



December 2022

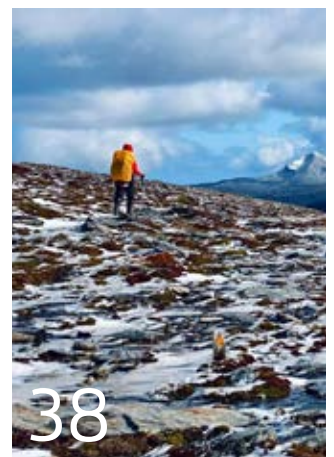
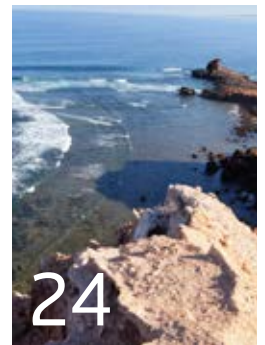
Bushwalk

Trail Treats



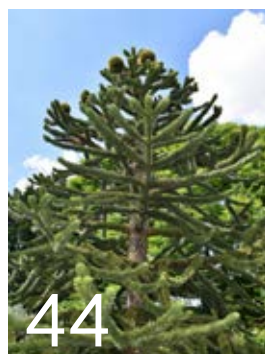
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**Always Was
Always Will Be
Aboriginal Land**

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



Editor's Letter



Hi, I hope this summer and magazine finds you well.

Large parts of Australia have experienced devastating floods in the last few months. Now we head into summer with a forecast for even more rain with a wetter-than-average period for most of the country again. As always, let us keep a close eye on weather forecasts and catchment rainfall when planning our adventures. The Mount Beauty to Falls Creek road has been blocked by a landslip and will not be open for many months. This is quite bad for Mount Beauty and Falls Creek – most of their summer events have been cancelled.

In this edition, Bede and Rob take us to explore the Mount Anne Circuit in Tassie's Southwest NP, enjoying the stunning vistas over three perfect days. Damian takes us on a canyon adventure, with kids in tow, on a base camping trip in Deep Pass, Wollemi NP, NSW. Ian helps us get close up to the stunning coastline and high cliffs in Streaky Bay, South Australia. Our photographers show us amazing parts from all corners of Australia. Tracey shares her journey of writing an honest and personal blog designed to inspire others, The Adventures of Xing. Gregory dives deep into the Southern Conifers, the seemingly weird oddity of Aussie native plants. Sonya does us a treat by sharing with us the wacky back story to (and how to make) the yummiest track treat.

I hope you have a merry Christmas and a great start to 2023.

Happy walking and reading

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

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Cover image
Separate rooms, please
North-north-west

Bushwalk Magazine
Edition 56,
December 2022
An electronic magazine for
<http://bushwalk.com>



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Please send any articles, suggestions or advertising enquires to Eva. We would love you to be part of the magazine. Read our [Writer's Guide](#) to get started, and we are here to help.

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.

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 Bushwalk magazine.

Mount Anne Circuit - lucky

Text
Bede House

Photos
Rob Deed

Walking in Tasmania is always a close-cut thing. When you are forced to compete with a tempestuous, temperamental environment, the chance to walk even three days without rain results from a hefty dose of divine intervention.

Tasmanian walking always heats up around Christmas. It's really the only opportunity to walk that coincides with good weather. Being aware of this, I recruited early. I brought up the idea of a walk in Tasmania with my uncle Rob in October and we settled on the Mount Anne circuit.



Bede on the ridge between Mount Lot and Lots Wife.
Mount Anne in the background



Mount Anne from the side of Eve Peak

It's always a good idea to have a casual glance at the mountain forecast before you embark on a trip. To my alarm, a southerly, the most dreaded of mountain winds, was forecast for the week we had planned for the trip. This is a recurring theme for me, as with most walkers in this region, I think.

What was lucky was that Monday through to Wednesday seemed okay, with no rain forecast.

Day 1: Condominium Creek, Mount Anne, Shelf Camp, 8.7 km, 8 hours

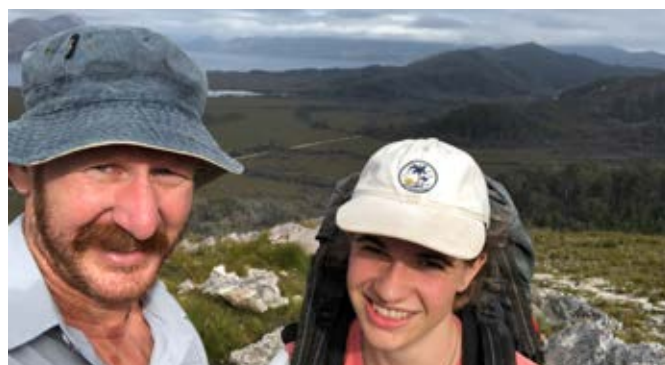
We set out early on Monday, 4:30 am. It was a dismal sight. It rained until Hobart and as we came into Maydena, it poured. Turning down Scotts Peak Road, it rained. What luck! Like a biblical scene, the clouds were parting as we trundled up the road, and the sky became mottled with blue and white.

My grandfather had driven us to the start of the walk, and having donned packs, we began along the new boardwalk. The sight was intimidating. A long flight of stairs greeted us, steep and endless. We said goodbye, gulped and began the strenuous clamber up the hill.

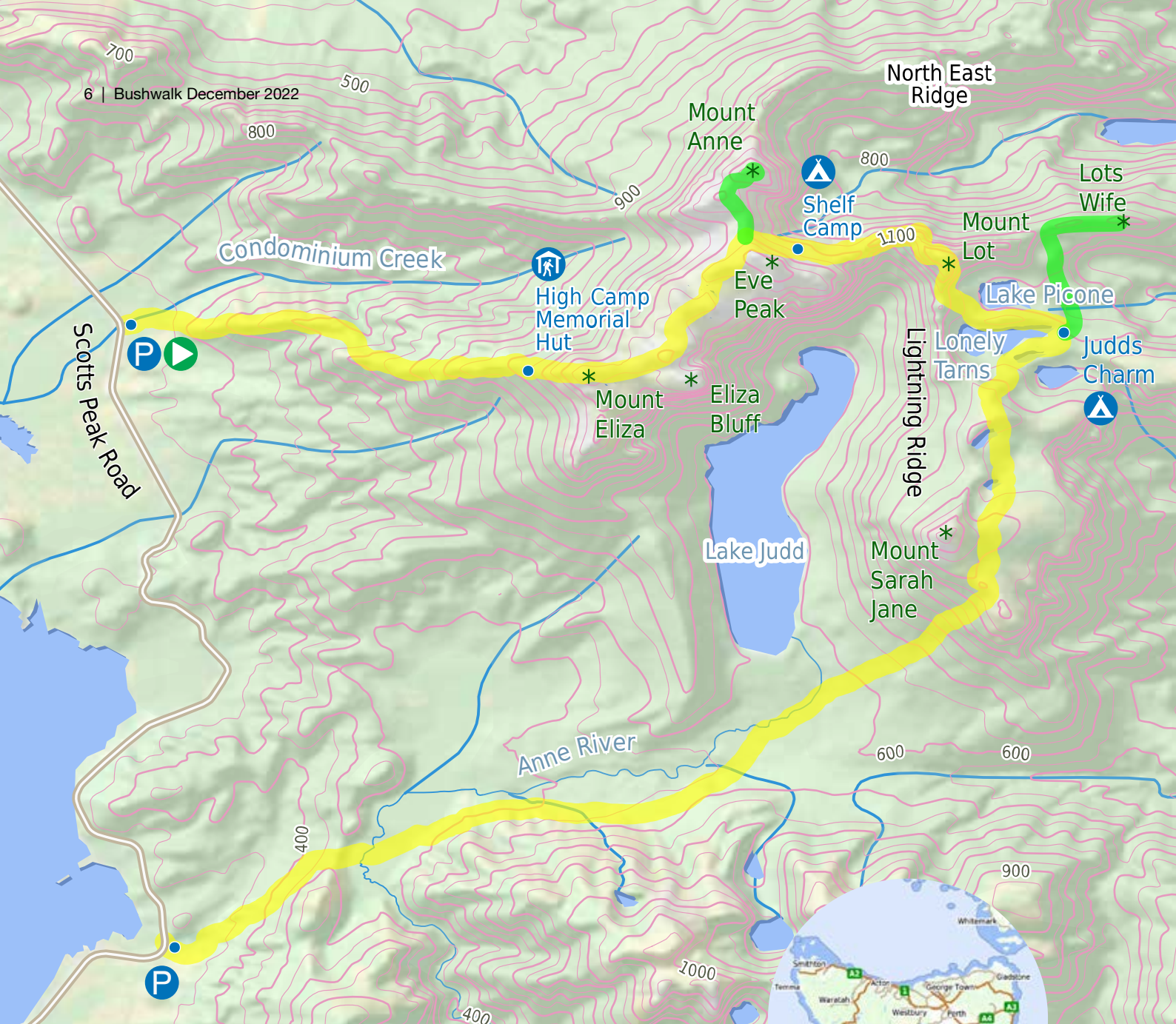
It had been a while since I had stepped out on the track, and my walking fitness was not quite up to par. There was a lot of stopping and resting as we made our way up the initial steep slope, hindered further by the constant need to lift one's legs further than usual. However, my fitness slowly started to return to me as we continued, and I felt we were getting into a rhythm, an important point often

“

The sight was intimidating. A long flight of stairs greeted us, steep and endless.



Uncle Rob and Bede on track



Mount Anne Circuit



0 km 0.5 1 2 3 km



Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)



Main track, side trip, alternate route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Hut



Campsite



Toilet



Parking

Bushwalk.com notes and maps on [webpage](#), [GPX](#) and [PDF](#)

This map is © [Bushwalk.com](#) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](#) contributors

overlooked by walkers. We took a brief stop at a little seat, and the view over Pedder had cleared brilliantly. It was cloudy above us, but the signs were good. What good luck!

We continued up onto the flat secondary ridge and could see the lower reaches of the scree slope below the summit taunting us. Then came another great ascent, and a small shower came over and quickly dissipated. The hillside was covered in low vegetation, such as pandani, and a large amount of charred debris. The damage from the 2018-19 fires was stark, and the vegetation, even now, was only starting to recover.

The slope was short but horrifying. Again, my lack of walking fitness was taking a toll. It seems here that the track shifts ridges, or else follows the side of the ridge rather than the top of it. I suppose this is to stop erosion on the top of the ridge, but I am not sure. It certainly makes the walking more arduous.

