

Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

www.pntmc.org.nz

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter November 2012



The welcome Whangaehu Hut (NZAC), Tukino side of Mt Ruapehu [Chris Tuffley]

Club Nights

All are welcome to our club nights. These are held at 7:45pm on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North.

Thursday 8 November

BYO pics

PNTMC

This is your opportunity to show a selection of your latest photos, and catch up with others.

Thursday 29 November

Protecting our Whio

Janet Wilson

It's one year since Janet became involved with the Oroua Blue Duck Protection Project. Come along and hear how the year has gone, and what the future holds. Peter Russell will talk about his work as a member of the Blue Duck Recovery Group, and the WhiOne captive breeding programme. He is the aviary keeper at the esplanade here in PN.

13 December

EOY BBQ

PNTMC

Our Christmas BYO BBQ is held at the Ashhurst Domain. Bring food and a small gift. Annual awards and Ruahine hutbagging prize winners announced.

Upcoming Trips

3-4 Nov

Matui-Somes Island E/ M
Janet Wilson 329 4722

This DoC island is located in the middle of Wellington Harbour. Good chance to see tuatara, penguins, huge wetas, birds and (hopefully) fireworks. Travel down Sat am, return Sunday and meet the BBQ (below).

4 Nov

Otaki Forks BBQ and Picnic All
Tony Gates 357 7439

An easy day picnic where you do not need to stray far from your vehicle, and can explore the easy trails near the Waitotaru River. We will prepare a BBQ for the above group. Depart PN mid morning.

10-11 Nov

Makaretu Hut M/ F
Warren Wheeler 356 1998

Depart 7.30am. This eastern Ruahines loop is really a medium grade trip although it does involve considerable, albeit relatively easy, river travel more suitable for the adventurous. Great views, tussock tops, sheltered ridge travel thanks to the wide track cut through the leatherwood, rock hopping, gravel streambeds and a chance to bag four huts – Longview, Makaretu, Happy Daze and Awatere.

11 Nov

Blue Range Hut E/ M
Woody Lee 357 2390

Depart 7:30am to a wonderful blue hut in the Tararua Forest Park, near Masterton. It is a good track with a nice canopy and a picnic table outside the hut. Returning via the same route and stop at the Mt Bruce for an afternoon tea.

17-18 Nov

Pureora Forest Park MTB
Richard Lockett 323 0948

Depart Friday evening 16th for Piropiro Flats campsite our base for the weekend. Hope to be able to ride the whole timber trail Ongerue – Piropiro Saturday and Piropiro – Pureora on Sunday. Easy grade re Mountain bikes. Camping at Piropiro so tents required. Also good options for non bikers with walks from Piropiro camp or just to hang out at a great spot.

17-18 Nov

Cattle Creek Hut E/ M
Llew Pritchard 358 2217

Lovely huts and scenery in from Dannevirke, and plenty of good places to explore.

18 Nov

Stanfield Hut E
Malcolm Parker 357 5203

Plan to leave town at 8.00 am. A gentle amble into Stanfield Hut. If conditions are suitable plan to go in via the track and then out via the river. In the same area as the above group, this tramp will most likely meet them for a brew.

24-25 Nov

Crow-Wakelings Huts M/ F
Dave Grant 357 8269

Located in the Taihape corner of the Ruahines, this area offers wonderful tramping through forest and tussock tops to these two delightful riverside huts.

25 Nov

Iron Gate Hut M
Mike Allerby 323 8563

A perennial favourite forest tramp following the Oroua River in from Apiti. Plenty of interesting sights en route. Depart 8.00 AM.

1-2 December

Top Gorge - Pohangina M
Janet Wilson 329 4722

This trip has been altered down valley, to Ngamoko and Mid Pohangina Huts, for their planned Spring clean. Two classic southern Ruahine valley and riverside huts.

2 Dec (possibly to be postponed one week)

Holdsworth Waterfall F
Terry Crippen 356 3588 / 027 6433637

Come and help find the elusive impressive 50m high Holdsworth Waterfall, hiding in a very narrow section of Holdsworth Creek. Off-track stream travel. Once found we will then leatherwood bush bash onto the tops and return via the usual track down from Mt Holdsworth. Probably leave PN 6am or meet at Holdsworth Lodge about 7:30am.

8 Dec (one week earlier than previously advertised)

Happy Daze, Makaretu M
Kathy Corner 356 8186

An interesting and easy Ruahine valley in from Norsewood, with the choice of a northern or southern access.

Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20th of each month to Tony Gates, the newsletter editor, at kiwi@leatherwood.co.nz, or via <http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>

Trip Grading

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

Easy (E):	3-4 hrs
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.

