

NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, 18 February 2021, 8.00 pm (on Zoom)

1. Welcome

President Esther Gallant welcomed members, life members and guests to the meeting (in total there were about 30 participants).

Esther paid respects to the traditional custodians of the land and their elders, past and present.

2. Announcements

Esther announced that the next general meeting will be held at the O'Connor Uniting Church, providing COVID requirements can be achieved. Check the NPA website to confirm the location.

About 40 members and guests were present at the Namadgi open day held at the visitor information centre on 23 January to celebrate the NPA 60th anniversary. Esther thanked those who attended.

3. Presentation by Zac Zaharias - Climbing and trekking in Pakistan

Esther welcomed Zac Zaharias, one of Australia's leading high-altitude climbers who has summited six of the world's fourteen peaks above 8000 metres. He has participated in 17 major high altitude expeditions and has been leader or deputy leader on 13 of these expeditions. Zac is the first Australian to climb Broad Peak.

While Zac has climbed in many parts of the subcontinent, his presentation focussed on climbing in the Pakistan Himalaya: K2, Gasherbrum IV, Nango Parbat, Broad Peak, Trango Towers - the names conjure up romantic images of this fabulous region. Zac has spent much time there, including five birthdays! Zac was introduced to the region in the 1980s when - as an army officer - he was part of a United Nations Observer team in the Kashmir disputed territories.

Zac observed that the Pakistan Himalaya is remote and isolated and an extraordinary place to visit and go climbing. Pakistan Tourism promotes the area and more facilities are now provided, but still only approximately 1000 people visit K2 base camp each year. Trekking activity is mainly in north-west Pakistan where there is a confluence of three mountain ranges including the famous Karakoram Range.

Logistics are key and in Zac's first climbing trip in the 1980s, he was part of a largish party which required much negotiation with the local Pakistani support crew. There were more expenses than expected and Zac and his party walked out very hungry. Zac went back to the region 20 years later. It was a very different experience in a small climbing party of just two people, but again Zac said he walked out exhausted and hungry. In 2007, Zac returned to climb Gasherbrum IV with a much larger team and in 2011 on an Australian-Pakistan Military good-will expedition. This time a helicopter was provided for the trip out.

It is a tough and difficult environment, making the right decisions is key to surviving. Zac shared a number of stories of assisting exhausted climbers from other parties down from high altitude, and in 1986 Zac and his party chose not to ascend when a storm was forecast, while other experienced climbers continued. In all, thirteen people died on K2 that year.

For Zac, being and climbing in the Himalaya is as much about the personal journey as it is about the destination and he finished with a quote from Sir Edmund Hillary: 'It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.'

After a number of questions from the audience Esther thanked Zac for his presentation and declared the meeting closed at 9:10 pm.

Chair: Date: