

On the Tracks

Issue 1, January 2014

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Editor: Joslin Guest

Deadline for next Issue: 17 February 2014

Send reports, photos and articles to:

editor@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

Include **On the Tracks** in the Subject line



Kurth Kiln track maintenance team—building steps

On the Tracks

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Welcome to On the Tracks

Welcome to the first issue of Bushwalking Victoria's *On the Tracks* newsletter for Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation (BTAC). *On the Tracks* will be emailed to BTAC volunteers, club contacts, field officers and committee members. The newsletter aims to provide an effective way to share information between BTAC members at all levels.

We plan for the *On the Tracks* newsletter to be emailed every second month to each person on the BTAC database, and a *Bulletin* to be emailed when something of importance comes up or changes occur at short notice.

Both the newsletter and bulletin are 'works in progress' with regard to content, format and timing. And we need your input and feedback about these.

We also want you to contribute reports on your activities, promote upcoming track and conservation events you are planning, raise issues that you think should be addressed, or simply forward articles of interest from another source. We want the newsletter and bulletin to be a 'two-way street'.

We hope you have enjoyed your BTAC work activities during 2013 and look forward to working with you on the tracks in 2014.

Megan Major, Convener BTAC

BEC Becomes BTAC

For many years, Bushwalking Victoria has had a standing committee known as the Bushwalking Environment Committee (BEC). As a result of the review which we carried out as part of the process of evolving our new Strategic Plan, we came to the conclusion that we needed to change the focus of BEC in two ways:

- To provide a more proactive focus on tracks and trails strategy – ie, to concentrate on looking at opportunities for new or upgraded tracks and trails and to be able to articulate a vision of the bushwalking facilities that we wanted for the future
- To increase the focus on engaging with key land-manager decision makers so that we can influence planning as it affects bushwalkers more effectively and at an earlier stage.

As part of this change, we decided to rename BEC to reflect more closely its new and expanded role. From now on, BEC will be known as Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation (BTAC). BTAC will be represented by two Board members:

- Megan Major, who will be the convener of the committee and will play a major role in land manager liaison
- Charlie Ablitt, who will lead the tracks and trails development and conservation projects.

In practice, they will overlap in their roles. They will work together to ensure that bushwalkers needs and wishes are clearly stated and understood, and will continue the outstanding work BEC did over many years. They will work with the other members of the BTAC committee: Phil Brotchie, Joslin Guest, Dave Rimmer and David Miller, and will be supported by a network of BTAC field officers, club contacts and the many volunteers who make our track work possible.

Tony Walker, Bushwalking Victoria President

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How BTAC Operates

BTAC operates at four levels.

- Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation **volunteers** do the hands-on work on tracks and conservation projects that have been approved by Parks Victoria, now part of Department of Environment and Primary Industry (DEPI). Work may include clearing vegetation, constructing or repairing steps or rails, fixing netting on boardwalks, installing or replacing signs, clearing water bars, removing noxious weeds or any other work that Parks Victoria/DEPI would like Bushwalking Victoria to help with.

If you are already a volunteer and want more information about forthcoming projects, contact Charlie Ablitt, Projects Coordinator, at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

If you wish to be added to our list of BTAC volunteers, contact Patricia Scales, Bushwalking Victoria's Office Manager at admin@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

- Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation **club contacts** act as a point of contact to receive information about projects and to advise BTAC of track/conservation issues and activities that concern their club. This contact person should have a close relationship with the local Parks Ranger, Friends Group or Advisory Group which may have a common interest.

To update club contact details, contact Patricia Scales, Bushwalking Victoria's Office Manager, at admin@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

If your club is planning a local track or conservation activity and would like additional help, contact Charlie Ablitt, Projects Coordinator, at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

- Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation **field officers** are appointed by the BTAC and are responsible for a designated geographic area. They liaise and network with local clubs and land managers and report monthly to BTAC. They are expected to be long-term appointees and not subject to changes at club committee level. They should be frequent visitors to their area and build strong relationships with land managers. Their task is to identify issues, recommend possible courses of action, research and investigate issues as requested.
- The Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Committee is a standing committee of Bushwalking Victoria. It replaces the Bushwalking Environment Committee. Its role is to develop, coordinate, promote and administer all of the above.

