



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - April 1999

THIS ISSUE

NEWS:

**President's Annual Report, MSC Courses,
and calls for trip leaders**

TRIP REPORTS:

**Thursday trampers, Ruahine Traverse (attempt),
Titahi Bay Rock, SAREX,
Syme Hut / Wilkies Pools**

CLUB NIGHTS

APRIL 8	"Canada & the Yukon"	Maree Limpus
APRIL 29	"Kayaking in China"	Andy Backhouse
MAY 6	Committee meeting	Terry's place
MAY 13	"Down on the coast"	Harley Betts
MAY 27	Video night + BYO slides	

Club nights are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month at the **Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North**. All club nights commence at 7:45 pm, winter or summer. The PNTMC Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

At the club night: Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 50c which includes supper.

UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Trip Grades

Grades of trips can depend on many factors, most especially the weather and state of the track. As a guide, a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the graded trips in about the following times:

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs

Fit (F): about 8 hrs

Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

(T) refers to technical trips requiring special skills and/or gear.

Beginners should start with Easy Grade trips.

Apr 15 Thursday trampers
 Carolyn Brodie 358-6576

Apr 17-18 Full Pohangina M/F
 Graeme Roberts 357-8567

Depart 7am. Walk from Kashmir Roadend up to Longview Hut and the source of the Pohangina River. A weekend of river travel with a mixture of open valley and lovely gorges. Downriver via Top Gorge and Leon Kinvig Huts to Ngamoko Hut for Saturday night, continuing on via mid-Pohangina & out to Pohangina Base Sunday.

Apr 18 Herepai Hut E/M
 Neil Campbell 359-5048

A leisurely jaunt in the northeastern Tararuas, taking in a nice riverside walk and forest on the way to Herepai Hut. On a fine day, a climb beyond the hut up onto the tussock tops for some views.

Apr 22 Thursday trampers
 Merv Matthews 357-2858

Apr 24-25 Tama TNP weekend M
 Patrick Janssen 356-3116

Depart 8am. This is a fairly leisurely weekend into an interesting area of Tongariro National Park. Walking from Whakapapa across to camp around upper Tama Lake. Perhaps some exploring of the surrounding area on Sunday morning, then packing up after lunch to return to the cars.

Apr 25 Deadman's/Rangi M

Mick Leyland 358-3183

Depart 8am. We'll be heading up the alternative "Deadmans" track from the Rangi carpark and cutting across the tussock to Rangi Hut for lunch. Probably return down Rangi Track.

Apr 29 Thursday trampers
 Harry & Chris Allardice 323-4390

**Apr 29 Club Night: "Kayaking in China"
 Andy Backhouse**

In 1988, Andy became a medical officer on a schools expedition to circumnavigate Lake Qing Hai, China's largest lake, by sea kayak. The lake is salty & lies at 3100m on the plateau that extends into Tibet. The area had not been visited much by Westerners since the 1920s. This club night should be a fascinating insight into Chinese culture, how Tibetan nomads are viewed & the effects of the Cultural Revolution on the people & the environment.

May 1-2 Longview weekend M
 Heather & Lawrence Gatehouse 356-5805

Depart 8am. The plan is to park at the site of the old Moorcock base, climb the ridge as if going to Daphne and then walk the length of the ridge to Longview. A side trip to the high point is an option and given clear weather we will get magnificent views over Hawkes Bay and into the central Ruahines. Sunday there are a few options including the paths marked on the map on the lower ridge to the east.

May 2 Dave's Special M
 Dave Henwood 326-8892

Book in & come along on Dave's magical mystery tour.

May 6 Thursday trampers
 Dave Warnock 357-6247

May 6 Committee Meeting

May 8-9 Kelly Knight hut E
 Llew Pritchard 358-2217

Depart 8am. An easy route across farmland to the bush side track along the Pourangaki River to Kelly Knights Hut for the night. Could meet up

with Dave Grant's crew on the way out if they're fast enough!

May 8-9 Waterfall/Pourangaki Hut F
 Dave Grant 357-8269

Depart 6am. A trip into the Kawhatau headwaters of the Ruahines from Mangakokeke road end in the Upper Kawhatau. Climb up onto the Hikurangi range via Purity hut and Wooden and Iron Pegs, dropping down the eastern side to Waterfall hut for the night. Sunday will see us amble back up over Hawkes Bay Range to Pourangaki Hut. Depending on conditions we will make our way down-river to Kelly Knight or climb up onto the Whanahuia and then drop down to KN. Meet Llew Pritchard's daygroup for an easy amble out and hopefully a ride back to the road end.

