The Bushwalker

Pagoda Country,
Newnes Plateau

Volume 32
Issue 1
Summer 2007

The same place Summer and Winter.

Where is it?

Answer on page 7 (No peeking!)

The Bushwalker
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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 65 Clubs with a total membership of about 10,000 bushwalkers.
Formed in 1932, the Confederation provides a united voice on behalf of all bushwalkers on conservation, access and other issues.
It runs training courses for members, helps to provide a free wilderness search and rescue organisation, and helps runs bush navigation competitions.
People interested in joining a bushwalking club may write to the Confederation Administration, at the address above, for a list of Clubs, but a more up-to-date version can be found on the Confederation website at www.bushwalking.org.au, broken up into areas. There's lots of other good stuff there too.

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Also please indicate if you are a member of a bushwalking club, and if not whether you would like a copy of the list of our clubs.

You do have to be a member of one of our clubs to enter the 'Where Am I' Competition.

From the editor's desk. . .

The *Bushwalker* is into the third year of colour, and the changes seem to have been well received.

Some changes have been introduced with this issue. The *'Where am I'* Photo Competition proved popular with a small number of enthusiasts, but logistics will make it very difficult to keep it going in the coming year. It is therefore taking a bit of a holiday. For the Spring Photo Competition all photos were successfully identified.

Photo 29 of Valentines Hut in KNP was identified with great precision by a number of people; Silvia French (NPA) gets the prize with a ME voucher.
Photo 30 of the cairn on Mt Guouogang was identified by several people; Michael Smith (Nimbin Bushwalkers) gets the prize with a PP voucher.
Photo 31 was of Queens Cascades from Undercliff. Several people came geographically close but had the wrong Falls or wrong viewpoint. Ian Partridge (NPA) gets the prize with a TT voucher.
Photo 32 was of Mouin & Warrigal from Clear Hill (above Tarros Ladders). The power line and road in the foreground are the clue. Several people got the mountains right but thought it was from Carlons Head. Mark Agnew (BWRS) gets the prize with a PP voucher.
In addition, Ian Partridge also identified **Photo 22** later on. It is the face of Goolara Peak taken from Black Glen Spur, which is the spur on the south side of Black Creek. This was apparently a hard one. (So is the bottom of that spur ...)
Photo 28 of the bottom of Tarros Ladders was identified recently by several people, but the picture had since appeared with identification in Michael Keats' new book *'Day Walks in Therabulat Country'*, and the photo was therefore 'withdrawn' from the competition. Sorry guys.

We thank the Paddy Pallin group and the Outdoor Life group for their support over the last two years.

The idea of renaming lots of places in the Blue Mountains continues to attract correspondence, with supporters for both sides of the argument. The debate continues under *"From the Mail Bag"* on page 14.

Despite my appeals, we still need someone with some experience to help us with the advertising and marketing, both for this magazine and the nascent *'Bush Pages'* on the web site. No pay, but plenty of glory! Enquiries please to: *admin@bushwalking.org.au*.

We are still asking for good articles to print. Clubs and members are encouraged to submit relevant articles, with a very strong preference for those with good pictures. We will also accept articles from outside bodies where the articles seem relevant to members. Articles may be edited for length and content to help fit into our page limit. Pictures should be sent at maximum available resolution: at least 300 dpi. JPG, PDF or TIFF formats are preferred. The text should be sent if possible as a plain text file (*.txt) rather than in a Word file (*.doc). Please send the pictures separate from the text file; do NOT send them embedded in a Word doc file. And, of course, the Editor is always interested in receiving bushwalking books and maps for review. Enquiries should be sent to: *editor@bushwalking.org.au*

Please note that opinions expressed by authors may not represent the official opinions of the Confederation or any Club. The Editor's opinions don't represent anyone at all.

Roger Caffin
Editor

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Kyrgyzstan 2006

Trekking in Central Asia

Hugh Barrett, Narrabri Bushwalking Club

There were a few anxious moments, as Hugh and Pam made urgent applications for new passports after their home was burgled, John just made the connection at Tashkent, and Mary's luggage went missing. However, we all assembled in Bishkek and after a tour around the city and a day devoted largely to getting Uzbekistan visas (and joining the Kyrgyzstan Independence Day celebrations), we were off by mini-bus to Karakol in eastern Kyrgyzstan with our guides Mirim and Luba.

First camp, Dungureme River

Side excursions to the 10th century Burana tower and the petroglyphs at Cholpon Ata helped break up the 400 kilometre trip via the northern shore of Lake Issyk-kul. On arrival at Karakol we were introduced to our trekking guide, Dimitri (Dima), our seven porters, cook and interpreter, and the camp followers' (CF) guide and interpreter.

After a night in Turkestan Travel's yurt camp, we were off next morning aboard our 6-wheeled Soviet army truck, following the southern shore of Lake Issyk-kul until a swim was called for. Halfway along the 182 km long lake, at Barskoon, we turned south along a decent gravel (gold mining) road, arriving a little over-awed by the scenery for a late (damp) lunch at our camp site (altitude 2600m) at the junction of the Barskoon and Dungureme Rivers.

The cloud lifted in the morning and we found ourselves surrounded by soaring peaks (over 4500m) covered with a light dusting of fresh snow. Saying goodbye to CF, we made good time as we headed for Dungureme Pass. However, the altitude was telling by the time we reached the pass (3773m) in the early afternoon and we didn't get as far as planned on the descent, camping at 3460m.

This resulted in an extra-long trek of 25km to our next camp, a beautiful site (2500m) selected by Denise and CF (who came up from Karakol in the food truck) where the Djuuku River meets the Kashka-Suu. By this time we were variously suffering the effects of altitudinitis, diarrhoea, foot soreness and general fatigue, with only one fully fit walker amongst us. Faced with three more passes in the next three days, each averaging 1000m ascent and descent, we opted out and took a rest day. Four of us walked a little way up the proposed route and were rewarded with an impromptu smoko with a shepherding family in a yurt. CF walked up the Djuuku valley the way the trekkers had come.

At Dima's suggestion, we piled into the truck after lunch and moved downstream, then up the Djuukuchak tributary to camp near some hot springs. We cleaned up the litter then went for a good soak. The next morning we returned down the valley through the striking red cliffs of the Seven Bulls and the Broken Heart and then bumped our way to our subsequent camp in Chon Kyzyl-Suu (2600m), which revealed splendid views up the valley to the snow capped peaks.

Leaving CF next morning, we ascended the glorious Kara-Batkak valley then turned up a side creek towards Archa-Tor pass. We were in camp (3500m) before 1 pm, giving us plenty of time to explore the surrounds. Kay climbed a 300m ridge for exercise. A wonderful golden light passed over the peaks before sunset. Attacking the pass (3800m) next morning was a challenge, through the scree fields, with a rope-assisted vertiginous drop-off on the far side. Then it was downhill all the way, to a pristine camp (2600m) on the Jety-Oguz in full view of Oguz-Bashi (5168m) and Yeltsin Peaks. We took a day walk up to near the base of the glaciers the next morning for a rewarding closer look, then headed back downstream to meet CF at the junction of the western Teleti gorge.

A camp with a view

We headed up Teleti gorge the following morning, to camp at 2900m before attempting Teleti pass (3800m). Awakening to the crack of a tent pole at 4 am, we found ourselves covered in 15 cm of new snow, effectively putting the pass out of question. A porter headed back down early to reach a phone and arranged for the truck to meet us as we walked back down the valley, disappointed but safe. However, the uninitiated revelled in their first touch of fresh snow. The truck took us back to Karakol, to replenish, then up Karakol Gorge to camp (2530m) opposite the junction of the Kel-Ter.

Holy cow! Where did the snow come from

The walk the next day took us due south, past the monument to fallen climbers, for spectacular views of Karakol Peak (5218m). The three who continued furthest were rewarded by the most sublime view of the magnificent peak overlooking the cloudy blue river meandering from under the glacier and across the meadow, all bathed in brilliant sunshine.

