

ARGUS

Victorian Climbing Club
Newsletter
June 2020

VCC



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For the latest COVID-19 information, visit: www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions-victoria

For more information regarding parks and camping, visit www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature/covid-19-update

Gyms are permitted to reopen from 22 June with a maximum of 20 people.

Thinking of building a home wall? Check out our story on p28



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ARGUS

Editor/Designer
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Submissions

Send your submissions to argueditor@vicclimb.org.au
Deadline is the 15th of each month. A big thank you to all of this month's contributors!

Printing

Argus is printed by Shelton & Lane, Horsham, on 100% recycled paper.

Back Issues

For a selection of previous Argus issues, please follow this link: <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/tep/129542>

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Front Cover

Ben taking a dip, Cerro Castillo, Chile
Photo: Heather Murray

Inside Cover

Amy on the wall Francesco built
Photo: Francesco Vicenzi

EDITORIAL



Dear Members,

I hope the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions has provided glimpses of normality: in-person catch-ups with family and friends, and the chance to get out on the rock.

For me, going climbing last weekend was much-needed soulfood. (People, I have missed you!) That's been

contrasted by some of the content in this month's *Argus*: the errors made by Parks Victoria over LTOs and chalk use, and misclassification of the Bundaleer. All I'll say here is that it's not only frustrating, because climbers have repeatedly offered to share their knowledge in the crag assessment process, but unfairly detrimental to the public perception of us as a community.

At times, it does feel like we're banging our heads against a wall (couldn't resist), but I urge you to read Kevin Lindorff's column and, as he suggests, keep voicing your concerns appropriately, including responding to the draft Grampians Land Management Plan when it's made public. That's the biggie.

A couple of changes to the *Argus*: this month there's no membership section, as no new members joined and all existing members received a three-month extension in April. We've also dropped the 'Spotlight on Safety' column, although articles on safety issues will of course be welcome. And we'll be starting a new column next month about pivotal climbs—those experiences that have defined you as a climber. Stay tuned! If you'd like to submit a story for this column or for the *Argus* in general, please do!

Thanks to everyone who contributed this month, especially Cynthia Marinakos, who writes our regular youth climbing column. I know that for many, time has been a precious resource lately.

Leigh

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi all,

Draft Cultural Heritage Permit for LTOs



Licensed Tour Operators (LTOs) received an email from Parks Victoria (PV) on 20 May, which included a draft Cultural Heritage Permit (Permit to Harm) for Summerday Valley. PV had informed LTOs that if they were to continue tour operations in Summerday Valley, then they would need to enter into a legal permit with Aboriginal Victoria (AV). This offloads liability from Parks Victoria to the small business operator (the LTOs).



Understandably, many LTOs object to the very premise of the document, summarised on page 3: *'To carry out an activity that will, or is likely to, harm Aboriginal cultural heritage. (Complete Attachment B) 46 fee units \$681.26'* Although this shows the assumption made by PV and AV that the activity the LTOs wish to run—trad climbing and abseiling—is damaging to cultural heritage, there is no actual evidence in the document of damage to Summerday Valley by LTOs.

The presumption that LTOs are damaging or will damage the area in any way is galling to them. PV lists harm as things like chalk use, bolting, or painting the rock. But, paradoxically, LTOs are forbidden from these very activities. Yet they have been asked to sign an application for a permit that says they are going to carry out an activity that 'will, or is likely to, harm Aboriginal cultural heritage'. Really?

Quite possibly PV's sensitivity about chalk use has been heightened by their misunderstanding of its impact. In the draft application for a Cultural Heritage Permit, there is a section titled 'Describe the impact, or likely impact of the activity on the Aboriginal cultural heritage'. PV has put together some purported examples of how rock climbing and abseiling have caused damage. These examples of 'likely impacts' feature Sandinista Wall, which is not even in Summerday Valley! The following is an extract from the draft application.

<p>The impact of chalk (used by climbers) on Aboriginal cultural heritage can be very high because it visually obscures and stains the surface of the cliff face and is difficult to remove. <u>The use of chalk is not to be permitted under this permit.</u></p> <p>The use of steel brushes to clean chalk from climbing areas is not permitted in the PAA. Use of this technique poses a considerable impact to sensitive Rock Art (known sites and those that may not have been rediscovered). <u>Whilst evidence of use of steel brushes was not found as part of the assessment it is not to be permitted under this permit.</u></p> <p>The image shows the extent of chalk wash and staining at 'Sandinista Wall', Hollow Mountain.</p>	
<p>Sport climbing typically only occurs in areas where bolts are present, (see circled areas on photo). The installation of bolts in the rock face in proximity to Aboriginal places leads to increased climbing activities in the area which can lead to impacts on cultural values.</p> <p><u>Installation of bolts is not to be permitted under this permit.</u></p> <p>Note - chalk staining is also visible in this photograph.</p>	

Not that the white streaks in the Sandinista Wall photo nor the supposed chalk staining in the bottom photo are chalk-related. They are naturally occurring water streaks.

With the perpetuation of such misinformation from PV about climbers' impacts, and the incorporation of this misinformation into communications with Aboriginal Victoria, it is little wonder that Traditional Owners (TOs) might be sensitive about, and suspicious of, climbing in the vicinity of cultural heritage. Who could blame them if this is the calibre of the information they are being fed?

As the recent Save Grampians Climbing [post](#) asked: 'Who made the mistake? Was it the same archaeologist who mistakes tourist graffiti for climbers? Or the PV staff member who photographed a bolt placed by their own department in rock art and blames it on climbers? Or the bureaucrat who misinterpreted data from thecrag.com and inflated climbing growth ten-fold? Or the environmental assessment team that managed to place the decimal point in the wrong place to claim climbers had damaged vegetation 10 times more their own survey showed?'

Such mistakes by PV are all the more regrettable because the VCC had suggested that climbers 'walk the ground' with their staff, to talk about crag impacts by recreational users—about what impacts climbing did and didn't have at crag environments, about what the evidence suggested regarding which impacts were or were not attributable to climbers, and about possible mitigation strategies.

It was also suggested that a climber(s) with whom Traditional Owners felt comfortable could accompany PV and TOs on some of their crag assessments. That way, climbers could learn from and be clear about any specific concerns regarding actual or potential harm to cultural heritage, and PV and TOs could get informed input from climbers about possible win-win solutions.

If either of these things had happened, the sort of basic misconceptions by PV or their advisors about the impacts of climbers—evidenced by the PV allusion in the LTO permit application about the supposed legacy of chalk use—could have been avoided.

Sadly, these offers were ignored. Hopefully, PV will be inclined to be more collaborative in future to avoid similar mistakes.

Cultural Heritage Assessments and the draft Grampians Land Management Plan (GLMP)

As mentioned in the last *Argus*, PV remain opposed to making any changes to the current Grampians climbing bans until the GLMP 'process' has run its course. This includes allowing climbing at some sites in SPAs where cultural heritage assessments have been carried out and where no tangible cultural heritage has been identified. For example, Andersens, a bouldering site at Mt Stapylton, where a cultural heritage assessment was carried out in 2018 prior to a bouldering festival. No cultural heritage was found and the Grampians Bouldering Festival was permitted to take place, presumably because it did not pose any threat to either environmental or cultural heritage values.

We would argue that PV's decision not to make any changes until the GLMP process has run its course is a rationalisation of their inertia, because:

- PV has already made changes to the old (2003) Management Plan in respect to climbing. The set-aside determinations in February 2019 are the obvious cases in point, but PV have also added new SPAs then made changes to these changes, by allowing 'permits to harm' for LTOs to operate in Summerday Valley under specified conditions.
- PV has made 125 Grampians climbing site assessments in the last 12 months. By their own reckoning they would like to carry out approximately another 100. These will not be completed before the draft GLMP is due to be presented to the Minister and then made public so that feedback can be obtained. So the new GLMP will not set in stone for the next 15 years (the intended effective lifespan of the plan) what cliffs can and can't be climbed on, or what conditions might be applied to climbing at different sites.

There have been recent changes to the old plan and regular operational variations, and there will no doubt be cause for such changes to continue to be necessary after the new plan is adopted. The GLMP will be a roadmap of management principles, not a detailed compendium of individual cliff-by-cliff management instructions, tailored to what is or isn't at or near each cliff, or what might be the best option for protecting specific environmental and/or cultural heritage.

