

Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

www.pntmc.org.nz

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter March 2017



Putting our feet up with MTSC friends on the Pouakai Circuit, Egmont/Taranaki.

[Kathy Corner]

Club Nights

All are welcome to our club nights. These are held on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. Doors open 7.15 pm. for meeting start at 7.30pm.

9 March 2017

Samoa Circuit

Kathy Corner

In the middle of last year Kathy and two others from PNTMC experienced a taste of Pacific paradise as they cycled 200km around Savaii in Western Samoa and kayaked across to one of the small islands. Come along to find out more about the fun and adventures along the way.

30 March 2017

AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will start at 7.15pm with a cuppa and light supper. The meeting itself will start soon after 7.30pm and as usual will feature the Presidents Report, Financial Report and election of Officers. If you would like to be involved in running the club then we welcome your nomination. The AGM is expected to conclude by 8.30pm and will be followed by a cuppa and late supper.

Upcoming Trips

4-5 March

SAREX

The annual Search and Rescue Exercise is being organised by Levin LandSAR this year. Palmerston North branch will provide two teams made up from the pool of local volunteers, including members from PNTMC. Apart from this weekend there are also evening SAR training sessions each month to refresh and learn new skills. These are organised by Andy Brook of the local Police. Contact one of our committee members to find out more about getting involved in SAR.

4-5 March

Ponga Hut

M

Thomas Robertson

022 075 0864

This is your chance to stay in an old hunter's bush hut built out of ponga logs and located in a secret spot in the northern Tararua Ranges.

5 March

Atiwhakatu

E

Woody Lee

357 2390

(NB - trip swapped from 26 March)

A nice and easy walk along Atiwhakatu Stream. This track is the most popular area of the Tararuas in from Masterton. Depart 8.00am.

6-12 or 10-12 March

Te Potae Trap Lines

M/F

Janet Wilson

329 4722

If you are interested in coming on this great "Fly-in Trip" to Ruahine Corner let me know asap as there are limited places on the helicopter. Chance to visit the more remote northern Ruahines including Ikawatea Forks. I am thinking of making this a longer trip starting early the week before - maybe 6th March onward, so book some leave.

12 March

Puketurua/College Creek

M/F

Dave Grant

328 7788

A little Tararua adventure for those keen on exploring some new ground in from the Mangahao No.1 Dam behind Shannon.

18-19 March

Whangaehu Hut, TNP

E/M

Grant Christian

354 5843

This Alpine Club hut on the eastern side of Mt Ruapehu provides easy access to the crater lake and opportunities for some rock climbing and peak bagging or just exploring this wonderful volcanic landscape.

19 March

Beehive Creek

E

Doug Strachan

353 6526

This Pohangina walkway is just 30km from P.N. My daughter is 11 now and has done this walk every year of her life, the first time in the womb. The creek is generally ankle-deep and sandy-bottomed, making this ideal for all, including families and first-time trampers, but dogs not allowed. Kids like to jump in the deeper bits, so leaving a change of clothes in the car for them is advisable. It only takes about 2.5hrs, but can still be a workout for anyone who wants to walk the road section (3km, 40mins) of the loop. The walk will be followed by lunch at a picnic spot. Good social tramp, and you'll still have the afternoon free to mow the lawns. 9am start from Milverton Park.

25-26 March

Upper Makororo Hut

M

Richard Lockett

323 0948

Just for something different a trip into the northeastern Ruahines to service a stoat trap line normally looked after by a Wellington based group. In and out via Sentry Box or Master Shelter. Friday night depart.

26 March

Centre Creek

E

Warren Wheeler

356 1998

(NB - trip swapped from 5 March)

A classic summer trip in the Pohangina Valley on the edge of Ruahine Forest Park. We will follow the track upriver to the Centre Creek confluence and visit the old biv site then return via the river. Expect to get more than wet feet! Depart 8.00am from Milverton Park.

1-2 April

Tongariro NP Explorer

E/M

Kathy Corner

356 8186

This is a nice easy weekend exploring short walks in Tongariro National Park. Rough plan depending on the weather is to walk to Lake Surprise, then afterwards walk to Blyth Hut for the night. Sunday is a walk to Tama Lakes and Silica Rapids. Leave at 7.30am. If you are interested contact me on 027 618 5722.

