



# Behind the Log

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[www.bsar.org](http://www.bsar.org)

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BSAR appreciates the annual funding from the Department for Victorian Communities to Bushwalking Victoria, a component of which is put towards BSAR administration and training activities.

Editor of Behind the Log – Ren Millsom  
Next issue May 2012 - deadline 30 April

## Search on Mount Erica, 6-7 August 2011

On Saturday 6th August 2011, Bush Search and Rescue Victoria (BSAR) was called to assist Police in the search for a 13 year old girl, Ashley Kerstjens, missing on a Scout trip close to Mushroom Rocks near Mt Erica, east of Melbourne.

Eighteen BSAR searchers participated in the search, joining Police and the SES. Searching commenced in the dark at 1:30am on Sunday in the vicinity of Mushroom Rocks and surrounding creeks and ridges.

The terrain around Mushroom Rocks has a thick snow gum forest with dense undergrowth between large granite boulders. Many search routes along creeks and through the bush nearby were almost impenetrable.

Four cross country skiers from Boroondara Bushwalkers on a club trip and camped near Mt Erica joined the search in the field. They had spotted footprints possibly those of the missing person when they were descending to Scout Hut for a briefing on Sunday morning. They were tasked to return and continue following the footprint trail. Their diligence in locating and following this footprint trail was the key activity leading to finding the missing person.

This highlights the need for keen observance for clues and perseverance in following them. The footprints were assessed to be small and not ski boots. They were visible in snow drifts but would

disappear on the alpine heath. The missing person appeared to be favouring snow patches over the heath for walking as she was light enough to walk on the surface. The meandering trail was judged to be characteristic for a lost person and notified to search base as such.

The BSAR Boroondara group reached a location at a saddle west of Talbot Peak where the footprints were heading in many directions. Later on Sunday afternoon, they were joined by several other BSAR groups and a BSAR field controller to provide forward coordination. The Police Dog unit had also joined the BSAR Boroondara search group at this time.

After further searching in this area, Ashley was heard calling out by a BSAR search group and located nearby. She was lying down and was not visible from the air or the ground nearby, indeed the BSAR group actually trod on her in locating her.

She was evacuated immediately by the Police helicopter and taken to hospital. It is fortunate that she was saved from a life-threatening second night out in very cold conditions. She has made a full recovery.

Photos of the Mt Erica search can be found at <http://www.bsar.org/MtErica2011>

*Peter Campbell, Field Organiser*

## Five day search for Deer Hunter at Tomahawk Hut, 6-10 June

BSAR members spent a total five days searching for David Prideaux who became lost while hunting for deer in an area off the Buckland Spur track just north of Tomahawk Hut, in the Mt Stirling area.

Mr Prideaux was reported lost in the afternoon of Sunday 5 June and BSAR were called out by Police S&R in the early hours of the Monday morning. In all there were three callouts over the five days and BSAR delivered a total of eighty-three days of search effort. Thirty-two members stayed for their required two days, a small number stayed for three days and two members stayed for the entire five days. For the first four days BSAR members feature searched in teams of two or three while on day 5 teams were combined for line searching.

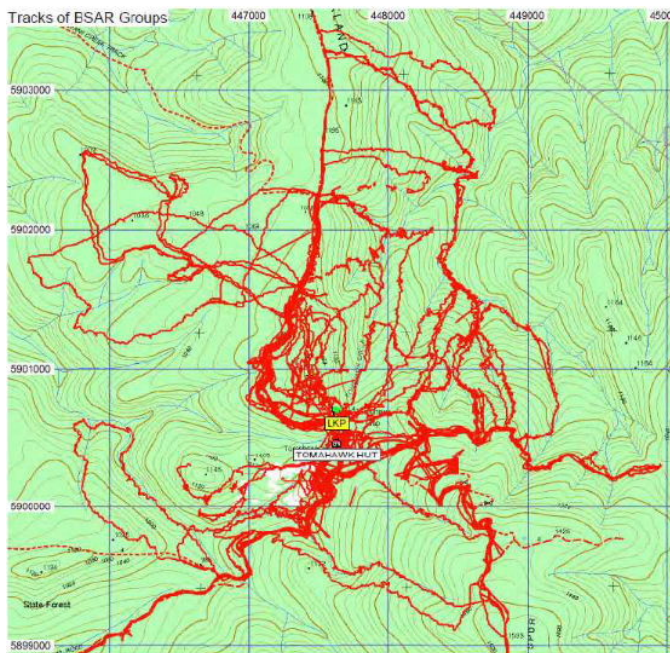
BSAR worked closely with Police S&R, local Police, other specialist Police units, and VicSES, who provided transport, tentage and some search groups. Other organisations that provided support included the Mansfield Red Cross who provided meals and Mt Buller Bus Lines who provide 4WD transport vehicles for the trips in and out from Mirimbah. Mobile phone communications out of the area proved difficult until a high gain external antenna was installed at the search base by BSAR.

Conditions for searchers in the field were very difficult due to the combination of cold, snow, wet together with the steep terrain. In some areas the bush was very dense while other areas it was fairly open. There were rock outcrops, a number of cliffs and numerous creeks.

The Prideaux family were present each day and had some family members/friends out searching. They were very appreciative of the efforts of BSAR, the SES and the Police in looking for David.

BSAR searchers performed exceptionally well, especially given the combination of severe weather, the terrain and difficulty of access. Unfortunately at this time Mr Prideaux has not been found.

