

Footprints 2015



Editorial

This year has been a great one. We had an amazing 69 trips run this year and we had an astounding 660 members, but I would have to say our most impressive achievement was finally printing Footprints in colour. I hope that all of you, readers, will be able to look back on the trips that ran this year, enjoy the memories of them, and find inspiration for future ones.

I would like to thank the Authors: Matt Battley, Nick Lombard, Natalie Sharples, John Cater, Kathleen Collier, David Gauld, Carmen Chan, Vishakham Joseph, Maud Tissink, Sylvie Admore, Tiffany Shih, Katie Herbert, Helen Liley, Bridget Hall, and Graham Brodie. Your work makes the foundation of this magazine and it certainly wouldn't be possible without you.

Speacial thanks to Matt and Kat who helped tremendously with proofreading; you all made my job a whole lot easier, and to Bridget for the Cover Photo. And lastly, thanks to Anna, Sarah, and the other previous publications officers; your help and your previous examples were essential to putting this all together. Thanks again everyone, I think we've made this the best edition of Footprints I've ever made.

Louis Christie
AUTC Publications 2015



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Committee Members 2015

Captain	Matthew Battley
Secretary	Carl Barnhill
Treasurer	Sam Hood
Trips Officer	Carmen Chan
Safety Officer	Daniel Scholes
Social Officers	Nicholas Lombard Natalie Sharples
Gear Officer	Helen Liley
Hut Officer	David Zheng
Environmental Officer	Maud Tissink
Memberships Officer	Ray Li
Website Officer	Hamish Buckley
Publications Officer	Louis Christie
General Members	Moira Dickson Bianca Freytag
President	John Cater
Vice Presidents	Anton Gulley Katie Herbert Anna Luo Sarah Daniel Sylvie Admore



Captain's Report

Spam, spam, spammy spam, Captain's Report and spam.

It seems that we've come to the end of yet another excellent tramping year, wonderfully full of disappearing off into the middle of nowhere.

The Club has continued to go from strength to strength this year, maintaining the 650+ members we had last year and certainly not showing any signs of slowing down! We've had a huge number of trips go out, everywhere from Mt Aspiring National Park, to the Central Plateau, to one or two in that little known Waitaks place... In fact we've averaged over 1 trip a week throughout the year, 69 in total, which is thoroughly impressive. I think a lot of this has been down to the excellent job Carmen (the Trips Officer) has done this year, persuading members (both new and old) to get out there and run tramps.

And on a similar note, the Socials Trips year have been absolutely fantastic - Natalie and Nick have tirelessly organised numerous huge trips and parties like O'Trip, May Camp, Cave Party and many more so that we can all head out to cool places and enjoy ourselves. These social trips are crucial to maintaining the strong relationships and traditions of the club and our members, so it's been wonderful to see them so well attended.

Instructional Courses have also been booming this year - Basic Bush School took people out to Whatipu and Pararaha to learn about navigation and wading through endless swamps, Advanced Snow School and a record 5 separate Beginner's Snow Schools (totalling 40 students) were held to try to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of keen beans to head into the Alpine environment. Another record of 80 people applied this year, so there's been some pretty tough competition! And don't worry if you missed out, we'll be running more in 2016!



I've been particularly pleased with the huge variety of trips going out this year – an excellent range from 11-day epics or Alpine Ice Plateaus through to fun day-walks and some fantastic 3-4 day trips in between. I'd like to thank all of you members for getting out there and leading tramps; without your input the club simply wouldn't function.

A personal highlight for me this year was the St Arnaud to Lewis Pass 11-day tramp through the Nelson Lakes National Park South. It's a wonderful area with hugely varied terrain: from lakes, bush and rivers to sub-alpine and alpine tops travel. If you do have the time I'd highly recommend challenging yourself to some longer trips as these get you into places well off the beaten track and form strong friendships with your fellow adventurers

Safety-wise, had I written this two weeks ago like I originally intended, I could have claimed a year without any significant accidents, but an unfortunate coincidence of two PLB-pulls in the same week mid November is a reminder to all of us to take care when we're out there tramping. Thankfully both members injured on these tramps are now home safe and sound thanks to the good work done by those on the tramps and the excellent emergency services/SAR teams. As always, leaving clear intentions, taking a PLB and having escape plans allows those injured to be rescued before they are in serious trouble when accidents occur.

Significant work has continued on the club hut this year, with the whole front of the hut now rebuilt and reclad, the water-tank and toilets cleaned, and various odds and ends tidied up. There's still plenty to keep us busy in the coming years, but it's nice to see it with a bit of a new lease on life.

Finally, I'd like to say a massive thank-you to the entire committee, who all work tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure the club runs smoothly. Without your wonderful work a club this big would be impossible to organise.

I hope you're all looking forward to a summer full of exploring everywhere NZ has to offer. I look forward to hearing stories of your summer exploits, as you return pumped for a whole new year of tramping adventures.

That's all from me – have fun, stay safe and go find some mountains!

Matthew Battley
Captain 2015

P.S. Watch out for next year's captain, I hear that Matt fellow can be a bit odd...



Social's Report

Quad Lunches

Hosted by Natalie and myself (Nick), your trusty socials officers, the AUTC lunch was held every week in Albert park. This gave the opportunity for people interested in AUTC to come say hi, for people to plan trips, or just catch up and discuss the joys of honey-peanut butter sandwiches.



O'Camp

The year started with a bang, with the AUTC running the annual O-Week camp at our beloved Ōngāruanuku hut, set in the Waitakare forest. This year we had a great turn up, and even though we got a little rain on the Sat night, we had a heck of a good time to remember.

We set off from the usual spot outside the Library sat morning in the hired bus and a few cars, and arrived at the foot of the Waitaks in good time. We split into different walking parties, depending on your flavour of tramping. The walk up was smooth and dry making for an easy hike. After settling in and pitching tents, it wasn't long before there were drinking vessels cracked open and snacks getting shared around.

The evening was kicked off with a good round of classic hut games, including the telephone book challenge, traversing of various objects and sock wrestling. A big thanks to the cooks for making us an amazing meal, and for all those who helped with the cleaning.

In the evening we blasted the big stereo, and flailed around whatever emitted light like lunatics. The following morning we set about cleaning the mess and getting ready for the tramp down to Piha beach where all the walking parties rallied and enjoyed the view and nibbling on their remaining food rations.



Mt. Eden Wine and Cheese

On a fine Monday afternoon a few trampers met up at the usual rally point and made a human convoy to the foot of Mt Eden. With our chosen attire of 'oh.. this will do' clothing and fashionable silly hats for those brave enough, we walked up the hill. I mean mountain. At the top we were greeted with a fantastic 360 degree view of Auckland City, the harbour, and neighbouring mountains. As the sun set we were treated to a fine selection of box wine, cheese and biscuits fit for a king, and continued to take copious amounts of selfies. A glorious day worth remembering.



Cave Party

Situated at the southern end of the Waitaks, the Caves are a mere 30 minute drive from the heart of Auckland. We met at the usual spot and made our way up on a fine Saturday morning. On arrival we sorted out the tents, and split up into walking groups for the afternoon. As the sun set, we enjoyed a hearty dinner of homemade burgers. After we were well into our second cup of Fanta, we collected the necessary gear and made the walk to the cave, where we set up a night to remember. We lit up the cave with tea candles, played good tunes and fun games to shake off the cobwebs.

In the morning the cave was cleaned up, and a breakfast consisting of uneaten leftovers was enjoyed before packing up and heading home to catch up on some sleep. And a shower. Thanks to Nathaniel (aka Nacho) for showing us the ropes on how to party like an animal, and for the bottomless packet of chips. I always knew yer a wizard!



Hut Birthday

We celebrated our beloved Ōngāruanuku hut's 71st birthday this year by christening it with 4! Yes 4 new road signs acquired legally. The weather was stellar, and although we might have gotten slightly lost on the way, we found the hut and proceeded to claim beds and get the tunes going. Classic hut games were enjoyed, such as table/body/chair traversing, sock wrestling and so on.

The hut was adorned with streamers in such a way that would have brought great joy to a drunken monkey. We refuelled on a lovely potluck dinner and desert where we sang happy birthday to our much-loved place of refug. Afterwards the tunes were cranked, the glows ticks were cracked and we danced the night away. Brilliant night. Can't remember most of it, but I'm sure it was epic.



May Camp

On the weekend 25th of July we celebrated May camp at the Waitawheta camp in the Kaimais. On the Friday afternoon we made our way to the campsite and settled in for an epic weekend.

After a quiet Friday night of chilling, speed dating and a hearty dinner, we headed off to the Kaimai Gorge the next morning. The walk proved to be one for the books, treating us to a beautiful views, tunnels, and a glimpse into the mining history of the area. After enjoying a well-deserved lunch we headed back via either the easy or the more adventurous routes. Tales of the days were shared back at basecamp and after dinner we got set up for a Toga/Rubix cube themed party lovingly set up by the AUTC committee members. We enjoyed an epic 20-person, 10x10 meter GIANT Twister game and afterwards dancing like rabid drunken squirrels to the tunes belted out on the massive sound system specially brought in. I can't remember how the night ended. One thing I do know is that we were definitely not short of orange juice. By far one of the best nights we had all year. Thanks everyone, it was a blast.





Tawhitokino Beach Camp

This tramp was very special. We parked up at the car park at the end of the coastal road and set off along the beach at low tide to our campsite. The weather was fine and we were in good spirits. Thanks to Natalie, we had access to a motor boat, which allowed us to get the food to the camp site easily, and also get a few turns getting thrown off the supertube! We set up the volleyball set and threw a rugby ball around all day, enjoying every minute of such a splendid day on our own private beach. We all enjoyed a good ol' sausage sizzle for dinner and a delicious ice-cream desert. At night we settled around a camp fire playing games and having a beer or two. Unfortunately, the weather didn't hold the next weekend, so we quickly packed up the gear and headed back to the cars. Smashing weekend in the sun.



Pinnacles Cook-Off

Around 30 of us headed up to the massive Pinnacles Hut for the ultimate cook off challenge. In pairs each team was allocated a dish and had to battle it out in the kitchen to win the cool prizes. With churros, pancakes, French toast and much, much more we ate like champions. We all headed up to the top of the pinnacles to watch the sunset and it did not disappoint! Overall a truly awesome trip!



Authors: Nick Lombard and Natalie Sharples, Social Officers 2016



Marin Segedin

Life Member: 1922 - 2016

Marin, just a month short of ten years old when the club was formed, joined the then Auckland University College Tramping Club in the early days when it was still struggling for existence. This must have been an exciting time to be a member of AUCTC as the club strengthened: May Camp, which was actually held during the University vacation in May (until we changed to a semester system), was started in 1942; Ongaruanuku and Footprints were both founded in 1944; by the end of 1948 AUCTC was tramping in the South Island. You can read lots more about these heady days in Marin's own account in the Auckland University Tramping Club Jubilee History 1932-2007, pages 6-10. For all but one of the 16 years 1942-1957 inclusive, Marin served on the Committee in various ways, including as Club Captain in 1948 and President in 1949-1954. He was elected a Life Member in 1949, the same year he took up a lectureship in the Mathematics Department.

An important aspect of the club in those days must have been the setting of standards. The club itself was born after a disastrous tramping/climbing episode on Mt Ruapehu so safety would have been a central concern, especially with trips to the higher mountains of the South Island. Moral issues were also different in those days from now, with it being unusual for "girls and boys" of student age to disappear into the hills for days at a time unchaperoned (apparently an early encounter between an AUCTC party in the mountains of the South Island and a group from the Canterbury Mountaineering Club, which didn't allow women, provoked the question "you are a heterosexual club, aren't you?" from the locals). Marin gave lots of thought to both of these issues and for years afterwards, whenever a new or uncertain issue arose the question would be asked: "What would Marin do?"

Marin had a great sense of humour and was a great actor. Many of us enjoyed his silent skit involving him sewing his fingers together. Because few if any current AUTC members will have seen him in action I shall try (inadequately!) to describe the idea. He would start by pretending to pluck a whisker from a stubbly-cheeked male and a long strand of hair from a female: these would serve as needle and thread. After 'threading' the 'needle' he would then begin to sew the fingers of his left hand together and you could almost see the thread pulling the little finger up against the next finger as he tugged on the thread. You could feel the pain which he expressed so vividly as he stood on his hand to force the needle through his palm then somehow force it through his upper arm before alternately tugging on and relaxing the thread to make his sewn hand wave. I have seen him do this many times and never tired of it.

As a Mathematics lecturer Marin also influenced my life. He was a stern but inspiring lecturer with a great knowledge of his subject. He had an amazing memory. When I was a student class attendance was compulsory and at every lecture a class roll was passed around with those in attendance expected to sign the roll: if you didn't sign enough times then you were not allowed to sit the final exam. Sometimes you'd sign for an absent friend. One of my fellow trampers reported that he went to visit Marin after a class to discuss some tramping issue. Marin asked him to wait a bit while he checked the roll because there were more signatures than students present. It wasn't long before he identified from the first year class of nearly 200 which student was signed for but absent, and this was early in the year.

Finally, he was a valued mentor for me, particularly when I was a beginning lecturer, sharing his experiences and advice freely.

Author: David Gauld



Anton Gulley

New Life Member

Anton was as the inaugural Safety Officer in 2009, but he had been a member for a few years before that. It was on an O-Week trip in 2010 that I first met him. Safety is an area which he took (and still takes) very seriously, and he could often be found phoning trip leaders with reminders to pack snow chains or to submit their intentions forms. In his role as Safety Officer, Anton was responsible for an Advanced Bush School, and was a strong advocate for club investment in safety and instructional courses such as MSC River School and Avalanche Awareness. He followed this up with a year as the club's Treasurer in 2010.

