

SUTHERLAND BUSHWALKERS NEWSLETTER

December 2024



President's Ponderings

Another year is almost over, and our annual Christmas barbecue is just around the corner. This is undoubtedly the social highlight of the year for our club, and I am looking forward to catching up with members.

The big news for next year is the introduction of the Bilby management system. This software will ease the load on many committee members and streamline a number of processes. I have found it easy to use and I am sure it will be a great asset to our club. It will be implemented gradually over the first 3 quarters of next year.

2024 has seen the club numbers grow and participation in activities is also increasing. This year the club has successfully run well over 200 activities, with many mid-week day walks, paddles and multi-day trips to some tremendous locations. Thursday morning walks continue to be a great success. The Pygmy Possum trip to Charlotte Pass, with a variety of interesting walks, is approaching and the 1st quarter program is brimming with great activities. My thanks go out to all the activity organisers, you are truly the backbone of the club.

From the committee, I wish everyone a safe and joyous Christmas, and a wonderful New Year.

See you at the barbecue.

Ken



Tony imparting his knowledge - Libby Davies

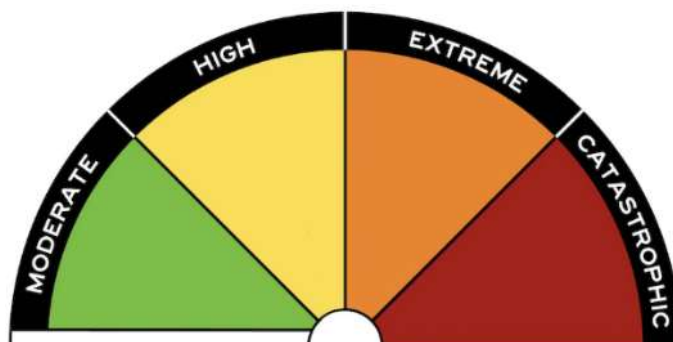
What's it like to be an RFS Volunteer?

Member, Janice McLeod gave a very interesting presentation at the September General Meeting about what it's like to be a volunteer in the NSW Rural Fire Service.



Janice even dressed the part!

The NSW RFS is the world's largest volunteer fire service, made up of more than 70,000 dedicated volunteers right across NSW. RFS volunteers respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round, attending a range of incidents from bush and grass fires to house and structure fires, road accidents and assisting at other events like floods, storms and searches. There is a wide variety of volunteer roles ranging from front line firefighting and emergency response to operational support and communications, admin support, catering... it's a long list. You can become an RFS volunteer from as young as 13.





Janice drops into teacher mode

Janice has two volunteer roles. As a Communications Officer, Janice plays a vital role in coordinating response vehicles to get them where they need to be, supporting the crews in the field. She talked about how some shifts can be routine and others can be very busy. The role is quite flexible as Janice can set her days/hours, although during an emergency the RFS may ask her to do additional shifts.

Janice is also a RFS preschool educator. This role sees her visiting local preschools with a fire truck to teach young children about fire safety.

An unexpected benefit of being an RFS volunteer was learning new skills and a new language (there are lots of acronyms). Janice has met lots of new people who she wouldn't normally come across, some of whom have become friends. She finds the RFS a positive and caring environment and strongly encourages you to look into volunteering with the NSW RFS.

Visit the [RFS website](#) for more information about volunteering at the RFS.

Thank you, Janice, for an excellent presentation.

Annette Mathews

Cape to Cape Track

21st to 28th September 2024

Twelve SBC members met in Perth, excited about what lay ahead: 130 km and 7 days of walking WA's southwest coast from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin. We quickly connected over previous walking experiences knowing there'd be some challenges to collectively face in the next few

days. Gene and his team from Cape to Cape Explorer Tours picked us up from Perth to transfer us to the start of the walk in the minibuses that would operate complicated bus shuffles all week, to and from our accommodation at Surfpoint Resort. The walk commenced soon after our arrival at Cape Naturaliste lighthouse. It's funny how a walk with a destination as notable as Cape Leeuwin, the meeting point of the Indian and Southern Oceans, enters your psyche as a must-achieve goal (even though there were some nice little options to cheat along the way).



Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse - tallest on mainland Australia

Andrew joined us as the first of 5 different guides for the week, each generously sharing their local knowledge as well as their personal connection to the area. There was a lot to take in with each day's theme: geology, oceans, flora, fauna, indigenous culture and European history. The rocks told us stories of past ice ages and formed limestone caves and blowholes. We experienced the laid-back surfing culture and began to understand the attraction of long, perfect, turquoise breaks despite the many surfer tragedies along this stretch of coast. Except for an afternoon diversion into the Karri forest, the ocean and the breaching whales were our constant right-hand companions for the duration of the walk as the track varied from accessible boardwalk and wide flat avenues to treacherous rocky undulations, sand dunes and beaches.



Remote beach on the Cape to Cape walk



Shoe-sucking soft sand

We became experts at identifying the exquisite WA wildflowers, particularly cowslip, pink fairy and donkey orchids. The golden 5 kilometres on Day 5, lined with a profusion of flowering Acacia species, eye-popping coral vine and the bushfire survivors, Xanthorrhoea, made us slow, then stop for photographs. We couldn't avoid comparing the animals we saw with our east coast species. The Southwest is home to smaller pythons and monitors, but huge, black King Skinks that nibble on bare toes when scavenging for scone crumbs, dark brown Western Grey Kangaroos and a diverse range of birds, including the large Pacific Gull.



Magnificent coastal views

Indigenous elder, Bill, welcomed us to Country and we heard about the intersection of indigenous culture and European history at Ellensbrook Homestead and school. I'll admit that my knowledge of West Australian history is sketchy - I'm keen to fix this now. There were opportunities during the week to sample more than the stunning coastal scenery and to temper the experience of shoe-sucking kilometres of soft sand by enjoying the local produce. We sampled fabulous local wine and cheese on Day 3, brewed beverages and a laid-back vibe for dinner on Day 6 and a sunny outdoor champagne celebration at the end of the Day 7.



A floral explosion that WA is well known for

Our Surfpoint host, Nic, farewelled us with genuine appreciation for having been her guests. Best of all, I've shared all this with friends from SBC. Thank you, Gina, for selecting a week with near-perfect walking weather and for adding this trip to the club programme.

Robin Gordon

Photos courtesy Cape to Cape Explorer Tours

Bungonia National Park Walk

Wednesday 9th Oct

I threw on a late notice walk, to which five brave blokes chose to take up the challenge.

The Challenge:- the grade 5 Red Track, Bungonia Slot Canyon. It was a first time for two of the guys, one of whom I hadn't walked with before, but I crossed my fingers and hoped they would cope with it all.



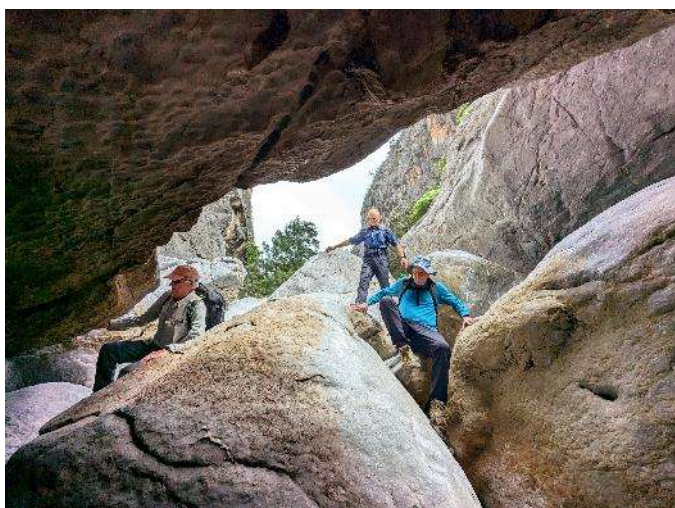
Hibbertia sp (Guinea flower)

Signing in was completed at the National Park Office with everyone's names, ages (and sex!) also where we were going, time of departure and expected return time. Starting at William Mitchell Carpark, we headed west to do The Red Track grand loop in a clockwise direction (as per NP's advice). What! No big warning sign, gee on previous walks there had been two! Perhaps the track had suddenly become easier - haha! After the false pretence of a bit of flat going, it was soon onto the steep slippery shale covered track, not to the liking of some. Further on we passed a big patch of tall grass trees, then we hit several vertical rock faces, which required sitting down and stretching out the legs to find little ledges to help with our descent.



