



Ben Cruachan Walking Club

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ISSUE 235b — Supplementary Newsletter of the BCWC — May 2024

Walkers approaching The Crinoline



The Venue - Licola Wilderness Village



The Food



Combined Gippsland Bushwalking Clubs Weekend Walk Reports

Thomastown to Kelly Hut and return

Date: 11 May 2024

Leader: Jack Winterbottom

Report: Nathalie Charles

We took two cars to venture to the start of the walk. Jack Winterbottom was our leader. The sky was grey, but it was not raining. The road to get there was partly with tarmac and then, gravel. By the time we reached the Benison Lookout, it was sooo muddy that it took all of Jack's driving skills to "skid" through the mud and get us to our destination, Thomastown campsite.

The walk started with a slight up and was on a 4WD track. On the way we paused at the "pause" (paws?) tree and continued on, crossing the creek on some stepping stones. At a track junction we passed 3 bags on the side of the road, belonging to members of the other bushwalking group, they soon arrived to pick up their packs and we had a chat and a joke. Then we made our way to Kelly Hut and had a look at it and some graffiti inside. see pic in the link). We also met 3 young men, with all the most light and modern equipment who were going to camp for the night.



good humour all through. Thanks, Jack, for leading and driving us there and back.



We then proceeded to walk back to McMichael's Hut where we had lunch. By then it was drizzling and getting quite cold. One walker had a blister, so Jack and Peter gave her a "shoe lacing" training sessions, in order for her to avoid blisters in the future. We started back and just before the "pause" tree, I managed to put my foot in the water while crossing.

At the end of the walk, we checked for platypuses in the water, but did not see any.

It was a very nice walk, in good company and

Arbuckle Junction to Dingo Hill Track

Date: 11 May 2024

Leader: Peter Jennings

Report: Jenny Bull

Started with a car shuffle, leaving one car 3kms down Dingo Hill track (the track being in too bad condition to leave it at the Shaw Creek campsite as suggested, so parked 1 km short of this). Then we all piled in the other car to Arbuckle Junction.

The walk is entirely on the McMillan Walking Track, and the start is clearly marked by the triangular red markers of MMWT.

We head west uphill. Silent damp track. Overgrown and steep for the first 1/2 hour on a cool misty morning. Surrounded by lichen encrusted forest. We follow the markers and ski trail loop signs. If not for the mist we could have seen Mt Arbuckle. We descend to Shaw Creek, cross, and head north across Holmes Plain to Kelly Hut for morning tea.

Holmes Plain is an alpine peatland -- a plant community found high up in the alps. The plants grow in organic peat, decomposed plant material laid down in water logged conditions over many thousands of

Neilson Crag

Date: 11 May 2024

Leader: Joe van Beek

Report: Kerry Knights



years. They are important habitat for many rare and threatened native plants and animals. Morning tea at Kelly Hut (built 1934). Mist prevented views of Mt Reynard. We then headed south for 2.6 kms along Kelly Lane (a vehicle track). We took a diversion of 300m to see McMichaels Hut (built 1970s) which is picturesquely located on Shaw Creek so has good water access. We left our packs at the turnoff and returned to much laughter and shenanigans as the group heading to Kelly Hut for lunch had come across our packs and plotted to hide them up in the trees. We stopped for lunch just up the track then a 4.8 km pleasant stroll through previously logged forest to emerge on Dingo Hill track. Glimpses of views Picture Point and The Sentinels in the fog. Then we walked a km or so down the track, past Shaw Creek campsite to the car. Then back up to Arbuckle Junction to collect the other car.

12 kms, 6 hours walking. 92 km driving. Lovely to meet folk from other clubs.



The wilderness area above Licola has much to offer the adventurous explorer, with the hike to Neilson Crag providing a memorable experience.

The day began at the Licola camp, and with the logistics of the vehicles fully addressed, the cavalcade rolled out. The track to Arbuckle Junction and beyond had been the subject of significant road works the week earlier, and at that time, large swathes of premium gravel made travel a pleasing experience. Particularly given the significant corrugations on the road before this new surface. However, on this particular day, the wet conditions and frequent use had transformed the gravel in to a hideously slippery mess in many places. As it transpired, the surface continued to deteriorate as the day went on. This had less 'all terrain' drivers appreciating the back up of 4WDs, complete with gripping tyres and handy recovery gear, on the journey back to camp.

