



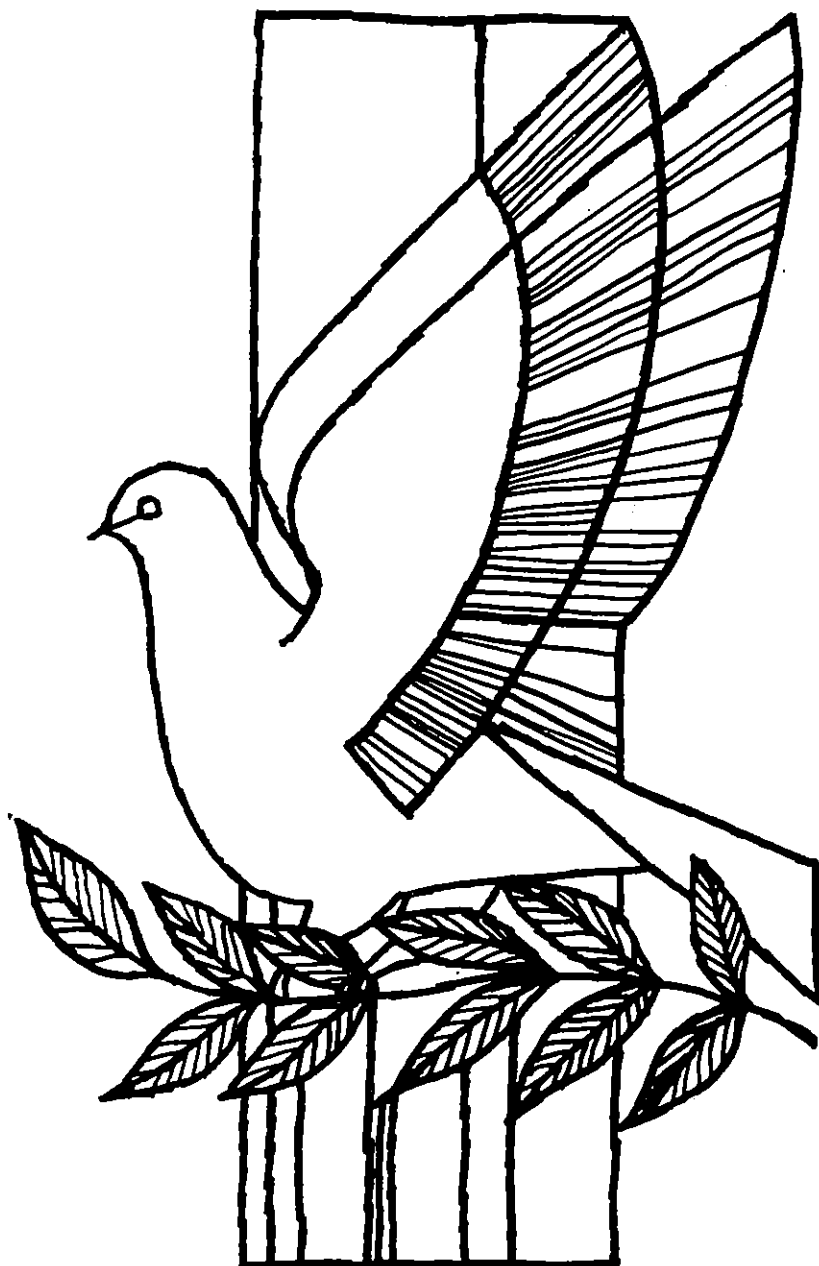
NPA BULLETIN

National Parks Association of the ACT

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NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY INC.

Inaugurated 1960

Aims and Objects of the Association

Promotion of national parks and of measures for the protection of fauna and flora, scenery and natural features in the Australian Capital Territory and elsewhere, and the reservation of specific areas.

Interest in the provision of appropriate outdoor recreation areas.

Stimulation of interest in, and appreciation and enjoyment of, such natural phenomena by organised field outings, meetings or any other means.

Co-operation with organisations and persons having similar interests and objectives.

Promotion of, and education for, nature conservation, and the planning of land-use to achieve conservation.

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Membership Enquiries welcome.

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Articles by contributors may not necessarily reflect Association opinion or objectives.

Attention All Members !

Contributions of between 200 and 300 words, with or without photographs (black and white preferably) are sought eagerly for the *Bulletin*. Of course we need longer items as well, but short ones are popular . . . with everyone!

Share with us your camps, trips and pack walks, your trials and tribulations and adventures of all kinds.

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President's Foreword



A number of NPA committee and ordinary members attended the Australian Conservation Foundation's 1988 National Conference 'Taking Stock and Looking Ahead' in Sydney in October. The conference aimed at taking stock of the past environmental record in Australia and proposing and evaluating strategies for the future. I believe the conference was generally successful in its aims. In the general sessions there were excellent presentations drawing out many of the outstanding features of the Australian landscape which are only just being realised or recognised such as Michael Archer's fossil discoveries from north-west Queensland and his associated suggestion that the rainforests were the home of the ancestral mammal fauna. Just as important were those speakers like Petra Kelly and Charles Birch who dealt with environmental ideology - the system of ideas making up modern environmentalism.

Eleven 'Task Force Groups' were organised to deal with major Australian environmental 'problem areas'. The quality of the contribution made by participants in the 'Forests' group, for which I acted as facilitator, was impressive.

In many ways the conference showed the new professionalism of the environmental movement. If the main task of the 1970s was getting environmental concern onto the political agenda, the challenge in the 1980s is to keep it there. Professional, well informed representation to government and participation in advisory bodies is a first requirement.

Some themes seemed to re-appear on numerous occasions - sustainable development, questions of equity and the need for a new 'ecological economics'. In this there was a global perspective - from 'greenhouse' to the 'Bruntland report' (*Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development*).

Robin Williams brought many of these points together into a hard hitting closing address in which he attacked the retreat from knowledge and social concern evident in the 'loads-a-money' society of the 1980s. His sustainable economy based on a new ecological economics would see, for example, the application of a 'green levy' or 'penalty' where heavy polluting products would cost more and 'green' products less.

I look forward to the publication of the proceedings of the conference and in the meantime wonder how Robin Williams might be convinced to consider the Prime Ministership.

Kevin Frawley



New Members

The following new members are welcomed to the Association:

Dr Sue Arnott, Young; Robert Bell, Mawson; Stephen Both, Aranda; Jef Byrne & Melissa Gould, Lyneham; Ken & Debbi Cameron & family, Cook; Denis Carlisle, Evatt; Isobel Crawford, Dickson; Carole Fullalove, Galwell; Linda Gosnell, Downer; Mrs Shirley Gould, Pearce; Judith Grant, Kambah; Jeni Hatéley, Aranda; Hird Family, Hackett; June Hornby, Scullin; Kenneth Hughes, Kaleen; Brian & Anna Ilsley,

Kambah; Dr Wendy Jarvie, Hackett; Philip & Jennifer Lemon, Latham; Christopher Leslie, Macquarie; Helen Madden, Macgregor; Julie McGuinness, Turner; Gregory McKinnon and family, Girilang; Stephen Padgham & Johanne Badham, O'Connor; Jacqueline Rees, Griffith; Ian & Julie Robinson & family, Chapman; Stanley Russell-Smith, Griffith; Janna Thompson, Turner; Betty Williams, Cook.

Committee News

New Committee

The new Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting has been joined by Les Pyke who was co-opted as Treasurer from 1st November. The Committee welcomes Les, and thanks our retiring Treasurer Jan Gatenby who maintained continuity until we found our new Treasurer. Other new Committee members are Stephen Forst (*Outings Convenor*), Timothy Walsh and Den Robin who continues to represent the Association on the ACT Parks and Conservation Consultative Committee. The position of Vice-President remains unfilled.

Namadgi

Our last Bulletin inadvertently omitted Namadgi news, so we will include a little 'old' news in this issue. In June three members of the Committee met with Mr Greg Fraser, Director of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service and Mr Andy Turner of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. The following topics were discussed: the Northern Cotter catchment, Orroral Homestead, Gudgenby homestead and grazing; Jervis Bay and the Bowen Island plan of management; and open space systems in the ACT. The Committee strongly supports the cessation of the grazing lease at Gudgenby Station which is due to take effect in mid 1989, and has formally communicated this view to Greg Fraser and Mr Gary Punch (the former Minister for the Arts and Territories). We have also opposed grazing at Gudgenby at meetings of the ACT Parks and Conservation Consultative Committee.

The ACT Parks and Conservation Service has announced its work programme for 1988/89. It includes the appointment of consultant Dennis Williamson from Scenic Spectrum to review Gudgenby; the repair of flood damage to fences and roads; control of rabbits at Grassy Creek; the installation of a radio transmitter at Mt Booth; the completion of stage one of the Bulls Head recreational facilities, and the engagement of consultants to prepare conservation plans for Brayshaws and Westermans huts.

Murrumbidgee & Bowen Island

The Environment subcommittee prepared a submission on behalf of the Association on the draft plan of management for the Murrumbidgee River Corridor. In addition our President prepared a submission (at very short notice) on the draft management plan for Bowen Island in Jervis Bay.

Budawangs

The Committee is still pursuing the possibility of providing labour for track maintenance in the Morton National Park. We have also supported a proposed extension of the park near Wog Wog.

Australian Alps

The World Heritage nomination for the Australian Alps has been published. Copies will be available for sale to members for \$20 each.

Brindabella Forest Walk

A small NPA team participated in this event, and the Association sponsored them to the tune of just over a hundred dollars. Several NPA members participated independently, and next year we will try to organise a larger NPA team.

Conferences

The Association hosted the Australian National Parks Council annual meeting on 22-23 October. We offer our special thanks to Fiona Brand and Beverly Hammond for the preparation of home-made lunches on the Saturday, and to Den Robin for organising a picnic in the Botanical Gardens on the Sunday.

The Association funded Philip Gatenby to attend the Australian Conservation Foundation Conference in Sydney in October.

ROCKS

The Resident of 100th & Wankmiller Streets (where the Association has its office) are seeking incorporation. This will give ROCKS a more recognisable standing in the community so it can better protect the interests of member organisations. It will also give ROCKS a legal identity so that it can apply for assistance from funding bodies such as the Community Development Fund.



Bulletin

This is the last Bulletin to be edited by Judith Simondson, and the Committee thanks Judith for her efforts during the last two years. Once more the Committee is looking for an editor. The position of editor appears to be too demanding for one person to cope with for any length of time, and the Committee is exploring ways of using paid help on the various tasks associated with Bulletin production. The Committee has resolved to formulate an editorial policy for the Bulletin and to investigate the budget with a view to consideration of employing an editor for 1989. One way of helping to off-set costs would be to attract more advertising in the Bulletin. Any member who wishes to assist with the Bulletin or who wishes to comment on these ideas should contact the committee. A decision will have to be made at the Committee meeting on 1st December so that work can start in mid-January for the production of the next bulletin.

* * *



Ashmore Reef

*Notes from a talk delivered to the National Parks Association of the ACT
on 15 September 1988
by Tom Scotney*

Ashmore Reef is a coral atoll in the Timor Sea, some 840 km west of Darwin and 12 degrees south of the Equator. Three small islands lie inside the reef, rising only 1-2 metres above high tide and supporting a flora of 28, mostly herbaceous species. Tall shrub species such as Octopus Bush (*Argusia argentea*), form a discontinuous fringe around West Island, but are present as only a handful of shrubs on Middle Island, and are absent from East Island.

