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# PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

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P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

**Newsletter - November 1999**

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

### **NEWS:**

**Risk Management course, Voting for the Environment,  
Terry's SAR report, and Mitre Flats poetry**

### **TRIP REPORTS:**

**Atene, Northeast Ruahines, Track & Clue Awareness course,  
windy Whangaehu, Mangaweka Trig**

## **CLUB NIGHTS**

NOV 11	“Looking forward, looking Back”	BYO slides
NOV 25	“Scandinavian Touring”	Warren Wheeler
DEC 2	Committee meeting	Peter Wiles' place (12 Jensen St)
DEC 9	XMAS BBQ	Ashhurst Domain

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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Nov 20-21 Pouakai Range M  
Malcolm Parker 357-5203

Depart 6am for North Egmont. Up to join the Round the Mountain track, heading west to Holly Hut for lunch. In the afternoon across the Ahukawakawa swamp and onto the Pouakai Range, and Pouakai Hut for the night. The Pouakai Range is set off from Mt Egmont. With its open tussock tops it gives excellent vantage points for views of Mt Egmont, New Plymouth and the north Taranaki coast. The route back to North Egmont on Sunday will depend on what the group wishes, there being a number of options.

Nov 21 Sunrise-Waipawa M  
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

Depart 7.30 am. Popular destination with added variety and adventure. We will enjoy the variety of forest types up the track to Sunrise Hut on the bushline, marvel at the views west to Ruapehu and east to Hawkes Bay from the rocky tussock tops, boost the adrenalin down a scree slope into the north branch of the Waipawa Stream, and relish the untracked stream route. Expect to get wet feet before returning to the cars!

(Note: this trip has been bought forward from 5 Dec and swapped with Dave Henwood's Rangi-Howletts crossing trip which is now 4-5 Dec.)

Nov 25 Thursday trampers  
Jill Spenser 329-8738

### Nov 25 Club Night: "Scandinavian Touring" with Warren Wheeler.

Warren Wheeler will give a slide presentation and talk on hiking Norwegian-style, as well as canoe touring in Sweden. Warren has spent the last two northern summer holiday periods in this part of the world. Both trips featured 14 day extended hikes amidst the valleys, mountains, lakes and fjords of Norway, experiencing the relatively luxurious accommodation and easy walking en route.

Nov 27 Navigation 1 & River Safety all, I  
Terry Crippen 356-3588

A day of instruction on two important aspects of safe tramping in the hills and valleys. Come to one or both: Firstly a practical navigation activity to introduce people to using compass, estimating distance and times. Terry will be organizing this and compasses will be supplied. A lunch break and then secondly: River safety instruction with Warren Granger and others of the local branch of

the NZ Mountain Safety Council. This activity is always enjoyable with the keen ones going in for repeated wettings in the Pohangina and/or Manawatu river.

Starting times:

10:00am for the Navigation exercise

1:00pm for the River Safety

Navigation exercise: meet at the Ashhurst Domain public shelter. Bring your boots or other suitable footwear and a pencil. For the River Safety, meet again at the public shelter. Bring your pack filled up with the equivalent of a weekend's tramping pack load - well sealed up in a pack liner, and lots of polyprop clothing for when you're in the lovely warm waters.

Note its ELECTION DAY - you can do your voting at ASHHURST at lunch time or before or after activities. The voting booth is probably at the Village Valley centre hall.

Nov 28 Peter Wiles' Ruapehu day trip  
*Shifted forward to Nov 14<sup>th</sup>.*

Dec 2 Thursday trampers  
Monica Cantwell 326-9691

Dec 2 Committee meeting  
- the last one for this MILLENIUM!?!#^\*

Dec 4 (Sat) Navigation 2 NE Tararua  
M, I Terry Crippen 3563-588

Depart 8 am heading over the hill to a pleasant part of the NE Tararua. A day of navigation practice following on from the previous Saturday's activity at Ashhurst. Some forest, bush ridge and pleasant river flats, with a waterfall that we can visit if we want. Everyone can benefit from this exercise - novice or experienced trumper alike - using compasses and maps we will get to grips with bearings, distances and contours. Maps and compasses supplied.