Make your own adventure!

Once at the sandy creek bed level you were dwarfed by the incredibly high 400 m walls of Slot Canyon. It was relief for the leader, "No water," which hopefully means we'll have a dry run down the canyon. We had morning tea at the start of the boulder section.



Some 'off-track' scrambling



Now how do we get out of here?

The boulders! - these amazing huge white coloured smooth limestone rocks are a sight to see. The challenge now is to navigate our way through them, whether it be climb over them, slide down them, crawl under them, or squeeze between them, there are no nice little red markers here! Now we use the "skills" of three navigators spread across the canyon to try to find suitable ways that all the group could manage. Even having done this walk several times before, we often had to back track, as there aren't any obvious routes. This trip, we sadly missed out on the fun biggest slide!



Bungonia's famous boulder canyon

Finally, out of the boulders there is some clear water flowing in the creek, which we walk beside amongst trees. Lunch spot was near our exit point, no swimming or snake here this time. As we came down 400 m, you dread the thought of going back up, but it has to be done, no options! The first 15 minutes is very steep on a loose surface, it sure does take the wind out of your sails. Conveniently there are two places with fallen trees across the track, ideal for rest breaks, but some of us still needed to take a few more stops. I always allow two hours for the climb out and we blitzed that, well maybe not blitzed, but under the two. The day was slightly cloudy and cool, which we were grateful for, as the ridge doesn't have a lot of shade cover.

Guess what was at the top of the Red Track, where it joins the Green Track? A big sign with all the danger warnings, a bit late for first timers who followed NP advice of "go clockwise". Back at the cars, some fresh smelling shirts and socks, then a quick drive to two lookouts to look down to the Slot and that ridge. After signing out 30 minutes earlier than our expected 4pm return time, it was onto Marulan for well-earned coffees and a pat on each other's backs for a great walk accomplished.

Allan Bunt

ANSTO Blue Walk

Sept 11, 2024

Good weather, which was not too hot, made for a pleasant day for eight participants out for a short walk. It was estimated at 5 km, through various and changing vegetation - tall trees, rough banksias, fern trees, a few creek crossings with only a trickle of water, admiring the few waratahs out in bloom and spring flowers starting to show like boronia, grevilleas and Gynea lilies ... well that was what should have been until ...



A mobile phone call received in the bush

ANSTO Security calling - "we would like you to not walk the Blue Walk", despite the Welcome to the area signpost at the start of the track. The area is being decommissioned, tracks are being closed and their aim is to stop everyone from using that area because of safety and security concerns. Any future thoughts of stepping into this zone must be via written application to ANSTO for permission, assessment of persons and their ability to go into the bush. Safety concerns! It may even require an "escort" to be arranged if application is approved. Application email to reception@ansto



Almost a great day for a walk

I can't say much more, as it is obviously an issue to have 8 "older generational" experienced bushwalkers loose out in the bush opposite a sensitive establishment found between the tip site and sports grounds and Barden Ridge housing estate. It may also be my grey hair and metal hips/knee that has raised the threat level and triggered off alarm bells but whatever it is, it made for the Club's shortest walk of 1 ¼ hours.

So, the bottom line is no more walks on the Blue Walk track along New Illawarra Rd.

Vanessa Hicks



Depot Beach cabin accommodation

Murramarang South Coast Walk Overnight Hike

On the 27th of October, a group of 8 walkers embarked on the 35 km Murramarang South Coast walk. We had 2 cabins booked for the National Park's Self-Guided 2 night, 3 day cabin package which includes a bus transfer, at the end of the walk, back to the cars.

Walkers: Kerrie, Anne, Rosalind, Bonnie, Sheree, Heather, John and Marilyn.

Day 1: After locating the ranger for our pre-walk instructions, we commenced today's 10 km walk with our full packs from the starting point at Pretty Beach campground to Depot Beach. The weather forecast was good for the day but there was some concern over the rock platform being slippery, but as we commenced on a low tide, we managed easily around this section. We walked past Singing Stones Beach and Snake Bay and found limited shade near the rocks for morning tea. Then onto our lunch stop at Pebbly Beach picnic area, walking along winding tracks that followed the coastline around the beautiful, picturesque bays. We located our 2 cabins after some beach walking and another rock platform. We were surprised at the quality and size of the 2-bedroom cabins, complete with kitchen, cooking utensils, air conditioning, hot showers and comfortable beds.



