



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

March 2013



Largest dragonfly species in NZ. Wainuiomata
water catchment area.

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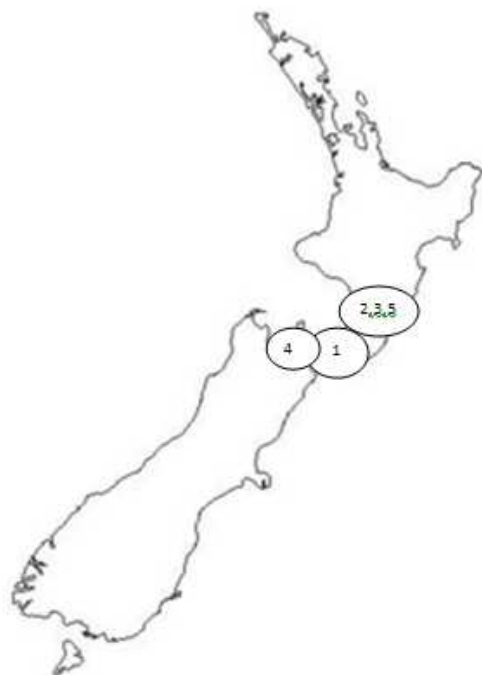
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The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President

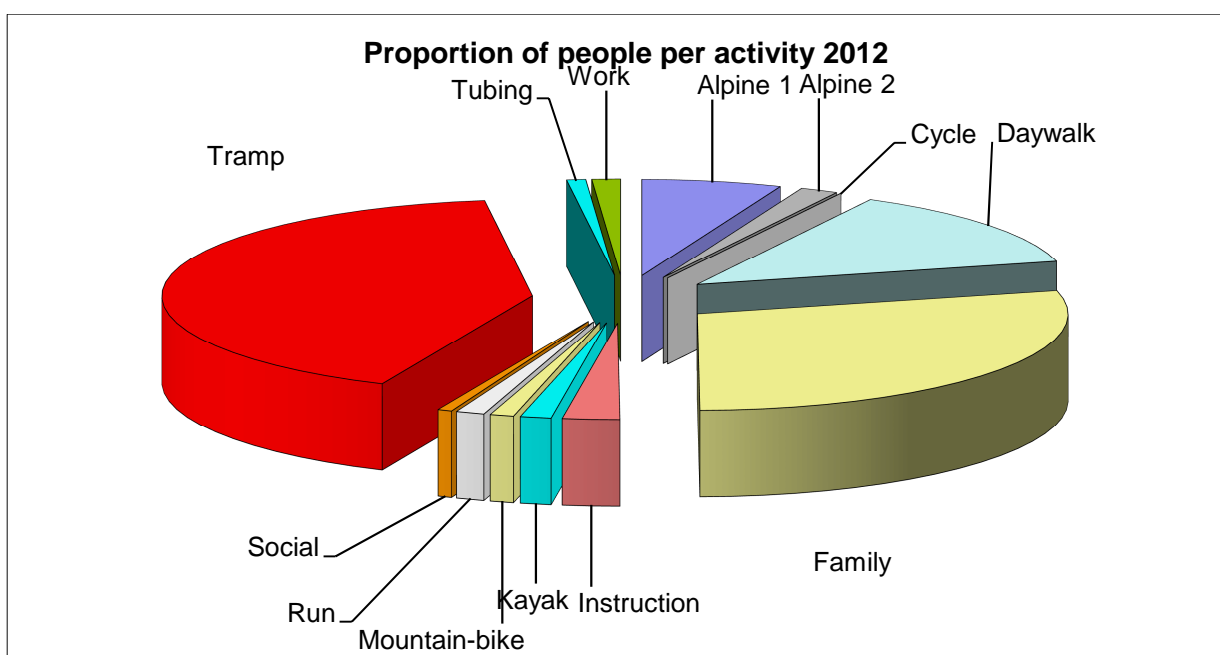
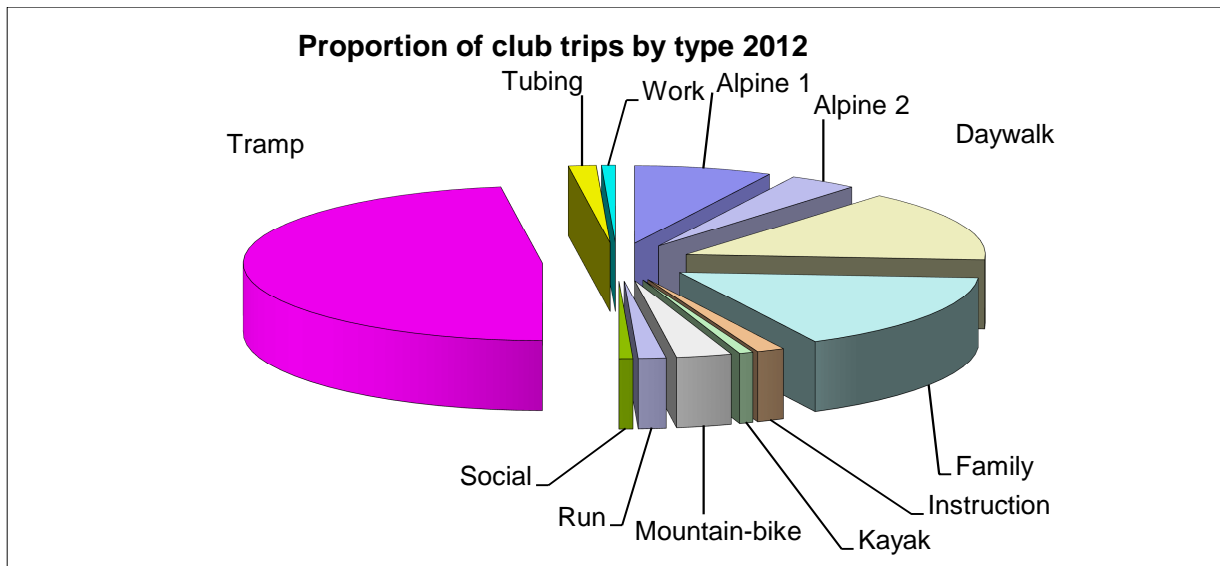


Those of you sitting on the edge of your seats in anticipation of reading the annual report will have to wait a little longer. Perhaps you could sign up for a tramp to pass the time. The accounts are currently with the auditor and I expect to have the report ready to be signed off at our March Committee meeting. The report will go up on the website shortly thereafter.

If you are interested in being nominated for the 2013 Committee we are calling for nominations now. Just download a nomination form off the website or pick up a hard copy from the Club on a Wednesday night. We will have nomination forms available at the door. A few people have volunteered for roles already, this is great but we still have plenty of roles to fill. If you want to know who has been nominated for which role just check out the website. The AGM is scheduled for Wednesday 10 April. See you there.

Meantime check out the graphs below compiled by our Statistics whiz Steve Kohler. If you lead trips you will know about Steve. He is the guy that sends out emails each week asking where your trip went, who went on it and what happened. At the end of the financial year he converts this data into graphs giving us a visual snapshot of trip activity that we can then compare with previous years. So what can we take away from these two graphs? WTMC runs a variety of trips. The bottom graph shows what proportion of people go on the different types of trip. The big story here is the number of people who go on the family trips, almost twice as many people as for any other trip type on a per trip basis. This can partly be explained by the tendency for an entire family to go on such trips rather than just an individual but the graphs indicate that family trips represent a big chunk of Club activity. Mike Gilbert has done a superb job of nurturing this aspect of Club life over the last few years.

Despite the variety of activities on offer we remain predominately a tramping club, the tramp, day walk and family categories combined make up the vast bulk of our activity with Alpine 1 trips, the next most popular category, lagging far behind. Tubing is back on the scene, this activity used to be popular then faded away for a bit and trail running shows up for the first time.



You can check out the rest of the graphs along with Amanda's commentary in the annual report.

In this newsletter we are launching the revised Club policy for personal locator beacons. Thanks to everyone who assisted in the development of this policy particularly Amanda, Richard and Mike McGavin. Thanks also to Jenny Cossey who has shared her experiences with PLBs in this newsletter. While it is a good idea to take a PLB on a trip it's the other stuff that is really important. Making sure you go on trips appropriate to your level of skill, experience and fitness, taking the appropriate equipment and food, checking the weather and track conditions, ensuring someone reliable knows where you are going and when you are coming back etc.

