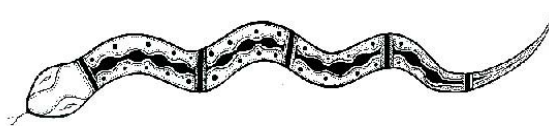




## Recreation and tourism in the Australian Alps

*Aboriginal people travelled to the Alps when the weather warmed up each year, to participate in ceremonies and celebrations, exchange goods, settle disputes and arrange marriages. Mountains have spiritual values for many Aboriginal people.*

Rod Mason, Indigenous Education and Liaison Officer, Snowy Mountains Region, DEC NSW  
Illustration: Jim Williams



### Enjoyment

What does **recreation** mean? Is it the thrill of skiing down a steep run, the challenge of rock climbing or kayaking down a section of river? Recreation could be a restful day in a beautiful place, bushwalking, orienteering, having a picnic, fishing, meditating or cycling. Whatever the activity, the common element of all these

activities is enjoyment. A useful definition of recreation is ‘the pleasurable and constructive use of leisure time’.

Recreation in the Australian Alps can be viewed as a series of different land uses that have changed over time. These changes often reflect the values and structure of society.



View of Mt Buller, Victoria (© Tourism Victoria)

## Enduring qualities

The enduring qualities of the Australian Alps include its magnificent rugged scenery and dramatic weather changes, and the challenging nature of the mountains. These qualities have long attracted people and inspired adventurers, artists and poets. The steep slopes and open plateaus lend themselves to many recreation activities, and the alpine environment is the only one in mainland Australia that can provide the substantial amounts of snow essential for snow-based activities.



Chionohebe and other alpine plants provide showy wild flower displays in summer, Kosciuszko National Park, NSW (Photo: Totterdell © Australian National Botanic Gardens)

The remote qualities of the Australian Alps are also of interest for science, including studies of natural systems, geology, **geomorphology** and plants and animals. This interest continues to attract another sort of recreationist, the field naturalist and observer of nature.

Europeans first went to the Alps to explore and find new areas for grazing, mining and settlement. Nevertheless explorers, stockmen, geologists and botanists often found their own special recreational pleasure in the rugged magnificence of the mountains.

Many historical accounts illustrate the appreciation and wonder that these

men felt for the Alps. **Strzelecki**, who claimed the first ascent of Mount Kosciuszko, wrote about his experience later:

*Mt Kosciusko is seen cresting the Australian Alps, in all the sublimity of mountain scenery... (it) is one of those few elevations... (which) present the traveller with all that can remunerate fatigue.*

People have continued to value the Alps as a recreational setting, especially in winter. In 1891, the poet **Barcroft Boake** captured some of the excitement of skiing in 'The Demon Snow Shoes - a Legend of Kiandra':

*The Eucumbene itself lies dead  
Fast frozen in its narrow bed;  
While to and fro the people go  
In silent swiftness o'er the snow  
His long, lithe snow shoes sped  
along  
In easy rhythm to his song:  
Now slowly circling round the hill,  
Now speeding downward with a  
will.*

Today's visitors might use different words to describe their experiences, but the feeling is much the same.



Baw Baw National Park (©Tourism Victoria)

## *From incidental beginnings to organised industry*

Recreation in these early days was low key, a pastime secondary to making a living in the Alps. In the 1860s, miners at Kiandra (NSW) experimented with rough-hewn timber skis on nearby small slopes during the winter. These haphazard skiers were unwittingly introducing skiing to Australia.

Since then, recreation has developed into a major land use of the area. The activities that come under the broad category of 'recreation' are really a series of land uses with varying social, economic and environmental impacts.

Recreation has become very important in people's lives, and most now visit the Alps specifically for recreation, rather than enjoying it for some other purpose. Many people earn money largely to support their recreation activities, and others earn their living from recreation.

There has also been a growing tendency towards more organised recreational use. In the early days, recreation was sporadic, individual and ad hoc: stockmen occasionally riding to a summit to admire the view; a local pastoralist heading off, perhaps with a group of friends, for a day of walking in the mountains; miners skiing. In 1907 eminent geologist **Edgeworth David** described a field trip thus:

The tourer of those days carried potatoes, onions, flour, corned beef in a roll, mutton, bacon, tea, oatmeal, sugar and the like. Having no rucksack, all the gear was carried in a bundle (swag)... required items were arranged within a blanket, or bedroll, which after being folded was usually wrapped in a canvas sheet. Rope or leather straps lashed the whole load together... Apart from serving as a general cover for the swag, the canvas sheet doubled as a shelter from precipitation, and was also handy as a ground sheet... It was also a widespread practice to pack newspapers in layers next to the body under the shirt, to keep the wearer warm. (Graeme Wheeler in *The Scroggin Eaters*, 1991, p. 21–22).