The next morning all 11 of us walked a couple of kilometres downstream to the junction of Kurgok-Tor Gorge. A primitive log bridge got us across the rushing Karakol River, with packs

unstrapped in case of falling in. We then ascended to Sirota, a well used but beautiful camping spot (2900m) amongst the trees, which again was improved by a quick emu-parade. The triangular buttress of Ayu-Tor Peak (4320m) could be seen at the head of the opposing gorge. The CF descended the following morning, while the trekkers climbed upstream past the waterfall, to be overlooking Ala-Kol Lake before lunch. We pushed on to half-way around the northern side of the 3 kilometre long lake, where we camped (3535m) and had lunch. A brief shower hunted us into our tents for a snooze and later a couple of us found our way around towards the eastern end of the lake, for a grand vista overlooking the moraine at the end of the glacier feeding down from Ala-Kol Peak (4359m).

Peak Karakol

We awoke the next morning to a light dusting of sago snow and frozen underpants drying on the tent ropes. John couldn't be restrained and jumped (very briefly) into the lake in company with ever-enthusiastic Yarrick, one of our porters, before we trekked up through the scree to Ala-Koll Pass (3860m). A rude shock awaited us on the other side, with the downslope enveloped in cloud and covered in snow. We slithered our way down beyond the reach of both, but a drizzle came back at us as we finished lunch.

The drizzle was largely gone by the time we reached our camp site at Altyn Arashan hot springs, but kept returning overnight and in the morning, so we abandoned plans for a walk up the Anyr-Ter. We took another hot tub instead and brought our "special dinner", prepared by our extra-special cook, Luda, forward to lunch in the neighbouring yurt. The truck then returned us to Karakol, nearly a day early but, unbelievably, with two weeks having elapsed.

The CF had done well and for our last evening in Karakol had organised a special performance for us by a top-flight group of local musicians. We bade a sad farewell to our special cook and those porters, guides and interpreters who had joined us for dinner and the concert, and packed our bags for the trip back to Bishkek and the airport in the morning, via the southern shore of Lake Issyk-kul. Our effervescent guide, Nelly, was awaiting us at Tashkent airport, for a 10 day tour of the fabulous cities of the Silk Road.

But that is another story.

000 Emergency Phone Numbers

The recent search around Mt Solitary in the Blue Mountains for David Iredale has generated some debate regarding how the "000" emergency phone number system operates. You will find an official statement regarding "000" emergency phone calls at http://www.emergencycalls.aca.gov.au/

As with Distress Beacons (if you choose to take one) a mobile phone should only be part of an overall Safety Plan. You should always leave written details of your intended bushwalk with a responsible person such as immediate family member or close friend. See the previous article in this magazine 'Let Someone Know Before you Go'. You should carry food and equipment appropriate to the anticipated environmental conditions.

If you have decided to carry a mobile phone as a safety aid you should be aware of its limitations. Do NOT let the battery go flat. This usually means leaving it switched off all the time unless you need to use it. Leave the phone in a waterproof bag until you really need it.

Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) has placed some notes with links to other websites on emergency communications at the web address below:
http://www.bwrs.org.au/pages/emergency coms.html

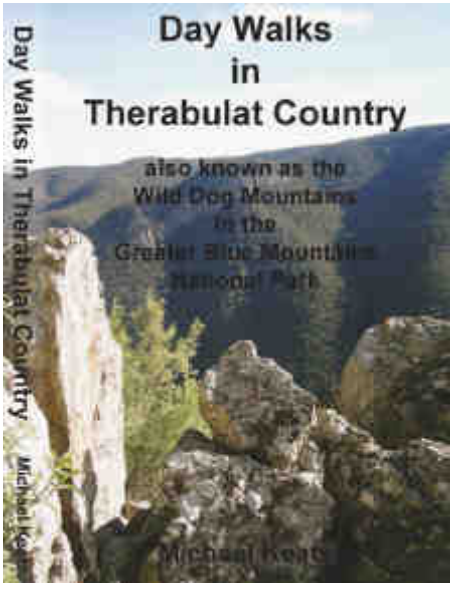
Remember that the mobile phone network is a communication system for cities and towns. Coverage into bush areas is not guaranteed. Technology is always changing. Currently, CDMA phones are more likely to get through from bush areas than (the usual) GSM phones. Text messaging (SMS) will often "get through" when voice communication is unreliable.

In an emergency situation call 000 first, if that does not work try 112. There is NO call fee for calling "000" Thus, a mobile phone with no credit should still be able to dial "000".

The first website (above) has a reminder memory prompt. BEFORE you call "000" decide what service (Police, Fire Brigade or Ambulance) you require. What is the nature of the emergency? What is your location? What is your Grid Reference? What is the closest town or natural feature a non-bushwalker call operator would understand? A mobile phone can sometimes be a useful communication tool in an emergency but it should be only one part of an overall Safety Plan.

Day Walks in Therabulat* Country

Michael Keats, The Bush Club



This is a wonderful book, full of colour pictures and immense amounts of detail about the Wild Dogs area. It is in a very convenient A5 format (goes easily in a pack) with a stiff glossy cover, hordes of colour pictures and runs to 200 pages. The walks described range from simple to challenging, but the topo map extract provided with each walk shows the route in plenty of detail. Michael describes the book thus:

"This text is 'the' guide to the Wild Dog Mountains. Whether your interest is Aboriginal History, Geology, the origin of Place Names, early European History, Flowers, Animals, a penchant for cattle duffing or to experience any of 19 walks in this area, this book is for you.

The author spent four years researching and compiling the text that includes contributions by the NPWS, the Geographical Names Board and the Central Mapping Authority.

Historian-bushwalker Wilf Hildur provided many research leads and comment. The content has been skillfully edited by bushwalking icon and editor Roger Caffin [aw shucks]."

What does come through from the route descriptions (and from all the rest of the text) is Michael's huge enthusiasm for the area, and considerable knowledge of the history and geology too. The rocks there are ancient! The willingness of other Bush Club members to go along with his explorations must be mentioned as well.

The book can be ordered now for $27.50 per copy plus P&P ($3.50) from the author via his email address mjmkeats@easy.com.au .

* Also known as the Wild Dog Mountains in the Greater Blue Mountains National Park

Rafting the Franklin River

Alwyn Simple – Watagan Wanderers

[This was a seven day trip, but for space reasons this article covers just days 4 and 5, which were in the Great Ravine section. Selecting which photos to show was *difficult*!
The trip was done with Brett Fernon of "Adventure by Water", at www.franklinrivertasmania.com - Ed]

Rain in Aesthesia Ravine

Day Four.

The rain had gone away and the river had dropped 200mm over night but it was still running strongly. Today we were taking on the largest rapids for the trip and the Great Ravine. There would also be a couple of portages to get through. Leaving our campsite we travelled through several rapids and passed Askance Creek on our left. All these side creeks were helping to push up the water level in the Franklin. Huon pines were still plentiful along this section of the river. As we continued down the river, Blushrock Falls appeared on our right. We pulled in and walked up to the falls, which were flowing in spectacular glory. As we headed for the Bend of the Martins, we got our only view of Frenchman's Cap from the river. In the vastness of this wilderness, it was hard to believe that this mountain was actually over 1200 meters higher than we were on the river. This section of the river was relaxing but this relaxed attitude was about to change as we came to The Churn, a set of rapids and falls that could only be described as wild raging water. At this point we got out of the raft and walked around these rapids while both guides took the rafts down one at a time. This involved them riding down the first rapids and pulling out into some backwater before a large set of falls. Here ropes were attached to the front and back of the rafts and they were left to go over the falls unmanned. They were then pulled into a backwater and the guides bought them back across the river above another large rapid. We then got back in and rode them down the last big rapid. What a thrill.

Descension Gorge

Having got through The Churn, the next section of the river is called Serenity Sound, a deep and beautiful gorge that terminates at the head of Coruscades, the longest set of rapids on the Franklin River. Coruscades consists of several large boulders and narrow chutes. Again it was out of the rafts for us and we walked around this mass of boiling water. This time the guides took a raft each through this section and picked us up at the bottom of the run. It was spectacular to watch them and at times we could not see our guides in the raft for white water. From here we paddled through Transcendence Reach, the long middle section of the Great Ravine.

