



Palmerston North
Tramping and Mountaineering Club

www.pntmc.org.nz

PO Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter March 2022



The first beginner tramping party this year at Atiwhakatu Hut

COVID-19

All club activities require participants to present a current covid vaccination pass until further notice.

For club nights held indoors:

- Scan in at the Hall and/or sign in with contact details in our attendance book.
- Show your current vaccination pass at the door
- Use the hand sanitiser provided. Masks are optional but please feel comfortable to wear one if you prefer. Maintain social distance.
- If feeling unwell, stay home.

For club trips:

- Participants on a club trip form a 'trip bubble'.
- The trip leader is responsible for keeping contact details of everyone in the trip bubble and sighting each participant's vaccination pass

Club Nights

Thu 10 Mar Kaikoura to Lewis Pass Anthony and Fiona

If you've never heard of the East West route, then come along. Anthony Behrens, Fiona Burleigh and Coach Ron did an extended walk from Kaikoura to Lewis pass in early 2020. Hear about a little-known tramping track that traverses our largest farm and crosses a national park, has special huts, big rivers and many delights.

Thu 31 Mar Annual General Meeting Bruce van Brunt

PNTMC is having its AGM on 31 March 2022. Come along and have your say. Better yet, have you ever thought about joining the committee? The official reports and elections will be followed by supper accompanied by slides of the winners of the FMC photo competition. If you cannot attend the meeting but want to offer apologies and/or input, please contact Anne Lawrence (Club secretary).

Trip Grades

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trumper should expect to do the trips in the following times:

Easy (E):	3-4 hrs	Other Grades:
Medium (M):	5-6 hrs	Family (Fam)
Fit (F):	about 8 hrs	Technical skills (T)
Fitness Essential (FE):	over 8 hrs	

BWD = Best weather day of a weekend

Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips usually leave from Milverton Park. A charge for transport will be collected on the day.

Gear for trips

Minimum gear for day trips is appropriate footwear, pack, lunch and snacks, waterproof jacket, over-trousers, gloves, warm hat, torch, toilet paper, matches or a lighter, sunblock, first aid kit, and a survival bag or space blanket. Each person needs to be equipped to survive overnight.

Overdue Trips

If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry as there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone Martin Lawrence 357 1695 or Graeme Richards 353 6227

Upcoming Trips

Sun 6 Mar

Beginner Tramp #2 Easy

Anne Lawrence 06 357 1695

We are going to Sunrise hut in the Eastern Ruahines. The carpark is about 2 hours drive from Palmy. The track is easy to follow, climbing steadily to the hut which offers great views (weather dependent of course!) and is a good place to have lunch. Some of us may carry on above the hut towards Armstrong Saddle. We'll all return down the same track. Depart from Milverton Park at 7.30am.

Sat 12- Sun 13 Mar

Kawhata Base Medium

Janet Wilson 06 329 4722

An exploratory trip up the Kawhatau River. DOC's Kawhatau Base is currently "closed" so we will camp nearby. Due to access issues this area has not been visited by the club for some time now – so it will be nice to revisit an old favourite. It is approximately 2 hours of river travel to the base (so here's hoping for low river levels). From there we can climb up to "Colenso" or explore further up the river. Departing Milverton Park 7.30am.

Sun 13 Mar

Ohau Gorge Easy/ Medium

Warren Wheeler 06 356 1998

This delightful section of the Ohau Gorge in the western Tararuas behind Levin offers those feeling a little adventurous an opportunity for a couple of hours of nice rock-hopping, wading and even some pool swimming. We start with an easy hour walk along the track from Poads Roadend carpark to Blackwater Creek stream, with views down into the gorge as we go, then down the river itself to exit just past the old town water intake. We then rejoin the track back to the roadend. Yes, you will get wet feet! Depart Milverton at 7.30am.

Sun 20 Mar

Burn Hut Easy/Medium

Dave Grant 021 684 050

This northern-most hut in the Tararuas is well worth a visit. We cross the lower Mangahao Dam (up the road behind Shannon) and follow the bush track sidling downriver before climbing up through the changing forest to the tussock tops along to the hut. Return the same way or the slightly longer alternative loop. Depart Milverton Park 7.30pm.

