radios and carrier pigeons. Despite this sudden loss of communications, the missing parties were located successfully.

Whilst the war does not appear to have restricted many clubs' walking programmes, obviously attendance would have been down. So too were S & R activities, and in 1942 it was expressed that S & R should be reformed. But it was another two years before anything positive was done. (Between 1943-5 there were nine alerts with one search going out).

Local police were usually responsible for rescue calling upon whoever was around to lend a hand. A marked increase of cliff rescues during the early war years (mainly at Watsons Bay) led to especially chosen officers from the Police Demolition Squads being formed into the Cliff Rescue Squad (in 1942). These men were under the control of Special Sergeant Harry Ware - an

ex Harbour Bridge rigger.

In 1946 the Cliff Rescue was reorganised along the lines it operates today, and its role expanded so that by 1954 'Cliff' was deleted from its title. Later this year Bill Knight was appointed chairman of S&R with Paddy the convener of searches. Early next year the Commissioner of Police was advised of the re-emergence of S & R.

In 1947 the Federation produced the pamphlet 'Mountains Make Men' and included "Write down your intended route and leave it in safe hands - perhaps with Paddy Pallin, who will organise a Federation search party if necessary".

Ownership of cars was not widespread and when two men became lost in the Grose Valley in June 1948, one search party caught the train to Katoomba, party two went to Blackheath by car, party three detoured at Faulconbridge and party four took the train to Richmond. Fortunately news of the lost party reaching civilisation was received before the searchers entered the bush.

When a teacher and six boys became overdue in misty weather along the Coxs River in May 1952, it brought a spate of comment in the papers. The public suggested ways of preventing hikers from getting lost:

- carrying a couple of boxes of confetti and leaving a trail,
- carry a bugle or horn of the John Peel type,
- carrying a flare pistol with sufficient cartridges
- a surveyor suggested that a hard, dry

log could be hit "about 30 hard knocks to the minute" with the back of an axe to attract attention.

One senior Police Officer noted that "lost hikers should be treated as public mischief". On another occasion a Police Inspector suggested that two-way radios should be installed in bush outposts to contact the police. Disagreeing with some members of the public calling for bushwalking to be discouraged, he said "we

"one search in the Blue Mountains relied upon a large beacon fire being lit on the end of Narrow Neck, as the recall signal."

must not suppress the spirit of adventure. But we should educate people into making proper preparations for their rambles..."

Paddy supported this idea "Bushwalkers are not feckless folk who should be curbed. They should be acknowledged as good type young Australians in whom the spirit of adventure is not dead". Whether by chance or by design, the Federation produced the pamphlet 'Safety in the Bush', the same year (reprinted in 1960).

The problem facing the lost with signalling their needs was also shared with their rescuers. Despite pre-war experiments at radio communications, one search in the Blue Mountains relied upon a large beacon fire being lit on the end of Narrow Neck, as

the recall signal.

In 1954 a combined exercise in the Blue Mountains was organised with the Air Force and Police. Since there was no direct contact between ground to air, a message from the searchers to the plane had to be conveyed by foot and vehicle to the nearest farm with a telephone connection. A call was put through to the local police station who then contacted RAAF headquarters who radioed through to the plane. If there was no immediate reply forthcoming, the plane would radio back to headquarters, who would then phone the police and a message would be broadcast over the local radio station. The search centre was based at Carlon's farm (which had no phone) in the Megalong Valley. This communication system was further frustrated when it was realised that the searchers and the pilot were using different scale maps. In order to resolve the problem of communication between the search headquarters and the telephone network, it was suggested that a radio van, similar to those used by the Blue Mountains Council and the Electricity Commission, could be the solution. This could be used in conjunction with amateur radio operators. Walkie-talkies were also proposed for those in the field but were very expensive.

Portable radios (walkie-talkies) were available on the market but were bulky and heavy to carry - the battery alone weighed about 7kg, and each set was expensive. A trial use of these units showed their worth but only when line-of-sight reception was

Continued on page 9

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Kowmung River Epic

Andy Macqueen joins in the Great Kowmung Biodiversity Walk

As I launched myself into a swim in Morong Deep in the cool and drizzly Easter weather, I wondered what I had let myself in for. But I need not have worried: this trip was to fulfil all my expectations, and more.

