



#31 winter-spring 2005

news from the  
**alps**

# a national park without **COWS**

“We have the highest regard and respect for the people and communities whose lives were linked with grazing in the alps. They are in no way the enemy. They are a valuable part of the alps’ cultural heritage.”

So says Peter Jacobs, who is Chief Ranger of the Victorian section of the Australian Alps at an historic moment. Following a detailed review, the Victorian Government has announced that licensed cattle grazing will no longer occur in the Alpine National Park. In August, 57 cattle grazing licences were not renewed. The remaining four, the last in existence in the park, will cease from June 30 next year.

“A great many people were involved in the process which produced what I believe is a fair and just outcome for nature conservation. Agency field staff have maintained strong relationships with the graziers; others provided background information and support materials to the Labour Government task force formed to consider grazing in the Alpine National Park; Department of Sustainability and Environment staff also made their contribution; as did the scientific community who, through the rigour of their research, provided a sound platform for creating a cattle-free zone.”

A transition phase has begun, where former grazing licensees are considering their options, many of which have adjoining State Forest licences where grazing will continue and methods of effective containment are being developed. Financial assistance is also being provided as part of the process.

“What everyone appreciates is that grazing has been a part of the alpine region since the first half of the Nineteenth Century. The effects have been studied and documented since the 1940’s, with growing concern over the effects on soil erosion, regeneration, biodiversity and fragile ecosystems. Victoria was the last place where grazing occurred within the Australian Alps national parks network – until now.”





# welcome

...to this winter-spring issue of news from the alps which is full of interviews, information and resources gathered together especially for anyone connected with the Australian Alps.

As well as the usual columns – news from around the alps, updates on programs, an international perspective, dates for the diary – we've focussed on a few topics of interest.

We report on various workshops and get-togethers – post fire biodiversity, frontline, feral pigs and dogs. We also take a look at what the recent First People's gathering represents and aims to achieve. We explore the philosophical issues behind the balance we try to maintain – between protecting the alps and encouraging appropriate visitor experiences - and because each issue is seasonal, we take an alps-wide look at cross country skiing.

This is the second, new-look, issue (if you missed the first, let me know), and we're very happy to report that the response has been positive. Keep in mind that our new system to produce the newsletter means that no-one is burdened with writing articles, so if you have anything you think worth exploring, please email or give me a call.

Again, happy reading.

**Gill Anderson**  
program manager and Editor

Published by Australian Alps national parks, Program Manager and Editor: Gill Anderson. For editorial contributions, or mailing list updates contact Gill, PO Box 20, Bright, VIC 3741. T: 03 57550011. M: 0418561827. email ganderso@parks.vic.gov.au

For more information about the ALPS, including information about the Parks, other publications and news, visit the Australian Alps Web Page. [www.australianalps.deh.gov.au](http://www.australianalps.deh.gov.au)

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Cattle grazing, Bogong High Plains, Alpine National Park

And the changes, both logistical and ecological, are already beginning to show. The administrative costs associated with licence administration, ecological monitoring and managing grazed areas – a role performed by Parks Victoria staff and estimated to cost around \$400,000 per year – will progressively wind down to allow staff to re-focus on other issues of park management.

The scientific research which helped form the decision to remove cattle tells us that we'll see an increase in biodiversity health and the quality of the condition of the alpine environment. There will be an improvement in protection of soils through a reduction in bare ground and also to water quality by protecting fragile alpine wetlands and mossbeds. The threats to flora and fauna which were linked to grazing will also disappear.

As Peter says, "It's very exciting, we'll be seeing the alpine landscape slowly return to the pre grazing era as it was 170 years ago."

For more information, check out these sites: the Department of Sustainability and Environment at [www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse) (follow the links through Parks and Reserves on to Alpine Parks) and the Mountain Cattlemen's Association at [www.mcav.com.au](http://www.mcav.com.au) Victorian National Parks Association at [www.cowpaddock.com/page1.html](http://www.cowpaddock.com/page1.html)

# CROSS COUNTRY

Too often, the day to day workings of the job get in the way of opportunities to look at the bigger picture. For those who work in the Alps, various factors influence how we go about what we do – probably the most significant being state lines and agencies. For example, if you look at the winter management of cross country skiing, what emerges, as you talk to people about how they manage their area, is that there are differences, and there are also similarities. And like everything to do with the Alps, it's always worth knowing what someone else is doing, especially if it even remotely relates to what you're doing.

Gill Anderson has the advantage of an overview perspective, one that comes with her position as Program Manager for the Australian Alps National Parks. "It's all about creating a balance between managing the parks for their own value, and at the same time giving people opportunities to experience the parks in winter and in ways that are enjoyable and safe."

Regardless of whether the visitor is a back country skier, cross country tourer or skater, the role of park staff across the alps should include management, maintenance and communication. And this is where each area differs...

The 26 kilometres of trails around **Perisher** in Kosciuszko National Park are groomed on a regular basis. "We manage the process", says Tim Greville (Summit Ranger) "but contract the actual grooming. (Currently a memorandum of understanding is being drafted between the National Park and the Cross Country Community. When complete, the hands-on responsibility will largely lie with the community supported with Parks expertise, equipment and materials.) "There is also a broader network of trails which extend out to link the resorts, which aren't groomed regularly. In addition in the north end of Kosciuszko we have cross country trail systems which are not groomed at Three Mile Dam and Dry Dam. And to minimise negative impact through grooming, we've detailed specifications (how much snow cover is needed to prevent gouging or compaction) and marking (replacing markers and setting trails well away from sensitive ecosystems such as alpine bogs). We also construct snow fences to collect snow."