Sat 19-Sun 20 Mar

Tutuwai Hut Medium

Ernie Cook 0273031363

Visit the 20 bunk, serviced Tutuwai Hut in the Eastern Tararuas. Journey past the plaque marking the centre of New Zealand. Travel from the Waiohine Gorge Road-end. Depart Milverton Park at 7:30 a.m. Contact Ernie no later than Wed. 16th.

Sat 26 -Sun 27 Mar

Hidden Lake Easy

Warren Wheeler 356 1998

This unique spot in the western Tararuas is barely discernable on topo maps. It is a 4 hour walk in from Putara Roadend, behind Eketahuna, through some of the nicest forest around. We will

follow the track to Roaring Stag Lodge and veer off across country near the junction of the Ruapae Stream and Ruamahanga River, following our compass across a rimu forested terrace to find this little lake, located in a hollow about 20m above the river. There is a nice fly camping spot there to relax and enjoy. We will return via the Ruapae Stream and a bush bash up onto the track again, or simply retracing our steps along the main track. Depart Milverton Park at 7.30am. NB – an option, if it suits people better, is to do this as a Medium/Fit day trip.

Sun 27 Mar

Stanfield Hut Easy

Woody Lee 021 0444 552

An easy tramp to the eastern side of the Ruahines. We will start from Tamaki West Rd and follow the Holmes Ridge track and an unmarked riverbed route to the hut. After lunch we return the same way. We will leave from Milverton Park at 8am.

Club Personal Locator Beacons are no more

It is with some sadness that we announce the demise of the club PLBs. The club purchased two PLBs for general use several years ago. These instruments have reached their “use by date” and the batteries can no longer be replaced. The committee has decided not to replace these PLBs because:

1. They cost a lot;
2. There was very light usage of the PLBs over the last years;
3. A substantial portion of our membership now own a PLB;
4. PLBs can be hired from Bivouac in Palmerston North.

For those who own a PLB it is worth checking the date for batteries. Many models cannot have their batteries replaced beyond a certain date.

PNTMC Hut Bagging Posters

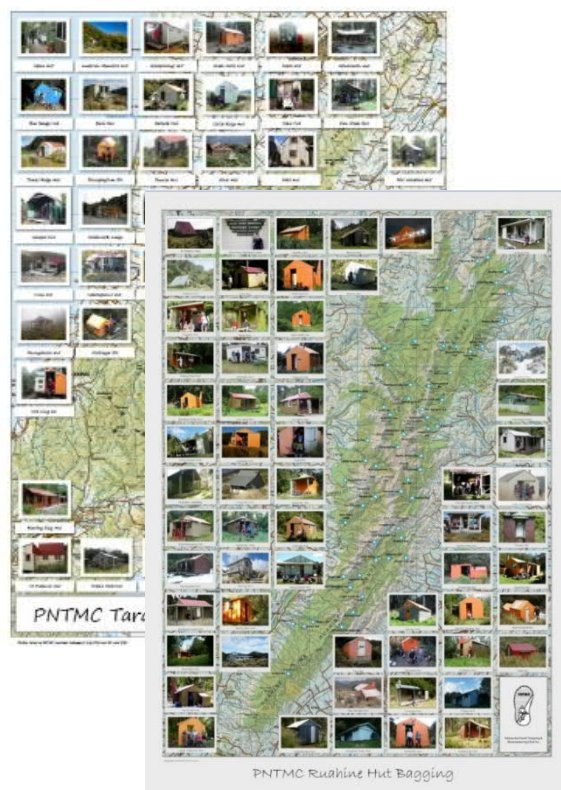
Posters are still available for both the Ruahine Huts and Tararua Huts that were produced following our Hut Bagging Challenge in 2012 and 2015 respectively.

Size	Cost for Members	Cost for Non-Members
A2	\$12	\$18
A1	\$24	\$30

Postage is about \$15 extra depending on where it is being sent.

