



Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club

Newsletter February 2026

www.pntmc.org.nz

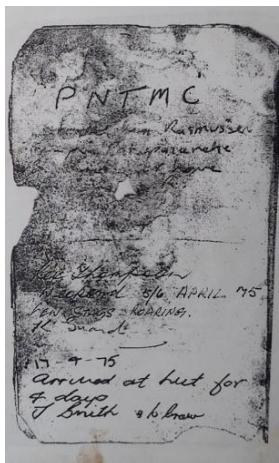
c/- Society of Friends, 227 College St, PN



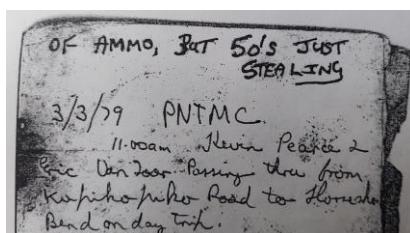
Photo by Grant Christian: Kelly Knight Hut

Welcome to 2026

Our club newsletter is a community of stories, notices, advice, records, track information, hut maintenance, conservation efforts, reviews, plans and opportunities for adventure and fun. I was reminded recently of our ever presence in the backcountry, spotting several PNTMC entries in a xerox copy of the first hut book in Punga hut, dating as far back as 1975. Sadly, I could not link these to any trip report in our archive and wondered if they were *unofficial* trips by club members who couldn't help adding our club's name regardless. Seems appropriate given a recent *official* club trip to Mangahao biv via Punga hut to include them pictured here (see overleaf).



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Club members can contribute content to our newsletter at any time of year. Contributions can come in the form of notices, club trip reports, personal (*unofficial*) trip reports (tell us about your adventures), advice on tried and tested gear (what's in my pack? (or what not to do!)), poetry, photography, short stories and more. This month's newsletter includes an intrepid record on how to get to North Mangahao biv, an all-weather trip to Rangiwhahia hut which draws attention to the value of noticing the small intricate details of the eco-systems we tramp through, and a carefully planned route in the Ruahine's designed for hut bagging.

Verity Elder (editor) – Summer

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 February

Map Reading and Orientation

sWarren Wheeler

Come along to our annual introduction map reading and orientation workshop at the Quakers Hall. Whether you are a beginner looking to learn or experienced and looking to brush up on your skills, come along for a practical hands-on-evening of map reading and compass orientation. This is the second workshop for our Beginners programme.

Thu 26th November

Map Reading and Orientation 2.0

Warren Wheeler

This is workshop 3 of our Beginners Programme. Come along to our second map reading and orientation workshop at the Quakers Hall. This workshop builds on the skills explored in the earlier map reading and orientation workshops with practical hands-on activities.

Upcoming Trips

Sun 8th February Iron Gates Gorge Medium

Warren Wheeler

06 356 1998

A classic summer Ruahine trip along the Oroua River. From the Pedersen Road carpark we follow the track for about 40 minutes to Alice Nash Memorial Hut (Heritage Lodge) and carry on along the sidle track until reaching the river itself and a chance for a dip in the pool there. We then head downstream for a delightful 2-3 hours, criss-crossing where necessary until reaching the impressive gorge, which is about 100m long. We can either return via the stoat trappers track or swim and pack float through before climbing out and back to the carpark. Depart 7.45am from Milverton Park.

Sun 15th February Beginner Tramp 1: Mikimiki Track Easy

Verity Elder

0212601885

The Mikimiki track follows an old logging tramine and passes over a low saddle into the Mikimiki watershed. This trip provides an introduction to low land forest tramping in the Tararua's and stream crossing. Return via the same track. NB: In the event of heavy rain prior to this trip we will shift to plan B and tramp to Atiwhakatu Hut from Holdsworth carpark (similar grade track and walking time). Contact Verity Elder no later than 5pm Friday 13th February. Track grade: Walking track. (Kiriwhakapapa camping area and car park). Walking time: 5 hours return Fitness level: low to moderate Meeting point: Milverton Park, 7:30am Travel time: 1hr 30 minutes approx one way.

Sat 21st February - Sun 22nd February Lake Surprise Loop and Tihia Loop Medium

Adam Matich

022 358 8062

We head north across Sunset Ridge from the Turoa car park to eventually cross the Mangaturuturu River above the 56 m waterfall and sidle up onto the around-the-mountain track. After dropping down through Lake Surprise we will visit the 23 m waterfall, downstream of the hut, and then spend the night at said hut. On day two we make our way

back to the vehicles and take the long way home via the Rotoaira Road (SH47) towards Turangi. Across the road from Lake Rotopounamu is Tihia, a peak with a loop track over the top, and which will make for a nice day trip.

