

# GIPPSLAND HIGH COUNTRY TOURS

Newsletter no. 39

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Australia

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Winter 2013

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## Spring Wildflowers

Step out of your everyday routine and into a wonderland of wildflowers in Croajingolong National Park.



Butterfly Flag Iris

Spring brings a profusion of flowers of every size to Victoria's far east coast. Shrubs hanging with fragrant blooms are dotted through the coastal forests while on the roadsides and in the heathland are ground cover plants and smaller wildflowers including orchids.

There are two different trips this spring, both fully accommodated, with walks, a rich history to learn about and wildlife experiences to enjoy .

### Croajingolong Coastal Ecotour, October 14, 2013

This slower pace ecotour maximises your opportunities to appreciate wildflowers and birdlife. There will be plenty of time to look as we won't be rushing along. Every day we enjoy a number of easy walks, ambling along forest tracks, through coastal heath or along quiet beaches.

### Walking Croajingolong, September 30 -October 6, 2013

Stretch your legs on some good walks as we explore a bit further afield, but still with time to pause and enjoy nature. There will be coastal peaks to climb, long white beaches and delightful forest and heathland walks. All the time spring wildflowers will be brightening the scenery and adding to the already glorious views.

## Owls and missing mammals

By Rohan Bilney

Virtually everywhere I go I find myself pondering what the landscape used to look like prior to European settlement; before clearing, logging, altered fire regimes, diseases and feral species altered the environment. How has the vegetation changed? How have populations of animals changed? What is missing?

Sadly, these 'disturbances' were often active long before detailed surveys were undertaken so we have limited understanding what 'original' conditions were like, let alone how native species have adapted to these disturbances. In many habitats, including heavily forested habitats of south-eastern Australia, detailed surveys only commenced in the 1960s, so our understanding of many species distributions and abundances are only based on studies conducted in an already high altered environment.

This is especially applicable to our understanding of small mammals, many of which are small, cryptic and nocturnal. Early settlers and explorers had great difficulty identifying such creatures (especially when some species had not been taxonomically described and field guides did not exist). It is therefore difficult to know whether some small mammal species have declined since European settlement.

To understand how species have adapted since European settlement requires an understanding of the past. Fortunately, our understanding of the pre-European settlement mammal community has been vastly improved in recent years thanks to an owl, the Sooty Owl, which has been the focus of my research for many years.

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## Editorial

Welcome to the new annual Newsletter. This one is a bumper issue and I thank the contributors who have helped make this Newsletter full of interesting stories.

The program is full and interesting and with spring just around the corner it's a perfect time to plan for some time enjoying nature's celebration of the end of winter.

On page 4 you will find news of some environmental issues that I believe are important. I hope you will be interested enough to follow these up and become better informed about the issues. I am also enclosing a sticker which could be displayed to show your support for our National Parks.

Speaking of sharing the word, Gippsland High Country Tours is



now on Facebook!! This will be a great informal way to communicate with you and share photos and sorties from trips as they happen. So if you are a Facebook user, look us up and "Like" the page. I'd love to hear your comments and see some photos and of course it's great if you can share the link with others.

The next full Newsletter will be in winter 2014, although I will send out a brief program update during summer. If I have your email address, you will also receive a couple of short email updates during the year to highlight new trips and special offers. Be assured that I do not pass on your email address to anyone without your permission, so it will not be used to generate spam emails.

Please enquire and book early, groups sizes are small (less than 11 and often only 4-6 participants) so places are limited. I can usually hold tentative reservations for a while to give you time to sort out holidays, but register your interest early. The Discount coupon below gives a great added discount for those who are quick of the mark.

*Jenny Lawrence*

*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.*

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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.

