



# The Mouth 'n' Ear

## Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

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

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*Photo: Amanda Wells*

**What type of bird is this little guy who popped in for a visit?**

A **chocolate bar** to the first person who emails [newsletter@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@wtmc.org.nz) with the correct answer. To be collected at WTMC Wednesday club night.

**Been somewhere in the NZ bush? Taken a great photo? Want to see it featured on the front cover of the newsletter? Send it to [newsletter@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@wtmc.org.nz).**

## In this Issue

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### Committee Reports

The Nature of Things, Sharron Came, President .....	2
Track Talk, Mike Phethean, Chief Guide .....	4
Over a cuppa, Sue Walsh, Social Convenor .....	5
Membership Update, Helen Law, Membership Officer .....	5
Transport Update, Richard Lardner, Transport Officer .....	6
Editor's Highlights, Megan Sety, Newsletter Editor .....	7

### Trip Reports

1. Cone to Tutuwai .....	9
2. The WTMC & Meetup Join-Up to Trains Hut.....	10
3. Schormann – Kaitoke Traverse in a weekend.....	11
4. The Not Tappy, Light and Fast Daywalk .....	13
5. Tim Tams for Dinner .....	15
6. Hard Yakka Trips and a Return to the Sunny Tararuas.....	18
7. Penn Creek Hut .....	20
8. Family Adventures to Pencarrow .....	21
9. Kapakapanui Day Walk .....	22

### Map of trip locations in this issue



- |               |
|---------------|
| 1. Tararua FP |
| 2. Tararua FP |
| 3. Tararua FP |
| 4. Tararua FP |
| 5. Tararua FP |
| 6. Tararua FP |
| 7. Tararua FP |
| 8. Wellington |
| 9. Tararua FP |

# Committee Reports

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## The Nature of Things

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Sharron Came, President



It's time to get organised for summer. If you want to help shape the summer trip schedule mark Wednesday 6 November and come to the clubrooms at 6pm with your trip ideas.

The Club Journal for 2013 is largely complete and we hope to send it out to members in time for Christmas. If you would like to order an additional copy at \$20 each, please contact Tony [journal@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:journal@wtmc.org.nz) by Wednesday 30 October. Big thanks to Tony for producing another masterpiece and to everyone who contributed articles and photos so we all have something to read at the beach or swat flies in backcountry huts.

Bushcraft will run shortly, one of the key skills this course covers is navigation. Navigation is not just for trip leaders and newbies. To this end we run occasional nav training trips throughout the year. I had the privilege of attending a course run by Marie Henderson recently in the Eastbourne Hills. It was a humbling experience. Despite spending many hours in the hills my mastery of the art of using a map and compass to figure out where I am and how to get somewhere else is to put it kindly, a work in progress. I suspect I'm not alone in this. Navigation like tramping fitness cannot be achieved by just reading a manual. Sooner or later you have to get off the couch. Regular practice is the best way to improve your confidence and eventually get better.

Here are a couple of tips from Marie's course:

1. You can download the 1:50000 map sheets using this link: <http://www.linz.govt.nz/topography/topo-maps/map-chooser> click through to the area you are after - download the tiff file and then work with that to get a larger scale map (for those times you need to see finer details).
2. For the theory side see the MSC outdoor manuals, such as the Bushcraft Manual which can be borrowed from the library if you don't want to buy your own.
3. For the practical side, get into the habit of getting your map and compass out on trips, pay attention to navigation decisions as they are made on your trips and if you don't understand them ask questions. Navigation is a team endeavour. Sign up for nav training courses and consider doing rogaines. The next Wellington after work rogaïne is scheduled for 19 Nov. These rogaines involve working in pairs or larger groups and have the added benefit of allowing you to work on your fitness as well as your navigation skills. There is pizza available at the end of the evening – it's worth turning up just for that! You can register a walking team, or go for the run option. They vary in amount of bush to urban they cover: <http://www.mapsport.co.nz/wellyrog>

We have launched the second edition of the WTMC cookbook. The new edition covers standard tramping recipes plus some tips for making dehydrated meals and some recipes for stuff you can bake at home and bring on tramps. It is downloadable from the club website. Big thanks to Illona and Megan for seeing this project through. Congratulations to those who won awards at the bake off we held for the launch – all 17 entrants were winners in my view – the quality of the baking on offer and the effort that went into preparation and presentation was very impressive. I'm looking forward to tasting some baking prepared by the male species next time. Only one entrant this year entered the competition and he was lucky that the judges who were obviously not selected for their baking expertise didn't appear to realise that hummus requires no baking.

If you have been on an easy or easy medium trip lately you may have noticed that we are undertaking a trial of a digital sign-up platform known as MeetUp. We are doing this as part of a wider project to come up with ways to make trip sign-up easier for both trip leaders and punters. We have also been using this platform to advertise certain Wednesday night events and to get more people using our club vans to head up to the Club lodge to go skiing, boarding or just hang out. If you are interested in this project see: <http://www.meetup.com/WellingtonTrampingGroup/>.

We are interested in any feedback or ideas people may have on how to make our trip systems easier to administer without compromising safety. Contact [chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz) or have a word to Mike Phethean, Debbie Buck or Mike Gilbert (MeetUp Mike) on a Wednesday night. Mike Gilbert is keen to hear from any trip leaders willing to try MeetUp for trips they plan to lead for the summer trip schedule.

We are also looking at tweaking the structure of the committee. In response to changes in technology, the growth of social media platforms and different ways of socialising we are considering introducing a new position of Communications Officer to prepare an annual communications plan and manage our website, journal, newsletter and website people with a view to better targeting our messaging particularly for the prospective member audience and those new to the club. Obviously a Communications Officer would need to work closely with the Social Convenor and the Promotions Officer to achieve good alignment. If we introduce a Communications Officer role we will vote someone in at the 2014 AGM in April with the option of the newsletter editor reverting to an off committee role as it has been in the past. If you have any feedback on this idea contact [newsletter@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@wtmc.org.nz) or have a word with Megan Sety on a Wednesday night.