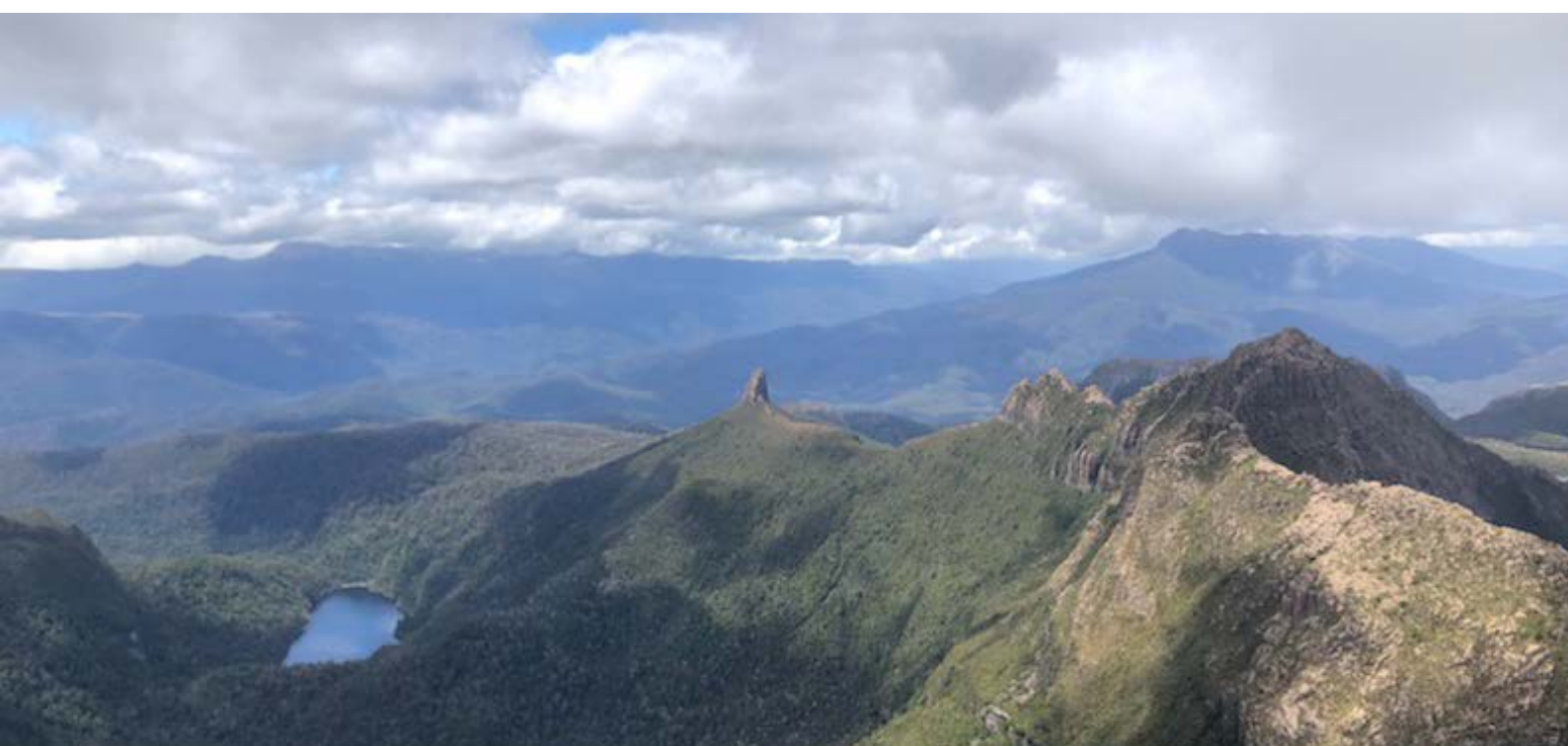
I believe that this section of the track has been re-routed somewhat. I never went up before this though, so I am not sure, but it took a little longer than Chapman said it would. This may well have been because we were not going very fast, but during the next sections, we had no trouble keeping to the times.

We were on the main ridge now and the cloud was closer overhead. We took a brief detour to see over the tip of the ridge down to Pedder and as before it was fabulous. The Western Arthurs were making a small appearance and, closer to home, Scotts Peak and Mount Solitary were showering us in their magnificence. The cloud was more broken now, and shafts of sun brought out a vibrant array of blues and greens, with the road a clear brown strip below us. Rob remarked that we could get a boat and take a trip out to the island peaks, an exciting prospect.

Upwards, ever upwards, but the going was easier now. It was quite a bit flatter, and the stairs were less rigorous. We could make out a glade of scrub in the distance, and I believed this to be where we would find the hut.

The track steepened again but not seriously. We darted around the side of a knoll before coming to a small, cleared area. I assumed this to be where High Camp Hut had been and that it had been destroyed, but after making our way up the track a way, we stumbled upon it, hidden in the thicket.

The hut was very nice. It was small and looked rather like a shepherd's cottage. It was made of un-shaped stone, and the gaps



Mount Lot and Lots Wife from the summit of Mount Anne

were filled with mortar. I was sad to see that the fireplace had been filled in as I think that a hut without a fireplace is rather a paradoxical and even disingenuous sight. I was also fascinated that it had two levels with a very nice little staircase leading to the second level. I commend its makers, for it is a premier piece of hut building.

The next part of the track took us through a maze of fallen boulders, mostly vehicular in volume, the last sentinels before the summit of Mount Eliza. There was rather more technical climbing than one would predict, the crux being a five metre climb up a miniature gully, but nothing that would cause any alarm.

The views had reduced significantly as we had managed to tuck ourselves into the cloud band. What was encouraging was that the band had risen significantly. Again, good luck.

We met a couple of parties descending, their reasoning being that there was no chance of climbing Anne that day (ha ha). We chatted

briefly before going our separate ways. It is nice to see people having a good time in the bush, and one does wonder if our going up there in such weather had the potential for hubris. These people may have been far more sensible than me.

We finally summited Mount Eliza at about 10 am in thick cloud. For the moment, my gamble was firmly not paying off. Further down, we had decided on tea, and we set about getting the Trangia boiling and extracting some nibbles from deep within our packs.

The previous day we bought three blocks of chocolate whilst food shopping. One (the mint) was meant to be for the family back home, but later on when we wanted to eat it, we found it had disappeared. It had now, like a phantom, materialised in my pack. I was quickly accused by my companion of a minor theft, a charge I denied and still deny, although I was pleased to have it.



Lake Pedder from the summit of Mount Anne

I tucked into the stolen goods, and the tea quickly boiled. We were joined at the summit by three groups. One group was two fathers with their sons, who we had seen and heard from below. They quickly moved off, followed closely by a group of three men. They too moved off after a quick chat, and a couple came and sat some distance off. I believe they only came to the summit of Eliza, but they were there for the time that we were, and when we left, they were still there.

I was pleasantly excited to see the clouds above me glowing a hot yellow rather than their customary dull grey. The sun was

breaking through. It was an agitated wait as the breaks came and went, but it showed definite improvement. It was from these breaks that everyone present got a large amount of amusement. My exultance was expressed vocally with many ecstatic cries.

We duly packed up and made our way across the foggy Eliza plateau. It was a wet place with many little tarns which were perfectly flat despite the minor wind, most likely from the fact that they are often indented into the earth. It was covered in vibrant green mosses and cushion plants. The visibility was improving as we went, and we even got some glimmers



Panorama from the summit of Mount Anne

of where the plateau dropped away into Lake Judd in impressive walls with large boulders at their tops.

We came quickly upon the brow of Eliza Bluff, and the heavens parted. The sun came down upon us in shards, and I felt for the first time hot. The gamble had paid off - what a relief. Anne was not yet visible, being somewhat higher, but I was sure she would appear soon enough.

“

The gamble had paid off - what a relief.

We crossed a number of little knolls in ever more sun, and as we came upon the peak of the final knoll, the great Mount Anne, the

tallest summit for miles around, broke free of her cloudy shackles. She was a magnificent beast, but very imposing. We could see the wall we must climb, some 10-15 metres in height.

Mount Anne rose in cliffs. Two rings to be precise. We made our way across down the boulder slope to the intersection of the circuit and the Mount Anne summit track. Here we dumped our packs, extracted a water bottle and began the journey to the summit. As we approached, a final plume of mist passed across Anne's flanks before she was rendered totally clear with a blue backdrop. The day had fined up magnificently for our attempt.

There is always a sense of foreboding with these things. That twinge of uncertainty is a niggle. We contoured around two knolls before coming onto the final scree slope. Cliffs barred the way. We made an angled ascent, aiming for the beginning of the final gully. As



The beginning of the final summit scramble

we reached its base, we saw a small crowd, including the group of three men we had met previously. We briefly chatted, during which they said they wanted to watch us first. Right.

One must put all emotions aside in this situation and work on the job at hand. I carefully climbed to the final ledge. My uncle came up beside me, and we made our way out onto the crux, 15 metre drop and all.

“

One must put all emotions aside in this situation and work on the job at hand.

In front of us was a chimney with obvious good holds, and I found myself above it in no time at all. The depths below were a good excuse to get to better ground, and I made my way gingerly across the sloping ledge

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... we were shocked to hear the thunder of rotors and saw a helicopter making a beeline for us.

towards safety. My uncle was with me as we got onto a blade and negotiated a large and confusing boulder. The route was then simple as we made our way along a ramp and then a short climb to reach the summit.

The summit region had a large number of boulders with large drops between them. The views were stupendous, extending to the very limits of vision. I could make out the furthest reaches of the Arthurs, the Franklands, the Pedder impoundment, and down to the Crest Range and Hartz and Adamsons Peak. The weather had cleared wonderfully, and everything was covered in light, creating vibrancy and dimension few get the opportunity to see in the southwest.

We stayed at the summit for a time, but the thought of the descent ate away at me until we decided to go.

The route was the same as it had been and no more daunting. When we reached the crux, it was over in no time. I gave a happy smile as I greeted a person going up, glad to have done the largest obstacle with no trouble.

We got back to the packs okay but noticed some of the other people were not moving past the crux, which was still plainly visible. As we set about making lunch at the track junction, we were shocked to hear the thunder of rotors and saw a helicopter making a beeline for us. We were even more shocked to see it make a few circuits of the peak and then drop a number of personnel around the crux, flying low and close to the cliffs, before gaining altitude to allow a second helicopter to do the same. We ate lunch and watched the rescue for two hours.

It was about 4 pm when we began the descent the Shelf Camp. We decided to camp down at the bottom of the shelf near a large



Mount Anne from Shelf Camp

tarn. We discussed the rescue with a couple of fellow walkers there and found an empty tent, but little information more was gathered.

We had a good dinner of steak and a little pudding and then fell asleep.

Day 2: Shelf Camp, Judds Charm, Lots Wife, 7.7 km, 8 hours

The morning came misty and chilly. Visibility was around 10 metres, and we made sure to stay away from the edge. I remark in my journal that it was so misty that the dew got caught in my hair and, rather more amusingly, Rob's beard.

We cooked a hearty meal of bacon, eggs and porridge, washed down with liberal quantities of tea, a must. Camp was struck about 7 am, and we began to make our way along the rather muddier track that sidles below the cliffs of Eve Peak.

“

... manoeuvring around the drop with a 20 kilogram pack was more than a little exciting.

The pad joined again with the ridge and what followed was an awkward crossing of large boulders that were scattered in large quantities along the top of the ridge. The fog was moving fast around us. It kept us well hydrated and made for an entertaining performance as we walked.

We came to the point where the pad leaves the main saddle and sidles along the northern face of the range. This exercise continued for some time before a large drop was climbed, followed by a tricky descent into the infamous Notch.

We were dwarfed by a large wall of rock with a cleft which offered an easy ascent. I was voted to go first. I tied the hauling rope in heroic style around my shoulder and set out. Again, everything was relatively simple, although it was more technical than the Anne climb. I came out onto the crux, with the full seven metre drop below me, found an easy way up and executed it without an issue.

The pack hauling was a chore with 20 kilograms of gear dangling from the rope, but we made it up. That was perhaps the most daunting part of the exercise, as manoeuvring around the drop with a 20 kilogram pack was more than a little exciting. But we came to no harm and were all safely up.

We began to sidle around the southern face of Mount Lot. It was a decidedly rocky affair, culminating in a long slog up a scree-choked chasm. But we had reached the top and were greeted with clag. I made tea using a neat little ledge for the Trangia, all rather homely way up there in the clouds. The tea was delicious and I tucked into some chocolate (Rob isn't a fan). I had to eat a bar a day and I was decidedly behind.

The clouds did not lift, and so we were left with a rather dismal view of nothing at all. It was also decidedly chilly, but the tea helped with that. We made our way down Lightning Ridge to the south. The top of the ridge was hard to move along due to the scree and regular scrambling obstacles. There were a couple of particular cruxes, the most memorable of which had a two metre drop; not really worrying but one would not want to fall, as I nearly did, the rock being decidedly slippery.

As we made our way down, the visibility slowly increased so that as we came to the secondary ridge we were required to take, we found that we could see it from a good 20-30 metres away, a stark improvement. A thick rainforest was next, with a little lookout at the top. We clambered out of the forest and stood

overlooking an imposing drop. We were luckily secure behind a blade of rock, but looking down I could see a thick ocean of trees, and we even spied Judds Charm peeking through the mist. Most exciting.

We began the descent. It was a typical southwest scene. False leads and spindly plant limbs caught us as if it were all a children's game. I believe this forest to be full of children, for one slips regularly as if it were a pre-laid plan. Through gaps in the trees, we spied Lake Picone, but the scene was sombre owing to the excessive grey that pervaded all around us.

We came out at the Charm and stood a moment gazing at its unsliced surface. We took a look at the map and noted that around us the cloud had risen enough to see the walls of the main ridge in the north running north-south. It was an impressive sight, as if we were in a large giant's mouth.

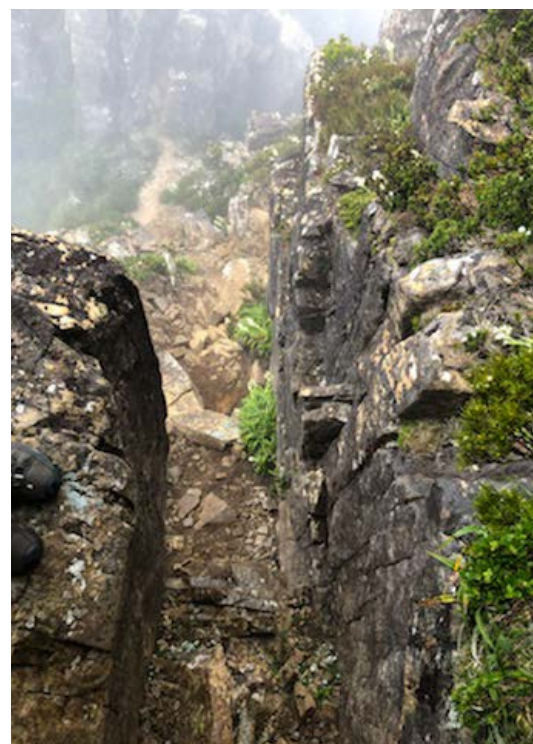
We made our way over the final knoll and descended into the campsite at the eastern tip of Judds Charm. Here we met an educational ranger whose job was to tramp her way around the countryside explaining many facts, usually about the preservation of wild places. We had not registered our walk



A dolerite column on the ridge between Eve Peak and Mount Lot



The top of The Notch from the beginning of the descent into it



The descent into The Notch

on the new registration system, not because I am against it, but because everything had been rather hurriedly organised. We hoped that we could avoid this awkward discussion by cutting short our conversation with some clever excuse. It was not to be. She eventually asked the question, and not wanting to cause a scene (although who was there to see it?) we fessed up. Her face changed very quickly. Gone was the jovial smile, and a serious tone came across it. It was perhaps the starkest moment of my life. She explained in no uncertain terms the issues with our course of action, and we nodded agreeably. Eventually, however, she relented, and we made our way to a nice tent platform by the Charm (the best in the place) and set up the tent.

As we were preparing lunch, we noticed with some dread that said ranger was approaching again, a cup of tea in hand. She mounted the platform, and we began a rather cheerful conversation about various things, including the climb up Lots Wife. Lots Wife had been a goal of mine. But only if the weather was good.

“

It was perhaps the starkest moment of my life.

The weather was changing rapidly from its morning state of dreariness. The cloud was lifting, and Lots Wife was intermittently in view. The cloud was moving fast above us, and it receded in great shafts that clung to the mountains like octopus tentacles.

We munched on a leisurely lunch of salami, cheese and cucumber as well as large quantities of chocolate and bread. The weather cleared before our eyes and the Charm remained a carpet of glass. The sun was peeking through, as was the blue sky.

We decided to make an attempt on Lots Wife. We grabbed some suitable warm gear and made for the track to Lake Picone. We crossed over the rib between Judds Charm and Picone and descended to the outlet, forded it, and made our way through thick mud. The mud was to be expected. This is not

a maintained track but rather kept in existence by use. It is also somewhat of a marsh. We climbed the further rib and made our way into the dense jungle.

We were most likely one of the first along this route in some time, and this was obvious. It had become somewhat indistinct, with many false leads. It was not at all helped by a landslide which had removed the original track, forcing us to push through the scrub to effectively make a new one. We quickly came upon the top of the ridge, but we were barred by chest-high scrub.

“

Ahead of us was a seven metre climb.

It was here that I took a wrong turn and led us too far to the left of the ridge top, placing us in very thick scrub. Rob quite rightly took the lead, and we were quickly reunited with the route. We had a good laugh and then made our way onto the moor that stretches to the base of Lots Wife. It was a stupendous outlook. The sun was well and truly out, and Mount Anne glowed orange.

At the base of the cliffs we made our way along the north face. We followed an undulating track that crossed many small ridges, overshoot, and came back to the correct gully. Ahead of us was a seven metre climb. It was the most technical of the lot, requiring a start in one small gully before crossing over to the other side and coming out underneath a large trunk. This trunk was a very good hold and I utilised it extensively. The track then pushed up through the gully before unexpectedly coming out of it and onto a face with grandstand views of the lakes surrounding the mountain as well as Mount Anne itself.

I was a little surprised and asked Rob to go out ahead; he has more experience in these matters. He confirmed this was the route and that it was quite okay, and we continued up and over a small climb before reaching the summit.

We sat down on the summit, enamoured at our achievement. We leaned up against a rock and enjoyed the wonderful views out over the area. The Arthurs were peeking through, Federation rearing its head, beckoning me. There were the Franklands and Hartz Peak, and Mount Anne glimmered amazingly. Even Mount Lot was impressive, with its winged face, but we got rather annoyed that it had not given us the same views. We also saw Angel Falls in all their glory, brimming with water. It was an exciting thing to see the plateau fall away so spectacularly.

I must say that Lots Wife was by far the most rewarding climb. It was more technical than anything else, and it was also a real unknown whether we would get there. It required a better forecast than Mount Anne was as we would need two days of reasonable weather.

We descended without trouble and made our way back along the base of the cliffs to the plateau. We found we had a little phone reception and called home to tell them of our good fortune. There was a twinge of sadness for me though. The hardest and most exciting part of the walk was over. That is always a sad part of a walk like this. I think that is the saddest part about bushwalking, that it must end.

As we descended, we came across a large crack in the earth, about a body's width and a good five metres deep, easy to fall into. We had not seen it on the way up. It was such a fascinating occurrence that when we got below the ridge top we tracked back to find its source. It turned out to be about 50 metres away but was nowhere as large meaning that if one fell into it, it would be very difficult to escape. We then made our way down the woody ridge to the plateau, finding it no easier than when we came up. I even managed to fall over with some pain onto a tree trunk.

We reached the floor quickly and tracked back over the first of the ribs, then through the Picone basin, over the second rib, and down into Judds Charm. Here we met the ranger again and informed her of our success. She joined us for dinner. I believe she must have been somewhat lonely traipsing about the bush on her own. I couldn't blame her really. The bush is a big place and when you have no one with you it gets tiring after a while.

I managed to stuff myself with a bar of chocolate in this period, a necessity given the issue of too much chocolate we were cruelly faced with. Punishment for our good weather, I think.



Bede descending into The Notch



Bede unfurling the hauling rope and the top of The Notch



Lots Wife from the approach ridge

Day 3: Judds Charm to Red Tape Creel, 11.9 km, 6 hours

The next day dawned better than the previous. A kind goodbye from the circuit. We struck camp at 7 am again because we needed to be out by about 1 pm. We coursed across the Charm's basin splendidly. The low scrub and the flat surface allowed us to take long strides.

We remounted the ridge by a direct and tiring route and made our way along towards Mount Sarah Jane. This mountain was striking, but I believed the climb is fairly easy from Judds Charm. However, we decided to give the quad a miss and make our way down. The wind was also blowing swiftly over the ridge top, and it was all rather chilly.

We crossed the moorland around Judds Charm with some difficulty. The textured plain made the going tough and was in a couple of places combined with walls of scrub. The mist came over up there but by the time we came to the descent of the range it had passed. The view down to Lake Judd was very pleasing, but rather teasing. It seemed so close, but a tough scrubby decent barred the way.

We stopped at the gap and surveyed the clearing view. It was nice to look down the Anne River Valley, watching its windings and viewing the sheer faces it had carved. Some we had topped; others would have to wait. It was here I made the biggest navigational error. We descended down a faint pad. It was

the wrong pad. What followed was an ever more difficult bash through the scrub. We were continually pulling out the map but to no avail. We decided to aim southwest and try our luck and by some miracle we managed to descend to the lake.

This took a chunk out of our time so after a quick look at the bridge over the Anne River we started to push on.

The final walk out was merely a slog along the floor of the Anne River Valley. It was largely a flat track and very beautiful country. A welcome change from the up and down scrambling of the range.

After about an hour and a half we came to the Anne River suspension bridge where we stopped for lunch. It was a cheerful thing. Looking down the river we could see where it heads into a large gorge. It was almost Austrian in appearance and very impressive.

We then donned our packs for the final slog and climbed over the small ridge on the right bank of the Anne River and down into the Lake Pedder catchment. After 30 minute walk down the hill, we reached the logbook shelter and the end of the walk.

I had a great time! It is highly recommended! I would also say that this trip was full of bloody good luck. The weather held out wonderfully well, and although we got lost a couple of times, we got back promptly. No one got hurt, which is good.



