

# Bushwalk Australia



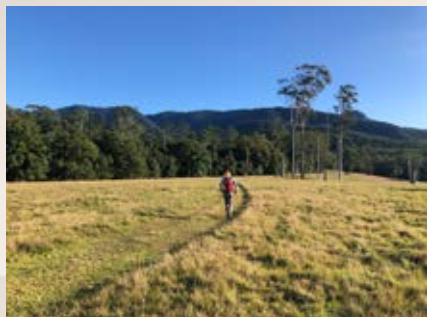
Terrific Terrain

Volume 45, February 2021



Bushwalk Australia Magazine  
An electronic magazine for  
<http://bushwalk.com>  
Volume 45, February 2021

**We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this vast land which we explore. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and thank them for their stewardship of this great south land.**



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We would love you to be part of the magazine, here is how to contribute - [Writer's Guide](#).

The copy deadline for the April 2021 edition is 28 February 2021.

#### Warning

Like all outdoor pursuits, the activities described in this publication may be dangerous. Undertaking them may result in loss, serious injury or death. The information in this publication is without any warranty on accuracy or completeness. There may be significant omissions and errors. People who are interested in walking in the areas concerned should make their own enquiries, and not rely fully on the information in this publication.

The publisher, editor, authors or any other entity or person will not be held responsible for any loss, injury, claim or liability of any kind resulting from people using information in this publication.

Please consider joining a walking club or undertaking formal training in other ways to ensure you are well prepared for any activities you are planning. Please report any errors or omissions to the editor or in the forum at BWA eMag.

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## From the Editor

Hi

I hope this edition finds you well.

It is great to be able to share three great walks. Nick heads up Helicopter Spur in Victoria, Craig explores Gibraltar and Washpool National Parks in NSW and Oliver takes his son to Freycinet National Park, Tassie. What amazingly diverse places.

If you live or plan to visit the NSW North Coast check out Yvonne's article about exploring the area as she shares her new CoffsTrails website - lots of great local secrets to enjoy.

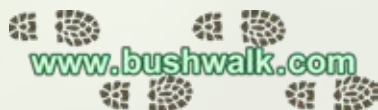
We have more amazing images from our regular photo competition and Sonya shares some eggcellent food ideas. Stephen also gives a chance to stop and reflect on the tragic deaths in Wollangambe Canyon in NSW this year.

My hope is that these articles help inspire you about new places to walk and give you new ideas to better enjoy bushwalking in this amazing country.

Happy Walking  
Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)  
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### Declaration

The opinions stated in articles are those of the authors and not of those involved in the production of this edition. If you are worried about transparency or any editorial aspect please either write to me or raise the issue on Bushwalk.com. The bushwalking community is a small world and paths often cross. To improve transparency I thought it would be helpful to list my main associations within the outdoor community.

I operate [Bushwalk.com](http://Bushwalk.com), [Wildwalks.com](http://Wildwalks.com) and [Overlandtrack.com](http://Overlandtrack.com), a number of other smaller websites (and related apps) and have written several walking guide books, published by Woodslane. I contract to National Parks Association NSW and I am a member of the Walking Volunteers. I have had contracts with state and local government departments regarding bushwalking and related matters. I have also partnered with a large number of other organisations in environmental campaigns. Any commercial advertising or sponsorship will be clear in the magazine.



## Video

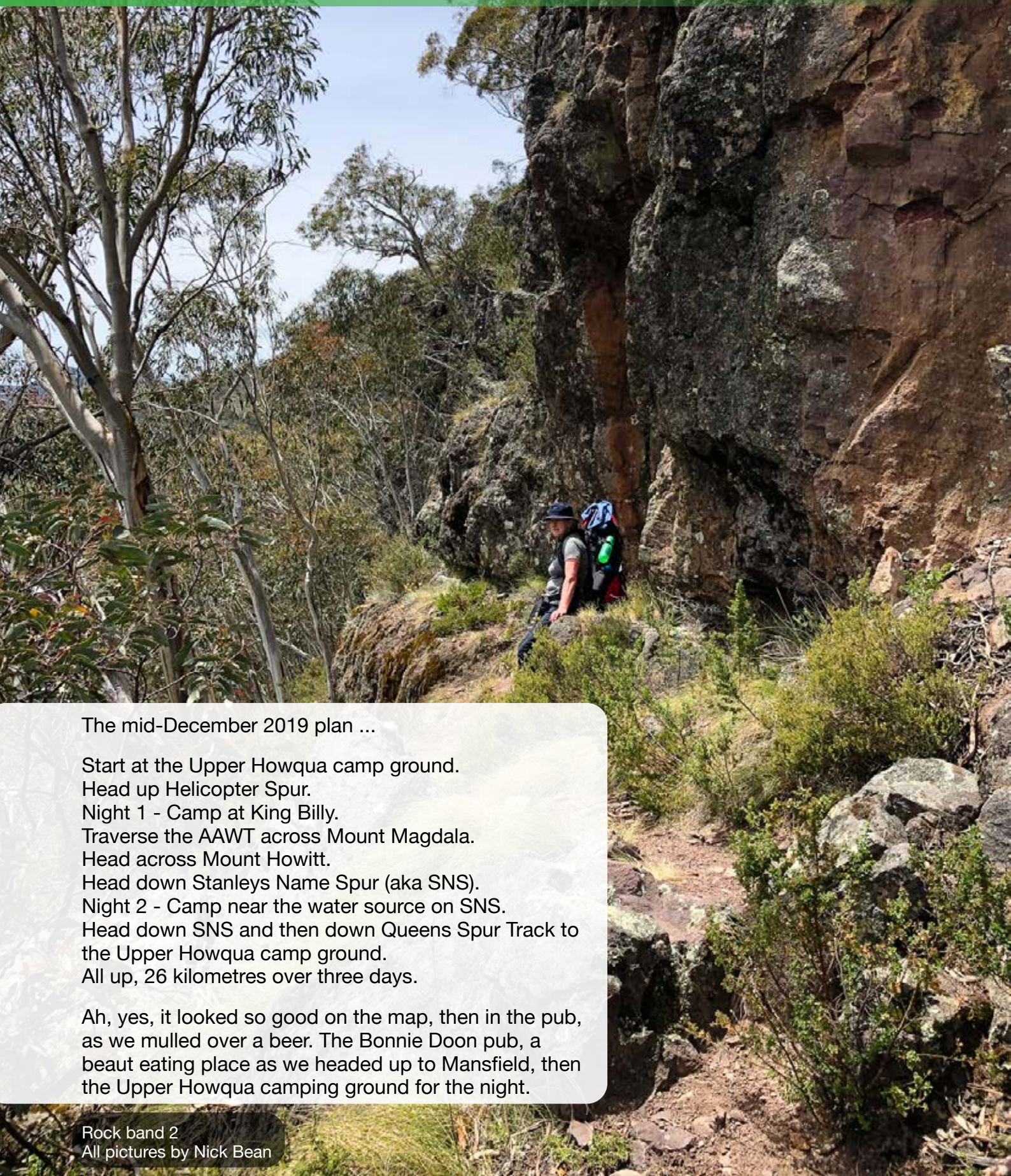
Sometimes we want to see and listen to the sounds of nature on a walk, but don't actually have time to go. Why not enjoy [a virtual hike in the woods](#) along High Point Trail, Issaquah area in USA. If there is no forest close to you then turn on this virtual hike and bring nature inside your home.





# Helicopter Spur, the Gentle Bastard of a Climb

Nick Bean



The mid-December 2019 plan ...

Start at the Upper Howqua camp ground.  
Head up Helicopter Spur.  
Night 1 - Camp at King Billy.  
Traverse the AAWT across Mount Magdala.  
Head across Mount Howitt.  
Head down Stanleys Name Spur (aka SNS).  
Night 2 - Camp near the water source on SNS.  
Head down SNS and then down Queens Spur Track to  
the Upper Howqua camp ground.  
All up, 26 kilometres over three days.

Ah, yes, it looked so good on the map, then in the pub,  
as we mulled over a beer. The Bonnie Doon pub, a  
beaut eating place as we headed up to Mansfield, then  
the Upper Howqua camping ground for the night.



Leaving the Bonnie Doon pub, it was a two hour drive to the first night's camp at the Upper Howqua Camp Ground. It was a reasonable dirt road for 2WD, and we took our time, being aware of wildlife. Just before dusk, we headed down the final dirt road, Bindaree Road. Arriving in fading light at a near empty ground, the tent was set up, mattresses were inflated, sleeping bags were set, and there was one last read through the next day's hiking notes.

### Day 1 - Upper Howqua camp ground to King Billy - 6.5 kilometres, hard walking and rock scrambling

The next day, a lucky Friday thirteenth, would see us up and moving just after 9 am. A few other campers had arrived at the camping ground, but it was a quiet start to a three day hike.

The first two kilometres we knew well, as we had assisted Bushwalking Victoria with a track clearing weekend in late November 2019. A moderate climb along an old logging track saw us reach the left turn towards the spur in 40 minutes. At this point, we noticed the Bird Orchid in flower. It was right next to the track, and easy to step on accidentally.

We went east, climbing through open scrub on a track that was easy to find as we simply had to keep to the top of the spur. A few fallen trees slowed our climb as we headed for our first challenge, the lowest of three rocky cliffs.

Approaching the first rocky band, we initially headed to the right of the spur, then, at the base of the cliff, the track swung to the left. Following a foot pad below the cliff, we found an easy route up the cliff.



Track markers came in all shapes, sizes and types

The first rocky band wasn't too hard (from memory). The second was a little more involved. While we didn't need ropes going up, I suspect you would need them coming down. Or, just throw the packs down, as some folk were doing! Not a favourite idea of mine.

In the end, brute force and no ropes were required to climb the cliff. As a distraction, the amount of wild flowers in bloom was amazing. The track is fairly clear and easy to follow.

“A few fallen trees slowed our climb as we headed for our first challenge ...

Rock band three was fairly easy. Finally, at the top of the climb, 740 metres above the start, we had a gentle rolling slope, with a beaut view looking back to the valley. Yes, a little weary, but we made it up the spur! Would do it again ... one day ...

Once off the climb, the track made its way to a dirt road, which passed Picture Point, then merged with Bluff Track. Easy walking.



At the top of the climb



The first night's camp site had been mentioned to me by a Parks Victoria Ranger. It was about 250 metres off the main track, heading east, a beautiful flat, green area to pitch a tent. But the issue with lots of black ant nests kept us searching. Stamp your foot on the ground, and if ants appear in 10 seconds, try elsewhere. Water was found about 200 metres to the north-east at a small creek, part of the King Billy Creek.

