

Bushwalking NSW Inc.

General Meeting

Tuesday, 19 May 2015

Held at Ashfield RSL Club

Present: Alex Allchin (SBW), Sierra Classen (SUBW), Mitchell Isaacs (SUBW), Ute Foster (CMW), Felix Ossig-Bonamo (SUBW), Geoff Reed (WEA Ramblers), Mike Pickles (WEA Ramblers), Chantal Bronkhorst (SUBW), Keith Maxwell (Mt Druitt BWC), David Trinder (SBW), Mindy Gu (Guest), Alice McGlashan (Blue Mountains Koala Project), Catherine Svec (minutes)

Apologies: Lyn McMillan (Sutherland BWC), Margaret Covi (Watagan Wanderers), Peter Hart (Sydney Christian Bushwalkers)

Meeting was opened at 7:35pm.

Official welcome and update from previous GM 17/02/2015

Mitchell thanked everyone for coming and noted apologies received. Updates provided:

- The potential closure at Zig Zag of the Glow Worm Tunnel road has been taken up by Lithgow Council and they are working on resolving the access issue.
- Anzac service (including second 11am service) run by Peter Sedgwick was a success, and BNSW has pledged to continue to support the ANZAC service. NPWS have confirmed that they can continue to provide transport next year if required, to reduce the walk in to 45 minutes.

Keynote Speaker

Alice McGlashan (Masters Environmental Science and Law, USYD) spoke in relation to the Blue Mountains Koala Project (BMKP).

- Introduction to the BMKP project: Koalas are listed as a threatened species in 3 states, including NSW, resulting from historical hunting (eg. Megalong Valley), predators, habitat loss and fragmentation. There are differences in koala species across Australia, including differences in weight, fur, food and habitat preferences – so we can't just relocate koalas to different areas. BMKP is part of a national scale effort looking at new whole-genome DNA mapping.
- Project questions: Currently, not much is known about Blue Mountains koalas – preferred food tree species and habitat types, where they occur, potential seasonal movements (important when planning controlled burns), numbers (and whether this is enough to maintain a population), whether there are several discrete populations, etc. Koalas are known to eat different trees to where they live; so scats are now being tested. BMKP are investigating koala sightings in all 7 NPs that make up GBMWA.

- Three levels of research:
 - 1) community engagement (spotting);
 - 2) new survey methods, including scat analysis, radio collars; and
 - 3) ecological studies.

- Ways you can assist the BMKP: Look for koalas, find koala scats, discover potential koala habitat, and identify and locate koala food trees. BMKP are producing a koala spotting tips and tricks & tree ID field booklet for bushwalkers to use to identify the above, and are also running koala spotting workshops (refer below). THEN – please report your findings to the project – via Science for Wildlife website – *including* if you have specifically been looking for koalas in an area and haven't seen any. BNSW confirmed that we are happy to include a link to the BMKP on our website, however, Alice suggested that we wait until the website has been updated or the BMKP Facebook page is up and running (coming soon!).

- Koala facts:
 - o Breeding season is September through to Spring (listen for sounds while out in the bush!), and they are not social unless breeding. Koalas leave home around 2-3 years of age, and boys tend to travel until they find a vacant territory;
 - o Koalas live 12-14 years on average;
 - o Likely koala habitat is where there are 3 or more species of tree without rough bark, there is deep, easy to dig soil, and there are tall trees > 0.5m diameter, in valleys and southern to eastern aspects on the slopes.

- Koala spotting workshops: Are being run for 1.5-2 hours with details as follows:
 - o Mulgoa Hall, 345-347 Littlefields Rd, Mulgoa, Wednesday 27 May, 7-8:30pm;
 - o Blue Mountains Heritage Centre, Govetts Leap Rd, Blackheath, Saturday 30 May, 1:30-3pm; and
 - o Richmond, 23 Bosworth St, Sunday 31 May, 2-3:30pm.

Additionally, if clubs would like to ask for a workshop, Alice is happy to arrange one.

Bush issues update

- Bushwalking Australia (BA): BA is working on a mission statement to promote state bodies doing the heavy lifting as BA is not well resourced. They are happy to facilitate states to do lobbying, training, etc, and will provide a coordinated voice at the international level. BA have also made a donation to an aid agency supporting efforts in Nepal, noting alot of Australian bushwalkers do go to Nepal. BNSW will ask bushwalkers to consider going to Nepal once the rebuilding has been completed to support the local tourism industry there.

- Insurance: All clubs have now responded and numbers have been sent to BA. A question was raised in relation to Directors Insurance, and BNSW will confirm and revert.