If you have questions or issues that you want the committee to address, contact the BTAC Convener, Megan Major, at tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

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Tracks and Conservation Schedule 2014

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<p>Hawkweed Survey, Falls Creek Mon 6 - Fri 10 Jan Mon 13 - Fri 17 Jan Mon 20 - Fri 24 Jan Organiser: Parks Victoria</p>	<p>Places still available on these dates. Accommodation is provided by Falls Creek Resort Management, including breakfast, morning & afternoon tea each day. For more information or to register interest, contact Yohanna Aurisch 0427 387 806 yohanna.aurisch@parks.vic.gov.au</p>
<p>Sallow Willow eradication, Falls Creek Sat 25 - Mon 27 Jan 20 Organisers: BTAC, Parks Victoria</p>	<p>Once again Parks Victoria has invited us to partake in the Annual Willow Hunt on the Bogong High Plains at Falls Creek on the Australia Day weekend, 25-27 January 2014. In 2014 we are arranging the activity to suit everyone, from the comfort loving to the rugged camper. We are looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 people to work out of Falls Creek. Accommodation will be at the Viking Ski Lodge. • 18 people who will work from a base camp on Mt Bogong. <p>Please send your expression of interest ASAP to Charlie Ablitt at charlieablitt31@gmail.com or 0400 967 054.</p>
<p>AAWT and Baw Baw feeder track clearing Fri 14 - Mon 17 Mar Organisers: Parks Victoria, Friends of Baw Baw NP, Strzelecki Bushwalking Club</p>	<p>Bushwalking clubs and individuals are invited to join local Parks Victoria staff, Friends of Baw Baw National Park and the Strzelecki Bushwalking Club over a 4-day track clearing activity on the Baw Baw Plateau (Baw Baw National Park). The activity will focus on clearing the walking track network between Jeep Track Flat and the Baw Baw Alpine Resort, including a section of the AAWT across Mt St Phillack. This will further enhance walking opportunities in Baw Baw National Park following the completion of track works in the remote Mt Whitelaw area of the park in 2012 and the Cascades Trail in 2013. Parks Victoria will establish a base camp for this activity at Jeep Track Flat from early Friday 14 March 2014. Access to the base camp is via the St Gwinear car park or Baw Baw Village. <u>Parks Victoria will supply fresh fruit, general consumables, energy food and all evening meals for participants. Ample water is available at the camp.</u> Volunteers will need to bring camping gear, sturdy footwear and wet weather clothing. Participants are welcome for whatever time they can spare and there will be a variety of tasks to complete from very easy to arduous. All safety gear will be provided by Parks Victoria. For further information or to register your interest in this activity, please contact the Parks Victoria Latrobe Ranger in Charge, Andy Gillham, at agillham@parks.vic.gov.au or 5172 2186 or 0428 333 464.</p>