There is nothing to prevent PV doing their job and immediately allowing, even encouraging, legitimate use by recreational user groups of cliff sites where there is no evidence that doing so will jeopardise cultural heritage or the environment.

Stakeholder Reference Group meeting minutes

As of the time of writing, PV has still not released the official notes from the previous SRG meeting. These are weeks overdue. We will put them on the VCC website and circulate them elsewhere in the public domain as soon as we have them.

Cultural Heritage Surveys at Djurite / Arapiles

We have been informed by PV that surveys of existing known cultural heritage sites at Arapiles (on the Aboriginal Heritage Register) will soon begin and will be carried out by Ben Gunn.

A spokesperson said, 'I can advise that Mr Gunn had been previously engaged to undertake assessments of only the currently registered rock art sites in Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park. This work will be undertaken in the coming weeks. Mr Gunn has been contracted for this project because of his experience in assessing Aboriginal rock art and expertise in the Aboriginal cultural heritage of western Victoria. This project does not seek to attribute any cause of harm or activities in conflict with these cultural sites, rather to detail the aims, context, methods, results and management recommendations for their protection.'

This begs a few questions. If they are already known sites—known to Traditional Owners, at least—and are in the Register, they would have already been assessed. What is PV hoping to get from the new assessments? If the answer is the current state of preservation/level of existing damage, then Ben Gunn would indeed be very qualified to make informed comment on that. Suggested strategies for their preservation? If Ben Gunn offers such suggestions it would be a real worry, because he has already shown his lack of understanding of climbing by making exaggerated, unsubstantiated and eminently contestable claims in the recent past about the nexus between

climbing and damage to cultural heritage.

Looking ahead

There will be one more Roundtable meeting (the date is still to be communicated by PV), but we don't expect anything new or substantial to come from that.

We have looked closely at legal options and strategies and will say much more on this in the near future. In the interim, we are conscious that VCC members, and the climbing community in general, are frustrated at PV's intransigence, and frustrated by being kept out of the loop regarding the intricacies of legal strategies. All I can say at the moment is be patient—things are afoot.

Lastly, PV is scheduled to provide the Minister with a copy of the draft Grampians Landscape Management Plan by the end of June. Historically, despite pre-draft engagement with the community focusing on such documents, two thirds of community responses come after drafts have been circulated for public response. So, irrespective of what letters we have written, meetings we have attended, voices we have raised in the lead-up to the draft GLMP, we will need to marshal all our energy and resources again, to convey our considered opinions clearly, respectfully but assertively, and repeatedly to PV, to Traditional Owners, to politicians and to the media in the wake of the release of the draft document.

Kevin Lindorff

UPDATES—MT ARAPILES-TOOAN STATE PARK

Mt Arapiles-Tooan Advisory Group

The Mt Arapiles-Tooan Advisory Group held a virtual meeting on 22 April. The meeting minutes have been published on the VCC website. To read them in full, click [here](#).

Management of Cultural Heritage Updates

If you are interested in receiving updates from Parks Victoria about the management of cultural heritage at Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park, you can sign up via this [link](#):

UPDATES—RT4

In response to requests made at Rock Climbing Roundtable 4 on 5 March, Parks Victoria have released updated maps of the SPAs in the Grampians, a list of names of the SPAs, and a list of the 125 areas assessed for tangible cultural heritage. They have also answered questions arising from the meeting.

These documents are printed on the following pages, with the exception of the list of SPA names. Those from 2003 are on the map key; those from 2019 remain unnamed. The list will be available on the VCC website.

You'll also find the Gariwerd Assessment Update, presented to RT4, on our website. This update is an interesting read, as it shows the cultural and environmental heritage process used by PV to determine whether sites should be made available for climbing.

Key takeaways for climbers from the new documents:

- Of the 125 climbing areas assessed, additional Aboriginal heritage was rediscovered in 28 of these climbing areas. Eight of these climbing areas are outside current SPAs and 20 of these climbing areas are within current SPAs.
- The areas assessed were chosen based on the number of climbs in each area, the importance of these areas to climbers, and PV knowledge of area usage.
- It looks like climbs might be lost from Bundaleer (from a point 30m to the north of Manic Depressive, then south of this point). This is particularly disappointing because PV have been aware of the existence of cultural heritage at this site for years and seemed happy with the steps taken to protect it without restricting climbing. In 2007/8, PV and VCC built a floating boardwalk around the base of Manic Depressive to protect cultural heritage and still allow climbers access (see 'Flashback' column on p36).
- Changes to SPAs are unlikely to be made outside of the Grampians Land Management Plan process. The draft plan is still set for the end of June.
- On the new maps, a 'focus area' encompasses the whole of the Northern Victoria Range, when previously the term referred to eight specific areas of high cultural significance.

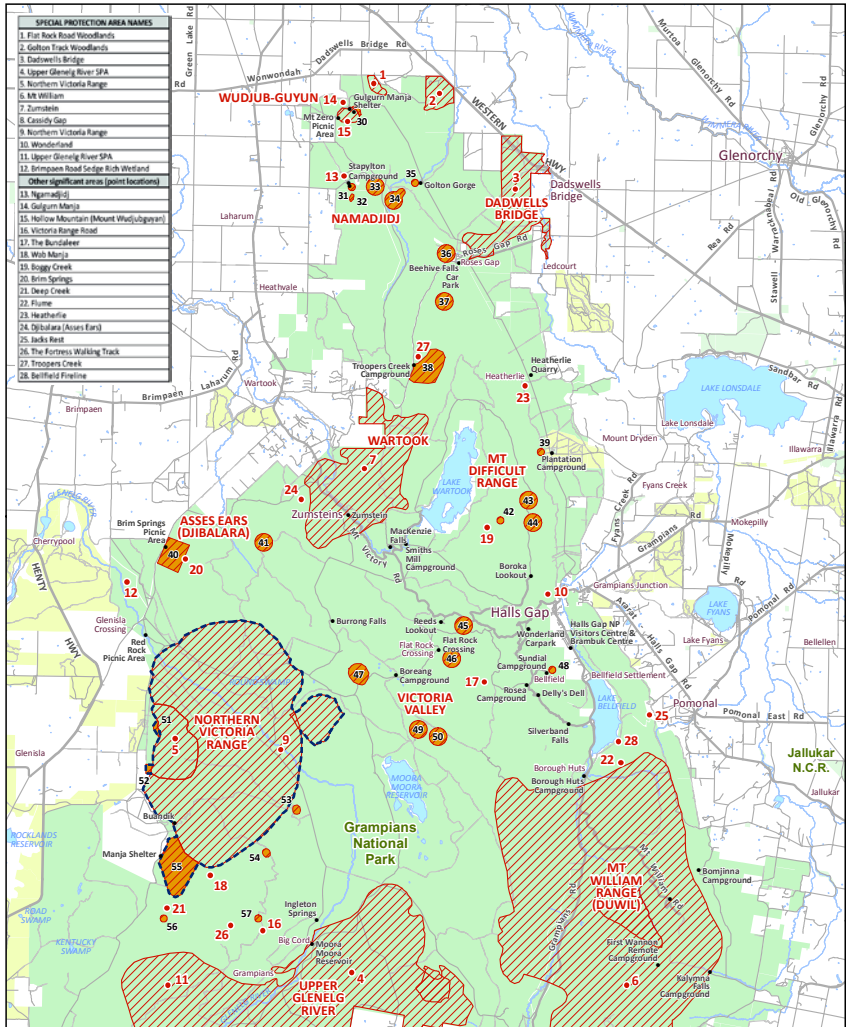
For a comprehensive summary of RT4, please see the April *Argus*.