Over the years I've walked most of the Kowmung River. But always in bits and pieces. I'd never had the opportunity to put it together. So when I heard about the Great Kowmung Biodiversity Walk, I was hooked at once.

It is one thing to walk a section of the river. It is quite another to make the whole journey, following it through all its moods—from the cleared fields above Tuglow Falls; through the wild granite canyons of Morong Deep; through the quartzite hillsides, rifts and gorges; from chilled crystal pool to slippery boulder; from grassy bank to Backhousia jungle. The river flows on, and the walk is never ending: bend succeeds bend, bluff succeeds bluff, rapid succeeds rapid, Casuarina succeeds Casuarina. Irresistible campsites, inviting waterholes. Definitely habit-forming.

The expedition took twelve days. Yes, it can be done faster, but that wasn't the point. The main objective was to gather data on plants and animals along the way. For me at least, another objective was to live the river.

While only three undertook the whole journey (Ben Correy, John Gordon and myself) over thirty other bushwalkers and National Parks staff participated in various sections, so the numbers on the river varied from six to seventeen. Five bushwalking clubs were represented—Springwood, Sydney Uni, Span, Upper Blue Mountains and Blue Mountains NPA. Parks staff included Senior Ranger Kim de Govrik and Senior Naturalist Wyn Jones.

Every good walk develops its own jokes and traditions, and this was no exception. Like how, on starting out every morning, it was mandatory to immediately plunge the good old Volleys into the water for the first crossing of the day; how at one stage there seemed to be so many injured knees that we renamed our trip the Dicky Knee Expedition; how a certain participant wore the same socks for twelve days.

Then there was that walker who was

such a terrible tea addict that he carried his Trangia and tea bags in an overnight bag everywhere he went. And the novice walker who put the silk inner sheet over the outside of the sleeping bag. And that other walker who ate enormous quantities of peas every night—with predictable consequences.

There were the inevitable debates about Volleys versus boots, which the Volleys easily won course.

While the biodiversity of the actual participants was very healthy, there was a general absence of one particular species: the Bushwalker. In fact, I was staggered to find that for most of the trip, which

occurred over the Easter-Anzac holiday period, we encountered not one other bushwalker.

The nil score was broken only by an encounter with Sydney Bush Walkers near Gingra Creek, and a lone fisherman further down. For sure, we probably just missed plenty of walkers at much-frequented spots such as Roots Ridge, but I've come to the conclusion that, in general, there are fewer serious walkers out there than there were twenty or thirty years ago. The 'rucksac sports' are supposed to be thriving, but it seems that the majority are concentrating on the thrill sports like canyoning, mountain biking and skiing: perhaps the dedicated back-country bushwalker is an endangered species?

But to return to biodiversity. As expected, many weeds infest the river—blackberry, willow trees, thornapple and ink weed to name only a few. As far as animals are concerned, it seemed at times that there were more ferals than natives: few wallabies were sighted, yet we came across

numerous cattle and pigs, and signs of goats, rabbits, horses and foxes. Carnivore scats (droppings) were collected for later analysis, so perhaps we can determine who is eating whom.

We searched the Church Creek limestone cliffs for recent signs of the endangered Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby—in vain.

On the positive side, we can report a multitude of small bird species, several large goannas, the odd giant eel and black snake, at least one platypus and assorted possums.

We observed much red cedar regeneration—and in exploring some of the small tributaries came across decent sized specimens which escaped the cedar-getter's axe.

Rubbish was collected along the way, but I'm pleased to say there was little of it—perhaps someone else had got to it all first. However, we spent quite a bit of time demolishing at least fifty fire rings. (Are you one of those people who still insists on building rings of stones for a fire-place? If so, it's time you read about Minimal Impact Bushwalking!)

The final day brought mixed emotions, and not only because it was the final day of a unique experience. For here we were in that wonderful final section of the river, the section threatened by Sydney Water's plans to raise Warragamba.

The Kowmung is not pristine, as the feral animals and weeds—and the fire rings—testify. But it's the nearest thing to it anywhere near Sydney. Bush-

walkers have been doing epic trips down the Kowmung for sixty years. But maybe not for much longer.

