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# PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

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P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

**Newsletter - April 2000**

## **\*\*\*THIS ISSUE\*\*\***

- **Snowcraft Instruction – book early**
- **AGM and Presidents Report**

### **TRIP REPORTS:**

**TNP- Ruapehu, Sarex 2000, Lake Colenso, Top Maropea, Deadmans-Rangi**

## **CLUB NIGHTS**

|                 |                                     |                             |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>APRIL 27</b> | <b>MSC Safety video evening</b>     | <b>Terry Crippen</b>        |
| <b>MAY 4</b>    | <b>Committee Meeting</b>            | <b>Mick Leyland's Place</b> |
| <b>MAY 11</b>   | <b>Wine and Cheese Gear Evening</b> | <b>Mountain Equipment</b>   |
| <b>MAY 25</b>   | <b>Indoor Rock Climbing</b>         | <b>Massey Rock Wall</b>     |

Club nights are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month at the **Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North**. All club nights commence at 7:45 pm **sharp**, winter or summer. The PNTMC Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

At the club night: Please sign your name in the visitors book. A 50c door fee includes supper.

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## UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

### Trip Grades

Grades of trips can depend on many factors, most especially the weather and state of the track. As a guide, a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the graded trips in about the following times:

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs

Fit (F): about 8 hrs

Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

(T) refers to technical trips requiring special skills and/or gear.

Beginners should start with Easy Grade trips.

### EASTER – ANZAC WEEKEND

April 21-22    Te Matawai                    M  
                  Richard Lockett                    323-0948

Depart 7-30am. In the northwestern Tararuas, in from Levin, this walk follows up the western ridge via Waiopehu Hut to Te Matawai hut for the night. Return via Gable End Ridge or down the Ohau River bed.

April 21-25    Nelson Lakes                    M  
                  Terry Crippen                    356-3588

Departing after lunch Thursday 20th. Making use of the Water Taxis for up and down Lake Rotoroa, the plan is to head up the Sabine to Blue Lake, check out Lake Constance and/or scramble up Mt Franklin, cross over Moss Pass and come down the D'Urville to the lake again. Its excellent beech forest with high open tops, and good tracks and huts. This year ANZAC day is on the Tuesday following on from Easter Monday so 5 days this time for tramping. We are catching the 5:30 pm ferry on the Thursday evening hence leaving Palmerston North after lunch on the Thursday - reward yourself by taking half a day off work. Returning on the 9:30pm ferry on Tuesday night, ie PN about 3am Wednesday morning!. (This trip is now full, sorry. Ed.)

April 22 or 23    Easter Egmont                    F  
                  Warren Wheeler                    356-1998

Depart 5.30pm on Saturday or other day, weather depending.

On this moon-light ascent of East Ridge we will leave camp at alpine-start-time of 3.00am in time for sunrise on the summit of Sharks Tooth, and to

see the dawn pyramid shadow from the main Mt Egmont/Taranaki summit. Return the same way with a massive scree run. Bring togs for a swim at the beach on the way home. Depending on interest we may go as a day trip instead, so let Warren know if you're interested one way or another, and he will try to arrange the trip to suit.

April 27            Thursday trampers  
                  David Warnock                    357-4140

### April 27            **Club Night: "Mountain Safety" video evening with Terry Crippen**

Come along and see what the latest videos are from the Mountain Safety Council. River Crossing (or not-to-cross), Hypothermia (what happens when you forget your hat and coat and gloves) and more.

4 May              Thursday trampers  
                  Merv Matthews                    357-2858

6-7 May            Mania - Pourangaki            M/F  
                  Terry Crippen                    356 3588

Depart 7am heading onto the tops at the northern end of the Whanahuia Range in the Ruahines via the newish Mania track (and the stile Mick and Llew built.) Across The tops and down to either Pourangaki or Kelly Night huts for the night. On the Sunday down river and across to the road end. Good forest, open tops, some H2O (solid as well as liquid phase hopefully).

7 May              Coppermine Creek            E  
                  Sarah Todd                    326 9265

Depart 8.30 am. Explore this close-to-home area north of Woodville. Stroll upstream along the easy track to explore the old Coppermine site and return via the Loop track with a climb up through the steep bush into the wind-shorn, goblin forest, emerging onto farmland with expansive views out over the Wairarapa.