Rock climbing Roundtable #4 – MARCH 2020 – Questions on notice – Parks Victoria response

<p>Question</p> <p>Is the Bundaleer climbing area within a SPA?</p>	<p>Proposed response</p> <p>Parks Victoria understands that the climbing area known as Bundaleer has many popular climbing routes. The 2003 Management Plan established a special protection area (SPA) known as Bundaleer, which is located in the climbing area also known as Bundaleer. It provided no size and is a coordinate, which identifies a place where tangible Aboriginal heritage values have been registered. The climbing route that is most proximate to this SPA is called “Manic Depressive.”</p> <p>Parks Victoria is working in partnership with Traditional Owners to review the results of recent cultural heritage surveys (within and outside of SPAs) including the Bundaleer climbing area. This information will be fed into the Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan to provide greater clarity on where recreational activities including climbing are permitted in the future. Pending the new plan being finalised, Parks Victoria may need to put in place some additional protection measures in the coming months.</p> <p>Parks Victoria expects that the area from 30m to the north of “Manic Depressive” (and northwards of this point) are unlikely to be affected by additional cultural heritage protection measures. Climbing routes south of this point are likely to be affected by additional cultural heritage protection measures.</p> <p>Parks Victoria maintains the position that decisions regarding amendments to SPAs or creation of new SPAs will be undertaken in partnership with Traditional Owners through the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Planning process. The draft plan is due to be submitted to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change by the end of June 2020.</p> <p>Management of the landscape is not only a binary present/not present, it also must take in to consideration other elements of park management best practice and the aspirations of Traditional Owners and park users.</p>
<p>If there are no tangible and intangible values present at sites surveyed will Parks Victoria open them up for access before the Grampians Landscape Management Plan process has been finalised?</p>	<p>Parks Victoria maintains the position that decisions regarding amendments to SPAs or creation of new SPAs will be undertaken in partnership with Traditional Owners through the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Planning process. The draft Landscape Management Plan is due to be submitted to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change by the end of June 2020. There will then be another opportunity for consultation where people can provide feedback on the draft plan.</p> <p>The National Parks Act requires Parks Victoria to consult on the establishment of new set asides and this will be covered through the consultation included in the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management process. However, the National Parks Act also enables and requires Parks Victoria to take action to protect cultural values and uphold compliance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and the objectives of the National Parks Act 1975. In these situations, Parks Victoria is obliged to act as quickly as possible and informs others of decisions rather than consulting on them.</p>
<p>What is the process for establishing new SPAs and the level of consultation in the preparation and implementation of these?</p>	<p>Parks Victoria maintains the position that decisions regarding amendments to SPAs or creation of new SPAs will be undertaken in partnership with Traditional Owners through the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Planning process. The draft Landscape Management Plan is due to be submitted to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change by the end of June 2020. There will then be another opportunity for consultation where people can provide feedback on the draft plan.</p> <p>The National Parks Act requires Parks Victoria to consult on the establishment of new set asides and this will be covered through the consultation included in the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management process. However, the National Parks Act also enables and requires Parks Victoria to take action to protect cultural values and uphold compliance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and the objectives of the National Parks Act 1975. In these situations, Parks Victoria is obliged to act as quickly as possible and informs others of decisions rather than consulting on them.</p>

Rock climbing Roundtable #4 – MARCH 2020 – Questions on notice – Parks Victoria response

<p>The LTO representative requested a meeting with Parks Victoria and Outdoors Victoria to discuss booking systems for LTOs at those crags where LTOs are currently operating.</p>	<p>Parks Victoria met with the Roundtable LTO representative and the CEO Outdoors Victoria on 17 and 20 March to discuss the current booking systems and access to crags where LTOs are currently operating. Parks Victoria has implemented some modifications to the current booking system in response to concerns raised. Additional meetings are planned.</p> <p>LTO access to crags and bookings of these in the medium to long term will be reviewed during the preparation of the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Plan.</p>
<p>Can the final Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Plan have usable map files attached?</p>	<p>Parks Victoria will address this request during the preparation of the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Plan to ensure the information provided is useful for park users.</p>
<p>Can there be a review of the current seasonal road (Rosea and Homestead) closures into Eastern Wall climbing site?</p>	<p>Parks Victoria will address this request during the preparation of the Greater Gariwerd (Grampians) Landscape Management Plan.</p>
<p>Parks Victoria to provide a list of the sites studied and whether they are inside or outside existing SPAs.</p>	<p>Please refer to Attachment 1.</p>
<p>How many of the rediscovered cultural sites are outside of existing SPAs?</p>	<p>At the roundtable we advised that, of the 125 climbing areas, additional Aboriginal places were rediscovered in 28 of these climbing areas. This means we found Aboriginal places not known prior to the assessments in 28 climbing areas. Eight of these climbing areas are areas that are outside current SPAs and 20 of these climbing areas are areas that are within current SPAs.</p>
<p>Can Parks Victoria provide SPA numbers and names?</p>	<p>These rediscoveries are in addition to all the tangible Aboriginal heritage in the SPAs that are already known to Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria and listed on the Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register.</p> <p>Please refer to Attachment 2.</p>



Grampians National Park - Special Protection Areas

Rock climbing (North)

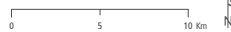
18/02/2019

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 54

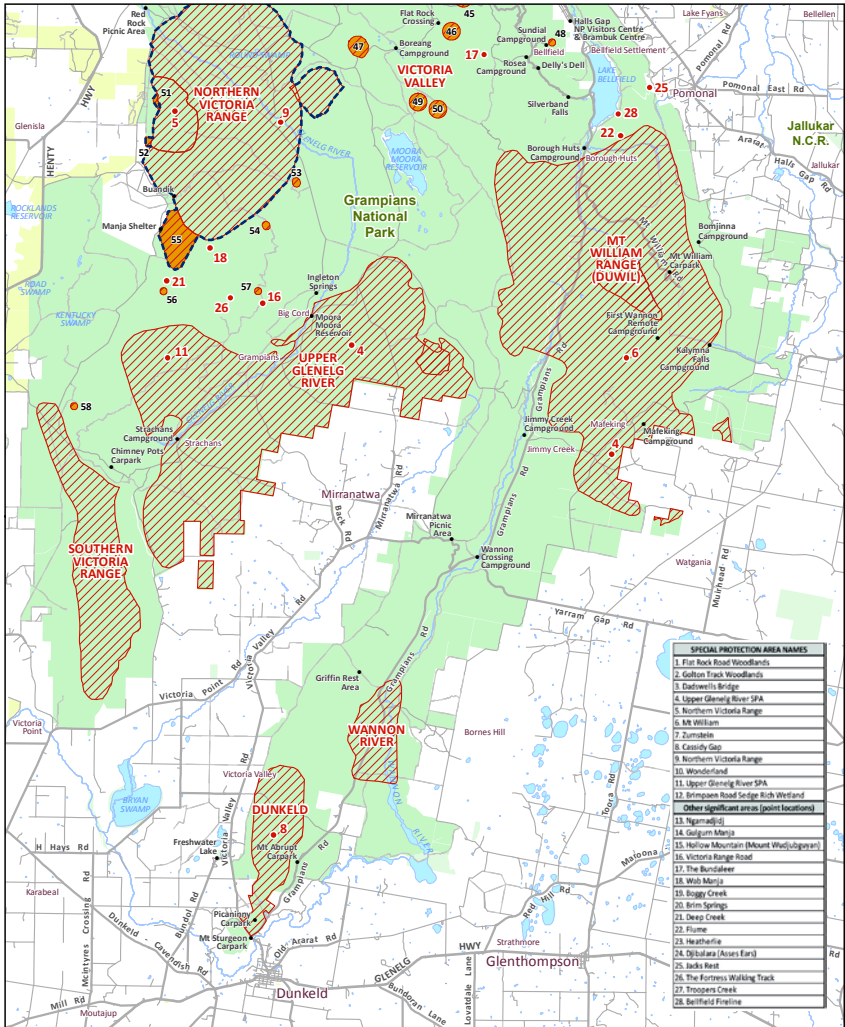
Projection: Transverse Mercator

- Special Protection Areas (see numbered points / names in table)
- Special Protection Areas (new as of Feb 2019)
- Focus area
- PV Visitor sites

- National Parks
 - Parks and Reserves
 - State Forest
- LOCALITY REGIONS**



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Grampians National Park - Special Protection Areas

Rock climbing (South)

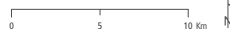
18/02/2019

Coordinate System: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 54

Projection: Transverse Mercator

- Special Protection Areas (see numbered points / names in table)
- Special Protection Areas (new as of Feb 2019)
- Focus area
- PV Visitor sites

- National Parks
 - Parks and Reserves
 - State Forest
- LOCALITY REGIONS**



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1. Areas assessed within current SPAs

