



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - November 2005

CLUB NIGHTS

Club nights are on the second and last Thursday of each month at the Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, at 7:45pm sharp. All welcome at the club night. Please sign the visitors book.

**10 Nov Club Night – Wine & Cheese
Gear Night at Mountain
Equipment**

For those of you weak in spirit this night will be torture; it may pay to leave the credit card with a trusted non-tramping friend. You only have to visit Tony Gates' garage to see what visiting Mountain Equipment too often can do to your available space. Now about those plastics, Tony... Seriously, this will be your chance to salivate over the latest and shiniest. Sure to be a fun night.

17 Nov Committee Meeting

24 Nov Club Night – BYO Slides

As we head into the Xmas rush, this is your opportunity to show us some of your favourite slides. A very informal evening but a chance to reminisce about some of the great trips of the year. I'm using this as an opportunity to show a few images of Alasdair's trip to Tapuae-o-uenuku in September which finally got off the ground after four years!

Articles to Lance gray.family@actrix.co.nz or post to 37 Parata Street, Palmerston North (by 20th of the month)

TRIPS

**Nov 5-6 Powell Hut E/M
Richard Lockett 323-0948**

Your chance to visit this popular but iconic hut in the eastern Tararuas. The scene of much drama including a murder, arson, search & rescue as

well as simply being a fine place to launch an adventure. Contact Richard for further details.

**Nov 6 Broken Axe Pinnacles F/E
Lance Gray 356-6454**

I will be looking to start from the Holdsworth road-end and heading up the Atiwhakatu to the Baldy track and along to South King. Weather permitting we will traverse over the pinnacles to McGregor. If the weather is not playing ball we will sidle them. A long day so I will be looking for an early kick-off.

**Nov 12-13 Duck Pond M
Mick Leyland 358-3183**

An eastern Ruahine tramp, going past Stanfield and Cattle Creek huts, and then dropping down to the west to a nameless stream and a nameless hut by the "Duck Pond". Contact Mick for further details.

**Nov 13 Field Hut M
Neil Campbell 359-5048**

Visit the historic Field hut and enjoy very nice Tararua forest and great views on a good day. We meet at Countdown carpark for an 8am start.

**Nov 19-20 Dundas Duddle M/F
Warren Wheeler 356-1998**

Join Warren for a wander along the Dundas Range for an overnight at Dundas Hut; a personal favourite of the editor's. Great views along the coast and of the Northern Tararuas. Contact Warren for further details.

**Nov 20 Te Araroa Trail M
Christine Cheyne 356-3588**

Join Christine for a trip in your own backyard. For those of you who attended Ian Argyles presentation about the Te Araroa Trail, you will know that the "Trail" locally is very much a work in progress This is your opportunity to be a part of local history. Contact Christine for further details.

Nov 26-27 McKinnon/Crow M
Dave Grant 357-8269

Perched on the Hawkes Bay range McKinnon Hut provides superb views of the Ruahines. The broad tussock slopes dotted with tarns make for a fantastic weekend tramp. Crow Hut on the Kawhatau River is equally a fine spot with a great wood burner! Contact Dave for further details.

Nov 27 Beehive Creek E
Doug Strachan 353-6526

Join Doug for an easy Sunday stroll. This has café potential written all over it. Besides you will need time to see all of Doug's baby photos! Contact Doug for further details as I have no idea where Beehive Creek is. It could be in Hokowhitu for all I know.

Trip participants:

Contact the leader at least 3 days in advance. Trips leave from Countdown carpark. A charge for transport will be collected on the day. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance. For general info, or any suggestions for future tramps, please contact Terry Crippen (356-3588), Janet Wilson (329-4722) or Tony Gates (357-7439).

Trips

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs Technical skills reqd (T)

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs Instructional (I)

Fit (F): about 8 hrs Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

Trip leaders:

Please advise a trip coordinator, as soon as possible, if 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.

*** OVERDUE TRIPS ***

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358 3183), Terry Crippen (356 3588), or Janet Wilson (329 4722)

NOTICES

Hopkins Valley Spotlight 15th-18th Jan 2006 onwards. -Terry Crippen

As mentioned in last month's newsletter the club plans to run a tramping and climbing spotlight based in the Hopkins Valley area up the head of Lake Ohau, in the South Island, hopefully to encourage more of us to "head south over summer". This valley is a very pleasant easy Southern Alps valley – wide open flats, beech forest, and is adjacent to the Main Divide.

