

# GIPPSLAND HIGH COUNTRY TOURS

Newsletter no. 36

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Australia

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## Mountain Sunrise

The first sun cracks the surface of the sky splashing white light across the heads of rolling grey clouds. High above, mountain snowgums are lost within a swirling fog

While below, morning shafts of brilliance pick out leaf and branch of taller trees. Cold drops of last nights dew reflecting radials of light like starry beacons.

Gracefully the mountains soak up warm beginnings of another day. Thinning clouds allow ridge-tops to awaken, while down below, valley streams slumber, awaiting their time.

The snapped frozen stillness is pierced by a currawongs echoing call, the raven adds his mournful notes, both rejoicing in the long awaited warmth of the autumn morning

The simple pleasure of a mountain sunrise does not ask much of you, only to be appreciated. For without appreciation, all manner of indignities are possible at the hand of the uncaring.

Peter Lawrence



## Happy 20th Birthday Gippsland High Country Tours

As my 20th year of operating Gippsland High Country Tours rolls around. I would like to recognise and thank some of the people who have helped make it such a success. Over 60% of participants on my trips are repeats clients and almost half of new clients come to me through word of mouth.

In celebration of this I would like to Congratulate and thank the following people.

I've had a number of consistently regular participants over the year and I would like to congratulate June Soutter who first travelled with me in 1993 and most recently in 2009. Over these 17 years, June has joined 12 trips travelling with me for 87 days!! June will receive a travel voucher to use on a future tour.

Others who have travelled over 50 days with me are Claire Beecher, Bob Gray, Joan Graves and Margaret Lees. They will also receive a travel voucher as a thank you. Special mention to Lana Tinsley, Marj Anderson, Val Beddome, Doug Kuhn, Belinda Heyward, Jean Leatham, Aidrie Mann and Mary Pahl who have all travelled over 40 days.

*Continued page 8*

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## Editorial

Welcome to the 36th Gippsland High Country Tours Newsletter celebrating my 20th year of sharing with you Victoria's High Country, East Gippsland and places further afield.

As part of the celebrations, everyone who books a trip to a Victorian destination before August 31st, goes in the draw to receive **50% discount** on their fare!

For me this has been two decades of meeting wonderful people and exploring together, discovering the wonders of a wide range of different environments.

I have enjoying watching your excitement at new discoveries and as many of you know, I get pretty excited at new discoveries myself! Nature has a habit of providing unexpected surprises even when you are a regular visitor to a particular site.

I enjoy the challenge of your many questions, curiosity about the natural world is a wonderful thing. Many of you arrive and tell me that you are not very knowledgeable, but you are almost all excellent observers which is the best place to start! If you can observe and be curious, the learning will follow.

For many of you the experience is also about having time to indulge in some quiet time, to contemplate and reflect. In our busy modern lives, taking time out in natural surroundings is such a luxury. Time and space to think and to gain inspiration.

I also want to thank Tom, Maria, Hans, Katherine and others who have helped out as guides over the years. Although I no longer lead every trip myself, I thoroughly enjoy leading as many as possible myself and spending time out there in the bush with you. So nothing much will change in the coming years. Hopefully you will enjoy seeing new trips appear in the program from time to time as well as the perennial favourites.

*Jenny*

*Established in 1987, Gippsland High Country Tours is an Accredited Tourism Business and a full member of Tourism Alliance Victoria. All product has Advanced Ecotourism Certification under Ecotourism Australia's Eco-Certification Program.*

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## What Does the Tick Mean?



Australia's Ecotourism Certification Program is an innovative "world first" program. It is a national scheme with hundreds of products across every state and territory of Australia. [www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)

Choosing a product that displays an **Eco Certification** logo means you will enjoy an experience with a quality operator, leaving minimal impact on the environment.

**Advanced Ecotourism Certification** recognises Australia's leading and most innovative ecotourism products, providing an opportunity to learn about the environment with an operator who is committed to achieving best practice when using resources wisely, contributing to the conservation of the environment and helping local communities.

**Gippsland High Country Tours is proud that all ecotour and walk products in the regular program have received Advanced Eco Certification.**

## Electronic version of Newsletter

This Newsletter is now available electronically as a (fairly large) pdf. file. If you have a preference for receiving future newsletters electronically, just email me and let me know.