Year of SPA	SPA Name	Survey Area	Climbing Area
2019	30	Hollow Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lemonade Wall
2019	31	Mt Stayplton Campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cave Of Ghosts Cliffs Warden Wall
2019	32	Mt Stayplton Campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mt Pleasant
2019	39	Eastern Mt Difficult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Promised Land
2019	48	Halls Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lookout Point Wall
2019	58	Harrop Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilham's Craggs
2003	10 - Wonderland	Halls Gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socrophiliac Buttress Venus Baths
2003	15 - Hollow Mountain (Wubjub Guyun)	Hollow Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amnesty Wall Area Andersens Bellerophon Wall Clicke Area (incl. Kindergarten routes) Gunn Buttress Hollow Mountain Cave Loopeys Pensioners Wall Area Red Wall Area incl Echoes Block Sandinista Cliffs The Kindergarten (bouldering)
2003	15 - Hollow Mountain (Wubjub Guyun)	Mt Stayplton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Buttress Northern Wall
2003	15 - Hollow Mountain (Wubjub Guyun)	Summerday Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back Wall Barc Cliff Bird Wall Bowler Boulder Echidna Wall (bouldering) Flying Blind Area Left Wall Main Wall Tunnel Cliff Wall of Fools
2003	17 - The Bundaleer	Bundaleer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bundaleer

2. Areas assessed outside current SPAs

Survey Area	Climbing Area		
Bundaleer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calectasia Walls • Equinox Walls • Stony Peak • The Peking Face • Tower Hill • Western Wall 	Mt Stayplton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterglow Wall • Bad Moon Rising Wall • Between the Sheeps • Bouldering Buttress • Citadel • Cloud Cuckoo Land • Epsilon Wall • Epsilon Wall Bouldering • Grey and Green Walls • Koalasquatsy Wall • Legoland • Lower Taipan • Sabre Gully • Spurt Wall • Taipan Wall • The Dungeon • The Plaza Strip • The Snake Pit • Trackside Boulders • Tribute Wall • Van Diemen's Land • Wildsides • Windjammer • Camping Area
Eastern Mt Difficult	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lebanon 2. Lunar Walls 3. Pine Wall 4. Syria 		
Halls Gap	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Bellfield Peak 6. Blockbuster Buttress 7. Bullaces Buttress 8. Chatauqua Peak 9. Clematis Falls 10. Crock Wall 11. Forrest Rock 12. Frenchmans Beret 13. Mackeys Peak 14. Neurology Wall 15. Point Sunshine 16. Signal Peak 17. Sundial Peak 18. The Elephants Hide 19. The Grand Canyon 20. The Lower Goon 21. The Tower of Paine 22. The Underworld 23. The Upper Goon 24. The Wall of China 25. The Watchtower 26. Upper Wurzlegummage Wall 27. Valley of the Giants 28. Wild Flower Wall 29. Wild Geese Wall 		
Hollow Mountain	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 30. The Play Pen 31. West Flank 		Mt Stayplton Campground
Mountain Lion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Cakewalk Wall 33. Mountain Lion 34. River Road Rocks 35. Tangerine Slide 36. The Breadboard 37. The Chimney Pots 38. Wedge Tail Boulders 	Pohlners Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Olive Cave • The Ravine • Truckstop Wall
		Summerday Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dolgoruki Wall and Three Tiers • Eastern Walls • Emu Crag • Interpretation Wall • Western Crags
		Harrop Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloggy • Curiosity Crag • Mt Pox
Mt Rosea	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 39. Giant's Staircase 40. Left Side 41. Main Cliff 42. Rosea Far Right 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out to Lunch Wall • Ruined Castle • Slander Gully • The Breach • Tortoise Wall

UPDATES—BURNLEY REVAMP



In April, PV Rangers from the Burnley Harbour Office laid reclaimed astro turf around the bouldering walls at Burnley. Along with the new benches, this is a great addition to smarten up the area. Above: Georgie laying repurposed astro turf; below: between walls 2 & 3.





And artist Amanda Newman has put up this beautiful mural of Angie Scarth-Johnson under the bridge at Burnley! @amandanewmanart



TRAVESIA LAS HORQUETAS

CERRO CASTILLO, CHILE



During the first month of our recent Patagonian hiking trip, Ben and I met a number of hikers who raved about the four-day walk across the Cerro Castillo National Reserve. We decided that we would do it after our also four-day, quite splendid and thoroughly recommended, ferry journey north from Puerto Natales to Puerto Montt. We flew an hour

back south to Balmaceda airport and stayed in Coyhaique, the capital of the Aysén region, and spent a day sorting out camping gas to supplement what we'd found in the hostel, as well as bus tickets and food.

The following day we took one of the first (mini) buses to the trail head. The bus was full, the luggage areas over-



flowing. The bus was not only taking passengers but also parcels—one man boarded with two car tyres! A couple of hours later the bus pulled over and we got out.

About 700m along the path we arrived at the ranger's hut. We sat down and put our gaiters on before paying the entrance fee and receiv-

ing a safety briefing. It was nearly midday when we set off. The track was easy to follow, although there were a few stream crossings on stepping stones and logs—we had our trekking poles for these moments. We overtook a couple of groups, including two women who overtook us again as we prevaricated over the best way to cross a river. They just strode on through, so we added a few rocks and did much the same.

We arrived at the first possible campsite and had a late lunch, preferring to continue and get as far as possible while it was relatively flat and still light. The second campsite was next to the raging Rio Turbio and was much more pleasant. There were already a few tents so we found a spot and moved in.

Later on, we joined some others at one of the tables to cook dinner and spent a pleasant evening finding out about each other. There was an interesting mix. A party of three—a German, a Chilean and a German-Chilean—pitched their enormous 6-person tent next to ours. Another couple were from Germany and had been travelling around Patagonia and South America for a while. Finally there was a Flemish Belgian who had a supply of bread rolls that came out with a tin of tuna at each meal: he didn't have a stove.

We had been told by the rangers at the start that we should leave camp at 8am so that we could get over the pass early when it would be

less windy. But it was cold and dark when our alarm went off at 7am, so we didn't rush. When we did leave camp there was still a bit of frost on the grass by the river, brrrrr. We walked for about twenty minutes then dumped our packs and went up a side track to a small but pretty lake and hanging glacier.

By the time we returned to our bags the sun was out and it was warming up. We climbed up through the forest and emerged out into the wind. As we climbed higher, scree slopes from the mountains on either side of the pass met, forming a sharp V of loose rock, along which our path undulated. We crossed a couple of sun-softened snow patches and were at the col by 11:50am, well done us! The descent involved navigating a frozen patch of snow before heading down into the river valley, into the forest to the lower camping area. We found a spot, pitched our tent and had a late lunch.

After lunch we packed a day bag and set off up a side valley to a lake complete with glacier, ice tunnel and icebergs. It was very spectacular and a number of the hiking groups we had met at the campsite were already there, while others arrived later. The lake had been described as a 'must see' by the rangers. We stayed for a while, watching icebergs float around, and climbing on the large boulders that were littered in and around the lake.

Over dinner with the other hikers,

one of the discussions was about how the timings on the map we were given were too cautious—some had arrived in camp at 11am. The timings did seem a bit too generous; for Ben and I those given by the Maps.me app seemed pretty accurate. Ben played cards with the hikers from the previous day, while the Belgian and I chatted with people on a nearby table. I was convinced I had seen one of them before, a tall man with a very distinctive, ZZ-Top beard. We talked about our previous hikes but meeting him on those wasn't possible. Later on, the conversation moved onto cinnamon buns and a cafe in Coyhaique where they made the 'best cinnamon buns outside Denmark'. It turned out he and his partner had sat next to us in that cafe—there were a couple of Americans chatting loudly who we had both overheard.

The following morning, we did start moving at 7am when the alarm went off as there was another, higher pass to cross. Once again we climbed up through forest until we emerged onto scree slopes to blue skies and views of Lago Castillo and Cerro Castillo (Castle Mountain). The path climbed very steeply up the scree beside the lake until it levelled out and became a rock hop in parts, before following a ridge beside Cerro Castillo. There were expansive views down towards Villa Cerro Castillo (Cerro Castillo village—the end of the walk) and beyond, as well as out to other mountain ranges in the area. Ben caught up to some of the others as we all climbed to the col; I plodded up as



Heather approaching the col, day 2. Photo: Ben Wright

usual. Carrying a heavy rucksack full of climbing gear (Ben) seemed to be better training for this holiday than running and long distance cycling (me)—oh well! The descent was again steep and rocky, into a forest then across a river where we found our campsite for the third night.