11 May             Thursday trampers  
                  Carolyn Brodie                    358-6576

### 11 May             **Club night: Wine and Cheese**                   Mountain Equipment, The Square.

Come along to see the new season's gear. Feel the

Quality, try the fit. Bring your VISA card or cash!

13-14 May      Haurangi Range      M/F  
                     Graham Peters            329-4722

Depart Friday night. After camping near the Pinnacles Graham intends to tramp North-South to come out near Cape Palliser, probably staying at Pararaki Hut on Saturday night. This is your chance to experience a range of hills, not often visited by the club, with quite a different feel to the Tararuas and Ruahines. The route boasts such delights as the spectacular Putangarua Pinnacles and the famous "nettling sidle".

14 May           Rimutaka Incline      E  
                     Richard Lockett        323-0948

Depart 7:30am. The Rimutaka Incline follows the route of the old railway line between Wellington and the Wairarapa and is an ideal outing for both young and old. On the way Richard will be checking out the old railway yard at Cross Creek and will finish at the Fell Engine museum in Featherston.

18 May           Thursday trampers  
                     Harry and Chris Allardice    323-4390

20-21 May      Southern Tararua Range    FE

Dave Henwood            326-8892

Depart Friday 6.30pm, up to Field Hut for the night. Early start for a big tops day, up to Tararua Peaks, past Maungahuka Hut and on to Andersons Hut in a patch of goblin forest. Drop down into the bush again, past Waitewaewae Hut and out to the start at Otaki Forks.

21 May           Stanfield Hut            E  
                     Liz Morrison            357-6532

Depart none too early for a nice wander in to a well-maintained hut with a mix of bush and stream travel.

25 May           Thursday trampers  
                     June Sowerby            355-2690

**25 May           Club night: Massey Rock Wall**  
 Come along to the Massey Recreation Centre and try your hand at rock-climbing for free, thanks to PNTMC involvement with building the wall. Practise your belaying and abseiling for both rock and the coming winter snow conditions. We will have club gear available and club instructors to get you started or refine techniques. Contact Terry Crippen 356-3588.

**Trip participants:**

If you are interested in going on a trip, please contact the leader at least three days in advance.

Trips usually leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street with transport provided by car-pooling. A charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance travelled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

For general information or any suggestions for future tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or David Grant (357-8269).

**Trip leaders:**

Please discuss with the trip co-ordinators, as soon as possible, if there is any doubt that you will be unable to run your trip as scheduled. This is so that alternatives can be arranged, put in the newsletter, or passed on at club night.

**\*\*\* OVERDUE TRIPS \*\*\***

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Terry Crippen (356-3588), or David Grant (357-8269)

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## NOTICES

### ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

All kinds of articles (trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, product reviews, etc etc) are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles may be hand-written or sent by e-mail to the newsletter editor John Phillips (see address on end page).

It is preferable to include your article as an attachment (please use Microsoft Word Version 7.0 or Rich Text Format), unless it is quite a small article, in which case it is fine to cut-&-paste into the e-mail.

Note that scanned **photos** must be sent with a covering e-mail (or phone call to John) to:

[postmaster@horizons.govt.nz](mailto:postmaster@horizons.govt.nz).

The deadline for anything to go in each month's issue is the FIRST THURSDAY of the month.

### FROM THE PRESIDENTS PC

Yes, its me again. Thanks to all those members who attended the AGM and who supported the nominations for Election of Officers for 2000-01. For those not present at the meeting we have included the Presidents Report in this newsletter. For a copy of the Financial Report please contact Peter Wiles, Treasurer.

The main outcomes of the meeting were

- Lawson Pither received a warm vote of thanks for 30 years as Honorary Auditor;
- Dave Henwood invited to take over as Honorary Auditor;
- The Executive remains the same;
- The Committee loses Tony Gates and Laurence Gatehouse (thanks guys)
- The Committee gains Janet Wilson and Derek Sharp (welcome aboard folks);
- Membership Subscriptions to stay the same;
- The meeting was finished by 8.20pm, leaving a good hour for our Distinguished Guest Speaker, David Round, President of FMC.

