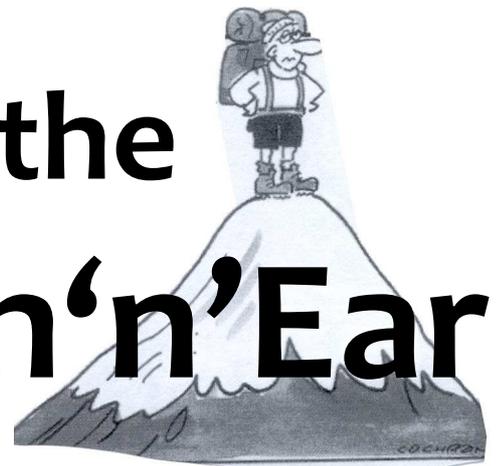




the Mouth'n'Ear



Newsletter of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club



View of harbour entrance from Matiu Somes Island

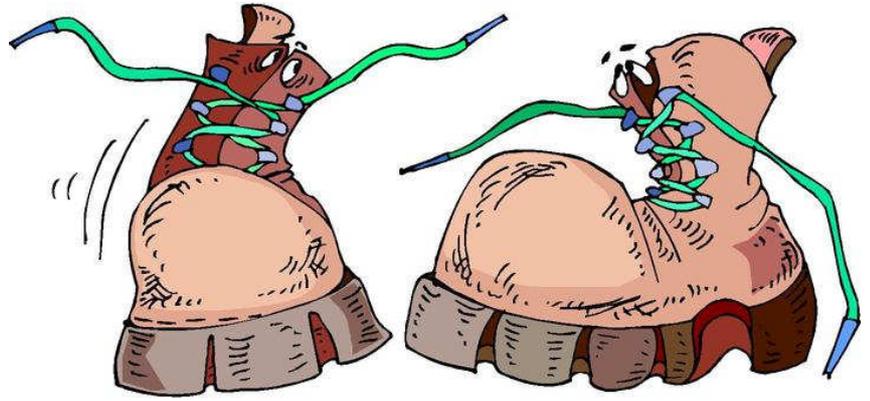
In this September issue: Family trip to Matiu Somes Island; Fly-making workshop; Aunty Rata Interview with Renee Habluetzel and Geoff Keey; Kai on the Fly.

Deadline October Newsletter: 24 September

Send contributions to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz, or PO Box 5068 Wellington.

Track Talk

with Amanda Wells -
Chief Guide



At the end of July I spent four days tramping in Lewis Pass with a friend who relocated to Christchurch a couple of years ago. Previously a member of the WTMC, Laurayne was telling me how things are done by clubs down there. They don't do communal dinners – instead everyone brings along their own packet of Back Country Cuisine or similar. And they also bring along their own cooker.

I wondered if people didn't sometimes say to each other before a trip, "let's share a cooker". But no, apparently they don't. It seems almost incomprehensible if you're used to our more-communal ways. Part of the enjoyment of our trips is taking your turn chopping or stirring then sitting down together for meal. Even if perfect custard remains elusive, producing a good meal in the outdoors is always surprisingly satisfying. Those struggling for ideas may be excited to hear that a club recipe collection is in the works at the moment.

To me being part of a group also means adopting a certain mentality. Like automatically checking (or waiting) to make sure the last person has got across a creek, or stopping every hour or so to regroup. It's one of the things that I most value about our club and a big contributor to our collective safety in the hills.

It's always a surprise when you strike other outdoors users who don't share similar values of consideration for others. During the past two months, while on private trips, I've twice encountered groups who've headed to a hut just to drink. While alcohol is one of my favourite liquids, I struggle to see its place in the bush especially when people are drinking two wine-bottle-equivalents each. Their loudness always grates, and the risk factors hardly encourage sound sleep – it's easy to imagine your drunken hut-mates wandering off in the night and getting lost/injured or (more selfishly) burning the hut down through carelessness with the fire or gas after you've gone to bed. Even though 90 percent of people you meet in huts are good sorts, it's the selfish ones that stand out.

