



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

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Photo: Spencer Clubb

Can you name this North Island National Park?

Hint: One of the trips in this issue of the newsletter visited this national park.

A **chocolate bar** to the first person who sends an email to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz with the correct answer.
To be collected at WTMC Wednesday club night.
(photographer excluded from winning)

Been somewhere in the amazing NZ bush? Taken a great photo? Want to see it featured on the front cover of the newsletter? Send it to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz.

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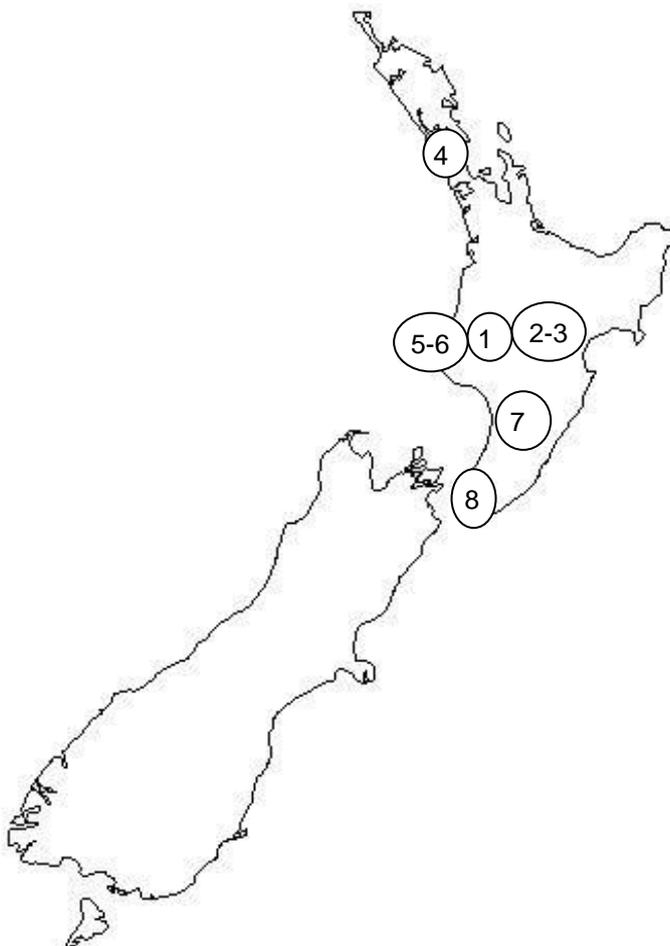
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Committee Reports

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



We live in strange times. The warmest winter on record, a pink trip schedule and tramping for yoga – spring must be here! On Wednesday 9 October we are hosting a New Member's Night to celebrate and welcome prospective trampers into our world. It would be great if you could spread the word. We will provide a great slideshow showcasing what we're about, plenty of E and EM trips for people to sign up for and we have a post New Member's Night gear evening the following Wednesday. Also relevant for newbies is the Bushcraft course the weekend of 1-3 November to be run by Alan Higgins and helpers. If you want to be part of New Member's Night please contact David Heffernan promotions@wtmc.org.nz. We need sexy trampers to meet and greet on the night, put posters up around town and generally promote the event. Also see the Editor's blurb below for details about a WTMC members in-store night at Bivouac on 26 September featuring a special 20% discount.

Big thanks to Donna Maher who has taken on the role of checking that trip money is being deposited into the Club account as required. Checking that people have paid for trips they plan to go on is an important job. You can make Donna's job easier by paying on time and clearly identifying who you are and the name of your trip when you pay. Thanks also to Brendan Eckhart who is going to help with the banking of Wednesday night door takings and gear hire money and to Nicky Shields who is assisting with our website development. Shout out to Mike Gilbert as well. Meet Up Mike is doing great work behind the scenes getting more groups up to the Lodge. He is looking for like-minded souls who don't mind driving punters north, doing a bit of skiing or boarding, then returning to Welly. Sound like you? webmaster@wtmc.org.nz

Hopefully you have had a chance to get along to some of the superb talks Sue has been hosting on Wednesday nights. We are in the process of adding some resources to the website that should be useful for those of you looking to broaden your outdoor skills base. The presentation from the talk on 21 August is already up on the website under "trips and training" and we hope to add more resources in the future. If you know of some useful resource material that we should have on our website please let Megan know newsletter@wtmc.org.nz.

For those of you who missed the 21 August talk, Nina Sawicki and Lorraine Johns gave a presentation on ideas for transitioning from novice trumper/climber to trip leader. Some of the themes will, I hope, have resonated with those of you who have done our Snowcraft and Leadership courses. A few ideas that bear repeating include:

- Treat outdoor adventures as a lifelong learning opportunity;
- Take personal responsibility for your tramping, kayaking, cycling or climbing;
- Learn from mistakes and share experiences;
- Safety first, friends second, summit third;

- Consider what you have to offer on a trip – everyone can make a contribution whether it is helping with the navigation or managing group dynamics or cooking; and
- Consider whether you can mentor less experienced trampers.

WTMC is an outdoor community, for us it is crucial that the trips we offer constitute a safe, enjoyable outdoor experience. This doesn't just happen, as with all aspects of Club life, a team effort is required.

