



The NEWS

of the
MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS INC.

JULY 1994

EDITION 521

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NOTICE:

As required by our articles of association, there will be a

HALF YEARLY GENERAL MEETING

in the

CLUBROOMS on 24 AUGUST 1994 at 8.00 pm,

for ratifying the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, plus any matters of general business.

All members are welcome, and visitors can observe.

SLIDES IN THE CLUBROOM

A Reminder of the Slides and Talk, to be presented by Calvin Hall from the Wilderness Society featuring the Beautiful Forests of **EAST GIPPSLAND**

Wednesday 20 July 1994

CROSS COUNTRY or NORDIC SKIING

In The Clubrooms

Wednesday 13 July 1994

Sylvia's **DEMONSTRATION NIGHT** in preparation for the Beginners Day at Lake Mountain on Saturday 23 July, 1994.

If you are thinking of going skiing, come along to this night.

ICE SKATING

at Sydney Myer Music Bowl

Saturday 16 July.

Meet George at entrance at 2.30 pm

DOWN HILL SKIING

Is this anathema to Bushwalkers?

Or perhaps you would prefer to go

Nordic Skiing

at Mt Stirling

12 - 14 AUGUST 1994

(2 nights)

George has arranged accommodation at the **Portillo Ski Lodge** at

Sawmill Settlement, at the foot of Mt Buller, and about 2 kms from the resort entrance.

Buller has great snow, man-made and (hopefully) natural snow by mid August. According to the brochures, Buller has 400 hectares of snowfield and 80 kms of ski trails!

Skiing is a lot of fun and if you haven't tried it, here is your chance

The Lodge is self-contained, and includes a drying room. It will cost **\$25** per person, per night.

Please book early, to arrange a group of 10 people

See George in the Clubroom

From the Editor

I had a most agreeable weekend bus trip to the Portland district on the June long weekend. Judging from the literary efforts elsewhere in this edition of **The NEWS**, I was not the only one who enjoyed the weekend. Our numbers were a bit down on what we had hoped for (there were a few last-minute cancellations), but for the 32 people who came, it was a memorable experience. Quite like old times for the ten or so 'veterans' who participated.

A reminder that we have a number of books in our Club library which would be of interest to bushwalkers, and you are welcome to borrow them. We also get magazines and newsletters from other clubs, conservation groups, the Federation, etc which can be read in the Clubrooms.

The snow has arrived, so get out your skis, brush off the cobwebs, check the bindings and your boots, and get ready to go on the Ski trips coming up this month and in August. Lake Mountain is quite close to Melbourne and is ideal for beginners. The first of the winter parties will be going in to Wilky this month. I hope the snow is deep and continuous for you. Enjoy the new stove and the wonderful cooking you will be able to do!

The Mt Stirling issue is still 'on the boil' Although submissions to the ARC Review have now closed, you can still write to the Premier and to the Ministers concerned (Mr Geoff Coleman and Mr Mark Birrell) urging them to reconsider the proposed development, and stating your opposition to the sacrifice of Mt Stirling on the altar of commercialism.

Bob Steel

The NEWS - official newsletter of the Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc. and published monthly. Edited by Bob Steel.

Articles, walk reports, poems, snippets of news, reports of new gear, book reviews, letters "to the Editor", advertisements, etc are always welcome.

Please note that articles for **The NEWS** may be put in the Red Box in the clubrooms or mailed to me, Bob Steel.

Advertising Rates

¼ Page 1 Issue-\$20; 3 Issues-\$50; 12 Issues (1 year)-\$180

½ Page 1 Issue-\$30; 3 Issues-\$75; 12 issues-\$270

Full Page 1 issues-\$50; 3 issues-\$125; 12 issues-\$450

Members Ads - FREE

Closing Date for August 1994 News is 27 July 1994

Meetings are held in the Clubrooms, MacKenzie St., Melbourne (rear of the Royal Horticultural Society building) on WEDNESDAY Evenings between 7.00pm and 9.00pm.

