

Bushwalk Australia



Reflections & Rescues

Volume 47, June 2021

Bushwalk Australia Magazine
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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.



Helen Jones on an outcrop near The Spires, Tasmania
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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 August 2021 edition is 30 June 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,

A year on Australia is still feeling the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, more so now as Victoria is in another lockdown. It is too easy to be frustrated as outbreaks impact our bushwalking and other plans, but let's not become complacent or careless.

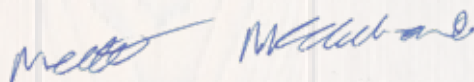
Too many species suffered huge blows in the 2019-20 fires, and some may never recover. Yet we still have native forest loss through woodchip logging and housing expansion, then add in feral animals and it's serious. The merits of controlled burns using Aboriginal methods are slowly becoming more accepted and some governments are doing a better job giving nature the attention it deserves. Let's keep pushing forward and not lose hope for wild places.

In this edition Rob takes us to Tasmania's Central Plateau, Stacey goes from Wilsons Prom to Feathertop, Sonya braves the cold to learn about swift water rescues, and Stephen turns back the clock for a historical perspective. Matt Ruchel of VNPA and Dr Gregory Moore of Melbourne University show that the battles for Lake Pedder and the Franklin River have contemporary counterparts. All in all - a cracker edition.

I hope that 2021 is treating you well and that you can get out and enjoy some amazing wild places, close to or far from home.

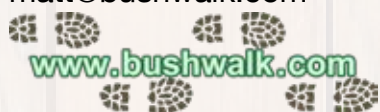
Happy walking

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, Wildwalks.com and 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.

In the News

Kokoda challenge

Join Australia's toughest team endurance event on [17-18 July on Gold Coast](#).

Trouble in Tassie #1 - Privatising the wilderness

Conservationists say [newly released documents](#) call into question the government's policy of backing tourism developments on protected public land.

Trouble in Tassie #2 - Wilderness for sale

Recreational fishers and environmentalists have accused the major political parties of turning Tasmania into a "development wonderland" as more details of [secret tourism proposals](#) are revealed.

Tasmanian rescues

In mid-April, police rescue staff had a [busy time](#) in the Tasmanian wilderness.

Illegal logging threatens Victorian catchments

In April there was [a report](#) of logging on steep slopes in catchments, contrary to law. The regulator did not do anything of substance. In May there was a [second report](#), "Experts stressed the seriousness of both the alleged and confirmed breaches of laws that are meant to protect the water supply for Melbourne and other parts of Victoria."

Central Victoria parks opposed

A proposal for 60,000 hectares of public land becoming national park or getting elevated protection around Bendigo, Ballarat, Daylesford and Woodend is [facing opposition](#) from shooters, prospectors and trail bike riders.

Fire weather trumps forestry, prescribed burning

Weather conditions were so extreme and landscapes so dry during the Black Summer bushfires that normal fire mitigation practices such as forestry management or hazard reduction burns had [little impact](#) on the devastation caused.

Secret report and social impacts of tourism in wilderness

A document kept secret by Tasmania's government has urged the state's environment department to [consider the social impacts](#) of proposed wilderness tourism developments before giving the green light to new projects.

Peru ancient indigenous techniques to extend water supply

The methods of improving [Peru's water supply](#) are similar to Australia. Feral animals and illegal actions have degraded alpine land, adversely affecting the quantity, quality and timing of water.

Mouse plague


Poison used to kill mice [affects native wildlife](#).



Mount Arapiles near Natimuk, Victoria

Junction Lake

Rob Wildman



A couple of hours after we all flew in to Launceston yesterday, a late, big and spicy dinner cushioned us into an easy, almost tidal awakening this morning. This is the first day of our planned seven day walk in an area unknown to all of us; the area nestled between the Walls of Jerusalem and the Overland Track. The others, Marc, Michelle and Helen, had all done several longish walks with me over the years and, once we'd broken our fast on hand-picked field mushrooms, eggs and generous amounts of coffee, we were ready for anything I was going to subject them to.

Lake Myrtle from Mount Rogoona, day 6
Rob Wildman

The walk was supposed to follow a big figure eight and included some big names in the walking business: Grail Falls, Junction Lake, the spine-tingling Never Never and an exit route which took in the climbing of Mount Rogoona. I was the leader and I'd never walked any of these tracks before. In fact, I had to question whether there would be any tracks at all? For the next few days, were we going to be bashing scoparia, ripping the skin from our knees and struggling into camp so late that dinner was a disaster? Would we be meeting bogs so deep you almost lose your boots extracting yourself or would it be glades of moss covered rocks under sweet smelling pines? As always, in Tasmania, it was all of these and more.

Day 1 – Moses Creek to Chalice Lake

First minor hiccup: two kilometres from the Moses Creek car park a tree had peeled over and blocked the road. There were many vehicles which were also in the same predicament as us and I was starting to wonder if this was going to be the remote bushwalking experience I had hoped for. Oh yeah, I hadn't looked at the Tasmanian public holidays so this was a long weekend, and everyone was out.

“The track ... is a real gem ...”

The track from the end of Mersey Valley road to Chapter Lake (Grail Falls) is a real gem, a good one. Given how it meanders around the base of the hills and across a few streams, I had expected a very boggy start but except for some very small sections the track was a delight. Once it ascended the first real hill, it sauntered up through a beech and pine filled glade – I kept thinking I would see hobbits spring out from behind trees – until the track finally reached the start of the last section which would take us over the saddle. Just prior to the saddle is a mysterious patch of grass in a clearing which took us by surprise so we decided to just laze back in the sun and have lunch. Michelle, the carrier of all lunch things, was urging us to help her get rid of some weight.

After the saddle, and the quite steep descent into Chapter Lake, we bumbled our way past the “Junction Lake Sign”, which sits some 100 metres before you get to the

camping spots and the falls themselves. This is unexpected but absolutely correct so I thank the person who placed the sign in this position very much. We were then drifting around trying to decide whether to go, as planned, up to Chalice Lake or not. “Come on, let's do it!” from the ebullient Helen was all we needed to force ourselves up the steep but straightforward ascent of Grail Falls, which was flowing extremely well at that time.

Once across the stream, half way to the lake, the track sidles many large rock platforms and opens out to vistas of the lake, with Twin Spires and Cathedral Mountain on the horizon. While it was overcast and a cool breeze drifted in from the west, the prospects looked good for a camp on the lake shore. Well that is, if you could find one. There were so few flat spots anywhere, and we had three tents, but we did find the Hilton outcrop complete with its own pond at our side. Down near the lake shore, we saw another two guys at various times wandering this way and that hunting down somewhere to spend the night. One actually carried a small blowup kayak and decided to test out the island some 80 metres off shore – only to be confounded by the scrub and slopes. By about 8 pm they had found their Xanadu on the far shore of the outlet stream.

At dusk, after the wind died completely, Chalice Lake encapsulated why it is a drawcard. You can't stop clicking away but also often just sitting watching the night approach as the occasional fish would send silent ripples across the water.



Hilton camp spot on Chalice Lake, day 1
Rob Wildman

Day 2 – Chalice Lake, Twin Spires, Chapter Lake

Next morning we did what everyone else seemed to be doing or had done – take the rough well cairned track to the top of the Cathedral Range near Twin Spires. From there, you get views over the valley in which the Overland runs from Pelion to Du Cane Gap and all the surrounding hills. Even Cradle Mountain at 25 kilometres distant was prominently visible with its sister, Barn Bluff, unmistakable at its side.



The Acropolis and Geryon, day 2
Rob Wildman

Getting back with plenty of time to spare, we decided to head back to Grail Falls and camp in the rather murky spots at the end of Chapter Lake. We had been told by a young, fit couple that the track down to Junction Lake from Chapter Lake was going to be very difficult so I thought we would grab a few extra hours in case this was true.

Descending the short steep route down the side of Grail Falls, Helen spiked her eye on a bush. Nothing remained in her eye and she could still see quite clearly but we stood transfixed as the blood oozed very slowly down the whites of her eyes, leaving her iris and pupil as normal. The effect was initially unnerving, but as Helen couldn't see it and she was in no pain, we all adjusted to the half zombie in our midst.

“... we all adjusted to the half zombie in our midst.”

The only other walker we met on this section was a tiger snake right at the point where you crane your neck back to try to see the falls and, of course, are not looking at the track. It didn't move far out the way but just enough for us to cautiously shuffle past.

Day 3 – Chapter Lake, Cloister Lagoon, Junction Lake

The track from the end of Chapter Lake to Junction Lake, as Mr Chapman assures us in his writings, roughly follows the lake shore, heading up into the scrub and back down to the edge when it can and passing through the flat boggy section before you get to Cloister Lagoon itself. I am entirely confused now because the more we saw of this track the more we enjoyed it. The track



On the way to The Spires, Tent Tarn in the middle distance, day 2
Marc Breton

meandered from beautiful mossy beech forest to dry sclerophyll gum forest and then to wet spongy swampy bogs on its amble over the saddle and down to Junction Lake. The last few kilometres down the creek bed to the lake was one of the most serene walks I've done.

We had originally planned to be real adventurers and head up to Artemis Lake and then follow this, find our way across the Traveller Range to Du Cane Gap and then back through the Never Never. But the campsite at the lake and the hut itself were so magical we completely bonked out and decided instead to stay for two nights, do a day walk down and up the Never Never (or as far as we could get) and then see what else later on. We came across two walkers at about 7 pm near the hut trying to ascertain the start of the Lake Artemis track; one attempting to find it at water level and the other up the hill somewhere. They looked exhausted and one even fell in the cold river to chest-high depth in the stumble to find the route. After they eventually found the cairns up the hill and were out of earshot, we pondered on this edgy style of walking and the potential it had for real disaster.

“... the campsite at the lake and the hut itself were so magical ...

“They looked exhausted and one even fell in the cold river ...



Dinner with Junction Lake Hut as background, day 3
Marc Breton

As part of the preparation for this walk, I volunteered to prepare all the main meals, drying and devising tasty delights, and then distribute them to each person as equitably as possible. After a couple of nights of curries, it was spag bol tonight followed by a chocolate milk dessert and then, the peach brandy and cigars to round off. And yes we carried out the butts! These were real chat starters as we were resting on the one big rock overlooking the lake as the sun fell over another still and placid surface. Nothing was off the agenda. Families, because we all had them, work, walking stories and some attempts at the dire political situation were all in there. And there was a red sky so tomorrow was looking good already!

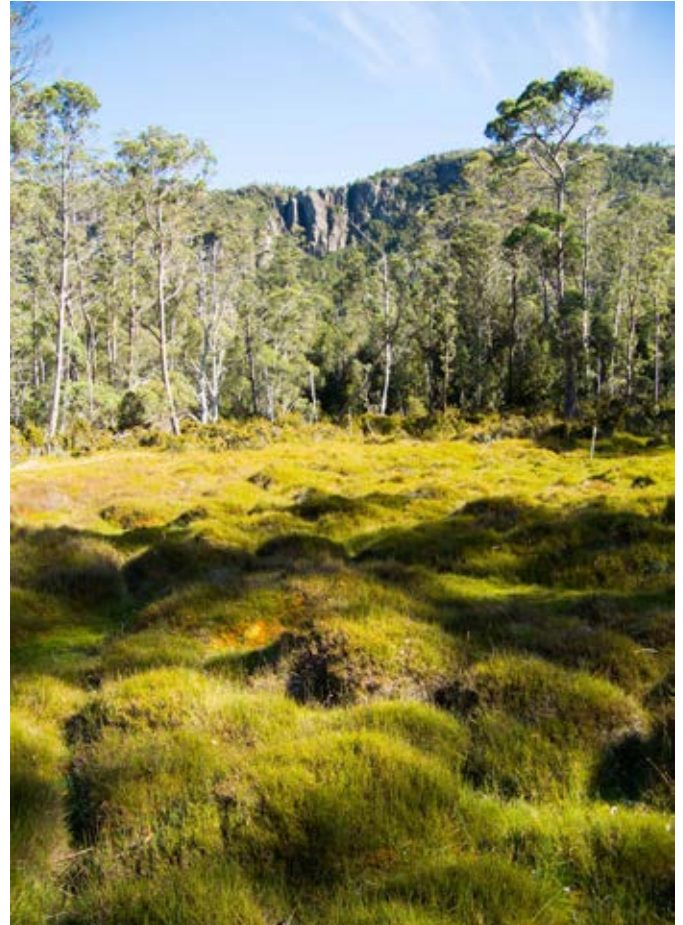


Chapter Lake at dusk, day 2
Marc Breton

Day 4 – Junction Lake, Never Never return

So, the Never Never. If you trawl the net there are boundless stories of the traverse of this part of the Mersey River from Junction Lake down to Hartnett Falls and most of them are stories of scrub bashing, bogs and getting lost. I can very well understand how in severe weather this route can be treacherous, especially as it involves a log crossing over a swiftly flowing river. But on our day, with the sun shining for most of it, it was a real pleasure. Sure, there were several sections where the pad disappears or there are several pads at the same time, but there is only the river on your left and the mountain on your right – you are going to stumble on the pad sometime. Even the log crossing had several options all close to one another. The pad generally sticks close to the river, especially in the lower section below McCoy Falls (which is one of many spectacular features) but when trees have fallen and the track is blocked, walkers have made their own diversions, some of which head off into infinity and some which do work their way back to the river and the original pad.

We had given ourselves until two o'clock before we would turn around and luck was with us as we strolled into a mass of Overland walkers at the top of Hartnett Falls, who were surprised to see us, with



Feather Falls from the Never Never, day 4
Rob Wildman

five minutes to spare. Many were doing the "luxury" walk and travelled with just day packs and were soaking up the water and the sun before heading on to Windy Ridge Hut.



Junction Lake, day 4
Rob Wildman

Twenty-two years before, I had walked the Overland with my, then fifteen year old son, Min. I had prepared a very short memorial to his memory as he had died almost one year previously, just before the pandemic. We all struggled to read the prepared letter and poems and by the time we were finished, other people were looking askance as they strolled passed this small bunch of weeping, hugging walkers.

The return trip was just as enjoyable and because we were now experienced, we cut almost an hour off the time. But the English garden look of the river downstream from the falls with flat, moss covered edges and a crystal clear babbling brook running in between, was something I'll never forget.