"Cross country skiing at Perisher lets you get out further in winter than you could in summer as the walking tracks don't go as far into the more remote backcountry areas. It's more of a thrill than walking in summer because less people are as familiar with the winter landscape. It's quiet and beautiful. And there's a thrill in being able to glide through this type of setting. The main range is expansive – amazingly so – and challenging."



Another memorandum of agreement has just been signed by **Falls Creek** Resort management and the **Bogong** Unit of the Alpine National Park which sets out their roles and objectives in managing the cross country trails in and around the resort. Says Cath Kent (Acting Ranger-in-Charge), "Together we've been taking care of things for over ten years, but until now, we'd never set out what needs to be done, by whom and how." The agreement's objective is two-fold – to provide the best quality trails and also a safe visitor experience. It provides benchmarks for grooming and signage whether that be degree of trail difficulty or hazard identification. It has also clearly defined the areas of responsibility – resort staff are responsible for grooming all the cross country trails both inside the resort and out into the park while it's the parks' staff role to ensure trails are marked and checked. Work is still underway to bring all signage into a consistent format.

The area covered by the memorandum includes an area known as the Nordic Bowl for beginners within the resort, and a variety of experiences including back country snow camping and ski touring for more competent skiers out in the park itself. Season depending, up to 65 kilometres of trail are groomed by resort staff with advice from alps staff. "It's wonderful country", says Dannika Shaw (Ranger) with open plains,



4 KM Trail, Giants Playground, Mt Buffalo NP.

rocky features and opportunities ranging from mountaineering at Mt Feathertop to getting out to some of the huts – Johnsons, Edmondsons, Tawonga and Wallace hut – to use them as a base for the day.” With such a range of experiences on offer, catering to such a wide range in experience levels, offering skiers information is important. “Our information boards spell out the basic messages for those entering the back country – take a map and a compass and be prepared. More detailed information is available at Windy Corner within the resort or from parks staff at the Mt Beauty office.”



At **Mount Buffalo** National Park there are six kilometres of groomed trails across snow plains and along treeless valleys as well as approximately 13 kilometres of track on seasonally closed roads. In fact one of these roads is groomed to offer people an easy cross country ski up to one of the best views in the alps – from the Horn right across to Mt Kosciuszko on a blue sky day.

Buffalo is well set up for cross country beginners, both in terms of the degree of challenge (trails are coded in sync with the downhill slopes alpine code with green for beginners, blue for intermediate and black for advanced skiers), and the facilities (the trails start opposite the Cresta Valley day visitor centre). Most sit within the tree line forming circuits within a basin – it’s a beautiful, sheltered setting.

Felicity, Ranger In Charge, describes how the cross country network is jointly maintained by park and resort staff. Parks staff report on the condition of and mark the trails. The resort grooms the trails on behalf of Parks Victoria. This is

part of the lease agreement and paid for by the Park. Grooming involves both packing and track cutting two to three times a week depending on snow conditions.

The cross country ski trails at Buffalo can be divided into three categories, each requiring a slightly different management approach. The first is promoted in park publications, marked and coloured in accordance with the alpine code, patrolled and groomed regularly; the second category is marked and coloured in accordance with the alpine code and patrolled, snow permitting; and the third includes roads and walking tracks covered by snow but in more remote or marginal snow areas of the plateau. These tracks may be signed posted but not marked, and they are promoted as remote area trails where skiers must be experienced, well prepared, and skilled navigators.



The cross country skiing on offer within the area covered by Alpine National Park’s **Wonnangatta Moroka** Unit differs from many of the others on several counts. To begin with, there is no downhill skiing or resorts in the vicinity, so the people who do come are dedicated cross country skiers. Parks Victoria Ranger, Wayne McCallum, explains.

“We’ve a marked ski loop of four kilometres at Mount Arbuckle, but neither that nor the other areas where people ski – for example on roads closed for the season – are groomed or even patrolled regularly.”

Winter in this part of the alps offers great opportunities for the fit and experienced skier to get out into remote country. “We have some people skiing 35 kilometres to access

the steep slopes of Mt Howitt, which in good weather takes two days. Of course you need to be well prepared and experienced in remote country navigation. But then we also have people driving up in four wheel drives, pulling on the skis and heading out straight from the car for a quick ski on the snow plains or among the snowgums. “

Impact on the area is minimal from skiers, and as over-snow vehicles are banned from the area (apart from those used for search and rescue purposes) the main area where attention is focussed are the roads. “The main road can become impassable in winter and gets very pot holey late in the season.”



Andy Gillham (Ranger) at **Baw Baw** National Park also deals with a stretch of back country cross country skiing on the Baw Baw Plateau with little impact from the nearby Mount Baw Baw Alpine Resort. “We’d see less than two percent of visitors from the resort enter the park – but for those that do venture out onto the plateau are rewarded with a peace and tranquillity that you simply can’t find on many other mountains. As for experience levels needed, the parks’ 12 kilometres of marked cross-country ski trails cater for the intermediate to experienced back country skier.”

What is interesting is the perspective Andy can give on the topic of trail marking and classification. Five years ago he had gathered together a group of key players and experts to look at creating an alps-wide set of standards. Despite the fact that the process was a fair way down the track, various factors got in the way of progression – but the topic is still as valid

now as it was then, and is certainly worthy of reinvigoration as a Recreation & Visitor Facilities working group project. “We need to develop a methodology and standard that is the same everywhere. It’s a question of duty of care – giving people a consistent message about what they are likely to experience.”