## Winter Discount

Select your ecotour or walking experience and book **before August 31, 2013**

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 August 31, 2013 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

### *Reflections & highlights from the Croajingolong National Park Tour 8/10/12 By Dorothy Francis*

In October when Victorian wild flowers were at their best I joined the 7 day Croajingolong Coastal Ecotour with easy day-walks along the SE coast of Victoria. This magnificent National Park stretches from Sydenham Inlet to the NSW border covering 87,500ha. The name Croajingolong is derived from the local aboriginal tribe 'Krauatungalung' meaning 'people of the east'. In the past there was abundant wild life included shellfish, wading birds and other marine life along this magnificent wildlife wilderness. The aboriginal people would have had a good life with the many estuaries and inlets that stretch along this vast coastline.

We were a small group of four who joined Jenny; our expert leader, driver, guide & cook for the first 4 days then Maria took over thereafter. Most mornings & afternoons we did short leisurely walks of 3 to 4km. Despite poor weather forecasts, the weather was very kind to us, only needing an umbrella for about half an hour all week .

The highlights for me were the many sightings of Humpback whales with their calves frolicking out to sea off Point Hicks on their migration to Antarctica for the summer. The group listed 70 wonderful bird species and 137 sightings that the experts shared with me a novice. I loved the profusion of wildflowers, especially the many native orchids that were so tiny but spectacular. We spent much of our time walking along minor tracks or on our knees, to see the next & the next wild flowers and taking photos.

At remote Pt Hicks we stayed in a lighthouse keeper assistant's cottage built in 1890 and did several local coastal walks. They are used for holiday makers now as the Lighthouse light is automated. Once three 'keepers' worked three shifts every 24 hrs and their families had to live in this beautiful but isolated spot. These days caretakers rotate each two weeks and are responsible for the weather/sea forecast three times a day & looking after visitors to the area.



This rugged coast is where Capt Cook first sighted the Australian mainland from the 'Endeavour' in 1770. It was named after the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Zachary Hicks who made the sighting. Until recently the only access was by sea to a nearby sandy beach 20-30 minutes walk away or by horseback down a windy unmade track, now it's only a 45 minute drive from the main road.

After leaving Pt Hicks we went further east to the north arm of Mallacoota Inlet staying at Gypsy Point Lodge and enjoyed the feeling of being in the lap of luxury for three nights. Beautiful scenery from the lodge and lots of wild life to enjoy such as a King Parrot that would eat out of your hand, Kangaroos grazing down by the inlet, a curious Kookaburra in a gum tree in the grounds. Inside there was a wonderful log fire in the huge guest sitting/dining room where coffee/tea was available 24hrs a day and we enjoyed our meals together.

In the country people often multi-task and we discovered the local chef, John is also a boat tour captain & 'man's the local rubbish tip. He took us out in his boat for 4 hours one morning and showed us the marvelous wildlife; many birds such as sea-eagles nesting in a gumtrees and diving for fish, a brilliant kingfisher, kookaburras, tiny blue wrens, and many other sea birds & birds of prey. We saw a metre long black snake in the sun on the riverbank, and a number of different types of lizards including Gippsland water dragons basking in the sun near Genoa Falls.

I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the trip and can recommend it to anyone interested in our wonderful country and its flora and fauna. A wonderful trip; thank Jenny for all your organization.



## “If you don’t fight for what you love, don’t cry for what you lose”

Its been said before, but applies even more now as our precious environment is under assault as never before. There are the well known and long standing environmental issues of climate change, land clearance, lack of funding for public land management and important things like threatened species protection and research.

The value of the natural environment is being eroded at an increasing rate with even areas we thought were protected in National Parks under threat as environmental protection is being watered down across Australia.

There are currently moves across the various state to allow logging, prospecting and mining in some National Parks, sell off portions to investors for commercial development and even suggestions of rescinding some National Parks completely. In NSW Park users are concerned about public safety as widespread hunting or feral animals will be permitted in many National Park while invasive animal experts say that this non-scientific approach may actually hinder systematic feral animal control works.