Visitors are always welcome.

General correspondence should be directed to:
The Secretary, Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc.
PO Box 1751Q, MELBOURNE 3001

From the President

Review of Alpine Resorts Commission (ARC)

As members will recall, we passed a resolution at our AGM last February to give a donation of \$4 000 to the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) to support its work in our Alpine areas, especially in trying to have the ARC scrutinised.

In June we received a letter from Doug Humann, Director of VNPA, extracts of which I quote:

"Thankyou Jean and fellow Bushies for your support of our work in the Alps. Our persistence has been rewarded and there is now a review under way of the ARC.

"The VNPA over the years has expressed grave concerns over the poor quality of management of Victoria's Alpine resort areas. The ARC's adversarial and uncooperative style of management, lack of public accountability, poor environmental practices and ad hoc planning processes have long been in need of radical change. The Government's decision to conduct a review, following the fracas over Mt Stirling, provides an unprecedented opportunity to overhaul the ARC and improve land management in the Alps. I urge you to make a submission"

[Alan Clarke prepared a submission on our behalf and we think (and hope) individual members did also]

"The VNPA remains critical of the Government's decision to conduct the review under the auspices of Minister Coleman's Natural Resources Department (rather than, for example, through an independent, all-party parliamentary committee) and of the omission of a panel member with expertise in alpine ecology.

"Thanks to your donation, the VNPA is currently employing Rodney Waterman to work on alpine issues and to prepare our submission to the panel. If you have any further enquiries about the review or our wider alpine work, please don't hesitate to contact me or Rodney

Congratulations to Joy McCann and Alan Mann who were married recently - a Club romance, so we will have a Club spoon ready for presentation at the half-yearly general meeting, but it may have to be posted to them as they are currently living in Canberra.

Elizabeth Spriggs has a good job in Perth, is enjoying that fair city and sends greetings.

Jean Giese

DAY WALKS

Sunday 7 August	LONG FOREST FLORA RESERVE - DJERRIWARRH CK
Easy & E/Medium	

Leaders: Peter McGrath & Robyn Gray
Transport: Bus at 9.00 am from South Bank Boulevard
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: c. 45 kms
 Expected time of return: 1830
 Area: Bacchus Marsh area
 Approx length of walks: 10 and 14 kms
 Map Reference: Melway 216A (22nd Ed.); Lerderderg and Melton 1:25 000

Long Forest Flora Reserve is situated between Melton and Bacchus Marsh, is home to the only naturally occurring Mallee south of the Great Dividing Range

We have two walks organised. The easy/medium group will travel Steep Track and Long Point Track before walking along Coimaidai (Pyrites) Creek and returning along Happy Valley Track to Long Forest Road. The easy group will traverse along Steep Track and Long Point Track then return to Long Forest Road before tackling Old House Track. There are plenty of other tracks to explore, depending on time, however we expect to return you to Melbourne with a good impression of Mallee vegetation.

Saturday 13 August	HISTORICAL WALK: TEMPERANCE TRIANGLE
Easy	

Leader: Athol Schafer
Transport: Meet under the clocks at Flinders Street Station at 1315
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: 10 km
 Expected time of return: 1700
 Area: Ascot Vale
 Approx length of walks: 5 kms
 Map Reference: Melways map 28

The triangle refers to part of the Crown Portion of the 1847 land sales, later becoming the Temperance Township Estate of the 1880's. Today, much of the late 19th Century streetscapes remain little altered. This walking tour also takes in the site of a John Wren pony track, and "Whisky Hill", plus other scenes of historic interest.

Member's Free Ad.

WANTED - A GOOD BACKPACK

Have you a spare one or one you don't want?

