



Gammon Sunrise

(l-r) Chris, Dzung, Pete and Lisa emerge from their tents a few metres away to take in the early morning view from the summit of Mt John Roberts in South Australia's Gammon Ranges.

Despite being fuelled by quandong pie washed down with some appropriately named Hilltop wine we'd picked up en-route in the Clare Valley, the hike to the summit of Mt John Roberts via Bunyip Chasm was the toughest day of our two weeks walking in the Flinders Ranges. We'd already met another party of bushwalkers who claimed the route we were taking wasn't possible. We made it however, and the reward was well worth the effort. *(full story p7)*



Christmas party Dec 5th

This year's Christmas Party will be on Saturday the 5th of December at the Imperial Hotel in Melbourne. We've been there once before, three years ago, when it was so popular over 80 people turned up. This time numbers may be reduced for comfort and to provide more room for dancing. We hope to see you all there for music, dancing and prize giveaways.

Cost = \$50 (\$45 leaders) for a three-course meal, plus drinks at bar prices.

Photo Competition closes soon

A reminder that entries for the club's inaugural photo competition must be received by Monday November 9th. Prizes include a Macpac Cascade 751 pack, a Black Wolf goose-down sleeping bag and a year's subscription to OuterEdge magazine.

Don't leave it too late to organise your entries – if you've amassed quite a few photos already, set aside some time in October to sort through and decide what are your best so far. With spring now in full swing, there's still plenty of opportunities to come up with prize-winning pictures.

Due to an error in the last Yeti, there has been confusion over the number of entries allowed; the maximum number should be nine, with up to three in each separate category of landscape, wildlife and people.

Winners will be announced at the Christmas function (Dec 5th) and published in the next edition of Yeti. See page 6 for a few easy tips on how to produce standout pictures.

Also in this Issue

- ❖ **Three ways to walk Wilsons Prom** - leisurely or luxurious(p2)
- ❖ **Spring overnight walks** – Mt Burrowa, Gelantipy Plateau, Cope Hut working bee, Wellington Plains beginner trip (p3-4)
- ❖ **Day walks** – Bunyip State Forest, Lerderderg Gorge, Ada Mill and an easier cakewalk (p4)
- ❖ **A new Hub for Clubnight** – Spring clubnights at Docklands (p5)
- ❖ **Bushwalking Photography Tips** (p6)
- ❖ **Three-course bushwalking in the Flinders Ranges**(p7-8)
- ❖ **The Holding Drama: YHA's walk-on roles** (p9)
- ❖ **How an EPIRB saved my life** – (p10-11)
- ❖ **Understanding Walk Gradings** (p11-12)

President's Report

Spring has arrived and it's time to pull on the boots for great upcoming walks to the Grampians, Wilsons Promontory, Cope and Craig's huts

YHA Bushwalking is trialling a new clubnight venue, the Hub @Docklands, and we would like to see members show up for our next couple of clubnights to check it out. We have made the change to the new venue in response to feedback we have received from our regular walkers, so please come along and let us know what you think of it. More details on how to get there and spring clubnight events are on page 5.

If you are not going away for the Melbourne Cup weekend then come along to the Hub @ Docklands for a meet and greet with drinks afterwards; we will also have a Melbourne Cup sweep and door prize. You will soon see changes to our sign-in sheets and will have to provide medical and emergency contact information when booking (*cont'd p2*)

YHA BUSHWALKING COMMITTEE 2009/10

President	Andrew Stevenson
Secretary/Website	Hooi-Soon Khoo
Treasurer	Cynthia Bell
Walks Sec. (Weekends)	Ken Sussex
Walks Sec (Sundays)	Hooi-Soon Khoo
Clubnight Coordinator	Tom Lun
Social Secretary	vacant
Search & Rescue Rep	Paul Gottlieb
General committee	Tamie Dick
	Bruce Meincke
	David Sisson
	John Sloan

Yeti Editor (non-committee) Stephen Smith

CONTRIBUTIONS TO YETI

These articles don't write themselves y'know, nor are they all plagiarised from the internet (well some of them aren't anyway). If you've enjoyed yourself on one or two YHA trips or have some thoughts about bushwalking which you'd like to share, then here's your opportunity to do so. Find a spare moment, jot them down then email them to yhabush@bigpond.com

YETI ONLINE

"Yeti" has its own website www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti containing an online version of the latest issue as well as archived articles from past editions. The web versions are well worth visiting, as they often include additional photographs not able to be included in the print version for reasons of space, as well as superior reproduction.

TRIP LEADERS

Take advantage of the opportunity to promote your upcoming trips in YETI with a more detailed description than space in the programme allows. Please contact the editor with the details.

YHA ACTIVITIES CLUBNIGHT

Is held on a Monday night once a month at the 'Hub', 17 Waterview Walk, Docklands from 8pm to approx. 9:30pm. Special events start at 8.15pm sharp, everybody welcome.

YETI THANKS

The following contributors to this issue:

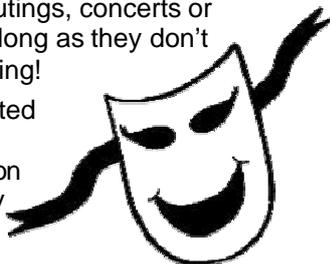
Les Gamel
Chris Marney
David Sale
Lisa Steinberg
Andrew Stevenson
Ken Sussex

YHA Bushwalking is looking for a new

Social Secretary

The responsibility of the role is to recruit volunteers to run a handful of social events each programme which complement the bushwalks. These can be restaurant nights, cinema outings, concerts or anything else as long as they don't require bushwalking!

If you are interested please contact
Andrew Stevenson
9830 7622 or any
other member
of the committee.



President's Report (cont'd from page 1)

for weekends and extended trips. Leaders will then be required to submit information to the designated club emergency contact prior to departure. It has been noticed that people attending our regular Sunday walks are not filling in their emergency contact details, please fill in this information as it is vital in the event of an emergency. This can be a family member, close friend or if you are an Out of Towner your accommodation residence.

Look out for some great extended weekends next year with a trip to Walhalla featuring walks along the Australian Alpine Track, Mt St Gwinear to Baw Baw village for a pub lunch. We will even use the Walhalla Historic Railway for a train ride, link up for a walk and have a trivia night as well.

