



# The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: [newsletter@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@wtmc.org.nz)

September 2012



Mt Paske trip, Nelson Lakes NP

Paula Vincent

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Map of trip locations in this issue



1. Tongariro National Park
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# The Nature of Things

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Sharron Came, President



At the time of writing I am looking forward to heading up to our fully booked Lodge for the last weekend of Snowcraft 2012. Magic to have a good weather forecast and to know there is currently white stuff coating the rocks. Of course it will be interesting to see what Tongariro looks like as well, probably a bit like an inverted ashtray. Mostly however I'm pleased that the hard work put in by our Lodge promotion people is starting to pay off. We have not had too many fully booked Lodge weekends so far this season so big ups to Eric Evans and the rest of the crew for persisting with the marketing. The rest of us can really help Eric, Brian and Colin and Co out by spreading the word that the Lodge is available for booking. We have noticed that relatively few Club members have been making use of the Lodge which is a bit disappointing as this great facility is ours to enjoy. We are about to commence negotiations with DoC to get our licence renewed. It is important that we are able to demonstrate that as well as basking in the reflective glory of actually owning a Lodge situated in a National Park, our members use it.

I'm delighted that Pete Gent has taken up the role of Secretary through to the next AGM and Craig McGregor has agreed to assume President of Vice duties. Both Pete and Craig are active, long serving members. Pete is our Gear Custodian and Craig is returning to the Committee where he previously held the office of Chief Guide.

What we'd really like though is for some of the members who have joined the Club over the last couple of years to take off their invisibility cloaks, come forward and help us out. You've obviously been on a few trips with us and decided you like us. It would be really great if a few more of you would volunteer to give something back so members who are already doing more than their fair share can take a sabbatical. The quickest way for the Club to go stale is to leave the same few people huddled in a damp, dark meeting room year after year. Fresh faces, different ideas and new attitudes are good. Please think about stepping up either now – we are always happy to take more people onto the Committee, or our various sub-Committees; or when we have our next AGM in April 2013.

We will be calling an SGM later in the year to discuss and vote on some proposed amendments to the Club Constitution. As I mentioned in the last newsletter there are various provisions that we think need to be updated to reflect the fact that times have changed since our rules were last revised in 2000. The Committee is currently mulling over some draft amendments and once we are satisfied with them we will be circulating them along with notice for the SGM. If the amendments are endorsed at the SGM we will lodge them with the Registrar of Incorporated Societies and Bob's your Uncle! We will have a stronger, faster, younger, taller, better looking set of rules! If you are interested in seeing an advance copy of the draft amendments get in touch with me [president@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:president@wtmc.org.nz). At this stage we are hoping to have our proposals ready in time for the October newsletter, with an SGM in November. I hope that you will take an interest and make time to attend the SGM.

Spring is an excellent time to go tramping. The weather changes more frequently adding a bit of interest and the daylight starts to last a bit longer. Also heading away is an excellent way to avoid Spring cleaning, lawn mowing and one sided rugby tests. Have a look at the Spring trip schedule, it contains something for everyone I reckon. If you can't find anything that suits I'm happy to supervise a working bee at my place ALP 1, FE. Some off track work, byo gloves, water blaster and hedge clippers.

## Track Talk

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Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



We've completed the trip schedule for Spring, which runs from September till Anniversary weekend in January. Thanks to all those who have signed up to lead trips; you play the most important role in the club. It's inspiring to see so many people who completed the leadership course earlier this year volunteering to lead trips on this new schedule. I hope you enjoy the experience!

Last month Richard and I were leading a club trip in the Tararuas and encountered a dilemma of the type much discussed at leadership courses. We'd had a generally good day of navigation from Kiriwhakapapa past Te Mara and along the ridge to .865, with only a few false starts. Then we followed an unofficial marked track down towards the Waingawa, losing it near the bottom but coming out at roughly the right place. But in reality, it was the wrong place. I knew (from an Internet account) that that track led down to the river – rather than to the bridge about 500m south. But following the markers seemed attractive after an afternoon of mild bush bashing, and we over optimistically figured that the Waingawa would be crossable. It was a classic case of taking an easy option that gets you into a difficult situation.

