

Bushwalk Australia



Better Bushwalking

Volume 48, August 2021

Bushwalk Australia Magazine
An electronic magazine for
<http://bushwalk.com>
Volume 48, August 2021

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



Gold and white
North-north-west

Editor
Matt McClelland
matt@bushwalk.com

Design manager
Eva Gomišček
eva@wildwalks.com

Sub-editor
Stephen Lake
stephen@bushwalk.com

Please send any articles, suggestions or advertising enquires to Eva.

BWA Advisory Panel
North-north-west
Mark Fowler
Brian Eglinton

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

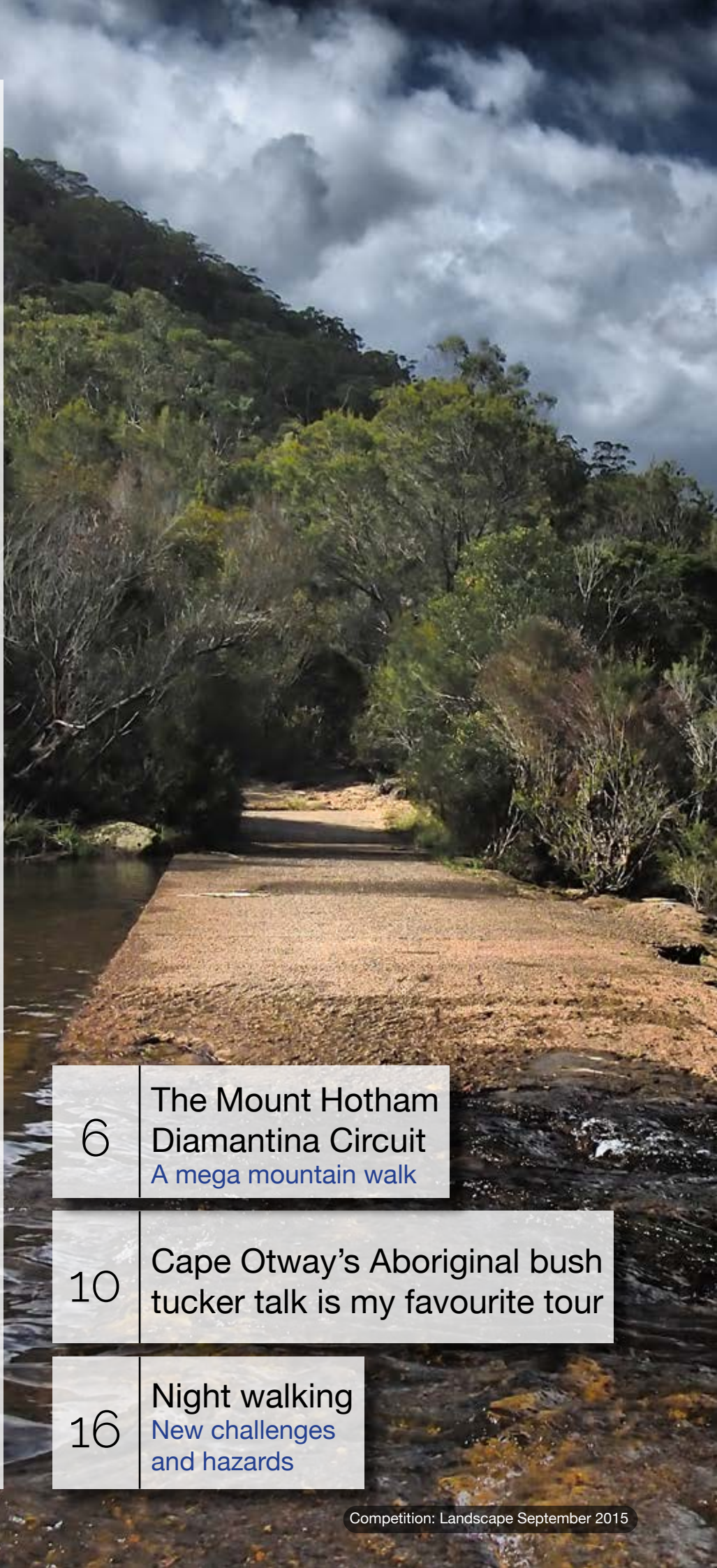
The copy deadline for the October 2021 edition is 31 August 2021.

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.



6

The Mount Hotham
Diamantina Circuit
[A mega mountain walk](#)

10

Cape Otway's Aboriginal bush
tucker talk is my favourite tour

16

Night walking
[New challenges
and hazards](#)

20

Photo gallery
Mesmerising
photography

38

White Cedar is a rare bird
A rarity among Australian
native trees

42

Navigation
Is it sufficient to rely on
electronic devices?

48

NSW Great walks mistake
There's a better way for iconic
NSW walks

56

Dehydrated delights
Roasted ratatouille with cous cous,
and Treacle sweet potato pudding

60

High mountain
Reflections on wild places

From the Editor

Hi all

I hope this edition finds you well. Currently, more than half the country is back in lockdown, working and/or schooling from home. I hope you are able to find some good local walks to explore. It is a good time to catch up on bushwalking news, adventures and ideas.

In this edition, Andrew takes us on a great day walk in the Victorian high country - Hotham to Hotham via Diamantina Spur. Teja explores Cape Otway, sampling the Aboriginal food while Wildwanderer heads out for a night walk in the Blue Mountains, sharing some great tips. Alan shares his insights into navigation and the impact technology is having on our pursuit. Sonya has more yummy recipes, always improving my repertoire on track. I detail the big mistakes NSW is currently making to the iconic walks program and how they can deliver something much better. And of course, we have all the great photo competition winners.

We would love to hear from you, please keep using the feedback thumbs at the end of each article and let us know what you want more of. If you want to submit an article please reach out; it can be a lot of fun.

Happy walking
Matt :)



Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
matt@bushwalk.com



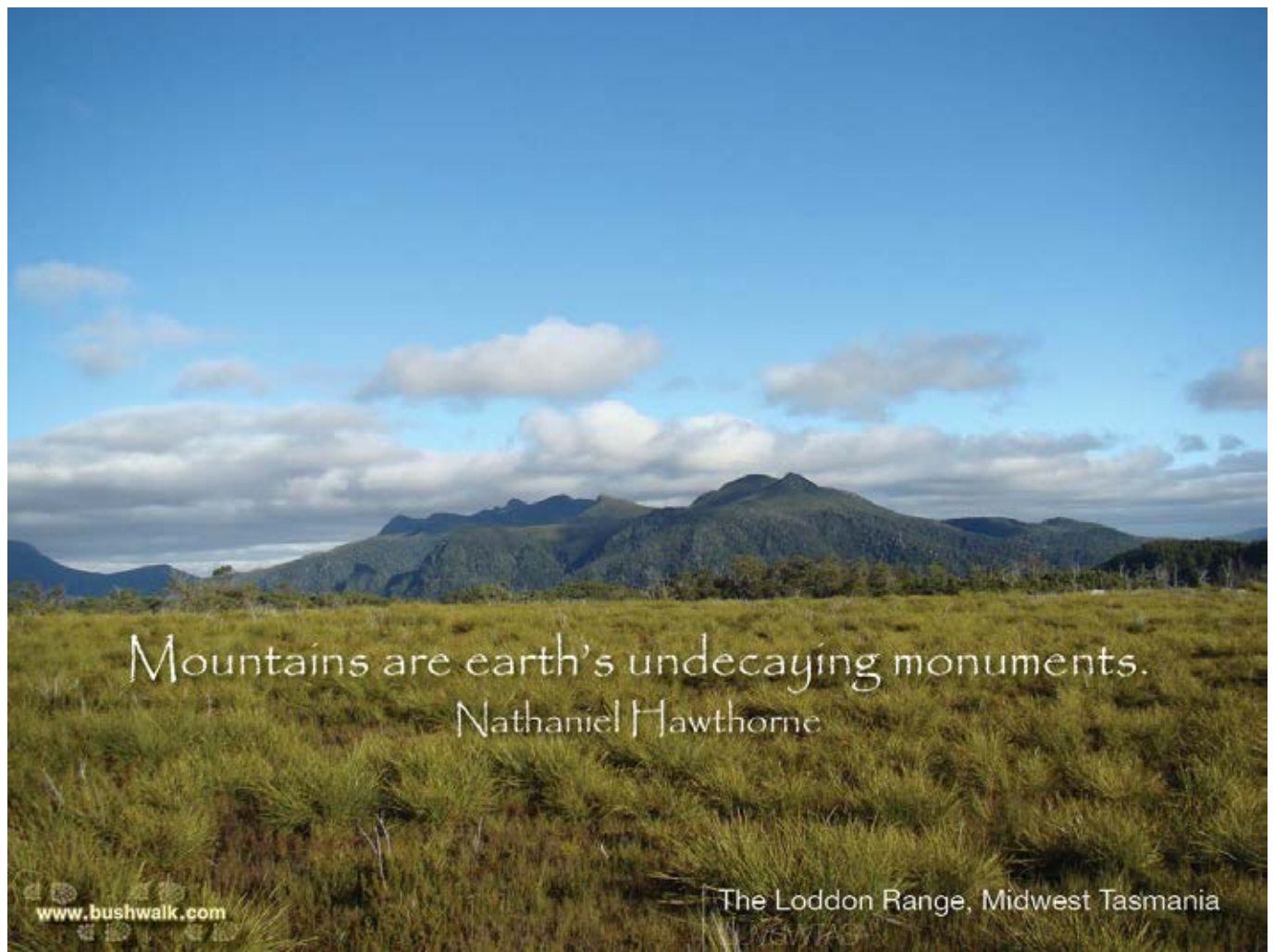
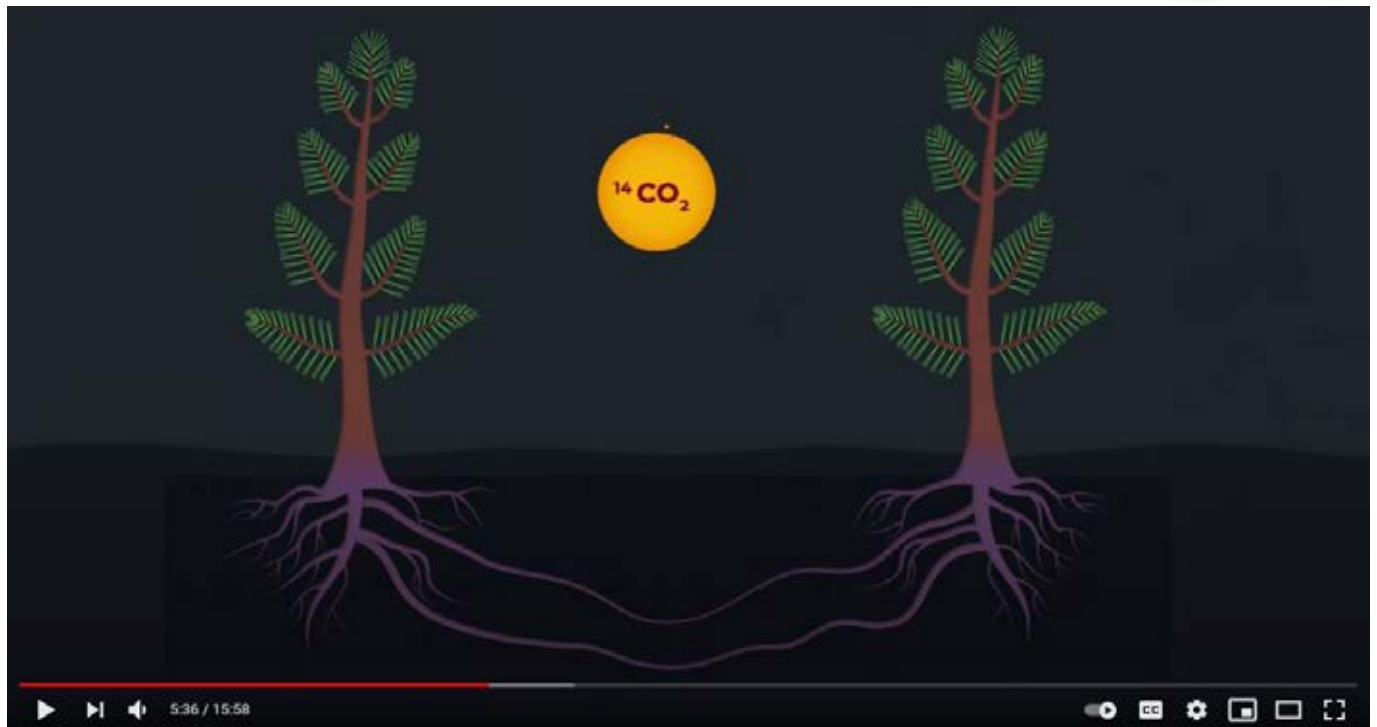
Declaration

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.

