



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter, March 2003

From the heart of downtown Wellington, one can look north and see the craggy peaks of the Tararua Ranges. Kathy Ombler (2001)

Trip Reports.
Ruahines; Waipawa, Kawhatau.
Tararuas; Field Hut, Burn Hut loop, Waiohine Gorge.
Kawekas, The Kaweka Challenge.
SAREX

CLUB NIGHTS

March 13	South Island road trip	Harley Betts
March 27	Annual General Meeting	Committee
April 3	Committee Meeting	
April 10	BYO slides and prints	PNTMC
April 24	Rescue Helicopter	
May 8	Climbing at Fox Glacier	John Barnes

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.

UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Trip Grades

Trip grades depend on many factors, especially the weather. A reasonably proficient tramp can be expected 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): >8 hrs

T refers to technical trips requiring special skills.

March 13 Club Night

South Island Road Trip, by Harley Betts.

Harley is a talented photographer, who will be presenting a photographic tour of some recently visited parts of the South Island, including the West Coast.

March 14-16 Rangī Howletts F/E
Jean Garman 354-3536

The plan is to leave Friday evening for Rangī Hut. On Saturday, we travel around the Whanahua Range past Te Hekenga, and to Howletts hut for the night. On Sunday we carry on down Daphne Ridge over Taumatataua and drop off the end into a stream we follow to the Oroua River. From here we head up river and pick up the track between Triangle and Iron gates to get to 1037 then its up onto Mangahua. To avoid retracing our steps we'll head back to the car via Deadmans track. Just a word of warning to you long legged speed machines - I don't walk that fast! But don't be put off, you're under no obligation to walk with me if you don't want to. To state the obvious this trip requires reasonable weather.

March 15-16 Pouakai Hut, ENP E/M
Harley Betts 357-0132

(Note; this trip has been brought forward and swapped with Elaine's which is now on 22 March.) A northern Taranaki tramp to show you possibly the best views of the mountain.

March 22 (Sat) Coppermine Creek E
Elaine Herve 354-2499

(Note; this trip has been swapped with Harley's which is now on 15-16 March)
Close to town, and a pleasant stroll along a good track. It is however quite steep off the track.

March 23 Takapari Mt bike M
Richard Lockett 323-0948

Takapari Road winds into the heart of the Ruahine Ranges south of the Pohangina valley. By mountain bike, you can get to see neat areas. The road is locked for four wheel drive vehicles, but still has long lengths of really god riding.

March 27. PNTMC Annual General Meeting
Refer notices. Also Gear for life.

March 29- 30 Waitewaiwai E/ M
Liz Flint 356 7654

In from Otaki, this tramp goes through excellent Tararua bush to a large and luxurious new hut beside the Otaki River.

March 30 Mt Hector F
Lance Gray 356 6454

Another classic Tararua tramp up the popular Judd Ridge, past the historic Field and Kime huts, through gorgeous tussock basins to the summit of Mt Hector, with its memorial cross. The super athletes of the Tararua Mountain Race descend from Hector in about an hour You are excused if you do it a bit slower!

April 3 Committee Meeting

April 5- 6 Waiopahu Hut E
Liz Morrison 357 6532

A long bush ridge track leads to this spacious hut, another new Tararua one, with grand views of the Levin plains and Tararuas behind.

April 5- 6 SAR T
Terry Crippen 356 3588

This weekend features Track and Clue Awareness, RR, and LAR.

April 10 Club night BYO slides/ photos

This is always a popular club evening, with members given the opportunity to show their favourite pic's from recent escapades. Guaranteed to have variety and interest.

April 12 (Sat) Blyth Hut, TNP
Mary Crow 06 322 8665

This hut is located on the scenic Mt Ruapehu bushline, up from Ohakune. Good tracks.

April 13 Hunterville Hill
Malcolm Leary 06 322 8533

Hill country farmland (mostly on tracks) walk, 24 km long, slight climb at start, top 800 metres, then gently descend a major ridge. Good views of surrounding hill country and bush.

