



# The Mouth 'n' Ear

## Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

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December 2012

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Summit of Mt Manakau



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# The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Dear Santa,

I swear I've been good this year. Don't eat that dehy meal I've left out for you too quickly or you'll get indigestion. It's not compulsory but you may want to add hot water to it. Jug is on the left hand side of the bench just flick the switch. Also, I would have left you a beer but we have a policy of not allowing alcohol on Club trips unless the Chief Guide gives permission. I'm sure I sent the Chief Guide an email requesting permission but have not had a reply so far. Enough of the small talk, here is my Xmas list:

1. Promotions Officer x 1 but I'll take >1 if you have a few spares.
2. Chief Guide x 1. Latter must be able to replace Amanda who is irreplaceable.
3. Good snow base at Ruapehu July through till September. As you are used to conditions in the North Pole I should probably explain, would be happy with at least 5cm of the white stuff covering all the sharpest rocks. Skiers would probably like a bit more but living here they are used to making do with a base that would do an Italian Pizza maker proud.
4. 50% more sunshine hours during the weekends in the Ruahines and Wellington.
5. 33% less precipitation and a 50% reduction in wind speed in the Tararuas. (Just threw 4 and 5 in to show that I know how to keep my requests specific and realistic!)
6. Active new members – the kind whose contribution to the Club matches what they take away. I'll take as many of these as you can stuff down my chimney, any that don't fit down the chimney can be stacked neatly on the deck outside.
7. More van drivers. Preferably with current driver licences and used to driving on the left hand side of the road.
8. Good attendance at Club nights. You may have to talk to the tv programmers to help with this, maybe get Coro St moved back half an hour or order up reruns of NZ's Got Talent.
9. Large, well maintained helicopter. I don't have a colour preference.
10. Patience. If you could give this priority I'll be able to wait a bit for the other 9.

Hope you get what you want this Xmas. Have a happy and safe holiday. Looking forward to seeing you all back in 2013 refreshed, reinvigorated and ready for more adventures.



## Track Talk

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Amanda Wells, Chief Guide

At the last minute, the Summer schedule came together and far exceeded my expectations. A big thanks to all our trip leaders! As an experiment, we'd included January again (after making it part of the Spring schedule) to see if we could get some more leaders. This worked, with a better array of trips now available for Anniversary Weekend. Remember that if you are keen to do a January trip, especially in the South Island, you need to sign up before Christmas.

Thanks again to everyone who's volunteered to lead a trip, especially those who are taking the plunge for the first time. If you want to co-lead a trip, there are a couple of opportunities still available – just get in touch with me. We will run a leadership course during the Winter schedule, probably in May, so make a mental note.

Bushcraft is on the agenda this schedule, in March. If you have friends keen to tramp but unsure where to start, point them in this direction. It's a non-intimidating way for people to dip their toes into the outdoors – complete with a stay at the club's own Paua hut in the Orongorongo valley.

I hope you're gearing up for some summer tramping adventures. Fitting in enough training is hard at this pointy end of the year, and the few weekends available for me and Richard have been distinctly rainy/windy. This means you get good at coming up with plans B, C, etc. Forced off the tops, we've been doing lots of off-track in the Tararuas, which definitely sharpens those navigation skills. For me this has been the year when I've finally started to enjoy off-track navigation, rather than feeling continual low-level fear of ending up on a bluff/wrong ridge or in a ravine. If your tramping is starting to feel a bit stale, give it a go. We even visited one of the Tararua's unofficial huts (admittedly, the easiest one to find), which was surprisingly roomy and weather tight, and very welcome after 11 long hours in the rain from Kapakapanui Hut.

Thanks to everyone who's helped out this year with the little and big things that keep trips kicking over. I hope you all have a safe and fun Christmas break 😊

## Membership

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Helen Law, Membership officer



This month we welcome Michael Schier as a new senior member.

Your subscription invoice is being sent out at the moment, if you do not receive yours by Christmas, either by email or by post, please contact me to verify your contact details and resend the invoice to you.

## Social corner

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Jenny Beaumont, Social convenor



Thanks to all who came along to the club rooms on the 21st to celebrate 65 years of the WTMC with us on the 21st November! We had a great evening with some tales from the past from Sue, wonderful slides shown from the good old days from Sue, Brian and Harry, some more recent slides of Debbie's overseas cycling adventures - and of course a great cake! Thanks to Sue and Debbie for helping to organise the evening.



Coming up over the next few weeks:

12th December: Donna Maher's adventure in Nepal

19th December - club will be open for gear pick up/return only

26th December - No club meeting

2nd January - No club meeting

9th January - club will be open for gear pick up/return only

16th January - First club meeting of 2013!

I will not be able to make club meetings in January or for most of the first half of 2013 - so thanks to Sue Walsh and various other volunteers for stepping up and running the club nights in my absence. I will put a roster together for volunteers to cover Wednesday nights - please get in touch if you would like to help out. Duties include setting up the computer/projector, putting out the tea and clearing up at the end (with help from other club members!).

