



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

June 2012



A natural high. Superb vistas and lots of fun in the snow.

In this Issue

Committee updates

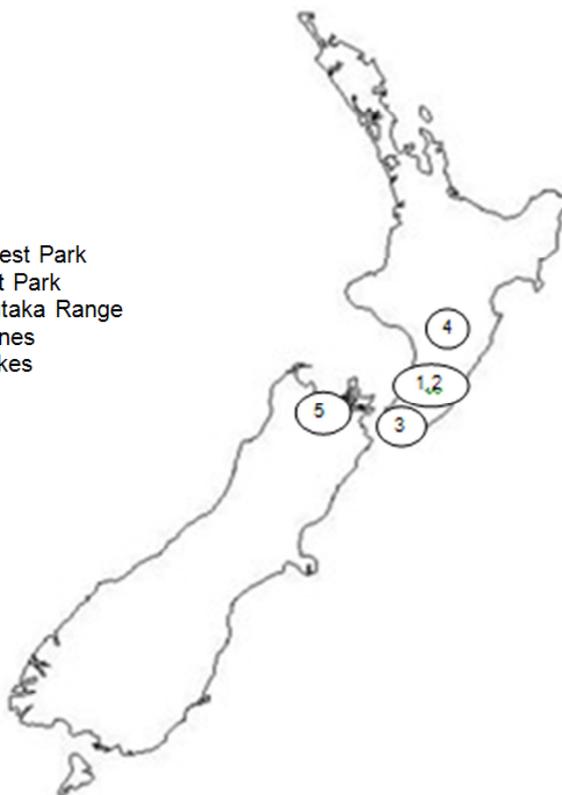
The Nature of Things, Sharron Came, President.....	4
Track Talk, Amanda Wells, Chief Guide.....	5
Membership, Helen Law, Membership Officer.....	7
Social corner, Jenny Beaumont, Social Convenor.....	7
WTMC van use for non-club trips, Gareth Morton, Transport Officer.....	8
Lodge update, Brian Goodwin, Lodge Convenor.....	8

Trip reports

1. Renata Hut via Pukeatua, Tararua Forest Park, Marie Henderson.....	10
2. Field Hut, Tararua Forest Park, David Blair.....	11
3. Papatahi Crossing: Catchpool to Wairarapa, Rimutaka Range, Mike Gilbert.....	12
4. A natural high, Ruahines, Alayne Wright.....	15
5. Anzac medium trip to Nelson Lakes, Nelson Lakes, Graeme Corin.....	17
Other bits and bobs.....	19

Map of trip locations in this issue

1. Renata Hut, Tararua Forest Park
2. Field Hut, Tararua Forest Park
3. Papatahi Crossing, Rimutaka Range
4. Top Maroepa Hut, Ruahines
5. Sabine River, Nelson Lakes



The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



This time last year I wrote in the newsletter that the three areas the Committee would try to put a bit of extra effort into were membership acquisition, increasing Lodge usage and improving the website. Progress in each of these areas was touched on in the 2011 Annual Report. It is too early yet to judge whether our efforts have made a significant difference, and it takes time to identify and experiment with new ways of doing things. For these reasons we will continue to make these aspects of Club administration the focus this year.

Mike, Sarah and Steve K working closely with other helpers have transformed our website. Keeping the content up to date, relevant and user friendly requires feedback from website users and advice and help from those of you out there with IT skills and experience. Help us make our website excellent by getting in touch if you have any suggestions or feedback. For website content contact Sarah newsletter@wtmc.org.nz, for website development contact Mike webmaster@wtmc.org.nz. If you have some nice action photos that would look good on the website send them to Steve K ssko@kol.co.nz.