Day 5 – Junction Lake, Lake Artemis, Meston Hut

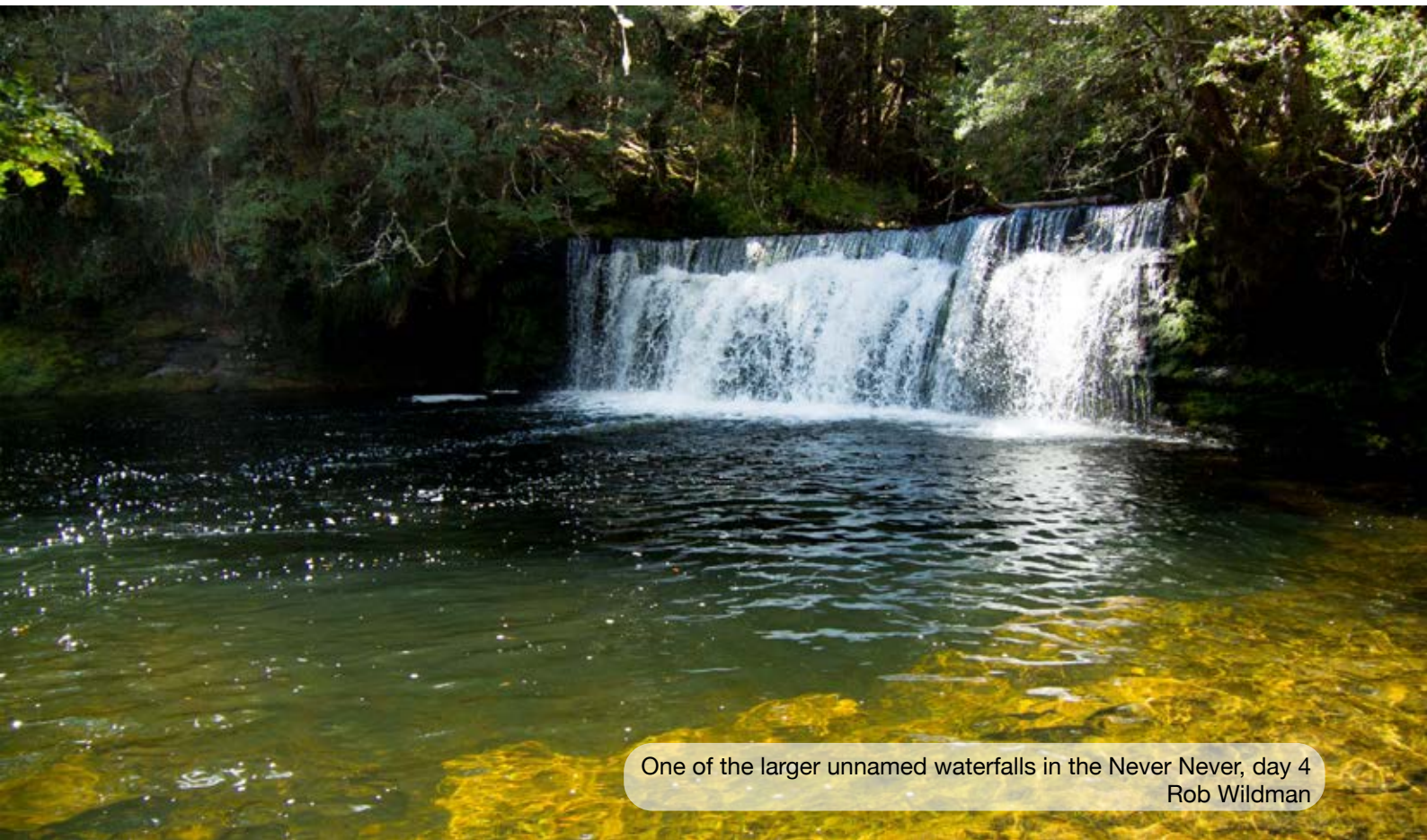
The next day we decided that we should also head up to Lake Artemis to see what we missed out on and to look at the country beyond. The track, difficult to find at first, lounges through a beautiful beech forest on its way to the crest over which was swampy ground and then about a kilometre of scratchy and narrow climbing before breaking out onto the ridge overlooking the lake. After seeing the scrub which surrounds the lake, we were very glad we didn't attempt



Michelle, Helen, Rob just above Hartnett Falls, day 4
Marc Breton

the high route we'd planned before. The camp sites at Lake Artemis were positioned atop a flat space on a spit of land jutting out into the lake. The lake was very clear and this area would have made a wonderful night's camp.

Having returned from this enjoyable short trip (its less than three kilometres to the lake), I'd heard or read that it was possible to camp on the southern shores of Lake Meston, the lake to the north-east of Junction Lake. As we approached this lake it became very obvious that this spot was not going to be our next camp. Thick bands of melaleuca covered the shores and the excellent track we were



One of the larger unnamed waterfalls in the Never Never, day 4
Rob Wildman



The "goblinessque" Meston Hut, day 5
Rob Wildman

following wasn't having anything to do with the lake itself, just skirting it. So we pushed on to the fairytale Meston Hut which was every bit as "goblinessque" as the Junction Lake hut. Marc found a short track which lead down to the actual shore of the lake where we threw ourselves into the water and then threw ourselves out just as fast.

A middle aged couple we met had nestled their tent onto the very edge of the lake and taken off to fish the northern shores during the unexpected good weather. This lake is famous for trout fishing and the lakes to the north and east right up to Lake Malbena are special areas for this activity. I can understand the fly fishing community's objection to the prospect of rich, helicopter fishing tourists invading this pristine place.

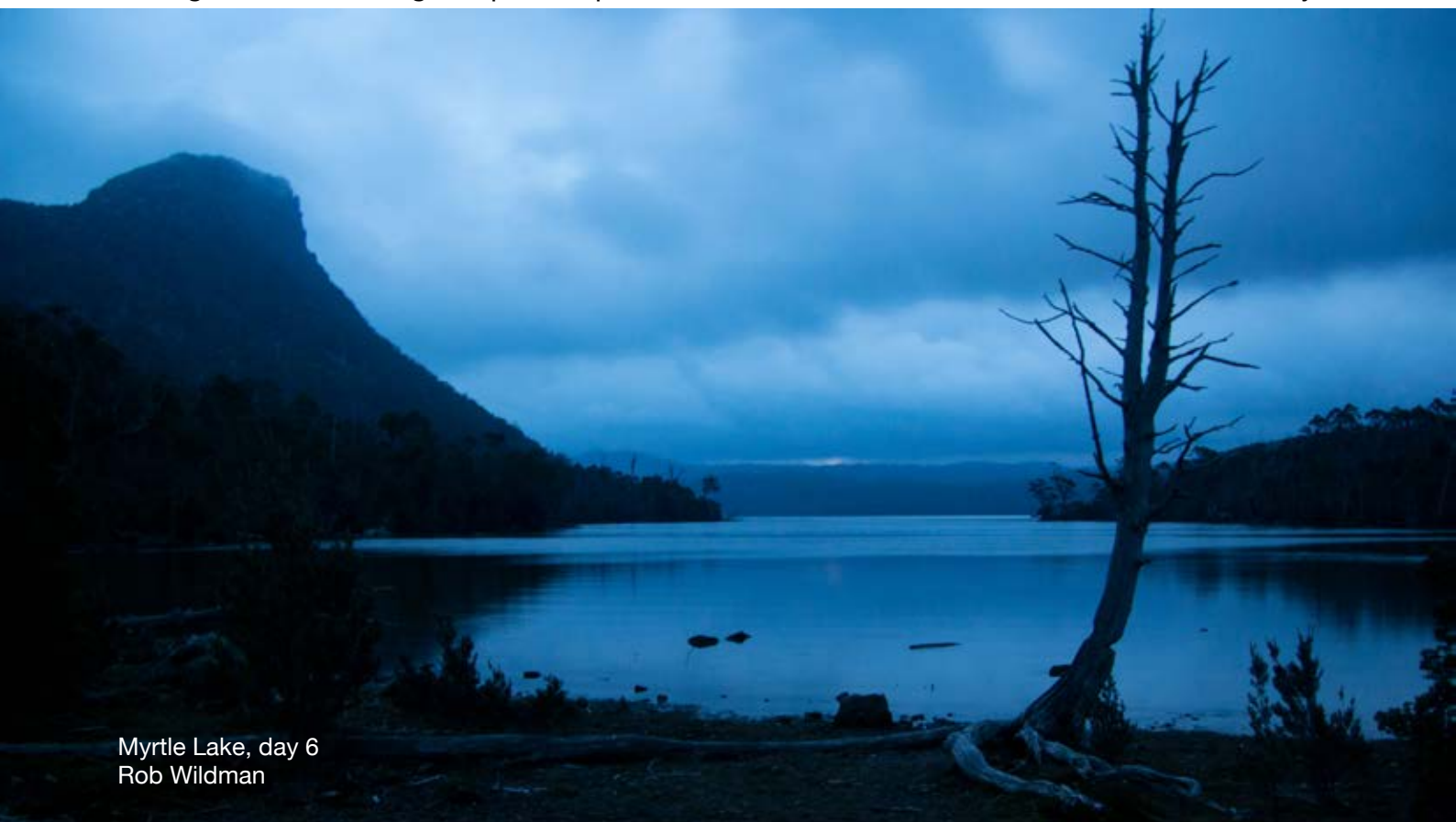
Day 6 – Meston Hut, Mount Rogoona, Lake Myrtle

Today, the second last, was to walk to the saddle on Mount Rogoona and then follow the cairned route to the top. We had, again, a spectacularly brilliant morning, with a fine soft mist on the surface of the lake but which had now disappeared and left us with the prospect of just getting sunburnt. The tracks we were following now were all very good; properly

made and maintained trails. While the Mount Rogoona route came and went it also never really left us for long, taking us to a high point one ridge away from the actual summit of the mountain. We could have done the dip and last climb to reach this but we could see an amazing skyline as it was and looking down on Lake Myrtle, our next destination, was just a treat.

“... looking down on Lake Myrtle, our next destination, was just a treat.”

After talking to some other walkers on the track, and not having heard a weather forecast for over a week, it seems we were going to be in for some weather, even snow, over the next day or so. But heck, we had the gear, we had plenty of shelter and we were walking out. The only unknown was that we were unsure of the standard of the "short cut" – the Jacksons Creek track. Given very



Myrtle Lake, day 6
Rob Wildman

bad weather was predicted, the prospect of walking out via the Lake Bill track was looking likely. Marc, in his usual investigative style, did a short trip around the lake shore and gave us the thumbs up for going out via Jacksons Creek. But that was tomorrow.

The Lake Myrtle camp spots are too numerous to count and we felt like royalty making our choice of a preferred spot. Another quick swim, a Madras Lamb curry with saffron rice, an Auntie Betty self-saucing pudding, a cigar and some whisky left us continuing the regal theme. How could this get any better?

Day 7 – Lake Myrtle, Jacksons Creek, Mersey River Road

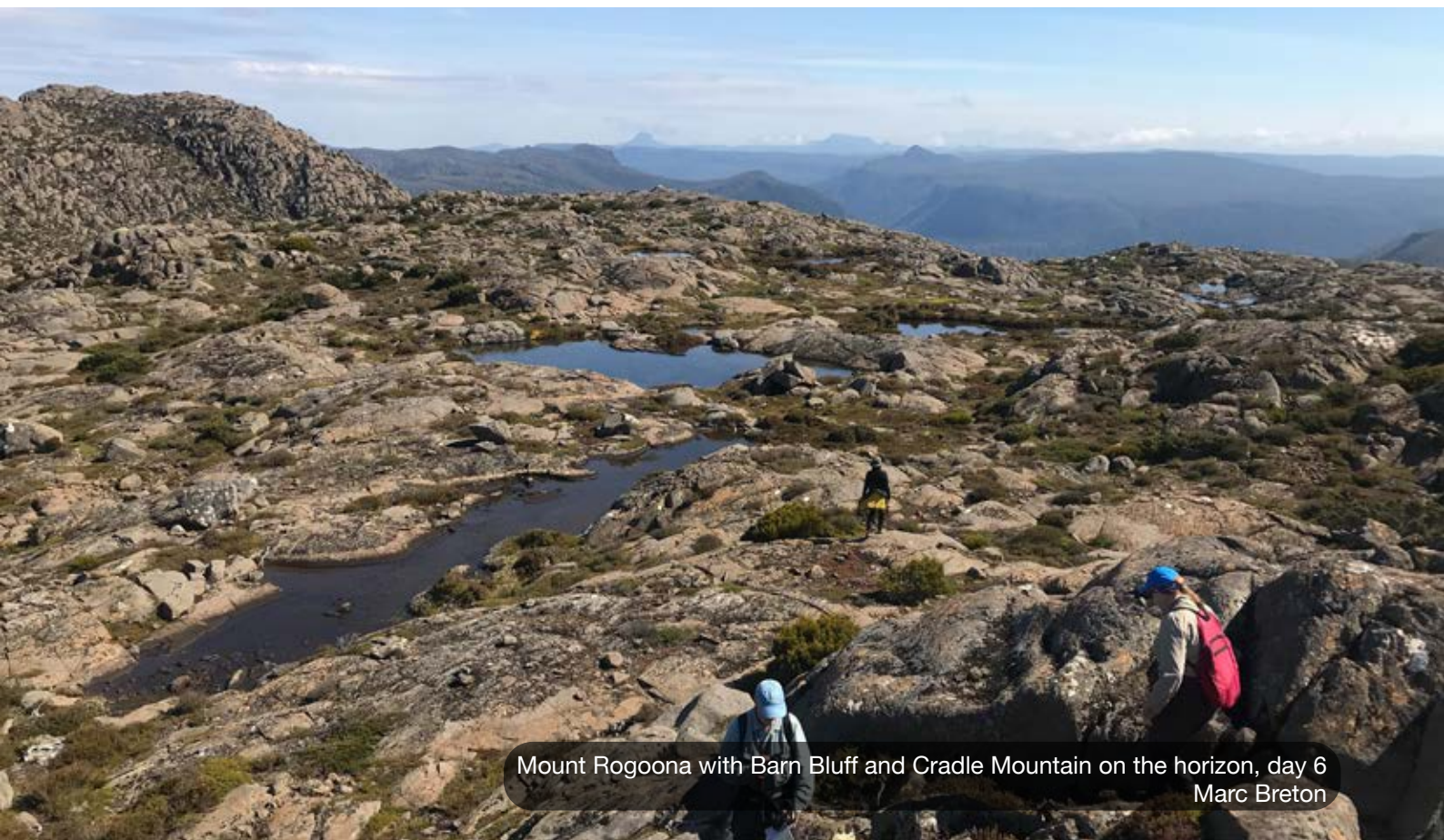
The rain held off until we were all packed and ready to go in the morning and even then it was just mild, mistily drifting in through the forest and bogs. After a kilometre or so, we passed what looked like a route which would join up with the Cloister Lake walk so we mentally tagged it for later. The track descended for a long way through taller and taller fern forests until we were down at the registration station, almost out. The regeneration of the ground level vegetation in this area felt luxuriant and we, sadly, single filed across the suspension bridge and down to the car.

What surprised me about this walk was how good all the tracks turned out to be. I had heard reports of scrub bashing and bog trawling and when it came to it, I would take these tracks any day ahead of some of the routes I've walked in NSW.

Of course, a trip like this is, for me, all about the people you have on board and their willingness to be there with you in this wonderful country. From the surreal scene of all four of us hugging each other during the memorial for Min to the laughs we had just ribbing each other over dinner, we all have something special to remember.



Rob is 67 and is based in Sydney. He has been bushwalking since the age of twelve, when he was dragged up The Castle and into a casual love affair with the bush. For years his stomping grounds were the Budawangs, Blue Mountains and Kanangra but Tasmania and the Snowies have been poking their nose in for a while. He often tries out poor unsuspecting first timers on impossible routes but somehow always makes it back to safety. Well, there was that one time with the helicopter ... For Rob, going bush is where the rejuvenation of the senses and the intimacy with nature always happens.