Look out also for an Accommodated Pack Carry where we will stay for a couple of nights at Wilsons Promontory Lighthouse and do walks to South Point the southernmost *point* of the Australian mainland and Waterloo Bay. So if you like the idea of a hike with all the comforts of home, this one is for you!

Cheers, Andrew

Three Ways to Walk Wilsons Prom

It's time to start visiting Wilsons Promontory again, after disruptions to trips at the beginning of the year due to bushfires. All walking tracks and campsites in the southern section are now reopened, although the northern part is still closed and likely to remain so for some time.

Weekend pack-carry (Nov 28-29th)

The classic Wilsons Prom weekend circuit, taking in the secluded bays of the south eastern section. The northern part of this track was on the fringe of the February fires, which revealed aspects of the Prom not seen for decades. See this altered landscape, and some different vegetation, before it recovers too much!

The overnight camp will be at Refuge Cove; total distance is 37km with (for those who are fast and still energetic at the end) the option of a side-trip up Mt Oberon.

Grading: Medium

Enquiries: Ken Sussex 0407 667 624

Extended pre-Christmas ramble (Dec 19-22nd)

This trip follows exactly the same route as Ken's weekend trip, but over four days instead of two, spending a night each at Sealers Cove, Refuge Cove and Waterloo. A very leisurely trip, perfect for those wanting some respite from Christmas activities, with plenty of time for beachcombing, swimming or reading a good book. Suitable for beginner pack-carriers; although four day's food needs to be carried it doesn't have to be dragged very far each day.

Grading: Easy-medium

Enquiries: Les Gamel 0413 404 217

Lighthouse Long Weekend (June 12-14th 2010)

On the Queens Birthday long weekend next year is a rare stay at the iconic Wilsons Prom lighthouse. Whether it's winter storms lashing Bass Strait or a burst of fine weather over this southernmost part of the mainland, this is the place to watch it in warm and dry comfort. The walk to the lighthouse is 20km, and a pack containing a sleeping bag, food and spare clothing for two nights will need to be carried, hence the trip is "medium" graded.

The cost is expected to be about \$100 plus booking fee; numbers are limited to 12 and payment in full will be needed to secure a place.

Overnight Walks

Mt Burrowa (Oct 17-18th)

If it was closer to Melbourne, the Burrowa-Pine Mountain national park would be extremely popular, as its collection of scenic peaks, lookouts, waterfalls and a colourful spring wildflower display offer many terrific bushwalks. Unfortunately its location, just short of Corryong, tends to place it in the category of long weekend destinations. Early spring, with its flowing creeks, mild weather and blooming wildflowers is by far the best time to visit this area, yet with most long weekends falling in the first half of the year, small wonder that its attractions aren't widely known.

This trip provides the opportunity to appreciate this national park without the concerns of a long drive on Friday night or a late return on Sunday. After departing Melbourne, the overnight stop is Tallangatta, a easier drive than Mt Beauty or Harrietville. After coffee and breakfast at Tallangatta bakery on Saturday morning, it's a pleasant hours drive along the Murray Valley highway to the start of the walk. A full pack only needs to be carried for the first seven kilometres along Hinces Creek up to Hinces Saddle where we'll set up camp and have lunch. A side-trip to the granite-bouldered peak of Mt Burrowa provides a full afternoon walk.



View from Mt Burrowa

After an initial climb, Sunday's walk is 10km downhill, passing lookouts that on a clear day provide views across the Murray Valley to Mt Kosciuszko and the Main Range. The walk finishes at lunchtime with a ladder-assisted descent to the base of Bluff Falls, a scenic lunch spot prior to the journey home.

Grading: Medium **Enquiries:** [Stephen Smith](mailto:Stephen.Smith@yha.org.au) 9387 6481

Gelantipy Plateau (Oct 31st – Nov 3rd)

The Gelantipy Plateau is a small isolated section of tableland in East Gippsland's Snowy River national park. With an altitude of 1100-1200m it towers 700m above the river valleys which bound it. Its attractions are some commanding views over the Snowy River valley and magnificent virgin alpine ash forest which has so far escaped the predations of both loggers and bushfires.

The Melbourne Cup long weekend provides an opportunity to explore this remote region. The walk starts at the

impressive McKillops Bridge on the Snowy River, although as it is a long winding drive to get there, Friday night's overnight stop will be at Buchan. The first day will be the toughest, a steady 800m climb up a 4WD track to the plateau. Once there a base-camp will be set up for the next two nights. Sunday's walk is a circuit around the alpine ash and blue gum forest of the plateau and an exploration of Minchin Creek falls. From there it's back down to via the Silver Mine track to a final night's camp on the Snowy River. Tuesday is then an easy walk of a few kilometres along the river back to McKillops Bridge, finishing in plenty of time to get back to civilisation for a Cup day lunch.



Snowy River and McKillops Bridge, from Deddick Track

Grading: Medium+ **Enquiries:** [Stephen Smith](mailto:Stephen.Smith@yha.org.au) 9387 6481

Cope Hut working bee (Nov 21-22nd)

The Bogong High Plains road is now sealed to Cope Hut and beyond, so an increased number of visitors is now likely to visit this historic and scenic location. In preparation for the summer, a small band of volunteers is needed to do some general cleaning and minor repairs to the hut.

There should be some spare time for a short walk to Mt Cope or another nearby landmark. Organiser John Belfio will also be taking along a camp oven, so expect a roast and some damper, washed down by whatever fine wine you care to bring along.

Enquiries: [John Belfio](mailto:John.Belfio@yha.org.au) 9306 2428



John Belfio (watched by the now club President Andrew Stevenson) affixes new roof insulation at the last working bee.

Beginner Pack Carry

Wellington Plain - Millers Hut (Nov 14-15th)

The Wellington Plains are in the part of the Alpine National Park 300km east of Melbourne accessed via Heyfield and Licola. A plateau at 1600m provides easy walking, whilst lookouts on the perimeter of the plains give stunning views across the valleys to other remote peaks without requiring any hard climbs.

The walk starts at McFarlane Saddle, heading across the plains to link up with the Mt Wellington 4WD track. After an easy side-trip to Mt Wellington, it's onward via another lookout to Millers Hut (below) for lunch, setting up camp either at the hut or nearby. An afternoon side-trip to the Sentinel provides more breathtaking views without having to do any serious climbing. The return walk on Sunday takes a different route, with a gentle climb on a footpad up to Spion Kopje ridge offering views in a different direction before rejoining the Wellington Plains track for a return to the cars by lunch time.



