

# *The Bushwalker*



**Long Reef Beach and Long Reef Point,  
Dee Why**

**Volume 41  
Issue 4, 2016**

*Wouldn't you like to be here?*



A lesson in geology, Rincon del Verde.  
Photo: Laura Fortey.

View from top of Strezlecki Peak, Flinders Island, Bass Strait.  
Photo: Linda Groom, Canberra Bushwalking Club.





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

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**Front Cover:** Long Reef Beach and Long Reef Point, Dee Why. Photo: Roger Caffin.

**Back Cover:** Larapinta Trail, 10:30 pm. Photo: David Whyte, Watagan Wanderers.

## From the editor's desk. . .

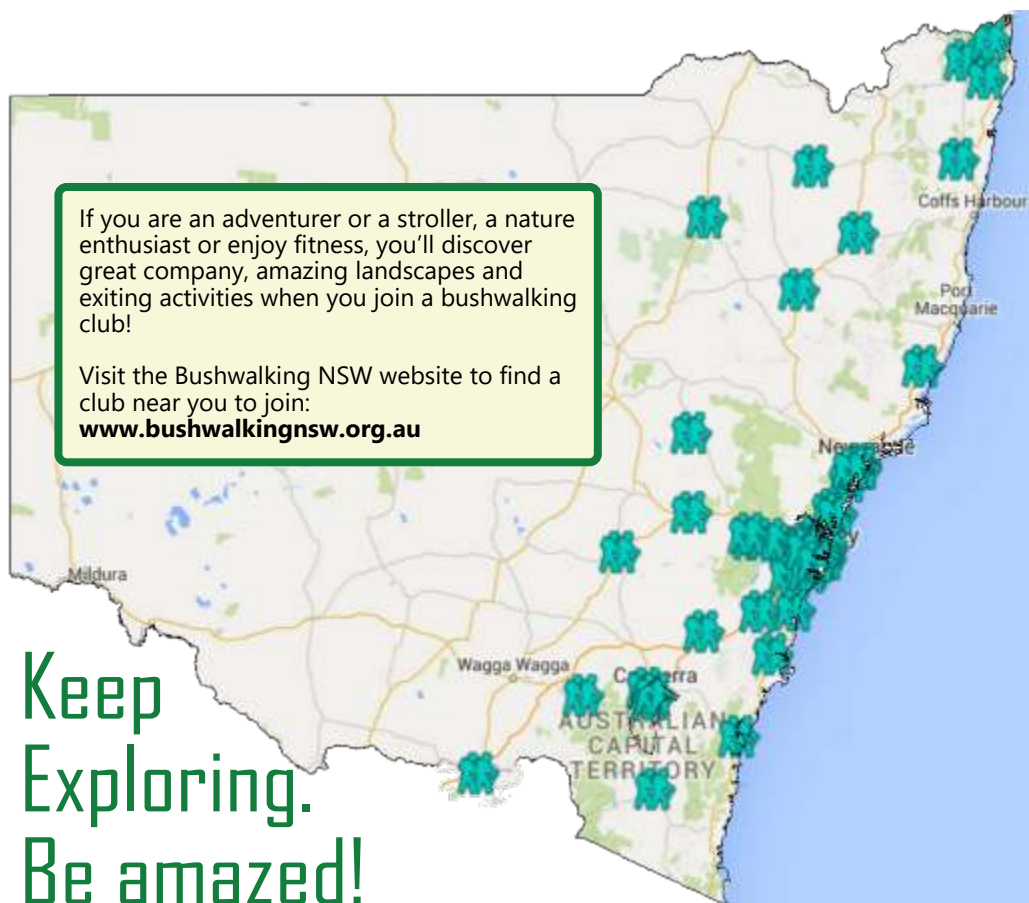
I WROTE in my last editorial "Recent times have seen an unmitigated assault on the environmental protection laws of NSW, at the hands of the Baird party." They don't seem to have got any better. I cannot help wondering at the mindset which countenances such wilful destruction.

The front cover: a wild looking bit of coastline, but it's actually a Sydney beach! We all know that 'Sydney is Hawkesbury sandstone', except that Long Reef Point, the headland in the photo, is not. Further north (another beach or two), we found what looked like the remains of volcanic lava. Indeed, there are volcanic outcrops and diatremes over much of the East Coast.

