



THE MOUNTAINEER

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JOURNAL OF THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

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COVER

A view of Mt Hurdinger and the peaks beyond, from the saddle between Mt Hurdinger and Grey Peak, New Zealand. This photograph was created from a segment of a panorama originally taken by Dale Thistlethwaite on a recent trip to New Zealand. See the full panorama and read about her trip on page 32.

ABOVE

Sunset on the beach near the Thurra River Campground, Croajingolong National Park in Victoria. The waves wash around the remnants of an old tree lodged in the sand, while Point Hicks Lightstation can be seen in the distance. Photo by Richard Sota.



KATHRYN WHALLEY
President

PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

WELCOME EVERYONE TO A new and exciting year with MUMC. It's great to see the year kicking off with some fantastic extended trips both within Australia and abroad. I'm looking forward to hearing the resulting stories over the coming weeks and sharing a few of my own from my overseas adventure. Whether you've just joined or are an OXO of many years, 2010 is sure to continue to offer countless opportunities to join friends, new and old, in pursuing outdoor adventures; providing the much needed breaks from our uni and working lives.

Having just celebrated MUMC's 65th year it's inspiring to see how it's grown from a couple of guys wanting to climb some mountains in New Zealand to the wealth of knowledge, experience and gear that MUMC offers today in over ten activities. The opportunities continue to grow, and this year the introduction of the MUMC Adventure Grant is designed to encourage and financially support your ambitious adventures. So if you've got some great ideas for a new trip, find some other OXOs and make it happen. If you need a bit of inspiration come along to one of the Tuesday workshops and talk to other members and see what gets you excited. One of the many things I love about MUMC is the opportunity to get involved in so many activities just by being part of a single club and so I'm thrilled that 2010 may see the addition of sea kayaking to the array of activities already on offer. It would be great to see this aid the development of some multi-sport expeditions – kayaking out to Tassie sea cliffs anyone?

As well as inspiration and the usually minimal finances, great trips require great people and some level of technical knowledge. Making new friends is a key reason most people join any club so there's plenty of people around ready to share your enthusiasm. Acquiring the skills you need isn't as difficult as it may sound either, even if you've never participated in any of the activities MUMC offers (or don't even know what some of them are). There are plenty of experienced members who'll generously provide instruction and share their experiences with you - something you could be paying a lot of money for. My advice for finding out what MUMC is really about is to sign up for a trip or two, keep in touch with new friends and ask lots of questions so you can learn as much as possible. If you're keen to learn you'll have fun while making the most of your time, and it won't be long before you're planning your own adventures. When I joined MUMC, I never imagined that at the end of the year I'd be a confident, independent rock-climber enjoying spectacular sea cliffs in Tassie with some of the great friends I'd made through MUMC. All it took was the willingness to give things a go and trying to learn all I could along the way. So I encourage members new and old to challenge yourself, whether it's through learning a new skill or by planning an exceptional adventure. Have fun and enjoy the journey, and I look forward to sharing the year ahead with you!

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MUMC ONLINE

Full colour PDF versions of this and past Mountaineers, as well as information about the club and how to join can be found on the website:
www.mumc.org.au

MEETINGS AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES

For specific questions about the club, contact the club secretary:
secretary@mumc.org.au

Regular meetings are held at the MUMC club rooms each Tuesday at 7:00 pm.

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Welcome to the first edition of The Mountaineer for a new decade, and the first Mountaineer to be churned out from the depths of my computer. I took on the role of Publications as I wanted to help maintain the tradition of The Mountaineer, of continuing to document the tales of club trips as the magazine has done for over 60 years. I hope that you find something in this edition that inspires you to join the club if you are still contemplating it, or gives you some ideas for where to go in your future travels (or where not to go...).

Similar to what Kathryn said in her introduction, I too would never have imagined the places that I've ended up travelling to, thanks to the skills that I've developed through being with the club, and perhaps more importantly the friendships that have been created.

I must mention that in recent years the standard of the magazine has become amazingly high due in no small part to Steve Chan, whom I must thank for making it so easy for me to step into the role and be able to produce such a sharp-looking publication within such a short space of time. Thanks also to all of the contributors who submitted articles for this edition, which has made it quite chunky for the first time in a while. I hope that you'll continue to write more stories of your trips throughout 2010 for the next edition!

FROM OUR CLUB CONVENORS

Mountaineering Dale Thistlethwaite

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It's the end of another fantastic summer mountaineering season in MUMC and despite the pretty lousy weather in NZ this year, OXOs managed to have plenty of fun in the mountains. MUMC had several members in NZ with Egg and Tim, general member and bushwalking convenor respectively, off for their first season in mid December. Egg and Tim completed a private instruction course, during which they climbed Mt Aspiring via the ramp. Sadly, weather precluded them from making any other significant ascents, but they both enjoyed themselves and many "Egg" based puns provided entertainment for all hut dwellers during spells of bad weather. Claire Lang also went on an instruction trip in the Mt Aspiring region.

Stuart started the season by soloing the SW Ridge on Mt Aspiring. Then the two of us made an ascent of the mixed route "Hidden Couloir" on Mt Aspiring's west face and also climbed Mt Grey and Toilet Peak (a decade long ambition of mine fulfilled) from Pioneer Hut. Textbook slab avalanche conditions thwarted an attempt on Haidinger.

MUMC capped off this season with the successful completion of a new route on Mt Cook by club members Stuart Hollaway and Lachie Curry. Making grateful use of grants from both MUMC and New Zealand Alpine Club Australia Section, the route was completed in 36 hours and runs from the base of the Bowie Couloir to crest onto the Zurbriggen Ridge and continues to the summit. For full details check out the topo and route description on page 10. This is now the hardest route on Aoraki/Mt Cook.

2009 was the first year that the MUMC Adventure Grant has been offered. If you have a great idea for an adventure in any MUMC sport and need a bit of financial support to make it happen you should consider applying for the grant in 2010. Details will be made available at www.mumc.org.au later in the year. Also, anyone keen to get involved in mountaineering at MUMC, don't hesitate to come to the clubrooms and have a chat.

Skiing Jessica Trevitt

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Many overseas visitors are surprised when we say we ski in Australia. When we get more specific and say cross-country ski, some refuse to believe us, full stop. But every winter there are tracks as little as three hours out of Melbourne that are swarming with nordic skiers, and huge stretches of wilderness hiding the backcountry battlers.

MUMC is out in the backcountry of Victoria and NSW every possible weekend throughout July and August (June and September if we're lucky), training in telemark and journeying out to a hut for the night. Backcountry ski touring is one of our most popular sports, and despite the thin snow cover last season, we still squeezed out some memorable trips.

Beginners were taken up to Mt Stirling and the Bogong High Plains, introduced to the elegant face-plant and the worthy labour of pitching snow tents. One weekend had us camping out in wild weather on Falls Creek, and waking to a slope of fresh powder all to ourselves. Over the second semester break there was a joint trip run with the ANU Mountaineering Club to the Main Range, where trails were covered between Thredbo and Kosciuszko, and the slopes of our highest mountain were tackled (and defeated).

With fingers crossed for the snow cover this year, we have plans to repeat these adventures after a host of smaller trips closer to home. We encourage all levels of skiers (or future skiers) to come up with us, whether you've never seen snow before or never skied with a free heel. More importantly, we encourage you to keep coming up. The ultimate goal is to become an independent skier and put Australia on the map for our snowgummed wilderness.

Bushwalking

Tim Carter

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Lacking original ideas for writing a convenor's report, I asked around the club for people's favourite memories of recent bushwalks.

Tanya's response was to say her favourite memory was watching me disappear into a waist-deep pool of mud on the South Coast Track in Tasmania. As you can see from the photos [left], Tanya helpfully stopped to take some photos before I was assisted out of my predicament. Five people from MUMC walked the track in November; we flew into Melaleuca and spent nine days walking back to civilisation involving two days of walking through a lagoon. The reflection of the Ironbound mountain range on the lagoon and Federation Peak in the distance was my favourite moment. More can be read about the trip in Jess' trip report featured on page 14 in this edition of the Mountaineer.

Closer to home we've had several trips to western Victoria, which comes alive after winter rains. Trips went up to Major Mitchell Plateau in the Grampians, and to Little Desert where a few members learnt to their detriment what it's like to walk with a hangover. A Mt Feathertop trip caught the end of the winter snow which gave walkers great views across the Razorback. There was also the Midnight Ascent up to the club hut in August where much frivolity was had. Egg's food group probably didn't realise they carried enough flour to make pizzas for everyone on the mountain! This was only a few weeks before Tim Holding got lost up on Feathertop and reminded us of the importance of being prepared. There have also been several trips to Wilsons Promontory and day walks up to the Dandenongs and out to the Wombat Ranges.

Coming up this year there is a trip over in New Zealand as this goes to print. We have four introductory trips organised for March: trips will head down to the Otways, Wilsons Prom, Mt Feathertop and the Fainters. I'd encourage any new members to sign up for these trips as they will help you get involved in the club and make it easier to do more challenging walks. Longer trips being discussed are the Long Spur of Mt Bogong, Croajingolong National Park and the Walls of Jerusalem in Tasmania. There is also likely to be a trip down to south west Tassie at the end of the year.

If you have any questions come along to the club rooms and have a chat to the bushwalkers. Then if you're keen, sign up for a trip and I'll see you out there!

Conservation

Chelsea Eaw

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MUMC members got involved in a variety of conservation activities during semester two of 2009. We saw members travel all over Victoria: one member donned waders to plunge into Victoria's waterways, helping a postgraduate student catch platypuses for her study; several other members wielded mattocks to plant trees in the Lurg Hills; some of us cleared a track in the Yarra Ranges on a bushfire recovery weekend; and what's more, a couple of us ventured up to Terrick Terrick National Park for what was possibly the club's first ever birdwatching trip.

Probably the largest conservation trip last year, however, was August's bird banding trip. Bird banding involves catching birds to record data for scientific studies. Often, it requires a small team, and the 19 MUMC participants (that's right, 19 people on a conservation trip) provided more than enough help. Members were taught to handle birds and collect valuable data. The experience seemed fascinating for most people.

MUMC members have been willing to branch out from other club activities to try something new, and for that I am glad. I hope to see more of you in the field in 2010.

Rockclimbing

Dave Ellis

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It's been a busy four months since I started as convenor in September. The gear store has been re-organised and inventoried, there's a new borrowing system, a new Google group, climbers contact list and a climbing calendar. Oh, and there's been some climbing in there too.

First semester is the most exciting time for climbing in the club. Coming up is the MONSTROUS O'Week abseil of TERROR... no, not really, it's just fun!

GymBQ will kick off in February and March and will be a great way to meet and chat with current members. GymBQ will teach novice climbers basic skills in the gym, preparing them for outdoor climbing as well as the gastronomic demands of club fine dining.

With some gym experience under their belt, new members will be able to join a Top-Roping day trip to Werribee Gorge or Mt Alexander. For more advanced climbers there'll be regular trips to the Grampians and Mt Arapiles, and extended trips to Tasmania (Coastal Crags) and New Zealand (Alpine Ice and Rock).

To find out more, check out the MUMC website and the MUMCrockclimb Google group. "Climb hard, eat well".

FROM OUR CLUB CONVENORS

Canyoning Kate Abel

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"Canyoning, so what's that?" you say. Canyoning is the art of scrambling, sliding, jumping, swimming and walking down creek beds. Sometimes it involves abseiling down a waterfall, or jumping several metres down into a deep pool of water (not for the faint-hearted). Some canyons involve floating on a lilo down wide, open gorges, while others are deep, dark and narrow. It can be as easy or as challenging as you want to make it. Canyoning requires the culmination of navigational, bushwalking and rock climbing skills. It can take you to some incredibly beautiful places, of which paddling, walking or climbing alone cannot take you.

There are very few canyons in Victoria so canyoning is a small sport in MUMC. Most of Australia's canyons are in the Blue Mountains National Park and surrounding areas in NSW, so we tend to run week-long trips rather than weekend trips.

