

11th ANNUAL WILDERNESS RESCUE NAVIGATION SHIELD 1999

Once again Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue (BWR) has run its annual Emergency Services Navigation Shield. This year's event was held on July 3rd/4th based around Wingello State Forest in the Southern Highlands. The event involves a two day navigation training exercise open to all emergency services involved in search and rescue. Each year a different site is chosen to provide new challenges. Wingello had a good mixture of easy forest country mixed with National Park that is dissected by two large gorges. The scrub was not fierce as in NavShield 98 (my apologies to all survivors from Sassafras).

BWR is the Search and Rescue Section of the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs Inc. and was established in 1936. The NavShield is our unique, premier training event open to all Australian and international emergency services personnel. Local knowledge is minimised as the location is always a secret until the last week. This year there were over 450 participants who entered either the one day event as a team of 2 to 4 or the two day event as a team of 4 to 6 members. Surrounding the base site was a network of 42 checkpoints, each with a unique points value. Each checkpoint had a distinct marker flag and a paper punch to mark the team card. The aim is to choose a navigation route that links up as many checkpoints as possible without incurring a late penalty. By using a laptop computer to collate results, we are able to give progressive results and have the awards presentation about an hour after the finish time. The event always happens rain or shine and fortunately this year was dry and mild. Our course co-ordinators Ken Smith and Glenn Horrocks received many unsolicited favourable comments for its accuracy and diversity. Our caterer provided good nourishing food, as usual, to aid the social mingling just prior to award presentations. "Moon lights" as used at the Thredbo rescue provided our best lighting ever of the disused airfield base site.

Safety is always paramount so that overdue groups are always a concern. BWR was kept busy with three overdue groups from the one day event and one from the two day event. Two of the three groups turned up quickly on Sunday morning but the third couple was slow to turn up and search procedures were steadily being widened when they were belatedly found on a fire road. A two day team did not return until 5pm on Sunday - 3 hours late. Penalty points for lateness are 30 points for every five minutes or part thereof, so these teams did not do too well in the overall standings...

The NavShield is recognised by the State Rescue Board and once again a representative of the NSW Premier (Carmel Tebbutt, Minister for Juvenile Justice) presented the two day Shield. The one day Shield was won by Victorian SES. It is good to see an interstate team doing well, but I am sure it will make the local teams keen to keep the Shield in NSW next year! Keith McQueen copied his father as part of the winning two day Springwood Bushwalking Club team. Class Shields are also awarded for the respective services which included Defence Forces, SES, Rural Fire Services, NP&WS, Ambulance, Police and VRA. There were also 10 year and 5 year Participation Cups presented. You do not have to be a winner just persistent. The VRA radio amateurs WICEN helped again with communications and Radio Checkpoints. A full list of results is attached.

More complete details of this and past NavShields is available at our website. Mark your diary now for next years NavShield on July 1st/2nd, 2000. Don't ask where it will be but if you are interested in being part of this great annual event then send your details to BWR Secretary, PO Box 22 Canterbury, 2193.

Keith Maxwell
Director
Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue.
