

Bushwalk Australia

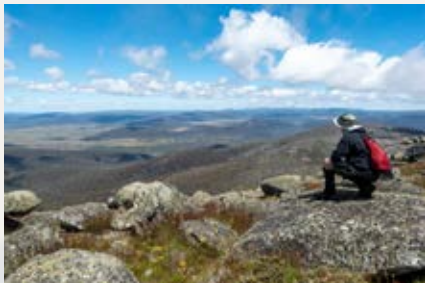


Epic Escarpments

Volume 49, October 2021

Bushwalk Australia Magazine
An electronic magazine for
<http://bushwalk.com>
Volume 49, October 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.



Mount Bimberi, towards Tantangara in Kosciuszko National Park
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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 December 2021 edition is 30 October 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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Oh Sweet Honey!

Do you know how
important bees are?

From the Editor

Hi

I am very conscious that the past 18 months have been very different for all of us. People missing adventures, friends, family whilst experiencing extended lockdowns and isolation. I know we are a resilient bunch and will continue to support each other the best we can. Like many of you my walking plans for this year have not played out as I hoped, but I do look forward to being able to explore more widely soon and shed these COVID kilograms.

In this issue, John shares his hair-raising trip in the Blue Mountains, Tracie shares some stunning rare wildflower finds, Sonya brings us a new yummy honey recipe, and I enjoy a few days walking around Carnarvon Gorge. Craig shares his mid-life crisis and his recommitment to wilderness. Jessica takes us to Timor-Leste and the Nino Konis Santana National Park via the Overland Track - quite the journey.

Bushwalk Australia is all about a community made up of people like you. We would love to help share your story of adventures or ideas big and small. Even if you just have an idea please reach out to Eva, Stephen or me and let's make it happen.

Stay safe, happy walking

Matt :)



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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

The untold story of naming Kosciuszko

John Anderson has written a [book of the 1840 expedition](#) to the Australian Alps and in it explains where Mount Kosciuszko got its name.

Feral horses create divisiveness

In NSW, [feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park](#) are splitting communities. It's unfortunate that science is ignored.

How long will paper maps be needed?

With GPS, Google maps and the like, paper maps are not used by many people now. However, there's still [a place for paper maps](#).

Orroral Valley fire enquiry

A January 2020 bushfire that destroyed 80 per cent of Namadgi National Park was started by a Defence helicopter. A [coronial inquiry](#) will focus on the 45 minutes between when the blaze started and emergency services being informed of its location.

Invasive species have cost Australia \$390 billion in 60 years

The [\\$390 billion figure](#) is probably an underestimation. Professor Corey Bradshaw from Flinders University said, "Because it's really difficult to put monetary costs on things like ecological function, or even bushfire risk."

Arthur-Pieman 4WD tracks in Tasmania stay closed for good

Eight years ago three 4WD tracks were closed for vehicles by Labor-Green government. Although the Liberals fought against it for eight years, the tracks [remain closed](#) for vehicles for good, saving the Aboriginal heritage.

Poison baits in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

The NSW government says that baiting is necessary [to protect vulnerable native animals](#), but concerns have been raised by the local mayor and a scientist who specialises in dingoes.

Tree plan well short of target

The federal government September 2018 plan to increase timber plantations by one billion trees over a decade is [not happening](#) - less than 1 per cent of that goal has been planted.

National park developments

Wild places are disappearing as developments continue to encroach with private huts, unsympathetic track upgrades, and poor infrastructure. In some cases the economic basis is very flawed or non-existent. This article gives a [reasonably balanced assessment](#).

Lake Malbena appeal upheld

In September, the full bench of the Supreme Court case regarding proposed helicopter-accessed visitor accommodation at Lake Malbena in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was handed down. [The ruling is in favour of conservation](#), setting aside both the outcome of the initial appeal to the Supreme Court and the original decision of the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal to grant a permit for the proposal.

Falls to Hotham walk proceeding

Parks Victoria has [announced a further step](#) in the Falls Creek to Mount Hotham walk. Amazingly, the same contractor that was used before, McGregor Coxall, will be used. McGregor Coxall was justifiably strongly criticised for a poor standard in their reports - making up information, no research, and extremely flawed conclusions.



Carnarvon Gorge-ous

Matt McClelland

From canyons to grasslands,
this great walk truly is gorgeous.

Carnarvon Gorge from top of Battleship Spur
All pictures by Matt McClelland

On a large scale view Carnarvon Gorge is just a wee little crack in the Queensland's central highlands. As I drove closer, I could pick which crack it is in the distance. As I parked my car I was impressed by the towering sandstone cliffs. And when I walked through the gorge I was swallowed up by breathtaking side canyons, Aboriginal art and history, and the sheer power of water and time. If I saw a dinosaur I would not have been too surprised.

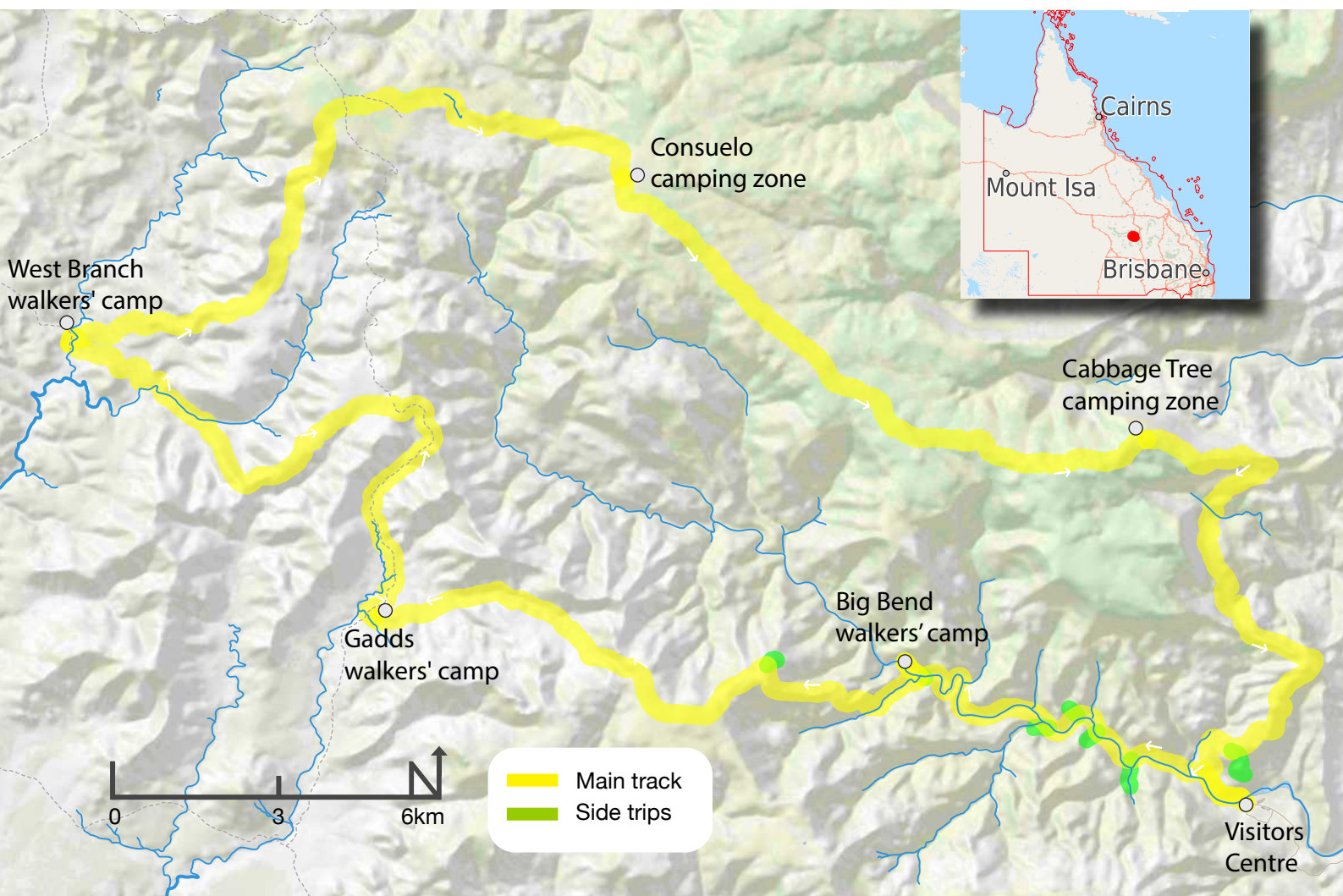
Most of the walking I do is fairly well planned. I am not manic in my planning, but I usually do a pretty good research. But not this time. I was on the Gold Coast for a few weeks to

do a series of short walks, but the forecast was such that I looked into other options. I like blue skies, you can call me soft if you want. It was only a 750 kilometre drive to this Carnarvon Gorge, a place I have heard was good. I have enough food in the boot, so let's go.

Don't get me wrong, there is value in researching a place before you go. I would have got more out of the trip if I had a better sense of the traditional custodial history, the geology, the flora and fauna. Oh and having a good sense of the walk would have meant I was better prepared, but I was prepared enough to be safe and enjoy it.



Visitors Centre



Day 1 - Visitors Centre - Big Bend walkers' camp, 9.5 km, 2.75 - 4.5 hours

The walk starts with the most spectacular places to visit, it really is an awesome day. There is parking a short walk from the visitor centre, the official start of the walk. There is a pay phone, free Wi-Fi, toilets and plenty of information about the regions. It was worth spending a bit of time getting a feel for the history and landscape that I was about to plunge into.

I kicked off from the Visitors Centre, following the very well maintained tourist track up through the centre of the gorge. Soon into the walk I noticed the track to Boolimba Bluff where I will come down when I finish the walk in a few days. The canyon walk is nice, but it is all about the rougher side trips to some amazing places like Moss Garden, the Amphitheatre, Wards Canyon, the Art Gallery, and Cathedral Cave.

The Moss Garden is found at the base of a waterfall in a side canyon.



Moss Garden

The Amphitheatre walk leads you up a broad side gully to a large cliff wall, which could easily be described as an amphitheatre, but no, keep going. Climb up the ladder and into

the narrow slot canyon until it opens into a large open roof cavern - so worth the side trip.

Wards Canyon is a fantastic side narrow slot mossy canyon. If I had to pick a favorite side trip it would be this one, but it is hard to choose. Enjoy the water cascading through the well shaded and cool canyon.

The Art Gallery and the Cathedral Cave are both spectacular natural places in their own right but the clear history of the first nation people is breathtaking. There are boardwalks sensitively built and signs give a richer understanding of the importance of these places.



Art Gallery



Cathedral Cave

The walk is short enough that if you start early in the day you have plenty of time to soak up and really explore the side trips. Past Cathedral Cave the track starts to fade and crosses below Boowinda Gorge (tomorrow's turn off) and not long after leads you to the signposted Big Bend walkers' camp.

Big Bend walkers'campsite



This delightful campsite is located on the sand banks in the upper reaches of the main canyon. If you only have two days, then the walk here and back is a great way to spend it. I would also be content camping here a few nights. This is a well shaded campsite, surrounded by towering cliffs. There are a couple of pit toilets and a picnic table. Water can be collected from the creek. I spent the evening chatting with a lovely couple at the picnic table and sharing walking adventures, and talking American politics. Beware of the mice, seriously. At 3 am I woke to two of the cutest tiniest mice scurrying around me and my shelter. The persistent creatures were evicted after a good ten minute wrestle and after they had a good nibble at my food. I highly recommend bear bagging your food each night as these things will chew through anything.

Day 2 - Big Bend walkers' camp - Gadds walkers' camp, 14 km, 5.3 - 7 hours

After packing up camp we were sharing mice related war stories with fellow campers. Seems there were a lot of mice or a very enthusiastic pair - most tents had a newly installed mouse door.

The walk leads back down the canyon a bit before turning right up Boowinda Gorge. I was so unprepared and unfamiliar with the walk that I was surprised and really delighted by this canyon. There is no track. I was walking through the small boulder field that formed the dry creek bed as the tall cliffs came closer and closer. Soon you could

touch each side looking up through the crack to the sky far above. It is slower walking on the rocks but it is a place worth taking the time.



Boowinda Gorge

Ohh and then the climb starts. Don't worry, it is only 600 metres over four kilometres. Oh wait, what?

Yep you feel it, but again, there is no rush. Walking up Boowinda Gorge I noticed a side gully with a small orange triangle on a palm tree, the canyon exit. The track up this gully is steep, so I needed to use my hands and scramble over a few rocks. Nothing technical but fun all the same. At the top of the gully the terrain opens up to a grassy understory of a tall forest. The start of the aptly named Battleship Ridge. This is where the rest of the 500 metre climb happens. Just under an hour after leaving the canyon, the track leads over a rocky scree section, then 30 minutes later I climbed up a short metal ladder/steps.



Big Bend walkers'campsite

Then another 30 minutes later brought me to the intersection with Battleship Spur. Is it just me or did they get the spur and ridge naming backwards, weird. Anyway, I can only assume based on the lack of finding anything else that the Battleship naming is how the person felt when they walked up. But really it is not that bad. Take your time and enjoy the shade of the palms as you walk up looking back at the stunning views.

The side trip to the Battleship Spur Lookout is only 500 metres return from the intersection and proved a great morning tea spot as I glanced back down over the main gorge. If you were able to sleep in a bit more, somehow avoiding the mouse alarm, then this would also be a great lunch spot. Actually almost anywhere on this day is a good spot for lunch.

The rest of the walk to camp took me about three hours. It is mostly undulating through open grassy forest, through a few narrow gullies, along a few rock creek beds, but most open wide flatter lands. I stopped for lunch on a log in one of the more narrow and cooler gullies. The steepness of the morning's climb was forgotten (maybe forgiven) and it is just a lovely meander through what to me is unfamiliar but delightful country.

Gadds walkers' camp



This is the first of what seems to be “the classic” campsites that define this walk. A large post shelter with a tin roof that feeds two underground water tanks, from which water is obtained by hand pumps. The water tanks are much needed as there is not a lot of surface water for much of the year



Gadds walkers' camp

on this walk. This campsite also has a well maintained pit toilet and plenty of space to camp.

Time for a wash and hangout for the afternoon. As the sun was getting close to setting and I was sipping my ice tea, I could hear a group approaching in the distance. They were the families from the Northern Territory I briefly met yesterday. What a delightful and fun group. We stayed up into the evening chatting about the day, near misses with mice, and other adventures. Over the next few evenings we became friends. We walked separately but I looked forward to them joining me at camp.