Contact **John Kowarsky**

Sunday 14 August	SCHOOLHOUSE RIDGE - PAULS RANGE
Easy & E/Medium	

Leaders: Peter Havlicek & Chris Lynch
Transport: Bus at 9.00 am from South Bank Boulevard
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: c. 55 km
 Expected time of return:
 Area: near Healesville
 Approx length of walks: 14 & 19 kms
 Map Reference: Toolangi and Tarrawarra 1:25 000

Pauls Range lies in the triangle formed by Toolangi, Healesville and Yarra Glen. It is an undulating ridge, about 270 metres above the plain where the regrowth affords a habitat to lyrebirds, black cockatoos, etc. In August, the wattles should be out and with clement weather, a pleasant walk is expected.

The medium walkers shall ascend from Schoolhouse Lane, where the hill gives magnificent panoramic views of the Yarra Valley.

Further along both walks will have good views of the Black Range across the historic Chum Creek valley.

Saturday 20 August	SEARCH & RESCUE PRACTICE: Steep Snow and Ice, Mt Buller
Hard	

Leader: Stephen Down
Transport: Private
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: 230 km
 Expected time of return: Sunday evening
 Area: Near Mansfield
 Map Reference: Outdoor Leisure Map Buller-Stirling 1:25 000

Run in conjunction with the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, for members of the our Club's Search and Rescue Squad. See Stephen for more details.

Sunday 21 August	MT STIRLING SKIING - DAY TRIP
Medium	

Leader: Stephen Rowlands
Transport: Private
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: 235 km
 Expected time of return: Sunday evening
 Area: Near Mansfield
 Approx. length of ski trip: as you please
 Map Reference: Outdoor Leisure Map Buller-Stirling 1:25 000

With 60 kms of maintained and groomed trails to chose from, the wether and snow conditions on the day will decide if Razorback hut is our destination. Otherwise Mt Stirling summit is another option.

DAY WALKS continued

Sunday 21 August **GELLIBRAND HILL
PARK** **Easy & E/Medium**

Leaders: **John Kittson & Denise Triffett**
Transport: **Bus at 9.00 am from South Bank
Boulevard**

Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **25 kms**
Expected time of return: **1830-1700**
Area: **near Tullamarine Airport**
Approx. length of walks: **10 kms & 15 kms**
Map Reference: **Melway maps 4, 177 & 178, and
ESMAP 644 & 645**

A delightful walk, close to Melbourne, in a rural setting, with stands of red gums and set in the upper reaches of Moonee Ponds Creek. The historic *Woodlands* homestead was brought out from England and was the first prefab house built in Victoria. It has since been extended by various owners.

Both walks will have good views of the city and nearby Tullamarine Airport, with its wide-bodied jets coming and going throughout the day. Gellibrand park has well over 400 kangaroos and more than 70 species of birds, along with the near extinct Eastern barred bandicoot.

The easy walk will be a circular walk around the park, while the medium walk will continue over towards Deep Creek and around the Airport perimeter. A lovely place to walk with no leeches or trail bikes

Saturday 27 August **Dandenongs Explorer:
Easy/Medium** **SHERBROOKE FOREST**

Leader: **Rosemary Cotter Ph. 497 3928 (H)**
Transport: **Meet in carpark at Grants Picnic
Ground (Melway ref 75 K4) at 1000.**
Private or Train to Belgrave. If you need to be picked up at Belgrave station, please let the leader know. (0809 train from Flinders Street gets to Belgrave c. 0923)
Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **13 kms**
Expected time of return: **c. 1700**
Area: **Near Belgrave**
Approx length of walks: **13 km**
Map Reference: **Melway maps 75 and 124**

My guidebook describes this as "an enchanted forest ruled by soaring mountain ash" (*Head for the Hills* by A Mevissen, 1991). Indeed there are magnificent stands of mountain ash above tree ferns, lots of birdlife (audible if not visible) and the occasional distant sound of Puffing Billy. Our walk is a circular one taking in all corners of the forest. Please see leader in Clubrooms closer to date as some paths were being re-graded at the time of the preview.