“ Stamp your foot on the ground, and if ants appear in 10 seconds, try elsewhere.

It wasn't fast flowing but it was enough to fill up and cook with. This was a peaceful location. The rest of the crowd (around 5-6 4WDs) had camped back near the road.

### Day 2 - King Billy, Howitt to Stanleys Name Spur - 10.4 kilometres Easy walking, up and down

The walk from King Billy to Mount Magdala is a little up and down, not a lot, but enough to raise a sweat, with stunning views as we followed the top of the cliffs. While Mac Springs is nearby, there were very few folks around. The biggest group we saw were 5-6 deer hunters. I wasn't really comfortable with



Carolyn takes a breather on Mount Magdala, Howitt and the Crosscut Saw in the background

people shooting around these parts, but I suspect, the number of rangers to manage this sort of thing are very low.

We stopped for lunch below Mount Magdala, a great camp site, on a saddle, dotted with large old snow gums. This is near the path that leads to Hellfire Creek, about 400 metres along a well trodden path. Initially, as you head down the track, you wonder where the creek could be. It seems way off. But as you traverse around the slope, it's there, with that beautiful, water trickling sound.



Hells Window, as we descend Mount Magdala. Mt Buller in the distance



The start of the descent down Stanleys Name Spur intersects with the Crosscut Saw track. The first kilometre down to the camp site is a little rocky and challenging, but worth it. Initially, the descent starts off well, the track is clear, but soon it becomes an undefined scramble. The approach is to simply follow the ridge and the odd rock cairn. Plus the scramble marks.

The second campsite was on the small plateau about a kilometre down from the start of the descent. Around 100 metres away was a beautiful flowing stream, the headwaters of the King River. There was not a lot of choice for a tent site, but we arrived at around threeish and had the place to ourselves. A couple of hours later, a group of young guys arrived, from the Upper Howqua camping area. In my view this was a bit of a long slog, up Queens Spur Track, then Stanleys Name Spur. We were heading in the other direction, tomorrow.

### Day 3 - Stanleys Name Spur back to the car (at Upper Howqua camp ground) - 9.4 kilometres Easy walking, mostly downhill

The weather was perfect. Having breakfast and packing up, we were walking by 8:30 am. I was glad we stopped here as its been on my list to check out for a number of years. The water source, the views, just great. The track, for the next 1.5 kilometres, down to the start of the Queens Spur track is easy to follow. Mostly a ridge track, keeping to the highest point. A few yellow markers reassure

“A fair number of fallen trees slowed our progress.”



The creek near Stanleys Name Spur track

the walker that they are heading in the right direction. A fair number of fallen trees slowed our progress.

The only "tricky" navigation bit is the last kilometres before the intersection of Stanleys Name Spur track and Queens Spur track. The SNS track heads around an outcrop of red rocks, then heads due west, through some knee/waist high growth, then through a wall of understorey. The track through this waist high scrub is easy to follow. The understorey can be a little difficult as deer have made tracks through this section, which is a little misleading. Fortunately, some pink flagging tape marks the entrance. Our first attempt a few years back didn't have this tape and it took a few goes to work out where the start was. Once through this section, probably 500 metres, it opens up to a grassy meadow. Head down this grassy section to a saddle,

“The understorey can be a little difficult as deer have made tracks through this section, which is a little misleading.”



Lower reaches of the Queens Spur Track, as it merges with the Howqua River



where the Queens Spur track appears to the left (the well trampled foot pad is the giveaway). At this intersection, an old track heads west over Mount Thorn, north, along the very overgrown section of the Queens Spur Track towards Mount Buggery, or south, back to the Upper Howqua camp ground.

On the lower sections of Queens Spur Track, the native fernery display is magic. Such a lush green environment. On many other walks we have done here, we would head up Howitt Spur, then back down Stanleys Name Spur or Queens Spur, so it was a great adventure, doing Helicopter Spur, that gentle bastard of a climb.



For more pictures see [Dirt tracks wandering](#).



Old fire bunker, near the intersection of Queens Spur Track and Stanleys Name Spur



Nick is from Melbourne and has spent most of his working life in IT. He has been bushwalking for 40 years, trekking in mountainous parts of Australia, Chile and Argentina. Of late he has gone on multi-day walks, such as the AAWT. A passion in photography has meant there are times when camera gear almost outweighs essential items. Carolyn is from Manjimup, Western Australia, and has spent her working life nursing. Between nursing stints, she travelled, walked and cycled around the globe. Most memorable are cycling large parts of Australia, Tasmania and England, trekking in Nepal, and six months in Africa.



Stanleys Name Spur Track, a few fallen trees to deal with



# In the News

## Sydney Coastrek 19 March 2021

Choose your adventure! Walk 30 or 15 kilometres (60 kilometres sold out!) in teams of four along some of Australia's most spectacular coastlines to get fit with friends and raise funds for mental health.

## Koala's status should be critically endangered

Instead of acting on concerns about declining koala numbers, the federal government has conducted a census. The Australian Koala Foundation says that the koala's status should be updated from vulnerable to critically endangered.



# NO TREE NO ME

**\* DONATE \***

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GPO Box 2659  
Brisbane, Queensland 4001  
p: 61 (07) 3229 7233  
f: 61 (07) 3221 0337  
[www.savethekoala.com](http://www.savethekoala.com)



## Is Tasmanian agreement invalid?

The Bob Brown Foundation is arguing in court that the Tasmanian agreement under the Regional Forests Agreements Act is invalid. If successful it could mean the end of native forest logging in Tasmania and potentially Australia.

## Endangered scrub turpentine and native guava

NSW property owners are being asked to look for the critically endangered native shrubs scrub turpentine and native guava as part of the NSW Government Saving our Species program establishes an emergency seedbank. There's rapid decline due to Myrtle rust, a fungal disease that affects plants within the Myrtaceae family.

## Overnighted on Mount Superbus

Emergency services are praising crew members who "took a massive leap of faith" by staying by the side of an injured hiker overnight on south-east Queensland's highest mountain, Mount Superbus.

## A new reserve for small mammals and marsupials

A 9500 hectare reserve with 42 kilometres of electrified fence in south-west NSW near Mildura will hopefully provide a safe haven from feral predators for reintroduced small mammals and marsupials.

## Restoring key habitat sites for platypus in Victoria

The platypus is a threatened species and listed as vulnerable in Victoria. The State Government is providing an initial \$250,000 towards restoration works at key habitat sites, with a further \$50,000 for a long-term action plan.





# Gibraltar and Washpool

Craig N Pearce



The coronavirus has forced us to think local and be agile. The Gibraltar Range and Washpool National Parks in northern NSW offer a variety of outdoors options that are "social distancing compliant" – and flexible to boot. And they will be there post-virus.

Coombadjha Creek adjacent to the Washpool Walk  
All uncredited pictures by Craig N Pearce



Crowned by a misty nimbus across its precipice, Dandahra Falls presented itself in sombre, epic glory. Threads of fog trailed over the abyss. Water poured from a gap between the trees, plummeting 130 metres down a near vertical granite cliff face. Its fall was punctuated mid-way by a massive pool. Tantalising. Beckoning. But out of reach to all but abseilers. From the pool, water gushed into the gully's depths, unseeable, yet mysteriously audible.

"With bated breath and whispering humbleness ...", Shakespeare wrote. Not about these absorbing falls, admittedly, but it's an apt phrase for a sight that pins you back in reverence. A formidable – almost bald – cliff face framed the scene. Outcrops of vegetation struggled to maintain a foothold. Thick bush and boulders like monuments crowded around. The fog stealthily closed in. Everything was utterly primal.

Like most of the features encountered over four days of traversing the Gibraltar-Washpool World Heritage Walk (WHW), located within the Gibraltar Range and Washpool National Parks in northern NSW, this was a moment experienced with only the breeze, silence and nature – sometimes somnolent, sometimes agitated – for company.

But that was before; before the crushing devastation of the summer of 2019-20's bushfires; before coronavirus; and before that word "community" took on the weight it now possesses.

### What now, with wilderness?

Koenraad Dijkstra is a NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger with 10 years' experience of the area. He told me that, incredibly, nearly 100% of both the Gibraltar Range and Washpool National Parks were burnt by the fires. There is also the increasing dryness of the parks, thanks to you-know-what, which is making them more vulnerable to fire over the longer term.

"In the past we were able to do hazard reduction burns in August and September, but there's no way we can do that now," said Koen. "We have to do it earlier in the season or late autumn, which the local landowners agree with. It's just too risky late spring or summer if we lose control or hazard reduction fires re-ignite."

The rainforest elements of the parks were the hardest hit by the fires. "In Washpool we have the largest continuous rainforest area in NSW," continued Koen. "All the wet forests and edges of the rainforests burnt heavily. It will take a while to recover, if it ever does."



Early stages of recovery  
Koenraad Dijkstra



People fought hard to protect the rainforest area over the years, but these trees are not adapted to fire. It's been reduced and I anticipate it will shrink further."

Observations like this are difficult to stomach. Rainforest patches here are jewels in a necklace of remnant rainforests trailing down the eastern edge of Australia, from Main Range National Park in the north to Barrington Tops National Park in the south. However, the largest portion of Gondwanan rainforests is in Tasmania's Tarkine wilderness). This is the world's most extensive area of subtropical rainforest and, collectively, they are a World Heritage Site, providing a glimpse of our planet from millions of years ago.

There are many more unique and precious elements to these parks. They include the largest remaining stand of coachwood-dominated warm temperate rainforest in Australia; and a mosaic of eucalypt and rainforest communities. Most of the parks – including sections through which the WHW passes – are a declared wilderness.

Koen is upbeat, however. "Because we've had so much rain the vegetation has been recovering like crazy. There is lots of epicormic (growing from a previously dormant bud on the tree) growth, lots of colour and lots of healthy plants. The spring flowering seasons should be really good. I can guarantee the Christmas bells will go berserk.

"We have lost a lot of small mammals and they will take longer to recover. But I have been surprised by how many red-necked pademelons, bandicoots, brush-tailed possums and parma wallabies we've seen. The wallabies were thought to be extinct back in the sixties, but then some were found in the eighties and they are now – or were – pretty common at Mulligans Hut."

Despite the fire, Koen said the views from the higher points on the walk are the same, "just a bit more black and brighter greens from regrowth in the palette". And precious sections like the rainforest parts of Washpool Walk diversion, through luxuriant rainforest, came through unscathed.



