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## Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

www.pntmc.org.nz  
P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

### Newsletter October 2020

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*Best of the Show in ONTMC Photo Competition 2020: Heron At Lunch. Photo by Chris Tuffley*

### Club Nights

Club nights are held on the second and last Thursday of the month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. Doors open 7.15 pm for a cuppa before start at 7.30pm. All welcome.

**8<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**What's Up DOC?**

Our annual opportunity to catch up with all things DOC. Our guest speaker from DOC will be happy to answer your questions about huts, tracks and any other conservation matters.

**29<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Colorado Trail**

**Glenn Pendergrast**

Come and hear about another of Glenn's epic long-distance hikes in the USA. This time his talk will cover his 800km hike in the Rockies, from Denver to Durango.

### PNTMC Jubilee Book

Old Boots & Packs - The First 50 Years of the Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club (PNTMC) will interest and amuse mountain users, historians, photographers, hut baggers and tree huggers. Read about current and past members' exploits, which include climbing our highest peaks (sometimes with boots on the wrong feet) and powering a car on white spirits cooking fuel.





## 1<sup>st</sup> November

### Tramping for Beginners #3

All

Anne Lawrence

357 1695

We'll decide on which of two options depending on the weather.

Option 1: Herepai Hut

Option 2: Field Hut

Both involve a bit of a climb to a nice hut for lunch and the possibility for exploring beyond the hut for those with extra energy! Leave Milverton Park at 7.30am.

## 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> November

### First Aid Course

Graeme Richards

This two-day First Aid Course is funded, in part, by an Eastern and Central Community Trust grant of \$2000 grant. Venue is DOC base at Pohangina. Cost is \$30 for members (\$60 for Non-members). Please contact Graeme Richards if you are interested in attending.

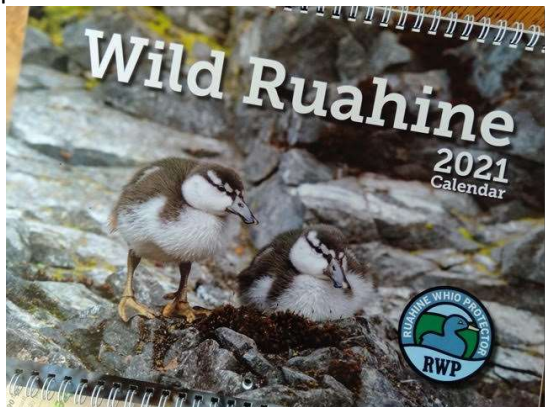
## Notices

### DOC Annual Hut Passes

Remember to visit DOC to get two months added to your hut pass if you had a current hut pass over the lockdown period.

### Wild Ruahine Calendar

The Ruahine Whio Protection Trust (RWPT) has produced a "Wild Ruahine" calendar for 2021.



They are selling this as a fundraiser for \$20 each. All profits go to the RWPT to support the work they do helping to protect the Ruahine whio. Get started early with your xmas shopping! Orders to Janet Wilson at club nights or by emailing [jwtilson@inspire.net.nz](mailto:jwtilson@inspire.net.nz)

### 77cm Grivel ice axe for a shorter one

George wants to swap his Grivel Mont blanc ice axe, which is new never used, for another shorter axe, that will fit in my day pack.

[georgebridgeman1@gmail.com](mailto:georgebridgeman1@gmail.com)

## New members

Welcome to new club member, Christina Beckmann.

## PNTMC Photo Competition

This year we again had more than 100 entries for the club photo competition. It was an enjoyable night with plenty of great photos on show. Harley Betts, assisted by budding photographer daughter Alex, did a fantastic job of judging. With Harley's help we could see how cropping can dramatically improve/change a picture.

Harley and Alex selected the top three in each category and from this the first three place-getters were chosen by show of hands on the night.

Winner in each category are listed below. The first two place-getters in each of the FMC categories have been entered in the FMC competition. The first three place-getters have been entered in the Interclub photo competition.

### ABOVE BUSHLINE with no Human Element

1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Tararua sea of clouds

2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Tuffley with Ariels Tarns

3<sup>rd</sup> Roy Ralston with South King Saddle

### ABOVE BUSHLINE with Human Element

1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Sunrise at Kylie Biv

2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Tuffley with Dominie Biv

3<sup>rd</sup> Kathy Corner with Heading for Mt Arthur

### BELOW BUSHLINE with no Human Element

1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Lake Lockett

2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Tuffley with Lake Colenso

3<sup>rd</sup> Chris Tuffley with The Maropea River

### BELOW BUSHLINE with Human Element

1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Asbestos Cottage

2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Tuffley with Winter Oroua Trapping

3<sup>rd</sup> Dieter Stalman with Swingbridge in the Tararuas

### HISTORICAL

1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Tent on a Rock!