Remember if you'd like to join the committee next year, now is an excellent time to talk to existing committee members to find out what is involved. I mentioned in the October newsletter that we will need a new President, Treasurer and Secretary for the 2014 financial year. Helen Law also intends to stand down after 3 years as Membership Officer. Helen has worked extremely hard in this role and done a fantastic job. She will be a tough act to follow but I'm sure there is someone out there who is up to the challenge.

We are still on the hunt for people to help out with website development. While you were off tramping or relaxing at home over Labour weekend Mike Gilbert and Steve Koehler beavered away on their computers looking at ways to introduce a blog style newsletter. This project has been a priority for some time now but we have struggled to attract anyone

with the time and expertise to get it done. It would be great if we could spread this workload around a few more people. If you think you can help out please contact Mike at [webmaster@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:webmaster@wtmc.org.nz).

Meantime, check out version 2 of the cookbook and savour the breezy dregs of spring.

## Track Talk

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Mike Phethean, Chief Guide



In the last news letter I asked for ideas about where people would like to go over summer – there is still time to send me your ideas. If you have a specific trip you would like to lead, go on then, let me know and even the dates you would like it to be. There have been quite a few good suggestions so far, which means we will have a nicely varied summer schedule. You can contact me at [chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz).

The next part of the process is the trip planning night. The most important part of the evening is the **free** pizza at the start. Then once bloated on bread we divide into small groups and work out cool trips for each road end. There will be a supply of maps and guidebooks but it's great if people also bring their own. Each group then fills the spreadsheet up with their ideas and picks another road end until all are done. We start at 6pm and finish about 7:15pm. You don't need to be an expert or have vast knowledge of tramping - we will match up people's experience and this is a good way to learn trip planning.

After this the spreadsheet is available on Google Docs and trip leaders can sign up to lead a trip. Leaders are encouraged to sign up early, but I think I live in hope rather than expectation!

If you haven't led a trip before this would be an excellent time to consider doing so. We offer quite a bit of support for new leaders. There are usually a number of navigation trips on a schedule and these are an excellent way to improve your route finding. There will hopefully be a leadership course and this helps with both the planning process and the softer people management side of things. Finally both Debbie and I spend some time making sure your first trip is coming together and pointing out where to get bits of help if necessary (the WTMC website has some great information).

Of course worrying about food is now soooooo last year. We have a new edition of the cookbook and it is very easy to pick a recipe out which meets every one's dietary requirements. Even better print the recipe and delegate someone in your group to be in charge of cooking. Well done to Illona and Megan for putting the latest edition together.

Oh and although you might not believe it, the weather is getting better so now is the time to go tramping. Heaps!




## Over a cuppa

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Sue Walsh, Social Convenor



Our Wednesday night events and presentations are going well and attendance numbers are good. I'm so pleased this is happening. Our speakers for the rest of the year:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 30 October  | Pete Gent takes us on his recent trip to Svalbard - wrap up warm for this presentation   |
| 6 November  | Adventures in Scotland on Land – Beccy Day   |
| 13 November | Adventures in Scotland on Seat – Gareth Gretton  |
| 20 November | My bluff has been called on showing some slides from my dad's tramping years, come by for a Blast from the Past (1940s and 1950s tramping) |
| 27 November | Rowena will take us through River Crossings in preparation for the river crossing instruction 7-8 December                                 |
| 4 December  | John Shultis, a guest speaker, will talk about hiking in Utah, US  |
| 11 December | Christmas Special!                                        |

Last month I made reference to ideas I had for the odd themed presentation and these are some of my thoughts:

- Tramping through the ages – looking at the changing fashion in tramping attire and maybe in huts too.
- National Parks – a few shots per person of different National Parks people have been to, and this is not restricted to NZ.
- Tararuas! Yes, I know. However, we never seem to see much about the Tararuas these days so a few shots from trips there would be quite nice.

These ideas will only work though if you decide to go through your photos/slides and find shots that can be used and don't wait for someone else to do something. As I said last month, the other person is waiting too for you to do something so we are all waiting for the other to do something. That means we'll sit in front of a blank screen playing charades.

As that won't happen, I look forward to you coming forward with the offer of doing a presentation or volunteering to help put one of these evenings together – thank you!

## Membership Update

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Helen Law, Membership Officer



### Re-joining members

This month we welcome back Murray MacRae and Julie Catchpole who first joined WTMC in the 60s /70s. They are still very active trampers so no doubt we will see them out in the hills sometime.

## 2014-2015 membership renewal

It's almost that time of the year again...to renew your subscription (subs). The good news is that the committee has approved to keep next year's rates UNCHANGED. What is even better is you will get further discount if you pay on time - by 1st of February 2014. So please note that in you diary now. Invoices will be emailed/ posted out early December around the same time the last newsletter of 2013 is published. So if you don't receive your invoice before Christmas or you have misplaced it during the Christmas break no problem - send me an email to let me know.

Fee structure for 2014 and the discount amounts are listed below:

Category	Rate	Prompt payment discount before 1st Feb
Associate	\$38	\$4
Child/children	\$38	\$4
Couple	\$85	\$6
Friend of the Club	\$38	\$4
Junior	\$38	\$4
Senior	\$62	\$6
Veteran	\$52	\$6
Veteran Couple	\$76	\$6
+ printed newsletters		\$11

### Update your contact details

As you know, we will be sending out our annual club journals and membership invoices to members very soon. If you have moved house/ flat or changed your email address during the year, please let us know your new contact details a.s.a.p. by sending them to PO Box 5068 Wellington or email me [membership@wtmc.org.nz](mailto:membership@wtmc.org.nz). If you are not sure whether you have or not, send them to me anyway!