Day 3 - Gadds walkers' camp - West Branch camp, 16.7 km, 5 - 6.5 hours

Today's walk is not about the “in your face” spectacular that defined the last few days. There are three main parts of the day - walking up along the Angelina Creek valley, then walking up to and along the plateau (part of the Great Dividing Range), then wandering the Boot Creek valley to West Branch.

From the campsite I walked for a short distance before joining the management trail and wandering. You get a feel for how



Swing bridge near West Branch campsite

the area was once a popular grazing land. There are a series of creek beds to cross but is generally a fairly open pleasant forest. When I came through, the grass was about 1.5 metres high in places along the old trail. Although still pretty easy to follow, the track was faint in places and I did hit a few unexpected bumps I did not see. But no dramas.

Following the spur down off the far end of the plateau, I checked out the view to the basalt capped peak of Mount Moffatt off to the left. As I continued down the valley though the varying forests, I passed a series of signs to cross the (usually dry) west branch of the Maranoa River on a foot swing bridge. On the far side of the bridge is the second (alternate start/end) trackhead for the walk, and the basic West Branch walkers camp.

West Branch campsite



I walked a few hundred metres further to camp at the bigger 4WD camping area. There were no cars when I got there. A few came later but it was still a pleasant place to camp. Picnic tables, toilet, tap tank water and fire pits. My NT friends came later and had some of their other friends drive in, so there was snack food, drinks and a pleasant evening chatting around the campfire.

The walkers campsite is a flat grassy area with a water tap, no other facilities, but an easy short walk to the toilet if you want to use it. I think if I were there on a long weekend I would have camped here.

Day 4 - West Branch camp - Consuelo camping zone, 16.1 km, 5.5 - 7.5 hours

A relatively easy day and a great change in vegetation. As I kicked off I climbed up onto and followed a ridge through a notably taller

woodland and open forest, a mix of Sydney Blue Gum and more Silvertop Stringybarks, as well as a scattering of the tall Macrozamia cycads. I got to the Mahogany Forest for morning tea. This would be an awesome lunch spot. The "Mahogany" forest is a silvertop stringybark (*Eucalyptus laevopinea*) growing up to 40 metres high. It is a real change in vegetation from the rest of the walk. It is a pretty easy, mostly downhill walk to the Consuelo camping zone. I got there for lunch and was feeling pretty itchy so I kept walking and got to the Cabbage Tree camping zone comfortably before dark.

Consuelo camping zone



Now I did not camp here, but filled up water bottles and had lunch. There are a couple of signs along the track that you can camp between. In the middle is one of these nine post shelters with two pumps and underground water tanks.

Day 5 - Consuelo camping zone - Cabbage Tree camping zone, 13.6 km, 3 - 4.5 hours

This is an even easier day, the easiest of the whole trip. The track follows an overgrown old 4WD track through a blue gum, angophora and cycads forest, and a fairly gently undulating track.

Cabbage Tree camping zone



This is a camping area, so there are a couple of signs along the track that you can camp between. In the middle is one of these nine post shelters with two pumps and underground water tanks. Most people seem to camp near the shelter. It is up high and exposed to the wind, even though you are in the forest. It was a pleasant evening for me, but I imagine it could get very chilly.



West Branch walkers campsite

Day 6 - Cabbage Tree camping zone back to the start, 14.5 km, 5 - 6.5 hours

The last day was dominated by cliff top views and walking down, down, down hill. I slept in and didn't leave camp till 9 am. I was feeling pretty lazy and pretty good about it. Within fifteen minutes I passed my first stunning view looking north over Jimmys Shelf. An hour later I was winding down a spur and crossed a fairly large body of water that was not marked on the map. I can't find notes on it but I assume it is a dam built by the stockman who worked the area. Soon after, the track leads down some steps to cross the cool and gently flowing North Arch Creek. What a great spot to rest on my lazy day.

Three hours after leaving the camp I came to the narrow Demons Ridge where a short informal track leads to the top of a rock platform on the left of the track. Views north seem to go on forever past Arch Chasm. And looking back the track there were glimpses of

The Ogres Thumb rock formation. There are a series of more unfenced and unsigned cliff top views off to the left as I continued down, hitting touristville again at the intersection with the Boolimba Bluff Lookout track. I dropped my pack and took the basic pack with lunch for the 750 metre wander out to the series of fenced, shaded and special lookouts. The views were down to the start of the walk and across the mouth of the main gorge. A lovely spot. I started chatting with a friendly walker who later turned out to be staying at the same caravan park as me. She and her husband shared dinner with me. I love meeting walkers and hearing their stories, especially when food is also on offer.

The walk then leads steep down a series of steps and ladders into the gorge and back to the Visitors Centre. Yep this counts as a great walk in my book. Not one for the bucket list, but definitely worth the drive and a week. Queensland parks have done well.



Entrance to the Amphitheatre

Getting there	Carnarvon Gorge NP sits between Roma and Emerald, about 720 kilometres by road north-west of Brisbane. The road is good with just the last few kilometres on a good dirt road. There are plenty of day and multi-day parking spaces near the (start of the walk).
Where to stay	There is a good range of accommodation options near the start of the walk for before and after. It is a long drive for most people, so staying before and after the walk is a good idea and gives you more time to enjoy the area. There is a national park campsite at the start of the walk (only open during school holidays) and a short drive away you will find a great caravan park and some more fancy hard roof accommodation.
When to walk	The walk is closed from November to the end of February, during the main heat of the year. The time between May and September gives you a good balance of not being too hot or cloudy. See bom.gov.au
Permits	You need to book and get a camping permit for each night, about \$7 a person a night, pretty good value I reckon. I would happily pay that just for the water supply. Two people walking for five nights will pay just shy of \$70 on campsite bookings for the actual walk. Also, budget for a night or two before and after the walk.
Walking pace	I found that most days you can be at a camp by lunch time if you start early enough and walk at a fair pace. I had some lazy lunches and snack times on rocks with views. You can do the walk at a faster pace. I ended up merging a few days into one. But if you can, take your time. Give yourself the full five nights, explore the area, enjoy the views and curl up with a good book. Also, I had an extra night after the walk in the local caravan park to enjoy some swimming and explore a few more canyons. So give yourself a good week. Yes, you can do it quicker. If you're fit and happy to move you could complete the walk in three nights easily enough.
Water access	There is water at the start, end, and at each campsite. All water is promoted as needing treating. At the first night's campsite, water is from the creek. The rest of the walk has water tanks.
Fires and stoves	This is a fuel stove only walk. All the walkers' campsites have a no campfire rule. The one exception to this is the West Branch camp (the car camping area, not the walkers camp) that allows fires in the pits provided. All the campsites have clearly regularly used fire scars, but avoid the temptation.



Typical woodland when walking along ridge tops

Access points	Most people start the walk at the Visitors Centre, the main entrance to Carnarvon Gorge. There is also a secondary track head at West Branch, which requires a 4WD with high clearance and a much longer drive. West Branch might be a good option for people wanting to resupply or if you only want to walk part of the route.
Communication	Very limited, Telstra (not Telstra wholesale like Aldi). There is GPS coverage for the whole trip other than in the short very narrow canyon sections.
Group size	Campsites are limited to groups of six people and you can stay up to two nights in each of the campsites.
Direction of travel	The walk is promoted for people to travel clockwise and this worked well for me. I think the anticlockwise would work fine too if you had a good reason to do it, but otherwise I think stick with the trend here.
Track grade and navigation	The walk is correctly graded as a class 5/6 as some sections the track are faint and unclear. Most intersections are tastefully and clearly signposted and the map is generally accurate (a few minor issues). I was a bit surprised that a fair amount of the second half of the walk follows an old 4WD track, but is pretty overgrown, so it did not feel like a road slog. You don't need to be a super-experienced navigator, but you will need to be comfortable navigating using a topographic map and dealing with ambiguity in places. The track is also marked with small metal orange (clockwise) or red (for anticlockwise) markers on trees.
Track surface	The track surface varies greatly over the walk. The main thing to be prepared for is walking on small boulders. Most of the sections you will be walking on firm, but sometimes loose boulders, a potential ankle nightmare. Most of the walk is on naturally compacted sandy soils with natural gravel. Some sandy sections. I walked in runners and that was fine for me.
Swimming	There are very limited opportunities to swim in the national park. There is only one designated swimming area in the park called "Rock Pool", which is well worth the visit before or after the walk. Other than the main gorge, the rest of the creeks don't hold reliable water for much of the year. Swimming in the gorge is not allowed for both cultural and environmental (think platypus) reasons. This is the one thing I wish I knew before setting off for the walk. I love my swims on walks. It is not a big deal, I just found it a bit disappointing because of my lack of research beforehand.



Rock Pool

What else to do in the area?

I was actually pretty keen to chuck gear in the car and just go, but I heard there were a few more short walks in the area and figured I should do them all. So I stayed at the caravan park, had a great time meeting other walkers and people planning on hitting the track the next day, but oops, I think I freaked out one person about the mice.

The Nature Trail is a nice walk, but not worth travelling for. The short walk to Rock Pool was great, and just past the first pool is a more pleasant area to swim - a refreshing waterhole but great.

Mickey Creek, yep do it. This is a drive back from the main visitor area. The main track is good and leads up to Mickey Gorge, a pleasant creek. But part way up is a signposted side trip up Warrumbah Creek Gorge. Do this one too, this is where the magic happens. Warrumbah Creek Gorge is a narrow canyon with no formal track once in the canyon, so just go as far as you can safely do so. it is a narrow slot canyon winding up through the valley with a series of short waterfalls and waterholes.

Read more here

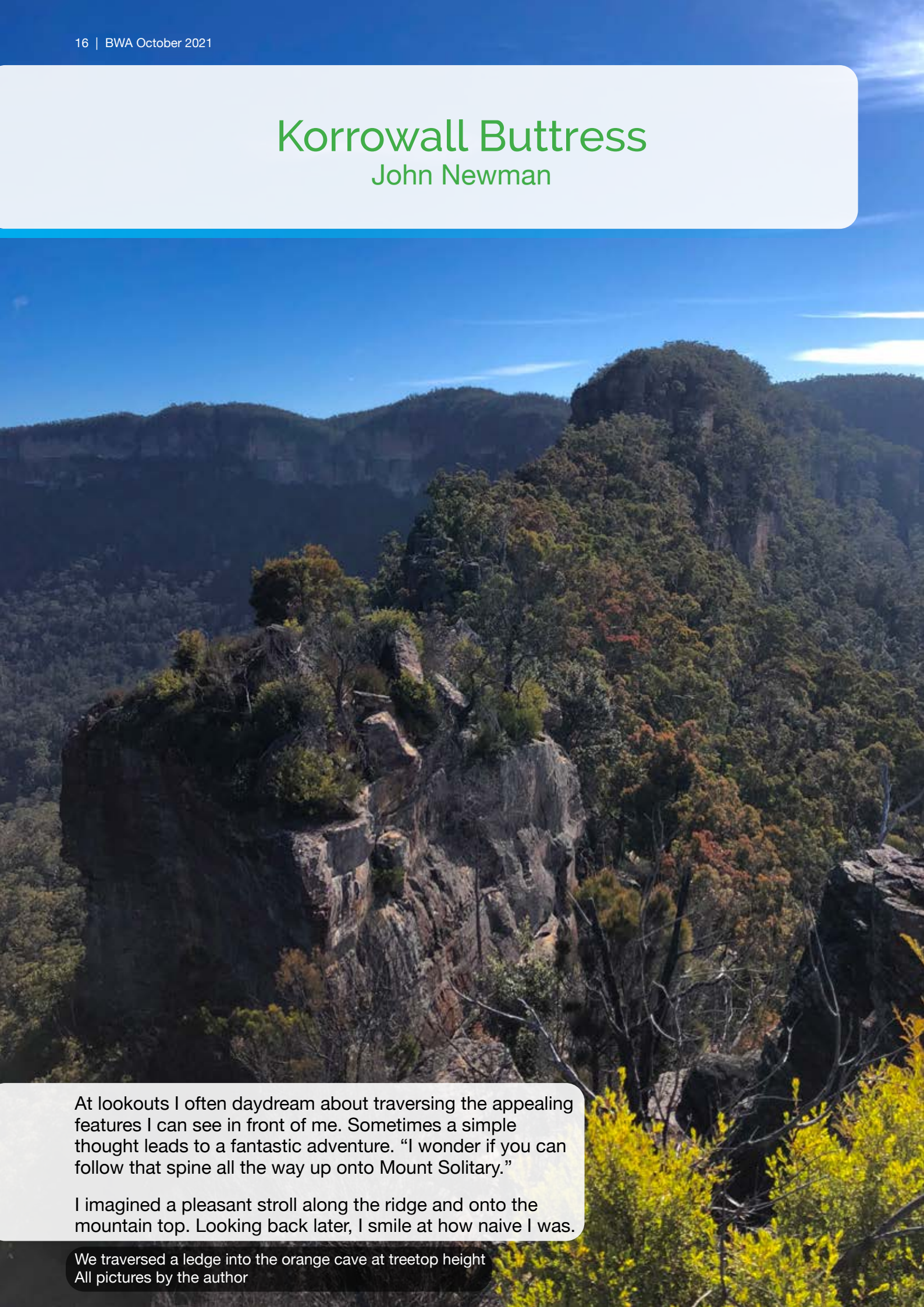
- [Carnarvon Great Walk](#)
- [All the walks in the park](#)



To get a sense of the size of Amphitheatre, look for two people in the photo

Korrowall Buttress

John Newman



At lookouts I often daydream about traversing the appealing features I can see in front of me. Sometimes a simple thought leads to a fantastic adventure. “I wonder if you can follow that spine all the way up onto Mount Solitary.”

I imagined a pleasant stroll along the ridge and onto the mountain top. Looking back later, I smile at how naive I was.

We traversed a ledge into the orange cave at treetop height
All pictures by the author

I asked Rob Mann if he'd ever been along the southern spine and up onto Mount Sol. Rob is an excitable adventurer who seems to know a bit about everything in the Blue Mountains. "Korrorwall Buttress? Yes, years ago."

"How did you get past Point Repulse, the cliff at the top of the ridge? Did you take the ledge to get around it? Is it sketchy?"

"I did. Bit of an airy step. You'll be fine."
Did Rob's eyes twinkle when he said the word "airy"?

