



the Mouth'n'Ear



Newsletter of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club



Negotiating the Waiohine Pinnacles (Tararua Northern Crossing)

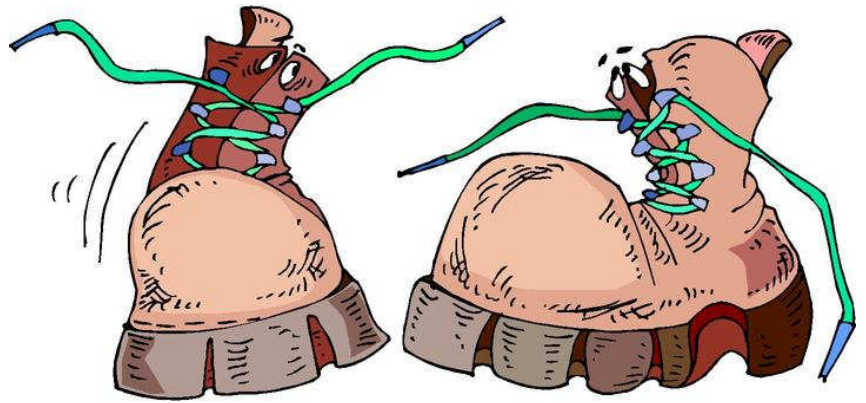
In this March issue: Kaitoke to Tutuwai Hut (Tararua FP); Notice of AGM & Nomination Form.

Deadline April Newsletter: 25 March

Send contributions to newsletter@wtmc.org.nz, or PO Box 5068 Wellington.

Track Talk

with Amanda Wells -
Chief Guide



One great thing about Jonathon Kennett's recently published *Adventure Guide to the Tararuas* is that it makes you see your favourite (or at least closest) mountains in a new light. As well as suggestions for tops epics, there are significant chapters on gorge and tubing trips, along with mountain running possibilities. One tramp that he waxes somewhat lyrical about is the Northern Crossing, which must have inspired me to put it on the current schedule.

When we attempted it the weekend before last, Wellington had baked in heat all week and the weekend looked similarly warm. Instead of the usual gale-force wind and rain risks, I was thinking about heat exhaustion and sufficient water. Another great thing about the Kennett book is its promotion of public transport possibilities; something we embraced to make the logistics of travelling from Levin to Masterton more simple. Catching the train to Levin is brilliant – no traffic jam and you arrive at 7. Our group of five were under a fly at the Ohau river by 9pm, ready for a 6am start.

More than 2000m of cumulative climb and 10 hours later, we were at Tarn Ridge Hut. The day had been overcast, a pleasant surprise given the high temperatures. But the happy moment of arrival was marred slightly on discovering that the back door's glass had been totally smashed, perhaps two weeks previously judging by the log book. The hut was pretty wet and unappetising; the mattresses mouldy and dripping. Some energy was mustered to create a makeshift door cover with a groundsheet, tape and an old door found under the hut by the intrepid Illona. We made a mental note to check on Monday that DOC knew of the damage. Unfortunately the wind that blew up in the night meant sleep interrupted by frequent flapping sounds (and also by the arrival of Steve and Jenny at 9pm!).

Next morning raincoats and overtrousers accompanied us over Mitre, with the clag clearing as we descended to the hut and out over the Barra track to the Pines (with even the water-adverse enjoying a swim along the way). To my pleasant surprise, the prebooked taxi turned up dead on time and whisked us to our train. Public transport is more expensive (about \$55 in total each for the two train and two taxi journeys) but definitely worth exploring for crossing trips, as is the *Adventure Guide* if you're not convinced by the Tararua's majestic possibilities.

I'll be looking at that book again as we start to plan the next schedule. During March, I'm after suggestions of road ends that you want to visit over Winter (May - August). You don't need to specify trips; just nominate a road end you think has potential. I'll put those road ends into a skeleton schedule, and we'll be holding a trip planning night on Wednesday 23 March at 5.30pm before club night to figure out the trips themselves. If you feel like adding a bit more excitement and variety to winter, this is your chance! Just email ideas to chiefguide@wtmc.org.nz - keep an eye on our website forum for more details.