This walk is ideally suited to anyone wanting to try pack carrying for the first time. The distance required to carry a full pack is only about 10km on both days, and the walk is mostly on fire trails across undulating open country. Anyone needing advice on what equipment to take should either visit our website (the *What to Bring* section on the *Bushwalking with Us* page) or chat to the leader prior to the walk. Items such as tents or stoves can be borrowed or shared provided you let the leader know beforehand.

Grading: *Easy-med* **Enquiries:** *Robert Potocnik 9459 4624*

Of the trips on the spring programme, this is the one most recommended to novice pack-carriers. If you can't make this weekend but are still keen to try pack carrying, the next best options are:

Wilson's Prom; either Dec 19-22 if you can get the time off or Nov 28-29. A longer distance (37km) and rougher track, but this should be manageable for experienced day walkers.

Mt Burrowa; Entirely on tracks, only 7km of pack-carrying on the first day, but with a 550m altitude gain. The downhill route on Sunday contains some steep sections that require care with a full pack.

The Melbourne Cup overnight walks aren't recommended for beginners as they involve some lengthy climbs on (for Mt Koonika-Speculation) an at times steep and rocky track.

Day Walks

Bunyip State Park (Saturday Oct 10th)

Bunyip State Park was badly affected by the devastating fires earlier this year, however a number of the tracks have been reopened. Here's an opportunity to see how the park is recovering. The walk is a 17km circuit along the Dyers Track, with a long lunch at the Four Brothers, a rocky outcrop with splendid views of the park (and maybe the location for the winning photo in the club's competition!). Numbers are limited to 12.

Grading: *Medium* **Enquiries:** *Andrew Stevenson 9830 7622*

Lerderderg Gorge (Sunday Nov 8th)

The Lerderderg River has sprung to life in the past month, flushing out what was little more than a series of stagnant ponds. The recent rains should ensure it keeps going for at least the first two months of spring, promising a quite scenic walk in an area that has been noticeably drought affected.

Some walks in the Lerderderg Gorge region can be quite strenuous, however not this one, which will be kept within the "easy-medium" rating and hence suitable for beginners. The route will be flexible according to weather conditions. If it's a warm day, the walk will mainly explore the gorge floor from the Bacchus Marsh end, with opportunities to enjoy some of the swimming holes. If conditions are cool then, an easy spur may be taken to Mt Blackwood for scenic views.

Grading: *Easy-medium* **Enquiries:** *Les Gamel 0413 404 217*

High Lead - Ada Mill (Sunday Nov 22nd)

Not all Sunday walks are recommended for new walkers, and this is one best left to the fast and fit ones who like a bit of a challenge. The High Lead walk (5.5km each way) starts from a car park approximately 10 km from Powelltown. It is initially relatively flat and crosses the Big Creek several times (on bridges that are sometimes only tree trunks). There is a good myrtle beech representation in this area.

The challenging part of the walk begins after 1.4km. This is the start of the high lead incline up to the old winch station. It is only 1.6km but rises 400m i.e. it is steep! Mountain Ash (regrowth from 1939 Black Friday and 1983 Ash Wednesday fires) dominate the upper slopes.

The path continues to the old Ada No. 2 Mill (in ruins). This is the intended lunch location, with the return trip in the reverse direction.

Grading: *Medium-plus* **Enquiries:** *David Sale 0407 667 624*

Barwon Heads cakewalk (Sunday Dec 20th)

Finish your walking year with the second annual YHA Sunday cakewalk. After some 'constructive' criticism of last year's walk we have decided to keep the cakes but replace the not so popular element of endless steep climbs with sea, sand, swimming, and no hills whatsoever. Yes, it's a beach walk, a return walk of about 20km from Point Lonsdale to Barwon Heads. There will be plenty of time for swimming (so bring your cossie and towel, preferably in a separate bag to your cake). The club will supply plates, forks, napkins and your appetite - you just have to bring yourself and a cake to be shared and enjoyed by the rest of the group.

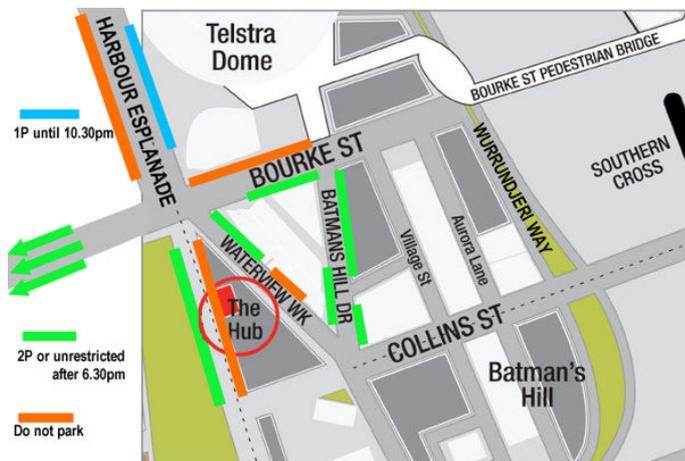
Grading: *Easy-med* **Enquiries:** *Chris Marney 9620 2363*

A new Hub for Clubnight

For the remainder of 2009 a new Clubnight venue will be trialled at "The Hub" in Docklands. This offers a more central location and much better facilities for presentations than the previous location of the Redback Hotel in North Melbourne.



Where is it? The official address is 17 Waterview Walk, Docklands, but it is basically on the corner of Bourke St and Harbour Esplanade. Entrance is from the Harbour Esplanade side.



Getting there by public transport. The Hub is a ten minute walk from Southern Cross station. Take the pedestrian bridge to Docklands Stadium, descend the stadium steps, then follow Bourke St down to Harbour Esplanade and cross over. Alternatively there are tram routes along Collins St (no's 48 or 70) and Harbour Esplanade that will drop you very close to the entrance.

Getting there by car. From the city, follow Latrobe St past Spencer St until the T-junction with Harbour Esplanade, then turn left. Bourke St is the next set of traffic lights. From the suburbs access Wurrundjeri Way from either Dynon Rd, the West Gate Freeway exit or Flinders St then turn into Bourke St.