The revised Club Constitution has now been lodged with the Office of Incorporated Societies. You can find it on our website should you wish to refer to it. Speaking of the

website, we are looking for people who have programming skills and experience with Drupal to help us with the various website improvements we are trying to implement. We have lots of members who work in IT some of you must have relevant skills and this would be a great way to help the Club run better. Contact Mike at webmaster@wtmc.org.nz for more details.

Our annual new member's night was well attended by prospective members and a solid core of members showed up to help out. It was cool to have random members just popping along to show their support. This had nothing to do with all that amazing baking on offer. Big thanks to everyone, especially David and Sue who did the bulk of the organising on the night and the cake makers without whom our waist lines would be significantly smaller. Last but my no means least, congratulations and best wishes to Jenny Beaumont and Steve Austin who as of Sunday 3 March 2013 are the proud parents of a baby boy!

Track Talk

Amanda Wells, Chief Guide



For the past couple of months, Richard, Sharron and I, along with some expert helpers, have been formulating a PLB policy for the club. After the first activation of a club PLB over Christmas (see Jenny's account), we realised that it would be useful to set out assumptions and guidelines around PLBs, particularly as committee positions turn over and institutional knowledge is lost.

During our recent 13-day trip in the Tasman Wilderness Area, Richard and I had an all-too-close encounter with the practice behind PLB activation theory. An unwise diversion saw us down climbing a rocky bluff; my legs slipped out, my arms were too high and my face hit the rock. To me, it felt like my top lip up to my nose was split in two; I'd felt my teeth go right through the skin. Richard (below me) was saying "you're alright", thinking I was freaked out by the short fall; I kept repeating "I'm not alright!" In that instant of injury, lots of things flash through your mind. "What a stupid thing to do" being uppermost. This was day five – we were an hour away from Lake Aorere, the heart of the wilderness era. And a long way from medical attention.

Sitting down and assessing the situation, the injury looked much less serious than it felt. Having a mirror in your first aid kit is handy in this kind of situation, as it's hard to believe someone else's mild assessment of an injury that feels severe. And having a PLB makes a big subconscious difference. In that first instant, I thought "is this trip over?" "Are all these months of planning going to end up in an embarrassing evacuation for an idiotic injury?". But having that option, no matter how little you want to exercise it, is priceless.

It made me think about how severe an injury needs to be to warrant evacuation, and how your “distance to civilisation” suddenly becomes a hugely relevant factor. One day of walking for help is very different from five. It meant that, safely back in civilisation, we introduced the concept of “incapacity” into the PLB policy rather than just mandating “immobilisation”.

We were also carrying a mountain radio, which still needs to be seen as the primary safety device on long trips. It meant that on reaching our planned campsite an hour after the accident, we were able to dial into the operator and get some medical advice. It's the first time I've ever used that “operator call” function on a mountain radio and it works surprisingly well. All we really needed was some reassurance, and that's what we got. After some careful first aid and a day of rest to help the healing, we continued as planned.

We've thought long and hard about how to put guidelines around PLB activation. I'm sure you've seen the recent media coverage around people activating PLBs because they are tired, have blisters, or are going to be late for a meeting! PLB activation is ultimately about judgement, and every situation will have its unique variables. Our policy isn't intended to be prescriptive but to ensure a common understanding across the club of factors that should be taken into account. It also clarifies that the responsibility for PLB activation on club trips should sit with the leader, unless this isn't realistically possible.

The policy is intended to clarify potential areas of confusion, including the use of personal PLBs on club trips. It's important that leaders know if a personal PLB is present, and that if one is used in place of a club PLB that the emergency contact system is complied with.

The policy also sets out expectations when club members borrow a club PLB for a personal trip. This may include taking a mountain radio on longer trips, because of the need for up to date weather information. As we all know, looking at the mountain forecast on Monday is unlikely to predict the weather you will experience on your trip next weekend. Accurate weather information is a crucial tool in the decision-making process on multi-day epics.

At the moment we are compiling the Winter schedule – please see the detailed notice on the website forum for info on how to participate.

Upcoming trips:

15-17 March Tararuas - Kiriwhakapapa

| | | | |
|--------|-----|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Tramp | E | Blue Range hut | Richard Lyth |
| Tramp | MF | Arete Forks via Table Ridge | Paul Christoffel |
| Alp1 | M | Taranaki summit from Syme | Mike Phethean |
| Day | M | Kapakapanui | Pete Gent |
| Day | EM | Photography workshop (Lodge) | Spencer Clubb |
| Family | All | Zealandia picnic | Amelia White |

22-24 March Ruapehu Lodge and Ruahines

| | | | |
|--------|-----|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tramp | F | Round or over the mountain | Sharron Came |
| Tramp | E | Rangiwahia via Deadman's | Rory McLellan Andrew Bichan |
| Tramp | MF | Howlett's hut | David Heffernan |
| Day | EM | Mt Climie | Ray Walker |
| Family | All | Sayer's hut tramp | Richard Lyth |

28 Mar-1 Apr (Easter) Kahurangi and Ruahines

| | | | |
|-------|----|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Tramp | EM | Bulmer Lake – Mt Owen | Tony Gazley |
| Tramp | M | Mt Owen nav | Stephen Healey |
| Tramp | F | Gomorrhah to Patriarch nav | David Jewell |
| Tramp | M | Ruahines ramble | Craig McGregor |
| Tramp | MF | Ruahines route TBC | Amanda Wells Richard Lardner |

5-7 April Picton and Wellington

| | | | |
|--------|-----|--------------------|------------------|
| Cycle | M | Picton loop | Mika Verheul |
| Day | EM | Cannon Point | Cecilia De Souza |
| Family | All | Turere Lodge tramp | Richard Lyth |

12-14 April Ruahines - Triplex

| | | | |
|--------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
| Tramp | E | Sunrise hut | John Hickey |
| Tramp | EM | Top Maropea hut | Jo Fink |
| Tramp | F | Waterfall hut | Richard Lardner |
| Day | E | Te Ikaamaru Bay | Tony Gazley |
| Family | All | Belmont daywalk | Anna Board |

18-20 April Tararuas – Mangahao

| | | | |
|-------|----|----------|------------------------------|
| Tramp | EM | Burn Hut | Rory McLellan Megan Banks |
|-------|----|----------|------------------------------|

24-28 April (Anzac) Nelson Lakes / Raglan Range

| | | | |
|-------|-----|------------------------------|--|
| Tramp | EM | Travers Sabine | Dmitry Alkhimov <i>Co-leader wanted</i> |
| Tramp | M | Lees Creek/ Misery/ Hellfire | Tony Gazley |
| Kayak | All | Marlborough Sounds | Debbie Buck |

Membership

Helen Law, Membership officer



Membership subs

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your membership subs. There are still a number who are yet to pay up; they will receive another reminder email from me. If you are one of those people please renew your membership as soon as possible. You can pay by on-line bank transfer or by cheque.

Please also let me know if your contact details have changed.

New members

This month we welcome Sarah Fisher as new senior, and Tom, Vincent & Daniel van Lierop and children members to the club.

Member benefits

If you have completed 2 overnight tramping trips with the club you can become a club member, with numerous benefits including:

- Discounted rates for overnight trips and training courses like snowcraft and first aid.
- [Federated Mountain Club](#) membership (including a free quarterly Bulletin and a Discount Card which offers significant reductions on a range of transport, clothing, accommodation, equipment (including personal locator beacons, DOC's Backcountry Hut Pass and Great Walk tickets and the Wilderness Magazine)
- Preferential bookings and rates at the [WTMC Lodge on Mt Ruapehu](#)
- [Paua Hut](#) access and free accommodation
- Annual club journal. Produced in a coffee-table format featuring stunning photos and great articles from our members
- Getting involved. As a member you have a voice to vote at our AGMs, help out with the running of the club including: lead trips, drive the club van, carry out various Wednesday night duties and join our committee.

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

Policy for use of WTMC Personal Locator Beacons on WTMC trips. March 2013

Background Information - How Search and Rescue is Co-ordinated in NZ

New Zealand has two agencies mandated to co-ordinate Search and Rescue. Maritime NZ via the Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCCNZ) and the NZ Police. Both agencies are empowered to take a decision on whether to rescue the person or group (or not) once they've assessed if the situation warrants it.