One can only imagine the road crews bemused "tut tutting", head shaking and good natured eye rolling in disbelief upon seeing the surface Monday morning.

So, back to the hike. Arriving at Doolans Plain Road, hikers alighting the warm vehicles were met with chilly conditions. Having gained altitude (and an appreciation of bitumen) as we drove up, the clouds were hanging low and so mists enveloped the track. This provided an atmospheric element to the hike.

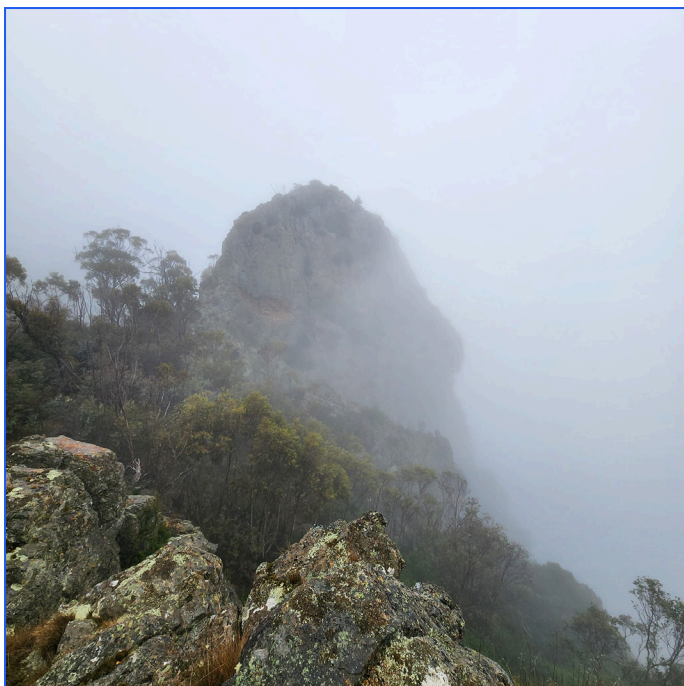
As we traversed the old 4WD track, its surrounding landscape changed, with the species of Eucalypts altering, along with the supporting ecology.

Lichen festooned on bushes at the beginning of the day moved to stands of mighty gums, some quite old and gnarly, providing all important habitat and hollows for a range of wildlife. Rivulets of water trickling down the trunks, staining the bark with dark streaks. Later, Snow Gums were more prominent, their iconic coloured bark highlighted by the moist air. Strappy foliage on the ground held the tendrils of bark, fallen from the trunks.

Countless spider webs draped through branches, each bearing sparkling drops of water. Granite outcrops along the road hinted at what was to come.

At the end of the formed track, due to the large numbers in the group, we broke in to two groups. From here, those more comfortable standing by the cliff edge had the opportunity to do so, before we met back up later to regroup.

Immersed in this cloudy forest, both the Watch Tower and Neilson Crag itself loomed from the mists. These imposing rock formations have stood for millennia. Rising far above us, they stood as sentinels over the valley.



Whilst the distant views were limited, Joe was able to provide images on his phone of the view on a clear day. The Moroka River and Snowy Bluff can usually be clearly seen, as well as Surveyor Creek and Carey Creek, along with the road to Howitt Plains and Wonnangatta station.

Watching our footfall, we completed the off track aspect of the day, returning to the formed track. Hikers had the option to return to the vehicles at their own pace, and some took this offer up, taking advantage of the opportunity to quietly listen to the bush.

As we neared the vehicles, a gentle breeze through the treetops had the leaves shedding rain drops. Branches clacked against each other, and at times, the gentle hubbub of hiker voices could be heard along the track. There was a resounding sense of achievement at the completion of the 15 km hike, along with gratitude for Joe introducing many to this special part of the wilderness.

Tamboritha Saddle to Breakfast Creek
11 May 2024
Leader: Piero Baglioni and Helmut Tracksdorf
Report: John Scarlett

Participants: Piero, Helmut, Fran, Frithjof, Lucy, Rhonda, Michael, Richard, Terri, John.
13.5km, about 400m up, 1300m down.