Ashmore is not at all the sort of tropical island paradise idealised in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. It is a remote and difficult place to get to, and even then, travel from one side of the Reef to the other is only possible when high tides cover the broad tidal flats. The islands are unforested. In summer they are dry, brown and shadeless, and seabirds fall over and die before your eyes in the heat of the afternoon.

Yet largely *because* of its isolation, the wildlife of the Reef is profuse. The marine flora and fauna are rich, diverse, and, as is often seen in isolated populations, contain a high proportion of endemic forms. Green and Hawksbill Turtles visit the Reef to nest, while the waters around Ashmore Reef reputedly contain not only the greatest diversity (number of types) of seasnakes, but also the highest density (snakes per hectare) recorded anywhere.

At least 16 bird species breed here including Sooty Terns, Bridled Terns, Crested Terns, Common and Black Noddies, Brown Boobies, Red-tailed Tropicbirds, White-tailed Tropicbirds, Eastern Reef Egrets, and Least Frigatebirds. When breeding is in full swing the islands are unbelievably noisy day and night as perhaps half a million birds squeeze onto islands not more than 600 metres across. Fresh guano droppeth not at all as the gentle rain from heaven on the place beneath, but in well-aimed showers of liquid faeces that smell strongly of old fish.



Life Membership for Charles Hill

Another 55 bird species have been seen at the Reef, including many of the migratory waders, which use the vast tidal flats as feeding stops on their annual journeys to and from their wintering grounds.

For perhaps as long as four centuries, Macassan fishermen have sailed south to Ashmore and beyond. At Pulau Pasir, the Sand Island as they call Ashmore, these fishermen have traditionally fished, collected trepang and water, and sheltered from bad weather. In 1878, Ashmore Reef was annexed by Great Britain to forestall attempts by international competitors to exploit the guano deposits of the islands. Great Britain passed the reef into Australian control in 1933. Indonesian fishermen continued their traditional activities throughout, and their access to traditional fishing grounds at Ashmore and elsewhere off the north-west coast was formally provided for in a 1974 Memorandum of Understanding between Australia and Indonesia.

However, severe depredations on the Reef's wildlife led to the declaration in 1983 of the Reef and its surrounding waters as a National Nature Reserve under the management of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. In response to ongoing occurrences of poaching and interference with wildlife, the traditional fishermen have been closely monitored and their activities have had to be restricted, culminating in the complete closure of much of the Reserve this year.

ANPWS is undertaking programs of bird banding and turtle tagging in the Reserve to gain a clearer understanding of wildlife movements to and away from the Reef. Efforts have also been made to eradicate a population of Black Rats (*Rattus rattus*) from West Island. This appears to have been successful, as rats have not been detected for some two years now.

The removal of two sources of predation will doubtless trigger changes in the nature of Ashmore Reef, as breeding success improves, new species begin to breed there, and vegetation development proceeds. However, it must always be remembered that in the wider scale of things, reefs such as Ashmore Reef are highly dynamic and ephemeral phenomena. Perhaps therein lies their fascination.

At the September general meeting the President announced that the Committee had resolved recently to nominate Charles Hill for Honorary Life Membership of the Association. He called upon Fiona Brand to move the motion nominating Charles Hill for honorary life membership of the National Parks Association of the ACT.

In moving the nomination, Fiona spoke as follows:

'It is with pleasure that I propose, on behalf of the Committee, that Charles Hill be made a Life Member of the National Parks Association of the ACT.

'Charles came into our orbit in 1971 when the Hill family moved from Melbourne to make a home at Red Hill. Charles took up a position in the Department of the Navy where he worked until retirement.

'Since youth he has had an interest in the natural environment. He was a keen walker with the Melbourne Walking Club and a skier in the Victorian Alps. Having settled in Canberra, Charles took his family into the Canberra surroundings and joined the National Parks Association of the ACT in 1971. He joined the Committee in 1976 and worked diligently until 1984, giving careful comments about the issues raised at the meetings.

'He showed a meticulous attention to detail, and conscientious dedication to a task undertaken, when he took over the leadership of the tree planting project near the Information Centre of Namadgi National Park. Despite environmental setbacks and disappointments, Charles has, with a faithful small group of helpers, done all to encourage the trees to grow.

'His characteristic of seeing a job through to its ultimate goal is evident in his supervision of the sales of the *Field guide to the native trees of the ACT*.

'Charles is always a cheerful leader of day walks, ski trips or car camps and now since his retirement leads mid-week walks in the local area.

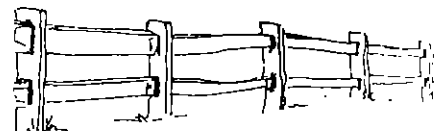
'He was a member of the enthusiastic team which built the Yerrabi

Track last year. He regularly attends our monthly meetings, thus keeping himself informed on current environmental issues. We trust that, as a Life Member, he will be taking part in NPA activities for many years to come and we all appreciate his years of commitment to caring for the natural environment.'

The nomination was seconded by Kevin Totterdell, who paid tribute to Charles's contribution to the *Field guide to the native trees of the ACT*, and his management of the tree planting project at Glendale. Kevin said that Charles's attention to detail and his organisational ability had led to the success of this project. His planning, supervision and nurturing role in the project had resulted in a significant improvement of the environment at Glendale. Furthermore, Charles's liaison with the ACT Parks & Conservation Service and his reports to the Bulletin, had been notably professional. Kevin said Charles Hill was eminently qualified to join the proud ranks of honoured life members of the Association.

The motion was carried by acclamation. The President congratulated Charles Hill, and completed the ceremony by the "pinning on of the badge".

Charles Hill spoke in reply. He said that he was indeed proud to be a life member, and he hoped he had put something in to the Association because he and Audrey and their family had gained so much from their membership of the NPA. It had been both fun and rewarding to do worthwhile work with like-minded people. As an example he cited the revegetation of the fire trails in Namadgi National Park after the bushfires in 1984.



ACF National Conference: The Australian Environment: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead

Philip Gatenby

(University of Technology Sydney 7-9 October 1988)

The title was reflected in the structure of the conference, which was built around the themes of cataloguing the current situation regarding the environment in Australia (taking stock), and developing strategies for the future (looking ahead) so that the environmental problems now confronting us would be stabilised in the short-term and rectified in the long-term. In this sense the intention of the conference was to look to the future, with some hope, rather than becoming a means of criticising the past and present. There was also an opening session and a summary of decisions.

Taking stock encompassed both the opening and first session (Australia: a land worth caring for). On the debit side, the grim statistics of land degradation, forest loss, species extinction, rising soil salinity, rising atmospheric levels of chlorofluorocarbons and carbon dioxide, and pollution (just about everywhere) were given out by speaker after speaker, not just at these sessions but throughout the conference. The credit side also got a mention. Neville Wran, in his opening address, referred to the growing preservationist streak in society as evident from the number of environmental battles fought (with some even won!) over recent years. David Bellamy, who chaired the first session noted that despite the world's predicament, change was occurring. Whether the change will be sufficiently large and quick enough remains to be seen.

Much of the first session was spent interpreting the historical evidence on the evolution of Australian landforms, flora and fauna.

The recent decades have been a time of revelation in the scientific understanding and valuation of the Australian environment. Its uniqueness and diversity is only now becoming fully recognised and acknowledged. The relationship between Australian Aborigines and the environment was also covered. This part of the session highlighted

the stark contrast between the environmental effects of 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation and 200 years of European involvement.

Session II looked at the extent to which we (non-Aborigines) have cared for Australia. While Session III considered the way ahead in the context of government initiatives for reconciling resource exploitation and conservation, overcoming constraints on pursuing actions for the well-being of the environment and the development of strategies for future action. A large part of these sessions was taken up by the task forces. There were thirteen in all, organised with a focus on specific environmental issues, namely agricultural lands; Antarctica; arid and semi-arid lands; coastal and marine environment; forests; inland waters; atmosphere; toxic and hazardous chemicals; urban areas; wilderness and wildlife. Surprisingly, there was not a task force for the greenhouse effect. The reason was that this major environmental problem impinges on all other current environmental issues.

The purpose of the task forces was for the participants to identify major problems of each environmental concern and then develop strategies for overcoming these problems. The strategies put forward by each task force should at a minimum provide input to ACF policy proposals.

Apart from the overriding aim of the conference, which was the development of future strategies to achieve solutions for a number of environmental problems, there was also a wider reflection on societal goals to be promoted by the conservation movement. Concepts of a sustainable society, and economic and ecological sustainability, received widespread coverage at the conference. In an inspiring keynote address by Judith Wright, which was tinged with regret because it may be her last speaking engagement, the ideas of H.C. Coombs on this concept were des-

cribed. As far back as 1972, Coombs put forward the idea of a sustainable society but sixteen years later few decision makers show an understanding of the principles of a sustainable society which would replace those based on the outdated philosophy of unlimited growth. The need for change was encapsulated in Judith Wright's phrase "Wrong way, go back!"

In an address on the way ahead Charles Birch provided four axioms for achieving a sustainable society in Australia. These were (i) that nothing is inevitable about the future; (ii) the future is in our hands; (iii) biocentric ethics need to replace anthropocentric ethics; and (iv) value judgements should be part of decision making.

The need to ensure that environmental considerations not only got to the top of the political and academic agenda, but remained there, was stressed by Penny Figgis in the opening address. This idea was reinforced by a number of speakers in a variety of ways throughout the conference. Steven Dubois MP (who presented Senator Graham Richardson's speech at the opening of Session II) noted that environmental considerations in Government decision making had moved from the periphery to be a central feature. Senator Peter Cook MP, Minister for Resources, referred to the growing dialogue between conservationists and the Government. He also referred to the need for a cooperative model including conservationist representation on bodies involved in policy formulation. Examples of a co-operative approach are the National Energy Consultative Council, the National Soil Conservation Council and the Endangered Species Advisory Committee. On the idea of conservationists being more involved in Government decision making bodies a cautionary note was sounded by Senator Chris Puplick, opposition spokesman on the environment. He warned of the dangers of being sucked into the

bureaucracy and the resultant loss of independence. This point was picked up by ACF Director, Phillip Toyne, in the media release for the second day of the conference. The need for environmental groups to maintain independence was seen as essential.

To keep environmental matters on the political and academic agenda the need for a high level of professionalism was made clear. David Bellamy stated that it was time environmentalists and industry improved communication in the hope of developing a constructive working relationship. Milo Dunphy promoted the idea of a nationwide paper on environmental issues. A more professional approach would involve campaigns to "win hearts and minds" to obtain acceptance by the community of the ideas of conservationists and to enshrine environmental absolutes in legislation. In a closing address along these lines Robyn Williams of the ABC Science Unit launched a blistering attack on the 'loads-a-money' society of the 1980s and the environmental ignorance of some world leaders. He stressed the importance of scientific excellence in the pursuit of solutions to environmental problems, raised the idea of a "green levy" on industry - proportional to each industry's level of environmental damage - which would be used to fund research, and drew attention to the significance of the media.