With snow already on the ground at Ruapehu we are aiming to make 2012 a good ski season with high Lodge usage. As you know Eric our Lodge booking officer is managing our on line booking system. We are keen to iron out any wrinkles in the system and to get your feedback on how it is working. Check out the system through our website and contact Eric if necessary lodgebookings@wtmc.org.nz. Please endeavour to familiarise yourself with the Lodge rules which are set out on the website. If you have any ideas for increasing Lodge usage or can otherwise help out with lodge promotion contact Brian lodgeconvenor@wtmc.org.nz or talk to Brian or Colin Bouttell on a Wednesday night. Both are very friendly and approachable. Colin has joined the Lodge sub-committee specifically to assist with Lodge promotion.

A steady trickle of new and prospective members have been coming along to our Wednesday nights and signing up for tramps. We have also had a few people offer to help out with various aspects of running the Club. This is great to see, please keep it up. We will be getting in touch with new members to help them sign up for small jobs such as helping in the gear locker, Wednesday night tea brewing, slide shows, trip leading etc. I've said this a few times but it bears repeating, if you can help out don't be shy, bowl up to someone on the committee and let them know you're available. Don't wait to be asked. Helen, our membership officer has done a great job of sorting out who is and is not a member after subscriptions were due, as well as compiling a fresh list of current members for inclusion in the latest membership database. Next time you see Helen make sure you high five her and offer some words of encouragement. Her job is neither glamorous nor easy but it is crucial to the smooth running of the Club.

If you have been on an interesting trip lately why not write it up for the 2012 Club Journal? Tony and Sarah are collecting articles and photos now with a view to having another Journal ready in time for Christmas. Tony will also be looking for proof readers. Any queries send them to journal@wtmc.org.nz or newsletter@wtmc.org.nz. If you want to buy a copy of the 2011 Journal email Sarah.

I'm shortly heading off on a tramping and climbing excursion while the President of Vice has scored a Pacific Island posting with VSA. In our absence contact Steve Austin or Jenny Beaumont if you can help out or have queries that other committee people can't help you with.

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



Next week we're running an instruction day at the club rooms for people interested in leading trips. It's cheering to have numbers well past the minimum threshold, when last year we had to cancel. We need a continual inflow of new leaders, with a proportion of existing leaders choosing to take time out every schedule or two, having children or moving away. We don't want to make leadership seem intimidating, nor do we want to minimise the responsibilities of this role. Hopefully we get that balance right on Saturday 9 June! If you want to come but haven't got in touch, please drop me an email by this coming Saturday.

As we head into winter, gear starts to tell. I remember well when I started tramping with the club and had an inferior sleeping bag coupled with a [brand-deleted] inflatable mat. The coldest I have ever been is a June night at a road end in the Kawekas, under a large fly, on frozen ground. I should have been suspicious when the trip leader quickly decamped to the bus trailer after setting up the fly. For some reason (it must have been the company!) I kept coming back. But it doesn't have to be this grim. Planning a trip to the Mangahao area in a few weeks time, I thought back to the first (and last) time I camped at that road end, about seven years ago. My clearest memory is the fly blowing away in the middle of the night, with hands so cold that moving and re-pitching was a herculean endeavour, especially as I had not yet spent \$\$\$\$ on better gear. This time, we're going to set off really early on Saturday morning, avoiding both fly nightmares and the Friday traffic crawl.

To me winter is an ideal time to tramp because there are fewer people around. Not because I'm a misanthrope but because I value wilderness. When you're out in the hills, it's not generally because you're looking to meet a crowd of strangers. (When you're new to the club, you've already done that on Friday night at the station.) But in winter, the people you meet in the hills tend to be more "serious" trampers. They might have interesting stories about places you've been or want to go to. They might even be familiar names from hut books. While the cold puts some people off, it just makes others more determined. Plus those nice fireboxes finally have a purpose.

We've got an interesting range of tramps running this winter – don't forget that trips are generally on the board about six weeks beforehand, and come down three or four weeks prior to the trip, depending on its destination. It's not fair to leaders to expect them to reorganise food and gear allocation and transport a few days out from the trip. A bit of thinking ahead will protect you from an indolent winter. Having had May off tramping, I'm looking forward to meeting the wilderness again with renewed enthusiasm and decent four-season gear.