*'Before leaving the Blue Lake the party enjoyed some excellent tobogganing on the snow drifts. Enamelled dinner plates served as toboggans'. Very different from the extensive chairlifts, pomas and T-bars of ski resorts today!*

Increasing use of the Alps by pastoralists, miners and loggers in the 1800s saw the beginnings of organised recreation. In 1856, miners working the Buckland River goldfield led the first tourist parties of miners up to the plateau to view the striking granite cliffs and tors of Mt Buffalo (Vic). In 1887, the Bright Alpine Club was formed to help develop tourist facilities. A few years later the club published the first tourist guidebook to the area.

In 1894, the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club was formed, and a little later the Mountain Trails Club in Sydney. These early walking clubs were for men only, dedicated to character-building through a life of strenuous outdoor activity and comradeship. The beauty, splendour and solitude of the Australian Alps attracted a steadily increasing group of ramblers who became the region's first bushwalkers. The pioneer long-distance 'tourer' of 100 years ago was very different from today's well-equipped bushwalker.

In the 1920s, there was an explosion of activity in the two main forms of recreation in the Alps, skiing and walking. Skiing became an organised sport in NSW, Victoria and the ACT. The Ski Club of Victoria, the Ski Club of Australia, the Millions Ski Club and the Canberra Alpine Club were formed. Previously-established walking clubs flourished and large numbers of people visited the Alps to explore the mountains on foot.

Construction on the Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme, which began in 1949 and was completed in 1974, fast-tracked access to the mountains and surrounding districts. Roads were cut through previously inaccessible terrain and dams constructed on all the major rivers. Migrants working on the scheme were proficient skiers and remained to help establish Australia's ski industry.

### **Crossing the Snowy Mountains on skis**

2002 will mark the 75th anniversary of the first "Kiandra to Kosciuszko" mountain crossing on skis. Graeme Handley provides a brief account of that first crossing and recalls the 1977 commemorative trip.

Skiing had its beginnings in Australia in the mid 1800's when the Ski Club of Kiandra was established in the small mining town of Kiandra at the northern end of the area generally known as the Snowy Mountains. In the early 1920's members of the Ski Club of Australia located at the southern end of the mountains began to speculate about what lay between these two centres of skiing in Australia, and after some exploratory trips in the mid '20's planned to cross the mountains on skis in the winter of 1927.

On 28 July 1927 a party comprising Drs. Herbert Schlink, Eric Fisher, John Laidley and Mr. William Gordon from the Ski Club of Australia together with a representative of the Ski Club of Kiandra, Mr. William Hughes set out from Kiandra for the Hotel Kosciuszko. On the first day they skied from Kiandra to Farm Ridge Hut via the Nine Mile Diggings and Boobee huts, a journey involving a waist deep crossing of the Happy Jacks River.

After topping up with supplies left there the previous summer, they set out the following morning for Jagungal Saddle, past the Bulls Peaks to the Tin Hut. Sensing that they were past the worst and in familiar territory, they discarded their sleeping bags and extra weight in the form of food etc at the Tin Hut and made a dash for Pounds Creek Hut.

However, they hadn't counted on the weather and were enveloped in fog. Unable to see the major landmarks they were forced to feel their way to Consett Stephen Pass then into the Guthega River which would lead them to the Snowy River and the hut. One mistake and they were out for the night. Fortunately they got it right and found the Snowy River frozen over, thus avoiding another cold river crossing. With the aid of a stiff whisky, they made their way the last quarter mile to Pounds Creek Hut where they slept until 11 the next morning.

They found the last leg of the journey to the Hotel Kosciuszko a doddle and arrived back to the adulation of friends and hotel guests. Herbert Schlink's chronicle of the journey can be found in the 1928 Australian Ski Yearbook and is reproduced in Klaus Hueneke's book "Kiandra to Kosciuszko".

In 1977 the Kosciuszko Huts Association celebrated the 50th anniversary of the crossing. The celebration took the form of the Kiandra to Kosciuszko Memorial Ski Tour in which experienced ski touring parties were encouraged to make a crossing during the winter of 1977 and to record the fact with comments in a special log book held at a lodge in Guthega. A sendoff ceremony was held at Kiandra on 30 July 1977 which was attended by the two then surviving members of the 1927 party. Tea and damper was served to participants and many appeared in period costume, skiing on early wooden skis similar to those which would have been used on the 1927 crossing.