The cross country experience on offer in the ACT is quite different than that in either Victoria or New South Wales, says Brett McNamara, District Manager **Namadgi** National Park, “On average at over 1600 metres the Brindabella and Bimberi Ranges within Namadgi National Park can receive quite a lot of snow, although the cover can be variable from year to year– with good cover experienced this year but very poor last year. Because the area is managed principally for water catchment purposes and as a wilderness area, cross country skiing opportunities are limited. As a result we don’t mark trails specifically for skiing and we don’t groom.” The Brindabella area is heavily forested and the terrain is wild so opportunities for cross country skiing are along marked fire trails accessed from sections of the **Mt Franklin Road**. “Generally, people come to the area for snow play, but we also have the more adventurous and experienced cross country skiers who appreciate the need to apply minimal impact principles while exercising personal safety.”



L-R: Groomed Horn Trail, Mt Buffalo NP. Backcountry skiing, The Bluff, Alpine NP. Main Ridge, Kosciuszko NP. View near Fitzgeralds Hut.



# sharing the knowledge

news of workshops, reports and other forms of useful information-

## pig strategies

In late May there was a meeting of parks and other agency staff (such as catchment authorities, DPI & DSE) at Khancoban to explore the processes and techniques of feral pig control as part of the Feral Pig Best Practice Management Workshop. Presentations ranged in content from operational to scientific, and as always, the act of bringing the right people together was of real benefit to all.

signs of rooting in the Omeo area – with recent similar signs also being found in the Falls Creek and Dargo High Plains areas. (The possibility exists that pigs may be being brought into the area for sport.) “One option was to carry out an audit from the air, but what we’ve learnt from the workshop has convinced us that our energies will be better spent focusing and going through the time-consuming process of ground searching and setting traps.”

Proceedings from the workshop will be sent to participants and uploaded onto the Alps web site shortly.



Wild boar, and their affects, Namadgi NP. Photos: Glen Digby.

“NSW and ACT have done a lot of work over the last ten years and at a very strategic level”, explains Brooke Ryan (Environment Strategy Officer). “They’ve been dealing with significant populations of feral pigs in their alpine parks in the alps and have been addressing the management of these populations, with significant input from scientific experts in the fields of pig ecology and feral animal management.”

What was obvious from the Workshop is that there may be different techniques and methods required in different environments – and that all agencies need to use an Adaptive Management Framework in their programs to control feral pigs so that learning and adapting is an integral part of all programs.

Obviously sharing knowledge is important to facilitate the speed with which techniques may be adopted, and this Workshop was a key to promoting Best Practice in the Alps. “The workshop gave us the chance to learn more about how they deploy resources for example; dedicating staff in four week programs to trap and shoot from the air; having continuity with the pilots you work with so that they are familiar with the area and understand where the pigs are most often found.”

Up until now there’s been very little evidence of feral pig infestation in Victoria with the exception of small isolated populations mainly in the east – there have been scats and

## fire = biodiversity

One message resonated throughout the recent post fire biodiversity conference held in Albury in June – that we have an excellent platform from which to learn about fire and the high country over the coming decades. Fires of such intensity and scale, as in 2003, are rare events in high mountain environments. Although there are ongoing concerns for some of our threatened species, recent studies have reinforced Australia’s native flora and fauna’s ability to survive and rebound from fire.

“The general public’s perception is that fire is devastating. But those who study fire, and the landscape’s response to it, have a very different perspective. They understand that the Australian landscape is adapted to fire – that when a fire has been through you should assume everything is still there.” So says Trish Macdonald, an alpine ecologist who helped organise the conference.

“The bush fires earlier last century were studied, but with a different mind frame. They considered the loss of grazing land and natural resources, such as timber, purely in the context of a human value. Which is why the 2003 fires have been such an interesting study resource.”

Sixty of Australia’s top fire and biodiversity specialists gathered to share their findings to date, among them Roger

Good, who has worked in the alps for over 40 years, internationally renowned fire ecologist Dr Malcolm Gill and alpine ecologist Dr Dick Williams.

“We heard about fires’ lack of uniformity, and the way this allows individuals within communities to survive. We want to know more about how a fire operates in an ecosystem so we can better manage fire and naturally occurring bushfires in our national parks.”

For more information, contact Gill Anderson (see page 2 for details). Proceedings from the workshop will be available later in the year.

## and for those ‘out front’

The speed with which places were filled for the most recent Frontline of the Alps workshop (held over two days in early May at Mount Buffalo) is a good indication of how valuable it is. Hosted by the Alps Program – the primary aim of the workshop was to improve the knowledge base of people who deal daily on a face to face basis with visitors to the Australian Alps. Convenor of the Program’s Community Relations Working group, Rod Atkins explains.

“Similar workshops have been held the past. The last one was almost four years ago and the next will be held at Kosciuszko National Park in November. Funds permitting, and given the response we’ve had, we’d hope to run more in the next financial year.” Moving the location helps to reach front-line people across the alps. “The Mount Buffalo workshop was weighted, as would be expected, with people from Victoria, (though there were people from both New South Wales and the ACT). In November we’d hope to see more participants from New South Wales and the ACT.”

As for the format of the most recent session, the forty or so participants were given a broad overview of the alps from two main perspectives. “We designed presentations to cover the geology, plants and animals, post-fire recovery and the cultural heritage (indigenous and non) of the alps. Of course the time available limits the depth to which we can go, but it’s a valuable basis for these people to work from. We also explain how management of the alps works, from the view-point of the Co-operative Management Program to that of a day in the life of a ranger.”

And that’s not all. Knowing how challenging it can be to interpret and communicate to a wide variety of audiences, the workshop also included some hands-on sessions filled with tips of both what you could do, and what you definitely should not.

“We appreciate that the alps are extremely important to local communities - they rely heavily on tourism - and these workshops are part of our role to support and network with the local tourism industry .”

## wild dogs

In June, the first meeting of the Alps Wild Dog Group was held at Tumut to explore the topic of wild dog control in the alps. One thing emerged, it’s a big issue – some would say bigger than other feral animal control – and one which is highly complex. At this point the Project Group is scoping different ways to share ideas and information. If interested contact Josh Bean or Rob Hunt (NSW); Charlie Pascoe (Victoria); Bill Woodruff or Don Fletcher (ACT).

