

THE Bushwalker

Magazine of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs (NSW) Inc

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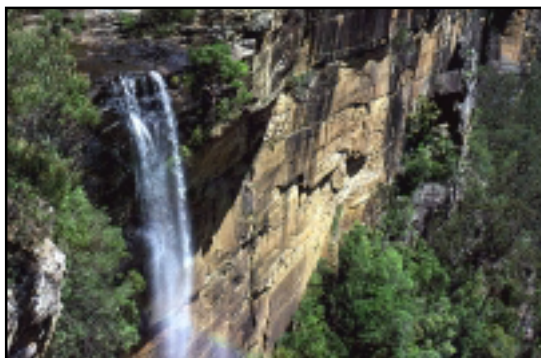


Environmental Vandalism - says 4WD Magazine

It is not my normal practice as Conservation Officer, to write reports for the Bushwalker as a reaction to other media articles.

A recent article however, in a four wheel drive magazine happened to fit in well with this general topic and deserves some scrutiny.

One of the most unworkable



Morton National Park- Photo Webster multimedia

park boundaries I have yet come across was Yalwal Creek, a tributary of the Shoalhaven River and until last year, dividing Morton National Park from adjacent State Forest.

This very attractive creek is popular for liloing, canoeing and walking, with nearby Ettrema creek being a favourite NSW area for remote walks. The gentle gradient of the creek bed also allowed off road vehicle use along the water course for many kilometres, which took place to the extent that a 'road' like imprint had formed in the stones and pebbles on the dry part of the bed. I was told on my last visit that collisions between canoes and vehicles were a real risk and I thought that was a nice metaphor for landuse conflict (water use conflict?)

by John Macris
Conservation Officer

Since a fence cannot be built along a river bed, the park boundary was an arbitrary one with generally everything to the west National Park and declared wilderness and to the east Yalwal State Forest. This presented a good opportunity to test the idea of self regulation by motorised recreation groups, something they often champion as a concept. Unfortunately self regulation was discredited here with Ettrema Creek, within a declared wilderness, receiving regular vehicle use in the same manner

as Yalwal Creek - along the river bed, for several kilometres into its gorge. A fire trail onto Drovers Ridge in the wilderness was also accessed regularly from Yalwal Creek and used to the extent that it had become braided and deeply potted along much of its route. Is playground too strong a term?

The State Government proposed eastern extensions to the Ettrema Wilderness in late 1995 which included the Yalwal Creek Valley. Confederation made a supporting submission and also raised with the National Parks and Wildlife Service our concerns about illegal vehicle use of the existing wilderness.

In April 1996 the addition of the Yalwal lands was announced and has since been declared. With a much improved boundary with

which to manage, we reminded the NPWS of the need to protect and restore the area to a primitive state. Our long standing policy on wilderness is that there should be not only no vehicle use, but no roads on which they could be used. In this case physical closures of a few routes would be required. The affected creek bed was subject to a grading to remove the trail formed by the imprint of vehicles, and some large rocks and boulders were strategically placed so as to form barriers of natural materials. The Drovers ridge trail was also closed off and should now begin to revegetate.

Confederation congratulates the Nowra district of NPWS on this work. In many other areas of declared wilderness, park managers have hung on to vehicle tracks, when according to our policies and the spirit of the wilderness act, they should be closed and revegetated.

Now, the four wheel drive magazine took a rather different view on this work, heralding it as an act of environmental vandalism by the service and pledging support for some recreationalists' aims of reversing the work in the name of the environment. Considerable outrage has also been expressed by some, over the severe damage sustained to a Wombat's residence during the works!

I say let them bellow and chest beat, a new playground will be found soon if it has not been already. Ettrema Wilderness is one of those wonderful natural places that should be set aside foremost for nature, with human use taking a small and unimposing second place behind that preservation goal.

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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 text file on three and a half inch floppy disk in IBM format or E-Mail.

Advertising rates are available on request. Ring John Clarke on (02) 9744-1916

Distribution is through affiliated clubs, major retail outlets, council information centres and national park offices. **Address all correspondence to** The Editor, The Bushwalker Bushwalkers NSW PO Box 2090 GPO Sydney 1043.

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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 63 clubs with a total membership around 8000 bushwalkers. Formed in 1932, the 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 Bushwalking Clubs at the above address for information on clubs in their area. Or web site <http://bushwalking.hightide.net.au>

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

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Confederation Reunion & Annual General meeting - The Discovery Centre - Kurnell

Saturday August 23rd 1997

This year the AGM will be held at Botany Bay National Park, Cape Solander Drive, Kurnell

Programme: Arrive approx midday.

1.00: AGM Reports, special issues, and elections, afternoon tea provided by host club.

The detailed agenda and other details will be sent to all Confederation members and club secretaries by July.

The Committee is looking for a club to host the AGM. For details please contact the President or Secretary.

Annual Bush Dance August 22nd

This year the annual bush dance will be held in conjunction with the AGM. The dance will be at Petersham Town Hall starting at 8pm (see add this magazine). The theme this year is the Blue Gum Forest 65th Anniversary. Come along and mix with the ghosts of the Blue Gum, the Dunphies, Chardon, Rigby, Lawry and others. The original Blue Gum committee, formed in 1931 comprised Rigby, Myles Dunphy, Harold Chardon, Walter Roots, Joe Turner, Harold Buckland, Roy Bennett and Harold Perrott. Dorothy Lawry replaced Chardon in February 1932 on the latter's resignation.

