



# The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

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

March 2012

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Beating the leatherwood at the top of the Ohaiti Stream



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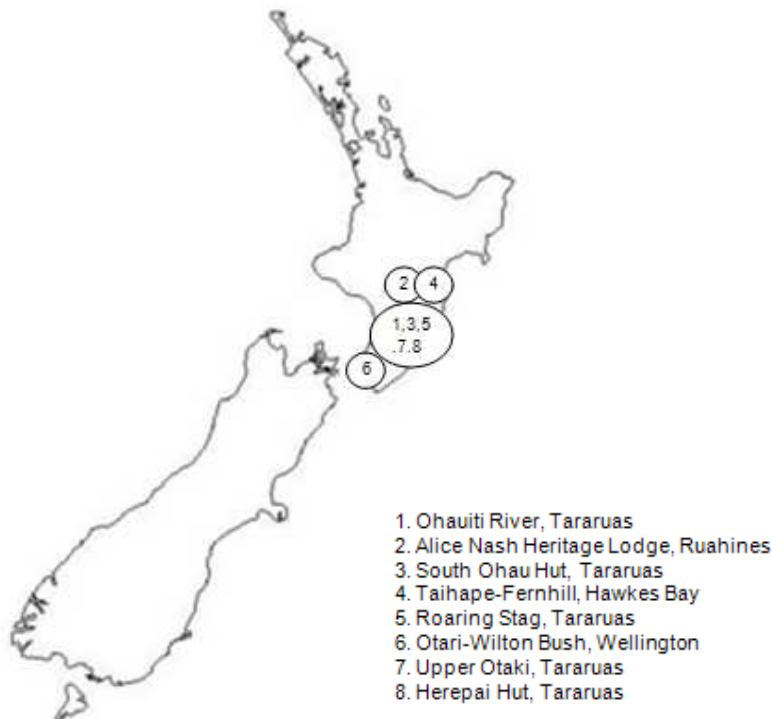
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## Map of trip locations in this issue



## First notice of AGM

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Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club will be held at the Clubrooms on Wednesday 18th April 2012 commencing at 8.00pm.

Nomination for committee positions are now open and must be received in writing by the Club Secretary by Wednesday 28 March 2012.

The nomination form is at the back of this newsletter, and further copies are available from the club on Wednesday club nights.

## The Nature of Things

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Sharron Came, President



The committee has been busy putting together the annual report for the 2011 financial year. I know what you're thinking – “that sounds incredibly dull, bit of a faux pas her mentioning that when she's looking for people to join the committee!” Actually it has been surprisingly interesting looking back at what happened in terms of club activity over the last 12 months and thinking about what we need to do better or differently. The information trip leaders pass to our statistics man Steve Kholer plays a vital role in this analysis so thanks to everyone who collects the data and a special thanks to Steve who collates it all and produces cool graphs on demand. Brian Goodwin also supplies key data relating to lodge usage that feeds into our review process. Thanks Brian! While we have our own impressions of what is happening in the club it is always good to see if the data supports those impressions. Reviewing our data also gives us an opportunity to think about whether we are collecting the right data. I hope you will give me the benefit of the doubt and have a read when the annual report including our financial reporting comes to you in the April newsletter. I know you have already marked the AGM in your diaries: April 18.

If you want to be part of the 2012 committee just fill out a nomination form and hand it in to anyone on the committee. There is a form at the back of this newsletter or they are available on Wednesday nights. We have received some nominations but there are plenty of opportunities available, particularly in the areas of social convenor and promotions. If you can think of anyone who might be interested please speak up. Enquiring about a role does not mean that you are obliged to take it on. A full list of nominations will be published in the April newsletter. The list will also go up on the website and at our clubrooms around the same time.

Last week we held our annual new member's night. The evening was great fun, particularly if you were hanging out at the families desk; they had marshmallows and jellybeans. Big thanks to Megan for organising it and to everyone who ignored the bad weather and came

along and helped to make the evening memorable. I expect a fair few of those in attendance to come back on future Wednesdays if only to see how prevalent cross dressing is amongst rank and file members. Please make new people feel at home. If you're shy a smile, a wink or a wave could work.

You can't simply join WTMC, you have to do two overnight trips first. Sometimes people ask me why we don't make it easier to join our club. There are two main reasons. First, we want prospective members to try out tramping with our club before they join to make sure they like tramping, and they like tramping with us. Secondly, we expect members to contribute to the running of the club in whatever way they can. We are a volunteer organisation so we are totally reliant on our members to work together to organise the trips and the club nights.

March is an excellent time to get out in the hills as the weather tends to be mild and settled. I'm not generally a big fan of bland but I like that quality in my weather! Hopefully you have some great trips earmarked for the coming weeks. If there is nothing on the trip schedule that takes your fancy, or your preferred trip is full you can always organise a trip and get it added to the schedule. There are a couple of important provisos though:

1. Your trip idea needs to fit with what is already scheduled for the club on the weekend you have in mind – ideally the same road end or somewhere close by.
2. You need an experienced trip leader and there need to be spare seats in the club vans. With two club vans we are finding that we frequently do have spare capacity.

If you want to run a trip at short notice you need to liaise with Amanda or Richard [chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz) and if you want transport with Gareth [transport@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:transport@wtmc.org.nz). Likewise if you want to go on a private trip to the same road end that the club vans are heading to or somewhere along the way, it may be possible to hitch a ride in our vans in a "transport only" capacity. Again contact Gareth to see if this is an option.

## Track Talk

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Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



The Wednesday before we left for our 12-day Fiordland epic, Sharron gave a slideshow on her Westland Christmas adventure. It looked hard. She said that there were times every day when she wished she wasn't there. It was a comment my mind kept returning to as we journeyed through the Murchison Mountains, up the Doon, up the Stillwater via Lake Wapiti, and along the George Sound route.

