



Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club

Newsletter September 2026

www.pntmc.org.nz / [pntmc on facebook](#)

c/- Society of Friends, 227 College St, PN

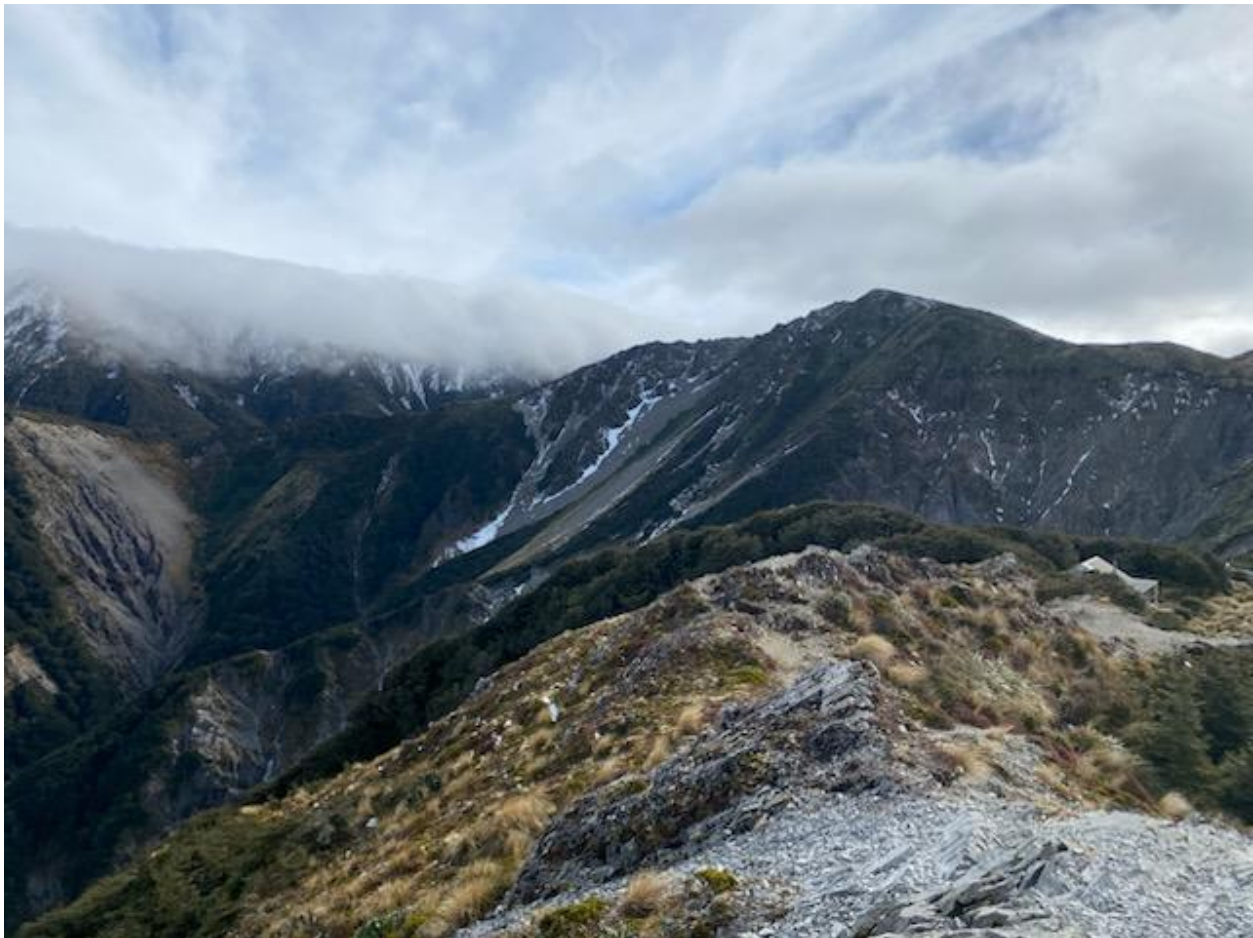


Photo by Kim Vardon – Ruahine Tops from the back of Sunrise Hut

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Winter into Spring

From the Editor - Verity Elder

Winter is the time of year when mountaineers come into their own and trampers pack extra weight to keep warm - extra food, heavier sleep system, 4 season tent, extra layers. Winter 2026 also includes a '[Conservation Amendment Bill](#)' which passed its first reading in Parliament on May 12th.