April 18- 22. Easter trip to Heaphy track, Kahurangi National Park.
Barry and Christine Scott will be leading a trip over the Heaphy track at Easter. The plan at present is to fly Origin from Palmerston North to

Nelson (Fri 18th) and return on Wed 23rd. Travel will then be from Nelson to the Collingwood road end the afternoon of Friday 18th April, to spend 4 days on the track, coming out at Karamea Tuesday 22 April. We plan to arrange a shuttle from Karamea to Nelson for Wednesday morning of 23rd of April - quote still to be obtained.

If you wish to join this trip you have the option of either flying or making your way by other means to Nelson, but you must arrive in Nelson by early afternoon of Fri 18th. Flights with Origin will fill up rapidly so book early. Close off date for this trip is 16th March.

Barry & Christine Scott, 06 354 0510 (after 7 pm)
d.b.scott@massey.ac.nz, c.a.scott@massey.ac.nz

April 23-27, ANZAC Weekend
Nelson Lakes climbing. F, T Terry Crippen 3563-588.

This follows directly on from Barry's Heaphy track trip, for those that want to do both. On Wednesday (23rd) drive/arrive at St Arnaud and

head into Cupola basin for the next few days. Various climbing possibilities on Mt Cupola and others. I will be taking a vehicle down on Thurs 17 April (5:30pm sailing) to meet up with Barry, if you don't want to fly. Or you can meet us at St Arnaud Wednesday afternoon. Returning Sunday 27 April 6pm sailing. Let me know asap if interested.

April 24 Club Night Rescue Helicopter

April 25- 27 Oturere, TNP M
Warren Wheeler 356 1998
In from the Desert Road, to a very nice hut. Easy, flat track, with spectacular volcanic landscapes.

May 31- June 2 (approx) (Queens Birthday) E/ M
Janet Wilson 329 4722
Abel Tasman NP. A coastal stroll along a nice track, concentrating on the northern end. Good huts and beaches. Early expressions of interest required, to assist with transport arrangements.

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 Andrew Lynch (325-8779).

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 Janet Wilson (329 4722)

NOTICES

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES can be Emailed to leatherwood@pconnect.co.nz or tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz, or delivered to home or work.

If you're e-mailing, please include your article as an attachment (Microsoft Word Version 7.0 or Rich Text Format), unless it is a small article, which can be typed directly into the e-mail.

EMAIL ADDRESS LIST

Committee members who are connected to Email are listed below. Please note that changes to this list may occur from time to time, so we will try to keep it as up to date as possible.

warren.wheeler@horizons.govt.nz

terry_crippen@clear.net.nz

P.WILES@wiles.gen.nz

tony.gates@horizons.govt.nz, or at home, at leatherwood@pconnect.co.nz

atlynch@ihug.co.nz

B.vanBrunt@massey.ac.nz

gaewyn.grant@xtra.co.nz

The 2003 Annual General Meeting.

It is proposed that the PNTMC constitution be amended. The winding up clause needs minor rewording to secure our status as a charitable organization, and ensure our eligibility for funding from Eastern & Central Trust. Also, the financial year needs to be moved to avoid Easter.

AGM 27 March 2003 - "Gear for Life"

This year's AGM will be followed by some serious fun – comparing the best features of the latest gear (from Mountain Equipment) with the real world stories of some of our best old (or new) gear and why we wouldn't part with it – truly gear for the long haul, if not in fact for life.

The first part of the evening will include the usual Presidential Address, Treasurers Report, and Nomination of Officers as well as General Business. The present Exec Team and the Committee members are pretty much all offering themselves for re nomination, and we hope you will support us, but we also welcome any further nominations.

General Business will include resolutions to change the Constitution. These have been mentioned in the last two newsletters and more detail is included with the proxy form included with this newsletter. The changes are mostly to meet IRD criteria for tax-free status, thereby enabling us to regain funding from Eastern and Central Trust and others to support our expenditure on instructional activities and gear purchases. In addition we are looking to provide some more flexibility over the timing of the AGM. If you are unable to attend please fill in the proxy form included with this newsletter and send it to the Secretary before the AGM.