Sunday 28 August **MT McIVOR - MT IDA**
Medium

Leaders: **Alan Miller & Lloyd Young**
Transport: **Bus at 9.00 am from South Bank
Boulevard**

Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **115 kms**
Expected time of return: **1900**
Area: **Near Heathcote**
Approx length of walks: **13 and 17 kms**
Map Reference: **Heathcote 1:25 000**

This walk is memorable for the views and for the *Styphelia pinifolia*. The first time I went on this walk I noticed the carpet of beautiful bright green pine needles and yellow bell flowers, and asked the leader what they were. He didn't know, nor did anyone else on the walk. I consulted my books on native shrubs, and there was a photograph. The text told me that they grow on Mt. Ida!

The two 'mountains' are isolated ridges parallel to the Northern Highway and just east of Heathcote. The easy walk will only do Mt Ida; the easy/medium walk will do both mountains. Warning: last time we ran this walk, the bus got bogged at the Mt. Ida picnic ground. The easy walkers had to push it uphill. The walking is easy on both walks, through open eucalypt forest. The E/M walk has more hills (two in total!) and crosses private land. Lloyd and I have some work to do in finding a new finish to the walk, as part of the area has been sub-divided into holiday farms!

Letter to the Editor

From Max Casley

What do members think of the idea of exempting Committee members from the \$27 annual membership fee? I am considering moving such a motion at the August general meeting, to take effect from next February. The Members of the Committee put in a lot of time and effort for the club and free membership would be some compensation.

Also from Max:

Our Metal stand which used to be put outside the Clubrooms has been stolen. It was a nice little stand with a finger board sign pointing towards the clubrooms. Keep your eyes open for it, but I don't suppose we will see it again. Perhaps some handy person could make us another one.

WEEKEND and PACK-CARRY WALKS

5-7 August **MT BUFFALO BASE**
E/Medium **CAMP: SKIING**

Leader: **Janet Norman**
Transport: **Private**
Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **330 kms**
Expected time of return: **Sunday evening**
Area: **Mt Buffalo - Lake Catani**
Approx length of trip: **15 to 20 kms**
Map Reference: **Eurobin & Buckland 1:25 000**

Editors note: The leader is O/S so I don't know what she intends doing, except that she will be camping at the Lake Catani camping ground (which is the only place you are allowed to camp up there) and will be doing day trips from camp. There are nordic trails from the end of the road at Cresta, also around Dingo Dell, and along the road to the North Plateau. If the snow is good, there are many little snow plains where one can potter about.

5-7 August **NORTHERN**
Medium **WILSONS PROMONTORY**

Leader: **Derrick Brown**
Transport: **Private**
Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **204 km**
Expected time of return: **1900, Sunday eve.**
Approx length of walks: **30 kms**
Map Reference: **Outdoor Leisure Map**
 Wilson's Promontory

This trip is in the Northern end of the Prom. Not so many visitors go there, especially at this time of the year. However, we are limited by park regulations to a party of six. If we have more, we can make up a second party, but we have to camp at different sites (this should not be a problem). However, twelve will be the maximum. We are allowed to have camp fires, but it could be cold, so bring your thermals etc. You'll also get your feet wet, getting in and out of the boat!

We will meet on Saturday morning at Port Welshpool where we will take a fishing boat to Johnny Souey Cove. With fine weather promised we shall investigate Five Mile Beach, Lighthouse Point and Tin Mine Cove. We will be picked up by the fishing boat on Sunday, at Tin Mine Cove.

Vale Lothar Kottek

Another well known member of the fifties, Lothar Kottek passed away on 14 June this year, just a few short weeks into retirement. Lothar, who will always be remembered for his friendly bouyanr disposition, married Joan Hobden, making another lasting Club marriage. The Club extends expressions of sympathy to Joan and family

12-14 August **RAWSON LODGE:**
Various Grades **SKIING & WALKING**

Leader: **Max Casley**
Transport: **Private**
Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **171 km**
Expected time of return: **Sunday Evening**
Area: **Near Walhalla**
Approx length of walks: **as you like it**
Map Reference: **VMTC - Baw Baw Plateau**

This lodge weekend is in the middle of August when the snow should be good - fingers crossed!
Accommodation is in twin share rooms with heaters and electric blankets. Bathrooms are down the corridor and there are drying rooms and a common room. The cost is \$58 per person for two nights and includes a big-as-you-like breakfast. A counter-meal dinner is available at extra cost on Friday and Saturday nights.

