



**Palmerston North
Tramping and Mountaineering Club**

www.pntmc.org.nz

PO Box 1217, Palmerston North

Newsletter June 2022



A quick photo opportunity at Arawaru trig (767m)...before the clag lifted.

Pic: Warren Wheeler

COVID-19 Update

Covid Update: The Committee has agreed that under Orange Alert level, there is no longer any requirement for vaccination passes for club nights, and/or club trips.

Safe practices of mask wearing, hand-washing and physical distancing are recommended.

See DOC website for more details regarding huts and trip planning.

Club Nights

Club nights are generally held on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Quakers Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North. Doors open 7.15pm for meeting start at 7.30pm. All welcome.

9 June 2022

Ivory Lake or Bust

Emma Gregg

Many people have been there, more people have not. Epic tales and awe inspiring photos have been shared by those that have succeeded. More often, however, adventures to Ivory Lake are unsuccessful. These tales are less often shared, although the hut books along the way are chockablock with tales of woe and despair. This is my tale of my on-going journey to Ivory Lake and the lessons that it has taught me.

30 June 2022

Czech Friendship Trail Plus

Monika Coles

Trip to Julian Alps in Slovenia - climbing Triglav (2864 m) using via ferrata gear. Train ride through Austria to the Czech Republic - Cesky Krumlov with its 13th century castle - walking through Šumava National Park or Bohemian Forest National Park - walking the Polish–Czech Friendship Trail in Krkonoše or The Giant Mountains - going up the highest mountain of the Czech Republic - Sněžka (1603m) - finishing the trip in Prague.

Upcoming Trips

4 - 6 June 2022 Queen's Birthday Coastal Classic - Ohope All Janet Wilson 329 4722

Our annual Coastal Classic trip this year heads to Ohope Beach in the sunny Bay of Plenty. Robyn and Warren will be our hosts at Robyn's beach house. Plenty to do in the area including a visit to Moutohora (Whale) Island. We will head up there on the Friday. Most people who have indicated an interest in this trip already are making the most of the long weekend and will be travelling home slowly and taking an extended break. If you are interested in joining this trip please let me know asap.

5 June (Sun) 2022

Blue Range Hut

E/M

Woody Lee

021 0444 552

A trip to the eastern Tararuas between Pukaha Mt Bruce and Masterton. We could have lunch at the picnic table overlooking the northern tops and then return the same way. An afternoon break at the Mt Bruce café is an option. Leave from Milverton Park at 7.30 am.

11 - 12 June 2022

Cattle Ridge

M/F

Chris Tuffley

359 2530

From Putara Roadend behind Eketahuna this Tararua trip takes the track to Roaring Stag, across the Ruamahanga swing bridge and up to the bushline to the Cattle Ridge Hut.

12 June 2022

Mangahao Dams

MTB

Richard Lockett

323 0948

Enjoy riding your bike for 17 km up this windy gravel road to the upper reservoir of the Mangahao Power Scheme, deep in the Tararua Ranges behind Shannon. The road provides public access to the three reservoirs feeding water to the small Mangahao Powerstation, located some 6km behind Shannon. Return the same way. Depart Milverton Park 7.30am.

18 - 19 June 2022

Iron Gate Hut

M

Janet Wilson

329 4722

A classic Ruahine tramp to the lovely Iron Gate Hut. This trip is suitable for beginner overnight trampers and I am happy to tramp in at a pace that suits everyone. With a bit of luck we will see the local pair of whio as they fly in in the evening. For those keen to do some work when we get there, I am sure there is some firewood to carry to a drier location – come along and make it a team effort. Depart PN 7.30am or Petersons Rd Apiti 9am. Anyone wanting to can stay Friday night in our road end "shed".

19 June 2022 Sledge Track Loop E Warren Wheeler 356 1998

A nice easy loop walk, close to Palmy. Beautiful lowland forest along the Kahuterawa Stream all the way to Quartz Creek. We backtrack to cross the swing bridge and up through the Arapuke Mountain Bike park and back to the carpark. Lunch stop with views north over Palmerston North to Ruapehu. Depart Milverton Park 8.00am.

