

# NEWS FROM THE ALPS

THE ALPS PROGRAM: WORKING  
TOGETHER BEYOND BORDERS



There's a lot going on across the Australian Alps: how much are you across?

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ALPS?

So here we are, at the end of the year when it's time for a bit of frivolity and fun. With that in mind we thought we'd make our contribution to the holiday season an Australian Alps quiz. What follows is your chance to confirm that you're an Alps wizz (or maybe discover that you *don't* know as much as you thought you did). Pop your numbered answers in an email to the Grand Quiz Master Elaine Thomas (aka the Australian Alps Program Manager) and she'll decide who the lucky winner or winners are. The prize is *definitely* worth ten minutes of your life. Note that the answers will be printed in the next issue of the alps news and Elaine's decision is final and won't be contested.



**Question 1.** Let's start with an easy question. What is the name of the talented and gifted current Australian Alps Program Manager?

**Question 2.** What chubby-cheeked mammal stays warm and active during an Australian Alps winter by scampering along tunnels lying under the snow blanket?

**Question 3.** As fire threatened Buchan just outside Victoria's Snowy River National Park in late December 2019, why did fire crews focus on protecting the school?

A. The fire team were former students. B. The school was the only building in town not to have been coated in fire retardant. C. It's known that communities recover more easily post-fire if infrastructure like the school is saved.



**Ariana Henderson a task force leader debriefing her fire crew after saving the school.**

**Question 4.** Name the plant vascular structures sitting under a tree's bark that is eaten by the larvae of the nefarious wood boring beetle (*Phoracantha mastersi*) which is causing widespread damage to the snow gums? Is it: A. Xylem. B. Phloem, C. Artery, D. Vein, E. C and D, F. A and B

**Question 5.** What is the VR being used to document in 3D priceless cultural heritage sites like Australian Alps huts?

A. Video Referee. B. Virtual Reality. C. Very Reliable. D. Vice Regal.

**Question 6.** Back in 2013, a new bit of fire kit was being trialled called the Green Dragon. Was it...

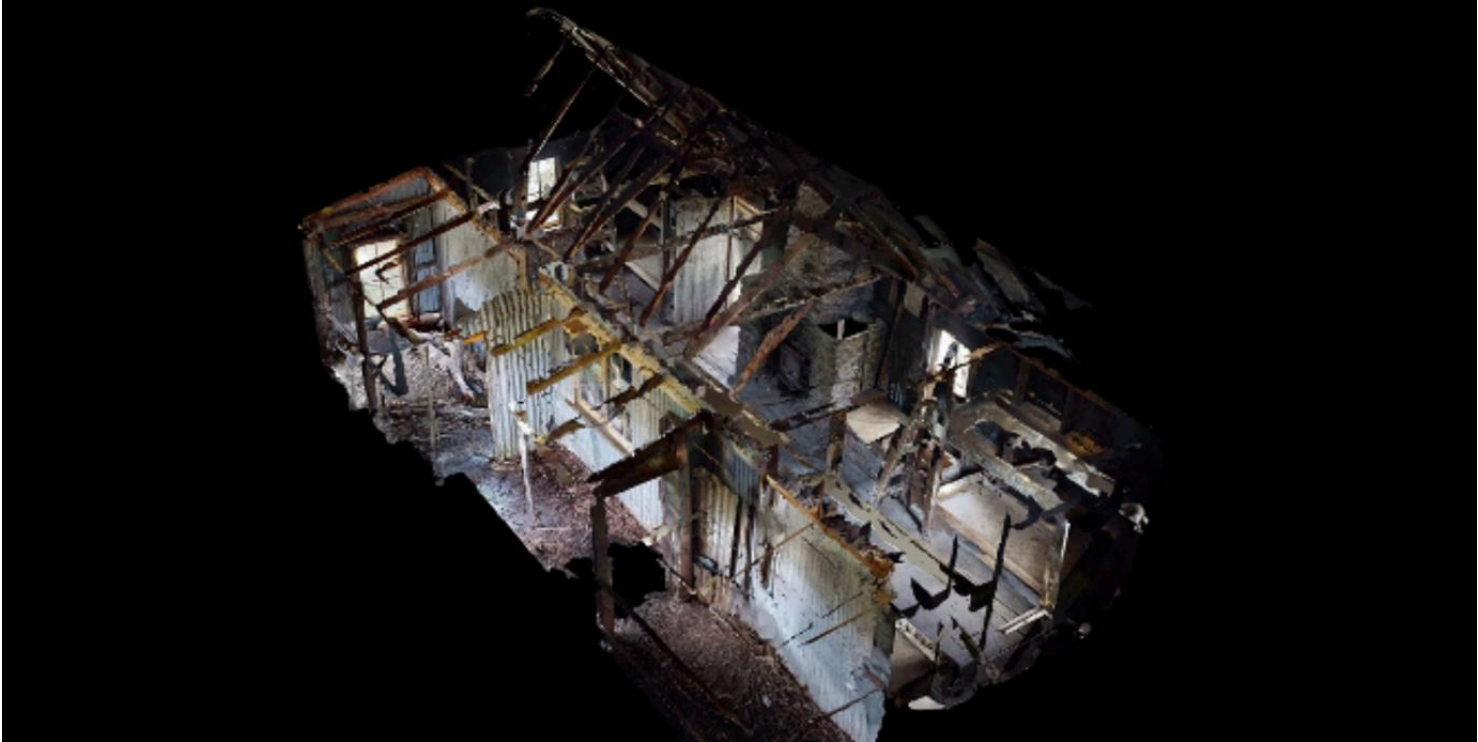
A. A vehicle-based incendiary launcher developed in Canada. B. A coating sprayed on tree trunks to deter fire reaching the canopy. C. An electrolyte drink used to keep crews hydrated when out on the fire ground.