Why do you spend valuable leisure time doing something so painful that watching television from a couch seems a vision of unobtainable nirvana? After another long day, I made the breathless comment to Richard that "tramping is full of highs and lows". Rather than it being an experience of unalloyed joy, as you might imagine a holiday to be, it's a continual ascent/descent between the despairing pits and sublime heights. The highs are hard to explain and sit inside the context of the lows.

On this trip, each day we consciously reflected on our personal “best” and “most challenging” moments. Over the course of the trip there were three standout moments where both of us felt total euphoria. One involved finding a trapping line that meant an easy path off-track up a difficult river. We knew it was there, so were looking... The second moment (on the same day!) was similar but much harder won. We spent nearly two hours searching for a rock bivvy. When Richard spied a pink ribbon marking the way, the relief was immense. We were planning to spend two nights there, given a rain day forecast, and camping options were nil. The third moment was the following day, when we beat Moir’s Guide’s time. If you’ve done any off track, you’ll know what that means! On the second day of the trip, we had depressingly doubled the time for one section so it seemed almost a miracle.



Richard wades the deceptively deep Doon River

It was amazing trip, with weather to match – only one and a half days of rain. I’ll save the blow-by-blow account for next year’s journal, or maybe an upcoming slideshow... While epics like

this are testing, they make you feel alive like nothing else.

But back in civilisation, it’s time to get started on the Winter schedule, which runs from May to August. Please send me your ideas for road ends by 17 March, so that we can put together a skeleton schedule in anticipation of the planning night on Wednesday 21 March. Please plan to be there, before club at 5.30pm, to enjoy the pizza, company and route planning. Remember Winter is a great time for inspiring trips, so that you come into Spring and Summer without losing any of that hard-won fitness!

We had a great new members' night at club this week. I just about lost my voice answering questions about tramping, from people who seemed genuinely keen to try us out. A lot of newcomers signed up for trips and you will see them during the coming weeks. Please think back to your own first trips with the club, and make a special effort to welcome those who might be feeling a bit nervous about tramping or about us WTMC trampers! There is a lot to learn when you start out that many of us now take for granted. But I remember well how hard it could be to walk into a room of strangers on Wednesday nights and mill awkwardly around the trips board...

# Membership

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Helen Law, Membership officer



## New & Re-joining members

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This month we welcome 6 new members and 5 former members re-joining the club.

### New members:

Graeme Corin (senior)  
Maren Luehrs (senior)  
Kelvin & Melanie Thiele (couple)  
Ben & Gus Lillico (children).

### Members re-joining:

Craig McGregor (senior)  
Christine Thomson (senior) and  
The Stevenson family – Alison & Paul (couple) and Ellen (child).

Congratulations to all.

Also congratulations to Toby Gilbert who has been upgraded to Junior membership as he has completed 2 weekend tramping trips with the club.

## REMINDER: Subscription renewal

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For members who are yet to pay, please make payment as soon as possible before the end of March. The fee structure is as follows:

Membership Type	2012 subscription
Senior	\$ 62
Couple	\$ 85
Veteran	\$ 52
Veteran couple	\$ 76
Family	\$ 38
Child/ Children	\$ 38
Friend of the Club	\$ 38

Please remember that if you want to receive newsletters by post within NZ, please add \$11 to your payment to cover part of the printing and postage cost.

Please make payment to:

Account name: **Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc**

Bank/branch: **National Bank of NZ, Manners St, Wellington**

Account number: **06-0582-0013409-02**

If you have misplaced your invoice or have any questions regarding membership, please contact me at [membership@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:membership@wtmc.org.nz)

## Promotions

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Megan Banks, Promotions officer



The annual new members night was held on 22 Feb and was a great success with around 60 new people turning up, a large number of which signed on for trips or the Bushcraft course. I'd really like to thank all the members who came on the night and did all the work. It was awesome to see such a turnout to chat to the new people, make them feel welcome and provide encouragement to join some trips. It's also a good reminder that sometimes an effort is required to make new people feel welcome on any club night. It can be really hard walking into a room full of strangers! From my experience talking to them it's actually pretty cool meeting so many nice people.



Another good opportunity to show how friendly we are is on the door on club night. With the leaving of Donna (off on a Nepalese adventure) we are needing to slightly extend the door persons role to assist with tea making, (possibly) opening and closing up and speaking duties. There will be a main 'acting' social convenor, until the role is officially filled at the AGM, but extra help is needed to provide some flexibility in case they have other things on and need to leave earlier or come later. I run a roster for the door and am always looking for more people to help: email or come and see me at club!

I'm looking at finishing the Promotions role in April so if anyone is interested in becoming more involved in the club come and see me or any other Committee member. It's not a hard role, it is very satisfying and is a great way of giving something back to the club.

## Social corner

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Donna Maher and Jenny Beaumont, Social convenors



We have some interesting talks lined up to keep you entertained on a Wednesday night so don't forget to come along to club nights to hear the talks/see the slideshows and join us for a catch-up over tea and biscuits even if you're not heading out into the hills!

The deadline for entries for the annual photo competition has now closed. We're pleased to announce that Grant Newton is judging the competition again this year. Come along on March 7th at 7.30pm to see all the entries, hear Grant's comments and congratulate the winners! Please note that there is a small chance that the competition will have to be



postponed until the 21st March (if Grant's new baby decides to arrive early!). If this is the case we will let you know by posting on the forum on our website, and we will have a normal club night instead (so please still come along!).

Don't forget we're always keen to hear from you if you have a trip you'd like to tell us about, or hear of any interesting speakers that you'd like us to invite along on a club night.