## Transport Update

Richard Lardner, Transport Officer



### Parking at Otaki Forks

If you are leaving a club van at Otaki Forks, please make sure you park in the **overnight car park**. To get to this carpark, drive past the entrance to the day car park and follow the obvious signs. DoC has asked us to not park our vans in the day car park, which has a limited capacity and is best left for day visitors and picnickers. But there are other good reasons to park in the overnight car park: it is more secure, being adjacent to the ranger's house (there are spates of thefts from the day car park) and it provides easy access to the intentions book, which you need to fill in anyway. A short track leads from the overnight carpark down to the day carpark and the bridge. Please talk to me if you have any questions about this.

## Warning lights in the van

If any lights on the dashboard come on during your trip, or if there are any other problems with the vans, please let me know. Some lights are serious and you should stop driving - consult the manual in the glove box. Even if a light comes on and then goes off, please tell me.

## Editor's Highlights

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Megan Sety, Newsletter Editor



### Photos for the WTMC website

Richard Young is looking for photos of WTMC trampers out in the NZ bush tramping, cycling, mountaineering, tubing, daywalking, etc. If you've got some photos from the last year or two, send them to [richardyoung40@ymail.com](mailto:richardyoung40@ymail.com).

### The Great WTMC Bake-Off

At the club social night on 23 October we had the First Annual Great WTMC Bake-Off where punters presented their best baked tramping snack for taste-testing. All this fun was to help highlight the launch of the second edition of the WTMC Cookbook – now online and including the award winning recipes from the bake-off. Awards from the night went to:

- **Golden Spork Award** for Best Tararua Biscuit - **Illona Keenan**: (easily the most moreish and distinctive cracker like appearance). Highly commended Annette Gazley (magnificent consistency across both batches and great taste) and Amanda Wells (good thinking presenting the biscuits with edible toppings (cheese and hummus)).
- **Hottest Home Baker Award** for best baking containing chocolate - **Bridget Boyle** for her raisin, chocolate almond slice (tasted sublime plus packed full of chocolate and protein via the nuts plus was all gone very early in the evening proving it was a real winner). Highly commended Donna Maher's chocolate, pistachio and coconut slice (tasted like expensive Swiss chocolate just awesome) and Beccy Day's cherry and white chocolate oat biscuits (loved the colour combo very festive plus good quantity).
- **Best Savoury Baking = Richard House** for his hummus (yes hummus isn't baked but the judges weren't picked for their technical expertise, it tasted great and very useful for tramping), highly commended Emily Shrosbree's cheese scones (brave choice, good colour, good quantity, would go down a treat with a few knobs of butter or some hummus).
- **Most Practical Baking Award - Debbie Buck's** date cakes (great size - easy to fit in your pocket for eating on the run). Highly commended Megan Sety's granola bars (looked just like the muesli bars you pay a small fortune for at New World but homemade - choice!) and Katy Glenie for her gluten free cookies (good size crunch, and great choice for those people with extra needs).
- **Special Award for Innovative Baking - Sue Walsh's** ANZAC biscuits with a twist (we loved that Sue produced a Kiwi classic and added a bit of cocoa to reference our



national icons the All Blacks). Prize = making a special batch for the next New Member's night.

- **People's Choice Awards** - **Donna Maher** for her amazing chocolate slice, **Bridget Boyle** for her amazing chocolate slice, and **Beccy Day** for her white chocolate oat biscuits which just goes to show, all baking is improved by adding a lot of chocolate.

### **Researching how trampers use recreation equipment**

We recently received a request from a researcher in Canadian who is studying the use of recreation equipment by outdoor enthusiasts – yes that includes trampers and mountaineers. Have a read of his letter below and let him if you're keen to help – surely a few of you like talking about your tramping experiences.

*Dear WTMC Club Members:*

*My name is John Shultis, and I am an Associate Professor at the University of Northern British Columbia in the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management program ([www.unbc.ca/ortm/](http://www.unbc.ca/ortm/)). I did my PhD at the University of Otago, and have regularly tramped, visited and conducted research in New Zealand for over 20 years, so am very familiar with the backcountry subculture in New Zealand.*

*I will be visiting New Zealand this coming summer to conduct additional research, including the Wellington area. The research involves me interviewing individual outdoor recreationists (trampers, climbers. etc.) about their recreation equipment and the impacts it has on their outdoor recreation experiences. Why am I interested in this topic? The academic literature often expresses concern about the potential impacts of some of the new technology available, but no one has really attempted to ask outdoor recreationists what they think of this equipment and how it impacts their experiences in the bush.*

*I am contacting several tramping/climbing clubs throughout New Zealand in order to look for volunteers to participate in this study. The interviews will take between 60-90 minutes, and I can meet you at whatever date, time and place works best for you. I will have a car, and can make my way to your work office, home, quiet public area, etc. for the interview. I am looking for a broad range of people to participate, from beginners to experts, first-timers to trip leaders, men and women, young and old, etc.*

*I will be in the Wellington area from December 1st to December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013. If you will have some spare time in these dates, and are willing to be interviewed for this study, I'd really appreciate if you could volunteer to be part of this research. By doing so, you could help contribute to understanding how peoples' use of recreation equipment affects their backcountry experiences.*

*If you are interested, please contact me at [john.shultis@unbc.ca](mailto:john.shultis@unbc.ca).*

*Many thanks in advance for considering this request, and I look forward to hearing from some of you! I will also be at the Dec. 4th WTMC meeting to give a trip report on a recent trip to some Utah national parks, so I may see some of you then too.*

*All the best, John*

## Trip reports

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### Cone to Tutuwai

14-15 September 2013, EM, Tararuas (map #1)

Author: Tim Bruce

Trampers: Tracey Black, Tim Bruce, Rose Graham, Megan Sety (leader),

The sun shone strong on our transit as we wound along the highway north oh Featherston. The unseasonably warm and almost cloudless sky illuminated the countryside's early spring greens. So marvellously distracting was the prospect of a golden weekend, that navigator couldn't be blamed for the missing the first turn off, but perhaps he should have pointed out the second one.

After two u-turns and a short trip along the shadowy Waiohine Gorge, the four of us punished the porcelain and donned our packs. A short walk led us to the swing bridge that marked the journeys start and testament to the weather, the river ran high as winter quietly melted away many miles upstream.