**Question 7.** Deciding where to build a new section of walking track involves...

A. Drawing a line taking the shortest distance from A to B then imposing it onto the landscape. B. Working out what needs to be skirted around because it's vulnerable or culturally sensitive. C. Thinking about the walker's journey and giving them reveals and vistas. D. Consider the slope in terms of walker's fatigue and water runoff. E. All of the above bar A.



**Question 8.** At alpine hut restoration and rebuild workshops, skills are shared like how to use traditional tools like the maul and froe. Which is hit with which?



A 3D, VR rendering of Cope Hut near Victoria's Falls Creek.

**Question 9.** When fire threatened Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve's Threatened Species Research and Recovery Program for Brush Tailed Rock Wallabies and Bettongs, how did the animals find themselves on a military airlift to Melbourne and Sydney?

A. Wildlife managers spent the week prior sedating animals with a dart gun. B. They'd spent months conditioning the animals to feed in open traps so they could be caught overnight and moved swiftly out of harm's way. C. It was brilliant timing: the animals had won a trip in a competition.



**Question 10.** What should you pack in case you're out in the Australian Alps, get into trouble and reach for your phone to discover it's flat?

A. A spare charged phone. B. A pack with 'what if' food and gear. C. Both of these.

**Question 11.** For what once-presumed extinct 'small rock mouse' were boulder-filled-trench-crossings constructed across ski runs at Mount Blue Cow?

**Question 12.** Name five Traditional Owner groups that have a connection to the Australian Alps.

**Question 13.** Actively controlling pest fox populations in the Australian Alps helps reduce pressure on populations of which Australian native duo?

A. The Mountain Pygmy-possum and the Broad-toothed Rat. B. The Fairy Penguin and Humpback Whale. C. Japanese Koi and Maine Lobster.



NSW Parks ranger John White laying fox baits up on Mt Kosciuszko (above) and a cage of airborne excrement is lifted out by helicopter.





**Question 14.** What weed, probably brought in on ski-field snow-grooming equipment from New Zealand, has a yellow flower and can be detected off-season by specially trained sniffer dogs?

**Question 15.** Helicopters are a valuable resource when managing landscapes in the Australian Alps. They are used for...

A. Lifting tonnes of solid human waste from remote toilets. B. Lighting fires from above using a large tank and a drip torch. C. Aerial surveys to count deer. D. Rescuing walkers unaware of nearby bushfires. E. All of these and more.

**Question 16.** In 2023, parks staff helped fight fires in Canada, adapting skills in a foreign landscape and using different methods. While there they saw...

A. Yogi Bear. B. Hoses rolled like watermelons. C. Meerkats. D. A Sasquatch.



**Spot the Canadian differences: the melons of rolled sections of hose; the Swedish Hagland personnel transporter; and the forest of spruce and aspen.**

**Question 17.** Why was the wooden boardwalk and viewing platform to the only accessible rock art paintings in the ACT replaced with metal?

