

March 2011

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RIDE THE TRAIL IN A DAY RETURNS! Saturday October 1

Mark this date in your diary - "Ride the Trail in a Day" returns!

As part of the promotional activities for the Trail the RT Management Committee has responded to demand and begun planning for this event. Snowy River Cycling, run by Liz Mitchell, has been engaged to provide the ride. The intention is to establish it as an annual event, timed to provide a 'training' weekend leading up to the Great Victorian Bike Ride.

Liz says that complete details for the event are still to be confirmed. However some likely features of the event are:

- Return transport to the beginning, as well as route support.
- Nowa Nowa will be the designated lunch site with the cost included in the entry fee.
- A trail passport of special offers and discounts at various businesses and attractions along the way (pending support of said businesses).
- Riders can start and finish at various points along the trail, so can choose to ride less than the whole trail.

The event will need volunteers to act as marshals along the route, help organise logistics and be friendly faces!



Discussions are being held with the Shire Council's events coordinator and EG tourism marketing. More details will be available soon on the web site.



"The exciting things about this event are that it is an opportunity to 'show off' the trail where riders can enjoy the support and camaraderie associated with a big event. It is also an opportunity to promote the Rail Trail to local people, particularly businesses and council to demonstrate the potential the trail has to support the economy of East Gippsland."

Liz Mitchell

Trail Gets Re-cycled Sign At Bairnsdale Entrance.

After sitting in Michael & Sue's yard for two+ years and the sign board in their shed for rather longer, the combination is now gracing the entrance at McEacharn Street. It features the large map as used at Burn Road and will carry other timely information for visitors.

Some repainting is needed to hide the steel posts which were needed to extend the timber 'legs'.



Michael Oxer

Thanks to Craig for assistance.



Bob Yeates Retires From the Management Committee.

After 109 meetings of the committee and many before that when the very idea of the Trail was being explored, Bob has been a passionate and relentless advocate for this community facility.

He has harried many politicians and councillors, pressing into the effort anyone who showed even a glimmer of interest and even those who did not.

Bob has been extremely generous with the facilities of his business, assisting with various printing and other help.

As wider business demands take his time he has offered his resignation, which was reluctantly

accepted.

Suitable ways to record Bob's contribution to East Gippsland by way of this Rail Trail are being considered.



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Thanks to the Nowa Nowa Development Group for their kind assistance in the printing of our last edition.

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GOANNAS

The summer of 2010-2011 has been the best for many years for sightings of goannas along the East Gippsland Rail Trail. With 20 species of goanna found in Australia, the most commonly seen on our trail is the Lace Monitor.

The adult Lace Monitor (*Varanus Varius*) averages 1.5 metres in length but it is not uncommon for sightings of this monitor around 2 metres in length.

Male monitors tend to be larger than the females and can weigh up to 20kg.

Many trees in sight of the trail have goanna scratch marks high up the trunks .



The Lace Monitor is usually dark blue grey with cream/yellow spots or blotches or bands. They are usually darker when young and colour tends to fade with age.

Lace Monitors have toes equipped with long, strong claws, which are used for climbing and digging. Their tails are extremely long and are usually almost twice the length of the monitor's head and body.



The Lace Monitor is both a predator and a scavenger, and feeds upon birds, insects, reptiles, small mammals and carrion. Several goannas will feed from the same carcass. It also actively forages for nesting birds' eggs.

After a large feed they can go several weeks until feeding again. Lace monitors are known for raiding chicken coops and scavenging in rubbish to find food.

The bite from a monitor lizard causes swelling and bleeding in humans. This is mainly caused by toxic bacteria in the lizard's mouth. Recent work by Brian Fry at the University of Melbourne in 2005 shows that monitors actually produce a mild venom similar to rattlesnake venom. While this toxin has only a slight effect on people, it may help subdue small prey animals.

Monitors are the only lizards that have a deeply forked tongue like that of a snake. There is a Jacobson's organ on the roof of the mouth, also like that of snakes. The tongue constantly flicks in and out, transferring information to the Jacobson's organ. This sensitive chemoreceptor can detect minute traces of odours in the air, whether from a prey item, a predator, or a potential mate. Because the tongue is forked, the lizard can receive information from both sides of its head, and figure out what direction the odours are coming from.

