

GIPPSLAND HIGH COUNTRY TOURS

Newsletter no. 37

P.O. Box 69, Bruthen Vic. 3885

Australia

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Autumn 2012

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NEW for 2012

Shells and Seashore Life of East Gippsland March 29– April 2

If you enjoy beachcombing for shells and would like to know more about who once lived inside them or enjoy exploring rock pools and discovering the life found in the clear waters, this trip is for you. More details on page 6

River Life at Waterholes October 24-27

A river somewhere... Learn about the life of a river, the Nicholson River. Think about the creatures that make the river their home—fish, frogs and maybe platypus. What about the tiny creatures that live on the sandy bottom or under the rocks? Armed with dip nets discover some of this macro-invertebrate life and why it is so important. Meet the local frogs too and enjoy the wonderful chorus of calls. Learn something of the river's own story. Where it comes from, the route it has travelled in the past and the importance of protecting the whole catchment.

Join us for four busy days learning about the life of a river. Although it feels very remote, we won't be roughing it at all. The Nicholson River is right on the doorstep of Waterholes Guesthouse. So you will enjoy a well appointed guesthouse room and great meals.



Walking Errinundra Plateau November 5-9

A great new walking tour in the tall damp forests of East Gippsland. Great moderate grade walks explore the leafy tracks on the Errinundra Plateau. Don't hurry though, take time to gaze upward at the giant eucalypts of these old-growth forests. More on page 7

Feathers, Frogs & Furry Things



Easter this year, we will forget the Easter Bunny or even the Bilby and spend Easter in the forests of the Snowy River National Park getting to know the local wildlife.

This ecotour is gathering data on wildlife populations as part of a research project and this year for the first time, the survey will be carried out during autumn. On previous trips over 25 new species have been added to the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife for this site

So enjoy a very natural Easter break this year in a quiet forest location away from the bustle. Your naturalist guides will share with you their knowledge of wildlife seldom seen by casual visitors.

The three days includes a busy program of setting up special traps, checking them and recording data on wildlife that have been captured. We will make a lists of birds of the area and enjoy short walks to listen and look for signs of wildlife.

After the sun sets the bush comes alive and we prepare for evening walks to listen and look for nocturnal animals. What might we hear? The soft yap of a sugar glider, frogs calling from a dam or perhaps the haunting sound of an owl? Maybe we'll see a glimpse of a wombat or wallaby blundering across the track.

April 7-9 (Easter) 3 days with 2 nights bush camping (equipment supplied)

INSIDE:

<i>Beyond the High Country</i>	<i>page 8</i>
<i>Calendar / Program</i>	<i>page 4</i>
<i>Discounts</i>	<i>page 2</i>
<i>Reply Coupon</i>	<i>pages 8</i>
<i>Trip Highlights</i>	<i>page 3</i>
<i>Walking</i>	<i>page 7</i>
<i>Wildlife</i>	<i>pages 5 & 6</i>

Editorial

Congratulations to Lorna McFarlane who was the winner of a 50% discount on her tour booking, as part of Gippsland High Country Tours 20th birthday celebrations as announced in the spring newsletter.

I expect most of you will have heard by now that the federal environment minister Tony Burke has ruled that Victoria's cattle grazing trials in the Alpine National Park cannot proceed as they now contravene the federal EPBC Act. This once again demonstrates the nationally significant values that exist in Victoria's Alpine National Park.

This Newsletter comes with a varied 2012 program including three great new trips, many "old" favourites and two interstate Natural History Tours.

Two of the new departures have a strong learning focus for those who are really curious about the natural world and would like a more educational experience. The third is a moderate graded walking tour exploring the magnificent forests of Errinundra Plateau.

There are some interesting nature notes in this issue and some food for thought about reducing the impacts of printing. Gippsland High Country Tours is proud to introduce our new printer, Black Rainbow who are a local company based at W Tree. This picturesque locality with an intriguing name may be remembered by anyone who has travelled into the Snowy River Country with me.

So as summer slips away from us and the benign autumn weather arrives, ensure you have your holiday plans in place to enjoy some time exploring nature, now or later in the year. Make use of the coupon below, book before March 30 and get an additional 5% discount.

As always advice on the selection of a suitable trip is only a phone call or email away. *Jenny*

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

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.

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

This Newsletter is typeset and published by Gippsland High Country Tours. Printed on 100% post consumer waste recycled paper.

Illustrations by Catherine Turnbull (All illustrations and photographs are subject to Copyright and must not be reproduced without permission) Photographs by J. Edwards.

