

Bushwalking NSW Newsletter

Edition 12; October 2014



Blue Mountains National Park: thanks to Kaushalya from SUBW for use of your great photos!.

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO YOUR MEMBERS!

Hello Everyone,

59 days to Christmas!

Have we all organised ourselves yet? A big, fat no from me, it's not Christmas Eve yet, can't rush these things!

A short and sweet newsletter this month; your poor old AO is taking a week off as of tomorrow so we needed to get it out to you, we know how you fret if you don't get your newsletter!

I will be back in the office on Friday 7 November; meanwhile the President will monitor and respond to anything urgent.

From the President

Bushwalking NSW currently has general meetings four times a year. In years gone by, they were the only way for clubs to get together to discuss common issues. They have often been dry, business meetings with limited interest for attendees.

Some of you will have attended the AGM in August. We had a guest speaker with an interesting topic. We had a number of issues raised by people present. And there were refreshments available before and after the meeting to encourage people to socialise.

We are intending to continue this approach to general meetings. The focus will be to make it more interesting for attendees and to minimise the business aspects.

So we will have a guest speaker, brief reports on some important issues affecting bushwalkers, club updates and a Q&A session.

Club delegates are encouraged to attend, and anyone else is welcome as well.

The meeting is on Tuesday 18 November, at 7 PM at Ashfield RSL Club. You can even make a night of it by having dinner in the club's bistro or at the many restaurants in Ashfield, five minutes up the street.

Watch out for details of the speakers and events about a week before the meeting.

David Morrison, President, Bushwalking NSW

Conservation Officer's Update

This is an update from your friendly conservation officer. I am writing to introduce myself first of all, and to give you a little update on what we've been doing on the conservation front in Bushwalking NSW.

My name is Sierra Classen. My bushwalking club is the Sydney University Bushwalking Club (SUBW), but I also walk with the Manning River Canoe (and Bushwalking) Club since my parents live in the Manning Valley (near Taree, somewhere along the Great Escarpment). I am into adventuring, bushwalking and all things involving being in the bush in a big way, which shouldn't surprise you given that this *is* a bushwalking newsletter. I am of Canadian origin, born on an Island in the "Pacific Northwest". I am perpetually fascinated and frequently...bouleversée (means overturned and surprised, emotionally undone) by the Australian landscape, flora, fauna, history, and the way people here have of experiencing the outdoors and honouring wilderness. Speaking of honouring wilderness, this is a conservation update.

Celebrate the Gardens of Stone

The wilderness conservation activists and communities have had a huge, well-deserved victory in the Gardens of Stone. We of Bushwalking NSW may not be directly responsible for the NSW Planning and Assessment Committee's refusal of Coalpac's proposed mining projects around the Gardens of Stone, however that does not exclude us from celebrating and feeling immense relief at this momentous event in conservation.

[What does this mean for bushwalkers? Well, the Gardens of Stone is a really special and unique place and now our state government is also coming to realise this. So it turns out that the Gardens of

Stone is not just a bushwalking paradise, disconnected from its surroundings and has value as a unique habitat and component of the wider biogeographical system. Apparently, it is a complex and delicate geological and biological zone they call the "pagoda landform complex". Look it up. Well, who knew?! Obviously, we had an inkling... Hopefully this means we can still go galloping around in that beautiful area unmolested by the concern that the animals, vegetables, and minerals surrounding us are slowly being poisoned and disintegrating alarmingly under the soles of our boots.]

I suppose it can be hard to appreciate good fortune like this when all it means is *conservation* (as opposed to destruction) and not drastic improvement. It is hard to cultivate awareness of what we have gained by having things stay the same. To remedy this problem, I have a proposal for you.

I propose that we bushwalkers try to put our best bushwalking-shoe-shod foot forward into this new era of safety for the Gardens of Stone by organizing Gardens of Stone celebration trips in our clubs. This is for all of you, near and far. There's Christmas and New Years for those for whom Gardens of Stone is a little/lot more distant than for those in the Sydney and Blue Mountains vicinity. If this sounds like a great idea and you desperately want to be involved, please get in contact with me and your club administrators so we can make this project fly. If you know Gardens of Stone well, or at all, I would love to receive your stories, comments, trip reports, films, images, poems, maps, and the like. I would like to collect a repository of such documents in order to create a Gardens of Stone Celebration Collage.

Don't worry. I will keep you informed about this project.

