



The Mouth 'n' Ear

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Newsletter

Editor: Megan Sety
Email: newsletter@wtmc.org.nz

December 2013



What river are these experts crossing on the bushcraft course??

A **chocolate bar** to the first person who emails 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.

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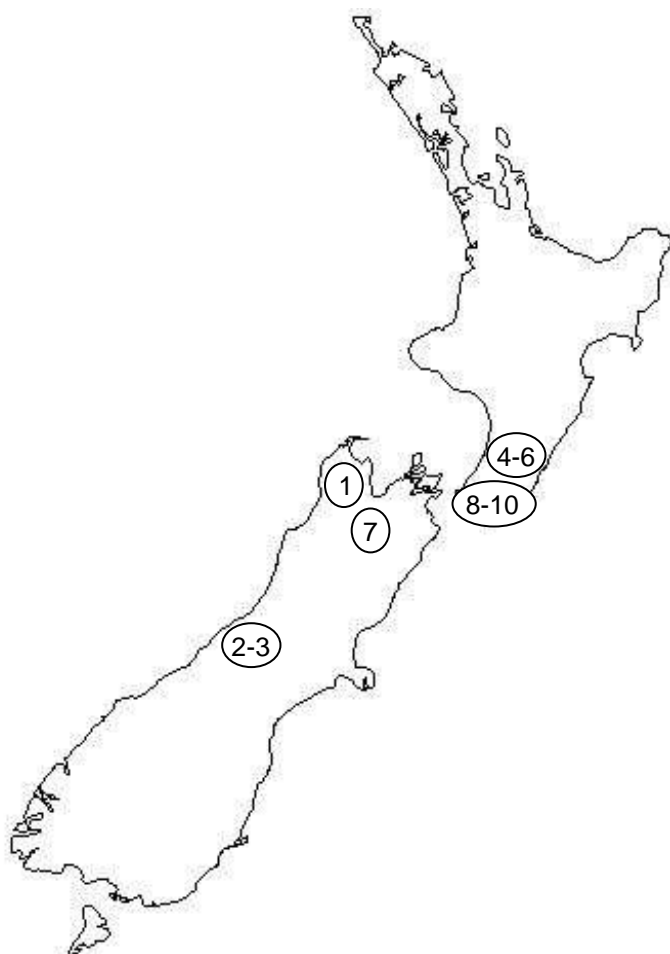
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Committee Reports

The Nature of Things

Sharron Came, President



Xmas will be here soon, although I'm slightly worried the reindeers will either drown or suffer terribly from heat exhaustion. Remember to leave some craft beer out for them, no dog...I mean Tararua biscuits! Please save your silly season stuff for the Xmas parties in town. Plan your outdoor adventures carefully and make considered decisions. It's not just a matter of being organised although that will certainly help. Flexibility is also important. Remember the weather doesn't know about your plans but thanks to forecasting and your own observation skills you should be able to form a view on what the weather is up to – plan and make decisions to fit in with the weather. Plan also to accommodate the skills and fitness of your party, that way you'll all have a greater chance of a fun time and returning home safely.

This month we had our second Club PLB call out. You can read about it in Mike's Chief Guide column. Every time one of our PLBs is used we review what happened. We are satisfied that the decision to activate the beacon in this instance was consistent with Club policy. WTMC encourages people to carry PLBs on tramps as a backup. There was an incident recently where some trampers had a PLB registered to them but decided to leave the device in their car at the road end. Consequently when they were reported overdue, a search for them was delayed as rescuers thought the trampers would set off the PLB if they required urgent assistance. There are two tramping items you should never leave in the car park – the PLB you have taken out from our gear room/have registered to you (if you own one) and spare chocolate bars. The former has the potential to save your life but only if you have it with you. The latter will melt in the car rendering it shapeless, white and worst of all, inedible.

November was a good month for the mountaineering side of WTMC after a very unsettled start to spring weather. Congratulations to the climbing Mikes who scaled Elie de Beaumont (3109m) and Mt Green (2837m) in Mt Cook NP. Sensibly, given the snow conditions and avalanche risk they passed up the opportunity to climb Mt Walter or linger in any crevasses. Around the same time Debbie and Stephen climbed Mt Olliver (1993m) and most of Mt Kitchener (2024m) in the Mueller Glacier area. In the first week of November Mike S, DJ and myself were fortunate enough to be in the right place when the weather cleared and we were able to climb the Footstool (2764m) from Sefton Biv just above Mt Cook Village. Of course many fabulous tramping trips took place over the same period. In fact a record number of families and other trampers had a fantastic Guy Fawkes celebration at Paua Hut. I'm only mentioning these climbs because November is the main window for mountaineering in NZ.

Speaking of tramping, it has been a bit of a struggle to secure trip leaders for the Summer Schedule although I understand there has been a last minute rush to volunteer which is great, we'll take late over never! If you forgot to sign up to lead a trip it is never too late to contact Debbie or Mike P and volunteer your services. We can add trips at any time and we would really love to run as many as we can, we are after all a tramping club!

Sue our Social Convenor is after some more slideshows to fill the Wednesday nights in 2014 – something to remember when you are tramping over Xmas. You can book a slot now by going onto the website and making a note in the google document or just talk to Sue at the clubrooms. Wednesday night slideshows and other entertainment has been fabulous this year, it would be great to keep the momentum going into next year. Don't forget to hang around after the slideshow and come to the Hop Garden for a beer or three, this is a great way to find out all the gossip, wind down, and plan more trips without worrying about whether you've remembered the PLB.