Please also get in touch if you would like to talk to us on a club night - I'm sure there will be lots of great trips going on over the summer that we should hear about!

Have a lovely Christmas break - happy tramping - and see you in 2013

## Trip reports

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### Easy as – the Travers-Sabine loop!

Anzac weekend April 2012, Easy, Nelson Lakes (map #1)

Author: John Hickey

Trampers: Debbie Buck , John Hickey, Derek Moore,  
Yao Liu, Weiman Reo, Anne Davies

The trouble with a working world is that we never seem to have enough time to complete the trip that one wants.

This year was different and Anzac day fell on a Wednesday so with just two days leave we could manage a full five day trip. Plenty of time, none of this let's run up to the hut by 2pm to avoid a passing cloud, this was to be a relaxed and dignified excursion.

There were six on this trip: Debbie, Yao and Weiman, Derek, Ann and myself.

Five WHOLE days to relax and enjoy the sun and view! What could be nicer than a carefree cruise up a silken lake followed by a leisurely stroll along a braided Travers river closeted by hills up to Mt Travers beyond.

Five days food is good when carted by a boat but not so hot on the back. So you can imagine the horror when it was found that the Lake Rotoiti water taxi was a thing of the past, it is no more, it had blown a gasket and was cancelled for the foreseeable future. Not only must we carry our five days of food but carry it for another eight kilometres turning a twelve kilometre day into a twenty km day. What a nuisance!

Still Wednesday dawned fine and it was wonderful to see the western side of Lake Rotoiti and the lake from land rather than water. It is a pleasant track open in most places with lowland bush crossing the occasional stream and after a few hours we reached Lakehead Hut. Lakehead is a new hut in good condition and being out of summer months it was empty and we had the whole valley to ourselves.

The sun was out and only a trace of breeze, a perfect day for tramping. We made steady progress up to the swing bridge which crosses the Travers river, a pleasant place for lunch.

We were making good time and with little fuss arrived at John Tait hut shortly before dusk. Time for tea, a vegetable bolognaise followed by a fruit and yoghurt dessert. What better way to start to a training school in Cards101.

Thursday was overcast, grey sky but little wind, great tramping weather. We gradually gained the 800m up to the Upper Travers Hut viewing many coloured mushrooms gathered around the track. The clouds too were gathering and whilst we arrived mid-afternoon at Travers Hut it was too late to attempt the Travers Saddle which would wait for tomorrow's day.





The weather had other ideas however and in the best southerly tradition the wind and rain settled in around evening. We were glad to be indoors and the Upper Travers hut proved to be a pleasant companion right through the next day with the rain drumming on the roof.

Rain means relaxation, and relax we did, this is the life, comfort and cards!

Whilst we gained 500 expertise the rain did not relent and this combined with low cloud was going to make the crossing of the Travers saddle difficult. For an EM trip this would

probably mean that a traverse back down the Travers valley would be the most prudent path forward.

The rain continued through the night and was still raining at 5.30am the next morning getting close to our decision point at 6am. It would have been sad to have abandoned the crossing but then again it is never sensible to compromise safety.

Then at 6.15am the rain relented and amazingly the sun came out. The morning had dawned fine with sunshine and steam rising off the trees around us. The track was softened but still firm as we left the hut and made our way up the hill to the saddle with a filled creek burbling alongside.



It was calm and beautiful and Mt Travers revealed its head for the first time in a few days with early winter snow still patchy on the tops. We reached the saddle by mid-morning; Mt Travers was in its glory.

Taking our time, we meandered along the tops enjoying the sheer falls below and clear contrast of the surrounding hills. It was a beautiful day and in the form of a weather window we watched as clouds gathered again beneath us and slowly came rolling in along

the Sabine valley promising more cloud cover late in the day but clear views for the time being.



We slowly came off the saddle heading towards the Sabine Valley below, and as we descended the clouds rose to greet us. The land is steep here and past landslides have punctuated the track at various intervals. At one point the track crosses a hardened scree slope with open boulders beyond, an avalanche alternative was apparent and our scout team believed that this would be a preferred route with the advantage of shady trees. This proved to be correct for a while but the slope became steeper and steeper heading



towards a toe-nail removing grade. A bit rough for an EM, as indicated by some of our punters, but great fun all the same. Still all good things must come to an end and all too soon we re-joined the main track and headed to the Sabine river beyond.

Recent weather had been harsh, however, and the Sabine River swing-bridge was washed out. Still, we were on the right side of the River for the West Sabine Hut. Evening and pre-breakfast 500 awaited and tomorrow was another day!

## Side trip to Cupola Hut

19-22 October 2012, Easy medium, Nelson Lakes (map #2)

Author: Anita Su'a

Trampers: Anita Su'a, David Bakker (photographer), Clare Todd

After a wonderful side trip to the stunning Travers Falls, a few of us decided to tackle Cupola Hut. DOC's estimated time was 2.5 hours to the hut and we saw from the map that we would have a 500m climb just before reaching it.

Our honourable leader did not think we could make it in time and gave us a stern warning about being back on time which made us even more determined to try.