Snowcraft 2013 has been and gone. I've been involved in this course for a few years now and the experience is always hugely rewarding. This year I was assisted by Marie Henderson and Mike Phethean whose support and skills were crucial to the success of the course. We had a real mix of participants, weather and snow conditions. This was fantastic in terms of wringing the most out of NZ's fickle alpine environment. On the first weekend we learnt about group decision making, risk management, walking without crampons and built a kick arse igloo. The second weekend saw us practice self-arrest, cramponing and navigation as well as undertaking a big trip to the elusive Mt Minger (2600m). For a change I got thrashed playing poker instead of 500. Watch out for Nicky's trip report in this issue.

Amanda Wells and helpers ran a Leadership course in early August. This was well attended with half the participants already signed up to lead trips. Big thanks to Amanda, Richard Lardner and David Heffernan for giving part of their weekend to run the course.

As we head towards the final third of the financial year, it is great to see the club in good heart with good levels of participation/engagement. Look forward to seeing you in the hills.

Track Talk

Mike Phethean, Chief Guide



Hopefully you are all aware that the Spring Schedule is now published both on the web and in print. Thank you to all those people who signed up to be leaders it is very much appreciated.

There really is a great range of trips coming up and it just remains for you all to sign up! In January there are three trips to the South Island and these will require flights down to Christchurch. It is up to members to book their own flights and booking as far in advance as possible is recommended as it is cheaper. If you want to go on any of these trips email the trip leader to find out which flights you will need. The Southern Alps really are great so, I would recommend that every ones goes.

The South Island Spring schedule trips are:

Tramp	EM	Edwards – Hawdon	Megan Sety
Tramp	MF	Big Tops	Dmitry Alkhimov
Alp 2	F	Dasler Pinnacles	Sharron Came

Coming up sooner, there are two trips in November to Mt Cook National Park which also require flights:

Alp 1	M	Ball Pass	Stephen Healey
Alp2	MF	Tasman Saddle	Mike Phethean

Christmas Trips

This is a good time of year for members to think about their Christmas plans. Whilst some of you will be having the roast dinner with trimmings, others may be contemplating a trip for a few days into the wilderness. Generally it is good to do a few days longer than a normal club trip.

This year, like last year, we won't be organizing any trips on the schedule but we would like to act as support and a forum for club members to organize their trips. These trips require quite extensive organization of logistics. Please be prepared to help out and plan as a team. Club trips will be able to take out club gear as per normal and if required have access to the vans and Interislander ferry bookings. To make sure they are club trips, there are a few requirements listed below:

- 1) Any trip must have more than 3 club members on it.
- 2) More than 50% of the people on it must be club members.
- 3) The trips must be notified to the chief guide and advertised on the website forum.
- 4) The trip leader can refuse to take anyone without the need for explanation.
- 5) The trip must use the club emergency contact person system.
- 6) The trip must be for an activity that the club supports (e.g. tramping, kayaking, climbing).

Send me your ideas. If you just want to go with a few like minded people, just email chiefguide@wmtc.org.nz and I will see if I can get some groups together.

Transport update

Richard Lardner, Transport Officer



One of the club's selling points is that the club owns two vans. This makes it easy for us to arrange transport and to travel together as a group on club trips. Taking one van instead of three private cars puts less pressure on drivers, is cheaper overall and better for the environment. It means we share the risks and liabilities of leaving vehicles at road ends, rather than asking individuals to carry this.

One question we are often asked is how we calculate our trip fares. When calculating trip fares, we need to cover all the costs associated with the vans. These include things like parking during the week, servicing, warrants of fitness, registration, road user charges, insurance and maintenance. We also take into account depreciation of the vans each year, so that when the vans need replacing we will have built up enough capital to do so.

It's easy to assume that the trip fare should equate to the cost of fuel, but in fact this only makes up about half the trip fare. Together the other components make up a similar

amount. For example, each van costs around \$6000 to run per year - excluding fuel, road user charges and maintenance.

We need to make sure that trip fares cover the total cost of owning the vans so that the club isn't losing money on them. The costs are averaged out over all the trips, based on the vans being used 40 weekends each year. Similarly, you'll find if you use your own vehicle for work purposes, the rate at which your employer reimburses you takes the total cost of the vehicle into account, rather than just the petrol you've used.

Moving on from van costs, one of the roles of transport officer is to allocate the vans to trips each weekend. To do this I need to know the number of people on each trip every weekend. For all overnight trips, it would be great if trip leaders remember to email me (transport@wtmc.org.nz) the number of people on each trip as soon as you know final numbers. Also, trip leaders should email or text me the odometer readings of vans after the trip is finished.

Finally, a big thanks to Michael Schier and David Bakker for volunteering to clean the vans every month.

WTMC Promotions – New Member Night

David Heffernan, Promotions Officer



The Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club will be holding its next New Members' Night on Wednesday, 9 October from 7:30pm. The night is a chance to reach out to those who are keen to join us, or to just get out in the great New Zealand outdoors for the first time. The schedule is a bit of a change for us - we normally do the information evening in February each year, but this time around we thought we would switch things up and try and catch people early in the season as we're coming out of winter hibernation and the weather is starting to get warmer.

The night will feature a pretty relaxed atmosphere, with tea, cake, and bikkies for all. Our Club President Sharron will give a short presentation about the club, and after that people will be free to wander around and ask questions or sign up for trips. The Chief Guide's team has done a good job of getting a bundle of easy to medium trips up on the schedule around that time to give those interested in coming along a few options for their first outings with the club.