The track was dry and the climb to Cone Hut was steady. After a few rest breaks we reached our destination, an *easy-medium* amount behind the track time. A billy went on the burner and a leisurely lunch ensued. Cone huts picnic table served our needs but the prospect of having to stay any longer inside Cone would have been less than leisurely.

After lunch we left for Tutuwai Hut and along the way we passed a pair of gameless hunters. On the approach to the Hut we decided that the grass area out the front of the hut would be the perfect place to practice pitching the fly. Our blue Hunttec tarp went up quickly and was surprisingly large for the weight of the package.



After we packed away the fly and gathered the firewood, we found ourselves retreating to the hut for the night, and with the help of our 3 lovely hut mates Megan lit the coal fire. It seemed the trick was to have the fire steadily burning before the addition of the coal. The folks sharing the hut, two women and a man, were all from Wellington, the bloke was a member of the Tararua Tramping Club. It was a nice evening spent discussing tramping stories around the dinner table. Our dinner was a delectable cream cheese smoked salmon pasta with fresh veges and, for the brave, a touch of homemade chilli infused olive oil.

With the deft skill of a master card manipulator, albeit a rusty one, Tim showed off a few tricks before we moved to a game called scum. Scum is a highly competitive and easy to learn game which plays like a cross between Last Card and 500. We didn't even know each other's names but we were quickly calling each other *Scum* across the card table (part of the fun of the game).



The next morning we woke and ate brekky while the day's rain passed, and then we hit the trail again. After lunch the sun came out. It was warm on our backs and if not for the cool breeze and the muddy descent into Kiwi Ranch it could have been summers day on the track. Minutes before we reached Kiwi Ranch, David Heffernan & Weimen Ren from the fit trip met up with us on their way back from Alpha hut, and after 10 minutes sitting on the grass outside Kiwi Ranch the Transit snaked its way up the driveway.

## The WTMC & MeetUp Join-Up to Trains Hut

4-6 October 2013, E, Tararuas (map #2)

Author: Kim Farrar

Trampers: Claire Dekker, Kim Farrar, Mike Gilbert (leader), Matt Hirshberg, Barbara Keenan, Peter Khongtyngkut, Steve Kohler, Brian Prendiville, Paul Richards, Deborah Stoebe

**Editor's note:** *WTMC has been testing out a new way of signing-up for trips via the website MeetUp.com and partnering with the Wellington Tramping Group MeetUp. The following trip report is from a joint trip.*

I think this was the first tramping trip with a mix of well the Meet up the Wellington Tramping Group and the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club.

Mike, Steve, Barbara, Paul, Kim, Peter Claire, Matt and Brian met at Wellington train station platform 9 to head off to the Wanganui to stay at the Ashley Park Tourist Resort. This was a great motor camp that was a really good place to stop off for the night if travelling (I will remember if heading this way again). We all stayed in out tents so not so sure about the resort part in the title,



After a relaxed start we packed up and headed off the start of the tramp. We drove for nearly an hour till we arrived at the start of the tramp. Was a nice day and the walk went just off along site the river. The tramp was relatively flat and took us the 4 hours that was estimated.

When we arrived at the hut, the keen people headed off for an adventure while the rest of us relaxed for a while enjoying the sunshine.



Barbara cooked us a fantastic green curry followed by amazing chocolate fondue (going to make this at home some time as really easy and tasty).

Paul started a ripper bonfire we sat around and watched the stars, and yes it seemed there were lots of shooting stars out that night, when no one else was looking.

Next morning was a fantastic sunny day, which was way better than forecast and we headed back to the van and then home.



## Schormann – Kaitoke Traverse in a weekend

8 February 2013, FE, Tararuas (map #3)

Author: Mike Phethean

Trampers: Yibai He (leader), Sharron Came, David Jewel, Harry Smith, Michael Schier, Michael Phethean

**Editor's note:** *Since 1997 some keen WTMC members led by Lindsay Cuthbertson have been publishing a little know guide called "Accounts of week-end, two-day and 24-hour Schormann – Kaitoke (or Putara-Kaitoke) traverses of the Tararuas, North Island, New Zealand, via the Main Range, Tarn Ridge, the rivers and in reverse!" I'll be looking to update the guide in 2014 and I welcome any new stories, route information or volunteer help with editing. Below is the story of six WTMC members who gave the S-K a go. Yibai and Michael completed in 48 hours and Harry completed in 3 days.*

### Friday 8<sup>th</sup>

We stopped for food in Carterton on the way in. We had left Wellington at 3pm and arrived at the Putara road end just after 6pm. We set off as timed by Yibai's watch at 6:14pm. Gear was reasonably light and there was a mixture of running shoes and boots. We headed up through the bush and soon reached Herepai hut. A quick stop to sign the book and we pushed on for our night's destination Dundas hut.

Once dark fell as we crossed East Peak, about 9:30pm the going got harder as trying to find the rough track in the tussock was confusing my eyes. Luckily David took spells at the front and we reach the turn off and dropped down to the hut for midnight. Harry and Yibai would come in an hour later.

### Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>

Late to bed meant we were late off the next morning only leaving the hut at 8am, in hind sight we were clearly lacking urgency and this continued as we almost ambled to Dundas and onto Arete. From here distances on maps started to hit and the pace was cranked up. The weather was most unlike Tararua like and we had brought Harry along! There was little to no wind but being on the tops it was not too hot.

We took care to take the correct route down to Butcher knob. This section was all new travel for me and while I was conscious of the time I also took in the view not knowing when I would ever see so far in the Tararuas again. We lunched at Dracophylum Biv. By this stage we were starting to string out and I had finished my lunch by the time the last of the group had arrived. We discussed contingencies and agreed that Harry would stop at Anderson and take three days to complete the trip.