Sun 22nd February Stanfield Hut Easy

Woody Lee
0210 444 552

A nice mix of easy bush and stream travel to this hut up the east branch of the Tamaki River. Depart Miverton Park at 8.00am.

Trips beyond February can be viewed on the club website '[trip card](#).'

Trip Grading - Trip grades depend on many factors, including weather and terrain. A reasonably proficient trumper should expect to do the trips in the following times:

Easy (E):	3-4 hrs
Medium (M):	5-6 hrs
Fit (F):	about 8 hrs
Fitness Essential (FE):	over 8 hrs

BWD = Best weather day of a weekend

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

Gear for trips - Minimum gear for day trips is appropriate footwear, pack, lunch and snacks, waterproof jacket, over-trousers, gloves, warm hat, torch, toilet paper, matches or a lighter, sunblock, first aid kit, and a survival bag or space blanket. Each person needs to be equipped to survive overnight.

Overdue Trips - If a club trip is late returning, please do not worry, there is probably a good reason for the delay. If you are in any doubt, please phone Bruce van Brunt 06 328 4761 or Verity Elder 0212601885

Notices

PNTMC is associated with **Federated Mountain Clubs** <http://fmx.org.nz/>

Trip Reports

Rangi Botanising – (18th January).

Report by Kirstie Priddle

Photos by Camile Penny and Warren Wheeler

After meeting at Milverton park and the usual greetings the four of us set off in Warren's car for the drive to Rangiwahia hut car park. Although its a mid summer day its very grey, overcast, cooler at 13 (ish) degrees and threatening rain. After arriving we followed the well-formed easy track, stopping along the way a few times to look at plants. I thought it was neat stopping and looking at small intricate tiny plants that would normally not be noticed. After a couple of hours, we arrived at Rangiwahia hut for lunch, we sat inside as it was raining and windy.

Layers of clothes were put on as it was cold in the hut. After lunch we went above the hut and along the ditch track botanising for only a short time due to the adverse weather, before we started the trek down. Camille and Warren found a large Weta, they helped it off the track as it was out in the open. About two hours later we arrived back to the carpark, stopping for a quick look at the entrance to Ian McKean Pinetum on Renfrew road, I never knew this place existed and would like to visit properly and look at all the interesting trees and tracks in there one day. We drove back via Apiti, then stopped at Cheltenham for the obligatory ice cream and then returned to Milverton park. Overall, a great day. My takeaway is, to be more observant of the small stuff. Thanks to Warren as trip leader for organizing this trip.





We were Richard Warren (trip leader), Camille, Angela, Kirstie.

North Mangahao Biv – (8-9th November).

Report by Monika Coles

Photos by Chris Parker and Grant Jensen

Prior to the trip, at the clubnight BYO Pics presentation on Thu 27th November, notices and upcoming trips were read. The last trip mentioned was a trip to North Mangahao Biv run by Chris Parker. I have not looked at any trips for about a year while recovering from injuries but going to North Mangahao Biv had been on my list for a long time. My mind started to work through possibilities... Chris sat behind me, so I turned around... "When are you planning on going?" I asked. His reply was "Saturday" ... "What?" I said, "THIS Saturday???"

I had recently started doing short hikes again to test the injuries and I had a good idea about how they behaved, and have read up and talked to enough people to know what to expect. The biggest temptation was, that one of the party members would have a key to the gate and we could drive to the start of the track eliminating the road bash, which would be a lot less aggravating to my foot. Chris also had been to the Biv before and the weekend weather forecast was good. Since we were going via Punga hut, which I have been to already, I knew that I could stay the night there as a backup plan. Chris's daughter was also going to go and reading and re-reading the trip card description... Easy-Medium... Relaxed trip... and after 24hours analysing it, I was in.

To set the scene, this is what was on the trip card:

Sat 29th - Sun 30th November North Mangahao Biv Easy-Medium Chris Parker... This replaces the trip to Poutaki Hut, which is currently affected by logging. It will be a relaxed trip from Gordon Keer forest through some scrubby sections to the biv, the southern-most hut in the Tararuas. Well worth a visit but only has room for two, so we will be tenting nearby.

We all fitted into two cars, drove up Scotts Road and as promised, had access through the gate to Gordon Keer Forest, which normally one needs to walk from as the gate is usually locked. But not for us, not today. We had the luxury of a key and closing the gate behind us we drove as far as we could on the forest roads, with a quick stop where we checked out Te Whare o Moturimu on the way.