Like all Australian goannas, they were a favourite traditional food of Australian Aboriginal peoples. The aboriginals valued goanna fat as a medicine and Cornelius Joseph Marconi started marketing his "Goanna Liniment" and "Goanna Salve" in 1910, incorporating goanna fat, eucalyptus oil and the ingredients of a charlatan's herbal snake-bite cure. It rapidly became a popular cure-all used for aching limbs through to cleaning guns!

The Lace Monitor is usually a solitary species but will come together in spring and early summer during the breeding season. Most females breed every year and 4-6 weeks after mating will lay 6-12 eggs. The female will dig a hole in the side of a termite mound to lay her eggs. The termites then close up the hole, keeping the eggs safe and at a constant incubation temperature of 30 degrees Celsius. After 8-9 months the young will hatch and the female will sometimes return to dig them out.

Janice Preston

References.:wikipedia; australiazoo; ozanimals ;lanerealty ;fourthcrossingwildlife web-sites

SUMMER RIDE



On the 2nd weekend in January a group of 9 riders and 2 support vehicles left Wombat Creek for a trail ride and weekend sojourn at "Snowy River Wilderness Bush Holiday Retreat".

Nine riders had prepared their horses to ensure appropriate fitness level for the ride of approximately 30kms each way in the heat of summer. Two riders were on borrowed horses and one rider was on her new steed. The rest of us were on old faithful friends.

We left the Wombat Creek property of Sue Lavell (organiser) at approximately 9.30 on Friday morning in the drizzling rain. There was a sense of adventure and team camaraderie as we headed along the track.

We made our way to the east Gippsland Rail Trail which we followed for approximately one kilometre. We rode mostly along the grassy banks alongside the trail as it was easier on our horses' hooves (some were barefoot). The trail provided the link we needed to continue our ride through the forests of East Gippsland.

We proceeded along Partelli's Crossing, WSM track, Painted Line and Monument Track. Our support vehicles met us for lunch there and we fed and watered the horses. The bush was peaceful and rejuvenated with the light sprinkling of rain. The fresh smell of Eucalyptus wafted in the light breeze.

Back on our trusty steeds and in brilliant sunshine we continued, stopping briefly to check out the unique pole fire tower at Stringers Knob and then settled in to a quiet steady rhythm with our horses now relaxed and calm after their initial excited steps at the start of the day.

We gathered a complete complement of lyrebird tail feathers and hoped that the original owner was alive and well to flock up for next year's mating season.

A few more tracks and we were on the long steep track in to "Wilderness". A sight to behold as we saw our first glimpses of the mighty Snowy River.

Our second day was spent in luxury frolicking in the water, surfing the rapids and relaxing in the garden. Our horses also enjoyed a swim to

relieve the intense heat of the summer day and ensured they were rested and relaxed for the return trip on Sunday.

We arrived back at Wombat Creek with 9 weary but happy riders and horses, exhilarated by the experience and keen to return next year.

You too could enjoy this fabulous experience whether on horseback or as the adventurous and fit cyclist with the East Gippsland Rail Trail providing a corridor to access the forest from Nowa Nowa or Orbost. Hope to see you there soon.



The Snowy River below the farm house at Snowy River Wilderness.



Janice Preston

Survivors 2, casualties 1.

The Tostaree fire took its toll over a long section of the Trail, incinerating a lot of verge vegetation (some of it usefully, saving necessary slashing). It damaged the gravel surface (to be lightly graded and rolled), but amazingly did not burn the table and seats at Partellis Crossing although it destroyed the toilet unit a few metres away.

Another survivor, up to a point, was an infra red sensing counter near Hospital Creek. It was damaged by heat which melted parts of the unit but amazingly the small hardware (motherboard) section survived and has been reactivated, the data retrieved and now being rebuilt to count again. The final reading between 3 and 4 pm registered 276 'hits'. This was generated by the blast of heat at the time the sensor failed.



Still standing

Michael Oxer

Correctional Services Work Crew Continue Their Help

An arrangement with Bairnsdale Community Correctional Services (BCCS) has greatly assisted getting a lot of cleaning up work done on the trail over the last two years. BCCS will continue this year on several Mondays each month, with Michael providing management of sites and working with the crew, of usually four to seven members.

Since November last year, work has been done extensively between McEacharn St and Nicholson Bridge, east and west of Stephenson Road, Bruthen section, and east of Nowa Nowa (Ironstone Creek area).

This valuable assistance has helped keep strong vegetation growth in check.

Wanted : historic photos of the former railway

Before too many old records are lost a search is on to locate photos of the former railway, and especially any video tapes. Some video clips are on hand but it is known that taking photos and movie film of trains in operation was a hobby enjoyed by many people in times past.

