

GSWW from Nelson to Lake Monibeong: 13 October

Walkers: *Karen, Margaret (Leader), Sandra & Tony*

Two groups set out on a fine Sunday morning from Warrnambool. Sandra and Tony were to walk the Lake Monibeong loop whilst Margaret led a walk with Karen from Nelson to Lake Monibeong.

Margaret and I started out from the township soon reaching the beach. The sand was firm underfoot and dotted with pretty clam shells as we set forth for Lake Monibeong. With the wild sea as a back drop and a brisk wind behind us, the going was fairly brisk and lively. We came upon two pied oyster catchers who kept company for most of the day – travelling about 10km along the beach with us. After a short while we looked back at the view to see some pretty dark and ominous clouds chasing us and soon the first of several short, sharp (we could feel the rain drops through our gortex jackets) squalls blew through. For most of the day these showers of hail and sharp rain would catch us but with the wind at our backs we made great progress, at times our feet barely touching the sand - almost flying along.

In the distance we could see a strange box shape on the shore and thought perhaps it was a ship, maybe we were about to discover the mythical mahogany ship but as we came closer we could see it was a strange rocky outcrop. Our map revealed it to be the Shipwreck Rocks. The cormorants had made a home here and seemed quite oblivious to the wild sea and weather.

After a few more showers and sunny breaks we reached White Sands and turned off the beach to have a look at the camp site. We were delighted to find the campsite just behind the sand dunes complete with picnic bench, shelter and toilet. Campers had collected flotsam from the beach and festooned the area with multi coloured buoys, ropes and nets, giving the place a beach party atmosphere. At this point the sun came to make lunch even more enjoyable. We agreed this would be a lovely place to camp during the summer months.

After lunch we set off again along the beach then up on to the cliff top which was surprisingly more sheltered. This area looked like a moonscape of rocks and shell middens. There were lots of flints and jagged rocks, which the aborigines had used as tools when they lived in the area. We passed McEacherns rocks and Nobles rocks and saw a mysterious hooded figure on the horizon. As we neared we noticed a pair of bare knees, but still couldn't figure out who it was until had reached him. It was Tony, who had walked a couple of extra kilometres to meet us and escort us to the junction we had intended to meet. We soon met up with Sandra who had fashioned a shelter out of wood to keep the rain off whilst she waited for us.

As we set out on the final leg of the walk Margaret and I congratulated Sandra and Tony who had walked this next kilometre of exposed beach facing into the wind and rain. It must have been pretty tough going.

We then turned inland through sheltered heath and scrubland on our way to Lake Monibeong. Along the way Sandra and Tony pointed out the numerous deep pink Caladenia orchids dotted along the way. One bed of orchids also revealed a wonderful spider orchid rearing its head above all the others.

This section of the walk was very easy going and soon we had the Lake in our sights. After a short scenic amble around the lake we arrived at the carpark. We changed out of our damp clothes and settled down to afternoon tea only to have it cut short by the heaviest downpour of the day. We figured it was time to go home.

Thank you Margaret for leading a lively and varied walk. This is definitely an area to revisit in calmer weather. *Karen*

Wyperfeld National Park: 25–27 October

Walkers: Diane, Coralie, Irene, Linda, Lothar

Lothar, Diane, Coralie, Linda and myself braved the “outback” of Victoria. I had never visited this area before and to my delight it was a fascinating weekend spent in the desert.

I was amazed to see how dry the countryside is after we left Hamilton on our journey up. Some of the crops planted have not made it above about 2” tall and are dying in the paddocks. It was such a difference to our lush greenness.

When Linda and I arrived we were greeted with a cuppa and great food, which didn’t stop all weekend. We pitched the tent and then headed off on a discovery walk of the near vicinity. (We couldn’t go too far from camp and the food.)

We did muster up enough energy to complete the Desert walk on Saturday morning, Diane and Coralie had us enthralled with their knowledge of the local flora.

During the afternoon we conquered the Eastern Lookout Nature Drive. We left Linda back at the tent as she felt she could not manage this arduous trek but the four of us struggled on and made it to the end.

That evening we had a sumptuous repast of Roast lamb and vegies with Lemon delicious (just to die for).

