THE BUSHBASHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAPIER TRAMPING CLUB INC ISSUE 19, JUNE 2010

Mt Ruapehu Summit on a stunning day

The annual club visit to Tongariro National Park, from March 6-11

Trampers to Mt Ruapahu Crater Lake: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Sue Marshall, Julia Mackie, Ken Ross, Les O'Shea, Nils Holstrom (exchange student from Sweden) and reporter Denise Payne

THE Auckland Tramping Club facilities at Iwaka Village are always appreciated. Tramps were undertaken each day to various stunning locations. However, the highlight this year was the trip up to the crater lake on Mt Ruapehu.

Advice: Never let the long range weather forecast put you off, because the so-called experts do get it wrong! Sorry, fisherman Brian (who believed it and stayed at home): the rivers were not brown and there was no rain!

When in a mountain environment, you can plan your trip the night before - but it's not until you look out the window in the morning that you know whether it's on or not. For us, the planned trip to the summit was all go. We are not too proud now to use the chairlift (and we did) but there was a delay, as they were deciding if it was too windy up higher. Eventually they got it under way and as we looked like seasoned trampers, they let us on first - was it our fighting-fit physical appearance or our mature looks that gave this false impression?

The chairlift ride over stunning volcanic terrain is a great way to start the day and it is hard to believe that in a few months there will be many groomed ski trails below. People who have not been in this environment say "but it is all rock". However, you have to be there to experience the beauty of such a spectacular area: the ruggedness, the rocks, the colours and the extensive views are awesome. You have Lake Taupo in the north, Mt Egmont in the west and to look back over to the near-perfect cone of Mt Ngauruhoe with unusual rock formations in between makes for an unforgettable sight.

Banner picture: Ken Ross atop Tongariro and, above, the crater plateau on Mt Ruapehu

With most of the walk ascending rocky ridges and people approaching the top from varying directions (it is not a marked route), you eventually reach the track zig-zagging up the face and onto Dome Ridge. Dome Shelter houses seismic equipment to monitor volcanic activity and is only an emergency shelter for people. The acidic crater lake this time was not the muddy grey as in the past but a beautiful turquoise/aqua. With many photos taken, everyone enjoying the superb panorama and Les taking a closer look at the lake, we headed off across the summit plateau with its many amazing features - tomo-type holes, sulphur-covered rocks, cliffs coated in ice and oh-so-so many colours. You could have wandered around for ages, soaking up the atmosphere, but it was time to make our way back down the mountain.

With Ted in the lead, we headed up onto the Te Heuheu Ridge and then down a well covered scoria area most of the way, but did have to take more care as we came down the edge of a glacier area and needed to make sure we did not end up on a bluff. We all reached the chairlift for the ride down, unscathed from the rocky terrain, and on reaching the ATC Lodge it was agreed we had all experienced a great day up on Mt Ruapehu.

Pukekaikiore, Monday March 8

Trampers: Ted Angove, Denise Payne and Sue Marshall

WE arrived to a full car park. Just ahead, a large busload of tourists was setting out for the Tongariro Crossing. We managed to nip in ahead of them, departing at 9am. It was a lovely sunny day as we sauntered up the Mangatepopo Valley. We diverted off the track and headed out on a route through stunted shrubs, pumice, mosses and boulders to where Pukekaikiore and the old lava flow meet at the base of Mt Ngauruhoe. Taking a short break, we sat watching a constant trail of walkers making their way up the ->P2

Left: Omahaki Stream. Above: The private fisherman's hideaway

Mangatepopo Track, including a few of our group intent on reaching the summit of Mt Ngauruhoe. Having been cut and scratched doing this route on previous tramps, our way was made easier this time round by keeping off the scoria and tucking as near to the bluffs as possible. The rock formations were varied, and impressive columned bluffs towered above us.

Reaching the high point, we discussed trying a new way across to the lakes by dropping down and picking our way across the flatter terrain below, but decided instead to persevere with our usual high level route, clambering across the large expanse of scoria rocks and rubble. Sure-footedness was a must, as there were a few loose rocks and plenty of steep ups and downs, places where we felt no boots had been before. Just to prove us wrong, Ted spotted a fresh bootprint!

The marker pole on the skyline came into view and back on flatter terrain we found a great spot for lunch amongst huge boulders strewn across the valley - result of of slips from the towering bluffs behind us. Everyone relaxed in the sun, enjoying a performance of pipits darting about the rocks. Ten minutes on, we reached the stark, ash-covered terrain of Dry Lake at the head of Upper Tama Lake. It was a disappointing display of gentians this year, and we struggled to find a decent clump to photograph.

Up and over the ridge, we spotted Paul way over on the Upper Tama ridge-line; frantic arm-waving and few yelps from us attracted his attention.

What a magic spot to be - looking over the fantastic green lakes. We followed the ridges down to Lower Tama Lake, arriving at the Waihohonu Track at 2.15pm and continuing on to meet Paul who had made his way back to the track junction. He'd found many flowering bladderworts, which we had to inspect. But there was still a fair way to go, so we filled our water bottles at Wairere Stream above Taranaki Falls, slipped into 'autopilot' and reached the Chateau at 4.20. There were no car 'fuel' problems outside the tavern this year!