4-5 Dec Rangi-Howletts crossing F  
Dave Henwood 326-8892

6:30 am departure from Palmie on Saturday morning for the Rangiwhia roadend. Then follow the tops past Rangi Hut onto the Whanahuia range, over Te Hekenga and Tiraha to spend what is left of the evening at the idyllic Howletts Hut. Sunday, a variety of options depending on what party members want such as to Mill Road via Daphne hut and the Tukituki river (short and relaxed) or via Sawtooth Ridge-

Ohuinga-Black Ridge-Rosvalls Track-Tukituki River (long and not relaxed) or Kashmir Road via the tops and Longview Hut.

If there are enough people interested, a cross-over and car key swap in the middle can be arranged.

Dec 9 Thursday trappers  
Ellie Kidd 329-0832

**Dec 9 Club night: YAAA!, ITS CHRISTMAS! PARTY, PARTY, PARTY! BBQ! BBQ! THE GREATEST THE LASTEST THE OUTDOORSIEST CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR THE MILLENNIUM**

FROM 6:30 pm ON. Bring yourselves, your friends, your family, your food, your drinks, your \$2.00 present (for your mystery but oh so appreciative recipient), your party attitude and any cool games or activity ideas.

Its all happening at the Asshurst Domain (close to river for swimming etc. Just drive in and down to the back of the reserve near the cemetery. There are toilets, picnic tables (no, not the graves!) BBQ stands, trees and grass.

(Anybody got a portable gas BBQ? Let Maree w 358-9004, or Terry 3563-588 know.)

Dec 11-12 Mick - Waitatapia Stream M/F  
Peter Burgess 354-3533

At Easter, I had a very enjoyable off-track trip down the Waitatapia Stream, having got into it from the Waitewaewae side. This time I'd like to organise a couple of cars and start by climbing the Mick track before dropping into the very head of this little-visited, but very attractive and easy-travelling stream that leads into Otaki Forks. This trip is ideal for anyone who perhaps doesn't feel super-fit, but has a sense of adventure and would like to get into some moderate off-track tramping. It's also a good chance to practice those river safety skills. We will camp somewhere by the Waitatapia Stream on Saturday night, before continuing on down to the Forks on Sunday.

Dec 12 Glaciercraft M/F, I Leader Bruce van Brunt

NOTE: names and enquires to Terry Crippen 356-3588

Depart early sun morning. The glaciercraft course will take place on the Turoa side of Ruapehu. The course will be a one day introduction to glacier travel and is essential for those contemplating heading into the glacier country of the Southern

Alps. The departure time will be early to get the most out of the day. The course is open to those who have the requisite alpine skills such as those taught on Snowcraft II. (The course will be cancelled if the glaciers on Ruapehu are not in suitable condition.) Please contact Terry who is taking names and organizing things at this end since Bruce will be down in the BIG Mountains immediately prior to the day.

Dec 13 Thursday trappers  
Christmas party

Dec 18-19 Mangahao Flats Hut E/Family  
Richard Lockett 323-0948  
Depart 8am Saturday morning. A leisurely relaxed trip to avoid the pre-Christmas panic. Sod the shopping and come away to this pleasant valley in the western Tararuas. Forest, track and river, with a nice hut to stay in for the night. Bring your togs for your first swim for the year.

Possibilities for MILLENNIUM EVENTS:

31 Dec - 1 Jan Traverse of Mount Cook All  
Warren Wheeler 356-1998

31 Dec - 1 Jan Ruapehu Snow cave M, T  
How about over night or for a couple of nights/days up on the snow and ice of Ruapehu, snow caving and/ or camping on the plateau, and generally enjoying the place. Plenty of things to do up there. You will need normal mountain equipment, and plenty of protection from the sun. *We need a leader.* However Tony Gates can co-ordinate things but will be elsewhere (SI) at the time. So give him a call on 357-7439.

