

beechleaves

Newsletter of the Manawatu Tramping and Skiing Club



P.O. Box 245, Palmerston North 4440 www.mtsc.org.nz <https://www.facebook.com/MTandSC>

Issue 3: April 2016

CLUB MEETINGS

Club meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of the month at the Rose City Aquatic Club Rooms, 50 Park Street, Palmerston North (next to the Lido). Meetings begin at 7.30pm.

Tuesday 5th April: Lunana Snowman Trek, Bhutan

Jill Dalton

The Lunana Snowman Trek crosses a rarely visited region of the Eastern Himalayas. More people have climbed to the summit of Mt Everest than completed this traverse of Bhutan. It is a 28 day trek covering 356kms and crossing eight Himalayan mountain passes, the highest being Gopu La at 5,466m. Jim Hepburn and Jill Dalton joined 9 other trekkers to complete this trek in September/October 2015.





The Munda Biddi Trail Foundation

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S
WORLD CLASS LONG DISTANCE,
OFF-ROAD CYCLING TRAIL

The Mundi Biddi cycle trail runs for 1000 km in Western Australia through a series of national parks from Perth to Albany. It is a mixture of single track, forestry roads, and disused railways, with occasional sections on actual roads. Over the summer Ken and Mary Mercer rode 700 km of the trail. And, yes, it was hot!



MTSC President Report: John Beech

president@mtsc.org.nz



Autumn has arrived and hopefully the cooler weather will reduce the amount of sweat produced whilst taking in the ups and downs of our local ranges. Although my own time in the hills since Christmas has been non-existent I hope to change that over the next few weeks. A few trips will be required prior to a school trip in the holidays to do the Milford as I do not want the students to make me look too old and decrepit.

The recent Wilderness magazine featured an article that is pretty close to home for all of us; that being access issues on the Western side of the Ruahines. The loss of Kawhatau Base and the ongoing difficulties with other access points is proving to be very difficult to resolve. One particular landowner has had a gutsful of trampers on his property and to quote from the article “We’d get major urban tramping clubs heading through lambing ewes in the middle of the night” (Wilderness Mar 2016). This is a lamentable situation and I sympathise with the farmer concerned. One would hope that tramping clubs, of all groups, would be more responsible. The article also lamented some questionable historic decisions (or perhaps lack of) on DOC’s part with regard to the Kawhatau Base issue, which one could only describe as a complete debacle. This has been the greatest loss according to the Walking Access Commission and I for one remember using the base for school trips. It was such a positive way to give our kids an easy introduction to tramping. We can only hope that DOC can try and renegotiate an improvement in the situation to right some of the wrongs of their predecessors. However, it is up to all of us to remember that access across private land is a privilege not a right and we all need to respect landowner’s properties to avoid the sort of fractious situations that we find ourselves in currently with the Ruahines. A phone call and a few beers cost very little when it comes to showing some appreciation for the access to our beloved mountains.

On a sadder note we lament the untimely passing of Joe Corpe from Mokai Station. I met Joe as we were returning from Iron Bark hut in the pouring rain last year and he struck me as a very friendly and down to earth guy who was always happy to come over for a bit of a yarn. That Joe was happy for trampers and hunters to cross quite a considerable section of his land to gain access to the Mokai Patea range, was testament to his easy going attitude and it is a shame to lose such a good bloke.

On a more positive note I hope you are all making plans for the autumn to get out and spend a bit of time in the bush or mountains. We are fortunate living in the Manawatu to have so much tramping and skiing country within 2 hours drive. Let's take advantage of what we have.

Just a reminder that the AGM is coming up soon (Tuesday 17th May) and if anyone wishes to be involved in the committee feel free to approach a committee member for further information. John

MTSC Chief Guide Report: Ken Mercer

chief.guide@mtsc.org.nz



Over the last few years I've experimented with hammocks which, with a fly, can provide a comfortable night anywhere there are trees. My Exped hammock came with clever slit leaders and two carabineers. Although quick to assemble this arrangement was bulky and a little heavy so I have replaced it with high tech dyneema rope which also resists moisture. The question was how to tie off this slippery material.

My solution is a knot I've never found a use for but always wanted to use. It's the alpine butterfly; the middle climber of three will use one to attach to their rope. I've never been in that situation but have found this knot ideally suited for tying off my new hammock leaders in a variation of a trucker's hitch.

Whether your problem is climbing, fishing, or securing a load a very good website for learning knots is <http://www.animatedknots.com/>. Check it out.



The Escarpment Walking Track between Paekakariki and Pukerua Bay will open in April 2016.

The 10km section of Te Araroa Trail from Paekakariki to Pukerua Bay will change on Saturday 9th April from a walk beside State Highway 1 to a new trail along the Escarpment above the Main Trunk railway line.

Note: dogs and cyclists are not permitted on this section; also, it is illegal to cross the railway line.