Parking. Unless there is an event on at the Docklands Stadium, parking near the Hub is plentiful on Monday evenings. The recommended parking area is The Harbour (continuation of Bourke St past Harbour Esplanade). In this section parking is free and unrestricted after 6.30pm. Parking is also available in Waterview Walk and the streets close to the stadium, but be careful, some of it is still restricted during the evening. Do not park on the north (stadium) side of Bourke St or in the bays in front of the Hub. Refer to the map for more details.

Clubnight Improvements. It is acknowledged that there have been some recent presentations where the audience has fallen victim to the excesses of the digital photography age. Presenters have not adequately culled their selection of photos, and the talk has gone on well past the recommended 30-45 minutes. This shouldn't happen again; upcoming events will either be from professional presenters, or others who have been given appropriate guidelines on keeping their talk in sync with an audience's attention span.

As well as the feature presentation, Clubnights are always a good opportunity for general enquiries about bushwalking or to have specific discussions about upcoming trips. There will always be a few committee members present, and where possible leaders of major weekend trips will also attend. We will be using the Cinema room of the Hub for presentations, however there is also a separate breakout area for socialising, enquiries and light refreshments.

Refreshments You won't be able to order a pot of beer at the new venue, however tea, coffee, hot chocolate etc are provided. The club will also be providing some snacks.

Door Prize Anyone who attends clubnight during spring will be eligible for a door prize. Entry is free, make sure you collect a ticket from the duty committee member and stay until the draw.

Clubnight Events - Spring 2009

Clubnights are usually on the first Monday of the month, unless it is a public holiday.

The main presentation should start shortly after 8.00pm and finish by 9pm, with tea, coffee and general enquiries, discussions until 9.30,

October (Monday 5th) – Himalayan Holidays

If you are you interested in trekking the classic trails of Nepal or going to a World Heritage listed Safari Park (Chitwan) or just like places with big mountains and very friendly people, then come along for a talk by Himalyan Holidays to find out about visiting one of the worlds best trekking destinations.

The club is looking at the possibility of running a trip to this location, so please come along and show your enthusiasm if you would like the club to consider this type of adventure.

November (Monday 2nd) If you aren't away walking but are interested in doing some trips with the club, then come along for a "meet and greet" and drinks with some of the club's leaders. To celebrate the occasion we'll have our own Melbourne Cup sweep with a few mystery prizes.

December (Monday 7th) An information night with the leaders of the Christmas walks, essential if you are considering an extended pack-carry and highly recommended for an accommodated trip or base-camp.

Photo Competition - main rules

Full entry conditions are on our website www.yhabush.org/Yeti/Autwin09/photocomp.htm

The main rules are:

1. Photographs must be from YHA Bushwalking trips on or after 1st November 2008.
2. Only three photographs per category may be entered. As there are three categories, you can enter up to nine times. The Categories Are: Landscape, Wildlife & People.
3. Photographs should be emailed (JPEG format) to yhabushphotocomp@yahoo.com.au
4. Make sure you label each digital image with a title, also in your e-mail message list the walk name, who led it and include your contact details and a brief description of the photograph.
5. Outer Edge Magazine and YHA Bushwalking have the right to publish any prize-winning entry.

Bushwalking Photography Tips

Here's a few hints to help with your competition entries.

1. **Take lots.** This doesn't mean point your lens at every tree you pass, however when you have an interesting subject, take multiple pictures from different angles, different focal lengths (if you have a zoom lens) and different exposures. In the days of film, professional photographers would shoot several rolls on one subject; with digital memory being cheap and reusable, there's no reason everyone else can't do something similar.

2. **And lots.** Many cameras have a continuous shooting or burst mode. Use this for any action scene such as wildlife, people crossing a river, rock scrambling or even a group walking along. This will give you plenty of choice to select a favourite shot from.

3. **and lots.** When photographing a moderate-sized group (up to 20), the rule of thumb to almost certainly obtain a photo with no-one blinking is to take a number of photos equal to half of the group size.

4. **Watch out for shadows.** With most bushwalkers being sun-smart and wearing a hat, their face will often be in shadow. Although it may look OK when taking the picture, with a bright background the faces will be dark and lack detail. Options to avoid this are either getting people to take off their hats or using a camera's inbuilt flash for fill-in lighting.

5. **Go on an overnight walk.** The best light for many landscapes is often in the golden hour either side of sunset or sunrise. Time and patience also help in obtaining the best shots, ingredients which are difficult to obtain on day walks but readily available once you've reached campsite and have plenty of spare moments.

6. **Digital Darkroom.** The adage that a "camera can't lie" is still basically true, however association with image-editing software can lead to many fibs. While the term "to Photoshop" has acquired overtones of cheating reality, it and similar (cheaper or free) software are still powerful tools for legitimately enhancing photos in ways equivalent to film darkroom techniques. What you can't do (for this competition) is manipulate an image (remove people or objects you don't like, add in things that weren't there originally, or move objects within the photo). Thus anyone who submits a picture of Michael Jackson snow-camping with them on Mt Feathertop will be told to beat it.

Before starting any of the experimentation suggested below, make sure you save a copy of your original image (either renamed or in a separate location from where you are editing).

A simple and very effective means of improving an image is cropping. The obvious use is removal of unwanted objects (eg fingers, half a head, branches) intruding at the edge of the frame. Cropping's real power however is allowing a photo to be recomposed. If you have a lot of sky or uninteresting foreground, test the effect of removing various sections. Even things which you originally wanted included may distract attention from your main subject and be better off cropped out.



In this example, cropping simply does what a zoom lens could have achieved when taking the original. It's advantage is that you don't have to decide until afterwards what detail to exclude.

With most cameras now with at least 5-7 megapixel resolution, cropping such as this won't result in any noticeable loss of image quality.



Cropping can also allow the subject of the photo to be repositioned relative to the frame. There isn't time to go into the rule of thirds here, however in many instances where the main subject was lined up in the middle of the picture, cropping such that they are shifted off-centre can be surprisingly effective.

Don't be afraid to tweak the brightness, contrast or even colour balance of your picture. These tools can all improve the appeal of the photo without affecting the truth of the image. It's still important to try and get these settings fairly accurate when taking the original photo, as detail that is washed out or hidden in shadow can't be revealed no matter how advanced the editing software is.

