



KCROS PO Box 425 Jindabyne NSW 2627.

www.kcros.org.au

YOUR VOICE FOR CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING IN KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

NEWSLETTER – May 2007 ISSUE

THE AIM OF Kcros

KCros is a special interest group with a primary focus on the issues of service and facilities for cross country skiers in Kosciuszko National Park. Experience has shown that a unified, well organised representation is more effective than many small scattered voices. KCros has the mandate of various cross-country organisations and independent skiers to speak on those issues on their behalf as a single strong voice.

KCros exists to ensure that the views and needs of cross country skiers are addressed and met in the operation of and in the future development of the Kosciuszko National Park.

KCros is aware of the differing needs of beginners, novices, children, seniors, handicapped or disabled, racers, ski orienteers, day tourers, back country tourers and snow campers.

THE ROLE OF KCros: COMMUNICATION

KCros provides the forum for the discussion of issues by interested parties. It will publish material of interest in a newsletter twice a year and make information available on the Internet and by e-mail. It offers individuals, clubs, associations, organisations and the NPWS the opportunity to raise issues, share information and make their views known to KCros and to each other.

THE ROLE OF KCros: LOBBYING

KCros provides the structure for varied and unrelated cross country skiing groups as well as independent skiers' to speak with one voice on

issues that affect safe and enjoyable participation in their chosen sport anywhere within Kosciuszko National Park.

KCros will identify and investigate relevant issues of concern to cross country skiers. When necessary KCros will co-ordinate lobbying activities and establish an effective lobby network wherever and whenever it is needed.

MEMBERSHIP OF KCros

Your KCros subscription gives life membership and KCros is funded by voluntary annual donations from members.

FROM THE PRESIDENT **From the President**

Welcome to the autumn edition of KCROS newsletter. I hope you all had a great summer whether you stayed at home and sweated it out or traveled north to colder climes.

A number of positive developments have happened over the spring and summer for cross-country skiing. More money has been granted by the State government for trail grooming at Perisher Valley over the next two years and the Nordic Shelter extension is going to begin construction this coming spring.

There was also the release of the Kosciusko Plan of Management which will have an affect on cross-country skiers in less travelled areas of the park. More about that later on.

Also over the summer there has been a lot of public discussion on global warming. I recently saw Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient

Truth” and it certainly dispelled the misconception that the world goes through warming periods. Probably the most graphic image was an ice core taken from the Antarctic Ice Shelf from which CO2 levels and global temperature could be ascertained over the last 650,000 years. Yes there has been a warmer period on the Earth in the Middle Ages but nothing compared to the last 30 years. This is hardly a new issue. We have know about this problem since global warming began accelerating in 1970 (look at the snow charts since then) and what is of most concern is that pace of climate change seems to be greater than first predicted. You certainly don’t hear news headlines of “coldest season on record” these days.

The consequences for our much loved KNP could be disastrous with a loss of habitat and species. In the recently released management plan for the park it was given the highest priority for parks staff. It is now overdue that we think about our own footprint on the planet and reduce the amount of energy we use as consumers.

We also need to make our politicians accountable for what they do. This is why organizations like KCROS are important. However this organization is just a mailing list if people don’t take action. So if you are concerned about something involving the Park or cross-country skiing write a letter or contact your local State or Federal politician or the relevant minister. And let us know what your concerns are. I am sure other KCROS members would be interested as well. We are a dispersed and disparate recreational community but I know many people are passionate about this sport. Sometimes we just need to show it.

Warren McCourt
President
Gabs_waz@yahoo.com

We have issues....

Over the spring and summer there was some good news for cross-country skiers...

First there was the grant of \$190,000 from the Department of Sport and Recreation for the

extension of the Nordic Shelter at Perisher Valley. This has been a long time coming but with the \$120,000 already raised from the cross-country community, construction can begin on the Nordic Shelter extension this coming spring. It seems like it is all coming together with also the Department of Planning granting a construction certificate that has taken years to obtain. KCROS and its members have been major contributors to the funds for the extension. Special thanks must go to the husband and wife team of Peter Ward and Leslie Ludwig who have put in years of persistent work into this project. Stay tuned to find out how you can help out!

There is also going to more funding for grooming over the next few years at Perisher Valley. Following a meeting with the Minister for Environment, members of the steering committee for Perisher Range Cross-Country Inc obtained an extra \$20,000 a year in funding for grooming for the next two years. Also authority was obtained to begin in 2008 the introduction of trail fees. This should bring funding up to close what is available to Falls Creek in Victoria. Some of the extra money was obtained from the increased park entry fees over the last two years.

Just a reminder that park entry fees this coming season will be \$27 per day or \$190 for a season’s pass. Yes it has gone up again and it is final part of a two part increase that arose from the IPART recommendations in 2005.

