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## Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club Inc.

www.pntmc.org.nz  
P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter December 2019 – January 2020

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*Beginner Tramp #2 – everyone looking forward to enjoying a nice day up to Sunrise Hut and Armstrong Saddle, Ruahine Forest Park.  
Pic by Martin Lawrence. Trip Report inside.*

### Club Nights

Club nights are held on the second and last Thursday of the month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. Doors open 7.15 pm for a cuppa before start at 7.30pm. All welcome.

**12 Dec 2019**

**End of Year BBQ**

**Warren Wheeler**

Our end of year social get together at the Ashhurst Domain will feature the usual presentation of Annual Awards and Santa's helpers handing out all the prezzies from under the tree. Bring a plate of your favourite BBQ fare to share, BYO drink and bring a \$5 prezzie for under the tree. From 6.00pm until dusk. Contact Warren on 356 1998 if you would like a lift out from town.

**30 Jan 2020**

**Beginning of Year BBQ**

**Warren Wheeler**

Join us for a social get together at the Victoria Esplanade BBQ area, located beside the kids paddling pool next to the aviaries, from 6.00pm until dusk. BYO food and drink.

## Upcoming Trips

**Sat 30 November – Sun 1 December**

**Hidden Lake** E/M  
**Jo O'Halloran** 027 417 1140

This can be a day trip or an overnigher depending on weather and interest. Come along to discover the secrets of Hidden Lake off the beaten track to Roaring Stag Hut in the eastern Tararuas.

**Sun 1 December**

**Mick and Ventura Wreck** M  
**Warren Wheeler** 356 1998

Mick is a (low) high point in the western Tararua foothills above the Waitohu Valley north of Otaki, with the remains of an old plane wreck to find along the way. Depart PN 7.30am.

**Sat 7 – Sun 8 December**

**Mid-Pohangina Hut** M  
**Janet Wilson** 329 4722

An opportunity to visit one of the lovely huts our club maintains and to see some whio. As there is no longer a Mid Pohangina Swingbridge, when and where this trip goes will depend on river levels. Please let Janet know by the 4th December if you are interested in this trip. As we will be servicing some of the A24 traps I would prefer to make this a 3-day weekend, departing on the Friday.

**Sun 8 December**

**Beginners Tramp #3** E  
**Anne Lawrence** 357 1695

Where we go will depend on the weather. Ruahine Option 1: Rangi-Deadman's Loop Tararua Option 2: Field Hut and Tabletop. Both involve a climb and potential for lovely views. Leave Milverton Park at 7.30am.

**14 – 15 plus December**

**Kaweka Explorer** M/F  
**Bruce van Brunt** 328 4761

It is hoped depending on interest and weather to make this an extended multi-day trip into the Kawekas. The ideal plan is to make a South to North crossing of the Kawekas starting at Kuripapango and ending via Boyd Hut at Porenuui station. Naturally, the plan is flexible and depends on weather and interest.

**Sun 15 December**

**No.1 Line Loop** M  
**Richard Lockett** 323 0948

A neat summer trip up the hill at the end of No.1 Line, Pohangina, then a bush bash down to a stream which we follow back via a waterfall detour to our start point. Possible wet feet and scratchy scrub, yeeha. Depart PN 8.00am.

**11 or 12 January (Best Weather Day)**

**Waipawa Loop** M  
**Warren Wheeler** 356 1998

Lots of variety and a bit of adventure on this trip up past Sunrise Hut in the Ruahines. Enjoy the alpine flowers in full bloom, run down a scree, rock hop down the north branch of the Waipawa River, visit Waipawa Forks Hut, find a pool for a cool dip. A real favourite and ideal for beginners wanting to try something off-track. Depart 7.30am from Milverton Park.

**18-20 January**

**Wellington Anniversary Weekend**  
**Mitre Flats-Cow Creek** E/M  
**Warren Wheeler** 356 1998

A loop trip into the western Tararuas from Kiriwhakapapa Roadend, exploring along an old ridge track down to Mitre Flats then upriver to Cow Creek and back out via Cow Saddle. Lovely fly camping spots and swimming holes. Depart 7.30am.

**18 or 19 January (Best Weather Day)**

**Beehive Creek** Family  
**Doug Strachan** 353 6526

This Pohangina walkway, opened in 1983, is just 30km from P.N. Our 12 year old son and 14 year old daughter have walked this track every year of their lives, so it has become something of a tradition. The creek is generally ankle-deep and sandy-bottomed, making this ideal for all, including families and first-time trampers. Kids like to jump in the deeper bits, so leaving a change of clothes in the car for them is advisable. Any little kids can be given a head start by not having to walk the road section (3km, 40mins) of the loop. No dogs allowed on this walkway. The walk will be followed by lunch at a picnic spot across the road from the cars, so you don't

even have to carry your massive lunch on your back. Good social tramp, and you'll still have the afternoon free to mow the lawns. 9am start from Milverton Park.