Huxley Lodge, which we have booked for three nights, is accessible by road. It has simple accommodation: bunk rooms, wood stove, gas for lighting, showers and flush toilets. It is planned that people arrive on Sunday 15th Jan.

The next couple of days can be spent doing day tramps, fishing, or just relaxing.

The cost for this will be \$40 per person (3 nights accommodation and tea/coffee/nibbles). You will need to supply your own meals. Find your own way south. (Some of us will be taking vehicles south from P North - may be spare seats.) There are numerous bus operators operating out of Christchurch that call in at Twizel and we can organize transport between there and Huxley Lodge.

Following this, beginning on the 18th, there is an organized 6-day medium/fit or fit grade transalpine tramp (Temple Valley, Huxley Valley, Broderick Pass, ?Mt McKenzie). Or you may want to do your own easier and/or shorter tramp in the area - Huxley or Elcho Valleys, up to Dasler Biv, or perhaps just camp further up the Hopkins. Or head off to other parts of the South Island. Some of us plan to do some more demanding climbing later.

In order for all this to go ahead a minimum of 10 people is needed. Since I will be away most of November, I have enclosed a registration form to send in (with moneys please, cheque made out to T. Crippen). Closing date is December 1st, so that plans and bookings can be finalized. There will be info at club nights. Further info, contact me: 3563-588, or 025 643 36 37. email: bluesky_tramping@clear.net.nz

Petrol Price Rise

Given the increase in fuel prices, the PNTMC committee have voted to increase the per kilometre rate for club trips to 25 cents.

Welcome to Minami Siena Strachan

Congratulations to proud parents Doug and Maho with the arrival of Minami (say Tsunami) on 10 October 2005.

New contact details for Wara Teeranitamkul
 113 Long Melford Rd. Ph 3573725

North Ohau Hut Removal

North Ohau Hut (Grid ref. NZMS260 S25134547) has been removed from the Tararua Forest Park. A new 4 bunk hut is planned for the North Ohau Valley and is expected to be completed in early 2006



Alasdair's Gate to the Hodder River

TRIP REPORTS

Snowcraft 1 & 2, Stanfield Hut, Tapuae-o-uenuku, Tongariro-Ngauruhoe, Sledge Track, East Coast Explorations, Knights-Knights Loop, Kapiti Island

Snowcraft 1 – Aug 2005 **By Alasdair Noble**

The annual snowcraft instruction courses went ahead as usual this year. Terry organised things once again with his inimitable efficiency, and even managed to be away for the first two, and so was unable to instruct. With six keen people for the first weekend and a small mix up in trying to free up spaces in the hut we ended up with one space too few so Bruce came up for the day on the Saturday, with Anastasia, and Alasdair was in charge(?) for the weekend.

Saturday's weather was excellent, with marvellous cramponing snow when we found it, in the morning softening to soft snow for self arrests in the afternoon. One of our hardy attendees suggested that this was the wrong

order and was quite right but we have to take the conditions as they come.

Bruce and Anastasia left as the sun set and the rest of us had a not so beautiful Sunday though it was good enough to get out and spend another two hours practicing the skills learnt the previous day. We then set off for a walk which petered out in the mist, snow and wind. Lunch back at the hut and then an earlyish departure saw us back in Palmy at a good time.

We were: Tristan, Ian, Barbara, Tim, Martin, Anne, Alasdair plus Bruce and Anastasia for the first day.

Snowcraft 2 – Aug 2005 By Alasdair Noble

Two weeks later we were back again and the weather forecast looked excellent. Saturday saw beautiful weather which was great for instruction. We went back over the SC1 stuff and then got out the ropes and tied ourselves in knots. Much fun was had by all and many mistakes were made but we all got better and by the end of the day we were all expert at setting up belays on the snow and handling the rope. In the evening Tim gave an interesting talk on navigation which was very instructive.



Bruce found some snow to show the group! "This is snow."

Sunday dawned to more good weather and with copious amounts of sunscreen we were off again. Just when we thought we had it all sussed Bruce and Alasdair introduced a whole lot more kinds of belays. However with such good weather and snow to practice on we sorted those out as well. A final session of self arrests and a look at some snow bollards finished the day off.

We were: Tristan, Ian, Barbara, Tim, Martin and Anne again, with Peter, Penny, Alasdair and Bruce.

A final note on the two weekends. The weather was the best for years and it is good to see some participants taking it so seriously that they felt three weeks of high altitude training was necessary to prepare themselves – that commitment should be encouraged.

Stanfield Hut – 28 Aug By Doug Strachan

This trip was Ian's baby, but a broken ankle meant he couldn't lead it. ***I took Ian's baby and, hoping my wife wouldn't have ours in my absence, met the others at the civilised hour of 9am.*** Shona probably thought we were a pack of softies as she was used to a standard departure time of 7:30am with the Taupo Tramping Club.

The Saudi's didn't make much out of us as we fitted five bods into one car. We left Palmy in beautiful sunshine, and were surprised to see that most of the hills' mills weren't revolving. Through the gorge and the usual fog, arriving an hour later at the road end, where there were three other cars. After about an hour's walking we stopped for a rest at the ideal spot, with views down into the valley. Time to apply sunscreen and eat "Ian commiseration chocolate."

We arrived at the hut at lunchtime, which we spent in the sun. It seemed appropriate when a pair of paradise ducks flew overhead. The river bed was our path home, and conversations ranged from pre-election shenanigans, to last year's February floods (damage still evident), to the quality of the transfer on John's T-shirt.

DJ's dairy has amazingly good-value ice creams: 2 scoops for a dollar. The queue stretched out the door. The value for the money, and summery weather, more than compensated for the absence of possum ice cream. Party: Neil Campbell, Barbara Maré, Shona Ellims, John Feeney, Doug Strachan.

Tapuae-o-uenuku – "In the footsteps of the rainbow god" 9 –12 September By Lance Gray

"Looks like Tiger country," says Malcolm. "You sure this is the route down Alasdair?" queries Janet, "Follow me!", says Graham. Lance looking at the Matagouri, Briar Rose, Bush Lawyer and Gorse makes sure he is tail-end Charlie on this one! Grovel does not do justice to the shit we just walked through

to the Hodder River. Five pairs of eyes try to discern a return route back to the very easy, no, ridiculously easy, four-wheel drive track we have just arm-chaired our way along not twenty minutes earlier.

“This way,” says Alasdair, as we dutifully follow our leader up the stream. ***What the five of us did not realise is that we were playing our role in a skit that the Keystone Cops, Monty Python or even the Goodies would be proud of.***



Janet, Graham & Malcolm atop Tapuae-o-uenuku

Finally, you get one of your party, preferably the leader to twist his ankle, not one hundred metres up the correct stream, and pull a thigh muscle, just to be certain of incapacitation, and then make the poor bastard grovel back up to the four-wheel drive through the vegetation just ventured. It must be noted here that Janet laid down the law and she and Malcolm assisted Alasdair back to the track before heading to Hodder Hut.

It was now bang on midday and we had essentially spent all morning finding the

First you send everyone through vegetation that Sleeping Beauty’s saviour would be hard pressed to slash through, next you send a bunch of experienced navigators up a stream (Shin) for an hour. You stop for a break and whip out the GPS just for the hell of it.

“Where are we Lance?” “Can’t be” exclaims Alasdair. “Hell, we’ve gone up the Shin.” Next you return back to the junction of the Shin and the Hodder and breathe a sigh of relief to the fact that there is no one there to witness your patent “balls-up”.

Hodder River! Alasdair was now spending the weekend sight-seeing around Blenheim. He visited A&E who told him his ankle showed all the classic signs of being twisted; the advice was free and he got a nice bandage (useless) for his troubles.

Graham and I were now under instructions to make for the hut, still some five hours away. We were not confident given our performance so far. We did however get a hurry along, not another 100 metres further up the stream, from a rather protective New Zealand Falcon

(Karearea) pair who gave us the courtesy of telling us to go away before attacking.

While not being too scary it was really cool to watch how they lined you up and came in with their claws extended. The yellow on their legs is really quite pronounced. This unfortunately was the end of the indigenous New Zealand lesson as for the remaining trip we saw lots of bloody goats. ***Having indulged in the water it was rather unpleasant to notice four dead goats in the river! Mmmmmmmmm.***

This time we actually looked at the map and noticed a big sidle in the offing, and up it went. As sidles go it was good as you lose very little ground heading into the valley ahead. Janet and Malcolm though decided to first have a go at the gorge but decided climbing waterfalls wasn't their thing. They'd had enough action for the day. Against the odds Graham and I made the hut by 5pm and Janet and Malcolm followed an hour later.