2 April

Roaring Stag

M

Martin Lawrence

357 1695

A popular trip in the eastern Tararuas behind Eketahuna. The track crosses two swing bridges as it sidles along the river before climbing steeply then dropping down a long ridge through magnificent rimu forest to the hut. Camping beside the river is an option.

8-9 April

Arthurs Pass **M**
Annett Patzold **021 189 4647**

East of Arthurs Pass, Classic Roundtrip Andrews Shelter/White Road End via Casey Saddle and Binser Saddle, which is considered a longish easy to medium tramp along rivers and over two easy passes. There is the option to make this harder by traversing the tops between Casey and Binser Saddle, either on the first day or the second and walk out via Andrews Stream Valley.

Tent/fly is required as Casey Hut has burnt down but also for spending Friday night at the shelter for an early start on Saturday.

8 April (Sat)

Manawatu Gorge **E**
Gina Fermor **359 0096**

Enjoy a little exertion while experiencing an easy excursion through the tawa and nikau forest to a lofty lookout or two.

14-17 April

Easter Eggmont Explorer **E/M**
Warren Wheeler **356 1998**

What we do will depend on you, but Plan A is a circuit of the mountain by car with side trips in to stay at Waiaua Falls Hut, Pouakai Hut, Maketawa Hut and a clamber to the summit. Options include Waingorongoro Hut, Lake Dive, Syme Hut and summit. BYO Easter eggs and hot cross buns. Depart 7.30am.

Trip Grading

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

Easy (E):	3-4 hrs
Medium (M):	5-6 hrs
Fit (F):	about 8 hrs
Fitness Essential (FE):	over 8 hrs

Other grades:

Technical skills (T)

Instructional (I)

Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips 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, overtrousers, 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.

Personal Locator Beacons – Free for trips

The club has purchased two PLBs for members' use. If you want to take one of these on a trip, contact Martin or Anne Lawrence on 357-1695. Note that this applies to any trip you are going on - it doesn't need to be a club trip.

Trip leaders

Complete the trip intentions form and leave with one of Overdue Trip Contacts or drop into 44 Dahlia St or email to pntmctrips@gmail.com with the date and trip name in the subject line. If you are unable to run your trip as scheduled, advise a trip coordinator as soon as possible so that alternatives can be arranged.

Overdue Trips

If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry unduly as there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone one of the Overdue Trip Contacts:

Janet Wilson	329-4722
Martin and Anne Lawrence	357-1695
Terry Crippen	356-3588

Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20th of each month to Warren Wheeler, the newsletter editor, direct or via our web site <http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>

Notices

Congratulations to Fiona and Pete

Peter Sebborn and Fiona Donald got married on 4th February 2017 in The Masterton Club, Masterton.

Their two week Kiwi honeymoon began in Masterton's B&B "Little Acres" (which comes highly recommended) then off to The Chateau - visited the Taranaki Falls and saw rifleman birds along the way; Mt Maunganui to walk up the Mount then a couple of nights at Acacia Bay/Taupo.

Best wishes for your future together.

Makaroro River Access Update

Access to Makaroro River is now by permission of the owner. A planned poled route along the legal road has been found to be impractical at present. Call the DoC Office in PN for contact details.

Trip Reports

The Call of the Kawekas

By Bruce van Brunt

Round 1: Main Range to Hot Springs

30 Dec 2016-1 Jan 2017

Every year I like to visit the Kawekas, at least a few times. Before the old year ended I thought it would be great to do another trip into this magnificent park. The plan originally was to look at the SE corner of the park and in particular the Manson range. Weather and circumstances, however, drove me east.

I began the ascent of Kaweka J on 30 December at the late hour of 11:45am. (It is a four hour drive from Pohangina to the Makahu Saddle road end.) The weather was perfect being clear, no wind and virtually no clouds. I slogged up to the Kaweka J and had a really pleasant trip across the tops north to Whetu and along the ridge towards Venison Tops up to the drop down to Ballard Hut. I love travelling along the tops in this park when the weather is good as it is infinitely easier than in the Ruahines and you get all the views. Sometime around 5pm I descended 200m to Ballard hut. (The Kaweka huts are cleverly located, but almost all of them seem to require some sort of significant descent.) Ballard Hut is located below the ridge at the edge of a delightful and sheltered beech forest.

I have been to Ballard Hut some 3 times and never met anyone, yet on this trip the hut (4 bunks) was mostly full. There were three German trampers (in from Rocks Ahead Hut) there with all of their gear. As I opened the door I could see that their packs must have exploded leaving no surface useable for the fourth. If, given a cup, you were challenged to put it down in the hut on a level surface (table, stove, bench, bunk...), you would lose...even the floor was congested with gear. No hope for comfort here.