See below the trips running in June. If you want to lead a trip (any destination is possible!) on the weekend of 22-24 June, drop an email to chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz and we can make up a trip sheet.

8-10 June Ruapehu Lodge

Day	EM	Ex Village	Ray Walker
Day	MF	Photos and summit	Ian Harrison
Run	MF	Tongariro Crossing	Simon McAuliffe
		Ruapehu Summit	
MTB	M	42 nd Traverse and Fischers track	Pete Gent
Run	F	Xterra Rimutaka	Gareth Morton
Day	E	Southern Walkway	Barbara Keenan
Day	M	Kapakapanui (10th)	Marie Henderson

15-17 June Tararuas – Mangahao

Tramp	EM	Burn Hut	Jenny Beaumont
Tramp	MF	North Ohau Hut via Deception Spur	Amanda Wells Richard Lardner
Family	All	Te Kopi Homestead	Sarah Young

22-24 June Rest and recovery?

29 June-1 July Orongorongos

Tramp	EM	Papatahi Hut	Sarah Young
Tramp	M	North Matthews South Matthews	Allen Higgins
Tramp	MF	Papatahi Crossing	Kate Cushing

6-8 July Tararuas – Ohau

Tramp	EM	Waiopehu Hut	Katy Glenie
Kayak	M	Wellington Harbour	Pete Gent

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



This month we welcome the following new members:

Senior members	David Heffernan, Jo Fink, John Price and Richard Lyth
Associate member	Sarah Lyth, and
Junior member	Hamish Lyth

The club has ordered the 2012-2013 Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) Discount Cards. These will be sent out with the next FMC bulletin, so look out for them arriving in your mail box in a week or so. The discount card offers reductions on a range of transport, clothing, accommodation, equipment including personal locator beacons, DOC's Backcountry Hut Pass, Great Walk tickets and the Wilderness Magazine subscription.

Social corner

Jenny Beaumont, Social convenor



We've had a great turnout on a Wednesday club night this last month, it's been good to see so many of you. More interesting talks coming up in June so I look forward to seeing you there!

- 6th June - Maarten Ruiten will tell us about a Taihape-Kaweka cycle/tramp with the club
- 13th June - Ian Harrison and Megan Banks will tell us about their recent adventures on Codfish Island where they volunteered with the Kakapo recovery project.
- 20th June - Higgins Surprise! Come and hear about some of Allen and Sue's local tramping adventures.
- 27th June - An evening of short talks. So far we have a mountain biking trip and a tramping trip. Let me know if you'd like to join in with a short talk.

If you'd like to join in the evening of short talks, or would like to show us some slides/tell us about an adventure on a club night in July please get in touch. Find me on a Wednesday evening at club or email social@wtmc.org.nz

Happy tramping!

WTMC van use for non-club trips

Gareth Morton, Transport Officer



In an effort to gain further income from the two club minivans, the Committee wishes to advise that any WTMC member may request to hire a van for personal use when they are not being used for club activities. Personal uses may include going away for a weekend with family or friends to celebrate a special occasion or perhaps a few days away with work colleagues on a team-building exercise.

The driver of the van needs to be a club member and the vans treated with due respect.

The hire cost will depend upon the destination. All enquiries should be directed to Gareth either in person or via email on transport@wtmc.org.nz.

Lodge update

Brian Goodwin, Lodge convenor



Well, the snow has fallen on the mountain and it's looking good. Bookings for the lodge opened 1 May and are steadily coming in. There is still space for the school holidays especially the first week starting 1st July and there is still heaps of space both weeks of the second lot of school holidays starting 30th September. These weeks will fill up fast when non-members bookings opening on 1st June so I suggest you book in sooner than later. If you are a member wanting to take some non-member friends then I would get in early after the 1st June.

There are still spaces on all the other scheduled weekend and weeks so book in early to avoid disappointment. The booking system is up and running with no major problems and is proving to be a popular and hassle free way to book and it's good to have instant confirmation of your booking.

To make a booking go to our website go to 'facilities' and 'how to book' and click on 'Use our online booking system to book your place at the Lodge'.

Thanks to a hand full of some dedicated and hard working people there have been a number of working parties up the lodge and they have completed work like double glazing of the windows, put bats in the kitchen ceiling and stocked up the non-perishable items. The lodge should be now extra cozy and warm and everything is ready for a good winter season.

Squabs in the dining area are now buttoned to prevent coverings moving and to keep them tidy.

Bunkrooms 1 and 2 windows are now double glazed along with the kitchen window which now has lower opening windows for those who are too short to reach the previous high opening windows. This now means that all living room and bunkroom windows are double glazed to reduce heat loss and reduce the condensation on the glass.

A new extractor fan is being installed for above the kitchen oven. This will stop the flow of air entering from outside as this has been the cause of heat loss in the kitchen dining and lounge areas when the wind direction causes the venting flue.

It will be interesting to see how our electricity use is affected by these measures as we are facing a battle with the power company who are basing our line charges on our maximum use and charging as if we are using power at the maximum all year. Unfortunately the company has a monopoly and we do not have the option to shift to another.

Trip reports

Renata Hut via Pukeatua

4-6 May, Medium Fit tramp, Tararua Forest Park (map #1)

Marie Henderson

Punters: Illona Keenan, Kevin Cole, Megan Banks, Marie Henderson

Renata Hut has loads of ambience. Ambience of a basic tin shed with some paint slapped on about 100 years ago with a collection of critters and the special indoor garden found in all continually damp locations. But I have never yet been sad to see it. All routes in I have taken so far have meant arriving late in the day, over some distance and sometimes in not the best weather. The last was no problem on this trip - unbelievably fabulous weather from Friday to Sunday night. But I was still glad to see the hut having covered by far enough ground for one day.

I signed up for the trip not too sure of the plan apart from it included Pukeatua, Te Araroa and Renata Hut, but without knowing how they were to be connected. Assuming it would all work out and maybe match a trip I had done previously with some section of the Te Araroa which was new to me, I signed up. It all turned out very well. Especially the pudding; despite the cook's lamentations.

Trip points of interest:

- ratio of punter to GPS capable devices: 1:1;
- number of near face plants: 1;
- number of golf-ball size bumps on the shin: 1;
- number of nights where pig snorty snuffly noises were heard: 2;
- number of additional people at Renata Hut on saturday night: 1;
- number of mad hunters at Renata Hut on saturday night:1;
- number of hunters who road in on a bike from the Akatarawa Saddle with a pack and gun to Maymorn Junction enroute to Renata Hut: 1;
- rate of increase of obstacles on track on approach to Renata Hut: exponential;
- rate of increase of swearing on approach to Renata Hut: exponential;
- exertion requirement on Sunday: inversely proportional to Saturday;
- moonlight rating: daylight;
- minutes Ray's trip were late for picking us up: -1;
- cups of tea measure: very poor (not really the weather for it);
- weather measure: exceptional (hard to imagine better);
- number correct of predictions Marie made: an unblemished zero.

I recommend doing the Te Araroa track between Otaki and wherever it comes out on a road again before it gets too popular and is turned in to the usual trampled meter wide grotty rooty slog fest the popular tracks in the Tararuas usually become before someone gets serious and puts a road in (see the Kapakapanui track for example - you have been warned!). I have heard that people have done it over and back as a day trip, but you

probably need to be a bit mad. But I am also sure there are madder options out there if you need a bigger challenge. Would be good for a run too (if you like that kind of thing) while still being less vertically challenging than most of the usual Tararua track runs. It is a nice spot, get in while the going is good.