Colong Wilderness Walk: Dunphy's Kowmung Adventure

Second of the conservation updates list is that Alex Allchin, your Tracks and Access Officer, and I recently returned from an incredible trip along the Kowmung River. It was a regional bushwalking celebration, which we organized through the Colong Foundation for Wilderness (and many, many outdoors-loving communities besides).

Many bushwalkers from among you came with us on this trip. It was truly inspiring! The walk was a re-enactment--a live re-creation--of an adventure that Myles Dunphy (a founder of Bushwalking NSW!) and his friend Bert Gallop went on at the dawn of bushwalking club history in NSW. Through the event and its aftermath, we intended to raise awareness about conservation and encourage people to get out there and experience the bush--especially young people. It was very successful in this aim. Lots of people came walking with us and even more people came together behind the scenes, all from so many different groups involved in wilderness conservation and appreciation.

We have a blog about our trip on the Colong Foundation Website

<https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/about-wilderness/dunphy-kowmung-centenary-walk/introduction>

and a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/DunphysAdventure>, if you want to know more about this exciting event.

We are hosting an event at the upcoming World Parks Congress, which should be pretty cool and comes with platters of tasty catering. Let me know if that is something you are interested in. The event is on Thursday, November 13th, from noon until 1:30pm. You need to be on the guest list to get in, so please contact me and I will put your name down. I'd love to see you there!

Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) Conference

Bushwalking NSW has three delegates attending Nature Conservation Council Annual Conference on the 1st and 2nd of November in the New Law Building of the University of Sydney.

This event is free to attend and should be fun and insightful. It's a great chance for all bushwalkers to get a taste for what goes on behind the scenes to make sure the areas we walk in stay beautiful, healthy, quiet-ish, and not too encroached upon by towering or sprawling three to five star resorts and other outlandish human landscape interventions (this is actually part of the constitution of Bushwalking NSW, but with different wording). Please also let me know if you want to come to the conference on either or both days, because registration technically closes on the 28th of October, so we would have to ask the NCC organisers if they could sidle your name onto the guest list (no promises that this will work--only vague hopes).

If you can't attend, that's alright. We will have an update for you next issue about how it all went and the great fun we had.

IUCN World Parks Congress

Another conference! November is absolutely chockers with conferences. Be grateful. This means it's smooth sailing for all those big December adventures you've been planning. No conference interruptions. Alternatively, it means the best of the wilderness will be yours for the taking because everyone else will be taking advantage of the fruit and meat platters on offer at these very informative and stimulating conference forums.

The IUCN World Parks Congress is a special conference, though. It only happens once per decade, and it's not usually in NSW. This might even be the first time! This event brings people who care about the outdoors together from all corners of the globe (noting that this is an impossible statement because spheres have no corners). It will be happening from the 11th to the 19th of November and the theme this year is....*Parks, People, Planet: Inspiring Solutions*. You'll have to attend to find out about all of those inspiring solutions.

Here's the link: <http://www.worldparkscongress.org/index.html>

10/50 Rule Review

For those of you who weren't aware of what the 10/50 Rule is, or are unsure what it is, here is a little blurb about it.

The 10/50 Rule simply allows homeowners within 150m of identified bushfire risk areas to clear trees and other vegetation without seeking council approval. All vegetation within 10m of the outer walls of the home (or habitable dwelling) and the understory (shrubs, bushes, saplings) within 50m can be cleared. There are certain restrictions on this for properties with registered areas of cultural or historical importance, conservation agreements, registered waterways, etc. In order to find out if the rule applies to them, homeowners are asked to search their address in a database which then tells them if they are eligible.

Concerns have been raised by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW in particular that people are misinterpreting and misusing the 10/50 Rule. There was an article in the Sydney Morning Herald that insinuated (quite obviously) that people were using their entitlement under the 10/50 Rule to clear their land for reasons other than bushfire safety. A prevalent suspicion is that the Rule is being used to dramatically raise property values by clearing away vegetation obstructing a glimpse of the water, or some other coveted and pricey view. Reports abound of important forest habitats being cleared since this Rule was introduced.