Conservation of the environment and outdoor sports such as mountaineering and tramping have a symbiotic relationship. These activities depend on healthy, well-preserved natural environments, while responsible outdoor recreation can encourage people to appreciate, respect, and protect the landscapes they enjoy. By following sustainable tramping and mountaineering ethics, and respecting wildlife and fragile ecosystems, we will help ensure that these environments remain accessible and thriving for future generations. When our government proposes a bill which may dramatically change the primary purpose of The Department of Conservation (DOC) from conservation to economic development, the voice we uphold and the questions we ask as trampers and mountaineers are of critical importance.

On the 30th of June a number of club members, myself included, attended a public meeting on 'The Conservation Amendment Bill.' All ages and a wide representation of outdoor interests (individuals and groups) filled the theatre at The Globe. I spotted some of my students, and some of the most pressing questions came from members of the PNC Youth Council, highlighting the fundamental need to preserve our ecosystems for future generations. Expecting DOC to prioritise conservation (it's in the name after all) was at the heart of public voice that day.

I follow DOC on social media and, like so many, delight in the feel-good stories about the work this government department achieves. Kākapō chicks successfully hatched, DOC workers tracking kiwi in Fiordland, or a new roof going onto Oturere Hut. Shortly following the deadline for submissions on the bill DOC released their latest video on YouTube titled "[Nature Looks Different From Here.](#)" Listening to the message in the video while stunning vistas of Aotearoa sweep across the screen, I seriously thought about the amendment bill. I encourage you to do the same as you close read the video transcript below.

Video transcript:

*"There's no nature quite like our nature. It's different. That's because 85 million years ago we said 'later' to the rest of the world. We headed south to grow. When you grow up out here, you grow up different. With creatures, plants, land and ideas found nowhere else on earth. We've built our lives with nature, our industries, our identity. Now our futures are bound together. But the thing that makes us different is under threat. **To stay different, we need to do different.** Not once, but always. Always be listening. **Always be adapting.** Always being naturing. We need to show the world that nature is not one thing. It's everything. **We are part of it, not above it.** In Aotearoa, nature has a voice. **Let's let everyone see nature looks different from here.**"* Source: <https://www.youtube.com/@docgovtnz>

What can you do?

Directly question politicians: What do you mean by that? Adapt how? What future industry? Whose Identify? Do different how? What is your definition of *naturing* (please explain)?

Make a difference by:

Joining Forest and Bird – for a reasonable annual donation you support one of Aotearoa's most active environmental groups and you get a neat magazine!

Record notable flora and fauna observations in hut books – adding to a vital on-going narrative of data about national, forest and conservation parks.

The bill is currently in *select committee* and an interim report presented on the 3rd of September can be read [here](#).

Club Nights

Club nights are 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.

Thu 10th September

Interclub Quiz

Janet Wilson

This year it is PNTMC's turn to host the annual quiz between MUAC, MTSC and PNTMC for the coveted Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy Trophy...and prizes including chocolate for sure. Test your knowledge and learn lots of interesting tramping related stuff. Come along and help make up a team.

Wed 30th September

Interclub Photo Competition

Chris Tuffley

This year's interclub photo competition is being hosted by MUAC. Held at Massey. Time and venue to be confirmed. Any questions, please contact Chris

Upcoming Trips

Sun 13th September Sheridan Creek *Medium*

Richard Lockett
06 323 0948

Rescheduled from 29 March. Otaki Forks was the centre of a thriving timber industry. We will wade across the Waiotauru River to explore the old tramway and other logging relics up this side creek. Depart 8.00am Milverton Park.