“ Did Rob's eyes twinkle when he said the word "airy"?

Brendan Davies joins me. Shortly after sunrise we descend the Goat Track to the Jamison Valley floor, then jog along fire trails towards Rucksack Point. The hill begins to narrow into a spine.

An unsettling rock face halts our progress. Korrorwall Buttress is flanked by cliffs. The inviting smooth landscapes I admired from



Brendan calls out: "Can I get down from here?"



Morning light above Rucksack Point

afar turned out to be a jagged, vertical maze. I try the eastern side, but the ledge narrows, the ground falls away and the cliffs grow higher. We trace the base of the buttress, looking for an acceptable climb. Holding tiny shrubs and digging finger holes for grip, we ease ourselves up onto the knife's edge. Boulders bigger than houses are stacked on top of each other.

We reach countless dead ends, cliffs above and below us. We inch along a one foot ledge and crawl into a small cave. Inside we find a stone fireplace. We squeeze through a crack and discover an exit ramp to the saddle. At one point, having no alternative but defeat, I resort to a free climb. It isn't difficult, but it's somewhere I would prefer not to fall. It is never bad enough to turn around, but in a few places I consider it. In these moments, I remind myself that there is a difference between fear and acceptable risk. A simple guideline keeps me out of trouble – can you retreat if this becomes a dead end?

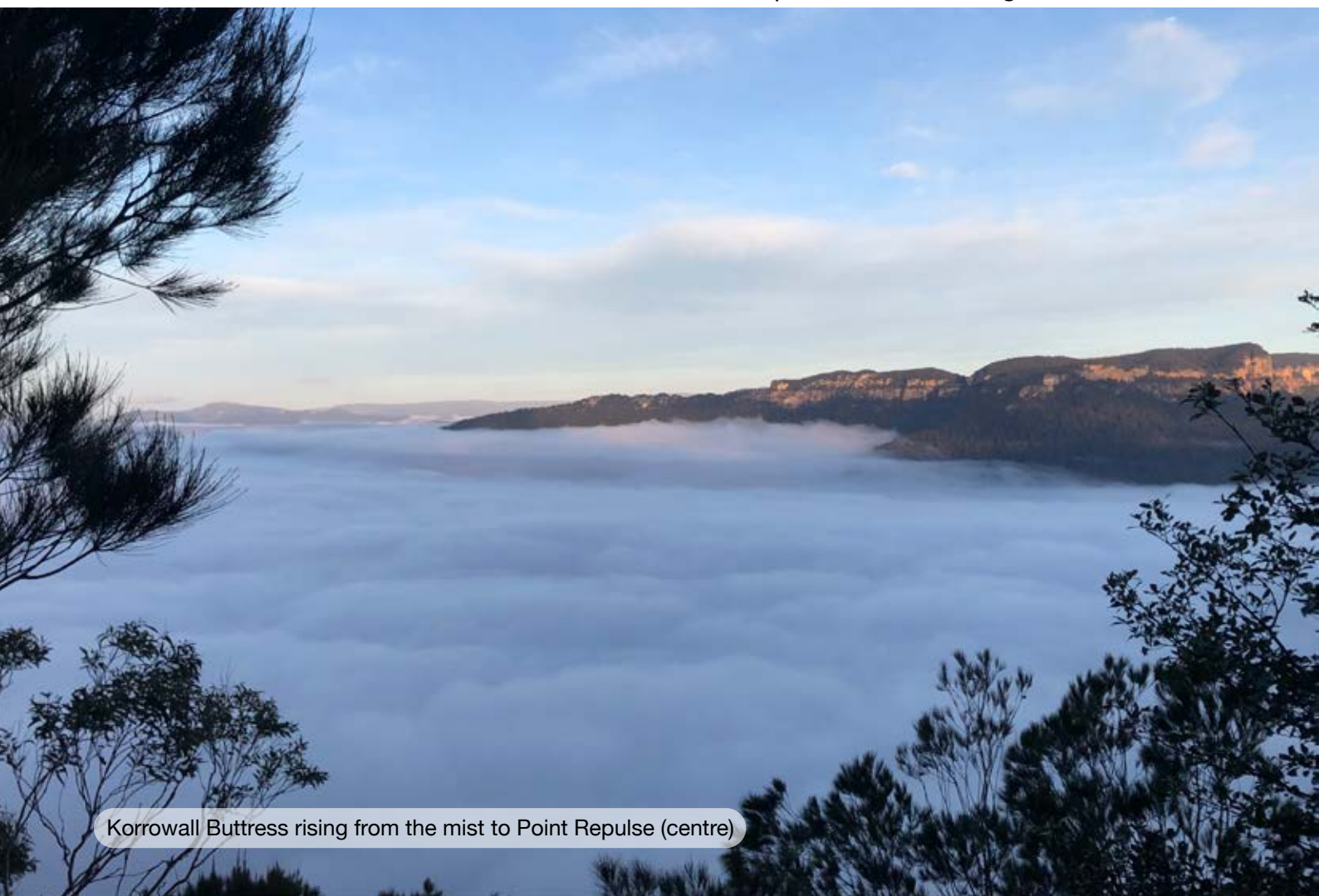
“... I remind myself that there is a difference between fear and acceptable risk.”



Fireplace and mist over the Jamison Valley

When we reach the infamous ledge at Point Repulse, I glide across without hesitating. I am surprised that this is the feature people speak about and are afraid of.

I am scratched and weary as we bushbash across the top of Mount Solitary. Brendan is still keen to complete a south-north traverse, so I banish the thought of a shortcut down the eastern col to the car. Neither of us has done the Miners Pass before. Fire, wind and storms have disfigured the route, so it takes us a couple of hours to navigate the first few



Korowall Buttress rising from the mist to Point Repulse (centre)

hundred metres. We scramble down rock slopes, comparing the route to photos from a blog when we find ourselves stranded in the cliffs. We follow a spur down to Jamison Creek, occasionally getting razored by lawyer vine, but mostly moving freely and occasionally even managing a jog. The hillside is strewn with tiny purple flowers that look like orchids (*Hardenbergia violacea*). When we reach the Sublime Point Fire Trail, Brendan asks me if I've ever run all the way up the hill before (600 metres of gain in four kilometres). "I always die as I reach the swine fence," I say. "It's a great training goal. Are you up for it?" Brendan asks. The idea of finishing before sunset is appealing. "Happy to try," I say. Thankfully for me, Brendan walks the end of the hill, so I do too. We reach our cars just under nine hours after we left, having covered 31 kilometres and 1800 metres of elevation. I call Rob as I'm driving home. "An airy step? That was fine, but what about crawling along a ledge, trusting my weight to a single rock wedged in a crevice? What about the four metre climb onto a crumbly slope?" He laughs. "I forgot about that."



John Newman is possibly the happiest person in Australia right now. He is exploring the Blue Mountains region 25+ hours a week, finding obscure mountain passes and scheming up adventures. Recent highlights include the passes of Narrow Neck, the Routeburn Track on an icy day and the [Alpine Challenge 100 mile run](#). When real-life resumes, John will return to teaching bridge and a more restrained training schedule of 10-15 hours a week.



Brendan scrambling between pagodas

Waking Up to Wilderness: A Mid-life Crisis

Craig N. Pearce

At Victoria's Point Hicks a furiously barking Australian fur seal, its face torture-twisted, belted up the beach. A 2 am explosion of roaring forties threatened orbit from a Tasmanian south coast Ironbound Range launchpad. And geological, ecological and Indigenous treasures paraded through the sandstone belt oasis of Queensland's Carnarvon Gorge.

Deep into Kanangra-Boyd NP
All pictures by the author

Of all nature's weapons of mass seduction, however, it is often the cameos that – minutely, stealthily – fire the synapses. Frogs. The great carousers. Perrins tree and eastern stony creek by Kanangra-Boyd National Park's wild Kowmung River. Corroboree, booroolong and spotted tree in Kosciuszko National Park's Jagungal Wilderness.

In Kanangra, it was a full-throated rebel yell of rasping, industrial-level noise; choruses in battle one moment, sliding into harmonic, contrapuntal glory the next. In Jagungal, snug in Gungartan Pass's lee, patches of melting snow feeding rivulets and bog, it was a calmer amphibian recitation. Swells rising and receding; fitful and lullaby-sedating. A connection through croak to nature's murmured enigmas.

The evening acclamation of frogs in both wildernesses was evidence of their vibrant ecosystems. Frogs have been working on me since I was a child. They are an almost obligatory inhabitant of creeks, that great article of allure to children. Now, on summer

evenings, I get a good carolling from my backyard's amphibian tenants. Like nature itself, they are full of chiaroscuro mysteries, spawning emotions and resonances as dependable as they are chaotic.

Frogs are a quirk of my Earth experience. Another – about 7600 square kilometres in total, so it's a big one – is K2K: Kosciuszko and Kanangra-Boyd. Heartlands. Their untamed power, beauty and significance – both feature formally declared wilderness areas, both are UNESCO World Heritage-listed are beacons for how I think and feel about life on Earth.

“... beacons for how I think and feel about life on Earth.”

Happy days? In many ways, yes. But, paradoxically, as I commit myself more to wilderness, I am increasingly angry and despondent about the condition of nature's gifts we are bequeathing to future organisms, our descendants included.



Kanangra Gorge

A mid-life epiphany

The electrifying, vivid sense of "aliveness" that being immersed in nature galvanises within me materialised as a diamond-cut mid-life insight. Nature's attractions were always there – making occasional, furtive grabs in life's back seat. But it was only later (in the "mature years") that all-consuming internal fireworks were ignited.

Literature, the flawed web of human relationships and rock'n'roll have all had their trysts with me, but it is nature that

has really given me

the full body

emotional, intellectual and physical workout.

The nature experience – my embracing of wilderness – has in effect become my mid-life rock'n'roll. A typical crisis in many ways as these things go, though perhaps not as sad as the clichéd alternatives.

The portal into nature and, ultimately, its prized wilderness dimension, was unlocked by two events. My son being born and wanting him to become familiar with the bush. And reacquaintance with a couple of my past teenage soul brothers – boys truly of the bush. Agrarian Januses?

Back in the day, in those incident-fuelled hometown teenage years, I played farmer by rounding up cattle on horses (trying not to fall off; avoiding snakes). I floated with other harmless troublemakers down the Tumut River on tyre tubes with an onion bag of beer kept cool in the frigid summer waters. I spent lazy afternoons at Little River, doing what many teenagers do and shouldn't do (kept company by a resident platypus). I undertook no-frigging-idea camping trips up the Goobragandra, chased once by a rabid grazer – whip-cracking, rifle-packing – on horseback down a breakneck gully. All these moments – a fraction of the multitude – conflated into an Arcadia where not a great deal of academic purposefulness transpired.

This action was enacted on the fringe of the Kosciuszko National Park. I was, literally, playing on the edge of wilderness. A typical teenage-child, not divining the

depth lying beneath the surface or, as in this case, beyond the often-kissed but non-consummated littoral.

The portal formally opened when my son and I began joining my not-so-teenage-anymore friends on their Christmas camps on northern Kosciuszko's Long Plain. Here, there was abundant untouched-by-human-hand wilderness. But so was there an extensive heritage of grazing (ceased a long time back now), and evidence of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Plentiful nature, but a relatively soft entry.

It was a unique entry, too, as this was horse-camping. In one of the few national park areas where horse riding is permitted, the campgrounds were littered with gooseneck horse float hotels-on-wheels, alongside more rustic means of accommodation. By day, cockies wandered off – limpeted to horses – across frost-afflicted treeless plains and into gnarly scrub-choked hills. At night, around fires, stories were spun. Beer-chilling generators growled. And, as human activity subsided, nature claimed back its placatory prerogative.

These camps – with their bushwalks, horse rides, swimming, cave exploring, yarn spinning and camaraderie – came to constitute the beating heart of nature for my son and me.

The teenage flirtations with nature had taken their next, more pivotal step. An expansion of knowledge and skills took place.

Also, without being conscious of it, of ambition, of desire

– to go deeper into the wild, to become disconnected from the society of humans which, ironically, is what revealed, then fostered, the desire in the first place.

The mid-life journey was like a revisiting of teenage immaturity, characterised by a need to bust-out, to rebel against the constraints – expectations, accountabilities, habits, routine. It was also a rebelling against the weight and constrictions of (sub)urbanised and corporate regimes – the chain mail of suits and ties. The weight of the built

“... it is nature that has really given me the full body emotional, intellectual and physical workout.

“An expansion of knowledge and skills took place.

environment, with its buildings, roads and traffic. Its arthritic knots of humans, with their demands around which we must ceaselessly navigate, turning us into distasteful versions of ourselves, was another. It was a package I came to find unutterably wearisome at best, but more often just soul-destroying.

An intrinsic component of this crisis was the examination, then recalibration, of values and priorities. It became crystal – for the first time – that humans are the problem. We are insatiable; our ‘knowing blindness’, wilful greed and destructiveness overwhelming. The surging energy with which I engaged in wilderness experiences was one outcome of this. An escalation in my environmentalism and disdain for humans were others.

The heartlands: old friend, new friend

The mid-life construction of Kosciuszko as a heartland was followed by its sister-K – Kanangra-Boyd National Park – becoming a second source of succour, education and influence. Located a few hours west of Sydney, it is an aggregation of deeply incised valleys, towering sandstone walls, secretive waterfalls, the enigmatic Kowmung and sprawling hills cloaked in one of Australia’s signature totems, dry sclerophyll forests. Its

biodiversity, heritage and geology (not least because of its relative proximity to Australia’s largest human population) are of inestimable value.

Kanangra – where the full romantic tempest of nature is on rich display – evolved into being my go-to release valve from the urban zoo. It is remarkable something so untamed is within easy commute of seething Sydney. After a day here, you get a good start on becoming attuned to nature’s rhythms, its eternal descants. No need for talking; often no need for thinking. The primal yearning for atomising into the environment takes over. Its subtle spiritual – and not so subtle physical – massage begins. Sounds, smells, terrain and touch – grappling at rocks and trees; flayed by branches; surfing slippery alarm bell-ringing scree – animating you into a heightened sense of being present in the moment, senses incandescent.

The wildernesses of Kosciuszko and Kanangra-Boyd are the ones I have most often navigated. What they have in common are their climactic extremes and unpredictability. Of the two, counter-intuitively, I’ve experienced more snow in Kanangra and more heat in Kosciuszko.



