

# ***The Bushwalker***

Ironstone formations,  
Koorowall Knife Edge,  
Blue Mountains NP

Volume 34  
Issue 2  
Autumn 2009



**Don't you wish  
you were here?**



Photo: Peter Vaughan

**Sea cliffs near The Waterrun,  
Royal National Park**

**Contributions of interesting, especially typical and spectacular bushwalking photos are sought.  
you don't want the same photographers all the time, do you?**



Photo: Graham Wright

**The old Four Mile Hut,  
KNP**



# The Bushwalker

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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 66 Clubs with a total membership of about 8,700 bushwalkers.

Formed in 1932, the Confederation provides a united voice on behalf of all bushwalkers on conservation, access and other issues.

People interested in joining a bushwalking club may write to the Confederation Administration **admin@bushwalking.org.au** for a list of Clubs, but a far more useful on-line list is available at the Confederation website **www.bushwalking.org.au**, broken up into areas. There's lots of other good stuff there too, including the bushwalking FAQ.



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Volume 34, Issue 2, Autumn 2009

## From the editor's desk. . .

**T**he last issue featured a photo-essay on Barrington Tops, and feedback was good. So this issue features two photo essays. However, I have to sound a note of warning to all confederation members. We are getting very short on contributions! If you don't want *The Bushwalker* to be just a Keats/Caffin effort, then **YOU** are going to have to contribute some more articles, trip reports and photos! *Get with it!*

## Articles for Publication

Clubs and members are encouraged to submit relevant articles, with a very strong preference for those with good pictures. Both the author and the author's club will feature in the Byline - this is a good way to advertise YOUR club. 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, preferably in their original unedited form. JPG, PDF or TIFF formats are preferred. **The text should be sent as a plain text file (\*.txt), NOT as a Word file (\*.doc).** I repeat, please send the pictures separate from the text file; do NOT send them embedded in a Word doc file. Pictures taken from a Word doc file are simply not good enough and won't be published. And, of course, the Editor is always interested in receiving bushwalking books and maps for review. All 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 are his own.

Roger Caffin  
Editor



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# Wave Hill Station

Anne Falkner

minute 4WD from the homestead. This grassy site offered a number of possible tent sites and a timber-stocked campfire place, a long drop toilet and river access, although the vegetation limits the view.

Hastily we partook of morning tea, then lazily carpooled back up to the saddle adjacent to the easiest Mt Carnham ascent where a side track afforded us convenient parking space on this otherwise steeply graded country. Starting at 200 m we quickly ascended, beginning along a fence line then following a natural ridge. Views to the south of the Clarence River Gorge country were quickly obvious, allowing a good excuse for numerous breathers and photo opportunities. The climb was rocky in places but not dangerous. A range of vegetation including an attractive yellow pea flowered medium shrub added colour to the landscape. The Mt Carnham trig was an obvious first destination at 531 m. This offered no views, being well covered by tall eucalypts.

We headed north-west down a small ridge to a saddle and over a small hill until the upper Clarence River opened itself to viewing. A magnificent vista. We returned via the trig and then deviated slightly to the east of our ascent and into a small rocky gully terminating in a cliff edge. There

were small pools with pink orchids flowering. From there we traversed westerly back to our ascent ridge and returned down towards our vehicles, deviating a little to the east when practical to view into the lightly forested gully. It was a comfortable 5 hour hike. Evidence of some earlier gold mining efforts were viewed down near the vehicles before returning to set up camp and enjoy campfire meals and yarns.

Our Sunday walk was southeasterly via an alternative smaller campsite with wonderful views of the upper Clarence Gorge. From there we ascended along the obvious ridge with numerous photo opportunities, this time of a number of waterfalls between foreground trees. After reaching the summit at 260 m we headed south and then towards the lower end of the Gorge. This involved some steep lantana scrambling back down a gully to the river. Lunch was eaten while closely observing the river views and a number of sizeable cod fish; it was greatly appreciated. A little further to the north was a natural sandy beach offering tempting swimming opportunities which none of our group could resist. Perfect!

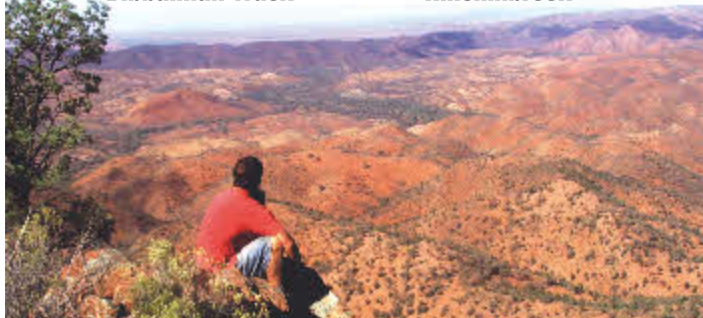
The return from there was a rock scrambling maze with river and close waterfall observations, imaginings of the power of water flowing through here at flood times and the hardness of the clinging clusters of vegetation. Beyond the last of the waterfalls another swimming pool beckoned, this with its own natural spa. This was enjoyed along with afternoon tea, then we returned to pack up camp. ♦

**B**ushwalking at the Clarence River Gorge and at Mt Carnham while camping at Wave Hill Station is certainly to be recommended. Our Clarence Valley Bushwalkers group chose to camp at the upriver Back Channel campsite north-east of the Gorge, a 45

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Scenes along the walk at Wave Hill Station



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# Wet Wild Wilderness

Michael Keats The Bush Club



The Australian bush is renowned for being dry, harsh and uncompromising. This abridged collection of three off-track, wet, wild, wilderness exploratory bushwalking trips is about a very different face of the bush in the Greater Blue Mountains national Park. It is all about water - lots of water. Rain, mist, rapids, waterfalls, wet walking - through canyons, dark pools, slippery cliffs, being totally wet and enjoying it all.