We will have several groups catering for different abilities (except complete beginners). For non skiers who would prefer to go walking or whatever, please see me and we will organise something.

I have booked for 20 people. Please pay a deposit of \$20 to secure your place.

Rawson was originally built for workers constructing the Thompson River dam. It is near Erica, north of Moe, and about 2 hours drive from Melbourne

19-21 August **MT STIRLING:**
Medium **SKIING**

Leader: **Merilyn Whimpey**
Transport: **Private**
Approx. Dist. from Melbourne: **205 kms**
Expected time of return: **Sunday evening**
Area: **Near Mansfield**
Map Reference: **Outdoor Leisure Map**
 Buller-Stirling 1:25 000

We will leave our cars and camping gear at Telephone Box Junction on Saturday Morning and ski around with day packs. The route will depend on the availability of snow and the wishes of the group. Before dark we will return to Telephone Box Junction and cook our dinner in the day shelter, provided the ranger doesn't object. Then we will go a short distance along Stirling Ring Road with our packs and set up camp. Sunday morning we pack up our gear and return it to our cars, before setting off for some more skiing. It would be possible for people who do not want to snow-camp, to arrange their accommodation at the foot of the mountain

Weekend Pack Carry Walks continued

26-28 August	BRISBANE RANGES
E/Medium	

Leader: Keith White
 Transport: Private
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: c. 60 km
 Expected time of return: Sunday evening
 Area: Between Geelong and Ballan
 Approx length of walks: ?
 Map Reference: Staughton Vale & Eclipse
 Creek 1:25 000

Editors note: The leader is O/S so I don't know quite what he intends doing. The Brisbane ranges are a very interesting area fairly close to Melbourne and this walk would be suitable for people who would like to try out a pack-carry walk as there are no big climbs involved.

The Ranges have a very diverse flora, and there should be many flowers just coming out at the end of August. There are also many signs of former gold mining activities in the area, particularly around historic Steiglitz. In some of the gullies, there are old dams and evidence of sluicing and alluvial mining, as well as many shafts (most now filled in). Water should not be a problem at this time of year.

See Keith in the Clubrooms closer to the walk.

Sneak Preview of September Walks

This is the current state of the draft program for the first month of the Spring Program. Use this as a good indication of the September walks; some changes may be made before the Program is finalised.

2-4	Falls Creek-Bogong Village	M	Stephen Down
4	East Mooroolbool River- Lake Bostock - Mt Edgerton	E & E/M	Bill Penrose & Jean Woodger
9-11	The Bluff - Skiing	M	Geoff Kelly
9-11	Major Mitchell Plateau	E/M	Alan Clarke
9-18	Snowy Mountains Skiing	M/H	Peter Chalkley
11	Mt Disappointment	E & E/M	John Kittson & Fay Pratt
18	Brisbane Ranges	E & M	Alan Miller & Brian Crouch
21	Mt Macedon	E/M	Trevor Thompson
23-25	Mt Feathertop Skiing	M	Derrick Brown
23-25	Chiltern Base Camp	E	Paul Stripeikis
24	Mt Evelyn - Olinda & area	E/M	Pauline Williams
25	Three Sisters - Flowerdale	E/M & M	Peter Havlicek & Peter McGrath

CLUBROOM DUTY ROSTER

13 July Stephen and Merilyn
 20 July Doug and Nigel
 27 July Bernie and Peter
 3 August Derek and Alan Miller

Committee Notes

Membership

The Club reached a maximum of 428 members last year, but with a number of non renewals, our membership now stands at 372. This comprises 11 Life members, 12 Honourary members, 48 couples (96 members) and 253 single members.