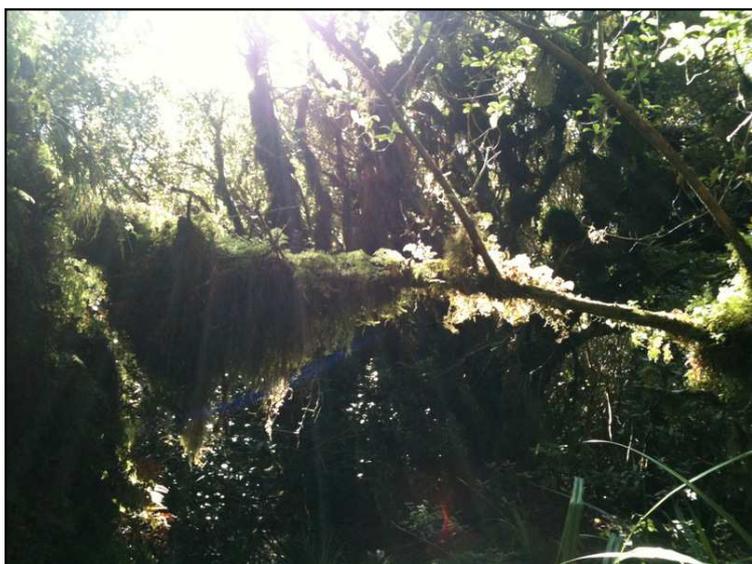
Field Hut

4-5 May 2012, Easy tramp, Tararua Forest Park (map #2)

David Blair

Punters: Ray Walker, Marie Smith, John Price, Penny Coombes, David Blair, Jo McLaughlan

We left Wellington on Friday evening, so that the Medium Fits we were travelling with could hit the trail early the following morning. Parking up at the trail head we put on our head torches and made the short walk out to Parawai Hut.



For Jo and I this was the first time tramping with the club, and having recently arrived from England this would be my first overnight tramp in NZ. As we boiled water for a morning brew a light mist was clinging to the ground and trees around the hut, with sun and blue sky promising to break through before long. By the time we left the hut the mist had well and truly been burned off, and we were grateful for the shade as we ascended into the bush line. We passed a hunter with a rifle and four hunting dogs, returning empty-handed from his night in the bush.

We followed Field Track up the spine of a wooded ridge. With brilliant sun pouring through any gaps in the canopy, I kept having to remind myself it was autumn. This was of course compounded by my associating autumn with fallen red and brown leaves, sepia light, and woodlands bursting with crab apples, sloes, rose hips and blackberries. This felt like a different world – one where the longer hours of sunlight and historic absence of mammals had allowed the forest to grow thicker, greener, more profusely. The bush was a riot of ferns, mosses and epiphytes using their host trees to raise them towards the sun.

We crossed over Tiroiro Knob and on towards Field Hut, where we stopped for lunch. There we left our overnight kit and carried on to Table Top. Climbing above the bush line the visibility was fantastic, with great views over the grassy peaks and sharp ridges of the Tararua range. A single dark grey cloud hung over the highest parts of the range as an ominous reminder of what the weather could have been like. Looking westward the sun was just starting its afternoon descent, turning the sea a brilliant silver.

We stayed overnight in Field Hut, where we got to know some of the hut's more permanent residents. Penny woke the next morning to find one of them had chewed a hole in the pocket of her jacket to get at some peanut M&Ms.

On Sunday morning we descended quickly along the previous day's route. By noon we were sipping flat whites and then swung through to pick up the Medium Fit group on the way back to Wellington. All in all a successful first tramp!



Papatahi Crossing: Catchpool to Wairarapa

5-6 May 2012, Private trip, Rimutaka Range (map #3)

Andrew Bichan

Punters: Mike Gilbert and Andrew Bichan

I've always wondered about that lonely meandering track from the Orongorongo valley, that finishes in the unfashionable backwaters of the South-West Wairarapa. And I see that Kate Cushing must feel that way too, since she's leading a trip here on 29 June. Two of us took a look last month on the spur of the moment and it is well worth it. Here's a sneak preview of why you should sign up for this trip.

