



# Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club

Newsletter March 2026

[www.pntmc.org.nz](http://www.pntmc.org.nz)

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



Photo by Woodey Lee: Homes Ridge in the wind, on route to Stanfield Hut

## 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 March**

**Stockholm Archipelago**

**Stephen Legg**

A whole different world of adventure awaits off the coast of Sweden, hopping from island to island by ferry (or row boat) and walking or cycling across to the next.

**Thu 26th March**

**Beginners Workshop 4: What's in my pack?**

**Verity Elder**

PNTMC members share and talk about gear they have in their pack: Emergency gear, Prepare for all weather, Hydration, Energy food, etc... Beginners and PNTMC members are welcome.

## Upcoming Trips

### Sat 7th March Maharahara *Medium*

Woody Lee  
0210 444 552

This Saturday trip involves a good steady climb up this beautiful Ruahine forest track to the bushline, with great views on a clear day.

### Sun 8<sup>th</sup> March Ohau Gorge *Easy-Medium*

Warren Wheeler  
06 3561998

*(Date changed from 15 March)* Another classic summer river trip with a sure chance of a swim in at least one of several pools. We start from Poads Road carpark behind Levin, cross paddocks to the Tararua Forest Park and take the sidle track above the river for less than an hour before crossing Blackwater Stream bridge and head downriver for another 3 hours or so. Depart 8.00am Milverton Park.

### Sun 15th March Arawaru *Medium*

Stephen Legg  
027 647 0094

Arawaru is the northern-most high point in the Tararua Forest Park and makes a nice local loop trip, going along the Sledge Track to Quartz Creek and up to the summit trig. We return via the Otangane Track or return back down the same way. Depart Milverton Park at 8.00am.

### Sat 21st March - Sun 22nd March Wainuiomata: The Peak – Paua Ridge Loop *Medium-Fit*

Adam Matich  
022 358 8062

We will head from the Catchpool Road End into and down the Orongorongo River to camp somewhere near Peak Stream, for the night, so not a long day. Next day, bright and early, we will climb the spur all the way up to "The Peak" and head NE along the tops to Tapokopoko, from which we will return to the river, via Paua Ridge, and out.

### Sun 22nd March Beginner Tramp 3: Blue Range Hut *Easy*

Verity Elder  
0212601885

This is a typical backcountry tramping track. Expect a rough and unformed track surface and an uphill climb with a fantastic reward. The very cute and happily situated Blue range hut looks out over the Waingawa river valley and peaks beyond. Contact Verity Elder no later than 5pm Friday 20th March. Track grade: tramping track. (Kiriwhakapapa Road end). Walking time: 5-6 hours return Fitness level: moderate to fit Meeting point: Milverton Park, 7:30am Travel time: 1 hr 30 minutes approx one way.

### Sat 28th March Beehive Creek *Easy-Family*

Doug Strachan  
06 353 6526

Enjoy the autumn colours in the Pohangina valley as we crisscross our way up the sandy creek and back again. Buzz Bars to follow lunch at the road end. Depart Milverton Park 8.30am.

### Sun 29th March Sheridan Creek *Easy*

Richard Lockett  
06 323 0948

Otaki Forks was the centre of a thriving timber industry. We will wade across the Waiotauru River to explore the old tramway and other logging relics up this side creek. Depart 8.00am Milverton Park.

Trips beyond March can be viewed on the club website [‘trip card.’](#)

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

Easy (E):	3-4 hrs	Other Grades:
Medium (M):	5-6 hrs	- Family (Fam)
Fit (F):	about 8 hrs	- Technical skills (T)
Fitness Essential (FE):	over 8 hrs	- Inst (Instruction)
BWD = Best weather day of a weekend		

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

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

## Notices

**Easter Explorer Series** is coming 3-6 April 2026 - in lieu of a multi-day trip this year we have programmed a variety of day trips to incorporate into your other long weekend activities.... or maybe do all four!

- **Fri 3rd April Easter Explorer 1 - Coppermine Creek Loop** Easy-Medium - Warren Wheeler 06 356 1998
- **Sat 4th April Easter Explorer 2 - Totara Reserve** Easy-Medium - Warren Wheeler 06 356 1998
- **Sun 5th April Easter Explorer 3: Paekakariki Escarpment Walkway** Easy - Nicola Wallace 021 209 0720
- **Mon 6th April Easter Explorer 4 - Sunrise-Waipawa North Bran** Medium Doug Strachan 06 353 6526

Check out the [trip card](#) for details.