It was about 5.15pm and we were across the river from Mitre Flats hut; we could see smoke curling from its roof. But the river did not look particularly crossable; the previous day's heavy rain had left it brownish and there were rapids. It would not have passed the stick test (throw a stick in – if its speed downstream is faster than you can walk, the river says "no"). It looked thigh deep in places. Assessing our group of seven, river crossing experience was scarce. I often feel that my judgement needs to be reined back where rivers are concerned, so looked to Richard for advice. The concern was whether, if it proved too difficult, the group had enough experience to hang together and back out safely. And we had to remember we had another option: the aforementioned bridge 500m downstream. The only problem was a 100m high slip in the way, which realistically we would have to climb up and around. But it was a safer alternative, if we could manage it before true dark fell, which seemed likely.

So, in the end, there was really no decision to be made. I remembered the rule of river crossing, drummed into me through both courses and experience; "do you need to cross?" We didn't.

An anaerobic scramble up and down saw us hitting the Barra track in exactly the right spot, and we were across the bridge and at the hut by 5.45pm, without torches. Sometimes it's hard to make the safe decision, and this was one of those that seemed even better in retrospect. I read recently that 40 percent of tramping deaths are in rivers; and it seems fair to assume those trampers had decided that crossing was both 1) necessary and 2) safe. Having been swept (slowly) away (on a relatively benign crossing), I know that what you focus on from the riverbank isn't necessarily the greatest point of danger – and that you need to be confident that no one in the party is being pushed beyond their individual risk tolerance.

As the weather warms, take the chance to get out into the hills and dust off your decision making. There's a great array of trips to recharge your sense of adventure.

## Membership

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Helen Law, Membership officer



This month we welcome four senior members: Rini Sugianto, Brendan Eckert, Jenna Mein and Meena Kadri. We also welcome Ellie Atkins joining as child member.

If you have recently changed your postal address or your contact details need updating, please notify me by sending me an email [membership@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:membership@wtmc.org.nz) or send it to WTMC, PO Box 5068, Wellington. Thank you.

## Social corner

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Jenny Beaumont, Social convenor



Wednesday night talks this month:

- 29th August - "shorts night". Let me know if you'd like to show a few slides.
- 5th September - Katja Reidel will give us some pointers on how to take a good photo.. come and be inspired to enter our annual photo competition!
- 12th September - Family tramping with the WTMC by Mike Gilbert
- 19th September - TBC

Please get in touch if you have a presentation/slide show you'd like to give on a Wednesday night through: [social@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:social@wtmc.org.nz)

## Lodge update

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Brian Goodwin, Ruapehu Lodge convenor



Jan and I spent two weeks in the Lodge recently. The first week was a club ski week and the second we were club representatives for a school group.

We had nine days skiing out of twelve with five Bluebird (clear) days and the other with a mix of sun / mist. Breaks during the misty periods were had in the comfortable Knoll ridge day lodge.

When Tongariro erupted for the first time in 100 years we heard nothing and saw nothing so carried on as per usual.

One of the days we had a power cut affecting the whole mountain and down as far as National Park. The lifts were stopped for a while until the diesel backup restored power to the ski field but not to our lodge. Out came the barbeque and sausages and onions on bread with tomato sauce. Also a large pot of water was boiled for hot drinks. This was followed by ice cream and fruit before the power was restored. It was good to see the barbeque was in reasonable working order.

When we arrived there was virtually no snow around the lodge but on leaving we were able to ski to the bottom of the steps in the gully leading up to it and 20cm of snow around the area. Although the snow levels around the Lodge were not that great due to warmer weather the upper ski field has now plenty of snow and continued to increase over the two weeks with most falling overnight. Hence we had fresh snow to ski in most days. All of this time there was little or no wind so being on the slopes in all weather was very pleasant.

Looking at future weather reports I would expect this trend to continue and deliver more snow to the mountain.

Coming up is another club week arriving Sunday 16 September departing Friday 21 September which still has some space left. You could join us on the ski week or book one weekend, or both weekends, at either end of the ski week. So take some leave and come on up for some good skiing and great company too!