The second part of the evening – "Gear for Life" is a "show and tell" to give you the opportunity to showcase and wax lyrical about one or more items of gear that is special for you, how the gear has served you well, and why you want to keep the item(s) despite appearing to be less than fashionable and past its use-by date (the gear that is, not you). This promises to reveal both light-hearted and serious aspects of lifetimes of outdoors experiences, so please give some thought to bringing along at least one or two of your favourite thing(s).

I look forward to seeing you there.
Warren Wheeler,
President PNTMC

Wednesday Tramping Group.

We go out every second Wednesday on easy tramps. Come and join us. For more information, please phone Judy 357 0192, Jennifer, 323 3914, or June 355 2690.

DOC News.

The Department of Conservation is building bridges at the following sites in the Tararuas:

From mid-February to 30th April 2003 contractors involved in the construction of the bridges will be staying at Tutuwai Hut and Cow Creek Hut. This means there will be fewer bunk spaces available in the huts near there.

Please take a tent or fly with you if you intend using the Tutuwai Hut or Cow Creek Hut during the above period. If the hut is full you are more than welcome to use the space outside the hut to pitch your tent or fly.

For further information please contact Mark Townsend, DOC Masterton, Ph 06 377 0700

Cooker Fuel For Sale.

For all your tramping trips; Terry has got bulk white spirits (Shellite/ Pegasol/ Calite- various names) available for your cookers. At \$3.50 a litre, it is much cheaper than up to \$8 when you have to buy it in the one litre containers from a garage. Contact Terry 356 3588. Bring your own container if you have one.

NZ Mountain Safety Outdoor First Aid Courses

Full Course- 2-3 August (PN) \$100
accommodation and meals included. Course starts Friday evening and finishes Sunday afternoon.

Revalidation courses- 29 March (PN) \$35
19 July (PN) \$35
Single all day course, open to holders of Mountain Safety first aid certificates that are no more than three calendar months past their expiry date

Note that Mountain Safety Outdoor First Aid certificates, in line with the industry standard, expire after two years.

Contact Tom to get a enrollment form.
enrolments close one week before the course.

Tom Siegenthaler, 1 Emmerdale Mews PN
ph/fax +64 6 3577237
tsiegen@xtra.co.nz
Mountain Safety Manawatu Outdoor First Aid
Coordinator

Book Review

Barron Saddle- Mt Brewster: A Guide for Climbers
By Ross Cullen, reviewed By Pete Barnes
RRP \$35, NZAC members \$23

As my eyes locked onto the new Barron Saddle to Mt Brewster guidebook I was instantly impressed....it has grown to an A5 size (double the size of the previous edition), it has been published with a nice weatherproof plastic-coated soft cover, and it is now in a very similar layout and style to its Mt Cook and Mt Aspiring big brothers.

While I have grown very attached to my 1st edition, which has clocked-up quite a few trips, and has a lot of character with its dog-ears and water stains, it seems it has just reached had automatic retirement!

This 2nd edition provides an up to date summary of the climbing available in Barron Saddle to Brewster region which stretches south-west from Aoraki/ Mt Cook National Park. As with the 1st edition, the guidebook covers the Ben Ohau, Neumann, Main Divide, Barrier Ohau, Huxley and Hooker Ranges. In addition to that lot, this edition now includes the alpine crags that have been developed at Twin Stream, as well as Mackenzie Basin bouldering spots. This means that the guide now covers a variety of alpine routes: rock scrambles, snow, ice and alpine rock climbing, as well as alpine crag climbing, and bouldering.

To state the obvious, there has been an explosion of new routes being completed in the region in the last few years, the majority coming from a core of active individuals, including the author, Ross Cullen. The 1st edition, even with the 1997 'additions supplement', has become well outdated with approx. 150 new climbs now having being completed. This new edition has brought all of the new and old information together, along with plenty of new maps, photo and line topo's and photographs to help guide the climber.

Route descriptions are largely based on the earlier edition. Many route descriptions are brief

TRIP REPORTS

SUNRISE HUT TO WAIPAWA VALLEY, 2 Feb 2003. By Elaine Herve.

