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## Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club

[www.pntmc.org.nz](http://www.pntmc.org.nz)

P.O. Box 1217, Palmerston North

### Newsletter April 2021

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*Motorimu Whare on the Burton's Track to Gladstone Rd section of the Te Araroa trail.*



*Kathy & Roy at the start of Mangahao track.*

**Photos taken by Roy Rolston. See inside for trip report by new club member, Liette.**

### 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.

**8<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**AGM**

Come along and here what your committee has been up to over the past year.

**29<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**New Zealand bird Atlas update**

Presented by Kirsten Olsen, (Atlas coordinator for Birds NZ Manawatu) and Stephen Legg

Birds NZ launched New Zealand's largest ever citizen science project in June 2019: The New Zealand Bird Atlas. The aim of the project is to record the birds in every corner of New Zealand (mountains to sea) in each season over five years. Anyone anywhere in New Zealand can help with this scheme by recording and entering the birds they see and hear on the eBird phone app. The eBird app is linked to the Merlin phone app to help with identification of birds if you are uncertain or do not know the bird.

This talk will describe Atlas progress after the first two years - how many people have contributed - which areas and seasons are well covered and which are not. You can help. As a keen trumper you visit areas that most other citizens do not, so you could record birds that nobody else will hear or see. After the talk we can help you install the eBird and Merlin apps. If you would like to practice using eBird and contributing to the Bird Atlas, join us in Ashhurst Domain for a couple of hours on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> or Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 9am (contact Stephen on 027 647 0095 or Kirsten on 027 354 6010).

## Upcoming Trips

### Easter trip (2-5 April): Te Araroa Levin to Otaki Forks

**Roy Ralston**

**Medium/Fit  
027 476 7188**

If you have heard of the Te Araroa Trail and wondered what thru hiking is all about, then this section hike over Easter weekend will give you a chance to experience it for yourselves. You will be following in the footsteps of many who would have normally completed this section over Nov/Jan period each year. This section is renowned for being the most challenging on the north island leg of the trail. The weather plays a huge part to how each trail walker prepares and completes this section as parts of the open tops on the main range are very exposed to the elements. In the same vein, many report that this section is their favourite with lots of variety and amazing views along the way.

The plan is to meet early Friday morning and travel to the start of this section at the end of Poads Road near Levin. We will tramp up to Te Matawai Hut for our first night. Approx 7-8 hrs.

On Saturday we will tramp up and along the main range passing Dracophyllum Bivy and stay at Nichols hut for the night. Approx 8-9hrs

On Sunday we will tramp south along the main range to climb Mt Crawford, the section's highest point, before descending to Waitewaewae hut for our third night. Approx 4-6hrs

On Monday we will tramp out to Otaki Forks NORMAL Road Carpark perhaps stopping at nearby Parawai hut for lunch. Approx 5 hrs Then we will tramp the Otaki Forks temporary access track that Doc has opened. It goes up and over the major slip that has closed the road to a new designated car park closer to Otaki. Approx 2-3 hrs

This trip will be weather dependent and could be called off or substituted for another destination if the forecast is unfavorable to the extent that it may be very difficult to complete the trip in the allotted time unless there is flexibility within the group to take an extra day or so. This section is one that normally does not include any dreaded road walking.

However, because of the closure of part of Otaki Fork Road, there is approx 3.5 km on the final day.

Easter break could mean this section may be popular with other trampers - huts could be full especially at Nichols hut so a tent or two would be a good idea. As this trip has a different start and end point please confirm your interest as early as possible.

For more detailed information go to the official Te Araroa website and look up the trail notes under the region of Wellington or call Roy.

### 10-11<sup>th</sup> April

**Makaretu Hut  
Kathy Corner**

**Medium  
027 618 5722**

This hut in the eastern Ruahines can be reached by going along the Makaretu river North Branch or climbing up to Longview hut along the tops past Rocky Knob then descending down to the hut. Which way we go depends on the weather so we will decide on the day.

### 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> April (Best weather day)

**Top Gorge Hut  
Warren Wheeler**

**Medium/Fit  
356 1998**

Plenty of variety on this trip into the eastern Ruahine Ranges. A steady climb to Longview Hut on the bush line then down the Pohangina River past a couple of little waterfalls and back up along the ridgeline. A lovely area. Depart Milverton at 7.00am.