We packed up Sunday morning with some sadness and wended our weary way back home but with a determination to return to conquer more of those "strenuous" walks of Wyperfeld.

Thanks Diane, Coralie, Lothar & Linda for a great weekend.

Irene

GSWW from Monibeong to Tarragal: 2–3 November

Walkers: *Carolyn, Jenny (visitor), Doris & Marg*

Swan Lake to Tarragal, Saturday

It was late in the morning that we began our walk back to Tarragal. We walked along the road for about a kilometre before heading off onto bush track which is skirted by coastal bush scrub on one side and pine plantation on the other. The day was overcast and never did it reach the predicted 28 degrees.

It wasn't long before we had our first scare, a three-foot tiger snake slithered along the side of the track before disappearing into the undergrowth. Further along, the lead walkers Carolyn and Jenny were stopped dead in their tracks when confronted by a bigger tiger snake who gaped at them with a raised head, then he turned and rapidly crossed the path and vanished quickly, much to our relief. Doris and I watched his hindquarters swishing into the scrub.

We stopped for lunch where the track turns and follows the firebreak to Telegraph Road.

We entered the Richmond National park which was well decorated in late spring flowering plants and shrubs; heaths, pink wax flowers, blue, white and pink plants, coastal wattle, eucalypts and grass trees. The track undulated as we neared Mt Richmond and we rested at the summit. The track then meanders on passing Emu Hill track, and Hanns track. Jenny and Doris took turns to stride ahead as they felt the end of the 20km hike drawing to a close. Light rain was falling though it wasn't cold. Thunder rumbled in the distance. We reached Tarragal at 5 pm.

We drove back to Swan Lake, Jenny returned to Portland whilst Carolyn dropped us at Monibeong before she too had other social engagements. With the darkening skies and lightening flashes, Doris and I hurriedly pitched our tents before the rain set in. We brewed our tea on the concrete floor of the shelter and it was nearly 9 pm before we were ready to settle in for the night.

I nearly got away with putting up my tent alone. I did need to attend to loose tent pegs in the dark when the tent caved in around me!!

Monibeong to Swan Lake, Sunday

With laden backpacks, we were on the path again at 8:15 am on Sunday. Over breakfast I read the GSWW "bible reading", of the planned walk back to Swan Lake along the beach. It was described as ..."not easy going as the sand is soft and the beach slopes seawards..." and we were to find this to be true as we trod the 13.5 km beach route to the Swan Lake turn off. The walk was without feature, low sand dunes from the coast and the waves broke on the shore with constant regularity.

The last stretch of the walk followed dune-buggy tracks and I began to realise an elation of nearing the completion of walking the entire Great South West Walk. A challenge I had set myself to take on in 2002. Doris and I reached the finish point at Swan Lake at 1:15 pm. We boiled the stove for a cup of soup as we rested on the grass, waiting for Carolyn to pick us up after 2 pm.

I have loved the variety of walks offered on the GSWW, forest, beach, rugged cliffs and the Glenelg River. I know that I will return often in other seasons as the GSWW has so much to offer.

Thank you to so many Warrnambool Walkers who have accompanied me along the way this year.

Marg.

GSWW from Swan Lake to Lake Monibeong: 7 December

Walkers: *Karen, Ken, Liz, Lothar (leader), Mabel, Marg, Mike, Sandra, Tony*

The weekend was our Christmas breakup at Lake Monibeong near Nelson. On Saturday afternoon a car shuffle was arranged to start the walk from Swan Lake to Lake Monibeong, a distance of about 16kms. There were 9 walkers in the party, the weather was over cast and the beach was quiet as we were the only people in sight.

The walk was enjoyable, but became a little monotonous as yet another kilometre of sand presented itself. The monotony was broken by the discovery of numerous fishing buoys (not boys ladies!). The buoys were the aftermath of big seas during the week. The walking party had gathered up numerous buoys and we were dragging them to camp when two professional fisherman came along and thanked us for picking them up for them! The buoys belonged to these fisherman so our efforts to bring some entertainment back to camp were in vain!

A few people got their feet wet when the tide came in up the beach. We all enjoyed the walk and the company and arrived back safely to further enjoy the festivities.