(You can read Ken Ross's Ruapehu Diary on the club website)

A walk you must not fail to miss

Omahaki Stream, March 13

Trampers: Ted Angove, Colin McNatty, Julia Mackie, Marc Marchal, John Marshall, Alison Greer, Jude Paton, Simon Hill, Murray McIndoe and reporter Geoff Donkin

AT the farm, we were met by manager Jock, who gave us a map, with directions on how to get to the stream. The river level was low, which made it easy going. However, there were signs of a major flood a while back, with the river level perhaps 2m higher, judging by debris on banks.

The stream has steep banks either side and, along with a strong wind, it took a while to go down it. We finally reached the branch to the Mangarakau Stream and decided to continue on to the Ngarururo River. A couple of fishermen were plying their trade, and there was a view of McIndoe Flat on the opposite bank of the Ngarururo for Murray McIndoe, plus the ridge up to Ruahine Corner.

We retraced our steps back to the entrance to Omahaki Stream for lunch. We decided to return via the farm track, so walked to Mangarakau Stream. It is signposted if you look hard enough (on both sides of Omahaki Stream). Then we came to the 4WD track junction (where some of us got misplaced last time). We actually headed off up the hill (the wrong way for perhaps 50 metres) before turning around. The markers with directions were visible if you were coming downstream. After crossing the stream, it is a climb up onto farmland. We headed along farm tracks, close to the DoC boundary. We could see the private hut (apparently, John Marshall got there) where, he informed us, a track leads down to the Omahaki Stream. We had not noticed it on the way down the stream. From here, we headed back to mid-farm stockyards, and further farm tracks back to the airstrip and the vehicle.

A good day to be out, with good weather; however, after perhaps four hours in the stream, we had had enough river walking.

Galbraith Hut: It reeks with ambience, thanks to pictures of Royalty - and a wooden chandelier

Scenery that's just waiting for a painter

Clements Road - Tahurua Road, March 3

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Paul Exeter, Vic Bullock, John Marshall, Geraldine Oliver, Gary Bowler, Jean Van Den Hout, Vic Bullock and reporter Keith Morretta

LOW cloud and occasional drizzle greeted the group of nine as we began ascending into the wonderful beech forest of the Kaimanawas, from the Clements Mill Road car park. But only Kelvin and Keith were keen to walk through to Poronui Station, on Tahurua Road.

The rest preferred a leisurely walk over the beech leaves and forest remnants, returning to Clements Mill Road. By lunchtime, the clouds had blown away and the sun shone for the rest of the day.

For Kelvin and Keith, after an hour ascending through the beech canopy, we passed Te Iringa. Another hour along the ridge, we also passed mountain cabbage trees with their huge dog-like tongues hanging down to catch the morning moisture, the area abundant with ferns and bracken.

After a couple of hours, the track descended to the Tiki Tiki Stream. A further 30-minute walk led us to a swing bridge, where the Tiki Tiki Stream converges with the Kaipo River. After a quick lunch stop, we pressed on along the river track to Oamaru Hut. This 90-minute walk along the Kaipo River was banked with beech, horipito and kanuka trees. The clear water, moss-covered rocks and the trees are just waiting to be captured on canvas.

We had another quick refresher stop at the 12-bunk Oamaru Hut, before starting our last trail to Poronui. This well-marked track is the only public access through Poronui's private lands and the trail runs adjacent to the Taharua River. After a long walk, we arrived at the Poronui settlement and its private gates, where our transport awaited. It had been a long tramp, but a lovely experience.

Expert navigation to Galbraith Hut

Maungaharuru Range, March 17

Trampers: to Galbraith Hut, Alison Greer, Ali Hollington, Sue Martin, Noeline Blair, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Manfred Hausler and reporter Ken Ross. The Bellbird Bushers were John Marshall, Vic Bullock, John Mason and Ron Morison

IF half Plan A plus half Plan B is Plan C, then we did Plan C again. The day's forecast was for a cold southerly front to pass through, but clearing in the afternoon. They were right with the first part.

Our mission (which seven accepted despite the forecast) was to transit the Maungaharuru Range from the Titiokura Saddle on the Taupo Road north to Pohokura Rd. We set off and climbed steadily, mainly on farm tracks, keeping an eye out for the expected change in the weather. It hit after about an hour. We had

The swingbridge crossing the Kaipo River

been smart enough to have our full rain gear on in time. It was cold, driving rain and we were glad it was on our backs. Also we were not on the ridge line but out to the west and down a bit, so were not exposed to the wind's full force. Our visibility was nil so the GPS was handy. At least we knew we were on the fold of the map!

Before long, we realised that it was not going to be much fun climbing up to the top of Taraponui in those conditions; the view would be zero and it could be hazardous. The decision was made to change our route and exit via Galbraith Hut and out through the farm on Waitara Road. Phone contact to the van crew was successful and they would come back around to pick us up. We reckoned we were at about the right elevation for the hut so continued to sidle round. With consummate expertise, we walked directly onto the hut.