Please include in the email your name and postal address so I can cross reference on my database and ensure you don't get a hard copy as well as an electronic copy.

## Spring Discount

Select a 4-7 day spring or summer Gippsland High Country Tour experience & book **before September 30, 2011**

Attach this coupon and receive

**\$250 Discount**

Not available in conjunction with any other discount or special offer.

## REGULAR DISCOUNTS

Available on all 3-7 day departures

*NOTE: Only one discount or special offer can be used on any one Booking.*

*Before April 30, 2011 5% may be added to these discounts*

- *Past Passengers 10% Discount.*
- *Pensioners 10% Discount.*
- *Early Booking (90+ days in advance) 10% Discount.*
- *Children (under 15) discount on selected tours only.*
- *Group Booking (5 or more persons on any trip) generous discounts apply, contact me for details.*

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS



### Walk Mt Howitt & Tali Karng

*Ray & I joined Jenny's first tour of "Walk Mt Howitt & Tali Karng" in 2010. All I can say about the week is the weather was good, company excellent, wonderful food and each days walk was exciting. The scenery every day blew the mind and what a great mix of walks, that were as good as you get anywhere. About the only problem was it came to an end, but we sure would do it all again.* **Maureen Hack (Vic)**

*"Another high country delight! Spectacular views, good food and company. Thanks Jenny and Hans. See you again"* **Doug (Vic)**

*"Many highlights in a well graduated 5 day series of walks. Very professional"* **Steve (NSW)**

### Point Hicks Lighthouse

**We climbed to the top of the lighthouse high  
And heard the tales of days gone by.  
So many ships the cape had rounded  
And on the rocks too many had foundered.  
So they built a lighthouse in that lonely place  
Tall and elegant and full of grace.  
And many were the ships saved by its light  
Shining brightly all through the night.  
Its working life is now in the past  
But it still makes its mark on the coastline vast.**

**Josephine Flanagan (Vic)**



## Calendar of Ecotours and Walks 2011 –2012

<b>September 21</b>	<b>Spring into Nature at Waterholes</b> Graded: EASY Fully Accommodated. Easy Walking. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1570 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1680
<b>September 28</b>	<b>Walking from Waterholes</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Walking all day, from an accommodation base. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1570 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1680
<b>October 3</b>	<b>Walking Croajingolong</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Lots of Moderate Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2550 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$2660
<b>October 24</b> <b>NEW</b>	<b>Cape Conran Explorer</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1320 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1430
<b>November 7</b>	<b>Snowy River &amp; Errinundra Explorer Tour</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated. Touring with Short Easy Walks. 6 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1900 6 Days ex. Melbourne \$2010
<b>November 14</b>	<b>Walk Mt Howitt &amp; Tali Karng</b> Graded: MODERATE - CHALLENGING Vehicle-based camping with Moderate-Challenging day walks. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1700 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1810
<b>November 21</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1750 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1860
<b>December 30</b> <b>NEW YEAR</b>	<b>Wonders of Wildlife Ecotour - Haunted Stream</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE 2 nights camping. Combined Ecotour and Wildlife Research Project. 3 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$960
<b>January 2</b> <b>2012</b>	<b>Alpine Discovery Tour</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated, lots of short easy nature walks . 6 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2070 6 Days ex. Melbourne \$2180
<b>January 9</b>	<b>Mt Feathertop Adventure</b> Graded: MODERATE - CHALLENGING Fully accommodated with moderate to challenging full day walks. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1740 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1850
<b>January 23</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1750 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1860
<b>March 5</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1750 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1860
<b>March 26</b> <i>A choice of two departures running concurrently</i>	<b>Eastern Peaks Walk</b> (Walking Ecotour) Graded: MODERATELY CHALLENGING <b>Threatened Fauna of the Cobberas</b> (Wildlife Research Ecotour) Graded: MODERATE Both departures - 3 nights camping, 1 nights accommodation. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$POA 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$POA
<b>April 7</b> <b>EASTER</b>	<b>Wonders of Wildlife Ecotour - Snowy River</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE 2 nights camping. Combined Ecotour and Wildlife Research Project. 3 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1050