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

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## Trip Reports

### **Stanfield Hut – (22<sup>nd</sup> February).**

Report by Woodey Lee

Photo Warren Wheeler

On a windy morning, four of us left Milverton Park at around 7.30 am and drove to the Ashurst petrol station, where we met Warren. With five people packed into my car, we continued on to our destination. Traffic on the expressway was light, and by 9 am we arrived at the Tamaki West Road carpark, where we met Steve, who had recently returned to Hawke's Bay from Australia. He and his wife had spent the night in their campervan, but unfortunately, he wasn't keen to join us for the walk.



After a brief discussion at the picnic area, we crossed the Tamaki River and climbed up onto the Homes Ridge Track. Some of us even managed to keep our feet dry during the crossing.

Strong winds hit us along the open track, but once we entered the forest the conditions were much calmer. The river crossings were surprisingly easy, as the water level was quite low—something I had been worried about given the showers and rain earlier in the week.

We arrived at the hut at 11.20 am, where I boiled my billy and we enjoyed hot drinks. Two other parties arrived just as we finished lunch, including a father and his young kids from Dannevirke. It was great to see how experienced and enthusiastic the children were about the outdoors.

Our original plan was to return via the same route, but everyone agreed to take the river track back to the carpark instead. It turned out to be the perfect choice—no rain, not too hot, and enjoyable continuous river crossings. We arrived back at the picnic area at 1.40 pm.

On the way home, we stopped in Woodville for ice cream. A great Sunday trip out with good company.

We were Emma, June, Dev, Warren, and Woody (leader).

## Iron Gates Gorge – (8<sup>th</sup> February).

Report by Grant Jensen

Photos by Grant Jensen and Warren Wheeler

Warren rang me on Saturday evening to inform me that there weren't many people who had signed up for this walk and did I still want to go. I didn't want to inconvenience him with such few numbers, but silly me, everyone knows that trampers are always keen to head out into the hills for an explore for no other reason but just to go somewhere. So, the plan was to meet at Warren & Robyn's lovely property out in the Pohangina Valley and head along the beautiful scenic road to Apiti and then onwards to Petersons Road.

After arriving and chatting with some American tourists that had stayed overnight in the campground, we headed through the "iron gates" gate and down the farmland. Following what was once a logging road, I can see how this walk is suitable for first timers and young families. Crossing Umutoi Creek Bridge is a treat with information boards showing the original bridge that allowed logging trucks to travel across.

Within around 30 minutes from departing the car park we arrive at the Alice Nash Memorial Heritage Lodge. A family with young children were just leaving from having what looked like, from their children's faces, a very exciting sleepover with some friends.

After a brief snack, we continued on the track. Crossing Cumberfield Creek, the track rises quickly and then levels out. There was a recent slip which we managed to cross directly without issue but noticed afterwards that the track has been redirected above the slip.



When we could see the Oroua River, Warren pointed out to me points that we would be coming back down the river later that day, almost like mental navigation markers. The track comes down to the river some 400 metres before Tunupo Creek and this would be our first crossing for the day. Warren explained the 'mutual assist method' and we held each other's pack straps and crossed in tandem. On the other side of the river is a flat spot suitable for camping. Apparently there used to be a shelter here and there are some remnants of this. There is also a nice swimming hole.



It was now midday so an excellent spot to sit on a log and enjoy shared watermelon and fruit cake. Moments like these are exactly why I enjoy getting out into nature. After lunch, we followed alongside the river heading downstream inspecting some of the traps. The newer gas-powered bolt traps look very impressive and much more efficient.



It's not long before you need to get in the river proper to follow it. The choices are pack float through the deeper sections or simply find a shallow spot which at most was up to our waist. We went with the second option. Little time was needed in the water but as is always necessary with rivers, you may cross 20-30 times. As we wandered down the river, we recognised spots that we had looked down at earlier in the day from the track. Those mental navigation markers come in handy!

Before getting to "the Gorge", we arrived at the campground. What a handy little spot complete with a toilet. A perfect place to bring a young family to experience camping in nature without being too far from the car. Shortly after this, on the true left of the river there is a large slip. From here you can hear the sound of "the Gorge" as the water takes a hard right turn and is forced through the "Iron Gates Gorge". It really is very impressive. I understand with a larger group who are confident swimmers, it is possible to float down with summer levels.