100 Man Cave, Kanangra-Boyd NP

I've been on the high tops of Kanangra's cordillera in 70 km/h winds, forced down its nuggety ridges to escape their ferocity (and falling branch widowmakers). Another time, I was beguiled by a seeming cloud of pollen, numinous, drifting out of a glaucous dawn – it was baby-flakes of snow. Our tents were frosted cakes in a muted, white-swathed wonderland. Koalas – evident from claw marks on their favoured grey gums – remained unsighted. After the 2019-20 horror fires, surviving populations are scant.

“ Another time, I was beguiled by a seeming cloud of pollen ...

The Kowmung, one of Australia's few remaining wild rivers, is always a highlight and often the site of a night's camp. Caves such as 100 Man and 1000 Man even offer no-tent-required hostelries. There are many waterways other than the Kowmung, some of them forging through camouflaged sanctuaries like Morong Deep. A not-so-secret set of eight falls cascade into Kanangra Creek, at the top of the Kanangra Gorge. The views from here exhilarate like few others (and are easily accessible). The bastions of Mount Danae and Thurat Spires glare at you across the plummet. Blue Mountains' Wild Dogs precinct howls in the distant aether. If pursued, from here one of the country's great walks stumbles along the stegosaurus spine of the Gangarangs. Traversed are the knolls of Rip, Rack, Roar and Rumble, and the Ordovician period quartzite studded Mount Cloudmaker.

Kanangra-Boyd offers less "soft-entry" points to the outdoors than Kosciuszko. With the former, it's an abrupt plunge into no-guided wilderness; like jumping into an ice-cold waterhole, something Kosciuszko shares in spades. A defibrillating example is the Blue Waterholes, a frequently visited paradise and a jewel of the Australian outdoors. Guarded by Clarke and Nichols gorges, cut through Karst country, and fed by the often underground but here emergent Caves Creek, the holes' inviting iridescent blue is a cunning deceit drawing you into their glacial grasp.

“ ... Blue Waterholes, a frequently visited paradise and a jewel of the Australian outdoors.

Away from the madding crowds

But Kosciuszko, too, once passing through its "civilised" edges, offers extreme opportunities for social distancing. Off-track through the charismatic Jagungal Wilderness, for instance, challenges abound.

Here, bowl-like wolds are thickened with spongy morasses of sphagnum moss, low clutching heath and stumble-inducing clumps of snow grass, exhausting to navigate. Wetlands such as those which support the moss and frogs are the most biologically diverse of ecosystems. Ridges are a bedlam of granite tors. Hills are a rabble of neck-high heath and snow gums, the latter either elegant and brawny or, seemingly, dead – pale, tortured Giacometti arms, fire-crucified spectres reaching hopelessly at a non-existent future. Yet even in this state, they could just be crippled, waiting for lignotubers to sprout. And they provide habitat to fauna, insects and fungi. Eventually, their decomposition will enrich the soil.

Towering, the lion of Mount Jagungal is a guiding battlement, lording over its aspirant flock: anemone buttercup, snow and white daisies, grass triggerplant, bidgee widgee, native edelweiss, alpine pepper, mint bush and gentian, and hoary sunray. Their mosaic illuminates the snow grass-dominated greens.

Both parks are home to many rare, endangered and threatened species, perhaps none more so than the mountain pygmy-possum, the sentimental koala of Kosciuszko (though also a citizen of limited locations in the Victorian high country). With the support of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, it survived the summer bushfires of 2019-20.

The only wombat I've seen in either park was one scampering over snow in a Kosciuszko winter (though the Kowmung features a teeming urban congestion of their warrens). It didn't electrocute me into a jolting standstill, though, the way a healthy copperhead snake did, as it sidled towards the unromantically feeling Valentine Creek. Not quite as adrenaline-pumping, but still engrossing, were dingo and yellow-tailed black cockatoo sightings in Kanangra.

“ It didn't electrocute me into a jolting standstill ...

Both parks feature landscapes where ancient geological features, from as far back as the Palaeozoic era 400 million years ago, are still visible. Much of Kanangra-Boyd's outcropping bedrock was formed then. The signature Kanangra Walls are the western-most part of the Narrabeen Sandstone deposits. They are the outcome of tectonic events associated with the opening of the Tasman and Coral Seas, which resulted in the uplift of eastern Australia. In Kosciuszko, Pleistocene epoch climactic changes are found in the park's rare glacial and periglacial features, while Holocene epoch sediments and peats hold information on Earth's post-glacial warming.

As the roof of Australia resides in Kosciuszko, because it offers a greater number and

“... the views it provides are consistently more dramatic ...

variety of outdoor experiences, and as the views it provides are consistently more dramatic, it is doubtlessly perceived as the more compelling of the two national parks. But it's also the vastly more visited – by humans. Because of that, and because of the "frog factor" (i.e., a cameo of seduction can transfix as much as its brasher brethren), Kanangra-Boyd offers enough fascinations to render comparisons a waste of breath.

Both parks and their attendant wildernesses possess inexhaustible swirls of enchantment. They vary from the minutest – branch-draping lichen, a shabby filigree – to the grandest – the Western Fall, yawning and vast, plummeting from rugged knuckle eyries like the Main Range's Sentinel. They boast a share portfolio no sane person would want to cash in.

Opposing corners: city vs nature

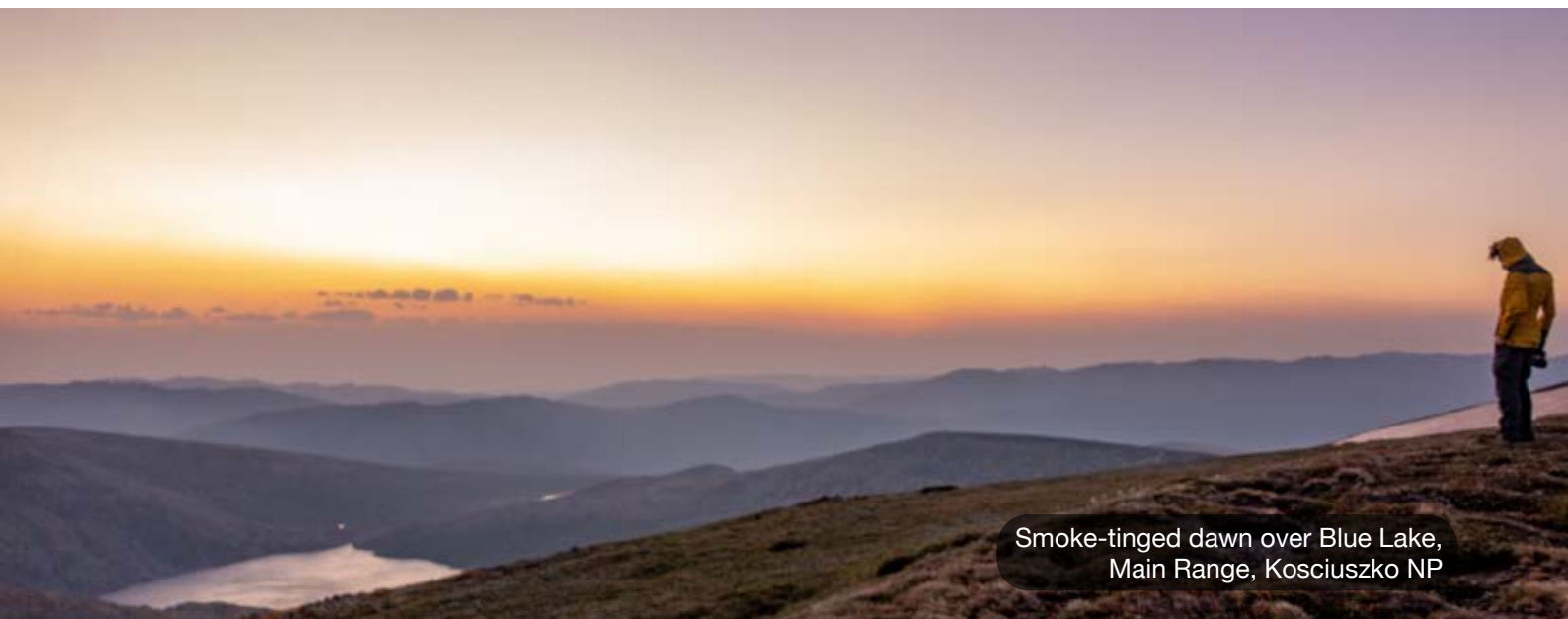
Occasionally, I think back to the time invested into nightclubbing, art and architecture. New York, Berlin, Hong Kong. Rock'n'roll games. All those missed backcountry walking opportunities.

A corollary to this mental trajectory is reflecting on what would I now rather wake up to? A solid, silent, safe ceiling? Or an inky blue-blackness littered with the flickering glitter of stars? A screech-fest of rainbow lorikeets, another of nature's non-human narratives, to eavesdrop on? A percussive havoc of branches, foliage and wind? All attune me to Earth's fervid throb, its intoxicating humid breath. Unfathomably complex, and with such a pageant of tales to tell! Their unfurling is ready for a receptive human heart, but by no means waiting for one.

Did humans build society and cities to escape from themselves, to escape from having to interact so closely – symbiotically – with the natural world? In society, there is an expectation to conform, to suppress our natural character, to acquiesce to the 'establishment'. Depending on our economic and social standing, this can lead to a pinched, meagre existence.

The ties that constrict

Cities, in theory, are an enabler for humans to have longer, happier and more fulfilled lives than they once achieved. They are generally successful in securing the "longer" ambition. It seems, however, cities and society are as dictatorial and enslaving as much as they are a platform for acquiring happiness and fulfilment.



Smoke-tinged dawn over Blue Lake, Main Range, Kosciuszko NP

It is unlikely significant numbers of people will again seek to settle permanently in greater intimacy with nature. This is despite cities offering an impoverished, clinical and anaesthetised actuality, contrasted to one that involves a higher degree of engagement with nature. The growing numbers of people visiting national parks, however, indicate a snowballing enthusiasm for (and hopefully a devotion to saving) nature. Why, then, the junkyard of discarded oxygen cylinders on the way up Everest? Or the coagulation of human detritus I encountered when traversing wilderness areas along the remote eastern-most coast of Victoria and southern-most coast of NSW? Even when theoretically loving the wilderness, it seems, humanity's rapacious, dirty hand cannot help itself.

“... it seems, humanity's rapacious, dirty hand cannot help itself.”

Once, the establishing of society may have saved us as a species. Now, it clearly seems to be destroying us. Advances in science are allowing more people to live, and to live for longer. This is exerting more pressure on planetary resources, including land on which to do this living. Here, the simple laws of supply and demand come into play. They are magnified by human ego, a default of which seems to be wanting more than its neighbour. This is a defining trait of our species, one the Bible warned against.

I don't see "going back to nature" as a regression. In fact, I think there is a strong case to assert humanity came to a fork in the road, took a certain path (let's call it the mass destruction of life on Earth path), then realised, oops, maybe we took the wrong option or, at least, went a bit too far down that path and we need to backtrack a bit, look for more of a happy/sustainable medium (I'm thinking of Graeme Base's *Uno's Garden* (Picture Puffin, 2013) – a philosophical treatise on the human species co-existing with nature), where we can still be cosseted by some of science's advances, but not despoil nature to the extent where its beauty is lost and, at its apogee of disaster, the planet's ecological balance is so ruined that life on Earth cannot survive.

“I don't see "going back to nature" as a regression.”

An outcome of this might be a compromise in cossetting – less of those near-fundamental modern life hallmarks of streaming, fast food and aeroplane trips. It may also lead to a halt in life expectancy's lengthening. And without doubt it must result in zero population growth.

The nourishment of nature

As I've stepped into a multiplying number of nature's wild domains, I've found them to be more potent and nourishing than humanity's built environments (the latter striking me as dissociative and corrosive). Nature possesses, and represents, life in a fuller, more realised manifestation. It repairs and nourishes. My journey towards nature has occurred in parallel with the increasing celerity of my anti-urban journey. The grind of combative/passive-aggressive corporate life takes its toll. The accumulating recognition of humans' destruction of life on Earth takes its toll. And even though I have become more and more attuned to wilderness, and have been calmed and revitalised by it, my pessimism and negativity regarding its future is becoming debilitating.

At the core of this pessimism is humanity's impact on nature; its tyrannical behaviour in claiming Earth as its property alone, unable to acknowledge there are sentient creatures on the planet who are also entitled to feel it is their home. As well as being life-affirming and enthralling, then, my immersion into nature has also caused me pain. It provides the positive and the enthralling. Yet, at the same time, it crystallises much that the human species is doing to destroy life on Earth, and as such its fundamental self-centredness.

Humanity's approach to nature (and its many non-human organisms) is reminiscent of European imperialism, with its concomitant demeaning and destruction of civilisations and lands outside its own domain. And there is also humans' lack of recognition of narratives that non-human animals might cherish. We know how intelligent dolphins, elephants and pigs are. We now know that mice, for instance, have a repertoire of emotions. And we have been aware for some time of plants' social and communicative abilities: the 'wood wide web' (the term coined in 1997 by the scientific journal,

Nature, when publishing forest ecologist [Dr Suzanne Simard's research](#)). It is comprehensively deflating to see humans' disrespect towards these realities and the resultant impact on organisms themselves.

The hollow slogan of economic growth

"Growth" (economic, cities, individual wealth) seems more important to humans than anything else. This obsession, perhaps the most heinous human transgression of all, is the fundamental reason for life on Earth's diminishment and prospective extinguishing.

Economic opportunity equalisation, not economic growth – with all its attendant digging up more, building more, producing more, consuming more – is what will better serve the human species, as well as other organisms. The proposition that economic growth helps the poor become wealthier is, for the most part, a fallacy. Economic growth mainly leads to more wealth for the well-off and continued marginalisation of the less well-off (as well as more environmental degradation).