**Question 18.** What is 650 kilometres long, snakes through the Australian Alps from Walhalla in Victoria through to Namadgi in the ACT, is used by car-based visitors and seasoned wilderness walkers alike, and is managed co-operatively by three state parks agencies?

**Question 19.** Many people volunteer in the Australian Alps. What is something they don't do?

A. 4WD club members work with parks staff to build fireplaces, picnic tables and repair toilets. B. Walk in a search-line to spot weeds. C. Load chainsaws onto their horses and ride into remote areas to clear tracks. D. Paint fresh lines on the roads where needed.





When volunteering in remote settings, why carry your chainsaw when you can strap it to your pack animal?

**Question 20.** It's a well-known fact that people who live, work and play in and around the Australian Alps are well above average in knowledge, skill, expertise, appearance and karaoke skills. These same people are also aware of the collective power and support offered by the Australian Alps Program. Given you are likely to be one of these people, what do you think the Australian Alps Program does best?



Much thought and effort goes into great tracks: these beautifully crafted steps are on the Mt Tennent summit track in the ACT.



# THE BIG TRAIL TURNS 30!



It's difficult to imagine the Australian Alps without The Track that lies across them. Thirty-years-old this year, the 650km-long Australian Alps Walking Track snakes across south-eastern Australia's mountains, taking in spectacular tracts of alpine and sub-alpine scenery and iconic rivers such as the Murrumbidgee, the headwaters of the Snowy, the Murray and the Mitta Mitta. It crosses expanses of wilderness and climbs Australia's highest mountains: it links a priceless landscape of not only natural beauty but of timeless Aboriginal and more recent European occupation. It is richly layered: First Peoples' routes and protected sites, stockmen's huts, old towns, ruins and former mining and hydroelectric sites. The Walk welcomes day-walkers, overnight walkers, track runners, and the end-to-end walkers who tackle it in one hit or take it in staged bites. Three park agencies, together with passionate volunteers, work to care for it so everyone can experience what it offers. Meeting regularly over the years, the most recent gathering was at Thredbo late in November to carry out the usual business of sharing information about the condition of the Track, fine tuning its current management, and discussing the future, before celebrating its existence with a birthday cake.



Back in 1989, to publicise the fact that the Australian Alps was now officially a co-operatively managed bio-region, eight eco-celebrities were gathered together to walk through the Alps along parts of what would become known as The Australian Alps Walking Track.

## FOR YOUR DIARY:

**December 11: International Mountains Day**, a day designed to raise awareness about the role that mountainous regions play in the lives of people and their importance to our planet. This year the focus is on the world's glaciers which hold around 70 percent of our freshwater and are lifelines for ecosystems and communities.

**May 12 – 14, 2026: Science Management Forum**, three days when Alpine National Park managers and researchers get together to share the latest information and research, and exchange ideas, needs and perspectives. This time around, we're focusing on identifying the knowledge gaps that are holding us back — the things we *don't yet know* that, if we did, could make a real difference to how we manage the Alps. Want to know more? Contact Alps Program Manager Elaine Thomas.

**GOOD TO KNOW:** 2026 will be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the co-operative management of the Australian Alps. It was back in June 1986 that the first Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the far-seeing governments of the time. They knew its power would ensure the Australian Alps would forever be protected and maintained as a single bioregion, rather than national parks scattered across the mountains of Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. This MOU has been resigned many times since then, keeping its functional arm – The Australian Alps Program – on the ground and active. This is The Program that supports and boosts all the cooperative work that we see and hear about in this newsletter (and elsewhere): the forums and workshops, the funding for research and other projects, the sharing of information, ideas and values. Valued and copied in other world settings, it is a brilliant piece of environmental political engineering and it's ours and will be celebrated. Stay tuned for more information.

**TELL US YOUR STORY:** We are always looking for stories to include in this newsletter. What's happening in your part of the Alps? If you've built a new bridge, cleared a track, managed pests, done vegetation restoration works or worked on threatened species recovery, why not send Elaine Thomas a photo and a quick line and she'll take care of the rest. Maybe you just went for a particularly fabulous walk and would like to share your experience. We're always happy to hear from agency staff members, volunteers and members of the general community.

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