The NZ Police coordinate *Class I* operations, which are generally land-based operations where a personal locator beacon (PLB) is not involved. Back-country operations of this class are typically invoked by reports of overdue people, emergency calls to 111, requests for help via the various mountain radio services, and so on. These operations often don't start with an exact position, so can involve large search components. This may mean first learning about a person's plans, abilities and preparations. Search staff can spend much of their time attempting to predict the most likely places for a person or group to be found, and how urgently they may require assistance. *Class 1* operations are also likely to include coordination of wider resources and volunteers such as the trained search specialists of LandSAR. A search and rescue operation of this type could be over quickly, or could last for days or weeks.

WTMC trip planning systems are primarily designed to fit with *Class I* operations as you would expect for an organisation that specialises in running trips into the NZ backcountry. Trips are carefully organised so that if one is overdue we are positioned to efficiently communicate good information to the NZ Police and therefore expedite any search and rescue. Those of you familiar with our contact person system will know that if one of our trips is overdue the club contact person for that trip will contact the NZ Police and supply them with the trip plan (this generally includes information about where the group planned to go, any alternative plans, equipment, who is in the party and party contact people) and any other information they have. You will also be aware that WTMC is a strong supporter of the work of LandSAR and some WTMC members are LandSAR volunteers.

The RCCNZ coordinates *Class II* operations. These equate to any operation triggered by the activation of a PLB. Even PLB's owned by the Club which are clearly designed for land use, are technically marine devices, and so the RCCNZ's monitoring of PLBs is a sub-set of a greater responsibility to coordinate major maritime and aviation searches. For back-country search and rescue where a PLB is activated an exact position will usually be known. The RCCNZ's typical response, after calling the registered contact numbers for that PLB, is to send a response crew straight to the location where the beacon signal is coming from (usually by helicopter), assess the situation, and deal with it.

WTMC PLBs are registered with the RCCNZ using the Club's cell phone number. This number is diverted every week to whoever is the duty club contact person. If a Club PLB is activated the RCCNZ contacts the registered number and if they do not get hold of someone they ring the next number on the registration list, then the next. For WTMC the

people on this list at the moment are Jenny Beaumont who is a LandSAR volunteer, Amanda Wells our Chief Guide and Sharron Came, the President. For more information on locator beacons and the RCCNZ click on the link below. <http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/Recreational-Boating/Communications-equipment/EPIRBs.asp>

Role of the Personal Locator Beacon

WTMC owns three personal locator beacons (PLBs). These are kept in the Club gear lockers and are available for use on Club trips along with other Club gear. WTMC encourages trip leaders to give careful consideration to taking a PLB on your Club trip so you have the option of activating one in the event you are confronted with:

- a life-threatening situation; or
- a person in the party suffering injury or illness that incapacitates them to a degree that a helicopter rescue is required; or
- your party being significantly overdue and it being evident that a helicopter is flying overhead searching for you.

We expect all Club gear to be treated with care and to be properly looked after. PLBs are a particularly expensive piece of kit.

A PLB is not a substitute for thorough trip planning and execution. WTMC expects all trip leaders and Club trip participants to abide by the Club's policies and procedures relating to Club trips (these are available on the WTMC website www.wtmc.org.nz). Our policies and procedures are designed to keep trip participants safe and are consistent with the principles set out in the NZ Mountain Safety Council Outdoor Safety Code.

- Plan your trip
 - Seek local knowledge. Plan the route you will take and the amount of time you can reasonably expect it to take. (This is covered by the trip plan you receive from the trip leader when you sign up for a WTMC trip).
- Tell someone
 - Tell someone your plans and leave a date for when to raise the alarm if you haven't returned. (See Club procedures around club contact people).
- Be aware of the weather
 - NZ weather can be highly unpredictable. Check the forecast and expect weather changes.
- Know your limits
 - Challenge yourself within your physical limits and experience. (WTMC grades its trips to help you figure out which trip is suitable for you).
- Take sufficient supplies
 - Make sure you have enough food, equipment and emergency rations for the worst case scenario. Take an appropriate means of communication. In some circumstances cell phone coverage is available, for longer trips to remote areas hiring a mountain radio is an option.

Conditions of PLB hire for Club trips

- Generally the trip leader is responsible for any PLB activation decision and for looking after the PLB. For these reasons the hirer should be the trip leader in most circumstances (to be checked by the Gear Custodian or their agent).
- The trip leader must agree to abide by the PLB policy, (to be checked by the Gear Custodian or their agent).
- If the PLB is activated, damaged, destroyed, lost or stolen the trip leader is responsible for notifying the Gear Custodian and the Chief Guide or Assistant Chief Guide as soon as possible. If the trip leader is unable to do so another member of the party should do so.
- If the PLB is activated in a manner consistent with this policy, the Club will meet the cost of getting the PLB checked and any battery replacement.
- If the PLB is activated in a manner that contravenes this policy, the trip leader is responsible paying for the PLB to be checked and for the battery to be replaced if necessary.
- If the PLB is damaged, destroyed, lost or stolen, the Committee has the discretion to determine whether the trip leader shall be responsible for paying for the PLB to be replaced by an equivalent make/model.
- If the PLB is activated or damaged, destroyed, lost or stolen and the trip leader believes there are extenuating circumstances the trip leader may ask the Committee to use its discretion to waive the trip leader's obligations or impose them on another trip member.
- The trip leader must return the PLB on the date indicated to the Gear Custodian or their delegate. This will usually be the Wednesday evening following receipt of the PLB.
- If the PLB is not returned on the date specified the Committee reserves the right to charge the trip leader a late fee. This fee is to cover the cost of the Club having to hire a replacement PLB to cover trips until the PLB is returned.

Responsibility for PLB activation

- The trip leader is responsible for deciding whether to activate a PLB, unless they are incapacitated or injured.
- If the trip leader is incapacitated or injured or it is otherwise not possible for them to make the decision (for example they are no longer with the group), the leader's delegate should make the decision.

When to activate a PLB

- PLBs should be activated in life-threatening situations only. Being late out or minor injuries do not constitute a life-threatening situation in most circumstances. We have a club contact system in place to deal with instances when a trip is overdue.
- It would be acceptable to activate the PLB when a person in the party suffers injury or illness that immobilises them to a degree that a helicopter rescue is required or your party is overdue and it is evident that a helicopter is flying overhead searching for you.
- It would be acceptable to activate the PLB when there is an unreasonably high risk

to extract yourself from the situation and get out without incurring injury or death.

What to do when a PLB is activated

- Before activating a PLB consider whether a cell phone call to 111 is a practical option. If you are able to talk to the Police you will be able to provide context and receive advice.
- If you activate a PLB and are in cell phone coverage or have a mountain radio, the trip leader or their delegate should use these means to contact the Police and provide them with details of the situation. If you do not know the contact number use 111.
- If the PLB is activated, the trip leader (or delegate) must inform the club contact person when the group is safe, as soon as is realistically possible, and provide a written account of the situation to the Chief Guide.
- If you inadvertently activate the PLB, (or activate it and then decide it was not necessary to do so) DO NOT deactivate the PLB. If a signal from a PLB disappears, the RCCNZ must still launch a search, so it is better for them to locate a PLB that has been inadvertently activated even if it is a false alarm. You should check whether you have cell phone reception and if you do call the RCCNZ number for reporting accidental activations 0508 472 269 or if you cannot recall this number use 111.

Review of PLB policy

- This policy will be reviewed by the Committee after any PLB activation.

Policy for use of personal PLBs on a Club trips

Situations where a personal PLB is a substitute for a Club PLB

- A personal PLB can only be taken instead of a Club PLB if the trip leader agrees and the PLB owner
 - i) agrees to abide by the WTMC PLB policy; and
 - ii) advises the club contact person that the PLB is theirs and that it has been registered with RCCNZ; and
 - iii) advises the club contact person of the contact person's name and contact details (you will have nominated someone when you filled out your ownership paperwork) and
 - iv) ensures that the contact person for the personal PLB and the club contact person each have a copy of the trip plan and are advised when the trip is completed; and
 - v) the contact person for the personal PLB instructed to advise the club contact person asap if they are made aware that the PLB has been activated.
- If, the conditions above are satisfied and a personal PLB is activated in accordance with the WTMC PLB policy or damaged, destroyed, lost or stolen the PLB owner may request that the Committee, at its discretion, approve the Club meeting the cost of having the personal PLB checked and its battery replaced or replacement cost as appropriate.

