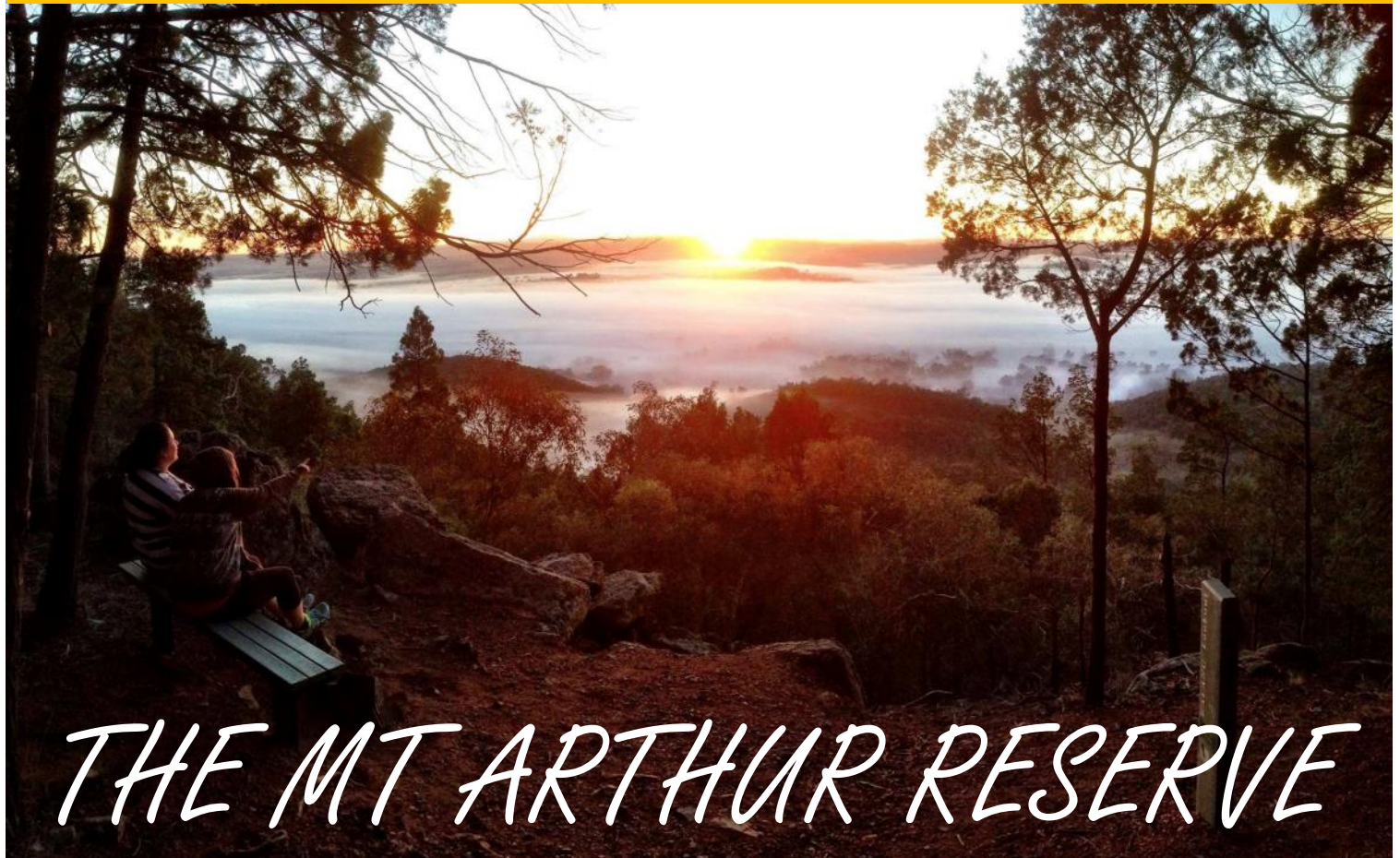


# AN INTRODUCTION TO



## THE MT ARTHUR RESERVE

*Wellington, NSW*



Photo credits : Emmalee Holmes (top) ; Bevan Tatnell, Mt Arthur Trust, Cherie Hughes (bottom, left to right)



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[www.facebook.com/mountarthurreserve/](https://www.facebook.com/mountarthurreserve/)



# A WELLINGTON ICON

Throughout the history of the Wellington valley, 'Mount Arthur' has meant many things to many people. A home, a source of natural resources, a workplace, a water supply, a special place of solitude and natural wonder, fond memories, family traditions, a distinctive feature of the skyline and much more.

