

# Bushwalking NSW

Newsletter

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Storm coming to Kanangra

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## **THE BUSHWALKING AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE ++**

It's been a busy month at Bushwalking NSW! Along with a well-attended General Meeting, we have further refined our Risk Management guidelines, and Elicia O'Reilly and Thea King presented to us the Communications Strategy and Plan they have developed for us. Thanks Elicia and Thea!

We now need volunteers and resources to help implement the plan so don't be shy about offering your time or resources; there's a lot of experience to be gained in social media and communications by implementing the plan.

Adding to the packed month, Mitchell and I attended the 2015 Bushwalking Australia Conference which was inspirational. The passion, commitment, dedication, experience, and capability of the delegates from each state, and Bushwalking Australia itself, were both impressive and encouraging. Collaboration and unity were key themes.

Learning about the experiences, knowledge and ideas from each of the states has illuminated useful pathways for NSW's advancement, and will fast-track our evolution.

Topics discussed were:

- The future of Bushwalking Australia
- Insurance: including service, coverage, benefits, claims and our statement of requirements for the upcoming insurance tendering
- An update from each state - exchanging ideas, work and experiences
- Engagement with the wider community: Methodologies and Initiatives

- Promoting bushwalking and clubs
- Supporting Clubs: Governance and Succession Planning
- The Bushwalking Australia AGM
- Commercial operator access to tracks
- Interaction with other trail users and the need to balance tourism with local bushwalking needs
- The Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) and its relationship to bushwalking

Succession planning and diversity for the conference itself was discussed so in 2016 we will be looking for delegates under 30 of a variety of backgrounds. The conference will be held in Tasmania so plenty of walk opportunities could be tacked onto the trip!

The 2015 Bushwalking Australia conference is held on the second weekend in November with two representatives from each state and the President of Bushwalking Australia.

## Alex Alchin, Tracks and Access Officer of Bushwalking NSW



## BUTTERBOX CANYON – NEW ACCESS ROUTE

Butterbox Canyon, also known as Mt Hay Canyon, is a favourite with canyoners. The route to the canyon crossed the Butterbox Swamp which is amongst some of the best hanging swamps in Australia. The swamps are recognised at both State and Federal level as an Ecological Endangered Community (EEC) due to their rare and unique qualities.

Butterbox Swamp is a known site for 2 threatened species: the Giant Dragon Fly and the Blue Mountains Water Skink. All far too valuable to allow continued trampling and erosion!



Photo: Ian Baird



Photo: Sarsha Gorissen

It is estimated that around 500 canyoneers visit the canyon per annum. Over time the access 'track' through Butterbox Swamp had a significant impact, becoming deeper and wider through the swamp as canyoneers increasingly tried to avoid mud-hole areas.



Butterbox Swamp damage (L) and Rehabilitation works (R). Photo: Aine Gliddon

In 2014 NPWS Blue Mountains secured funding under the 'Find it Fix it' grant to address a number of actions in the Saving Our Species Program for both the Water Skink and the Giant Dragon Fly.

Restoration of the then track has been undertaken addressing key threatening process to the swamp by restoring the soil and vegetation through the swamp.

To support continued use of Butterbox Canyon NPWS formalised an existing, but rarely used, alternate ridge route which bypasses the swamp.



The new Ridge Access Route. Photo: Aine Gliddon

Minor track clearing has been undertaken, track junction and 'abseiling route' totem track markers installed.

An interpretive sign has been placed at the Mt Hay Car Park track head detailing the canyon's history, a map with safety messages and information on swamp ecology.



Totem 'Abseil Route' signs. Photo: Aine Gliddon



Interpretive Sign, Mt. Hay Car Park.  
Photo: Aine Gliddon

Ongoing monitoring is in place to record the usage patterns on both the old and new tracks as well as the rate of rehabilitation of the swamp environment. A log book has been installed above the first descent into the canyon, which NPWS ask all canyoners to enter their trip details in as a safety measure and to provide use data.

NPWS thanks the recreational and commercial canyoneers consulted on the alternate route. And **most importantly** NPWS seeks your support to use and publicise the new route. You will be rewarded with great views, dry feet and be and contributing to the preservation of our endangered and unique Blue Mountains swamps and species.

Your feedback on this new route is welcome.

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## Blue Mountains Region, NPWS

**Keith Maxwell, President of the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS)**



## SUMMER EXTREMES – notes from BWRS

There is so much still to explore in National Parks and natural areas around Sydney and now is the time to explore canyons. Many canyons have only been found in the last 40 years!

Safety is always essential in exploring. Twice a year Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) offers a basic First Aid course adapted to the needs of bushwalkers. First Aid is a good skill to have especially if you only need a day for the training. BWRS had to turn away bushwalkers from the recent November 15 course. You could join bushwalkers who missed out on this November course at our next BWRS course on 15 May 2016.

First Aid training should make you more aware of the risks from extremes such as

**EXTREME HEAT** days may be days to not go canyoning unless you can avoid the heat of the day. There are some days when drinking extra water won't really work! It can be safer not to be there. Heat exhaustion can be fatal.

**EXTREME SUN / FIRES** Days of extreme heat are also days of high sunburn risk. Australia already has a high incidence of skin cancer. How do you cover up to minimise excessive sun exposure?? Bushfires on hot days with hot strong winds can move fast and become uncontrollable. Fires may spot kilometres in front of the main fire. There are days when it is not possible to fight fires!! It is far better not to be there. Do you know the websites to check for bush fire warnings / National Park closures??

**EXTREME COLD.** It is early in the canyon season; it's not yet summer. Pools of still water in very dark canyons may have very cold water. Late in summer these pools may be warmer. Now swimming is more difficult in cold water. So how well do you handle swimming in cold water?? Do you need a (new / better) wetsuit??

**EXTREME RAIN** Extreme weather events are becoming more common. Really heavy rain may head straight into the canyon head waters. There may be no time for this rain to soak in. Do you know how to check weather forecasts?? 'apps' or Bureau of Meteorology websites?? Can you identify white water with its dangerously low buoyancy??

**EXTREME CAUTION** Rescue from canyons will always be difficult. An injured person may be unable to move from this cold environment for many hours. Do you carry some simple survival items such as warm clothes in a dry bag?? Rescue cannot start until emergency services are contacted BUT mobile phones won't work in canyons and PLBs may / may not get an emergency signal out. You may need to do First Aid for a long time while someone(s) exit the canyon to raise the alarm. Can you remember if you left good trip details with a responsible friend??

The simple list of DO and DON'T on the BWRS website - [www.bwrs.org.au](http://www.bwrs.org.au) will help guide your safety planning. While you are on line you could check the advice on PLBs and their use plus emergency communications.

**EXTREME PLEASURE** What a wonderful world of sandstone canyons that so few people know or see awaits the canyoner who remains aware of the risks. The canyon challenge can be as easy as wet feet, from a walk through canyon, to swimming and combinations up to big drops of long waterfall abseils.

Good safety planning can minimise canyoning risks from poor communication, heat, fires, rain & cold plus abseiling through water.

Bushwalkers can gain some good basic skills in First Aid in just one day of training from one of the BWRS First Aid courses in either May or November. The next course will be 8 May 2016. Course registration is via the BWRS website - [www.bwrs.org.au](http://www.bwrs.org.au)