More than 150 ski tourers completed the journey. 1977 was an exceptional snow year and the first party was able to complete a crossing on the June long weekend. Some even completed a crossing then made the return journey on skis. A special endorsed commemorative print and a ceramic medallion were presented to those who completed the crossing.

Moves are afoot to again celebrate the epic journey undertaken by those five skiers in 1927. Arrangements have yet to be completed, but details should be available shortly.

Source: <http://www.australionalps.deh.gov.au/news/newslet/no26.html> Australian Alps Newsletter no. 26 Spring 2001

Today, recreation in the Alps tends to be even more organised. Many recreational facilities are available - walking tracks, ski runs, visitor centres. A service industry has developed, providing ski villages complete with flats, restaurants and hotels. Commercial operators organise sightseeing, walking, horseriding and camping tours for ever-increasing numbers of people. Over three million people visit Kosciuszko National Park each year. City-based walking groups, ski clubs and four-wheel-drive clubs set trends, lobby for development of facilities or areas set aside for their activity and influence the government on decisions about the use of public land.



Perisher Blue skiing (© Perisher Blue Pty Ltd)

The major resorts within Kosciuszko National Park are:

- **Perisher Range Resorts** include the ski areas of Perisher Valley, Smiggin Holes, Guthega and Blue Cow. These were amalgamated in 1995 to form the Perisher Blue Ski Resort. Combined, the resorts have 50 lifts and cover 1,250 hectares, with over 100 kilometres of cross country ski trails.
- **Thredbo Village** is situated in the Crackenback Valley, 37

kilometres from Jindabyne. The resort has 13 lifts and covers approximately 1,000 hectares. It provides year-round activities, including alpine skiing, and is a popular departure point to Mount Kosciuszko, in both summer and winter.

- **Selwyn Snowfields** is located in the northern section of Kosciuszko National Park. The Selwyn Snowfields are seven kilometres from Kiandra and 14 kilometres from Australia's highest town, Cabramurra. The resort is popular with families, and has 12 lifts providing access to more than 45 hectares. The resort has a lifting capacity of 9,500 skiers per hour.
- **Charlotte Pass Village** is the highest resort in Australia at 1,760 metres. Located eight kilometres beyond Perisher Valley, it is snowbound for most of the ski season. There are no cars or buses in winter and access is via snow vehicles. Charlotte Pass Village has only 12 club lodges plus the Kosciuszko Chalet. The resort has four lifts. During non-winter months, access to walking tracks on the Main Range is via Charlotte Pass lookout.

1856	Miners working the Buckland River goldfield led the first tourist parties of miners up to the plateau to view the striking granite cliffs and tors of Mt Buffalo (Vic).
1887	The Bright Alpine Club was formed to help develop tourist facilities. A few years later the club published the first tourist guidebook to the area.
1894	The Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club was formed, and a little later the Mountain Trails Club in Sydney. The beauty, splendour and solitude of the Australian Alps continued to attract walkers who became the region's first bushwalkers.
1909	The NSW Government built the Kosciuszko Hotel at Diggers Creek and the Government Chalet at Yarrangobilly Caves.
1910	The Government Chalet at Mount Buffalo in Victoria was built.
1920s	Skiing became an organised sport in NSW, Victoria and the ACT. Organisations such as the Ski Club of Victoria, the Ski Club of Australia, the Millions Ski Club and the Canberra Alpine Club were formed. Walking clubs flourished and large numbers of people visited the Alps to explore the mountains on foot.
1930	A chalet was built at Charlotte Pass.
Present	Recreation in the Alps has become more organised with the availability of many facilities such as walking tracks, ski runs, visitor centres, ski villages with flats, restaurants and hotels. People can join commercial operators to go on organised sightseeing, walking, horse riding and camping tours.

### *Horse tracks to car parks*

Until relatively recent times, movement around the Alps was slow and limited. There were few roads and tracks. People went to towns near the Alps by railway, and consequently were restricted to certain routes and particular destinations. Once they got there, the main means of getting around were walking and horseriding. Today, a large range of vehicles from skis and skidoos to four-wheel-drives and even helicopters is available.

Growth of car ownership and the development of roads have brought about the greatest change in access to and mobility in the Australian Alps. **Cleve Cole**, who died on Mount Bogong in 1936, took four or five days to approach the mountain via the Dargo High Plains and Mount Hotham. Now he could catch a bus from Melbourne to Falls Creek in six hours.