## Important changes to the road rules

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Gareth Morton, Transport Officer



The club would like to remind all drivers that important changes are taking place to the road rules from 5am on 25th March 2012. These changes will affect all drivers, riders, pedestrians and cyclists. Make sure you know the new rules so you'll know what to do.

There are two give-way rules that will be changing:

### **Change 1: The left-turn versus right-turn rule**

From 5am on 25 March 2012, this new rule will require all traffic turning right to give way to a vehicle coming from the opposite direction and turning left. This applies at cross roads, T-intersections and driveways where both vehicles are facing each other with no signs or signals, or the same signs or signals.

### **Change 2: At uncontrolled T-intersections ('uncontrolled' means when there are no signs or signals to tell you what to do)**

At an uncontrolled T-intersection, all traffic from a **terminating road** (bottom of the T) will have to give way to all traffic on a **continuing road** (top of the T). This will bring it into line with T-intersections where there are Stop or Give Way signs on the terminating road.

For further details about the above changes and illustrated examples of driving situations you will encounter from 25th March please visit <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/traffic/around-nz/road-user-rule.html>

## Trip reports

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### Waiopehu via Ohaiti

27-29 January, Easy Medium tramp, Tararuas (map #1)

Alistair Young

Punters: Jon Parker, Malgorzata Liber (Maggie), Robert Szymacha, Graeme Corin, Nic Hartley, Alistair Young (leader)



We departed for Levin with the best possible weather forecast: a dying southerly with a sunny weekend on the cards. Having beaten the worst of the traffic, we made most of the approximate 50 minute Friday night walk into the old Ohau Hut site without the need of a torch where we bivvied among the many perfect campsites nestled in the bush round the area.

We awoke to clag, the Tararuas defying the weatherman once again. After a brew and breakfast we headed up the Ohaiti stream aiming for its headwaters between the twin peaks of Waiopehu. Travel in the stream was fairly easy, with only the odd pool and fallen tree to negotiate we made steady progress through the morning and had lunch two thirds of the way up.

Over the afternoon we pushed up the final steeper section of the Ohaiti and with the final scramble through 20 odd meters of leatherwood we exited in the saddle between the twin peaks. With increasing wind and rising clag we headed down to the hut for brews, dinner and a hot dessert. It had been a great day tramping, marred only by the lack of views from the top.

We left late Sunday and took a leisurely tramp down the ridge from Waiopehu with an extended stop at Palmers camp to get our first decent views of the farmland around the base of the Tararuas. All the party were impressed by the beauty of the bush we encountered heading down the long easy decent out from the hut.

We then headed south to Otaki forks to pick up the fit duet of Harry and Ruth and began the drive back home, well relaxed from our pleasant trudge among the foothills and river valleys of the north western Tararuas. Well refreshed and ready for the week to come.

## Alice Nash Heritage Lodge – Tunupo – Iron Gate Hut – Heritage Lodge

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10-12 February, Medium tramp, Ruahines (map #2)

Nigel Case

Punters: Steve Austin (leader), Nigel Case, Roger Bolam, Monty (the mascot),  
Colin Bouttell, Garry de Rose, Robert Szymacha, Malgorzata Liber,  
Graeme Corin, Sam Segal, Tommy Rush.

Ten of us left platform 9 soon after 5:30pm. We dined at Levin where the vast array of takeaway options were fully taken advantage of with all trampers conjuring up different kai, much to the envy of myself having purchased a couple of stale buns from countdown. Light rain on and off on the journey forced discussions on the prospective trip and what was expected by way of the weather forecast.

We arrived safely at road end after 9:00pm (thanks driver, Steve) and walked 30 minutes in a light misty rain in the dark to Heritage Lodge. It was a calm and mild evening and, despite the rain, Gary, Steve and I elected to sleep on the verandah. Inside the trampers contended with snoring while outside I had to put up with the occasional need to flick a rat off my sleeping bag. Otherwise, it was a good night.



We woke in the morning to an overcast sky but no rain and 9 of us eagerly ventured out to conquer Tunupo. Gracious Roger, Monty (our mascot) and fellow tramper Roger took the river route to the hut to set up flies and tents in anticipation of our arrival. The ascent was reasonable around 850m and we made this in approximately 3 hours. At around halfway up, after leaving the bush line, we encountered light rain. We soldiered on anticipating that the weather might clear soon, as forecast.

The rain didn't clear though the sky did lighten for a moment which got our hopes up. Lunch was therefore relatively brief, so much so that the rear guard wondered whether they had had lunch at all. We ventured along the ridgeline with visibility at approximately 100m and rain driven by a reasonably brisk wind from the Southeast.

With no track laid out and no landmarks visible we took a northeast bearing and walked partway

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down an errant ridge before Steve pulled us up and redirected us along the correct ridge. The rain and wind persisted while we were on the top. The portable GPS came in handy with visibility being so poor.

The ridgeline exhibited a vast array of different flora; I could have tarried for much longer. The ground was dense with grasses and shrubs and small white flowers were in abundance, (Striped Gentians, Creeping Ourisia, Mountain Daisy among others).

A couple of hours later we had descended below the wet weather and took a moment to have a breather. The weather was a lot warmer and we were completely sheltered from the southerly wind. Some of us concluded our lunch at this point before the descent to Iron Gate Hut, which took another 2-3 hours. The descent was much steeper than the ascent and I was pleased we hadn't had to climb this slope.

Back at the hut Roger had erected a tent and two flies due to the hut being occupied by four girls working towards Duke of Edinburgh certificates and their leader. Tea was a communal WTMC Thai red curry, very tasty, followed by an equally tasty dessert organised by Roger: river chilled chocolate and marshmallow delight. Nice.

The following day brought clear weather and a pleasant 2-3 hour walk had us back at Heritage Lodge for lunch followed by a short walk out to the van.

