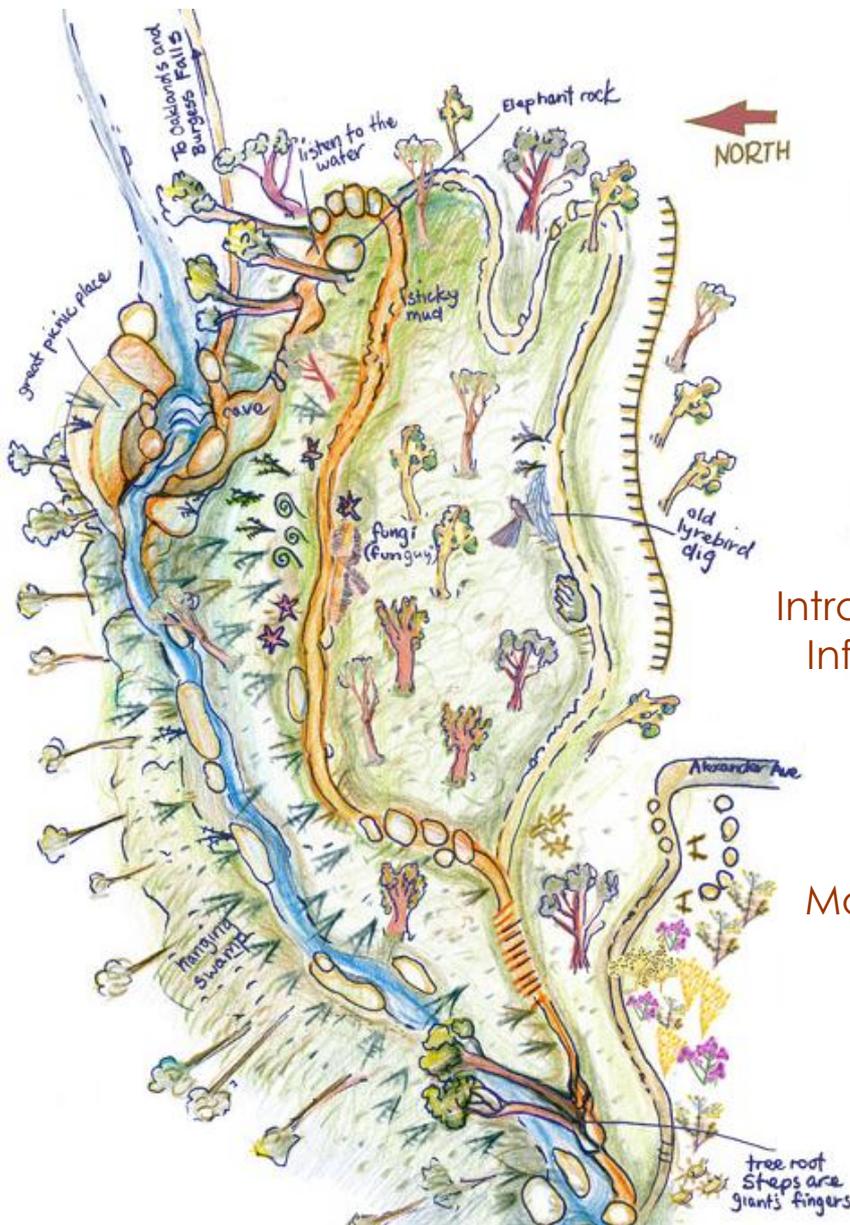


Bush Trackers

explore the bush
with guides for kids by kids

Information package



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Introduction and background

Bush Trackers, an environmental education project designed to engage more children and their families with the bush, and to promote the natural spaces within our local communities as “child-friendly” places.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Discovery Rangers guide Stage 2 school kids aged 8-10 years old on a local bush walk, encouraging the kids to share their experience through words, poems, pictures and photos. Performing Design use these to create the map and guide to encourage other kids and families to safely enjoy the bush! This is the beginning of something BIG, a relationship with nature which children can develop and nurture throughout their lives and can share with their family, friends and future generations.

