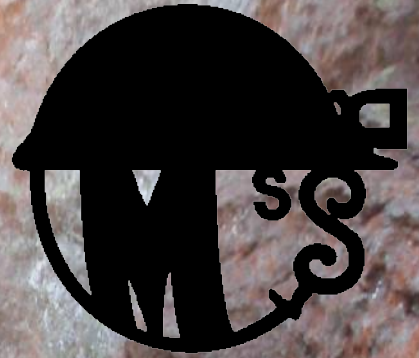


NEWSLETTER MONTHLY



Trip Reports:

Alcatraz

Death Trap

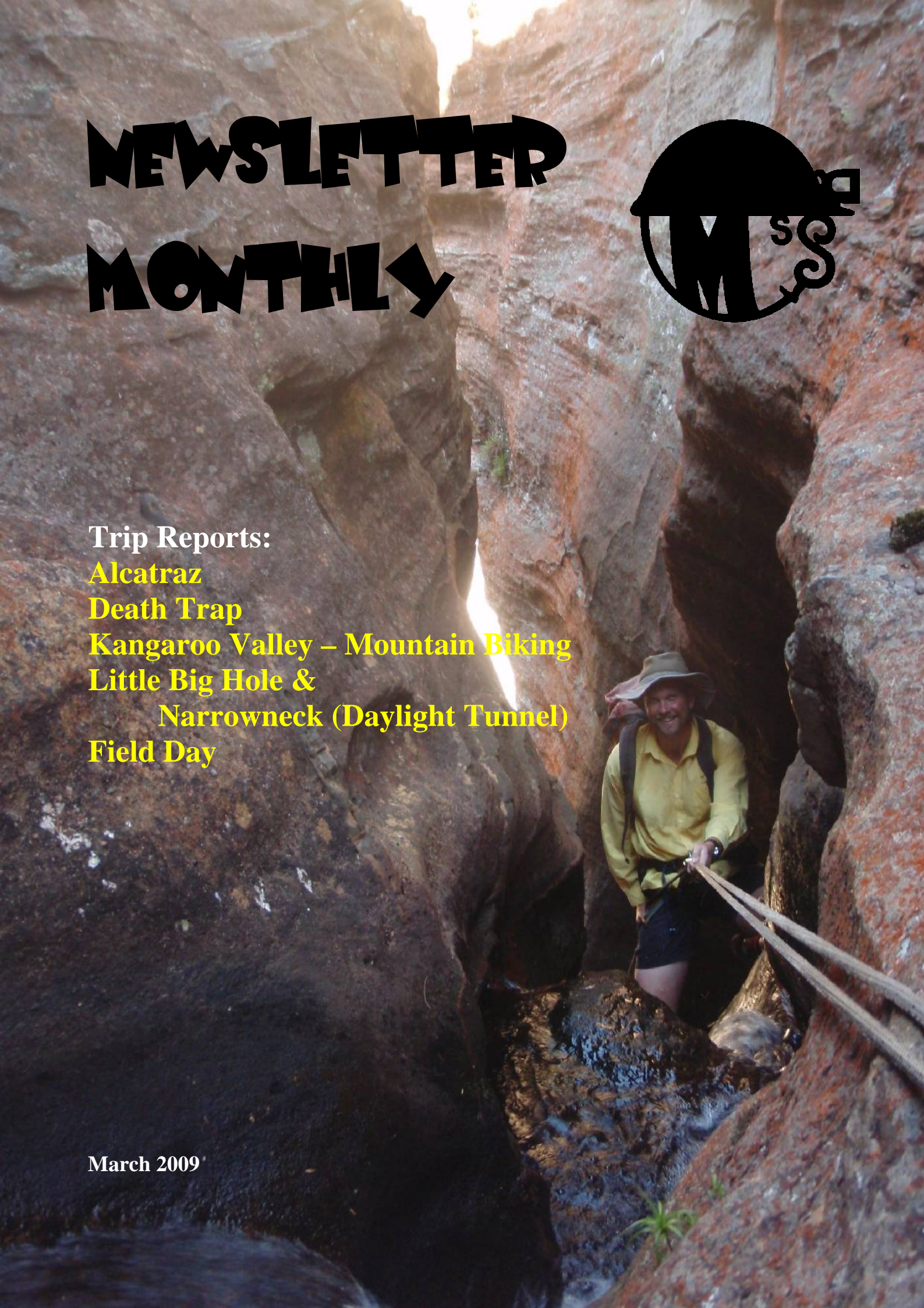
Kangaroo Valley – Mountain Biking

Little Big Hole &

Narrowneck (Daylight Tunnel)

Field Day

March 2009



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Cover Shot:
John Gray at the top of the Alcatraz abseil
Photo by Rod Smith

Last Meeting

Watch this space, we're working on something extra special!

Next Meeting

Monthly meetings are temporarily suspended due to the loss of our venue.

The committee are currently seeking alternative accommodation and will advise in due course.

If anyone is able to assist, please let us know.

Quote of the Month

"I am not an animal!" - Jim Crockett.

Announcements

Fees are due for next year. We will be finalising the cheque for ASF at the March meeting, so please pay your subs before then. The subs have remained at \$70. Payment options include:

Cash – to Jim Crockett

Cheque – made out to Metropolitan Speleological Society Inc.

Bank Transfer (preferred option) – BSB is 062021, Account Number is 000901421 and be sure to include your name in the message.

There has been an update on the bet between Brett and Dave. Due to the unfortunate cancellation of the November Jenolan trip, the bet has been postponed. It is also worth noting that Brett has lost the bet. As such, the next Jenolan trip that goes ahead, Brett will be supplying lamb shanks (cooked in the slow cooker) and a bottle of Mead.

Trip Reports

Alcatraz - 8th February, 2009 am

Present: David Stuckey, Warwick Blake, Jim Crockett, Nathan Barnaby Timms, Bonney Nathansmate, Rod Smith, John Gray (TL)



Jim Crockett in Alcatraz
Photo: John Gray

The forecast for the day was 40 degrees Celsius in Sydney. Fortunately, Newnes Plateau is high enough to avoid the worst of the heat. We all met at Zig Zag railway before heading into Newnes State Forest to do Alcatraz Canyon. There is some conjecture as to the origin of the name, but some attribute it to the nearby former Juvenile Justice Camp, while others see the canyon's likeness to a prison. Seen from above the abseil seems to drop you into a cell from which there is no