24 - 26 June 2022 Mid Winter Matariki All Janet Wilson 329 4722

Let's embrace Matariki - Ngā Mata o te Ariki - with a 2 or 3 night trip to the east coast. If we are lucky enough to have a clear night we will see Pleiades rise. I plan to book accommodation soon so if you are interested in coming along for our annual mid winter trip then let me know asap so I can find somewhere suitable. At this early stage we will be going to Riversdale. There is sure to be plenty to do in the area. A social trip that can be as active as we choose to make it.

26 June 2022 Easy Stoat Adventure E Anthony Behrens 06 358 5517

Fiona and Anthony are keen to take club members over the hill from the Kashmir Road carpark and down to Awatere Hut for a cuppa before heading downstream to service Manaaki Ruahine's new double set stoat traps. It's a midwinter river trip on a river that is usually pretty easy, but it will be weather dependent. Be prepared to get wet and cold feet. If the river is up, the trip will be shortened to a visit to the hut with a rebait happening on the 25 traps that run there from the carpark. All the tools and bait will be sorted by us. Bring a thermos/billy and warm clothes.

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	Other Grades:
Medium (M):	5-6 hrs	Family (Fam)
Fit (F):	about 8 hrs	Technical skills (T)
Fitness Essential (FE):	over 8 hrs	

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, over-trousers, 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 as there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone Martin Lawrence 357 1695 or Graeme Richards 021 149 8267

New Members

Welcome to Colleen Ruru from Feilding.

Notices

DOC has completed the new deck and handrails to the Umutoi Stream bridge.



Applications are now open for Snowcraft, which is due to be held on two weekends in July.

SC1 - basic skills in alpine conditions;
SC2 - mountain climbing skills using ropes.

Costs are kept to a minimum to encourage participation. For details see our website and contact Dieter Stalman 027 450 9460.

Trip Reports

Easter 15-18th April 2022

Te Araroa Section Hike - Levin to Otaki Forks

By Roy Rolston

Third time lucky was my motto for the weekend as twice before I was forced to a Plan B because of unsuitable weather. Leading up to the weekend the general forecast was really good for most of the country but a closer look at the mountain forecast in the Tararuas presented a mixed bag. Friday and Monday were looking really good but not so good in the middle. That represents the two most important days travelling along the main range and parts of along open tops. I was initially keen to do the section NOBO (northbound) but a day out the forecast was consistent with showers and strong winds increasing during Saturday which meant we would be climbing up over Mt Crawford, the highest point, that day so it made sense to switch it around and start at the other end and travel SOBO instead as the forecast was consistently saying Sunday was going to be a much better day.

Come Friday morning Blair and I set off from PN and prearranged to meet Ernie and his wife Annemarie at Shannon at 7am. We both then drove down to Otaki Forks to the new Road end where the road is closed just before a major slump and slip that has cut off access to Otaki Forks Campground and Road end proper. Leaving my Corolla there for Monday, Annemarie our taxi driver delivered us all back to Poads Road and the start of our adventure. We headed off in good spirits around 9am, our destination Te Matawai Hut and our first night stop. However we weren't the only ones, a group of four departed just ahead of us and a couple others passed by as we said our goodbyes to Annemarie. Then another group was assembling just as we left. Yes being Easter I knew it was going to be a popular weekend and was a bit worried that the huts could be full especially at our second night stop at the much smaller Nichols Hut, a well known pinch point on the TA. To that end I asked each of us to pack a sleeping mat and I carried my two person tent also as another backup.

Following the TA trail proper led us up the Gable End track along the ridge of same name to the high point of Richards Knob. It's mostly a long steady climb with a few steeper sections here and there. About half way up we met a small group of three coming down, an older couple and a young woman. A quick chat we learnt the young woman had come from Bluff and the older couple had been with her only for a few days. On parting and moving up the track a bit, Blair turned to me and said I am sure that was Peter Hillary, Sir Ed's son of course. I too thought he looked familiar as I just recently read a very good article about Peter Hillary and his sons in North and South Magazine. We vowed to check the hut book when we arrived at Te Matawai to hopefully confirm our thoughts.

