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***Sunraysia***

***Bushwalkers***

***September 2012***



***Membership Fees***

***Members \$30***

***Subs due July each year***

*PO Box 1827*

*MILDURA 3502*

***Affiliated with:***



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At our meeting this

Wednesday evening

Roger will be showing, only some

(you will be pleased to note)

photos of the Coast to Coast

Walk across Britain, undertaken by

four members, plus 2 others

in June of this year.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

With springtime about to commence it is timely to bring our hiking boots out of hibernation.

In September last year, a number of our members walked from Settlement Road on the northern boundary of the Murray Sunsey National Park to the high rocky outcrop of Mount Henschke in the Galpunga Wilderness. We then walked further out west and camped close to what we believe is the highest point in the region, before walking back to the start point the next day. The vegetation in this part of the park is in an excellent state and at that time much of it was in flower.

Being such an interesting area, we have again scheduled a walk in the wilderness on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September but this time with a difference. The plan is for a day walk of 12-15 kilometres commencing at Settlement Road and walking to Mt. Henschke for lunch and then returning past a large Mallee fowl nest that was very active last year. Some members have expressed interest in camping at the start point on the Friday night and would wait for the participants who wish to come for only the day. As the area is a designated wilderness there is no vehicular access, but for those who have a real interest in the Mallee and are happy to trek the distance, it will be a very rewarding walk.

At the next meeting we will seek to firm up the planning of the timing and route of the October overnight Grampians hike. For many of us, such excursions have been an instructive introduction to extended bushwalking.

Our Club either owns or has access to an extensive collection of books and journals that identify and describe a vast array of outdoor opportunities. For example, the Heysen magazine, "The Trailwalker" frequently high-light some amazing journeys. Whilst incoming material is normally tabled at our monthly meetings, we could perhaps explore ways of appraising some of the contents that may ultimately inspire new horizons. Would any member be interested in studying any of the publications and give a follow up report at a monthly meeting?

I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday evening.

Dick Johnstone.





## A Weekend at Pine Plains

18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> August 2012

*(Report written by Tessa, photos by Tom)*



In keeping with the club's tradition to host a winter social gathering, very early on in the scheduling for the year's activities, a mid-August weekend was set-aside for such an occasion. Only this year we decided to take it up a notch or two. To make a change, the tents and camping mats were to be left at home. This year we were to spend the weekend in the comfort of a luxury wooden lodge, located in the pine covered plains of surrounded by the Wyperfeld National Park. With a promise from our President that we would not be disappointed (and in the knowledge Sandra and Wendy were going to taking care of us) excitement and expectations were running high.

Those in the group with time on their hands (and in Russell's words, 'Julia's wage in their pocket') left home after lunch on Friday to spend an extra night at Pine Plains, but the majority of the party made their way down on Saturday morning. About 25km from Patchewollock and with the last stretch on gravel road, it made for a good drive from Mildura. With all members provided with detailed instructions and a map, no-one got (too) lost.

The staggered arrival of members diluted the expressions of amazement upon initial entry into the lodge; but no-one could fail to be impressed. Handcrafted from local timber, it truly is a beautiful structure. And this beauty comes at no cost to its comfort. It bestows a homely, farm-house atmosphere, with two open fires, a spectacular twenty-seated dining table, a lounge area and modern kitchen. Certainly a step up from a tent!



Susan and Adrian, our hosts, had sensibly pre-arranged the room allocation— allowing us full use of the four bedrooms in the lodge, as well as three bedrooms in the adjacent homestead.

After finding our respective quarters and enjoying a leisurely lunch, it was time to get a glimpse of the surrounding countryside. With the exception of those in the catering team, the remainder of the party set off on a "Mallee Safari". Adrian led the way in his four-wheel

drive, and Michael bravely followed in his vehicle with the remaining four passengers.



Driving along tracks he knew like the back of his hand, Adrian openly shared his wealth of knowledge of the area. A tumultuous relationship with Parks Victoria was at the forefront of many an anecdote (although for those of us in the vehicle behind, a somewhat temperamental walkie-talkie device rendered such tales disjointed at times!) In addition to the captivating running commentary, we were certainly not short changed on wildlife.



Bounding kangaroos or charging emus were in almost continuous view, and at times (dangerously) close to the vehicles. A strapping red kangaroo even kindly stopped in his tracks for a few minutes to please the crowd! Nevertheless, it may be fair to say, that it was the Major Mitchell Cockatoos that were the real treat. Two of these beautifully coloured birds poking their heads out of their tree-trunk nest gave us a sight to remember.



And, if that wasn't enough excitement, our tour guide led us to a Mallee Fowl's nest. What an impressive piece of work! Clearly not lacking a brain cell or two, the Mallee hen sets herself aside from other birds and sees no reason why she should take full responsibility for the hatching process. Instead, the Mallee Fowl gathers up twigs and leaves to form a heap in a pit, then covers it

with sand/soil and leaves it to rot. As the temperature rises, the heap becomes an ideal incubator for an egg – and it is the male's job to ensure the optimum temperature is maintained for the duration of the laying season. Several (female) members of the group marvelled at such a challenge to traditional gender-roles!