## Walk 1

A tributary of the Wollangambe River.



As frequent pilgrims to the shrine of Wollangambe know, it is a river of sudden and unpredictable changes. When the three of us were together, our leader Tom shared his desk research on the proposed way of route - a detailed study of available aerial photos. Very tight, canyon-like sections were possible where the creek is constricted. The variation in the country is amazing. Two almost parallel creeks not more than 200 m apart can have very different geomorphology and implications for would be explorers.



We came to a great overhang (on the eastern side) where the creek has cut deep into the rock strata. It had a sandy bed with scattered small pebbles of red, orange and yellow sandstone. The water speed was racing and the volume huge. I think we each did mental calculations about what the Wollangambe experience would be like later on . . .

The overhang continued for tens of metres. There were deeper sections in the creek bed and there were minor sand banks. An intense greenness was exhibited by all the ferns and other epiphytes adorning the walls. A really top quality section of the overhang had a ceiling height approaching 2 m. We slogged our way through this. Towards the end of the overhang the sound of water plunging over a drop was getting louder.



The loudness was due to the volume of water - not the height of the drop, estimated as a mere 2-3 m. We stopped to take a picture or two before negotiating a ledge to the western side and then dropping back into the creek. A short section where 'wet feet' as advertised quickly moved up to being wet family jewels. Reassuringly Tom volunteered that we were not really equipped to go swimming (much).

Next on the agenda was a bit of horizontal pole work to cross a rather deeper hole than encountered so far. Too slippery to walk,

the log was a 'wet tails' job. By now I did not really care. I was fully wet from the waist down, valuables that needed to be dry were safe in a dry bag, the camera is waterproof to 10 m . . . Let's go.



Ahead were more logs and waterfalls- nothing too alarming and all very pretty. Water volumes kept increasing as side creeks and gullies added their contribution. A larger side creek that joined from the west proved disappointing. Tom was hoping that it would also have 'interesting' features.



I have a picture of Tom and Chris pushing ahead of me, about to disappear into a green jungle. It is an exciting part of this canyon journey that changes continuously. We break through the jungle and arrive at another small waterfall. This is negotiated, and we walk the water highway a few more metres. This experience was followed by more wading between dark and forbidding cliffs. Then, just as suddenly the cliffs widen and we are in a broad gully still wading in water but through a tangled mess of green jungle.

Abruptly there is a change in water colour as a side stream cuts in. It is grey-black. This is no side stream, it is the Wollangambe River charged with coal fines leached from the dumps upstream and it is flowing very strongly.

[Editor's Note: the country described here is not easy, and the walkers involved have considerable experience. Much caution is advised before venturing into this region.]



We stop and ponder our options. Tom takes a step into the Wollangambe proper. It is up to his waist and moving at great speed. To go upstream is to commit to swimming and we are not equipped to do that, at least not for any distance. Tom is disappointed, as this is a section of the Wollangambe that he (and indeed I want to explore).

As we are climbing the cliffs in search of other options to enter, I suggest we could strip to our jocks, leave our packs and go upstream for say half an hour. The idea was rated as too risky so we keep climbing up the nose searching for a spot to look down into where the canyon should be. The air is full of noise and we cannot see more than just the occasional glimpse of turbulent water movement between trees and near vertical cliffs.



I point the camera down and press the button. I am looking at that picture now. At my feet the rock face is glossy with water, shifting one foot I confirm it is mighty slippery. Somewhere, perhaps 15 m below, and out of sight, the swollen Wollangambe thunders its tortuous way. 50% of me wants to be down in there testing it and photographing it. The other 50% says that Tom has made the right decision! We will be back under different circumstances.



## Walk 2

a tributary of the Bungleboori Creek.



Initially the creek is a benign little stream of pure clean water flowing through coral fern *Gleichenia dictyocarpa* on a rocky base, the occasional *Grevillea acanthifolia* lending colour to the scene from its pink toothbrush-like flowers. All interest in flowers soon disappeared as we cross the creek and climb a minor rock outcrop to the east. Through the misting rain we could see the ground dropping away steeply. A user-friendly ramp led down to the creek about 25 m further on.



0905 and the towering walls of sandstone were already closing in on the creek. Between raindrops I scrawled in the notebook 'suspect canyon ahead'. The pen then refused to write on the sodden paper. I put it away and pressed on. The twists and turns of the creek were amplified by soaring tight cliff lines, great tree ferns and tall eucalypts; water was now rushing faster over a perfect, smooth rocky bed.

Then we entered 'a room', a section where the cliffs were wider apart. Amazingly a cut tree section, and then a cut stump confronted us! Who, why and how? There was no obvious way to extract cut logs from this area. We found two more stumps and later more cut logs – half a metre in diameter and up to 4m long. Great timber, well cut but impossible to extract. Planning would have saved these former giants.



Next on the agenda was the negotiation of a small waterfall. One of the cut logs had jammed in the space so it was a bit of fun clambering over it without getting totally wet. It was slippery and hand-holds – well what hand-holds? With wet tails and more we moved on enjoying every piece of scenery. It was stunning. The creek now had a sandy bottom and then sections with brightly coloured sandstone pebbles. The King Fern *Todea barbara* was now dominant in the creek. Ever larger coachwood trees kept the light out and the ground free of any but the most determined of ferns.

It was now 0918 and we thought we were making good progress. We had negotiated a right-angled bend and thought that we were close to joining another unnamed creek from the north. It was way out. We had made very small progress. Even Ian's privately commissioned 1:15,000 topographic map did not prepare us for the size and constancy of the cliffs that surrounded us. They are truly awe-inspiring.



A deeply undercut cliff with a ceiling of about 5 m was a joy to walk through. Ferns bedecked the lower slope and the creek curved artistically in parallel to the main wall. The water was about 20 cm deep and moving fast. Small protrusions from the creek bed aerated the water giving it a gleaming, solid white appearance.