Proceeds from poster sales go towards the club’s maintenance of Mid-Pohangina Hut and Ngamoko Hut in Ruahine Forest Park.

Contact Warren (06) 356 1998.



No Man's exploration

7-13 January 2022

Report: Stephen Legg (edited by Ernie Cook)

A short account of a 7-day excursion in the Northern Ruahine ranges of the North Island of New Zealand, involving 4 wheel-drive motorised transport up Big Hill and No Man's Roads, pedestrian excursions from Ruahine Hut to Dead Dog Hut, overnights at Koau Stream and Taruarau River (campsites) and Dianas Hut, with side visits to historic Shutes Hut and Taruarau Bivvy

Access to the northern-most Ruahines, just south of the Kawekas, is strictly controlled. Janet and Graham had been luckily successful in securing an exceptionally limited allocation of tramping permits (far more of which are afforded to hunters) for a five-day pedestrian exploration of this fascinating wild unspoilt area.

Access was via a rough 4WD track in Graham's rugged motor transport through Big Hill Station up Big Hill Road (*shown as '1' on the map*) to Ruahine Hut (*shown as '2' on the map*). The latter was occupied by hunters. This was of no great concern to our party. We had pre-planned to camp there, amongst shaded tree cover. Since we were a hardened group of Kiwi trampers, after tent erection, we enjoyed pre-dinner nibbles and cool beers prior to turning in. It was stiflingly hot.

Next day, we motored slowly to the boundary of the ranges along a rutted No Man's Road, for a brief visit to No Man's Hut. Although I am a man, I have 'No Idea' why it is so named. En route, we had splendid sunny clear-blue-sky views from Tikorangi High point (1061m) of the adjacent and distant Ruahine ranges, including a sweeping panorama of the Hawkes Bay. The top notch Gimmlett Gravels wineries of Napier and Hastings were visible far below. Since we were a hardened group of Kiwi trampers, our pre-luncheon exercise for the day entailed a steep down-and-up clamber to Dead Dog Hut (*shown as '3' on the map*). Although I am not a dog, nor yet dead, I have 'No Idea' why it is so named. In a dry pebbly riverbed, we found a pure white egg, probably of a Blue Duck or a Paradise Shelduck (which have very similar eggs). I dare not mention the pre-dinner nibbles and cool beers prior to turning-in back at Ruahine Hut campsite. Again, it was stiflingly hot.



South of Kaweka Forest Park is the Northern Ruahines. Numbers 1-6 show the route from Ruahine Hut to Shutes and Dianas Huts, with a side trip to Dead Dog



Janet and Kirsten about to descend to Dead Dog Hut

On the third day of this excursion, since we were a hardened group of Kiwi trampers, we donned packs and walked to our campsite for the night at the Koau Stream crossing (*shown as '4' on the map*). Highlights were hearing (but not seeing) a North Island Robin adjacent to the track about 30 min after departure, some success in destroying wilding sapling pine trees, a lengthy tricky sidle through thick bush with care needed for route-finding. The walk was terminated by a very steep descent. It was hot, so one of our number immediately dipped in the river fully clad. Others immersed entirely unclad after pitching tents on a grassy shelf above the stream. We searched for, but did not find, the apocryphal Shutes Headstone. The story goes that an olde wanderer Mr Shute died here and comrades subsequently attempted to install but lost the headstone somewhere near the stream crossing, or maybe further up the adjacent hill. I have 'No Idea' why they lost it but, unexpectedly and surprisingly, we found the remnants of a hut and some evidence of wire fencing on the flats above the stream. Since we were not such a hardened group of Kiwi trampers as we thought, we retained the tradition of pre-dinner nibbles but were not tough enough to carry in any cool beers, even though our leader defined the excursion as 'cruisy' because each day comprised only 5-6 hrs of tramping.