After a resounding consensus not to walk back to the lodge (uncertainty over navigating the 5km without a map was voiced as a sound excuse), Adrian's vehicle again led the way. As well as an abundance of wildlife, the 'Safari' offered great insight into the history of the area. Adrian pointed out an old aboriginal watering point – still evident by a hole dug by kangaroos searching for moisture – and the final stop was at a 'double' canoe tree, with scarring on both sides of the trunk.





Back at the ranch dinner preparations were well underway. Without wanting to interfere in the careful negotiations Dick, Russell and Roger were having with the camp oven; or disrupt Wendy and Sandra's finely-tuned preparation in the kitchen, the rest of the group decided to take a stroll to work up a bit of an appetite. Perhaps it was being on foot, or maybe the time of day, but the beauty of the surroundings were accentuated on this short walk; the fine blend of open plains, undulating sand-dunes, and generous sprinkling of pine trees were quite exceptional.



Indeed, if the surroundings were exceptional, the evening ahead proved to be equally memorable. The full complement of the group (14), together with our hosts, congregated around the fire for pre-dinner drinks. In an effort to smarten the attire beyond the usual shorts and t-shirts, several bow ties were exhibited, a couple of family heirlooms were even flaunted – and Russell didn't let us down with his striking get-up (this time honouring Donald Duck). Such impressive attire was only fitting for the

three-course meal that followed. After an opening speech from Dick, one of Sandra's scrumptious soups (supplemented by Adrian's homemade bread) wetted our appetite for the fabulous main. A vast array of meats and vegetable dishes to cater for every palate was beautifully presented for all to help themselves. The minutes that followed were the quietest of the evening – truly indicative of a good meal - perhaps only equal to the hush that swept the table when Wendy's 'Spotted Dog' appeared for dessert. And the remainder of the evening was no less enjoyable; migrating to sit in front of the open fire, stimulating conversation was a plenty. A few of us even went on a night time adventure in search of barn owls – and although we saw no owls, we did enjoy a peak at a family of possums.

If we hadn't been spoiled enough with Saturday's evening meal, Roger ensured things continued in a similar vein the following morning and cooked up a big English breakfast for anyone who wanted it. It then really was time to at least attempt to live up to our name sake and do a bit of walking! The sun was shining and it was milder than the previous day too, a perfect morning for a walk. Dick led us towards the large sand dune 'Snow Drift', said by Adrian to be moving approximately 2 feet a year and to have lost 15 feet in height over the last 30 years. Kangaroos and emus were out in force once again, and we had more than a glimpse of several Major Mitchells. Furthermore, not only did the summit of the Snow Drift boast quite a view – the sand dune allowed several members of the group a return to their youth!



Finally, reluctant to draw things to a close, and keen to get one last view, all those willing to climb to the top of a large shipping container followed Adrian up to his observatory. And although we obviously couldn't put the telescope to use, it was certainly a view not to be missed. A perfect end to a fabulous weekend.

Dick had promised us we would not be disappointed, and disappointed we certainly were not.







## PROGRAM Winter/Spring 2012

*If you intend going on any of these trips please contact the Trip Leader by 8 pm the Thursdays beforehand so that arrangements may be finalized. Unless a minimum of 4 walkers (including the Trip Leader) have registered by Thursday evening walks may have to be cancelled.*

Day & Date	Activity	Grade * *	Trip Leader	Phone No	Comments
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>					
Wed 5 <sup>th</sup>	MEETING				
Sat 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Mt Henschke day walk	SM	Noel Hayward	50257455	Optional vehicle camp O/N or pack camp beyond Mt Henschke
<b>OCTOBER</b>					
Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MEETING				
Sat/Sun 20 <sup>th</sup> /21 <sup>st</sup>	Grampians 2 days Overnight walk	MH	Roger Cornell	50257325	Alternate day walks from Halls Gap Expressions of interest in this will be sort at the meeting on 1/8/2012
<b>NOVEMBER</b>					
Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MEETING				
17 18 <sup>th</sup>	Murrumbidgee Canoeing	ME			

<b>ADVANCE WARNING 2013 -14 WALKS.</b>			
<b>Feb 2013</b> Either side of Wooden Boat Show (8-11th)	Attempt at Mount Anne Circuit walk (Repeat attempt)	Roger	50257325
<b>April 2013</b>	Waldheim Huts Cradle Mountain. Day or overnight walks around the Cradle to admire the autumn foliage of the <i>Nothofagus Cunninghamham</i>	Noel	50257455
<b>April 2014</b>	Himalayan Walk. Everest Base Camp and/or Goyko Lakes	Noel	50257325

\*\* For our grading system of activities refer to our website at <http://www.sunbushwalk.net.au/activities.html>

**Next Meeting**  
**Wednesday 5th September at 8.00pm**  
**at Drysdale's,**  
**2164 Fifteenth Street, Irymple.**