escape. Although the constriction is a contender for the world's shortest canyon, what it lacks in length it makes up for in quality. The canyon basically consists of an abseil into a deep swirlhole in the rock. The first time down you have to wonder where all the water is going. Once down into the deep pool at the bottom a narrow horizontal slot is revealed through which you crawl out into the outside world. So ends the canyon. It is possible to scramble up onto the lip of the swirlhole for a great photo spot. A short walk down the creek later we exited up an old track back to the cars for lunch. Nathan & Bonney shot through at this stage as Bonney had a plane to catch.

Death Trap - 8th February, 2009 pm



Rod admiring the scenery just after Death Trap
Photo: John Gray

In keeping with the theme for the day we continued on to a canyon which contained a section that at first glance appeared to have no way out. Some instructions on access had been related to me with dodgy grid references so we missed the old overgrown fire trail on our first attempt. We ended up testing the Forester's (and the other vehicle that aspired to be a Forester) on a steep rocky hill before driving back and setting off in the 30 degree heat. Some time later we scrambled through some thick scrub into upper Rocky Creek and drank our fill of the cool water. Downstream of this point we passed through intermittent canyon with many swims. Apparently the other name for this canyon is Sheep Dip. (Not to be confused with the nearby Twister Canyon which was incorrectly bestowed with the name Sheep Dip.) No one felt the need for wetsuits. A water jump was negotiated before we reached a high waterfall. An abseil was rigged from a gum tree high on the right. At the bottom was a large pool full of glutinous mud and rotting vegetation which we sank into up to our knees as we crossed. Soon afterwards we reached the "Death Trap", a large cliff collapse almost completely blocking the canyon. A dark tunnel on the left was the only way out. The tunnel floor was in complete darkness giving us an anxious moment as we slid in. A scramble out of a valley filled with giant sandstone monoliths ended the trip.

