

On the tracks

Issue 3, October 2014

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Tracks and Conservation Schedule 2014

BTAC
 Parks Victoria / DEPI
 Club
 Combined Groups
 Friends Group
 Independent

	<p>Sassafras Creek walking track Sun 12 Oct Organiser: BTAC</p>	<p>The meeting time at Sassafras is 8.30 am where the track starts on the Mt Dandenong Tourist Rd. Melway 66 F9. Expect to start work at 9am.</p> <p>BYO morning tea, snacks and lunch. Tools and gloves will be provided. Easy jobs for all with some bending involved.</p> <p>Contact Charlie Ablitt at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au for more information.</p>
	<p>Condons Track, Healesville Sun 25 Oct Organiser: BTAC</p>	<p>The meeting time is 8.30am at the Parks Victoria office at Maroondah Reservoir Healesville. Melway 270 K10. Expect to start work at 9am.</p> <p>BYO morning tea, snacks and lunch. Tools, gloves and PPE will be provided. Easy jobs for all with some bending involved.</p> <p>Contact Charlie Ablitt at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au for more information.</p>

BTAC	Parks Victoria / DEPI	Club	Combined Groups	Friends Group	Independent

	Barry Mountains area, Victorian Alps Sat 1 Nov - Tue 4 Nov (Melbourne Cup Weekend) Organiser: BTAC	We will place track markers and clear the track from Barry's Saddle to Mt St Bernard. There will be a base camp. Volunteers from a 4WD club will assist with transport to and from the work sites. A Parks Victoria ranger will be in attendance. Contact Charlie Ablitt at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au for more information and to register your interest in joining this activity.
	Upper Howqua Sat 29 Nov-Sun 30 Nov Organiser: BTAC	This is a very enjoyable location. We will drive to and base camp at the upper Howqua River campsite, and clear overgrowth from the nearby track(s). A reasonable level of fitness is required as we will need to climb up the track. A Parks Victoria ranger will be in attendance. Contact Charlie Ablitt at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au for more information and to register interest in joining the activity.

Let Charlie Ablitt at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au know if you can operate a brush cutter or hedge trimmer or have a Chainsaw Licence or an Agricultural Chemical Users Permit.

Please note: An expression of interest to participate in a BTAC project does not necessarily guarantee an invitation to participate as sometimes we need to assemble a team with particular skills or there is a logistical limit to the number of participants. New willing hands will always be considered. In all instances we will keep you informed.

Bushwalking Victoria conservation and bushwalking amenity policies

Bushwalking Victoria's policies relating to conservation and bushwalking amenities have been reviewed, updated and published as four policy documents on the Bushwalking Victoria website:

- [Conservation](#) - covering conservation and related land management issues
- [Bushwalking Infrastructure](#) - covering tracks and trails, camping, huts, signage, information etc
- [Commercial Activities in Protected Areas](#) - covering commercial infrastructure, facilities and impacts in protected areas such as national parks, state parks and other reserves
- [Other Recreational User Groups](#) - covering our relationship with other significant users of protected areas.

BTAC volunteer contributions

Over the past 12 months, BTAC volunteers have made a significant contribution to track maintenance and other activities.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2014, BTAC volunteers contributed a total of 884 hours of labour. In addition, individual clubs and Bushwalking Victoria members contributed at least a further 1000 hours of work. At Parks Victoria's standard rate for volunteer work, this represents over \$61 000 worth of effort.

Members from 13 clubs participated in BTAC events: Bayside, Border, Boroondara, Catholic, Diamond Valley, Essendon, Maroondah, Melbourne, Melbourne Women's Walking Club, Strzelecki, Victorian Mountain Tramping Club, Waverley, West Gippsland. In addition, at least one member from Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (an Associate club) participated.

If you haven't already registered as a volunteer and would like to do so, email Charlie Ablitt, the BTAC Projects Coordinator at conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au.

Bushwalking Victoria is aware that some clubs undertake substantial track and conservation work about which we don't have details of the hours worked. For example, members of the Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club worked on Bukkertillible Track at Mt Buangor State Park.

Let us know what your club does so that our statistics are accurate and comprehensive. We would be grateful if club's reported these activities using the *BTAC Record of Volunteer Hour form* available at <http://www.bushwalkingvictoria.org.au/forms.html>.

David Miller resigns from BTAC

Thank you David Miller for the many years of contribution to the BEC/BTAC committee.

David has resigned from his responsibilities due to time constraints and other commitments. In the last year he took on the responsibility of developing the Field Officers network on behalf of BTAC and being our Field Office Coordinator.

He has also resigned from his role of Field Officer for the East Gippsland Region.

