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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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This leaflet explains minimal impact bushwalking techniques. Some - in particular those to do with fire - carry the weight of law. All must be used if we want to continue to enjoy the great Australian outdoors.

- **Choose a different route** each time you visit a trackless area, and camp at different sites whenever possible.

• **Walk softly.** Choose appropriate footwear for the terrain. Solid but lightweight walking boots are best. Sandshoes can be used on most tracks on the mainland in summer. Wear sandshoes around campsites.

• **Keep the wilderness wild.** Cutting new tracks is illegal, and marking tracks with cairns, tape or other materials is unsightly and can confuse other walkers.

• **Avoid sensitive vegetation.** Sphagnum bogs, cushion plants and other sensitive vegetation are easily destroyed by trampling. Stay on rocks and hard ground wherever possible.

- **Let someone know** before you go bushwalking. Tell them about your party, your route, when you plan to return and the equipment the party is carrying. Remember to contact them when you get back.
- **Keep your party small** (4-8 people). Large parties have more environmental impact, affect the experience of others and are socially unwieldy.

• **Go off peak.** If possible avoid the peak times of the year (December to February) and the more popular areas. You will miss the crowds and spread the impact, giving the environment a chance to recover.

- **Plan your route** so that you can camp at recognised campsites. If possible do not create a new site.
- **Minimise your impact** by taking the following items:
  - fuel stove and fuel for cooking
  - good quality tent (with sewn-in floor and poles)
  - hand trowel for burying toilet wastes.



## On the right track

In some areas, walking tracks are being graded to minimise the impact of increasing foot traffic; boardwalks are necessary in some places with large numbers of visitors. You can help minimise damage in the following ways.

• **Stay on the track** even if it's rough and muddy. Walking on the track edges and cutting corners on steep 'zigzag' tracks, increase damage, erosion and visual scarring, as well as causing confusion about which is the right track.

• **Spread out in open country** where there are no tracks. Spreading out (rather than following in each other's footsteps) disperses impact. A plant stepped on only once has more chance of survival than if trampled by the whole party.

## Protecting our most fragile areas

Many areas of the Australian bush are particularly fragile and need your care and protection to survive. The practices outlined in this leaflet apply to all natural areas, and are essential for the protection of our most sensitive environments such as our coastlines, rainforests and alpine areas.

With the assistance of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, land managers in the ACT, NSW and Victoria are developing similar approaches to managing Australia's alpine national parks. The Australian Alps National Parks include three linked national parks stretching from the outskirts of Canberra through the Snowy Mountains of NSW to near Mansfield and Licola in Victoria. They are:

- Namadji National Park (ACT)
- Kosciuszko National Park (NSW)
- Alpine National Park (Vic.)