Anton took over as Captain in 2011. He has been actively involved in the running or vetting of most trips that have gone out since then; he encourages new trip leaders and often accompanies them in order to help develop their skills; he has inspired a great number of trampers, new and old, with his straightforward approach, laconic humour, and general staunchness. Since 2012 he has been a VP active in safety and in giving advice to the committee. There is a general suspicion by many members that Anton actually secretly continues to run all facets of AUTC from behind the scenes.

Many stories have been told about Anton and his predilection for removing his clothes; here are a couple from Kat Collier, captain in 2010:

Caving with Anton in a tunnel reached through a manhole in a suburban car park: the cave was apparently not exciting enough for Anton's taste, and he decided that the optimal solution to this would be the removal of his clothing. That alone did not satisfy him, however, and he proceeded to tackle Andy Baddeley to the ground, straddle him, and engage in a very muddy wrestling match whilst forcibly removing his overalls. The end of this particular episode was reached when, climbing back out of the manhole – clad in the tasteful ensemble of helmet, boots, and a large quantity of mud – Anton was surprised by the four year old daughter of Andy's boss.

The hut working bee when Anton discovered falsies. Kat's bikini top has never been the same since. Also, the hut birthday when he dressed as a playboy bunny. And the loin cloth at May Camp, and the lime green mankini atop Ruapehu, and...

Anton is welcoming and approachable to newcomers, supportive of people who were insecure, and gentle with those who are shy.

Author: John Cater and Kathleen Collier



Tom Goodman

New Life Member

Tom joined the AUTC committee in 2008 as Duke of Edinburgh Officer (several years before the current president and most recent life member). He followed that up with a two year stint as Socials Officer – a role for which he was ideally suited given his boyish charm, exuberance, and thoroughly egalitarian approach both to alcohol and to members of the opposite sex. Since that time, he has been the club's Trips Officer, Alpine Officer, and Vice President, and has spent a total of seven years on the committee.

He is also exceptionally dedicated to AUTC: during his time in the club, Tom has run everything from dessert nights to Snow-Schools and, moreover, he has continued to do so long after most of his contemporaries have dropped away.

He is always entertaining company – he is an accomplished biologist, historian, literary critic and political commentator, amongst other things, and has in addition to this an astonishing knowledge of pop culture, which makes him invaluable at pub quizzes.

Once again, there are many stories of Tom's activities in the club, particularly when it comes to his ability to socialise. Before stories were shared the meeting was cleared of anyone in currently in a relationship with Tom:

Tom leading his first multi-day trip. He got the cars snowed in, forgot to pack matches or lighter, provided only seven crampons between four people, refused to get out of bed before eleven in the morning, and spent the evenings singing Andrew Lloyd Webber songs and trying to molest his bunk-mate. The trip never made it past the second hut.

Tom's luck is unenviable. In recent years he has written off approximately three cars, half a dozen cellphones, and at least a score of potential girlfriends. He is also the only tramper we know who has had a hut collapse on him, had to be rescued from a car park, and got lost whilst standing on the summit of Kaweka J. All this, and there's never been occasion for a helicopter call-out (amazing).

Tom is immensely loyal and unfailingly kind. He always makes a genuine effort to include new members and get to know them. He has a wealth of experience and continues to participate in club events.

Author: John Cater and Kathleen Collier



Trips 2015

Tawharanui Forest Reserve
Nelson Lakes
Goldie Bush Walk
Tararuas
Whanganui River
Kauaerange Gorge
Hunua Day Trip
Mt. Pirongia
Pararaha Valley Day Walk
Hunua Day Trip the 2nd
Kauaerange Kauri Trial
Kaweka J and Hotpools
Whatipu Day Trip
Umakarikari Thunderbolt
Nelson Lakes Epic
Pouakai Circuit
Kawekas
Great Barrier
Taranaki Trip
Pinnacles Trip
Pouakai Circuit the 2nd
Cascade Saddle - Mt. Aspiring
Mt. Taranaki: Up and around
Ruapehu Summit
Mt Pirongia overnight
TWALK 2015
Baiting Trip
Cape Brett
Mt Pirongia
Kawekas
Piha Daywalk

O'Camp
Wine and Cheese
Cave Party
Hut Birthday

Umakarikari-Middle Range
Thunderbolt Loop
Pinnacles
Round the Mountain
Cape Brett
Mokoroa Trail Run
Tongariro Moonlight Crossing
Climbing Ngauruhoe
Baiting Trip the 2nd
Tukino / Ruapehu
Waitawhet Hut
Moonlight Crossing
Waitakeres Adventure
Pouakai
Tongariro National Park Excursion
Te Rereatukahia hut and Hot Springs
Thunderbolt Ridge
Pinnacles Cook-Off
Kaweka Hot Pools
Northern Tongariro Circuit
Crosbies Hut
Kaweka Ranges
Tongariro Northern Circuit
Arthur's Pass
Wanganui River
Tiritiri Matangi
Tararuas Adventure
Baiting Trip the 3rd
Arthur's Pass
Tararuas
Nelson Lakes the 2nd

May Camp
Tawhitokino Beach
Pinnacles Cook-Off



The Spirit Challenge

The spirit of a trumper is not only to walk, but to lead. To traverse new boundaries and set new horizons for those too that wish to explore the outdoors. This year the Auckland University Tramping Club launched a new initiative called the 'Spirit Challenge'. Created by the AUTC Trips Officer Carmen Chan, the aim of this project aimed to encourage the spirit of outdoor leadership and to celebrate the effort placed into running group trips by AUTC club trip leaders.

In order to qualify for the award, recipients had to organise four club trips following the club's protocol and similarly facilitate the production of four trip reports. Members that then attended the trip were then encouraged to nominate their trip leader for an animal totem and at the end of the year, recipients of the award at the end of the club's year in 2015 were each gifted with an animal totem selected by their peers, and a certificate of recognition for their achievements.

This year's recipients were:

David Zeng	Spirit of the Megacerops
Matthew Battley	Spirit of the Owl
Maud Tissink	Spirit of the Kelenken
Natalie Sharples	The Incredible Flying Momma Dinosaur
Nicolas Lombard	Spirit of the Brahman Bull
Tiffany Shih	Spirit of the Giraffe



Tawharanui

Date: 10/01/15
Location: Tawharanui Forest Reserve
Trip Leader: Carmen Chan
Trampers: Vishakham Joseph, Vanamali Joseph, Shanouk De Silva, Michael Tabachnik, Henry Zhang, Tuan Dinh, Yi Wang, Lance André Cueto.



Today, digging through my backpack, my hands came upon an unexpected little treasure. A long, sleek black feather, the white vein of a stalk running vertically and slightly off centre. The feather of any ubiquitous bird. And I remembered our day tramp a couple of weeks ago.

It was the tenth day of the year and held at the mystical-sounding Tawharanui regional park (just a 90 minute drive from Auckland). It was a relaxing day, walking at a leisurely pace with a group of strangers who became friends. White sand beaches and turquoise waters weaved with sunshine. We walked through a paddock where cows watched us inquisitively. There was even a cow with burgundy stripes, resembling a tiger, as one creative trumper noted.

The bush walk was in welcome shade and we were serenaded by many unseen birds, though our sharp eyes did spot a few: tui, grey warbler, saddleback and kaka. Shortly afterwards, we encountered the same cows, the identical bush walk and concluded (with just a hint of embarrassment) that we were repeating the loop. We re-navigated, through another beautiful bush walk and reached our final destination, a lookout of breath-taking beauty.

The tramp back was one of heightened camaraderie and a sense of achievement, despite the brevity of the trip itself. Short tramps are a refreshing reminder of the magnificence of this country we live in. Can't wait for the next one!

Author: Vishakham Joseph



Three Summits in a Day

A Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, Tongariro Epic

Date: 22/02/15 to 24/02/15
Location: Tongariro National Park
Trip Leader: Maud Tissink
Trampers: Sarah Catley and Thomas Andrews

*"Summits are calling
Skies are blue.
Let's take down a summit
Why one, not two?
Or three?"*



So it was that one day, Sarah and I decided that this was a good idea. But I'd only get back to Auckland from work at 7pm on Saturday the 22nd, and Sarah had to be at work at 3pm on Monday the 24th. Which left us with...

44 hours to drive, sleep and tramp.

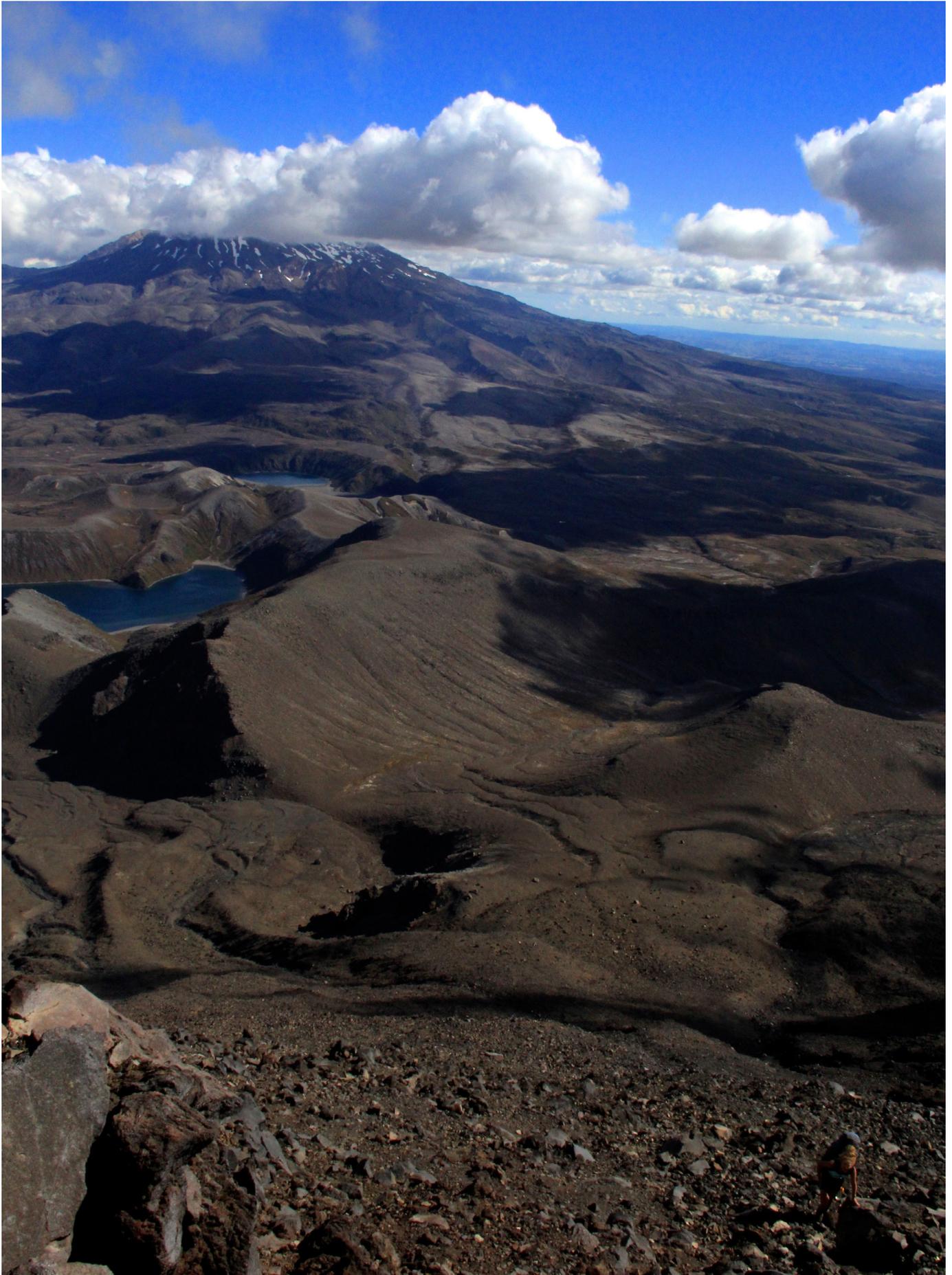
I mentioned this to Thomas, who commented that it was rather insane, and then decided he'd come anyway.

And so it was that we left Auckland at 9pm on Saturday with a generous helping of coffee and cookies to make our way down to Whakapapa village. We arrived at 1am, set up camp, tucked into bed and proceeded to wake up at 4am. The next day was a blur of awesomeness. The Te Huehue summit of Ruapehu was surprisingly easily reached, and by 9am we were on our way to Mt. Ngauruhoe.

Racing down the wonderfully gradual slope of Mt. Ruapehu into the Waihothonu Valley was heavenly. This was of course offset by the lengthy ascent of Ngauruhoe. Thankfully the Tama Lakes offered some entertainment on the way.



Here is Sarah, dwarfed by the landscape. Somewhere in the distance behind that far mountain our car was parked...



By 5pm we reached the summit of Mt. Ngauruhoe. We took a quick look into the crater and a selfie, and decided to hurry down before the sun set.

That was a good choice. As soon as we reached the South Crater and started heading towards Mt. Tongariro, the day bid us farewell with an impressive sunset.



By the time we got to the summit of Mt. Tongariro, it was well and truly dark. Perhaps it was a lack of sleep, or perhaps the result of a physically intense day, but the fall of night seemed to trigger a sudden onset of exhaustion in all of us. For the next few hours we slogged down the mountain in a slow, zombie-like state. By the time we got to the Mangatepopo Hut, and had cooked our dinner and had crashed on the wooden floor, it was nearly 2am. Yet we had to set alarms for 4am again..

Two hours later, I found getting off the floor extremely difficult. Despite that, we all somehow managed and left the hut by 5am. For the next two hours of walking to Whakapapa, I required all the mental strength I had to stay awake. Going got easier once the sun rose, and my mind suddenly seemed to kick-start. By 7am we arrived in Whakapapa Village! We finished! Our selfie does a good job at depicting our state of tiredness and impending madness.