Singing Stones Beach

Day 2: We were sorry to leave these cabins but it was on to South Durras today, a walk of only 8 km. The uphill track meandered through a beautiful Cycad forest for some time and onto Point Upright lookout. From here we could see today's walk, a long stretch of deserted beach which led us past Lake Durras and onto South Durras NRMA resort. I was pleased to see that a sandbar was covering the lake entrance to the sea which meant that we did not have to kayak or walk through the water at Lake Durras today. A nice track zig-zagged down to

the beach and we were able to stretch out in small groups and walk the beach at our own pace. We enjoyed seeing whales at a distance during our morning tea break. Before we arrived at our cabins, we located a picnic shelter to rest at for lunch. The cabins for this night were again very nice with a beach view and after settling in we relaxed, walked the local tracks and beach and spent time at the resort. Happy hour proved very popular as did the meal at the restaurant, which saved us carrying extra food.



A great spot to look for whales

Day 3: Today was an earlier start for a 16 km day and we needed to be at the bus pickup at 3.30 pm. A good pace was kept most of the day and there were more bush tracks than beach walking today. The track followed the headlands and we also took the opportunity of some side tracks to enjoy the beautiful coastline.



A bush track through lovely coastal forest

As the day was becoming much warmer, we took the opportunity to have lunch at the North Head Campground in the shade. Unfortunately, we had to sit on the ground, so we kept a lookout for ticks while eating. Then it was on to Yellow Rock and the 3 Islet Lookout. When we reached the bus shelter and the end of the walk, Sheree took the opportunity to cool off at the beach while we waited for our bus transfer back to our cars that we had left 3 days earlier at Pretty Beach campground.



Finishing the walk at Maloneys Beach

We were very fortunate to have had good weather, a lovely group of walkers to be with and the walking tracks and coastal scenery were beautiful. If you are considering doing this walk, I highly recommend it!

Kerrie McLean

Floral Distractions

Heather Hughes led a delightful ramble to see the Heathcote waratahs in September. This caused me to contemplate how easy it is to get lost when your attention is distracted by the scenery. This story is set in 1892.

Sydney resident Mrs Sarah Nagle was reasonably well-off. She owned 23 acres of land in Heathcote, inherited from her late husband. Since the death of her husband in 1891, Sarah Nagle had been residing with her daughter in Auburn. Sarah confided to her sister that she didn't like living with her daughter, and she was consequently in the habit of returning each weekend to the family house at Heathcote.



Heathcote Hall - recently renovated

In the spring of 1892, Sarah was spending the weekend at the Heathcote property following her regular routine. Her daughter Mary and son-in-law Charles visited her in Heathcote on Saturday. That Sunday was sunny, perfect for an afternoon stroll to see the waratahs scattered throughout the bush.

When Sarah didn't return to the house by dusk a search party was summoned, comprising police, Aboriginal trackers and local residents. Most people were still hopeful she would be found, but her son-in-law Charles seemed convinced she was already dead, insisting that police search the waterholes on the eastern side of the railway line for her body, although the searchers thought she had most likely gone in the opposite direction.



Waratahs have been spectacular at Heathcote lately

After a week's fruitless searching along the ridges and descending into the rugged, steep gullies, they had no success and most of the men returned home. Charles paid a neighbour £140 to arrange for others to continue the search over the next nine weeks, offering a £50 reward for information leading to her discovery.

The police were increasingly suspicious that Sarah may have met with foul play. There were conflicting reports that she had stayed at home feeling ill. Another report stated that she had been specifically invited by neighbours to go for a stroll to see the wildflowers, but had declined, as she never indulged in recreational activities on a Sunday. Later she knocked on the door of the house across

the road to ask if there were any church services nearby. She was last seen by the stationmaster standing outside her home at 12.30 p.m. He was the last person to see her alive, or was he?



Walking the tracks at Heathcote

By Christmas, the police had no further evidence, although the government was offering a reward for information leading to a possible conviction for murder. Probate was declared in May the following year, with Mary inheriting her mother's entire property.

Five years later, in August 1897, two men were shooting game in the Royal National Park, when they spotted a curious egg-shaped white object tucked under a rock ledge in on the eastern side of Heathcote Valley. On closer investigation, they made the gruesome discovery of a skeleton.

