

April 2023

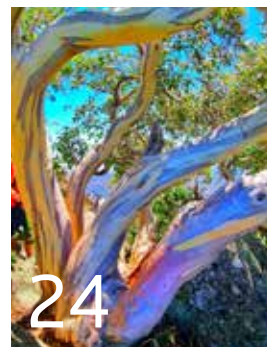
Bushwalk

Mountain Mysteries



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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 and looking forward to the next adventure.

In this edition, Michael takes us on a whirlwind trip around Dove Lake, Tasmania, climbing Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff. Nick takes us on a six-day adventure walking from Omeo Highway to Mount Hotham on the Australian Alps Walking Track, Victoria. Lamar takes us to Mount Buffalo NP, Victoria, to climb The Hump enjoying the distant views and magnificent snow gums. Ian takes us back to Western Australia, to the stunning Windjana Gorge getting up close and personal with living and fossilised ancient creatures.

Our photographic competition takes us to some of the most stunning wild places down under. Eva helps us cool off with an overview of some of the greater remote and more accessible wild swimming holes around the country. Christina busts the myth that snakes are deaf; it seems they can hear you scream. Just in time for Easter, Sonya shares the perfect recipe for pancakes for your next trip.

If you have not already, please check out the entire ten-year [back catalogue](#). If you can share it with your walking buddies, that would be a great encouragement to our little team here.

This magazine is written by bushwalkers for bushwalkers, so if you have an adventure you would like to share, please reach out.

Matt :)

Best wishes

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks)

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Cover image
Near Basalt Temple,
Bogong High Plains
Nick Bean



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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.

A Whirlwind Escapade

Text and photos
Michael Cridland

Tasmania – a hiking destination

Yes, an iconic destination for so many other reasons, but for me, visiting Tassie has always been about opportunities to explore its wild and rugged and remote wilderness areas.



Lindsay and Barn Bluff, 3 kilometres away and 340 metres higher



Cradle Mountain on the left with Barn Bluff on the skyline

For whatever reason – every reason under the sun – tripping to Tassie had been put on the back-burner for years ... too far away, too expensive, too busy with work and life in general.

Then, one quiet Saturday morning at home in Queensland, the tropical January heat got to me and with local bushwalking opportunities having oppressive weather forecasts, Tasmania was typed wishfully into the search engine. This is the story of the amazing, whirlwind, three-day adventure that took place when my good mate, Lindsay, and I committed to making this dream of exploring lutruwita a reality, when some five days later, on a Thursday evening, we landed in Launceston.

Brisbane to Tassie

Due to some minor delays touchdown into Launceston was slightly later than scheduled, but this didn't dampen the high spirits. Lindsay works for an Australian airline, so he flew with them. I used Frequent Flyer points, so I flew with another operator. We

regrouped, grabbed our hire car and headed straight for our wonderful friends at their beautiful Fork n Farm Artisan Homestead in the Tamar Valley. There we had a quick and long-overdue catch-up, grabbed the gas canisters they'd sourced for us (so we could start the walk early the next day) and continued on. It wasn't until almost two hours later at around midnight, having managed to dodge the plethora of amazing wildlife on the winding roads, that we arrived at our cottage at the Silver Ridge Retreat. This would prove to be a top spot as our base for the first and third nights of our long weekend, with the iconic and somewhat daunting Mount Roland towering above.

Ronny Creek to Cradle Mountain

An early start saw us complete the 40 minute drive to the trailhead and arrive not long after dawn. Only a few hundred metres into our walk, we were greeted by a beautiful little wombat who escorted us on the first section of what would be 36 kilometres of incredible hiking and rock scrambling. Over the next two days, I would pinch myself every few

metres, figuratively, but also once or twice, literally, as I couldn't quite believe we'd made this happen. The timeline from conception to execution was short. It added to the surreal sense of amazement and wonder, as we ventured into this incredible wilderness.

The other element that added to the experience was the weather – we'd watched it for the five days prior. It started out looking okay, then got better and better as the days went by. But of course, we knew the stories of the weather down this way being fickle, and we knew to expect the potential for four seasons across the two days. It didn't happen. The sun glowed against amazingly superb blue skies each morning, contrasting beautifully against the scattering of high clouds. Coupled with overcast afternoons and about three drops of rain while setting up the tents at Scott Kilvert Memorial Hut on Friday afternoon, the weather gods were in our corner.

After parting ways with our wombat guide, we continued on, through a magnificent section of the track. This section meanders through a moss-covered forest, following a crystal clear mountain stream and passing an enchanting waterfall. The scene was set. We had only just started and my mind was blown by the beauty of this country!

As we reached the boat shed on Crater Lake, we realised just how still it was ... there was not one ripple in the lake and the looming landscape above was reflected perfectly, almost making me dizzy when I tried to focus on where the watery reflection stopped and then met the rise of the mountain above. To top it off, the sky was the most amazing blue I think I had ever seen.

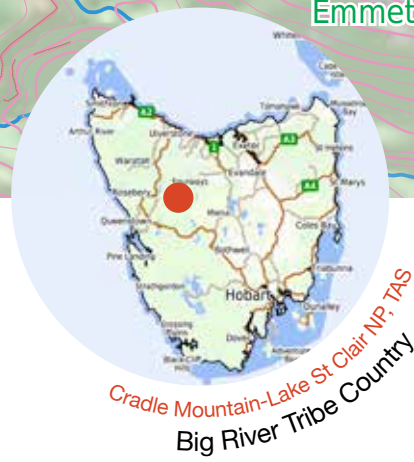
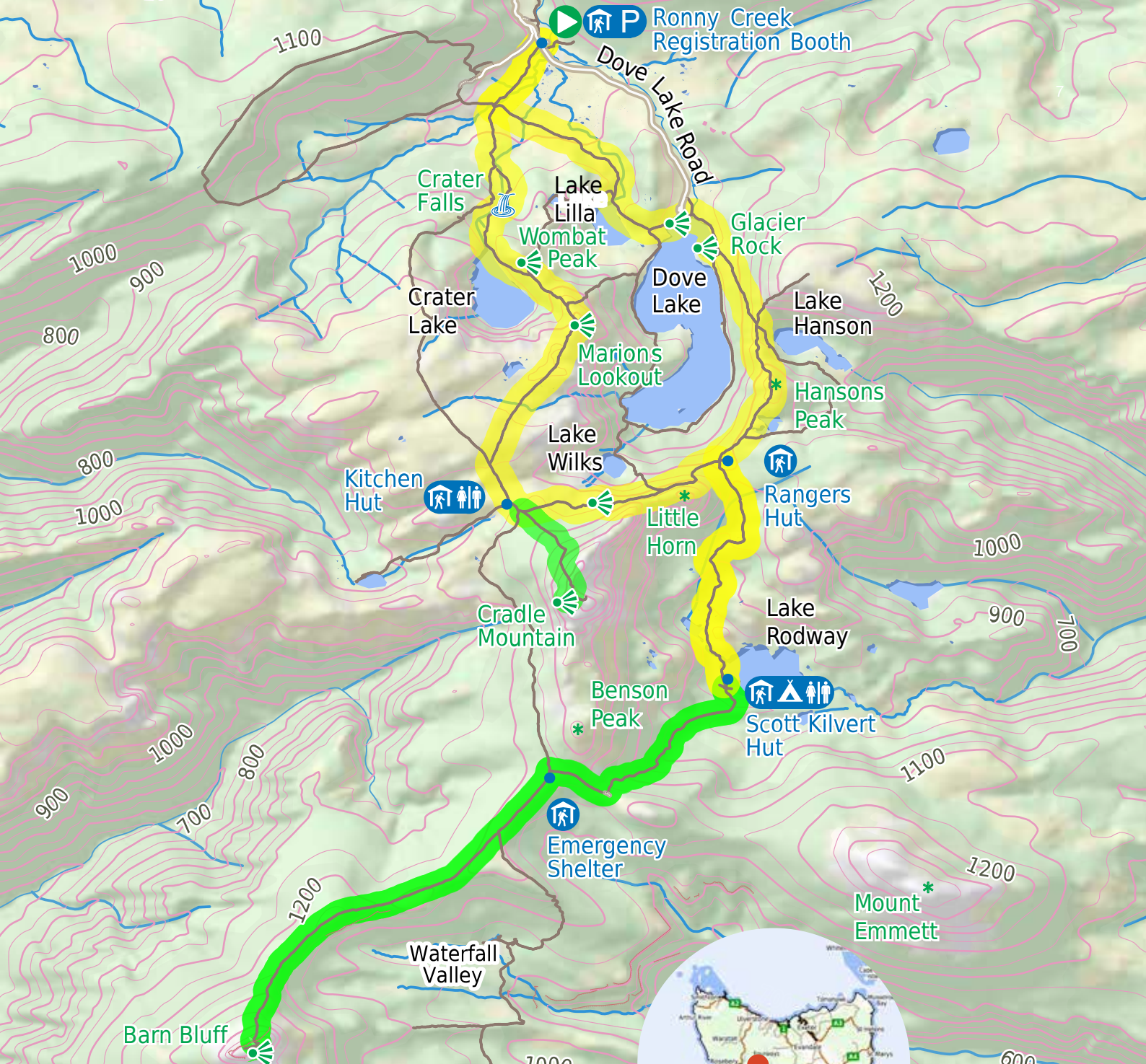
From here the track climbed steeply towards Marions Lookout, where we would have the most spectacular view of Dove Lake, Hansons Peak, Cradle Mountain and a distant Barn Bluff, peeking ever so discreetly above the horizon to the south.

Climbing Cradle Mountain

From Marions it was a short but awe-inspiring walk to Kitchen Hut at the base of Cradle Mountain, where we would leave our main packs and swap them for smaller daypacks for the steep ascent. Having read stories of the local black currawong birds being extremely crafty at unzipping pockets on packs to gain access to snacks, we were careful to use our pack covers and empty the most accessible of our pack pockets. Or so we thought ... on our return Linds would find that, sure enough, a sneaky bird or two had obliged to empty one of the pockets he'd forgot to. This proved a great laugh



Crater Lake



- | | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------|
| | Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed) | | Start of the walk |
| | Main track, side trip, alternate route | | Hut |
| | Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (50 metre interval) | | Campsite |
| | Lake, river, waterfall or creek | | Toilet |
| | | | Parking |

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

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Michael on the summit of Cradle with Barn Bluff in the centre distance

and for the rest of the trip, whenever we saw currawongs on the prowl, I happily reminded Linds that they were obviously waiting around for their next free feed – at his expense.

With our smaller packs on and being some 12 kilograms lighter, we started the climb up Cradle with great gusto. This proved to be short-lived and in no time at all our leg muscles were burning from the rock hopping and steep scrambling. I must admit though, I hadn't done this sort of hiking for a while, and so rediscovered my love of bagging peaks like this ... leaping from one rock to the next, all the while being amazed by the boundless vistas in every direction. It was some of the best fun I'd had out on a track in quite a while – a magnificent hike, with a gigantic obstacle course thrown in for good measure!

Enjoying the spoils of the view from the summit was next-level amazing! It felt like standing on top of the world and we were lucky enough to have it to ourselves!

Cradle Mountain to Scott Kilvert Memorial Hut

Once the peak was in the bag, the incredible views soaked up, and some pics and videos were taken to commemorate and remember the feat, we climbed down to regather our main packs. Lindsay's pack was slightly lighter now, thanks to the currawongs. We chose the Face Track which had beautiful views of Dove Lake to the north and the northern

aspect of Cradle's Little Horn and Weindorfers Tower looming directly above us for the length of the traverse.

The section of the trail following the Face Track and on to Scott Kilvert Memorial Hut was through some superb country and passed many picturesque lakes and tarns at the base of Cradle Mountain's eastern flank. We were pumped to be approaching our digs for the night while often pausing to look up at Cradle's peaks to remember the view from the top and smile at the accomplishment of making it to the peak under beautiful blue skies.

Making it to Scott Kilvert was a great feeling – it meant we could settle in and relax for the afternoon, while setting up the tents, checking out the hut and exploring the beauty of the surrounding area. Situated on the shores of Lake Rodway, the hut is a tribute to teacher Ewen Scott and one of his students, David Kilvert, who both tragically died when weather conditions deteriorated during a multi-day school hike in 1965. The hut provides shelter, or hikers can camp on the tent platforms while using the hut and facilities to add a touch of warmth and "luxury" to their adventures.

Choosing to use one of the four platforms for our tents, we enjoyed meeting some other hikers and shared stories of the track over sundowners and dinner while darkness descended on our magical little patch of the multiverse. It had been a big day.