Reaching Richards Knob was a welcome way point and the fine clear day afforded magnificent views over the towering peaks ahead and the long main range we were to travel along the next day. Descending down to the Dora Saddle is quite a drop and took some time and a little bit demoralizing after climbing so high to Richards Knob. Then up again to the junction of Yeates 500 Track down to South Ohau and further on to Te Matawai Hut arriving there around 5.30pm. It had taken us longer than expected as we were taking our time with plenty of stops, but we were still pretty tired when we finally arrived. Before getting there we were passed by Jen, a young woman TA trekker who left the road 3 hours after us after first walking to Poads Road end from Levin itself. At the hut we got to know her more and learnt that she had just recently completed the South Island part of the TA and was now doing parts of the North Island as she could while having to return to her day job. Jen ended up being our hut companion each night over the weekend and she presented herself as a seasoned trekker, fit and strong, and carrying the minimum she had worked out to be necessary. She said she weighed everything and aimed to keep her pack weight to just 7kgs. She presented to me as a very nice woman with a pleasant personality and a real inspiration in regard to the younger generation taking on and conquering the trail.

Arriving at the hut, there was already at least a dozen people there, but at least there were still bunks available so we made ourselves at home quickly before others arrived. And arrive they did, some well after dark. With so many at the hut the question was where was everybody heading tomorrow? So we made a point of asking and to our surprise two groups of at least four were heading to Carkeek Hut. That was interesting as I knew that hut was only a 6 bunker and not often visited. We made our intentions clear that we were doing the TA and heading for Nichols Hut, another six bunker and worked out that there were around three others including Jen who were heading there also. Then there was Susie. She arrived at the hut with another group of three via Waiopahu Hut after a fourth decided to bail out and stay there instead. After hearing our plans she asked Ernie if she could join us all the way to Otaki Forks. With a spare seat in my car to return her back to Poads Road we all agreed she was welcome to join us. So the tally now was around 7 heading to Nichols Hut. Well, I thought that's not too bad, just one needed to bunk on the floor or something and hoping that no others were there already. It was however still the middle of the roar and one guy we met heading out with a couple of small antlers attached to his pack after a week at Te Matawai said he had never seen so many helicopters flying around dropping off hunters, Hmmm!!

The bunk room was full when we finally turned in and the remaining set about sleeping where ever they could. A sea of bodies was a sight to behold next morning when I woke early just after dawn. And yes, checking the hut book it was Peter Hillary alright. He signed himself as only Peter without the Hillary. Prob so to keep a low profile I guess. I did kick myself however when we met him that I didn't speak up, as it would have been good to acknowledge to him that I had the privilege to climb Tappy with his son Alex, and to say what a great guy he was.

It was around 8 am when Ernie, Blair and I were ready to head off. The weather was as forecasted foggy and light rain had fallen earlier. We were waiting for Susie and when I checked in with her I found her just finishing off packing her stuff. Willing to wait, she was adamant that we go on ahead and she would us catch up. After making sure she knew where to go we set off but I was still uncomfortable doing so. While I had met her on a larger day trip previously, I didn't really know her but she did present herself as experienced and looked pretty fit as well so I let it pass. As it turned out she did catch up just before we reached Pukematawai Peak which was a relief. Susie did indeed join us from there on for the rest of the

weekend, however she did add an interesting dynamic to our group. Of note for me as leader was one of responsibility which proved to be a challenge at times.

As we scaled the last few metres to reach the peak the wind and now light rain gathered intensity and we were quick to stop and get out and put on warmer and waterproof clothing before taking a moment for a photo op at the signpost.



For me standing on Pukematawai Peak was a real milestone as I have an old photo of my Dad on the same peak 77 years earlier in snow in much less adequate clothing than we would have and expect to wear today. Dad and his brother along with other mates hunted this area extensively at that time during the 1940s. The main incentive was to gather up deer skins to sell as there was a good market for them during the war years.