### What can you do?

Inside this Newsletter is an *I love National Parks* sticker. Please display this to show your support for our parks. More are available from the Victorian National Parks Association.

Here are some links to help you learn about the issues and show your support-

Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) [www.vnpa.org.au](http://www.vnpa.org.au)

National Parks Association (NSW) [www.npansw.org.au](http://www.npansw.org.au)

Environment East Gippsland [www.eastgippsland.net.au](http://www.eastgippsland.net.au)

The federal election is looming and I encourage you to contact your local member and ask what his/her environmental policies are. What about Carbon emissions policies? It may not change the way you vote, but it sends a message that you as a voter care about the environment. Maybe it will change the way you vote?

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### At last!! A Management Plan for Feral Horses (also known as Wild Horses or Brumbies)

Parks Victoria is developing a Victorian Alps Wild Horse Management Plan to guide the management of wild horses and their impacts on public land in the Victorian Alps. Community input and expert advice are essential to ensure the plan considers the range of views on wild horses and that management controls are effective and practical.

Wild horses have been present in the Victorian Alps for more than 150 years, since being introduced by early European settlers. While valued by some in the community for their cultural association with the Alps, populations have grown rapidly in the past decade and the latest estimates suggest that there are now 8200 – 10,900 wild horses in the Victorian Alps. Wild horses pose a significant threat to the important environmental values of the Alps, including to a number of threatened species and ecological communities. The "degradation and loss of habitat caused by feral horses" is listed as a potentially threatening process under Victoria’s Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (1988).



Feral horse damage to a sub-alpine stream

A series of Information Sheets and Background Papers including Frequently Asked Questions, have been prepared to assist the community with information on wild horses in the Victorian Alps and are available from the website [www.parks.vic.gov.au/alpshorseplan](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au/alpshorseplan)

The website includes a survey and an opportunity to voice an opinion and contribute to the planning process, but best of all, the information sheets give you a chance to learn the facts and actively participate in discussions with others on this often emotional topic.

Many of you have visited the Cobberas, Forlorn Hope Plain or other parts of the Eastern Alps with me over the years and seen first hand some of the extensive damage feral horses have caused. Their numbers here are increasing dramatically and with no natural predators the impacts continue to increase. If you have never been to this part of the world and are keen to see feral horse impacts for yourself, let me know and I will see if I can match you up with a suitable trip that includes this in the future.

## Calendar of Ecotours and Walks 2013 - 2014

<b>September 25</b>	<b>Spring into Nature at Waterholes</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy Walking 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1750 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1870
<b>September 30</b>	<b>Walking Croajingolong</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Lots of Moderate Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2900 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$3020
<b>October 14</b>	<b>Croajingolong Coastal Ecotour</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2900 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$3020
<b>October 30</b>	<b>Walking from Waterholes</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Walking all day, from an accommodation base. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1750 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1870
<b>November 11</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2050 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2170
<b>November 18</b>	<b>Snowy River &amp; Errinundra Explorer Tour</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated with easy day walks. 6 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2250 6 Days ex. Melbourne \$2370
<b>November 25</b>	<b>Walking Errinundra Plateau</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated with lots of moderate day walks. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1840 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1960
<b>December 2</b>	<b>Tali Karng Explorer</b> Graded: MODERATE - CHALLENGING Vehicle-based camping with Moderate-Challenging day walks. 4 Days ex. Heyfield/Rosedale <u>from</u> \$1560 5 Days ex. Melbourne <u>from</u> \$1680
<b>January 13</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2050 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2170
<b>Summer NEW</b>	<b>Gabo Island Discovery Ecotour</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-Moderate walks <i>Contact us for full details</i>
<b>March 21</b>	<b>Seashore Life of East Gippsland</b> Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-moderate walks. Discovery and Research ecotour 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2540 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2660
<b>April 19 EASTER</b>	<b>Wonders of Wildlife Ecotour - Snowy River</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE 2 nights camping & easy walks. Combined Ecotour and Wildlife Research Project. 3 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1260
<b>Autumn NEW</b>	<b>High country huts with Wayne</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE <i>Contact us for full details</i>
<b>May</b>	<b>Flinders Ranges Natural History Tour</b> Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-Moderate walks. <i>Contact us for full details</i>
<b>August 31</b>	<b>Birds of the Hattah Kulkyne &amp; Murray Sunset</b> Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-moderate walks with a focus on birdwatching. 10 Days ex. Melbourne \$POA