Another worry was that people were interpreting the Rule's allowance of land clearing as a strong recommendation of this method of bushfire safety above all others. The truth is that it is land clearing

is one of numerous strategies that you can use to protect your home! (Great news!) It is dangerous for people to get the message that this type of clearing is a one size fits all solution. This needs to be addressed through more public awareness campaigns and further education by our diligent Rural Fire Service and local councils.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/northern-beaches/nsw-conservation-council-calls-for-review-of-1050-vegetation-clearing-code/story-fngr8hax-1227066710289>It is important for us, as bushwalkers, to engage with this conservation issue because its effects could be severely damaging to the wild places that we all care about so much. Please get in contact with me for more information about the 10/50 Rule.

You can also make your own submission using the points mentioned on the Nature Conservation Council web page on the issue.

<http://www.nature.org.au/get-involved/take-action/save-our-urban-trees/>

<http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/news-and-media/general-news/1050-vegetation-clearing>

Sierra Classen, Conservation Officer, Bushwalking NSW, contact via admin@bushwalkingnsw.org.au

Getting New Members

A comment heard frequently from clubs is that they cannot get new members, and particularly, that they cannot get younger members. A good question to ask yourself is what are you actually doing to attract new members? A related question is what you are doing that might discourage potential members?

One club has been tracking how new members found out about them for several years up to 2011. The results showed that by far the most common way was through word of mouth, ie, telling their friends (42%). The second most common was through the web (27%). I would expect by now that the proportion using the web would be substantially higher.

So here are some ideas you can use to assess whether you are doing everything you can to attract new members.

Word of mouth

- Probably the biggest question is: are your members having a good time? Do they tell their friends about the great trips they have done? If not, why not?
- Do your members hand out copies of your walks program/newsletter to friends so they can see what you are doing?
- Do you have social events/meetings that can bring new people in?
- Do you have notices in libraries, community noticeboards, etc telling people that you exist and what you do? If you do, do you regularly check they are still there?

Web site

With my website project manager hat on, I have been looking at a lot of club web sites over the last few months. Some have been truly excellent. Others - well, they are really an embarrassment and not really a good recommendation for the club.

- Is it easy to find things on your web site? Try asking a non-bushwalking friend if they would have a look at it for you.

- Does it say clearly how to contact you? Does it have an e-mail address or a contact form, and a postal address? A phone number is even better. Are these things still correct, or have they changed since the web site was set up?
- If someone tries to contact you, how long does it take to get back to them? Do you have procedures in place to ensure e-mail gets dealt with promptly, even if the main person is away travelling? (Would **you** be happy to wait for a week or a month for a reply to an enquiry?)
- If you have meetings, does your web site say when, where, how often, and what happens?
- Is the design modern and attractive? How long is it since it was last refreshed?
- Have you contacted local organisations to list your web site on their site? Tourist offices, local councils, newspapers and so on are always after references to local information and sites.

David Morrison, Web Site Project Manager, Bushwalking NSW

BWRS Stop Press - late Sunday night

Life in BWRS can have long spells of inactivity followed by burst of activity. Now is that burst of activity.

Just this past weekend (24 - 26 October) some BWRS members have been in rugged country in the gorge below Williams Falls in Barrington Tops. This is an annual training exercise where we attempt to find a plane lost since 1981; VH-MDX. We needed to walk in on Friday as the area is even difficult to get into.

During a Saturday radio "Sched" (agreed scheduled time for radio transmission) was the message "How many members are free for a search at Kanangra Walls on Monday??"

A large search will continue for a solo walker overdue in the Kanangra area. It was not practical or advisable for Barrington Tops field teams to get to Kanangra Walls for Monday morning.

However, on Monday, 27 October there will be BWRS and NSW Cave Rescue personnel engaged in this ongoing Kanangra search.

Then on the way home from Barrington Tops came a new question - "Would members be available for a search near Wollongong next weekend (November 1,2)??"

Once again, life in BWRS can have long spells of inactivity followed by bursts of activity.

Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) grew out of the Search & Rescue Section of NSW Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs (now Bushwalking NSW).

The strength of BWRS has always been the skills of bushwalkers; bushwalkers looking after fellow bushwalkers in trouble or members of the community where our special skills could make a difference. Despite PLB distress beacons and mobile phones etc. there is always a need for a valuable community resource such as BWRS.

BWRS can always use new members. Put your bushwalking skills to good use. New members will ease the workload on existing members. Be part of this fabulous community resource!! Bushwalk with a purpose!!

Our BWRS website at www.bwrs.org.au has great information to encourage and inform you on safe bushwalking but most importantly, it also has membership application details.

Keith Maxwell, President, Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad