

The Bushwalker Survey 2013

Summary of results

In the second half of 2013, Bushwalking NSW set up an online survey to find out what readers thought of its magazine *The Bushwalker*. The opportunity was also taken to gauge how Bushwalking NSW was regarded by bushwalkers, and to gather some demographic information about bushwalkers.

Invitations to complete the survey were sent to all bushwalking clubs in NSW with a request that they distribute it to their members. An invitation was also included in the October issue of the magazine.

192 responses had been received by 25 December 2013. Not all respondents answered all questions, and it seems that some clubs chose to provide a “club” response rather than letting their members respond individually. Thanks are due to all the people who completed the survey.

The executive summary is that people really enjoy *The Bushwalker* as it is, but many good suggestions were made to improve it.

This document will attempt to summarise the answers given. A summary of comments offered is included lower down.

1. *The Bushwalker* magazine

1.1 How often do you read it?

Only 6% of respondents had never seen the magazine. The rest read all or some issues. Mostly this appears to be because of distribution problems within clubs.

1.2 Do you read the paper or electronic version?

60% of people read the paper version only. 19% read it electronically only. The rest read it in both media.

The under 50s were significantly more likely to read it electronically than on paper (40% to 27%) than the over 50s who preferred the paper version overwhelmingly to electronic (66% to 16%).

1.3 How do you get it?

The vast majority of readers got the magazine through a bushwalking club (65%), with the next most popular being from a friend (11%). Presumably these are people who are not members of a bushwalking club.

1.4 Would you prefer to read it on paper or electronically?

There was a small overall majority preferred electronic, indicating that both paper and electronic versions are still very popular. Of the people who preferred electronic, few wanted to see it in a format suitable for ebook readers. Most preferred it as a PDF file.

Under 50s preferred electronic 3 to 1, while over 50s preferred paper 2 to 1.

1.5 Please rate your enjoyment of/interest in each part of the magazine.

The results showed average enjoyment ranging from 3.3 to 4.2 on a scale of 1-5. This indicates that readers find the magazine to be very worthwhile, although some areas could perhaps be reviewed.

Editorial: 3.5

Trip reports (Australia): 4.1

Trip reports (overseas): 3.4

Gear reports: 3.6

Historical articles: 3.9

Photos: 4.2

News from Bushwalking NSW: 4.0

1.6 Have you ever visited or travelled with any of the companies who advertise in the magazine?

29% of the readers of the magazine have patronised the companies who advertise in the magazine. Extrapolated to the full membership of Bushwalking NSW, this would mean that 2610 bushwalkers patronise the advertisers, a significant number in all respects.

2. Bushwalking NSW

2.1 Have you ever heard of Bushwalking NSW (formerly the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW)?

Almost everyone had heard of Bushwalking NSW.

2.2 What do you think it does? (Tick all that apply)

Protect the interests of bushwalkers: 87%

Lobby for preservation and extension of bushwalking areas: 83%

Maintain a search and rescue unit for bushwalkers and others: 55%

Arrange personal accident and public liability insurance cover for members of bushwalking clubs: 82%

Publish a magazine about bushwalking: 89%

Provide information on bushwalking, camping and other related activities: 78%

Provide advice on risk management, legal matters, etc for clubs: 73%

There was no difference between under and over 50s.

The lowest response, 55%, was for maintaining a search and rescue unit. Many years ago, Bushwalking NSW operated its own search and rescue unit. Legal issues and the need to comply with VRA standards led to the search and rescue unit transforming itself into a separate organisation called Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Service. <http://bwrs.org.au>

Bushwalking NSW now provides funding each year to support the operations of BWRS.

2.3 Have you visited Bushwalking NSW's web site <http://bushwalking.org.au>?

Around two thirds of respondents had visited the Bushwalking NSW web site.

2.4 Bushwalking NSW will be redesigning its web site over the next few months. What would you like to see on the new website?

Many useful comments were provided.

3. About you

3.1 How often do you go bushwalking?

Around 80% of respondents bushwalk once or twice a month or more. More of the over 50s walk every week (35%) than the under 50s (20%). Under 50s do not seem to walk as frequently as the over 50s.

3.2 How long have you been bushwalking?

The vast majority have been walking for more than 10 years (79%).

3.3 Are you a member of a bushwalking or outdoors club?

All except one were members of a club.

3.4 Where do you live (town/suburb)?

2% were from ACT, 44% were from Sydney region (excluding Blue Mountains), and the rest came from all over NSW or other states.

3.5 Age range?

There are not many under 50 (16%), with the peak being in the 60-69 age range (39%). It is difficult to know whether this is representative of all bushwalkers in NSW or just those who are members of clubs.

3.6 Gender?

42% were female, 57% male. This was the same for under and over 50s.

3.7 Leave e-mail address?

39% of respondents left their e-mail address to receive a summary of the results, indicating an interest in this process, Bushwalking NSW and *The Bushwalker*.

Summary of comments from the survey

Most questions in the survey allowed for responders to add comments to expand on their primary answer. This is a summary of the common comments.

The Bushwalker

• Getting it

Clubs distribute paper copies to members at meetings, on walks and by mail. They also e-mail the electronic version to members.

Many people often only get it randomly, especially the paper copy. Most would like to get all issues.

Clubs without meetings don't have a good way to distribute paper copies. Some distribute it on walks, but only people on that walk get a copy. Some clubs complain about the work involved in distributing it to their members.

Sometimes there are not enough to go around. [If your club needs more copies, please ask them to contact the Bushwalking NSW office to get more sent.]

Some people discovered it through this survey. Some have never seen it.

Many seem to think the survey is about cutting the cost, ie, electronic only. [This was not the reason for the survey.]

Being on the web site helps some people who do not see the paper version.

Copies have been available from NPWS offices, hotels/backpackers near national parks, art galleries, outdoors shops.

Most prefer e-mail of the magazine or a link to download it, to avoid having to go to the website to see if there were new issues - they would not do it.

• Preferred medium

Many people would prefer paper as it is easier to read than a screen, especially for older people.

Some would accept electronic if cost of paper version is too high.

Many prefer the electronic version for lesser environmental impact and other reasons.

Some did not know there was an electronic version.

A paper version is necessary for people without Internet access.

The current print layout with multiple columns is not easy to read on a screen.

• Content

Ambiguity over role: Is it news or is it for "reading"/ideas for trips or is it to encourage people to join a club?

It is a very good read and offers lots of ideas for trips, or dreams for those who cannot make it.

It seems like a club magazine in many respects, rather than something promoting clubs and Bushwalking NSW.

People generally enjoy the magazine contents but there could be some improvements.

Lots of pros and cons about different types of articles and authors. Some articles too detailed and technical (eg, "lunch at 12:18pm"); would prefer to be more readable and less a chronological record.

Could include an appreciation of country being passed through. [Many of the comments overlook the fact that the editor can only publish what has been submitted.]

Should be more coverage of nature and environmental issues.

Want more variety in cover pictures, ie, not the same person all the time.

Some people think the layout is a bit dated.

Needs to be more variety in authors for book reviews.

A number of people valued the advertisement content, both equipment and travel.

Some would like articles to be searchable on the web.

Bushwalking NSW

Bushwalking NSW has too low a profile and is not effective at lobbying or advising clubs.

Concerns about availability of insurance and risk management info. [Bushwalking NSW runs on volunteers and would be happy to accept offers of help in many areas.]

Some clubs unhappy about having to do work on behalf of Bushwalking NSW, eg, distribute magazines.

Confusion over BWRS relation to Bushwalking NSW. [BWRS was originally a part of Bushwalking NSW, but is now an independent body and a member of the Voluntary Rescue Association (VRA). Bushwalking NSW contributes to the costs of running BWRS.]

Positive response to survey. About 40% want to know results.

Bushwalking NSW Website

Few like current site, and those that do like the content.

Design very dated. Needs modern design, architecture, navigation.

Not a good image for bushwalking in NSW.

Needs to focus on clubs more.

Needs training/education material

Magazine needs to be more accessible.

Links to other sites, eg, NPWS for track closures.

Lots of good suggestions.