This kind of behaviour stands in stark contrast with the many hours of work some people put in to help others. August saw the completion of our Alpine Instruction Course, ably coordinated by Sharron Came. Many thanks to her and to instructors Yibai He, John Duggan, Allen Higgins, David Jewell and Mike Phethean. This month we also farewell Anthony Mullick, who has been our Gear Custodian and also very generous with his on-water

expertise. Luckily he's only going to Christchurch so we will see him in the hills (and on the water) every now and then.

In the past couple of months, we have been focusing on producing our Spring schedule, which you will receive with this newsletter. Thanks to all the people who've participated in the planning process and especially to those who have volunteered to lead trips – I think we've produced a full and diverse programme that everyone will enjoy getting stuck into. One area in which people often bemoan their lack of confidence is navigation, and on this schedule we have an entire weekend in and around the navigation-friendly Kiriwhakapapa area devoted to honing these skills. Make sure you sign up for these trips, which are on 24-26 September.

AN INDOORS OUTDOORS ACTIVITY (try making a fly)



The weather forecast was perfect for the occasion: lots of rain and pretty cold. Such days are ideal to prepare for future adventurous travels, so the seven of us (Steve, Lorraine, Mika, Hans, and three sewing machines) gathered for an excellent selfish indoor activity: making a 1-person fly.

Steve's experience was essential for design, budgeting, procurement, on-the-spot help, quality monitoring and logistics. His experience includes several flies, billy bags and much more, so the rest of us were keen to learn some tips and tricks. In the lead-up to the event we had the choice between green-olive and olive-green as colour for the fly, which coincidentally matched all our favourite colours. Much better in balance with nature than those horrendous blue tarps!

The shopping list for the flies included the following ingredients:

- tenting nylon (150 cm wide)
- Reinforcing tape to run along the edges of the fly
- Parka nylon for local reinforcements and stuff bags
- 'Ridgepole' tape
- 2mm nylon cord for lines
- Lots of Molnlycke or Metrosene 'domestic' thread

At about 10 am we had everything organised to get going: the light-weight fabric was spaced out on the floor and soon cut in four pieces - no way back now. The next stage was to zigzag around the perimeter of the fly with the reinforcement tape. Staying on a tramping track is easy enough for sturdy walkers, but we never realised that staying on track for just a couple of meters when sewing could be such a challenge! Just requires some more Zen.

With the sewing machines accelerating, stopping, reversing, and the operators humming along with concentrated faces, 6m of zigzagging and another couple of meters of straight stitching were finished on each fly before we decided it was time for morning tea.

Hans doesn't even hold a learners license for sewing machines, so in the meantime he had concentrated on making pumpkin soup for lunch. The soup was a good opportunity for a few breaks to avoid the sewing crew becoming too hunched over their machines.

The afternoon session focussed more on the detailing of the reinforcements, making strong triangles from the parka nylon and tape, and putting them on the fly at the right spots. An advantage of using polyester tape instead of cotton is that you can easily use a flame to burn the ends to avoid ragging. In the meantime Steve focussed on the stuffing bags, so at about 5 pm we welcomed a couple of newborns of 31.5cm and just over 400 grams.

At the end of the day we knew all about winding a bobbin, using the unpicker and the best materials to use to make your own fly. Now it is just waiting for the right weather window to give our new flies a try!

Report and photos by Hans and Mika, image mixing by Steve Kohler.

Aunty Rata Interview with Renee Habluetzel and Geoff Keey

Renee and Geoff are leaving Wellington shortly to return to their South Island roots. The plan is to settle in Arthur's Pass and run a bed and breakfast. This seemed like an audacious and risky move to Aunty Rata, can you even get chocolate down there? I was not completely surprised though, as Geoff and Renee are famous for their originality, standing up for what they believe in and their ability to make a difference. I'm sure they will have a great time down South and lots of us will be tempted to pop in for a visit next time we are down that way.