The pair summoned the police, leading the constable to the spot. Their immediate thought was that this was Sarah Nagle, whose body had never been found. Two days later a coroner's inquest was held at the Royal Hotel, Sutherland. The identity of the victim was quickly established from her possessions. The cause and circumstances of her death were a little more difficult to establish. The evidence was conflicting.

Her sister testified that although Sarah enjoyed lone bushwalks, she would have been most unlikely to go for a walk on a Sunday, as she 'had a great reverence for that day'.

The doctor testified that he found the skeleton lying on a bush bed of grasses, with bushes piled in front, as though to keep the wind off, which inferred that the woman settled herself in the cave for a night's rest after wandering aimlessly about the bush for several days. There were no visible marks of violence and he believed the death was due to natural causes.

The family were unhappy that they didn't receive sufficient inheritance from Henry Nagle's will. Mary would eventually inherit the property, but her mother had a life interest in it. Could the daughter not wait for her inheritance?

Circumstantial evidence suggested that the son-in-law may have pushed her into a gully so that he would inherit Sarah's land. Did he return to Heathcote on Sunday afternoon without being seen? Charles indignantly refuted allegations that he had asked Mrs Nagle for money, but possibly he was merely embarrassed to be seen as an avaricious man.

Her daughter also alleged at the inquest that her mother seldom went out alone, was forgetful and had once become lost travelling by train from Auburn to the city. However, it was asserted by her sister that Mrs Nagle liked to walk alone in the bush, and the neighbours related that she frequently walked in the bush on the western side of the rail line. Perhaps her daughter didn't know her mother as well as she thought.



A beautifully formed waratah

Her daughter claimed she had a heart condition. Did Sarah simply lay down and die as the doctor suggested?

Then there was the evidence that Mrs Nagle considered recreational walking on a Sunday sinful.

The jury found there was 'no evidence to show how she came to her death'. We will never know whether she was lost or murdered.

Leonie Bell

'The Bush Calls Us':

The defiant women who demanded a place on the walking track.

Here is a link to an interesting article from a newsletter called 'The Conversation'

<https://bushwalking-women-blazing-a-trail.netlify.app/>

Thanks, Janice Mcleod.

We Finally Spotted One!

Occasionally you hear the 'stories' about club walks where someone spotted one. I've looked and looked, often almost tripping over, but I've never found one until I was on a walk with Tony Larkin in the Georges River National Park in early October.



Libby the Koala

Tony Larkin stopped the walk to show us a grey gum with what looked like recent koala scratches. We all looked up at the tree but no-one could see anything out of the ordinary. As the group began to move off, I lingered a little longer surveying the tree. The group had barely gone a couple of metres when I spotted a furry bundle sitting at the end of a

branch in the very tree the group had been looking at. *'There's one!'* The group stopped in disbelief; I think most of them thought I was pulling their leg, but their reaction quickly changed to excitement. There was indeed a koala who was quite happy to be photographed. Except for Tony, this was the first time everyone in the group had seen a koala on a club walk.

Our new friend needed a name. The group christened her (or maybe it was a he) 'Libby' after Libby Davey who was celebrating her birthday on the day of the walk.

NPWS have officially recorded our find in the NSW Government database, Bionet. Sutherland Bushwalkers are now (semi) famous! 'Libby' is only the 27th recorded sighting in Georges River NP since 1969, with about a third of those in the past 3 years. The increase in sightings suggests that the local environment is healthy, and the koalas are doing OK.

Even though Libby was the outstanding highlight we had a very interesting walk with numerous orchid spottings, beautiful rock ledges, lots of local history and good company.

Annette Mathews

Editors Note:

Annette found another koala on her next club walk along the Mooray Track - our club koala whisperer?

Orchids Blooming in October

Seen in the Mill Creek area of the Georges River National Park (1) - *Erythrorchis cassythoides*, commonly known as the black bootlace orchid, is a leafless climbing orchid. It has long, dark brown to blackish stems and groups of up to thirty yellowish to greenish, sweetly scented flowers and is endemic to eastern Australia. Despite being relative rare, we managed to find 3 of these orchids.



Seen along the Bullawarring Track at Waterfall and in the Georges River National Park (2) - *Denribium linguiforme*, also known as a Tongue Orchid.