David gave an entertaining and provocative talk on recent FMC matters and pointed out that it was largely thanks to FMC that we now have the Wilderness Areas throughout NZ. For the Next 20 years the Big Issue may very well be How to Avoid Killing the One We Love by focussing on How to Manage Tourism in the DOC Estate.

Bordering on xenophobia at times David roundly accused DoC of veering away from “fostering recreation” and “allowing tourism” to promoting tourism at the expense of New Zealanders seeking access to their birthright. As experience in other countries shows, it is easy to get the balance wrong. We haven't heard the end of this one but I feel more confident that FMC will be able to present a strong lobby with people like David at the helm.

Once again John Phillips has handed over the Editorship of this edition of the Newsletter to me, happily this time it is for a holiday in Australia, not a stay in hospital.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this edition.

Warren Wheeler  
President and Acting Editor

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT - MARCH 2000

One of the main reasons for the existence of the club is to provide the opportunity to foster outdoor recreation. I am happy to report that in this and other respects this Trans-Millennium Year has been a success for the Club.

#### Membership

We have welcomed 10 new members over the last year but departures to greener pastures has meant that membership numbers have remained fairly static at around 65.

#### Activities

As in the past the committee this year has ensured that the club offers a wide variety of trips, club nights, social activities and instruction courses for members and non-members, whether novices or experts. Special thanks to Terry Crippen for organising the Snowcraft and Navigation Courses and to Bruce van Brunt for trying (albeit unsuccessfully) to find crevasses and fair weather on the Glaciercraft Courses. The End-of-Millennium Snowcraft Courses were exceptional for the kind weather, excellent snow conditions, and the great bunch of pupils (if the newsletter reports are anything to go by). Thanks also to the other instructors who helped make the Courses so successful for all attending.

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Club nights were generally well-attended, with a great variety of topics and activities helping to pull in the regulars and new-comers alike. Special thanks to the guest speakers and club members who gave slide-presentations.

### **Past Trips**

There has been a wide variety of trips again this year, including long Summer trips in the South Island Mountains, Easy to Fitness-Essential trips in the local ranges, 4-wheel drive trips, BMX rides, rock-climbing, caving, a moon-light ascent of Egmont, and the record-breaking K2-before-breakfast-and-Mt-Cook-by-Noon for some End-of-Millennium Madness. Thanks to Terry, Peter Burgess and Laurence Gatehouse for putting together the Trip Programme and coordinating changes during the year, and to all trip leaders.

Congratulations to those members who took on the high peaks down South on private trips and to Derek Sharp and Maree Limpus for joining the elite few who have climbed Mt Cook. These achievements are inspiration to us all.

Analysis of past trips shows that, on average, there has been just over 5 people on each day trip and just under 4 on each overnight trip. The most popular destination seems to be Rangī, with 13 on the Stuart Hubbard's Rangī Trip in March and 14 on Mick Leyland's Rangī-Deadmans Trip in April last year. Other big groups went on the Easter Egmont Trip (13) and to Table Top (12). On average the monthly maximum group size was 9.3, a little down on last years figure. The average monthly minimum was 2.1, almost the same "safe" number as last year.

However trips that did not go have increased markedly with some 40% of 92 programmed trips cancelled due mainly to lack of numbers. This is a big drop from last years 22% which was perhaps more typical, and is rather disconcerting. It is unclear why this is the case and may simply be a cyclical trend but is nevertheless disappointing, especially for the trip leaders. Nevertheless as I mentioned in last year's report it's the quality rather than the quantity that matters and, as those going on more intimate tramps will vouch, they can be some of the most rewarding and challenging tramping experiences.

Of those trips that did go only one involved an accident worth reporting, and that was for a broken wrist resulting from a trip-up and fall-down – not an auspicious start for our first trip of the Millennium, but a salutary reminder of the perils that we need to be prepared for. Fortunately the person affected was able to walk out with two friends to receive medical attention in Taupo, before rejoining the group in the evening, with wrist in a cast but still smiling.

### **Interclub Events**

The Interclub Quiz was hosted by MUAC and was won by our team for a change. This victory was celebrated by a Millennium upgrade of the Trevor Bissel Memorial Trophy with Tony Gates arranging for the four competitors' logos to be engraved on the lid.

