THE BUSHBASHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAPIER TRAMPING CLUB INC — ISSUE 17, NOVEMBER 2009

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

This newsletter is also available as a PDF file. Email trans@ction.co.nz for a copy, or download it from the club website

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Sunrise Hut - a bird's eye view on a snowy day

Slipping, sliding and skating: the Triplex Hut Solstice

Mid-week Solstice, Sunrise and Triplex, Wednesday June 24. Map: U22

Trampers: Robyn Smith, Jeanne van den Hout, John Russell, Gary Bowler, Murray Goss, Loretta Pearson, Rosemary Jeffery, Kelvin Shaw, Diane Hills, Geraldine Oliver, John Marshall, Penny and Arthur Mead, Peter Slagter, Vic Bullock and reporter **Alison Greer**

ANOTHER year, another winter, another solstice; how the time flies. We were back at Triplex Hut for this year's festivities - a favourite. It was a stunning day, after many days of very cold winds and heavy snow. A wicked frost, clear blue skies and icy roads meant the drivers took it easy on the road south. Only one from Havelock North joined us, taking the number to 16 - slightly down on previous years.

After dropping our shared lunches off at Triplex Hut (to come back to later) the group headed off up the track to Sunrise. The going was easy, with lots of chatter and stops to admire the views out through the bush to the snow-clad tops. After passing the turn-off to the Waipawa Forks Hut, the track tends to the south where the trampled snow had turned to solid ice, making it a little tricky. One or two took a tumble and all thought about the return trip back down.

Sunrise Hut was bathed in sunshine and the first of the group were taking advantage of the verandah, sunning themselves while having their morning tea. A small party wanted to go up to Armstrong Saddle, so didn't linger at the hut. Making their way over to the saddle, it was picture postcard stuff and they were looking forward to the views of Ruapehu. Imagine their disappointment when reaching the saddle, only to see thick cloud in the west! We retraced our steps back to the little tarn just below the saddle. It was frozen solid, and ideal for some ice-skating.

The walk back down was easier than expected, the solid ice track catching no one out. By the time the last of the party arrived back at Triplex, the fire had been lit and lunch prepared. But the trees must have grown since last time. There was no sun and the frost was still lying around the hut. We all squeezed inside, taking turns to sit close to the fire. As usual, there was a great variety of food and we were hard-pressed to eat it all. It was a little quiet; perhaps the "talkers" weren't out today!

We tidied up and trooped back out to the car park. I do believe the next frost was already starting, as it was crisp and cold. Home early after another pleasant day, another solstice over, and everyone looking forward to the gradual approach of Spring.

Alison goes for a skate

Four route plans in a day, and only one worked

Independence Day Tramp, Saturday July 4

Trampers: Jude Paton, John Gray, John Russell, Alison Greer, Gordon Tapp, Julia Mackie, Murray Goss, Geoff Donkin, Ted Angove, Sandy Ross and reporter **Geraldine Oliver**

Plan A - Hinerua Hut cancelled due to the track being too wet, cold and shaded!

Plan B - Makahu car park - Bugger!! Gate locked due to snow and ice!

Plan C - Middle Hill Hut - Double Bugger!! Jack's river crossing was flowing in the 'Red Zone'!

Plan D - Lotkow Road - Black Birch Bivvy - Little's Clearing and return

GOSSY'S summary says it all - we were down to Plan D on a middling grey day that looked as if it could clag in. Shame about the padlock and ford, but Alison pointed the van optimistically at Lotkow Road and by the time we got there, half of us wished we could just keep on driving. Instead, we girded our loins, pointed ourselves uphill and started the grunt to the top. No snow and ice on the way, but plenty once we reached the ridge. By then, we were in a winter wonderland with ranks of snowy peaks marching west as far as the eye could see. At every vantage point, we all took the same photos, but can you blame us? The scenery was dazzling.

Following the ridge along was pretty straightforward, though the snow was deep enough for us to stick closely to previous hoofprints. At Black Birch Bivvy, some detoured downhill to clap eyes on the actual hut, while others waited on the track until we were sick of taking photos. The bivvy was in pristine condition and looked quite cosy in all that snow, but maybe that's just the colour orange for you. The sun was out by now and there wasn't a breath of wind - perfect conditions for a winter tramp. So much for the forecast.

Eventually we came to lots of ice and meltwater but most of us kept our feet dry by sticking to the edge of the track. No one fell in. Just before the car park where we had lunch, there was a stream to jump and a small hill of attractive bush.

Alison kept saying "Almost there, almost there," so I guess I wasn't the only one who looked hungry. The advance party had already cleared the picnic table, but the one in the shade looked surreal, with its thick quilt of snow.

We took a group photo of the occasion, then headed back the way we'd come. Pinus contorta, pinus contorta and more pinus contorta, but also an amazing view of Cook's Horn wearing a snow cap. Again, we all took the same photos and then headed downhill. It didn't seem as far on the way back - I wonder why?

Ted drove the Toyota home and everyone pointed out its defects compared with the four-wheel drive (which wasn't available), but it seemed OK to me...