It is believed that representations from Major C.H Barton, a prominent and well respected Wellington landowner and businessman, led to a portion of Mt Arthur being declared a reserve for public recreation in 1913 and later proclaimed a 'fauna protection district'. In 1938 a further portion was reserved for the 'preservation of native flora'.

In the 1920's and 30s the tourism value of the mountain began to be promoted and the Mt Arthur Tourist Road (now the Scenic Drive) was constructed under a government unemployment relief scheme, just before the second world war (which also resulted in the construction of tourist roads at Mt Canobolas, Orange and Bathurst's Mt Panorama).

In 1960 a small group of local people were so inspired by the area, its values and its tourism potential, that (with the support of the Wellington Council) they formed the 'Mount Arthur National Park Committee' and campaigned tirelessly for 4 years to achieve their vision. It is thanks to the efforts of this Committee that the Mount Arthur Reserve was formally gazetted in 1964, securing it for future generations to enjoy.

*'In these days of our sinking bushland, the only habitat of many native birds and animals, we can easily imagine how important this reserve will be in the future. The need to get away from the pressure of modern life and be able to walk these natural bush trails makes its value priceless in future years.'*

R.G. Kimbell, 1978  
(former Mount Arthur Reserve Trustee)



Many of those first committee members went on to serve generously on the Mount Arthur Reserve Trust, some for over 30 years.

The Reserve also owes much to the efforts of the Wellington Apex Club, who worked hard in the 1960s and 1970s establishing the first facilities and walking trails, for the enjoyment of visitors. The Wellington Rotary and Lions Clubs have also contributed to the Reserve in recent years.

A total of 45 Trust members, 5 Rangers and countless other volunteers have looked after the Reserve over the last 53 years. The Reserve has grown to encompass over 2000ha and its natural values were recognised on the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate.

The Reserve is far from a forgotten gem. It still means many things, to many people. It inspires people with a passion for its values and a desire to get in and do something in their 'patch'. It is not an easy job, with many knocks along the way, but those who look after it do so because they still believe it is a special place worthy of care, and an asset to the township. We are proud that the Mt Arthur Reserve remains a free community resource, true to the vision of those who campaigned and cared for it in the first place.