2014 is going to be a year of change for WTMC with a few key Committee members stepping aside so that others can take on leadership roles. We have plenty of spots available for members who want to take up the challenge of helping ensure the club is well run and meets member needs. If you're considering helping out just have a chat with a committee member face to face or by email. Sue is a great person to talk to if you are at the clubrooms. You also can email me at president@wtmc.org.nz. I've been on the committee for three years; it is a great way to acquire new skills and meet lots of great people. We have a wide variety of jobs to suit just about anyone's interests and preferences.

Finally, I hope you enjoy reading the Club Journal over the Xmas break. A big thanks to Colin Bouttell for proof reading the club journal. More than anything else, bar the annual report of course, the Club Journal captures the essence of WTMC in pictures and words. I hope you'll share it with your friends and family so they can better understand the joys of tramping and mountaineering. Have a great break folks and I'll see you for some fresh adventures in 2014.

Track Talk

Mike Phethean, Chief Guide



Personal Locator Beacons (PLB)

Recently two of our club members were on a trip and had to set off their PLB. They had been tramping over some rough terrain and it continued to worsen until they realized that they could not continue upwards as they did not have the confidence and ability to scramble over the upcoming exposed rock and snow ridge in the rising wind. Descent was difficult terrain and going down is always harder. Night was not too far away, a forecast gale force weather front was starting to come in. There was no where unexposed to camp and set up their tent safely.

They made the right choice. They set off the PLB and advised the club contact of their situation, including that no-one was injured. It is never an easy thing to do and they took time to make the decision. They were airlifted out quite quickly before the full force of the storm came in and saving the necessity of sending up a team on foot. The Search and Rescue were satisfied with the decision-making and so is the club. The PLBs are there for your safety.

Summer Trip Schedule – Coming Soon!

The brand new shiny trip schedule will be published soon! If you want to go on any of the trips and they look like they cannot be accessed via the ferry but require a flight, contact the leader in advance. It will be a lot cheaper in airfares! These are some of the trips which will need flights:

- Wanaka Rock Climbing
- Christchurch Mystery rock climbing
- Mt Adams

Long trips on the new schedule.

As this year Anzac day falls the Friday after Easter there is the possibility of doing an 11 day tramp without taking too much annual leave. There are already three trips on the schedule to some great places. Although these trips have a nominated leader, due to the scale of the trips you should expect to be designated some task in the planning. You also should contact the leader quite a long time in advance.

Finally Happy Christmas and good tramping wherever you will be!

Over a cuppa

Sue Walsh, Social Convenor



Christmas is fast approaching and our presentations for the year are drawing to a close. The last presentation is on December 11 – sit back and watch a DVD of the photos that were entered for the FMC photography competition. In between there will be mini quizzes, and there will be more than just chocolate biscuits to nibble on. We take a break for a couple of weeks until 2014. Upcoming presentations include:

- 22 January: Lorraine Johns is making a welcome return and will be talking about climbing some 3,000+m peaks
- 29 January: our very own President will take us up the Footstools and Mt Aspiring

I'd like to thank all the presenters we've had this year – you've done an awesome job and have taken us on fabulous journeys, and everyone for coming along to the presentations. Have a lovely Christmas, be safe, and I look forward to being inundated with offers of presentations for next year!

Membership Update

Helen Law, Membership Officer



Your 2014/2015 subscription invoice is being sent out at the moment, if you do not receive yours by mid-December, either by email or by post, please contact me to verify your contact details and I will resend the invoice to you.

Please pay your subscription at your earliest convenience. Once again, we have included prompt payment discount if you pay on or before **1st February 2014**. Membership renewals will be received until the **31st March 2014**.

The 2014/2015 renewal rates, before discount, are as follow

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

Preference is for payment using direct credit/internet banking. Make your payment to:

Account name: Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc

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

Account number: 06-0582-0013409-02

Please use your name, "subs" & invoice# (as shown on your invoice which begins with 2014xxxx) as a payment reference so that we can easily trace your payment. Send an email to membership@wtmc.org.nz after you have made a payment.

Alternatively, you can make a cheque payable to WTMC and attach it with the bottom part of the invoice and post it to PO Box 5068 Wellington.

Editor's Highlights – A New Look Newsletter

Megan Sety, Newsletter Editor



For the last few years, a team of WTMC tech experts have been working to create a new and improved version of the newsletter. We have finally had a breakthrough and currently working out the last of the glitches.

This new version will still be delivered to your email, but the main content will be on the website. This has a few added benefits. Now our website will have a permanent log of all trip reports, gathered in one place. This new format will make it easier to search trip reports either through our website or your favourite search engine. This new format will also be more accessible to potential new members and help spread the word about exciting opportunities in the club.

We are hoping to have this new version appear in your inbox and on our website on the 1st of February. To do that we will need your trip reports. There won't be a newsletter for January, so there should be plenty of tramping opportunities and time to write up stories.

We will continue to post the newsletter to those of you currently receiving a print copy.

Thanks goes to Mike Gilbert, Sarah Young and especially Steve Kohler for making this happen!

Trip reports

Weather Windows

24-28 October 2013, Kahurangi NP (map #1)

Author: Katy Glenie

Trampers: Katy Glenie, Hans Wiskerke & Mika Verheul (leaders),
Michael Lightbourne, Dirk Naish, Pete Gent, Rebecca Day

The wind had subsided in downtown Wellington and the sun was making an attempt to peek through the clouds. 'Maybe this bad run of weather is finally on the way out,' we optimistically hoped as we made a plan B, C and D due to yet another poor weather forecast.

