

# GIPPSLAND HIGH COUNTRY TOURS

Newsletter no. 40

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Australia

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Spring 2014

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## Alpine Walking at its Autumn best

As summer slips away and the cool nights and mild days of autumn arrive, we will be heading for the Victorian Alps to enjoy two short walking holidays.

Why don't you join us? These walks are just perfect for clearing your head of urban noises and smog to allow for the sights, sounds and smells of nature to soak in. Energetic walks are invigorating and help you escape the stresses of everyday life.

Mt Feathertop, seen from Mt Loch



### Alpine Walking Tour, March 10-13, 2015

This is a classic lodge-based walking holiday with moderate grade walks every day to explore the Alpine National Park around Mt Hotham and Dinner Plain. **NEW !!**

There will be walks above the tree-line in the true alpine environment that makes you feel like you are walking on the top of Victoria with vast views across the mountains. There could even be some late summer wildflowers for careful observers. On other walks we will follow minor trails that meander through picturesque snowgum woodlands.

These guided walks are an opportunity to learn what makes the Alps so special as your guide shares local knowledge about plants, animals, history and much more. Every night we return to a cosy lodge at Dinner Plain Alpine Village for a relaxing evening with your fellow walkers.

### Eastern Peaks Walk, March 23-27, 2015

Have you got enough sense of adventure to enjoy a few nights bush camping? The Cobberas area of the Alpine National Park is remote from local towns, but provides a wonderful array of walks. Here we encounter wildlife more frequently than we meet

**Continued Page 4**

## Gabo Island

By Nancy O'Toole

So many images...the windswept dunes of Croajingolong as we glide past in the boat, the protected little sandy bay alongside the Gabo Island jetty, the statuesque tower of the pink granite lighthouse, the rich blue of the Southern Ocean, the dinner suit vision of fairy penguins hopping from rock to rock in the dark, picnic lunch in the shady dells under spreading banksia trees, the swarms of New Holland honeyeaters perched on shrubs at dusk.

There was a sense of stepping back in time at the sight of the cluster of stone cottages huddled behind high granite walls...and the delight that one of these will be our home for the five days of our adventure on Gabo Is. And what a delight! A cosy lounge surrounded by the artwork and photography of previous visitors, endless reference books to check our finds against. Then discovering two modern bathrooms for only 8 guests, comfy beds already made up, and a homey kitchen. And we were certainly well fed! Beyond was the bonus of three sheltered verandahs with seating overlooking the lighthouse and the granite cliffs. I felt I wanted to be there for weeks, not days!

It was a dream I had for many years...to go to Gabo Is. What could be more exciting but the mystery and isolation of a lighthouse island! Imagine my delight when Jenny offered the opportunity with her 5 day trip in January. **Continued page 3**

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## Editorial

Here at last is the long awaited annual Newsletter which I decided to release as we step into Spring this year rather than in the middle of winter.

There are not many places left on the Spring and Summer program, however get in early for autumn and the program inside goes right through to October 2015 to help you plan ahead. Booking early is also a good way to secure some extra bonus discounts. Bookings received during September will qualify for an extra 5% on top of regular discounts.

With many of you now on email, it is easy to send out a few email updates during the year to fill in the gaps between Newsletters and let you know of any new tours or discount offers.

If you have not already provided an email address, please do so I can better keep you up to date with happenings (even if you prefer to receive this newsletter as a hard copy in the mail). If I have not heard from you for a while, I will try to make contact to make sure I still have your current email address as its easy to lose touch if you change email provider at some stage.

Earlier this year I ran a prize draw for a group of people who I had not heard from for quite some time. Congratulations to A Donen, J Bonney and N Hodgson who all updated their contact details with me and were the lucky winners of a \$200 travel voucher each to use on a tour of their choice.

So take a look inside and I hope you enjoy the stories and articles in this Newsletter as well as news of the three new tours for 2015.

If you have never joined one of my tours before (or even if you have), please don't hesitate to ring or email and ask for more information. I'll be very happy to answer your questions.

*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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*Illustrations by Catherine Turnbull (All illustrations and photographs are subject to Copyright and must not be reproduced without permission) Photographs by J. Lawrence, J Bray, J Heyward and M Cardoso.*

## 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 your ecotour or walking experience and book **before September 30, 2014**

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 Sept 30, 2014 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

### Gabo Island by Nancy O'Toole

#### *Continued from page 1*

But I had many questions running through my brain. Would I cook in the summer heat? Would I have to leap from a heaving boat and clamber up a towering cliff? What would I do there anyway... just sit and eat while the wind howled and shook our digs? Thankfully, none of my apprehensions was the reality.