Ted points the way to Black Birch Bivvy - only it's two minutes away, not 10

The view from Little's Clearing

A wild and windy trek to Parks Peak

Sentry Box to Parks Peak, Wednesday July 22. Map: U21

Trampers: Alison Greer, Ken Ross, Vic Bullock, Kelvin Shaw, Robyn Smith, Peter Slagter, Keith Moretta, Murray White, John Marshall and reporter **Gordon Tapp**

DUE to bad weather, access was denied for us to tramp as programmed on two Puketitiri farms, and Parks Peak area was chosen as the alternative.

Knowing that gale force winds were forecast and there had been considerable snowfall in all the ranges over the previous weeks, we headed down Highway 50 and onto Mangleton. Nine trampers set off up the Sentry Box track, splitting into two parties as we climbed. John stayed to explore the bush lower down.

Two-thirds up the track, we reached the first snow. Further on, due to the heavy snowfall, bent and broken beech trees were encountered, with many forming obstructions. Reaching the top of the track, we paused for refreshments beside the Aranga Hut - Sentry Box - Parks Peak junction sign.

The wind was a raging gale, rocking the trees, with many gusts heaving up the ground as tree roots took the strain against the force. Considerable depths of snow covered the adjoining main range, making it a majestic sight. Heading towards Parks Peak Hut, the track was covered with around 500mm of snow - making travel demanding - and it took us twice the normal time to get to the hut.

A new Parks Peak Hut was built 18 months ago and the old hut was removed. All that remains is the old dog kennel. The new eight-person hut is of a very good standard with sliding aluminium windows, plywood interior lining and a new log fire. It appears that DoC is putting some of the hut fees collected to good purpose.

The snowy approach to Parks Peak Hut

A tramping guide, Graham Leech (Afoot.co.nz), arrived while we were having lunch, accompanied by his Labrador dog. He was in for the day to keep up his fitness.

The return journey was made much easier following our footprints in the snow. We arrived back to the van around 4 pm after meeting the challenges and having a great day.

Restoring a touch of colour to our landscape

DoC support: Kaka Beak planting around Shines Falls, Wednesday July 22

Labourers: Peter Slagter, Murray White, Alison Greer, Robyn Smith, Ken Ross, John Marshall, John Gray, Sue Marshall, Ted Angove, Geraldine Oliver and reporter **Keith Moretta**

OVERCAST skies with the threat of rain greeted our club's second year of Kaka Beak planting with Alan Lee from the Hawke's Bay branch of the Department of Conservation. We set off from the Shines Falls car park, armed with spades, Kaka Beak seedlings, lunch and a jovial mood, happy to be out planting among friends.

Ted Angove, John Gray and Peter Slagter were set the initial task of cutting wire to hold the mesh cages in place to prevent predators from eating the Kaka Beak. The others walked into the Boundary Stream Mainland Island Reserve and began digging, planting and caging the previously sprayed areas that would be home for our new plantings.

We stopped at regular intervals along the main pathway and planted groups of five to ten Kaka Beak seedlings.

Then we halted for a morning break and a photo opportunity at the stunning falls before heading back to complete the remaining plantings. Some of the crew went to remove a couple of willow trees that had grown near the stream. Ted had no problem attacking the first tree with his formidable saw, and then poison was applied to prevent future growth. The second willow proved more troublesome, because it was on the other side. This did not worry Ted, who strode across and attacked, suffering wet footwear and personal bloodshed. But he returned smiling - and that's typical of Ted, who enjoys nothing better than a brutal bush-bash.

We drove around to Lake Opouahi and had lunch in the shelter, and planted the few remaining seedlings. Then some took a walk around the lake. Everyone had an enjoyable day, proud to have helped DoC to re-establish one of New Zealand's endangered plants in Hawke's Bay.

What better time to watch a wind farm?

Manawatu Gorge (Te Apiti), Saturday August 5

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Peter Slagter, Murray White, Graham Bell, Vic Bullock, Ron Morison, John Marshall, Jeanne van den Hout, Alison Greer, Ken Ross, Loretta Pearson, Sandy Lamb, Robyn Smith, Danielle Paviour-Smith and reporter **Keith Moretta**

HEAVY snow made the scheduled Kaweka walk inaccessible. Alison's decision was to change to the lovely bush walk through the Manawatu Gorge. The day was clear, cool, but very windy. As we arrived at Ballance Road car park, Graham and Jeanne had already begun the walk.

Vic, John Marshall, Alison, Keith, John Gray and Robyn decided to walk in from the North, along the Klein track, while the remainder of the party was driven around to the south end of the track, with Ron returning the vehicle.

The Kaka Beak planting squad prepares for work around Shines Falls

Great views over the Manawatu Gorge

The bush was a wonderful mixture of young and old rimu, matai, with kawakawa, silverfern, nikau, horopito, black tree ferns (mamaku), fuchsia and much more. Most of the track had recently been replaced and realigned, with extensive wooden steps through some very steep terrain, which made it easy to walk. Turbines near the track emitted continuous low rumbling sounds as the high winds steadily gusted through.