We followed the river in stunning bush and in some areas enjoyed the beautiful vivid moss at our feet. As we were a silent bunch, mainly focusing on the time limit to reach our destination, we soon realised we were starting the first of our ascents. Surely this couldn't



be the 500m climb before the hut? And, it wasn't. So onwards and upwards. A light drizzle began, then it became slightly heavier which made progress slower. As always, whenever a climb is involved and it's behind you, you tend to feel slightly relieved that you have one hurdle out of the way and you're a bit closer towards reaching your goal.

A change in terrain saw us attempt a river junction crossing where various rivers joined into the

one. Because of the continuous rain all throughout the weekend it was thought we may experience a bit of difficulty, luckily it was quite narrow and not much contact with the actual river itself was involved. Hurdle two accomplished.

Continuing further into lovely bush we came to a fast flowing stream. Finding the easier way to cross, hurdle three – done and dusted. We now found ourselves at the start of our last climb – slowly, and cautiously we climbed! The good news, after all our efforts, was that we were starting to reach slabs of snow which was a very good sign we were nearing the top. Also the tree line could now be seen further ahead. During this ascent various glimpses of Mt Hopeless could be seen to our right which seemed more majestic the higher we climbed. Throughout our travels to reach the hut, we noticed that the tracks resembled mini waterfalls due to the amount of water and also avalanche debris that needed to be navigated.

An hour and 50 minutes later we reached Cupola Hut. The track leading up to the hut had been covered completely in snow. At this point it was only fitting that photos be taken outside the hut expressing our proud and excited moments of joy. A couple of members of the group noticed a



shovel hanging above the door, we could only assume for the purpose of digging your way into the hut (that surely would be an adventure!). Still feeling the effects of the elements, limbs very very cold, we were glad to be entering the hut, and to enjoy our well deserved lunch. As the temperature didn't get any warmer inside the hut we

decided to have a quick lunch.

More poses outside the hut, then we began our descent. As is the norm when descending, progress is much quicker. When we reached the bottom we met a couple of trampers on their way up to Cupola Hut. They were grinning from ear to ear when they discovered we were on our way to John Tait Hut as they gleefully informed us that we would be spending the night with 9 members from the Tararua Club, plus their loud snoring friend who had had an accident and decided to walk back to the hut. We were ok with that as we had our bunks – no probs! So a very satisfying and rewarding side trip to Cupola Hut meant another hut bagged for us that weekend.





# Climbing Mt Manakau

9-11 November, Alp1 Fit, Seaward Kaikouras (map #3)

Author: Brendan Eckert

Trampers: Brendan Eckert, Michael Schier,  
Mike Phethean (leader), Sharron Came

We: Mike, Sharron, Michael and Me (Brendan), met at platform 9 on the Thursday evening and all headed to the ferry terminal. The 3 hour ride across the strait was calm, dinner was served and 500 was played, Sharron didn't do so well on the 500 front, but like the crossing remained calm. At the other end we collected our little white steed to carry us the 2 hours to Kaikoura, it performed its duties and we arrived at the road end a bit past 11, tents erected quickly and with little chance of rain or wind guidelines were left coiled.



Ascending Mt Manakau

At 7am the troops were up sorting food and removing any last weight from our packs. We set off up the Hapuku river current elevation 100 metres; by the end of the day we hoped to be at the high camp around 1900 metres, so a big day was ahead. The first part of the river was pretty easy going: a few crossings and generally quite flat; we took a detour along a marked track after a waterfall to avoid a gorge. On the other side of the detour we came down the river a short distance before turning back upstream at a fork in the river.



Here we encountered some larger boulders and navigation up the river become slower. We made it to a large river bend where the river opened up and here we took our lunch at around 12 and 600meters higher than when we started. Conversations during lunch were centred on the large scree slope we would soon be climbing. After lunch we started our accent up the scree slope and onto the ridge, for the next four hours we battled with scree, loose rock, and scrub along the ridge line until we finally reached the point where the ridge flattened out and we set up camp for the night at 1900 meters. We watched the sun set over the ridge line we would be travelling along tomorrow and retired for the day.

At 6am, after a windy night, we were again presented with sunshine and calm conditions. After breakfast everyone grabbed what they needed for the day and headed off up the ridge toward the Manakau summit. The snow and ice that covered the ridge presented much better conditions than the day before; progress was good. A few traverses to avoid



extra climbing and to avoid large rocky scrambles were made, but on the whole the ridge line was a fine path to follow. The group reached the summit around 3 hours after leaving camp and after a few happy snaps we went back down the ridge. On the way back, to save time, we dropped down one of the gullies into the basin between camp and Manakau and then back up the other side to our camp site, bags packed and

back down the rocky part of the ridge. The down climb was made more difficult due to the indifferent rock conditions and steep scree slopes. We eventually headed for some snow to make the journey easier, but apart from Michael's boots skiing technique it didn't prove to be much quicker. After a few hours we finally made it back to the saddle above the scree slope overlooking the spot where we had had lunch the day before. The saying boys will be boys was probably quite apt as the downward journey on the scree slope was taken quickly. We set up camp on a flat grassy area above the river and again were in bed early.

