

Bushwalking NSW Newsletter

Edition 3 July 2013



Photo from the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, Tasmania, taken by Doug Slatter.

Welcome Back!

We hope you enjoy our July Newsletter, plenty of items of interest and information, including an article written by Justin McKee, campaign consultant and media spokesperson from NPA. I haven't received any photos yet, our intrepid shutterbugs must surely have some images they would like to share, so please send them in.

I am hoping that these newsletters are being shared with your members; as you would know we don't have contact details for individual club members and we rely on those Presidents and Secretaries who receive our communications to pass them on.

Next month is our AGM, to be held on 20th August at Ashfield RSL Club at 7.30pm. If anyone from any club would like to attend you would be most welcome and anyone who feels that they might like to stand for election to the Management Committee for the following year will be invited to do so.

We still do not have the premiums for this coming Insurance period, I am hoping that they will arrive shortly and invoices will be calculated and sent as soon as possible after that. Again, please be reminded that the numbers stated on your survey are binding, those are the numbers that your invoices will be calculated upon and they are not able to be changed.

We have welcomed two new members to the MC, as mentioned in the last newsletter David Morrison and Robert Gascoigne have been confirmed as Insurance Officer and Conservation Officer respectively.

We are also close to making a decision on a provider for our new Bushwalking NSW website, stay tuned!

Please advise Gail if you are receiving too many/not enough copies of The Bushwalker magazine, so that we can accurately assess our printing requirements.

Control of feral animals back in the hands of NPWS

Justin McKee, Campaign Consultant and Media Spokeperson, NPA.

On 4 July 2013, the NSW Government announced that a trial of the *Supplementary Pest Control Program* would commence in 12 national parks. After this trial, a report would be delivered to cabinet and further national parks on the original list of 75 may be considered for the program.

The details of controls and management reveal that campaign to stop amateur, recreational hunting in national parks has been won.

The trial program is fundamentally a professional hunting program and will be run entirely by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff. The program is back in the hands of the professionals who have always managed pest animals in NSW.

NPWS staff may bring in professional volunteers to help execute its professionally planned and managed programs, and such volunteers will have to go through the same training as NPWS staff. E.G: Undertake navigation training, species identification training, demonstrate competency etc.

Any pest eradication programs that NPWS staff utilise professional volunteers for will have one of two zones within it. There were previously three, and the third to be omitted was the 'scary zone' that permitted amateurs to carry out unsupervised hunting at their own discretion.

The two zones that remain are Zone A and Zone B.

Zone A: Volunteers will be part of the NPWS team and working shoulder to shoulder with experienced NPWS staff.

Zone B: Experienced and trained volunteers are supervised by NPWS staff. This will include induction and daily safety briefings. Detailed reporting, data collection and debriefing requirements will also apply. Site specific shooting plans with detailed maps will direct operations, with these being approved by NPWS regional managers consistent with regional pest strategies.

National Park will be closed to the public when pest eradication programs are taking place as has always occurred when NPWS have managed these programs.

A new addition to the rules around pest animal control is that there will be no shooting activity by NPWS at all in any national park during school holidays.

No minors will be allowed to hunt in any national parks despite lobbying from the Shooters and Fishers Party.

Unions of National Parks and Wildlife Service feel that the safety concerns they raised during the inception of the program have been adequately addressed.

The campaign to stop amateur, recreational hunting in national parks has very much been won! The groups working on the campaign have committed to keeping a watch on the program and are now calling for:

> Funds dedicated to the Game Council to be given to NPWS for strategic, integrated professional pest animal control programs, including further research into more humane methods of killing pest animals.

> For the management and controls for pest animal programs in national parks to be also applied to our State Forests.

In addition to the announcement around the *Supplementary Pest Control Program*, on 4 July the government also announced it had disbanded the Game Council of NSW. This came after an independent review of the Game Council by Steve Dunn reported the many incompetencies of the Council and that it promoted poor governance.