Weather

Cloud at about 800m with light South-Easterlies both days. Scattered showers predicted but none eventuating.

Access

See "Driving Instructions" below.

The trip starts as a Friday morning inkling. The forecast is settled and at least one of us has always intended, but never quite got around to knocking off this Rimutaka Range crossing.

We leave Catchpool at 10am on Saturday and it is easy going over the Orongorongo track and up the river to Papatahi Hut (about 3hrs). The hut is new and in fantastic condition but locked with bookings essential (link below).



From here, you need some map reading skills. About a kilometre upstream from the hut the track heads up North Boulder creek then into the first tributary (true left) before launching itself up a steep 500m ridge climb (some kindly soul has left a rope in one particularly gruesome spot). It eases for the last 100m before topping out at just over 900m.

The view expands as we climb until, just as we identify the Makara wind farm, we ascend into mist. The mossy condition of the forest shows

that the clouds scrape along these hills a fair proportion of the time. We reach a small clearing with a survey pin at the top about 3pm and just manage to send a text to our driver. We're in cloud and it's a bit chilly so we don't stick around. The track drops gently to about 700m then plummets to 300m, before easing us down to 200m. The descent is fairly tricky in places; the track is not always easy to find and it's loose or slippery underfoot.

Wharepapa hut is on the other side of Wharepapa stream (true left) but sign posted: "Joe's Hut." At 5pm it's already quite dim and we light candles as soon as the door shuts. The hut is well looked after and the log book indicates relatively light use with a lot of hunters.



The next morning we follow the track from the door of the hut (not quite what the map shows) about 140m up to a saddle which drops us into the Battery Stream catchment. The track from here is fairly rough in places and easily lost but we don't have too much trouble working our way out into gently shelving beech forest which fades away for a last 2km walk along a farm drainage ditch to the road; about 3hrs after leaving the hut.

All up it took us about 10 hours; we aren't super fit and weren't pushing it, but I suspect a bigger party will be slower. Track conditions are variable and a little challenging in places. I thoroughly enjoyed this impromptu trip; tested some new gear and didn't waste the weekend mowing the lawns; definitely one for the bucket list.

Useful Information

Map

<http://www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap?v=2&ll=-41.325185,175.076016&z=15&pin=1&lbl=Wharepapa%20Hut>

DoC track description

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/wellington-kapiti/wellington/papatahi-crossing/>

Papatahi Hut

<http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~fiski/nzhuts/nzhuts5.html>

Wharepapa Hut

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/backcountry-huts-by-region/wairarapa/wairarapa/wharepapa-hut/>

Driving instructions

West end: Catchpool stream off the Coast Road from Wainuiomata.

East end: From Featherston, turn South onto the Western Lake Road (also the way to Cross Creek). Follow this for ages until you leave the lake behind and see the "East West Access Road" coming in from your left. About 2.5Km past this there is a barely visible pull off on the right with a faded DoC sign. There is a farm entrance labelled "Devon" about 200m earlier. If you go around a sharpish right bend and a bridge you have gone 500m too far.

Cellphone coverage

Mostly none. Some patchy cover at the top of Papatahi; intermittent coming down to the farm land and at Western Lake Road. I wouldn't rely on it.

A natural high

18-20 May 2012, Easy Medium, Ruahines (map #4)

Alayne Wright

Punters: Gareth Morton (leader), Debbie Buck, Alayne Wright, Kaleb Smith, Rachel Laurie, Alaina Jury and Sam Segal

It was with some trepidation that I joined a group of fellow trampers at the Wellington railway station on Friday evening. I had signed up to tramp into the Ruahines over the weekend. This was my first major tramp into one of New Zealand's mountain ranges, near winter. I know it's been said before but "because they're there" was my answer to the obvious question. For the life of me I couldn't think of a better reason.



The shuttle arrived and we were off, stopping at Carterton for dinner and then onward to the foot of the ranges. No turning back now. First up, a 15 minute hike in the gloom to the Triplex Hut, our starting point for the following morning. Light rain falling, which hopefully would not be a sign of things to come.