Autumn Discount

Select your ecotour or walking experience experience & book **before March 30, 2012**

Attach this coupon and receive

5% Discount

in addition to the regular discounts

off the advertised fare for any departure of 3-7 days duration

REGULAR DISCOUNTS

Available on all 3-7 day departures

NOTE: Only one discount or special offer can be used on any one booking. Not applicable to local day trips and weekends.

Before March 30, 2012 5% may be added to these discounts

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

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

Some of your comments from a variety of different trips

Really enjoyable trip and an exciting eye-opener to a world I haven't observed before. **Shirley**

Thank you Jenny & Peter for introducing us to the south east of Victoria. We have learned, been entertained, met friendly and interesting people and pleased indeed with the well constructed and organised ecotour. **Lesley & Ross.**

The knowledge Jenny imparts is amazing, it is so good to travel with "a local" **Lana**

Jenny once again you have provided us with a feast of happy memories as well as some happy feasts. We really do appreciate your wide range of skills - organising, driving, cooking, finding birds and plants - and simply the gift of bringing a diverse group of people into a harmonious whole. We have had three memorable adventures with GHCT and look forward to others to come. **Tim & Ros**



Trying to think of a term that covers your combined knowledge of insects, flowers, trees, fires etc..., let me say "inspirational". And not to forget Katherine's insight into her aboriginal culture which she so freely discussed. **Michael**

A journey of exploration, full of surprises. **Tineke**

Jenny was very friendly, concerned and interested in everyone, with great expertise, knowledge and she communicated well. It couldn't have been better. I enjoyed the small group and travelling to places I would not go to on my own. A long-held seemingly impossible dream come true for me. **Edith**

Thank you for accommodating my dietary preference. My highlights were the fellowship, weather and walks. The trip gave me a better appreciation of the beauty and vulnerability of our High Country. **Marjorie**

Thank you Maria for your excellent leadership, pleasant company, good driving and healthy catering. A very scenic and informative trip. **Val**

Was the trip all it was promoted to be? Absolutely and more!! This was a wonderful, easily paced experience with comprehensive information before and during the trip. I enjoyed your well researched knowledge Jenny. Thanks for another wonderful experience and I look forward to more. **Sandra**

Thank you Jenny for an enjoyable trip – a great introduction to East Gippsland. Thank you for your, thoughtfulness and caring for each person and their particular interest. It was wonderful! I will definitely be back. **Sue**

Went away jangled and tired, returned refreshed and better balanced. Thank you and Christianne for all your thoughtful hard work. Same time next year? **Catherine**

Calendar of Ecotours and Walks 2012

March 29 <i>NEW</i>	Shells & Seashore Life of East Gippsland Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy=moderate walks. Discovery and Research ecotour 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2350 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2470
April 7 <i>EASTER</i>	Wonders of Wildlife Ecotour - Snowy River Graded: EASY/MODERATE 2 nights camping & easy walks. Combined Ecotour and Wildlife Research Project. 3 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1050
April 17	Cape Conran Explorer Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy walks 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1410 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1530
May 6 <i>OUTBACK</i>	Strzelecki Track & Cooper Creek –Arid Environment Natural History Tour Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy-moderate walks. 15 Days ex. Adelaide \$5450
September 2 <i>OUTBACK</i>	Flinders Ranges Natural History Tour Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-moderate walks. 14 Days ex. Melbourne \$5100
September 26	Walking from Waterholes Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Walking all day, from an accommodation base. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1680 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1800
October 1	Walking Croajingolong Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Lots of Moderate Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2830 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$2950
October 8	Croajingolong Coastal Ecotour Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2830 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$2950
October 16	Cape Conran Explorer Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy walks 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1410 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1530
October 24 <i>NEW</i>	River Life at Waterholes Graded: EASY Fully Accommodated. Easy Walking. Combined Ecotour and Wildlife Research Project. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1800 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1920
November 5 <i>NEW</i>	Walking Errinundra Plateau Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated with lots of moderate day walks. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1720 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1840
November 12	Birds of the Snowy River Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1900 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2020
November 19	Walk Mt Howitt & Tali Karng Graded: MODERATE - CHALLENGING Vehicle-based camping with Moderate-Challenging day walks. 5 Days ex. Heyfield/Rosedale \$1900 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2010
January 7 2013	Alpine Discovery Tour Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated, lots of short easy nature walks . 6 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2300 6 Days ex. Melbourne \$2420

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

Nature Notes

During a spring tour to Croajingolong, we were enjoying the views from the balcony of the Pt Hicks lighthouse, when someone observed what appeared to be a snake on the road below. A closer look with binoculars showed that it was in fact two large Red-bellied Black Snakes intertwined in a tight coil wrestling quite vigorously along the road (See the picture below). We wondered at the time whether we were observing fighting or mating behaviour? The following information from “Australian Snakes” by Rick Shine confirms that the snakes we observed were in fact fighting males, not a mating pair.



