

Brindabella Bushwalking Club

February 2024



I recently participated in a very well attended Wednesday walk involving almost 40 participants and it reinforced (again) to me the necessity of everyone acting in support of the group and the walk-leader.

The walk was over well-defined tracks and footpads and the terrain was open/lightly forested areas, so the walk leader and their tail-end support person could keep a reasonable eye on how everyone was going. Nonetheless, the group did get quite spread out and there was quite some time difference between walkers at the front and the rear of the group. It would not have been possible to sustain such a large group if the walk entailed going off-track.

As well as resources on our website, Bushwalking NSW has several videos on the responsibilities of leaders and walk participants and I encourage you to view them, e.g. search YouTube for 'team spirit bushwalking nsw'.

By following this simple guidance as well as the resources on our website, we can all (including the walk leader) have an enjoyable and rewarding walk in the bush.

Don't forget about the Mt Ainslie Sunset Walk this Friday 2nd February, starting from the carpark behind the War Memorial at 6:00pm.

That's it from me, so I hope to see you on a walk soon, until then take care.... Bill



The first walk of 2024 on 3 January was led by John E. There were an amazing 38 participants! Could the large number of attendees perhaps be the result of New Year's Resolutions?

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CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME [here](#)



RED IMPORTED FIRE ANTS

Bill Gibson



In support of funding to biosecurity agencies for the continuation of the existing eradication program of these dangerous invasive ants, the club recently made a submission to the Senate Inquiry on Red Imported Fire Ants in Australia. The call for submissions was due to close on 1 December 2023 but was extended to 29 January, 2024. Here is some background information about the threat.

In our environment, a silent threat looms, one that has the potential to disrupt ecosystems, endanger lives, and impact our economy. It comes in the form of the red fire ant, an invasive species from South America that has found its way into Australia.

Seven infestations have been subdued, but the largest one remains. This infestation is from Brisbane to close to the NSW border. Most recently it spread to the coastal island of Minjerribah (North Stradbroke) and within 12km of the New South Wales border.

Look across the Pacific to the United States, where a similar story unfolds. What started as a small incursion in Alabama in the 1930s has now spread across sixteen states. The economic toll is staggering – billions lost each year, not to mention the human cost. Eighty-five lives claimed through anaphylactic shock from stings.

These ants aren't just a nuisance; they are quite formidable due to their sheer numbers and ability to multiply and move with alarming speed. With venomous stings and aggressive behaviour, they pose a threat not just to other species but to our ecosystems. And they're spreading, with the potential to enter the Murray-Darling River catchment, where their presence could become beyond control

If not contained/eradicated, the impacts of red fire ants in Australia could surpass the combined damage done each year by our worst pests: feral cats, wild dogs, foxes, camels, rabbits, and cane toads.

Australia's biosecurity forces are in the middle of an eradication program

against the red fire ant invasion. Aided by advanced surveillance techniques, they look for signs of infestation, deploying bait and insecticides to disrupt the ants' reproductive cycle.

Failure to eradicate fire ants could lead to extensive ecological, health, and economic consequences, including significant impacts on agriculture, public health, and infrastructure.

The presence of fire ants in our wilderness areas could lead to restrictions on where we could hike and/or serious injury to bushwalkers from fire ant stings, so not only do we need to support the biosecurity efforts but also remain alert to the possible presence of these pests. **For further reading on these and other invasive ants see [here](#).**



A Red Fire Ant Colony (from stock photos)

Two Sticks, One Stick or No Sticks?

Henry Gardner

From time immemorial, bushwalkers have picked up sticks and used them to provide support on a long walk.