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<p>Cathedral Ranges track clearing Sat 15 - Sun 16 Mar Organisers: Boroondara Bushwalkers Inc, Parks Victoria</p>	<p>Boroondara Bushwalks Inc has agreed to be a support group for the Cathedral Ranges State Park under the auspice of Parks Victoria and ranger Rhyl Shaw. Our first project will be track clearing (lopper work) on the southern ridgeline between Farmyard and Mt Sugarloaf. (Location may be subject to change.) Parks Victoria will provide training, tools, PPE, etc and insurance cover. We will work on the Saturday and bushwalk on the Sunday. We will have a basecamp (tents) on Saturday night. BYO everything, including water.</p> <p>Members of other bushwalking clubs and individual members of Bushwalking Victoria are invited to participate. To register interest, contact Joslin Guest at president@boroondarabushwalkers.org.au or 9882 7629 or 0400 988 668.</p>
<p>Threatened species nest boxing – Lurg Hills Sat 1 - Sun 2 Mar Sat 5 – Sun 6 April Sat 3 - Sun 4 May Organiser: Regent Honeyeater Project</p>	<p>This annual activity in the Lurg Hills near Benalla is a count of nest box use by threatened species such as Squirrel Gliders, Sugar Gliders and Brush-tailed Phascogales.</p> <p>It is also an opportunity to enjoy the Lurg Hills scenery and its forested areas, practice bush navigation, and gain some deeper insights into local ecological issues and the successes the Regent Honeyeater Project has had during 19 years of habitat restoration. It is also an opportunity to socialise with like-minded people.</p> <p>See http://regenthoneyeater.org.au/nest-box.php for more information.</p> <p>To register interest, contact Ray Thomas at ray@regenthoneyeater.org.au</p>
<p>AAWT Wallace Hut/Cope Hut area, Bogong High Plains Sun 12 - Sat 18 Jan Sun 2 - Sat 8 Feb Organiser: Conservation Volunteers Australia</p>	<p>Track re-surfacing using rubber tiles; rock/timber water bars and steps.</p> <p>Easy walking, but vigorous physical activity.</p> <p>Maximum of 6 volunteers. Group departs from the CVA Bendigo Office. Must be equipped for alpine conditions and meet the minimum gear requirements for the project. Bunk-style accommodation at Falls Creek. \$75 contribution towards food.</p> <p>For more information and to register interest, contact Adam at 5444 0777 or 0427 507 004 or ASmolak@conservationvolunteers.com.au</p>
<p>Heathy Spur – feeder track to AAWT Sun 16 - Sat 22 Feb Organiser: Conservation Volunteers Australia</p>	<p>Track re-surfacing using rubber tiles; installing water bars and steps.</p> <p>Easy walking, but vigorous physical activity.</p> <p>Max of 6 volunteers. Group departs from the CVA Bendigo Office. Must be equipped for alpine conditions and meet the minimum gear requirements for the project. Bunk-style accommodation at Falls Creek. \$75 contribution towards food.</p> <p>For more information and to register interest, contact Adam at 5444 0777 or 0427 507 004 or ASmolak@conservationvolunteers.com.au</p>

Bushwalking Victoria Office Manager: admin@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Convener: tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

Projects Coordinator: conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

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<p>AAWT Mt Clear/Nobs area Sun 2 - Sat 8 Mar Sun 16 - Sat 22 Mar* Organiser: Conservation Volunteers Australia</p>	<p>Track clearing (chainsaw, leader only), brush cutting and drainage installation.</p> <p>Need to be able to walk several kilometres each day in very steep, uneven and rocky terrain carrying approximately 10kg of equipment. Need to be able to operate an 8kg brushcutter or use a rake hoe or mattock all day.</p> <p>Maximum of 6 volunteers. Group departs from the CVA Bendigo Office. Must be equipped for alpine conditions and meet the minimum gear requirements for the project. \$75 contribution towards food.</p> <p>Remote camping. *A more remote area than the prior weekend.</p> <p>For more information and to register interest, contact Adam at 5444 0777 or 0427 507 004 or ASmolak@conservationvolunteers.com.au</p>
<p>AAWT King Billy/Mt Magdala Sun 30 Mar - Sat 5 Apr Organiser: Conservation Volunteers Australia</p>	<p>Track clearing (chainsaw, leader only), brush cutting and drainage installation.</p> <p>Need to be able to walk several kilometres each day in very steep, uneven and rocky terrain carrying approximately 10kg of equipment. Need to be able to operate an 8kg brushcutter or use a rake hoe or mattock all day.</p> <p>Remote camping.</p> <p>Maximum of 6 volunteers. Must be equipped for alpine conditions and meet the minimum gear requirements for the project. \$75 contribution towards food.</p> <p>For more information and to register interest, contact Adam at 5444 0777 or 0427 507 004 or ASmolak@conservationvolunteers.com.au</p>
<p>Threatened species planting – Lurg Hills Sat 9 - Sun 10 Aug Sat 23 - Sun 24 Aug Sat 6 - Sun 7 Sep Sat 20 - Sun 21 Sep Organiser: Regent Honeyeater Project</p>	<p>This annual activity in the Lurg Hills near Benalla involves the planting critical habitat for threatened woodland birds such as the endangered Regent Honeyeater and Grey Crowned Babbler.</p> <p>It is also an opportunity to enjoy the Lurg Hills scenery; and gain some deeper insights into local ecological issues and the successes the Regent Honeyeater Project has had during 19 years of habitat restoration. It is also an opportunity to socialise with like-minded people.</p> <p>See http://regenthoneyeater.org.au/planting.php for more information.</p> <p>To register interest, contact Ray Thomas at ray@regenthoneyeater.org.au</p>