Varied impact of fire  
Koenraad Dijkstra



### World Heritage Walk: A primer

Dandahra Falls is, perhaps, the WHW's signature experience. This is especially so when you consider the almost viscous wet eucalypt and rainforest tramped through to get there (it's, um, sort of off-track ... but easy enough to get to for most), and the other nearby water-wonder experiences you can pack into the exploration. For me, it was a magical and misty fairyland expedition that included Murrumbooee and Barra Nulla Cascades. As opposed to other blue skied days, this one was pervaded by a haunting, claustrophobic, gothic atmosphere.

But while it sounds less glamorous on paper, it is diversity itself that is the heart of the walk's come-hither beauty.

A proliferation of wildflowers; an abundance of crazily diverting granite conglomerations; ravishing views (some hard fought for); reluctantly revealed pools, waterfalls and cascades; the contrasting verdant botanical environments; the heritage of the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Ngoorabul peoples who

once using these areas for ceremonies when travelling between the coast and tablelands; and its grazing, woodcutting, mining and grand, failed hydro-electric scheme past.

The walk's story is a confluence of all these elements; another gem in our invaluable collection of Australian nature experiences.

### High hopes and flowering intent

Hither granite, I found, came views. The first of these granite = distance = perspective triangulations came soon after beginning the WHW. The Needles is a modern art conurbation of six granite pillars, engaged in aspirational skyscrapering from a steep hillside dropping swiftly into Little Dandahra Creek. Its lookout reveals expanses of hills and valleys racing away into distant open country.

The Needles digression proved typical of the WHW's side-trip rewards. On it, I discovered the first of many Gibraltar waratahs (another signature characteristic of the walk), glowing fire-red in the green. Also encountered were grass trees and New England blackbutt,



Dandahra Falls



The Needles



hakeas and banksias. The weaving walk occurred partially through thickly vegetated foliage tunnels (no wonder considering the rich, red soil from which it emerged), a cool blessing on an already warming day.

As I continued, the day shook itself awake and the track unfurled, sometimes through vaulted undergrowth ceilings and sometimes through open forest, an industrial thrum of cicadas surged and subsided as they did violence to themselves, creating the archetypal Australian soundtrack.

“... the day shook itself awake and the track unfurled ...”

Other "high" points (as in literally possessing height) of the walk were The Haystack and Dandahra Crag. The former was heralded by a massive field of blunt-leaf heath wildflowers. The juxtaposition of the flowers, the bush on the surrounding slopes and granite mushrooming out of the earth was spellbinding.

The scramble up the Haystack, initially bashing through scrub, then past native holly and rare pink rock orchids, was a lark. And that's before the wind just about kited me off my feet. It's a gnarly plateau up top, where you can feast on 360-degree views. Cracked dinosaur egg-like granite conglomerations are randomly scattered. Old Man Hat is south-west and the Demon Fault is north-

west while, in the foreground, granite blisters proliferate. Another day, another act in the World Heritage drama.

Dandahra Crag provided a similar experience. Sprawling views unfurled over folds of bush-draped hills, across and over Cooraldooral Creek valley. More giant boulders balanced precariously. There were also views back over the tors of Cardinals Cap and The Mistake, and one of the walk's trademark open fields of button grass. It grows in sedge lands – their vivid orange shadings providing a welcome contrast to the eucalypts' prosaic green – sweeping across sub-alpine swamps in naturally open fields.

Both Haystack and the Crag were visible from distance, providing rocky beacons to guide navigation, giving up different contoured perspectives as you approached, bewitching in their gargantuan solidity and unique sculpting.

On these peaks silence was all-pervasive, full of variegations and subtleties, as firm as the rock on which you stand. It was palpable, touchable; a wary, watching and living presence, ready to breath on you or break you, holding you with implacable gravitas, daring you to issue it a challenge. At other times, the inverse occurred, beckoning me closer into a steady – though I feared siren-like – embrace.



Haystack face



Not far from the Craggs is the diversion to Anvil Rock, some of it bordered by a hanging swamp. The springtime humidity was stultifying, the static of insects incessant and, gloriously, the flowers pure bonanza:

- Gibraltar waratahs were so rife I began recognising their leafy serrations.
- Smoke bush, prevalent for much of the journey, but with particularly luxurious groves of it here.
- Masses of the crushed white paper-like flowers of white helichrysum.
- The oranges, yellows and lilacs of silky purple flag, black-eyed susan, boronia, bush pea and lemon bottle brush – post-fire, many of these are small enough to be already flowering.



Gibraltar Waratah

### Rainforest moments

A prime means of experiencing the local rainforest is the 8.5 kilometre loop of the Washpool Walk. Though being relentlessly enclosed at times, it has the paradoxical effect of enlivening rather than stifling.

It's a ramble bursting with highlights: waterfalls, cascades, dense forest, remnants of the area's logging past and examples of the red cedar that caused the tree-cutting frenzy. The tallest surviving red cedar is about 48 metres tall, but examples up to about 60 metres have been recorded. They are one of the few native trees to lose their leaves, their new spring copper-red leaves making them easy to spot.

The undulating route is technically interesting and, as you negotiate its reaches, replete with plenty of branch "massages":

1. The rainforest's thick undergrowth ranged from the towering cedar to stands of coachwood and crabapple, along with extensive galleries of stag horns.
2. Fecund aromas of damp leaf mould and fungi provided complimentary nasal passage clearing.
3. There are sections of dry sclerophyll (which has its own eucalypt oil fragrance, no doubt some of it from the strawberry gums).



Superb lyrebird



Rainforest on the Washpool Walk



Nearby, I was romanced by a superb lyrebird. It sauntered up close, doing a dainty dance while foraging for food. Pursuing it into the undergrowth, a remarkable performance occurred – sonic booms, electronic percussion-like barrages of song; bass notes thudding into my rib cage.

Coombadjha Creek is central to this location and provides several romantic settings. A highlight was following the creek upstream to the WHW's main artery, where a wooden bridge bisects the creek. This place is thick with, and made cool and dark by, rainforest. Ferns included weeping spleenwort, king, umbrella, birds nest, felt and strap. It is a beautiful wonderland, with a large pool one of its many cossetting treats.

### A Demon Fault

At Duffer Falls, another of the WHW's diversions, a view of vastness is revealed. It reaches out over the falls' pools and the precipitous drop to Boundary Creek, which traces the Demon Fault Line, into the deeply valleyed distance. The fault occurred about 230 million years ago, in the process breaking its rock down into weaker materials, hence expediting watercourses such as Boundary Creek scarring paths into forested ridges.

The Demon, roughly speaking, runs from the Queensland border southwards to around Dorrigo. One local outcome is that plants

and animals living either side of Boundary Creek are very different. On one side, soils are formed from old metasediment rocks. On the other, soils were formed from younger, volcanic and granite rocks that slid down the fault. On one side is a dry forest; on the other, a wet forest, the latter supporting bigger trees, more shrubs and insect-eating birds than its cross-creek rival. Koen told me the wet eucalypt forest burnt more than it has in previous fires, indicating its increasing dryness.

### The civilising power of nature

For Koen, this is "proper wilderness – which is rare on this planet. I've done surveys at sites where there is not a single weed species. This is just about unheard of. It's like it would have been thousands of years ago.

“It's like it would have been thousands of years ago.”

Walking through this spectacular granite country with all the wildflowers and heath country, with its high biodiversity, is about as good as it gets.”

Whichever of the parks' many walking options you choose, they all deliver refuge from the static of our urbanised lives. The calming and spiritually renewing forces of nature loom large. They help compensate for the emotional subsidence resulting from our interaction with urbanisation, socialisation and "civilisation" itself.



Blunt-leaf heath



Nature contextualises us, giving us a perspective of the single-grain-of-sand-on-the-beach we really are. And it also provides an insight into how dependent we are on forces greater than we can control (never more societally apparent than now). The closer we get to raw nature, the more we realise how much it is incumbent on us to fight for its integrity. Not for ourselves necessarily, though any motive will do, but for our children and the future they will inherit. In this sense, nature is not just a humanising force, it is a socialising and civilising force too.

### 10 regional highlights

The Gibraltar Range and Washpool National Parks are about an eight-hour drive from Sydney and a five-hour drive from Brisbane. They are located between Grafton to the east and Glen Innes to the west. After the drought and the bushfires, business was starting to pick up. Then came Covid-19. Here are 10 local businesses and activities offering unique, quality experiences. #thinklocal #supportcountry

1. [Glen Innes Highlands Tours](#) – guided national park tours for small to large groups. Customised to participants' interests. Can provide bush tucker lunches. 0409 322 026.
2. River Sherpas – white-water canoe tours (and there is plenty of water in the rivers up this way). These occur on the 190 kilometre [Clarence Canoe and Kayak Trail](#), which is on the Nymboida, Mann and Clarence Rivers. 0437 470 116.
3. [Four Bull Hut](#) – this is a gorgeous bush-bound getaway in the "Tenterfield" NW section of the Washpool NP. It makes a perfect base from which to do some trail riding. 1300 072 757.
4. [Deepwater Brewery](#) – craft beer and pizza; dogs allowed. What else do you need to know! 0432 757 750
5. [The Gorge](#) – a working cattle station featuring farm stay and camping options. Activities include canoeing (BYO gear), fishing and bushwalking. The spectacular Clarence Gorge is on the property. 02 6647 2173
6. [Glen Innes Cottage Markets](#) – every Saturday you can find local produce (often organically grown), arts, crafts and plants – includes donuts! 02 0403 036 328
7. [Wild River Tours](#) – adventure canoe and kayak tours on the Nymboida, Clarence, Macleay and Mann Rivers. Bass fishing tours are a popular speciality. 0477 779 983
8. [Bullock Mountain Homestead](#) – one of several farm stay options near Glen Innes. It has on-site accommodation and campsite options. Bullock Mountain has 1,200 acres of mainly rugged bushland. Activities include sapphire fossicking, fishing, yabby catching, swimming and hunting (conditions apply!). 0457 357 909
9. [Grafton Jacaranda Season](#) – October and November transforms Grafton's streets so they are more purple than Prince (RIP) and, like, totes Insta-mad. Perfect time to bike through the wide country town avenues, go kayaking on the massive Clarence and witness sky-torrents of flying foxes go foraging. 02 6643 0800
10. [Everlasting Swamp National Park](#) – the charms of the [Yuraygir coastal walk](#) are fairly well known. Less well known is Everlasting Swamp, which has been described as "Kakadu of the south" by birdwatchers. Add cycling, walking and more waterway adventure options. What's not to like? 02 6643 0800

For further information, contact visitor centres at [Glen Innes](#) on 02 6730 2400 and [Grafton](#) on 02 6643 0800.