2<sup>nd</sup> equal: Chris Tuffley with Camped on Walker Pass

2<sup>nd</sup> equal: Chris Tuffley with Snow Walk and a Number of Dwarves

## LONG EXPOSURE

- 1<sup>st</sup> Dieter Stalman with Night Sky 2
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Dieter Stalman with Night Sky 1
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Chris Tuffley with Stars Over Tongariro

## NATIVE FLORA & FAUNA

- 1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Leon Kinvig Resident Whio
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Chris Tuffley with Heron at Lunch
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Dieter Stalman with Fern 1

## OVERSEAS

- 1<sup>st</sup> Ben Stables with Volcán de fuego seen from Acatenango Volcano, Antigua, Guatemala (2)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Martin Lawrence with Cape to Cape SW Australia
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Kathy Corner with The Berber Thinker

## TOPICAL

- 1<sup>st</sup> Chris Tuffley with Evening Entertainment
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Warren Wheeler with Beware of Wind
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Kathy Corner with Pohangina Warriors

Chris Tuffley is the standout winner. In addition to him taking first and second place in 6 of the categories, his photo 'Heron At Lunch' was selected by Harley and Alex as 'Best of the show' (see pic on front page).

Well done to everyone – those who entered a photo, those who attended and helped select the winners and of course to the place-getters.

## Trip Reports

### Post lockdown Pohangina Re bait aka "the cold trip"

22-24 May 2020

Report and pics: Chris Tuffley

I wouldn't want to be a duck in winter - the river is freezing! But still as beautiful as ever.

Stoats don't stop for covid but trapping does... so post lockdown the Pohangina A24 trapline urgently needed servicing before the winter rains made the river too cold and high to negotiate. There was funding for one flight in to the Pohangina, so in late May Janet Wilson, Ernie Cook, Richard Lockett and I flew in from Kashmir Road, with Janet and Ernie getting dropped off at Leon Kinvig, and Richard and I at Mid Pohangina.



Janet's plan was for Richard and me to work up river, staying at Ngamoko on Friday night and then continuing up to Leon Kinvig on Saturday; while she and Ernie would visit the ~36 traps upstream of Leon Kinvig on Friday, and then work downstream towards Richard and me on Saturday. We'd all spend Saturday night at Leon Kinvig and then walk back out to Kashmir Road via Longview on Sunday. That gave each team 25-35 traps to visit each day, keeping the workload manageable in the cold short days of May.



*Nearing Ngamoko*

The river level was still nice and low, making for easy travel. But frosts all three mornings made it chilly work, with the sun only reaching us in the bottom of the valley now and then. LKH only has an open fire, and poor Janet and Ernie crawled into their sleeping bags around 6pm on Friday, then woke on Saturday to find their boots and socks and the water in the water bucket had frozen overnight \*inside\* the hut. Down the river at Ngamoko, Richard and I had enjoyed a toasty hut thanks to the woodburner there, and woke to a balmy 5 degrees C inside with nothing frozen. Our feet soon turned to ice blocks too however once we got in the river!

Saturday night at LKH Richard got a fire going without smoking us all out (was a grate in the fireplace the magic missing ingredient all those times I've come home from huts with open fires with everything stinking of smoke?);

between that and a thin layer of cloud cover overnight we woke on Sunday to a frost outside the hut only, with nothing frozen inside. Phew!



*The team outside Ngamoko Hut*

Cold feet aside it was a successful and enjoyable mission amid the rapids and still green pools of the Pohangina. Just in time, too - it started raining on our way home, bringing the river up. Between us we saw four pairs of whio, and heard a ninth duck at 6:30am on Sunday morning while still tucked up in our sleeping bags at Leon Kinvig.

See you again in November or so, ducks! Enjoy the river in safety and solitude until then.

**13 - 16 August 2020**  
**Cattle Ridge – Arete Loop**  
**Report and pics: Elly Arnst**

Going to bed on Tuesday night I had had plans to run in Auckland on the weekend. Waking up on Wednesday morning I had four free days and no plans. The opportunity for a longer trip was just too good to pass up, so on Thursday morning, after some quick forecast checking and possible route planning, Katie and I drove to Putara Road.

Lunch eaten in the empty carpark; we were off – heading to Cattle Ridge for the night. The track was much less muddy than my last experience and before long we reached Roaring Stag. The river was really low – “good weekend for an SK!”, we joked. From my previous stay at Cattle Ridge I knew there probably wouldn’t be much firewood, so we strapped as much as we could to the outsides of our already full packs (dog food is heavy!), used a couple of longer pieces as improvised walking poles, and plodded our way up the “steepest track in the Tarauas” (pretty sure it isn’t!). Note: it is rather difficult to cross a

swing bridge with long pieces of wood protruding from the sides of your pack!

It was totally worth the effort - we spent a toasty night in the hut making a plan for the next day. It was meant to snow lightly overnight, then stop sometime around 9am. Plan A was to go to Arete via Dundas, so off we set in the morning. Visibility was really poor and it was snowing even more heavily with the wind picking up by the time we reached the bottom of the rocky descent towards Dundas. Time for Plan B. With limited firewood supplies and no water left in the tank at Cattle Ridge, we decided to head for Cow Creek Hut.