### **Search and Rescue**

There were two Search and Rescue call-outs for the Club, including one on Christmas Eve, but fortunately both were stood down in the early stages of putting a team together.

We fielded two 3-man teams at the recent SAREX based at Pohangina DOC Base. Terry Crippen was involved on the Organising Committee and on the day Peter McGregor was promoted from Team Leader to Search Advisor (due to ill health) and got to see how things are done back at Base. This was a really good training exercise, with several members now keen to upskill by attending further SAR training, especially the Track and Clue Awareness Course.

SAR Training Courses held over the year seem to appear at short notice which results in fewer members being available to attend. Weekend Courses have included Search Adviser, Track and Clue Awareness, and Search Methods, and Search Management and have been recommended by those attending.

### **Sponsorship and New Gear**

Further donations from the Hillary Commission and Trustbank Community Trust have enabled the purchase of 4 avalanche transceivers which are a valuable resource for both the Club and other organisations. They have already been used by the Police for a Training Exercise. We also purchased 4 more helmets and Tony Gates went on the FMC Alpine Instructors Course. We are intending to apply for funding for more alpine instructional gear including a few more crampons and ice-axes.

Thanks to club member and Mountain Equipment owner Dave Grant for getting us such good deals on these purchases and for on-going support of the club with membership discounts and newsletter sponsorship.

### **New Trophy**

Thanks to Tony Gates for the Tararua Trophy, which he very artistically made up using a melted alloy fragment from the burnt out Powell Hut. The trophy is to be awarded annually for the best newsletter article and was presented to Peter McGregor at the Christmas Barbeque.

## Club Night Venue

The Society of Friends now requires that all meetings in the hall are alcohol free so there is no Wine and Cheese tonight, sorry. For that you will need to come along to Mountain Equipments Gear Evening later in the year.

We have also been requested to hold a Fire Drill at least once each year and to fill in an Assisted Persons Register to help comply with Fire Regulations. Those who missed the Drill at the last Club Night will have to wait until next time.

## The new Millennium is Now

This is a unique time in history (but then aren't most eventful times), and it's wonderful to see the different things that people are doing to celebrate, to set new directions, to reaffirm commitments, and so on. I hope you are enjoying being involved in the Club's Millennium Moments and look forward to working with you to make the rest of Y2K a time to remember, a Time for Good Tramping.

Warren Wheeler  
30 March 2000

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## POET'S CORNER

*Reflections on the PNTMC*  
by Pete McGegor  
(with apologies to Terry & Tony..)

*I joined the PNTMC last year  
and walked the hills with Crippen and with Gates  
they conned me, said that if I'd volunteer  
for trip reports and interclub debates*

*in turn they'd teach me mountaineering skills -  
like self-arresting 'til you're one great bruise  
thus Terry worked us through those endless drills  
and changed us all to shades of blacks and blues*

*while Tony marched around the snowy slopes  
in vain attempts to make us mountaineers  
he humoured us and tried to raise our hopes  
and when that failed he kicked us up our rears*

*so if you want a life of hedonism  
ignore the call to mingle with these louts  
but if instead you're into masochism  
be quick to join, just cast away your doubts -  
because you'll find the PNTMC  
will surely be your perfect cup of tea.*



## SNOWCRAFT INSTRUCTION 2000

### SNOW GLORIOUS SNOW

Each year the club runs a snowcraft instruction programme to equip club members and others with the basic skills to safely get out and about into the white stuff on winter trips and down south over the summer holidays: basic skills for straight forward travel in snow on easy terrain, simple snow climbing, and aspects of technical snow and ice climbing and mountaineering.

The instruction programme is in three parts; SC 1 (basic), SC 2 (intermediate) and SC 3 (advanced). It involves three weekends away up Mt Ruapehu and/or Mt Egmont and two Tuesday night evenings preceding SC1 and SC2. A progressive approach is used: SC 1 assumes nil or only minor experience with snow, SC 2 develops skills learnt on SC 2, and SC 3 on those of SC 2.