Our next rapid was Side Winder, which was a drop off right on a bend of the river. We stayed in the rafts for this rapid and rode safely through it. After having see our guides handle the rafts in last two rapids our confidence in their ability had grown considerably. Also we had now been working as a team for four days and this was what we had been building up to. The next rapid was Thunderush, which was where the river narrowed and the water gathered speed. This is a dangerous Rapid and is not normally run in the rafts. We pulled into the bank before the top of the rapid and unloaded the heavy top-loaded items from both rafts. These items were carried over the rocks by hand past the dangerous section of this rapid. Ropes were then attached to the rafts and they were pushed out into the flow where they were carried into the boiling water past the worst section. The rafts were tied up in the fast flowing water and reloaded with the supplies. We took our positions in the raft and cast off riding the remainder of the rapid into the still waters of The Sanctum. At the end of The Sanctum was The Cauldron, a rapid of devouring rocks and white water. There is a high level porterage around the Cauldron with a small level camp spot for four people at the top of the lower cliff line. This campsite has two names: The Sanctum Campsite or The Eagles Nest. It looked down on the Cauldron and also down the Sanctum section of the Great Ravine.

We padded the rafts into the narrow ledge at the start of the porterage track and pulled our way up and across the top of the cliff using the rope that had been set into the rock face with steel pins. To allow enough room, the two guides slept on the rafts and the cooking and other chores were done at the rafts. A safety rope was set up to act as a handrail and to stop people falling over the edge. Dinner was delivered by the guides and I still do not know how they got those hot meals up that cliff on plates two at a time. The meal contained bacon and this bought a Quoll out of the bush into our camp. He was not frightened by us and continued to walk through and around our campsite that evening.

Sidewinder in the Great Ravine

Looking down from Eagles Nest

Day Five

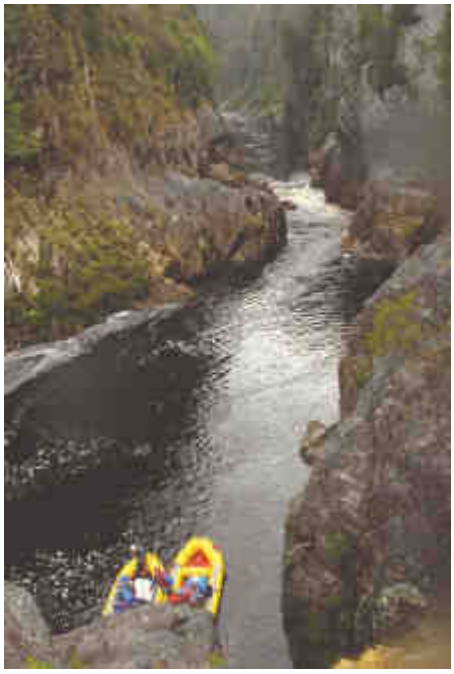
This campsite was the most spectacular we had stayed at. Next morning, looking out along the Sanctum section of the Great Ravine, a line of white speckled foam snaked its way down the centre of the gorge like a giant python on the tannin coloured water. As it floated along with the river flow it continually changed it shape and pattern but it always remained in the centre of the river. Looking at this it is easy to understand how the Aboriginal people came up with the rainbow serpent. Along the peaks at the top of the ravine the mist floated like a veil softening the colours of the dawn in the early morning light. As I sat there taking in the natural beauty of the area, I was really glad that the Franklin River Dam had never been built as this beautiful place would have been drowned and lost forever.

Today was a short day and there was no urgency to start early. Our first objective was to get past the Cauldron. Because of the size and location of the large boulders blocking the river at the Cauldron it was not practical to get a raft through this section. The supplies were loaded in the rafts, and, with two people in each raft, were taken to a large rock on the far side of the river. Here all supplies were removed from the rafts and packed on to a large flat rock. The rafts were then pulled across this rock and dropped back into the river on the other side where they were reloaded while tied against the fast flowing current. I had walked over the high porterage track to photograph the operation.

With everyone back on board we continued down stream through the Inner and Outer Gates and past the Mouse Hole, which is a narrow recess with a cat-like boulder overlooking a waterfall-worn niche in the river rock. This was a narrow section of the river. We also stopped to check out a set of waterfalls that dropped into the river through a section of canyon just south of the Mouse Hole. The rapids had now reduced in size and ferocity and we were clear of the Great Ravine. The next point of interest was the Biscuit, which is a strata of rock across the river with a bite taken out of the centre section where the river flows through. From here there was one small rapid and then we were in Rafters Basin and our camp for the next two nights. This is the only pool we saw on the Franklin River. We set up our camp on this pool at the junction of the Franklin River and Interlude Creek.

Our thanks to Brett Fernon and his assistant Josh Waterson who were great river guides.

December 2006



Leaving the Great Ravine

Puzzle answer

Bluff Tarn near Upper Geehi River KNP

Breakfast Creek as you have never seen it before

Or What can go wrong on a simple day walk?

Michael Keats

Photo at left: The Coxs River.

We met at the Dunphy Carpark on a fine summer morning, checked everyone had enough water, had some commentary about the silver mine we were going to look at, then it was all go down the descent into Carlons Creek.

The most notable and noticeable aspect of the walk in was the openness of the whole valley. Prolonged drought conditions had removed so much green matter – even the nettles were just about non-existent. Everywhere there were vistas of the Carlon valley I had never noted before. It was as though this was a new walk in strange country. The deep glades that used to be full of ferns were no longer. It was all dry, dry, dry.

There was not even a hint of moisture in Carlons Creek from end to end. The big dry continued all the way to the junction with Breakfast Creek with side creeks and bald ridges not normally seen now very obvious. Arriving at the junction there was some expectation that Breakfast Creek would be flowing or at least have significant pools of water. Instead it was dry, just as Carlons Creek had been dry.

As it was now 10:00, we decided to have morning tea. The openness of the area was a shock. Where usually it was necessary to fight your way around the bushes to switch from the Carlons Creek track to the Breakfast Creek track, it was now a huge, wide and desolate open space. A check of Breakfast Creek showed not one sign of water with even the deepest of holes being bone dry. In the whole length of Breakfast Creek down to the Coxs River we counted only 7 small pools of water, most of which were very degraded and polluted.

the bed of Breakfast Creek

The views we had of the banks and the hillsides were atypical of most bushwalker memories of the area. In the course of our traverse we encountered only one black snake (Pseudechis porphyriacus) and it was in need of food. Similarly the only goanna (Varanus varius), which shot up a tree in the creek had empty folds of skin where there should be a well-rounded belly. The wild life is doing it tough. During the course of the day we found the carcases of 4 wallabies that presumably had either died of dehydration or a complete lack of nutrients.

The rocks in the creek were mostly stained reddish brown, possibly from an algal bloom that had flourished in the final phases of the drying up process. On the walls of the deep holes there were successive tide lines as the water level fell and fell. At the point where the walking track cuts off a tight loop and mini canyon in Breakfast Creek, I took the party down the dry river- bed – an experience not often available. Chris was heard to declaim, 'We would look back on this walk down Breakfast Creek as one of the easiest ever done'.

11:45 and the 'man-made bench' below the old silver mine filled our sights. Taking water, headlight torches and cameras we set off up the dry ravine to the opening of the adit. Inside we found three geckos (Phyllurus platurus) and at the terminal end of the workings a single specimen of the micro Eastern Bent Wing Bat, (Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis) that quickly moved out of camera range. Several wasp nests were also identified, some with pupae intact and some recently vacated.

A piece of quartz-rich gossan was cracked open with another rock to reveal what might have been the material that sparked the original interest in the area. It certainly gave off a strong sulphurous, acrid smell that hung in the air for some time. After an hour of fruitless activity looking for other traces we set off for the Coxs River junction for lunch.

13:00 saw most of the party under the casuarinas munching contentedly. I opted for a swim first. The Coxs River is not at its best. It was just flowing. There were many tadpoles to be seen including a few very close to completing the transition to frogs. They shot off to the shallows as I monopolised the deeper water. The pool I was in was just large enough to have a few strokes before I was beached. At least I was now cool.

Wilf Hildur, before and after

Back on the bank I was dry in seconds and soon into lunch with gusto. Later Phil had a swim as well. Just before we left Geoff wanted to take a picture of Mounts Jenolan and Queahgong with the Coxs River casuarinas in the foreground. We both noted that the sky in that general direction was darkening rapidly. I repeated my nostrum that it was unlikely to rain as we were in the catchment area. Um…

13:45 we started the return trek. The air was breathless, the humidity rising, drink stops were frequent. About a third of the way along the Creek a couple of big raindrops fell. They then disappeared. Then they started again. The sky was darkening rapidly. It was difficult to see through the gloom. Several members prudently stopped to put on wet weather gear. Pam asked me if I thought it would be heavy. I gave a qualified 'yes' but like John I did not bother to put on a wet weather jacket.