Again I led the next stage I was conscious of the time and also that I shouldn't allow myself to cool down too much as I would get stiff. I stopped at the turn off to Nichols hut and waited for Michael and Yibai to catch up. They had taken a wrong turn and Michael's boots were proving to be too much for the terrain. I was thankful that I had opted for running shoes at the last minute when leaving Putara.

As soon as they had caught me up, I pushed on agreeing to wait at Anderson. It felt strange in a way because this is not normally how I prefer to tramp but I was beginning to realize that we were not all going to make it and the pace would have to be forced if some of us were going to make it. I left it up to each individual to decide if they were going to continue, again a little strange for me but with such experienced people the right decision.

I reached Andersons hut at 4pm and waited until 4:45pm. My thoughts had actually turned to thinking that there was trouble and I was contemplating turning around when Sharron and Yibai arrived and let me know it was just tiredness catching up with everyone. Yibai was keen to keep going but the others decided that they had reached their limit. We were down to two and we quickened the pace a little as we both preferred to reach Mangahuka hut before dark.

The waiting time was not entirely wasted and I was able to count of the peaks as we completed the last stage of the day. The climbing was definitely a lot harder now and there is even a mild scramble but we chatted occasionally to each other stopping once to pile a heap of chocolate and water down our throats. We crossed Aokaparangi and headed to the dip before the last climb. I knew I was tired as I was wishing the climbing to start at this would signal the last stretch! It did and we crossed the threshold of the hut at dusk without the need of torch light. I think neither of us wanted to go through the tussock in the dark again!

Efficiency from too many alpine trips kicked in and we had the water boiling while we threw out our sleeping bags and few belongings. A quick dehydrated meal and we were asleep 45 minutes after arriving.

### **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>**

We got up at 5:15 am and left at 6am with a quick coffee down our throats. Expectation was high, the weather was good and we knew that we knew that we could make the end within the time limit of 48 hours. Normally I would have been certain but the previous two days had taken some toll on both of us and particularly Yibai's knees.

We had waited for day light as this was the only tricky section. Nothing really serious, but not worth a miss step. It turned out to be a good idea as we came across two deer just as we reached Managhuka peak, Yibai's fingers itching for his absent gun. The ladder and the chains breezed by and we moseyed along the Tararua peaks our eyes on the clock.



Kime hut took just over three hours and we took the chance to fill up with water as the day was turning hot. If I worried about the pace I decided we were ok when we met one of Yibai's friends on the beehives. He asked what the hurry was but seemed to understand when we mentioned the SK.

The route was becoming more obvious now which allowed more focus on speed and we reached Alpha hut at 11:30am and stopped for a good lunch and more water.

We were easily on target as we left at midday but having spent so much energy I was glad of a contingency for something to go wrong. The Marchant ridge as always is deceptively slow for its distance but we count the turn offs as we went.

Both of us were getting tired now. I realized afterwards that I was very dehydrated; the drop in height meaning it was hot walking. For Yibai his knees were now hurting. We were both stoic and played tramping leap frog as I could go faster but preferred to occasionally stop to refuel whereas Yibai went for a constant pace.

We reached the Puffer saddle with plenty of time to spare but did not drop the pace one bit by then we just wanted to get off our feet. A few more twists and turns and we arrived at the car park to the site of the big white van, (the medium tramp had moved it for us.) It was 4:45pm and we had completed the SK in 46.5 hours. After a reasonable amount of sitting and we drove back to Wellington.

## Epilogue

Harry continued his SK getting out the next day. He acquired Michael Schier's map who had wisely decided he never wanted to go into the Tararuas again. Michael, Sharron and David walked out via the Waitewaewae hut to Otaki forks where they got a lift from Michael's partner Sandra. David went home to recover. Michael went tramping again in the Tararuas with Sandra two weeks later. Sharron emailed Yibai and me to see if we wanted to have another go the next weekend as the weather was good. We both declined.

## The Not Tappy, Light and Fast Daywalk

11-13 October 2013, F Daywalk, Tararuas (map #4)

Author: Rob Edwards

Trampers: Debbie Buck, Rob Edwards, Tony Gazley (leader), Megan Sety, Emily Shrobbree

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley." And so they did. What was to be a three day trip to climb Tappy became a furtive dash in the Tararuas during marginal conditions between crappy weather and really crappy weather. The revised plan was to be a fast and light jaunt over Mt Baldy to Mt Holdsworth via the Broken Axe Pinnacles. A trip, Tony assured us that would take about nine hours, and a fairly easy nine hours at that.

We camped at the Holdsworth road end Saturday



night, just managing to get the tents pitched before a heavy downpour and lightning storm barrelled in. An earlyish start was in order so we turned in shortly after dark.

The new day dawned clear and after a hasty breakfast we departed up the Atiwhakatu valley on a track best described as lavishly groomed. It soon became apparent that there exists two discrete categories of time and distance estimators; the DOC employed Cassandra and the trip leading Pollyanna. The former would have us to believe their prophecy that a one and a half hour trip would take three, and the latter? More on that later.

We passed the new, and not yet opened, Atiwhakatu hut stopping for a brief watering and nose bags and then shortly thereafter began the slog up to Baldy. It quickly became apparent that we would not be having a crossing with long vistas and warming sunshine. Once we were on the tops it was apparent we would be three sheets to the wind with no liquor to blame.

Despite the wind gust induced zigzag of our travel we made good time to start of what would be the crux of the trip, the Broken Axe pinnacles. A beautiful series of formations that are mostly quite easily negotiated except for one which requires a slabby, and in these drizzly conditions, greasy climb. The height of the slab is only two meters or so but with dire consequences should you fall not one to be sniffed at. The option of a sidle to avoid this was said to be as bad if not worse than the prospect of the slab. So over we went with varying styles that could've been variously described as calmly stoic (everyone else), or desperate and flailing (myself).

We stopped for lunch once we were past the pinnacles and were regaled by rounds of one-upmanship from Megan and Emily regarding who was the most malevolent when blood sugars were low. I recall it was never settled as to who was most despicable, but we were left with no doubt that, given enough time and not enough food, we would be in serious trouble. It was also observed at this time that Tony had an unerring tendency toward the optimistic side with his estimations of time to destination. It seems he uses calculations only seventy five percent representative of reality. A recalibration is in order or perhaps fitter companions!