It was an adventure! This was the first trip for Gippsland High Country Tours and our leader, Maria. So we had the joy of exploring, sometimes in our group of five, other times free range. Right from



when we arrived we chose to abandon the kind ranger's plan to drive us to the accommodation, and walked the one and a half kilometres, so we could explore our new surroundings. It was a glorious sunny day, milder than Melbourne, and with no wind. A swim was in the offing but we chose to continue our wandering.

I had visualised a wind swept landscape, and some of it is, reminiscent of the moors of England, but much of it is thick woodland, tweeting with birds. Walking tracks were few and we mean-

dered in and out, up and down the rises, seeing what plants, birds, and new vistas we could find. Imagine my delight when I did in fact discover a new species not listed on Gabo Is. It was an insignificant spindly tree, which drew my attention as it reminded me of species I had seen in my Out-back wanderings. It had thin leaves and fruit like small olives. My amateur botanist companion, Ros identified it as Australian sandalwood, which was later verified by the ranger.

We indulged in the history of the island in the small museum, with its seafaring objects and stories of the lives of lighthouse keepers and their families since 1850. The ranger briefed us on his daily weather observations. Imagine our surprise when in the midst of this, two strange people appeared. They were from one of the numerous yachts we had seen sailing past and had anchored on the other side of the island. The ranger then took us all up the lighthouse. What a view!

My joy on Gabo was to sit on a verandah out of the 75km/hr wind of that day, sipping my hot chocolate, watching the endless waves crashing on the rocky cliffs at our front door. The spray would erupt like a volcano, spread over the cliffs and ooze down to the sea like a torrent of spilt milk. Different sea birds flew in to their favourite cliff perches, and just beyond, a colony of seals kept us entertained on their small rocky island.

Jenny is offering this trip in early summer and next autumn. As the climate on Gabo Is. is much milder than Melbourne I could recommend both times and each would be a quite different experience. Be sure to pack some long pants and long sleeved shirts for your woodland wandering. Enjoy!



## Calendar of Ecotours and Walks 2014 - 2015

<b>October 1</b>	<b>Walking from Waterholes</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Lots of easy/moderate grade walks. <b><i>SORRY BOOKED OUT</i></b>
<b>October 13</b>	<b>Walking Croajingolong</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Lots of Moderate Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$3010 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$3130
<b>November 5</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2160 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2280
<b>December 5</b> <b><i>NEW</i></b>	<b>High Country Huts North of Licola</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy/moderate walks with a focus on history 3 Days ex. Traralgon <b><i>SORRY BOOKED OUT</i></b>
<b>December 15</b>	<b>Gabo Island Discovery Ecotour</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-Moderate walks 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2410 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2530
<b>January 7</b> <b>2015</b>	<b>Alpine Discovery Tour</b> Graded: VERY EASY Fully accommodated, lots of short easy nature walks . 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2250 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2370
<b>February 23</b>	<b>Seashore Life of East Gippsland</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-moderate walks. Discovery and Research ecotour 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2700 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2820
<b>March 10</b>	<b>Alpine Walking in Autumn</b> Graded: MODERATE Fully accommodated. Lots of good moderate walks. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1710 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$1830
<b>March 23</b>	<b>Eastern Peaks Walk</b> Graded: Moderately Challenging 4 Nights camping. Lots of moderately challenging day walks 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2240 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2360
<b>April 10</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 \$1350
<b>April 20</b>	<b>Mitchell River Explorer</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-Moderate walks. 4 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$1790 4 Days ex. Melbourne \$1910
<b>April 27</b>	<b>Gabo Island Discovery Ecotour</b> Graded: EASY/MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-Moderate walks Prices as for December 15 above
<b>September</b>	<b>Birds of the Hattah Kulkyne &amp; Murray Sunset</b> Graded: EASY-MODERATE Fully accommodated. Easy-moderate walks with a focus on birdwatching. 8 Days ex. Melbourne \$4530
<b>October 5</b>	<b>Croajingolong Coastal Ecotour</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy Walks. 7 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$3250 7 Days ex. Melbourne \$3370
<b>October 26</b>	<b>Birds of the Snowy River</b> Graded: EASY Fully accommodated. Easy walks with a focus on birdwatching. 5 Days ex. Bairnsdale \$2200 5 Days ex. Melbourne \$2320

More than just a holiday, these are a rewarding experience featuring expert guidance and lots of interaction with nature. These small group tours promote an appreciation and understanding of varied environments, rich history and diverse flora and fauna. **Fares are all inclusive as per itinerary. Full itinerary for each trip available on request.**

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



**Continued from Page 1**

tourists and our walks have a real Wilderness feel about them. Your guide knows this country and its wildlife well so you experience things the average walker may miss.



We walk to the top of the Cobberas Range to look out over fold after fold of mountain ranges and from Mt Stradbroke you can see down into the Snowy River country. Snowgum woodlands, dramatic rock outcrops and grassland plains are settings for memorable walks, especially when you add bubbling mountain streams and a few ancient gnarled trees to hug.

Walks are graded moderately challenging, so you need a good level of fitness and enough sense of adventure to enjoy bush camping.

We do make it easy for you with a vehicle-based camp and we provide all the camping gear including great tents you can stand up in. We do all the cooking, you just come along and enjoy the walks.

**Peregrine Falcon apartment tower**

In the centre of the main street gardens in Bairnsdale stands an old concrete water tower.

Recently the Gippsland Plains Conservation Management Network have decided that this high rise real estate may be in demand for Peregrine Falcons and an artificial nest box was installed (supported by East Gippsland Water).

Local naturalists Rohan Bilney and Raz Martin have both photographed Peregrines inspecting the roost recently. It is hoped that they will find it suitable to their needs and lay eggs very shortly.

You can find photos on our Facebook page- [www.facebook.com/gippslandhighcountrytours](http://www.facebook.com/gippslandhighcountrytours)

**Summer wildflower rambles**

This summer put yourself in a picture that includes mountain views as far as the eye can see with alpine wildflowers at your feet, wafting gently in the summer breeze.

You will be enjoying lots of short gentle walks with time to sit and enjoy your surroundings, photograph and look up close at the little things. Alpine wildflowers are a world in miniature and getting up close reveals some stunning details.

A range of colourful insects can be found; many of these provide food for the numerous small skinks often seen disappearing into the snowgrass tussocks. The insects also attract the attention of the local birds, a flame robin perched on a nearby snowgum or a Kestrel hovering overhead.



Your guide will have lots to share with you including stories of the first people of the Alps and the early settlers that followed. You will also gain an understanding of how plants and animals both survive and thrive in this harsh climate. What effects will climate change have in the future?

But we won't talk to you all the time. We understand that sometimes you need some quiet time to take in this mountain serenity in peace, so there will be opportunities for solitude as well.

At the end of each day, we return to our cosy base in a ski lodge at the Dinner Plain Alpine Village. You don't have to do any planning or organising meals, just relax in the lounge room or find one of the many places to curl up with a good book.

Does this sounds like your sort of holiday? Nature, information, relaxation and a complete break from your usual routine.

**Alpine Discovery Tour**  
January 7-11, 2015

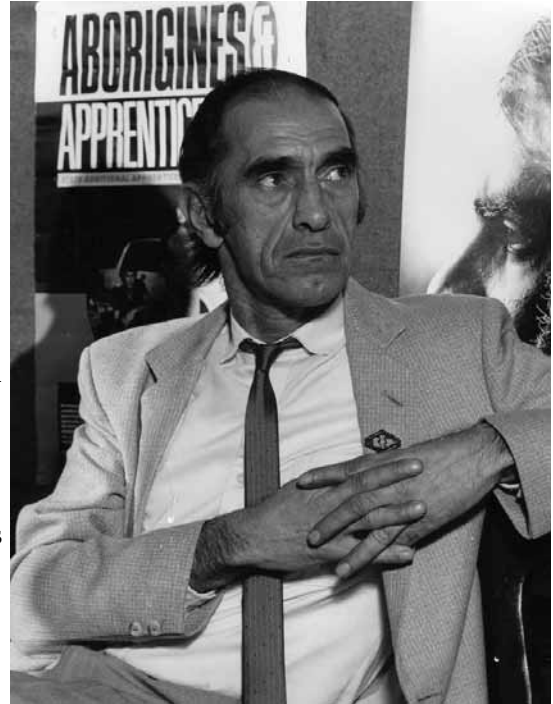
## A tribute to Uncle Albert Mullett

The Gunaikurnai people are the Traditional Owners of an area of Gippsland from Mt Hotham and Mt Howitt in the north, down the southern fall of the Great Divide to the coast at Foster near Wilsons Promontory and east to Orbost. In July this year we said goodbye to a highly respected senior Gunai Elder, Uncle Albert Mullett. I feel privileged to have known Uncle Albert and had the benefit of his wisdom and knowledge on many occasions.