A three-course bushwalk in the Flinders Ranges

I enjoy a good bushwalk as much as the next (avid) bushwalker. I love to get out in the great outdoors and experience all Mother Nature cares to throw at me. But, like most bushwalkers, after a long day pounding the trail, the thought of fresh food and a good meal becomes all consuming. And so began the YHA extended walk to the Flinders Ranges and Gammon Ranges and what quickly became a foodies tour of Vic/SA.

Days 1-2 – A Clare Valley aperitif: It's a comfortable two day drive to the Flinders Ranges from Melbourne, a little longer if you nominate to frequently stop (like the seven of us did) at numerous delectable country bakeries and a boutique winery in the Clare Valley along the way. Admittedly the bakery stops were a little indulgent, but given the ongoing drought and the possible lack of readily available water in the arid Flinders & Gammons Ranges, the stop at the winery was justified to ensure we had sufficient liquids for the trip.

Days 3-4 – A Remarkable entrée: The plan is to do a couple of day trips and an overnight pack carry at the Flinders Ranges before proceeding to the Gammon Ranges. We warm up with a day walk to Hidden Gorge in Mt Remarkable NP. I could wax lyrical about the arduous rock scramble up the dry river beds into the spectacular gorge complete with towering red/ochre cliffs, the abundant native pines, and the family of emus that darted across the track in front of us, but once the rain started, all thoughts turned to camp and drying ourselves out by the campfire with a good meal (coal roasted potatoes, corn, onions, steak & sausages) and a drop of the Clare valley wine to warm the bones.

Day 5: A Rocky First Course: At Wilpena Pound, the bushman's alarm (kookaburra) goes off at 5.30am and it's rise and shine for a 13 km day walk in the Elder Range. The walk starts easily enough (flat) and Heysen-like views abound, but it soon evolves into a rock scramble up to a 730m peak.



Hiking towards the Elder Range

The spinifex is thick and murderous to the arms and legs of the unwary (ie all of us). Views from the top are spectacular and we are rewarded with clear skies, gale force winds, and stellar views across the Pound and also out to Lake Torrens. The walk back down to the cars is quick – I suspect the thought of hot showers and more leisurely food & drink around the campfire is spurring everyone on. Back at campsite Michael sets up his luxury “home away from home” complete with table, chair, gas lantern, 2-ring gas



Wilpena Pound (background) from Elder Range

burner and wash basin. While he reclines in his chair, feet up, the rest of us try desperately to look comfortable, sprawled in the dust. The campfire is lit and Steve whips up a batch of damper (secret ingredient – a stubby of Boags) and we feast on more coal roasted vegetables, beer & wine.

Days 6-7 - Wilpena Masterchef: The walk to Coinda campground through the Pound is relatively flat and easy going. Spirits and conversation are high as we meander through the native pines and flowering wattle. After an eight kilometre walk we set up camp and eat lunch in anticipation of conquering St Mary's Peak in the late afternoon. Group photos on the summit (1170 m) are limited because the gale force winds mean that we are more focussed on clinging to the rocks than striking a pose. The return trip is perfectly timed to reach camp as the last glow fades from the sky half an hour after sunset.

Dinner comprises the inaugural “Carbonara Cookoff” with fierce combatants Chris and Dr Peter jealously guarding their secret ingredients. Due to the limited pack carry cooking equipment available to them, Wilpena's Master Chefs take about 1.5 hours to prepare their dishes (Iron Chef they 'aint!). Peter does well with his secret ingredients (salami + fresh grated parmesan), while Chris makes a good start with long life cream. But then disaster strikes as he reveals his other key ingredient to be ... a tin of SPAM®. SPAM® belongs in 1940s kitchens and Monty Python sketches, it has no place on bushwalks no matter how desperately hungry anyone is. After tasting by an independent judge (Peter E), to only one person's (Chris) surprise, his dish fails to win. Peter E develops a sudden inexplicable nausea overnight (...draw your own conclusions!).

Days 8-9 – The Quandong Quest Begins: Dr Peter had to leave early to return to Melbourne for work (and what turned out to be an appointment with swine flu). Before he departed he told us that high on a Gammon Ranges peak there standeth a lonely quandong tree. Heading north to Arkaroola and the Gammon Ranges via Mt Chambers Gorge, we had our first tantalising encounter with this elusive fruit. A café at Blinman lured us in with “Quandong Pie” chalked up on their blackboard outside, but alas it was a false promise as the proprietress hadn't got around to baking any yet. (Also listed on their blackboard was →

Flinders Ranges bushwalking (cont'd)

“coffee”, but after serving up a cup of warm liquid, it was obvious they didn't have any of that either).

Hitting the now dirt road, apart from some brief spurts of green, the scenery indicates that we are now in the desert – mobs of emus roam the plains, blow flies are ubiquitous and everything looks tired, dry and dusty. I am glad to have remembered to pack my fly net. Dzung makes do with her net laundry bag. If my memory serves me correctly, I'm sure I heard the rest of group commenting on how alluring we both looked...



Showing off the new-season flywear at Mt Chambers Gorge

Arkaroola (declared by Michael as the Dust Bowl Capital of Australia), consists of a petrol pump, various forms of accommodation, small store and restaurant. It is our home for two nights as we wait for the Gammon Ranges to re-open after being closed for pest-control (ie goat eradication). We make the most of our time in this buzzing metropolis (and dodge the first rain in 3 months) by frequenting the restaurant where we enjoy the delights of lukewarm vegetables and our first taste of the infamous quandong pie (suspiciously similar in taste to apple & rhubarb pie – we need to find a wild quandong of our own). It is Dzung's birthday so we celebrate with wine and song (a rousing version of Happy Birthday, with backing vocals provided by everyone in the restaurant).

Day 10 – The Sweet Taste of Success: At last we leave Arkaroola for the Gammon Ranges. After a car shuffle and having a look at Grindell's Hut, we commence a three day pack carry in search of the quandong tree. The flies follow us on the first leg of the walk towards Bunyip Chasm. Half way there, the odour of cigarette smoke tells us we aren't alone. Voices are heard next and then we come upon them, a party of dejected knights thwarted in their quest – the same as our own. Their leader, Sir Effalot told how they came upon an f—ing impassable rock wall that they couldn't f—ing climb up, so they f—ing turned back and that we would suffer the same f—ing fate.