This being my first expedition with WTMC I was uncertain what to expect and have to say the trip was perfect. Good pace, good sense of exploration, well organised and lead. Thanks Steve and WTMC.



Lunch at Tunupo

# South Ohau Hut

27-29 January, Easy tramp, Tararuas (map #3)

Margaret Craigie

Punters: Anna Lambrechtsen (leader), Margaret Craigie,  
Barbara Keenan, Cindy Mcmurtrie, Anita Su'a

A few weeks ago, in the process of hut bagging, I did one of my mind-shattering solo “well, that was exciting, how can we make it less so?” trips. This is not that story.

This story is how, after having done that full-on trip recently, I was MORE than happy to sign up for South Ohau hut. I was feeling relatively fit, and was looking forward to something a bit easier. The email was received as to food etc, and I noted it was an all female group: Excellent! It also had two familiar names to me: Barbara and Anita. Anna was leading, there was one newby, the omens were fantastic.

When trip leader, I am aware that you have to constantly think, think, think. You are always on the look-out for foot placement, weather conditions, track conditions, navigation, comfort levels (particularly of newbies), whether anyone is falling behind, getting too far ahead or simply lost; the mind is a constant whirl until the trip is over. Apart from sticking with the group and ensuring I was on the right track (or on the wrong track but together..?) all the responsibility lay with Anna. I was VERY happy.

The one hiccup in the plan was that it was a Saturday morning start. I took my pack down to the Upper Hutt railway station the night before and by 6.30am (Aargh!) I was already on my bicycle, pedaling to the station for the 7am train. However, I don't have to do this often, and it meant another hut off my bucket list. My happiness levels were not disturbed.

Barbara, Anita and I carpoled to the road-end, chatting and catching up on recent trips and club gossip. Off we set across the farmland and quickly into mud. However, my body was not hurting and I had spare breath to talk, even on the up hills! This was a rare occurrence and I did my best to keep up my word quota. Life was simply fab, darling! We met a hunter on his way out of the bush. I've always thought it is better to be nice to a man with a gun than not, so as amiably as I knew how, I gently massaged his mind for information. He told us that in the higher reaches, the river flow was swift and too deep for crossing, and that he'd turned back. Before long, we were looking at the water making a decision. It looked pretty and inviting, but based on the hunter's statement, and being an easy trip, not fanatical FE, we decided to take a sidle-path that Anna knew. This meant a lot fewer river crossings. I'm not overly fond of them, anyway. This trip was getting even better.

Sidle-paths have a reputation of being more gnarly than the main track, but this was generally very easy to follow. A supplejack vine insisted on doing a microphone impersonation (I simply had to use it) and, when I found myself swinging on a tree branch to get myself to a lower part of the track, I couldn't resist a Tarzan call. There was no rain, no blustery wind and (on my part), no thinking. I was really enjoying myself.

The track started to change. There was still the occasional puddle of mud, of course, but now there were fallen trees to negotiate, a small slip or two and then, a big challenge. We were high up, hard against a bank on a narrow pathway, and the hillside dropped away 100m to the river far below, nothing to stop the fall, while at the same time having to duck under a log. It was nerve-wracking stuff, and I was very proud of our group that we got past it. It reminded me of a children's story, "Can't go over it, can't go round it, can't go under it, gotta go THROUGH it!"

Conversation revolved around Smartphones and their applications. Specifically, if there is a bear at the hut, we were safe in the knowledge that there exists an application resembling the sound of clapping to scare off the bear (presumably for people who can't clap themselves). Personally, I don't care how good the Smartphone is. If there is a bear at any NZ hut, I'd be absolutely terrified.

We trundled on, but it was slow going and eventually the path just disappeared. Scouting below revealed nothing, but the track reappeared above us to negotiate a slip. At this point, a group discussion was held. Track conditions, forward motion slower than we'd hoped for, another trial immediately before us (balancing on kie kie) and seemingly the pathway getting worse the further we went.

The retreat was called, and like the story, we had to do everything we'd just done in reverse. At the river, we enjoyed an accidental lolly-scramble and congratulated Anna on her new bicycle with a seat that she had to swap. We pondered the gripping power men must possess to stay on them.

The last leg out was pleasant and uneventful. I was in excellent spirits; my feet were dry, the rain and wind was still non-existent and my brain was still happily relaxed. Back at Poads Road, Barbara's cellphone seemed to go berserk with a phone call every half minute. She had set it to the sound of sheep bleating!!!

From there Cindy decided to be dropped off back home and the rest of us drove to Anna's hut in Korokoro. The meal was excellent, the view was great and I even got to sleep in my own bed that night! A perfect day trip.

# Taihape-Fernhill Cycle / Kuripapango Day Walk / Magatutu Hot Pools and Mohaka Tubing Adventure

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3-6 February, Medium tramp, Hawkes Bay (map #4)

Joint collaboration

Punters: Debbie Buck, Christine Thompson, Richard Mansfield, Maren Luehrs, Christine Latimer, Helen Law, Ritchard Crerar, Nicole Benkert, David Weil, Maarten Ruiter (leader)

## Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February

Fish and chips, pizza and Subway at Paraparaumu gave the group a foundation of reserves for the start of the long Waitangi day Weekend on Friday eve. We reached Mangaweka international airport around 9pm in time to check in for a flight to la la land, pitching our tents at the departure gate campsite down by the river. This was a great spot with showers and toilets and close to Taihape Township which is where we were leaving from the following morning. \$7 camp fee.

## Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February

### Cycling Taihape – Kuripapango / Day Walk at Kuripapango

#### The cycling group: Cycling day one of the Gentle Annie (author: Christine Latimer)

Up early and ready to start the mission. A variety of mueslis were compared at breakfast, ablutions completed, we regrouped at Taihape where the cyclists got ready for the first instalment of the 139km ride. The day was overcast and gloomy and rain threatened...hmmm.

