

# SNOWY RIVER NATIONAL PARK TRIP

December 2015

Words by Arron Skillen, Trip Leader

Starting under the cover of a wet Melbourne morning, we commenced our adventure at the BP Officer heading east on the Princes Highway. Whilst we expected much traffic on the road, we were surprised to find very light traffic on the roads (with the exception of a major traffic jam at Bairnsdale due to the local markets. Stopping briefly in Bairnsdale for bread and last minute supplies we were soon amongst the gums of the Snowy River area.

We stopped for lunch at the Buchan Caves and to our surprise, found the crowds we were expecting! After a quick check of the topographical maps to plan our afternoon we were underway again and it wasn't long until we were airing down for our first river crossing of the day. The New Guinea Track led us to the top of the Running Creek Track, which would take us down to the Snowy River and Jacksons Crossing. After a quick photo at the start of the NP, we dropped from 790m in altitude to 260m in about 3km of steep decent down a very rocky track.



Having made our way slowly down to Jackson's Crossing, we decided to have a look to see if it was passible. After checking the depths and flow rate we decided to give the 400m river crossing of the mighty Snowy a crack to great success. By this time it was about that time of day to start looking for a campsite. Having conquered the crossing it opened up a few options to camp with one being Hicks Camp. However the flies certainly owned this campsite so we decided to continue down the Varney Track and turn into Yalmy Road. We found a small, shady campsite on the creek near a ford to pull up for the night.



Waking to a fairly warm morning (for the high country!) we quickly packed up camp and were underway by 8.00am with our first scheduled stop up to the Lightning Ridge trig point. Making our way down Yalmy Road we soon turned onto the Lightning Ridge track to find it hadn't been used in sometime. The saplings growing down the middle of track would soon grow into trees so it was lucky we each had bullbars to get through. Pulling over to clear fallen trees with the chainsaws we soon found ourselves at the trig point but without much of a view. But it was just enough for Jacko to post a quick Facebook status.

We headed back down the track to Yalmy Road and before long had commenced our journey on the famed Deddick Trail. A forestry sign told us of a landslide that had taken place on the northern stretch so we could go as far as Bowen Track and then we would need to turn and take Collings Track out to McKillops Road. The steep descents and ascents meant that the entire track was a low range track. We came across our first ford crossing which was a wheel depth. Before long we had made the Mt Joan helipad and stopped for some morning tea and photos at 977m.

Unfortunately it was at this time that we had to call short the trip. Even with the small amount of phone signal, the urgent message from Arron's wife came through that her mother had passed away. With half a days worth of driving to go to get to the tar again, we changed our route to ensure we were home by lunchtime the next day.

After the unfortunate news, it took the excitement away from the highlight of the day; the aptly named "Staircase". This 700m drop in the space of 500m of track. Needless to say, first gear low range was still too fast for the descent! The track then meandered along the creek to a ford before heading back up the steep hills to Mt Gelantipy. We stopped and had lunch at the 1209m summit amongst the uprooted gum trees.

Following lunch we started to head back down to the Bowen Track junction and the end of the Deddick trail for us. Whilst we thought Bowen Track would be a chance to pop out of low range, we were soon greeted with a larger, steeper and more slippery descent than the Staircase! The winding track reminded us of Mt Blue Rag track. We then came across a very slippery section which required a bit of track building in order to descend.

We finally reached the end of the 11km stretch some hour after starting it and headed for the final 8km stretch down the Collings Track. Again, we were totally surprised at the difficulty of this track as well. We were able to stop on one of the summits of the track to capture 360 degree views of the surrounding valleys which was a highlight. But Collings Track was a track that kept on giving right to the end and required low range right to the very last 10m!

We finally made our way onto McKillops Bridge after 6 hours tackling the Deddick Trail along a road that wended along a picturesque creek. After stopping for firewood and photos at the bridge, we headed away from the crowds at Little River Junction. You have a feeling you are on a winner when it requires low range to get to the campsite and although the ground wasn't too great, the unspoilt views of the majestic Snowy River certainly gave us a great way to end the day. We even threw a line in (almost literally) to try our luck for some trout. Instead of trout for dinner, we both tucked into a nice piece of steak.