We set up our tent, had lunch and then took a day pack up to the higher camp and, beyond that, to another spectacular lake—no icebergs this time, but deep and blue. We had it to ourselves for a while, so Ben had a very brief swim, while I cheered him on! (*Ed*: see cover.) The others arrived. Most of them had opted to carry their packs to the higher camp for the night. The man with the big beard was persuaded to swim when Ben mentioned that he'd been in.

The rangers at the entrance had told us that the road south was closing daily between 1pm and 5pm for road works so no traffic would be getting through. We passed on that information as well before heading down to our camp.

The last day and we had a bus to catch! The three buses that could take us back to Coyhaique would arrive between 11:30pm and 1pm. So we were up early, in order to get one of them. The weather was changing and it looked damp and misty higher up. The walk was steadily downhill through open forest and across a few streams until we checked out at the ranger station. The last 6km stretch was 'Patagonian flat' along a gravel road splattered with fresh cow poo. After an hour we caught up to the



Photo: Ben Wright

cows, a gaucho on horseback and his dogs. There was no way past so we followed them for a few kilometres until they turned off just before the village.

There were already people at the bus stop who had stayed overnight in the village. Some of the others arrived after us. The first bus that pulled up was full, with the driver telling us that the other buses would all be full too. We were looking at a long wait but luckily one of the people at the bus stop was Chilean and had a flight the following day, so he was very keen to get to Coyhaique. He managed to phone a local company and chartered a bus for the fourteen of us waiting, which turned up half an hour later!

As we returned on the bus and went on to our hostel we started to get a sense of what had been going on while we were out of contact.

Before we left Australia we'd signed up for emails from smartraveller.com.au. The latest emails weren't encouraging, with borders closing. Over dinner we talked about whether to continue with our next hike or return home. We decided to get out as soon as possible, which we did four days later, cutting our holiday short by a week. Cochamó Valley, the Yosemite of South America, would have to wait.

Heather Murray



CRAG STATUS: *OPEN?*

In May, we published a list of all the crags in the Northern Grampians and their 'status'. David Lia sent in some amendments to the list, clearing up the 'unsures' and correcting a couple. Thanks David.

Northern Grampians—Amendments

Pohler Track & Smith's Rd Area	Mt Emu	Open
	The Crows Nest	Open
	The Eyrie	Open
The Rockwall Area	The Rockwall	Partially in an SPA— The SPA west boundary is about 30 metres east of Horsemen of the Apocalypse
	Barr's Buttress	Open
NW Mount Difficult Range	Carter's Col	SPA since 2003
	Mt Difficult Cliff	SPA
	Epaminondas Buttress	SPA
	Mt Bloody Impossible	SPA
Briggs Bluff Area	Distortion Wall	Open
	Deep Creek Walls	Open
	Deep Creek Blocks	Open
	The End of the Earth	Open
Eastern Mt Difficult Range	Lower Heavens	Open
	Lake Wartook Lookout	SPA
	The Tim Tams	Open

We also have one amendment to the Central and Southern Grampians crag list (April Argus)—Bundaleer is in an SPA.

Plans to publish a list of the climbs open in the Victoria Range is now on hold: as you'll see from RT4 updates, there may be changes to SPAs with the draft Grampians Land Management Plan, still set for submission to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change by the end of this month. As of 1 June, our lists for the Northern Grampians and the Central and Southern Grampians are up-to-date.

Access, Bats *and* Climbing *at* Devils Tower

Every year during the month of June, climbers are asked not to climb at Devils Tower in Wyoming out of respect for Native Americans. For many tribes, the Tower is a sacred place and the summer solstice a time of pilgrimage, spiritual insight and healing.

Climber and biological technician Philip Knecht has lived and worked at the Tower for seven years. He spoke to Leigh Hopkinson about climbing, access and bat research.

For many climbers, Philip Knecht has the dream job: six months on, working seasonally for the US National Park Service; six months off, travelling and climbing. He's based at Devils Tower National Monument, an extraordinary rock formation rising out of the prairies in Wyoming.

A little backstory: the Tower became a travel destination after it featured in the 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Climbers had already been going there for years, because the Tower offers some of the finest traditional crack climbing in North America. Native Americans had

been going there for much longer. When they were forced off their land, caring for the Tower became the responsibility of the State. It was the first US National Monument to be established under Roosevelt in 1906. Today the Tower is public land, administered by the National Park Service. As of 2011, climbers make up 1% of the 400,000 annual visitors.

In the 1990s, thing started to heat up after a big increase in the number of climbers at the Tower. 'It was a butt-heads kind of culture—Parks vs climbers vs tribes,' Philip said. 'There was an attempted policy change brought on by the 1995 Climbing Management Plan.' As a gesture of respect to Native Americans, the Parks-initiated plan asked climbers to accept a voluntary ban during the month of June, so tribes could celebrate undisturbed. 'Local climbers and guides sued the NPS decision, arguing you can't ban a recreational activity on public land. They won. Legally you can't, but ethically is it right?'

Climbers were still encouraged to observe the voluntary ban during June. For about a decade this



Photo: [Shelby L Bell](#)

worked well, then it went by the wayside, based on Park Service data. Parks have a permit system at the Tower that allows them to keep data on who's climbing where. Permits are free, but all climbers must register.

Philip said about five years ago, a climbing ranger remarketed the voluntary ban, creating an uproar for and against both positions. 'We work really closely with the Access Fund now. They jumped on board after the remarketing and encouraged the June closure, which was a positive step.'

The US Access Fund has been negotiating access for climbers since 1991. A non-governmental body funded largely by climbers, it has millions of dollars at its disposal.

'The Access Fund has become this great go-between for land owners and land managers, and a solid voice for the climbers that is reasonable and thinks things through,' said Philip. 'And they've got lawyers.'

The Access Fund has also supported climber involvement in environmental projects such as monitoring bats. Much of Philip's work at the Tower involves collecting data on up to eleven species of bat. Bat populations in parts of the US have been decimated by White-nose Syndrome, which has reached Wyoming but has not yet reached the Tower, providing the opportunity to gain valuable insights in advance.

Out east, bats inhabit cave systems, making them easier to monitor,

but in the west they roost in the same cracks favoured by climbers. This has led to Parks enlisting the help of climbers to locate the exact whereabouts of the bats, which technicians can then follow up.

Philip said his initial approach of going to festivals and talking to climbers wasn't productive, because he was there in uniform. While climbers were interested in the project, they were wary of confiding in Parks staff.

'We've been trying to develop a bridge between the Access Fund and Parks and climbers, so the climbers are encouraged to report to land managers about bats. I think it's working. When I go out there not in uniform I hear from climbers I get talking to that they've heard of the work we're doing.'

Information to date suggests that bats aren't affected by sharing their environment with climbers. Most species at the Tower are not threatened or endangered. 'The threatened species of bat that we do have—the Northern Long-eared Bat—we capture, put mini radio transmitters on and track,' said Philip. 'All of them head for sandstone cliffs—total choss—or standing snags, like lightning-struck trees. It's encouraged us to rethink our position on chopping down dead trees. It's good, eco-conscious thinking not to chop down dead trees.'

Philip's work also involves monitoring

peregrine falcons. Every year on 15 March, one of the faces of the Tower (about ¼ of the Tower) is closed for falcon breeding season. Mating starts in March and selecting nest sites in April and early May. 'The falcons change their nests annually, so we have this general closure to reduce disturbance to the falcons, then we move the closures 50m from the nests. In my seven years that's worked really well, closing the climbs in the line of sight. I monitor the chicks until they fledge and fly around (late July) and by the time we see attempts at hunting by the fledglings we open the climbs back up.'

*

During the month of June, Native Americans come to the Tower to say prayers, hold sweat lodges and vision quests, and take part in sun dances. The Tower is significant for as many as 26 different tribes.

For Parks staff, the voluntary closure of climbing is mandatory. Philip said that when he first started he was fully—and somewhat naively—all for the closures. Invitations to tribal consultations have allowed him to expand his thinking.