Tracks & Access Report

By David Trinder

This report includes relevant extracts from the NPWS "Park Closures" section of their web site at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/FireClosure.aspx> . For further information refer to the link. 84 Parks have closed areas, there are no fire bans.

Barren Grounds Nature Reserve

The reserve will be closed for vehicle and foot traffic until the end of July for Road Work.

Blue Mountains

Breakfast Point Lookout at Wentworth Falls is closed until further notice.

Burralow Camping and Picnic Area is open to 4WD vehicles from the Kurrajong Heights (eastern side) via Tabaraga Ridge Fire Trail. The Burralow Fire Trail from Bilpin (western side) remains closed.

Campsites at Euroka - Euroka campground

Darug campsite now closed until further notice for maintenance and upgrade. Camping is available at other sites at Euroka.

Snowy Mountains

Lowells Flat and MacIntyres Hut Camping areas are closed (Ends Monday 29 October)

Trail Closures - Flea Creek camp ground.

The following trails are closed until further notice: Waterfall, McIntyres, Lowells Flat, Follys, and Bag Range.

This is due to deteriorating road conditions

Two Sticks Road is closed between Piccadilly Circus and Curries Road until further notice due to deteriorating road conditions.

Central Coast,

Daniels Point Road in Jilliby State Conservation Area is closed between Watagan Forest Road and Maculata Fire Trail until further notice.

Closure is due to severe erosion of the creek banks at Daniels Point Road creek crossing.

Middle Ridge Road is closed until further notice due to an infestation of Myrtle Rust.

All roads in Jilliby SCA can be slippery after rain events. Drivers are cautioned to take extreme care - roads are most suitable to 4WDs.

Lemon Tree Forest Road in Jilliby SCA is temporarily closed until further notice to all vehicles from Prickly Ridge Road to Yambo Forest Road due to road damage from rain and vehicle activity.

Prickly Ridge Road is only suitable for 4WD

Red Hill Road is closed.

Snowy Mountains

Bridge washed away on Buddong Falls Track

Creel Bay road and the boat ramp are closed due to rising dam levels - Creel Bay

General Park wide advice and warning - many areas are flood affected - exercise extreme caution - Geehi Dam.

Please stay on sealed roads within Kosciuszko National Park until further notice. Roads could be affected by rock fall and other debris.

Geehi Dam Road is closed beyond the lookout.

Access to the Rock Flat picnic and Camping ground has been closed indefinitely due to significant damage due to flood waters in the Goobragandra river.

Port Phillip Fire Trail is closed at the causeway of Tantangra dam - Ghost Gully campground. Road and trail closures, Goobragandra Powerline Road - Broken Cart campground

The Tin Mines Barn within the Pilot Wilderness Area is closed.

Winter Road Closure apply until 5th October

Morton National Park

Red Hills Fire Trail Closure (Ends Friday 31 August)

The Tianjara Artillery Impact Area, in the northeastern part of the Budawangs, is permanently closed to certain activities because of danger from Unexploded Ordnance.

Tianjara Fire Trail is closed until further notice, due to wet weather and environmental damage.

Watagans National Park

Bangalow Road, Bangalow and Gap Creek Camping areas are closed until further notice

Click Creek Fire Trail is closed to all vehicles due to storm damage.

Drivers should take care on Watagan Forest Road.

Wollemi National Park

The California Trail is closed for road works from Thursday 25th August 2011 until further notice. Glow Worm Tunnel Road 4WD only. Grassy Hill trail is closed. Part of Martindale Trail is closed.

Worimi National Park

Partially closed areas Worimi Conservation Lands including Stockton Beach. - Stockton Bight.

BWRS in Action

Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) is an active part of emergency services in NSW. Recently, it has been active. Some highlights are shown below.