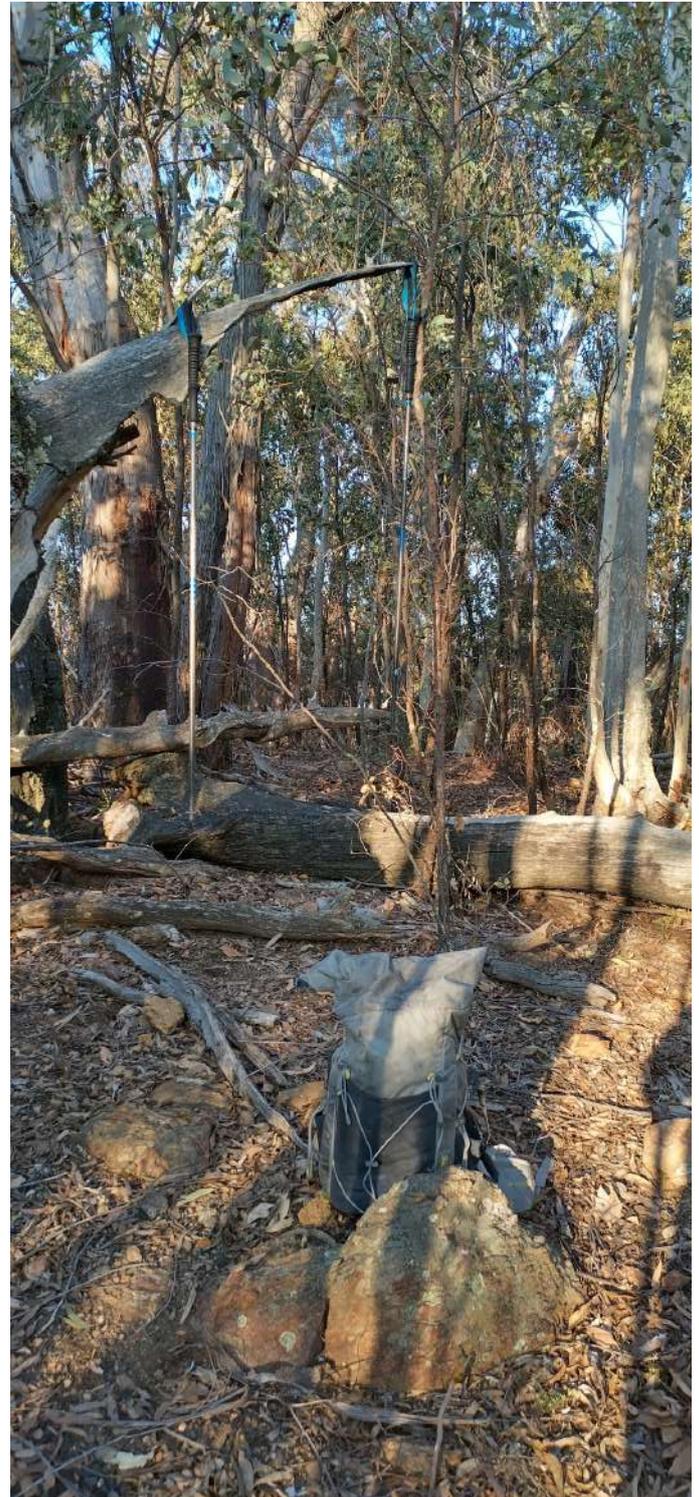
Nowadays, lightweight walking poles are an increasingly familiar sight in alpine areas but less so when bush bashing. I love the way that walking poles exercise your upper back, give your arms something to do, and provide support and balance when going downhill. They are wonderful on fire trails where you can get up a decent rhythm and swing. They are, of course, useful when crossing creeks.

I am a relatively new member of BBC and I very much enjoyed several of the Wednesday Walks last year. I started by taking my poles with me but became a little self-conscious when I realised that I was the only one who routinely trotted out with two poles and that even the one-polers were in a minority. In conversations, I learnt that poles "can be dangerous". It's true that poles can be useless and frustrating when you are "swimming" through thick bush and they might even trip you up. Some people are prone to discomfort in their shoulders when using poles. Poles might create a bit of a barrier between yourself and someone who is not poling and perhaps that makes the experience a bit less jolly. You can also slow down the group when you stop to pack or unpack a pole as the terrain changes. All of these are reasons to hesitate about using walking poles.

Outside of the Wednesday Walks, I have been experimenting with the use of one, two or no poles on some recent solo bushwalks (call them "recces" if you will). Solo bushwalking is not without risk, and these experiments have led me to tumble on a few occasions. Curiously, all these occasions have been when I have been using just one pole rather than two or zero poles, and they have been in relatively open, but uneven, terrain where my non-poling hand had nothing to do. There are some tentative lessons for me there but suffice it to say that I will continue to pack my two poles in the future and to concentrate on keeping balance.

