





Off into the pine forest our group marched in search of the hidden gnome. Led by Margret Kirsten and armed with walking poles, sunhats and snacks we found much more than a gnome as the excessively wet summer revealed hidden treasures amongst the pine needles, tree stumps and fallen leaves... Bright red stars that looked like anemones ( *Aseroe Rubra* - Anemone Stinkhorn), multicolored lichen, bright orange *Spongiforma Squarepantril*, yellow Smooth Panterelle (edible), white *Tyromyces* genus of poroid fungi and rainbow colored Turkey Tail - *Trametes Versicolour*. After the eerie silence of the Pine Forest our route took a detour as a group of downhill mountain bikers had taken over the planned path. Undeterred Margret found an alternate option and we were soon on track on the upward climb through gum and muddy trenches to the radio beacon and views over Midmar in the distance. After a replenishing snack break we carefully headed downhill where we were rewarded with our Gnome sighting underneath the gum trees. With a few more mulchy patches to negotiate, the weather remained a pleasant temperature, with no rain for the remainder of the descent and winding trail, stopping to "hug-a-tree" before reaching our starting point at Amber Ridge. Feeling rejuvenated by nature, and a little on the muddy side the trail was the perfect mix of shady canopies and a bit of uphill to stretch the calves with pleasant company along the way!

Tanya Adey

