THE BUSHBASHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAPIER TRAMPING CLUB INC — ISSUE 15, MARCH 2009

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The club meets at 7.30pm every second Thursday at Port Ahuriri School, before the weekend tramp

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Alison Greer and Sue Marshall head for Junction Top, on Day Two

The Desert Road to Makahu: A grunty six-day adventure...

...involving The "Tight Five": Geoff Donkin, Alison Greer, Julia Mackie, Sue Marshall and reporter **John Dobbs**

DAY ONE: Monday, Jan 5 2009 - Waipakihi Hut, 6.25h, 12.5km

WITH a forecast of fine and settled weather, we set out with high expectations on a trip seemingly planned for ages. Thanks to Murray White and Brian Mackie for safe transport, we began from the Kaimanawa Road end, after the obligatory group photos.

We headed upwards along the Umukarikari Range on a good track in beech forest with light cloud overhead. The cloud lifted to sunny conditions and it got hotter as we emerged from the beech trees to an open rocky area. Here were hundreds of Maori Onion plants in brilliant yellow flower, frequent white Celmisias and occasional patches of bluish harebells - a veritable flower garden. We were to see more of all these flowers at different stages of our trip. There were superb first views to Mt Ruapehu and Lakes Taupo and Rotoaira.

From then on, it was a poled route across the tops with 'undulations' - a rather overused phrase for the rest of the trip. But the clear conditions made navigation easy. Lunch was definitely a room with a view! A little while later, a father and two young sons caught us up, also on their way to Waipakihi Hut. This was soon followed by a slip and fall by Sue who went down rather heavily. We were concerned, but luckily nothing was broken and later there was only a little bruising.

By 4pm, we had arrived at the hut, with the father and sons there plus several middle-aged tramping friends. They all occupied one bunkroom leaving the other six-person bunkroom for us, which was nice. A very pleasant bunch of people; with the late sun streaming into the hut deck, we felt good about our first day's effort and slept well.

DAY TWO: Tuesday Jan 6 - Plan B campsite, 9.5h, about 11km

It was a typical cloudy Taupo area morning that soon burnt off to sunny conditions. We were the only ones doing 'the big trip' and farewelled our hut buddies at around 7.40am.

Continuing eastwards, we climbed up onto Junction Top with numerous rock cairns to highlight the route. Again, the excellent views out to Ruapehu and Lake Taupo had the cameras out. Then it was a well-worn descent to the Rangitikei River, crystal clear and low.

Then our first real test - where to pick up an old ridge track/route on the way up Te More. Well, the old track is there, possibly cut in the Forest Service days, but not maintained and heavily overlaid with windfall and snowfall. As we were now well into the private hunting block area that we had gained permission to

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from P1

traverse, it seemed that track maintenance was non-existent. We endured a two-hour struggle, the big packs getting snagged constantly. This was a draining exercise and when we finally emerged onto open rocky ridges, it was around 1.30pm and we were starving and very hot.

The good weather revealed the tops of the Island Range we were to head along, turning south and later more eastwards again. It was exhilarating to have such awesome views, and much easier to travel.

However, it was clear that our intentions for the day were too ambitious and we considered an alternative campsite by late afternoon. Our first close encounter with a helicopter occurred, as one came towards us on a narrow ridge top, literally right overhead. Soon, we found a suitable trackside camping spot, reasonably level and with terrific views. However, getting to a water supply involved a scramble down a scree slope, so supplies were a bit rationed that night.

The tents and Murray's fly were soon set up and we settled in for the night.

DAY THREE - Wednesday Jan 7 - Boyd Lodge, 12.5h, about 17km

You read that right. It took (me) 12.5hrs!

We were determined to catch up on the schedule and reach Boyd, no matter what.

As usual, we were up and active at 6am sparrowfart and away by 7.30. Start every day with a climb! This time up towards Te Wetenga, but not actually on this peak. Again, conditions were clear and calm, making for easy navigation. (Geoff did a sterling job of map and compass work, pointing out features, and aiming us mostly in the right direction.)

It was a steepish descent into the Mangamaire River. It was lovely to finally get down to the river and cool off, before a zig-zag climb again up the Pawerewera Ridge. We found some good rocks for a lunch stop.

Then there was some tricky work trying to find the correct ridge and entry point back into beech forest to descend into the Mangamingi Stream. Another bushbash session was ensured before we plunged/fell down to meet the stream, scratched and bloodied. There were no clear markers, cairns, or bits of plastic at all.

At least now it was pretty smooth going among tussock grasses on the banks or in the stream, heading downstream to the confluence with the Ngarururo River.

While Geoff and Julia shot away to find the shortcut to Boyd, the rest of us carried on as normal. Unfortunately, I made some memory errors and we went too far, having to retrace our steps and not reaching Boyd until 8pm, around 20 minutes later than Geoff and Julia.

The place seemed like Paddington Station, with a family group, hunters' partners awaiting their guys much later on. The place was littered with gear and supplies, as these folks were here for quite a few days. At least they tidied up and there were bunks for us all.