An infrastructure for recreation originated from other land uses. The network of walking tracks is partly a

legacy from the gold rush days. Roads were first constructed for logging operations, and many of the huts in the Alps were initially built by stockmen tending cattle and sheep. These huts are now used by trailriders, bushwalkers and skiers.

The development of facilities specifically for recreation probably began with the construction of government accommodation chalets in popular areas. In 1909, the NSW Government built the Kosciuszko Hotel at Diggers Creek and the Government Chalet at Yarrangobilly Caves. Later, in 1930, a chalet was built at Charlotte Pass. The Government Chalet at Mount Buffalo in Victoria was built in 1910.

These chalets provided their visitors with an opulent lifestyle, restful days, reading, walking, extensive organised entertainment and formal meals, a marked contrast to the quick visits and takeaway food more common today.

The number of beds and style of accommodation remained limited until after World War II, when a growth in tourism led to an expansion in the amount and range of accommodation. In 1952, The Australian Snow Pictorial described accommodation at Kosciuszko as consisting of one large hotel, a camp site and several small huts. The publication, 'Ski 2000', proposes a limit of 10,566 beds in resorts in the Snowy Mountains!

In NSW, the growing interest in skiing became the basis for a tourist industry in the Snowy Mountains. This, and the establishment of a State Tourist Committee in Victoria, spurred on recreational development in the alpine region.



Perisher Blue ski fields (© Perisher Blue Pty Limited)

Today, most of the development and construction in the Australian Alps is driven by the need for facilities for recreational purposes, usually for brief visits. There are ski resorts and ski runs on several of the high peaks, roads are maintained and cleared of snow to provide access for sightseers to remote areas, and picnic and camping areas with accompanying facilities are dotted throughout the Alps. The tourist accommodation and service industry is now the major growth industry in the towns in and around the Alps.

### **Australian Alps walking track**

Formerly called 'The Alpine Walking Track', the 'Australian Alps Walking Track' is a long track that passes through the mountains of Victoria and New South Wales. It is primarily a wilderness style walk as it passes through natural landscapes and there are no major facilities.

The track essentially follows the crest of the alpine range (the alps) from southern Victoria through to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). On the way it crosses all the highest mountain regions from the Baw Baw Plateau, the Mt Howitt area, the Bogong High Plains, the Cobberras then the Kosciuszko National Park and finally into the Namadgi National Park near Canberra.

In many ways, it is the grandest and most difficult of all the long distance tracks in Australia... The entire route takes about 50 to 70 days to complete depending on the number of rest days. As this is an alpine area with variable weather, it is suggested to build in extra days to wait out poor weather.

There are not just many tough climbs, the track crosses a number of rivers which have to waded or crossed by rough log bridges. Long sections of the track also have no markers as it passes through wilderness areas... Tents are essential - there are only a couple of huts along the track.

The first suggestion of a long distance walking track in Victoria was made in 1948 by the Field Naturalist Club of Victoria. This was accepted and proposals of routes were put forward by the Parliamentary State Development Committee in 1952. In 1954 Alan Strom walked from Mt Erica in Victoria to Tidbinbilla near Canberra and proposed the route to extend all the way through to Canberra. This was published by the National Parks Association of NSW. However there was little support at the time by bushwalkers and the idea languished. Many walkers felt that the wild areas should be left the way they were and a formal track was not needed. At that stage bushwalkers felt that the wilderness would last forever and that a track would destroy the wilderness values.

Extract from: John Chapman, 'Australian Alps Walking Tracks' at <http://www.john.chapman.name/vic-alpt.html>

## ***The balance between nature conservation and recreation***

Early recreationists were among those who fought for the protection of large areas of the Australian Alps through the establishment of parks for nature conservation and public recreation. Today, these are two of the major land uses of the Australian Alps. As Australia's population is growing, so is the demand for outdoor recreation.



Cyclists, Australian Alps (© Visions of Victoria)

Statistics of visitor numbers and visitor surveys for individual parks in the Alps show increases both in visitor numbers and in the range of activities.

Increasing numbers of visitors place increasing demands on the Alps for access and services. A balance needs to be achieved so that these recreational pressures do not threaten the natural values which are often the very reason for visiting the Alps in the first place.

In the last few years there has been a move towards ecotourism-ecologically sustainable tourism-in which the focus is on learning and caring about the natural world. This will perhaps go some way to protecting the integrity of the Alps while still allowing people to enjoy this natural area both now and in the future.