Kangaroo Valley Mountain Bike Ride - 7th March, 2009

Cyclists: David Stuckey (TL), Rod Smith, Jim Crockett, John Stathakis, Kris Gamble(new member).

A very pleasant drive to Fitzroy Falls. The early morning mists were about but the weather looked excellent. Our group of riders assembled at the National Parks' car park as planned. Bikes were assembled, oiled, adjusted. Rod changed his tyres for some more aggressive off road tyres. Then the vehicles proceeded to the finishing spot at Bendeela Camping Area. We left most of the cars here and piled into Rod's car for the return trip back up the pass.



Jim, Dave, Rod and Kris
Photo: John Stathakis

We were off, heading out along some very pleasant fire roads. The mists had cleared by now and some excellent views were glimpsed through the trees. The fire road clings to the edge of the main escarpment for quite a way, before heading back into the forest. There were several small creek crossings and some light hills. Presently, we were out of the bush and onto an open dirt road for a small stretch, before diving back into the more densely forested fire roads. We were making our way to Meryla Pass. Stopping briefly at the top of the pass for a snack, the views were excellent.

Out with the map to see where we still had to ride. It looked like an awfully long way, however, the trails were in excellent condition and we were making a good pace. Lifting our bikes over the gates at the top of the pass, we slipped down the steep trail, through beautiful rainforest, to a large cleared area. Here we stopped for lunch and soaked up a bit of sunshine. I recall from previous trips that there were a few leeches around and sure enough, John obliged by getting one of the little critters attached to his ankle. He calmly produced his salt shaker (I did say bring a gourmet lunch) and 'convinced' the offending creature to let go of his leg and try its luck elsewhere (it's all said in leechtalk of course).



The lunch spot
Photo: John Stathakis

Feeling fully refuelled from our meals, we remounted our bikes and headed down, down, down. This is a mighty hill which steepens at each turn. Our fingers were aching on the brake levers, the rims were smoking from the generated heat! Rod somehow raced ahead and was spotted filming the riders from one vantage point or another. At the bottom, there was a delightful traverse along the river before the inevitable crossing. Most wheeled their bikes through the water. I shouldered my bike, not wanting to submerge my wheel bearings and chain derailleurs.

Now the uphill sections started, however not as high as the escarpment from which we had just descended. We walked a fair bit before remounting the bikes and picking up speed. Another delightful, undulating section saw us through the National Park and back on the road via another gate. Not far to the Kangaroo Valley Power Station now and luckily, the road has been sealed since my last visit in 2005. This made for a very quick run.

We had a quick drink at the power station, then headed for the final downhill to the camping area where the cars were parked. This final section is very steep and several records for "Max" speed on riders' trip computers were broken. I decided that leaning into corners at 60 kph on knobby mountain tyres was not a wise thing to do, so I backed off. Some of the braver riders certainly had a blast down this section.

We changed at the cars, packed up the bikes and headed into Kangaroo Valley for some refreshments at the pub, then headed back up the pass once more to Fitzroy Falls. Rod collected his car and we all headed back home.

Thanks everyone for coming along and making it such a good day.

David Stuckey.

Little Big Hole & Narrowneck (Daylight Tunnel) - 15th March, 2009

Participants

Rob Clyne, David Stuckey.

Nathan & I found made route about 10 years ago. We actually went back last year to find it again and put new tapes on the anchors. I have always had trouble finding the start of the route due to the thick bastard scrub above Diamond Falls on Narrow Neck. So with the previous trip still freshish in my mind, I felt confident to go straight to the first pitch. Dave and I had met at 9.00am and were making our way across the cliff line above the waterfall. Climbers doing 20+ routes could be heard and seen (lots of chalk lines).

