

Mt Feathertop: 29—31 Jul 2011

Walkers: Bill P, Coralie G, Mabel M

The hulking grey mass of the Buffalo was devoid of snow, but after peeling off the Hume some could be seen on the other higher ranges above the tree line. It did not seem to augur well for a white weekend.

After pillaging the bakery at Myrtleford we saddled up at the base of Bungalow spur at midday. The sustained gradient saw us enter the snow zone about ½ way up. A few fallen trees tested both our rodeo & limbo skills, but progress was consistent. By 4.30 pm we wearily gained the Federation Hut col and established camp by modifying some pre prepared snow pads. The general snow cover was about two feet thick and we elected for the added protection of some snow gums behind the hut. We were joined in the hut that night by a couple of ice climbers and by another chap who seemed to know an awful lot, which he unfortunately was rather keen to share.

Saturday dawned clear and fine, and a summit bid was indeed feasible. Donning snow shoes and weighty day packs we struck out for the top of Victoria's 2nd highest and most elegant peak. Impressed with the grip of the new snow shoes, we gained the peak of Feathertop without difficulty. The summit breeze was fresh and strong, an exhilarating, unimpeded 360 degree view of the Australian Alps was our reward.

To the east the Buffalo had patches of dandruff, to it's south was the bumpy Cobbler, then came the snow peaked Buller with Stirling in it's foreground, Mt Speculation and the entire Crosscut cutting south to Howitt. Panning around closer we had The Twins, Hotham, Loch and then the expansive High Plains with the conical Mt Jim out east standing like a candle on top. The Fainters floated closer by with the Bogong massif behind them. In a gap to the right of Bogong, further back with a creamier hue, was the western face of the NSW Main Range with Kosciusko



anchoring its southern end. Dozens of lesser ridges with edges of delicately torn strips of water coloured tissue paper filled the intervening spaces. A hundred walking routes simultaneously fought for attention in my head, all screaming Me! Me! It had been more than a decade since I had been here and it is as good as it ever was.

I peered over into Hellfire Gully, where unseen way below, our two ice climbers were intensively working a line across a face, their crampon trail leading enticingly (for Coralie anyway) off the summit and way down the eastern side to the lyrebird country below. The chill was biting as we descended to the saddle between the peaks where we found respite from the wind and time to drink in the experience.

Gaining the Tom Kneen track we traversed around to MUMC hut, the newer snowshoes demonstrating superior grip on the icy traverse. I had the unintended opportunity to practise a couple of self arrests, a consequence of using my older snowshoes. Mabel paused to marvel at three skiers carving down the west face of Feathertop. Although the terrain is generally considered unskiable, it was clear Mabel would have loved to have had a crack at it.

At MUMC a delightfully exuberant group of MU students, all with perfect teeth, arrived during our lunch there, steaming like opened cauldrons after storming up the NW spur in 3 hrs.

Wildlife persists in the Alpine winter, although we found an antechinus which didn't survive. Tracks in the snow made for interesting speculation, a wombat trail heading off a ridge looked disturbingly like footprints of an errant toddler. And we have yet to identify the owner of a particular three toed gait.

After a life sustaining cuppa back at Federation, Coralie & I experimented with snow cave construction. A pleasant fireside evening with the two climbers, of conversation and remembered adventures, followed in the hut before we retired.

We awoke in cloud on Sunday with limited visibility under a brooding sky and prepared for the descent. We had used up all our weather luck the day before. Arrested half way down the spur by the calls of a dozen different birds in rapid succession, we stood enthralled. Kookaburra, whip bird, budgerigar, Hew Holland honey eater, wattle bird, cockatoo and more. It was of course a lyrebird, who alighted onto a branch above us to show us his lyre, as proof. The descent was rapid and after a delightful café lunch we continued the 600 km car home journey.

Thanks Mabel & Coralie for the enthusiastic company.

Bill

Glenfyne to Timboon Rail Trail: 13 Aug 2011

Walkers: Coralie, Di P, Graeme W, Helen A, Linda H, Michelle C, Sue M plus Doris D and Floss R from the Camperdown club.

This walk is something of an annual occurrence but always attracts a crowd – this year was no exception but we were especially delighted to be re-acquainted with Doris D. She is even threatening to rejoin Warrnambool Bushwalkers!

Despite much recent wet weather and dire warnings by the leader, NO LEECHES were spotted this year. The trestle bridges on Power Creek are being reclaimed by the rampant vegetation and not even the foolhardy would cross over the top these days. Di P tickled our taste buds when she located, and we sampled, water cress plants beside the creek.

The highlight of the trip was undoubtedly being able to cross over the large trestle bridge on the Curdies River. For years we had watched the slow restoration efforts from below. It was very satisfying to be able to walk straight across. The official opening occurred late last year.

Whilst some of the group elected to return home at the completion of the walk, the TRUE PORKERS indulged in a scrumptious lunch at the Timboon Distillery Cafe. The food and service could not be faulted. By early afternoon happy and replete walkers were enjoying some time at home.