We welcome Sarah Donnelly and family to the club

“Few People can say: I am here. They look for themselves in the past and see themselves in the future”

Georges Braque, French painter



UPCOMING TRIPS

Trip Intentions: The email address for leaving trip intentions is intentions@mtsc.org.nz. Intentions sent to this address will not be acted upon UNLESS a party is reported overdue (e.g. by a family member, flatmate, friend, etc). The email is sent to several MTSC members. This information will be provided to LandSAR/RCC only if the party is reported overdue or a PLB is activated. The email should include: a list of participants and their contact details; a brief description of the intended route and possible alternative routes; starting point; start date; date/time due out; vehicle registration; and any other relevant details.

April Wednesday Tramps			April Thursday Tramps		
Date	Leader	Phone	Date	Leader	Phone
6	Maurice McDonald	357 5522	7	Merv Matthews	357 2858
13	Anne West	357 5716	14	John McLeod	323 5785
20	Chris Teo-Sherrell	355 1816	21	John & Gillian Thornley	356 9681
27	Christine Finnigan	329 7822	28	Brian & Ruth Evans	323 7614

April Weekend Trips				
Date	Trip	Grade	Leader	Phone
3	Atiwhakatu Hut – Orchid Hunting	Easy Med	Alla Seleznyova	06 355 0862
9-10	Cattle Creek Hut	Easy Med	Jenny McCarthy	06 376 8838
16-17	Pohangina camping	Family	Ken Mercer	356 7497
23-25	Ruapehu area	Easy	Linda Campbell	06 323 3836
30-1	Upper Matakuhia Hut	Easy Med	Mark Learmonth	355 9143

9th – 10th April: Cattle Creek Hut

Easy Medium **Jenny McCarthy** **06 376 8838** jmccarthy1.nz@gmail.com

This is an easy tramp into a delightful little hut. We will leave Palmerston North at 8am and onto the road end. The proposed route is via the Holmes Ridge to Stanfield hut for lunch and then on to Cattle Creek hut along the ridge for afternoon tea. There should be plenty of time for activities such as embroidery, reading or firewood collecting. On the way out we can follow the same route or go up the river to the saddle and down to Stanfield hut, to the Holmes Ridge or travel down the river. I have not done this for a long time and it could be a bit overgrown.

16th – 17th April: Pohangina Camping

Family **Ken Mercer** **356 7497**

Keen to camp out for a night without carrying your gear too far? We'll follow the Pohangina river into the Ruahines for a short distance and find a nice spot. Youngins and oldins all welcome!

23rd – 25th April: Ruapehu Area

Easy **Linda Campbell** **06 323 3836**

The plan is to stay at the club lodge and do day walks from there. Walks will depend on those interested in coming. I am quite keen to have a look at the Tupapakuraa Falls track on the way up. The track begins at Fishers Road, National Park with an easy walk to Taranaki Lookout before becoming a tramping track. The track follows a ridge and drops steeply to a stream before climbing back around some bluffs to a lookout

point with views of the falls. It is an 11 kilometre walk which takes 4-5 hours. We will travel back the morning of April 25th.

30th April – 1st May: Upper Matakuhia Hut

Easy Medium

Mark Learmonth

355 9143 or 027 200 4960

Upper Matakuhia Hut is located in the little known Waipunga Conservation Forest accessed from SH5 onto Waipunga Road. From the car park a benched track sidles down to a beautiful valley then follows the Matakuhia stream to the eight bunk hut situated on the streams true left in a rough clearing. This trip is a first for the club and it would be really neat if you could join us. Should suit most tampers' in the club as it won't be a huge day. We do need at least 5 or 6 people for this trip to go ahead.



Sunday 24th January: The Skyline Track - "Windy Wellington Workout"

Report: Roberto Bruce

Photos: Maureen Naylor

Twenty one very lithe lads and lasses exited Manawatu for Woodmancote Road, Khandallah. Ahead of us was the Skyline Track being an exposed and windswept slog of some 12km between Mount Kau Kau (445 m) across the tops to Johnston's Hill in Karori.

We made a short detour to the Gorsey Knob hillock to gain a view of the leafy, hill country burgh of Khandallahisthan ("abode of the gods"). Then we pushed upwards through regenerating broadleaf forest pausing at "BRUCE'S Seat." At the summit of Mount Kau Kau, we fortified with shortbread while enjoying 360 degree views of Wellington and the harbour ("*Suprema a Situ*"), the Orongorongos, Ohariu, Makara, Porirua and across Cook Strait to the South Island.



BRUCE'S Seat



In front of the Lawrence Kilmister brick chimney

The ridge track was fully exposed to the hot, dry north - westerly winds. These winds blasted our faces with super fine grit. Caps were removed so they wouldn't be flung off and disappear forever. To the west, Meridian Energy had chosen the right spots onto which to plonk their turbines. It was pleasing to see the valleys and slopes regenerating with mostly native bush.

We chose a sheltered locus for a quick lunch before we headed off again somewhat horizontally. Nimble footwork was needed to keep our boots scrupulously clean by avoiding the cow pats and mounds of sheep pellets. The route was well marked with signs plus yellow discs.

We stopped for more photographs at the brick chimney and fireplace built by Lawrence Kilmister in the 1930's. His forebears had opened up and farmed the area in the mid 1800s. Despite the buffeting, we made very good progress to exit the ridge at Parkvale Road. It was a very gleeful group that traipsed into Karoriville to flash their Gold Cards at the driver of a GO Wellington trolley charabanc.