# OVERVIEW

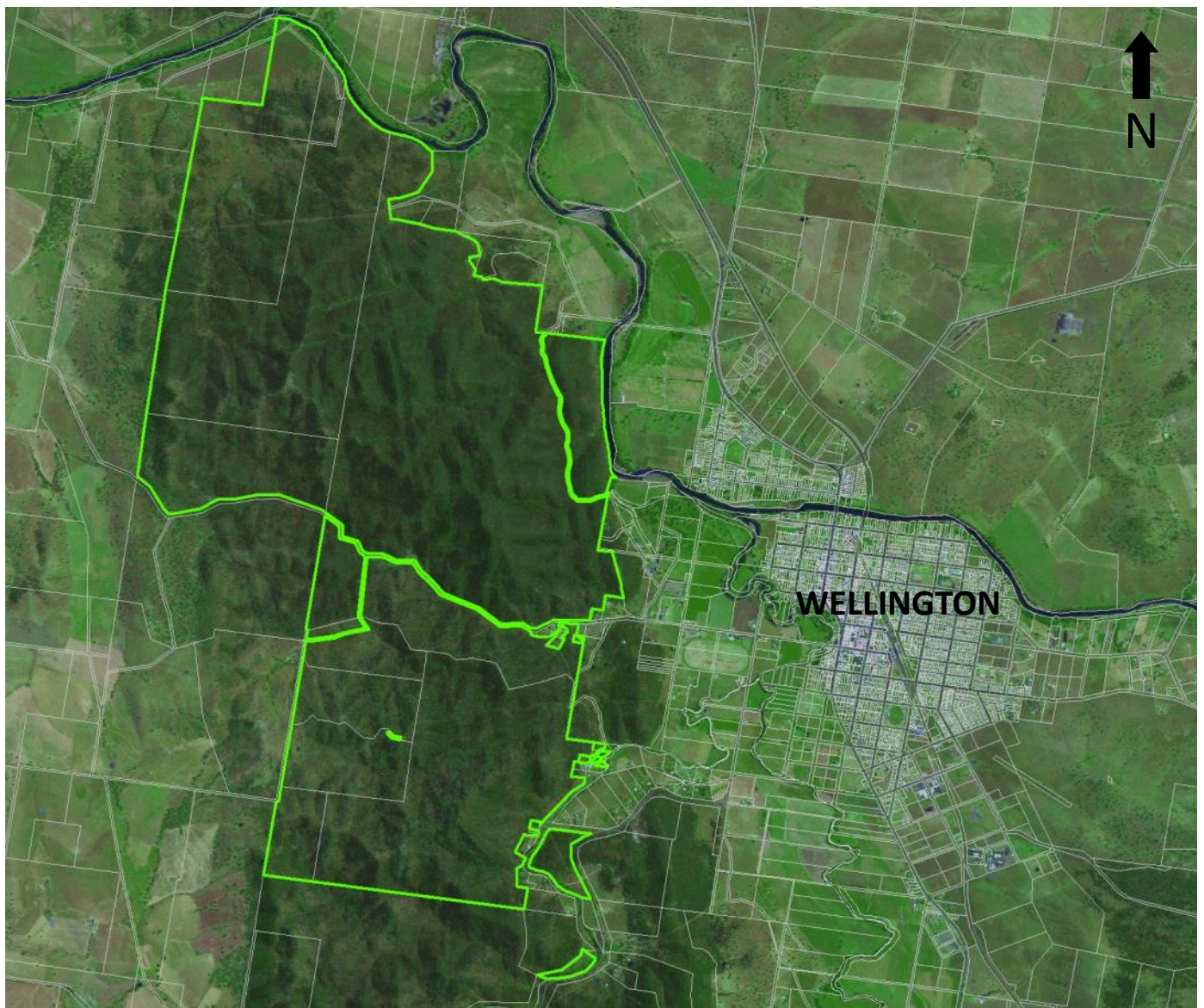
The Mount Arthur Reserve ('the Reserve') is a mountainous 2,123ha crown reserve set aside for **Public Recreation** and **Environmental Protection** (see boundaries outlined in green on the map below). It is located at the northern-most part of the Catombal Range, approximately 3km from the town of Wellington, NSW. The Reserve is dissected by three public roads, and surrounded by a mixture of Crown and private lands.

West of Mt Canobolas, it appears that the Mt Arthur Reserve is the oldest crown reserve of it's type in the Central West. The Reserve has significant conservation values within a catchment where over 60% of native vegetation has been cleared.

The Mt Arthur Reserve is used for walking, trail running, dog-walking, horse riding, road bike riding, mountain biking, and picnicking. It is also used by people seeking scenic view points and those interested in botany, birdwatching, art and photography.

Access to the Reserve is free - the Reserve is a community asset encouraging outdoor activity, physical fitness and appreciation of nature. The entire Reserve, the equivalent of over 2000 football fields in size, is managed by local volunteers.

Large areas of remnant vegetation on public land, which are actively managed for conservation whilst providing public access and formal recreation opportunities, are relatively uncommon in the local area. Those that do exist within the Dubbo Regional Council area are quite different in character to Mt Arthur.





# NATURAL & CULTURAL VALUES

The environments of the Reserve are much more varied than they appear at first glance. A closer look in the right season reveals its gems.

Over 400 native plant species have been recorded in the Reserve, including rare and threatened species. The Reserve is noted for its high diversity of terrestrial orchids, with 36 species recorded.

The Reserve is also home to some vegetation communities only found on conglomerate rock outcrops and rocky hills in the central western slopes. Examples of the White Box– Yellow Box—Blakely's Red Gum Endangered Ecological Community also occur.

Six threatened fauna species have been recorded within the Reserve, with at least a further 10 potentially occurring.

In 1987 the Mt Arthur Reserve was recognised on the Register of the National Estate for its:

- native plant richness and diversity,
- value as a fauna refuge
- population of the Small Purple Pea (*Swainsona recta*) - a state and nationally listed threatened species.