We would like to encourage country clubs to be more involved with their confederations business, especially with the ORCA and bushwalker training uppermost on the agenda of all outdoor recreation organisations.

The Confederation will be happy to **arrange accommodation to any country member who would like to come to the dance and AGM.**

Down the Track - Tracks & Access Report

There has been a lot of TALK about Tracks in the last three months, but virtually none about Access ! More of that later.

I mailed to a random sample of 30 members of Confederation, one from each club in the Sydney suburbs, and have had three recruits to the T & A sub committee. I would welcome some more people either to attend committee meetings in the City or to be corresponding members to whom I can write for personal opinions on draft documents or for advice on issues local to them. So let's hear it from club delegates outside the suburban area. I should emphasize that I am not necessarily seeking for club opinions, but input from individual bushwalkers so that documents can receive a wider scrutiny before presentation to the Management Committee and then to all clubs if that Committee so decides.

The invitation is also extended to any bushwalker. If it is convenient for you to attend sub committee meetings you can be co-opted and vote in that sub committee as an individual. You can of course attend Management and general meetings, as a visitor, and may address those meetings, but without any voting rights.

*by Alex Tucker Confederation's
Tracks and Access officer Sydney
NPA*

Australian Alpine Walking Track (AAWT)

I represented Confederation at a workshop on a Management Strategy for the AAWT. It was attended by representatives of the Victorian Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, the National Parks Associations of Victoria and NSW and Canberra Bushwalkers and the Rangers responsible for the various sections of the track. Naturally the majority of the latter were from Parks Victoria as the route of the 396 km track starts from Walhalla and continues through the Baw Baws, the Razor - Viking Wilderness, the Barry Mountains, Hotham and Bogong to the Cobberas Wilderness.

In NSW it goes through the Pilot and Jagungal Wildernesses to Kiandra and Murray Gap. In the ACT there is the Cotter Wilderness and the track ends at the Visitor Centre of Namadgi NP. Notice that the AAWT avoids the Main Kosciuszko Range by going from Dead Horse Gap, Charlottes Pass, Smiggins and Guthega PS to Slink Pass. Many walkers will no doubt think that this somewhat round about route is a good thing to avoid overuse of the Main Range. Do you ?



A working group which includes a delegate from the Canberra Club and one from the Victorian Federation is preparing a draft strategy which will be discussed at a meeting in Canberra at the end of April. It is hoped that the final draft will be available for wider comment later this year. Please tell me if you are interested in making an input.

Standards Australia.

I represented Confederation on a S-A committee reviewing AS 2156-1978 - Walking Track Signs. The committee was established following a request from the Victorian Federation. The existing standard is limited to specifying an isosceles triangle indicator which is mounted with the base vertical to indicate a change of direction or horizontal to indicate straight ahead. The preferred colour is fluorescent orange or, in desert areas, blue. Information signs covered are limited to routed timber. There is a very brief look at the relationship between the grade of track and the

Continued on Page 10

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Paddy Pallin

Training workshop report

The beginnings of Confederation's training policy, was workshoped on April 12. This policy, when devised, will be to provide support for clubs who will retain responsibility for training their members.



A group at the Training Workshop

Such support may include:

- circulating the new competency standards
- circulating training materials, probably based on the standards
- developing a code of practice and model manuals for leaders and members
- providing information about training resources, geographical knowledge and areas of club expertise.

The workshop, attended by some 40 representatives of affiliated clubs, laid the ground draft after discussion, of the results of Confederation's 1996 training survey.

The need for a training strategy has been accelerated by the publication by The Outdoor Recreation Council of Australia's (ORCA) controversial new competency standards for leaders of outdoor activities.

These standards, still not embraced by many in Confederation, are seen by others as providing a convenient benchmark to measure the skills of club leaders. Once the standards are finalised, it is foreseeable that land managers and underwriters of club public liability policies may adopt them as a minimum requirement for leaders of group activities.

*Lucy Moore
Sydney Bush Walkers*

Confederation continues to reject the need for mandatory accreditation of leaders and instead promotes adherence to minimum standards or accepted practice with a view to minimising the incidence of claims based on negligence.

The new training policy, to be implemented by the new training sub-committee, help to provide opportunities for leaders to access appropriate training to enable them to comply with accepted practice.

During the workshop, there was considerable discussion about Confederation's role in the provision of training courses, such as leadership skills, first aid and train-the-trainer, as well as the issue of fees for participants and payment for trainers. This matter was not resolved and will be taken up by the training committee.

Mechanisms for minimising the workload of the training committee include using existing resources wherever possible, encouraging clubs to nominate a Training Officer and share



*Lunch catered for by
John & Sylvia Clarke NPA*

information directly and providing basic resource information to clubs who can keep it up to date.

Throughout the day participants returned to the need to keep the training strategy simple - after all, everyone really just wants to go bushwalking.

**Lucy Moore
The Sydney Bush Walkers**

The First Unsupported Crossing of the Gibson Desert

In April 1997, Peter Treseder completed the first unsupported crossing of Western Australia's Gibson Desert.

Starting near Giles Weather Station at the eastern edge of the Rawlinson Range (eastern edge of the desert) he completed the 500 kilometre crossing to near Carnegie Station (western edge of the desert) in four days, 11 hours.

Most of the crossing was through trackless desert and Peter carried all his food and water requirements in a pack.