Trip leaders

Complete the trip intentions form and leave with one of Overdue Trip Contacts or drop into 44 Dahlia St. 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:

Tony Gates	357 7439
Janet Wilson	329 4722
Martin and Anne Lawrence	357-1695

Notices

PLB's

PNTMC have purchased and registered two PLB's, otherwise known as EPIRB's, or Emergency Locator Beacons. These are available for club members to loan free of charge, and are currently kept at Martin and Anne's house, 44 Dahlia St Palmerston North.

Customised clothing

Several years ago, PNTMC printed our logo on some sunhats, beanies, and shirts. These proved very popular, so we plan to do this again soon. Terry Crippen will be following up on this, so speak with him if you are interested.

Next Trip Card: January-June 2013

Work has started work on the Events Card for January-June 2013. Please consider which trips you are interested in leading and perhaps offer something to Janet.

Last summer saw PNTMC out and about on a lot of trips. I have always thought that summer - late summer was the best time to do trips. The hut bagging may even continue, so get ready for some good trips.

PNTMC Photo Competition

Thanks to all entrants for such a stunning display of photography, thanks to Harley Betts for judging, and thanks to Bivouac for the donation of prizes. It was an excellent evening, with lots of constructive criticism from Harley.

Results

Alpine NZ

- 1 Chris Tuffley Taranaki from Fanthams Peak
- 2 Angela Minto Impassable icefall
- 3 Malcolm Leary Mt Cook

Natural History

- 1 Chris Tuffley Oruoa River whio
- 2 Doug Strachan Shag - Abel Tasman
- 3 Martin Lawrence Nikau

Overeas People

- 1 Kathy Corner Tibetan family
- 2= Angela Minto Phrase book conversation
- 2= Terry Crippen Local lads - Bulgan

Overseas Alpine/Tramping

- 1 Angela Minto Mist in the Julian Alps
- 2 Angela Minto Camp for the night - Mongolia
- 3 Chris Tuffley The Grose Valley

Scenic NZ

- 1 Martin Lawrence Shine Falls
- 2 Chris Tuffley View from Puketaramea
- 3= Terry Crippen Snug Cove
- 3= Chris Tuffley Wairarapa Coast

Topical

- 1 Chris Tuffley Cattle Creek - an exercise in writing backwards
- 2 Martin Lawrence The Thinker
- 3= Chris Tuffley Crossing the Kawhatau
- 3= Chris Tuffley The Wages of Conservation

Best of Show

- Chris Tuffley Taranaki from Fanthams Peak

Here is the link to view the winning photos

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gng2nk74h5bmv7g/0CePDBKTEX>



*Cattle Creek - an exercise in writing backwards.
By Chris Tuffley*

In future, the PNTMC photo competition categories will be aligned with those at FMC. The winners will be sent to FMC for their 2013 photo competition. The FMC categories set out below were used for the Interclub Competition:

- Above Bushline
- Below Bushline
- Hut & Camp Life
- Native Flora & Fauna
- Landscapes
- Overseas (people and landscapes)

Interclub Photo Competition Results

Our judge this year was Udo. He picked Martin Lawrences' "Shine Falls" as best overall.

Above Bushline

- | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1 | Jean Garman | MTSC | Taranaki Summits |
| 2 | Angela Minto | PNTMC | Impassable Icefall |
| 3 | Tim Swale | MTSC | Tongariro |

Below Bushline

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|-----------------|
| 1 | Martin Lawrence | PNTMC | Shine Falls |
| 2 | Chris Tuffley | PNTMC | Wairarapa Coast |
| 3 | Richard Lander | MTSC | Catlins River |

Landscape

- | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Chris Tuffley | PNTMC | View from Puketaramea |
| 2 | Lorna Fox | MTSC | Milford Waterfall |
| 3 | Ivan Rienks | MTSC | Crucible Lake |

Natural History

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Jean Garman | MTSC | Frosty Rock and Plant |
| 2 | Martin Lawrence | PNTMC | Nikau |
| 3 | Doug Strachan | PNTMC | Abel Tasman Shag |

Overseas

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Richard Lander | MTSC | Horseshoe Bend |
| 2 | Kathy Corner | PNTMC | Tibetan Family |
| 3 | Laura | MUAC | |

Topical

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | Martin Lawrence | PNTMC | The Thinker |
| 2 | Chris Tuffley | PNTMC | Writing Backwards |
| 3 | Jean Garman | MTSC | Jenny |

Interclub Debate Report

A lecture theatre in the Massey Vet Tower on 1 October 2012 was the place and time for this years' interclub debate. Teams spoke, argued, and laughed for the honour to win the prestigious "Boot and Rock" trophy.