### 25 January

**Tunupo Fly Camp Explorer M**  
**Graham Peters 329 4722**

The plan is to check out the old route from the Tunupo Fly Camp up to the Whanahua Range.

### 26 January

**Lower Oroua Adventure M**  
**Graham Peters 329 4722**

Have you ever wondered what the Oroua river does from the Iron Gates gorge to the road bridge? Hopefully we'll find out.

### 1-2 February

**Maungamahue Camping M**  
**Elly Arnst 022 682 3136**

We will take the less commonly used Mania Track onto the Whanahua Range and camp by one of the many tarns - either in the saddle or below Maungamahue. Return same way. Depart 07:30.

### 2 February

**Ohau Gorge E/M**  
**Warren Wheeler 356 1998**

This is a relatively easy gorge trip suitable for beginners keen for an adventure. It will be interesting to see how deep the pools are now. Expect to swim and/or pack float at times. Depart 8.00am from Milverton Park.

### 8-9 February

**Cattle Ridge M**  
**Martin Lawrence 357 1695**

This is the club's first overnight at Cattle Ridge since its renovation. Access is from Putara Road end. One option is to leave Saturday morning and head to Roaring Stag Hut. From there, it is a bit of a clamber up to Cattle Ridge Hut where we plan to spend Saturday night. Another option is to head in on Friday afternoon and stay Friday night at Herepai. This would shorten Saturday's trip to Cattle Ridge and give us the time to explore a couple of high points nearby. Either way, Sunday will involve walking out via Roaring Stag to the road end.

### 9 February

**Sunrise and Armstrong Saddle E/M**  
**Jo O'Halloran 0274 171 140**

This is a popular walk at any time of the year. The excellent zig zag track up through shady forest brings us to Sunrise Lodge at the bush edge and the saddle just 20 minutes further along offers even better views. Return the same way or branch off to walk out with cool wet feet via the river.

#### 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)

**BWD = Best weather day of a weekend**

#### Trip participants

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips usually 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.

#### 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:

Anne & Martin Lawrence	357 1695
Graeme Richards	353 6227

## Notices

### PLBs Available to Club Members

The club has two personal locator beacons (PLBs) for members' use. If you want to take one of these on a trip, contact Martin or Anne Lawrence on 357 1695. There is no cost to use these. This applies to any

trip you are going on - it doesn't need to be a club trip.

### Editor's Note

Publication of this newsletter has been delayed to allow the inclusion of the Annual Awards and December trip reports. Apologies for any inconvenience.

### DOC Hut News

The new Iron Gates Hut is expected to be open on 14 December, just in time for the busy summer season. Thanks to the Army Engineers involved in the construction.

## PNTMC Challenge 2019-2020

### Huts and High Places Challenge Update 18 December 2019

Three months to go, so make the most of the summer ahead. You can update your points by entering trip details, places visited etc in the online spreadsheet. Contact Martin if you have any problems with this.

You can refer to the June Newsletter for details of the rules and how to earn points.

Member	Huts	Highs	Bonus	TOTAL
Janet	54	21	25	100
Warren	53.5	14	30	97.5
Grant	35.5	41	20	96.5
Chris T	36.5	20	15	71.5
Bruce	46	20.5	0	66.5
Elly	26	24	15	65
Michelle	34	8.5	20	62.5
Ernie	32	11.5	15	58.5
Graham	22.5	9.5	10	42
Mary	14.5	9	5	28.5
Penny	18	5	5	28
Anne	11.5	9.5	5	26
Martin	11.5	9.5	5	26
Hannah	10	14	0	24
Ash	5	12	0	17
Woody	10.5	1	5	16.5
Richard	5	3.5	0	8.5
Vicki	5.5	3	0	8.5
Annett	1.5	1.5	0	3
Jo	3	0	0	3

## New Member

Welcome to Ben Stables, who joins us ex-Taranaki Alpine Club.

We wish you many happy trips with us.

## Annual Awards

Our Annual Awards were compiled and presented by Warren Wheeler at the End of Year BBQ held on Thursday 12 December 2019 at Ashhurst Domain.

**It's in the Bag Award** – Warren Wheeler, for picking the wrong bread bag out of his freezer, only bread not sandwiches.

**Put a Sock in It Award** – Warren Wheeler, who eventually found the socks left in the toe of his boots explained the unusually snug fit.

**NanoSAR Award** – Graeme Richards, for finding the missing woman in the street as he was leaving home.

**Spectacular SAR Award** – Richard Lockett, who found CJ's sunglasses under knee-high ferns completely overgrowing the track.

**Left Right Out Award** – Richard Lockett, for leading us astray off to the left of Ranginui, instead of to the right.

**Missing in Action Award** – Warren Wheeler, for being away on the Anzac Day Club Night and leaving the presenter without screen or projector.

**Screeching Halt Award** – Grant Christian, for memorable moments on scree in the Macauley Valley and off Ajax.

**Early Bird Award** – Dieter Stalman, for being a week early for the second club night in May.

**DB Award** – Janet and Graeme, for finding a dead banana in the bottom of their packs.

**Heads Up Award** – Richard Lockett, for using his head to get the highest possible GPS signal.

**Cross It Out Award** – Ernie Cook, for crossing at Tunupo Campsite thinking it was the Tunupo Stream.

**Lost Her Bottle Award** - Michelle Benton, for remaining calm after dropping her drink bottle into a jumble of logs (and delegating recovery to Janet).

**No More Double Tenting Award** – Bruce van Brunt, for taking an extra tent instead of his bivvy bag on a trip to Makaretu Hut.

**Best Trip Award** – Anne Lawrence, for a bruising face plant at the very end of a 150km trek in SW Australia.

**Highly Commended Trip Award** – Martin Lawrence, for safely landing on his nose on the same trip.

**Just Gremlin Award** – Anne Lawrence, who just wore new shoes for a week before her Oz trip, initiating blisters that ended up being golf ball size at the end of their trip.

**Dave Hodges Award for Excellence in Pursuit of Forgetfulness** (our most prestigious award) – Warren Wheeler, for not only forgetting to remove his used socks from the toe of his boots, but for forgetting to hand over screen and projector when away for ANZAC Day club night.

**Tararua Trophy** for Best Newsletter Article was presented by Editor Anne Lawrence to Bruce the Dog (aka Graham Peters) for the Upper Makaroro trip report in the August newsletter.

## Trip Reports

**Beginners to Sunrise Hut**  
**3 November 2019**  
**Report: Carol Joines**  
**Pics: Martin Lawrence**

The snow peaked mountains glistened in the sunlight as we drove towards our destination-The Ruahines. Just below the mountains bush clad green hills, this I thought was our climb for the day - I was so mistaken. We were heading to Sunrise Hut which is set within those snow peaked mountains that I had been admiring earlier.

The day was going to be extremely hot as we set off uphill. Each of us excited and exchanging jovial banter and forming new friendships. The well-marked track zigzagged through the lush native bush, with every turn another step forward closer to our destination. Heading towards the treetops – higher and higher.

After 20 minutes, I was beginning to think that maybe I should have just gone to the beach. A bench seat marks the halfway mark, at this stage conversation was intermittent and the breathing has got heavier with the weight of hot/dry air. Only the hardened trampers were hiking along with ease.

I felt like a Hobbit as my legs appeared to be shrinking and I was secretly pleased I had brought my pole along and a wet flannel to dampen the face.

'Not far now ' I heard someone say. Head down I pushed through with only one goal in mind. Not long after we emerged from the canopy of the trees and around the final bend was our reward. Sunrise Hut welcoming us to rest.

Unfortunately, there was no Streetwise coffee or ice blocks, but that was soon forgotten when we saw the panoramic views of Hawkes Bay.

On arrival I didn't feel like eating, I was just relieved I had finally made the climb. However, 5 minutes later, all my gourmet sandwiches had disappeared - who did that? I sat there with a cold wet flannel over my hot face thinking this was worth it.

With a full belly and our thirst quenched, a small group of us decided to hike to the Armstrong Saddle subalpine herb field. There was a warm wind blowing and the views were breath taking.



*Hike in warm wind across to Armstrong Saddle*

At the saddle is a pile of rocks - a monument to Armstrong - his plane went down and his fate remains a mystery. In the distance a clear view of Mt Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe, majestic in all their glory.

The descent down was quick - few words were spoken, all with the same agenda to get down and grab a wet cold beer or anything cold and wet. We settled for ice-cold treats at the General Store in Ongaonga instead.



*Enjoying the view at Armstrong Saddle*

On reflection of our day tramp I think after each hut visit we should acquire a small hut pin/badge. On Sunday, we all deserved a Sunrise Hut badge.

Thank you to Anne for arranging this special day.

*Beginners were: Michelle Fremaux, Carol Joines, Nic Ogier, Johan Swanepoel, Colin, Kate Parker, Adele Barker, Rohit Bharti and Jenny Mark.*

*Club members were: Martin and Anne Lawrence, Michelle Benton, Penny Abercrombie, Malcolm Parker and Vern Aldridge.*

## **Blue Range - Te Mara (not Cow Creek)**

**9 November 2019**

**Report: Roy Rolston**

**Pic: Warren Wheeler**

Originally it was an overnight tramp to Cow Creek Hut scheduled on the trip card, about 5 hours walk in from Kiriwhakapapa Roadend just south of Mt Bruce on the eastern side of the Tararuas. With Janet assigned as leader. At the beginning of the week I indicated my interest and checked back a couple of days later about how it was panning out. Janet only had one other interested and it was also of note that Warren was taking a group on a day trip to Blue Range Hut, also from Kiriwhakapapa on the Sunday,

After a week of indifferent weather, we were down to just Janet and I. Near week's end and the forecast, while OK for Saturday, was for heavy rain on Sunday. A discussion to go or not had Warren in the

conversation and we quickly found out he didn't have any punters for his trip so the long and short was to combine ourselves to Warren's day trip, brought forward to Saturday.