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)**

## **Dateline: Innamincka, South Australia May 10-13, 2012**

**By Deborah Campbell**

After our long, tiring but interesting day of travel along the Strzelecki Track, we were glad of a leisurely morning to accustom ourselves to the blinding light, the blue, blue skies and the heat at Innamincka. During our five nights' stay in this tiny but pivotal settlement on Cooper Creek, I met tourists who flew their own planes in one day and departed the next. One asked me what on earth we could find to do in Innamincka for several days. My response: we needed to be there that long, if not longer, to get a feel for the place and its surrounding countryside.

The 'town' itself is tiny – a hotel/motel, store and restored AIM nurses' home/hospital housing an excellent display of photos and documents recounting the history of the building and the settlement. There are a few other buildings, a camping area, an airstrip and a cemetery. At that time the Cooper's waters were running high and fast so the causeway was closed to traffic, which meant our day trip to the Coongie Lakes was cancelled. Although this was disappointing, there was so much else to see in the area.

After lunch on the shady veranda of the motel, we drove to the Cullyamurra Waterhole on the Cooper. The waters were alive with bird life: pelicans, whistling kites, cormorants, for example. One kite was fishing very successfully. Wayne later found its nest and, on the ground underneath, the corpses of many fish, each minus its head. We happily whiled away the afternoon along the Cooper banks. Unfortunately we couldn't visit the Indigenous rock painting site further up its course as that area has now been closed off to all but the local Aboriginals. Near there the Waterhole is about 28 metres deep.

As evening drew on, we became aware of the play of light and shade on the sandy tracks that revealed the marks left by insects, reptiles and mammals. As the sun set, the birds began gathering to fly to their roosts for the night; I especially recall a V-shaped flotilla of pelicans catching the sun as they flew downstream. Wayne and Jenny cooked a delicious pasta meal capped off with fruit cake with our cuppa, then Wayne played his guitar and sang for us as darkness fell and a myriad of stars twinkled above. A memorable experience! As we drove out on to the main 'road', I spotted a light grey feral cat slinking toward the creek bank. I reckon it knew where to find a feed of very accessible fish!

The succeeding days were taken up with visits to Cooper Creek sites linked with Burke and Wills' ill-fated expedition. Our first destination was The Dig Tree, followed by the sites of Burke's grave, Wills grave and King's rescue. At each location, Jenny read an account of what had happened there which enriched our imaginations as we considered the hardships, courage, despair, and occasional foolishness of these famous men.



Each historical site and others that we visited, offered excellent opportunities for birdwatching, plus the occasional sighting of reptiles and mammals. Near the site of King's rescue, for example, we saw a well-fed dingo that stopped and looked at us with curiosity. Sweets Bore Road is bounded by high red vegetated sand dunes, which have an ecology of their own. It was fascinating looking at the birds, plants, and animal tracks on the dunes.

Owing to the abundant rains of preceding months through much of Australia, the desert vegetation had grown incredibly; in fact it was difficult to consider the area as desert. Strikingly the usually harsh landscape of the gibber plains was softened by green growth.

In addition to the natural and historical attractions of the Innamincka area, there is another fascinating aspect of life there, one which is best appreciated during an extended stay. The town's location makes it a hub for comings and goings, not just of tourists, but also of mine and other work crews, drivers of delivery trucks (food, potable water and other necessities), and hotel staff.