Changing socio-economic factors have had a major effect on the recreational use of the Australian Alps. These factors include more leisure time and

money to spend on recreation, a growth in tourism, and increasingly sophisticated equipment which has increased and diversified leisure opportunities.

Technology has allowed the ski industry in particular to burgeon, with the development of equipment such as tows for ski slopes, snow-making machines and snow vehicles, and construction of ski runs and residential facilities that enable people to stay comfortably for long periods in alpine environments.

Changing perceptions of the economic value of the Alps have in turn affected recreational use. Formerly, the economic value of the Alps was in the use of natural resources through grazing, mining and forestry. Now it is increasingly seen to be in recreational use through commercial activities such as the skiing industry, horse trail rides, accommodation and so on.

Much of the public land in the Alps is administered under the appropriate Acts of Parliament for the national parks of each state and the ACT. In each Act, the promotion of use and enjoyment of national parks is an objective. In managing public land, the relevant land management agencies aim to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities, but at the same time preserve and protect the natural environment.

Recreation activities in the Alps today range from those like downhill skiing and snowboarding that require highly developed facilities to those such as walking, kayaking and ski touring that are usually enjoyed in a natural setting without intensive development.

## Care for the Alps: leave no trace!

### Plan ahead

*Think before your trip - about weather, equipment and safety.*

Planning can make all the difference. Make sure you'll be safe and comfortable throughout your trip by knowing where you're going, what you need to take and what you need to do. Take warm, waterproof clothing so you're prepared for sudden changes in conditions. If staying out overnight, a good tent and sleeping bag will keep you safe and comfortable - and you won't have to depend on fires for warmth. ALWAYS plan to have as little impact on the bush as possible.



### Use a fuel stove

*- Quicker and cleaner for you, better for the bush.*

Compared to campfires, fuel stoves are much quicker and easier to use - especially in wet weather. They cook faster and don't leave unsightly and long-lasting scars on the landscape. And of course escaped campfires have led to disastrous bushfires. Collecting wood and fallen branches or twigs disturbs and destroys the local plants, animals and their habitat. In alpine areas where the growing season is short, such habitats are replaced very slowly, if at all. Barbecues must be used where provided. If you do use an established fireplace, always be very careful to safeguard against the fire escaping. Keep the fire small and **don't** ring it with stones. (All rocks provide habitat and river rocks can explode!) Use as little wood as possible - remember it provides homes for many of the Alps' tiny plants and animals. Be absolutely sure the fire is out before you leave - Use water, not soil, to put out your fire and **always** check that the ground beneath the coals is completely cold.



### Carry it in, carry it out

*- Whatever it is. Don't burn, bury or leave anything.*

Many kinds of rubbish can be created during a trip - food scraps, empty cans and packets, used matches, plastic bread ties, sanitary pads, tampons, condoms, cigarette butts - so please be sure that none of it ends up as litter. Most rubbish does not decompose, even if it's buried or burnt. Instead it just stays where it's left, creating an eyesore and a mess. Worse still, it washes into watercourses and pollutes them, or animals may try to eat it and harm themselves. So always do the right thing and carry rubbish bags with you to take out everything that you bring in. And if you really care, be prepared to collect any litter that you see during your trip.

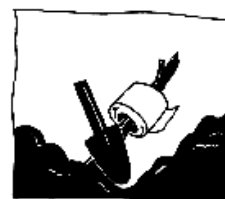


## Got to 'go'? Use a toilet or take a walk

***No toilet? Walk at least 100 paces from water and campsites. Dig 15 cm deep and cover well.***

With so many people visiting the Alps - and the potential for spread of infectious diseases - the management of human waste is a serious issue. If faeces, urine or toilet paper gets into the water supply, or are uncovered by animals, the results are very unsightly - and potentially very dangerous for both people and animals.

Carelessness upstream could affect you downstream! So if there is a nearby toilet, use it. Where there are no toilets, walk at least 100 paces away from creeks, lakes, campsites and tracks, dig a hole as deep as your trowel/hand (about 15 cm) then bury your waste and the toilet paper very carefully.



## Stay on track

***- Even if it's muddy or dusty. Don't widen tracks or take shortcuts.***

Whether walking, riding or driving, follow all formed tracks, even if they are muddy or dusty. Please don't be tempted to cut corners or travel right on the edges. This just makes the tracks wider and increases the impact on the bush. Shortcuts can cause erosion and scars on the landscape, especially on steep, zigzag paths, and eventually may confuse people as to which is the real path. But there aren't tracks everywhere in the Alps so please don't create new ones. Where there isn't a track, groups should spread out so that people don't walk in exactly the same places. Many plants can survive being stepped on just once, but are destroyed if trampled by several feet. It's even better to stay on rocks and hard ground wherever possible and avoid fragile vegetation, like Sphagnum Moss and Cushion Plants.