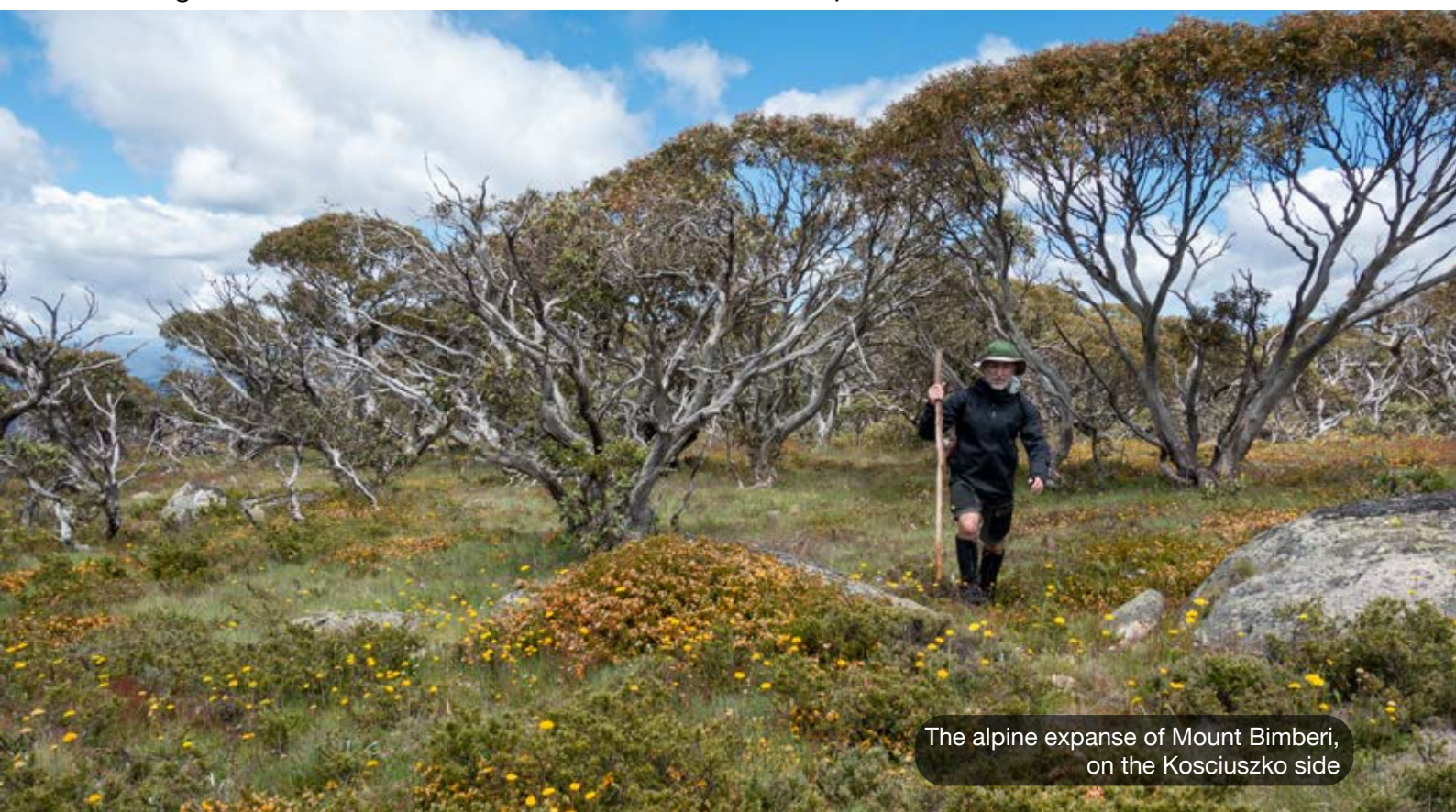
Growth is a synonym for taking – for, fundamentally, greed. It says to hell with the Earth as a whole and what we are leaving for our descendants and/or the impact we are having on non-human lifeforms. Only a miniscule number of us are innocent of this charge.

Anyone who has more than two children is guilty. Anyone who buys cling-wrapped bananas is guilty. Anyone who uses energy created by the burning of fossil fuels is guilty. Nearly all Australians have superannuation which is investing in environmentally damaging companies. Guilty.

There are, plainly, degrees of guilt. It is politicians, large businesses (especially those generating fossil fuel-driven energy) and investment entities that carry the greatest accountability. It is they who can have the biggest impact on our way of life and, hence, environmental impact. That's where the rubber really hits the road. But this truth does not obviate us of our own accountabilities. Any of us who vote, who invest, who consume...are making choices now. Are they the best choices for our planet?

Wild walking

The most fulfilling way to experience, and benefit from, wilderness is to journey through it. Ideally propelled by foot, but sometimes by raft or kayak, or even bicycle. Testing its littoral doesn't cut it. One reason for this is the physical demands of a multi-day trek. There is the psychological dimension, too. In the wilderness, they have a propensity to entwine and accelerate a loosening of your mind from its moorings. The physical sense of freedom instilled underpins the consequential mental freedom.



The alpine expanse of Mount Bimberi, on the Kosciuszko side

While any wilderness interaction is worthwhile, for a tangible and rarefied transformation to materialise, a walk of at least four days feels obligatory to me. Over this duration, an intimacy and bond form. Both you and nature give up secrets – a confessional. Free psychological counselling. You live in the moment of travel, water, food, safety, shelter; but there is the alternative psychological reality, too. Deliberate reflection or wayward reverie? Sometimes you are bound to the present, fully in the moment. Sometimes you are simply "gone", freewheeling into a deliciously unencumbered flight of fancy. (Just be wary that enough alertness is activated to not trip over a tree root or step on a snake.)

As Robert Macfarlane implies in his *Underland* (Hamish Hamilton, 2019), nature and geology can work as a portal (that word again) into less explored recesses of our lives. An "opening up" transpires, into the "other" – founded on or circumscribed by its metaphysical, physical or sensate facets – into something more capacious, a cosmos of stars, meteors, coruscating solar gales – our breath. A lucid and indescribably personal presence.

“... nature and geology can work as a portal ... into less explored recesses of our lives.”

The wild offers an alternative to our species' now dominant – screen-afflicted – blink of an eye attention span, which has somehow managed to position itself as desirable. Nature rewards the patient, those willing to soak in it. It is anti-superficiality. Anti-artifice. Sometimes the best of nature is immediately apparent but, nearly always, depth and dimension will be revealed over time, as you allow it to become part of you, and you of it.

Perhaps the greatest challenge wilderness presents when encountering it is that, released from the relentless distractions of urban life, we are forced to live closer to ourselves, confront and wrangle with who we really are. There is no hiding. This necessitates a degree of bravery we are not well-versed in practising.

“... we are forced to live closer to ourselves ...”

Cities foster a sedentary mode of living, whereas humans, Bruce Chatwin's postulates in *Songlines* (Jonathan Cape, 1987), were designed by natural selection for “a career of seasonal journeys on foot ...” In *Songlines* he quotes one of Dostoevsky's characters, saying that man, originally, was a “wanderer in the scorching and barren wilderness of this world”. There is some irony in this, as when I think of what most accurately describes ‘barren’, it is cities, rather than anything relating to nature. Nature's wildernesses are, to me, abundance incarnate next to the sterility of cities. (Rather the solitude of the bush than the loneliness of a city crowd.)

It is a notion that helped justify Chatwin's peripatetic existence, but one of *Songlines'* themes is that movement, walking and nomadism results in vigorous health. Whereas stasis, ultimately, leads at best to inertia and dissipation – despite psychiatrists and politicians, among others, demonising the “wandering life” – eastern thought preserves ... “the once universal concept: that wandering re-establishes the original harmony which once existed between man and the universe.”

Intrinsic to the demands of multi-day wilderness walking is its physicality. 14 to 24 kilogram backpacks. On-track and (smashed) off-track. Treacherously uneven, tree-barricaded, torrent dissected, mudhole-punctuated routes.

A quad exploding, cardio-bursting up; a knee-brutalising down. The micro muscles this sort of exertion employs makes it a sadistic – but perversely exhilarating – a high-intensity boot camp session. There is no equivalent. It's a cauldron of sensory overload. Every fibre in your body – from feet to fingers to scalp – comes fiercely alive. It is full-body physical engagement.

“Treacherously uneven, tree-barricaded, torrent dissected, mudhole-punctuated routes.”

To put yourself through challenges like this clearly requires a love of adventure and an appetite for, and an ability to find solace in, suffering. It is an inseparable part of the package. You are compelled to live life more

fully – physically, intellectually, sensually – compared to feeble urban existence. The outdoors experience delivers its own sort of equipoise – a hunger for endorphins released by its physical aspect, balanced by the serenity replenishing our mental and emotional faculties.

An ingrained joy every experience in the wild provides is its unwavering provision of the new, something not previously encountered, either individually or in combination with other factors. Weather, river/tide heights, animals, sounds (birdsong, wind rifling through foliage, waves – a soft slapping, a booming thunder), seasonally or weather-impacted vegetation (e.g., a rock orchid, a freshly fallen tree), unencountered routes (I'm well qualified in unintentionally discovering off-piste routes – just don't mention the "lost" word ...). Often, it is simply that, for the first time, I "see" things I have wandered past many times before.

It is a paradox that while in the city I crave separation and silence – oblivion from its rebarbative static, from the way its version of living seems so sensorially reductive and yet so wound up in mind-numbingly beige complexity – yet wilderness's 4D

sensual surfeit flicks a switch to maximum animation. The demands on others that people and bureaucracy make are enormous, asphyxiating, as is the city's furious busyness. The cramming of so many humans in such confined spaces, nearly all of whom do not know each other and have minimal tolerance for each other, has become alienating, even repellent.

Wilderness, however, despite it churning with both life and the inherent violence of survival, also possesses a soothing spaciousness. Its version of busyness is a balm, rather than a weight. It provides that much sought-after separation. And an enhanced possibility of an easy, intimate connection with Earth itself.

The inheritance

"Wilderness begins in the human mind," wrote Edward Abbey (*Desert Solitaire*, McGraw-Hill, 1968) who has been part of the chorus claiming the idea of wilderness is, as Wallace Stegner put in his *Wilderness Letter* (1960), "a resource in itself" – an "intangible and spiritual resource." It is an opportunity, too, Stegner wrote, to help us understand, "we were in subdued ways subdued by what we conquered."



Clarke Gorge, Kosciuszko NP

In other words, we don't need to visit wilderness to get value from it. Other than its qualities of oxygen generation and biodiversity storage that are necessary for our survival, it is a source of our sense of belonging, our sense of hope, our sense of the dynamism and diversity of Earth. It feeds into our imagination – a foundational element of the joy we feel from being alive. It should also tell us something about where, as a species, we came from, what our mistakes were and what we might be able to do to ensure the planet's health.

For me, however, while the knowledge that wilderness exists provides inspiration, it is being immersed in it when I comprehend its vigour and profound value. This is when its cathartic and life-enriching characteristics saturate with their irresistible authority. It has worked on me emotionally, psychologically, physically and politically – ingrained within every cell of my body. Too long an absence from wilderness feels like being manacled (resentfully, to the city). Strength leaches away. Unshackled, it is an invigorating dive into an icy tarn.

“Too long an absence from wilderness feels like being manacled ...

It is also humbling, as the deeper into its folds you venture, the greater the perspective you acquire of humans – individually and technology-unencumbered at least – being motes of dust in a maelstrom. As we have chosen, as Stegner put it, a “headlong dive into our technological termite-life,” (and this was written pre-digital in 1960 ...), it is shameful we have harnessed science and technology to so thoroughly debase the natural world.

Plant neurobiologist Stefan Mancuso puts it bluntly. Homo sapiens, although only having been extant for 300,000 years, when the average lifespan for a species is 2-5 million years, “... have been able to almost destroy our environment. From this point of view, how can we say we are the better organisms?” A little humility would do our species (and Earth) a world of good.

“A little humility would do our species (and Earth) a world of good.

Despite this determined march to wilderness extinction, and the bushfires of 2019-20 doing their best to eviscerate them, I still have my K2K heartlands. Hopefully, their ecosystems will recover to some semblance of what was there pre-fires. But even if



Windy morning on Mount Twynam, Kosciuszko NP

they do, like all of nature, their future (and humans' future) remains under threat from anthropogenic climate change – founded on damage being caused by what Naomi Klein calls “fossil fuel profiteers” and their “enablers in government”.

Thinking big-picture and strategic about climate change sounds grand. But it is the sometimes small, transactional steps, doing something, not talking about it, that makes a difference. Execution not abstraction. Each company, each investment entity, each tier in the hierarchy of government, each human being. A flourishing wilderness and the survival of life will only result if all participants in the dance fulfil their role. Each step executes not only a material outcome in and of itself, but it also contributes to a momentum that might just encourage others to join in. It should be unacceptable, and be perceived as unacceptable, not to do this.

“ Hopefully, their ecosystems will recover ...