Janet and Graham proudly showing one of the wilding pine saplings removed en route

The fourth day saw our party puffing up to a ridge, near the top of which we failed in a brief search for a hot spring that is marked on a 1959 map but not on a current topomap. The old map shows the spring on the right of the map-marked track. The track that we followed (marked with orange triangles) seemed to sidle well off to the left to join the ridgetop at a saddle, so we realised we were not as near to the apocryphal hot spring as we had hoped and the bush was too thick to easily penetrate. It would have taken several hours of searching so we elected to press on. The day was characterised by stupendous views under a blazing sun, a long tangly sidle, a few minor tumbles, substantial success in finding and destroying wilding sapling pine trees, a case of one member lost (by failing to see a turn off the final ridge, but rapidly self-rectified) and then found. It was surprising that a shrill 'emergency' whistle could not be heard at so short a distance as about 100m. Shortly before reaching Shutes Hut, we cut right down to a wonderfully open and shady campsite beside Taruarau River campsite (*shown as '5' on the map*). Hot - luxury nibbles - swim - no beers.



Stonewalled Shutes Hut

Day five saw our party retrace our steps to visit historic Shutes Hut. It is stonewalled and was inhabited in isolation

by Alex Shute with his three dogs Whiskey, Brandy and Gin for 12 years in the 1920's! There followed a long struggle up a steady ascent with very little shade along tops in searing heat. One party member had failed to pre-hydrate at breakfast, so rapidly ran out of water, started to stagger and hallucinate - classic symptoms of heat stress. After sharing water and a lunchtime break in a cooling breeze at the high point (1183m), where we observed two black backed gulls (unusual for this location) and had increased our pine tree decimation count to over thirty, our invalid recovered fully. A short side scramble took us to the bright orange Taruarau bivvy, located in forest just below the bush-line. Its thunder box was charmingly found in dappled shade surrounded by Tom Tits. On regaining the high point, our recovered invalid set off downhill in advance and alone and immediately lost the track but wisely stayed put, waiting for the rest of the party to catch up and was easily 'found'. An extremely steep rooty descent terminated in a silver wriggly tin Dianas Hut (*shown as '6' on the map*). A plaque indicated that the hut was built in 1979 by the Tresidder family in memory of daughter Diane who died in 1978 aged 21 years. Very hot – last of the nibbles - shallow dip in river - obviously no beers.

The last tramping day involved a gentler climb to join No man's Road, a long gentle walk along said road back to Ruahine Hut (*shown as '2' on the map*). En route, we observed Fern Birds and stopped to inspect Lessong's Monument. The rest of the day was cruisy and lazy in camp. Two party members headed off for an hour to successfully find the North Island Robin that had been heard on the first day of the pedestrian excursion. The rest enjoyed the heat, nibbles, no swim, but all of the remaining beer.

The final day was taken up with striking tents (well - fly's as it was still very hot), packing, motoring out to civilisation, finding a cosy quirky general store in Onga Onga and consuming ice creams all-round because it was still so hot. The final avian tally of 29 species in 71 checklist counts in a region where very few previous counts had ever been made, was only superseded by the final wilding pine-tree sapling chop-down or pull-out tally of over fifty.

Party comprised: Janet Wilson (Leader), Graham Peters, Stephen Legg, Kirsten Olsen, Ernie Cook

Hut Bagging in the Kaweka

Report: Grant Christian

29 to 31 Dec 2021

I was looking for places I could visit huts that I hadn't been to before and I found there were many huts and bivouacs not too far apart in the Kaweka, a place I hadn't visited many times. I devised a plan to visit 10 new huts over three days. The weather forecast leading up to New Year was a little cooler than the recent hot weather we had been having, with even a bit of light rain forecast for the first day.

I set off from the car park at Makahu saddle in fine weather but soon had to put on my poncho for the light rain that started. Not far into my walk I came across a deer that soon disappeared, crashing through the bush. My first stop was Kaweka Flats Bivouac and not long after I went down a side-track to Iron Whare, a still usable hut built in 1860. A stoat was coming along the track towards me as I back tracked, quickly changing direction when it spotted me. Shortly after I got a fright when there was a loud crash nearby. I didn't see anything and the sound stopped abruptly so I thought it must have been a large branch falling from a tree.