This trip represents a leap forward in what has been achieved in significant desert crossings and builds on Peters and William's first unsupported crossing of the Simpson Desert in 1996.

Peter Treseder carries out lone rescue in Claustal Canyon

While traveling home from the desert, after a week of very little sleep and almost three days of continuous driving, Peter pulled into the Claustal Canyon car park where he tried to catch up on some much needed sleep before completing the drive to Sydney. Peter presumed that no one would be canyoning because it was extremely cold at the time.

He put his head down at about 9pm, but within 30 minutes he was woken by a male companion of a woman who was trapped on the second of Claustal's three waterfalls. Her wetsuit and hair were firmly jammed in her abseil device.

By the time Peter reached her, approximately 35 minutes later, she was almost unconscious. She had been trapped in the waterfall for approximately eight hours.

After much difficulty, Peter had her safely back to the car park by the next morning.

The amazing thing about this isn't so much the rescue, but the circumstances surrounding it. After driving across Australia and back and running across a desert, Peter somehow managed to be in the right place at the right time.

It is clear that the woman would have died without immediate help.



It's time to start planning your clubs' Rogaine teams. The site for this annual event has been selected but (as usual) we ain't saying where it are! The only clue for the grapevine is north of Sydney Harbour.

The aim of the Rogaine is to make bushwalkers look good compared to the other rescue groups that are invited to attend. This is not hard to do even for beginners! Thus the course is set up to be straight forward. Checkpoints are always set in obvious places such as the top of hills or creek junctions. There is a choice of either the one day or overnight event. Everyone starts together and returns by 7pm Saturday night or 2pm Sunday. Capable one day bushwalking

teams regularly do better than many two day teams from outside rescue squads as they do not have experience in bush travel.

This is a great opportunity to train club members in navigation. In my club I regularly hold a navigation training day prior to the Rogaine. The beginner navigators then enter the one day event on their own for some concentrated practice and usually end up around midway of the results. This gives them a tremendous confidence boost.

Food is available at the end of the day. So when you return tired and hungry there is a hot meal and drink just waiting for you. You can then do some serious socialising with the other bushwalkers present as you all wait for the presentation. We try to do the presentation no later than 90 minutes from the finish time. So when you head home you know your results and will

probably be discussing how to do better in 1998.

So why not start planning your teams. The Rogaine is always on the last weekend of June so this year it will be on 28th / 29th. The entry forms have been sent to all the bushwalking clubs. The one day teams must be 2 to 4 persons while the limit on two day teams is 4 to 6. Now since this is just a variety of either a one day or two day bushwalk you must carry adequate equipment. Overnight teams must have sleeping bags and tents or tentflys. You can make the event as hard or as easy as you like but you must stay together as a team. Close to the event the details of the location will be sent to you. When you register at the event you will receive the necessary 1:25,000 map.

I hope to see you at this seldom visited bushwalking area (do I have to tell you that's another clue?).

WONDERFUL WALKING HOLIDAYS

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Conservation News

Newnes Area

There is currently exploration for coal in a part of the Newnes State Forest which is surrounded on three sides by Blue Mountains National Park. This plateau area forms the upper catchment of the Wollangambe and Dumbano Creeks and their system of canyons.

Disturbance to bushland from mineral exploration tends to include clearing of vehicular trails constructed as a network over the area and drilling sites at various points, both leading to a degradation of the areas natural values. High natural values they are too, as this encroaches into the State's largest undisturbed piece of parkland - the northern Blue Mountains and Wollemi National Parks.

Willow Eradication

The Kowmung Committee and Blue Mountains NPA branch have

John Macris Conservation Officer

been holding willow eradication walks along the Kowmung River. With the recent Easter effort we can now say with some confidence that all willows between Ferny Flat and Ritson Elbow have been got, as have most between Church Creek and Bulga Dennis Canyon. The Canyon to Ferny Flat section will be the likely next target with the lower Kowmung to follow (with access permission obtained of course)

With some imagination, there is potential for voluntary bushwalker involvement in a wider range of National Park management issues than the traditional track upkeep or clean ups.

Several districts have been successfully running voluntary bush regeneration programs in various parks.

Wildlife Atlas

Then there is the NSW wildlife atlas, where some note taking of field observations is passed on to the service for their faunal records.

In late June we would like to make a weekend of campsite rationalisation along the Shoalhaven River from Blockup Gorge to Badgeries Spur. The number of fireplaces with their futile ring of stones is startling and a weekend could be well spent removing a good proportion of them. Education will hopefully lead to people dismantling their campfire places at the conclusion of their stay.

Any club representative or individual interested can contact **Conservation Officer John Macris on the number in the front of this issue.**



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FIRST AID TRAINING

Keith Maxwell Director
Wilderness Rescue

There
are many
good reasons
for getting

some basic First Aid training but you won't read any further if I try to list them. I think you should consider how easy it is to get a recognised St John First Aid Certificate via the Confederation.

The **Senior** First Aid Certificate and the **Remote Area** First Aid Certificate are available at a discount (i.e. cheaper than elsewhere) to club members.

Each year the **Senior** course is offered twice as well as on demand to clubs. It is always offered on the **Last** weekend of May and October so for this year that means May 24/25 and October 25/26. Bookings must be made in the month leading up to the course by phoning me, Keith Maxwell, on (02) 9622 0049. I will not take bookings outside of May or October. The course requires 8 hours instruction each on Saturday and Sunday. The exam is held a week later one evening and takes around 90 minutes. Your Certificate is then valid for three years.