*Enough snow and cold wind to turn hair into icicles!*

We were both warm enough for a couple of hours on the tops, despite the cold wind which turned Katie’s hair into icicles! The snow made for slower travel and several navigational checks were required to make sure we were headed in the right direction. We exited the main ridge without any trouble, and apart from being a bit overgrown through the leatherwood section, the track down to Cow Saddle was in good condition and easy walking.

We were a bit soggy by the time we reached Cow Creek Hut and it was still drizzling at the lower elevation. Although it was only lunchtime, we decided to stop for the day and dry out all our gear. We knew from recent stays at the Waingawa Hilton that we could get a roaring fire going fairly easily.

Saturday was a stunningly beautiful day. We wished we were already on the tops, but relished the feeling of dry clothes as we set off to explore “the worst sidle track in the Tarauas” (pretty sure it isn’t!) to Arete Forks. Lunching in the sun at the hut, we conceded

that the track was good – it was a bit up and down and you had to watch your feet in places, but .... it was actually an easy-to-follow track, so we had no complaints!



*Lunching in the sun at Arete Forks*

We ascended Pinnacle Spur, (which I am sure is much steeper than Cattle Ridge), happy to be going up, rather than coming down. There was snow underfoot and a decent amount of ice sitting in the south-facing sidles. However, we made it to the top without mishap – Tucker only requiring one shove up the steepest part.

On top the views were glorious. Fringes of cloud just starting to gather in the west. No other footprints in the snow – we were the only ones up there. We headed off to find Arete Hut, hoping that we were also the only ones there. We were. Maybe because it was cold. Luckily, we collected plenty of water, because by 7pm the tap had frozen!



*On top of Pinnacle Spur, Lancaster behind*

We had plenty of warm gear and good sleeping bags, which was just as well. While it was much warmer in the hut than outside, there was plenty of ice coating the inside of the door and the windows by the morning.

Emerging at first light, a cold wind had picked up and the clag rolled in. We climbed towards the Arete highpoint, then backtracked a little

to get onto the Dundas Ridge. Visibility was low as we walked along, sheltering on the western side of the ridge when we could. The longer we walked, the more the visibility improved, although the cold breeze hung around all day.

Dundas Hut was a tempting bright spec of orange below the ridge, so down we went for a look and to top up our water supplies. A good while later and another couple of hundred metres of vert and we were back on top, traversing the little bumps and clambering around the narrow sections of ridgeline to Walker.



*Dundas Hut from the spur, Dome behind.*

We opted for lunch in a sunny spot on West Peak, admiring the distant Mts Taranaki and Ruapehu - almost too warm and comfortable to move! But all things must end, and soon we were dipping down and up to East Peak, turning left to Ruapae, right to Herepai, no trouble with navigation in the now clear conditions. Possibly the worst track of the entire trip was the part between Herepai and Herepai Hut!

An easy trot down the hill and we had looped back to the start. A great trip in some of the lesser traversed sections of the Tararuas - we hadn't seen anyone for the entire four days.

We were: Katie Wright, Elly Arnst & Tucker.

### **Coppermine Creek 30th August 2020 Report: Steven Webby**

Several slips along the track, but fine. Cave weta and a harvestman in the copper mine. Windy coming down through the farmland. There was some debate over whether an egg

that was found belonged to a duck or a chicken. Good sunny day out.

Participants: Warren Wheeler (trip leader), Neil Benton, Michelle Benton, Ernie Cook, Rachel Price, Richard Lockett, Steven Webby.

**SK Valleys (Putara Rd to Kiwi Ranch Rd)  
4th September 2020  
Report and pics: Elly Arnst**

*My friend Katie and I ran the "SK Valleys" – one of the 'length of the Tararua' routes that people try to complete within 24 hours. Full details can be found at <https://tararuafkt.wordpress.com/>*

The moon is nearly full in the clear sky and the car windscreen needs de-icing before the short drive from Putara Base to the carpark. With the obligatory start photo taken, head torches switched on, I hit the record button on the GPS and we're off - 5:07am.



It's quite wet and muddy underfoot thanks to a decent amount of recent rainfall. We'd been refreshing the Ruamahunga stage level (at Mount Bruce) several times a day for the past week, watching it rise and fall, rise and fall, willing it to go under 400mm. Our last update at 9:30pm had been 399mm - game on.

We run to the second swingbridge, then the poles come out for the short climb to the Herepai junction. Poles away and running again down to Roaring Stag. The hut is empty. Quick bottle refill and off, across the bridge

and onto the bank of the Ruamahunga (who knew it was actually possible to run across swing bridges!). We're not quite sure what lies ahead as neither of us have been on this section, but at least it's light enough to see now. There is plenty of frost on the ground and a good dumping of fresh snow on Cattle Ridge. We cut across the shallows - the water is freezing. I decide there is no way we're swimming any crossings today, in fact I point blank refuse to go in over my knees (which isn't very deep).