I spoke with a hunter as I headed towards Middle Hill Hut. He said that the track to Makino Hut was quite challenging. I reached Middle Hill Hut, which was a very nice hut set in a clearing. I

considered staying there the night but went over my map and came up with a circuit that would give me a shorter walk for the rest of the day but could end up with me visiting 12 new huts. So up the hill to Ballard Hut was the next section of my journey and where I would stay for the night. I arrived not long before it started to rain heavily. It is a small four bunk hut and I was there alone until a hunter and his girlfriend arrived.



Walkwire minus the safety net

Next morning I climbed back to the ridge and headed along to Venison Tops Hut (Tira Lodge). Some hunters were packing up to be picked up by helicopter. From here it was downhill to Rocks Ahead Hut. The stream had a walkwire across it and although I could've easily crossed through the stream I took the walkwire. I haven't encountered these very often and previously they had safety netting by the bottom wire to catch you if your feet should slip off. This one didn't have that safety feature so I was very careful as I inched across and thought

about the consequences if I was to fall off. A couple of people were at the hut and another couple turned up while I was there having my lunch.



The bare essentials long-drop toilet

There was a cableway across the nearby Ngaruroro River to the Rocks Ahead Biv. I thought I should visit the biv as it was so close. I carefully read all the instructions for how to use the cableway, noting that, although the cart was supposed to be left in the middle it had been left hooked up to my side. I chose high gear thinking this would be quicker and I should be strong enough to pull myself up the far side. I realised this was a mistake as I got closer to the other side and the angle of climb made it very difficult to make progress. I didn't think I could change gear at this stage

because the cart would roll back to the middle so I used all my strength to pull myself up to the other side. It was a close thing. Safely on solid ground on the other side I walked to the biv. I was amused by the open-air toilet, a long drop with toilet seat but no roof or walls.



My next stop was Back Ridge Biv, a climb of a few hundred metres. I enjoyed a cuppa with the occupants before heading on to Back Ridge Hut, an hour further on. The four bunk hut was occupied by a couple with a lot of gear and two large dogs so I set up my fly nearby.

In the morning I was climbing back up to the ridge when I heard the call of a long tailed cuckoo in a couple of isolated trees nearby. They often seem hard to spot but this time I was level with the tree tops and

spotted one in the branches. It soon took flight and was followed by another from the same trees. They circled around before eventually flying away.

It wasn't far to Kaweka J and there I met three young woman from Hawke's Bay who had walked up from the car park. They were celebrating New Year's Eve early with wine and chicken and coleslaw rolls. I sat and chatted for a bit and they gave me their leftover chicken and coleslaw.

After the break I headed south along the main range, stopping briefly to talk to a woman from Taupo who was on a six-day tramp. Continuing over Mad Dog Hill and into Studholme Saddle I dropped down to Studholme Saddle Hut and the nearby Studholme Saddle Biv. From there I retraced my steps back to Kaweka J and descended a steep track down towards Makahu Saddle, stopping at Dominie Biv on the way to the car park. I had visited 12 new huts or bivvys.

Iron Gates Gorge

19 February 2022

Report by Warren Wheeler

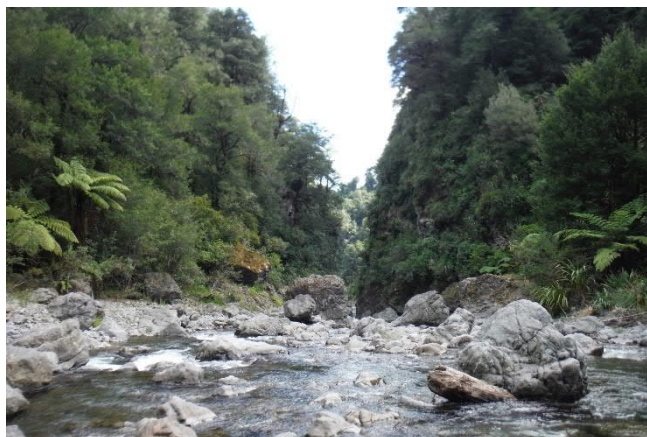
This trip was due to go on Sunday 13 February but rain and high flows in the Oroua River meant that it was postponed until the following Saturday (to avoid a clash with the rescheduled Beginners Tramp on Sunday). However, despite the improved weather and river conditions forecast for the Saturday there was no one else keen to join me except Robyn. This worked out well in the end as Janet was keen for us to rebait the stoat traps in the lower Oroua River loop. She already had helpers on the other lines to be done that weekend, but Graham's knees were playing up and needed a rest. This suited us nicely, although it was less than half the river trip originally planned. Instead, we enjoyed staying the Friday night socializing at their shed, along with Kirsten and Stephen who were joining Janet to rebait traps on the tops loop to Iron Gate Hut.