There is, of course, one place in the local region where the use of walking poles is appropriate, and that is around Two Sticks Hill behind Sherwood Homestead. Not only is there a hill, but there is a Two Sticks Rd (and even a One Stick Rd!) so you can end up with plenty of bragging rights. I can recommend the excursion and include a photo of my two sticks on the top of Two Sticks

Hill. What a day that was – somewhat disappointing views from the summit but plenty of sticks and sufficiently thick bush to avoid unintended tumbling!



This is a recurring topic for articles - see also Eric Pickering's piece in the February 2022 newsletter. (Accessible from [website](#))

Ed.



BBC HISTORY Can you Help?

I am in the process of updating the BBC history. The current version (available on the BBC website) ends at 2013. If you have any comments or anecdotes you would like to share about walks, trips or social events you have attended in recent years I'd love to hear from you, although I can't guarantee that they'll be included. Please keep responses brief. For an idea of the kinds of responses I have in mind refer to the existing history on the website. Comments can be emailed to: history@brindabellabushwalking.org.au and should reach me by mid March at the latest.

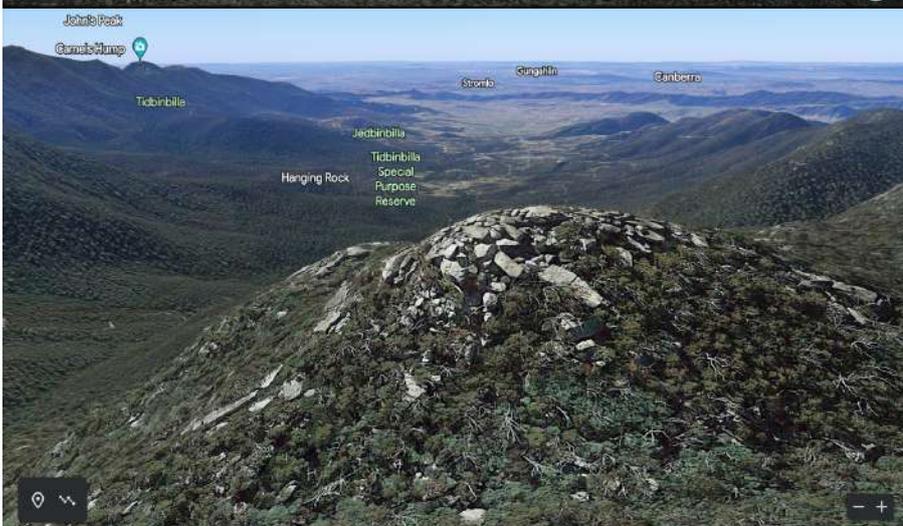
The current history is available on our website [here](#).

Mary Lindsay

What's in a Name? As Shakespeare said

We recently received a request from Mr Charles Barton (cebarton@gmail.com) regarding the renaming of a site overlooking Tidbinbilla in honour of Professor Will Steffen. Mr Barton is seeking signatures to a petition for the naming of the site as 'Steffen Rocks'. He says that it would be 'a fitting memorial for an internationally distinguished climate scientist, communicator and mountaineer.'

The club does not take a position on such matters but if you wish to follow up, please contact Mr Barton direct at the above email address.



Letter to the Editor

Almost as soon as our last issue was published, I received that rarest of contributions, a letter to the editor. My initial reaction was one of elation, quickly followed by the realisation that it couldn't be published. It dealt with a party political issue and we don't play that kind of music. I was curious about the author and was able to ascertain that he was not a BBC member. Still puzzled, I explained the situation to him with what courtesy I could muster only to provoke a series of email exchanges about the wrongness of my decision. Our differences were finally resolved when he realised we are a bushwalking club and the gremlins had apparently substituted my email address for the one he had entered. Ah well, perhaps I'll get a real letter eventually.

Ed.

New Year's Day get together in Bowen Park



New Years Day get together. Forty one club members and friends met in Bowen Park, Barton late afternoon. The weather was kind and everyone enjoyed chatting and eating.



Facebook

Our Facebook Manager regularly posts photos, walk reports and information about upcoming activities. Please visit [here](#) and see what our members are planning or have recently been up to.

Please send your photos etc. to Heather at facebook@brindabellabushwalking.org.a

ACT SPIDERS



This article comprises extracts from a paper which you can access [here](#) - and for a field guide see [here](#). Australia has a large and varied spider fauna, with many species yet to be identified and named. The spiders described here can be found in and around houses in the ACT and eastern NSW.