Sunday, we set off early back the way we had come in, hoping to get to the car early enough to get to Picton to catch the 2:30 ferry. We got back to the car just after 10 and made the call to see if we could change onto the 2:30... we were out of season and the best they could offer was the 1pm ferry. So, instead of rushing up to Picton we decided to take the car into Kaikoura to check out the town. On the way in Sharron confirmed that last time she was in Kaikoura it was full of hoons and had been bitten by a dog in the main street, Sharron also mentioned she would like to have a go at marketing and her first point of call would be to sorting out the Hamilton 'More than you would expect' tag line. We also saw some seals, used up some fat boy credits and made it back onto the ferry where, again, Sharron lost 500.

# Abel Tasman Coastal Challenge

28 September 2012, Running event, Abel Tasman (map #4)

Author: Andrew Bichan  
Runners: Andrew Bichan, Richard Hardie

The Abel Tasman Coastal Challenge is a one day event taking a limit of 300 runners from Awaroa Inlet to Marahau following the impossibly gorgeous coastal track. Track conditions are excellent and the event is well organised by the Nelson Striders (the web site is under the banner 'Nelson Events'). The distance varies depending on who you talk to, but is about 36km. This may change as there is a rumour that they will run a longer route next year. There is an option for supporters to take a boat trip to walk the last 14km from Torrent Bay.

Being a late initiate into running and quickly finding tarmac to be a little tedious, heading off-road was inevitable. A cursory web search reveals that we have an ever-increasing choice of intimidating but spectacular events. Richard, an old college mate and companion on various hare-brained adventures in our youth requires no encouragement.

Unfortunately, our first attempt founders with the cancellation (*after* we'd trained up) of the 2011 Tararua Mountain Race, due to SARs resources being required for the second Christchurch earthquake. It's a while before our affairs coincide sufficiently for a repeat attempt and it is the Abel Tasman that catches the eye. A training schedule is drafted up and largely ignored as we try to fit a few 'hit outs' around work, family and winter weather.

We take the Friday morning ferry and have a leisurely trip to Marahau via the Slip Inn Havelock (try the seafood chowder) and the Sprig and Fern (takeaway riggers of good craft beer). Friends have booked a house in Marahau just around the corner from the registration point so we have a very relaxed evening in which to savour the 'riggers' of pre-race nerves.

The organisation on the day is seamless. At 7am we register at Marahau, board a bus to Kaiteriteri then a scenic boat ride to Awaroa. The morning is cool, but sunny as we study our map and the passing coastline to get a feel for what the next few hours will bring.

There's a short walk from the boat to the starting point on the Awaroa airstrip with a few competitors being taken aside for random gear checks. The compulsory gear feels very modest compared to the average Tararua day pack. A few duck into the lodge to use the facilities and here we must offer a thought to the punter whose race ended when he tripped and tore something vital while exiting the loo.

As the field lines up and warms up, we acknowledge the Royals of the event; these are the three gentlemen who have competed every year since the race's inception. Truly impressive; we speculate about how none of them could possibly consider *not* being there each year and whether the last man standing wins a car.

The horn goes and the pack sets off down the airstrip with yahoos and cheers. Those in the know put on a bit of pace in order to beat the queue that forms where the track narrows to single file.

This is one of our great walks so there is beautiful bush with view windows opening over secluded golden beaches and an emerald sea. There are mossy waterfalls, granite outcrops and at times the track meanders through cool bush along a bench cut at the water edge. However, our focus was less on the aesthetics and more on the two meters of track ahead.

Support during the race is good and the most obvious wrong turns are marked. Supporters, volunteers, and residents appear at various points throughout the event to bolster spirits and provide water and snacks. The day is calm and sunny but the air stays blessedly cool under the canopy.

The track is mostly well packed and of gentle grade varying between 0 and about 150m, but there a lot of ups and down and a few steep sections to keep you on your toes. Things potter along well until Torrent Bay; 14km from the end. This is where we start to pay the price for a somewhat casual approach to training.

The last 10km are unrelenting; Richard's Achilles is playing up and it is hard to judge progress amongst the trees. Each gentle rise sucks a little more from depleted reserves and the last few kilometres are interminable. We are not the only ones feeling the burn; the track is littered with souls who may have started the day at a slightly optimistic pace.

At the line I have nothing left in the tank and the first overwhelming emotion is absolute relief. It takes a few minutes to get around to feeling satisfaction at coming in under our 4 hour target; quickly followed by guilty relief at getting away with a somewhat slack training regime. It's a few hours before cockiness sets in and we start contemplating what the next event might be.

The organisers provide pineapple at the end, a subway lunch then a generous meal in the late afternoon before prize giving. While the winning times are impressive (the overall winner is in our 40 - 49 age group so we didn't stand a chance!), the highlight is the acknowledgement given to the oldest finisher. At 82, after well over 5 hours on his feet his standing ovation is well deserved; what a legend.

#### *Comments:*

No regrets and a great deal of enjoyment. I am very pleased to have been part of this event. At \$195 it feels quite expensive but you get: a unique run, scenic boat trip, support during the run, lunch and dinner... and a bunch of priceless memories.