Top-bottom:  
1 & 2 - Post Fire Biodiversity Workshop, Albury, June 2005.  
3 & 4 - Frontline Workshop, Mt BuffaloNP, May 2005



“There was a strong spiritual feeling as we sat down once again after this long. It was good to come together to talk about something common to us all – the alpine region. This first gathering was a big step in showing respect and recognition of the fact that we were the first people. In time there will be more gatherings, and ways in which the culture can be spread, to anyone who is prepared to sit and listen to the stories.” – Albert Mullett, one of the senior male Gunnai Elders, Gippsland

# they came from all over

For thousands of years before European settlement, the alps stood together as a region with significance for a number of different Aboriginal peoples who lived or moved through seasonally, harvesting Bogong moths and other abundant foods and holding ceremonies. These practices stopped with settlement, and nowadays, with state borders dividing management of the alps three ways, getting an understanding of the relationship between these people and the alps is difficult. But in early April, that started to change...

“There are several different cultural working groups across the alps”, explains Dean Freeman, Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Officer, “but until now there has never been a peoples gathering from all over. More than 100 people came, and we were able to talk about ways best to manage the alps as a whole and from their perspective.”

The two days were full of hearty and frank discussion between Aboriginal elders and traditional owners and the various government agency staff about how Aboriginal herit-

age should be managed. There were also strong and constant reminders about what the Alps meant to those present.

Seven groups were represented –Gunnai/Kurnai, traditional owners of the area around Dinner Plains (Vic) where the gathering was held, Wiradjuri, Monaro/Ngarigo, Dhuduroa, Wolgalu, Ngunnawal, and Taungurung – showing the breadth of cultural information which is available. Not surprisingly, by the end of the three days, an overall goal emerged – to have a unity of purpose. There was much discussion about developing a treaty between the Aboriginal groups and the importance the Aboriginal peoples working together and negotiating with one voice, something which was strongly supported by the various agencies.

Says Dean, “There are the issues which relate to separate areas which traditional owners in those areas are best to deal with, but there are times when we need a group from all over to consider issues which will affect management of the alps. And time must be taken to create this group so that it has a balance of representation and be the resource we hope it will be.”

Recommendation highlights: ■ A treaty to bring together all the groups to work as one ■ Recognition that traditional owners are the legitimate speakers for the land ■ Land set aside for traditional owners to continue cultural practices ■ Establishment of an Australian Alps First people's Keeping Place ■ Reintroduce language for use in meetings, events, reports, signage and interpretation.

*Doonooch Dancers, First People's gathering, Dinner Plain, April 2005.*



*Mountain Pygmy Possum. Photos: Glen Johnson.*

## post-fire possums

Sometimes, in trying to get a grasp of the bigger picture, it's a good idea to take a close look at one of the smaller pieces.

In this case, gaining some understanding of the effects of bushfire post the 2003 event has involved looking at *Burrhamys parvus* or the Mountain Pygmy Possum. Glen Johnson, Department of Sustainability and Environment explains.

“Being a nationally endangered species (at one point believed to be extinct), a reasonable body of research existed before the fires. We'd identified the key locations where permanent populations existed. We'd also located transient populations in less optimum environments.” Research has also provided a fair amount of information on allocation of territory, diet, breeding and gestation.

“The Mountain Pygmy Possum is linked to the Bogong Moth. Indigenous people travelled high into the alps each summer to harvest the incredibly protein, fat and carbohydrate-rich moths, and the moths are also the food of choice for *Burrhamys*. It's been established that the females occupy the optimum habitat – the rocky outcrops and screes at higher elevations – where more moths aestivate, or congregate to escape the heat of the summer plains.”

Males living at lower altitudes move into the females' territory in October to mate, and by November there are pouch young. “Eight are born and it's the strongest who manage to latch onto one of the four teats.” A rapid period of growth follows simply because in this alpine environment, animals must have a sufficient weight gain over summer to survive the winter, when *Burrhamys* settles into a period of torpor which begins with days at a time, then into weeks during the coldest months.

Post fire, researchers were keen to use this “exceptional event” to gather more information. “By March we found that

the species had survived in all of the locations supporting permanent populations, but that there was no evidence of *Burrhamys* in the transient locations – a scenario which we anticipated given that historically, the numbers at sub-optimum environments were always small.

“It's likely that the larger areas of rocky screes, with less vegetation to burn, offered protection. We've also noted fewer animals in areas where the fire has reduced the amount of cover.” In fact, this reduction in, among other species, the Mountain Plum Pine, (*Podocarpus lawrencei*) has meant not only a loss of protection from predation, but also another key food source. “This species is killed by fire and it will take 30 years for new pines to germinate, grow and reach the point where they offer fruits and cover. In the mean time, with limited food and habitat restricted, though large numbers of young were being noted, post-natal abortions were also occurring.”

For more on reports or site information contact Glen Johnson, [glen.johnson@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:glen.johnson@dse.vic.gov.au)

*Spot the Burrhamys.*



# around the alps

news, big or small  
on Alps-based projects, people  
and events

**from New South Wales...** A short documentary - Kosciuszko Reflections - about Kosciuszko National Park received a Bronze Remi in the environmental category of the prestigious 38th WorldFest in Houston, one of the largest and longest running film festivals in the world. Produced in 2001 and produced by local Canberra filmmakers, Images Online and Fine Films, the winning documentary was funded and project managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife service (a collaboration which has produced a number of award winning documentaries over the past 10 years). The 12 minute documentary features stunning images and interviews with people who have close links with Kosciuszko National Park. It's a valuable tool for the promotion of ational parks both nationally and internationally. ■

With the numbers of people now walking the Main Range in Kosciuszko National Park, doing nothing about human waste is not an option. Given the cold climate, altitude and vegetation, this waste takes a very long time to break down, and aside from its obvious impact on water quality, when the snow melts it's not a pretty sight.