We were at Galbraith for an early lunch. It was great to be out of the elements for a while even if we didn't really warm up at all, despite the fire that Manfred managed to coax into life. We enjoyed the ambience of this unique little hut with its wooden chandelier, pictures of Royalty decorating the walls and I noted a new rubber doorstop lovingly mounted to protect the doorframe. After lunch, we set off downhill at a brisk pace and soon warmed up. By then, the rain had eased but the cloud level was still down to just above the hut. I was glad we were heading down, not up. In no time, we were back at the van. Those who had gone up through Bellbird Bush toward Bell Rock seemed a little smug about their decision.

We spent little time or energy checking on the fauna and flora, but some did note that the clump of Hoheria Augustifolia trees adjacent to the hut were smothered in starry white flowers.

Pancake crossover: Not a piece of cake

Iron Gate - Ngamoko Range/Ruahine Range Crossover, March 27-28. Map: BL36 Norsewood

Trampers: Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Alison Greer, Les O'Shea, Ali Hollington, Geoff Donkin and reporter Julia Mackie

THE planned start from Kashmir Road end was aborted at our 7am meeting point. The winds were high and it would have been horrendous on the tops. So we decided to drive around to the western side of the Ruahine Range and walk into Iron Gate. Some of us had not been there before, and we like to go somewhere new.

The day was sunny with high cloud but still 19C. We parked at the end of Table Flat Rd along with at least half a dozen other vehicles and set off at around 10.30. We hoped those other people weren't walking our way.

The bridge crossing the Oroua River is the same as on the track to Rangi Hut. We reached Heritage Lodge within 25 minutes, and a group of schoolkids was just leaving. After checking out the new lodge, we continued on to our destination, Iron Gate Hut. The track follows the Oroua River, with a few ups and down and quite a number of huge tree falls, which had been cut up to allow passage. We lunched down by the river in the sun, checking out the fishing pools. The track was a little boggy in places and Paul, taking a short cut, ended on all fours in the mud.

On reaching the hut around 2.30, we found two hunters in residence. They had come from Taranaki and were hoping that the deer roar would be early, but apparently the weather was too warm. We had a hot cuppa before deciding what to do next. The planned crossover was back on, with Paul and Ted volunteering to drive the vehicles around to pick us up at Kashmir Road-end. We checked out the track heading up to the Ngamoko Range from the hut, for about 20 minutes. It was going to be a climb up as usual from the river the next morning.

A lazy afternoon in the sun outside the hut, and then pancakes courtesy of Paul and plenty of maple syrup and whipped cream on top and the usual cheerios supplied by Ted. After dinner, the hunters lit the campfire at the front of the hut. We watched it get dark as the moon rose above the bushline.

The next day looked good and we started out for the tops at 8.30am in fine warm weather. The podocarp forest seemed very dark. Just before the tops, we stopped and put on coats and overtrousers, hats, gloves and extra layers. Drizzle was persistent and the wind was up a bit. Coming out of the leatherwood, the track becomes a route; however, it was easy to spot. We made our way to a cairn which we knew marked one of the high points we needed to pass along the Ngamoko tops. Cloud hampered the longer views. >P4

We headed east for 1519m where a sign indicated Iron Gate Hut, from whence we had tramped. We checked with the GPS and map, and then moved north-east towards Otumore, also at 1519m. Standards marked the route from here, down the steep, muddy slope to Pohangina Saddle. I took a tumble on the grass, and did a few horizontal cartwheels.

We reached Longview Hut, happy to be out of the cold wind and rain for our late lunch. We calculated that it would take an hour to get to the road-end, and so phoned Ted and Paul to check their position. They had got to Table Flat road-end in 3.5 hours and were in Ashhurst. We arranged to meet at 2.30, and then put a billy on for a hot drink with lunch.

Five wet and happy trampers had completed the west-east crossover, despite poor conditions. Good navigation and using the GPS at the various high points made for an exhilarating day's end to the weekend.

A stream too far...

Smiths Stream, Ruahine Range, March 31

Trampers: Keith Moretta, John Mason, Murray White, Vic Bullock, Ken Ross, Robyn Smith, Manfred Hausler, Jeanne Van Den Hout, Rosemary Jeffery, Peter Slagter and reporter Kelvin Shaw

... OR so it seemed, after tramping for three hours and with a sign saying two more hours to go - at which point we turned around and headed home.

We had set out on a warm, windless and sunny morning, arriving at the car park by 9am. Along the way, we were pleased to see that the slab crossing over the Triplex Creek had been widened and repaired. Scouring and erosion at this point had prevented further progress on the last outing in this area in February.

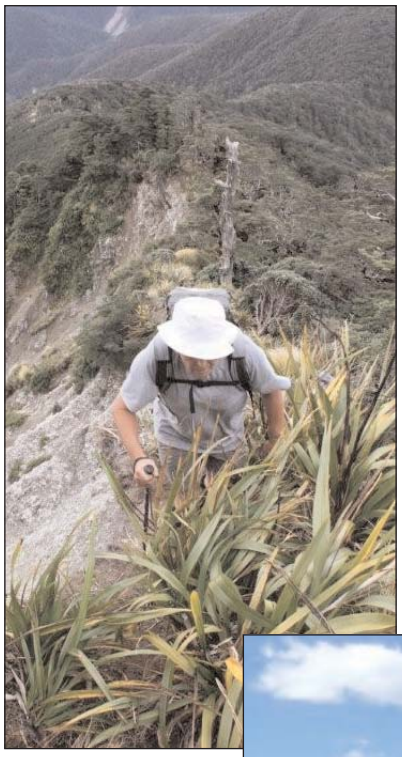
Ten set off on the tramp to Smiths Stream, while three dropped off along the way to set their own pace and distance.