EXTENDED TRIPS THIS SUMMER

4 - 15 Jan Arrowsmith Range F/T  
Peter Wiles 358-6894.

Leaving PN 4th Jan for Erewhon and the Lawrence branch of the Rangitata River. Aim for Mt Arrowsmith (give or take a couple meters, the same height of Ruapehu). Then might consider further peaks on the Arrowsmith range on the eastern side of the Lawrence, or might cross into the Sinclair River branch of the Clyde River branch of the Rangitata via a col on the west of the Lawrence. This would access a variety of peaks in the Kirk Stream tributary of the Rakaia River. Aim to be out on 15 January and people might wish to consider further trips following on after 15<sup>th</sup> (Topomap J35 Arrowsmith).

17-27 Jan Franz - Fox, Westland National Park  
 F,T Terry Crippen 356-3588  
 This trip follows on from Peter's Arrowsmith one. Probably starting and finishing in Hokitika, we will drive down the West Coast to Fox Glacier village, where we will fly up onto either the upper Fox or Franz Glaciers, for 10 days of fine settled weather (fingers crossed). We will be high up on the neves, with lots of glacier travel, and some

good climbs, exiting back down to the West Coast. Flight in will cost approx \$150. We will be staying in NZAC huts. Applications close EOYBBQ December 9th with \$50, so I can organise the food. (Topomaps H35 Franz Joseph and H36 Mt Cook.)

SCHEDULED CLUB TRIPS THEN BEGIN AGAIN MID-JANUARY.

#### 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), Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805), or Peter Burgess (354-3533).

#### 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 Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805)

### NOTICES

#### ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

All kinds of articles, whether trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, or even a product review, 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, contrary to last month's advice (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 EDITOR

Things are gradually getting back to normal for me after involuntarily doing the motorbike Evil-Kneival thing off the side of a hill country

backroad last month. Scary stuff & not recommended! Saved by a very compliant old no.8 wire farm fence, otherwise I just might not be here writing this today. As several people have remarked to me "tramping is probably a bit less risky, John" – yup, sound advice which I think I will take on board for now. Many thanks to committee members & others for the Get-Well card.

Typing will be less of a struggle when I shed this cast off my left wrist mid-November & the back just might be okay in time for some late summer tramping! Thanks to Warren for taking care of the October newsletter.

Cheers, John

#### NEW MEMBERS

A big welcome to two new members this month:

Ross Fletcher  
 100 Russell St, PN  
 ph 359-0716

Stephen Liddall  
 33 Peter Hall Drive, PN

ph 353-1272

Ross is a club member from way back who has recently returned from overseas - Welcome Home, Ross & happy tramping to both of you.

#### MAP ORDER

If you want maps for summer & you read this before the first club night in November, get your order in to Laurence Gatehouse by then. There's big discounts (up to 30%) when you order through the club.

#### RISK MANAGEMENT COURSE FEB 2000

A couple of years ago leaders and prospective leaders of club trips attended a two day risk management course - managing and minimising risks in the outdoors so that trips can be enjoyable, exciting and safe. Another one is being held for anybody who is interested:

Education Outdoors NZ Manawatu is running a two day Risk Management training seminar based at the Highland Home in the Pohangina Valley. Accommodation (two nights) and food are provided, and we have a contract with two of the best Risk Management facilitators in the North Island.

Dates: Thursday & Friday 25-26 February 2000

Cost: \$130

Bookings and further information:

Jan Watts: Ph. (06) 357 6848

Fax (06)359 0760

Email [jan.watts@natlib.govt.nz](mailto:jan.watts@natlib.govt.nz)

#### NEXT SIX MONTHLY EVENTS CARD

Its that time of the year again (what again!!) and Laurence is looking for leaders and trips for January to June next year. Be in quick to get the dates you want, the first trip of the millennium will be at a premium. Please contact Laurence Gatehouse at 356-5805 or [lgatehouse@hort.cri.nz](mailto:lgatehouse@hort.cri.nz) with your trips before we have to ring you up and offer threats (no ice-cream for YOU next tramp). Seriously have a think about where to go and what to do.