A relatively early start at about 8 o'clock meant that we were back soon after lunch. We had a lovely time, having had a chat with three young deer hunters (plenty if sign around, looking promising for The Roar), cleared very old rats from three traps, been stung slightly clearing a stinging nettle (ongaonga) off the track down to the Oroua Campsite (where we chatted with a young mum and her daughter on a jaunt down from Heritage Lodge) and enjoying a brief dip in the river just above the Iron Gates Gorge.

Back at the shed we could see that the tops were clear of cloud and thought of Janet and Co up there, enjoying their much bigger day out. Although it wasn't the adventure I had originally planned, it was great to be out and about, with the added bonus of feeling that we were doing some good.



The Top Team heading off to Tunupo and Iron Gates Hut.



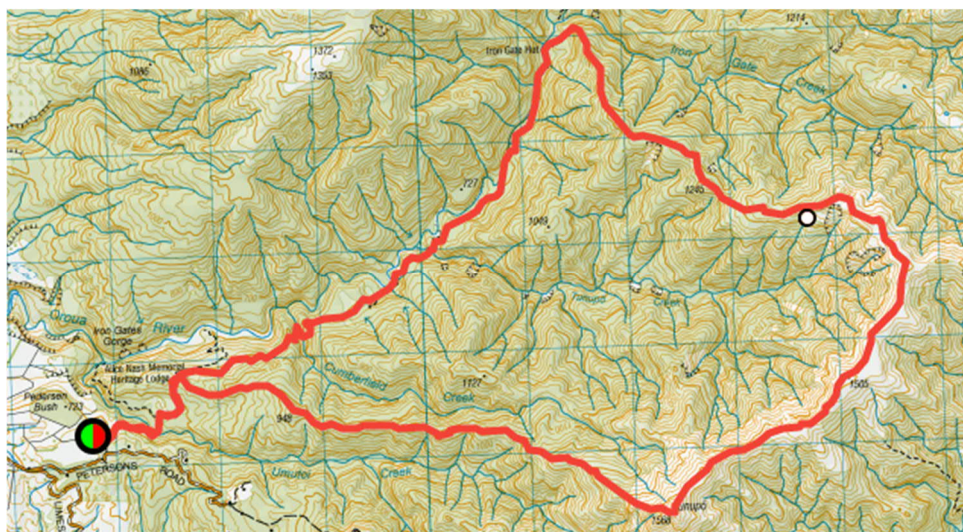
Iron Gates Gorge hiding behind some big rocks.

Tunupo - Iron Gate hut circuit

19-20 February 2022

Report by Kirsten Olsen Photos by Stephen Legg

We were three on this magnificent trip led by Janet Wilson. Stephen and I had for many years talked about loving to do the circuit after having been to both Iron Gate hut and Tunupo, but not along the tops. Here was the opportunity! On the map below is the traditional loop track. The plan was to do the traditional route, walking clockwise up to Tunupo, along the tops and down to Iron Gate hut where we would stay for the night and then walk down Orua river. One purpose was to rebait the traps positioned along the track all the way.



This is the traditional loop track. We went along the river from Iron Gate Hut to after Tunupo stream.

To be able to make an early start Stephen and I stayed at Janet's place, near the start on Friday night. We started from 99 Petersons Rd at 7:45am well packed with eggs and dried rabbit meat to rebait all the traps. The weather looked fine, although the clouds moved a bit fast. We hoped that the wind would not be too strong at the tops. It was easy going to the junction between the track to Alice Nash hut and the Tunupo track. We all just wore one layer.