After lunch we went over Macgregor and then deciding the weather was really starting to pack it in, with rain and ever increasing wind-speed, we descended via Jumbo and stopped for another refuelling (all of us keen to keep Megan and Emily from becoming hypoglycaemic) at Jumbo hut. We gained the valley floor around ten and a half hours after leaving it and were back at the van in twelve.

It felt like a big day out and was very satisfying to have done the traverse of the pinnacles, a trip Tony assures us is not done that often.



## Tim Tams for Dinner

28-29 September 2013, M Tramp, Tararuas (map #5)

Author: Debbie Buck

Trampers: Debbie Buck (leader), Spencer Clubb (leader, trip photographer), Elizabeth Claridge (leader)

*The route: Waiohine road end – Reeves – Tutuwai Hut – Cone Hut- Cone Saddle – Totara Flats Hut – Waiohine Road end*

After Ngauruhoe high camp was cancelled, I decided I needed a weekend of tramping to keep my fitness for Tappy in a few weeks. For family reasons, Spencer was about to enter a period of tramping abstinence and wanted a good solid tramp. As well as keeping tramping fit, Elizabeth needed an excuse to avoid commitments involving lamb tailing. So a solid medium tramp was agreed to!

After multiple revisions of our planned tramping route and a harrowing journey we arrived at the Waiohine road end. It was showery (rain with sunshine) so we decided on Plan F because it gave three hut options along the way – flexibility if the day progressed to rain (showers without sun). We didn't quite decide on who was the trip leader...so we used a collaborative, laissez-faire leadership model.

The Waiohine river was muddy and pumping when we crossed it at 10am Saturday and Coal stream was at high thigh level – about a foot deeper than in early winter. Was this what the DoC sign was referring to as an 'unmanaged hazard'?

Spencer navigated up the ridge, following the 'not quite orange' triangles and watching out for the unmanaged hazards. Showers and shadows came and went and came back. We hit real orange triangles and 'managed hazards' after about 1hr 45min (according to the designated time-check chick (Debbie) and rewarded ourselves with muesli bars for surviving the unmanaged hazards. It was much colder than the forecast 15° C so we put on extra layers to keep warm.



On we went, up and over Reeves (899m), watching the showers being blown towards us. By 2pm we were at Tutuwai Hut for lunch, overlooking the much swollen river. With our wet footwear back on, we waded along the track in rain for just over an hour to reach Cone Hut.

Here was a decision point – it wasn't quite 4pm so would we:

- stay here at Cone Hut for the night?; or
- keep going for about 3.5 hours to Totara Flats Hut?; or
- camp before Totara Flats if the Makaka creek was too swollen to cross?; or
- make a beeline to the car and head to Ruamahanga for dinner, a warm fire and possibly pack floating on Sunday?

Ambivalence dominated. We weren't too tired after our 10am start and Elizabeth mentioned that we couldn't stop walking because we'd only had lunch an hour ago. Perhaps it was un-mediumish to not use the last 2 hours of daylight for tramping.

So off we set, on the water-laden path to Cone Saddle. Part way up, Elizabeth mentioned that she'd left her tramping mojo at Cone Hut – we weren't going back downhill to get it, so Spencer and I shared some of our plentiful tramping mojo with her. We all reached Cone Saddle at 5pm and then headed off on the track to the Waiohine valley. I hadn't been on this track before and enjoyed the new terrain, not-too-well-worn nature of the track, the bush and the identifying of good campsites (close to puddles for water supply) along the way. Spencer even saw a young deer. Part way down, it was time to put on our head torches, have some snacks to replenish the collective tramping mojo and get into the serious business of night walking.



With the exception of Elizabeth who was carrying the dinner carrot and therefore had excellent night vision, we were slowed a bit in the dark by all the wet, slippery tree routes on the track. About 7pm we reached the Waiohine valley track to Totara Flats, which was about 4.5 km away. We headed towards Makaka creek, took a bit of a detour and saw that it was too swollen to cross. I shined my torch upstream and saw a shiny new bridge! Back on the track, we crossed the bridge over the stream and then stopped at a wee stream to refill our water bottles. It was about here, in the drizzle, that I sensed the collective tramping mojo had hit a low point, so we shared some chocolate, imagined the warm hut waiting for us at Totara Flats, and set off.

Spencer and I had travelled this route many times before. However, we had both completely forgotten about the section of track that follows the river edge for about 10 minutes at the bottom of a slip! When we got to this point, the Waiohine River was far too swollen to take this low route. We had to go up and over the slip. The lure of the hut and varying degrees of reluctance to camp in the rain propelled us upwards.

The over-slip detour was a bit rugged, vertical and rambly, the orange triangles were a bit sparse, and the tramping mojo was getting dangerously low. Grovelling up in the darkness through the bush, there were some spots where we were suddenly engulfed by a vast misty greyness – this was where the detour passed close to the edge of the slip and we traversed these sections one by one. Taking turns to lead, we lost the track a few times – Spencer found a very pretty grove at one point – he was so fond of it I contemplated camping there but Elizabeth suggested that camping in the rain at the top of an active slip was a dumb idea. So dragging Spencer away from his arboreal paradise, down we went on the side of the slip. Whilst I changed my torch batteries and did a time check at 9pm, Elizabeth and Spencer fantasized about what life would be like if we'd stopped at Cone Hut at 4pm – a mellow evening, a full puku after a tasty dinner, cosily cocooned in our sleeping bags we'd be asleep by now!