Sat 19th – Sun 20th September Turoa Girdlestone Climbing Technicals *Technical*

Grant Christian
021 117 6921

Best weather day. A classic day out on the south side of Mt Ruapehu.

Sun 26th September Levin Trig by Moonlight *Easy*

Kirstie Priddle
027 779 0738

We will go up the side track switchbacks, with an amazing view from the top. Bring something to share for supper at the top. Back down the logging road. Bring headlamp and warm clothes. Meet 6pm Milverton Park.

Sat 26th September - Sun 27th September Te Matawai Hut *Medium-Fit*

Janet Wilson
0273418945

A classic Tararua trip. We will head up the Gable End track, over Richards Knob, down to Butcher Saddle and back up the hill to Te Matawai Hut. Yes, it's on the Te Araroa but it's a bit early in the season for TA walkers to be going through that part of the Tararuas in large numbers. We will return either via Waiopahu Hut or South Ohau. Departing PN 7.30am. Contact Janet 0273418945 by Wednesday prior to trip.

Trips beyond September can be viewed on the club website [‘trip card.’](#)

Trip Grading - Trip grades depend on many factors, including weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trampler 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
BWD = Best weather day of a weekend	

Other Grades:
- Family (Fam)
- Technical skills (T)
- Inst (Instruction)

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, there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone Bruce van Brunt 06 328 4761 or Verity Elder 0212601885

Notices

Temporary change to gear custodian: Graeme Curwin is looking after the gear while Peter Chambers is away. Graeme's contact details are ph 0273912759. Email graemecurwin@gmail.com

No Man's Road access via Big Hill Station:

DOC must issue a permit for use of the easement to cross Big Hill Station and drive into the Ruahine Forest Park on No Man's Road

DOC has an agreement with the owner of Big Hill Station for limited access to cross the farm. 4WD is required. As part of the agreement, DOC must issue a permit to anyone using the easement.

2026/27 Access Season

- Season opens: 6 November 2026
- Season closes: 30 July 2027
- Access through Big Hill Station is closed from August to October each year for farming operations.

How to Apply:

Permits will be allocated through a ballot process due to limited availability.

- Applications open 7 August 2026.
- Applications close at 9.30am on 21 September 2026.
- Applications must be submitted using the online application form.
- Successful applicants will be allocated a permit week and sent permit information by email.
- Applicants who are not allocated a permit may be contacted if a permit becomes available due to a cancellation.

Apply online here: [Access to No Man's Road via Big Hill Station: Ruahine Forest Park](#)

2027 Wild Ruahine" calendar is now available

This lovely locally produced limited edition calendar features photos taken in the Ruahines and is created by club member and supporter Anthony Behrens. All proceeds help support the trapping work volunteers (many of them club members) do to help protect our endangered Whio. The price is \$20.00 each. – see Janet at club nights or email her at jwilson@inspire.net.nz.



Trip Reports

Branch Road Walkway – (2nd August).

Report and photos by Janet Wilson

On a coolish early August morning a group of 6 of us enjoyed a walk up (and back down) Branch Road Walkway, the historic route that leads from Pohangina township to Ridge Road.

It's a pleasant walk that (mostly) climbs steadily for nearly 5km starting at the car park at the Pohangina Rec Reserve. The track is in good condition underfoot with only 1 slightly tricky part where a large tree had fallen recently. About halfway up you reach the more open farmland section. Here the young pine trees are growing rapidly and it will certainly be a different walk in a few years' time. We got to Ridge Rd in good time and enjoyed a late morning tea or early "first lunch". I was hoping for good views of the snowy Ruahine tops but sadly the views north are now largely obscured by bigger pine trees.

We headed back down, aiming to be at the local "County Fayre" tearooms and gallery not too long after it opened at 1pm. Here we enjoyed scones with jam and cream, coffee and milkshakes. It was a very pleasant way to end the day - good conversation and company. Unfortunately, I don't have any photos from this trip. We were Janet (leader), Adam, Emma, Sarah, Fletcher, Graham.

