



The Camp LIBRARY

by Lindsay Bovill

For as long as I can remember, books have been an essential part of my camping kit: viewed as necessary equipment, as equally vital and deserving of a place amongst my gear as basic shelter, axes, bushcraft knives, fire making tools, and binoculars. Books are carefully packed and protected from damage on long expeditions and have become an inseparable part of the experienced landscape. It's always a joy to select from the shelves at home before a trip. Some books are now old field companions, having toured farmland and upland, survived alpine snowstorms, and endured the blinding, bleaching noonday light of the interior deserts.

Way back as a kid, I'd be allocated a tote bag of personal effects on extended trips into the bush: and though I remember cramming in fishing gear, my Walkman, torches, batteries, knife, note books, alarms and a compass, it was the books that always weighed my bag down. On those younger trips, I recall *Watership Down* being a regular, as well as *Biggles Adventures*, and a puzzle book or two. I'd enjoy waking up at first light and reading, or during

the heat of midday, between dozing sessions.

As a teenager, my reading list changed a bit, but the habit remained. Before the internet was a going concern, prior to our camping trips we would visit outdoor stores and stock up on catalogues and pamphlets, and spent entire afternoons eagerly pouring over them in front of the campfire: optics, bows, binoculars, tents, anything camping related. Evenings around the fire would be spent weighing up the items we needed, deciding on the best to purchase, and deciding how we'd save up for them. The books were still there too of course for me, it always included *Slaters' Field Guide to Australian Birds* as a staple, along with *Eagles and Falcons of North America*, *Estes' Behaviour Guide to African Mammals*, plus always a thick stack of paperback Westerns, which I'd soak up in the midday shade and dust, sometimes with a nip of whiskey to lend an edge to the experience.

At that stage, I had never heard of anyone other than myself taking so much reading material along on camping and exploring trips. Nobody I knew

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