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# Bushwalking Code

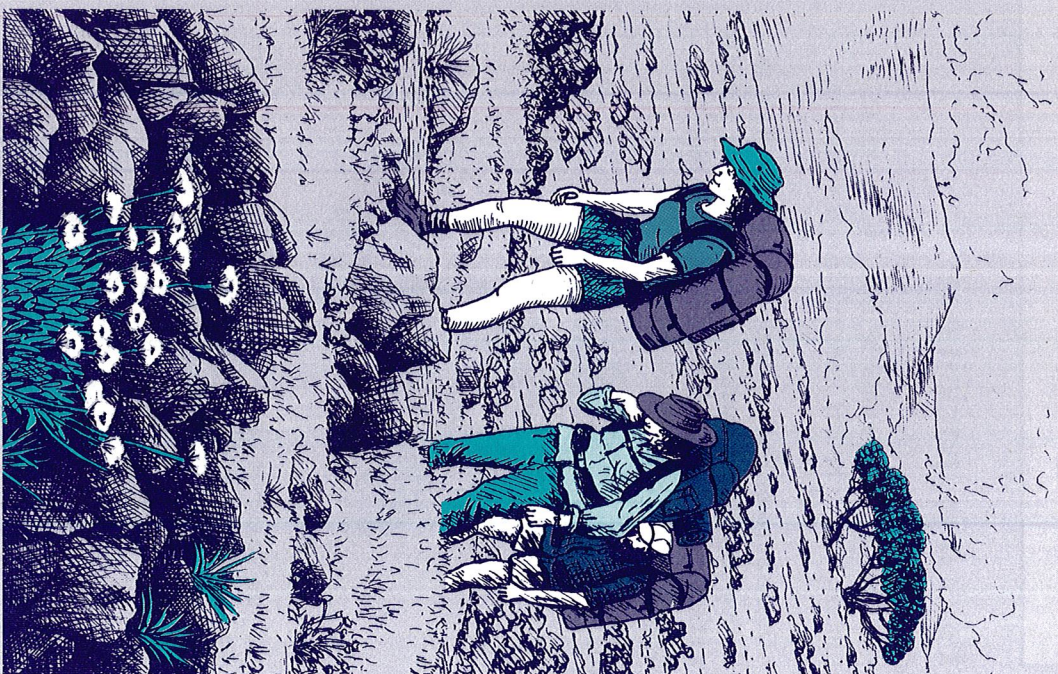
## Minimal impact bushwalking

Increasing numbers of bushwalkers visiting national parks, wilderness areas and other reserves are causing serious damage to the natural environment. Escapes from bushwalkers' campfires, expansion of campsites, trampling and cutting of vegetation, outbreaks of gastroenteritis and the rapid deterioration of walking tracks have all become more commonplace.

## Minimal impact bushwalking

Fortunately many walkers have adopted a new bushwalking ethic, **Minimal impact bushwalking**. Without it we run the very real danger of 'loving our natural areas to death'. By learning to 'walk softly', we can minimise the damage to the natural environment and reduce the need for restrictions on walker numbers and track closures.

This leaflet explains minimal impact bushwalking techniques. Some - in particular those to do with fire - carry the weight of law. All must be used if we want to continue to enjoy the great Australian outdoors.



## Bushfires, campfires and billies

Bushfires starting from walkers' campfires cause extensive damage. Trees such as Snow Gums are killed by very hot fires, and replacement of mature trees may take hundreds of years. In Tasmania, native pines over 1000 years old have been killed by escapes from campfires and will never return.

In many areas, firewood is often in short supply. Many small native animals live among fallen branches. In alpine areas where the growing season is short, such habitats are only replaced slowly.

• **Please don't light a fire** if you are in any doubt about the safety of lighting it. Fire restrictions apply in all national parks, forests and other reserves, and open fires and fuel stoves may not be used on days of Total Fire Ban. Do not light open fires during hot windy weather.

• **Observe the fire lighting regulations.** Regulations governing the lighting and use of fires vary from State to State. You should check local variations if you're planning to walk and use open fires.

• **Keep the fire small** (under one metre square). Don't put rocks around it - these just create another visual scar. Use a safe existing fireplace rather than make a new one.

• **Use only dead fallen wood.** Dead standing trees are a home for wildlife and are a valued part of the scenery. Leave axes and machetes at home.

• **Be absolutely sure the fire is out.** Before you leave, feel the ground underneath the coals. If it is still warm, the fire is not out. Put it out with water, not soil.

## How to avoid 'gastro'

We think the increasing cases of gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting) in some high-use areas are caused by exposed human faecal waste. *Giardia*, a human bacterial parasite is also of concern.



*Giardia* lives in mountain streams contaminated by faecal waste, and causes chronic diarrhoea and an array of other nasties. It has been found in the USA and New Zealand, and is possibly in some alpine areas of Australia. Avoid 'gastro' and help ensure that *Giardia* does not spread to new areas by observing these guidelines.

• **Where there is a toilet, please use it.**

• **In areas without toilets, bury your faecal waste.** Choose a spot at least 100 metres away from campsites and watercourses.

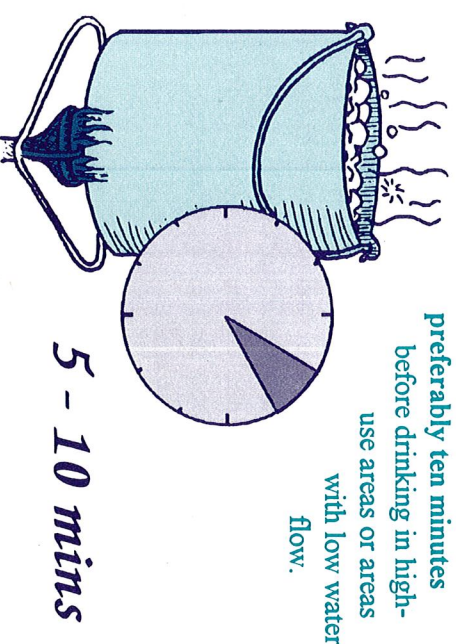


Dig a hole 15 cm (6 inches) deep (take a hand trowel for this purpose). Bury all faecal waste and paper, mixing it with soil to help decomposition and discourage animals. Carry out sanitary pads, tampons and condoms.

• **In snow, dig down into the soil.** Burying human waste is only temporary until the snow melts!