This is a great opportunity to visit some awesome country and experience the transition from forest to shrubland to tussock several times in the one weekend!!! Total distance about 26km.

May 13 Thursday trampers
 Keith Domett 04 394-5208

**May 13 Club Night: Harley's photo trip
 "Down on the coast" Harley Betts**

Harley will be showing images from a number of coastal areas around New Zealand, all collected during short walks taken over the last year or two. Photographing New Zealand's scenery doesn't just involve going to mountains and lakes - some of it can be discovered literally "on the back door step" simply by following side roads out to the coast and walking from there. So come along all you mountaineers and see why you should also be getting some sand between your toes!

May 15-16 Waitomo Caving M
 Janet Wilson 329-4722

Leave Friday evening. For those into a bit of a challenge and something different, this is it! No experience needed but a reasonable level of fitness. Staying at the Hamilton Tomo Group hut in Waitomo township, exploring a few caves in the region. Helmets and lamps will be for hire, but bring your own overalls, stout gloves and gumboots!

Please note: Need to book by Friday 7th May.

May 16 Comet Range F
 Peter Wiles 358-6894

Depart 7am. The Comet Range is a small range between the northern extremity of the Ruahine Range and the southern aspect of the Kaweka Range. Access is from a turn-off, off the Napier-Taihape road. On a clear day good views of both these ranges can be gained as well as onto the Central Plateau. A good waterbottle is recommended, as water may be scarce on the range. (The alternative is a 700 m descent to the Taruarau River - which is an option if we feel inclined.)

May 20 Thursday trampers
 Anne Green 06 394 5208

May 22-23 Kime - Penn Creek F
 Dave Grant 357-8269

Depart 6am from Foodtown for the Otaki Gorge road end, then head up through bush via Fields track, onto the tussock tops to Kime hut. Weather permitting we will backtrack slightly and head north along the tops to Maungahuka hut for the night. On Sunday we will come out via Penn Creek hut and the Penn Creek track along the Otaki River. A primo chance to stretch your legs for the weekend. Total distance about 28km (or less if we don't go to Maungahuka!!)

May 23 Tony's Tararua day M
 Tony Gates 357-7439

More details next newsletter.

May 27 Thursday trampers
 Jill Spenser 329-8738

May 27 Club Night: Videos + BYO Slides
 Some of you may have noticed John Phillips wielding a video camera on some club trips in recent years. He will show videos of trips up into the snow in the North Island (Egmont Summit & Sawtooth Ridge) as well as a club trip to Nelson Lakes National Park in Easter 1997. Bring along your slides from recent trips too, for a bit of variety between videos.

Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trips co-ordinator (Terry Crippen 356-3588, or Liz Flint 356-7654), as soon as possible, if there is any doubt that you will be unable to run your trip as scheduled. This is so that alternatives can be arranged, put in the newsletter, or passed on at club night.

Trip participants:

If you are interested in going on a trip, please advise the leader **at least three days** in advance.

Trips often leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street unless the leader arranges otherwise.

A charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance travelled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance.

For general information on the scheduled or alternative tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654).

***** OVERDUE TRIPS *****

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Liz Flint (356-7654), or Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805)

NOTICES

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

All kinds of articles, whether trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, or even a product review, are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. If it is a small article, hand-written is okay (deliver to John Phillips at home address: 87 Victoria Avenue) but if handwriting is all you can do, don't let it put you off even large articles.

If you *do* have access to a computer, by far the most convenient way is to e-mail it to me, at my work address. Regular contributors please note that **my work e-mail address has changed** due to the regional council re-branding, and is now:

john.phillips@horizons.govt.nz

This does not mean that the old e-mail address doesn't work – all e-mails to the old address will be automatically forwarded to the new address for a period of time.

If you are e-mailing scanned photos, still send your scan files to:

postmaster@horizons.govt.nz

where all incoming scan files are processed by a software package and forwarded on to me. **Any photo scan files e-mailed directly to me will be automatically rejected** by the system, so make

sure you send them to the 'postmaster' address at my work.