The Waipawa River (bridge crossing) and Middle Stream, which we crossed twice, were very low, having had little recent rainfall. Crossing them was not a problem. The track has been redirected in the area approaching the Middle Stream and that has removed the need for a knotted rope to get down the bank. However, the replacement is not a lot better, looks far from permanent with loose footings and still has very steep gradients.

From the top, there were clear views of the Three Johns and surrounding hills and the sound of stags roaring was heard by some.

From the start, the target of reaching Smiths Stream hut was a big ask, and in the end we never even reached the stream, turning around after lunch at the point where the track descends steeply to the Smiths Stream.

Despite offers by me to accompany someone/anyone down to the stream, there were no takers. The return to the vehicles was uneventful but completed an excellent day in the sunshine.



Clockwise: Kelvin Shaw plods on resolutely, heading for Sparrowhawk Bivvy; Paul Exeter, the Pancake Masterchef, performs at Iron Gate Hut; and the Mohaka River as it passes through Waitere Station

Happy wanderers, hopelessly lost

The Easter trip to Wellington, April 2-5

Trippers: John Dobbs (organiser), Paul Exeter, Denise Payne, Sue Marshall, Jude Paton, Sue Dawson and reporter Murray White

GETTING away from Napier before Easter was stressful. None more so than for organiser John Dobbs, who had just returned from leading a tour party in the wilds of Tasmania.

We travelled through the Manawatu Gorge and took the Shannon-Levin back route. All was well until "the turn-off to Levin". John was leading and Murray in the rear was on autopilot. After a while, Denise, in Murray's vehicle, said the road didn't look right. It had too many sharp corners. Efforts to attract John's attention failed, so Murray turned round and went back to the junction. Fortunately, John and Co soon woke up and joined us. We had been heading for the Wairarapa via the Pahiatua Track…

A weary crew entered the Paekakariki camp grounds, to be confronted by a code-controlled barrier. It was after 11pm. Murray decided to risk the owners' wrath by banging on their door. And the reception was frosty.

Next morning, the team decided on a trip into the Tararuas - via the "Puffer" track at Kaitoke and down to the Tauherenikau River and the Smith's Creek Shelter. However, mine hosts at the motor camp had demanded we front up at 8.30, so departure was delayed while John grovelled about our late arrival the previous night. He must have done a convincing job, because he arrived back intact.

We travelled to Kaitoke via the Paekakariki Hill Road - Pauatahunanui Inlet - Haywards roads. North of Upper Hutt, we reached the turn-off by the old YMCA buildings at Kaitoke and halted in the car park.

A steady climb via a 4WD track led to the track proper through a hillside covered in gorse and kanuka. From there, it was downhill through a track scoured out of clay. The rewards were magnificent miro, kahikatea, totara and broadleaf trees that flourish in this area.

We came across a DoC sign advising a diversion to avoid a slip. The blokes decided to risk going via the original track, while Denise and Sue Marshall chose the alternative route. Jude

Clockwise: Jude Paton, Les O'Shea and Julia Mackie at Pohatuhaha Trig with the Ruahine Main Range on the horizon; Route 66 - Te Atuaoparapara; On the WWII gun emplacements - Makara windfarm in the distance; and Murray McIndoe, wood chopper par excellence, at Howletts Hut

and Sue Dawson were still to reach that point. The blokes found the slip and debris challenging, and pushed onto the shelter for lunch, before back-tracking until they found the rest of the party down by the creek. The climb back up proved hot, but we all made it and returned to camp via the northern circuit of the Pauatahunanui Inlet.

That evening, we set off to explore the beach. It was a lovely evening with an apricot band of sky near the horizon, capped by a largely clear blue sky and Kapiti Island in relief. It was around the time of the full moon, which accounts for the lunatic behaviour that followed. The team held hands and ran, played ring-a-ring-a-rosie, and draped themselves artistically off some creative person's driftwood sculptures. Then it was home to bed before the people in white coats arrived.

Next day, we were blessed with a fine morning, and a wind that increased as we came closer to Makara. Sue Marshall was feeling below-par and decided to stay in John's vehicle while the rest set off around the coast, passing evidence of old slipways, winches and disused boat sheds. We climbed up a grassy gully and then followed close to the cliff top. The slope steepened before the final high point leading to our objective. There were the World War 2 gun emplacements, positioned to cover Cook Strait - two at one level, each the size of a seaside bach, with a third mounted on a knoll above. They were protected by machine-gun emplacements. The views across Cook Strait were clear and impressive. After a time, it was around the corner and onto a flat area where we found the remains of foundations, presumably for barracks and maintenance sheds. In the background was the Makara wind farm, which proved quite mesmerising.

We made our way back in high winds, observing manmade rubbish littering the beach. Back at the cars, we decided to visit a nearby cafe that offered surprisingly good food and coffee. Then it was off to Wilton's bush, a popular stopping place where the original farmer had the foresight to preserve and which has been enhanced with additional plantings and a variety of tracks for all levels of fitness.