Alternatively your Club Secretary could arrange a course

for your club provided that you can guarantee at least 10 definite starters. You pick the weekend to suit yourselves in consultation with the Wilderness Rescue First Aid co-ordinator, David Sheppard on (042) 26-6565.

The Senior First Aid Certificate teaches you a lot of skills and is not taught as though the Ambulance is just around the corner as is assumed when you go to other instructors. An even more detailed and practical course is available called the **Remote Area** First Aid Certificate. Now there are **two** ways in which you can do this Certificate. If you have a current Senior First Aid Certificate you need only do another 16 hours (two days) training. IF you do NOT have a current First Aid certificate you will need to do three days training spread over two weekends. Wilderness Rescue only offers this course (two or three day) on demand via our First Aid Co-ordinator, David Sheppard on (042) 266 565. You can also contact St John Ambulance to book into the next available course. Either way the cost will be the same -

\$110 for the two day course
\$160 for the three day course.

So there you have it. For less than 0.5% of your potential bushwalking time (52 weekends x 3 = 156 weekends but don't forget three years of annual leave - discussion is welcome on the sums; it proves you have read the article) and minimal expense you can gain some invaluable skills.

APPROACH OR DEPART
FROM THIS AREA
ONLY



DATES FOR 1997

Put them in your diary now!

Make sure they get into
your club's walks program.

28-29 June: The Navigation

Shield Rogaine

22 Aug: Annual Bush Dance

see add this magazine

23 Aug: AGM and Reunion

Discovery Centre - Kurnell

6-7th Sept: 65th Anniversary of

Blue Gum Forest

18-19th Oct: Wilderness Rescue

training weekend

August 9th-17th : Great Grose

Gorse walk.

25-26th Oct: First-aid course

Has your club updated
its Wilderness Rescue
personel to
Confederation

From page 3

frequency of indicators.

Several Land Managers are represented on the review committee and the Western Australia, South Australia, and Queensland authorities are seeking a considerable expansion of the standard to include engineering standards for track construction, as well as the use of internationally recognised grading symbols. An officer of the NSW State Forests also represents NPWS and DLaWC.

Nominations have been called for a Working Group to draft engineering design standards for presentation to the main committee. I think that three or four meetings might be involved between now and the next full committee meeting in October/November.

I would appreciate comments on my ideas for the new standard. It seems that every track management has its own grading and signage system and I don't think they will be very willing to make major changes. Obviously most systems are targeted at the popular short walks. For example, one authority uses the International symbols for three grades of walk;

- EASY defined, amongst other criteria, as less than 2 km long
- MODERATE between 2 & 5 km
- CHALLENGING greater than 5 km

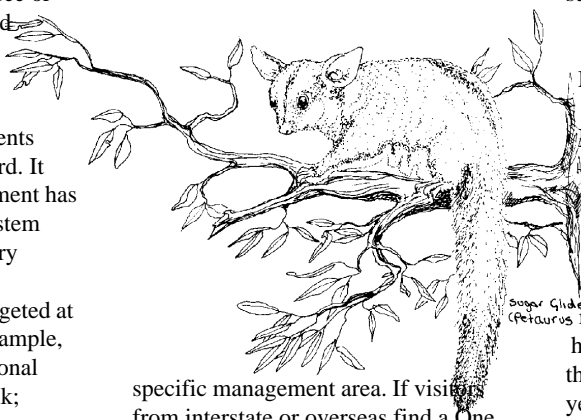
I don't know if the definitions are also international standards but assuming that they are, S-A would find it difficult to use the symbols with vastly different definitions. So I propose to leave them stand and let each authority reconcile their own gradings with the symbols. It might mean that track head signs would have several grading symbols to establish the relation between the international and the local gradings. This is not very different to the practice in Finland, for example, where track head signs are usually in Finnish, German, English and Lappish (Sami) in the North and the first three plus Swedish in the South.

If the definitions can be modified, I would change the length criterion to one of walking times, since this allows for differences in gradients number of steps etc. I suggest that times be based on say 2.5 km per hour on level track and on a lesser rate for steeper gradients and many steps. So "Easy" would be up to one hour return, and

Moderate up to 2 hours.

Obviously, bushwalkers are mainly (?) interested in Challenging Walks. Here I would add to that symbol a "Boot" rating which I understand is used in parts of Europe and Asia. I am told Everest rates 15 boots! Whilst one criteria of Moderate walks is a recommendation for sturdy footwear and whilst many experienced bushwalkers prefer Volleys, for me, bushwalking needs the ankle support and protection provided by boots!

I would limit this additional sign to four boots, and define the latter as the hardest, or longest walk in any



specific management area. If visitors from interstate or overseas find a One Boot walk is too easy for them they can upgrade. They can be warned about tackling a four Boot walk first off.

I would appreciate comments from readers before I put the above to the S-A committee.

Blue Mountains Track Survey

Establishing Limits of Acceptable Environmental Change.

I attended a workshop at which the consultants for this project aimed for input from bushwalkers to complement that available from surveys of users of more tourist oriented tracks. A questionnaire was distributed to allow individual bushwalkers to comment on track management matters with specific reference to the Blue Mountains NPWS District. The Project officer, Ms Sue Morison is located at the NPWS Blackheath office, PO Box 43 BLACKHEATH 2785, phone (047) 878 877.

