

Camperdown to Cobden Rail Trail: 3 October

Walkers: Coralie, Doris (leader), Doug, Fiona, Lothar

It was a great walk! The weather was perfect, the views from the top of the hill at the Botanic gardens were fantastic. We had lunch beside Lake Bullen Merri, before heading towards the actual rail trail. We'd just started the rail trail when - surprise! - there was some tree planting happening. We each ended up planting a tree!

After the walk we all had afternoon tea at the Cobden bakery with Betty before Doug drove us back to Camperdown.

Many thanks Doris for such an excellent outing.

Lothar



Nelson area/Princess Margaret Rose Caves: 9–10 October

Walkers: Lothar (Leader & camp roast chef extraordinaire), Marg, Mabel, Di F, Liz C, John P, Helen, Terry & Shirley, Brian & Glenda

We finally arrived at Nelson – on time – surprising as our start was definitely faulty – the popularity of the local state school polling booth and returning to collect boots and jumpers combining to significantly hinder our progress! After a short morning tea stop we continued our journey to the Dry Creek Native Forest Reserve. There were two (little) walks here – the Creek bed walk and the River walk – we decided to be daring and do both. We spent a lot of the walk peering down the wombat holes trying (in vain) to spot the elusive critters. Evidence of their presence was everywhere, but alas they were not going to show their furry faces this day! [Despite their non appearance it was an interesting walk and inspired a few keen members to return (very) early the following morning for another try. Again unsuccessful – no wombats but some really great spider webs – which have been captured forever on film!]

Then we made our way to the campground at Princess Margaret Rose Caves. Brian and Glenda had already arrived and had made themselves quite comfortable in their cosy cabin. The rest of us set up tents in our own cosy, secluded camping area. This is a fantastic campground, certainly worth more visits. After lunch we walked along the river from the caves, this was a colourful walk with lots of wildflowers out in all their glory. Yes, we did spot some orchids – wax lips and pink fingers – and three extra persistent of us found some spider orchids too. John P was pleased to identify the eggs and bacon, them some (vegetarian) eggs (no bacon) plants and the “trotting” running postman!!! Well done John! We returned to the campground in time to greet Terry and Shirley who had arrived with their mobile home – our party was complete.

Lucky for most of us there was one hill on this walk – we needed a hill; to earn the eagerly awaited camp roast for tea. And we were not disappointed! Lothar excelled himself (and everybody else) to produce a scrumptious Roast Lamb with lots and lots of roasted vegetables to match. All cooked to perfection, this meal was thoroughly enjoyed by all. The accompanying red wine was pretty well enjoyed also! Some sympathy for the camp possum who I am sure was quite miffed having to smell and watch the feast taking place – and all he managed to score was a few Nobby's nuts and even those were taken from under his very nose!



Sunday morning we made our way to the Penambol Conservation Park where we had a look at Caroline Sinkhole before setting out on the Wombat walk. Again our wombats refused to show themselves but we did meet up with some mountain bikers from Mount Gambier who were very obliging and told us a bit of what was happening in the real world and advised us on the condition of the track. Another lovely walk, quite different environment; dryer, parts of the walk were quite open then the walk would lead to dense and taller foliage. While the wombats we did manage to spot quite a few stumpy lizards – and Dr John very kindly removed some ticks from at least one of them. He was one happy lizard I am sure.

We returned back to the caves area for lunch, a lot of us enjoyed the left over vegetables from tea. Then it was a quick stop nearer to Nelson for a short stroll along the coastline (Livingstone's Island Nature Walk) with a bit of bird watching (the feathered variety) before the mandatory coffee and treats before heading home.

This was a wonderful weekend – great campsite, walks, weather, company, food, drink etc etc. Thank you Lothar for the amount of effort you obviously took to ensure a wonderful weekend was had by all.



Di



Grampians - Major Mitchell Plateau:16–17 October

Walkers: *Dianne F, Coralie, John P and Mabel (leader).*

The weather gods were kind to us this weekend and we were able to enjoy the wonderful views of the various mountain ranges famous that make up the Grampians as we trudged up the sealed road from the car park to the summit of Mt William. Under the tuition of Coralie we gradually came to recognize the various peaks on the Sierra range and some of the other landmarks.

It was an enjoyable walk over to Boundary Gap – the track dry but of course stony and lots of rocks that typifies walking tracks of this area. The challenge of the climb down to Boundary Gap and the rock scramble up to the plateau was eagerly overcome and we reached the campsite at First Wannon mid afternoon.

