

Indigenous people in the Australian Alps

Indigenous groups came to the Alps in Spring and Summer mainly to feast on the Bogong Moths, which migrate there from central and northern NSW. There is evidence that this was a cultural meeting place for many aboriginal groups and tribes.

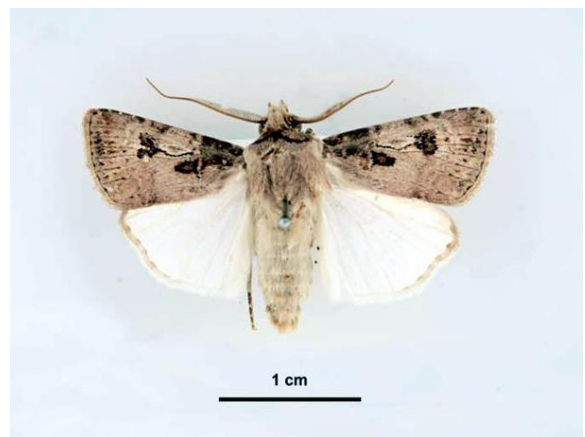


The Bogong moth (*Agrotis infusa*) occurs commonly during the winter over a wide area of New South Wales. Major migrations southward toward the mountains occur in the spring, and migrations in the opposite direction occur in early autumn. The large quantities of moths and their ease of gathering make them the most reliable summer food source in the Australian highlands.

The Bogong moths are collected and prepared for food by the aborigines in the following manner: a sheet of bark is spread on the floor; the moths are disturbed by a stick and fall down, are gathered up and put into a bag. To cook them, a hole is made in a sandy spot and a fire lit on it until the sand is

thoroughly heated. All glowing coals are carefully picked out, for fear of scorching the bodies of the insects. The moths are now poured out of the bag, stirred about in the hot ashes for a short time, and then placed upon a sheet of bark until cold. The next process is to sift them carefully in a net, by which action the heads fall through. The wings and legs having been previously singed off, the bodies are now obtained properly prepared. In this state they are generally eaten, but some times they are ground into a paste by the use of a smooth stone and hollow piece of bark and made into cakes.

As a food, Bogong moths are extremely rich in fat. Protein is carried in the eggs of fertile moths and there are no conspicuous reserves of protein in the moth bodies. Studies have found the average fat content of males' abdomens exceeded 61% and of females 51% of their dry weight.



From 'The Moth Hunters: Aboriginal Prehistory of the Australian Alps' by Josephine Flood