If you haven't heard of Renee and Geoff you are probably new to the Club. Older hands will know they have both made big contributions to WTMC. In the not too distant past when we couldn't find a Chief Guide Geoff stepped up and performed the role while Renee has also served on the Committee. They have both led Club trips. Aunty Rata well remembers being permitted to accompany Geoff on a big Xmas trip to the Garden of Eden despite being short on experience and long on complaints. It was an unforgettable journey that still sets the benchmark by which I measure other trips. Geoff also instructed on both the Bushcraft and Snowcraft courses teaching new Clubbies fundamental skills for getting about in the hills. I asked them both about their latest adventure.

So tell us about Geoff and Renée's Magnificent adventure, what's it all about?

We decided we wanted to live in a beautiful place where we could be near rivers, mountains and the bush. So we have bought a house in Arthurs Pass Village and are opening a bed and breakfast in November.

How does it feel to be at the stage where the dream is in the throes of being implemented?

Exhilarating and terrifying. The bank balance is taking a thrashing as we organise moving and purchase items for the guest rooms. But we are having a lot of fun thinking about what kind of services we want to provide to guests. One of our plans is to build an outdoor bath area.

How do you see the division of labour working out? I know Geoff is the designated Poo Man.

Geoff will need to develop a closer relationship with our vacuum cleaner than he currently does.

Do you foresee any particular challenges making the transition from the big smoke of Wellington to the tiny community of Arthur's Pass?

Arthurs Pass village has excellent cell phone coverage and broadband so we'll be able to keep in touch with friends and family. Shopping trips need to be well planned because it's 2 hours return if we forget something. Kea!

You guys chose to get married at Arthur's Pass. What makes Arthur's Pass a special place for you two?

We were both raised in the South Island and both spent a lot of time near rivers and mountains. When we began talking about where we'd like to live Renée wanted to live near a braided river and Geoff wanted mountains, Arthur's Pass has both.

What are the three best things about Arthur's Pass from the perspective of a tramper?

- 1) A good range of tramping from easy wanders to hard alpine routes.
- 2) Accessible region.
- 3) Our bed and breakfast.

What is your favourite thing to do in the Park?

Enjoy being in such an awesome place. Geoff likes heading up some of the easier peaks and finding obscure routes. Renée is more sane and prefers to jump into ice cold rivers.

Is there a best time of the year to visit?

Interesting question, as a small business owner we'd like you to come anytime. You come, we eat. Actually, there is something great about every time of the year. Great snow climbs and skiing in winter and spring. Mountain flowers in summer. Low rivers and great tramping in Autumn. We are planning on having Matariki and Midwinter packages to celebrate winter.

How can people keep in touch with you and what is happening down in Arthur's Pass?

We have our own website www.arthurspass.org.nz and we are on Facebook We'll still be members of WTMC of course cos that's where we met each other.

Will we still hear Geoff in the media talking about climate change issues on behalf of Greenpeace or is it goodbye to all that?

Well, I'll have to stop being the Wellington political advisor, but planet wreckers can't relax quite yet.

It must be very rewarding doing a job that aligns so strongly with your personal beliefs but also a bit heart breaking from time to time?

It is hard sometimes. I come back from the climate change negotiations feeling very tired and often frustrated. Renée here – Geoff returns barely able to communicate, for a few weeks he grunts alot.

Any advice Geoff for others engaged in, or contemplating environmental activism?

Don't take life too seriously. Work on the issues you are passionate about. Take care of yourself because campaigning will suck up everything you've got.

You must be pretty self sufficient Renée with Geoff away a bit and in the spotlight from time to time. Is it hard or is it nice to stay in the background a bit and have time to yourself while Geoff is off on his Greenpeace missions?

Geoff looks cute on the telly, he looks so harmless with his DoC geeky ways. I'm happy for him to bounce about chatting on telly and radio, I don't think the world is ready for Renée and Geoff the celebrity couple. Attending UN meetings provides a great opportunity to sell off his tramping gear, particularly his mother's discarded silk shirts he's fond of wearing in the hills. Seriously though, it's a good opportunity for a clear out. Geoff here – she hates it and complains whenever I go away.