My first meeting with Uncle Albert was to learn about some culturally significant sites to the Gunaikurnai people and how I could show respect when visiting these areas. He always emphasised the need for respect and this was at the core of everything. Respect for the land, respect for fellow humans and respect for culture

For more than 15 years, Albert led his people's fight for native title recognition. On 22 October 2010, the Federal Court of Australia recognised the claim of the Gunaikurnai people over much of Gippsland. It was a momentous occasion for Albert, who went on to play a prominent role on the Gunaikurnai Elders' Council.

This Native Title determination for the Gunaikurnai means that when you join one of my Gippsland tours, much of the public land is managed with the Traditional Owners. This is a major step in recognising the connection local aboriginal people have with their country.



Uncle Albert has left a wonderful legacy and in 2013 he was inducted into the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll. The following is a summary of his story which can be found at -

[www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/projects-and-programs/leadership/victorian-indigenous-honour-roll/victorian-indigenous-honour-roll-2013-inductees/albert-mullett-born-1933](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/projects-and-programs/leadership/victorian-indigenous-honour-roll/victorian-indigenous-honour-roll-2013-inductees/albert-mullett-born-1933)

### Albert Mullett 1933-2014

*Uncle Albert Mullett was a Gunai Elder whose many years of service to the community earned him widespread admiration. His devotion to his culture, his people and his country was expressed through significant contributions in areas such as education, land rights and cultural heritage.*

*Although the young Albert spent time growing up at Lake Tyres, Melbourne and Jacksons Track, he also spent significant periods of time in the bush learning from his elders.*

*He was passionate about educating the broader community about aboriginal culture and from small beginnings with lessons held in a renovated bike shed at Bairnsdale Primary School, he became a spokesperson for aboriginal education. Among his achievements, Albert helped establish the first Aboriginal Studies course in Victoria, at Monash University's Gippsland.*

*Respected as a master-craftsman of traditional wooden artefacts, including shields and boomerangs, Uncle Albert taught these skills to new generations. He was a storyteller who educated and advised people of all ages about Aboriginal culture, including his 17 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.*

*Although he is sadly missed, he will always be remembered as a leader who possessed wisdom, integrity and fortitude, and was a positive role model to many people.*

You might also like to listen to an interview with Uncle Albert Mullett on "Voices of Lake Tyres"  
[www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/lake\\_tyres/voices\\_of\\_lake\\_tyres/](http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/lake_tyres/voices_of_lake_tyres/)

## The Regent (Smoker) Parrot

On the inaugural **Birds of Hattah Kulkynne & Murray Sunset Tour** in September 2013, we were privileged to enjoy numerous parrots, including many occasions with good sightings of Regent Parrots.

The male is yellow with striking gold shoulders while the female is a duller olive-green. Both have red markings on the wing and a deep red or pink bill. These long slim parrots with elegant long tails are restricted in Victoria to the Mallee regions and are listed as threatened.

They require mature stands of hollow bearing trees near water (such as river red-gums) to nest. The male Regent Parrot feeds the female during incubation so needs ready access to a good food source provided by remnant mallee vegetation within close proximity.

The Regent Parrot is also known as the Smoker or Smoker Parrot. One of the participants on this trip, Marian kindly forwarded on this poem she found about The Smoker Parrot (Regent Parrot) -

### The Smoker Parrot

**He has the full moon on his breast,  
The moonbeams are about his wing;  
He has the colours of a king.  
I see him floating unto rest  
When all eyes wearily go west,  
And the warm winds are quieting.  
The moonbeams are about his wing;  
He has the full moon on his breast.**

John Shaw Neilson (1872-1942)

John Shaw Nielsen was born in South Australia, but his family later struggled poverty in the Wimmera and mallee districts of Victoria. His story includes descriptions of hard times at Sea Lake (between Ouyen and Hattah) where dust storms were a regular occurrence and rabbits in their hundreds of thousands ate the crops as soon as they emerged. Neilson wrote this poem in 1927.

