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**\$40 per Person**

**Subs due July each year**

# *Sunraysia Bushwalkers December 2014*

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- ❖ **Chalka Creek Report**
- ❖ **Lock Island Evening walk**



To view the complete calendar,  
please follow the link:

<http://www.sunbushwalk.net.au/calendarofactivities.html>



## Chalka Creek & the Duckweed

It was with great relief that the rather warm weather forecast for our intended trip ended up being not so hot but just right for canoeing.

The Club has offered its assistance to the Murray Mallee Catchment Authority to help with the monitoring of the spread of weeds within the Park, following their environmental flooding of the area. Thus Noel, Neil, Russell, Michael, Roge & Barb set off for Hattah National Park and Chalka Creek at 9.00am on Saturday morning 4<sup>th</sup> November.



*Neil, Russell, Michael, Noel & Roger*

The plan of attack was to off load canoes about 1 km above the Oatey weir, portage around the weir and continue paddling the Chalka Channel to the river. Unfortunately the water level

became too shallow and we bailed out for the day on reaching a flooded causeway about 1 km short of the river.

But back to the start: I am thankful the Catchment Authority had given us permission to use the Management Vehicle tracks which enabled us to have easy access to the creek.



As we had two vehicles a car shuffle was needed. So there was a bit of a wait before the drivers returned and we were on the water. Whilst waiting Barb realized that she had not off loaded the paddles from the back of Roger's wagon! Up the creek without a paddle sort of came to mind. The first attempt with the

Mobile phone showed no reception so a climb up the closest and highest sand dune was



sort of successful in that a voice message was left. There was much angst whilst waiting for them to return to see if the message had been received – fortunately it had.

During the wait a goanna was seen wandering about presumably looking for bird nests in the hollows. A Kingfisher was spotted leaving a hollow where it had made a mud nest. I do hope that it manages to raise its brood.

The launching of the canoes went well even though it had been some time since last time we had paddled. As we pushed off an aboriginal marker tree was spotted in the water. Branches from one tree had been crossed over to another and over time pleaching had occurred forming a circle within the tree.



Shortly after starting we paddled through duck weed floating on the surface, the leading canoe leaving a cleared trail together with cleared circular patches where they had dipped their paddles.

It wasn't long before we reached Oatey's Weir and had to portage the canoes. At one stage we did think that the trailing canoe may have dumped its paddlers in the drink as they were rather a long time in catching us up at the weir. Unfortunately no such excitement.



During the trip there was much dodging and weaving through dead and not so dead branches and trees. The cry from the back of canoe – 'Paddle, Barb paddle!' - followed by a thud as we hit the submerged part of the tree. Captain Roge decreed that we would end up breaking the canoe if we remained seated trying to force our way over the log. So, in the middle of the creek it was abandon canoe whilst standing on the log to man/woman handle it over the obstruction! Fortunately decorum was maintained as embarkation and positions were resumed without a dunking.

Thoughts of smooth paddling soon gave way to a heavy slog as we pulled rather than paddled our way through 300 – 400 metres of extremely thick dense mat of Duckweed.

Rounding a bend we discovered the reason for the thickness was a large fallen tree across the Creek causing the Duckweed to be banked up.

At one stage the channel narrowed and divided and a decision had to be made as to which way to go. After the Duckweed episode no one wanted to expend any more energy than was necessary to get to our lunch stop. It was a very welcome site to see Roger's vehicle as that meant lunch and a rest. After lunch Michael took very good advantage of another car shuffle wait.

Once back on the water it wasn't long before the water became too shallow and we decided to call it a day.

The main weed infestation along the banks was Bridal Creeper which we duly plotted on our GPS for a return trip to be removed. Unfortunately we didn't come across much bird life during our trip. All up we paddled approx.. 9.3 klms for the day.

Thank you Roge and my fellow paddlers for making it a great day.

*Report by Barb*



## **THE WILDERNESS COAST - MALLACOOTA to WONBOYN VILLAGE**

**Roger, Karl & Meryl**

Fisherman George & his wife on the MV Lochard have been plying their trade to visitors for a good many years, but they still don't really understand why anyone would want to walk up that tick-infested, snake-ridden, dry coastline – but then not many people do. There's not that much to understand really. It's a very beautiful, untamed walk which passes from endless beaches with rocky headlands & lookouts to fascinating & fun dunes, on to close coastal moorlands with abundant flowers, plus hobbit-like tea-tree and curly angophora forests, and amazing estuarine lakes, with a touch of whale-spotting (tail fin + a wave anyway) & lighthouses & shipwrecks for the maritime history buffs.