*Rik Head, Field Organiser*



This map shows the GPS tracks of the BSAR search teams over the five days. It does not show the actual coverage width of each team nor does it show the areas searched by Police and SES.

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## Mt Feathertop Accident – Steep Snow and Ice Alert and Recovery of Skier

On the afternoon of Wednesday 24 August 2011 the Police Search and Rescue Squad requested that an alert be sent to all the BSAR Steep Snow and Ice members advising that a request for assistance with a recovery operation may be required.

The situation was that a skier, Dr Graeme Nelson from Eden, NSW, had fallen while attempting skiing Avalanche Gully on Mt Feathertop, and was deceased.

It was unknown if a helicopter rescue would be able to be carried out. If not, the BSAR SSI members would be required to assist the Police with a rescue of the body from near the bottom of the gully.

The accident occurred about 1.00 pm. Dr Nelson had started to descend the gully and made several turns

before apparently slipping on ice. He was unable to arrest his fall down the icy gully. His friends descended, assessed the situation and raised the alarm for assistance.

The alert to BSAR SSI members was sent at 4.00 pm.

The Police were able to extract the body by helicopter to Mt Hotham about 6.00 pm. Consequently the alert was cancelled

Dr Nelson was a very experienced back country skier and a well known contributor to on-line chat sites.

There was quite wide coverage of the accident in the print media and brief coverage on the TV News.

*Merv Trease, PLO*

## Steep Snow and Ice Training Weekend 2011 – 9-10 July

Two separate training sessions for steep snow and ice rescue training were held this year - a dryland training day covering theory and some off-snow exercises, and a weekend at Mount Stirling where we focussed on steep snow and ice rescue skills in an alpine environment.

For the weekend at Mount Stirling, we departed from Green Street Northcote on Friday night (8 July 2011) and camped at Mansfield overnight to get an early start on Saturday. The Police bus dropped us at Telephone Box Junction on Mount Stirling, then we skied up to our campsite at Bluff Spur Hut.

Saturday's training focused on self arrest practice, roping up and self rescue techniques. Snow travel using ice axe and crampons was covered for non-SSI rated members.

We conducted "light and sound" searching after dinner along the Bluff Spur trail in the dark. This search method requires a powerful hand torch in addition to the normal head torches we use.

On Sunday, avalanche search and rescue techniques involving avalanche transceivers, probes and shovels were conducted around the summit of Mount Stirling in deteriorating weather conditions.

Later on Sunday we setup then performed stretcher hauling using the Police z-pulley system and equipment at the top of Stanley Bowl. This exercise was cut short due to further deterioration in weather conditions.

Returning down the Bluff Spur trail was hazardous due to a large number of falling snow gums, but all members made it safely down the trail.

The training organisers were Eric Krista, David Mitchell, Peter Campbell and Duncan Maughan.

*Peter Campbell, Field Organiser*



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## Bush Search and Rescue Training weekend 19-20 November

This weekend will provide BSAR members and interested bushwalkers with training in the skills required for bush searching. The varied program structure will cater for new through to our most experienced members. It will include a new rogaine style GPS navigation exercise to develop members' navigation skills with a GPS. Other exercises will include observation and tracking, "sound and light" night searching, the group leader's role, and first aid.

### Who should attend?

Current BSAR members, prospective members and experienced bushwalkers who are considering membership of BSAR and who meet or who are close to meeting the requirements for BSAR membership, are all most welcome.

**Venue:** The Wombat State Forest

### Date, departure time, transport & parking

Buses will be provided by Police Transport Branch. The car parking, assembly and departure point for all participants is at **Police Bands Compound, end of Green Street, NORTHCOTE by 0700 hrs Saturday 19 November**. The bus will return at approximately 1800 hrs Sunday 20 November.

### What to bring?

Bring normal food and equipment for an overnight camp on Saturday night and day trips into the bush; off track and some thick scrub. A reminder of BSAR policy: no shorts please. Maps will be supplied. Full waterbottles as always. There will be a fresh water tank on site.

Bring your copy of the BSAR manual, notebook, folder, pens and paper.

A folding chair is a handy luxury for the workshop sessions and in camp.

### **Attendance Confirmation**

**Club members and prospective members** should register with their Club BSAR Delegate prior to Wednesday 9 November.

**Club Delegates**, please email [training@bsar.org](mailto:training@bsar.org) with the name, email address and mobile phone number of each member attending from your Club by Wednesday 9 November.

**Bushwalking Victoria members**, please email [training@bsar.org](mailto:training@bsar.org) directly with the same details, by Wednesday 9 November. Please also advise Monica Chapman; [monica@john.chapman.name](mailto:monica@john.chapman.name).

**Other experienced bushwalkers** interested in attending and joining BSAR, please telephone one of the people listed below.

If you have any questions about the weekend, please don't hesitate to ring one of the organising team:

Duncan Brookes	9379 6163	0428 170 068
Jim Grellis	9836 0127	0400 999 445
Wayne Merry	9877 8427	0403 766 048
John Baillie	0419 336 911	
Linda Beilharz	0409 940 184	
Merv Trease	9873 1281	0439 726 470

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## **Welcome to new BSAR members**

BSAR warmly welcomes the following new Individual Members:

Julien Atherstone

Patricia Borton

John Scales

*Monica Chapman*

*Individual Membership Coordinator*

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If undeliverable, please return to:  
Bush Search and Rescue Victoria  
Bushwalking Victoria  
P O Box 1007  
Templestowe Vic 3106

### **Behind the Log**