Alison's group reached the Gorge track junction, with the Klein track descending back to SH3 in the gorge. Further along from the junction, the Gorge track levelled, with several lookout sites along the ridge. They gave excellent views over the road and railway through the gorge, while high above were views of the wind turbines, slowly turning.

A couple of hours from Ballance Road car park, we met the main party travelling north. Alison, Keith, Robyn and Vic continued south while the rest tramped towards the Ballance Road. The main group reached the car park and cafe about 1.00 pm.

Alison's group turned and headed back to Ballance Road and after a quick stop for lunch at one of the lookouts, we returned to Ballance Road. Alison and Robyn returned to the car park via Klein track, while Keith and Vic viewed the Totora loop track. This short walk off the Klein track also exited onto Ballance Road, but a little further up from the other car park. Alison's party arrived at the cafe about 2.00 pm.

It was a lovely day's walk in good company, some stunning bush, and a fine track.

B*** weather forces another Plan B

Daphne Hut, Saturday August 15

Trampers: Alex Thomason (leader), Colin McNatty, Murray White, Geoff Donkin, Ray Slavin, Denise Payne (who kept the boys in line!) and reporter **John Dobbs**

THE forecast was for considerable rain coming through the southern Ruahines, where the day trip was originally planned. So, since 2009 is the year of "Plan B", an alternative trip not so far south was agreed on, for maybe better conditions. A diversion to Daphne Hut was decided, and Alex assigned as trip leader.

On Friday night, it had rained a lot, but was luckily only threatening as we gathered for the drive south. There was only a little drizzle when we got closer to the Ruahines, so it was looking good.

Ray decided he would only go as far up the ridge track as he fancied and then would come back down and stay at the van. So we all waded through Moorcock Stream and followed the white marker posts that led to the formed ridge track. Then it was basically up and up and before long, several layers of clothing were removed. The track was clear with some lovely bigger trees, mainly beech but with scattered totara and the odd rimu further along.

Arriving at the signpost and track junction, there were options south to Longview and north towards Daphne. There was no real rain and the sun was shining through the cloud cover at the top, so we were happy despite no views and little bird life, but good tramping conditions. Eventually, the steep descent down to the Tukituki River began and we had

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a few little slides but no dramas. Denise decided she did not want to get wet feet, so remained riverside for an early lunch, while the boys walked up the river towards the hut. River levels were up a bit, but still clear; 20 minutes later, at 11.55am, we reached Daphne Hut (now painted an odd shade of yellow) and sat inside for a pleasant lunch. The usual rubbish was discussed and as we soon cooled off, we were on our way back in the direction of Denise again. Interestingly, the hut book recorded that the weekend before, a lady from Palmerston North was doing a longish solo trip in the area and up to Howletts.

Denise had left arrows, cairns and her time of departure, so as we puffed our way back up the ridge again, we caught up with her, waiting near the turnoff to the old track no longer maintained by DoC. We decided it would make a more interesting circuit to return this way, although it does cross private farmland and we would effectively be trespassing.

The track was still easy to follow and soon emerged into open farmland, but we needed to take bearings and descend through cloud cover to see the correct angle across the farmland. Dodging cows, sheep and possibly tricky gullies, we did rather well on the descent and the route became more obvious. This led to a patch of bush and back to the Moorcock Stream. The weather did come at us with light drizzle by now though, so we donned coats for the last stretch.

All were safely back at the van, where Ray was relaxing, by 3.35pm. The whole trip had taken exactly seven hours and was a very nice circuit, a good workout and enough variety to keep us interested - actually, quite a good Plan B.

Spring has sprung at the Springs!

Makino Ridge / Te Puia Lodge / Mangatainoka Hot Springs, Saturday August 29

Trampers: Colleen Pereaux, Julia Mackie, Gordon Tapp, Alison Greer, Alex Thomason, Geraldine Oliver, John Dobbs, Jude Paton, Geoff Donkin, John Marshall, Colin McNatty, Murray White, Ray Slavin, Sue Marshall, Ted Angove, Denise Payne, Murray Goss, Suzanne Collins, Veronica Docherty and reporter **John Gray**

THE forecast was good and 20 assembled at Park Island for another day out in the hills! The van, plus two other vehicles, left on time and conveyed everyone safely to the Makino Ridge car park at Puketitiri, by about 8.30 am.

The large group split up here, with 12 trampers heading up Makino Ridge track to do the popular circuit and the others going down to 'The Gums' to start their river tramp.

The 'circuit group' made its way slowly up the ridge track, stopping for views, drinks and at the Makino Bivvy, where two hunters were in residence. We took another break at the signpost to Makino Hut, then started our descent to the swing-bridge over the Makino Stream. The group split up again here and nine went up to the Mangatainoka Hot Springs for lunch. Some had a soak in the pools.