With the wind chill increasing it wasn't a pleasant place to hang around so we quickly headed off following the main range south and on to our next destination stop Dracophyllum Biv. After an hour or so we were off the tops and back into the bush which was much more sheltered and made for better going. The track follows the main range through amazing goblin forest and eventually dracophyllum trees become more noticeable. Along this section we caught up and passed a guy on his own heading the same way. It was about midday when we finally arrived at the small bivy. Almost immediately we all piled into the small space to get out of the weather and to tuck in to some food and a hot brew. Not long after, the guy who we had passed earlier arrived too and we managed to find space to jam another body in as well. After staying about an hour we got back into it, braving the chilly air outside the hut. Thinking of numbers staying at our next night stop, Nichols Hut, the lone guy was happy to stay put for the night. But there was another guy on his own we knew about that left Te Matawai that morning ahead of us too, but as opposed to our TA Jen who was about hour ahead of us as per the hut book, there was no entry regarding him which was a bit of mystery.

We continued south west along the main range in fog and light rain at times, the wind quite strong when the track along the ridge emerges from the bush periodically to scale over a low high point. Leading the troops up to one such rise I saw ahead another high point not far ahead in the fog. Presuming that had to be the way I took a little short cut and headed in that direction, figuring I would pick up the ground trail

again just ahead, but there didn't seem to be one and I couldn't see any more marker poles either that were spread out on the open tussock sections. Moving on, it must be here somewhere but no, all we saw was a lot of deer sign. Susie, a keen hunter, noted that as well and amongst the confusion Blair got out his phone out and found out where we were. Clearly we weren't on the trail but had indeed scaled a high point just off the main range. If you look up the map you will see where I mean. Clearly my little shortcut had led the team up the garden path. We agreed to backtrack and found a cairn on top of a crest I didn't see because of my shortcut, but Susie said she saw it and then I saw a pole nearby. Then over the crest, located down a steep drop in the ridge that I would never have thought was the way to go from further away, I could see the next pole. Arhhh! with poor visibility and a dog leg in the trail, the high point ahead fooled me and I had to eat humble pie especially to Susie when we finally got back on the trail.

Back in the bush we tramped on up and down along the ridge following a well marked track and ground trail. Susie complained she was getting cold and was keen to pick up the pace. She moved to the front and pretty soon she was out of sight ahead of us. The three of us plodded on, seeming to take ages to make real progress towards the hut, as Blair's phone indicated at periodic intervals, and thinking at any moment we would surely see Susie ahead waiting for us. Ernie seemed to be trucking along pretty well but I was feeling pretty worn out. I knew I had some energy gels in my pack so I stopped to fish them out. Blair said he was feeling similar so I handed him a gel as well and we enjoyed the gooey sweet flavoured sludge together, then munched on some food as well.

Setting off again feeling more energized we thought we were about an hour from the hut. Soon we were finally ascending a long section to a high point we knew was the last before we would find the hut not far beyond. With still no sign of Susie we at last came to a sign at the bottom of a saddle that pointed down off the ridge to Nichols Hut that we could just see in the fog. We arrived at the hut around 5.30pm hoping the fire was going and there was a bed available after a long day trekking in fairly challenging conditions. While somewhat dismayed the fire was not going, we were relieved to see Susie had already made herself at home talking to our TA girl Jen. I also noted that there were two other guys there as well. With us that



made seven in a reasonably roomy six bunk hut so pretty happy about that and hoping now no one else turns up. We quickly got organized and found some dry warm clothes before enjoying a hot brew and food before settling in for the night.

As forecasted, day 3 dawned fine and clear but it was still quite windy and cold. We set off on the trail around 8am, an hour or so after Jen, heading for Waitewaewae Hut via our highest point Mt Crawford that was just ahead of us. The trek to Mt Crawford is all on open tops and very exposed but it started with another descent into a saddle before it climbed steadily in a bit of a curve around to the peak. We stopped several times to take photos as the scenery was fantastic saving the best for Mt Crawford itself. Taking our time, we moved on a few hundred metres to meet the turnoff from the main range down to Shoulder Knob connecting with the bush track down to the Otaki River. It was at this point that I had been before, but travelling in the opposite direction south to Anderson Memorial Hut. It was a few years ago with my Old

Dog mates doing a Tararua Crossing that time in foggy conditions. For Blair and Susie it was all new ground but we all took in the clear views, so much so that we decided to park up for a lunch stop by a weather

station mast on Shoulder Knob. It was so good to be out of the wind and taking in some warm sunshine - I think it's fair to say we all got in some shuteye for a bit.