### 17-18<sup>th</sup> April

**Thunderbolt- Kaimanawas  
Grant Christian**

**Fit  
021 117 6921**

Meet at the end of Kaimanawa Road where the track leads to the Urchin trig at 9 a.m. Saturday morning. Take the route over Urchin trig and down to the Waipakihi River then follow the route up the other side of the river to Thunderbolt. If the weather is suitable, we will camp on the tops toward Thunderbolt. You will need a tent or bivvy bag. Grant has space for one in his tent. Out the same way on Sunday.

### Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April

**Blue Range Hut  
Michelle Benton**

**Easy/Medium  
027 355 2532**

This is a lovely walk in from the Kiriwhakapapa entrance to the Tararua Forest Park. There are

some big redwoods at the beginning and then a climb up to a bright blue hut decorated with a medical hospital theme. We will be taking our time at an easy-medium pace and returning the same way we went in. Meet at Milverton Park at 7:30 am. Let Michelle know if you're interested.

**24-26<sup>th</sup> April**

**Purangi – East Taranaki**                      **Easy/Medium**  
**Janet Wilson**                                      **329 4722**

This Anzac Weekend trip is a little treat, more so if you are a bird lover. We will be based at Purangi approx 40km to the east of Inglewood. This is the home of the East Taranaki Environment Trust who look after a thriving kiwi population and some recently released Kokako. While exploring the nearby area we will also be helping put out some new traps – nothing too difficult I am told, and many hands make light work!

From the Trust’s website:

*“We provide a place for kiwi to thrive. Our project at Pūrangi, East Taranaki is a community initiative, involving the implementation of a suite of pest control and advocacy measures to promote conservation and sustainability in the Pūrangi / Matau and Pouiatoa catchments. Kiwi is our indicator species. We have around 13,000 hectares of land within the project area, which is home to over 4000 kiwi. We are proud to be one of the largest community environment schemes in New Zealand. This is an area of significant habitat of nationally threatened and at-risk indigenous species”.*

Accommodation is in a comfortable cabin. Travel up on Saturday 24th unless we are all keen for a Friday departure.

**1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> May**

**Tukino**    **Fit&Technical**  
**Grant Christian**

Meet at Tukino Road 2wd car park at 9 a.m. Saturday morning. Drive to the top of the road and walk up to Wangaehu Hut where we will stay the night (fees apply). We can leave our overnight gear at the hut and climb further up the mountain. If anyone is keen, we could do some rock scrambling on steeper rock with a rope - or stick to the easier stuff if you

prefer. May need crampons if there’s been some early snow.

**1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> May (Best weather day)**

**Maharaha Crossing**                      **Medium**  
**Warren Wheeler**                              **356 1998**

This trip is one of the shortest crossings up onto the leatherwood tops and over the Ruahine Ranges. The group will split in two and start from each side, swapping car keys in the middle. Depart Milverton at 7.30am.

**New members**

Welcome to new families: Liette Godin Mckerras and family, and Debbie Parrott and her family.

**Notices**

**Trip card for January – June 2021**

[The latest Trip Card](#) is on the club website. We are keeping it on the website as a ‘living document’ so it can be kept updated with any changes. There are still gaps to fill so please contact Anne Lawrence or Janet Wilson if you wish to add a trip. You will also find a copy of the latest version of this on the back page of this newsletter.

**Keeping it Local - Our new club challenge**

Here is the list of the people with points entered as at 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Michelle is still leading the way – she has been extremely busy out in the Ruahines! There is still plenty of time left for others to get on board.

Club Member	Total Huts	Total High Points	Total Bonus	TOTAL
Michelle	103	72	3	178
Chris T	46	66	3	115
Elly	26	51	3	80
Ernie	47	26	3	76
Janet	51	19	0	70
Neil	22	29	0	51
Anne	20	27	0	47
Martin	20	27	0	47
Warren	17	13	3	33
Graham	2	8	0	10

## Hut and Track closures

- **Sunrise Hut and Track**

Sunrise hut and track will be closed to 5<sup>th</sup> April due to a major track upgrade. The other huts in the area will remain open but access will be closed via the Sunrise Track.