Undaunted, we continue on to Bunyip Chasm where, fuelled by last night's quandong pie, Steve, Chris and Michael scramble up sheer cliffs towards the upper section of the chasm. We all reward ourselves for their physical efforts with lunch. Energised by lunch, we tackle Mt John Roberts. This initially involves hauling packs and bodies (twice) up sheer rock faces to reach a precarious ledge approx 30m above our lunch spot. We then ascend 400m over loose

shale and spinifex to our campsite on the summit of Mt John Roberts. It is late afternoon when we finally arrive but the views are spectacular and certainly worth the climb and the pain of being shredded by the spinifex. The ground is extremely rocky, with just a few not quite so rocky patches suitable for tents – it was just as well Sir Effalot and his smoky band of followers couldn't find their way up here, as there wouldn't have been room for us all. Amidst a howling wind we set up camp near the cliff edge, then eat dinner as the sun sets. Everyone crawls off to bed after making sure the tents are well secured with rocks. No nice beverages tonight – unfortunately we had to forgo that luxury to make room for 6-7 litres of water!

Day 11 – A Scenic Dessert: Sunrise from the summit of Mt John Roberts is a highlight of the trip. Everyone emerges from tents to watch the sunrise (Peter E opts to lie in bed and listen to Chris' poetic description of the changing colours). The colours on the rugged scenery are breathtaking as the first rays of light creep across the landscape. Spirits are high and after much posing for photos in our bed attire (we look like an ad for an outdoor store or Qantas), we break camp and make our way down the mountain....only to eventually drop packs and climb Cleft Peak. By this stage we are well used to dry, prickly, rock scrambles and make it to the top in under an hour. After a leisurely lunch, we scramble back down to Rover Rockhole, the region's only decent water source, where we proceed to set up camp. We saw so much on this day, except for one thing. Despite passing lots of scraggly trees, there was no sign of a quandong (not that any of us really knew what to look for).

The next day is the walk out; yet more scrambling over loose rocks but as the river bed widens the terrain becomes flatter and easier going. The pace quickens as we get closer to the cars and sense the proximity of pre-booked 'luxury' accommodation at Arkaroola and more quandong pie at the restaurant. After showering & hermetically sealing dirty clothes and boots in zip-lock bags, we congratulate ourselves on our tremendous efforts and also Steve for his exemplary planning & co-ordination of the trip, celebrating with pre-dinner nibbles and the last of the Clare Valley wine.



On the journey back to Melbourne we blaze a 1500km trail through country town bakeries and cafés. Just as this wears off three weeks later we have a reunion replete with another mountain of food. All this has given us an appetite for more extended walks.....

LS

YHA Bushwalking's walk-on roles in the Holding drama

When the alarm was raised that "one of our ministers is missing", a few YHA Bushwalking identities also made the news as part of the headline-grabbing story of Tim Holding's dramatic rescue from Mt Feathertop.

The On The Spot Witness



Former YHA Bushwalking President (2001-02), **David Ford** and his wife Kath were camping at Federation Hut on the same weekend as Tim Holding. They spoke to him briefly on Sunday morning just before he set out towards the Mt Feathertop summit.

The "Hiking & Mountaineering Instructor"



Another former YHA Bushwalking President, **David Sisson** provided comments to *The Age* and Channel 10 news about the need to have suitable equipment for steep snow and ice and the ease with which it is possible for someone to slide off the mountain and disappear into thin air.

The Wise Man Who Feared to Tread



If there was a Guinness Book of Records entry for the most ascents of Mt Feathertop, **Bruce Meincke** would hold it by a country mile. Having climbed it regularly since the mid-1960s and over a dozen times this season, he was contemplating another visit on this fateful weekend, but decided against it as conditions were too poor.

Bruce provided some comments about Mt Feathertop on ABC Radio's 774 breakfast show.

The Media Coverage: Apart from the populist rantings of shock jocks like Derryn Hinch (yes, wouldn't it be cheaper for taxpayers if everyone just stayed home and drank themselves half to death?), media coverage was fairly balanced and accurate – eventually. It took a while for some media organisations to work out exactly where Mt Feathertop was, and even then some didn't scurry much further than Wikipedia (which itself has had some post-Holding updates). Hence a few inaccuracies such as "West Spur" instead of Northwest Spur (*The Age*) and "hikers usually start their trip at Diamantina hut and walk 11km along Razor Back Spur" (*Herald Sun*). Not in winter they don't; Bungalow Spur is the safest and most popular route.

Although there was plenty of informed commentary from experienced bushwalkers (like those from YHA), the media tended to emphasise that Holding's sin was walking solo without an EPIRB, rather than the root cause that got him into trouble in the first place: a lack of experience and suitable equipment for the icy environment common to Victoria's highest peaks and a failure to appreciate that the conditions that weekend were abnormally severe. In fine weather and with appropriate equipment, Mt Feathertop in winter isn't difficult, but care needs to be taken. No matter how many are in a group, make sure at least one has previous experience. YHA Bushwalking will definitely be running trips there next winter.

How an EPIRB Saved My Life

I was unconventionally lost in the wilderness. I say “unconventional” because the image of “lost” that first springs to mind in most people is one of being surrounded by endless featureless bush, with no idea where they are or how to get out. In my case I was in the middle of a fire trail and, thanks to my GPS, knew exactly which square metre of the planet I was standing on. I also knew which direction to head towards a township – that’s what made my situation unconventional. The problem was I’d run out of water two days earlier. There was a river somewhere nearby which I needed to reach well before I could walk to civilisation, but I didn’t know exactly where it was or how to get to it. That’s what made me lost.

Pick up a road atlas and the area between Mittagong, on the Hume Highway west of Sydney, and Katoomba 80km north is shown as empty space with Warragamba Dam in the middle. While empty of major tracks, the region occupied by the Kanangra and Blue Mountains national parks is full of a spectacular but impossibly rugged labyrinth of thickly forested valleys bounded by sheer cliffs. A long distance walking track over 8-9 days was pioneered between Mittagong and Katoomba during the late 1980s. The route isn’t easy however; a relatively small number of bushwalkers, mainly those based in NSW, do it each year.

I was told about this track while on a VNPA walk in the Budawangs. After the Budawangs trip ended, I was keen to do some more walking, but no-one else in



View from Starlights Trail, Mittagong-Katoomba walk

the group had the extra time, so it meant going solo. I’d walked by myself on previous occasions, including an earlier trip to the Blue Mountains and wasn’t concerned at the prospect. I’d always been accompanied on these trips by my compact and light-weight EPIRB, having obtained one when they first became available several years earlier.