This walk offered a very special experience. We all had a great time, and learnt from it too. Congratulations are due to the chief organiser, Ben Correy of the Blue Mountains Rare and Endangered Species Group, and also to all the National Parks and Wildlife officers who supported it and participated so enthusiastically.

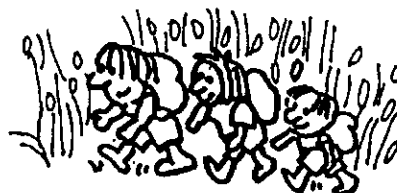


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- ★ Merimbula - Ben Boyd NP
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- ★ Thredbo - Kosciusko NP
- ★ Armidale - New England NP
- ★ Katoomba - Blue Mountains NP



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S&R - A History.

Continued from page 7

possible, transmission was poor when screened by hills.

Transport for callout was a problem and a list of bushwalkers who were available to transport searchers was maintained. Apart from the Police and the Army it was suggested that local Rotary Clubs could perhaps help out with vehicles. S & R equipment consisted solely of signalling mirrors and coloured plastic panels with the international code for ground-to-air signalling. Each searcher was expected to use their own walking equipment (including ropes, first aid kit) and construct a stretcher from natural materials. Female search party members were not favourably looked upon by the public. Problems with accommodation, tenting, close co-operation with service personnel, adverse press attention, difficulty with base sanitation arrangements and "unwelcomed by Forestry men" were reasons perceived. Only when there were females in the overdue party was this policy to be reconsidered.

The then policy was only to look for recreational walkers lost children or old people were not within the normal scope of S & R activities. When the Police called for

assistance, S & R worked under the Police - but only to the end of the road where their authority ended. The problems facing NSW bushwalkers were shared by others. The Victorian S & R organisation wrote in 1955 about their methods and expressed a favourable use of dynamite for effective long range signalling. Four blasts on the hour was the suitable recall signal. In the bush the 'Acme Thunderer' whistle was best for maintaining contact between searchers. Jim Hooper held the position of field officer to S & R for most of the 1950's and into the 1960's, and had the section running smoothly. Toward the end of the decade he saw that the nature of the Section's activities were changing and realised there needed to be more involvement and co operation with the Police. (This was the time of the rebirth of rock climbing in the State, and incidents started to involve cliff rescue). He also set about trying to develop and encourage some degree of rock climbing proficiency among the volunteers. Jim however was never to see the fulfilment of his plans for he tragically lost his life early in 1961 trying to save another person trapped in a whirlpool near Barrington. Whereas Jim was an efficient organiser, he tended to move cautiously and quietly towards achieving his goals. His successor,

Major Ninian Melville, could manage confrontation quite effectively and though he ruffled feathers along the way the goals were reached far more quickly. Under Nin a year long campaign to raise funds ensured with over \$800 being received - \$500 alone coming from the Kameruka Bushwalking Club.

Part 2 of this article will appear in the next issue.

Get Well Milo

Renowned conservationist and son of Myles, Milo Dunphy is recovering after a successful operation to remove cancer from his liver. Shortly after leaving hospital, Milo announced to his doctor he would be standing for election in the local seat of Georges River. While failing to win election, the more successful Bob Carr paid him a get-well visit on his birthday in May. It is hoped that by mid-year Milo will be back campaigning for the protection of areas such as the Blue Mountains and Kosciusko for bushwalkers to enjoy in the future.

Communications In The Bush

- A WEA Illawarra Rambler's Perspective

by Nuri Chorvat - President of WEA Illawarra Ramblers

With the rapidly reducing size and weight of modern communication devices, such as mobile phones and hand-held UHF CB transceivers, our club wondered - Do we use them or not? We examined the pros and cons of these devices and the use of mobile phones V's hand-held radios. The result was that our club decided to purchase a Philips P65 40 channel UHF hand-held transceiver. Our decision was guided by the following considerations.

Consider some typical bush injury scenarios.

1. Patient is conscious with a compound fracture - where a walker has tripped/slipped over a root/stone and has a fracture of the elbow/ankle.

2. Patient has suffered a heart attack but is still conscious - where a walker has suddenly collapsed.

3. Patient is unconscious with multiple contusions and internal bleeding - where a walker has slipped and fallen over a ledge or down a steep slope.