- **Makaroro access**

If you are planning to use the Makaroro access to Ellis Parks Peak or Poutaki huts, note that the PanPac forest is sometimes closed. Check DOC site for up-to-date info.

- **Otaki Gorge emergency access**

Otaki Gorge Road is closed to vehicles and pedestrians indefinitely. DOC has opened an Ōtaki Forks temporary walking access track which starts 11 km from SH1. This emergency track allows you to gain walking access to Tararua Forest Park. Wellington Tramping Club have got more details at

<https://wtmc.org.nz/uncategorized/otaki-forks-temporary-walking-access/>

## Trip Reports

### **Te Araroa: Burttons to Gladstone Rd 27-28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

#### **Report and Pics: Liette Godin McKerras**

I have been meaning to join the Manawatu Tramping club for years and I have finally done it! How exciting! After a day hike with Michelle to Herepai Hut, I decided I was ready to dive into an overnight. I dusted off my 75 litre pack which has been in storage for nearly two decades - and packed it with what I thought was the bare essentials. My first thought was 'Oh no, I am 'Nic' from the exercise at the last club night. Nic was the 'newbie' who had a pack much too big and heavy for him filled with way too much unnecessary food. The only thing was, I couldn't think what I could leave out.

**Day 1:** Roy arrived to pick me up at 7:30 and we picked up our driver (his wife Debbie) and Kathy and headed to Scott's Road where we met up with Simon and Bronwyn. The weather was perfect for the 2 days, if not a little hot! (but I will never complain about the heat!!) We

followed the forestry road in the Gordon Kear Forest for approximately 2 kms to a new shelter for TA hikers called the Motorimu Whare. It had a toilet, rubbish bin and was a lovely newly built Whare complete with magazines to enjoy! We didn't stay long and began to climb steadily for about 3km to the signpost for Burton's Track. At the sign we spotted a family pig-hunting with their dogs. Their dogs had tracking devices while the owner followed him on his tracker. They called it 'lazy hunting' and a 'good way to stock the fridge!'



*Motorimu Whare*





inner hunter  
gatherer  
instincts kicked  
in and I could  
not stop picking  
and eating the  
delicious  
berries! We  
seemed to all  
benefit from the  
hit of natural  
sugar and



pushed on to the shelter which seemed to be  
around the next corner now that we had bellies  
full of sweet berries.

Burton's Track was beautifully shaded and followed the Tokomaru River. We got our feet wet crossing No 1 and 2 streams and the river a couple of times. It was actually quite refreshing to do so and made up for the squidgy feel of wet socks. We came up to Burton's Whare about half-way along the track and stopped for lunch. No actual Whare to be seen here, just a little clearing with a sign explaining the historical track completed by Burton who sadly died after falling down a swing bridge he had built. After our lunch we

pressed on through the Tararua Forest towards the Tokomaru Shelter. We passed what Bron called a great swim spot only for me to spot the biggest eel I had ever seen (ok, I haven't seen many but still!)



Everyone seemed to slow down and by the last hour even (super fit) Kathy was saying she had had enough now. I was feeling the weight of my pack at this point and was fading when we came upon a patch of wild blackberries. My



The freshwater stream was not too much more than a trickle but we all managed a wee bit of a splash to clean up and cool off. Simon and Bronwyn and I put up our tents and then we enjoyed the last bit of sunshine. We saw one vehicle pass by, a couple of hunters who said they would pass once more on their quad bike. We did see them pass and heard a gunshot later on but we were all in bed by the time they passed again. Oh, how the body aches when you aren't used to tramping with a heavy pack! Simon and I stretched and did yoga poses to try to limber up, but there was no denying that we just need to go tramping more often! Roy and I even admitted to taking Panadol to help with the aches! I was very thankful that I had

packed some extra warm clothes as I did feel the chill!