FVWC Annual subs to this umbrella organisation is \$5 per member (ie, \$5 of your subscription goes to the FVWC) 1994 figure set at 380 members x \$5 = \$1900.

Walks Secretary May walks

5 Sunday trips, 3 Pack carries, 1 base camp, 1 Wed. walk. 1 Dandenongs, & 1 Historical walk.

241 total participants: 209 day walkers & 32 weekenders, 184 members & 57 visitors. Average of 36 on day walks & 10 on w/e walks

June Long weekend We had 100 people out on trips over this weekend. That must be some sort of record!

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Catholic Walking Club & the Camperdown Bushwalking Club are organising a special Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs (FVWC) base camp in the Grampians on the weekend of 15-16 October 1994

So put it in your calendar/diary. Come and meet walkers from other clubs. There will be a comprehensive program of walks, from easy to hard. Something for everybody. And Talk & Slides on Saturday evening!

Members and Visitors Please Note!

It is your responsibility to get to the bus starting point in South Bank Boulevard (Nolan Street) next to the Art Centre, in good time to catch the bus. 9.00 am start means the time the Bus will be leaving, not the time you should get there. Aim to be at bus stop by 8.45 am at the latest. Remember - the leader has to mark people off, and it would help if people could be there in good time. Remember also that sometimes there are "Fun Runs", half marathons etc on Sunday mornings, and this can mean delays in finding a parking spot.

So - Be Prepared!

Queen's Birthday Weekend - Portland Base Camp

On Friday evening, together with the pack carriers, we travelled by bus to Mt. Eccles National Park and set up camp around midnight. The bus got bogged at the camp site and I understand that Jean, Joan and other able bodied people pushed the bus out.

The next morning the pack-carriers were away bright and early, leaving a group of 11 base campers, 3 of whom stayed in accommodation with Bob, our bus driver. Things suddenly were quiet with the exception of the kookaburras who were still laughing at the frenetic antics of the humans below.

The base campers - Pam, Joan, Joyce, Theresa, Becky, and me, plus Grace, Barbara, and Sue who stayed at the B&B - were led by the intrepid Jean Giese and whipped along by Bob Steel. We had the use of the bus driven by the other Bob, who was continually cheerful and obliging, no matter how many farm driveways he had to manoeuvre in, in order to execute impossible turns, as we sought the correct roads.

On Saturday morning we walked the rim of the volcanic craters at Mt Eccles and then down the path to Lake Surprise in the centre of the crater. We also took in a large lava cave and lava canal. At one very narrow point on the path we came face to face with another walker. Bob solved that problem by throwing the walker into the scrub. He then ceremoniously picked her up, dusted her off and apologised so charmingly that she completely forgave him. That afternoon we drove to Mt. Napier, walked to the summit and obtained an excellent view of the surrounding countryside. Back at Mt Eccles that evening, we sat around the campfire, although it was a little damp, and Bob entertained us with his dulcet tones.

We were a bit soggy on Sunday morning and blotted our copy book by being a little late for the bus pick up (only 10 minutes). We piled into the bus and set off for Cape Nelson State Park. One group took the very pleasant nature walk whilst the others galloped around the cliff tops. After lunch we set off from Cape Bridgewater at the blow hole where we passed a fossilised forest on the cliff top and walked beside pasture land. While resting on a grassy slope on the lee of Cape Bridgewater, sharp-eyed Barbara espied seals sporting in the water. We were all entranced and lazed in the sun watching the seals for quite some time. We then descended along the cliff path to a kiosk where I had my first cappuccino and cake for what seemed like an eternity. And there was the welcoming site of driver Bob and bus waiting for us.

We camped that night at the old school house at Bridgewater Bay. What a lovely spot. There is a tiny schoolhouse and a miniature church complete with pews, lectern and miniature organ. We camped on lush grass under the trees and lit the camp fire under big old pine trees. Everyone indulged me as I set up my camera. Bob helped with advice about exposure and the others posed

around the camp fire so I could experiment with different settings.