In December, MUMC members attended an interclub canyoning trip in Kanangra Boyd National Park. Members of ANU Mountaineering Club, University of NSW Outdoor Club and Sydney University of Technology Outdoor Club also attended. It was a great opportunity to meet other canyoningers and also to discuss different methods of running club trips. We also compared different techniques used for abseiling, rigging anchors and other such canyoning operations, as used by the various clubs.

On the same trip, MUMC canyoningers, aided by good weather and low water, successfully completed Danae Brook canyon. This canyon is very long, remote and challenging, and is one of the most difficult in Australia.

So what's in store for early 2010? We will hopefully run a combined canyoning and caving trip to Bungonia in NSW (weather and leader dependent). Plans for a beginner abseiling trip are also underway.

You can obtain many of the required skills for canyoning by participating in other MUMC sports. Rope skills, including abseiling and prusiking (climbing back up a rope), are usually learned on weekend rock climbing trips, and navigational skills improved by participating in some rogaines.

If you are keen to do some canyoning, email me at canyon@mumc.org.au or have a chat to me in the clubrooms on Tuesday evenings.

MUMC Hut Warden Daniel Hearnden

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People outside the club often give me strange looks when I tell them about the MUMC Hut and my many, many trips to this slightly odd-looking dome on the side of Feathertop. What possesses someone to haul timber, paint, tools and the like to perform unpaid work? Clearly, they've never been hit by the handy-man bug, and clearly they've never had a strong desire to prusik onto a domed roof.

The hut has had half a facelift in March 2009, a fresh coat of green which still needs to be finished. Much more work still needs to be done to keep the old girl in tip top shape. A leak here and there, floor boards, varnishing, painting and more. Lots of fun to share around for anyone who'd like to get their hands dirty.

Keep an eye out for trips to the hut this year and roll up your sleeves!

SECRETARY'S RAMBLINGS

- from the desk of Daniel Hearnden

As part of my ongoing quest to find mundane tasks and turn them into my own little pet projects, I've been digging through club archives cataloguing and organising. I'm slowing collecting statistics on how many members the club has had over the years. The club has an unbelievable amount of "stuff", dating way back to a few years after the formation of the club in 1944.

So far it seems pretty clear that the club had a big peak during the 60's and 70's, which is around the same time that bushwalking, climbing and other outdoor pursuits were going through a resurgence all around the country. Looking more recently, in the early 2000's we can see that membership dropped relatively sharply, which is likely to do with the introduction of VSU as well as the continuing trend for students to have less free time.





MUMC ADVENTURE GRANT

Explore your dreams, firsthand.
Applications are now being accepted.



MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY
MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



MUMC 65TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

BY KATHRYN WHALLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE CHAN

OVER MUCH WINE AND story telling, MUMC recently celebrated its 65th anniversary. It was a great opportunity to hear about MUMC's history such as the beginning of the club and the early years of rogaining and 24 hr hikes, as well as stories of past epics (and some successful trips) and how things have changed. It also provided an opportunity for present members to recount what is happening in the club these days

and to celebrate the hard work and effort put in by past members to develop MUMC and all the opportunities it can now offer its members.

As well as the traditional formal dinner, the night began at the clubrooms which provided past members a chance to see the facilities and gear that are available to members today as well as to look back over displays of historical gear, maps and books

from the early days of MUMC.

I would like to give a big thank-you again to Dale for making the night a reality and going through the stress of making it a great night! I'd also like to thank all who came and helped make it a memorable celebration, you seemed to be having a good time and I hope you learnt a bit about the club in the process (I know I did). To those of you who missed out... I'll see you in five years time!



Not much room to move—the clubrooms became packed when they were opened to ex-OXOs before the start of the formal dinner (top); Past members congregate outside the clubrooms (left).

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Dale speaks as Andy and Kathryn listen on at the start of the dinner; Dinner guests listening to the presentations; Jim Newlands (right of frame) catches up with friends; The INU Bar at the University of Melbourne did a great job of sprucing up the place, so the dinner could be held at a venue nearby to the clubrooms.



The 65th pre-dinner drinks were eventful in itself: it was great to see our little club-rooms so full I had to push my way through to the ski store. Talking with past members, I began to see what MUMC does from the long-term perspective: these people are still interested because they still pursue the activities they began here. It felt good to be able to show them that the club is still pushing people towards independence in their outdoor sports, even decades later.

Jessica Trevitt

I ran into one gentleman who after a brief chat told me he was involved in organising some of the old 24 hr walks. These were of course the predecessor to the sport of rogaining. I think he was active during the early 70's, during the times when the club would hire old furniture vans and have a whole bunch of people stuffed in the back for trips.

Daniel Hearnden

I met some lovely people and they were all appreciative of the fantastic space that we have all to ourselves. The spruced up club-rooms that got a dusting and vacuum weren't distinguishable from their normal messy state. Nevertheless there was a happy, cosy atmosphere, filled with smiling chatting people who overflowed into the side passages of the gear stores and to outside.

Wen-Jie Yang

Some thoughts from attendees:

I found it quite entertaining to hear the stories of courting and match-making within the club from the previous generations of OXOs—some things will never change.

Kathryn Whalley

While helping organise the dinner, I was struck by just how important this night was to past members. Many came from interstate, and some even came from overseas. When I finally got to meet them, I was impressed by their good-natured zeal for life. From their eager stories of girlfriends and courting in the club (many now married) to the way one announced loudly "They want us all to bugger off!" at the end of the night, they live life to its fullest. Another called MUS after the night to demand to know why the club-rooms were to be demolished (plans are currently on hold for review). Several told their stories as they saw them, and hotly debated any alternate version of events. Past OXOs are empowered people, who will voice their opinions rather than roll over. I hope MUMC still empowers people as much as it has these alumni, and that it still provides the strong social circle that keeps bringing people back from such distant places.

Andy Green

My favourite story from the night was about a winter trip up Mt Feathertop. While headed for the summit a member of the party took a terrible fall resulting in an ice-axe puncturing his thigh. The party proceeded to make an 18 hr decent of Mt Feathertop assisting the wounded member back to the car. Upon reaching the car the party decided it was best to head straight to Melbourne by-passing any nearby hospital as it wasn't that serious and they were all needing to rest after the long and tiring decent. When the injured member finally made it to a hospital he was informed by the doctor that he was lucky to be alive and had the ice axe hit less than one inch to the side it would have severed an artery—inevitably resulting in him bleeding to death within a few minutes. I think this really highlights the changes in our response and acceptance of injuries while participating in our outdoor pursuits. (I claim no responsibility for the accuracy of my account of this story...).

Kathryn Whalley

It's interesting to see how times change: how in having more specialised gear we can push the boundaries more. But at the same time things stay the same: we just like hanging out with like-minded people in natural places. ☺

Heather Couper



RESOLUTION: A NEW ROUTE ON AORAKI/MT COOK

BY STUART HOLLAWAY
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY LACHIE CURRIE

Resolution climbs the big corner running all the way up buttress from the base of the Bowie Couloir to the crest of Zurbriggen's Ridge.

480m of rock to the crest climbed in 11 pitches, crux 19/20, then continue across the snow arete and up Zurbriggen's; NZ 6. High quality rock and climbing on a big mountain route—strongly recommended. This corner line would be a spectacularly good mixed route and the whole buttress offers excellent scope for further climbing.

Start: Below the roof and hanging corner just left of the right arete of the buttress.

- 1) 30m, 14. Up hanging corner to small alcove of dark rock.
- 2) 30m, 15. Work up red wall and arete to climb hanging corner on right to big ledge. (Pitches 1 and 2 could be combined.)
- 3) 60m, 14. Climb right hand corner then continue up ledges and walls left of the main corner.
- 4) 50m, 16. Slabs and walls of pink rock left of the corner. Belay near the arete below a steep wall.
- 5) 30m, 18. Traverse up and right towards corner. Climb overhang into groove left of main corner (which is blocked by loose flakes).
- 6) 60m, 18. Up easy ground then left below roof in main corner into subsidiary corner (snow). Weave up pink wall (~20m) with cracks to cross arete and make slopey traverse back to main corner. Belay off hand and fist size cams.



The line of *Resolution* up the buttress showing the described pitches (above).

7) 90m, 12. Up nice corner, then long chimney; finally scramble to belay below steepening in corner. (There are potential belays in this pitch but they are not very sheltered.)

8) 30m, 16. Climb corner (or wall on right—corner may be wet) to awkward belay below next overhang. Piton high on left. (This belay is dry but the ropes will get wet—best to combine pitches 8 and 9 to get past wet section.)

9) 30m, 17. The *Waterfall* pitch—climb overhang using chockstones and continue up corner and right wall to a stance on the left.

10) 30m, 13. Up corner to gain obvious diagonal weakness heading up across right wall. Belay on flake/pedestal below smooth, steep wall with cracks heading diagonally up left and right. (Pitches 10 and 11 could be combined.)

11) 40m, 19/20. Tricky moves up right leading crack and the wall beyond to crest. Continue up easy arete of buttress to snow.

Gear: Approx. 7 cams finger to fist, a full set of nuts, 1KB & 1LA (optional), draws, full alpine kit to continue up mountain or double ropes and extensive tat to rappel buttress.

FA: Stuart Hollaway and Lachie Currie. 18-19 January, 2010.

This trip was supported by the inaugural MUMC Adventure Grant and the NZAC Australian Section Expedition Fund, both of which are gratefully acknowledged. ☸



Clockwise, from above:

The north-east aspect of Aoraki/Mt Cook—the line indicates the buttress taken by *Resolution* to join Zurbriggen's route to the summit;

Returning through the icefall after reconnaissance of access to the buttress;

Another view of the icefall;

Lachie climbing out of the icefall;

Lachie changing boots at the bottom of the route—full alpine kit in the pack makes for heavy climbing...



The opening moves (above left).

Lachie pulling through the overhang on pitch 5 (inset).

Stuart starting up the corner of the long chimney, pitch 7 (above).

Top of the wet corner, pitch 8 (left).

Looking down the line from the crest of the buttress (below).





Traversing the snow arete to join Zurbriggen's Ridge (below left).

Stuart in the morning after a sitting bivvy in a crevasse high on the mountain (right), and the magnificent views of Mt Tasman from the bivvy site (above).

A happy man on top (below right).



THE WAY OF THE WET SOCK

On surviving south-west Tasmania
(and going back for more).



Our intrepid OXOs walk along Australia's
most southerly beach.



BY JESSICA TREVITT

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MUMC and Tasmania. The last edition of the Mountaineer featured the story of a trek down south, with a photo of the group oblivious to Ian's raised axe behind them. Late last year Tim, Sebastian, Tanya, myself and said Ian did a trek further south again—and further into the country explored by the original axewielder, Alexander Pearce. We were, perhaps, asking for trouble.

In 1822 Irish convict Alexander Pearce escaped from the Macquarie Harbour Penal Settlement. He began bashing his way through the bush of south-west Tasmania to return to Hobart, along with seven

companions. Overcome by the conditions and his hunger, he reverted to cannibalism and was the only one in the group to make it through to the east coast. According to our trip-rating system, this would make Pearce's adventure a partial success, because at least one participant survived. We can go one up on him, however, and say that our trip along the South Coast Track of Tasmania was 100% successful. Over ten days we walked 100km through bush, swamp and beach, and although we may occasionally have harboured vaguely cannibalistic notions toward one another—we would have stopped at nothing to get Tim's bag of chocolate on day ten—we

finished the trip with everyone alive. So how did five MUMC members succeed where a cannibal convicted of stealing six shoes had failed? This is an account of the challenges we faced and the extraordinarily good times we had in overcoming them.