Only a few species of spiders are capable of delivering a bite which seriously affects humans. The vast majority are harmless and play a vital role in keeping insect numbers in check. If you take time to observe spiders in your house or garden you will discover them to be interesting and fascinating animals.

JUMPING SPIDER



These small, square fronted spiders have the central pair of eyes in the front row greatly enlarged and they hunt their prey by sight. Many of the species that enter houses are bark and foliage dwellers, and they stalk their prey around the walls and ceiling.

If you approach a Jumping spider slowly with your finger it will turn its body so as to follow the movement with its eyes.

None of the local Jumping spiders are known to be dangerous to humans.

WHITE-TAILED SPIDER



These dark, elongated, spiders cruise around the walls of houses during summer. They seem to feed mainly on other spiders, particularly the black house spider.

In nature *Lampona* lives under the bark of trees, while in houses it often shelters amongst bed clothes and pillows. Recent reports in the Press that the bite of White-tailed spiders can cause severe ulcers have no factual basis.

FUNNEL WEB SPIDER



Funnelwebs are large, shiny black spiders that dig burrows in the ground or in rotting wood, usually in undisturbed bushland. The burrow, which does not resemble a funnel, is lined with silk and often has several flattened web tubes at the entrance. Funnelwebs are common in eastern and southern Australia

and the 30 or more species are all thought to be dangerous.

When disturbed Funnelwebs raise the front part of their body off the ground and strike repeatedly with their long, downward pointing fangs. Males leave their burrows on summer nights and wander in search of females.

All fatal bites have been from males, which have the most toxic venom. The bite treatment is the same as for snake bite, and medical attention should be sought immediately. Funnelwebs are native to the ACT and are sometimes brought into houses in firewood. Although not yet common in the suburbs, the number of Funnelwebs found near houses in Canberra seems to be increasing.

HUNTSMAN SPIDER



These large, agile spiders are common in houses. In nature they hide in narrow crevices, venturing out at night to hunt

insects and small vertebrates. While *Isopoda* and *Delena* have flattened bodies for hiding under bark, *Olios* is more rounded and lives among foliage.

Huntsman spiders are often found near outside lights, preying on moths. *Delena* is an unusual spider in that it often forms 'colonies' of up to 300 individuals under the bark of trees.

They seem to live together harmoniously without the typical cannibalism of spiders. Although the bite of Huntsman spiders can be painful they are not dangerous.

WOLF SPIDER



Australia has over 200 species of Wolf spiders. Wolf spiders have good eyesight and run down their prey. Often large and aggressive, they build burrows in the soil.

Although the bite of local species is painful, it is not known to be dangerous. Female Wolf spiders drag their egg-sacs around attached to their spinnerets, and allow newly hatched young to ride on their backs.

Wolf spiders commonly come into houses after rain and are often mistaken for Funnelweb spiders. The Italian folk dance, the tarantella, is named after a mediterranean wolf spider, the tarantula, whose bite in medieval times was believed to cause dancing and licentious behaviour.

REDBACK SPIDER

Female redback spiders are spherical black spiders with thin legs and a distinctive red stripe on the back of the abdomen. They build tough, untidy webs in the shade,



with a hidden retreat. The male redback is small, harmless and easily overlooked. Redbacks are common around ACT houses and can be found in abundance during the warmer months. Clearing away the webs and spherical egg sacs helps to keep their numbers under control. *Steatoda* is a common spider which is often mistaken for redbacks, but it lacks the characteristic red stripe.

Although their venom is very toxic, redbacks are not aggressive and usually only bite when handled. Medical attention should be sought after all bites. Contrary to popular belief Redback spiders are not native to Australia and probably arrived from Asia in

the 1880s. Redbacks in Canberra are currently being replaced by another accidental import, the less dangerous Brown Widow spider.

BLACK HOUSE SPIDER



These black, grey speckled spiders build dense 'furry' grey webs in the corners of windows and under eaves. There are several funnels leading to a retreat, from which the spider runs forth to capture prey. The dense appearance of the web is due to the special type of complex silk the spider produces, and its tendency to gather dust.

Black house spiders can bite painfully if provoked, but would much rather catch insects. Due to their black colour and funnel-shaped webs these spiders are often mistaken for Funnelweb spiders. Although the untidy appearance of the webs can be a nuisance, Black House spiders are thought to help keep Red-back spider numbers in check.