Several hours later, the hunters arrived and they slept in the kitchen. It was a beautiful clear night, and a few snores were heard…

Sunrise at Harkness Valley and below, the Tight Five at Boyd Lodge

DAY FOUR - Thursday Jan 8 - Harkness Hut, 6h 10m, 11.5km

A soft mist greeted us as we set off, but soon lifted. By the time we picked up the steady ridgeline track up to Tussock, it was clear, so we had great views down the valley. It was nice to be on well-maintained tracks again!

Soon we entered beech forest and then the descent into Tussock, a tidy well-kept six-bunk hut, in time for brunch. Then we followed a poled and tracked criss-cross of the Harkness valley and river into more tussocky areas in very hot conditions. We came across a lone Aucklander doing much the same route as us but in reverse, looking slightly unfit and carrying a rifle. He had read about the trip in a tramping book and decided to give it a go. After a chat, we left him to it.

With endless stream crossings (great for cooling down a bit), we made good time to Harkness, arriving at 1.40pm. All hoped we would have the hut to ourselves (we did), and we settled into this beautiful place for a decent clean-up in the river and time to relax. We had an excellent night with the door open and Julia electing to sleep out on the deck. We heard a loud sika deer along with several moreporks and even a kiwi calling. All agreed this was a spot we would like to return to.

DAY FIVE - Friday Jan 9 - Tira Lodge (Kelvinator!), 6.25h, 15km

As usual, the day began with a climb, up through beech forest to Te Puke trig, emerging from the trees to a cool breeze and superb views to Ruapehu. The few clouds were disappearing fast as we viewed the Kawekas, now not-too-distant. It was great to be on the tops in fine conditions and we made good progress over the undulations, and beech interspersed with open areas. There were more birds singing than on other days - plenty of long-tailed and shining cuckoos, tui and even a kaka. Then it was an open poled route before the turnoff to Mangaturutu Hut and then due south to Tira Lodge. The last section was a long slog. The 12-bunker was in tidy order and we got our wish for no company.

DAY SIX - Saturday Jan 10 - To Makahu car park, 6.5h, about 13km

The weather began to break, with dark clouds in the distance. It was good to be ending the trip. The usual climb up through beech trees with some really old markers among the plastic triangles, but little bird life. Breaking onto the tops towards Ballard Hut turnoff, it was cool with clouds out to the west. Mist rose up the flanks of Whetu, our next major point. From here, it was a solid slog along to North Kaweka with the alpine flowers looking lovely, gentians and little eye-brights. At times, the rising misty bits obscured the next pole marker until the last moment, but we wound our way along safely. Thankfully, there was no need to reach the actual summit of Kaweka North as the track then ambles across to the Kaweka J. It was along this easier section that we took our lunch break.

Then down, down the J, into a few drizzly bits and Trials Spur back to Makahu Saddle Hut. Mooching about were four overweight Dutch tourist types and one videoing us - which was not much appreciated.

Around 10 minutes later, as we were getting a brew going, who should turn up but Murray White; he thought we should still be descending the J. It was good to see him and he was quickly followed by Brian Mackie and Gary Marshall, our official taxi service.

We had completed the trip unscathed. The weather had been kind. The bushbashing was hard, but we worked as a team. Sadly, this exact trip will probably be impossible in a few years' time, because of the lack of track cutting or maintenance across the private block.

Kelvin's constant cry: "Are we there yet?"

Kaweka J - Back Ridge Hut, December 3 2008. Map: U20

Trampers: Rosemary Jeffery, Alison Greer, Ken Ross, John Marshall, John Gray, Vic Bullock, Graham Bell, Manfred Hausler, Keith Moretta, Ron Morison, Barry and Rita Motley and reporter **Kelvin Shaw**

ON a day that started with clear sky and only became cloudy by mid-afternoon, 13 trampers set off in warm weather from Makahu Saddle to tackle Kaweka J and points beyond.

Barry and Rita parted from the main group at the Domini Bivouac level, as they needed to return earlier than the rest.

The climb to the top, via Makahu Spur, was uneventful. The fight against contorta seems to be succeeding, with little new growth.

Eight of the main group reached the top and visited the memorial cairn. Ruapehu could be seen to the West but was unfortunately surrounded by cloud patches. The views towards Hawke's Bay and South were very clear.

Ken decided to separate, and was promptly charged with finding a spring water supply claimed to be just west of the peak. At this stage, we weren't sure if Ken had been sent looking for the source of the Nile, or the fountain of eternal youth, but he did find the source of the stream, which flows past Back Ridge Hut.