First thing we did? We got a coffee. Then we hurried back to Auckland, because some of us had work that afternoon. But we will be back to do the three peaks the 'proper' way, as we later discovered such a thing exists.

Author: Maud Tissink



Paradise Found

Sunshine, Snow, and Friendship in the Gardens of Eden and Allah

Trip Leader: Sylvie Admore and Helen Liley

Trampers: Stephen Waite, Sam Richardson and Bjoern Striebling

With the university holidays almost upon us, Helen Liley and I were in search of our next big adventure. NZtopo has been the genesis of many a trip, and that was where we found ourselves; trawling through the mesmerising landscape of the digitalised Alps. One swathe of contours caught our interest, twin expanses of ice hidden behind the Canterbury high country - the Gardens of Eden and Allah. Armed with nothing but dreams and enthusiasm we recruited three more members from the ranks of the Auckland University Tramping Club (AUTC): Stephen Waite, Sam Richardson and Bjoern Striebling. After some careful planning and a swiftly assembled application we were rewarded with a letter from Federated Mountain Clubs offering us a Youth Expedition Scholarship. Our student budgets were immensely grateful! Finally, after months of preparation, we set off with bags packed, boots on, and a wad of photocopied pages from the NZAC Canterbury-Westland.

On the 2nd of January 2015, the Clyde stretched before us - coursing with recent rainfall and the promise of adventure. The next morning starts with a 900m climb up to Butler Saddle. We head up a narrow valley of endless grey clag, sending loose scree skittering below us with every step. Eventually we emerge from the cloud onto the saddle. It's lunch time and packs are heaved onto the ground, their edible contents disgorged. Once our stomachs are satisfied, our eyes drink in the panorama of peaks scattered across the horizon in the direction of our next eight days of travel. It's an exciting prospect.

Less exciting is the nasty descent which culminates in a sweltering bush bash down the ignobly named Meins Knob. We crash our way through stabbing Spaniard and clumps of Hebe before tumbling out onto the banks of the upper Rakaia; beaten, broken and thoroughly dehydrated.

Lyell Hut brings both relief and surprise to our party of five. We stumble into the single dim room to find one of the six beds already coated in a layer of belongings. Our curiosity is satisfied an hour later with the appearance of a beige-clad climber. Simon is an engineer taking a six month break to collect some of New Zealand's 100 classic peaks. His mission had been made somewhat difficult by his climbing partner's loss of a boot in the bush bash down Meins Knob the previous day. (The partner had subsequently walked out the Rakaia in search of more footwear.) Now at a loose end Simon listens with interest to our planned route; we hoped to climb Newton, a peak not far from Tyndall which appears in the classic 100. After some discussion and a fair amount of leftover hut food scrounging, it was agreed that our party of five would become a party of six, with an engineer to other ratio of 5:1.

After a day spent lounging at Lyell Hut we wake at 3am to ascend the Lyell to McCoy Col. From McCoy we execute a roped traverse below Mt Nicholson before finally making camp just below the windswept Malcom Col, trapped by the weather. It is 5.00am. The tent pole has flogged loose



of its Velcro binding and now flails and flexes above Simon's head in time with the rest of the structure. The windward guy is now free from its shovel-head attachment and the interior space has been halved by the external pressure of the wind gusts lashing against the tent. My proactive re-guy-roping quickly proves futile as they fly loose almost immediately upon my return to the tent. Burrowing deeply into my now damp sleeping bag, I make the most of the inability to do anything by catching up on some sleep.

By 8am the wind has dropped to a manageable level. We pack down the tents, our gloved fingers fumbling with the myriad of guy rope knots employed in an effort to anchor ourselves to the mountainside. Shouldering our loads, we descend into cloud towards the indistinct whiteness of the Frances Glacier. Simon's GPS proves an invaluable tool to fill in the gaps not gleaned from the occasional breaks in the cloud. We soon start up the steep snow slope to Lambert Col. The sun-warmed rock of the Col invites a short coffee break and we align ourselves with our backs against a large boulder. The sun is already blazing, promising a baking traverse of the Lawrence Glacier and a sweat-soaked plod up onto the Garden of Allah.

After half a day of exactly that, we find ourselves on the gentle saddle below Snowy Peak at around 2.00 pm. The slushy snow rules out any attempt on Newton and Tyndall so we set about constructing our camp, henceforth known as 'The Fortress of Allah'. We gradually expand a walled snow pit, roughly a metre deep, to accommodate our tents and gear. It's hot work but the rewards are high (we would make out its shadowy shape from the peak of Farrar three days later). Eventually the shovels are discarded and our three tents are pitched. After a quick walk up Snowy Peak we cocoon ourselves in civilisation. There is nothing more comforting than a tiny sphere of security in the midst of icy wilderness. Safe on our padded sleeping mats, encased in our down bags, we fall asleep to the roars of the surrounding ice-falls as they splinter themselves around us.

The next morning dawns in streaks of colour. The snow has frozen overnight, creating perfect crampon conditions. We make fast progress up the ridge toward Newton (2543m) and Tyndall (2517m). We head to Newton first, edging our way around a schrund before gaining the easy slope to the summit. It is a straight-forward climb, rewarded with panoramic views of the Southern Alps. We spot the stern rock ridge of Mt Cook away to the south and puzzle out the maze of crevasses on the face of Mt Lambert to the north, eventually losing ourselves in the grandeur of the landscape. While Newton may have been our goal, Tyndall is definitely Simon's. Sam, Bjoern and I watch him race up its south face with Helen and Stephen in tow. Fifteen minutes later he's ticked off his 66th classic peak. Our group heads back down to camp ablaze with achievement and ready for a coffee.

After decamping, the rest of the day is spent traipsing across the Garden of Allah in single file before starting on the final 200m climb to the day's campsite. Adam's Col, when we reach it, is worth the effort. ClimbNZ declares that, "On a fine day there is no better place to be on the planet." Luckily for us the tent-shredding gales and pelting precipitation that plague many parties, remain at bay and we are able to appreciate this piece of paradise-on-earth.

The next day's mission is Mount Farrar which lies roughly three kilometres east of our Adam's Col. It is an impressive looking, three-peaked mountain with a gaping icfall in the centre of its eastern face. We head up on the south side of this face, plugging in the already soft snow. We traverse above a gaping crevasse, minds firmly focussed on our feet and axes. A glorious ridge of rock stretches up and eastward to the summit. We leave our ice-tools and crampons behind



and scramble up Farrar's jagged spine. The climb is exposed but the rock is excellent and we are soon standing on the summit. Persistent cloud still clings to the valleys but has rolled off the twin ice-plateaus which now stretch out eastward away from us. The pyramidal Guardian Peak rises in the centre, cleaving Allah from Eden. All around us mountains raise their crests above the sea of cloud, mysterious islands promising adventure. This moment - this is it. This is why we plug doggedly through knee-deep snow, why we shiver in our sleeping bags, why we heave our packs back on our shoulders time after time: to encounter the sublime heart of this spectacular country on its own terms.

The next morning we bid farewell to the Garden of Eden. We descend the comfortingly named Wee McGregor Glacier and hit the moraine spilling down from the Frances. Acres of loose rock stretch out in every direction and we pause to contemplate our next move. Suddenly a huge roar echoes down the valley. We look north to see a massive cascade of snow and ice flowing down from below Snowy Peak. Simon's camera is out and we stand with mouths ajar admiring the ice-plateau's final farewell. It is an apt reminder of the powerful forces underpinning this volatile environment.

After a night spent at the superbly situated McCoy hut we make our way down the Clyde to emerge, dust ridden and sweat-soaked, into the paddock where Esmeralda, Helen's Hilux Surf, has been waiting patiently for over a week. We line up for the quintessential 'after' shot, grinning furiously.

In the weeks following we are keen to chat about our trip to anyone who seems as though they might be remotely interested. The first thing we mention isn't the spectacular climb up Newton or Farrar. It's not our self-built fortress on the Garden of Allah or the cascading icefalls below Snowy peak. It's not even the amazing days we spent at Adams Col. Our first sentences all go something like: "It was incredible and, funny story; we met this awesome dude on day two who decided to come along for the rest of the trip!"

As a general rule the New Zealand backcountry is not a great place to meet new people, in fact I would say that it's fairly unlikely that you meet anyone at all. Meeting someone who didn't complain about the layer of our gear spread across the entire hut and who patiently tolerated our barely smirk-inducing jokes would have been enough. The fact that we were lucky enough to meet Simon, who subsequently contributed to our gear explosions at each campsite and who actively joined in on our often sub-par banter, is really quite special. Moreover, Simon taught us a lot about moving in the mountains. His calm, careful approach to alpine climbing won him quiet admiration from all of our party. His laid-back manner, sense of humour and a common love of being in the mountains ensured him our friendship.

Just days after our return from the Gardens, Simon headed off to climb Mt Earnslaw. He was reported missing three weeks later and his belongings were found in Esquilant bivvy. While we may never know exactly what has happened to Simon, it is certain that Earnslaw won't be his last climb. Helen, Stephen, Sam, Bjoern and I, as well as many others, will take the knowledge he imparted and the memories he shared with us each time we head into the mountains.

Author: Sylvie Admore



Whatipu

Date: 03/04/15
Location: Waitakere Ranges
Trip Leader: Graham Brodie
Trampers: Kelsey Waite, Sulin Wang, Shunto Arai, Cong Li



As my first time leading a trip I thought 'why not go for something easy' and after reading around I decided a circuit taking in the Gibbon's, Muir and Pararaha Valley tracks (a small part of the Hillary trail) and Whatipu beach would be ideal; it had beautiful views and wasn't too far from the city. Having only lived in Auckland for just over a year myself I was really keen to explore the Waitakeres which I had heard such good things about. It was only after I had arranged everything that I was told to expect some sort of waist-deep mud-fest! Whilst losing someone into a bog would certainly be eventful for my first time as a trip leader, it was still something I was keen to avoid!

When the day came, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, a stunning Auckland autumn day and not a speck of mud to be found. The Gibbon's track starts off steep but once you're up there are some fantastic views of the Whatipu wetland and beach below. The Muir track is where things start to get interesting. The track narrows and the ground becomes more uneven. This is, as I'm told, what tramping in the Waitaks is all about, obviously without the mud. Clambering across rocks while holding onto a chain and wading through a stream definitely livens things up a bit. The rumoured waist deep bog of the Parahaha Valley track has, in the past few years, been turned into a pleasant boardwalk stroll which leads towards the beach and the wetlands. After losing our way a bit amongst the sand dunes and ending up a bit further up the beach than planned, we found a nice hollow in the rocks to stop for lunch.

Afterwards we set off down the typically West coast black-sand beach to return to the car park. The sea spray made for some atmospheric photographs as some of our group ran through the waves. The beach route feels longer that you would expect it to as we see nary another soul on our way towards the Manukau harbour. When we returned it seemed as though half of Auckland had followed us and was sitting on the beach close to the car park. Just goes to show that, even on a nice day in Auckland, if you're willing to walk just a few km you can still find a stretch of beach all to yourself!



Winter is Coming

Date: 05/04/15 to 15/04/15
Location: Nelson Lakes National Park
Trip Leader: Matt Battley
Trampers: Sophie Jenkins, Blair Ramsdale, Hamish Buckley and Josh Alexander



11 Days, 6(ish) passes and innumerable face-plants by Matt. Looking at topomap.co.nz is really dangerous...

It was mid-March and Blair and I were trying to do our Engineering design project (truly!), when miraculously the computer gained a mind of its own and switched us to looking at a topo map of the Nelson Lakes area. From there we were doomed; everything was far too tempting around there, and Sophie, Blair and I realised that we had surprisingly little to do over the Easter break. We thus hatched a plan for an 11-day epic to make our way from St Arnaud to Lewis Pass, taking in some impressive passes like Waiau, Thompson and D'Urville. It didn't take much persuading to get Hamish and Josh along, so before we knew it Easter found us in Nelson.

We spent most of Saturday getting to St Arnaud where we'd decided to camp before beginning to tramp on Easter Sunday. However, there was just enough time left for the obligatory jump of NZ's most photographed jetty (at lake Rotoiti), beginning the oral rendition of Pratchett/Gaiman's magnificent 'Good Omens' and debating whether it was a good idea for Blair to skinny-dip behind the wedding party at the lake. With everything packed and a hearty fish-n-chips warming the stomachs, we drifted off to sleep excited by the adventure about to begin...

Day 1: The adventure begins

The weather gods were smiling so far. As the impromptu Blair Easter-Bunny distributed Easter-eggs (it was Easter Sunday, after all), an atmospheric thin mist clung to the surface of Lake Rotoiti, leaving the sky gloriously clear. Day 1 involved an 800m/2600ft (vert) grind up the Pinchgut Track followed by a traverse across Robert's Ridge all the way up to Lake Angelus. I should point out at



this juncture that all heights will be supplied in both meters and feet as this was a lively debate throughout. We certainly envied the day-walkers during the initial climb as our packs weighed in the mid to high 20kgs margin (11 days worth of food is even more when someone doesn't believe in dehydrating it), however the increasingly incredible view on the way up made every metre worth it. It was during this climb that Hamish obtained his 'Gandalf Stick', which survived the entire trip, despite some deliberate and accidental foreshortening.

Splitting off from the day-walkers as we carried up along Robert Ridge, the terrain became far rockier, with patches of green spattered among the basins on the Travers side. It's quite a rewarding ridgeline for its accessibility and really not too taxing once you're past the Pinchgut section. Julius Summit makes a nice 5min side-trip to get a wider view of the track. As the light began to play on the grassy basins, we noticed how much it looked like Warg territory and developed our theories about the best way to cut down the mightiest tree in a forest with a Herring.

