



# Desert Runner

Newsletter of the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club



Hi Everyone

Welcome to the January 2020 edition of *Desert Runner* - the newsletter of the Alice Springs Running and Walking Club. After a break of 12 months, we are back in publication. The aim is to keep members up to date with significant news and developments within the club, but also for what I believe is more important – to share our experiences as runners and walkers. Not many of us make the headlines, but we all have interesting stories to tell and share, and hopefully this newsletter provides an opportunity for that to happen.

As you will read, 2020 will see many changes in how the club operates through the year. We hope to introduce online registration for some events. There will also be a points system to determine a club champion over the year. This system will give every member the chance to be club champion. The calendar will also include events with a social emphasis. The club will also need to begin looking at ways to reduce our use of plastic cups. Running events all over the world are starting to acknowledge this challenge, and it will require everyone to be prepared to do things differently. And as was highlighted at the AGM, the issue of the cost and inconvenience of traffic management plans for our road events will need to be addressed for these events to continue.

Undoubtedly the highlight events for 2020 will be the second West Macs Monster in May and the Masters Games in October. In addition, the 41<sup>st</sup> running of the Alice Springs Marathon will take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in August. But our season begins with the Australia Day Fun Run on 26<sup>th</sup> January starting at 6.00am in Todd St Mall. This is the largest running/walking event in Alice Springs, and the distance of 3.5km means no one should have any excuses for not entering, no matter how much the heat has interfered with your plans to keep fit over summer. So I hope to see everyone there.

Best wishes for 2020

John

## President's Report

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate event participants and volunteers on a great 2019 for the club and thank all again for their support of the committee past and present as we head into 2020. It's very exciting to see a great blend of experience and new faces onto the committee and various subcommittees and it's a privilege to be serving as President for the coming year.

The new committee has already met twice in December including a very fruitful 'Shed Party' (code for working bee) on a balmy 40 degree evening.



You'll notice a refreshed and exciting calendar of events for 2020 with additional training opportunities, an age graded percentage points system and social events scheduled! We've also added in a monthly Strava Challenge for those so inclined which Cail Rayment will be overseeing. I strongly encourage you to get your annual membership sorted early to ensure you get maximum value from it for the year, and bring some friends with you!

I and the committee are listening and open to your ideas and feedback. It is beyond the committee to make it a great year *for* you, but we are keen to make it a great year *with* you. Please don't hesitate to mention what is working and what isn't, as well as

put your hand up to be a part of the solution when things can be done better.

Sunday Jan 26 will see the Australia Day Fun Run on again, a perfect way to kick off the year and see how much of a toll the Christmas break has had on your fitness! On Saturday Jan 18th we will also be hosting a 'beep' test on the Council Lawns. This doesn't involve expletives; rather it is a test of endurance and measure of general running fitness that we'll offer at 3 different times throughout the year. It will be free to participate!

Lastly, in the recent club survey and in a number of conversations I've had the past couple of months, three core ideas have been resurfacing that on reflection have set ASRWC apart from many other sporting clubs, and I believe in 2020 with the start of a new decade upon us, it is the right time to affirm them as a foundation for the next ten years going forwards. Those are the values of *FUN, FITNESS and FRIENDSHIP*.

I know for myself that these three values sum up my experience of ASRWC these past few years well, and the more I have become involved, the more fun I've had and friendships I've built. Even for those of us who are pushing and looking to kick some particular running or walking goals in 2020, '*FUN, FITNESS AND FRIENDSHIP*' is a reminder of why we got involved in running or walking in the first place....and to not take ourselves too seriously, lest we lose sight of the origin of our involvement. I hope this year your involvement helps you kick some fitness goals, but more importantly I'm looking forward to the priceless fun and friendships the year will bring also.

Simon Duke

President ASRWC

## Club News

### Age Graded Handicaps

During 2020, ASRWC will introduce the age-graded handicap system to determine the athlete of the year – both for running and walking. Age grading is a way of putting all race participants on a level playing field, regardless of age or gender. A calculation is carried out that takes into account the age and the sex of the runner and produces a single percentage value. This value can then be used to compare performances between males and females and across different ages and distances. The higher the percentage value, the better the performance.

