Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club

Newsletter November 2026

www.pntmc.org.nz / pntmc_on_facebook
c/- Society of Friends, 227 College St, PN



Photo by Warren Wheeler – Tongariro Loop

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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 12th November **Back to France** **Fiona Burleigh**
Unfinished business trekking in France.

Thu 26th November **BYO Pics** **Warren Wheeler**
Come along and enjoy this Show and Tell of highlights from trips that Members's have been on in the last six months or so.

Thu 10th December **End of Year BBQ**
Our annual end of year BBQ at Ashhurst Domain from 6.15pm until dusk. BYO food and drink and a $5 gift for the Secret Santa Bag.

Upcoming Trips

Sat 7th November Tunupo *Medium* **Anne Lawrence**
0274504212

Saturday or Sunday depending on best weather day. We leave cars at the Table Flat carpark and head down the track over farmland and into the Ruahine Forest Park. Before reaching Alice Nash Heritage Lodge, we turn right at the sign 'Tunipo 3 hours'. After a couple of hours of climbing, we'll reach the leatherwood and eventually, looming up ahead, Tunupo stands majestically in the background - that's if we have clear day. It doesn't look that far away, but it takes another 45 minutes to reach the top. It's not a difficult walk but it does have some fairly steep bits. On a good day, there are good views so you can play 'name that peak'. On most days the wind can be pretty strong up top so come prepared.

Sat 14th November Akatarawas - Orange Hut to Wainui Peak *Medium-Fit* **Adam Matich**
022 358 8062

Best Weather Day. A range seldom visited by the club, we will visit Orange Hut and "bush-push" thru to Wainui Peak for a fun day out exploring.

Sun 15th November Mountain House Loop *Easy-Medium* **Kirstie Priddle**
027 779 0738

So good we're doing it again, this time in Spring. A delightful and varied trip. From Holdsworth carpark we take the Atiwhakatu Track along the river, then head up River Ridge track to find the old Mountain House site, ending up at the Mountain House Shelter on the Powell Hut Track. We loop back down via the Gentle Annie Track and Holdsworth Lookout Platform. Depart Milverton Park 7.30am.

Sat 21st November - Sun 22nd November Sayers Hut *Medium* **Richard Lockett**
06 323 0948

Recently upgraded, this is one of the oldest huts in the Tararua Forest Park, across the Waiohine River from Totara Flats Hut.

Sun 29th November Te Ekaou & Forks Huts *Easy* **Blair Petersen**
027 600 4263

Join Blair on this easy trip to Te Ekaou and Forks Huts, two Ruahine huts that the club rarely visits. Just 5 minutes north of Totara Reserve. He has arranged access with the farm owner, so you'll be able to drive most of the way to the bush line, where Te Ekaou is. It's then not far to Forks. Numbers are limited, be in quick to reserve your place! https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/manawatu-whanganui/places/ruahine-forest-park/things-to-do/huts/te-ekaou-hut/

Sat 21st November - Sun 22nd November Sayers Hut *Medium* **Richard Lockett**
06 323 0948

Recently upgraded, this is one of the oldest huts in the Tararua Forest Park, across the Waiohine River from Totara Flats Hut.

Trips beyond November can be viewed on the club website 'trip card.'

Trip Grading - Trip grades depend on many factors, including weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient tramper 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	- Inst (Instruction)

BWD = Best weather day of a weekend

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

Horizons whanau challenge day

Horizons Regional Council is inviting families, friends and community members to discover Tōtara Reserve in a whole new way at The Great Tōtara Reserve Whānau Challenge on Saturday 7 November 2026, from 10.30am to 1.30pm.

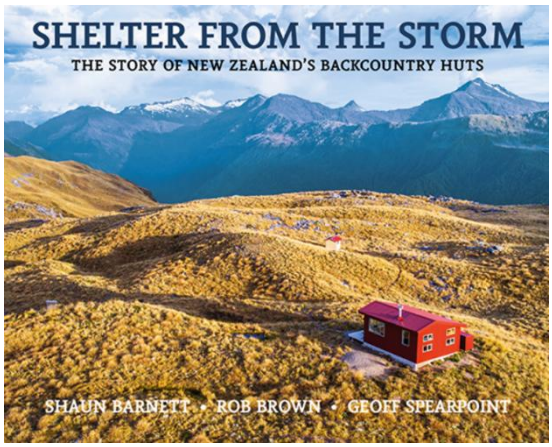


New Challenge – PNTMC Shelter from the Storm Hut bagging Challenge

PNTMC Shelter from the Storm Hut Bagging Challenge launched at the start of October, with hut visits counted from 1 July this year.