The back cover is another photo from the Larapinta Trail. The rock here is fascinating too - and razor sharp in places, but the real attraction is the sunset. The glow, the light on the clouds, the plains disappearing into dusk. And there's a bit of interesting rock in the inside front cover photos too. It can be fascinating stuff, looking closely at the rock under your feet.

Yes, good photos are always welcome. Small captions at least to explain if you can, please.

Roger Caffin  
Editor



## Keep Exploring. Be amazed!

**We are likely to make *The Bushwalker* an online only publication.**

If you have strong views on the subject, please make contact via email or phone using the contact details on this page.





## A Feast of Forest at Coolah Tops

Jane Munro  
Mudgee Bushwalking Club

When I was a child in the 1960's, it was fashionable to have a framed print of a landscape painting on your lounge room wall, along with the cabinet TV and the Parker lounge suite. One of those popular artworks remains in my memory. It depicted a shadowy, mysterious forest of towering trees, which my father told me were Californian redwoods. This image couldn't have been more different from our sun-drenched Australian eucalyptus forests, which I knew so well, from family bushwalking trips.

Recently, out of the blue, I was reminded of this painted forest. It wasn't in California but on the Mudgee Bushwalking Club's

April bushwalk at one of our local National Parks, Coolah Tops. The trees weren't redwoods but majestic silvertop stringybarks, rising straight and tall out of a carpet of emerald green bracken fern, and we passed through them as we walked the track from the Breeza Lookout to Shepherds Peak.

Shepherds Peak is a prominent basaltic rock formation, jutting out from the escarpment on the easternmost extremity of the National Park. On first view it seems quite daunting, but its flat, blocky rock structure makes it quite easy to climb, with plenty of footholds despite the steep and precipitous topography. From its narrow summit a grand vista spread out before us, across the Liverpool Plains towards Gunnedah, Quirindi and beyond, although smoke from hazard reduction burning in the Park diminished the visibility. Each of us added a rock to the cairn at the top, to commemorate our visit, and I resolved to return in clearer conditions, to experience the full majesty of the view.

We saw two more wonderful forests on our Coolah Tops walk. Near the Barracks camping area, where we met for morning tea, is a stand of huge grass trees. Some of them are estimated to be up to three hundred years old. Information boards told us that the resin from these trees was



Silvertop Stringybark forest

Very, very tall snow gums



commercially harvested in the early 20th century and used for lacquer, to relieve digestive problems, and as a component of explosives. But the walkers were more interested in photographing the grass trees, and being photographed among them, capturing all the quirky eccentricity of the forms which stimulated all of our imaginations.

Different again are the snow gums which are scattered over the eastern end of the Tops. This area receives snowfalls annually, and heavy dumps of snow every few years. The snow gums here are quite unlike those seen in alpine areas where they don't grow particularly tall, but grow in clumps, displaying gnarled and twisted forms. The Coolah Tops specimens are the tallest in the world, growing up to 40 metres tall, on straight trunks.

We walked a circuit track which leads through a forest of these trees. There was much to enjoy here. Some walkers used a torch to look into hollow tree trunks, to investigate the fauna inhabiting them. A surprised family of bats was discovered in one of these trees. Our youngest walker ended up with a collection of leaves of a multitude of different shapes and colours. Others simply absorbed the stillness which precedes the dusk, the ethereal late afternoon sunlight, and the sounds of the birds and animals preparing for the night.

We lingered longer than planned, among the snow gums, reluctant to say farewell to this atmospheric place. But the sun was sinking low and we needed to leave this remote area of the National Park while there was still daylight. I sensed the shadows of all these wonderful trees closing over us as we drove away, leaving the darkening forest behind us, with an autumn chill in the air and the snows of winter not so far away.

