

The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

July 2012



In crispy cold conditions and not a cloud in the sky. Crossing the swing bridge over the Wairau River.

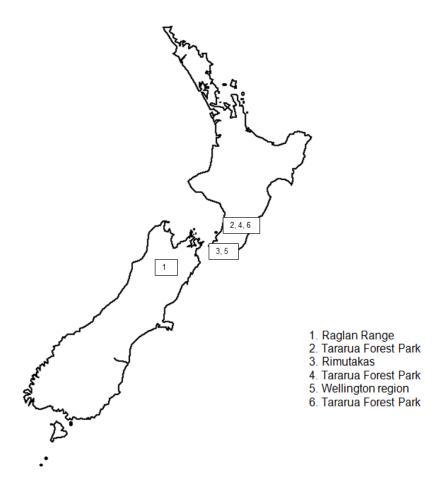
Katja Riedel

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Map of trip locations in this issue



The Nature of Things

Steve Austin, Stand-in President



Congratulations to Ian and Spencer whose photos received recognition in the 2012 FMC photo competition. Spencer's photo taken near the WTMC Mountain House shelter in the Tararuas was the overall winning shot from the 224 entries! Keep those cameras snapping in preparedness for next club competition planned for early 2013.

A big thank you to Ant who represented our club at the FMC AGM held in Christchurch on June 9th.

The snow is accumulating on Mt. Ruapehu. Today I heard that you can now ski from the Whakapapa slopes all the way to the front door of the Lodge. The Lodge is a great Club asset. The on-line booking system is receiving plenty of use; to avoid disappointment get in early to secure your place in the lodge for that next week/weekend away on the mountain.

The planning for the Spring schedule is well under way. Please let Amanda and Richard know where you would like club trips to venture over the latter part of 2012.

During the last four weeks I have been lucky enough to get to Waikamaka Hut and North Ohau Hut in the Ruahines and Tararuas respectively. Both trips saw the hut fireplace getting plenty of use as the thermometer dropped below zero outside.

Happy tramping and keep warm out there.

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide

As I write this in front of the fire on a Sunday morning (late again!), I'm thinking of Allen and Sue's crew off in the Orongorongos. A cold night in Karori would have been even colder in the hills. But two weeks ago at North Ohau Hut, we were far from cold despite the ice outside. An energetic day, hot meal and decent fire meant the top bunks took on sauna like qualities, with those on the floor perhaps getting a better deal.

For me it was great to knock off another unvisited Tararua hut but also to venture into untracked territory and find some relatively well-marked unofficial routes. An afternoon of bush bashing became one of track detection, which I find more satisfying! We are keen to include some interesting new routes in the Spring Schedule, and now is your chance to send through ideas. I need suggestions of road ends (eg, Ohau (Tararuas), or eastern

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Richmond Ranges, or Lewis Pass, etc) by next Saturday 7 July. We will then match these ideas to dates. The planning night on Wednesday 11 July (5.45pm, clubrooms, pizza inc) is your chance to devise trips for the predetermined road ends. So start thinking and email me (chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz).

Last month we held our course for aspiring trip leaders, and it was really cheering to get 13 people along when we cancelled last year due to lack of numbers. The revised one-day format worked well, with talk about trip planning, organisation and leading in the morning and some practical navigation work in the afternoon. Thanks to Alistair Young for the latter, Richard for managing logistics and everyone who came for being willing to share their experiences and thoughts. At the end, everyone nominated the one thing that stood out to them most from the course. We had 13 different answers, which just shows how differently we process information based on our own experience, personality and learning style. Probably the value of planning and preparation came through most strongly, but others included: watching others' wellbeing, the importance of communication, being aware how little newbies might know, knowing escape routes, using common sense and "easy/easy mediums are hard!". Watch out for our new leaders in the next schedule and give them your support.

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer

This month we welcome the Lewis famil: Vivienne as Senior member, John as Associate member and Benjamin as Junior member. In addition, we welcome 2 senior members: Andrew Buchan and Rebecca Hayter.

If you have any questions about membership please find me at the club on a Wednesday night or contact me on: membership@wtmc.org.nz

Social corner

Jenny Beaumont, Social convenor



The winners and runners up of each category in the annual WTMC photographic competition were entered into the FMC's annual photo competition in April.