“

Bede lives in Brisbane, Queensland. He grew up in Tasmania where he got his passion for bushwalking. He is kitchen hand at a restaurant whilst he finishes school. Bede likes bushwalking because it is an exciting exploit, allowing one to have many great adventures, and it also allows him to see the most beautiful and remote parts of our country. It also gives him something to have a good chat about after the walk is over.

Canyon Calamity

Text and photos
Damian McDermott

Wayfinding in Wollemi National Park Dharug Country

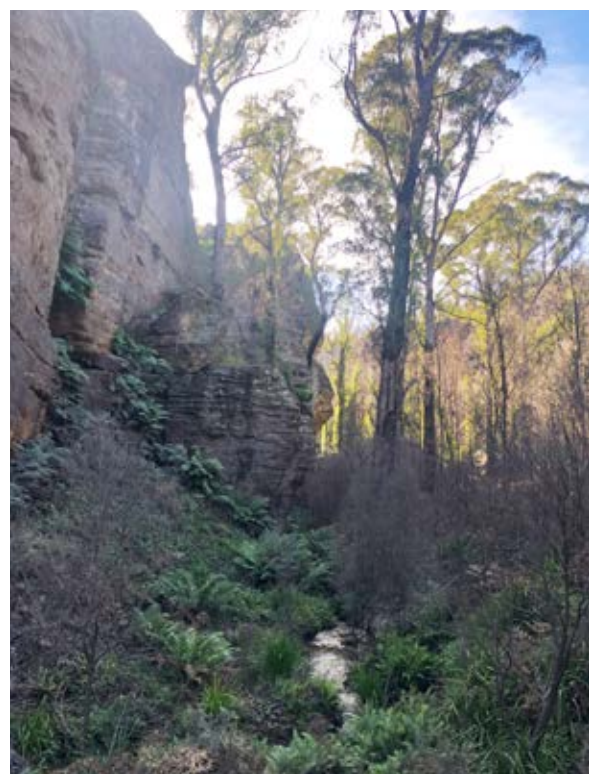
It's autumn, and the "Crazy Danger Crew" are back in the wonderful Wollemi National Park with our sights set on a canyon adventure. The Crew include Ava (14), Mary (8), Rory and Daisy (both 11), Crazy Chris and myself (mid forties, but who's counting). For the last few years we've been taking our kids on a multi-day adventure in every season and I've been writing about it on my page [Random Footprints](#) to help other parents find backpacking adventures for kids and families.



Mary, Chris, Rory, Ava, Daisy and Damian - the Crazy Danger Crew



Ava, Mary, Rory and Daisy at Deep Pass campsite



Nayook Creek near Deep Pass campsite

After going off track in [Namadgi National Park](#) last spring we packed the compass and topographic maps and headed to the Newnes Plateau and a remote camping area among the sandstone escarpments. The geography couldn't be any more different to last spring. With a labyrinth of deep canyons, gullies, rocky pagodas and forest, this is a stark contrast to Namadgi's open country and easy navigation. Navigating Newnes Plateau is not for the inexperienced or underprepared.

Day 1 - Base Camp at Deep Pass

Just like our [last Wollemi trip](#) we opted for a base camp adventure. Our base camp is [Deep Pass campground](#), accessed by a steep but short 500 metre hike from the carpark. We had a few extra luxuries like a small esky with some fresh food (and a few cold cans of beer).

We took the unsealed Glowworm Tunnel Road which begins at the Zig Zag Railway and then followed a series of 4WD tracks to the carpark. From there it was fairly



Campground panorama

intuitive and somehow we got there without too many wrong turns, or maybe because I was following Chris, oblivious to any navigational conniptions. The walk down to the campground is on a steep, overgrown and uneven service trail. Though short, it's not a walk we want to do multiple times, so we carried everything down in one go, deciding to leave the climbing gear in the car.

Deep Pass campground is a sunny clearing surrounded by trees, rocky pagodas and canyons, with green grass and a crystal clear creek running through the area. There are multiple options for tents and as we arrived a group was just leaving a nice shady spot with a campfire and sitting logs close to the creek, so we claimed it as our home for the next two nights.

We spent the afternoon exploring the gullies and nearby T Slot canyon, scrambling over

the various rock formations. The T Slot canyon is particularly fun and worth seeking out if you visit Deep Pass. Don't let the squeeze at the start put you off!

Later, two other walkers returned from their day exploring River Caves Canyon - an off track route to a dry canyon about 5 kilometres north of the campground. This was our plan for tomorrow, but I forgot to download the maps to my device, so we gathered some intel, photographing their maps and marking the route onto our own maps. This information will put it back on the agenda for tomorrow's adventure.

“

Don't let the squeeze at the start put you off!

After some more exploration and fun, we settled in for a relaxing evening, dining on Chris's fresh spaghetti bolognese under the stars, ready for our big adventure in the morning.

Day 2 - A canyon adventure

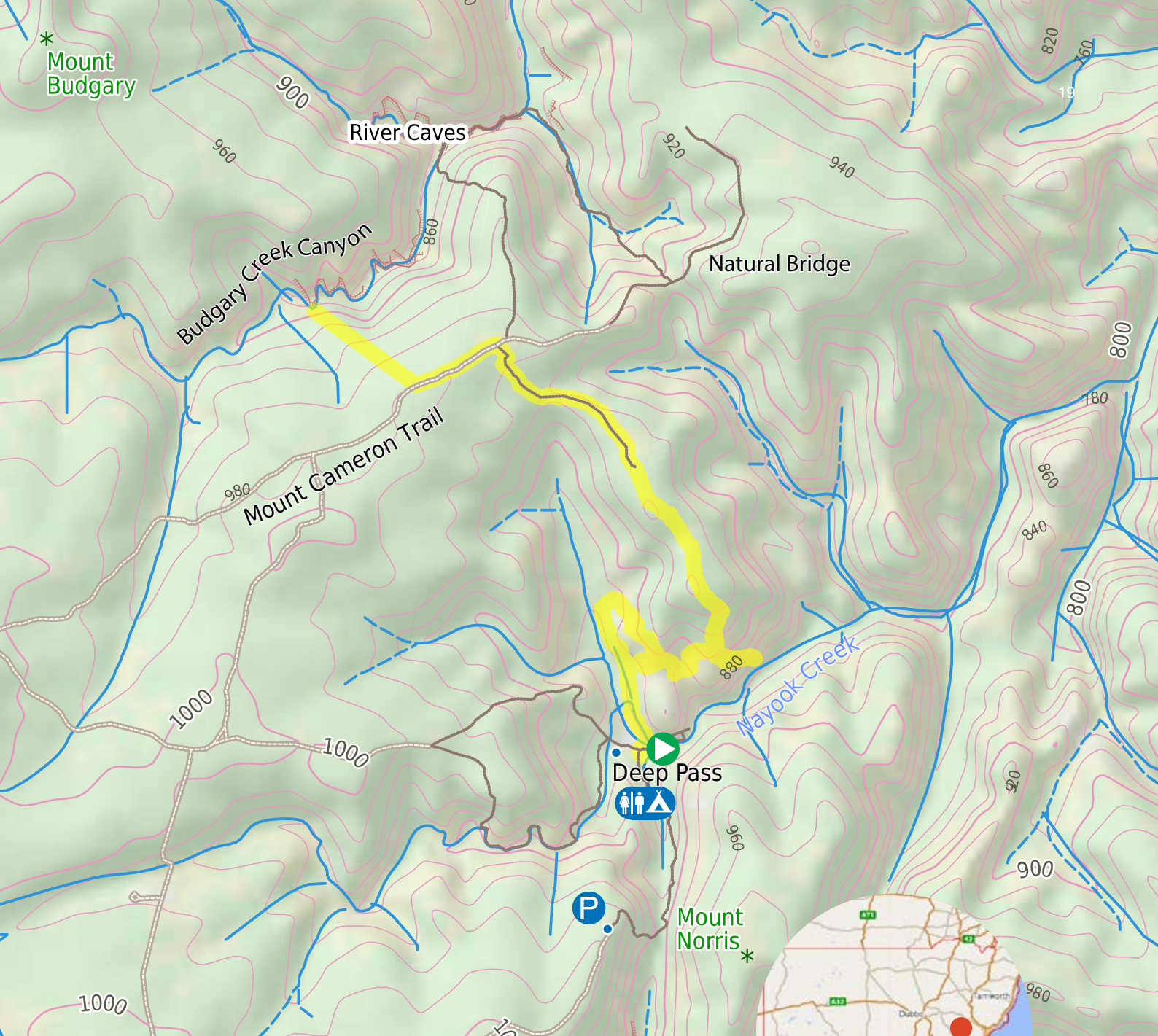
The night was cool but not too cold and there hasn't been a drop of dew. We lit the fire and enjoyed breakfast and a show from the local lyrebirds. The kids dressed in their hiking clothes as Chris and I loaded our packs with water bottles, a nice lunch, snacks and cooking gear, then embarked on our journey north to find the hidden canyon.

We crossed the creek and headed upstream to the north following the bottom of the cliff. After a few hundred metres there was a break in the cliffs and we scrambled up to a ridge, heading north-east. Eventually this ridge opened up to a wooded area and we continued to climb, finding a footpad heading north-west following the contour.

After about 1.5 kilometres we hit a very well graded dirt track, the road to Natural Bridge. We followed it east, passing an impressive valley of pagodas and amazing rock features, and River Caves Canyon hidden somewhere among it all. After following this track for a few hundred metres we realised it's going the



T Slot canyon



Getting lost on day 2



Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)



Main track, side trip, alternate route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (20 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Hut



Campsite



Toilet



Parking



Rory at the top of a scramble near Deep Pass campground



Ava, Mary, Rory and Daisy, and Chris approaching canyons but before getting lost

wrong direction and backtrack to where we originally met the road. Then we head north to find an entry point to the canyon.

Lost! (the first time)

We don't have much information and there are no digital maps in the GPS app, an oversight on my part. We just have a printed topographic map with the track scrawled on it (copied from the other campers maps) and are heading in a north-westerly direction searching for the canyon.

By midday, the kids have been scrub-bashing through regrowth, getting scratched and scraped by ashen stumps, having expected a

lovely cooked lunch in a beautiful dry canyon by now. There is an impressive canyon ahead but we can't find a way in, just deadly drops. The kids eat dry wraps with dodgy cheddar cheese on the dusty banks of a dry creek while Chris and I continue to traverse the clifftops with walkie talkies, looking for an entry point.

Eventually I found a way down, somewhat convinced that it will lead to River Caves Canyon. It was a precarious scramble with a sheer 15 metre drop on one side and after some coaxing, we guided the kids safely down to the shady canyon.



Mary and canyon tops

The rock features are impressive and the creek is crystal clear, so we began exploring downstream and are almost immediately stopped by a 2 metre drop into a deep pool. This is not exactly the dry canyon we were expecting.