On Sunday, we drove into Wellington, where the crew disembarked at Oriental Parade before their walk through the green belts to Houghton Bay. Murray gave this trip a miss. The rest headed up to Mt Victoria and on behind the zoo. Many high points provided excellent views, but the sky was leaden and threatening rain. Everyone had agreed to meet at Houghton Bay. Murray was driving around Island Bay half an hour early when he spotted some of the team on the footpath. The rest were scattered elsewhere and rounding them up was like trying to herd feral cats. We finally all met up at Te Papa for lunch and the outstanding Pompeii exhibition.

Back to camp and into the showers, then off to Fisherman's Table for a pleasant meal. That night, a gale screamed through and next morning there was evidence of the damage, with shredded leaves and branches.

Returning to Napier via the Rimutakas and Wairarapa, we broke our journey at the Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre and enjoyed lunch plus a stroll. Particularly entertaining was the hand-reared kokako, which had learnt to wolf-whistle.

Thanks to John Dobbs for his organisation and Pat and John Tristram of HVTC for collecting trip info. While we may not have used much of that this time, it will provide a useful resource for future trips.

Team efforts, all rewarded with views

Golden Crown Ridge, Aranga Hut, April 10. Map: BK37

Trampers: Jude Paton, Les O'Shea, Julia Mackie, Colin McNatty, Ted Angove, Sue Martin, Geoff Donkin, Murray Goss, Murray White, Alex Thomason, Denise Payne, Marc Marchal, Paul Exeter and reporter Alison Greer

IT was a glorious autumn day of blue skies, sunshine and no wind. We drove through Kereru and down the pretty Mangleton Valley road, stopping at the gate that leads to the Masters Shelter car park. It was to be a day of teams, the A+ team deciding to tackle the longer Golden Crown route to Aranga Hut and beyond to high point 1406.

The van continued on, stopping at Sentry Box car park, this group choosing the steeper but shorter route. The first steep section sorted out the A and B teams with everyone stopping at the Rocky Knoll for a breather and a look round. The A and B teams regrouped again at the sign post of the track junction, where the B team announced they would not be going to Aranga Hut but would stay on the tops for lunch, then make their way along to the Golden Crown ridge.

The A team set off, stopping at the high point Pohatuhaha (1368m) where a 360deg view awaited. Mt Ruapahu stood out, as did all the high points on the Ruahine Range, the Heretaunga Plains and Wakarara range. Photos were taken, routes were established then it was back down to the main track and along the often muddy, undulating ridge, reaching the turn-off at 11.15am. Meanwhile the A+ team had scampered up Golden Crown past the sign post and hurried >P6

on towards Aranga Hut, leaving a note in the hut for the A team saying they had left for 1406 at 11.30am. They made their way the short distance to the objective for the day and were rewarded for their efforts with fabulous views over the Ruahine Range and west towards Mt Ruapahu. The A team reached Aranga Hut and had settled into a relaxing lunch in the sunshine when the A+ team arrived back, and they too sat in the sunshine and had lunch.

The B team had found a spot about 10 minutes on from the signpost for their lunch stop. They then continued on along the ridge top and down the Golden Crown ridge. It was along here that a wasp nest was encountered and unfortunately one member was stung a few times, which did not make a good end to her day.

The A+ and A teams made their way back across the wet plateau to the track junction with the A+ team heading south towards Sentry Box track and the A team continuing north towards Golden Crown. The A+ team also made the diversion to Pohatuhaha, checking points on the map and taking photos. Then it was a quick trip down to the car park, to pick up the van and drive back to Masters Shelter, where A and B teams waited. A great day out for all teams, with everyone achieving what they had set out to do.

Up-and-down, and all-round drama

Waitere Station, April 14

Trampers: Ted Angove, Gary Bowler, Vic Bullock, Alison Greer, Rosemary Jeffery, John Marshall, Sue and Peter Martin, Keith Moretta, Kelvin Shaw, Robyn Smith, Peter Slagter, Gordon Tapp and reporter Ken Ross

FROM the top of the Maungaharuru Range (Bell Rock or Taraponui), you can look northwest into the Mohaka River basin, onto some very interesting country: a vista of farm, forest and bush with distinctive land formations and the dramatic Mohaka River rushing through it. In the middle, at the end of Waitara Road, is Landcorp's Waitere Station, the location for our tramp. We're grateful to have permission to tramp on this farm.

Our route was a clockwise circuit, starting from the station's new cattle yards. We followed farm tracks westward, until dropping quite steeply to a river terrace and our first expansive views up the river. Our search for an easy descent to water level didn't prove successful and so the technically difficult, ungainly and undignified five-point crawl was generally adopted for the final drop. We took an extended drink stop in this interesting section of the river, on large flat rock platforms featuring ancient shell fossils. A waterfall spouted from the cliff face opposite.

We worked our way downstream, clambering over or around large boulders along the river's edge to our lunch spot, a deep swimming hole - but there were no swimmers. And then we climbed steadily, to be rewarded with expansive views up-river to that distinctive peak, Te Kooti's Lookout, and to our route ahead, a hanging valley between towering buttressed limestone cliffs. The climb through the valley is dramatic, with amazing rock formations on both sides. From the top of the valley, it was a short traverse around to the airstrip and then downhill back to the woolshed, where we found our wheels.