Once in the city, we tramped across to the METRO Link train to Khandallah. Again, we merrily flashed our Gold Cards for another buckshee trip. Above, we could see the ridgeline that we had just hoofed across. Our luck extended further when Cafe du Parc beside the swimming pool was open for our cake cum coffee custom.



While the Skyline Track extends over 12km, we covered a total of 16km. Trampers are advised to allow 3½ - 5 hours for the trip along the tops. Our circuitous journey from Woodmancote Road and return took 5½ hours. Altogether, our bucolic squad had a superb outing. No one was blown away or lost. Wellington on a sunny day is quite magic.

Thanks to drivers Evan, Bernard, Denise and Ian.

Fuimus **Roberto**

6th – 9th February: Northern Ruahines

Report: Nicola Wallace

Photos: Nicola Wallace

Tony and Mark arrived early, and after stopping briefly at the Colenso Memorial (which I'd never seen before), we arrived at the Mokai Patea roadend at about 9am. Then followed the steep climb up through the farm. It was a steep grovel up Mokai Patea, but we only went partway up before starting to sidle in an Easterly direction in order to meet up with the track to Ironbark Hut. The sidling was harder than I expected, as we had to negotiate manuka and scrub filled gullies. Eventually I decided it was easier to go up and around them. After what seemed ages, we were descending and were soon to the park boundary, and in to the lovely beech forest, and to the deserted Ironbark Hut for lunch. Tony was very sensibly calling a rest break every hour, so wherever we were, we had opportunity to sit and enjoy the atmosphere.

After lunch we had a straightforward walk up the hill; it was a very hot and humid day, so we weren't in a hurry. All was pleasant and straightforward till we got to the big slip just before the Unknown Campsite turnoff. It was very steep, and rocky, rather than the soil type where you can get some grip, so a difficult crossing, with Tony having to help me round a large and awkwardly positioned tree. We all got across safely, with only a few cuts and scrapes. Another unusual feature before we reached Colenso Hut was a large clearing, filled with tall grass, and ongaonga round the edges. We reached the hut at 7pm, after a 10 hour day. We were ready for tea, and decided we'd visit Lake Colenso in the morning. The hut was very hot inside, so I went outside to sleep, but had to come in again as the mozzies were really bad!

The next morning the lake was a lovely sight indeed, with two black shags were flying over the lake. We contemplated how lucky we were to be able to come to a place like this and not have crowds of people. Back to the hut, and off on a morning of river travel. After leaving Colenso Hut, we made our way to the Mangatera River, then up a sidestream that had a very good track running up the side of it. Much of the travel was easy and very pleasant, but gradually it became trickier. Later in the morning we filled our bottles as we left the river system, and headed up the hill towards Potae. At a rest stop halfway up, we

met three DOC workers who were voluntarily checking the stoat traps. They looked very fresh, like they were just out for a stroll. They warned us that a party of hunters was due to be helicoptered in to Ruahine Corner Hut later that day so we'd better get there and sort out our bunks.



The hat rock



Mark enjoying his lunch on Potae

We had lunch on Potae, under the "hat". It was a sunny day, and cooler and less humid than the day before. The track to Ruahine Corner Hut looked flat on the map, we imagined a doddle, but it was quite up and down, and very interesting, with some very large rocks to pass by. The latter part was a wide, flat track through thinning bush. We arrived at the hut, sited in the tussock but with bush behind, at 3pm. Time for afternoon tea! We spent the rest of the afternoon outside. Lying in the dry golden tussock with the warm sun beating down was total bliss! This hut is in a really beautiful location. We had a very relaxing few hours, but gradually dark clouds rolled in from the East. Mark and Tony said that a helicopter wouldn't arrive with that cloud, and so it was, no hunters came. I set up my tarp in a tussocky camping area near the hut. By bedtime, it was misty, but I slept very well outside.



Ruahine Corner Hut

The next morning I got up at 5.30, as we had a long day ahead. It was dark, with light drizzle, and had been like that all night. I carefully picked my way to the hut as it was pitch dark. We left the hut before 7.30am, and retraced our steps to Potae in fine but cloudy weather. Here we headed down the Waiokotore Biv track, which I felt was the most beautiful track of the trip. We were soon in beech forest, the track a gentle up and down, and lots of birds (riflemen and tomtits mostly). It was the kind of track you could wander along all day, but eventually we started

descending to the Waiokotore Stream. Down towards the stream, the track got very muddy and steep. At one place there was a knotted rope to assist our descent between rocks. Just as I got to the bottom, a large brown bird flew silently out of the trees, and quickly flew back in again. Despite looking in the trees, I couldn't find him, but I think he was a morepork.

There isn't much left at the Waiokotore Biv site, just a sign and a few bits of wood. After a good long break, we crossed the stream and commenced the climb onto Ohutu Ridge. This bottom part of the climb

was very steep and slippery with soggy, pale coloured mud. Soon we came to a lovely waterfall, not what you usually see in the Ruahines, very rainforest like. Tony had told us there was a ladder coming up, we all wondered what it would be like, it was a really good angled wooden one – no problems there. The next hunk of rock was more of a challenge, but soon we were onto a more normal bush track, albeit a very steep one up to Ohutu Ridge. Oh how the calf muscles complained on the top half of this track, as the track surface was pretty flat, but the track was very steeply angled. Near the top it relented abruptly as the top of this ridge is broad and we had lunch at the track intersection on the top in the sun.

The plan was to descend Ohutu Ridge, an 800m descent, and go along the river and spend the last night at Ironbark Hut. The walk along the top of the ridge was great and it was a hot, sunny afternoon. Tony consulted his GPS at a rest stop, and decided we were making very good progress. Soon we started the descent of Ohutu Ridge; even at the top, this was steep, and the further we went down, the steeper it got. At first, the surface was hard-packed mud. Thereafter there was plenty of variety, with scabbly bits in bush, a route round the left hand side of a huge slip, and the sound of a helicopter in the distance.....

In the last 300m before the river, the descent became very steep. I remember thinking, this is too steep for people, but probably OK for deer. I also thought that going uphill would be nearly impossible with a heavy pack.

We were close to the river now, but a trap for me lay at hand. It was a rock face, not very high (I can't remember it well enough to make a height estimate). Tony had got down it successfully, and he said there were hand and foot holds. Flaxes etc growing at the top prevented a good look at the face of it, so I got handholds and proceeded to get footholds by feel. I'd found a foothold, but don't know what happened next as I fell vertically on to uneven rock at the bottom. Pain shot through my right ankle. One look and I knew it was broken, as my right foot was pointing off between 1 and 2 o'clock, and the foot tilted left side down and right side up. A terrible sight. It was now about 5pm.

Mark and Tony were great, and with PLB activation a helicopter arrived 3 hours later. Daylight was running out, no time for winching. With the Paramedic's and Tony's help I hopped across the river to the helicopter that was hovering above the far riverbank. Being hauled on board was the best feeling ever! The helicopter ascended, and staff injected me with painkillers and stabilised my ankle before flying me to PN hospital. I arrived at about 9pm.

Mark, Tony and the helicopter guys did a great job. Mark and Tony also did a great job the next day carrying all my stuff out. I made a mess of my leg and ankle, with a broken fibula, broken end of the tibia, and ruptured tendon or ligament that meant my ankle had completely come apart. I stayed in hospital for a week waiting for the swelling to go down enough for an operation to take place and had it operated on on 16 Feb. I now have a plate and 8 screws holding everything together, and the plan is that they will stay in permanently.

Now I'm recovering on crutches, and am heartened that everyone I've dealt with has been so good and helpful. Even though I still have a cast on, it's good to see my foot pointing in the proper direction now!

Many thanks to all involved in my rescue. On the trip we were: Mark Learmonth (trip leader), Tony Evans (driver), Nicola Wallace

13th – 14th February: Lodge Work Party

Report: John Lyttle

We had a great turn out for this work party with great weather that allowed the installation of the new double glazed windows into the bedrooms and a touch up of the paint around the outside and inside of the lodge. We had a few new members participate and overall it was very social. I thank all that provided support in either doing the work or by catering for the workers. The new windows will reduce our heating bills and are less likely to get condensation on the inside of the glass.

13th – 14th February: Full Waingawa

Report: Jean Garman

Photos: Jean Garman

A balmy Friday evening saw David and I making our way along the sidle track (dinner consumed en route) into Mitre Flats hut for the night to allow us a quick getaway on Saturday morning. This was necessary to get as much climbing as possible out of the way in the relative cool of the morning. That said it was still a



pretty sweaty haul up onto Mitre Peak for morning tea before we continued around the tops to Girdlestone. It was a beautiful day and there were numerous people around heading in varying directions including a group of over 70 blokes who referred to themselves as the 'old dog tramping club'. Apparently I couldn't join, for a start I am not a dog (bitch discrimination?) but mainly I was told that by the time I was old enough they would all be dead. From Girdlestone we headed down, before long there was sufficient wetness and we were in the headwaters of the Waingawa

river which we planned to follow for the next day and half all the way back to the car.