Meeting at 8am we cruised down to our road end taking on being representatives of some engineering outfit in PN. While all of us had been to the road end before we were reminded what a great spot it was to camp, park up and take in the beauty of the bush setting. There are very good basic facilities present and it was good to see some punters taking advantage of that.

After getting organized we headed off about 9am in indifferent but fine humid weather. Our destination was Blue Range Hut about 2 hrs ahead and Te Mara Peak, a short side trip to a high point. A good track soon passed the impressive redwood trees purposely planted many years ago after a sawmill in area had cut down and processed most of the good gettable native trees.

Upward and onward we soon broke into a sweat (well I did anyway) and after a good conversation along the way the signpost and turnoff to the hut was soon realized.

Too early for lunch, we decided to carry on with our planned visit to our high point by following the main track left that eventually leads down to Cow Creek Hut. A short distance along and down in a shallow saddle there is an easy to miss small arrow pointing uphill. Following an intermittent flagged tape line, and old disc markers, a very easy route is navigated up and along a ridge to the official Te Mara high point, an old iron tube trig point, a tramp of about 20 minutes or so.

At this point a bit of a discussion centred around possible future tramps that could be offered to further explore this diversion encompassing navigation skills instruction. Food for thought!

After a photo I lead the trio back to the main track. Following the infrequent flags of tape and the ridge line had me heading into the yonder at one point before being checked

by Warren that I had missed the angled turn left off a small knob at which I quickly remembered we came to on the way up.



*Proof of bagging Te Mara high point.*

Back along the track to the signpost and a short distance downhill, although it always seems further than you think, Blue Range Hut was our lunch stop. There is a good viewpoint out front of the hut and on a clear day you get good views of Cow Saddle, the Ruamahanga Valley and the tops of Cattle Ridge and beyond. We unfortunately couldn't see much as the forecasted bad weather for Sunday was already brewing.

After lunch and stashing a bit of firewood we set off back up the track to the signpost in drizzly conditions. Descending down to the road end was straight forward and as it fined up, overheating had us remove our coats and layers. After a coffee stop at the famous bird reserve of Mt Bruce we arrived back in good time around 5 pm. All in all, a pleasant day in the bush and we came back with ideas for future trips to the same area.

We were Janet (and Bruce the dog), Warren and Roy.

**Makaretu Hut (not Top Gorge Hut)  
15-16 November 2019  
Report: Bruce van Brunt  
Pics: Warren Wheeler**

The original goal of this trip was to go to Top Gorge Hut via Longview Hut. Once at Top Gorge the plan was to check traps on the Pohangina River and a few up the slopes towards the Ngamoko Range. The forecast, while not perfect, did show a window of weather that would at least allow

us to go up and do this trip with perhaps a bit of wind on the day out. Friday was supposed to be the "best weather day". The main enemy would be the wind.

Janet and I left Pohangina and met with Warren and Penny around 7:45am on Friday and headed east. Already, the weather looked a bit dodgy, but not that bad. We stopped at Dannevirke for the traditional pie and Bruce (the dog) got his exercise. Yes, there was a bit of wind in Dannevirke.

The grass and shrubs on the way to the Kashmir Road were not horizontal from the wind and, in fact, the wind abated as we turned down the Ashley Clinton Road. We drove up to the carpark (the road is in fairly nice condition at the moment). Here, it was evident that there was some wind about the saddle and more on the Longview ridge. We quickly decided on a Plan B as it was clear that the wind would be a challenge for us up that ridge. We decided to go over the lower ridge to Awatere Hut and follow the north branch of the Makaretu River. The revised goal for the night was Makaretu Hut on the south branch of the river. The next day (weather gods permitting) we would strike out for Top Gorge. We packed all of our stoat trapping stuff with this in mind.



*Rock hop across to Awatere Hut.*

After a windy transit over this low ridge (seems as bad as Longview, but maybe not) we arrived at Awatere Hut and had a brief stop. We then continued down the river with a short stop at the very dilapidated Black Stag biv. The river was slightly milky with new runoff and marginally higher than "normal". Nonetheless, it was pretty good travel. We

had light rain on and off most of the day, but nothing that warranted even putting a coat on.



*Awatere Hut sheltered in beech forest*



*Black Stag biv in need of some TLC*

At the confluence of the north and south branch, we stopped for a short snack and then to a 15 minute diversion to Happy Daze Hut. The track to Happy Daze is not that inspiring, but one climbs up to get a view or two of the river. The track itself is mostly well marked but a bit soft in places. Fortunately, there are many opportunities to clean one's boots in the rivers later.



*Diversion to Happy Daze Hut*

The hut itself was formerly a private hut (not NZFS) and this explains its peculiar

character. It is not a hut that I would go out of my way to spend a night in, but it is worth the short diversion if you are nearby.

Returning to the confluence of the branches, we then went up the south branch of the river to Makaretu Hut. This branch is much smaller than the north branch and more cloistered. The north branch is quite open and save for a few awkward large fallen trees is pretty nice travel. The south branch is pleasant enough, but it is a smaller river/creek and the riverbed is overall slower travel with more "slippery rocks". Here, one must always look for small ground trails on the terraces to optimize travel.