The Mt Arthur Reserve population of the endangered *Swainsona recta* (a native pea species now only found in the Queanbeyan and Wellington-Mudgee areas) is significant due to its size. Over 4,000 individuals of this species have been found within the Reserve, making this the second largest population currently known in the state and the largest known population within the Wellington-Mudgee area. A portion of the Reserve is identified as a specific management site for this species under the Office of Environment and Heritage Save Our Species program.

Whilst no comprehensive surveys have been undertaken, the Reserve is known to contain Aboriginal artefacts, particularly in the vicinity of creek lines.

The Reserve also contains items of local heritage interest, including:

- a number of trees bearing old survey marks,
- the remains of the old Wellington reservoir (an example of a 'thin concrete arch dam' completed in 1900 and demolished in 2002), and
- the 'Scenic Drive' - a tourist road built during the Depression, featuring hand built stone embankments.



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust

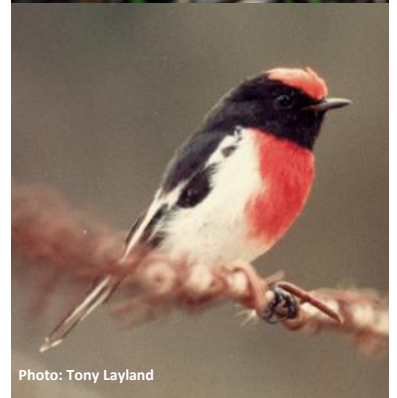


Photo: Tony Layland



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Tony Layland



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



# RECREATION



Photo: Monica Wilson



Photo: Dubbo Bicycle User Group (BÜG)