Nearing the end of a reasonably long first day we finally climbed over the last ridgeline to gain our first view of Lake Angelus and Angelus Hut. Nestled between Mt Angelus and the basin formed by Lake Angelus, the hut looked incredibly inviting, but we had already decided to be stingy and camp instead. It was our intention to carry on down the track for a while and maybe drop down to Hinapouri Tarn to get out of view of the hut (as is usually the ruling), however as luck would have it just a few 100m down the track there was a specially designated DoC 'freedom camping site', on the other side of the lake from the hut. It was the best camping spot we could have hoped for in that area. As the sun set on day 1 we quickly threw up the tents and chowed down on the first of the dinners of dried meat and bread which Blair had prepared for us.



Day 2: The day the weather started to hate us

Day 2 was a much shorter day, where we only needed to drop down from Lake Angelus via the Mt Cedric route to Sabine Hut on the shores of Lake Rotoroa (which interestingly is 170m lower than Lake Rotoiti, where we began – all that hard work for nothing!). We had planned a side-trip up Mt Angelus to fill in the morning, but the clouds kept teasing us, playing on the summit. Ascertaining that going right to the summit might be unwise (with next to no view) we instead went to explore the aptly-named Sunset saddle. Dropping down to Hinapouri Tarn to get across, we climbed towards the red-rocked saddle, with Josh stopping at any large enough tarns to show off his rock-skipping prowess.



Eventually the mist began to find us, so we decided it was time to sidle back around to the camp and follow the track while we could still see it. The Cedric Route is tremendous fun, with some open rocky ridge-travel with reasonably steep drops off either side, before you drop down and down and down the Mt Cedric Track (about a km of drop in only 2.5km at the end – it's a known knee-destroyer). I would recommend pack llamas for taking the load off the knees – apparently you can get them from Hanmer Springs. Of course there are probably really nice views all along the ridge, but the weather had decided to be evil by then, so it was mildly unpleasant, windy and very rainy for the whole day. Interestingly we saw a large school group out on a school trip going in the opposite direction – it's clear that South Island schools are way more epic than silly Auckland ones.

Once we got back down out of the wind and the fog though our first glimpse of Rotoroa was glorious, and the later swim in the lake was surprisingly warm given the freezing ridgeline travel. Sabine Hut is massive, which gave us all the chance to dry off and spread out on the floor to try to persuade our knees not to hate us anymore.



Day 3: Nice day for a walk in the park

Nah, not really – the weather was still crap. I proved this by only taking 1 photo between the Huts this day (compare that to the first day when I took about 260). But day 3 was quite a ramble, just an easy 5hr tramp following the Sabine River up the valley with ~120m/390ft climb over the whole day. The river was impressively high, but you cross it using two excellent swing bridges, so the track can be done in pretty much any weather. The original plan had been to potentially carry on to Blue Lake Hut this day to save ourselves some time but we spoke to some of the trampers coming the other way (who seemed a little freaked) and decided against it, as apparently the side-streams further up were huge. We were quite content to eat pasta, bacon and apple pie before playing 500 in front of the fire. Mmmm, that was such a good fireplace.



Day 4: Towards the clearest water in the Southern Hemisphere

By the next day thankfully the sky had cleared (slightly), which had allowed the river and side-streams to drop considerably. Since we only had to get to Blue Lake it was a pretty relaxed day, with only about 3.5hrs of tramping (though 530m/1740ft climb). It's a really cool piece of track up to Blue Lake – though we'd be more realistic to call it a stream on that day – wandering up through nice Beech forest (and dodging massive branches that tried 'wandering through' Hamish - falling just a few meters away), travelling up over old avalanche debris, and watching the incredible waterfalls fall down off the Mahanga Range were all pretty incredible. I honestly think this piece of track is better in the wet, as the waterfalls really make the views spectacular. The size of the rocks knocked down in the avalanches was more than a little worrying though, particularly as Sophie and I considered that the last Jenkins/Battley attempt of this St Arnaud – Lewis Pass route some 30 years ago was done in August, around when some of these avalanche routes would have been active. It wasn't the last time the 'why on Earth were they trying to do this in winter' thought passed my mind...



Upon arriving at the Hut we quickly dropped our packs and headed behind the hut to the lake itself – proclaimed to be 'the clearest lake in the world'. Sadly its clarity had been compromised slightly by the massive amounts of wet stuff that had fallen recently, but it was nonetheless stunning with the depth you could see. Taking the 'no bathing' sign to mean 'no using soap' the majority of the party took the opportunity to have a quick dip (don't worry, we didn't pollute it with our clothes) before retreating back to the hut to get as close to the fire as possible without quite setting ourselves on fire. Out the window Mt Franklin called temptingly from the clouds, but that would have to wait for another trip. This night at Blue Lake Hut we saw the last people we would see for 6 days, which was probably a good thing considering Josh and Hamish were already starting a mattress fort war.



Day 5: Goodbye people, hello passes

Just when it mattered, the weather began to play ball again. Day 5 would see us leave the well defined Sabine Valley tracks and wander up the Waiau Pass route, over the 1870m/6135ft Waiau Pass itself and end up in the head of the Waiau Valley. The route starts up between the lake and the hut, and climbs its way up to the beautiful Lake Constance. Crossing the rockfields just above the level of Lake Constance, we could see a thin mist oozing over from the other side of the main divide, but it was clear that such wispy remnants were burning off quickly under an otherwise perfect blue sky.

Climbing up a scree slope from the flats, the route follows above the bluffs on the true left of the lake to avoid the dangerous cliffs on the true right. Looking back there are incredible views of the Mahanga Range and Franklin Ridge, forming the top of the Sabine Valley, while ahead imposing (and looking impassably steep) the head of the Sabine valley reared its head. There are some good steep undulations before you get back down to lake level on the other side, but we knew we were only just warming up for the rest of the day. Stopping at Lake Constance for just long enough to admire the view (and for Blair to claim another body of water by skinny-dipping in it), we then set off to attack the pass itself.



Waiau pass is about 470m/1540ft above Lake Constance and you do most of that all at once (see the route diagram). I naturally was ridiculously happy to spend forever going up a steep hill. Nonetheless, everyone enjoyed the increasingly magnificent view back down the Sabine valley. As we neared the top cloud suddenly swept over us again, having chased us up the valley, meaning that as we crossed the main divide for the first of 3 times on the trip, we couldn't see any of the view. Unless you count rocks and nice thick cloud as a view.

Coming down the other side was a little rugged (it would be easier in the other direction), so Gollum/Legolas kindly kept Gandalf's staff safe for himself until the valley floor. Interestingly, as we dropped into the head of the Waiau Valley we walked into a clear spot, sandwiched between the valley fog below and mountain cloud above, so we managed to have a quick glimpse across to Thompson pass, our next major aim.

Finding a camping spot in the head of the Waiau valley proved surprisingly difficult given how many rocks were around and the fact that it was a little bit of a wind-tunnel. Not an awful amount of sleep was got by anyone that night thanks to the wind, especially as Sophie's Citadel already had rather interestingly shaped poles from a previous windswept trip.



Day 6: Going Nowhere #1

Not a lot was done this day. We needed good visibility every day we were planning to head over some passes, and the next planned day involved two of them. Thankfully we had built 3 weather/rest-days into the original plan and had only used one so far when we took longer to get to Blue Lake Hut. So we basically spent this entire day watching the weather, eating and playing cards while hoping against hope that the next day would be clear so that we didn't have to just escape down the rather less interesting Waiau Valley. Since it was the visibility problem in this exact place which had thwarted the 1980s AUTC winter attempt of Peter Jenkins and Mark Battley, Sophie and I were obviously even keener to do the passes, thus finishing some unfinished family business.

Day 7: Into the Unknown – Valley of the Mountain Goats.

With the fortuitous coming of visibility, we were cleared to finally leave all official tracks and routes behind to attack Thompson and D'Urville Passes on the way into the Matakita Valley. Leaving our dining room behind, we crossed the Waiau 'River' (more like a stream that high up) and climbed up and across some scree slopes to above the bluffs on the way to Lake Thompson. Following up the head of one of the tributaries leads you up an easy climb to reach the lake itself, which also rewards you with an awesome view back to Waiau Pass.



There had been a distinct Southerly change, so we didn't wait by the lake for long, but instead carried on around the back of it, slightly away from Thompson Pass itself. Having spoken to a few people who had done the route before, Sophie had heard that going over the real Thompson Pass left you in a really freaky position to sidle around the first bit of upper D'Urville Valley. We would apparently be better to cross slightly to the South-East over an 1860m/6100ft fake Thompson Pass.

With a bit of route-finding this worked perfectly, and we could later see the frightening section we thankfully avoided. What's more, the view from the pass gave us a fantastic vista both all the way back to Waiau Pass and all the way to D'Urville pass – our next aim. With terrible rock puns made and various vocabularies voiced down into the new valley, we descended over a pile of schist to a good place to sidle around the head of the valley. Such sidling was excellent practice for being a mountain goat, a skill which Sophie has perfected much more than the rest of us. Everyone negotiated the steep scree slopes well however and we soon enough found ourselves at D'Urville Pass itself.





So as not to allow us a clear view of the Matakитaki, the weather then decided it was high-time to catch up with us again. We crossed the 1820m/5970ft pass in cloud. Not far down from the pass we noticed some small patches of snow which we were half tempted to put our ice-axes in just to prove we'd seen some, but as it turned out that was far from the last time we spotted some white stuff... There's only really one sensible route into the Matakитaki from there as most of it is cliffs, but if you stick to your left on the flatter section when you are descending you should come across a handy chute, which – while quite steep – is ideal for a quick but controlled descent.

The Matakитaki is a beautiful valley right from the start. As you follow the river down (dodging rocks one minute and speargrass the next), waterfalls flow down the steep sides of the upper valley, making the drizzle seem to have a purpose for once. We weren't sure how long this day would take at first, so thought we might just get to the bushline and make camp, but we were making good time, so everyone was really keen to push on to the nice warm East Matakитaki Hut further down the valley. We were pleasantly surprised to find bits and pieces of ground-track down this section of the river, most likely formed by a combination of deer and the 3-4 other groups who try this route every year. Such partial tracks make bush travel far less demoralising at the end of a long day. Arriving at East Matakитaki Hut (920m/3020ft) just before dark (and not quite losing Matt thanks to millions of faceplants) we found a quaint old forestry hut by the side of the river with a glorious (if admittedly very smoky) open fireplace.



Day 8: Bridge Crossing 101

Having made such good progress the day before, all that was left on today's agenda was a pleasant 3-4hr wander down-valley to Bobs Hut (apostrophe not included). With a relaxed start, the only real things of note in the day were situated around the 3-wire bridge crossing near Matakita Forks. Interesting crossings at the best of times, Josh decided to make it even more of a challenge by dropping his ice-axe halfway across. Quite miraculously the bridge actually caught it, which was especially lucky given the tumultuous waters below. Josh couldn't do much with all of his stuff still on, so after he reached the other side Sophie valiantly crossed back to halfway and rescued the ice-axe with her leg. With an ice-axe rescue completed, we thought we'd had most of the excitement for the day, right up until Blair got swarmed by evil wasps. We were all glad to reach Bobs hut after a surprisingly eventful short day. Bobs Hut is a very nice hut indeed, in the same style as East Matakita Hut, but set in an even nicer spot, looking out over the higher Spenser Mountains. But geez was it cold...

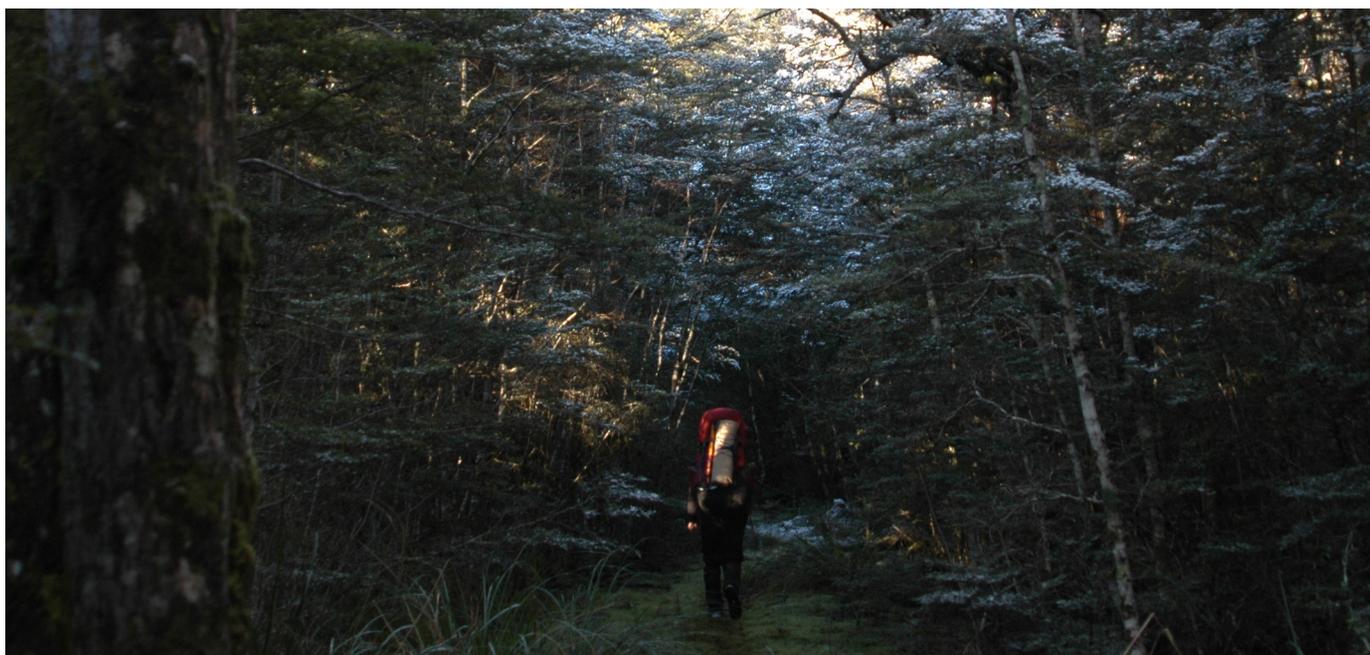
Day 9: Going Nowhere #2 – The Winter Edition

Day 9 dawned rather cloudily, so it was clear that we weren't going anywhere, as going any further involved heading over the 1840m/6040ft 3 Tarn Pass back to the other side of the main divide, for which visibility was crucial. It was clear however that the night really had been as cold as we thought, as most of the surrounding mountains had a fresh sprinkling of snow above the bushline. Then, sitting in the Hut finishing Good Omens and eating by the fire, we suddenly noticed that the returning rain was starting to get thicker again. And floating rather than falling! Excited, the Aucklanders couldn't believe their luck, running out into the soon heavy snow. So much for the pitiful spots we'd seen before by the passes, we had the real stuff now! We found out later that the various dumps went down to about 300m that day (and the next night), and the hut was at ~800m, meaning everything got covered. Suddenly we felt very justified in bringing our ice-axes. As the day progressed this first dump gradually melted where we were, but we needn't have worried about missing out, as an even bigger dump came that night.