The south-west is renowned for getting you wet and keeping you wet. We had to descend the steep Ironbound Range in a relentless downpour, throwing ourselves off steps made by unusually tall people into puddles that were rising as we watched. We had two days that featured ten kilometres of wading through a knee-deep lagoon, and I lost count of how many times we crossed a

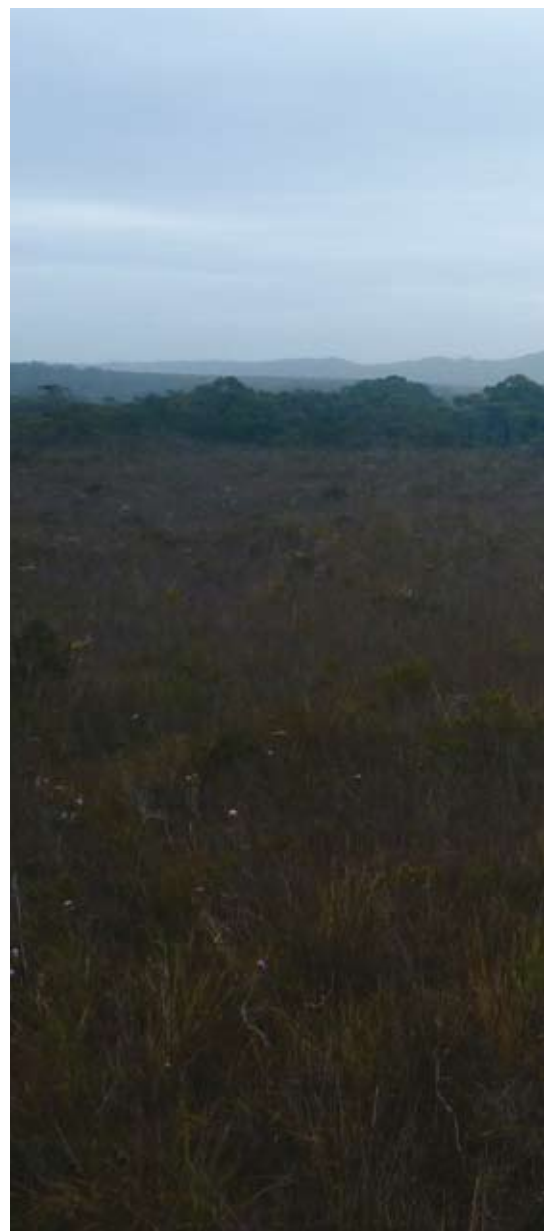


river without a bridge. Outdoor sales people take note, no goretex boot can keep you dry here. We quickly learnt lesson number one: Dry Sock + Wet Boot = Wet Sock. This means that you might as well wear the same pair of socks for ten days, squashing them into cold boots every morning. Pearce probably had the one pair of socks and shoes he'd brought with him from Ireland, so I'll assume he experienced the same, but it seems he let such conditions get his spirits down. We, on the other hand, managed to keep ours up. As we got the socks on every morning, we would scream to the skies, lacing our boots as a team, revelling in the sticky material coldly clinging to our toes. The ritual became a daily gathering of positive attitude, and we dubbed it "The Way of the Wet Sock".

The morning routine also involved strapping on our gaiters, and fiddling with buckles that were thickly coated in yesterday's mud. As we walked we were followed by the squelching sound of it moving between our toes and through the fibers of our socks. And this began right from day one, with long stretches of glup threading their way through fields of buttongrass and purple melaleuca.

Recent track work has provided boardwalks so that walkers of the twenty-first century can forget the mud in sections, but I'd go crazy quicker than Pearce did if I had to follow two narrow planks of wood for long. To prevent the bog from increasing where it had been left in its natural state, we walked through the puddles rather than around, and so we learnt lesson number two: ankle-deep mud looks the same as thigh-deep mud. One over-confident step was enough to suck us in beyond any hope of using our legs. Alexander Pearce probably experienced the same, and three times as much of it, seeing as he was without the benefit of wooden planks. But again, we were able to keep up our spirits by extending The Way of the Wet Sock: we developed a friendly relationship with the glup by charging forward and launching ourselves into it. This had a tendency to push us to the other extreme, leaving us paralysed with laughter and unable to pull each other out. But it did, in the long run, help us to overcome the challenge.

The water and the mud were not our greatest enemies. Ask us what weighed most heavily on our minds, and we'd wince and let you



Tanya gracefully attempts to overcome a small obstacle, helped along by the rain (top).

Wading through the never-ending lagoon (left).

The boardwalk that provided some respite from the mud (main).

Ian helps Tanya out of yet another sticky situation (right).

Tim shows off his new "mud-line" (far right). Note the walking pole drowning in the background...





in on a secret: we failed the three-day side trip up Precipitous Bluff. This enormous rock structure bursts out of the forest on day five and looms above you, spoiling a nice long stretch of beach. We were goaded on to summit it. The only way of doing this was to wade through the lagoon and set up camp at its base. We had to climb up for lunch on the peak and get back to camp before sundown, or else be left in vegetation too dense to navigate in the dark. The ascent began in the forest on an angle so steep that it was like climbing directly up through the branches of a tree. We saw sunlight again at the base of the cliffs, circled around them for an hour, then turned up a gully. It was here that we learnt our greatest lesson: be careful how you interpret track notes. Following the instructions to “continue up the gully”, we scrambled up a flat rock-face and across the tops of thorny bushes, only to reach a dead end. When we realized our mistake we turned back and found the cairn that marked the track turning slightly to the left, but it was too late to reach the summit and be back before dark. We had missed it by a painfully small margin. Lunching quietly over a magnificent view of Tasmania, from Fed Peak to the coast and the six days of track we had just walked, each of us was kicking ourselves for not seeing what should have been obvious. I think we would have



Precipitous Bluff loomed in the distance, calling out to be summited (top left). The group succumbed to PB's call and scrambled up through the forest, trying to follow the trail to the summit (top right). They took a wrong turn, forcing them to abort the summit, but they still enjoyed a magnificent view while they reflected back on their mistake over lunch (centre left).

The group stumbles upon a golf course and enjoys a quick round (bottom left).



given up our scroggin to get our chance up there again.

Alexander Pearce was lucky enough to get a second go at the whole trek. Having reached Hobart, alone, his confession to cannibalism was rejected and he was sent back to Macquarie Harbour. Escaping again, he was only out in the bush for ten days before being captured with his ex-companion's remains still in his pockets (it puts to shame my grumbling over blisters and the need to ration scroggin). But I'd rather our single trip to his two: I suspect he didn't have the time to enjoy the beauty and isolation of the area. We got to bush-bash along a marsupial trail, meet a blind baby echidna on a mountaintop and even squeeze in a game of golf with walking poles on the green shores of the lagoon. There is definitely something about MUMC and Tasmania—and if any of this appeals to your inner hiker, come back with us this April 2nd-11th! ☘



The group's final dinner on the beach (main), shared with Ian's brother and sister-in-law (left of frame) who hiked in with fresh vegetables, strawberries and port.

Right, clockwise from top left: Tanya celebrates her birthday on the track with a piece of cake topped with gumleaf candles; The sign of the OXO's presence; A blind baby echidna takes a liking to Tim's muddy gaiters; Sebastian shows how to do it the Alexander Pierce way—serious bush bashing.

TALES OF A NEWBIE 2: SNOW PLAY

The newbie learns some things about snow.

BY EGG (ENG WU ONG)



Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

by Robert Frost (1923)

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.*

*He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

THIS WAS ONE OF the poems [below left] that I learnt in literature class back when I was studying in Trinity College. I looked it up after the recent trip up Mount Bogong with Dan Hearnden, Sam Flewett and Tim Carter. Our trip didn't involve any horses, but I think that the poem reflects how I felt about the trip.

We ascended Staircase Spur after camping on Friday night at Mount Beauty camping ground, which is a lovely camp site beside a river. Sam and Tim took up skis while Dan and I took snowshoes. The ascent was pretty intense, with reasonably steep trails leading up to the snowline. It was the first time I had ever walked in such deep snow, with most parts reaching up to my knees. I felt like I was walking in quicksand. Sam, Tim and Dan were all reasonably comfortable walking in snow and had no problem crossing the snow up to the summit of Mount Bogong. I, however, struggled with each step like a clumsy buffalo, sliding down the slopes and watching little balls of snow roll off the edge. "It would suck to be that little snow ball right now", I thought to myself.

I asked myself if I had made some mistake by coming on this trip; that I could be sleeping on my comfortable warm bed at home instead. Visibility was quite poor with about a hundred metres ahead being as far as I could see. Later on, Dan taught me how to put on snowshoes and I learnt to "walk" again like a baby. It made the trek a lot more bearable. Thinking back about it, I tried to clear my mind of the hardship, or the fact that I was always falling behind Dan. I took it one step at a time, and every time I got tired I reminded myself of my favourite whisky (spelt "whiskey" for the Irish), Johnnie Walker. And what is Johnnie Walker's motto?

"Keep walking". "Keeping walking" and "one step at a time" were the only things that kept repeating in my mind. Eventually we reached the hut and I was relieved.

In the evening, Sam and Tim gave me some beginner skiing lessons and I played around behind our hut. As darkness fell, I grew bored and started to build a snowman with the shovel that I hauled up. It was the first time I had done so and boy what fun! I felt like a child again. Snow is exceptionally friendly to work with. It sticks together easily and it is easy to carve with your bare hands or with a small scoop. Also, it is a great way to get to know people as I built the snowman together with a lovely couple from Adelaide, who were sharing the hut with us.

One thing new that I learnt was that you can actually get sunburnt while in the snow. Something that people like me from tropical countries find a bit hard to comprehend, maybe because it seems counter-intuitive. There was hardly any sun and it was cold, yet people were slapping on sun block. Apparently more ultra-violet (UV) light reflects off snow than on normal ground, and at higher altitude more UV penetrates the surface of the earth. The idea of being sunburnt normally conjures up the image of sun tanning at the beach, but what we see or feel at the beach is visible light, whereas in the snow you can't "feel" UV light.

The snow can be both fun and treacherous. Always be prepared by having sufficient warm clothing, multiple layers and spare dry clothes. Also, remember to bring a shovel so that you can dig snow trenches and build snowmen! ☺

"For those who have never walked in snow before, it can be a lot of fun!"

— Daniel Hearnden



Egg's first ever snowman looks pretty good (top); Egg tries to "keep walking" (above).



Sam and Tim show how easy it is even while carrying skis.



Discovering the joys of snow: Egg makes the most of his shovel and chair.

PIE 'N' SLIDE NIGHT 2009

EVERY YEAR, THE CLUB holds its annual photography competition, giving club members a chance to show off their photographic skills. The much anticipated night allows us all to be inspired by the beautiful places that fellow OXOs have visited, to have a laugh at some funny photos, and to enjoy a good slideshow over some pies and beer.

The prizes that had been generously donated by a range of businesses were this year awarded to the winners of seven different categories, and to an overall winner and runner up. The difficult task of choosing the winners was performed by a panel of four judges: Russell Misson and Kelvin Burrage from The North Face, Neil Blundy, owner of Bogong Equipment and The Wilderness Shop, and Frank Zgoznik from Bush Search and Rescue Victoria.

This year there were a number of excellent entries that made the judges work hard to choose winners. In the Video category however, they decided against awarding a winner and instead gave an Honourable Mention to Tom Bailey for his climbing video entry.

MUMC would like to thank the judges for generously providing their time and effort, and also the businesses listed below for their kind support, without which Pie 'n' Slide Night would not be possible.

THE DAN O'CONNELL HOTEL, 225 Canning St, Carlton
www.thedan.com.au

RICHMOND PIE SHOP, 200 Swan Street, Richmond

THE LACTIC FACTORY, 1 Studley St., Abbotsford
www.thelacticfactory.com.au

ANACONDA, Spotlight Centre, 2 Koornang Road, Carnegie
www.anaconda.com.au

AUSSIE DISPOSALS, 283 Elizabeth St, Melbourne
www.aussiedisposals.com.au

ICEBREAKER, Shop 9, 397 Smith Street, Fitzroy
www.icebreaker.com

ROCK HARDWARE, www.rockhardware.com.au

BOGONG EQUIPMENT, 374 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne
www.bogong.com.au

HELLY HANSEN, 17-19 Hardware Lane, Melbourne
www.hellyhansen.com

PADDY PALLIN, 360 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne
www.paddypallin.com.au

THE WILDERNESS SHOP, 969 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill
www.wildernessshop.com.au

THE NORTH FACE, 385 Bourke Street, Melbourne
www.thenorthface.com.au

CLIFFHANGER, Grieve Parade (cnr Dohertys Road), Altona North
www.cliffhanger.com.au



From top to bottom: OXOs eagerly awaiting the start of the slideshow; Judges working hard to choose a winner; Deb serves up some hot pies.