Mount Rogoona with Barn Bluff and Cradle Mountain on the horizon, day 6
Marc Breton

Feathertop via Wilsons Prom

Stacey Ireland



Our trip began with the goal of showing two very excited Sydney friends (Dan and Joanna) Wilsons Prom. We roped in another Melbourne based mate (Wade) to do the Southern Circuit. Joanna is a teacher, so we locked in a school holidays date. We were all excited, talking about our gear, planning side trips etc.

Feathertop summit
All photos by Paul Ireland

Twelve days out we received an email from Parks Victorian - The Prom is closed! There was 200 mm of rain in one day, causing extensive flood damage, so overnight hiking was closed while they repaired the damage. With moving dates not an option due to the need to go in school holidays, we frantically began searching for other options. Grampians? Dan and Joanna were coming from Lakes Entrance ... too far. Gippsland? We didn't have enough time off work, too far for us ...

We only had one overnight hike under our belts, so we are somewhat newbies, but our adventurous spirit is definitely in the "old soul" bucket.

My husband Paul thought, what about Feathertop? He's been wanting to do a Feathertop hike ever since we moved to Melbourne a couple of years ago. So we were frantically on the laptops - Paul searching for GPX recordings of people doing hikes around Feathertop, and me on [Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com.au/) to my trusted advisers!

Paul found a loop that looked like it was about the right length for us.

Day 1 Diamantina Hut along Razorback to Federation Hut.

Day 2 Down Diamantina Spur, up the West Kiewa, over the saddle and down to Dibbins Hut.

Day 3 Up Swindlers Spur to Hotham.

I checked with the crew, and everyone was happy to do that, we booked the tent platforms at Dibbins and an apartment after the walk, locked in.

Then I started looking at the actual track and asked [Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com.au/) about it. Diamantina sounded hard! I have a dodgy knee that I'd been at physio for, so I was nervous. Some full on reports on bushwalk scared me, but some others told me I would live. After much advice and back and forth, I talked myself into it. That advice would prove invaluable later.

Three days before we were meant to go, the weather forecast turned nasty. The "polar blast" was here. The forecast was for 90 km/hour winds, below zero temperatures and snow - it was not looking good. Cue research #2 for alternatives - we decided it would just have to be a one nighter if the weather turned bad. Secretly, Paul was hoping it *did* snow!

“Three days before we were meant to go, the weather forecast turned nasty.”

On Sunday, the day before we were to leave, the weather forecast turned in our favour. Sunday was meant to get snow, but Monday to Wednesday was to be fine, cold, but no rain until Wednesday. We were back on again!

After a 5 am start from Melbourne, picking up Wade on the way, we drove up to Hotham via Bright. As we came up the very windy road to just below the top of Mount Hotham, there was snow everywhere and it was very cloudy. We were thinking - are we even going to see any views along the famous Razorback? We met Dan and Joanna at Diamantina Hut, and amazingly, the cloud lifted. We all jumped out, full of nervous energy, popped our names in the book and got going.



View from Feathertop summit

Day 1 – The Razorback, Federation Hut, Feathertop

The walk along The Razorback was incredible. An easy walk, with amazing vistas made all the more beautiful from the dusting of snow that had arrived on Sunday night. Our timing ended up perfect! Wildflowers peeped their heads out of the top of the snow, but the track wasn't covered. Just enough to make a beautiful view without making it too much of a challenge for these newbies!

We arrived at Federation Hut, refilled water from the tank (thanks to the snow, there was water in the tank) set up tents and then did the summit of Feathertop. What a good decision to do that on day one (again, a tip from the forum well needed) as day two proved to be a real physical challenge. The view from Feathertop was incredible, we got some unreal photos with the sun peeping through the clouds, and it just felt amazing to be able to see so far and not see another person. It really felt like we were in another world, and actually reminded me a little of the volcano ranges in Indonesia.

We descended and had dinner in the hut with a number of other people. Double checked the forecast for the next two days – it looked okay, so we were good to go! I was glad of my -4 °C sleeping bag; we had -3 °C overnight and I slept in thermal socks and my beanie!

Day 2 – Diamantina Spur, West Kiewa River, Dibbins Hut

Tuesday morning woke to a beautiful sunny day, and tents covered in ice from the condensation. A good old Chux did wonders scraping the ice off the tents before we got going.

We stopped for a group photo at the top of Diamantina Spur thinking if we die along this spur, at least there will be evidence of us! Joanna had read the horror stories of this walk too, so we all mentally braced ourselves.

“Joanna had read the horror stories of this walk too ...”

The first two hours were fine, we loved the view back to Feathertop from the spur and it was great to be able to see where we had come from. We started to hit the steeper descent, and thanks to some great advice of the forum, when we got to the rock scrambling bits we definitely went down backwards! There were only really two short sections like that, and for us 30-somethings, that was all a bit of an adventure. Cue the obligatory selfie on the rock section! The constant steep downhill after those rock sections was a killer. I completely understand why we were advised against it – I wouldn't call that an “enjoyable” section. About

“The constant steep downhill after those rock sections was a killer.”



Wade, Stacey, Dan and Joanna at Dibbins Hut

12:30 pm we were all really hungry and there seemed to be no end in sight to this downhill section. We played psychoanalytical games and sung terribly to keep our minds off the angle of the decline. The track I mean, not our minds. Around 1:15 pm we reached the bottom of the spur – at last! We dragged our exhausted bodies to the river and plonked ourselves down to have lunch. We were all stuffed – but proud that we had done it.

“ We played psychoanalytical games and sung terribly to keep our minds off the angle of the decline.

After a fuel up we walked to the Dibbins Hut campsite, arriving around 4 pm, very very tired. We were happy to have booked the tent platforms – it was windy when we got there, but the way the platforms were set up, our tents were completely sheltered from the wind. The river ran right past the tent area and the whole “campground” was just stunning; the scenery there is really magical.

We walked 300 metres from the tent platforms to Dibbins Hut. Dibbins was much nicer than Federation – Dibbins is an old style log hut, although the window needs to be fixed. Dan and Joanna collected wood and got a fire in the pot belly stove in no time. As Joanna and Dan were making tea, Joanna knocked the handle of the boiling water all over her leg. Cue rush to the river and 20 minutes of scooping freezing river water over her burns. She never winced or cried – what a trooper! Note to self – handles go inwards.

We were happy to be in the hut – the wind was really howling as we had dinner. A can of red wine for me and whisky for the boys really went down well, we were all zapped of energy. A round of cards and we were all in bed around 9 pm.

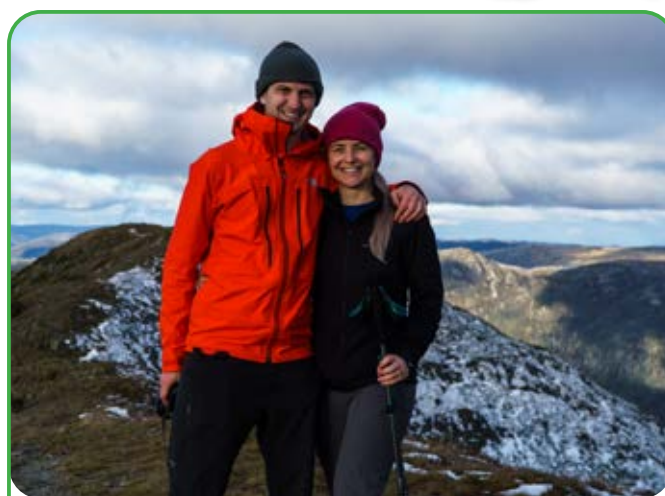
Day 3 – Swindlers Spur, Derrick Hut, Loch car park

On Wednesday morning we had a slow start, and were punished for it as it started sprinkling right when we started packing up the tent. The Chux came in handy again! Today we were going up Swindlers Spur back to Hotham. Swindlers was steep for the first few hours, with lots of loose shale – we

had been warned about this on the forum so we were prepared. It was good to get us going and warm, as we had strong wind and light rain, so the exercise got us warmed up nicely. We stopped at Derrick Hut for our feast of a lunch – the more we ate, the less there was to carry the last leg of the trip! So down went chocolate, more whisky, biscuits, tea, and fruit! Derrick Hut was really cute too, although camping nearby in wind wouldn't be great as it's very exposed. We had been warned that from Derrick back to Hotham was also exposed, so we rugged up before leaving the hut.

We wandered back to Loch car park from Derrick, being blasted by the wind, but we knew we weren't far from hot showers so it didn't matter. As we reached the skifields, we could see our entire walk, from the start of The Razorback all the way to Feathertop, and the Diamantina Spur. It was pretty incredible to see the whole thing and think we had just walked all of it.

It was amazing that from such a bad start, to a Plan B choice, then a terrible weather forecast, to that we ended up having almost perfect weather and the added bonus of the dusting of snow on the first day. The alpine regions are just stunning and we can't wait to hit up the rest of it soon ... but maybe after winter!



Stacey is a reluctant adventurer, spurred on by her intrepid and fearless husband Paul. Her parents took her on bushwalks as soon as she could walk. She is originally from Sydney but is loving exploring the amazing scenery in her new home state of Victoria.

Photo Gallery



Dawn at Surveyors Pool
Tom Brennan

Competition: Landscape June 2012



BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes June 2020

WINNER



Fainter South
Snowgum Grove
Sam Denniston



Deep view
Brian Eglinton



Mount Difficult
MulgaBill



A late arvo ramble, Mount
Razorback to the north
Osik



Misty morning
on the Bibb
Nigel H



Pretty Creek Gully
John Walker



Forests and farms
North-north-west



Non-landscapes

June 2020

WINNER



Lunch time
Brian Eglinton

Small birds are a challenge to photograph as they quickly flit around the trees and bushes.

This red browed finch was pausing long enough to get the shot as it was scoffing some seeds for lunch in Morialta Gorge.



Last rays of sun
(Tree of life)
Nigel H



The things that you find
John Walker



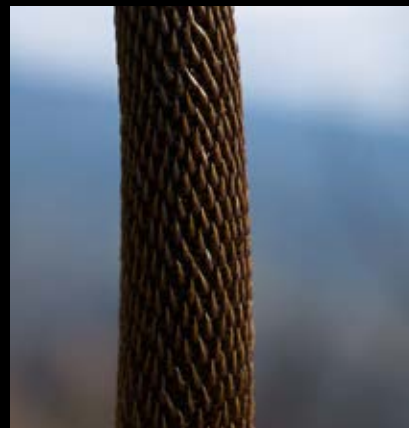
Life continues
on a fallen giant
Osik



Yellow Fungi,
Mount Difficult Range
MulgaBill



Mycena interrupta
North-north-west



Grass Tree spike spikes!
Tom Brennan



Other States

June 2020

WINNER



Second Falls
Brian Eglinton

Adelaide has the remarkable Morialta Gorge within a short distance from the CBD. It has a series of waterfalls and is often frequented by rock climbers drawn to its walls.

Second Falls can be viewed from various tracks, but it is a bit of a scramble seeking to avoid blackberries to get to its base.

This is the view a short distance downstream near some enormous fallen blocks.



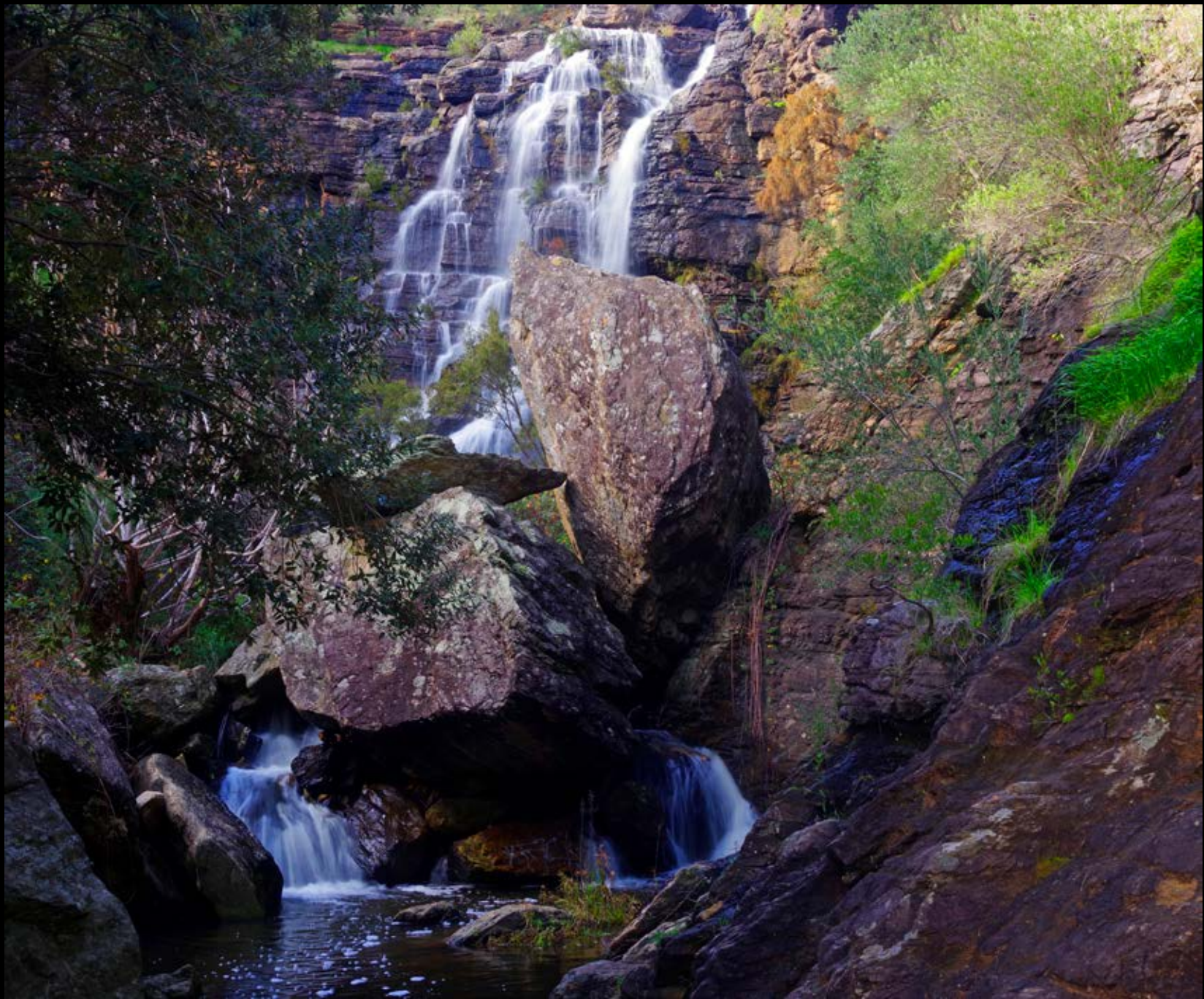
Light strikes the canopy floor near the
grave of a fallen hero
Osik



Wanganderry sunset
Tom Brennan



The Old Quarry Pond
John Walker



Tasmania

June 2020

WINNER



Back in the forest
North-north-west

They finally lengthened the leash during our pandemic lockdown in June. Cape Surville was the first decent walk since coming off the Port Davey Track in March and it didn't disappoint, especially the beautiful little pocket of rainforest halfway along the track.