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Field Officer Reports

Alps

The '**Loo with a view**' at MacAlister Springs re-opened at on 30 November.

The seasonally closed **Blue Rag Range Track** has been re-opened to the Trig Point, but remains closed beyond the Trig Point.

Parks Victoria and Museum Victoria, with logistical support from 4WD Victoria, did a two-week **Bioscan of wildlife in the Alpine National Park**, based at Native Dog Flat near the Cobberas, following similar surveys in the Grampians and Wilsons Promontory. The survey finished on 3 December. It was reported in *The Age* at <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/critter-census-reaps-bonanza-for-researchers-20131129-2ygeg.html>

Pinnacles Fire Tower via Moroka Road is currently closed due to a new bridge being constructed on Moroka Road at Little River. Access to Horseyard Flat camping area is still available via Moroka Road, but there is no access beyond that point.

Following the January-February 2013 fires, a small number of vehicle and walking tracks in the Alpine National Park in the **vicinity of Mt Hotham** remain closed for safety reasons. The Access Re-opening Strategy that advises visitors of the scheduled dates for re-opening is available at http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/577412/Access_reopening_strategy_alpine_fire_2013.pdf.pdf

Parks Victoria and volunteer groups such as Friends of Bogong and the Harrietville community are doing regular work on the Bungalow Spur track to Mt Feathertop to keep it open.

Jim Harker

Wilsons Promontory

All tracks are in good order and are ready for the peak visitor period.

Tracks crew are currently working at **Tongue Point**.

Contracts have been let for putting in new steps on the eroded sections of tracks at **Little Waterloo Bay** and at **North Waterloo**.

In the last month, significant periods of strong winds have resulted in more trees falling across tracks. The long boardwalk near Sealers Cove was damaged during one of these incidents, but has been repaired.

A series of new, more **informative road signs** are being progressively introduced to help visitors find their way to various features at the Prom, not just to Tidal River.

Ian McKellar

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Activity Reports

AAWT – Wallaces Hut to Cope Hut Heritage Track

17-18 November 2013



Friends of Bogong

Participants: Rod N, Dawn K, Jim H, Betty W, Margaret G, Pam G, Margaret T, Shauna W, Nick B, Harry T, Eilene C (Sat only); plus first-timers: Ralph B, Deb S

Liaison Ranger: Iris Curran

On both Saturday and Sunday, we worked on the track near the Maisie's Plot information board laying permatread tiles. This involved edging the walking track, laying the permatread tiles which are joined together with interlocking tabs, cutting the tiles to fit around the numerous rocks and folding them over the snowgrass to secure them. We laid approximately 140 tiles. We had just finished and picked up our tools when it started to snow.

Friends of Bogong Convener



Upper Howqua River Track Maintenance Weekend

7-8 December 2013



BTAC

Participants: Charlie, Sigrid, Ailsa, Geoff, Marianne, Jim

Liaison Ranger: Nigel Watts

The participants made their own way to our campsite on the Howqua River. Before going to the campsite Ailsa, Sigrid and I met Ranger-in-Charge, Nigel Watts, at the Parks Victoria office at Mansfield to discuss logistics, and the three of us also stopped at Craigs Hut to enjoy the stunning vista. After that we headed down Bindaree Track to its junction with the Howqua River, where we set up camp and enjoyed a cup of our favourite beverage while taking in the beauty of our location.

The rest of the crew arrived over the course of the evening. Geoff and Marianne arrived while we were preparing dinner and we spent a congenial evening chatting. Jim arrived after we had gone to bed.