Our able team, of Graham Peters, Chris Tuffley, and Malcolm Parker argued about how our access to technology has improved adventure, then how the aesthetics of clothing do not affect ability. MUAC argued the converse on both topics, and with skilful hand gesticulations and facial expressions, managed to score more points than us (it was pointed out that PNTMC did come a close second!).

Interclub Quiz 2012 Report

Our three local clubs vied for the prestigious Trevor Bissell Memorial billy on 2 October. Organised by MTSC this year, they fielded 3 teams, ourselves 2, and MUAC 1.

After plenty of advice from the quiz organiser, and more than a few prompts, we all fought for points in each of the 6 interesting and variable sections. There were sections about hut bagging, bird calls, celebrities, NZ Geography, First Aid, and NZ native flora, each of which included some rather difficult questions.

The interclub quiz is organised by a different club each year, so there are always different questions and ideas and emphases.

Out of a total of 360 points, the MTSC Team One scored 151.5 points, MUAC 157.5 points, MTSC Two 191 points, PNTMC Two 197 points, MTSC Three 224 points, and PNTMC "muddy gaiters" team 234 points.

Well done team muddy gaiters. The Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy has once again been returned to PNTMC, and will most likely be displayed on a shelf at Bivouac outdoor store.

Ruahine hut bagging competition update

It's still not too late to bag a few more Ruahine huts. The competition ends at the EOY BBQ on 13 December 2012, with prizes awarded. There are many stories appearing in this Newsletter about Ruahine huts. The huts are a great asset.

The cumulative total of huts visited by PNTMC is, as yet, unknown. Ikawatea Forks, Dead Dog, and Rockslide are the only Ruahine huts so far not visited. The most popular huts are Heritage, Stanfield, Sunrise/Triplex, and of course Rangi.

But how about a brief update of scores as of early October? Terry mumbled something about bagging 2 or 3 Ruahine huts in a year, and Malcolm said he'd bagged even less. But at the other and much more interesting and strenuous end of the scale, Derek has amassed an exceptional 146 points (2 points per hut, 1 point on third and subsequent visits). Bruce isn't far behind, at 143 points, and Janet has 115, Warren 90, and Chris 73. That's a lot of huts. Competition promises to be interesting over the next few weeks.

New Members

Welcome and happy tramping to

Thomas Robertson, phone 022 075 0864

Hannah and Mary Lund, phone 06 374 7811

For Sale

Book For Sale: "Worn out boots" four decades enjoying the New Zealand mountains

Tramper and Editor of this Newsletter has recently published volume one of his memoirs. As the title suggests, he has spent a considerable time in the mountains of New Zealand, much of it with PNTMC. The Tararuas, Ruahines, and other places feature, as well as a few PNTMC people. This book is reviewed below.

Worn Out Boots. \$30.00, 160 pages, soft cover, with b/w and colour photos.

For Sale: Charlet Moser Goulotte alpine hammer 55cm. A sturdy alpine hammer, excellent for bashing in snowstakes. In good condition. These are not made anymore. \$75 ono. (I'm converting to a flimsy lightweight hammer!) Contact Terry 027 643-3637 or 356 3588

Book Review. By Terry Crippen

Worn Out Boots. Four decades enjoying the New Zealand Mountains, by Tony Gates

For those of you who like reading about tramping or other outdoor activities, *Worn Out Boots* is an enjoyable very easy to read book, written by our newsletter editor. The book covers trips done in the North Island ranges from the Rimutakas to the Raukumaras, Ruapehu, together with areas in the Southern Alps, Kahurangi National Park and the Patagonia parts of Argentina and Chile. A wide range of activities are covered besides tramping; hunting, fishing, rafting and tubing, back country skiing, canyoning, and even horse riding. The author has certainly made full use of the outdoors over the 40 years, from easy "café close by" trips such as skiing on the Chateau golf course to hard core trips such as up the Butler Valley.

Each chapter concentrates on a specific area; beginning with the *Orongorongo Years*; where Tony's love of the outdoors began with his family. There are numerous black and white images throughout as well as a set of colour plates. Various poems, hut book entries and other quotes have been sourced including John Pascoe's well known one about the Tararuas: "*For sheer monotony of contour, rigour of weather, and bleakness of outlook it is hard to beat the Tararuas.*". Some club members will recognize their names from trips done with Tony and we will all recognize places we have tramped in.

Self published, this is Tony's first real publication. While there are some spelling, punctuation and grammar errors, these don't detract from the easy reading style. Compared

with some "laborious style of writing" books, to do with in particular certain climbers (such as *Between Heaven and Earth* about Freda Du Frau), from my point of view anyhow, this book is certainly worth reading.