At 0945 a dry overhang provided an ideal spot to have morning tea. It was good to stop and enjoy the surroundings. The constant rain of several days had translated into many non-perennial waterfalls coming to life. Everywhere there was water cascading down. Fortunately for us the air was still warm as we ended up spending a large part of the day in water up to our knees. Morning tea over it was time to continue our exploring.



It was then we came to what I have dubbed 'Thorpe's Constriction'. This is a nice little challenge involving a 2+ m drop. A tumble of high-speed white water passes through a narrow 50 mm wide slot and dumps into a pool of gloomy, uncertain depth. While Ian debated about fixing a rope and checked out suitable anchor trees (nil!) I found a dead tree that could be moved and used as a depth check. It seemed to be about waist deep. I decided to see whether it was now possible to climb down. It was. Several strategic hand and footholds enabled the descent into the water without mishap. It was cool around the waist! A foot in the wrong spot and it would have been a different story.

Safely below the waterfall we then went back to make sure of good pictures of this spot. Shortly after this experience the creek turns quickly from flowing NS to EW. That is not all. It becomes a canyon. A magnificent canyon with towering 20+m sculpted walls and a delightful light play deep down into shallow water. The floor has a hard smooth rock bottom. It stretches for about 100 m. Ian's map did show that a constriction was likely in this area. Lots of photos taken, but no good ones. Really needs time exposure and a tripod. Must come back.

50m on and a branch creek from the north entered. The volume of

water doubled. At 1054 we took a GPS reading and found that good progress had been made and we could identify our position. The creek was very pleasant and the coachwood forest on each side was becoming more extensive.



Then in moment the creek disappeared! We had an interesting challenge climbing up onto a high dry ledge and over this small obstacle. On the other side of this block up the creek resumed its pace although it was a lot bigger. 1118 and again the creek disappeared, this time into a seemingly black hole.

We scratched our heads for a while. This was not just a small block up, this was major. The narrow valley of the creek was filled by a huge wall of rock and earth, complete with very large well-established trees. We reckoned by the size of the trees that this block up had been in place for at least 80 years.



From being in water often up to our waists we were suddenly climbing a 20 m tumble of rock and earth, but still 'in the creek'. The crest at the top gave good views back up stream. Downstream, well where was our creek? Kept walking down and after a time we could hear water but not see it. We pushed down further to be confronted with a massive vertical drop.

Gingerly we approached the edge. I had a 15 m rope. I figured perhaps 3 of these knotted together may have done the trick ... We found a rock ledge that went down



a bit, and then a bit more. From our position we could now see high vertical cliffs a good 200 m away and guessed the position of another major constriction where yet another unnamed creek cut in. Our immediate problem was to get down and in there.



The ledge we were on seemed to be the best option so we kept following it around a nose of rock between two creeks and then into yet another side creek that was part of the planned exit route.

The master plan envisaged we would travel a further kilometre or so downstream and have lunch on a pagoda with a view of the Little Arthurs. A nice idea, but back to the ledge. Fortunately it dropped progressively but still left an unacceptable drop to the bed of the creek.



Ian pushed further west along the ledge and located a concealed ramp. This proved ideal, as it was reversible in the event that we were confronted by impossible waterfalls or drops later on. The descent was a good one. We were now successfully below the very big drop on our entry creek.

It was now 1155 and time to review our position. Given our rate of progress and the constant rain there was no way we could achieve the planned lunch spot in a reasonable time so it was decided to curtail the exploration and make as much progress as possible up this side creek.



Climbing rapidly we both commented on how different the terrain was in this creek (also unnamed) from the two we had already descended. It was more open and the creek bed was filled with boulders. It was equally beautiful but in a very different way. A waterfall some 3 m in height was negotiated using a handy strong vine and some brute strength. I wondered what lay ahead. It was easier than I thought it would be and we made the junction of another north-south flowing creek at 1205.

As we were chilling down quite a bit by now we decided that we would exit at this creek, find a spot for lunch and then seek a way out back to the vehicle.

### Walk 3

a section of Rocky Creek.



Knowing the way made for good progress and at 0953 we arrived at the rock face descent that leads down into a side canyon and into Rocky Creek. The rock face was wet. Very wet. An exploratory test descent and ascent of the first 5 m was pronounced 'OK.' The party then descended one at a time. Steve went first enjoying his self styled role as guide. I descended last to prevent anyone from chickening out.

Geoff stopped at a couple of key spots on the way down to take photos as we negotiated our way. Hopefully there will be some extraordinary action shots of each of us clinging limpet like during the descent. On one tiny rock shelf I

took the opportunity to stop and look across the gorge that hides Rocky Creek deep, deep down. Swirling misty clouds filled the sky. Would we get to the bottom and find the creek so high to force abandonment of the enterprise?



Below the cliff face the next section of the descent was fun. A lot of slippery black mud sections alternate with glorious rainforest and the occasional challenging rock crevice where chimneying skills were handy. I give Mother Nature top marks for the provision of convenient exposed tree roots in so many spots. The recent rain had given a new life to the moss covered rocks and in the soft light the pictures were extra special.

Emerged on the bank of Rocky Creek above a half metre deep pool. Fortunately even with the recent rains Rocky Creek had not risen. I was rather wet already, so a splash entry was not a problem. The others were sensible enough to go looking for a somewhat more dignified entry. They even claimed dry feet! I just laughed because I knew what was ahead.



Here Rocky Creek is truly magnificent – lots of clean sandy beaches, clear pools, great ferns everywhere, (at least 4 species) and of course those canyon walls. The canyon walls, well, they are special. Of wonderful ochre colours, they rise to varying heights and probably average 30 m. They are pocked with caves and overhangs all begging for attention in a canyon that has the same claim everywhere.