The Kosciusko Plan of Management was released last July and it has some good news and some bad news for cross-country skiers. Many of the huts that were burnt down in the January 2003 fires are to be rebuilt or restored whilst the future of the nordic shelter at the Dry Dam trails at Cabramurra is uncertain. The huts to be rebuilt are Boobee, Brookes, Broken Dam, Delaney's, O'Keefe, Patons, Pretty Plain. Those to be restored or reconstructed (ie using the previous construction methods) are Dr Forbes, Geehi, Old Geehi and Opera. Those that will be not rebuilt but will be commemorated are Boltons, Bolton Hill, Diane/Orange, Grey Hill Café, Happy Jacks, Jounama and Linesman No 2. The huts to be rebuilt will be done through co-operation between the NPWS and the Kosciusko Huts Association.

Whilst this is good news for cross-country skiers what may be of concern to them is that the future of the nordic shelter at the Dry Dam Trails at Cabramurra is under threat. With declining snow levels at Cabramurra, the NPWS is considering whether the shelter should be removed. The trails are still marked and yes snow seasons are not the same as they were. However when there is snow the shelter does serve as a worthwhile facility for people especially those come from west of the Divide. Considering the resources that are being used to rebuild huts that have even lower visitation throughout the year and it would seem hasty to remove this shelter. Enquiries will be made with the Service about the timetable for the removal of the shelter.

Other developments in the plan are the permission for judicious pruning in summer grooming on the Perisher and Smiggins Trails. Over the last few years along with snow fencing, summer grooming has been shown to greatly increase the longevity of skiing on the trails during winter. There is also permission given for artificial snowmaking and lighting on the 2.5km trail at Perisher. This is something a future management body of the trails may have to consider.

Congratulations to NSW skiers Ben Sim, Alex Almoukov and Aimee Watson who qualified to compete in World Championships this year. Ben skied the World Championships

in Sapporo, Japan in February and Alex and Aimee skied in the World Junior Championships in Tarvisio, Italy in March. All finished in the bottom half of the fields in their races but had skied well in a number of races beforehand to qualify. So well done to them!

Remember our website www.kcros.org.au and if you want to keep in touch with the racing scene during the season go to www.nswski.com.au.

Warren McCourt

FROM THE SECRETARY/EDITOR

I have taken on the editorship again and am happy to be communicating with you. KCros needs to continue to survive for the sake of cross-country skiing in NSW as a whole. I want to repeat what was printed in an earlier newsletter - *KCros has the only database of KNP XC skiers except for a few customer records that may be kept by commercial organisations or XC club membership records.* This list is this back up for recognition of our sport and needs to be maintained. *Please advise us if you change your address. Encourage your friends to join KCros and talk to new skiers about joining. It is noticeable from reading race results that the majority of racers do not belong to KCros in spite of the fact that KCros devotes a lot of time to improving the standard of the groomed trails.*

Margaret McCawley

THE 2006 AGM

Margaret McCawley Secretary/Editor

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

We need enough money in our account to cover the cost of two newsletters per year (about \$1000 for each newsletter plus some for insurance, Ski Association affiliation and petty cash etc.). We were able to give \$3000 to the Nordic Shelter extension fund and also pass the remaining Rob McCawley memorial fund monies to the extension. Your donation to KCros go back into XC skiing for your benefit. Please keep the donations coming in.

Laurinda Allan
Treasurer

REPORT FROM THE TOURING REPRESENTATIVE

Japan

In late December 2006 Kathy Husselbee and I flew to Hokkaido, the north island of Japan, for two weeks skiing. We planned to mostly resort ski at Niseko and Furano, with perhaps a little track skiing. Hokkaido has the reputation for deep dry powder and Niseko is reputedly the best of the best. This season was unpredictable with some great snow but also quite a bit of rain.

Resorts

Niseko United is huge and steep, the steepness about equivalent to the steeper slopes at Thredbo, but much longer runs. It's like four resorts in one, interconnected by lifts and a bit of cross country skiing! We skied mainly green and blue runs (blue runs are red in Japan). Some of their green runs seemed more like blue runs! There are easier slopes in the Annapuri ski area. But there is a good mix of levels across the resort and large areas off piste for powder hounds.

The resort at Furano is smaller and in general less steep and also much less crowded, with two sections connected by a two-seater chair. We had good snow but not much powder in Niseko, and almost 24 hours a day of the light fluffy

stuff falling in Furano, which was fabulous. Furano has little off piste in the resort, but there are areas that are not groomed for days, so we often skied in 15-20cm of fresh powder.