The weather had been near-perfect: Sunny with a clear blue sky, plus a few fluffy white clouds to add interest to the photos - and just enough wind to keep everyone cool.

A Longview from Howletts

Howletts via Daphne Spur Track then Longview, April 24-25

Trampers: Alison Greer, Murray McIndoe and reporter Julia Mackie

REACHING the end of Kashmir Road, we took a look at the cloud hanging about the Ruahine tops, judged the wind and decided that we would go to Howletts via the Daphne Hut track. Ray Slavin kindly volunteered to help bring back our vehicle to the Longview car park. We set off at 8.50, heading across the Moorcock Stream and along the unofficial farmland route.

We reach the bushline and head up to rejoin the main track, where we stop for a snack at 10.30. Then it's downhill to the Tukituki River, and a few crossings until we reach the start of the Howletts track. We stop again to take off boots and drain them, and wring out our wet socks. We decide that it is too early for lunch, and head off up the track at 11.40. After 20 minutes of steep climb, we stop for a 10-minute breather, then continue on until 12.40 when we stop for lunch. The wind above the tree-line can be heard and we realise that the decision to take this track was the right one. The tops would have been very cold and windy today. All windfall has been cleared from the track so, apart from the incline, it is easy walking.

We reach Howletts Hut at 1.40, so we have walked it in the 2hrs, plus had 30 minutes of break time. We are doing well… The cloud is hanging about the tops to the west; however, we are in the clear, and can see the eastern vistas. But it is not warm, and so we have a hot cuppa, and take stock of our firewood supplies. We grab the empty coal bags and axe and head off searching for firewood. Luckily there is plenty about, and with Murray's strength we bring back some big logs as well as smaller stuff. This takes time, but the weather is closing in, and it is getting even colder. We get the pot belly going, and soon have a good warm temperature in the hut. After a wash, we settle down with some red wine and cheese, courtesy of Murray, and have a natter.

After darkness falls, we all cook and enjoy our evening meals. The cloud has come down, so we are not able to see the coastal lights, and light rain begins to fall. We are cosy and warm… wonderful. We have the hut to ourselves, with Murray taking the penthouse, and Alison and I on the lower deck.

The next morning, cloud was lifting and we were up for the Anzac dawn sunrise. A good view from the loo. The wind was not too strong, so we set off for Longview at 8.15. The track is through leatherwood for a short time, before becoming grassy tops walking up to Taumatataua 1415, after which you soon see the saddle and route up to the 1452m high point. The alternate track down to Daphne Hut is at the top of the saddle, and is marked to take 1.5 hours. It's one none of us has done, so we must give it a go sometime.

We can see the route up to Otumore 1519, but the top is in cloud. A one-minute stop before the last ascent up to the turn-off down to Longview. It was too cold to linger for longer, but we could enjoy the views through to the Manawatu and out east.

The descent from Otumore was just as bad as usual. Deep holes filled with water and mud in two sections of this descent, however we were all glad to be out of the wind. Looking back, we could see the tops we had walked last month coming over from Iron Gate. We had no views then, but could see Tunupo 1568 today. We reached Longview Hut at 11.45, so were pleased with the 3.5 hour time we had taken.

A good long lunch break in Longview Hut, with a hot cuppa. Two day trampers from Palmerston North were also lunching there. It was drizzly in the west so they had come to the east coast for fine weather. Lucky us.

The trip down back to the van was quick as usual, with a stop to look back up to Longview Hut, and the horizon beyond before we reached the bottom. A very satisfying trip for us all, and the weather had been kind at last.

Day trampers to Longview Hut: Jude Paton, Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Matt Green, Ron Eagle and reporter Marc Marchal; to Awatere Hut: Geoff Donkin, Ray Slavin, Denise Payne, Gillian Dalton

IF Napier's beautiful crisp morning was anything to go by, then our walk up to Longview would be a breeze.

However, when we reached the end of Kashmir Road, the cloud was shooting over the Ruahines. Although there was little wind in the car park, no one doubted there would be more than a breeze blowing on the tops.

And as our party rose, so did the wind intensity - so much so that half way up, several decided enough was enough and turned back to make their way to the Awatere Hut instead.

Six of the group decided to give it a further go and, after some serious windbashing, reached the Longview Hut. Morning tea was a windfree event with the door firmly shut. Further tramping over the tops was clearly impossible and after morning tea, the group set out to descend back.

Staying upright proved quite a challenge over the top ridge, with the wind claiming a small victory in blowing Ron over. Once away from the tops, things became much easier, which allowed Ted to suggest an alternative route over a spur down to the river.

What initially seemed quite easy rapidly turned into a bushbashing exercise that lasted until we reached the river. We walked downstream to the Awatere Hut, where we caught up with the rest of the group for lunch.

Down in the riverbed and with the sun shining, it was hard to believe the weather conditions higher up. After lunch, a quick visit to the Black Stag Hut and a leisurely walk back out completed a thoroughly enjoyable trip. Oh yes, and then there was the cool beer on the way home, always a treat for a Belgian. Cheers!