OVERALL WINNER
KATHRYN WHALLEY
Fox Glacier

Looking across the Fox Glacier to the north from Suicide Alley, shortly before sunset and an unexpected bivouac under a rock. South Island, New Zealand.

RUNNER UP
KATE HESKETT
Climber on Castle Crag

A view of a climber on *Swinging*, Castle Crag. Mt Arapiles, western Victoria.





CLUB ACTIVITY

KHANH TRAN

Jumping on Beeripmo Trail

Group jump on Beeripmo Trail, western Victoria. Willing participants were Richard Sota, Michael Wong, Daniel Ortmann and Prashant Dabee.



AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

PRASHANT DABEE

Wilsons Promontory

Sunset at Tidal River, Wilsons Promontory, Victoria.



OUTDOORS NATURE

RICHARD SOTA

Lupins in New Zealand

Russell Lupins by Lake Tekapo, with Mt Edward in the distance. South Island, New Zealand.



CLUB PERSONALITY & HUMOUR

TANYA CRAIG

Golf in Tasmania

Pretend game of golf on moss along the South Coast Track, Tasmania. Golfers were Tim Carter, Jessica Trevitt, Ian Wanless and Sebastian (Eu Choon).



OVERSEAS LANDSCAPE

PRASHANT DABEE

View of Mauritius

Le Morne Brabant (UNESCO World Heritage Site) in the distance, from the summit of Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire, Republic of Mauritius.



PHOTOJOURNALISM

CHELSEA EAW

Tree Planting

2009 Conservationist of the Year awardee Ray Thomas explains how to plant trees in the Lurg Hills, north-eastern Victoria.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN: A WALKER'S TALE

BUSHWALKING

... OF THE ROTEBURN TRACK

First impressions of one of
NZ's most popular walking trails.

BY DEBORAH PIATTONI, KEREM AKARTUNALI & KHANH TRAN
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD SOTA

AS OUR FIRST TRIP to the South Island of NZ, we had to do one of the Great Walks. So Kerem, Khanh and I chose the Routeburn Track in the south-west for its variety of views and landscapes including the head of Lake Wakatipu. The 32 km can be covered in 1 ½ to 3 days depending on how fast you like to travel, and is rated as an easy walk. As we wanted to appreciate and photograph the changing landscape, it took us 2 ½ days. The track is not a loop so requires a car shuffle. Luckily, Richard who was travelling with us was keen to explore the south-east of NZ so dropped us off at the Divide, collecting us a few days later from the Routeburn shelter.

Thanks to Khanh's thorough research we chose to do the walk opposite to the usually chosen direction, starting from the Divide. This worked out really well as the majority of trampers approach from the other direction meaning we had more of the track to ourselves at that time. Plus we had the best views in front of us.

Day One:

The Divide to Lake MacKenzie Hut

From the Divide, all four of us started up to Key Summit to take in the views (and lunch) before Richard left us and we three



started on the track. We were rewarded with fantastic views from Key Summit of the Darran Mountains, Hollyford Valley and views of Lake Marian.

It was a remarkably hot day and slightly marred by Kerem mildly spraining his ankle after the side trip to Key Summit. Having got a large branch for him as a staff, he seemed fine to continue so we set off.

From our initial higher altitude start, the scenery then changed dramatically from bushland, to alpine wetland, waterfalls, then forests with native beech trees coated in moss like something from a fairy tale.

Kerem enjoying the Routeburn, despite having a dodgy ankle and needing to use a branch as a makeshift walking pole (top). PHOTO: DEBORAH PIATTONI

View of Lake Marian tucked away within the valley (above). PHOTO: KEREM AKARTUNALI



View of alpine marshland from Key Summit (above). Kerem is gobsmacked when he sees how amazingly bright and airy it is inside the composting toilet! (left). Howden Hut (centre left).

The towering Earland Falls (right), one of NZ's tallest; and Deb attempts to menace Khahn with a chunk of ice she discovers at the base of the falls (bottom left).

PHOTOS: DEBORAH PIATTONI (LEFT, CENTRE LEFT, RIGHT); RICHARD SOTA (ABOVE); KEREM AKARTUNALI (BOTTOM LEFT).



The composting toilets were amusing—this was the first time we'd come across one where the interior seemed light and airy despite the dark and dingy green exterior.

Even though we'd done quite a few short walks on this trip, coming from Australia we were still getting used to the amount of water flowing everywhere. And the Routeburn was no different, with the added bonus of making us stride over un-bridged creeks that run across the path. So no shortage of drinking water!

After passing Lake Howden Hut, the terrain changed to open grassy areas with ribbonwood trees known as 'The Orchard' before reaching the Earland Falls—one of the tallest falls in New Zealand at 174 metres in one drop from Lake Roberts. After the heat of the day this pleasantly cooled us down. It also vaguely reminded me of Yosemite National Park in California. But then New Zealand kept reminding me of different places all the time—such a chameleon country.

We got to Lake MacKenzie Hut by early evening and had time to do a brief walk by the lake along Split Rock track. Like the other huts we encountered on the track, the hut was large (50 beds), well maintained and well organised with a resident warden.



Day Two:

Lake MacKenzie Hut to Routeburn Falls Hut

Weather in the South Island is full of surprising changes, even in mid-November. One of the passes near the Lake Harris outlet had unexpectedly heavy snowfall which closed off 1 km of the track. We became much happier about this when we discovered a cheap helicopter ride over it from Harris Saddle was available!

We climbed to 1,255 m through sub-alpine landscape to the Harris Saddle huts to meet the helicopter—the steepest part of the track. Lake Harris by the Harris Saddle offered us spectacular mountain views though it was very exposed to the elements. We were glad that we didn't have to wait around too long for the helicopter! We wanted to do additional side walks including to the reputedly lovely Conical Hill (near Lake Harris) but the track was closed owing to the weather conditions.

The walk onwards from there was easier—with clear views of glacial-formed valleys. The Routeburn track also gives you the opportunity to see some impressive alpine flora including South Island edelweiss, Mountain foxglove and Cushion plants, to name a few.



Khanh in front of a glacial lake, near Lake MacKenzie Hut (top left).

A stunning view of the Dart River with low cloud (above left).

Khanh restlessly waits for the helicopter while Kerem checks out one of the Harris Saddle huts to see if any hobbits are inside... (above).

Finally the helicopter arrives to Khanh's delight! (left)

Increased snow and fog near Harris Saddle (below left).

PHOTOS: DEBORAH PIATTONI (ABOVE, TOP LEFT); KHANH TRAN (BELOW LEFT); KEREM AKARTUNALI (LEFT, ABOVE LEFT).



Striking combination of rocks and alpine plants, with various types of foliage, textures and colours (above left).

View from the track towards the Routeburn Falls Hut and valley beyond (above).

River-side view through beech forest (left).

Kerem models the "pirate" look within an interesting cave that the track takes you through (below).

PHOTOS: DEBORAH PIATTONI (LEFT, ABOVE LEFT, BELOW); KEREM AKARTUNALI (ABOVE).



We got to the Routeburn Falls Hut by late afternoon. Fantastic location with the hut perched high up by the falls with over-looking views. Again the bunks were of a good standard.

Day Three:

Routeburn Falls Hut to Routeburn Shelter

It took us just three hours on the last day to get to the Routeburn Shelter, and much of it was at a slow descent down to the valley. We had some great views through the beech forest valley, crossing more fun suspension bridges till we reached the inlets to the Dart River, which reaches Lake Wakatipu.

Summary

There are so many positives about doing the Routeburn Track, especially as an introduction to bush walking in NZ.

- Track was well maintained without being over-managed and for anyone with reasonable fitness it is a perfectly achievable trek with steady elevation changes. It was an added bonus to see the odd composting toilet along the track also.

- Estimated walk durations were pretty accurate over all of the South Island.

- Unlike the adjacent Fiordland National Park area, we didn't have to worry about mozzies and sandflies as much, especially as we weren't camping. Though loading up on Deet repellents and pre-soaking your clothes in permethrin can help, you tend to get eaten alive.

- The huts were of a high standard and really well organised with heating, lighting and cooking facilities, though you need to bring your own matches and pans—something that nearly caught us out.

- With more changeable weather in the winter months, the Routeburn Track is often not available. Most tramp in late spring to summer. Avoiding larger numbers of fellow walkers is always good so we'd recommend heading there Oct-Nov, even if the weather is less stable.

- As you need to take your own rubbish back with you it is worth planning your food with less waste in mind.

- All-in-all the only down side of this walk is its popularity—you have to pre-book during Oct-Apr for either huts or camping spots. ☹

More information:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/southland/te-anau-area/routeburn-track>



One of many suspension bridges along the track, this one situated close to the end of the trail near the Routeburn Shelter (left).

Deb, Khanh and Kerem at the Routeburn Shelter after finishing their hike (below).

PHOTOS: KEREM AKARTUNALI (LEFT); RICHARD SOTA (BELOW).



COLD FEET: THE DUMMY'S GUIDE TO SLEEPING BAGS

Thinking of buying a sleeping bag? Avoid making the wrong choice by knowing a bit about them first.

BY EGG (ENG WU ONG)
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD SOTA

DOWN VERSUS SYNTHETIC, GOOSE VERSUS duck, box-wall versus radial baffles; the list of specifications are confusing and endless. The sales person will dazzle you with all the different features, but if you throw some technical terms back at him or her and ask some smart questions, they will know that they are dealing with someone who knows their stuff, and you'll be less likely to buy a sleeping bag that doesn't match your needs. This article aims to give beginners an introduction to sleeping systems.

Why is it important?

On average, we spend a third of our lives sleeping. After a hard day of activity, our body needs uninterrupted rest to recuperate and recover. The last thing we want is to shiver the whole night and not be able to sleep because it was cold. It happened to me on my very first bushwalk with the club, using a +15°C summer sleeping bag on a +6°C night. Trust me, it was torture.

What is a sleeping bag?

A sleeping bag is a sack that fits around your whole body and traps your body heat in order to keep you warm. It is not an electric blanket, it does not produce heat by itself! A sleeping bag's effectiveness depends on the type and amount of insulating fill, loft, size and style as well as the metabolism of the user.

Insulating fills?

There are two main types of fill in a sleeping bag: down and synthetic. In short, down is bird feathers (either goose or duck) while synthetic fills comprise of all sorts of modern materials.

Down versus synthetic

Down occupies the more volume for less weight. It expands inside your sleeping bag to create a barrier of dead air between your body and the cold air outside, thus trapping heat. It is lighter and more compressible than a synthetic bag of the same rating. The disadvantages are that down is expensive and

hard to dry if wet. Synthetic fills on the other hand are much cheaper, but also do not last for as many compression cycles (packing and unpacking) as a down sleeping bag. Synthetic bags still retain some insulative properties when wet, whereas a wet down bag will be useless. However, having a wet sleeping bag, be it down or synthetic, is a miserable experience so a better idea is to prevent getting your bag wet in the first place.

Loft ratings

Loft, to put simply is the amount of volume that an ounce of fill occupies; what people normally describe as "fluffiness". By definition, if a down bag has a rating of 800 loft for example, it means that it will expand to occupy 800 cubic inches of volume per ounce of feathers, or 462 cubic centimetres per gram. A higher loft rating means that more air is trapped around the bag using less feathers or fill. Generally speaking, the higher the loft rating, the better the quality of the down. Duck down is cheaper than goose down, but is not as lofty. The European standard puts 750 loft as the highest quality down available, however the Americans use a slightly different scale, where 850 loft is their best quality down.