I decided to encourage Janet and Malcolm with much hand-clapping and support up the final 200 metres to the hut as it is rather steep any time of day. Janet thought I was taking the piss given the choice of language that returned. Malcolm was too hammered to say anything. Even if he was upset there was only the politest of comments from Malcolm.

This irritated the hell out of Graham who having suffered at the hands of Malcolm's politeness, and the disastrous effect it was having on hut relations, lashed out at us one particular breakfast as we fought over who would do the dishes. "I can't believe what I am witnessing!" he groaned. "You're just too bloody polite Malcolm!" Malcolm of course praised Edith and then we returned to the most popular topic of the trip: sheep.

Now Janet is something of a sheep psychologist and Malcolm and Janet shared sheep stories, with one quick venture to cattle, before returning to their adored subject. Graham and I shadow-boxed over politics with him calling me, rather affectionately, a "chardonnay drinking, liberal,

commie, pinko." ***I really came to appreciate the patches in his bush-shirt and the way his hair tufted out in various directions. We got on famously! (I think).***

Oh yeah, the climb itself. Without Alasdair we decided that a trip to the saddle between Tapuae-o-uenuku and Alarm would indicate exactly where to go. Well at the saddle we were really none the wiser so being lazy we thought we would just sidle below the steep bits and then pick a snow slope to the summit ridge. On snow Graham was rocket-propelled and we all struggled to keep up. Janet wondered aloud briefly about why we didn't have helmets and possibly a rope but this quickly abated when we found tamer tiger country. The summit ridge was fun as you could imagine yourself climbing something remotely difficult at high altitude. We were having a great time.

Typically, a committee formed just below the summit and politeness reigned as we determined the criteria for who should go first. I suggested qualifications, but lost out to age, so Graham was eventually selected to go first. The summit area is a great spot with views to the North Island, east towards the Seaward Kaikoura's, west to Kahurangi, and south to Nelson Lakes and beyond. Photo's all round, a quick discussion in favour of the round-trip, and off we went in noticeably softer snow.

"Betchya he'll wave us over," says Janet. "Why do you say that," I ask? "Because he's too lazy. No way does he want to climb that easy slope to the saddle." Sure enough we arrive to find Graham tackling easily the steepest slope of the day just so we get to the saddle without any more climbing. We watch as he snowploughs gently into some rocks. The snow is so soft now we remove our crampons and slosh our way down without too much drama. By the time we reach the hut we all have sore feet but are happy. We spend an hour outside having cups of tea and enjoying the still, warm, conditions. You'd almost think it was Summer.

The return down the Hodder next day thankfully occurred without any dramas. We were again welcomed by the falcon pair which to me was a real highlight. The greatest highlight however was finding the trail back to the four wheel drive track which is marked by a bloody great cairn on the true left 50 to 100 metres from the junction with the Shin. To cap it off the trail has its own gate and a sister cairn on the four wheel drive track. PLEASE ignore the little peg on a corner of the four-wheel drive track and make your way another 218 metres along the track to this cairn where an Auckland motorway of a path leads you, without thorn, to the river.

Moral of the story is don't be polite to your trip leader. Stop them and wrench the map out of their hands and have a bloody good look for your self. Alasdair as a teacher was probably testing our leadership abilities and we failed miserably because we were too busy talking about sheep!!

We were Alasdair Noble, Graham Peters, Janet Wilson, Malcolm Leary & Lance Gray.

Mt Tapuae-o-uenuku is 2858 metres high and an ideal introductory climbing experience. It is the highest point north of Mt Cook and commands superb views. Tappy as it is known is a superb three day trip. One day into the hut, a day climbing, and a day returning down the Hodder. Of course in Summer one party of eleven we read about in the hut book, had walked in and climbed Tappy in a day, with a bottle of champagne on the top to kick off the birthday celebrations. Best of all. When you drive out the Awatere Valley you can look back and see the magnificent sight of Mt Tapuae-o-uenuku staring back at you.

Tongariro-Ngauruhoe Trip 24-25 Sep by Warren Wheeler

Strong winds and showers were forecast but fortunately there was a promise of some clearing, so undeterred we set off on

Saturday morning. Unfortunately Patrick's turbo Renault Fuego decided to lose reverse gear after coming in over the judder bars to my flat. Undeterred by this mere trifle we duly headed off and had no further trouble except for some minor pushing involved from a park-up in Taihape.