Mudgee Bushwalking Club welcomes visitors and new members. For more information visit our website [www.mudgeebushwalking.org.au](http://www.mudgeebushwalking.org.au). ♦



Ancient Grass Trees ▲

Club members ▼







Brian and Neta descending. Photo: Kerrie



Joffre gorge and waterfall, Brian doing handstand. Photo: Neta

# Pilbara

Neta Horniman, Tamworth Bushwalking & Canoe Club

Two of us from the Tamworth Bushwalking & Canoe Club have just completed a wonderful coach trip from Broome to Perth. Our 22 coach passengers included a variety of fitness levels. On the first day Brian Fox from The Bush Club had impressed us. He is well known for his walks & photos in The Bushwalker Magazine. Needless to say we had a few good yarns about bushwalking etc. Brian was off the coach 1st and ready to explore the surrounding area and report back to us.

## Karijini NP, Joffre Gorge

Our 2 day stay at Karijini National Park was 'full on' with touring, viewing, swimming & short walks down a few of the many lovely gorges. On day 2 after a busy day again of visiting more gorges we finally stopped at Joffre Gorge LO on the tourist side. We got back to camp around 3 pm. Kerry & I decided to take a stroll from our camp over to view Joffre from the western side. We did not realise that Brian was ahead of us and had already made his way to the bottom of the gorge to get a look at the Amphitheatre & waterfall. He reappeared up in front of us and announced that this was 'the highlight of all gorges' and if we want to go down he would take us - that was all the encouragement I needed.

It was a grade 4 or 5 descent (according to the NP signs). Kerry had a dickie knee so stayed at the top & took some photos of us 2 adventurers disappearing into the depth of Joffre Gorge.

I hadn't done much in the way of this kind of narrow ledge walking/climbing for the past 15 months, so I was grateful for Brian's guidance. Half way down the steep part I was not overly comfortable in leaping from one rock to another, supposedly landing on a narrow ledge on the other side. The massive drop in the middle was the disturbing bit! Brian, in his wisdom, found me another way down.

Nearing the bottom of the gorge & not willing to get our feet wet, we slid across narrow rock shelves, edging carefully down onto the sandy bottom of the gorge and into the large amphitheatre and in full view of the waterfall. It was late in the day so my photos do not do it justice, but it was spectacular.

It was time to get back up to the top before sunset & that was not a problem to Brian although he did take an 'alternative' way again for me. We couldn't resist doing another side walk downstream. It was another lovely



Mandu Mandu Gorge.  
Photo Neta



# Bus Trip

[Not entirely bushwalking, but it could be -RNC]

water hole surrounded by shale like cliffs.

I would have to say that this was a lovely way to remember the start of my 72nd birthday. Many thanks to Brian for his time in helping me on this walk, giving me the opportunity to experience this wonderful gorge.

## Cape Range NP, Mandu Mandu Gorge

This is near Exmouth WA on the Western Coast side of the Cape Range. It's limestone country, dissected by creeks coming out of the range and flowing into the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean & Ningaloo Reef.

There was an interesting walk starting from our camp at Sal Salis (a beautiful fully catered camp with its own coral reef & beach area). Brian and another passenger Helen were with us this day and we headed off to explore the gorge. Kerry & I strolled up the creek a short way then decided to check out a small cliff on the N side to gain views up and over the gorge.

Nestled in a rocky overhead/crevice was a mother Black Footed Rock Wallaby & her Joey. We watched them for quite a while until the mother decided to poke the Joey into the crevice just in case we were a threat. The views were great and we were lucky to spot Brian & Helen down on the creek below. After we joined back up as a group we decide to 'reduce the distance back to the camp' by doing a 'short cut' via the rocky creek until we came to the road. The spotting of a very interesting bit of 'conglomerate' caught Kerry's eye and questions were answered. We made it back to camp in time for lunch and to get organised for our afternoon of Whale Watching and snorkelling on the outer reef.

The next day was a visit to Yardie Creek, still on the western side of the Cape Range NP and a few kilometres further south.