Craig uses bushwalking to unchain the imagination and free himself from the human wrangling that accompanies corporate life in the big city. How that is consistent with his other "recreational" physical activity, that of coaching teenagers in confrontational, competitive football, remains a mystery. He's all for stopping the production of single-use plastic bottles, and is aghast at the softening the South Coast Track and the trend of closing off sections of national parks for "premium outdoor experiences".





# Freycinet Circuit

Oliver Descoeudres

The Freycinet Circuit is a rewarding circular hike that combines picturesque bays, turquoise water and majestic views of the Tasmanian coast.

Reaching Cooks Beach at the end of day 1  
All pictures by Oliver Descoeudres



This circuit of Freycinet Peninsula, one of Tasmania's "Great Bushwalks", has been on my to do list for a long time. It was originally intended as a long one-day hike, but with my eight-year son Luke showing increasing enthusiasm for hiking and camping it became a two night three day adventure. It's been many years since I've walked with a 20 kilogram pack and the first time Luke's been on an overnight walk. So this could be a great experience ... or the chance to see how effective my emergency beacon is!

We arrived in Launceston the evening before our walk and stayed with a Taswegian friend overnight, so we can make a relatively early start the following day for the 2.5 hour drive to Coles Bay. There's time for an egg and bacon roll before we hit the track – the last palatable food for the next 48 hours.

### **Day 1 - Wineglass Bay to Cooks Beach 15.3 kilometres, 205 metres climbing**

At 11 am we're on the track from Wineglass Bay car park to Hazards Beach. It's a slow start, with a friendly wallaby posing for photos at the trackhead. Despite signs saying "don't feed the wildlife", this wallaby was very tame and was obviously used to receiving food from tourists. At least it had been fed fruit, and not bread which is bad for them. I was happy it was a friendly one; the

signs along the road to Freycinet were rather ominous and warned of kangaroos that would flip your vehicle with a single paw. It's not surprising that international visitors are scared of our wildlife!

The first five kilometres were relatively flat, with the track following the coast from the car park to Hazards Beach, said to be named after local whaler, African-American Captain Richard Hazard. It's pleasant walking, despite being a warm day and carrying a heavy pack, which I'm not used to. There are views out to the west over Promise Bay towards Swansea and the Eastern Tiers.

After about 1.5 hours we've almost reached Hazards Beach, and just before we get there we spotted an idyllic bay. Across the (almost warm) turquoise water is Mount Freycinet and Mount Graham, which we will climb tomorrow. Unlike the exposed beach, this spot had plenty of shade and another friendly wallaby. We stopped here for lunch and a swim.

Reluctantly, we left the bay around 2:30 pm, continuing our walk along Hazards Beach. The beach doesn't disappoint either: we could easily have spent a few hours lingering here, except that we have a campsite to get to.



Luke on Cooks Beach





Coles Bay

Honeymoon Bay

The Hazards

Wineglass Bay

Promise Bay

Freycinet Peninsula

Mount Freycinet

Cooks Hut



The campsite at the end of the beach was shaded and fairly empty. From here the track followed the coast through low scrub and casuarina trees. While there was some shade, this section of track felt much longer than the four kilometres that it is. We were glad to reach Cooks Beach.

A short walk along Cooks Beach brought us to our camp site. We've covered about 15 kilometres, but it has been easy walking. We set up camp a stone's throw from the ocean, on a small hill just before the entrance to the official campground. There's water from a tank at Cooks Hut a stroll away, where we chatted to the friendly park volunteers before enjoying a hot chocolate and tea as the sun sets. Apart from my lamentable attempt at cooking sausages on my camp stove, it was a fantastic day.

## Day 2 - Cooks Beach, Mount Freycinet, Wineglass Bay

### 15 kilometres, 930 metres climbing

We woke early the next day. To be specific, Luke woke up early and told me I need to get up. I'd have been happy to snooze another couple of hours. We were underway around 7 am, heading back along Cooks Beach to the turn-off up to Mount Freycinet and Mount Graham. Today will be a big day.

From the northern end of Cooks Beach, the track ascends steadily up to and then along the East Freycinet saddle, gaining about 375 metres over 5 kilometres. It's tough going after a very flat first day and carrying a heavy pack, but we're walking through dry sclerophyll forest and in shade. It takes us just over two hours to reach the side-track to Mount Freycinet. I felt slightly bad telling Luke that climbing the highest peak in Freycinet National Park is not optional, and we leave our packs at the bottom.

The climb is steep: only 750 metres in distance, but climbing from 375 metres up to the top at 620 metres. There are cairns and orange markers designating the rough track that goes directly up the side of the mountain, with some boulder scrambling at the top. As you approach the summit the views towards Wineglass Bay suggest it's worth the effort. Luke doesn't share my opinion. I am currently the Worst Dad in the World.

The view from the top is incredible, although I am not yet forgiven. You can see the main track continuing up over Mount Graham to the north-east. Directly north is a magnificent vista that takes in Hazards Beach and Wineglass Bay, with Hazards Lagoon in the



Descending to Wineglass Bay from Mount Graham



middle and The Hazards in the background. If you're doing the Freycinet Peninsula circuit, it's worth making the effort.

The descent is much quicker. We re-shoulder our packs at the bottom, and start our second ascent, up Mount Graham, 579 metres. We are now in full sun as the track climbs steadily through low heath to our second summit of the day.

Mount Graham is not really a peak – there's a 100 metre distance pad up to the "summit" from the main track, with views of Mount Freycinet to the south and Wineglass Bay to the north. The views are not as dramatic as Mount Freycinet (which is more a collection of large boulders), but being a "flat" peak you get uninterrupted 360 degree views. Strong winds and some cool mist suggests how quickly the Tasmanian weather can change.

From here the track descends to Wineglass Bay, but remains exposed and it's another section that feels much longer than it really is. Wineglass Bay still looks far away ...

I'm unsure whether there is water at Wineglass Bay, so I'm hoping that we can replenish our water supplies on the way

down. We find a few unappealing, brackish streams before eventually striking a clear stream that crosses the track, Graham Creek, and we refill our three 1.5 litre water bottles. I explained to Luke that, worst case, we could suck the nectar out of Banksia flowers (although most were pretty dry).

Finally, we reach our camp for the second night, after 16 kilometres and almost 1000 metres of climbing. Wineglass Bay is rated one of the best beaches in the world by [Traveller.com](#), [UK Telegraph](#) and [Lonely Planet](#) and other publications, and it is just spectacular. Clear, blue water and white sand with the peaks of The Hazards forming the background.

The only downside is the number of mosquitoes. The large campground, which is right on the water, is not full despite it being a summer weekend. But as all the premium waterfront plots are taken, we find a nice secluded camp site toward the back of the campground. Big mistake. I feel as we are the guests of honour at the Tasmanian National Mosquito Conference. I've never seen so many mozzies. We quickly cook our dinner (another culinary miss, with Luke



Arriving at Wineglass Bay campsite at the end of day 2



declaring my expensive Back Country Honey Soy Chicken packet a bunch of inedible vegetables), watch the sun set and climb into our tents. Despite this, we sleep well and are ready for the final hike out the next morning.

### Day 3 - Wineglass Bay, Coles Bay 5.2 kilometres, 225 metres climbing

Another early-ish (7:30 am) start – we are both ready for an egg and bacon roll and a cold drink at Coles Bay, after our last few meals ... It should be pretty easy as we're walking around Wineglass Bay along the beach, although the sand is soft and we can feel our muscles! Wineglass Bay looks pretty impressive from this angle too, this time with Mount Freycinet and Mount Graham in the background.

The track ascends from the north end of Wineglass Bay. Being a popular day walk, the track is now of a considerably higher standard, but we've got a 200 metre climb up to the Wineglass Bay lookout. For the first time in three days we start seeing a lot more people.

It's not a bad view over Wineglass Bay ... but we've been spoilt by the last two days and the weather is a bit overcast for the first time, although it soon clears. There are many people here, with the lookout rated as one of the "most photogenic destinations" in the world, according to [Traveller](#).

It's now all downhill for the last two or so kilometres, on a well-graded track that feels more like a highway than a track after last two days. We're welcomed by another friendly wallaby, as we make our way back to the car park, and our well-earned egg and bacon roll. It's been exactly 40 kilometre in 48 hours. We've both had a great time on our first overnight hike, and thinking about where we might go next ...

Remarkably, after a bacon and egg roll I've been promoted from "Worst Dad in the World", and Luke thinks that he might come on another bushwalk with me one day. Two years later, we complete an 80 kilometre walk around Maria Island – and the map of our Freycinet bushwalk takes pride of place on Luke's bedroom wall.



### Lessons and suggestions

It's been many years since I've done an overnight walk, and we've done pretty well with our preparation and gear. Next time, I'll definitely be packing insect repellent. Some light-weight thongs or slippers would have been helpful around camp. And you can never bring too much wine.

If you're not up for overnight camping, there are a few companies that offer Freycinet trips, often using boats to avoid sections of hiking and including accommodation in a lodge near Coles Bay.