The FMC announced the winners at their AGM in June: Big congratulations to Spencer Clubb and Ian Harrison. Spencer's photo "morning light at Mountain House" won the Below Bushline category. Ian's photo of a Buller's Albatross in Doubtful Sound was runner-up in the Native flora and fauna category. Spencer also won "Overall Winner" of the FMC photo competition. A great result!





Don't forget to take your camera with you when out and about over the winter - we'll be holding another photo competition early next year.

Great to see good turnouts on a club night despite the awful weather! I'm looking for more speakers for the end of July onwards; please get in touch if you have an adventure you'd like to tell us about.

Coming up over the next few weeks:

- 4th July Sue Walsh takes us exploring the Catlins, Te Anau, Milford and Fox Glacier.
- 11th July Kate Cushing is abandoning us (temporarily we hope!) to go and live on Christmas Island while volunteering with Voluntary Services Abroad. Come and hear about Kate's forthcoming adventure.
- 18th July Could be you! Please get in touch if you'd like to talk to us/show some us slides of your adventures.

Happy tramping

Trip reports

Toughing it out in the Raglan Range (medium-without-fit-or-alpine trip on Queens Birthday)

2-4 June 2012, Medium tramp, Raglan Range (map #1)

Punters: Spencer Clubb (leader), Illona Keenan, Kevin Cole, Simon McAuliffe, Paul Christoffel, Stuart Palmer and Katia Riedel

Spencer said bring ice axes, crampons and helmets because we are doing an alpine trip in the Raglan Range. As a trip leader he was pleased with the uniformly high level of fitness and experience of the punters on his trip; quite uncharacteristic for a medium trip.

However, there was a reason for this, said punters had in fact signed up for a medium-fit trip, a fact adamantly denied by the trip leader till he was shown the trip schedule.

The ferry crossing was smooth, the night on Kowhai DOC campground frigging cold. At 8:30am we picked up the keys for the gate. The famer said the valley was quite busy; two other people went in yesterday! Spencer heroically drove the van through the many fords on the road. Water splashed.

In crispy cold conditions and not a cloud in the sky we crossed the swing bridge over the Wairau River. Carrying on along



Lees Creek, grass covered in hoar frost crunched under our boots. It was cold! The sun never reached the valley floor, nor our faces, until we arrived at Lees Creek Hut after 3h. The hut was occupied but empty. Matching sleeping bags on two of the four bunks raised a few eye brows. We enjoyed 15 minutes of lunch in the sun before the fast approaching shadow line chased us further and further uphill. The sun finally disappeared at 1:15pm and blue light filled the valley. It got even colder. We hurried on to the upper forks in the river, where patches of sun beckoned, and finally met the two occupants of the hut who were just returning. The female sported a pair of artificial boobs, also called Aarn Pack. They came from Ngatinaughty they said, which might have been Ngatimoti.

Going with the medium-without-fit theme of the tramp we called it a day after only 5h of tramping, as the campsite under the beech trees at the forks looked so inviting. Simon got a fire roaring. It was warm! We stayed up late till 7:05pm!!! It was cold in the tents. After a short sleep of 12h, tea in bed was served by Stuart. What a treat, uncharacteristic for a medium trip (unheard of on a medium-fit trip).



Unencumbered by heavy packs we skipped up the true left branch of Lees Creek, destination: a few tarns at 1860m. It started sleeting. If sleet is classified as rain (disputed, appeal pending) Paul lost his bet. We clambered up snow grass slopes, tried walking in a frozen river gully and finally climbed up a rocky gut to reach the tarns. They were frozen. We played a round of rock curling, but nobody volunteered to be the sweeper. Probably a sensible decision when rocks thrown by some eco vandals punctured the thin ice and ruined the pristine lake surface forever. It was cold and sleeting when we reached the highest point of our trip, Coldwater Creek Saddle.

Simon's attempt at peak 2169m was aborted after rebellion by the clearly just medium punters. (In fairness it has to be said that sleet had turned to rain and visibility was low). Running down the scree slope was fun and by 12pm we were back at our campsite for some

lunch in the drizzle. We packed up and headed down to Lees Creek Hut. Since Stuart and Katja graciously pitched their tent outside there was room for everyone else to pile into the hut. The former occupants had dried some firewood for us and were therefore forgiven



their matching sleeping bags. The fire roared, the kettle boiled, and Illona's knitting needles made click clack – ah domestic bliss. Outside it got dark and the full moon lit up some low hanging clouds, transforming them into mystic veils.