Ken

GSWW - Bridgewater Lakes to Cape Bridgewater Kiosk: 28 December

Walkers: *Lothar, Chris, Cathy, Linda, Irene and Karen*

The walk was divided into two sections. The first, starting from the Petrified Forest taking the coastal track to the kiosk at Bridgewater Bay. The second leg from the Bridgewater Lakes to the Petrified Forest.

We took an easy stroll through the moonscape of the ancient limestone Petrified Forest with views along the spectacular coastline. The landscape soon changed to coastal heath and grassland, a family of kangaroos watching the passing parade. There were many stops to take in the breathtaking scenery and look back along Discovery Bay. Soon we had arrived at the seal viewing platforms. The seals were enjoying the sunshine too and with the low tide, many were sunning themselves on the rocks. A sign indicated there are 650 seals in the colony at Cape Bridgewater. No one was counting but there must have been over a hundred in view.

Some of us took the track to the kiosk for lunch while Irene and Linda took advantage of the low tide to scramble over the rocks back to the main beach. After a long and leisurely lunch at the kiosk the group split into two. One group to walk from the lakes to the Petrified Forest, the second group to frolic at the Cape Bridgewater beach.

Irene and Linda gave Lothar and I a lift to the Bridgewater Lakes. Before starting the walk, we straggled up a hill for a wonderful view overlooking the lakes and coast. We then set off through coastal scrub admiring the many plants along the way. No matter what time of year it is, you can always find plenty of wildflowers and flowering shrubs. Today was no exception. There were purple and pink pea flowers (possibly swainsonia), the native pelargoniums, daisy bushes, coastal (native) rosemary, winged spyridium, flax lily with its purple flowers and deep purple berries, lots of cushion bushes and plenty more.

The track turned towards the coast and we could see the sand dunes of Discovery Bay behind and rugged cliffs ahead. There is so much to take in along this track. The minutiae of delicate plant life contrasting with sharp rock formations and tall cliffs looming over the vast ocean. The sea had become calm and you could watch long lines of gentle breakers rolling in to shore. Down at the bottom of the cliffs were dark rugged rocks dotted with pretty rock pools, large enough to take a dip in.

We passed the Springs camp and walked on to the springs. After a bit of a scramble down the cliffs we had a look at the spring at the base of the cliff. The spring water tasted like sweet rainwater. The surrounding rock pools were filled with dried out salt crystals. It looked as if a rare ocean wave washed over the rocks and dried out, leaving the salt deposit.

The track continued on, the landscape changing to moonscape as we neared the Petrified Forest area. The ocean was so calm that nothing was happening at the Blowhole (Lothar insisted nothing ever happened at the blowhole but I figure you must have to be out in pretty wild weather to see it blowing).

Soon we were back at the carpark and on our way to pick up our beach frolickers. Thanks to Lothar for a wonderful day along the great Great South West Walk.

Karen

GSWW from Cape Nelson Lighthouse to Portland: 30 December

Walkers: Karen, Lothar (Leader), Mabel, Marg

After a quick look around the lighthouse area Lothar, Karen, Marg and Mabel headed East in 30+ degree heat with a North wind and clear blue skies. Marg and Mabel did not judge the weather or distance well and treated it as a training walk so were carrying full overnight packs.

The track leads ever eastwards along the cliff tops of Nelson Bay with a short diversion to Mallee Camp. The scenery is quite spectacular with towering steep cliffs contrasting against the blue ocean. The Enchanting Forest was just that. We had lunch at Yellow Rock hiding from the hot sun. It felt like we were walking forever to get around the Portland Smelter - it is a huge complex.

The track was in good condition and it was mainly flat so walking was easy. However our pace was not very fast with two carrying full packs and feeling the heat of the day.

When we left Cape Nelson we all laughed at Lothar when he predicted it would be raining when we arrived in Portland but as we neared the town the skies darkened, the thunder started grumbling and just as we were about to leave the track for the streets the clouds burst. We were walking into gale force winds and rain that came at us like darts. With or without rain jackets we were soaked within a few minutes. The rain came down our legs and soon we were squelching in our boots. The street drains did not cope with all the water and at times the water was more than ankle deep.

In spite of the finish it was an excellent walk. However one issue remains unsolved - does our honoured president have extraordinary powers of prediction or some magical control over the weather? Whatever it is I do not think we will be laughing when he makes another weather prediction!

Mabel