On the downside, (if it is one) there are lots of fallen trees and in spots heaps of debris. It is in these places that food resources exist for crayfish and other invertebrates. We had an encounter with a mature blue crayfish *Euastacus spinifer*. I am sure lots of his mates were watching on. We were just not clever enough to look in the right places.



We pushed on down-stream making good progress and thoroughly enjoying the beauty of the place. At the big bend there were great undercuts and overhangs. The magic of raw wilderness was everywhere. Further on we encountered a small set of rapids that were easy to negotiate. Out spirits were high. Then we came to a block up, only a small one and doable with the tape I carried, but it was irreversible unless we left the tape set. As we had no idea whether the next exit down stream was within our capability, or whether we could find it we were forced to turn back. ♦

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# Kosciusko National Park

## The Northern Half

Roger Caffin

Everyone knows about the middle part of Kosciusko National Park (KNP), from Mt Kosciusko to Mt Jagungal, but it seems not so many know

about the northern end. The Wombat recently did a 11 day loop around the northern end, mainly on old tracks and 'management trails', and took a lot of

photos. It is much more varied country, with a lot of that awful stuff called height-change. The country was pretty dry in places, even dusty.

1



A start was made near Cesjacks Hut and the back way was taken to the saddle at the headwaters of the Gungarlin, where THE tree is still standing after the fires. It was crossed and the wombat headed out onto the plains to the north.

2



This time the plains were dry and easy travelling, but the wombat was reminded of a previous trip in the same month of another year when the weather had turned a shade less clement. The moral is you always take some snow gear up here.



3



The horrible Happy Jacks Road was crossed and the wombat headed north to the new Brooks Hut. The new version looks a bit neater and trimmer on the outside, although the inside is rather bare, even spartan, with just a small table. The toilet arrangements seemed a shade primitive compared to the normal NPWS loo.



4



The wombat went up Arsenic Spur, but the old walking track has completely disappeared after the fires, which is a great pity as it was the old Ligars Route from the gold rush days. Camp was made just before Tabletop Mountains on firm ground by the headwaters swamp of Waterhole Creek. There was some water in the creek - for a short distance only. But it's a nice spot.

5



Next morning a farewell was said to Mt Jagungal from near Tabletop, the Selwyn ski resort was quickly traversed (they look awful without the snow) and Three Mile Dam was explored. It's very pretty, and the weather was fine. Then the wombat headed north along Wallaces Creek Fire Trail, through a fair bit of unburnt forest and over grasslands. The FT seems to be mainly used by brumbies. The Plan was to descend the Coppermine FT as far as the crossing on Blue Creek and to camp there, but that's basalt country and it was dry, dry, dry. Oh Dear. . . The wombat sighed, and set off for the Yarrangobilly River, over 600 m below.



6



An unsuccessful attempt at a dry foot crossing on stepping stones was made, but no matter. A wash in the river was enjoyed - shivering due to fatigue, and then camp was swiftly made. Next morning the light in the trees was nice, before the steep climb up onto the plateau on the other side. The altitude here is lower, and the trees are bigger - much bigger.

The Yans Crossing FT led to the Jounama homestead. The use of that much brick suggests that life here must have been profitable for some time, and enjoyable too. Pity about the big bag of rubbish: doubtful that there are 'cultural artifacts' in it. Then a very dry, harsh descent was made back to the Yarrangobilly at Yans Crossing.

7



8



9



This is limestone country: very dry and harsh away from the river, but the water was just warm enough for the obligatory swim. Lunch was in the shade of a very nice tree nearby. From here the Alpine Highway was crossed to reach Kennedy Ridge and the start of the Horseshoe FT. There were no signs of any other walkers around.

No walkers, but some wildlife. Bluetongue lizards tend to freeze when you approach, which makes for good photos. The brumby was curious at first, but then took fright and ran away. The piles of brumby dung along the fire trails are pretty huge in places - too many of them altogether for a national park.

WILLIS'S WALKABOUTS

# The Charnley River

**The Charnley is one of the most spectacular and least accessible rivers in the Kimberley. The lower section goes through about 30 km of continuous gorge.**

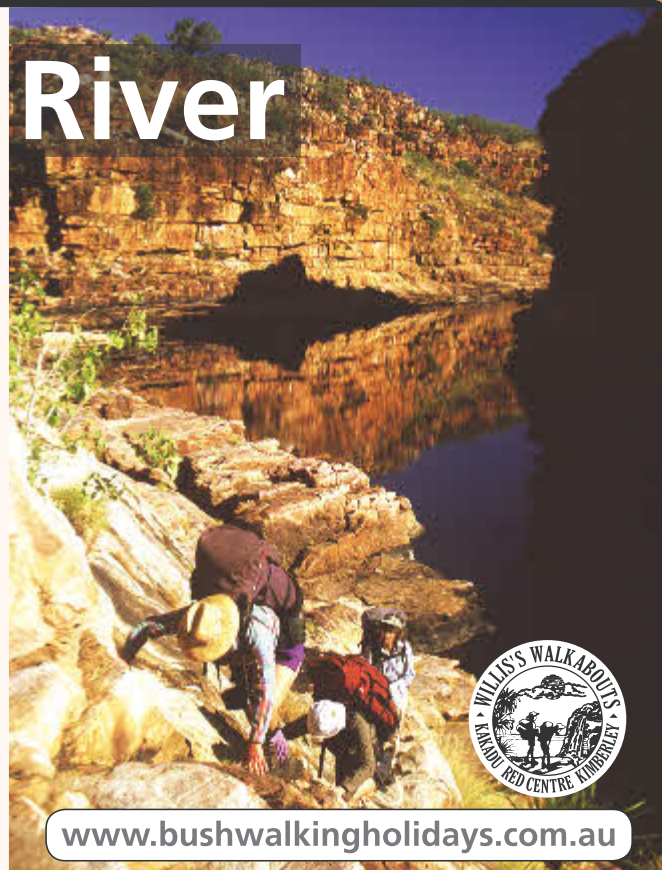
Dozens of Aboriginal art sites show that this has been a special place for thousands of years. With so many interesting side creeks to explore, our Charnley Explorer includes a number of day walks where we don't carry full packs.