In Niseko there are tours to more remote areas, where you will be driven up the mountain on a caterpillar, and only have to ski down. In Furano the more remote areas are in national parks so no caterpillars!, You walk up what you want to ski down! Well, you say, that's what we do in Australia. However, knee to thigh deep powder is another experience altogether. I did 20 mins on snow shoes and I was bushed! From Furano there are also tours to Kamui ski links and other smaller resorts, which sometimes have more ungroomed snow.

Bookings

This was the first time in Japan for both of us, and as we had the equivalent of maybe three lessons in Japanese, we decided to use a tour company to pre book accommodation, connections and flights. Unfortunately, John Morrell's tours did not coincide with our dates (see end of article for more details), so Kathy rang around a few companies and chose Deep Powder Tours because they responded quickly to enquiries and the staff had been to the places they were recommending and their first hand experience was invaluable. One of their number was even a telemark skier! So they were very helpful about gear and what could or could not be hired.

Flying

We flew JAL, which I'd recommend, as your Japanese experience starts as soon as you get on the plane. The cabin attendants, as do all Japanese, take service seriously! Though cattle class is still cattle class when the plane is full. Luggage allowance is 20kg. Many people put their boots in their day pack and carry them on board. Even doing this we had 22-25kg each, including our skis. However we had no trouble with excess baggage. Don't take it for granted, just travel as light as you can.

The Japanese airports were a lot of fun, especially Kansai in Osaka. So don't be dismayed if you have a bit of a wait. There's fascinating nicknack shops and amazing food especially frozen seafood.

We flew Sydney, Osaka (overnight at airport hotel), Hokkaido, with a bus connection to Niseko, and between Niseko and Furano. If you want to book yourself the bus company was Good Sports.

Gear

Take your own if possible, especially boots. You can hire tele gear in Niseko (probably small selection), but not Furano. Good fat alpine powder skies available in Niseko, also boots. No track gear for hire in either resort. Its colder in Japan, we skied in about minus 10 to 5 degrees. Take extra layers of thermals, and options for keeping your whole face covered. We also used rubber cleats which we pulled on over our walking boots. They grabbed in the ice and helped avoid unexpected falls when going out to dinner etc.

Track skiing

No tracks in Niseko, and at least one in Furano, which was well used.

Money

Change to yen in Australia. Big city banks give the best rates. ATMs are scarce in Japan, and ATMs in English even scarcer. They also only accept cards with four normal corners. Cards are accepted in many places, but not smaller establishments.

Accommodation

We stayed at pension Woody Note in Niseko (Hirafu village) and North Country Inn in Furano. Both were very good. The later was 20 mins walk out of town, but with a variety of bus services. Many good places around - closer to the slopes in Furano are pensions Lavender, and Crayon. Be prepared for small rooms, little hanging space and banging doors. The Japanese are pretty quiet, apart from door banging. Aussies are good at it too.

Food

Fantastic, especially if you like fish – raw, grilled fried etc. Even though Niseko is very used to aussies, there are still places where you walk in and no one speaks English, but are very welcoming, and its lots of fun pointing to what you would like. We also met lots of Japanese who spoke some English and were very happy to

help. Cost was about \$10-\$30 ahead. On the resort slopes, you could get a large steaming bowl of noodle soup for \$10-\$15. Vending machines are everywhere with drinks and snacks. Good supermarkets, though it's hard to know what's inside the packaging. Look for triangles of rice wrapped in seaweed with surprise centres.

Onsens

A hot mineral bath at the end of the day is great for sore muscles and flagging energy. Niseko has an onsen you can walk to. Furano does not have mineral springs in the town, but has onsens without the minerals, and there are tours to local natural springs – from just a rock pool in the snow to large complexes. In most onsens the sexes bathe separately, no costumes needed.

Language

Learn a few words before you go. Lonely planet has an excellent phrase book. If all else fails, have a pen and paper handy. Many Japanese learnt to read and write English at school, but have little practice speaking.

Ski schools

Niseko – lots of English speaking alpine instructors, many of them good Aussie instructors. Several English speaking Japanese telemark instructors. Furano – has only just got an English speaking alpine instructor, no one for teles.

What's next for us? Learn more Japanese, have another trip to Japan and allow more time to travel away from the ski fields. One of John Morrell's trips beckons. Friends have just come back from one of John's trips, this one including Kamui, Asahidaki and the Takachi mountains. They enjoyed the smaller places, the delightful Japanese hosts, and opportunities for off piste skiing and XC trails. Where ever you go it's a fascinating country!

Laurinda Allan Touring Representative

Laurinda's article brought back flooding memories of the island of ice and snow that is Hokaido. Top of my list was the wonder of night skiing in the intense cold at Furano, the heated footpaths, (natural thermal waterpipes,) at Ashi

Daki and the downhill ski trails there through the red pine forests. See the KCros website for many overseas ski places. Do contribute if you have something to share with other X-C skiers. Ed.