Bushbashers? More like windbashers

Sparrowhawk Bivouac, Ruahine Range, April 28

Trampers: Julia Mackie, John Mason, Paul Exeter, Alison Greer, Keith Moretta, Murray White, Vic Bullock, Ken Ross, Peter Slagter and reporter Kelvin Shaw

THE forecast was for rain clearing and a westerly wind. They were spot on again, but the mention of a gale would have been helpful. With ten on board, the van arrived at the end of Glenny Road (thanks to the farmer allowing access) in good time. Eight set off with the bivvy as a target, while John and Vic headed for Gold Creek Hut.

The track starts very steeply up a craggy ridge at the junction of Gold Creek and the Makaroro River (alt 500m). Both had low water flows. A DoC sign advises that time to the bivvy is 3.5 hours.

There are many snow-damaged trees in the lower part of the track and fallen branches on the track caused several detours or the need to clamber over the debris. At least it took your mind off the steep gradient.

The bivvy was reached just after midday by everyone, in just over three hours (alt. approx. 1300m). The final section of the track required careful negotiation along the top edge of a large slip. The thought of a fast descent to the bottom was a good deterrent to being over-confident.

A few keen individuals ventured further up to see the views from the tops. That was well worth the extra effort but the cold gale-force wind didn't allow for staying too long.

The views were tremendous, which made the effort worthwhile. The return down the track was a lot easier and was uneventful - apart from me suffering cramp.

We arrived at the river six hours after the start. From there, it was a return trip over the farmland to the van. John and Vic had also achieved their objective, so it was a very successful day.

Matt Green, Colin McNatty, Marc Marchal and Geoff Donkin waiting for others in the Waipawa River bed

Get your blisters and bruises on Route 66

Sunrise, Armstrong Saddle, Te Atuaoparapara (66) Waipawa Saddle, Waipawa River, May 8. Map: BK36

Trampers: Colin McNatty, Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Shaun (visitor), Geoff Donkin, Jude Paton, Julia Mackie, Alison Greer, Murray White, Phil (visitor), Denise Payne, Colleen Pereau, Matt Green, Ray Slavin, Murray Goss and reporter Sue Martin

IT was a perfect day to tackle this favourite climb. A large number of trampers set off up to Sunrise Hut - some at record pace, others in their own time. An hour up the track, I could feel blisters developing at the back of my heels. Bugger!

Everyone enjoyed a cuppa on the hut verandah in the warm sun and I did a little repair job on those annoying and painful blisters. A small group chose to only go to Sunrise Hut, back around the swamp track and then down the river.

Before the big group headed up Armstrong Saddle, they sensibly placed more layers on to battle the cold winds that can blow across. However, it wasn't as cold as predicted. When we reached the 'Top Maropea Hut' sign and headed west, it was a long slog up to the trig. But the views along these tussocky tops were stunning and the higher we climbed, the better they were - especially with snow-capped Mt Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe in full view. With almost 360-degree views across the ranges, there were so many great Kodak moments and hut-spotting opportunities. The climb was well worth the effort.

It was too fresh to have lunch at the top of 66 at 1687m (the highest point of the tramp) so we continued climbing our way around the craggy rock face, overlooking massive slips. Then it was a slide/slip/bum-slide/run down the scree to the designated lunch spot by the small tarns.

It was a great sight, looking back up the ridge, knowing that we had just done it. The hard work was over. Only one more small climb from here, and then downhill to the Waipawa Saddle. We had glorious views of the western Ruahine Ranges.

It wasn't long before the track joined the Waipawa River. Initially, we had to manoeuvre around large boulders. Then we made dozens of river crossings and often had to enter small bush tracks when the river was not navigable. Boy, my blisters were screaming with pain whenever the feet got wet.

There was lots of regrouping, which is always appreciated. A few walked up the 10-minute track to Waipawa Forks Hut for a first-time look. Less than an hour later, we came to the farmland and road entrance to Triplex Hut. There were the cars that had been kindly driven down to avoid a long slog back to the car park.

It had been an enjoyable tramp of less than eight hours. It had everything: tracks, hard climbs, scree, rocks, river crossings, saddles, huts, and spectacular views. Then it was home to treat the huge blisters, hoping they'd be gone before the next tramp.

The Whirinaki Wonderland

Upper Te Hoe Hut, Whirinaki Forest Park, May 22-23. Map: BG38

Weekend party: Simon Hill, Ted Angove, Paul Exeter, Murray Goss, Les O' Shea, Julia Mackie, Gillian Dalton, Ray Slavin, Sue Martin and reporter Alison Greer

Day party: John Dobbs, Gorden Tapp, Rosemary Jeffery, Matt Green, John Marshall, Marc Marchal and John Russell

ON a lovely morning after a cool night, and with the prospect of a good day ahead, three vehicles met at the Taupo turn-off en route to the Whirinaki Forest. There must have been too much chatter in Ray's vehicle because he overshot Pohokura Rd, the turn-off from the Taupo highway.

The forest road was good considering the recent rain; we came across two gangs logging beside the road, making it a little muddy, but we all got through and arrived at Plateau car park around nine.