Situations where a personal PLB is additional to a Club PLB

- If you are taking a personal PLB in addition to a Club PLB on a Club trip you must
 - ensure it is registered with RCCNZ; and
 - advise the trip leader so they can include this fact in the trip plan; and
 - advise the club contact person of the contact person's name and contact details; and
 - ensure that the contact person for the personal PLB has a copy of the trip plan and are advised when the trip is completed; and
 - ensure that your contact person is instructed to advise the club contact person asap if they are made aware that your PLB has been activated.
- If your PLB is activated in accordance with the WTMC PLB policy you may request that the Committee, at its discretion, approve the Club meeting the cost of having your personal PLB checked and its battery replaced.
- The Club will not meet the cost of replacing an additional PLB on Club trips in circumstances where it is damaged, destroyed, lost or stolen.

Policy for use of WTMC Personal Locator Beacons on Private Trips

The primary purpose of Club PLBs is for them to be available for taking on Club trips. Anyone using a Club PLB on a private trip must abide by the Club policy for use of its PLBs. You may not be comfortable with this in which case you have the option of investing in a PLB of your own or hiring a PLB from various sources including many local outdoor shops or Department of Conservation regional offices.

Conditions of hire

- Hirer must be an adult club member.
- Hirer must agree to abide by the PLB policy.
- PLB must not be required for Club trips during the proposed hire period.
- Hirer must get approval of their trip plan from the Chief Guide or Assistant Chief Guide BEFORE making a hire request to the Gear Custodian or their delegate.
- The Chief Guide or Assistant Chief Guide has the right to give approval subject to conditions, for example a mountain radio must be taken, or to reject the request.
- If the PLB is activated, lost, damaged, destroyed or stolen, regardless of whether it was activated in a manner consistent with this policy, the hirer is responsible for;
 - informing the Gear Custodian; and
 - paying for the PLB to be checked and for the battery to be replaced if necessary; and
 - paying for the PLB to be replaced by an equivalent make/model if necessary as determined by the Committee.

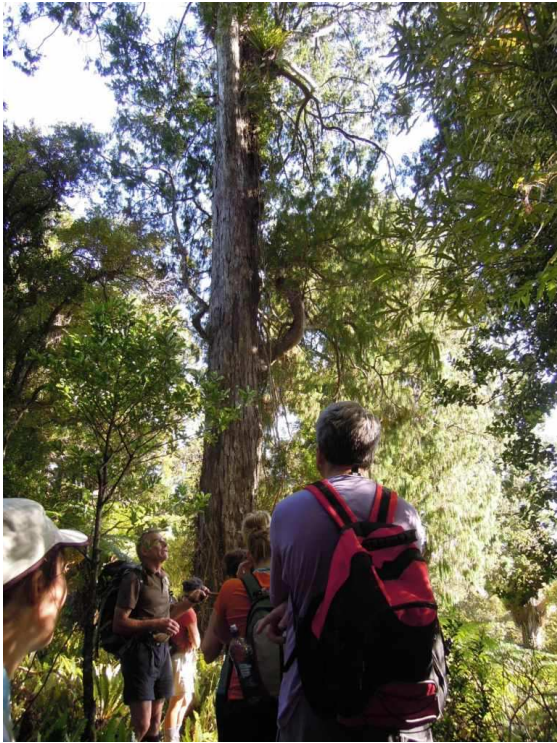
Trip reports

Wainuiomata daywalk through the water collection area

26 January 2013, Medium tramp, GWRC Wainui catchment (map #1)

Author: Simone Musin

Trampers: Sarah Fordham, Chris Bolton, Sharleen Grounds, Christine Latimer, Simone Musin, Helen Law & GWRC ranger Grant Timlin.



We had a group of 6 trampers for this daywalk with stunning sunshine weather; the day it was forecasted to be sunshine for another 10 days! We had 2 cars and met Grant the ranger at the main car park whereupon he let us in to the water collection area through a couple of gates and past the house he rents. We parked one of our cars by the Recreation Centre and took Grant's car and one other, through into the forest on the other side of the river to start our adventure.

Grant decided to take us up Drummond Ridge on the right side of the valley. His first talk was about the pest control program they run in what they call the "Island" area of the Wainuiomata Catchment. They have trap lines that go horizontally across the ridge which start with the letter 'A' and end with (what's the last letter of the alphabet?) 'Z'. So we knew that we would be halfway to lunch around 'K'. Grant shared lots of interesting information about the birds, flora and of course pest control.



One interesting thing he told us about was to do with the birds. Now don't punish me for not remembering the type of birds! But basically there is a breed of bird(1) that migrates over to the forest in summer time and pretty much takes over the nests of another bird(2) then lays its own eggs for bird(2) to raise... how sneaky, but also quite damaging to the population of bird(2). Wish I could remember the bird species though!

Next he showed us some of the possum traps and how they work. He

also talked about the trees and how our Pohutukawa tree is actually a species of the Eucalyptus trees which are in Australia mainly. Something new to me!

Then we got to our lunch point at the top of the valley with 360 degree views!!! After that we had a bit of a steep downhill back into the valley with a nice walk along the river back to our start point.

Trip to Roaring Stag

9-10 February 2013, Easy medium tramp, Flora / fauna appreciation, Tararua FP - Putara (map #2)

Author: Rachel Boschen. Images: Rachel and Marie Henderson.

Trampers: Illona Keenan (leader), Marie Smith, Marie Henderson, Rachel Boschen, Barbara Keenan, Richard Salisbury, David Barker and Emily Shrosbree.

After a slightly bleary-eyed 7.30am meet on the Saturday morning, a club minibus jam-packed with sleepy trampers left for the Tararuas in hot pursuit after Illona's car. As a tramping-virgin, I had been warned about the mysteriously misty, murky and muddy Tararuas and had sat through various club presentations picturing drizzly-looking forest and decidedly damp-looking trampers. But as we neared the drop-off point, I began to suspect foul play as surely these beautiful ranges with luscious vegetation, cloudless blue skies and balmy breezes couldn't be those same Tararuas?

After a scenic drive punctuated by tramper's snores there was a scramble for packs, second breakfasts and suntan cream. Then the mediums were off and the easy-mediums received their briefing from the nature guide Illona. Armed with identification sheets and our incredibly knowledgeable guide, we set off into the wild to learn about the Tararua flora and fauna.



Yes the sun really was shining through the canopy (left) whilst team tramp re-fuelled (right). Can

you identify the flora and fauna in these pictures? If not, maybe you need to go on a flora and fauna tramp...

Illona introduced the flora and fauna by clever word-plays and tactile investigation. We discovered that Rimu fronds are distinctly stroke-able but that some

are more stroke-able than others and if the fronds are too high to stroke, that Rimu can be distinguished by the contour-like patterns of its bark. We learnt that Rata is a hugga, starting life as a seed deposited in the crux of a lofty branch and letting down exploratory Rapunzel-like roots to the forest floor, giving the Rata trunk its distinctly twisted shape. We now know that Mānuka is mean, with spiky leaves and honey-pie-shaped pods, whilst Kānuka is kind with stroke-able leaves (although not as stroke-able as Rimu). We were told that some ferns wear skirts, some have silver linings and others fuel the whole chicken-and-egg debate. We debated whether the kidney fern really does look like a kidney (no one was prepared to use a knife to find out) and decided that the pepper tree did indeed taste peppery.

So much for the green stuff – the fauna was much more elusive and in being able to run/fly/swim away was more challenging to gain an introduction too. But we learnt to identify the song of the grey warbler and had two juvenile male tomtits join us for a snack break (just to clarify we were eating scroggin, not the tomtits). The fan tails and silvereyes needed no cryptic word-plays to stick in the memory. We also saw some very funky black and red crane flies and New Zealand's largest dragon fly species.

The Saturday tramp was fairly leisurely with plenty of snack breaks and pauses for pearls of flora and fauna wisdom. Once we made it to Roaring Stag Lodge (or hut, as would be a more appropriate name) we baggsied bunks and put up flies. Someone put the billy on and we all had hot drinks whilst contemplating the next move. A quartet of brave explorers went swimming in the slightly-too-cold-to-be-refreshing stream and proceeded to conduct a scientific study on the feeding preferences of local biting bugs. The official results from this study are pending but preliminary investigations indicate said bugs prefer Brits to Kiwis and within the Brit category preferentially feed on brunettes over blondes. Who said blondes had all the fun? Following the feeding experiment the majority of the party set off to explore for more flora and fauna just over the stream from the hut. Whilst negotiating the swing bridge I gained a twisted knee to add to my insect bites but continued regardless in search of flora and fauna.