It was fine Saturday morning when we began the first major leg toward the Sunrise Hut. Aptly named as we were to discover. Unfortunately also aptly named was the swamp track which we

spent unnecessary time circling as we had missed the turn off to Sunrise Hut. Not an auspicious start, however our spirits rose as we finally found the right track and began the ascent.

It is a demanding hike for a beginner and I was glad I had done plenty of walking and running in preparation. Tramping in a group with plenty of laughs and encouragement certainly makes tramping easier and after a few hours we had reached our first goal. We ate lunch at the Sunrise Hut and then began stage 2. A tramp across the ridge and down to the Top Maropea Hut, where we were to stay the night. The hut is much smaller than the Sunrise Hut, which would have meant some of us sleeping in tents outside. I could see this turning into a sprint finish.

At this stage mother nature decided to play her unwelcome part. As we traversed the ridge we were assailed by rain, wind and sleet. So strong were the gale force winds that we were nearly knocked off our feet. We felt it was too dangerous to continue so we turned our stinging faces back toward Sunrise Hut to wait out the storm. Unfortunately it never abated so we resigned ourselves to a night at the hut.

Out came the cards and the hours soon passed, not without a few friendly arguments along the way as to which hand beat which hand at poker. A recurring theme obviously, as

it was only after some hours we discovered, written on the table by some previous occupants, the very answers. And on the subject of previous occupants, we found interesting the hut log book with the thoughts, and often humorous comments of earlier trampers. One particular entry by a young man named Henry was a plaintive message for girls to call him at his given number. As a dating agency you would have to say this was one of the strangest and least obvious services around, however Henry, if you're out there somewhere, there are a few numbers alongside yours so maybe it's time to get back up there and log in.

Also in the 'believe it or not' department was the late arrival, in the falling snow, of a teenager and his grandparents. His goal as part of a school bush project was to sleep outside covered in a tarpaulin. We stood amazed at the hut window, watching this valiant young man burrowing into the snow to clear a hole for him to crawl into for the night wrapped in the tarp. Such is the stuff of intrepid explorers. Eventually the foul weather drove the young man into the warmth of the hut, somewhat fortunately as we had visions of returning his frozen body back to his school as a show and tell exhibit. I don't know what other projects his school has underway but it would no doubt account for their diminishing school roll.

Woke up early Sunday morning to experience the sunrise for which this hut is named. A wonderful sight. I read recently where a late Wellington personality would yell down the phone to anybody who responded to his call with the word 'awesome.' "A telephone call is not awesome," he would shout, "A sunrise on a perfect day is awesome!" I get it.

We set off early to again attempt the ridge. This time the weather was kind and we were



successful in reaching heights. Superb vistas and lots of fun in the snow. Our guide, Gareth, told us to "bag a summit," any summit and it would become your summit. I know it wasn't exactly Everest but it felt that way to me.

The tramp back down the mountain was a mission in itself. We decided to follow a track along the river, however along the river became increasingly across the river as we were forced to ford the river again and again. Tentative steps across boulders soon turned into

boots and all plunges into the freezing waters as we gave up all hope of keeping our footwear dry.

Finally we emerged from the bush, loaded the van for the long drive home. It may have been my first major tramp but it won't be my last. My new goal is to complete the required number of tramps to enable me to join the tramping club. Beautiful New Zealand is out there - you just need to go out and find it.

Anzac medium trip to Nelson Lakes

24-29 April 2012, Medium tramp, Nelson Lakes (map #5)

Graeme Corin

Punters: Amanda Wells, Richard Lardner, Graeme Corin and Adam Clarke

Three keen punters (we picked Richard up from the Junction Hotel in Spring Creek) assembled at Wellington train station on Tuesday evening, before embarking on the 5 minute drive to the Interislander ferry terminal. John and his group were also aboard for the van and ferry ride. The ferry ride to Picton was fairly uneventful unless you happened to be commandeered to join John in a game of 500. Once berthed safely in Picton we began the drive to St Arnaud, stopping briefly so Richard (who had been waiting for us at the Junction Hotel) could climb aboard and commence his share of the driving duties. We arrived safely at the very nice St Arnaud backpackers around 11.00pm.