Thanks to all the participants.

Coralie



GSWW—Glenelg River Gorge Walk: 21 Aug 2011

Walkers: Helen (leader), Jim, Linda and Rob

We started the walk after a brief coffee and biscuit break on the rivers' edge. Due to the recent rain, the water looked like melted chocolate. Unfortunately I left my camera home so no photos of this!

It was a pleasant walk in cloudy conditions. The bush looked revitalised with much evidence of fresh new growth. We lunched at the Hirth's Landing picnic area before returning to the cars.

Thanks to all participants for making this a very enjoyable day.

Helen

Grampians—Piccaninny/ Arboretum: 17 Sep 2011

Walkers: Di, Dina Helen, Linda and Sue

On an absolutely glorious spring day, five walkers gathered to check out the Piccaninny. After the mildly novel experience of applying sunscreen, we set off along the moderately rocky track at a steady pace, despite the multiple pauses to view the abundance of spring flowers. There were beautiful specimens of orchids, hakea, holly grevilleas to name just a few.

Morning tea was taken at the top with stunning vistas of Mt. Abrupt and Dunkeld (and the wind farm in the far distance). We descended down behind the Piccaninny to connect up with the Mt. Sturgeon track, where we finally found some hooded orchids.

After driving into Dunkeld to the Arboretum, we lunched on the little jetty, where conversation centred naturally on cooking and food and drink, with the quote of the day being “I only drink water or wine” !!! The group then meandered round the lake at the Arboretum, very much impressed by the massive gums, before heading off home, with a stop for coffee and cake at Madigan’s, (of course).

A great way to start the weekend with very enjoyable company; the group comprising Helen, Sue, Linda, Di and Dina.

Dina



WA: Cape to Cape walk: 23 Sep to 4 Oct 2011

Walkers: Coralie, Glenda M, Helen A, John M

The first day was rather long with an uneventful train trip to Melbourne and the flight to Perth. We were warmly met by Glenda as John was watching the Hawthorn/Collingwood semi final (poor John – Hawthorn lost). Next morning we set off and along the way visited a market at Bunbury and walked the length of the Busselton Pier.

After an overnight stop at Dunsborough we drove to Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse to the start of the walk. The track was excellent with beautiful views of the coast from well appointed seats. The flowers and shrubs were in full bloom. The track wound its way along the cliff tops to Sugarloaf Rock and on to Yallingup.

From Yallingup we walked on soft sand along Smiths Beach towards Canal Rocks. The track up from the beach was through huge granite boulders. There were a few stands of tea tree as a variation to the low heathland. The area near Cape Clairaut is popular for surfers (saw a couple) and often frequented by whales and dolphins (alas seen not by us). The track crossed several small streams which we negotiated easily. It was a different matter though the next day when crossing Willyabrup Brook! The large boulder stepping stones were fine for 2/3rds the way—unfortunately the eroded far bank and the swift, deep stream resulted in a change of plan. Even with boots off and pants rolled up, we still got wet. We quickly dried out with the steep climb up to the cliff tops along which we walked for several kms. A stairway made the steep ascent on the south side of Biljedup Brook much easier with a seat at the top to appreciate the beautiful views from. We walked into Gracetown via a rocky outcrop at North Point. From Ellenbrook we drove to Prevally to bypass a long strip of beach and the Margaret River diversion.

We had a free day in Margaret River – didn't go to any wineries! Instead we went shopping for supplies as Glenda was cooking us a roast for tea. This was much appreciated as dehydrated meals are rather uninteresting.

The flowers along the track near Prevally were stunning. Huge sections covered with Green and red Kangaroo Paw, pimeleas and orchids. The vegetation changed as we descended into



the appropriately named “Blackboy Hollow”. This part of the walk was very interesting, ranging from tranquil pools over Boodjidup Creek to cliffs at Bobs Hollow Grotto.

Contos was a lovely campground. From there we walked through heathland into tall karri forest. John explained the differences between various tree species which was very interesting. It was a welcome change to the seascapes of the past few days.

The section from Cosy Corner to Cape Hamelin was a little daunting for me as I don’t like steep drop-offs. The long rock platform to be crossed was sculpted by many blowholes. In a couple of places you had to jump across deep chasms. From here the end was in sight with the Cape Leewin lighthouse barely discernible in the distance. The last day was cool, windy and overcast. We didn’t mind about this as the snake count had averaged one per day. The vegetation was dense and obscured the track in many places. It was a bit of a letdown knowing the walk was over.

The next day was spent returning to Perth and spending the afternoon walking around Kings Park identifying several of the plants observed along the track. After a farewell meal it was back to the airport.

I would like to thank John and Glenda for all their assistance in planning the trip, being our transport and, more importantly, their friendship and hospitality. Happy Hour with nibbles and Glenda’s beer were definite highlights along with the memory of John reclining on his banana lounge drinking wine. I would also like to thank Coralie for her companionship and advice which contributed towards making this walk an enjoyable experience for all.

Helen