The percentage value is determined by dividing your own time for the distance by the world record for the age and gender category that you are in. For example, if the world record is 70 minutes for a specific distance, and you ran it in 100 minutes, that's precisely 70% of the world record.

Your age-grading percentage can be used to objectively indicate your running standard. The table opposite is typically used.

This age-graded award will only be open to ASRWC members. Certain events on the calendar are designated for ASRWC

Percentage	Standard
100%	World record
90% +	World class
80% +	National class
70% +	State class
60% +	Local class

season points. Over the duration of the year, points earned during these events will be totalled and the winners will be the walker and the runner with the highest score at the end of the year.

### Deep Water Running

Quick question! What is the best way to stay fit while keeping cool during summer in Alice Springs? Answer – water running!

As it simulates the running action and posture in the water, it is by far the best cross-training for runners. Anyone can do it. A flotation belt is used as the feet do not touch the bottom. And some time needs to be allowed to learn to maintain the correct posture in the pool. But after that, my experience suggests that every minute of water running can roughly equate to one minute of land running. Studies have confirmed that aqua jogging is relatively close to real running in terms of cardiovascular demand.

Early this year, Australia's leading female distance runner, Genevieve Gregson, was suffering from severe Achilles tendonitis and wasn't able to run on land. For longer than 4 months (February into June) she maintained her elite training program –

but in the water. Through July, she gradually moved back into full land training. In October, she made the final of the 5000m at the World Championships in Doha. So if it works for elite athletes, it can work for you.





## Katie's run across Australia

During 2019 I had the privilege of supporting a young lady who was fulfilling her long held dream of running across Australia. In July, Katie Visco set out from Darwin to run to Adelaide. She was accompanied by her husband, Henley, who was riding a bicycle pulling a trailer with around 150kg of gear, including their water and food. Their route took them down through Lajamanu onto the Tanami and then down to Alice. And from here, it was down to Fink, Oodnadatta, Flinders Ranges before finishing at Henley Beach in Adelaide.

The journey proved a lot more challenging than they anticipated, and I thought others might like to read some of her posts. In 2009, Katie became the youngest female to run across America. She sees her running as an avenue to inspire others to chase their dreams. In this post below, she describes her run from Lajamanu to Alice Springs.



**Big milestone:** one week ago today, we made it to Alice Springs!!!!!! It's our halfway point and our only city en route. I've run 1114 miles in 60 days to get here, and the day we rolled into town I even decided to run an extra three miles in the morning just to stuff my face with a real live burrito for lunch. Talk about motivation!

Alice Springs, or Alice, is a town of about 25K, and it looks and feels like the spawn of Moab, Utah + Austin, Texas - quirky, colorful, and full of trails. A weird oasis in the desert. I love it. I could live here. But I can't fall in love with it too much or else I'll never leave! Anyway, even though this city is overload to the senses since being in the bush for two months, it has everything I want - rest, and my favorite conveniences like going out to a coffee shop, fresh food, and interaction with people. We've been looking forward to this place since day one, dreaming daily of said rest,

sleeping in, and the chance to cook said fresh food in an actual kitchen. It's all a reality now, thank goodness! Other than rest, our goal while here was to nail down our route south ASAP. Check. We even met up with Aussie bike-packing legend Sarah Hammond to get some route knowledge! Verdict: we have sandy miles ahead of us so we need to make sure the bike is able and we are prepared. Another check, we think. All said and done, it's 47 more days to the finish and we expect the first 18 to Oodnadatta to perhaps be even more challenging than the dirt roads we've already experienced. Time to get sandy!

Since I last wrote y'all, my feet have begun to ache, or rather, hurt. My knees are still stiff, and make creaky noises like rubber on rubber. But that's no surprise. Perhaps the miles are catching up to me, or the change to pavement and more miles a day is breaking me down little by little. I don't know what's going on,

but I do know that I want to finish and I will come in on crutches if I have to, so to speak. Don't get me wrong - it's not like I'm heaving over in pain. What I'm saying is that things are massively uncomfortable, but I can push through this. I've come to learn the difference between being determined and being stupid. I am the former, BTW :-). The bottom line is that I'm smitten to be chasing my dream, and there's no question that I'll make it to Adelaide given what we've endured and accomplished the last 60 days.