Shelter from the Storm by Shaun Barnett, Rob Brown, and Geoff Spearpoint was gifted to PNTMC to celebrate its 60th Jubilee. This wonderful book was presented to the club by Sue Pither on 11 July 2026 in loving memory of her husband, Lawson Pither, who was Patron of the club from 1974 to 2010. Sue became patron of the club in 2011.
The book is kept in PNTMC's library shelf in the club rooms at Society of Friends Hall.

In tribute to Sue's generous gift, we are launching the 'Shelter from the Storm Hut Bagging Challenge'. The main aim of this Challenge is for club members collectively to visit as many as possible of the huts featured in the book. Visits will count from the start of this financial year (1 July 2026). Note: a visit is a visit however short or long it is.



In addition to collectively ticking off as many huts as possible, we have a trophy to be awarded annually to the club member who gets the most first visits to huts featured in the book that financial year (from 1 July to 30 June). A first visit is defined as the first time that person has visited a particular hut since 1 July 2026.

View the list or map of huts included in Shelter in the Storm.
View the tally of huts visited by PNTMC members.

Shelter From The Storm Hut Bagging Challenge

October 2026 Challenge update here.

Founding Member Roger Clarke

Tribute by Warren Wheeler

It is with deep sadness that we note that, on Sunday 25 October 2026, founding member Roger Clarke of Feilding passed away aged 79 years. He died unexpectedly after 7 weeks in Palmerston North Hospital "cutting his own track" as his daughter Fiona Sutton told me.

Roger was only 19 years old in February 1967, when 22 keen members signed the PNTMC Constitution to become an Incorporated Society, a formality a year after the club was initially formed. He has not been a club member for many years but was keen to talk about the early days when Doug Strachan contacted him in 2016 about those in the photo of the first club trip to Field Hut on 6 February 1966.

Roger thought it was a great trip, “none of the younger ones among us really knew what life had in store for us, back then it was all a great adventure”. It was the first of many escapades.

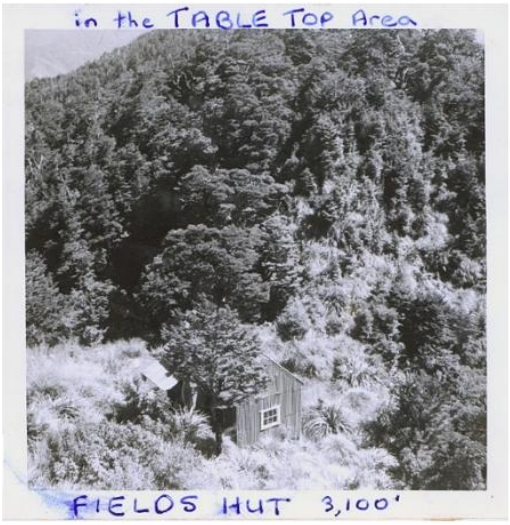
Roger reminisces, “the old saying was – ‘Why do we want to get to the top of the ridge?’- ‘To See the Other Side!!!’ Always a blast, covered in sweat & foliage, sometimes like drowned rats, on we toiled - always looking out for each other. Was a great Club Spirit back in those days”.