Day 10: From Narnia to a mountain paradise

You know those glorious days you get right after some huge dumps of snow? That was this day. After a huge overnight dump, everything from hut-level up was covered in a blanket of snow, making the surrounding bush feel like Narnia itself. The route followed up the West Branch of the Matakītaki River, awarding us with fantastic views of the now snow-capped and oh-so-inviting Faerie Queene and Gloriana Peak. The Bush soon gave way to your classic South Island river valley, which only improved the views. I swear snow makes everything look 1000x cooler (pardon the pun). As we gazed towards the fake head of the valley, which appeared as a solid wall of ice, we discussed which Discworld characters we all reminded each other of, having much earlier settled on our LoTR personas. The route wanders further up the stream before you have to go high for a little while to avoid a gorgy bush section shortly before the main kink. There's quite a lot of speargrass around here too, which I'm sure Blair can tell you all about... Just past the bend we stopped for an earlyish lunch, allowing us to have a quick snow-ball fight before venturing further.



By the time we hit the 1300m contour, the track had disappeared again and the snow was starting to get considerably deeper, which slowed us down a lot. The original plan was to go over the pass and back down to Ada Pass Hut, but it became increasingly obvious that we might run out of daylight before managing that. Most crucial was getting across the pass while the weather was perfect, and handily there was a good sheltered flat section just on the other side of the pass according to the map. Getting all the way up to the Three Tarns was a real slog, but such an incredible piece of the country that you couldn't help but enjoy yourself. Upon arriving there you have to be quite careful to line up the three tarns to not accidentally take the much nicer-looking fake passes, as these turn quite nasty on the other side. The real one is a little surprising however, as it certainly wouldn't be the one you'd guess.

The view from the top really is something else, especially when it's covered in snow. The rest of the Southern Alps spread infinitely into the distance, just calling to be followed, and framing them are your own Spenser Mountains, with two more tarns directly below.

Descending back into Canterbury from the West, we came onto the wide ledge where we'd set up camp for the night, noting that, sure enough, it would be too icy to descend wisely tonight. But one thing was clear, camping in the snow at 1700m/5680ft was going to be very cold indeed...





Day 11: Back to Civilisation

And it was. Really really cold. About -15o C of cold apparently, with -20 windchill (another thing the parents cheerfully told us afterwards). With very little sleep we were happy indeed to see the dawn, but decreed it too cold to get up at least until the sun reached the tents. Overnight drink-bottles froze solid while they were being used as pillows, socks turned into solid lumps and as we got up we discovered that our boots were completely frozen as well, requiring huge amounts of boiling water to get them malleable enough to even get on. However we eventually unfroze ourselves and the gear sufficiently to begin negotiating our way down the reasonably steep slopes to the bushline.

The snow conditions were perfect, other than a few icy sections, and we were lucky enough to have been granted another perfectly clear day. We quite rapidly lost the 700 vertical meters down to Ada Pass Hut (hardly a pass – it's just at 1008m/3310ft about 250m away horizontally from the hut) where we devoured a huge lunch of leftovers. Now we only had the stroll down the St James Walkway to get us to Lewis Pass. THERE WERE BOARDWALKS. Well maintained tracks felt like cheating a bit after over a week of epicness, but I think we were all secretly pleased at the easier going. Plus we were really pushing it for time given our shuttle pick-up. Thus as the 11th day disappeared we raced down the walkway we dodged cannibals through cannibal gorge and gradually felt Lewis Pass drawing closer.

Then suddenly we were there. Lewis Pass, end of the line. Although the mountains continue South we unfortunately had to leave them, needing to return back to the big smoke.

Though that next mountain range did look quite tempting... I wonder what it would be like to go from Lewis Pass to Arthur's Pass.... Hmmm

Author: Matt Battley



Mt. Pirongia

Date: 02/05/15 to 3/05/15
Location: Pirongia National Park
Trip Leader: Tiffany Shih
Trampers: Sawyer Hitchcock and Matthias Eckerstorfer

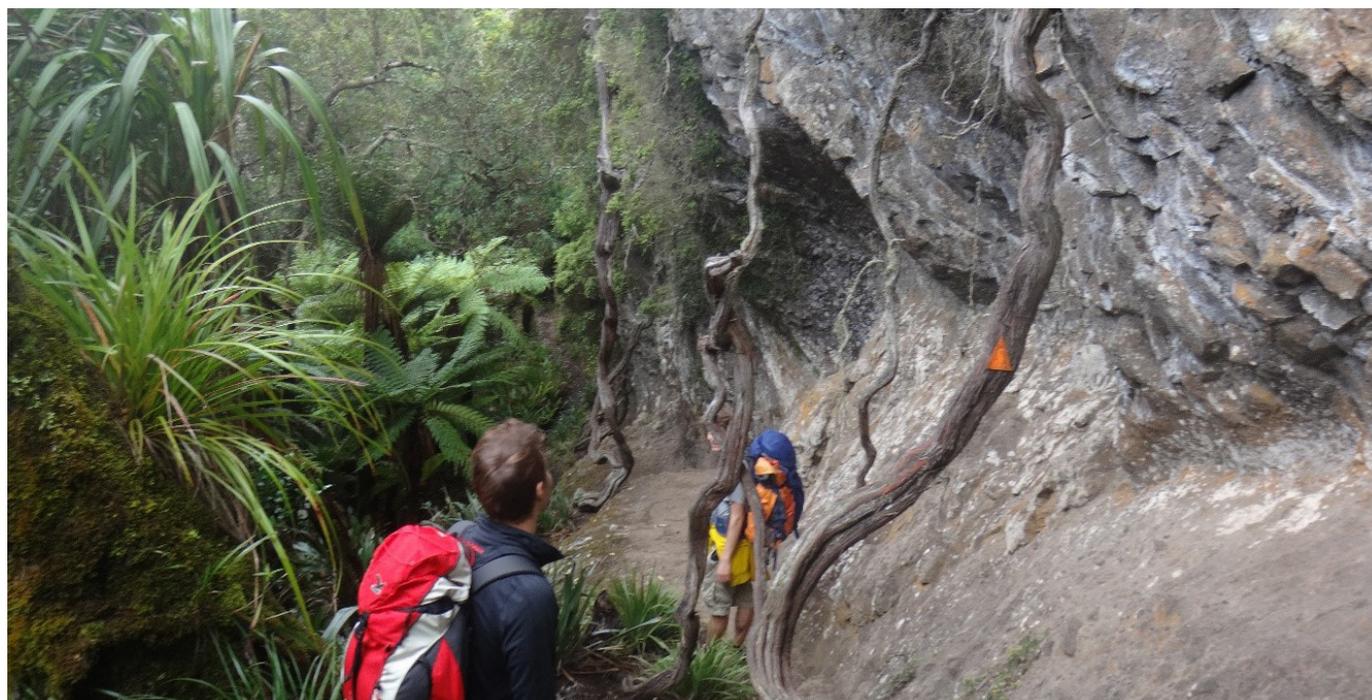


We left Auckland at 8:30am on Saturday and arrived at Grey Road carpark around 10:40am. With the overcast cloud cover the fear of rain loomed, but the scarce gaps still promised hope of sunshine. Ten minutes on a nice boardwalk loop track took us to the start of the link track. Here the trail almost immediately started upwards with some narrow steps, but the trail gradually widened and eased to a gentler incline. After about an hour we come to the intersection of Tirohana track and head up to Ruapane lookout.



We made it to the trig station at the top around 12:20pm and stopped for lunch, and found another group of day walkers enjoying the view. After a quick break we continued along the track, which started to descend quickly. Much of this section is over large boulders, and chains have been installed to help with the descent. The track continues to undulate over rock, mud, and through bush, before reaching the summit where a wooden viewing platform provided 360 degree views of the area.

30 minutes from the summit we reached the new hut and campsites, around 3:30pm. The old hut was still open so we took a quick look around. The new hut had only opened the week before and still didn't have any tables, although there were plenty of benches to sit on.



With some time on our hands we decided to take a short side trip to Hihikiwi summit. It was about 15 minutes on boardwalk the whole way and well recommended for a different vantage. You can see the hut and summit viewing platform too. Back to the hut to cook some food, which had started to fill up nicely with other trampers. Around 15 of us stayed the night.

In the morning we left the hut just after 9am and headed back along same track to the summit, turning off shortly after down Mahaukura track. This track goes down and up, down and up, down up with plenty of viewing spots along the way. We made it to the top of Mahaukura around 11:30am and had a nice long break, whilst enjoying some rare sunshine. There was some more chain and rock to negotiate before we reached the lower part of the Mountain, where the track widened and became an easier descent. We made it out to the carpark just after 2pm.

Author: Tiffany Shih



T-Walk 2015

Don't Ask The Marshals Which Way To Go: The Experiences of Team 'Some More of God's Greatest Mistakes'

Date: 09/05/15 to 10/05/15
Location: Arthur's Pass National Park
Trip Leader: Sylvie Admore (Event Marshall)
Trampers: Helen Liley (Matagouri Clearing Team), Finn Drummond (First Aid), Sam Richardson (Westpac Fire Helicopter), Harriet Peel (Emergency Fire Rescue), and Matt Battley (Alpine Rescue).



Tension hung in the air in much the same way that bricks don't.

It was the morning of May 9th, and the buses had finally ceased wandering towards the Southern Alps, stopping just short of Arthur's Pass to disgorge 61 ridiculously attired teams onto the side of Lake Pearson. It seemed that everyone from a community of Gypsies through to a large group of base-jumpers had decided to escape from reality for the weekend and get lost in the hills. The T'Walk officials were being particularly helpful by wearing bright orange jackets adorned with the T'Walk logo, offering their official help to any who were confused. Oh wait, no they weren't – that was us: team 'Some More of God's Greatest Mistakes' were wearing said costumes, but these T'Walk marshalls were more likely to point you in precisely the wrong direction...

For anyone who missed the memo or was hiding under a squashed whale in the first Semester, T'Walk is a 24 hour rogaine organised by Canterbury University Tramping Club and held every year in a mystery location, typically 1.5-3 hours from Christchurch. For 24 hours, teams search painstakingly through swamps, gorse, mountains and rockfields for tiny pieces of ice-cream containers with codes on them, typically having to battle with unicorns, rodents of unusual size and other teams in order to make it back from the five legs alive. Between each leg they crash at the Hash House and devour freshly-cooked lasagne, muffins, burritos and beverages all through the night. It's a truly fantastic event, even when it doesn't always go quite to plan, as you may begin to see below...



Leg One began in its traditional frenzied manner; teams stampeded from the start line down to the first clues by the side of Lake Pearson whilst laughing at the thoroughly peculiar group of people surrounding them. A slightly evil clue titled "You don't have to..." beckoned to the teams from THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAKE. Thankfully our First Aid T'Walk Marshall quite enjoyed the chance to take his clothes off and had soon found the clue. Leg One was an absolute blast, with the team efficiently tracking down all of the clues in the stunning landscape. As we worked our way around Mount Saint Bernard we dared to brave unknown terrors, to do mighty deeds, to boldly split infinitives that no person had split before--and thus T'walk began.

Leg One dropped us at Craigieburn Station, the Hash House for this year's T'walk. Quickly dropping our excess gear like ice-axes and a now incredibly munted helicopter, we refuelled and wrote the next leg's points on the map. Once our compulsory 30 minute stop was complete we ran out into the wild again.

Leg Two started in the opposite direction to Leg One, sending us directly into the surrounding hills. Clues ranged from the enigmatic "queen of thorns", which made use of the fact that humans are very good at not looking up, to a yet another "needle in a haystack", by which time it was so dark that we were struggling to find the haystack, let alone the needle. Still, as the sun set over us on Control 10, things were proceeding quite nicely, the team having found all but one of the clues so far. Indeed, the mere thought of not enjoying ourselves hadn't even begun to speculate about the merest possibility of crossing our minds.



However, the night is dark and full of terrors. Basically as soon as the sun goes down you remember just why humans tend to be awake in the day rather than the night. Finding clues becomes at least 42 times harder. Thankfully at that stage it was still gloriously clear, giving us a fantastic view of the Southland stars. We bumped into a group of wizards at the top of the range and wandered with them across the tops in the hopes that we might collectively be slightly less blind, but by this time the wind was getting very chilly, so while we did find a few extra ones we decided it might be time to sidle our way down to the Hash House.