After parking our cars, we set off on the uphill to get us all warmed up. Mind you, there wasn't much need for that, the weather was great and we were all in good spirits. The hike to Punga hut was straightforward; we were enjoying it especially because we knew that the easy walking will not last long. Chris suggested to take a photo of us all while we were still smiling.



We had a nice break at Punga hut, enjoying the sun, checking out the hut, having a bite to eat and chatting. Chris started to investigate among the group who would like to lead from then on. We all assumed and agreed that Chris should be the one leading since he was the only one of us who has done it before, but Chris was quite keen to give the opportunity of 'way finding' to somebody else since he had already had the chance himself. Mike's name seemed to come up in that conversation a number of times and a nice banter about it was going on for a while. Something about an opportunity for not getting us lost, or was it, getting us lost...



Anyway, we set off with Chris leading, but as there is no track between the two huts, within a few meters we were looking at our phones for navigation and Chris declared... See what I've meant, we can try and go as close to the way as I went, but at the end of the day, each and every way will be different. It's just about picking the best and easiest way possible while trying to ignore any markers and routes that look way too nice and tempting as they would stray us off to places that we don't want to go to. So, team effort really. Trying to stay on the right contour line, however, that was not always possible as we found out, as sometimes you either need to get to the other side via a gully or go up high around a slip. As we were navigating through, the first part of the bush was quite open with relatively easy walking. Sometimes we had to backtrack and try a different way, so the leading kept changing mainly between Chris and Mike, but it was making me think this is not as bad, after all. This is pretty easy walking.

Even made me wonder why I had long sleeves and long trousers since it wasn't like we were trying to push through some overgrown leatherwood or something. After a while we came across this beautiful sunny clearing and it was just the right time for a break. Everyone grabbed a spot and enjoyed the sun, the views and more stories, banter and laughter. Life was great. We had been making good time and there was still plenty of time left to get to the Biv. After a lovely break, we set off again. The fun banter about who got who lost the last time started up again, and that it was Mike's turn to get us lost, in which Mike swiftly replied "Well, last time, there was a track to get us lost from, which in here ... well, here, there is no track to get us lost from :-)"

The joy of relatively easy walking was not meant to last. The second part was complete opposite to the first part. And that was true for the way there as well as for the way back the next day. On the way there, while trying to get around a slip and not dropping too low we ended up way too high. As walking became scrambling and the bush started to close in, everyone stopped, Chris turned around and said "**I think we lost relaxing**". Everyone tried to find a way through the Horopito, mainly by crawling underneath it while getting periodically stuck and having backpacks caught in everything above and around you. Progress was slow and a way out nowhere in sight. For me that was fun and part of the authenticity of what you hear the trip is like. Crawling for some time was great for being off my foot... trying to find a silver lining... Chris had also warned us prior to the trip to expect bruises and cuts. I reckon mainly for us it was the slipping/falling over and sliding on our bums (well that could have just been me)... nothing major anyhow and just part of an adventure!



Once up at the tops the cooler breeze was welcomed by all. And after a bit over 6 hours covering 5.4km we reached North Mangahao Biv. The time also included looking for a campsite, which proved to be way too high and quite a far from the Biv, so just as we were almost there, we all decided to turn back and camp by the Biv instead. This turned out to be a great choice. Three people fitted into the Biv and there was just enough space to squeeze three tents next to the Biv. Everyone seemed to have a good sleep, with one person proclaiming it was one of the best sleeps he had in a long time!



The next day we successfully avoided the Horopito on the return trip, only to start off with a bash through leatherwood. When trying to get around a slip, we ended up quite high which made for a very slow start. With the previous day's navigation experience, Grant, Chris, Mike and Ryan were all debating the best route and best option moving forward. It was a great team effort and once we got through the leatherwood, it wasn't long and we were back at Punga hut and back at our cars. Thanks, Chris, for organising and thanks to everyone for a great trip and great company, I look forward to another adventure together.



We were Chris (leader), Mike, Ryan, Grant, Ernie and Monika.

Off the Beaten Track – Club Contributions

Grant Christian shares his ambitious undertaking toward hutbaggers.co.nz's 'Ultimate Ruahine Rebel badge.'

Hut Bagging in the Ruahine Ranges – (3rd & 4th November / 11th – 15th December).