Geraldine Oliver reports on the river tramp:

This well-worn groove is regarded as a walk in the park, but to wannabe tramper Veronica Docherty, it was a bit of a wall. This has stimulated much discussion on introductory tramps and how to attract new members without burning them out. Te Puia was my own first tramp back in 2005. Alison assigned Veronica and I to the river track and as a 'recovering tramper', that was fine with me. Veronica was happy to be on the flat, though she was a bit puzzled that it began uphill.

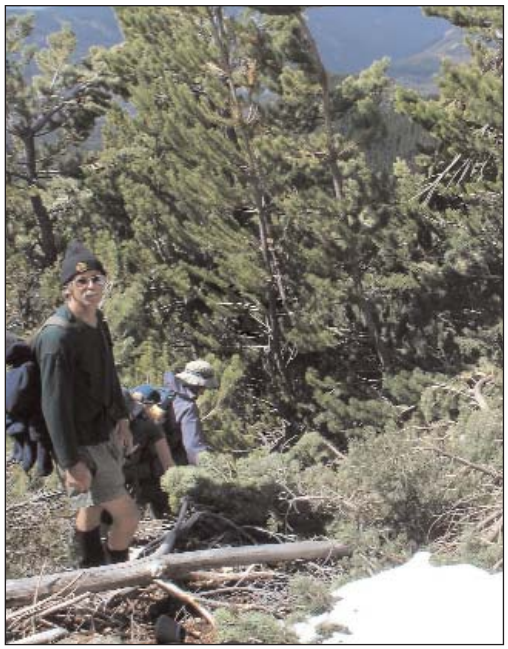
The bluff-side views of rapids and jade-coloured water are superb. At times, the opposite bank looks eerily like islands marooned by a long moat. Once at the lodge, Murray and Julia decided to test their fitness and tramp up to Makino junction and then down the ridge track. The others sat down for a bite of lunch and I hot-footed up to the top pool, just for the satisfaction of swimming in two hot pools in one day. On the way back, I met the Makino Ridge pack heading for a swim. You get the best views coming downriver, or perhaps the afternoon light was clearer. Veronica survived the trip back, though at the final hill, only the thought of Ray's advanced years and the sight of him trudging steadily ahead got her up and over. ("If he can do it, so can I!") Most of us had a swim or at least a footbath in DoC's new improved square spas. There is an interesting push-pull sluicegate on the new piping, but Julia and I had it figured out in a flash and the tub fills very quickly. As always, it's a long drive home and the van seemed to fishtail and smoke at the back. No one threw up, though. Late home, but a great day and a well-supported tramp.

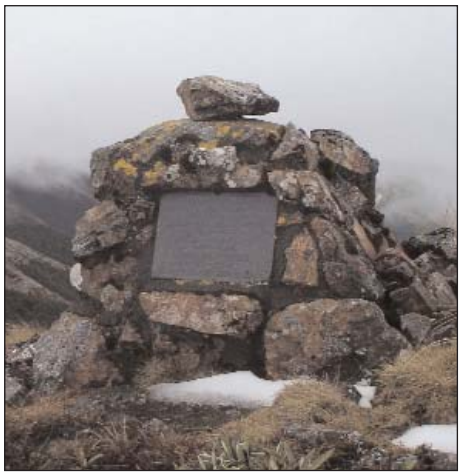
Holding on to our hats around Holdsworth...

Weekend trip to Mt Holdsworth area: Powell - Jumbo circuit, Sept 11-13

Trampers: Sue Marshall, Julia Mackie, Denise Payne, Jude Paton, Geraldine Oliver, Murray White, Ted Angove, Geoff Donkin, Paul Exeter, Les O'Shea and reporter **John Gray**

ELEVEN enthusiastic club members assembled late on Friday and finally got away from Napier just before 5pm, in our comfortable and trusty hired van. The weather forecast





Clockwise from left: Geraldine Oliver and Julia Mackie above the Mohaka (Te Puia trip); Contortionists Simon Hill and Paul Exeter (report, P7); Masters memorial cairn (No Mans); John Dobbs, Murray White and Alex Thomason at Daphne Hut; a Tararua trail and Mt Holdsworth trig in the clouds

A bit of everything for the all-weather trampers

Kumeti Road to Keretaki Hut, August 15-16. Map: T23

Trampers: Sue Marshall, Ted Angove, Simon Hill and John Gray

AT 0845, four 'real' trampers left the picnic area car park. Low, thick cloud hung above us as we made our way up the dry streambed. Paradise ducks flew overhead, squawking madly, as we marched through their nesting area. The old Kumeti Hut site was reached - and the first sign of water. The actual stream had disappeared underground from that point. A few minor stream crossings later, we were at the start of the track.

Keeping a steady pace, we ascended into the mist and humid, still air; the ghostly silhouettes of long dead trees dominated any view. We had a photo shot of Simon at the water gauge and not long after that we popped through the mist and into glorious sunshine! Ahead was the largest unbroken expanse of leatherwood in the country with the track winding up to the Opawe-Keretaki junction where we had an early lunch at 11.30. Great views above the cloud layer, brilliant blue sky, snow-covered Ruahine range; to the south off in the distance, the spire of Wharite Peak pierced up through the cloud layer and somewhere under all that lay our destination - Keretaki Hut.