Leg Three was soul-destroying. Number One took us 30 minutes more than it should have, Number Two involved a massive bash down through gorse to an ex-gate only to end up not finding it anyway (turns out I was in exactly the right place but not looking hard enough, ggrrr...), and Number Four we had accidentally already found in Leg Two. We had a brief reprieve with a nice one on the top of a hill for Number Three, but it was from Number Five that things started to go seriously, seriously wrong. Picture hours upon hours (and six controls) of fruitless searching when we were in pretty much exactly the right places but unable to find anything... For a moment, nothing happened. Then, after a second or so, nothing continued to happen. In fact, for hours and hours and hours nothing repeatedly happened, despite our best efforts.

Now was the T'Walk of our discontent. Upon later reviewing our route and discussing the actual locations with other teams, I'm confident that we were almost exactly in the right place for all but one of these controls, yet somehow they all eluded us. I mean, for goodness sake, we even looked in the bottom of a locked filing cabinet stuck in a disused lavatory with a sign on the door saying 'Beware of the Leopard'. But then, at Number Eleven, the seemingly impossible happened: we found a clue. Truly it was a momentous occasion – if I remember correctly from my sleep-deprived state there were celebratory elephants and streamers. And maybe Sam in a cow onesie, dunno. By now we were exhausted however, and when Clue Twelve eluded us completely (oh no, not again!) we decided it was definitely time to search out the wonders of muffins and lasagne (though we did find Thirteen and Fifteen on the way).

Hearing horror reports of Leg Four, and already being somewhat low on time thanks to the horror of Leg Three, we elected to skip Leg Four entirely. By now, Sam the helicopter was down to a single rotor, and the matagouri had done a deal with the ground to get back at Helen (plus we couldn't find the tent where Fire Rescue Harriet and First Aid Finn had fallen asleep). So, with dawn begin to tease us on the horizon, Event Marshall Sylvie and I hobbled off on the final Leg in the hope of picking off a few last clues. Unfortunately we didn't have time to climb Mount Saint Bernard, as course-setter Alistair had intended (no-one did in all of T'walk regrettably), but we did have quite an enjoyable romp to Clues One, Two, Three and Eleven. Now that the sun was coming up, we started to feel vaguely human again and capable of actually finding clues. It was pleasing to discover that we did in fact know what we were doing occasionally. The clues up the mountain teased us till the end, but everyone was pretty wrecked, so Mount Saint Bernard will have to wait until another time...

At 10:03 am, on Sunday the 10th of May, precisely 24 hours after we had begun, T'walk 2015 came to a close. A period of rigidly defined areas of doubt and uncertainty, T'walk had won this year, out-navigating our navigation, taking no mercy on our bodies and kicking us when we were down. So will I do it again next year? Of course! I can't wait for the next round...

Apologies to Douglas Adams for the blatantly stolen quotes. I leave you with one more of his, which really reminds me of the madness of T'walk:

"Bypasses are devices that allow some people to dash from point A to point B very fast while other people dash from point B to point A very fast. People living at point C, being a point directly in between, are often given to wonder what's so great about point A that so many people from point B are so keen to get there, and what's so great about point B that so many people from point A are so keen to get there. They often wish that people would just once and for all work out where the hell they wanted to be."

- Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Author: Matt Battley



Okura Bush Walkway

Date: 24/05/15
Location: Okura Bush Scenic Reserve
Trip Leader: Katie 'Tigeress' Herbert
Trampers: Thomas 'Honey Bear' Goodman, Lisa 'Deep-sea angler Fish' Toft, Francesca 'Narwhal' Osten, Kristina 'Sloth on a slow day, a meerkat when she wants to be' Geilfuss

The end of autumn in New Zealand heralds beautiful vistas of golden leaves, unspoilt beaches without a sand-fly in sight and...a lot of rain! On this note, Tom was lying in bed at 8am for his 9am trip meet (unbeknownst to him, Fran had already been up for almost two hours to bus to the city from Manukau and had already reached Newmarket), hearing the rain lashing against his windows. Together with phone consultation with Katie, they decided the weather was too pour (deliberate spelling pun) to trip all the way to the Hunuas, and instead we would head North and try to outrun the raincloud which had descended on the rest of the North Island. An admittedly foolhardy quest, however this was not enough to deter three incredibly keen individuals from joining, while all around others fell like lemmings.

Initial trip omens were not great. The rain pounded against the roof of the car as we drove through the North Shore and Google maps directed up down a forestry road. Undeterred by the 'no entry', 'private property' signs, we were within two minutes of our destination when we reached a *very* locked gate. [How could you do this to us, Google?!] However, after a swift detour we arrived at the track start. The sun was shining; the sea a radiant blue, and the rainforest bush track was beckoning us in. For those last lingering raindrops, we put our faith in Kristina's umbrella- unbreakable, even in the strongest winds. "Where is it?" we asked. At home- it needed fixing, was the reply. Mysterious, indeed.

The walkway took us up and over Jurassic Park landscapes (we decided Tom would be the best sacrifice option if we came across a T-rex, although he remained convinced he could outrun any dinosaur), along abandoned beaches and, unusually on an AUTC trip, architectural highlights such as the stone Dacre Cottage on the Karepiro beach. Having reached the Silverdale beach, we decided to coast hop round for our return trip. An enjoyable hour was spent wandering along pristine beaches admiring the oyster-catchers and dotterels, clambering across rock shelves and jumping over waves trying not to get our boots wet. We arrived back at the car having experienced a few showers, but delightfully still dry! An excellent trip with fantastic company, and proof that you can outrun the weather!

Author: Katie Herbert



The Pinnacles

Date: 28/06/15
Location: Coromandel Forest Park
Trip Leader: Tiffany Shih
Trampers: Theo Steger, Sawyer Hitchcock, Shunto Arai, Amy Whitesell, Nick DiVencenzo, Marie Carco, Sam Lancaster-Robertson, Rachel Ainslie, Tanya Peart, Hamish O’Kane, Matt LaMotta, Kuba Swaitly, Lance Cueto.



Sunday saw the fourteen of us gather outside the library in the wee hours of the morning. After brief introductions we piled into cars for the drive to the Coromandel, managing to arrive just after 8am at the Visitors Centre. Although it didn’t open until 8.30am, the DOC lady kindly let us inside to show us a large map of the track and make sure we knew where we were going.

After a brief look around we drove a further fifteen minutes to the road end. We sprayed our boots to protect against kauri dieback and started on the track about 8.45am, following the Webb Creek trail. Fifteen minutes later we came to a nice swing bridge across the river, classic DOC style with max of one person. Soon afterwards the track began to climb steadily, with plenty of steps made from rock and logs. There were several nice view points on the way which made for good stopping points to catch our breath.

We arrived at the hut just after 11am and decided to have an early lunch. After passing many people heading down the track, we were the only ones at the hut. Most of the group took the chance to bathe in the rare spot of sunshine breaking through the clouds. Some banana bread was passed around as we looked up at the Pinnacles and contemplated the climb ahead. After lunch we took a group photo and briefly checked out the kauri dam just five minutes past the hut, before heading up the track to the top of the Pinnacles.

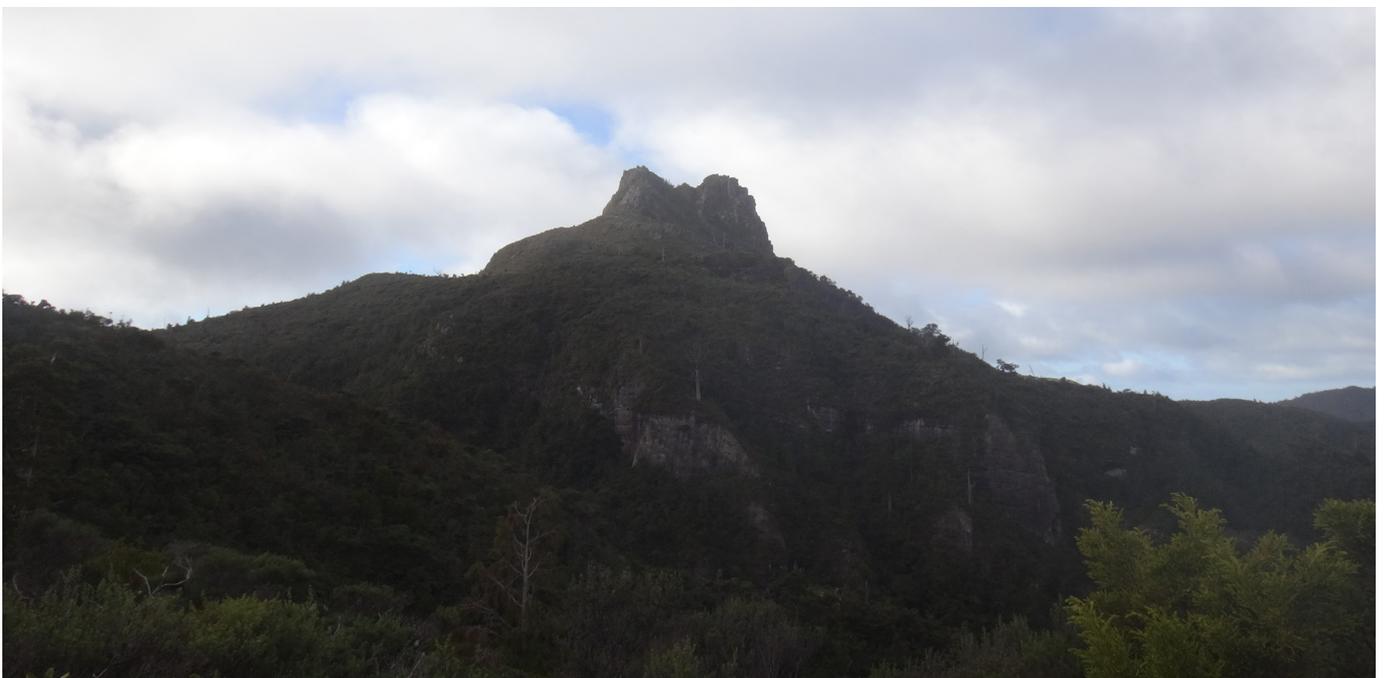
The track started off gentle but soon enough we started up the steps. Fortunately there are plenty of places to stop and admire the view if you need a brief rest. Near the top, the track became a scramble over rock. A couple of ladders and metal hand-holds are installed to help with the climb; however, they do result in extremely cold hands. As we got higher the wind picked up, and soon it was pretty strong, not to mention loud! The view from the top was well worth the effort, with amazing coastal scenery and plenty of Coromandel bush; however, the strong wind meant that we didn’t stay long.



We headed back down the same way, stopping briefly at the hut again, and made it to the carpark by 3.30pm.

Overall, a great day trip. The weather forecast was for showers; however, we were lucky and only had a little bit of drizzle near the end. The sun even managed to break through the clouds a couple of times.

Author: Tiffany Shih



Advanced Snow School

Date: 29/06/15 to 04/07/15
Location: Tongariro National Park
Instructors: Stephen Waite, Helen Liley, Petrouchka Steiner-Grierson, and Owen Lee (Sort of).
Students: Nick Pett, Sam Richardson, Jamie Corkill, Sophie Jenkins, Matthew Battley.



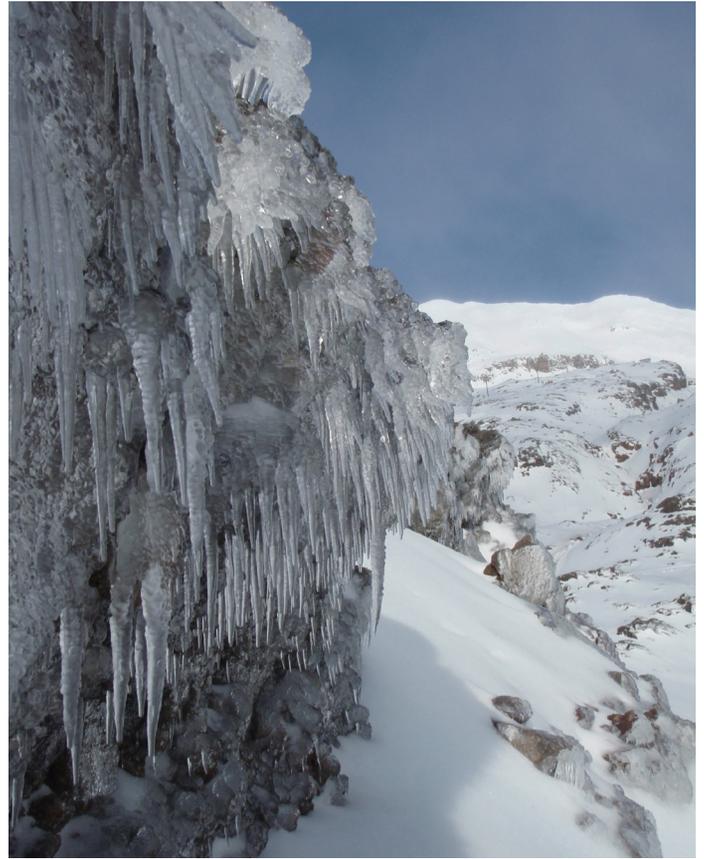
Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
And on that farm he had a cow
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
With a moo moo here
And an Ice-axe there
Here a moo, there an axe
Everywhere some heavy packs
Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow

Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
And on that farm he had a crevasse
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
With a 'biner here
And a 'biner there
Here a rope, there and anchor
Rescue people from the cracks
Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow



Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
And on that farm he had an avalanche
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
With whoomping here
And a terrain trap there
Here new snow, there a weak layer
Better not walk just here chaps
Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow

Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
And on that farm he had a Summit Plateau
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
With a tent-site here
And a poo pot there
Here a summit, there some ice
Time for a dawn multi-pitch
Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow



Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
And on that farm he had an ice-climb
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snow
Set up an anchor here
Abseil down there
Here some rock, there some ice
Tech tools take me up the face
With a tent-site here
And a poo pot there
Here a summit, there some ice
Time for a dawn multi-pitch
With whoomping here
And a terrain trap there
Here new snow, there a weak layer
Better not walk just here chaps
With a 'biner here
And a 'biner there
Here a rope, there and anchor
Rescue people from the cracks
With a moo moo here
And an Ice-axe there
Here a moo, there an axe
Everywhere some heavy packs

Old Mac-Stephen had a farm
Lots-And-Lots-Of-Snoooooooooooooooooooooooooow
Dramatic Flourish

Author: Matthew Battley



Waitawheta Hut

Date: 12/09/15 to 13/09/15
Location: Kaimai Forest Park
Trip Leader: Tiffany Shih
Trampers: Johannes Adams-Mulders, Hoi Kiu Christie Chan, Angela Waters.