The riders, 6 of us, set off at 9ish from the New World after doing a last minute shop. The gruelling ascents and descents started straight away and lasted all day until we got to our destination tired and sore. Even though Taihape is at 400m we still climbed to 950m before lunch. Lunch was at Springdale Bridge which is on the Gentle Annie road which runs from Taihape to Hastings. The 77km ride was hard work with not a lot of cruising to be had. Rather a lot of the same scenery and not much worth seeing in the low cloud and it is sheep country!

We were certainly ready to finish when we arrived at the campsite for the evening. We made it by between 5-5.30pm and with no rain in sight.

#### The day walk group (author: Maren Luehrs)

When we arrived at our camp site next to Mount Kuripapango we put up the tents for the cyclists and sat down together to have our lunch, during which we had a great time coming up with all sorts of scenarios of what we could tell the cyclists about what we had done and what we would actually be doing during their absence.

The tramp up Mount Kuripapango was quite steep and in parts rocky. The vegetation was low most of the way up, therefore the view of the surrounding landscape was amazing. The river down below curved itself around the slopes of the hills. For our short snack breaks we sat down and enjoyed the view. The weather was good for the climb; no rain, relative clarity and a pleasant temperature. Closer to the top of Mount Kuripapango the

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vegetation changed into lush pine forest in different shades of green. At this level we also walked into the clouds which seemed to submerge the upper section of the hill. At approximately 1270 meters we reached the summit. We made great efforts to prop up the cameras to take a photos of all of us next to the summit marker. Half the group went down the way we had come up and half the group went down the other side of the mount. All together the tramp up and down Mount Kuripapango took us 4 hours. The company and walk was great!

The DOC campground at Kurikapango was fairly busy but was a great spot with fabulous swimming holes and is within the Kaweka forest park. After a dip for some and a swim for others we were ready to eat. Dinner was a joint effort and a delicious combination of fresh fish, vegetables and rice in a creamy sauce. Camping fee here was \$5, a bargain.

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February.**

### **Cycling Kuripapango-Fernhill**

We had a relaxed breakfast and strong coffee before packing up and getting ready for the second leg of the cycle. As it was only a mainly downhill 55km ride, there were 9 people who participated. After checking our bikes and posing for a team photo, we set off with a hiss and a roar. We soon separated as the first climb started straight away, but as agreed, we regrouped at the top of the hill, after about 45 min. It was noticeably warmer as we descended into HB, despite us having an easterly head wind.



There were more rolling hills and views compared to the first day, and it was great biking between two ranges: The Ruahines on our right and the Kawekas on our left.

Having drink and snack stops ensured that we stayed together reasonably well, and we were doing good time for our planned lunch at Fernhill, until one of the riders got a puncture!! This was fixed in no time and wasn't a bother.

The last 15 kms was flat and I thought it was beautiful biking through the vineyards, farms and over many small rivers.

We meet the van at Fernhill, and had lunch on the Marae lawn. All loaded up, we all anticipated the Mohaka river and the Hot Pools in the Kawekas. We passed some hamlets



which broke up the sheep country somewhat. We got some great vistas of Hawkes bay this day as well.

Arriving at the Mohaka River free campsite after 1 hour drive, we negotiated a cosy campsite before a soak in the hot tub, perched in a deck partway down the hill above the Mohaka River. As we soaked, the grease, road dust and sore muscles washed away. Suitably relaxed and by the fire, we prepared and indulged in another gourmet, cordon bleu dinner, designed by Maarten.

## Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February.

### Soaking and tubing in the Mohaka (author: Debbie Buck)

Awakening to drizzle on Monday, we caffeine-loaded, packed up and prepared for the day walk and tubing. We traipsed along a well made track with misty views of the river before stopping at a launching spot. After a bit of pffing by the tubers, and pumping of tubes by everyone, we were ready to launch just as it started to drizzle again.



Some of the group headed back to the campsite for another soak in the hot tub amidst the greenery overlooking the river. Maren and David volunteered as paparazzi and walked back more slowly, capturing the ‘voyage of the tubers’ on film.

Christine and Richard shared the mega-tube (aka ‘the throne’), which was 3 concentric tractor, truck and car tubes lashed together. After a bit of re-adjustment, they were away, lying in ‘the throne’ riding the rapids face-first! 3D glasses were superfluous in such circumstances. Debbie and Maarten rode the rapids in a more conventional style, and seemed to stay in their tubes more easily.

The river level was perfect, creating fun easy rapids with only a few bumpy rocks. The scenery was stunning as the mist drifted here and there in the narrow valleys alongside the river. Some challenges included an eddy that wouldn’t let Debbie escape easily, loss of Richard’s glasses, and the shyness of the sun.

Fortunately, just as Christine was reaching the point of intolerable chilliness, we sniffed out a sulphurous, slimy green hot pool for her to lie in. After a bit of indulging in the warmth,

we set off once again. It wasn't long before we saw a blue towel flying (the other Christine's) from the hot tub in the trees, signalling our exit point. Pure bliss was had by all the tubers as we joined the walkers and stretched out in the hot tub.

We left at the agreed time of 3pm, to head back to Wellington. The driving was shared and, as we stopped for dinner, we got back to Wellington at 10pm.