On arrival we had a bit of time to hike to two good lookouts on the Cliff Walk before taking a boat trip up the accessible part of the creek to see the wild life: rock wallabies, a nesting Sea Eagle and an array of other birds etc. Another good day in the eyes of us tourists. ♦



Another waterhole, shale country. Photo Neta



Top LO above Yardie Ck. Photo Neta

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# The Grand Balcony and Koopartoo Mesa

Michael Keats, The Bush Club.  
Photos: Brian Fox



Even in the remotest of wild country, rarely does an exploratory bushwalk provide such a sense of fulfilment as this walk in the southern cliffs of the Capertee Creek, three kilometres south west of Newnes. Folklore in Newnes was to the effect that the cliff line was impregnable. The experience of a group of ten determined walkers on 6th May 2016 proved this to be a fallacy. Better still, what we saw is some of the most beautiful and spectacular country that the Greater Blue Mountains area has to offer.

Walking conditions were close to perfect: a clear autumn day with some initial high thin cloud clearing to a brilliant day. Temperature ranged from 9 to 19 C. In the valley a flock of Kangaroos kept grazing as we walked by. In the deeper sections of the ravine, Bell Birds maintained a steady noisy protest at our intrusion.

The Koopartoo Mesa comprises approximately six square kilometres of deeply dissected high plateau, having Capertee Creek on the north- west side and the Wolgan River encircling the east and southern sides. For those who want more

precision consult the Ben Bullen 1:25000 topographic map. Grid reference 415 230 is the central point. The glorious Minotaur Lair is within this area.

At the briefing session no punches were pulled. As leader Yuri Bolotin put it, “the chances of success in finding a way up to the top of Koopartoo Mesa via the planned, tight ‘V’ shaped north-south ravine were no better than one percent.” For this reason some time was spent discussing options to enjoy a great day out even if our prime mission failed.

We reminded ourselves that we were



Leaving Red Cliffs



Slots and tapes, and upwards





The Grand Balcony



Grand Balcony, looking back

explorers. As we have learned, very few exploratory walks proceed as planned. Whatever we did would be new and different. At 0906 we set off walking through Red Cliffs noting that the B&B cottage was currently unoccupied. Once passed the cleared land, we began our ascent, heading generally south into a tight ravine that rises more than 200 m over a map distance of 800 m.

The way up is steep and although there are some basic animal tracks in the lower sections, scrambling and climbing were continuous activities. An early morning tea

break was taken as we perched on the steep slope in a copse of casuarinas. We noted that huge Eucalypt trees soaring 40+ m filled the ravine. The water course bed was filled with great boulders that hid treacherous deep holes. This is a wild and rarely visited location.

After morning tea the climbing became a bit more serious. Various slots and the use of a tape, all linked by narrow ledges, added to the excitement as we climbed higher towards a towering cliff line. From 1022 to 1035 we gained 20 m in

altitude and stood in awe at one of the most remarkable locations in the Wollemi Wilderness. Stretching as far as the eye could see was a ledge of gargantuan proportions. Later on Brian paced it out over a distance of 420 m. What made the ledge so amazing were the vertical cliffs both above and below. Below the drop was 35+ m; above it was at least 50 m. Adding to the splendour was the array of colours, shades of pink through to apricot, orange to deep purple.

The ledge needed a name. I recalled that on the northern side of Capertee Creek in

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the special valley that houses Capertee Creek there are the Newnes Balconies. I proffered the word 'balcony', Yuri and Brian suggested 'grand' and so it was named the Grand Balcony.

Well, the Grand Balcony had us mesmerised. We needed time to absorb its magnitude, its colour and its sheer grandeur. More prosaically, we also needed to check whether we would be forced to retrace our steps or whether we could find a way up through the next 50 m of cliff line. Would Yuri's words about one percent chance of making it through be our nemesis?

After taking pictures and pacing out the length it was time to catch up with forward scout Rodney to see what he had been able to discover. Now, the top notched end of this ravine has two distinct entry points. The one on the east side looked to be a definite no-go. The one on the western side is partly hidden behind dense vegetation and a rock scree slope that narrows to a slot. Rodney reported that the slot actually was a possible route. He had been up and back.

While he was there he had set a tape.

Meanwhile we made our way across the butt end of the ravine, climbing all the time. After all we did have some 50 m of elevation to conquer. To our amazement the slot worked. The odds of success being 1 in 100 had paid off! Ecstatic and euphoric are the words that best describes our feelings. Yuri's diligent homework studying aerial photographs in fine detail had paid off.