Above: Geoff and Renee's Bed and Breakfast

The government has backed down over opening up Schedule 4 land for mining but there is still plenty to be concerned about in this area isn't there?

Yes. Energy Minister Gerry Brownlee will be getting a say on whether miners get access to public conservation land outside of schedule 4. This includes many of the places people go tramping. One to watch for is Oceana gold mine in Victoria Forest Park that is looking at expansion, even though it has been convicted of 15 pollution offences.

Smoke Free Lodge

We have been looking into the issue of smoking in the lodge. Currently the only area that smokers can use, other than going outside, is the ski room and or porch area. Following research into this issue and recommendations made by our insurers committee has formally endorsed the lodge to become a smoke free establishment.

This change will be effective from 1 September 2010 and means that smoking can no longer take place in the ski room and porch area. Suitable receptacles will be provided for cigarette butts which must be cleared at the end of each week and weekend that the lodge is in use.

New signage will shortly be installed in the lodge and the lodge trip leader manuals have been updated to reflect the new status.

Sue Walsh

Lodge Convenor

Family trip to Matiu Somes Island – August 14-15

by Angela Gilbert

Family daywalk (and overnight stay for some): Mike, Angela, Toby, Brennan, Josh, Aidan, Duncan, Emerson

Having lived outside New Zealand for a while, I can say that weather forecasting is quite a bit more hit and miss here than, say, Australia or Europe. Something to do with being a small island in a large ocean, I'll bet. But when the MetService decided to add a 10 day forecast to their website, it did make me laugh. The forecasting is sometimes wrong on the day they release it. But, despite that, when they are forecasting for tomorrow, they have a reasonable chance of getting it pretty right.

So I was quietly confident that the Saturday forecast of "clearing showers and easing winds" might be vaguely reliable. Even though as I read it on Friday night, it was pouring and blowing. Anyway, the Forest and Bird Lodge on Matiu/Somes Island was ours for Saturday night and I was determined not to miss that. I was going to the island come rain or shine (as long as the ferries were running).

We'd organised a family day walk for Saturday August 14 on Matiu/Somes, and decided a few months out that we would hire the Forest and Bird Lodge and stay the night as well. Our son Toby has had a fascination with Matiu/Somes for years. He calls it Tracey Island (from the Thunderbirds) and we (and his Thunderbird-mad Aunty Sally) do nothing to dissuade him from it. We've been meaning to visit for ages and this was a great opportunity.

However, the lashing rain driven by gale northerlies did change the mind of several other families planning on making the trip out to Matiu/Somes. It is hard to take families out in poor weather. Social skills involving stiff upper lips and struggling gamely through all adversity are certainly not fully developed until much later in the teenage years. And the recurring theme that all us parents of young kids have is "Don't put the children off tramping!".

So, we waited on Saturday morning at Queens Wharf, with our luggage haphazardly strewn around to avoid the puddles from the recent rain. Another family turned up (but then, they were also booked into the Forest and Bird Lodge with us, so they had a vested interest and knowledge that we had refuge from anything the island could throw at us) and we did have one other person arrive. But they asked more about the coming trip to Nelson Lakes and decided against visiting Matiu/Somes this time around.

We boarded the Dom Post ferry (two families of two adults and two boys each) at 10am and enjoyed the fast trip out to the island. We were met by DoC officers and searched our luggage for stowaway pests and listened to some information about the island. Then we walked up to the house and made ourselves comfortable. The house was a well-maintained

three bedroom house with excellent facilities. The power is from a diesel generator, so there are three bursts of power through the day while the generator runs: an hour at breakfast time; another hour at lunchtime; and 4 hours in the evening. You can cook with the gas hob/stovetop outside those times, but at 9:30pm when the power goes off and the lights go out - that's pretty well bed time.