**Day 2:** There is no better sleep than one spent in the outdoors.... Even when one is stiff and sore! We woke to a chilly but beautiful morning and enjoyed our breakfast with more fresh blackberries. ☺ I was very surprised at how good I felt after a night's sleep. The pack seemed quite manageable. Simon, on the other hand, had decided that he was too sore to finish the walk and that he and Bron would walk out once we got to the Mangahao Road. (I should add here that Simon was actually overcoming an injury and thought he was healed enough for the weekend, but sadly had been too optimistic!) Luckily we passed a car that said they would kindly pick them up and take them into Shannon. What lovely people you can meet while out tramping!



Kathy, Roy and I continued on past the Mangahao No 3 Reservoir into the Tararua Forest. It was surprising how muddy some sections were seeing as how dry it had been. We nearly missed the first lookout – thankfully Kathy spotted the trail leading to the Horowhenua Lookout showing Shannon, Horowhenua and Manawatu. It was a lovely spot to stop and get reception – only to find out that we were going back into lockdown! I am always amazed at how you much you can

escape when you go tramping. We enjoyed a longish lunch while soaking up the sun. Sadly, the sun also started to melt our chocolate so we had to rescue it by eating it all then and there. Once re-energized we continued on to the next lookout – Archey's Lookout. This one had good views of Kapiti Island, the South Island, Makahika Valey and Gladstone Road. The rest of the walk was lovely, crossing the Makahika stream multiple times. We finally came upon a beautiful clearing which would have made a marvelous campsite for the night.



Nearly at the end of our adventure, we came across a mother-daughter team doing the TA North Bound. They were on their 80<sup>th</sup> day walking. The mother was retired so must have been over 65 but didn't look it and the daughter had kids that had left home but didn't look a day over 40....We were so inspired by these 2 ladies walking in their dresses and packs. We stood and spoke with them for about 10 minutes but I wanted to sit by the fire with them and ask so many questions. What was their favorite part? What was their hardest part? What did they pack? What did they eat? Had it been difficult? What had they learned? Had they enjoyed it? How did they manage to take 6 months off to do it? So many more questions! I hope to be fit enough when I retire to be able to do the TA with one of my kids.



Lastly, I have learned that it's essential to stop for a well-earned ice cream on the way home. It always tastes so much better when you have worked hard for it. It was a wonderful 2 days spent with excellent company and I am ever so glad that I have joined the tramping club (finally!)



We were (led by) Roy Rolston, Liette Godin McKerras, Kathy Corner, Simon and Bronwyn Ferry.

**South Island Sojourn**  
**Report and pics: Grant Christian**  
**Participants: Grant Christian & Malcolm Leary**  
**30<sup>th</sup> January to 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**30 Jan – Mt Rolleston – 2275m - Arthur's Pass National Park**



*Approach to Rolleston*

Neither of us was as fit as usual, so we agreed to take a more relaxed approach to this trip. Our first objective was Mt Rolleston so we stayed at Arthur's Pass. We were on the Otira Valley track at 5:25 a.m. A long walk up the valley led us to a snowfield and the crampons went on for the last bit of the climb up to Goldney Ridge. Once on the ridge we had a mixture of snow and loose rock until we gained the low peak. We had great views from this point. From there we climbed down to the Crow Glacier and crossed to the rock ridge leading to the high peak.

We climbed on to the ridge but the presence of snow and water on the steep rock made us question the safety of this route, so we climbed back down to the glacier. We crossed the glacier and attempted to find a way across a crevasse leading to another possible route to the top. This was also unsuccessful, and we decided to turn back. I didn't enjoy the climb back down the loose rock on Goldney Ridge but made it down safely. We arrived back at the car around 7 p.m. A longish day for two people needing to get a little fitter.

### 1 Feb – Mt Wakelin – 2058m – Mt Cook National Park



*Approach to Wakelin*

Rather than tackle Nun's Veil immediately we thought another easier day would help us harden up. The climb to Wakelin is around 1360 metres up from the start point. The first 500 metres was steep but then you gain the ridge and the gain was more gradual. The ridge was over some interesting terrain with loose rock and boulders. As we approached Wakelin it looked as if the climb to the peak would be challenging but, once we were on the final approach, we found the route was within our ability. We had lunch on the peak and once again enjoyed the views. Going back down the route from the top again needed a cautious approach. The rest of the return journey was without incident, but we were both tired. We arrived back at the car after 12 hours.