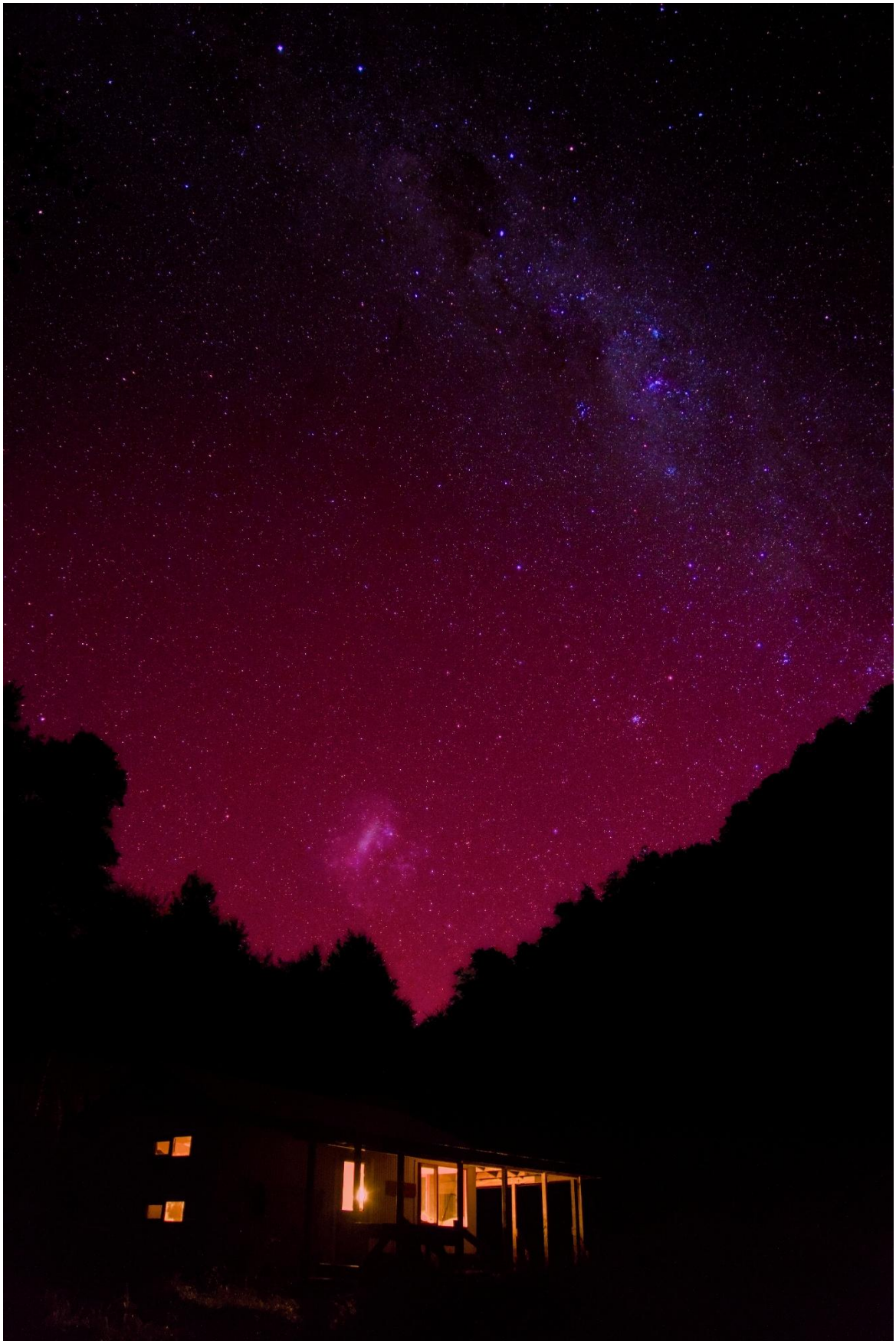
Roger Clarke with.... Roger's pack



Field Hut Feb 1966



You can read more in Doug's article "Field Hut Revisited" in PNTMC News 3 April 2020 .



2026 PNTMC Photo Competition winner - Photo by Chris Tuffley – Long Exposure Section
- Aurora over Iron Gate -

Trip Reports

Sheridan Creek Revisited – (20th September).

Report and Photos by Richard Lockett

I can't remember when my first visit up Sheridan Creek was, but it would have been in the early 2000's. Why would you bother I hear you ask, you are going to get wet to well above the knee all going well if not maybe totally wet having to cross the Waiotauru River twice and walk up and down sections of Sheridan Creek itself, not to mention a few scratches or worse if not careful! Some of us like to visit these back country places because its good fun on a nice day, its challenging, you and I own it and there's an item of interest up the creek in the form of a logging tramway and a Vulcan Foundry Steam Hauler.

Sheridan Creek is part of the Otaki River catchment and drains the valley which lies between the Rae and Judd Ridges on the western side of the Tararua Range between Otaki and Waikanae before discharging its flow into the Waiotauru River which then flows into the Otaki River at the Otaki Forks confluence.