### Resources

**Location** Starts at the Wineglass Bay carpark, near Coles Bay. About 2.5 hours from Hobart or Launceston airports.

**Distance** 40 kilometre circuit, 1180 metres total ascent, 2-3 days.

**Grade** Moderate

**Season/s** All year round

**Map** TasMap [Freycinet National Park](#) 1:50,000

**GPS route** [AllTrails map](#) with GPX download option

Top Walks in Tasmania (Melanie Ball), Walk 25, Amazon [US](#) / [AU](#)

Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife [Freycinet Peninsula Circuit](#) overview

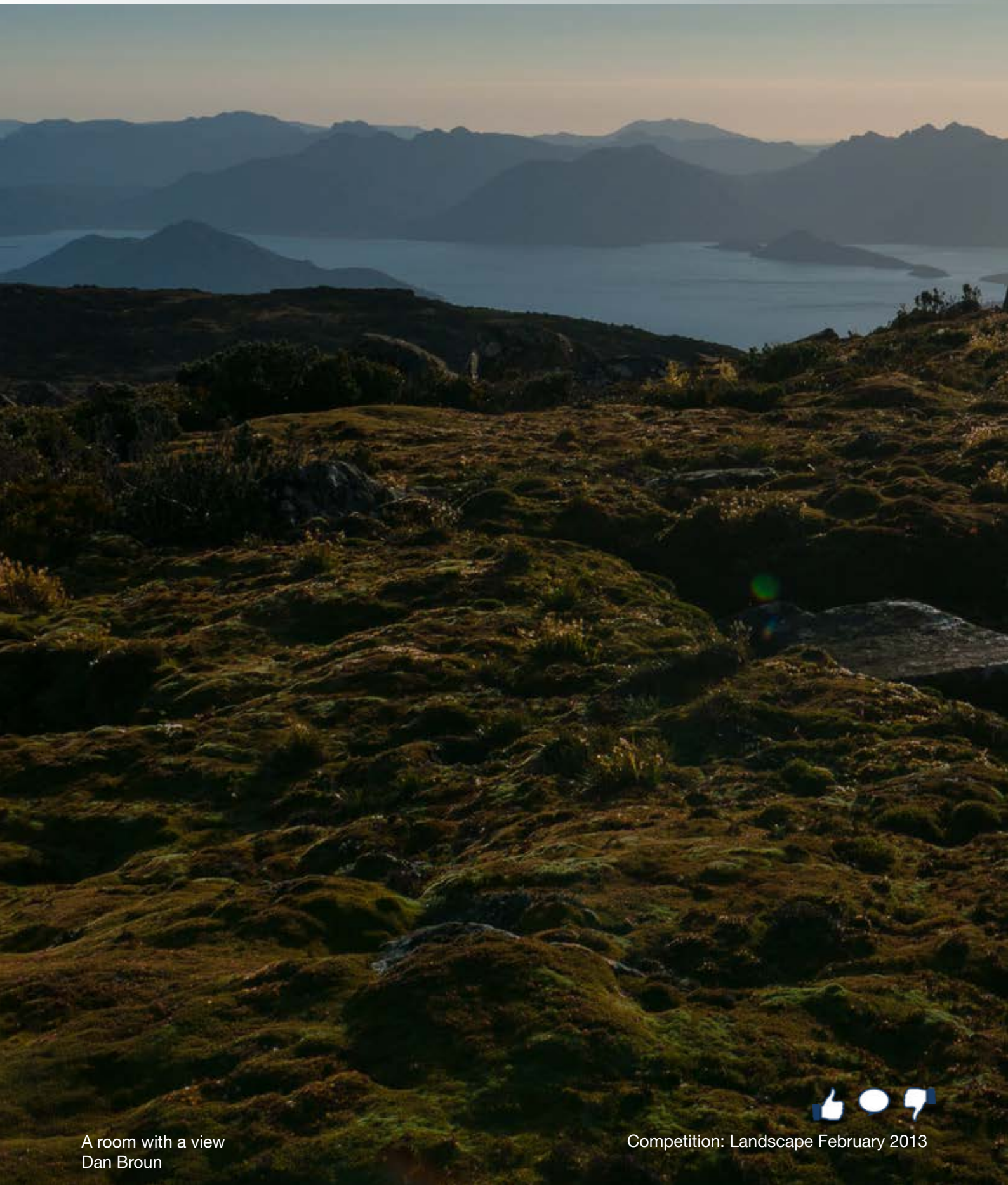
For more walk ideas, see [Hiking World](#).



Oliver lives in Sydney with his family, and drags his two children on bushwalks as often as he can. Working full time in the information technology industry during the week, he tries to get into the bush every weekend and has been hiking in Australia and overseas for almost forty years. He is also a Cub Scout leader in Sydney's north region, and a keen photographer.



# Photo Gallery



A room with a view  
Dan Broun

Competition: Landscape February 2013



# BWA Photo Competition





# Landscapes

## February 2020

### WINNER



Morning mist on the Starfish  
North-north-west

It's not all about peakbagging points. Detached Peak and Starfish Hill aren't on the list, but they're both well worth visiting, especially the Starfish. The camping down on Fake Pedder is not too shabby either; just remember to take your tripod and get out of the tent early.



Morning glory  
Brian Eglinton



Queen Victoria Lookout  
landsmith



Traversing the upper  
slopes of Gibraltar  
John Walker







# Non-landscapes

## February 2020

### WINNER



Green velvet  
Brian Eglinton

Between New Pelion Hut and Pelion Gap the track climbs adjacent to the Douglas River. I was aware of others exploring the banks of the river finding some lovely spots. So on my second visit to this track we took care to follow some pads to some small falls. The lower section was particularly captivating with the complete cover of moss over the rocky edges.



Stairway to heaven  
John Walker



Down the gully  
North-north-west



*Lambertia Formosa*  
landsmith







# Tasmania

## February 2020

### WINNER



Last night on the ridge  
North-north-west

Being obsessive can give great gifts. Koruna had been socked in when I first climbed it, so a return was needed; this also gave a chance to explore the ridge behind it, even more necessary when checking maps made it clear that the peakbaggers list had the summit in the wrong place. It's a hard area to leave when the conditions are right, so one last high camp ...



Beams  
Brian Eglinton







# Other States February 2020

## WINNER



Therabulat Lookout  
landsmith

I'd never heard of it but was doing a house sit at Katoomba and the house owners said there was a trail not far away so, off I went one day on a quiet track (something of a rarity around Katoomba) and eventually ended up at this site named after an aboriginal tribe that used to inhabit the area. It offered a totally different look at Narrow Neck.



A mountain of Trachyte  
John Walker



Emerging Bluffs  
Brian Eglinton







# Landscapes

## March 2020

WINNER



Carrington Falls  
and Gorge  
Tom Brennan



The calm before the  
storm  
North-north-west



Mitchell Creek Falls  
landsmith



Mount Thackeray,  
Grampians National Park  
Max Holt



In simpler times  
John Walker



After the fires,  
after the flood  
Cajun



Monument and Pillar  
Brian Eglinton







# Non-landscapes

## March 2020

### WINNER



Fire on the water,  
smoke in the sky  
North-north-west

A suitably apocalyptic end to the midpoint of the last walk before lockdown. I came out to a message saying "the world has changed"; had it ever. At least the storm 24 hours later meant wherever the fire was, it wouldn't get far. Farrell Point, Port Davey Track.



Curtain  
Brian Eglinton



Fairy dust  
on bright blue petals  
Tom Brennan



How're you hanging  
landsmith



An introspective view  
John Walker







# Tasmania

## March 2020

### WINNER



Meander Falls  
Brian Eglinton

Having seen my companions off at the airport, I had a spare day before boarding the boat. It was time to visit the majestic Meander Falls which I had only seen from an airplane window till then.

The track follows the Meander River and its cascades are quite pretty before the final boulder hopping and arrival at the base of the double drop over the Great Western Tiers.

Lunch was had soaking in the scene before a loop return over some enormous screes and past Cleft Rock Falls.



Tomorrow's challenge  
North-north-west







# Other States March 2020

## WINNER



The many cascades of  
Terrace Falls  
Tom Brennan



Rock Wonderland  
Brian Eglinton



Mirrored  
John Walker



Looking towards Narrow Neck  
landsmith







# Wollangambe Canyon Deaths

Stephen Lake



On 2 January 2021 in the Wollangambe Canyon in the Blue Mountains National Park there was a tragedy.

In the calm water a siphon opened, sucking in Chinese student and software engineer Jennifer Qi. Senior Constable Kelly Foster of Lithgow Police Station dived in attempting to rescue the student. Very sadly, both died.

Place of the accident



There were reports by the [ABC](#) and the [Blue Mountains Gazette](#). A party member said that the latter is the most accurate.

Sergeant Dallas Atkinson of the Blue Mountains Police Rescue helped recover the bodies. He said, "In the context of Blue Mountains canyons it's an extremely unusual event", one he had not seen in 14 years working in the rescue area. "It could have happened to anybody," he said. "It was an unfortunate tragedy. Despite some rain, the water levels were not unusually high, maybe slightly above normal. It wasn't running dirty and the rest of the canyon was normal." Sergeant Atkinson said it was like pulling an 80 centimetre plug from one end of a 25 metre pool.

He said, "In the very recent past, something's changed in that particular section of the canyon that's caused the bulk of the water volume to go underneath the rocks. As a result other ordinary flow points have stopped flowing. You don't see it virtually ever, but there's always the potential. You put moving water (and moving debris) through a space, it's got to go somewhere."

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service immediately closed Wollangambe One Canyon, which is an introductory canyon often visited by children. The canyon is east of Lithgow with many streams in the catchment.

NSW Police Chief Inspector Peter Schienflug said something that resonated with me. He said, "It's true traditions of the NSW Police that it's service above self and it's a common line we're quite often first responders (who) run towards danger as other people run from it." Bushwalkers look after each other, especially when things go bad.

Senior Constable Foster's [funeral](#) was on 14 January. NSW Police Commissioner Michael Fuller delivered her valedictory. He said that she served her community and state with "outstanding dedication and devotion to duty" in her career. He posthumously conferred upon her the Commissioner's Valour Award, the state's highest bravery award. He said "It is with profound sorrow that I, on behalf of the New South Wales Police Force extend to Kelly's partner Gavin, her mother and father Marilyn and Terry, sister Leigh and brother David and Kelly's extended family, our deepest personal sympathy in the tragic unexpected loss of an admired woman and an outstanding police officer."



Kelly Foster

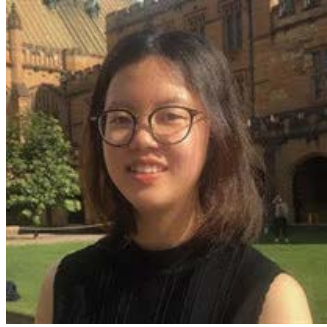


Wollangambe Canyon



Jennifer Qi's funeral was on 30 January, delayed to allow the family to have 14 days of quarantine. This must have been very hard for them, isolated in a foreign country. It's also hard for the people involved, but at least they have support from local family and friends.