### 3 to 5 Feb – The Nun's Veil - 2749m – Mt Cook National Park

Having attempted this peak last year we decided to forgo the long walk in and had a ten minute helicopter ride across the Tasman River and up Gorilla Stream to the bivvy site at 1600 metres where we stayed for the night before our climb. An early start in the dark found the valley cloaked in cloud which made navigation through the ice and loose rock even more difficult. We picked our way through some challenging terrain that eventually led to steeper slopes where we required crampons. Some of the snow had turned to hard ice and we had to be careful that our crampons were getting a secure grip. As we gained height we came out above the cloud to a clear morning and continued up to a large flat area a few hundred metres below the peak.

After a break we pushed on up the steeper slopes leading to the summit, acutely aware that if we slipped here we may not stop for a while. We got to a point slightly past where we had turned back last year and considered the options. We decided to head up the rock directly above us which led to the top of a ridge heading to the summit. On the other side of this ridge was a wide ledge that we thought might go to the summit. We climbed part-way down to the ledge but the final couple of metres to the ledge were too difficult. We returned to the ridge and tried to find a route along the top. It was potentially viable, but the narrow ridge and exposure was too much for me. We could've used the rope but a lack of experience using a rope on rock saw us turning back again. We climbed back down to the snow and headed back down. I studied the snow route around the bottom of a large rock buttress. It was very exposed and the snow and/or ice was very thin - you could see the rock under it. It seemed too risky: if you fell there was no stopping for a few hundred metres. Once again, we were short of our objective but, nevertheless, what a great place to be.



*Nun's Veil*

We made our way back down and spent another night in the bivvy, still enveloped in cloud. We walked out next morning and were joined by a flock of twelve kea. A few joined us when we stopped for a break. We had a boat ride across the Tasman glacier lake and walked the short track to the car park. Malcolm found a couple at the car park who happened to be going to the airfield so I got a ride back to my car.

### **6 Feb – Mt Edgar Thomson – 2379m – Mt Cook National Park.**

The route up Edgar Thomson is very close to Unwin Lodge where we were staying. It was a climb of 1670 metres from the start point. Although we had checked out where to go the day before, in the dark of early morning we had a little trouble finding the vehicle track. There was a straightforward route to the ridge up a stream bed and the route along the ridge was not technical. Higher up we sidled the steeper part of the ridge and got on to the snowfields. We continued up the snow to the top. We spent an hour on top enjoying the views and the weather and having lunch.

### **8 Feb – Mt Technical – 1879m – Lewis Pass**

Our last peak for the trip started through bush but as we emerged above the bush line conditions were unpleasant. The tops were cloaked in cloud and as we got higher the wind picked up. We stopped for 15 minutes to see if conditions improved but there was no change so we decided to head back. There were some glimmers of hope for improvement so we found a sheltered spot and waited for another 45 minutes. The cloud seemed to be lifting and the wind easing a little so we headed on to our objective. As we moved on, the cloud around the ridge lifted and we had a clear view of our route but Mt Technical was still covered in cloud.

We proceeded along the ridge and then into a large bowl at the top of the valley which led to another ridge that went up to the peak. We met a couple that had been most of the way to the peak but turned back because they thought there would be no view from the top. There was a lot of scrambling over rock along the ridge before we had to sidle to avoid the gnarly part. The sidle was over loose rock and scree. As we neared where we thought the peak should be, we still couldn't see where it was. As it is a high point on a ridge, we had to use the GPS to pinpoint where we should go. We climbed up a steep and difficult scree slope and eventually reached some rock to climb up. Once we gained the top we could see the trig and a large pole through the mist.



*The very top of Technical*

We spent a bit of time on top and at one point had a view of the roadway below. We had no problems on the return journey and were able to take a more direct route across the head of the valley and had an easy walk back out.

### **Platinum Mines**

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Report: Nicola Wallace**

**Trip Leader: Nicola Wallace**

Duncan and I left Milverton Park at 7.55am, after a few minutes wait to make sure no-one else turned up. 30 minutes later we were squeezing through the pipey thing in the Kahuterawa carpark, on a cloudy day that promised to be rain free. I chose Saturday, as the SE wind would keep the air nice and cool.