Birdsong heralded the morning. Nigel arrived at his appointed hour, on the dot. After introductions and safety briefing, we picked up tools and headed for the first of six river crossings. This first crossing was a shock to the system and we emerged from the water with numbingly cold feet. We then walked for 3kms on a reasonable track and after another five rivers crossing arrived at the start of our worksite, a 3km stretch of track leading uphill through forest.

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Geoff and I, along with the Ranger Nigel, went in front with the chainsaws. Nigel attended to the larger fallen trees while Geoff and I attacked the many smaller trunks. The rest of the crew came up the rear using loppers to cut back the bush that intruded on the track. Jim and Sigrid took it in turns using the brushcutter to trim low lying vegetation. Blackberry and raspberry vines, which grew quite thickly in places, made trimming a difficult task. Nigel decided to organise contractors to spray these at a later date. We worked steadily with breaks for morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

The river crossings on the way back were appreciated, as the water was not as cold as previously and was refreshing on our hot and tired feet. All through the day, it was great to see how we looked out for one another when we crossed the river or were on the more difficult sections of track. We returned to camp, tired, but happy. Once again we ate in a congenial atmosphere, with each person contributing a tasty delight to share. It was not long after the light failed that we all headed for bed.

We arose early enough the next day to start back to work at 7.30. The river crossings were still cold, but not as bad as the day before. We all headed up to a high point on the track and worked our way back to where we had stopped work the day before. When the trimmers had finished their clearing up, they continued further uphill, and when it was time to return to our base camp we were only a short distance from the very top of the track. But there wasn't time to finish that section.

We headed home justifiably satisfied with the effort we had put in and the work done, and talking about the next time we might work in the area. I thank all who participated for their great effort.

Charlie Ablitt, BTAC Projects Coordinator



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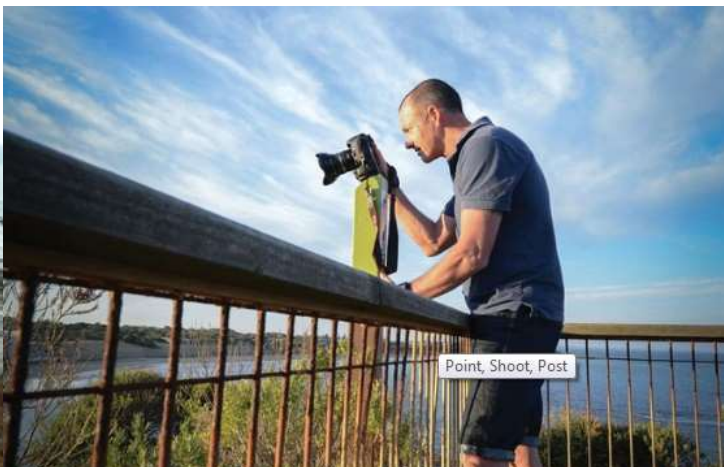
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Conservation Issues

Fluker Posts—Take a Photo and Contribute to the Monitoring of the Environment

[Martin Fluker](#), a lecturer in Tourism Management in the College of Business at Victoria University, with the support of partners such as Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria, has devised a project for monitoring the environment in designated areas. The project uses crowd-sourced photography to keep long-term tabs on ecologically sensitive landscapes such as revegetated areas, wetlands, foreshores, offshore reefs and heavily trafficked tracks.

The Fluker Posts are 120cm tall (4ft in the old money), weather-hardy, bright green posts topped a cradle, a small platform designed to accept any digital camera and pointing in a particular direction. Passers-by are instructed where to point their camera to ensure that the same perspective is recorded each time a photo is taken and to email their date-stamped digital photograph to FlukerPost@gmail.com



The pictures are arranged chronologically in a PowerPoint presentation, allowing land managers to easily view the impacts of trail usage, design and maintenance, weed infestation, fire damage, general erosion, climate change and so on in a given location over a number of years. The public can view the images at www.slideshare.net/towbike



4 images from the 47 collected from [Fluker Post BR1](#) at the Brisbane Ranges National Park, showing some of the changes that have occurred at this particular location.