Wednesday morning (ANZAC Day) dawned fine and clear for the water taxi ride up Lake Rotoroa to Sabine Hut. The plan for the day would have us travel up the well maintained track up the Sabine River to Blue Lake Hut. The weather was fine and calm as we wandered up the track to Blue Lake. The pleasantness was tempered somewhat by the fact that any form of break would result in the party being crashed by the resident sand-flies! The trip to Blue Lake hut took around 7 hours, which included breaks despite the sand-fly epidemic. I had

unfortunately contracted a rather unpleasant cough a few days before departing for the trip, which meant that the short breaks were quite welcome as I coughed and spluttered my way along. Thanks to the others for putting up with my numerous coughing and gasping fits they had to endure! When we arrived at Blue Lake Hut we relaxed before enjoying a dinner of Mediterranean fettuccini. Some members of the party chose to make the short trip to Blue Lake for a nosey around. I chose to stay in the hut and cough! The visit to the lake could wait until the next morning.



Thursday was also a cracker in the weather department. However, the forecast for Friday was looking rather less inviting. The original plan was to have us camping at Lake

Thompson on Thursday night, but due to the dire forecast for Friday this idea was abandoned, and we were left with the option of trying to get over Waiau and Thompson pass and down to Upper D'urville Biv in 1 day, or just heading west from Blue Lake over Moss Pass and down to George Lyon (formally Ella) hut. As this trip was designated a medium, the Moss Pass option was selected. The trip from Blue Lake to Moss Pass was quite a pleasant ascent, only got loose and scrabbly for the final 50 – 100 meters. We had a short break at the top to admire the views before



commencing the decent into the D'urville Valley. The trip down from Moss Pass is not too bad, but does have a few steep sections. George Lyon hut was reached mid-afternoon.

Thursday night the weather packed in and it bucketed down, vindicating the decision to abandon the camping aspirations. Friday was wet all day so a rest day was called. The majority of us choose to hang around the hut all day, except Adam who was suffering from cabin fever and went for an afternoon trot back up valley.

Saturday we decided to head up valley for a jaunt to Upper D'urville Biv and then back down and spend the night at Morgan Hut. The trip up to the biv took about 3 hours, although only around 2.5 on the way back to George Lyon hut, where we stopped for an early lunch, before proceeding down to Morgan Hut. The track was in good condition and it Morgan Hut was invaded by the WTMC army in the early afternoon.

Sunday was home day. We left Morgan Hut and continued down valley to D'urville hut, our rendezvous point for the water taxi pick up. Again, the tramp was uneventful, although being constantly forced to wage genocide on the sand-flies was becoming rather tiresome. We decided to deviate from the track and follow the river to avoid unnecessarily climbing over a bluff. We also took the opportunity to practice river crossing techniques in the D'urville . We reached D'urville hut in with ample time to spare, and enjoyed feasting on our remaining food. The water taxi arrived on time and we headed back to the van via Sabine Hut where we collected John and his punters.

We headed for Picton, via St Arnaud for a bit to eat, and arrived on time for the ferry sailing. Unfortunately the ferry was delayed, so we were a bit later than expected arriving back in Wellington, and the end of a very nice trip down to Nelson Lakes National Park.

Other bits and bobs

To get updates on DoC related activities, gain information on some current conservation management issue, read newsletters from DoC offices around the country, and much more information besides, go to the news section on their site: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/news/>

Deadline for submissions to the July 2012 WTMC newsletter: Friday 29 June 2012

The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club. Any queries or comments should be directed to the writer of the article. The editor of the newsletter reserves the right to edit and publish articles.

Page 20 of 20