After a pleasant walk up the Sledge track, followed by a sweat up The Elevation, we stopped at a lookout and watched the Kahuts shuttle dropping MTBers off at the Summit Hub shelter. Soon after, we reached Toe Toe Junction, and I enjoyed a cup of "Feel New"

herbal tea. Yes please! A lone trumper arrived at the junction: Kyran, who it turns out had met Warren on a tramp in the past. Kyran was just on a morning walk, and hadn't brought lunch, but I invited him to join us on our walk, and he did.

We turned right from the junction, doing the longer side of the Toe Toe loop first. The conversation flowed as easily as the track, with its beautiful bush and the pretty Toe Toe flat. We got to the picnic table and start of the mines loop too early for lunch, so Kyran came round the loop with us. On the loop is one horizontal drive, three vertical shafts, and one fenced-off mine. I'd brought my head torch, and spotted cave wetas in some of the mines. In the vertical shafts, it was tempting to have a belly crawl along the horizontal part at the bottom, but the mud put me off.

Back at the picnic table, Duncan and I farewelled Kyran, before enjoying lunch to the beep-beep-beep of reversing trucks, and other machinery to our West. This is going to be wind turbine country, judging by the look of the earthworks in the distance, from the West around to the North. Probably next time I come back, turbines will be working. Aaaah progress.....

On the way back now, we called at Menedorffer's Platinum Mine 1875, a horizontal drive which is not on the loop with the other mines. There's always much water in this mine, and as with my last visit I declined to go in so I'd keep dry feet. We had a pleasant walk back, stopping for a couple of breaks. We got back to the car just after 2pm. Thanks for your company Duncan, and Kyran too, if you're lucky enough to be reading this newsletter.

**13<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**SK Tarn (Putara Road to Kiwi Ranch Road)  
Report and pics: Elly Arnst**

*Following our September SK Valleys, Katie and I tackled one of the more technical Tararua run routes along Dundas Ridge, Tarn Ridge, The Kings, Mt Holdsworth, then the Waiohine and Tauherenikau Valleys. We are the first women to complete this route in under 24 hours. Full route details can be found at <https://tararuafkt.wordpress.com/>*

It's always a bit of a weather risk when you schedule things weeks in advance, but with Katie having relocated to Wanaka we took the plunge and pre-booked in a window of 12 - 14 March for a Tarn SK attempt. The forecast was stable and showed a fine couple of days between two fronts, and with Saturday being the slightly better of the two, we decided that would be the day and set about organising the final logistics of accommodation and transport.

03:41 we depart an already full Putara car park and head into the dark; me with a lot less nervous anticipation than when we started the Valleys SK in September. We've both covered much of the route before and know we can cover the distance; the only real question is how long will it take? It would be pretty awesome if we could go sub-24 hours. I've worked out the splits for 23:30 and hope I'm right, because neither of us really fancy the prospect of a sprint finish from the Puffer to scrape under 24 with seconds to spare.

Up the first hill to Herepai and the rows of boots lined up outside indicate a full hut. It's just before 5am, so we quietly fill our soft flasks, pull on waterproof pants and head on up the hill. The route is a bit overgrown through this next section and the vegetation can get quite wet; I don't fancy getting out onto the tops soaked from the waist down. The higher we go, the windier it gets. It's a cold SE, but the forecast said it's meant to improve as the day goes on. It's a bit of a dark trudge up the hill, both of us eye the eastern horizon periodically, waiting for the first glimpses of daylight.

In front of me, Katie reaches a waratah. "We need to go that way", I call out and point right, recognising that we are on East Peak. We find the ground trail and head down into the saddle between East and West Peaks - a seemingly pointless 200m descent and re-ascent. We find ourselves too far to the right, check the GPS, shine the torches around, back track, and regain the correct trajectory. It's still dark and now it's claggy as well - making the headtorch lights reflect back at us. Wading through the last of the leatherwood, we start the climb up onto West Peak. The brief reprieve from the wind is gone, the cold gusts blowing us as we reach the top. I hate being cold. I want to go home. "Can you check the weather again?" I ask Katie as we try to shelter out of the worst of it. It still says the same - winds dropping after 10am. It's just ticked over 7am and the sky is lighter, albeit no sun due to the low cloud. "Do you want to go back?" asks Katie, not sounding like she wants to. "Nah it's ok, let's just keep moving and stay warm," I reply. Three hours 'til the wind drops - I can suffer that out. We have enough warm gear and my mind runs through the exit possibilities.