The consultations are organised at the Tower by Parks once a year as a way of reaching out to the tribes, to outline land management plans, gain feedback and start discussions. The consultations proved an opportunity to gauge tribal representatives'

thoughts on climbing. 'In the side rooms I'd ask, hey, what do you think about climbing? And it was a mixed bag. Some absolutely do not like it. For other representatives, it was like wow, I wish you could take my son up there. You don't care? Oh no, it's cool. Responses varied.'

Thesedays, Philip is still all for the voluntary closures, but questions the impact climbers have versus the hundreds of thousands of tourists who do the 1.3-mile loop track around the base of the Tower. 'Hikers aren't banned. Why are climbers singled out? You've either got to ban everyone over the month of June, or not. Climbers are a very low percentage. The visual impact is there, sure, but maybe we could do something to further the outreach to hikers as well.'

The climber vs hiker debate has come up in response to the climbing bans here in the Grampians too. But Philip notes there are differences: unlike the Grampians, the Tower is mostly trad climbing and chalk marks don't tend to stick around, as the gradients aren't so steep and there's greater annual rainfall. Having the Access Fund as a go-between is also a distinct advantage.

When pressed on whether he had any suggestions for climbers negotiating access to the Grampians, Philip said to reach out to Traditional Owners. 'If you have a solid climbing community, be the first to make the effort. It shows a lot of

respect. Don't immediately go to the negative—they're going to shut down climbing—instead fully learn the situation. Banning climbing isn't a solution, but nor is disregarding sacred sites.'

Lastly, tips on where to climb in North America? 'I always go back to Squamish, British Columbia. I spend a lot of my time travelling and climbing and that's got it all. Wind River Range in Wyoming is amazing in terms of alpine. Gotta give a shout out to the Tower and from there Indian Creek near Moab. It's a super-fun community where people come from all over the States to celebrate Halloween and Thanksgiving.

'It's really nice as a traveller, especially a solo traveller, to have these kinds of places. In New Zealand I struggled to find climbers in the North Island but in the South at Paynes Ford there's an established campground. I spent a month there and continued my journey onto the Darrans with great people. Paynes Ford was a really special place to come across. The Pines is sort of the Australian equivalent.'

After seven years at the Tower, Philip has decided to move on. You can find out more about his work by watching the short film, *Explorers for Bats*.

You can also find out more about the Native American fight to regain access to their sacred places in the feature film *In the Light of Reverence*.

Home Build

For many of us, COVID-19 has amplified the idea of one day having a climbing wall at home. So how to go about it? We spoke to three climbers who constructed their own walls about the decision-making process, the build and the results. (All three walls were put up prior to COVID-19.)



Francesco's outdoor / freestanding / new wall

What considerations did you factor in?

My wall was always going to be outdoors and freestanding, as we live in a rental. It stands at the far end of the backyard and has a 23° overhang—although I designed it for 15°, but it turned out steeper. Euclidean geometry is not an exact science anyway, right?

How did you work out the structural loading?

I overcompensated for the lack of formal structural planning with a generous

dose of over-engineering. You could probably eliminate half of the structural timber in my wall and still have a solid build. In climbing, safety redundancy is God, so I have applied the same principles to the design of the wall. I also had a carpenter friend have a look at it and give me the thumbs up.

What major materials did you need?

Treated pine for building timber; form ply for my panel (not the most glamorous choice, but cheap, sturdy and weather resistant); t-nuts and bolts from climbing shops, when they were still available; undulated PVC for the cover; gymnastic mat and foam for crashpad; more plywood to build volumes—volumes are awesome!

How long did it take to build?

The initial basic build took me maybe a couple of days. Then came the side panels, the volumes, handmade holds, crash mats, a bigger roof (for rain cover). It is a real time-bottomless pit.

How much did it cost?

About \$500 for the wall and another \$400 for volumes and holds.

What holds did you opt for?

I bought a Metolius 30 holds starter kit from Climbing Anchors, plus I scouted the web for extra holds that people were getting rid of. I also bought specific one-off holds (for example, a big sloper) and made lots (lots!) of holds with stacked plywood, pine, firewood etc... It's really fun, and addictive. I am now dipping my toe into molding and casting with resin... I have a really short attention span.

What about crash pads?

Shopping for crash pads is when you realise how expensive foam is. I bought a cheap gymnastic 10cm foldable mat from eBay, which I stacked on top of 30cm-deep foam wrapped in building plastic. I can comfortably fall on my back from a couple of metres.

What resources were helpful?

I consulted a lot of different blogs, youtube pages and resources before actually going ahead with my own design. I think it is helpful to learn the general concept from other peoples' projects but, when it comes to your build, you really want to personalise your recipe and make it your own, even if it is not as efficient or has quirks. We have all had enough of Ikea's flat packs.

What did you learn and what would you do differently?

I learned everything, since this was my first experience using timber. I got

given a drop-saw just two days before building. I have also learned respect for blades, spinning tools etc... If you are not Tommy Caldwell, you need all the fingers you can count on. If I could do it all again, I would really like to have built a variable angle wall.

What tips do you have for someone wanting to build a home wall?

Design in advance, and not on the go. If your wall is 23 degrees instead of the 15 you had planned for... well, you may have made a mistake somewhere. But also have fun, it's such an enjoyable thing to do, especially knowing that you will be climbing on it shortly. It's comparable to cooking a feast, knowing that it will taste amazing!



Martin's outdoor / freestanding / second-hand wall

What considerations did you factor in?

I live in a rental, so I couldn't do major structural works. Luckily, we have a pretty big backyard. The wall was always going to be outdoors, so a major consideration was how protect it from the weather. I painted both sides of the panels and rigged a big tarp (abandoned by a friendly stranger at Arapiles) from the base of the rear of the wall all the way over and out the front a few metres, attached to a tree. It creates a roof big enough to still train in the rain.

Another consideration was lighting when training at night. Fate stepped in and supplied two sets of freestanding spotlights via hard rubbish on my street.

Since I was setting the wall up on the lawn, I had to work out how to fix it into the ground. I drove star pickets along the back of the wall going 600 deep and heavy duty pegs through the legs of the A-frame supports. (With a rental, I didn't want to pour any concrete.)

As for the all-important angle of the wall, I wanted it to be something that would be fun for my girlfriend as well as other mates to pop over and play on, not a brutal den of frustration, so I designed it for 25 degrees. A few mods during installation caused it to land at 33 degrees. There's been no complaints yet.

How did you work out the structural loading?

Guess work and a bit of online research. I decided on an 'A-frame' design which means there is two legs that stick out the front and take the majority of the load. Community consensus said that 18mm ply meant it'd be unlikely you'd pull a t-nut through the wall.

What major materials did you need?

90 x 45 framing timber; 18mm ply boards; 100s of screws; starpickets and pegs; t-nuts.

How long did it take to build?

When I say I bought a second-hand wall, that's being generous. The way it had been previously set up was a bit of a shambles (the panels were just leaning against the previous owner's garage support beam with no real structure and he'd drilled t-nut holes in completely random spots) so I had to strip it back and start from scratch. It took two days labour by myself to do the framework, paint and prepare the wall panels and fit new t-nuts in an offset 200mm grid, then a morning with a friend to erect the wall and set the holds.

How much did it cost?

Around \$800.

What holds did you opt for?

The holds that came with the wall were a Metolius variety 60 pack. I'd say it's a good set to get started with, everything from big jugs down to tiny foot chips. However, I pretty quickly got bored and started making my own timber holds. This has become a bit of an obsession and now I can't look at a branch, a piece of firewood, a hardwood off-cut, scraps of ply or even furniture legs



with out seeing the potential holds within. I wouldn't say that making holds is cheaper than buying them, but it's really fun and my wall feels unique.

What about crash pads?

A queen mattress and a big old sofa bed foam cushion—thanks again hard rubbish. Both are covered in two \$5 mattress storage bags from Bunnings.

What resources were helpful?

I read a few guides—the Metolius one, the REI one, the Climbing Anchors website has one—but it really came down to simple construction logic, and applying common sense and problem solving to my particular situation. I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all for home walls, because every person's space and training requirements differ.

What did you learn and what would you do differently?

I would really consider a kind of system wall with mirrored setting so I can train movement from both sides. The holds I had restricted that in the beginning, but now that I make my own I could do that. That said, I'm still really happy with it and the only things I would like to change require more space: basically going wider and higher. I would consider doing an adjustable angle wall—the A-frame design can be modified by adding hinges between the kickboard and the angled part of the wall—but there's downsides to that too.