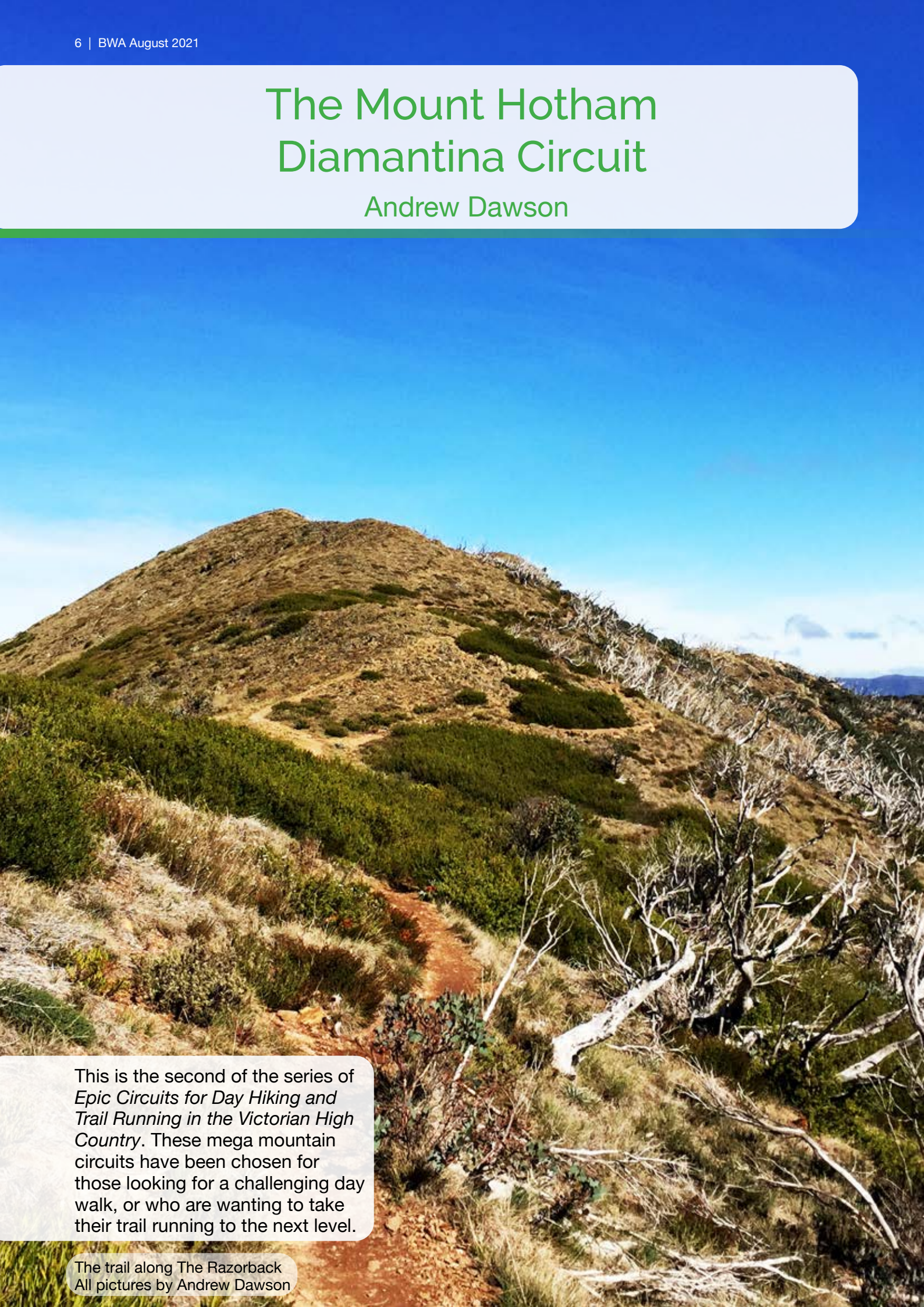
Video

Learn about [communication between trees](#) and their ability to help one another. Nature is fascinating.



The Mount Hotham Diamantina Circuit

Andrew Dawson



This is the second of the series of *Epic Circuits for Day Hiking and Trail Running in the Victorian High Country*. These mega mountain circuits have been chosen for those looking for a challenging day walk, or who are wanting to take their trail running to the next level.

The trail along The Razorback
All pictures by Andrew Dawson

This fantastic route passes iconic high country huts, climbs one of Victoria's most challenging ascents, and traverses The Razorback, one of the alpine region's most spectacular ridges. Its 29 kilometre length includes tough descents and ascents, as well as the opportunity to stride out some quick kilometres on relatively easy terrain. And with easy access on the Great Alpine Road near Mount Hotham, this one is well worth checking out.

Important warning on the epic circuits series

These circuits are for experts only. As well as being long, these circuits cover rugged terrain in remote environments. You need to be physically and mentally capable, as well as being experienced and competent in the outdoors, and carrying all the [necessary equipment and supplies](#). You should [know how to navigate](#), and will need to take heed of weather conditions.

Some parties may prefer to complete these circuits in two or three days. Although not described here, all of the circuits do provide great overnight camping options.

The route starts at [Diamantina Hut](#), on the Great Alpine Road at the southern end of The Razorback. For the first couple of kilometres you'll be keeping to the bitumen on the Great Alpine Road up to Mount Loch car park. An alternative is to follow the track behind the hut, traversing steeply then up over Mount Hotham, coming out near Loch car park. From there you then follow a rocky vehicle track that goes around the rim of the ski area in Mount Hotham Alpine Resort, gaining some nice views out to Mount Feathertop and The Razorback as well as back toward the Mount Hotham village.

After about three kilometres you will get to the final lift of the Mount Hotham Resort (The Orchard) near Mount Loch. At this point you leave the vehicle track and follow a foot track that continues around the back of the resort before dropping to reach Derrick Hut after about a kilometre.

The trail then descends, gently at first then quite steeply, for almost four kilometres before reaching the iconic Dibbins Hut on the picturesque Cobungra River plains. Follow the trail for 400 metres to Cobungra Gap,



The iconic Dibbins Hut on the Cobungra River Plains

then north for three and a half kilometres, passing Red Robin Battery en route to Blairs Hut. You can either take the side trail to visit Blairs Hut, or stay on the more direct vehicle track which passes Blairs Hut on the other side of the West Kiewa River. Continuing north from Blairs Hut involves fording the river to get to the vehicle track. Alternatively, return the way you came. About two kilometres from Blairs Hut you reach the Diamantina Spur trail head.

Often regarded as the most difficult ascent in the Victorian Alps, Diamantina Spur gains almost 800 metres over its four and a half kilometre length (as measured by GPS). The first section is particularly steep, and even involves some moderate rock scrambling in places. Once you break out of the trees you are rewarded with great views of the south face of Mount Feathertop, and the gradient also eases off a little.

It's hard to not be fooled by the false crests, and false sense of hope, that this spur continues to dish out. My advice is to take a Zen approach, pace yourself, and assume that you'll be continuing to climb until such time that you are standing next to the sign that marks the departure of the spur from The Razorback!

“... take a Zen approach, and assume that you'll be continuing to climb ...”

Once you do reach The Razorback it's around eight kilometres along a well formed track over undulating terrain to return to the start of this circuit at Diamantina Hut. This is a great time to lengthen the stride and pick up the pace, but make sure you also stop and take your eyes off the trail long enough to absorb the sweeping views as you travel along this spectacular ridge. You'll see Mount Feathertop to the north, the Jaithmathangs to the north-east, Mount Hotham to the south, and Mount Buffalo and the ranges beyond to the north-west.

“... make sure you also stop and take your eyes off the trail long enough to absorb the sweeping views ...”

This is a fabulous circuit for getting out and enjoying the high country whilst taking on some demanding terrain without getting too far off the beaten path. Access is easy and involves a beautiful drive up the Great Alpine Road. The trail itself takes in some spectacular Victorian scenery including historic high country huts and stunning alpine vistas.

This report first appeared in [Unleashed-Unlimited](#).



Sunrise over The Razorback and Mount Feathertop

In the News

Blind woman walks Larapinta

Legally blind Sunshine Coast woman [Nicole Forbes-Hood](#) has walked the Larapinta Trail.



Nicole reaches the summit of Mount Sonder
Supplied by Nicole Forbes-Hood

UNESCO calls on Tasmania to pause development in Wilderness World Heritage Areas

After many years of questionable decisions by the Tasmanian government, a United Nations committee has asked the government to [halt tourism development in the Tasmanian WWhA](#) until a cultural assessment is completed.

Malcolm Turnbull seeks Parliamentary inquiry into "inadequate" mine remediation bonds

In NSW, mining companies pay a rehabilitation security bond activities begin, covering the [full cost of all rehabilitation and mine closure activities](#). The bond may not be enough, with costs being made by the government.

Quoll comeback

Despite natural disasters including drought, bushfires and floods, a recent survey reports that [Spotted-tail quolls are thriving](#) in the Illawarra and Southern Highlands.

Wombats

[Fascinating facts](#) about wombats.

Warragamba Dam wall decision questioned

The federal government has intervened in a NSW government plan to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, [questioning the evidence](#) used to claim the proposal would have no significant environmental impacts on the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Local opposition to alpine mining

North-east Victorian residents say the tourism-reliant alpine region is [unsuitable for mineral exploration](#).

Creativity at home

Bushwalkers at home can have a slight relief [using art](#).



Cape Otway's Aboriginal Bush Tucker Talk is My Favourite Tour

Teja



“What’s in Cape Otway?” I asked Suraya. She had particularly wanted this stop. Usually, her travel style is très budget, but she was willing to fork out nearly A\$20 for the admission fee at Cape Otway Lightstation. So I was curious.