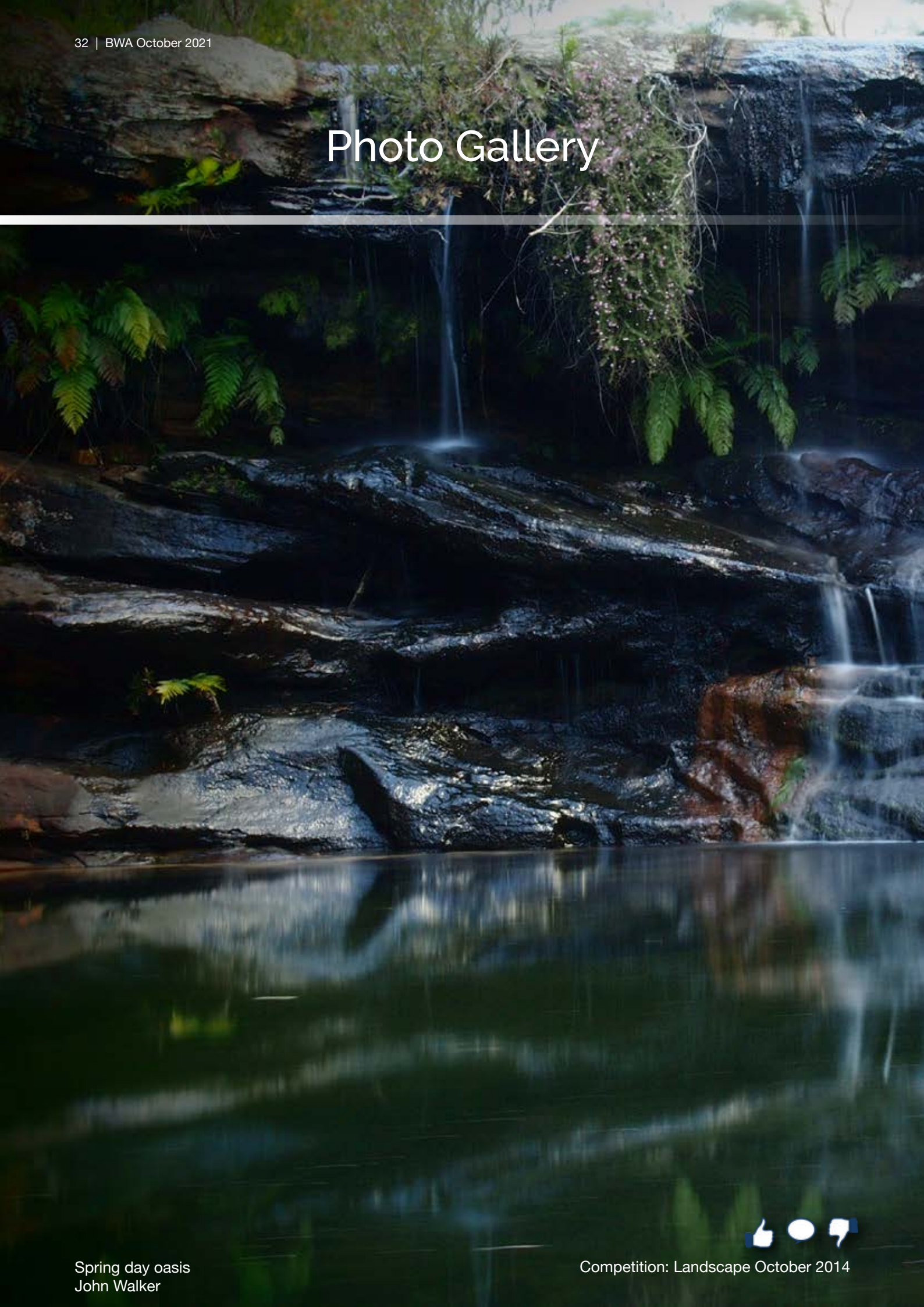
If this occurs and, crucially, only if this occurs, then my small friends the eastern stony creek, corroboree and booroolong frogs will have the opportunity to thrive. As pivotal constituents of wilderness, they will then be able to continue beguiling those humans – our children, and their descendants in turn – intrepid and fortunate enough to enter the frogs' cloistered, sacred neighbourhoods. This will help realise, as Stegner put it, “the geography of hope.” He wrote this 60 years ago. I am sceptical such hope remains warranted. What choice, however, do we have? As without hope, we will lack the motivation to take action. And only action, and the change that instigates, will result in a healthy planet and the retention of its devastatingly beautiful wildernesses.

“ ... the geography of hope ...



Coolleman Falls, Cave Creek, Kosciuszko NP

Photo Gallery

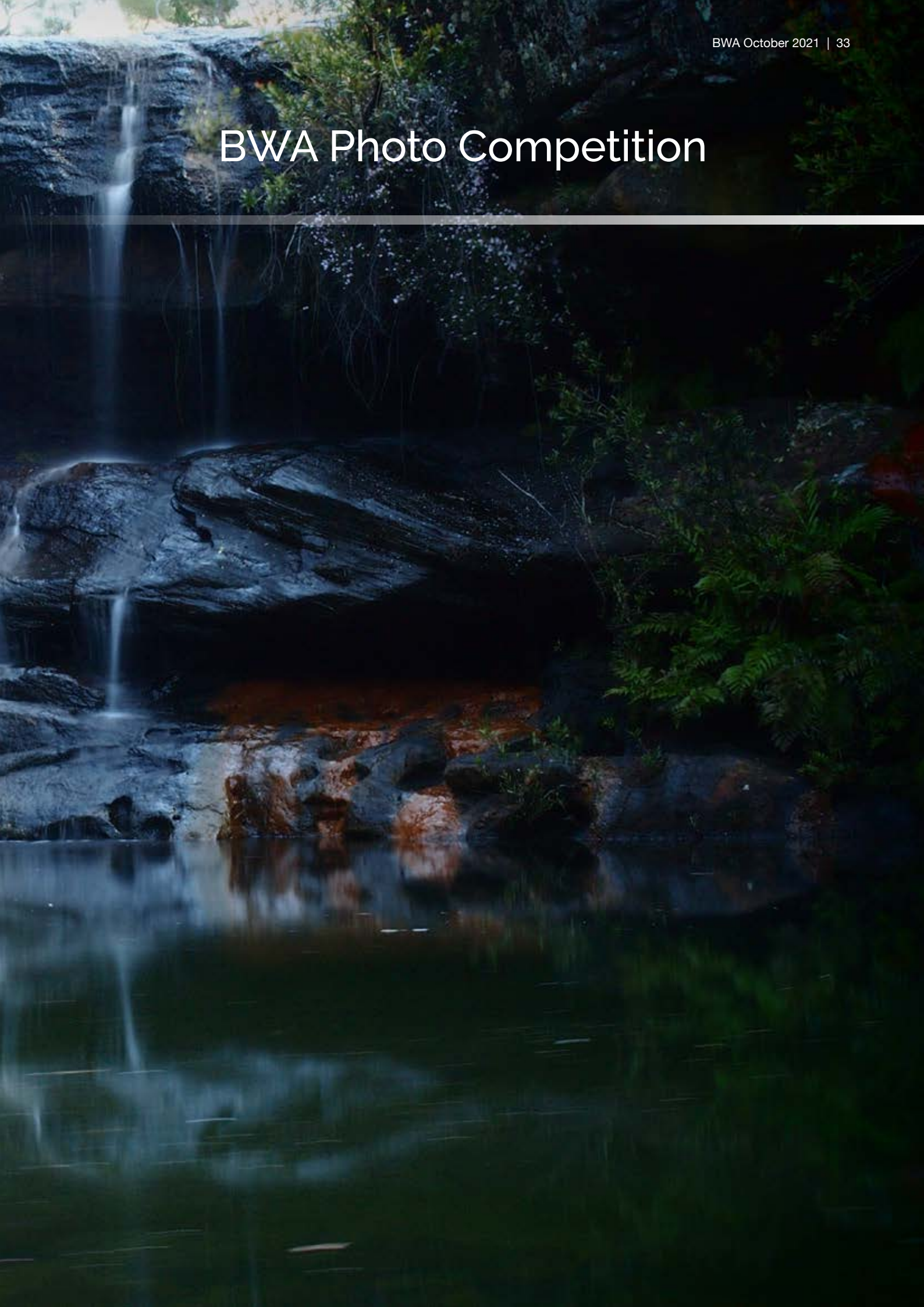


Spring day oasis
John Walker

Competition: Landscape October 2014



BWA Photo Competition



Landscapes October 2020

WINNER



Diamond Falls
landsmith



Ghosties Cave
Lorraine



At the edge of the world
North-north-west



Lions Den
Doogs



Resilience
John Walker



On the Rim
Brian Eglinton



The Gardens of Stone
after the inferno
Osik



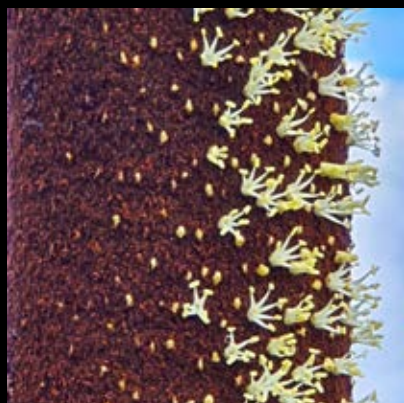
Non-landscapes October 2020

WINNER



Spring growth
North-north-west

Everyone wants to see fagus "turning". Yeah, it's great ... but the first flush of green on the bare stems means spring is really here and in some ways that's even better.



The rebirth
landsmith



Here be dragons
Osik



Spooked
Brian Eglinton



Snake in the grass
John Walker

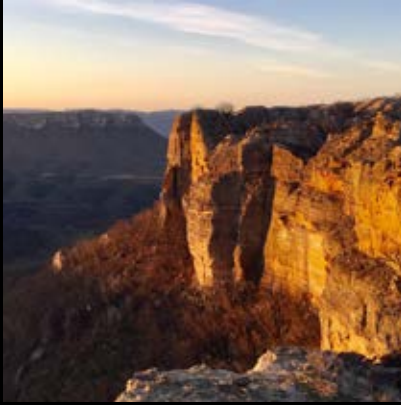


Postie
Doogs



Other States October 2020

WINNER



Last light
on Pantoneys Crown
Osik

After the first day of walking through the devastation of the landscape post-bushfires, we found our way to a cliff top campsite and were treated to a brilliant sunset and the space to take in a turned world.



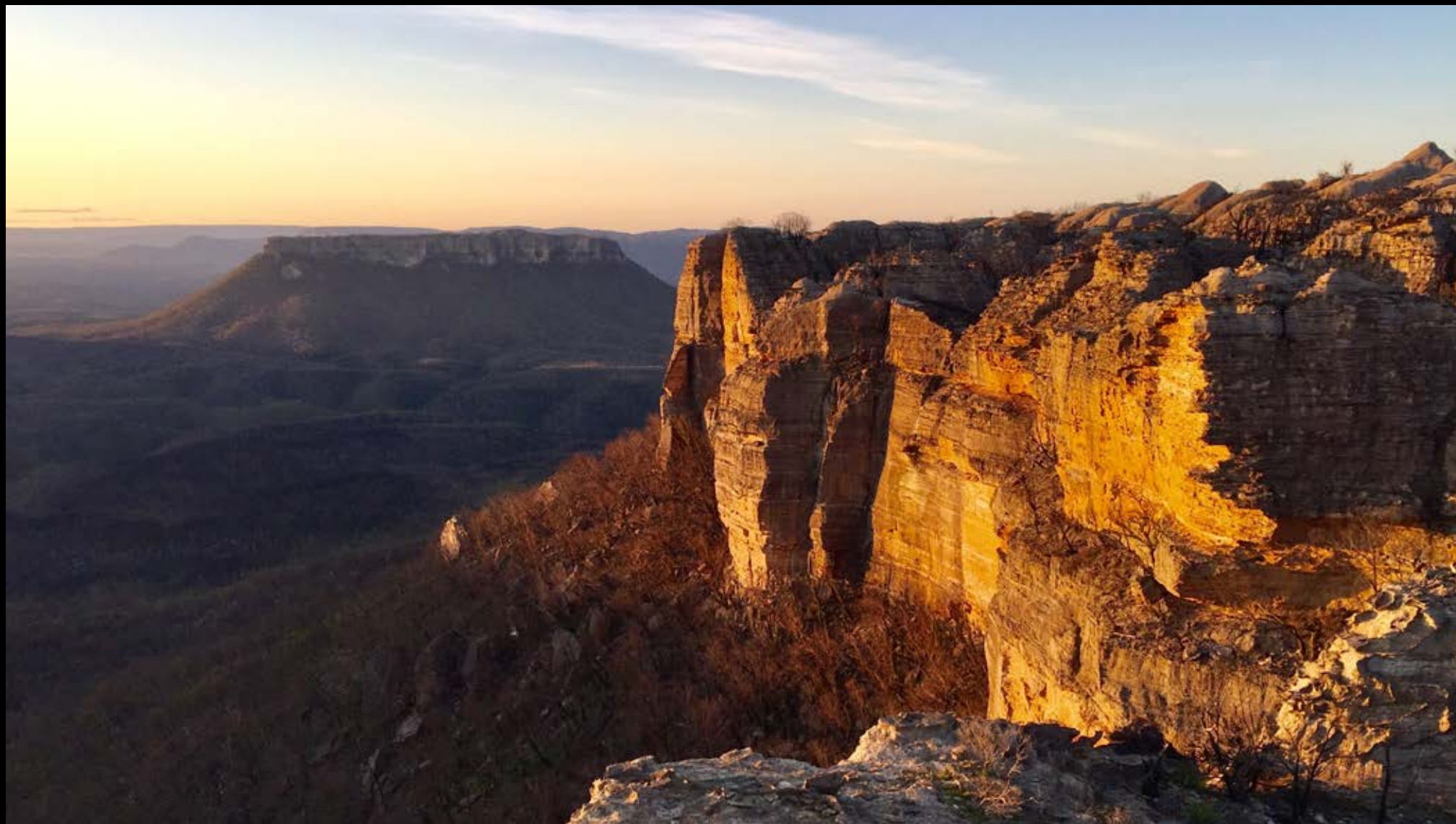
Beyond Witches Leap
landsmith



Man vs nature
John Walker



At the Cape
Brian Eglinton



Tasmania

October 2020

WINNER



Mount Field of dreams
Doogs

The Mount Field National Park is a special place for many Tasmanians and a visit there is always memorable. On the day that I took this photograph I had set out early to walk up Naturalist Peak. There was a good dusting of snow and hardly a breath of wind, perfect weather for taking in the splendour of the area. On the final ascent of the mountain, I paused, took a quick snap, and went on my way. It was only on returning home that I realised that my pic was a good one!



Sometimes conditions are just right for
capturing the image
GerryDuke



Nelson Bay River
North-north-west



Landscapes

November 2020

WINNER



Tyndallicious
North-north-west

For years, Tyndall was one of those peaks - regardless of the forecast, whenever I went up it was invariably soaked in by the time the summit was reached. But then, finally, it all worked out.