I use Microsoft Word Version 7.0. If you use any other software, give me a ring on 357-9009 (work) or 358-1874 (home) and I may be able to indicate whether it is compatible or not. If in doubt, try sending any files as an ".RTF" (Rich Text Format) file, which can sometimes be easily converted from one software format to another, or the safest bet is to just cut-and-paste your text directly into your e-mail message.

The deadline for anything to go in each month's issue is the **FIRST THURSDAY** of the month.

1999 AGM

All the previous year's office bearers were returned. They are listed on the back of the newsletter. Welcome to Warren Soufflot and Peter Burgess as new Committee members. They replace Andy Backhouse, who has done a sterling job in recent years. Maree Limpus also joined the Committee ranks a few months ago. Peter Burgess is also now an additional overdue trip contact.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT presented at the 1999 AGM

One of the main reasons for the existence of the club is to provide the opportunity to foster

outdoor recreation for the public to enjoy. I am happy to report that in this and other respects this has been another successful year for the Club.

Membership

During the year we were unable to keep up with the increasing trend in population mobility and with only 4 new recruits the club membership dropped slightly from 72 to a fit and healthy 65. I trust those who have left enjoyed their time with the club and that new and intending members feel welcome. If you don't then please see me afterwards...

Activities

As in the past the committee this year has ensured that the club offers a wide variety of trips, club nights, social activities and instruction courses for members and non-members, whether novices or experts. Special thanks to Andy Backhouse and Bruce van Brunt for organising the Snowcraft and Glaciercraft Courses and to the other club members who helped with instructing the 8 to 11 pupils despite the less than ideal snow conditions this year.

Newsletter

The club's activities have been well-reported in our new-look newsletter under the editorship of John Phillips, and provide an interesting and often inspiring read. Thanks to all those who contributed trip reports, articles and photos and to Peter Wiles for making sure it gets distributed each month.

Competitive pricing has enabled the cost of producing the newsletter to be reduced to less than 40c a copy, half the previous cost of photocopying.

Past Trips

Analysis of past trips shows that, on average, there has been just over 5 people on each trip. The largest group on a club trip was 14 for Mick Leyland's Centre Creek Biv Trip, and Liz Flint had 19 on her combined trip with MTSC to Top Maropea. On average the monthly maximum group size was 10.5 but the average monthly minimum was only 2.2 (not exactly an ideal safe group size).

Some 22% of the 100 programmed trips were cancelled due to lack of interest or poor weather conditions. Based on past years experience this is

not atypical and seems to be more a function of our small size, but it is still somewhat disappointing, especially for the trip leaders. Nevertheless it's the quality rather than the quantity that matters and its good to see trips going regardless of small numbers. As those going on these intimate tramps will vouch, they can offer some of the most rewarding and challenging tramping experiences.

Interclub Events

The several combined trips with MTSC seem to have left us outnumbered on the day and I encourage members to broaden your experience by going on at least one of these trips this coming year. Several members are already in both clubs and enjoy the advantage of a wider selection of suitable trips with a variety of companions.

The Interclub Quiz was hosted by MTSC and was enjoyed by all with our team putting on a plausible and nail-biting performance to come a close third.

Club members were also able to calibrate their photographic skills at the first Inter-club Photo Competition organised by MUAC.

Search and Rescue

There were no Search and Rescue call-outs except for a successful helicopter search requiring only Terry Crippen from our team. I am happy to report that all our club trips returned safely although Mick Leyland, while on a solo Ruahine Trip, was inadvertently rescued by helicopter at dawn from Howletts Hut. The definitive report of this episode is yet to appear (the newspaper got it wrong as usual) but apparently there was a slight communication breakdown regarding a cellphone and suspected dehydration.

We fielded one team at the recent SAREX and among other things learned all about How to Wait Patiently for our turn to be choppered in to the Mangahao search area.

Sponsorship and New Gear

Further donations from the Hillary Commission and Trustbank Community Trust have enabled more gear to be purchased for climbing and avalanche safety as well as compasses and laminated maps for navigation instruction. We are in the process of purchasing 4 avalanche transceivers that will be a valuable resource for

club members as well as other local climbers or skiers.