**Want something even better?** Enjoy an easy start to your holiday by combining the Charnley walk with the final section of our Gibb Gorges trip. This takes you about 200 km along the Munja Track. Along the way we do some day and half day walks as well as a four day walk along the two branches of Bachsten Creek. We've found some beautiful spots on previous Bachsten walks there and have been told about something special which we hope to find for the first time this year.

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10



After the fires the NPWS seems to have gone mad building ugly bridges with concrete pipes and arches over every little creek. Can't say they add to the 'wilderness values' of the place. This one was at the site of the Long Flat Hut, where the wombat camped.

11



From Long Flat the Horseshoe FT goes over the long, high Andy Andy range to the Goobarragandra River and Kells Hut. The forest was thick in places, but the blackberries and the native raspberries on top of the range were luscious. The wombat had never tasted wild raspberries that good. The descent to the river is long, steep, tiring and a bit loose in places. But Kells Hut on Emu Flat Creek is cute, and the myriads of apple trees (and others) around were in fruit, and enjoyed. Thoughts had been given to going up the Goobarragandra River to Dubbo Falls, but the extent of the blackberries on the river banks made the token efforts seen at spraying the blackberries along the immediate edges of the trail seem a bit pointless, and anyhow the emus love blackberries. Their scats are full of the seeds.

12



Next morning the climb out of Emu Flat Ck was tackled (it's steep!) to the plateau above. The trails inside the National Park are nice; the transition onto a public road in Bondo State forest was a rude shock. In places the 'road' was one car wide with solid blackberry walls. Granted, there was an unlimited amount of very ripe blackberries for eating, but they do pall after a while. Anyhow, the maze of roads and fire trails was negotiated to Browns Flat for another smooth campsite.

13



The camp site was fine, but it took the wombat about half an hour to find enough water to fill four bottles. The water had some 'organic matter' in it too. Weird, because the previous creeks had all had good water, but not this one. It seemed all the brumbies had left Browns Flat too, migrating down to the Wombat Ground. The latter was of course a very fine place in the morning light.

A food drop was picked up in Brindabella and the wombat set off down the Goodradigbee River on the McLeod Spur FT. A rough camp was made where some fishermen had cleared a site off the track - but it was tilted and bumpy. Then the long climb (800+ m) was started up to Circuits Mountain. But the air was fresh and the views got better. Somewhere between Circuits Mt and Mt Jackson there is a transition from harsh rocky country back to lovely snow grass and snow gums, and the wombat felt much relieved by this. Home country as it were. In a saddle beyond Mt Jackson a brumby track was picked up and followed down the valley onto the plains north of Blue Waterhole.

14





15



Several herds of brumbies were displaced and camp was made beside a little creek at the edge of the plain; further out on the plain the creek just vanished into the limestone soil. The evening was very mild and pleasant; breakfast the next morning was a shade cooler.

16



It was cold in the morning with a ground mist far away and frost close up, but the arrival of the sun was eagerly anticipated. The tent had been wet with condensation from previous nights, so getting the poles out of the sleeves in the morning proved to be a gloves-needed affair. But then the sun arrived and the wombat set off south over the plains, past numerous sink-holes.

17



The plains got drier and drier towards the southern edge. It was an interesting transition: don't expect to find water around here. But then the track moved off the limestone plain and back into the hills, over a ridge and out onto the high plains. There was water in Dairymans Creek, but the burnt-out low heather scrub around it still shows no signs of recovery from the fires.

18



The old bridge across the Murrumbidgee River which the Australian Alpine walking Track once used was gone. What does one do in spring when the river is in flood? The bridge across the next big side creek was also burnt, and only bits of it remain. The trees beyond show the effects of the fires too. And the track was very dusty.

19



Witses Hut is still in good condition. The wombat suspects it has survived because the nearby water supply has all dried up, so no-one camps nearby or inside. A harsh judgement, but... Instead camp was made at the crossing on the Tantangara near Kiandra Creek, out on the plains again. The site is not recommended: it was very exposed to any bad weather, and very bumpy too. Snow grass is lovely, but not for camping on.

20



The weather changed overnight. Not a lot of real wind and rain, but it was definitely damp. Packing was done during a non-raining spell. Then it was off across the Wild Horse Plains to the joys of Kiandra, pausing for morning tea on a small ridge above the Plains.

21



The snow gums on the ridge were not burnt in the fires, and this one was huge, with a nice home underneath. Much nicer than the lonely wind-swept plains of Kiandra - how the gold miners survived winter there in their tents is anyone's guess. The lure of gold! The big bridge at Kiandra looks tempting but is no use to the walker - a pity.



22



The Tabletop Mountain FT goes up very gently from Kian-dra to the plateau above: it's a pleasant walk. The fires swept across the top here, leaving some fascinating dead gums behind. But here the regrowth is doing well. There were even some pom-poms left over from spring - an unexpected but delightful bonus.



23



The Nine Mile Diggings looked a bit bare after the fires, but maybe the site now qualifies as a 'cultural artifact' rather than as a mining wasteland?

Perception, perception. The soil colours are fascinating anyhow. Camp at Nine Mile Creek was considered, but it was early and most of the good tent sites had dead trees leaning precariously over them, so the wombat pushed on past Tabletop Mt. The NPWS has covered a fair bit of this track with thick layers of blue-metal so any fire trucks won't get bogged - an absurd despoilation of the place considering the futility of attempting to stop a firestorm with a little hose. Head Office bureaucracy at work, to satisfy the politicians.