What tips do you have for someone wanting to build a home wall?

Just go for it, if you're experienced with building then it's easy, if not then you'll learn tons that you can apply to future projects. Also don't paint texture on the wall—that's cheating!

Anything else you can think of?

While researching I read somewhere that the excitement of having a home wall will wear off. I don't feel that's true for me, but it is true that a home wall is quite a long way removed from all the great things about climbing: it's not in a remote location, it's not scary, it's not real rock in your hand and icy wind on your back, and it's not spending special time with your most trusted friends. So as great as it is, I'd trade the stronger fingers and footwork to have that stuff back any day.



Nic's indoor / supported / second-hand wall

What considerations did you factor in?

When we had a baby we worried we wouldn't get out climbing as much, especially over winter. We'd just bought the shack we'd been renting in the bush, and discovered that the locked shed out the back—which we'd never set foot in, because it'd been full of the owner's junk—was perfect for an indoor wall. We wanted something to play on as much as train on, plus Leigh and I and the baby climb different grades, so it had to have enough variation to keep us all interested in the long run.

A quick costing of new materials showed it'd be serious \$\$\$ to build something substantial and being cheapskates, we started scouring Gumtree and facebook for a pre-loved wall. A friend sent us a link to a guy in Caulfield selling his set-up: 12m x 2.7m including vertical, 15 degree and roof sections. He was gutted to see it go, but it was installed in his dad's garage, and his dad had just bought a new 6L corvette that needed a home. He kept the holds. It cost us \$2500, and saved us a heaaaaaap of time.

I'm a nerd, so I made a quick Sketchup model of the shed and panels, then played around figuring out the best configuration. We decided to create a full

cave by putting 15 degree walls on either side of the roof section. We also flipped another 15 degree section to create a slab: I love balancy problems, our local crag is slabby ol' Mt Alexander, and it'd be good for baby's-first-climb. I added space between the cave and the slab to make a mini-chimney. We also jacked everything up to 3.2-3.5m, the height of the shed roof: more climbing space, and the shed is still fully useable even under the roof. Last but not least we designed the roof section so we could put storage above it. It was great having a 3D model, because we could easily visualise different designs.

How did you work out the structural loading?

A wall this size weighs a lot, and I was especially paranoid about adequately supporting the roof. Luckily Leigh's dad is an architect, so I sent him the dimensions and materials, and he recommended timber sizes and techniques to build the frame (the original wall was screwed into brick, so I had to build a supporting structure first). Our neighbour also built his own home, and came by every now and then to give everything a good kick. 'Yep,' he'd say. 'That's the right noise.' Which didn't seem heaps scientific, but I could quickly hear what he meant: as each structural piece went up, the whole thing sounded more and more dull and dense.

What major materials did you need?

The original wall included a dozen or so sheets of 2.4x1.2 18mm ply, and treated pine framing to hold it in place. It took about another \$1000 of 140x45 structural pine to build the frame, as well as heaps of offcuts and random bits of timber lying around the shed. Sourcing long M10 bolts to fix frame to shed needed a trip to a specialist bolt shop, but everything else was easy to find. Tool-wise, we mainly used the drop saw, circular saw, impact driver and drill, some good big clamps—and a bunch of climbing gear to rig crevasse rescue systems.

How long did it take to build?

Because we're out in the bush and have a young baby, I did most of it by myself, which slowed things down a fair bit, especially working at height with 3.4m lengths of 140x45. It took one day to get the first section up and test out the design (luckily everything fit!). Getting the roof frame in took a day with three people, then I built the rest by myself in five days. I'd figured I'd just slap up what we'd bought, but everything needed tweaking or redoing. So a week's full-time work all up. The fun bit was mounting these super-heavy panels by myself. I haven't been able to go mountaineering for two years now, so I was stoked to have an excuse to rig 5-1 pulley systems and crevasse-rescue the panels into place, then clamp, then screw. That felt good.

How much did it cost?

About \$3800 (or 18 months worth of gym fees for two).

What holds did you opt for?

We got lucky with holds, because a friend works at the Geelong climbing gym, and he scored us a big bucket of their old holds for \$1 each. That got us started—but it also meant they were super polished, and there's only so much sloper action climbers of our calibre can handle on a roof (i.e. none). So we bought a Metolius 60-hold starter pack, an Uncarved Blocks 15-hold crimp set, and a Metolius roof jug pack as well. I've also put up some pine offcuts for drytooling. Next up is experimenting with making hardwood jugs.

What about crash pads?

Hard rubbish mattresses, baby. I gave myself a heart attack driving from Melbourne to the bush house with a sloppy old queen sized mattress strapped to the roof: at one point I looked out the window and it was gone—luckily it'd only folded itself in half, and not fallen off! A detour to Bunnings for about fifty more compression straps did the trick. We're still acquiring more mattresses, and have picked one up from the local tip.

What resources were helpful?

The Metolius how-to booklet that came with the starter kit was really useful, plus youtube videos and chats with people who know how to build stuff.

What did you learn and what would you do differently?

First, that it's great to plan in the abstract, but in reality everything's out by 2mm or 20mm or 200mm, so there's not much point in cutting timber according to what it should be. I quickly learned to measure everything in situ, twice, then do my cuts. Second, we didn't pay much attention to the t-nuts because they were already installed, but it seems the holes were a fraction too large, and they hadn't been hammered in far enough, so several have cross-threaded or popped out the back. Annoying having to remove panels to retrieve them. So make sure the holes are the right size, and hammer the t-nuts in good!

What tips do you have for someone wanting to build a home wall?

Two people is better than one, and smash your t-nuts in hard!

Anything else you can think of?

If you're considering it, do it! The design and build process was really fun, and we're so grateful to have the wall during lockdown. Setting our own routes has also taught us a lot. And it means our son has a big soft playground, and has already sent his first V-10.



To the 2007/8 collaboration between the VCC and Parks Victoria to install a floating boardwalk, sign and removable cairn at the Bundaleer, at the base of Manic Depressive, to both protect cultural heritage and allow climbers to still access the climb.



Top: Steve Monks & Frank Van Der Peet (Parks Victoria) taking measurements for the boardwalk;
Below left: Dale adding the weight while Cam saws & Steve prepares the drill.



Suzy Scurie (Cultural Heritage Ranger, PV) with the new signage for the Bundaleer.



Sylvia Van Der Peet (Parks Victoria) and the newly erected sign at the Bundaleer. It explains the cultural significance of the area and the joint effort between PV and the VCC/Cliffcare.



YOUNG CLIFFHANGERS

Youth Competition Climbing: Highlights from the Sport Climbing Victoria (SCV) Coaching for Climbing Workshop

Competition climbing is daunting for adults, let alone for young climbers.

On 2 March, Sport Climbing Victoria ran an online workshop about coaching for climbing. The panel included National Head Coaches, the National Team Physio, the Jury President, the SCV President, a Victorian Climbing Child Safety Rep and a neuropsychologist.

In just under two-and-a-half hours, these specialists shared in-depth information and valuable insights about competition support, training for comps, mental health considerations, child safety, and how young athletes differ from adults.

Here are my highlights from the session. These are helpful to parents of climbing youth who don't compete, as well as climbing parents and coaches with youth involved in competition.

Coaching and support on the day of competition

National Coach for SCV Will

Hammersla emphasised the importance of maintaining rituals. For instance, making sure an athlete runs through their usual warm-up. Checklists are great to ensure they've got everything they need. Be a good buffer, liaise with judges, time check and communicate well, so your climber can focus on climbing. And no matter what happens, don't panic. Everything should always be okay.

Competition tips

Jury President and Head Judge Steph Gooden suggested knowing the rules, so climbers understand how to maximise their scores and how appeals work (for climbers and against other climbers).

Steph also recommended practising competition rules during training sessions. Things such as correcting z-clips, using black tape (out of bounds), setting time limits and calling technicals. And when watching forerunning videos, pay attention to clips, foot movements and flow. Ask questions of route setters.

How to develop training programs that get athletes familiar with competition

Philip Goebel, President of SCV, spoke about how to develop training programs that get athletes familiar with competition. His two key tips? Help climbers perform well during competition, and nurture resilience. He recognises these are hard to do at the same time.