The club enjoys a special relationship with Mountain Equipment with membership discounts and newsletter sponsorship. Thanks to club member and owner Dave Grant.

Issues addressed by the Committee

Looking back through the Minutes Book is interesting reading with some very topical issues being addressed. These include club representatives attending a user-group meeting with the Department of Conservation to hear about their Visitor Asset Management Programme, and attending meetings of the PN Mountain Bike Focus group. We also made submissions on the wind-farm regarding the continued access along North Range Road, on the proposed logging by Timberlands of West Coast Beech, on Options for minimising damage from a Ruapehu Crater Lake lahar, on the DoC Tararua Hut Management Plan, and on the Mt Cook/Westland Management Plan Review.

Thanks to all the committee for your support and involvement, and especially to those who hosted committee meetings at your place. The committee meets every month and any member is welcome to attend to see how and what goes on, and why we enjoy doing it so much. You may even find how easy it is to be seconded on, like Maree Limpus this year.

Into the next Millennium

These are unique times we live in and I look forward to celebrating 1999 and 2000 in special ways. We have a few ideas lurking out there and I look forward to working with you all to make this a Wonderful Time to Remember. I offer my Mid-Fold Traverse of the Tararua Park Map as one example of the mass of memorable moments likely to accrue over the next 24 months.

Finally thanks to everyone for helping to make PN Tramping and Mountaineering Club such a pleasure to belong to.

Good tramping.

Warren Wheeler

POST SCRIPTS FROM THE PRESIDENTS PC

From the errors and omissions file I have downloaded the following items:

Post Script 1 (*to Presidents Report*)

Special thanks to Monica Cantwell and also Richard Lockett for helping to promote the club, in Palmy and Feilding respectively, by putting up our high impact PNTMC fliers on supermarket community notice boards and elsewhere. It is surprising how many enquiries we get from this source - keep an eye out for all the torn off tabs.

Post Script 2 (*Election of Officers*)

Democracy is dead. Long Live the autocracy!!
Bang!!!!

OK. Somehow we managed not to elect a Vice-President at the AGM (he was asleep in the back row). To avoid a constitutional crisis we have invoked the powers of the executive committee to fill casual vacancies. Since we were clearly way too casual on election night, and Terry was way too casual about getting re-elected the committee was clearly entitled to exercise these powers. Consequently Terry Crippen is once again officially back on board. Thanks Terry, we don't take you for granted really...

Happy tramping everyone. May the earth continue our footprints into a non-apocalyptic new millennium.

Warren Wheeler

TRIP OPTIONS FOR QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND 5-7 June

Currently there are no trips going over Queens birthday. Terry can't lead the Richmond Range one - the only trip down on the events card - he is unfortunately going to be in France. So we need a leader for a weekend trip and a leader for a day trip: any grade, to anywhere, for either. Let either of the Trip coordinators know: Terry 356-3588 (email terry_crippen@clear.net.nz) or Laurence 356-5805.

The NEXT SIX MONTHLY EVENTS CARD

The Events card for July to December of this year is now being organized. It needs to be ready by Mid-May to come out in the June newsletter. So all you keen leaders and prospective leaders be in early with your ideas and dates for day and weekend trips. Phone or email a trip coordinator with dates and ideas. Remember its those choice fine clear winter days from July on or those nice spring and early summer trips.

For those who haven't lead a club trip before why not give it a try: choose a favourite track or area that you have done before so that you have the experience of knowing the route and what conditions can be like. Try leading a easier grade than what you may have been on before. Read the guide for trip leaders (available from the trip coordinators or at club night), and ask the trip coordinators or other experienced leaders.

Trip coordinators are Terry Crippen 3563-588 (email terry_crippen@clear.net.nz), Laurence Gatehouse 356-5805, and Peter Burgess 354-3533.

Also if you have any suggestions for club evenings – speakers & activities – let the new club

night convenor Maree Limpus know 025 395-883 (home) or 358-9004 (work).

MSC COURSES

Bushcraft Skills Part 2 (Intermediate) May 29-30. For those who already have a basic knowledge of gear and trip planning, map and compass work. A weekend away and a Sunday afternoon beforehand (May 23rd). Contact Noel Bigwood 357-0116 for registration.