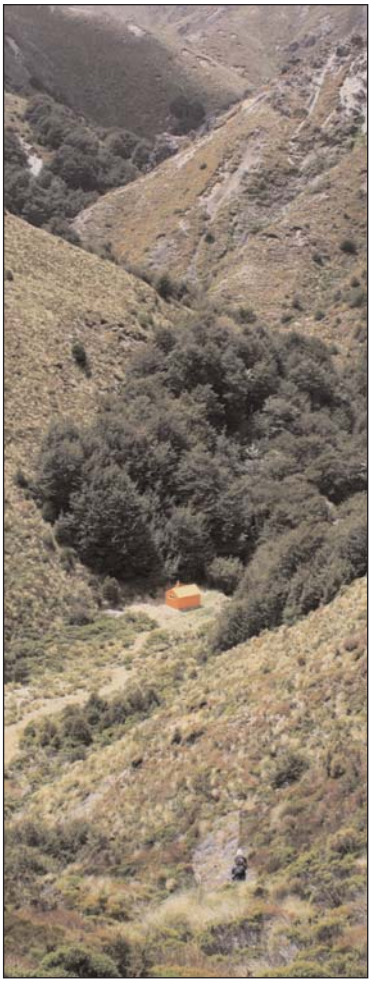
Soon after starting along Back Ridge and with Studholme Saddle Hut as a yardstick, questions from me to others in the group - such as "Is Back Ridge further, lower in altitude, more difficult to reach than Studholme?" etc - seemed to fall on deaf ears.

After two gulps of water and a spasm of hypertension, it was realised that this was going to be much more than one of Alison's "undulations". Oh well, if they can do it, so can I, and off we went.

It was tough, but the scenery was fantastic, the track was well marked, and once the hut came into view, it still seemed that we had a long way to go. But it only took 15 minutes from this point to reach the hut in time for lunch. The hut is a four-berth and in good condition. The stream runs past within five metres. The break for lunch was very welcome, but overshadowed by thoughts of climbing about 500 metres back to Kaweka J.

The return was via North Ridge, which starts as a very steep climb that thankfully gets better as you progress. From the face of North Ridge, there was a clear and dramatic view of Back Ridge and our earlier outward route. With several signs of wild life tracks throughout the day, we were rewarded with a sighting of a hind crossing a scree slope on the face of Back Ridge.

The return to the car park was via Makahu Spur and once again Vic had placed indicators along the track to show the less informed about various rare flora. We reached the car park just before 4 pm, tired and with sore feet, after an exceptional day in the great outdoors of God's Own.



Clockwise... the end is nigh for Kelvin (Back Ridge Hut); as gold prices rocket, Paul Exeter probes the old Mohaka mine; and trampers forge along the Makahu River

Coming a cropper in Coppermine Creek...

Day and weekend trips to Coppermine Creek and Everett's Campsite, December 13-14 2008

Day trampers: Alison Greer, Julia Mackie, Gordon Tapp, John Russell and John Marshall. Day trip and weekenders: Rosemary Jeffrey, Colleen Pereau, Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Ray Slavin and **John Gray (reporter)**

THIS was another combined trip, with 11 out for the day and just six of them staying on at Everett's Campsite for the end-of-year camp. We got away in good time from Napier and left the cars at the campsite before 9am, heading down to the old 'goldmine' on the Mohaka River. Rosemary Jeffrey, John Marshall and Ray Slavin did some local walks, closer to the camp.

It was a beautiful day for tramping: fine, cloudy and mild. After visiting the old goldmine shaft and checking on its resident wetas, we headed up Coppermine Creek. The creek bed was very slippery all the way, causing some heavy falls. Few people (or animals) walk this watercourse, so we had plenty of long grass and blackberry bushes to contend with. Several families of paradise ducks were seen on the water, panicking at the sight of human interference in their lives. And there was a very large eel, which did not seem bothered by us walking by.

We negotiated the impressive waterfall and stopped for lunch, before pushing on to the road bridge and the uninteresting walk along forestry roads back to our campsite, arriving about 4 pm. We changed into dry clothes, farewelled the day party and set up our tents.

The DoC shelter made a comfortable 'dining room/lounge' for us to enjoy a pleasant, leisurely evening.

Sunday dawned fine, allowing everyone to pack dry gear after breakfast, and we arrived back in Napier at about 10.30am following an enjoyable weekend that brought another year's varied tramping programme to a close.

The long and the short of Makahu

Makahu River, Saturday, January 17 2009. Map: U20

Trampers: Gordon Tapp, Vic Bullock, John Russell, John Marshall, Simon Hill, Murray Goss, Ray Slavin, Daniel Fraser, Carol Finch, Alex Thomason, Penny and Arthur Mead, Colin McNatty, and reporter **Alison Greer.** Visitors: Suzanne Collins, Caroline Newing, Sharon Chapman

THE first tramp of the new year turned out to be very short for some and very long for others! Twenty two members ventured out on a beautiful sunny morning, the day promising to be hot with little wind. Three vehicles headed up Puketitiri Rd but, just before Patoka, Ted's van broke down. All the vehicles were full, so some volunteered to go back with Ted and have an early day, with the rest carrying on to Makahu car park. **>P4**

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We dropped John Marshall off at the Quarry, and Vic, Ray and Simon went up to see the wild flowers then bring the vehicles round to Jack's ford to meet the rest of the group. The remainder of the party headed off into the bush behind the DoC buildings in search of the little stream that would take us into Pinnacle stream and eventually the Makahu River. After a bit of bushbashing, we found running water and headed off downstream.

This section of the stream was narrow with large rocks and small waterfalls, very pretty with ferns, mosses and large beech trees giving us plenty of shade. After an hour or so, the Makahu River joins on the left and becomes a bigger, wider river. The water and a warming day made for very pleasant walking.