The slot is filled with a type of rock quite different from the surrounding sandstone. It looks like massive hematite intrusion and



Lunch with a view

has a polished appearance from animal use. The question of its formation is something else again. A professional opinion would be good to have. Whether we can persuade a geologist to go there with us is another question.

During the course of clearing debris from the slot I sustained a painful blow to the nose from a flying stick. In jest the name Proboscis Slot was mentioned. However, recalling Yuri's one percent chance of making it through to the top, One Percent Slot was agreed as the name. Observant Dave found an old piece of blue plastic in the slot debris. Perhaps we were not the first explorers to visit this site? Or could it have got here some other way?

Now that we had made it to the top, thought was given to exploring the amazing dissected plateau area. In a distance of less than two hundred metres our vision moved from the Capertee Creek valley to the Wolgan Valley. Although we could not see it, the upper reaches of the Minotaur Lair were less than 500 m to the east, and to the south east was spot height 920, both places that we had visited on 7th April 2016.

The area to the west of the slot top comprises three heavily dissected and pagoda-encrusted ridges that form a triple prong shape. The area was named The Trident. It is so complex that the smoothing of the contours by cartographers belies the incredible detail that is on ground reality - but that is normal around here.

An early lunch was taken on a pagoda, nominally at GR 405 222. There are so many pagodas and they all provide stunning views. After lunch an inspection was made of the western most prong of The Trident. In-between the prongs the terrain falls away quickly and steeply. Vertical drops in excess of 40 m are common.

The exit route from the plateau was originally planned to be via a well-known pass that is a major tributary of Capertee Creek. This would have entailed skirting an extra 300 m around the top of several gullies and then descending through known territory. Given that we had very good aerial photographs with us it was decided to try a new route some 300 m to the east. This option took us between some amazing cliff edge pagodas and involved some plunging unknowns in negotiating a watercourse.

A way down was found through a mix of spectacular slots and tight ravines. The initial drop offered two options. Brian and Harold choose the tighter one while the rest of us followed a more open descent. Joining up, the group then descended a succession of small variable drops in a currently dry creek bed. This would not be a safe route when it was raining!

At 1359, the major cliff line above Capertee Creek valley had been breached. The talus slope below remained to be conquered. This proved fun with great drifts of leaf litter providing a lot of sliding as it was near impossible to maintain traction. I noted that our route was almost parallel to the known creek route to the west, and in the lower sections, easier. The pasture land attached to Red Cliffs was reached at 1428 and the vehicles at 1455. ♦

*\* Red Cliffs is an inlier property owned by James McPhee who also currently owns Koopartoo. The participants had permission to walk through both properties.*



Top end of One Percent Slot



A view from halfway down the Devil's Maw as another victim approaches.  
Photo: Emanuel Conomos

Walk Safely—Walk with a Club

# The Devil's Maw

A recent despatch from one of our roving reporters has highlighted a previously unknown hazard to be found lurking near Newnes Plateau.

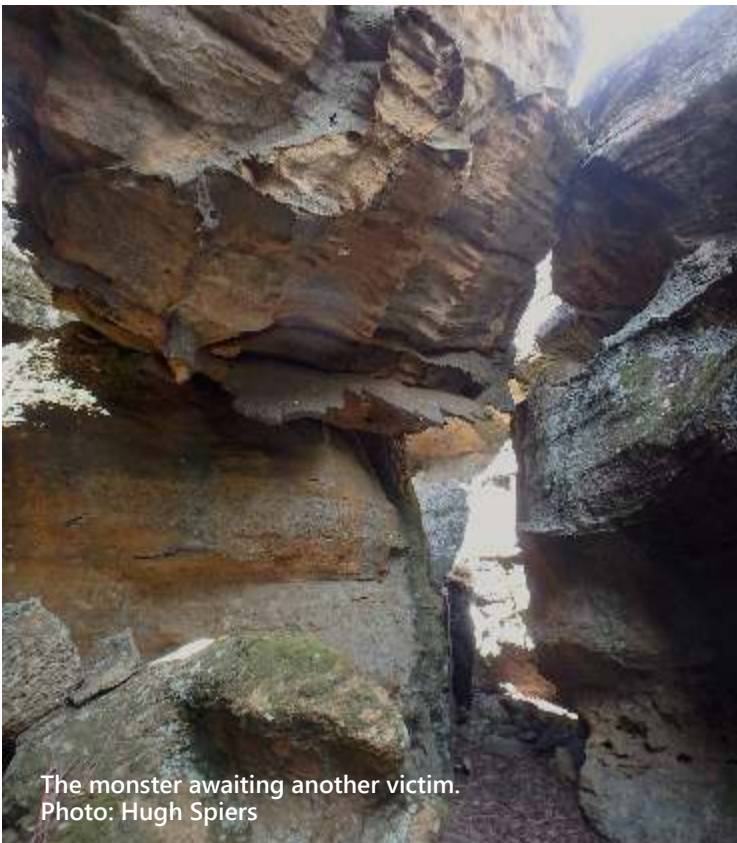
No, it's not a coal miner or a NSW politician, it's something else. We have all heard of the Australian Bunyip of course, and some of us have heard of the Rock-Eating Worm Petrophila devorans, but how many of you have heard of the giant Saw-Tooth Devil?