If we did not have a means of communication, then if the group was 4 hours into the bush when the injury occurred, then it will usually take 4 hours to walk out for medical assistance.

In scenario 1, the time may not be critical to the survival of the patient. In scenarios 2 and 3, I would suggest that time would be critical.

The use of a mobile phone or UHF radio in these situations, I suspect, would have the support of the majority of our Confederation walkers. The quality of the transmission and reception of the radio signals, which may require the user to climb up to a higher location to send the signal may slightly lessen the time advantage to summon medical assistance, but **the point to be made is that the time is considerably reduced by using a communications device.** For example, along the South Coast our club is well served by the central location of the Volunteer Coast Guard station based on Hill 60 at Port Kembla and the repeater transmitting tower on Knights Hill above Albion Park. The Bushfire Control Centre at Bulli is also radio based and the fire vehicles have both Fire Brigade and

UHF CB radios (to communicate with farmers when fighting fires). When we walk in Heathcote or the Royal National Parks, we are generally in direct view of Sydney and within radio contact of the emergency services.

The high and ongoing costs of purchasing/leasing a mobile phone was considered to be unacceptable. A small lightweight hand-held 40 channel UHF radio (cost \$600 plus \$95 for a spare 12V 600mAh NiCad battery) was less expensive and offered more advantages; such as

1. Able to transmit 1 or 5 watts for extended coverage,

2. Able to be used in convoy situations when travelling to a walk starting location in a remote or unfamiliar area (an extra lead plugs into the vehicles cigarette lighter socket),

3. For large groups - having the leader in contact with the tail end Charlie (usually achieved by the leader's radio scanning channels 5 [emergency channel] and 20 [nominated channel for bushwalkers and arbitrarily selected as adjacent to channels 18 - Volunteer Coast Guard and 21 - Bushfire Control Centre] which uses minimal power (60mA) and is silent with the tail end Charlie only transmitting when necessary,

4. Able to communicate between bushwalking groups (to know if other groups are in the vicinity) that may be able to help in a rescue situation,

5. Contacting and assisting emergency rescue services (Eg. providing information directly to the rescue helicopter crew when they approach within the target area), or conduct a limited search for a missing walker before Wilderness Rescue is called.

6. Used when conducting abseiling on long drops- communicating from the leader/instructor at the top down to the leader/instructor at the bottom. If a rock rescue is required, a small hand-held UHF radio (with its small 10cm aerial) that could be clipped to a rescuer's harness would be more suitable than the existing VHF radios with their 2 metre long aerials.

7. Able to notify emergency services (Police or Bushfire Control Centre) as required. For example, if a body is found or a fire observed.

If emergency assistance is required then the UHF CB channels to be used should be :

(Remember the best position to transmit is on the highest point)

Channel 5 Nominated emergency channel. Monitored by CREST and Rescue Services. This channel is usually relayed via transmitting stations - listen on Ch. 35.

However if no contact is made, then try:

Channel 20 Bushwalkers channel - to establish if any other bushwalkers are in the area and that could provide quick assistance.

Channel 40 Truckies channel providing extensive coverage within range of major roads.

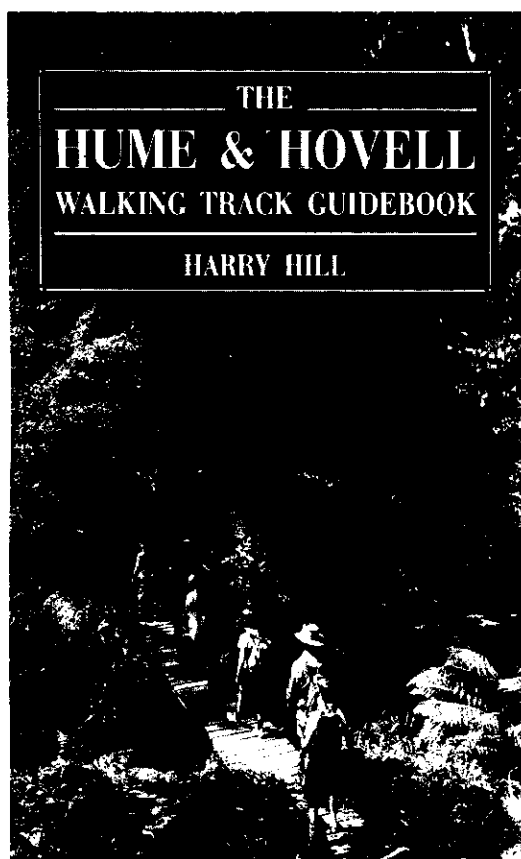
Most truckies have mobile phones and are able to relay emergency calls. However if no contact can be made, then try scanning all channels. If no response, then you will have to walk out for help.