For several years David coordinated a four-day track clearing and maintenance project in the Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) over the Australia Day long weekend. Unfortunately, the 2013 and 2014 planned activities were cancelled due to fires, but if you have walked on the Buckwong Creek or the Mt Wills sections of the AAWT, then you should thank David for his efforts in recruiting teams to do work on this track. He built up a relationship with the rangers in Omeo and was recently working with the Ranger in Charge at Mt Beauty to plan ongoing work on the AAWT in the Bogong High Plains area.

The BTAC committee members thank him for his contribution and wish him all the best for his planned trips and travels.

Megan Major
BTAC Convener

Vacancy for BTAC Field Officer Coordinator

Following David Miller's resignation BTAC is seeking expressions of interest to fill the vacancy of Field Officer Coordinator on the BTAC Committee.

Responsibilities:

- Calling for monthly reports from the Field Officers
- Collating reports and forwarding them to the BTAC Convener
- Liaising with Field Officers regarding their areas
- Recruiting new Field Officers in gap areas.

For more information or to express your interest in joining the BTAC committee, please contact Megan Major: Email tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au or mobile 0425 702 788. Please submit your expression of interest by Friday 17 October so the BTAC committee can consider at its meeting on Monday 20 October.

The committee of six usually meets every two months in Melbourne.

Current committee members are:

- Convener - Megan Major
- Projects Coordinator - Charlie Ablitt
- Land Management Consultant Phil Brotchie
- Dave Rimmer – Track Development
- Field Officer Coordinator - Vacant
- Publications - Joslin Guest.

Vacancies for BTAC Field Officers

Field Officers are appointed by the BTAC Committee and are responsible for a designated geographic area. They liaise and network with local bushwalking 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 the land managers.

Responsibilities:

- Be responsible for a designated geographical area
- Raise issues with the BTAC Committee as necessary
- Research and investigate issues and actions as requested by the BTAC
- Liaise and network with local clubs
- Build strong relationships with land managers
- Ensure BTAC Convener is kept fully briefed
- Present a monthly report the BTAC committee
- Recommend possible courses of action on issues.

The current Field Officers are:

- Ballarat and Central Victoria - John Petheram
- Grampians and Western Victoria - Phil Brotchie
- Otway Ranges - Bernard Jordan
- Central Gippsland - Michael Haynes
- Wilsons Promontory - Ian McKellar
- Mt Buffalo - Pauline McLaughlin
- Victorian Alps - Jim Harker
- Eastern Highlands - David Rimmer
- Dandenong Ranges - Bev Williams .

Possible additional Field Officer areas:

- Alpine National Park, Omeo Region
- East Gippsland
- South Gippsland
- Mornington Peninsular
- Yarra Ranges
- Brisbane Ranges/Lerderderg Gorge
- Bendigo area
- Murray-Sunset National Park
- Desert Parks.

To express interest in becoming a Field Officer for a specific area, contact Megan Major at tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au or mobile 0425 702 788.

Adopting a track

Some clubs have already adopted a track or park.

- Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club - Bukkertillible Track at Mt Buangor State Park
- Benalla Bushwalking Club - Mt Samaria State Park
- Border Bushwalking Club - assisting in the upkeep of high country huts
- Boroondara Bushwalking Club - Cathedral Range State Park
- Diamond Valley Bushwalking Club - Sugarloaf Reserve
- Strzelecki Bushwalking Club - Baw Baw National Park
- West Gippsland Bushwalking Club - Bench Rest Track, Gembrook
- Warrnambool Bushwalking club - regularly helps maintain the local rail trail
- Bayside Bushwalking Club - is considering adopting the Freemans Mill Track, Bunyip State Park.

If your club regularly does work in a particular area but is not included in the above list, please let Charlie Ablitt know.

If any club has a favourite track and wishes to help with its upkeep, please contact me so that Charlie can help liaise with Parks Victoria to see if we can arrange an ongoing association.

Similarly, if a club would like to adopt a park/track but does not have a particular location in mind, let Charlie know and he will consult with Parks Victoria and discuss with them the opportunity to build a relationship.

Charles Ablitt
Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Projects Coordinator
Email: conservation@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au
Mobile: 0400967054

BTAC Field Officers reports

Compiled by Megan Major, BTAC Convener - email: tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au.

Ballarat and Central Victoria Field Officer

Mt Buninyong - South Track

A small team of Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club (BBOC) members joined forces with members of the Mt Buninyong Friends Group on Sunday 24 August to re-open the old walking trail around the south-eastern side of the mountain. The track starts between the Buninyong crater and Blackberry Lane, and winds around the east side of the mountain and up to the road and top of Mt Buninyong. The track had fallen into disrepair over the past decade and its re-opening allows a nice circular route from the car park below the crater to the summit and down the steep Summit Track, or along the road back to the crater. A large log and some work on the steps remain to be completed. Thanks to Peter Hiscock and all who took part in reccies, marking and trampling the route.