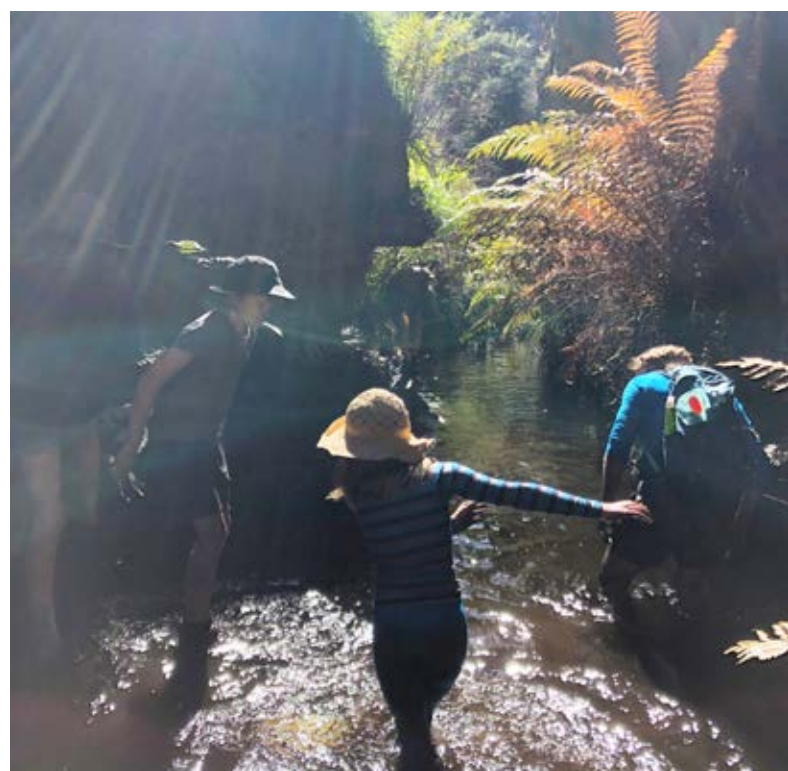
We had no ropes or climbing gear (beer was deemed more valuable to carry into camp at the start of the walk) so we decided against continuing downstream. Instead we headed upstream. The canyon meandered beneath ledges and rock fissures, turning at right

angles and opening up as we approached a series of cascades that looked like natural waterslides.

We were able to climb the sides of the cascades and follow a pool until we were stopped again by another 2-3 metre waterfall. At this point we were convinced that we aren't anywhere near River Caves Canyon. Chris found an easy scramble out of the canyon and we rested in the sun, wrung out our socks and ate some sweets before heading back south to the comfort of our campsite.



Ava in the canyon



Kids in the canyon

Lost! (the second time)

By now it's about 2.15 pm and all we need to do is walk back - for an hour or so - the way we came ... easy! And it is easy for the first few kilometres. We make it back to the road quicker than expected and followed the same footpad back towards the south. We moved quickly along the ridge, knowing we will be back soon for a relaxing afternoon in camp.

But we aren't ... we haven't focused on the point where we need to leave the ridge to scramble back to our valley and have walked way too far and are now on the escarpment,

far above where we want to be, with nothing but vertical drops ahead of us. What's more the kids find it all really exciting and scatter off frantically to climb all the pagodas and peaks, evoking mild panic in Chris and me.

After another hour trying to escape to the lower ground we traverse west and find a scramble down. It's unfamiliar but eventually we recognise features and make it back to the campsite by about 5 pm, relieved that we won't need to huddle together for a night sheltered beneath an overhang somewhere on the escarpment.



Escarpment pagodas with the kids



Spiny crayfish

Back to base camp

We returned to camp exhausted but relieved and instantly consumed the soup with noodles intended for our canyon picnic. Later we clean up and eat a hearty shepherd's pie, with lamb mince I'd prepared earlier and trusty old Deb powdered mash. The kids fall asleep easily and Chris and I enjoy a drink by the campfire, reflecting on the misadventures of the day. It may not have been the canyon we were looking for, but it didn't really matter in the end. Plus it's always satisfying to take the road less travelled. Chris and I have history of accidental canyons - but that's another story.

“

It may not have been the canyon we were looking for, but it didn't really matter in the end.

Day 3 - The journey ends

We woke to another cool but dry morning and enjoy a slow start to the day. Happy in the knowledge that the hardest thing today is walking 500 metres uphill to the car and deciding what to eat at the pub for lunch. After packing up camp we visit the nearby T Slot canyon again. On the way we saw a rare spiny crayfish in the creek where we got our water. It's a large prehistoric looking creature with bright orange spiky claws that look like they could cut your finger off. We look but don't touch.

The walk back to the cars is an uphill slog, but after yesterday the kids barely notice it. We load up and hit the road to the Gardeners Inn at Blackheath for a good pub feed. Burgers, nuggets, chicken parmas and cold drinks cap off an amazing adventure.

Summary

Chris and I are experienced bushwalkers and our kids are used to the challenges of exploring the Australian bush (even with us). But our canyon adventure could have been a lot easier if we hadn't made some basic mistakes. If I had managed to download the maps before the trip everything would have been a lot smoother - next time I won't forget.

But there was another lesson here, about the value of knowing how to navigate with maps and compass. Navigating with GPS and digital maps can make you complacent and cause you to take less notice of the features you travel through. Which can be a fun challenge, but when the kids are there, the stakes are raised. And if we weren't experienced in navigating and didn't have the maps we would have been really stuffed.

I tracked some of our return route and downloaded the maps later to see where we had been - I'm pretty sure the canyon we were in was Budgary Creek Canyon - formerly known as "buggary creek" just west of River Caves. The map shows the detail and the scrambling around trying to get back to camp.

Our canyon caper was fun, but if you're travelling to Deep Pass with small kids you may want to keep it local. The campground is stunning and there is a loop trail that goes to Nayook Creek and a fun canyon a lot closer to home. If you go in warmer weather there is a swimming hole to cool off.

Water was abundant, but be sure to treat it if you intend to drink it. The campground has toilets, but they were out of action while we

were there - so be prepared with plenty of toilet paper and something to dig a hole with. The ground in the Newnes Plateau is hard, but not as hard as our kids.

For an easier car camping option in the area check out our 2019 [Newnes Campground blog](#). For information on River Caves Canyon check out [Bushwalking NSW](#). And for information about the Aboriginal cultural significance check out [Storylines](#).



Day 2: Kids after hike



Climbing out



Pub feed



Mary and Damian

“

Damian is a Canberra-born bushwalking and mountain sports enthusiast who lives in Sydney. Since 2017 he's been taking his two young daughters out every season on a multi-day adventure and has (so far) managed to nurture their love of the outdoors without crushing their spirits. He writes about the adventures on his blog at randomfootprints.com with the hope of helping other parents find overnight adventures for kids.

The Author wishes to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the traditional custodians of the land featured in this article.

High Cliff

Text and photos
Ian Smith

I parked at the western end of Tractor Beach, South Australia, an occasionally visited stretch of sand on the Westall Way with a small campsite. Wasn't sure where I was going to go from there but I really wanted to get a glimpse of The Dreadnoughts, a significant rock formation off a place called, somewhat imaginatively, High Cliff.



High Cliff - The Dreadnoughts



Bight Lookout flora



Bight Lookout

Never has there been a more appropriate nomenclature. After due consideration and, bearing in mind the almost perfect conditions, I decided to start to walk north-west and see how far I got. I ended up going all the way.

“

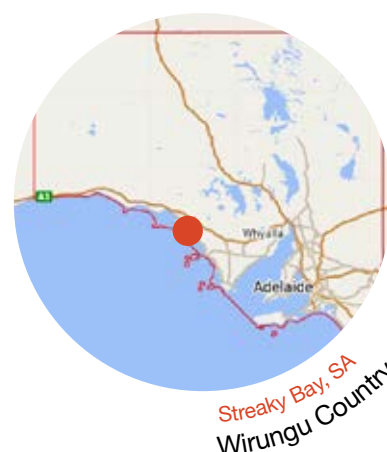
Life was on a knife edge out here but it made for some interesting scenery ...

The dunes atop the headland occasionally sported growth. Larger heath scrub had roots exposed by the weather while flora closer to the ground had flowers that were tiny, almost microscopic. I guess they had to be to survive out here where rain is almost something you only hear about in fairy tales. It is a constant fight for them just to stay alive, as it is for everything else. Also, you couldn't see them, but the lizard, wallaby and a few birds were exposed by their footprints. There was a dog as well that someone had taken for a walk and ripples in the sand. Life was on a knife edge out here but it made for some interesting scenery, if only you kept your eyes open.

Mostly the walk was on reasonably firm ground but, from time to time, soft dunes had to be negotiated and a couple went alarmingly close to the edge so I headed inland for a short distance. Right then I wished I had a tractor.

Because of the Dreadnoughts, the beach below is protected and just a nice little wave rolls in, quite benign compared to what else happens along this coast. A lone fishing boat was obviously finding something just beyond the last island because it stayed there the whole time I did the walk. A lone osprey rose, maybe for the first time on his morning rounds, wings beating due to the lack of air currents; they would come later.

Getting nearer to High Cliff the scene changes significantly. No longer do the rocks look like ships strung out in line astern; now they're all heaped on top of one another and the sound of the sea rises with the soft





High Cliff - The Dreadnoughts

breeze to cleanse the soul. There are a few more solid sand patches here and they look like sculptures but they're no more stable than where I'm about to walk near the edge of the precipice. At this point there's crumbling apparent everywhere, the treacherous sides flaunting their fragility as layer after layer flakes away. Caution is the order of the day as the point narrows alarmingly and I take my last shots before heading back. It's probably about six kilometres return but since I've left

my phone back in the motorhome I'll be told by the monitor later on that I've actually done nothing.

“

... the treacherous sides
flaunting their fragility as
layer after layer flakes away.



High Cliff - The Dreadnoughts

2023 Calendar

The 2023 calendar is a splendid collection of great pictures from the winners of the Bushwalk.com photo competitions. To enjoy

this amazing imagery, order your copy by emailing Eva at eva@wildwalks.com or click **PayPal** to order it straight away.



Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



Check this and
other entries at
[Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com)
Photo competitions



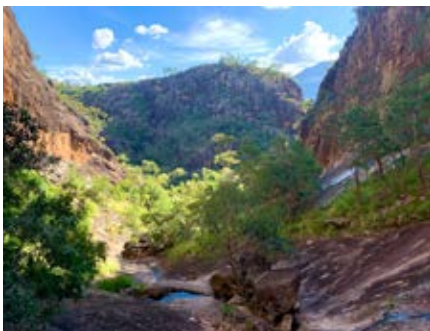
Land of a thousand lakes, Blue Peaks, Tasmania
Peter Grant

Landscapes

December 2021

Winner
Morning mist
Stephen Lake

This is at Ryders Huts on the Bogong High Plains, camped in the trees, away from the clearing with dead trees that looked as if they would fall. The fog and light that morning were pretty. The rest of the trip had ice at night and warm to hot days.