I have to be careful on the narrow rocky bits near Pukemoremore - time it between the gustier bits of wind so I don't get blown off mid-stride. Another down, another up and we're on Mt Dundas. I recognise this bit and change direction slightly, making sure we head down the correct ridge. I'm pretty good at remembering bits of track and committing mental copies of maps to my memory. Pays off in the clag.

Suddenly the dark green of Arete Hut emerges from the fog. It's 10:03. Good news is we're only two minutes behind our scheduled 6 hours 20 minutes. The wind still blows. We duck inside for a quick snack and I put on an extra top layer. I'm now wearing a t-shirt, arm warmers, a thermal top, a windproof jacket, a rain jacket, gloves, buff, and goretex overpants. The new NIWA forecast predicted minus1 at Arete Hut; I reckon that was a pretty good prediction. We head out, no discussion of bailing. Should be less than two hours to Tarn Ridge Hut, and the weather will be better by

then, right? I'm just really grateful it isn't raining.



*First Photo of the Day at the top of Waiohine Pinnacles*

At the top of Pinnacle Spur, we pause for the first photo of the day, before heading off into unknown territory; neither of us have covered this section of Tarn Ridge. The Waiohine Pinnacles are fun and straightforward, the rock mostly nice and solid underfoot - completely different to the Ruahines! We traverse carefully though, what with the wind and the clag, there would be no quick rescue should either of us fall. Down onto the flatter section of the ridge we can start picking up the pace again, jogging past tarns as we repeatedly check our nav. We pause for a more substantial refuel at the bottom of the little dip before Tarn Ridge Hut. Battling the wind and the extra concentration required to make sure we stay on route, results in us both being a bit down on nutrition. I know I'm definitely on the back foot and, usually a lover of hills, I comment to Katie that, "I think I forgot to pack my uphill legs".



*Constantly checking the nav in the clagging conditions*

At 12:00 the weather still isn't matching the forecast. I wonder how trying to keep warm and pushing into a head wind for hours will impact the Valleys section of our run. I struggle with the climb up to Girdlestone, where we are treated to about three minutes of sunshine. I

feel a bit nauseous, but shove down another gel and sip at the Tailwind. I'm pretty much over it and ready to go home - I think that once we get to Powell I'll head out to Holdsworth and Katie can go to Kaitoke on her own. I can't face the thought of another nine hours down the valleys. I keep these thoughts to myself though - we can barely hear each other talk over the wind anyway.

On the south side of Girdlestone the raincoat finally comes off. It must be warming up a bit, but I'm still wearing three layers. The wind continues to blow, the clouds scud around us, the forecast is still wrong! This is obviously NOT one of the 80 clear days in the Tararuas! We cross Adkin, barely even registering it and wiggle our way along the ridge to the Kings. Human shapes emerge from the cloud and it's two trampers who ask us to confirm their location, which we agree later is mildly concerning. These are not good conditions to be unsure of where you are!

Before too long we're on South King and we can really start moving faster. Past the Baldy turn off and towards the Broken Axe Pinnacles, where we meet another two trampers. No one is keen to stop and chat today. We had said we'd probably go directly over the Pinnacles, but when we get there we decide that in these conditions the sidle will probably be a safer option. We're through quickly and onto McGregor. The cloud starts to break up and patches of blue sky emerge. I can spot Dorset Ridge Hut on the other side of the valley, and then McGregor Biv below.

Running towards Angle Knob I finally start to feel more human; I am loving this. I have stopped thinking about bailing. We sidle under the Knob and turn towards Jumbo. Run, run, run - this feels amazing! We change direction again and are onto the poled route of the Jumbo-Holdsworth circuit. The waterproof pants and windproof finally come off before the climb onto Mt Holdsworth and we begin the steady descent to Powell Hut, eyeing the Waiohine valley spread out far below us.