Now it's time for some stories from the last three weeks...

On September 2, we made it across the Tanami Desert of Australia. The Tanami was the crux of our trip; if we could make it across this remote 17-day stretch of no food resupply and sandy, corrugated, rocky dirt road, we could make it to Adelaide.



The next day, we hit pavement, after 450 miles of dirt. Henley immediately kissed the ground. Then a big-bearded road train (truck) driver pulled up and dropped four oranges into my arms from his window and said, "Good luck, take care!" I couldn't believe his timing! After I stuffed the oranges into our bike bags, Henley took a few pedals on this smooth surface and said, "It's like butter on my ass." He was proud and so relieved. The dirt was miserable, maddening, hard, and beautiful all at the same time. There wasn't a day that went by that we both just wanted the whole trip to be done, over. The Tanami rocked Henley - it beat him up. I've never seen him struggle so much physically, and thus mentally. I'm so proud of how he collected himself to push through. I know he's proud

too. It took swearing out loud to himself, curling over his bike handlebars exhausted whenever he got a minute, and realizing that distracting his mind with stories of other athletes suffering under their own volition may be the best solution. I'm just so gobsmacked that our bodies held up, the bike/trailer didn't break, and my husband actually pedaled a 350-pound beast across the shittiest road I've ever experienced. Amazed. Dear Tanami Road; you are a road we will never run/pedal down again, you seriously suck, but thanks???? Yes, thanks; and experience that tore us apart but then built us up.

Let's hear from Henley about what biking the Tanami was like for him:

"If you've ever ridden a horse and can recall your first time in the saddle, you might come to understand what it's like to pedal a dirt road in Australia. You try trotting out and the goal is to glide with the animal, posting it's called. Dig your heels into the horse's side, and you start to bounce, but bouncing isn't what you want. There may be, though, a fleeting moment when you and beast are indeed moving in unison. You're posting, and you're a cowboy. It feels nice, even, and then it ends, and you're bouncing again. Bouncing, bouncing and bouncing. In a moment it's made clear that you're out of your element, not where you're meant to be. You want to feel like the real McCoy, but instead you feel like a real idiot. Misplaced. It's an experience to endure, not to enjoy or celebrate. And from then on you shutter at the sight and thought of a mounted horse and that loathsome leather perch that you've been thrown from."

Once we hit pavement, my running became more efficient and I was able to cover 3-4 more miles in a day. I've been going into a meditation as I run, or at least that's my intent because I now believe it's the only way I will get each day done without suffering. Sometimes I just run with my shadow, focusing on the way it's moving in front or alongside me, and then all of a sudden I've covered the miles and it's time for dinner.

One special stop four days before hitting Alice was

Tilmouth Well Roadhouse, where we camped on grass (no joke!) for two days, resting and enjoying their pool (also no joke!) and breakfast room with couches. The first night, we met a most striking character, John, 62-years old, and chatted with him for a good while at camp. We will forever refer to him as “John the suave Hungarian.” Without a picture to show you, here is a little bit about John, written by Henley:

“He’s got a strut to him. Polished boots (freshly done), a long-sleeved cotton shirt that’s been cut to just above the elbow and tucked in to blue jeans, black suspenders, peppered hair cut stylishly, freshly shaven. He’s carrying a black leather pouch and has one helluva firm handshake. He’s the kind that uses your name often in conversation even after only just meeting you. ‘That’s a good question, Henley.’ He is an amateur gold prospector traveling in a (green) canvas-backed Land Cruiser. He describes an elaborate process by which he’s aiming to find ‘gold in quantities that make a suitable economic return.’ Well-spoken and still carries a heavy accent despite living in Australia almost 40 years. ‘I can’t seem to lose my accent.’ Mid-conversation, he pulls out a circular, squat tin can, and for a second I think he’s got gold to show us. It’s rolling tobacco, and he rolls an expert cigarette, balancing the can on a crossed knee. He’s the type that makes smoking look like a reasonable, if not attractive, activity to pursue. Our conversation meanders, and in the end, he remarks that making decisions is the most difficult task in life. He’s speaking our language and applauds us for even deciding to try something like this. ‘Apprehension takes hold and can paralyze.’ He’s right. That’s what is so nice about this trip, I think. The decision has been made. We’re here, and all we have to do is run and cycle. That’s it. No massive decisions to be made. We need to relish that because once we dip our toes and tires in Adelaide’s ocean, it’s all over, and the big choices have to be made again. Work. Where to live? School? All the things that feel stifling and like a gauze around the oozing, dripping freedom we feel right now.” John - what a dude!!!!

On Henley’s note, I, too, am taken by the fact that this all will be over so soon. It hit me when we were relaxing at Tilmouth, having a chance to reflect. I



realize that as much as this is hard, I want to be more grateful for each day, each moment, even if a struggle. My manifesto for the rest of the trip is this: “I will be more grateful on this trip. I will count the ways. I will be in nothingness more often and not need to do too much too soon. Relish the way of the bush now.”

While in Alice, a bustling place, I can tell that my mind is already full of things to do; I actually have a to-do list here. I’m struck by how quickly my mind goes into modern pace when I have access to things like interesting things to do in town, WiFi, and a coffee shop with colorful food. With only two more days here before setting off again, my promise to myself is to consider every step meditation, a practice of presence.

A few nights ago, Susie told me a story of an aboriginal elder, now in her 90s, who as a 6-year old girl, had to travel with her family across the same land we’ve travelled, barefoot with only the clothes on her back. To ease her hardship, her mother told her to sing to the land and she would be OK. Wow. I just cannot imagine that. Loss of words.

So, my friends, for the next 47 days, I will let the earth take care of me; I will sing to Australia. I must, and whatever land you are on, you can sing to it too.

Everything out of love.



# Introducing

Clubs are made of people. Everyone has a story to tell. Let's use this newsletter to meet some of them.

## David Busuttil

### How long have you been running, and what factors led you into running?

I did my first run on the beach when I was about five or six with my Dad. I have probably been a runner ever since, sometimes taking it much more seriously than other times. How much I weigh generally determines how well I am running!

### What would be your best running achievement?

Probably my sub 80 minute half marathon

### Describe a favourite running memory.

By virtue of the fact I live in the Northern Territory and was already entered into the Melbourne Marathon, I was made an NT Representative in the Australian Marathon Championships. I thought someone was playing a very elaborate trick on me when I was told this.

### What do you like best about running?

Challenging myself, getting fit and making friends.

### Do you have a favourite training session?

I am enjoying Tuesday mornings at Head Street Oval as we have been getting a very good turnout lately.

### Do you have a current running goal or aspiration?

I am entered in the 128 kilometre West Macs Monster for 2020. I just want to finish and do better than my last ultra where I was just appalling!

### Do you have a favourite piece of essential running gear?

My shoes – only question - is it my road runners, trail runners, spikes, racing flats, spare trail runners, old road runners etc.?

### If you could go for a run anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

How about running against Jesse Owens in the 100 m at the Berlin Olympics? Just so I could shake his hand at the end.

More realistically, I think Iceland as the scenery looks amazing and this heat wave is hurting me.



# West Macs Monster 2020

The 2020 West Macs Monster is really shaping up! This year, we have an increase in entries across all race distances, with entrants hailing from across Australia and for the first time, internationally. This year's event sees the inclusion of the new 128km Ellery Monster, providing an intermediate option for those seeking a challenge beyond the 65km Standley Monster who are not yet ready to tackle our flagship event, the 231km Sonder Monster. While the WMM is new on the ultra-running scene, receiving such a positive response from the adventure racing and ultra-running communities affirms our belief that WMM's reputation as a world class event is gaining traction.