Only four of the weekend party were doing the longer trip, while the rest took the vehicles round to the Pukahunui car park. The day group and the weekend party headed off in high spirits, making their way up and down the ridge leading to the Upper Whirinaki **>P8**

A few of the day group and weekend party stop to admire the Whirinaki River: Left to right, John Russell, Rosemary Jeffery, Simon Hill, Matt Green, Alison Greer, Gordon Tapp and John Dobbs

Hut. The track could do with some attention - it's getting quite overgrown in places.

On reaching the Whirinaki River, we crossed over and turned upstream, picking up the track on the true right. After the snowstorms of recent years, we were concerned about the state of the river track but were relieved to find it recently cut and in very good order. The river was beautiful to walk beside, crystal clear, lovely ferns and bush overhanging the water, plus the call of the elusive blue duck. With only six or seven river crossings, you hardly got your feet wet!

Lunch was had in a sunny spot just above the river. As the river narrows to its headwaters, becoming a small stream, you look down on slopes of punga fern, beautiful with the filtered light shining through the bigger trees.

As we climbed up the side of the ridge, the day party went ahead and reached the junction to Upper Te Hoe. They turned right and followed the track out to Pukahunui where their transport awaited, while the weekend party turned left and continued on to Upper Te Hoe Hut to join the rest of the group for the night. We arrived around 3.45pm, pleased to see the fire going and the billy on. Everyone busied themselves with getting tidied up, beds out, and then we settled down for the evening, with a cup of Ray's mulled wine. Two slept on the porch, one in a tent with the rest inside. It was an uneventful night - apart from comings and goings to the loo!

The next morning, the mist was down, so it was a bit cool. We cleaned up, packed up, and wandered off to tackle the climb back up the hill. Up amongst the trees, the mist and fog swirling around makes Whirinaki such a magical place.

We reached the signpost and found Simon's hat (which he had left from the day before), had a bite to eat, then continued. This section of the track could also do with some maintenance - there were several trees lying across the track, some of them very large and making it a bit challenging for those with short legs!

It was cold at the car park so we boiled the billy for a cuppa as we waited for the slower members to arrive. We drove out just as it was starting to rain.

Find the sun, and then follow it...

Wharite Peak, Ruahines, May 26

Trampers: Kelvin Shaw, Keith Moretta, Robyn Smith, Paul Exeter, Ken Ross, John Marshall and reporter Alison Greer

A SELECT group set out from Taradale on a heavily overcast morning. The weather forecast was not good for the Southern Ruahines, but we continued on down Highway 50, hoping for the best.

But it soon became apparent that the whole range was completely obscured with rain cloud.

"Where shall we go?" was the question. "Over there, where the sun is" was the answer. A quick decision made, we turned off at Otane, went through to Waipawa then headed east, ending up at Blackhead Beach. What a lovely day it was: no wind, slightly overcast, and quite warm. We headed north towards Aramoana and Pourere and, since the tide was low, wandered around the rock pools of the marine reserve.

The photographers were in heaven because the light was just perfect and the water still, making the rocks stand out and giving off good reflections. Among the many birds spotted were two types of gull, white-faced heron, kingfisher, and godwits. Paua and kina shells were collected to become garden masterpieces, and it was nice to stand and watch the waves crashing onto the rock shelves.

We reached Pourere at 11.30, and decided to return past a narrow section of the beach before having lunch.

With the tide coming in, it was obvious that the water would reach the cliff if we lingered too long.

We settled in for lunch on a grassy bank and were entertained by the antics of the oyster catchers, then retraced our steps, stopping at Aramoana to watch a group of knots and NZ dotterel poking around in the small stream which runs across the beach.

Dark clouds began to appear from the south and as we arrived back at the van it started to rain, so we piled in and drove back through the lovely Central Hawke's Bay countryside, after a short but enjoyable day out.

i TRAMP

www.napiertrampingclub.org.nz

President: Julia Mackie
Club Captain: Alison Greer
Secretary: Jude Paton
Treasurer: Garry Whincop

Committee

Julia Mackie 844 0540
trans@ction.co.nz
Murray White 845 3316
jomel@xtra.co.nz
Alison Greer 844 8152
greer.fans@xtra.co.nz
John Dobbs 844 2285
DobbsDJI@xtra.co.nz
Keith Moretta 844 7570
lamb.moretta@xtra.co.nz
Sue Martin 835 8144
petesuem@googlemail.com
Garry Whincop 845 2805
whincop@inhb.co.nz
Kelvin Shaw 836 7094
y2kshaw@inhb.co.nz
Jude Paton 835 4649
jude.paton@clear.net.nz
Colin McNatty 844 4144
cvmcnatty@slingshot.co.nz

New member's contact:
Kelvin Shaw 836 7094

Transport co-ordinator:
Alison Greer 844 8152

Bushbasher Editor:
Brian Mackie 844 0540

Bushbasher reports to:
trans@ction.co.nz

The club meets at 7.30pm every second Thursday at Port Ahuriri School, before each weekend tramp. Please check the club website for dates and upcoming topics.

This newsletter is also available as a PDF file. Email trans@ction.co.nz for a copy.

The club thanks Band Limited at 50 Ossian Street, Ahuriri, Napier, for printing our newsletter.

Napier Tramping Club also thanks the Eastern and Central CommunityTrust for its financial support.

For the latest information, visit www.napiertrampingclub.org.nz

To stay right up to date - just click and get RSS alerts via email