Temperature ratings

Some manufacturers give three temperature ratings, while others only give one. If a



sleeping bag has a single rating of -10°C for example, then it means that a male adult shouldn't feel cold in the sleeping bag when the air around you is -10°C. Other manufacturers use a triple rating system. One rating for comfort, one for limit of comfort, and finally an extreme rating. The comfort rating is what a female adult should be comfortable in; given that women generally produce less body heat than men, they usually need a warmer sleeping bag. The limit of comfort would be what a male adult would be comfortable up to (which is the same as the single rating). The extreme rating is the temperature at which you can survive in the bag for six hours without becoming hypothermic. What happens after six hours remains unexplained. Normally people do not bother with the extreme ratings. Overall, the figures are usually rough guides, and the warmth of the bag is also dependant upon the metabolism of the person.

How warm do I need to be?

In choosing a sleeping bag, the first thing you must ask yourself is what you will be using it for. For trips during summer, you will probably want to cut down on weight and won't be needing a sleeping bag providing too much warmth. Normally +10°C will do for summer, and they'll weigh under a kilogram. Beware though that in certain areas or during freak weather conditions, the temperature at night during summer can still get pretty low (+5°C for instance). For winter conditions, and especially if you're camping in the snow, you'll probably want a -5°C to -10°C bag. They'll normally weigh more (approx. 1.5 kg for down) but it also depends on the quality of the down and the material of the shell. For spring and autumn,



Various sleeping bags strategically placed on the floor of the MUMC clubrooms (top); Ben shows off the thinnest sleeping bag that can be borrowed from the club (left); "Sleeping Bag Abstraction" (opposite top).



the weather can vary a bit so be prepared for both warm and cold conditions. Wear extra layers while in the bag if it is too cold, or strip down and unzip the bag if its too warm. Normally people just buy one sleeping bag for all seasons, somewhere in the range of -5°C to $+5^{\circ}\text{C}$ covers the majority of your needs in Australia. However, if you're mountaineering in New Zealand then consider getting a warmer bag.

Shell fabrics

The shell of the sleeping bag is basically the outer layer, or what the bag is made of to hold the filling inside. There are laminated fabrics, microfibers and nylon. Laminated fabrics are waterproof and are thus desirable for damp environments, however they also make the bag heavier. Microfibers are constructed of very tightly woven polyester which provide some water resistance and better breathability than laminated shells. They are also lighter and easier to compress than laminated fabrics. Nylon shells are the very lightest and most compressible of the three, but also provide the least protection against condensation and moisture. In short, the choice of shell fabric affects the weight, breathability and water resistance of the bag.

Shapes

There are three basic shapes that sleeping bags are made into: rectangular, mummy and barrel. Rectangular sleeping bags provide a lot of room for movement, if you are the kind that likes space to toss and turn at night, but the extra space also causes the bag to retain

less heat and makes it slightly heavier. Mummy bags have a cocoon-like shape, where it is narrow at the feet. There is less space to move, but it provides excellent heat retention and saves a bit on weight. Barrel sleeping bags are essentially a modified mummy bag. They have more room for the shoulders and feet, but are heavier and bulkier than mummy sleeping bags. They are a good compromise between rectangular and mummy-shaped bags.

Construction methods

Continuous baffled, box-baffled, radial baffled, sewn through. Arrghh; too many and perhaps too technical for the average buyer. The construction method of the bag affects the distribution of the filling within the bag, and certain methods claim to prevent heat loss more than others, or eliminate cold spots (e.g. at the feet or shoulders). There are some websites online which give detailed explanations on the different construction methods if you are really interested.

Storage

Try to store your sleeping bag in a big mesh sack when keeping it at home, so as not to compress the filling unnecessarily. This is especially so for down sleeping bags. If you have the space, then hang the sleeping bag from a cupboard and let it expand fully. If you are bushwalking or camping and are carrying your sleeping bag, stuff it like a pillow into the compression sack instead of trying to roll it up like a mattress, because rolling it causes one side of the shell to stretch and may cause it to tear.

Cleaning

If you are investing in a good sleeping bag, consider buying an inner liner. An inner liner basically acts like a bed sheet, so it keeps your bag clean from the dirt and oil on your body. This will help to keep your bag cleaner and allow it to last longer. In general, sleeping bags don't need to be washed that often if they are well taken care of. In the event that your bag does need washing, you can hand wash it or put it into the washing machine (front-loaders only!). Use special down soap if you have a down sleeping bag, and **DO NOT TUMBLE DRY!** At the end of the wash cycle, slowly squeeze the water out and allow it to hang dry. Alternatively you can bring it to a dry cleaner who specialises in cleaning sleeping bags, but remember to check their credentials and ask questions before engaging their services.

Conclusion

Buying a sleeping bag is a big investment, and requires a lot of forethought and planning. Make sure to ask yourself, "What am I going to use it for?", and shop around before committing to one. Talk to people at the MUMC clubrooms, to sales staff at stores, and rent from our gear store first if you're not ready to buy one. Down bags in general start at around \$500, while synthetics can start from just over \$100. Hope you found this article useful! ☺

References:

Mountaineering: The Freedom of The Hills, 7th edition, edited by Steven M. Coz and Kris Fulsaa, The Mountaineers Books, Seattle, 2008.



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A SNIPPET OF MUMC HISTORY.

Neil Blundy was on the committee of MUMC from 1975 to 1979. During this time the club rooms moved from "Aikman's Rd" at the rear of a building in Royal Pde to the old Meteorology building on campus. This period is listed as the "Historical Dark Ages" of the club according to the MUMC website and perhaps due to the nefarious activities of members of the time should remain so!

After many hard years of study - fortunately being totally overwhelmed by MUMC activities - Neil entered the retail outdoor industry which led to the establishment of Bogong Equipment in 1990. Bogong to this day remains steeped in the tradition of supplying "real" outdoor gear for the outdoor activities of MUMC tradition.

Gear for serious outdoor adventurers

bogong.com.au



Neil showing the latest in outdoor apparel on MUMC trip circa 1975

THE MAGNUS RATIO

The key to more fun and less horror during trips lies in a newly discovered equation.



BY DALE THISTLETHWAITE

"You know the problem with that climb?"

"No"

"There wasn't enough fun"

"I thought it was fun"

"Oh yeah it was fun, but there wasn't enough fun to make up for all the horror. The fun to horror ratio wasn't good enough"

"I know what you mean... and I think we need a name for that ratio"

"A name?"

"Yeah a name, you know, like the Frobert's ratio!"

"OK. Let's call it the Magnus ratio"

THIS CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE at about 7 a.m. on an extremely steep walk down French Ridge towards Aspiring hut and Raspberry Flat car park in the pouring rain. The day before, Stuart and I had climbed the Hidden Couloir (3+) on the West Face of Mt Aspiring in rising winds and white-out, and though we completed the route, the weather was too bad to crest the ridge and walk the last few hundred metres to the summit. It was the second time I had climbed Mt Aspiring with no view. Despite our waterproofs, and a weather forecast that assured us it wouldn't rain till midday, we were already saturated and our packs, containing axes, hammers, ropes, ice screws and bivvy gear were rapidly absorbing the rain to become even heavier. We continued to reflect as we walked down.

It seemed the whole 2009/2010 summer season in NZ had been dominated by an unsatisfactory Magnus ratio. It's not that the climbs weren't good, or that we hadn't done climbs that involved horror before: there were two nasty incidents last season, one involving crawling through a tunnel of matagouri², and then abseiling a waterfall on a walk out from Mt Sealy which was supposed to be a gentle grassy slope (and it is if you go the right way). The second incident involved two attempts on Mt Cook in two days. After being struck down by gastro half way across the Linda shelf on the first day, we came back up and made it to the summit on the second day somewhat thinner. The difference this time was that the achievement didn't seem enough to make up for the horror. Why?

A bit like Donald Rumsfeld's "known knowns, unknown knowns, and known unknowns..." there are a few things that can go wrong mountaineering, as well as in war. Some of these things you can control, others you can plan and prepare for, but not control, and some you can't control or prepare for. The problem with this trip was that, a lot like Iraq, nothing seemed to have gone according to plan. We'd flown in to Bevan Col on what we knew was a short weather window. The chopper landed at about 5:30 p.m. and we headed across the Bonar to our beautiful bivvy spot at the base of the south-west ridge. The forecast had indicated that the weather would be fine with light winds until about 5 p.m. the next day when

the winds were forecast to pick up and the possibility of precipitation emerged. We reasoned that the route was about seven or eight sixty metre pitches, and then a short walk to the summit. We planned to rise at around 4:30 a.m. and be up the route, down, back to collect our bivvy gear, and over the quarterdeck to French Ridge hut before the weather set in. At worst, if the forecast bad weather came in really early, we'd be crossing the Bonar and walking to the hut when it hit—no sweat. The problem was the weather crapped out on about pitch 5 at about 10 a.m. When you're on a mixed rock/ice route 300 metres off the deck and spindrift is passing you going up, that's not a good sign. It got increasingly cold. The climbing on the lower pitches and crux rock step was good,

The achievement didn't seem enough to make up for the horror. Why?

but as we got higher and the angle eased there was a lot of loose snow covering the ice below and in order to get a decent tool placement I had to swing my tools wildly. Sometimes a shallow tool or crampon placement would pop leaving me to stab at the route with crazed frustration (and swear). We climbed the seven pitches to just below the north-west ridge and the wind was howling.



Heading to the summit was not a possibility, and even gaining the ridge and then walking down to descend via the ramp looked like more trouble and risk than it was worth. We decided to rappel the route on v-threads, and though we'd completed it, without cresting the ridge it was strangely unsatisfying, kind of like rappelling Tiger Wall five metres short of the top of The Bard.

What followed was a long and tiresome walk across the Bonar and up the Quarterdeck in a howling gale. Progress was slow given that every twenty or so steps there was a wind gust so strong we had to stop and brace with our axes on the ground. When we finally reached French Ridge Hut at about 6 p.m. we were helpfully informed by several rude trampers that it was "already full." I resisted the urge to point out that it was an NZAC climbers' hut (not a DOC facility) and as such NZAC members had bed priority. By ten o'clock we were asleep on the floor despite the raucous inhabitants. By 7 a.m. the next morning we were walking out in the rain that hadn't been forecast to start till 1 p.m.

So what had we learnt? We continued our discussion on the walk and noted some curious aspects of the Magnus ratio, defined as:

Fun experienced : Horror experienced

(I should make it clear that "fun" includes all feelings of joy and personal satisfaction resulting from climbing, not just fun in the traditional sense of the word).

The first observation is that a person's ca-

capacity to experience horror diminishes with their experience of it. In other words, the more horror you have experienced the less horrible any new horror will seem; the mind, when faced with horror, has a tendency to look to past horrors and say either "this is not as bad as the time we (insert past horror here)" or "I got through (insert past horror here), I can get through this." This also applies to fear. The more you do things you fear (in this case climbing steep mixed routes in bad condition), the less fear you feel when attempting it again. However, this diminishing return rule doesn't appear to apply to fun. You don't have less fun because you've previously experienced fun. You don't become less excited about reaching a summit because you've reached other summits. The experience of fun appears to be a constant. This gives experienced mountaineers a Magnus ratio advantage—with experience the good bits continue to seem just as good, but the bad bits seem not as bad.

The other interesting aspect is that horror recedes with time. While the fun and satisfaction of a trip remain bright, the horror fades. Interestingly, this might be why people actually continue to be involved in essentially annual activities like mountaineering, by the time the next season rolls around you've forgotten just how much hard work the last one was.

As we walked, we questioned how we could skew the Magnus ratio in our favour in future. A few good ideas emerged:



A panorama taken from the saddle between Grey Peak and Mt Humdinger (main), showing from left to right: Mt Humdinger, Douglas Peak, and Mt Haidinger; Dale quite relaxed on the same saddle (inset).