*Running down to Powell Hut*

It's my first time visiting the new hut. I spot a group of people on the deck as I drop down the final section. The hut is very full and very loud - at such odds from being in our own little bubbles for the past 14 hours. We take a few minutes to eat and sort gear for the valleys. We're just over an hour ahead of schedule at this point, so it's nice not to have too much time pressure.

We just cruise down the hill, feeling like we're going much faster than we did on the Valleys SK (but ironically, we're not). Being a bit ahead on time means that we manage to make it through a quiet Totara Flats Hut, across a very busy Totara Flats, and almost to the junction at the bottom of Cone Saddle before the headlamps are permanently on. Groups of campers seem a little surprised to see us, but whoop and call out encouragement as we run past their campfires.

I don't mind Cone Saddle. It's not that steep, you just need to be careful with following the track, which is definitely overgrown in some parts, and a bit open and ill-defined from the rest of the surrounds in others. We briefly wander off, but quickly check ourselves and re-route. After that we have no trouble - apart from wondering repeatedly "Are we nearly at the junction yet?"

A dog barks as we run past Cone Hut at 22:32. It feels like we're on the home straight now. Possums run all over the place, up trees, across the track, even right in front of Katie's feet! On and on we trot. We run the easy stuff and fast walk anything up or really rooty. Swing bridge, Marchant Stream, Smith Creek Shelter. Two hours, 50 minutes to get out - easy! We might

even make it out under 23 hours. “My watch alarm is still set for 02:30,” says Katie, “let’s get out before that goes off”.

The Dobson Loop Track seems to drag on forever, until finally we reach the steps of the Puffer. I’m not dreading it this time either. The few hundred metres of vert seems to go quickly and we can spot the lights of the YMCA below us. Nearly there! I’m in front again and trot off down the hill. The clay is a little

slippery, but we don’t have to slow down too much. Katie seems to be keeping up, so I keep running. Down, down, down. We blast down the final steps, past the highwire course and the farm fence appears in front of us. We whoop loudly, Jean (Beaumont) whoops back, running in, finishing strong in 22:36 and still a full 12 minutes before Katie’s alarm goes off.

### Trip card – latest information on trips for May to June 2021

May				
1-2	Ruapehu Crater from Tukino	F&T	Grant Christian	021 117 6921
1 or 2 (BWD)	Maharara Crossing	M	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
8-9	Triangle Hut	F	Richard Lockett	323 0948
8 or 9	Navigation day	All	Chris Tuffley	359 2530
15-16	Howlett's crossing	F	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
Sun 16	Pukenaena/Arawaru	M	Dave Grant	328 7788
22-23	Iron Gate Hut		Janet Wilson	329 4722
22 or 23				
29-30	Northern Circuit - Tongariro National Park	M	Grant Christian	021 117 6921
29 or 30				
June				
5-7	<b>Queens Brithday:</b> Motutapu	All	Janet Wilson	329 4722
5 or 6				
12-13	Waiopehu Hut	M	Nicola Wallace	021 209 0720
12 or 13				
19-20	Forks Hut		Graham Peters	
19 or 20 (BWD)	Toka	M	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
26-27	Mid-winter get-together	All		
26 or 27				



## PNTMC Newsletter

### April 2021

- Keeping it Local: The Lower Ruahine Huts and High Points Challenge
- Trip reports
- Upcoming events

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the newsletter editor, via the club website  
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Send PNTMC  
PO Box 1217  
Palmerston North

#### PNTMC Contacts

President	Bruce van Brunt	328 4761
Vice President	Anne Lawrence	357 1695
Secretary	Janet Wilson	329 4722
Treasurer	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
Webmasters	Peter Wiles	358 6894
	Martin Lawrence	357 1695
Membership Enquiries	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
Gear Custodian	Warren Wheeler	356 1998
Newsletter Editor	Anne Lawrence	357 1695
Trip Co-ordinators	Janet Wilson	329 4722
	Anne Lawrence	357 1695
Snowcraft Programme	Dieter Stalman	027 450 9460