A map of the walk is available at <http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/lae/gardens/mt-buninyong-scenic-reserve.aspx>.

Grampians Peaks Trail (GPT)

There is strong interest from members of the Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club (BBOC), the Grampians Bushwalking Club and other individuals in Parks Victoria's **request that we** check the alignment for the southern section of the GPT. This section runs along little known the southern extension of the Mt William Range towards Mt Abrupt and Dunkeld. Gib Wettenhall of Great Dividing Trail Association (GDTA) is coordinating this project with Phil Brotchie (the BTAC Field Officer for Grampians) under direction of Parks Victoria. Dave Witham of Grampians Track Support group is also involved.

In addition, Bill Casey of the Essendon Bushwalking Club and other interested parties are organising a public walks on the central/souther section of the GPT over the weekend prior to the 2015 Melbourne Cup. We aim to walk the full GPT in 2016.

John Petheram
Ballarat and Central Victoria Field Officer

Wilsons Prom

During August, Parks Victoria worked on clearing the Tongue Point track. The team will next work on the walking track from Martins Hill.

In September, a team of BTAC volunteers completed clearing the South East Track from the light station to Waterloo Bay, following on from work they commenced in May. See also *Activity Reports*

Wilsons Prom track clearing.

The Friends of the Prom is a voluntary incorporated organisation that provides assistance at Wilsons Prom such as raising and planting out indigenous flora and removing pest plants. They have a nursery at Tidal River where the plants are raised from seed collected on the Prom. They have done track work in the past and have quite a large number of local (Gippsland) members who may include some from walking clubs.

Alps

The Victorian National Parks Association have put out a submission very critical of the *Draft Management Plan for the Greater Alpine National Park* which can be viewed at http://vnpa.org.au/admin/library/attachments/PDFs/Submissions/sub_alps-draft-plan-VNPA-part1.pdf.

Jim Harker
Victorian Alps Field Officer

Trashing the bush

Vandalism, illegal activities and rubbish dumping in the bush has long been a problem, which seems to be getting worse. Examples from the past year include:

- In March, Boroondara Bushwalking Club walked the Tanglefoot Track and encountered trail bike riders who gained access by going bush around gates and posts.
- In May, we had a report about people chopping down standing timber at Federation Hut over Easter to use for cooking in a hut stove.
- In June, John Petheram, BTAC Field Officer for Ballarat and Central Victoria, reported that the main issues on walks around Ballarat are the creation of unauthorised tracks and rubbish dumping. The increasing numbers of 4WD drivers and trail bike riders in the bush are increasing the incidence of track making and deepening. The uncontrolled use by 4WDs and trail bikes in the wet periods is a big worry. This is leading to serious loss of plant diversity and ground cover, greatly increased runoff and erosion into creeks and is contributing to floods in local towns and villages. Another impact is that previously pleasant walks are now deep rutted. On the Anglesea Heathland walk early this year, Boroondara Bushwalkers saw a spreading 3-4m tall tree completely and deliberately encased with thick mud from a large, deep wheel rut that must have deliberately widened and deepened for the purpose. The baked on mud on trunk, branches and foliage was severely stressing the tree.



Damage done by 4WD going over a hump on a track

- The August newsletter of Ben Cruachan Club reported that members met a dozen trail bike riders blazing a trail up the Avon River, blatantly riding past signs excluding bikes.



Trail bikers blazing a trail beside the Avon River. Source: Ben Crauchan Bushwalking Club newsletter, Iss 174, August 2014



A trail biker ignoring a No Bikes sign. Source: Ben Crauchan Bushwalking Club newsletter, Iss 174, August 2014

- In the past year, I have reported two gates pulled out of the ground with concrete footings still attached, have walked past at least five abandoned cars (one full of bullet holes), walked on tracks severely degraded by vehicles (they manage to get around exclusions humps) and took photos of two lots of illegal rubbish dumping. A ranger in one state park advised that 25% of their time/budget is spent cleaning up rubbish and repairing damage due to vandalism.