Landscapes

July 2020

WINNER



Mount Abrupt
Brian Eglinton

The Flinders Ranges are notable for rich colours. The best time to walk is the cooler months, and the Heysen Trail makes for good multi-day walking. It runs along the valley under the north wall of Wilpena Pound which swings north to become the Heysen Range.

Early in that range is Mount Abrupt, a peak that stands out from the rest. Here its quartzite faces contrast with the light colour of the limestone foothills and the green of the native pines spaced out over the deep red soils.



Recumbent view
John Walker



The Drip
landsmith



Last light on the pagodas
Tom Brennan



Time to find a campsite
North-north-west



Dove Lake
Graham51



Non-landscapes

July 2020

WINNER



Crazy paving
North-north-west

Ice pools have always fascinated me due to the myriad patterns they form, but this day - wandering around up on Western Bluff - was the first (indeed, the only) time I have seen angular patterns like this. Perhaps someone out there can explain the physics behind it; I'll stick to photographing them.



The magic of spring
landsmith



How's the view, sister?
John Walker



Weebil
Brian Eglinton



Other States

July 2020

WINNER



ABC dawn
Brian Eglinton

Getting up early and doing some off track scrambling in the open forests and rocky ridges of the ABC Range leads to fantastic views of the morning sun on the north wall of Wilpena Pound.

This view covers from Point Bonney on the left past St Marys Peak and the Sawtooth to Mount Abrupt.



Vertical perspective
John Walker



Morning mist through the trees
Tom Brennan



The Drip
landsmith



Mugii Murum-ban
Osik



Tasmania

July 2020

WINNER



Fog, snow and icy rock - Ben Lomond has it all, any time of year, but most of all in winter.

Winter peakbagging
North-north-west



West of Cradle
Graham51



Swift Water Rescue Course

Sonya Muhlsimmer



In April 2021 I had the opportunity to do a three day Swift Water Awareness and Rescue Course for canyoneers in Tasmania with [Cradle Mountains Canyon Tours](#) (CMC).

Day 2 - Learning rescue techniques when stuck in a whirlpool
All uncredited pictures by Sonya Muhlsimmer

In early 2021 several people drowned in canyons in the Blue Mountains, NSW. These drownings prompted Anthony O'Hern from CMC to host a course in swift water canyon rescue techniques - he thought there was a need for more awareness and training when dealing with water hazards in canyons. Any training session is great to undertake to learn, sharpen and refresh techniques, and the canyons and rivers in Cradle Mountain are the perfect venue to do such training. This was the first course of its kind in Cradle Mountain and I guess you could say, our group of seven were the guinea pigs. And yes, we all survived.

The force of the water can be quite confronting; it really makes you appreciate and respect the danger and hazards of any sport undertaken in water. How many bushwalkers drown in river crossings, swimmers at beaches? How many canyons get stuck? A little knowledge of how to get yourself out and most importantly how to stay calm when a situation could be life saving. In May, [Backpacker](#) reported that Max LeNail, 21, drowned while navigating a section of trail that crosses the San Diego River in California's [Mission Trails Regional Park](#). Ask yourself, could you identify water hazards or even get out of a tricky situation or help

“Ask yourself, could you identify water hazards ...”

someone else if they got stuck in water? And did you know it is generally not safe to enter water that is greater than knee deep when you need to cross a creek or river? I encourage you to do a course in swift water if you spend any time out in water - creek or river crossings, surfing, canoeing or kayaking. There's a prerequisite to the course in that you have had canyon experience, and rightly so.

There were so many techniques that were discussed and tried, which I will discuss briefly later. The course was certainly a challenging three days and not for the faint-hearted. The water was high, fast flowing and cold. Five days prior to the course Cradle Mountain received 20 centimetres of snow at 900 metres and around 30+ centimetres at 1200 metres. By the time I arrived the snow had melted, but the water had to go somewhere, and into the canyons and rivers it went. This made a perfect training ground to test every level of senses. With this course and the predicted weather conditions it was looking like we were going to experience features of an A7 canyon, which means extremely hard. The grading means A for aquatic and 7 for Extremely difficult and very exposed.

I really didn't feel ready for this type of canyoning course but everything was booked, so I went anyway.



A bit of background on the canyon guides

Anthony O'Hern is the owner of CMC with over 18 years in guiding. He has a background in kayaking the world, solo trekking along the Great Wall of China and working as a rafting and canyoning guide. He knows his stuff.

Alec Wilson has been a guide with CMC for five years and his background is a climbing and canyoning guide, white water kayaker instructor. He has worked in the USA at Yosemite National Park as a wilderness emergency medicine technician, which means he is specially trained in first aid and wilderness environments to provide care in an emergency. He also knows his stuff. I couldn't have asked for more well equipped, knowledgeable and patient guides for this course. There were a few oh crap moments, but Antho and Al were always there to lend a hand.

Course overview

Day 1 – Mersey River

The first day was on the Mersey River with rafts, practising a number of swift water rescue techniques and how to identify water hazards.

The first tip was how to identify an eddy, and how to swim across strong currents to break through the eddy line to calmer water on the other side of the river. An eddy is a circular current of water. The water flows back upstream against the current, generally obstructed by something and the water has a softer flow rate so it's easier to manage than the current. An eddy is a good spot for entering and exiting the water as the current is not so strong. Due to the circular motion, the eddy edges are faster than the water in the middle of the eddy.

The idea is to jump in at the top of the eddy line, the point at which the eddy meets the



Day 1 - V formation crossing white water
Anthony O'Hern

main current, at a 45 degree angle to cross into the eddy. Start by having your arms out in front and swim as hard and fast as you can until you get to the eddy line and you are through and into the calmer water. When swimming to the shore don't stop until your hands touch the bottom. This is the [best video](#) I have found to explain it more.

Further down the river we were testing out how to cross a river in a group in a V-shaped wedge. As a bushwalker this was extremely valuable as I have had to cross so many dodgy rivers. I know in one river, a few people perished the year before by being swept away. The strongest person goes at the front and uses a walking pole or a paddle if you happen to have one as we did. The next two people go on either side of the first person at an angle, holding on, and if you have anyone else they can go behind the first person and in the middle of the side two. Face upstream, go slowly and shuffle your feet, always have two to three points of contact, hold on and push down. If you get swept away turn onto your back, ditch your pack ASAP if you have one, and face your feet downstream with your feet pointing up and legs bent slightly, then aim for the bank in a diagonal direction.

For backpacking, don't forget to unclip your waist and chest straps before entering the water for easy disposal in case you do fall in and get swept away so that the pack won't drag you down.

Next we crossed a river using a tensioned diagonal line. The catch to this one is send the strongest swimmer first with the rope

attached to the person, when they are on the other side they can attach it to an anchor at about 45 degrees downstream. Attach yourself to the line using a sling or safety line if you have one and go on your back with your feet facing downstream and generally the current will take you. If the current doesn't pull you, use your hands and pull yourself down the line.

Further down the river we learned how to use throw ropes and also tested out how to save someone using a live bait rescue, explained later. Briefly, a throw rope is a bag full of a floating material rope and it is thrown generally in an overhand throw towards the victim. Start by ensuring you have a back up person behind you to help pull the victim in and then by pulling out some rope, hold the free end of the rope in one hand and the bag in the tossing hand. Throw the bag right in front of the victim. Once the victim has the rope, pull them in. See [this](#).

A live bait rescue is used when the rescuer jumps in to save someone. The "bait" or rescuer is tied into the rope through a releasable harness or life jacket and jumps in upstream as close as possible to the person, grabbing onto the victim, getting behind them and holding onto their life jacket or shoulder. Then you can grab onto the rope behind you and in a ferry position, aid them to safety. You want to be behind the victim so if they are in a panic you can let them go not to get yourself in a pickle. There are always one or two other people at the end of the line to help pull in the rescuer and the victim. See how to perform a live bait rescue [here](#).



We also learned how to ferry glide to cross a current. Ferry gliding is crossing the river from one eddy to another without losing distance downstream. This was done on a raft and it involves speed to stay stable, angle to cross the eddy pointing upstream and edging downstream when you approach the eddy line.

Day 2 – Dove Canyon

We spent the day in the top and lower sections of Dove Canyon. There were lots of exercises that were practised and many discussions were had along the way about escaping forms of hydraulics (stoppers and holes). The water was too high for us to go through the canyon proper - the water level marker was completely underwater - so we abseiled in and climbed out at either end.

The first exercise was in a strong retentive eddy, or in other words something like a whirlpool. Once you jumped in you would continue spinning around. We tried a few techniques in this feature such as trying to swim out and throwing a rope that we tensioned off downstream using a rope bag. The force you had to use to swim out was confronting and extremely hard. Firstly you had to aim upstream. If you were lucky, you would catch the current and then you would be swept out of the downstream side of the eddy. If not, it is back around the eddy you go. We also tried using our feet to push off against the wall to get out of the current. The tensioned rope with the rope bag was quite a success. The rescuer throws the rope bag downstream and the bag simply fills up and creates a good tension line, just by using the current of the water. The rope is thrown in at the victim and they pull themselves out along the rope. Further down this section of the canyon we also tried some more tensioned line crossings.

After lunch, we abseiled into the top of Tea Cup Falls, and I must say this section looked very intimidating. My choice was to jump 3-4 metres or climb out about 30 or more metres, so I jumped. The water was white

and frothy and very fast flowing through a narrow tunnel. In case we needed rescuing, Al wedged himself in the narrow section just past where we jumped into the frothy water; it was comforting to have him there.

After this section the canyon opened up a little with a ledge you could climb out

“We were warned about this and guess what? This happened to me.

onto, but then if you missed the climb, the current would drag you over a 4-5 metre waterfall. We were warned about this and guess what? This happened to me. I missed the climb out due to some confusion, lack of communication and hesitation, and over I went. That incident really scared me but I managed to get out at the bottom and Al came down to make sure I got out, before the next waterfall and to see if I was alright. This was the correct way to go over and most people went this way. The alternative was to abseil beside the waterfall which someone in the group did. I just would have liked to go over the waterfall when I was ready and not get sucked over by the current. At the bottom of the pool we tested the methods of pushing off with your feet through strong currents.

Further down and near the end of Dove Canyon we tried using the rope bag again with a tensioned line. Al also showed us how to do a Superman dive. This dive method is really useful if you don't know how deep the water is, or if there are any obstructions under the water that you can't see due to fast flowing water

“This dive method is really useful if you don't know how deep the water is ...

and to get out of a retentive eddy as quickly as you can. It is simple and very effective by simply diving in on the side with one arm out over your head, just like Superman, and when you enter the water start swimming hard as you are already between strokes.

The last two exercises were mimicking a log jam and how to get over, never under, the obstruction and trying to free yourself from a trapped foot. These were very interesting techniques and were difficult to get out of, even in a low water environment.

Day 3 – Machinery Canyon

The last day was spent in Machinery Canyon focusing on vertical rescue techniques. It was great to be in the canyon and completing it fully, especially on the last day of the course. Also, due to the location of this canyon it had a lot less water compared to Dove Canyon so it was a relatively dry day. A lot was covered so here is a quick overview and the main techniques we learnt from the day.

First we learnt about mechanical haul systems which are used by rescuers when they need to haul someone up, or even for rock climbers on a multi-pitch climb hauling gear. The haul system reduces the effort to raise a load and for a 3 to 1 hauling system, for every 3 metres of rope that you haul, you move the person 1 metre. Calculating the ratio of a pulley system is to count the lines that pull the load, 3 lines equals a 3:1 and each rope is supporting a third of the load. So if you have a heavy load you can increase the pulley system up to a 7:1 to make the heavy weight easier to haul. Without going into further detail, here is a great link with diagrams to further explain the [3:1 system](#).

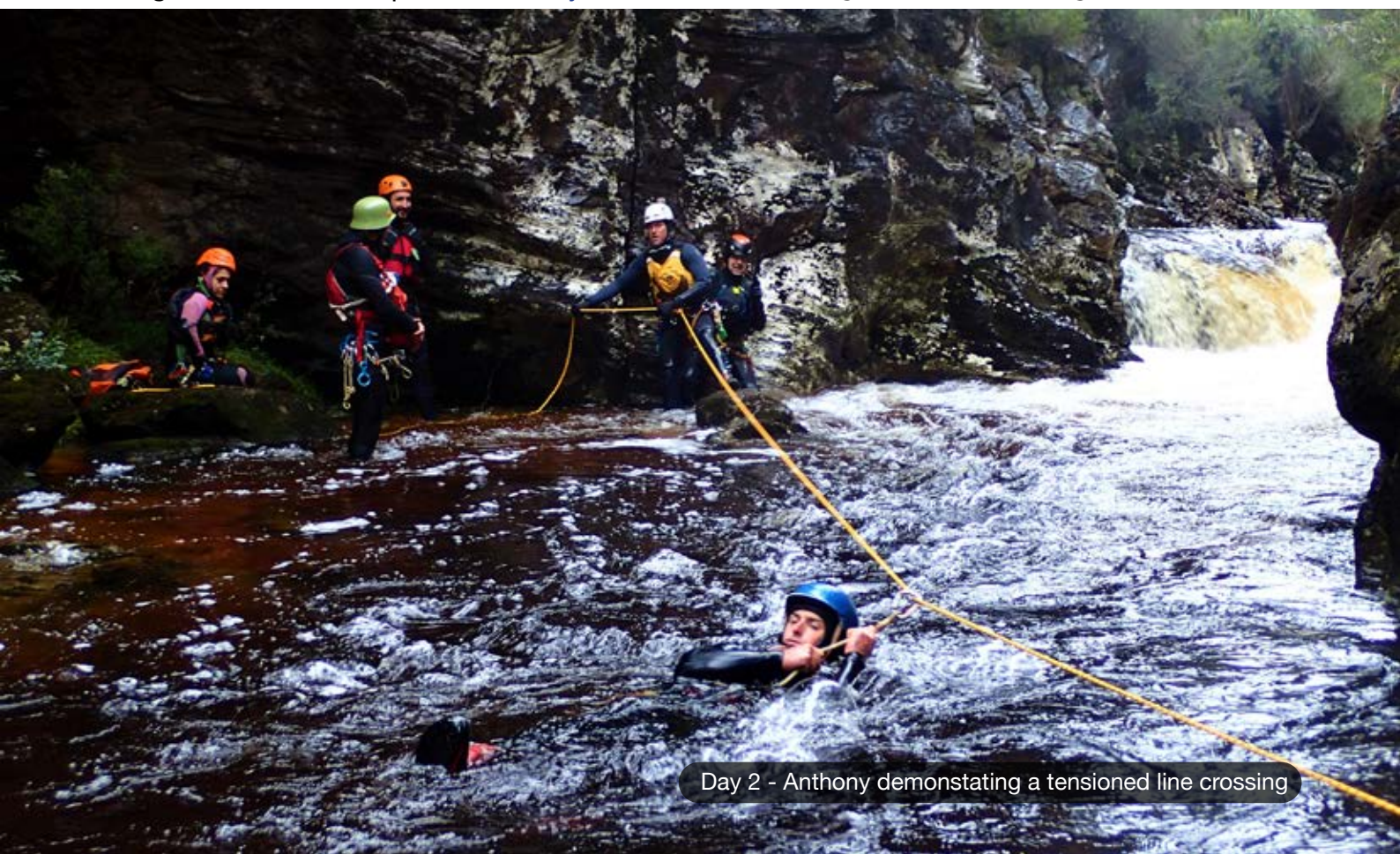
“First we learnt about mechanical haul systems ...”