If you or a friend is interested in attending then please feel free to just turn up on the night, no reservations necessary. Alternatively, email me at promotions@wtmc.org.nz if you have any questions.

If you are already a club member then we would love for you to help out. You can offer to staff one of the tables, or come along and mingle and chat, or if you really want to help you can whip up a cake to share for supper. Again, email promotions@wtmc.org.nz to volunteer or to find out more.

Update from the Gear Room

Pete Gent, Gear Room Steward

Down in the basement of the club rooms, you will find the gear storage for the club. Every Wednesday, between 7:30 and 8:00 pm, we give out and receive gear for club trips. The range of gear we hold is typically group gear like flys, PLBs and first aid kits. However, we do carry personal gear for alpine trips such as crampons, ice axes and helmets. We also carry packs for those who are just starting out tramping, or those who are between packs and wish to head in the bush. Finally we look after keys for the club vans and we sell hut tickets at the bargain rate of \$5 (well not that much of a bargain) for those who have yet to get their hut pass from DoC enabling them to use the extensive hut network we have here in New Zealand. If you have questions, email me at gear@wtmc.org.nz.

Over a cuppa tea

Sue Walsh, Social Convenor



September starts off with a hiss and a roar with Grant Newton on 4 September talking about his trip to the sub-Antarctic Islands a few years ago. Grant captured many wonderful images so you will be in for a treat when you come along.

Simon Bell revisits us on September 11 talking about rock climbing at Mt Cook and the Darrens. September 18 is a jaffa and popcorn night while we watch a 45 minute film on Mt Everest. And talking of mountains, Emily Shrosbree is going to take us up Mt Kilimanjaro on Sept 25. On 2 October we have Tom Fanning talking about walking the Camino. And keep an eye out for our new members night on 9 October, followed by a talk on gear for tramping newbies 16 October. We have plenty to keep you entertained so make sure you come along on Wednesdays.

Ruapehu Lodge Report

Brian Goodwin, Lodge Convenor

We are having some mild weather up the mountain and along with that comes more fine days than normal due to some persistent easterly winds with Whakapapa being in the shelter. The snow base is ample for some good skiing particularly, above the waterfall and above the west chair. With a mix of weather throughout the days that Jan and I have been up there, there have been some bluebird days and some changeable weather in which we have been able to ski while snow was falling giving exceptional skiing. We managed to ski eight out of 12 days.



The west chair was opened while we were there and there were just two possible ski runs down. We are expecting this to improve with more snow falling into September. The July school holidays were also blessed with some good weather so we had some happy people staying at the lodge and good occupancy rates for the lodge during both weeks. The occupancy rate for the lodge so far is looking good and there is a high number of forward bookings so an increase in interest is a welcome sign.

A reminder that the only club ski week outside of the school holidays is from 15th to 20th September and there is plenty of space available for that week. Non-member friends are welcome! Visit the website to book online and get a faster response:

<http://www.wtmc.org.nz/ruapehu-lodge>

Membership update

Helen Law, Membership Officer

This month we welcome three senior members: Richard House, Sam Thornton and Fiona Elliott - Congratulations!



If you have any membership questions please find me at the club on a Wednesday night otherwise contact me on membership@wtmc.org.nz or send it to PO Box 5068, Lambton Quay, Wellington 6145.

WTMC Discount Night at Bivouac & and a few odds and ends

Megan Sety, Newsletter Editor

Bivouac is offering a unique opportunity for WTMC members this month on Thursday 26 September 6:30 – 7:30pm at their store on 39 Mercer St in Wellington. Come along to hear what's new in tramping and mountaineering gear including Exped air mats, ultra lite Black Diamond walking poles and new items from Earth Sea Sky. More importantly, if you come along that night you receive a 20% discount available to use that night and the following week on anything in store (excludes electrical, clearance and cactus gear). RSVP or send questions to me at newsletter@wtmc.org.nz.

Bivouac will also be offering a new-to-tramping gear night as a club talk on 16 October featuring parkas, packs, boots and other newbie gear questions.

In other news, you can brush-up your photography skills in this month's issue of *Wilderness* focused on photography. While you're there, consider entering in the *Wilderness* magazine reader photo competition. Visit their website for more details: <http://www.wildernessmag.co.nz>.

Winning a photo competition is possible. In fact, one of our club members is a finalist in the New Zealand Geographic Photographer of the Year 2013 competition. You can view Ian Harrison's photo and vote in the People's choice at <http://www.nzgeographic.co.nz/poty/photocomp>.

Finally, here are the answers to the cryptic crossword puzzle clues in Harry Smith's Old Codger's Trip Report from last month's newsletter.

1. WATER (HIJKLMNO = H to O = H₂O = water)
2. OFTENTIMES (OF OF = OF ten times = oftentimes)
3. SPOONER (The Reverend William Spooner, after whom the speech defect known as the *Spoonerism* is named. In a *Spoonerism*, the initial sounds of two words in a phrase are accidentally reversed. As a sufferer of this condition, Spooner was a word botcher, so he would have proclaimed himself a birdwatcher!)

The chocolate fish for the first correct answers received goes to Tony Gazley. Actually, Tony's were the *only* answers received, and he solved them within a day or two of the newsletter coming out, so well done Tony!

Trip reports

Matemateaonga Track to Pouria Hut

12-14 July 2013, EM tramp, Whanganui National Park (map #1) Author: Richard House
Trampers: Illona Keenan (Leader), Megan Sety, Debbie Buck, Murray Sutherland, Richard House

The one line summary: long drive for an overnighter in an old nurses' home with a damp tramp to a hilltop hut sauna for fine dining, escaping the worst of the weekend weather.

While Wellington was being lashed by weekend gales and rain, a group of trampers escaped the worst of the weather in the Whanganui National Park. The planned destination was Tahupo Hut, but with the weather forecast looking pretty wet, Illona made a well supported call to go for a Saturday night hut with a fire, Pouria Hut on the Matemateaonga Track. It did mean a slightly longer drive around to the West of Whanganui National Park.



After a Friday evening 6pm station departure, we reached Stratford at about 10:30 with a short stop in Bulls to eat. The Transmore Backpackers (ex-nurses' home) provided a \$20 comfortable overnighter and we hit the road the next morning for another hour's drive to reach Kohi Saddle at the western end of the Matemateaonga Track for a 9:25am start. The track follows an old Maori trail and settlers dray road. The whole 43km could be easily walked in 3 days, but would need a pre-arranged jet-boat pick-up on the Whanganui River at the eastern end.

About 200m up a road from Kohi Saddle, the path broke off left over a stile onto a pretty well maintained track. Apart from one scramble around a wind-blown tree, the track was clear, but slippery in places with greasy mud and some exposed planking where it wasn't

wire covered. The track hugged the contours pretty well and there were no noticeable climbs until a deliberate exploratory leg after lunch.



About an hour from the start, we passed Omaru Hut where a family had established themselves for the school holidays. The bush enclosed the track for much of the route, but occasional openings gave some good views to the north with low cloud lining some of the valleys. The rain held off for the morning and with little wind and mild temperatures, waterproofs were soon packed rather than worn. We made good progress, covering distances in about two thirds of the DOC times. With a few snack stops to keeps us going, we

pushed on for a lunch stop around 1pm at the track junction at the base of Mt. Humphries.

After lunch, Murray pressed onwards to Pouria Hut while the rest of us took a small excursion for a couple of km up to the top of Mt. Humphries. Shame the rain spoiled the views. Picking up our packs at the lunch stop, the track continued over similar terrain to the Hut, where Murray had pulled a roaring hut fire out of his magic hat and forced a kit change to shorts and t-shirts. No other hut company; it looked like the last visitors had been the previous weekend.

Megan's magic hat produced a spread of starter nibbles and Illona orchestrated the preparation of a great pasta dish. Her pudding surprise was berry fruits with sponge biscuits and cream, so we ate like lords. Sleeping bunks had three levels, but the bottom levels were preferred by those with winter sleeping bags. Too hot above!

Facing a long drive back to Wellington, we were up early for a dawn walking start and a faster pace back along the same route we had come in. We saw some sunshine and blue sky briefly mid-morning, but by the time we reached the minibus around 12:30 the rain had set in. We had enjoyed a pretty good weather window compared to most of the country. However it became stormier on our drive back. The gusts even stripped some plastic trim off the minibus, but didn't prevent us making the waffle shop in Hawera on Debbie's recommendation for a late on-the-road lunch. It was a long day for the drivers (Illona and Megan), getting back to Wellington around 7pm.



After hearing the weekend weather Wellington had endured, our trip was a pleasant escape to see some country off the beaten track.

Girdlestone Alp 2 – Meeting Friends

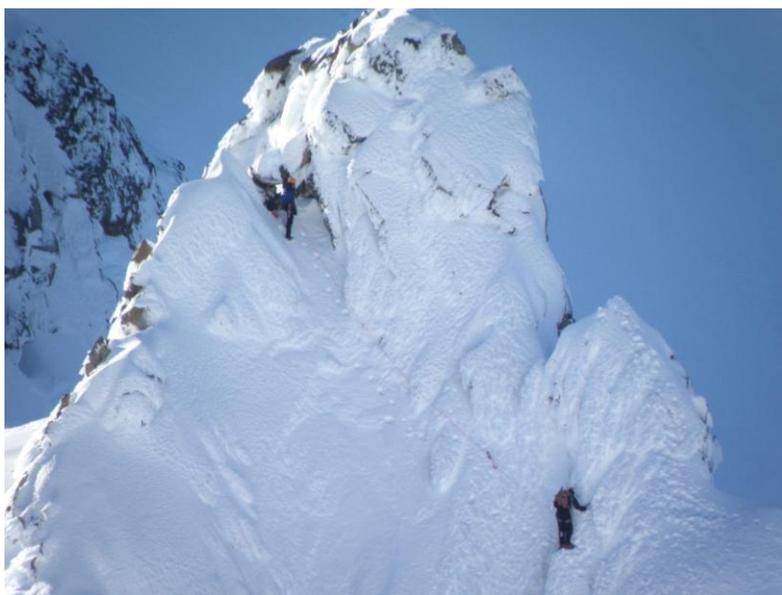
26-28 July 2013, Alp 2, Tongariro NP (map #2)

Author: Mike Phethean
Trampers: Mike Schier and Mike Phethean

Planning mountaineering trips like this in advance you hope for at least one goodish day out of two so that you can get to the summit. This time was different - the forecast was brilliant 5 days before and fell to a little windy by Friday. The only problem with weather like this is the mountain gets crowded. We knew of two other groups heading up just from Wellington. We therefore drove up to Ohakune in 'high hopes' (or in the WTMC van as some call it).