More than just a holiday, a rewarding High Country experience featuring expert guidance and lots of interaction with nature. These small group tours promote an appreciation and understanding of the High Country's varied environments, rich history and diverse flora and fauna. **Full itinerary for each trip available on request.**

**More details also available on website– [www.gippslandhighcountrytours.com.au](http://www.gippslandhighcountrytours.com.au)**

## 2011 - International Year of the Forest

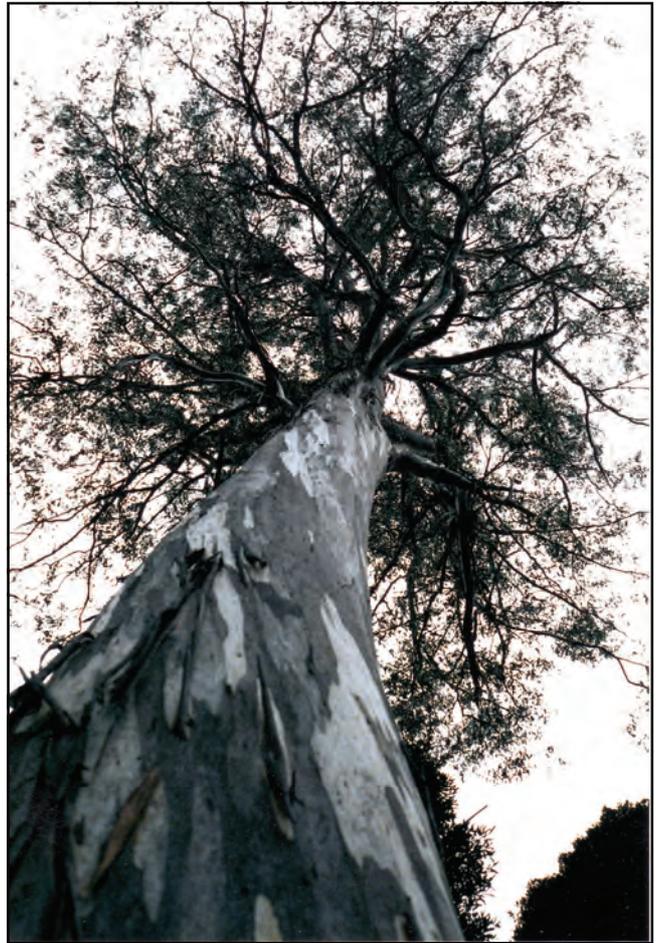
Forests come in many different types. What do you think of when you see the word forest?

For many Australians a forest conjures up images on tall straight eucalypts, shading beneath them a world of ferns and smaller plants.

Australia has 4% of the world's forests. Eucalypt forests are the most common type in Australia, but we also have less common forests of acacia, melaleuca and casuarinas, then there are rainforests, callitris forest and mangrove forests.

But forests are not just about the trees, they are full of life from the soil below to the treetops above. They sustain birds, animals, invertebrates and plants of all descriptions from flowering plants to ferns. There are also the other important groups of living organisms that we often overlook - fungi, mosses and liverworts. Forests play an important role in the natural ecosystem and they are an amazing system of life in themselves with each part dependent on others in an often fine balance.

Forests are also great carbon storages. According to a recent CSIRO paper, the world's intact forests absorb about one third of our carbon emissions every year. This makes forest the most effective and immediate carbon storage solution we have. Some say they are the lungs of the earth.



Our forests are subject to many threats, from commercial forestry operations, to clearing for agricultural or development as well as the effects of climate change. A changing climate could bring with it more frequent fire, perhaps more frequent than some forest types can sustain. Many people are also concerned about the current trend to increase the frequency of man made fire in forests.



Photo: Glenys Greenwood

When did you last visit a forest? If its been a while think what you enjoy most about a forest, is it the sounds (or the quiet!), the fresh earthy smells or is it gazing up high at tall trees? Do you get a thrill from seeing the small things, dew drops on a mossy logs, an intricate spider-web strung on vegetation, an interesting beetle or colourful fungi growing in deep forest litter?