Since the first Fluker Post was installed five years ago, over 1500 images have been recorded from 68 posts in Victoria—eg, the [Great Ocean Walk](#) in the Great Otway National Park, the [You Yangs](#) Regional Park and the [Brisbane Ranges](#) National Park. In January 2013, Martin installed two posts on a pontoon overlooking a part of the Great Barrier Reef that was exposed at low tide and—a first—an underwater post (made of aluminium) to observe the a coral shelf at the same site.

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Current Fluker Post Sites	No of posts
Great Ocean Walk (Great Otway National Park)	20
The Brisbane Ranges National Park	3
The You Yangs Regional Park	3
The Great Barrier Reef	3
The Western Treatment Plant	30
The Surf Coast	7
The Point, Point Lonsdale	3
Melton Botanic Garden	3
TOTAL:	72

Martin single-handedly manages the posts' construction and manages the online photo data feed to land managers. Each site's land-manager pays for posts in their area of responsibility. Martin hopes to extend the monitoring to urban landscapes. 'Land managers of national parks spend heaps of money and resources on designing, creating and maintaining...walking paths', Dr Fluker says. 'One of the most important reasons to monitor the condition of the tracks is to make sure walkers are kept safe.'

Parks Victoria's Great Ocean Walk Team Leader Nick Alexeyeff welcomes the initiative. 'It's been great to work with Victoria University on this project. The 20 posts are in remote locations and can be hard to get to [regularly]. For a park ranger it can be a two hour walk from any road. This project enables us to check the condition of the tracks from the comfort of our office. It's a great tool for us.'

Sources:

<http://www.flukerpost.com/>

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/fluker-posts-help-protect-victoria8217s-environmental-treasures/story-fni0fit3-1226727822160>

<http://www.vu.edu.au/news-events/media-releases/posting-photos-for-research-is-all-in-a-day-s-walk>

<http://www.slideshare.net/towbike/great-ocean-walk-fluker-post-001-3876912>

<http://conservationmagazine.org/2013/06/fluker-posts/>

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Hawkweed

Scientists, land managers and weed ecologists from Victoria, Tasmania and NSW met at Falls Creek on 7-8 November to discuss the control and eradication of highly invasive Hawkweed in Australia. Three types of Hawkweed occur in Victoria: Orange Hawkweed, King Devil Hawkweed, and Mouse-ear Hawkweed. Orange Hawkweed is also found in NSW and Tasmania.



King Devil Hawkweed. Photo Neville Walsh



Orange Hawkweed. Photo J.R.Hosking



Mouse-ear Hawkweed. Note the mouse ear like leaves and single flower head. Photo Jenny Rolland



Leaves have scattered long hairs on top surface



Stems are covered with scattered long hairs

Photos: © 2005 Louis M Landry



Mouse-ear Hawkweed spreads by stolon

Photo: RG & FJ Richardson www.weedinfo.com.au.

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Australian land managers want to eradicate all three species before they create the level of damage that is occurring in New Zealand. In New Zealand, 10 species of Hawkweed occupy more than 6,000,000ha. In the South Island, Hawkweed is the dominant plant on more than 500,000ha.

Speaking on ABC Radio National's *Bush Telegraph*, Charlie Pascoe, Parks Victoria's Environment Program Manager for the Alps, said that it is not known for sure how Hawkweed got to Australia. However it is likely that Orange Hawkweed was introduced by European migrants working on hydro schemes in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. It is believed that Devil Hawkweed was introduced to Falls Creek by ski field machinery brought over from NZ. Ski field machinery from Falls Creek is known to be responsible for the introduction to Devil Hawkweed to Mt Buller. No one knows how Mouse-ear Hawkweed was introduced, but he suspects that it came in from NZ via seeds attached to socks, bootlaces or trousers. Hence the importance of thoroughly cleaning and checking all bushwalking equipment and clothing after each trip and before you carry or wear it on another walk.