A person at Jennifer's funeral said, "Such a beautiful ceremony. It started at 8 am with the Buddhist service, listening to the monks chanting. After the Buddhist service there was another more typical funeral service for friends. I went to both. I'm glad that I got to experience the Buddhist service for her, something I will never forget. Both services really



Jennifer Qi

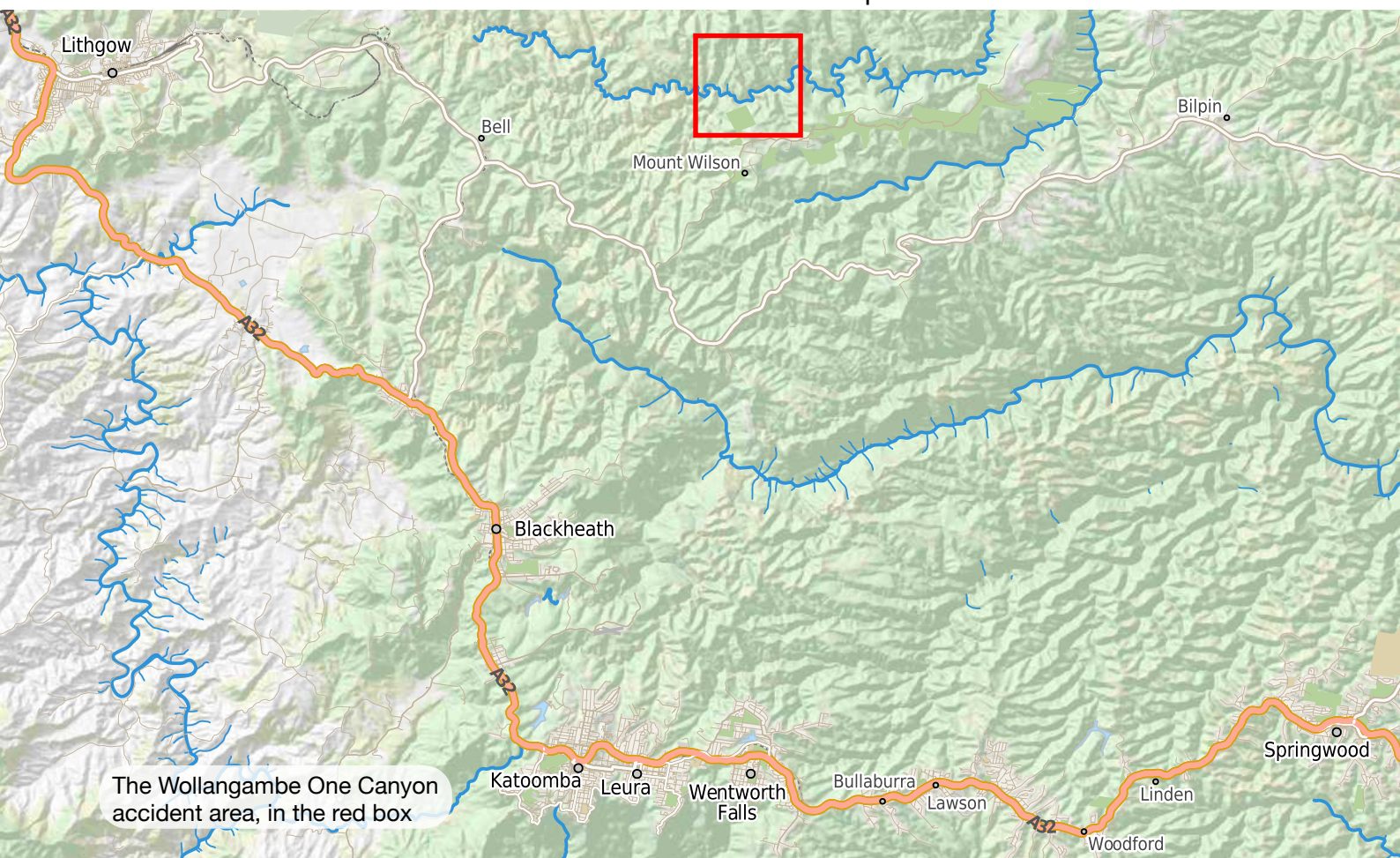
represented who she was. In Buddhism belief Jennifer will be reborn, so it's comforting to think that she has not left us completely. Also, listening to her friends and family's tributes and hearing stories of her love of adventure, she lived life to the fullest. Now she has been set free from this world, ready for her next life."

An experienced and respected canyoner not on the trip has advised me, "The club involved is also undertaking its own immediate review following the incident ... they are not waiting for the formal investigation to look at the incident themselves. If there's improvements to be made, then doing that quickly rather than waiting for a long, formal investigation, is clearly the better outcome."

On the forum, people have been great at avoiding speculation and blame. We don't have all the information and never want to be in a position to cast judgement in such a horrific situation. Respectful, informed discussion while the event is still fresh in the memory is good. Facts rather than speculation are best.

There will be a coronial enquiry. Party members, family, friends and the bushwalking club have requested privacy.

We can and should always reflect on tragedies like this - to learn and become safer at our own pursuits. Tragic events like this make me take pause, thinking about when I got out of sticky situations due to luck more than good planning. It is always a good time to think about what we can do to make our trips safer.





# In the News

## Rescue from Narrow Neck

On 18 January 2021 at Narrow Neck in the Blue Mountains a party member had a leg injury, possibly a broken leg. Eight people were winched out.

## Fraser Island bushfire

A campfire that was illegally lit and not extinguished turned into a bushfire that burnt through 87,000 hectares on the World Heritage-listed Fraser Island. However, scientists believe that there will be regeneration.

## Progress on Snowies Iconic Walk

Work on the Snowies Iconic Walk in Kosciuszko NP is proceeding well, with a number of tracks finished or close to completion.



Old and new Mount Lee tracks before and after remedial action  
Pictures courtesy of NP&WS

Charlotte Pass to Guthega walkway





# Four Ways Australia's Environment Has Repaired Itself in 2020

Albert Van Dijk



When the clock ticked over to 2020, Australia was in the grip of a brutal drought and unprecedented bushfires. But in the months since, while many of us were indoors avoiding the pandemic, nature has started its slow recovery. That is the message of our [new analysis released on 26 August 2020](#).



Every year, my colleagues and I collate a vast number of measurements made by satellites, field sensors and people. We process the data and combine them into a consistent picture of the state of our environment.

Our 2019 report documented a disaster year of record heat, drought, and bushfires. We repeated the analysis after the first half of 2020, keen to see how our environment was recovering.

It's not all good news. But encouragingly, our results show most of the country has started to bounce back from drought and fire. Here are four ways that's happening.

### 1. Rain

Whether a region is in drought depends on the measure used: rainfall, river flows, reservoir storage, soil water availability or cropping conditions. On top of that, Australia is a vast country with large differences between regions.

By most measures, and for most of the country, wetter weather in 2020 helped ease drought conditions – although [with caveats and notable exceptions](#).

Halfway through January, rain-blocking conditions in the Indian Ocean finally relented. This allowed the long-awaited monsoon to reach northern Australia, and encouraged more rainfall across the rest of the continent. February and March brought much needed rains in southeast Australia.

### 2. Water availability

Across the continent, the volume of water flowing into rivers in the first half of 2020 was almost four times greater than the previous year – although still below average. Good rains fell in the northern Murray-Darling Basin. Some made it into the town and irrigation water supplies that ran empty during the drought, and storage levels showed a modest improvement by the end of June to 17% of capacity.

The flows were also enough to fill wetlands such as Narran Lakes and the Paroo and Bulloo River wetlands, west of Bourke. There were enough flood waters left to send a modest flood pulse down the Darling River in March for the first time since 2016.

Reservoir water storage across the entire the Murray-Darling Basin improved from 36% of capacity at the end of June 2019 to 44% a year later. Even so, by June 2020 dry conditions still persisted in the tributaries and wetlands of the middle and southern Murray-Darling Basin.

Storage in urban water supply systems increased for Sydney (52% to 81%) and Melbourne (50% to 64%) while remaining stable for Brisbane (66%), Canberra (55%) and Perth (41%).

Meanwhile, lake and wetland extent across much of Western Australia remained at record or near-record low levels. Due to the poor northern monsoon, Lake Argyle – the massive dam lake supplying the Ord irrigation scheme in northern Australia – shrank to 38% of capacity, a level not seen for several decades.

### 3. Soil moisture

Soil moisture acts like a bank account: rainfall makes deposits and plant roots make withdrawals. This makes soil moisture a useful measure of drought condition. Average soil water availability across the country was far below average at the start of 2020, but returned closer to average conditions from March 2020 onwards. Very to extremely low soil water availability across most of northwest and southeast Australia had eased by June 2020.

By the end of June, rains had also improved growing conditions in southeast Queensland, western New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. However, recovery in these regions is, literally, shallow. Soil water remains low in the deeper soil layers and groundwater from which trees and other drought-tolerant vegetation draw their water. Drought conditions also persist in the dry inland of Australia.

### 4. Vegetation growth

Vegetation condition is measured by estimating leaf area from satellite observations. National leaf area reached its lowest value in December 2019 due to drought and bushfires, but improved once the rains returned from February onwards. It's remained very close to average since.



Autumn rains also brought the best growth conditions in many years across much of the eastern wheat and sheep belt. But in the Western Australian wheat belt, which did not see much rain, cropping conditions are average or below average.

We separately measured vegetation recovery across areas in southeast Australia burnt at different times during the 2019-20 fire season.

In the central and northern NSW regions which burnt earlier in the fire season and received plentiful rains, recovery was relatively swift – more than 63% of lost leaf area had returned by June 2020.

But in the areas burnt in early 2020, recovery has been slow. The burnt forests in the far south of NSW and East Gippsland did not receive good rains until very recently. Also, much of areas burnt in early 2020 are found in the mountains of the NSW-Victoria border region, where cool autumn and winter temperatures have paused plant growth until spring.

Leaf area recovery is not a good measure of biodiversity. Much of the increase will have been due to rapid leaf flush from fire tolerant trees and undergrowth, including weeds.



Some damage to ecosystems and sensitive species will take many years to recover, while some species [may well be lost forever](#).

### **Climate change: the biggest threat**

Rainfall after June has been average to good across much of Australia, and La Niña conditions are predicted to bring further rain. So there is reason to hope our environment will get a chance to recover further from a horrendous 2019.

In the long term, climate change remains the greatest risk to our agriculture and ecosystems. Ever-increasing summer temperatures kill people, livestock and wildlife, dry out soil and vegetation, and increase fire risk. In 2020, high temperatures also caused the third mass coral bleaching event in the Great Barrier Reef in five years.

Decisive climate action is needed, in Australia and worldwide, if we're to protect ourselves and our ecosystems from long-term decline.

#### **Albert Van Dijk**

Professor, Water and Landscape Dynamics,  
Fenner School of Environment & Society,  
Australian National University

This article first appeared in [The Conversation](#) on 26 August 2020.







View from top of Moraine A, Western Arthurs  
Jose



# Coffs Trails - Discover Walks on the NSW North Coast

Yvonne Everett



When the COVID lockdown shut down the country in 2020, Yvonne Everett and Alan Whitelock-Jones put on their boots and went exploring on the coast and in the hills near their home in Coffs Harbour in northern New South Wales.