Outdoor First Aid, also May 29-30. Excellent course for learning basic first aid, practical and in tramping/outdoor situations. Contact Dianne Siegenthaler 357-7237 for registration.

TRIP REPORTS

THURSDAY TRAMPS Monica Cantwell

Ever wondered where they went? Here are some great trips you may like to pursue...

Honeycomb Rock 17th December 98
East Coast out from Gladstone (2 ¼ hour drive). "Xmas party". 13 ventured out led by Liz Flint. We walked along the coast on the edge of Glen Burn Station to the Honeycomb Rocks. The return trip took 4 hours. Fuel cost was \$19.

Mikimiki Tramway / Blue Range 14th January 99
19 of us this time led by Harry and Chris Allardice. You guessed it, we had a break away group to Blue Range. 10 felt that they had to climb a big hill while the other 9 found their hill just as grand but with a swimming hole at the lunch stop at the far end. Both parties taking 4 hours on the return trip arriving back at club bus together. Fuel cost was \$11.

Takapari Rd – Diggers Hut 21st January 99
14 led by Bev Akers. Steady climb up Takapari Rd to the turnoff to Diggers Hut (2 hours). Walked along the ridge to a big drop down to the river for lunch (2 hours). Great deep swimming holes as we walked down the river to Diggers Hut. Steady climb up from the hut to farmland. Long walk out over the farm but rewarded at the end by a swim in the river by the carpark, but walk upstream to a deeper hole behind the woolshed. Need to get permission from the farmer for access on property (7 hours total).

Great summer tramp – take your togs.

Windfarm 28th January 99
From Pahiataua track end. 5-6 hours. Judy Calleson leader.

Kaiparoro 4th February 99
5 hours. Monica Cantwell.

Kaimanawas 9th-11th February 99 Liz Flint.

Kelly Knights / Pourangaki Peak 18th February
Graham Pritchard.

Mountain House / Holdsworth Trig
25th February 99 Pam Wilson.

Mt Thompson 4th March 99
Sue & Lawson Pither.

Further information about Thursday trampers, ring Monica Cantwell, 326-9691.

RUAHINE TRAVERSE (sort of)

27-28 December 1998 and 2-10 January 1999

by John Phillips

The original plan was an ambitious 2-week traverse from Wharite to the Comet Range. It was a promising start from Wharite at 9am on Sunday 27th December, with clear sparkling blue skies. Even the normally muddy track was amazingly dry, a wide highway through the leatherwood.

By mid-afternoon I was completely stuffed. I'd lost the track up out of Manga-atua Stream, and kept bush-bashing upward but inevitably became completely grounded by a wall of leatherwood near the top of the spur. More by accident, I stumbled out on to the open track an hour later, dropping down to Raparapawai Stream (with some relief) via the newly found track.

I grovelled upstream for another hour or two, but it was getting late. I stopped to biv out as I was not going to make Keretaki Hut. That would have to wait until nearly midday the next day. Apart from lost tracks and leatherwood-bashing, the humidity had been stifling and the flowering tussock was playing havoc with my hay-fever. And I felt very unfit. I'd had enough - time to ring someone to pick me up! I wandered down Orouakeretaki Stream to meet Heather a few hours later.

The following Saturday, a little more rejuvenated, I set off from Moorcock Base with another tramping mate to continue the planned second leg of my now interrupted traverse. James and I chatted with the local farmer, whose tirade of abuse at his dog was a source of amusement for us both. We set off up through the scrub in light showers, the only rain we were to experience over the next 8 days.

We descended through nice beech forest to the Tukituki River, only to glimpse a couple tramping off downstream. We continued upstream to Daphne Hut for lunch then the long haul up to Howletts Hut for the first night. There another visitor, a young hunter/photographer, also arrived for the night from Rangi / Te Hekenga.

Day 2 – Sawtooth Ridge

We awoke to a stunning clear day, with great views of the ridge ahead as we set out to climb Tiraha. A thin layer of cloud moved in from Hawkes Bay as we rounded Tiraha & descended onto Sawtooth Ridge – providing welcome shade but thin enough to let a glowing ethereal light down upon us as we traversed the ridge. The alpine flora was also setting on a beautiful display. It was tramping conditions on the Ruahine tops at its best.