For the last chapter, titled *Goodbye friends*, Tony has adopted a different approach. It is his tribute to some of his tramping, climbing and hunting mates who has passed away, some of whom died while out there enjoying the hills and mountains.

I expect Tony has other publications that he is working on, as he continues to do a lot of research including the use of the large number of hut log books saved from the NZ Forest Service days.

Worn Out Boots. By Tony Gates. 2012. Self published (with the help of PublishMe). Available from the author for \$30.00.

Book Review. By Tony Gates

Shelter from the Storm. By Rob Brown, Geoff Spearpoint, and Shaun Barnett (2012).

\$80.00, 257 pages, hard cover, Craig Potton Publishing.



Co author and tramping photographer Rob Brown at Howletts Hut, July 2011 [Tony Gates]

These three well known New Zealand trampers, photographers, writers have joined forces to produce a magnificent volume about the history and contemporary use of hut networks in the back country of New Zealand. Kathryn Ryan, of National Radio "Nine to Noon" interviewed two of the authors during October to aid with the book's launch. They spoke on the radio of peoples' love of huts. Hunters, trampers, farmers, gold miners, and many other visitors treasure these shelters from the storm.

The book covers history of many huts, from the

1800's till the present. It may appear to be biased towards huts in the South Island, but there's plenty about the Ruahines, Tararuas, etcetera. Recycling building materials, changing usage, historical value, and/ or Government or privately financed hut construction and maintenance. The book is liberally endowed with both historic and modern photographs.

During 2010, Mark Pickering published an excellent book about back country New Zealand huts, featuring Howletts, Shutes, and many other huts that you may know. The new book is in no way diminished by an existing book on a similar topic.

Trip Reports

**25 August
Mitre Peak from the North Buttress
Report by Thomas Robertson
Photo by Chris Tuffley**

On Saturday 25 August, myself, Dwight Swainson, Chris Tuffley and Bruce Van Brunt headed up Ruapehu's Mitre peak via the North Buttress. Me and Dwight had just finished our snowcraft courses, and for us this was a perfect chance to put those skills into practice.

We left Palmy at 4 AM, heading to the Tukino snowfield with Dwight driving. Bruce had checked the gate would be open, and Dwight had a four wheel drive, so we could get right up to the ski field saving us an eleven km walk at each end. We arrived at 7AM with perfect weather, no clouds or wind and good snow. We left and made our way to the NZAC's Whangaehu hut. The hut has fairly spectacular settings, with steep cliffs on two sides, and overlooking the Whangaehu river valley, and with good views of the buttress we would have to climb. Chris said there was a geocache behind the toilet, but after a few minutes of digging we decided to give up on it. From there we went across the Whangaehu valley, Bruce fording it and me, Dwight and Chris using a snow bridge. This took us to the base of the buttress.

There was a small chink of snow in the first band of cliffs which we decided to make our way through, then walk along between the sets of cliffs to the ridge which we could then follow to the summit. As the gap of snow in the first set of cliffs was too small for multiple ropes, Chris lead and set an anchor, and me and Dwight prussicked up, followed by Bruce. Again on the band of snow between the two cliffs me and Dwight prussicked along the rope. The snow was fairly good here, but there was a lot of exposure. Our main worry here was that the sun was now

melting the snow, and pieces of ice and rock were falling from the cliffs above us, so we got out of the area as fast as we could. Once nearer the ridge there was space to split into two rope teams, with Chris and Bruce one, and me and Dwight following. There were several more pitches before we came to a hairy bit of rock climbing several metres high. Chris lead this, being the best rock climber, and then top roped each of us up. The climb involved getting on to the rock face, then removing your crampons while in a precarious position, then heading up without satisfactory handholds. Hair raising, but we all managed it.

From there we put the ropes away and followed the ridge along as quickly as we could. The number of pitches, and the fact that we had to use prussicks had put us behind schedule, but it was a committing climb that would have taken us longer to go back than forwards. We hit one more spot where ropes were needed, with ice blocking the ridge, so we sidled around this over a steep couloir. Bruce lead, setting in two runners on the way across. Again me and Dwight prussicked across as there was only room for one rope.

Once across this we returned to the ridge, pushing on ahead as quickly as we could. By this point the temperature was dropping, the wind picking up, and the sun only just above the mountain, so we started looking for an escape route. There were a number of snow slopes down, but we couldn't see the bottom and were worried there would be small cliffs so we pushed on to the lower summit when we finally saw a good route. By this point the sun was just dropping behind the mountain.



The intimidating north face of Mitre peak, as viewed from Whangaehu Hut.