ACF are to publish a set of conference papers which will be available in the NPA (ACT) Office.

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Wrecked on Abrahams Bosom

Trevor Plumb

At 4pm on Monday 26 March 1928 the S.S. *Merimbula*, a twin-screw steamer of 1111 tons, left its wharf in Sydney Harbour and, around 5pm, cleared the Heads on its weekly run to Eden via Bermagui, Tathra and Merimbula. On board were 14 passengers, a crew of 35 and a cargo of 350 tons of general merchandise, including a quantity of benzine as deck cargo.

During the night, which was exceptionally dark, heavy weather was encountered. There were fierce rain squalls and a heavy south-easterly sea was running.

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 30 March, the stewardess, Mrs Sparks, later said that when she woke at midnight 'something told me to get dressed'. As a result, when the ship struck at about 1am with a terrible, grinding crash that threw at least one passenger from his bunk, the stewardess was one of the first on deck.

The passengers and crew put on life jackets and stood by the boats while rockets were sent up. The captain then assured them that the ship was fairly safe and they could stay on board till morning (there being no response to their distress signals).

Quoting the stewardess again: 'We went below and had something to eat. Two of the women played the piano for a bit, and then I brought out my old gramophone. That cheered them up. We played 'Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past' and 'Home, Sweet Home' !'

Morning showed the forward section on a rocky spur while at the stern the deck was awash. The ship was listing to port and its bottom was being ground away by movements caused by the wind and seas.

At 6am the journey from ship to shore began in pelting rain and with occasional waves breaking over the boats. The journey seemed endless but, when all the party were finally sheltering in huts near the beach, Captain O'Connor set out in pouring rain to walk to the lighthouse at Point Perpendicular, on the northern head to Jervis Bay. His way led generally south along the Becroft Peninsula for about 13km and

across what today might be aptly called the 'blasted heath', since although it is a 'flora park' it is also the RAN's gunnery range.

Despite frequent fires, the flora is still diverse and attractive. At the end of October this year, plants in flower included species of *Bauera*, *Boronia*, *Comesperma*, *Dampiera*, *Epacris*, *Grevillea*, *Isopogon*, *Kunzea*, *Lambertia*, *Leptospermum*, *Melaleuca*, *Patersonia*, *Thysanotus*, *Westringia*, and *Xanthorrhoea*.

At least Captain O'Connor did not have to concern himself with unexploded shells and bombs, but he was wet through and exhausted when he reached the lighthouse. (Why he went alone I cannot imagine.) After the alarm had been raised, he was driven back to his sheltering party in a cart.

Several features near where the party landed carried then and carry still the name 'Abrahams Bosom'. There is Abrahams Bosom Beach and also Abrahams Bosom Creek, which now form part of Abrahams Bosom Reserve - see CMA 1:25 000 Currarong sheet, 1985.

Three cars were despatched from Nowra 'post haste', but to reach the cars at Currarong Creek (now Currarong) the passengers and crew had to enter the boats again. By evening all the party had reached Nowra except Captain O'Connor and one officer, who stayed by the ship.

It was perhaps an odd coincidence that the passengers on that voyage included the State Superintendent of Navigation and an inspector of shipping on their way to inspect installations and activities of the Navigation Department along the south coast.

On 3 April, the Melbourne *Argus* recorded that the ship was finally sold for £300. Today only part of the iron skeleton remains as a physical reminder of this mishap of sixty years ago.

Acknowledgement: My thanks to Ian Fraser and Margaret McJannett for their excellent Environment Tour of the Jervis Bay area.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Ms Simondson,

Recently I have been concerned by the apparent conservatism and triviality of some of the material which has been published in our Association's *Bulletin*. This is disturbing indeed, since I believe that the Association's role is an important one – namely, to promote an understanding of the current predicament of our plants and animals and their constituent assemblages/ecosystems, to work for the establishment of secure national parks and to support the effective management of such areas. The entire debate about Gudgenby, while appropriate in less informed circles, I feel is a source of frustration and confusion to the readers. It seems as if our Association may well be permitting by default, or even *advocating*, the continuation of grazing in our national parks! This flies in the face of the Australian concept of a national park, being an

area where essentially wild things and processes operate untrammelled or minimally influenced by human induced disturbance. Allowing grazing in any national park (save for the sensible, practical destocking over maybe two to three years on grazing properties recently acquired) is inimical to the concept. As for the preservation of the cultural landscape argument, for goodness sake we are surrounded by such landscapes. We have more examples of those than we can poke a stick at! What we are in dire need of is extensive areas of minimally disturbed pre-European landscapes so that what remnant ecosystems remain can exist in perpetuity. Do let us get our priorities right.

Since I had noted this disturbing trend in some NPA publications/activities, I had contemplated perhaps relinquishing my membership and turning my attention to more progressive organisations

such as the Wilderness society which have similar objectives to the NPA and actually do attempt to achieve their objectives rather than to flounder in a wash of redherrings and to dally with activities dangerous to the retention of our remnant wild lands. Instead I will give it a little more time. In addition, I offer you an item for the *Bulletin*. This contribution, I see, serves three functions. These are:

- (i) it places the plight of animals dependent on the retention of pre-European communities in an appropriate light;
- (ii) it informs readers as to the nature of current ecological findings and happenings; and
- (iii) it serves to show that I am attempting to work towards what I see to be a more effective *Bulletin* rather than to simply criticise, and allow others to work for a change.

Thanking you,

Garry L. Werren

Ecologists Called to Arms

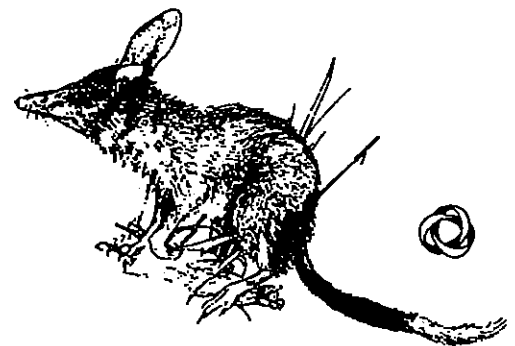
by Garry Werren

Over 180 environmental scientists, plant and animal ecologists and representatives of government land management agencies recently met in Geraldton, Western Australia in the Ecological Society's Biennial Symposium. The theme of the meeting was 'Australian Ecosystems: 200 years of utilisation, degradation and reconstruction'.

During the week-long meeting over 60 papers were presented. These covered many topics including the history of use of land-based and aquatic systems, the study and management of Australia's special stocks of plants and animals and planning for future land use. A great deal of attention was given to the means of reconstructing and rehabilitating damaged ecosystems and to the need to retain the genetic resource base.

Many of the papers provided a great litany of evidence for the break-down of ecosystem pro-

cesses as a result of the extensive changes wrought on the landscape over the past 200 years of European settlement and agricultural conquest. A great number of speakers reported massive and rapid changes resulting in accelerated loss of native plants and animals and a decline of primary production. Since 1788 many species of Australia's unique marsupials have become extinct and others have suffered great declines in their range and numbers. Of the original 71 species of arid zone mammals, 11 are now extinct, while 5 are confined only to offshore island refuges. A further 15 are very severely restricted and are extraordinarily vulnerable. The smaller wallabies and bandicoots have suffered most due to the combined effect of grazing, introduction of rabbits and exotic predators such as the cat and the fox, large-scale habitat destruction and profound habitat modification as in



The Bilby or Rabbit-eared Bandicoot (*Macrotis lagotis*) – an animal which has been driven to the very edge of extinction over the past 200 years – was the logo for the Ecological Society's conference on Australian Ecosystems.

the wildfire-driven homogeneity which followed the removal of Aboriginal burning practices. Similar worrying trends are likewise evident for our plants, our birds and some groups of invertebrates. Problems of land degradation – the acidification and erosion of topsoil and salinisation – have affected around 40% of the entire continent.

Dr Recher, formerly of the Australian Museum, Sydney, and presently from the Department of Ecosystem Management at the University of New England, argued that Australia is the most perversely and pervasively modified of all of the continents. He pointed to a huge 20% of all of our vertebrates – some 273 species – as endangered. We are about to witness another bout of extinction – perhaps 30% of all of our mammals and 30 species of birds will be lost unless there is drastic action. For this remedial action to eventuate requires a major redirection of community attitudes. We can no longer rely simply on national parks and reserves to stop extinction and, in any case, we delude ourselves if we think that we have an adequate nature reserve network, he said. Ecologists must become actively involved and communicate.

His call to take up arms – at least metaphorically – was well understood by most participants. On the whole there was a deep concern for the future conservation of our living natural resources and our ability to manage these on a sustainable basis, together with a renewed commitment for ecological input to the rectification of the situation. There was a clearly identifiable need for Australian ecologists to inform the public, politicians and senior decision-makers about environmental issues.

While the discussion in the conference hall was lively and the messages about the state of the environment often depressing, the surrounding sandplains and laterite hills were an extraordinary tapestry of colour. The wildflowers were at their best with an incredible array of shapes and hues. First visitors from the East, of which I was a fortunate example, found the spectacle intrinsically curious and exhilarating. It was as if the plants themselves were supporting the call to arms amongst the ecological fraternity in the most impressive way.

★ ★ ★

Car Camp at Oallen Ford: June Long Weekend

*Olive Buckman
Flora data by Russ Kefford*

Under the care of genial hosts Pam and Russ Kefford, some 31 members and friends made their way by devious routes (via Tarago being voted the best), to gather at the Shoalhaven River at Oallen Ford midday Saturday. The group covered all ages (of membership and years) from the 'elderly' down to young teens. One couple were very new members, and another had recently returned from a year in Canada.

Soon tents, caravans with annexes, campervans and so on, sprang up over a long, narrow area high above the river level at the time, but obviously not much higher than the water had been some weeks previously. With such large numbers and sparse bushland within 'cooee', a 'little blue house' was made down below an inland bank. Head and shoulders could still be seen, but that saved any system of sign of occupation! Lunch consumed, one and all set off along the river – dodging trees and flood debris – finally to reach the site of old gold diggings (around 1880-1900). Spurred by thoughts

that recent heavy rains could well have washed down gold specks, hopeful seekers fossicked around – but to no avail.

One huge area about 10-15m deep had been made by sluice waters passing through, and gum trees now 80 or more years old were growing in the bottom.

Turning for home near the (very swollen) river, we became enthralled with the activities of a platypus in mid-stream, only about 20 m away! For many, it was their first near sighting of this lovely monotreme. On the way back one member spotted an unusual formation not far from the track, and introduced others to a water race. This followed back and forth on the same contour, carrying water for hydraulic sluicing – a method used by most gold companies of the period in that area.

Our camping area divided itself – by sheer numbers and distance – into two camp fires, but a cold wind which had been with us since arrival, soon sent members scurrying to tents and other habitats. Sunday dawned bright and clear with a



Breakfast – NPA car camp at Oallen Ford

18/19/20 March - Car Camp

Wapengo/Mimosa Rocks National Park

Ref: Murrah 1:25 000

Leader: Gary Thompson 88 6084

Contact leader early for details. Wapengo north of Tathra. Camp at lake edge. Swim, fish or stroll along the beach, canoe or birdwatch. Note there are no facilities, no toilets and no water so bring plenty of drinking water. 500km drive.