GARDEN ORB-WEAVER

Eriophora are large, humped spiders, variable in colour and with a leafshaped pattern on the back. They build large orb webs between bushes and prey on flying insects, particularly moths. The many smaller *Araneus* species are similar in shape and habit to *Eriophora*, and some are brightly coloured with metallic hues.



Orb spiders build intricate webs at twilight and later destroy and devour them in the early hours of the morning, leaving guide lines to mark their position. During the day orb spiders hide in crevices or vegetation, concealed by their cryptic colouration. Many species have the ability to change their colour to blend with the surface in which they are resting. Orb spiders are not aggressive and bites are rare.

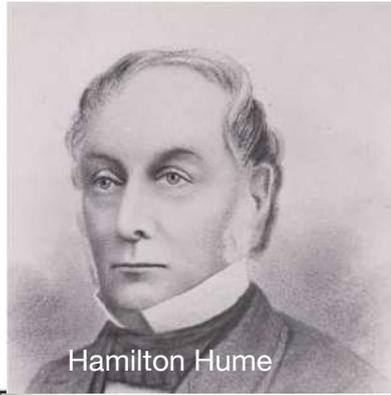


Hume and Hovell

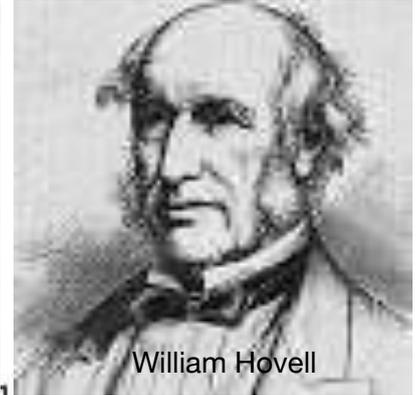
This is the first of an occasional series on Australian explorers. Among non-indigenous people, they were, after all, some of the first bushwalkers. It's now 200 years since Hume and Hovell made their famous trip.

Ed.

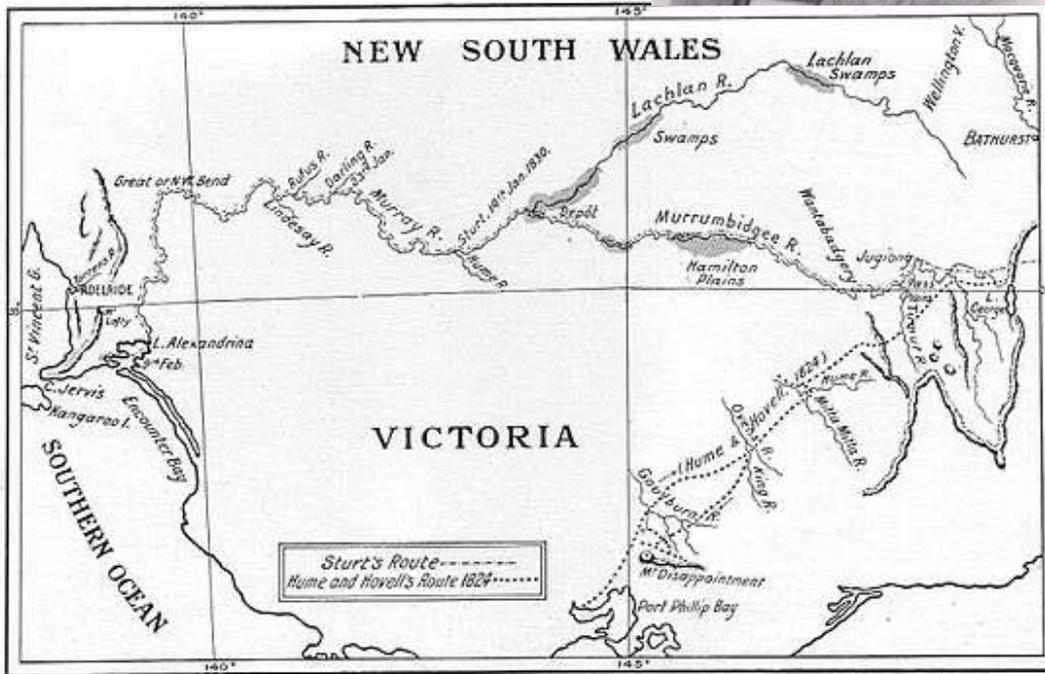
In the Paths of Explorers



Hamilton Hume



William Hovell



Hume and Hovells 1824 expedition is shown by the broken line

They fought over the frying pan!