It's also a good time of year to start thinking about building your skill base. Consider recommending our Bushcraft course (11-13 March) to potential tramping friends or family, and think about our Leadership course (1-3 April) for everything you ever wanted to know about leading trips. There's also our Outdoor First Aid course (15-17 April), run by the best first aid instructor I have ever encountered; places are limited and you can sign up at club. And the Mountain Safety Council is running a River Safety course on 10 April – this is an entry level course with basic river crossing training, including the chance to practice being swept away in a relatively controlled environment (more details can be found at www.mountainsafety.org.nz – click on Wellington).

Membership Report

Thanks to all those who have renewed your membership already. If you have still to renew please do so asap and before the end of March. See last months newsletter for payment details and fees (can be accessed through the website).

I would like to step down from doing the membership officer role at the upcoming AGM - it is an interesting and rewarding position so please get in touch with me or another committee member if you are interested in taking over!

If you have any questions about renewing your membership, joining the club or taking the Membership position over please come and find me on a club night or email me on membership@wtmc.org.nz

Jenny
WTMC Membership Officer

A Pleasant River Trip

Kaitoke to Tutuwai Hut – February 12 & 13

by Paul Christoffel
photo by WeiMin Ren



Having a spare weekend in mid-February, I decided to sign up for a club trip. There were two trips going from the Kaitoke road end, meaning a Saturday morning start (yay!). The Medium trip appeared to involve a long slog along the Marchant Ridge, which I've never done, having been deterred by its reputation. The other was an Easy-Medium to Tutuwai Hut, up the Tauherenikau River, on what promised to be a fine weekend. No contest.

I did a Tutuwai hut trip with the club 10 years ago, when it was graded 'easy'. However, since then a new swing bridge has been built not far from Smiths Creek shelter after the old bridge, several kilometres further upstream, was wiped out in a flood. The new track along the true left bank of the river is rougher than the old one, and parts have already been affected by slips. Easy-medium therefore seems a reasonable grading for the trip these days.

We parted company with the mediums at the Marchant Ridge turnoff and eventually headed down into the valley for a morning tea break by a stream. The various slips and DOCs interesting detours provided the main highlights. The first such detour came quite early on, with a sign pointing to the right saying 'Track closed', and a sign pointing uphill saying 'Detour'. Someone had scratched on the sign the words 'DOC route' and 'Tramper's route',

so I decided to take the trumper's route (although was a little less confident than I pretended). For some reason WeiMin was keen to follow. As it turned out, apart from lack of track maintenance and a slightly tricky bit over a slip, the track was fine, and we had a five minute wait for the others. Trampers 1, DOC 0.

Smiths Creek shelter looked uninviting, so trip leader Paul took us down to the river where we lunched in the shade of a large rock. WeiMin amused himself by photographing our lunches and muddy boots with a very large camera. After we crossed the swing bridge the track became a bit indistinct, and was soon diverted by various slips. The largest diversion took most of the party a good 15 minutes to traverse. Ironically DOC's diversion was a lot trickier than the earlier 'trampers route' that DOC had certified as too dangerous. Furthermore, Karl pointed out that there was an easy path worn by trampers across the slip that could be crossed in a few seconds. Trampers 2, DOC 0.

There's a flash new path on the final 50 metres up to Tutuwai hut, but otherwise it's little changed. It started to rain shortly after we arrived, just as the Met Service had forecast. Some of us were kept awake for much of the night by rats scuttling across the ceiling for hours on end. There was no evidence in the morning they had been inside the hut, but it sure sounded like it.

