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## About The Epic

The Epic is the quarterly newsletter of the ANU Mountaineering Club.

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**Contributions:**

YOUR contributions are the essence of the Epic! We love to receive your contributions, especially with pictures! All care/no responsibility is taken. Please try to limit your contributions to 600 words, and follow these guidelines:

- The prefered format for the contributions is an unformatted text file(.txt)
- If sending pictures, send us the highest resolution version you have
- Please send your pictures as attachments and not embbeded in a document
- Avoid sending Word files or other proprietary formats

Thank you!

Cover photo: on the way to Trollstigen, Norway. By Tiago Pereira.
Happy birthday to the ANU Mountaineering Club! On September 29th 2007 the ANUMC turns 40. The club was formed from a merger of the ANU Bushwalking Club, the ANU Rockclimbing Club and the ANU Canoe Club way back in 1967. The anniversary is being celebrated through a number of events including the anniversary dinner with special guest speaker Lincoln Hall on September 22nd, and the inaugural Canberra to Kossie adventure race on October 20-21st.

Over the years the Club has been responsible for several major mountaineering expeditions and for fostering some of Australia's leading adventurers. The club has published a climbing guide for the ACT for the last 40 years and in the early 90's we built one of the largest synthetic climbing walls in Australia.

More importantly, the Club has been a focus for outdoorsy types for 40 years! Whether you're into bird watching or ice climbing, whether you want to enjoy a relaxing stroll now and then, or face the challenge of overcoming difficult obstacles, the ANUMC has something for you. Our club fosters strong leadership and organisational skills and has always relied on our fantastic volunteer trip leaders and committee and executive members. We can all be proud of being part of the ANUMC!

Speaking of volunteer spirit, the annual general meeting is coming up on October 24th and as always we need people to nominate for the 7 executive positions. These are President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Social Officer and 2 General Officers. If you're interested to contribute more to the club and think you have something to offer, please get in touch with anyone on the executive to discuss what is involved in the role. Remember, the club doesn't run itself. It relies on a bunch of enthusiastic volunteers who are committed to making the club even better, and ensuring that the ANU Mountaineering Club is around for the next 40 years!

Sam Keech-Marx
Having seen some of the best snow in years during July on the previous two hut raid trips we were hoping our luck would last out for the final installment at the end of August. With the forecast for sun and reports of the snow being washed away by rain in the weeks prior, it was going to be interesting.

Having negotiated a not so early start of 5am from Canberra, Munyang power station was in full sun as we set off on the suspiciously snow-free firetrail. The lower altitude forests have regrown well since the fires and making quick progress on the clear track the dappled sunlight filtering through to us was soon accompanied by the occasional drift of snow. It wasn’t until mid morning that we reached enough cover for us to don our snowshoes, and worryingly not due to the depth of the snow but rather the slippery surface of ice. The noisy crunching of the crampons drowned out any attempt at conversation and we organically stretched out into single file.

Soon we were upon the first hut we were to encounter for the weekend, Whites River. Looking across the valley to it a lone body in a blue jacket stood outside but the creek crossing involved to reach the hut didn’t seem worth the effort so we pressed on.

The snow was steadily getting better as we rose and with the snowshoes making less noise conversation returned to the group. During lunch at the one and only Schlink Hilton, we were joined by a solo traveller. He too was surprised by the lack of people around and remarked “You’ve probably just doubled the number of people out here”. Making our exit we filled an entry to the historic records and were quizzed by the gentleman “Is being left handed compulsory to join your club?”, amazingly 5 of the 6 of...
us had exposed our left handedness when signing our name.

The afternoons target loomed ahead as soon as we stepped out the door, Gungartan was perched atop a seemingly endless face of soft, dry, snow. We picked our way up a ridge and didn't believe it at first when we reached the base of the northern peak, it all seemed too easy. From there it was a quick trot across to the peak proper at 2068m. The ice formations atop the exposed peak kept us mesmerized for some time before we decided to make a beeline for Tin Hut.