Rubbish dumped at Bunyip State park. Photo by Megan Major

Walkers are not the only people concerned about illegal activity. In the October 2012 edition of *Trackwatch*, the President of Four Wheel Drive Victoria expressed his concerns about the growing reports of hoon behaviour and vandalism in the bush. Four Wheel Drive Victoria has a *Dob In a Hoon* form to report illegal behaviour. It can be downloaded from <http://www.fwdvictoria.org.au/default0.asp?First>

Illegal rubbish dumping is obviously a drain on local government too. *Warragul and Drouin Gazette* of 9 September, 2014 reported that Baw Baw Shire is conducting patrols around the municipality to crack-down on illegal rubbish dumping. The continuing need to clear illegally dumped waste creates significant costs for council. 'Offenders often dump rubbish in an area where they think they will not be seen.' Offenders face fines ranging from \$289 to more than \$1700 under the Environment Protection Act. If a matter proceeds to court, penalties can be up to \$5760. Bass Coast Shire is trying to establish who dumped rubbish. For now the rubbish is cordoned off with tape marked *Illegal Dumping Under Investigation*.



Rubbish dumped on the Bass Coast. Photo by Megan Major

What can we do?

- Report illegal use of tracks, environmental damage or vandalism on the Bushwalking Victoria's *Report Illegal Activity in the Bush Form* available at <http://www.bushwalkingvictoria.org.au/forms.html>.
- Report illegal 4WD activities on the *Dob in a Hoon* form available at <http://www.fwdvictoria.org.au/default0.asp?First>.
- Use the *Snap Send Solve* app available for smart phones to photograph and report rubbish and vandalism. The app works out where you are, who manages incidents within that particular area and then sends through relevant information such as location, incident type and any related image to the appropriate authority. *Snap Send Solve* allows users to report incidents to every single council in Australia as well as a growing list of new organisations. For further information go to about *Snap Send Solve* go to the website at <http://www.snapsendsolve.com/>
- To report illegal dumping which may have serious environmental impact contact EPA Victoria 1300 372 842.

Questions for BTAC

How much illegal activity is really going on in the bush? Are people reporting it? Are authorities doing anything about the reported activity?

The BTAC committee would be very interested in your views on what we should do or should not do. For example, by clearing large fallen trees off walking tracks are we enhancing illegal access for 4WD vehicles and trail bikes?

This is your opportunity to express your opinions and get involved. I look forward to hearing from you.

Megan Major
BTAC Convener
tracks@bushwalkingvictoria.org.au

Activity Reports

Wilsons Prom track clearing

12-14 September

Participants: Parks Victoria ranger Cathy; BTAC volunteers - Ailsa Mackenzie, Charles Ablitt, Fay and Dave Rimmer, Helen Frances, Ian McKellar, Joslin Guest, Lloyd Smiley, Mark Heath, Megan Major, Peter Conroy, and Sigrid Meier.

Because we were taking in heavy equipment – chain saws, brush cutters, hedge trimmers and their fuel and protective equipment – we had permission to take two vehicles in addition to ranger Cathy's Parks Victoria vehicle to the end of Telegraph Saddle Track. From there we carried the equipment the 4km to the light station, which was to be our base for the weekend.

Next morning we headed off early, met ranger Cathy and walked the more than 6km to our work area on the Waterloo-Lighthouse Track. The weather was ideal for working –cool (but slightly hazy) in the morning, warming to a sunny, but not hot, afternoon. We split into two groups to work on different parts of the track, each with a chainsaw, one brush cutter and one hedge trimmer for the intense cutting, plus hand saws, loppers and rakes for lighter trimming and clearing debris off the track. We worked until 4pm, having cleared several kilometres of track.



Participants



Setting off for work



Obstacles to be cleared



Looking for whales



At work

While we worked we were passed by quite a number of bushwalkers, all of whom stopped to thank us for our effort and complimented us on the standard of the work done. Some were surprised to find out we were volunteers.

As on all work events, there was a lot of camaraderie. This time our accommodation was particularly comfortable because we stayed in the lighthouse keeper's cottage. Renata and Colin, the light station rangers, joined us for dinner on Friday and Saturday nights, to which all contributed delicious food; ranger Cathy joined us on Saturday night only, as she had to go back to her other duties after helping get us to the end of Telegraph Saddle Track on Friday.

In addition to the sight of our beautifully clear track as we walked back and the enthusiastic compliments we received from bushwalkers, we had the special reward of seeing whales out towards Rondondo Island on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Among them were a mother and her calf. We also saw seals cavorting.

Many thanks to ranger Cathy and the BTAC volunteers for their contribution to keeping the track open for others to enjoy, and to Renata and Colin for their hospitality at the light station.

Charlie Ablitt
Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation Projects Coordinator

Buckertillible Cave Track (loop), Mt Buangor State Park

Buckertillible is the Aborigine name for a large rock overhang in Buangor SP. It is not a sleeping cave, but a spectacular granite formation about 250m above Middle Ck campground. The track was closed after major fires and floods in the park in 2010-2011 and recently re-opened following work completed by the Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club between 2011 and 2014 in collaboration with Parks Victoria.

John Petheram
Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club