Course dates and fees (payable on registration) are:

- SC 1 - evening Tues 1 August, weekend 5-6 August - \$120
  - SC 2 - evening Tues 15 August, weekend 19-20 August - \$140
  - SC 3 - weekend 2-3 Sept - \$100
- (Total discounted one off payment of \$350)

The course fee covers transport, accommodation, most gear and food, and instruction by club instructors. These dates and costs are to be confirmed.

For further information and a registration form contact Terry Crippen 356-3588 or Bruce van Brunt 328-4761.

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## ● DOC SPOT

### PESTICIDE SUMMARY

DOC have a summary of pesticide use for possum control. In particular the Manawatu Gorge is now being treated – watch your dogs in this area. On the other hand the Waingawa, Ruamahanga and Waiopahu are now all clear.

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## TRIP REPORTS

### A SPECIAL MOMENT

By Tony Gates

Another day, and another tramp in the Ruahines. This time, late summer brought more good weather, so a group of us wandered past Rangi onto the vast tussock tops that must surely be one of the nicest places anywhere. The others continued on to Howletts in the blistering heat, and I descended a steep leatherwood covered ridge into the Porongaki Valley in search of shade, water, and to places seldom visited by people.

It felt quite remote down there. Blue Duck, more passionately known by its Maori name "Whio" are not uncommon in Ruahine Rivers. They are however endangered, because the fast flowing mountain rivers that form their favoured habitat are usually separated by large tracts of land. Each major river in the Ruahines supports maybe a few pairs of Whio. They are never far from the rivers, so I could imagine some significant problems at maintaining the population in some valleys. They can sometimes be seen in side creek headwaters, but they need plenty of water. You *never* see Whio cruising over the tops, through the forest, or on the farmland. The Pohangina catchment, and the North Eastern Ruahine rivers, are probably the best spots to admire Whio.

Carefully picking my way down the rather tight Pourangaki River, I splashed and boulder hopped almost right on top of an innocent Whio! I think it was alone, enjoying a sunny, sheltered enclave, when I shattered its peace and quiet. Well, I didn't say much, but it did. Typical of Whio, it squarked, whistled, and swam in a panic around the small pool right next to me. It appeared to not have room enough to take flight, or perhaps, it was not fully mature, and preferred the safety of the water. I could easily get close enough for a *good* photograph. How often do you comfortably observe wildlife at close range in their natural habitat? It was a special moment.



### TNP-RUAPEHU

4-5 March 2000

by Warren Wheeler

Sorry to all who couldn't make it on this trip – there was only two of us, but it was one of the best times to be there.

Fine weather, but not too hot for the steep grunt up Ngauruhoe. Great views, but surprising how many of the teeming hordes did not cut across from the inner crater rim and up onto the outer rim for views to Ruapehu with Tama Lakes below. Perhaps more distinct track poles or appropriate signage would help encourage people to do this.

The new "DOC Standard" yellow and green signposts with spindly timber posts look completely out of place compared with the original environmentally friendly chunky timber ones – and they don't even point you in the direction of the track! More of an arm wave really – not exactly "progress" - just call me old-fashioned. At least they have removed the remains of the old ones left lying there mid-January like some ghastly warning to those who dare to challenge the New Broom dusting off the warm and fuzzy image of Our National Park and preparing it for Wholesale Consumption by Tourists. Sigh.

I had a quick dip in the upper Emerald Lake (it was freezing) and wished I had taiho-ed until the Blue Lake which, going by the gleeful shouts from the young ladies, was "warmer than the swimming pool". Hella tried out the warm Soda Springs at Ketetahi (east of the main thermal area) after we cut across the old top track to avoid the zig-zags to the Hut.

Unfortunately we couldn't linger too long or we would miss our pick-up which I had set at 5pm. I would make it 6pm next time, which would give us a good 10 hour day with time to relax as well.

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Eivin's Lodge is up for sale so hopefully the new owners will continue to do drop-offs and pick-ups using your own car. Eivins is used by Campervanners and fishermen – if you want to see big dead trout, this is the place to be!



Sunday: Ruapehu. From the Turoa side for a change. No markers. No tracks. Just gaunt pylons, hibernating with arms out-stretched, patiently awaiting winter's playtime in the autumn peace and quiet. We left the Turoa carpark at about 8.30am and went up a bit of a track along the stream, cresting the rise, and met up with the Van Brunt Family Group at the top of the first chairlift. PNTMC seemed to have a near monopoly on the mountain today. They were one of three family groups summiting on the mountain that day – and, for all those bemoaning the sorry lack of fitness of modern youth, the youngest member of each party was only six years old!