Ready to confront a very steep descent, we left the sunshine behind and dropped back into the mist. Conversation ceased as we concentrated on every step. The only sounds were of our clothing scratching against the leatherwood, the drippy wet flax slapping against our legs and the squish of boots as they hit the mud. We took a quick breather at the last high point before dropping down to the stream, a spot where we usually get a view across the valley to the hut - but we had to visualise our little orange hut, which was hidden by the mist.

Large greasy boulders had to be negotiated at the river entry (the old track that sidled to the left is now overgrown) so it was just a matter of careful foot placement as we made our way around a few bends until we spotted the sign high on the bank - Keretaki Hut 30 minutes. A huge tree had come down about eight metres above and landed on the track, blocking our way. Once over that obstacle, it was up - and a very steep and slippery up it was, too.

We arrived at the hut about 2.15pm, enjoyed a hot brew and before we got too comfortable it was out and about to gather and cut firewood. In no time, the fire lighter had worked his magic and had a great blaze going - we settled in for a cosy evening. The silence of the night was broken only by Ted and Simon fighting off attacks of cramp, the rain **>P6**

was poor, but we were going anyway! We made good time to Masterton, where everyone bought fish and chips for dinner. We arrived at Holdsworth Lodge at about 8.30pm and settled in for the night.

In the morning, we set off at about 8am, in showery weather. At the junction, nine headed for Powell Hut, with weekend packs and with Paul and Les following along for the day. Powell is a very large and tidy DoC 'serviced' hut, where we had a hot brew and lunch break.

We were all wet and cold at this stage and the group split into two here, with some wanting to linger longer at Powell.

The track from Powell to Jumbo Hut is all open-tops, so we were very exposed to the cold, windy, stormy elements that were being thrown at the Tararuas that day - sorry, no views. The first group of five arrived at a warm Jumbo Hut about 3.30pm. Other trampers had a fire going and were drying out.

We settled in, thinking that the second group of four would probably have stayed at Powell; but they arrived safely at about 4.10pm, so we were together again and quite relieved all were in one piece! Wet clothes were discarded and dry ones put on, hot drinks were devoured and, slowly, people warmed up.

The usual trampers' talk continued before dinner and another hot drink. A small group of six trampers arrived, looking for beds, but they decided to return to Atiwhakatu Hut - probably in the dark. The 15 incumbents in Jumbo Hut settled down early for a good night's sleep.

Sunday dawned beautifully fine and after breakfast, repacking and farewells, we headed downhill to the new Atiwhakatu Hut, which is still being finished and looked very nice, close to the river.

We soon met Paul and Les on the track and all continued our walk back to Holdsworth Shelter and clean dry clothes again. This is a very popular area for walking, judging by the number of vehicles at the large car park.

We had lunch with coffee in Masterton and after an uneventful trip, on a beautiful warm day, arrived in Napier about 4pm, giving enough time to empty everything out of our packs and start the laundry and drying process. Although conditions were against us on Saturday, Sunday was beautiful; we all survived the trip and enjoyed each other's company.

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on the roof and a rat scratching at the door.

On Sunday morning, it was decided to walk out via Oruatere Stream, even though we'd need to walk about 5km along the road to our car. By 0745, in light drizzle, we were away down a good track to the stream, bouldery and slippery for the first hour, opening out to river terraces and farmland, and across to Fairbrother Rd for the trudge back to the car.

Ten minutes into it, and along comes a car and trailer - a dad and son collecting firewood from the road edge. The gent was a retired Manawatu tramper and he offered to drive us back to our car... thank you… thank you! John found a pozzie on the trailer, the rest squashed into the back seat. After a quick visit to his property, the son dropped us back at the car. Then it was into dry clothes and off to Dannevirke for lunch and safely back home in Napier by 2 o'clock.

Staying one step ahead of the wind...

Moorcock Saddle, Longview Hut, Daphne Track, Wednesday Sept 16. Map: U22

Trampers: Alison Greer, Ken Ross, Vic Bullock, Kelvin Shaw, Robyn Smith, Peter Slagter, Nolene Blair, Paul Exeter, Gary Bowler, Ron Morison, John Marshall, Manfred Hausler, Jeanne van den Hout, and reporter **Gordon Tapp**

TWELVE trampers travelled in the van to Moorcock Saddle. The weather was fine and sunny, with little wind - a pleasant surprise in an area where high winds are common. Eight set off on the long trip, with the others tramping as far as they felt comfortable.

In two hours, we reached Longview Hut. A westerly wind had risen to moderate strength, as we moved towards the top of the spur. The hut was unoccupied.

After morning tea, Paul turned back to bring the van and meet us at Daphne Track car park. The main party decided to walk 3 km along the ridge to the track's north end and down to the car park. On the first section over high open tussock tops, we followed a poled route. Further on, the track dropped into beech forest where we found number of mountain beech trees had been blown over, exposing their two-metre diameter ring of radiating roots, like wheels standing up with the trunk as the axle. Heavy snow and high winds had taken their toll.