An early start on Saturday saw us walking for a while with the Tahurangi group before Mike and I took the turn to Girdlestone. We headed around the back towards the south slopes. The snow was hard and occasionally icy which boded well.

We headed up the south slopes and probably could have found a route without getting the rope out, but that wasn't the idea! Mike spotted a 40 m pitch of 60 to 70 degree snow and ice off to the side and away we went. Another pitch and a half of 50 to 60 degrees took us to the summit.



Here we met Simon, Lorraine and Elizabeth and we sat down for lunch and a chat. As it was only 1pm we discussed some time fillers and decided to try the ridge up to Tahurangi.

A soft snow down climb got us onto the ridge and away we went. Michael passed the first main gendarme whilst I looked up and saw a nice ice gully which seemed to have been in the shade. I pointed this out and Michael enthusiastically climbed the far more vertical mixed rock and ice next to it.

This involved good axe placement as sometimes they were used to haul ourselves up!

We did not have enough rope to top out and so a half pitch involving a near vertical down climb was needed to get us to the top and the obvious belay. I wondered if the route we had taken had been climbed before. Certainly the gully had, but we took photos as the wall would not often be in such condition.

From there we waved back to Girdlestone where Sharron, David and Marie were topping out after much pitching on the south-east ridge. The descent was a straight forward abseil and the others came over so that they could borrow chocolate and walk out with us. The next day saw us over to Tongariro and that is told elsewhere.

There's No Business like Snow Business - The Snowcraft Course Production and the (near) Ascent of Mt Minger

12-14 July & 2-4 August 2013, Tongariro NP (map #3)

Brought to you by Nicky Shields
Featuring Assembled Cast Members:

Ye Enlightened and Wise Instructors: Sharron Came, Mike Phethean, Marie Henderson
Keen Bean Students: Sam Thorndon, Fiona Elliot, Emily Shrosbee, Doug Jones, Adam Threlkeld, Inky Hickey, Nicky Shields, Megan Sety, James Skeggs

First of all, if you've never done the snowcraft course or been on trips in the snow, I would highly recommend doing the course - or having a go and getting 'stuck in'. The alpine environment is beautiful, challenging and requires a whole new set of skills. We had a good mixture of weather conditions over two weekends up at Ruapehu - everything from black ice on the road (picture the van sliding backwards with the brakes and handbrake on!) to energy-sapping knee-deep snow to almost full white-out conditions...oh and yes, the sun did make an appearance too.



Our first weekend started with some true winter conditions on the Friday night on the Bruce Road up to the lodge, all looked very wintry with snow at the side of the road. The patch of black ice on the road saw us abandon the van to walk to the lodge while Marie and Mike got the chains on and managed to park the van nearer the lodge.



After a hearty breakfast on Saturday (how many trips have bacon!), we headed out to practice some snow techniques. The snow was too soft and deep to don our crampons but walking in deep snow is a skill in itself and was good practice. It became important to assess the terrain to conserve energy. We determined our goal was to take the opposite routes to those of a snowboarder (as a skier, I had to adjust - deep powder was no longer my friend). We wanted to stick close to ridges (high winds might change this) and avoid concave basins where the snow would be deeper.

We practiced techniques walking in snow. Going uphill in knee-deep snow? You can kick those toes in and go straight up if you're feeling keen and have a spare lung - but traversing and kicking the edges of the side of your boots in saves a lot of energy. We tried to ensure we made good steps for those behind us and rotated the people in front doing all

the hard work cutting steps. Going downhill, we resisted the urge to have a good slide, and kicked our heels in, walking downhill in control.

Come the afternoon, the weather was packing a bit of a sad (as they say) and we based ourselves close to the lodge...cue project 'Mr Magoo - I'm gonna build me an IGLOO!' The group engrossed themselves in various activities such as building snow caves and flat



platforms for tent laying while our in-house team: Adam, Doug, Emily and Fiona plus an assortment of helpers at various times set themselves the task of building an igloo. The team filled plastic boxes with hard-packed snow to create 'bricks', a bit similar to making sand castles in the snow and house-proud Adam and Doug, meticulously placed the bricks and smoothed the walls. The construction continued into the darkness but our team didn't give up and come dinner time, possibly the greatest igloo in the history of Ruapehu had been completed. To demonstrate their faith in the construction,

Adam and Doug slept the night in the igloo (although they were still in the lounge when we went to bed and were not in the igloo in the morning when we got up - we'll just have to take your word for it boys).

Sunday saw us leave the mountain early. The mountain was in medium stropky mode by now and we dug the van out and drove down a slippery, snow-covered road. A good call made by Marie since the road was closed shortly after we made our escape.

We returned to the mountain on the second weekend to much less snow (and a melted igloo) and more suitable conditions for testing out our crampons. We headed up to a gully beside the Pinnacles for some practice. No more digging in those boot edges or heels, we now had to maximise the point of contact of the crampons which called for some flexible ankle work when sidling around slopes. After some deliberation, we settled the discussion that while generally you don't need to 'kick' steps when wearing crampons, this changes when walking in deeper snow where you might need to kick through the soft snow to get a grip with the crampon. We found descending sun-melted snow slopes wearing crampons felt much better when we down-climbed, with toe kicks and our axe.



The melting snow caused small rocks to become dislodged and fly down to our gully so we retreated to the lodge for some lunch and ice-axe arrest and navigation practice.