About 50 m on Teresa said 'I think that is a hail stone'. She stopped, picked it up and sucked its cold surface, confirming it. Then there were some more. We kept walking. Suddenly the heavens opened and unleashed a fury of hail like I have never experienced. We each stopped under the nearest tree to get some protection from the growing intensity and barrage of hailstones. They were getting bigger, some pushing it to nearly 2cm in diameter. They hurt a lot when they hit.

The fusillade became heavier, and heavier. We sought protection by placing

packs strategically as the cold missile attack continued. This was no small storm. Around us the ground was rapidly turning white. The trees above were systematically stripped of leaves and needles. This white fury continued unabated for perhaps 15 minutes. We were all wet to the skin and increasingly chilling.

As the onslaught abated we decided that we had to keep moving and keep the circulation going. As fingers became warm enough to operate cameras photos were taken. The air was filled with mist and the landscape was pure northern hemisphere Christmas. It was an unbelievable landscape that we now surveyed. The contrast with the dry desiccated scene of an hour earlier, unimaginable.

The hailstones formed thick drifts on the ground. I was concerned that they could consolidate into ice and make progress hazardous. Fortunately for us they remained as discrete stones and we crunched our way through them. The really good thing was that all spaces between smooth rocks were now filled with temporary white concrete and the going was remarkably fast.

Where the hail had fallen on the higher slopes, the ground had been very hot and a lot of hail soon melted sending small ephemeral waterfalls rushing down into Breakfast Creek. Many of these refroze as they entered the colder zone. Those that did not provided another joy for us – nice deep drift of ice- cold water and free ice on what was once the track. Soon we got used to the idea of slushing our way forward. Any concerns about how deep it was were immaterial. We were wet and cold anyway in the middle of summer.

The best bits of our progress were when the ice cover hid a deeper hole and then the chilling water went into more sensitive areas (they did not remain sensitive for long as everything chilled rapidly down to the same temperature).

Seeing the way forward was a problem, even in a valley as confined as Breakfast Creek when everything is white and there are no familiar landmarks. The mist caused by the mixing of hot and cold air distorted vision and muffled sound. All agreed we were in the middle of a unique experience. The hail eased off and finally stopped leaving a changed world that an hour earlier could not have been imagined.

refugees, but cheerful ones

Arriving at the morning tea site (junction of Carlons Creek an Breakfast Creek) we just had to stop and take pictures of the contrasting situation. We now looked like refugees that had escaped from a prison camp in winter in Central Europe.

As we climbed up the Carlons Creek track, the hail drifts lessened and finally where the old fence line crosses the track they disappeared leaving the track scoured and the ground temporarily refreshed. There had not been enough hail to cause any runoff or to even form pools in the creek bed.

It was a relief that early concerns that the vehicles would be hail-damaged were baseless, as the hailstorm had been confined to a very specific area – all down in the valley. A quick change into dry clothes and the singularity of our experience began to sink in.

We had been through something very special. Prospective member Geoff (on his first walk with the Bush Club) announced to all that he was going to book on my cyclone walk next and, yes, he wanted to do the sand storm and volcano walks as well!

The Hippy, the Straight and the Sphinx.

Michael Smith, Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

Photo: Mount Warning from Sphinx Rock

Sphinx Rock is between Blue Knob (Mount Burrell) and Mount Neville. I can see it from my place. Returning from a long trip I know I am nearly home when Sphinx Rock reveals itself, silhouetted against the skyline. I want to be near it, spend some time there, climb it. I decide to go, but there are many barriers to this endeavour. Firstly it is mostly surrounded by private land. You need permission. Lots of people don't want you up there. It's their personal meditation spot, they are self-appointed protectors of the aboriginal sacred site or they just don't want you to see what's happening on their land.

A few months ago I joined a group from the Northern Rivers Bushwalking Club who planned a day walk to the Sphinx. We got permission from a Community whose land we needed to cross and slogged up the slopes of Mount Burrell from the valley floor. After 4 hours we made it to a lookout a few hundred metres from Sphinx Rock. It was a gratifying moment to see the Sphinx, end on. Out of time, we had to turn around (after just 10 minutes) and spend the next 4 hours going back down through virgin, trackless rainforest. Much closer, but not good enough.

A Bundjalung story tells of a sacred cave high on the mountain at Blue Knob (a dangerous place) that was was home to an old woman who had a role in training the men who wanted to become clever men. They went to this witch to learn the things that such men should know. At the finish of the training the final test came when the witch threw them over the cliff to see if they could save themselves. Whatever the outcome the witch used her magic power to stop them from coming to harm.

There is a public corridor in Nightcap National Park that will take you there: the skyline traverse from Mount Nardi to Blue Knob. I have spoken to people who have been out and back in a long day. They say you have to stride it out. I decide to take two days and put the trip in The Nimbin Bushwalkers Club walks programme. A young club, not even a year old, this is the first overnighter, only one other person responds. So it came to pass that Franca and I stepped off the bitumen at Mount Nardi and straight into the forest, not to see the sun for the next 5 hours. We wandered down to Pholis Gap, named after a timber worker Athol Pholi who was killed here felling a tree. Catbirds call from the forest. Is it a warning or a greeting? We turn left and follow Googarna Road, now overgrown with trees and weeds. Back in the 1980's Franca drove down this road all the way to the flying fox. She was part of the protest in 1982 that blockaded the Mount Nardi Road and took on the loggers. She remembers silk-screening the banners. The action was successful and logging here was stopped.

The next four hours are spent plodding along this remnant of the logging infrastructure. Where the canopy opens a little and lets in sunshine, wild raspberry and lantana thrive. The forest proper is full of palms, ferns, figs, pademelons, snakes and scrub turkeys. The latter have built nests 4 metres across and 1.5 metres high, covering the road completely. No maps are needed, leave the 'road' and you are back in the Big Scrub, dominated by lawyer vines.

We have lunch at the flying fox, built in 1948 to lower the logs down the mountain to the Kunghur Sawmill. The cable, once 1.6 km long, is still tied to its anchor point. A lot of the massive timber structure is still standing and I am surprised at the size of the trees that have grown back in the intervening 24 years since logging was stopped. Forty five minutes later we reach the lookout that reveals the challenge ahead, how to get up on to the Sphinx. Nobody I spoke to could give me any specific directions, only that you had to go around one side or the other.

There was an intervening peak to get past. We spent an exhausting and fruitless hour trying the south side only to be stopped at some dangerous cliffs. We found it was possible to just go over the top and we sat there with our first uninterrupted view of Sphinx Rock. At this spot we were on a narrow web of rock that was part of the Mount Warning caldera. If our nerves could take it we had 200 metres to go, along a strip of rock just a few metres wide with a sheer drop on both sides. It had the catenary curve of a suspension bridge, but was covered in grass, lilies and stunted trees. There was no hesitation from either of us, we were being drawn to the Sphinx as if by a string.

On the way over I noticed that wallabies had grazed even here. We finally got to touch the Sphinx, appearing as a sheer cliff rising above us. We sat for half an hour without speaking a word. The view was breathtaking. To the north was Mount Warning and the nearby sisters. To the north-west the Border Ranges and to the south Nimbin Rocks, the township of Nimbin and the Koonorigan Range. The sun was bright,

Sphinx Rock from a little way off

the air clear and the whole place had a mystery and reverence similar to Ayres Rock. This was easily one of the best experiences I have had in 44 years of bushwalking.

Hoping to summit, we followed a ledge for about 50 metres on the north side, but it ended in sheer cliffs. A falcon took to the air screeching and tried to see us off. It may have been the spirit of the old woman, but the message was clear enough. We had a look at the southern side which appeared to be an almost vertical slope covered with trees. It looked possible but reckless. Time to find a campsite. We made it back to the flying

fox and pitched our home-made tents on a thick layer of leaves, over a fine, loamy tilth. As night fell Wampoo Pigeons called from the forest, a soapy gargle, the last gasp of a drowning man, wam-poo, wam-poo. A sugar glider called from a tree, no doubt attracted by our lights.

Twenty seven years ago Franca left her university art course in Victoria, bought a share in the Tuntable Community, lived in a tent, knocked up a shack, built a house and had babies. In 1973 I had just graduated from university and heard of the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin. People, hippies some would call them, were coming up here and starting communities.