Bagging Barn Bluff

Thankfully, we slept well and rose early to pack the tents and leave our main packs in the hut (out of the way of any curious currawongs).

The steep walk out of the Lake Rodway valley was thick with iconic Tasmanian wilderness. Moss-covered terrain, amazingly colourful wildflowers and views back towards the lake and the mountains beyond, had our bleary, early-morning eyes adjusting and widened in no time at all. It was a decent distance to

the top before we would spy Barn Bluff on the horizon, but the country was incredibly beautiful, so we took it all in and enjoyed the anticipation of reaching the top of this section, to arrive at Cradle Mountain's southern base.

From this vantage point we spied our goal for the day – the distinct mammoth that is Barn Bluff, at 1,559 metres above sea level. Still some 4 kilometres away, it was as daunting as ever, jutting from the earth like a mammoth Statesperson of the wilderness, overseeing and overshadowing all and sundry below.



Wildflowers at Cradle Cirque



Lake Rodway dawn

The track to the base of Barn Bluff starts as a narrow wooden boardwalk to protect the fragile alpine environment. Once at the base, with the legs now well and truly warmed up, the steep climb began and the cardio really started to get tested. As the vegetation among the rocks gave way to rocks upon more rocks, the climb became a scramble from one sideways pillar to the next.

This was similar to Cradle Mountain's climb, and we were in our element, loving every minute of the ascent. The sun was rising higher in the sky, gleaming between Barn Bluff's iconic pillars of rock, with an amazing blue sky and the perfect smattering of beautiful, contrasting white cloud to complete a picture perfect summit view – again, all to ourselves. The summit was the definition of serene. One of the quietest spots I think I have ever been. We soaked it in, while watching the clouds off to the north-east build and darken ever so slightly.

Back to the Trackhead via Hansons Peak

We started descending Barn Bluff knowing we had quite a day ahead of us – about 15 kilometres further, on top of the 6 kilometres already under our belts. With only our daypacks to contend with until we returned to

our main packs at Scott Kilvert, we made the most of the easier walking – the main thing slowing our progress being the rocks on Barn Bluff and magnificent views as we descended towards Lake Rodway.

With the main packs donned and the peaks of Cradle and Barn Bluff bagged and behind us, we left the hut to hike out to the trackhead and complete the two-day loop. This last section was long. It may have been all in the mind, but I didn't enjoy it as much as the earlier hiking. The legs were spent and although the views from Hansons Peak were glorious and the terrain overlooking Dove Lake was superb, we were nonetheless heading back towards civilisation. The tourists at the northern end of Dove Lake near the carpark and bus drop-off point did nothing to lift the spirits either. And then, I caught myself and reminded myself of where we were, where we had just been and quickly returned to the precious present moment to smile and regain that sense of achievement for what we had accomplished over the last two days. I slowed the pace – just a little, as it was pretty exciting to get back to the car and a cold drink – and soak up the last section of trail back to Ronny Creek. We finished as we started, with three wombats escorting us back to the trackhead.



Barn Bluff talus with Cradle in the distance



Barn Bluff

What a whirlwind!

We spent Saturday night back at our Silver Ridge Retreat cottage, enjoying a scrumptious take-away feed and a few quiet celebratory drinks – reminiscing our epic adventure. Sunday was a self-drive tour of the incredibly scenic north coast in our little rental car, before finding some pub grub and old world

culture back towards Launceston and nearby to the airport to make our Sunday night flights home.

What a whirlwind weekend, full of amazing memories! The tiny part of the Tasmanian wilderness we explored is absolutely magical. Tassie delivered and I can't wait to return to explore further!



“

Michael lives in Queensland with his family and has always shared his love of nature and everything outdoors with his two young children, including recently introducing them to overnight hiking. He tries to get out into the bush with his family, friends or solo, as often as possible on day hikes or multi-day adventures. Recent trips include with the kids to Mount Barney NP, and Kosciuszko NP. Michael enjoys combining his love of the outdoors with a bit of amateur photography and often summarises his adventures into shared memories on his [YouTube channel](#). His bucket list of incredible hiking destinations grows longer every day.

AAWT

Omeo Highway to Mount Hotham

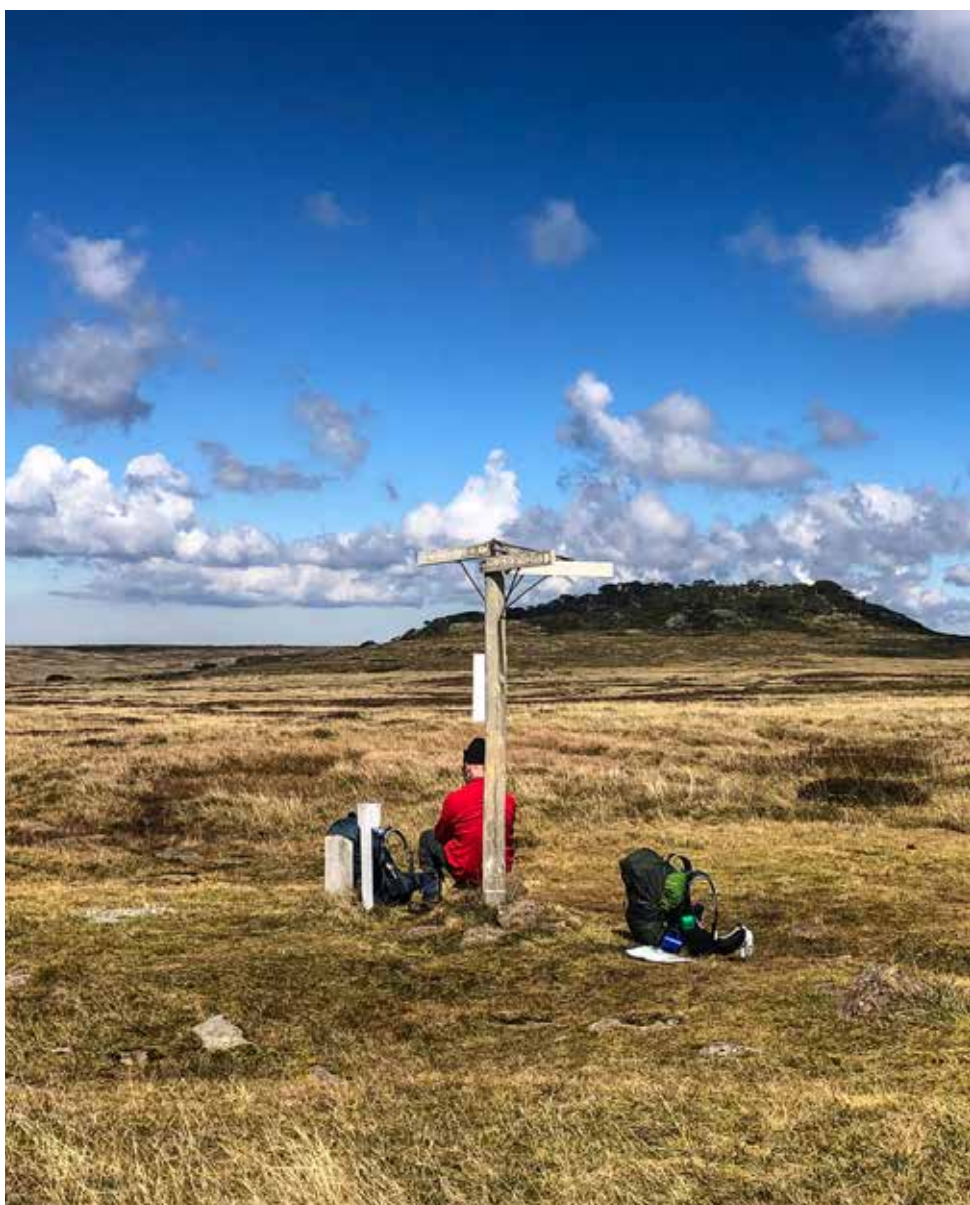
Text and photos
Nick Bean

The concept

Easter, 2021

After completing other sections of the AAWT in multi-day walks, namely, Rumpff Saddle to Mount Howitt (five days), then Mount Howitt to Mount Hotham (six days), this one seemed a natural to do. How hard could it be - after all, we did The Crosscut Saw and the Dry Barrys in April, easy ... perhaps.

A night at Mount Hotham, a good meal at the pub and we were ready to walk. Leaving my car near The General at Hotham, we headed off with friends towards Omeo. While it was an easy drive, the bit from Omeo to Glen Wills was a little windy, to say the least. Not good for those of us that suffer car sickness. Well, the good news is, I kept breakfast down and we unloaded the car at the AAWT leading to Mount Wills. The adventure begins.



Pole 333 and Mount Jim



Mount Wills Hut
Stephen Lake

Follow the yellow triangle. Otherwise, look for flagging tape. Otherwise, look for tracks people have made. Or, based on the map, take a punt and walk. It works out in the end.

Day 1: Omeo Highway to Big River Saddle, 10.4 km

Starting elevation	1200 metres
Maximum elevation	1757 metres
End elevation	~1200 metres

The first 2-2.5 kilometres is an easy ramble along an old 4WD track, but you reach a point where the climbing starts. From the 2.5 kilometre mark, it's up until you reach the Mount Wills South area where it levels out a little. Time to regain a bit of breath before heading up to Mount Wills proper. Bear in mind, we had seven days of supplies on my back (well, breakfast and dinners, and Carolyn had the lunches and the Trangia cooker). Track wise it was quite clear, with just a few fallen trees to step over.

The track from Mount Wills South to Mount Wills seemed to go on f..o..r..e..v..e..r. But, as we approached the top, we started to see the views around us. And what a beaut view it was, along with large slabs of rock to rest on.

At the top was Mount Wills Hut with two bunk rooms, a pot belly stove and a general area, plus running water from the tank outside. Luxury! After a brief stop, we headed NNE down the 4WD Mount Wills Track. A gentle decline made the walk easy. It was all downhill from here to the campsite for the night at Big River Saddle.

“

The track from Mount Wills South to Mount Wills seemed to go on f..o..r..e..v..e..r.

Roughly two kilometres down Mount Wills Track a yellow marker indicated a left turn, to the west. The footpad was fairly clear, and a few yellow markers gave a clue that this is the way down. For the next two kilometres we followed an ever steepening track, with the main issue being the track having lengths of bark, which proved to be very slippery. But we survived.

As we approached the bottom half of the walk, tall eucalyptus trees become the dominant species. The last few 100 metres

had a fair amount of blackberries crowding the track and surrounds. This would be an ongoing theme for the next day. A road soon appeared, indicating the campsite area.

A lone trail bike rider zoomed past as I waited next to Big River Road for Carolyn. Other than that we had no company, which surprised me, as the road is in good condition (2WD really), it's Easter, and the road joins the Omeo Highway probably 5-6 kilometres away. But I'm happy for the lack of company tonight. Just Carolyn and myself, in a beaut bush environment. Perfect.

There's a clearing on a bend in the road. In the picture below the road is 20-25 metres to the right of the tent. John Chapman's book mentions water 500 metres on Big River Road towards the highway. While it is flowing well, it's almost impossible to reach because of the blackberries. Plus, the route down

“






While it is flowing well, it's almost impossible to reach because of the blackberries.





(roughly 1.2-1.5 metres) is extremely challenging. Another source, about 180 metres in the opposite direction, is Mount Wills Creek, which flows across Big River Road. A short hike up from the campsite led us to this source. Get water from the uphill side, on the right hand side. It was flowing well.

The call of the wild. While we have seen Alpine Dingoes on our walks, we haven't heard them before. A rather mournful call. Lonely in some respects.