***Continued on page 7***

**Dateline: Innamincka *Continued from page 6***

We gained a fascinating if fleeting insight into the lives of a number of these people. Among them were the housekeeper and her two young rescued feral cats, Angel and Demon, and the woman's offsider, a young traveller from Finland; the chef from Liverpool, a woman in an all-male mining team who told me she would be working as a cleaner but planned to develop her photography skills as well, perhaps as an entree to a new career, and the Aboriginal man whose job was to advise on possible sacred sites in places where mining may occur.

It seemed that everyone in this 'melting pot' had a story to tell. As a city-dweller, I had no idea of all that is going on in our country's heart. **Deborah**

**Foothill secrets at Waterholes**

A number of readers have already enjoyed the delights of Waterholes Guesthouse on one of my walking or nature discovery ecotours that have been based here over the years.

Their comments are glowing testament to the wonderful hospitality and meals that hosts Kaye and Bob provide. Their comments also clearly show what a wonderful hidden secret this is, surrounded by forest, which despite a rich human history still appears only lightly touched by human hands. We do very little driving as pretty much everything starts right outside your guesthouse room!

Just beyond the garden is the Nicholson River, tumbling quickly over rocks and lying quiet and dark in still pools. Perhaps a Platypus, a Water Dragon or a Kingfisher will appear if you sit quietly enough? By night, a dark but starry sky replaces street lights and the chorus of frogs calling from the lagoon replace the jagged sounds of civilization.

Sadly, this may be the last spring that I can offer my popular Waterholes trips as Kaye and Bob are finally talking seriously of retirement. So if you have ever been to Waterholes and thought you would like to return one day, or if you have never had a chance to join these trips before, 2013 is the time to do it! Small groups, maximum 6 participants.

**Spring into Nature at Waterholes, Sept 25-28.**

Easy ambles, wildflowers, river scenes, fascinating history, great birdlife and more.

**Walking from Waterholes, October 9-12**

Energetic walks follow old mining trails and explore a changing forest. Still time to enjoy what nature provides and hear tales of history from an earlier era.

**Misty Mountains and ferny forests**

When you need to escape from everyday life; to replace the rushing with relaxing, and swap stress for solitude- try the magical forests of East Gippsland.

Wandering along ferny tracks beneath towering trees that are forest giants, listening to the spring chirping of birds and the silence in between, your busy life-style will seem a million miles away.

This spring two very different departures take you to Errinundra Plateau to enjoy all of this and much more. The bush will be dotted with flowering shrubs and trees including the Gippsland Waratah. Spring in Errinundra is a bit damp for camping, so we stay in cosy cottage accommodation not far away.

**Walking Errinundra Plateau** is for energetic walkers with a combination of good walks each day taking in a variety of forest tracks and views. November 25-29.

**Snowy River & Errinundra Explorer** is an easier trip taking in two contrasting National Parks with touring and lots of shorter, easier walks. November 16-23.





## Gippsland's missing mammals

### Continued from page 1

It was over 10 years ago while exploring a rocky gorge surrounded with rainforest in Gippsland, I discovered piles of small mammal bones in several caves. These bones were the dietary remains of Sooty Owls, which still occupied many of the caves nearby. Owls regurgitate indigestible remains of their prey (primarily bones and fur), which in caves can accumulate over time and the bones can span hundreds if not thousands of years in age. As Sooty Owls are capable of consuming virtually any small mammal available to them under 1.5kg, these sub-fossil deposits provide important information regarding what species historically occupied the region.