It was a long but satisfying day as we traversed Sawtooth, then Broken Ridge and Rangiateatua before descending to Waikamaka Hut. There were already 2 occupants and, being equipped

with tent, we carried on a few hundred yards to camp in the mountain beech by the river.

Day 3 – Wakelings / Maropea Forks

Awaking to another clear day, the morning was a superb walk through gorges down the Waikamaka River to Wakelings Hut. After lunch the cloud (and humidity) set in for the short but grunty climb over to Maropea Forks for the third night. We were once again grateful for the tent, as nights were getting pretty warm for staying in huts.

Day 4 – Lake Colenso

The fourth day dawned clear again, with a climb up a narrow spur of mountain beech past a huge slip, to the ridge just east of Puketaramea. We branched north to head down to Unknown Campsite, passing through a superb stand of red beech on the flat spur en route. We took respite from the heat with a break for lunch at the rather unattractive Campsite, before grovelling upstream to find the start to the Lake Colenso track (further upstream than on the Topomap).

What was to be a straightforward 160-metre ascent to the bluffs over Lake Colenso turned out to be an exhausting effort in the hot mid-afternoon sun and humidity (I later found out it was 28°C in Palmy that day). After an eternity we dropped our packs exhausted at the top to enjoy the stunning view over the lake. Negotiating a precarious descent down an impressive knife-edge forested spur, we checked out the lake before bedding up at Colenso Hut at the nearby stream.

We opted to bed out on the hut verandah, but were later driven inside by man-eating mosquitoes. We regretted not erecting the tent as the hut was stifling, with windows shut to exclude the mozzies. The problem was compounded by the fact that we had fired up the wood stove (appropriately named 'corker') to save on fuel, and the thing continued to glow with heat as we tried to get to sleep. I don't think the 2 other Swiss visitors were that impressed either.

Day 5 – Ruahine Corner

It was a welcome cooling walk the next morning up the Mangatera Stream valleys northeast of Lake Colenso. As we turned north into the sidestream, the aspect changed as we entered limestone country, the stream valley closing in with towering bluffs either side. The cooling respite was soon over as we began the trudge up the leading spur to Potae.

Potae summit was a spectacular rock outcrop, and we clambered up to catch the breezes, and the bonus of full 360° views. We could see Ruapehu to the northwest, the Kaimanawas and Kawekas to the north, and back to the bluffs of the Lake Colenso basin, with the Te Atuaoparapara tops way further south near the end of our day-2 journey. This was a real culmination point to the trip.

However, to the north the tussock plains of Ruahine Corner beckoned. I'd long given away ideas of even completing this part of the Ruahine Traverse, opting for a shorter loop back to Mokai Station over these last four days. Given the very hot weather spell, we geared down our plans even more and opted to give Reperoa Bog a miss, aiming only for Ruahine Hut for the day. The few kilometres to the Hut were an interesting dart back and forth between knife-edge & almost vertical limestone outcrops. The aspect changed to mysterious mountain cedar forest as we approached Ruahine Corner.

Arriving soon after 3pm, it was yet another hot afternoon as we reclined under the cool verandah. After some clothes washing and dinner we went for a short loop walk around the wide expanse of tussock flats, a stunning experience in the still light of sunset.

Day 6 – Waiokotore Valley

We were enjoying the weather more with shorter walking days, so continued in the same vein, with a 7km-day back to Potae and west into the Waiokotore Stream valley. The last hutbook entry in the 2-man biv was May 1998! Apparently the biv is nick-named “the fridge” on account of it being nestled in a very narrow steep north-south oriented valley. We calculated some angles and figured that, in winter, the sun would first hit the biv around midday, and disappear again by 1:00 pm !!!

Waiokotore Biv was anything *but* a fridge on this day. We arrived about midday in blazing heat. Dragging the mattresses outside from “the oven”, we collapsed in the shade of a tree. Some of us(!) nodded off for an hour or more.

We then braved a dip in the freezing cold spring-fed waters of the stream – beautiful when you can hop out to be dried by the warm winds fanning down the valley. Nestled amidst towering

limestone bluffs, this place was paradise on a hot day. The scene was replete with resident blue ducks upstream and downstream, and kaka occasionally flying overhead (we'd also seen kakariki earlier that day up in the forest). We set up tent on the helipad when the hot sun disappeared behind the bluffs about 3pm.