19 March - Sunday Walk (A)

Red Rocks Gorge

Ref: ACT 1:100 000

Leader: Shirley Lewls 95 2720

Meet at Kambah Pool bitumen parking area at 9.30am. An 8km walk along the track following the Murrumbidgee River from Kambah Pool to Red Rocks Gorge. The track is undulating with good river views. Swimming and lunch at Red Rocks pool.

24/25/26/27 March - Pack Walk (2/3)

Easter in Namadgi's southern parts

Ref: Yaouk 1:25 000, Bredbo 1:25 000
and Shannons Flat 1:25 000

Leader: Dianne Thompson 88 6084

Contact leader early for details. Visit many of the hut ruins, stockyards and other historic features of the park. Plenty of time for photography. Walk to the NSW border then along Back or Grassy Creek, through to Sheepstation and Naas Creeks. Mostly on fire trails, but will include some open bush and scrub. Small car shuffle planned. 160km drive.

1/2 April - Pack Walk (1/2)

Hut on Hospital Creek

Ref: Yaouk 1:25 000

Leader: Bob Story 81 2174

Meet at Kambah Village Shops at 8.30am. A pleasant day walk mostly on tracks. A 12km round trip. 100km drive.

2 April - Sunday Walk (A)

Goodradigbee

Ref: ACT 1:100 000

Leader: Steven Forst 51 6817 (H), 56 2424 (W)

Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 8.30am. A stroll along the river north of Brindabella. Plenty of time for swimming or dozing under trees.

8/9 April - Pack Walk (3/5)

Smokers Flat/Mt Keahnle Area

Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000

Leader: Les Pyke 81 2982

Contact leader by Wednesday. An exploratory walk towards Orroral Valley from a base camp at Smokers Flat to establish a linkage point for a future walk from the valley. 80km drive.

9 April - Sunday Walk (B)

Black Springs

Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000

Leader: Lyle Mark 86 2801

Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road. A 14km walk to Fishing Gap and onto the Cotter River. Partly along historic bridle path. A long but gradual climb back to the gap. 70km drive.

18 April - Sunday Walk (A)

Mt Ainslie - Mt Pleasant

Ref: ACT 1:100 000

Leader: Gary Schnelder 54 9801

Meet at the car park behind the War Memorial at 10.00am. An easy day walk with excellent views of Canberra.

18 April - Tuesday Midweek Walk (A/B)

Hardys Range

Ref: Cotter Dam 1:25 000

Leader: Charles Hill 95 8924

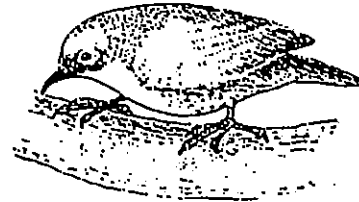
Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 9.30am. A 10km walk the length of Hardys Range, through interesting terrain and with good views. A steep climb up a firebreak then easy undulating walking along the ridge. Total climb 400 metres. Walking on forest roads and in parts open forest. Suitable for anyone who can puff up a firebreak rising 200 metres. 40km drive.

6/7 May - Weekend Away (A)

Braidwood History Tour

Leader: Kevin Frawley 82 3080

Contact leader early for details of this trip to explore the history and environs of Braidwood. More details will be available in the next Program.



Points to Note

New faces to lead, new places to go!
Please help to keep our Outings Program alive by volunteering to lead a walk occasionally.
Contact Walks Convenor Steven Forst 51 6817 (H).

All persons joining an outing of the National Parks Association of the A.C.T. do so as volunteers in all respects and as such accept sole responsibility for any injury howsoever incurred and the National Parks Association of the A.C.T., its office bearers and appointed leaders are absolved from any liability in respect of any injury or damage suffered whilst engaged in any such outing.

The Committee suggests a donation of FIVE cents per kilometre (calculation to nearest dollar) be offered to the driver by each passenger accepting transport. Drive and walk distances quoted in the program are for approximate return journeys.

OUTINGS PROGRAM

DECEMBER 1988 - APRIL 1989



OUTINGS GUIDE

- Day Walks** - Carry lunch, drinks and protective clothing.
Pack Walks - Two or more days, carry all food and camping requirements. CONTACT LEADER BY WEDNESDAY.
Car Camps - Often limited or no facilities. Vehicles taken to site can be used for camping. BOOK WITH LEADER EARLY.

Other activities include nature rambles, field guide studies, ski tours, snow crafts, tree maintenance and other projects.

DAY WALKS - GRADING

- A Up to 15 km, mainly on tracks or forest roads, relatively flat terrain or shorter distances through trackless open bushland.
B Up to 20 km, mainly on tracks or shorter walks through trackless open bush.
C As for 'B' may include rougher terrain, i.e. heavy scrub, rock hopping or scrambling or steep terrain.
D Up to 30 km, relatively easy terrain or less over trackless or steep terrain.

PACK WALKS - GRADING

- 1 Up to 14 km a day over relatively easy terrain.
2 Up to 20 km a day, may involve long ascents.
3 As for '2' may include rougher terrain, i.e. heavy scrub, rock hopping or scrambling.
4 Strenuous long distance or much steep climbing or very difficult terrain.
5 Exploratory in an area unfamiliar to the leader.

Additional information will be contained in the actual walks program. If necessary contact leader.

14 December – Wednesday Meeting

Outings Program Meeting Ref: Canberra UBD
Leader: Steven Forst 51 6817 (H), 56 2426 (W)
Meeting to be held at Steven's place, 46 Wybalena Grove, Cook from 1930 (7.30pm). The Outings Program for April to June 1989 will be discussed, along with any other business. All welcome.

14/15 January – Canoe Trip

Tumut River
Leader: Nick Gascoigne 51 5550 (H), 46 2167 (W)
Location subject to water conditions. Contact leader by Wednesday 4 January for details of venue and map references. Numbers limited. 320km drive.

21/22 January – Pack Walk (4)

Brogio River Ref: Yowrie 1:25 000
and Puen Buen 1:25 000
Leader: Philip Gatenby 54 3094
Contact leader by Wednesday for details. A walk in a wilderness area of Wadbilliga National Park. Mostly off tracks, steep climbs and may involve swimming with packs. Total climb over 1000 metres. Numbers limited. 300km drive.

28/29 January – Pack Walk (1/2)

Broken Dam, Kiandra Ref: Tantangara 1:100 000
and Kosciusko 1:100 000
Leader: Peter Roe 91 9535
Contact leader by Wednesday for details. About a 9km walk from Sawyers Hut to Broken Dam Hut on fire trails. Will also include a look around the Nine Mile Diggings. 280km drive.

29 January – Sunday Walk (A/B)

Mt Franklin/Mt Ginini Area Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
and Tidbinbilla 1:25 000
Leader: Lyn Richardson 41 5498
Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 9.00am. A 10km walk over fairly level ground with good views possible. 110km drive.

4/5 February – Pack Walk (2)

McIntyres Hut Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Steven Forst 51 6817 (H), 56 2426 (W)
Contact leader by Wednesday for details. A walk along the Goodradigbee River from Brindabella northward to McIntyres Hut and return. Plenty of opportunity for swimming. 120km drive.

5 February – Sunday Walk (A/B)

Swamp Creek Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Frank Clements 31 7005
Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Rd at 9.30am. A pleasant stroll along the creek, pick blackberries and swim. 20km drive.

11/12 February – Pack Walk (2/3)

Deua River Ref: Burrumbela 1:25 000
Leader: Bob Story 81 2174
Contact leader early for details. A great walk along the river, weather permitting. Much wading. 115km drive on tar, 10km rough.

1 February – Sunday Walk (A)

Shoalhaven River Ref: Braidwood 1:25 000
Leader: Allan Mortlock 81 2335
Meet at Canberra Railway Station at 9.00am. An easy walk along the Shoalhaven River near the Warri Bridge. Plenty of opportunities to get wet or just sit on sandy beaches. Spectacular granite cliffs also along the river. 100km drive.

16 February – Thursday Midweek Walk (A)

Australian National Botanic Gardens
Leader: Gladys Joyce 95 6959
Meet at the Information Centre at 10.00am. Walks through tropical rainforest and other interesting areas in the gardens. Lunch in the amphitheatre area. 4 to 5km walk.

18/19 February – Pack Walk (4)

Ettrema Ref: Touga 1:25 000 & Nerriga 1:25 000
Leader: Eric Pickering 86 2128
Walk to Ettrema Gorge via Shingles Pass, return by a different way. No tracks, some rock hopping and wading. Please contact leader by Wednesday for details. Total climb of 400 metres, 340km drive.

18/19 February – Car Camp

Brindabella Valley Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000
Leader: Peter Roe 91 9535
Contact leader before Wednesday. A lovely weekend on the Goodradigbee River with a walk up the Brindabella Range. Bring fishing gear if you want trout for tea?? Also swimming in the Goodradigbee River. 120km drive.

19 February – Sunday Walk (B)

Brindabella Range Ref: Tidbinbilla 1:25 000
Leader: Peter Roe 91 9535
Meet at the Brindabella Valley bridge at 9.00am. Walk in the Brindabella Valley and up the Brindabella Range. 120km drive.

25/26 February – Pack Walk (1)

Goodradigbee River Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Fiona Brand 47 9538
Contact leader by Wednesday for details of this easy 2km walk for beginners, children and swimmers. 160km drive.

26 February – Sunday Walk (A)

Joint KHA/NPA walk: Huts of the Mt Clear - High Forest Area Ref: Colinton 1:25 000
and Bredbo 1:25 000
Leader: Andrew Lyne 88 6632
Meet at Kambah Shops at 8.00am. An easy 11km walk from Mt Clear Homestead area along Grassy Creek, then up the fire trail to the High Forest area, through open grassy country to Naas Creek and finally along track to the start. Visit Potters Hut, Reggie Brayshaws Hut, Sam Shouds Hut, Chaulkers Hut, Barretts Hut, and Mt Clear Homestead. 170km drive.

4 March – Saturday Walk (C)

Blue Gum Creek Area Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Philip Gatenby 54 3094
Contact leader by Wednesday for this exploratory walk. May involve rock scrambling, thick scrub and steep climbs. Not for beginners. 100km drive. Venue may be changed in the event of extremely hot weather.

4/5 March – Pack Walk (2)

Somewhere on the Shoalhaven or Kangaroo River system
Leader: Steven Forst 51 6817 (H), 56 2426 (W)
Contact leader before Wednesday to find out just where he is going and how he is going to get there? We do know that there will be a chance to get wet and any walking won't be too far. So give him a ring and find out. ??? drive.

5 March – Sunday Walk (A)

Michelago Gorge Ref: Michelago 1:25 000
Leader: John Webster 41 4646
Contact leader by Wednesday for details of this walk and swim on the Murrumbidgee River. Numbers limited. 120km drive.

8 March – Wednesday Midweek Walk (A)

Lake Burley Griffin Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Les Pyke 81 2982
Meet at Orana Bay at 9.30am. A pleasant 16km walk around the lake west of Commonwealth Avenue. Pine forest and lake views.

11 March – Saturday Walk (B)

Mt Gingera Ref: Corin Dam 1:25 000
Leader: Dugald Munroe 31 8776
Meet at the corner of Eucumbene Drive and Cotter Road at 8.00am. A 13km walk from Mt Ginini to the top of Mt Gingera. Good views, returning by Snowy Flat. Half on tracks, half through open bush. One steep 200m climb. 100km drive.

11/12 March – Pack Walk (2/3)

Woola Creek Ref: Burrumbela 1:25 000
Leader: Bob Story 81 2174
Contact leader before Wednesday. Summer swimming and much wading, weather permitting. 115km drive on tar, 10km rough.

15 March – Wednesday Midweek Walk (A)

Orroral Valley Ref: ACT 1:100 000
Leader: Betty Campbell 81 1771
Meet at Tharwa shops at 10.00am. Walk in vicinity of Orroral Valley tracking station. About 10km easy walk, 50km drive.

18/19/20 March – Pack Walk (3)

Mt Jagungal Area Ref: Khancoban 1:50 000
Leader: Neville Esau 86 4176
Contact leader before Wednesday for details. A long weekend walk in the high country. Visit historic huts and enjoy majestic views. 400km drive.

slight frost, then clear blue skies and warm sunshine. Some members went their own ways – or rested – while the bulk of the group were off early, driving along the Nerriga road to a newly constructed Wog Wog parking area.

Those of us old enough in membership to remember the 'good old days' when we could drive through Wog Wog property, and so – within a very short while – be walking in the Budawangs, found ourself interested – but frustrated. We followed a track – recently made – round private properties, up and down and round about, for nearly 1½ hours – to eventually find we were in the Budawangs – a stone's throw from our old car parking area! At this point, the group divided, some to return to camp and follow their own interests, while 16 of us wended our way into the Budawangs proper. One joy of this area is that at any time of the year there is always something 'out'. On this day we had an early pale wattle, and then masses of a brighter yellow one – a great joy. Other flowers and shrubs in bloom included: Stylidium, Boronia, Epacris, Banksia spinulosa and B. paludosa. Banksia ericifolia is always a lovely sight, and after Russ's example of a gentle poke and finger lick, we all followed suit – yummy – no wonder the honeyeaters were twittering all around us! With mighty Currockbilly looming on our right in the distance, and Corang Peak ahead, we deviated to Admiration Point. For those new to the area, what a magnificent sight awaited them. With clear blue skies and bright sunshine, they had wide views from left to right: Bibbenluke, Donjon, Mts Cole and Owen and the lovely Castle – all perfect examples of the towering rocky mesas typical of the area, and so round to Byangee Walls and Pigeon House. Beyond lay the sea, and to complete the picture, at least two ships sailing thereon. Below us, as we ate our lunch, were the deep, deep, densely wooded gullies with patches of rain forest – home of many animals – and creeks, plus the start of the Yadboro river.

Time to return – meandering around Korra Hill (from which point four young, energetic members dashed off up Corang Peak). To complete a wonderful day, on the way home those in the lead car could hardly believe their eyes as

four eagles rose like lumbering 747s from a paddock near the road, landing in some trees, then returning to the carcass where they had been feeding, to provide sightings for other cars behind us.

It was a perfect night for roaring camp fires, and while I cannot speak for 'the other one', we had an hilarious night around ours. We covered everything from action songs, trick word games, ditties of both World Wars, to monologues. All this was greatly enhanced by an array of bottles (whose contents got less as time went by) and a visit from the 'Nabisco Fairy' (in the opposition fire group) with choccy biccies!

Monday was again bright and clear, and many members wended their way by car to the Endrick River. Extraordinary heavy rains some six weeks previously, along with the debris the river carried, had lifted the lovely old bridge completely off its moorings (remains of 25 cm bolts sticking out of the concrete blocks in the river could be seen) and carried the *whole* bridge some 25 m down stream, then tipping it onto the bank. The main, vast old tree trunks some 60cm or more in diameter had been recovered and restored in place, vast wooden beams bolted back, and 12cm square blocks had been laid across. Although not yet open to traffic, we were able to scramble

up on the new bridge, walk across and wander around the chaos. It was an incredible sight, especially to see the original deck planking 'tossed' onto the bank in huge sections, and our minds boggled at the thought of the *whole* bridge being lifted up, carried down stream and dumped like a pack of cards!

Returning to Nerriga, we spent some time looking around a very old deserted house and outbuildings – with a delightful huge, tiled, domed oven under its own roof. It was then on to the old Nerriga school house (1924?) – now an old historical museum. Russ had arranged for the curator to open up, and we spent a very interesting time both there, and in the nearby building – a 'mines and minerals' exploration collection of photos, maps, mining equipment and so on.

The delightful, interesting weekend was over. Back to camp and the chores of packing up, cheerios, thanks, and a pleasant drive back to Canberra. One and all returned refreshed both mentally and physically, and with many happy memories, and hopes of returning again to this fascinating area with so many remains of the very active 'gold' priod, dammed creeks and other points of interest and beauty.

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Lunch – NPA car camp at Oallen Ford

Cooleman to Orroral

by Judith Webster

For the October long weekend John and I went on the NPA pack walk. Our leader, Ross Carlton, had this interesting idea to walk from Blue Waterholes – in the Kosciusko National Park – through to the Orroral Valley – in our own local Namadgi National Park – following old fire trails. A considerable amount of organisation was involved and quite an element of doubt.

The road into Blue Waterholes is closed during the winter and officially reopened the first weekend in October, weather permitting. In order to reconnoitre the walk before the road was opened, Ross had to do it both ways, beginning and ending at Orroral Valley. He allowed five days for his planning trip but managed to do it in three (partly spurred on by a deterioration in the weather). As we had to walk only half the distance he did in three days, it promised to be a comfortable walk without undue time pressures.

The next problem was organising transport to the commencement of the walk (leaving cars at the Orroral end presented no difficulty). Ross arranged to hire a twelve-seater bus but needed to find someone willing to drive it to Blue Waterholes and then back to Canberra. He found a kind and noble soul in the shape of Charles Hill with Audrey as his supporter.

Now the only possible obstacle was the weather – if there was a lot of rain or a late snowfall before the Long Weekend, the road would remain closed. Fortunately the weather was reasonable and Ross was 90% sure we would be able to get in but didn't actually know until we got to the gate and found it open!

We were all looking forward to the walk – we being the lucky ones who expressed an interest in the walk at an early stage. It was arranged that we meet at 8am on Saturday morning at the 'locked gate' in Orroral Valley. With the magpies talking softly to themselves before it was even light and a major dawn chorus soon after 5am, no-one overslept and we were all assembled by

7.45am; had loaded ourselves and packs into the bus and were on the road by 8.02am. The drive along the Boboyan Road to Adaminaby was straightforward but on the Snowy Mountains Highway we became increasingly conscious of the gale force winds swaying the bus. With Charles's steady hand on the driving wheel, we were all relaxed and enjoyed being chauffeur driven to our starting point.

When we turned off this highway onto the dirt track leading into Blue Waterholes, Charles was unimpressed by the state of the road and took some convincing that it was the right one. Ruts, holes, puddles and a fallen tree to skirt, meant that we proceeded at a snail's pace.

Later we were confronted by a very steep and rutted descent. While the rest of us waited in the van, Charles and Ross set off on foot to see if it was OK to continue. They decided it was and the bus rocked gently downhill and out onto a long, rather boggy plain. Two-thirds of the way across this, it was felt we should not push our luck too far with the bus and we stopped and began our walk. We were still some five or six kilometres short of the Blue Waterholes.

Charles and Audrey had planned to have a picnic lunch and an exploratory stroll before returning to Canberra so joined us to walk to the Cooleman Homestead. However, when we came to a boots-off or wet-foot creek, they decided to turn back. We were extremely grateful to them for driving us all that way. They had a long, slow journey back with several tricky parts getting up the steep hills without our weight in the bus to give traction to the wheels. The bus was due back in Canberra at 5.00pm and they returned it at 4.55pm, (allowing for only a very brief lunch and coffee break).

Meanwhile, not quite ready to do battle with the cold wind and intermittent spitting rain, we walkers opted for an early lunch in the shelter of the Cooleman homestead. This homestead has been restored and NPA members will

remember seeing a Heritage film made during the restoration which showed the art of splitting logs and techniques for constructing the walls.

Our route took us down a rough and eroded track to Blue Waterholes which belied its name and looked a slightly murky green. We criss-crossed Cave Creek a couple of times and then straggled out following the firetrail over tussock grass plains with the gale buffeting us.

It was wide open country with large changing skylscapes of dark clouds, fragments of rainbows, expanses of blue, and pale curtains of rain sweeping over the distant hills and sometimes over us.

About mid-afternoon we reached Pockets Hut which offered a quiet haven from the gale. John and I remembered it in a different light from an Ian Currie Easter weekend when the hut was over-run with trail bikies having a party!

At this point Ross said the campsite he had chosen might be rather exposed and we could instead, stay in the hut or walk another two kilometres to a crossing at the Goodradigbee river. Two voted for the hut. The rest, including myself, were apparently neutral. While we were undecided, two other walkers appeared and it crossed my mind we could end up sharing the hut with all sorts of unknown people and it might not be very peaceful. I remembered, too, that the crossing at the Goodradigbee was a pretty spot so voiced my vote in favour of camping at the river telling everyone how attractive it was. Suddenly my lonely voice had swayed the party and everyone was for the river.

On the steep descent to the crossing, we met a party of three labouring up the hill with mountain bikes. The spokesman of their trio waxed eloquent about the joys of biking – obviously of the persuasion that it was better than walking. They'd had a great day, traversing 30 kilometres down fire trails from Mt Ginini and were headed for the hut. All their smart gear was neatly stowed in panniers hung over the

wheels, both front and back. Mountain biking certainly appeared to offer an attractive alternative way for seeing more of the bush.

I was glad I had spoken up in favour of the riverside camp. It was a delightful spot. A large flat grassy area in a natural bowl where the river curved around before entering a mini-gorge. It was sheltered from the main force of the gale but occasional gusts of wind blew into the bowl, whirled around (creating a frenzy with our camp fire smoke) and then blew away again.

After a pleasant evening with no further showers, we all retired to bed quite early. It then began to rain and rained quite steadily most of the night with heavier downpours at times. Occasionally I awoke and, listening to the rain, felt cosy in my sleeping bag but hoped it would stop by morning or my vote for the river campsite would not be quite so popular!

Soon after the pale, damp dawn, I was woken to the sound of raised voices. 'What's this', I thought, 'acrimony on a bushwalk'. I then realised the 'argument' was about the prospects of getting a fire lit with the wet wood and the imminent prospect of another downpour and I shrank down into my bag; this was just as I feared – how would I face 'the hut' advocates now! When I emerged from the tent, there was no sign of any fire and a few disconsolate bushwalkers stood around eating their cold tucker.

Some time had elapsed since the last shower and stout-hearted David began to gather wood and construct a magnificent wigwam which, with the aid of a firefighter, was soon blazing cheerfully. From then on the morning brightened by the minute with all signs of the rain blown away and a lovely freshness and sparkle emanating from the bush.

The three mountain bikers passed by on their return trip. We played a sort of tortoise and hare game with them over the next few hours, overtaking them whenever they had to get off and push. Our route climbed steadily following an old fire trail up through tall forest, sprinkled with the gold and mauve of wattle and hovea, to Leura Gap which we reached ahead of the cyclists.