Our first wildlife encounter came on the boat journey across the inlet, with George having trained the local sea eagles to come for the syringe-inflated fish he tosses for them. Being only 2<sup>nd</sup> in size to wedge-tails, it's most impressive seeing them swoop & scoop with outstretched talons only a few metres away.



Next wildlife event was the mosquito plague at the Ranger station; much more buzz than bite thankfully. Roger's first escapade with his new one-man tent worked out well, once he & Karl sorted out tub from roof. Dinner down on the pier meant fewer mozzies, views across the inlet, pippies & a chorus of gang gangs! We think it was bats providing

our bed-time lullabies, with wombat toddling along later to ensure we'd turned the lights out.

Monday started sweetly through light forest & flowering heathland, then a turn on to the boardwalk at Howe Creek. How seductive this construction proved. After too few metres, the track turned quite wet. KJ wisely stopped & unshod. I could picture myself falling into the wetness if I tried to take gaiters, shoes & socks off while keeping a Day 1 pack on, & I'm not certain what Roger was thinking. Anyway, there was about 1km of shin-deep, silty water, almost to the beach. It felt like a school of tiddlers were swimming around in my boots by that time.



The first of the endless beaches awaited us. Reaching the track into the freshwater Lake Barracoota by late morning, we rested the packs and hopped over the great dunes to view the lake & its surrounds, accompanied by Eastern Whipbird calls. Passing Telegraph Point, level with Gabo Island, the wind decided to join us, belting off the ocean & sandblasting our legs.

Lunch was in a secluded huddle behind the dunes amongst acacia shrubs, before being blasted along to Lake Wau Wauka Outflow



campsite. A lovely protected site, but the briny water was only good enough for cooking & a wash - & to sink suddenly knee deep into the sand at its shoreline edge!

The wind stayed with us for most of Tuesday morning, as we strolled and played and Karl skied amongst the huge sand dunes. Passing Cape Howe, the Vic/NSW border, the route then took us down to the shore to clamber over & marvel at the beautiful rocks whose colours ranged from dove-grey to russet to purple with seams of cream or multi-coloured terrazzo sprinkles. A further beach walk, with cheeky waves sneakily threatening to lick our boots as



we sought the firm sand to walk on, brought us to a protected rocky point for lunch, complete with spectacular spouting wave action.

We then moved across Endeavour Moor, said to be one of the best sections in Nadgee Reserve for its wildflowers and for seeing Ground Parrots. And we were blessed on both counts, with a huge array of flowering shrubs, lilies & grasses, plus ground parrot sightings. Roger & Karl saw a few more than I, as I was generally behind still trying to focus on some sweet little flower. This section was quite

unexpected & amazing for its richness. And yes, it's the sought of track where you value your gaiters. The day ended with Plan B to access Nadgee Lake campsite, as its northern beach was submerged. However, Roger sourced fresh water, a large goanna graced an angophora overhead and there were black swans on the lake. Chilly, windy & a dram of Port to celebrate being there.



Nadgee Moor gave us a second dose of wildflowers before moving along tea-tree and larger, forested, overgrown 4WD tracks. Osprey Lookout had us spellbound, before more close forest, a native bee sting for Karl & a wade saw us at Little River estuary for lunch. Lunch was delayed by 15min along the way as we painstakingly removed the first of 5 ticks between us, (Meryl 2, Roge 2, Karl 1). Rid repellent, tweezers & dental floss lasso were the required tools. (Timing improved to about 5 min by the final removal at Bright.) By early afternoon we were at Newton's Beach & we chose the less mozzied campsites in behind the dunes. The reported tap & visitor station were not to be found, just remnants & stinging nettles, but we were able to tank up from the stream & then lighten the fuel-load by boiling the water.

The rest of the afternoon was spent relaxing, exploring, reflecting - walking bare-foot along the beach without a pack (!), bathing in a shallow, warm, freshwater lake (!), having entirely normal conversations with each other while undies dried on our heads (!!) - and wondering at the



vastness, the beauty & the geology of the sea caves. Great angular caverns, as big as lounge

rooms, have been carved out by the ocean, leaving the cliffs above and sweet water filtering through to service delicate rockery plants. Awesome is really the best word to describe this, (despite its current overuse).