Waa Gorge on a summer day
Osik



Looking down from
Lightning Ridge
North-north-west



Early climb on a hot day
Brian Eglinton

Non-landscapes

December 2021

Winner
Sturt Desert Pea
Brian Eglinton

The Northern Flinders in December is not a good time for hiking. The heat can be a killer, so great care is needed. However, a friend in need and some very good recent rains drew us up north. The weather allowed some good day walks and water was flowing through Mt Chambers Gorge which had been very dry in September. And there were refreshed pools in Arkaroola Sanctuary. In these conditions, the odd Sturt Desert Pea was found in flower in the creek beds.



In your face!
Tom Brennan



Dewdrop
North-north-west



Summer
Tortoise

Tasmania

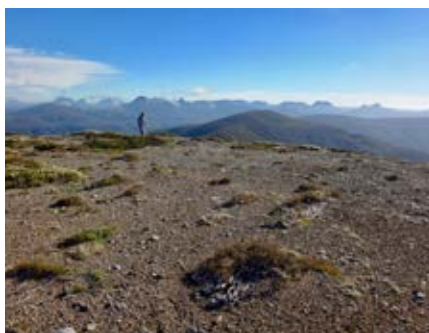
December 2021

Winner
Alpenglow
North-north-west

The Anne circuit is deservedly famous in bushwalking circles. This time I did it the harder way, starting late at Red Tape and camping near Sarah Jane before continuing on to the Lonely Tarns and Lots Wife. The weather gods saved the worst for the last day so I finally got to see some of this terrain.



Long Range
Doogs



Top of the world
Tortoise

Other States

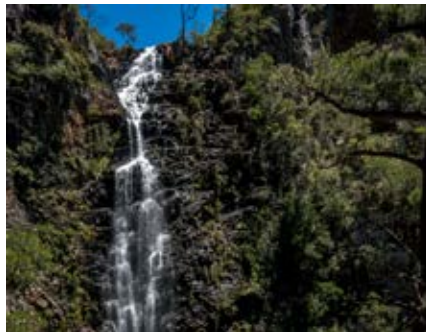
December 2021

Winner
New Year's eve in Kaputar
Osik

Catching the last rays of 2021 looking over a vista with a very Jurassic feel.



Bararranna Gorge
Brian Eglinton



Tinga Falls
Tom Brennan

Landscapes

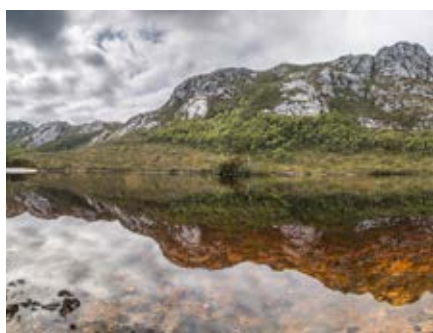
January 2022

Winner

Welcoming in the new year

Osik

What better way to break in 2022 than with an early hike and scramble in the hills.



Perfect place for a rest day
North-north-west



A birds eye view from
Twynam
John Walker



Morning mysteries
Tortoise

Non-landscapes

January 2022

Winner
Red Rumped Parrot
Brian Eglinton

Australia has a great variety of birds. Our parrots have a range of vivid colourings. The male Red Rumped Parrot is a bit tricky at ground level as the red bit can be hidden away. One bird site says, "When perched, the red rump is usually hidden under the folded wings."



The quick way down
North-north-west



Highland yabby
Tortoise



A study in contrasts
John Walker

Tasmania

January 2022

Winner

Sunrise in the South West

North-north-west

The first time into the Spires area I missed out on a number of subsidiary peaks so a return was essential; thus there was another glorious night - and sunrise - at the best campsite ever.



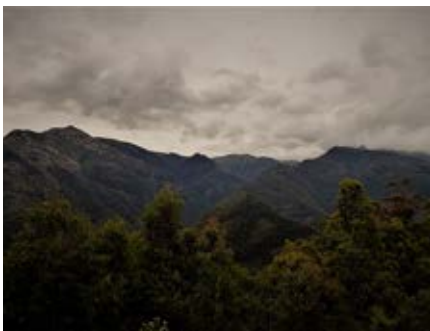
Relief at last
Tortoise

Other States

January 2022

Winner
Yulludunida before the traverse
Osik

After the steep walk to the saddle the classic Stegosaurus profile of Yulludunida in Kaputar National Park lay before us.



The Western Fall
John Walker



Murray
Brian Eglinton

The Adventures of Xing

Text
Tracey Orr

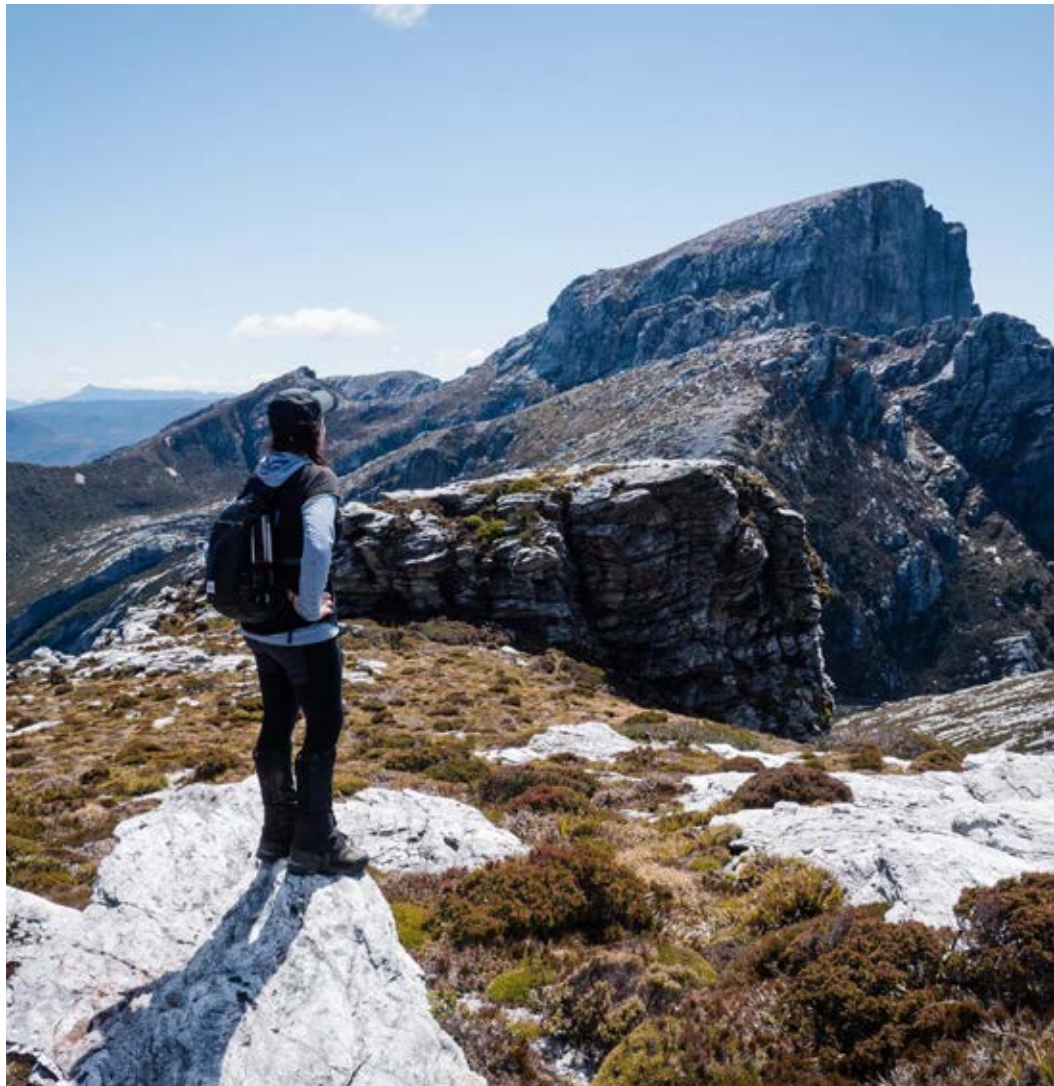
Photos
Ben Wells

It seems like a lifetime ago that I wrote and published my first bushwalking blog.

In reality, it was only a few years back, in 2019. Prior to setting up the Adventures of Xing I had shared brief trip reports with friends and family, and occasionally posted photos and commentary on social media. It quickly became apparent that friends and strangers alike were all hungry for more information on the beautiful places I am lucky enough to be exploring.

Bender and Xing

A great many of my adventures are in the company of my partner Ben. He is the other half of Bender and Xing, and it is his exquisite photos that help bring to life the blog posts I pen.



Tracey looking towards Frenchmans Cap from Clytemnestra



Winter Southern Ranges

We hope with his photos and my words, we can impart just a small sense of the challenges, sweat, tears, wonder and joy on offer in Tasmania's natural backyard.

I am not a writer, nor do I consider myself an accomplished story teller. I am and always will, however, be a person that believes in the sharing the gift of knowledge. It was this passion to share knowledge that was the precursor to Adventures of Xing. Simply put, I want to help others. During the few years I have been bushwalking, a great number of amazing human beings have helped guide my walking experiences with practical and pertinent advice, and I am and will be forever in their debt. Adventures of Xing is my small way of paying it forward.

Inspiration

I want to inspire others to venture out of their comfort zones and find their inner child. As adults, responsibilities often weigh us down and we lose confidence to just get out and seek adventure. Watch a small child in the local park and you will see that to them,

everything is an adventure! The height of the slide, challenging wobbly little legs as they climb the rungs to the top. The whoosh of air rushing past them as they go yet higher on the swing, or the tree they climb that scratches the pads of delicate hands. Every slimy slug is fascinating and wondrous. Colourful flowers inspected, even tasted if given half a chance. There is no comfort zone, rarely fear and always, always curiosity.

Yet as we age, our inner child disappears. We can become overwhelmed by the pressures of life. Cleaning the house becomes more important than "wasting" time on a hobby. Getting ready for work or the kids prepped for school on Monday takes up an entire sunny Sunday. Words like "bills", "responsibility", "adulting" and "busy" replace spontaneity and adventure. Gradually over time, bit by bit, the confidence to put ourselves in situations of discomfort declines. We begin to dwell in the safety of our comfort zones, never really challenging ourselves physically or mentally. It happened to me. I've seen it happen to friends. Life, somehow, just takes over "living".

If writing about my own adventures inspires just one other person to step out of their comfort zone and seek their own adventure, then I consider that a success. Whether that adventure be as simple as joining a local walking club or climbing gym, or as ambitious as putting those long-dreamt plans of a hiking trip along the Overland Track finally into motion.

If Adventures of Xing can help others to recognise that they are able and deserving of visiting Tasmania's wonderful natural places; if it inspires and encourages readers to learn new skills to gain the confidence to once again seek adventure - in whatever form that may take - then my many hours of writing have been worthwhile.