All photos by Teja

I can't remember now, what her reply was. It's probably something to do with the historical importance, because Suraya is the kind of traveller who reads history displays even more than I do. But it was her next remark that convinced me, and it had nothing whatsoever to do with Australian history.

"You'll like it," she said. She had already gone on the Great Ocean Road before I came, and had seen the approach to the lightstation. "It has this forest before you get there, where the trees are all white and with no leaves. It looks really creepy, like an enchanted forest."

Well, you don't get to BFF status without knowing my oddball tastes exactly! I was sold.

Cape Otway Lightstation Overview

The admission fee to Cape Otway Lightstation isn't cheap. The additional special tours are even more expensive. But, is it worth it?

After going into the grounds on a general admission ticket, I think that Cape Otway is definitely a worthwhile stop (even without the petrified forest). The daily tours covered both history as well as Aboriginal culture. Both are well worth following.

- History Talk: 3 x daily (11 am, 2 pm, 4 pm)
- Bush Tucker Talk: 2 x daily (12 noon, 3 pm)

Here's my tip: arrange your road trip itinerary so that you can go for the bush talker talk. It

was not only my favourite tour on this road trip, but possibly among the best tours I've taken, period. Or ... stay in the old lighthouse keeper cottages? This makes more sense during whale season, since more time on site is conducive to spotting passing whales at the whale viewing station.

“... possibly among the best tours I've taken, period.”

As for the special tours, I think that will depend on how interested you are in the focus topics. The [Cape Otway website](#) provides further details that can help you decide. However, for a casual visitor without an existing interest in history, it seems a bit expensive.

Extra tip: Stop for lunch here. It's a very pleasant spot for it. The cafe has an al fresco area with a great view of the lighthouse.

The website say that "we have taken the difficult decision to close the site to Day Visitors from the 1 July 2021. We will be continuing to operate our accommodation and pre-booked guided tours only with limited staff. A Winter Tour Program will be announced on our website once details have been finalised, to facilitate ongoing access to the site. We are committed to continuing the full time operation of our accommodation until the end of our lease in June 2022 and hope to be able to reopen the site to day visitors during peak periods once visitation levels increase."



Cape Otway Lighthouse

I personally like lighthouses in general. There's something curious about its necessary remoteness, and something romantic about its purpose as a beacon. Some lighthouses are fascinating due to the difficulty and danger of even constructing them in the first place, in locations of strong waves and lack of land connections.

That's not to mention the often lonely job of being the lighthouse keeper. The guy who had to keep the light going. And if he has a family with him, what about the isolated life of the family of a lighthouse keeper? The safety of countless ships carrying the fortunes of nations, and the independent travellers of those days, all owe a debt to the sacrifice of lighthouse keepers.

Fortunately, today the sacrifice is no longer necessary. Today, the actually functioning Cape Otway lighthouse lies on a ledge, somewhere below the photogenic older lighthouse. No longer requiring keeping, it's more like a light signal, since no house is required!

What kind of history would you get from the history talk? Well, there's the history of the lighthouse itself, and the reason for its construction. I guess it falls under the category of Australian (specifically Victorian) history. Cape Otway also has a bit of WW2 history.

The Bush Tucker Talk

We were attracted to the bush tucker talk when we walked past this curious thing by the path.

Nearby was a little hut. Around the hut grew many shrubs, and we wondered if they would be part of the talk. (They were.)

We deduced that it must be the Talking Hut. (Don't you love how straightforward the names are? It reminds me of Oman!) We returned to the hut close to the start of the Bush Tucker Talk, and explored the Aboriginal artifacts kept inside the hut while waiting for the guide to arrive.

The guide for the bush tucker talk

When the guide arrived we were surprised, because he looked Caucasian – albeit one who had gone very native indeed. We looked at each other, wondering if he was mixed, since we had naturally expected a guide giving an Aboriginal talk, to be Aboriginal himself.

But his somewhat disheveled appearance counted in his favour where we were concerned. Suraya has the firm belief that for these kinds of things, it is better to have a guide who looks like he might be homeless. Don't ask me why. In fact, she intentionally chose to learn diving from a divemaster who looked as though on non-teaching days, he bums around the beach loaded with rum.



So when he began talking, I was not surprised that Suraya's mad convictions were once again proven correct. He might look Caucasian, but his heart and soul is all Aboriginal.

Why did we like the bush tucker talk?

It was an extremely fun talk! He utilised many of the bushes and shrubs around the talking hut, giving us a crash course on how not to die if left out in the bush all by yourself. I can never forget the hilarious, yet infinitely more sensible method of hunting emu than chasing it down. Suffice to say that it involves daubing yourself with emu poo, and taking advantage of the emu's poor eyesight to fool it into thinking you're an emu too!

It was actually fairly difficult for us to follow the talk, due to the guide's very fast speaking pace and thick Australian accent. It was too fast for us to remember exact details, but slow enough for us to remain enraptured by his eccentric storytelling and energetic instruction in bush foraging. His disparaging dismissal of what he considered to be excessively onerous Western agriculture was very amusing!

There were many such anecdotes, all meant to illustrate the worldview of Aboriginal peoples. That their way was to attain a high degree of knowledge of their own land, which then enables them to obtain food with very little exertion.

Aboriginal and Malay worldviews

When we were back on the road, Suraya confided to me how much she liked the bush tucker talk. Despite having been in Melbourne for nearly a year, that was her first introduction to Australian Aboriginal culture. It was very different from mainstream Australian culture, she said. A completely different worldview.

Not a worldview of comparing and competing, of exertion and industriousness for the sake of "more".

Instead, it was a way that sees the sign of the impending arrival of migrating birds, and begins walking to

arrive just in time for the hunt. It was a way that forages as you wander, scattering seeds along the way so

that future generations would have more shrubs to forage from along the same route. It was a way that doesn't bother to harvest seafood before it is the right time. Its way to find food is more by cleverness and cunning, rather than superior force.

She said, it was the first time that she felt things made sense, since she came to Australia.

“... scattering seeds along the way so that future generations would have more shrubs to forage ...”



I can't say that the Malay worldview is quite the same. We were a nation-building people, so there is an element of striving and industry. But at the same time, I understood what she meant. Competition is difficult for us, whose natural inclination is to maintain harmony. And for Suraya personally, I knew that her character is just like that – necessary exertion only, and don't force anything.

“Competition is difficult for us, whose natural inclination is to maintain harmony.”

It's difficult for me to say why this is not the better worldview. At least, not while considering myself still a good person.

The extent of my bush tucker knowledge

I still remember two things I learned about foraging in the bush. It was because I applied the knowledge straight away, while still on the road trip. I can't remember the names of the shrubs, but I know what I can eat from them.

I kept foraging at almost every stop throughout our road trip, to Suraya's great disapproval. Her medical profession naturally inclines her to a cautious disposition, and she would rather I ingest only small amounts just in case I've been poisoning myself!

One was a shrub common on the top of the coastal cliffs along the Great Ocean Road which bear white berries (the white berries are ripe). Though you need to eat a lot of it if you're seriously looking for something to eat, occasional snacking on the little berries is quite fun.

The other one was a green shrub with vaguely diamond-shaped leaves. Just pluck the leaves and eat them directly. I remember the taste was slightly salty. This one could be mistaken for a different shrub, so I had to look at the overall shape of the shrub to be sure. Nevertheless, the other shrub didn't seem to be poisonous. You know immediately when you're wrong, because the leaves taste different and are completely yucky.



Aboriginal References: Australia and New Zealand

During my first visit to Australia, I found myself fascinated by a statement that seemed ubiquitous. Some variation of it appeared on physical signs amidst city blocks, by the shoreline, as a footer in emails when you book things online. It goes something like this:

"We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians of all ancestral lands on which we meet and operate. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal peoples to this country."

The reason why it confounded me was, in person I could hardly find any sign that these words were true, or at least attempting to become true. In none of the instances when I encountered such statements, was there any overlay of Aboriginal context or history on whatever the place/tour is.

By contrast, when I first went to New Zealand with my friends, the airport welcome signs greeted us in English and Maori.

Certain places, like Rotorua, are clearly Maori land. The history of a place often includes both Maori and then European events, told as a single and unseparated series. It is one history.

Maori motifs, dance and art are generally embraced not as "Aboriginal" curiosities, but as part of what makes New Zealand identity unique. To this day, I remember the Maori name of New Zealand – Aotearoa.

New Zealand does not have signs saying "they" acknowledge Maori precedence, but you could argue that they don't really have to.

Now, Cape Otway Lightstation is like New Zealand. Their website does not display this standard pledge. But, they actually feature a tour that is more meaningful than just words. The tour gave us some little insight on how the original people had lived with the land, before it was terraformed to resemble Europe.

This article first appeared on [Teja on the Horizon](#).



Night Walking

Wildwanderer



Sometimes by choice, mostly because a walk's taken longer than planned, bushwalking at night brings new challenges and hazards.

Tobias Mrzyk

I had an interesting walk the other week. There is a three hour circuit through my local national park which I do once every few months. Previously, all my walks on this trail had been during the day. On this particular Friday, work finished a bit early, so I decided to go night bushwalking.

It has always been a concern of mine when walking in alpine regions that weather and mist can descend quickly. I had encountered it a few times before, most notably on a spring trip in New Zealand. On an alpine trail I was hit with strong wind and cold. The mist descended bringing visibility to about 8 metres.

So, knowing that it would be dark and misty for my Friday walk, I wanted it to be a training walk on navigation and terrain management when visibility is minimal. It was also an opportunity to become more mentally comfortable in these conditions on a relatively safe low-altitude trail.

I was on the trail by 4 pm. Mid-winter temps of 8-10 °C with a consistent light rain falling, the rainy conditions added an extra and quite enjoyable challenge. As most of the walk is in a narrow river valley, I knew the dark and mist would arrive quickly.

It has been a while since I had bushwalked for a significant distance in the dark. My previous experience had mostly been on Friday night fire trail walks along Narrow Neck in the Blue Mountains to get a head start on a weekend trip in the Wild Dogs.

This trail was quite different to a wide fire trail. During the day it's a clear and easy foot trail through forest, meandering along a river, sometimes rising to negotiate river bluffs. At times the walk moves away from the river to higher in the valley and there is one simple creek crossing to negotiate. (Usually, you don't get your feet wet). The trail is sometimes rocky, sometimes covered in pine needles but mostly it is dirt and was quickly turning to mud in the steady rain.



InReach mini satellite communicator with SOS function and a Black Diamond revolt headlamp
Wildwanderer

I'd packed for the conditions, rain jacket and rain pants, a fleece in my pack, fully charged water resistant head torch and a backup light. I had two GPS, (my new Fenix 6x watch which has maps and the Orux maps nav phone app), a compass, and my Inreach mini with an SOS function in its pouch for emergencies. A first aid kit, emergency blanket, food, water and a waterproof pack liner completed the gear list.

In hindsight, to be extra safe I could have added an emergency fly, 3/4 mat and thermals. I didn't take them but it would have been a good idea. I also knew the direction of the nearest road which was parallel to the trail, it wasn't far away and provided an always there emergency exit point.

I wore a merino top, light nylon bushwalking pants, walking shoes and my hooded rain jacket.

As it turned out I didn't need to put on the rain pants, while my jacket had a lot of water beading on the surface, I was moving quick enough that the combo of body heat and light drizzling rain, kept my bush walking pants just slightly damp. I was more comfortable without the sweat-inducing rain pants on.