There are limited entries so book early for the run and accommodation. Having accommodation nearby and a good group to share it with was fantastic. We left a car at the race end which meant a quick shuttle back to our accommodation.



The race website leaves a bit to be desired, and they do not offer a decent topo map of the course, however the organisation on the day more than made up for it. If you're like me and want to be able to visualise the route, it would pay to get the Topo map and talk to someone that has done it to identify exactly where the track goes. DoC and others have contour graphs of the coast but not all of them follow the same route, particularly out of Torrent Bay.

The time of year means the weather isn't too hot but you are training through winter. Do a fair amount of hill training; although the route only climbs to about 140m, it bounces up and down throughout the race and by the time you reach Torrent Bay the legs are feeling it. It's not like running over a mountain where you know it's all downhill at the end.

As with any longish off road event, unless you're fit and experienced, I suggest getting advice and planning your training, gear, hydration and nutrition carefully. Knowing the course is an advantage, especially in the final stages where the run through the bush seems to go forever.

Finally, there are limited pre-race loo opportunities so get into the queue on the boat early!

#### *Links*

<http://www.nelsonevents.co.nz/content/abel-tasman-coastal-classic>

## Iron Gate

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2-4 November, Easy medium, Ruahines (map #5)

Author: Debbie Buck

Trampers: Debbie Buck (leader), Paula Vincent, Nicky Shields,  
Kelly Scott, Rory MacLellan, Chris Davies, Maarten Ruiter

**Maarten** - We met at the Railway station and introduced each other whilst packing the van. It is always nice to meet new people on the trips. When all were present we, along with the Easy group, set off up north. After about 30min I remembered what was suggested at the club a week earlier, and I shouted out in the van if everyone had their food. To the leaders relief, they all said yes.

Bulls was our first stop. We tanked up the van and were given 30min to get something to eat. I still think those kebabs there are great value! With a few people changing seats and new driver, we set off again heading north to Mangaweka. It was dark when we arrived, so with torches we found some nice flat grassy areas to pitch our tents. The tents were up in no time and it was an early night for all in anticipation of a hard first day tramp the next morning.



**Kelly** - From Mangaweka campground, we made our way to the start of the track. The Ruahines lived up to the expectation of steep inclines and steep descents. What a leg workout! Despite a terrible forecast (which meant we went with the more sheltered plan B to Iron Gate rather than the more exposed trip over the tops to Triangle Hut), the weather held off. The river even looked inviting as we made our way past. The 3.5 hours it took to get to Iron Gate hut was filled with gorgeous scenery, great conversation and a few laughs - almost losing Paula and Rory in a puddle of

mud that was much deeper than it looked! Lessons learnt: not to photo bomb everyone's picture with your bum; that scroggin might actually stand for Sultanas, Chocolate, Raisins, Orange peel, Grains, Glucose, Imagination, Nuts or Sultanas; how to make ceramic toilet; and that if we kept walking, we would eventually make it to the Hawkes Bay! Thankfully, that is not where we ended up, but at an empty Iron Gate Hut just in time for a well-earned lunch.

**Paula** – Lunch at the hut made us suddenly lazy and a walk up to the tops less appealing. But, some of us felt the need to stretch our legs and thought we would chance the approaching bad weather for a view. Up and up we climbed, Rory, Debbie, Kelly, Maarten and I, taking one giant step up and another. Nearing the top of the ridge we glimpsed snow on the tops through the trees. Cloud rolled in around us as we reached the top, obscuring the view. Rain followed, falling in sheets, leaving us all streaming with water. We watched to check Rory didn't turn into the threatened gremlin - fortunately not. We squelched in our soggy boots back down comparing the effectiveness of our raincoats and carefully negotiating the steep bits.





**Rory** - Well after finishing the lovely descent from the tops where the views were slightly less than spectacular the 5 of us proceeded to peel the wet clothes off. Some of us then headed for the river for a quick scrub. Luckily our smart companions that decided not to go to the tops had started a fire so the hut was nice and cosy. After drying off and putting on some warm clothes, a game of yahtzee was initiated to the soothing sounds of 80's rock from a contraband ipod that had been smuggled to the hut. Maarten seemed to have the upper hand in yahtzee but was being closely followed by rookie sensation

Nicky. This came to an abrupt end when tea (supper) preparations began with chopping of vegies and cooking of pasta. Soon all the ingredients were combined for a delicious pesto, vegie pasta ensemble and scrumptious salami for the carnivores. For supper or dessert (depending on your country of origin), the cup of tea was topped off with an exceptional white and brown chocolate chip brownie cake prepared by Chris, that was nothing short of the same baked by Le Bordeaux bakery and was accompanied with custard. With bellies full everyone slid into the comfy confines of the sleeping bags with visions of a full house roll of dice and more brownies dancing in their heads.