To book the Lodge go to: <http://www.wtmc.org.nz/lodgebookings>

# Trip reports

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## Pinnacles traverse

21 July 2012, Alp 2 / 3 F, Tongariro National Park (map #1)

Mike Phethean

Punters: Simon Bell, Mike Phethean

The trip was a lodge based ice climbing trip. The difficulty: no ice. I only had one other punter and due to severe jet lag they decided to bail too. What to do?



Pinnacle ridge

The answer was to recruit someone on really short notice. Luckily I was climbing with Simon on Thursday and persuaded him that the Tararuas really are not worth the trouble. A negotiation of routes and kit rapidly followed, just how many ice screws do you need?

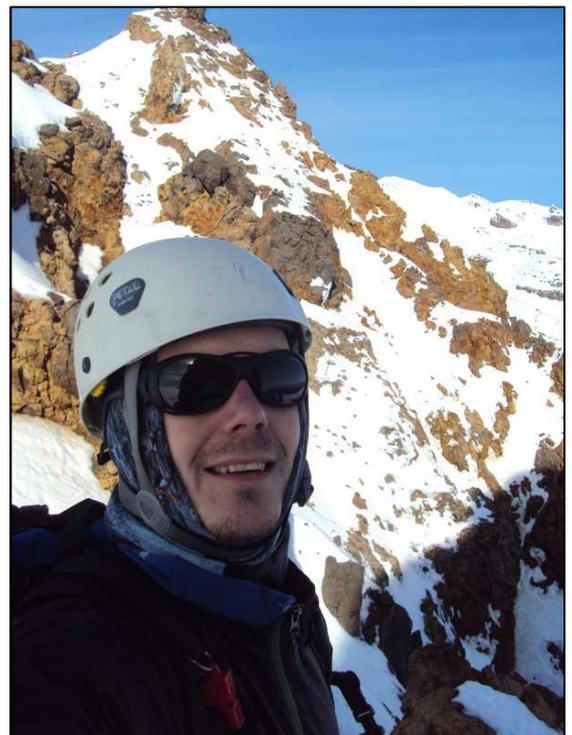
We picked the Pinnacles traverse as something moderately difficult, close to the lodge and not in need of a great deal of snow.

The usual drive up to the lodge was punctuated by the fast food of Bulls and I almost managed to fall asleep.

We were sharing the trip with the summit baggers.

The forecast was good (hence the lack of snow) and so an early start was in order. The worse alpine start always makes me cringe a little so we aimed to get up at 6:30am and head out after an hour. We left at 7:45 am.

The route we took crossed a streambed where the snow had been washed away, pretty much the only ice we saw. We then followed up the slopes crossing through an obvious snow gap in the rock band to gain the ridge. Simon thought that the route was round the right side of the first pinnacle, aptly named the Grand Pinnacle. It wasn't and there was a 15m rock pitch on the rope to the top. (The route is normally along the ridge). Normally this is just good fun/training but the ability of two 20kg rocks to not stay on the mountain but roll out of my hands just



Simon Bell

missing my legs increased my heart rate somewhat. “Welcome back to NZ mountaineering” Simon said! I caught my breath and then went off to bag the top.

We then spent far too long faffing about setting up a belay for the next stage. I’ll skip the details though the abseil was a nice 50m. You are supposed to be able to ice climb this face, but we were just being careful about not knocking any more rocks off.

Time was on my mind as we had just wasted too much of it and the sun was warming its way through the breeze. The Middle Pinnacle gave it back to us, a snow walk almost to the top followed by a 20m abseil to the slopes below. Simon mentioned that last time he couldn’t get through this section but the snow was generally good, though starting to soften a bit.



Top of the Grand Pinnacle

We stopped at the notch for lunch looking at the possible routes ahead. There were three ways, a short bypass to the right, a longer bypass but all the way to the top round to the left or over the top. The fact that it was 12:30pm, and the escape routes were easy made us decide on over the top. It comprised of a moderate snow slope requiring both ice tools followed by a rock climb to the ridge. The snow actually went further than we could see and we set an anchor for the rock section. It didn’t look too bad up to the ridge but the ridge looked sharpish.