Plan A had been ruled out almost immediately – access to Kahurangi's 1000 Acre Plateau would be blocked due to high rainfall and flooded rivers. Plan B, exploring the drier seaward Kaikouras, was also off the list – one of the group had memories of long days, high exposure, and forbidding cliffs.

Plan C and D meant an overnight at Mika and Hans' brand new home in Nelson – it was an easy choice to head over the hill to *The Brooke* and to some classic Dutch hospitality.



Saturday dawned bright and clear. We did one last scan of the maps and decided on the Tablelands area of the Cobb Valley in Kahurangi. It soon became apparent that the sky over Cobb Valley was more black-grey than the earlier blue of Nelson.

Heading out into the cold on Saturday made us think about Plan D – appealingly named 'Day Walks from Nelson'. But this was a WTMC trip, we were tough, we had layers, there was no turning back.



Before long we'd climbed 500 meters to the open tops of Peel Range, catching a glimpse of Lake Peel before making a bee-line to the welcome shelter of Balloon Hut. Balloon was characteristic of huts in the area, designed by trampers for trampers, and much better than many of the newer standard DOC huts.

Sunday was forecast to be pretty wild weather, so we took our time with morning ablutions. A break in the sleet motivated action, and we headed south to Salisbury Lodge. We were the only occupants of this normally busy hut, due to a road closure at Flora Saddle (and possibly the atrocious weather forecast for the weekend)!

Before long hut-fever took over, and as soon as we could see our shadows we were out the door to explore. The



tablelands have a fascinating history of gold-mining and cattle-grazing. Remnants of these activities remain in the landscape, framed by a network of limestone caves and sink-holes.

We returned to Salisbury Lodge to wait out the afternoon's sleet, and then headed to our destination for the day, Gridiron Rock Shelter. This was an absolute gem of a spot – a towering rock overhang embellished with a sleeping platform, cooking table, and fireplace. We fell asleep to the sound of the nearby river and

awoke to a dawn chorus of bellbirds and warblers. A whio sitting on the walk out was a perfect end to a brilliant weekend. Well worth dodging between weather windows!

Paua Hut on Guy Fawkes' Weekend

9-10 November 2013, EM, Orongorongos (map #8)

Author: Joe Harbridge

Trampers: Tony Gazley (leader), Joe Harbridge, Pete Gent, Barbara, Yuki, Bridget, Marisa



This was my first tramp with the club and arriving at the railway station on Saturday morning, I was not exactly sure what I was getting myself into. Was I in for an easy walk through the bush or something a little more challenging? The answer was a little bit of both.

As people showed up and the trip got underway, I was struck by how diverse the group was. Between the seven of us we covered a wide range of ages, experience levels and nationalities. Despite this, conversation flowed easily and almost before I knew it, we had arrived at Paua Hut.



Campsite tasks like collecting firewood, boiling water and putting up the flysheet were quickly squared away leaving the afternoon for relaxation and exploration. A few of us went on a fairly casual excursion down the river while others chose to remain behind and take it easy.

Returning to camp, our group had been bolstered by the arrival of the family group and it was clear that a decent-sized fire would be required to provide sufficient marshmallow roasting

real estate. A collaborative effort ensued with Peter overseeing the operation.

The evening slid pleasantly by; first with a delicious meal prepared with Barbara's excellent recipes and oversight followed by roasted marshmallows, sparklers and more conversation around the campfire. Before long, it was time to retire for the night.



The following morning, we set off for home with a slightly more challenging route planned for the return journey. Most of that challenge consisted of making our way up to Cattle Ridge Track from the campsite below. Frequent breaks at this point were welcome, both for the chance to catch my breath and for the guidance on how to navigate via map and compass.



The day passed quickly and as we returned to the van the conversation moved on to the comforts of home; chief among them hot showers, cold beverages and warm beds. For me, the trip had gone exceptionally smoothly (with the exception of a couple of Tony's gear shifts in the van) and it was a chance to reflect on the whole experience.

Lessons I learned ranged from the importance of having the right gear (better to be over prepared than under) to an update on which websites are hot or not as confidently explained by a teenage girl (FYI – Instagram is now “lame” but tumblr is not). Most importantly, I learnt that there is plenty of New Zealand out there just waiting to be explored and the tramping club is a great way to do so while hanging out with some interesting people along the way.

Mt. Footstool (2767m)

1-3 November 2013, Aoraki / Mount Cook NP (map #2)

Author: Michael Schier

Trampers: David Jewell, Sharron Came, Michael Schier

"Footstool? You really wanna climb a mountain with such a name?" - that was pretty much the reply I got from my boss when asking for a day off late October. I usually don't care too much about mountain names, but I had to admit that it is a weird name, probably originating from its shape.

So despite the name, I was really looking forward to this trip as it promised a peak in a way I like it: mainly going up a mountain without wasting a day or two to get to its foot (i.e. not 50 but 2 river crossings, even with a bridge).