Unfortunately, one of the party developed a sore ankle and had to slow down, leaving a group of three at the back. The main group stopped every now and again to let them catch up and we all had lunch in a lovely shady spot. It became clear we weren't making fast progress and thoughts turned to our likely arrival at the ford.

The afternoon passed quickly and still we had a long way to go, so an advance group was sent ahead to warn that we would be late. The bridge to the Nicholas farmhouse was sighted about 6.15pm and we arrived at the vehicles by 6.30pm - happy to to sit down!

A pleasant but long day, a bit hard on three new people out for the first time, but they did well and we hope to see them again soon.

(Those who returned with Ted: Paul Exeter, Julia Mackie, Sue Marshall and Geoff Donkin.)

Not so much a tramp, more like a wander...

Makaroro River to Barlows Hut and variants, Wednesday, January 21

Trampers: Graham Bell, Nolene Blair, Vic Bullock, Paul Exeter, Murray Goss, Manfred Hausler, Rosemary Jeffery, John Marshall, Ron Morison, Kelvin Shaw, Roz Snijders, Thelma Tasman-Smith, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Keith Moretta, Hillary Proctor (visitor) and reporter **Ken Ross**

SIXTEEN (including a visitor) set out from Yeoman's Mill car park on Wakarara Rd for day tramps in the area. The majority headed up the Makaroro River to Barlows Hut. The weather was perfect and the river crossings never more than knee deep, so it was a pleasant start to the tramping year.

Most enjoyed a relaxed lunch at the hut while two went upstream a little to a waterfall on a side stream, and reported it to be worth the effort. Return was back down the river. The day concluded with a laid-back cup of tea as we awaited the arrival of those who had gone further afield.

Others who were not keen to have wet feet all day did the Yeoman's Track (Thelma and Vic) or up the Parks Peak Hut track (Keith) either to the hut or dropping off down to the river and returning that way. So there was something to suit everybody.

This was a great way to start the year - not too strenuous and plenty of opportunity for a bit of a natter…

In search of Kiwi Saddle - and finding other places by accident

Kiwi Saddle via Kuripapango, January 31-February 1. Map: U20

Trampers: Ted Angove, Murray Goss, Sue Marshall, Julia Mackie and unreliable reporter **Ray Slavin**

IT'S many years since I undertook the hardships of a weekend tramp into the hinterland of the Kaweka Range - namely, Kiwi Saddle Hut. I was eagerly looking forward to this arduous journey, carried out at the height of the summer when conditions can be very varied.

I decided to carry no excess baggage, just the essentials plus extra equipment in the car so that at the start point, extra protection could be added if required. For sustenance, I decided that my basic ration would be bacon and egg pie. Luxurious, I grant, but nothing's too good for a veteran bushbasher.

I was to convey the others - Sue Marshall ('Mrs H'), Murray Goss, Julia Mackie and Ted Angove - in my luxurious bush motor to the start point at Lakes Road car park.

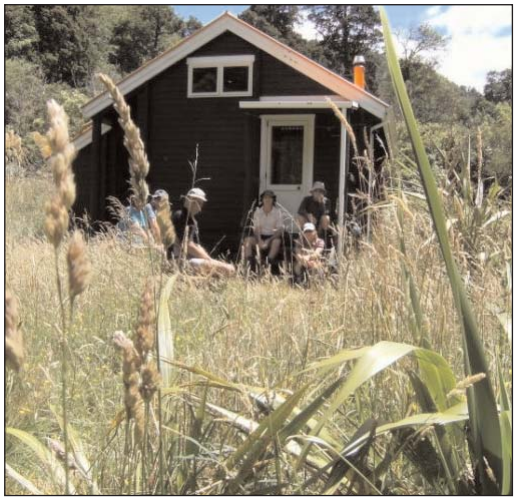
There, we found an undisciplined mob of fellow members milling around a common-or-garden Toyota van. They were heading for the day tramp. Because of the uncertainty of the weather (black clouds and high winds), they decided to do a walk around the lower paths of the Kawekas, but we hardy souls prepared for our tougher trip. Packs were shouldered and we ascended into the dark clouds. As if by magic, the gloom vanished and when we arrived at the summit of Kuripapango, the sky was clear and bright, although a strong wind was gusting.

After a short break for water and snacks, we carried on northwards along to Smith-Russell track. The contorta had grown higher since I was there last, but tunnels had been cut through the weed, with a wide path through on the climb to the last ridge and the junction that takes the traveller down to Cameron. Plenty of breaks were taken.

We met a hunter at one stop, and he gave us vital information about the journey ahead. He'd suffered a cold night in the bush and had used Kiwi Saddle Hut to warm up that very morning.

We arrived at the high point overlooking the hut. The weather was brilliantly fine, with views across to Ruapehu and the ocean at Napier. The last drop down to the hut seemed to take forever. Then it was good to take off the boots and packs. Several small expeditions were carried out during the afternoon, to ensure there was no approaching enemy, and we chose our resting places for the night very carefully, to avoid the lingering heat and the night noises that emanate from some members of the party.