Having said all this, it is a beautiful river and travel is not that slow. We soon came to a large orange triangle lying near a tree and spotted the ground trail to Makaretu Hut. Warren dutifully nailed up the triangle in a useful place for trampers (with a full-sized hammer he just happened to have for stoat trapping work). We arrived at Makaretu Hut in approximately 5 hours after we left Moorcock Saddle.



*Criss-crossing up south branch Makaretu River*

Makaretu Hut is in a lovely position near the river. I have been there several times on long day trips but never spent a night there. I knew it would be a great place to stay and I was not disappointed. We had the place to ourselves and a fairly relaxing afternoon. There is plenty of good camping near the hut in the beech forest and I took advantage of that despite the uncrowded hut.

The weather on Saturday was not meant to be any better than that of Friday. Indeed,

the wind howled down the valley through the night. It reached a crescendo when the hut door suddenly blew open and Warren scrambled to secure it. Somewhere in mid-sleep Penny thought a helicopter had landed, but it was just the wind. In the beech forest, I had a tent flapping about, but basically a more sheltered night's sleep.



*Psyched to back-track out from Makaretu Hut*

The wind was still up the next morning and we decided to go out via the rivers to avoid more wind. It is a bit tough to tell what the wind is doing higher up, but when it is windy in a sheltered valley below one can extrapolate. We thus retreated back down the south branch of the river. The trip down this branch was faster than that up it the day before and not really because of any height gains/losses. We found a number of ground trails that shortened the journey, and the river itself was down, which made life all the more pleasant. We were soon back to the confluence (some 20 minutes faster).

Janet went back to Happy Daze Hut to leave a Whio newsletter. Warren waited at the confluence for Janet whilst Penny and I went up the north branch towards Awatere Hut. We soon got to Awatere and met a group of hunters that optimistically hoped to get out but realized the limitations of the weather. Janet and Warren were right behind us, but, somehow, they saw a whio that arrived in the main river after we went through. Bad luck for Penny and I!

After a windy transit over the ridge to Moorcock Saddle, we ended our adventure with a nice fish and chips lunch in Dannevirke. The team was Janet (leader),

Warren, Penny, Bruce (the human) and Bruce (the dog).



*Doubling up made it easier on the windy ridge*

### **Bird Atlas Training - Ashhurst Domain 2 November 2019 Report & Pics: Stephen Legg**

Following a popular and well attended Thursday night presentation by Kirsten Olsen and Stephen Legg on the '**New Zealand Bird Atlas - citizen science from mountains to see!**', this gentle half day stroll provided six keen tramping birding aspirants practical hands-on experience of downloading the eBird App (<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/home>) and using it.



*The intrepid birder (not twicher) trampers.*

The stroll wended its way down the hill from Ashurst Domain to the Manawatu River, and back. There were no sore feet at the end of this tramp (!) and the bird list was as follows: [Sacred Kingfisher](#) (2), [Eastern Rosella](#) (2), [Tui](#) (5), [Australian Magpie](#) (3), [European Starling](#) (5), [Song Thrush](#) (7), [Eurasian Blackbird](#) (11), [House Sparrow](#) (22), [Paradise Shelduck](#) (9), [Rock Pigeon](#) ([Feral Pigeon](#)) (22), [New Zealand Pigeon](#) (Keruru) (3), [Shining Cuckoo](#) (1), [Spur-](#)

[winged Plover](#) (10), [Black Shag](#) (1), [New Zealand Fantail](#) (2), [Chaffinch](#) (1), [Sulphur-crested Cockatoo](#) (9), [Grey Warbler](#) (2), [European Greenfinch](#) (2), [European Goldfinch](#) (3).

Anyone wanting help with birding whilst tramping are welcome to contact either Kirsten (027 354 6010 email: [kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com](mailto:kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com)) or Stephen (027 647 0095 email: [sjlegg2@gmail.com](mailto:sjlegg2@gmail.com)).

See if you can identify these two birds: (Clue: use the links above and below to find the birds)



Here are some useful bird identification websites that you can download:

NZ birds online: <http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/> ,  
NZ bird atlas on ebird: <http://ebird.org/atlasnz>  
BirdingNZ.net: <https://www.birdingnz.net/>

**Makaretu Be or Not to Be**  
**23-24 November 2019**  
**Report: Richard Lockett**  
**Pics: Warren Wheeler**

Six of us set off from Palmy in Michelle's car which afforded a high degree of

comfort, more akin to an executive jet from what I'm used to! With the promise of a good weather forecast for the weekend we were greeted by a larger than normal amount of vehicles on arrival at the Kashmir Roadend. This always begs the question, where are all these people going to? Hope it's not to Makaretu Hut for the night! Being such a glorious day with no wind for a change, we as a group decided to go in via Longview as who knows what the actual conditions will be like on the tops on Sunday wind-wise.