The *Bush Trackers* grew from support of the Stronger Families Alliance to help create a Child Friendly Community in the Blue Mountains. NSW Heritage Grants have provided ‘Community youth and seniors heritage project’ funding to be administered by Blue Mountains Lithgow Oberon Tourism Ltd with Jacqueline Reid continuing as Project Manager and Lucy McGarry as Project Officer and we can grow Bush Trackers across the Blue Mountains and into the Lithgow and Oberon region.

The *Bush Trackers* project is an introduction, it creates the opportunity for children and their families to seek and build an evolving relationship with nature.

The aim of the *Bush Trackers* project, and the creation of *Bush Trackers* maps and guides, is to enable children to experience the bush on their own terms, through their own eyes and to allow them to share with others, the stories of their experiences in the bush.

Project Outline

- The *Bush Trackers* team works with Stage Two Primary students and teachers to create kids’ guides for exploring explore our natural, cultural and historic.
- A local bushwalk is chosen and the kids spend a day with NPWS Discovery Rangers exploring the walk and the surrounding bushland.
- Each school/class will learn about their local environment, including local Aboriginal culture and our historical heritage as well as bush safety and protection.
- The children are all provided with an A4 art diary and pencil for use on the day so they can draw and write about their experience and observations of the walk, what was fun or scary, their favourite places to swim, sit, draw, have a picnic, read a book, kick a ball etc and what is important about the walk from a natural/cultural perspective.
- The teachers encourage the children to ‘finish’ their works back in the class room.
- This material is collected and collated and Performing Design (local art teacher and graphic designer) create a published A3 double sided *Bush Trackers* Guide, (www.bushtrackers.com.au) to kids and families, both local and visitors.
- *Bush Trackers* guides are written from a child’s perspective with all the tips and knowledge of children who have been there and know where all the fun bits are!
- By collaborating with local schools in the development of this resource, we facilitate the active engagement of local children and their families with their natural surroundings. This ‘ground up’ approach helps promote a healthy relationship between children and their communities and a greater appreciation of, and respect for, the natural environment.
- *Bush Trackers* guides are for children who live in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Region and for those visiting with their families.
- The target age group is 8-10 year olds.

- *Bush Trackers* is intergenerational, the guides include and encourage activities that children can do with their grandparents or elderly neighbours. The children can act as 'guides' for their older companions.
- Project partners include NPWS; Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Councils; Stronger Families Alliance; Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism Limited and Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Why a guide for children by children?

- We live in the middle of or close to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area but how many local families get out regularly in the bush or in natural spaces in the community?
- *Bush Trackers* guides are designed by children and shows both visitors and locals, how child-friendly our local bushland and historic places can be.
- A fun guide makes getting out and about and exploring the bush more attractive to young kids. The guides focus on features which kids love like caves and creeks, trees to climb, animals to be seen etc. *Bush Trackers* guides include tips and anecdotes about adventures to be had along the way.
- *Bush Trackers* guides give safety and minimal impact advice and show how easy it is to spend time in the bush. The focus is not just on *bushwalking*, but on *being* in the bush and creating opportunities for children to discover and explore it at their own pace.
- Kids love to interact. *Bush Trackers* shows how much there is to interact with in the natural environment. Look, Listen, Touch, Smell, Climb, Dig, Splash!
- Creating and using their own guide, the kids become the 'leaders' and gain a sense of empowerment and independence in the bush and in their community.
- When children are happy and enjoying themselves parents are happy!
- *Bush Trackers* guides motivate more kids and their families to explore their natural environment. The more time they spend in it, the more they will build a relationship with it and the more likely they are to take care of it.