Further into the canyon we tried methods of setting the line when you don't know how much rope you need to touch the bottom, guided rappels, setting a meat anchor, this is when a person is used as an anchor, and using a rope bag for a tension line.

When setting the rope length it is a good idea to have a releasable anchor so you can lower the person if there is not enough rope and for communication, ensure you establish an understanding of what whistle and hand signals will be used and mean before the first person goes over the cliff edge. Communication is the key here.

Guided rappels are great for avoiding obstacles like a pool at the bottom of a waterfall. Think of a guided rappel as a combined rappel and zipline. The zipline is anchored top and bottom tight enough so that the abseiler misses the obstacle. The bottom of the rope can either be a meat anchor (someone holding the line) or tied to a tree. The abseiler clips on to the zipline with a sling. When the obstacle is reached the zipline takes most of the weight and the person abseils while sliding on the zipline. See the photo on page 43.

Lastly, a cut-away rescue was practised and even though I knew I was in good hands it



Day 2 - Anthony demonstrating a tensioned line crossing

was nerve-wracking, well for me anyway. When time is of the essence and there is no quick solution, sometimes you need to cut the rope. This needs to be done carefully so as not to drop the abseiler!

Start by attaching a prusik or ascender with a karabiner to the loaded rope for a rope grab. Then attach a spare rope to that karabiner, thread the rope through another karabiner on the anchor, then attach the rope to your belay device. Take the weight with a counterbalanced meat anchor (person with a descender) and carefully cut the loaded rope above the rope grab. Finally, tie an overhand knot in the cut rope, and lower the person using the descender.

This is a technique of last resort with catastrophic consequences if you get it wrong, so the opportunity to practice it in a controlled environment was very valuable.

Knowing how to tie knots and when to use them is essential in canyoning. You should have a good knowledge of knots, including the following.

- Stopper knots Double overhand and a figure of eight knot.
- Hitches Girth, clove and munter hitches, and a prusik knot.
- Bends Double fisherman and a water (aka tape) knot.
- Loop knots Alpine butterfly and a figure of eight on a bight.



A few good websites are [Canyoning knots](#) and [Animated knots](#). Another great resource is the book called [Canyoning Technical Manual](#) by Grant Prattley & David Clearwater. You can spend hours looking at these links and this book practicing knots.

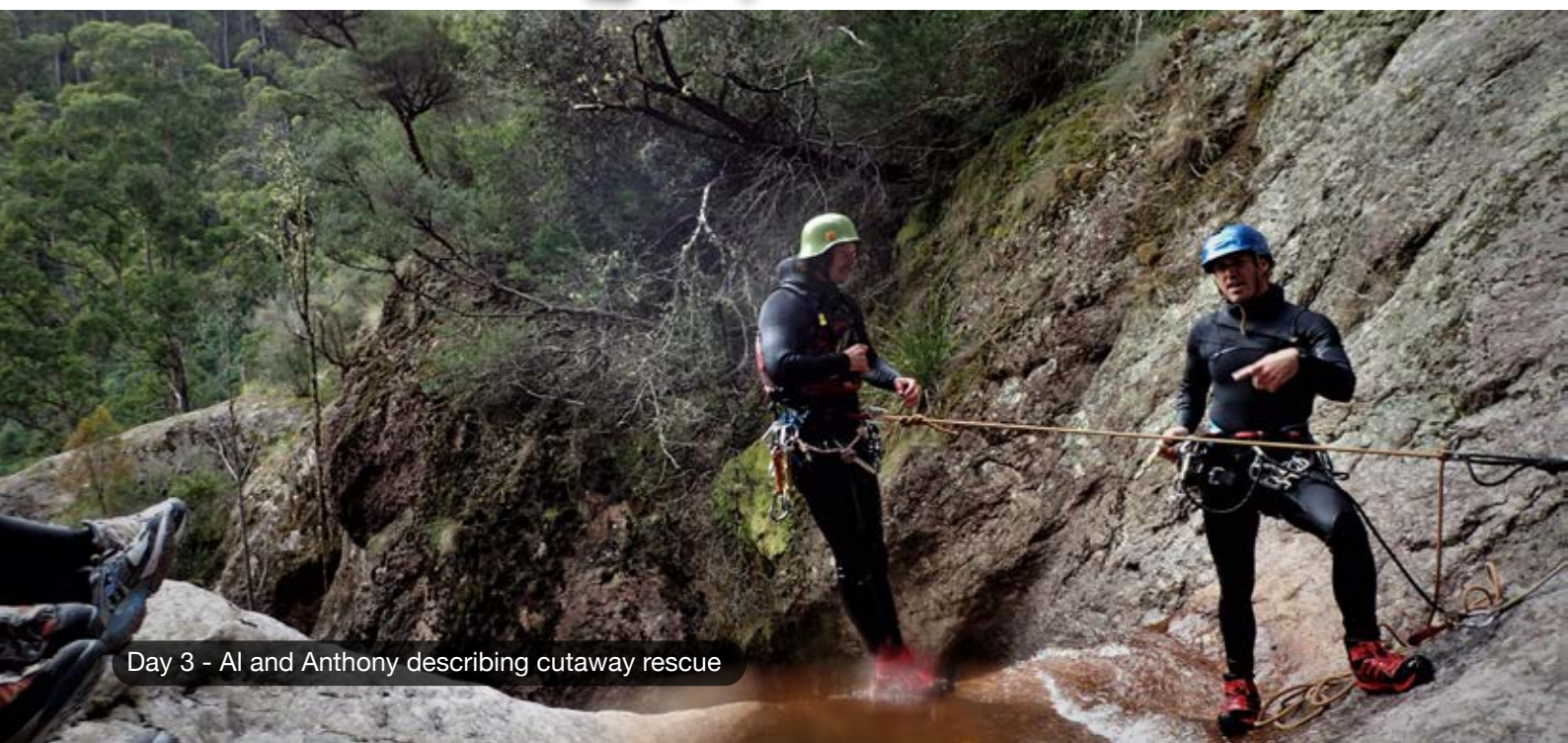
Before you go canyoning, ask yourself, do you know how to abseil, self-rescue or identify a hazard in the water, and how to get out or help someone out if you were to find yourself in a tricky situation? If not, I would suggest you join a canyoning group. Some bushwalking clubs have a canyoning group which you can join, or even go on a commercial tour to see how you like canyoning.

Alternatively, there is an online training course from [V7 academy](#). Start off with their free course to see what you think.

I must say, it is good fun as most of the time you have to walk a fair distance in the bush to get into the canyon so you have the best of both worlds in bushwalking and canyoning.

CMC will run this course again, however you have to wait for the right time and water levels so keep an eye out; in a small group environment the course will book out fast. It is so worth doing.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Guy Wittig and Anthony O'Hern in writing the article. Any mistakes are the author's responsibility.



Day 3 - Al and Anthony describing cutaway rescue



The National Environmental Laws Don't Work

Matt Ruchel
VNPA Executive Director

"Ineffective", leading to "piecemeal decisions", "outdated", and "not fit to address current or future environmental challenges" – some of the damning findings of the review of our national environmental laws.

Logging continues in the Central Highlands under the Regional Forest Agreements, exempt from the EBPC Act
Justin Cally

Professor Graeme Samuel's [Final Report](#) of the Independent Review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) was released in late January 2021.

The report pushes an overhaul of national environmental laws – and at the centre of these reforms is the development of National Environmental Standards.

To help address the issue of duplication with state and territory development approval processes, the new National Environmental Standards are intended to set the boundaries for decision-making and deliver the protections needed for "matters of national environmental significance", such as threatened species.

National Environmental Standards will however only work as part of a reform package, and, as Samuel notes, will only work if there is a mandated and rigorous compliance and enforcement regime to ensure that decisions made are consistently and fairly enforced in accordance with the law. The report proposes the establishment of an Environment Assurance Commissioner and a new, beefed-up enforcement office within the federal environment department, as well as an improved role for Traditional Owners.

Thoughtfully, Samuel cautions that: "Governments should avoid the temptation to cherry-pick from a highly interconnected suite of recommendations". But to date, precisely that has already happened. The Morrison Government is continuing its moves to introduce new "streamlining" legislation that aims to hand back environmental approval powers from the Commonwealth to the states – all before the EPBC Act gets the reforms it needs, and the report recommends.

Like its predecessor (the [Hawke Review](#), undertaken about a decade ago), the Samuel Review is scathing of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) between the Commonwealth and states which allow the logging industry exemption from the EPBC Act. The Samuel Review believes that the environmental considerations under the RFAs

and associated legislation are weaker and do not align with the EPBC Act's assessment of "matters of national environmental significance". It is also noted that there is insufficient Commonwealth oversight of RFAs and the assurance and reporting mechanisms are weak. Who knew? This is a repeated point made by conservation groups such as VNPA for decades. (See [Another Decade](#))

To end the special treatment of the logging industry, the report recommends an increase in the level of environmental protection afforded in RFAs by way of the Commonwealth immediately requiring them to be consistent with the proposed National Environmental Standards and, during the second tranche of reforms, amending the EPBC Act to replace the RFA exemption.

Victoria's outdated RFAs were only recently renewed for another ten years, showing that there is often little appetite for fundamental change. Similar recommendations by the Hawke Review a decade ago were ruled out almost immediately by the then federal Labor government.

The report also highlights that stakeholders are concerned that the Commonwealth does not deliver effective oversight of how system-level approaches that are exempt from the EPBC Act have been implemented, nor how they are delivering environmental outcomes. The report cites RFAs as an example of this and Strategic Assessments as another. Concerns about the failure of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment are acknowledged in the report, including VNPA's specific submission on these issues as they relate to critically endangered grasslands threatened by development in Melbourne's urban growth area. (See [Renewed rush to "clear" the way](#)) The report notes that: "The use of a strategic assessment in some cases, for example for growth corridors of major cities, has been a work around rather than the most ideal planning tool". This is Canberra speak for "it's not working and probably shouldn't have been used in the first place".

However, while acknowledging the failing and legally complex nature of these exempt approaches, the report essentially

recommends greater use of these types of tools, but with new conditions and modifications, including:

- Compliance with yet to be established National Environmental Standards and regional recovery plans (where they are in place).
- A new national biodiversity "offset" policy to deliver offsets in a coordinated way across multiple regions.
- New regional scale "ecologically sustainable development plans", which appears to be a form of regional planning to underpin regulatory approvals, but which need to be consistent with the National Environmental Standards for matters of national environmental significance before being accredited under the EPBC Act.
- Amendments to the EPBC Act to clarify accountability and oversight of Strategic Assessments, particularly those like the Melbourne Strategic Assessment which are in place for many decades.

But if these tools are to have any chance of working, all the building blocks need to be put in place without key pieces getting left off due to the vagaries of the political process. The Samuel review points the way to reform,

but if any of it is to have real impact, the reform would need to be significant; and there are few instances of this of late in the Australian Parliament. The environment is complex, and the environmental laws and policies that are set up to help make decisions often need to deal with unique ecosystems and how they interact with seemingly insatiable human visions for development – which is always a challenge for reform.

With a climate and extinction crisis in full swing and a global pandemic overshadowing our lives, perhaps some of the lessons of listening to science and appreciating the simpler things in community and nature might be learned and applied here.

The Morrison Government must hear what this review is saying and deliver the fundamental reform to our environmental laws that is required to protect our natural world as the challenges grow.



This article was originally published in *Park Watch* magazine March 2021 by the [Victorian National Parks Association](#), a leading organisation working to protect nature in Victoria.



Endangered Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans* subsp. *tricolor*) are one of many Victorian grassland flora species listed under the EPBC Act.
Debbie Reynolds

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.

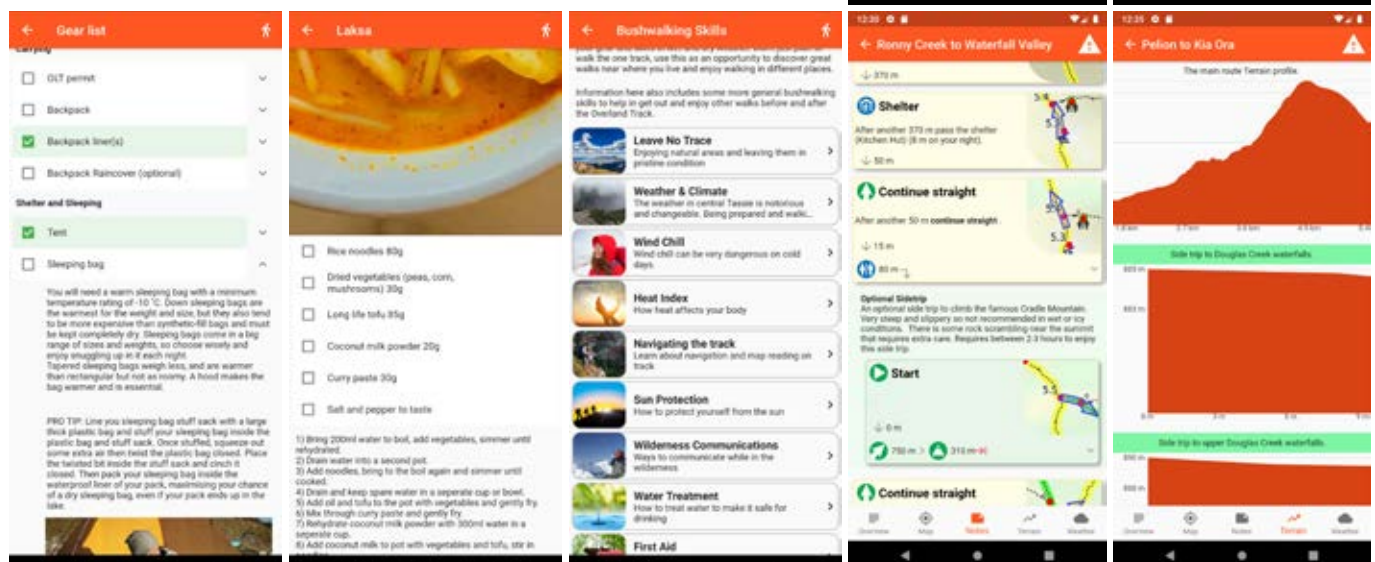
Think of this as the ultimate reference for the Overland Track, a happy marriage between a GPS and a bushwalking guide book.