Sunrise Hut – Sun, Snow and Seven Happy Trampers – (9th August).

Report and photos by Kim Vardon

I was looking forward to returning to Sunrise Hut. It had been 8 years since I had tramped there with my children and two other families for an overnight stay. This time there was the anticipation of snow, and I had packed my shiny new microspikes in readiness. The forecasts from YR and NIWA were not optimistic, but as we sped along the state highway the snowcapped Ruahine Range kept our hopes high.

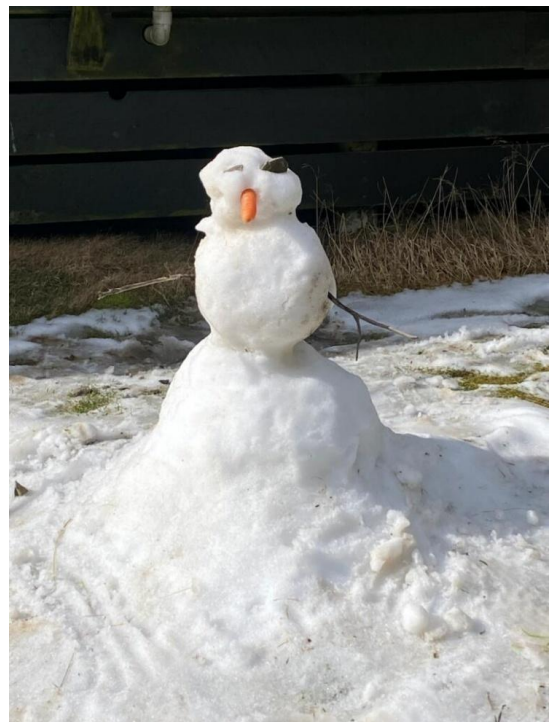


After a long drive of nearly two hours, we arrived at the North Block Road end car park. The wind was bitter, so we quickly added extra layers and were relieved to reach the shelter of the bush after the short walk across farmland. After a few hundred metres along the Sunrise Track, we made a brief detour to Triple X Hut to inspect its recent makeover, which received a big thumbs-up from Anne and Janet.

The steady 800-metre climb to Sunrise Hut is a very pleasant one. The magnificent beech forest provides excellent protection from the weather, and the track is well graded and maintained throughout. We passed several groups heading down after a night at the hut. As we approached the final kilometre, patches of snow and ice on the track required careful footing. Recovering from a heavy cold, I found the last kilometre hard, and Martin did a great job of keeping me motivated. It was a relief to emerge onto the open tops with the hut just a short distance away.

We enjoyed lunch in a sunny, sheltered spot on the deck, taking in magnificent views across the Hawke's Bay plains. Conditions on the tops were far better than forecast, with none of the expected low visibility and light rain.

After lunch there was time for a short recce on the tops. Adam, Anne and I headed to the rocky outcrop to the left of the hut for panoramic views and a reminder of just how rugged and unforgiving the Ruahines are! Adam and Anne pointed to various routes they had previously tramped. We then joined the others on Armstrong Saddle where Sarah had been treated to a small taste of ridge walking. Behind the hut, we were amused to discover an intact snowman sheltered from the sun.



On the descent, we encountered a large group of adults and children heading up for the night. The children appeared to be experiencing varying levels of enthusiasm for the adventure!

On the way home, we stopped in the historic village of Ongaonga for a hot drink and a well-earned treat. The community has done a marvellous job restoring the village's buildings and artefacts. A particular highlight for me was the bright orange former NZFS "Broom Hut", relocated from the Ruahine Range. With no insulation, we imagined how cold overnight stays there must have been.

It was a great day out, and we were all grateful for the much better weather than expected.

We were Anne (leader), Kim, Adam, Janet, June, Martin and Sarah.