To nurture resilience, Phillip has three suggestions:

1. Place climbers in an unfamiliar environment, such as another climbing gym;
2. Simulate pressure, such as setting time limits or posting running orders;
3. Debrief, such as making time to reflect and to focus on psychological, tactical areas before a competition.

He encouraged practising a positive attitude in suboptimal conditions. If conditions aren't ideal, it's the same for all athletes and 'sometimes the athlete who can deal with that the best and be the most positive and focus on what they can control will be the one that performs the best in those situations.'

Youth physiology: How are young athletes different to adults?

Australian Youth Climbing Team Physio Katie Kaminsky ran through illustrations of how bone develops at different ages and explained that young athletes are vulnerable to certain injuries during—and after—their growth plates are fusing. What was interesting was the list of how

injuries occur and where.

Most common youth climbing injuries:

- most injuries are overuse;
- boulder more than sport, more than speed;
- indoor more than outdoor;
- 3rd and 4th middle knuckle—shown by swelling, pain/tenderness, sore, stiff, red;
- arms more than legs;
- sprains, tendinopathies, and strains more than other types of injuries.

Certain activities added to the risk of injuries, such as early campus boarding and high volume intensive climbing. Starting progressions early, poor technique and gripping are also common sources of injury. Don't focus on body weight or ignore new symptoms. When left untreated, unhealed injuries can lead to surgery or finger deformity. Get medical support and time off for rehab—take rest as seriously as training.

For injury prevention, focus on sleep, nutrition, and recovery. Treat each athlete individually. Plan training specific to growth and development / injury risk, life demands, experience, and goals.

Mental health

Clinical Neuropsychologist Dr James Gooden highlighted that the majority of mental health difficulties come from adolescence. This is an important time for their growth and development. A time where they

form identity and independence. He shared that some stress can improve performance, but too much isn't helpful.

Four tips to deal with stress during competition:

1. Deep breathing (from diaphragm);
2. Tense and release muscles;
3. Drink water;
4. Stay present.

Dr Gooden suggested helping young climbers to be compassionate to themselves with phrases such as, 'You're being pretty hard on yourself... even the best people make mistakes'. Reinforce strengths with phrases such as, 'I love the way you helped Amy on that climb'. Ask open-ended questions.

Encourage self-care that leads to a balanced, healthy lifestyle: good sleep, eating, connecting with others, having fun, and exercising.

Child safety

SCV Board Director Ellen White Mackenzie reminded that the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply to climbing: children should be treated respectfully, treated appropriately, and not subject to any form of verbal harm. We need to be aware of problems and inform the right people when needed.

Summary

The message I got from watching the session is that as parents and coaches, we need to be aware of a few factors specific to youth climbers.

Before a competition, it's about planning physical and mental training that's specific to the growth and needs of the climber. Knowing their bone structure and considering what's important at their stage of life. Building resilience. It's also about knowing in advance how to get the highest scores—and what will get a climber pulled off a wall. How to appeal and when.

During comp, it's about how to deal with the busyness of the day. How to help a young climber do as well as they can under potentially stressful, nerve-wracking conditions. It's about keeping them positive and able to recover quickly from setbacks.

Through it all, we need to treat youth with respect and keep them safe while they climb on.

Want to watch the full workshop? Head to Coaching for Climbing under the Members Only section of the SCV website: sportclimbingaustralia.org.au

Cynthia Marinakos

NEW ROUTES AND BETA

Mt Arapiles—Northern Group

Tower of Babel

This truncated tower, at the left end of Shiralee Wall, has a few fun climbs. It's a bit like a mini D Minor pinnacle. To descend, abseil off bollards. The last person down can retrieve the anchors and abseil off the opposite side of the tower—as long as their climbing partner ties one end of the rope to a convenient tree.

White Noise 22m 16

The front left arete of the pinnacle all the way. The upper bulge requires a bit of vigour.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 30/9/19

Hubbub 20m 10

Takes the main line on the front face. When the line ends, step right and up steeply, just right of the arete.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 30/9/19

Forked Tongue 20m 9

Looks can be deceiving. Start up Hubbub then step right into the obvious right-hand line. Bridge to glory.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 16/10/19

Babble 15m 9

Don't believe your eyes—there are good holds and pro. Step off the boulder and climb the front right arete through a series of bulges.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 16/10/19

Mumbo Jumbo 15m 12

A shady climb. Take the right-leaning line through bulges in the middle of the north face (ie, facing the Shiralee cliff).

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 30/9/19

VCC SUPPORTERS

*The following climbing gyms offer VCC members concession entry
Discounts are also usually available on memberships and 10-visit passes
Some of the gyms offer discounts in their gear shops*

Bayside Rock Carrum Downs
www.baysiderock.com.au



Cliffhanger Altona North
www.cliffhanger.com.au



Gravity Worx Coburg
www.gravityworx.com.au



Hardrock CBD
www.hardrock.com.au



Hardrock Nunawading
www.hardrock.com.au



The Lactic Factory Abbotsford
www.thelacticfactory.com.au



Northside Boulders Brunswick
www.northsideboulders.com



Northside Boulders Northcote
www.northsideboulders.com



North Walls Brunswick
www.northwalls.com.au



The Rock Adventure Centre
Geelong
www.rockadventures.com.au



Urban Climb
Collingwood
www.urbanclimb.com



La Roca
Oakleigh
www.laroca.com.au



*Please support these gyms as they support the VCC and Cliffcare
Show your VCC Membership Card to obtain discounts*

VCC SUPPORTERS

*The following retailers offer discounts to VCC members
These discounts are usually 10% off RRP or 'non-sale' prices
Contact individual retailers for more details and specials*

Bogong Equipment

Melbourne CBD
www.bogong.com.au



The Wilderness Shop

Box Hill
www.wildernessshop.com.au



Arapiles Mountain Shop

Natimuk VIC
Phone: (03) 53871529



Climbing Anchors

Online Store Coffs Harbour, QLD
www.climbinganchors.com.au
Contact Steve for 10% discount



Rock Hardware

Online Store Bendigo, VIC
www.rockhardware.com.au
Contact Steve for 20% discount



Open Spaces Publishing

Online Store Natimuk VIC
www.osp.com.au
Contact OSP for 15% discount



BJR Climbing Equipment

Online Store Blackheath, NSW
www.bigjohn.com.au
10% discount, including resoles



Mosaic Myotherapy

Coburg & Richmond Clinics
www.mosaicmyotherapy.com.au
\$10 off all appointments and rehab equipment & supplies



Other retailers may offer a discount to VCC members.
Show your VCC membership card and ask!

*Please support these retailers as they support the VCC and Cliffcare
Show your VCC Membership Card to obtain discounts
Call the online retailers before ordering*

GOAT OF THE MONTH!



Photo: [Laura Wolf](#)

June's goat, before and after the relaxation of restrictions.
Top: in isolation with home gym in background;
Below: so stoked to be out my ears have changed colour!

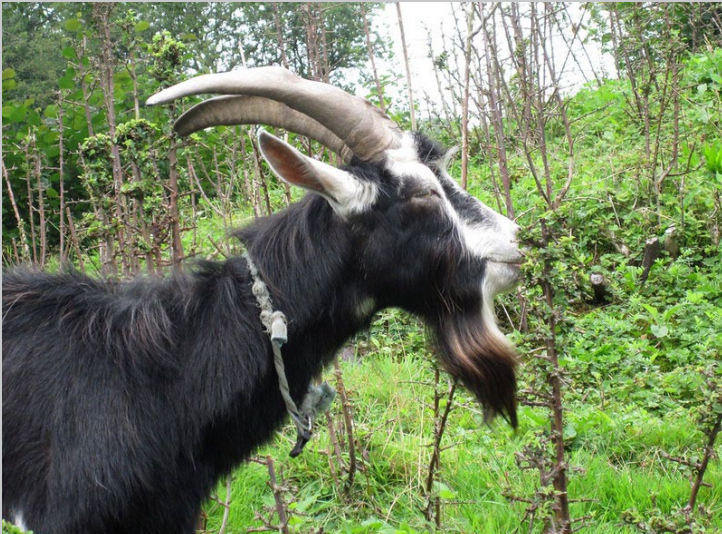


Photo: [NH53](#)