The final morning on the track went along Merrica River fire trail amongst tall eucalypts & songbirds. A side trip to Tumbledown Lookout did not afford great views – the trees had grown – but the leaf litter just had to be home for ground orchids. There were several soft Pink Finger & some yellow Eastern Wallflower orchids. Roger & Karl fended off scurvy by snacking on tart Common Native Cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) (also called Cherry Ballart) berries along the way – I took my chances with malnutrition as they were just too tart with a lingering bitter aftertaste for my liking.



Descending again to the beach, we had yet another idyllic lunch spot at Merrica River estuary. It's a beautiful, peaceful outlet with forest coming right down to the beach or rocks, and varying water depths giving many different blues to contemplate. Certainly worth the wade across. A fish trap of twigs stood in the sand at the water's edge, its shadows casting even more sticks across the sand. And a school of very small fish gathered near its edge,

perhaps engaged in 'life skills' education, while pied oyster catches stalked the shallows. We lingered at this spot, knowing it was our last lunch on the track before rejoining the world, & also because we were uncertain of the next unmarked section – track notes had become vague & our map had petered out. Onwards & upwards through fairly steep, thickly leaf-littered forest. Hot, no track, fallen trees, god knows how many snakes saying "Help! Humans!", mysterious single sneaker & its mate found miles away – all prompted me to recall my friend Coralie, (on her first & last trip with us), hiking into Billywing Gorge, when she asked, "Are we having fun yet?" However, intrepid trackers that they are, Karl & Roger wisely kept the ocean to our right, & we eventually spilled out on to Disaster Bay & settled in for the night at Greenglade picnic area (watertank flow rate = 1 l/minute), before the 5km walk out to Wonboyn the next morning.

Wonboyn is a beautiful fishing village, but perhaps already discovered and too expensive for us. But not really discovered yet by the V-Line bus people from whom Roger had enquired & bought tickets! Mr General Store Man thankfully gave us a lift the 10km out to the highway to catch the bus. Mr V-Line Bus Driver only let us out at Genoa when we reminded him to do so. Forlorn little place Genoa, when your scheduled connecting bus to Mallacoota fails to materialise. V-line said to phone again in 10 min if it hadn't turned up – hmmm. Plan B involved me hitching a ride back to Mallacoota to fetch the car for the trip back, while the men guarded the packs.

It's a beautiful part of the world to walk, & great for Roger & Karl to have extended their walk from the 5 days they'd done in November 2013 from Cann River up to Mallacoota. Will we walk on to Eden? Who knows, but it's worth contemplating?

The basic outline:

Sunday 09 Nov @ 5p.m. – catch the MV Lochard across Mallacoota Inlet to the Ranger station at the Old Settlement

Monday – 2 days walking in one. Checked out Lake Barracoota (Day 1), before continuing to Lake Wau Waukal campsite. Sand-blasted & weary!

Tuesday – Lake Wau Waukal – Nadgee Lake. Great sand dunes, moor flowers & beach rocks

Wednesday – Nadgee Lake – Little River Estuary - Newton's Beach. Time to wander the beach & marvel at the sea caves

Thursday – Newton's Beach – Merrica River Estuary – Greenglade picnic ground. Beautiful estuary, off-track huff & puff

Friday – Greenglade into Wonboyn Village 1hr for 8.35 a.m. bus. 4 lyre birds!!, frantic car-ride to the highway, hitchhike Genoa – Mallacoota, onwards to Bright for the traditional post-walk beer & counter meal, home Saturday.



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## Scientists prove you can 'walk off' depression

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“Wild magazine 142” has this intriguing heading to an article on page 13. Just to quote a few paragraphs gives some insight to the full article.

‘The findings suggest that frequency of walking in nature may be more predictive of wellbeing than the amount of time spent in it’. ‘Being in nature – with nature defined as parkland, green corridor, coastal area or farmland – was found to provide a greater uplift in mental wellbeing than that provided by physical activity in general’.

Anna-Louise Bouvier, a physiotherapist and Sydney Coastrek advocate, told Wild. “This heavy-duty scientific report confirms what bushwalkers have always known. In an urban setting you’re often on a flat road that doesn’t require much concentration so it’s easy to keep thinking about what has been worrying you, whereas having to think about your footfall over natural terrain has a calming effect on your mind”.