- Executive Officer, BNSW: BNSW will seek a new Executive Officer to step up the public face of BNSW and take the organisation to a higher level of profile and influence, including supporting clubs and members, lobbying the government, liaising with stakeholders, etc. The role description has almost been finalised and the position will be advertised shortly. (NOTE 20/5: The position is now advertised on our website: <http://www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au/about/position-vacant/>)

- Tracks and Access issues: A number of T&A issues have been received from members, and some have been addressed while others are under resourced.
 - o Alex has had a meeting with NPWS in the RNP, looking to introduce better free tourist maps for the area. It was agreed that clubs could undertake basic track maintenance if they wished to in RNP, and we are hoping to expand this across other NPs. This involves recording any major issues, ensuring the track is still clear, taking secateurs if the track is overgrown, etc. RNP are happy for clubs to clear the track, but please let them know, as club involvement will help keep tracks open. In addition to an individual club adopting a particular track (eg. Sutherland Bushwalking Club), BNSW could look to organise an interclub day to maintain a particular track, either as a once off or on an ongoing basis (eg. monthly). This could be trialled in the RNP, with the aim perhaps for BM next. Please get in touch with Alex via email if interested and he will try and set something up (ajallchin@gmail.com).
 - o There is talk that a staircase will be developed at the end of Narroneck near Tarros Ladders. Alex will let clubs know as more information comes to hand.
 - o NPWS are requesting people use a new access route for Mt Hay/Butterbox canyon to protect the hanging swamp the existing track goes through. They are putting up a map and notes that direct people around this hanging swamp and uses the ridge, saving muddy feet. Please do the right thing and avoid the swamp.
- Interclub competition: There used to be an interclub competition, where clubs come together, intermingle, and compete with various bushwalker skills, and BNSW is looking to bring this competition back. As per the article in the April Newsletter, we are looking for a club to adopt the Bushwalkers Olympics event and host it for this year. BNSW will make documents available online to help out, and it doesn't have to be the same club organising it each year. Please let us know if you/your club would like to help reinvigorate this event and reinforce the sense of community between bushwalking clubs.
- Gardens of Stone photography competition: Jointly organised by The Colong Foundation, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, and Lithgow Environment Group looking to combine photography and bushwalking to help preserve more of the area by raising awareness of the beauty and diversity of the GoS area. Guided walks around 16 different locations are on offer if you want to attend, however, photos can be from anywhere in the GoS, and can be taken either before or during the competition. The best photos will be displayed in a gallery in Sydney, and there will be awards for different categories. Expressions of interest are sought at this stage, the competition will run from 3 June to 28 July. More information can be found on the Colong website (<https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/campaigns/the-gardens-of-stone/gardens-stone-focus-photographic-competition>).
- Training: Some of our clubs are too small to run training within the club. BNSW is considering offering training (eg. navigation) to encourage new leaders into clubs and allow them to perhaps go on more adventurous walks. The plan would be to meet in Centennial Park, with clubs to first send experienced people to be shown the syllabus, and for these people to then pass the knowledge onto less experienced people. It was noted that not all good navigators are good teachers; and that the

training may then be of interest to both good navigators that would like to improve their teaching and good teachers that are looking to improve their navigation skills. It was also noted that there is some excellent training material online for navigation, particularly in the BMs. BNSW will speak to the writer/s of this material about including a link to this in our Newsletter. It was proposed that BNSW should facilitate clubs hosting training days (and interclub), rather than BNSW holding the training. Please let us know your thoughts in relation to this via email admin@bushwalkingnsw.org.au. There is also recognition that training would need to be tailored for different ability levels.

- The Bushwalker: The magazine urgently needs more articles submitted if the publication is to continue. The May issue is now available on our website: <http://www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au/bushwalking/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Vol-40-No-2.pdf>
- The Bush Club has put out its 75 NPs book to celebrate turning 75. As it's a Members publication, you will need to join the Bush Club to get a copy!
- As advised in the Newsletter, NPA is organising a Bushwalking Conference over two days. BNSW will be seeking volunteers from clubs to run bushwalks for the Sunday for visitors that have travelled.
- The Catholic Bushwalking Club is looking to rejoin BNSW. They have advised that they are keen on being involved with club activities and taking an active role. This would see another 500 members welcomed into BNSW.
- The issue of family walks was raised. It is confirmed that children under 18 are covered under insurance, and that disclaimer forms are currently with BNSW committee to look at. BNSW is also drafting a child protection policy that will raise issues to consider with children on walks, including child protection and safety, and whether background or working with children checks are required. It was noted that if the child is accompanied by the parent, then the parent assumes the liability role; the risks arise if there is an unaccompanied child. The recommendation will be for clubs to consider the issues raised in the BNSW policy. It was noted that to address the issue of child safety, SUBW has been looking at free membership for children that are accompanied by their parent. The policy will also consider grandchildren.
- Thank you to those clubs that have responded in relation to how club activities are listed on their website. Please take the time to email Alex or Catherine with this information if your club has not already done so.
- Update from SUBW: Felix has been amazingly active over the last two months, and SUBW want to recognise the great initiative he has shown. On walking around the Grose River, Felix found a lot of rubbish that could not be carried out that trip, and thus organised another trip down there a couple of weeks later so that the rubbish could be cleaned up. Great work Felix! It is everyone's responsibility to keep the bush clean, and we would love to hear more stories like this.
- Thanks to everyone for coming, and to Alice for the presentation. We hope to see a large turnout for the AGM on the 18th of August.

The meeting closed at 9:06pm.