I said we could not be sure of having the hut



to ourselves until the last of the Sun's rays had disappeared and, sure enough, around 8pm two figures appeared and descended towards us. They brought startling news of tramping parties not turning up on time, and fears of missing people. Our hearts sank to our boots, as we realised they could be referring to our brave but possibly misguided companions on the day trip…

Such was the concern that some of us had a sleepless night. Fortunately, I was not one of them.

We arose to another superb day, and even Mrs H did not get up until 6.30 - a very late hour for her and her duster. But before long, natural instincts prevailed. She got all fired up and began sweeping the hut, while some of us were still scoffing a luxury breakfast of fresh venison steaks and roast guinea fowl prepared by the hunters.

By 8 am, we were ready to leave. The Sun was blazing down and a hot north-westerly was starting up. We climbed the first (and hardest) hill and could already feel the energy sapping away. Any shade on the track was welcome, and we made the rest of it with numerous stops for fruit and water.

It got even hotter and the wind did not abate. We began to struggle. Soon the small party became strung out; I was the last and, rounding a corner, came upon Goss collapsed on the track, eyes wide open but staring blankly into space. His deep panting showed that all was not well. "What's to do, old chap?" I asked.

Clockwise from top left:

Trampers relax at Barlows Hut

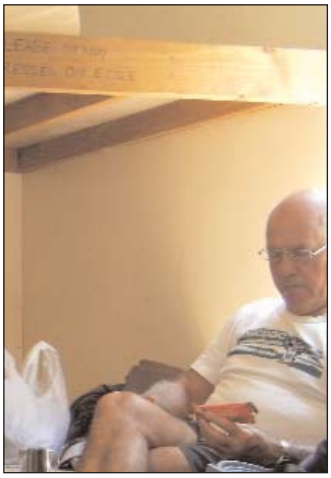
Ray Slavin stumbles towards Kiwi Saddle Hut, clearly suffering from a serious overdose of bacon and egg pie

A delightful beech-lined track on the Kiwi Saddle route

The writing on the bunk says: "Please stand mattresses on edge" - which, if obeyed, guarantees a hard day's night

Fish-hunter Murray Goss enters the Makororo River. This was one of the last photos taken before Murray assumed his hairy and youthful new Facebook identity

Remaining upright in Coppermine Creek: Alison Greer, John Gray, Gordon Tapp and Paul Exeter



He tried to say something, but only a croaking sound came from deep inside his throat.

I bent down and told him: “Come on, old chum - it’s not far now”. I hauled him to his feet and let him fall over my shoulder. I stood up straight and stumbled to the edge of the track, heaving Goss over the cliff and onto the rocks far below.

We cannot have Napier Tramping Club members making the place look untidy.

As we reached the car around 11.30, the heat was intense and by the time we reached Taradale, it was touching 37 deg C. Four hours in and three-and-a-half back - it seemed quite a sensible weekend outing to me…

Editor’s note: Other members of Ray’s party have pointed out that his account of this trip does not match their recollection in some minor respects.

Meanwhile, other trippers were experiencing something like The Longest Day…

The Lakes car park to Mackintosh Hut, Saturday, January 31. Map: U20

Trampers: Murray White, Colin McNatty, Andrew Bryant, Les O'Shea, Suzanne Collins, John Russell, John Dobbs, Denise Payne, Rosemary Jeffery, Jude Paton, Paul Exeter, Geoff Donkin, Colleen Pereau, Alex Thomason, Arthur and Penny Mead and reporter **Gordon Tapp**

THIS trip was to be from the lakes to Kuripapango, Kiwi Saddle Hut, Castle Camp, Kaiarahi, down Rogue Ridge and back to the Lakes car park, but as we exited the van, our leadership in the car arrived and had decided on the way that, as strong winds appeared to be blowing up top, we should take the protected low-level track to Mackintosh Hut.

For many, this deviation from our planned route was a disappointment, with the wind moderating and changing direction and bringing clear skies and wide views as the day wore on. To get out the protective gear and be a little challenged provides valuable experience and increases confidence in our abilities. But we should always be ready to backtrack when judgement dictates.

Walking along the Mackintosh track was delightful, with the bright sun highlighting the beautiful silver beech forest in places. Bird life was abundant, with grey warbler and shining cuckoo singing their merry tunes. The warm sunshine had brought very many cicadas to life in the trees above.

One member who was suffering from a recurrence of knee pain slowed our progress, and many of the party raced on to arrive at the Mackintosh Hut around three quarters of an hour ahead. The three trampers who provided support and company for the injured member used the extra time available to pull young pinus contorta trees growing up on the track.

Our steepest climb on this leg, before the hut, was up out of the Kaiarahi Creek.

On reaching Mackintosh Hut, we joined the main party for lunch on the verandah to the newly extended hut. It appears that this hut will sleep six to eight inside, with much extra room for sleeping on the extended verandahs.