Ruapehu was clear as we approached but unfortunately the west side of Tongariro was in thick cloud. Ngauruhoe was clear but we decided that was probably because the wind was too strong for the cloud to stay put. Undeterred by this prognosis we headed off up the Mangatepopo Valley along with a few day-trippers on the Tongariro Crossing. The snow was well up the mountain and the track was largely snow free. An extensive new section of board walk has been installed before the soda springs and a new toilet erected by the springs turnoff sign. Unfortunately the toilet site is much more exposed than the previous one around the corner and one of the doors had been ripped off already.

We entered the cloud half way up the Devils Staircase but undeterred we carried on with a good tail wind to ease the gradient. From South Crater we could see a small guided group struggling with the wind on the bare ridge up to Red Crater, but undeterred they made good, though erratic, progress and were soon out of sight.

We took the sheltered flat route across the western side of South Crater, with good firmish snow providing relatively easy going despite the odd protruding rocks. The gradient steepened as we headed up the north side of the crater rim. Fortunately the cloud lifted from time to time and presented us with the obvious low point to head for. Unfortunately it was a bit steep and Richard had never been in snow before, but undeterred he carefully followed Patrick's footsteps and with ice axe well-placed as instructed we were soon safely up and over.

Unfortunately we could not see how to get down in the cloud, but undeterred we strode off down towards North Crater. Fortunately the cloud lifted and we could see that the cloud was largely confined to the western flanks of the mountain, with clear views to the

north and east. Undeterred by the suggestion to sidle around the head of the valley Warren strode off down the snow gully “to avoid the mixed snow and rocks on the side”.

Fortunately the others agreed to follow, undeterred by the piffing down and up involved. A steady snow climb soon had us cresting the gap in the rim on the south east side of North Crater. Looking along the edge we could see a large crack in the snow above our diagonal line of footprints, but undeterred by our brush with death we turned to face the cloud racing eastwards and set off across the snow and soon found the deep secondary crater in North Crater – perfect place for a rock concert, but.

With a tail wind and scattered cloud we easily reached the east side of North Crater at just the right low spot in the rim and sidled down towards Central Crater, out of the cloud and with views to Taupo and over Blue Lake, which was completely ice covered. A good bumslide finished off our descent into the crater, and undeterred by the softer conditions Richard led the way across Central Crater to the small sulphur outcrop and thermal area at the edge of the lava field from Red Crater.

From here we took the snow gully up and were soon looking into Red Crater with the wind having dropped nicely. Unfortunately a rapid descent into South Crater was foregone in favour of the easier tracked route, which avoided a longer walk across the crater snow. Descending back to the carpark along the track we soon had views across a golden sky to Mt Egmont, with its peak nicely framed by the slopes on the near horizon. As dusk settled we drove off to our accommodation 20 minutes away at Eivin’s Lodge (\$20 each), and opted for a quick hot shower before indulging in the Saturday Fish Special at the café (good value at only \$12).

Eivins even had a TV for us to follow the historical “Frontier of Dreams” on TVOne. Next day we set off to implement part 2 of Plan A – summit ascent of Ngauruhoe via Pukekaikiore but the cloudy weather turned to drizzle as we reached the low saddle so decided to return around the northern base of

Pukekaikiore after first having lunch beside and under the dripping boulders.

Fortunately the cloud refrained from depositing any more moisture as we picked our way along the well-trodden trail, which was much easier than anticipated despite the lava rocks. The low cloud made for an eerie landscape, with steep bluffs and rocky crags rising up into the mist. Old marker posts appeared as we descended further past the last of the lava rocks thrown out by Ngauruhoe during its last eruption just 30 years ago.

After a good five hour tramp we were back at the carpark – happy with our choice of plan B. A visit to the DoC Visitor centre was in order to see the Audio-Visual on Volcanoes, despite the rain starting to settle in and home starting to draw us south - well worth a visit. Trip members: Richard Lockett, Patrick Janssen, Warren Wheeler.