Bush Trackers Guides include:

- Anecdotes and Stories- "We found a snake-skin in this cave", "We saw heaps of Fairy Wrens on this walk", "There is a huge rock that's great for climbing on at the top of the hill", "Wow you can see Sydney from this lookout!"
- Drawings, poems and photographs taken by the children along the walk.
- Distance of walks and approx time.
- Cultural heritage and local Aboriginal information.
- Fauna "look out for frogs/rosellas/skinks/yabbies"
- Flora "in winter there are wattles flowering everywhere along this track. It's a sea of yellow!"
- Pictures of common native plants for the kids to identify in the bush.
- 'What to bring', 'Bush Tracker safety' and 'Minimal impact Bush Tracking'

Bush Trackers Guides available from:

- NPWS Parks Offices, Visitor and Tourist Information Centres, Schools, Preschools, Day Care Centres, Hotels and Guest Houses, YHA, BMCC Offices.....
- Bush Trackers web site: www.bushtrackers.com.au (with smart phone version)
- Stronger Families Alliance website www.strongerfamilies.co
- BMCC New Residents Kit, Rates newsletter, Education Network newsletter, Leisure centres.....
- Blue Mountains Conservation Society's *Hut News*

Bush Trackers for participating schools

Before the excursion

Teachers are encouraged to prepare the following:

- Allocate a Stage Two class or classes to take part in the *Bush Trackers* project.
- Introduce simple map-reading skills to the class in preparation for the excursion, so that the children understand the concept of the types of information that maps convey, the types of stories that maps tell. This will stimulate ideas and engage them with developing their own maps during the bush walk and give them an understanding of what they need to keep an eye out for along the way.
- Prepare a Risk Assessment (see draft example on page 5).
- Hand out:
 - “What to Bring” forms (see page 7)
 - Permission note (see page 8 for an example)
 - Model release forms (please use the form on page 9)
- Receive permission notes and model release forms from each child participating in the *Bush Trackers* excursion.

The Discovery Rangers and the *Bush Trackers* Team will prepare and conduct the following:

- Choose a local walk close to the school of a suitable length for Stage Two students with exciting features that children will enjoy like creeks, caves, etc. The *Bush Trackers* team will do a reconnaissance of the walk to ensure its suitability. Ideally the chosen walk will be within walking distance of the school but if necessary, transport will be arranged through the school and the project officer.
- Visit the school to speak with students and teachers for a brief introduction to the *Bush Trackers* project and what to expect on the excursion.

The excursion

On the morning of the excursion, Discovery Rangers will introduce the participating class to the following:

- Prepare the students with NPWS Safety, and Minimum Impact Guidelines for spending time in the bush.
- Explain the objectives of the project and the outline of the excursion to the children. They will understand that their observations and experiences are going to lead to the creation of a map and guide of their local walk for other children who have never been there. It will be made clear that they are going to become the guides, the experts of this particular part of the bush and will be able to lead other children and families along it in the future.
- During the walk, children will learn about and discuss the natural and cultural heritage of the walk and surrounding area.
- Leaving at approx 9:30am the class(es) will walk from the school to the beginning of the bushwalk accompanied by Discovery Rangers, teachers and parents.
- A minimum of two hours will be allowed for the class to complete the walk at a slow pace.
- Morning tea and lunch brought by participants will be eaten at suitable spots along the walk.
- There will be plenty of time for the children to stop and explore, touch and investigate things that grab their interest along the walk.
- An Aboriginal Discovery Ranger may be available to give a cultural presentation before or during the walk, detailing the cultural history and significance of the area.
- A4 Visual Art Diaries will be loaned for each child and time will be allocated for the children to draw and write about their observations of the bush.

- This experience is not just a 'bushwalk', but more an experience of spending time in the bush be it sitting, playing near a creek, exploring a cave, investigating plants and animals, listening, smelling and touching etc. It is not just about getting to the destination.
- Participants to return to the school in plenty of time for the bell.