Mainly Link to Great North Walk

My direct mail also achieved some helpful comments on alternative routes for this link track. I have some site checking to do before I write to

DLaWC so if you want to comment on the information in the November Bushwalker, please do so quickly.

Track Maintenance Parties.

Although I had no direct response to the section of my article headed a Confederation Construction Corps?, I have learnt of a number of clubs who are involved in track maintenance in NP's and of other clubs who could support the idea. I have the approval of the Management Committee to commence preliminary work on a submission to NPWS. By the time you read this I hope to have submitted a draft to the General Meeting on May 27th.

Blue Mountains Crossing Track.

The proposal by the Scripture Union Club for a Blue Mountains Crossing Walk was detailed in a back issue of The Bushwalker. I have now had the opportunity to talk to two of the three people who have, over several years, developed more ambitious plans for such a walk. I am engaged in plotting the four routes on one map to facilitate comparisons. There are, of course, several sections which are common to two or more schemes.

Two proposals start with the Great North Walk at Acquire Place and at Epping and these might well prove as attractive to politicians as the GNW did in 1987. Once we get into the Mountains,

I expect that the SU route, comprising mostly existing "day" tracks from the railway stations and requiring minimum new construction, will prove more politically achievable as Stage 1. The extended routes through Eureka, Ironbarks, the Oaks, Murphies Glen and Kings Tableland etc do require more track construction or upgrading and will have less appeal to the non "bushwalking" population. I hope that the latter might be funded as a "Millennium" or Centenary of Federation Project as Stage 2, because of their historic and cultural heritage.

The end points of the routes are either Hartley Vale, Clarence Zig Zag Station or Lithgow. There are also possible extensions to the 1860 Engineer's Track, to Mittagong, Jenolan or Rylstone.

“I’m a Walker — Boots and All!”

It was Xmas 1946. A time when one could rely on seasonal weather.

TV and Computers were unknown and the concept of space travel was only read about in comic books! As for the Ozone layer ... it might well have been a new brand of fly spray.

“Mum - I’m going away for four days bushwalking. We are leaving Xmas afternoon, so could you get this food on my list for me?”

“Bushwalking for FOUR days?” My mother shook her head in disbelief. “Leaving Xmas day! What is happening to the young people of to-day.” She held out her hand. “Give me the list.” As for me, I was excited. This was my first big trip. I can use my new sleeping bag and rucksack. Paddy was a ‘one man to supply light weight camp gear. He only made a few bags each month, and on ‘sale’ day you had to be there early or miss out. My rucksack was a Paddy’s Ladies three pocket A frame. Both these items cost me almost four weeks pay! With what change I had left, I crossed George street to Sterns Disposals and bought a compactum set (knife/fork/spoon) for two shillings a square army mess tin with handle for one and sixpence and a pair of army leather boots, a bargain at nineteen shillings and sixpence! I was well prepared. Not like my first trip ... a fiasco of borrowed gear and an army pack that had fallen out the trains dog box window just after leaving Sydney Central! But ‘that’s another story.

Christmas dinner over, I incurred the wrath of relatives as I donned my boots and walking gear. Swinging my A frame on my back, I bid them all a haughty goodbye. Everyone came out the front and stood at the gate to watch my progress to the bus stop. My brother, a World War II veteran yelled out ... “You’ll be sorry!” I

By Joan Morrison OAM

ignored him and the others. Admittedly my pack was heavy, at least 30lbs but back then, dried food as we know it to-day was unheard of. What there was was ex-army rations and very unpalatable. One good thing from Army ration kits was the miniature can opener which also doubled as a spoon. Everyone carried one of these. Snack food was pretty much like that of to-day ... dried apricots, sultanas, cheese and Vita wheat biscuits and a special glucose treat, BMI solid form jelly. The squares of solid jelly provided instant energy.

Bushwalkers always met ‘under the clock’ at Central Railway Station. This clock is now in the Powerhouse Museum at Darling Harbour.

Not many girls did full pack walks in those days, and to see us among a group of young men drew many disapproving glances.

Soon we were settled in the train. It had two long seats facing each other, a door in one corner leading to an attached toilet, and a large glass bottle of water beside the elevated luggage racks. We began to move Moss Vale, here we come!

The walk: Moss Vale - Fitzroy Falls - Belmore Falls - Yeola Gorge in Upper Kangaroo Valley - Junction of Kangaroo river and Fitzgeralds Creek - the Old Buderoo trail - Jamberoo - Kiama - train to Sydney.

It was a hard road bash from Moss Vale to our camp at Fitzroy Falls, but it was a glorious night, studded with stars. Too tired to pitch tents, we spread out our groundsheets and crawled into our sleeping bags dead tired. I woke to the smell of gum leaves. They crackled on the fire while the billy boiled merrily. A quick breakfast, rucksackpacked, and a look at Fitzroy Falls. It was truly beautiful,

sending up a misty spray as the water cascaded into the valley below.

Packs on ... another road bash to Belmore Falls. The weather was hot. The sky a cloudless blue. The dirt road crunched beneath our feet as we walked. The sign had said three miles to Belmore Falls. We found later that local signs were not reliable. We arrived at last. Time for lunch and marvelled at these new falls, different to the one at Fitzroy, but equally as beautiful. ‘Packs On!’ called our leader.

