Family Bushwalks
in the
Snowy Mountains

A Pocket Guide to Day Walks
in Kosciuszko National Park

Geoff Whale
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Warnings

While bushwalking anywhere is potentially hazardous, in remote, unfamiliar or meteorologically changeable locations the risk of a life-threatening situation arising is multiplied many-fold. Kosciuszko has all three attributes: although most of the walks described in the book are on clearly marked tracks, some are not very frequently travelled. Getting lost is fairly unlikely, but if someone is injured or becomes ill, there won’t always be another walker around the bend to help out.

The greatest dangers are posed by falling tree branches in burnt areas, and by the weather, especially in the alpine regions. Conditions can change rapidly, one minute it may be sunny and the next a cold, wet squall hits. Snow can fall at any time of the year, even midsummer. **Be prepared to turn back if the weather deteriorates.**

All groups must take responsibility for getting themselves out of trouble should it unfortunately occur. Everybody should be fully equipped for bad weather, regardless of the forecast. Always carry sufficient food and water, and allow plenty of time for a later return should someone require help getting back.

Please read the relevant sections in the main part of the book before venturing out in this unique part of Australia:

- Clothing, Water, Food, Equipment ............... 27–28
- Bushwalking code .......................................... 29
- Alpine walk preparation, Hypothermia ........... 62–63

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the following people who have helped in various ways to shape this book: Michael Allen and Stephen Whale (walk accompaniment and validation, while composing Grass Roots’ classic *Ballad of the Masses*), Malcolm Cox and Brett O’Halloran (reviews), Margaret Evans and Ian Close (NPWS), Andrew Taylor (GPS support), Marcus Whale (puzzle validation), Mei Cheng Whale (financial veto withholding), Sara Hollis-Watts and Bruce Welch from Southwood Press (research into best practice in 4-colour map publication). And the hundreds of people willing to hand over their hard-earned cash.

Abbreviations

- **GDA** Geocentric Datum of Australia (see page 22)
- **GPS** Global Positioning System (see page 22)
- **KNP** Kosciuszko National Park
- **NPWS** National Parks and Wildlife Service, responsible for maintaining all national parks in New South Wales
- **SMHEA** Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Authority
On 8 January 2003 lightning strikes started over forty fires in Kosciuszko National Park. For the next six weeks hundreds of people fought daily to try to control the conflagration and save the settlements inside and surrounding the park. Fortunately no lives and little property were lost, although some of the historic huts that dot the park, sadly, were destroyed.

The firestorms, the worst for a century, tore up the gullies and along the ridges, incinerating everything in their path. By the time it was over, two-thirds of the 679000 hectares of the park had been burnt to some degree.

This book, nearly complete before the fires struck, provides detailed descriptions of most of the popular day walks in the park. It is intended for families and anyone else interested in how to get there, what each walk will offer, and how to plan to get the most out of the day.

With a young family in the early 1990s I wasn’t satisfied with the brief National Parks and Wildlife Service brochures, and found that information was scattered across too many other sources. To appreciate the context of a walk a map is essential, yet sheet topographic maps are cumbersome, easily damaged and lack up-to-date detail. The only book containing detailed maps, Geehi Bushwalking Club’s excellent Snowy Mountains Walks, addresses a more experienced audience and omits the simpler routes. Thus was the idea for the present publication born: a genuinely pocket-sized field guide, always at the ready with maps, information and pictures of the many unique sights that Kosciuszko National Park has to offer the summer visitor.

So how have the fires affected the relevance of this guide? Certainly, in many cases the visual experience will be different from that described and illustrated. Much of the forest along the Kosciuszko Road and the Alpine Way was burnt, and hence the walks in these areas will show evidence of the powerful events of January. The alpine area was not badly affected, although many heavily forested ridges visible from the high country have turned from green to orange-black.

But the tourist tracks are open again, and visitors are expected in even greater numbers to see the remarkable regeneration that occurs after such devastation. It will be some years before the bush fully recovers, and perhaps longer before some of the native animal species are again found in numbers, yet the cycle goes on. It took decades for parts of the park to return to their natural state following the cessation of grazing a half a century ago. We need to bear this in mind: human activities, even those of a few thoughtless walkers cutting track corners, trampling sensitive vegetation and polluting lakes, may have a more long-lasting effect than the recent bushfires. Tread carefully, share the experience with generations to come.

Geoff Whale
Bardwell Park, September 2003