#### VOTE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- an Environment Charter 1999 FMC (Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ, to which PNTMC is affiliated) have combined with Forest and Bird, ECO and Greenpeace to produce an Environmental Charter which sets out the key principles and policy planks that these groups consider should be adopted by all political parties. Some of these principles and planks are of direct

relevance to us as trampers. These could be used by you as a trumper when thinking about who and/or what party to vote for. (The Environmental Charter does not support any particular party - thats for you to decide.)

Examples on what the Charter would like to see as commitments by all parties, include: "maintain and enhance public foot access to the public conservation estate, and along the coast and waterways (including the Queen's chain) except where ecologically damaging" and "Increase baseline Department of Conservation funding by \$200 million over three years, with priority given to threatened species, habitat protection and restoration, pastoral lease property purchases, pest control and conservation advocacy".

If you want to see the document come along to Club night or borrow a copy off Terry (3563588).

#### SEARCH AND RESCUE MATTERS

Terry Crippen

On late afternoon of Saturday 6th, a hunter was reported overdue by a day, from a hunting trip in the Diggers area of the Ruahines and a SAR was initiated by the PN police. I got phoned up by the search controller, Hugh Wilde, to get two teams ready to go on standby for Sunday morning. Luckily about six of PNTMC's SAR list people where home and were available, so we all got busy throwing overnight gear and food into our packs for the morning. However no sooner had we done that, than I got the message that the hunter was out safe and sound. So no search and we could all get back to our original plans for Sunday.

What happened was: the hunter and his overdue contact had differing ideas for the day when the hunter was due out! So a timely reminder: when you are heading out and about in the hills, make sure your contact has the correct details of when you are due out (plus your intentions) - write it down for them so everything is quite clear.

Thanks to those who were able to respond & get geared up for the search.

#### BUSH POETRY, FROM A PLAQUE ON THE WALLS OF THE POPULAR MITRE FLATS HUT.

- First hut built 1935, timber cut on site, iron carried in by horse.

- 1953, second MF hut, 12 months to carry in materials, then slip diverted river & carried most things away.
- 1965, hut added to.
- April 1988, 3<sup>rd</sup> hut (now) opened.

Poem by Ted Esler, who helped to build the second MF hut in 1953

**It is Easter Thursday morning  
of the year 1945**

*men gather around the Mitre Hut  
like bees around a hive  
Some have gear all shiney new  
Some have billies grimey  
Some have no gear at all  
Only a rifle shiney.*

*They spin the yarns of yesteryear  
of many a bloodstained fray  
they tell the story of the mighty stag  
the one that got away  
and soon they roll up their blankets  
and are fast asleep so soon  
they are up and about by 3.00 AM  
and away by the light of the moon  
some bound for Mitre Peak  
some for the bushline grey  
some to Mt Holdsworth  
some to far away.*

*Now it is Monday evening  
men came down the tracks  
with many a hard earned stag skin  
strapped upon their packs  
and so into the old Waingawa*

*some of them seem to lag  
but they'll come again next easter  
to stalk the old red stag.*

*And the mists settle down on the Mitre  
as they did since time began  
and the red stag roared out his challenge  
A challenge to man and his gun.*

**LOG BOOK ENTRY, RUAHINE CORNER  
HUT**

Ray the Pig, via Waiouru Military Camp, going north this time. Got down south to Lake Tekapo in the South Island, been in and out of the National Parks now for 153 day, the last 10 day has been wet and cold, not verry enjoyable, but take the good with the bad but overall seen a lot of NZ bush Uarewa, Kaiweka, Kimanawa, Ruahine, Tararua National Parks in the Nth Is, Nelson-Westport, Lewis Pass, Arthurs Pass & down to Tekapo. Then back to Wgtn by public transport & back into the Tararua Ranges had a weeks rest in Palmiston North then back into the Ruahine at Coppermine took about 15 days to com back from Copermine Ck to here. Seen a lot of deer in the last 153 day & native birds. Must admit it been better than having to work everey day. Been in some good hut over the last 153 day. Got lost once in a whiteout didn't use compas that time. Had some pritty good brews also some good veneson stakes. Hope the weather improves tomorrow after 10 days of shitt. Have a nice day.  
2 June 1999