The hut was hot and very full, so I kindly asked for the last sleeping mat so that I might sleep outside in the cool evening. (There are no nearby sites for a tent.) They seem to have acquired all the benches, so I cut my losses and simply went to sleep enjoying a magnificent star filled sky. The next morning I arose early and had a comfortable departure at 7:30am. The Germans were mostly comatose; nonetheless, I woke them up to tell

them that I would not attempt to navigate the floor and put the mattress back in the bunk.

One could not ask for a better weather day than the 31st especially in the early morning. It would be a scorcher on the tops by midday. I wished the Germans well and moved on to Whetu, the high northern peak of the range. From here I decided to tramp down to Makino Hut and then over to Middle Hill Hut. The weather was superb, but by the time I was into the bushline I realized that the damage to the track from the heavy August snowfall was significant. At about 1150m the bush track became distinctly harder owing to lots of branches (nothing big, but a lot of it). The track down to Makino is beautifully graded and should be fast, but this time it was rather slow having to dodge branches every 10m. Indeed, it is easy to lose the track from time to time given that you are forced off of it so often, and all the branch litter on the track makes it harder to find it again.

To make a long story short, I took quite a lot longer to get from Whetu to Makino Hut. DoC was clearing lower tracks, but up here it was still pretty raw. My original plan was to go from Makino Hut to Middle Hill Hut and then back to the car park via Kaweka Biv. *The problem was that the track was trashed by the heavy snow of August.* It will be another year or so before these tracks are cleared. Plan A was dead, and I had no Plan B. Nonetheless, I decided that my best chances were to descend down another 500m to the Mohaka River, and take my chances getting a ride back to Makahu Saddle. There should be lots of people down there for the New Year.

I was exceedingly lucky to strike up a conversation with two hunters (Alex and Angus) in Makino Hut just before they descended to Te Puia Lodge. I had Makino Hut to myself that night (in stark contrast to the night before), but I met them again on 1 January at Te Puia Lodge and they agreed to give me a lift to Makahu Saddle. This was a huge relief, because my only other plan was to bash up to Middle Hill Hut and then on to Kaweka Biv (two miserable days, with the weather closing in). All up, I felt pretty lucky to escape the tangles of the Kaweka forests this year and a bit stoked because I managed to walk all of the main range of this park (from Kuripapango to Whetu all the way to the hot pools) in year 2016.

Round 2: Kiwi Saddle Circuit (Party of 3) **5-6 Jan 2017**

On my last trip I could have spent another day or two in the hills even though the weather seemed to be "packing it in". In fact, not much happened weather wise and I found myself itching to get back to the park and explore some other bits. I met up with Nigel Scott (ex PNTMC) just after New Year and though he talked of a Ruahine trip, I quickly twisted/perverted the trip into a Kaweka venture. The plan was simple: we would climb up Kuripapango and make our way to Kiwi Saddle Hut. The next day we would continue on the tops to Castle Camp and then head south to exit the park along the Rogue Ridge. Nigel had an extended family relation (name escapes me) that had never been tramping before and he came along on this journey. In the end, everything went mostly to plan and we had a lot of fun.

We left Ashhurst at a fairly civilized hour and began our ascent of Kuripapango before noon. The weather was good and not too hot for this work. I think in other years we would have been roasted going up that hill from the Lakes Carpark. The track is great (if less inspiring than the track from Cameron Road end) from the car park to Kuripapango, and the track to Kiwi Saddle Hut is very pleasant. There is some evidence of snow damage, but nothing really inconvenient. I suspect that this is because of the vegetation (not much in places and small pine in others) along with the attention this track gets from DoC. We got to Kiwi Saddle Hut at about 3-3:30pm and chilled for the rest of the day exploring the neighbourhood and convincing ourselves that we were doing something. We met up with George, a hunter from Auckland, on the way. I think he seriously underestimated the climb and was quite tired. I thought he was being extra still and patiently waiting for deer: I apologized for coming up on him and scaring any midday deer antics. In fact (as he admitted) he was stuffed and needed 30+min. rest time before the last little climb and descent to the hut. When we got to the hut, I realized at least one cause of George's exhaustion: he was in for one night, but carried more food than three people would bring in for three nights. George had a lot of food, and was quite happy for us to help him eat it...he did not want to carry it out. Later that night a very experienced "local" hunter came to the hut and took George under his wing...I think we all had a great time. It is one of those great

hut nights when everybody got along and enjoyed each others company.