After flying down on a Friday evening, spending the night at Tekapo, we arrived at Mt. Cook Village early Saturday just to have a coffee first while taking a closer look at our target. At first covered in clouds, it soon revealed its face, and, compared to Sefton's SE face, it looked quite doable! So off we went, first following the quite tourist-hunted Hooker valley track but soon turning off towards the Footstool. I started ascending the mountain in a rather straight line following the vegetation whereas Sharron and David turned true right to follow the main scree slope. I somewhat expected to run into steep terrain further up and to cross over to them, but somehow made it to Sefton biv following avalanche slopes all the way. That gave me enough time to free the shelter from snow and bring us back its window before my two party members turned up.



The rest of the day was spent sitting in the sun, enjoying the marvellous views, and doing some more snow-shovelling just for the fun of it. Later that day, two more parties (4p and 2p) turned up and gratefully accepted our offer to sleep under the bivi rock while we chose the far less comfortable bivi hut. The 7pm radio call was still talking of good weather the next day, so we set the alarm for 4am, well knowing that our friends sleeping under the bivi rock would start their ascent at 2am and would hopefully, by then have plugged a reasonable number of steps in the snow.



After getting up next morning, we found the snow in a nice and frozen condition and started following the tracks of the other two parties. At some point, we roped up (which gave me a chance to figure out what a kiwi-coil is), later took some photos of a beautiful sunrise, and soon reached the saddle between Footstool and Cadogan Peak. The remaining 400m got increasingly steep, and we even had to pitch the last 20m (by shamelessly attaching to the top-rope of another party) to get on top of an icy bulge, which turned out to be Footstool peak.



After the obligatory summit photo and some well-deserved chocolate, we climbed down again and back-tracked our steps. Getting down turned out to be more tricky than getting up, as the snow had turned increasingly soft by then and each step could either be OK or could get you in a 1m deep hole. Back at Sefton biv, we first enjoyed a brew and then continued the descent towards our car. The rest of the trip was spent with sleeping, driving, and hours of waiting at the airport - doing the trip in two days would've definitely been possible, but unfortunately, you can't book the good weather in advance.

A Week at Tasman Saddle

9-15 November 2013, Aoraki / Mount Cook NP (map #3)

Author: Michael Schier

Trampers: Mike Phethean, Michael Schier

What's better than going up a mountain without having to walk to its foot? Yes correct - going up lots of mountains without horizontal walking. And that was basically the entire plan for this trip.



We flew down to Christchurch on a Saturday morning, hopped into a rental car and drove down to Ashburton to fill up our food supply. You usually spend a lot of time thinking on what you really need and how heavy everything will be in the end, but not when you're planning on getting an air-taxi, that drops you and all your crap at the hut. This probably saves your shoulders from a lot of pain, but you can still screw it up in another way at the supermarket - we ended up with a huge bill and our biggest fear for the rest of the week was how to eat this pile of food just so we wouldn't have to carry it out at the end.

After our power-shopping session, we continued our way down to Mt. Cook village and Mike soon found out that the airport considered the weather good enough to give us a lift up to Tasman Saddle today, which, not surprisingly, is at the top of Tasman glacier. The flight in was quite exciting as it was the first time for me to fly in a chopper, and Mike somehow managed to get us two front-row seats, pushing the view-hungry tourists into second row.

After a scenic flight in and an intermediate glacier landing to abandon the second-row tourists, we finally landed close to Tasman Saddle hut. Five minutes later, we were in the hut, breathing heavily from the exhausting walk (and from dragging a 100kg food bag behind us). The rest of the day was spent with drinking tea, reading books, and shooting photos.

Next day, the weather forecast wasn't too good, so we stuck to our books and later in the day walked up Hochstetter Dome (2810m) by somehow making it through the crevasses at its SW face with poor visibility. After being quite certain that we arrived at the top, we went down the normal way along the SE ridge.



On day two, we got up early to do Mt Elie De Beaumont (3109m). The plan was to do this as some kind of warming up route, but it turned out to take longer than expected - in fact it took us almost 12h (5h up) to get to the top and back to the hut

again. Main reason for this was that the south face was heavily crevassed and despite very good visibility, finding a way through them turned out to be quite tricky. The climbing itself

was of moderate difficulty, and we could reach the summit without having to bother with building fixed points.



On the way down, we back-tracked our steps, which finally led us to the main difficulty during our ascent: a 4m broad crevasse with a bridge over it and a slightly overhanging 4m vertical step. On the way up, we simply crossed the bridge and climbed the step, which was doable although really exhausting because I had to dig through a meter of soft snow while holding my body weight with the other hand. On the way down, the plan was to build a T-anchor and abseil on top of the bridge, and that's what we did. What we didn't expect though, was that when adding even just slightly more weight to the bridge below, it would collapse, and that's what happened. So the lucky one who abseiled first (Mike) had to make his way up again along the rope, while making comments that mainly sounded like F***. I can't recall the last time I've seen somebody with such a red head. But as funny as the situation was back then, we still had to find a way across this main crevasse, and we could see the clouds rising which, once at our level, would reduce our visibility down to a few meters, which isn't exactly what you want in such a situation.



First we thought of abseiling at a point where the vertical step is higher so that the overhang would get us to the other side of the crevasse below, but we couldn't tell for sure how far the rope would cut into the snow and whether we would end up dangling above the 30m deep crevasse with no chance of reaching the other end or not. So we finally followed the edge towards the rock face of Mt. Walter, traversed some avalanche debris that had come off the rock face, and downclimbed a small waterfall to get to a much more solid bridge, which ultimately allowed us to get down.