**TRIP REPORTS**

**ATENE SKYLINE WALKWAY**

by Joseph ward, Aged 8

On Saturday 2nd of October I went on a tramp. With us was my Mum Elizabeth, my uncle Richard, my Brother Daniel who is 7, Duncan and Ellan. It was a nice day and the 18km walk took us about 7 hours.

The Atene skyline track circles the old Wanganui river bed (cut-off meander) 36kms from Wanganui and was opened in 1981. You start off by walking on an old road which was built in the 1960s and is easy walking. At the Ahu ahu valley lookout we were 317 metres above sea level and

we could see the surrounding bush area for miles. After about 2 hours the track becomes narrow and steep in places. We had lunch at the shelter which is halfway around. There was a Dead Possum. There were flies on it. We saw some Goats and lots of birds including a native Pigeon a Bellbird and some Swallows. My Mum is going to ask DoC to build some more seats around the track. It was fun and we had heaps of rests.

**IMAGINATION'S EDGE - A NORTHERN  
RUAHINE WALK**

2-3 October 1999 by Pete McGregor

On the second day of October, a Saturday full of the promise of heat, I headed alone to the north-eastern Ruahine, arriving at Masters Shelter in the late morning - probably would have got there an hour earlier if I hadn't had to open and close all 5 gates... in and out of the car 10 times, it's enough to drive you crazy but you have no choice so you just do it and don't think how much time you're wasting... No-one else was there. I parked in the shade and walked up the track to a sheltered, sunny spot among the open scrub and rock where I ditched boots and socks and shirt and lay back like a lizard feeling the sun sink in as I ate my peculiar sandwich and banana and wondered how much of the water I should drink, expecting nothing before Aranga hut... Set off again feeling good and climbed steadily, up through the scrub and into the beech and eventually to the stunted zone where the beeches are old like wizened Chinese monks and the snowgrass grows under them and soon came to the sign that says Aranga hut 1 hour No Mans hut 2 hours so I downed the last of the carefully saved water and it was easy going, a gentle walk but cold because of the wind despite the sun... Aranga appeared, a flash of faded orange sooner than I'd expected, so I checked it out and made a brew outside in the sun and nibbled cheese then pushed on, past the sign that says Kylie biv 4 hours, but glad I wasn't going there, pleased to be just taking my time and going only as far and as slow as I felt.

Right out on the tops, close to the highest point, there's a tarn. I walked over and crouched down to see the late light on the wrinkled water; a tiny island near the shore, with pale yellow tussocks flexing in the wind; on the far shore a brilliant olive-green whipcord shrub folding over the edge to almost, but not quite, touch its reflection; at my feet, clean-edged mats of green, even, submerged weed... all these *colours*, and the light... I felt helpless, needing so much to find a way to share it, but the camera's so fickle, and the words so inadequate... so now it's here in my memory, and what good is that to anyone else... I followed the track until it descended again into beech forest. It drops to a saddle then climbs to the open tops again, then heads around to Piopio... that name, the name of the extinct native thrush, it seemed so right, so appropriate, so old and gone and full of the mystery and sadness of extinction... in the beech forest, yellow light filtering through to illuminate yellow and green snowgrass, still with last year's spent seedheads... Several times I cut back to the ridge to look into the head of the

evening Makaroro... a huge sweep of white windcloud in the endless sky, the vast depth of the valley, ridgelines lit and gullies dark... the cold... the warm light, the bitter wind... I walked maybe a third of the way towards Piopio, then turned around and walked back through that miniature world of shoulder-high trees, low shrubs, small snow tussocks, matted moss and cushion plants... On the edge of vision I saw something flicker and freeze in the late evening - a pair of hares. They crouched and watched until I moved, then they raced off into the dusk... it felt like an omen, they were only partly real, the other part a product of the strangeness and I went over to where they'd been and it was as if the land was saying camp here, this is the spot, stay here, this is where you belong... But the wind was bitter... so cold... I was shaking with it, trying to take photos, and there was always one more I had to try for before doing something about getting warm...