Richard Lockett mashing his way up Mt Tongariro

**Interclub Quiz Night 29th Sep 2005
Hosted by PNTMC (by Anja Scholz)**

While the MTSC's team appeared with some supporters in tow, unfortunately Team Mountain Equipment had to cancel unexpectedly, and there was no sighting of MUAC's team – did they not find the venue, or were they just too scared? Therefore, to make the event a bit more competitive, PNTMC sent a second team into the ring, so the following teams eventually took the stand:

PNTMC: Heather, Tony and Graham
MTSC: Doug McNeur and team
"Not the MUAC team" (PNTMC 2): Fiona, Peter (van Essen) and Richard

Quizmaster Warren had sorted the questions into various categories, and with a mind numbing array of adding, subtracting, doubling and inverse quadrupling modes for the scored points, the speed writing and mathematical abilities of lovely assistant Anja were severely tested.

Questions were far ranging and covered many subjects:

- Geography (North and South Islands, Spain ...);
 - Botany (know your Maori plant names ...);
 - Numismatics (which birds are found on New Zealand coins ...);
 - NZ Fauna (really stink if you don't know your coprosma foetidissima ...);
 - Tramping Gear Brand Names (never mind who MAKES the "Lullaby"-sleeping bag: who the hell NAMES it? ...);
 - Gear use (a doddle for masters of the one handed bowline ...)
 - FMC and DOC news regarding the country's parks
- and of course the "Ruahine-Special": a set of questions to cater to every possible answer**

that Tony Gates might have up his sleeve.....

While many correct answers, and some disturbing ones, came forward, and a few bewildered faces indicated who had not perused the latest Wilderness and FMC Magazines, the event was dominated by the PNTMC team, especially by Tony who answered many questions in unparalleled speed. Good on ya, Tony, for your intimate knowledge of every Ruahine and Tararua sidecreek and the range dividing its headwaters from the upper reaches of the opposite tarn (??)!!

In the end the PNTMC team managed to score the Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy for this year's event, with "Not the MUAC team" coming second, closely followed by the MTSC team.

Chokkies for all and a cuppa ended the Quiznight – and the 2006 teams will have started swatting for the next event hosted by MUAC.

**Sledge Track 2 Oct
By John Feeney**

Somehow we all managed to work out the complexities of adjusting our clocks to day-light saving time, to leave Countdown car park shortly after the scheduled time of 8am. With the weather looking fine it was an easy 20 minute drive to the start of the track.

We were quickly off on our walk following the frequently sign posted track with its undulating gradient beside the river to the start of the up hill section. The quality of the track and the precision with which the many steps and terraces have been so comfortably formed is owed to such generous benefactors as our own Terry Crippen.

On reaching the up hill section to the Platinum Mines we were warned the track was only suitable for experienced trampers (but we went on any way!). Although a bit muddy in places we were treated to some great views of native ferns, tall punga trees, an area of Toe

Toe bushes and adventure scenes of the Manawatu.

Towards the top end of the track we somehow managed to veer off on to a side track which led us away from the mines and onto a road beside the water catchments area. After a bit of discussion we retraced our route and found ourselves back in the right area very close to the platinum mine shafts.



John, Shona, Neil and Barbara

Equipped with a head lamp the only girl in our group, Shona, headed down the ladder at the first shaft we came to for a better look, of course the guys in our group were too sensible to follow her. Predictably she reported the shaft was wet and mossy and cold! Further on we saw the start of several old mine shafts and also one tunnel which we were able to walk partly into.

After stopping for lunch at Red Rock and admiring the view of Palmerston we continued our walk around the loop track to rejoin the main walkway back to the river and car park. The trip was uneventful but spectacular in places. We passed several groups of walkers, including one lady with a push chair out for a Sunday walk over the

river section of the track. It's great to see this area so close to the city is accessible to many and being well used. Luckily the rain held off until we got back to Palmerston having completed a very satisfying walk.

We were Neil Campbell, Duncan Hedderley, Shona, Andy and John Feeney.

East Coast Explorations By Duncan Hedderley

Herbertville is a little place - a dozen houses and a pub/store/post office - on the coast due east of the Manawatu Gorge. About 4km along the beach is Cape Turnagain, where seals can be seen in the winter. On a good day it is a pleasant walk.

It looked like a good day as we drove in from Dannevirke - blue sky, verdant fields, lambs gamboling, like a tourist brochure. Unfortunately, it was quite windy. We crouched in the lee of the cars, putting on boots, thankful that the wind was going to be on our backs as we walked to the Cape. Most of us waded across the Tautaki stream and headed up the beach. Ian, pleading his injured ankle, took his car along a back road and joined us halfway up the beach.