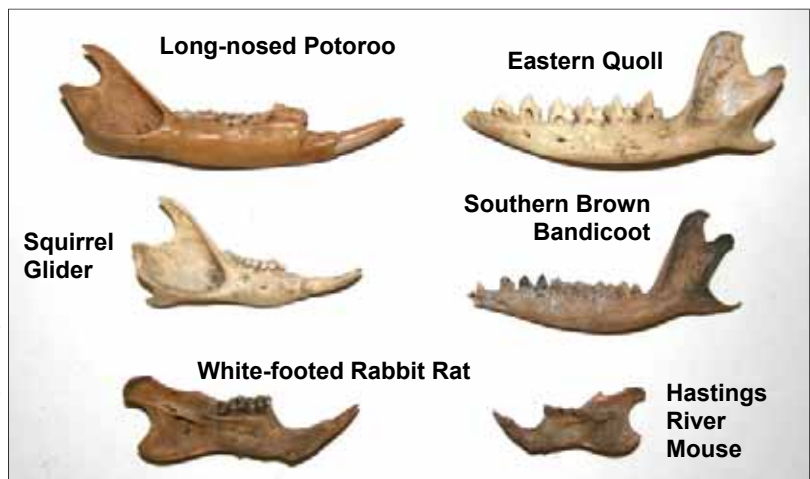
**Female Sooty Owl in cave roost**

In addition to that, the current diet of the Sooty Owl provides a good understanding of what mammals currently exist in the area, and comparing their current diet to the sub-fossils reveals how the mammal community has changed over time.

What I discovered from the sub-fossil deposits is that close to the time of European settlement 28 species of mammal were being regularly consumed by Sooty Owls in Gippsland. This contrasts markedly from their current diet, where only 10 species were detected from the same geographical area. Overall, it appears that 75% of the small mammals present in the region at the time of European settlement have declined dramatically in distribution and/or abundance. The species that have suffered the greatest declines were ground-dwelling and occupied open habitats (such as woodlands which have often been cleared for farmland).

The mammal species no longer present include the only extinct mammal from south-eastern Australia, the White-footed Rabbit Rat, while three species are extinct on the mainland being the Red-bellied Pademelon, Southern Bettong and Eastern Quoll which all persist in Tasmania. Many very rare species that occupied the region until recently include the Hastings River Mouse that now occupies northern NSW, the Eastern Chestnut Mouse that occupies coastal habitats north of Jervis Bay in NSW. The sub-fossil owl deposits also showed that Broad-toothed Rats and Leadbeater's Possums previously occupied the drier foothill forests opposed to the wet forest types that they occupy today. Many other species including bandicoots, potoroos, and several other rodents still persist in Gippsland, but only in habitats that can now be considered as refuge habitat where they are less vulnerable to being eaten by feral predators such as cats and foxes.

Thanks to the Sooty Owls, we now have an understanding of the mammals that are missing from the forests of Gippsland due the impacts of European settlement. Hopefully this knowledge will inspire the community and our land managers to improve forest management and adequately address many of the threatening processes that exist. I live in hope to one day see conditions where many of our precious native mammals can be returned to our forests.



**Examples of mandibles (lower jaw) bones from Sooty Owl deposits**



## WANTED



One, two or three adventurous walkers to join another enthusiastic adventurer on a walking ecotour to discover Tali Karng, a remote high country lake with an air of mystery surrounding it.

Graded Moderately Challenging, this trip entails full day walks from a vehicle-based camp (no heavy backpacks). However the gradients on many sections of our walks are steep and you will need to be fit and adventurous.

Spend a leisurely time at the lake, exploring, quietly absorbing the special atmosphere or enjoying a lazy swim. Your local guide will share a great love of the mountain environment and stories of a fascinating history. Other walks take you to enjoy great vantage points from above, sub-alpine plains and wonderful snowgums.

**Tali Karng Explorer, December 2-5, 2013.**  
**From \$1560 per person (maximum 4)**

### Personalised or custom made ecotours and walks

Is there a trip on the program that you are interested in but its never at the right time or year?

Perhaps there is a destination that interests you but it needs to include easier or longer walks or won't fit into holiday time you have available?

If so, please let me know!! I can often personalise a trip around your needs and interests, then see if others are interested in joining you to make up a small group.