The rest of the way back was spent under 2m-visibility conditions, and I was quite glad that Mike had his GPS. Although not precisely walking in a straight line (when looking at our tracks the next day, one might think that we must've been pretty drunk) and running into crevasses more than once, we finally made it back to the hut.

Because our easy day had turned out not to be that easy after all, we decided to have a rest day on Tuesday and simply took a stroll over to Kelman hut followed by some pitching up to Mt 9144. I made the mistake and agreed to make Mike lead pitches one and three, so he was the one to run into a snow-stake, a quite new ice screw, and a Balakov tool - lucky bastard! Especially the tool should serve us well just 3 days after...





Day four, Wednesday, was reserved for climbing Mt. Green (2837m). Although lower than Ellie, the face was quite steep and I found it hard to decide whether to use fixed points or not. We climbed the South face almost to Divers Col, had a short break there, and then continued on to the top, circumventing a crevasse that went around almost the entire SW face to the true right. Quick photos at the top, some hero poses as usual, and then we went down again, this time simul-pitching the SW face and traversing the crevasse at its

bottom to the same point where we got up. We then went down the SE glacier face as it was less steep and less avalanche-prone than the S-ridge and traversed back onto the ridge at a height of 2200m.

On day five, Thursday, we wanted to climb Mt. Annan (2934) via the main couloir but soon ran into problems with rocks and stones constantly falling down the gully. We climbed the first two pitches of probably four to five but then decided to turn around as major holes in our helmets wouldn't look that great when coming home - and it definitely was the right decision - while abseiling, the rubbish that was coming down just got bigger and bigger.



Later the day, back at the hut, we managed to get a cheap flight out for Friday lunchtime, and this was good timing as the bad weather was expected to arrive on Saturday. So the next day, we got up early again and did Mt. Alymer (2699m) (I believe we found the steep bit in its face that people were talking of) and then followed the ridge-line to summit Hochstetter Dome a second time. On the way down, we had a quick chat with members of an instruction course at Lengenfeld Saddle before returning to the hut and enjoying bacon and eggs one last time.

After the chopper dropped us at the airport, we checked in at the Youth hostel and had an extensive shower first before doing anything else. Later, we popped by the Sebastapol bluffs to get some fun rock climbing done. After the climbing session and while going back to our car, we saw a chopper just flying by our noses, heading up towards Mt. Kitchener, potentially searching for some troubled trampers. A couple of minutes later, we found out that we actually know these guys the chopper was looking for and went to the emergency service station to look after them. Luckily, they were not injured, and after waiting for them completing some paperwork, we gave them a lift to the Youth hostel and later enjoyed a couple of beers at the Mountaineer's cafe to conclude a brilliant week.

Bushcraft River Crossings

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

Author: Emily Stretch



The majority of Team Bushcraft had made every effort to keep their feet dry on the way to the campsite. But when it came to learning about river crossing later that afternoon, it was immediately apparent that notwithstanding our previous efforts, no amount of side-stepping, tree-clinging or stunning athleticism would change the fact that we were all going to get wet. Our esteemed team leaders showed us how it was done and then it was our turn, with many of the shorter individuals in the group making beelines for tall people who looked most likely to be able to stop them from floating downstream. Safe and sound and wet on the other side looking back, the river did not seem quite as intimidating as it had beforehand – a rewarding experience!! A huge thank you to our fantastic team leaders who took the time to share their passion for the outdoors with us: Allen (the man of many good yarns), Marie (the super navigation leader), Sam (the mapping machine with a hidden repertoire of inspirational poetry) and Sue (the sharer of many pearls of tramping wisdom)!



See more photos from bushcraft on the next page



Cow Creek

28-29 September 2013, EM, Tararuas (map #4)

Author: Tracey Black

Trampers: Barbara Keenan, Derek Moore, Grant Floyd, Jo Mackay, Michelle Rich, Paul Crozier, Tim Bruce, Tracey Black (leader)

This was one of those trips that makes you think the grading system really should have an extra category so you can get a feel for how demanding the “EM” is really going to be. Of course you should be able to tell that from looking at a map (note to self...read map more closely before signing up for next trip!), but how much simpler would it be if an EM tramp also had descriptors like: “easy peasy” or “gutbuster”? On the other hand, perhaps eight of us wouldn't have signed up to do this trip if we knew it was of the latter variety!

We left Wellington on Saturday morning for Kiriwhakapapa road end, not too far past Masterton, and as we were standing in the shelter waiting for our last group member to arrive, looking out at the driving rain, two guys arrived down from Blue Range Hut. That's about 650m or two hours up the hill and a convenient lunch stop. They looked a bit surprised to see that we were heading into the range given the gale force norwesterly winds and the heavy rain. We were a bit dubious ourselves!

Our wet weather gear got a workout and we headed up to Blue Range Hut. Our arrival was perfectly timed as we managed to avoid some hail showers. We were grateful to have lunch and a hot cuppa in the comfort of the hut, a very homey four-bunker.

After lunch we had a bit further to ascend and also headed onto the more exposed side of the ridge. Fortunately, the wind had dropped a bit from the morning and no hail dropped on us. We took our time descending the 550 m to the Waingawa River as it was fairly steep and wet. We even linked up two-by-two to cross a stream which, although not at all wide, was moving swiftly with all the rain. The river itself was raging, and we were glad to come to the fantastic swing bridge across from Cow Creek Hut, as we could never have crossed otherwise.