24



Camp was made on another bit of Waterhole Creek - definitely not as smooth as the site used for the first night. That vast swamp area out there - was rather dry. Only one small waterhole was found - but it was enough. The wind blew most of the night and rattled the tent, and in the morning there was fog and rain. No matter: a comfortable night was had despite the snow grass tussocks.

25



Then it was off to Cesjacks. Given the fog and rain and the loss of the track on Arsenic Ridge, the fire trails were used instead. The foggy ridge in the background of the last photo was Arsenic Ridge - wet stuff. But the day cleared up a bit as we reached the car. The wombat enjoyed a very large vanilla slice with a long black in Cooma.

All this fine dry mild weather, and at the same time Sydney was having torrential rain for days on end.

What a difference! ♦

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**Air Niugini**



*(The more polemic bits were written by Roger Caffin, who takes full responsibility for them.)*

# A Looming Nightmare

## Adventure Activity Standards

Roger Caffin and Keith Maxwell

**P**lease don't think that your club bushwalking is just a private activity between consenting adults. Be aware that NSW could be subject to ridiculous regulations that have been applied or are about to be applied in other States of Australia. These regulations have the potential to render volunteer bushwalking clubs and especially 'club walks' a bureaucratic nightmare, leading very possibly to their rapid demise.

What are we talking about? The proposed imposition of Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) and National Outdoors Leaders Registration Scheme (NOLRS) on volunteer clubs. These are an array of regulations which seek to dictate who can lead a bushwalk or similar activity. Now, many of us would be happy to see regulations brought in to cover the operation of commercial adventure companies and other people who undertake to lead youth groups etc in outdoor activities. After all, these people are putting themselves in the position of being fee-for-service providers and claiming to look after 'members of the public'. Requiring some sort of qualification for this seems very reasonable (and about time too). However, we do NOT agree that these regulations have any place in volunteer adult bushwalking clubs.

It should be noted that Europe and New Zealand have Guides Associations with strict qualifications, and we would be happy to see a similar regime brought into existence here. In those countries wearing a Guide's badge is a mark of honour. But neither Europe nor New Zealand make any attempt to regulate volunteer clubs and private individuals - but that is what the AAS seeks to do.

### The Source

The push seems to be led by an Australia-wide body, the Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA). OCA is an incorporated, not-for-profit association of outdoor recreation industry professionals in Australia that includes ORIC in NSW. OCA (and hence ORIC) are encouraging AAS & NOLRS.

See [www.outdoorcouncil.asn.au](http://www.outdoorcouncil.asn.au) for more details. It would seem that there are some people in some government departments (eg NSW Department of Sport and Recreation) who are also pushing this - why is not known. In Victoria, access to public land by commercial groups is subject to licence. Licensees must show they meet AAS. Some commercial land-use groups are pushing an 'equity' argument that all land-users must meet AAS, and it seems from the Victorian experience that is part of the 'real' motive behind the current push.

OCA has members that range from commercial operators to Scouts / Outward Bound and outdoor education groups. Our Confederation is a member of Bushwalking Australia or BAI, found at [www.bushwalkingaustralia.org](http://www.bushwalkingaustralia.org).

BAI represents all the State-based 'confederations'. BAI has chosen to be a member of OCA in order to have a voice regarding AAS and NOLRS, but it must be said that the powers-that-be in OCA do not seem to want to pay any attention to the protests from bushwalker organisations. The Victorian (VicWalk) experience has been especially traumatic, with what seems at times to have been deliberate misrepresentations.

In more detail, AAS is a system of guidelines and regulations for involvement in the outdoors that covers essential aspects and practices including planning, leader competency, equipment, safety, emergency procedures and environment. A core feature of the leader registration scheme (NOLRS) is the dependency of 'Clients' on the activity leader, the 'Guide'. That is, unlike in bushwalking clubs, the clients are assumed to have little or no skill in the outdoors activity. This places a significant 'duty of care' on the Leader. Typically, (inexperienced) 'Clients' pay a fee to do an adventure activity (such as Claustal Canyon) with no pre-training or existing skill. This stands in stark contrast to the system found in every volunteer bushwalking club in NSW, where every member participates in club activities under his own steam and takes full responsibility for his own safety.

Every bushwalking club in the Confederation has their own set of safety regulations and training procedures to which members must subscribe. In most cases these have been developed in concert with other clubs, and probably represent a far more evolved, practical and relevant code than some of the OCA guidelines we (RNC) have seen. Confederation has provided considerable information on Risk Management and procedures to OCA, but at present the proposed AAS completely ignore all club knowledge and training.

I (RNC) have seen some of the Victorian AAS Regulations and an earlier draft of the NSW ones. They are a bureaucratic nightmare of almost null-content in places. 'The Leader shall have appropriate skills in XYZ...'. It was not obvious where the 'appropriate skills' would be defined or by whom, but it was fairly clear at the time that bushwalking clubs would have no say in defining them. Oh yes - those skills come in a series of grades too: you need grade 1 for a walk of this difficulty and grade 2 for a walk of that difficulty, or so it seemed.

### Direct Implications for Us

Let's be very explicit here about the implications. You want to 'lead' a few other members of your club on a walk somewhere? Under AAS you could not do this legally unless you had passed all the

AAS examinations and regulations. Unless your club had AAS-approved leaders, it could not schedule any club walks.

Some emergency services managers see AAS & NOLRS as a way to reduce the number and/or severity of outdoors emergency incidents. Fine, but it would not be an exaggeration to say that that most incidents 'happen' to people who are NOT members of a bushwalking club, and who are not on a club activity. You know what we mean.

