

## TROOP CAMP AT CAMP COUTTS, 14-16/Aug/2009

It was a cold start to our weekend camp with Friday night temperatures dropping to around 3° and on Saturday morning we warmed up around the fire until the sun camp into the valley. After breakfast we went on a hike in small patrols navigating to designated checkpoints where the Leaders caught up and verified the navigation. We climbed the high ground to the west of the camp and explored the 'bubble caves' on our way towards Mt Westmacott, the highest point in the Sutherland Shire at around 270m. From the summit we could see the city skyline to the north, the national park and ocean to the east, high ground to the south and Blue Mountains to the west.



On the summit.



Exploring the bubble caves.

The following pictures were taken for fun while the Scouts were standing on firm ground; but it looks like they are clinging onto a cliff edge.



**Nearly lost these two over the cliffs (actually they were safe and just posing)**

We returned to camp for lunch and by now it was a beautiful warm spring day - in winter.



**Lunch Patrol.**



**Cutting firewood.**

Activities after lunch included collecting lots of fire wood to cook a baked dinner, some training tasks and relaxing around camp. During the afternoon some adventurous Scouts decided to sleep out in make shift shelters. They had a big adventure selecting a suitable site and using natural materials to build their shelter. While that construction proceeded late into the afternoon we started the fire to build up a supply of hot coals. Duty patrol prepared the savory rissoles and we baked them in the Dutch ovens. They were so juicy and full of flavor! Dessert was apple pie baked in the fire too.

Later in the night two adventurous groups retired to their bush shelters. Here is what Jack thought of the sleepout:

“During the weekend Jack, Josh M, and Daniel M slept outside. Now you must think we were mad because it was at Coutts. But in fact it was a lot warmer in our shelter than it was in the tent. We made our shelter by finding two rocks with a space between them. We placed leaves and some plywood (that we found in the bush) over the top to make a roof. We placed big leaves along the ground to make it comfier. We slept head to toe. It was a lot comfier than we thought it was going to be. We had a great time and it was a great learning experience.”



**Scouts retire for the night in their make shift shelters.**



Sunday morning was cold and we warmed up by the fire. Breakfast was delicious pancakes cooked just right by our master chef. As the sun came into the valley it turned into another beautiful warm day.



**Preparing pancakes from scratch.**



**Pancake master chef in action.**

The refurbished camp chapel was a nice spot for Scouts Own in the glorious sunshine. We packed morning tea and set off on another hike to the east of the camp and then south along the valley to the highway and then returned to camp along the western side of the valley. There were some interesting carnivorous plants in the boggy places along the track. During the weekend we walked about 7km all up, which was great exercise and good preparation for the blue journey candidates who walked with weight in the packs.

Back in camp we enjoyed lunch and went through the pack-up routine and headed home. The unload and repack at the hall proceeded quickly with many helpers. Thanks to everyone who participated to make a great weekend.