The next day dawned fine (hunters already looking for deer). We left the hut at about 7am ish and began our small ascent from Kiwi Saddle towards Castle Camp. The only remarkable thing about this morning was that there was a persistent cold wind. I found myself putting on a fleece to keep warm whilst going uphill in the middle of summer at a modest elevation. We met up with the hunters (now descending) soon after the saddle (no luck with deer). The rest of the day was spent mostly enjoying the tops. By the time we got onto the ridge to Castle Camp the wind was at our back and now a pleasant feature. *The tops here are really pleasant and easy to walk!* We continued south along the ridge to the Rogue Ridge and descended to the stream. The lower part of the track certainly got some snow damage, but mercifully somebody cleared things so that we were but slightly inconvenienced. (Pine forest snow damage on the track is always a lot more painful to get around than beech forest damage, so I was pleasantly surprised when I found this track mostly cleared.) All up, this was a very civilized trip with no long days and well-formed tracks. I think this is a great introduction to tramping along the tops.

Round 3: Recce up Kaweka J **27-28 Jan 2017**

By this stage, I had seen a fair bit of the forest. To the northeast I had tramped to Te Puia Lodge and the hot springs. Earlier (Dec 2015), I had tramped to the most remote hut, Tussock Hut, in the northwest section of the park (next stop Boyd Hut, Kaimanawas). I had thrashed the south of the forest along the main range (Mad Dog Hill, Studholm Saddle, Kuripapango...), and I had visited the inside of the park at Rocks Ahead, Backridge biv/hut along with Venison Tops and huts to the west.

There remains the southeast corner of the park, which is perhaps more easily accessed than other places I visited. I started planning a trip to the Manson Range. Unfortunately the weather started planning a different trip. In the end, I wound up going back to Makahu Saddle and climbing along the tops (always a first rate experience in good weather) to do some recce. Most of my trips have been solo here, but this time I talked Penny Abercrombie into climbing Kaweka and having a look around on

the tops. Although I have done Kaweka as a day trip from Pohangina (not recommended ...too much driving for one day) I wanted to have a full day on the tops. We crashed at Makahu Saddle Hut (5 minutes from the car park) on Friday night and woke early enough to enjoy a cool climb to the tops. The evening before was quite windy, so that I knew my original plan to go over the top and down to Rocks Ahead would have been miserable.

In the end, it was a nice, unpressured trip to the tops with a pleasant rest at Dominie biv (=small hut). The weather was pleasant and I could see far enough to the west to get my bearings for the Manson Range. Now, all I need is low enough river, and a day or two of reasonable weather!

26-28 January 2017

**Applied Tramping 102 - Triangle Circuit
Janet Wilson**

This 2-day circuit is a good little adventure - nothing too difficult but plenty of variation and a lovely area to visit. We were fortunate to strike one of the few good weekends so far this summer and enjoyed stunning views of the Ruahines on our return on Sunday.

Fellow who folk and loyal supporters of the Oroua Blue Duck Protection project Warren Wheeler and Graeme Richards came along for the walk. As usual there were extras in our pack - a spare A24 trap each, some lure for the traps and some tools - no eggs for a change. To make life easy for ourselves and allow for some extra exploration time we walked up to Rangi Hut on the Friday night, arriving just on dark. We hadn't used the new booking system to book as the system doesn't allow you to book online with an annual pass. There were plenty of beds. It was interesting to find a paid (student job search) hut warden in residence! Hmm.

Next morning we headed up to high point Mangahuia, checking the traps on the way and removing one stoat. The flowers were spectacular, especially near Rangi Hut in the "trench" where they hang decoratively over the sides of the track. From the top the trap line continues down the ridge that heads south, to the saddle on the track upstream from Iron Gate hut. It's a little rough on the way down - easy enough to find the traps 100m apart - care still needed to find the way on to the narrow track through the leatherwood. Navigate carefully down the broad parts of the

ridge - it's not marked and we had our compasses out.



A great day to be on the tops.