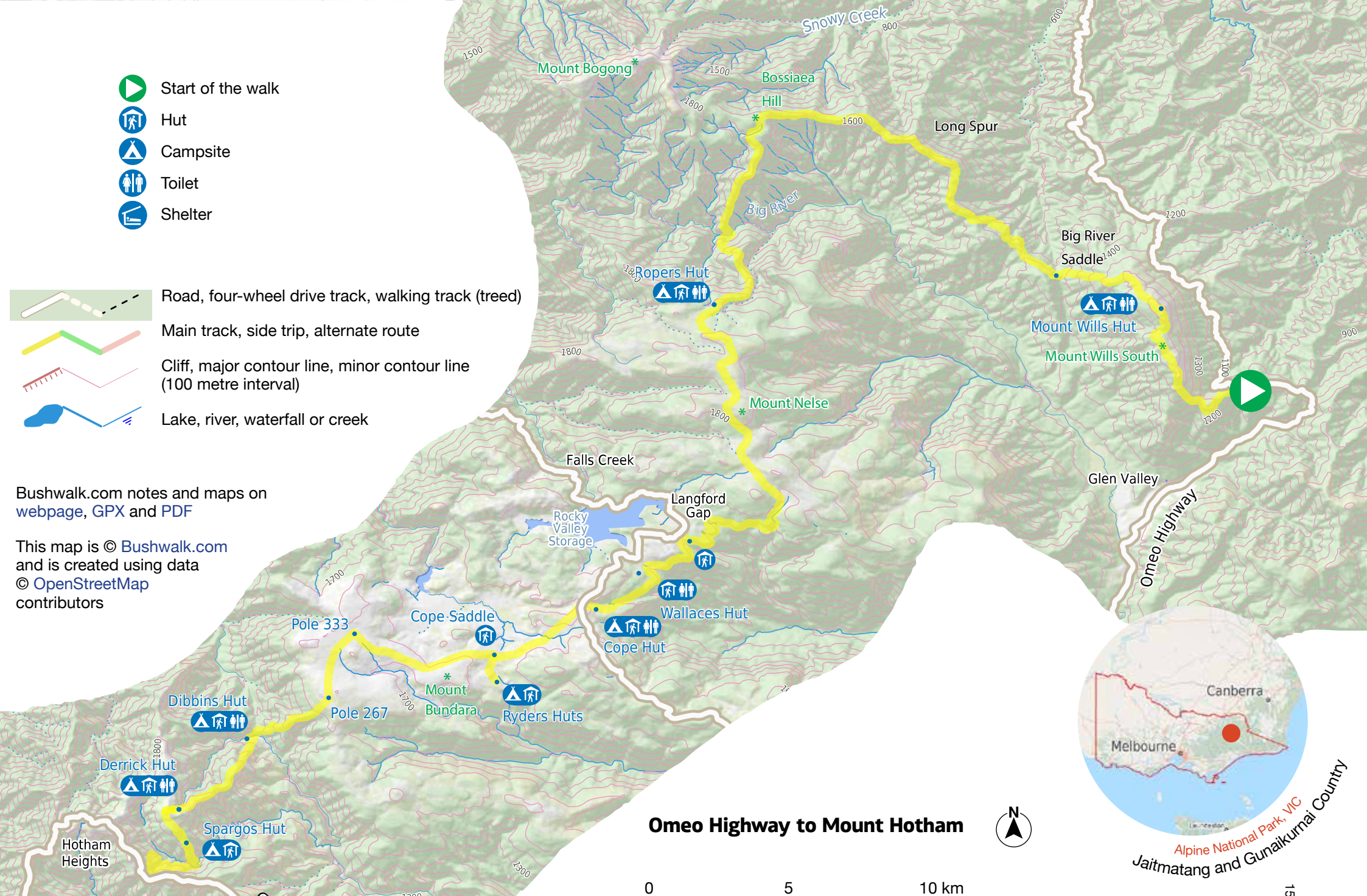
Big River Saddle

-  Start of the walk
-  Hut
-  Campsite
-  Toilet
-  Shelter

-  Road, four-wheel drive track, walking track (treed)
-  Main track, side trip, alternate route
-  Cliff, major contour line, minor contour line (100 metre interval)
-  Lake, river, waterfall or creek

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Omeo Highway to Mount Hotham



Alpine National Park, VIC
Jaitmatang and Gunaikurnai Country

Day 2: Big River Saddle to Maddisons Hut Site, 14.7 km

Starting elevation	1200 metres
Maximum elevation	1775 metres
End elevation	~1700 metres

After a beaut meal and a good night's sleep, the pain of climbing Mount Wills was forgotten. I mean, it was only 10.4 kilometres. Yeah, a bit of a slog going up, but remember, going up a hill means going down a hill.

Long Spur was our challenge today. For nearly half of this walk, it's 2WD or 4WD tracks in various stages of disrepair. The first few hours really just involve following a vehicle track. So, auto pilot on and take in the views. There's a bit of up and down, mostly up, but nothing too dramatic. The end of the 4WD section was marked by a wooden picnic table and a sign "The Long Spur", a good place for an early lunch.

There are two picnic tables in the next kilometre or so. The first was probably dropped off by 4WD, and the second a

few hundred metres further was perhaps disassembled and carried. The third is a fair distance to travel with a disassembled wooden table. Impressive!

After lunch, we headed off for the final 6 kilometres to Maddisons Hut Site. It was a mixed bag, walking wise. Once again the walk trended up and down, with up being the dominant aspect. Blackberries appeared along sections of the track, with dense scrub making it hard work.

“

It was a mixed bag, walking wise.

At one point a couple of kilometres from the picnic tables, we descended into a saddle, which gave us a breather. Climbing out of the saddle, we could see the last long climb of the day, Bossiaea Hill. As we started the climb, we had clear views of Long Spur and Mount



View towards Maddisons from Bossiaea Hill



Camp near Maddisons Hut site

Wills in the distance. When walking for a few days it always strikes me that the path you have travelled can be seen fading off into the distance. And this was only day two!

Bossiaea Hill is a fairly moderate climb. The views make it worthwhile. The track curves around to the left, never really reaching the top, but traversing around. Once we slipped around Bossiaea Hill, the final downhill section appeared, along with snow poles, which will be with us all the way to Mount Hotham. As we wandered down the open plain, a creek on our left became apparent. Ultimately, this is our water source at the campsite. About 500 metres before the campsite we noticed a couple of patches where feral horses or deer had wallowed and muddied up the creek.

Maddisons Hut site is a little cosy if you have more than two tents. A couple had already set up camp at the site, and when we scouted

around, we found another spot 100 metres along the track, towards Cleve Cole. In the end, while happy to be social, we moved to this new location. In the photo above, the walking track is only 5-7 metres below the tent. But we didn't expect too many others. A few groups came in late, but most were heading to Cleve Cole Hut, two kilometres away.

One thing about clear weather conditions is the ability to just unpack stuff where and when you feel like it. This is completely different when it's raining, and you're frantically trying to keep everything dry ... you have to think strategically, how to pack things, then unpacked, to minimise getting wet.

Long Spur is a bit of a slog, but it's not hard and the views are great.

Day 3: Maddisons Hut site to Ropers Hut, 8.4 km

Starting elevation	1700 metres
Minimum elevation	1050 metres - yes, a long way down
End elevation	~1700 metres

Day three - the big one. I've hiked for over 30 years but not yet done Big River, so it was weighing on my mind. The first 1.6 kilometres of the walk was easy, a nice stroll in the Snow Gums. We started to head down the ridge, fairly clear walking. In the far distance the Bogong High Plains beckon. In the immediate distance, the top of the ridge still shows, with a gentle saddle to wander. The views of Mount Wills were inspiring. We were there, days ago, but that's one heck of a valley dividing us and the Bogong High Plains. Hmm ...

Meanwhile, I noted a number of the track markers were made from old (beer?) cans and nailed up. If it saves carrying them out ...



Beer can as a marker on the track

By now, the Snow Gums have given way to a taller forest, indicating our drop into a lower altitude. Now, the walk headed down more steeply, zig zagging some of the way, and in other parts it's just straight down. Careful foot placement becomes paramount. And time seems to drag on, with the tops of tall trees still appearing below. The sound of the running river starts to be heard.

The forest canopy became dense, but the track was wide and clear. I noted on the way down that someone had been here in the past couple of weeks with a chainsaw. Freshly cut fallen trees. Sawdust across the track. An impressive hike in with such gear, I thought.

The last 100 metres are flat and take you past an area that one could pitch a tent. But it would be crowded. Looking across the river, flowing with reasonable vigour, I see lots of one metre sticks on both sides of the crossing. A sharing scheme appears to be in place, with people using, then leaving on the opposite bank.

Carolyn, being the lover of water (and a white water kayaker), quickly pointed out a path though the knee-deep water, as it bubbled past. Parts of the river looked challenging. But, we are here now!

Quickly shedding my shoes, socks and pants, I tucked them and my phone into a waterproof storage bag, attached it to my pack and put on my rubber kayaking shoes - they have superb grip in these crossings. And away I went. As expected, the water was cold, and with the help of two sticks, I managed to make it across without any drama. Close behind was Carolyn. I was hoping to get footage of the crossing, but it was not to be, maybe next time. Note: the chain which would normally assist with the crossing was broken. You can see it in the picture (on the next page) wrapped around the log on the right.

After the half hour of mucking around in the water, it was back to the serious bit, getting up Duane Spur. In some respects, I'm a "give me a hard, steep climb, but lets get it over" type walker. Duane Spur isn't really like that, unfortunately! It goes hard for two thirds of the way then dips down, then just wanders on f..o..r..e..v..e..r, or, at least it seems like that. The last kilometre is tantalising, as we meander through snow gums, bushy bits that open up, then close up again.

In my spare time, between breaths, I noticed a wombat burrow on the side of the track. Active, from the looks of the diggings. Looking back across the valley, T Spur loomed large. That's one big lump to walk, up or down, but we had done it.

We noticed the toilet first, then Ropers Hut, further away - finally arriving at about 4 pm. There were two other pairs camping in the area, both gathered around a tent. Without even putting down packs, we joined in the conversation. One couple had been here for

a couple of days, the other couple, Adam and Bec, were doing the entire AAWT from south to north. This was day 35 for them, but they had started from Federation Square and, on foot, spent five days trekking to the start of the walk! They were planning to take sixtyish days for the trek. Why rush - enjoy.

Day 4: Ropers Hut to Ryders Huts, 25.6 km

And yep, a slog.

Starting elevation	1710 metres
Maximum elevation	1860 metres
End elevation	~1660 metres

Today was regarded as an "easy day", walking the relative flats after three days of hills and mountains. And in some respects, it was easy. All of the tracks in this section are either gravel roads or well worn walking paths. So, set the auto pilot on, brain off, as far as real navigation goes, and enjoy the scenery with beautiful sunny conditions.

Leaving Ropers we had a last visit to the water source, Duane Creek, with its small gushing waterfall, and ice cold water. Such

a treat. A gentle climb saw us heading past the intersection with Timms Spur. Behind us, Mount Bogong loomed in the background.

With Mount Nelse North and Mount Nelse on our left we dropped packs, with the intention of "climbing" Mount Nelse North. Heading towards the summit, we realise it's a distance away and return to our walk. While certainly an easy one, we did have mileage to do today.

The landscape up on the Bogong High Plains is broad and flat. It's big in size, not height. Nearly six kilometres from Ropers we were near two other huts, Johnstons Hut to the east and Edmondsons Hut to the west, each 10-15 minutes from the main pole line. Twelve years ago, I stayed at Johnstons Hut. A nice location.

Between Marum Point Track and Langford East aqueduct we walked through a treed section, with views of Mount Cope, beckoning in the distance mid frame. Our plan today is to skirt around to the right of the peak, then head to Ryders Huts. At this stage we were shy of halfway. As I said earlier, it's a big place to walk. Distance is the key word.



From the AAWT, between Marum Point Track and Langford East Aqueduct, the view of the Rocky Valley Dam peeks through the rolling hills. From Langford Gap to the turn off to Cope Hut, it's just a flat walk beside the aqueduct or pipe. Back to auto-pilot mode, enjoy the views, enjoy the bird life.

A short distance before Cope Hut we had an option to head up to Wallaces Hut and following the pole line to Cope Hut, between the aqueduct and the road. But, since I was

going off John Chapman's book, I didn't have any details about this section, so continued as per the book. I was aware of the option, but, I thought we might as well keep going. Ah, Cope Hut. A little busy, a little crowded for our liking (remember, this was Easter).

Crossing the sealed Bogong High Plains Road, we were on the final stretch to Cope Saddle and Ryders Huts. Just follow the pole line and a foot track that had matting for long sections.



Marum Point Track with Mount Cope on the skyline

In fog this section was confusing. We saw an old sign stating "Mount Cope ½ mile", probably dating back to the 1960s. At this point, there's what appears to be an old 4WD track from the Bogong High Plains Road, which merges into the AAWT. Both tracks, 4WD and Mount Cope summit, show on the map and GPS.

Ryders Huts area. No one around. Tranquil. While we could see the huts from Cope Saddle, as a shiny structure, the map and GPS showed different tracks to get there. It's easy, once you know how. While we could have stayed at Cope Saddle, it was far more scenic to walk the two kilometres or so. Also, camping at Ryders Huts is more sheltered. It's a flat walk, so just slip into auto mode and enjoy.