As the afternoon slipped away from the valley surrounding us the backlit Kerries Ridge climbed into the sky on a scale only achievable in the snow. Tracks flowing out of a small stand of trees guided us the way to the hut and we arrived concurrently with a party of 3 on skis (2 Swedish blondes, what were the chances?), they were in fact the group we had seen earlier at Whites River Hut. With the tents firmly pitched some of us enjoyed the last of the sunlight before retiring down into the half buried hut. The evenings entertainment included:

- Too much food and a flaming hot curry
- A serious match of poker complete with rustic "chips"
- A classically awful rendition of happy birthday sung around a real, freshly baked, chocolate cake

Morning brought with it windy conditions and a hot breakfast in the shelter of the hut was appreciated by all. The walking started with some tricky traversing of a steep ridge shelter-
ing us from the wind, but soon returned to the easy conditions of the previous day once we were out in the open. Interestingly rabbits were the only animals we saw during the trip, all of us envious of their speed across the snow.

Lunch on our way down to Disappointment Spur was a brief affair care of the cold wind, a group of skiers were in sight but we didn't make contact. The steep descent to Disappointment Hut through the dead snowgums had a surreal touch to it, nothing but twisted grey trunks as far as the eye could see. Checking in at the SMA leftover, (one of the few huts to be mounted on skis) Disappointment Hut, on our way back to the cars provided us with some unexpectedly pleasant shade. The afternoon temperatures started to pick up as we got out of the wind and descended, back at the cars bare feet and t-shirts were the standard dress. A stop for snacks at Jindabyne on the way home saw us catch quite a few familiar faces, the stiffness from a big weekend already present in our movements, but we'll be back to do it again next year because there is nothing quite like the high country under snow.

John Pillans

Photos by John Pillans

Home sweet home!
BOOK REVIEW: SECRETS OF WARMTH

Secrets of Warmth for Comfort or Survival
by Hal Weiss
ANUMC gearstore library

The ANUMC gearstore has a small library which includes many guidebooks as well as a few gems. A gem is "Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills". Another gem is "Secrets of Warmth". I was intrigued by it and borrowed it to learn a few tricks to help improve my cold weather/mountain/glacier approach to keeping warm.

The author Hal Weiss has written a comprehensive overview of many aspects of keeping warm in a simple to understand and easy to read format. He has included chapters such as: What is warmth? How do you generate warmth? Clothing systems; Dressing for warmth; Winter camping; Survival. He thoroughly discusses many ideas and especially espouses the Vapour Barrier Layer principle as a highly effective whilst highly underated mean of keeping warm. I personally use VBL when camping/ living on glaciers for extended periods and can definitely testify that I am keen on the idea and it works effectively for me.

Others, as a result of their metabolism, may develop an antipathy towards a VBL idea. The section on insulation materials and clothing was really interesting. Did you know that polypropelene and chlorofibre only absorbed 0.3% of their weight in moisture whereas cotton absorbs 8% and wool a whopping 17%? No wonder wool takes such a long time to dry.

Other ideas discussed include snow shelters constructions and give a few good tips to keep in mind.

I would highly recommed the book to anyone who is interested in appreciating and understanding more ideas to keep themselves warm.

A friend once told me as we were summitting on a snow summit in the Atlas Range in Morroco. "With modern equipment there are only two reasons to be cold in the mountains. One: it is an emergency. Two: you are a fool" By reading this book it should eliminate the second reason and hopefully mitigate the first reason.

Nic Bendeli
While I must reluctantly confess a fondness for this song, and Vanilla Ice’s blatant self-promotion therein (isn’t it sad when your only great song is about how great you are?), there are limits to my enthusiasm for ice, ice, baby. Ice on a lake is fun. Icicles on the side of an alpine chalet are cool. Skiing on ice is not.

But with a series of clear cold nights and windy days that’s what those of us on Paul Lloyd’s Springtime Supersize Snowtrip were faced with. On the Saturday morning Paul, Erik, Deciana, Greg, Daniel, Mitch, Rachel and I climbed the spur from Guthega to the Rolling Ground. Some people were forced to snowshoe all the way up for the lack of grip. Greg discovered that ice also carries away very quickly any equipment you are unfortunate enough to drop. From lunch -- where we found a sheltered, sunny, soft slope -- onwards was much better, with some good snow on the side of the spur on which to traverse down.

Motions were made for night skiing at Perisher, but everyone was too buggered so we sat around a campfire and ate marshmallows, Nic regaling us with tales of near-death experiences. Much better idea.