Building on an options paper for a toilet facility at Rawson's Pass - Between a Rock and a Hard Place (2003) - the NPWS has developed a Human Waste Management Plan for the Main Range titled Taking care of Business. This Plan includes the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for building what will ultimately become the nation's highest toilet. (The plan also includes a range of strategies to manage toilet waste from overnight campers, and educational programs to help visitors minimise their impact while in the mountains.)

## from Victoria... in the far south...

The Friends of Baw Baw National Park volunteer group turns 25 this year. This incorporated group of people share a common interest in the Park and surrounding areas, and their aim is to provide support and to foster awareness of the flora and fauna and physical environment of the Baw Baw National Park, in Central Gippsland. Working primarily with Parks Victoria, the group organises and participates in a number of activities on public land each year involving a wide range of people from Melbourne through to southern New South Wales. This milestone will be officially recognised by the Minister for the Environment at the Friends Network Conference in September this year. ■

The volunteer Ski Patrol that works in Baw Baw National Park also turns 25 this year - another volunteer group which provides a first aid service and helps skiers to ski safely and enjoy their time in Baw Baw National park. ■

Another years' work on the Grey sallow Willow (*Salix Cinerea*) control program in and around Baw Baw National Park has recently wound up. Remoteness and thick vegetation make many of the willow sites extremely difficult to access.

Temporary toilets installed in the past detract from the setting, so the proposed facility will be built into the side of the Pass and be as low key as possible. And having consulted current human waste management practice in mountain environments around the world (composting is not an option at 2,000 metres) a decision has been made to install a very simple pump out toilet. In addition, a carry out policy is being explored for all solid waste. Stay tuned. ■

**Spirit and Survival:** stories from the 2003 Snowy Mountains bushfires, is a beautifully presented booklet and compact disc. An initiative of the Snowy Mountains Bushfire Recovery Taskforce funded by NSW Premier's Department.

The 2003 fires prompted one of the longest and most exhaustive fire suppression operations ever undertaken in Australian history, involving more than 1,600 people from 20 different agencies. Each person interviewed in Spirit and Survival, tells their own story. Recorded and produced by former ABC Radio journalist, Louise Darmody, on behalf of the Taskforce, Spirit and Survival contains the stories of 26 people from country areas and towns around the Snowy Mountains, including Paupong, Berridale, Rocky Plains, Shannons Flat and Cabramurra. Taskforce chair, Ken Prendergast, said that to aid in the recovery process the Taskforce felt it was important to record this history before memories of the details faded with time.

Spirit and Survival is available at Regional Visitor Centres in Cooma, Jindabyne, Khancoban and Tumut for \$10.00. Profits from CD sales go to local Rural Fire Service brigades. For further information contact Graeme Enders on 64521455

(It's thought the willows became established in these remote areas following the 1939 wildfires.) This year we were able to treat 71 willows at 14 different locations using a helicopter to fly crews in, while a further 34 willows were also targeted on foot. Since the start of the program (January 2000) a staggering 758 willows (mostly mature, in and around Baw Baw National Park) have been targeted at 210 different locations using 1,410 volunteer hours. ■

## in the far east...

In the Tingaringy area of the Alpine National Park works in the past six months have taken place in and around the Tingaringy Falls walk including clearing the trail of vegetation, signage at the start of the walk, track markers and ensuring public safety barriers were secure at the look out. A new interpretive board has been installed at the Roaring Camp information shelter, and contractors have completed extensive road works.

Southern Ark in conjunction with third year environmental students from Deakin University conducted a trapping program to determine the number of Quolls in the area. A total of 286 trap nights carried out, numerous feral animals caught or sighted, a number of new latrine sites found. ■

from the ACT...Environment ACT has recently been undergoing a 'realignment process' - the result of the Government's decision to bring artsACT into the group late last year and ACT Forests earlier this year. This is coupled with the Government's decision last year to transfer the group from the Department of Urban Services to the Chief Minister's Department.

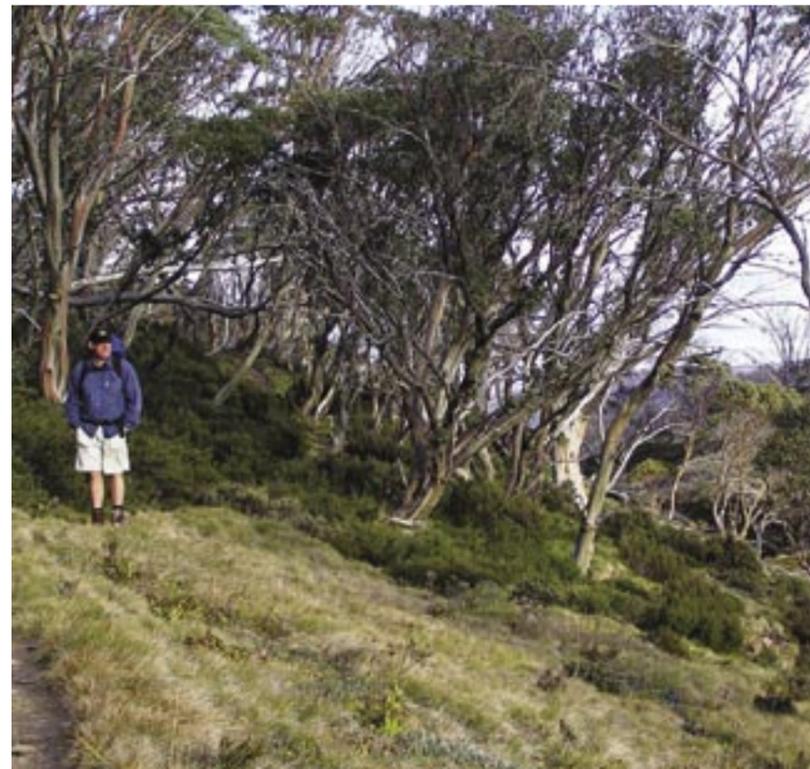
And what are the benefits? Integration of ACT Forests with Environment ACT should improve fire management, nature conservation, recreation planning and the management of plant and equipment.