I took my walking pole, usually this trail is not steep or rocky enough to require it. In the dark it was valued especially negotiating wet rocks.

As I walked, it approached 5 pm and the shadows lengthened. In some areas with rock overhangs and steep forested banks that rise on the side of the trail it was already quite dim and hard to see my feet. It's this twilight time that can be difficult because depending on the foliage and terrain coverage, one moment you're in darkness, the next back in light again.

I made the creek crossing still in twilight, not difficult as the water was low and I remembered the easiest stepping path across the rocks from previous walks. Even in the dark it would have been a simple crossing.

At 5 pm it quickly became dark. It is amazing how the dark envelops the trail, trail side foliage becomes shadows, anything further than 2-3 metres is an inky blackness. Depth perception becomes trickier; in torchlight everything looks flatter than it really is. It became important to slow down and examine any descent for the best way before attempting to walk down even minor rock shelves.

“It is amazing how the dark envelops the trail ...

I have a decent head torch and the light usually gives me about 20-25 metres of visibility for five hours. However, in misty and rain conditions these distances go out the window. Even pumping out full brightness I could only see 4-5 metres in front of me. The light gets "caught" by the mist and turns into a haze. The brighter the light the worse this effect seems to be. It's the same when driving at night in heavy mist. I ended up turning the head torch down a bit as full brightness was just wasting battery for no gain in visibility.

Mostly the heavy foliage on either side of the trail became an advantage. It keeps you corralled on the track preventing any accidental divergence.

It became trickier when the track moved into areas of a type of river "pine". (Sorry not that good with the botany ... the trees had pine needles that is all I know). These "pines" were spaced further apart and there was no ground shrubs or grasses only dead pine needles covering the ground. This meant everything for 360 degrees around me was easily mistaken for the track. I had to slow down, be mindful of direction and slope of the land. My memory of the trail became important.

In reality, there wasn't a danger of becoming lost. I had the GPS and even if I'd wandered off the trail, I felt confident I would be able

to make my way back to the river and use that as a means of finding the trail again. In that location the trail is mostly within 10-40 metres of the water. So, moving back to the river, along and then heading perpendicular once out of the "pine" tree area would have found a clear foot trail again even at night.

Still, it was good reminder to use all the tools available:

- The compass to confirm the direction of the trail;
- Use memory of earlier trips on that trail;
- Visually review the slope of land (trails are usually even); and
- Use the GPS to ensure I'm not tens of metres away from where I think I am.

I was walking solo and one of the challenges of walking in the dark is mental. It's the unknown that inspires the most fear. And it doesn't get more unknown than inky blackness on a misty night with no moon. It helped a lot that I had to keep focused on navigating and avoiding terrain pitfalls. When your mind is occupied, there is no opportunity for your imagination to conjure up false fears that might be hidden in the night.

I ended up having a great deal of fun. Looking at my GPS track of the route when I got back home, I didn't slow much more than I would have during the day and covered the 10 kilometres in under three hours.

This was a very worthwhile trip in search of something different and a good way to train for more difficult low visibility environments that are less forgiving.

Important note

It's critical to have the appropriate skills, experience and equipment before attempting a walk such as this. Be conservative, walk on an easy trail, close to civilisation. Be on an extremely familiar trail. Do not walk solo unless you really know what you are doing and are sure how you will react to the dark.

Keep focused, be terrain and location aware, make smart decisions and most importantly keep calm. Tell someone where you're going and when you will be back.



Photo Gallery



BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes August 2020

WINNER



Flinders Peak
Grant Cameron

Coming out of a five kilometre lockdown radius to 50 kilometres, I jumped at the chance to bushwalk Flinders Peak. At 679 metres it's the highest peak in the Ipswich area. The seven kilometre return is a real leg burner but the effort is rewarded with magnificent views. The cloud formation on this day was spectacular. It's very popular on weekends so get there early.



Stunning forest
John Walker



Lake Macquarie shores
landsmith



Climbing Mount Falkland
Brian Eglinton



Calm day down south
North-north-west



Non-landscapes

August 2020

WINNER



You think you're
watching me, but I'm
watching you ...
John Walker

I was visiting this small-ish gem of a highland reserve for the first time. I had the place to myself all day and explored most of its tracks.

The wildlife was also enjoying the peace and quiet. I was rewarded by the sudden appearance of this colourful Crimson Rosella across a short but deep gully.

I felt like I could almost reach out and touch it, but for the precipitous drop between us.

The bird was in no hurry to leave and seemed to be watching and taunting me, safely from its perch.



White Plumed Honeyeater
Brian Eglinton



Gynea lily
Iandsmith



Backflow
North-north-west



Other States August 2020

WINNER



Patawarta Hill
Brian Eglinton

North from Blinman in the Flinders Ranges is the curious Patawarta Hill which is head and shoulders above anything else for some distance around.

It was starkly rendered by Sir Hans Heysen in one of his paintings.

It is not on any designated trail, but frequently draws ones eyes.

Then it is out with a telephoto lens, here to capture it in late afternoon light from Mount Dib in the ABC range.



Must be spring
landsmith



Flinders Peak Secret Caves
Grant Cameron



Campsite for
Banksia men?
John Walker



Tasmania

August 2020

WINNER



Lake Balmoral
Teak

At Lake Balmoral on a very cold clear morning after overnight snow, the lake surface was about half frozen over. The low sun behind me lit up icicles on the bushes and grass.



Low tide
North-north-west



Landscapes

September 2020

WINNER



After an overcast dawn from Point Nicholson in Wollemi National Park, I was about to give up on the photography. However, gaps in the low cloud over the Capertee Valley began to let through occasional shafts of light, one of which briefly lit up Mount Gundangaroo.

Morning light
through the clouds
Tom Brennan



Urunga Wetlands
Lorraine



The Nattai, after the fires
Osik



The Wall
John Walker



Rocky Hill Forest
Brian Eglinton



Non-landscapes September 2020

WINNER



Boot camp commander
North-north-west

Small birds often have big personalities; this one - a regular sight up near The Springs on kunanyi/Mount Wellington being a classic example. Fearless, talkative and, in this case, very, very bossy.



Grevillea
Lorraine



Platypus Wilmot River
Teak



Donkey orchids
Tom Brennan



What's up
Brian Eglinton



Colours
John Walker



Other States

September 2020

WINNER



Rain is a comin'
Tom Brennan

After whiteout conditions and ongoing drizzle in the morning on Pantoneys Crown, by the time we reached Moffitts Pagodas in the Gardens of Stone in the late afternoon, the sun had emerged in places. It briefly lit up Baal Bone Point, with ominous skies lurking in the background.



Winter
Brian Eglinton



Late arvo light on the way back
from Bonnum Pic
Osik



Something different
John Walker



Tasmania

September 2020

WINNER



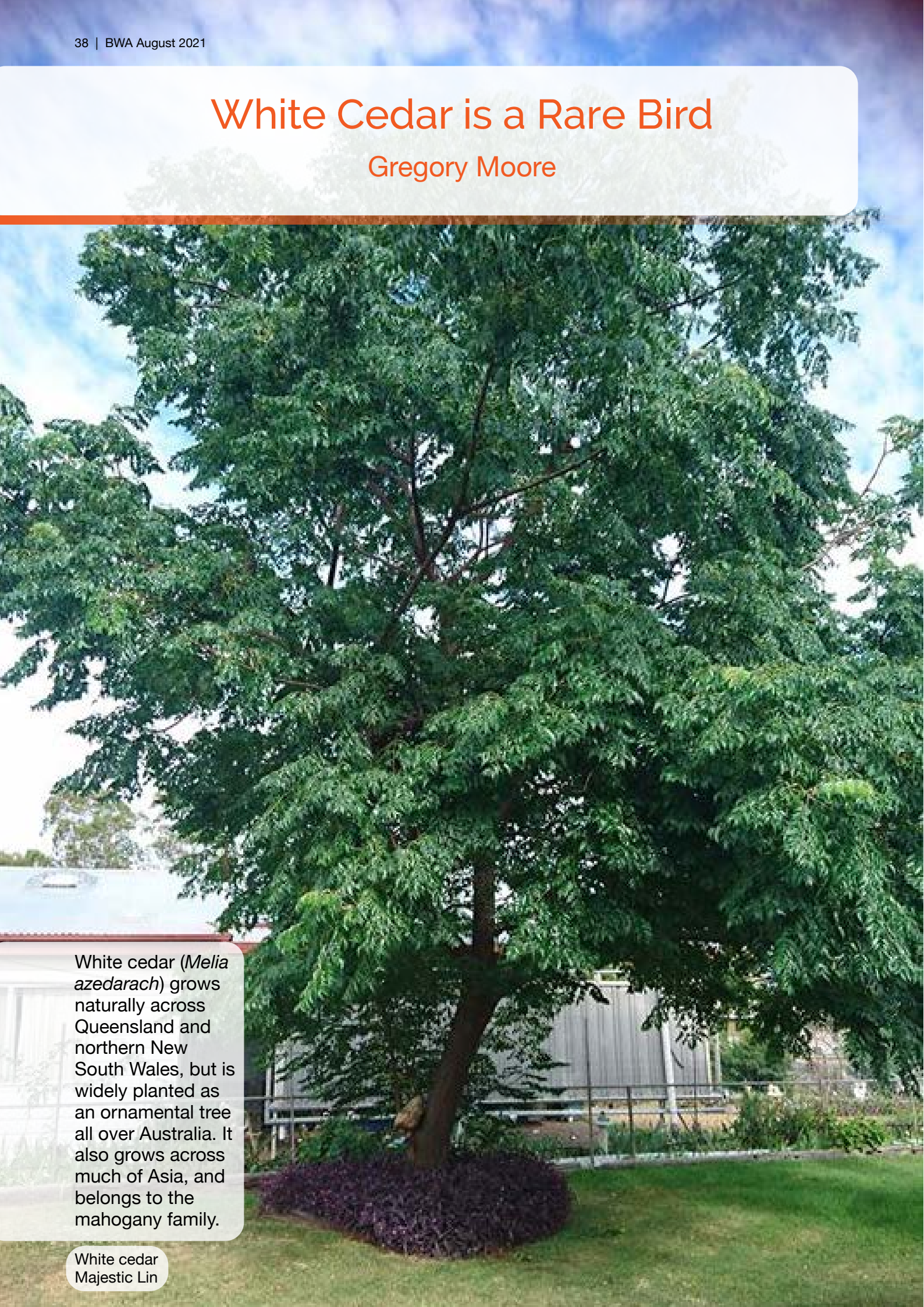
Going down
North-north-west

Winter means shorter days and thus frequently finishing walking during - or even after - sunset. Adds to the fun to be stumbling over a rough, rocky track in the twilight, and also adds opportunities to slow yourself down even more by trying to photograph the changing light.



White Cedar is a Rare Bird

Gregory Moore



White cedar (*Melia azedarach*) grows naturally across Queensland and northern New South Wales, but is widely planted as an ornamental tree all over Australia. It also grows across much of Asia, and belongs to the mahogany family.

White cedar
Majestic Lin

This wide dispersal sees the species given a very wide and diverse range of common names, including: umbrella cedar, pride of India, Indian lilac, Persian lilac, and Chinaberry. In Australia it is known as white cedar due to its soft general-purpose timber.