## Respect heritage

***Heritage places are a link to memories of people and the past.***

Within the Australian Alps there are many sites, places and landscapes with Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage value. These may be Aboriginal rock paintings, scar trees, artefact scatters, axe grinding grooves and pathways; or historic huts, yards, mining equipment, arboreta and border markers. Huts in particular, were often located in areas used as camp sites by Aboriginal people.

Please do not souvenir any articles or artefacts and leave the hut environs undisturbed.



## Enjoy the Alps but leave no trace

***Walking, driving, camping, skiing, riding, climbing, paddling - whatever you do, aim to leave no trace.***

No matter what kind of activities you enjoy in the Alps, you can minimise the impacts you have on the environment by following the simple guidelines described here. Challenge yourself to leave as little trace of your visit as possible. It's all about caring for the Alps now - then they'll be just as wonderful in the future.



## ***The effects of recreation***

Demands by growing numbers of visitors for recreation opportunities, as well as the demands of other land uses in the alpine area, have created conflicts and problems that public land management agencies have to address. The various recreation activities differ in their requirements for types of land, size of area, and site location. They also differ in their impact on the land or on other recreation activities.

Generally, any one activity pursued at a low level of intensity poses little threat to the environment, and seldom conflicts with other activities. With increasing intensity of use, conflicts and problems begin to arise.

There is a general recreation pattern that outdoor enthusiasts follow and which leads to potential conflict. After an introduction to an activity in relatively civilised or developed settings, the recreationist begins to specialise and seek out increasingly remote settings. For four-wheel-drivers, these are tracks further away from popular roads; for walkers, they are areas remote from vehicle or horse access and from other walkers.

As numbers of recreationists grow, increasing pressures are being placed on the more remote parts of the Alps. More people seek experiences in a setting free of the obvious intrusions of past and present land uses. They want to feel a part of nature, and to be in an environment essentially unaltered by human intervention or presence.

Land management agencies have met this range of needs through zoning for a range of needs from intensive to very remote. At the 'very remote' end of this spectrum, in all three alpine parks, there are Wilderness Areas. The main

objective of wilderness is to conserve part of the natural environment in as pristine condition as possible.

Part of the value of such areas is that they can provide high-quality, self-reliant recreational experiences. Wilderness recreation is compatible with wilderness zoning as it requires land that retains its primeval character and is without improvements or management presence. Wilderness areas in the Alps include several large cross-border zones such as Bimberri Wilderness which links Namadgi and Kosciuszko national parks, and the Pilot and Byadbo wildernesses which are now linked with the Indi, Cobberas and Tingaringy wilderness zones in Victoria.

An issue often debated in decision-making about wilderness is just how much of a park can be designated as wilderness as opposed to being available for other uses, including other recreation activities. Another discussion point is that of acceptable uses. For example, are activities which involve the presence of an introduced animal, such as horse riding, or the use of firearms, such as deer stalking, acceptable?

The major objective of wilderness is the provision of an undisturbed natural area for the protection of all its values (water catchment, scientific study, intrinsic value). The increasing use of wilderness for recreation, and the resulting impact of possible overuse, may threaten both the integrity of natural ecosystems and the very wilderness experience that recreationists are seeking.

## Management - by whom, for whom?

More people are now aware of all these issues. Land managers have to accommodate and control different uses and expectations in such a way as to protect valuable natural resources but still provide for quality recreation.

Most of the alpine area is public land. Management of recreation as a land use is therefore the responsibility of State government and Territory government land management agencies.

Within the public land of the Alps there are areas of different land category such as national parks, state forests and alpine resorts. These public lands have different management objectives as directed by their relevant Acts, and in some cases are managed by different agencies.

For example, in Victoria recreation in the Alpine National Park is managed by Parks Victoria, but the adjoining alpine resorts are managed by the Commission. The objectives of both Parks Victoria and the Alpine Resorts Commission are to protect the natural environment and provide for public recreation, enjoyment and use of the land. Parks Victoria has to manage the park for a very broad range of purposes; the Alpine Resorts Commission's main focus is provision for intensive use associated with winter sports. This means that it is particularly concerned with issues such as providing ski slopes and infrastructure needs to cater for large numbers of visitors to the resorts. For example, the need for car parking and effluent disposal has to be considered.