Descending into the headwaters

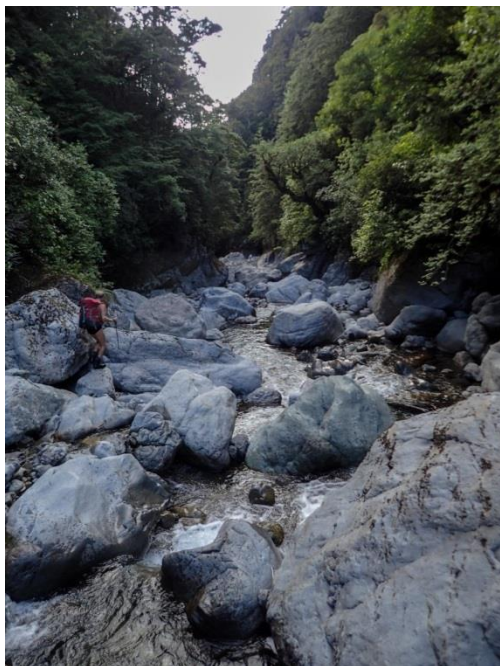


Looking up at Tarn Ridge hut

It was mostly straight forward going with an interesting view looking up at Tarn Ridge hut. Not long after this the stream narrowed and headed into a series of what appeared to be very tight very difficult drops. Rather than ruin a perfectly nice day we scrambled through some scrub to gain the toe of a spur which we dropped down (very literally) to the stream junction below the nastiness. To be honest if we weren't being pedantic about travelling the river it would be easier to take this spur from the top (about halfway between Brockett and Girdlestone). From here down there were no more problems and before long we popped out into the area of the river that had been blasted by the big side stream slip a few years ago. It must have actually been quite a few years ago as it was no longer the gravel super highway it used to be but still made for relatively easy travel down to Arete Forks hut where we spent the night.

Another lovely day saw us boulder hopping our way down towards Cow Creek, only getting significantly wet towards the end. The next section of the river was very cruisey down to Mitre Flats hut where we met

up with Adam who had come in for the day to join us for the last section of the river. Lunch was consumed before we continued on down the river which is more gorgy (think beautiful big pools) so we had many enjoyable pack floats before getting back to the car, followed by the obligatory ice cream at the Masterton bypass dairy.



Boulder hopping above Cow Creek



The cruisey section below Cow Creek

Wednesday 17th February: Wednesday trampers do battle

Report: Bob Hodgson

Photos: Maureen Naylor

After an ~8am initial rendezvous in PN and Fielding, 29 trampers made their way in light rain via SH1 then 11km along the steep and windy Paekakariki Hill Road to the entrance of the Battle Hill Forest Park.

The park was purchased by the Wellington Regional Council in 1987. The park gets its name as the site, in 1846, of one of the last battles between Maori and colonial forces in the region. More details

<http://www.gw.govt.nz/walking-running-and-tramping/>



The Briefing



Handy seats

By 9:50am the cats were herded for a briefing and, in by then dry conditions, made their way to the Puketiro Loop by crossing the Transmission Gully Motor Way construction site. The loop is 10km in length with about three quarters in steep and mature pine forest and the top quarter exposed hill tops. The park brochure has this to say of the loop “ Please travel the loop in a clockwise direction and take warm clothing

because the hilltops are exposed to strong winds. The track climbs through the (mature) pine plantation to the top from which you will have great views the Pauatahanui inlet and the South Island on a clear day.” Signs also described the climb to the top as “strenuous” and suggested a walking time of four hours. For the record we started at an altitude of 41m and the highest point of the loop was at 451m. Many of the party had completed the loop by noon and then set about walking the many alternative and well labelled tracks including the “Wetlands Walk” and the Summit Loop (peak at 251m). Although we experienced a few light showers it was a pleasant and rewarding day with the views from the top of the Puketiro loop both a literal and metaphoric high point. The scene of a recent tramp, Mana Island was in good view. It was a relaxed and exercised party that left the park at 3-15pm for the return journey broken for coffee at the River Cottage cafe. Thanks to trip leader Ian for organising the tramp: it is always good to break new ground and with the current loss of the Otaki Gorge/Forks road and associated tramps there is a need to find more, new local tramps.

Thanks also to drivers including van driver Evan.



The view



Perusing an information board

20th – 21st February: Waipakahi Hut

Report 1: Dave Mitchell

Report 2: Adam Matich

Photos: Adam Matich

Report 1

It had been years since I had been to this hut with the club. On Saturday we decided to take the track up to Umukarkari and see where it might be best to drop down to the river. I managed to pick a really overgrown spur, so it turned into a 2 hour battle to bash our way down. We eventually ended up in the river, there’s nothing like a good bush bash every now and then.

From this point in the river it was only another 2 hours of slogging it up the river to the hut. The travel is not easy because you are in and of the river the whole way. Over the years there has been erosion and regrowth which sort of obliterates any existing tracks.

With the hut in sight we were soon there and spent the rest of the afternoon relaxing before cooking up a big feed. Waipakahi hut is still in reasonable condition and even has coal supplied, which would be really appreciated in winter. Even though we had fine weather it is amazing how much it cools down overnight

On Sunday we walked out via the Umukarikari ridge so we had brilliant views all the way along it. I couldn’t remember the ridge being so exposed; I guess that’s why a few trampers have run into trouble along there in winter. Fortunately for us we had a cooling south westerly breeze as we made our way back towards Umukarikari. As we progressed we had good views Thunderbolt which is a peak further to the

East. To traverse that part of the range another day would be required. There is a huge amount of the park which is untracked but would provide some interesting tramps.

As we left early we reached the top of Umukarikari before lunch and were soon down in the bush again. We met two mountain bikers carrying their bikes up the track. Some parts of the tops would be alright for mountain bikes but they would tear it up pretty quick.

This weekend easily was a medium fit tramp, although if we had come out over Urchin it would have been a long hot day. After changing we took a scenic tour of some the touristy spots like tree trunk gorge and tried to figure where all the water comes from that makes up the Rangipo power project. Thanks to Adam and Jenny for making up the numbers. The Kaimanawas are still an appealing place to tramp; there is plenty of scope for adventure or misadventure if you really want it.