We arose on Sunday to reasonably good conditions and headed off at 7:15am for an attempt to climb Mt Minger, as she was later named. We hoped to reach Dome shelter near the crater lake if the weather was kind and we continued uphill along delta ridge where the instructors satisfied our sugar needs with a steady supply of jelly beans. We had a good break at delta corner (2010m) outside the NZ alpine hut. The club members looked cosy in their hut as we executed 'the penguin' and some groovy dance moves outside to keep warm.

We continued on above 2200m in diminishing visibility with our jelly-bean-fuelled group sticking together at a steady pace. We were approaching white out conditions and the skills of our chief navigators using altimeters and GPS became increasingly important. As we turned onto the ridge above the plateau, the precipitous drops besides the path appeared as flat ground in our goggles and we decided it was safer to retreat rather than continue to Dome shelter in dangerous conditions. We felt a height of 2600m was a good achievement for the day. Mt Minger had challenged us well and left a lingering temptation to return another day...

Four Degrees and Gales

13-15 July 2013, Private trip, Waitakere Ranges Regional Park (map #4)

Author: Jenny Cossey

If that was the forecast for Auckland what was the rest of the country going to get that weekend?

I was in now in Plan B mode and instead of packing a sarong, sunblock and fly swat I was packing a down jacket, over trousers, merino jumpers and extra plastic bags for a four day trip along the three year old Hillary Trail, Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, Auckland. I had been thinking I was going to walk along sub-tropical beaches in warmth, not heading into a South Island storm.

The Auckland Regional Council (ARC) downloadable guide of the four to five day 75km Hillary Trail is full of useful information, tips, and suggestions of where to camp using the ARC campgrounds (and lists private campgrounds and bach accommodation at the end). The four day trail concludes on its final day as a 27km 11-12 hour walk from Craw Campground to Muriwai Beach. This was the seed of the idea of walking the trail as a solo fit trip in 72 hours; winter dawn started at 7am and darkness at 6pm.



I caught the plane from Wellington and was collected by a friend who drove me to lunch at Titirangi and started the trail at 4pm. I traversed the beautiful kauri forests before darkness

descended at 6pm near Huia Dam and hence walked along the beach at low tide to the ARC's Karamatura campground in the dark. (11km, 3 hours).

The second day was a 400m climb over to Whatipu where I watched the antics of the Boy Scouts compete in the strongest man competition and run around orange cones in the mud



while carrying heavy packs. I was greeted with a large cup of tea at the shelter (while escaping the gusts of wind at lunchtime) and talked to the ranger and volunteers planting natives.

The ranger suggested Tunnel Point was the best for camping as dry and flat, but I did remind him a gale was forecasted for that night and I did not want to be on an exposed beach when it hit land. I continued on to Pararana Campground for the night. One of the luxuries of winter camping is there is no

competition for the best camp site (i.e. flat dry level ground, a gurgling stream beside to lull me to sleep and a shelter to cook in). Fully sheltered by flax and totora from the gale that blew through the night, I slept well and woke to a dry, warm tent. (14.5km 8-9 hours including breaks).

Day three was a gem, blue skies, warm winter sun, no wind, big black sand beaches as the tide was out and the place to myself. In summer these beaches would have been crowded. (Not mentioned in the guide is that if you check the tides, one could walk this section of the trail along the beach and not climb the inland track). A lovely long walk on the firm sand to Tunnel Point, and then northwards to Karekara. The recycling truck visits Monday 9.25am. I waved it down to give the driver my book as a donation; I had finished reading it the previous night. Another joy of winter camping is that it is dark at 6pm, bed is at 7pm, books are read and the night sleeping is long.

A second café stop at Karekare and on Sundays there is another café open at Piha. A steady climb up the hill to Crew Campground followed. I still had a couple of hours of daylight so pushed on and wild camped literally on the track at Lake Waibanu, overlooking the still flat lake while listening to the rolling, crashing waves on the beach beyond the sand dunes and spur. It was a great place to camp as I missed the inland frost and awoke the next morning to another dry tent. (26km, 9.45hours).

The fourth day was another beautiful day and I was in shorts sleeves and thinking my sarong might have been useful. Although the guide is fairly comprehensive, the Park Ranger I met mentioned it was about to be rewritten as there are a few missing hints for this trail. I agree with that statement as urban area trail markers



are vague and more of those beloved orange triangle plastic markers would be a welcome addition. This was particularly so on day four when the guide stated "...at this point the Hillary Trail follows Waiti Stream to Bethells Beach...", meaning literally that for a couple of kms one walks in the stream from the exit of Lake Wainamu (where the black sand dunes start) to St Bethells Beach, and ignore the four wheel drive track on the adjacent bank which land owners will not let you walk upon.

Although the trail is open all year round, not mentioned in the guide is that DOC land north of Bethells Beach is closed for lambing in August and September.

From St Bethells north the trail is a beautiful sea cliff path, wild, exposed and beautiful as it winds its way around the headlands. Followed by before an hour of grass verge walking before the descent on the attractive Quarry Trail to the albatross colony at Muriwai. Another reason to walk the trail in July is that the albatross are returning to nest. The sunset on the beach was gorgeous. I wild camped along the beach in the dunes. In total a 72 hour walk.

The Hillary Trail would make a great club off-peak season four-day trip, thereby missing the crowds at the beaches and campsites with options for cafe walkers and medium and fit tramps. Enjoy the numerous café stops along the way and accommodation can be in ARC, private campgrounds, wild camp or stay in pre-booked baches.