### Selwyn Snowfield information days

In an attempt to improve the level of service and information for Selwyn Snowfield guests during the 2004 snow season, NPWS officers from South West Slopes and Resorts Section established an information stall adjacent to the terminal building during the July school holidays. Community information on weeds, feral animals, fire management and summer activities were all popular topics discussed with Service officers.

Also popular amongst smokers were the free handouts of 'butt-bins' and portable ashtrays as provided by Keep Australia Beautiful. In June, a winter induction with Selwyn staff also improved the NPWS presence within the resort and allowed ski field staff to help answer questions and promote the park.



Information for visitors to Selwyn (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service)

## ***Recreation planning and monitoring in national parks***

Acts of Parliament for national parks require the appropriate land management agencies to prepare a management plan for each park. The aim is to identify, understand, balance and control land uses to ensure the protection of the natural environment into the future. The plans set out ways to use the park for recreation activities without impairing the natural environment.

The protection and preservation of the natural environment is of primary concern in a national park, and so the effects of recreation activities are of major concern for the managers. These effects can be environmental, including effects on soils, vegetation, water quality and wildlife, or social: encounters with other visitors, incompatible activities, presence of facilities and evidence of management practices.

Various indicators can be used to measure these effects.

### **Carrying capacity**

Inappropriate levels of recreational use can lead to environmental damage. Damage can be minimized by measuring the capacity of an area for recreational activities and either restricting its use to that capacity or providing facilities which will minimise damage. An example is the metal walkway which covers the last part of the track to Mount Kosciuszko. It was put in to stop erosion on the track but still allow many people to climb our highest mountain. 'Recreational carrying capacity' is the type and level of use that can be supported without causing excessive damage to the physical environment or

diminishing the quality of the user's recreation experience.

### **Monitoring and evaluation programs**

Monitoring programs can help determine the environmental and social impacts of recreation activities. Quantitative monitoring includes collecting visitor statistics and measuring impacts on vegetation and soils. Qualitative monitoring involves site inspections, observations, and surveys seeking opinions on the needs and expectations of visitors.

### **Management strategies**

Management plans and strategies for the Australian Alps refer to recreation as part of the park's management objectives. For example the Australian Alps Strategic Plan 2004 – 2007 identifies the following as its objectives:

- 1. To pursue the growth and enhancement of inter-governmental co-operative management to protect the important natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps national parks.*
- 2. To co-operate in the determination and implementation of best-practice management of the areas listed in Schedule 1 of the MOU to achieve:*
  - (a) Protection of the unique mountain landscapes;*
  - (b) Protection of the natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps;*
  - (c) Provision of an appropriate range of outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities that encourage the enjoyment,*

*education, understanding and conservation of the natural and cultural values; and (d) Protection of mountain catchments. (February 2004, Australian Alps Liaison Committee)*

A range of management strategies can be used when visitor impacts on the environment are potentially unacceptable. An example is provided by the Ski Slope Master Plan for the Perisher Blue Ski Resort. This Master Plan provides a framework for future developments within the resort areas on the Perisher Range that are consistent with environmental objectives of the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management. It applies from 'the point at which alpine skiers leave their mode of transport or accommodation in the resort centres and enter the ski slopes for a day's skiing' (SSMP 2002, p. 1).

Organised recreation and tourism focusing on public land attractions in the Alps began in the 1850s when tourist parties first visited Mount Buffalo in Victoria. Sightseeing and walking were the main recreation activities in the early days. The demand for facilities and accommodation resulted in the

establishment at the turn of the century of a number of large accommodation places in well-visited areas such as the Yarrangobilly Caves and Charlotte Pass in NSW.

Since then, the growth of tourism and recreation has led to increasing numbers of visitors, and a variety of facilities on public land, ranging from ski resorts to walking tracks. The environmental impact of such facilities depends on their scale and the intensity of visitor use. A large resort in a sensitive area, such as above the snowline, can have a major impact. A walking track, on the other hand, can have minimal impact, depending on location and how much it is used.