The northernmost track leading down off the ridge was well marked with plastic tape and we moved towards Moorcock base camp. We dropped into the headwaters of the Tukituki, then climbed to a ridge at about 900m. Further down, the route became less obvious but we followed cattle markings and reached the Moorcock Stream beside Kashmir Road.

The wind had risen to very strong and gusty, and we were happy for protection in the van. An enjoyable six-hour tramp was experienced by the eight participants, with the other four also having a good day's outing.

Radio-controlled rendezvous with the elusive Blew

The Kiwi Health Check - Conservation Week, Sept 18

Cuddly, isn't he? And the kiwi's nice. John Gray with Blew

BACK in 2002, fewer than 500 kiwi lived in the Kaweka Ranges and the species was effectively extinct south of Hawke's Bay. That year, the newly formed Environment, Conservation and Outdoor Education Trust (ECOED) sprung into action to help reverse the decline.

As part of the "Save Our Kiwi Hawke's Bay" project, ECOED and DoC manage 25 kiwi that wear transmitters in the Kaweka Forest Park. Chicks are rescued from the adult kiwi in the breeding season and transferred to the Pan Pac Kiwi Crèche near Tutira, where they can grow to 800gm in a pest-free environment before being returned to the Kaweka park. At 800 gm, they are big enough to "beat up" their main predator, the stoat, but remain defenceless to dogs, the other major killer.

There are two areas where kiwi are managed in the Kaweka Forest Park, one around the Makino Hut and the other at the end of Kaweka Rd, where tramps up Kaweka J begin.

John Gray, Julia Mackie and Matt Green went on the DoC- and ECOED-organised Conservation Week event to track down a special kiwi. We, and nine other interested people, met at the Puketitiri Field Centre before heading up Whittle Road and into the Kaweka Forest Park. We only went a few kilometres into the park before stopping for a transmitter search.

The aim was to find Blew, a male kiwi due for his annual transmitter change and health check and last traced to the area to the east of the Black Birch Range. A faint signal was heard. We followed Al Bramley from ECOED and Paddy Willems, a DoC ranger, and his dog Jay (who's been trained to search for kiwi).

Blew was located within kanuka scrub - his favourite habitat. Jay found Blew quickly and we marvelled at his beautifully coloured feather coat - and his 89mm bill, which clacked now and again. Blew weighed in at 1580 grams.

A new transmitter was attached to Blew's left leg, then we all had a chance to cuddle him. For most, it was the first time we had seen a kiwi in its natural habitat. Blew was released and scampered away into the bush. It would be hard to spot a kiwi, because its feather coat provides excellent camouflage. Here's hoping that any pesky stoat gets its come-uppance, should it come up against our pal Blew.

Slip-sliding away, to and from No Mans

Golden Crown to No Mans, Saturday Sept 26. Map: U20/BK37

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Geoff Donkin, John Dobbs, Murray White, John Gray, Julia Mackie, Alison Greer, Dennis Mitchell (newcomer) and reporter **Jude Paton**

TEN keen trampers, including a newcomer, were determined to make it all the way to No Mans Hut this time round. The weather looked better than earlier forecast and we set out from Masters Shelter at 8:10am in cool, still conditions, the tops shrouded in cloud.

Before long, some of us were huffing and puffing and discarding outer layers. The 'A' team (Julia, Geoff and John D) took advantage of our breather to surge through the ranks, leaving the 'B' team to follow in their wake. The dumping of snow earlier in the week became evident in the second half of the climb up to the ridge as we proceeded to slip and slide in places. Earlier snow damage turned parts of the track into an obstacle course as we clambered over, under, around and through uprooted trees and broken branches. We reached the signposts up top after 2h 15m. The 'A' team had already departed and we literally followed in their footsteps through the snow. Raincoats, hats and gloves were donned as we emerged from the scrubby bush onto the open tops. Views were restricted to what's up front, with white-out on both sides. John G wasn't feeling great (nothing to do with the red wine from the previous night, he assured us) and decided to call it a day, heading back with Paul's 'C' team.

Light wind, cooler temperatures and brief skiffs of rain accompanied us through the snowgrass and the barer tops. We passed the Ohawai trig and continued to undulate our way along. Later, we spotted the 'A' team up ahead on No Mans Spur and passed by the Masters' memorial. We reached the sealed road end (very bizarre, when you think you're in the middle of nowhere!) just before 12:30pm and headed down to the hut. To our surprise, it was unlocked and no 'A' team to be seen. They turned up shortly after, having made a diversion to the No Mans trig.

Sun broke through briefly and the sky continued to lighten as we retraced our footsteps, with views clearing out to the western side, revealing beautiful reddish slopes, along with fresh greens, yellows and browns. Off came the outer layers once more.