At the saddle you meet the well-worn path again. Warren and Graeme continued north, dropping down to the river. I did a quick trip trap run to the south towards Iron Gate/Oroua River. There was a big trout to watch in the pool by the last trap. It's a steep grunt back up this track so I left the rebaiting until the uphill bit - I've heard it said that one of the good things about working with traps is being able to stop every 100m! W & G had gone off for a look downstream for ducks but had left me a radio (GR is known for being particularly well equipped) so I called them up and they abandoned their search - deep pools making for slow travel. The river from here to Triangle Hut could be described as delightful apart from one or two awkward bits. The upper section has much more gravel and is shallower than I remember. We were well over manky rotten rats by the time we reached the hut around 2.30.



Typical easy travel in the upper Oroua.

Time for a siesta. Around 5pm we wandered off upstream to look for who. We soon came to a very scenic small gorge. Careful negotiation of submerged logs was needed to ensure dry shorts. Above here the river is

easy travel and we wandered upstream for some time. Back to the hut around 7.30 - lovely summer tramping. We were a little surprised to find we still had the hut to ourselves.

I was keen to explore the major true right side stream about 200m down from the hut. This trip on Sunday morning ended quickly after the stream soon became a narrow and difficult series of cascades. We did climb high to sidle this section but it would have become a longer adventure that we had time for. Whio sign (pooh) was found at the confluence so maybe they are hiding up there. The hut book has recent whio sightings recorded but we weren't lucky enough to see any on this trip.

So after this we headed back via the official route, continuing the rebait. It's quite direct and efficient up to the tussock and the track is mostly in good condition. On the tops we paused for a while to take in the views. It was windy enough for us to decide to take the quick route back via Rangī Hut rather than continue around the Deadmans Track loop.

Checking the traps is a good excuse to go out tramping (hence the "Applied Tramping") and this loop is just a step up from the easier lines. It's not that far to Triangle Hut for those of you that haven't been there - give it a go sometime. Thanks to Warren and Graeme for coming along on a very enjoyable trip and for helping out so willingly.

28 January 2017
Deadmans Loop & Rangiwahia Hut
Nicola Wallace

Woody picked me up from home in Feilding right on 8am, and I got to meet new trampers Fawwaz and Wendy. It was a very sunny drive up through Apiti, with just a little cloud sitting on the Ruahine tops. Along Renfrew Road, two parent turkeys with four little babies watched us pass. I volunteered for gate duty. The bottom carpark was empty, but we were surprised to see about six cars in the upper park.

Woody set off at a cracking pace up the Deadmans track, and I deliberately paced myself, as it was already a hot day and it was only a little after 9am. This part of the hill is a very steady, some would say relentless climb. After we'd been going for about 30 minutes, Wendy decided she would be better to return to the bottom, and go up to the hut on the

"normal" track. Woody went down with her, and Fawwaz was happy to come round the loop with me. He had never done the loop before.

We chatted, sweated, and frequently stopped to admire the views on the way up. The cloud had all disappeared, and the views of Mt Ruapehu and Mt Ngauruhoe were spectacular. Perhaps most remarkably, there was, most of the time, not a breath of wind. I was not used to this! We spotted a couple of large snail shells by the side of the track, in different locations. The ground had been very dry, but as we gained height we found boggy patches. These became a tad challenging when descending into the big dip before the final ascent on to Mangahua. It was overgrown here, and you couldn't see where you were putting your feet. Fawwaz (who had gone to look at the tarn and so was behind me) later said he fell into a couple of mudholes.

The ascent to Mangahua is steep, and we were pleased to arrive on the top at about 12.30pm. There was still no wind, but I was taken with a sneezing fit as Fawwaz tried to take my photo – must be the tussock. I pointed out the Triangle Hut turnoff and suggested we lunch there. Once there I showed Fawwaz the view of Triangle Hut which you get just off the top, as someone else had once shown me. We lunched just a little way down the track towards Rangī Hut. As we ate in the hot sun, a solo trumper passed us, and he said Woody was at the hut. How did he know Woody's name? I later found out that the mystery man was Chris Tuffley. I didn't recognise him, but my excuse was he did have a hat on.



Perfect tops weather.

It was a gentle but rocky descent to Rangiwahia Hut, which took us an hour. We passed two hunters, who said they would camp on the tops. It felt wonderful to arrive at

the hut, I wanted a cool drink and sit in the shade. Wendy and Woody were there, they had their lunch on the walk up to the hut. There were about 10 people at the hut, and more kept arriving. We met the hut warden, a student, and we commandeered a lady just arriving to take a photo of all of us.