Returned and camped out about 10 minutes past Aranga hut, in the elfin-scrub - tiny, gnarled mountain beeches and kaikawaka like a world belonging to patupaiarehe, the spirit-people, sprites...wanted to get photos of the last light over the northern Ruahine... ah, you should've seen the sun setting over Ruahine Corner and Te Rakaunuiakura /Black Hill; way up there I was at 1400m, higher than the top of Black Hill and the Corner seemed far below... a huge dark cloud hanging there above it and the sun behind the cloud sending shafts of light streaming down through gaps, the hill black as its name and the red-tussock plateau warm under the soft light ... and then the sun dropped into the gap between the cloud and the land, a red disc burning and creeping down below the horizon... but the light after the sun had disappeared completely, it was so stunningly subtle: pinks and greys and violets, and white clouds, and tussocks in the wind, and those tiny trees, so old and weather-beaten and mysterious... they're so small; I walked across the tops and felt like a giant...

During the night the wind shook the tent in a fury, although I'd snuggled in deep among the elfin beech. I kept waking during the night but still got a fair amount of sleep... at one stage I woke, or thought I woke, sure there was a group of people talking nearby. I almost scrambled out of the scratcher, but then realised I was still asleep, so woke myself up properly... but it was very strange ... I think maybe there are patupaiarehe up there, living in that weird, wonderful place... By

morning I was in cloud, the tent wet, mist-ghosts howling by... I made a quick brew, packed and headed for Aranga to have a more sheltered breakfast. It's in a bit of a mess - some real low-lives go there by the look of it... and there was possum crap on the mattresses and rubbish lying around and it was generally dark and dirty ... I cleaned it up but I guess possums'll get back in and foul it up in short order; it's a shame, because it's actually not a bad hut - doesn't deserve its nickname "Ruin", it's not that bad and if people looked after it better it'd be quite a cosy little spot. But in the state it was in when I got there, I wouldn't want to spend a night in it - it's the sort of place you feel you'd catch some sort of sordid disease if you accidentally touched anything - sort of like the feeling of sleeping in a public toilet (not that I've ever done that, but you get the idea...). But if it was clean and flash and comfortable then more people would go there and perhaps the feeling of age and remoteness would vanish.

I left the wind-whipped cloud behind as I followed the track through fingers of open, stunted beech forest, across scrubby tussock and bog, past the 3-way sign - No Mans/Parks Peak/Aranga... striding out in the sun towards the top of Golden Crown Ridge, I almost stepped on a bird - don't know what it was, perhaps a pipit... it flashed up in fright from right beside my boot and I saw only a glimpse of startled wings, then gone... maybe it had a nest there. I thought of searching, but then thought no, if I search it might abandon the nest, so I kept walking, on to the junction, through broken trees and beaten-down snowgrass and down to the big slip where I stopped and peered out to the north and east - a haze of faraway hills faint and faded where the world ends. Everything shimmering but not a thing moving...

I arrived back at the car late morning, in the heat and sun, and drove dusty roads back to central Hawkes Bay, then along the shimmering white-lined tarmac roads towards the grey and overcast Manawatu, lines of cars like frantic ants on New York footpaths, filled with the mad horror of exhausted cities. I put away the thought and wandered through memories... trees, tarns, tracks, the land, the light... found myself wondering if anyone would ever again see those hares. If they do, I hope they see them the way I did: half real; halfway into memory; always on the edge of imagination as the light vanishes over Ruahine Corner.