We front pointed several hundred meters down the slope, making good time. Once reaching the base of the slope we crossed the river again by snowbridge and started making our way towards the hut. All the technical parts were over, but it was still moderately hard going with the snow being very soft, and the wind picking up. We made the hut by about 9PM, and decided it was

time for lunch as we still hadn't eaten. When we said this to the couple staying in the hut it took them a while to click that we weren't joking, we really were having lunch at 9 PM. From there it was another hour and a half easy walk back to the cars, and we finally left at 11PM, and getting back to Palmy at about 2.30AM.

It was a bit of an epic, with 16 hours on the mountain, but we all enjoyed it, and it was great to improve the skills from the snowcraft courses. Cheers to Dwight for driving, and thanks again to Bruce, Peter and Terry for doing the snowcraft courses.

29 September

Masters Shelter - Sentry Box - Parkes Peak - Upper Makaroro day trip.

Report by Bruce Van Brunt

Photos by Chris Tuffley

I always thought this would make a nice albeit energetic day trip. Derek, Chris and I left Ashhurst early morning and after a brief stop at Masters Shelter, we moved on to Sentry Box hut and began the steep greasy climb up the ridge. It is only the first 200m that were slippery. Soon we were over Rocky Knob and into the stunted forest that leads up to the Parks Peak ridge.



Makaroro River and Upper Makaroro Hut

The track junction is a solid 35 minutes from Parks Peak hut, but the track is very nice with mostly gentle undulations. After a short stop at Parks Peak hut we continued briefly along the ridge to the junction with the track down to Upper Makaroro hut.

The track down to the Makaroro river threads through a lovely beech forest, though it is a 600m descent. The river was in a friendly mood and we crossed it to get to the hut for lunch. There seems to be the remains of old bridge anchors near the crossing. After lunch we then faced climbing back up the 600m and retracing our steps to Sentry Box. This was an energetic but enjoyable day trip.



Masters Shelter- you can drive to this place The shelter is a memorial to Lester Masters - great Ruahine hunter and poet from the 1920's.

High Hills

Lester Masters (1958).

*Gently let my ashes rest
Mid the high hills of the west,
Where the golden tussocks grow
And the graceful red deer go.*

*Where down in the gorges dim
Blue ducks of the mountains swim,
And the red stag's roar resound
Through my happy hunting ground.*

*While through beeches straight and tall
Mountain breezes softly call,
And the mad world's worries cease
Mid those ancient hills of peace.*

*There forgotten tracks I'll tramp,
Forgotten make the final camp
Where bellbirds sing the best
Mid the high hills of the west.*

*For remembrance only these,
Lofty hills and stately trees,
Azure lake and rippling shore,
Grace of life for evermore.*

6-7 October

Daphne - Tarn Biv – Howletts - Longview

Report by Bruce van Brunt

Photos by Chris Tuffley

The weather forecast for this weekend was not encouraging. In particular, Saturday was to be graced with high winds punctuated by the occasional shower, followed by more determined showers in the evening. The forecast for Sunday, however, appeared to be mostly ok. Armed with this knowledge we decided to go to

Daphne on Saturday with a visit to Tarn biv, and if all went to plan a trip up to Howletts before the rain. Derek Sharp and Nigel Scott opted to go over the ridge to Awatere hut, down the river and up to Makaretu hut and on to Leon Kinvig. Their plan entailed climbing Toka the next day followed by a visit to Toka biv and Top Gorge hut.

We had strong winds at the Kashmir carpark. In fact, the wind never really let up until we were well over the ridge from the carpark. Going over the top of this ridge, we noticed some of the stunted trees moved around a lot...you could see the roots of the trees moving around making this a place not very attractive in which to loiter.

The wind dropped as we got to the Tukituki river. After a few cold thigh deep crossings we made it to Daphne hut for an early lunch. Leaving all of our overnight gear in Daphne, we then struck out for Tarn biv. We were nicely sheltered along most of the way up the Black ridge until just before the junction with the Rosvalls track. The wind was strong and we found the horizontal high speed hail a bit painful. Nonetheless, we marched on to Tarn biv, and had a well-earned break from the weather.

The wind did not abate, but the hail did stop, and thus the descent back down to Daphne was comparatively pleasant. Just before the hut, the heavens opened up and soaked us. We contemplated going up to Howletts for the night (we still had enough time to do this) but the weather really put us off leaving Daphne. The hail/snow/rain continued well into the night.