We made lunch and had fun exploring the house. Then we tackled a walk around the island. It was a family daywalk trip after all. We walked back down to the wharf as a starting point. A day volunteer ranger pointed out a nesting penguin, which was good as despite our best efforts we never got to see another penguin for the rest of the stay. We certainly smelled their presence and heard them a lot. But they proved elusive. We picked up a dead weta to examine more closely and returned it to the scene of its demise. Then we walked back up the hill to the visitors centre, then up past that to the gun emplacements on the top of the island. Can you believe there was no wind at all? So calm and peaceful. Interrupted only by four boys playing soldiers amongst the old fortifications.

We enjoyed the view of Wellington and Lower Hutt from the summit and continued on the Circuit Track around to the lighthouse. The views of the shoreline were spectacular. The sea was so clear and the birdlife was abundant. I peered through Josh's binoculars at any opportunity. (Thanks Josh!) One of the boys spotted a Giant Cook Strait Weta on the side of the path at one point. It was huge. We all took a good look.

Then, further around, closer to our accommodation, Aidan, Emerson and Duncan found a tuatara nesting under an old, gnarled macrocarpa tree. We used the binoculars then too, to get a good look at a tuatara in the wild. I've only ever seen them in glass enclosures before this trip. What a highlight. Wetas and tuatara. I was so excited at the idea of a torchlight walk around the Circuit Track because with this much good luck we'd see flocks of Little Blue Penguins. Surely.

Anyhow, when the evening power came on at 5.30pm, we cooked up a mighty fine dinner. Spaghetti bolognese. I don't know why, but I never tire of eating it and it always seems such a hit for the kids. Most of the children ate as much as the adults. Must be that good, fresh island air.

After tea we pulled on our warm clothes, and wandered down to the northern end of the island for the 7.30pm Petone Winter Festival Fireworks Spectacular. And, I have to say, I think we had a prime spot for viewing it. It was marvellous. Fifteen minutes of very good fireworks. Then we went around the Circuit Track to spot the multitude of penguins. After a good 45 minutes walking around, we could smell the penguins easily, and hear them cooing (laughing at us?), but saw nothing of them. They were Ninja Penguins. And we must have been elephant tourists. Four young boys didn't make us the stealthiest of groups. Lucky the volunteer ranger pointed out the nesting penguin down by the wharf so we can say we did see one.

Back to the lodge and our hard family daywalk had us all tuckered out. Two boys crashed

immediately, and the two others followed close on their heels. Then it wasn't long for the parents to follow suit. Come 9.30pm when the lights went out, it was very easy to pass up playing cards by torchlight and go straight to bed instead.

Sunday we packed up and cleaned the lodge, using our precious hour of electricity to get in and vacuum it out. The DoC ranger came and collected our luggage with the trailer and we wandered down to meet the ferry. At some stage during the night the weather had turned from a warm northerly to a cooler, stronger, southerly. In the morning, the shoreline was all murked out with fog around the edge of the harbour, making Matiu/Somes feel even more remote. Still no rain though! We took the boys for a last play around the gun enplacements and then walked down to meet the ferry at 10.40am.

The southerly had whipped the harbour up into a frenzy, but with such a short ride into the city, not even my poor sea stomach could be upset. The boys thought we'd provided them with their very own roller coaster, so their whoops of joy could be heard echoing around the boat with every wild dip.

The trip out to Matiu/Somes was as good as I could have hoped. Despite looking out at the twinkling lights of Wellington, you felt really isolated and cut off from the world. It is a special place so close to Wellington. Go and explore it, either for the day or overnight. We had fun!

KAI ON THE FLY

with Aunty Rata

Hi fellow trampers

Sometimes it is nice to have a bit of fun and frivolity with food you take into the hills. Dessert is the perfect time to give your fun muscles a work out because even if the dish doesn't quite work out everyone should be reasonably full after the main course. When looking to have fun with desserts you can't really do any better than take a leaf out of Geoff Keey's book and seek inspiration from the traditional Kiwi kids birthday party. When Aunty Rata did Bushcraft with Geoff he "cooked" us Chocolate Crackles for dessert. The assembly of these sweet treats is not as tricky as you might imagine and they will be a big hit with anyone who has a sweet tooth.