The resounding success of the WMM would not be possible without the support of our volunteers. Once again, we are seeking assistance from our local community to facilitate event operations in the lead up to and over event weekend. Roles vary between registration, start and finish line duties, check point duties, sweeping sections, general 'gofer' type responsibilities, and packing competitor packs and set-up activities before the event. The checkpoint roles are particularly special as we access the trail heads, setting-up camp for 24+ hours to provide aid station requirements. As an aid station volunteer, you would be camping in some of the most stunning scenery imaginable!

If you would like to join us as a volunteer for a truly rewarding experience at this unique, bucket list event, you can register on the website via the 'Enter Now' tab – just select 'volunteer' in the first drop-down box and complete the rest of the details as required. We will contact all volunteers with more information in due course.

Some interesting stats:

Of the Ultra Distance Events, the 65km event is our most popular, and will fill to capacity before entries close. (So get your entry in...)

Total Registrations are currently 101 with 62% so far being female (C'mon Fellas!)

Entrants are from:

- Alice Springs 65
- Darwin 7
- NSW 6
- VIC 12
- QLD 1
- SA 8
- International 2

The inaugural event in 2019 had approx. 150 competitors in total, including the 5km event. We are well on track to exceed these numbers on race day as the 5km Tele-Monster family fun run will



attract a lot of families and kids on the day.

The committee is looking forward to bringing you another outstanding, challenging and above all else, fun event on 22-24 May 2020.

If you're unsure if the monster is for you, bear in mind that all distances have generous cut-off times and are designed to welcome anyone who wishes to push themselves to the edge of their comfort zone. Entries are still available across all race distances; though expect the 25km and 65km to reach capacity, so enter now to avoid disappointment!

Warm regards for the holiday season

Marc Woods



## How to train for your First Trail Run (or Second, or Third ...)

The following article by Ashley Mateo appeared on the Runners World Website, August 2019. Ashley is a writer, editor, and UESCA-certified running coach who has contributed to Runner's World, Bicycling, Women's Health, Health, Shape, Self, and more. Photos are from 2019 West Macs Monster.

Once you've tackled a marathon, there are two ways to challenge yourself further: Increase your distance into ultra-marathon territory, or make the same distance harder by changing up your terrain. Tackling a distance more than 26.2 can be intimidating to some people, but running a marathon on trails? That's much more accessible, which is part of the reason trail running participation has increased by 26.4 per cent over the past three years, according to research done by the Outdoor Foundation.



But running a marathon on the trail isn't exactly the same thing as running one on the road. A trail run lets you step outside the pace/splits construct of a road race because your mile pace is dictated more by the terrain than anything else. And while there are pluses (like less impact on your body versus running on pavement and better scenery), a trail marathon also comes with unique elevation changes, different strength requirements, and less

aid on the course.

Thinking about taking your marathoning off the road? Here's what you need to know before you start racing trails.

### What Does a Trail Marathon Training Plan Look Like?

Good news: You can use the exact same training plan as you would for a road marathon, with the caveat that your long run should definitely be on the trails, says Jes Woods, a Nike Run Club Coach in New York City and ultrarunner. "You should try and hit the trails as much as you can, but at least once a week," she says. "And if you only have time for one, let it be the long run."

### Don't Get Hung Up On Pace

Road runners tend to obsess over their pace, splits, and finishing time. But "the first piece of advice I would give someone training for a trail marathon is don't worry about your pace, because every mile is created differently," says Mendoza.

On a trail, one mile could cover a 2,000 foot elevation gain and the next could be totally flat; you can't compare how long it takes you to do each one. Instead of focusing on your splits, pay attention to your effort level.

"I try to train people to transition to time-based runs and training by perceived effort," says Woods. "The terrain changes so much on trails and sometimes you're going to hit points where you can't run, and you're just power hiking up, so you cannot not be stressing out, looking down at your watch, 'What pace am I at?'"

A 9-minute mile on the trail may feel way tougher than a 6-minute mile on the road, so "you should

know what your marathon effort, or 4 out of 10, feels like and what your 7 out of 10 effort feels like, and you can judge your performance from there,” she adds.