After the excursion

- Teachers are encouraged to allow time for the children to work on their art/stories upon return to school and in the following days. The Diaries will be collected so the material can be collated to create the Bush Trackers Guide for that particular walk.
- Teachers to provide list of first names of all children who participated in the excursion to be included on the printed Bush Tracker Guide.
- Once printed, the Bush Trackers Team will ensure copies are provided to the school and available for download from www.bushtrackers.com.au

Contacts and resources

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lucyx3@bigpond.com

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NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
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jacqueline.reid@environment.nsw.gov.au

For more information on Discovery activities, please contact:
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Blue Mountains Discovery Coordinator
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
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sandy.holmes@environment.nsw.gov.au

Bush Trackers
<http://www.bushtrackers.com.au>

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/>

For teachers, schools and community educators
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/forteachers.htm>

Teachers' kit - What is a National Park?
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/edresources/TeachersKitNationalpark.htm>

Stronger Families Alliance
<http://www.strongerfamilies.co/>



Draft Risk Assessment for Bush Trackers Program

Venue name: NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service - Discovery for Schools Program Blue Mountains National Park (Office of Environment and Heritage)

Location: Blue Mountains, Lithgow or Oberon – various locations including Wentworth Falls, Katoomba, Blackheath, Mt York, Glenbrook, Jenolan Caves etc....

Phone number: 4784 7301

Fax number: 4782 6199

Web address: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

e-mail: bluemtns.discovery@environment.nsw.gov.au

Insurance: Public liability cover Yes

Activity/program: Easy or Medium grade walk/ educational activity, Blue Mountains/Lithgow/Oberon Local Government Area or National Park

Recommended age group/fitness level/ prerequisite skills: Kindergarten upwards for easy walks. Year 3 upwards for medium walks

Staff accreditation/ competence for this activity/program: Trained and experienced Discovery Rangers (most Cert IV level Outdoor Guiding). Working with Children Clearance. First Aid trained and certified.

Possible Hazard or Risk	Suggested Risk management Strategy
1. Unsuitable weather	<u>Teacher checks</u> weather forecast leading up to activity date and liaises Discovery Coordinator if postponing activity before the day of the activity. School to provide mobile phone contact for day of activity. If group already in transit Discovery Coordinator consults with Discovery Rangers and school staff as to relocate and/or redesign activity. Discovery does not accept school bookings on Mondays, so as 24 hrs lead time is available to alter or postpone programs
2. Changing weather and exposure to the sun/wind/rain	<u>Teacher circulates “What to Bring” list</u> as provided by Discovery and ensures all students are suitably equipped including appropriate clothing to wear and what to bring
3. Carpark next to meeting place and start of walk	Teachers are responsible for supervision of students in carpark areas prior to and after the activity
4. Hazards in the natural and built environment including cliffs, uneven or slippery ground, stairs.	<u>The coordinating Discovery Ranger does a ‘Take 5’ safety assessment</u> prior to each activity, and at each new venue. <u>Discovery Rangers are responsible for conducting the activity</u> that includes a safety briefing at the beginning of the activity and at pertinent times for the

	<p>duration. <u>Discovery Ranger stays at the front of group</u> to constantly observe track conditions.</p> <p><u>Teachers/supervising adults</u> (1 representative from the school in each walking group max 15) are responsible for maintaining student discipline at all times (ie students must listen). Teachers are responsible for ensuring students come appropriately equipped for an outdoor activity where the weather can change in short periods.</p>
5. Injury on the activity	Discovery Rangers are certified with Senior First Aid and carry a first aid kit and communication equipment.
6. Student gets separated from group.	<u>Discovery Rangers brief students</u> at the beginning of activity to stay on track and with group. <u>Teachers or a representative from school</u> acts as 'tail ender' to ensure no dawdlers are left behind. Teachers count student number of each group prior to start of walk and keep check throughout activity
7. Participant suffers from exhaustion – lack of fitness.	All activities are designed to complete the walk easily without significant physical exertion. <u>Teachers ensure full scheduled time for activity is available.</u> <u>Teacher is to notify</u> Discovery coordinator of any special needs or physical constraints prior to confirming activity.
8. Serious medical condition arising (asthma, allergies, epilepsy, knee/back/ankle problems)	The school identify any students with serious medical conditions in advance of the activity and consider whether they are able to participate. Discovery Coordinator informs Discovery staff of any special needs, allergies and makes arrangements as required. <u>Teachers/school are responsible for bringing and handling medical forms</u> that outline pre-existing medical conditions and emergency contact details of all students. School ensures that all children carry personal medication as required (eg asthma puffer) <u>Discovery Rangers do not bring peanut products on activities.</u>
9. End of walk	Discovery Rangers lead the students to the end of the track. Teachers are responsible for supervising students from end of track to toilets as required, and onto buses.