I obtained a set of track notes from the author, who lives in Mittagong and also offers a transport service to bushwalking trailheads. The first two days went according to plan. The track wasn’t easy, with steep sections and a few parts that were actually overgrown and off-track, however the compensation for these challenges was sunny but mild spring weather and beautiful views from the high points. The highlights were the Nattai wilderness and the very narrow Beloon Pass, which is barely 10 metres wide at the top. According to the track notes, Beloon Pass was the Aboriginal crossing over the Wanganderry Mountains from the Nattai Valley to the Wollondilly River.

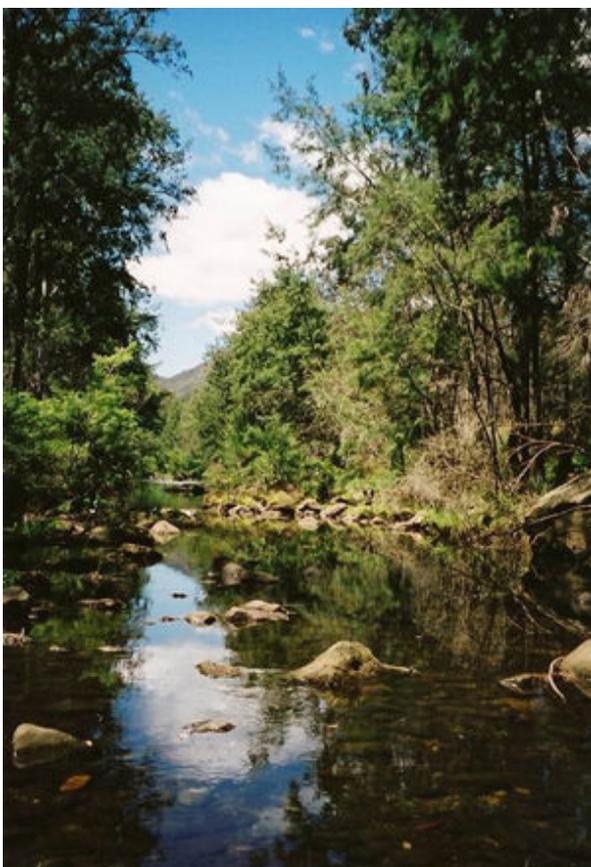
The 130km route required seven topographic maps. My mistake, which I didn’t discover until crossing a map boundary on the third day, was that I was only carrying six of them.

It was more than half a day’s walk to get back on a map again. I reached the junction of a fire trail and a less well-defined bushwalking track. The walking route would have gone further along the fire trail down to the Wollondilly River, which is about 80m wide, but finding the correct path, particularly where the river could be crossed on foot, was going to be risky without a proper map. The bushwalking track’s advantage was that it took the high route away from the river, meaning a greater distance but leading to a forded crossing.

A mistake I made was not to stay overnight at Vineyard Flat campsite. It had water, but I decided it was too early for me to set up a tent. In addition, I didn’t fill up with extra water before leaving camp to climb up and through the Beloon Pass.

I had my first dry camp on the rocky ground of a dry waterfall just after descending from the pass, and that night used up my remaining water.

The next day I headed down into the sheoak forest to try and find water and ended up having a second dry campsite there due to dry creeks. A light shower occurred, but not enough to produce any runoff that I could collect.



Nattai River – plenty of water for the first two days

How an EPIRB Saved My Life (cont'd)

I can recall that next day I became very tired and weak and pitched my tent somewhere in what I believed was Murphys Flat. On my third evening without water my anxiety began to mount and I began thinking I might have to use my EPIRB. These thoughts were suddenly pushed aside by the sound of voices and a car. Immediately I began blowing hard on my whistle, and waited for a response. After a few repeated attempts with the whistle I realised that help wasn't going to come, and began to doubt if I had actually heard anything. Was the thirst making me delusional as well? Dinner that night was dry biscuits accompanied by a small quantity of my own urine; small wonder that all I dreamt about that night was cooked meals and a soak in the Wollondilly River.

The following morning I walked down to the valley for a final attempt at finding water, but no success. Around lunch time I realised that I'd have to use the EPIRB. I walked back up to a high point and clear area, then set it off. I'd never used or seen an EPIRB used before, but was confident it would work because the red light flashed and audible tones sounded. Within an hour or two came the unmistakable sound of an approaching helicopter. This was no delusion – in no time it was hovering directly above me. A rescuer was lowered on a rope. I remember him complimenting me on my pack – a nice compact MacPac Esprit – as it was easy to strap on. Of course he fastened me to the rope as well, before we were all whisked skyward. No guesses what my first request was when I was safely inside the chopper, although my second was for confidentiality.

After being taken to Liverpool hospital for tests, I was then interviewed by police. Standard procedure - I requested them again not to involve the media, which is why this story hasn't been published until now, several years later. I expect there have been other straightforward rescues that haven't made the news; it's only searches involving large numbers of people over a length of time that enable a fanfare to build up.

Gastrolyte, water and a light meal were enough to fix me up, and I was discharged later that afternoon, in time to get a train into Sydney and a flight home to Melbourne that night.

I carried my EPIRB for several more years without further cause to use it. I now need to replace it, as from Feb 2009 the old 121MHz distress frequency is no longer monitored, a bit of a headache as the cheapest 406MHz model is more than double that of the old devices. Of course an EPIRB is complementary to, not a substitute for, having adequate preparation and experience to undertake walks in remote areas, but when mistakes were made, I was thankful to be granted the opportunity to learn from them.

YHA Bushwalking has a club EPIRB available for use by walk leaders. Where more than one walk is being run at the same time, preference is given to the one in the most risky and remote region (an EPIRB should only be used if there is no mobile phone coverage).

Contact the Walks Secretary (w/e) if you wish to borrow it.

Understanding Walk Gradings

You've been on two walks, both rated "medium". The first didn't present any problems, and you may have wondered why it was judged harder than the "E-M" one you did previously. The second walk on the other hand was much more of a struggle and left you exhausted and sore. Does this situation sound familiar? Most people recognise that all bushwalks aren't created equal, but how to rate a walk's level of difficulty is an oft-debated topic and more than occasional cause of complaint. Sometimes the fault is due to a lack of understanding by participants about what a walk's grading means, whilst at other times there have been inconsistencies or misjudgements in how a walk was rated.