Of course if you'd like a really private trip just for you on your own, a couple or a small group of friends I can do this too. Ask now!!

### Threatened Species News and updates

The Victorian Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby Recovery Team are at last having success with the last remaining wild population in Victoria. The Snowy River National Park colony is growing steadily and spreading out in their gorge habitat with youngsters appearing regularly. A great Newsletter "The Shadow" is published once per year. Contact DEPI Bairnsdale office - 5152 0600

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

## Seashore life - A journey of discovery

If you enjoy the thought of paddling along beaches and exploring rock pools discovering the array of wonderful creatures that live within, then this trip is for you. We will be led by an expert on seashore life, Alan Monger. The biggest surprise to participants on the last trip was the incredible diversity of creatures we discovered. Of course most of us have seen Sea Stars before and a Sea anemone (did you know they come in other colours as well as red ones?), but what about a Feather-duster Worm or a Sea Hare? Did you know that some shellfish are grazers, while others are carnivores?

As the sting of the summer heat is left behind autumn brings delightful long days to explore the beaches and rocks of Victorias far east coast. Everything we discover is recorded by Alan and sent to the Marine Research Group of the Victorian Field Naturalist Club to add to the knowledge of species distribution along the coast.

You do not need any prior knowledge, bring along a sense of adventure, a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn about creatures that inhabit the intertidal zone of our beaches and rocky headlands.

### Some comments from participants-

*"Alan was terrific, providing lots of information and good at sharing knowledge. Jenny, your local knowledge and organisation make trips such a pleasure"*

*"I just loved the rock pools and the accommodation"*

*"If you missed the inaugural shells an seashores trip in 2013 and are interested in natural history, I highly recommit you grab your shorts, sand shoes and sun-hat and make a booking for the chance of a unique experience I some East Gippsland rock pools."*

*"It was such an amazing trip, I still think about it often"*

### Seashore Life of East Gippsland, March 21-25, 2013

#### Birds of the Snowy River By Josephine Flanagan

Birds in the air, birds on the ground,  
 Everywhere birds abound.  
 Some warming eggs on nests so snug  
 Others feeding chicks a dainty slug.  
 Chirping here and trilling there  
 Birds were calling everywhere.  
 Nature so bountiful, birds singing thanks  
 Amid wildflowers blooming on the Snowy's banks.



## New for 2014

**There will be two exciting new trips offered in 2014. Details are almost finalised for both of these, so please let me know now if they interest you and ensure your name is on the list to receive the itinerary with date and prices as soon as it is available.**

### Gabo Island Discovery Ecotour

Seen from Mallacoota, the low profile of Gabo Island is broken only by the lighthouse tower standing tall and proud at the southern end. This fascinating island is only small, but as we will be doing all our exploring on foot, you need to be reasonable fit. It is largely made up of rock and is hillier than it looks from the mainland. Birdlife (including the largest known Little Penguin colony in the world), the possibility of sighting marine mammals off the rocks and some interesting plant life mean there will be something for all nature lovers. Add the rich stories of a long human history plus time and space for everyone to enjoy some solitude and you have a refreshing and educational short holiday break. Summer 2014.

Very limited group size, so register your interest early

### High Country Huts with Wayne

Some of you have already met Wayne helping out on my trips in the past couple of years and next year he will be sharing his passion for High Country Huts when he leads this new tour. Hear about pioneer skills and hut building as well as the colourful tales of high country characters associated with these huts as only Wayne can tell them. Visit some of the oldest huts in the Moroka and Snowy Range areas north of Licola and some that are not quite so old. You will enjoy smooth trunked snowgums, great views and open snowgrass plains. Easy-Moderate walks and either camping or very basic bunk accommodation overnight. Bring along an enthusiasm for history. Register your interest early to receive details as they are finalised.



Kelly Hut




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**Or Fax to (03) 5157 5539**

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

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

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