Franca on the abandoned Kunghur Flying Fox

I decided not to, but ended up here anyway 33 years later. Franca, a vegetarian, munches into some nori she had made earlier. I tell her nothing of my meal which has home-grown beef in it. Specifically a Murray Grey heifer that I watched being born, lovingly tended for 18 months and, in an act of betrayal, sent to the place where the knives are sharp. All our food has a history, a life story.

Not much chance of sleeping through the first-light chorus of birds in the forest. Our packs were significantly lighter, each of us had brought 6 litres of water. Temperatures of 29 degrees were predicted. A first for me was the wearing of leather gloves to grasp the thorns that would ensnare me. Franca carried a pair of seceteurs to deal with the lawyer vines. Either way we had to wait-a-while.

On the way out we ran into Sandy and Rob. They were off to do much the same walk as we had hoped to do. Their plan was to sleep on the top of Sphinx Rock that night and continue over the top of Blue Knob, ending on the Blue Springs Community. They have done the trip before and gave us all the instructions we needed yesterday. For the time being Sphinx Rock was, for us, an unfinished project.

We soon passed a dozen members of the The Nimbin Bushwalkers Club who had come out to meet us on a day walk. They needed to climb a mountain before turning back, so we left them to it. National Parks have taken all references to this track off their brochures and signage. It was good to see it still being used. Franca decides to go back and finish her university art course next year, and I resolve to try and embrace some of the Aquarius values. Nimbin is that sort of place.

Blue Gum Forest Burns Again

Ian Brown

A large and controversial bushfire burnt the upper Grose Valley last November. While thankfully no human lives and property were lost, the fire burnt some 15,000 hectares of Blue Mountains National Park (and World Heritage Area), much of it to a high intensity, and damaged rare plant sites and many kilometres of walking track. Fire suppression costs were up to $500,000 a day just for aircraft, and the final cost will exceed $10 million. The park restoration costs and environmental impacts are unknown, but the long-term protection of Grose Valley ecosystems are threatened by too-frequent fire.

Blue Gum Forest burnt in a very hot head fire on the 'blowup' day of 22 November which threw spots 12 km in front of the fire. It was the third time the near-sacred forest has burnt in 24 years (1982, 1994 and 2006), and this was the hottest. About 80% of the canopy was scorched and most of the understorey removed. The future of many trees is uncertain.

These impacts were seen by many as unnecessary and produced a groundswell of concern in the Blue Mountains and conservation communities. Issues included the failure to suppress the fires while small, the large extent of backburning under severe conditions, the escape of some backburns, the lack of recognition of heritage values, the power of the RFS, the cost, the burning of Blue Gum Forest, the media 'spin' and the long-term survival of park ecosystems. A particular concern was the dominance of road-based strategies and resources over remote area (helicopter-based) firefighting capability. Would greater investment in remote area crews have paid off in a much smaller (and cheaper) fire?

The outcry included a full page statement in the local newspaper funded by 143 residents (I was one). It pointed out that the Grose Valley is burning too often, noted the threat of increased fire with global warming and called for an independent review of the fire. The Sydney Morning Herald ran an 'expose' by a local journalist, in which Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation queried whether Blue Gum had been sacrificed. It also reported disputes within the multi-agency fire team over how to manage the fire. In the local paper, former NPWS Blue Mountains fire ecologist Nic Gellie published a critique of the fire control strategies. Most commentators did not criticise those who worked on the fire, including many hundreds of Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers.

The public reaction from RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg (who was the new state Labor candidate for the seat of Blue Mountains) and sitting local member (and Minister for the Environment) Bob Debus was rapid and vigorous. They denounced critics, said the 'campaign' was 'political', praised volunteers, refused to acknowledge any problems (despite the facts) and denied a review. Now that some time has passed, and more issues with the fire have come to light, local critics and conservation groups are pursuing discussions with RFS, NPWS and others to seek better management of fires for the future.

While the 'fog of fire' still surrounds the full story, more facts are becoming clear. The first few days were critical to later events. The fire began with two separate ignitions. A lightning strike was spotted on Burrakorain Head on 14 November and attacked by NPWS remote area firefighters. Good progress was disrupted when their two helicopters were diverted to a second ignition (suspected lightning) west of Darling Causeway in the Hartley Valley.

In a stiff westerly wind, this second fire moved quickly up to the causeway, where extensive backburning was undertaken. A combination of the head fire and backburns crossed the road-railway corridor in many locations that night and spread into the national park in the head of the Grose Valley. These were not contained, and meanwhile the unattended Burrakorain fire had also spread significantly.

The decision was taken to fall back to a large area backburn around the north of Blackheath and Mount Victoria and along Bells Line of Road. Several lines were attempted to hold the fire across the valley between Pierces Pass and Banks Wall, but more backburn escapes in worsening conditions caused these to fail. One breakout sent fire across Thunder Gorge towards Mount Tomah and another near Anvil Rock sent fire into the valley towards Blue Gum and around the escarpment towards Blackheath.

When all this fire, enlarged by backburns, blew up on 22 November it ran east into the area burnt in the 2002 Mt Hay fire. Low fuels combined with an easterly weather change enabled close containment to finally work – but the fire also threw spots beyond the 2002 fire to threaten the lower mountains. A huge extension of the backburn to Faulconbridge (and the entire Grose Valley), pushed by some in the RFS, was only narrowly averted by damp weather and RAFT suppression of the spotovers.

The upshot is that all of the upper Grose Valley from near Mt Hay has been burnt, including Govett Gorge and parts of the Mt Hay plateau. The valley and all walking tracks between Mt Victoria and Evans Lookout will remain closed until reconstruction can be completed. Whether any of this could have been avoided by better initial attack or different strategies will be debated for some time, as will long-term improvements in fire suppression for our national parks.

[Ian has attempted to be fairly neutral about the RFS management of the firefighting as he is still involved in the assessment process. I have seen and wept over the carnage inflicted by the methods used to handle the whole fire incident. Surely we can do better than to control burn the entire Grose Valley just to protect a few bits of badly-sited private property? - Editor]

Ian Brown is a Bushwalker, former NPWS Ranger and Operations Manager with 20 years firefighting experience (mostly in Blue Mtns) and currently an environmental consultant

BWRS Helps in Large Search

Doug Floyd and Keith Maxwell

Introduction

Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) was called out for an 8am start on Friday 15th December at Queen Victoria Hospital, Kings Tableland Road, Wentworth Falls. The task was to assist in the search for David Iredale, a 17 year old bushwalker, who had been missing since midday Monday.

Three boys were doing a 3 day walk over Mt Solitary as an unapproved practice walk for their Duke of Edinburgh gold trip. Sunday night they camped on Mt Solitary but could not find water. So they were out of water when they started the descent to the Kedumba River, where they knew there was water. They had purification tablets because the water is polluted from Katoomba sewage. Near midday the boys rested at a spot perhaps about 15 – 20 minutes away from the water. For some reason David went ahead of his companions. He rang "000" a short time later saying he was lost. There were some more "000" phone calls over a short period. The other two boys continued walking and when David wasn't at the location where the track crosses the river, they assumed he had gone ahead again and continued up the track towards the fire trail. A rescue party met the two boys. This was the first time they knew that David was missing. A search was commenced that continued into Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, with absolutely no trace of David.

Friday – day 5

The tasks given the two BWRS teams (assuming that David was looking for water) took them into a close search of the creek systems south of the foot track and then a general search of all the other ridges and creeks in the area. The BWRS Toyota Troop Carrier joined other vehicles in the extensive movement of personnel in and out of the Kedumba Valley via the (normally locked) Kedumba Pass road.

The area was steep in parts with numerous small waterfalls and cliffs in the water courses; some scrubby places with lawyer vine but generally fairly open under a canopy of tall trees, with lots of fallen timber and the occasional rock outcrop to search. Despite the continuous drizzly rain there was very little pooled water even in rock depressions that would normally be a pool.

Later in the day BWRS did a more general search of the remainder of their allotted area, concentrating on the creek systems and ridges between which included checking the deep pools of the Kedumba River and the thick vegetation along its banks. Generally this area was not as steep but did have more vegetation and fewer tall trees.

BWRS personnel camped at Kedumba Crossing. This good camp site was reasonably flat with plenty of wood beside flowing water that unfortunately was unfit to drink.