The goal when producing a walks programme is to ensure all our walks are rated consistently relative to each other. They don't necessarily align with gradings used by other clubs or guidebooks, however anyone doing one walk on the programme should be confident in knowing whether the next one they attempt will be easier, similar or more difficult. Here's a rundown of some of the reasons why this isn't always the case.

Gradings are subjective (1). There are guidelines for deciding the grade of a walk (eg distance, steepness, time, types of terrain) but no set formula that categorically deems walk A to be harder than walk B. Gradings could use a value from 0-100 or letters A-E, but the chances are that few would understand what they meant. Hence, like many other clubs and guide books, we use the subjective terms "easy", "medium" and "hard". These don't necessarily indicate how you will find a walk; recent couch-potatoes may not regard a walk as "easy", whilst fit, regular walkers will recognise that Mt Bogong is a tougher climb than Mt Stirling, but may not see it as "hard".

Originally walks were just rated as "Easy", "Medium" or "Hard", and notes on the back of the Walks Programme still reflect this. Each category encompassed a fair range, so the difference between two walks in adjacent categories could be a quantum leap or barely noticeable depending on whether they were at the lower or upper end of their ranges. For walks that sat somewhere near the border of two categories, "easy-medium" and "medium-hard" were created to lessen the confusion. The overall distribution of walk gradings for YHA Bushwalking is approximately:

- 10% = Easy (20% of Sunday walks)
- 25% = Easy-medium (40% of Sunday walks)
- 50% = Medium (40% of Sunday walks)
- 10% = Medium-Hard
- 5% = Hard

Understanding Walk Gradings (cont'd)

The dreaded "Medium-plus". Due to a belief that the H-word could frighten off potential walkers, the term "medium-plus" began to be used for walks that were at or slightly beyond the upper range of "medium". This category overlaps "medium" and "medium-hard" rather than slotting separately between the two. Of the 50% of medium walks, one third are listed as "M+".

Gradings are subjective (2). Different people can have differing opinions on the grading of a walk. Some ratings are based on those in guidebooks (amongst which authors can have varying views), some from standard Parks Victoria notes (which are targeted at the general populace rather than regular bushwalkers and tend to use harsher terms, eg "strenuous"), whilst the rest are recommended by the leader. A Walks Secretary's role is to moderate the ratings based on their overall knowledge and experience, adjusting where necessary to achieve consistency.

It's not just distance that counts! Many enquiries relating to the difficulty of a walk are only concerned about the distance. If only gradings were that simple! It can be hard convincing less experienced walkers that an 8km walk will be harder than the 16km one they did a few weeks ago. Other points that leaders should be asked about and make people aware of are:

Height gain; total ascent, descent and how steep the hills are
Track; is it well graded, free of obstructions?

Off-track; Any significant off-track component lifts a walk out of the "easy" realm. Off-track can range from open forest, through to thick scrub or wading along a river.

River crossings; how many, how deep are they likely to be?

Rock scrambling; How much? Any exposed sections?

Gradings are subjective (3). Never mind that Jack considers a walk "medium" whilst Jill thinks it "easy". At least if they were asked to rank several walks in order of difficulty they'd end up with the same result? Well not necessarily. Jack is extremely fit and can maintain a solid pace up steep hills, but doesn't like heights or getting his feet wet. Jill on the other hand slows down a bit on the hills, but is an experienced rock climber and doesn't mind a bit of wading. If there are features of a walk that you are particularly uncomfortable with (see the previous paragraph for suggestions), you may regard it as harder than listed.

The weather makes a difference. The grading of a walk is based on it being undertaken in fine weather and average temperatures for the time of year. Wet, windy, abnormally cold or hot conditions can increase a walk's degree of difficulty, hence what is rated easy can become medium, while medium seems like medium-hard.

Understating of walks. Most problems arise when people find a walk to be much harder than they expected. If they aren't fit or experienced enough to cope comfortably, the whole group can be slowed down. It is in no-one's interest to deliberately underrate a walk; the main culprits are leaders who rate a walk as M or M+ as they are worried about scaring people away if they use the H-word.

Overrating walks doesn't help much either. Nobody suffers if a walk is easier than expected, however it can create a false sense of achievement for less experienced walkers and lead to a rude shock when they do a more accurately rated trip. It has been known for some leaders to overrate a walk because either it doesn't fit their image running easier walks or who want to limit numbers by scaring away less experienced walkers. A word of caution for these leaders: some walkers only get out of bed to do hard walks, and if their endorphins aren't sufficiently fired up by your little ramble, they are likely to complain anyway. If an overnight walk is unable to be surveyed due to its remoteness or length, it is acceptable for leaders to err on the side of caution and rate a walk as slightly harder than they expect it to be to indicate participants must be capable of coping with more difficult conditions should they occur.

Surveying for Accurate Gradings Leaders of any day walk near Melbourne should survey them beforehand. Weekend walks intended to be listed in the E through M range should also be surveyed to confirm they don't prove too difficult. Nevertheless even with surveying, grading inaccuracies still occur. Unfortunately some walks are listed on the programme before the leader gets a chance to survey them. If the estimated rating differs from the assessment after surveying, and the route can't be adapted to make it easier, it is difficult to make people aware of this beforehand for Sunday walks. The lack of a recent survey can also cause a few surprises. Tracks can become overgrown (or cleared) and the passage of a storm, flood or fire can dramatically affect track and off-track conditions.

Feedback on inaccurately graded walks. As stated at the beginning, the aim is to produce a walks programme with walks graded consistently with respect to each other. Mistakes have occurred, the only way to avoid perpetuating them is to provide appropriate feedback.

If you think a walk's grading was way off the mark:

- Check if others in the group have a similar opinion.
- Discuss it with the leader; if the leader also agrees, they obviously won't get it wrong again, but should also make a note of it in their trip report.
- If the leader's view is at odds with the group, send a note to the Walks Secretary.

Mystery Object

Did you guess what this was in the Autumn Yeti?



Congratulations to **Darren Yan** (is there any piece of equipment he doesn't own?) for being the first to identify it as an MSR stove base; the holes fit the legs of any model MSR stove in existence, providing extra stability.