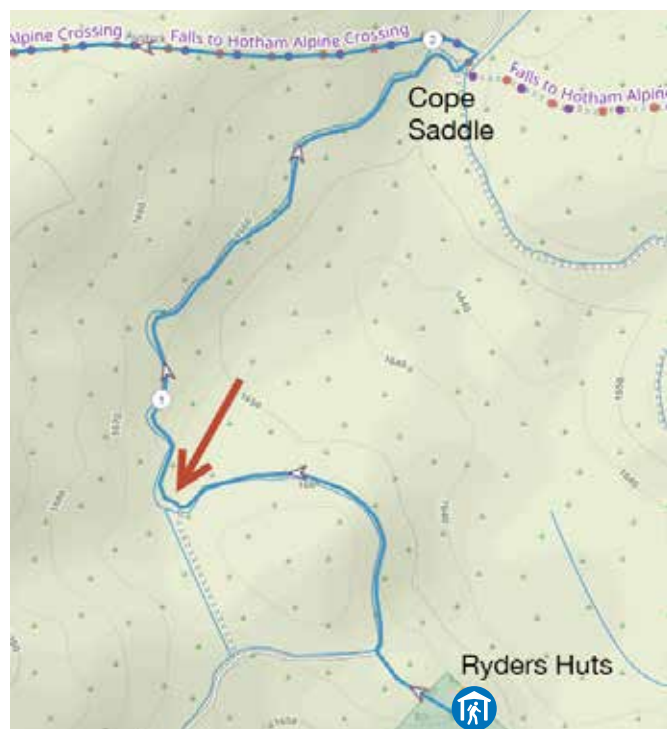
Mount Cope sign

What's not obvious when finding Ryders Huts is the left turn, where an old aqueduct heads east, the red arrow on the map. This wasn't on the map I had or on the GPS. However, it is on the online map supplied by Plotaroute, which is how I can show you, after the event. I had a gut feeling that we turned left, so we went that way, and completed the loop before realising that we had gone past the hut. Water was another issue, as the only place to fill up is from the aqueduct. This was the only place in the six days that we filtered the water. While it was flowing, we felt more comfortable in filtering and treating the water with UV. I'm not a fan of the tablets; the magic UV wand has been fine.

Day 5: Ryders Huts to Dibbins Hut, 12.1 km

Starting elevation	1660 metres
Maximum elevation	1784 metres
End elevation	1351 metres

Today really was an easy day. Only 12 kilometres or so, with a stretch downhill. It was a quiet night with no sounds to alarm us, but I had a very wet tent from condensation. Inside also suffered from the drips. My brand new Mont sleeping bag became a little damp near the feet area! But, inside the bag, toasty warm.



The red arrow marking the turn to Ryders Huts

Today's walk involved a big loop around Mount Jim then a drop down to Dibbins Hut near Cobungra Gap. After the past four days of pushing it, with much lighter packs, since we've eaten most of the food, today was a day to enjoy.



Ryders Huts camp area

From a tent perspective, the Ryders campsite was probably one of the best we had for this trip. It was flat, so there was no sliding down the tent at night. It was like a mowed lawn and there were no ants. It was also the first night we had with frost.

Cope Saddle is to the left of the image below, probably 500 metres away, as we start to climb the back of Mount Bundara.

Now, for such a remote area, communications by phone (mostly 4G) is excellent from Ropers Hut to the western edges of the High Plains. Towers on Mount McKay near Falls Creek and on Mount Hotham mean you are always accessible ... good or bad. I had a family Zoom meeting to make at 11 am. All I had to do was find a reasonable boulder and participate!

At the intersection of the AAWT and Tawonga Huts track, pole 333, we were roughly halfway through our walking day. We had plenty of time and just stopping to look at creeks, wildflowers and the scenery was wonderful. Great weather to top it off.



Zoom meeting on the High Plains

Now I had been at this intersection back in the 1990s. One summer a friend and I hiked from Hotham to Falls Creek and back, via Westons Hut. From memory it was a hard slog up Basalt Temple. The good 'ol days.

It was along this stretch, between the intersection and the SEC Hut track that we saw our first feral horses. I'd never really seen them before. Initially we could see them way off in the distance. But, as we rounded some of the gentle hills, we would see more. We probably counted 30-40 in groups of 6-10 horses. As much as I don't want them in the High Plains, there is a certain magnificence about them. We also saw two horse riders off in the distance, heading east, maybe in the direction of Ryders Huts.



Looking back towards Mount Cope

At the intersection of the AAWT and the SEC Hut track, pole 267, we had a break, ready for the final trek down. As we waited, a group came up from Basalt Temple. They were doing a day walk from Hotham to Falls Creek. A great day for such a trip.

The initial two kilometres is easy, a wide, gentle slope that soon narrows to a ridge, which then drops steeply. Just before the drop, the views of Hotham and Feathertop are stunning. The Dibbins campsite is split between the tent platforms and the hut area, with a few tent sites in between. Call me old fashioned, but I prefer the site next to the hut. For starters, it has the table to use for meal preparations. And we are upstream from the other sites.

Day 6: Dibbins Hut to Mount Hotham, 8.8 km

Starting elevation	1351 metres
Maximum elevation	1782 metres
End elevation	1680 metres

With the car parked down near the pub (The General), we made a detour at about the four kilometre mark. We could have headed to Mount Loch carpark, then walk the remaining distance along the road. Or, plan B, turn left and head down the Huts Track, past Spargos Hut, down to Swindlers Creek and up to the road. We took plan B.

We had time today, so, we meandered up to the four kilometre mark, looking at the bugs, flowers, etc. At the top we took a left turn on the Huts Walk, towards Spargos Hut. Once again, looking back to the east, we could pick out mountains and plains that we had wandered through, just days ago. Soon we were looking down on Spargos Hut. Just a bit more down, then a bit more up, and we have finished.

The section up from Swindlers Creek is a bit of a push. Besides nearly standing on a Copperhead snake, we were running a bit behind schedule. The drama there is, the pub would stop serving meals! But, we made it.

Summary

Overall, this is a great walk. Thanks to our friend Rob and his son Matt, who dropped us off at the start. While some of the days had us walking 20+ kilometres we never felt pushed by it. Navigation was mostly with map and compass, with GPS only being used on the first day when climbing Mount Wills to clarify a right turn we had to make, at the start of the climb. After that, it was mostly 4WD or well worn tracks.

Piece by piece, section by section, we wander the AAWT. Hopefully in two years or so, we will do the whole thing.



“

Nick is from Melbourne and has spent most of his working life in IT. He has been bushwalking for 40 years, trekking in mountainous parts of Australia, Chile and Argentina. Of late he has gone on multiday walks, such as the AAWT. A passion in photography has meant there are times when camera gear almost outweighs essential items. Carolyn is from Manjimup, Western Australia, and has spent her working life nursing. Between nursing stints, she travelled, walked and cycled around the globe. Most memorable are cycling large parts of Australia, Tasmania and England, trekking in Nepal, and six months in Africa.

Mount Buffalo

Victoria

Text and photos
Lamar Quentin

The Hump and The Cathedral

After a recent traumatic event I found myself feeling defeated. Along with the physical effects of the ordeal came severe anxiety and depression. Now you might be wondering, I thought this was going to be an article about hiking and it is. However, to really understand the depths of this hike I feel it incumbent that you come along on the journey with me and I hope that you too might find yourself exploring this very track one day and in doing so like me, rediscover that light within you.



Atop the peak of The Hump



Near the summit of The Hump with The Cathedral on the left

When I tell you that high up there overlooking the horizon with the valleys and plains below, there is nothing that can compare to that feeling of being one with the gods. Alternatively, if you're more spiritual, it's a space of feeling so safe and so connected with your whole mind and body you have a version of peace like nothing you have ever experienced before.

Following yet another tormented night I found myself at an impasse, one that only those of you who have dwelled in the deep dark depths of your mind can understand. I needed something, not like a sign from the universe sort of something but more an ember, a spark even so thin as a fragment of hope that could allow me to feel, well, me again. Being the experienced hiker I am, I already had my pack

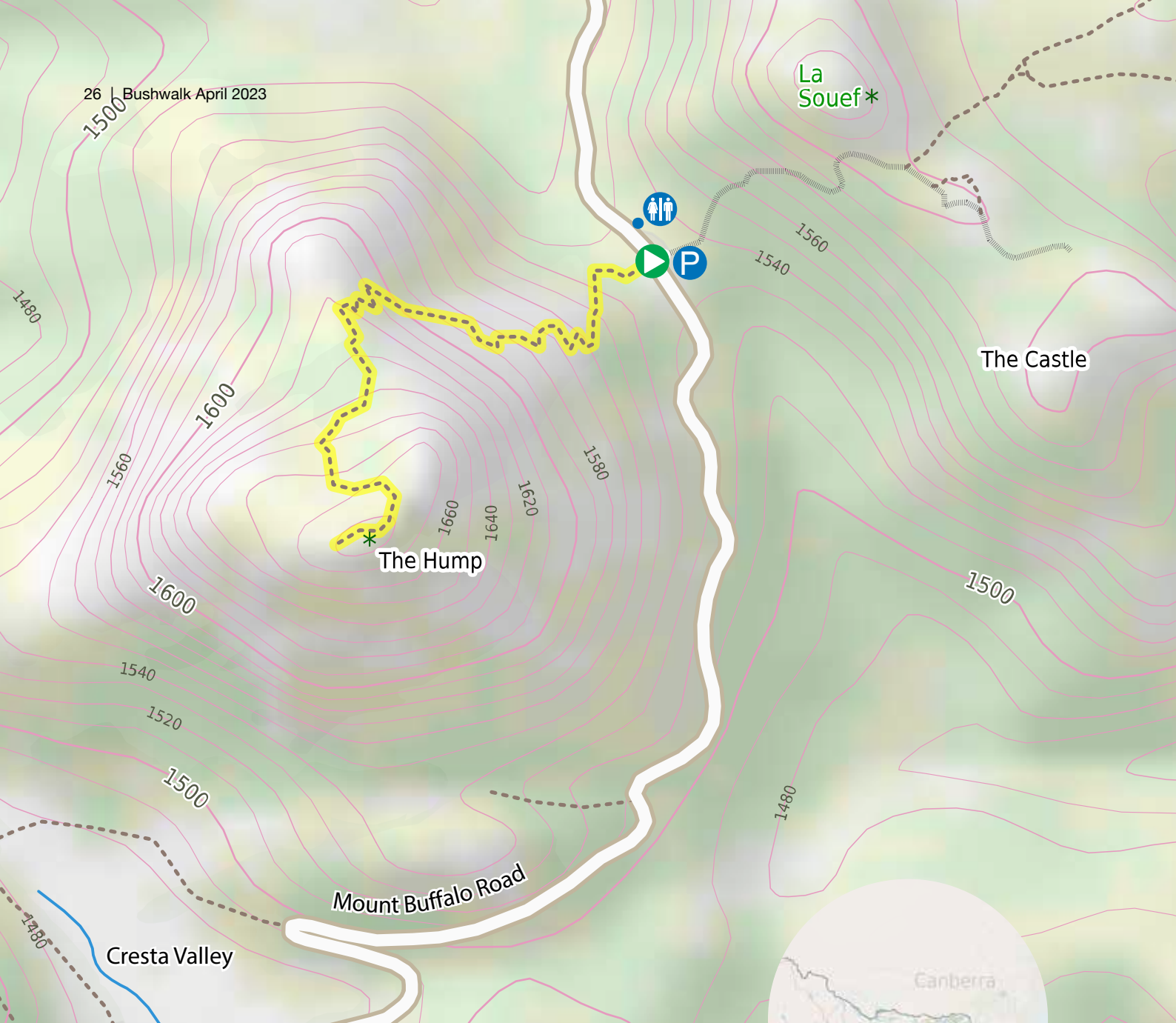
in the corner of the room ready to go, just add water, as it always is for those spur of the moment day trips all walkers know and love. A quick check of the weather showed no warnings and so I headed off in search of the answer I was so desperately seeking.

One to two hours from Wangaratta or Albury is the turnoff to the stately Mount Buffalo with its highest peak The Horn sitting at a noble 1723 metres. This is an easy to reach spot for most beginner walkers, though experienced hikers know that often some of the toughest walks give the greatest reward. Now if you're in your twenties and perhaps even your early thirties and find yourself thinking, but Lamar this isn't that tough, you're forgiven as you know not yet the state of a person's knee's come their late thirties.