*Traipsing down the Ruamahunga*

Thirty minutes into the river section I slip on a rock and go down hard on my right knee. It hurts like hell. I swear. I'm so mad. The day has only just started and I don't want to be forced to bail because of stupid rocks. I get up, rub my knee and roll up my tights to check the damage - a lump is already forming. Katie hands me my first dose of paracetamol for the day. Nothing much to do but to keep moving and see how it goes. Not long after this I fall again and hit my left knee! Thankfully not so hard, but enough to slow me down a bit.

We manage to stay on the TR the entire way - sometimes edging along the sides of the water, other times scrambling up and down the banks to avoid the deeper pools. Staying in the riverbed would be faster in low levels, but with the higher flow it would still be slow, not to mention freezing. At the final gorge section before Cleft Creek we climb up the bank near some overhanging trees and follow a good ground trail to the top. It doesn't take too long before we're dropping down into the creek and I spot two pieces of pink tape. Across, up the steep bank on the opposite side and bang - back on a track with orange triangles - wahoo!

An hour later we're crossing the Waingawa and standing outside Cow Creek hut (for the fourth time in two months). Katie nearly has a wet mishap dropping her flask lid in the river and scrambling to retrieve it! Crisis averted, we're on our way to Mitre Flats, back in familiar territory. The track is still a bit technical underfoot and the downhills jar my knee, but the k's seem to pass quickly. The sun is out and there's very little breeze which makes it quite warm. We cross a boardwalk covered in netting and think this is the slippery one - forgetting the sneaky one much closer to Mitre Flats. Katie finds it - ouch!

At Mitre Flats the front pockets get restocked, bottles refilled, shoes emptied of stones, and a second dose of paracetamol downed. The next stop will be pretty much halfway. For some reason I'm dreading this section. I've tramped the Barra Track twice and got an idea in my mind that the first part is steep and hard. It's a bit steep at the bottom, but zig zags and is nicely graded underfoot. It also eases off after less than 200m of vertical gain, but then sneakily descends and regains another 200m. Overall it really isn't that bad at all! The paracetamol hasn't taken the edge off, so I start on ibuprofen. I do a rough calculation in my head to space out the max doses between here and Kaitoke.

Close to Atiwhakatu we see our first person of the day. "You look like you're moving quickly". Yup, and we're gone - finally able to get some good stretches of running in. At the hut it's the same drill: write in the hut book, refill bottles, check pockets, move on. It feels strange running on "Highway Atiwhakatu" with its graded metallised track, large swing bridges, and stairs. We meet our second group of people at the bridge before the River Ridge Track. It's a family with young children. Unfortunately, it's a "Maximum load 1 person" bridge, and they are moving very slowly so I ask if we can jump the queue saying, "Sorry, do you mind if we go first? We're in a bit of a hurry." The woman steps back and I'm onto the bridge and running, leaving Katie to explain why we're pushing in.

The River Ridge Track. Fourth climb of the day, described as "rooty and steep" - basically just a typical Tararua track. I've resorted to allocating Pure gels to climbs, so suck one back and get

on with it. It's not too far up there and before long we're at Pig Flat and Katie is messaging Kyle about our finish time.

At the Totara Flats junction we meet a group of older gentlemen. "Where have you come from?", they ask. I laugh and reply, "Putara Road," as we head off down the hill. I feel so frustratingly slow on this section. I manage to weave through the less rooty paths to the right of the main track, but I'm glad when we turn onto the flatter sections of the new track. The wind has picked up and is blasting cold air straight at us. We have to stop to put on an extra layer and gloves. More downhill, one swingbridge, and then the Waiohine. Thankfully the wind direction is such that the bridge isn't blowing sideways today! Katie crosses and continues on to Totara Flats hut.

Two young guys are standing on the deck of the hut when I arrive. They are somewhat starstruck when they find out what we're doing and where we've come from. People actually do that stuff? Wow! Amazing! Despite the non-stop conversation we manage to restock, refill, eat and leave in under 10 minutes after politely refusing offers of baked beans and soy chocolate milk.

The Flats are great running - especially at the moment while the grass is short. We have a tailwind too, but turning the legs over at pace feels like hard work, so we settle for a steady jog. Cone Saddle is one of the dreaded sections of the route and I'd hoped to at least get to the top before darkness, but it wasn't to be. Part way up the headlamps come out and we momentarily lose the track. Thankfully it is muddy, so isn't too long before we find boot prints and we're back on it. Before long my headtorch needs a battery change, which promptly fails so requires another change - argh frustrating! I'd fully recharged it the night before, so it should have lasted much longer. I'm feeling grumpy, so I down a handful of sugary ginger. The track is pretty easy to stay on in the end, we only have to briefly hunt around after crossing Clem, otherwise it is straightforward.