**“If you are seeking creative ideas, go out walking. Angels whisper to a man when he goes for a walk”**

**Raymond Inmom**

The study also highlighted the popularity of bushwalking among women aged over 50. Dr Westway, Sydney Coastrek founder said “Walking in nature improves immunity and memory, reduces anxiety, helps battle colds and flu, speeds recovery time after sickness, and it’s fun.”

There is more to the article but it resonated with ideas that I have formed over the years of the benefit of bushwalking and particularly the observation that a weekend away walking seemed like a week away and a week away seemed like a fortnight. I always found that the degree of refreshment from a walk while I was working was disproportional to the time away in all good senses.

I commend the article to you. Roger 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2014

**The study also highlighted the popularity of bushwalking among women aged over 50.**

**“Walking would teach people the quality that youngsters find so hard to learn – patience.”**

- Edward P. Weston

### Evening stroll along the Murray

Thursday evening, and with the Club sage making a rare visit to Mildura, it was opportune to have a casual stroll along the river with much talking and reminiscing. Altogether 10 walkers assembled at the car park opposite Lock Island just after 5pm and immediately headed for the ‘hills’ when we climbed through the scrub up to Cureton Avenue and proceeded to Apex Park and beyond.

We walked and talked for an hour before turning around and retracing our steps for a picnic tea at the Lock. Eating was up to normal form with a 2 hour repass. John returned to Ballarat 3 days later with strict instructions not to leave it so long before returning.

### Rawson and the Federation 2014 weekend

The trip to Mallacoota coincided with the 2014 Bushwalking Victoria gathering of clubs and three Sunraysia Bushwalkers attended. It was great to catch up with Peter Maffei and some of the other walkers whom we met last year on our Croajingalong walk. Having informed Peter of our close shave the previous year when skinny dipping it was with some embarrassment that we found that he was the MC at the evening talk and commented on the distance that some had travelled to attend the weekend especially referring to those from North West Victoria with the words ‘be careful they are known to drop their clothes at any opportunity’.

I doubt that anyone knew it was us as by then we were firmly under our seats and out of sight.

The walking was excellent on the Saturday but due to our commitment we departed early on Sunday for the remaining drive to Mallacoota and our rendezvous with the ferryman.

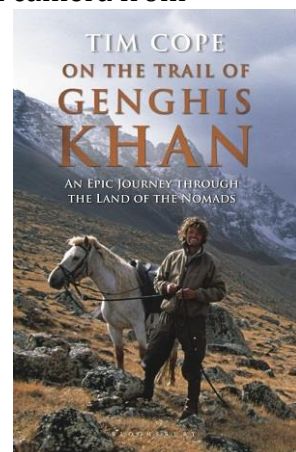
The most memorable part of the weekend was the talk on Saturday night by the guest speaker, Tim Cope. He gave us an excellent insight to the trials that he had in undertaking his trek from Mongolia to Europe in the footsteps of Genghis Kahn. The friendship that he developed with his Kazakh dog ‘Tigon’ and the dog growing into a noble companion was only topped by the dog’s arrival in the hall after the talk. It brought a tear to the eye and sustained applause.



There was a fast forwarded film clip of Tim and his horses passing before a fixed camera from various directions and Tim pointed out that after several passes the dog disappeared from shot. This was due to its coming to the realisation that they were coming back to the same spot each time so it took up position under the tripod until all was complete.

Books and DVDs are available if you are interested. Search on the web for Genghis khan and Tim Cope.

Report by \*\*\*\*\* whose name has been withheld to protect the innocent.



## CALENDAR

Dec 3rd	Meeting 8.00pm Club Room	
Dec 6th	Break-up	Contact Roger 50257325/0488121648
<b>2015</b>		
Jan 28th	Meeting 8.00pm Club Room	
Feb 2-7	Overseas Walk – Milford Track, New Zealand	One space possibly available. Contact the Club at: enquiries@sunbushwalk.net.au
Feb 28th	Progressive Meal	Final details arranged at Jan 28 <sup>th</sup> meeting
Nov	Overseas Walk – Patagonia South America	16 day walk, early indication of interest required. Contact the Club at: enquiries@sunbushwalk.net.au

**Next Meeting**  
**Wednesday 3rd December at 8.00 pm**  
**at Drysdale's**  
**2164 Fifteenth Street,**  
**Irymple**