Down off the tops and into the bush once again, the track led us down the long ridge to the bottom. The weather improved greatly as we descended and when we arrived at the hut around mid afternoon it was dead calm, clear and sunny and pleasantly warm. Jen our TA girl was the only person there, relaxing reading a book on her bunk. We made ourselves at home and had plenty of choices where to sleep in the large 20 bunker hut. I was aware the hut had just recently had a spruce up and it showed. It certainly was looking pretty fresh, clean and smart.

As the afternoon closed in so did the temperature, so we got the fire going and took advantage of the large drying rack to dry out some clothes from the day before. Not long before dark our lone trekker that we left to stay at Dracophyllum Biv arrived but there was no sign whatsoever of the other lone TA trekker that was supposed to be coming the same way. We could only hope he had changed his mind and gone somewhere else or in the bad weather yesterday may have turned back. While I didn't talk to him much I was a bit worried about him as he was from the Manawatu too.

It was a real mystery as to what happened to him. In true Te Araroa spirit I get that when you on the trail you look out for each other and in that sense the magic of walking the trail comes alive. For the short time we were on the trail and mixing it with others I can see great long lasting connections would be made if you were walking the trail together for weeks on end.

Another night and another day, our last day out to Otaki Forks and along the closed road to my car at the fenced off road end. As very accurately forecasted it was a brilliant day which contributed to a very pleasant days tramp. As previously Jen got a head start on us and depending upon her plan we may see her again at Parawai Lodge at Otaki Forks. It was still the Roar and occasionally we would hear the odd stag bellow out. We were up above the hut, trekking across the area known as the plateau, when we heard a roar not far away. Susie got excited and gave a few roars in return. Her roars were her own version and I couldn't help thinking she definitely needed a deeper voice. We moved further along the track, Susie taking the lead about 40 or so metres ahead. Next thing I heard a loud huff. Clearly, as I saw it, we had spooked the stag and he was off. We caught up to Susie and she claimed she saw the stag about 30 metres off the track. She said it bolted off quickly but she had time to see it had a good set of antlers and was drooling in the fact that this time she didn't have her rifle with her.

I had heard that the Waitewaewae Track was pretty rough with a lot of windfall down on it and was very interested to see for myself as we moved on to where it was reported to be a major problem. Yes, there was some windfall, one large one in particular, but it was nowhere as bad as I imagined.



We made good time in excellent conditions and called into Parawai Lodge to bag it and to really affirm that we had completed the trail to Otaki Forks. We didn't find Jen there however. We learnt later from Susie when she was half way back to wellington that she had ditched her plan to walk through to Waikanae and walked out to the road end instead and was lucky enough to get a lift into Otaki. The only obstacle left for us now was an hour or so walk along the road and to cross over a massive road slip and slump. On reaching it we found clearly no one was using the designated alternative sidle track. What we found instead was as a well worn footpath over

it including some cut steps and some railing in place that someone had clearly spent a lot of time installing.

Back at the car and it was homeward bound but first we needed to drop Susie off at her car at Poads Road. That done our TA adventure was complete and in reflection from my point of view, it was more challenging than I thought. This Tararua section truly deserves its fullest respect and not to be undertaken lightly. In really bad weather it would be very unpleasant and even dangerous but in good weather the views are magnificent, as we were lucky to experience for ourselves. It was tough in places especially day 2 because of the poor weather but the sense of “knocking the bastard off” was for me a great sense of achievement and now I can truly say what’s it really like to anybody considering to walk this section of the Te Araroa trail.

Thanks to Blair, Ernie and later Susie for joining me and making it happen.

1 May 2022

Pinnacle Ridge

Report by Ella Parkinson

Six of us headed off from Milverton Park at 7:30am on a lovely, slightly chilly Sunday morning. It was a bit of long drive to the Holdsworth carpark, but in one of the cars Warren kept us entertained with stories of his more precarious trips into the Tararuas. We set off at 9:20am from the carpark, walking 5 minutes to the first bridge, where instead of crossing we took the informal track that sidles along the true left of Atiwhakatu stream. It was easy going until we reached the top of the slip that overlooks Donnelly flats. We stopped here for morning tea and to admire the view.