We were the first to arrive but we expected company as we had seen a group at the Jimmy's Creek end of the track. They were very late in getting to camp. The leader was from Ballarat – not from the Bush Walking Club – he was very complimentary of our web site and checks it regularly, particularly the walk reports.

John, an early riser, had the task of ensuring no one slept in but we didn't explain to him that we usually let the birds get up first and then we appear at a later date. We had to wait until the frost melted a bit as we had crisp tents and water left overnight in a platypus flask was frozen.

The plateau had the appearance of late winter as few wildflowers were out. We were compensated for this with the wonderful array of flowers and colours of the way down to Jimmy's Creek but even there they are later than last year.

"Ants in the pants" was a literal experience at lunch time as I made a poor choice of rock to sit on. Assistance was very tardy as my companions tried to control their hysteria. I think Coralie has shares in walking accessories as she promoted the purchase of a light weight tripod stool as well as the value of using a walking stick on this type of terrain.

This track is now clearly marked with the new signs being used in this region – the metal ones with the map of the track. They are at all the major cross tracks. Major Mitchell Plateau is now a fuel stove only area. There are signs at each end of the track prohibiting camp fires although the camp fires remain at the camp sites.

Finally a note for the Warrnambool Porkers – Dunkeld Café doesn't open until 9.00 am and the coffee machines then takes 20 minutes to warm up so it's 9.30 am before coffee is available. However, the Royal Mail Hotel is serving breakfast prior to 9.00am and they are willing to serve scruffy walkers coffee.

Thanks Coralie for sharing your knowledge for this challenging but rewarding walk.

Mabel

PS: Ask Mabel about why her rolling apple gathers no moss....

Mt Abrupt & Myers Open Garden Day: 23 October

Walkers: Marg (leader), John P, John T, Doris, Doug, Liz, Shirley (visitor from Hamilton), & Fiona. Betty enjoyed the bush and birds from the car.

A quick squirt over familiar ground racing against the fog's descent. On reaching the summit the fog had completely enveloped us. Alas John P to the rescue, it was doughnuts all round before a re trace of the track. Memorable moments of this walk are doughnuts in the fog and delightful flowers trackside.

Joining Lothar, Chris, Mabel, Diane F, Coralie and Mabel we had lunch in Dunkeld amidst traffic jams (yes you read that correctly) then off to the Macarthur St garden to meander through 870 Australian native plant species, and I lost count of the number of exotics.

Fiona



Little Desert National Park: 29–31 October

Walkers: *Karen, Sandra and Tony.*

The club decided earlier in the year that the Little Desert NP would be worth re-visiting in spring when the wildflowers were in bloom. We had stayed there in autumn and although the area has its own beauty there were no wildflowers or wildlife. Spring is definitely the time to visit. We were surrounded by wildflowers, birdsong, wildlife and wonderful scenery all weekend.

We left Warrnambool after lunch on Friday and headed north into the sunshine. We set up camp at Kiata Camp Ground and went for a stroll along the Red Gum track. The landscape was completely transformed from earlier in the year. There were many different varieties of wildflowers and herbs (even some sun orchids) and the air was full of birds chattering and flitting through the trees.

After our stroll Tony lit up the camp fire and we settled into some beer, reds, and whites. We watched the sun set and the full moon rise and enjoyed the campfires warmth until late.

We woke to a very warm morning. I was going to walk to the Salt Lake with Tony and Sandra accompanying me part way. We took our time along the sandy tracks to admire the trees, birds and wildflowers. There were many we hadn't seen before. We flushed out a few kangaroos and emus from the dense scrub and tried to work out which birds were serenading us. As the track rose towards the trig point we could see the salt flats and plains in the distance.

From the trig point Sandra and Tony wandered back to camp and I continued on to the salt lake. The area has had a bit of rain which made the salt lake more slippery than usual. I had lunch on the banks admiring the crystal refractions off the lake surface, took a little salt sample to show the others and started heading back towards camp in the afternoon heat.

I had almost made it back to camp when a male emu dashed out of the bushes followed by two, then three, then six young emus (all about a year old). They raced along the track ahead of me in a wild panic but dad disappeared. Then he re-emerged from the bushes in front of me and flushed out another six young emus. What a sight. I saw more kangaroos and an echidna and tiny lizards on the way back to camp. As we had our pre dinner drinks we admired all the birds chattering in the trees. We identified tree creepers, purple capped lorikeets, kookaburras, wattle birds, cuckoos and more. There were a lot of different parrots flitting around and at night we spotted a Boobook owl calling out to its mate on the other side of the camp ground.

The next morning after a late brekky we took a stroll around the camp again and then drove to the Sanctuary Nature walk for a little stroll before heading home.