DISCOVERY FOR SCHOOLS

What to bring

for all participants on Discovery Bush Trackers bushwalks

The weather is very changeable in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Region. To ensure your comfort and safety on our *Discovery Bush Trackers* activity, please check that you have everything on this list the night before your arrival:

Students must carry a small backpack on *Discovery Bush Trackers* bushwalks so that hands are free to hold onto art books, railings etc.

In your backpack you need to carry:

- a minimum of 600ml water (not soft drink or juice)
- snacks and/or lunch
- a raincoat
- beanie, gloves and a warm jumper (April – Oct)
- any personal medications e.g. asthma puffer, epipen;
- a small plastic bag for rubbish
- a camera (optional)

Please wear:

- enclosed walking shoes
- a hat and sun screen
- a warm jacket (April –Oct)

Please do not bring gaming devices or wear ugg boots or sandals.

And plan to have fun!





Draft Bush Trackers permission note

Dear Parents,

Stage 2 teachers have organised an excursion for _____ which will involve a bushwalk at _____. It will enable the children to learn about nature, cultural stories and bush safety while they help create a Bush Trackers Guide for the walk.

A number of schools across the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Region are participating in the Bush Trackers project, a collaboration with NSW National Parks, Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Councils, Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Blue Mountains Lithgow Oberon Tourism Ltd. See www.bushtrackers.com.au for more information.

NSW National Parks Discovery Rangers will show how child friendly the bush and local heritage places can be while sharing the important natural, cultural and historic stories.

The children will depart school at _____am and will return at approximately _____pm.

Children should bring a backpack with:

- a minimum of 600ml water (not soft drink or juice)
- snacks and/or lunch
- a raincoat
- beanie, gloves and a warm jumper (April – Oct)
- any personal medications e.g. asthma puffer, epipen;
- a small plastic bag for rubbish
- a camera (optional)

Please ensure children wear:

- enclosed walking shoes
- a hat and sun screen
- a warm jacket (April –Oct)

Please complete the Permission Slip below and the Model and Text Release Form and return to school before _____.

Stage 2 teachers

State 2 Excursion – local bushwalk for Bush Trackers – Term _____

I give permission for my child, _____ of class _____ to attend the Stage 2

bushwalk excursion on _____.

Parent/carer signature _____ Date: _____

If your child has any medical conditions that may be an impact on this excursion please indicate below. All excursions are equipped with First Aid Kits and teachers are trained in CPR and Emergency Care Procedures

Medical condition _____



Bush Trackers model and text release

I, _____
give OEH permission to use the following:

- Written material by myself (or my child) _____
- Quotes by myself (or my child) _____
- Photographic images of myself (or my child) _____

Taken with my consent, by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), at
[insert location] _____

These images will be held in the OEH Image Library and used for purposes considered appropriate by OEH.

I understand that OEH:

- will retain copyright of the images
- aims to maintain the integrity of these images and not allow their use in a derogatory treatment or context.
- may share images with project partners and sponsors including BMCC, BMLOT and BMCS for the promotion of the Bush Trackers Project.

Name: _____

Signature / Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Signed for
Terry Bailey, Chief Executive, Office of Environment and Heritage, Department of Premier and Cabinet

OEH Officer's name: Sandy Holmes

Signature / Date: _____

Position / Unit: Discovery Coordinator, Blue Mountains Region, Operations Support and Coordination Unit

Section / Division: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Address: Level 1 39 Whitton St Katoomba 2780

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Email: sandy.holmes@environment.nsw.gov.au

