

# Playing in the bush

## Recreation and national parks in New South Wales

*Edited by Richard White and Caroline Ford*



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## Foreword

National parks are eminently cultural, a fact that is obvious to those working in fields like history and heritage. The value of this present collection of essays is that it demonstrates to a broader readership, in park-based case studies, just why and how this is so. There was a time, of course, when the uncleared, un-farmed parts of New South Wales were – or at least seemed to be – wide open to those who wanted to stroll in the bush, camp below the banksias on a quiet beach, or watch kangaroos browsing in the late afternoon sunlight. These days, such experiences will almost inevitably take place in a national park. The young historians who make up the majority of the contributors to this volume show us how this shift has occurred. They also show how, along the way, the national park experience became inextricably tangled up in the way we imagine Australian nature, the way we define the national character, the ways in which we think about and experience fire, camping, and a range of other things.

These essays will prove to be an important resource for present and future scholars of environmental and recreational history. But there is so much between these covers which is surprising, intriguing, amusing and thought provoking that I hope the volume will also find its way into the hands and backpacks of ordinary campers and indeed anyone who remembers a good time in a national park.

Denis Byrne  
Office of Environment and Heritage NSW



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## Notes on contributors

**Ella Barnett** has a long association with national parks around NSW, which includes many fond childhood memories of holidaying with family and friends around Jervis Bay, the Blue Mountains, the Royal National Park, the Barrington Tops and the Snowy Mountains. Having grown up in Sydney's inner west, Ella developed a keen interest in local history, studied history and heritage studies in her undergraduate years and completed honours in Australian history. She now works for a Federal Member of Parliament and is studying psychology part-time.

**Isobelle Barrett Meyering** grew up in Sydney. She spent most of her childhood holidays at her uncle's home in Woolli, where she was never far from the walks, mountain bike trails and beaches of Yuraygir National Park. In 2011, Isobelle began a PhD in history at the University of New South Wales. She is also a research assistant at the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, where she has worked since 2009.

**Julia Bowes** grew up in Boronia Park, Sydney. Her house was metres from the beginning of the Great North Walk in Lane Cove National Park and so her appreciation of national parks, perhaps forced at first, began at an early age. She completed an honours degree at the University of Sydney in 2008 and is currently undertaking a PhD in history at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

**Claire Farrugia** grew up near Georges River National Park and spent a great deal of time exploring the many areas of the park that intrigued her. She graduated with honours in history from the University of Sydney in 2008 and spent the following six months travelling in the Middle East and attempting to learn Arabic. After living in London for a further ten months she returned to Sydney with a renewed passion for the outdoor opportunities that the national parks provide. She began a PhD in refugee and migrant related areas at Macquarie University in 2012.

**Caroline Ford** grew up in Sydney's southern suburbs, close to the Royal National Park. She has fond memories of walking, swimming and driving in the park, although her high school's annual walk to Audley is not one of them. Caroline completed her PhD on the history of Sydney's beach culture at the University of Sydney in 2008 and is now a Cultural Heritage Researcher with the Office of Environment and Heritage NSW. She is the author of *Sydney's beaches: a history* (UNSW Press, forthcoming).

**Justine Greenwood** spent her annual childhood holidays at Huskisson, on the NSW South Coast, visiting the beaches scattered through the nearby Jervis Bay National Park. As a PhD candidate in history at the University of Sydney she has continued to work on aspects of recreation in people's lives, focusing on the role tourism and holiday-making have played in migrant settlement experiences in postwar Australia. She is also the Assistant Editor of *History Australia*, the journal of the Australian Historical Association.

**Fiona Howie** is a native Tasmanian. Her childhood memories include annual summer camping at Coles Bay, Freycinet National Park, visiting the family shack at Eaglehawk Neck on the Tasman Peninsula and picnicking and bushwalking in Mt Field National Park. Her education in national parks in Sydney has included the Bundeena to Otford overnight walk in the Royal National Park, and getting knocked on the head by a falling tree in the Blue Mountains. Luckily, it was only a very small tree. Fiona graduated with honours in history from the University of Sydney and then worked in publishing. She is currently living in Hanoi, Vietnam.

**Tess Mierendorff** was born in Tamworth NSW and has been visiting Arakoon and rambling around the gaol, beach and bushland since she could walk. She has always seen national parks as places carved out for adventure, fun and family. In 2008 Tess graduated from the University of Sydney with honours in history and she is currently completing a Bachelor of Laws.

**Richard White** grew up in Sydney where the Royal, Ku-ring-gai Chase and Lane Cove National Parks were essential venues for family picnics. He teaches Australian history and the history of travel and tourism at the University of Sydney and his books include *Inventing Australia*, *The Oxford book of Australian travel writing*, *On holidays: a history of getting away in Australia* and *Symbols of Australia*. He is currently researching the emergence of the past as a tourist destination in Australia.