Leader Warren Wheeler, with Doug Strachan, Richard Biss, Judith Ridd, & Elaine Herve.

At our usual meeting place, we all squeezed into my car, and had an uneventful drive to the road end. The weather was perfect, and stayed that way all day, providing us with clear views in all

(eg. South Ridge of Mt Lloyd: "Up Freds Stream, take fourth stream on right onto ridge and climb around to top"). However, it seems that most of the longer and more technical routes have sufficient detail contained in the guidebook. This is certainly the case with routes on Mt Ward, Mt Jackson and Mt Hooker that I am familiar with.

A major asset to this 2nd edition is the inclusion of information on the increasingly popular alpine crags at Twin Stream. While I am yet to visit Twin Stream (.gulp!), and I therefore cannot personally vouch for the accuracy of the route information, there appears to be a wealth of up to date route information. The topo's are clearly drawn, and are consistent in their use of symbols that are all easily identified with a key to symbols that is provided at the beginning of the guide.

While the basic guiding system adopted for the first edition was practical and adequate for the early nineties (scramble/intermediate/technical), the second edition has adopted the grade 1-7 system used in the Aoraki/Mt Cook and Aspiring guidebooks (with rock climbing grades incorporated as necessary). The use of this grading system will inevitably bring about consistency in route grading throughout the Alps, and routes will be more easily assessed/ identified by climbers who are using this system more and more.

In addition to practical and accurate route descriptions, the author has provided the usual guidebook information on grading, land access, geology and climbing history. However, in addition to this, an introductory essay and numerous historical quotes from NZ Alpine Journal articles provides a good feel for the region, the climbing that it has to offer, and a bit of amusement for good measure.

Ross's passion for the area has meant this is a well compiled and very professionally laid out guidebook, which now covers a very wide variety of climbing styles. At \$23 to NZAC members, this is an absolute bargain.

directions. As we wound our way up to Sunrise Hut, there was the usual botanizing, led by Warren and assisted by Doug. We were less successful in identifying some of the local bird life that appears to be recovering as a result of prolonged use of 1080 in the area. There was discussion on the value of having a pocket sized book of local flora and fauna for such outings.

We had lunch at the lookout above Sunrise Hut. Warren kindly pointed out the slip he was taking us down later. After about 40 minutes lunch stop, we moved on from our warm sunny rest stop, slapped on more suntan lotion, filled water bottles, and carried on up towards Armstrong Saddle.

At the sign post for Maropea Hut, we turned left, and headed towards our slip. At this point, a nervous silence settled over the group, as we recalled the story of an accident that occurred at this spot during a previous trip. Warren was however enthusiastic and thorough with his instructions on how to do scree runs. We all made it down without incident, causing only a few minor rock falls. After a short break, we continued down a stream. Our progress was made easier by low water levels and by more instruction from Warren. We joined the Waipawa Valley, which was easy going after our earlier adventures. Warren once again demonstrated to us his natural balance by walking along the base of a cliff face, while most of us chose a longer, wetter route. We spent some time looking at the fossilized shells before rejoining the road for the short walk back to the car.

After some deliberations, we decided to have our ice creams at Ongaonga, arriving at 6.00, and stopping the general store from shutting to purchase our treats (no scoop ice creams, but very friendly service). The journey back was made interesting by observing the crazy drivers on the road (presumably Wellingtonians). After drop offs around town, I arrived home at 8.00 pm. A long but enjoyable day had by all. Thank you Warren.

FIELD HUT, 6 Feb. By Neil Campbell.

Field Hut is located in the Tararua Range. It has historic status having been built in 1924. It was the destination for the very first PNTMC trip (Feb 6, 1966). The drive to the start of our walk to this hut involves leaving State Highway 1, just after passing through Otaki, and then proceeding along the Otaki Gorge Road. Much of the Otaki Gorge Road is unsealed but it is mostly in good condition. We left Palmerston North at about 8.10am and were ready to start walking from Otaki Forks by about 9.45am. The day was warm with clear skies and hence sunscreen and sun hats were very necessary. The well-made track first crosses open country and then enters very attractive Tararua forest. We reached the hut at lunchtime. A group of people were busily carrying out some hut maintenance. After lunch we followed the track a little bit further to take in some good views from Table Top which has an altitude of 1047 meters. At about 2.20pm we left this open alpine area and headed back down the track

to Otaki Forks. We reached the cars at about 4.15pm and had a swim in the nice cool river. We finished the day with some real fruit ice creams at the fruit shop on State Highway 1 just South of the Otaki Gorge Road turn-off.