If a male encounters another male close to a female, he either fights or runs away (apparently depending on whether or not he is larger than the other male). If two similarly sized, large males encounter each other in this way, the resulting “combat dance is one of the most spectacular sights in the Australian bush. The rival males engage in a test of strength, wrapping around each other’s bodies so that they look like a plaited whip. Each male attempts to place his head over that of his rival and force the other’s head down. If one snake is much larger or stronger than the other, the fight may last only a few seconds. On the other hand, combats between two very large males can last for hours. Generally males do not bite each other during these encounters.

Most untrained observers who see male combat in snakes interpret it as courtship or mating, rather than fighting. The two combatants are coiled around each other, move together very elegantly and do not bite. However the plaited appearance of fighting males is very different to the positions that snakes use for courtship and mating. In these latter activities the female generally remains passive while the male moves around in a jerky excited fashion. Females that want to avoid mating seem to escape fairly easily. After all, the male does not have any arms or hand with which to hold her down!

We were very lucky to experience this behaviour and see it all from a wonderful elevated vantage point.

Remote cameras for wildlife surveys

Advances in technology bring new devices into our lives all the time, mobile phones gets smaller, there are so many new gadgets with buttons and programs, some are exciting while some just plain frustrating! In the world of wildlife survey, one of the great advances has been in remote cameras. These have earned a significant place in wildlife researchers kits.

Tempting bait is set in a wire “cage” luring animals to the site where a sensor detects heat and movement triggering the camera to take a series of photos.

In additional to learning about presence of a species at a site, you often observe interactions between individuals as they go about their nightly business.

Gippsland High Country Tours often uses remote cameras as part of wildlife research projects to gather data with as little impact on animals as possible. If conditions are right, remote cameras will be set as part of the Easter survey in Snowy River National Park (April 7-9).



Long-nosed bandicoot

Shells & Seashore Life of East Gippsland (March 29-April 2)

This trip is more than just a coastal holiday, it has a strong focus on learning about the coastal and marine environments and the creatures that live along Victoria's eastern seashores. Jenny will be joined by Alan Monger who brings years of expertise on shells in particular, but has held a deep interest in all marine life for more than 50 years.

Alan will enthusiastically lead you to discover the vast array of life that can be found on our seashores. You'll be wandering along the beaches beach-combing and getting up early while the tide is low to enjoy rock pool rambles. As we go along, Alan will record his findings to report back to the Museum of Victoria and the Marine Research Group.

You will learn the difference between different groups of organisms and gain an understanding of how they fit into the overall scheme of things and why protection of our marine environments and shorelines is so important.

In addition to time actively searching, there will be a few informal "tutorial" sessions and of course some free time too so you can relax and enjoy your surroundings.

Expect this trip to be more educational and research based, however you do not need any prior knowledge or experience. I do ask that you come along with a healthy curiosity about the natural world along our coasts and be open to learning more about the many forms of life we might find.

Walks are not long or difficult, but include some scrambling around rocks, so a reasonable level of fitness and agility will be required to participate fully.



5 Days (4 nights accommodation) \$2350 ex. Bairnsdale or \$2470 ex. Melbourne

Point Hicks Lighthouse By Josephine Flanagan (Vic)

We were a group of Senior Cits
And all of us were thrilled to bits
When first we sighted a Humpback Whale
Its back, its fin and then its tail.
Up in the air, water it spouted
And in our genteel way, we shouted.

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

Cape Conran Explorer

A relaxing short break holiday to enjoy lots of easy-moderate walks, wildflowers in season and an interesting history. From the dramatic colours of salmon rocks to the still dark water of Yeerung River estuary photographic opportunities abound.

Birds and wildlife are generally plentiful and an evening spotlight walk is an opportunity to see small mammals such as bandicoots just a short distance from your cosy cabin accommodation.

Maria is leading two departures this year so you can choose between autumn and spring. Group numbers are small, so book early.

April 17-20 and October 16-19, 2012

**4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1410
or 4 days ex. Melbourne \$1530**

Walking Ecotours

If you love great walks that allow you time to pause and appreciate the natural areas you walk through, you will love the program of guided walking ecotours on offer for spring 2012.

September 26 - Walking from Waterholes. A short break, not much travelling and a very relaxing destination. Most walks start right at the door of your well appointed Guesthouse room. Follow bush tracks and old mining trails while enjoying great bushland, a bit of history and spring wildflowers.

October 1 - Walking Croajingolong. A whole week of walking taking in a variety of different environments along Victoria's eastern coast. Spring wildflowers will be in full swing and the scenery and wildlife are a bonus.