Dale climbing the crux mixed step of the Hidden Couloir in full conditions (above).

1. Maximise the potential fun: if the route is something you really, really want to do, you can endure a whole lot of horror before the ratio tips. This is because your sense of satisfaction at achieving your goal (i.e. fun) will be so great that the horror simply can't outweigh it (see gastro and successive attempts on Mt Cook as mentioned previously).

2. The second is to limit the possibility of experiencing horror. Our trip appeared to have failed dismally on this score by including both a bivvy and a walk-out. Fly-in, fly-out mountaineering trips based in huts severely limit the chance of experiencing horror, as does stubbornly waiting for a dead-set perfect weather forecast (though this also limits your chance of climbing anything).

3. The third idea was ingenious. Before thinking about a mountaineering trip—wait. If horror recedes over time, then Magnus ratios improve over time. Isn't there the possibility that no matter how horrible, eventually every trip could become good in hindsight?

We decided to devise an equation for horror (clearly the most complex aspect of the Magnus ratio). Before you judge, keep in mind that it's a long walk... (and that it's been over a decade since I did any kind of maths).

Magnus ratio = F : H

Where:

F = fun on a subjective scale from 0-16

H = horror according to the equation:

$$H = (16.16227 - \sqrt{p}) / (t+1)$$

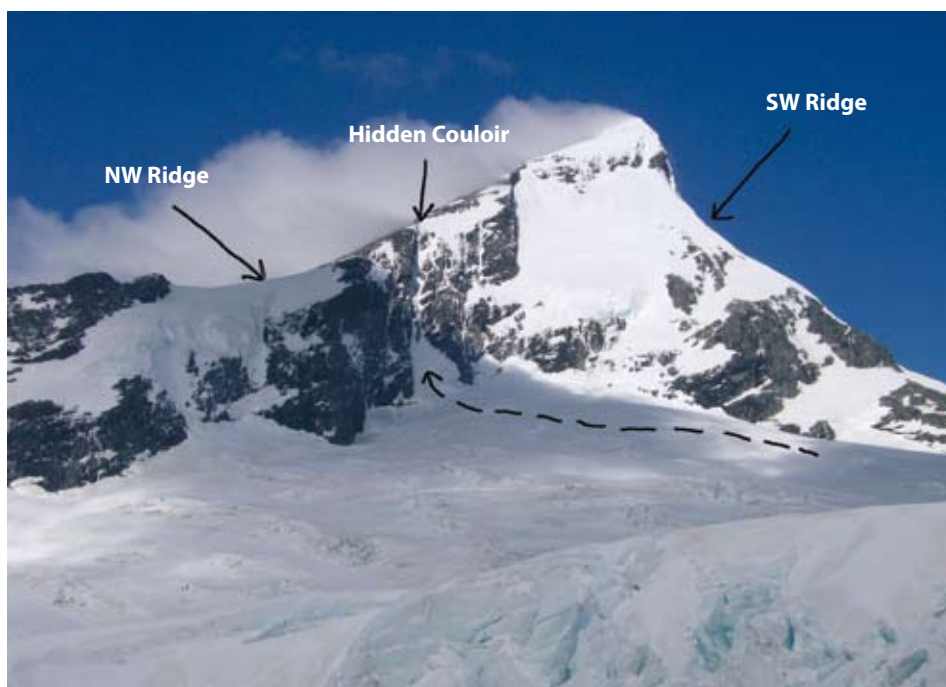
Where:

p = no. of previous trips including a comparable level of horror ($p \leq 10$, as subsequent trips are deemed to have little effect);

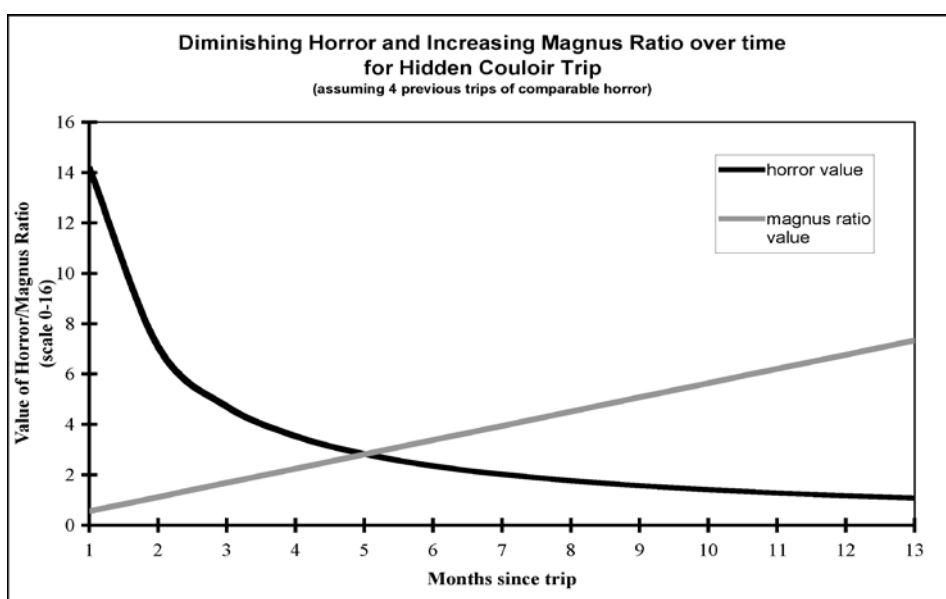
t = time in months since the horror was experienced ($t \leq 12$, as no significant time effect is observed after 12 months).

We graphed our trip (obviously not on the walk now)—plotting the diminishing value of horror over time leading to a corresponding increase in the Magnus ratio value over time. For the purposes of this graph I gave the route a fun rating of 8 (no summit detracts somewhat) and counted four previous mountaineering trips I had completed with comparable horror levels.

Looking at the graph the answer became clear. Contemplation might be the key to wisdom, but it never made anyone feel any



Routes on Mt Aspiring, including Hidden Couloir (above).



better about a crappy mountaineering trip. What appears to be required is about eight months of not being cold, wet or scared half to death and then, fingers crossed, a season of decent weather. Having reached this epiphany I have resolved to leave any consideration of our trip up the Hidden Couloir till at least August at which time you can all expect me to hold some sort of slideshow chuckling about what an hilarious adventure it all was. Until then don't speak to me about it. ☹

Footnotes:

1. "Frobert's" was a term coined to describe the ratio of female to male participants on a given MUMC trip. The ratio was named after former MUMC President (1992) Andrew Roberts who only attended trips with a ratio greater than 1.

2. Matagouri, or wild Irishman as it is sometimes called, is a thorny bush or small tree that can grow up to six metres high. It has very small leaves, small greenish-white flowers and spines that may be several centimetres long. It is painful to encounter.

TALES FROM TOPOUT

Episode 1:

Prince Rockhard and the Holy Hex

BY SAMUEL OGBORN
CONCEPT BY DAVE ELLIS

There is a world called Topout that is dedicated entirely to climbers and their ilk. The view from above (the most commonly taken), shows a range of smaller kingdoms, crags, cliffs, canyons and the Bakeries of the Neutral Lands. But first, welcome to Cliffedge. A land far from over-developed areas but still close to amenities; a fairer land where climbers are mostly free from poor weather, chossy ascents and the social pressure of having to regularly bathe.

PRINCE ROCKHARD OF CLIFFEDGE grimaced while considering the next move. He adjusted the chin strap on his crown and put more weight on the low pinkie jam keeping him on the face. Now ready, he launched and with only minor twangs and protests from his groin, snared a big toe on the crimp by his head. Right, he thought. The next bit may get tricky.

"Sire!" The Castle Ghost, a former climber who made the transition to spirit without having to change his tan suddenly appeared next to him.

"Huh!?"

"You must come at once my lead! The Holy Hex has been stolen!"

At this the Prince almost lost his grip and swore as best you can with a quickdraw in your mouth. The idea was almost unthinkable, the Holy Hex had been a permanent fixture for years. Like the sky, or the porridge you forgot to clean out of the pan that has now set like concrete.

He quickly down-climbed in a state of shock and with the Castle Ghost in lead, made for home. After a quick bush bash, trail hike, scrub walk and a discreet stop in the bushes, he came to Castle Rockhard. Already the exterior showed signs of mourning. Belay calls were curiously absent and the traditional gear slings and improvised clothes lines were all at half mast.

As the drawbridge hadn't been used in centuries, the prince climbed through the traditional entrance—the upper windows. There in the Hall of the Grand Tarp, behind the Royal Throne and Anchor was a horrible

gap in the wall. The castle was already filling up with muttering climbers and general hangers-on.

"Who could have done this?" the Prince demanded. "The Holy Hex was forever bomber! Unremovable!"

"We do not know" said the Ghost sadly. It was just one climber. They got in, somehow stole the Holy Hex and then pinched the chocolate teddys on the way out.

Prince Rockhard considered this mystery. Then before he could ask if anything happened to the hommus, the ghost interrupted.

"The Holy Hex must not remain booty, it holds Castle Rockhard and the Kingdom together. I was alive in the terrible days when the Royal Anchor was just RPs. Now we're back to that I don't know how long it will last. When it fails we are finished!"

The Holy Hex had been a permanent fixture for years. Like the sky, or the porridge you forgot to clean out of the pan that has now set like concrete.

Prince Rockhard nodded and stuck out a chin so firm you'd be happy to belay from it, and also his chest, on which some had already belayed.

"Bastard. He will pay! I will give chase and retrieve the Hex. Regardless of the walk in!"

Prince Rockhard knew what he must first do to save the kingdom: consult Glamrock, the wise, old, tight-fisted hermit. He lived amongst the cliffs of WHAT!?! (so named for their windy ledges), only coming out at night to search by the light of his magic chalk bag, for a dollar dropped many years ago.

Rockhard considered his options. "I'll need supplies and a seconder. I summon my favoured subject who cooks, tastes and occasionally steals my food: Larderman! Laaaar-dermaann!" At the call a figure rapped in from the kitchens in a shower of crumbs.

"Mmf? (gulp), yes sire!?"

"Prepare for an epic. We journey to retrieve the Holy Hex!"

"Mmf!"

Preparation was done carefully as this was no ordinary trip. Prince Rockhard packed his newest and most reliable (but strategically scratched) gear. Some pieces had been donated by the climbing aristocracy and held enormous value. Prince Rockhard appreciated this and like anyone else, spent a lot of time telling people of the incredible cost of the things he didn't actually have to pay for. Some had enchantments that he was only starting to explore, such as the quickdraws that used chirpy tones to judge your placements: Gonna die! Gonna die! Gonna die! Nah, yehgood.

Larderman packed differently but with no less ceremony. He was by trade a provedore to the stars and celebrity camping chef. The first person to climb with fry pans, wok, gas stove, chopping boards, knives, spice rack and more, all with their own inlaid carabiners. It was rumoured he had flipped pancakes twenty metres into the air whilst climbing, so he could have the time to pull rope and clip in to gear with his fry pan hand.

Once ready they were seen off by most of the population, happy that someone else was doing something. The High Priest gave them the usual blessing for those going on a long journey (got your headtorch?), then in accordance with climbing tradition they left the required one-and-a-half hours after the Agreed Leaving Time. Returning for a second departure thirty minutes later to retrieve The Thing That Had Been Forgotten (also in accordance with tradition).

But the wind is a curious thing. It can stop communication between a few metres, or carry conversations across entire mountain ranges. Far up in his cave, Glamrock listened to the farewells. He'd even heard the High Priest give the dull recital of "That Was A Quick Trip" when Rockhard and Larderman returned for The Thing That Had Been Forgotten.

"The Holy Hex eh?" he muttered. "Wait until they learn of the Crux they face..."