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ADVANCED TRACK & CLUE AWARENESS  
COURSE October 9-10 by Peter Burgess

As with most of the participants, this was my second TCA course. Both had been at the outdoor pursuits centre near Levin and both given by Ross Gordon and funded by NZ Land SAR. However, unlike most of the participants, I have had very little (in fact no real) SAR experience, so felt quite humble in the company of 17 crusty veterans from various walks of bush-life and as far afield as Hawkes Bay and New Plymouth.

As with the previous course the learning began pretty much straight away on Friday night with some revision of basic rules of tracking and some case studies, including a practical (outdoor) revision exercise carried out in pairs. Despite getting right into it, Ross was keen to ensure that the weekend wasn't completely full-on and intensive, stressing that the key to successful tracking is to stop and think before making any move. Another key point, which he made several times, was that searchers who are asleep on their feet are no use to anyone. Having had quite a stressful time at work lately, I found this approach just great!

I won't try to cover all that was learned that weekend, that would be impossible, without using up most of the newsletter, but the main topics were sign-cutting, which means to encircle a clue and try to intercept the target's entry and exit tracks at 90 degrees, and ageing. For sign-cutting, we learned a systematic approach aimed at minimising and controlling the contamination caused by the searchers. The basic idea is to mark the route that you use to approach the clue clearly and then mark 2 or 3 concentric circles, starting 1m out from the clue. The searchers should then walk only on these marked paths, while trying to find the lost parties tracks leading up to and away from the clue. We practised this technique many times over the course of the weekend, in many different scenarios, both day and night.

The key point that we learned about ageing sign is that it is very difficult! There are many variables that affect how a clue, such as a footprint, piece of paper, apple core or whatever changes over time and the wise searcher avoids making rash statements such as "the footprints were made 18 hours and 43 minutes ago". A much more useful

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idea is to use time-frames, such as "since the river dropped".

Other skills that we learned during the weekend were how to use feel when springy ground cover hides footprints from visual tracking and how to sex urine (no, you don't have to taste it!). I can thoroughly recommend any of Ross Gordon's courses as he has a very approachable and effective presentation style as well as a real passion for search and rescue.

The difficulty of ageing footprints depending on the conditions was brought home to me last weekend, when on the way in to Roaring Stag Hut, I followed some fresh-looking tracks leading up to the junction with the Herepai track (there had been some rain, but conditions were now dry). These then disappeared, on the way to Roaring Stag. However I met the maker of the footprints who arrived not long after me, as he had just been up to Herepai to take its picture. It turned out that this individual was a hut collector. He had collected all the huts in the Kawekas, Ruahines and Tararuas and several other places apparently (totalling some 600 odd). He had been tramping for 15 years and always alone apparently.

Anyway the next morning I was heading out from Roaring Stag in pouring rain (the streams were only just passable) and some people at the hut told me some others in their party had left that morning for the road-end. As I made my way back I looked carefully for their foot-prints because the people at the hut were concerned about their ability to cross the streams (apparently they were inexperienced). I found some tracks leading out, but if I had not known better would have said that they were several days old rather than just hours. At the road-end there were no cars left that could not be accounted for by the parties that I had met, so I assumed that they must have made it and that those few faint prints were indeed theirs.

Another bizarre footprint incident happened the weekend before while on route into Cattle Creek Hut in the Ruahines. I left quite late, but decided to try finding my way down Cattle Creek itself rather than take the ridge track, which I did last time. I didn't manage to find the old track leading into the creek and ended up thrashing around for about 40 minutes before I managed to find my way into it. Almost immediately I noticed some

very fresh looking footprints (splashes on the rocks were a sure sign that someone had made them quite recently) as I made my way towards the hut, I thought to myself, it's probably a hunter, perhaps it's Tony Gates. When I got there I found the hut empty, but the log book showed that sure enough Tony had been through that day and was off down to Mid-Pohangina for an evening shoot. Next day I discovered from the entry in Stanfield Hut log book that Tony had actually been behind me and must have passed while I was trying to find Cattle Creek!