The trip to Waitawheta hut was an international affair, with the group comprising six Americans, three Europeans, one Indian and just two Kiwis. We left Auckland at 10:15am, arriving at the Franklin Road carpark just after 12pm. We started off along some farmland for about 30 minutes before entering the Forest Park. The tramway track to Waitawehta hut follows an old tramline and sticks close to the river the whole way. It is well formed, pretty flat and very scenic. Several river crossings have nice big swing bridges, making for great photo opportunities. There is only one crossing, about 30 minutes from the hut, which requires either getting wet feet or rock-hopping skills. Just before the hut there is a neat waterfall, aptly named the "toilet bowl".



We arrived at 3.30pm and spent the afternoon exploring the area before cooking up some dinner. What followed was a night of assassinations, murder mystery and babies pushing people off boats. Thankfully no actual persons were harmed during the night. Some of the group took a short walk to see the glow worms before heading to bed.

The next morning we left at 8.15am, taking the track towards Waitengaue stream, a right turn just after the toilet bowl waterfall. This tramping track is more rugged than the tramline, with plenty of mud and roots to negotiate. After crossing Waitengaue stream the track heads fairly steeply upwards towards Ananui falls. We made it to the top just after 11am and stopped here for an early lunch. There is a rock outcropping which hangs over the waterfall edge, making for some great photos. A few brave souls even dangled their legs over the 106m drop.





The track continued gradually upwards and then flattened out. After several small stream crossings we made it to the track junction around 2pm. There's a huge Kauri tree here that is well worth checking out. We decided on the less steep route back down (the sign says two hours to the carpark). Right at the end there is an un-bridged river crossing; the water level was fairly low, but still up to our knees in some places. Back to the carpark at 3.30pm, just in time before the rain started!

Author: Tiffany Shih

Photo credits: Gregory Furtado



Pinnacles Traverse

Location: Mt. Ruapehu
Trip Leader: Helen Liley
Trampers: Gregor Kolbe, Sam Richardson



ClimbNZ rates the complete traverse of the Nga Tohu Pinnacle Ridge as one of the best alpine adventures in the North Island. They also promise that “Rock is sound over practically the entire traverse and there are a number of sound and adequate belays”. This climb had been a goal of Greg and mine for the 2015 winter season, so on the arrival of a good weekend weather window, we roped in a token “friend-with-car” (Sam) and headed down late Friday night.

Arriving around 1am, we set up camp in the emergency shelter, enjoyed 4 hours of sleep before enthusiastically bouncing up off the cold floor around 5am. Our general joy of mountains and awakens was fueled by an outstanding breakfast of a boiled egg and a packet of m&ms each, which was actually fairly disgusting, but still probably the best meal we had the whole weekend.





We had decided previously to do this trip with the lightest packs possible, and somehow this turned into a challenge to traverse the pinnacles and go straight to the NZAC hut, followed by a day climbing on Sunday, while leaving the car with only day packs. I happily revealed that my daypack was in fact, a 5-7L cycling backpack, perfect for multi-day alpine trips. This culminated in the decision that one 500g sleeping bag would do for the three of us.

We slogged up the Rockgarden in the dreary darkness, and managed to initially overshoot the easy face leading up to the ridge north of Great Pinnacle. Once on said face, we all started sugar crashing hard. There were huge amounts of whinging, mostly about the lack of coffee, but also concerning the no sleep and terrible breakfast. Despite this, we managed to struggle up the fairly short climb to hit the ridge just as the sun rose.

The shot of vitamin D got us feeling more invigorated than a happy little bunch of spring chickens, and we charged up to the peak of great pinnacle, and whipped out the rope, which was tied in a bit of a tangle to the outside of my tiny pack, for the big abseil down to the col at the top of grand gully. This was our first experience of the supposedly 'sound' rock, which although was slightly more solid than further up, still had a habit of breaking off the face and zooming past your head while abseiling. Apart from this, the climb up Great Pinnacle (coming from the other direction) looks like a cool challenge.

A couple more pitches and some easy soloing on soft snow and steadily deteriorating rock took us to the top of the first pinnacle, where we stopped for an energy lunch of lumps of cheese and bits of stale wraps. Greg produced his coup de grace, a litre of wine, which was delicious, perfect for the place and conditions, and well worth the sacrifice of what would have been space for Sam's sleeping bag.

We dropped down an easy gulley south of the First Pinnacle, and made it back to the NZAC hut for some much needed afternoon naps. Our hopes at scrounging leftover food from the hut were thwarted, probably by Pet and Owen, who had been living there all week. This left us with a dinner of plain pasta with... more cheese. The following day we headed up to the summit plateau with renewed energy, mostly due to Edwin arriving late Saturday night armed with coffee. We did a couple of fun ice routes on Tukino Peak, while Ed stole my super hard core multi-day mountaineering pack to tick off the 12 summits of Ruapehu in a 10 hour push. An adventure to aspire to for next year!

Author: Helen Liley



Snowcaving Trip

We dug a hole in the snow and slept in it

Date: 06/09/15 to 08/09/15

Location: Mt. Ruapehu

Trampers: Sam Hood, Sam Granger, Sam Lancaster-Robertson, David Zeng, Jamie Corkill, Marc Reinhardt, Joshua Thorensen, Sophie Jenkins, Hamish Buckley, and guest starring Tim Bulmer



That is what happened. After a night spent at Sophie's bach in National Park village, with people arriving continuously throughout the night, we headed up the slopes of Mt. Ruapehu the next morning. The climb up the mountain was gorgeous, but turned lengthier than expected in our bid to avoid some avalanche-looking routes up. And so it was that approximately two thirds up the mountain, we begun the major task of digging a ten-man snow cave.

Thankfully, the snow layers agreed with us. Some time later, with some help from Tim the spontaneous visitor, we decided it was done. As the sun set, we lit some candles inside (for those who are skeptical like I was, it is a very good idea), entered the cave and admired the impressive result.

All was well.

Then we realized it was cooking time...

So it was that we ended up taking half hour turns at cooking outside, in the biting -20°C cold of the night. Gloves froze in less than a minute. Gusts of snow-loaded wind cut our faces. It was harsh. Yet some people appeared to remain strangely comfortable in these conditions. Two and a half hours later, dinner was served.



We went through the night very comfortably, huddled and toasty. The next day started with a cooked breakfast, followed by an awesome hike up exploring the summit plateau of Mt. Ruapehu. Afterwards, some of us skied down from the top while others hiked back. I think I'll just include more photos to convey how much fun we had, and we'll just call it a photo report. It was truly a fantastic trip.

Author: Maud Tissink





Pouakai Circuit

Date: 07/09/15 to 9/09/15

Location: Egmont National Park

Trip Leader: Matt Battley

Trampers: Daniel Scholes, Alice Ferguson, Nimrod Thien, Torsten Schmidt, Oscar.

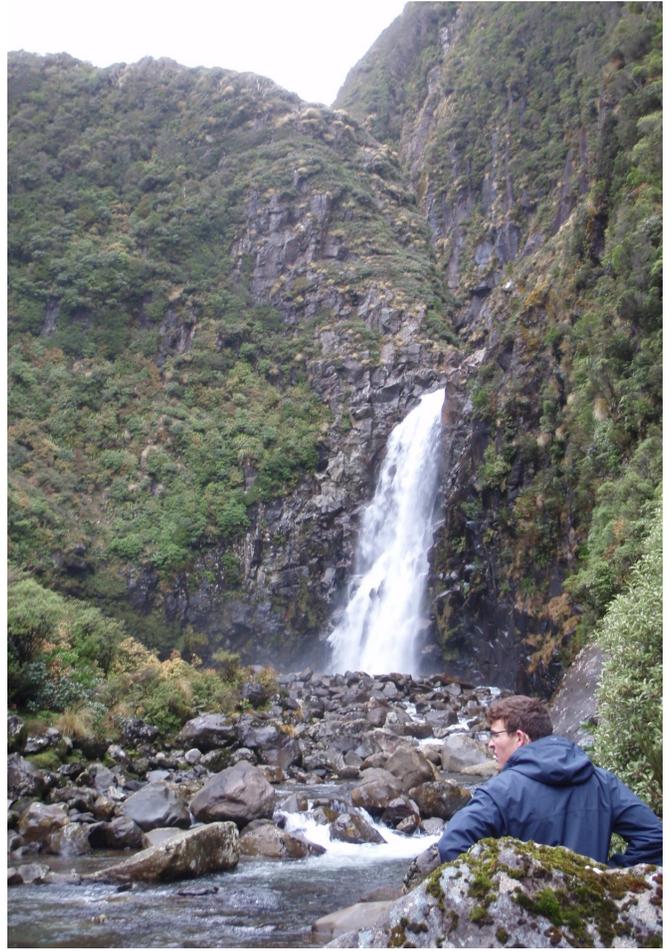
With the to-ing and fro-ing happening with the Ruapehu snowcaving trip, Daniel and I gave up and made our own less weather-dependent trip, which naturally made the weather miraculously clear. The six of us wandered around the stunning Taranaki scenery for a leisurely three days completing the loop from North Egmont – Holly Hut – Pouakai Hut – North Egmont, with a quick side-trip to Bell Falls.

I'll let the pictures tell the rest...

Author: Matt Battley







Beginners Snow School Five

Date: 10/09/15 to 13/09/15
Location: Tongariro National Park
Instructors: Roman Amman and Bjorn Striebing
Students: Rachel Cooper, Paul Jang, Bridget Hall, Georgi Carpenter, Kike Sanchez Garcia, Louis Christie, Raymond Huang

There are 3 topics people often revert to when talking about tramping expeditions other than the track itself: the weather, the food and the people. This recount of Snow School 5 on Mt Ruapehu will be no exception!

As we trudged through the rain and the night on Day One, stoically attempting to put up our tents in oceans of mud there was no doubt the weather was not going to be easy on us. It was when our trip to the summit was cancelled due to blizzards & avalanche risks that these fears were confirmed. Overall, the weather didn't bother us too much. It made our avalanche simulations that much more realistic, and the spectacular views from just outside the hut had us forgiving the weather very quickly.



In tramping terms, the hut was a 5 star hotel. We had electricity! Forget slow gas cookers, meals could be heated in mere seconds in the microwave, and warm beverages prepared instantly from the kettle. What's more, there was fridge space galore as soon as you stepped outside! Flipping down icy slopes "self-arresting" was that much more majestic in the knowledge that mulled wine and an abundance of cheese was waiting back at the hut.



From table traversing and prusiking indoors to ascending ice slopes and eating snowballs, there's no bunch of people I would have preferred to spend Snow School with. Our instructors Bjorn and Roman were as prepared as they were quick-witted, and with my fellow snow school members we soon became as close as family.

Author: Bridget Hall



Te Rereatukahia Hut

Date: 12/09/15 to 13/09/15
Location: Kaimai Forest Park
Trip Leader: Tiffany Shih
Trampers: Johannes Adams-Mulders, Hoi Kiu Christie Chan, Angela Waters.



We left Auckland at 8:15am and, after a brief stop in Paeroa, found ourselves at Hot Springs Road just after 10:30am. At 10:45am we start on the Tuahu track. The track was well formed and had an easy upward gradient. After about ten minutes there was a short side track that lead to a large kauri tree. The bush opened up in a couple of spots along the way, which provided some stunning views over towards Tauranga. We arrived at the intersection of the North South track at 1pm and turned right to follow this along the ridge, giving us further views over the western side of the Kaimais.

We arrived at the hut at around 2:20pm. After relaxing in the sun for a while, two of us took a short climb up to the high point (735m) to see the view. The track up was a bit more rugged, with plenty of mud, but was not particularly long. It took about 45 minutes to return, including time for photos at the top. It was fairly windy, but the views were more than worth it with 360 degree visibility. We even managed to see Ngaruhoe and Mt Ruapehu cloaked in white in the distance.

Back at the hut we played some cards and learned Hong Kong style snap. Later in the evening we were joined by another group of four. Overnight the hut was buffeted by strong winds, shaking the windows and rattling the door. A couple of us were worried about our boots flying away however they turned out to be fine the next morning.





We left at 8:10am, taking the Te Rereatukahia track straight down. The sign said two and a half hours to the car park; but we made it in two. This track was easy going, with some steep downhill sections and a couple of uphill, but was still well marked. There was less of a view on this side, however the track winds through a Kauri grove about 30 minutes from the end. A final river crossing is required just before reaching the road.

We arrived at the carpark just after 10am. On our way out we stop by Sapphire springs for a quick soak. The main outdoors pools are at 30°-32°C, more warm than actually hot, but they were still very nice for a swim. We then continued on to Auckland arriving back at 2.30pm.

Author: Tiffany Shih



The Tararua Ranges

Date: 26/12/15 to 02/01/16
Location: Tararua Ranges
Trip Leader: Carmen Chan
Trampers: Toby Jackson, Blair Ramsdale, David Zeng, Sophie Jenkins, Finn Drummond.