There are no markers but we followed quite a good beaten trail heading up the mountain, following the ski-tows, before crossing a firm snow tongue and traversing over to the hard lava ridge route alongside the Mangaehuehu Glacier. Looked like slim pickings for crevasses for the upcoming Club Glaciercraft Course.

On the snow-free summit we were attacked by horse-flies(?) and midges but had great views across the crater lake which is slowly filling to lahar breach level in a few more years. We were lucky that the clouds only started to drift in after we were leaving the summit around 2.30pm and, after passing the others still heading upwards, arrived back at our car at about 5pm very satisfied, if not a little concerned at the ugly clouds now shrouding the upper slopes, and the fate of those still at altitude. We figured that they were in good hands and, after chatting with the Swiss family Schubach and gazing at the kids still

tearing around despite the days climb, headed happily home.

We were Hella Janssen and Warren Wheeler.

## THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING GLACIER

By Tony Gates

Saturday March 18 saw two keen mountain men clambering up the sun bathed rocky slopes of Turoa Skifield, on the south slopes of Mt Ruapehu. Their Destination was Mangaehuehu Glacier, a favourite haunt of mountaineers for training and practice on glacier travel. Recent warm seasons have let Ruapehu's once mighty glaciers dwindle in size considerably, so planned activities of ice climbing, abseiling, and the like were somewhat curtailed. Its incredible, though, to experience the Mangaehuehu Glacier as it shrinks, and see massive changes in the landscape. Its really only a "rump" glacier now. Our once mighty Glacial playground is just about no more.

So, we cramponed about the glacier for a few hours and set up the rope for some practice climbing ice. No large crevasses were found, and the ice was hardly what we would have called of good quality. Quite a few steams flowing over (and through) the glacier, and quite a bit of ash on the ice. A couple of ice screws did however find something solid to stick to, and, after much bashing with the ice axe, a couple of short climbs were completed. So we did accomplish a brief vertical climb, and felt suitably warmed up and ready for some more on the next trip. By then, though, the sun was hot, and, feeling more than a little lethargic, we wandered on back down to the car. No crowds on Turoa, just a few day visitors enjoying a lovely autumnal afternoon at the car park. Hardly like Whakapapa on a busy day.

## SAREX 2000

18-19<sup>th</sup> March

by Peter Burgess

When I arrived at Pohangina Base for this exercise I was expecting to be an umpire, however it turned out that I was the only one, so instead I became leader of a scratch team of three. The turnout was down on recent years and there even seemed to be a shortage of organisers. We were PNTMC #2, with James Gordon as No.2 and Simon, an outsider from Pahiatua, making up the third team member. Warren was originally to be search advisor (a job I had wormed my way out of), but as Pete McGregor was feeling under the weather, he took on the role and Warren was able to lead PNTMC #1 with Mick and Llew. With his

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strong local knowledge, Pete turned out to be an ideal choice for search advisor anyway. Dave Barker did his usual excellent job as search controller.

The morning consisted of the usual round of training: first aid, radios and track & clue awareness followed by getting on and off a helicopter (which was not involved in the main exercise this year). The radio briefing introduced us to the new Icom hand-held radios that we were to use during this exercise. These have the advantage of being much more convenient than the older Condor mountain radios that require setting up a long aerial. They do have the disadvantage, however of requiring line-of-sight contact with the other party. To get around this we had a repeater positioned on Takapari hill and we also carried the old Condor radios as a back-up.

After a large packed lunch, with lots of goodies that I was still eating on Sunday, we got into the exercise proper. The scenario was that a group of three or more inexperienced trampers had headed up the Pohangina river on Thursday with the intention of staying at "the first hut". They were now overdue. One (Charles) was a mild asthmatic and it was unknown whether he had medication. There may have been others in the party. We knew that they had two cars. Three teams (including mine) were dispatched first to the likely starting points, with our team having the privilege of searching the main road end starting point for accessing the Pohangina. As luck would have it we found cars matching the descriptions of the ones belonging to the missing party, so we were straight into action.