The new group - Arts, Heritage and Environment represents a cross section of interests with its core business including: arts development, environmental quality, heritage conservation, nature conservation and sustainable land management.

A high level structure for the new organisation has been put in place which recognises both the core business as well as the operational, policy and regulatory roles of the group. As for the management structures within the new groups (which sit under this level) they're currently being established. ■

**and from Canberra (the DEH...)** Meg Switzer, who had been the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) representative on the Australian Alps Liaison Committee has retired from the Department and Bruce Leaver is now in the role. (Some will know that Bruce was instrumental in establishing the Alps MOU when he was the Regional Director for NSW NPWS in Queanbeyan nearly 20 years ago. Rod Atkins, Convenor of the Community Relations Working Group, has had a move recently from the position of Director of Environmental Education in DEH to Manager of Public Programs and Marketing at the Australian National Botanic Gardens which is part of the Parks Australia Division of the Department. ■

New Alpine Chief Ranger,  
Peter Jacobs, Mt Bogong.



## international perspective

A regular update from Graeme Worboys\* - drawn from a world-wide pool of mountain protected area conservation and management expertise - useful for anyone who works within the Australian Alps.

"Anyone working in mountain protected areas should keep an eye on three vital global events which will be taking place during the latter part of 2005. First up is the 8th World Wilderness Congress (September 30 - October 6, 2005) in Anchorage, Alaska; then the Global Change in Mountain Regions (October 1 - 5) in Perth, Scotland; and finally, the International Mountain Corridors Conference (October 24-27), Catalanian Pyrenees, Spain.

Each of these forums will be discussing responses to the major issue of global climate change - a topic of immediate interest to Australian Alps managers. In addition, inspired by a recent article on Climate Change in the George Wright Forum magazine by David Welch of Parks Canada (Vol 22, No 1); the WCPA Mountains Biome has posted a paper on some practical responses to dealing with climate change, which will hopefully help mountain protected area managers during this time of rapid change ([www.mountains-wcpa.org](http://www.mountains-wcpa.org))."

For more information about the events above, contact  
Alaska: [www.8wwc.org](http://www.8wwc.org)  
Scotland: [www.mountains.conf.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:www.mountains.conf.uhi.ac.uk)  
Spain: [mallarach@natura.ictnet.es](mailto:mallarach@natura.ictnet.es)

For more information about IUCN and the WCPA Mountains Biome visit [www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa.html](http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa.html), or email [Graeme.g.worboys@bigpond.com](mailto:Graeme.g.worboys@bigpond.com)  
If you would like an electronic copy of the Mountain Protected Areas Update contact Gill Anderson (see page 2 for details).

\*Vice Chair of IUCN's (The World Conservation Union) World Commission on Protected Areas (Mountains Biome), one of IUCN's six global Commissions (ie networks of technical, scientific and policy experts).

# getting philosophical

Who isn't so busy with life – whether you're a visitor to the alps or someone whose work revolves around them – that it's hard to find time to ponder the bigger picture?

Happily some people do find the time, or in this case, deliberately make the time, to do just that. Kathryn McCallum took time away from her life to trek solo across the alps. For most of the 45 days that it took her to walk from Wallhalla in Victoria to the outskirts of Canberra, she had lots of time to think...

"It was somewhere around the 12-day mark that all tension left my body and I felt very relaxed. I'd settled down into a rhythm – I stopped doing two things at once (like having a cup of tea and reading at the same time), and my thoughts stopped madly jumping around."

"This idea that we are separate from nature is an illusion..."

Experiencing the alps in this way gave Kathryn the time to ponder personal philosophies related to the wilderness. "Going to a wild place provides a very powerful experience, even if it is an infrequent visit. A visit to the mountains or beach leaves people incredibly refreshed. I believe that immersion in a natural environment, where the sensory inputs are so different to someone's normal life, is transforming. Wild places disrupt our normal patterns of perception and provide some of the sensuous beauty we crave."

"I think it's vital to preserve wilderness for its own sake, and for non-human creatures, because there are now so few places not overrun by humans. But I also think we must question the very concept of wilderness – it implies that wild nature is somewhere humans do not belong, that it's opposed to the tame, or human environment."

"This idea that we are separate from nature is an illusion. Even those of us who live in an urban environment are dependant on ecological systems – for example, our petrol was once organisms floating in a prehistoric sea. It is a dangerous illusion because if we think we are separate from nature, we think we are not constrained by its finite resources."

"Wilderness area managers are at the practical edge of negotiating these interactions between humans and the wild. How many signs? Huts or no huts? We need to feel our way for the context of each situation. Personally, I'd be happy if large areas of the world contained no humans at all. But that is now rare, and if we are to survive we need to break down the boundaries between nature and culture in our thinking – to bring the wild into our everyday lives. And to think of the wilderness as somewhere we belong."

Kathryn suggests that many people who might benefit from a trip into the back country are put off by their perceived fear of a potential acute risk, like losing their way, exposure, or snake bite. These risks are real, but Kathryn believes the slow, cumulative risks of a sedentary life on a couch in front of the television are actually far greater. If we're to encourage people to put this in perspective we need to strike a balance between the boardwalk adjacent to the car park experience and the back country ridge with the sign that lets you know there are no more signs ahead (something which Kathryn found ironic...).