The largest dragon fly species in NZ investigates my sock-stick (left) and the swing bridge of doom that claimed my knee as its victim (right).

As the shadows claimed the forest around the hut and closed in on the hut clearing, team tramp co-ordinated to create the gourmet three-course group meal. Starter: a selection of local cheeses with rice crackers. Mains: quinoa with feta, chick peas, eggplant, courgette, peppers, nuts, garlic and onions. Dessert: yummy short bread biscuits. Dinner entertainment: studying the calls of forest birds via Illona's ipod. Once the washing up was done, we set off for a night-time expedition in search of the nocturnal forest and stream fauna armed with head torches and binoculars. Intrepid Illona found crayfish and an unidentified spotted river fish and team tramp searched for eye-shine using their head torches and binoculars. The most common finds were spiders, including some freaky scorpion-imitating spiders although I reckon I won the eye-shine competition with the big red eyes of a possum lurking near the long drop. Said possum then proceeded to serenade Illona in the wee-hours as she cursed illegal Australian immigrants under her fly.



Home-sweet-home as spied from over the dreaded wing bridge (top left), team tramp preparing a gourmet dinner (top right) and a captured crayfish (bottom left).

Following a sleep punctuated by light snoring, a civilised lay in and leisurely breakfast, the next morning saw a shift in team tramp dynamics.

Fortunately the bite cream eased the itchiness from the previous night's scientific investigation but even the morphine-rich tramadol couldn't completely take away the pain of my twisted knee. So my very

generous team mates took on various items from my pack to lighten my load and Illona made me a sock stick to help me negotiate the trail home. Feeling a bit like Gandalf, but slightly less sprightly, I set off on an unexpectedly slow journey home. It soon became clear my load needed further lightening so I took Marie's pack (very light) and Marie took mine (not so light). I also gained another stick so I could feel less like Gandalf and more like a cross country skier, but significantly less sprightly. At lunch stop, Marie's pack was confiscated by Illona the heroine, who carried both packs on her back as lightly as if they were match boxes, whilst I scrambled pack-less down the track. As the majority of team tramp marched on, the rear was brought up by Marie, Illona and I, whilst I entertained my chaperones with strange morphine-fuelled tales. With the aid of my trusty sticks and some very elegant bum-shuffling on the steep bits, I made it back to the club van. The packs and people were loaded and Illona chauffeured me home with the odd stop to collect frozen peas.

So, as my virgin-tramp, it really was an adventure! Not only did I learn about NZ flora and fauna (which being a Brit I previously knew nothing about) but I also learnt one of the most important tramping lessons – teamwork. Without the help of team tramp I would have been stuck at Roaring Stag being bitten alive by bugs for a very long time.... So thanks team for helping me home. I would strongly recommend an Illona-guided flora and fauna tramp to really appreciate the lush forest that so many just stomp on by. When my knee has finished its current hissy-fit, I will be throwing the sticks aside and taking up my pack again, so watch out for the limping, bug-bitten brunette Brit! I'll be back...



Illona the heroine with her double pack (left) and me with my trusty sticks at the end of the adventure (right).

Jumbo-Holdsworth run

25-27 January, Fit run, Tararua FP (map #3)

Author: Sharron Came

Runners: Gareth Morton (trip leader), Eddie Hussey, Dmitry Alkhimov, David Heffernan and Sharron Came

When Gareth asked me for the sixth time “have you committed to the Jumbo-Holdsworth?” I weighed up the pros and cons for the sixth time. Pros – no time left to do any training, have run the route before and enjoyed it, unlikely to be snow this time. Cons – have not done any training, unlikely to be snow this time, have run it before so no excuse for getting lost. “Ok I’m in” I replied.

With Gareth in charge I knew things would run with military precision, it would just be a question of which military. We left the railway station precisely 30 minutes behind schedule. We arrived in the Wairarapa to discover that Eddie’s running shorts were in Wellington. No matter, it being David’s first ever trail running event he had brought along two of everything. One pair of running shorts was duly transferred from David to Eddie. David takes the two of everything principle very seriously. After his kebab he went in search of fish and trips. Gareth was so impressed he let him eat them in his car.

The Jumbo-Holdsworth starts at 8am so if you aren’t local it makes sense to drive over the night before and camp. We arrived at the Holdsworth camping ground as it was filling up with tents, caravans, dogs and bonfires. Dmitry and I both had standard tunnel tents, the kind that a couple of people and take a couple of minutes to pitch. You may be familiar with them. People take them tramping. After we’d pitched our tents I thought Dmitry would

busy himself adding smoke to the existing fires but we were both distracted by events unfurling in front of us.

With a moderate degree of fanfare David unveiled a borrowed tent big enough to house the entire WTMC membership. Working alone he was able to erect it in under 2 hours. Eddie had a similar model in a different colour. Erection time = 1.5 hours. Eddie had obviously done this before. "Lucky this camping ground is enormous" I remarked to Dmitry as we munched chocolate chip biscuits while watching, Gareth as he grappled with his monstrosity complete with a king size flax mat that took pride of place outside his backdoor. We thought it prudent not to attempt to time his erection.

Gareth woke us at 6am so we would have time to eat our breakfast before race registration. Breakfast passed without incident if you don't count the grass fire that started when the cooker tipped over. Some quick thinking by David meant that the Rural Fire Service got a lie in.

The waiting round before a race starts is often the most stressful time. Eddie retreated into his tent. Dmitry paced. Gareth sunbathed on his flax mat. David asked for advice. Gareth's response cut to the heart of the matter. "Whatever you do don't come last". Dmitry stopped pacing and smiled as the rest of us watched the colour drain from David's face.

8am and we're off. Bit of a false beginning as there is a swing bridge close to the start which means queuing to get across, only after that does the race begin in earnest. This year we had the choice of doing the race clockwise or anti-clockwise. We, along with the vast majority of competitors elected to run the race clockwise. The first section is an easy amble along the mostly flat Atiwhakatu track then you head up the Rain Guage track to Jumbo Hut (1105m). The Rain Guage is steep but not particularly long. The trick is not to try and run up but to tramp as quickly as you can checking your altimeter from time to time for motivation while staying on the route. Some competitors found the last bit tricky.

From Jumbo Hut we were in sunshine but fortunately there was a bit of a breeze making running conditions ideal. We headed across the tops to the summit of Jumbo (1405m), then south to the Mt Holdsworth trig (1470m). As the Tararuas were experiencing their first summer in living memory conditions were unusually dry. Even the bits that are effectively a bog were not very wet if you picked your line with care, (I didn't). The views were special - coast in both directions and wave after hilly wave of tanned tussocks shimmering in the breeze. There was plenty of action to keep your mind off your physical outlay as you simultaneously greeted and jumped out of the way of the runners coming in the other direction.

From the trig I carefully descended to Powell Hut (1160m). Jet plane lollies were on offer here but I elected to push on thinking I'd make up some time. This turned out to be a false economy as I promptly fell over. From Powell it is all downhill which makes for a reasonably pleasant finish. I enjoyed the descent as we were back in the shade of the bush and having not gone too fast in the beginning I had plenty of energy left. I caught up to another bloke and we took turns pacing each other in an effort to lift our spirits and speed.

I hadn't seen the rest of the team since the swing bridge so I was pleased to see them at the finish line happy, healthy, personal bests all round and seemingly keen to do other events. Runner's highs all round. We stuck around for the race barbecue lunch and prize giving. The race was won by a young English lad over here on holiday in an impressive time of 2.22.45. Talking to him afterwards he said he'd enjoyed the experience although his mates had been dispatched on a mercy mission into town in search of beer. He had won quite a bit of wine but preferred beer. Eddie has far more luck picking up a six pack of boutique beer as a spot prize. Dmitry won a sponsors t-shirt and I went home with a drink bottle which I couldn't give away.

This family friendly community event is chilled out and fun. There are loads of spot prizes and plenty for spectators and supporters to do while waiting for the race to finish. If we'd had any supporters with us we would definitely have put them to work striking the larger tents. As the main run is only 24kms it only takes up a morning leaving you with time to explore other aspects of life in the Wairarapa if you want. I'd recommend it as a great day out for any aspiring trail runner. What did I learn from the experience? Doing the race clockwise is easier than anti-clockwise, it is uncool and surprisingly painful to fall over outside Powell Hut and most importantly, tent size matters.