The name *Melia* was the Greek name given to the ash tree, which has similar foliage, and *azedarach* means “poisonous tree” – parts of it are toxic.

White cedar is something of a rarity among Australian native trees, as it loses its leaves in winter or early autumn. Winter deciduous trees are highly valued in landscape design as they provide all the benefits of summer shade, but allow winter light.

“... it loses its leaves in winter or early autumn.”

While Australia has an abundance of evergreen tree species and a variety of summer deciduous trees that lose their leaves in summer when water is scarce, we have [few winter deciduous native trees](#). White cedar fits the bill beautifully, and despite a few shortcomings has some very attractive traits.

White cedar is usually a small spreading tree with a rounded canopy up to about 6 metres in height, but under the right conditions

trees can be more than 20 metres tall, with a canopy spread of 10 metres or more. They have quite dense foliage composed of dark compound leaves up to 500 millimetres long, which transition from dark green to a pale yellow in autumn.

As a winter deciduous tree they are a very popular native tree that has been widely planted as street trees and in domestic gardens, where specimens of 10-12 metres are common. The trees are often considered to be short-lived (around 20 years), but in gardens and where irrigation is available some may live for 40 years or longer.

Good specimens of white cedar have many small flowers (20 millimetre) that are white with purple/blue stripes and a wonderful, almost citrus-like scent. The fruits are about 15 millimetre in diameter and bright orange in colour. They are usually retained over winter and so the trees provide a seasonal smorgasbord – shade in summer, autumn foliage colour, orange fruits in winter, and attractive scented flowers in spring.

Many specimens are prolific in their production of fruits and seeds, which readily germinate, underscoring the weed potential of the species under the right circumstances. They can be an invasive species in some parts of Asia and Africa.



White cedar
Anna Anichkova

Unfortunately as the fruits mature and dry they become as hard as ball bearings. If you mow over them they can fire from under a mower like bullets, and if they land on a hard paved surface they can be a tripping hazard for people who unexpectedly find themselves skating. The fruits and foliage can also be quite toxic if eaten. So this would appear to put a bit a dampener on the use of the tree. However, in recent years non-fruiting varieties of white cedar have become available and these have proven popular as street and garden trees.

A toxic treat

Many parts of the tree are toxic - interestingly, though, not the fleshy part of the fruit. It has evolved to be attractive to the birds that disperse seed. However the seeds are very poisonous, and as few as six or eight seeds can be [fatal for children](#). Fortunately, the seeds are very hard and do not taste very pleasant, so the risk of humans eating them is quite low.

Despite this, white cedar has been widely used as a medicinal plant by indigenous cultures, especially for [intestinal parasites](#). The seeds have been widely used to make beads by indigenous peoples in Asia and Australia, and in some places the tree is called the bead tree.

An easy grower

One of the good things about white cedar is they are easily grown, and cope quite well with the low rainfall in many parts of

Australia. They also tolerate a variety of soil types, which is why they have been so widely and successfully spread.

The trees are quite resistant to termite damage and their poison does protect them from grazing mammals and some insects. They can be prone to root problems and it is not uncommon for their trunks to break off at ground level, especially if they have been poorly propagated or planted, which can be a big problem when they are planted as a street tree.

Although they are related to mahogany, their wood can be quite brittle and easily broken, which means care should be taken when pruning or working on them. When the wood dries it shatters easily and can send shards in all directions when you try to snap it. In Australia the wood can range from light cream to dark brown in colour, and while it is quite a useful wood for carving and furniture, it is not widely used.

As a winter deciduous native tree of smallish stature, with many attractive characteristics, the white cedar really is an Australian rarity, despite how widely it occurs or is planted.

Gregory Moore

Doctor of Botany,
The University of Melbourne



This article first appeared in [The Conversation](#) on 28 June 2019.



Indian Grey Hornbill eating White cedar berries
J.M.Garg

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.

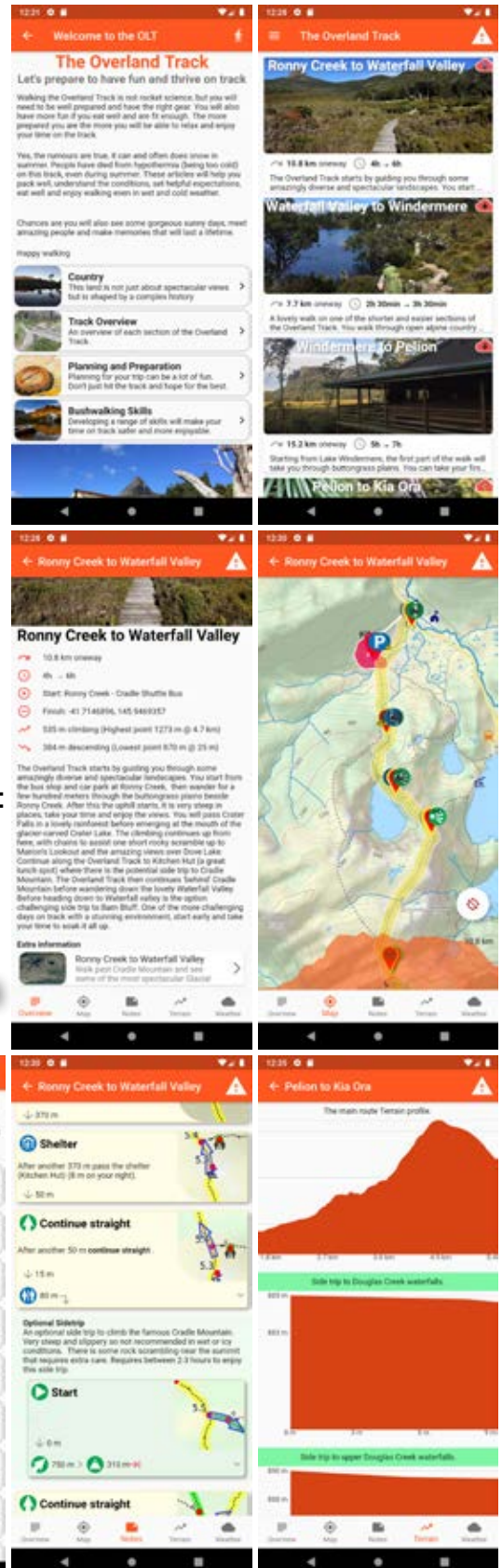
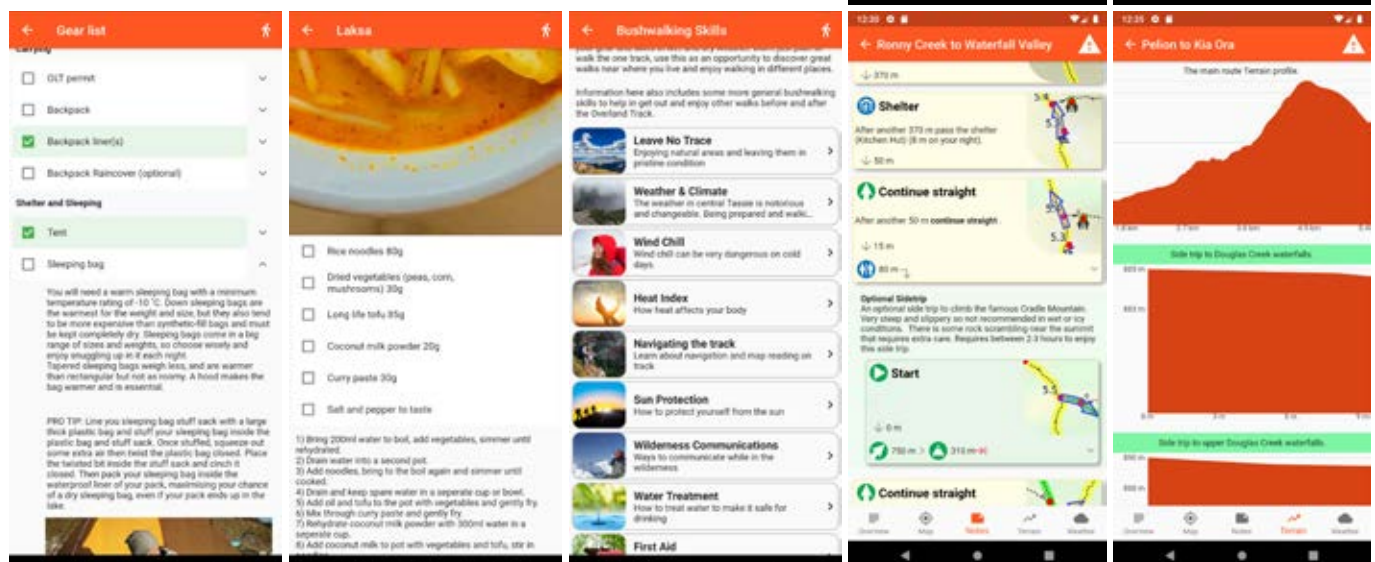
Think of this as the ultimate reference for the Overland Track, a happy marriage between a GPS and a bushwalking guide book.

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



Navigation

Allan Purdon



A lone walker moves silently through an ancient forest as dark clouds gather overhead. A strengthening wind gives voice to the tree tops and fat icy raindrops announce their arrival landing noisily in the leaf litter under foot. Scanning the forest ahead for signs of the faint pad he has been following the walker is confronted by the chaos of a recently fallen tree.

That must be north then ... isn't it? Lake Fanny Track, Walls of Jerusalem, Tasmania
All pictures by Annie Bowerman

Smashed limbs and the fractured trunk of a large stringybark have obliterated any signs of the way ahead. Turning to look back the way he came, the path he was following is suddenly no longer obvious. Retreating slowly he searches for one of the strands of pink surveyors tape that had been his primary navigational tool to that point. The sighting of pink ribbons at regular intervals have provided him with all the reassurance he has required to know that he has been heading in the right direction. Now, with slowly ebbing confidence he moves in a wider arc searching for any sort of sign that he has previously passed this way.

With the menacing rumble of distant thunder ringing in his ears he slings his pack down on a nearby log and pulls out ...

If you have yet to find yourself in a predicament similar to this, keep walking, one day you will.

In an era that most of us might still remember our wayward walker would have had a very limited choice of navigational tools to reach for. A map and a compass would have been his best bet to make sense of where he had found himself. But maybe even before

consulting the map, an inherent sense of direction and understanding of the landscape that could only have been gained through years of experience could well have been his most valuable tool. Today, well-equipped walkers of all levels have a vast array of navigational aids at their disposal and any information required would most likely have been sourced from the internet, searched for, downloaded and saved to some form of digital device prior to setting out. The information stored, like the device it has been saved on, could come in many different formats and be customised to suit the needs of the individual.

Now this is where it gets tricky. Is it sufficient for bushwalkers to rely solely on electronic devices for all their navigational needs or should they still be required to possess a basic understanding of topographical maps and the use of a compass as a minimal back up? And on the other side of the coin, is a walker using nothing more than a map and compass simply stuck in the past and possibly even putting himself at more risk by limiting his way finding options?

“Is it sufficient for bushwalkers to rely solely on electronic devices ...



Should you leave home without them?