After reporting that we had sighted the two cars from the road (as well as an old ute parked some distance away), we carefully approached the vehicles, marking our approach route to minimise contamination. I then proceeded to check the cars contents and to look for evidence of how many occupants they may have had. I was able to confirm at least three people from the grass trapped in the car doors, however the danger of drawing too many conclusions from this was to become apparent later.

While we were reporting our discoveries in and around the cars, and just before proceeding to try and establish the direction of travel of the occupants by sign cutting, three other teams arrived. There was some argument over what to do now, as I was not keen on having that many people charging through the gate before I had

verified that the missing party actually went that way. Eventually most of the others stood by while a couple of us (with track and clue awareness training) did the sign cutting. We soon picked up a line of bent grass heading from the vehicles towards the gate. At this point the occupant of the third vehicle appeared (a fisherman) and was able to tell us that he had seen footprints by the river and on the track. I checked and measured his shoes so that we could eliminate his tracks. The remaining parties proceeded from here to carry out their various assigned tasks. We were sent to search up river of the Piri Piri stream junction. On the way we found numerous footprints, so it was a while before we got to our main task area.

It was a very hot day and we didn't mind being sent up the river, although there were no more footprints to be seen. After some time we heard a report over the radio that two of the missing party had been sighted in the river by Team 4, who had been searching the track. We proceeded up river as quickly as we could and arrived at the missing party, just above the large waterfall, shortly after Team 4. While that team dealt with "Brenda's" sprained ankle we learnt from "Peter" that there were in fact three other people in the party "Dianna", "Eric" and "Fiona". They had apparently arrived at Centre Creek Biv and on finding that it only has three bunks, "Eric" and "Fiona" had left with the intention of heading up the river towards the next hut (presumably Mid-Pohangina). The next morning "Charles" and "Di" had headed upwards towards Takapari road with the intention of looping back to the cars.

After radioing in this information we were told to take "Peter" and "Brenda" to the nearest helicopter landing site, which we determined to be about 100m downstream from our present location. Fortunately "Brenda" was reasonably mobile with the aid of an improvised crutch and this did not present too much of a challenge despite quite a bit of scrambling and a tricky river crossing. That part of the exercise was now over and we were told to find a suitable campsite as it was now about 6pm. We proceeded back down to Piri Piri stream, where another team had told us of a good site.

Next morning started at the very civilised hour of 8am (really 9am, since daylight savings had just ended) and we were dispatched to Centre Creek. On arriving we were sent back down the Pohangina as far as the large waterfall. On the way we found lots of yesterday's clues (a camera

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marked “Peter’s” and the dried up footprints of two people and a dog), but nothing new. We were then sent back up to Centre Creek! On arrival we were told to intercept a hunter seen coming down the creek. This guy turned out to have stayed at the biv along with three search teams (cosy), but no-one had thought to mention this to HQ! He told us he had seen lots of footprints and described the members of PNTMC #1, who we met shortly afterwards after they had given up on searching the upper creek bed.

We were unable to get out on the Icon radio, so we headed back down to the main river and set up our trusty Condor, which now became the communications base for the teams searching in this area. Meanwhile “Charles” and “Di” had been found just off Takapari road. Unfortunately we never found “Eric” and “Fiona” (in real life Graham Peters and Janet Wilson) who were bivvied further up Centre Creek than certain people could be bothered searching!

The scenarios on these exercises are always a bit contrived, to maximise the involvement of everyone, but it was good to find lots of clues and be involved in a rescue this time. PNTMC #1 got special mention for speedy covering of great distances (they went all the way up to Mid-Pohangina and came back down via the river).

I think the search HQ team did an excellent job of targeting the right areas to search based on information received and it was probably only the lack of people with track and clue awareness training on the teams that prevented us from finding everyone in the allotted time. Apparently “Eric” and “Fiona” had left very clear footprints at the point where they had taken a “wrong” turn off the track down from the hut to Centre Creek as well as beside the creek itself. Another lesson learnt was that you still can’t beat the old Condors and it is often better to get them out than to waste time trying to get through on the Icons when in an enclosed area.

SAREX 2000 (the unabridged version)  
by Pete McGregor

(On stand-by for next month’s newsletter. Ed.)