We had an early night in anticipation of the big day tomorrow. The walk out took us a full 2.5h! The track was well formed, the sun was up and we debated downgrading the trip to easy –medium. But once we got

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out we put some serious effort in at Villa Maria and Allan Scott vinery which gave us the good feeling that we were carrying our name with full right: Tongues and (M)eat!

PS: Needless to say that we never used ice axe or crampons, they stayed in the van the whole weekend!

Neil Winchcombe

2-4 June 2012, Medium tramp, Tararua Forest Park (map #1)

Punters: Craig McGregor (Leader), Debbie Buck, Weimin Ren,
Alayne Wright, Caleb, Alistair Young, Philip Dunlop

The forecast for our 3 day Tararua based tramp over Queen's birthday was excellent. So, we tramped in Friday night from the Waiohine Gorge road end to Cone Hut on the south eastern Tararuas with real optimism for nailing what looked like a substantial medium trip.

Saturday morning was magnificent: neither wind nor clouds. We set off at 8:30am climbing onto Cone. After little more than an hour the wind picked up with a fury and with it came the clag.

We pushed on and beetled over Cone, swinging westwards towards Hector in very strong and cold westerlies; it looked to be a tough day after all.

The Winchcombe crossing between Cone and Hector is a rarely tramped part of the southern Tararuas. We had the treat of walking on barely discernible tracks among a beautiful mossy goblin forest. In spite of the weather we were all having a ball and decided to stop for lunch in the Neil saddle.

After lunch we battled up the steep 250 odd meter climb on to Neil. Ominously the wind seemed stronger as we headed above the bush line for the second time, and daylight hours were dwindling, so we decided to push on to Winchcombe.

The route between Neil and Winchcombe peak is very physical: Either up steep or down steep with plenty of scrambling in between. By the time we arrived at the base of Winchcombe we were all feeling the pinch.

We summited Winchcombe and tramped as swiftly as we could towards the next steep peak (height 1398). This brute had almost sheer sides.

With daylight almost exhausted and the westerly growing in strength we decided to retreat back the way we had come. A little after nightfall, we bivvied in a half decent spot just off the track. With no water left we jumped into our sleeping bags, snacked and attempted to sleep - something many of us were denied as the wind built up and began to flap our flies, ripping out pegs at times, over the long cold night.

Daylight has never been more wished for, nor more welcome. Exhaustion and bad weather convinced us to head out the way we had come in. Thirsts were quenched from puddles and the summit of Neil had a small tarn which replenished bottles.

We had a pleasant brunch in the Neil saddle and once again climbed up and over Cone for the long descent back to the road end. With the nearing proximity of the van, clean clothes and civilisation, the jokes and good cheer returned in earnest. Yes it had been a tough tramp: sleepless cold and physical, but we were all buzzing from the experience.

Not to everyone's taste

Easter Friday to Sunday 2012, Private trip, Rimutakas (map #1) Marie Henderson Punters: Allen and Sue Higgins, Marie Henderson

This is not a trip to everyone's taste. Few majestic views, no clearings for sunshine basking breaks, very limited amenities, scant opportunity for a natter on the middle day and no 'racking up the miles' or 'peak bagging' for achievement lists. Your gear will come out not quite the same ever again. And with regards to your trip selection, you may wonder 'why?', which the majority of people will certainly do.

But, if you take to it with the right spirit, you will get a laugh – even if only at yourself.

Eventual goal: head north from Mt Mathews North Saddle to Papatahi from bush camps along the OO river in a day. Well why the hell not?

It was Easter and too much on to go far away and just planning a few days at work. An email from Allen followed with a call on Wednesday – "how about the western Tararuas?"... "Sure". A call with Allen Thursday – "OOs?".. "No worries, but I have eaten all my Easter eggs"... "Don't worry, we'll find some".

Friday. All in the car on the way to Catchpool road end – "so what the ? are we doing?"... Allen explained the plan. "Oh. Well good thing I threw in the scrub gear just in case. Where are the Easter eggs?"

A pleasant stroll in, general wander about sightseeing and night under the fly with a fire at the old Bain Hut site. Some disturbance of the night from stags roaring. And Easter eggs!

The day began with the regulation kick off for these trips with the brew on before sunrise. Good (roughish) travel up to north saddle and then progress slowed...