Photo: Nikki Huckel



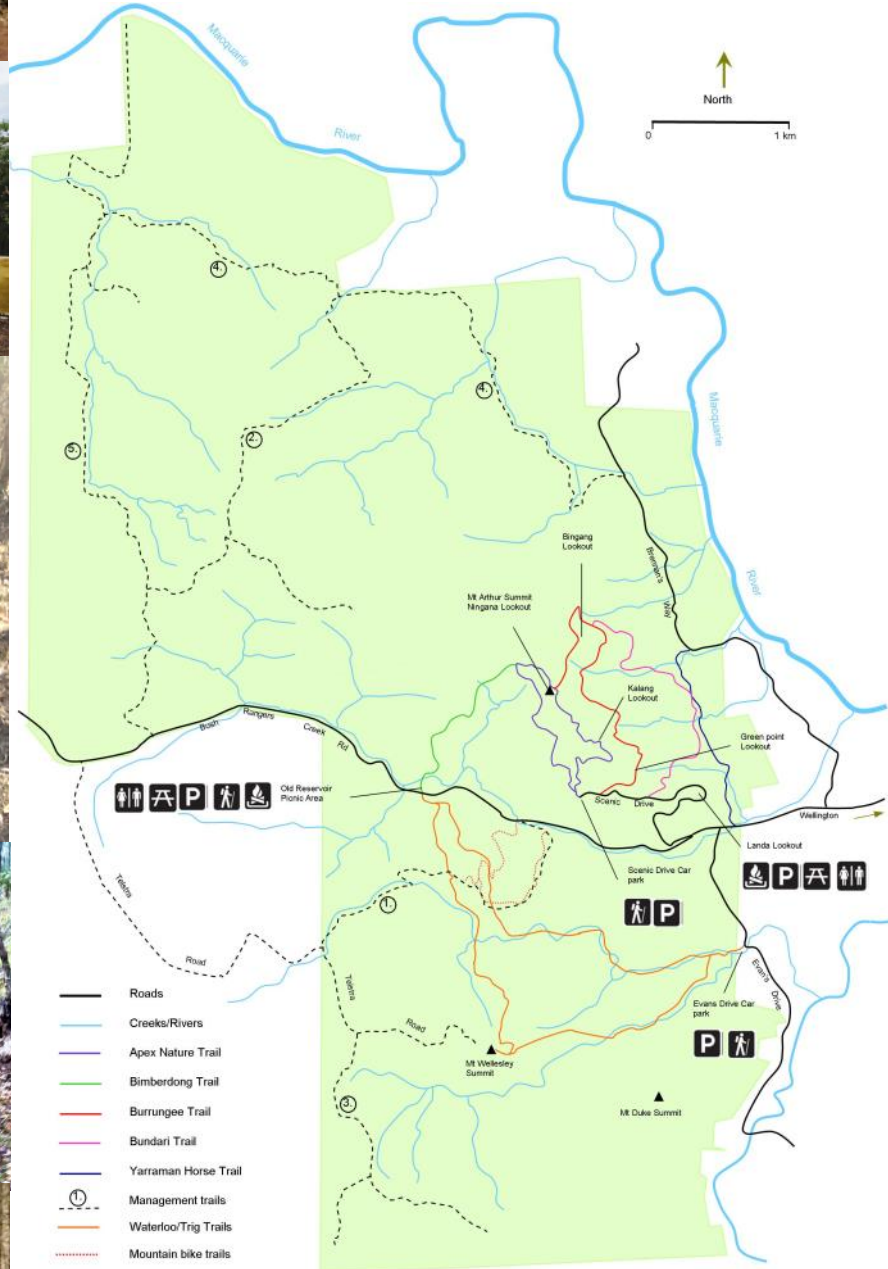
Photo: Emmalee Holmes



Photo: Cherie Hughes

The Reserve provides 17.5km of **walking trails** through varied terrain and environments, with stunning views of the surrounding landscape. Two picnic areas provide basic facilities.

Two downhill **mountain bike** trails are signposted and mountain bike riding is also permitted on the fire trails within the Reserve. **Road bike riders** use the Scenic Drive and Bushranger's Creek road. **Horse-riding** is also permitted on the Yarraman Trail and fire trails.



In addition to Wellington residents, the Reserve is increasingly being used by Dubbo residents and trail runners from Orange and Mudgee.

The Reserve is also visited by field naturalist groups, bush-walking clubs, the Wellington Scouts, local gym/fitness groups and running clubs.

Four of the trails are used for the annual Mt Arthur Challenge running events.