Our previous trip we had overshot the gully and had to do a 180 degree turn to find it. We passed the small gully with lots of hollows under the scrub (Bonny - Nathan's girlfriend had disappeared down one of these previously!) and headed for the sandstone boulder marker. "Now just up hear" - dam - same mistake as last time!!!

Anyway - after a slight backtrack and down a small drop we arrived in the gully, our legs a little worse for wear from the scrub (need gaiters next time).

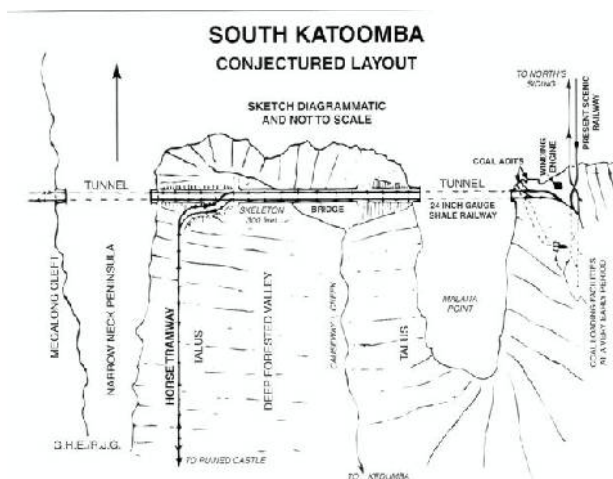
The tapes still looked fine. The route consists of 3 pitches - the first down a cleft into the little big hole itself. Pitch heights from rough memory - (I'm sure Nathan has them in Mac!) - 25m, 50m and 20m. Great views, some nice overhangs and a weather.

Arriving at the bottom of the last pitch, we de-rigged and started down the ridge to the old shale railway embankment on the valley floor. This is the key to finding the quick route across to the tunnel. It had been raining a bit during the previous week and there was still a bit of moisture around. "Leech", "leech" - became the call of the afternoon call. They absolutely loved Dave. He was the leech magnet as we found the embankment and followed it across to the water board road leading up to the water board ladder (and the tunnel). At the road - shoes and socks were ripped off and the little suckers removed!!

At this point we ummed and arrhhd about weather to go up Devils Hole or do the Tunnel,. We thought "well we are here - may as well have a look at the entrance". The entry wasn't as far from the road as I had remembered (about 20m).

Not much had changed - still looks like a hole in a rock fall. With a little more discussion we decided we were hard core cavers and we were going through!

Helmets on, old volleys on - "Dave there's something in here man". "Yeah right".



Daylight Tunnel Map

“No I mean it – listen”. Thoughts of the cartoon at Jenolan with a caver coming face to face with some nasty beast came into my mind. All of a sudden a face appeared. Bloody hell – of all the places to run into someone! “Does anyone know where you are?” “No” This tourist had come through from the Jamison Valley end of the tunnel with a school bag and handheld torch!

We helped him up the squeeze and gave him directions to the Devils Hole. Dave had to repeat them about 10 times for them to sink in.

After our worrying encounter we grunted and groaned through the tunnel (guess who’s light died – thanks Dave !) The main complaint was ‘Oh my back’ with both of us carrying 60m ropes in our packs slung on our fronts with a very low roof for tall people,. Great tunnel – lots bats and the famous orange ooze that stains everything. I have included a map on it rough location.

If you haven’t read “The Shale Railways of NSW” – have a look. It gives you a great history of the Scenic Railway and various tunnels in the valley.

Finally we reemerged into Daylight. With lots of laughs we were certainly glad to have done the tunnel again.

With leeches still with us we headed up the Golden Stairs.