Also at the hut was Murray White. He had driven to, and come in from, the other end of the track after searching for a slower member who had lost contact soon after we left the Lakes car park. Shortly after the rear group arrived at the hut around 1 pm, the main group packed up and moved off on the track towards the new steel joist bridge and Castle Rock car park.

After completing their lunch, the rear group left Mackintosh Hut and continued with contorta-pulling along the Mackintosh Spur track. Temperatures rose to around 36 degrees, making walking out in the sun tiring. Areas where shade could be found were much appreciated, even for a short period.

Not seeing many footprints along this track alerted us to check our position and finally discover that we had started on a parallel track leading to the Lawrence shelter. We backtracked to the hut and then slowly travelled towards Castle Rock car park, giving support and encouragement to our injured member.

A short time after leaving the hut, we agreed that John would leave the other three and make for the car park to alert the main party that we were proceeding slowly to the destination. He took Colleen’s pack with him.

We finally arrived at the Castle Rock car park and our van transport around 6 pm.

The trip was enjoyable through pleasant bush of various types, with much bird song. We used the slower pace to carry out some useful work pulling out young contorta on the tracks. However, the point should be made that if all would stay in contact with the slowest member in a party, it will assist progress and make for safer travel for the entire group.

Doing the Sentry Box Shuffle

Sentry Box - Golden Crown, Wednesday February 4. Map: U21

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Ken Ross, Peter Slagter, Ron Morison, Julia Mackie, Suzanne Collins, John Marshall, Vic Bullock, Murray White, Keith Moretta, Gary Bowler, Jenny Bray, Rosemary Jeffery and reporter **Paul Exeter**

ONE vanload and two cars headed from Kereru to Mangleton Road, to do the Sentry Box Spur to Golden Crown circuit for the day.

Vic and John decided to go up Sentry Box and along to the new Parks Peak Hut and then back out to move the vehicle to Master's Shelter (the bottom of Golden Crown). Ron was to bring the van also. We split into three groups and grunted up Sentry Box Spur, with good views back to the Wakarara and farmland.

The first group rested at the top of the spur, with others following steadily. Some visited Pohatuhaha for the views as we travelled along the top eventually going past the turnoff to Aranga Hut and the main range.

We headed towards No Mans on tops that were still boggy in places, with many flowers still blooming - which was great to see. We lunched at the top of Golden Crown Spur, having a good rest and then put our knees to the test going down to Master's Shelter. At the shelter: no van, so after a while we decided to walk to the roadway. Clearly, our driver thought we were in need of a little extra walking… Thanks Ron!

With a bit of shuffling, we got all the vehicles from Sentry Box, changed and headed home, after another great day in the ranges.

Caught between a rock and a lot more rock. John, Jude and the Te Hoe team come to an abrupt halt

A hard row Te Hoe, and a side-track to Brian's Bivvy

Te Hoe River - from Mohaka River junction (with permission from Maori Trust land owners), Saturday, February 14

Trampers: Ted Angove, Colin McNatty, Jude Paton, Nolene Blair, Les O'Shea, Julia Mackie, Alex Thomason and reporter **John Dobbs**

SIX morphed into eight, so we had an economical vanload as we set out up the Taupo Road. Turning off into Waitara Road, the weather looked benign, with some cloud and cooler temperatures than recently in the Bay. The lofty sentinel of Te Kooti's Lookout loomed not far away.

After driving through Waitere Station, we parked the van just before the impressive bridge across the Mohaka. We walked across it and up a forestry road, then turned first right, and up an access-way lined with delicious blackberries, on which we feasted. Then it was into the Te Hoe valley, where we made our way up the true right bank.

The river levels had been much higher in the previous few days; damp mud was everywhere and the water was still discoloured as it was reducing. Rock hopping needed concentration. The river closed in with very steep sides and lots of driftwood timbers, and several times we needed to clamber higher around sheer bluff areas. It was slow going and after nearly 1.5 hrs, we decided that to go on any further would have involved very deep wading combined with river crossings. The current was too strong to handle safely and so we wisely turned around.

At least the fossilised rocks and interesting driftwood shapes were fascinating, so much so that I collected a lovely rock and several driftwood pieces, but I wasn't the only one collecting!

And for our next trig: Ken Ross and Jenny Bray at Pohatuhaha

A small diversion on the way back through a patch of pine trees meant a tricky descent through onga onga and blackberry until we met that forestry road again. Munching on more blackberries here, we were back at the van in time for lunch at the BBQ table.

Afterwards, we headed along the true right bank of the Mohaka to inspect Brian's Bivvy. Many will remember Brian Daly, a good keen member who passed away six years ago and was an avid trout fisherman. Well, his campsite, about an hour upsteam, is still there and in good condition, with tarpaulins, bunks and all. Getting there involved a little mud and scrambling, but it was great to see the campsite again and complete our day with this little side trip.

Apart from one beautiful kingfisher near the BBQ table, bird life was scarce. The weather had been good, the sun poked through clouds and it was not too hot - a very pleasant day in good company, and everyone was safely back to Napier by 4.15pm.

The Rosvall offers rugged rewards

Rosvall Track - Tarn Bivouac, Wednesday, February 18. Map: U22

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Gary Bowler, Peter Slagter, Murray White, Julia Mackie, Manfred Hausler, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Alison Greer, Paul Exeter, Vic Bullock and reporter **Keith Moretta**

CLOUD-covered Ruahines greeted 11 members on a still and warm day. From the end of Mill Road, and passing the local farm, we briefly walked along the Moorcock stream. From the Moorcock-Tukituki River junction, we headed west, towards the source of the Tukituki River. Both rivers were flowing higher than normal, due to recent rain.

After 2 km along the steep and rocky Tukituki River, the group began the Rosvall track.

An 850m elevation gain in only 2 km typified the beauty and ruggedness of the Ruahines. On reaching the 1285m summit, there were clear views of Howletts Hut, to the South-

A magical view of Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe, during the Kaiarahi Circuit walk

One of the loneliest loos in New Zealand, at Tarn Bivvy

The rocky route that's simply a stunner

Kuripapango-Kiwi Saddle-Kaiarahi circuit, Wednesday, March 4

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Gary Bowler, Peter Slagter, Murray White, Julia Mackie, Graham Bell, Thelma Tasman-Smith, Alison Greer, Paul Exeter, Vic Bullock, Robyn Smith, Les O'Shea, Ron Morison, Ken Ross, John Mason, John Marshall and reporter **Keith Moretta**

WE arrived at the Lakes car park, Kuripapango, on a clear and calm morning, where the previous night's rain had made conditions cooler. Morning mist rolled in the valleys, and occasionally over some of the mountain saddles, making it very picturesque. From the pine trees car park, the group quickly ascended Kuripapango. At the lower level, an assortment of pittosporums, kanuka, tree ferns and many forms of bracken and scrub grew. This gradually changed to mountain beech and pine remnants, as we neared the top of Kuripapango. The circuit was to trek along a series of ridges, where harsh climate conditions and continuous subduction processes, resulting in erosion and uplifting, have created many stunning rocky outcrops along the ridge-tops.

After a short walk along the Smith-Russell track to Kiwi Saddle Hut, the group suddenly exited the beech trees and were treated to panoramic views of Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe. These views were to last all day as we circled around the ridge tops. Also spectacular was nature's fluid characteristics of the mist; static in the valleys and dynamic over the mountain ridges.

At 11.00, the group had a morning break at Kiwi Saddle Hut, set among mountain beech, creating cooler temperatures in the tree shade.

After leaving Kiwi Saddle Hut, we ascended northwards along a ridge towards Kaiarahi. Along the way, only pockets of mountain beech remained, with most of the ridge covered in a variety of mountain lichen, bracken and wild grasses. We stopped for lunch next to hill 1356, and admired the views.

After lunch, we continued north to Castle-Camp. Upon entering the camp, nestled in Beech trees, we were surprised to see the lone shelter surrounded by a dozen tents. We had walked through a Department of Conservation Campsite, set up for the month's contract of clearing 400 hectares of pinus contorta in the region.

Continuing past Castle-Camp, we ascended to Kaiarahi - our highest point of the circuit. Kaiarahi stretches north, finishing at Kiwi Stream, where converging on the other side, with Mad Dog Hill and Studholme part of the Kaweka Ranges.

After a short descent from Kaiarahi, we traversed one of the Tits. These two pointed peaks adjoin Cooks Horn, a spectacular column of rock set among a rugged and steep ridge. Continuing past these points, we descended along a narrow rocky ridge-line to Rogue Ridge. We were nearing the Kurapapango-Kaiarahi circuit. A long steep descent along Rogue Ridge had us join with the Kaweka Hut Track before descending to the Tutaekuri River.

From the river, another small ascent to the car park found many trampers weary but very happy to have completed one of the most stunning walks in Hawke's Bay.

Heading across to Rogue Ridge

west, set minutely on the huge Daphne Ridge at the top of Daphne Spur. To the West and North, heavy cloud settled over some of the jagged tops of Sawtooth and Black Ridges, and water cascaded down them into the North Branch Tukituki River, more than 500m below.

The steep countryside was dominated by beech trees, with young rimu, totara, manuka, horopito, pittosporum, bracken, tree ferns, pungas, and mosses - a healthy sign that deer and goat numbers are reducing. Leatherwood covered the top ridges, with occasional stunted mountain beech, all trying to survive the extreme harsh ridge-top conditions.

After an undulating, 20-minute walk along Black Ridge from Rosvall track summit, we arrived at Tarn Bivouac for lunch and more splendid views across vast areas from Central Hawke's Bay to Havelock North.

After lunch, we returned along Black Ridge to begin descending Rosvall track. The group reached the Tukituki River after 90 minutes descending through the forest.

It was an enjoyable, challenging day that had a variety of terrains, with everyone walking within their abilities. So after returning through the Tukituki River, then Moorcock Stream, it was a welcome return to the van and some rest.