About half way up the climb to Longview we met Catherine Jackson coming down, having spent the night at Makaretu Hut, with the advice that the hut was already full with people that Catherine had met on tops between Makaretu and Longview. No problem we thought, as Warren had a large fly and I had a tent for myself. Wendy, a mid-week Wednesday trumper new to us started having Yea Na moments, where the mind was keen to take advantage of such a glorious day on the tops but the body was saying that it wasn't so keen to be climbing a hill in the heat on the day.

With a few rest stops and some gentle coaxing Wendy made it to Longview Hut where we all had a very long lunch and rest stop. With the climb over and with a good rest Wendy was keen to continue along the ridge track past Rocky Knob and the descent to Makaretu Hut. The short climb around Rocky Knob saw Wendy's body start to battle with her mind again so after three of us had bagged the points for Rocky Knob we decided to retreat Wendy back to Longview before we put her and the rest of us into a possible bad situation on the tops.



*Smokey views from Rocky Knob*

So Wendy, Neil and myself returned to Longview while Warren, Kathy and Michelle dropped down into the Pohangina and Top Gorge Hut to see if there was anyone at home, with the view of staying for the night if it was empty.

While Wendy snoozed in the hut, Neil and me nipped down to the waterfall behind the hut in the Pohangina headwaters for refreshment and a look around, enjoying the hot early summer conditions at hand. Similar activities were happening at Top Gorge, as it transpires! With the party split in two there was a distinct over supply of Christmas mince tarts at Longview with half a dozen each needing to be eaten, which they were, but upon reading the packaging and seeing how far out into future the best before date is and with no manufacture date being admitted to, we were left feeling somewhat queasy and embalmed!

After a good nights kip, with an early get up from Neil to watch the sun rise up through the layer of Aussie bush fire smoke, we took our time leaving the hut, which meant that the wind returned to remind us of the usual spring conditions up here as we left, which would make for a challenging walk back to Longview for Kathy, Michelle and Warren.



*Bracing against the wild west wind*

Back at the roadend and other parties arriving from the Awatere were saying 17 people were at Makaretu Hut for the night! So no one felt short-changed from our shortened trip and we returned to Palmy in good spirits.

We were Michelle and Neil Benton, Kathy Corner, Wendy Williams, Warren Wheeler and Richard Lockett.

### **Hidden Lake**

**30 November 2019**

**Report: Jo Lawrence**

**Pic: Warren Wheeler**

Warren, Jo and Lawrence set off from Palmerston North at 0730 to meet up with Roy and Laura at the Putara Rd end. We were in pursuit of the Hidden Lake half an hour from Roaring Stag Hut.

The day was mild and clear. Bird sounds accompanied us on the track. A bit of a climb up to Herepai/Roaring Stag junction then down to the creek with the tree with a circle in its trunk. With no markers to Hidden Lake it was left to navigation expert Warren to get us there which he did, having identified a created branch marker on the ground where we head off the track, to cross the Ruapae Stream towards the Hidden Lake.

We came upon the hunters campsite very near the Hidden Lake and stopped for a much-anticipated lunch at the lakeside.

Warren caught sight of a young black eel coming to the waters edge and made the observation that rushes in the lake were becoming more evident.

Leaving the Hidden Lake we bush-bashed our way back up to the well-trodden track back to the car park. The skies opened to drench us on the last leg of the tramp.



*Picnic at Hidden Lake*

**Mid-Pohangina**  
**6-8 December 2019**  
**Report: Ernie Cook**  
**Pics: Chris Tuffley**

In the beginning there were two plans. Plan A, the preferred option, entailed traveling in from Limestone Road end and over Toka to Leon Kinvig Hut. Time and energy prevailing, some of the traps upstream of the hut could be serviced the same day, Friday, before returning to Leon Kinvig Hut for the night. Saturday would see us work our way down to Mid-Pohangina Hut, ready to ford the Pohangina River before the rain forecast for Sunday morning.

Plan B involved going in via the Mid-Pohangina sidle track and traveling directly to Leon Kinvig Hut. Traps above the hut could be serviced before journeying back down to Mid-Pohangina Hut on the Saturday. There was some suggestion of an exit out via Toka if necessitated by bad weather.

My understanding of Plan B may be a little clouded, but in the end it doesn't matter as with the forecast rain on Sunday looking to be later in the day now, Plan A was all go.

With Janet's able lieutenant, Chris, leaving a vehicle at the Mid-Pohangina road-end, we were self-sufficient and on our way traveling to Limestone Road-end. The journey in over Toka was pretty uneventful though a cool breeze near the summit meant the faster trampers overtook the plodder and sheltered out of the breeze awaiting his arrival.



*Battling the wind on the way over to Leon Kinvig*

Travel along the tops was pleasant, affording good views in both directions,

with a sometimes cool breeze of reasonable force. Lunch was taken in a sheltered spot just above the thicker bush-line. Ernie determined that we were in the same square on the map as the hut. A comfortable descent through the bush and crossing of the river had us checking in to a vacant hut at 1:45 p.m.