Hawkweed is the perfect weed. It can adapt to almost any niche—all soil types, including gravel, full sun, part shade, frost or snow. Like many introduced plants that become weeds, its environment plasticity is greater in its adopted country than in its native environment. It is highly aggressive. It produces massive amounts of seed—more than 40000 per square metre—and uses the full range of disperse methods. It can spread vegetatively both above and below ground—stolons and rhizomes—to form dense mats. It has allopathic capabilities that enable it to change soil chemistry, not only to outcompete native species but other weeds.

There are three requirements for eradication: detection, prevention of seed production and destruction of plants.

Currently detection is based on surveillance using contractors, land manager staff and volunteers.

There is now a program to see whether dogs can be trained to detect Hawkweed by smell. The trial currently underway indicates that dogs can be trained to do this. Missy, a two year old Springer Spaniel, has just completed the first stage of her training, during which she has been 100% successful in detecting Hawkweed on a detection panel. The next stage of training will be to introduce Missy to Hawkweed in different habitats. It's hoped that if there is hawkweed in a 1ha area, she will be able to detect it in a matter of minutes. At present, it takes many volunteers a long time to cover an equivalent area.



Missy, the 2 year old Springer Spaniel, can sniff out Hawkweed on a detection panel 100% of the time (Parks Victoria)

Sources:

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/national-hawkweed-meeting-at-falls-creek>

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bushtelegraph/past-programs/>

<http://invasivesblog.com/2013/07/11/hawkweeds-a-recent-discovery-in-victorias-alps-and-a-taxonomic-name-change/>

[http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/Attachments/KFER-87B7WT/\\$FILE/twan_Mouseearhawkweed.pdf](http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/Attachments/KFER-87B7WT/$FILE/twan_Mouseearhawkweed.pdf)

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Volunteer Profile

If you have worked on a conservation or track maintenance project, tell us about yourself and how you feel about it.

Here are three profiles of BTAC standing committee members.



Freemans Mill Track work party—4th from the right: Megan Major; kneeling front left: Joslin Guest; sitting front middle Charlie Ablitt

Megan Major, BTAC Convener

I have worked on tracks several times a year over the last four years. For me the work has been a great education about how dramatically tracks can change due to bushfires, storm damage, weed infestation and neglect. I now have a much better understanding of the challenges faced by land managers. Working alongside park rangers is a great way to build relationships and let them know what walkers want. I have enjoyed all the activities and they have allowed me to:

- Meet people from about 20 different clubs or friends groups
- Go to places I otherwise would not have seen such as the Australian Alpine Walking Track (AAWT) near Mt Whitelaw in Baw Baw National Park, AAWT near Mt Wills and AAWT near Buckwong Creek in East Gippsland

Bushwalking Victoria Office Manager: admin@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Convener: tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

Projects Coordinator: conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

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- Work on new tracks such as the Bench Rest in Bunyip State Park and the Grand Strzelecki track near Balook
- Locate and clear the Freemans Mill Track in Bunyip State Park, which is in my local area, after bushfires
- Support local friends group in restoring steps, bridges and tracks after heavy rain and storms at Mt Worth
- Work with some great teams of people with a common purpose out in the bush.

The work has been varied and interesting: sometimes using plain ordinary garden tools like secateurs, bow saw, pruning saw and loppers to trim vegetation; at other times the work has been much harder, using a hedge trimmer, brush cutter or, because I have chain saw accreditation, a chain saw. Building steps, rails and water bars has also been fun.

Charlie Ablitt, BTAC Projects Coordinator

I have enjoyed nature since I was a youngster and have been interested in similar issues ever since. But it has only been since my recent return from a long stay in Europe that I found through Bushwalking Victoria a proactive way to channel my interest.

My first activity when I returned to Australia was the Regent Honeyeater Project, with its program of planting in early spring and nest boxing in autumn. Last spring I attended four of the five planting weekends, and I try to do at least this every year.

Boneseed irradiation at Arthurs Seat is another of my involvements through Bayside Bushwalking Club, to which I belong and whose Conservation Officer I am.

The annual Sallow Willow hunt up at Falls Creek is another event that I attend, where I enjoy the camaraderie with the other participants from lots of other bushwalking clubs.

My involvement in conservation activities through my role as Projects Coordinator at Bushwalking Victoria has opened my mind to other lesser known important issues in our state: Leadbeater's Possum to name one.