Report and Photos by Grant Christian

For a few years I have been logging huts visited on hutbagger.co.nz. It is great inspiration for places I haven't been to before. This year I found they were awarding badges for visiting a specified number of huts in various parks. I had earned the 'Ruahine Rebel badge' for visiting at least 40 huts in the Ruahine Ranges. Reading the information I discovered a higher award, The 'Ultimate Ruahine Rebel' if you get to all huts in the Ruahines. They have 57 on their list! I started wondering if I could get to all those huts before I had to hang up my boots. Being retired does make it easier to find the time but I'm no longer keen on 8-10 hour days of big hills and bad weather.

I studied where all the huts were that I had yet to visit and started planning possible trips. Most of them involve river crossings or river travel so I needed to wait for suitable weather.

In early November there were a few days of settled weather forecast so I decided on a trip to Gold Creek & Barlow Huts & Kylie Biv. It was a long drive from Taupo to the carpark at the end of Wakarara Road. I started walking in the afternoon in fine calm weather. The walk up the Makaroro River was easy travel and lead to the ridge that goes to Gold Creek Hut. The beginning of this track was very steep and hard going but the slope eventually eased and before long I was descending to the hut by Gold Creek. From here I returned by the same track to the Makaroro and headed upriver another hour or so to Barlow Hut. I noted on the way up the river that vehicles had driven up here and thought it would be an easy enough route for my Landcruiser.

I was the only person in residence at Barlow Hut. During the night it became very windy and the wind had not dropped by the time I was ready to go in the morning. My plan had been to do a quick day trip to Kylie

Biv and return to Barlow Hut. I decided that it was probably going to be too windy for travel along the tops so would head home instead. It was disappointing not to get to Kylie because it was a long drive to get back here. I also regretted that I had not visited Kylie when returning from Ruahine Corner via Upper Makaroro Hut late November 2023. We had discussed that option, but the weather was unpleasant. The walk back down the river to the car was very gusty and I got buffeted around by the regular gusts, particularly in the narrow section of the valley.

The opportunity for another trip arose in December. We had been having hot weather for several days and the weather was forecast to stay good for another five days. This time I headed for Renfrew Road and walked up past Rangiwahia Hut to the Whanahuia Range in fine but cooler weather. My route took me north along the range and then down to Pourangaki Hut where I spent my first night. The next day I climbed 800 metres to the tops again. The DOC sign said 1 hour to Iron Peg. I looked across to what I thought must be Iron Peg and thought that's quite a bit of up and down to get there in an hour. I walked another 15 minutes to the turn off to Waterfall Hut and found another sign to Iron Peg which said I still had an hour to go. Hmm, slow progress I thought. It took me another hour to reach Iron Peg. The sign at Iron Peg said 5 hours to McKinnon Hut. I had planned to get to Crow Hut via McKinnon but started to think it was going to be too longer day. Travel along the tops was easy and I arrived at McKinnon in 2 ½ hours. I decided to stay there rather than press on for possibly another couple of hours to Crow Hut. I would need to stay out for an extra night. Thankfully phone coverage was good, and I could let my wife know I would be home a day later.



The following day I did a light day trip to Crow Hut and return to McKinnon. It was quicker than expected and I spent quite a bit of time at Crow Hut. Next morning I headed back up to the Hikurangi Range and along to Iron Peg, followed by Wooden Peg where I turned for Kelly Knight Hut. The route down through the tussock to the bush line was difficult with large tussock hiding depressions into which a leg could easily disappear. It was hard to follow where other people had walked, and I needed to be careful not to be cut off by the Leatherwood. Once into the bush the track was great and I enjoyed the interesting shapes of the Kaikawaka trees (aka Pahautea, NZ Cedar). The track led to a swing bridge across the river to the hut, where I spent a relaxing afternoon.

The final day started with a long climb back up to the Whanahuia Range. The weather was still fine and calm and I enjoyed an easy walk along the tops. Soon after reaching the turn off to Rangiwahia Hut, I saw three people in the distance behind me. The first people I had seen since leaving Rangi four days earlier. I continued to Deadman's track and headed downhill to the car.

This trip took my total of huts visited in the Ruahine Range to 48, 3 of which aren't counted for the 'Ruahine Rebel badge.' I have 11 to go to get the 'Ultimate Ruahine Rebel' badge.

Palmerton North
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Send to PNTMC



PNTMC Newsletter February 2026

- Upcoming Trips and Club Nights

- Notices
- Trip Reports: Rangi Botanising, North Mangahao Biv, Hut Bagging in the Ruahine Ranges

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