We left the road and I gained an education in bush bashing. The leader led us a merry dance trying to locate McAndrews Gap and the trail down to the Upper Valley. It was extremely hot by now and we encountered several false trails all along the escarpment. Eventually we hit pay dirt and began our descent. The trail was indistinct and petered out in many places, but one or other of the boys soon picked it up again. Those of us without gaiters were covered in scratches. I stared at my scratched and bleeding legs. I won’t be able to shave them for a week! The trail led into a grassy clearing. Below us the narrow ribbon of river glistened in the sunlight as it gushed noisily over some rocks. There was a deserted cabin amongst the trees surrounded by some wild fruit trees and cactus plants, strangely out of place, nearby.

‘This is Yeola, and that is the Watchmakers Cabin’ said our leader. ‘We camp here to-night.’

Dumping our packs we inspected the fruit trees.. After pitching tents and collecting firewood, we went for a swim. The water was crystal clear, a little cold at first, but very refreshing. As we yarned around the fire that night I wanted to know who the watchmaker was. No one knew. We presumed he was a recluse who had turned his back on city life and built a cabin in an ideallic spot. We

drank the water freely. Polluted streams and purifying tablets were not an issue in 1946.

Twittering birds woke us early. To-day was an 'easy' day we were told. We made our way down the valley. The faint trail followed the river. Later, it became a rough dirt road which serviced the isolated farms we began to see on either side of the river. The valley



*Federation's Anzac Day ceremony at Splendour Rock - 1993
Bruce & Joan Morrison with Federation's ex-president*

was lush. We discovered a suspension bridge and had loads of fun running across, swaying as we went. The boys got us girls in the middle and we had to hang on like grim death. We reached the junction of Fitzgerald Creek round midday.

We stopped for ten minutes, eating oranges from the trees at the Watchmakers Cabin. From here we headed along the narrow creek, picking our way carefully. As we got closer to the towering valley walls, we found a clearing where we made camp. It was early afternoon. We found a deep pool in the creek free of leeches, so we had a quick swim. Relaxing around the campfire that evening, we yarned and talked of tomorrow. The Old Buderoo trail was a tough climb, It was one of the original trails in and out of the Valley used by pioneers. It led over the mountain into the hamlet of Jamberoo.

If those early explorers could see Jamberoo now, with its Fun Park and large tourist population ...

it would stop them in their tracks, My husband and I had never been back until late last year. A nostalgic journey 50 years later into the past to locate the creek where we pitched our tents and find the old hall where we went to the pictures that night. Did we find them? No. They are lost forever in the mainstream of progress and tourist activity.

The sweat poured out of me as I trudged up that mountain trail. This was my apprenticeship into the art of bushwalking. A new vista of discovery had opened for me. I would walk many hundreds of miles in the next few years.

Climb many mountains. Gaze at Nature's beauty from escarpments that only the true bushwalker knew, At the end of the sweat and toil was achievement. I supposed that this was how the early explorers felt. Yes ... I experienced sights and sounds not found in the city. It was the beginning of a lifetime of outdoor activity.

To-day, as I gaze into the windows of the Outdoor shops at the vast array of tents, packs and gear of a new age technology; and read and listen to tales of the continuing destruction of the wilderness ... I recall the days when a fire trail did not exist on Katoomba's Narrow Neck, and there was no Warragamba Dam to stop us canoeing the Lower Wollondilly river in the beautiful Burrigorang Valley. The shops have detailed books on all areas and on all outdoor pursuits Our maps were ex-army survey or if lucky like me... a copy of a genuine Mile Dumphy map of the Blue Mountains.

The cars rush by our transport was mostly by steam train, or as a group in an uncomfortable and draughty army blitz truck to areas not serviced by train. It was tough - but then ... so were we! My husband Bruce and I agree that we experienced the best years for both walking and canoeing. We are still active in both sports and proud members of two clubs, Sutherland Bushwalkers and the Sutherland Shire Canoe club.

I'm a walker Boot's and all

I bought a pair of leather boots,
No longer needed by the Army.
Bushwalking? said my family,
I think you must be barmy!

Those boots they walked a hundred
miles,
Up mountains they would climb,
For views no tourist ever sees
Magnificent — sublime!

Those boots (and Paddy Pallin's
gear)

Decided my life' fate,
Bushwalking introduced me to
My husband and my mate.

Those army boots just fell apart,
Now my joggers pound the track
But they led me on a mountain path
To walk .. with pack on back.

Joan Morison.

Joan started Bushwalking in 1946 as a member of the YHA Campers Club. She was a member of the Federation's Social Committee in the late 1940s; a member of the YHA Executive; and later in 1949 Joan and husband Bruce began the YHA Canoe Club. and they have been involved deeply in administration, as officials and competitors. Joan is now Historian/Archivist for NSW & National Canoeing, and are still active in both walking and canoeing. Joan also write stories and articles, many on Canoeing including a chapter in the Budawang Committee book - Fitzroy Falls and Beyond.

Blue Gum Forest 65th Anniversary Sept 6th-7th

The Blue Gum Forest was reserved on 2 September 1932, after being 'saved from the axe' by a group of bushwalkers. Those events provided the stimulus for many conservation campaigns and for the formation of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs. The forest, which became the major focus for bushwalkers in the 1930s, may truly be described as the Cradle of Conservation in New South Wales.