From here we went briefly up the Umutoi creek to find the Stoat Trappers track which ascends quickly for about 100 metres vertical elevation. That track joins the main track just before the Umutoi Creek bridge where you then climb back to the car park across the farmland.

A lovely day out and thanks to Warren for as always sharing his knowledge and wit.

We were Warren (leader) and Grant J.



## **Rangiwahia Hut – Beginner Tramp – (30<sup>th</sup> February).**

Report and Photos by Verity Elder

PNTMC's first Beginner Tramp for 2026 was to Rangiwahia Hut. A popular trip, with many keen to explore a local hut, gain some experience or return to an old and familiar stomping ground, the conditions were not too hot (ideal temps for tramping) but with likelihood of some drizzle and low hanging cloud. We double checked we were prepared with a raincoat and an extra layer for warmth before leaving Milverton Park.

After an uneventful drive (*we took the Apiti route to avoid the recently closed Rangiwahia Road (sections only open to 4X4 following the recent storm)*) we set off from Renfrew road end, following the wide benched track up the switch backs to the first lookout. We stopped briefly for sips of water, to remove layers and the occasional snack. We crossed paths with numerous people descending after their overnight stay in the hut and reached the lookout for morning tea just over an hour into our walk (10:30am). With low clag there was unfortunately not much of a view. The temperature dropped slightly so we layered up and continued, reaching Rangiwahia Hut around 11:30am, for an early lunch. Some people opted to eat in the hut while others enjoyed the fresh air outside at the picnic tables.



With the tops not looking ideal and it too early to head backdown, Blair suggested we try and move some of the firewood delivered in large sacks by helicopter into the woodshed. This would allow the wood to dry before the winter months kicked in. We formed two lines, passing each piece of firewood from one person to the next, often with brief descriptions such as: ‘*very wet!*’ or ‘*very heavy!*’ or ‘*mushrooms!*’ and at one point ‘*spider!*’, and within 40 minutes or so we had successfully emptied 4 sacks! Our beginner trip now encompassed the importance of hut maintenance, including, how we leave huts for the next user. Before we left Warren and Blair quickly sweep the hut and we posed for a group photo (*also how Warren did not end up in the photo (he snuck back to return the broom, and I did not realise – sorry Warren)*). After a brief pause at the high viewpoint lookout to the right of the track, we began the decent back to the cars, reaching the carpark by 2:30pm.



We were Misa, Kere, Shahnaz, Julian, Raimudhi, Nicole, Shannon, Stephen, Warren, Blair, Graeme C, and Verity (leader)

## The Fern Walk – (31<sup>st</sup> January).

Report and Photos by Kim Vardon

PNTMC’s Beginner trip series 2026 kicked off once again with a workshop at the Fern Walk in the Pohangina Valley. Three PNTMC members were joined by three new enthusiasts as we set off for the trailhead at Tōtara Reserve.

Before stepping onto the track, Verity gathered the group for a short map-reading session in the carpark. Our challenge was to locate the Fern Walk on an older topo map – no track markings were included. Observing our surroundings – the curve in the road, the bridge we crossed before entering the carpark, the stream and the terraces of farmland – we located our position. As it happened, Ernie brought a more recent map which includes the track, so it was interesting to compare the two after we’d completed Verity’s challenge.



As we made our way around the loop, we paused to admire the magnificent examples of ancient forest (tōtara, matai, rimu and kahikatea). Verity weaved in navigation practice, stopping at key points so we could orient ourselves and confirm our location on the map, including the terraces that surround the loop track, bridged streams, and a farm road that borders the reserve.

2 hrs 30 mins later, we arrived back at the start. The morning was a great reminder to stay observant of our surroundings, and an inspired introduction to practical map-reading skills in a relaxed manner.



We were Verity (leader), Ernie, Misa, Linda, Kere and Kim.



## PNTMC Newsletter

### March 2026

- Upcoming Trips and Club Nights
- Notices
- Trip Reports: Stanfield Hut , Iron Gates Gorge, Rangiwahia Hut, The Fern Walk.

Send articles to the newsletter editor at [elderverity@gmail.com](mailto:elderverity@gmail.com)

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