The party consisted of: Neil Campbell (leader), Duncan Hedderly, Doug Strachan, Monica Cantwell, Judith Kidd, Yuko Watanabe, Sewoong An, Elaine Herve, Warren Wheeler, Graham and Hilda Heap.

Hinerua- Waterfall Hut- Ohuinga, February 8-9. By Lance Gray.

You just never know who will turn up on your club trips and I had absolutely no idea this time around especially with the medium fit rating assigned to it. I sounded out the normal culprits for weekend thrashings and found most of them taking advantage of the sunny week of Waitangi and doing the logical thing of tubing down the Otaki or other rivers. So I was pleasantly surprised to find two game trampers to have a go at a trip others had talked longingly about: Mill Road – Hinerua Hut – Broken Ridge – Tussock Creek – Waterfall Hut. On the Sunday it was to be Pinnacle Creek – the range along to Ohuinga – Blacks Ridge – Rosvalls Track – Mill Rd.

Nigel and Craig looked fit enough when I met them on Saturday morning but it was to be me who was the weakest link. We started out in blazing heat at 9am and I in particular felt it more than my two colleagues. Blow me down if just above Hinerua Hut I developed severe cramp in both legs above the knee. So much for leadership! With enough rest I managed my way along the tops cramping up on the steepest spots only. Nigel with advice from Mick convinced me that Tussock Creek was less ugly than Broken Ridge so Tussock Creek it was. After some debate we ran down the scree directly into Tussock Creek, which was great fun. Basically staying in the creek or close to it on the true right we hit the Kawhatau River before we knew it. I must of driven Nigel crazy by saying it must get more difficult than this somewhere! If you are going up Tussock Creek just keep following the main stream up on the true right. Don't however contemplate peeling away to your left as you are going up just because it looks easier - it ain't. A bit like Pinnacle Creek – just keep going straight ahead up the stream-bed.

A quick visit to Waterfall Hut to put a note in the hut book and then to our fly camp opposite Rangi Creek around 5pm. After a windy night we wandered up Pinnacle Creek and emerged onto the tops in thick cloud. This is when the action really began – Craig was our eyes because us

Geeks (Nigel and I) had fogged up glasses. Nigel provided the bulk of the navigation while I kept an eye on the GPS, which certainly earned its money. Navigating along to Ohuinga was no picnic and many times we took compass bearings off a point identified by GPS and found ourselves wandering off into never never land leading to much debate. We kept thanking Terry for his instructional course because we used every bit of it for a solid four hours in thick cloud.

At Ohuinga we had a little difficulty picking up Blacks Ridge but between us we found it and rushed off downhill and finally out of the cloud into a blazing hot day. Tarn Biv was a delight with the compulsory toilet photo and then down a very overgrown Rosvals Track. By the time we hit the Tukituki River we'd had enough of navigation and so on cue we walked past our turn-off back to the car!! After a 7.30am start we finally made my car at 6pm: a good honest day's toil. A big thanks to Craig whose fitness is never ever to be questioned again and to Nigel who is really enjoying his navigation – we made a great team.

We were Nigel Gregory, Craig Allerby and Lance Gray.

Burn Hut Loop, Sunday 16 February 2003. By Liz Flint.

After all the hot sunny weather we had been having it was a bit of a surprise to wake up to a little bit of drizzle. But it didn't last long, and it did settle the dust on the road in. After meeting at Foodtown at a nice leisurely 8am we took off in 2 vehicles and drove to Mangahao leaving one car at the top dam and returning to the second dam in the other from where we set off.

