

# Bogong Moth Festival

## Journey to Mt. Bogong



Bogong moths (*Agrotis infusa*) begin their life (as all moths do), as a caterpillar. This caterpillar makes a burrow in the soil at the base of a food plant on the western plains. Being of nocturnal habit, they hide in their burrows during the day and feed upon the plant at night. Adults emerge in spring from the cocoons in the soil, about 4 weeks after the caterpillar enters the cocoon. As the temperature on the western high plains of Victoria and New South Wales soar during summer, the adult Bogong moths migrate to the cooler high country of the Alps. Congregating around Mount Bogong, they wait in caves and crevices until Autumn, marking the cooler weather ahead and time to return to the western plains for breeding (Herbison-Evans & Crossley, 2003). The Aboriginals in the surrounding area knew of this cycle in the lives of the Bogong moths. Subsequently, once the bogong moths had migrated to the high country, the local Aboriginals started a journey of their own. They would gather on the river bank and when given the signal, hundreds of men, women and children would wade across the river and climb to the plateau of Mount Kosciuszko until they reached Tom Groggin. Here the elders of the clans would meet. It was a meeting place where the clans would come together (Larkins, 1982).



## Celebration

The mountain tops did not belong to one clan, rather the mountain tops were shared among the clans. The great men of the tribes walked together on the 'roof' of Australia toward a strange looking peak, the colour changing Jagungal. Below, the tribes would dance and wait in anticipation for Jagungal to give the signal (a puff of smoke) that the time was right to collect the Bogong moths. The Bogong moths were smoked out and Kurrajong nets and kangaroo skins were used to collect the moths. The moths were eaten raw, roasted on the campfire or pounded to make 'moth meat'. This was a time of celebration for the Aboriginals. For two weeks they ate, danced, held discussions and sought wives. With their bellies full, the clans returned to their land in the river valleys (Larkins, 1982). The Bogong Moth Festival is still celebrated today in late November at Albury in New South Wales (AusEmade, 2004).

## Activities

Discuss the importance of the Bogong moths to the local Aboriginal clans.

List the things that the Bogong Moth Festival provided opportunity for.

Discuss - are these things important to our society?

If Yes - how do we deal with them?

If No - why not?

## References

- AusEmade. 2004, *Bogong Moth*, [Online accessed 6 January, 2004], URL: [www.ausemade.com.au/group/f/fauna/insect/bogong/bogongmoth.htm](http://www.ausemade.com.au/group/f/fauna/insect/bogong/bogongmoth.htm)
- Herbison-Evans, D. & Crossley, S. 2003, *Agrotis infusa Bogong Moth*, [Online accessed, 25 November 2003] URL: [www-staff.mcs.uts.edu.au/~don/larvae/noct/infusa.html](http://www-staff.mcs.uts.edu.au/~don/larvae/noct/infusa.html)
- Larkins, J. 1982, *Australia's Greatest River The Murray: From Source to Sea*, Rigby Publishers, Adelaide, South Australia.