We need to have a viable alternative to AAS & NOLRS. We can say that AAS & NOLRS could act as a serious deterrent to new members joining bushwalking clubs. Bushwalking clubs could slowly fade away as private trips (without 'leaders') proliferate. Confederation would lose its influence with land managers and government. Unfortunately we cannot ignore AAS & NOLRS. There is considerable momentum behind AAS & NOLRS in the commercial outdoors sector. BAI has advised OCA that in regards to AAS & NOLRS 'there are things OCA does NOT have the support of Bushwalking Australia or our members on.' So BAI membership of OCA does not imply support of AAS & NOLRS. In fact, as far as I (RNC) know, every State bushwalking body is vehemently opposed to the imposition of AAS on volunteer bushwalking clubs.

AAS has the potential to be overly and uselessly prescriptive in defining outdoors activities and to ignore the range of informal training and acquisition of bushwalking skills and experience provided by the current system within the various bushwalking clubs during bushwalks. It has the potential to destroy our Clubs.

The Confederation does not believe the issue of AAS & NOLRS will go away. It is already partly in operation in other Australian States but is currently non-compulsory. It is not appropriate for bushwalking clubs and has the potential to stop new members joining clubs. The ability of Confederation to speak for bushwalkers and influence land managers would be compromised, or destroyed. We ask that all member clubs support your Confederation. In addition, clubs need to ensure that they have good training & safety procedures as a viable alternative to AAS & NOLRS.

We recommend that these procedures be documented.

### Status - Now

At present AAS & NOLRS remain non-compulsory due to resistance by BAI, VicWalk and Queensland Federation of Bushwalking Clubs and other groups. But how long this stalemate will last is uncertain. The Confederation will keep member clubs informed of any future developments. ♦





# Navshield 2008

Nerriga—Morton National Park

## Introduction

**M**orton National Park was this year's venue for Navshield, a return to the strikingly picturesque area near Nerriga, used for the original event 20 years ago. The vista from this western side is of numerous, bluff-sided, flat-topped mountains, jutting from a forested and gently undulating plain. Gold, orange and red cliffs glow in the morning and evening sunlight, silhouetted against the pale blue sky. Reminiscent of buttes and mesas of Nevada USA, but in a eucalypt forest, not in a desert.

It was just the place for Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad to celebrate the twentieth year of the Emergency Services Navigational Shield, for 2008. Any competitors who glanced at a map would have easily deduced that the 11 flat topped high points would be chosen for controls, even before they received the checkpoint list and map. We always like to reward competitors (and course setters) in as many ways as possible: what better way than a magnificent view, after some 'interesting' navigation and route finding to locate the pass up.

This is a big event with over 1000 people taking part: competitors and their support crews, administration, safety, communications, catering, etc. All the emergency services of NSW are represented: Police Rescue, Ambulance SCAT teams, Rural Fire Brigades, SES, VRA, Armed Services, as well as bushwalkers and rogainers. The numbers of participants were down a bit this year due to a number of squads being rostered to manage the Pope's visit to the World Youth Day summit in Sydney. Onsite we had members of BWRS as the safety response teams, WICEN for radio communications, SCAT ambulance officers for remote casualty access, St John First Aid at base and Nerriga Progress Association for catering.

The course covered about 80 square kilometres, mostly rugged national park. There were three radio checkpoints: RCP Alpha, with views to the northeast, in a leafy glade on the trail just past Flat Top Hill; RCP Bravo on a trail junction on high ground to the south of the course; and RCP Charley on a trail just south of Round Mountain, with beautiful views east to Quiltys Mountain and south to Fosters Mountain and beyond. The RCPs are there for the participants' safety, as well as a location to pick up water or to camp at night. There were also numerous overhangs below the cliff lines that have been used for camping in the past, with natural water soaks nearby which could be used during the event. Most major creeks in the area have good water. Height loss or gain was only a modest 300m or so, which suited many competitors. Elevation of the area was from 600 m to 900 m, so cool temperatures were expected. Morton NP is noted for high rainfall, but this western side tends to be dryer. In fact we only had a couple of drizzly days in all the time we spent there, including setting up and pulling down. The event itself was sunny. There are two parallel service tracks in the area: Alum Creek Firetrail and Square Top Mountain Firetrail, running north south 4 – 5 km apart. They join in the south so it was easy to set a course to limit the amount of road running.

## Course Setting

Course setting is always a busy time for the small band of talented navigators. Their reward is walking to interesting beautiful places bushwalkers would not normally visit. Some map features select themselves as checkpoints because of their views or as places of interest. It is then only a matter of filling in the grid by finding features that will make good checkpoints between them. Flat Top Hill, Square Top Mt, Fosters Mt, Round Mt, Hoddles Castle Hill, Barnies Hill, Castle

Doug Floyd, BWRS



Map - Endrick; 1:2500,  
8927-4S, third edition

Hill, are such places. We would have liked to include Quiltys Mt, Mt Haughton, Sturgiss Mt as well but these would have made the course too big.

In searching along the foot of cliff lines to find passes up through the bluffs, we saw many overhangs with flat sandy/dusty floors that indicate aboriginal use, pre-European settlement. A couple of the high points had what looked like Bora Grounds (ancient aboriginal corroboree sites - clear, flat areas marked out with stones).

Many of the watercourses (eg Grassy Ck, Corang Ck, Corang River, Alum Ck, Running Ck, Gallagher's Ck, Sallee Ck and Hoddle Ck) were swampy and very scrubby places, to be avoided as much as possible. To complicate matters a few were excellent walking and provided flat places to camp. The flat swampy nature of the creeks made most watercourse junctions too indistinct for use as check points, especially where they were very scrubby.

Places of particular interest or beauty included the tall forests on the eastern side of high ground such as Round Mt, and the views from the flat open areas south of Round Mt, west of Sturgiss Mt, south of Barnies Hill and west of Mt Hoddle. We passed a beautifully constructed Lyre Bird nest on a 1 m high boulder out in the open on the south west slopes of Castle Hill. Most of the Lyre Bird nests I have seen previously were a few sticks roughly set on a ledge, just enough to stop the eggs rolling off.