Saturday – day 6

Extra BWRS personnel along with four NSW Cave Rescue members arrive as reinforcements. The task was to do a thorough line search (in one big team of 17) of the area west of that searched on Friday up to the cliffs below Mt Solitary. The area had some cliffs and was generally very rugged country, including logged areas with lots of forestry off-cuts covered in lawyer vine. The final line search down a steep slope was definitely easier than searching across the contours. Still misty rain in the morning but mainly overcast by afternoon with some slight drizzle. Creeks still dry but the occasional small pool of dirty water you could have sucked up in desperation.

The fact that no clues had emerged after 6 days of searching was puzzling and meant we needed to have a wide search so we could tick off areas. No result of any kind so far!

The Troop Carrier carried in fresh water and food from the Salvation Army Emergency Services Catering Unit now at the Queen Victoria search base. BWRS personnel from Friday had to conserve their food supplies in case they needed to go out overnight somewhere else.

Sunday – day 7

This was a warm, sunny day tending to hot by midday. The task was to conduct a contact line search of the more southern part of the area searched on Friday (between the fire trail and the first major creek). About 10 am BWRS met a combined SES / RFS team in the same area. BWRS was then re-tasked to the corresponding area east of the Kedumba River. This has some much steeper country with much loose footing. Black snakes were seen on the banks of the Kedumba River (surprise, surprise). One footprint size 7-8 was sighted in a Lyre Bird mound track trap and noted. Details were radioed back to search HQ.

Many BWRS members had to return home so Kedumba Crossing was abandoned. Remaining BWRS members stayed (for security reasons) with the BWRS tent and other equipment at Queen Victoria Hospital. During Sunday the Troop Carrier drove along fire trails to the south and west of Mt Solitary. Great drive along usually closed access roads but no sightings.

A late afternoon quick search was conducted along the Kedumba River south of Kedumba Crossing by a combined team of NSW Cave Rescue, Blue Mountains Climbers Rescue (BMCR) group and BWRS. The evening feed, again provided by the Salvation Army, was much appreciated.

Monday – day 8

A pleasant clear night and warm day. The task was a contact line search of an area east of the Kedumba River north of the foot track up to the fire road. The area is extremely steep with some large water falls, lots of layer vine, difficult creek beds and much broken rocky country, very steep dirt banks in parts. Very difficult country to search thoroughly.

Water levels in the Kedumba River mean a kayak search of the lower reaches of the river may be possible. Two kayakers (suggested by BWRS) from Wollongong were contacted by Police for an early start on Tuesday.

Tuesday – day 9

New information meant a change of tactics was required. The task for a combined team of NSW Cave Rescue, BMCR and BWRS was a close-order search either side of the Mt Solitary track from top to bottom and some adjacent areas. BMCR also have a team to the south side of the BWRS area.

The water level in the Kedumba River is controlled by Katoomba sewerage treatment works. Unfortunately, the river level was down from when the kayakers were suggested. After paddling a few pools up high in the system, the remaining 9 km was a skull drag over mud and sand (up to the knees in places). The level of the dam is so low at the moment. This area needed to be checked, so thanks to them for a job well done.

The BWRS search area was extremely steep with cliffs and very rocky, broken sometimes steep ground. This made the going very tough. Some parts required very competent people to go back and search some of the cliffs without day packs. Fortunately the vegetation was sparse.

The BWRS task was completed before lunch. During lunch we overheard radio traffic confirming that a body had been found which was probably David. A very sombre team packed up and filed back to their transport.

Conclusion

The task of finding David was achieved, although all searchers would have preferred to have found David alive. They naturally felt 'flat' after such a sustained effort. However, this outcome must be of some comfort as in south west Tasmania there still are unlocated bushwalkers. (BWRS assisted in the search for Wade Butler near Precipitous Bluff in 1995)

At the time of writing, conjecture only is possible regarding the death of David. At 17 David was too young to have done much bushwalking and have much stamina for walking in hot, dry weather. The lack of clues suggests that David was suffering from heat stroke (not thinking clearly) and may have died quite quickly.

Over 30 members of BWRS assisted for one or more days of the five days that we were involved. We completed our tasks with obvious professionalism and dedication that was appreciated by David's family. Our BWRS headquarters tent was able to provide shelter for David's parents in the heat and rain of this search.

This has been one of the biggest searches in the Blue Mountains for quite a few years. We were all impressed at how well it was run with such large numbers from so many different agencies. The sheer number of volunteers from all agencies over the many days was staggering. There were personnel from SES, RFS (Rural Fire Service) and Blue Mountains Climbers Rescue group. BWRS was allowed to call in assistance from several other VRA Squads to maintain the overall level of VRA personnel present. BWRS would like to thank NSW Cave Rescue, South Coast and Cessnock VRA for their assistance.

[Editor's note: subsequent information suggests that David may have become lost on the initial descent from the col at Solitary Lookout, going straight down the hill on animal tracks rather than sideways at the foot of the cliffs to the crest of the spur. More than a few bushwalkers have been caught this way - including your Editor! It seems David may have fallen and died the first day, although this remains with the Coroner to determine.]

The Adventure Activity Standards and the Anti-Parks Lobby

An Update by Adventure Victoria
[Reproduced here as a warning to all walkers and Clubs in NSW - Ed.]

You might be aware that in its September report on the Adventure Activity Standards, the Outdoor Recreation Centre lent strong support to two lobby groups that are campaigning on an anti-parks platform in the Victorian elections. Many in the outdoors community, regardless of their view on the AAS issue, will find this disturbing.

Recreation Environment Group (REG) is opposing the Greens on an anti-national parks platform. Push for the Bush lobbies against national parks, land management related controls generally, the Greens and the current Victorian government. The ORC has expressed its backing for both these organisations under the AAS and Victorian Government banners.

In a subsequent circular, the ORC has now said that is was simply passing on information rather than expressing support. The original statement is quoted below and you can judge for yourself. Also, the ORC now says that the organisations in question are not political and want only to support access to crown land. This is not so and their natures are plain to see. Their websites are quoted below and you can check their websites.

Adventure Victoria has several points to make.

1) We do not wish to deny anyone the opportunity to make a mistake and make amends. But the ORC's statement was not a slip of the tongue. It was unequivocal and unambiguous. It said what it said and it obviously meant it. It is extremely unlikely that it did not know the policies of these organisations. But if not, why does it now pretend that these organisations have a narrow and innocuous focus when their websites show plainly that they are party political and oppose national parks?

2) The ORC made a mistake in principle. It now acknowledges that it should not air its political views under the banner of a government funded project. Whether principle is the reason for the ORC's backdown or fear of jeopardising future grants, we can't know.

3) It is false for the ORC to represent these groups now as simply pro-access. The aim of the Recreation Environment Group is to remove impediments to inappropriate vehicular access to sensitive areas. The aim of Push for the Bush is to remove management controls on a host of recreation and commercial activities. Both are openly and fiercely anti-Greens and anti-parks. I don't like to paraphrase, so please read their websites for yourself.

4) We do not reproach the ORC for representing their eighteen or so members, one of whom is the driving force behind REG, and perhaps many of whom support the anti-parks philosophy. But insofar as the ORC operates its Adventure Activity Standards project it purports to represent a vastly wider stakeholder group. It is an abuse to promote its political/philosophical positioning through the AAS project.

5) The AAS threatens recreation access to public land and this is one of AV's main reasons for opposing the AAS project in its current form. It is ironic that the ORC should belatedly attach itself to the pro-access bandwagon while doggedly persisting in the AAS as it is.

6) This development forces Adventure Victoria to take a position on the underlying issue. We do so with little difficulty. We believe that the vast majority of our members are pro-parks and pro-conservation. As a committee, we hold the view that remote and natural areas are integral to the activities that we promote and represent. Further we believe that our broader social responsibility requires us to support land and nature conservation measures regardless of the compromises that might they might impose from time to time on our recreation. Adventure Victoria is pro-national parks and supports conservation in land management.

The following excerpts provide the background. First, from AAS Update No. 28, Sept 2006:

> **'Getting political**
>
> The ORC Victoria has received information regarding two separate initiatives that are being established to put some power back into the hands of the many individuals (and organisations) that depend upon access to Victorian crown land for their livelihood and/or simply for their sanity (recreational access).
>
> Though these are distinct initiatives they are worthy of mention in this part of the AAS update because you may wish to contact, join, support or even help lead these worthy causes. The similarity seems to be that they both support the need to conservation and careful land management but, particularly relevant in the upper house, they wish to place a voice that can clearly be heard supporting the absolute need for public having access to public land now as well as in the future.
>
> For more information you can contact the ORC or the newly established 'Recreational Environmental Group (REG) or The 'Push for the Bush' campaign led by the Mountain Cattlemen.