## Roaring Stag. Flora and fauna appreciation

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17-19 February, Easy medium, Tararuas (map #5)

Joint collaboration

Punters: Illona Keenan (leader), Rebecca Hayter, Jo Boyle, Rory MacLellan, Debbie Buck, Janie Britton, Maren Luehrs and Alissa Pedley

### Illona's memories

I thought a flora and fauna appreciation trip would be a good first easy-medium trip to lead: I could take books and slow down to explain things to people. It would be a different type of trip to my usual medium fit tramp, but one that would keep my pace at a more easy medium one. I think I might have scared some people in the van when I mentioned I had got to Roaring Stag in two and a bit hours on night! I am keen to lead other easy medium trips as it is a fantastic way to meet new and exciting people, rather than the usual medium fit crowd. When I mentioned my latest horror of undertaking the Oxfam trail walk in March I found out Alissa and Rory are both veterans (so I was able to get all sorts of tips). If you fancy donating please go to [http://www.oxfam.org.nz/oxfam\\_trailwalker/](http://www.oxfam.org.nz/oxfam_trailwalker/) search for **Cafe Cruisers** and donate for the good cause of four club members: myself, Katy Glenie, Kate Cushing and Megan Banks, all walking 100km in less than 36hrs! Eek.

I thought it might be nice to get everyone to write 5 lines about their experiences of the weekend. Here are the responses. I like the themes!

### Rebecca's Hayter version of adventures to the 'Roaring Stag'...

Our tramp lead us into the forest of the familiar but largely unknown. We discovered which shrub is mean and which is kind, which hardy tree ferns have scales and which have hairs and there's those hen and chicken ferns too! The rata trees that 'cuddle' whilst all twisted up, dropping out of the canopy hoping to touch the ground and that they are not the only species hanging on for dear life in the forest! If you loose your way, the rimu has a map of contours displayed on its trunk for you to discover.

After a great dinner, as the sunlight fell, the sky became littered with stars and our night adventures began. An eel, some glow worms, spiders in every direction, weta, shrimp and more. The return back to the hut we were set to discover other creatures of the night....of the snoring variety that is.

After a great trip learning all this and so much more, we hear a squeaky tricycle in the forest...or a Tom Tit welcoming us to the road end and the end of our tramp.

## **Jo Boyle's memories**

Just a few minutes into the tramp, Illona had the group stroking trees. Which, it turns out, is a great way to spot the difference between Kanuka (K for 'kind', nice and soft green bits if you stroke it) and Manuka (M for 'mean' – as it is a bit prickly when you stroke it).

We spotted the awesome map-like contours on rimu trees trunks and saw some impressive rata trees bracing themselves on host trees.

We got to see fresh water crayfish in what amounted to a big puddle! The budget Colby cheese we'd left there earlier was snubbed by the crayfish. I think the Bulgarian feta we had for dinner may have been more to their taste.

On Saturday night, we (watched Illona) set a peanut butter trap (in a plastic tube with ink and paper) and by Sunday morning we had a collection of weta and mice foot prints. There was actually quite a lot of fauna action in the long drop, with the largest ever spider seen in NZ and a cave weta, both of which seemed to be thriving on a pure methane diet.

One important thing I learned over the weekend is that you can spot flora, even when you're too tired to lift your head up, by scanning the ground for the leaves and branches that have fallen; once you know what you're looking for!!

Awesome weekend. Illona is so good sharing her extensive knowledge!

## **Rory MacLellan's memories**

Excellent trip, knowledge of the leader on flora and fauna was very educating but not so over the top as to continually make me feel stupid which tends to happen very easily.

The trip has really increased my confidence in recognizing the different trees native to NZ that are found in most of the forest and national parks.

The night walk was very informative especially looking closely at the glow worms and having the biology of the worms explained.

Learning how to find insects at night time with binoculars and a powerful headlamp was excellent and something that I will take with me for future tramping trips.

Learned lots of different bird sounds and what bird they were associated with even if the birds could not be seen as they tended to fly away as soon we stopped to look up.

There was much discussion over the 2 days on what type of cheese is best used for baiting crayfish, it seems that budget edam/colby are not desirable baits for crayfish. Perhaps there is a Ph D project here for someone to look at the correlation between cheeses that mice and crayfish prefer????? Or maybe they just prefer peanut butter, at least mice do.

## Debbie Buck's memories

On the flat we caressed 'mean manuka' and 'kind kanuka' trees.

After walking a bit further Illona introduced us to hard and soft tree ferns and various beech varieties. I particularly liked the handy hint for remembering red beech: the leaves have saw-blade shaped serrations on their perimeter and a saw cut results in red blood.

As we tramped up the steepest part of the track, Illona made plenty of opportunities for us to catch our breath by sharing her tree knowledge. We looked at adult rimu, aka the topo map tree. And were enticed further up the hill by the promise of stroking cute baby rimu.

Further on there was the very sculptural rata, aka the hugging tree. By the time we reached the junction with the Herepai hut turn-off, I felt semi arbor-literate and pleasantly surprised that the uphill was done.

## Otari-Wilton Bush

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17-19 February, Family tramp, Wellington (map #6)

This photo says it all ....



Sallywags! Taylor, Gustav, Dominic, Kate, Hamish and Carly.

# Down memory lane and the Upper Otaki

27-29 January, Medium fit tramp, Tararuas (map #7)

Harry Smith

Punters: Harry Smith and Ruth Parnell

The phone rang. A voice from the past. Ruth Parnell, ex-Chief Guide. I hadn't seen her for years. "Can I come on your trip down the Upper Otaki River?", she asked. "Sure", I said. "Who else is on it?" she asked, worried; "I hope they're not too fit!" "Well, actually you're the only one so far," I explained, "and I'm not fit either!"

In the end it was just the two of us, despite the fact that on the Wednesday before the trip Jim Hickey was promising us two big yellow suns. Two suns! In a row! In the Tararuas! I couldn't believe it! I was almost tempted to go out and buy a Lotto ticket on the spot.

On Friday night when we were walking in to the old Ohau Shelter site to camp it was still daylight and the sun was shining. I don't think that has ever happened to me before. Something was definitely wrong! I think I really would have bought a Lotto ticket if there had been an outlet on the way.