After a brew, Chris and Grant raced away up river to the farthest traps that were to be serviced. Janet and Ernie then set off after them servicing the traps as we went. Conditions were pleasantly warm and the river not cold. We collided at about trap 22 which was pretty much as Janet had expected. A quicker return trip had us back at the hut around 7:15 p.m. with a very satisfactory day's work achieved.

The two resident who made their usual appearance on dusk and were able to be seen outside the hut the next morning.



*Early start from Leon Kinvig*



*Grant at the gorge below Leon Kinvig*

We set off down river, working in pairs servicing the traps as we went. The river was nice and low and travel quite straight forward. Some fresh dead rats were found, sometimes more than one at a trap. A

relatively fresh dead stoat was found at one trap. Lunch was enjoyed at Ngamoko Hut, which appeared nice and clean. Scant consideration was given to over-nighting here and we continued on to Mid-Pohangina Hut, arriving late afternoon.

We were thrilled to see a pair of whio and a juvenile swimming in a pool above the hut. As we watched, two more juvenile birds joined the other three. Having joked about finding a lure with the ten-cent piece still in place, Grant gleefully announced from higher up the bank that he had found one. I'll take the blame, Graham.



*Family of five whio above Mid Pohangina Hut*

Chris had been busy recording bird sightings on his phone and it was great to hear him and Janet comparing bird sightings and sounds. While my hearing precluded me from hearing all the calls, I did enjoy seeing a pair of karearea swooping above. We settled in to an empty hut that had been recently provisioned by the New Zealand Army's Scot battalion. Cans of beer and back country foods. Plenty of gas also.

The indefatigable Chris serviced the trap up the hill behind the hut and he and Janet shortened up the next day's workload. Ernie thought he had done a good job sorting out the used gas cylinders from the used lure baits. Unfortunately he left said baits on the hut verandah and the resident possums had a great party in the early hours of the morning scattering them all over.

Rain on the roof early morning threatened to make a mockery of Ernie's assertion that it wouldn't rain till later in the day. It was short lived, though some drizzle was about

in the morning. We hit the trail before eight, servicing the last handful of traps and making our way out the sidle track. Three deer were sighted along the way.

As we emerged from the bush at the bottom it became necessary to don wet weather gear or fashion ponchos. The rain was heavier and made the final leg to the road-end somewhat unpleasant. We exited at about 12:15 p.m. Chris's car veered left instead of right and Janet treated us to some nice hot chips at the over-crowded Apiti Hotel where a chance meeting with Steve Bielski let him regale us with the tale of how he had recently caught two stoats at once in the same one-ended DOC 200 trap on the Rangī-Deadmans loop track.

A final commute to Limestone Road end and we were on our way homewards after what was deemed to be a very satisfying and successful excursion. We were Chris Tuffley, Grant Christian, Ernie Cook and inspirational leader Janet Wilson.

### **Kaweka Explorer 13-15 December 2019 Report: Bruce van Brunt**

This trip was billed perhaps ambitiously as a South to North traverse of the Kawekas. The weather and schedules, however, modified it into a very pleasant tramp in the Southern Kawekas. One could neither fault the weather nor the tracks. We were a party of two: Catherine and I.

We started our trip from the Lakes carpark at 3:30pm on Friday with the object of getting to Kiwi Saddle Hut at some civilized time. The climb up Kuripapango was warm and (for me) slow. The bush up this track has its features with large manuka trees and various scrub plants. There is a constant presence of wilding pine. This track affords a few nice views of the Lakes and the eastern aspects towards Napier. It is a pleasant route, but nowhere near as spectacular as the Cameron Carpark Track up Kuripapango. The choice of this route is based on making a loop.

Soon, we spotted the radio mast that stands on the summit of Kuripapango and entered into a heavily overgrown wilding pine forest. Passing the junction with the Cameron Carpark Track we continued along though mostly pine, but some gorgeous beech sections, to eventually reach an open section. Here, we were rewarded with a spectacular view of the Ngaruroro River valley and the slender ribbon of the river hundreds of metres below. After the last slog up to the Cameron Hut junction we had a break to appreciate the beauty of the place. Kiwi Saddle Hut was under 30 minutes and we could relax...we would get there with plenty of daylight to spare. We descended down to Kiwi Saddle to the hut, which is embedded in a small beech forest (you cannot see the hut until you are virtually upon it). At a relaxed pace, it is about 3.5 hours to this hut from the carpark and this time could certainly be shortened to 3 hours if needed.

There are some "new DoC" signs near this hut declaring that Kiwi Mouth Hut is but 2 hours away and that Studholm Hut is 3.5 hours away. The latter time is arguably accurate for a fast party; the former time is ridiculous. Kiwi Mouth Hut is by all accounts a lot more than 2 hours distant from Kiwi Saddle Hut even for a very fit party. Someone scratched "Yeah Right" below this time on the sign. Very experienced parties reported time more like 3-4hrs even using the shortest routes to Kiwi Mouth Hut.