We left the hut in the mid afternoon, and as we descended it grew very hot, unpleasantly so as we climbed the slip. It's a wonderful track, but you still have to do some climbing! The air seemed too hot and still to breathe, and sweat poured off me, but we were soon at the top, and a huge drink was had. I felt very pleased that we had such lovely weather though, we were very lucky, given the weather this summer.

We had a most enjoyable descent, and were back at the car by just after 4.30 pm. By this time, there were lots more cars in the parks. Fawwaz did the gates. Woody drove us back via Rangiwahia, which included a short stop to get the air con working, and for me to get my water. It was very hot. Many thanks to the others for their company, and Woody for driving.

We were: Wendy, Woody, Fawwaz and Nicola.

4-6 February 2017

Waitangi Pouakai Circuit

Kathy Corner

I was surprised to have only one taker for the Pouakai Circuit over the Waitangi weekend and it was with a guy I didn't even know! When I mentioned at work I was going tramping with a stranger my colleagues said jokingly 'what if he is a mass murderer!' I said no way, he is a trumper! I picked up Murray and met his wife who looked me up and down and decided I was OK to be with her husband for 3 days. Murray and I chatted non-stop for the drive to North Egmont. When we got to the carpark it was chock-a-block. There was a young man directing us where to park and we ended up in the middle of the driveway. We thought I hope all these people are not doing the Pouakai Circuit. When we got back on Monday I found a notice on my windscreen telling me off for parking there. So I promptly went and told them. It appears he was new on the job and was told where visitors should not park.

It took us the allocated 4 hours to get to Holly Hut and it was hot going climbing initially. We

had lunch in the shade by a stream so were able to fill our water bottles with lovely cold unchlorinated water. Mt Taranaki was a clear-as-a-bell perfect for summiting. We walked beneath the towering lava columns of the Dieffenbach Cliffs and across the Boomerang Slip, then descended to Holly Hut, a 32-bunk hut with solar panels. We were surprised to find only four trampers, who we had seen earlier, at the hut and we anticipated the hut would be packed. We reserved our bunk and took a stroll to Bells Falls. By this time it was a bit cooler so I did not feel inclined for a dip, and felt it not prudent to skinny dip like I normally do as this would put off our prospective member!

When we returned to the hut it was packed, and lo and behold who was there but Tim Swale and Linda Campbell and three other members of MTSC. I should have checked their trip card and then we could have joined forces. As you can imagine it was a lovely social night chatting to all sorts of people. Murray was impressed that I provided dessert.

The next day was short - 2 and a half hours to Pouakai Hut across the boardwalk of the Ahukawakawa Swamp. Here is a quote from the brochure: *The mighty Ahukawakawa Swamp formed around 3500 years ago. This unique microclimate is home to many plant species, some unusual at this altitude, and others found nowhere else in the world. Sedges, sphagnum moss, herbs, mosses and red tussock are common here, along with small orchids and flowering plants. The unique divaricating shrub Melicytus drucei is found only here and on the Pouakai Range.*

Warning! Do not venture off the broadwalk as it is extremely boggy. One of the young guys from Wellington ended up in mud up to his thighs! After crossing the headwaters of the Stony River we headed up the steps and steep muddy path. I don't know how the young lady kept her running shoes so clean. I joked her boyfriend must have carried her across! We arrived at Pouakai Hut at 11am in time for a lovely cup of coffee and wonderful almond and pistachio biscuits, then packed some lunch and headed for Pouakai Trig (1440m). The weather remained stunning. I have never seen Mount Taranaki stay clear for so long. En route we met a woman who looked at least 80 and a family with 2 children. At the trig we chatted to a young guy whose hobby was amateur radio and he proudly told us he had been talking to someone in The States. I hope he didn't talk Trump.

On returning to the hut we had a cuppa and then headed to the tarn with the MTSC group. We sat by the tarn waiting for the breeze to abate so we could get the perfect reflection shot, but somehow that eluded us. Nonetheless it was very pleasant taking in the magnificent view. Back to the hut for another cuppa and blue cheese and crackers (and yes, it is OK Murray to bring red wine on a tramp, this would have married perfectly with the cheese!!). I must say I had anticipated lots of time to sit and read but I only got through a few pages. As nightfall descended we were treated to a superb view of the twinkling lights of New Plymouth.