North and East Ridge Taranaki

23-25 August 2013, Alp2, Taranaki (map #5)

Author: Mike Phethean
Trampers: Mike Schier and Mike Phethean

Some work weeks can be quite nice, some are ok, but this one just had sucked from the very beginning. However, knowing that there are some great outdoorsy activities waiting at the end made the week a lot easier to endure, especially when it is a really scenic destination such as Mt. Egmont.

As usual, a bus full of motivated trampers departed from the train station sometime around 6pm, and after a quick dinner stop at Bulls plus some more driving, we finally arrived at North Egmont visitor centre. Packs were mounted, torchlights were switched on, and off we went - just to arrive at Tahurangi lodge an hour later to meet up with Steve Healy who had arrived a couple of hours earlier. Because the weather forecast hadn't been too promising, Steve's plan had been to already climb Taranaki on Friday just in case the weather turned bad on Saturday. However, wind and hail thwarted his summit ambitions, and so, he had to hope with us for better conditions on Saturday.

The next morning started with a clear blue sky and the wind had died away. We split up in two groups: Steve headed off with a bunch of keen mountaineers to ascend Taranaki via the northern ridge whereas Mike and I started our ascent towards the Organ Pipes valley. Our plan was to do some pitches along the east ridge, but the snow conditions and the inclination were decent enough to not lose time with ropework. The higher we got, the sweeter the ice conditions became, and combined with the breathtaking view, it made it one of these experiences worth living for!

After some hours of walking, trudging, and sometimes crawling up the mountain, we finally ended up on top of a spike called Sharks Tooth, which in summer, is really nothing more than a boring pile of stones. In winter however, it is turned into one big fascinating ice sculpture. Its structure and its steepness woke the monkeys in us, and soon after finishing our lunch, we put up a top-rope and started fooling around. Unfortunately, the ice consistency wasn't really what we had expected, and the constant wind shovelling snow in our faces when moving up soon caused us to wrap up our stuff and descend.

And that was when the real fun started. We somehow expected that the visibility would become worse, so we tried to follow some footsteps that we'd found earlier. Our foolproof plan failed just 5 minutes later when we lost the trail. By that time, visibility had come down to 5 metres, and despite roughly knowing the direction and having a GPS on us, we had to slow down our descent to avoid accidentally falling off bluffs that would otherwise have perfectly been visible under normal weather conditions.

After getting down another couple of 100 metres, visibility finally reached its anticlimax, and we were really forced to kick off snow just to see it sliding down the hill to get an idea of the contours. It is slightly scary when you just see white all around you and you are quite sure that your next step is safe but you can't exclude the possibility that the step after takes you over a bluff. The magic recipe, step, kick off snow, watch it slide, step...and some down-climbing finally led us into less steep terrain, the visibility became better and after another hour, we even found our way back to the lodge.

There, the other group was already waiting for us - they had turned around before reaching the summit as the weather had been less gentle on their side of the mountain, and they wanted to avoid getting caught in the white out.

For the rest of the day, I can't really tell what happened because soon after our arrival, the warmth and comfort of my sleeping bag became too compelling and I soon drifted off.

Sunday was exactly the same as every other Sunday I had spent on Taranaki so far: lots of rain. There was nothing more to do than pack up, get down and drive home. Oh wait, I've almost forgotten about the Belgium waffles we had on the way to Welly - yummy - they saved the day!

Holly Hut

23-25 August 2013, Easy, Taranaki (map #6)

Author: Inky Hickey

Tampers: David Bakker, Siobhan Bakker, Inky Hickey (leader), Donna Maher

We headed off for Egmont National Park on Friday night in good weather and good spirits and, after a hefty drive, were lucky enough to catch a view of the mighty Mt Taranaki as we drove past in the dark. After a good rest overnight at the local backpackers, we set off from the North Visitor centre and tramped up the Razorback track through montane forest and subalpine scrub. A brief 500m ascent brought us out onto the holly hut track which presented a brief obstacle known as the Boomerang Slip. This is a loose shingle, scree slope which we crossed one-by-one, not a good place to go for a slide.

After that brief moment of excitement, we continued north-west along the track, through atmospheric misty conditions, viewing lava columns along the way until we reached the ample 32-bunk Holly Hut. We were spoiled having this palatial space all to ourselves. We had a yummy dinner and desert and headed off to bed with happy tummies.

In the morning, we headed back up the same track before turning off to head down the Kokowai track, and after a brief section above the bush-line, we were back in the forest, clambering down numerous ladders before finally emerging back onto Egmont Road. A short walk along the road had us back at our rental car where we said good-bye to the iconic mountain. There are so many tracks in the park and we looked forward to coming back another day to explore some more!

Neither Howletts nor Cow Creek...

2-4 August 2013, Medium, Tararuas (map #7)

Author: Gareth Gretton

Trampers: Spencer Clubb (Leader), Rebecca (Beccy) Day, Gareth Gretton, Ian Harrison

The original plan for this trip was to go to Howletts Hut in the Ruahines via a Friday night stay at Longview. This would be a great plan for a dry and moonlit Friday night, but that wasn't the way the weather was shaping up. Instead, the forecast was for strong winds and heavy rain (from the north east) to set in on Friday afternoon, only to abate by about Sunday afternoon, about the time we would get back to the van. Plan B was to walk in to Daphne, where the EM group were headed, but this didn't look like a particularly clever idea either, given the walk through the gorge to get to Daphne.