• **In high-use areas, river valleys without toilets and snow areas, you should consider carrying out human wastes to a suitable sewage system.**

• **Flies and small animals love faecal waste and food.** Cover all food. Avoid putting it on hut tables, furniture and other places used by flies and animals.



• **Boil water for at least five and preferably ten minutes before drinking in high-use areas or areas with low water flow.**

• **Pack to minimise rubbish.** Don't take potential rubbish such as bottles, cans and excess wrapping.

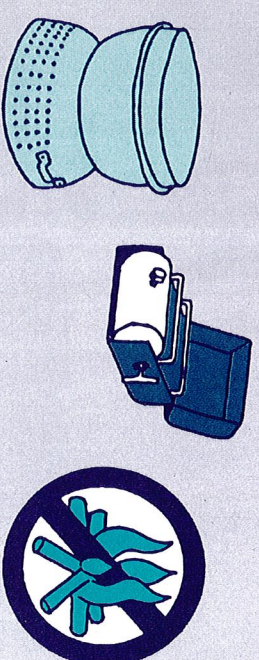
• **Don't burn or bury rubbish.** Rubbish is likely to be dug up and scattered by possums and other animals and may injure them. Digging disturbs the soil and encourages weeds and erosion.



• **If you've carried it in, you can carry it out.** Carry out all your rubbish, including those easy-to-forget items like silver paper, plastic wrappers and orange peel which won't easily decompose.

• **Other people's rubbish.** If you have the misfortune to come across other people's rubbish, do the bush a favour and pick that up too.

## Fuel stove only areas



A number of places are designated as fuel stove only areas (no campfires allowed) to lessen the environmental damage associated with fires. In alpine areas these are:

• **Mt Bogong, Mt Feathertop** and its approaches (including the Razorback), and within one kilometre of Lake Tali Karring in the Alpine National Park;  
 • **above 1700 m** in Kosciuszko National Park;  
 • **many areas, particularly in the World Heritage Area.**

Other places at lower elevations and some coastal parks in various States are also fuel stove only areas. Fines are imposed on people who light fires. Before your visit, check with local land managers as to whether campfires are allowed.

In many parts of the Tasmanian alpine area, the ground contains peat (decaying plant material) which if set alight can smoulder underground for months. Because such underground fires are extremely difficult to put out, it is illegal to light fires on peat in Tasmania.

## 'No-trace' camping

• **Look for low impact campsites.** Sandy or hard surfaces are better than boggy or grassed areas. Camp at an existing campsite rather than a new one, and keep at least 30 metres away from watercourses and the track. Spend only one or two nights at each campsite.

• **Use modern camping equipment.** Use waterproof tents (with floors and tent poles) and foam sleeping-mats to minimise damage to camping areas. Digging trenches around tents is damaging, and unnecessary if the tents are sited properly.



• **Leave campsites better than you found them** by removing rubbish and dismantling unnecessary or unsafe fireplaces.

• **Always carry a fuel stove when camping.** If you carry warm clothing and a fuel stove, fires will not be needed for warmth or cooking. Compared with campfires, fuel stoves are faster, cleaner, easier to use in wet weather and they don't scar the landscape.

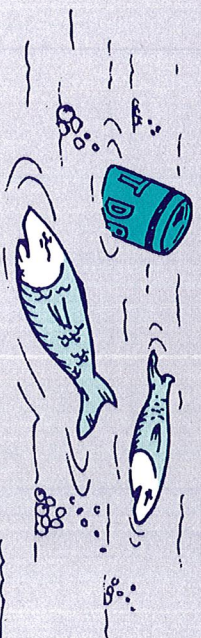
## Huts

• **Don't rely on finding a hut.** They are usually only for emergency or refuge use. Always carry a tent.

• **Huts are for everyone.** Respect the rights of people who are there first, but be prepared to make space for late-comers.

• **Don't leave food scraps or store food in huts.** It only clutters up the hut and encourages rats.

• **Clean the hut,** check that the fire is out, replace firewood and close the door securely when you leave.



Wash 50 metres away from streams and lakes, and scatter the washwater here so that it filters through the soil before returning to the stream. Use gritty sand and a scourer instead of soap to clean dishes. Don't throw food scraps into streams or lakes.

• **Don't wash in streams and lakes.** Detergents, tooth paste and soap (even biodegradable types) harm fish and waterlife.

## Washing

• **Don't feed animals, especially around huts and campsites.** Feeding causes unnaturally high and unbalanced animal populations dependent on walkers' food. Some animals become a nuisance and can develop diseases such as 'lumpy jaw' from eating refined foods.