“

... you have a version of peace like nothing you have ever experienced before.

Given its bold and commanding granite boulder structure settled upon the side of the mountain rising high above the plateau, The Cathedral is aptly named, and is not a hike to be scoffed at. This 1.9 kilometre grade 4 walk is on a well-defined track with stone steps laid by hand in the 1930s. Beginning at the



Cathedral-Hump Track



0 m 50 100 200 300 400 500 m



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



Main track, side trip, alternate route



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



Lake, river, waterfall or creek



Start of the walk



Toilet



Parking

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

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

Cathedral Saddle car park on the Horn Road, this hike is alive with an array of wildflowers best seen in late spring. It's a fauna admirer's dream with numerous native lizards sunning themselves along the rocks, magnificent coloured indigenous birds and I even spotted some elusive blue banded bees along the way. The track twists and turns steeply, bringing you to the base of The Cathedral's boulders.

For those who enjoy the challenge of hiking and rock climbing, there are crags along the way. Bolt anchors and trad protection is used, with Parks Victoria requesting that climbers avoid further bolting or pegs to minimise the human impact on this magnificent landscape.

Once you reach The Cathedral you have the option to turn around and make your way back down or, take the path less travelled and climb The Hump, 1695 metres, the second highest peak on the mountain and the fifty-ninth highest in Victoria. In my view this is absolutely well worth it and I feel is the best spot on Buffalo. In the early 1930s a hut was constructed here to provide shelter for skiers.

As you traverse the Cathedral Track towards the Hump, it is hard to believe a hut was once located all this way up by the Cathedral

boulders giving shelter to wayward skiers early in the 1930s. Hiking this track out of snow season really gives a sense of wonder at how much we have changed and achieved through the generations with safer skier sanctuaries now located at Dingo Dell, the Horn and the Gorge Walk car park.

“

It's a fauna admirer's dream ...

On the way up hikers are greeted with breathtaking views of The Cathedral and surrounding hills giving a backdrop for some of the most prolific sunrise and sunset photographs out there, a commanding scene you do not want to miss. A must do is The Hump track that carries on beyond this point. A warning: the steep twists and turns can be challenging to some and trekking poles for the return trip will get solid use.

If you thought The Horn gave impressive views, the magical scenes from The Hump bestow a categorically exquisite 360 degree panorama of the Kiewa, Tawonga and Hume



View from The Hump

valleys. Not only that, but on a clear day hikers are rewarded with glorious views overlooking the alp's most regal mountains such as Big Ben, Mount Bogong, Mount Feathertop and Mount Buller. There are native wattles along the way but a must see is the most magnificent snow gum I have ever been privileged to experience at the very tip of The Hump slightly off the beaten track hidden behind The Hump boulder. At the right time of day in mid-summer where the sun sits at just the right spot, this snow gum glows like a stunning rainbow, and you could easily mistake it for the rainbow gums only found in the tropics, a wow moment for sure. Take the time to pause, really pause and breathe in the magnificence of this place that in my opinion is unmatched to anywhere else in Victoria. This is a walk that everyone simply must do at least once.

“

... a must see is the most magnificent snow gum I have ever been privileged to experience ...

So you ask, but Lamar did you find what you were looking for? I began The Hump hike lost in my own darkness searching for a way out, something to give me just a glimmer of hope to keep fighting. Not only did I find that, I experienced a moment high up on that peak surrounded by flawless majesty. This felt like new breath injected into my soul, as though the gods Baldr and Iðun had reached out and breathed it to me themselves. I found me. I hope that you explore The Hump trail and find what it is you're looking for too, be that a spark of your own, a reason to keep living, or a view that you can hold in as much awe as I did that will stay with you forever, bringing a peace whenever you may need it most.



Snow gum at The Hump

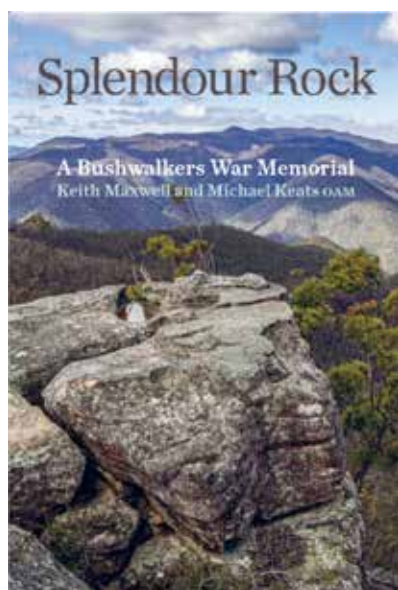
Just Published

Splendour Rock A Bushwalkers War Memorial

Keith Maxwell and Michael Keats OAM

The Bushexplorers published a new book in February 2023. It is dedicated to the Splendour Rock.

Australia's most remote war memorial, Splendour Rock, is one of the most spectacular locations in New South Wales. Named by the authors "Gods Balcony", it is a place of great presence. Since 1948, it has become one of the most special places for bushwalker reverence. Each Anzac Day, it is the scene of a dawn service like no other. This intensely human book chronicles the story of Splendour Rock and associated memorials.

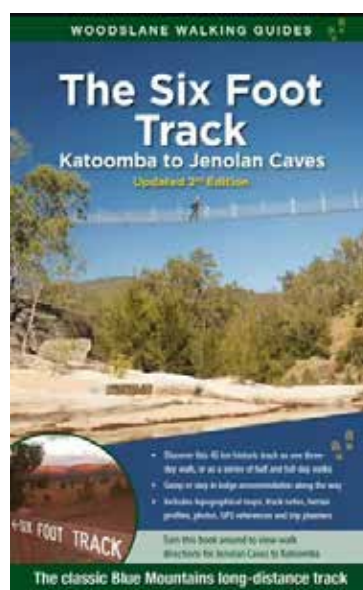


The Six Foot Track

Matt McClelland (aka Wildwalks and editor of this magazine)

Woodslane Press published the updated second edition of this book in March 2023.

This book uses a delightfully quirky and original format. The first half of the book presents walk directions running from Katoomba to Jenolan Caves. Turn the book upside down, and you can read walk directions running from Jenolan Caves to Katoomba. Navigation and trip planning are made easy with maps and detailed walk statistics, including distances, total ascent and descent, walk grades and estimated times.



Wondrous Windjana

Text and photos
Ian Smith

It was first on the list of my destinations after leaving Broome. Since I hadn't done much homework it actually took a lot longer than I thought to get there; around about four hours in fact. But of course I turned that into at least six after I stopped to photograph a tree and a sunset.



Windjana Gorge



Fossilised nautiloid



Crocodile

It was the following day before I reached Windjana and it certainly delivers as soon as you arrive, with the massive cliffs rising from the plain dating from the Devonian Period, when only sea creatures inhabited the earth. No crocs to worry about way back then!

The entrance to the gorge is exciting. Looking at the cliffs you'd imagine you'd have to walk up the stream to get into it but no, there's a small cave-like entrance about 20 metres long that you slip through and, hey presto, you're there.

It's a broad expanse that awaits you and you're quickly onto river sand after signs reminding you of the crocs and also taunting your curiosity to find a fossilised **nautiloid** in the rock (I found one).

If you've ever wondered what seeing a crocodile in the wild would be like then pencil in Windjana. On one bank in the space of 100 metres there would have been twenty, and then there were more on the "tourist" side. I wondered whether or not it was the knowledge I had about the Johnson River

croc or just their posture; whatever it was, you're just not intimidated by them as you are by the estuarine crocs.

For starters, they're not gliding towards you with both eyes focused! No, by the time I finished the gorge walk, I felt quite at home with them. In fact, I can boast I even went swimming in croc-infested waters! Okay, so it was about a kilometre upstream from where the crocs actually were (well, the ones you can see anyway) but I was the only one who did venture in. Bunch of wimps.

The walk is listed as two hours return. If you're snap happy and want to push the boundaries a little, you can easily turn it into four hours. It's a pleasant place and the further you venture along the





Windjana Gorge



Windjana Gorge

chasm the quieter it becomes; anything to get away from the screeching flock of corellas at the main pool.

“

The trail follows the creek and curves in an “s” shape until the end ...

After a while you start to encounter boabs on the lower slopes and a pretty yellow flowering tree. The trail follows the creek and curves in an “s” shape until the end is reached, designated by no sign, just where one encounters a wall of reeds. However, no hardy bushwalker would be detained by a few stalks so I battered my way onward till I reached a

dry stream bed running in from the side and followed it down to the river again and it was near here that I crossed over and came down the other side.

The only prints were those of a horse that had been past in the last day or two, but no humans had ventured on this side though the water was just shin high where I crossed.

Coming back beneath the streaky high clouds I roughly knew where I could cross and, apart from dropping one shoe in the water, made it safely before I went in for a dip. The water is just beautiful and so refreshing, it's no wonder Paul (someone I'd met earlier) spent so much time in!

So, a wonderful morning came to an end, but there would be more adventures later.

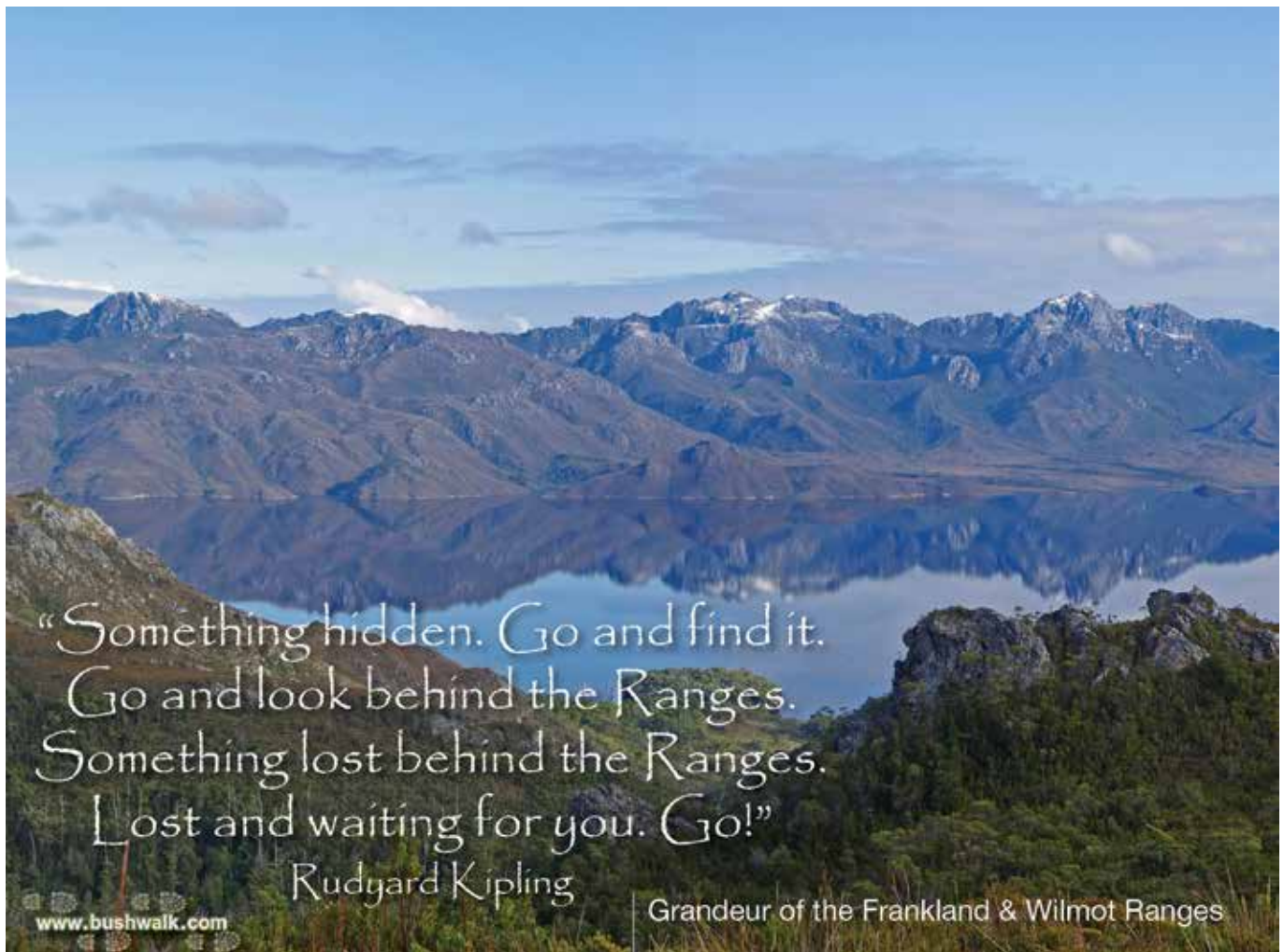


Photo Gallery

Photos
Bushwalk.com photographers



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



Artillery view
Brian Eglinton

Landscapes

April 2022

Winner
Sunrise cloud river
Tom Brennan

A delightful sunrise from an Easter high camp on the East Nattai Walls overlooking Martins Creek and the Nattai Valley, in Nattai National Park.