Howletts Hut, central Ruahine Range

The weather the next morning looked a bit uncertain on the tops. There was still a fair amount of wind and precipitation happening up high. We went up the Daphne spur in the morning hoping all that unpleasant weather would magically go away by the time we got to Howletts. This is pretty much what happened, although we were pretty cold at Howletts. There was a beautiful fresh blanket of snow on the hills. It was not too much and it did not really impede

travel, but it was very scenic. We travelled along the tops to Longview hut. As each hour passed, the weather got steadily better. By the time we got to Longview the sun was out and the wind had dropped. We saw Derek and Nigel soon after we left Longview and the group was soon together at the car park.

6-7 October

Awatere – Makaretu - Leon Kinvig - Toka Biv - Ngamoko Range - Longview

Notes from Nigel Scott

Sharing transport with the above group, Derek Sharp and Nigel Scott had their own hut bagging adventures a little to the south. Derek led the way, and Nigel staggered along enjoying the southern Ruahines. They arrived at Longview a little after Bruce and Chris, who saw and heard them as they were descending the spur back to the road.

Sunday 6th October 2012

Mt Ngauruhoe

Report and photo by Thomas Robertson

On Sunday the 6th of October myself, Woody and Warren left for Mt. Ngauruhoe with Warren as leader. The weather report said the Sunday should be OK, but the days before and after were pretty rough. We were still unsure on Friday if it would be a good idea, and had started to wonder if the Ruahines might be a better option. However, come Sunday morning everything seemed OK so we left at 6AM in the Hyundai station wagon for the Mount.

All of us were equipped with ice axes, but only Warren had his own crampons. The pair I ordered hadn't arrived but I managed to borrow a pair at short notice (cheers Derek). We went on anyway, with the idea we could always cut steps or turn back-none of us were on a peak bagging mission. We stopped in Waiouru at Angkor Watt for the obligatory pie and coffee breakfast. We discussed there whether it might be better to explore Tongariro instead. We pushed on arriving at 9.30 and found the carpark busy but not so crowded as to be unpleasant.

The weather was fairly good at this point, both still and slightly cloudy so we decided to go for Ngauruhoe. On the way we spoke briefly to a few people who said they had been turned back due to ice they couldn't pass without crampons. We marvelled at the ice formations and lava flows en route, with Warren explaining some of the geology and rock types to me and Woody. We followed the crossing to where it comes close to the Northern face and moved along the

saddle to the base and up. The snow wasn't ideal, with layers of hard ice covered by a usually thin layer of fresh snow, which made for unpleasant walking. We weren't the only ones heading up with two groups of two each ahead of us, and a fitter and more determined pair overtaking us as we went up. I put on crampons part way up, while Woody and Warren continued up without. At the lower summit we moved to the Southern side for lunch and a view of Lake Tama. This was about two o'clock.

It was cloudy, but they cleared once, giving us the chance for a few photos of Tama lakes. We also got some good views of Tongariro. The crater itself was very icy, the ice looking almost like small flowers. Warren and Woody decided to remain on the lower summit and explore the fumaroles while I cramponed around the crater rim, getting some good views of its overhanging ice walls, then joining Woody and Warren at the fumaroles. We then started our descent moving down more to the north-east. The long steep snow slope looked too tempting and we soon gave up walking and tried a glissade down.



Woody bumsliding the slopes

This quickly turned into a bumslide, and we found by using loose snow as a snowboard and ice axes as 'oars' it was possible to get decent speed while remaining in control.

At the bottom Warren noticed a large snow bank so we stopped to start on an ice cave, using our adzes. After getting it to the length of a body we

headed back to the car. From there it was home via Ohakune for a curry, and we made it back OK despite the odd wrong turn.

We were Warren Wheeler, Woody Lee and Thomas Robertson.

20 October

Day trip to Barlow Hut and Sparrowhawk biv Report by Bruce Van Brunt

Photo Chris Tuffley

The labour weekend weather forecast was grim, and it appeared that if any day might be useable it would be Saturday. Derek Sharp and Chris Tuffley joined me for another early start from Ashhurst and were en route once again for the Makaroro River. The forecast showed that little precipitation was expected except in the evening, but that one might expect a bit of wind. Indeed, this was the case and it was clear from driving up to Glenny Road farm that this area of Hawkes Bay got a lot of wind over the last few days. There were quite a few bits of large trees on or near the road, and it looked like one tree fell on a farmhouse between North Block Road and Glenny Road.

The farmer had given us permission to use his access to the river. This saves a bit of time and distance and the walk through the farm is

pleasant. The river was a bit above normal flow but perfectly useable all the way to Barlow. (In fact some keen hunters took a farm quad well up the river perhaps some 1.5 km below Barlow hut.) The river was, however, cold and by the time we got to Barlow hut (2.5 hrs) our feet were frozen. Morning tea at the hut served mostly to get us even colder. We were thinking of going up the Colenso spur and along the tops to Sparrowhawk Biv, but the wind was up and nobody felt like facing it.