From here we climbed steadily up to Pinnacle (887m), following the clear and very nice track. There was a



large clearing at the highpoint, with incredible views of the main range and blue range in the distance. Both Powell and Jumbo huts were visible as orange and white squares at the edge of the bushline.



We had our first lunch at Pinnacle, and had a look at the map to see our route to get to Atiwhakatu hut. As we left this stop, we found a memorial to Ron Brown, who had cut and maintained this track.

We followed the track which took us down back into the bush and across the saddle onto Pinnacle ridge proper. This section along the ridge was really beautiful, with varied flora, including some classic goblin forest trees. The turn off the ridge to walk down the spur to the Atiwhakatu stream was marked by a

handmade sign, telling us it would take 40 minutes to get to the stream. Sure enough, we made it in 40, to the minute.

Most of us got our feet wet crossing the stream, then joined up with the main track, arriving at Atiwhakatu hut 5 minutes later. We had a second lunch at the hut, before strolling back along the main track to the carpark. We were back at the cars at 4:30pm, and made it back to Palmy just after 6pm. It was an excellent trip, with varied and stunning terrain, views, and great company. Thanks to Warren for leading the trip and sharing your knowledge with us.

Trip participants were Warren Wheeler, Robyn, Chris & Leigh, Verity Elder, and Ella Parkinson.

8 May 2022

Arawaru Loop

Report: Robyn Boocock Pics: Monika Coles

Five set out on a cool Autumn morning at 0815 from the Sledge Track carpark. Our goal was to follow the Sledge Track, pass the turnoff to the Platinum Mines along to Quartz Creek and scramble up to Awarua peak via a track less travelled, make our way along the tops and return via the Otangane Loop.

We made good time allowing for retracing our steps occasionally to find the track, regular stops for refreshments and bird counting from the rear. Our vision at the top was initially limited but our spirits were raised as the cloud lifted providing great views of Palmy, distant hills and wind turbines.

Proceeding along the ridge toward the Otangane Loop we walked on carpets of green blooms dropped by coprosma, through a low growing forest of horopito draped thickly with moss on every branch on either side of the track. It was very atmospheric; stories were shared.



The day sped by; we met few others until we reached the descent toward the Sledge Track. We arrived back at the cars at 1600hrs having had a marvellous day in the bush. Good fun.

We were Stephen Legg (leader), Kirsten Olsen, Monika Coles, Warren Wheeler & Robyn Boocock.

27 April to 1 May 2022

Poronui to Kuripapango

Report: Grant Christian

I worked out that this trip would take me to 10 huts that I hadn't visited before and to save returning over the same ground my wife agreed to drop me at Poronui and collect me, four days later, at Kuripapango. With a fine forecast for the next several days I left the car park at Poronui Station late Wednesday morning. The route is easy walking along farm roads to start and later turns to easy farm tracks. Before leaving the farm I saw numerous wild Sika deer wandering around. They were not fenced off from the neighbouring forest park but I presume they were not under the same hunting pressure.

Poronui Hut is a DOC hut that is not open to the public. I did a short side track to have a close look before continuing my journey. Oamaru Hut was my next stop. It is a 12 bunk hut looking out over the Oamaru River. I stopped briefly to fill in the hut book and talk to a hunter before continuing along a track that follows the river. It wasn't always easy to follow the track, but I knew if I stayed by the river I would soon find the track again. I was concerned when, after walking for about 15 minutes without seeing a track marker, that I could have gone up a side stream. I checked my GPS and found that it was a side stream, so had to back track and I eventually found the marked track



Later in the day I passed a nice looking campsite in the bush but decided I should continue on a bit further. Eventually I saw a nice grassy patch by the river and left the track to investigate. It was the perfect spot, close to the river and a nice flat spot for my tent. After getting my tent set up I heard the whistling of a whio. There was a pair of them living about 20 metres away.