Old fire trails can be a very pleasant alternative to bushbashing – they give a clear route but are

grown over sufficiently to be soft underfoot and still feel part of the bush. Sometimes too, they have the dreamy quality of a bygone era – here is a route that once upon a time was used by early settlers in the region...

When we reached Leura Gap the strong wind made us glad to push on down into the valley to a bridge over the Cotter River. There was plenty of clear, bright and pure, water gushing by on its way to the Corin Dam and eventually to our household taps. For this reason, although we had a permit to camp in the Cotter Catchment, it had to be a stipulated distance from the river and Ross had a campsite in mind which meant carrying water 2 kilometres!

We had lunch beside this stream and then some of the group went in search of the Cotter House while the rest of us relaxed in the sun. On their return Ross said they had found a much more promising campsite, the required distance from the river. It was on the side of a gently sloping hill looking down towards the river and a magnificent view along the valley to Coronet Peak and the beginning of the Mt Kelly spur. There was a small arboretum marked on the map nearby and this we discovered was a stand of pines which had been chopped down. We were able to use some pine cones for our fire and know we were helping prevent proliferation of wild pines.

The rest of the afternoon was spent lazily in the sun or beside our fire brewing cups of tea and making early preparations for our evening meal.

On Monday we were ready to leave at 7.40am. Another variation to the walk was suggested and instead of following the firetrail that went via Sawpit creek to the top end of the Orroral valley, we cut across country onto the remains of an old trail over Cotter Gap. Leaving the Gap it becomes a mere footpath through shoulder high bush which was vibrant with bird-songs. The wind was less today and it was warm and sheltered in the gully.

With the early start and a steady pace, we had rejoined the firetrail in the Orroral Valley by lunch-time. We took a steep short cut to avoid a large loop of the road and then had a lunch break. Many day-walkers in family groups and pairs wandered

past us on the road back to the locked gate and it was good to see our local National Park being used and appreciated. We certainly appreciated our walk through country varying from high-country plains, to tall forest and open valleys. We had covered a distance of about 47 kilometres. Thank you Ross for organising it all.

Yellow, Red or Letter Box?

Den Robin

Where have all the trees gone?

In 200 years of European settlement, Australia has lost two-thirds of its tree cover, including three-quarters of its rainforest.

Multi-nationals are tearing down the world's forests at an alarming rate, with devastating environmental, social and economic consequences.

Increasingly, the trees are being converted into advertising catalogues, unsolicited free newspapers and other forms of junk mail.

Already *three billion* of these items are being delivered into Australian letterboxes each year!

Three major letterboxing companies (controlled by Murdoch and Fairfax) in the last 10 years have built up a huge industry in letterboxing, often printing, as well as delivering, the material. According to an industry spokesperson addressing a seminar in Canberra recently, the delivery cost to the advertiser is around three to four cents per item, much cheaper than a postage stamp.

The letterboxing industry currently is seeking further expansion of its market, offering its service to government, banking, insurance and investment companies, in addition to retailers.

A constructive protest against this massive threat to the globe's forests is for individuals to fix a small, inexpensive 'no junk mail' sticker to their letterbox. Such stickers can be obtained from the Environment Centre for \$1.00 each.

Stop waste post haste.



Just Briefly –

Our best wishes go to Pat and Kevin T. terdell, who are leaving Canberra and moving to the coast to live. They will remain members of NPA, and we hope to see them now and again.

★ ★ ★

Judith Webster was interested, and slightly alarmed, on reading the note in Just Briefly, September issue of the *Bulletin*, which stated there were 28 people on her Mts Majura/ Ainslie walk. She only accounted for 22. Well, it was a foggy day ...!

★ ★ ★

As a newcomer to Canberra, I remember being keen to explore the richness and diversity of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve after watching the short film shown at the Visitors' Centre. Now there is a *new* 12-minute audio-visual which can be viewed on request. Management staff are anxious to hear comments on the new presentation, so why not call in to this attractive and informative Centre and help in the 'survey'? Also, the Bicentennial Exhibition of historic photographs, presented by the Tidbinbilla Pioneers' Association, is still on view at the Centre until the end of 1988, so hurry!

★ ★ ★

The Management of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve wishes to thank those bushwalkers who sign their names in the Bushwalking Register book before leaving on their walks. This simple act can benefit all concerned, and it is to be hoped that others will be encouraged to follow the example of those thoughtful walkers in signing the book.

With the onset of summer, it is timely to issue a warning regarding campfires and BBQs. After using the fireplaces in the BBQ areas at Tidbinbilla, or anywhere else for that matter, always make sure that you have extinguished the fire before leaving the site. Always be aware when a total fire ban has been declared, and observe it!

★ ★ ★

To discourage people from the dangerous practice of walking along the road between the koala/waterbird enclosures and the kangaroo enclosures, a walking track through the trees was constructed. Recently, signs have been erected at each end of the track to indicate more readily just where this track starts. The start of the track at the koala/waterbird end is in the *waterbird enclosure carpark*.

★ ★ ★

25 October was the official opening date of Mick's Track – named in honour of a man's dedication to his work at Tidbinbilla. Mr Mick McMahon worked at Tidbinbilla for 24 years, living at the Reserve for most of that time. He retired recently due to illness. As Mr McMahon particularly enjoyed working in the kangaroo areas, it is appropriate that the new track wends its way through the trees in the wallaroo enclosure then leads downhill to the gate into the red kangaroos' area. Continuing through this part of the Reserve, the track curves almost enough to form a 'ring', and soon joins the path which leads back to the small bridge over the creek, and the carpark. Strategically placed seats, at the top of a rise, or overlooking a view, make this a leisurely walk of about an hour. Those who wish to can continue walking through the grey kangaroos' enclosure, where the track is along a board walk and bridge, through the tea-tree scrub to the waterbirds area.

Apparently, it has been a really good spring this year, with the evidence provided by lots of ducklings, including mountain duck and blue-bills. The ibis have also brought forth some young families.

★ ★ ★

During the summer months, Tidbinbilla will be open as follows:
November 9am - 8pm, December, January and February 9am - 9pm, and March 9am - 8pm. The Summer Evening Interpretation Activities Program includes ranger-guided Evening Walks on Saturday evenings, and Spotlight Walks on Wednesday and Thursday nights.

Bookings are required for both these popular series; watch the *Canberra Times* for notices, and ring the Visitors' Centre for more information, 37 5120 (11am - 4pm Mon-Fri).

★ ★ ★

For some members, the past few months hold vivid memories of exciting travel. At the risk of Just Briefly becoming a 'not so brief' travel documentary, the following items are included as impressions gained by three such members. (PS. It will also counteract the lack of contributions relating to 'local' outings!)

★ ★ ★

Firstly, Norma Price's '**Thoughts on Things African**'.

- . Tour vehicle bogged while passengers photographing pride of lions.
- . Samburu Reserve – chasing vervet monkeys away from dining areas.
- . Masai Mona – so lush, due to heavy rains, animal migration late – not moving. Best game reserve in East Africa.
- . Tsavo, one of oldest, is so depleted of animals that tour leader will not visit on next trip. POACHING is the cause and is widespread. According to a recent Harare newspaper, the war in Angola is mostly financed by ivory sales.
- . *Another depressing item* – the large amount of souvenirs on sale made from animal skin or bones.
- . Saw 19 species of antelope, 3 species of giraffe, and 2 types of zebra. Also, a rare caracal cat.
- . The camouflage colour of lions varied according to region. Tour vehicle surprised a lioness sound asleep in tall grass. Cubs as charming and playful as domestic kittens!
- . Elephants – gentle and caring of each other, but their food requirements are destructive of the vegetation. Many reserves are overpopulated and are being eaten out.
- . Norma's menu included some rather 'exotic' dishes – roast crocodile, and wart hog.
- . The bird life, Norma says is 'beautiful beyond all dreams of the imagination, eg a flock of thousands

of pink flamingoes in the late afternoon sun.'

. TWO FLIGHTS with a difference (*High* adventure) – Drifting over Masai Mona Game Reserve at dawn in a hot-air balloon (with champagne breakfast of course), AND a dreamlike flight by small plane over the mighty Zambesi River where it tumbles over the Victoria Falls.

. MORE EXOTIC MODES OF TRAVEL: Stranded in mid-stream on an old dhow with its engine on fire and slowly sinking, AND the overnight train from Mombassa to Nairobi – silver service in dining car like relics from Queen Victoria's era, AND of course, the camel rides.

★ ★ ★

Emu III Tour – USA

American teacher and expert ornithologist Connie Gottlund, and Richard Jordan, former warden of the Barren (Grounds) Bird Observatory, were the well informed leaders of the recent EMU III Tour of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico in which Ian and Jean Currie participated.

Some of Jean's indelible impressions:

- . Learning to camp safely in bear territory in the High Sierras.
- . Coping with temperatures below freezing in the Sierras at 14,000 feet, and 135 degrees F. in Death Valley, 282 feet below sea level.
- . Waking up to watch hummingbirds feeding.
- . Sunset over the Grand Canyon, and flying into the Canyon in a single engine plane.
- . Sighting the elusive Trogon at Cave Creek Canyon.
- . Visiting the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, and Las Vegas Museum of Natural History.
- . Enjoying the wonderful craftsmanship of Navajo, Seri, Hopi, Apache, and Zuni Indians.

★ ★ ★

Fair Isle

Ian and Jean also had a memorable voyage to Fair Isle.

Set in reputedly the roughest stretch of open sea in the world, and lying between the Shetland mainland and the Orkneys, is tiny Fair Isle. Not only is it world famous for its knitted garments, but also as

one of the most important points in Europe for bird migration study.

It has 60 permanent residents, a tiny village, and two lighthouses. The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust runs the observatory and a comfortable hostel.

The 40 species of birds which breed on Fair Isle include 18 species of sea-birds. Great numbers of migrating birds visit on their passages between Greenland, Iceland, the Faeroes, Scandinavia and the Arctic.

Ask Jean for a description of species recorded, and for the names of the rarer British birds which turn up on the Isle. It makes colourful reading!

Fair Isle has a romantic atmosphere, windswept and wild, bleak, but with a haunting beauty. Jean and Ian are now under the spell of this remote place; the only palliative treatment available, Jean says, is to return.

★ ★ ★

Away from it all in near Paradise

(*Olive's holiday on Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands*)

Within ten days of the thought that a relaxing holiday was badly needed (first in 5 years) Olive 'upt and oft' to Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands for 12 days in August.

Scorning the hired cars on one, and bikes on the other, she walked and walked (and talked and talked). If she found Norfolk fascinating for its beauty and history, she then 'fell in love' with Lord Howe, and can't get back quick enough. One highlight there was climbing Mt. Gower (875m sheer from sea level) – ropes 'an all', for an experience of a lifetime. The top was like the enchanted fairyland of her childhood – mist, rain forest, dozens of different mosses, lichen and tiny ferns, thickly decorating every trunk and branch. Flightless native woodhens wandered around her feet, while at a clap from the guide, Providence petrels plummeted through the magical canopy, to scuttle to their burrows.

A two-hour boat trip round the islands was another outstanding memory, the volcanic shores, mountains and islands a joy to see from sea level, to say nothing of Ball's Pyramid – rising 548m of sheer beauty.