Maybe you would like to re-acquaint yourself with a forest this year or visit a forest type that is new to you. East Gippsland is home to many wonderful forests. The Snowy River National Park boasts Mountain or Alpine Ash forests in the southern sections, while further north near McKillops Bridge, you will find callitris (cypress pine) forests. Croajingolong National Park has diverse coastal and foothill forests as well as small warm temperate rainforests. High on the Errinundra plateau you will find an ancient type of rainforest, the cool temperate rainforest as well as old growth eucalypt forests of Errinundra Shining gums. As we head up into the alps we find another magnificent "forest"- the snowgum woodland.

What a variety of forest experiences... just waiting for you!

## Twice as much Walking

This spring I am offering you the idea of joining two of my walking trips “back to back” to make an even longer break. There will be two nights and a day in between for you to have some free time to explore locally. I am happy to offer suggestions for accommodation and activities for this period.

There is nothing like good walks in great natural settings to rejuvenate you. Add some great like-minded walking companions, a knowledgeable guide to organise the day and meals that appear before you like magic at the end of the day and you have a great walking holiday.

Begin with **Walking from Waterholes (September 28-October 1)** which is a great way to unwind. There is not much travelling to our destination, Waterholes Guesthouse, although the setting suggests that you could be somewhere quite remote. Surrounded by forest you will enjoy being spoilt here with great meals and a little luxury. Even a deep bath in your room to soak away any walking aches at the end of the day! Each day we walk off from right outside the guesthouse to follow bush trails to interesting destinations.

Then this is followed by a week **Walking Croajingolong (October 3-9)** to take you to Victoria’s far east coast. Take your boots off and enjoy the clean white sand between your toes on beach walks. Best to leave your boots on for the walks through foothill forests and up to Mt Everard and Genoa Peak for grand views of the coast. There are estuaries and dunes to explore, coastal heath and rocky headlands plus a lighthouse to climb. We stay at Point Hick Lighthouse cottages for three of the six nights, a really special experience.

Of course you can choose to do just one of these trips, but if you would like an extended walking experience, you can save at least \$570 by booking both together.



**Both trips booked together- \$3550 ex. Bairnsdale or \$3610 ex Melbourne.**

\* Note that the discount on page 2 cannot be applied in conjunction with this special “joint” price, however you will still go in the draw for a 50% fare on each trip.

### Cattle grazing in Victoria’s Alpine National Park - update

If you have been following the Victorian Government’s promise to return cattle grazing to the Alpine National Park, you might have been wondering what has happened recently. The short answer is that we do not know for sure. According to The Age on July 20th, a DSE spokesperson said “We are working through the design of the longer-term research trial, informed by the outcomes of year one of the trial,” she said. “The state has maintained that, as required, it will refer the trial to the Commonwealth when the design process is complete.” There is no new information available on the DSE website yet explaining how or when this will take place.

According to The Age the department has not responded to freedom-of-information requests for details of the trial lodged by the Victorian National Parks Association, which has now referred the issue to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Association spokesman Philip Ingamells said the government was imposing an extraordinary level of secrecy to fulfil an ill-considered promise to hand the park back to a “privileged group” of cattle grazers.

The article in The Age has prompted further comment in the media so keeping an eye on the media and checking the following websites is the best way to stay informed about the issue.

**Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) explains its cattle grazing trial -**  
[www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au) (Then go to the Parks & Reserves page, then Whats New page)

**Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) explains its opposition to the cattle grazing trial -**  
[www.vnpa.org.au](http://www.vnpa.org.au)

## The Nankeen Kestrel by Peter Lawrence

We are lucky in Victoria to have a significant number of species of birds of prey. From the magnificent Wedge-tailed Eagles with wing spans of almost three meters to the diminutive Nankeen Kestrel that barely makes it to one meter. But as we know, size is not everything. What they might lack in size is made up for by their amazing abilities in the air, as Kestrels are supreme masters of hovering almost motionless, except for the constant fine adjustment of the tail feathers reading the changes in the breeze. One of the common names used for this Falcon is 'Windhover' which seems rather appropriate. Sometimes from a distance they are actually hard to see because they move so little but when they dive toward some prey below, their true nature is revealed as their sharp pointed wings show their Falcon heritage.

*Falco cenchroides* is the species name and like all the other falcons they are masters of the air. Sure, they are not as fast as the Peregrines or as 'stealthy' as the Black Falcons but in their prime habitat of open grasslands, deserts and farmlands they are consummate hunters of small ground dwelling prey.