Being a small group, we decided to be flexible and opt for somewhere in the Tararuas, leaving Saturday morning, and after considering just about every possible road end/hut we settled on Kiriwhakapapa road end and walking to Cow Creek Hut. After a relatively relaxed start (OK, we stopped at the French Bakery in Greytown), we got to the road end and got started.

It was a pretty easy walk up to Blue Range Hut (2 hrs) where we stopped for lunch. Spencer looked in the hut book and found that a group of 8 had stayed there the previous night and were headed for Arete Forks Hut. Apparently this wasn't great news, since there was a decent chance that they might end up at Cow Creek Hut (6 bunks).



From Blue Range it was pretty flat for a few kms, as far as a bent sign pointing down the hill. At this point we could either stay on the track, or follow the ridge down past spot heights 970, 890 and 810 to Cow Saddle. We opted for the easy choice of following the marked track, figuring that it was probably better to get to Cow Creek sooner rather than later.

This led fairly steeply down to the river, and then along for about a km to a suspension bridge about 3 hrs from Blue Range. Cow Creek Hut was directly on the other side, and

there was a fire on with the other group. Whilst friendly enough they weren't sending out 'we want to share our hut with you vibes'. This was probably the low point of the trip, as we stood around in the rain having a quick confab about what to do. Option A was a rainy night under the fly and/or crammed into the hut, and option B was a return trip to Blue Range. General consensus was that it was worth the 3 hrs return trip in order to have a decent night in a hut, so that was it. We had about 1.5 hrs daylight at this point, so at least we'd be a good bit of the way there before it got properly dark.

As we made the ascent, it felt like the rain was beginning to properly set in for the night, having been showery all day, so it felt like the decision was being vindicated. We got back up to the bent sign after an hour or so, which meant that most of the climbing was over. After that, it was a case of spot the orange triangles. It's interesting that you only see about half of them when it's dark.



We were back at Blue Range after 3 hrs, which felt like pretty good going. Having already walked the route outwards it made the return journey that bit quicker. Good news was that nobody was there.

Everybody got stuck into the cooking and fire-making and within an hour or so we were eating dinner in front of a decent fire. By this point it definitely felt like the right decision being at Blue Range.

Sunday was obviously an easy day, as there wasn't a great deal to do other than walk out. We did a bit of firewood gathering in the morning, and were back at the road end for an early lunch under the shelter. Entertainment en-route was provided by a very vocal kaka. It was only obvious how heavy it was raining once we emerged from the bush, so I guess there was something to be said for having done most of the walking on the Saturday.

Returning to Wellington we heard it had been a good weekend of dry weather, which was just a little disappointing, but all in all, it was good to get away with a great crowd.

Southern Walkway Day Walk

20 July, Easy Day Walk, Wellington City (map #8)

Author: Tracey Black

Trampers: Tracey Black (Leader), Chris Bolton, Clinton Hunter, Deborah Stoebe, Rose Graham

Doing this walk reminded me how lucky we are to live in Wellington. The Southern Walkway between Oriental Bay and Island Bay is an 11 km track through the town belt, across ridge tops and along a short section of coast. It is easy to access and very easy walking (it took us about four hours at a comfortable pace, including stops for lunch and other breaks).

We started at the Oriental Bay end of the track, which is just at the bottom of Carlton Gore Road, at 9:30 am. There was little wind but some low cloud, which later dropped a bit of drizzle on us. The track ascends from Oriental Bay fairly steeply at first and, having quickly

gained some height, we were able to appreciate the view back across the harbour before getting into the cloud. We headed up towards the Mt Victoria lookout, but the walkway track bypasses that, skirting to the west and continuing over the top of the Mt Vic tunnels.

When we got to Crawford Road, which on one side heads down to Newtown and on the other heads to Kilbirnie, we faced a small navigation challenge - the next part of the walkway was closed due to storm damage. We decided to drop off to the Newtown side of the road and go south along the first street we came to, to find another access point to the walkway. We managed to bypass the closed portion of the track, and joined up with the walkway again after ten minutes.

The walkway then takes you past Truby King House in Melrose, and from there you spend a few minutes on footpaths en route to Melrose Park, just behind the zoo. Following the zoo fenceline you head back into the bush and ascend Mt Albert (at 182 m, really just a hill!).

This is near the end, and I almost led us astray as we had to do a little more footpath travel from Mt Albert Road to get to Sinclair Park...I was looking for a track marker that I didn't spot and was merrily leading us further along Buckley Road. Fortunately one of the other walkers was more eagle-eyed. After a short back-track we continued on the walkway to the lookout over Houghton Bay. This was a fantastic place to stop for lunch and we had great views of Cook Strait and ferry traffic.

The last leg of our walk took us down to Houghton Bay through the bush in Buckley Road Reserve, popping us out onto Houghton Bay Road just up from the Haewai Meadery. On reaching the bay we said goodbye to Deborah who was heading back around the coast to Lyall Bay, and the rest of us walked along the coastal footpath on the Esplanade to Island Bay. As we approached Island Bay, we had gorgeous views of the snowy Kaikouras. We stopped to check out the storm damage to the seawall before arriving at the bus stop in the Parade. We had just a few minutes to wait in the sun for our ride back to town.

Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 27 September 2013

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