Saturday in Licola dawned dull and misty. The muck was down on the mountains and a fine drizzle fell. The charms of warm sleeping bag and soft pillow would have kept any sane person abed. Bushwalkers are made of sterner stuff.

The drive up to Dingo Creek Road rattled loose a few teeth but ten walkers, (shaken - not stirred), emerged from the vehicles into a grey, silent alpine



world. Piero led boldly forth on the 4WD road, then left on an old 4WD track/foot track, to a trail junction after about one km, where a track to the right - much used by horses - leads up to the Tamboritha summit. The climb is gentle and the summit was attained in about ten minutes without shortness of breath. Sadly, the views were clouded over.

From there, it was all down hill, apart from the uphill bits. The track was a variably defined foot track through snowgum country with some alpine meadows. The route follows the McMillan Walking Track, and the red track markers were helpful, although sparse in places. At one point the spur becomes quite wide and gradually divides into two or three subsidiaries. With reduced visibility we drifted off track and had to traverse right and then left for a few hundred metres to locate the route. Having done so, lunchtime was called.





Up to this point the descent was very gradual, but after lunch it became steeper, and then quite steep. One or two slips resulted in abrupt buttock to ground contact, but no-one was hurt and by a little after 2pm we emerged at the Breakfast Creek car park.

This is a walk through mostly open, gently sloping alpine country, with a steeper but not difficult final descent, and on a good day, it should offer some fine views. Even in the cloudy conditions, it was a very pleasant walk. Many thanks to all for good company, and to Piero and Helmut for their leadership.

Wollangarra Outdoor Education Centre

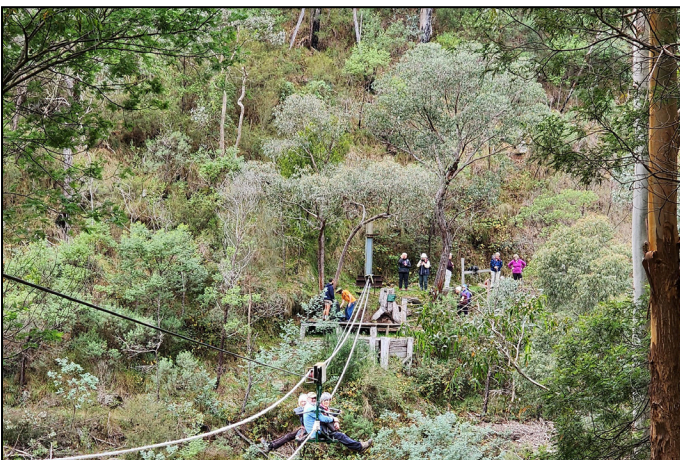
Date: 12 May 2024

Leader: Ken Free and Judy van Beek

Report: Fran Miller

Sixteen participants drove the 18km from Licola Village to the 'gates' of Wollangarra arriving about 10.30. We jumped the stile and walked the 2km grassy road, dodging wombat/kangaroo poo and stopping to watch a couple of the culprits bounding off into the bush.

W is on the "other" side of the Macalister River and the best way to cross is by flying fox.



Three people per trip were whizzed across, with a bit of a push and a pull from energetic helpers on either side. A great way to introduce us to W - it felt like we had stepped into another way of life. Smitho, one of the managers greeted us and gave us an in-

formative, detailed explanation of what W hopes to achieve.

It was established around 1990 by Ian Stapleton for adolescents to experience simple living, learn new skills and appreciate the value of meaningful work. There is no electricity and wood is burned for cooking, heating water and warmth. The students only have one shower in their one week stay and I don't think it would be a long one because the showers only have half walls around them. The shower block also contains the laundry - complete with hand operated wash tub and an old ACME wringer. The spacious, flat grounds house 5 buildings - the main homestead, half of which was built with recycled sleepers and lining boards, a second kitchen/eating area where the annual fruit preserving takes place, a gear shed, the shower block ...



... and a tool shed with wood bays attached. There are 2 composting toilets and an extensive orchard with a variety of fruit and nut trees.

Hiking is usually one of the activities the students do and backpacks, tents and sleeping bags are provided. If you have any equipment you are not using, any donations would be appreciated. Students also bake bread, work in the vegie patch, feed the chickens and chop wood. Smitho kindly gave us a published recipe/photo book, created by one of the staff.