Allan M. Lewis, *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 October, 1946

Even at 17 this tall, sunburnt youth had made many journeys of discovery. At 27 Hume embarked on his most important expedition. He wanted to find a land route from Lake George to the Southern Ocean.

Little help came from the cheese-paring Government so he accepted the offer of a seaman, William Hovell, to give him much needed equipment. Hovell joined his party but the partnership was not successful. The explorers argued and wrangled all the way, at times separating when they couldn't agree. An instance when two heads were worse than one!

They travelled (the hard way and the wrong way) over some of Australia's most rugged country, through nerve-shattering gorges and over swollen rivers. They crossed the Murrumbidgee in full flood on an improvised raft made by wrapping a tarpaulin around their one and only cart. Hume and Boyd, another of the party, tied ropes to

cords which they held between their teeth while they struggled across the raging torrent. Once across, the ropes were secured to trees and the remainder of the party and equipment were ferried across in the precious cart. After days of weary travel, they were rewarded by being the first white men to see the snow capped Australian Alps.

Another argument between the leaders concerning the best route to take resulted in the party splitting up. The equipment was divided and they prepared to cut their one

tent in halves. Hume and Hovell fought bitterly over the frying pan, one of them taking the handle, the other the pan itself. Later, however, Hovell rejoined Hume when he found he had made a mistake.

They came upon a wide, deep river now known as the Murray, and improvised a tarpaulin-covered wicker boat but nobody was keen on crossing in such a fragile craft. 'If you don't do what I tell you I'll throw you in!' Thundered Hume at Hovell. He won this argument too.

After more hardships and disappointments they eventually reached their goal of Port Phillip, which, obstinate to the last, Hovell declared was Western Port. Hume recognised the landmarks Flinders had described.

The expedition returned by a shorter route, and Hume's unerring bushcraft led them safely to their starting point at Lake George, the round journey having taken them three months.



SOCIAL NEWS

New Year's Day picnic Bowen Park (photos p.5)
What an overwhelming success!!! 41 attendees – a record for our short notice picnics. Comments such as it's a quiet #me of year and good to get out and meet with friends. This will be a repeat event 1/1/25 (subject to weather).

Upcoming events

Friday 2 Feb. Sunset walk Mt Ainslie 3km Easy
(subject to weather)

See Social Convenor's email of yesterday's date for details.



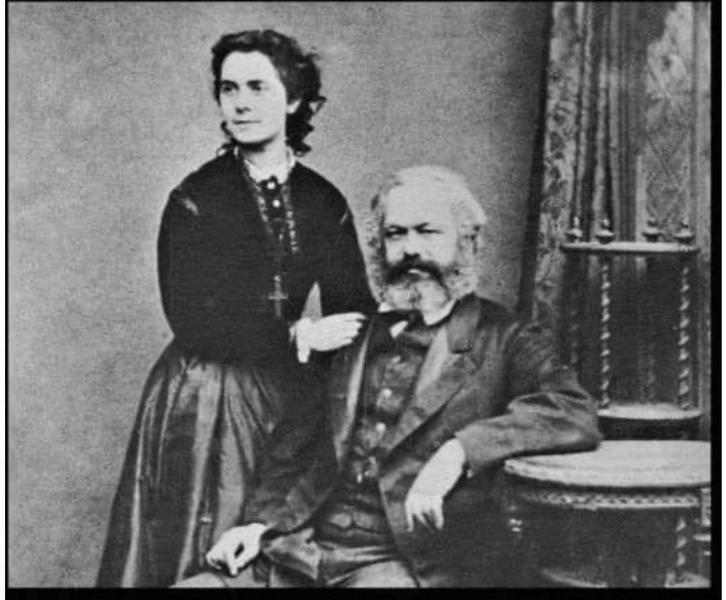
For Sale

70 litre Kathmandu backpack, with separate rain cover. A bit dusty, but in very good condition. \$25 the lot. Email pdalton411@gmail.com for details.

**Why must I prove
that I am me to pay my
bills over the phone?
Do strangers call to
pay my Bills? And if
they do, why don't
you let them?**

Condolences and Funnies

Most people have heard of Karl Marx, but few know of his sister Onya, an Olympic runner. Her name is still mentioned at the start of every race.



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