Goodness me! I was hoping hard there would not be too much of this type of bush – the midriff to head high type that is very hard work to get up through. The bush gained height and opened up over the first bump. And continued the same, varying between slow push through shoulder to head height crud to some good going animal tracks under a canopy. Did not find navigation that tricky, but maybe we got lucky and it certainly helped with it

being a clear day and the chance to spy out the route. With nettle and bush lawyer about, gardening gloves and bush bashing kit are the ticket. It also pays to be short on this trip and take the smallest, least snaggy pack you can.

Things we discovered on the ridge: a very surprised hunter – very surprised to meet us and also with grim warnings to impart concerning our plan based on his past experience (but if you attended to everyone's tales of woe you'd never go anywhere); A sleeping bag, tarp and foam mat – if these items belong to you I can give some basic directions on where to find them; A small bush rubbish site – again, if these items belong to you I can give some basic directions on where to find them; Three boot prints.

The last climb to gain Papatahi looked interesting, but Allen found a decent sneaky route around that. I was feeling tired by the time we got to Papatahi (or some time before), but the daylight left was limited and we had to make the most of it. So straight down after route discussion on the hoof "East or west? I am after a call from someone.", "I'm stuffed – lets go west so I can have a lie in".

We re-joined the OO river and had camp set up about an hour after dark – but dark that descended like a thump as we dropped height fast in to the valley. Some disturbance of the night from possums. More Easter eggs!

Sunday is the traditional day of rest. So rest we did. With a very late lie in and a leisurely wander back to the car park.



Section of nice travel. Papatahi on left







Burn Hut

16-17 June 2012, Easy Medium, Tararua Forest Park (map #1)

Debbie Buck
Punters: Jenny Beaumont (leader), Donna Maher, Debbie Buck, Clare Todd, Anthony Schroeder, Bernie
Smithyman, Jennifer Hale, Jamie Sirios and (Harry Smith - kind of on the trip but kind of doing a solo trip)



On a dreary Saturday morning we contemplated alternative routes as we made our way to Levin. A southerly was forecast and there was already snow on the coastal foothills of the Kapiti coast.



As we ascended the windy road to Mangahao Dam 2, the sunny calm weather convinced us to stick with our planned trip to Burn Hut, nestled in the tussock at 752m. The tramp started with a meandering, slightly slippery track through the bush above the river, with a few tricky clambers down and up from side creeks. It was a good warm up before we started the ascent up to a wee lookout and a quick lunch; the temperature seemed to drop a few degrees as we ate. After marvelling at a couple of rainbows over a parallel spur to the south we set off again.

Upwards on what I thought was the most user-friendly 'access to Tararua tops' track I'd had the pleasure of travelling. A steady ascent but not too arduous, a few steep tree-rooty

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climbs punctuated with heart-rate reducing micro-plateaus, and of course the changing flora confirming our upwards progress. Definitely an improvement on the track to Cone! As the group met up on a high knoll at 657m, the mild southerly showered us with some light sleet. Not long afterwards we were in the tussock, with expansive views to Kapiti and the sea and over the Wairarapa hills, with gently falling snow. As the track did a 90 degree turn we headed southwest, facing bigger peaks dusted in snow. Shortly afterwards we arrived at Burn Hut, in a sheltered spot in the tussock.



Since it was going to be a bit of a squeeze in the 8 bed hut, we pitched three tents in the cosy flattish space around the hut. 4pm and it was still calm so I was excited by the prospect of a sub-zero night in the tent in the tussock. I was glad Donna was willing to share her super-duper MSR hubba tent.

After the tents were pitched and the billy was on, Harry mentioned the hot pools nearby: vaguely in the saddle and down a bit but only about 10 minutes away. Mmm,

maybe hot pools were too good to be true but since they weren't too far away, a few of us went off to investigate. At the saddle, we found lots of leatherwood and no obvious hot pools super-highway. Hot pools at Burn Hut – yeah right!

As the night cooled down, we all congregated in the fireless-hut to keep warm and watch the awesome scarlet sunset. Anthony's technology told us there had been hail for two hours in Wellington. Donna and Jenny cooked up a fabulous red curry with veges, coconut milk and tuna. Tim tams, muffins and ginger slice followed. It was crisp and clear outside, with the Milky Way vivid directly above us and the orange glow of town lights below us to the west.

We survived the calm sub-zero night which left a snow-like frost on the tents. Displaying her leader's wisdom, Jenny suggested we wipe this frost off before the glorious sun melted it. The usual pfaffing and we set off in sun at 9am, along the tops to the highest point of 835m. Permafrost along the track to captivate us, Taranaki and Ruapehu volcanoes in stunning snowiness to the northwest and some enticing seriously snowy Tararua peaks visible further south.