Day 7 – Ohutu Ridge / Iron Bark Hut

As if not overwhelmed enough by the scenic gems we had encountered so far, the climb out of the gorge next morning encountered a magical waterfall, with intriguing sidetrips to more pools and rapids on the upper Waiokotore. The whole stream disappeared underground at one point.

The climb up to Ohutu Ridge was uneventful, fortunately with some cloud to welcome us as we emerged from the bush. We dropped packs at the top for a short detour to the northern end of the ridge, with more vistas over the tussock plains to the north of Ruahine Corner. Returning to packs, we continued south, with pleasant going along the undulating ridgetop.

After a lunch break by a dry tarn, it was a grovelly descent through rough bush and stinging nettle to the junction of the Mangatera & Maropea Rivers. Heading up the Maropea, its substantial glistening waters were too tempting, and we lept in boots-and-all at a deep green pool. A fitting end to the day as we walked the last kilometre to settle into Iron Bark Hut.

Day 8 – the walk out

It would be an easy few hours walk out but we were to meet our car pick-up later in the afternoon. So we opted for a lazy sleep-in, pigged out on the leftover food, and then went off for a mid-morning jaunt up Unknown Stream to check out the impassable waterfall. The going got progressively deeper until the waterfall itself was too tempting, and we lept into the plunge pool for another swim and a free shower.

It was a welcome relief to walk out over the saddle to Mokai station with a lovely cool southeasterly to our side. We paused at the top for a look back over the ranges, to recount some of the magic moments on this most memorable of Ruahine trips. Are we lucky to have this place on our doorstep or what???

The satisfied team members with grins ear-to-ear were: John Phillips and James Gordon.

TITAHI BAY ROCK

14th February by Laurence Gatehouse

In the spirit of romance we had a decently late departure from Foodtown and a relaxed drive down to Titahi bay. Here the rest of the party met us and after a false start we found the path down the cliff and set about a bit of climbing on the Nose. The day got hotter and hotter and as our fingers burned out the sea started looking more and more inviting. That after climb swim was a goodie though the launching and landing required some care. Next time I fancy a bit of leading on the Pinnacle.

We were Laurence, Heather, June, John and his two nephews James and Edward.

SAREX 99

20 - 21 February by Terry Crippen

Since the weather in the Tararuas had been fine for days on end up till Saturday morning it was a "refreshing" change to head down to the Palmerston North Police Station with a completely overcast sky above. Yes Saturday was a cloudy rainy day for the start of the annual Search and Rescue Exercise for the region. Cloud was right down over the Tararuas. About 12 teams took part from Palmerston North, Levin and Dannevirke areas. Tramping and hunting club members as well as police. PNTMC had one team (Warren W. as team leader, Patrick Janssen, Derek Sharp and Alan Bee) and Terry C. as umpire for the team to keep them on (or off) the straight and narrow?

For those of you who are not familiar with Search and Rescue (SAR), background: SAR comes under an organization called NZ Land SAR (Inc), and the NZ Police to a large degree have operational control. They utilise experienced civilians as well as police. The Search Controller is somebody who has an excellent knowledge of the area under concern. In the past PNTMC has had a search controller amongst us, but not at the moment. Clubs have a number of experienced people who can get called out as a team once the search controller initiates a search. There are about 20 on the PNTMC list, which is held by the 3 club SAR contacts. Club members go on training exercises such as this SAREX (Search And Rescue Exercise) and other technical courses like the one Warren S. wrote about in the March newsletter.

Anyhow back to this SAREX, based at the showgrounds at Levin. The scenario: six tramping or hunting parties were in the Tararuas when a tropical cyclone struck the ranges. Some parties there reported overdue and there was concern for the other parties.

So 12 teams were assembled and briefed for this search and rescue mission. An RNZAF helicopter was there waiting to ferry the 12 teams in. But with the crappy weather parties couldn't be dropped on the top of the range (quite a realistic situation actually). So a lot of waiting about (also realistic) as the chopper had to fly each party in the long way going round the bottom or top end of the range under the clouds. Our team didn't get dropped off till about 4pm! The upper Mangahao below the slopes of Triangle Knob was our area. Our task was to search a section of track up towards Girdlestone Saddle. Some footprint sign - and radio scheds each hour. By this stage in the day most of the lost parties had been found, so nothing positive from the PNTMC team so far.