Great trip – great views, leeches, scratches, cuts, mud, bats, dark, light, weird tunnel dwellers and interesting bushwalking groups looking at your orange volleys and commenting “I know where you’ve been!”

Cheers Rob

Training Day, Lindfield Rocks - 28th March, 2009

Attending: Danielle (new member), David, Jim and Johan (TL)

When was the last time you had three experienced people all to yourself, explaining rope and abseil skills?

Well, Danielle our latest new member in MSS had just that, during our training day.

With a variety of ropes rigged including double 9mm and single 11mm, we all enjoyed a fun morning of practising a number of important rope-skills including:

- Locking-off whilst on abseil and clearing the abseil rope from obstacles (how many times does the first person descending, do that on our abseil trips? – every pitch!
- Changing from abseil to prusik and back again (self rescue).
- Abseiling onto a rope knot/jam and getting out of that situation, then continuing the abseil to the ground.
- Rescuing another abseiler and bringing that person safely to the ground.
- Prusiking with knots and mechanical ascenders.
- Rigging an abseil pitch incl throwing the ropes and retrieval afterwards.
- Discussion of belaying techniques.

Jim used his prusik cords – WHICH EVERYONE CARRIES ON THEIR HARNESS AT ALL TIMES - DON’T THEY!!, to do a couple of ascents and explained his prusik technique to Danielle.

David even had time to dust-off his friction boots to do a number of solo ascents and boulder-problems, including one or two test pieces that were popular in 1982!

Meanwhile, Danielle listened and learned and is ready for the big abseils of the Boar’s Head Trip, next weekend!!

See you all on the rock.....with your prusik cords!

Johan

Future Trips

Welcome to the new look future trips section. Anyone with artistic abilities are welcome to submit their own icons for any of the categories here, and/or any other categories. If we use your icon then you'll have to be prepared to accept the praise and admiration from your fellow club members. Send your icons, or any other feedback, to roderick_smith@hotmail.com.

Legend:

Activity



Caving



Canyoning



Diving



Hiking



Abseiling



Cycling



Horse Riding



Kayaking



Climbing



Skiing

Grade



Easy



Easy/Medium



Medium



Medium/Hard



Hard



Extreme

Accommodation



Camping



Cottage


















Extras













Kites



Camp Ovens

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Boars Head and Sahara (new route!)	4 th Apr			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			1 st Apr	
Other Info:								
Wee Jasper	25 th - 26 th Apr			Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick_smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores)			23 rd Apr	
Other Info:								
Malaita Wall	9 th May			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au			6 th May	
Other Info:								
Pilchers	10 th May			TBA			6 th May	
Other Info:								
Deep Pass	16 th - 17 th May			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com			13 th May	
Other Info:								
Abercrombie	30 th - 31 st May			Rod Smith 0438 444 262 roderick_smith@hotmail.com (that's 2 underscores)			27 th May	

Where	When	Activity	Grade	Trip Leader	Accommodation (if applicable)	Additional Costs	Let Trip Leader Know By:	No. of Spots Left
Other Info:								
Yarrangobilly	7 th - 13 th Sep			Jim Crockett 0407 284 256 jim.crockett@reach.com		We'll be staying in Caves House, which will be an additional cost	14 th Aug	
Other Info:								
Jenolan	1 st - 2 nd Aug			Rob Clyne 0409 033 224 caver@people.net.au			27 th Jul	
Other Info:								
Tongariro Track – New Zealand	Jan 2010			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au		Flights, huts fees etc.	1 st Jul	
Other Info: One of New Zealand's “great walks”.								
Lake Waikaremoana Track – New Zealand	Jan 2010			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au		Flights, huts fees etc.	1 st Jul	
Other Info: One of New Zealand's “great walks”.								
Waitomo – New Zealand	Jan 2010			Johan Verhagen 4758 9811 johan.verhagen@sydneywater.com.au		Flights, trip costs etc.	1 st Jul	
Other Info: These are commercial trips, but well worth the costs for the amazing experience.								