Another interesting item was the camp overhangs (not just one, but two) below Square Top Mtn bluffs, with the firewood in each neatly set out in separate neat piles of sticks all broken to size. A pile of small kindling with leaves and bark, a pile of less than 5 mm diameter sticks, a pile of 10 mm diameter sticks, a pile of 20 mm sticks, all that would be easily broken by hand and all about 200mm to 300mm long. There was no big wood that could provide hollow havens for insects or small animals. The fire place was set up with stones just so to protect the fire and



"Now if we run down here. . ."



surrounded by flat stones to hold the billy. Importantly, they had been used before but there was no big pile of ash or charcoal. Clearly the sites were cleaned out regularly. Many bushwalkers may leave a pile of long branches in a dry place for those who turn up in the rain, but I've never seen this before.

## Friday -- Preparation

Good weather, cool but sunny day. A local landholder had kindly offered the use of this beautiful base site beside the Nerriga Braidwood road. A basin-shaped grassy paddock with scattered trees and scrubs on the higher ground for firewood and shelter. Thank you to Bob and Adam for donating the use of this site: your help was most appreciated by all participants.

WICEN members (radio communications) and BWRS members arrived throughout the day to set up the base site and radio checkpoints in the field. Competitors and support crew arrived during the afternoon and evening to set up camp, light camp/cooking fires and start the socialising which is a feature of all Navshields.

The maps and checkpoint lists were distributed from 7 pm Friday onwards. Competitors could then begin to mark up the checkpoints on their maps and plan their intended route – a difference from rogaining where competitors are handed marked-up maps. Also we give grids references of 8 figures.



Bashing around under the cliffs

## Saturday – day one

Saturday morning dawned clear and bright. Frosty of course after a clear starry night. The bustle of preparation yesterday afternoon meant there were only a few last minute activities this morning. The roving bushranger teams were briefed and dispatched early to be ready in place before the 8:45 am start. Bushranging is partly a safety role to have people in the field to react swiftly to any problem or injury.

Competitors were briefed by the course setter and safety manager at 8:30 am, ready for the mass start at 8:45 am. Once the start hooter sounded there was a flurry of activity as the teams collected their control cards from the line strung out before them. Then they all headed off,

navigating to collect their first control. Within 5 minutes peace returned, with the support crews and administrators standing about with little to do but wait at this time. A couple of teams choose to hang back till 09:00 am to study the master map prepared by the course setter to verify a particular location.

All was quiet. We just wandered about chatting or enjoying the sunny morning. Around mid morning I was relayed a radio message from RCP alpha: a competitor had reported one of the checkpoint flags had blown down a slot in the rock. That meant they had to climb down a 3 m cliff to punch their tags. A bushranger team was dispatched to correct the situation and soon all was as it was meant to be. Peace reigned again until a little later I overheard part of a message from the radio tent that indicated that the bushranger vehicle had come across a team with a member who had a damaged knee. No problem - she was evacuated back to base where the paramedics and first aider did their stuff.

Just after lunch a competitor told me that RCP alpha was in the wrong position. A check showed that there had been confusion caused by a draft checkpoint list and the flag needed to be moved 170m further north along the track. Just what I didn't need. But that was it: no excitement for the rest of the event.

Late in the afternoon the teams began trickling in with stories of easy to find points, hard to find points, points that couldn't be found by one team but were found by another, easy walking places, good views places, hard to negotiate passes, easy passes found, and one story of horrendous scrub leading to a chest deep pool that was near impossible to fight out of through the swampy scrubby overgrown bank. The beaming faces and laughter: they have obviously had a good time.

By 7:30 pm all one day teams were back or accounted for and the one-day presentations could be made.

## Results

1st Team: 009 Springwood Bushwalkers	750 points
2nd Team: 018 Berowra Bushwhackers	730 points
3rd Team: 050 Wollongong SES – 1	640 points

## Sunday – day two

Sunday dawned clear and sunny after cold and frosty night. All teams were back by 3:30 pm and the two-day presentations could be made.

## Results

1st Team: 006 Shoalhaven SES – 1	1670 points
2nd Team: 061 Sutherland Bushwalkers	1370 points
3rd Team: 086 Kangaroo Valley Bushfire Brigade	1350 points

## Conclusion

Congratulations and well done to the place getters, and to all participants. NavShield is an event where everyone is a winner. We all enjoy the friendly informal



Check point

atmosphere. Thank you everyone for contributing to that.

It was a great event, with complements on the course from many competitors. Mind you, a few teams did have difficulty with checkpoints and others with thick very mean scrub. While we did warn participants of the thick scrub we knew about, some of them found some very nasty places we hadn't known. Route choice is very important!

Thank you again to the landholders Bob and Adam, and National Parks and Wildlife staff for their help and support, without which the event could not have gone ahead.

We received an unsolicited note, from a nearby land holder, complementing us on how clean we left the site and that there was no trespassing into out of bounds areas. ♦



A neat and tidy camping cave

## Errata and Omissions

Corrections to Volume 34, Issue 1:

Some of the photos of Barrington Tops should have been credited to Cotter Erickson of The Bush Club. The article on the Great Ocean Walk was by Paul Ellis of the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers.

Apologies over both of these.



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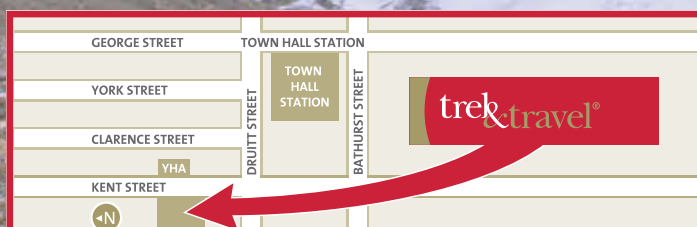
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