These records can be used to illustrate story boards and as a general interest, especially when the old fettler's hut gets moved to Bruthen and set up as a museum, with an emphasis on railway times.

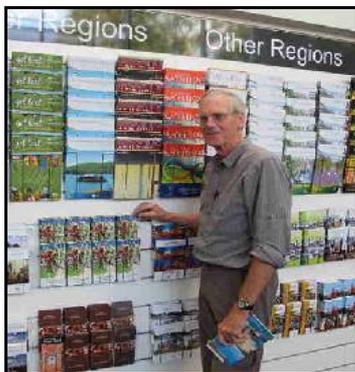
Nowa Nowa station about 1917



V/Line Interest in a Station Poster Promoting the Trail

A draft poster has been prepared with help from Bob Yeates' office staff, as a first step towards producing a promotional poster for display at V/Line stations. The objective is to encourage visitors to use the train to visit our area. Meanwhile a smart new wall mounted brochure display case includes the Trail brochure.

Canberra Visitor Information Centre (VIC) says 'Yes' to the brochure.



During a recent trip checking on VICs in the ACT and SE NSW, Michael was pleased to leave 500 copies at Canberra. It was even more pleasing to have the manager promptly put up a new rack and add the EGRT's bright red parrot to the wall.

It was too good a chance to miss for a photo as evidence. Several other VICs down the coast accepted brochures (Merimbula, Bega, Eden), with a call at Mallacoota to top up their supply.

Fuel Reduction Burns Listed For Autumn.

DSE will assist with eco burns at two sites between Harmans Road and Bumberrah, and at the Tostaree station ground (west of Johnsons Rd). Notices will be posted and neighbours alerted before the action happens. Several other sections including at Bruthen need attention to reduce built up debris.



DSE worker using a drip torch to light a fuel reduction burn.

Fires Leave Trail Bereft Of A Stately Bridge.

“The night of February 1-2, 2011 will go down in years to come as a sad anniversary of the loss of an un-replaceable old timber bridge which spanned Hospital Creek. Although not used for access it gave the creek crossing location a wonderful ‘feel’, towering above passers by and providing a stop and ponder opportunity. DSE firefighters and a nearby neighbour did their best to protect it but the ferocity of the fire beat all efforts. What is left is an ash trail, iron bolts and plates, and photos to remind us of the past. In time a story board will be installed to note what once stood at that site.”.....Michael Oxer.

Completed in 1916, Hospital Creek No. 1 Bridge was the longest, tallest and probably the most impressive all-timber-beam bridge along the rail trail.

It was a sixteen-span single-track timber-trestle and timber-beam railway bridge. The spans were uniformly of twenty feet (6.1 metres): the maximum size of timber-beam span used by the Victorian Railways this century. Its builders used innovatory fastening techniques introduced by Victorian Railways Chief Engineer, M E Kernot at that time, to avoid damage from spiking and to enhance bridge life.



The bridge alight on the night of February 1 2011.



All that is left.



1914-15. Timbers have been laid across the piers but are not yet fastened in place.



The bridge a little later 1914-15.



As it was before being completely destroyed by the fire.

Next Issue : Boggy Creek Bridge

Check regularly at www.eastgippslandrailtrail.com for updates.

Meetings



Meeting dates for 2011

May 9 th	Nowa Nowa
Aug 9 th AGM	Bruthen
Nov 14 th	Nicholson

Further information contact secretary, Sue Peirce. Ph. 51568228
or email : peirces@wideband.com.au

Thanks, thanks and thanks!

Without ready and willing volunteers this Trail would not exist. It is fitting to even if just occasionally, acknowledge these efforts.

- ✓ Janice and Gus lending a hand and skills on a Monday visit by the correctional services crew (Nowa Nowa)
- ✓ David with the crew in January, with his tractor and slasher/mulcher, clearing edge vegetation
- ✓ Andrew on many things and with Gus especially after the Tostaree fires
- ✓ Eddie checking the eastern end; Sue caring for reveg planting
- ✓ David and Clarrie, members of the Giles Street Crew, mowing and caring for "their" patch at Wiseleigh
- ✓ Nicholson River Landcare Group taking on a reveg project east of the river
- ✓ Keith always monitoring our web site
- ✓ and of course Marlene and her team producing story boards, sponsors, to say nothing of the Trail Mail.
- ✓ **and last, but by no means least, where would we be without Michael to advise, guide and lobby? ? ?**