The 65th anniversary of the reservation will be held on the weekend of 6-7 September 1997. The Friends of Blue Gum Forest invite bushwalkers old and young to join in. The preliminary program is as follows:

Saturday 6 September:

10 a.m.: The official celebrations will commence at Govetts Leap, then continue at the nearby NPWS Heritage Centre. The function will include:

- the launch of the book 'Back from the Brink: Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness', by Andy Macqueen
- a presentation of the original 10 slides used by the Blue Gum Committee to raise funds in 1932

Death of an old Colonist

A death notice appeared in the Maitland Mercury November 7th 1899 of a James Eggins, a very old colonist who had resided in the district since 1857.

During his early days James was a great walker, having repeatedly walked from Dungog to Maitland and back, a distance of 64 miles, within a day; and while on the Manning he has accomplished the remarkable feat of walking to Maitland within 48 hours.

"He much preferred walking to riding."

Marie Jones
Newcastle Ramblers

Andy Macqueen Training Officer

The function will conclude about midday, providing time for you to get down to the forest to camp for the night.

Evening: Join other bushwalkers camped at Acacia Flat or on the other side of Govetts Creek, at 'The Meadow'. There will be a group campfire at The Meadow.

Sunday 7 September:

10.30: Meet at the 'big tree' at the base of the Perrys track for a historical tour of the forest. In this stroll of an hour or so, Andy Macqueen and other Friends of Blue Gum will point out some points of interest in the area, including: the true Blue Gum Forest (not what most people think); the Hordern Pavilion; the sites of the first European campsites, in 1859; the route of the Engineers Track through the forest; changes to the forest ecology, past land-clearing, river changes, etc.

Watch the August edition for more details!



Artwork: Joanne Wells

Annual Bush Dance Friday August 22nd

Petersham Town Hall 8pm

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65th anniversary
of Blue Gum
Forest

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The perfect damper

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Ingredients:

2 Bottles Beer
500 grams Self Raising Flour
Garlic, Peas, chopped
vegetables or anything you like
(cheese, bacon bits etc.)

Method:

Open one bottle of beer and
test for taste
Mix the SR flour with the peas
and other 'extras'
Open second bottle of beer
and combine until about scone
mixture

Leave to rise

Cook in the camp oven until
done (about 25-30 mins)

Drink the rest of the beer!

Thanks Steve. It was a really
great damper.

Vivien Dunne Yarrawood

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The Friends of Blue Gum
are calling for more volunteers to
be 'campground hosts' for Blue
Gum Forest. Under this scheme,
individuals, groups or clubs are
rostered to visit the forest,
especially on weekends, to talk to
campers, gather information, and
help with campground management
generally. Interested people should
contact ranger Cath Ireland at
NPWS, PO Box 43, Blackheath
2785.

The Great Grose Gorse Walk August 9th-17th

This event, aimed at
controlling noxious weeds in the
Grose Valley, will be on again this
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a day or two, or a whole week. No
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ranger Cath Ireland, NPWS, PO
Box 43, Blackheath 2785.

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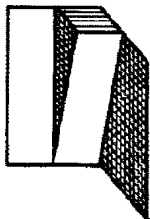
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- Royal National Park
- BlueMountains National Park

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Philosophy in the Arthurs

A matter of opinion

by Confederation President, Brian Walker

Although it is mid-summer, the early morning chill keeps me in my sleeping bag long after sunrise.

I lie, relaxed and warm, listening to the first faint sounds of the day. At eye level outside my tent three fat little brown birds are fossicking busily among fallen scoparia leaves. The air is pungent with the



Tasmania's South West-Photo Courtesy Websters Multimedia

smell of leaf mould and damp earth.

My camp is among gnarled, weather-beaten scoparia scrub on the edge of Thwaites Plateau, below the towering pinnacle of Federation Peak in Tasmania's remote Eastern Arthur Range. Here a few level tent sites have been hacked out of the steep slope. The dark brown soil is hard and cracked with rocks protruding; after rain it will be liquid mud.

As I watch the birds I realise with a shock that I am an alien in this harsh mountain environment where they are so clearly at home. Getting here was hard work for me. My well-being – in fact my very survival – depends entirely on what I can carry on my back. With food for ten days, camping gear and cameras, it is no light load.

When I realise my insignificance in the total scheme of things, it quickly sets my mind to pondering philosophically. What right do I have to be here, I wonder? How can I claim to be at home in the bush when my ability to survive in it is so limited?

I recall my first visit to the Tasmanian southwest. It was a major trek of nearly 260 km that included the Huon Track, Western Arthur Range, Port Davey Track, South West Cape and the South Coast Track.

On that journey I developed a love-hate relationship with this region, where weather, mud, scrub and the terrain seem to conspire to make all forward progress as difficult as possible. In places I felt as if I were fighting for every step.

Back in the more benign walking conditions around Sydney, I decided I had seen enough of

Tasmania. It was too wet, too cold, too unpredictable, too difficult for truly enjoyable bushwalking. But as time passed, I found my mind wandering back repeatedly to that wild and lonely landscape.

On reflection, I realised I had not been prepared mentally for Tasmania's southwest. Of course I was expecting it to be tough in places. And I had heard all about the unpredictable weather. But somehow my brain hadn't made the necessary adjustment. While hoping for the best, I was unwilling to accept the worst when it happened.

All I remember long afterwards is the appalling weather, the inescapable mud, the vicious scrub and the pain of slogging hour after hour through freezing wind and rain. I decide this is one part of the world where man is not meant to intrude.

