

Grand Strzelecki Bush Telegraph

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GRAND STRZELECKI TRACK Inc. SUPPORT AND EVENTS

We have recently ramped up our efforts to recruit new members onto the management committee for the Grand Strzelecki Track, with the imminent loss of some of our long term members. We need practical support from stakeholders, particularly tourism operators and bushwalkers, to continue to operate effectively. **There is enormous potential for development of supporting services around this project including guided walks, organized package tours, transport and accommodation.** We are working hard to improve our recognition as a great tourist destination for Gippsland and Victoria, but a lot more could be done with additional help from people in these fields. If you can join our committee or lend support in other ways, we would be very happy to hear from you!

We have been successful in getting our former Publicity Officer to re-join and she has breathed new life into our Facebook page as well as bringing new ideas for events and publicity (thanks Nici).

We are planning to have an event in spring for the launch of both the new walking maps and the new Duff Trail signage, with guided walks on the day. Watch our website closer to the time for information: www.grandstrzeleckitrack.org.au .

The third annual Duncan's Run 100 ultra running event was held along the Grand Strzelecki Track on April 2nd over 100, 50, 28 and 6km, following its postponement from December 19th due to high fire danger on the day. Again this day was very successful and attracted entrants even from overseas. Next year's event is already in the planning and will again be held in April to avoid the summer heat. There may be some changes to the courses and distances offered, so if interested in participating check the website www.duncansrunhundred.com for information closer to the date.

AN EXCITING NEW 'FACELIFT' FOR DUFF TRAIL

The tired old interpretive signs along the Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail have been replaced with new, improved ones to make this popular walk even more appealing. "Duff Trail" as it is commonly called is probably the most trodden of all our walks, being close to Balook, fairly easy walking and exceptionally pretty with the added dimension of providing some information on the colourful settlement and sawmilling history of the Balook area. The eighteen new signs cover a wider range of topics in a lot more detail. They talk about the early sawmilling industry, our settlement history from the 1880s, our natural history including rainforest, flora and fauna, forest stewardship and the first inhabitants and custodians of The Great Forest, the Gunaikurnai people. Some of the signs include old historic photos that paint a graphic picture of past times and hardships. We think you will enjoy the learning experience, so if you haven't done this walk in a while maybe it's worth another look.

Duff Trail was created as a stewardship project in 1998 and is now maintained by HVP Plantations whose land it passes through. It was incorporated into the Grand Strzelecki Track in 2012 and now forms part of the Mount Tassie Loop, but the 3.8km of the Trail remains a popular walk in its own right with access from roads at both ends. Thanks to HVP for designing, installing and paying for the new signs.

The next step will be updating the separate brochure for the Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail, which was last printed for the Balook Community with the assistance of Wellington Shire.



FRRR GRANT PROJECTS

AND INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

The Grand Strzelecki Track was recently successful in obtaining an FRRR (Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal) grant of \$20,000. The grant is for maintenance of the tracks, signage and infrastructure. Money will be spent on four specific projects:

1. Spraying or cutting back vegetation that is encroaching on some sections of the track and around directional markers and signs.
2. Installing more steps and retaining walls on two steep sections in Macks Creek and Billy's Creek to make these sections safer and prevent erosion.
3. Improving signage at major track junctions and possible entry points that do not already have information signs.
4. Upgrading facilities.