We drove to the Otaki Forks campsite which is located on a terrace above the Waiotauru River and set off in bright sunshine along the Waiotauru track which heads south on the true left of the river to an old saw milling site complete with boiler, horizontal steam engine and the front wheel assembly off a Marshall portable engine, the remains of which are laying in the Waiotauru River slowly being pushed down stream with each flood event. At this point we crossed the river, first accessing the depth and flow and picking the best spot to cross, knee deep before back tracking on the true right to pick up the creek.



My memory was the tramway was on the true left of the creek but Blair liked the look of the other side and found himself on the tramway so we changed sides and set off again. The terrace on which the tram sits has been washed away in places so you are in and out of the creek before crossing to the other side and negotiating a slippery rock face complete with a handy installed rope to lower yourself down into the creek again and onto the tramway before the final climb to the hauler site.



A tramway up these creeks was always prone to being destroyed by the next flood and is probably why this one was abandoned in 1936 with the prevailing economic conditions of the day making repairs prohibitive. The Vulcan hauler was still resting under its protective canopy built by the Dept of Conservation back in 2005, along with sections of the remaining steel rails reattached to new sleepers to replicate a section of tramway. Club member Chris Saunders volunteered his time to assist with this project back then and had the task brushing oil onto the Vulcan hauler Ennis to help preserve the steel components of the hauler from the harsh bush environment. This tramway supplied logs to the Tararua Timber Company's mill from 1929 to 1936, and locomotive power was a Wellington built Nattrass rail tractor based around a Fordson F model.

After a look over the hauler with discussion about its inner workings and operation we retraced our journey back down the creek stopping for lunch on a sunny terrace and then following newish orange triangle track markers back to the Waiotauru River which seemed to be deeper than before (snow melt?), but just doable, and up to the camp. Lovely trip!

We were Richard (leader), Anne, Martin, and Blair.

Moonshine Valley Jaunt – (10th October).

Report and Photos by Barry Scott

On Saturday 10th October 14 club members joined me for a jaunt around the two PNCC reserves in Moonshine Valley that I have been looking after for around 30 years. We first explored the eastern section of Moonshine reserve following a track I have around the banks of the stream that flows through the reserve and my property. Our first stop was to inspect one of three AT220 automatic resetting traps I have set up in the valley, and to explain how they work. It is strategically placed at the junction of 4 properties, where the track leaves the stream to head up a steep hill to the eastern boundary, and has been a 'hot spot' for catching predators. The lower section of this hill strip was once gorse with a few natives but has now totally self-regenerated to native with just minor intervention from some enrichment planting. The top section of the track passes under some magnificent old tawa and hinau trees and as you exit the bush at the top there is a cluster of *Melicope simplex* which can be found at just one other site in the valley. From the ridge we were able to look across a strip of land that has recently been purchased by PNCC to connect Polson Hill with Moonshine Valley and will eventually be part of a walkway through Moonshine Valley and across to Pacific Drive. The area on the eastern side of the ridge was once mainly gorse, blackberry and grass but during lockdown I cleared the blackberry and started planting in natives so is now well on the way to being restored.



We then back tracked down the steep hill, crossed the stream and followed the true left of the stream to emerge on Moonshine Valley Road. The track through the western section of the reserve on the other side of the road involves crossing a series of plank bridges over what was once a narrow ditch but has now become a wide and deeply cut ephemeral stream bed from successive flooding events. From the valley floor we headed up 'lockdown ridge' at the head of the reserve and through a cutting in the blackberry to emerge on the tops where you get great views across the city and to the windmills on the range behind. After a short walk along the grass flats, we clambered over a fence to take a 'short cut' across the upper section of Moonshine Gully. While traversing the gully we cleared the recently set Timms traps of three dead possums. The steepness of the ridge out of this gully surprised a few in the group but that added to the adventure. This ridge and adjacent gully have a nice stand of kanuka and is regenerating well. After exiting the bush at the top it was across the grass flats, through another gap in the blackberry, and down Monument gully – so named by Moonshine property developer Richard Parker - to emerge by the ponds in Tutukiwi reserve. This name arises from the presence of the gorgeous little greenhood orchid (*Pterostylis banksii*) that grows on the banks of the stream through the reserve.