I was greatly impressed by the fact that most were willing to eat the previous night's leftover curry and rice for breakfast. On the way out Paul was keen for us to cross the river at some point and join a track on the true right. We eventually found a point where this could be done easily, and the walking was a lot more pleasant on the other side. The track seemed less enclosed, and there was more sun. Eventually the track disappeared, having collapsed into the river below, so we decided that heading straight down the river was the best option. It was getting hot, and I had a dip in a swimming hole. The travel proved pretty easy, and in no time we had reached the swing bridge, which Annie, being French, was keen to cross again (apparently they're a bit of a Kiwi novelty). We found a pleasant clearing with lots of shade near Smiths Creek Shelter, as it was getting hotter by the minute. On the way back we all took the trumper's route rather than the detour, walking most of the way up the cooling stream. There followed a walk through pleasant bush then the slog up the Puffer and beyond in the hot sun. On the way up Puffer Saddle, Barbara rather unwillingly followed Karl and I on an unofficial route straight up the hill, and was probably cursing us as she neared the top. We beat the mediums back to the YMCA car park by a good margin, mainly because they had stopped for lots of swims. We enjoyed the weekend, so I guess I'd better award DOC a couple of points for that. Let's call it a 2-2 draw.

Punters were Paul Andrews, Barbara Keenan, WeiMin Ren, Annie Vherck, Karl Stapleton and Paul Christoffel

Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club Inc.

FIRST NOTICE OF AGM

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club will be held at the Clubrooms on WEDNESDAY 6th April 2011 commencing at 8.00pm.

Nomination for committee positions are now open and must be received in writing by the Club Secretary by WEDNESDAY 23rd MARCH 2011. The nomination form is attached to the newsletter, and further copies are available from the Secretary on Wednesday club nights.



Wellington Tramping & Mountaineering Club

NOMINATION FORM

I, _____ hereby nominate
(name of nominator)

_____ for the role of
(name of nominee)

_____ for the 2011/2012 committee.

I, _____ accept the nomination for the
(name of nominee)

role of _____ for the 2011/2012 committee.

FROM THE GREEN CROCS

Obviously the tragic events in Christchurch this week are on many people's minds at the moment. I hope that anyone who has friends and family in the city has heard that all are safe and well. As a former resident of the city, it has been a huge shock for me to hear about the loss of life, and to see the images of the destruction of large numbers of buildings. The city has been changed forever...

Now onto less serious stuff ...

We are always keen to get new people involved in WT&MC, and this Wednesday (23rd) we held our Annual New Members Night. The evening was a great success, with around 50 new people attending. Thanks to our Promotions Officer Megan for organising it, and to all who helped out.

If you have friends, family, or workmates who are interested in the club, but couldn't make the New Members Night, they can come along ANY Wednesday to sign up for trips, ask questions about the club, watch a slideshow, and have a cuppa and a biscuit.

Last time I mentioned the upcoming Annual General Meeting on April 6th, and our committee vacancies for the 2011/12 year. We are still looking for people to fill the following roles; President, Vice President(s), Membership Officer and Assistant Chief Guide. If you are keen to help out the club in one of these roles, you can talk to the person currently in the role (or me) about what is involved.

Nominations will close on March 23rd, there is a nomination form in this newsletter and also on the club website (www.wtmc.org.nz) under Downloads / Forms / Committee Nomination Form 2011/12. Completed forms can be handed to me or our Secretary, Mika.

There are lots of other ways you can help out the club if being on committee is not your scene. We always need people to do slideshows on Wed nights, write trip reports for the newsletter, greet people at the door, lead trips, drive the van, look after the gear cupboard, and more. You can talk to the appropriate committee person, or ask me if you are not sure who to talk to, if you'd like to help.

Next Wednesday, March 2nd, is a highlight of the social calendar, the Club's Photo Competition. It's sure to be a great night, I'm sorry to be missing it, but The Chemical Brothers are playing that night in Auckland :-)

You can always contact me on president@wtmc.org.nz, or I am usually around on club nights

Darren Hammond

All published trip reports (or other written articles that aren't committee reports) are in the draw to win a \$20 book voucher!

Congratulations to Spencer Clubb, winner of the February draw, for the Syme Hut report.

Also congratulations to Paul Christoffel, who wins this month's voucher, his report being the only entry.

The views expressed in the articles in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club. Any queries or comments should be directed to the writer of the article.