Dropping off the Umukarikari Range



Waipakahi Hut

Report 2

The plan was to go to Waipakahi Hut and out again, but by partly different routes. On Saturday morning we climbed up onto the Umukarikari Range and had lunch in the sun just on the other side of Umukarikari peak, after which we followed the track down to just below the 1500m contour and dropped off the side of the ridge into the Waipakahi River. The descent through the open tussocky section was really good travel, but below in the forest the terrain looked troublesome. Eventually, after some sidling up-river we were forced down into the forest, which was rubbish. It was steep; there were lots of windfalls, and the occasional bluff to work around. Travel didn't improve until around 1140m (an informant has subsequently revealed that a lot of the Kaimanawa forest is rubbish above around 1100m, so don't go there) when we found a stream to follow

the rest of the way down to the main river, it having taken 2 hours to drop 450m.



The river wasn't difficult, but it wasn't really our idea of a good time either and a wet two hours was endured in the river before the party arrived at the almost empty hut after a seven hour day. We didn't seem to be able to find much in the way of the fondly remembered tracks to follow and so spent a lot of our time in the river. There were only two other people staying at the hut, with two others camping out, so it wasn't crowded and we

spent a very pleasant afternoon there as it was just the right temperature for sitting around doing nothing. We did however get to enjoy our first cold night for the season, it being around 5 degrees the next morning, which was a treat. On Sunday it was an easy romp (4½ hr), in the cool breeze, over the Umukarikari Range back to the car with some really nice views to be had. We also met some mountain bikers struggling up the forested section of the Umukarikari Track. We were keen to see them riding back down again, but didn't really want to hang around to direct the rescue helicopter when it turned up. On our way home we visited Poutu Dam and Waikato Falls, which were an interesting diversion. We were Dave Mitchell, Jenny McCarthy and Adam Matich.

20th – 21st February: Rimutaka Forest Walks

Report: Alla Seleznyova

Photos: Alla Seleznyova, Jinny Andersen, Tim Swale



Tim capturing the perfect view

All the huts in Orongorongo valley were booked for this weekend, hence it was decided to camp at the Catchpool valley campground, where we assembled on Saturday morning. We started with an ascent along the Butcher track to a 'viewpoint' at 400m, which was long overgrown and had no view. Near the top we switched to a pleasant Cattle Ridge Track with some views of Wainuomata. We had lunch in a shady spot and descended to the Orongorongo River where we spent some time wading in the river and

some of us had a short walk to check out Jan's hut. We returned to the campground along the Orongorongo track with plenty of time to set the base camp and enjoy a pleasant sunny evening.



Lunch at the Cattle Ridge Track



Descending the Cattle Ridge Track

Sunday's walk was a bit harder; it was longer (about 17-19km) and steeper in some places. From the car park, we took Middle Ridge Track and then Clay Ridge Track to Mt McKerrow (706m) – a flat top in the forest marked by a nondescript short metal pole. There was no view, but it was a good spot for lunch, airy with sunlight filtering through the trees. We had spectacular views of Wellington from the top of Clay Ridge Track. After lunch we climbed down the steep McKerrow track leading to the Orongorongo River

and then we went directly back to the campground. The weather was warm and sunny and on both days we saw many white native orchids with a pleasant sweet fragrance. This was offset by a terrible stink of dead possums hanging from the traps. Tim volunteered to release the possums and to reset the traps; we started counting the possums but lost count after 10. Tim's comment was that it was the 'smelliest tramp' of his life. My companions were Linda Campbell, Tim Swale, Helen Peek, Jinny Andersen and Adela Bismarck.

Wednesday 2nd March: Wednesday Trampers Opt for Plan "B"

Report: Bob Hodgson

Photos: Maureen Naylor



All keen at the road end



A little damp



Relaxing on the track

About thirty Wednesday trampers and two guests from the USA, converged on the start of the Sunrise Track. It was a misty, moist day. We were greeted by light drizzle and this alternated with heavy drizzle and no drizzle throughout the day. We made our way up the Sunrise Track to the second junction then down the narrow track to the Waipawa River, here the intention was to cross the river and have lunch at the Waipawa Forks Hut and then to make our way down the river. Sadly, the river was brown and busy so the decision was made to retrace our steps, have lunch at the junction and then tramp down to the first junction and follow the swamp Track. A brief deviation was made to inspect the get-out point where we

had intended to emerge had river conditions been suitable. In the event the drizzle and low cloud and the many Rimu, made the Swamp Track particularly appealing to the majority walking the track for the first time. After a 7.30am rendezvous, we started tramping at about 9.40am and stopped five hours later. As we drove south the weather improved and PN was bathed in bright sunlight!

Thanks to trip leader Margaret, our drivers and van driver Evan.