**Chris** - Sunday morning started with a conversation about who snored the loudest followed by a quick breakfast and tidy up/hut tickets. We gathered outside the hut to pay final homage with the keener of the group showing off their latest jazzergetic and karate stretches that could be done. Leaving Irongate Hut at 8.30 in the morning, our plan was to meet up with the Easy Party at Heritage Hut. The track roller coasts over the hills and valleys testing both novice and seasoned trumper alike, but, it makes it just a little more rewarding knowing that the extra rations carried in were no longer in your pack. It is reassuring to know some effort from DOC is being made with a number of stoat traps in place. Number of Stoats trapped: Zero. Number of Rats trapped: Five! On reaching Heritage Hut I was filled with mixed emotions knowing that our trip was almost over and wondering if we would have a cuppa made for us by the Easy Party. "

**Nicky** – We arrived at Heritage lodge in pleasant sunshine with the recent rain shower evaporating from the deck in steamy wafts. Minutes later, our enjoyment of the sunshine and the scoffing of an assortment of gourmet lunches (caramelised hummus with lemon and rosemary was definitely a hit) was interrupted by a random torrent of hail stones. Talk about four seasons in one day! We waited for the worst of the hail to pass before donning our waterproofs and heading back to the van, arriving in another bout of pleasant sunshine. After changing back into warm, dry clothes, we headed to Shannon for a (well earned) coffee/chocolate/cake hit before returning to Wellington; Wellington harbour was at its best.....blue skies and sunshine.....perfect for drying off the gear from a pleasant weekend tramp.



# A bit of imagination

16-18 November, Easy(?), Tararuas (map #6)

Author: Sarah Fordham

Trampers: Sarah Fordham, Kate Hodgkinson, Tony Gazley (leader)

This, according to trip leader Tony, was all we needed to find the track back up the hill from Totara flats to the ridge via the old unmaintained hunters' track: Imagination, plus a map and a compass. And find it we did – battling through long grass and a hailstorm in the process. For a novice, and very recent import to New Zealand, this was something of a baptism of fire into the world of tramping!

In spite of the challenges on this 'easy' trip (or perhaps because of them!), the entire loop from Mangatarere Valley to the Totara Flats and back proved to be a great opportunity for creative thinking. Some of the particularly memorable moments included:

- Negotiating a number of rather steep tracks that had been made extremely slippery by recent rain. This resulted in quite a few bruised bottoms
- My first encounter with a goblin forest, the eeriness of which was only slightly muted by the absence of Lord of the Rings characters
- Fitting seven people in a six-person hut. Though the route had been specifically chosen as a quiet one, with the expectation that we would have Sayers Hut to ourselves – a party from the Kaumatua Tramping Club tramping club beat us to the bunks! Tony ended up on the veranda...
- Kate (another new member to the club) learned how to use a liquid fuel stove, so that we could cook up an Auntie Rata recipe. The tomato macaroni went down a treat!
- Traversing the swing-bridge over the Totara Creek in pretty significant winds. I'm very glad that I only found out it was flexible enough to turn 90 degrees in the right conditions until after the crossing.

Needless to say, it was not a dull trip. And we ended up being very lucky with the weather. Although it had been forecast to rain for most of Saturday and on Sunday morning, with the exception of the afore-mentioned hailstorm, we managed to miss almost all of it during the daylight hours! It was a different story at night though, when I was woken at least three times by the almighty ruckus of heavy rain on the tin-roof of the hut.

Tony was an excellent guide throughout the experience, pointing out all the best opportunities for me to play with my camera, and very tolerant of my rather plodding pace.

In all, it was a great first experience in the Tararuas, and I'm looking forward to the next one!



# Roaring Stag

24 - 25 November, Easy medium, Tararuas (map #7)

Author: Richard Lyth

Trampers: Richard Lyth, Jo Fink, Ashley Pendree, Barbara Keenan, Clinton Hunter, Felix Over, James Hemming, Anna Lambrechtsen, Luke Fraser, Maarten Ruiter, Brendon Caskey

We were lucky with great weather this weekend. Departure from Putara Road was in bright sun. The group of 11 set off upstream leaving a vocal farm dog behind us. The trip was a pleasant day in the bush, marked with a couple of breaks. We arrived at Roaring Stag early afternoon, with plenty of time to explore the surrounding area. Jo set off up the hill, to check out the tops. She managed to catch up to David, who had ridden in the van with us, as he arrived at Cattle Ridge.

Some of us thought it would be a great idea to go for a dip as the swimming hole water looked so inviting. It was a satisfying and exhilarating plunge off the cliff side after a long, humid hike through the canopy. The water chilled me to the bone but I quickly forgot after I warmed myself on the rocks in the sun ;). Others chose to gently slip into the water.

Dinner was satay Chicken, with plenty of rice and nibbly greens. Leftovers were not to be found tonight!

Following dinner, Felix, guided by his "man genes" thought it would be nice to start the camp fire. Once he started, the other men "knew" what their jobs were and started "hunting" for more wood. The whole episode was narrated by the onlookers and there were laughs all round. The firewood cutting competition pitted a Victorinox knife against a DOC pruning saw. The knife was the victor on the night. The fire proved to be a hit as it was the place to be where everyone hung out and had a great fun until it was bed time.