Nelson mountain biking

19-21 January 2013, Medium mountain bike, Nelson (map #4)

Maungatapu Saddle to Pelorus and back and the Dun Mt loop.

Author: Andrew Bichan

Trampers: Andrew Bichan (leader), Mike Gilbert, Julie Williams, Thomas Ekholm. (Photos by Mike Gilbert and Julie Williams)

Having attended the obligatory two club tramps before becoming a member, and a trip leading session, it was appropriate to contribute in a small way by volunteering to lead a trip. Encouraged by my brother in-law Mike and the fact that a number of other trips were planned around Nelson at the same time, this looked like a good place to start.

In the end two Nelson trips went ahead: this one, and a tubing trip down the Pelorus River. Mike and I were the only confirmed MTB starters until the late entry of one of Mike's work colleagues, Julie, and partner Thomas for the final day of riding. Although the trip involved some complicated logistics and Christmas delays, with a little bit of guidance from other club members, leading was not at all daunting.

Wellington to Nelson

After meeting at the railway station and wrestling bikes onto the van we join the queue for a smooth Cook Strait crossing. It's after 11pm when we arrive at Pelorus and put phase one of our plan into action. Maungatapu road is hard left after the bridge and we find a likely spot after about 2.5km to hide our stash bags, containing food and camping gear for Saturday night, in a place we fondly hope will not be visible in daylight.



WTMC members Hans Wiskerke and Mika Verheul have very kindly opened their brand-new home in The Brook (Nelson) to us. We start by sadly abusing their hospitality; arriving at midnight there's time for a quick round of hellos and we let them go to bed while we take the tubers to the Hackett Stream road end. It's a fair hike and we leave them in the dark pitching tents; they can take their story up from there. A bit after 2am we let ourselves quietly into H&M's house and crawl into our sleeping bags.

Maungatapu Saddle to Pelorus

Saturday morning starts cool with a high overcast; a good day for biking. The Maungatapu Saddle is a well-known route with some history, it features in the Kiwi Brevet, and there are plenty of blogs that mention it.

We pick up the trail at Sharland Hill on Brook St a bit after 10am. Old Codgers Track and a gravel road take us up to Tantragee Saddle (190m) before a brief plummet into Maitai Valley. Almost immediately we hit a road closed sign and are diverted about 70m up a steep track to follow the city water main for about 3km as it sidles up the valley. The road is apparently being sequentially ripped up to lay a new main in the valley floor.



A left at the next intersection takes us up a steepish hill to the Maitai Reservoir caretaker's house (240m). At the top the Maungatapu Road is easily identified by various road closed signs (internet information was quite clear the road was closed only for 4WDs). On the topo map this is the point where you depart from the marked gravel roads.

We drop to the Maitai Reservoir then traverse up and down above the east side on a 4WD track that gets gradually rougher. Leaving the reservoir behind there's a short rocky climb through a gorge to a bridge over Maitai River North Branch (240m again). We stop for a bite and to fill water bottles. The overcast has cleared and the day is hot.

Looking at the map with trampers eyes, the contours are quite a way apart so it should be an easy climb on a flat spur between two streams. Wrong. Steep on foot is a lot steeper on a bike and you can't use your hands. The climb steepens and the periods where we have to push become more frequent until there is far more pushing than riding.

The beech canopy is open letting the sun pour down but provides few view spots until about 560m where a pylon clearing opens a window across Tasman Bay. Nelson is hidden below us, and above are the bare slopes of Mt Dun (1129m) and the steep bushed Little Twin (1143m) looking down on the Maitai catchment. The wind has picked up and we linger to enjoy the view, cool down and avoid pushing bikes up hot hills for a few more minutes.



It is literally a last push to the top (750m) around 3pm for a wider view of Tasman Bay in the west and across ranks of hills towards Picton in the east. The views are good and rata is flowering spectacularly but still, it is not a pretty place. Pylons march through and vehicle tracks and erosion have left a bit of a wasteland in the saddle. We take a few record shots before turning to what we have been anticipating: the descent.

The down side is anything but. It is all ride-able and as fast as you like. A little rocky at the top, it is still a better surface than the Nelson side. Pausing occasionally to regroup we hang on down the first steep, rocky sections then cruise at a good pace the rest of the way as it sidles down the Heringa Stream catchment.

Shortly before the exit onto Maungatapu Road, the Pelorus River comes briefly into view. It is an improbable light blue/green, looking for all the world to be glacially fed (which it ain't).

The ride feels like it is over but there is a small matter of 12 or 15 km to go; mostly gravel road climbing and dropping around the tributaries of the Pelorus. However, it is good riding and shortly after hitting the seal we spot the paddock where our stash hopefully lies unmolested. Mike has chosen well; the packs are indeed invisible from the road. We fish them out and ride the last few kilometres arriving around 6 hours after leaving.

Cold drinks and ice creams are the first order of the day. The café has a good selection of food and excellent sized ice creams. Somehow dehy doesn't appeal and it's lasagne and chips for an early tea (the café shuts at 5.30).

I've stopped many times at Pelorus and occasionally visited the café but was completely unaware of the delightful camping site a couple of hundred meters away. We pay our \$12 each and follow the driveway which breaks abruptly from the trees onto a manicured lawn. Hemmed around by forest it positively nestles next to the river which has, very conveniently, cut a rocky channel in front of the dining room. The building is dwarfed by a stand of rimu which merge into the deck.



The facilities are new and clean and the showers are hot. We bask in the evening sun to the sound of cicadas and a lone warbler before turning in early, to make up for last night. We don't wait up to see if we can spot the long tail bats for which the area is known. The population seems to have survived due to roosting spots in the tall rimus, above easy predator access, with the local street lights attracting a smorgasbord of insects.

Pelorus to Nelson

In the morning we drop our packs at the office to pick up on Monday and a little before 9am start to retrace our steps.

We keep company for much of the return trip with a Californian towing a trailer. It would have weighed 30Kgs at least, yet he rides and pushes it to the top in the heat. And he had dragged the thing through the Queen Charlotte track over the past two days.

We leave the Pelorus River, which is a darker green today, and start the climb. There is less bush cover this side so it can be brutally hot on a sunny day; the few shady stream gullies are very welcome. It is ride-able to Murderers Rock (4.3km from the top) where it becomes steeper and rockier. If you are strong and bloody minded enough it is ride-able to the top (more so than the Nelson side).

Murderers' Rock bears a mention; in 1866 the Burgess gang killed and robbed a lone prospector, then a party of four the next day. They were picked up in Nelson within a week, whilst spending their gains. With the help of one turning Queen's evidence, the other three were hanged for their efforts. The rock is easily missed; on a bend 4.3Km from the top, just before a short drop to cross Kohuru Creek. It is marked with a vandalised plaque on a white post (left side of track going up).

We are at the top by 12 but some of us have already demolished their water. Fortunately we know that the lunch stream from yesterday will be less than 20 minutes downhill from the top.

The descent is steep, loose and exciting. The technique is to carry as much speed as you are comfortable with, and make sure the front and back wheels progress in the right order. If you start getting in trouble; speed up.

At the lunch spot we sit in the shade to wait for the Californian. He arrives, after having to walk down some of the steep bits, to discover that what had been a delightfully gurgling stream with clear fresh pools has disappeared completely overnight. We promise that there definitely is water a little further on and set off down what proves to be, although short, the most hairy section yet.

At the bottom we resist the urge to swim in Nelson's water supply and sweat over the lumps, dips and the final rise to the caretaker's house for a rest under a tree looking up at the Bryant Range.

For the final ride into Nelson we follow the single track on the true left of the Maitai river. This is a very pleasant meander passing deep swimming holes full of hot Nelsonians.

Back in Nelson before 3pm, the bikes dangle from the verandah while we cool down and have a bite at the Sprig and Fern.

That afternoon it is Hans & Mika's housewarming. When we turn up, festivities are in full swing, as friends, neighbours, and a sprinkling of WTMCCers are chatting and enjoying the sun. Lindsay Fletcher, and Steve & Jenny have come down for the event. The promised Dutch hospitality lives up to its reputation with plenty of food including Han's excellent [Gember Kruidkoek](#) spice cake, and good conversation. The trampers are of course the last to leave.