After much preplanning BWRS held its 25th NavShield on 6 / 7 July around Dunn's Swamp, outside Kandos. The days were warm but nights were bitterly cold. Participants enjoyed the fabulous large pagodas and great views despite the extra navigation challenges. NavShield is a remote area navigation event for teams of emergency services personnel. This year there were teams from NSW Police, SES, RFS, VRA, Defence and bushwalking clubs. Within a limited time teams must select a route to find, as many as possible, checkpoint flags without being late and thus incurring late penalties.

This year there was an unexpected twist during Saturday afternoon when a teenage boy went missing from his family campsite at Dunn's Swamp. Fortunately, Thomas was located before dark. There were plenty of resources on hand but almost no time to use them before dark!!! The training for many personnel kicked in, so

much, was achieved effectively and efficiently.

On June 15 / 16 BWRS assisted Katoomba Police in an evidence search for a missing person at Blackheath. Land search and vertical rescue teams were involved (as also at Leura, see below)

On July 17 / 18 / 19 BWRS was involved in a large multi-agency search with Katoomba Police for a man missing around Fairmont Golf Course at Leura. There were few clues of his possible whereabouts except for a brief mobile phone call.

Each year BWRS assists the major fundraiser of Oxfam, TrailWalker. Over 500 teams of four will attempt to walk 100km in semi urban bush around Sydney from Brooklyn to George's Heights over 48 hours. Again, on August 23 - 25 BWRS will provide first and second safety response teams in shifts over the event. I have enjoyed this great event and its many unusual challenges including water rescues, high winds (that knocked down official tents), moonlight walks to reset markers and stretcher hauls.

BWRS is a long established community organisation that specialises in bush search and rescue. BWRS is an informal, friendly group that concentrates on doing, not talking. Put your bushwalking skills to good use; get involved in BWRS! To join Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad please contact our Secretary, Steven Rutten on secretary@bwrs.org.au or visit our revised website at www.bwrs.org.au

CRIME SCENE

When bushwalkers wander off track they sometimes find unusual things. New, unrecorded rock art is a pleasant surprise but forbidden plants are another story. I have been in teams that have found both. Recently, a bushwalking club group found a deceased person in Royal National Park.

Forbidden plants and deceased persons are just two examples of a crime scene. Now since, legal rules and penalties can apply to these situations, such as tampering with evidence, bushwalkers should be aware of some simple guidelines to fulfil their legal obligations.

Simple guidelines are, do as little as possible and inform the Police of the location preferably via Lat. / Long. The Police are always available on "triple zero" (000).

Your role is not to investigate unusual situations / possible crimes. That is what Police Officers are obliged to do. There are many types of possible crime scenes from old explosives to suicide victims. So, there is not always an obvious crime but Police may still be required to intervene.

A real life example may help. You come across a near new four wheel drive in bushland below some bluffs (nowhere near a road). Suburban housing is on top of the bluffs. The bushwalker involved informed the Police of the registration number and vehicle location. The Police asked him to guide them back to this vehicle. He was later told that the vehicle was the subject of insurance fraud. The owner had claimed that the vehicle had been stolen but really had let the hand brake off on a steep driveway. Do you really want your fingerprints on such a vehicle???

You think you may have found human bones. One person goes to check and walks back out the same way. They touch as little as possible. You cannot know how the person died; it may be a serious crime. Think Belangelo State Forest and a serial killer - Ivan Milat. Would you want to compromise the evidence???

So you have informed the Police of the location (Lat. / Long) but what about the media???

There are good reasons for being cautious in dealing with the media. You may compromise a serious Police investigation. Also, even with media training our politicians can still slip up. Your story and the story the media want to tell can be totally different. Remember, the media don't like silence. If you are put on "the spot" the safest thing to say is "no comment". Sometimes you may be guided by the Police in what can be said.

Bushwalkers cannot escape their responsibilities as citizens. If they see something unusual / possible crime / crime scene they need to touch / interfere as little as possible and give a location (Lat. / Long) to Police. Police can always be contacted on "triple zero" (000).