Tyenna
Brian Eglinton



A Cleft in the Pilot
GregR



Little Horn and Weindorfers
Tower from Hansons Peak
Rorywalks

Non-landscapes

April 2022

Winner
Nature's Artistry
John Walker

I've spent many months of 2022 quasi-sidelined by the after effects of major surgery. I was just starting to tentatively get around again when I took this shot on a local bush stroll. I always look for unusual things in the landscape and couldn't pass this one up. The lighting conditions were just right and pure luck on my part. I really like the way the light enhances the interesting features of the sculpted rock face a few metres above me. The bonus was that the contrasting background and foreground are in sync, very rare for me.



Autumn colour is more than
fagus
North-north-west



Amanita Muscaria
landsmith



An individual
Tortoise

Tasmania

April 2022

Winner

Sunrise at Shelf Camp on a perfect morning

Rob Grantner

We all woke at first light and checked the vital signs: no wind, no clouds above and a strong cloud inversion below. We knew this was going to be one of "those" special moments that we always hope for but rarely get. As the sun slowly rose the glorious wonder of a perfect morning at Shelf Camp unfolded.



Kitchen Hut
Rory Buck



Gnarled
Brian Eglinton



Fisher River
North-north-west

Other States

April 2022

Winner
Ningadhun sunrise
Tom Brennan

Camped on the Mount Yulludunida plateau in Mount Kaputar National Park, we had the worst night's sleep as the wind flattened the tent on top of us all night. The wind died off just before dawn, and I was treated to a moody sunrise.



MacKenzie Falls
Brian Eglinton



The Old Crossing
John Walker



Square Rock lookout
landsmith

Landscapes

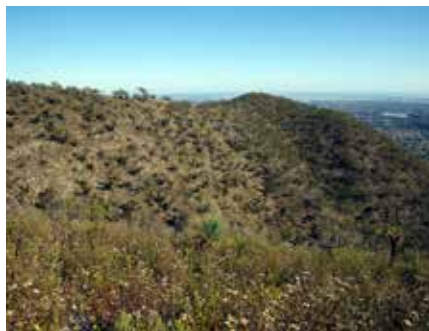
May 2022

Winner
Getting a Little Horny
North-north-west

If you want stunning views from a daywalk at Cradle, you can't do better than climbing Little Horn. It's magnificent whichever way you turn, but this particular angle is my favourite.



Solar band over The Basin
John Walker



Black Hill
Brian Eglinton

Non-landscapes

May 2022

Winner
A curious group
Robl

Richea pandanifolia. "A curious group" was taken from a boardwalk in central Tasmania.



Paved with gold
North-north-west



Gorilla Rock
John Walker



Joey
Brian Eglinton

Tasmania

May 2022

Winner
My secret garden
North-north-west

It's a secret so, as they say, I could tell you but I'd have to kill you. I've visited this place at every season and it's always stunningly beautiful with no-one else around. Perfect, in other words.



Mount Geryon
Robl

Other States

May 2022

Winner
Basin Falls
John Walker

The Basin, aka Bushwalkers Basin, and its falls are a feature of my local area and are often photographed. It's a short bushwalk to get there and a popular spot for swimming, with other walks nearby. Fortunately I arrived late in the day after the crowds and had plenty of time to set up the shot. The rain in the preceding weeks meant that the falls were running really well.



Heysen in the Hills
Brian Eglinton

Wild Swimming

Text
Eva Gomiscek

People that love water will be in search of great places to cool off this time of year. Swimming is usually associated with the sea and sandy beaches. But why not try Australia's hidden gems - swimming holes? We're talking about lakes, rivers, waterfalls and even secluded beaches. The idea of sliding into a cool, refreshing water after or during a hot summer walk comes to mind.



Make it a fun experience

In [August 2016](#) edition of Bushwalk magazine we had an article in our magazine about wild swimming written by Rachel Lewis. She explained to us how to make wild swimming an enjoyable experience. She reminded us to enjoy a swim while on a hike, to take along a buddy and/or a curious child, to enjoy the nature and take care of it. Rachel also said to take the time and enjoy a picnic by the water, take a photo and maybe even a nap. If this got you intrigued then [read this article](#) and learn more.

Some other points

- Know your swimming ability, use floaties and start slow.
- Swim with other people, preferably experienced.
- Check forecast and recent rainfall. Never swim in flood water or recently flooded areas.
- Check the depth, logs, branches and rocks before jumping. Check again.
- Take your time. Take food, water and time to chill and enjoy.
- Beware of cold water – it numbs the body very quickly.

Benefits of wild swimming

So now let's also talk about a few benefits we gain from swimming in the wild.

1. Improving your circulation - when your body heats up from walking it rushes the blood to the surface. And when dipping into the cool water, it sends it back to internal organs, refreshing your circulation in the process.
2. Improving your stress response - studies show that dipping into cold water helps your body to overcome anxieties more easily.
3. Increase of dopamine - studies also show that dipping into cold water increase dopamine levels in your body around five-fold.
4. Swimming is a full body workout.
5. Swimming improves your sleep.

What to be mindful of

While having fun in the water, we have to be mindful of the fact that we're in nature, a fragile ecosystem that we interrupt by being there. To make this as non-intrusive as possible, check Rachel's tips on how to swim sustainably and visit her [Wild Swimming Australia website](#).

Winter swimming

There's a difference between going swimming in the summer and in the winter. For winter swims we have some extra tips:

- Think about investing in neoprene wetsuit, gloves and boots.
- Start slow. Cold water can be a real shock to the body, so start preparing it with daily cold showers. Take it slow when entering the cool water.
- Slow breathing. The human body's reaction to cold water is very often rapid breathing. Try to slow it down with different breathing techniques - research [Wim Hof](#).
- Slowly in, quickly out. A few minutes will do your body tons of good, you don't need to stay in there for hours.
- Quickly warm up. Remove cold wet clothes straight away and warm up with insulating layers and a hot drink.
- Talk to your doctor first if you're pregnant, have high blood pressure, any kind of heart condition or lung condition (eg. asthma).

Four per state

We researched and found some of the special ones in every state to get you started. Wherever possible we also found a walk that is tied to that pool. Are you feeling inspired already?

What next?

Hopefully, you will get inspired and will be looking for your wild swimming adventure soon. Do we mention your favourite spot? If not, [send us](#) pictures of your favourite swimming pool and we can include it in the next years' article.



1. Empress Falls, Blue Mountains National Park

To swim in one the best pools of Blue Mountains you'll need to descend along a steepish track along [Conservation Hut to Empress Falls Track](#). On the way you can catch a glimpse of the falls if stopping at Empress Lookout. After your swim you can extend your walk to another set of falls a little further along the track - Edith and Lodore falls.

▶ 1.2 km return, 30-60 mins

🚗 Sydney 100 km



2. Mahon Rock Pool, Jack Vanny Reserve, Maroubra

This gem is located north of Malabar Headland NP and Maroubra Beach. There are toilets, showers and changing rooms near the parking area, on the way to the pool. To reach it you need to take the steep steps downhill with views over the wide rocky pool.

▶ 400 m return, 30 mins

🚗 Sydney 15 km



New South Wales



3. Yarrangobilly Thermal Pool

Take the direct return [Thermal Pool Walk](#) or a 2.8 km circuit [Yarrangobilly Caves River Walk](#) to reach this lovely spot. The water is great to swim year round as it comes from a natural spring and has about 27 °C. There's a picnic area next to the pool, as well as change rooms and toilets.

▶ 1.4 km return, 45 mins

🚗 Canberra 230 km

4. Rainbow Lake, Kosciuszko National Park

You can reach this spot by taking the return [Rainbow Lake Trail](#). A slight path leads around the lake if you want to explore it further. There's plenty of space for a picnic and to relax in this pristine area on a lovely sunny day. Between May and the end of October, this walk is likely to be covered in snow.

▶ 2.6 km return, 1-2 h

🚗 Canberra 200 km



1. Florence Falls Swimming hole, Litchfield National Park



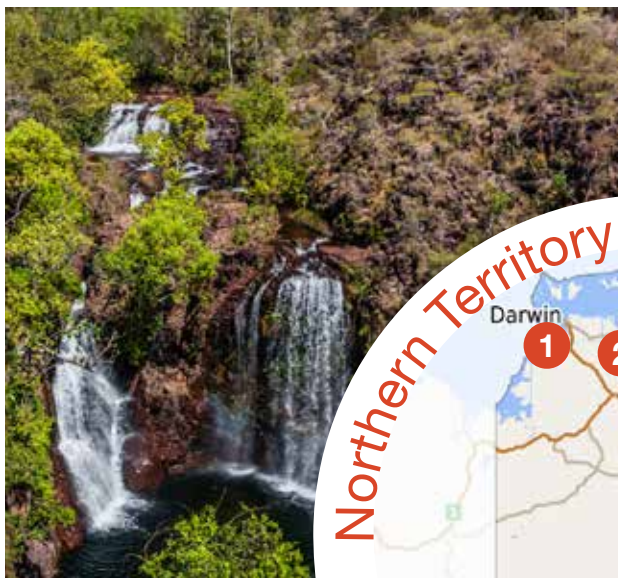
Starting from Florence Falls carpark and picnic area it will take you 160 steps along the last part of [Florence Creek Walk](#) to reach the pool. Alternatively you can do the whole 5 kilometre return walk, starting from the neighbour Buley Rockhole and follow Florence Creek for about 1-2 hours.



400 m return, 30 mins



Darwin 145 km



2. Maguk Waterfall, Barramundi Gorge, Kakadu National Park



To reach this secluded pool you'll need to walk for about a kilometre along [Maguk Pool and Waterfall](#). There, surrounded by tall rock cliffs, is the pool with a great view over the falls.



2.7 km return, 1 h



Darwin 345 km



3. Mataranka hot pools, Bitter Springs, Elsey National Park



Located only a short walk away from the end of Bitter Springs Road, these natural thermal pools await you with very warm water all year. You can also take the kilometre long [Bitter Springs Circuit](#) walk around the pools.



400 m return, 15 mins



Darwin 430 km

4. Ellery Creek Big Hole, Tjoritja/West MacDonnell National Park



A five minute walk will get you from Ellery Creek carpark and campsite to this scenic waterhole to freshen up after you've possibly done about an hour long 2.6 km return [Dolomite Walk](#) or the longer, 26 kilometre [Ellery Big Hole Circuit](#) that can be done in 7 hours to 2 days.



700 m return, 30 mins



Alice Springs 90 km



1. Crystal Cascades, Cairns

It'll take you about an hour of walking along the [Crystal Cascades Track](#) to reach this freshwater gem. So pack a picnic and explore this beautiful area to then freshen up in the swimming holes by the falls.



2.3 km return, 1 h



Cairns 20 km



2. Zoe Falls, Hinchinbrook Island National Park, Hinchinbrook Island

When bushwalking the [Thorsborne Trail](#) these stunning waterfalls will be definitely one of the stops you make. Simply immerse yourself in the freshwater pool at the top of the falls and enjoy the stunning views.



28.7 km one way, 2-5 days



Townsville 160 km



Queensland



3. Wheel of Fire Cascades, Eungella National Park

Starting from Finch Hatton Picnic Area it'll take you about 1.5 hours of walking along [Wheel of Fire Cascades](#) to reach the cascades. There are several climbs and steps along the way, well worth the effort.