Seen in the southern end of the Royal (3) - *Sarcochilus parviflorus*, commonly known as the Lawyer Orchid.



These were all seen on one walk in the Heathcote National Park. Orchid number 4, a Donkey Orchid was found in a large cluster on the side of the Pipeline track.

The Beard Orchid (5) was seen on the Mooray Track and finally the Pink Lady Fingers (6), well if you look hard enough you see these little orchids everywhere.

Annette Mathews

Blue Mountains - A Grade 4 Walk

Wednesday 7th August

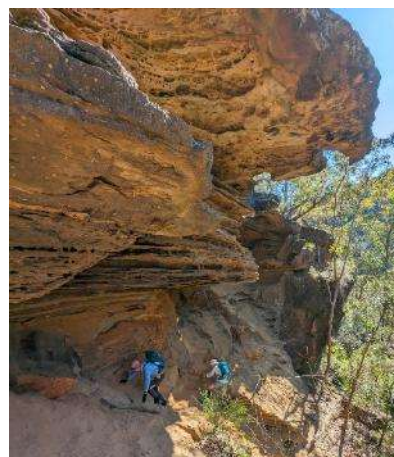
Having been on so many great walks with Tim, it's very hard to write about just one. Maybe it should be Red Ledge Pass/Devil's Hole, or Asgard Swamp Area, perhaps Walls Lookout, or Lockleys Pylon.

Martin's Lookout to Glenbrook Creek, a grade 4 walk to Sharks Head and Lost World Lookout in the program caught my eye. Lost World wasn't tempting me much, but hey I'd never been to Sharks Head, so a booking was made. What a great decision it turned out to be. I do like a bit of a challenge, even if it nearly kills me!



Up through the squeeze

After the steep descent down to Glenbrook Creek and a dry crossing, it was off track up the creek line before the climb up a ridge to Sharks Head Cave. This part of the walk was full of surprises and fun, which will always be remembered.



A tight line close to the cliff line

Scrambling up rocky outcrops, morning tea at the cave, traversing across a slippery dusty surface under an orange overhang, squeezing up a tight crack in the cliff line, before inching our way up a "chimney" to emerge through a very small hole at ground level. Our great leader Tim had hauled our packs up on a rope, then coached us up one at a time. Being in the middle of the pack here, it was incredible to watch, first a head pops out of the hole, then one arm appears and to see everyone struggling to get their other arm out to the surface! Tim always surveys and assess these tricky situations before proceeding with safely helping everyone through the obstacle, like a true gentleman.



Hello, hello are you okay down there?

There was a fairly brisk walk on flat ground to Lost World, where we had lunch. The walk finished with a descent to Glenbrook Creek and the climb backup to Martin's Lookout. As per usual, I was the last back up the hill, thinking will this be my last mountain's walk!



This is grade 4!

No, it won't be my last!

Allan Bunt

Save the Dates

Wednesday 29 January, 2025

The annual social BYO everything BBQ / cold spread at Audley, Commonwealth Pavilion Royal National Park (near the visitor centre) at 5.30 pm.



This is a chance to catch up with friends after the Christmas excitement and talk of things to come in the new year. All members, past and present, are welcome.

There's no need to RSVP, just come along.

Wednesday 26 February, 2025
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sutherland Community Centre, Stapleton Ave 7pm. This is the club's most important meeting of the year which includes the elections of the 2025 office bearers. Please come along to have your say or put your hand up for one of the many jobs that constitute the committee. It is a very rewarding experience and there are all sorts of jobs that need doing.



A warm welcome to our new members:

Pam	Arnold
Rizwana	Kaiser
Bradley	Lamerton
Craig	Marshall
Phillip	Murray
Michael	Rogers
Joan	Sato
Luke	Tuffy
Zaf	Voulalas
Mary	Vu

Q3 Club Activity Stats (July, Aug, Sep)

Sutherland Bushwalking Club now has 379 registered members and we participated in 67 club activities during Q3 2024.

Activity Type	Number of Activities	Number of Participants
Day Walk	59	507
Paddle	5	36
Multi-day Walk	1	12
Bike Ride	0	0
Multi-day Trip	0	0
Track Work	2	18
(Data from Activity Organiser's Trip Reports)		



A group of Thursday morning walkers in Garawarra SCA - Alayne Michel