At this point, five of the party left us while the remaining 10 of us headed into the bush to complete a loop around upper Tutukiwi reserve. Just before crossing the stream, we all stopped to view a big, friendly Tuna / Long Finned Eel that hangs out at this crossing point. The route from here follows a 'secateur cut' trap line comprised of around 25 Timms and 25 DOC200 traps. Crossing the stream takes you into the remnant podocarp forest – comprised of large tawa, kahikatea, hinau and totara – that defines this reserve.





A freshwater survey by a Horizons team, earlier this year found tuna / longfin eel, giant kōkopu, common bully, upland bully, kōura and kākahi to be present in this stream, highlighting the importance of protecting this waterway. A short distance along the true right of the stream we crossed again to follow the tributary that flows from the upper section of the reserve. Just after crossing the stream at this junction I have another AT220 resetting trap. Beneath it was a dead possum, the fourth caught at this spot in the last 3 months. Monitoring this and other AT220 sites with a Browning Dark Ops camera shows that these are also good sites to catch feral cats using live cage traps as the cats visit to feed on dead rats and possums.

The route up this tributary involved a series of scrambles up and down banks, and in and out of the stream, which everyone seemed to enjoy. About half-way up we reached the junction of two further tributaries, one flowing in from the east and the other from the west. One of the delights of looking after this reserve is finding species of plants to add to my Moonshine flora list. Despite passing this junction many times to clear traps it was not until relatively recently I noticed a lovely clump of *Adiantum cunninghamii* growing on the side of the track at this junction. The track from here does a loop to the east, along the back boundary fence, and then down the western tributary to return to this junction.

Looping out to the east we worked our way back and forth across the stream, through a boggy section to our next observation point – a tongue of green waste that 'flows' down the bank into the reserve from a neighbor's property. After finding and clearing an infestation of Tradescantia and Arum lily from this waste strip, I have kept a watch on this spot to ensure these, and other weeds, do not become established in this upper section of the reserve. A special feature of this tributary is the presence of layers of 'coal-like' sandstone on the base of
the stream which often sparkles in the sunlight that trickles through the forest canopy.



The track emerges from the forest to hit the boundary fence between the reserve and a farm at the back, which stretches back up into the foothills. After traversing along this boundary fence through the blackberry and gorse that infests this margin we reached the point where the western tributary enters the reserve. It was here two months ago that five cattle breached a poorly maintained 'wooden drop down' and slowly worked their way down through the reserve to emerge in the paddock by the car park. Consequently, a lot of the undergrowth in this upper tributary has been eaten out and will take some time to recover. Breaches like this are also bad news for the freshwater life in the stream as cattle do like to crap into streams. Hopefully this problem is now resolved.

To complete the loop we followed this tributary back to the junction where we started the loop. All the willows in this upper section of the reserve have been drilled and poisoned with herbicide. Old Man's

Beard is also close to being eliminated from the reserve through a concerted 'cut-n-paste' effort over many years.

To complete our walk through the reserve we headed east at the first stream junction following another trapline. Here the group got to see some recently emerged Tutukiwi / Greenhood Orchids as well as some grand specimens of rimu, hinau, tawa and kahikatea. This section of the track emerges on a second driveway that cuts through the reserve to another private property. The final stopping point was the bridge on this driveway to watch a large tuna swimming under the bridge. We then followed the road back to my place for tea, coffee and some biscuits.

We were:
Barry Scott (leader), Kirstie Priddle, Adele Singleton, Sally Hewson, David and Bell Pollard, Anne and Martin Lawrence, Richard Lockett, Elena Harjes, Catherine Farquar, Warren and Robin Wheeler, Harley Betts, and Janet Wilson.

Addendum
For those interested in the natural world of these two Moonshine Reserves have a look at my iNaturalist project where I am recording all species.

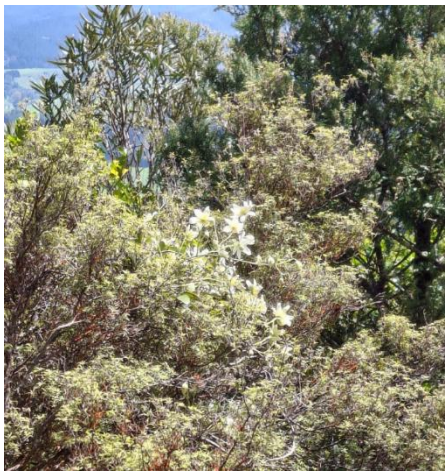
No1 Line Pohangina – (18th October).