3.8 km return, 1.5 h



Townsville 395 km



4. Serenity Falls and swimming hole, Buderim Forest Park

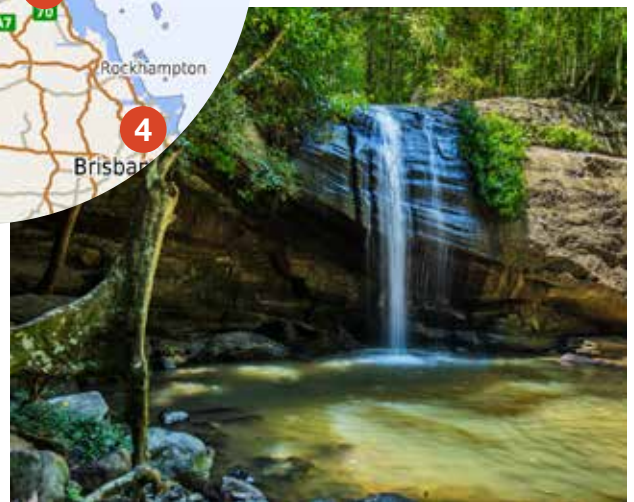
From Quorn Close car park and picnic area with toilets, take the short [Buderim \(Serenity\) Falls Circuit walk](#) downhill along the boardwalk and later on some rocky areas to reach the scenic falls and have a dip in the swimming hole.



700 m circuit, 30 mins



Brisbane 100 km



1. Dalhousie Springs, Witjira National Park



These are a group of more than 60 artesian springs, making them one of the biggest spots in this article. Dalhousie Springs are next to a campsite and have a 2.1 kilometre [Dalhousie Springs circuit walk](#) leading around them. So take the walk before jumping into the 40 °C water (year round).

 400 m return, 15 mins

 Coober Pedy 350 km



Dalhousie Springs pool
Tasndrew22, CC BY-SA 4.0




3. Beachport Salt Lake aka Pool of Siloam



This large salt water pool is located at the intersection of McCourt Street and Scenic Drive in Beachport. It is seven times saltier as the sea, so floating is made easy. There's a parking and picnic area with toilets and showers just next to the pool.

 Parking area by the lake

 Adelaide 380 km

2. Greenly Beach rock pools, Eyre Peninsula



Located at the end of Greenly Beach Road, this lovely rockpool lies at the northern end of the white sandy beach. There's free camping nearby so this is a perfect spot for a dip in sunrise or sunset.

 150 m return, 7 mins

 Adelaide 690 km



4. The Little Blue Lake



Located next to the parking area along Mount Sal Road near Mount Gambier, this natural sinkhole is 40 metres wide and 36 metres deep. There are steps and a pontoon to reach it. Take the 3.6 kilometre [Blue Lake Circuit](#) before freshening up in the cool water.

 Parking area by the lake

 Adelaide 450 km

South Australia



1. Kimberley Warm Springs, Kimberley Warm Springs Reserve



Shhh, don't tell too many people as these springs are not well known, but they are the only ones in north-west Tassie. They are very easy to reach. It only takes 200 metres of flat walking from the free car park. And to top it all there's a picnic area and toilets too. Enjoy the mineral rich water with constant 25 °C temperature.



200 m return, 10 mins



Launceston 70 km



2. Apsley River Waterhole, Douglas-Apsley National Park



The [Apsley Waterhole Loop Track](#) and 5.5 kilometre return [Apsley River Waterhole and Gorge](#) walks start from Rosedale Road parking area and take you past the serene waterhole all the way to the gorge. You can stop at the pools on the way there or back (or both) and relax in the sounds of the river gently trickling into the pools.



1 km circuit, 30 mins



Launceston 190 km



Spa Pool in Hamersley Gorge
Albertchecuti, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

3. Wombat Pool, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park



At the start of Overland Track, the [Overland](#), [Wombat Pool](#) and [Lake Lilla Tracks Circuit](#) walk takes you through pristine Tassie nature with plenty of stunning views on the way.



6.5 km circuit, 1.5-2.5 h



Launceston 160 km



4. Hartnett Falls, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park



Located a short way from the 78.3 kilometre [Overland Track](#), these falls are a great spot for swimming, with a view over the falls.



2 km return, 45 mins



Launceston 150 km



Tasmania



1. **Dalmanyi (Bell) Gorge Pool, Kimberley**

The [Dalmanyi \(Bell Gorge\) Walk](#) takes two kilometres from the car park area to reach the cascading waterfalls. The pools are a bit further away along a bit more challenging track.

▶ 2.4 km return, 1 h

🚗 Broome 460 km



2. **Python Pool, Millstream Chichester National Park**

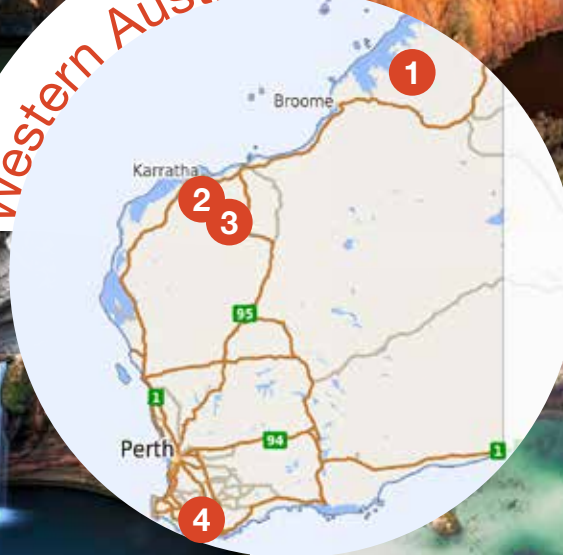
After you've parked just off Roebourne-Wittenoom Road it'll take you a short [Python Pool walk](#) to reach this deep swimming pool. A picnic area and toilets are nearby. If you have time you can take the longer 15 kilometre return [Camel Trail](#).

▶ 400 m return, 10 mins

🚗 Karratha 120 km



Western Australia



Spa Pool in Hamersley Gorge
Albertchecuti, CC BY-SA 4.0

3. **Spa Pool, Hamersley Gorge, Karijini National Park**

[Hamersley Gorge Walk](#) is a very difficult walk to get to this gem, but the reward is stunning. This freshwater pool is surrounded by colourful rock walls.

▶ 400 m return, 10 mins

🚗 Karratha 280 km

4. **Elephant Rocks, William Bay National Park, Denmark**

Starting from the parking area at the end of Elephant Road, take the short [Elephant Cove Track](#) walk to reach this lovely white sandy beach. The rocks look like large elephants.

▶ 760 m return, 15 mins


🚗 Perth 430 km



1. Venus Baths, Grampians National Park

To reach this lovely spot take the [Venus Baths Circuit](#) beside Stony Creek. It's a lovely flat walk, suitable for the whole family so pack some snacks because you'll definitely spend time there.


 1.7 km circuit, 45 mins


 Horsham 75 km



2. Pound Bend, Warrandyte State Park

The Yarra River nearly surrounds the 3.3 kilometre [Pound Bend Loop](#) which takes you to the Pound Bend area to freshen up after the walk.

 3.3 km circuit, 1-1.5 h

 Melbourne 30 km



The Pound Bend Tunnel was dug by miners, diverting the river, Tim Sabo, CC BY-SA 4.0

3. Blue Pool, Briagolong State Forest

This lovely spot on Freestone Creek is a perfect to freshen up after a walk in summer. You can opt for the shorter [Freestone Walking Track](#) or for the longer 3 kilometre [Fern Gully Track circuit](#) before stopping at the gorge for a swim. There's a picnic area with toilets near by so you can stay for the day.

 1.1 km circuit, 30 mins

 Melbourne 250 km



4. Fairy Cove, Wilson's Promontory National Park

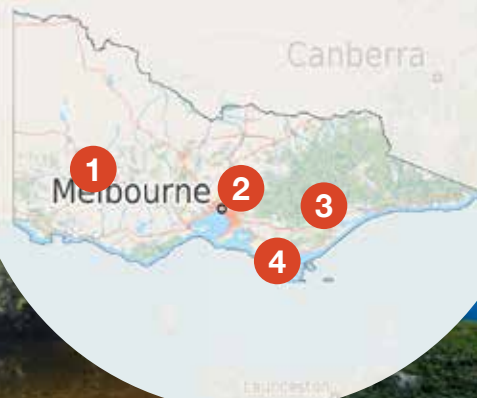
This lovely area can be reached by taking a side trip on 7.9 km return [Tongue Point Track](#). Why not hike the track and then freshen up at the cove. There's a pretty steep start to the walk but the views from the lookout are worth it.

 7.9 km return, 3-4 h

 Melbourne 215 km



Victoria



1. Casuarina Sands Reserve

Located on the banks of Murrumbidgee River, this recreation area has picnic spots with BBQs and toilets. Not really wild, but still a lovely swimming spot. And a starting (or ending point) to the [Murrumbidgee Discovery Track](#).

▶ 27 km one way, 8.5-13 h

🚌 Canberra 25 km



Casuarina Sands, Canberra, Brian Ireland, CC BY-SA 2.0

2. Gibraltar Falls, Namadgi National Park

Take the [Woods Reserve to Gibraltar Falls walk](#) to this beautiful falls. At their top there are a number of pools, the best one of all is the infinity one with stunning views over Canberra.

▶ 2.3 km return, 1-1.5 h

🚌 Canberra 45 km



Gibraltar Falls, Elliott McFarlane, CC BY-SA 4.0



Tharwa Sandwash on Murrumbidgee River, Parks ACT Website



Angle Crossing on Murrumbidgee River, Conquimbo, CC BY-SA 3.0

3. Tharwa Sandwash, Gigerline Nature Reserve

This spot on Murrumbidgee River has a picnic area. Take the short [Tharwa Sandwash](#) walk from the parking area to the river and enjoy the day in the sun.

▶ 1.8 km return, 45 mins

🚌 Canberra 35 km

4. Angle Crossing, Gigerline Nature Reserve

This spot is the furthest point of Murrumbidgee River in ACT, where the Angle Crossing Road traverses the river. Take the [Angle Crossing River Track](#) before taking a dip in the river.

▶ 800 m circuit, 40 mins

🚌 Canberra 40 km

Snakes Can Hear You Scream

Text

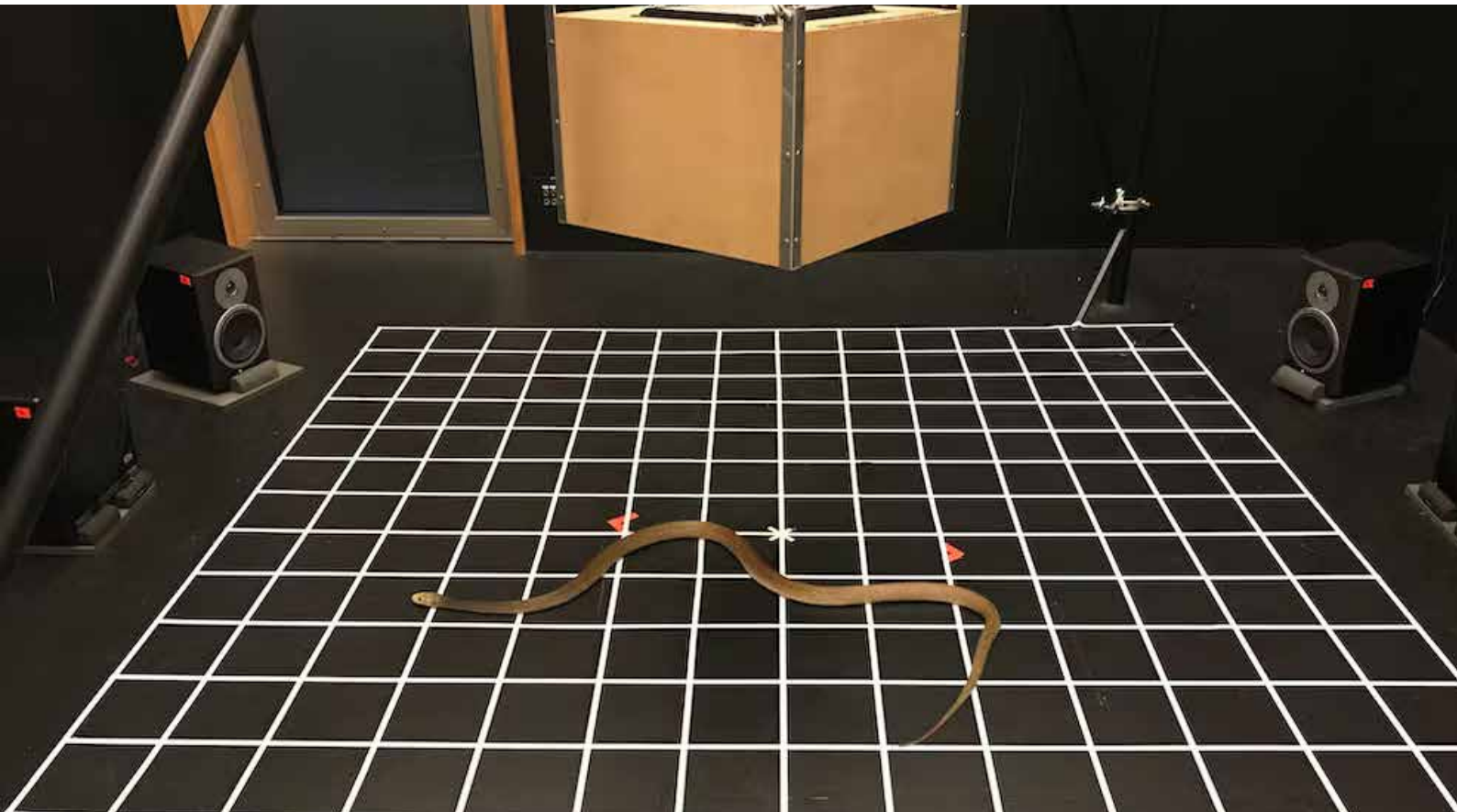
Christina N. Zdenek

Experts have long understood that snakes can feel sound vibrations through the ground – what we call “tactile” sensing – but we’ve puzzled over whether they can also hear airborne sound vibrations, and particularly over how they *react* to sounds.

