

Australian Native Plants Society – Canberra Region

Guidelines for Field Trips

Members of the Australian Native Plants Society, Canberra Region (ANPSC) run field trips throughout the year to places of botanic interest, generally on the third weekend of the month. The destinations are within a day's drive of Canberra and generally involve a departure on a Friday and a return on a Monday. Longer trips to more distant areas are also organised on an irregular basis and may extend over one to three weeks. Accommodation is in tourist parks and campgrounds that are booked by participants.

Daily walks into areas of botanical interest in National Parks and elsewhere are generally easy ones along trails (max 10km) although some may be cross-country and others may involve more challenging ascents and descents. Car crawls are also involved and may be along bush tracks where 4WD or AWD and good clearance are recommended.

A draft program of trips is organised at the start of each year and details of the walks are advertised each month in the Bulletin and on the ANPS website together with the contact details of the leader. Members interested in participating can also email one of the organisers for the copy of the year's draft program.

Participants take part in trips as volunteers and at their own risk although the Society carries public liability insurance to protect itself and field trip organisers and leaders and other participating members. Organisers and leaders run trips with safety as a priority so that risks to participants are minimised. However, risks such as tripping and falling, crossing watercourses, exposure to sudden changes in weather and potential encounters with ticks, mosquitos, leeches and snakes and prickly/stinging vegetation cannot always be avoided.

Participant Responsibilities

The decision to go on an activity is yours and you do so at your own risk. It is important that you are properly prepared for both the trip and the walks.

For the trip you should bring –

- Sufficient food and water for the weekend or longer as some destinations do not have drinking water available.
- If camping you will be expected to be experienced and know what to bring but remember that nights can be cold.
- For the walks, you should wear appropriate clothing/footwear to protect yourself against the terrain, vegetation, sunburn, and be aware of venomous animals.
- You should carry a day-pack with enough food and hot and cold water for each walk, allowing extra water for warm days and be prepared for changing weather conditions by carrying a waterproof and an extra layer of clothing.
- We recommend that you also carry personal safety items such as a whistle, compass, sunscreen, a first-aid kit containing compression bandages and any other medical supplies needed such as anti-histamines, asthma relievers etc.

Keeping fit will help you to enjoy a range of activities. You should be aware of your own limitations and not attempt anything which could endanger you or anyone else. It is essential that you are clear about the walks and what fitness level is required before you join a trip. Trip leaders will provide intended participants with sufficient, prior information for them to gauge whether they should join the field trip. If you are unsure whether you should attempt a particular walk, it is your responsibility to check with the leader beforehand so that you are clear on what is required. If the leader recommends that you do not attempt a walk because of its difficulty, please accept this as being in the best interests of yourself and the group.

Getting to the destination

Make sure your vehicle is prepared and full of fuel for the trip. Some areas are remote and drivers should be capable of changing a wheel and minor repairs. The leader will let you know how long the drive will take and whether there is a meeting place where some participants will continue in convoy. If you are travelling in another member's car, you are expected to contribute towards travel costs. If travelling in convoy keep the vehicle behind in view especially at intersections. Some vehicles have UHF radio contact and two hand-held radios are available to those that do not have them. Some trips may involve some local driving from the camping/accommodation area and this generally involves car-pooling to avoid congestion on bush roads.

Walks & CarCrawls

On arrival at the field trip site, the leader or another group member will ask participants to sign the ANPSC Walks Attendance Register for insurance purposes. The trip leader will outline the daily plans and will generally show the group a map of the area, although in National Parks there is often a notice board at the campground with the necessary information. It is possible that the plan will change depending on what is found once the walk starts. Walks and car crawls generally start at 8.30-9am and finish at 3-5pm.

On our walks there may be several "leaders" because there will often be people who are expert on different plants and animals that you may encounter and others who know the route and terrain. The walks are not always on prepared trails and sometimes there is no designated route, depending on what is seen on the day. The group may become spread out, both laterally and linearly, particularly when people have different interests. For these reasons, it is essential that you keep others in sight at all times and do not divert off track out of sight of the party unless you tell the leader or a member of the group of your intentions. If you find that you are having difficulty at any stage, you must inform other members of the group so that the pace can be adjusted. If you do happen to become isolated from the group you should stay put and use your whistle or shout to attract attention. There will be morning tea and lunch breaks on the walk. At least one person will always be carrying relevant maps, compass and GPS and two UHF radios will be carried by participants. Some participants will also be carrying plant-lists, floras and other information for the walks

You are advised not to leave a walk early. If it is necessary for you to do so, you must tell members of the group of your intention. Many walks are 'out & back' along the same track and you may be asked to wait on the trail for the party to return. If you insist on leaving the walk alone, you do so at your own risk and are responsible for your safe return. You should contact the leader to let him/her know that you are back safely once the group has returned.

The other options is the **car crawl** when a designated lead car, usually with the leader, decides where to travel and stop to view places of botanic interest along the roadside or not far from it. When returning to the cars the members of the lead car will ensure that everyone is back in their cars before taking off. Radio communication is often used on these occasions.

As a participant in a group, you should be aware of the others around you and make sure that no one is experiencing any difficulties or is being left behind. The **essential rule** to follow when walking – and when travelling in convoy – is to keep those behind in sight at all times and wait for them to catch up.

Organiser, Leader and Group Roles

The program of trips and their leaders is drawn up by regular field trip members at the start of the year and is coordinated by an organiser. This may involve leaders inspecting the area to be visited and research for plants lists, National Parks leaflets and maps, other information and the relevant 1:25000 maps. The leader will give an indication of the length of the drive and preferred route to the destination and the length and degree of difficulty of the walks proposed each day and/or possible car crawls. The leader can advise you about whether it is suitable for you. Trips may be made to places where a reconnaissance is not undertaken and ad hoc plans will be drawn up on arrival.

At the end of the day's activity: -

- The leader (s) will check that everyone has returned safely.
- If there have been any incidents on the walk, the details will be documented on the back of the Attendance Register and ANPS Council informed.

After the final walk and prior to departure, the leader or a designated member of the group will sign-off the Attendance Register.

Reports

The leader or a designated member of the group will generally prepare a report on the trip for submission to the ANPSC web site, including the principle plants seen and often accompanied by a selection of plant photographs,. This report is also individually circulated to members participating in a particular trip for comment.