Tunupo track is lovely. It is uphill all the way but there are flatter sections. There are places where you would normally see and hear lots of birds but on this trip, we did not hear many on the way up. However, we did hear the native Grey Warbler, Whitehead and Tomtit. When we came above the tree line, we were pleased that the wind wasn't too strong. We were maybe too quick to be pleased because the wind got up when we came nearer the top of Tunupo. We arrived at the last trap on Tunupo track (at the weather station) around 11:45. It was now very windy and we put on a fleece and our jackets to keep warm. We decided to have lunch at the next spot where we could find some shelter.



3 Descending from Tunupo. Looking along the ridge.

From the top of Tunupo we could see the long track along the tops and we could see the start of the line of traps we had to re-bait. It was clear and beautiful. In the photo to the left we are descending from Tunupo high point. There is not a marked track on the tops. At the beginning it is quite clear where to go because you go along a ridge. Later on, it becomes a bit more difficult to find the way and the traps to re-bait.

We found a hollow where the wind wasn't too bad a bit further down from Tunupo, so we stopped for lunch. We had a nice view over Hawke's Bay and a nice view back towards Tunupo.



4 Looking back towards Tunupo after lunch.

After a while when the tops flatten out there is an area that is more wet with small bogs and very low vegetation. It became more difficult to find the track and the traps, so we spread out to try not to miss a trap, but we did miss one trap.



5 Rebaiting a trap near the bog.



6 At the top where the track to Iron Gate Hut turns of. (a quarter past 2pm)

There is a clear sign where the track to Iron Gate Hut turns off the tops. However, a bit further down (quite a while after turning off) you have to make sure you catch the correct ridge to follow. It is not too difficult because the track disappears after a little while and you realise that you might have missed a turning. For a long while the track still runs through tussock before it goes into small vegetation and then a bit of leatherwood.



7 Big native earthworm, maybe Maoridrilus Montanus

Then the track becomes a wide, nearly vehicle-sized, track before it enters the forest. When we entered the forest, we came across a large earthworm around 300 mm long. It was crawling straight across the path. We think it was a *Maoridrilus Montanus*. The descent through the forest is quite steep at the end. When we arrived at Iron Gate Hut at 5:20pm we saw a tent outside the hut so we thought we might have to use our mats on the floor in the hut, but it was not necessary. There were four spare bunks so we had a good night's sleep.

At dusk, Janet and I went a little way down river from the hut to a pool where Blue Ducks/Whio like to hang out at dusk. Janet just said, "at this time the Whio used to fly up river" and we immediately heard the whistle of a Whio and saw two flying up river. We walked back to the hut where Stephen and several others from the hut were admiring the ducks.



8 Kirsten and Janet walking down Orua river.

Sunday morning, we left the hut at around 9am. It was overcast and looked as if it was going to rain. We went down the Orua river. The river was nice, low and cool. No problems with cold or warm feet. We went from true right to true left and back and forth over and over again. On the way down we came across a pair of Whio and later two male Whio who enjoyed each other's company.

Half-way down the river the rain set in and we now got wet both from the top and the bottom up. We also came across one of the big water spiders (*Dolomedes donsalei*).



9 crossing Orua river in the rain.



10 Dolomedes donsalei in Orua river bed.

We came down the river to Tunupo fly camp and then we went on to the track between Iron Gate hut and Alice Nash hut. We followed the track to Alice Nash hut where we had a short lunch at around 1pm. From there we returned to 99 Peterson Rd. just after 2pm.

It was lovely to get some dry clothes on and enjoy a bit more lunch in good company. It was a wonderful trip; beautiful views from the tops, beautiful forest and river and nice wild life. What more can you ask for?

Thank you, Janet, for organising the trip and leading us safely all the way.

We were: Janet Wilson (trip leader and head baiter) Stephen Legg (photographer and editor) and Kirsten Olsen (bait carrier and reporter).



11 The pair of Whio



PNTMC Newsletter March 2022

- Trip reports
- Upcoming events

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