Then it was time to set up camp. This is when the club's flys are excellent, rather than tents, since often on SARs and SAREXs you can't choose that lovely grassey terrace that you know is down valley to camp on - you camp more or less on the spot were your searching stops for the night. We actually had an excellent soft mossy area on a high terrace in the forest. Dry and well sheltered from the rain, which had coming down all afternoon.

A cracker of a day greeted us on Sunday: fine and clear. From our first radio sched for the day we set off on our task: to carefully search up the head of the Mangahao, using such close contact techniques as purposeful wandering and sound sweeping. Search HQ, working on all the evidence gathered from the other parties, considered that we were in the AOP (area of probability) and that we could expect to come in direct contact with the last party soon. With our whistles out in unison, the blast soon alerted the missing and injured party, and we came upon them on a gravelly beach.

Into determining what the injuries were - one of them, semi-conscious with a broken leg, the other bod OK. First aid and encouragement were applied while we contacted search HQ on the Radio. Then the last rescue, a carry-out, began to be organized as some of the other teams arrived,

complete with stretcher. Plenty of radio discussion back and forth – it was then decided the carry-out would be to the nearest area for a helicopter winch out instead. Carry-outs are very difficult work – you need about 15 to 20 people. So a short carry then on the radio: "that's it the SAREX is canned". (now winch outs on exercises). But we all got choppered out to Levin. A debrief and some hospitality made a good end to a successful and good learning exercise.

SYME HUT – WILKIES POOLS

March 27-28

by Harley Betts

Three of us set off at a cruisy time of 8.30am on Saturday for Dawson Falls – stopping, of course, in Hawera to “preview” the famous 30 cent ice-creams at the Sunshine Dairy. After delighted squeals of “<expletive> it's huge!” and other similar comments we finished the now-even-more-famous ice-creams and continued on to the carpark, the late summer sun smiling warmly on us and promising to bake us to a crisp on the way up.

We took our time climbing Fanthams Peak, stopping now and then to take a few photos (okay, rests) and generally admiring the open views above and below us. What little wind there was came out of the north, but it wasn't threatening to deliver any bad weather at that stage so all was well. We reached the hut in mid afternoon and found it to be already occupied, so, for that reason and just for the hell of it, we decided to ‘acquire’ a few mattresses from the hut and sleep outside under the stars instead. There was a slight chance of frost, or so we thought, but as it turned out the temperature stayed well above freezing throughout the night and we had a surprisingly comfortable night's sleep. And what a great place to roll out a mat - sunset views straight out of the sleeping bag, a huge vault of stars overhead and you only had to roll over in the morning to view the sunrise!

The sunrise itself was fantastic. We all rose in the morning twilight, and watched spellbound as the beginnings of the new day coloured the eastern horizon. As daybreak approached the sky literally burst into flames above the sharp black silhouette of Ruapehu, the sun eventually erupting from the northern side of Ruapehu as though it too was being consumed by fire. Amazing. In a moment of total captivation, fumbling with camera gear, I found out that my lens cap wouldn't go back on because it was actually a gingernut - duh, wrong pocket...

After the show was over and a quick breakfast, we headed back down and took an abandoned side track to link up with the Wilkies Pools walk near Dawson Falls. By now we were feeling kind of sweaty and ready for a wash, but at 8°C the water wasn't exactly inviting! It had to be a quick decision, ie. “Do it now or you'll never get in”. After a moment's hesitation we all took our turn to jump in, each of us sprouting wings and flying back out in what could be described as a rather short period of time.

Back down to Dawson Falls, and then on to Hawera to follow up on the ‘previewed’ ice creams at the Sunshine Dairy - their 50c ice creams are also enormous, but we didn't have the courage or the stomach capacity to even consider how much you would get for a dollar. This has to be the Taranaki equivalent of the chocolate eclair stop in Ohakune! Just as we were settling into the ecstatic comforts of Cloud Nine, we discovered that an 80c ice cream at the Turakina dairy is a one dollar equivalent - that is, you could almost hide the whole thing under a dollar coin and not see any of it. And so ended the 1999 Inaugural Hawera to Palmy Dairy Crawl.

Thanks to all for a great little trip. We were: Maree Limpus, Guy Vickers and Harley Betts.