Be aware of the channels that other groups use , and especially those that could possibly relay messages in an emergency. Eg. local farmers or State Emergency Services

For example, on the South Coast we scan (listen to) Channels 5 (Emergency), 18 (Volunteer Coast Guard), 20 (Bushwalkers), 21 (Bushfire Control Centre) and 35 (Emergency relay). This scanning is usually silent.

We concluded that there was a **nett positive** benefit of having a communication device carried by a walking group out in the bush. It is now common for leaders to ask at the start of a walk, How many walkers are carrying mobile phones? There are generally one or two phones present in a typical group of 10 to 20 walkers. **I would propose that a simple Bushwalking Code of Practice be established with only one rule - mobile phones should only be used when requested by the leader in an emergency situation** (otherwise switched off inside their pack). Todate there have not been any problems with misuse of phones or radios on the walks that I have attended. The presence of a mobile phone generally is viewed as positive and tends to raise the perceived confidence of the group. That is, if we need emergency help, we should be able to get help quickly.

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Bits and Pieces

Compiled by David Noble

According to "Splash" the newsletter of the River Canoe Club the Canoe Creek fire road and the road to the north have recently been upgraded and should now suit conventional vehicles.

Jim Barret, the author of books on the Coffs and Kowmung Rivers and Kanangra Walls has been busy completing two new volumes - one on Place Names of the Blue Mountains and Burratorang and one on the history of Yerranderie. Both are available from Jim c/- 65 Brook Rd Glenbrook 2773. Reviews will appear soon.

The Bush Club has been undertaking a series of walks visiting all of NSW's National Parks. By the end of this year they should have walked in about 60 parks of the 70 or so parks.

The Confederation minutes reveal that Maurice Smith has spoken to Dunlop about the future availability of Volleys. He has been assured that Volleys will continue to

be produced by Dunlop.

The Australian Alps Walking track has now been completed between Walhalla (Victoria) and Tharwa (ACT). The Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs has expressed concern over the quality and position (height) of the markers.

Sharon Toffler - a member of the Carlon family of "Green Gully" in Megalong Valley (Packsaddlers) has written to the Sydney Bushwalkers requesting any memorabilia of her family in years gone by. She would like copies of photos etc taken in the pre-packsaddlers era. Contact her on (047) 879150.

An attractive new book has appeared in Tasmania called "The Abels" (Volume 1). It contains photos and information about Tasmania's peaks over 1100 metres high. It has 1 page devoted to each peak in the manner of the Scottish Monroes guide. Copies are available from P.O. Box 224, Kings Meadows, Launceston, Tasmania 7249 for \$44.50 (hard cover) or \$34.50 (soft)- includes post and packing. Volume 1 contains details of the northern peaks and is of much interest to bushwalkers.

The Bushwalker

Contributions, letters to the editor, original cartoons and suggestions are welcome. They should be sent to the address below. Except for short notes or letters, all contributions should be accompanied with a text file on a three and a half inch floppy disk in either Macintosh or MS DOS format. or Email to: dnoble@nexus.edu.au

Advertising rates are available on request. Ring John Clarke on (02) 744-1916

Distribution is through the affiliated clubs and through major retail outlets.

Address all correspondence to

The Editor, The Bushwalker

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs

NSW Inc. GPO Box 2090, Sydney 2001

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs

NSW Inc represents approximately 55

clubs with a total membership of around

5000 bushwalkers. Formed in 1932,

Confederation provides a united voice on

conservation and other issues, runs training

courses for members, and provides for the

public a free wilderness search and rescue

service. People interested in joining a

bushwalking club are invited to write to the

Secretary of the Confederation of

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for information on clubs in their area.



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