Classic Oberon
Tom Brennan



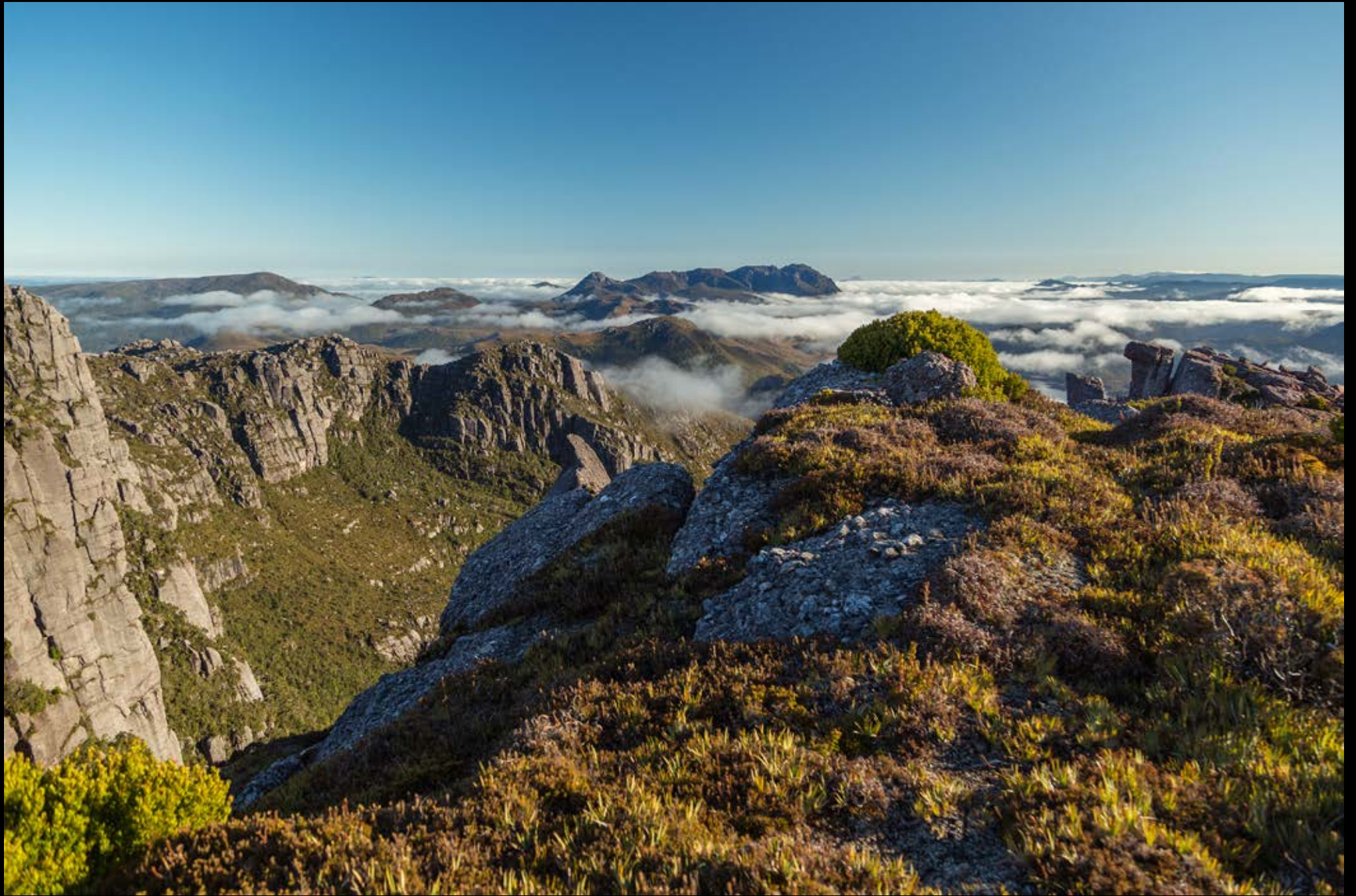
A cool gem
John Walker



Bald Rock reserve
landsmith



Pond
Brian Eglinton



Non-landscapes

November 2020

WINNER



Pterostylus plumosa
North-north-west

Nothing like seeing a plant species in real life for the first time, and this was one I'd lusted after for some time. There were two others and a rare variant of a third, but this was the really special one.



The inside story
landsmith



Summer snow
John Walker



Dune plants
Brian Eglinton



Other States

November 2020

WINNER



The storm approaches
John Walker

I was staying at a friends semi-rural property north of Lithgow for an (old) boys long weekend get together. No bushwalking but plenty of merriment. A highlight was being hit by this massive storm front late one afternoon.

These dramatic cloud formations arrived very quickly over the Great Dividing Range from the direction of nearby Ben Bullen State Forest. A torrential downpour followed for many hours, leaving us to drown our sorrows.



River mouth
Brian Eglinton



Crayfish Pool and Grey Hat Falls
Tom Brennan



Tasmania

November 2020

WINNER



Full moon morning
North-north-west

Early morning. Full moon. High camp. Clear skies. Low misty cloud slowly creeping over the range. Does it get any better than this?



Pegasus reflections
Tom Brennan



A Pink Treasure Hunt

Tracie McMahon



Lockdown has given me time to flick through my seemingly limitless camera roll of bushwalking photos and one particular journey has caught my imagination.

A larger (20 mm) *Actinotis forsythii* with feathery bracts on Narrow Neck Plateau
All photos by the author

I am fortunate to walk on Darug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri country (also known as Blue Mountains NP, Newnes Plateau and Kanangra-Boyd NP) and spent a good part of 2020 hunting for the usually elusive pink flannel flower (*Actinotis forsythii*).

I saw my first pink flannel the year I joined the Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club (hereafter, the Upper Blueys) on Newnes Plateau after the 2013 fires. It was one small, tiny plant amongst a blackened scree. The leader enthused how rare it was and how lucky we were to see it. It may never happen again! With the huge 2019-20 fires, I was sure we might get another glimpse and so the hunt began.

In October 2020, a club trip headed out near Jinki Ridge and we had a first sighting. A single small tuft hidden amongst banksia skeletons. With time on my hands, I knew there must be more and considered likely sights. Soon Ikara Head, Dobbs Drift, and Goochs Crater were all full and then came the mass flowering at Narrow Neck. In contrast to my previously solo wanders along

Glenraphael Drive I now required a high-vis vest to avoid being hit by an onslaught of eager photographers on what was clearly the “Flannel-flower freeway”.

But still, there are always plenty of other places to explore and in doing so, these tiny flowers have taught me so much about geology and botany. I would like to make it clear, that I am a novice at both, and it is only through slow and frequent walking, rampant curiosity and the generosity and patience of my fellow walkers that I have a rudimentary understanding of either.

What I found was intriguing. At each site, this one species of flower had many variations. Some had many petal-like bracts, some only a few, bracts varied in colour from pale pink to a deep magenta, pale green and cream. Some had bracts that alternated in colour and some were a single colour. The centre (flowers) also varied in colour from a paler pink to a deep magenta, and in some cases formed like conjoined twins, surrounded by an odd assortment of bracts.



The thumb shows the size of the delicate stem of a tiny specimen

At one site near Mount Hay, a particular outcrop grew in a daisy formation with many flower heads (a compound umbel). I am fortunate that my rampant curiosity was entertained by a few other fellow members of the Upper Blueys who graciously shared photos of their own sightings.

My hunt for variety continued from October 2020 to March 2021 across all the areas fellow enthusiasts had identified. The lesser flannel flower (*Actinotis minor*) was also in abundance and caused much discussion, as many of these blended seamlessly with the pink flannels, particularly around De Faur Head, where bracts and flowers on the tiny flannels also came in pale pink, green and cream.

My only lament as autumn days grew shorter was that I had yet to see *Actinotis gibbonsii*. A tiny, tufted herb up to 10 mm with small green bracts. My inquiries of “those in the know” told me I’d left it too late. The only sighting had been around Newnes and even then, you really needed a magnifying glass to spot it.

So I shelved my hunt for another season, and began exploring possible flora for an upcoming club camp in Kanangra-Boyd NP,

having settled on paper daisies I thought I was set. On Day 3, our erstwhile leader took us out around the boulders near a trig point, an easy walk after a few days of Kanangra “hills”, and a wander back. Tiny daisies had sprung up in all the hollows and I wandered off to take a closer look.

“Oh my god!” I shrieked. The poor walk leader thought I had woken a dozy tiger snake. I had just found an entire field of the tiny *Actinotis gibbonsii*. The hunt for pink was complete.

Finding and photographing the flannel flower was really the bonus of my excursions, the real joy was in being out on tracks, navigating to places mentioned by others and thinking about the geology and terrain as to where the flowers might be and why.



Tracie is a corporate escapee, and a member of the Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club. She now spends her time bush wandering and wondering. You can find more of her ramblings at [The Moving Pen](#).



Actinotis gibbonsii, Kanangra-Boyd NP

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.

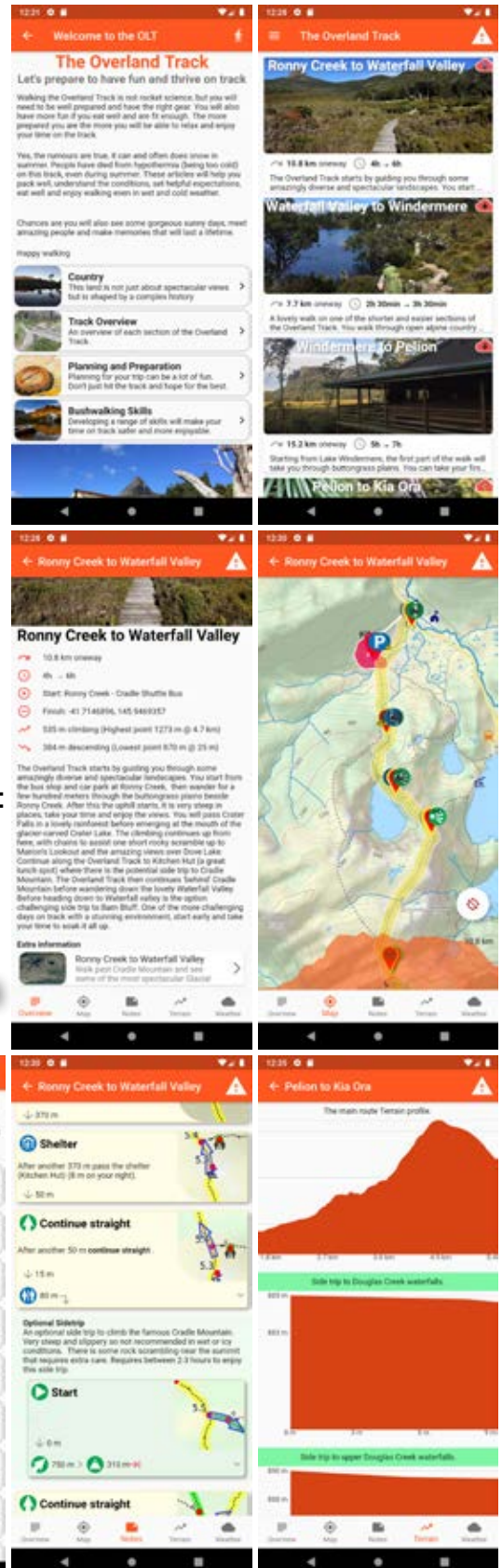
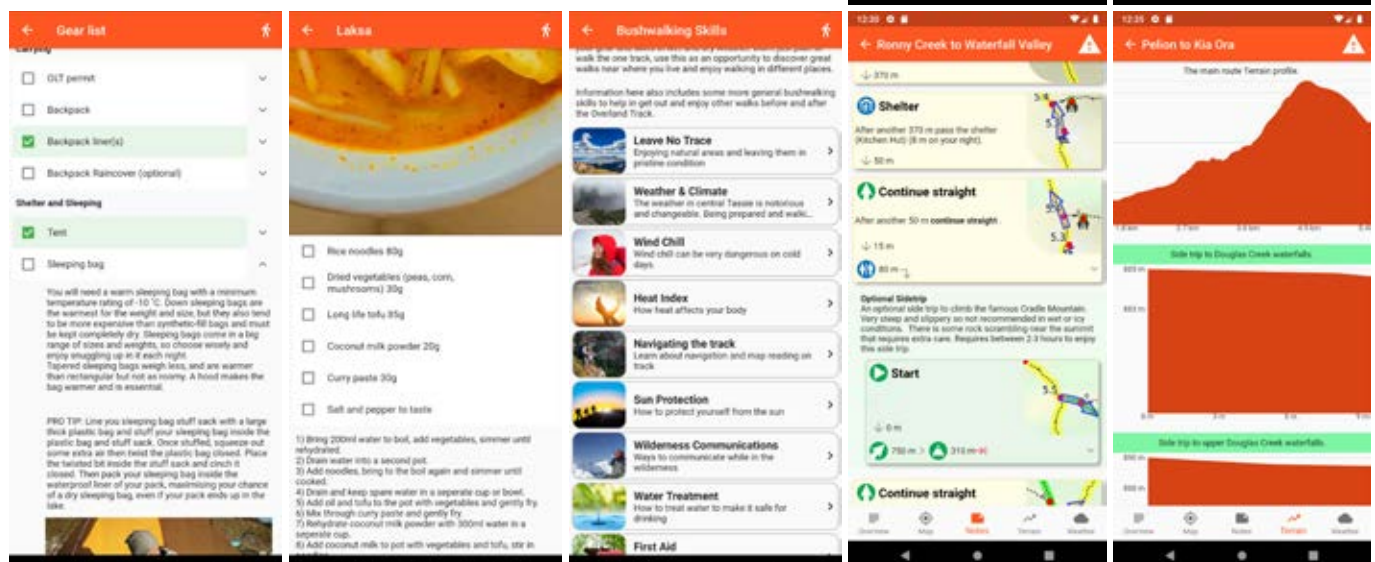
Think of this as the ultimate reference for the Overland Track, a happy marriage between a GPS and a bushwalking guide book.

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



Tasmanian Rangers Go Wild for Timor-Leste Forest Guards

Jessica Hewenn, Media Officer
Tasmanian Rangers Association

Part of being a park ranger in Australia is having the public comment on how great a job it must be. Indeed, while there might be some complaints about difficult working conditions, or being a glorified cleaner, in general it is a pretty great job – especially compared to rangers working in other parts of the world.

Some of those more difficult locations are even on our doorstep. One of Australia's closest neighbours, Timor-Leste, only established formal independence in 2002, and their first and only national park was declared in 2007. This is [Nino Konis Santana National Park](#), named after the independence movement national hero who was born in what became the park.

National Park News

Matt McClelland



The NSW NPWS has revealed there were [205 submissions](#) with significant opposition to significant aspects of the plan for the hut-to-hut style walk in the Ben Boyd NP on NSW's far south coast.

View from Indian Head, K'gari, Queensland
Rhain

Ben Boyd National Park, Light to light

The NPWS has made a number of significant changes to their original plan based on the community response. Although many environmental groups still say they plan goes to far. So what has changed?

1. Independent overnight campsites

The plan was to close the existing remote campsites and all overnights must be in the huts are at the two car-based campsites. Now, the remote walk-in Mowarry Point campsite will be formalised as a backpack camping site near the huts that are to be built. However, the walk-in campsite at Hegartys Bay will be closed (replaced with huts) and the walk-in only campsite provided at Bittangabee Bay (near the car-based camping).