On Saturday morning we set off up the river. The last time I went this way was a number of years ago on a three-day Northern Crossing led by Alistair Young. Sarah Young, our newsletter editor, was also on that trip although she was Sarah Cartmell in those days. Quite a lot of water has flown under the bridge since then - and there was quite a lot of water flowing in the river now! It was up on its normal level and we took it carefully while I silently worried what the Otaki would be like. I was glad it was daylight; I remember once years ago going up the river to South Ohau on Friday night, in the dark. We spent ages blundering around trying to do the river crossings by torchlight and didn't get there until about 4 in the morning. I'll never do that again, ever. There used to be a tricky little section just upstream a bit from the junction with the North Ohau in those days but the river seems to have changed and it's gone. I think Dave Humm led that trip and we were doing a Northern Main Range.

After just under 3 hours we reached South Ohau. I hadn't seen the new South Ohau hut before. It's a nice hut, but a bit soulless, lacking the character of the old one. Lots of DOC's new huts are like this: new, neat and tidy, spacious and functional, but soulless, lacking charm and character, cosiness and warmth. Bland, austere, functional, rectangular barns, without the personality, the character, the history, the wear and tear, the charming Jerry-built irregularities and idiosyncrasies of the older ones. And of course there's never an open fire, an essential requirement of a good hut. Whoever invented those ugly pot-belly stove monstrosities



should be taken out and shot! There was no need to pull the old South Ohau hut down; it was just DOC paranoia in the wake of Cave Creek.

It had been overcast and drizzly on the way up the river and it now started raining lightly. So much for Mr Hickey's suns, I had never really believed in them anyway. It was probably brilliantly fine in the entire rest of the country but this was the Tararuas, and the Tararuas constitute a separate universe.



The start of the Yeates 500 track behind the hut was blocked by a large treefall so we had to bash up the hillside and fight our way through a small patch of supplejack to regain it. When we reached the top we turned left towards Te Matawai. Apparently there was an old track somewhere along here heading down into the head of the Otaki. After 10 or 15 minutes we had failed to find it and I worried that we had gone too far, but then it appeared, the start of it clearly marked by yellow plastic arrows on a tree at the top of a rise. Bits of tape around trees and the occasional old white permolat marker indicated the route. Alistair Young told me later that he was responsible for the tape. I have been down the Upper Otaki twice before but it must be well over 20 years ago and we just bush-bashed down from the saddle. I don't think we knew about the track, or maybe it wasn't there then. I remember some difficulty getting into the river at the bottom of the

hillside. In contrast the track proved to be straightforward and we stopped for lunch beside the river at the bottom.

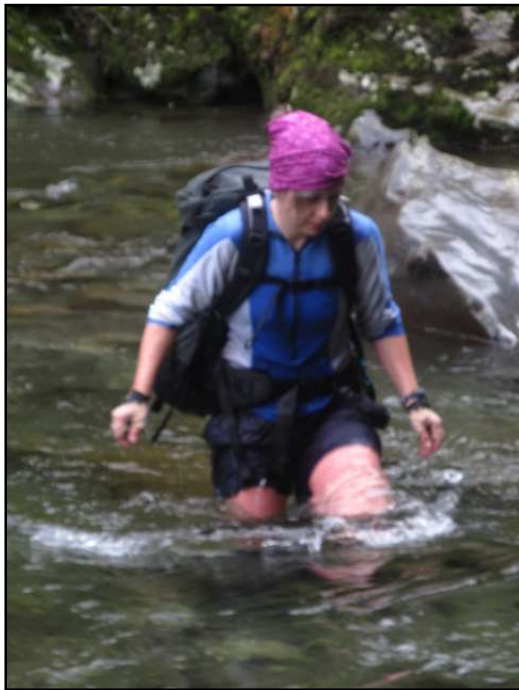
After lunch we headed off down river. Unlike the Ohau, the Otaki didn't seem to be up. The water was crystal clear. We had to wade long stretches and continually criss-cross the river, but mostly there was no need to link up. It was mostly just pleasant, straightforward travel down the remote, silent valley, past steep, ferny hillsides and easier bush-covered banks.

After three and a half hours we came to the old Upper Otaki Hut site, where there is a large crescent-shaped grassy flat. Here we discovered a wooden picnic table in the middle of the flats - obviously somebody must have choppered it in! I toyed briefly with the idea of continuing a bit further down river, to make Sunday a bit shorter, but it was hard to pass up such a good campsite, or a picnic table – especially when you were sitting down on the soft grass with your pack off! As the saying goes, a nice, flat, grassy campsite



in the hand is worth two rough ones in the bush. Later we found the site of the old hut on a raised terrace just in the bush edge but there was no sign of the hut itself; it was removed long ago and the whole area is now a Remote Experience Zone.

That night we had a period of slightly heavier rain, although by morning it had returned to an overcast state, as if unsure whether it was supposed to drizzle or whether the sun was supposed to come out. It didn't look a particularly long way down to Waitewaewae on the map but Amanda and Richard had been down here a few weeks previously and had told me it took them five hours, so we were away just after 7.00.



Five hours and one minute later we walked into Waitewaewae Hut. We were a minute slow – Amanda and Richard had obviously had better conditions than us! We had been following the river most of the way, although there were a few places where we had taken to the bush to avoid rough sections of river. There had been some deep pools on the way, including a couple where I was walking on tip-toe and Ruth must have been floating! They were superb pools and if it had been a sunny day and we hadn't been pressed for time I would have stopped for a swim.

Twenty-five years ago Waitewaewae was a different hut in a different place. It was an old, run-down place located on a small flat just upstream from the bridge on the true right and I think it used to flood. The new hut is clearly an improvement over the old one but I'm afraid it still feels a bit like a soulless barn to me.