Alan on End Peak trail in Ulidarra National Park  
All pictures by Yvonne Everett



New to the area, having recently left corporate careers in Sydney, Yvonne initially struggled to find information on local Coffs walks. Guidebooks were few, not readily available and 20 years out of date, while websites such as [Wildwalks](#) or [AussieBushwalking](#) tend to focus on walks near the cities. What trails were documented were scattered across different websites organised by landowner - national parks, state forest, council.

A glance at the map shows a vast area of green surrounds Coffs, both national parks and state forest. The coast is walkable from the Clarence River in the north to the Macleay River and beyond in the south. The region's biodiversity is significant with world heritage rainforest and sclerophyll forests, heathland, mangroves and salt marshes, sedge lands and sub-alpine woodland. Even the rocks are interesting with ancient jasper at Red Rock, the Ebor Volcano and Demon Fault inland.

Starting close to home, Yvonne and Alan stepped out on the [Solitary Island Coastal Walk](#) from Red Rock to Sawtell. Their active boxer dog Nuka was delighted when she

heard the tell-tale jangle of the leash and joined them on some sections.

To build their fitness, they tackled [Mount Coramba](#) next, finding at least five different routes through rainforest and eucalyptus on old logging trails up this 590 metre peak.

It turns out repetition in walking is a great way to understand a new landscape - how a mountain looks when approached from a number of different ridge lines, or the dynamic changes to a beach visited before and after storms. The [iNaturalist app](#) and active community was also a helpful resource to put names to new flora or creatures.

Meanwhile, Yvonne's obsessive map reading and irrepressible curiosity meant the list of future trails to explore was growing longer. Even the dog began to be suspicious when her leash jangled yet again and a collapsible dog bowl was clipped onto the outside of Alan's day pack. Where to next?

In the quiet of lockdown, Yvonne used her technology skills to set up [CoffsTrails.com](#) as a self-funded personal project. CoffsTrails organises and shares their trails with both

“The region's biodiversity is significant ...

“... the list of future trails to explore was growing longer.



Slingsbys Trail, Dorrig National Park



the local community and visitors who are rediscovering the joys of holidaying locally with international borders closed.

CoffsTrails now has over 100 trails on the north coast of NSW, from the Clarence River to the Macleay River and inland to the New England plateau. There is a diverse selection of trails - family-friendly walks, café strolls, short and multi-day bushwalks, forest and beach, and of course some hill climbing challenges and dog walks. All trails have been walked by Alan and Yvonne and include a map and GPX to download.

### CoffsTrails suggestions for visitors

- Children will love [Red Rock River walk](#) with its secret Gnome Home, or riding their bike around [Coffs Creek](#).



Secret Gnome Home on the Red Rock River Walk

- For a caffeine fix, combine the short rainforest walk to [Bangalore Falls](#) or [Battery Falls](#) with [Ulong Café](#) in the Valley.



Battery Falls

- Hill climbers and peak baggers might tackle [Glenugie Peak](#), [Mount Coramba](#) via [Rocky Trail](#), or [Syndicate Ridge](#).
- If you enjoyed [Yuraygir Coastal Walk](#), don't stop! Four days on the [Solitary Island Coastal Walk](#) with a light pack will take you from Red Rock to Sawtell, another four days pleasant walking will get you to the Macleay River and up onto the granite Smoky Cape.



Alan and Nuka on Solitary Island Coastal Walk

Yvonne and Alan thank the locals of Coffs Coast who have generously shared trail information or joined them on some of their explorations.



Yvonne is an experienced bushwalker, happy camper and adventure motorcyclist. Her first multi-day walk was with her father on the Otter Trail in South Africa, age 12. More recently, she loves walking with the fit and fabulous [Sydney Sole Sisters](#). She created [CoffsTrails](#) during lockdown in 2020. Alan was cajoled into a hiking honeymoon many years ago, and in turn coaches Yvonne that it is easier if you go faster when out exploring on their BMW GS bikes.



# Overland Track App

This app is to help you plan and prepare for the Overland Track in Tasmania, and then navigate this safely and enjoyably.

You will find detailed packing lists, information on each day of walking, itineraries, yummy recipes, a guide to flora, fauna, geology and travel planning, first aid and much much more. The app has a navigation section with topographic maps that will work offline, photos, terrain profiles, track notes and weather forecasts.

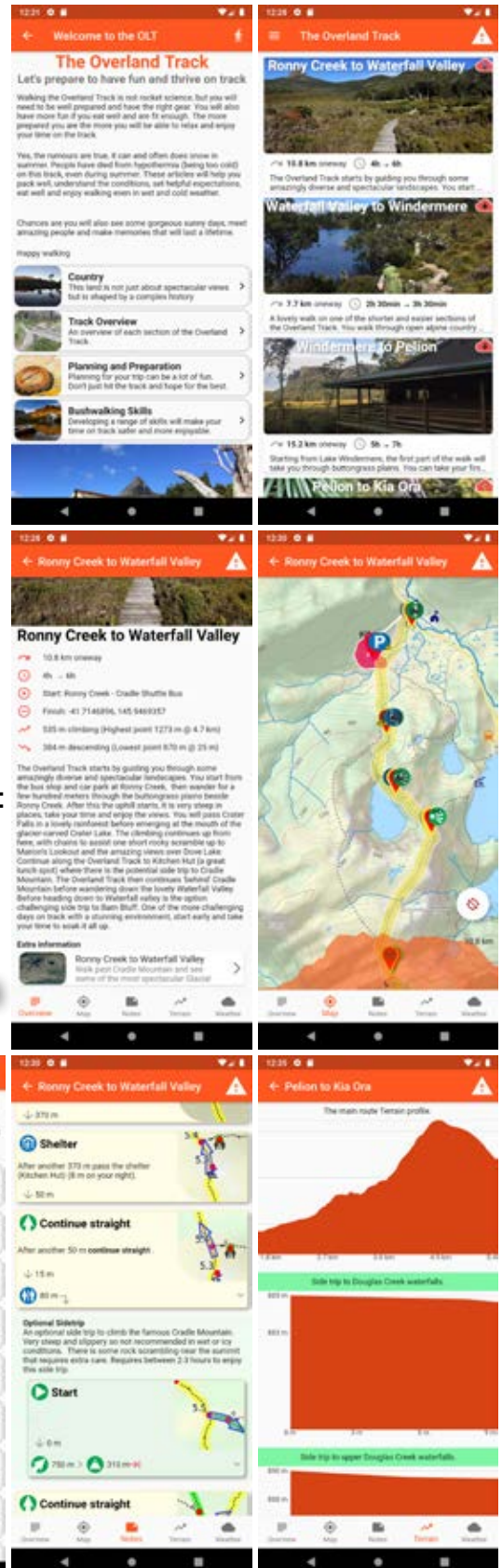
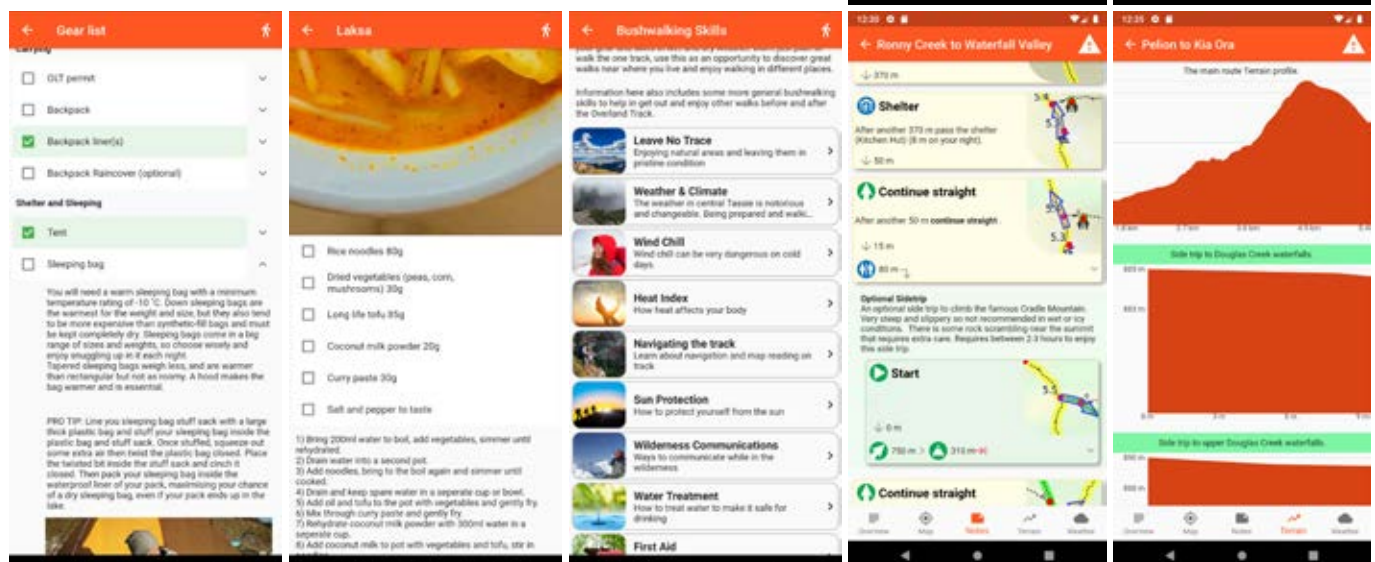
Think of this as the ultimate reference for the Overland Track, a happy marriage between a GPS and a bushwalking guide book.

Each section of the walk has an overview and a moving map (download the map tiles for offline use before hitting the track).

Information on bushwalking skills and equipment also applies to other parts of Australia to help you build your bushwalking skills before getting on track.

This app was made to help you get the most out of your time on the Overland Track, and is designed for all people: those new to bushwalking, hiking or tramping up to seasoned walkers.