Old school fishing boat skippers have argued for decades that modern GPS navigation and ocean sounding technology has dumbed down the requirements needed to be a successful fisherman. Modern skippers they say are simply accessing artificial intelligence to show them when and where to get the best results where previous generations had to rely on a greater wealth of knowledge gained through years of trial and error to be successful. Could it be argued that like a modern day fishing boat skipper a bushwalker following a dot on a screen is devoid of any inherent skill and simply using artificial intelligence to reach his chosen objective? Could it be that a walker concentrating on a small blip held in the palm of his hand has sacrificed any sense of spatial awareness that a walker surveying the broad spread of a topographical map may have gained from a need to relate what the map is telling him to what he sees in the landscape surrounding him? A bit like the music festival patron who spends the entire concert recording the event on their phone and as a result sees very little of the event through their own eyes.

When researching a walk it is now possible for the researcher to simply request a detailed GPX file from somebody who has previously completed the walk and then to download a customised map from an ever expanding number of specialist map producing platforms. While sharing of GPX files may be frowned upon by some it is a common practise widely accepted by many bushwalkers. It's also good chance that anybody researching a walk will have the opportunity to watch a video posted on the internet of the walk they intend to do. The days of walking off into the unknown are fast becoming a thing of the past.

“The days of walking off into the unknown are fast becoming a thing of the past.”

When a large proportion of bushwalkers pull on a pack and set forth into the bush it could well be imagined that one of their main objectives is to escape the constraints of everyday life. To leave the city and all its trappings behind. For those of us who already spend a huge amount of time screen



That looks like the same lake we passed an hour ago
Terry Tarn, Central Plateau, Tasmania

gazing in our normal day to day existence it would seem that this would be the perfect opportunity to leave our devices at home. But for walkers of all levels the ability to pinpoint our location down to the square metre is an asset and at times a comfort that simply can't be dismissed. The massive amounts of man and resource hours that must have been saved by emergency services since the advent of Global Positioning Satellite Receivers could not be overestimated. On average 2000 rescues are performed by emergency services throughout Australia every year with state and territory police tasked to coordinate all land based search and rescues. Lost walkers make up a proportionally small number of these rescues with injured or poorly equipped walkers making up the bulk of the numbers. It would seem that getting lost is becoming harder than ever. Even at its most basic level GPS navigation has the ability to save lives while at its most rudimentary level map and compass navigation is a skill which requires practise to master and regular use to maintain as a useful skill.

“It would seem that getting lost is becoming harder than ever.”

So is the art of finding your way with a map and compass dying?

Map and compass navigation certainly requires a higher degree of patience when compared to the function of a GPS and a user who simply wants to know where he is at the push of a button. A map and compass navigator will need to utilise skills gained through regular use to calculate where he is as opposed to a walker who has simply been shown his location on a GPS screen. While not possessing the same degree of accuracy as a GPS, the reliability of a map and compass in the hands of a competent navigator can be assured. So long as they are kept in reasonable condition a good compass and map will always function in the way it was designed to, where as any form of digital navigation is crucially reliant on a reliable power source and clear path to a satellite to function properly. While a GPS may be far more accurate and faster than a wind shredded rain soaked map, there are still limitations for both. Situations of restricted

“Situations of restricted visibility create added challenges to all forms of navigation ...”



The choice of navigational tools has never been greater.

visibility create added challenges to all forms of navigation and without some line of sight any bushwalker is going to experience an increased level of difficulty in such situations regardless of what they are using to find their way.

Ever since the earliest caveman first picked up a rock to use as a hammer, us humans have been inventing and perfecting tools to make tasks easier. Englishman Edmund Halley is credited as inventing the first liquid filled compass in 1690. However, Chinese navigators were using crude dry type compasses for centuries prior to that. In 1730 Englishman John Hadley and American Thomas Godfrey using principles discovered by Issac Newton, simultaneously developed the sextant. Both of these inventions would have been massive leaps forward for navigators and must have revolutionised the principals of navigation at the time. The sextant and compass must surely have been regarded as the ultimate device that could ever be needed to perform the tasks they did. Inventions that needed no improvements.

Even in their wildest imagination these gentlemen could not possibly have imagined that one day our planet would be surrounded by satellites flying through space, constantly detecting signals from billions of sources worldwide in order to pinpoint their

exact locations. Regardless of the crazy advances being made in satellite navigation, today's airline pilots and ships navigators are still equipped with paper maps and compasses. Today's navigators are still using technologies founded

in the 17th century! While it would seem that the use of a map and compass by the bushwalking community at

large is heading in the same direction as the use of heavy canvas tents and back packs. The contribution these tools have made to modern navigation should not be disregarded too quickly. I feel the trusty map and compass may be around for a long time to come yet!

With the menacing rumble of distant thunder ringing in his ears he slings his pack down on a nearby log and pulls out ... his GPS. A map and compass would usually have been his first choice, but with the weather closing in by the minute, the need to determine his exact location and before pitching his tent and seeking shelter has become a priority. Like any skilled craftsman he has chosen the right tools to do the job proficiently in the time available.

“Today's navigators are still using technologies founded in the 17th century!”



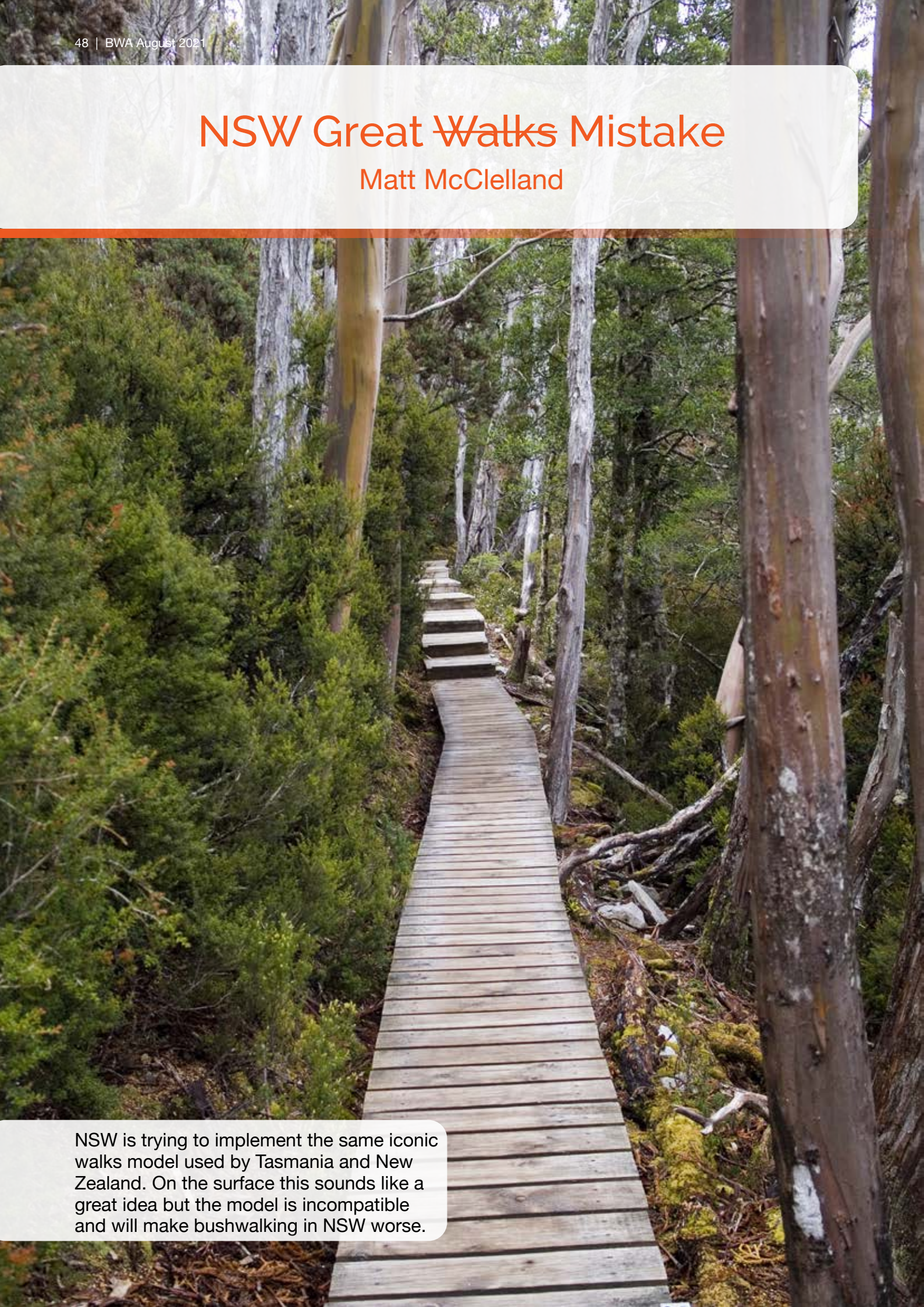
I reckon this could be where we went wrong!
Southern access to the Walls of Jerusalem, Tasmania



Sunset over the walls from Walls
Tom Brennan

NSW Great ~~Walks~~ Mistake

Matt McClelland



NSW is trying to implement the same iconic walks model used by Tasmania and New Zealand. On the surface this sounds like a great idea but the model is incompatible and will make bushwalking in NSW worse.

People love iconic walks, think the [Overland Track](#), [Three Capes](#) or any of the NZ great walks like the [Routeburn](#). There is no doubt that they are popular; they book out very quickly. NSW can and should still have an iconic walks program. It's possible to have a better program than the proposed vision, with a different approach.

Why have great walks?

Iconic or "great" walks are not designed for the seasoned bushwalker but rather for people who like the idea of bushwalking. Walks that provide accommodation, toilets, water, and easy navigation can be enjoyed by most people with minimal bushwalking experience. If NSW gets the model right then the walks will be a truly great experience, unique to the region, carry many more people, and be more accessible. The walks would cost less and be quicker to deliver.

The wrong model

NSW has a choice of iconic walk models to use. Currently the focus is on the Tasmanian and NZ "on-park accommodation" model but the focus should be on the European "off-park accommodation" model. Getting this model right will lead to greater benefits to the people of NSW and far fewer issues for the parks service.

Let's now dig into the rationale then see how we can build better and more iconic walks for less cost that will benefit more parks, more people and more businesses in NSW.

Carrying capacity

The carrying capacity of a track is the number of people who can walk it in a given period. For the Tasmanian and NZ iconic walks the carrying capacity is about 15,000 people a year, limited by pinch points, overnight accommodation. At a certain point the number and size of campsites and huts compromise the quality of the experience. The carrying capacity in Tasmania and NZ is also limited by the weather, with most trips viable in mid-spring to mid-autumn. The iconic walks of Tasmania and NZ are running at their carrying capacity with no opportunities for growth.

“At a certain point the number and size of campsites and huts compromise the quality of the experience.”

Scaling the Tasmanian or NZ model

If NSW goes ahead with an on-park accommodation model it is likely to build a series of overnight sites that can sleep about 60 people, similar to Three Capes. With a 100% occupancy rate the maximum carrying capacity is 22,000 people a year.