Sunday morning was relaxed, most of us sat by the river chewing the fat. We were not departing until 9.30, to give David the chance to catch us up. Again the track provided a nice passage through the forest, with breaks to refuel en route. Lunch today was taken at the road end, where we all basked in the sun, while listening to a barking farm dog.

On the drive back the van was named Albert, and his brother is now Oscar. Albert made us stop at Carterton, where we again basked in the Wairarapa sun with coffees and yummy cafe food.

A great weekend all round. Thanks to everyone who came.



# A trifle easy (medium) weekend (Paua Hut via Mt McKerrow)

10-11 November, Easy medium, Orongorongos (map #8)

Author: Kate Hodgkinson

Trampers: Mike Gilbert, Meena Kadri (photos),  
Ashley Pendree, Luke Fraser, Kate Hodgkinson

We met at Platform 9¾ bright and early on the 10<sup>th</sup> November and headed off, via a crucial pit stop at Maccie Ds, to the road end of the Whakanui Track.

Once there, we kitted up and headed up what felt like a near-vertical climb to meet the McKerrow Track. We enjoyed a gentle tramp along the ridge of this track with a number of food stops and enjoyed taking in the beautiful forest scenery.

We tramped along in eager anticipation of reaching the top of Mt McKerrow only to find that this was a little underwhelming in reality as someone had evidently stolen the sign marking the top, leaving just a small metal pole to mark the achievements of our up-hill tramp!



Not letting this dampen our spirits, we continued on downhill along the same track to meet the river, which was running really low. We walked along the river bed to Paua Hut where we met up with the other two tramping groups – the Family trip and the Easy Medium Tramp.

We were greeted at Paua Hut by Gustav from the family trip assuring us that the hut was safe as he had spent the past two hours scaring off the zombies. Relieved to hear this news, we pitched our tents and headed inside for a much needed cup of tea by the fire whilst the zombie eradication continued apace outside.

Dinner time was, as always, an exciting event, though this time even more so than usual due to the promise of the surprise dessert Mike had been carrying along with him. After a delicious tuna risotto, it was at last time for dessert. To our amazement, Mike casually whipped up a full-blown trifle, complete with chocolate shavings, inside a billy! It was delicious and, we assured Mike, worth every bit of the extra few kilograms of weight he had to carry to make it happen. Surely this has to go down in WTMC history as being one of the best-ever desserts on a tramp?!

To top off what was already fast becoming a pretty awesome evening, we joined the other WTMC-ers down at the campfire circle and enjoyed a firework display and toasted marshmallows over the fire.



Soon enough it was time for bed and we all kept our fingers crossed the forecasted rain would hold off.

On Sunday morning, after breakfasting and packing up, Mike somehow managed to persuade us to head up Browns Track on to Cattle Ridge, rather than heading along a longer yet significantly less steep route to meet the track. With memories of the start of the track yesterday still fresh in my mind, I'm convinced that Mike should become either a politician or an advertising agent for this because,

evidently, it wasn't what he was selling but how he was selling it that did the trick.

Sure enough we soon found ourselves heading up another steep gradient, yet we did have numerous rests en route to lessen the blow. Once reaching the top though, we were all in agreement that this was in fact preferable to the alternative longer route.

Not long after joining the Cattle Ridge, we managed to take a bit of a bush-bashing detour, led astray by markers that looked deceptively similar to the DOC ones we had been following. Once re-discovering our correct route, we started debating how "easy" this easy tramp was and it seemed that the bush-bashing has achieved what the steep climb up Browns Track hadn't – to unofficially upgrade the tramp to an easy medium.

With the excitement of the detour behind us, we carried on steadily downhill, stopping off for a lunch break before continuing along to the end of the track and finding the van. After a fun weekend, we all climbed into the van just on the right side of exhausted!

Just when we thought the weekend's excitement was over, the club van passed the 100,000km mark on the way back to Wellington and we had a mini celebration to mark the land-mark moment.

Soon enough we were back at Wellington Station after what we were all in agreement was an awesome weekend. Huge thanks to Mike Gilbert for making it possible and, of course, for making the trifle against which all future club trips' desserts will be judged!



### Wasps ... Bee aware!

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Author: Mika Verheul

Tramping in New Zealand can be challenging. One of the risks perhaps underestimated by many trampers is a severe reaction to wasp venom. There are various opinions about how to deal with possibly allergic people when they get stung by a wasp, often resulting in uncertainty and anxiety. Emergency response might get alarmed unnecessary or fatalities might occur when activated too late. What should be the initial treatment after a wasp sting?

For my study 'Wilderness medicine' I wrote an assignment on the treatment of wasp stings in the New Zealand outdoors. As we are entering the wasp season again, I'd like to share some bits of information about this subject.

Fortunately wasp stings are rare and the average person might experience the occasional sting once every 10-15 years. However, trampers can easily be exposed to wasps more frequently due to their activity.