We retreated down the Makaroro to the Gold Creek junction. After some debate, we decided to go up the beautiful Sparrowhawk ridge and visit the biv. The sun was coming out and we felt warmer. The wind was still blasting away at the tops, but we were sheltered in the forest for most of the climb.

We got up to the biv and immediately started getting cold again. There was a light dusting of snow on the tops and at the biv. We retreated back down the ridge and crossed the farm to the car. In the last 15 minutes of the tramp the rain finally started, but we ended the day mostly dry apart from the boots.



Barlow Hut and the Makaroro River

22 September 2012
Girdlestone Peak, Mt Ruapehu
Report and photo by Grant Christian

Recent Snowcraft attendees Kelly Holland, Greg Thurlow, Mary McBride and myself arrived at the Turoa car park where we were due to meet another climber, OJ Rodda. We were directed to a car park directly behind a familiar looking Subaru. It was OJ. A good omen I thought. By 8 a.m we had organised all our gear and had stepped on to the snow.

The sky above the mountain was clear and there was no wind. A perfect day for climbing. We trudged steadily up the mountain as the first skiers rode past on the lift that carried them effortlessly up the slopes. We had decided to walk because the scheduled lift opening time was much later. It didn't take long for me to wish I was on the lift, as the lightweights of our group got further ahead and I wondered how a day pack could weigh so much.

The snow was harder as we gained altitude and OJ and I stopped to put on our crampons, sunhats and sunscreen while the others carried on up the steepening slope and disappeared over the brow. We soon came over the brow and I saw the others gathered around, a little away to the right. Putting on their crampons I presumed. Mary called out and I just waved back and carried on, thinking it was a chance to make up a bit of time because they were climbing faster than me. OJ headed over to them to see how they were getting on.

I carried on at a leisurely pace and eventually waited for OJ to catch me up. He explained that Mary was having trouble with her crampons but they thought they had it sorted. We carried on up the slope towards the highest point of the ski field. The weather was glorious. We could see Greg coming up behind us. As we climbed up past the top lift station Greg caught up and we headed east towards the ridge beyond which was the Mangaehuehu glacier.

Once on the ridge we waited for the others. Mary was some way behind and when she eventually caught up she explained that a crampon had come off twice. She had not used these crampons with these boots before and they didn't fit well. While we sat and had a snack Mary thought things over and decided it was best that she didn't attempt the climb up Girdlestone. Although disappointing it seemed like a wise decision.

The next part of the walk took us over the glacier. We followed the curve of the glacier

around and steadily gained height as we approached Girdlestone. Once we got to a point in line with the peak out came the ropes and anchors and we set ourselves up for belaying. Kelly and Greg made up one pair and OJ and I the other. The snow was hard and made for good anchors.

Although the slope can be climbed without ropes it was a good opportunity to practice our skills and to increase our confidence on steeper slopes.

It took about five pitches and quite some time before I reached a difficult section near the ridge leading to the top. There was soft snow in channels between hard ice that was easily broken. I set up a belay in a rather uncomfortable position and waited for OJ to come up. He came past and set up the next belay about 10 metres from the peak.



The beautiful mountain: Girdlestone Peak, Mt Ruapehu, and the route followed.

Eventually OJ and I reached the summit separately while belayed by the other. OJ then made his way back down and Kelly came up the rope. He explained that Greg had decided he didn't want to come up any further.

Kelly went on to the top and then made his way back down. I followed Kelly and was belayed by OJ through a steep section that went through an ice tunnel and then came out onto a flat part of the ridge, north of where we had come up.

We carried along the ridge which was quite flat for about 50 metres. At this point we had to drop back down on to the top of the glacier. This section required front pointing for a while and then traversing the slope across the glacier and back to the ridge that lead to the ski field.

I was very thankful when I reached that ridge because my ankles and lower legs were getting very sore from the long walk across a steep slope.

Kelly and Greg continued to belay for some time down the slope from Girdlestone. By now the cloud had come in and we couldn't see them. It was starting to get late in the day so OJ headed back down to the car park and I waited for Kelly & Greg. I eventually spotted them when the cloud lifted a little. They soon joined me on the ridge and we headed in the direction of what I thought was the top of the chairlift, which had now disappeared from site.

I became confused about where the chairlift was and started to head across the top of it while Kelly headed more downhill. I realised he was on the right path when the cloud cleared enough to glimpse the top of the mountain and I saw that I was walking parallel to it. It seemed a long walk down and my quads complained at the constant downhill. Kelly's foot was also giving him trouble so we had a short break. Eventually we arrived back at the car park which was empty apart from our two vehicles. We were soon comfortably seated in the cars and heading home, satisfied at having another great day on the mountain.