**Photo: George Pergaminelis** (via BOCA)

Nankeen refers to the beautiful nut brown colour of the plumage across the back of both males and females. The males have a greyish colour across the head and on the tail which makes picking the sexes of these birds a little easier than many other birds of prey. Like other raptors, the females are slightly larger than the males, which is a nice change from the usual situation with many birds and animals!

There is another way you can tell the Kestrel is a member of the Falcon family and that is by its call. The piercing 'kee kee kee' call is distinctive and generally causes most of the small birds in the area to sound their alarm

calls, as one of those nasty Falcons is in the area, so beware! It is interesting as Kestrels do not often take birds as prey, focussing mostly on small ground dwelling animals and insects. Large numbers of them can gather when prey is plentiful during mice and locusts plagues, but the normal diet can include a wide range of insects, spiders and lizards.

Strangely, some Kestrels in southern Australia are known to be partly migratory, which is not a normal trait of most Falcons. It seems that a proportion of the population like the idea of a holiday up north during the winter months, just like many Victorians! Birds breed from August to December across Australia and use a range of sites for nesting including tree hollows, cliffs and even old ravens nests.

It would be nice to think perhaps that we Australians are the only ones to have such a wonderful bird but other species of Kestrels occur on almost every continent and some very restricted species are found on islands like Madagascar and Mauritius.

Most of you I expect spend time in the country, many of you hopefully at one time or another with Jenny on one of her tours. Take the time to look out for this wonderful bird in the open landscapes of this country and marvel at the smallest member of the Falcon family.

*When you have finished with this Newsletter, please pass it on to a friend or recycle thoughtfully*

### Arid Wonderland

Parts of inland Australia have experienced their best two consecutive seasons for some time. Not just the water rushing down rivers heading for inland lakes, but local rains too. For my trip up the **Strzelecki Track to Innamincka** in May 2012, we expect to see a transformation after the country has enjoyed its best "drink" for a long time. Wildlife populations are enjoying a boom and plants too will be taking on abundant new growth. Similarly the **Flinders Ranges** (September 2012) will be alive with spring colours. Be quick, both trips are fully accommodated and will fill quickly.



### 50% Discount prize draw.

Every booking (with deposit) on tours within Victoria, received before **August 31st** will go in a draw for a massive 50% discount off the fare of the tour you have booked. So be quick, someone has to win!

### Continued from page 1 20th Birthday Celebrations

The following people will each receive a travel voucher for having joined the most number of trips - Meg Wiblin 17, Marg Bini, Marian Curson & June Soutter all 12, Phyl Akeroyd 11 and Margaret Lees 9.

As word of mouth is so important in building a small business I would also like to award travel vouchers to the following people for encouraging others to join a Gippsland High Country Tour experience. Ann Lang, Gail Smith, Pam Petschack, John & Joan Garner & Robin Carter.

Life seems to be more hectic every year and no matter how much you want to join one of my trips, I understand that making it happen can be difficult. Seven of the people who have enjoyed reading my newsletters for many years but have not yet had a chance to travel with me will also receive travel vouchers. Your continued interest and contact is appreciated. Janene Bonney, Mrs S Savage, Marjorie Murphy, Jane McKay, Diana Carlile, Peter McCullough and Geoff Martin.

### In the pipeline for 2012

#### Seashore life and Shells of East Gippsland

Like many people you have no doubt admired the variety of shells found washed up on our beaches.

Have you ever wondered who lives in them?

In Autumn 2012 I will be joined by Alan Monger to look more closely at shells and seashore life. We will wander the beaches, paddle in the shallows and explore rock pools to discover who lives there.

More details and itinerary available shortly.  
Register your interest now.



### KURRAJONG

in the heart of spectacular Snowy River country.

Accommodation for 5 in a spacious self contained house by the Deddick

River, handy to the Snowy and McKillops Bridge. Secluded garden, hammocks, open fire and good books, bush walks, abundant wildlife, unspoiled nature and friendly hosts.

Joanna and Kevin Ph: 0264 580216  
or email: jo@telegraphics.com.au

To: **Gippsland High Country Tours,**  
**Reply Paid 69,**  
**Bruthen Vic. 3885**

(No Stamp Required)

Or Fax to (03) 5157 5539

Please send me more information about the following trips - \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_