Next day we drove to Thredbo. Nic and his nephew went off telemarking again, while Tiago joined us for a tour to Mt Kosciuszko (on which some Polish students had corrected my pronunciation a few days before). But at the top of the chairlift it was even more windy than the day before and, guess what -- a pattern’s forming here -- icy. As icy as your housemates’ faces when you trample home with dirty boots, stinking socks and poo tube, stick a ski through the flywire door, pro-
ceed to hang your tent out to dry in the living room, and last of all put Vanilla Ice on the stereo. Yep, icy.

We made about 500m in 20 minutes into a strong head wind, before turning around and getting literally blown, uphill as well as down, back to the resort. (Many cleverly abandoned the effort earlier, retiring to a café for, who knows, maybe an iced coffee.) The top of the runs in the resort was iced as well, which challenged the beginners amongst us, before turning to slush churned up by those snow-boarding scallywags.

Despite the ice, the shining sun, superb views, great company, and a decent array of Australian wildlife, including kangaroos, a wombat and an emu, made for a fun weekend. I just hope Daniel made it home after dropping him at Nuggets Crossing to wait for Nic. I guess there are worse places to be stranded than the Sundance bakery — but if you meet an engorged ANUMCer with an aversion to ice please be nice and give him a lift home.

Steve Lade

Yes, it was icy!

Barely visible here, Steve and Tiago take shelter from the wind behind some rocks.

Photos by Rachel Hendery and Paul Lloyd
It was all a bit last minute. I got a call from a friend on Friday night: she had come down with a dreaded Canberra winter bug and was going to have to pull out of the trip. Would I like to go in her place? Well, who could turn down such an opportunity? So I found myself frantically packing thermals, looking for clean socks and strapping strange, and vaguely dangerous looking snow-shoes to my pack, before falling into bed with a big grin on my face: I was going to the snow!

As we drove up into the mountains the snow began to appear on the South facing slopes. As a newcomer to Australia I had never seen anything quite like it: eucalypt forest on one side of the road with dry grass and emus (yup, we saw an emu), alpine slopes and skiers on the other. We pulled up to Dead Horse Gap as a light snow began to fall, adding to the generous layer that already covered the ground.

So it was snow shoe-conditions from the word go. We were all soon trudging along the path that lead into the valley; nine happy hikers and three intrepid skiers. After one rather embarrassing attempt to walk backwards, the snow-shoes began to feel almost normal and I was able to concentrate on the beautiful winter views and on getting to know my fellow hikers.
The route was 10 kms of gently undulating track. Within half an hour we had passed over a small river and found ourselves in a snowy valley. Already there was a feeling that civilisation was far behind us. Brumbies appearing in the snow only added to the sensation of being in the wilderness. The weather was changeable, with some wind and snow on top of the ridge making it a bit exciting and enough periods of stillness to appreciate the winter vistas and the wonderful snow formations. Being used to the Scottish hills, I found it incredible to be trudging through snow in a forest of snow gums, with their beautiful multi-coloured trunks.

With such a friendly bunch of people to chat to, the day seemed to pass in a flash. We were soon crossing our last river and heading up the slope to Cascade hut. At the top the forest opened out into a little clearing with a quaint little stone built hut, already showing signs of life with smoke drifting out of the chimney. By this time it was nearing dusk and Sam, our wonderfully friendly and fearless leader, soon had us all putting up tents and scouting for firewood. We managed to get organised by night fall and all gathered in the hut to begin the serious matter of making dinner. As the hut was already occupied it was a bit of a tight squeeze, especially with everyone cooking up their share of the feast, but as the food and wine began to flow it didn't seem to matter too much. Honourable mentions must go to Sam for her grilled haloumi cheese, Dave and Rhonda for their gnocchi dish and Laura for carting 4 litres of goon all the way there.

The next morning we woke to a picture book setting of sun and...
The tents had all received a dusting of snow overnight and the whole place just looked like a winter wonderland. Five minutes out of camp we were met with the sight of a whole herd of brumbies that just added to my good mood.

If anything, I enjoyed the walk back even more than the day before. The weather didn't hold for the whole day but the sun did come out again to supply us with beautiful views for lunch on the ridge. After lunch the temptation of all that fresh, untouched snow proved to be too much. I can't remember who threw the first snowball, but it was a pretty epic fight, with alliances being made and broken, friends and partners pelting each other with snow and anybody on skies being a prime target. Eventually we got ourselves together, got as much snow out from down our backs as possible and continued the walk back.

It all seemed to be over far too quickly after that. We got back to the cars and unstrapped ourselves from our snow-shoes for the last time. Soon, tired and happy, we were back in the car, heading to Bredbo for post-trip pizzas and a last chat before home.