South Island Section Cobb Valley Kahurangi National Park

12-15 October

**Plan E: The Cobb Valley and Kakapo Peak
Report and photos by Terry Crippen**

Plan A (Tappy/Alarm), Plan B (Hopeless), Plan C (Arthur & The Twins), Plan D (Tablelands & beyond) all had to be scrapped due to a combination of the Hodder River level, heavy rain and gale force wind forecasts and a massive slip on the Graham Valley access road!

So finding we couldn't get to the Flora Saddle car park, Plan E was decided upon as Ange Minto and I turned Big Red round and headed back to Motueka.

We needed to buy another map, then it was the long drive up to the Trilobite Hut car park up the Cobb Valley.

At least we had a fine day for the tramp up the valley to Fenella hut. Quite an easy track with various historic features to keep our minds off our other 4 plans. Chaffey Hut has been completely rebuilt as an excellent slab hut by the

Golden Bay NZDA, and the Tent Camp was looking damp and very old.

Once past Cobb Hut it was a final short grunt up to Fenella. The last time I had been in the area Fenella Hut hadn't even been built!

We planned to base ourselves here for the next two days and, if weather permitted, explore some of the adjacent tops. (And as an aside I had tramped with Fenella years ago in AUTC days. She was able to sit in the back seat of the VW reading the whole way from Mt Hikurangi to Auckland via the East coast and not even approach getting car sick!).

Shortly after we arrived, the rain and wind started, this continued all night and all the next day; very strong winds and heavy rain. The tussock basins were awash with flowing water. So it was going to be a classic Pit day of eating, drinking, reading and sleeping. But we did manage a bit of an excursion exploring the tussock basins, rocky saddle and tarns nearby, when the weather abated slightly.

The day after that, the morning greeted us with clearing skies and the forest covered in a light coating of snow.

So we decided we had better make use of the possible fine day, head north along the Douglas Range and scramble up Kakapo Peak (1783m).

It's a well-worn cairned route along the Douglas Range to Lonely Lake and beyond. Sidling under Waingaro Pk there was plenty of slab avalanche debris; the wet tussock underneath the snow made a very good sliding surface for the snow pack. In other places deep cracks indicated more snow could slide.

And Ange managed to endure my periodic mumblings about the great variety of rock types; that's one feature that makes Kahurangi NP so interesting and unique.

We ran into a solitary very fit German woman (knows fellow club member Anja) heading south doing a traverse from Farewell Spit to the bottom of Fiordland; and not the Te Araroa trail, too tame for her she said! That made the plugging of steps in the snow easier for all concerned.

Once we departed from the route to Lonely Lake it was an easy snow scramble up onto the summit of Kakapo where we had lunch and plenty of views; across to Lonely Lake, the Dragons, and Lake Stanley below us. Returning the same way the weather had improved greatly, all the fresh snow on the forest had gone; so it looked promising for our walk out the following day.



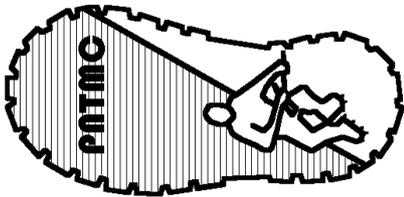
The view north along the Douglas Range towards Lonely Lake, The Drunken Sailors, and The Dragons Teeth/Anatoki Peak from the summit of Kakapo.

Unfortunately come the morning of our final day, the rain and some snow had set in, so it was going to a wet 4 to 5 hour walk back to the vehicle. At least the wind and rain wasn't as heavy as the other day.



Once back to Big Red, we headed back down the access road, assuming at some stage we would run into the fellow tramper we had meet. So we were able to give her lift out to Upper Takaka, as we knew she was heading out to replenish supplies. Her planned traverse was certainly going to be interesting and full on; including across the Gardens of Allah and Eden, over Whataroa saddle, and through Fiordland !

So if plans A, B, C. ... are off due to weather or whatever, you can always dream another one up and make the best of it.



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PNTMC Newsletter November 2012

What's inside this month?

- Photo competition 2012 results
- Interclub debate, Quiz
- Reviews of two great new books
- More Ruahine hutbagging
- Climbing Ruapehu and Ngaruahoe
- Kahurangi National Park

Articles for the newsletter

Send by the 20th of each month to Tony Gates,
the newsletter editor, via the club website
<http://www.pntmc.org.nz/mail/>.

Get out and about with us!

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