Hopefully the next time that voice in your head tells you that you are too busy, too old, not fit enough or a plethora of other negative

nancy thoughts, you can overrule it with "I deserve to have an adventure!" My favourite saying is "Whatever you do today, do it with the confidence of a four year old, wearing a Batman suit". So put on your metaphorical superhero suit-of-choice and get out there!

Beginning the journey

You don't need to jump straight into a winter ascent of Cradle Mountain. My own journey started literally with short strolls around our local parklands, which then progressed to short day walks on formal tracks in national parks and conservation areas. From there, I really became well and truly afflicted with the bushwalking bug!

I took myself off to the Blue Mountains to do a navigational course with [MountainSphere Adventures and Education](#) as I believe every bushwalker should be proficient with a compass and map. I then joined a



Sitting atop Mount Oakleigh looking towards Mount Pelion West

bushwalking club so I could build my skills further and dip my still new and inexperienced toes in ever more challenging walks in a safe and supported environment.

Regular trips most weekends meant my abilities and confidence grew quickly, with each new trip building on the experiences of the last. This inspired me to be a little more ambitious for the next adventure, to push further beyond my comfort zone.

Higher, further, longer

As my adventures have become more ambitious and complex, so too has the interest from other people for helpful information regarding access, route planning, walking conditions and other logistical challenges. I always try to publish trip reports that are genuinely helpful, but am also mindful to the safety and environmental concerns surrounding our delicate wilderness areas. It's not always an easy balance to strike. By being completely honest with challenges endured to impart a true sense of the adventure, I hope those readers keen to replicate the trip will be honest with their own abilities and the risks involved. By discussing environmental issues and reinforcing strong Leave No Trace practices at every opportunity, I hope those who follow in my footsteps will tread as softly and with the same respect.

Over time the blog has grown beyond trip reports to also include sections on food, planning, gear, packing and other practical information. After all, knowing how to make a tasty post-walk recovery shake, or practical considerations for hiking as a solo female,

are no less relevant than reading about me dreaming of riding a giant wombat - Never Ending Story-style - down the Arm River Track after climbing Mount Proteus!

While I am currently predominately enjoying climbing Tasmania's 158 Abels and many of my trip reports surround that topic my list of places to see keeps growing and so too no doubt will [Adventures of Xing](#).

Rewards

One of the greatest rewards I get is when someone contacts me to say Adventures of Xing had an impact on their life. It might be that often they are thanking me for sharing up to date information on particular tracks or other helpful practical information. But perhaps the most rewarding times are when I hear from readers that they have lived a place vicariously through my blog. For whatever reason some people no matter how much they wish they could will never be able to physically make the journey. What an honour it is to take their minds and eyes there through mine.

Blogs really are quite personal. They are a mirror into the writers experience and as my life changes so too will the blog posts and the direction of Adventures of Xing. Maybe one day my children and grandchildren will look back on the blog and read of the wondrous adventures that I had. When I can no longer adventure in the same capacity I do right now perhaps they might inspire me to find my inner child again. It is a lovely thought that perhaps someone reading this article has also just been inspired to get adventuring.



Tracey lives in Launceston, Tasmania. When not climbing mountains with her partner Ben, she enjoys vegan cooking and pampering her seven, very spoiled cats. You can follow her at Adventures of Xing ([website](#), [Instagram](#)) and on [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#) at Bender & Xing.

Videos



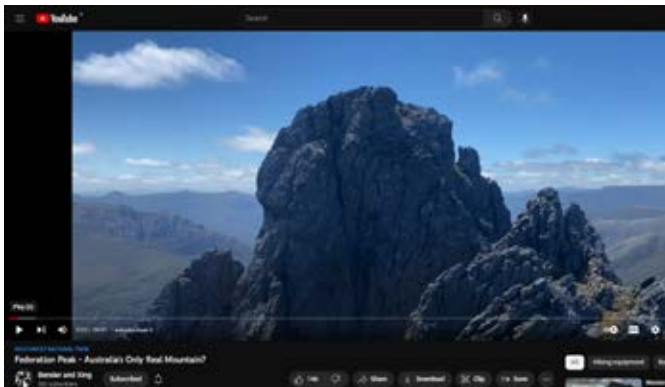
Mount Kosciuszko Snow Shoe Camp by Lotsafreshair

A three day trip, in the backcountry of the Australian Alps, along the Main Range, in late June.



Heysen Trailer by Danielle Dutschke

Danielle walked the Heysen Trail end to end, and she shares the whole journey with you.



Federation Peak by Bender and Xing

Bender and Xing join the folks from Pandani Walking Club for a six-day, five-night south-west wilderness adventure to climb *that* mountain - Tasmania's formidable Federation Peak (1225m).



How trail designers build good hikes

The design secrets that make hiking trails feel “organic”. Watch the video to hear trail ecologist Jeffery Marion explain how these principles work, and why they’re more important now than ever.

Just Published

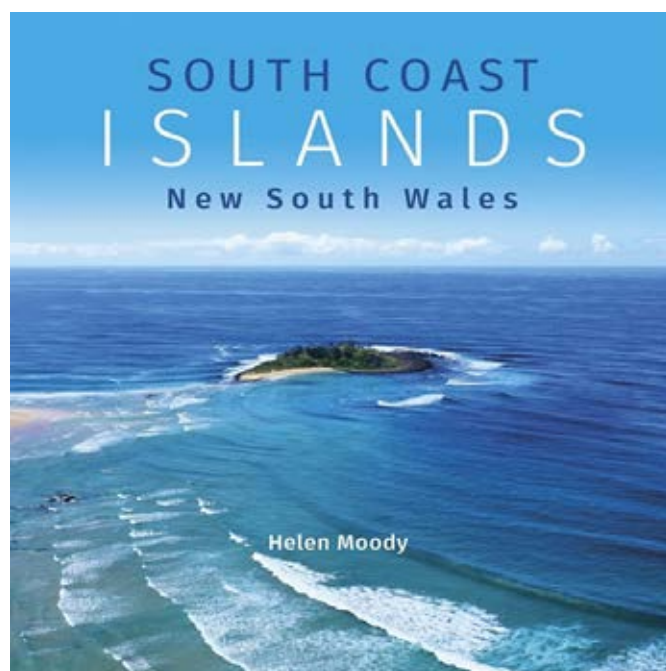
Wild Light, new Tasmanian photo book by Grant Dixon

Grant's new book, Wild Light, features both grand vistas and intimate details of the wild Tasmanian landscape, including its rocky basement, cloak of vegetation and rugged mountains, and also features Tasmania's subantarctic outpost, Macquarie Island. The book is available from November 2022. You can order your copy at grantdixonphotography.com.au/book/WildLight.php



South Coast Islands by Hellen Moody

The book is more than a travel guide. It tells of Aboriginal connections to the islands, the history of south coast exploration, and the arrival of settlers and convicts. It covers the geology, flora, lighthouses, shipwrecks, bird life and environmental values of the islands. With over 200 photographs, and maps and descriptions of how to visit every island, whether on foot or by boat, it will be a substantial, colourful book. The sale price will be \$50. Email southcoastislandsbook@gmail.com with your name and contact details to reserve a copy. You will be helping them gauge interest, be assured of a copy, and receive an invitation to a launch event.



Southern conifers

Text
Gregory Moore

When you think of “conifers”, tall, conical shaped trees often found in public parks or front yards may spring to mind. But these impressive trees are far more fascinating than you may have realised, as they represent just one piece of an unsolved botanical puzzle.



Monkey Puzzle tree, *Araucaria Araucana*,
NasserHalaweh
Wikimedia Commons, [CC-BY-SA-4.0](#)



Spruce cones

These popular garden trees are from the northern hemisphere. But we also have conifers in the southern hemisphere, called “southern conifers”, found largely in Australia, South America, New Zealand and New Caledonia.

A little detective work reveals that southern conifers [evolved in Gondwana](#), and long ago separated from coniferous relatives in the northern hemisphere.

They appeared around 200 million years ago, before the first flowering plants evolved, sharing land with the dinosaurs. One example is the Wollemi pine, which was famously saved in a [secret firefighting operation](#) during the 2019-2020 bushfires.

Unlike the introduced conifer garden trees, southern conifers are neither as well-known nor as popular with Australians as they should be. So let me help you get to know them a little better.

Famous "living fossils"

Northern conifers are mostly evergreen, woody trees with needle-like leaves, while southern conifers tend to have broad leaves like flowering trees.

Trees in the genus *Araucaria*, including the monkey puzzle, bunya bunya, hoop pine and Norfolk Island pine, are southern conifers. As are most members of the Podocarp family (Huon pine, celery top pine and plum pine) and 22 species of *Agathis* (including the majestic Queensland and New Zealand Kauri trees).

“

Trees in the genus *Araucaria*, including the monkey puzzle, bunya bunya, hoop pine and Norfolk Island pine, are southern conifers.

Southern conifers often possess cones, such as the *Araucaria* and *Agathis* species. Sometimes, these cones are very large and heavy that can cause serious injury if they fall from high in the tree onto an unsuspecting passerby.

Some southern conifers can be over 30 metres high. Others, such as the Kauri and Huon pine, are renowned for [their longevity](#). They can live for centuries or, for the Huon pine, perhaps over an astonishing [ten millennia](#).

While all species of southern conifers are of ancient origin, the [Wollemi pine](#) is famous for its status as a “living fossil”. Of course, this is a contradiction in terms – a fossil is any evidence of past life.

But in this context, the term refers to organisms that appeared in the fossil record long ago, were then thought to be extinct, before a living version was discovered. We are curious as to how they successfully hid for so long and may imagine a link with a distant, different past.

So, the question botanists have yet to answer is: how distant are the north and south relatives?

“

... the [Wollemi pine](#) is famous for its status as a “living fossil”.

When flowering plants evolved

Many southern conifers show little resemblance to the “true conifers” of the northern hemisphere, such as pine, cedar, spruce and juniper.

All conifers are gymnosperms, which means they have naked seeds and cones. They evolved from an ancient group of seed ferns, before the fragmentation of the super continent Pangaea.

These seed ferns were a diverse group. As Pangaea divided into Gondwana in the south and Laurasia in the north, the seed ferns began to diversify, giving rise to northern and southern seed ferns.



Wollemi Pine
KathFlynn
Wikimedia Commons, [CC-BY-SA-4.0](#)

Botanists have long known that northern conifers and other gymnosperms **evolved** from these northern seed ferns. But what of the southern seed ferns? They remained a bit of a mystery until the 1970s.

One group of southern seed ferns constituted what's **now called** the *Glossopteris flora*, which was of Gondwanan origin. From this diverse group of *Glossopterids*, flowering plants in all their variety evolved.

This solved one of the great riddles of botany – the origin of the flowering plants which had puzzled scientists, particularly in the northern hemisphere until the early 1980s.

It's likely southern conifers also evolved from these southern seed ferns. Some may have arisen from other members of the *Glossopteris* group, too, or perhaps their relatives.

If this was the case, then the southern conifers would be more closely related to flowering plants than to the true conifers of the north.

When the trees were in fashion

After millions of years of evolution, southern conifers became fashionable with gardeners **in the 1800s**.