Tararua Northern Crossing

11-13 January 2013, Fit tramp, Tararua FP (map #5)

Author: David Heffernan

Trampers: WeiMin Ren, Rob Edward, David Heffernan (leader)

As we were doing a crossing we had a few transport logistics issues. We left Wellington Station on the 5:30pm train bound for Masterton, a lovely scenic ride, with the goal getting a pickup from the MF Blackwater-Makaretu group on the Sunday afternoon. We arrived in Masterton a bit hungry and in no real hurry, so had a sit-down feed at a great little Chinese restaurant, a bit of a luxury for a pre-tramp Friday night dinner.

We caught a taxi in to Pines, which cost us about \$60 (not too bad split three ways) and walked in to Mitre Flats arriving to a half-full hut at about 12:00am.



Pre-trip at the Pines. Overfed and optimistic.
(Photo c/- WeiMin)

We made a fairly quick getaway the next morning, and headed straight up Mitre. Sadly the winds started picking up from near the bushline at about 900m, and we were getting blown off our feet more or less constantly at the ridgeline at about 1100m, so after a quick team talk we made the difficult decision to turn around. Sometimes in situations like these the decision will make itself, but unfortunately this wasn't one of them. The open tops weren't completely impassable, and if we desperately had to get to Tarn Ridge Hut for some reason or other then we could have probably made it, but it would have been a miserable day's crawl over the tops to Arete or Te Matawai. As we turned around we couldn't shake the feeling that we had technically just piked out. Sad to have the Tararua weather get the best of us yet again.

As we didn't really have anywhere to go -- and didn't have any transport either way -- we decided to head for Kaitoke, and after a relaxed lunch back at Mitre Flats Hut we made Totara Flats on the Saturday night in about 13h. We passed a busload of people doing the

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Holdsworth -> Jumbo -> Atiwhakatu loop and they were all looking pretty sad and miserable, and they only would have been exposed to the wind on the tops for an hour or two, so that reinforced for us that bailing out was probably the right call.



Rob and WeiMin in front of the slip south of Totara Flats.
(Photo c/- WeiMin)

After a chicken satay noodle dinner we had an early night, and a relaxed start on the Sunday. But all three of us were struggling a bit on the uphill, so at the turnoff for Cone Ridge we instead decided to pop out to Waiohine carpark. We had a feed, and were about to start walking towards Carterton when we got offered a ride, and then after another feed offered a return to Wellington, so everything worked out well in the end. We even managed to get a call in to the MF group cancelling our ride home, after keeping them waiting for us for only an hour or so over a coffee, so a good result all around.

Was a good weekend, and we all agreed we should bump the Northern Crossing trip up the spring trip schedule so we can have another shot at it.

To PLB or not to PLB, that is the question?

Author: Jenny Cossey

As I now hold double (dubious) honour of setting off the first WTMC beacon rescue, and the first time I have asked others to get me out of a tricky situation, I have been contemplating the necessity, or otherwise, of carrying a PLB.

It is only in the last few years I have started to carry a beacon when undertaking long solo trips into the hills. Partly as my trips have become longer into remoter areas of NZ, and partially as I feel obliged to carry one. According to *Wilderness* (Feb 2013 p11) there were 6000 more registered PLB's in NZ in 2013 than in 2012. Currently there are 33,500 locator beacons in NZ, of which, only 27,700 are registered.

The double edge sword of carrying a PLB gives me more confidence to go solo into remote areas but has also increases the 'concern from others' in this age of technology. If I am not out by the due date, then I must need help and my intentions person feels they must do something. In days of old, if there was heavy rain, people assumed you would be late out of the hills, and give you grace of a few days watching the river level drop before thinking you might actually need some help getting home again. Nowadays if you are not out by the date on your intention sheet, they act a bit quicker. Even if SAR waits for 24 hours after your intended intention form return time has passed, people are more quickly asking for help.

This summer has seen an ever increasing number of SAR call outs from activated PLBs and some very interesting report comments in the press. The search and rescue of a local runner in the Tararua's, who admitted to the interviewing TV journalist that he would do things differently next time in regard to leaving intentions, carrying survival gear and adequate clothing. The reporter questioning that everyone "should" carry a PLB. A written quote in The Dompst (Feb 14pA3) for a different call out, quotes a SAR personal "that they were disappointed we were not alerted sooner" by a hunter who's partner was late coming back from the bush near Turangi. The hunter used the old school style system of waiting 24 hours before calling for help in case the women returned on his own. The 62 year old women spend three nights out in the bush before being found. The West Coast man who was charged for wasting SAR personal time and the cost of a helicopter, as he feared being late for a meeting and asked to be pulled out for the hills by activating his beacon, when he was not in a dangerous or injured situation.

Included in the public announcements of beacon activation this summer was my activated beacon; one line of speech in a TV3 broadcast while the search for the Tararua runner was happening. A ex WTMC member (currently a DOC employee at Makaraoa) announced my claim to fame when I met up with him a week after I had activated my beacon. The TV clip, filmed at the Rescue Coordination Centre just north of Wellington, showed a reporter (in front of a large map of the Landsborough with my red beacon shining red to indicate my location), talking to a rescue centre employee who announced that I was a "women trapped by rising water in the Landsdown River in Mt Cook National Park". At which point I

was grateful that the beacon was in the right place as I was actually in the Landsborough River in Aspiring National Park!

My use of the beacon in the Landsborough was an ethical decision due to an incident 18 months prior when on another eight day solo trip from the Wangapeka track to Golden Bay over Easter 2011. I had left intentions with a highly experienced mountain friend who was also given my seven days weather forecast, my intended route from the Wangapeka along the top of the ranges (Patriarch via Gomorrah and Sodom to Mt Arthurs), my list of provisions ie map, compass, GPS, tent, fuel, how much food I was carrying, etc. I did not take a PLB.

The Kahurangi traverse was a planned six day trip, I took food for 8 days and said not to worry until the 9th day when I would run out of food. The trip went well and as I crossed Mount Arthur I asked a passing family to text a message out of my current location saying that due to the fine weather I would now continue to Golden Bay via Asbestos Cottage and not leave the park via Flora Saddle and hitch as my early intentions stated. My phone was on the Two degrees network and although DOC at Motuaka said there was coverage along the range, I never had any. There were four bars of reception for Telcom on the stranger's phone, and I double checked the number on the phone it was sent from. Hence I felt happy my contact person would receive it and know where I was. I also asked that the text be resent again later in the day, which they said they would follow through with.

On my 9th morning I left Asbestos Cottage, signed out in the DOC intention book where the track met the Cobb Road, and hitched to Golden Bay (still no Two Degree coverage) and went rock climbing at Paynes for three days. Un-be known to me, the stranger's text message did not get through. On day nine, my contact waited two hours after I said to call help and at 11am informed Nelson Police, who were then very quick at organised a search team for me. Luckily for them a quick thinking member saw my name in the end of road DOC intentions book where the Asbestos Hut track enters the Cobb Road and a full search and Iroquois helicopter were not needed. I heard about this after my phone came back into Two Degree coverage as I crossed eastwards over Takaha Hill into the Nelson area and my intentions person messages and call filled me in. The moral of the story, always phone until you talk to a real person and do not assume text messages are received. Or change your network provider.

Hence on my six to eight day Landsborough trip 20 months later, I borrowed the WTMC PLB so that if the need arose, only a rescue, not a more expensive search and rescue operation, would be needed if things went to custard. In the previous two years I had hired a PLB from DOC at Makarao when I had undertaken solo tips over Armstrong into the Makarao, Hunter Valleys and back via Cameron Creek. The year prior, when I tramped the lower Landsborough from Haast Pass to Fraser Hut, over Brodrick Pass, to the Huxley and north to Twizel.

In 2012 I wanted to red line the Karangarua Valley, Mt Howitt, The Gladiator, Maori Glacier and the headwaters of the Landsborough to visit Townsend Glacier as the latter is a family name. I estimated it would be a six day trip, took extra take food for two wet weather days, which I knew I could stretch to 9 1/2 days and fuel for fuel for eight hot evening meals (one

MSR bottle of 750ml is all I need). A GPS, four topo maps, compass, two route guides, updates about track conditions from DOC Makarora, Wanaka and Franz Joseph and a seven day forecast that only showed pink on two separate afternoons.