Photo: Hardnox Gym



Photo: Wellington Scouts



# RECREATION



Photo: Greg Walsh



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Emmalee Holmes

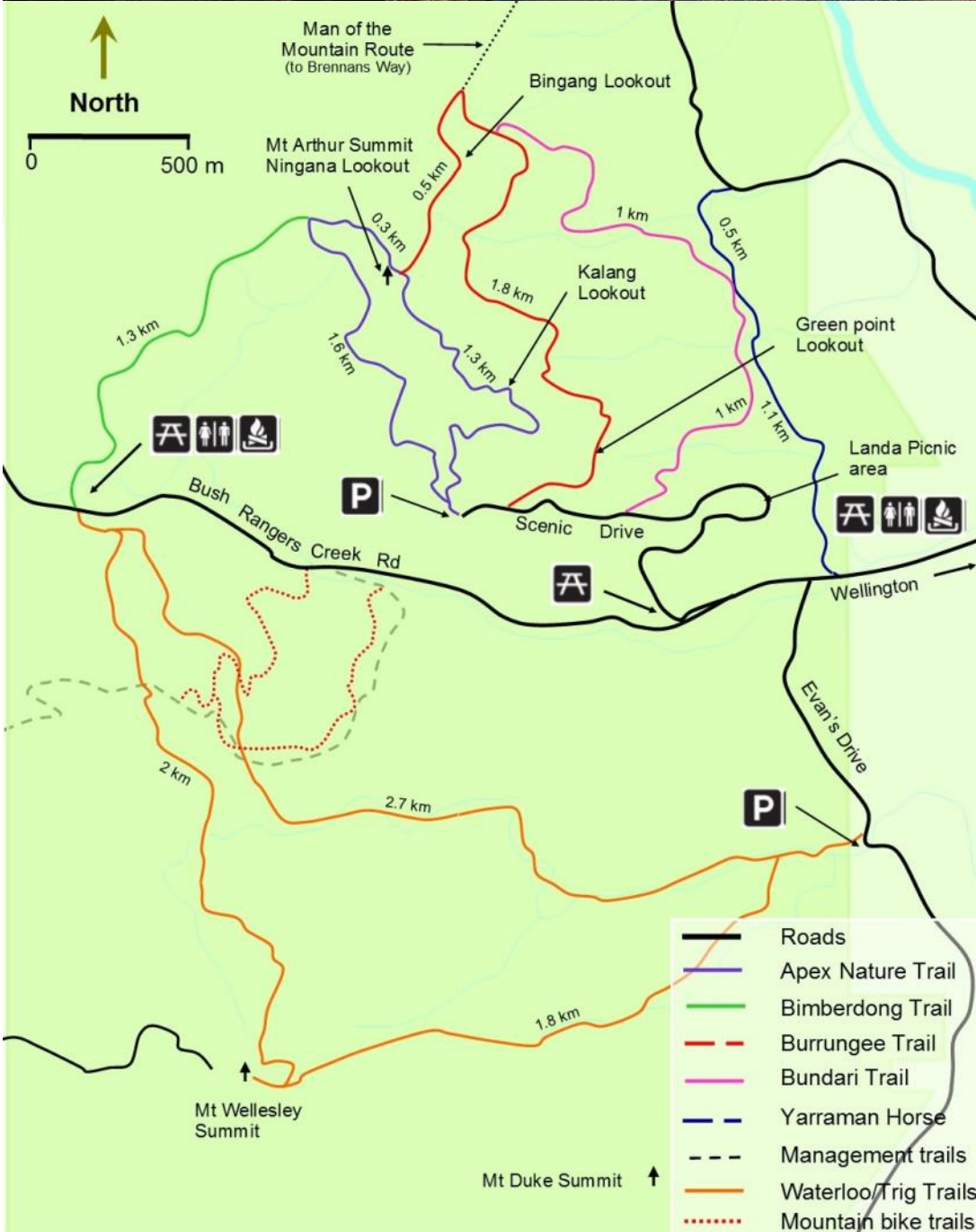


Photo: Emmalee Holmes



Photo: Alice Newton



Photo: Monica Wilson



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Sanya Ardill



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



# THE MT ARTHUR TRUST



The Trust is a small group of volunteers (appointed by the Minister for Lands) responsible for the care, control and management of the Reserve under the *Crown Lands Act 1989*. We aim to maintain a range of recreation opportunities for the community, whilst preserving and enhancing the area's special values and character.

We are a not-for-profit group with little regular income. We are largely dependent on grants and fundraising for projects, maintenance, pest/weed management, and to rectify vandalism and rubbish dumping. All income goes back into the management of the Reserve.

The Department of Industry (Crown Lands) no longer supports applications for operational cost assistance. Whilst project-based funding can be applied for annually through Crown Lands, we must compete with 8,000 other Crown Reserve Managers.

We currently employ a Ranger for three days per week, supported by volunteers (or casuals when funding allows). The Ranger does an exceptional job and this position is vital for addressing our management obligations over the 2000ha area, maintaining facilities and walking trails so they are safe and appealing, and reducing our need for contractors. Yet it is difficult to source funding for operating costs, particularly those relating to ongoing maintenance. Continuing low income is a significant threat to this position.

Threatened species management is in collaboration with the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and fire management in collaboration with the Rural Fire Service/ Orana Bushfire Management Committee. The Wellington Correctional Centre Community Projects Team also assists us with projects where possible.

## Achievements

Over the last 10 years the Trust has delivered signage, road and facility upgrades, trail improvements, revegetation works, weed control projects and a goat control trial is underway. The Reserve and selected Trust projects were the subject of a Local Land Services and OEH field day in 2016.

In 2011, 2012 and 2014 the Trust made it to the top 3 finalists in the Crown Reserve Community Managers Category of the NSW Regional Achievement and Community Awards.

A subcommittee of the Trust organises the annual Mt Arthur Challenge to raise funds and promote the Reserve. The event received the 2016 Wellington Australia Day Community Event of the Year Award.

All of our administrative work is performed by a small number of volunteers, amounting to hundreds of volunteer hours per year. Keeping administrative costs very low through volunteer labour ensures we deliver excellent value for money on our management tasks and projects.





# TOURISM

The Mt Arthur Reserve epitomises Dubbo Regional Council's proposed promotional tagline for Wellington: 'Start your adventure'.