Don’t be afraid to hike, either. “A lot of people moving from the road to trails have this mindset that you have to run everything, but sometimes running isn’t the most efficient thing,” says Mendoza. “I’ve seen really good hikers hike faster than people trying to run up; they’re conserving energy for when they need it.”

### How to Cross-Train for a Trail Marathon

Runners are...not great at cross-training. But making time for workouts *besides* running is crucial, especially for trail runners. On the road, running is a repetitive, forward motion; the uneven terrain of a trail, however, can pose serious stability challenges. “On a trail, you’re usually navigating rocks and roots and things on the ground, which works your legs in a way road running does not,” says Mendoza.

Because trail running calls for shorter, choppier steps that keep you light on your feet, it’s important to work on your foot and ankle strength and work on your lateral stabilizing muscles. “I like to do a lot of single-leg stability exercises, whether that’s single-leg deadlifts, bounding exercises or plyometrics where you’re jumping and landing on one foot, or balancing on one leg on one of those Bosu balls,” says Woods. “You need to get accustomed to activating and using those stabilizing muscles before race day.”

A strong core is also going to help keep you upright when you hit bumps on the trail. “Your body takes a different kind of impact on a trail than on a flat road, because you’re working so many more muscles that connect at different points of your body,” says Woods. Since your core is your center of power, it needs to be able to withstand the extra stress.

Make sure you’re including at least one day of strength training in your training plan, with just 10

minutes of core work.

### Carry What You Need (and Take It with You)

When you’re out in the woods, you don’t have access to the same kind of amenities you might find on the road (think: kind spectators handing out orange slices or Popsicle sticks with Vaseline).



“My rule of thumb on the trails is to prepare for the worst so the worst doesn’t happen,” says Woods. “I always wear a vest to carry essentials—plus a packet of Advil, a packet of Pepto, a Band-Aid.” Mendoza also recommends toilet paper for bathroom emergencies (“You really don’t want to use the wrong kind of leaf...”) and enough food to keep you fuelled, since trail marathons typically run longer than road marathons.

Unlike the chug and toss culture of road racing, trail running is all about leaving the trail better than you found it. So, during a race, you’re going to need to carry anything you might need with you—and take it back out with you. “Maybe you even pick up one piece of garbage that you see,” says Woods.

“Just be respectful of the trails.”

# Australia Day FAMILY FUN RUN & WALK

**SUNDAY 26 JAN @ 6.00 AM**  
**START/FINISH: TODD MALL,**  
**SOUTHERN ENTRANCE**

**ENTRY: \$5 ADULTS / \$2 KIDS (Under 18)**

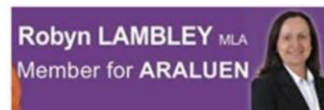
**3.5km**

**Pre-register at Intersport**  
 or from 5.15am on the day at the Alice Springs Town Council Lawns

This is an event for the whole family. **RUN or WALK.** Come and celebrate Australia Day 2020.  
**Dress Code: *Australiana***

**Free Breakfast** for all participants after the event - Fruit and cereal, BBQ, pancakes  
 Coffee available for purchase

For more info contact John: 0488 435 442





## What's on this month?

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January:** Beep Test – Council Lawns 6.00am. Come along and get a measure on your fitness. A fun and non-competitive event and anyone can do it.

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January:** Australia Day Family Fun Run/Walk – 3.5km

Come along and participate in Alice Springs' largest community run and celebrate Australia Day. The distance is only 3.5km so there is no excuse for not bringing the whole family. You can Walk or Run or Both.

Enjoy the biggest breakfast after the event.

The dress code is Australiana and there will be a prize for the best dressed.

After the event, you can then be part of the ASTC Australia Day program.

If possible pre-enter at Intersport – pick up your race bib and avoid the crowds on the morning.

Club membership registrations will be open soon. NT Athletics has introduced a new on-line registration system and we are still setting this up. When the system is ready, the announcement will be made by email (to all 2019 members) as well as on our Facebook page.

**Remember** – become a member before the events start to enjoy the benefits of subsidized race fees for members. Club membership registration will be online at [www.asrwc.com.au](http://www.asrwc.com.au)