You can use real chocolate instead of cocoa but I don't recommend it as chocolate is a hassle to melt on a tramp – you need to put water in a billy then heat the chocolate in a separate container sitting in the water. Aunty Rata does not normally bother with the coconut but if you like macaroons you will love this variation on the Chocolate Crackle. If you really want to impress your group take a packet of hundreds and thousands along as well and sprinkle them on the finished product – very colourful, any 5 year old would be proud!

Bushcraft Chocolate Crackles (serves 4-6)

Ingredients

250g Kremelta *
4 cups rice bubbles (or cornflakes if you prefer)
1 cup icing sugar
3 T cocoa
1 cup coconut (optional)
Paper cupcake wrappers#

*this is vegetable shortening found in the baking section of supermarkets. It looks like margarine but is white and not as soft.

#also available in the baking section of supermarkets, a packet of them should do.

Method

Melt Kremelta in a billy, add remaining ingredients and mix well. Turn off heat. Place a spoon full of mixture into each paper cupcake wrapper and leave somewhere cold so they set.

If chocolate is not your thing then you could go for Honey Crackles.

Honey Crackles (serves 4-6)

Ingredients

1T honey
4c rice bubbles or cornflakes
90g butter or margarine
One third of a cup of sugar
Cupcake wrappers

Method

Place all the ingredients in a billy and heat to melt and combine. Spoon mixture into cupcake wrappers, 1 spoonful per wrapper. Set aside to cool then serve.

All published trip reports (or other written articles that aren't committee reports) are in the draw to win a \$20 book voucher!

Congratulations to Steve Kohler, winner of the August draw, for writing in about the Billy-off Competition.

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.

FROM THE GREEN CROCS

The spring trip schedule will reach you with this newsletter, there are some really great trips on offer, so I hope you are able to get out and enjoy the great NZ outdoors with WT&MC. Thanks to all the people who have volunteered to lead trips, especially those who are leading trips for the first time. There are a few trips listed as Leader Required, if you would like to see these trips run, all volunteers to lead these trips (or any extra trips!) are gratefully accepted, Amanda or Melissa would love to hear from you.

There are lots of other ways you can help out the club if leading trips is not your scene. We always need people to do slideshows or greet people at the door on Wed nights, write trip reports for the newsletter, drive the van, look after the gear cupboard, and more. You can talk to the appropriate committee person, or ask me if you are not sure who to talk to, if you'd like to help.

This Saturday just gone (Aug 21st), the club held a ball for the first time in many years. If the hard work that Donna, Sally, Jenny, and Jo put in organising this is a reflection on the event, I know that all those who went had a great time!

Committee minutes have been available on the club website under the Downloads section for a few months now, and I can see that a few of you have had a look at these, which is great to see. The committee is working on behalf of you, the members, and we want you to know what we have been doing and talking about. If you ever have any questions or issues about anything in these minutes, get in touch with me.

The committee meetings themselves are open to members, they are generally on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, at a committee members house. If you would like to attend a meeting, just let me know. We need to know you are coming, so that there are enough chairs :-). Note that you will not be able to vote on any motions, but your opinions will be welcome.

We have a couple of General Committee vacancies at the moment, if you are interested in having a voice at committee level, and helping out the club, why not attend a meeting and see if you'd like to join us?

Finally, our Gear Custodian, Anthony Mulick is leaving us at the end of August to return to Christchurch. Many thanks for all you have done for the club over the last few years, Ant.

This means that the Gear Custodian role is now free, let me know if you'd like to know more about this position. Note that you don't need to be in the gear room every Wednesday or attend committee meetings!

You can always contact me on president@wtmc.org.nz, or I am usually around on club nights

Darren Hammond