So, it was a wonderful introduction to the inspired sport of snow-shoeing and an all round good weekend. Thanks to Sam Keech-Marx for organising it so well, and to everyone else for being such a fun bunch of people.

Fiona Beck

Photos by Sam Keech-Marx
I set the alarm for 4am. Nuts. Everything was packed and ready - even the breakfast quota of muesli bars in my jacket ready for when I emerged from the sleeping bag. I've never been so organised. A few hours later I hit the track, washing down a couple of muesli bars with some icy cold water from the small stream at the trail head. It was going to be a long day so needed to set a cracking pace. After a few minutes it was easier to start a gentle run and I could feel the cool mountain air rush into my lungs.

Gradually the sounds of the San Joaquin River became noticeable as the trail eased into the valley, losing precious elevation. It was all uphill from the river - a bit over 2000m vertical before lunchtime. I pushed on quickly to cover the lower sections before the sun hit the mountain side making it hot work.

The track led around the side of a gentle spur and above the sides of a waterfall canyon dropping steep into the valley below. Suddenly I could feel the sun sprinkling light on the back of my neck as it lifted over the Eastern range behind me. As the track rounded further into the top of the canyon I could see the moon setting into the gap from where the stream was flowing. It wasn't until reaching the stream, that it opened out into Shadow Lake, silent and still with a perfect mirror reflection of The Minarets, Mount Ritter and Banner Peak.

As I followed the track around Shadow Lake, progress slowed as each break in the treeline provided another spectacular photo opportunity. Soon the...
track moved upwards and away from the lake back into the forest. It seemed to be taking ages to cover only several kilometres, until realising the map distances were in miles. Suddenly my day trip had increased by 160%.

As I came to Lake Ediza, it was time to leave the track. At Lake Ediza the size and scale of these mountains really started to look impressive, enhanced by the duplication mirrored across the lake. Sitting beside the lake, taking in the amazing scene had already made it an incredible day -- alpine flowers, bear tracks in the soft mud, a large fish swimming in the shallow crystal clear waters. The mountain was getting close, but I could have spent the whole day lying on the big slabs just soaking up the surreal vibe. Instead it was time to negotiate the glacial streams feeding into the lake. The water was fast flowing and I soon discovered reasonably deep after wading through just below waist level, providing an invigorating moment of cold shock. Fortunately my shorts and trainers dried out quickly as I approached the first snow patches and the climbing began.

I could no longer see much above the imposing gendarme and cliff line in front of me. It took a few minutes to pick a line to climb -- apparently it can vary between a challenging scramble to an adrenaline overdose, depending on water and ice content as it is directly below Ritter’s South East Glacier. I happily found a sloppy but stable scramble, which developed into steeper slabs of smooth rock, requiring some unglamorous awkward maneuvers.

Finally I made it onto the glacier and unpacked the crampons and ice axe. The glacier was hard packed and even though it was a warm sunny mid-Summer day, there was very little sign of softening. The sun spots on the glacier were deep and slippery, like polished glass in parts, carving channels down the slope, providing an extra challenge to the ascent. After a couple of hours on the glacier, it was the final climb to the summit. The tallas field was massive.

Huge boulders balanced precariously and scree slopes on the critical steeper sections. It’s rated class 3 to 4, but it was a big surprise to discover the most super stable talas and scree I have ever encountered. It looked bad, it sounded bad, but it behaved like normal rock! As I climbed out of a steep scree filled chute, the summit was in sight. A few more snow patches, and a careful negotiation of the tallas field led to the summit. It had already been a day filled with spectacular views and the summit panorama was even more incredible. Clear skies, no wind, no interruptions and no distractions. Clarity and reflection. Mount Ritter (4006m) is one of the highest peaks in California, located in the Sierra Nevada Ansell Adams Wilderness Area.

Paul Lloyd

Photos by Paul Lloyd

Looking down Ritter’s South East Glacier and across The Minarets
The ANUMC is one of the most active outdoor clubs in Canberra. Club members organize many trips, including bushwalking, canyoning, rock climbing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, kayaking and many more!
You can find more about the club in our web page, where you can also sign up for trips using the online trip calendar!

Visit
http://anumc.anu.edu.au
for more info!

Club Memberships (for the rest of 2007):

$20 for students; $30 for non-students (+ SRA Membership Fee)