To be continued in the next pitch... ☛

KEEN TO GET INTO the Canadian backcountry on my new skis during January and with a little help from Evan Morris and Greta Raymont (former MUMC-er), I found myself on Varsity Outdoors Club's (VOC) annual Winter Longhike. VOC is the University of British Columbia's outdoor club and Winter Longhike is an introductory winter camping trip where the goal is to build a snow shelter to sleep in on Saturday night and have some fun in the snow!

After testing out my new skins (a piece of removable nylon that sticks to the bottom of skis in order to grip the snow whilst moving upwards) and skiing into camp, Evan posed the question: "So, what kind of snow shelter do you want to build?" My answer: "Euhhhh, there's more than one type?!!!" To this response, Evan pulled out information sheets from the internet detailing the construction of a snow cave, an igloo, a snow quinsy and a snow trench, just to name a few! Yep, it turns out that there are many, many different types of snow shelters and many different variations on each one. The design is limited only by your imagination and your ability to carve snow. With approximately 70 people on the VOC trip that weekend we were able to see many different types, varieties and styles.



Another group building an igloo by cutting rectangular blocks of snow out of the lake, positioning them on the structure and then filling in the gaps with extra snow.

PHOTO: HELEN DULFER

Evan, Bob and I decided that we'd start by building a snow cave and then maybe try to construct a trench if time permitted. Snow caves are usually dug out of snow compiled on the side of a slope, and we soon discovered that the metre of snow we had would not be sufficient. Instead we opted to build a snow quinsy that is similar in construction, however, snow must first be piled up and then the cave is the dug out of the snow pile.

Being able to build a snow cave is a handy skill to have if you spend a lot of time in the backcountry during winter because they can be dug out quickly as an emergency shelter. Therefore, I thought I'd share what I have learnt during the trip and have put together some instructions on how to build a snow quinsy.

HOW TO BUILD A SNOW QUINSY

It's a type of snow shelter, in case you were wondering.

1. Find a good site location without trees, logs or rocks beneath the snow by probing for these objects (by sticking a long thin metal rod that's kind-of like a tent pole into the snow). A probe is usually used to search for and locate bodies buried within an avalanche. Once a good site has been found, shovel snow into a large mound (size depends on the number of people sleeping in the quinsy). Snow shoveling will take about an hour and packs can be buried in the middle to reduce the amount of snow shoveling work.



The last part of the pack is about to be buried by Evan shoveling snow. PHOTO: HELEN DULFER



Helen and Evan continue to pile the snow. Probes have been placed to define the edges of the snow quinsy.

PHOTO: BOB LAI

2. Once the snow mound has reached a sufficient size, let it sit for approximately one hour to allow the snow to compact and become harder.

This is a good time for a lunch break, provided you took your lunch out of your pack!



Evan checking that the snow mound is sufficiently hard enough to start digging out. PHOTO: BOB LAI



Evan improvising with a snow saw to cut the fruit cake on account of leaving his knife in his pack. The fruit cake proceeded to crumble! PHOTO: HELEN DULFER

3. Now it is time to start digging out the snow quinsy. Firstly, the entrance must be created by digging horizontally into the bottom of the mound.



Evan starts to dig into the base of the mound. He continues until he creates a tunnel that he can crawl into.

PHOTOS: HELEN DULFER

4. Once the tunnel entrance has reached a sufficient size, which depends on the size and intended design of the snow mound, start to dig upwards. Note that longer tunnels allow less light to penetrate into the quinsy and torches may be needed to dig out the inside. Also note that the snow dug out from the middle of the mound must all be passed through and out of the tunnel entrance. Therefore, a tunnel entrance that goes a long way downwards before moving upwards may be a lot of hard work!



The tunnel entrance seen from inside the snow quinsy.

PHOTO: HELEN DULFER

5. Finally a ledge needs to be dug out for people to sleep on. If you're lucky, it's at this point that you'll find your packs, and where they lay will be the beginning of the ledge. As you dig out the space continually poke and prod the edges of the snow cave in order to determine the thickness of the walls and roof where you are digging. You don't want to dig through to the other side! It was decided that a 40 cm wall and roof thickness would be sufficient.



Helen is sitting on the ledge digging back to create a space big enough for three people to sleep. Note the ski pole coming through the wall, which has been placed to measure the snow thickness.

PHOTO: EVAN MORRIS

6. Once you are satisfied with the size of the hole, put the finishing touches on the snow quinsy by ensuring that the floor is flat and smooth (after all you're sleeping on it!).

Also smooth out the walls and roof of the quinsy with your hands to prevent condensation building up on nooks during the night and subsequently dripping water onto sleeping bodies (some people experienced a very wet and uncomfortable night).

Lastly, be sure to poke a few air holes into the structure. Have a good night's sleep!



The inside of the snow quinsy in the morning as Evan packs up his gear. Be sure to put on your alarm clock as the lack of light can be very deceiving (we may have slept in until 11 a.m.—luckily the skiing was crappy!).

PHOTO: BOB LAI

7. After all that work you'll probably want to stay in it for a couple of days! But when the time comes to leave, it should be destroyed (depending on the location) just in case the odd skier comes hurtling down the hill and smashes into the unknown obstacle.



Helen and Evan jumping on the snow quinsy. To their amusement nothing happened. A snow saw was then brought out to help with the process.

PHOTO: BOB LAI



Stomping on the last bits of the snow quinsy (even more fun than destroying a huge sand castle!). They were surprised at the thickness of the walls.

PHOTO: BOB LAI



The finished snow quinsy!

PHOTO: HELEN DULFER

OPERATION: PLAINS-WANDERER

Partial success for birdwatchers on a crazy mission.

BY CHELSEA EAW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PRASHANT DABEE
BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JOHN BARKLA

YOU'D HAVE TO BE crazy to brave horrific weather conditions simply to find a bird. Perhaps all birdwatchers are a little bit mad; myself included. Melbourne received more than a month's worth of rain in 17 hours over the second-last weekend in November. That was the weekend a couple of us decided to drive north of Bendigo to Terrick Terrick National Park in search of a single bird; Plains-wanderer. It's acts like this that make birdwatchers seem a bit loopy.

Given our excited anticipation about seeing Plains-wanderer, you'd think that it would be a spectacular bird with feathers every colour of the rainbow and a tail that fascinator enthusiasts would envy—not Plains-wanderer. This diminutive bird does not resemble a 'bird of paradise'; in fact, it can be likened

more to a quail. What's special about it is that it's critically endangered in Victoria. And, it can be difficult to see during the day. So it was in the dark that we spent several hours in the car—with rain lashing against the wind-screen—sliding along unsealed roads (literally; and in a 4WD, no less).

The rain was unrelenting even when we stepped out from the car's shelter for a walk, wielding a spotlight. There was nothing out that night except for a lone Speckled Warbler. Defeated, we abandoned "Operation: Plains-wanderer", which was becoming more accurate to describe as "Mission: Impossible".

But that's not to say we didn't see any birds. On both Saturday and Sunday, we wandered amongst the native White Cypress-pines in the park's open woodland, and saw many birds worth the three-hour drive: Gilbert's Whistler (an uncommon bird with an amaz-

ing voice), White-browed Babbler (gregarious birds often found in groups), and Australian Ringneck (a green parrot with a yellow 'ring' behind its neck—a refreshing change from Red-rumped Parrots and lorikeets often seen in Melbourne), among others.

Birdwatching—at least, amongst us young folk—is often perceived as the most boring of all boring outdoor activities, but our night-time escapades and rain-defying hunt proves that birdwatching isn't just for couch (or camping chair) potatoes, but for those of us up for an outdoor experience with a different objective. Of course, it does help if you're also a little bit loopy for birds. ☺

Further information:

<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au>

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net>



No sightings or photographs of the elusive Plains-wanderer, but some of the birds that were spotted by the group during the trip are shown above: from left to right are the Australian Ringneck, Gilbert's Whistler, and White-browed Babbler. Photographs courtesy of John Barkla.



Terrick Terrick National Park contains open woodland dominated by native White Cypress-pine, and is one of the last strongholds for Victoria's native grass-land—one of the most endangered ecosystems in Victoria (opposite top).

The woodlands contain an abundance of native wildflowers. In this case, a field of Yellow Buttons (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*) (top).

Some of the granite hills in Terrick Terrick National Park (below), and the interesting patterns created where the rock has formed cracks and grasses have subsequently filled them in (left).



FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD: AN ADVENTURE IN CLIMBING

Climbers accidentally become bushwalkers,
amongst other frivolity in the land of Oz.

BY HEATHER COUPER

Characters:

Dorothy: Heather Couper
&

Toto: Roisin Briscoe

Got a little disoriented in Oz and
turned a twenty minute trek into a
five hour sojourn.

Scarecrow: Mark Patterson

Was a little scatter-brained, losing his
lucky hat.

Tinman: Lachlan Hick

Found his heart and re-oriented
Dorothy & Toto.

Lion: Kathryn Whalley

Found her courage to climb
harder grades.

—————<—————>

Chapter 1:
Lost in Oz whereby
Tinman finds his heart

IN SEPTEMBER THE CHARACTERS travelled to eastern Oz to pit themselves against NSW’s Blue Mountains. Dorothy and Toto’s adventure was a little more adventurous than initially intended.

Lion having successfully convinced Scarecrow and Tinman that daylight hours are shorter in eastern Oz, headed out to Celebrity Crag, EARLY. Toto and Dorothy followed at the more reasonable time of 7:30 a.m.

Like Dorothy and Toto, you may also not be aware of the significant differences between track descriptions in Kansas and Oz. Kansas guides (of the bushwalking variety) use *maps*, that mark all tracks. The Oz climbing Wizard provides *descriptions*, some requiring readers to tilt their heads 45 degrees and squint to see the “reddish-brown reverse clown face, left of the black pitted feature.” As per the Wizard’s instructions, Toto and Dorothy took the left fork at the dell ten minutes down the track, and searched for the stream-crossing ten minutes later. After twenty minutes they realised more likely climbing cliffs were on the opposite side of the natural basin, and so back-tracked.

One hour gone, and feeling sheepish¹, they continued down the original track for another

twenty minutes before finding a more dell-like area (Wizard descriptions range from the vague to the mathematically precise). At this point, it made sense to Dorothy and Toto to assume the Wizard’s walking times were more appropriate for (crag) hunting parties with Lion present, as Lion walked with a faster pace (this assumption becoming mistake no. 1), so in response, they mentally doubled all estimates given (in turn causing downfall no. 2).

Dorothy and Toto took a track marked by yellow ties, crossed the stream and kept heading to the bottom of the cliffs singing “Follow the Yellow Brick Road.”² Soon Toto realised they had missed a turn and again consulted the Wizard. Dorothy regretted not taking a digital photo of the park map (passed at 7:30 a.m.). However, relying on the Wizard’s sketch (error no. 3), the circular track would take them to the other side of the crag. Toto and Dorothy were not ill-prepared for the originally anticipated twenty minute foray into Oz, with two first aid kits, three emergency blankets, twelve muesli bars and about 3.5 litres of water between them. No salt though...

Having heard voices, Dorothy and Toto thought they couldn’t be too far away. The “yellow brick road” curved down once more, ending at a larger stream. After searching for more markers down several likely-looking tracks, Dorothy concluded they were at



Toto, three hours into the walk and prior to two leeches (left).

Lion, courage intact (far left).

a dead end and slightly lost. She concluded that the bewitching poppy fields had confused their sense of direction.

Dorothy was starting to worry about Toto at this point, as Toto was hallucinating and describing bushwalking as fun³. After another muesli bar she seemed OK and still in surprisingly good spirits, given Toto had now walked for four hours. Toto's high spirits ended, however, after she found a leech trying to invade her trousers (which she had to nibble out).

Leaving Toto at the last yellow marker, Dorothy attempted to find the track by going

Dorothy was starting to worry about Toto at this point, as Toto was hallucinating and describing bushwalking as fun.

in a circle around Toto. As with the earlier attempts, Dorothy again confused kangaroo and human tracks. In Dorothy's absence Toto had found another leech so was feeling particularly unhappy about bushwalking again. Toto and Dorothy decided to call Tinman for reinforcements. It took some convincing, but he eventually found the heart to come and find them.