Saturday 5th March: Grand Opening of the Otangane (Nipple) Loop

Report: Bob Hodgson

Photos: Maureen Naylor GPS track: Bob Hodgson

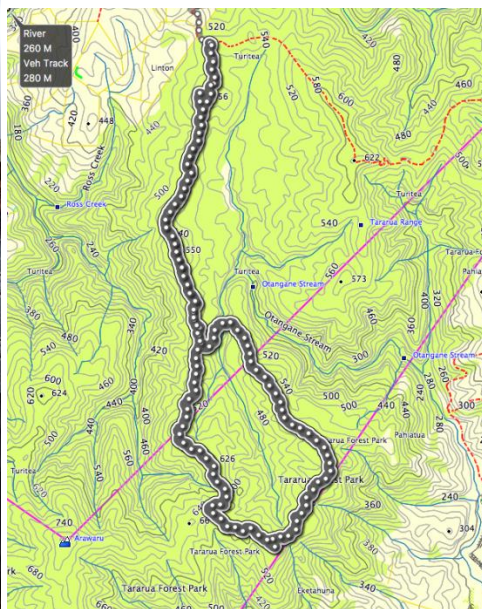
On Saturday March 5th, after a 7.30am rendezvous near the Rendezvous Cafe at Summerhill, Bev and Gary drove two 4WDs full of Wednesday Trampers up to the South Range Road (we drove in via John Love's farm thereby avoiding a much longer drive in). We joined with others to make up a party of over thirty persons at the beginning of the Mines/Sledge track off South Range Road to walk through to the start of the new Otangane (Nipple) track for the blessing and official opening. There we were addressed by a representative of the local Rangitane people, Manu Kawana, who blessed the new track, by the DOC Operations Manager, Allanah Irvine and by Ian Argyle who had led the team that cut the track and raised support for its construction. The new track is partly in Hardings Park and partly in the Tararua Forest Park. Allanah remind us that, in aggregate, the combined park area equals that of Kapiti Island!



The blessing



Hardings Park signage



GPS plot of the Nipple track

About twenty five persons then set out to walk the new track in overcast and blustery conditions. The track was found to be a delight and by 11.30am all of the trampers were eating lunch having retreated from the wind at the top of the Nipple. This is a sheltered, all-weather track with a vertical range of about 200m. It is soft under foot and includes one minor stream crossing. Parts are likely to be muddy in winter.

By 2.30pm we had returned to the vehicles parked on the South Range Road and were soon enjoying coffee at Rendezvous. Thanks to Bev and Gary and to our other drivers.

5th – 6th March: West Waitewaewae (YTYT) River

Report: Adam Matich

Photos: Adam Matich

The sign on the gate on North Manakau Road proclaimed there to be no-through-traffic which is curious as that has always been the case. What the sign really means is that a heavy rainfall event in June of last year produced a big slip which now blocks the road 200m before the road-end car park, past the PanaTYT Track. The walk across the slip was not enjoyable. North Manakau Road also seems to be somewhat unkempt

and a bit dodgy for low-slung vehicles. Once the correct track was found at the PanaTYT-Waikawa confluence, we had a 2½ hour, 700m climb up to 20m below the top of YTYT peak, where there was an intersection marked for the spur we were going to take down into the upper West YTYT River. There was only the one track marker at the very top of the spur; the rest of the way David had to navigate so that we didn't end up on the false spur. Once in the West YTYT, river travel was pretty good; none of the river was dangerous or even particularly difficult. There were some log jams to clamber down, two so-called waterfalls to easily climb around, and one gorge to wade, but otherwise it was pretty gentle and we only just got our shorts wet. However, by the time we reached YTYT forks we were tired of rock-hopping down the river and were glad to make our way 100m up the East YTYT to the Project Kaka Hut where we spent the night (7½ hour day). There is also space for camping under the trees near this 2-berth hut, but there are mosquitoes.



Plenty of greenery



The Project Kaka hut

Next day we headed back down to YTYT Forks, up the West YTYT though Island Forks again, and 1 hour from the hut reached the base of the spur (BN33 929829) we were to take up to pt 828. The side stream has a large rock with a cairn on top. It took us 90 minutes to climb almost 400m through open bush to the top of pt 828, where we landed on the marked trail that travels the tops between Mick and pt 730, where we found ourselves on one of the many logging tracks that radiate from Thompson. As one might expect, travel on the logging tracks was easy but confusing as there are multiple tracks on and around Thompson that are not shown on the map. Map and compass, and even a GPS, reduced our insecurity and helped get us through the maze. Once we were off the logging tracks and heading NE back down to the PanaTYT-Waikawa confluence, the location of the track was not entirely certain as the marker poles were few and far between. In places we had to rely on the sometimes faint ground-trail; although we never actually needed to navigate on this final section. We arrived back at the vehicle after only a 5½ hour day. We were David Harrington and Adam Matich.

Saturday 5th March: Tongariro Alpine Crossing Walk

Report: Pak Lam Yu

Photos: Pak Lam Yu

What a trip! Seventeen of us (including visitors and new comers from Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands) stayed in the MTSC Lodge; we started the day with a full breakfast at 6.30am. By 8.15am, we arrived at the Mangatepopo car park where there are already a lot of buses, vans and cars. The whole place was bustling with excitement, waiting for a day of adventure to begin. We all looked forward to the



The Group

19.4km Tongariro Alpine Crossing walk - one of most iconic walks in New Zealand. Given the success of the recent Lord of Rings trilogy and the name Mount Doom (Mt Ngauruhoe), the popularity of this walk has sky-rocketed.