ORC subsequently issued a denial in AAS Update No. 29, Oct 2006:

> 'In the last update we added a section called "Getting political". This was to pass on information we had received from two groups lobbying for access to crown land. These were Recreation Environment Group (REG) and Push for the Bush. We received some comments that the ORC should not be supporting such groups and reminding us that we are not a political organisation. In this issue I just want to re-assure readers that the ORC has no political allegiances other than lobbying all to all groups to encourage the development of the outdoor recreation industry in Victoria through communication, networking and representation. & encourage safe and fun involvement in outdoor pursuits at all levels through information education and direction. However as part of these aims it is important to inform the industry of initiatives that may be of interest to individuals within the outdoor industry. I apologise to anyone who was offended by the circulation of this information.'

Adventure Victoria obtained the following from the websites of the two organisations:

> 'The Recreational Environment Group is an alliance of recreational users of public land in Victoria who are very concerned about the likelihood of politicians from the 'Greens' political party holding the balance of power in Victoria's Upper House following the state election on the 25th November, 2006. To stop this happening, REG will be contesting two seats in the Victorian Upper House.'
>
> 'We want to ensure that the opportunity to participate in traditional outdoor activities is protected, as is the environment in which they are conducted. Recent years have seen a 'lock-up and lock-out' mentality in relation to Victoria's public land. 'Lock-up' areas in national parks, marine parks etc and 'lockout' recreational activities.'
>
> 'The Green policies for the November election include establishing more national parks, alongside giving free heroin to addicts. REG's focus is on encouraging people to participate in healthy, outdoor activities - rather than those at the end of a deadly needle.'

And

> 'What we [Push for the Bush] stand for …Fighting for public land access, sorting out "the neighbours from hell" [DSE and Parks Victoria], alpine grazing, better fire management, supplying Victoria's timber needs, private land rights, farmers, irrigators, fishing, horse riding and especially exposing the hypocrisy and danger of the Greens' party policies.'
>
> 'The current review of the permit system for organisations conducting a trade or business upon crown land and the increased push to upgrade state to National Parks threatens or is perceived to threaten the available land for Victorian community groups and individuals to undertake their leisure activities.'

The policy of Adventure Victoria in relation to Adventure Activity Standards is that the question of standards for amateur recreation should be removed from the scope of the AAS. Relevant representative bodies should be free to create such guidelines only if it suits their needs and should be free to create relevant, satisfactory guidelines specific to their circumstances.

Rod Costigan

President, Adventure Victoria (Bush and Mountain Recreation Association of Victoria)
http://www.adventurevictoria.org

From The mail bag. . .

Defending Dunphys Nomenclature

Jim Smith (see "Myles Dunphy and William Cuneo: Two Misguided Nomenclaturists of the Blue Mountains" Place Names Australia, March 2006, and The Bushwalker, Winter 2006) takes aim at Myles Dunphy for his nomenclatural work in the Blue Mountains, accusing him of stealing names and misappropriating others.

I personally believe that Dunphy's nomenclature was a great achievement. He was neither anthropologist nor historical researcher, but his mapping and nomenclature brought the Blue Mountains to life to a wider public, not least to those who desired to experience the mountains with minds sympathetic to its appreciation and preservation.

To the best of his abilities Myles tried to preserve as many of the authentic old names as he could. He may have made some mistakes but many authentic old names are known to us today because Myles preserved them. It was Myles' policy to give aboriginal names precedence and to the best of his ability he did so. If he did not know the aboriginal name for every ridge and range it is because no individual from his time or before had the resources to make such a study. If Dunphy did not know the aboriginal system of names, it is likely that few, if any, of his local informants did either.

The task of obtaining genuine local names was not always straightforward. The fact is that some of Dunphy's local informants were not very good sources of information when it came to place names. Generations of settlers and cattlemen had filled the countryside with 'Rocky', 'Stony', 'Stockyard' and 'Breakfast' creeks. These names were not so set in stone as some might think, and could be applied fluidly. A feature with such a name might also be known to some by the name of the settler family who lived there, and there was no certainty that the family at the opposite end of the valley used the same names.

Dunphy found some good sources of information in men such as Bill Morton, manager of Colong Station. But others such as Timothy Brennan (1851-1938) of Oberon who knew Kanangra and Burragorang well and could talk horses all night, were not so forthcoming. After drawing blank on a number of questions put to him by Dunphy, the questioner did not quite know what to make of it when Brennan told him that Burragorang pioneer John Lacy and his friends called Kanangra (which presumably they were able to view from the rim of the Burragorang) 'Mini Mini' (though we know the earliest name, recorded by Govett, to be Thurat). Dunphy was incredulous that a man who seemed only capable of refering to the names of the major creeks in the same area in terms of 'the left creek' and 'the right creek' could come up with assertion like that. We might have reason to doubt the veracity of Brennan's claim (or even of Dunphy's interpretation of it) but on the other hand, if Brennan's statement is indeed reliable (and presuming 'Mini Mini' to be aboriginal) then perhaps it is that the aborigines themselves sometimes had more than one name for specific features.

Names can also be buried deeply in local lore. Such, I think, could be the case with Bernard O'Reilly's belief that Yellow Dog Ridge (at the centre of Dunphy's Wild Dog Mountains) had for long been known as Peter O'Reilly's Range. Bernard O'Reilly (1903-1975) made this known in 1954 in his book "Green Mountains", where he stated that for upwards of seventy years the 'granite' peak of Yellow Dog had been known by his father's name. This fact though does not appear to have been communicated to bushwalkers prior to this, nor am I aware of any map or earlier reference to corroborate the claim, although Bert Carlon (adopted son of "Green Gully" pioneer Norbert Carlon) restated it in a letter to the Geographical Names Board in 1968 when he pointed out that "Yellow Dog Ridge was always Peter O'Reilly Range."

It should be taken into account that Dunphy and Alan Rigby (who were at the forefront of bushwalker explorations in the area) both approached Norbert Carlon, Burragorang-bred resident of "Green Gully" since 1908, for information. Before Dunphy coined "The Wild Dogs", the region was referred to by some bushwalkers as The Mouins, and I suspect Norbert Carlon to have been the likely source for this name. At that time Dunphy and Rigby referred to the three main peaks as Mouins One, Two and Three. Dunphy thought the name Mouin should best apply to Mt. Mouin itself, I think with some justification. He named Mouins Two and Three Mounts Warrigal and Dingo respectively. This was the beginning of his 'Dogs' theme which was developed on the basis of older cattlemen's names in the vicinity such as Black Dog and probably also White Dog. This to me is one example that shows Dunphy, if inventive, was also a thoughtful nomenclaturist.

According to Alan Rigby, Norbert Carlon maintained that stockmen never ventured into The Mouins as the place provided little feed for livestock. Carlon considered that the few walkers who explored the tops were probably the first people to do so. This they might or might not have been. A few years ago I asked last of the Cox's River men, the late Ben Esgate, who spent a lot of his youth in the Megalong and Cox's River regions in the 1920s and 30s, for his view on the claim of precedence for 'Peter O'Reilly Range'. Ben was somewhat dismissive of it, saying in fact he could not recall his mentor Norbert Carlon (an O'Reilly relative) using the term. It is therefore possible that if the name was in use it was, in the main, used by the O'Reilly clan and that it left the district when the family transferred to Queensland towards the end of the 1st World War, when Bernard O'Reilly was in his early teens. It was in fact a voice from Queensland (Bernard's) rather than (as far as I understand it) a clamour from the Megalong that first put forward the claim of precedence for 'Peter O'Reilly Range'.

In light of this I think the proposition by Jim Smith and others (see Michael Keat's "Day Walks In Therabulat Country", 2006) to name the entire backbone of The Wild Dog Mountains from the end of Narrow Neck to the bottom of Yellow Dog 'Peter O'Reilly Range' a big call. If this is to be justified substantiation is required for unconvincing statements such as the one in Jim Barrett's "The Place Names of the Blue Mountains and Burragorang Valley" 1994: "During the annual musters at Konangaroo Clearing… Peter O'Reilly (father of Bernard) would often look up and admire the hump across the river and he eventually became (probably) the first to climb it." This statement has more the ring of supposition to it than it does of actual fact, yet it is included twice in Michael's book. Michael also cites unspecified and undated personal notes prepared by Jim Smith, in which it is stated categorically – "The residents of the Burragorang and Megalong Valleys called the mountain which, at the end of Narrow Neck, separates the two valleys, Peter O'Reilly's Mountain." This could be interpreted as The Mouins generally, or Mount Mouin specifically, but supporting evidence again is needed.

I would suggest a cautious approach to any proposed wholesale revision or "clean sweep" of Dunphy's nomenclature as recommended by Jim Smith in his article. For instance I am not sure what would be achieved by modifying Dunphy's 'aboriginalised' names such as Morriberri Pass. The allegation that such names mock aboriginal language should be discounted. Myles delighted in aboriginal words: aboriginal languages and English are replete with borrowings from one another. The 'aboriginalising' of Maurice Berry's name is an example of Dunphy's recognition and appreciation for aboriginal linguistic euphony, and should be left as such.

Dunphy was determined there be a future for wilderness in the Blue Mountains. To him blank spaces on the map without named features were vulnerable to unsympathetic exploitation and destruction, and who is to say he was wrong? His nomenclature made bushwalkers aware of the history in the mountains, and gave them a sense of their own part in it. The claim that Dunphy was misguided is just not true. He did not get everything right, but what he achieved with his nomenclature showed great foresight for its time. His maps and nomenclature were important cornerstones for decades of conservation work which time has vindicated in the achievement of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Colin Gibson

Nomenclature of the Blue Mountains

Re the article by Jim Smith —
Can the word 'contentious' be removed from the debate about the nomenclature of the Blue Mountains please?

As a bushwalking/environment movement that claims an empathy with the natural world, I think we can support the renaming of the Blue Mountains to indigenous names where they exist and are desired by local indigenous people. This ned not diminish the contribution of Myles Dunphy and William Cuneo to conservation.

Having just finished reading 'Blood on the Wattle' by Bruce Elder, I am very conscious of the human and cultural annihilation imposed upon Indigenous People, and of the land theft throughout our Australian History. Indigenous People are still fighting for their land - the very least we can do is to become involved in a reconciliation process of renaming the landscape. Let's move forward and heal the past.

Meredith Brownhill

Comment

I doubt the word 'contentious' can be removed from the debate as many people strongly disagree with the proposals.

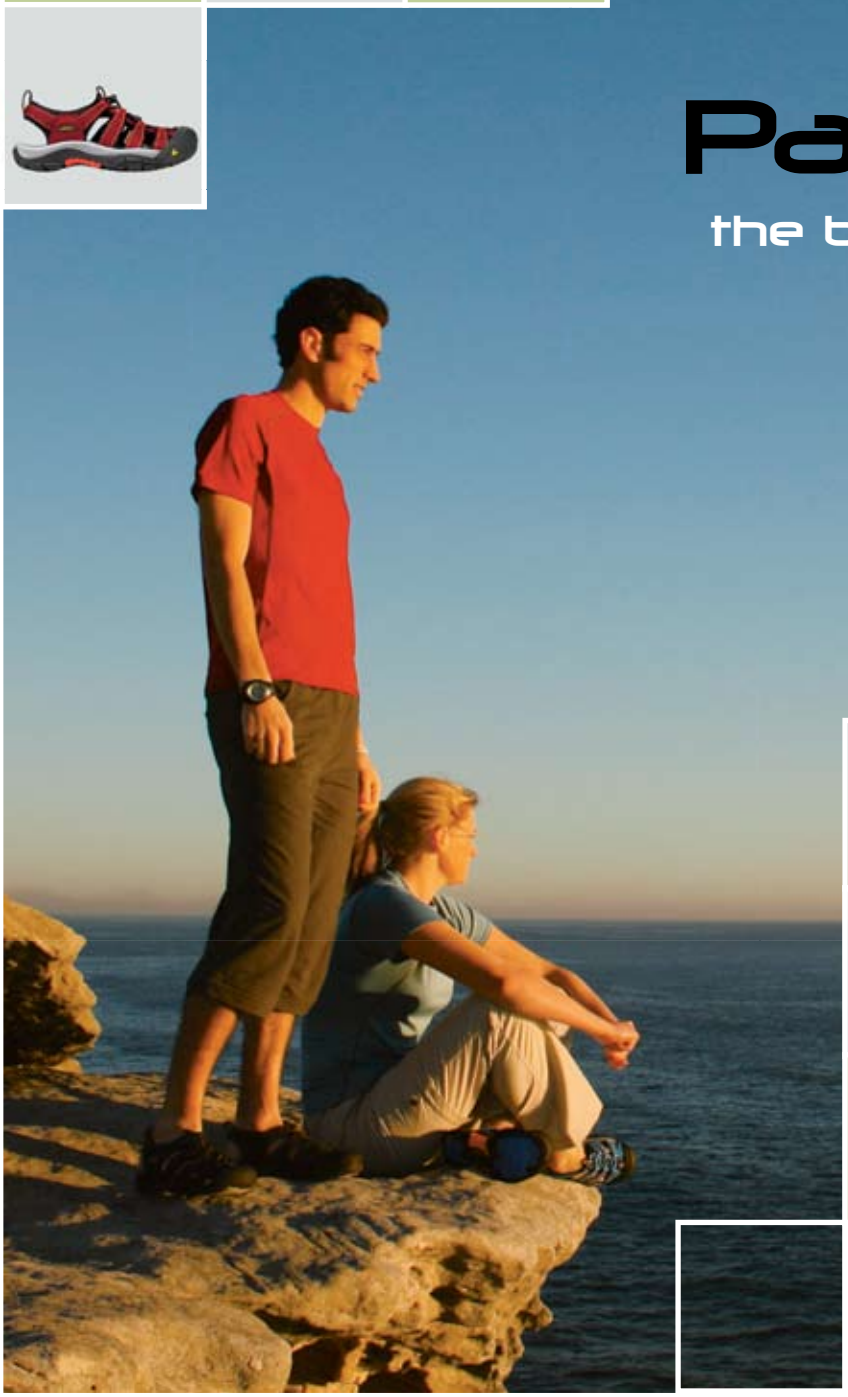
Countries have been invaded, conquered and renamed for thousands of years all around the world. It is a fact of life. These names have been in use for long enough.

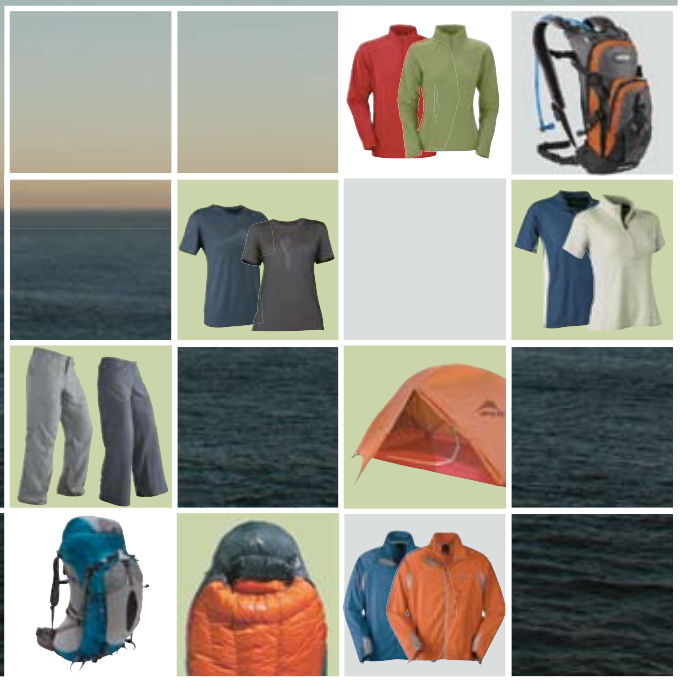
The First Fleet arrived here over two hundred years ago: many generations have passed since then. Surely it is time we stopped living in the past and moved on into the 21st century. This land belongs to us ALL now. We should ALL call ourselves Australians, with equal rights and equal opportunities for ALL.

Editor

Paddy Pallin

the bushwalking specialists





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