Yes, there were several ridgelines Dorothy and Toto could have bush-bashed their way up (although there were also several cliffs, unfriendly to both bushwalker and climber). There was also the option of following the stream, and possibly finding familiar territory. However this would have meant Tinman would have left Oz without gaining a heart (and possibly got the duo really lost).

The afternoon provided delightful climbing at Dam Cliffs⁴ with Lion finding the courage to lead a grade higher. Lion and Dorothy had made an agreement where every time Dorothy went up a grade, Lion would too. Lion had the advantage of climbing five grades below her top roping ability, to Dorothy's four-grade differential.

Chapter 2: The Sydney dust tornado

The next day, with Tinman not trusting Toto and Dorothy alone, the troupe started climbing right next to camp. Even then, the wicked west wind turned Dorothy into an over-clutching wreck and everyone headed for more sheltered climbing.

The storm hit as everyone returned from Katoomba that night. It was so bad that at 6:30 p.m. the troupe hunkered down in their tents and ate scroggin for dinner. Given the dry Oz bush, the rain quickly turned the campsite into a series of minor streams. Unfortunately, one made its way through the middle of Dorothy and Toto's tent, making sleeping quarters a tad soggy. As Toto was using Lion's spare sleeping bag, Dorothy's fear of turning down-filled bags into matted ducks outweighed her fear of Toto heading for the neighbouring pub/hotel (with her "tale" between her legs). To Dorothy's surprise, Toto whimpered a little, but stayed put.

The next day was still soggy and windy and everyone relaxed in Katoomba. Despite a number of downpours and hosing, Dorothy's tent still has a protective covering of dust. At the time, Tinman and Lion had crowed about their dry abode, but on the last day found the futon had soaked up a stream.

Chapter 3: Lion finds her courage

Given the windy weather, sheltered Dam Cliffs was perfect for the next day's activities. It also offered great climbs across all grades as ability ranged from grades 13 to 23. After following Toto up a 16, Dorothy gave it a go on lead. Given Dorothy had pushed a grade; Lion had to follow her example. Tinman flew up climbs all over the place and with male (or possibly just climber) pride, Scarecrow also started pushing his limits.

Toto had also picked her hard climb for the day and after struggling for a while

on the crux, broke through. Dorothy was determined to try it too, but on top rope. Frustrated by the crux, her mentality of "just climb the damned thing" kicked in. Although inelegant, she finally made it up and was ecstatic to have climbed (albeit on top rope) her first 19. Dorothy's fingers didn't quite agree as half were bleeding. Lion, encouraged by the others, pushed another grade higher.

Chapter 4: Toto and Dorothy alone again

After consulting the Wizard, Toto and Dorothy had chosen to climb *Sweet Dreams* at Sublime Cliffs. Of course the rest of the group (and particularly Tinman) was incredibly dubious at Toto and Dorothy's ability to find their climb (and their way back). To everyone's surprise, they did both. Toto's ability to sniff-out bolts, belay stations and not lose rope bags put Dorothy to shame that day. A lovely outing was had by both parties, with Tinman, Scarecrow and Lion also having a successful day's climbing on some pretty awesome rock at Bunny Bucket Buttress.

The End

Scarecrow had forgotten to pack Dorothy's ruby slippers, so the troupe was forced to drive back to Melbourne. ☹

Footnotes:

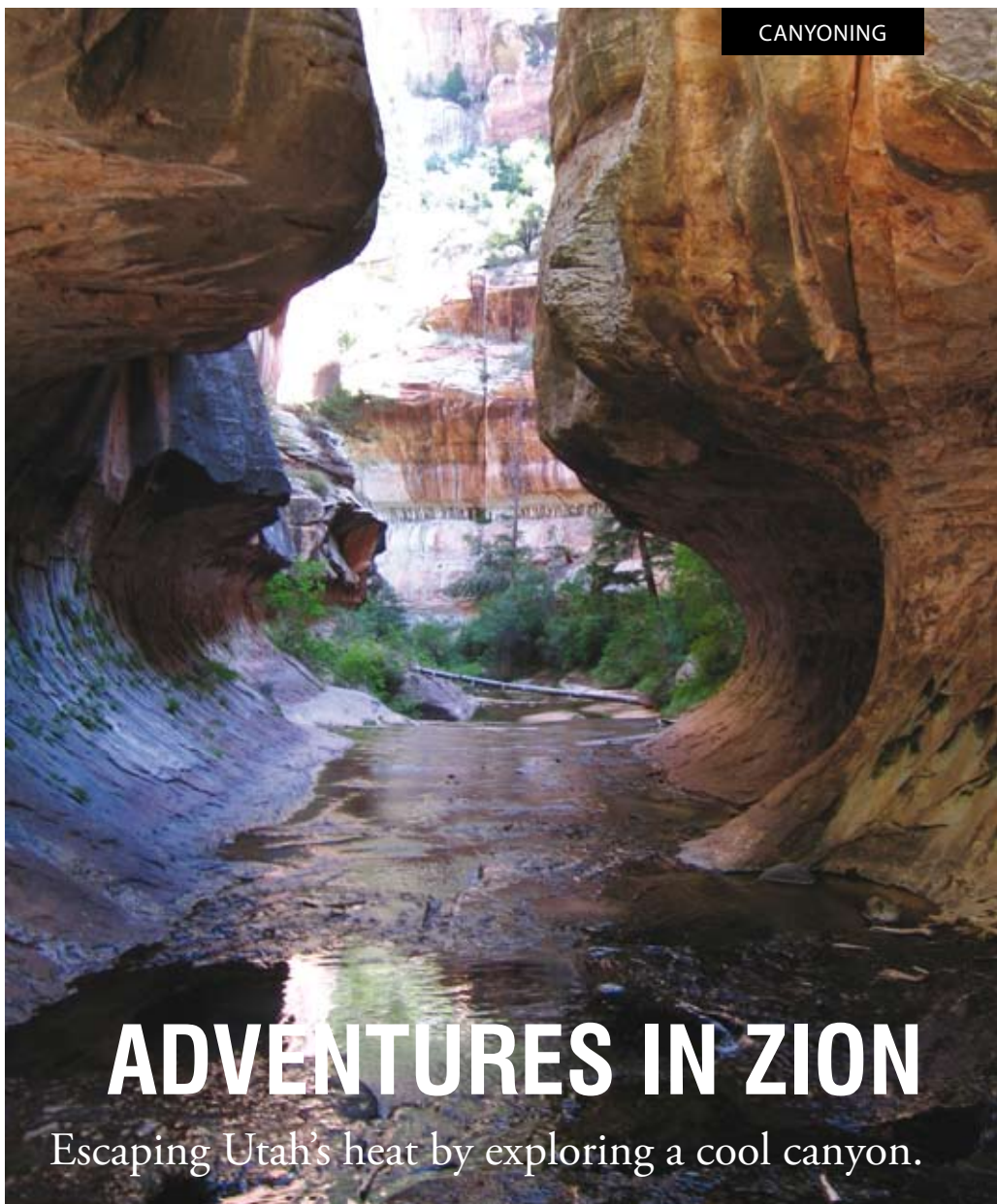
1. Which came a little more naturally to Dorothy than to Toto. Toto felt like growling.
2. Not that they realised the significance at the time.
3. Before insulting a large proportion of Kansas, Dorothy is a happy hiker. She was worried about Toto who vehemently barks and growls on walks.
4. Apparently another scene for disoriented MUMC climbers, but we followed Lion and Tinman this time.

JULY IN UTAH HAS oppressive heat. Zion was no exception. Boulderering was not really an option with temperatures above 45°C every day. No amount of chalk could help friction, as the orange sandstone was hot enough to melt the rubber from your shoes. Instead I decided to go canyoning. I had done some research before I left the homeland and decided to do something fun but straightforward. The canyon named ‘The Subway’ was the obvious choice.

I got up early and parked the car at the canyon exit. I had decided to hitch the shuttle rather than walk as the road was fairly well used. Ten minutes passed and the temperature slowly climbed. A blue pick-up pulled into the car park followed by another car. Two guys got out and promptly asked what I was doing. I told them and they offered me a lift. After a squishy journey jammed behind the front seat we arrived at our destination. ‘Leave that shit behind’ one of them said. ‘You don’t need it’. I left the rope, harness and other gear in the car. Finding the canyon entrance was not meant to be easy. It was good I now had a local to guide my way. Hanging out in the heat was not my idea of fun.

Earlier in my trip I had gained myself a good dose of heat stroke. It was maybe not such a good idea to go walking in the desert in the middle of summer. Three days of vomiting caused me to re-think my journey. I escaped to Colorado and the Rockies but that is another story.

After an hour or so of walking and many pretty rocks along the way, we were at the canyon entrance. We descended a steep gully scrambling down the rocks until we were in the shade below. A few minutes later we were entering the canyon proper. It was cool and moist, the steep canyon walls blocking out the ravaging sun. We walked on, often through cold pools of ankle deep water until we reached a tight section with a small obstacle to get down. With the help of a sling around a chockstone we lowered ourselves down. The water below was not deep enough to jump from above but fine when hanging at arms length.



A few meters on and the pool deepened. We found ourselves swimming through a tight canyon with parts where it was hard to force my body through. The frigid water was welcome after the earlier heat. The walls of the canyon were sculpted by water and they soon widened into a large open pipe-like formation a few meters across. This soon led to a small cliff. We threaded our tubular webbing through a bolt and descended hand over hand. The wet webbing was slippery and had to be gripped hard. I was glad to get down unscathed.

The rest of the canyon was most uneventful. The walls got further apart and the cliffs got higher. It soon opened into a steep sided valley. Trees and large boulders filled the valley floor. A large slab of rock at the edge of

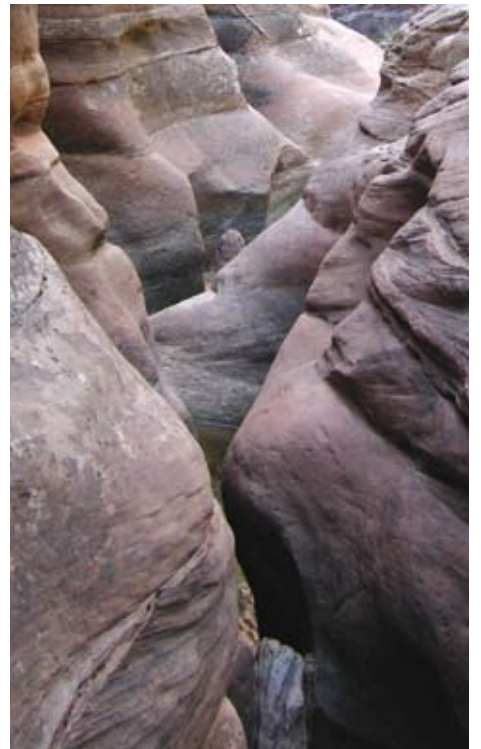
the canyon was covered in dinosaur footprints and fossil plants. This kept my interest up. Toward the end of our journey we unexpectedly got a bit of a surprise from a large snake on our path. It reared up hissing and scared the shit out of us. We soon noticed that it probably wouldn't bite us as it already had its mouth full... of another snake!

We had a rest at the end of the canyon where there was still some water and watched some frogs and lizards in the reeds. The exit was steep and hot. Much less friendly than the gorgeous canyon behind us. I farewelled the Wal-Mart guys and made my way back to camp marvelling at the thick black clouds in the distance. It was a mighty fine day out and I deserved a mighty fine meal! Off to the local diner for an Elk burger and fries! ☘

One of numerous water channels that give ‘The Subway’ its name (top).

Mac braves the heat to do some bouldering (left).

Opposite page, clockwise from top: Wider section of the canyon with dramatic cliffs; Smooth walls sculpted by water; Snake eating snake; Natural coffee table; The Wal-Mart guys negotiate some very large logs; View of the valley after exiting the canyon.





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