REPORT FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

(e-mail the www.kcros.org.au web address to all the cross country skiers you know who race and stress that the representation that KCros has will be even stronger to look after their interests if they join us – Ed.).

E-mail

If you have an e-mail address please note it on your donation form but print clearly, make dots clear and make the case clear. Our e-mail list is confidential; it is not given to any outside organisations. The membership secretary has the only electronic address book and the secretary has a list of members. Due to the very small response by members to receive the newsletter by e-mail this option has not been used so far.

The web site is designed to further the aims of KCros:

KCros focuses on the issues of services and facilities for ALL cross country skiers in Kosciuszko National Park.

The role of KCros is to identify and investigate relevant issues, plan strategies in conjunction with skiers, ski clubs and associations and to coordinate lobbying activities.

KCros is a forum to facilitate communication so that groups and individual skiers can share information.

KCros promotes cross country skiing as a healthy outdoor exercise suitable for the whole family for minimal cost and virtually no impact

on the environment.

KCros WEB SITE www.kcros.org.au

Chapters on the KCros website include:

- PLACES TO GO SKIING. A guide to trails and backcountry skiing. Includes the KCros Perisher Trail Map.
- CROSS COUNTRY SKIING ISSUES, NEWS AND LINKS. Current news updates here as well as newsletters. Notices posted from skiing organisations about events and races. News from the NPWS. A page of links to other websites of interest to XC skiers including clubs, accommodation, snow reports, overseas areas.
- MEMBER'S COMMENTS. A page where you can have your say.
- BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY AND PLANNING A TRIP. This is essential reading for anybody going skiing for the first time and for skiers who want to ski off the beaten track or go snow camping for the first time. Information on planning a trip, equipment, clothing, food, safety issues, first aid, weather, snow conditions, camping, navigation etc.
- PHOTO GALLERY. Put your favourite XC photos on the website.
- LEARN TO SKI XC. The KCros website is YOUR site. Send in your comments, your photos and details of your favourite skiing areas and route directions if applicable.

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING RESOURCES

There is an excellent source of links to ski clubs and organisations, snow reports and snow cams, weather reports and forecasts and manufacturers, retailers and services on the KCros web page. If you have other cross country ski related web sites to give KCros then go to our page and send them in.

Popular clubs and associations are :-

Koscuiszko Huts Association

PO Box 3626 Manuka ACT 2603

Interesting newsletters, working bees and information on all huts in the Park. \$25/year, \$10 student.

Australian Cross Country News – Publication of Skiing Australia's XC Committee.

Interesting news and articles, mostly race related for NSW/VIC. \$25 /year.

Canberra Cross Country Ski Club

GPO Box 922 Canberra ACT 2601

Comprehensive program of lessons and tours.

Web page. \$25/year.

NSW Nordic Ski Club

PO Box A683 South Sydney NSW 1234

Many Sydney skiers are members - interesting web page. \$25/year.

Ridnaun valley, just south of the Brenner Pass in the south Tyrol. The main valley trail is fairly limited but there was good skiing at the biathlon centre, which is why some dozen of the best national teams had come there to train.

We had always planned to go east to Toblach for a few weeks and as they had just had a decent snow fall we arrived a week early to what proved to some of the best skiing anywhere. We probably should have stayed there but were misled by optimistic weather forecasts plus rather misleading trail reports and moved to the Leutasch Valley, near Seefeld in the Austrian Tyrol. After the first week the 5 to 10 cm of "ice in the morning, slush by midday" was occasionally groomed but it was really all finished by the start of March and we went gorge walking and sightseeing.

In future we will leave decisions on any trips to Europe to the last thing, keep the plan as flexible as possible and probably confine ourselves to the higher resorts, at least 1000 metre above sea level. This will mean giving certain destinations a miss altogether but will make others such as Japan, North America from the Rockies west and maybe Scandinavia relatively more attractive.

Stan McDonald

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH?

In February this year the English paper "The Guardian" ran an article that criticized the Alpine Ski industry for not coming to terms with" its own contribution to the degradation of the climate and of fragile mountain environments". It finally suggested that "To enjoy mountains, humans will have to work harder...cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, or walking."

However, anyone who planned to do the "right thing" and cross-country in Europe this last season would have found that in many places condition were almost as bad as last season in Australia. It was so warm that both citizen and "serious" races were either shifted to different locations, had the dates or the courses changed or were cancelled altogether.

Our own experience was fairly typical. We arrived in the German biathlon centre of Ruhpolding in late January to green fields and almost balmy weather and moved on after two days, but not, however, to our next planned stop of St. Johan im Tyrol where conditions were not much better. Instead we skied for a week in the

LIST OF DONORS

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Your Suggestions to and/or Comments about KCros