With my new-found night visibility, I led the final descent back to the main track. At 9:30pm Spencer declared it was time for dinner and pulled out the Tim Tams. We gobbled them for instant chocolate transfusion, whilst looking skyward and pondering the coexistence of clouds and stars. We were on the home stretch now – not even my recollection of a coming 'horrible, toi toi infested creek crossing' could slow me. But, as far as Elizabeth and Spencer were concerned, the dregs of collective tramping mojo had been left somewhere up near the slip and fatigue and grumbles had set in! To combat this I lead with a steady pace through the trees and across the flats, close enough in front to keep Elizabeth and Spencer moving but far enough away to not clearly hear the mutinous grumbles about sore feet, don't think I can take another step, etc.

Finally, at 10:30pm, we arrived at the hut, shattered. Even though the hut was far from full, to get some space for our mattresses, it was necessary to wake people who had liberally spread their stuff over the sleeping platforms. After this was dealt with, we rehydrated, changed, put our watches forward an hour and went to bed at midnight!

On Sunday we slept in and woke when we felt like it, which turned out to be about 9amish. We'd each had varying success at sleeping and I wasn't feeling that all my tramping mojo had returned. Still weary, we ambled around the hut and decided to have our pasta dinner for brunch. We cooked it with seamless ease, vaguely aware of a chaotic group going about their morning madness.

We were happily chomping our way through our tuna pesto pasta brunch with freshly brewed coffee when a femme fatale appeared with Spencer's wet grey socks (with one orange stripe to match his Crocs). The ensuing dialogue went something like this:

FF: I'm looking for my socks. Are these your socks?

S: Yes. What colour are your socks?

FF: Black and waterproof.

S: My socks, which you are holding, are grey and not waterproof.

FF: Oh yes. Would you like me to put them in the fire for you?

S: No, not really. Please put them over there near the fire.

Looking bemused, Spencer returned to his brunch.



The femme fatale and her chaotic group continued in that vein with their preparations – tying pillows around their butts (for floating down the river? for posterior cushioning if they tripped over?), going about the hut looking for gear (not necessarily their own) to fit into their packs, seemingly with little recollection of what gear they had arrived with! It was all a bit much. Elizabeth was more pro-active and started sweeping the hut – soon enough one of the other occupants got the hint and started helping her.

Anyway, the hut soon emptied out and we had it to ourselves for a peaceful half hour. We tidied it, packed up and put on our soggy clothes and boots. It was then that the real disaster struck – Elizabeth's new luxurious blue and black Icebreaker socks had disappeared. We fumed and vowed to track down the sock thief.

At 11:45 am, just as the morning rain stopped, we set off on the main valley track back towards the Waiohine road end, hot on the trail of the suspected sock thief. The river had dropped a lot overnight so we took the river route below the slip and soon caught up with the chaotic group. Tactfully we asked them to check their packs for the lost socks when they got home, and gave our contact info in case they found the socks.

With that out of the way, beneath blue sky and with occasional showers, we sauntered on. We lamented that the arduous Saturday had depleted our beer bellies and joked about sheep, colour coordination of crocs and socks, wet dogs and other random unprintable things. By 4:15pm we were back at the bridge over the fast-flowing, green Waiohine river, and the end of our adventurous and entertaining, solid medium tramp.

## **Hard Yakka Trips and a Return to the Sunny Tararuas**

28-29 September 2013, MF, Tararuas (map #6)

Author: Marie Henderson

Trampers: Megan Banks, Marie Henderson, Illona Keenan (leader), Bernard Smithyman

There are all kinds of hard yakka trips, but to qualify they must test you to breaking point and beyond. A recent trip back in to the sunny Tararuas cracked me. Not so I couldn't be put back together again, but I definitely did lose it.

Hard yakka trips come from my husband Robert. There was an ocker TV ad for Yakka work wear in the 80's and 90's which stuck in the cultural collective mind at the time that relates:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3N4vxMuxjKg>.

Once you've heard the song, imagine yourself already sunburnt from the ferry ride trudging up a beautiful sand beach, a very soft sand beach, in the sweltering midday humidity of Queensland. Sweat runs like a river off of you but gives no relief. You have to spare the water you carry as there isn't any other except on the other side of the sand island, a 10km sand wallowing trudge over numerous dunes away. The ocean looks attractively cool, but you know from the ferry ride it is packed chocka full of tyre sized jellyfish with meters long tentacles. The ferry won't be back for two more days. Cue Robert quietly singing the hard yakka song...someone's screaming...and I think it may be me! Ah the fun we had. The memories!

So the Tararuas trip isn't really hard yakka, as it lacked any element of 'death march' but it certainly tested perseverance and I was shown wanting near the end. The forecast was for 'typical crud' but it turned out to be worse than that. The wind was already up in the kiriwhakapapa car park. We ascended in to cloud and then light rain with rising wind before stopping at Blue Range Hut to overnight. It rained and blattered with even thunder overnight, but with some improvement in the morning on the rain and thunder front. With only a short pop over the tops to do we decided to stick with the plan after discounting the option of doing the trip in reverse.



Appetite for the trip diminished to zero however by the time we came to our turn off and we ended up descending to Cow Creek Hut to make further plans. Any tops was going to be a real challenge, with a creek to cross at the end of the day and difficulties staying together and grounded on the tops. In the shelter of Cow Creek Hut the options were discussed and I was pleasantly surprised to have mine win out – slothing all weekend in the hut! I set to lighting the fire at once before anyone got keen to head out again.



With the fire going and us fed it was natural to drift to the bunks to read and then to snooze. In to our hut's fog of sloth ventured another club trip. Great! Entertainment! But they were 8, we were 4 and the hut held 6. Options were discussed and in the end none of our trip moved from their bunks of sloth. So our bunk slothing continued on and on unabated. I had another brainwave the next morning, figuring it would be easier if we stayed slotted in our bunks until the other trip left. By now I had a bad case of cabin fever which could maybe be blamed for this departure from sanity. Over an hour of watching people stuff things in to other things, find things, lose things, unstuff and restuff things, I finally lost the plot. I was screaming on the inside. I'd cracked. I just could not do it anymore. I had to leave my bunk. I had to pack. I had to plan to leave the hut. I had to get back on with life.