And that is the balance to strike, to encourage people to experience the wilderness, but in a way that doesn't detract from the remote experience or have an adverse effect on what is a precious resource.

# where are they now

The Alps Program has been long-lived and has seen many different faces over the years. And while many of these individuals have moved on to other ventures, most retain an active interest in the Alps..



**Cath Renwick.** Community and Media Liaison 1997-2003. Cath has now returned to the big smoke of Sydney with her husband Andy and younger daughter Honor, living in sunny Camperdown. Having wound up her business venture (Out in the Open), she now has a 'real' job with holiday pay and everything! Continuing to focus on interpretation, Cath works for Godden Mackay Logan, a busy heritage consultancy in Redfern, helping to interpret a range of amazing places. Contact Cath on 02 9319 4811 or cathr@gml.com.au

**Andre Mayne.** Inaugural Programme Coordinator 1991. After deciding that he needed a change, Andre took a year and a half off travelling around the world, where he met his new partner. He returned and started work in the Commonwealth Dept of Ag where he has worked in a wide range of areas. Despite his background, he lost his house at Stromlo during the Canberra bushfires and has recently bought a new house in Duffy, where he and Kerstin have just had twins - Reuben Louis and Tobias Paul. Contact Andre.mayne@daff.gov.au.

**Janet Mackay.** Program Coordinator 1992-95. Janet is still in the mountains - in her own consulting business, Planning for People, which is based in Berridale and specialises in tourism, recreation and environmental planning. As well as working in the Alps (Falls Creek and the Alpine National Park), Janet works all over Australia with projects in recent times in Canberra, Alice Springs and the West MacDonnell Ranges, Booderree National Park, Kakadu and Tasmania. Between trips Janet skis, walks, cycles and spends time relaxing with Lauren and Lachy, now 16 and 12. Contact Janet.Mackay@globalleisureregroupp.com



**Neville Byrne.** Program Coordinator 1995-98. Neville was initially involved with the Alps program through the Recreation & Tourism working group. After his stint as Program Coordinator he headed off to Bendigo (Vic) as Chief Ranger in charge of the 850+ reserves in the foothill slopes down to the Murray River (Murray Central District, Parks Victoria). Following a brief encounter with a young lady on a bike ride on Kangaroo Island, Neville moved to Adelaide for romantic reasons. Several jobs followed including co-ordinating an education and advice program for holders of small farms in the Adelaide Hills, and co-ordinating the Master Plan & Parklands legislation for the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide. He then moved back into 'parks' as the Program Leader for Tourism & Recreation Planning for the SA Department for Environment & Heritage. A recent stint saw Neville fill the role of Regional Conservator for the Northern & Yorke Region of the Department. Hobbies include cross country skiing (still), and the new life as a caravan owner with partner Leanne. Contact byrne.neville@saugov.sa.gov.au

# useful stuff

Having the right tool always makes the job easier, and that applies just as much in the case of the right spanner to service your chain saw to the right communications resources to get those vital messages out there. So what do we have to work with?

The set of alps brochures has just been revised and re-released, now in full colour – Australian Alps Walking Track, Huts Code for Visitors, Care for the Alps and the overview brochure Australian Alps National Parks. Bulk copies were directly mailed out in late July but if you need more, contact Gill Anderson\*. (Gill also has hundreds of colourful Care for the Alps bookmarks - perfect giveaways for schools.)

For anyone who needs to establish a presence at a show, event workshop or whatever, the alps portable display is an easy and very punchy way to do it. Currently there are three sets available for use – contact the Parks Victoria office at Mansfield, the Snowy Region Visitor centre at Jindabyne or the visitor centre at Namadgi National Park.

It's also worth knowing that many popular and useful alps related reports and publications are now available at [www.australialps.deh.gov.au](http://www.australialps.deh.gov.au). Look for them under Publications. And while you're there, take a look around the site. Even better, let Gill Anderson know what you think. It's the best way to help create a site which works harder for you.

\*for contact details see Welcome on page 2

# new walking track strategy

Earlier this year Australian Alps staff responsible for the management of the Australian Alps Walking Track from Baw Baw, Alpine, Kosciusko and Namadgi national parks gathered in Namadgi with a range of community members interested in the Australian Alps Walking Track. The objective was to work through and finalise the draft strategy and gain direct input from everyone concerned; staff and the many groups who have a very strong sense of ownership of the track – the bush walkers, the national parks associations, the authors of walking guide books. The result is a new strategy which is now in place. For copies contact Gill Anderson (see page 2 for details) who says, "This strategy, just like the track itself, is a tangible example of good co-operative management across the alps."

AAWT Group, Mt Tennent, Namadgi NP.



# a.i.a.s. institute for alpine researchers

The Australian Institute of Alpine Studies is an invaluable umbrella organisation for alpine researchers of all disciplines. Its aims are to promote research in the alpine and sub-alpine areas of Australia as well as co-operative projects between alpine researchers. The institute also helps to share information on current alpine research both in Australia and overseas, to liaise with international mountain research organisations as well as convening an annual seminar session on alpine research. For more details about the Institute, membership, newsletter and more, visit [www.ias.org.au](http://www.ias.org.au)

## Capacity Building

**Newsletter** Produce two printed News from the Alps, Winter Spring & Summer Autumn editions.

**Communication, Web** Web maintenance, brochure review & reprints, Alps program promotion, report printing & distribution.

## Operational Implementation

**Alps Operational Group (AOG)** Conduct annual AOG meeting with managers from across the agencies to seek operational input into Alps program.

