

Werrikimbe Trip November 9th – 14th

Trip Leader: Ron & Jenni Mason

Attendees:

Ron, Jenni and Toby Mason – Mazda BT50

Noelene and Stanley Kynoch – Landrover Defender

Simon Hirshbein & Kath Lawrence – Nissan Patrol

Day 1

We all met early on Sunday morning at Gloucester, we had all stayed in the area the night before so we were ready to get on the road by 9.30am.

It started to rain a little as we headed off and it was a touch chilly but we all had a week off work and were heading to the bush 4WDing.

Heading out of Gloucester we headed along the road toward Taree before turning off towards Bundook. We crossed the Gloucester River and then the Manning as we continued through farmland. Soon after we started to climb out of the farm land and into the mountains and we headed towards Dingo Tops where we stopped for a break and lunch. Dingo Tops is a great area for picnics, no camping but would be nice if there was camping allowed. There is some old steam machinery and such to wander around. After lunch we left Dingo Tops and on to our campsite for the night we stopped at Blue Nob lookout. Unfortunately the ladder for the forestry lookout was gone but we had a nice view anyway.

Our campsite for the 1st 2 nights was at Maxwell Flat where we arrived about 2.30pm with plenty of time to set up camp and enjoy a few drinks before building a fire and having dinner.

Our first day was good with no real events other than a few leeches.

Day 2

Not a really early start and we were all ready to get on the road by 9.30am. The sun was shining and there was no sign of rain and it was quite warm in the sun which was good. Today we were heading to Cells River and to explore some tracks we didn't get to do on the reccie back in April due to the rain.

We had quite a few creek crossings before stopping near the juncture of Grassy Ridge RD and Jeep Trail for lunch and a walk to a waterfall and swimming hole. This stop was quite eventful.

First, Ron, Simon and Noelene went to explore an old mine shaft where Simon had a visit from a bat and screamed like a girl before running out of the cave. We now call him Batman.

Second during our walk to the waterfall we had a few issues with stinging nettle and leeches but the highlight of the day was watching Jenni's right boot go over the

waterfall and was not retrievable. Toby cried and was concerned that Mummy might get attacked by leeches on the way back to the car without one boot.

The third event was at the waterfall when Noelene decided to use a rock as a slippery slide and nearly ended up in the water.

We got back to the cars with no further events with only a leech patrol before getting back in the cars, crossing the creek and heading up Grassy Ridge Rd. This was the most exciting part of the track, the book we were following said there were some steep sections and we thought they were steep until we got to the really steep section, we now know why it is not recommended to do this track in the wet.

This section was only 8 km but was well worthwhile. The track ended when we hit the Oxley highway just before Ginger Creek, where we stopped to top up for fuel and coffee before heading to camp via other track which starts in the rest area on the Highway just past Ginger Creek.

Back at camp we had heaps of time for showers and happy hour before dinner and then a quiet sit around the fire with a few drinks. We also played back the video we took of the day and Simon persisted in watching Jenni's boot go over the waterfall about 6 times.

Day 3

Trip Report by Noelene and Stan

Tuesday 11th November – Maxwells Flat to Brushy Mountain

After a leisurely breakfast and packing our wet tents and 1 camper van, we left Maxwells Flat at 9.40 am for our next destination. Maxwells Flat was a beautiful place right by the river. We will definitely be returning there in the future.

We travelled along some beautiful misty mountain tracks lush with fernery and tall trees. The light drizzle made the slipping and sliding fun. We stopped for a very quick wet photo shoot and off we went again.

Ron and Jenni's fridge stopped working as a branch pulled their wiring out from the trailer, and we stopped for a quick fix. Thank goodness for cable ties.

At 12.15 pm we stopped for lunch at Moorabark. We were going to camp here for the next 2 days, but our trusty leader made a good decision to continue on to Brushy Mountain, where there was a large shelter with a fire place.

We arrived at Brushy Mountain at 2.45pm and set up camp. Out came the compulsory nibbles and we settled down in the huge shelter quickly lighting the fire. Thank goodness as it rained through the night.

Stan and Noelene's fridge also packed up and Simon spent time trying to sort it out but it was dead.

Simon showed his Cockatoo Island photos and later after tea, Noelene showed the Simpson Trip photos. Then all went to bed for a good sleep. A terrific day was had by all. Thanks Ron and Jenni.

Day 4

by Kathy Lawrence

On Wednesday, the sun tried to escape from the clouds at about 6am but was unsuccessful. The day was overcast and grey. We set off along the Hastings Forest Way to Wilson River. As we approached Wilson River, the rainforest began encroaching on the road, a mass of vines and leaves.

