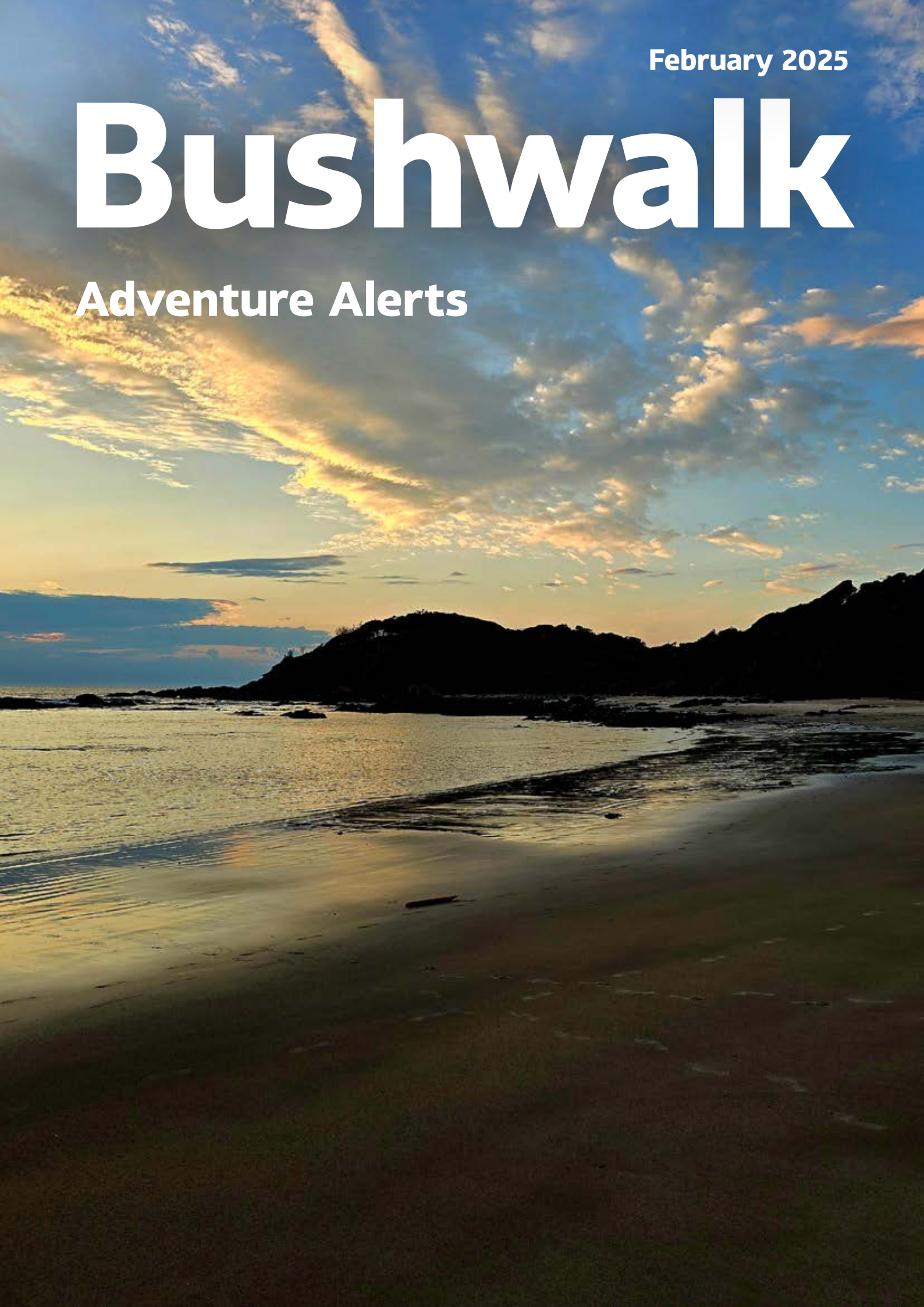


February 2025

Bushwalk

Adventure Alerts



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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 all,

I hope this edition finds you well.

This issue takes us on a diverse range of adventures, from sweeping coastlines to classic Aussie bush tracks. John Walker celebrates an important win for bushwalkers with a scenic traverse from Warrimoo to Blaxland via Green Point Lookout. Greg Keaney continues guiding us on the Dreamtime to Eden journey, tackling the stunning stretch from Port Macquarie to Forster. Ian Smith explores Gibraltar Peak in Tidbinbilla, ACT, offering breathtaking views and wildlife encounters along the way.

Our photo gallery captures the beauty of the natural world, while Sonya Muhlsimmer shares some useful insights in her Muesli Bar Bonanza to help fuel your next adventure. We also take a look at how high-tech drones may soon be fighting bushfires, offering a fascinating glimpse into the future of fire management.

As always, if you have a story to share, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to Eva with your articles, photos, or ideas for a future edition.

Happy walking and reading!

Matt :)

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)
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Cover image
Shelly Beach
by Greg Keaney

Bushwalk Magazine
Edition 69
February 2025
An electronic magazine for
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 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.

Green Point Lookout

Text and photos
John Walker

At the end of June 2024 I decided to take a celebratory walk.



Looking west from Green Point Lookout along the valley of Glenbrook Creek



Early views over the Glenbrook Creek valley from the private section of Greens Rd trail

I did a through walk from Warrimoo to Blaxland via the informal Green Point Lookout, celebrating our continued bushwalking access from Greens Road, Warrimoo (Lower Blue Mountains). Continued access was made possible, at least in part, by members of the Bushwalk.com forums petitioning for it via public submissions, including me. Discussion about this eventual small win can be found on [the forum](#).

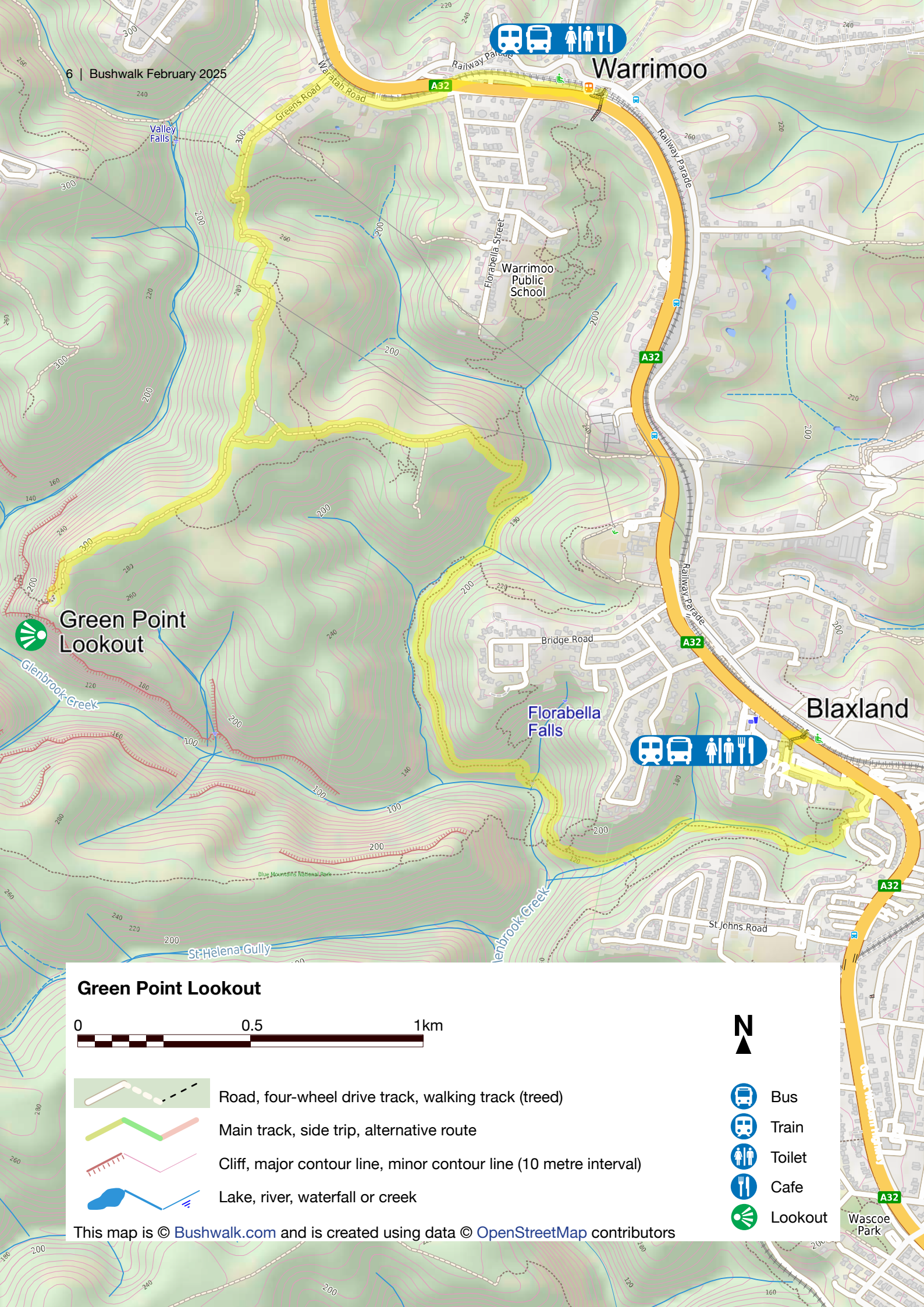
I think this is an important win because there now seems to be a push by all incumbent governments to make money out of selling off parcels of crown land that have often been used for public recreation and wellbeing for a very long time, in particular by local residents and bushwalkers. These locations are often important to local indigenous communities and I wish to acknowledge the Dharug and Gundungurra peoples as the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains area. It seems elitist to ignore these things and sell these places off for exclusive private use, denying historic access to all others. The Greens Road precinct is on the fringe of the Blue Labyrinth, a very large tract of often wild and remote bushland that covers much of the

southern part of the Blue Mountains National Park. The area protects a wide range of flora and fauna, many indigenous rock art sites, and contains many established, long standing walking tracks.

“

These locations are often important to local indigenous communities and I wish to acknowledge the Dharug and Gundungurra peoples as the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains area.

Now to the celebration. I could have done a simple out and back walk similar to my last visit to this location, but I decided that a more interesting trip would be to attempt this extended traverse between Warrimoo and Blaxland railway stations. My goal was to find a linking route between the Greens Road area and the historic Florabella Pass. It ended up being fairly straightforward and I had really nice weather to enjoy it.



Green Point Lookout

0 0.5 1km



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



Main track, side trip, alternative route



Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (10 metre interval)



Lake, river, waterfall or creek

This map is © [Bushwalk.com](https://bushwalk.com) and is created using data © [OpenStreetMap](https://openstreetmap.org) contributors



Bus



Train



Toilet



Cafe



Lookout

Wascoe Park

After a relaxing train trip, arriving at Warrimoo I quickly got the urban street walking to Greens Road out of the way. The first locked gate is still there, protecting the contentious section of (former) crown road. There was no evidence that this tract of land is now privately owned. I thank the new owner for leaving things as they were and hope that the bushland remains unspoiled. A short stroll of a few hundred metres brought me to an informal lookout of sorts and some early views over the valley of Glenbrook Creek.



Interesting artefact on Greens Road trail



Greens Road trail access gate with the still walkable but now privately owned section behind

After a quick bit of downhill walking I arrived at the Blue Mountains National Park locked gate. I'm pleased to note that the padlock is still intact, and there was no evidence of any vandalism since I was last there. After finding a way around the locked gate, there was some further down and up under some power lines. These will figure in my navigation for the latter part of the walk. After a while I came to a decision point at a fork in the trail. The branch on the right goes to Green Point Lookout, which is what I wanted to visit initially. I'll be taking the other branch on the return trip in order to find the link to the Florabella Pass.

“

I thank the new owner for leaving things as they were and hope that the bushland remains unspoiled.



NPWS boundary gate on Greens Rd trail



Decision time on Greens Rd trail RH branch to Green Point LO LH branch to Florabella Pass link

From the fork it was easy walking to the end of the Greens Road trail, eventually arriving at a rock platform with reasonable views. To get the most panoramic views though you need to find and tackle an easy scramble down from the rock platform and join an informal pad that goes up to Green Point Lookout proper. The pad is a little vague in places but it's very easy to see where you need to go. I note that the lookout is not signposted but you will know when you've arrived. From the lookout the views are at their most expansive. There is an option to go a bit further on, but I left that for another visit. Zooming in across the valley I could just make out the white cross on Psalm Rock at Lost World Lookout, a spot I've visited several times via first descending into Glenbrook Creek at a different location.

“

I note that the lookout is not signposted but you will know when you've arrived.

After having lunch at the lookout I backtracked to where the Greens Rd trail splits and followed the other branch to its end under a large power line tower. Sussing around I rediscovered the informal pad that



I needed to scramble down to the lookout pad



Looking across the valley to Psalm Rock



Arrival at Green Point Lookout

I had seen on my previous visit, which my mapping app indicated could get me to the Florabella Pass. After a short distance the pad splits into two options. I tried both for a short distance but the right hand branch seemed less precipitous, so I opted for that. At the time I was still working on getting my total knee replacement to full strength at about 8 months post surgery, so wanted to protect my investment. I'm happy to report that my knee is almost 100% functional now, with very few issues. After a short and fairly steep descent I was a little surprised to arrive very quickly at the Florabella Pass. I had walked the pass a number of times previously, although not since before Covid.

The vegetation changed considerably

“

I had to substitute hanging on to plants, tree roots, rocks and so on, with a bum slide or two.

as I descended further into this deeper section of the pass, generally heading in an easterly direction. It is very green and pretty, rainforesty, with the occasional shelter cave and creek crossing, old cut stone steps, many



Start of the linking route to the Florabella Pass



Arrival at the Florabella Pass



Descending a wetter part of the Florabella Pass



Shelter cave on the Florabella Pass

now falling into disrepair. There was still a fair bit of walking to be done from there to get to my end point at Blaxland Railway Station, with a number of short but steep ups and downs. My route also traversed several now-very-eroded sections of the pass on the drier side of the valley, courtesy of fairly recent extreme weather events. I encountered at least one roped off side track leading down into Glenbrook Creek, with a closure sign warning of extreme danger. Eventually I came to the junction with the quite short Pippa's Pass, which I followed to its end behind the Blaxland library, then a brief walk to the railway station for the trip home. A successful day out and a reminder that it was worth the effort to seek preservation of access to this lovely area on the fringe of the Blue Labyrinth.



Pond on Pippas Pass



Creek crossing on the Florabella Pass



Upcoming Events & News

Mount Bogong Conquestathon

1 March 2025, Tawonga, VIC

Walk or run up the highest mountain in Victoria on this [ultimate challenge](#).

Great Aussie Hike

2-3 March 2025, Daylesford, VIC

Either walk the track in Daylesford or share you distance from elsewhere, either way, [join in](#) on one of the challenges.

Great Illawarra Walk

8 March 2025, Shellharbour, NSW

This fund raising event will take you on a 40km journey from [Shellharbour to Austinmer](#).

Into the wild - bushwalking & navigation skills

16, 17 March 2025, Kunghur, NSW

Learn about the essential skills you need in the outdoors on this [2-day course](#).

Aussie Peace Walk

29-30 March 2025, Canberra, ACT

Australia's [premier international walking festival](#) where you can choose from a range of walk between 7 and 42km.

Coastrek

4 April 2025, Sydney, NSW

Gather a team and join the 20 – 50km walk from [Bondi Beach to Coogee](#).

Surf Coast Trek

5 April 2025, Surf Coast VIC

Walk along the coast with stunning ocean views on this [fundraising event](#).

WalkFest

6 April 2025, Belair NP, SA

Discover walking opportunities in SA at [this day event](#) with SA bushwalking clubs.

Great Ocean Walk

10-13 April 2025, VIC

Support WWF conservation efforts by challenging yourself on this [4-day event](#).

Western Chances Three Peaks Trek

10-13 April 2025, Mount Buller, VIC

Summit Victoria's three most famous peaks (Mt Timbertop, Mt Stirling and Mt Buller) on this [3-day event](#).



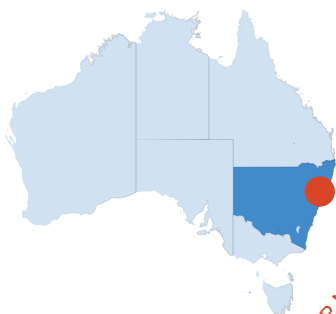
Port Macquarie to Forster Coast Walk

Text and photos
Greg Keaney

*You either live under a rock
or you walk in the sunshine.
That's pretty much how it
goes.*

Sixto Rodriguez

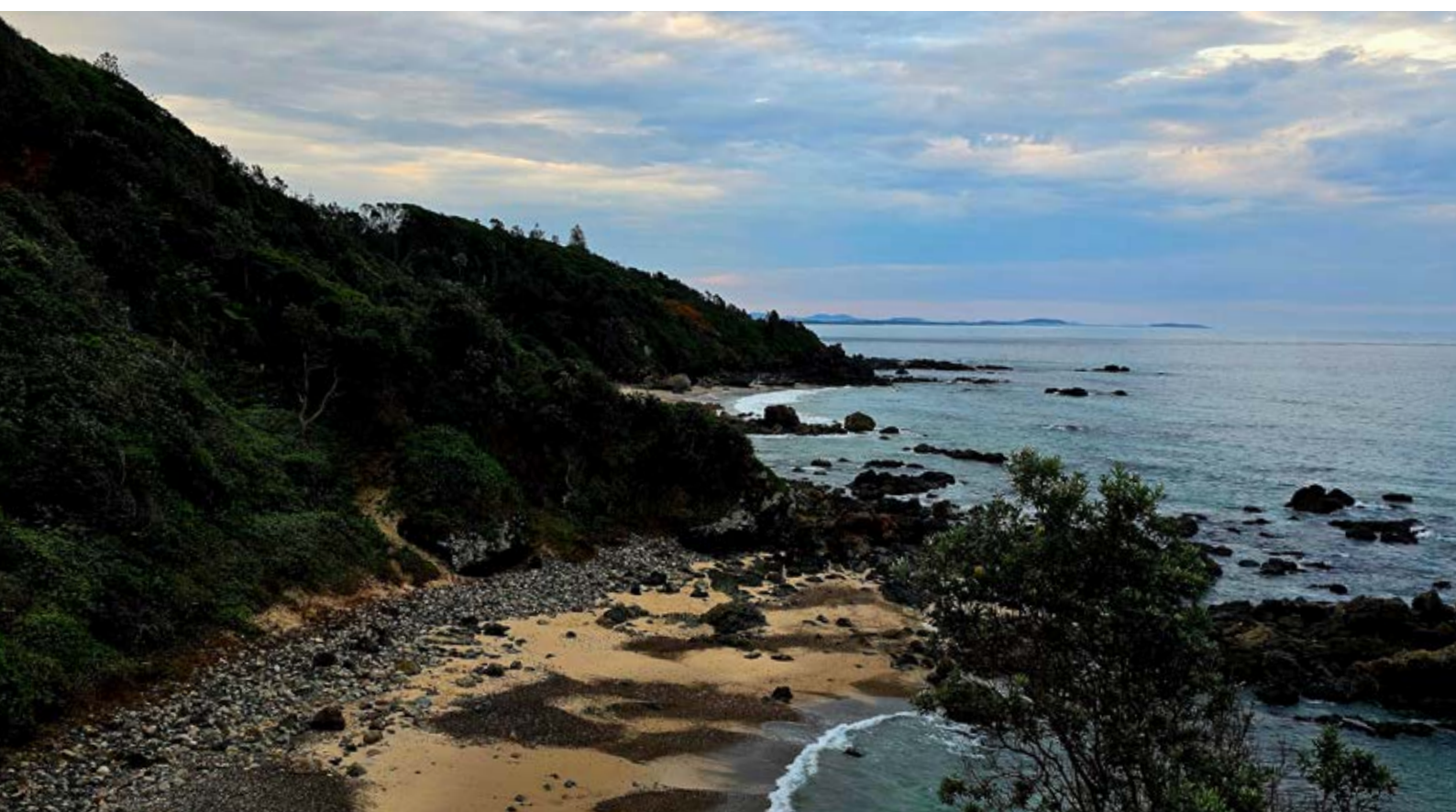
Greg is walking from
'Dreamtime to Eden' along
the length of the NSW coast.
Recent articles in Bushwalk
magazine have detailed the
first four sections of his walk
(see [June 2024](#), [August 2024](#),
[October 2024](#) and [December
2024](#) editions).



See Acres NP, Crowdy Bay NP- NSW
Birpai, Taree/Purfleet Country



Day 1: Rocky Beach



Day 1: Rocky Beach

In this article Greg recounts the 5th stage of the coast walk; 5 days and 97 kms from Port Macquarie to Forster-Tuncurry.

Introduction

5 days - 97kms

I'm doing a 'thousand mile, thousand beaches' NSW coastal 'Camino', aiming to walk every beach and every headland of this magnificent coast. I do the walk in stages and this article recounts Stage 5 from Port Macquarie on the Hastings, to the twin towns of Forster-Tuncurry on the Coolongolook River. The stage took me 5 days of moderate walking, although most of the first day was spent getting from Sydney to Port Macquarie and then exploring its many fascinating beaches.



The stage took me 5 days of moderate walking, although most of the first day was spent getting from Sydney to Port Macquarie and then exploring its many fascinating beaches.

With fair weather and a calm ocean forecast, and some of the best bits of walking and most spectacular scenery on the NSW coast ahead, I was excited 'much' to get back out there.

Day 1: Port Macquarie

8km, 2 hours

I caught an early XPT 'country' train from Sydney Central station. One of the many side benefits of this coastal experience has been becoming familiar with regional NSW public transport - for all our whinging it's actually pretty good, at least for a leisure traveller with a bit of time on their hands, and incredible value by first world standards (even more so with a 'seniors' discount).

It's a superb train ride north across the Hawkesbury River and especially the long stretch on the water adjacent to Mullet Creek and Brisbane Waters. After leaving Newcastle it's then a delightful ride through the picturesque countryside and intriguing but somehow semi-forgotten towns in the Hunter, Manning and Hastings valleys along with gorgeous views to the mountain ranges. I alighted in the timber town of Wauchope,

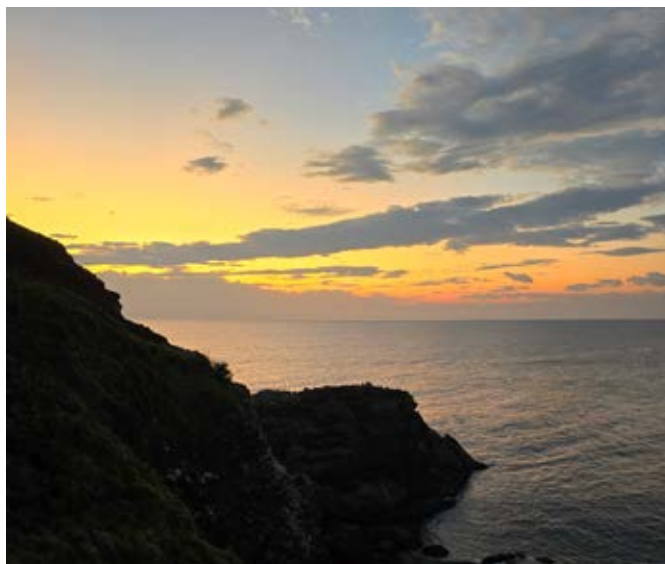
where I was met by my brother who was in Port for a conference. After a short diversion to the quaint hill town of Comboyne, we headed down to Port Macquarie, where Stage 4 of the walk had ended and Stage 5 would begin.

I was staying at Flynn's Beach, so I headed north from there, along the Port Macquarie Coastal Track, back into the heart of the town. From Flynn's and Nobby Beaches it was over the headland to Rocky Beach, with its rare blueschist and eclogite and then to Oxley Beach. Igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks all visible in one place thanks to the magic of plate tectonics. A great little warm up for the enticing four full days of walking ahead.

Day 2: Port Macquarie to Rainbow Beach 26km, 8 hours

Started today from Flynn's Beach, just south of the township of Port Macquarie and loved the southern part of the outstanding Port Macquarie Coastal Track. It's all jaw dropping, with the Sea Acres rainforest section and Tacking Point as particular highlights.

Enjoyed some sunrise magnificence at Henry Gardiner Monument (he drowned in 1874 trying to save the life of his friend - onya mate) and Burley Point. Then Shelly Beach followed by the outstanding Miners Beach track and



Day 2: Nobby Head sunrise



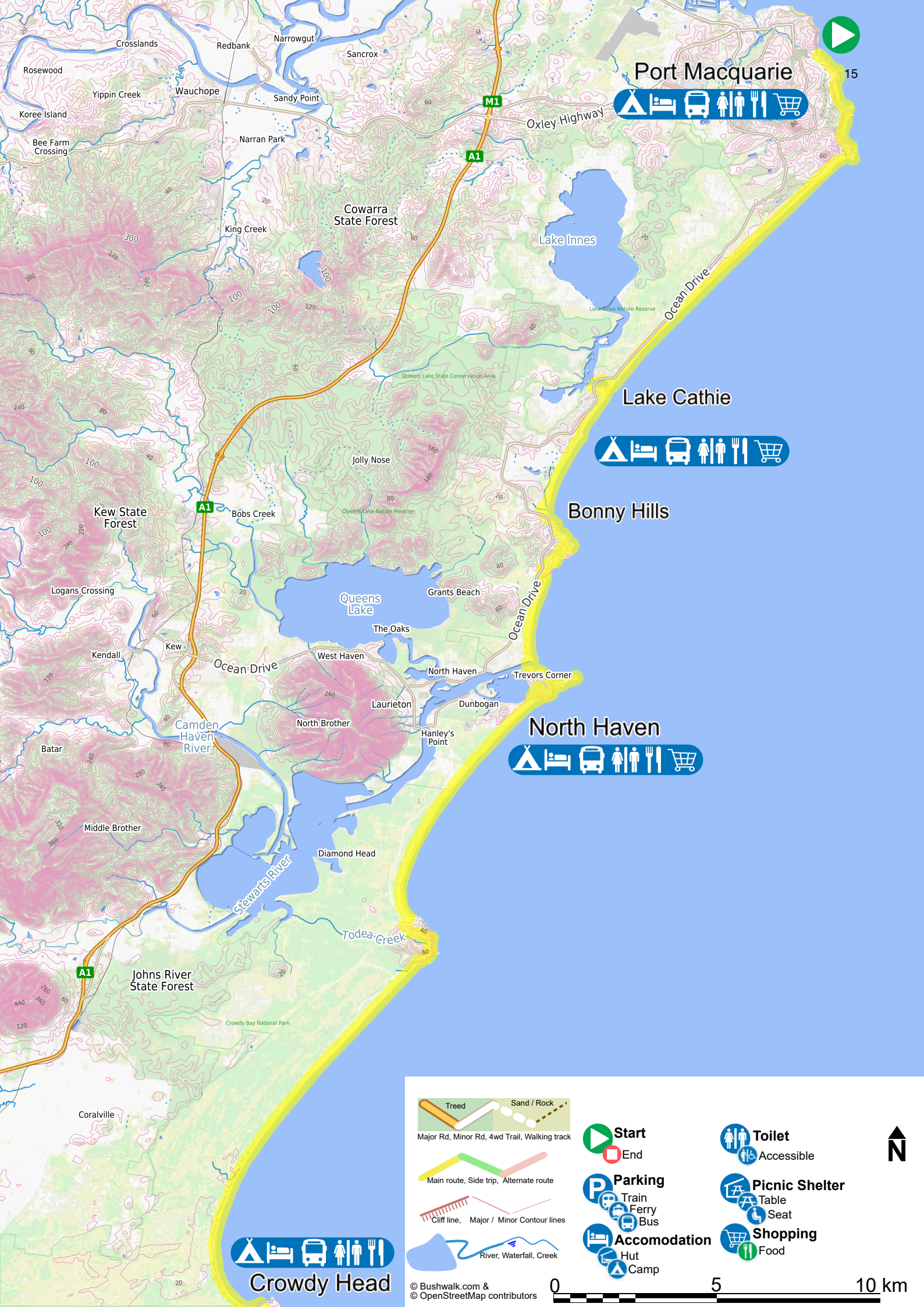
Day 2: Burley Point



Day 2: Early morning light at Shelly Beach



Day 2: The unnamed beaches are often the best! (Rock Pool Track between Shelly and Miners Beaches)



Port Macquarie



Lake Cathie



Bonny Hills

North Haven



Crowdy Head



Parking



Accommodation



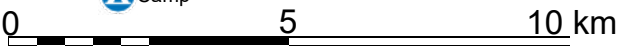
Picnic Shelter



Shopping



© Bushwalk.com &
© OpenStreetMap contributors



lookout on the coastal edge of the magnificent Sea Acres rainforest reserve, followed by the nicely named Chillers Bay.

Had to scramble down to Little Bay, as the track is currently being repaired, but once complete the track from there up to Tacking Point will be another winner. It was a little road detour to wonderful Tacking Point and its cute lighthouse and then 'beachfall' on the lovely long stretch of sand that is Lighthouse Beach. Lighthouse was at its absolute best that day in the late winter sunlight and my heart was full. 'Put me on a long beach, at a perfect low tide, and walk it to the limit, one more time' as the Eagles should have sung!

A few kms south of Watonga Rocks I had a swim with a pod of dolphins and then communed with a red-backed sea eagle (technically a Brahminy Kite) that watched quizzically as I re-robed.

Lake Cathie and Cathie Creek entrance were superb. I wended my way around the foreshore reserve to the small bridge at Lake Cathie (pronounced 'cat-eye' if you want to



Day 2: Miners Beach (Sea Acres Rainforest)

“

A few kms south of Watonga Rocks I had a swim with a pod of dolphins and then communed with a red-backed sea eagle ...



Day 2: Down to Lighthouse Beach



Day 2: A curious friend (Brahminy Kite) at Lighthouse Beach



Day 2: The high tide route around Lake Cathie

sound like a local) - the entrance is generally wade-able beachside, but it was peak high tide, and the bridge was only a short distance inland. I had a lunch break and a relax while waiting for the tide to turn and then it was another superb stretch of sand and rocks past Cathie Beach, Middle Rock and Beach, and Duchess Gully to Rainbow Beach at Bonny Hills where I stayed the night in an exceptionally good value AirBnB.

I was reflecting as the tide turned, and the ebb made the impassable seem passable, about Abraham Lincoln's phrase 'This too shall pass' (known in the west from the retelling of a Persian fable by the English poet Edward Fitzgerald). Wise words that hold true in both prosperity and adversity and sauntering and, indeed, life. Long may the good times of today's coast walk linger, and not pass too quickly from this eminently contented coastal pilgrim's memory.

Day 3: Bonny Hills to Diamond Head 22km, 8 hours

Started out at dawn from beautiful Bonny Hills and passed Bartletts Beach on the way to sunrise at magnificent Grants Head. The walk across the headland was just another perfect start to another sublime day.

The headlands are steep in this part of the world, but there is a well-made set of stairs down to Field Stop 1 - locally known as Sharkies - to either intentionally, or unintentionally, scare the tourists away.

“

The headlands are steep in this part of the world, but there is a well-made set of stairs down to Field Stop 1 - locally known as Sharkies - to either intentionally, or unintentionally, scare the tourists away.

Traversed another small headland to Grants Beach which is a 4km stretch of lovely sand all the way to North Haven Beach and the Camden River break wall.

I was lucky to have a support crew to take me across the river, although the 7km walk along the river and across the bridge at Laurieton would be a pleasant enough diversion (and campers note, you would need to reprovise here before camping at glorious Diamond Head).

But I'm getting ahead of myself, because next was another contender for the headland Oscars - mighty Perpendicular Point and Camden Head - just wow! It's only 4km or so out to the point and back but each of the lookouts on the headland are amazing - indeed it would not be hard to while away a full day here and then want to come back for more. Great signage, so no need for further instruction - an absolute must-see if you're in the area.



Day 3: Down to Sharkies



Day 3: Dunbogan Beach

Plenty of whales with some mammas and babies close in to the point. Also a large pod of resident dolphins (might have been the light but they had a really golden-brown hue, quite unlike the grey bottlenose ones I usually see), birdlife galore and a few goannas as well. My kind of sacred place on the coastal way. Then it was down to Dunbogan Beach for a high tide, soft sand walk towards Diamond Head - my penance for whiling away too many hours at Perpendicular Point. Forget leg day at the gym - a few laps of Dunbogan at high tide will set you right!

I try to pick up any litter on the beaches away from 'civilisation' and to the credit of most Aussies there's usually little to be found. While I normally hate seeing any stray plastic on the beach, I made an exception for the perfectly placed chair at Dunbogan which made a fine spot for a rest! Although the charming wooden throne a little further along was even better. Nice!



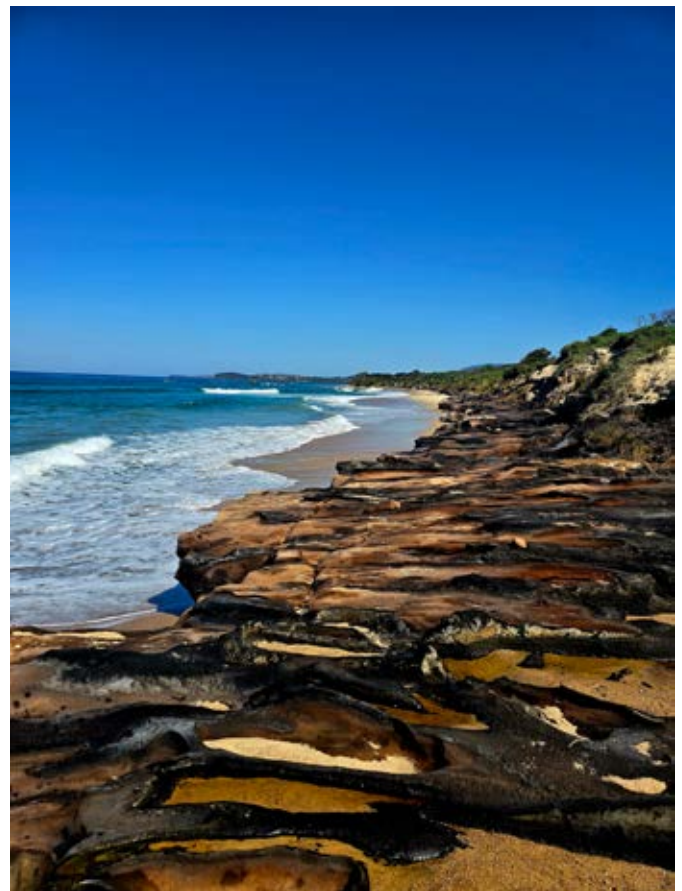
Diamond Head has strong connections with one of my favourite Aussie authors, Kylie Tennant.

Diamond Head has strong connections with one of my favourite Aussie authors, Kylie Tennant. One of her books, 'The Man on the Headland' centres on her times in Diamond Head and some local characters. Hard to find these days but a great read. She understood poverty and desperation and so many aspects of her life and times, but also had a great way of seeing the bright side of life. She often notes that the human eye records best at the pace at which one walks and that to truly 'see' we need to walk, or even better, sit still.

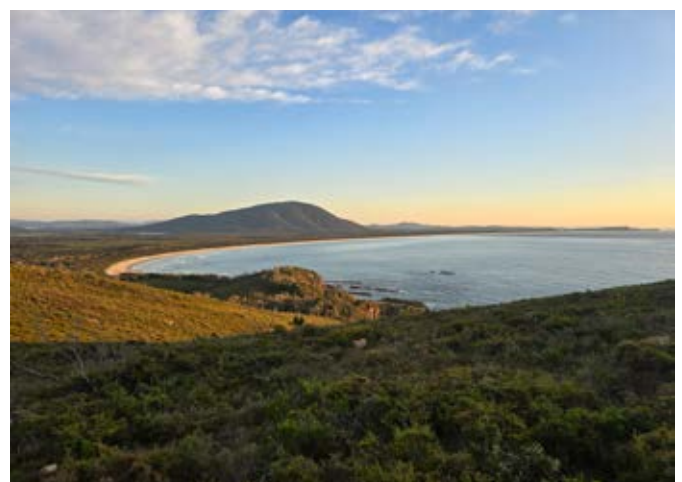
Walking is such a great way to see the world - and making time to sit still along the way (on a perfect headland or a well-placed driftwood log or even a plastic chair) makes it even better!



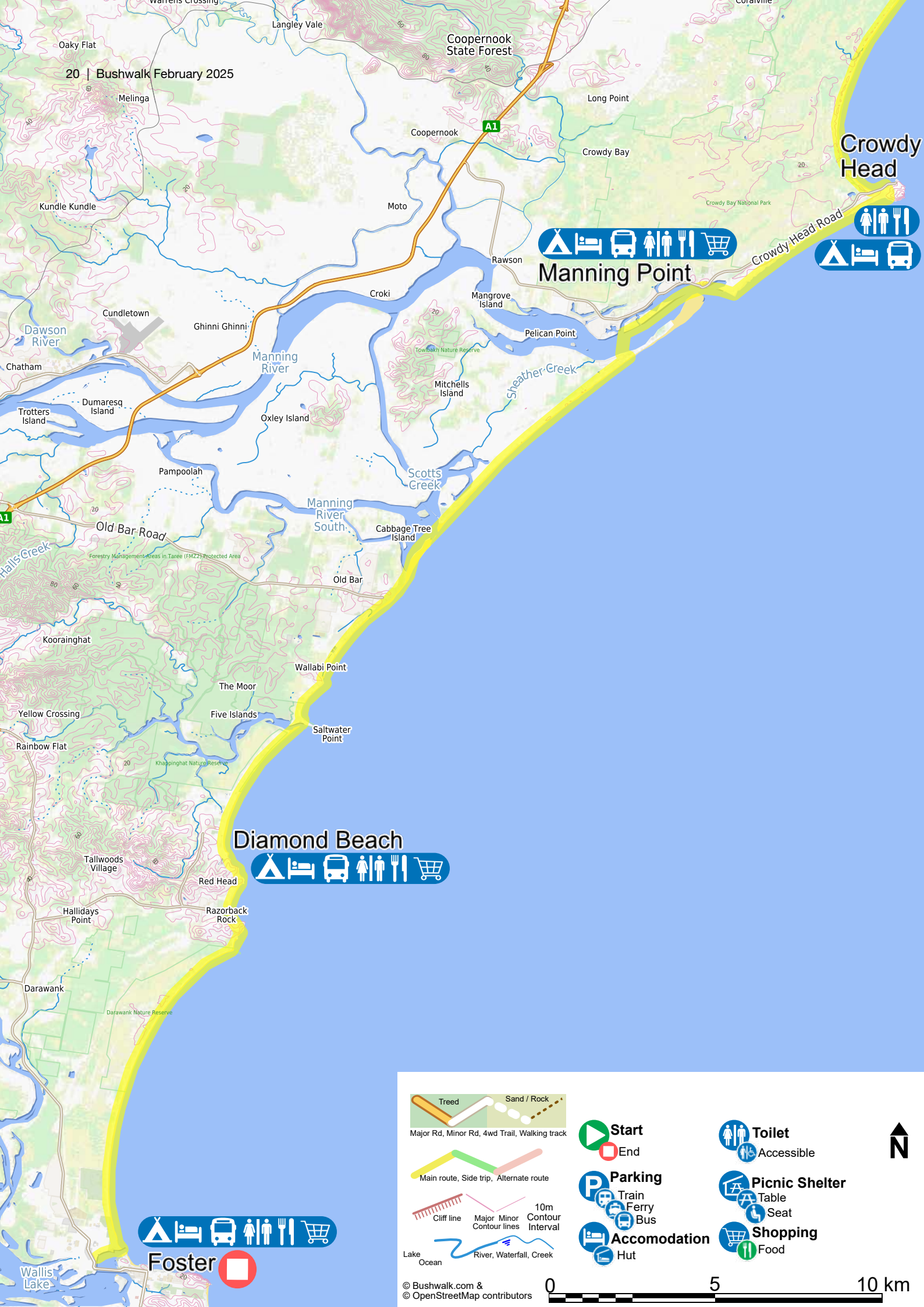
Day 3: Some more new friends



Day 3: Around the ragged rocks the ragged rascal ran



Day 4: Living in the here and now



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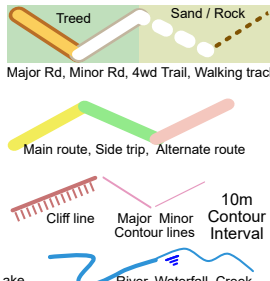

Manning Point




Diamond Beach



Foster 



 **Start**
 **End**
 **Parking**
 **Train Ferry Bus**
 **Accommodation**
 **Hut**

 **Toilet**
 **Accessible**
 **Picnic Shelter**
 **Table**
 **Seat**
 **Shopping**
 **Food**

Day 4: Diamond Head to Harrington 24km, 8 hours

I was listening to an Australian Hiker podcast interviewing Yvonne Everett, who runs the brilliant [Coffs Trails site](#) (comprehensive information on many walks in the region) and who has written a superb walking guide for this part of the coast. She was pressed as to the 'best' walk in the region and she nominated Diamond Head.

I'm tempted to agree. I have to say it very well may be the 'jewel in the crown' - even though it would be a mighty crown filled with many other splendidly sparkling gems! As I walked around this magnificent headland, I was also reflecting on the wise words of Thich Nhat Hanh:

People sacrifice the present for the future. But life is available only in the present. That is why we should walk in such a way that every step can bring us to the here and the now.

As a result, I tried my very, very, very best to stay in the 'now' as I enjoyed every step of this spellbinding walk.

Starting Day 4 at Diamond Head campground I went out and back to Mermaid Lookout before tackling the amazing Headland Walk track. Just do it - I can't find the words to describe the quality of this walk. Definitely



Day 4: Sunrise at Diamond Head



Day 4: The giving tree



Day 4: Living in the here and now



Day 4: Rounding Diamond Head towards the Natural Arch

check out (carefully) the down and back up track to the Natural Arch as soon as you can. I worry what's going to happen when Sunday arvo instagrammers start sliding off the steep slippery track to their doom - it's a Darwin awards kind of place so I wonder how long the open access will last.

On to Indian Head campground (the first foreign name for Diamond Head, because Cook saw 'Indians' there) which was a perfectly peaceful kangaroo feeding ground in the early morning. Kylie's Hut (Kylie Tennant's perfect little writing studio, lovingly restored after being engulfed in flames in the 2019 bushfires) and Kylie's Beach just topped off the perfection of this amazing bit of the walk.



Day 4: Kylies Hut (restored after 2019 bushfires)

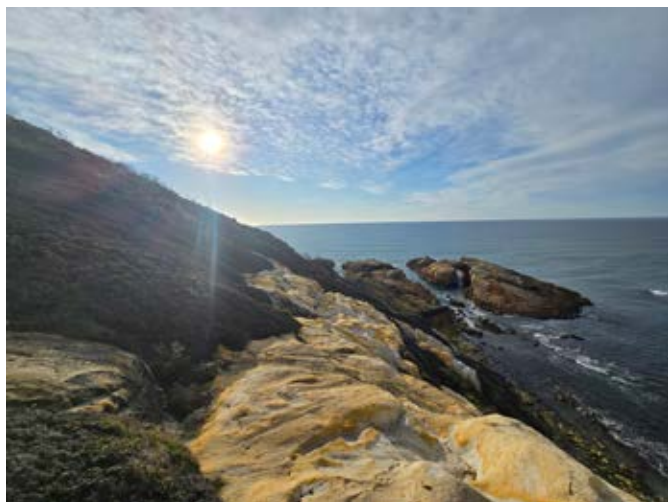
Again, if you are nearby and have not done this walk go tomorrow! As Kylie Tennant so beautifully writes:

Diamond Head has its own special illusion. Anyone who comes there is seized with a wild resolution to stay forever.

And:

League after league the headlands curve up the coast of the continent. The white fingers of the sea play on them, each bluff giving out its unique note, making its own music.

After the delights of Diamond Head, I made beachfall at long, long Crowdy Bay Beach - 15 kms of sandy perfection with a small



Day 4: The Natural Arch



Day 4: Kylies Beach

pod of dolphins trailing me oceanside. Past Colly's Creek (closed entrance), Abbey Creek picnic area, and then Crowdy Head with its perfect view of the 'three brothers' and its cute lighthouse, along with several whales frolicking offshore.

“

Camino comes from a late Latin word 'camminus' ...

An afternoon stroll along Crowdy Back Beach which morphs into Harrington Beach concluded with a lovely rainforest walk off the beach to the break wall. And just like that, (drumroll) tada - the Manning River.

Won't mean much to most, but for me that's the Tweed, Richmond, Clarence, Macleay, Hastings and Manning Rivers accomplished, and every headland and beach along the way. Only the Hunter and the Hawkesbury to cross on the 'Northern Way' of my Aussie Camino...

I like to think of my coast walk as a gentle pilgrimage or 'camino'. Camino comes from a late Latin word 'camminus' by way of Gaul 'kamman' and ultimately proto-Celtic - so just like any good pilgrimage it is a well-used, well-travelled word with deep, long, strong roots –an etymology that makes it available to us all.

Day 5: Manning Point to Forster/Tuncurry 27km, 9 hours

The mouth of the Manning presents a few challenges for the coast walker without a support crew. Fortunately, I had an obliging driver so was able to get to Manning Point (amazing dunes and river mouth) and then the beach walk to Old Bar. From there it was down to Wallabi Point before the delights of Saltwater National Park. I had been prepared for a wade or a swim across the mouth of Khappinghat Creek, but the entrance was fully closed on the day I was walking through. So, it was just some nice easy sand strolling on a falling tide along Saltwater Beach with a pod of dolphins accompanying me south while getting in their early body bash.



Day 5: Manning Point



Day 5: Wallabi Point



Day 5: Khappingat Creek



Day 5: Red Head

A yellow-bellied sea snake seemed to be sun-baking near the water so I gave it a wide berth. I know they almost never cause problems for humans, despite being incredibly venomous (or at least that's what I was taught in Sea Scouts 50 years ago) - but no point taking any chances!

Next were Red Head and Diamond Beaches then lovely Shelly Beach and Red Headland and then over to gorgeous Black Head Beach with its sensational rock pool. Caught up with an old schoolmate for brunch and then it was across Razorback Rock and Pebbly Beach before the long stretch of Nine Mile Beach (actually only 8 miles or a tad under 12 kms). The softish estuary sand of Nine Mile makes it a beach to avoid at high tide – but despite being the first beach north of Forster, most of the way was completely deserted.

And so, I arrived at the twin towns of Tuncurry/Forster that straddle the mouth of Wallis Lake and the Coolongolook River, and where this stage of the Dreamtime to Eden walk came to its close.

Conclusion

Stage 5 was a little more complex than any of the previous four stages, primarily due to the crossing of the Manning River. That being said, the whole stage provided some incredible coast walking – in particular the walk through Crowdy Bay National Park from Camden Head to Harrington which is just

an incredible series of almost untouched beaches and headlands. I felt so privileged to 'walk this way' – accompanied by the wise words of Kylie Tennant and, as always, the stunning scenery and the incredible coastline of NSW. Every day of this stage provided ever more coastal magic and existential bliss.

And, as always on this coastal pilgrimage, I now looked forward to the coming explorations as I 'wended' my way ever southward. Stage 6 would involve meandering from Forster to the southern side of Port Stephens. Plenty more 'walking in the sunshine'!

I trust that your every step will bring you to the here and the now...



Day 5: Black Head



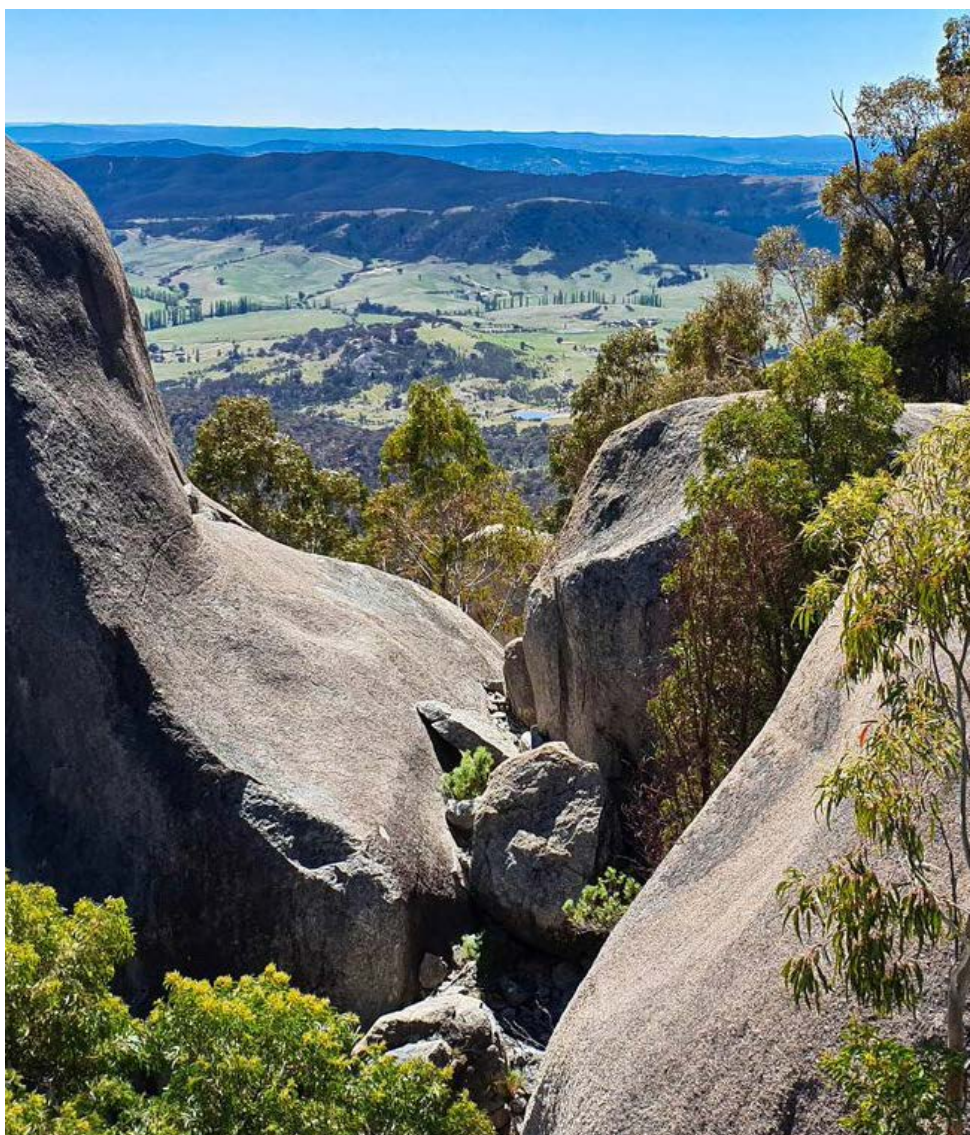
Greg grew up in Sydney but lived for many years in SE Asia. He has now returned home to Sydney and loves exploring Australia's magnificent bushwalks, parks, coasts, and waterways. When he's not bushwalking or mountain bike-riding, he works in education for Deloitte Australia and Ecctis UK.

More detailed information on each day of his walk, pics and future posts are all available on Facebook - either on his [personal page](#) or in the FB groups [Hiking in Australia and New Zealand](#), [Take a hike NSW](#) and [Hiking and exploring NSW](#).

Gibraltar Peak Walk

Text and photos
Ian Smith

By tourism standards, it's fairly well known, despite its semi-remoteness.



View from Gibraltar Peak



Signs on Gibraltar Peak Walk



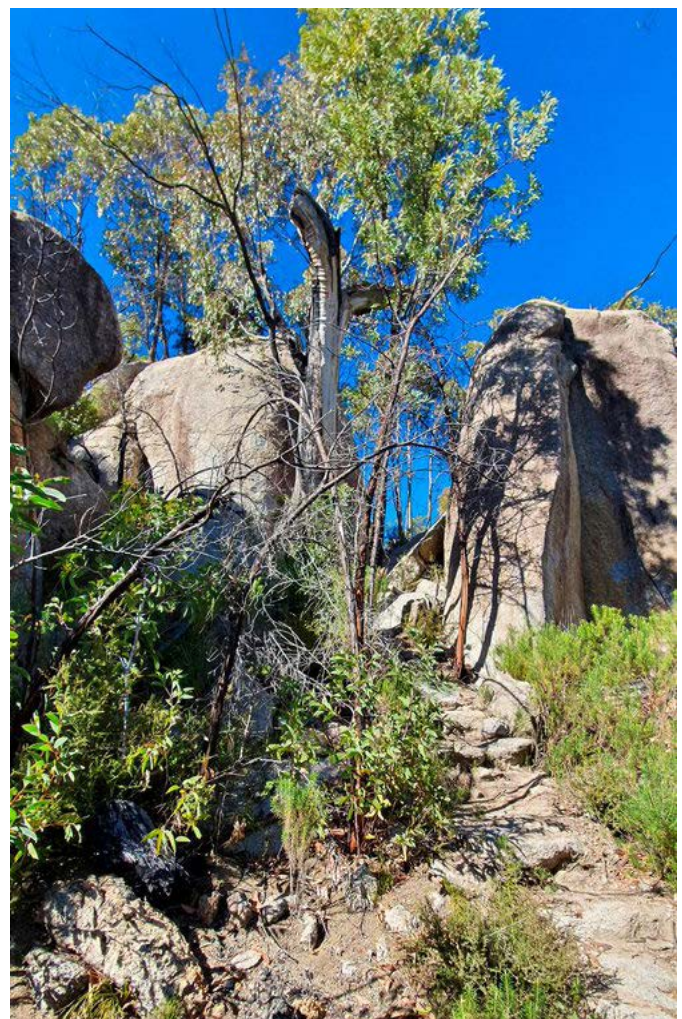
Early Nancy

The name Tidbinbilla conjures up starry, starry nights, radio telescopes that probe deeply into space and are closely linked to NASA and some fascinating information about space probes from a multitude of countries. For instance, the Indian, Japanese, European, Chinese and other explorations are all going full steam ahead. I found it fascinating to see just how much they had achieved, since all we basically hear about is NASA.

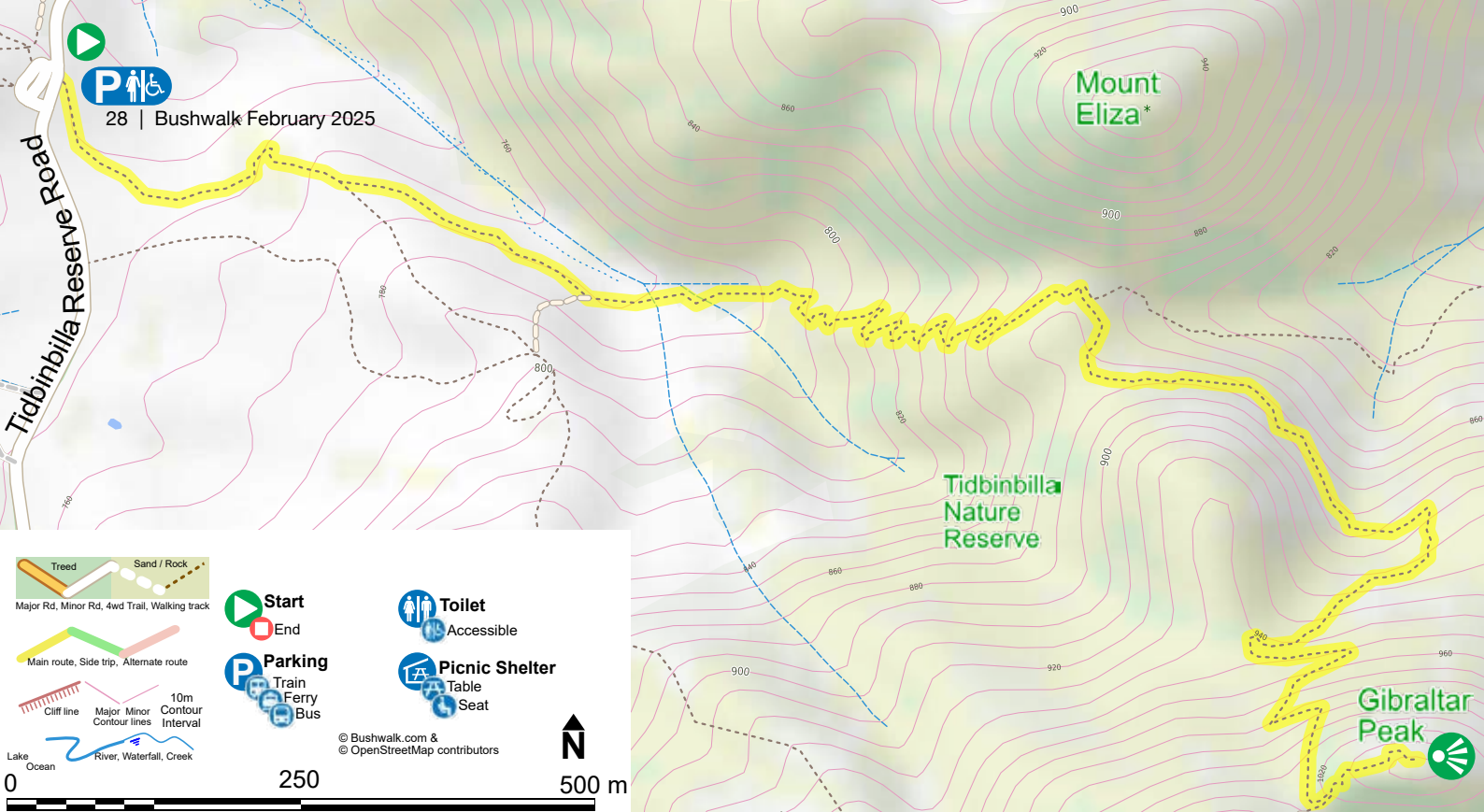
“

However, my main interest on two trips I've done there was to visit the sanctuary.

However, my main interest on two trips I've done there was to visit the sanctuary. Money has been spent here. There's a national park's office where you can get information and food. Oh, and you can also pay for the privilege of getting inside the national park which houses the sanctuary a few kilometres away.



On the way to the top of Gibraltar Peak



It is also the home of Gibraltar Peak, an 8.2km return climb I had pencilled in, and a climb it was. The sort that deters your average Joe but which true bushwalkers thrive on. I'm somewhere in the middle but, being a keen snapper, I had to go and see it.

It's one of 22 walks in the reserve and is rated 18 on the list in terms of hardness.

“

It's one of 22 walks in the reserve and is rated 18 on the list in terms of hardness.

The initial rise is to a saddle whereupon you turn right and that's when the steps begin. Rising through the carved granite, you eventually find yourself in something of a maze at the top. It's a bit of a puzzle trying to work your way through the creviced barricade but the sky is your guide as you navigate through the cracks, eventually reaching the panoramic views over the valley and a massive lump of isolated round-topped granite in the immediate foreground. It's an unforgettable reward but there's still the sanctuary to look forward to.



Stone stairs on Gibraltar Peak Walk

Back in the car I headed deeper into the reserve, eventually reaching the scenic loop road that contains the nature reserve and a few other walks. Hanging Rock I managed to do on the second trip. A short, pleasant uphill stroll in an area once frequented by indigenous peoples, though I'm still trying to work out where the supposed hanging rock was.

The Sanctuary Loop is nearby, a circular route around a series of pondages deliberately set up to encourage wildlife, with educational areas featuring diagrams and seating.

There was, according to the sign, the possibility of seeing a platypus. Well, having been to many places over the years where platypus were supposedly on show, my scepticism was high. Yet, no sooner had I stopped by the upper reservoir than presto, there they were, all two of them, which made



Platypus in the sanctuary

“

Well, having been to many places over the years where platypus were supposedly on show, my scepticism was high.



Yellow faced honeyeater in the sanctuary



A picture-winged fly (*Delphinia picta*)



White browed scrub wren in the sanctuary



Silvereye

a grand total of three I'd now seen. Of course, they were coming and going, rolling along the surface and not getting out of the water but hey, that hardly dimmed my excitement.

“

Not something many of you want to come across I realise, but it got my adrenalin going in more ways than one ...

After watching for a while I moved around the other side of the pondage and, lo and behold, there was a fine specimen of a red-bellied black snake. Not something many of you want to come across I realise, but it got my adrenalin going in more ways than one as it slithered cautiously through the leaf litter, with at least one eye on me all the time.

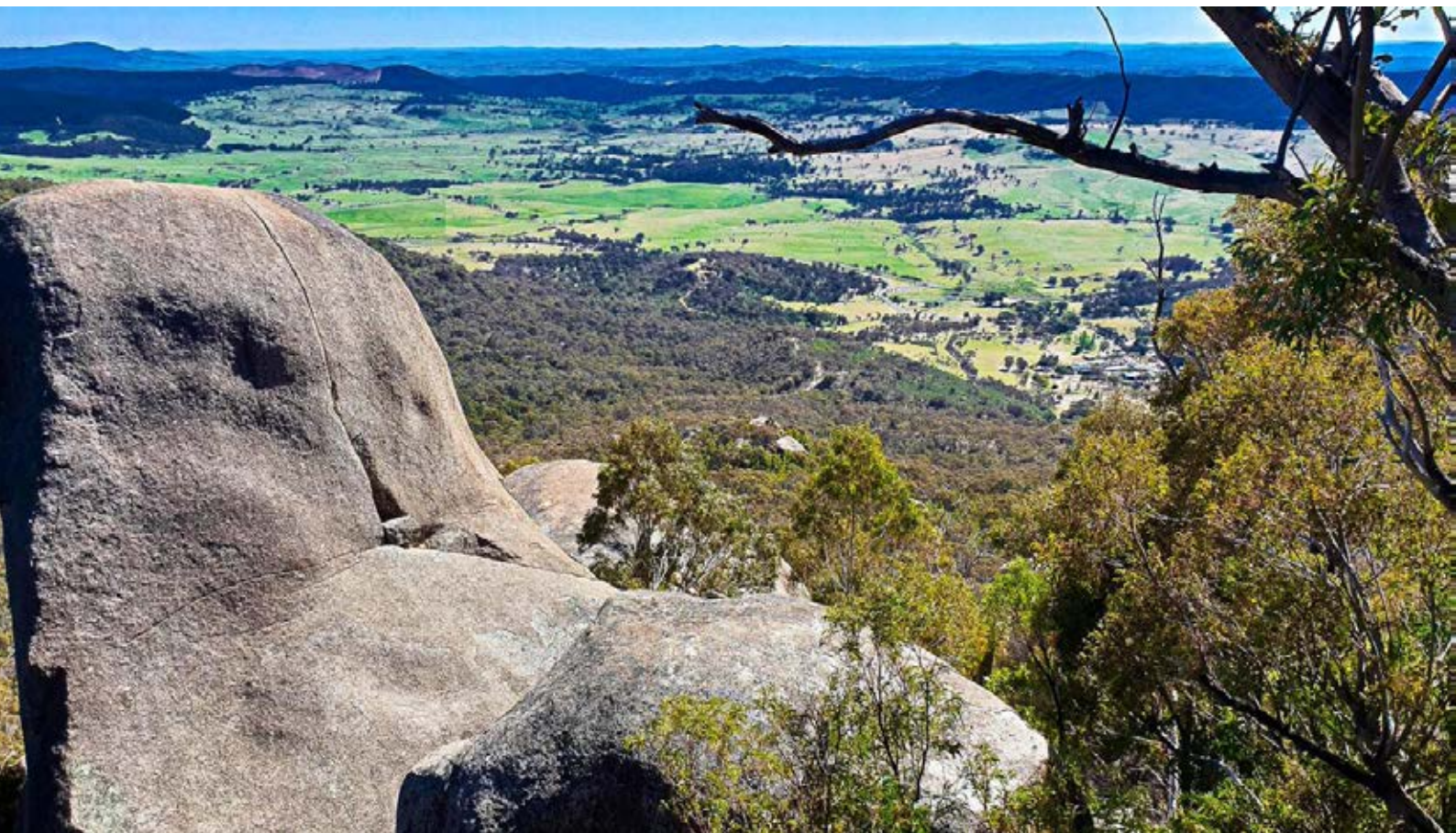
There were more things as well, birds I've yet to identify and lots of eastern long-necked turtles sunbaking on logs and one



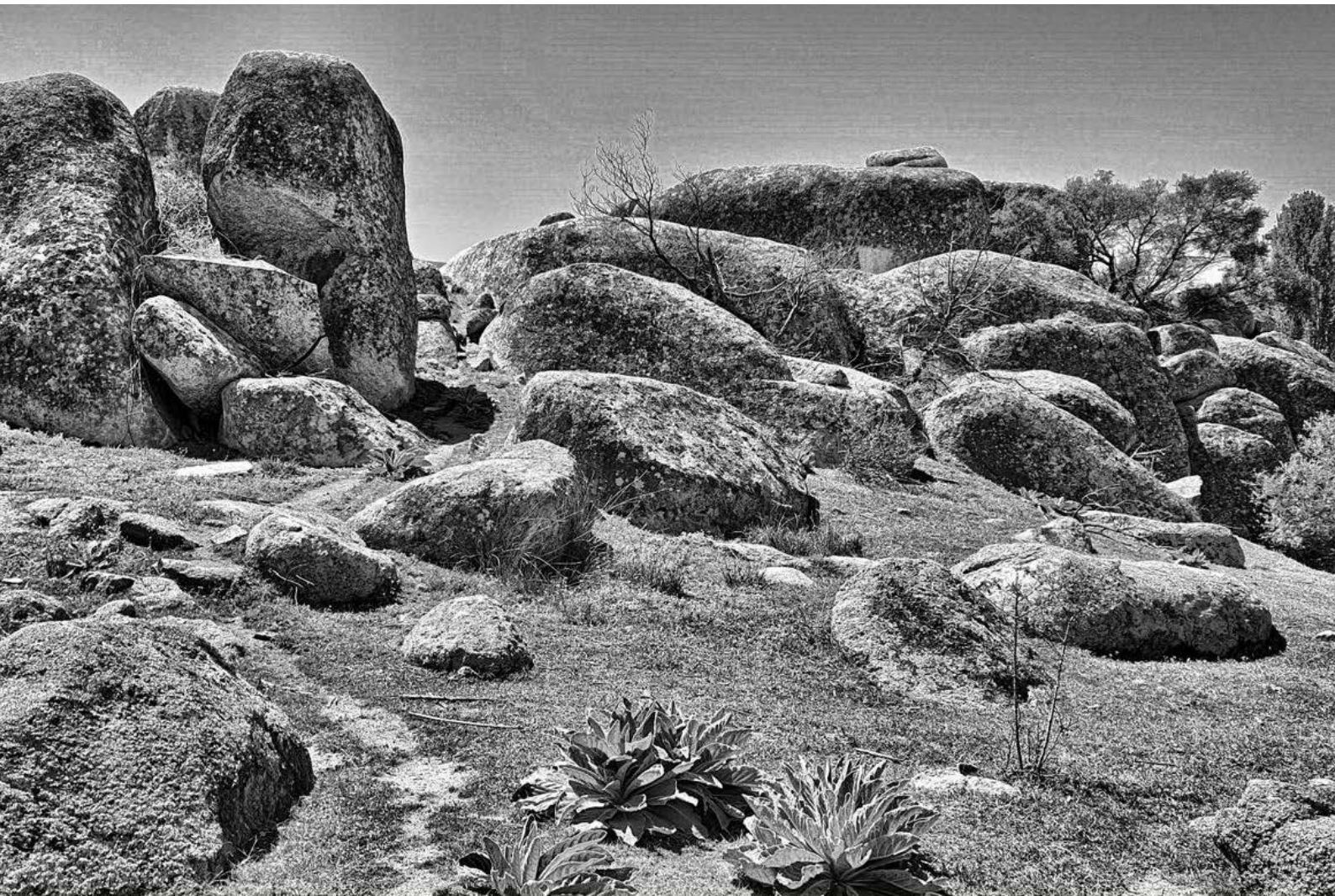
Red bellied black snake in the sanctuary



Eastern long neck turtle in the sanctuary



View from Gibraltar Peak



Tidbinbilla

of my favourite subjects, order odonatan, or dragonflies and damselflies as they're more commonly known.

I got my first shot of a rockmaster dragonfly here and a tau emerald as well that had actually stopped for a moment. They are usually flying most of the day, unlike others that frequently stop. You'll often be near a body of water and see a dragonfly but, when you tarry awhile, you start to notice others and there'll be up to eight different species where earlier you only noticed one.

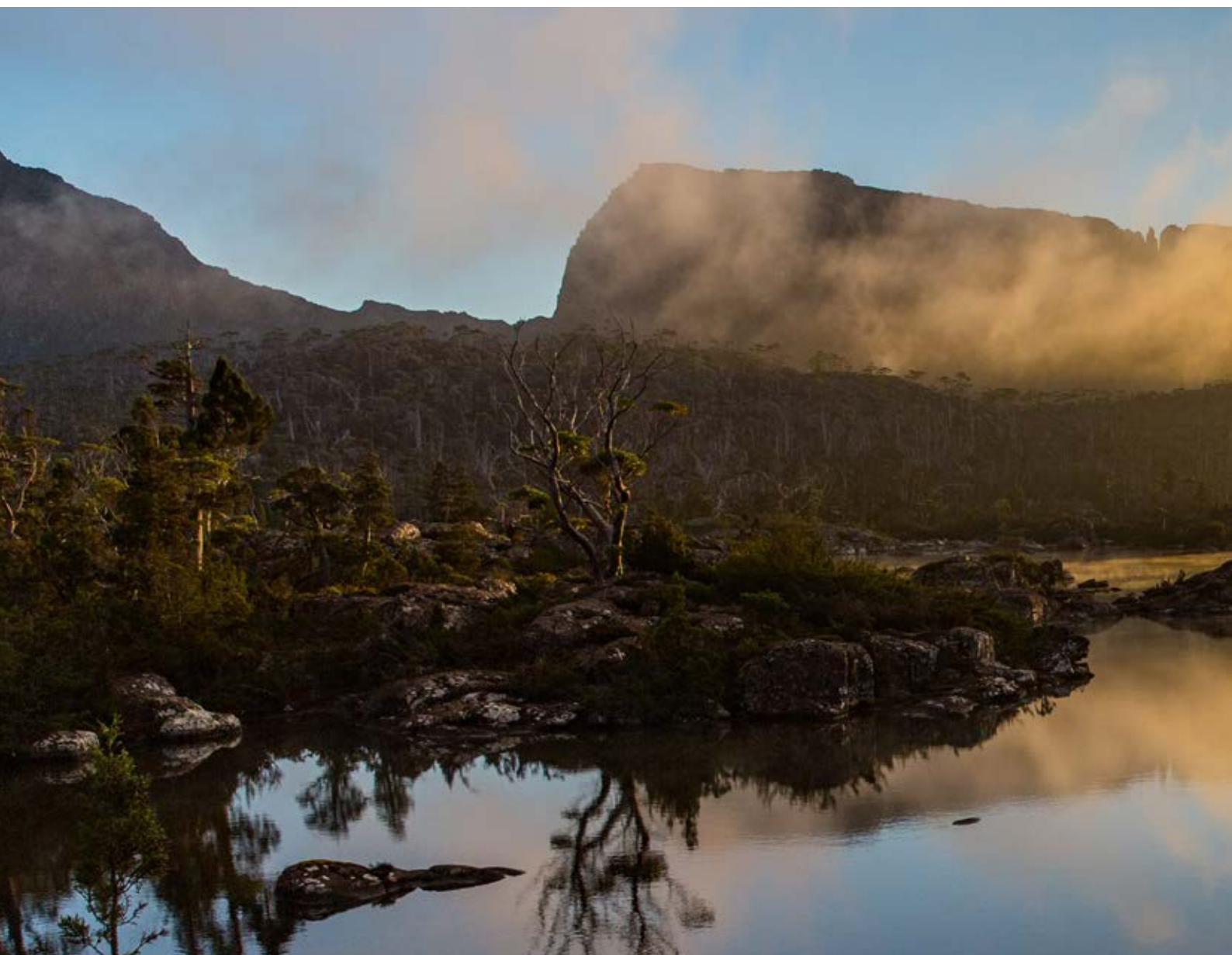
It was time to leave and cruise down the scenic road to the exit and reflect that the Tidbinbilla area gives in so many ways. You might like to try it next time you're in the A.C.T.



Grey Guinea flower

Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



Check this and
other entries at
Bushwalk.com
Photo competitions



The dawn of another perfect day at Lake Elysia
MJD

Landscapes

February 2024

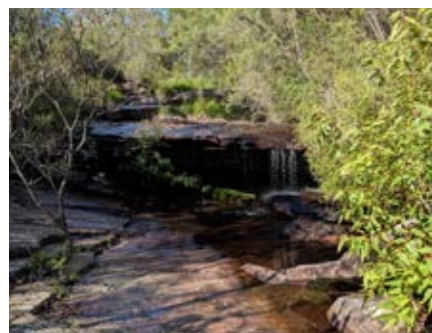
Winner
Heavy Folding
Eggs



The river remote
Johnw



On the edge of the plains
North-north-west



Pindar Cascades
Pritch

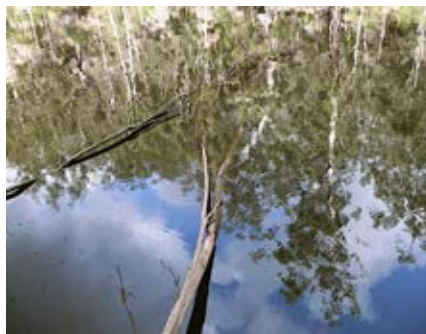
Non-landscapes

February 2024

Winner
What's Up
Eggs



Dawn Ripples,
Central Plateau Lake
Whynotwalk



Impressionist
Johnw

Tasmania

February 2024

Winner
Lake Nugara
North-north-west



Other States

February 2024

Winner
Sugarloaf
Eggs

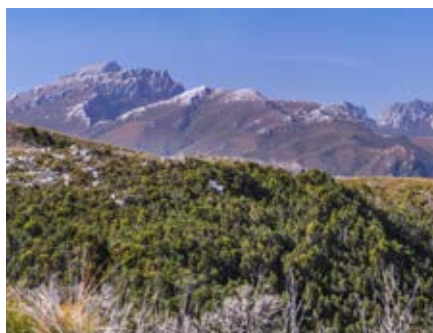
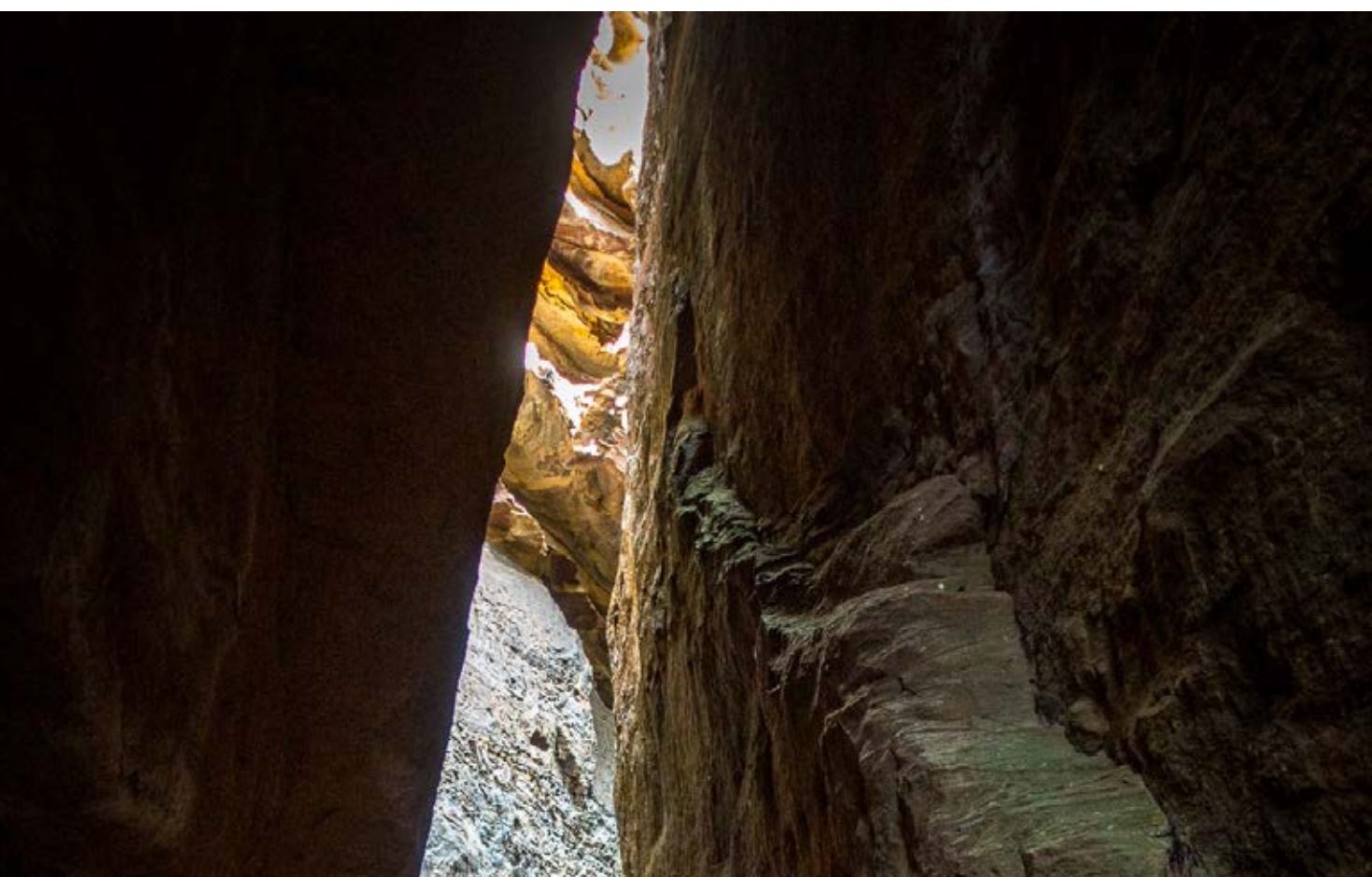


The other bank
Johnw

Landscapes

March 2024

Winner
The Chasm
Tom_brennan



Evening on McCall
North-north-west



Forgotten history
Johnw

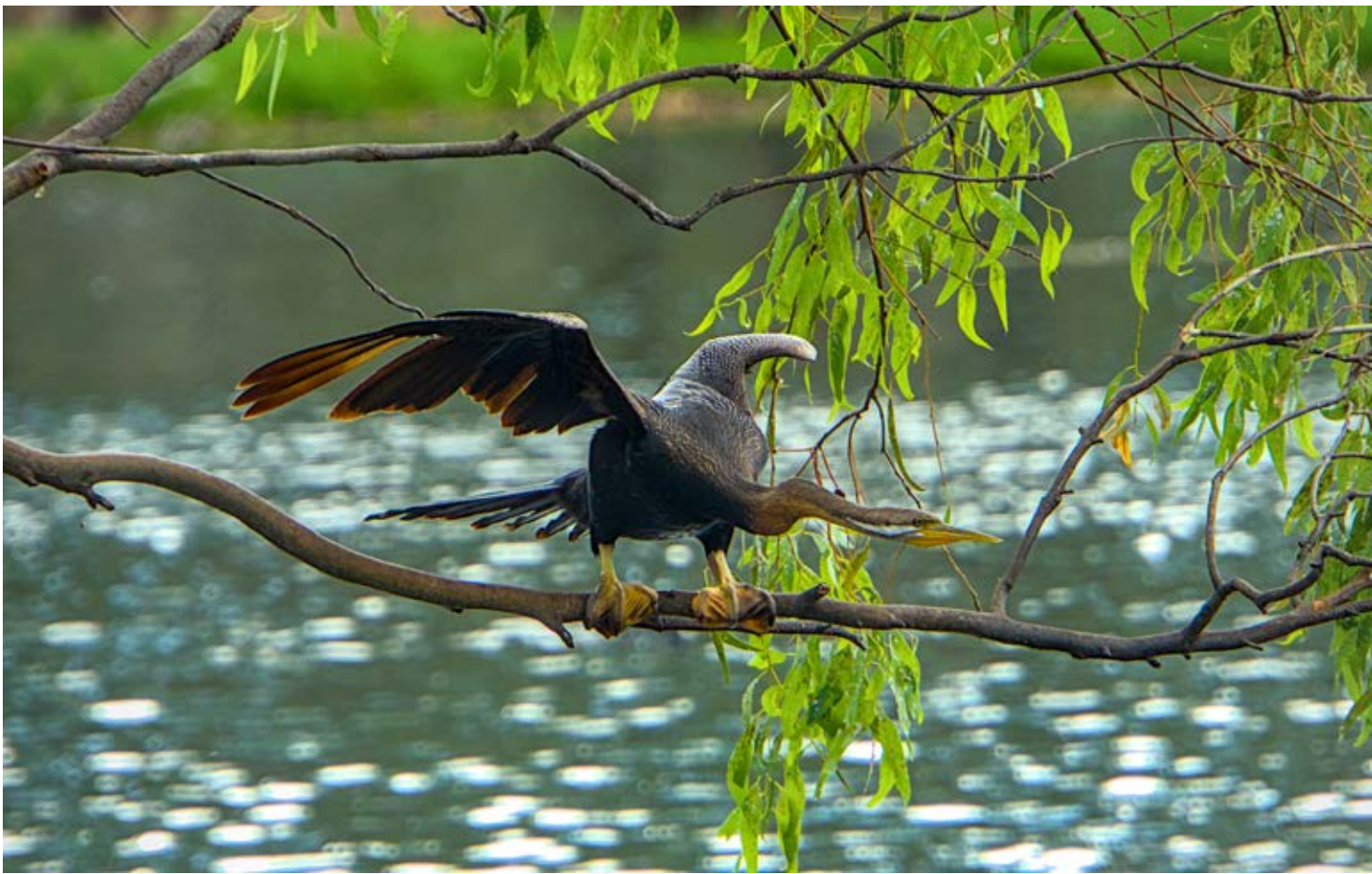


Steers Lake
Graham51

Non-landscapes

March 2024

Winner
Male Australasian Darter
Joe J



Hi there
Eggs



Bassian thrush
Johnw



As the pelican flies
landsmith

Tasmania

March 2024

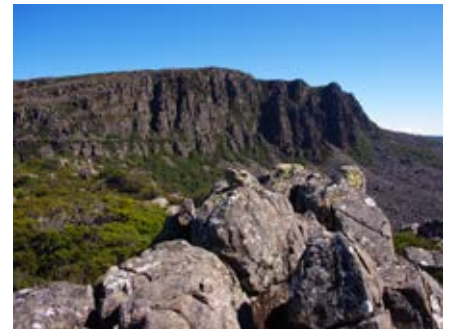
Winner
Pool of Bethesda
Graham51



Lovely Lake Lilla
Son of a Beach



Another ridge done
North-north-west



Looking at Bastion Bluff
from Meander Crag
Teak

Other States

March 2024

Winner
Coachwood corridor
Tom_brennan



From my perch
Johnw



Rough at the edges
Eggs

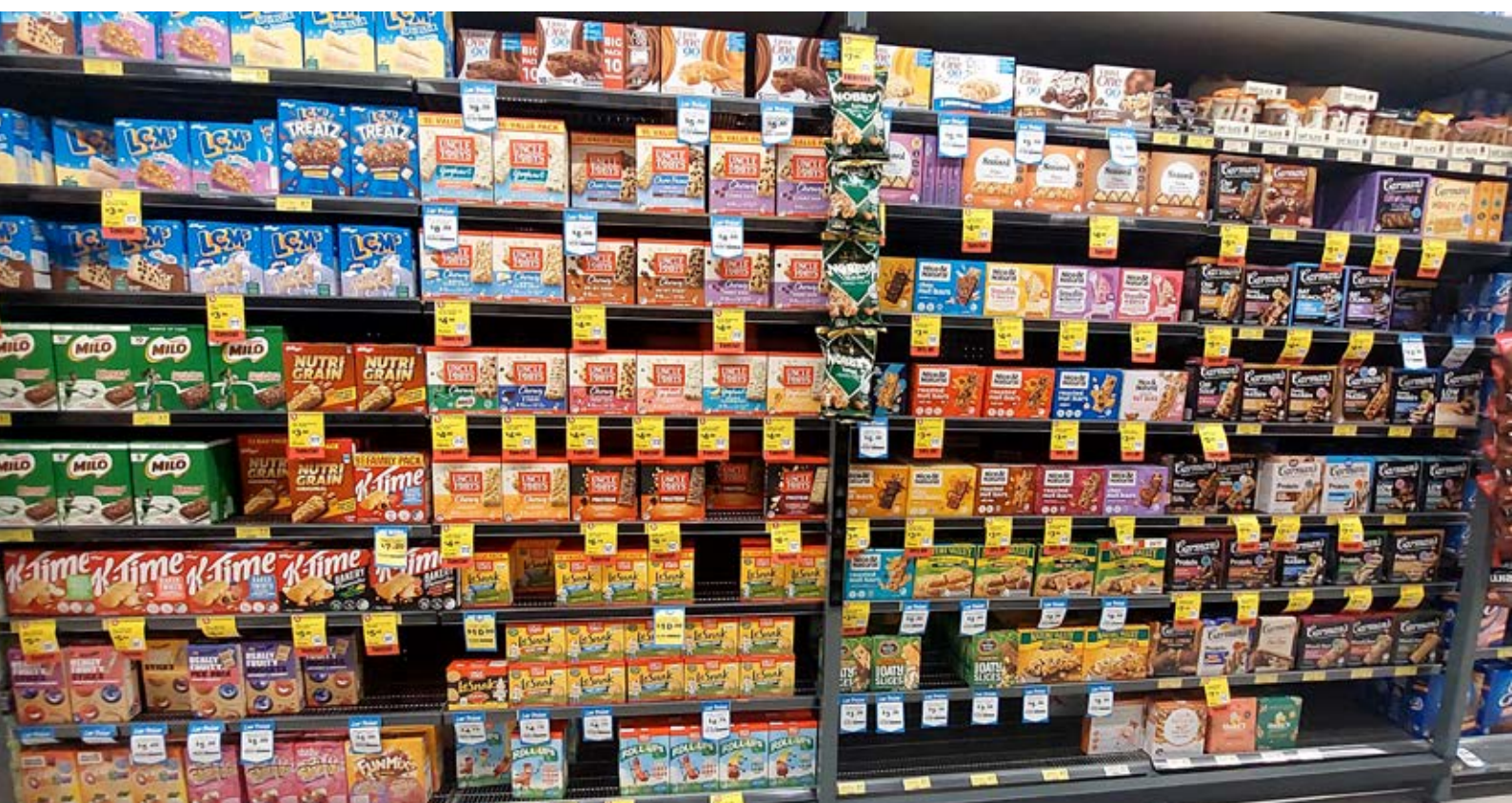
Muesli Bar Bonanza

Text and photos
Sonya Muhlsimmer

On my last day hike with a few friends we went into the local café for breakfast prior to our walk and saw that they had some hand-made muesli bars from a locally owned company called Whisk & Pin.



Pool of Siloam, Blue Mountains NP



A variety of bars in the store

I bought a raspberry and dark chocolate one and it had a whopping 965 kJ per serve - now that is a good amount of energy per bar. Most of you know that I am all about the nutritional value in foods, so I was quite impressed with this muesli bar. I do love trying new recipes and sharing them with you all, but recently I have not had a huge amount of time to experiment in the kitchen. But seeing this muesli bar made me think about the 'mass produced' muesli bars in the shops, and my very good friend also did some research, in the table below. There is so much variety in the shops, I mean just look at the photo. There is LCM, Milo, Nutri Grain, K-Time, Uncle Tobys, Nice & Natural, Nature Valley, Mother Earth, Carmen's and the list goes on.

I want to try them all just to compare taste and texture, but there are just too many. Some bars are soft, too soft to hold together in our packs for a few days. Other bars are crunchy and hard, great for the backpack. Some have high protein, low carbs, gluten free and some just have way too much sugar in them - again the list goes on. However, there is something available for everyone.

So, the point of this article is just to look at the nutritional value, energy (kJ) per 100 grams, of the list below. Muesli bars are a great snack to add to our menu on the trail, or even have them as a quick and easy breakfast with no washing up. The most important aspects of nutrition for muesli bars, well I think, are the energy, carbs and protein. If hiking for a few days, I would choose the highest energy (kJ) per 100 grams per bar, and if it has a high carbohydrate and protein count, that is a bonus.

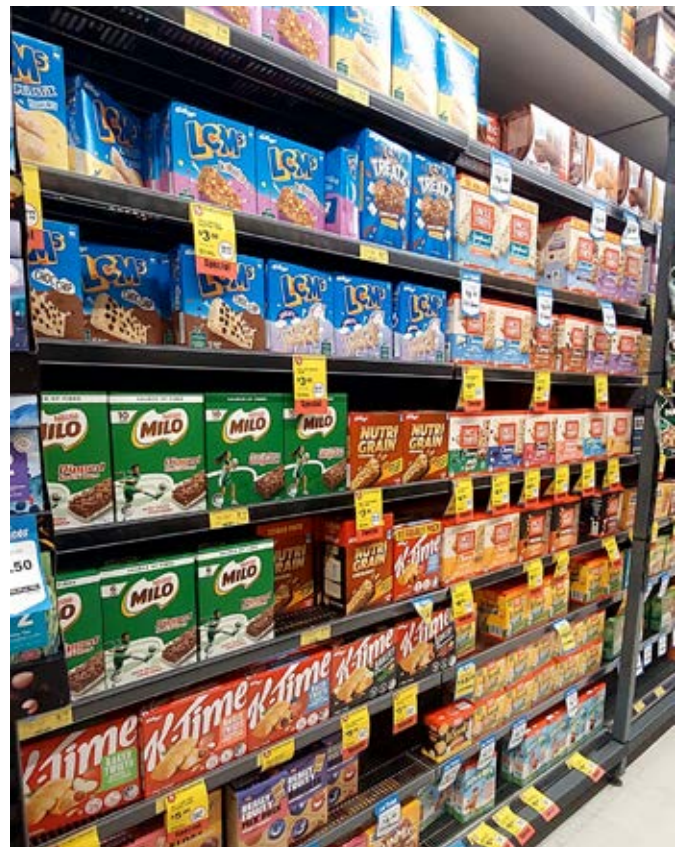
How many bars per day would you pack? One, two or even four? Just say you carried four for a day, that would be 160 grams, on the heavier side, and over 2500 kJ, not a bad amount of energy to get you up that hill. From the list below, my choice would be the Nature Valley Crunchy Granola, then Carmen Dark chocolate bars due to the highest energy. This table is not an exhaustive list, it only just scrapes the surface really but it is enough to get you started and thinking about muesli bars. I also like the nut bars as you get all the good nutrition of nuts and they are hard and won't break in your pack, but that in itself could be another article.

Name	Weight [g]	No. bars	Weight bar [g]	KJ per 100 g	kJ per bar
Carmen dark choc pretzel	200	5	40	2000	800
Carmen roasted nut bar almond, hazelnut and vanilla	175	5	35	2230	781
K-time baked twists apple and blueberry	315	9	35	1510	529
Mother Earth salted caramel choc baked oatly slices	240	6	40	1940	776
Nature Valley crunchy granola	252	6	42	1960	823
Nice & natural roasted nut	192	6	32	2190	701
Noshu raspberry cream and protein	150	5	30	1330	399
Uncle Toby's protein caramel flavour dark choc	175	5	35	1670	585
Woolies oven baked fruit filled bars	450	12	38	1580	593

Did you know that Australia's first muesli bar was launched in 1976 by Uncle Tobys? It was called the Crunchola bar. In New Zealand the first muesli bar was the iconic Snak Log, launched in 1977, then Quaker Products, an American company launched a chewy muesli bar in the 1980s.

I can't talk about muesli bars without talking about muesli, so here goes. Dr Max Bircher-Benner, a Swiss physician and nutritional pioneer increased the health of his patients by prescribing or feeding them a somewhat healthy recipe, as an appetiser consisting of oats, apples, condensed milk, nuts and lemon juice. Before you know it, in around 1959 the first mass-produced muesli was created and the rest, well, is history.

Go to your nearest shop and start looking at the array of muesli bars available and I will see you on the trail somewhere, we can compare our muesli bars then.



To read more about the author or find delicious recipes check xtremegourmet.com.

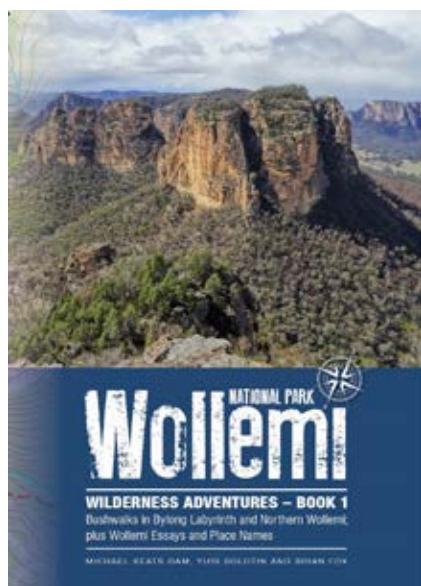
Published

**Wollemi National Park:
Wilderness Adventures - Book 1**
Michael Keats OAM, Yuri Bolotin, Brian Fox

The book contains detailed track notes from a series of unique multi-day wilderness adventures in the Bylong Labyrinth and the Northern Wollemi, two most extraordinary, challenging and beautiful parts of the park. In addition, there are three Wollemi essays, as well as a comprehensive list of place names.

Hardcover, 632 pages

AU\$66

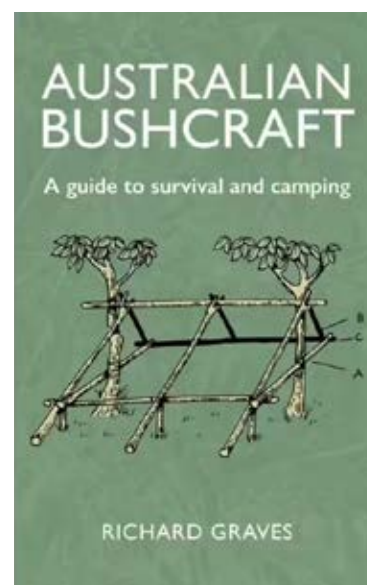


**Australian Bushcraft
Guide to Survival and Camping**
Richard Graves

The book is full of information on necessary survival skills you might need if your get lost in the bush.

Paperback, 256 pages

AU\$28



High-Tech Drones May Soon Be Fighting Bushfires

Text

Marta Yebra

Iain Guilliard

Nicholas Wilson

Robert Mahony

Picture this. It's a summer evening in Australia. A dry lightning storm is about to sweep across remote, tinder-dry bushland. The next day is forecast to be hot and windy. A lightning strike tonight could spark a fire that grows into a catastrophic blaze tomorrow.



A white drone flying over a field of grass. Drone aircraft fly.
pixabay.com



Drones were used to spot fires in the ACT during the Black Summer fires.
Gary Hooker and Garry Mayo

Fire authorities deploy drones to chase the storm. The drones detect spots where lightning strikes have ignited the bush – perhaps smouldering tree roots, or smoke pouring from a tree hollow. The drones stay aloft throughout the night, identifying new ignitions and monitoring those that progress to small fires.

Larger drones are dispatched through the night. They drop retardant on the burning bush to slow the flames. The small drones continue to supply data to human fire crews. By dawn, the crews are armed with precise information and ready to act. They suppress the small fires in the early morning, before the winds arrive. What could have turned into a raging megablaze is confined to a few hectares.

“

The drones stay aloft throughout the night, identifying new ignitions and monitoring those that progress to small fires.

This is not science fiction. It is a feasible vision for using drone technology to manage bushfires in Australia, outlined in the federal government's recent [roadmap](#), which we authored.

So let's take a look at how drones can help Australia fight bushfires, and the obstacles to be overcome before it becomes reality.

Stopping fires when they're small

The current fire season marks five years since the Black Summer bushfires devastated southeast Australia in 2019–20. This summer, fires have burned in [Victoria's Grampians region](#) and [around Western Australia's Wedge Island](#).

And the devastating fires in Los Angeles provide yet another example of how terrifying huge bushfires can be.

The sooner a fire is detected, the easier it is to [control and extinguish](#). Fires that start in remote bush may go unnoticed for hours or days.

[Studies show](#) lightning is the primary cause of large bushfires in Australia. Fire outbreaks must be detected and suppressed quickly, while still small, so they don't become large and uncontrollable. That's where drones can be very useful.

What is a fire-fighting drone?

Drones are [aerial vehicles](#) that can fly on autopilot under human supervision. Those used to fight fires may carry [cameras and thermal detectors](#), provide [communications links](#), or hold water or retardant to [douse flames](#).

Drone technology extends the capabilities of existing human-crewed aircraft when fighting fires.

For example, technology allowing human crews to fight fires at night is still in its infancy. Humans cannot work for days without rest, and [may get bored](#) looking for signs of fire over the same ground time and again.

Drones do not have these limitations. They operate by satellite navigation and function well at night or when visibility is limited. Drones can easily fly at night, and all night, then fly the next day, too.

The below footage shows the BRCoE Scout Drone detecting a small spot fire from more than 800 metres away. The fire was lit by firefighters to simulate a lightning strike ignition. In the infrared camera view (lower left), the small fire stands out clearly against the cooler temperature of the bush.

Multiple drones can be [coordinated](#) to cover a large area or stay close to an ignition. They can deliver [fire retardants](#) in remote locations, and with remarkable accuracy.

And crucially, losing a drone to bad weather or mechanical failure does not compare to the tragedy of [losing an aircraft crewed with firefighters](#).



Fire agencies are already trialling and using drone technology. For example, Australian Federal Police and the Australian Capital Territory Rural Fire Service used drones to spot fires during the Black Summer fires, after smoke and poor visibility grounded crewed aircraft.

The New South Wales Rural Fire Service last year [conducted a trial](#) using drones to monitor grass and bushfires in the state's west. And Noosa Council in Queensland is [investigating if drones](#) can help survey an area after a bushfire to provide data on the extent of damage.

A few things to consider

Despite the obvious advantages, using drones to battle fires is challenging.

For example, many systems cannot operate in the high winds and intense heat found near fire zones.

Smaller drones, although portable, lack endurance and cannot carry heavy loads such as high-end thermal sensors and cameras. And work is needed to improve reliability, such as making drones waterproof and ensuring cables and connectors can't unplug during flight.

Drones produce a vast stream of data such as video, thermal images and information about temperature and wind speed. This data must be processed quickly in a fire emergency. Doing this requires reliable communication links and powerful computers.

Firefighting drones require human workers to support their operation, including remote pilots, service crews, and workers on landing fields. This incurs labour costs – albeit far lower than using human-crewed aircraft.

Expanding drone technology will require investment in infrastructure such as operation centres, landing facilities and maintenance hubs. But this infrastructure can be shared with other sectors using drones, such as land management and surveying.

In a warmer world, innovation is vital

Our roadmap outlines essential steps to ensure drone technology fulfils its potential. They include:

- streamlining regulatory approvals to lower the bar for companies to operate commercial drones remotely
- adequate infrastructure investment
- fostering collaboration between the first responders, such as rural fire services, and technology companies developing drones.

Drones are not the only technology promising to revolutionise efforts to fight bushfires. Others include satellite technology monitoring vegetation flammability, and using artificial intelligence to detect fire outbreaks.

As fire seasons grow longer and more intense, innovation is not just an opportunity – it's a necessity. Added to Australia's existing resources, drone technologies have the potential to help safeguard lives, communities and ecosystems.

Damien Pollard

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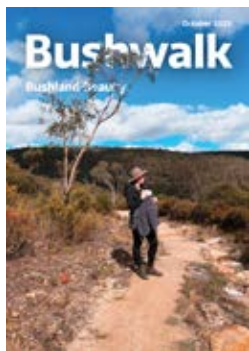
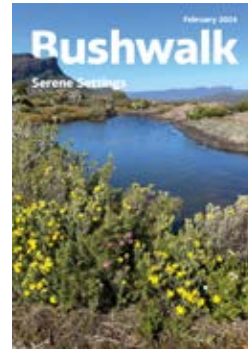
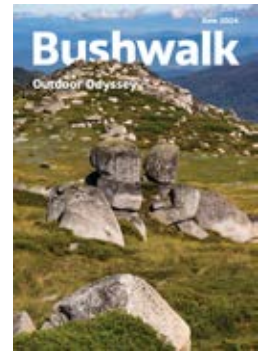
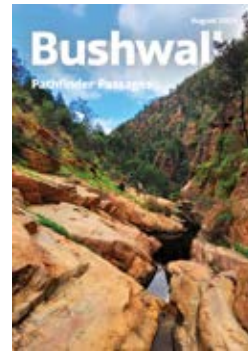
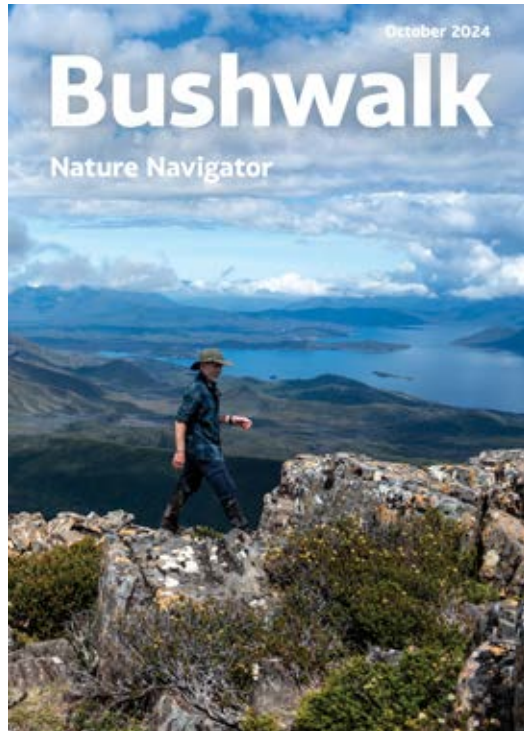
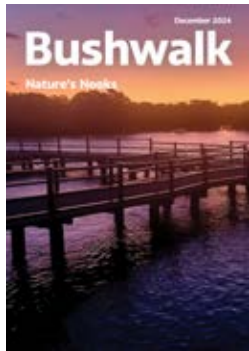
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This article first appeared in
[The Conversation](#) on 21 January 2025.



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