Other memories, including

friendly people – both locals and visitors – delightful walks, wonderful scenery, fascinating geology, and the perfect peace, have left her feet itching more than usual! (Contributions to Buckman's 'Return to Lord Howe Fund' are more than welcome!)

★ ★ ★

Part of the car salesman's pitch, 'That bit extra under the bonnet', came to mean something quite different to a Canberra family recently. On arrival at Tidbinbilla, they heard a familiar "home" sound, and on investigating the source, found they had an extra 1 c.c. (one cat capacity) under the car bonnet! (PS – Puss survived the ordeal and was returned home, minus one of his nine lives.)

★ ★ ★

Having survived the impact of magpie beak, and even claws on scalp, it made a nice change to be aerially attacked by a spur-winged plover during spring. A pair of these handsome, but garrulous birds were tending four beautiful brown mottled eggs laid unceremoniously on an open grassy stretch between buildings at Belconnen. Long before I was aware of birds or eggs, the noisy aggression began. For us earth-bound creatures, aerial attacks by plovers have one advantage over magpie attacks. Unlike the silent, swift strike of a savage swooping magpie, a plover's plangent, piercing piping is used as a terrorising tactic, and warns us of impending danger. (If you can't down your enemy, then deafen 'em!)

★ ★ ★

Thanks to those who shared their travel experiences with us. More required for the next issue. Note – all you recently returned voyagers! Just as urgently required are items of local interest – please ring Melliodora 88 1889.

★ ★ ★



Controlled Lostness

(Or, how not to be a blind-faith bushwalker)

Margus Kallaid

Many bushwalkers can be said to travel through the scrub in a state of 'controlled lostness'. Dutifully carrying map and compass, they never become totally lost, but they're never entirely in control either. They're often quite unaware – sometimes blissfully, sometimes not – of where they are in relationship to anywhere else.

What follows is not a lesson in basic orienteering nor will it be a map and compass primer. That instruction is offered in booklets put out by the CMA or NATMAP. One of the best, more comprehensive guides is the Map Reading Handbook compiled by the State Emergency Service of Tasmania.

Instead, the accent will be on map-reading skills and to elevate the status of the map in the map-and-compass tandem. Of course there are times when the compass must be the dominant partner – when you are travelling through expanses of dense forest that offer limited vision, for instance, or across areas of minimal relief, such as snow-covered high plains in alpine areas. No matter how facile you become with a compass, however, it is rarely going to provide you with much more than a bearing.

But topographic maps can be endlessly revealing to the well-schooled eye. You never recognise how subtle is the face of the land, how much detail of environmental features is lost between the contour lines, until you have developed the skill to read the landscape and fit the map to it. The practised bushwalker not only sees more on the map than does the novice, he or she uses more of this information to find the easiest way through the bush.

As Ian Haynes remarked to me once: 'There's a big difference between bushwalking and walking in the bush.' Ian rarely uses his compass because his senses are finely tuned to relating the terrain around him to what he sees on his map. Constant practice at doing this puts him in full control of knowing where he is without having to rely on a compass.

Remember the last time you walked up the track from the Orroral Road into Nursery Swamp. Many people would see nothing more than the route of the track.

But a closer look at the map reveals several intermittent streams feeding the gully adjacent to the track, a prominent knoll to the north-west as you proceed upwards to the saddle with the big boulders. A flat open frost hollow lies just to the other side of where the track crosses Nursery Creek. Then the track follows a fairly even gradient as it contours south-east to the wide open area of Nursery Swamp with prominent peaks on the ridges north and south of the creek.

These various topographic features – the intermittent streams, the knoll, saddle, frost hollow and surrounding peaks – are all *collecting features*. They provide, literally, a frame of reference for the primary objective, Nursery Swamp. If the track wasn't there, these features would assist you in finding your way, just as street signs point the way in an unfamiliar suburb. If you're obliged to walk through the bush in the absence of a track, these collecting features will be crucial to finding your objective and, hopefully, prevent you from becoming lost.

The gully that runs alongside as you trudge up to the saddle also functions as a *handrail*. A handrail is any linear feature – either natural (stream, gully or spur) or man-made (a powerline cut, fire-trail, or fence-line) – that can be readily followed to a jumping off point. A compass may tell the novice bushwalker to follow a bearing slavishly but this becomes tedious when handrails are available but not used. The dial on the compass will force you to focus on the needle, possibly depriving you of the delights in the surrounding bush. Your perspective will broaden in more ways than one if you practise becoming *aware* of collecting features and handrails as you walk.

It is much easier to follow the path of least resistance through the bush whenever possible. Certainly there are gung-ho types who find

bush-bashing a physical challenge. Not me. I'd much rather go up the ridge of a spur where the vegetation is generally sparser than tangle with tea-tree in a gully where a creek is flowing. It's more enjoyable, the views are generally better, and the mood of the group remains contented rather than cranky.

The need to remain aware of your position on the map seems so obvious as to hardly bear mention. Yet whenever someone draws up a list of the factors that contribute to parties losing themselves in the bush, all signs point to a lack of awareness and map sense. They didn't carry a map, because it was only a day walk and someone had been there before; they got dis-oriented by the pleasant ambience of the bush; they failed to keep track of their progress; they trusted their instincts or memories or put blind faith in their leader's abilities; they followed the direction they just *knew* was correct rather than what the map and compass indicated; or they failed to take into account the inaccuracies of out-dated maps.

Let's look at some of these factors. Keep track of your progress by periodically looking backward to see where you've been, a habit that will help you retrace your steps should you lose the way. Don't put blind faith in your leader. What would happen if the leader had an accident? In any case, a good leader allows all members of the party to take the point, giving everyone practice and experience in finding the easiest way or following a bearing, while the leader can direct from the rear, at the same time keeping an unobtrusive eye on less fit members of the group.

Map error is a factor out of our direct control, and one that is often not taken into consideration. The CMA or NATMAP topographic maps are generally regarded as the best available. Yet these maps are often out-of-date. Several years pass between taking the aerial photographs upon which a map is based and the map's issue. In the

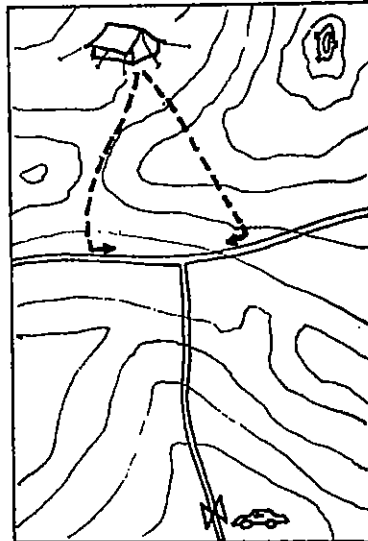
meantime, a raging bushfire may radically change the vegetation cover and fire trails or tracks come into use. Many of the most used tracks in Namadgi National Park – the Nursery Swamp track, the bridle path up to Cotter Rocks, the fire trail up to Mt Scabby – are not marked on the topographic maps. What others do you know about?

Topographic maps will not tell you how difficult progress will be through regenerated vegetation after a bushfire and there is no guarantee there will be water at a 'perennial' stream in a drought year, just because the map says so. The more practised you become at reading maps, however, the more readily you will recognise potentially misleading information.

Map reading then can be fun and rewarding but it takes practice, as does using its helper, the compass. One technique borrowed from orienteering is invaluable to the bushwalker and should make finding your way easier: *deliberate error*. Unlike its risky and ne'er-do-well acquaintance *stupid mistake* – a technique commonly applied by people who follow that old humbug, their 'sense of direction' – deliberate error sounds a lot worse than it actually is. More fortunately, it's easier to describe than define.

Let's say, for instance, you have to find the 'T' intersection of a fire trail in the middle of the bush (see diagram). The junction is just a pin-

point on the map. If you live a charmed life, you may come right at the junction, in which event you can continue merrily on your way back to the cars on the south-heading fire trail. But chances are you'll intersect the east-west fire trail... somewhere west or east of the hard-to-spot junction. How will you know which way to turn to follow the fire-trail back to the junction?



Editor's Note: The gremlins have been here again! This map was inadvertently placed on page 8 of the September issue of the Bulletin. My apologies for any confusion resulting from this error.

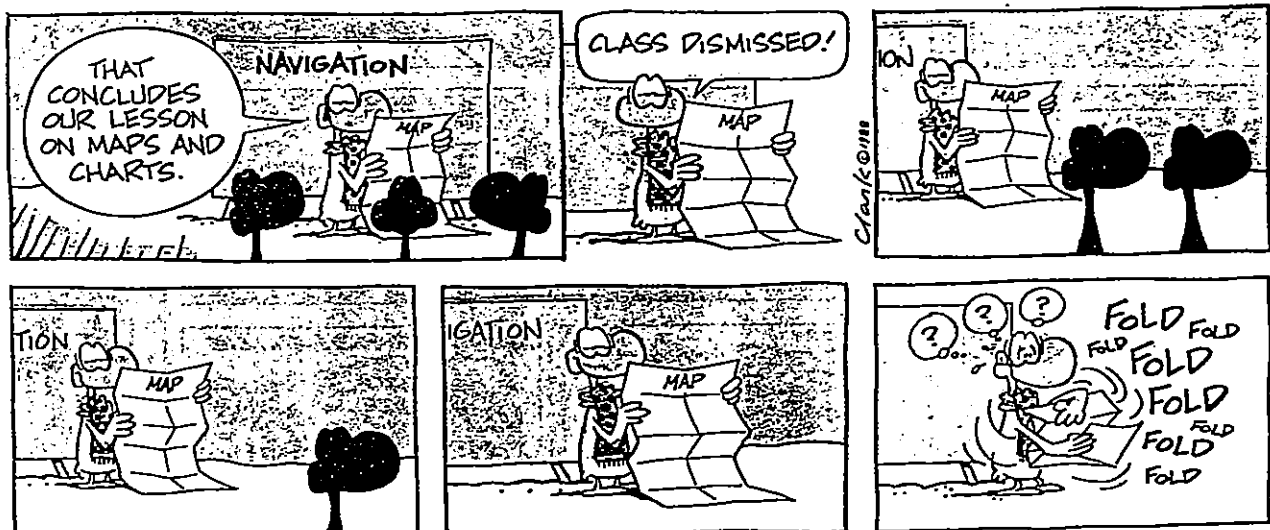
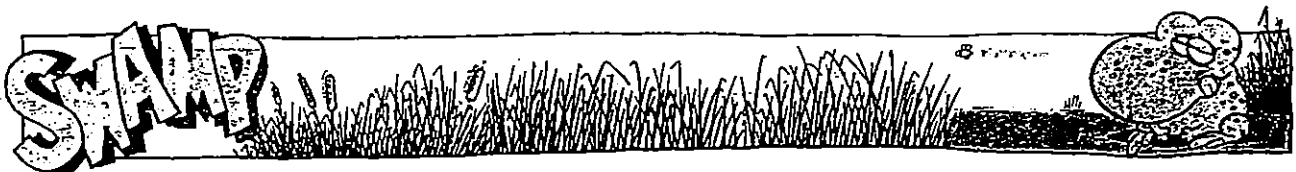
—Editor

By using deliberate error, that's how. Instead of following a due-south bearing from your campsite to the T intersection (the needle-in-a-haystack approach), aim off several degrees to one side or the other. Using this technique will almost surely save you much trial-and-error walking... and a lot of uncertainty.