Descending to Cone Hut is actually a fairly steep and technical 300m drop. Not good on sore knees. More drugs required. The hut is dark and empty, but warm and dry. Outside it's



blowing and trying to drizzle. Repeat hut drill, move on. Ten metres. "I forgot my poles!" "I dropped a glove". "Come on Eleanor, get it together" I tell myself. I know it's still a way to Kaitoke from here, but I feel like we're on the final stretch.

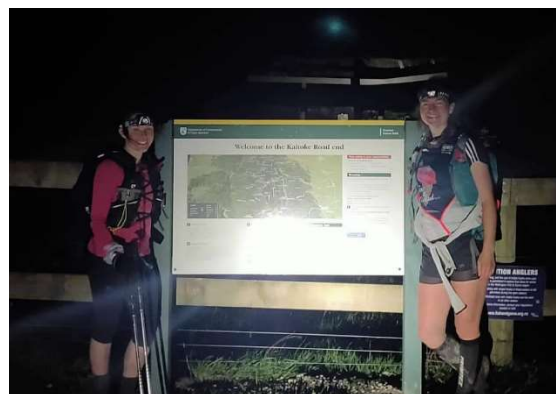
The river flats between Cone and Tutuwai are actually quite hard to navigate in the dark. The track weaves in and out of the trees and several times we find ourselves too far to the right. We decide to forgo visiting Tutuwai Hut and press on, this time heading too far left. Katie in front spots some markers up a side stream and I follow her, taking a few minutes before I check the GPS to confirm that we are not heading the right way! I show her and we retrace our steps and head right. After this the track is in the trees, mostly flat and really easy to follow. We jog along and the kilometres tick by.

We scramble up the bank, Katie getting caught up in the rope, and soon we're crossing the final swingbridge of the day and topping up bottles for the final time in Marchant Stream. It seems to take ages to get to the start of the Puffer, but then we're there. Final ascent, final gel. Thankfully the clay descent isn't too slippery today. The painkillers need topping up by the final descent to Kiwi Ranch Road, but I'm not stopping, so grit my teeth and get on with it. We joke about taking the wrong track in the YMCA bushwalk section and getting lost, thankfully it doesn't happen.



*Getting close to the end!*

Then it's there in front of us - a farm fence! We whoop as we run the final few metres to the lone car in the carpark. We freakin' made it! 72km of SK Valleys in 18:28. Body still feels good, just a little tired. Kyle takes our finish photo and hands us vegetarian pizza and chocolate milk, then drives us back to Putara Base to sleep what's left of the night.



***Made it!!***

### **Beginners Tramp #1 Atiwhakatu Hut Sunday 6 September 2020 Report and pic: Shelly Gyde**

I had seen it advertised... 'Beginners Tramp' so contacted Anne and got my name added to the list. I had my lunch, water, raincoat, hat, gloves and backpack. I was prepared. All I needed now was to research where Milverton Park stood.

On an overcast morning, a group of 15 met before carpooling over to Mt Holdsworth Road carpark. Our intention was Atiwhakatu Hut, 7km one way, have lunch there and return. I travelled shotgun in Michelle's van where conversation flowed and connections were made among her passengers.



Upon arriving at the carpark, I scanned in and collected my best Covid-19 QR code to date. We waited for all to arrive then set out with Anne at lead and Martin as backstop. Drizzle was beginning to fall and the Atiwhakatu Steam was up and moving fast. The air temperature was mild.

Along the track we crossed numerous bridges, including a 'one-person-a-time-chicken-wire-

set-up'. This was a little concerning but we all made it across without incident and continued on. Another bridge was of an industrial design, it's quite unique and unexpected to be seen upstream.



All was going well along the track... until I saw how high we were above the stream and got a bit unsteady as there were no trees to break my fall. I immediately turned and consulted the opposite rock bank qualities (I went from fine to fatal quite dramatically there). Thankfully Duncan was behind me and I felt reassured by his presence. I moved on but it played in my mind of our eventual return...

Arriving at the hut I went for a nosy inside and out. I learnt of peanut butter slugs and observed best practice for using a gas stove inside that I'd only just read about. I discovered long drops these days are much, much brighter than days gone by, almost a sunglasses requirement.

We stay for about half an hour for lunch and then began our return towards the carpark. One blister got identified, discussed and attended to. Conversations mingled. Wind gusted. Rain came and went. Clothing was taken on and off. Rain hats went up and down. Then without warning we all stopped and admired a particular view... and I found myself making friends with a very familiar rock bank again!

Everyone though got safely back into their cars just before it started to bucket down. The weather was perfect. We were to stop for a hot drink in Eketahuna's cafe but at 1530 it was closed. Alternatively the 4Square wasn't.

Thank you to all those I met and hope to join you again. Thank you PNMTTC for this opportunity.

Club members were: Martin and Anne, Michelle, Duncan and Stephen.  
Newcomers were: Amariya, Petrona, Michael, Rosie, Nic, Shelly, Jenny, Brendan, Francis and Lauren.