I had finally gotten the knack of being warm and comfortable in my tent, and was thoroughly enjoying my sleep when I was awoken by a little lady calling "Dawn has broken.". This was echoed some minutes later by another little lady "Indeed Dawn has broken". Jean and Joyce were determined that we were going to be ready for the bus on time. We were all packed up and waiting at the roadside when the bus arrived. We drove past Bridgewater Lakes, then set off along the walk to Mt. Richmond via the Trewalla camp. We caught up with some of the backpackers and arrived at the top of Mt. Richmond after taking a lovely little detour to a scenic outlook.

As a first time base camper I was not too sure what to expect. I suspect Jean organised the weather. She only permitted it to rain Saturday evening after we were safely tucked up in our tents, and insisted that it cease before she performed the reveille on Sunday morning. Apart from that the weather was great.

During my walk I saw two koalas (pointed out by other walkers), seals which were spotted by Barbara, and emus (which found me at Tower Hill). I heard the dawn chorus of kookaburras, experienced the congenial company of other walkers, the pleasure of togetherness around the camp fire, the cheerfulness of a great bus driver and last but not least the expert guidance of a lovely lady.

Thanks guys.

Clare Lonergan

#####

Mootwingee National Park - the Queen's Birthday Weekend

This is really a great way to go bushwalking! You just have to get yourself to Moorabbin airport (at 6.00 am!) where you hop onto your private Piper Cherokee, you are flown to your destination with great views en route, and you land right at the spot where you will start the bushwalk. On this occasion we were in NSW, sort of near the top left-hand corner, at little-known Mootwingee National Park. It is surrounded by a lot of nothing, so it is not surprising that the early settlers found it to be an oasis. They dug around for gold and tried to farm for a while, then gave up.

Having parked our plane, we started our walk with a visit to the Visitors Centre as we had landed right on cue for a guided tour. This is in a protected historical area, where visits are only allowed accompanied by a ranger. We had a good introduction to the Aboriginal carvings and cave paintings, of which there are many. We later saw others elsewhere in the Park - there are hundreds of sites. The ranger was a most enthusiastic young woman whom I had met two years previously in Kakadu. Skirting around the protected area, we began to make our way into the gorge system of the park. As we stopped for lunch, Marilyn disturbed an emu which had been sitting on nine beautiful eggs. We climbed on to a ridge and found our first gorge.

continued next page

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W READ THIS! W

And discover what makes Build Up Bushwalking such a special experience.

As the year progresses, the hot, dry weather of September turns into the hotter, humid weather of October and November. All but a few creeks have completely disappeared. Major rivers are reduced to a series of isolated waterholes. The land lies brown and parched, waiting, still, silent and sweltering.

Suddenly, a wind springs up. In a matter of minutes, the temperature drops five or even ten degrees. The first few drops of rain turn into a torrent as lightning flashes and thunder roars. Then it is over and still once more. The frogs began to call and the birds begin to sing. The land turns green again, almost as you watch. All nature rejoices in the change.

Even in this, the hottest time of year, there are a few beautiful, cool, shady creeks and gorges where the bushwalker can relax and watch the birds as they come in for a drink or listen to the cicada chorus which announces the coming change. Knowledgeable locals head bush at every opportunity, leaving the ignorant to swelter in the city. Our routes have been chosen with relaxation, swimming and shade in mind. Walking will generally be restricted to early in the morning and late in the afternoon. The hot middle part of the day will be devoted to taking it easy and soaking up the sights and sounds of the environment around us. On our final walk of the year, we finish with an overnight stay on a houseboat on the Mary River, allowing you to experience the wetlands wildlife at its concentrated best.

WILLIS'S WALKABOUTS

12 Carrington Street Millner NT 0810

Phone (089) 85 2134 Fax: (089) 85 2355