This monster, cunningly disguised as a huge chockstone, has recently been seen hanging above narrow passages waiting for an unsuspecting passer-by. Step within range and those razor-sharp saw-tooth edges will flash down to consume the unwary.

Well, that's the Devil's intention, anyhow. However, being silica-based like one of Pratchett's troll, it tends to have slightly slower reaction times compared with us graphene-based (well, carbon-based?) life-forms. Perhaps the synapses are still back in the Telstra ADSL1 days, rather than being upgraded full Gigahertz optical fibre?

Fortunately, in this case the passer-by proved to be a shade faster than the monster. She was able to flee out of range. Or did the Devil's teeth get jammed between the boulders? We don't know.

(This Saw-Tooth Devil was discovered by Alice Terry and Barb Carfrae on one of Hugh Speirs' Bushranger walks in February 2015.) ♦



The monster awaiting another victim.  
Photo: Hugh Speirs



Escaping the monster.  
Photo: Hugh Speirs



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# Walking in the Watagans

David White  
Watagan Wanderers

The Watagan Wanderers Bushwalking club lives up to its name by walking nearly every week in the Watagan Mountains. This delightful location is full of hidden gems of bubbling streams, towering cliffs, waterfalls and magical pockets of rainforest. The club regularly goes off track following creeks and ridges relying on compass and GPS and often a pair of secateurs. I joined the club in 2011 when I retired from working in Canberra and relocated to Lake Macquarie. It was a home coming for me as I grew up in this area but have never bushwalked here. I had heard about the club for many years as my mother has been a long time member. The following photos are a taste of the Watagan Mountains



Gap Creek Falls after heavy rain can be quite spectacular



One Tree Hill walk was named after a prominent tree



On the way up One Tree Hill



Three "Wanderers" admire the falling water



Alan Rendal likes to swim even with his clothes on



Julie Cox leads the way



The variety of fungi in the Watagans is amazing



Gap Creek offers spectacular photo ops



Nancy Ainsworth enjoys the view from One Tree Hill



Nature's art work in Gap Creek





# Walking in the Watagans

David White  
Watagan Wanderers



Stunning scenery in Wallis Creek



A typical Watagans creek  
crossing - Cedar Creek



Ancient grinding  
grooves in Rocky Creek



Wallis Creek puts on a light play



Stopping for lunch in Reedy Creek



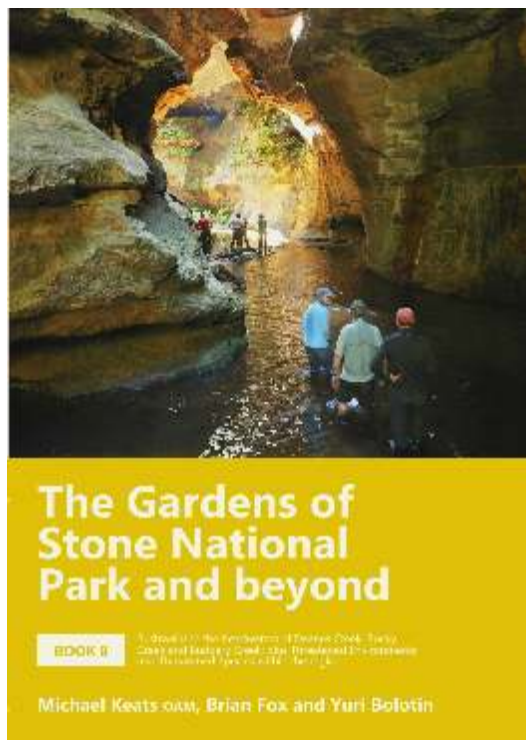
## Book Reviews . . .

### Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond, Book 8

Michael Keats OAM, Brian Fox and Yuri Bolotin

ISBN 978 0 9870546 7 8

Paperback, full colour, 604 pp \$50 inc postage  
from [www.bushexplorers.com.au](http://www.bushexplorers.com.au)



As usual, Michael, Brian and Yuri have done it again, and I venture to suggest maybe even better than before. Full colour, good paper, detailed route notes, topo maps - all the usual stuff we expect from them of course. There's an extensive preliminary section on the threatened environment and species (almost 30 pages), plus sections on the threatened fauna and flora and the impact of coal on the area (over 100 pages) before you get to the 21 different trips. The trips themselves are extensively documented.

The preliminary sections are not just waffle-waffle either: they are detailed technical (but very readable) discussions of the whole area. More to

the point, with the success of the previous 7 volumes the authors have been able in this Book to draw on a wide range of experts from various places for input. The comments on the whole coal business are researched, factual and do not pull any punches.

All that said, it would be wrong to focus on just the text. To my mind, the really wonderful bit about this book is the photography. To be sure, some of the authors are very good photographers, and some of their walking partners are also very good, but this time there is much more. The book features some of the very best photos available from a wide range of external experts. Some of the animal photography is just unbelievable.

Some of the photos of the Powerful Owl are downright intimidating!

Just beautiful.  
Roger Caffin



### Tianjara -

a History of the former Artillery Training Area in the hinterland of south eastern NSW

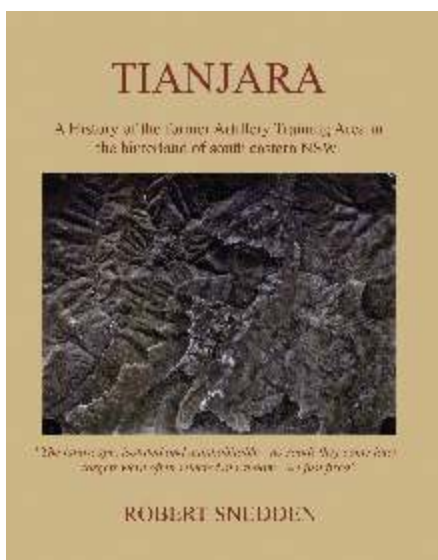
Robert Sneddon

Published in Australia by R C Sneddon,  
5 Nyah Place, Duffy, ACT 2611

This is a slim booklet, part of Robert Sneddon's continuing research into the Sassafras Mountain region as described in Sassafras The Parish of Sixty Farms. It covers the early history of the Tianjara area and then the use of the area as a military preserve for live firing exercises.

Eventually, well after WW II, the military was persuaded to vacate the area and it was handed over to the NPWS. However, the extent of the area affected by any unexploded ordinance was unknown, and it seems that no proper survey was ever done. As Defence had no real records of what had been fired where, this should have presented a problem, but it seems little notice was officially taken. It was assumed the affected area was small.

Reality was far worse. The book documents many reports from ex-Servicemen about the live fire practices, which seemed to be along the lines of 'take



a truck load of artillery shells and fire them off and don't bring any back'. Some ex-Servicemen opined that 10% of the munitions did not explode as they should have, so a lot of them must be still out there - waiting.

The realisation of the dangers seems to have taken a long while to sink in - shades of Marangaroo! See The Bushwalker Vol 33 No 4 for the details of that ex-Defence site.

Roger Caffin



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Larapinta Trail, 10:30 pm,  
Northern Territory.  
Photo: David Whyte, Watagan Wanderers