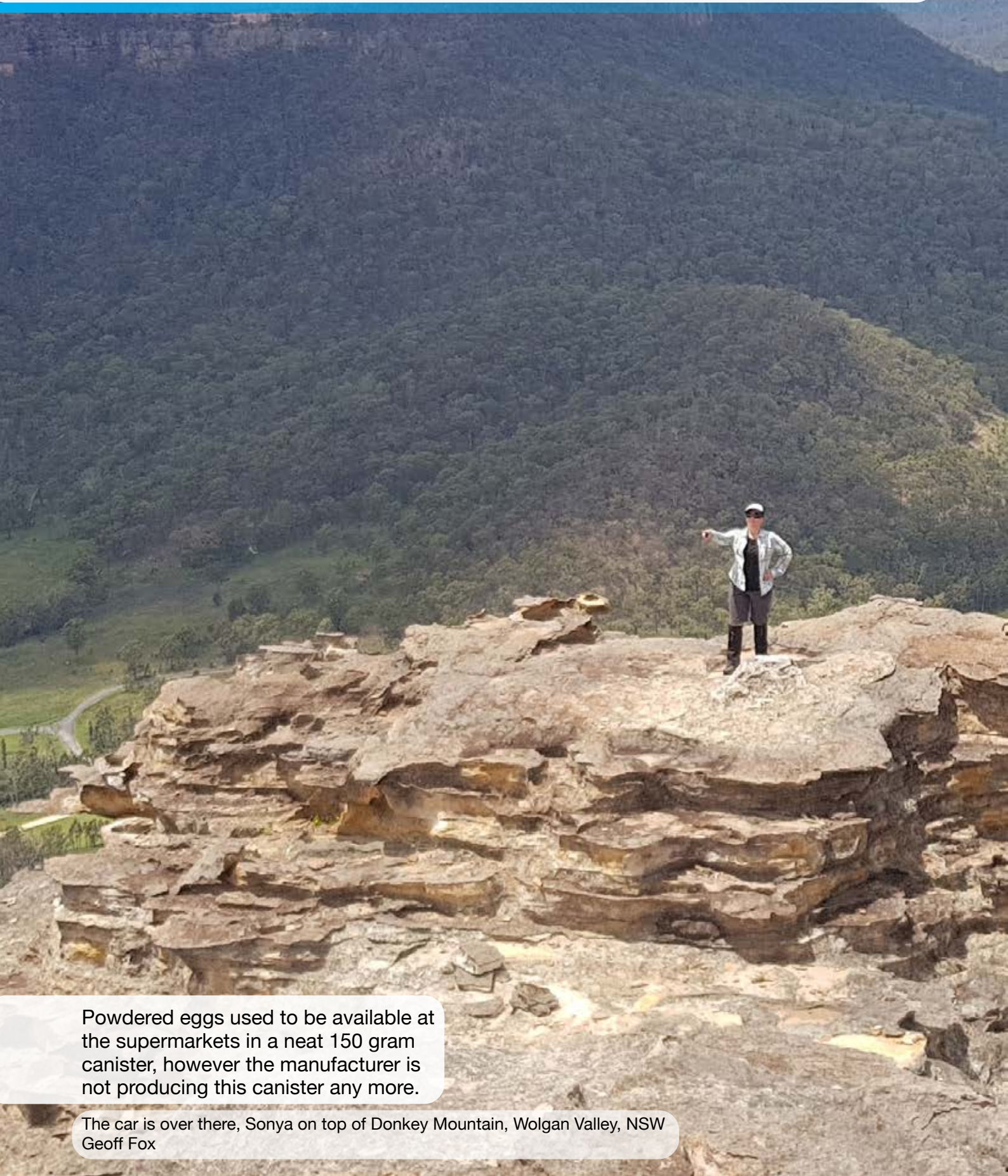
More information at [www.overlandtrack.com](http://www.overlandtrack.com)





# Eggscellent Eggs

Sonya Muhlsimmer



Powdered eggs used to be available at the supermarkets in a neat 150 gram canister, however the manufacturer is not producing this canister any more.

The car is over there, Sonya on top of Donkey Mountain, Wolgan Valley, NSW  
Geoff Fox



Good news though, egg powder is still available as a four canister pack online from [Farm Pride](#), just share it with friends if you want to purchase some. I can get egg powder from my work place as I work in a food manufacturing plant and the company uses this ingredient in some products, but if I do that I have to order 15 kilograms of powder, so the quantity is way too much – a side business perhaps ... So really the four canister pack is a reasonable purchase. One alternative is to buy a 160 gram pouch of scrambled egg mix – cough, only 53% egg powder - from [Back Country](#), good for scrambled eggs but not good if you're intolerant to milk or you want to use eggs for a recipe, like a cake or pancakes, or even milk-free scrambled eggs. Or you can buy a minimum of 1 kilogram from [Australian Egg](#). If that is too much still, what do you do? You can dehydrate your own. Let's discuss this option.

### Dehydrating

There is a fair bit of information on the net about dehydrating eggs. It can be risky and if you don't do it correctly, you are at risk of salmonella poisoning, or gastroenteritis and I am sure you don't want that in the bush, no way. One science journal I was reading stated that there were an estimated on a global scale 155,000 deaths annually related to salmonella infection.

Lucky for you, a good friend of mine has trialled drying eggs and I analysed them in a laboratory. The results were pretty good

which means the product is safe to eat and if stored correctly you will get a long time – say about a year or more storage if stored correctly and the method used is reliable.

A bit of science jargon first. Moisture content means how much water is in a product – good to know as it can determine shelf life. Water activity (Aw) is the measure of how much of that moisture content is free, which means microorganisms, which need water to grow, can grow in this free water. Salmonella can grow if the moisture and water content are right for this type of microbe. If a product is dried above 95% the product is typically safe and would have a good shelf life at that dryness without posing a microbiological risk. Typical manufactured egg comes in at Aw 0.40 and around 5% moisture with a shelf life of a couple of years. Read more about Aw, salmonella and low-moisture foods in the [science journal](#). So what are the results? Well, the egg results came back with Aw 0.52, and moisture of 6.52%.

On the Aw side, it is pretty good for the home dehydrated method. Salmonella starts growing at Aw 0.93 so this result shows that this home dehydrating method is safe on the microbiological side of things. On the moisture side, 93.48% of water has been removed. As stated, in the right storage condition this will last a while.

“... a year or more storage if stored correctly ...”



A comparison of home dehydrated egg, a darker more crumbly texture to bought powdered egg, a light coloured powder.



### Dehydrating eggs

There is a lot of information on the web, such as [Tactical intelligence](#), [Prairie Homestead](#) and [Little House Living](#). The link to [Backwoodshome](#) is on the money, seems she has done her research and has got the facts right, the wet/dry method is the way to go. However, the home method used for this trial was based on the [Dirtygourmet](#) method, but the both methods are similar to each other. The other thing I can suggest, and was done in this home trial is to lift the eggs and break them up during the drying process. This creates more surface area, thus better drying properties and a safer, longer lasting product. Take note though, salmonella can create a cross-contamination risk later on as salmonella can survive in variable conditions such as optimal storage temperature, or poor cleaning of equipment. Clean your equipment well to avoid any cross contact as it is what you can't see that does make a difference.

### Storage

In storage, the egg could take up moisture which could change the ability for microbes to grow and obviously affect the shelf life. Store the powdered egg in an airtight jar, with minimal head space for air to accumulate and away from sunlight, like in the pantry, temperature depending you could get about a year out of it. Vacuum sealing is a great method of storage as it removes all the air; this could last a good year or two. Another way of storage is in a freezer bags with all the air taken out wrapped well; that way it will last a few years in the freezer. Try to have the storage jar or freezer bag as close to as the amount of product as possible.

“ Vacuum sealing is a great method of storage ...

So now what can you do with all this egg powder? I am glad you asked. Here is a scrambled egg recipe. Go on, get drying and go on a hike. See you out there somewhere.





# Recipe for Scrambled Eggs

## At home preparation

For the vegetarian option, break up the TVP jerky. Place all ingredients into the allocated bags and label with the numbers. Print the method at camp label and place with the bags.

## Method in camp

Soak the vegetables (Bag 1) and beef jerky in about 1 cup of water for a minimum of 10 minutes. Meanwhile, place the egg mix (Bag 2) into the pan. When the vegetables are soft and fully rehydrated, slowly drizzle the remaining water from the vegetables into the egg mix, stirring into a paste ensuring no lumps occur. Place the pan on the heat and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until the egg mix starts to coagulate, then add the rehydrated vegetables (Bag 1). Mix this through the egg and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes until the egg mix is cooked and there is no water left in the pan. Serve with salt and cracked black pepper.

**Hint:** you don't really need the protein isolate, which is there to bulk the nutrition up so the meal is healthier for you. Protein isolate can be found in health food shops. It is a good product to have as you can bulk up other breakfast meals, add it to cakes or muesli bars.



## Bag 1 (vegetable mix)

|                 |        |          |
|-----------------|--------|----------|
| Dried peas      | 1 Tbsp | 10 grams |
| Dried mushrooms | ½ cup  | 7 grams  |
| Fried shallots  | 1 Tbsp | 6 grams  |

## Bag 2 (egg mix)

|                 |             |          |
|-----------------|-------------|----------|
| Egg powder      | 2½ Tbsp     | 23 grams |
| Milk powder     | 1½ Tbsp     | 15 grams |
| Bacon bits      | 1 Tbsp      | 11 grams |
| Protein isolate | 1 Tbsp      | 10 grams |
| Grated Parmesan | 2 tsp       | 6 grams  |
| Dried onion     | ⅛ tsp       | 1 gram   |
| Dried chives    | ½ tsp       | 1 gram   |
| Dried parsley   | ½ tsp       | 1 gram   |
| Ground chilli   | few pinches |          |
| Salt, pepper    | few pinches |          |

## Keep separate

|                   |            |          |
|-------------------|------------|----------|
| Beef or TVP Jerky | 3-4 pieces | 10 grams |
| Water             | 1 cup      |          |

To read more about the author or find delicious recipes check [xtremegourmet.com](http://xtremegourmet.com)



# Someday, One Day

Stephen Lake

I wrote this when confined to home due to the pandemic, unable to get out. Compared to some people I was much better off, but I still missed the bush.

Kosciuszko National Park waterfall  
Stephen Lake





Tune: *Someday one day* by The Seekers

Someday, one day,  
Time's not so far away,  
We can share the walks we've had.  
Oh, someday, ooh-ooh-ooh!

Hey there, look in the mountains,  
Tell me, what do you see before you?  
I see somewhere to be walking.  
Happy people all a talking.

Someday, one day,  
Time's not so far away,  
We can walk the paths we want.  
Oh, someday, ooh-ooh-ooh!

They say you're a bushwalker,  
What do they know of where you're going?  
If you believe this track your taking,  
Then believe in what I say.

Someday, one day,  
Time's not so far away,  
We can walk the paths we want.  
Oh, someday, ooh-ooh-ooh!

I know your feeling tired,  
Sometimes walks move very slowly.  
And I know that you feel like quittin',  
Feel like leavin', feel like stoppin'.

Someday, one day,  
Time's not so far away,  
We can walk the paths we want.  
Oh, someday, ooh-ooh-ooh!





# Bushwalk Australia



Bushwalk Australia blog at [mag.bushwalk.com/magazines/](http://mag.bushwalk.com/magazines/)