**Mitre**  
**12-13th September**  
**Trip leaders: Stephen Legg, Kirsten Olsen**  
**Report: Rachel Price**

It was a stunning sunny morning when we arrived at the car park for Mitre Peak at 9am on Saturday morning. Unfortunately, Warren, the original tramp leader, was recovering from a cold and needed to stay home. With clear skies, plenty of sunshine and snow-covered ranges beckoning us on I was full of optimism that we would make it to the top of Mitre Peak. Sprightly Warren had informed me that it would take three hours to the hut and two to the peak. With the sign stating 4 hours to the hut and another three to the top I had my concerns if we would make it.

The track was initially down a gravel farm road. The Waingawa River was on the right below us. It was a wide, pristine river with some deep inviting swimming holes. We passed a quaint hut with lots of chooks and roster outside. As we came to a creek, Kirsten and Stephen realized we had missed the track, backtracking we found the sign. The Barra track leads into the bush and carries on sidling along the range to the right of the river. The track continues like this for most of the way to the hut. Although there is not a lot of climbing the track ascends and descends to small creeks that cut across the track. There were many slippery tree roots all over the track which required careful attention when walking. There were a lot of large rimu trees. There were also beech, miro and matai trees. At times while walking in the shade of the trees we would turn a corner

and see sunlight streaming through the forest lighting up the ferns and streams. It was a beautiful sight.

Stephen and Kirsten were recording sighting of birds for the bird atlas. This is a five-year initiative running to 2024 to map New Zealand's unique birdlife. Anyone can be involved and the eBird app allows participants to record the data. We heard lots of grey warblers whistling on our journey to the hut. I was excited to see my first grey warbler and a whitehead.

There was a sharp descent to a long suspension bridge across where Stoney creek converges with the Waingawa river. Five minutes down the track we were happy to find the hut situated next to the river. This is a 14-bunk serviced hut which I was pleased to see had plenty of firewood. It is situated in a beautiful spot by the river. We had taken just over four hours and enjoyed a welcome lunch break on the deck in the sun. Shortly afterwards a young couple arrived who had made it to the hut in two hours making me feel awfully slow and unfit.



At 2pm with much lighter packs we set off to climb as much of Mitre peak as we could before sundown. This was a steady grunt up the track. As we climbed higher little bits of snow started to appear in the undergrowth. As we got to the top of the ridge it was a beautiful sight with moss covering the trees and snow on the ground. The snow on the tops of the forest was dripping though the trees illuminated in the sunlight like silver bullets.



Pushing through the trees we were suddenly above the bush line. Everything was covered in snow like a winter wonderland it was soft powdery snow up to my knees in certain places. This made it hard to tell where the track was. We climbed higher and had an amazing view of the snow-covered peaks to the left of us. Soaking in the beauty before we had to turn around.



It was getting dark when we returned to the hut. Stepping inside we were greeted by the warmth of the fire. The hut felt full. There was the young couple, a solo trumper and a group of four friends cooking and having dinner when we arrived. We enjoyed our dinner after a full eight-hour day.

After a great sleep I had a leisurely start to Sunday. Stephen and Kirsten had been up early to look for more birds. The other group in the hut were enjoying a cooked breakfast - they certainly hadn't left any luxuries at home. After 10am we returned via the same track to the car. The gravel farm road was longer than I remembered due to my slightly weary state. Gusts of strong winds were trying to blow us off our feet. We were happy to return to the car and enjoyed good coffee at a pleasant café in Masterton before driving home.

## **Toka Biv**

**19-20th September 2020**

**Report and pic: Chris Tuffley**

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a backcountry hut in receipt of a major rebuild must be in want of a visit to check it out.

So the recent news in Backcountry that Toka Biv had been given a much needed overhaul back in February naturally made the biv an attractive destination for an excursion. And I figured while I was at it, why not spend the night there? I'd always been drawn by the location, but had never been keen on staying in the biv in its former damp and run-down state. If I dropped off my mountain bike at Petersons Road I could complete the loop over Toka and Tunupō to boot.

The Mangaweka mountain forecast was for mere 5-10 km/h winds on Saturday afternoon and all of Sunday - something that should not be passed up! - with showers and light snow on Saturday afternoon and evening, clearing overnight to a sunny day on Sunday. I could live with that - settled! Convinced every other tramper in easy driving distance would have come up with the exact same plan for the weekend (cf. truth, universally acknowledged, above) I packed a tent and sleeping pad just in case, and set course in the car for Limestone Road on Saturday morning.

As I neared the ranges my confidence in my choice of destination waned. The tops were completely hidden in grey cloud...was I sure I wanted to head up there? My enthusiasm was further dampened by rain as I dropped off my bike at Petersons Road. Was I positive?? But the rain turned out to be a mere shower, I stuck to my guns, and the weather largely held until I was well up Knights Track and long past the point of no return. At which point it began to snizzle, large wet snowflakes alternating with drizzle. (Drat, there I was thinking I'd just made that word up, but it's already in [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com) with just that meaning!) Fortunately, the precipitation never reached soak-you-through-in-an-instant levels, and I eventually arrived at Toka Biv damp but several tail lengths shy of drowned rat status.