I started on Christmas Day and in warm, humid conditions that continued for three days, safely tramping east over the mountain peaks and glaciers of the Hooker Range into the Landsborough. The fourth day's rain was heavier than forecasted and I decided on a rest day below Townsend Glacier where I enjoyed the glaciers and scenery. The following day it was easy downstream travel and a blue water crossing of Zora Canyon. I safely crossed all the streams mentioned in the guide that could be problematic. The rain continued all day and I picked up the orange waratah possum trail south of Hind Flat and anticipated being near the hut in Tio Tio Flats for the night. Alas I was bluffed 2km from the hut at 7pm. As the bluff was steep and the river had risen during the day, the waratahs were now in an island away from the bluff edge, and the steep bluff was covered in rotten wood, not a desirable climbing option at the end of a long days tramping. As I tried to sidle around the bluff base, my leki pole slide off my wrist and I made the call to stop before I made a mistake, even though there was only 200m more of difficult bluff to sidle. Bad decisions are often made when tired at the end of the day. I back tracked to camp under sheltering trees on slightly higher ground to cook a hot dinner in a safe, sheltered spot and pondered my options.

That night the rain steadily increased and in the morning the Landsborough was higher. Where I had attempted to sidle the bluff the night before was now below the water line. I knew I could not retreat my steps upstream as Zora Canyon would have become impassable and my bolt hole downstream to Toe Toes's hut with a radio to charter a plane out on the grass runway, was now not an option. I knew if I waited more than a couple of days for the water level to fall I would be passed my intended return date. My gut feeling was the forecast had changed. I have been in Fiordland where heavy rain has occurred and this was beginning to feel like heavy rain. The Landsborough was now going to take a few days to go down as boiling grey.

I decided to sleep on the matter and make a decision in the morning. A 9am on New Year's Day I set off the beacon, a civilized time as many would have been partying to the early hours to welcome in the New Year and would not have appreciated a late night or an early morning call out. A three hour highly impressive thunderstorm started. I thought no one would come out in such weather and settled into sleeping bag, in my near dry tent with my three dry merino wool jumpers as my pillow to have a pit day reading a book. 3 ½ hours later a helicopter arrive, much quicker than anticipated. The crew announced it was touch and go whether they could have got to me that day as 500mm of rain were forecasted in the next 48 hours. I asked when the heavy rain warning was announced. Three days ago, was the reply. It was now day six of my trip and my gut feeling had been right, the forecast had dramatically changed.

The SAR policewoman in Wanaka police station was happy with me, even though I felt guilty as asked to be pulled out of the hills when I was not injured or in immediate danger. The reply was that I had all the right gear, left intentions that I had stuck to, done my homework before I went, had the right gear, spare food and fuel and done everything right.

The weather had taken an unpredicted turn which was bad luck and that I had wisely got help out before the situation had turned sour.

After many hours of contemplation about the ethics of being pulled out in a developing situation, which only in hindsight, when the road was washed out and rivers ran high for days, did I become at peace with myself. Five days later another heavy rain deluge closed the Haast road to Makarora due to a wash out. Even I had tramped as anticipated on my intentions form, I would not have been able to hitch back into cell phone coverage to let my intentions person know I was safe with so many streams to cross and then a 30km road walk due to the landslip. Too many people die trying to cross flooded rivers.

What would I have done differently? May be come down the east side not the west side of the river. But I could easily have been caught out on that side as well with the change in the forecast. Carry a radio on solo trips? Far too heavy. Satellite phone? My budget does not reach that far. Spot checker? No thanks would be like a home detention strap, I go to get away from the world not for everyone to be voyager on my activities. Have a beacon with a range of outgoing messages? **Yes.** If someone knows the name of a PLB that admits a few message options ie safe but not moving, rescue me now as hurt, etc I would buy one if not too expensive. Or hire such beacons from WTMC and other PLB hirers. Two and a half weeks later, with a seven day forecast of no rain, I did another five day solo trip into the mountains with a friends' PLB. I cycled from Tekapo to Lillybank where I left my bike. Tramped up the Godley Valley and Butcher Glacier, crossed Twilight Col into the Haverlock Valley. Tramped up Carey's Stream into Tom's Stream, to Macaulay Hut and back to Lillybank for a bike ride to Tekapo. I was glad I had a PLB with me, and even happier I did not need to use it.

Other bits and bobs

Goal Setter celebration dinner

Each year the Port Nicholson Rotary Club supports the work of a variety of organisations and causes. One of the highlights of the club's year is the Goal Setter Celebration Dinner to recognise high achieving students who have overcome significant hurdles in pursuit of their goals, and in making a difference for others.

This year, speaking at the event about overcoming obstacles will be Pem Sherpa, a mountain guide in Nepal, who has climbed Mt. Everest twice, and proceeds from the event will go towards the repair of Chyangba Village Junior High School in Nepal. In recognition of the topic of the evening, the Club would like to invite you and your members to participate in this Celebration Dinner which this year is to be held at the Intercontinental Hotel on 13 March.

There will also be musical entertainment at the dinner which will be provided by opera singer Tom Atkins, a student of the New Zealand Music School who in 2003 was chosen to sing as the treble soloist with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra for the world premiere of The Lord of the Rings Symphony in Wellington.

Tickets for the event are \$80 per person, with the proceeds going to fund awards for other tertiary students in subsequent years, and to contribute to the repair of Chyangba Village school in Nepal.

If you would like to buy ticket(s) for this event email: Marc Rands:
rand962@btinternet.com

And a little bit of history

With lots of discussion around the use of PLBs and the WTMC PLB policy, what more appropriate article could I publish than one of rescue ...

HOLDSWORTH SEARCH.

December 10/12th.

With much ado at Club on the Thursday night a reasonable sort of team was sorted out consisting of four sub-parties and most of the folk were at the T.T.C. rooms at the appointed hour on the following night. Everyone piled in to the Army truck and, plus one or two extras, but with a little space reserved, away we went. Half a dozen more were collected en route through the Hutt Valley (One chap missed out - and even Mountain Man wasn't walking to Masterton) and we headed for Bannister at a steady 30m.p.h. Stan's party had to set off for Mountain House almost straight away while after about half an hour we had to send Athol along after them. He liked Bannister so much he wanted to stay. Eventually, after breaking up one sub-party we were instructed to bed down somewhere near at hand.

The following day two parties, about 12, plus odds and sods packed into a 15cwt. van and rode round to Mangatariri from where they set off for their respective areas, one the area in Block 37 from stream to ridge, the other, the Western face of Carrington Ridge. The day passed quickly with the ground being scoured with visual contact between searchers. However after meeting a large party, we headed back down stream to base, there to discover that we had made a mistake which, along with other parties, proved to be one of the major hold-ups of the search, inability to locate the correct area.

Sunday was completely re-organised with a re-shuffle of sub-party areas. Footprints were the main clue and served to narrow down the possible location of the girl. At about

- 10 -

3 o'clock in the afternoon aircraft flew over and this was the signal that the search was over. Only a few minutes from Bannister at this time, we hastened our stride and on reaching the motor camp met a policeman handing out bottles of refreshment. Taking advantage of this singular opportunity we sat down in the shade and awaited developments.

After leaving Bannister on Friday night Stan's party were based at Mountain House and on Saturday covered the East face of Pig Flat and on Sunday, together with a Paua party, searched along the Carrington Ridge. Bill's party found the girl, and, excepting two, remained at Mangatariri to assist in the following day's task of carrying, returning to town that day.

This search was the largest ever organised in New Zealand's history with some 400 people taking part in the week's searching. Many faults were discovered, but improvements can only be made when they are discovered, and some recommendations are to be made to the National Search and Rescue Organisation. No praise can be given to this Club. We were a very small section in a large organisation. Plenty worked harder and longer than any of our parties. In spite of the fact we were unable to save life, it is gratifying to know that there is still a spirit of co-operation prevailing among clubs and club members which is particularly brought to the fore in a case of emergency such as this was. The weekend was almost completely successful in this sphere.

The following took part:- Bill Rice (Party Leader), Dave Lowe, Mel Manning, Mike Reddington, Tom Lawton, Cyril Jacquard, Stan Kinder (Party Leader), Den Collings, Keith Durrant, K. Ancell, Roger Reddington, Athol Geddes, John Robinson, Harry Dixon, Titch Graham, Dick Archer, Trev Walsh, B. Toomath (C.T.C.) and Graeme Hall (Party Leader).

G.H.

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Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 29 March 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.