The walk along the river and across the streams was all accomplished without getting wet feet. Up the hill and onto the tops with a short stop for a drink soon led to where the track used to go down to the old hut. Carrying on along a well cut track through the leatherwood gave us good views of the countryside before sighting the hut. It was just over half an hour more of easy tramping to the hut which we reached after two and a half hours.

A pleasant lunchbreak was followed by a short climb to the tops again and then it was more of the same via a well cut track. The hut was in sight for 45 minutes as we looped around. The track all but disappeared on the way down and there were several bruised and scratched legs from hidden stumps on the path. Once down at the stream it was a short stroll boulder hopping down to the lake and then back to the car. Walk out took 3 hours.

We were Dave (leader), Yuko, Doug, Liz and Arthur

Totara Flats- Waiohine Gorge floating, 15- 16 February 2003. By Taylor Watson, age 11.

On the 15/02/03 we went tramp to Totara flats the people who went are me (Taylor Watson) my dad Chris Watson, Tony Gates, and Trevor Robinson. We left on at 11:00 am Saturday morning and took 3 and a half hours to get there, we left to go back at 12:00 am on Sunday morning and took 3 hours and 45 minutes, so we got back 3:45 pm on the 16/02/03.

When we got there we started to pump up the tubes so that we could go tubing soon. When we went up the river the first time we didn't go very far so we didn't go on any rapids, the 2nd time we went up we went up further and found 2 rapids we also found a pool and a big rock that you could jump off, I didn't jump but Chris and Trevor did.



Trevor floating warm, clean, and tranquil waters of the Waiohine Gorge above Totara Flats. [Tony Gates]

On the way up Trevor saw some trout. I went down one of the rapids that day after that we floated right down. We got back and had a rest and laid the gear out. There was never nothing to do because you could pump up the tubes or if you didn't want to do that you could read your book which I had two weeks to read. Next we had some salmon and French bread and made a fire for some pork to go on, we also cooked some rice

and potatoes. After that we got in our sleeping bags and went to sleep.

The next morning me and my dad walked to the Totara flats hut and saw some people there, we took a packet of chocolate biscuits to eat when we got there. We went tubing when we got back and I did both the rapids, and when I was going down this little tiny rapid I was going down it and there was a big rock and I was going towards it and I couldn't twist or anything so I was going towards it feet first and my feet bumped it and the next thing I thing I know I am getting tossed around in the water and Tony got a photo of me doing that. when we got back, we packed up and left.

Taylor Watson, age 11

PS the water was warm, and the rapids fun.

Kaweka Challenge (Kuripapango), 22- 23 February. By Janet Wilson.



Yvette Wilson and Janet Wilson, Kaweka Challenge. [Tony Gates]

Four club members participated in this event this year, held in near perfect conditions on 22- 23 Feb. Near perfect, as it was actually rather cold, with a good frost on Saturday morning before the start, and a good sprinkling of snow on the tops-most unseasonal. Saturday evening too, was chilly, with more frost.



Mick Leyland at the Waikarekare Stream. [Tony Gates]

Llew Pritchard teamed up with new partner Nigel Gregory, to win the veteran pairs section of the 30 km two day course. They finished second overall on the course.

Mick Leyland, competing in his 11th event, and partner Graeme Fletcher (also in the veteran class) also did well, given that Mick claims to have retired from running.

Janet Wilson teamed up with Yvette Cottam for the third time, this time competing in the longer 41 km two day event. They exceeded their own expectations, to win the womens section in a new record time.

Thank you to the new sponsors, and to the organisers of this great event. It would be good to see more club members having a go. Visit www.ramhb.co.nz/kaweka for the full story.