At first glance Toka Biv appeared largely unchanged, aside from the welcome addition of a water tank and a small deck. But on closer inspection there was a world of difference. Inside was no more torn lining, damp framing, mouldy mattresses or questionable rusted cans of - what does that label say - beans? Instead, I was treated to the sight - and in short order the shelter - of brand new two-by-four framing and plywood walls and flooring. Thanks, Jeff, Josh, Yaks, Peter, Rob, Shaun and the Backcountry Trust! And to top it off, I had the place to myself. Guess I wouldn't be needing that tent after all! Just as well, because I couldn't see any ground that wasn't waterlogged to pitch it on. In fact, no one else had been through since Elly, Katie and Tucker on their Shorts-Toka-Tunupō-Iron Gate run four weeks before. Is that truth not so universally acknowledged? After a cup of chilli hot chocolate (recipe: dissolve several squares of Lindt Excellence Chilli Dark Chocolate in boiling water) I settled down to do some maths (recipe: take a pen, a 1B4 notebook, and - ah, okay, you don't want to know the rest).

The week before I'd had a lesson in astrophotography, while on a weekend away with the Manawatū Camera Club; and I was keen to have another go at the biv, if the opportunity presented itself. So with the weather forecast to clear overnight I was constantly popping out the door to stand on the deck and check on the sky. By 10pm I was close to giving up, when on my umpteenth check the cloud overhead had cleared to reveal stars. I thrust my bare feet into my damp boots and hopped outside with my camera and tripod. It's surprising how much fun you can have outside in the dark taking pictures. I could have almost stayed up all night, quite forgetting to go to bed! It was beautifully still and surprisingly mild, and somehow over an hour went by as I experimented with shooting from this angle and that, and played around with how much to light the biv with my headlamp. But eventually I decided that I wasn't going to improve on one of my earliest shots, and that it really was time for bed.



*The Milky Way over Toka Biv*

I woke before my alarm went off for sunrise, toasty and warm in my sleeping bag. The thermometer however read 0°C...not what I wanted to see with wet boots and other damp gear in the hut! But thankfully nothing was frozen. The world outside was cloudless and still, with a light touch of frost and a glow along the horizon. And have I mentioned that it was still, with not a breath of wind? How rare is that?? I couldn't think of anywhere else I'd rather be. I hopped outside with camera and tripod again - feet in socks then plastic bags then damp boots this time - and whiled away a couple of hours happily photographing anything and everything (the sunrise, the biv, the frosted celmisia and dracophyllum, the snow dusted hills above...) before deciding that perhaps it was time for breakfast.

Hmmm gosh, what's that bird singing? It sounds like the mythical dunnock - but do you really find them up here? Why yes you do, that's one singing right there on that leatherwood bush! Who knew? Blackbirds, pipits and the odd chaffinch formed the rest of the morning's sound track as I leisurely ate breakfast, packed up, photographed the biv reflected in the tarn from several angles, then set off back up the spur to the Ngamoko tops.

Heading north along the range I spied a figure up ahead in the distance, moving north towards Tunupō as well. Something about its stride put me in mind of Catherine - could it be her? I figured I'd never catch up to find out, especially after the figure disappeared from view; but then suddenly there was Catherine right in front of me, sitting admiring the view and packing up after lunch. Always nice to meet a familiar face in the mountains! We marvelled at the lovely still sunny weather, then parted ways, Catherine south back to Limestone Road while I continued north to Tunupō.

Next to greet me was a kārearea, perched on a pinnacle not 10m in front of me. Well, perhaps greeted is overstating it...it regarded me silently for some time before taking wing as I got closer, disappearing out of sight down the other side of the ridge. The exposed climb on the approach to Tunupō gave momentary pause (ahh, leatherwood...so much more reassuring to hang on to than tussock!), then I was on the summit, eating lunch in the sun in just my merino tee. Te Hekenga dominated the northern skyline, capped in snow; and cloud lapped at the Pohangina side of the ridgeline below.

Then it was down down down down the Tunupō track, across the Umutoi bridge and then up up groan up back to the carpark...I could really do without that tent in my pack right now! Still, it was good to have had it...it wouldn't have been the first or even second time I turned up at a two person biv to find it occupied! And we were glad to have a tent with us then. Finally there was just the bike ride back to the car left, down then more up before the final down. As I reached the car I was beginning to wish I'd had a snack before getting on the bike; and then what should I find but half a packet of sour cream and chive chips tucked under the windscreen wiper. Thanks, Catherine! Chips munched, footwear changed and bike loaded it was back to Petersons Road to retrieve my pack, then zip zip zip back to Palmy, still riding the mountain high.