We reached our sanctuary from the rain about three hours after leaving Blue Range. It was already warm in the hut, as the MFs had decided to abandon their more ambitious plans for the day due to the weather, and had holed up there. Cow Creek is a six-bunker, so it was a squeeze, but everyone was just very glad to have shelter.

Two of our group pitched the tents they had brought (having figured that with eight in the group and a six-bunker hut our destination, a tent may be handy). We also pitched a large fly for extra room for gear, so that we could free up floor space. Having seen for the first time how one of these performs in the rain, I'm glad that we were able to use the floor and didn't need to sleep under it!

Along with the cheerful sharing of a small space among a large group, the other highlight of the trip was dinner. We had chilli con carne with spices Tim brought specially, and for dessert fruit and amazing custard. We had enough left to have some for breakfast the next day, and it was still delicious.

So we ended up with four on their sleeping mats on the floor, including one in a snug position under a bunk. This was a pretty successful arrangement except unfortunately for the person who ended up under the dripline of the wet clothes we'd hung up.

Sunday dawned less wet and windy thankfully. We headed back the way we'd come, slogging up the hill. Although we weren't in any doubt, we had it confirmed that there's heaps of room for improving our fitness when the MFs caught us up a couple of hours later, having patiently waited until we'd cleared out before getting themselves sorted.

We were all fairly glad to reach the van in the mid afternoon and then be on our way to coffee, cake, pie, or fish and chips in Carterton. But it turned out we had one more challenge to deal with...we discovered we had a flat tyre, although fortunately this was when we got back to the van from our coffee stop! It turns out that changing a flat in one of the club vans is not that straightforward. It was a true team effort, and we also met some friendly locals who came to help.

So we finally got back to Wellington in the early evening. It was a great group to go a tramp with in crappy weather, and Blue Range and Cow Creek are both great wee huts that we were able to fully appreciate given the conditions.

Family Trip to Totara Flats Hut

19-20 October 2013, Tararua (map #6)

Author: Barry Cuthbert

Trampers: Oliver Cuthbert (7), Theo Jennings (6)

Porters: Barry Cuthbert (leader and scribe), Alan Jennings

Summerlike conditions with bright sunshine and highs of early 20's were promised and delivered for the weekend, and a couple of keen lads were ready to go.

The track up to the Holdsworth/Totara Flats junction seems to have been continuously upgraded towards a metalled highway of constant gradient. In the warm weather, a break at Rocky Lookout was welcome for a drink and chocolate. Distant mountains were pointed

out with suggestions of future family trips but Ollie and Theo were much more interested in conquering the local peak at the lookout.

Afterwards the gravel trail continued to wind its way around the spurs and allowed good progress. The Totara Flats junction now sports a couple of park benches over and above the existing logs, and it was a perfect place to stop for lunch for our group.

Stepping off the Holdsworth Highway onto the track towards Totara Flats couldn't have provided a more stark contrast with the track full of roots and rocks and mud. Theo and Ollie quickly slipped into their Kevin and Jamie First Crossings adventure modes and their imaginations magnified every splash and jump hundred-fold.



After a 270m descent down towards the headwaters of Totara Creek, some sticks across the track and a couple of orange triangles that pointed left indicated the start of the new track opened by DOC. The new track follows the eastern ridge that runs parallel to Totara Creek, rising gradually over Pt. 575 before veering off the ridge and then down a spur. The track is an easily followed padded trail with occasional patches of gravel laid on the spur. Towards the bottom of the gradually steepening spur there were some impressive totara and rimu. About 60 metres above Totara Creek a new bridge crosses over a small creek and this proved a perfect opportunity to cool off.



It's always astounding how kids who immediately prior to stopping are flagging, complaining of being tired and hungry, suddenly burst into life with boundless energy to throw stones, chase sticks downstream and despite the coolness of the water, go for a swim. All without any addition of chocolate or sugar.

The new track then sidles around the next spur on a benched and stepped gravel track. An unmarked creek about 5-10 mins south of the first bridge proved the most challenging part of the trip. The creek is in a steep sided gully with loosely consolidated gravel and was a real scramble to get down and back up. Ollie somewhat unintentionally took down the fast way down, which was quite the surprise to him as one second he was on the track then next he was chasing his pack down the creek. A further 15 minutes sidling saw us dropping down to the



new swing bridge over Totara Creek then it's a 15 minute jaunt along the creek to the swing bridge over the Waiohine. Passing glimpses of the hut through the trees provide great motivation to tired legs to carry on a little further. The Waiohine swing bridge is long, wobbly and scenic, and a great highlight at the end of the day.

Totara Flats hut sits on a grass river terrace opposite where Totara Creek meets the Waiohine River. It's a large hut sleeping 24 and the night we were there it was half full with a couple of young hunters, a fairly large party from Victoria University Tramping Club and a guy checking out his company's work on the new bridges along the Waiohine valley. With some noise in the hut it took some time for the kids to go to sleep, despite the long day.

Overall we took 8 hrs from leaving the carpark to arriving at the hut, with about 5.5 hrs actual walking. One useful technique with getting kids to walk long distances is breaking the trip into bite-sized chunks with something different or interesting at the stops to take their minds off how far there is to go.

A sunny Sunday saw our party starting out early, so we would have plenty of time for an ice cream on the drive back home. We retraced our route from yesterday. The loose gravel scramble was a bit of struggle getting up for some. The climb back up the old track to the Holdsworth junction for lunch seemed to drag on and the park benches were a welcome sight.