The *Vespula Vulgaris* or Common wasp became established in New Zealand in 1978, whereas the *Vespula Germanica* or German wasp had already become established in 1945. Both species are considered pests due to their aggressive nature, their competition for resources with other species and their painful stings. The presence of honeydew (responsible for the black bark in beech forest) and the mild New Zealand climate are responsible for a very high density of wasps on the South Island with up to 30 nests per hectare, and the average nest size being amongst the biggest in the world. Common wasps forage on honeydew more efficiently than the German wasps hence it is the common wasp that dominates in the New Zealand beech forest.

Wasp activity depends on the weather and shows a seasonal variation with wasps being most active in summer time, from October to April. In New Zealand more than 85% of the wasp nests are built below ground, mostly in soil, on sunny river banks. The wasps can easily be disturbed by accidentally stepping on the nest, in particular when bush bashing.

People allergic for wasp venom are not likely to be allergic for bee venom and the other way round, as the venom is different. Often the severity of the reaction weans off over time when not exposed again.

The reaction to the wasp sting can occur as a normal local reaction, a large local reaction or a generalised reaction:

- The normal reaction is characterised by local pain, redness, and swelling at the site of the sting with a diameter up to 10cm. Pain medication (paracetamol or ibuprofen) can be taken to ease the discomfort.

- A large local reaction has a diameter larger than 10cm and symptoms persist longer than 24 hours, up to 5 days. Additional signs of fever, malaise and swollen glands might be present. Again pain mediation can be taken and, although researchers don't agree, it can be beneficial to take oral antihistamine (2-4 times the normal daily 'hayfever' dose, continue for 4 days).

Severe local reactions are quite common and fortunately in most cases not life threatening. The risk of anaphylaxis in people with a history of severe local reactions is only 5-10%. A generalised reaction in allergic people seems to recur as often as not, and there is no linear relationship between those with severe local reactions and those developing generalised symptoms.

- Generalised reactions are not restricted to the site of the sting and can manifest in many different ways. Signs consist of low blood pressure, difficulty to breath, generalised swelling, sometimes a rash or hives, abdominal pain and loss of consciousness or collapse. The most severe is anaphylaxis. Generalised sting reactions occur in an estimated 0.4-5% of individuals. No clear characteristics are known to predict the risk of an individual to develop anaphylaxis. It is however more likely to occur after multiple stings, or when repeated stings occur over a short period of time. If someone has had a generalised reaction, a referral to an allergy specialist is recommended to perform blood tests and to discuss serious long term treatment by venom sensitization.

Fatalities due to anaphylaxis occur in an estimated 0.5 per one million people only and often without a past history of sting reactions. Anaphylaxis has a rapid onset and people feel very ill within minutes after being stung, often referred to as a 'sense of impending doom'. All fatalities due to venom anaphylaxis happened within 5 minutes to 4 hours after being stung.

Adrenaline injections reduce symptoms in anaphylaxis, but only when injected in an early stage. For that reason an "epipen" (prefab adrenaline injection) can be taken along by people at risk. However, the epipen is quite expensive and in practice the injection method requires familiarisation and regular updating of skills.

In summary: prevention can make the largest difference!

During summer months you can reduce the risk of wasp stings by:

- Wearing protective clothes
- Staying on the tracks and avoid bush bashing, especially in beech forest with honeydew (Nelson Lakes area)
- Avoiding sunny river banks
- If a nest gets disturbed, run away for at least 30m, most preferably away from the water. As long as you are within the nest territory the wasps will attack you.

In addition to this the general recommendation is to let people with an allergic history go first when travelling as part of a tramping group in an area where there are many wasps, because the ones in front of the group are less likely to be stung.

Hopefully none of the above keeps you from tramping and appreciating nature!

## **Here's a fun event you might be interested in...**

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XRACE is a fantastic MYSTERY ADVENTURE. A challenging race against the clock and against other family teams. Teams of two must locate clues on a map, complete a series of 10 different mystery challenges, beat the clock and all the other teams – with the fastest and luckiest family team crowned XRACE champion.

An XRACE team must be a child aged 7 to 12 racing side-by-side with dad or mum (or even uncle or auntie). Each regional event will also hold a mini XRACE for the little ones 6 and under.

XRACE is a physical challenge, but not a running race. XRACE has mental challenges and challenges of agility, but isn't hard. Any family can complete it.

OK, so here's the next steps. Form a team and then sign up online, take advantage of our fantastic early bird registration special and secure your place in your local XRACE.

The Wellington XRACE is 9 February 2013. Places are limited and races will sell out. Enter early to avoid disappointment.

Registration for the event is open now: <http://www.xrace.co.nz/#!/wellington/c1f3c>

## **Online record of the huts you have visited**

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Record which huts you've visited through hutbagger.co.nz. Register on the site and you'll be able to record and view the huts you have visited, export a list of huts visited and compare your stats against other hut baggers.

The data is not going to be used for any purpose, just kept on the site. It is a tool just for you!

If you'd like further information about the site email: [info@hutbagger.co.nz](mailto:info@hutbagger.co.nz)

## **Gear request**

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A reminder that gear for Christmas trips needs to be collected no later than the 12th December.





**Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: end January 2013**

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.