## WINDY WHANGAEHU CLIMBING

Labour Weekend 23-24 Oct Terry Crippen

A full moon was booked for Labour weekend, just what we needed to wander up to Whangaehu, the NZAC hut at about 2100m on the Desert Rd side of Ruapehu. The weather forecast wasn't the best for the weekend including Friday night so being the pessimist, I was suggesting that it would be wind, rain and poor visibility for the walk in the dark, giving descriptions of previous epic trips in. However from Waiouru north, conditions were looking good; a cloudless, moonlight evening. No problems with the access road, and a quick sort out of gear, saw us heading up the rock rib then onto snow slopes with just occasional use of headlamps. A couple of deviations from the poled route, and some wind, didn't add much more to the time or effort to get the hut. We had this side of the mountain to ourselves, however sharing the hut with a number of resident mice.

Saturday; fine and clear but very windy, so we headed across to the sheltered NE side of the ridge leading up to the Watch Tower and Cathedral Rocks; the Mangatoetoenui Glacier side -hot and soft slushy snow. One pitch of rope work then onto the other very windy side of the ridge – quite icy and wind almost strong enough to make light people airborne. We sighted a couple of people over by The Dome - they must have been glued to the slopes. Dropping down out of some of the wind we had a relaxed late lunch before heading back to the hut, with the wind behind us now.

The hut is in an exhilarating locality, on the edge of high bluffs overlooking the Whangaehu Valley, the BIG face of Mitre, and the geometric slope of Pyramid looking quite inviting from this side. The occasional sniff of sulphur reminds one that the active crater, while out of sight, is not far away. We kept ourselves busy in the hut; eating,

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drinking, Warren and Maree duo-reading, and annoying the resident mice - translocating the odd one (live) down slope past the outhouse after catching it in the un-patented PET bottle mice catcher. None of us were willing to do a knife job or use a heavy boot.

Plenty of wind, with rain and some snow overnight. Come Sunday morning this continued unabated. Utilising cell phone technology we obtained the latest on-the-spot forecast for the Monday - more 50km/h winds, clearing only in the afternoon before turning into a nor' wester. So we decided we would exit the place after lunch, so we could all do those 101 things that needed doing at home on Labour Day.

So after lunch, into the wind, off across and down the slopes and back to the road end and the vehicle. Still no one else on this side of the mountain. A bit of a feed in Waiouru, not much to eat though – something to remember: lack of food early evening on Labour weekend Sunday in Waiouru, they probably get things going for Monday evening when most of the traffic is going home.

So while very little climbing was done, the trip introduced or re-introduced that side of the mountain to the five mice watchers; Warren Wheeler, Sarah Todd, Dave Simcock, Maree Limpus, Terry Crippen (scribe).

P.S. We all avoided looking Ruapehu's way on the mountain - by all accounts it would have been a cracker of a day up there. Mumble!

## TITAHI BAY ROCK

7th November by Laurence Gatehouse

The weather forecast was so-so on Saturday night but the leader is responsible for these decisions and so I carefully weighed in my mind the alternatives (lie in, hangover etc) and decided to

go, so we went. The descent down the cliffs was pretty slippery after the rain we have been having but it has been worse (I only landed on my bum once, pretty good!) and when we got to the bottom the tide was in which meant wet feet as we paddled and scrambled round to the bottom of the climbs but Hey! what is a visit to the seaside without a paddle?

After a bit of prospecting routes and impromptu bouldering (and spotting that the Nose where we usually start was fully occupied) we decided to try the region beyond. This turned out to be a big slab which you arrive at about 10 meters up from the bottom and about 15 meters down from a big sloping ledge. There is a very easy traverse across this into a corner which you can descend to the next little bay, or more interestingly ascend via a number of routes to that big sloping ledge. So we passed the day climbing here and doing a bit of scrambling and bouldering. Nice to be on routes which reward balance more than straight finger strength (OK OK I should get to the rockwall more often).

We were Laurence (Your scribe) and Heather Gatehouse, Peter Burgess and Warren "El Presidente" Wheeler.

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