Does anyone know why the Regent Parrot was once called the Smoker Parrot or the Mallee Smoker?

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



Find us on  
**Facebook**

Find our photo  
albums on  
Facebook now too.

## High Country Huts north of Licola

Led by our guide Wayne, you will visit a number of huts in the mountains north of Licola, including Howitt, Moroka and Guys Huts. Wayne is passionate about history and will generously share his knowledge of pioneering skills used in hut construction as well as the stories associated with each hut. (If you are lucky he may even share a bit of bush poetry too!!)



**Guys Hut features traditional log construction**

The December departure of this tour is booked out, but it will be offered again in 2015.

Although this tour is available fully accommodated, a more comprehensive experience is a feature when it is a camping tour. You will spend more time exploring and visiting huts with less time driving.

Contact me to express your interest in either an accommodated or camping departure for next year so I can forward details on the options.

### Desert Pea Pilbara by Yvonne Wong

All that's vivid here is harsh  
Sky and iron, blue and red.  
Desert Pea draws hue from stone  
Glow from fire overhead  
Softer flowers blend with dust,  
Twine to patterns of the wind;  
Desert Pea burns back at sun-blaze,  
Rigid flame from iron stand.



## New for 2015

### Mitchell River Explorer (Easy-Moderate)

The Mitchell River is within Victoria's largest un-dammed river catchment!

The snowmelt waters from a number of rivers on the southern fall of the Great Dividing Range, join to create the Mitchell River which flows through a narrow valley and gorge before reaching the coastal plains. Explore a variety of interesting sites in the Mitchell River National park, featuring dry rain-shadow woodland and pockets of warm temperate rainforest. Learn about the aboriginal significance of the Den of Nargun and take in some great geological features. At the lower end of the catchment as the river enters the Gippsland Lakes discover the Mitchell River Silt Jetties and associated features.

**April 20-23, 2015**

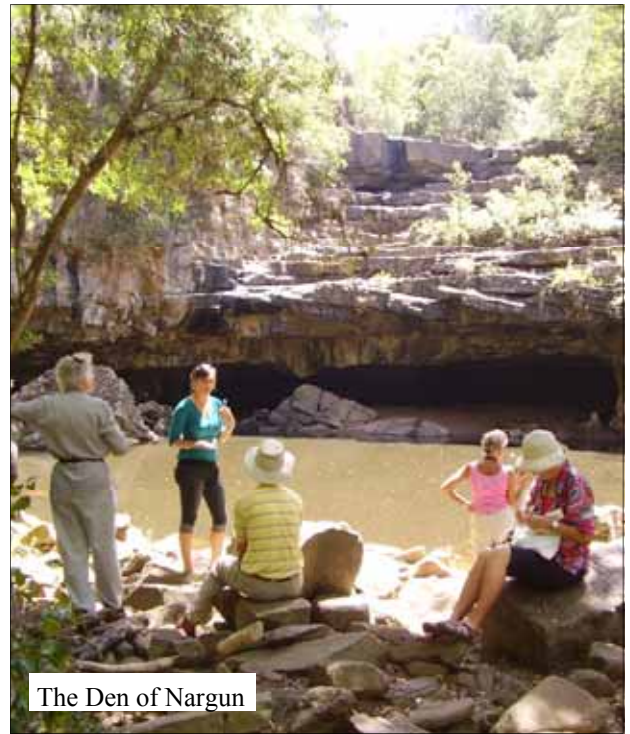
**4 Days with 3 nights accommodation**

### Birds of the Wellington River (Graded Easy)

With a cosy accommodation base near Heyfield this dedicated birdwatching tour will explore a variety of bird habitats in the foothills and coastal plains as well as wetland communities.

We will look at the birdlife in parts of the Wellington River catchment, from the sheltered forests in the Wellington valley (Alpine National Park) near Licola to box ironbark woodland around Lake Glenmaggie. Small patches of remnant red-gum woodland nearby offer a different habitat again and at the bottom of the catchment are the wetlands near Lake Wellington with an array of water birds.

**Spring 2015, 4 Days, 3 nights accommodation.**



The Den of Nargun

Sometimes the best things in life are hard to find, but when you do, you share these things with others.

At Gippsland High Country Tours we are proud of our return client base and our recommendation rate. On any tour you are likely to find at least half the other participants are repeat clients. Some have travelled with us more than a dozen times.

**Black Rainbow**

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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: \_\_\_\_\_