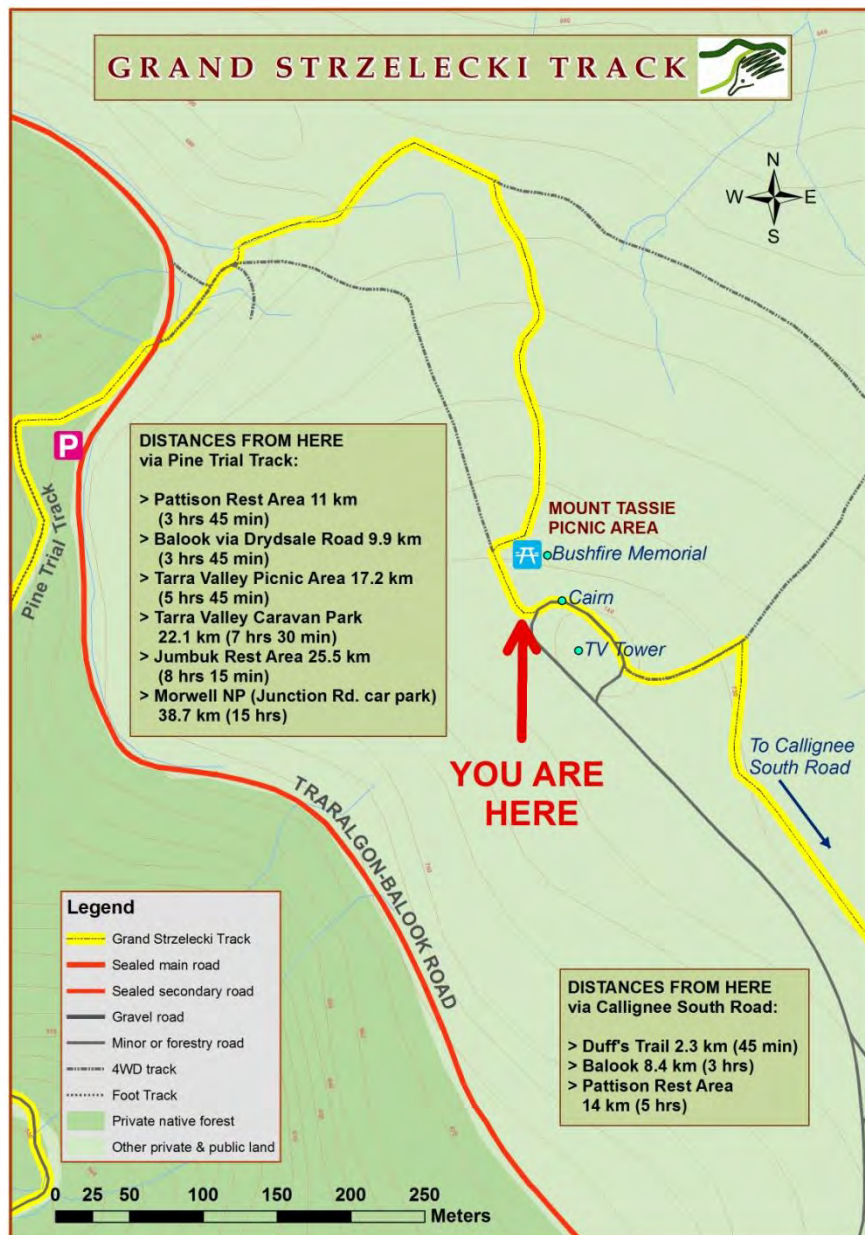
New steps have already been installed on the steep side-slope where the foot track starts below Roberts Road in Macks Creek. Many people have found this section difficult to negotiate and it needed to be improved to bring it into line with the overall standard of the Macks Creek loop.

The new signs will consist of close-up maps of each point or track junction with a 'you are here' arrow and distances and walking times to each possible destination clearly indicated. Walking times shown will be conservative to cater for slow or inexperienced walkers.

Two new picnic tables will be installed, one at the Morningside historic site on Drysdale Road and one at a small waterfall called Forget-me-not Falls just off West Face Track near the junction with Drysdale Road. Both of these locations will provide convenient rest stops on the Mount Tassie and Tarra Valley Loops. The Forget-me-not Falls picnic spot is identified on the new maps and provides an enclosed, sheltered location for morning or afternoon tea on either of these walks as well as water to fill water bottles (the water is clean, but we still suggest you sterilize all water before drinking as we don't do regular water testing).

The Morningside site is subject to ongoing work controlling invasive Sycamore Maples, which is being paid for by HVP Plantations. These seeded from old garden trees originally planted around the homestead and are posing a threat to the nearby Tarra-Bulga National Park. Work this summer was the second attempt to eradicate the maples under an agreement between Parks Victoria and HVP to allow use of Drysdale Road through the National Park for extracting fire-salvaged plantation timber in exchange for removing the maples from HVP's property. Once work is complete, this site should make a good spot to erect a tent if necessary. It is

reasonably flat and has a nice view, but would benefit from planting some native shelter trees around the perimeter which we might undertake in future.



An example of the new signage – above: Below our track Logo – The echnida



NEW EDITION WALKING MAPS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR NAVIGATION

It has been a long time in preparation, but the second edition of our walking maps is finally available thanks to a grant from Wellington Shire to cover printing and a lot of volunteer work by the GST Committee. It took about 10 months to complete the field checking of the track alignment and intricately adjust the line-work with the Geographic Information System (GIS) software licensed to HVP Plantations, which they kindly let us use for this purpose. This has saved the committee many thousands of dollars and produced professional looking maps which are a big advance on the previous edition. Inaccuracies on the original maps have been rectified and useful, up-to-date information included to assist walkers in identifying places to camp and features of interest. Because the printing was paid for by Wellington Shire we are able to sell the set of 6 maps at a very reasonable price of \$20 retail, with 100% of the purchase price going towards maintenance of the track. Your support by purchasing maps is greatly appreciated. Please see our website.