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.

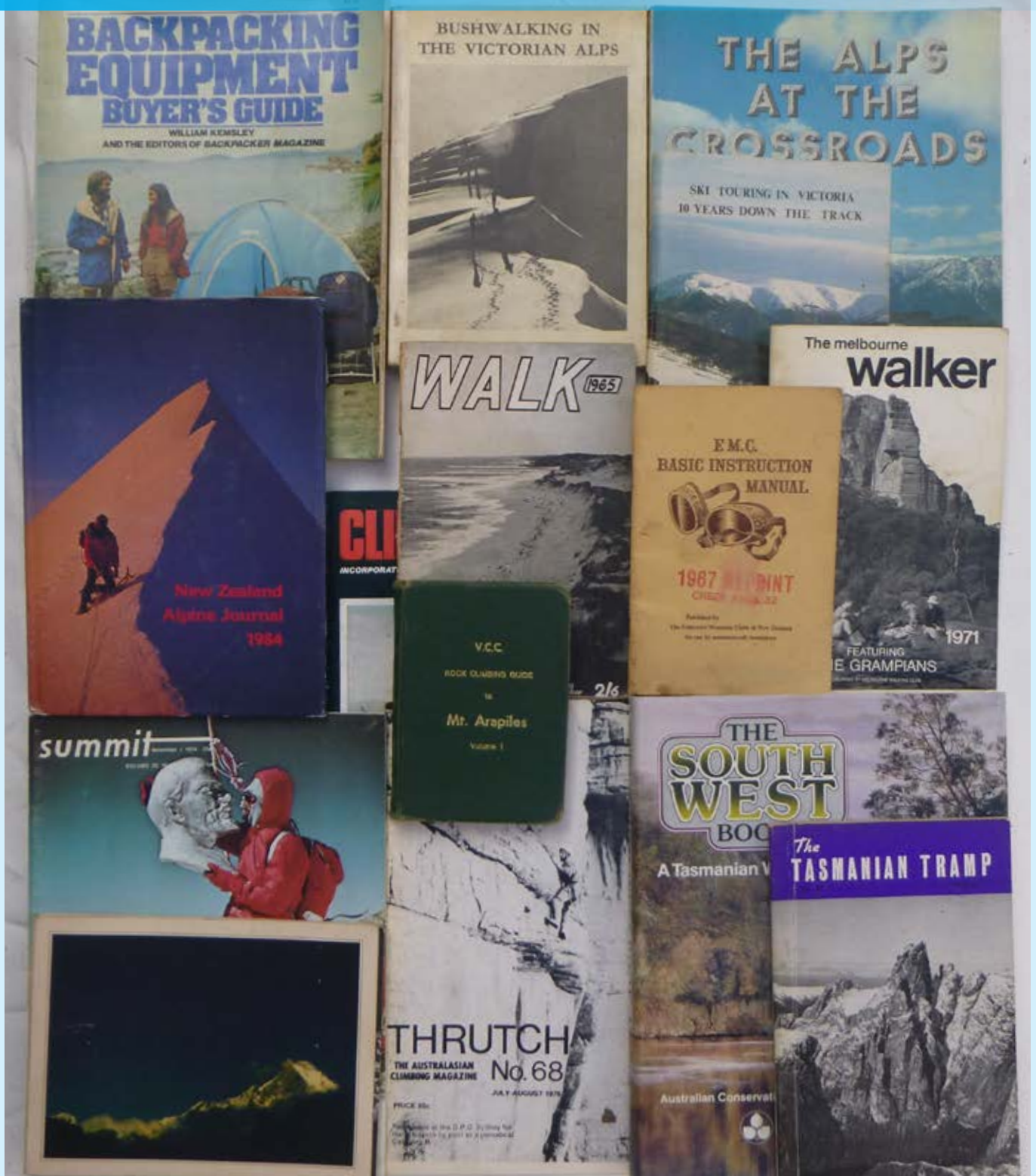
This app was made to help you get the most out of your time on the Overland Track, and is designed for all people: those new to bushwalking, hiking or tramping up to seasoned walkers.

More information at www.overlandtrack.com



Archive - Glimpses of the Past

Stephen Lake



A few weeks ago I was rearranging the dust in the lower dungeon when I found a number of old publications. As I browsed through them I thought that many things have changed in 50 years. There are perspectives that may be interesting, with younger people probably not knowing some aspects.

All pictures and scans by Stephen Lake

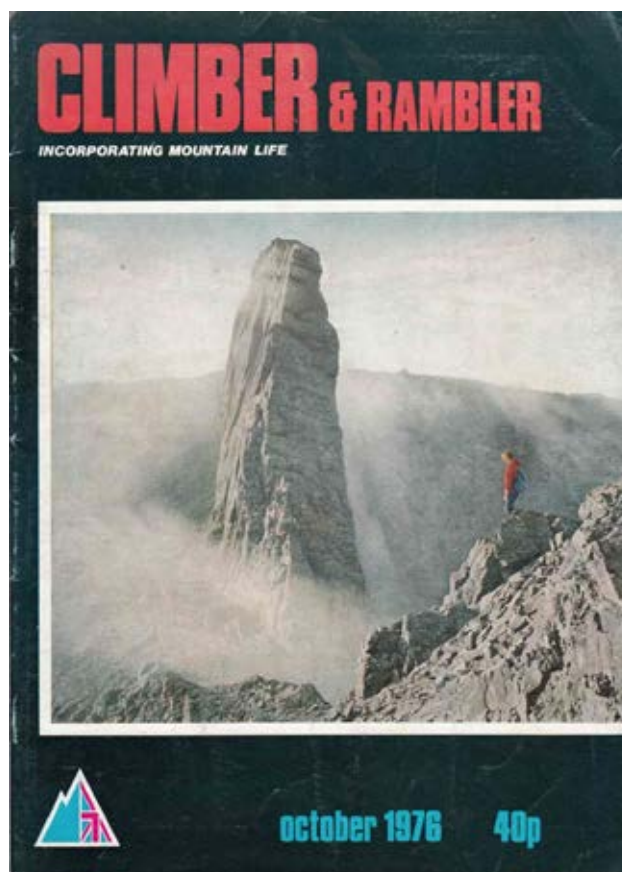
Rock

1965 - VCC Rock climbing guide to Mount Arapiles volume 1

This [VCC](#) guide has just 107 climbs. The preface says "Four years ago a most important step in Victorian climbing was taken, the first comprehensive guide to climbing in Victoria was produced." The 1965 Arapiles guide is "the first bound and printed guide book on rock climbing in Australia."

The grades have the English system, Moderately difficult to Hard very severe, grades 3-17. Improvements and developments in skill, technique, fitness and gear have led to grades of over 30. Some aid climbs (then called mechanical) are now free. For example, Dramp was graded severe/12 M2 in the book and is now grade 21. Some of the grades have gone up, perhaps due to the rock becoming smoother with climbing traffic.

A rope length of 120 feet (36.6 metres) was considered adequate. Today ropes are 60 metres long. In the early 1970s, ropes took just a few leader falls before they were risky. Now a rope can take 5-12 leader falls, and a lot more for people seconding or just above protection. In 1965 ropes were laid; now they are kernmantle.



Some of my guidebooks and other publications of that era have stamps and advertising from bushwalking shops now long gone – Bushgear, Moloneys and others.

1976 July-August – Thrutch 68 The Australasian climbing magazine

The cover has Reg Marron on the second free ascent of Odysseus at Bundaleer, Grampians, Victoria. Reg is now a magistrate. There's a report about a confrontation between conservationists and miners at Freycinet National Park – the miners want the rock. Grades have gone up to 22. [Thrutch](#) is now published by the Sydney Rock Climbers.

1976 October – Climber and Rambler

This is a UK magazine similar to *Wild* and is now called [Climber](#). The only pack in this edition that was popular in Australia is the Cyclops Roc. A sleeping bag review lists bags that are good to -10 °C. These weigh 1.1-1.6 kilograms, a bit heavier than today. A lightweight tent is advertised ... 5.52 kilograms. The colours are approved by the National Trust. There's an advertisement for a gadget with a siren audible at 900 metres and a light that goes to 280 metres. Ear muffs and sunnies are not included. Another advertisement has rocket flares. A pack called a Trojan looks nothing like the ones I have seen.

1976 November- December - Thrutch 69

There's an advertisement for the [Omnipotent](#), a quantum leap in tent design. This tent has four hoops and needs just two pegs, quite different to the more common ridge tents and the Blacks Good companion style. The Omnipotent has a cited weight of 5.5 pounds, 2.5 kilograms, but this does not



Omnipotent

Source: oregonphotos.com

include the vestibules, essential in my view, so allow around 2.8 kilograms. The concept is good but it was hard to negotiate the end guys to get in or out. This [amazing tent](#) has now been surpassed by better designs.

The last page has a report of the first climbing death in Australia. This was in the Blue Mountains where a climber was unroped at the top of a pitch, and seems to have got too close to the edge where he slipped on loose rocks.

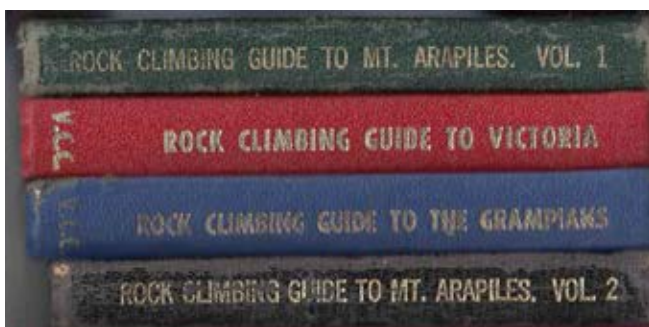
1977 May – Climber and rambler

Tents have ridges, with just one tunnel tent, for expeditions. A pack in an advertisement is in sharp contrast to modern packs. The Haston Alpiniste has an elegant design, a single bag with a pocket in the lid.

Modern packs are too complicated for me. Gas stoves are mentioned. A report of a 1937 trip says "We had scrounged a few clinkers for our army boots, our hemp rope had been carefully tested to prove that it would bear our weight, and we even had ice axes". Not many people know that the patterns on the soles of bushwalking boots are based on star muggers, clinkers, [Tricounis](#) and hobnails.

1994 – A rock climbers' guide to Arapiles/Djurite

This guide is just over twice the size of the 1965 guide, 205 X 150 mm. A colour cover, more pictures (some with females climbers), better topos, lists by name and grade, and better descriptions are the changes since 1965. Forgot – there are over 2000 routes in the book, and in 2021, over 3000. This is before sections of Arapiles [were closed](#). The hardest grade in the book is 32.



“Not many people know that the patterns on the soles of boots are based on star muggers ...”

Gear

1975 – Great Pacific Iron Works catalogue

This is a rather elegant booklet, with history, philosophy and other useful information and a lot of good pictures. The emphasis is on clean climbing, no pitons, somewhat ironic given that chalk was later used. The Chouinard krab is 71 grams, much lighter than steel. Hexentrics are three years old. "By the summer 1975 the minimum UIAA requirement will be increased to three falls." That is, a rope can take three falls safely. I was amazed to read that Jumars were invented in the early 1950s. Dachstein mitts are very heavy and quite warm, but take an age to dry.

1977 – Backpacking equipment buyer's guide

This is a substantial book, 285 pages. Despite the emphasis on American gear unsuitable for Australia, especially packs, this is an excellent guide. For example, the sleeping bag sections describe slant wall boxes, offset seams, mummy, rectangular and much more technical descriptions in 14 pages of words and diagrams before the reviews start. It's very hard to compare these bags with contemporary equivalent bags.

Tents have forest, rain, tropical, wind, Arctic tundra and desert tents categories. Wow. What seems to be the low altitude tent section has 46 ridge, 10 dome, 7 tunnel, and 2 hybrids. The high altitude winter tents section has 7 ridge, 2 dome, 1 tunnel, and 2 hybrids. A number of tents have entry sleeves, no zips. The late 1970s saw the start of dome and tunnel tents.

The stoves have a lot of gas models, with a few others that will be familiar to many: MSR, [Svea 123R](#) (choofer), [Optimus 111B](#) (1.6 kilograms, blue box with a lid, shellite), and a Trangia. The gas stoves have evolved into a smaller range, MSR and the Trangia are still used, and the rest are no longer available except in the back of cupboards or my lower dungeon. The [Optimus 8R](#) was more common in Australia, 690 grams.

“... the rest are no longer available except in the back of cupboards or my lower dungeon.”

The only sleeping mat I can find in this guide that is in use today is a Thermarest, 119 X 48 cm, 673 grams. Today the equivalent Thermarest is 3-400 grams. The range has been vastly expanded.

Mountaineering and ski touring

1967 – FMC Basic instruction manual

This small booklet of 32 pages was produced by the [Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand](#). The start of the book has a sentence "It must be emphasised that real competence can only be gained from experience." That has not changed.

Two pages later is advice about karabiners: "Use only steel. Other types of light alloy karabiners have no place for the uses described in these notes." When I first started climbing we used steel, soon abandoned as lighter krabs became common. I have a steel Bonatti, weight 200 grams. The lightest modern krabs weigh **20-30 grams**. "Slings should be made of manilla or hemp about 5/16" minimum diameter." The book predates harnesses and says that a waist loop should be used. This is one reason for the saying that the leader should never fall; falling was painful and risky.



Chouinard ice axe, pitons, bolt hanger, Bonatti krab, 60' number 3 rope, bamboo A-frame pack and a waist cord

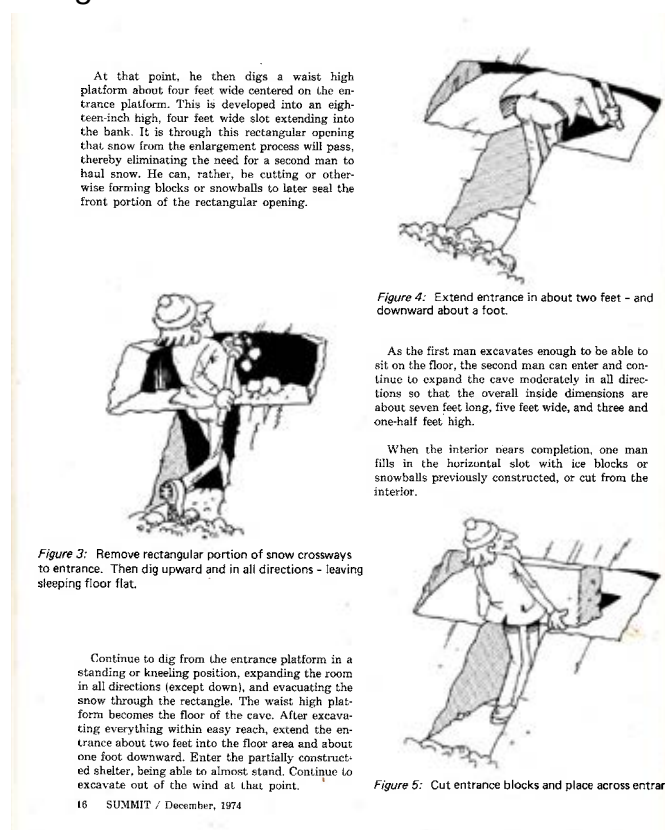
1973 – Mountain 25

This was a UK magazine similar to *Wild*, published by YHA England and Wales, and was probably the leading international mountaineering magazine of its time. New alpine and rock routes include places all over the world, with an emphasis on the UK. The presentation and information are excellent with pictures that made many dream.