2. Huts

NPWS has highlighted that "Construction of huts and associated facilities is expected to be more complicated at Hegartys Bay" and that the hut may be relocated to near the car-based campsite at Bittangabee Bay. There is still a sense of remoteness

3. Commercial operations

The original plan allowed for commercial operators to book out the huts and on-sell accommodation such as to commercial groups. This was clearly ripe for profiteering risks and would limit access based on price. NPWS has now dropped this idea but will still allow commercial operations in a similar manner as with other parks (guided walks, transport, equipment supply etc).

4. Track realignment

There was a note that there was significant concern about some of the track changes. NPWS noted that the final track location is still being reviewed.

5. Green Cape accommodation

The proposal to use the lighthouse precinct for the final night (end of the walk) was met with significant opposition, NPWS has not changed their position on the plan and now retain "the option to build new accommodation at Green Cape, either outside or within the lightstation precinct".

6. Reference Group to be created

NPWS have proposed that a new Light to Light Walk Stakeholder Reference Group will be established until the end of the project. There is no comment on the powers they will have.

Opinion

Although there are few "wins" based on the public comments I am still very disappointed by this project plan overall. Although I am confident it will become a popular walk NSW has far better, lower impact and more affordable options available. NPWS are digging themselves a big hole and setting an unreasonable expectation of what our national parks in NSW should deliver.

New national park in western Sydney

The 500 hectare site at Shanes Park between Penrith and Windsor will soon [become a national park](#). The Environment Minister, Matt Kean said the park is set to be a "Noah's Ark" of native animals including emus, koalas, bettongs, bandicoots, and quolls. The park will become one of seven fenced and feral free parks in NSW, with the plan to re-introduce 30 species at this site once safe to do so. Fencing will start this year, the park is expected to be legally declared early next year and open to visitors in early 2023 with a new visitors centre and walking tracks.

Great Sandy National Park, K'gari

Some 250 kilometres north of Brisbane is the world's largest sand island. The Badtjala (Butchulla) people call this K'gari (pronounced Gurri), meaning paradise. The island has been inhabited for more than 5000 years. Soon after European colonisation it was named Great Sandy Island and was more recently known as [Fraser Island](#) until formally changed back to its original name on 19 September 2021. [Great Sandy National Park](#) is a World Heritage Area.

Fraser Island is named after [Eliza Anne Fraser](#) (c.1798–1858), a Scottish woman who was shipwrecked on this island on 22 May 1836. She was taken in and supported by the Badtjala (Butchulla) people. She claimed to have been captured by the Aboriginal people. Many other people who surveyed her wreck disputed her claims of poor treatment, while other whites reported they had been cared for well by the Badtjala people. In part, Fraser's claim led to the [1851 massacre](#) and dispossession of the Badtjala people.



Dead Frogs Across Eastern Australia

Jodi Rowley and Karrie Rose



Over the past few weeks, we've received a flurry of emails from concerned people who've seen sick and dead frogs across eastern Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Australian green tree frog

One person wrote: "About a month ago, I noticed the Green Tree Frogs living around our home showing signs of lethargy & ill health. I was devastated to find about seven of them dead."

Another wrote: "We previously had a very healthy population of green tree frogs and a couple of months ago I noticed a frog that had turned brown. I then noticed more of them and have found numerous dead frogs around our property."

And another said she'd seen so many dead frogs on her daily runs she had to "seriously wonder how many more are there".

So what's going on? The short answer is: we don't really know. How many frogs have died and why is a mystery, and we're relying on people across Australia to help us solve it.

Why are frogs important?

Frogs are an integral part of healthy Australian ecosystems. While they are usually small and unseen, they're an important thread in the food web, and a kind of environmental glue that keeps ecosystems functioning. Healthy frog populations are usually a good indication of a healthy environment.

They eat vast amounts of invertebrates, including pest species, and they're a fundamental food source for a wide variety of other wildlife, including birds, mammals and reptiles. Tadpoles fill our creeks and dams, helping keep algae and mosquito larvae under control while they too become food for fish and other wildlife.

But many of Australia's frog populations are imperilled from multiple, compounding threats, such as habitat loss and modification, climate change, invasive plants, animals and diseases.

Although we're fortunate to have [at least 242 native frog species in Australia](#), [35 are considered threatened with extinction](#). At least four are considered extinct: the southern and northern gastric-brooding frogs (*Rheobatrachus silus* and *Rheobatrachus vitellinus*), the sharp-snouted day frog (*Taudactylus acutirostris*) and the southern day frog (*Taudactylus diurnus*).

A truly unusual outbreak

In most circumstances, it's rare to see a dead frog. Most frogs are secretive in nature and, when they die, they decompose rapidly. So the growing reports of dead and dying frogs



Leaf-green Tree Frog

from across eastern Australia over the last few months are surprising, to say the least.

While the first cold snap of each year can be accompanied by a few localised frog deaths, this outbreak has affected more animals over a greater range than previously encountered.

This is truly an unusual amphibian mass mortality event.

In this outbreak, frogs appear to be either darker or lighter than normal, slow, out in the daytime (they're usually nocturnal), and are thin. Some frogs have red bellies, red feet, and excessive sloughed skin.

The iconic green tree frog (*Litoria caerulea*) seems hardest hit in this event, with the often apple-green and plump frogs turning brown and shrivelled.

This frog is widespread and generally rather common. In fact, it's the ninth most

commonly recorded frog in the national citizen science project, [FrogID](#). But it has [disappeared from parts of its former range](#).

Other species reported as being among the sick and dying include Peron's tree frog (*Litoria peronii*), the Stony Creek frog (*Litoria lesueuri*), and green stream frog (*Litoria phyllochroa*). These are all relatively common and widespread species, which is likely why they have been found in and around our gardens.

We simply don't know the true impacts of this event on Australia's frog species, particularly those that are rare, cryptic or living in remote places. Well over 100 species of frog live within the geographic range of this outbreak. Dozens of these are considered threatened, including the booroolong Frog (*Litoria booroolongensis*) and the giant barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*).



Peron's tree frog
LiquidGhoul

So what might be going on?

Amphibians are susceptible to environmental toxins and a wide range of parasitic, bacterial, viral and fungal pathogens. Frogs globally have been battling it out with a pandemic of their own for decades - a potentially deadly fungus often called amphibian **chytrid fungus**.

“... a potentially deadly fungus often called amphibian **chytrid fungus**.”

This fungus attacks the skin, which frogs use to breathe, drink, and control electrolytes important for the heart to function. It's also responsible for causing population declines in more than **500 amphibian species around the world**, and 50 extinctions.

For example, in Australia the bright yellow and black southern corroboree frog (*Pseudophryne corroboree*) is just hanging on in the wild, thanks only to **intensive management and captive breeding**.

Curiously, some other frog species appear more tolerant to the amphibian chytrid fungus than others. Many now common frogs seem able to live with the fungus, such as the near-ubiquitous Australian common eastern froglet (*Crinia signifera*).

But if frogs have had this fungus affecting them for decades, why are we seeing so many dead frogs now?

Well, disease is the outcome of a battle between a pathogen (in this case a

“... disease is the outcome of a battle between a pathogen, a host and the environment.”

fungus), a host (in this case the frog) and the environment. The fungus doesn't do well in warm, dry conditions. So during summer, frogs are more likely to have the upper hand.

In winter, the tables turn. As the frog's immune system slows, the fungus may be able to take hold.

Of course, the amphibian chytrid fungus is just one possible culprit. Other less well-known diseases affect frogs.

To date, the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health has confirmed the presence of the

amphibian chytrid fungus in a very small number of sick frogs they've examined from the recent outbreak. However, other diseases - such as ranavirus, **myxosporean parasites** and **trypanosome parasites** - have also been responsible for native frog mass mortality events in Australia.

It's also possible a novel or exotic pathogen could be behind this. So the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health is working with the Australian Museum, government biosecurity and environment agencies as part of the investigation.

Here's how you can help

While we suspect a combination of the amphibian chytrid fungus and the chilly temperatures, we simply don't know what factors may be contributing to the outbreak.

We also aren't sure how widespread it is, what impact it will have on our frog populations, or how long it will last.

While the temperatures stay low, we suspect our frogs will continue to succumb. If we don't investigate quickly, we will lose the opportunity to achieve a diagnosis and understand what has transpired.

“We need your help to solve this mystery.”

We need your help to solve this mystery.

Please send any reports of sick or dead frogs (and if possible, photos) to us, via the national citizen science project **FrogID**, or email calls@frogid.net.au.

“Please send any reports of sick or dead frogs ...”



Jodi Rowley

Curator, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Biology, UNSW, Australian Museum

Karrie Rose

Australian Registry of Wildlife Health - Taronga Conservation Society Australia, University of Sydney

This article first appeared in **The Conversation** on 28 July 2021.

Oh Sweet Honey!

Sonya Muhlsimmer

I thought I would check out what Food Days Australia celebrates and get creative in the kitchen according to the food days. I came across the site [National Food Day calendar](#).

Honey bee
Mark Brown

World Bee Day was on 20 May 2021 so why not celebrate bees and honey? Better late than never, and any day is a good day. Do you know how important bees are? They are very important, oh and the honey they make is so delicious and healthy for you, and they are worth talking about. So, why are bees so important? Well let me tell you why.

There are around 20,000 species of bees worldwide, one of which is the honeybee. Bees produce wax used for polish, candles, and skin care products, and they produce honey. Most importantly, bees are responsible for the most fundamental ecological processes - the pollination of plants. According to [Science.org.au](https://www.science.org.au) one-third of the global food production requires animal pollination and about 80-90 percent of this is done by honeybees. We would not have food like avocados, almonds, onion, sunflower, cucumbers, mangos, apples, asparagus and pumpkin and the list goes on. Bees are also worth around \$4 to 6 billion per year for the Australian agricultural industry. Wow, I know, right.

But on a more sombre note, with little mainstream attention there has been a decline in bee population globally. Australia

is currently the only country not grappling with the Varroa mite that spreads viruses amongst the bee population. The decline is also caused by insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, fertilisers, habitat destruction and climate change. One thing we can do to help our bees is plant more flowers like Abelia, Bottlebrush, Daisies, Grevilia, Lavender, oh don't forget to leave those Dandelions in the garden too. Bees need flowers for food and we need bees for our food, win-win.

Nutritionally, honey can change somewhat due to the season and processing techniques. Honey contains carbohydrates, enzymes, vitamins and minerals, antioxidants and lots of amino acids - the building blocks of protein which are essential in your diet. Honey can look and taste differently, and there are so many varieties of honey on the supermarket shelves. This is due to the type of flower or plant source, weather conditions and different botanical origins of where the bees collect the pollen.

You can buy raw honey, that is it has only been strained to remove the waxy bits, or more commonly available at the supermarkets, you buy processed honey. This honey has been heat-treated to kill off



Honey bee
Mark Brown

any pathogenic bacteria that may be present. Unfortunately, during the processing of the honey, it loses some minerals and vitamins, so buy raw honey where you can from the beekeeper or corner stores who help the local folk. I buy my honey from my local fruit and veggie shop and they get the honey from a local beekeeper just up the road. The jar states who and where it comes from. I do realise not everyone will have the ability to buy like this, but it sure is a good way to support the local folk and bees, and the honey will do a lot less food miles as well. When I was at university, a few of my friends were studying entomology and on a regular basis I would take some containers in and give them to my friends, they would collect honey straight from their hives for me. My oh my it was nice honey.



Honey bee
Mark Brown

Okay, I hear you ask, what has this got to do with hiking? So, on a hike take a small container of honey for your cups of tea. If you make scones you can drizzle some honey over them, or you can buy freeze-dried honey and bake a beautiful cake. Get it, beautiful ...

Recently I bought 200 grams of freeze-dried Manuka Honey Powder, it cost \$35, plus delivery ... not cheap. This product however is not pure honey, it has been mixed with maltodextrin, a powder made from tapioca that acts as a filler, improves the texture and can help extend and stabilise the shelf life of a product. I bought it from [Inspired Ingredients](#) and this is what I did with it. Enjoy!



Freeze Dried Manuka Honey Powder
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Honey and Almond Cake

At home preparation

Place all ingredients into the allocated bag, label the bag Honey Cake. Cut two pieces of greaseproof paper to fit the pan. Copy the At camp method and pack with the cake bag.

Method in camp

In a bowl place the contents and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water, stirring thoroughly to make a paste. Place a piece of grease proof paper in the bottom of the pan, spread the cake mix over the paper. Set the stove to a low to medium heat and cook for about 4-5 minutes or until bubbles appear and cover the surface, covered with a lid, if you have one. The cake may take a couple of minutes more to cook if not covered. Take off the heat, cover the top of the cake with the greaseproof paper and with your hand or small chopping board cover the top of the cake and flip the cake over. Place back in the pan and cook for about 2-3 minutes. Serve with some Mead if you must, yum!

Bag (honey cake mix)

Self raising flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Caster sugar	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Milk powder	2 Tbsp
Egg powder	1 Tbsp
Honey powder*	2 Tbsp
Almond meal	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Vanilla sugar	2 tsp

Water	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
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Honey – see note below	1 Tbsp
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* Instead of honey powder, use 1 Tbsp of honey which has been stored in a small well sealed container. To ensure the container does not leak, place the container in a zip-lock bag.



Bushwalk Australia



Better Bushwalking

- The Mount Hotham Diamantina Circuit
- Night walking
- NSW Great walks mistake



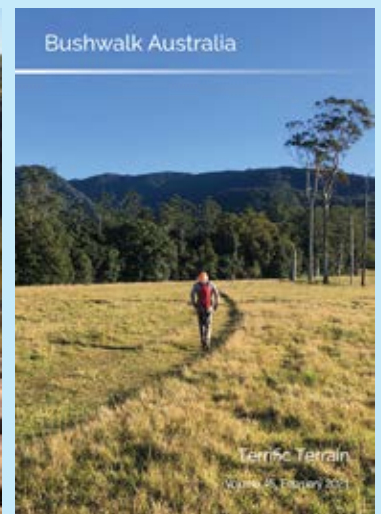
Reflections & Rescues

- 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



Resounding Rocks

- Traversing the Winburndale Range
- Malbena Matters!



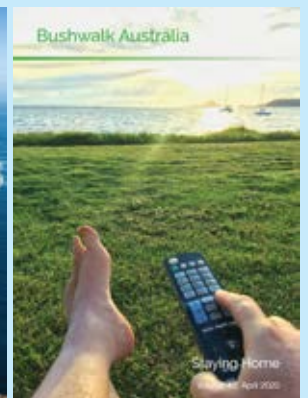
COVID Contingencies

- 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



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