All we had before us now was the walk out to Otaki Forks. It had been years since I had done the Waitewaewae track – I think the last time was on a tubing trip down the river from Waitewaewae with Lyndsay Fletcher. On that trip we had walked in to the Plateau and camped on Friday night. On Saturday we set off down the river and camped overnight on the true right a bit upstream from Penn Creek, but it rained overnight, the river came up, and it would have been suicidal to continue downriver, so we bush-bashed out over the ridge behind us and down to the track in the Waitatapia. I remember easy travel through superb huge trees on the top of the ridge, followed by a long, horrendous descent down a hillside of solid tangled supplejack on the far side. I've never seen supplejack like it, before or since. It made the small patch of supplejack Ruth and I went through behind South Ohau Hut pale into complete insignificance. I remember being forced to crawl under it in places, dragging our packs behind us. If we had been able to call up a helicopter to lift us out I think I would have done so! I still remember the relief when we finally emerged out of the jungle onto the track.

Today Ruth and I were due out at Otaki Forks at 5 o'clock. I couldn't remember how long it took out from Waitewaewae to Otaki Forks but I estimated at least four hours and by the time we had had lunch it was ten to 1 so we put our heads down and did it at a good

steady pace, with only a couple of short rests along the way. Coming out down the Waitatapia the track climbed up around the top of a huge slip that hadn't been there last time I passed this way.

When we reached Otaki Forks we discovered more changes. I was surprised to find the track no longer went across the upper terrace and down the little spur the way it used to – instead there is now a vehicle track winding down the escarpment behind Parawai Lodge. There was also a new bridge across the river from when I was last here; the old one was destroyed in a large flood about ten years ago. And of course Parawai Lodge originally used to be on the other side of the river from where it is now.

We reached the car park at ten to 5. It had taken us exactly 4 hours. Alistair Young's trip turned up in the van about 5 minutes later so it was perfect timing! It had been a good trip, and had brought back some memories for an old codger. And speaking of old codgers, just as we were packing up to go who should come walking across the bridge but another figure from the past - John Rhodes! He had been in to Snowy Creek Hut. That's somewhere I've never been and must visit before I'm finally confined to a wheelchair.

It's funny how memory plays tricks on you. I don't remember much about my previous trips down the Upper Otaki 20 or 25 years ago. I remember John Booth led one of them but I don't remember who else was on it. I don't even remember who led the other one. I remember bush-bashing down into the head of the river, I remember the crescent-shaped grassy flat we camped at, I vaguely remember going through a few pools in the river, but I don't remember much else. I don't really remember the large number of hours of wading and criss-crossing the river but obviously we must have done it. I'm sure I remember more flats than there actually are. I don't remember the Waitewaewae confluence, although we must have passed it. I seem to remember lots of sidling in the bush on one of the trips – perhaps the river was up.

I doubt I'll be doing another trip down the Upper Otaki in another 25 years time so it was a good chance to do a trip down a beautiful river – and down Memory Lane.



# Herepai Hut

17-19 February, Easy, Tararua Forest Park (map #8)

Pavithra Devadatta

Punters: Clinton Hunter (leader), Barbara Keenan, Deborah Stoebe and Pavithra Devadatta

Twelve eager punters gathered early at the usual meeting place on platform 9 at Wellington station on Saturday 17th February to head out on the weekend tramps to Herepai and Roaring Stag huts located in the Tararua Forest Park.

Experienced driver Illona drove the flash club van both ways. There was a welcome pit stop at the Wild Oats Cafe at Carterton and then on towards Eketahuna to the Tararua Forest Park.

After gearing up, four of us walked along the stream for about 30 minutes and then started a steep climb for about an hour and a half until we came up to the intersection that turned right to Herepai Hut and left towards Roaring Stag Hut. We stopped here for lunch and exchanged tramping experiences.

Though it was a sunny day we were sheltered and stayed cool in the thick bush. We came across a huge fallen Matai Tree with its bright red decaying split trunk shining in the sun. I gathered some of this red dust with which to do a water colour painting later in the hut.



There were two narrow wire bridges to cross one person at a time. It was an easy walk from here for about an hour and then a short steep climb to the hut. The hut apparently was restored in 1977 after a fire. It's a small 8 sleeper with bunks and mattresses, a small wood burner, table, benches and a cooking counter. We were only the four of us staying the night there. The long drop is about 10m away (full of noisy flies waiting to be let out!).

Around tea time our tramp leader, Clinton Hunter, gathered up the ingredients brought by all and rustled up a delicious Indian vegetable curry to go with steaming rice. Barbara shared her trick for cooking rice: plonk the rice in the pot, fill water till it reaches approx 2 knuckles high above the rice level and cook until all the water evaporates. In spite of a bit of skepticism, this formula seemed to work well without the need for measuring cups. We

had Tim Tams for dessert. At dusk the candles were lit and we sat down to a game of cards and funny stories.

After a rather windy night we woke up to steaming coffee and breakfast. After the usual hut clean up and hut log book entry we headed down the hill. We did good time though the track was slushy due to the previous night's downpour. We waited at the car park, played the alphabet story game and exchanged hilarious stories about inquisitive cows until the other party arrived from Roaring Stag. We then headed back to Wellington after a pit stop at Mt. Bruce Café along the way.

All in all an enjoyable tramp. Ideal for newbees like me wanting to get back into tramping but a bit nervous about their fitness level. The track was well marked so everyone could do it at their own pace.

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**Deadline for submissions to the April 2012 WTMC newsletter: Friday 30 March 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.





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Nomination Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby nominate  
(name of nominator)

\_\_\_\_\_ for the role of  
(name of nominee)

\_\_\_\_\_for the 2012/2013 committee.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ accept the nomination for the  
(name of nominee)

role of \_\_\_\_\_ for the 2012/2013 committee.