In a new paper [published](#) in PLOS ONE, we conclude snakes use hearing to help them interpret the world, and finally dispel the myth that snakes are deaf to airborne sound.



Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*)



The coastal taipan was one of 19 snake species used in our research.
Christina Zdenek, Author provided

Our research, which included 19 different snakes from seven species, reveals that not only do snakes have airborne hearing, but that different species react differently to what they hear.

How snakes respond to airborne and ground-borne sounds

Although seeing and tasting (the air) are the main ways snakes sense their environment, our study highlights that hearing still plays an important role in snakes' sensory repertoire.

This makes sense from an evolutionary perspective. Snakes are susceptible to predators including monitor lizards, cats, dogs

and other snakes. Hearing is an important sense for both predator avoidance and injury avoidance (such as being trodden on).

For our experiments, we collaborated with the Queensland University of Technology's [School of Creative Practice](#) to fit-out a soundproof room and test one snake at a time.

Using silence as our control, we played one of three sounds, each including a range of frequencies: 1–150 Hz, 150–300 Hz and 300–450 Hz. For comparison, the human voice range is about 100–250Hz, and birds chirp at about 8000 Hz.

In one [previous study](#), researchers hung western diamondback rattlesnakes (*Crotalus atrox*) in a steel mesh basket and observed their restricted behaviours in response to sound frequencies between 200 Hz and 400 Hz. In another, [researchers](#) surgically implanted electrodes into the brains of partially anaesthetised snakes, detecting electrical potentials in response to sound up to 600 Hz.

“

Hearing is an important sense for both predator avoidance and injury avoidance (such as being trodden on).

But our research is the first to investigate how multiple snake species respond to sounds in a space where they can move freely. We also used an accelerometer to detect whether the sounds produced ground vibrations. In this way we confirmed the snakes were indeed registering airborne sounds, and not just feeling ground vibrations.

Do snakes move toward or away from sound?

Most of the snakes exhibited very different types of behaviours in sound trials compared to the control.

Woma pythons (*Aspidites ramsayi*) – a non-venomous snake found throughout Australia’s arid interior – significantly increased their movement in response to sound and actually approached it. They exhibited an interesting behaviour called “periscoping”, in which snakes raise the front third of their body in a manner that suggests curiosity.

In contrast, three other genera – *Acanthophis* (death adders), *Oxyuranus* (taipans) and *Pseudonaja* (brown snakes) – were more likely to move away from sound, signalling potential avoidance behaviour.

Death adders are ambush predators. They wait for their prey to come to them [using the lure on their tail](#) (which they wiggle to look like a worm), and they can’t travel quickly. So it makes sense they trended away from the sound. For them, survival means avoiding being trodden on by large vertebrates such as kangaroos, wombats or humans.

Brown snakes and taipans are active foragers that rapidly pursue their prey during the day. This means they may be vulnerable to daytime

predators such as raptors. In our experiments, both of these snakes appeared to have acute senses. Taipans in particular were likely to display defensive and cautious behaviours in response to sound.

Can snakes hear us?

Our study further debunks the myth that snakes are deaf. They can hear – just not as well as you or I. Snakes can only hear low frequencies, roughly below the 600 Hz mark, whereas most of us can hear a [much wider range](#). Snakes probably hear muffled versions of what we do.

“

Snakes can only hear low frequencies, roughly below the 600 Hz mark..

So, can snakes hear us? The frequency of the human voice is about 100–250 Hz, depending on sex. The sounds we played in our trials included these frequencies, and were played at a distance of 1.2 metres from the snakes at 85 decibels. This is about the amplitude of a loud voice.

The snakes in our study responded to this sound, and many significantly so. So it’s probably safe to say snakes can hear people speaking loudly or screaming. That doesn’t mean they can’t hear someone talking (a normal conversation is about 60 decibels) – we just didn’t test sound at this noise level.

Christina N. Zdenek
Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Venom Evolution Lab, The University of Queensland

This article first appeared in [The Conversation](#) on 15 February 2023.

In the News

Citizen Scientists alert

Lisa Gershwin is seeking photos and alerts on algal blooms and/or discoloured or smelly water in Tasmanian rivers, (especially southern parts), particularly while they are occurring. Send your findings with precise location, date observed and photos to Lisa by SMS 0408 080 829 or email algae@lisagershwin.com

Bushfire Closes Sections of Larapinta Trail

Eight of the twelve sections of Central Australia's 230-kilometre Larapinta Trail near Alice Springs are now [closed due to a bushfire](#) in Tjoritja (West MacDonnell) National Park, meaning sections four to eleven are shut to the public. Check the [Parks and Wildlife website](#) for updates on closures.

Blue Mountains tracks overgrown

After two bushwalkers were overdue in the Blue Mountains National Park, the National Parks and Wildlife Service's work has been [examined](#). Bushfires and successive storms have led to an explosion of shrubs and plants, with tracks becoming overgrown.

Bowtells Swing Bridge closed

Due to safety concerns the Cocks River Bowtells Swing Bridge on [Six Foot Track](#) is [closed for an upgrade](#). Crown Lands anticipates it will be reopened before the end of 2023.



Current Bowtells Swing Bridge

Pancakes

Text and photos
Sonya Muhlsimmer

Did you know there is a day dedicated to pancakes? There is a day in February and it always falls on a Tuesday, 47 days before Easter Sunday at the beginning of Lent and the day goes by the name of Shrove Tuesday. The word shrove is derived from the word shriving, which means to listen to someone's sins and forgive them. So how does a pancake have anything to do with this? I am glad you asked. In some countries during Lent Christians would give up certain foods such as butter, eggs and sugar and these are the classic ingredients for pancakes.



Pancake Rock, Punakaiki, West Coast New Zealand



So much choice in the supermarket for ready made pancake mix

Apparently this tradition has been around since 1445 and it originated in England when a woman lost track of time while she was making pancakes. She heard the church bells ring, realised she was late and ran as fast as she could to church, still holding the pan she was cooking with. I found this from [Shrove Tuesday](#). Go and check it out for more information, it is very interesting. It even has a perfect pancake recipe to try.

I was not brought up in a Christian house as such so I only found out about the importance of this day recently, when I worked for a food manufacturing company that produced pancake mix. Well this was a good day to be at work as someone was on the BBQ all day cooking pancakes. But for me, any day is a good day to have pancakes.

“

Apparently this tradition has been around since 1445 ...

So, to make pancakes on the trail, it can be a little fiddly but if you have the right gear it will be a bit easier. And I must say it is pretty good

“

And I must say it is pretty good having a hot cooked breakfast in the bush.

having a hot cooked breakfast in the bush. There is also so much variety to be had with the pancakes such as buckwheat, wholemeal, blueberry, chocolate, just to name a few.

If you didn't want to go through the hassle of creating your own, you could just buy the packet mix, they are so simple, just add water. You could decant some or all of the mix into a bag and add water to the bag, or just carry the container – but then you would be stuck carrying the container out.

Buckwheat pancakes

Ingredients

Buckwheat flour	½ cup	Bag 1
Coconut milk powder	2 Tbsp	
Egg powder	2 Tbsp	
Vanilla sugar	1 Tbsp	
Cocoa powder	2 tsp	
Baking powder	½ tsp	
Salt	Few pinches	
Ghee	3 tsp	Container
Nutella	2 Tbsp	Container
Water	½ cup	

At home preparation

Place all ingredients into the bag and containers. Label the bag and copy the method at camp and keep together with the bag.

Method at camp

Add the contents of the bag to a bowl and slowly stir in the water, mixing constantly to make a thick paste. Alternatively, if you have a zip lock bag big enough, keep the contents in the bag and add water to the bag and mix by squeezing the water through. In a hot pan add 1 teaspoon of the ghee then pour in about a third of the mix. Swirl the mix to cover the base of the pan and cook until bubbles appear, about 2 minutes. Flip the pancakes and cook for about 2 minutes. Repeat until the mix is used up. Spread the Nutella over the top and enjoy.

Hints

If you don't have a non-stick fry pan cut 2 pieces of greaseproof paper to the size of the pan, and place in the pan before adding the mix. Another alternative to greaseproof paper, and what I use, is silicone paper. The benefit of the silicone paper is that it is reusable. You could also top the pancakes with some trail mix, dried fruit or honey - the choices are endless. Enjoy.



Videos



Things that could go wrong on a overnight walk

Five mistakes that first-time thru-hikers can make and how to avoid them.



How to wash and reproof a rain jacket

Not only is my rain jacket dirty but it is no longer waterproof. Wash your rain jacket with me and I will give it a brand new life.



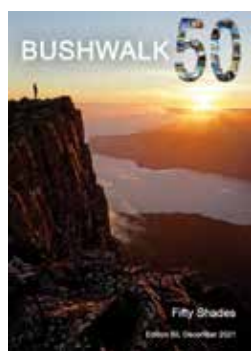
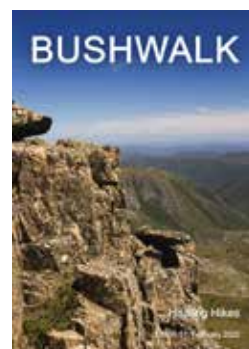
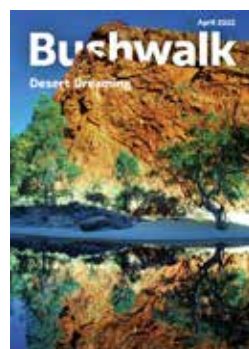
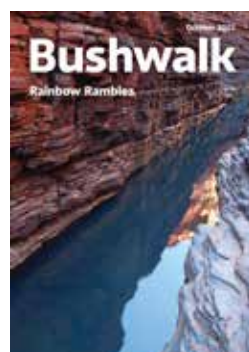
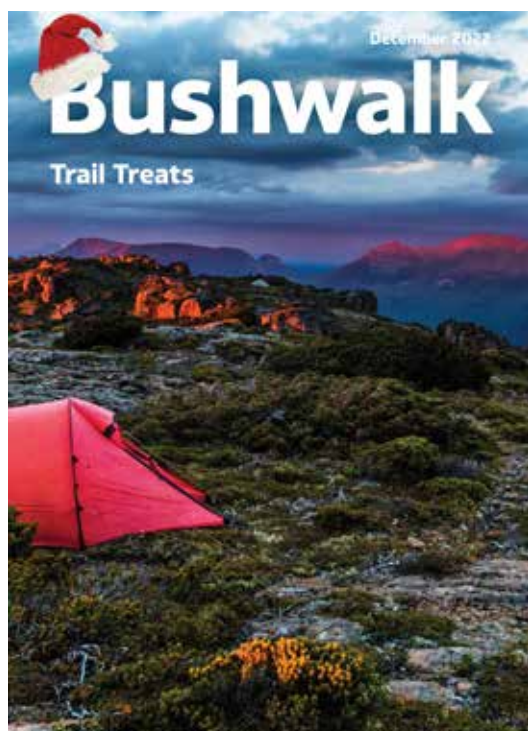
A high alpine rescue goes wrong

The two best rescue workers of the region are ready for their new mission. Despite their professionalism and their determination, it did not go as planned ...



Mount Bogong, Alpine NP, Victoria's highest mountain

In mid-summer we went on an overnight walk to Mount Bogong, 1986 metres.



Check our past editions in the [back catalog](#)