Seven hours after we started we were back at the carpark having walked for about the same time as yesterday. Supervising two kids swimming in the river seemed like too much hard work so we settled for sitting outside in the warm sun with coffees and baking from Wild Oats Cafe in Carterton, which was a fantastic end to an excellent tramp for the family group.

Angelus Eventually!

1-3 November 2013, ALP1 M, Nelson Lakes NP (map #7)

Author: Debbie Buck

Trampers: Tony Gazely (Leader), Fiona Elliott, Elizabeth Claridge, Gareth Gretton, Debbie Buck

After the trip was postponed, rescheduled and the ferry was delayed, we squeezed into the hire car and arrived at Nelson Lakes camping area very late on Thursday night. The morning dawned bright and clear with a few sandflies finding my legs tasty. After breakfast we met up with John, a mate of Tony's from a few moons ago who was running the shuttle service that took us up to the Robert Ridge carpark. Here, despite a forecast for passing snow showers throughout the day, a unanimous decision was made to walk to Angelus



Hut via Robert Ridge.

Lots of switchbacks to warm us up before the Bushedge shelter where it started raining. Rain jacket on and then up. The snow flurries came in and the temperature dropped. Getting colder, Gareth and I stopped in Relaxed shelter to put on overpants— by the time we left it, the sun was out...Murphys Law in action! Gareth and I sweated our way along the ridge in sunshine, watching the weather move around and admiring the colours of the rocky ridge stretched out before us, with only a few patches of snow. Elizabeth was setting a cracking pace, and Tony and Fiona were being tail-end paparazzi – I was expecting lots of stunning photos to go with the trip report!

Shortly after the first basin with the abandoned ski field, the rain arrived again and visibility dropped. We walked through it and broke into the sunshine again not far from Flagtop. It was a bit windy so we descended for a sheltered sunny lunch stop with a view of the third basin – picturesque tussock, snow, scree, but no tarns of note. Two Americans passed by as they came back from Angelus and told us the way ahead was all pretty unsnowed. For the rest of the day we wandered at a reasonable pace through the snow showers that came and went, stopping for snacks and photos of the beautiful snow-dusted scenery, until we descended to Angelus Hut at about 3pm.



More wood on the fire, a hot cuppa, a few old National Geographics, a cosy spot by the fire and I was set and ready to be sedate for the evening. Gareth however was a hive of industriousness – he had been pondering the roominess of his boots for most of the day and at an indeterminate moment realised he had left his innersoles somewhere (not in his boots). Gareth's mission for the evening was to develop something akin to innersoles, using whatever non-personal property was in the hut...

He quickly honed in on the thermal insulating and relative cushioning properties of paper....I started to read my magazine more quickly. Prototype one looked remarkably like rollie cigarettes – squashing lots of small rolled tubes of paper into the sole of his boot. This failed the comfort and continual coverage tests. Prototype two was even more labour and resource intensive – lots of small (<1cm diameter) balls of scrunched up National Geographic, crammed into the sole of his boot using a complex particle packing model. This seemed very promising.

Midway through our very tasty dinner, complete with smoked salmon, two more trampers turned up. During the course of the evening the conversation with these trampers turned to floating floorboard underlay! Gareth was not slow in making a connection between the squidgy purple stuff with reflective gold foil coating, and innersoles. The carefully laid layer of paper



was unceremoniously removed from one boot and replaced with the purple 'squidgy sole', with gold side down. The trial stroll around the hut was completed and declared a success. With a bit of fine tuning, Gareth's boots were ready for an ascent of Angelus Peak, and we were ready for bed.

Saturday dawned fine-ish and suitable for a summit. We set off, and after a few stream jumps to avoid wet feet, were scrambling over rock fall and then up tussock towards Angelus Peak. Soon it got snowy and steep enough to get out the ice axe, and shortly after that the crampons. We dumped our packs at a rock wall and then proceeded up over scree and snow, in poor visibility. About this time my crampons started to have some technical problems that needed fixing...annoyingly close to the summit. Gareth and Fiona continued on to the summit for some photos of the mist. Stuck on a rock, I trouble-shooted and sorted my crampons with the assistance of Tony and Elizabeth who was regretting wearing her loose tramping boots.



After the excitement of summitting and fixing crampons, we tramped to Sunset saddle and looked over into the magical valley before us...circled by peaks, our path downwards was a mix of snow and tussock. Off came the crampons, so we glissaded and moved quickly down the valley until we came to the first emerald-green tarn. We kept going to

lunch in the sun overlooking the next tarn in Hopeless stream, just above a waterfall.

Across the waterfall at the outlet of the tarn, along some snow-grass and rock slopes and then a scree run to the bottom of the valley. The scenery changed and it cooled down as we entered the bush and followed the track to Hopeless hut. From here it was a gentle downhill for about 1.5 hours, crossing quite a few side streams until we arrived in the Travers Valley.

Once in the valley, Tony lead us to his primo campsite – a sheltered, grassy alcove next to the Travers river. Before long, we were cooking dinner, putting up the fly and keeping cosy beside a not-modest fire. After seconds and thirds of chorizo pasta, we waited a bit and prepared our sticks for dessert -fire-roasted marshmallows.



Sunday dawned sunny and we slept in after our late night. Tony got the fire going and we took bets on the time it would take the sun to reach our campsite. After a leisurely breakfast cooking toast on the fire and drying the fly and stuff in the sun, we headed away about 10am, for an estimated 6 hour walk. It was a brisk pace all day, on the track down the Travers valley and around the eastern side of the lake. We made it back to the Nelson Lakes campground just in time for a celebratory dash into the lake before leaving at 5pm to catch the 7pm ferry – just!