Park Accommodation Model	Off Park Accommodation Model
Government accommodation monopoly	Local business managed with competition
Little choice in accommodation options, difficult to adapt	Wide range of options, adaptive to demand
Limited to about 20,000 walkers a year	No arbitrary limit
Creates exclusive use areas within national parks for wealthy walkers	Fosters the ideal that parks are open to all, regardless of wealth
Significant new infrastructure building and maintenance costs for the NSW taxpayer	Leverages off existing community facilities, with costs in the private sector
Books out quickly leading to higher prices, limited access and frustration	More demand encourages more private investment, increasing capacity over time
Very limited economic benefit to regional communities with no growth opportunities	Much larger and growing economic benefit to regional communities
Slow roll out times, taking years and much community debate	Much faster rollout using mostly existing community and business infrastructure
Limited to a small number of walks across the state	Leads to a much larger and scalable state wide track network

There are around one million people in NSW who like to bushwalk. One million people divided by the 22,000 carrying capacity means a 45 year wait to get on track, assuming only NSW residents can book, excluding tourists. Imagine the frustration and bad press every time bookings open. Even if we build 45 walks, then people just want to do them all, creating more frustration.

The root of all the issues is that NSW is deliberately choosing to build artificial bottlenecks on something they know will be very popular. It is like building a new six lane freeway and putting a ferry crossing over a river rather than a bridge. The system cannot grow or scale over time nor do we get the maximum value from the spend. We need to fix the bottleneck at the initial planning phase. It is far too late to have this conversation at the normal public consultation points.

What makes NSW different?

NSW is fundamentally different to Tasmania and NZ and can do something much better for its citizens and parks. The core things that make NSW different include the following.

“NSW is fundamentally different to Tasmania and NZ and can do something much better for its citizens and parks.”

Climate

Most of NSW has a temperate climate, making it safer and more comfortable than some other places for walking year round, even for inexperienced walkers. It also means that the shelters are more about comfort than life saving facilities.

Location of green space and existing track network

In NSW, most of the major cities are home or near to large national parks and other green areas. Iconic walks in Tasmania and NZ tend to be located in remote areas. In NSW the most logical places to have the walks are in and around our cities and regional centres. These parks still give a sense of remoteness even though they are physically close to townships. This also means that NSW can leverage off community-based facilities for walks such as picnic areas, toilets, swimming

areas, accommodation, caravan parks and cafes. Some of NSW's most popular multi-day walks are cross tenure, mixing walking on state forests, national park and private land.

Trackhead access

NSW has incredible public transport networks. It means iconic walks can start and end at train stations or ferry terminals. Also, side trips can join walks to public transport nodes, allowing you to break very long walks into weekend journeys.

A better model – inn-to-inn walking

There is a much better accommodation model for NSW and it is better on almost every metric. It is better for walkers, the environment, for regional economies, faster and cheaper to implement, can be rolled out across many areas of the state and is highly scalable. It is also popular in Europe and in the USA.

“There is a much better accommodation model for NSW and it is better on almost every metric.”

The idea of inn-to-inn walking is simple, walk on-park during the day and stay overnight off-park, in regional communities. The inns will vary and may be a pub, hotel, caravan park, hostel, hosted tent campsite, people's homes, tree houses or micro homes.

The [Camino de Santiago](#) in Spain has 300,000 people walk it each year and it is growing at around 10% a year. If you want to increase the carrying capacity, then encourage the villages to house more people and it keeps scaling up. You also have hundreds of businesses keen to promote the walk, growing it further.

This kind of walking is different from the Overland Track, and that is the point. Why try to compete with the Overland Track on its strengths? Why spend taxpayer money to build something very restrictive when we could spend less and make something much more popular and more accessible? There is demand for this style of walking and NSW has the ideal landscape for it. This should be our primary model for delivering iconic multi-day walking experiences across the state.

The risks to visitor experience using the wrong model

The mismatch in the context of the model will lead to poor visitor experiences. On-park accommodation in Tasmania and NZ are used in remote areas. Using this same model in day walk areas leads to notable visitor experience dissonance. Trying to emulate the Tasmanian experience in a NSW day walk area will lead to comments like "the walk was okay, but no Overland Track". Rather, we should be aiming for "It is like our very own Camino de Santiago." The model must match the landscape helping set the visitor expectations.

Mixing with day visitors

The walks earmarked for iconic walks in NSW have very frequent interactions with day visitors. Visitors are trying to hold in their mind the idea of a very remote getaway, but the reality is frequent interactions with other visitors on short walks, roads and carparks. Such interactions make intuitive sense in the European off-park accommodation model.

Artificial walk duration

When walking in a remote area the length of the walk is naturally the distance between

trackheads. The NSW proposed walks have frequent passing of trackheads and access points, yet the promotion and booking system will enforce a set number of days like the Great Southern Walk, four nights. For some users, doing the walk as a series of weekend trips would be more optimal, but the booking system for on-park accommodation will not allow this and visitors will be forced to walk at the pace and rhythm set by NPWS. With off-park accommodation models there is no such pressure giving visitors the opportunity to walk at their own pace and time frames.

Difficult to scale

The earmarked iconic walks in NSW are perfect for extension and joining into a network. For example, the [Great North Walk](#), [Great West Walk](#) and [Great Southern Walk](#) can all be linked into a multi-week journey and extended along the entire coast of NSW. The on-park accommodation model makes this growth extraordinarily difficult if not impossible. As the walk gets longer then booking the accommodation in chunks becomes unmanageable and even more difficult when there is a logical section of track off-park.



View over Berowra Waters from the Great North Walk

Why is the Inn-to-inn off-park accommodation model better?

For walkers

- There is more choice in walking pace and accommodation options.
- Choose accommodation that provides hot showers and food, or a place to pitch your tent. Great for couples, singles, families, groups - walk your own walk.
- Can walk end to end or tackle sections at your own pace.
- Logistically easier to organise - can have the inns prepare your meals.
- Lower gear requirements makes for lighter packs and lower barriers to entry.
- Larger iconic walking track network - more options.

Regional communities

- Year round steady customer base for accommodation, meals and supplies.
- Commercial motivation to promote the walk and partner with similar accommodation providers on track with real grown potential.
- Most of the infrastructure is already in place.
- Lots of opportunities for value added experiences.

Park agencies

- Focus on what they are great at, protecting ecosystems and providing quality walking infrastructure.

- Not having to deal with the headache of accommodation in remote areas.
- Shift in focus from charging wealthy visitors for exclusive use to charging everyone a smaller fee to enjoy public space.
- More in line with the overall national park ethos, lower maintenance costs, fewer changes to Plans of Management, increase in park visitation, able to roll out more walks

State government

- This model is much more in line with the current state government philosophy
- Maximising the community impact for each dollar spent
- Less cost to the NSW taxpayer
- Encouraging small businesses to provide quality and competitive services, rather than building a government accommodation network
- Long term sustainable and scalable model, that increases the number of visitors without adding burden to the park system.
- Better utilisation of existing government infrastructure, eg, public transport.
- Faster and cheaper to roll out across more of NSW.
- Major tourism draw cards that are visitor friendly opening up following COVID.



Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff in Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair NP, Tasmania

Why not run both models on each track?

On the surface there is a reasonable sounding argument that we can run both models in parallel. We could have government provided accommodation on-park and let people organise their own if they want. Parks can set up accommodation and other providers can set up competition to them. But wait, what? Why should the government be setting up a service to compete with already struggling regions?

The goal should be about maximising the visitor experience in a way that also maximises the benefit to our communities, with the best return on investment for the government and the local communities. Governments should be plugging the gaps that industry cannot fill whilst encouraging local business to do what they do best.

If there is a gap such as a long section of track through a national park where there are no reasonable options for off-park accommodation, then and only then look to fill the gap with on-park accommodation that will not create bottlenecks.

If NSW adopt on-park accommodation then NPWS will aim to maximise their own income, making walks more expensive and less accessible. They will have a government funded virtual monopoly that will inevitably come with all the standard issues of any artificial monopoly. This sounds harsh, but it is already happening.

Monopoly thinking already in action

We can already see the negative impact that the focus of this on-park accommodation model is having on bushwalking in NSW. Here are two recent examples and the state has not even started to build these iconic walks yet.

“We can already see the negative impact that the focus of this on-park accommodation model is having ...

Remote campsites earmarked for removal

The plan for the [Light to Light walk](#) in southern NSW, removes the free remote campsites. This forces bushwalkers with tents to pay a significant fee to camp in the far less idyllic, busy car-based campsites. Parks made a deliberate decision to make



Saltwater Creek Beach on Light to Light walk, Ben Boyd NP, NSW

the walking experience worse for those on a lower budget. Instead of this, formalising these remote campsites would have improved lower budget access and provided toilet breaks for the five million Australians with some form of incontinence, making the hut-based walk more inclusive.

Very high prices and exclusive use

The [Green Gully Track](#) is a 4-5 day walk in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, NSW. You can *only* do the walk if you book the huts, \$900 for 2-4 people, no solo walkers. If two people want to do this walk, it costs twice as much as walking the Overland Track. With a maximum of six people a day the track has an annual carrying capacity of 2200 a year.

Repurposing the huts is great, but the cost is prohibitive for many people. It also means that no one can do the walk on a budget using tents. It seems fundamentally wrong to build a walk on public land that is deliberately limited to only six people each day. There should not be arbitrary limits imposed for accessing public land.

It is clear that the NSW iconic walks program is inadvertently starting a new government funded monopoly.

No one is sitting in an office making a deliberate decision to do this; it is an accident caused by an incompatible

model and philosophical approach. The main issues stem from the false assumption that the walk and accommodation should be wholly on NPWS land. Instead, if the project started with the idea of how to protect parks and maximise the benefit to the people of NSW the result would be much better.

“ If two people want to do this walk, it costs twice as much as walking the Overland Track.

A way forward?

Trying to compete with Tasmania and NZ on their terms is never going to work for NSW. The best way to "compete" is on NSW's natural strengths. Building walks that are best for NSW visitors, parks, communities, environment and infrastructure. Here are a few simple steps NSW can take to start moving towards a better iconic walks program.



Project benefit review

Although many of the basic earmarked routes will probably still work with an off-park accommodation model, the projects need to be reviewed with fresh eyes. Namely, starting with the focus on park protection, visitor experience and maximum community benefit front of mind in a land tenure neutral way.

Review of budget requirements

Budgets are often a killer for change like this. Sometimes money is specifically earmarked for building infrastructure, even though being spent in another way may offer a better return on the overall investment.

Earliest possible consultation

To date, all the NPWS public consultations on iconic walks have occurred after the walk proposal is very detailed. This means that any feedback from the community on the basic route or core issues are routinely ignored leading to conflict between the plan and the community subject matter experts (SMEs). Walk ideas can be rapidly improved in the early prototyping phase when SMEs and parks staff can bounce ideas around. This also broadens knowledge bases and improves the level of general community support and ultimately the quality of the overall walking experiences.

“... all the NPWS public consultations on iconic walks have occurred after the walk proposal is very detailed.”

Multi-tenure, multi-agency and community group approach

NSW is much bigger than Tasmania or New Zealand and has more agencies engaged in similar activities. In NSW we have state forests, local council, crown land and national park estates managed separately and also have a very good tourism agency. Crown Lands currently manages some of NSW's most well known longer walks, The Great North Walk, Six Foot Track and the [Hume and Hovell Walking Track](#). NSW is

“It is time to take a fraction of the money spent so far to optimise the proposed walks ...”

also home to the Walking Volunteers, a group with a great track record of establishing walking routes, let alone many other community environmental groups. NSW could also look to establish a "Walk NSW" group tasked with the job of coordinating the establishment of a network of iconic inn-to-inn walks across the state.