The walk curved to the right from the car park and then headed northwards, passing between Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. From an elevation of 1100m (Mangatepopo car park), the track led us through the Mangatepopo valley over bogs. Near Soda Springs, we had our morning tea break, with Ngauruhoe as the back drop. From there, we have many tough steps to negotiate before we could stroll through the rather flat South Crater. With the Red Crater (1900m, the highest point of the crossing) in sight, we gave our full effort to go over the steep rocky climb, with the help of steel cable that were attached to the side of the rocks. At the top, we were rewarded to see the different shades of redness bouncing off the sunlight. A group picture was taken at junction to the Mt Tongariro summit walk, which was 3 km return walk. From there, it was pretty much all downhill over scoria (very fun sliding down) and stopped to admire the beauty of the Emerald Lakes - the colour is so incredible. We had our lunch at the lake front, sitting on dry grass. The next big attraction was the Central Crater and the Blue Lake. We saw some people taking a swim, but they were not supposed to. As we continued the journey, we stopped for a break at Ketetahi Hut (no longer in use), where we could see the end point of the traverse - the Ketetahi junction with highway 46. After passing through forest and fast-running stream, we arrived at the car park; there were lots of people resting and waiting for their transportation back to the National Park village or other locations. In total, we spent about eight hours for this crossing.



Red Crater



Emerald Lakes

The weather was fantastic, we had good company, and the scenery was splendid. Thank you Mary and Ken for the excellent organization and your outstanding leadership. Without a doubt, this is one of the most memorable trips that I have ever taken part in!

Wednesday 9nd March: Wednesday Trampers do the Kapakapanui Loop Anti clockwise

Report: Bob Hodgson

Photos: Linda and Carole



At the Summit



In the cloud

After a 7:30am rendezvous, 20 trampers assembled at the start of the track by 9am to walk in across the private land and to make the several crossings of the Ngatiawa river. Unfortunately the party disturbed a wasp nest on the track which was surrounded by fruiting blackberry. At least six members of the party were stung multiple times. Bev, Anne and Gary were forced to withdraw from the tramp because not only was Bev badly stung but so were both her and Gary's dogs. Anti-histamine tablets and ointments were shared by the well prepared and so a depleted party of 17 started the steep and steady climb to the Trig point. This involves a height gain of ~936m in about 4km. Lunch was taken at the trig. The anticipated views were intermittent as the clouds streamed overhead. The slower group got the better of the views as the seeing steadily improved as they lunched from about 1pm. The next goal was the hut, this was reached via the exposed tops followed by a descent through some superb goblin forest. This loop takes in the full range of bush to be found in the Tararuas and the full range of associated challenges including; bogs, exposed tops, very steep and slippery sections and river crossings; the beauty and quality of the bush more than compensates for the physical challenge to be met. The slow group emerged safely by ~6.30pm and with some trampers using the river rather than the track; no more wasp stings were recorded.

This was summer tramping at its best!

Thanks to trip leader Dennis, to the trampers who shared wasp sting medications and to Van driver Evan and the other drivers.



The cloud came and went



The superb goblin forest



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New Members

Prospective members must be nominated by a Proposer and a Secunder who are current MTSC members and have been so for at least one year. New memberships are confirmed at the next monthly committee meeting. Prospective members are encouraged to go on a club trip or attend a club night before joining. For further information or an application form please see the club website.

Club Equipment

Hire equipment: we have packs, 2 and 3 person tents, tent flies (small and large), snow mats, gas cookers, size 8 and 9 boots, billies, food dehydrator and two bivvy bags. Ice axes, crampons, and helmets are also available. We have two personal locator beacons (PLB) for which there is no charge. Contact the Gear Custodian: Peter Rawlins on (06) 356 7443.

Website www.mtsc.org.nz

This contains club information, photos, contact details and back issues of this newsletter, Beechleaves. The club website is maintained by Howard Nicholson (06) 357 6325 and is kindly hosted by **Inspire Net**, a locally based company.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MTandSC>

Accommodation at the MTSC lodge on Mount Ruapehu

The lodge is close to Iwikau Village, has power, heating, hot showers and is stocked with food. Members and their guests are welcome. For Lodge bookings email Liz and Hugh Wilde lodge.bookings@mtsc.org.nz or phone (06) 356 9450. To confirm your booking, payment must be made by cheque to 179 Cook St Palmerston North 4410, by cash in person or internet payment (please email to confirm before depositing) Westpac account number 03 1521 022035300.

	Members	Guests
Adult	\$35	\$50
Secondary School	\$28	\$43
Primary School	\$23	\$38
Pre-school (3-5 yo)	\$10	\$10

The Lodge phone number is (07) 892 3860.

Booking the MTSC Van

For bookings: Contact Ken Mercer (06) 356 7497. Cancellations should be made as soon as practicable to accommodate other potential users. A fly (in the passenger door) and a Personal Locator Beacon (in the glove box) are available for use free of charge on trips.