Damp days and happy nights, on Ruapehu

Ruapehu Week, March 6-12

With Nolene Blair, Vic Bullock, Manfred Hausler, John Marshall, Jeanne Van Den Hout and reporter **Ken Ross**

ONLY a small group made the annual trip to the ATC lodge on Ruapehu. We were hoping for a week of summer tramping up the mountain, but the weather gods weren't kind. It started raining shortly after we arrived and it didn't clear until we were leaving. Nevertheless, we had a great week. Oh, I forgot to mention the wind and the snow. Yes, we made good use of our wet-weather gear by day, and the drying room by night.

Each day, we drove down the mountain to get below the cloud base. We did all the local tramps, trying to avoid the worst of the weather. We really enjoyed the bush tracks for their beauty and their shelter, but we were exposed to the elements for much of the time. Still, we managed full (or nearly full) tramping on all days. Mission accomplished. It would have been nice to have more expansive views along the way, though.

Only after our evening meals did we really feel sorry for those who weren't on the mountain with us. Thanks to group skills, dinners were a delight, and there was always too much. The subsequent relaxation in the cosy lodge was divine. Two nights were particularly interesting, with snow falling below the level of the lodge - not enough to build a snowman, but enough to look pretty. It was a great opportunity to experiment with cameras, and made up for the lack of sunsets.

So, despite the weather, we had a fine time. While waiting for the black ice to thaw so we could drive off the mountain, the talk was of doing it again next year (when it will be fine and sunny, and warm and calm, and…)

But clouds got in our way...

Above: All the views had vanished at the trig on Te Atuaoparapara

Left: Believe it or not, this is a colour picture. Lonesome figures in the mist near the ATC lodge on Mount Ruapehu

Badly timed clouds spoil the Sunrise experience

Sunrise Hut - 66 - Waipawa River, March 14. Map: U22

Trampers: Julia Mackie, Rosemary Jeffery, Murray White, Matt Green, John Russell, Arthur and Penny Mead, Melinda Chapman, John Marshall, Ali Hollington, Murray Goss, Ray Slavin, Jude Paton, Colleen Pereau, visitor Roel Pootjes and reporter **Alison Greer**

AFTER a few days of inclement weather, which included a light early season snowfall, Saturday dawned fine and clear with only a gentle southerly keeping things cool. Sixteen arrived at the Sunrise car park to find it nearly full. A new toilet has been installed, surrounded by a picket fence, plus a roof over the information panel. The walk up to the hut was uneventful, the bush as usual in this area looking lush after recent rain. There has been maintenance done to the track in several areas, bringing it up to a high standard.

After morning tea at the hut, the group split into two, those who wished to continue the round trip over 66 and those who wanted a more leisurely day. Nine continued on up to Armstrong Saddle where the cool wind made us don more layers, but the views over to the west were superb. Climbing up to our left (south), the turnoff to Top Maropea was reached and we continued south down into a saddle above the north branch of the Waipawa River. Fabulous views all round, and we gave a wave in the direction of Colin McNatty, who was guiding a party over the Tongariro crossing (they would have had a great day).

Looking across, we could see Sunrise Hut and the other party making their way to Armstrong Saddle. They were heading for lunch on a high point but the cool wind changed their minds and they went down to Waipawa Forks Hut instead. Picking our way through scrubby bush, remembering to keep to the ridge edge, good progress was made.

Unfortunately, a large cloud appeared over the summit and our lunch spot, so by the time we reached the trig (Te Atuaoparapara, 1687m) at just after noon, all the views were gone. It was still very pleasant, sitting out of the breeze and watching the clouds swirl about, but mildly disappointing that we were not rewarded for our efforts.

From the trig, it is a steep descent on scree slopes down to a series of saddles. The erosion is very prominent, making the landscape eerie and foreign-looking. Now that we had descended, we were back in sunshine and the cloud appeared to lift, bringing the Hikurangi Range into view, plus Rangi Saddle, the Three Johns and Waikamaka Hut track.

We regrouped on the Waipawa Saddle then headed down through scrub and bush before dropping into the Waipawa riverbed, where we were surprised to find a party of youngsters with a guide who had not been in the area before. They had come from the Manawatu and were doing the same trip as us, in reverse. It was already 2pm, so we were a little concerned about them making it to Sunrise Hut before dark. We gave them some pointers about the track, wished them well and headed off down-river.

Looking back up to the high point of the day, the cloud had cleared and we were disappointed it hadn't been like that earlier. Murray set a cracking pace and we were soon down by the Waipawa Forks Hut and reached the car park a little after 4pm. It was great to see that Penny and John R had brought the vehicles round to save us the walk back to Sunrise car park - most appreciated, after a long day.

A highly recommended trip: we all enjoyed the day, with mainly good weather and good company.

Reminders...

THE **AGM** is on May 7. Please show your support for the club - and have your say.

The **annual subscription** is due in May and at the AGM, the committee will recommend no increase. Current fees are:

Individual Membership $40 (club tramps, events, DoC projects, club newsletter, FMC affiliation); Family Membership $50 (covers all the above benefits for participating family members); Associate Membership $20 (benefits of full membership except FMC).

DoC projects are planned for March 25, July 22, August 13 and 26. See the club website for more information, or contact Keith Moretta.

The club thanks Band Limited, Waghorne Street, Ahuriri, Napier, for helping to publish this newsletter