Collecting features, handrails, deliberate error – simple tricks. But making your way through bush and across mountain ranges is more than a matter of mere competence with the tools of the trade. It's a state of mind, a blend of common sense and attention to detail. Whether you're following a track or walking through the bush, check your map when you start, orienting it to the land. Be sure you've made adjustments for map error, particularly with older maps. Remain constantly aware of the changes in the terrain you pass through (remember to look backwards when you stop for a breather), and always make sure you're conscious of relating map to landscape, landscape to map.

Do this and with practice you'll become more attuned to the bush and stand the surest chance of getting safely home.

*This article has been freely adapted from an original article by David Green in Sierra Magazine, March/April 1985, pp59-63.



Walks Grading System

by Beverley Hammond

How do you decide if an advertised walk suits you ?

Several members responded to a request from the Outings Planning Subcommittee to provide comments on our current grading system. The Subcommittee now invites members to register their preferences so that a decision can be made at the next meeting.

Most models favoured a detailed description of the outing including comments on terrain, distance, ascents and descents, noteworthy characteristics, educational or recreational features.

Your choice is invited for the following abbreviations of gradings:

Method 1

The present system (see program)
DAY WALK A, B, C, D
PACK WALK 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Method 2

EASY, MEDIUM, HARD

Method 3

NO GRADING – any abbreviated designation can be interpreted differently depending on the experience or stamina of the walker.

Method 4

GRADE/DISTANCE/TOTAL CLIMB
eg. A/B-15km-200m

- A Road, firetrail, track
- B Open forest
- C Light scrub
- D Patches thick scrub, regrowth
- E Wet river crossings, rock hopping, rock scrambling
- F Swimming with packs
- G Rock climbing
- H Exploratory
- I Ski trip

Method 5

A detailed description of the walk, plus a factor 'suitable for' to describe the sort of party the leaders needs or hopes to have. This might have five categories in ascending order:

SUITABLE FOR:

1. beginners, look-and-loiter walkers
2. moderately fit walkers
3. fit walkers, out regularly
4. fit walkers needing few rests on climbs
5. energetic, fit walkers experienced on scrubby, steep, rough going

To standardise this information for the Bulletin:

eg. Distance 22km return
Track 15km
Trackless 7km scrub, some rock
Total of all climbs 800m
Suitable for fit walkers needing few rests

Method 6:

DISTANCE AND DIFFICULTY
factors, e.g. 4-C

Distance gradings (per day)

1. up to 8km
2. 8km to 15km
3. 15km to 20km
4. 20km to 25km
5. unknown but over 15km

Difficulty Grading

- A. Easy - Well defined tracks, total climb less than 200m
- B. Medium - Tracks or paths, climb 200m to 400m
- C. Harder - Some ill-defined tracks or open bush, steep climbs or total climb of more than 400m
- D. Difficult - Tracks may not exist in parts - e.g. scrub or climbing or deep river crossings
- E. Exploratory - Contact leader for details

Method 7:

DISTANCE/TERRAIN/CLIMBS
eg. D2-T2-C3 (Tidbinbilla Peak)

Distance per day:

- D1 - up to 10km
- D2 - to 15km
- D3 - to 20km
- D4 - above 20km

Terrain:

- T1 - tracks, forest roads
- T2 - with additional open bush
- T3 - with scrub, rocks
- T4 - with dense scrub, scrambling, rock hopping

Climbs:

- C1 - relatively flat
- C2 - climbs to 200m
- C3 - climbs to 500m
(War Memorial to top of Mt Ainslie is 240m)
- C4 - above 500m

Please register your preference either at a General Meeting or by telephoning Beverley 88 6577 or Steven 51 6817.

Books for Sale

Come down to the NPA office during office hours or come to a General Meeting and see the range of books on display. If you ring the office, a publication can be sent to you for the added cost of the postage.

Eden Woodchipping - A Review Debbie Quarmby \$3.

Kiandra to Kosciusko Klaus Hueneker \$27.

Exploring Queensland's Central Highlands Charles Warner \$11.

Exploring Namadgi and Tidbinbilla Graeme Barrow \$7.

Discovering New South Wales Rainforests: A Touring Walking and Cycling Guide Published by the Total Environmental Centre \$10.

The Man from the Misty Mountains James Henry Sturgiss \$12.

The Alps in Flower I.R. McCann \$8.50

Victorian Alps An Australian Endangered Heritage Harry Nankin \$14.



Beyond . . .

by Judith Webster

A walk in Budawangs – Mt Talaterang – other side of Pigeon House – north-eastern corner – see Coast and Mountain Walkers map 'Pigeon House and Beyond'.

Two weeks of high winds. Bush fire in Royal National Park Sydney–Bundeena. South coast seas–swell of 3-4 metres. Morning of walk radio report – bush fire at south coast near Moruya–approached as far as back yards of homes. Fire near Kings Highway causing concern.

Steven received call from Les at the coast – withdrew from pack walk because of fires. No reports of fires as far north as Moreton National Park. Six of us decide to proceed.

Long drive – via Fitzroy Falls (sign up 'Total Fire Ban in Moreton National Park'); Kangaroo Valley, Nowra and then south. Smoke visible to the south and some fires burning locally beside Highway. Passed two fire trucks. One doing a back-burn.

Turn onto Porter Creek Dam road and then along sandy fire trail on Little Forest Plateau.

Walk for 1½ hours, beginning 2.30pm, to brink of plateau – magnificent views but horizon hazy from smoke of distant fires.

Followed edge of plateau to top of Ngaityung Falls. Steve disappointed to discover no waterfall! Last year apparently a good fall. Still water in creek – quite a deep channel and several round holes in rocky platform, about 3-6ft diameter and 4-5ft deep.

Not much room to camp – squashed down a few tough, springy plants; hoped we would not be too uncomfortable and that plants would survive!

Steve announced Devonshire tea was served and sure enough scones, jam and cream had been most graciously provided.

About 6.30pm wind died away – seemed safe to light a fire but did not (thank goodness!). Wind blew up again later. With no fire to sit around, retired to bed soon after 8pm. Could hear the creek tinkling gently so evidently still flowing.

Up early and walking, with day packs, by 7.25am. Traversed plateau to Gadara Point overlooking upper Clyde Gorge. At 9am, while enjoying

view, noticed column of smoke rise from Claytons Creek valley. We witnessed this with surprise and concern but there was nothing effective we could do – it was kilometres away in rugged, inaccessible country and we were some four hours from any reporting centre. Still very windy. Hoped the spotter plane we had seen previous afternoon would return.

Keeping an eye on the fire, we continued our walk. Mt Talaterang is an 'island', joined to Little Forest Plateau by a long spur with a steep subsidiary peak in the middle. Occasional spectacular panoramas of Pigeon House and the sea to the east; The Castle, Shrouded Gods Mountain and Folly Point to the west, halted us in admiration.

Skirted cliff line. Dense colonies of Bogong moths clinging to overhangs resembled patches of brown fungus.

Reached summit of Talaterang through thickets of fragrant flowering shrubs. 11am – had an early lunch. Entered our names in the bushwalking register. Some entertaining entries – one woman had written 'I knew I was mad to come hiking with this man – mother always said he would lead me astray!' Another entry declared the walker had 'made it to the top after three attempts in four years!'

Wind strengthening and direction changing.

About 1pm observed spotter plane flying over and later a helicopter. On reaching lookout point where we had first seen the fire, could see it had spread up valley and jumped into a tributary valley. Now climbing the escarpment and growing in strength.

Back at camp we all had a cooling immersion in the rock holes (heads in holes bobbed liked missionaries in a cooking pot!). Had a snack, packed up camp and walked out briskly, short-cutting directly across the plateau. Difficult in places as it was a lumpy bog, dry for the most part but full of hidden holes.

Back on the fire-trail, we increased our pace. Little black snakes and large black bush cockroaches crossed the track; also an aggressive spider. Behind us a thick pall of dirty smoke was rising. Ahead, in

the vicinity of our cars, also smoke though less dense and probably more distant.

Helicopter still buzzing about; spent ten minutes hovering over our parked vehicles. We were still some 2 kilometres away from these and reached them 4.10pm. Sun was now a fiery red behind the smoke screen, afternoon light was a filtered amber colour. Hundreds of Bogong moths fluttered crazily across the path of the car. My driver quizzed me 'Are you feeling slightly apprehensive?' 'Yes' I admitted. He reassured me the fire was too distant to be a real threat but proceeded to give me the drill for action in the event of being trapped!

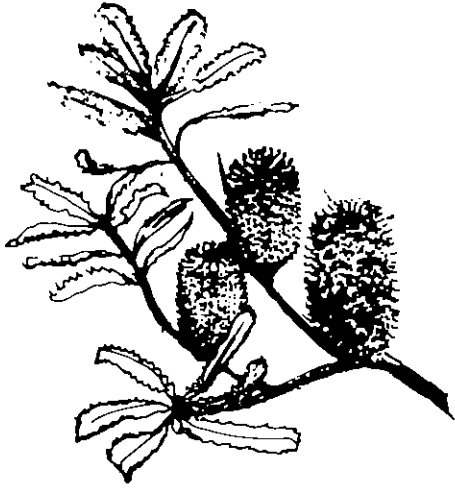
On gaining the dirt road, we passed four horseriders who had obviously been bush. They wore small packs and carried swags across their saddles.

We met the police and the Lake Conjola Bush Fire Brigade coming up the road. They hailed us down. 'Had we seen a bush-fire?' Had we seen a bush fire!!!! 'Yes' – we got out maps and described where we had seen it start and the direction it was taking now. 'Had we seen any other vehicles?' 'No' A bushfireman then said 'we were sent to look for you – to see you were OK'. We thanked them for their concern. Police noted our vehicle numbers to confirm with the helicopter's sighting.

Travelled along Princes Highway to Bateman's Bay. Here we went into the wharf fish shop for a meal. Whilst there a police van drew up outside and an officer began writing down car numbers. Another officer came into the shop and said 'Did you know it's rear to kerb parking outside?' This was something strange and new to us and our drivers rushed out and turned the vehicles around. Our thanks to the reasonable Cop ... Five minutes later the van was back and they were booking one vehicle which had not turned around (the owner had not been in the shop at the crucial time!)

A quick journey home via Braidwood and managed to avoid a third close encounter with the Police who had a Breath Testing Unit set up in Bungendore!

Beyond? ... and back safely.



The President and Committee
wish all members

A Merry Christmas

and

a Prosperous New Year

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GENERAL MEETINGS

Held at 8pm, Room 1, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, Civic.

FEBRUARY – Thursday 16

Dione Gilmour, Acting Executive Producer of the ABC's Natural History Unit, will give an illustrated talk about the making of the series *Nature of Australia*.

MARCH – Thursday 16

Ian Garvin from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service will speak about the Canberra Nature Park, and how the Service plans to involve the community in the development of the plan of management for Canberra's urban parklands.

APRIL – Thursday 20

Dr Geoff Mosley, environmental consultant and former Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, will speak about the nomination of the Australian Alps for World Heritage listing. A Heritage Week special!

Note that there will be no general meetings in December and January.