About 18 months ago, I took over the role of Project Coordinator (previously called Tracks and Conservation Coordinator) from the very able Steve Robertson (Steve is a hard act to follow). Since then I have been pivotal in the work done by our team of volunteers for Bushwalking Victoria sponsored projects eg, steps at Kirth Kiln State Park, upkeep clearing on Condons Track near Healesville, re-defining and cutting the circuit track through northern Wilsons Promontory and clearing the Freemans Mill Track at Bunyip State Park. The logistics of these projects makes being the Projects Coordinator an interesting responsibility and meeting and becoming friends with the volunteers makes the task enjoyable.

One program which we hope to enlarge is the 'Adopt a Park/Track' initiative for clubs, which we hope will allow us to visit more areas of the state and meet and work alongside club members and local groups in those areas.

Track maintenance and conservation activities are not just hard slog, but are enjoyable and friendly activities carried out in often beautiful areas. Doing this worthwhile work enhances the enjoyment other walkers experiences. When walkers or sightseers pass by us while we working on tracks nearly all comment appreciatively on the work we are doing. If this sounds like a pitch for you to come and join us, well it is! But it's all true! And I hope that sometime soon you will join us on one of our events.

In closing I would like to thank all those great souls who have stepped forward and helped in 2013.

Bushwalking Victoria Office Manager: admin@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au
Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Convener: tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au
Projects Coordinator: conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

On the Tracks

Issue 1, January 2014

Joslin Guest, BTAC committee member

I started participating in conservation activities through my club, Boroondara Bushwalkers (BBI). Until the fires destroyed Murrindindi Scenic Reserve, BBI had a special relationship with Murrindindi Scenic Reserve. Members of my club made a significant contribution to the building the steps at Wilhimena Falls (before my time) and I participated in track maintenance on the Boroondara Track (named after my club), planting and so on in the reserve under the auspices of DSE. Through my club, I became involved in the Regent Honeyeater Project and have participated in at least one planting weekend and one nest boxing weekend each year ever since.

From there it was a natural step to go on the annual Sallow Willow eradication weekends. It was there I met Steve Robertson, Bushwalking Victoria's Tracks and Conservation Coordinator, and found out about BEC. I have participated in track maintenance in the Cathedral Ranges State Park organised by him, Snake Island planting weekends, track re-defining at northern Wilsons Promontory, track activities on Condons Track, Freemans Mill, Big Peninsula and other tracks, plus the multi-track multi-club activity Steve organised to restore tracks burnt out in the 2009 fires. When I was conservation officer for my club, I contacted the rangers for Kinglake, Cathedral Ranges and Murrindindi Scenic Reserve volunteered my club to help post-fire restoration in any way we could. Eventually this led to my club doing some track work, planting or survey work in one or the other of these areas. Over the last 18 months, I have worked on several projects with Charlie Ablitt

In the last few months BBI has 'adopted' the Cathedrals and we plan to do regular projects in the park under the auspices of Parks Victoria.

Originally my interest was in conservation-type activities. But at the Federation Weekend at Rawson more than 10 years ago, the guest speaker was the ranger in charge of the area and I was shocked when he mentioned the piddling budget he had for track development and maintenance. Until then I had never given a thought to how the tracks I walked on were funded and maintained. I realised that if we bushwalkers want to walk on decent tracks and a range of tracks then we have to contribute to their making and maintenance. It should be a government responsibility—like recreational cycling tracks—but bushwalking does not have the same profile or lobbying capacity as cycling and hence the ear of government. It was after that Federation event I started look for opportunities to participate in track maintenance projects.

Unlike Megan and Charlie, I have no particular skills to contribute to projects; but I am a willing 'worker ant'. I don't care what I am asked to do, I will just do it. I was thrilled when I used power tools to help build a boardwalk—prior to the sophisticated tool I had used was a screwdriver. Some projects are easy, some are hard, but all are personally satisfying; my favourites involve camping out. I love the sense of joint achievement we get when working on a project. The camaraderie is palpable and wonderful friendships are made.