Geoff set a fast pace and had us back at the signposts in 1h 30m, ready for the descent. With snow melting fast, we slipped and slithered our way back down below the snow line to firmer footing in misty sunlight, breaking into smaller groups to suit our pace with the last of us arriving back at 4:20pm. Our newcomer coped extremely well and hopefully he'll be back for more adventures. A great day out - we achieved our goal, the weather cooperated for a change and we all felt pretty pleased with ourselves and only a bit tired! Alison had an unusually quiet bunch in the back of the van, for the homeward drive.

A late start and early finish, for a change

Quarryburn Station near Rissington, Wednesday Sept 30

Trampers: Alison Greer, Ron Morison, Peter Slagter, Vic Bullock, John Marshall, Kelvin Shaw, Sue Martin, Thelma Tasman-Smith, Graham Bell, Ted Angove, Robyn Smith, Les O'Shea and reporter **Gary Bowler**

A SHORT distance to the beginning of this Wednesday tramp enabled a welcome late start, particularly as the change to daylight saving had taken place just four days earlier! Tall trees lined the driveway into the very attractive house and farm of Patrick and Lesley O'Rourke off the Puketitiri Rd at Rissington. Patrick produced a map of the farm and outlined a 9km walk for us across rolling hill country interrupted by steep gullies, just to ensure we kept up our fitness. The walk across well-maintained farm tracks and paddocks provided a leisurely alternative to some of the more rigorous tramps of the past.

At this time of the year, the lush green pastures were full of stock. Sheep, lambs, cattle, calves and deer were all in abundance. The higher points on the farm provided excellent views in all directions. A suspension bridge constructed in 1974 high across one of the gulches was said to be capable of carrying a 15-ton load, but did not feel so as it swayed to and fro while crossing. Another feature of the 'walk' was the ability of one of our number to drive around the station and pick up another of our party who had lost her way! An early lunch stop and a return to the transport by 1.30pm meant we were all home before the rain set in, to learn that we had missed the drama of a false tsunami warning.

Lunch among the beech trees, on the Geriatric Track: Gordon, Keith, Les, Peter and Gary

Old hands tackle the Geriatric Track

Kaweka Forest Park. Three gorges from Middle Hill Hut/Makino Ridge, Wednesday Oct 14. Map: BJ37 Kuripapango

Trampers: Ken Ross, Paul Exeter, John Marshall, Vic Bullock, Murray Goss, Thelma Tasman-Smith, Manfred Hausler, Jeanne van den Hout, Gary Bowler, Keith Moretta, Les O'Shea, Gordon Tapp, Peter Slagter and reporter **Julia Mackie**

WITH the Makahu Stream in the red zone on the Nicholas farm crossing, we obtained permission from Mrs Nicholas to cross their private bridge. So 12 trampers set off from Middle Hill car park at 9.30 - a little later than normal, which meant that we would be on the back foot all day. So it proved, with kanuka snow damage over the track even before we reached the footbridge crossing the Mangatutunui Stream. Nothing too serious though; it just slowed the pace a little. The first views of the higher peaks, still with a little snow, were wonderful. We steadily made our way to Middle Hill, and some then decided not to continue to the three gorge (or geriatric track, as it is described in the Happy Wanderer). They had a scout around the track towards the Ihaka Spur turn-off, instead.

Six dedicated trampers led by Julia started the three gorges trip. We would turn back if the snow damage made going too difficult. But it was easily walkable. We got down the first gorge and into the beech trees on the other side. Across the beech forest tops, and then down the second gorge. We had decided to have a later lunch, and met Manfred and Jeanne on the track down to the bottom of the second gorge, again in mature beech forest. They had tackled it from the Makino ridge end, and advised us we had a lot of climbing yet to do. No problem, we love challenges, don't we, guys? Please all say yes…

We lunched on the tops, (yes, you are allowed to stop and eat), before tackling the third and longest gorge. It drops down into a stream and then ascends briefly, before sidling around a ridge and dropping down into the last stream crossing. There are lovely tree ferns in this gully.

Then the final push up, and you're on the Makino ridge track. We reached it at 3.15 and then started down. You can see the track stretch out in front across the ridges, and then the final one, before the last leg down to the car park. The kanuka was again all across the track in places, but nothing too serious. Keith moved many broken branches from the track, a sterling effort that will help other trampers and hunters.

We reached the van, which had been brought up from Middle Hill, at 4.50. A longer day than normal, and some weary trampers, but all very satisfied to have done the tramp. It does not have the geriatric nickname for no reason, but we all felt fitter and younger than we had at 9.30.

A good day out for contortionists

Lakes car park - Rogue Ridge - Kaiarahi - Mackintosh Spur, Mackintosh Hut, Mackintosh car park, Saturday Oct 17. Map: BJ37 Kuripapango

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, John Dobbs, Colin McNatty, Jude Paton, Julia Mackie, Geraldine Oliver, Murray McIndoe, Bridget Seque, Denise Payne and reporter **Simon Hill**

BY 9am, we were off from the Lakes car park and up the Rogue Ridge track. There were a few damaged trees from the previous week's snowstorm. **>P8**

<P7 Julia disturbed a possum, which promptly sought refuge in a contorta pine tree. We all tried to knock it off by throwing rocks, but it stubbornly held on. Once again, Denise failed to get a picture.