Kiwi Saddle Hut is a delightful place to spend a night. The hut is beautifully located and sheltered in the beech forest. Later, three trampers from the Napier Tramping Club joined us and we had a very pleasant evening recounting old "war stories" of the Kawekas and Ruahines. This was their "shakedown" trip for the Heaphy Track.

Catherine and I are both early risers, and we found ourselves ready to go at 6:30am. The object was to follow the tops around to Castle Camp, climb up to Kaiarahi then turn north for a short bit before descending the Mackintosh Spur. The weather was

pleasant, and we easily made Castle Camp in two hours. The track along the tops is spectacular yet straight forward and in such weather conditions *one should relish it much like a fine glass of vintage port.*



*Super tops travel to Castle Camp*

Castle Camp itself consists of a plastic/greenhouse sort of structure and most importantly water tanks. Water on these tops is always a concern, so it is good to know that one can get water here without losing elevation. The camp is located in a sheltered beech forest with lots of good camping spots nearby. I did not spot a toilet here, but maybe I missed something. The plastic house is good for basic shelter and cooking, but in fine weather it is very unappealing as a place to stay. It is basic shelter with a dirt floor.

The climb up Kaiarahi is also nice with lots of great views of Mad Dog Hill, Kaweka J. and the Studholm Biv far below. We soon topped over Kaiarahi and headed towards the Mackintosh Spur. The signage up here is very good and, even in bad weather, the aluminium signs are clear and easy to read. The track up to Kaiarahi was spectacular yet one could not ignore that the wilding pines were a serious threat. Evidently, a significant effort was spent to slow the pine encroachment, but one was left feeling that it might end up like Kuripapango, suffocated by pine trees in some 20 years.

If the weather is really rotten on the tops, the Mackintosh Spur is surely a reliable route. This is an extremely sheltered route (lots of wilding pines) and is gentler than

the Rogue Ridge (which is OK save for the extra travel on the tops in bad weather). We descended down the Mackintosh Ridge some 600m to the junction with the track to the Lakes Carpark. We were intent, however, on continuing to Mackintosh Hut.

The original plan was to spend the night at this hut, but we found with the good weather, the early start, the nice track, and the serious time underestimation of the trip leader, that we were at the hut for a slightly late lunch! Neither of us were in the mood to hang around a hut for 8 hrs before dark, so we decided to have a leisurely lunch on the veranda and press on to the car. Mackintosh Hut is a very nice and well-appointed hut. Looking at the hut book, it is clear that the place is a favourite for Duke of Ed parties and heavily used on most weekends. Lots of people go to this hut. We had it alone for lunch but soon we found that a party of 6 young ladies would descend on the hut for a night.



*Luxury - gruyere and salami at Mackintosh Hut*

When we knew we would be there early enough for lunch we immediately changed our plans to walk towards the Lakes Carpark that afternoon. The first plan was to back track up to the junction and walk out under the Rogue Ridge to the carpark (3-4+ hours by signage). At the hut, however, there was a sign to Mackintosh Road end that said 2hrs. This was a new track for me and I could not resist. It was also a lot shorter.

The track to the Mackintosh Carpark is very good except that you have to descend significantly down to Tutaekuri River and climb some 300 m out of it. It looks bad on

the map, but it is a pretty good track both up and down. On my new (2014) Kuripapango map the river crossing is marked with "Walkwire", but in fact there is a beautiful solid steel bridge at this crossing. The climb up was well graded and much better than expected. Yes, we had some 2km of bland road travel to the car, but the time savings in the end was significant.

We got out much earlier than expected and made for the campground at Kuripapango. The lure of swimming in the Ngaruroro River was too much for me and I had a nice swim before dinner despite the sandflies.

The next morning we headed for Comet (aka Komata) Hut just to have a look at it. Four years ago, this was a remarkably tidy and strategic hut that one could drive to and collect water for a trip to Shute's Hut. I have stayed at this hut a few times and always found it enjoyable. Now, I see that the hut has been made worse by the predations of idiots. The windows have been replaced by plywood and the water tank made useless. The hut is still a good shelter, but now it is darker and has no water. I felt a surge of anger as I entered the hut and secretly hoped that NZ was party to a eugenics programme that would somehow breed out or make sterile people like this that stupidly destroyed huts like Comet and A-Frame. Perhaps crucifixion of a few of these criminals might help. At any rate, Comet Hut has been like this for more than a year and I am confident that DoC will not invest anything to improve these huts. Why should they with such criminals at large?

To end on a positive note, the trip was a very enjoyable romp in the Kawekas. The good weather and early starts meant that there were no time pressures and hence we could enjoy the alpine vegetation and scenery at leisure. I learned a lot from Catherine about various plants and she had the leisure to photograph and study a number of plants.

We were Bruce van Brunt and Catherine Jackson.



## PNTMC Newsletter

Dec 2019 - Jan 2020

### *What's inside this month?*

- Annual Awards announced
- Club Challenge update
- Bird Atlas – help map our birds
- Lots of Trip Reports
- Upcoming trips and more

### Articles for the newsletter

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