Pencarrow Head

16 November 2013, E Daywalk, Wellington (map #9)

Author: Emily Shrosbree

Trampers: Chris Bolton, John Harrison, Barbara Keenan, Deb Jones, Laura Mursell, Misa from MeetUp, Mark Potheary, Bradley Scott, Emily Shrosbree (leader) Deborah Stoebe

This trip report is brought to you by the letter 'L'. L is for Lighthouse of which there were two. One was old and one was new(er). L is also for Lakes. Again there were two. One was circumnavigated and the second just viewed from afar. Finally, L is for Lunch – an important supporting character! Muritai Road in Eastbourne hosted the start line for what was a first with the club for a good proportion of the group. Our plan was a circuit to Pencarrow Head and back with some exploring of the various L's on the way. The forecasted strong northerly was already blowing, so we knew the easy walk to the Lighthouses would be more taxing on the way back.



Despite being an 'easy' graded walk, the group set a fast pace along the flat and in well under two hours we reached the fork in the track which lead us up the hill to our first Lighthouse. The stile at the top provided a good breath-catching and view-taking-in point, while the accompanying signage (see photo) warned us to take caution as traps had been set for Australians – luckily we had none amongst us today so we were safe to continue. The top Lighthouse at Pencarrow provided great views across the Cook Strait and back onto Wellington and while the wind was certainly upon us, the sun was making a good appearance too. On to Bluff Point for more views, and a little bit of daredevil rule-breaking (see photo) to get the absolute maximum from the land and seascapes before us.



We then took the path down to the first Lake in search of a sheltered Lunch spot. We found the perfect spot, guarded by a hawk which we discovered was coveting a kill...maybe not quite the perfect spot after all. There was lots of folding and unfolding of maps over lunch with particular interest in how far we'd get if we simply carried on around the coast. We also discovered one member of the party was in training and carrying 30kg of training weights – had we known earlier I for one would have happily replaced some of the dead weight with a flask of tea.



After Lunch we carried on round the Lake. It was now quite warm, and we had a small climb to come but this turned out to be very manageable. Back on the coast at the head of the Lake we waited for intrepid photographers to re-join us before heading back round the headland to face to the wind, passing Lighthouse number two on the way. The return leg was a bit of a slog into the wind, but we had jet planes to keep us going so spirits remained high.

Afterwards, three of us opted for the ice-cream-extension, and I have to say the others missed out. Green apple and Tiramisu gelato from Eastbourne is not to be missed...especially when a bean bag is the available leg-resting seat of choice!

All in all a very successful walk exploring a nearby land which some of us had previously only seen from the city side.

Skyline Track

2 November 2013, EM Daywalk, Wellington (map #10)

Author: Piyush Misra

Trampers: Tracey Black, Deb Jones, Erika Kalniskis, Helen Law (leader), Piyush Misra, Nicky Shields, Stefanie

A varied group of people we were. From unemployed I.T. Geeks to people who had to attend work phone meetings even on the Saturday! Yes - one of us had to be in on a phone meeting for at least the first few kilometers. Personally, I would like a job like that - going for a trek and getting paid at the same time!

Someone in the group must have prayed well to the weather gods. The sun shone and we filled up the Karori bus with 7 trampers near the Tararua hall shortly after 9am.



The walking track starts about half a kilometer from where the bus leaves in Karori. Gentle ascents and descents all through. If you trust the technology, during the entire trip, we climbed up 666 meter up and came down 659 meters. Most of the time, we were walking on treks that could accommodate 2-3 people side by side. So, it is a good 'chatting' trek – if you are not busy taking photos and then running to catch-up with the group.



Be aware that the trek runs through a few farming properties. So if you do not like cows, or even if the cows do not like you, you may not like the trek. In fact, if they do not like you, you may be finishing the trek a bit sooner! The cows can run really fast, especially when chasing humans.

Although cow 'traces' could be seen on most of the track, the track was not smelly. There was enough wind to move the smell towards our neighboring country! The dots towards the center of the picture, are not dots. They are cows. No cows were harmed in taking of the picture above.

It was such a clear day that we could see the South Island's snow covered peaks. The mountains looked so close that we debated if they moved the South Island a bit closer overnight.



Above, you see some beautiful trampers... and of course, beautiful views from Mt Kaukau. Sure those trampers look tired and hungry – it was lunch time after all. 12:56:28 to be precisely precise. So, it took us 3 hours and 2 minutes and not sure how many seconds (ah – I am slipping!) from the bus to the top of Mt Kaukau.



Once we got up to Mt Kaukau, the group had 2 choices. Go down to Johnsonville and catch the bus from there. Or, go down to Khandallah, grab a beer at the pub and then catch the bus. The choice was easy. They did not even want to wait for the official photographer! Evidence above.

Experienced trampers should add “a scooter” to the most meticulously prepared “What to bring for the walk”. Yes – one tramper did bring a scooter along!

The technology says that the entire trip was 13.21 Kms long from where the bus dropped us till the pub at Khandallah. It took us AROUND 4 hours 21 minutes and 51 second approximately. Spent about 2717 calories - you just have to trust that.

Deadline for submissions to the next WTMC newsletter: Friday 31 January 2014

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