One of the least noted essential tramping skills is patience and maintenance of sanity when waiting out the weather. The ability to while away days doing nothing at all is vital. Otherwise you will go mad and eat all of your food. I need to practice, but if the year continues the way it has so far I am bound to get such chances.

Thanks to my trip party who were so easy to get on with in the face of adverse weather – it's easy to be nice on good days, bad weather is the real test of companions. Thanks to the other club trips who brought support, entertainment and tolerance.

## **Penn Creek Hut**

11-13 October 2013, EM, Tararuas (map #7)

Author: Margaret Craige

Trampers: Tim Bruce, Margaret Craige (leader), Michelle

There were 3 in our happy band. After many days of beautiful, calm, sunny weather, there were howling gales and lashing rain forecasted for the weekend. Driving from Wellington on the Friday night, the worst of it did not arrive until we actually parked the van at Otaki Forks about 9pm. We opened the van door to get our gear, and the heavens opened.

Fortunately, Parawai Lodge is only 200 metres away from the bridge, and we coped just fine in the couple of minutes it took us to get to the hut. Tim and I huddled up to hot water bottles, while Michelle braved it out despite having a small bout of carsickness on arrival (I swear I drove slowly and carefully!).

There was rain, and lots of it, but by morning it had blown itself out and we woke to birdsong and sunshine. In fact it was perfect tramping weather, and with a spring in our step made our way up to Field Hut where we stopped for lunch. I was happy to share the result of a newly discovered (for me) recipe for spanakopita. Mmmm! After warnings by a couple of strangers about the perils of slips on the track to Penn Creek, we continued uphill to Table Top, where yet another person also warned us, and we got to the "Danger" sign erected by DoC.

A discussion ensued about the merits of going to Kime instead, which by all reports had snow and frozen streams early in the morning. You also could hardly see far beyond Dinnan Hill because of the ugly conditions evident in that direction. On agreement that we would turn back to Field if the going got too tough, we soldiered on toward Penn. And we saw our first wild mammal...a kid, no more than 20 metres away. It bounded down the track ahead and stared at us before disappearing into the brush. Down, down, downhill. Seemingly never-ending and tough on the knees, we descended to the valley floor.

We were practically there. There had been no slips at all. A couple of small stream crossings and a disagreement with a supplejack later, we arrived at the hut. It is a hut brimming with character, and is just lovely to be in. A slight drawback is that unless you want a smoke-filled room within seconds, it is an absolute must to have both windows open while the fire is alight. We had the place to ourselves apart from a couple who borrowed a pot and mattress and camped downstream.

Tim and Michelle were in charge of the meal, and it was butter chicken on rice, followed by cheesecake. Whilst in the middle of making the cheesecake, the whole place lit up, again and again. The thunder storm had arrived. Fortunately for us, it only deposited about 20 minutes of heavy rain. We found out the following day that there was also hail and fiendish gales up at Maungahuka hut. I was very glad of the decision to go to Penn. After the brief

downpour, Tim played a few magic card tricks on me and we whiled away a very pleasant evening.

The forecast for Sunday had been clear, and indeed it was. Tim and Michelle charged up back up the hill to Table Top, with instructions to look for me if I hadn't been seen for 1 ½ hours. Much to my dismay, they came and looked for me! Admittedly, I'd stopped for a nice falafel lunch (another new recipe I'd tried), but even so, they made me feel every bit 20 years their senior. Argh!

At this point, the weather closed in with some mist and drizzle. I didn't even bother to put on my raincoat, as we would soon be back at Field Hut. Amanda and Richard popped in to say hello, and after a rest, the 3 of us headed back to the van. Essentially, we'd missed 99.9% of all the bad weather, and I'm not sure there was any that weekend at all...

## Family Adventures to Pencarrow

28 September 2013, Family Cycle, Wellington (map #8)

Author: Susan Sturman

Trampers: Alan Wood & Iona (8), Romana Jennings & Stella (3),  
Susan Sturman & Katelyn (8) & Vanessa (3), Nige Cox

This was an excellent flat route for family trip but challenging on Saturday because of the approximately 35 knot northerly winds on return. This added to the adventure though and wind was only bad on the points, not in the bays so plenty of respite. Two wisely chose to turn back early. Some lambs and kids (of the goat variety) spotted and plenty of great shells collected on the way. A few chocolate fish treasure hunts on the way back to keep up the spirits.





# Kapakapanui Day Walk

5 October 2013, M Daywalk, Tararuas (map #9)

Author: Pete Gent

Trampers: Chris Bolton, Pete Gent (leader), Erika Kalniskis, Weimen Ren

You know your leading a trip when the hustle from the News letter editor appears in your inbox at the start of the week, and what a good hustle it was! Needless to say, early Saturday morning a small but fine party of trampers assembled to be transported to the eastern fringe of the Tararua ranges for a day trip around the loop. After taking an hour of SH1 travel, we arrived to a quiet road end with only one other car in evidence. A quick change of boots and team talk, and we were off.



Four river crossings in 10 minutes, with the rivers not too high but minding the brown rocks none the less we were at the base of the uphill. Two hours later, we were 900 meters up, nothing really to write home about, but a descent set of tree roots / mini slip just before the bush line and a family of four goats out enjoying the mist too.

Up on the top, even less view was on offer, but we had lunch at the trig point after failing to find the secret hut on the southern right before the trig point.

After the obligatory group photo, it was time to descend along the northern ridge, which seemed to take longer than the uphill. However even after signing the hut book (no one had been through for a couple of days) we still were in danger of a very respectable time back to the car.

After a gentle descent for a couple of hundred meters (vertical), we reached the last major descent of the day. The group slowed down a little but keep a decent pace none the less. At this point, one GPS packed in - backing up the point that technology is not always right, but then a second device proved to be useful in obtaining our altitude. With a couple of minor scrambles, it was back to re-cross the river lots of time, pass a couple of parties heading in to overnight at the hut and we returned to the much more busier road end. Many thanks to Chris for the superb choice of vehicle to transport us there and back.



**Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 29 November 2013**

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