Their novelty and striking form captured the interest of the educated and wealthy landowners of Europe and they were planted as status symbols on estates and in public gardens.

In Australia they were planted in large private gardens and in many public parks from the mid 1800s to World War 1, after which their popularity waned.

You can see many of these fine trees growing still in large gardens and public parks across

Australia, such as botanic gardens in most Australian states, as well as in smaller public parks and gardens of older suburbs and inland towns. Their striking, almost geometrical, form catches the eye.

Southern conifers are known for their resilience, are rarely affected by pests or disease and, despite their large size, cause few problems with paths, roads, buildings and other urban infrastructure. Probably because they were given plenty of space to grow when first planted.



This solved one of the great riddles of botany – the origin of the flowering plants which had puzzled scientists ... until the early 1980s.

We still have much to learn

It takes time to solve some of these botanical puzzles. Evolution is a sophisticated process that has led to very complex relationships between plant groups.

In future we may well recognise that southern conifers are not really conifers at all. Perhaps, the links between the two groups go so far back in time, the relationship is too distant for both southern and true conifers to be called conifers at all.

In any case, these mysterious trees have persisted through **vast periods of time** and changing environments – they have much to teach us about plant responses to climate change.

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This article first appeared in *The Conversation* on 10 August 2020.

Cookie day

Text and photos
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Did you know that homemade Cookie day is on 1 October and then on 4 December there is an International Cookie day? If there was ever an excuse to get out the chocolate chips, vanilla, sprinkles, M&M's, nuts, dried fruit, peanut butter, cinnamon, ginger, lemon, oats and any other ingredient you want to add to the cookies, this is it. Or, you may just be asking, what is homemade Cookie day and International Cookie day?





Shelf life at home - not long at all

Firstly though, a cookie is defined as a flour based sweet cake that can be held in your hand. The cookie has a long history and can be traced back to the seventh century AD in Persia. By the fourteenth century they were found in Europe and eventually America caught on, then slowly the rest of the world. International Cookie day has been around since 1853, born in America, and homemade Cookie day started in 1987 in San Francisco. It seems we are missing out here in Australia ...

The one thing I just love about cookies is that there is no end to what you can do. According to [A Brief History of the Cookie - DoDo Cookie Dough & Ice Cream](#) the most popular type of cookie in no particular order is Animal crackers, originally from England. They are called Animal due to the shape of the biscuit, cut with animal shapes. Animal cookies varied with different recipes. Then there are the iconic Australian Anzac Biscuits made with oats for the Australian army.

Biscotti comes next, meaning twice cooked, Italian known, however the Dutch and German have their claim to fame with a twice cooked biscuit.

Probably by far the most popular is the chocolate chip cookie which was accidentally invented in 1937. Ruth Wakefield wanted to bake butter cookies but ran out of baker's chocolate and added chopped bits of chocolate bars she found in her pantry. To her surprise the chocolate did not melt through the dough and they became a world-wide hit - the world has never been the same since then. In 1997 this cookie became the official cookie of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Also, let's not forget about the Fig Newton, which is a fig roll, then there is Ladyfinger or Sugar cookies, oh and there is also the infamous Oreo which was invented in 1912. There are so many varieties of cookies and there is so much to know and learn about them too.

By the way, have you ever wanted to know what kind of cookie you are? Well if so you can take a test at [National Cookie Day](#). Yes, this is a somewhat true and interesting test to take, go on give it a go.

To no surprise I am a Chocolate Chip Cookie and this is what the quiz said about me. "You're a chocolate chip cookie! You've likely got a large group of friends, and you've probably even baked cookies with a few of them. Your friends can count on you to always have the most-stocked pantry, and you never let them down."

Sounds about right to me but I wonder how many other people will take the test and end up being a chocolate chip cookie ...

So, here are a few short facts about the cookie according to [National Homemade Cookies Day 2022](#).

- A homemade biscuit can last up to a week at room temperature, good for a short multi-day hike I say.
- An average person consumes almost 19,000 cookies in a lifetime. Wow, that is a lot of cookies.
- Cookies are one of the easier desserts to cook. Let's get baking.
- The biggest cookie was baked in 2003, and it was said that it was 102 feet wide and weighed over 40,000 pounds! That is 31 metres wide and just over 18 tonnes. Wow, what a big cookie that is.



One last thing. Who remembers Sid the Muppet, the Cookie Monster? Well, he was born on 2 November 1966 and became famous on Sesame Street in 1969 for his voracious appetite for cookies. His favourite biscuit is the original simple Cookie Dough with chocolate chips. This is a recipe for you to bake at home and share with friends on your next hike. You're welcome!

Cookie Dough

Ingredients

Unsalted butter or margarine, softened	¾ cup
Sugar	1 cup
Eggs	2
Vanilla	1 teaspoon
Plain flour	2½ cups
Baking powder	1 teaspoon
Salt	1 teaspoon
Chocolate chips	1 cup

Method

Put ¾ cup of butter or margarine into your mixing bowl. Measure 1 cup of sugar. Pour sugar over butter. With a fork, squash the butter and sugar together until they are blended. Crack open the two eggs, slightly beat them and then pour the eggs over the mixture in the bowl. Measure 1 teaspoon vanilla and pour over the mixture. With a fork, blend everything in the bowl together. Measure 2½ cups plain flour and pour over the mixture in the bowl. Measure 1 teaspoon of baking powder and sprinkle over the flour. Measure 1 teaspoon of salt and sprinkle over the flour and teaspoon of baking powder. Mix everything together either with the fork or with your hands. Add the chocolate chips add now and gently mix through. Rest the dough at least one hour in the fridge. Sprinkle the counter with flour and place the chilled dough on top. Roll dough into a 7 mm thick sheet. Use your favourite cookie cutters to cut out shapes. Place on ungreased baking paper, sprinkle with sugar, and bake at 180 degrees for 10-15 minutes. Enjoy cookies.

In the News

Eastern and Western Arthurs and Huon Track have reopened

The tracks that were closed since 2018-19 bushfires. Now that more than 40 kilometres of [tracks have been rebuilt](#), they're open for walking again.

Walker registration encouraged for some Tasmanian overnight walks

The Parks and Wildlife Service is encouraging bushwalkers to [register](#) for overnight walks in some of Tasmania's most remote and pristine locations.

PLA 2022 National Park of the Year award
[Wilson Botanic Park](#) in the City of Casey won [this year's award](#) after they revitalised the 39 hectares of park.

Tasmanian Iconic Walks fundraising hike
[Join a good cause](#) and tackle Mount Field on 1 April 2023.

The Victorian logging regulator failing to use powers

A report by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office says that Victoria's logging regulator is failing to fully use its powers, and cannot assure the public it is effectively reducing the risk of illegal logging. Victoria's state-owned logging company VicForests has been the subject of multiple allegations of illegal logging.

Mount Beauty-Falls Creek road blocked

A landslide near Bogong Village has blocked the Falls Creek road, and it will take [at least three months](#) before it is cleared. There's another report on the [Falls Creek website](#).

Old growth forests are still being logged

The claim that 90,000 hectares of old growth had been protected from logging did not match the reality and zones designated as old growth on the map the government released [continue to be logged](#).

Land bordering endangered wallaby's habitat cleared

A "loophole" allowing a mining company to clear land bordering a reserve protecting an endangered native wallaby has been [condemned by conservationists](#).

Yarra Ranges National Park mountain bike tracks rejected

Victoria's planning minister has [rejected the largest sections](#) of the proposed "Warburton Mountain Bike Destination", labelling them "unacceptable" for construction in the Yarra Ranges National Park.

Jatbula Trail

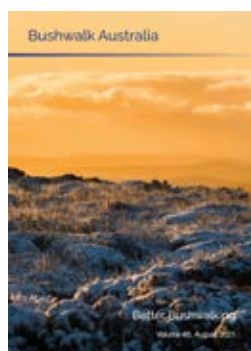
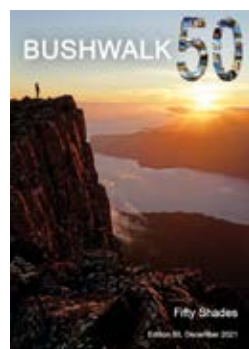
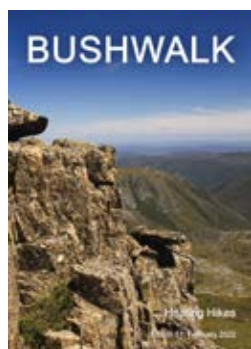
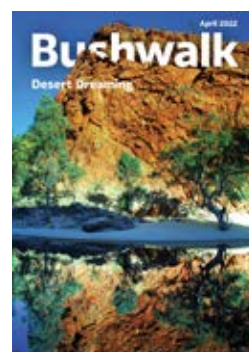
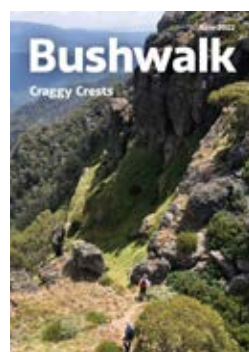
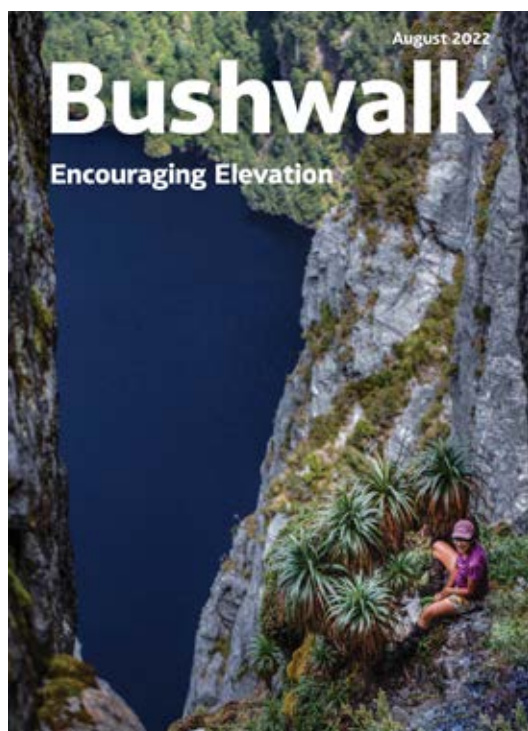
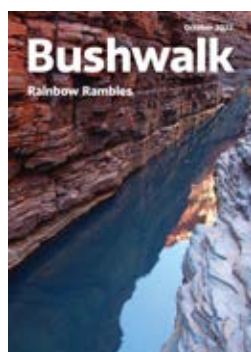
The 2023 walking season (1 July to 30 September) will open for [bookings](#) at 9 am on 6 February 2023.

Heysen Trail

Part of the Heysen Trail north of Wirrabara was closed due to fire restrictions on 1 November 2022. The rest of the trail will close at the start of the Fire Danger Season. Check [other closures](#) along the walk.

Take a walk outdoors day

[Take a walk outdoors day](#) on 20 January 2023 is a good reason to go out and catch some fresh air.



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[back catalog](#)