November 5 - Walking Errinundra Plateau. Famous for old growth forests, this trip features walks along delightful fern-lined tracks taking in the magnificent forests of Errinundra Plateau. Gippsland Waratahs in bloom, misty mountains, towering Errinundra Shining gums, a rainforest boardwalk and so much more. Fully accommodated for four nights and moderate grade walks every day. **NEW FOR 2012 - be quick!**

November 19 - Walk Mt Howitt & Tali Karng The High Country in Spring! Magical walks to mountain peaks, waterfalls and Tali Karng, the hidden lake. Requires enough fitness for moderately challenging walks and enough sense of adventure to enjoy 4 nights vehicle based camping.

Simple steps to reduce the impact of your paper trail

As we strive to reduce our environmental footprint we are constantly reminded to reduce printed material and in this age of email and electronic media this is often possible. However for many reasons printing remains a feature of modern life.

Finding ways to make printed material more environmentally friendly is important. Recycling is becoming a way of life. Reduce, re-use, recycle. Begin with reducing your printed material where possible and print double sided to reduce paper use. Then re-use what you can. Paper that has been printed on one side only (letters, old reports and office documents) can be used in home printers, or cut up and stapled for shopping lists, phone notepads etc... Finally recycle all paper thoughtfully.

When printing material yourself at home or in your workplace, community group or volunteer organization, look at reducing the impacts of your printing. Select paper carefully, around 85% of timber logged from Victoria's native forests ends up as pulp and paper. Recycled paper that uses 100% post consumer waste are gradually becoming more readily available. If its not recycled post consumer waste it is not actually reducing the amount of virgin pulp required and thus the number of trees cut down. Choosing 100% post consumer waste recycled paper over 100% virgin wood pulp paper means you use no trees, 63% less energy, 58% less water and produce 56% less greenhouse gases for every tonne of paper. Don't be fooled by claims that "recycled paper fouls photocopiers and printing machines". The quality of recycled paper has come a long way and this excuse is often used to avoid the slightly higher price of 100% post consumer waste recycled paper.

Gippsland High Country Tours recommends Black Rainbow Printing (www.blackrainbow.com.au) for any commercial printing needs. They are a local company committed to the environment, using carefully selected recycled paper, vegetable oil based inks and are 100% solar powered. See their ad below.



Black Rainbow
Environmentally Responsible Printing

- Recycled stock • Vegie Inks • 100% Solar Power • Chemical Free
- 25 Years Supplying Green Print • We deliver to your door!

Supplying all your printing requirements
at pricing you can afford!

P: 03 5155 0221
E: blackrainbow@blackrainbow.com.au

In the pipeline for September 2013

Birds of Hattah Kulkyn & Murray Sunset

Birdwatching in the mallee environment is very rewarding and brings species of birds new to most of us from the southern parts of Victoria.

Proximity to the Murray River also adds waterbirds to the variety of birdlife. We will take our time and enjoy watching the birds, not just ticking off lists.

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

Beyond the High Country - Flinders Ranges Natural History Tour September 2-15, 2012

Nature lovers can enjoy a new look at an old favourite destination. The Flinders Ranges has captured the hearts of artists, photographers and tourists for a long time, but it is so much more than rugged scenery. Look deeper to discover the natural wonders including a rich flora and fauna and the complex geology that has given rise to the spectacular landforms we enjoy now. Visit aboriginal art sites and think about a very old culture.

You will enjoy outstanding birdwatching opportunities in a range of habitats (our list for the previous trips includes 93 species) and see a variety of other wildlife. Gain an understanding of how these creatures survive the boom and bust cycles so common in this arid country.

This landscape has suffered since European settlement with changes brought by early settlers and pastoralists who did not understand this harsh but fragile environment. Now with protection, threatened species like Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies are bouncing back.

14 days, fully accommodated with easy-moderate walks. Includes the southern Flinders plus 2 nights at Arkaroola and 5 nights in the heart of the Flinders Ranges. **\$5100 per person ex. Melbourne**

Strzelecki Track & Cooper Creek Arid environment Natural History Tour May 6-20, 2012

Only 2 places remain. Take the opportunity to join a small group and enjoy seeing the arid environment after two good seasons. Great birdwatching opportunities, fascinating landforms, interesting plant life and a rich history to be told.
15 days, fully accommodated.





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

Waterholes

Waterholes provides an unsurpassed escape to peace. An Eden experience in a wilderness river valley. Boutique accommodation and high quality meals. Walks, swimming and laid back activities in total privacy.

Waterholes Guest House

Ph: 03 5157 9330 (Closed June, July & August)

Email: inquire@waterholesguesthouse.com.au
Website: www.waterholesguesthouse.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: _____