At Wilson River, we left Jenni and Toby to explore their immediate surrounds while the rest of us crossed the bridge and took the path through the rainforest to the waterfall (1500 m each way). Some of us soon discovered that our travelling companions the leeches wanted to hitch a ride again. In the process of dispelling the leeches from the myth that they could have a free ride to the waterfall, Simon was heard to exclaim that he had singed his leg hair with the cigarette lighter (but missed the leech). Simon was heard to make the very intelligent comment "don't walk on the leaves and you won't get leeches." A bit difficult in the rainforest where the ground was deeply covered in leaf litter! It was quite an easy path to the waterfall, however a bit slippery in places due to the recent rain.

At the waterfall, Ron was the first to cross the river to get a better view of the waterfall. Unfortunately for him, the leeches did not appreciate him disturbing their oasis and jumped from the trees seeking a blood donation in return.

The water was pouring over the waterfall which made a good backdrop for the photo shoots. However, we were hastened on our journey back to the picnic area by a sudden downpour of rain. It was weird to look up and see heavy rain, but not actually feel it – due to the dense canopy, the rain was not actually making through to ground level. Of course, a walk through the rainforest would not be complete without someone hiding in the hollowed trunk of a tree and jumping out as people passed! No guessing, who the little kid was!

Back at the picnic area we had lunch, with Simon making good use of the BBQ and leftover dinner to create Satay wraps. Other people thought it would be a better idea to feed their leftovers to the goanna who was sunbaking on the bridge. However, the goanna also did not like his oasis being disturbed, especially when he was trying to catch the only bit of sun for days and enjoy the picturesque view of the river. He took offence to these tourists throwing bits of sausage at him. He decided to teach them a lesson and give them a bit of exercise at the same time. It's amazing how fast some people can run back to their cars when being charged by a goanna! I'm not sure if the mere presence of the Mazda was enough to protect you Ron, I think it is better to get in it. However, lessons were not learned and Mr Goanna was still left wondering why it was still raining sausage.

Note that hazards at this picnic area not only include innocent goannas napping on the bridge, but also large spiders in the toilets and leeches in the grass immediately

around the picnic shelter. But if these can be disregarded it is still a beautiful spot next the river in the middle of the rainforest.

After the goanna incident we decided that we had disturbed enough local wildlife and it was time to continue on our journey. The road at times was slippery (Simon slipped twice) due to some patches of loose wet soil but would be quite easy in the dry. Hide and Seek was played with the next turnoff (that is we sought the road on numerous occasions but could not find it). It took a trip out of the rainforest to visit some cows (maybe Stan's Landrover needed to seek solace in some more cow pats) and a return trip the way we had been, before we were able to win the game of hide and seek and find the road we were looking for.

Afternoon tea was had at another picnic area/ camping area near the river after one driver was heard to exclaim how tiring it was to be on holidays. From there, we all headed back to camp. Simon made a detour to a lookout which looked out over the rainforest to the sea, so that he could instruct his boss on confined space training (i.e. the only place with mobile signal). Unfortunately, everyone else was not so eager to talk to their bosses and so therefore missed out on a great view. On the way back, we realised that 4.30pm was peak hour in the rainforest as we passed two utes going the other way (the only vehicles we had seen in the whole day).

Day 5

Thursday 13th

Brushy Mountain to Port Macquarie

Report by Noelene and Stan

Rained through the night again and as we were pulling down our tent a National Parks ranger came and said hello. Moments later he was back to ask if we wanted to see a spotted quoll, so with cameras in hand we walked very quietly to the rubbish pit and opened the lid. There it was having breaky and we all took lots of photos as it posed for us.

At 9.20 am we left Brushy Mountain's great camp site and drove out on Hastings Forest Rd., then along Main Range Rd. We certainly did lots of pruning in the jungle with our roof rack.

At 11am we hit a big sloppy churned up track, Simon doing it with 2 attempts, but now it was worse for Stan and we had a good go but got bogged. We managed after sliding all over to get to the top on our 5th attempt. As we drove further on, the going got tough, and after the guys did a walking surveillance of the area decided it was too dangerous to continue. Unfortunately Ron was well and truly stuck, but with good team work and lots of muscle on the hand winch, plus 8 various coloured snatch straps and 2 tree protectors, we managed to pull Ron plus camp trailer up the steep, slippery, muddy hill. It then started to rain which made it even more slippery.

Hard bloody yakka!!

At 2.45 pm we were finally on our way back tracking, then onto Bobs Ridge Rd.

At 4.15 pm we all lost the plot due to exhaustion and hunger as we missed lunch, and had a silly sing along. At 4.45 pm we fuelled and aired up at Telegraph Point and bought ice creams and drinks for a much needed rest. We said our good byes to "Batman" and "Mouse" as they headed off to South West Rocks. The 2 remaining cars continued on to Port Macquarie and at 5.30 pm we booked into Breakwall Tourist Park cabins right on the ocean. Hot long showers were very welcome and so were the fish and chips dinner.

We said our farewells to each other in the morning and went our different ways. We all vowed to return to do some more tracks in the dry. Many thanks Ron, Jenni, Toby, Simon and Kathy for making a great trip fantastic.