### **Knights – Shorts Circuit (Toka Loop)**

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**Report: Nicola Wallace**

**Pics: Warren Wheeler**

I booked into this trip very late, as the weather had been so windy and wet during the week, but Sunday promised to be a fine and mostly windless day. On the drive, we could see snow on the Ruahines, but just North of where we'd be going. Mts Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Taranaki were very clear today.

We arrived at Limestone Roadend just before 9am, to find four cars already there, one with a Ruahine Whio Protection sticker on the back window. Five minutes and we were on our way. The two stream crossings were uneventful, but near one of them several trees

were down, not in a group, but a tree here and there. It didn't look like wind or snow damage. Strange.

Following the second stream crossing, the real climbing started. It was a steady gradient up through the beech forest, but the pace was easy, so it was very enjoyable. Grey warblers warbled, and Chaffinches and Whiteheads sang their happy songs. At first morning tea, Warren offered us carrot cake, from his birthday a few days before. Yummy cake! At this stage, we wanted to know our present altitude. I guessed somewhere below 900m ASL, as we were still among trees. (I was thinking of Wharite, and how at 920m you're in the leatherwood). I was wrong, we were already over 1000m.

Soon we emerged into the more open world of smaller plants and more sun. I got to meet and know *Drachophyllum*. The gradient eased, and looking ahead to Toka, it looked like a lot more climbing was in store. Small patches of snow, and other patches of ice started appearing as we ascended.

Some cloud was also in store, high cloud, not the claggy kind. The rest of the way to the top was easier than I remembered, and 3 hours after leaving the car we arrived at the top. Afterwards I found out that the town I was looking at on the Eastern side was Dannevirke, we headed up to Toka peak.

It was so calm and warm up here, we unanimously decided this was the place for lunch. The cloud was a little lower now, just touching on some of the other peaks. Munch, munch, and suddenly "woosh" and a glider flew past. The pilot did another pass at our height, we waved and saw him wave back. He headed up range, and we last saw him near Mangahuia. There was less cloud up there.



It took us 40 minutes to walk along the tops, to the start of the Shorts track, marked by a disused rain gauge. The views west along here were still fantastic, and the band of Horopito showed up as a golden hue in the bush. To the east it was more cloudy. After initially descending into the bush, the Shorts track became undulating, as we walked over some knobs. The steep descent came further down, which led us to the top end of the Deerford Track. Here was a DOC sign that had had its misdirected direction arrow corrected by someone a few years before.....I think it was Warren.



More steep descending followed, and the side of my big toe (the left one) was starting to rub on my boot. I guess wet socks didn't help. But we didn't have far to go now, so I did my best to forget about it, and enjoy the increasingly gentle gradient through the bush. Very soon we crossed the stream for the final time, and a short walk along the grass had us back at the carpark at about 3.30pm.

What a wonderful tramp in what was - easily the best weather day for months. Many thanks to my companions for their friendly company.



We were: Warren Wheeler (trip leader), Neil Benton (drove us there), Michelle Benton (drove us home), Roy Rolston, Ernie Cook and Nicola Wallace.

### From the Archives - 50 years ago

There is a gold mine of entertaining reading in the Archive of Newsletters on our website.

September 1970 has a recipe for Stew and three trips reports, one of which is reproduced here.

**Sometime in August**, on a special occasion, an unscheduled trip was taken to Purity Hut in the Ruahines by four members of the Club. Russ Lacey, Ian Hoare, Kevin Pearce and Heather Crabb climbed a steep hillside to over 3,000'. The track was easy and pleasant through the bush.

It was proved, this day that the age of chivalry is not past. Heather was grateful to Kevin for carrying her pack. It was a gratifying change for

her as, on a previous occasion, she had been driven at the point of an ice axe, to carry a certain pack weighing every bit as much as the owner.

The party found themselves between two layers of cloud and even the visual effect of this was fantastic, similar to Chiang Yee's sketches in the "The Silent Traveller, a Chinese Artist in Lakeland."

Over a brew at the hut the possibility of the Club's maintaining the hut was considered. As it was raining the party remained in the hut for the afternoon, making brews and discussing various topics, then made their way back to the car at 4 p.m.



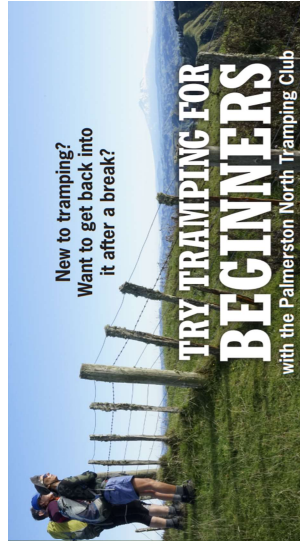
*Evening Entertainment. Photo by Chris Tuffley.  
First place in Topical Category of PNTMC Photo competition 2020*



# PNTMC Newsletter

## October 2020

- Photo competition results
- Trip reports and Upcoming trips
- Beginners tramps: 4 Oct, 1 Nov, 6 Dec



Articles for the newsletter

Send to Anne Lawrence,  
the newsletter editor, via the club website  
<http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>.



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