



Photo by the author
September 2009

Lake Mountain Heathlands were severely hit by the 2009 fires but the growth around you shows how well they are recovering.

At the top of the hill, you'll arrive at the **Snow Gauge**. From here you can look out across the headwaters of the Taggerly River and the Echo Flat heath land and mossbeds.

Although severely hit by the fire you can now see various shades of green which shows there are a variety of plants returning.

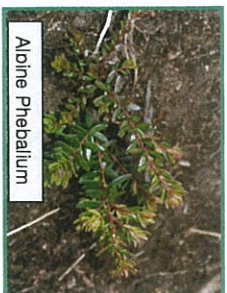
The area looks devastated, but the assessment is that it will recover and no rehabilitation work is needed. It may take some years, but there should be significant regrowth evident this spring. From the photos on the sign here you can gauge the progress of the regeneration.



Alpine Mint Bush



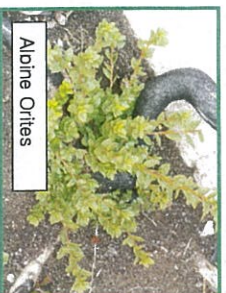
Hovea Montana



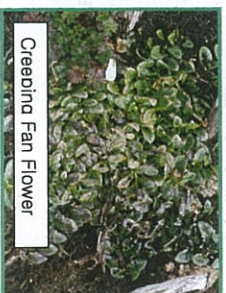
Alpine Phebalium



Alpine Pepper



Alpine Orchids



Creeping Fan Flower



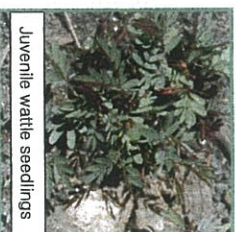
Trigger plants are one of the most prolific flowers in this area, particularly after the recent fires.

As you leave the **Snow Gauge** area you will see a profusion of **Trigger** plants with their distinctive bright pink flowers. These appear to be growing in an ash bed in places but look closely and you will see a profusion of tiny seedlings of all types appearing.



Prior to the 2009 fires there were few Wattle on the plateau, those which regenerated after the 2009 fires were mostly the Yellow Wattle, which is abundant, as happens they perform an important task in fixing nitrogen into the soil. The Wattle seedlings can be distinguished from the Snow Gum seedlings by the off-centric position of the main vein.

When the seedlings first appeared the juvenile leaves were pinnate or divided, and very different to the large single leaves which you can see now.



Juvenile wattle seedlings

The sign here will help you to distinguish between the Snow Gum seedlings and the Wattle seedlings as you walk along the trail.



This is the border between Snow Gum and Alpine Ash Woodland forest. Both are fire resistant but not fire tolerant. The Snow Gum has a thick bark and not see basal sprouts on these tall gums. These trees are also easy to identify by their very black lower trunks since the fire.

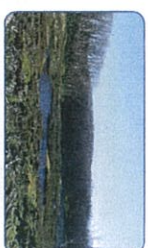


When Home Trail ends keep the workshops on your left and return to the Village.

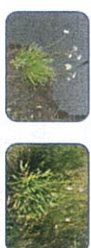
Displays of regrowth photos have been exhibited in the main foyer, drop in and have a look or head to the bistro for a coffee.



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The pond system on the plateau forms an important part of the ecosystem and in summer hosts a variety of flowering herbs, shrubs and annuals.



Red Fox Tail
Red Fox Tail

Continue along Echo Flat Trail

When you arrive at **Helicopter Flat**, stay on Echo Flat Trail with the open heath land and ponds still on your left, stop and have a close look for wildflowers.

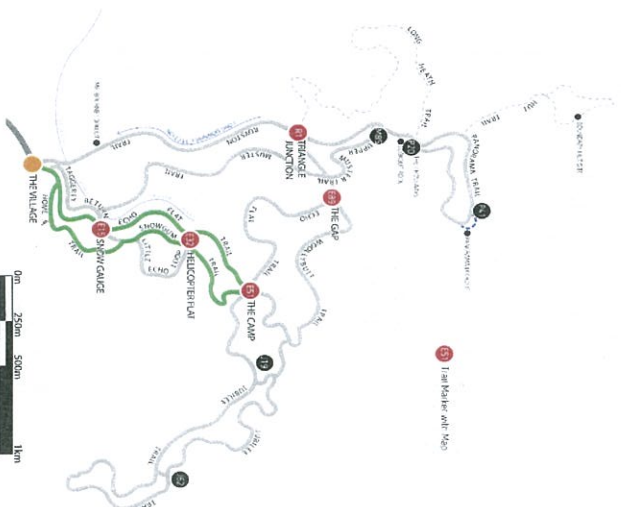
The Alpine Leek Orchids flower in profusion here, particularly on the left of the track, but you may have to look closely.



Leek orchid

At **The Camp** take a hard right turn to return to the Village via Snow Gum and the Home trails.

(At this point you could also decide to take a longer walk following other ski trails). As an aid to navigation all ski poles along a particular trail start with the same letter as the name of the trail. E.g. Echo Flat poles are named E1, E2, etc.



This map of the ski trails can also be found on the sign at the Camp and at other major intersections as marked on the trail network.



This area is known as The Camp from the days when the Koppal family had the grazing lease for the Lake Mountain plateau. The Koppal family were Maysoyle pioneers and had the cattle lease from the 1860's until 1964.

Summer Walks at Lake Mountain

After a great snow season, the ski trails are open for summer walking and offer a fantastic display of the many ways the Australian bush responds to fire. Come on up, enjoy a walk and see the new growth and wildflowers which are emerging as the blanket of snow disappears. With over 30km of trails to walk there is something for everybody.

Green again Walk

An easy 4km walk (about 1.5 hours) return to the Village with interpretative signs along the way.

Follow the **green arrows** → outside the building, across the open ski school area to Echo Flat trail, you will soon enter the Snow Gum woodland and see at first hand how well the snow gums are recovering since the 2009 fires.

Stop and read about the different ways that these remarkable eucalypts respond to fire. You will see abundant evidence of both types of regeneration along Echo Flat trail.

The regrowth from the base of the Snow Gums was one of the first signs of regeneration immediately after the fires. However it was not until the October 2009 that the tiny seedlings also emerged.

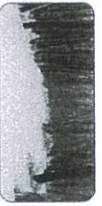
The understory as you walk is much greener than in 2009, the carpet of snow grass has returned and you'll see evidence everywhere that the wombats are enjoying it. Wombats appear to have survived the fires well, presumably they went to ground and survived in the many burrows they have on the plateau. Look out for these as you walk the trails.

The straw you will see laid along the trails is rice straw, used during winter to reduce the mud on trails. Rice straw is particularly chosen to ensure no foreign seeds are brought into the Resort.

The 3 large water tanks you will pass on your left provide all the resort's water supply. The tanks are constantly filled by the Taggerly River which meanders across Echo Flat.



Ski Trail construction occurs under strict guidelines. Trails are designed and constructed with careful consideration for the environment. Trees felled for safety reasons are chipped on site and used for trail construction.



Ski Trail construction

As you descend to the Village, near pole H10, you'll see Woollybutt or Alpine Ash forest on your left, these trees are obvious from the very large and black trunks. They have no regrowth at the base as the Snow Gums do, and will regenerate only from the seed cast during the fire. These trees, like the Snow Gums, are regrowth from the 1939 bushfires, and so the process begins again... Look carefully for seedlings but don't confuse them with the watties which are everywhere and growing very quickly.



Snow Gums regenerate in two ways after a fire.



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