The walk there went smoothly, apart from Shona and Michelle stumbling into an area of dunes where seals were basking. The walk back was invigorating - at least, I think that was what Warren was saying through the howling wind and blown sand. Michelle and Shona wrapped up like Bedouin; the rest of us got sand blasted. It was good to get back to Ian's car.

Ian had asked the pub if they could do us afternoon tea. It was only 1.30, but, well, it was laid on, and coffee and cake are always welcome... Shona mentioned that we had passed the road to Waihi Falls on the way in, and suggested we stop off there on the way back. If you are in the area, they are well worth a look - a river the size of the Pohangina going over a 10 metre mudstone cliff. Elsewhere, locals would be charging admission and selling hotdogs; here, there is just a parking area and some steps put in by the council.

From there Ian took the back roads to Pahiatua, while Neil headed back via Dannevirke; both of us getting back to Palmerston a bit after 5pm. A good day out. We were Ian, Warren, Richard, Monica, Neil, Michelle, Shona and Duncan.

Knights – Knights Loop 9 Oct 2005 by Anja Scholz

The forecast for Saturday was shocking, Sunday not too bad..... so six keen trampers decided to stick to the Sunday outing and opt for the hills.

Janet Wilson, Susan and Andy Vince, Warren Wheeler, Anja Scholz and trip leader Peter Darragh were the hopefuls on their way up the Pohangina Valley, where the previous night's dumping had left snowy patches down to low altitude, e.g. wee patches down to the carpark past Sixtus Lodge. Accordingly we were prepared for a spot of cold, and sure enough the first river-crossing left most of us with wet and cold feet, brrrr.

Ascending via the Knights Track (aka the sweet, short and steep one) we warmed up somewhat, and the snowy patches proliferated with altitude. A shower or two made us don the rain gear but did not otherwise halt our progress. Once in the open, however, the temperature plummeted somewhat, alas, the steeper angle, and 30-40 cm snowcover, made for another "keep warm whilst ascending" feature, until we hit the top of the ridge with the track (snow covered and misted in....) to Shorts Track branching off.

The decision NOT to do a traverse was made quite unanimously by us six and the 100 mph wind that was blowing up there. We huddled about 50 m down from the ridge, and out of the worst of the wind, for a quick "add energy to your day" snack, before retracing our steps back up to the ridge and down quickly via Knights. I had not bothered to put gloves on earlier, and my hands had been fine, until we hit the wind again – which seemed to have got stronger and colder in those 5 minutes of huddling – while descending the first 100 m or so. Within about a minute I thought I'd get instant frostbite (just add wind and water) and struggled to put the gloves on.

At another break on the way down in more sheltered conditions we could relax, and the rest of the trip was uneventful – the cars were a welcome sight (not much 'sight' whatsoever up on the tops...), but the closed Kimbolton Café (for sale) was not ☹. No sight-seeing, not even a coffee on this trip, but suffering the

slings and arrows of outrageous weather and getting a whiff of rather fresh air made for an invigorating day out.

Kapiti Island 16 Oct by Martin Lawrence

The sea was calm on Sunday morning with a cap of cloud on Kapiti. It isn't far to the island but I, for one, am capable of turning green on the smallest of waves, so this was a great start. ***Janet must have sold this trip well as PNTMC accounted for the full 50 people allowed by DOC for one day.***

I joined the first of the two boatloads. As instructed, I peered into my backpack for any stray cats or mice and climbed on for the tractor trip down to the sea. The trip was over soon after it started and we settled under a shelter for a half hour introductory talk by a DOC person. The talk was interesting, especially with the off-stage antics of the local kaka.

After a group photo shoot from Janet, we left the second group to have their talk and headed off and up at a very leisurely pace. We saw fewer birds than we heard but were very happy to spot Whiteheads, Kakas, Stitchbirds, Saddlebacks and Weka. ***And right at the top we were surprised to see a group of three Takahe!***

We had lunch at the top, and did try not to drop food for the foraging Wekas. The cloud cap cleared in time to give us a view of the other side before heading back down. We had time on the way down to wait by the Stitchbird feeding stations and to check out the Takahe in the grass at the bottom.

I am sure that all in the large group enjoyed the day out as much as I did. I know that a couple of people with injured ankles still managed to get around and see the birds. Thanks to Janet for a well-organised trip. Any more big ones coming up?

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