This is definitely a good time of year to visit and I hope the club can do this next year. Thank you Sandra and Tony for your great company and good humour.

Karen

Bomjinna PG to Wild Sheep Hills CP: 31 October

Walkers: *Mabel (leader), Coralie, Janice, Doris, Doug, Fiona*

This walk got off to a most impressive start with all walkers attired colour appropriate to the floral gala awaiting us.

The approach from the western side to Mt William, included a side trip to view a wonderful waterfall sparkling down orange Grampians rocks. Lunch was enjoyed in a floral wonderland prior to the Mt William car park.

Descent was through the Fyans creek valley with a scroggin break at Lothar's Lookout where we managed a ROYGBIV photo using our shirt colours. Marvellous view.

This walk was a true joy for botanical enthusiasts. Dense with floral overhang, swathes of flowers brushed us by as we strolled the track on a warm spring day.

The vista before us included; Grevilleas – Cats Claws, Grampians, Flame, Variable rocky. Love Creeper, Black-Anther Lily, Chocolate Lily, Yellow Rice-Flower; Apple-berry, Everlastings, Goodenias, Guinea Flowers, Peas-all sorts ranging in colour from Yellow to orange. Mint-Bush, Kunzea, Grampians Bauera, orchids, Tea-Trees, Sundews, Correa, Heath, Tetratheca and so I could go on . But only a coloured photo could do justice to this spectacle.

Fiona

Old Beechy Line, Triplet Falls, Otway Fly: 21 November

Walkers: Anne, Coralie, Diane D, Dianne F, Doris, Doug, Elinor, Frank, Geoff, Heather, Helen A, Helen C, Irene, Jeanette, Leo, Linda, Liz, Lothar (leader), John P, Val (yes - 20!)

As arranged, a number of us left Warrnambool at 8.15 a.m., and were joined for a morning cuppa in the grounds of the Otway Estate Winery by walkers from Camperdown, Cobden and Portland. This was an opportunity for me (the newcomer) to start familiarising myself with names and faces (I'm told this group of 20 was quite large for an arranged day walk). A bottle or two was purchased, then the thermoses were packed up and we headed towards the start of the Old Beechy Line walk.

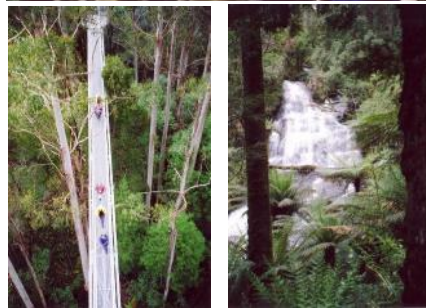
The old railway line has been pulled up, and an excellent walking track left in its place. About two hours of trees, trees & more trees, bird calls, magnificent rural views, and lots of laughs saw us back at our cars. By this time the tummies were rumbling so we set off for the picnic spot at Triplet Falls.

After eating our lunch, we took on the numerous steps which make up part of the walking track developed around the Triplet Falls area. We were all saddened to see the terrible and deliberate mutilation of so many (we are told 70) trees, some of which may well have taken hundreds of years to grow. The beauty of the place remains, however, and we had no trouble at all in soaking up the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity there just for our taking.

Back into the cars again for a drive to the Otway Fly. Quite an experience actually being up there at treetop level – a place where one can admire the magnificence of nature and acknowledge the ingenuity of man's engineering at the same time. Words such as “wobbly”, “vertigo” and “nausea” were heard to be muttered. Those of us who made it to the top of the tower (47 metres above the forest floor) were quite impressed (?bemused) with ourselves; however, not all (who shall remain nameless) ventured out onto the suspended bridge (oh we of little faith!).

Another short road trip saw us relaxing in style and indulging in afternoon tea (at McDuffs Bakehouse in Lavers Hill) from charming china that many of us recall in our grannies' kitchens.

On a personal level, I need to acknowledge the pleasure that was mine on this, my very first day walk. I was made to feel very welcome from the time Dianne loaded me into her car along with fellow passengers John and Liz. I had the pleasure of chatting with some I've met over the last couple of weeks on our early evening walks, and of meeting new people. I am delighted that a wheelbarrow wasn't needed to transport me at the end of the day and am in fact, secretly quite pleased with myself. Thank you Lothar for the thought and preparation you obviously gave in planning this day, and for welcoming me as part of it.