First impressions some times are right and the climbing on the ridge was definitely towards fun. We managed about 30m of it. From an anchor on the ridge we dropped to slopes 10m to its left which gave easy access to the top, called the First Pinnacle (We had gone the wrong way, doh!) Here there were many more fresh footsteps and some good down climbing that brought us to a broad section of the ridge from where we dropped in to a gully which led to the ski field.

We stopped in the café for a drinks and chips at 3pm before heading down to the lodge for a shower before the main group came back.

The next morning we ran through some rope work with the summit group. We had done our job and it was murky outside!

# Naturists on Tongariro

28 July 2012, Easy Medium, Tongariro National Park (map #2)

Mike Gilbert

Punters: Mike Gilbert, Yingjie Zhang, Ilske Verberg

At home with flu: Josh "It'll always be there, I'll do it later" Tabor

Note to the Committee:

I feel I must notify you of a conflict of interest I have, as myself and others have formed a new club that inevitably will compete with the WTMC. A group of us have had a flash of insight that there is a totally un-serviced need in the tramping community, and that is how the Wellington Alpine Naturists Group was born. This seemed like a great idea at about 10pm at a beer tasting event, and in rapid order we had many founding members and a full WANG committee was formed.

I must further inform you of our inaugural trip, which was a great success, although it did not strictly achieve our founding aims since everybody seemed to stay very thoroughly dressed.

We started by surreptitiously tagging along with a WTMC group - one of the three family trips to Ruapehu Lodge that are running this year. Saturday morning we left a happy, bubbling Lodge full of children getting ready to sled, ski and board, and drove off down from Whakapapa.

We called in at the DOC office to find out that while last week there was snow all the way to the bottom of Tongariro, the torrential rains of the last week had washed most of it away. Ice in the craters but washed off the slopes seemed to be the recurring theme. So we packed our crampons, tied on our ice axes, and set off from Mangetepopo.

I've only ever done the crossing with the masses in summer, so found Mangtepopo road end eerily empty. No full car park, nor steady shuttling of buses and large groups of tourists and walkers milling around. Just us and maybe 5 other people. Strangely, we all



started with many layers of clothing, somewhat counter to our Naturist ideals. Perhaps the biting wind and cool temperature had something to do with this. We started off on the gentle walk through the Mangetepopo valley with ice all around. Beautiful ice crystal formations grew out of the dirt like jewelled spines. The grasses were covered in delicate ice casing. A stream running beside the track formed sculpted shapes where the water splashed and trickled over rocks and down gullies.

At soda springs the grunt up the hill began. We still had seen little or no sign of snow - only the chill in the gentle breeze told us it wasn't a pleasant summer's day. But when we topped out in the first crater, the white stuff made its presence known in the form of quite patchy snow and ice. As the DOC office lady had predicted, the rain had washed snow into the crater and frozen. I untied my ice axe, more in hope than necessity, but although things were a little slippery in places there was no thought of strapping on crampons.

In very little time we'd climbed the spur to the top crater. The wind was fresh and chilling but the tops were sunny and quite pleasant. We crossed and picked our way down the other side through the steep scoria. No snow, no ice, nothing but loose, sliding rubble. We slowly and carefully descended to the emerald lakes. Emerald in summer, icy white in winter!

We lunched here in the shelter of a rocky outcrop, absorbing the sun like lizards. A couple of us gingerly made our way onto the lake and tapped at the surface with ice axes. The lakes seemed very solid - but we didn't push our luck.



We carried on through red crater, the third of the four big craters. This was the snowiest part of the journey, with good cover over the entire floor and a slushy, icy exit to Blue Lake. Blue Lake was truly spectacular as a large white expanse of ice.



We sidled around the edge of the lake and began our descent, to spectacular views of Lake Rotoaira with Taupo in the background.



All too soon we left the snow behind, and ice and rock gave way to mud and gravel. The track to Ketatahi Hut was showing a lot of damage with washouts and great pieces of wooden edge pulled loose and fallen down the hill. I always find the descent to Ketatahi Hut interminably long and today was no exception - the track wound back and forth and the hut grew closer in agonisingly small increments. But soon enough we were chomping on afternoon tea on the porch.



The interminable track carried on from the hut to the beech forest, which is a pleasant finale to the day. Before long we were met by our driver with welcome cold drinks and were loaded into the car to return to the lodge, to hear excited stories about a great day in the snow.