Galen Rowell reviews the widely published mountaineering cartoonist Sheridan Anderson.

1974 – Summit volume 20, number 10

This is described in *Mountain* as "the most venerable and successful of American mountain magazines." Apart from the usual fare, two parts stand out. The first is how to dig a snow cave with a new method.



Summit magazine, how to build a snow cave

Briefly, on a steep snow bank go in and up. The excavated snow falls down the slope. A report of a climb on Peak Lenin details the deaths of nine climbers from cold on the normal routes of an easy mountain. "Perhaps an important factor in the death of the Russian women was the false sense of confidence afforded by radios, helicopters, expert advisers at base camp and large numbers of people on the same route." This pre-dates mobile phones, electronic maps, GPSs, PLBs and the internet.

1979 – Mountaineering 79

This is the journal of the [Melbourne University Mountaineering Club](#). In Melbourne, Paddy Pallin was at 55 Hardware Street. Moloneys and Bushgear were trading. In 2021 Auski are still at the same place,

trading since 1949. Ansett have a full page advertisement. Bill Bewsher's account of a 1948 attempt at Federation is stunning in that so much of the gear is well below today's standards. Mike Feller details the rise in visitor numbers in Victoria and Kosciuszko. Federation Hut has 723 and 1445 visitors for 1970 and 1977. I suspect that the numbers are now much higher, but with just 10-20% of people making a log book entry it's hard to say. The next page has a picture I took of Glen Tempest on Judgement day at Arapiles. I'd forgotten about that! Rob Jung discusses the proposed Snowy River National Park, now part of the Alpine NP.

The back page is an advertisement for Bushgear with a quote from Eric Shipton in *Upon That Mountain*, 1943.

He is lucky who, in the full tide of life, has experienced a measure of the active environment he most desires. In these days of upheaval and violent change, when the basic values of to-day are the vain and shattered dreams of to-morrow, there is much to be said for a philosophy which aims at living a full life while the opportunity offers. There are few treasures of more lasting worth than the experience of a way of life that is in itself wholly satisfying. Such, after all, are the only possessions of which no fate, no cosmic catastrophe can deprive us; nothing can alter the fact if for one moment in eternity we have really lived.

1984 – New Zealand Alpine Journal

This is published by the [New Zealand Alpine Club](#). As I read the pages for the first time in decades I was taken back to the mountains I loved so much. Alpine starts, firm snow, crampons, the joy of summits offset by terror as the slope collapsed.

1986 – Ski touring in Victoria 10 years down the track

This is the monthly newsletter of the Ski Touring Association of Victoria, and is an anniversary edition. STAV made a big difference to XC skiing and conservation. In 1976 there was a lot of emphasis on resort-based XC skiing activities and marked trails. With other groups, STAV opposed the proposals for a resort on Feathertop (does this sound familiar?), a new village at

Rocky Valley Dam, ski tows and helicopters on Mount Nelse, and recreational use of snowmobiles in remote regions. The snowmobiles were sometimes cited as being on a search and rescue practice, but this was a small fig leaf covering riders having fun. Instruction and safety standards were raised. Zoning was developed. Huts, routes and pole lines were discussed. The Mount Stirling development was opposed.

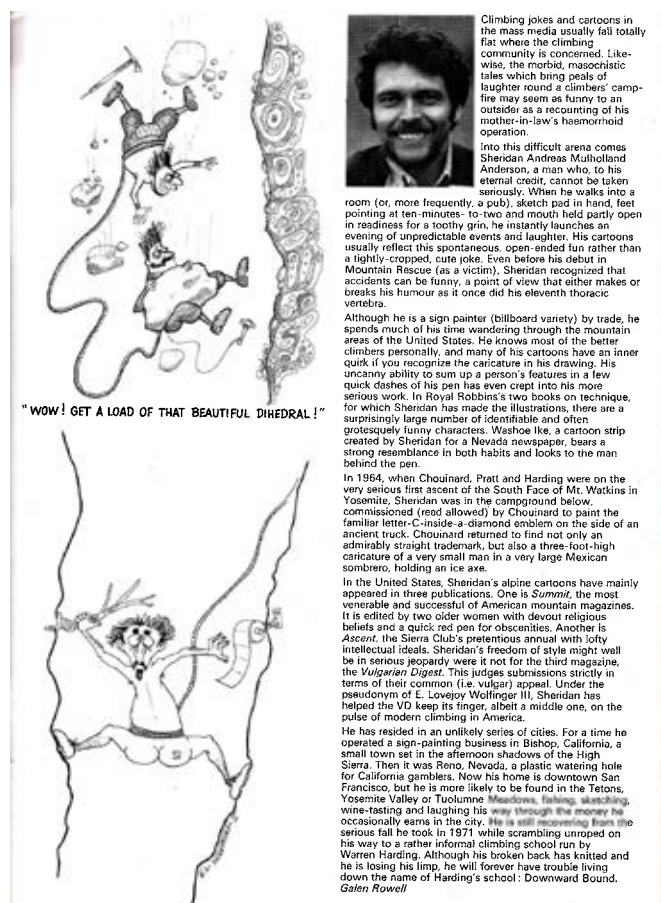
It was a busy time in the face of vested interests and a lack of awareness of conservation values. National parks were under threat from developers, helicopters landed at remote places without permission and nothing was done by land managers. Not much has changed.

Bindings are three pin, waxes are in evidence, and a party stayed at the Soil Conservation Hut above Blue Lake on the Main Range at KNP.

Bushwalking magazines

1965 – Walk

This is the annual magazine of the [Melbourne Bushwalkers](#). The inside cover has an advertisement for Paddy Pallin with an A-frame pack. Opposite is the meeting room,



Sheridan cartoons in *Mountain 25*

VRI, the same building as [YHA Bushies](#) a few years later. Page 23 has advice:

Culled from a South African newspaper: "It is not true that walking is a lost art. After all, one has to get to the garage somehow."

There's a picture of a beginner abseiling, bare feet, T-shirt, rope over the shoulder – ouch. Surely twisted krab or crossed krabs had been invented by then. The Forests Commission of Victoria has a full page advertisement showing how to safely light fires and to put them out, lots of water. A possible chair lift up Mount Bogong is discussed. "Hundreds of snow poles have been erected on the Bogong High Plains lately which should considerably help those who have taken to ski touring as an extension of walking." The Victorian Government Tourist Bureau has a page advising that "Special tickets enable hikers to leave Melbourne on one line, walk across country to join a return train on another line." Maps are 1:63,360, one inch to the mile, with currency in pounds, shillings and pence. The last page has snake bite treatment – cut the wound. We've come a long way since then.



Walk 1965

1971 – The Melbourne walker

This is similar in size and style to *Walk*, and is the annual of the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club, now called the [Melbourne Walking Club](#). An advertisement has sleeping bags from \$4.95, one man tents for \$8.00, compasses from 25 cents, and Flinders Ranges H-frame packs for \$24. The Scout Shop has eight outlets in Victoria. The Australian Dairy Produce Board has a full page advertisement with dietary suggestions. Kodak has an Instamatic camera, not quite a Nikon or Canon, but it works.

"Most people would accept that the history of the Grampians commenced with their discovery by the famous Major Thomas Mitchell." Today a more enlightened view has Aboriginals there for tens of thousands of years. A new concept is discussed – if you can carry it in you can carry it out, with the main emphasis on cans. The custom until then was burn, bash and bury.

1972 – Walk

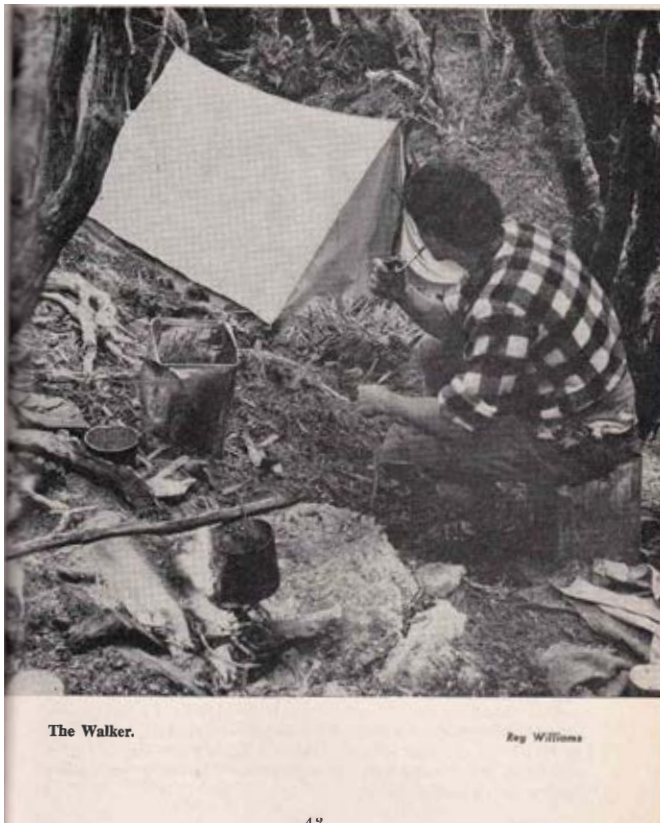
Kodak has an advertisement for a cassette camera, thus avoiding the need to feed the film. The Kimptons Mountain Mule is 2 lbs 14 ounces, or 1.3 kg, quite light for an H-frame pack of that era. R Johnson is Dick Johnson, see below. He discusses fire in the forest environment and says that there's a new technique, "fuel reduction" or "prescribed burning". Some 48 years later the article is still valid.

The Gilleo Memorial Track has just been cut. The Alpine Trail is now called the Alpine Track. The Ministry of Tourism will maintain essential Bogong High Plains pole lines. The Kosciuszko Huts Association has been formed. The National Fitness Council is running bushwalking leader training courses. This is before the Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership Course was created.

1974 – The Tasmanian tramp

This is the Journal of the [Hobart Walking Club](#) and was produced every two years. The format is the same as the two Melbourne clubs above. The first thing that made me take note were the authors of the articles – Jesse Luckman, Reg Williams, Jack Thwaites, Alex Sklenica and Jim England.

Jesse discusses conservation and says "Frequently, members have collated material and presented evidence on behalf of the Club to members of Parliament, select committees, and boards of enquiry". Fourteen years later I was doing just that regarding the Alpine National Park. "The first private air drop in the South-West was made in 1946." The article is too long to quote, but it would be good if Jesse's ideas of 1974 were adopted; it would have saved a lot of aggro regarding many areas, including Halls Island.



Tasmanian Tramp 1974. Note the fire, trees very close, food drop, tiny tent held up with sticks and the pipe.

Supplies for an Easter camp in 1924 are cited: 16 lb bread, 2 lb sugar, 24 eggs, 1 cake, 2 large jars of jam, 1 large apple pie, 1 small apple pie, and 1 large rabbit pie. Items were on the big side. Tracks have been cut to Cape Pillar and Clemes Peak. I wonder what they would think of the upmarket Two Capes track.

Guide books

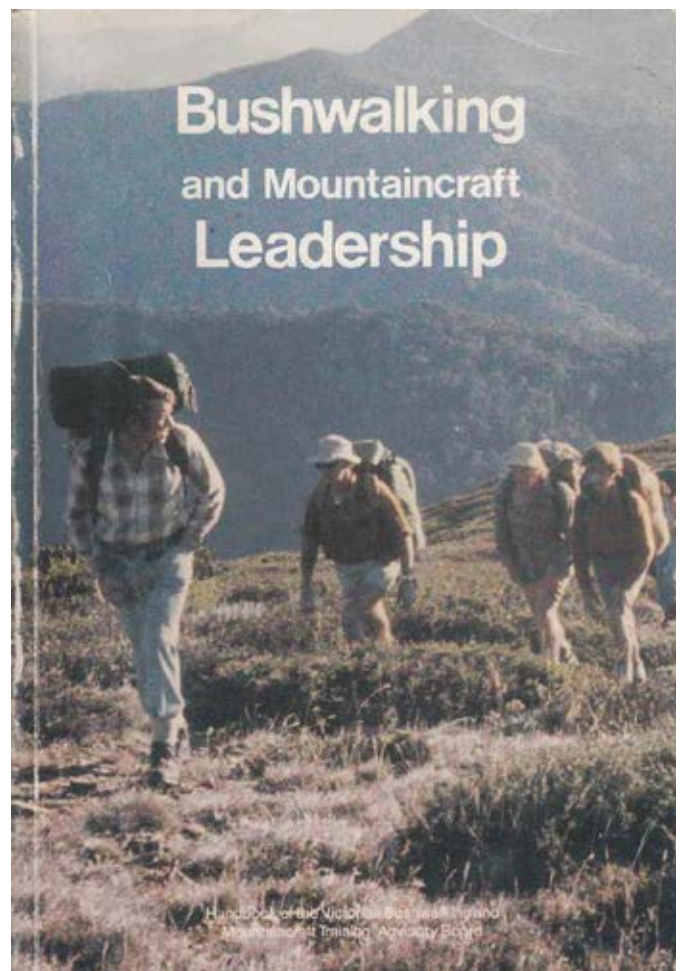
1974 – *Bushwalking in the Victorian Alps*

This was first published in 1970 by the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club as *Guide to the Victorian Alps*, filling an

information void. The 1974 update had a new name and revised notes. Cowombat Flat is spelled as Quambatt Flat in the book. Summit Hut on Bogong is still up; it would be intentionally burnt a few years later.

There's advice that entry to old mines at Walhalla is "extremely dangerous, and should not be undertaken without an experienced guide." I discovered this. On an exploration trip we had gone in horizontally a short distance, past a fallen roof, and for some reason that we could not initially fathom the candles kept on going out. Then we all got headaches. I was the first to see the danger and said something like, "There seems to be a lack of oxygen. What steps should we take?" My mate Terry Elliott gave a reply that was typical for him: "Bloody big ones!" We were in bad shape when we emerged, but recovered to do more foolish things.

“What steps should we take?” My mate Terry Elliott gave a reply that was typical for him: “Bloody big ones!”



Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership, 1981

Instruction

1981 – Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership

This was first published by the Victorian Department of Sport and Recreation as the handbook of the Victorian Bushwalking and Mountaineering Training Advisory Board in 1978. It proved to be popular and a revised edition was published in 1981. It has been revised again, and in my view is one of the best leadership resources in Australia. A lot has changed in 40 years. Oiled japaara, H-frame packs, japaara ridge tents, campfires, technology, information, bushwalking clubs, climate change, logging. The core information about leadership is intact. I contributed in a minor way to the 1978 and 2000 editions and was a staff member.