Thursday morning I continued along the river track before climbing a little to get into the Ngaruroro River valley.



At this point the valley is a broad expanse of open tussock country. It was enjoyable travel with great views into the distance. I descended to the river and crossed to head for Boyd Hut. The hut was tucked behind a spur so I didn't see it until I got quite close. It had good views looking south down the valley. From Boyd I headed south, walking along the airfield with its nicely cut grass before trying to follow tracks through the scrub and tussock that would lead back down to the river and a crossing. I then had an uphill section to Tussock Hut. At Tussock Hut there was a family of hunters and a couple of their friends. They were packing up their huge pile of gear getting ready for a helicopter pickup. I continued

on to Harkness Hut, again walking through an open tussock valley. The valley narrowed and got steeper. I found that I had lost the track and a check of the GPS showed I now needed to be walking down the river. From that point I had numerous river crossings until I reached the track that led up to Harkness Hut. I stayed the night at Harkness, a comfortable six bunk hut.

Friday morning was a side trip to Te Pukeohikarua Hut, a climb of 460m to 1420m. I took a day pack and was back before lunch. I had great views on top and could see Ruapehu in the distance. I collected the rest of my gear from Harkness and continued on down the river to Ngaawaparua Hut which was my bed for the night. I lit a fire and hung up my socks to dry. I thought how nice it would be to put on dry socks in the morning and the good thing was I had no river crossings tomorrow. My feet could stay semi-dry (my boots would still be damp).

After a nice cosy night in the hut, alone again, I enjoyed putting on those dry socks before heading to the bridge, just past the hut. On reaching the river I looked downstream for the bridge, then upstream, hmm I thought to myself. I hadn't gone much further when I found some old bridge anchors. The hazards of using a map from the 1980s to plan a trip. I headed down to the river and waded in, so much for dry socks for the day. The next section of track crosses private land. Although it follows a track it is not maintained or well marked so progress was slower. On the tops I chatted with a woman from Hastings who had flown in with her husband. He was hunting while she was out enjoying a walk. My next stop was Otutu Hut and then down into the valley and back up the other side, eventually reaching the high tops again. In the distance I could see Manson Hut which I was heading to. It was another fine day with great views all around. Just before reaching Manson Hut there was a newish DOC sign to Kiwi Mouth Hut, my final destination for the day. The sign said 3 ½ hours to Kiwi Mouth Hut. I had worked out it would be about 2 hours and I considered staying at Manson instead so that I didn't have to walk in the dark. Once at Manson

I had another look at my map and notes. It was only 5.5k to Kiwi Mouth and a descent of 600 metres. I thought my estimate was realistic so carried on, reaching Kiwi Mouth in 1 hour 50.

Kiwi Mouth Hut was an old iron hut with a large open fire, ideal for letting the cold air in. It got quite cold that night and I put a headband over my nose to keep it warm. In the morning there was good frost outside and I checked the inside temperature on my altimeter: 1.8°. My wet boots and socks were in the porch so I didn't enjoy putting them on. From this point I had intended on walking out to Kuripapango via the river and Cameron Hut. The river is meant to be easy enough to walk down and I had checked before leaving that the flow was quite low. It is not a small river and I didn't know how deep some of the river crossings were. There were also a lot of good sized boulders to walk over alongside the river, which can be tiring. I also thought the water would be getting quite cold.



I decided to take the high route via Kiwi Saddle Hut. It was a big climb back to the tops and the hut. I had visited this hut before in the Kaweka mountain races, so it wasn't a new hut for my hut bagging list.

From the hut it was an easy walk along the ridge to Kuripapango Peak and then an 800 metre descent to Kuripapango campground where I was to be collected. I arrived at the campground around 1:30 p.m.

I had found the tramp tiring, despite walking an average of only six hours per day. I did walk quite quickly and some of it was hard terrain. I calculated the total distance as about 80 km. I had increased my tally of DOC huts visited to 221.



PNTMC Newsletter June 2022

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- Trip reports: Easter TA Poads Rod to Otaki Forks, Pinnacle Ridge-Atiwhakatu, Arawaru Loop
- Kaweka Hut Bagging Epic

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