The Regional Development Authority Orana Regional Plan 2012-2020 lists the Mt Arthur Reserve among the key attractions for Wellington. On 21 March 2017 the 'Travel In' website listed the Mt Arthur Reserve as number two in a list of the top 5 Wellington attractions [[www.travelin.com.au/articles/Top-5-things-to-do-in-Wellington-04015](http://www.travelin.com.au/articles/Top-5-things-to-do-in-Wellington-04015)].

Over the last 10 years the Mt Arthur Trust has been working on progressively improving the walking trails and other facilities in the Reserve as funds allow. Whilst promotional funds are very limited, the Trust has nevertheless been active in improving promotion of the Reserve—a website has been established and a colour brochure produced. The Trust also administers a Mt Arthur Reserve facebook page and a Mt Arthur Challenge facebook page.

The annual Mt Arthur Challenge in particular has raised the profile of the Reserve and has proved that this asset can attract people to Wellington. Now in it's 5th year the event is still attracting strong interest and participant numbers are growing, with 410 competitors registered in 2017.

The 2017 Mt Arthur Challenge survey results also demonstrated that the event, and the Mt Arthur Reserve, can bring repeat visitors to town and associated benefits to local businesses:

- 30% of survey respondents indicated that they visited their chosen Mt Arthur Challenge course prior to the event and supported a Wellington business at the same time.
- 83% of survey respondents reported that they supported a Wellington business on the day of the event.
- 57% of survey respondents said that they would be 'very likely' to 'extremely likely' to return to Wellington to explore the Mt Arthur Reserve further.

Whilst increased visitation to the Reserve does not guarantee any increased funding for the Mt Arthur Trust, the Reserve is clearly an asset which can bring social and economic benefits to Wellington.



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



Photo: Shannon Wallace



Photo: Cherie Hughes



Photo: Mt Arthur Trust

Photo: Emmalee Holmes

Photo: Mt Arthur Trust



# THE MT ARTHUR CHALLENGE



Photos: Cherie Hughes

The Mt Arthur Challenge is held in mid July each year and consists of:

- **The 9km 'Wedgetail Challenge'** - the pinnacle of the running events, with the overall winner awarded 'King or Queen of the Mountain'. The 'Wedgetail Challenge' ascends Mt Arthur following marked trails and covers some relatively rough terrain - both uphill and downhill. The harshness of this course is softened by the scenery and spectacular views.
- **The 5km 'Wallaby Run'** - a less challenging 5km race, suitable for both experienced trail runners and novices, which avoids the steeper sections of the 'Wedgetail Challenge' course.
- **The 50km 'Limestone Ride'** – a single lap of a 50km loop which proceeds through the Mt Arthur Reserve and through the picturesque Wellington countryside. The entirety of the ride is on sealed public roads.

All events commence from the marshalling area at the Wellington Showground and utilise parts of the Mt Arthur Reserve.

The event is open to everyone, runners and walkers, young and old, individuals, families and teams. Competitor feedback each year is overwhelmingly positive, and the event is growing.

The event is funded via competitor registration fees and sponsorship. In-kind support is also received from local people and businesses donating services and spot prizes. Hundreds of volunteer hours go into the organising of the event and over 40 volunteers work hard on the day of the event to make sure everything runs smoothly.

As a fundraiser for the Trust, any profit from the event goes back into the management of the Reserve. The profit from the event is variable—over the last four years the event has generated funds covering between 9 and 18% of the Mt Arthur Trust's annual general management costs (excluding projects).



More information on the event, including our annual report to our sponsors (containing competitor feedback and survey results) can be found at: [www.mtarthurchallenge.org.au](http://www.mtarthurchallenge.org.au).





# WHAT IS A MT ARTHUR RESERVE TRUSTEE?

Wellington Times Advertisement on 10 July 1973:

## MT ARTHUR RESERVE TRUST VACANCY FOR TRUSTEE

*A vacancy currently exists on the Mount Arthur Trust.*

*Appointment to the Trust involves a person in attendance at a number of meetings each year, a degree of manual labour, exposure to considerable criticism and frustration of having the fruits of toil destroyed by senseless vandalism.*

*It also provides opportunities for simple fellowship in congenial company, for communion with nature in an attractive setting and for worthwhile work in conservation. Otherwise, the Trustee is unpaid.'*

Alf Roberts, Honorary Secretary (1973)