Heather

Grampians: Borough Huts base camp 27–28 November

Walkers: Betty, Diane, Doris, Doug, Eleanor, Frank, Karen, Linda, Marg

Karen's report:

Six of us met in Dunkeld for a coffee at the very swish Royal Mail hotel. Then on to Borough Huts camp ground to do a little car shuffle to Silverband Falls and off we went. It was going to be quite a warm day but not too uncomfortable. We clambered easily up the side of the waterfall and up and up the hill till we reached the Dell for a quick morning tea. The forest was filled with birdsong and the shrubs rustled as we passed (snakes no doubt). We wandered on to the very palatial Burma Hut for lunch. This is quite a neat little hut with bunk, chairs, table, fireplace and veranda.

After lunch we head down a steep and slippery track and it wasn't long before we crossed the ferny creek to Borough Hut camp ground again where Linda pointed out a quiet spot for us to set up camp overnight. Four of us set up tents and had afternoon tea with the rosellas. They were quite tame, feeding on our almonds (must be the calcium in them) out of our hands and harassing Marg for her home made cookies. We made quite a few friends that afternoon. The Gang Gang Cockatoos wattle birds and a Kookaburra family were also keeping a close eye on us. Eastern Spinebills and other scrub wrens and thornbills were flitting through the trees too.

We were still a bit restless at three o'clock and decided to wander through the camp ground then to the creek and on to the road. We happened to find the track to the Tunnel (only 4.4kms) and decided this would be a good walk to fill in the time before dinner.

It is a lovely easy amble along this track so we could admire the wildflowers. We saw a wallaby and joey which was out of its pouch but hopped back in when we approached (it must get very hot inside the pouch on hot days). We finally found the tunnel and more tracks to wander but we were running out of water very quickly and decided to head back. Eleanor has a sharp eye and stopped us from getting too close to a yellow tiger snake which hung around long enough for us to admire its colouring. We found a couple of late orchids, one a spider and the other a green and red caladenia which I had never seen before.

We had a beautiful camping spot under the trees with all the birds and the added song of what sounded like banjo frogs. They sang all night and all morning. It was lovely. The evening was pleasant, just cooling down and the sun took forever to go down. After sharing our meal with the birds (couldn't believe they were still hungry) we retired for the night listening to the frogs, the short rain shower and the kangaroos in the morning.

After breakfast the next morning we took a stroll along the track from the camp ground that followed the creek. We could hear koalas growling in the distance and followed the sound through the bush until we found one big grumpy bear high up a tree trying to pretend he was asleep. It was an unusual sight for the Grampians as they have not been around for years.

At 9:30 we met up with Doug, Betty and Doris for more walks. Boronia Peak and The Piccaninny were planned. See Doug's report for more tales of adventure. Thanks Marg and Linda for a lovely weekend.

Marg's report 2:

Hot weather was forecast for the weekend but we decided to go with our planned camp at Borough Huts. The (Saturday) walk started at the Silverband Falls car park. Water spills over the rocks in a narrow stream, disappears at the base and re-emerges as Dairy Creek. Diane led us up the rocky ledges beside Silverband and we followed the creek through the sheltered sclerophyll forest of tall eucalypts, lush bracken, ground and tree ferns.

We stopped at the edge of Delley's Dell where we met the road. The map was consulted and that was also helpful to two tourists who were walking back to Halls Gap.

The gravel Burma Track was tackled at an easy pace in the humid conditions. On reaching the hut we stopped for lunch. The Burma Hut is well-maintained: 2 bunk beds, inside and outside fire places, bench, chairs, and a lean-to sheltering a wood stack.

Descending after lunch we kept alert in case of reptiles, at times the grasses were tall and lush. The path crosses the Ingleton Track and the final creek crossing we rock-hopped without getting wet.

The drivers retrieved the cars whilst we made camp. Diane and Linda then headed home.

After a hot drink, and as it was still early, it seemed a good idea to "go for a walk". So we wandered out along the bitumen road to the signpost that pointed to "The Tunnel - 4.1km" up a flat dirt road not too far from Lake Bellfield. A pleasant stroll though the day was still hot.

Karen located the water tunnel outlet that was part of the pipeline into Stawell. The area was quite overgrown.

At one stage Eleanor halted us before we stepped on a slim Tiger Snake that was crossing. Earlier, a joey hopped back into his mother's pouch as we approached.

Back at the campsite tame Rosellas boldly landed on our shoulders or hats and champed almonds that were offered. A pair of handsome Gang Gangs stayed aloft. Bull frogs in Fyans Creek echoed.

The full moon didn't shine through. When it got dark we headed for our tents. A light shower of rain in the early hours was the extent of the weather change. Doug, Betty and Doris would join us in the morning.

Thanks to Frank and Eleanor for driving me and to the group for such a good weekend in the Grampians.

Dunkeld Xmas breakup: 3–5 December