The last day started with a stiff climb to the viewing platform on Henry Peak (1220m). We descended the steps into the bush. There was a lot of boardwalk and steps on this day's walk - hard work. We stopped many times and kept passing and repassing the MTSC group who stopped after us for lunch. When we reached the road 6 hours later, lucky for us the Polish couple we had met gave us a lift – what perfect timing. And guess what, just as we were leaving it started drizzling. A perfect three days. Thanks for your wonderful company Murray.

12 February 2017
Iron Gates Gorge
Christian Offen

Stuart, Warren and I made a very nice trip to the impressive Iron Gates Gorge. Starting at the Oroua River Access at Petersons Road we crossed the bridge over the Umutoi Creek and went upstream along a sidle track above the Oroua River.

On our way, I (newbie to NZ) learned a lot about typical New Zealand plants, including the nasty types (cutty grass, bush lawyer) and the helpful ones (bushman's friend). Warren added funny explanations for names like "horopito": spitting out the peppery tasting leaves might sound like "horopito". However, Stuart warned me that these might not be officially recognised explanations.

After descending to the Oroua River, we continued our trip downstream making our way through the bush and the river. We crossed the Oroua so often that we did not bother counting. As the frequent crossings made us sufficiently wet, none of us was keen to go swimming in the quite cold river water.

Well guided by Warron we finally reached the impressive Iron Gates Gorge. "Wow, on which cool planet we are living." (Warren).



Awesome Iron Gates Gorge.

We got back up to the car park keeping pictures of wonderful nature on the memory cards of our cameras and in our minds.

Moreover, we contributed to the conservation programme for native New Zealand wildlife checking the traps along our way for predators. We renewed the baits and removed 3 stoats and 10 rats.

The three of us were Stuart Hubbard, Warren Wheeler and Christian Offen.

19 February 2017
Ohingaiti Boulders
Doug Strachan

Downhill, past woolly mullein and shorn sheep, to the giant concretions, many with a mossy patina, nestled amongst trees with hammered bark, and supporting entanglements of twisting vines, we walked.

Lunch. We get creative with, and sticky fingers from, Warren's rock melon. I skite that I can wipe my hands on my shorts, because I will wear them when we swim. Minami marches over and wipes her melon juice fingers on my

shorts... seeing as I will wear them when we swim. Grrr.

It's a hot walk back to the car, but Jill and Christina choose to make it a longer walk, zig-zagging in search of mushrooms, with some success.

Back at the cars, I ask the others if they are feeling stressed. They take the cue from Minami's furious head nodding and reply "yes". I pass around the Japanese "Stress Reduction Chocolate" that effects "mental balance".

With sound mental health, we depart. Warren opens the gates this time, so Conan needn't worry about getting wet cow poo on his sandals again.

A minute later, we are picking fruit from a wild plum tree. Reaching for a container Maho was passing up the bank to me, my feet started sliding. I slid half a metre and then landed hard on my rear, a plum stone ejecting with considerable velocity from my mouth towards Maho. She describes the whole episode as looking comical, and cannot retell it without laughing.

On to the Ruahine Dress Circle, where a group just leaving tell us they got a fright when six chunks fell from the papa cliffs. Recollection of the three kids who died 10 years earlier at Pohangina when material fell on a swimming spot.

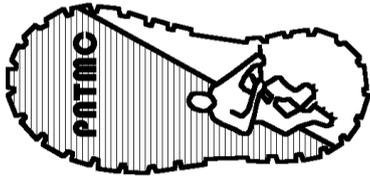
After a refreshing swim, we headed for the Cheltenham Dairy, smug and snug in our cars when the rain finally hit. "That's a "single scoop?" asked Christina, looking with puzzlement at the two boulders atop each cone. "Yep", we assured her. Then a discussion ensued about whether "Corner Store" would be a more appropriate description than "Dairy", and what examples we know of shops being referred to as "Kiosks".

A great day out. Jill voiced her satisfaction at having become acquainted with three great places: the boulders, the swimming spot, and a decent ice cream shop.

We remain: Jill Stewart, Christina Sørensen, Warren Wheeler, the Strachans (Maho, Doug, Minami, Conan).



A cracking good time at the Ohingaiti White Cliffs Boulders.



**Palmerston North
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PNTMC Newsletter March 2017

What's inside this month?

- Applied Tramping 102 – Triangle Hut
- The Call of the Kawekas
- Deadmans Loop
- Waitangi Pouakai Circuit
- Iron Gates Gorge
- White Cliffs Boulders scenic tour
- Coming trips and more

Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20th of each month to Warren Wheeler
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