Not until much later do I begin to recall the good things – such as my elation on completing the full east-west traverse of the Western Arthurs. And the extraordinary sense of being at one with the world as I

wander along the windswept sands of Prion Beach. As the swirling waves obliterate my tracks, I think I could be here in spirit alone.

On that first trip, a wonderful bond of friendship developed between me and my three companions as we shared the good and the bad. At the end of each day, sometimes in awful conditions and almost at the limit of our endurance, we always managed to cheer each other up. We laughed and joked a lot as we shared the pleasure of knowing we had survived another day.

Gradually I realised that the bad things I remembered were important elements of a journey that had been immensely uplifting. For a brief time I had experienced the planet merely as a spectator, exercising no control, completely at the mercy of the elements.

With this realisation came a longing to return, a longing that has since been fulfilled several times. I have been back to the Western Arthurs, the south-west

coast, the Central Conservation Area, the Walls of Jerusalem, Precipitous Bluff and twice more along the South Coast Track—all in the past four years.

On this occasion I'm back again, this time traversing the Eastern Arthurs to Federation Peak. I reached the range by way of the Huon Track—the infamous yo-yo with its interminable ups and downs across the ends of all the ridges that sweep down from the northern side of Mount Picton.

The 900-metre climb up Luckman's Lead in blazing heat leaves me feeling exhausted and dizzy. 'I think I need a lay day' I gasp to Rob Simon, my walking companion, as I stagger into Stuart Saddle. He

many species of animals that inhabit this planet. In our arrogance, we assume the planet is ours, to use however we please. We try to subjugate it to our needs despite the consequences for ourselves and everything else.

In this selfish, short-sighted way, we act as if the present conditions will last forever. We diminish, destroy, pollute and alter irreplaceable natural elements. Our actions endanger the very fabric that sustains life as we know it.

The little birds that prompted my thoughts are in their natural habitat. They are at home peacefully going about their own business; I am an intruder, lucky to be sharing their space for a while. I think surely this



Hartz Mountain National Park Photo courtesy Websters Multimedia

gives me a sly look and says 'I guess you have to expect this sort of thing when you walk with older people.' The bastard!

But for once I'm inclined to agree that my age is beginning to show. Luckily it's only a momentary glimpse. Next morning I feel fine and have little trouble scrambling around the Needles, across Goon Moor and through the rocky maze of the Four Peaks. We emerge onto Thwaites Plateau as a huge bank of cumulus cloud behind Federation Peak turns to gold in the late afternoon sun.

Now it is the morning of our fifth day. Rob is still sleeping in his tent lower down the slope. He won't get up until he hears me shout 'tea'! As the early riser, I put the billy on for both of us. This morning I'm taking a leaf out of his book and staying in bed.

Which brings me back to my philosophising. It seems to me we have forgotten that we are just one of

is what wilderness conservation is really all about.

Isn't it our recognition that other species have the right to exist too, free from interference by the all-dominating *Homo sapiens*? Wilderness consists of those few places still unspoiled by the hand of man. It is only proper that we visit them on sufferance, if at all.

We must realise that we simply do not have some divine right to go anywhere we please in any fashion we choose. If we build roads, bridle paths, huts – even walking tracks – in wilderness areas, we diminish them. We also diminish ourselves.

We should enter wilderness only as silent spectators. Being there is a privilege, not a right. I deplore the modern trend to regard bushwalking as an energetic fitness activity and the bush as a vast gymnasium. This is based on the same arrogant assumption that the planet is for our use alone.

This attitude is no different from that of 4WD

and trailbike owners, horse riders, and so-called ‘adventurers’ who think they have a God-given right to go anywhere they please. The bush (what’s left of it) is not our playground. It is the home of many other species that depend on it for their very existence.

It is unforgivable to endanger or eliminate other species by recklessly destroying their natural habitats. The complete removal of centuries-old native forests is an act of vandalism on a monumental scale. The shameful practices of modern forestry are based on short-term greed for money, not on responsible land husbandry.

Fouling rivers, the oceans, the very air we breathe, are acts of folly that will have harmful repercussions for thousands of years. Mining and farming practices that result in saline soil, erosion, and other degradations are totally irresponsible.

Hunting other species to extinction cannot be justified on any grounds. Such behaviour highlights the breakdown of high moral and ethical principles as forcefully as the shocking mistreatment of our own kind.

Most people are unconcerned by such matters because they have lost touch with the life force of the planet. Living in cities and towns, in artificial, man-made environments, we are seldom forced to confront the results of our depredations, let alone take more than superficial action to curb them.

We have only limited opportunity to observe

the crucial links between sunlight and plants, air and water. Totally engrossed with our own mundane existence we are unaware – or do not care – about the disastrous effects our actions are having on other species and on the environment.

In densely populated countries it is impossible to escape from the overpowering crush of humanity. Places free of the destructive aspects of human intrusion are very rare. It is no wonder people are now coming from all over the world to experience Australia’s vast open spaces.

Warm air rising from the valley gently stirs the flap of my tent and sets the scoparia rustling and clattering overhead. It is almost time to make a move. Reaching for my clothes, I decide the enlightened few who are fighting so passionately to save the world’s vanishing wilderness will prove to be the true guardians of this planet.

Only those who experience the world with open minds and hearts, free of all but the most basic trappings of civilisation, will ever truly understand. When you can survive the elements at their worst and observe nature as it is, without interfering in any way, you will know true humility.

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