Report and Photos by Kirstie Priddle



Today we went up No1 line in the Pohangina area to a look out for lunch, return the same way we came. Three of us met at Ashhurt at 8.40 am since we were coming from different towns. We carpooled from there to the start of the track and off we went at 9.15.

Soon we were in awe of a giant Rimu tree owning its patch of bush. The track started off a gentle grade and gradually became steep, challenging in places, followed by a few patches of boggy mud to navigate. We had glimpses of views through gaps in the trees a couple of times to reward us for our efforts, and then soon enough we were at the lookout at 11.15 where we stopped for lunch. It seems the clouds were over the Manawatu area but not over the Ruahines today, with the best weather and views for miles.



Just after 12pm we carefully made our way back down. I'd left my walking sticks at home today, but I was very thankful to Blair for cutting me a stick with his handy dandy saw, to help with balance on the way back down the steep bits. I saw a couple of native clematis plants in the canopy after finding petals on the ground to remind me to look up! We decided to finish the tramp via the trig track past a massive grand old Rata tree. There was also a tall wire fence around an area of bush with a built-in wooden ladder. We had a discussion and we came up with the conclusion that maybe this was a bush survey area. We went past the trig then we arrived at a bench seat with a plaque in memory of Raewyn with an amazing view of a fully snow-covered Mt Ruapehu shining bright white in the sun. Not far to the car from here, then back to Ashhurst to my car. Overall, we had an amazing day, highly recommend this track, am intending to do this one again.

We were Kirstie (Leader), Blair and Shannon.

Tongariro-Mangatepopo Loop – (18th October).

Report and photos by Warren Wheeler.

You can't change the weather
But you can change whether.
So, we waited out the week of drizzle and snow
Staying warm at home until it was good to go.
With gentle breeze and sunny blue sky
There was only three of us, we wondered why.

Mangatepopo Road end, burnt landscape stark
We hoped there would be a place to park.
We didn't need to worry, it was plain to see
Despite how busy the Crossing can be
The carpark still had a place for us
A week before the four-hour parking fuss.

With only patchy snow along our route
We left ice axe and crampons in the boot
Ambling off around 9.45,
Feeling happy to be alive
But saddened by the blackened landscape
On either side and up ahead, an awful fate.

Thankfully the fire didn't reach Mangatepopo Hut
But the track to the Chateau was damaged and shut.
From there the Crossing track is fine
But we soon turned off on the left to climb
Up to the Armchair, as it's known by a few
A good place to stop and admire the view.

From there the ridge is easy enough
Well-trodden until the final puff
Lunch at nicely sheltered spot
Summit rocks a selfie stop
Craters, peaks and far away
Glorious, marvellous, what a day.

Down along the ridge to join the Crossing track
Then a look at Red Crater before heading back
A little loose and slippery heading steeply down
A photographer unsteady, wearing a frown
Three girls heading up, will they make it by dark
It's still a long way, out of the Park.

South Crater so flat, a relief and delight
Across to the edge, our end in sight
Far down the valley, far down below
A nice easy track without any snow
Just lots of steps, with a sign or two
Explaining it's more than a lovely view.

Another hour down the valley back
Striding along boardwalk and track
Hi to the hiker heading up for sunset
Not a cloud in the sky, he'll be upset
But on such a grand day, who can complain
We're fully enriched, no longer the same.

But still, there's the blackened "bombsite"
Where predators soar in flight
For prey with no shelter, an easy meal.
But still, for us there's just a dusty road, not ideal
And then, a lucky hitchhiker sweating for a ride
A good turn back to the cars they left behind.

We were Warren Wheeler (leader), Lynette Price and Adam Matich.








Shelter From the Storm Challenge

October 2026 update

Report by Marty Lawrence

We are off with a great start, six huts on the board. Special mention must go to Heather Knox who recorded 3 huts for us a mere 2 hours after the email went out!







Roaring Stag - Martin and Anne Lawrence



Rangiwahia Hut - Chris Millar



Old Waihohonu Hut - Martin Lawrence



Field Hut - Heather Knox



Blue Range Hut - Heather Knox



Sunrise Hut - Heather Knox

View the tally of huts visited by PNTMC members.

Shelter From The Storm Hut Bagging Challenge