## Integrated landscape Management

**National Heritage List Nomination** Continue to progress the National Heritage List draft nomination.

**Post Fire Expert Scientific Committee** Post Fire Biodiversity Workshop Proceedings will be distributed to participants and uploaded onto the web.

**Fire History** Finalise & print.

**Climate Change & Resorts "Keep Winter Cool"** Collaborative project with Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council and Australian Ski Areas Association to raise awareness about climate change and ways of reducing greenhouse emissions.

**Science / Management Forum** An annual workshop aimed at bringing together operational managers and scientists / researchers to workshop the latest in research and the implications for land management. This year the theme will be post fire ecological response.

## Cultural Heritage

**Remembering Lost Places** Heritage consultant, Rob Kaufman has produced a draft document of stories about places lost in the 2003 fires (concentrating predominately on historic hut & mine sites) - an entertaining and historically interesting publication, printed before Christmas.

**Indigenous Gathering Video** The Koori Heritage Trust is nearly finished producing a short film of the Australian Alps First Peoples Gathering.

**Australian Alps Indigenous Group** Support the formation of a group of Aboriginal Traditional Owners to provide advice to the AALC on the Alps program.

**Managing Historic Heritage (Hut focus) Skills Workshop** A workshop involving volunteers and park staff to identify and minimise threats to historic heritage sites - with a key focus on historic hut maintenance skills and conservation planning.

**Cultural Heritage Display** Creation of a cultural heritage banner featuring historic huts, to go with the suite of existing Australian Alps banners.

**Research Partners** Project Officer to develop briefs & liaise with Universities to undertake heritage research.

## Community Awareness

**Education Kit & Promotion** The revised and updated Kit will soon be available free on the web or as a CD (minimal cost). The section on Aboriginal people of the Australian Alps is still being developed in close liaison with Traditional Owners.

**Frontline** The Frontline steering committee is planning another Frontline workshop in Kosciuszko National Park in late November. This is a joint Visitor & Recreation / Community Relations project.

**ABC Stories** Work in close liaison with Canberra ABC to produce 25 stories of people & places around the Alps. Potential to be picked up by ABC digital TV & ABC Enterprises.

**2nd Edition Touring Guide** Investigate revising and reprinting the book "Explore" touring guide to the Australian Alps national parks.

**Community Service Announcements** Stuart Cohen will co-ordinate the production of new Community Service Announcements (previous CSAs have all been highly acclaimed for their beauty & professionalism) to be shown as 'fill ins' on TV.

**Alps Image CD** Produce CD of Alps images for repeated use by Alps staff in promotional material, presentations & displays (free of copyright) - depicting range of values, scenery and activities.

**AAWT Trail Head Signs** Develop & produce package of AAWT promotional & interpretive signs for key intersections (X 10 locations to be finalised) & trail head at Namadgi & Walhalla (to compliment existing signs)

## Visitor Recreation

**Australian Alps Walking Track Interpretive Signs** In conjunction with the AAWT sub group & the Recreation WG a series of small plaques will be developed for key visitor nodes with vehicle access along the Alps Track.

**One Park "Welcome to Country" Signs** In conjunction with the Cultural Heritage & Recreation WGs, concept designs and location options will be developed for further discussion.

**Leave No Trace Camping Code** Develop a minimal impact camping (snow, vehicle based & bush walking) brochure. Investigate inclusion of popular camping sites across the Alps. Continue to work with LNT Australia on the development of Alpine Skills & Ethics booklet.

## Natural Heritage

**Restoration Manual** Roger Good is preparing the new and very comprehensive alpine ecological rehabilitation manual. Draft by September 2005. Expected to be completed, printed and distributed this financial year.

**Fire Ecology Plots Analysis**

**Wild Dog (Special Group)**

**Mossbed (bog) rehabilitation workshop** Follow up to the successful workshop last year in Namadgi & Kosciuszko national parks looking at the various techniques being employed on bog rehabilitation post fire.

**Alps Invaders** Addition of approximately 30 weed species to the original Alps Invaders booklet, design and printing.

# leave no trace

Spend time in an environment like the alps and you'll appreciate the importance of minimising your impact. For those who work there, it becomes second nature. For those who visit, the aim is to bring them up to speed. How is it done? Well, in addition to the Care for the Alps...Leave No Trace minimal impact codes for visitors, which the Alps program have been promoting in one form or another for well over a decade, the Alps Program is working closely with Leave No Trace Australia (LNT)\* on a number of other minimal impact messaging ideas. Paramount to this is the completion of the LNT Skills and Ethics booklet designed specifically for the Australian Alps bioregion. This booklet will eventually provide the foundation for all minimal impact information and messaging across the Alps. At the end of the day we are all working toward the same goal, reducing impacts on the alpine environment and enhancing visitor understanding, enjoyment and safety.

The Alps Program will also be sponsoring three positions for rangers to attend the LNT Australia Masters Course. This field-based course will ensure participants are competent in planning and implementing minimal impact practices as well as being able to train small groups.

\*Leave No Trace Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting minimal impact skills and ethics. For more information visit [www.lnt.org.au](http://www.lnt.org.au)



# diary

2nd Frontline Workshop 15 – 16 November 2005 - Thredbo, Kosciuszko National Park

2nd Mossbed Rehabilitation Workshop December 2005 - Bogong High Plains, Alpine National Park

Leave No Trace Australia Master Educator Course 14 - 18 November - Bogong High Plains, Alpine National Park

Historic Skills (huts) Workshop March 2006 - Currango Homestead, Kosciuszko National Park & April 2006 location TBD

Science/Management Forum late May 2006 - Jindabyne

Alps Operational Group Meeting late May 2006 - Jindabyne



Australian Government  
Department of the Environment and Heritage

environment ACT



people working together  
for the Australian Alps

*Sunset in the Victorian Alps*