I'm happy I've done Tongariro Crossing in the winter. In the event it was pretty well like a summer crossing - we didn't need to utilise our snowcraft skills at all. But it was superb to experience the crossing like it must have been before the rest of the world discovered it - peaceful, tranquil and deserted. Tongariro feels like an otherworldly place so much more when it's not scattered with other walkers.

Of course, 10 days later Tongariro did its thing. Returning two weekends later for a Whakapapa Ski weekend (and the second Family Trampers weekend) the sour smell of sulphur was in the air and clouds hung dark and foreboding over Tongariro and Ngaruhoe. It's quite special to think that we were one of the last people to cross Tongariro for probably quite some time.

If you have done the snowcraft course and know what to do with crampons and ice axe,

The Crossing in Winter is definitely a trip to do. You're still on a well formed track so even with more snow and ice, it should be pretty good going, the scoria descent possibly the only tricky bit. Definitely a good side trip if you are on the mountain but want a break from Whakapapa.

And the future of WANG? Well, it has its detractors, with their "hypothermia waiting to happen" this and "sunburn in terribly sensitive places" that. Any innovation always has haters. So if you have been seeking clothes-optional trips above the snowline, you now need look no further...

## Mt Paske

10-12 August, Alp 1 M, Nelson Lakes (map #3)

Paula Vincent

Punters: Mike Phethean, Katy Glenie, Paula Vincent, Michael Schier, Garry de Rose, Kevin Cole, Paul Clarke, Rini Sugianto

This trip promised great things: 3 days away, good weather (which always seems to happen in Nelson Lakes), an easy walk in and an achievable peak. And that was before I met everyone else on the trip. Our party were: Mike P, stalwart leader, Katie, Rini, Paul, Gary, Kevin and myself (Paula).

The ferry trip was spent figuring out where exactly we were going, with most of us leaving the detail of understanding what we were doing to the last minute. Paul also spent this time figuring out what he needed to bring and realising he needed a cup and plate stocked up on the plentiful supply of foam coffee cups the ferry had.

We spent the Thursday night in Picton as our ferry was a late departure. Friday morning dawned clear – not that we noticed, being too busy getting ready for our early departure to our destination and identifying who the snorers were.

The starting point of our walk was beyond Rainbow Station and ski field, along the (Transpower maintained) access road, which had a few very rocky fords. At the start we turned our gaze to the wide river plain we were headed for and started walking. We criss-crossed the river and dodged the patches of matagouri that littered the landscape. The first river plain narrowed into a gorge which we sidled around which opened into another large river plain where we crossed the river forks and followed the river up into a valley where the hut was. The hut was cute, code for tiny, sleeping 6. The most noted



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snorer was elected to sleep in the tent.



We started early the next day, getting a head start on the sun. Inevitably we started by crossing the river setting the scene for soggy cold feet all day. Clambering over fallen mossy trees we tumbled out to the snow at about the treeline and wend our way round the slope to the top of the col. Snow! We followed the ridgeline up clambering over the rocks with the soft soggy snow seeming to come away with our steps. We paused at 1900 m pushed on a bit further before deciding that not all were comfortable with the planned route and the avalanche risk too high to try alternatives. The view up there was fantastic with endless rows of snow topped ridges stretching ahead of us. We seemed to be sitting above the clouds – fantastic

views!

Back down at the hut we settled in for an afternoon of R&R – except for Mike who still had energy to burn and chopped wood for the hut fire.

The evening meal was again fantastic, risotto followed by Gary's famous chocolate mousse. Kevin couldn't help himself and succumbed to 2 helpings!

As forecast the rain arrived overnight during our last night and we set off early on last day in case the rivers rose. Fortunately the rain stayed light and we didn't have any issues getting back. The final stage of our trip involved debating where to go for lunch and coffee and an uneventful journey back to Wellington.



# Turere Lodge trip

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18-19 August, Family tramp, Orongorongos (map #4)

Richard Lyth

Punters: 30 of us, 10 families in all. Children aged from 4 to 13. Leader Richard Lyth

This trip had been anticipated for a long time. Turere is a popular Orongorongo hut that needs booking well in advance. Planning began back in May for this trip. We met on Saturday at Catchpool, where bags of food were distributed for punters to carry in for our substantial dinner. The weather was kind on Saturday, but the forecast for Sunday was rain.