NSW NPWS has already spent a very significant amount of time and consultancy fees in developing detailed proposed iconic walking routes across the state. It is time to take a fraction of the money spent so far to optimise the proposed walks to avoid creating headaches for the parks service whilst maximising the benefits and walking experience for the community.



Bowtells Bridge over the Coxs River, on the Six Foot Track, NSW

Dehydrated Delights

Sonya Muhlsimmer



Now is about the time I start preparing my meals for my annual back country pilgrimage to the snow. I have been searching through some old favourites and also looking through some ideas I have written down, yet to be formally written. I came across these two meals that are healthy, hearty and delicious. Time is required to cook, dehydrate and condition the meals, so go on and get in the kitchen and start preparing. Conditioning is placing the dehydrated meal into an airtight glass jar for a week to look for condensation, ensuring all the dehydrated food is fully dry at the same humidity level so mould won't grow.

I have tried these dishes a few times and enjoyed them in trials at home, so why not give them a go in the snow? Having a good serving of vegetables when you are on a multi-day trip anywhere is pretty good, your body and taste buds will thank you. Oh, I will also show you a method to rehydrate the meals that you won't even have any dirty dishes left behind to wash up, except for a bowl or two. Seriously, there is nothing better than having a hearty meal and dessert in the middle of nowhere and you don't have to clean up, how good is that. This is what I call real soul food.

Roasted Ratatouille with Cous Cous

Ratatouille is a classic French stew consisting of slow cooked vegetables in a rich tomato sauce. This is comfort food right here, ratatouille is a vegan and gluten free dish on its own, and anyone can eat it. Of course it depends on what side dish or accompaniment you have with it, you can serve it with cous cous, (which I will use for this article), rice, pasta, polenta, quinoa or even some flat bread. There are so many versions and recipes of this dish out there and you can either bake it or stew it. All you need is some good quality vegetables like eggplant, tomato, zucchini, capsicum and some herbs and spices. The traditional way is to saute each vegetable separately, then layer the vegetables in an oven dish and bake it, but we will be doing it a little differently, then it needs dehydrating. This meal serves two people.

Bag 1 (Ratatouille)

Eggplant (1 each)	Approx 200 grams
Zucchini (2 each)	Approx 250 grams
Red capsicum (1 with seeds removed)	Approx 200 grams
Dried herbs (oregano, thyme and basil)	2 pinches each
Vegetable stock	1 tsp
Crushed garlic	1 clove or tsp
Olive oil	2 Tbsp
Salt & pepper	Pinch
Diced tomato (1 can)	400 grams
White sugar	1 tsp

Bag 2 (Cous Cous)

Cous cous	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup
Vegetable stock	1 tsp
Salt & pepper	Pinch

Water

Water	2½ cups
-------	---------

At home method

Cut the eggplant in uniform squares at approximately 2 x 2 centimetres diameter and place the eggplant in a colander in the sink. Sprinkle some salt over the eggplant and let sit for about 30 minutes, after this time rinse the eggplant in water to remove the salt. This



removes the bitterness from the seeds of the eggplant. In the meantime cut the remaining vegetables in a uniform size of around 2 x 2 centimetres. Pour the olive oil on the bottom of a baking tray, Place the vegetables on the tray, sprinkle with salt, pepper, chilli, herbs and garlic and mix the vegetables around so they get coated with the oil. Roast the vegetables in the oven at 180 °C for 30 minutes. While the vegetables are in the oven, open a 400 gram can of diced tomatoes and sprinkle a teaspoon of sugar in the can. When the vegetables are roasted, pour the can of tomato over the roasted vegetables, mix through and bake for another 30 minutes. This will weigh approximately 600 grams. Once cooked, spread the mixture over two dehydrator trays lined with baking paper, or if you have a dehydrator with solid trays lining the trays is not necessary. Dehydrate at 70 °C for about 15 hours. Look at the instructions of your dehydrator to set the temperature correctly as it could either have Level 1, 2 or 3. Then when the Ratatouille is dry, break it up and place it in jars and let sit for about a week to condition the meal. Then, place it in a snap lock bag and label as Ratatouille - Bag 1. The dehydrated weight is approximately 100 grams. Place the cous cous, salt pepper and stock powder in another bag and label this Bag 2.

At camp method

To rehydrate, boil 2.5 cups of water. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup boiled water to cover the cous cous then seal the bag. Add about 1¼ cups of the boiled water to the ratatouille bag, seal the zip lock bag closed and mix the water through by lightly squeezing the bag. The bags do not melt! Place the two bags into the remaining water in the pot, cover and let sit for around 10 minutes. When the ratatouille is rehydrated, add the cous cous to the bowl and pour the ratatouille over the cous cous, enjoy.

Treacle Sweet Potato Pudding

So who does not love a great dessert? And who does not love a quick and nutritious dessert at that? Let me tell you a little bit about the humble sweet potato. This vegetable is full of fibre and vitamins A, C and B6, which is great for the immune system, iron absorption and forming of red blood cells. There are also a lot of minerals such as potassium and folate which helps muscle function and forming of red blood cells and calcium to strengthen bones. Magnesium is also found in the sweet potato which helps with over 300 chemical reactions in the body such as contracting muscles, sending and receiving messages and keeping your heart beating just for some examples. For a humble root vegetable it sure packs a nutritious punch. Oh by the way, on a side note magnesium can also be taken to aid in muscle cramps. This dessert is pretty simple and tasty with a hint of sweetness and crunch for some texture. To have a super healthy vegetable made into a dessert is the best of both worlds I say. This dish also serves two people.

At home method

Peel and dice the sweet potato into approximately 3 x 3 cm cubes. Boil for about 15-20 minutes until the sweet potato is soft and cooked through. Drain into a colander and let cool, then place it into a blender with all the other ingredients except for the pecans. Puree the mix for about one minute then scrape down the sides of the blender with a spatula. Puree again for about 15 seconds until fully mixed through. This will weigh approximately 540 grams. Spread the mixture over two dehydrator trays lined with baking paper, or if you have a dehydrator with solid trays, lining the trays is unnecessary. Dehydrate at 70 °C for about 15 hours. Look at the instructions of your dehydrator to set the temperature correctly as it could either have Level 1, 2 or 3. Then when the pudding is dry, break it up and place it in jars and let sit for about a week to condition the meal. Now this should weigh approximately 140 grams. Once conditioned, place the sweet



potato in a food processor and grind it to a powder, this will help with rehydrating out on the trail. Then, place it in a snap lock bag and label as Sweet potato pudding - Bag 1. Toast the pecans and once cool crush them up slightly and place them in a bag labelled Topping - Bag 2.

Method at camp

Boil 1.5 cups of water. Add about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water to the pudding bag and seal the bag closed. Mix the water through the pudding by lightly squeezing the bag. Soak the pudding mix in the pot with the remaining water for about 10 minutes. After the soaking time, mix thoroughly and serve in bowls, pour the pecans over the pudding and enjoy.

Bag 1 (Sweet potato pudding)

Sweet potato (2 medium)	Approx 540 grams
Treacle	3 Tbsp
Mixed spice	1 tsp
Coconut milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Vanilla essence	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp

Bag 2 (Topping)

Pecans (toasted and crushed)	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
------------------------------	-------------------

Water

Water	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups
-------	----------------------





Descending to Blue Lake, Kosciuszko NP, NSW
John Walker

High Mountain

Stephen Lake



Tune: *Moon River*

High mountain, way up in the sky,
Climbing on your ridge I'll fly, today.
A fine bush track, with my rucksack.
Whenever I'm with you I'm happy this way.

Out walking, off to see the peaks,
There's such a lot of peaks to see.
Each day there are views sublime, sharing all
good times,
In bushland I'll be fine, wild places and me.

Wild country, camping so remote,
Down rivers I will float with friends
Through scrub slipping, the day tripping.
I'm glad to be with you, a rainbow to end.

Warm sunshine, hear the song birds' calls,
Our journey to the falls, we'll see.
Each day has a good campsite, settled
for the night.

Everything is right, wild places and me.

High mountain, way up in the sky,
Climbing on your ridge I'll fly, today.
A fine bush track, with my rucksack.
Whenever I'm with you I'm happy this way.



Bushwalk Australia



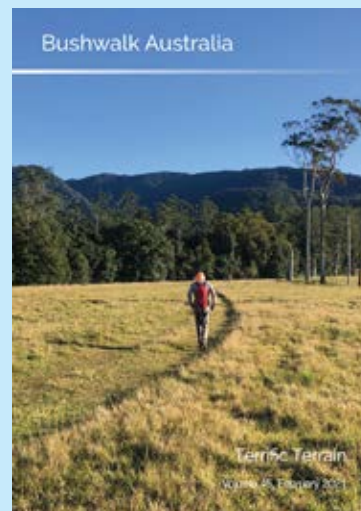
Reflections & Rescues

- > Junction Lake
- > Feathertop via Wilsons Prom
- > Swift Water Rescue Course
- > Archive - Glimpses of the past



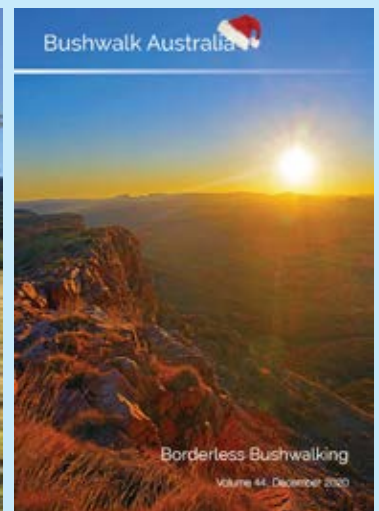
Hidden Hikes

- > Nitmiluk Gorge
- > Boltons Hut
- > Can artificial intelligence write a bushwalking article?



Terrific Terrain

- > Helicopter Spur
- > Gibraltar and Washpool
- > Freycinet Circuit
- > Wollangambe Canyon deaths



Borderless Bushwalking

- > Ettrema Wilderness
- > Tripping in NSW
- > Western Macs
- > Rubbish!



Resounding Rocks

- > Traversing the Winburndale Range
- > Malbena Matters!



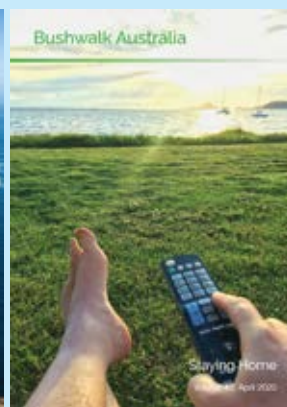
COVID Contingencies

- > Barrington Tops
- > Mount Emmett
- > South West Cape circuit



Bushwalking Anew

- > Three Capes
- > Spirit of place
- > The butterfly effect



Staying Home

- > Mount Giles
- > Bushwalking in a pandemic
- > Southern Ranges & Du Cane



Fire and Fury

- > 2019-20 bushfires overview
- > In memory of Four Mile Hut



Hills & Valleys

- > Orange Bluff
- > Walking on fire



Alpine Adventures

- > Hannells Spur Loop, NSW
- > AAWT



Awesome Adventures

- > McMillans Track, Victoria
- > Island Lagoon



Wild & Rugged

- > Queen Charlotte Track, NZ
- > Huemul Circuit, Argentina



Going the Distance

- > Mt Wills to Mt Bogong
- > Hume & Hovell WT