Writing in 2004, former BMTAB Executive Officer Rod Lingard has [this to say](#).

In his endorsement of the latest edition, the chair of the Outdoor Recreation Council of Australia said: "It is regarded as the definitive text for leading others in outdoor pursuits ..." Schools, universities and other groups throughout Australia have bought the book in impressive numbers. More than 30,000 copies have been sold.

A bushwalking manual based on the BMLC book can be found [here](#).

Conservation

1974 – Alps at the crossroads

This was written by Dick Johnson and published by the [Victorian National Parks Association](#) to push for an Alpine National Park. *Alps at the crossroads* is one of the most important conservation books in Victoria, if not Australia. The reader is gently taken through the history, geology

flora, fauna, grazing, recreation and other aspects. The facts are stated simply, and it's very persuasive. Forty-seven years since publication the words still stand true.

1979 – The South West Book, a Tasmanian Wilderness

The [Australian Conservation Foundation](#) published this lovely book. The format is similar to *Alps at the crossroads*. There are pictures of Lake Peddar, the real one, not the new one. We lost that, going down fighting, the victim of Tasmanian government foolishness. Bob Hawke saved the Franklin, with such issues leading to the rise of conservation groups. The fight continues at Halls Island, the Bogong High Plains and too many other places.

1983 – Franklin blockade

Published by [The Wilderness Society](#), the blockaders' stories give a wonderful view of events without the filter of others. Labor won the federal election on 11 March 1983. Prime Minister-elect Bob Hawke's first commitment on election night was "The dam will not be built." A few pages later is this: "On 1 July 1983 the High Court of Australia ruled that the Commonwealth Government had the power to stop the Gordon-below Franklin dam."

All that protesting paid off. Those who were involved should still be proud that they were there.

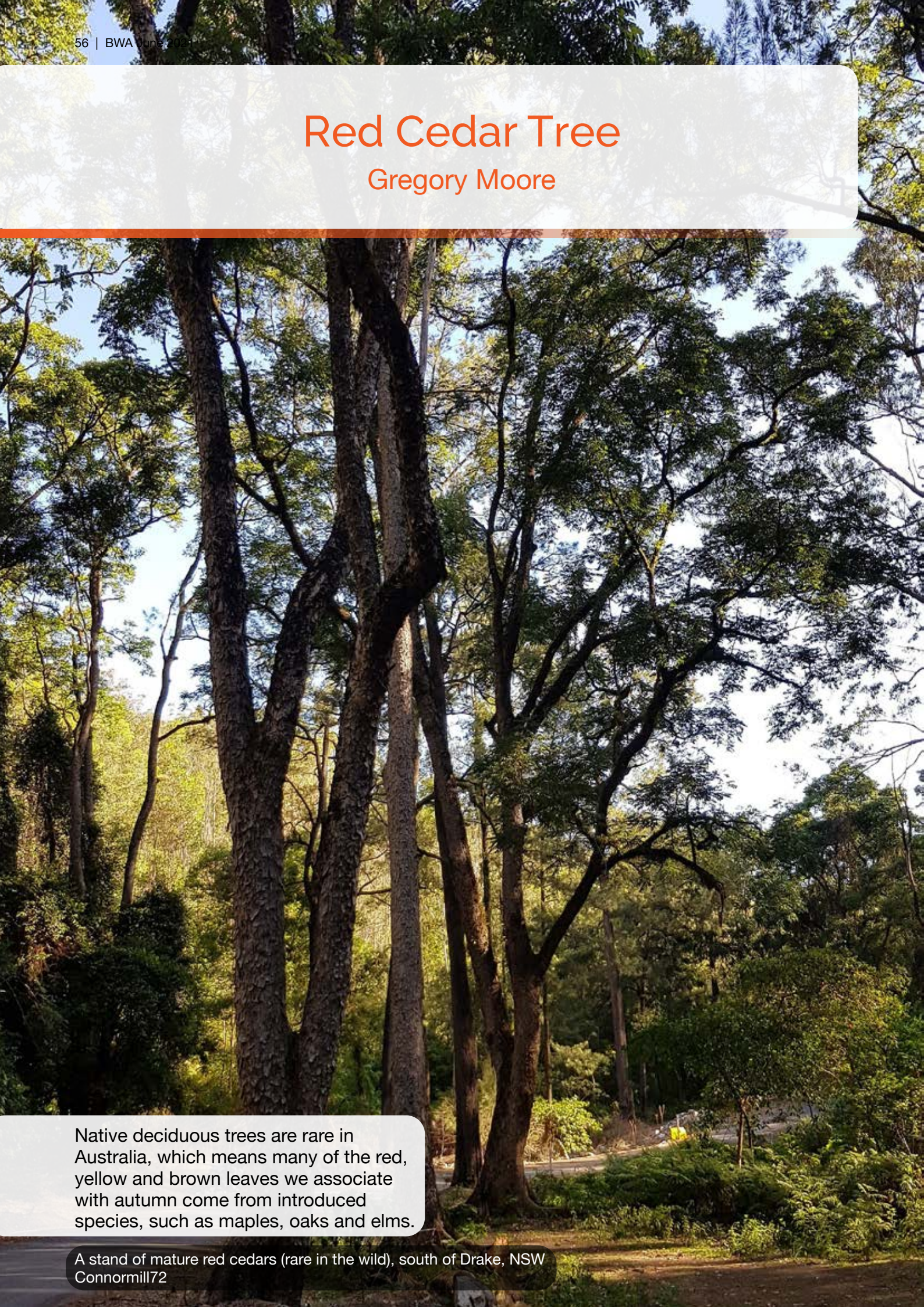
Final thoughts

With increasing reliance on electronic information, I wonder if an article such as this will be possible in 50 years. Someone else can write it.



Red Cedar Tree

Gregory Moore



Native deciduous trees are rare in Australia, which means many of the red, yellow and brown leaves we associate with autumn come from introduced species, such as maples, oaks and elms.

A stand of mature red cedars (rare in the wild), south of Drake, NSW
Connormill72

One native tree, however, stands out for its leaves with soft autumnal hues that drop in March and April: Australia's red cedar. Don't be fooled by its common name — red cedar is not a cedar at all, but naturally grows in rainforests throughout Southeast Asia and Australia.

“... red cedar is not a cedar at all ...”

You may be more familiar with its timber, which I've been acquainted with all of my life. My grandmothers had cedar chests of drawers they had inherited from their mothers or grandmothers, and I had assumed they were made from one of the Northern hemisphere cedar species. The wood still smelled of cedar after all this time in family homes — a scent I associate with grandparents and country homes.

“The wood still smelled of cedar after all this time ...”

By the time I was given one of these chests to restore, I knew much more about the tree and valued the chest of drawers all the more. So, with autumn putting a spotlight on Australian red cedars, let's look at this species in more detail.

Majestic giants of the rainforest

I first encountered red cedar trees in the sub-tropical rainforests of Queensland and New South Wales in the 1980s. Then, its scientific name was called *Cedrela toona* and later *Toona australis*. Now, it's recognised as *Toona ciliata*.

The various names reflect a taxonomic history in which the Australian species was once regarded as being separate from its Asian relatives, but all are now considered one.

The trees are awe-inspiring. Under the right conditions, it can [grow to 60 metres tall](#) (occasionally more) with a trunk diameter of up to 7 metres.

After losing its foliage in autumn, the new foliage in spring often has an attractive reddish tinge. In late spring it has small (5 millimetres) white or pale pink flowers, but they usually go unnoticed in the rainforest because of their height or the density of other tree canopies growing beneath.

Older red cedars have wonderful buttresses at the base of their trunk, a characteristic shared by many tall tropical trees. These



buttresses have long been considered an advantage for species that can emerge above the canopy of a rainforest where winds are much stronger, with the buttresses and expanded root systems providing greater strength and resistance to the wind.

These buttresses also greatly increase the surface area of the base of the trees exposed to air, which facilitates the uptake of extra oxygen as the activity of micro-organisms in the soil can leave it oxygen-depleted.

Logged to near extinction

With a wide distribution throughout Asia and Australia, its uses [in ancient times](#) were many and varied. In traditional medicine, bark was used or digestive remedies as well as wound dressing and its resin was used for treating skin conditions.

Dyes, oils and tannins used for preparing leather could also be extracted by boiling various plant parts. Today the wood is used for culturing shiitake mushrooms, which are much in demand in restaurants.

But the recent history of red cedar is a typically sad colonial tale. The species belongs to the same family as mahogany (*Meliaceae*) and, not surprisingly, was exploited for its timber from the early days of colonisation.

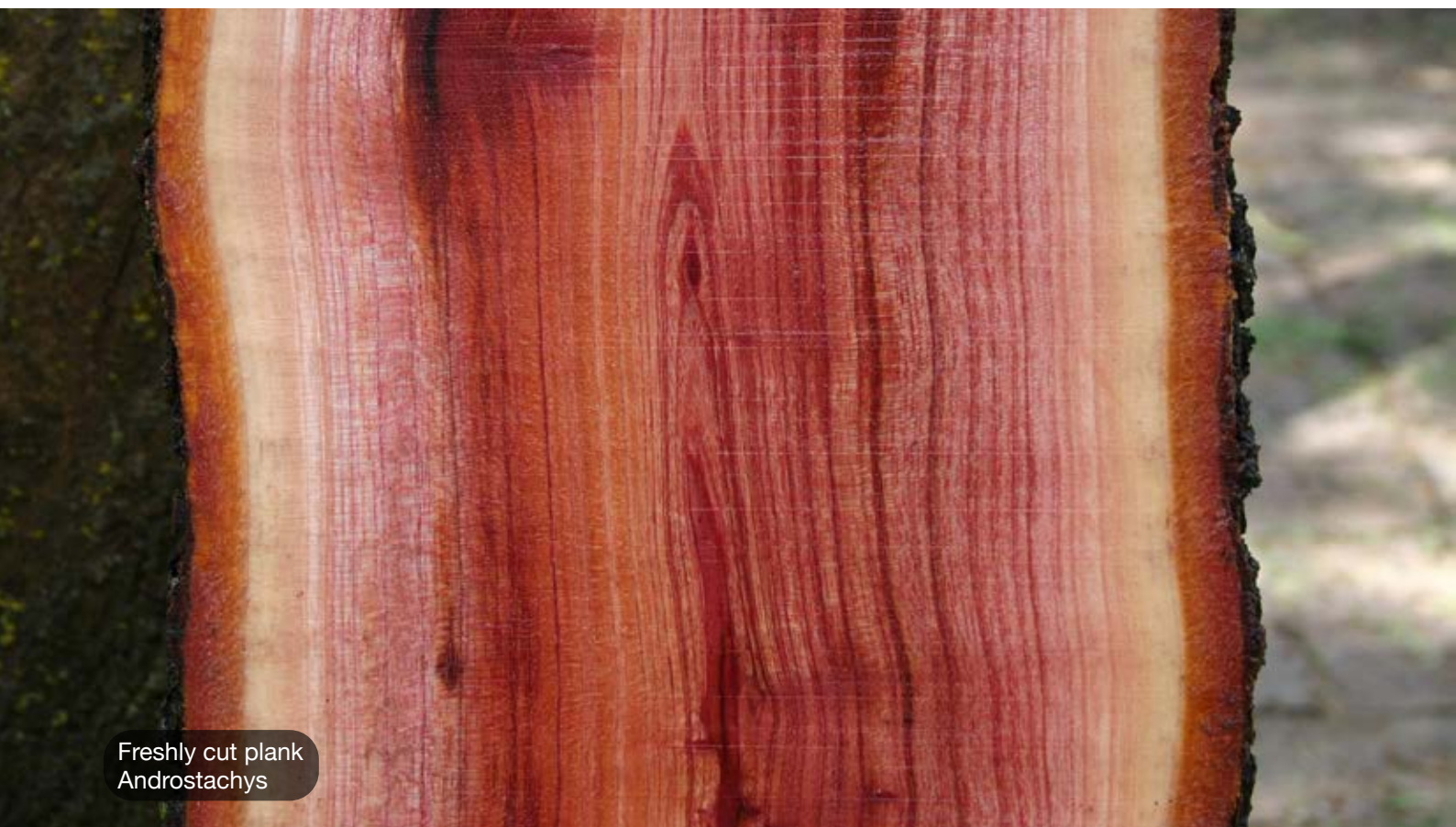
The timber is durable, lightweight and suitable for naval use and so was very heavily logged, right along the east coast of Australia [from the early 1800s](#) until the early 20th century.

The rich deep red colour of its timber and the fact it was soft and easily worked meant it was used for furniture, ornate carvings in public buildings, town halls and parliaments, such as the State Library in Melbourne. It was also used for implements and handles, and for sailing and racing boats.

You've probably had a close encounter with [the lovely red banisters](#) on some of these old buildings that were made of red cedar, often darkened under the patina of so many hands.

The once common and widespread species was logged almost to extinction along the east coast by the mid-1900s, and to the point of practical commercial extinction with little timber available to industry by the 1960s.

So valued was the timber that in the late 1970s, a plan was hatched to remove red cedar from Queensland national park rainforests using helicopters. Luckily, the idea did not fly and so some great trees persist. The species has a conservation status of concern, but is not considered to be endangered at present.



A terrible pest

The fact they are deciduous [makes them potentially](#) very interesting and useful for horticultural use, but that potential remains largely unrealised. And given the value and quality of its timber, you may be wondering why it's not being grown in plantations across the continent.

The reason is a native moth called the [cedar tip moth](#) (*Hypsipyla robusta*), which lays its eggs on the main growing shoot of the tree. When the eggs hatch the larvae bore down the shoot, which not only results in shoot dieback but also causes the trees to develop multiple stems and branches which reduce its timber value.

Despite this, they are still planted as a quick-growing ornamental tree for their shade in other parts of the world, such as Hawaii and Zimbabwe.

The moths are attracted to the scent of the tree, so they're very difficult to control. The moth does not attack the tree in South America, for instance, because the moth has not established there, so there are large plantations of red cedar [in Brazil](#).

It's an interesting reminder: often it's the little things in ecology that can affect success, or failure. When we humans meddle without knowledge, things don't necessarily go to plan, usually to our cost.



Gregory Moore

Doctor of Botany, The University of Melbourne

This article first appeared in [The Conversation](#) on 20 April 2021.



Capsules and seeds
Poyt448 Peter Woodard

Morning has Broken

Stephen Lake



Tune: *Morning has broken*

Morning has broken like the first morning.
People awoken, like the first dawn.
Praise for the campsite, praise for the morning.
Praise for the first light, this is our home.

Mountains around us, soft in the dawn mist.
Beauty surrounds us, nature so sweet.
Praise for the view here, ridges are sun kissed.
As the sun makes clear, grass at our feet.

Warm in the sun's rays, savouring morning.
Happy for these days, time to relax.
Some are still sleeping, missing the dawning
Memories for keeping, carrying our packs.

Morning has broken like the first morning.
People awoken, like the first dawn.
Praise for the campsite, praise for the morning.
Praise for the first light, this is our home.



Bushwalk Australia