Lost and Found. SAREX, March 1 & 2. by Doug Strachan

Five groups of DOC staff all got lost while counting animal droppings. They were in the pooh, so 10 search and rescue teams were sent in find them. This was the scenario for this year's SAREX (search and rescue exercise). Terry

Crippen (team leader) and Peter Darragh were teamed up with 2 SAREX first-timers, Nigel Gregory and Doug Strachan. We were enticed into participating by the promise of a helicopter ride. We drove down to Levin on Friday evening and received a briefing, along with the other teams, at the showgrounds. Most groups then bedded down for the night on the "carpet," which turned out to be concrete (we had been deceived). I was beginning to have suspicions about whether the "helicopter" might in fact be a van. However, the next day a real one did arrive after some fuel pumping problems were sorted out. We all went over to the chopper for a safety talk. I had already forgotten most of what was written in the SAR booklet, but remembered that, like guns, one end of a helicopter is more dangerous than the other. Coincidentally, just after reading that one should never approach the tail-end of a helicopter, I saw a surgeon on the TV programme ER get his arm lopped off by a tail rotor. It made the point in a rather timely manner. They're not called choppers without good reason. The crew told us the tail-end also has exhaust gases at hundreds of degrees, and communication microwaves that can cook you. There was nervous laughter as we heard the situations in which the main rotor might sever a head or torso. Our group made it into the chopper intact, and was whisked away to a spot near the high point Kahiwaroa. During the flight, Nigel was making comments in my ear like "some helicopters have 3 engines, but this old Iroquois just has one," "Isn't it windy up here near the tops," and "look, the 'rpm limit' red warning light has come on." Successfully dropped off, it wasn't long before we started finding clues from the lost party. A boot print in the mud here, a broken plant there, and even a bullet shell. We followed clues all the way down to a bluff, where the trail went cold. Had the lost party fallen over the bluff, or come down the wrong spur and then gone back up? It turned out to be the latter. Fortunately, when we sidled over to the next spur, there were again plenty of signs, including another bullet shell, and more chocolate wrapper. We dutifully scratched a line everywhere we went so that other search parties would know our team had been by, and wouldn't mistake our prints for a lost party's prints. It's a good method provided all search parties know the system. Unfortunately, we later learned that another search party was following our line, thinking "Gosh, the lost party has made this too easy for us. All we have to do is follow this line they made." Anyway, our team was hot on the trail again now, finding some chicken bones left over from a snack, and then a campsite with cut flax. The trail became less distinct, but Terry found knee impressions where people went

under some low branches. The navigation became tricky, and both compass and GPS were employed. The ICOM transceiver was another essential piece of equipment. We periodically radioed in to Levin base with our position and findings. Levin base asked us to do some sound sweeps, so Peter told us the whistle signals for that, and we blew our whistles in unison, but heard no response. At a rest stop, Peter asked if we wanted some scroggin and we answered "affirmative" instead of "yes." It was obvious we were really getting into the radio jargon. Moving on, we found a pool of blood, suggesting a DOC worker could be seriously injured... until we saw the deer remains nearby. It was about 8:30pm and we were instructed to look for a campsite. We were wandering along bemoaning our lack of water when we found Marty and Chris, the lost party. They weren't expecting to be found until Sunday, and didn't have time to put on fake injuries. The next morning, we were instructed to find a place to be winched out by helicopter. We walked out onto a large revegetating slip, where a helicopter would have no tree problems. Peter and Nigel went on a water-collecting mission down the steep slope, through cutty grass to the stream, and then had a hard slog back up. The helicopter came and hovered above us like a ruddy great fan. The pilots decided the spot was too risky as there was no way to safely abort the lift in the event of an emergency. It was reassuring to know the pilots were safety-conscious and not gung-ho. They winched us out near the river, and it was the highlight of the trip (that, and being the first team to find a lost party). The six of us had to be taken out in two trips. Peter, Nigel and I had about a 5hr wait at the show grounds until all the teams were back for the debriefing. The last team back was told to leave the packs in the chopper, get out of it, and roll away from the craft. They couldn't go near their packs for an hour because the battery of the chopper, which had had a hard-days work, was leaking. Meanwhile, we had a debriefing where one issue that was raised was the accuracy of GPS's. Some say the error factor can be as much as 600m. It seems that if the satellites are directly overhead, it is hard to get a good triangulation, and the error increases. There was one "no duff," – a genuine injury, during the day. Someone had to be flown out when he suffered a badly crushed toe. Still, everyone had a great time and we look forward to the next SAREX. Perhaps for that one we can go and look for Graham Peters, who was part of the caver's search team. He still languishes up on Shoulder Knob because the helicopter needs a new battery.

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