By 11.00 we were all moving. Two keen families elected to take the Cattle Ridge route, where entertainment was provided by a boyish dad and a sheep skull. Great views were to be seen from up the top. On the Five Mile track, we saw a couple of other groups, noticeably a girl guide group that chose to lunch on the other side of Midway bridge from us.

Lots of chatter and a few games passed the walk in to the river quickly. We stopped here for a break, and then got everyone going again for the last short leg to Turere. I'd be fairly sure this was everyone's first time at this lodge. It looks north up the river, from a large deck. Inside are 4 bunkrooms, and a large kitchen and dining area. The kitchen is equipped with large pots, all the kitchen utensils that you need: cookware, crockery and cutlery. If you like to rough it, then don't visit Turere.

Our group settled in to the lodge. Kids were heard in excited chatter in their new accommodation. Once things were sorted, and snacks devoured, a group of mostly dads and sons went down to the river. The route is down a steep track. Once on the river we built dams, collected firewood and generally enjoyed the vista. On returning to the lodge, dinner was underway. After lots of chopping and prep, stirring and adjusting, a bit of a feast was dished up. The fudge brownie was well received.

Following dinner everyone headed down to the river for a 'My Fire Rules' competition. We had unwittingly built two fires earlier – whose was to be the best? Incredibly the north site won the day. We are still waiting investigation to the fairness of the event. This fire, and the marshmallows that were toasted over it, were the best memories for many of our younger people. Kelvin displayed his penchant for bridge building – both in the evening and the next morning.

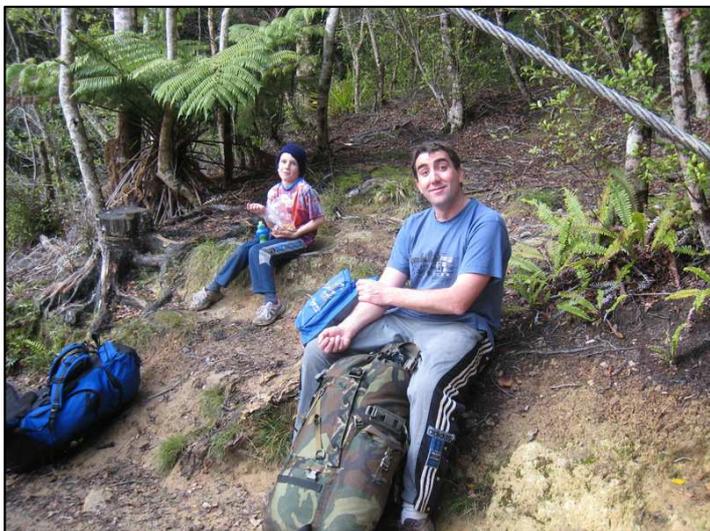
An enjoyable evening activity was lying outside to watch the night sky. A game of Ps and As was in full swing at the table – enjoyed by all. Next day, those with the youngest families headed out on the track. Others wandered down to the river, where Kelvin was to be found building bridges. Mike displayed great skill at laying a treasure hunt; he looked a little like the pied piper with all those kids in tow.

From here we headed out via the river, back to the Five Mile track. We seemed to cover the ground on Sunday pretty quickly. Maybe it was the threat of rain late in the day that spurred us on.

Highlights of the trip for the children were;  
'Putting sticks on the fire'  
'Playing with other kids'  
'Sleeping on the deck'  
'A quick swim in the river'

And for the adults;  
'Enjoyed realising that I can do this (tramping)'  
'Pride in the kids' achievement of walking all the way'  
'Great adventure getting to the fire'  
'Taking the up and over route'  
'Fudge Brownie'  
'Fantastic food'  
'Battle of the fires'  
'Amazing lodge and great company'

I will certainly look at doing this trip again. Watch for the trip on the schedule, as you need to book well in advance to secure the lodge. At the time of writing, the next viable dates available are in February.



## Other bits and bobs

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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/>

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**Deadline for submissions to the October 2012 WTMC newsletter: Friday 28 September 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.