We ate lunch around a fire/BBQ pit, sitting on huge logs, watching the sheep graze and enjoying the serenity. If you too would like to visit, W has an open day in October and several community events throughout the year. Thank you Ken and Judy for

organizing this trip, it was great to get an in depth look at W, having passed the cars parked on the side of the road many times, wondering what it was all about.

Bird Watch Walk

Date: 12 May 2024

Leader: all of us

Report: Nicki Jennings

Participants: Jack, Tessa, Nicki and Heather

On Sunday morning after all the walkers had departed for their various mountains, three experienced bird watchers and one complete novice began surveying the bird life surrounding the Lions Club Village. The first bird noted was a very bold Satin Bowerbird on the roof of the hut where we gathered.



With binoculars in hand we walked around to the back of the huts where a very steep ridge, covered in exotic plants, weeds and a few eucalyptus, proved to be a veritable bustle of small bird activity. We then walked up to the top of the ridge near where Licola's solar panels are set. The bird count continued to mount as a Willie Wagtail and Flame Robin observed



us from their vantage points on the solar panels.

Our morning of bird watching concluded with a relaxing lunch in the picnic area by the Macalister River. Two flowering eucalyptus provided further avian species to the now comprehensive list. As the

novice in the group, I learnt the difference between bird watchers, twitchers and listers. I think given the extensive list of the 35 bird species we observed that morning, we were all bird listers that day. Below are the bird species we observed which have been documented by Jack.

- White-faced Heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) 1
- Australian White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) 1
- Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*) 20
- Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*) 2
- Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*) 4
- Galah (*Eolophus roseicapilla*) 2
- Little Corella (*Cacatua sanguinea*) 2
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) 105
- Australian King-Parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*) 15
- Crimson Rosella (*Platyercus elegans*) 15
- Satin Bowerbird (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*) 20
- Superb Fairywren (*Malurus cyaneus*) 8
- Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) 6
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Caligavis chrysops*) 13
- Red Wattlebird (*Anthochaera carunculata*) 12
- White-plumed Honeyeater (*Ptilotula penicillata*) 3
- Crescent Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus*) 12
- New Holland Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*) 11
- White-naped Honeyeater (*Meliphaga lunata*) 25
- Striated Pardalote (*Pardalotus striatus*) 1
- White-browed Scrubwren (*Sericornis frontalis*) 1
- Striated Thornbill (*Acanthiza lineata*) 2
- Grey Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*) 4
- Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) 3
- Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) 10
- Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) 1
- Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura albiscapa*) 2
- Restless Flycatcher (*Myiagra inquieta*) 2
- Australian Raven (*Corvus coronoides*) 1
- Little Raven (*Corvus mellori*) 2
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*) 1
- Eastern Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) 2
- Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) 6
- Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) 56
- European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) 2

Mt Eliza

Date: 12 May 2024

Leader: Patrick Platt

Report: Michael Haynes

Participants: Patrick, Joe, Peter; Michelle, Val, Michael, Judith, Matthew, John, Rhonda, Michael.



We departed from Licola Wilderness Village in fine weather, although misty on the hilltops. After a brief car shuffle we entered a section of Glenfallloch Station (by permission of the management) at Stony Creek and spent a little time learning about the homestead that once stood there and examining the remaining old trees and house relics. Then the climb up the grassy slopes began, watched by some curious, but skittish black steers. We took our time, pausing often to admire the widening views, until we reached a cairn overlooking LWV, where we stopped for morning tea. Continuing on we soon entered a thicket of wattle and other scrub through which a path had been cut for the Fedwalks weekend in 2020. The track was still in surprisingly good condition, and we soon arrived at the small cairn denoting the top of Mt Eliza, where we paused for the obligatory group photo.

From here the walk became more challenging, as we looked for the path down the steep slope, and found the occasional helpful pink tapes were no longer there. Lunch was taken overlooking a steep drop, with dramatic views toward a cloud-covered Crinoline. (The clouds drifted off just as we started walking again.) From here, the going was slow, as we picked our way down the steep and sometimes slippery terrain. All managed well, however, and we arrived back at the cars in good time for afternoon tea in Licola.

Thank you to Patrick and Joe for an excellent walk over a variety of terrain. And thank you to Joe and all those from Ben Cruachan club who organised such an enjoyable and successful weekend.

The Crinoline
No report ... just great photos