Kosciuszko National Park (© Tourism New South Wales)

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## Glossary

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### Barcroft Boake

*Barcroft Boake, poet, was born in Sydney, NSW, in 1866. His father was a photographer who had migrated from Ireland. Boake began working as a surveyor's assistant in the Snowy River country in 1886. After this he became a boundary rider and drover on a cattle station. In 1891 he returned to Sydney, despite his obvious love of the bush but family problems needed to be sorted out. His personal and financial problems became too much for him and, as a result, on 2 May 1892, he disappeared from home. Eight days later his body was found, at Folly Point in the Middle Harbour scrub, hanging by the neck from a stockwhip.*

*Boake published poems such as 'Where the Dead Men Lie'.*

### Cleve Cole

*Cleve Cole is remembered by alpine campers mainly because of the stone hut that bears his name on Mount Bogong at the top of Camp Valley, two minutes walk from Camp Creek. The hut is dedicated to the first winter ascent of Mount Bogong by Cleve J.M Cole in August 1928.*

*Cleve Cole was a Victorian skiing pioneer who died after being trapped on Mount Bogong in the winter of 1936. Malcolm McColl, the hut's architect, designed the building in 1936. Construction began in February 1937 using building material that was hauled up the mountain by packhorses.*

### Edgeworth David

*Tannatt William Edgeworth David graduated from Oxford University in 1881 with a Bachelor of Arts. His interest in geology were influenced by the lectures given by Joseph Prestwich, and also the lectures provided by J.W. Judd at the Royal College of Science in London. In 1882 he was appointed Assistant Geological Surveyor in the New South Wales Geological Survey. From May 1891 until 1924, David was Professor of Geology at the University of Sydney, although he spent some periods of time working away from the university during that time. After 1924, he continued to work at the University until his death.*

*In 1897, he directed drilling at Funafuti Atoll to try and verify Darwin's theory of the formation of coral atolls. In December 1907 David, with his former students Douglas Mawson and Leo Cotton joined Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition. David led a party, including Mawson, on the first successful attempt to climb the active volcano, Mt. Erebus. David, Mawson and Forbes McKay then made a four month journey to reach the South Magnetic Pole.*

*David went to the West Front during World War I with the Australian Mining Corps in 1916 to provide geological advice. On returning to Australia he attempted to write a book on the geology of the Commonwealth although this was never completed. However, his Geological Map of the Commonwealth was not published until 1932, accompanied by a written summary of the geology.*

## Geomorphology

*Geomorphology, also described as physiography, is the study of the shape of the earth. It is about the relationships between geological structures and landscape features. This includes consideration of the processes which change landscape features such as erosion. Geomorphology includes rivers, coastlines, rock types, ice and weathering. (Woodcock, R. 1989, The Hamlyn Dictionary of Geography: An A-Z Guide to the Science of the Earth's Surface, Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, London.*

## Recreation

*Use of leisure time for personal satisfaction and enjoyment and for physical and mental health. Recreation might be undertaken individually or with others. It might be planned or spontaneous. It is passive or active, and does not necessarily require skills and training, and nor a designated physical area. It is not a resource but a complex activity composed of people (the recreationists), the environments and their actions. Recreation, for some people, exists in the mind and takes place in an environment. Outdoor recreation involves protecting, preserving, developing, using, and enjoying scenery, water, primitive or natural landscape, wildlife, natural phenomena, and archaeological and historical sites. Source: [fwie.fw.vt.edu/rhgiles/appendices/glossr.htm](http://fwie.fw.vt.edu/rhgiles/appendices/glossr.htm). Sourced: 8 February 2005.*

## Strzelecki

*Mt. Kosciuszko was named by explorer Count Paul Edmund de Strzelecki after a Polish democratic leader, Tadeusz Kosciuszko. It appears that the peak's shape reminded Strzelecki of the tomb of Kosciuszko. Different sources provide different dates for this event with the vast majority quoting 1840 as the year in which Strzelecki named Mt Kosciuszko. The Collins publication, Milestones in Australian History: 1788 to the Present (compiled R. Brown, ed. R. Appleton, 1986, William Collins, Sydney), states that during January 1840, Strzelecki, James Macarthur and James Ridley explored country between Westernport and Gippsland and on 15 February, Strzelecki discovers, ascends and names Mt Koscius[z]ko. The Macquarie Encyclopedia of Australian Events: Events that Shaped the History of Australia (devised by B. Fletcher, editors B. Fraser and A. Atkinson 1997, rev. edition, The Macquarie Library Pty Ltd, Sydney), states that in 1839, 'Paul de Strzelecki, Polish-born explorer and scientist who later took up British citizenship and was knighted, alone ascended the highest peak in the Australian Alps during a geological survey and named it after ... Tadeusz Kosciuszko' (p. 42).*

## Plant and animal species

Chionohebe

*Chionohebe densifolia*



<http://www.australianalps.deh.gov.au/>