TOP MAROPEA HUT, RUAHINE RANGE  
25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> March 2000 by Adam Johnstone

We started the trip early on Saturday morning not quite sure where the end of the day would find us. A shortage of time and some gloomy weather led

to a change to the originally planned trip to Golden Crown and the Ruahine Corner. Tony Gates and I decided to head to Sunrise Hut instead because of the accessibility it offers to the tops. We figured that once the weather cleared, we would be perfectly positioned to enjoy some great views and a bit of afternoon exercise before settling down to find a campsite for the night.

The walk up to Sunrise brought back memories of my last visit. The last time I had been here was on third form camp to Triplex Hut on one of my first “back-country wilderness adventures.” While we prepared our own bizarre concoctions for dinner and camped out for the night, the parents and teachers gorged themselves on junk food and slept in the hut.

We arrived at Sunrise relatively early after a pleasant walk in light rain. After taking a while to get the gas heater going we settled into the hut to wait for the weather to clear. After a big early lunch of sandwiches, chocolate, Easter eggs and biscuits, Tony settled down for a sleep while I read about flying cars and de-gnoming gardens in his Harry Potter book. After an hour and a half in the hut the weather still hadn’t cleared, but we were inspired to move on by the arrival of twelve army cadets from Waipukurau and Napier on a training exercise. We decided to head for Top Maropea Hut, still optimistic that the weather might clear later in the afternoon or in the morning.

We were shrouded in clouds for the walk to Top Maropea, but despite the lack of views it was great. The mist made the big gaping emptiness off to either side of us and harsh features left behind by slips and rapid erosion more dramatic. On arrival at the hut Tony got a good fire going and we had a brew. The fire started out great but soon the wind was back-drafting the smoke down the dodgy chimney and smoking out the whole hut. After some more snoozing, reading Harry Potter and munching on food, the weather cleared long enough to go for an early evening hunt. Tony was a bit surprised by a lack of deer sign, but we enjoyed the walk and the chance to get out of the smoky hut. We ended the day with the now customary eating, drinking and reading Harry Potter.

We rose fairly early after a twelve-hour sleep interrupted only by the noisy chimney. After a quick breakfast we left the hut and managed to get

back to the car by 10.30am. So, despite gloomy weather and the invasion of Sunrise Hut by the cadets, the weekend turned out to be a good relaxing one with heaps of sleep and lots of food.

#### LAKE COLENZO

1-2 April 2000 by Warren Wheeler

I will let the Trip Feedback forms speak for themselves.

Expectations: Robin commented that the trip was as she expected but that there should be two gradings - one for time, one for difficulty eg. steepness, rough track.

Alan commented that it was steep but challenging, good leadership.

Incidents: Robin said Yes, twisted her knee. Great chivalry – leader (Warren) carried her sleeping bag and cooker.

Highlights: Robin – lovely varied bush, seeing Lake Colenso and Hut.

Alan – seeing a new part of the country – remote.

Route Info: Watch for Onga Onga.

The weather was kind, but the Unknown Stream will have to wait until next time.

We were Robin Garnett, Alan Cameron, Warren Wheeler.

#### DEADMANS - RANGI LOOP

2 April 2000 by Stephen Liddall

Three of us left Palmerston under grey cloudy skies and not much chance of any views. Upon arrival at the road end everything was wet and foggy so at 9.30am we set off up Deadmans track. Fortunately it wasn't cold, but once out onto the tussock there was a fairly strong wind at our backs driving the moisture along as Terry navigated us through the cloud. We paused at the top of Mangahuia before heading off down towards Rangi hut, and off the main ridge the wind had subsided although the closer we got to the hut the more persistent was the rain.

The hut was a chance for a late lunch and welcome hot drink, then once Terry had swept the place clean we headed away towards the car park. By now the front had really arrived and it was colder with steady rain so it was good to get down into the shelter of the bush. Once at the bottom it was into dry clothes and away back to the city. We were Stephen Liddall, Terry Crippen and Christine Cheyne.

## REMINDER

## SUBS ARE NOW DUE

- \$30 SINGLE
- \$35 FAMILY

Cheques payable to PNTMC.

PLEASE hand to Peter Wiles, Treasurer or send to P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North