On the ridge top, we had a bite to eat and a good all-round view. The sun shone through some fast-moving clouds. We climbed onto Kaiarahi (1507m), walking through a few patches of snow.

Once on the track down Mackintosh Spur, more broken branches from the pinus contorta as a result of the winter snow made the tramp a little difficult in places. Orange tie markers around several diversions were helpful.

A lunch spot was found on Mackintosh Spur, among the snow and pinus contorta, with a view of the van far below. Murray and Bridget had returned down the Rogue Ridge top junction to drive the van round to Mackintosh car park. Back on track, we walked through beech forest and finally made it to Mackintosh Hut at 1.30.

After a good rest, we walked down to the new bridge over a fast-flowing Tutaekuri River. Then, for Julia it was a 20-minute climb to the top, while others took about 35 to the waiting van and off to Napier, after a great day tramp.

Boys' Own Capers around Sunrise

Sunrise Hut and Armstrong Saddle, Friday Oct 23. Map: BK36

Trampers: Gordon Tapp, Paul Exeter, Murray Goss, Ray Slavin, Paul Hendy, Christopher Redfern-Wilson, Wade Sawyer, John Dobbs and reporter **Murray White**

HAWKE'S Bay Anniversary Day, and the forecast suggested south-easterlies and showers dying out. But we awoke to light drizzle. It proved to be a trip with an unusual component - an all-male affair. As we travelled down State Highway 50 and along the Makaroro Road, we were struck by the green vegetation and the flourishing rabbit and hare population.

As we drew closer to the Ruahines, we saw a band of cloud clinging to the tops and an overnight dusting of snow. At the car park, we exchanged introductions, as we had two new participants - Wade and Christopher - and gave a brief outline about the trip, which was largely unimportant because everyone had been at least to Sunrise Hut anyway.

We started up a soggy track, showing evidence of damage from heavy snowfalls. The streams were swollen through recent rain and snow-melt. The temperatures were quite mild initially and there was little wind, but it all changed as we ascended. Paul Exeter and Murray White ended up wearing three layers while on the move. As the track gave way to rutted, scoured-out clay and coarse stones, small patches of snow could be seen and the odd snowflake drifted down. Winter had not entirely released its grip on the range above.

Boys will be boys... the all-male expedition to Sunrise; Paul's cooking with gas; and the frozen peaks. Pictures by Paul Hendy

The first trampers reached Sunrise Hut at around 10.35 and enjoyed their morning tea or early lunch. When Murray Goss arrived, he set about coaxing the gas heater to life, while Paul Exeter put the gas rings on the bench, and entertained the gathering multitude by standing on a stool and warming his nether regions!

We decided to set off on up towards Armstrong Saddle. Initially, the weather had cleared and we basked in sunshine. We could see the tops and Waipawa Saddle-66, but the views to the east were obscured by low cloud. On the saddle, we all put on our parkas before moving up towards the Top Maropea turn-off. By now, we were tramping through snow. We reached the turn-off and it was agreed that Top Maropea would not be visited today.

Rapidly, conditions changed, with black clouds threatening; the sun vanished, leaving a monochromatic landscape. Gordon Tapp, Paul Exeter, John Dobbs and Murray White beat a hasty retreat back to the hut, while the photographers rung whatever they could from the changing landscape.

At the hut, lunch and humourous banter were enjoyed. We were fascinated by a gadget that Wade Sawyer had brought. It could receive e-mails, take photos and do all manner of things, and it had a compass and a spirit level! It's always interesting to have new people in the party, and we enjoyed talking to Wade about his role at TVHB and Christopher's musical interests. We hope to see more of them.

We were blessed with more sunshine, as we headed happily home to Napier.

Graham Bell

CLUB member Graham Bell (72) died suddenly while tramping on October 21. He and six others were on a private tramp to Hinerua Hut in the Ruahines. Soon after starting the tramp, Graham suffered a heart attack.

Graham had tramped with the club's midweek group for about 10 years. He was also a keen golfer and belonged to the local Freemasons and the Probus Club. He took up tramping on retirement from the NZ Railways, where he was a photographer. Graham is survived by his wife and daughter, to whom we extend our condolences.

YOU should soon be spotting this eye-catching message on car bumpers around the area. Garry Whincop's idea was rendered by Geraldine Oliver; they're members of a sub-committee tasked to find ways to attract new members. The motif doesn't replace the logo created in 1974, but is intended to promote the club. Stickers are available from Jude Paton, and business cards from John Dobbs. Let's show ourselves off to the world!

Christmas BBQ

THE date has been changed to Sunday December 13. It will be held at Julia and Brian Mackie's property in Puketitiri Road, from 1pm.

The usual format: bring a dish and liquid refreshments. For directions to the spread, please call Julia on 06 844 0540.

The club thanks Band Limited, 50 Ossian Street, Ahuriri, Napier, for helping to publish this newsletter