Another exciting development is the completion of geo-referenced PDF maps which can be used on your mobile device with the free Avenza PDF Maps app. This works on Apple or Android systems. We are currently getting the maps into the Avenza map store (they have been submitted and are awaiting approval). Since the scale and size of maps is a lot more flexible than a printed map system we have condensed the 5 section maps into 2 large maps; Grand Strzelecki Track West (Park to Park) and Grand Strzelecki Track East (Loop Walks). The West map covers Morwell National Park to Balook and the East map covers all three loop walks (Mount Tassie, Macks Creek and Tarra Valley) with Balook at the centre. They look great on a smart-phone and stunning on the larger screen of an i-Pad, i-Pad Mini or Notebook. They will sell for about \$10 each, downloadable from the Avenza map store. Look under 'Recreation' or type 'Grand Strzelecki Track' into the search box. They should be available very soon.

The PDF maps have embedded track notes, elevation graphs and current information similar to the printed versions.

The beauty of this system is that you don't need a mobile phone signal to use it because the map is stored in your device, so download the map(s) before you start your trip. When you open the app and select the map you want, a blue dot will appear showing your location based on your GPS position. The dot follows your progress as you go, so you always know where you are. Your coordinates are also shown at the bottom of the screen so in an emergency you can identify your exact position and even send a screen shot of the map with your location on it. You can zoom right in to view any section of the map in great detail, or out to any scale for viewing the overall route and information. There are many other functions available, including creating waypoints with notes and attaching photos to these points so you

can identify where your happy snaps were taken. Waypoints are created in the middle of a circle which appears at the centre of the screen, so if you want the waypoint to be at your current location drag the map across until your location (the blue dot) is in the middle of the circle before pushing the pin symbol to create the point.

This system is becoming widely used because it is easy to use and it works. We tested it during the re-mapping of the track. The positioning system uses clever software and seems to be as good as or better than most hand-held GPS units. In the deepest gullies and under dense vegetation it can take a few minutes to adjust your position accurately as you walk, but the dot never disappears off the screen and when it makes an adjustment it always shows your position within about 20 metres of your true location. In less enclosed terrain where the GPS signal is stronger, it constantly updates in real time and the accuracy is normally within 5 metres.

Using the app continuously on an i-phone will drain the battery in about 4 hours, but the only time you really need to use it is when you're uncertain about your location or want to identify which route to follow.

PDF Maps should be a great safety feature, enabling you to navigate back to the track if you lose it or identify where you are in an emergency.



The second edition printed map set includes an overall map and 5 detailed section maps

LONG UNSEEN MARSUPIAL RETURNS

The small marsupial White-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis leucopus*) is a threatened (FFG listed) species not seen in the Strzelecki Ranges since the 1970s; until now. A motion-sensing camera from one of HVP Plantations' biodiversity monitoring plots located on the Grand Strzelecki Track near Taylor's Road in the headwaters of Traralgon Creek snapped the photo below (red circle), which was amongst thousands of shots from 25 cameras deployed through the upper Traralgon Creek and Billy's Creek catchments in hope of detecting another threatened species, Spot-tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*). No Quolls so far, but this find is just as significant.

White-footed Dunnarts are most commonly found in areas heavily disturbed by fire. The location of this individual was 200m from the Black Saturday (2009) fire edge and 350m from another small fire started by a lightning strike in 2013. In an area where there had been no previous fires since 1944, it is possible a population of Dunnarts has established itself in pockets within the Traralgon Creek catchment since 2009, when over 24,000 hectares was burnt. In the 7 years since, the regenerating habitat will have become less suitable for them so their fate is uncertain but HVP may be able to shed some light on it though further monitoring over future years.

The species is more common in Tasmania. On the mainland it has very limited distribution through southern Victoria and south-east NSW in a range of environments from coastal sand dunes to mountain forests. The species is in decline due to inappropriate fire regimes, habitat disturbance and predation by foxes.

The White-footed Dunnart has a body length of 65-100mm with a tail almost as long. Its main food is invertebrates (insects etc.) and lizards. It uses hollow trees and logs for hiding during the daytime and for making a nest where the young (up to 8) are raised once they become too big to carry on the teat. Males of the species survive for only one breeding season.



Inset image: Western Port Biosphere

FUNGI SEASON

May is the best time to be out on the track spotting and photographing some of the hundreds of species of fungi to be found in the eastern Strzeleckis. You have to admit, in this wet environment fungi are one of our main attractions and they are often quite stunning in their diversity of colours and shapes! Here are a few shots to whet your appetite. Thanks to Park Ranger Craig Campbell for sharing these.