But we were heading west and down a spur into College Creek for some river travel. We lunched in the sun when we hit the creek. After some river crossing instruction, we set off. Lots of sun, rock hopping, gravel walking, and criss-crossing the river. And then it got a bit

narrower, darker, deeper, with wet rock bum slides and chimney clambering in a few places. We all popped out of the river and located the Puketurua track to follow for a while to the top of dam 1. And then we lost the track so half the party went in different directions looking for it, or big orange triangles. The rest of us stayed put as instructed, until Jenny returned to lead us along the found track, hoping we would bump into the rest of the track-finders. Fortunately we did. After another kilometre clambering and tramping in the bush above the dam, we were relieved to get to the dam wall and the Medium party's van. We loaded in to the van and set off back to Wellington, doing a van shuttle to pick up the Mediums.

In essence, a fantastic E-M Tararua tramp with variety of terrain and scenery, great company and compliant weather.

X-Terra race series

April - June 2012, Level, Wellington region (map #1)

Gareth Morton

The X-Terra Race series comprises three off-road running events around the capital with breath taking views, jagged coastlines and lush native forest. Runners can choose to do either a short, medium or long course so all running ability is covered so long as you have a general level of fitness and some experience of off-road running.

The first race was held at Owhiro Bay which is very close to where I live and I had ran this track a number of times by myself. I entered the medium course of approximately 13km as I was recently getting back from injury. Sharron Came entered the long course of approximately 20km because she is totally hard-core! After a 20 minute delay the organisers set a crowd of about 150 runners on their way with an early climb of 400mts up the Tip Track, so called due to its proximity to the Happy Valley landfill site. The track still offers wonderful views of Wellington Harbour but today held no time for sight-seeing. After the initial climb the track turns south, undulating towards Red Rocks and the sharp descent to the south coast. When I reached the coast the race marshals pointed out a small pod of whales breaching no more than 200 metres away which is something I had never seen before along here – this certainly called for a very brief stop to chug down a few more jellybeans! The final 4km was along the coast on the gravel beach and hard sand to the finish line in a time of 1hr 20 minutes. Fortunately there was little wind as I have ran this course before where you are literally running on the spot, such is the strength of the wind on some corners.

I decided to upgrade to the long course for the next race held in Belmont Regional Park from the Woolshed entrance at Stratton Street. This 21km course involved about 700mts of vertical climb so was definitely more challenging than the previous race. Due to rain the previous day the course was muddy and slippery in many places which drastically slowed my pace. I was keen not to take a tumble and careful to control my momentum on the downhill. After the first initial climb I was regretting the two beers I had the previous night as I felt my speed slow and the effort required to keep moving increase. A friend I was

running with whom I usually beat had now gone ahead and I was resigned to having a bad race day and coming behind my friend. Although my speed was not great I did keep moving as we headed up to Belmont Trig. With the main ascent now over I regained some breath and even passed a couple of people on the descent. As the final uphill section of 150mt was conquered I was surprised to see my friend just ahead who was suffering from cramping and had taken a slight fall off the track. With about 1km of downhill remaining we set off together and I was now motivated to beat him to the finish. Although I too started to cramp up in the last 500mt it wasn't as bad as that of my friends cramp so I beat him in the end by a couple of minutes in 2hrs 20mins. I finished only 10-12 minutes behind some other friends who ran the race so considering my feelings of an off day it wasn't too bad in the end.

For the final race I made the sensible decision to return to the medium course around the Whakanui and McKerrow Tracks in the Rimutakas. A large mist hung over Wainuiomata as we drove down the hill through Wainui to the start line at Richard Prouse Park and the temperature was low, creating a reluctance to get out of the car wearing shorts. I decided to wear my running jacket as it was so cold but had to wear it round my waist soon after we started on the 600mt climb up the Whakanui Track. Due to rain the previous day and lots of other runners ahead of me the track was extremely muddy and slippery and was not very wide, making it difficult to pass people. A 3.5km loop track went off the main track and followed some bait stations. This part of the course involved the kind of mud that clung to your shoes, the track was overgrown which made it difficult to see your next step and was technically challenging. This part of the course was more like speed-tramping than running. Once this section was over we were on the way down along a more gradual track though still narrow so a bit of a bottle-neck was developing. As I am a better downhill runner than an uphill runner I was able to overtake a number of people along here before emerging from the bush and back to the finish line in a time of 1hr 50mins.

If you are a runner who is perhaps a little bored of running on concrete or a trail runner that wants to get out and run new tracks in a well organised and social event then the Wellington X-Terra Race Series could be for you.

http://www.splashanddash.co.nz/XTERRAWellington/Home.html

Mangahou Valley to Ohau

15-17 June 2012, Medium Fit, Tararua Forest Park (map #1)

Punters: Amanda Wells (Leader), Richard Lardner,
Rowena, Katy Glennie, Kevin Cole, Steve Austin, Alistair Young

Friday night we made the long drive from Levin to the Mangahou road end. The evening was cold but very still at the tail end of the miserable southerly which had blown hard all week. Morning saw a cold and very light drizzle, we donned coats and warms and made haste round the lake, getting shelter as the track wound under the trees.

It's been many years since I set foot in the Mangahou valley, and I'd forgotten how breathtakingly beautiful it is. Huge green pools, large beech stands and enough open flats



with views of the towering mountains of the north western Tararuas to sate the senses.

We tramped steadily, stopping every hour to munch and chinwag and made the Mangahou hut in expected time for a very pleasant lunch. As lovely as Mangahou hut is, one can't help noticing it is bounded by 3 rivers, making egress in bad weather almost impossible for all but the strongest party.

This day the drizzle was light

and river crossings benign. We headed up the valley to the old avalanche flats hut site, crossing the river shortly after.

Although this was meant to be a navigational tramp and we came prepared with compass, map and GPS we found ourselves on a well-marked and maintained unofficial track, which took us to the top of deception spur which lies above the confluence of the north and south Ohau Rivers. Someone has clearly reopened and remarked the traditional route to Mount Dundas from the Ohau road end.

The day was beginning to fade (as was I, and perhaps one or two of the other punters), we marched double pace North West along the top to a well-marked decent down the spur to North Ohau hut which was unoccupied; we danced with glee and collected wood, piling the fire high.

The night fell with bitter cold outside but, fire roaring and brews a pouring, we paid no heed to artic frosts outside. I slept soundly on the floor, stirring occasionally to the sweaty groans

of the punter on top bunk as she cussed the firebugs who stoked the fire, drenching her mattress in furious sweat.

Morning brought clear blues skies and frost white, we dithered our departure till the sun came up. On with frozen socks and rigid boot; the day starts tough on winter tramps when you leave your boots outside.

The North Ohau was easy travel and we made the old Ohau hut side in time for lunch, before whistling out



to the road end for a chilly couple of hours of stomping banter till the van turned up – a warm and welcome site.

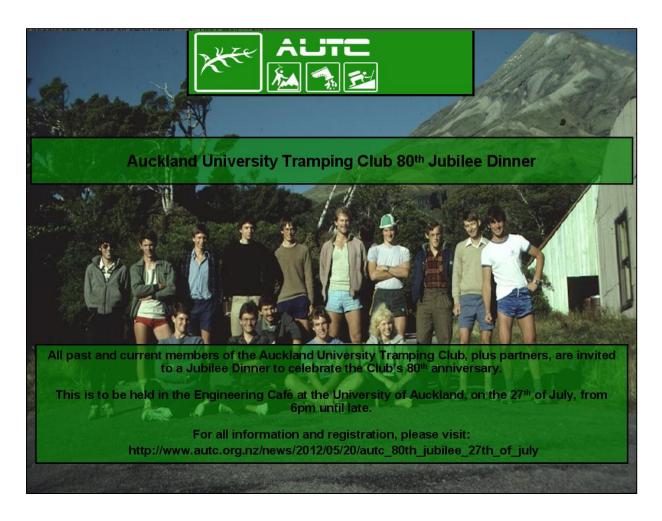
Other bits and bobs

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

Happy 80th Auckland University Tramping Club

The Auckland University Tramping Club turns 80 this year, and we are trying to track down past members in order to encourage their attendance at a celebratory dinner, to be held on July 27th, at the University of Auckland.

It would be greatly appreciated if you were able to circulate the following notice to your members. It is available as an email attachment if preferred.



Deadline for submissions to the August 2012 WTMC newsletter: Friday 27 July	2012
The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club. Any queries or comments should be directed to the writer of the	
article. The editor of the newsletter reserves the right to edit and publish articles.	Page 20 of 20