Like all good adventures, it had begun with one wild idea. The Tararua Ranges for many AUTCers have long been spoken of in the passing. Known for its infamous mist and wind it is described as the 'birthplace of tramping'. Yet, due to the cost of unleaded gasoline, distance had meant that many of us had still to tramp its rugged paths. It was on one particularly wintry night at Auckland University that the decision to rectify our absence was addressed, and over two hours of discussion a plan to traverse the spine of the Tararua Ranges was born. How did this happen? Well, life is brief. After searching up the region, we were blown by the beauty of the peaks.

Six months transpired and the generosity of the FMC Youth Expedition Scholarship found six young trampers ready to attempt a traverse of the ranges in December 2015. Starting from the Mangahao Number One Upper Reservoir in Shannon, we spent one week tramping along the Tararua Range crossing the major peaks and ranges en-route to Kaitoke. Journeys create unique opportunities to learn about a new place, and also ourselves. All virgin to the range, the Tararuas challenged us to overcome personal challenges, develop our teamwork and communication skills and similarly expand our outdoor experience. The region was rugged, wild and beautiful. Below, we welcome you to read through a tale of our journey as we walked eighty kilometres from 2015 into the New Year of 2016.

26th of December 2015 – Day 0

We had decided to bus down. On the outlook, it had appeared the most economical option and a ten hour journey from Auckland, an adventurous dip in Lake Taupo and a stay overnight on a dairy farm in Levin (courtesy of the Langton-Burnells) had meant that the adventure had begun long before we had strapped on our packs.





As the bus rolled into Levin, the spine of the Tararuas loomed expansively into the distance. How wrinkled it looked! It seemed as if some God had scrunched up a tapestry and had left the ranges furled outwards. Thin veils of cloud embraced the crags in its wisps, and amongst the blue it looked deceptively peaceful.

27th of December 2015 – Day 1

We were dropped into our start point by Ian and Ben Langton-Burnell after the morning milking. With this family's generous support, we were able to navigate the metal road to start the expedition at the Mangahao Number One Upper Reservoir. Starting at midday, we spent the first day tramping along the Mangahao River to make our way deeper in the range. The route follows the river closely, and while relatively flat on the map, it deceptively crosses one to two contours to create a unique medley to tramping and clambering through beech forest and streams. Most striking were the natural tree bridges which were incorporated into parts of the tracks that we were to cross. Covered in moss, stalking up those trunks felt like walking across the Bridge of Terabithia. With every step, we were brought deeper into the heart of tramping.

That first day collectively took us six and a half hours to walk eight kilometres. This came as a shock. Our initial plan had been to hike sixteen kilometres to Te Matawai Hut, and thus our first team discussion involved convening at Mangahao Hut to re-evaluate our tramp plan and travelling speed. How did we err on our estimates? Should we continue onwards or spend the night here? We decided to stay at Mangahao for the night and start earlier the next morning. Based on our current group speed, we would be able to make it back on track with planned destinations by the third day with some additional early starts. Also, how could we not spend the night when Finn was so enamoured by the two large mountain cabbage trees poking outside of the hut door?



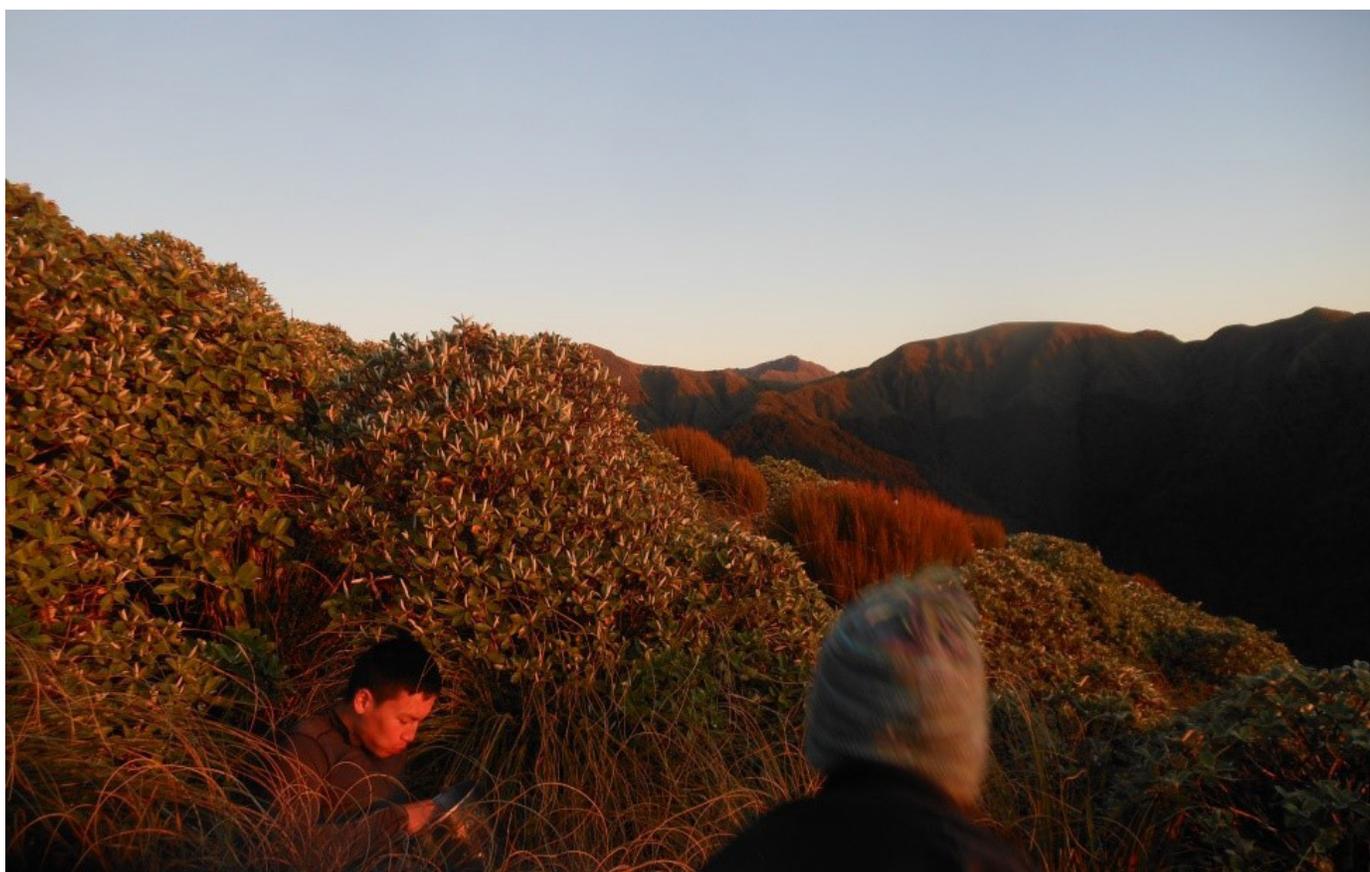
28th of December 2015 – Day 2

The second day of tramping was one of the most challenging days in this expedition. This was not only in covering terrain, but also in group communication and teamwork. We started out of the hut at 7:00am and spent a subsequent twelve hours on the route until reaching the two-bunk Dracophyllum Hut at 7:00pm. Contrary to the infamous Tararua weather, we had been treated with a strikingly stunning cloud-free sky and the ranges looked pristine as we ventured up the spine. The first four and a half hours of the morning took us to the junction leading towards Te Matawai Hut. The group had split tramping up the range from Girdlestone Saddle and so we decided to lunch at the junction as the sun arced towards midday. After eating, we took the opportunity for a water refuel at Te Matawai hut to prepare for hotter weather. The heat was beginning to build.

It took us a total of three hours to tramp the two and a half kilometres to reach Pukematawai and the Arete. Three whole hours. The sun had reached its zenith and with heat reflecting over the range and the lack of tree coverage, we had found ourselves stopping every three hundred metres of the climb in order to prevent self-combustion from the heat. The group regathered at Pukematawai to plan our next steps, and it was decided that we would push onto Dracophyllum, but would send two faster individuals ahead as a 'safety measure' to restock on water and meet us in the opposite direction while the main group continued onwards. David also taught us a trick that he'd picked up from the military about hydration and advised that we only that 'sips' of water and to drink only once relatively cool after stopping for few minutes. This would prevent water loss from sweat. Aware of the sun, we slathered on more sunscreen and worked to stay hydrated. Throughout that day, each person drank on average three to four litres of water.



Our decision to tramp along the spine of the Tararuas meant that we had expected to be exposed to the elements. Heat exposure is not an unusual phenomena, and careful management would prevent us from suffering from heatstroke. That evening, after rehydrating ourselves and settling into the cosy two bunk venue of *Dracophyllum* we sat down and debriefed about the day – highs and lows, and similarly, aspects of what happened as a group that we could improve upon to make it a better tramp in the days to come. Each as seasoned trampers, it was a challenging conversation to have – especially when we individually had a broad range of background experience and a number of complex excursions under our belts. It was ultimately a fruitful experience with the group coming to a consensus to meet at sign posted meeting points, to adhere to a 'boots on' time every morning, and to similarly renegotiate the weight of packs to improve upon group travelling time. Every group is different, and with the formation of a team – especially the meeting of experienced individuals to achieve an ambitious goal, the stages of forming, growth and development must inevitably ensue. The Tararua Ranges was pushing us to each redefine our tramping experiences, and with this we grew collectively as a group in strength with every step and every discussion.



"I recall that the sunset was beautiful. David had gone off into the tussock to clean out the pot of vegetable curry and slowly, the group had joined him out on the hills to watch the sun set over the ranges. After so many hours of walking in the heat, that small moment of quiet had suddenly made the long day worth all of the struggle."



29th of December 2015 – Day 3

The third morning had us pre-emptively hydrating ourselves with water and departing at 6:10am to do the bulk of our tramping out of the afternoon sun. The morning was still, and the podocarp leaned over in their wizened fashion as we walked into the lightening sky. We clambered above the treeline and once more, presented to us were jagged ridges striking against a darkening palette of azure. It was absolutely breath-taking. The air was still as we climbed along the peak towards Puketoro, past Kelleher and walked up to Nichols soaking in the rugged expanse along the range tops. Our travel times improved and we arrived down at Nichols Hut for an early morning tea. We met a hunter there – Dave, who tramped in for a fortnight and was planning on 'having a good time'. He let us borrow his scope and we could spy our destination for Day Four – Maungahuka Hut nestled snugly as a pinprick in between the Tararua Peaks.

Following our morning tea (turned into early lunch), we climbed up along the Te Araroa and summited Mt Crawford. While pausing for a second degustation, we soaked in the views towards McGregor and The Three Kings before descending towards Junction Knob and down towards Anderson Memorial. Despite the arid weather that had outlined this summer, we had looked out for - with much hope - the cooling waters of the tarn marked boldly out at 1226m on track and prior to the hut. Alas, under the blazing sun all watering holes en-route were bone dry. Walking brought us into Anderson Memorial Hut at 3:00pm just as the heat of summer kicked in again. After an afternoon of further feasting on carrot cake, we debriefed about the day's event and established that an early morning start had helped us to avoid some of the afternoon heat, and that conscious hydration and set 'break points' had enabled us to effectively traverse the range while sticking closer as a group.



I am slightly confused as the group silently get up and walk outside of the hut towards the range. I go searching for them five minutes later and find them standing to watch the last rays of the Sun sinking over the Marlborough. Pink streaks of light spill over the ocean and the horizon is lined with an indiscriminate yellow, white and blue. The beauty of the relentless peaks hold me in their grip. To think that you can see the Kapiti Islands and the South Island from the peaks on which we are standing...



30th of December 2015 – Day 4

Four days into the tramp, and slinging on boots early into the morning had been established into our norm along with the silence of our sunset viewings. Once again, we were treated to the fortune of pristine weather conditions and found ourselves tramping along the Kahiwiroa and up towards the Aokaparangi with avian clear views towards Mt Holdsworth and Waikanae. We traverse Wright and Simpson prior to midday, ascend up towards Maungahuka and arrive at Maungahuka Hut in time for lunch. Walking up the ridge line and spotting the hut revealed two surprises: One - the view of the Tararua Peaks ladder, and Two - a water filled tarn!



31st of December 2015 – Day 5

Day five saw us waking at 5:00am to the hush of mist and veil of rain. The weather systems had predicted a low, but not severe enough such that a traverse of the peaks would be impossible. We gathered briefly for a group discussion and prior to starting out, ran over the route, key landmarks and decided to stay within visible sight of each other over the mist. One group member had misplaced a rain jacket and we crafted a wind cover from a black plastic bag to protect him from the wind.

The ascent of the Tararua Peaks was both an adventure and a challenge. It was finally the time of reckoning and we held true to the teamwork that we had developed over the six days as we navigated over the increasingly rocky terrain down towards the peaks and up the ladder. A carved pathway led to jagged rocks, and gradually this shifted into chained regions of track. Visibility was down to ten metres and as we snaked our way along the ridge, we found occasional shelter from the wind behind sheltered parts of the tussock.

The Peaks were breath-taking. Traversing them in the mist only served to compound their beauty as the weather drove us to band closer to each other and the land. With each step, we grasped each surface of the range, peak by peak we conquered the slopes and with the strike of each footstep and howling of the wind, each mountain daisy and vegetable sheep appeared astounding in its tenacity to survive on its slopes. That morning, we traversed the McIntosh, Yeates, Vosseler, Boyd-Wilson Knob, Bridge Peak and Hut Mound.



We arrived at Kime hut at 12:30pm in time for lunch. Being young people who have undergone many days of mountain climbing, we subsequently ate for two hours and spent the afternoon recuperating from the feast. A German couple would later walk in in at 2:30pm to find all six young trampers snoring in sleeping bags. We decided to spend the night at Kime as we re-evaluate the group situation and weather over the upcoming days.



"That night, we make our familiar march out onto the range to watch the sun sink over the edge of the Earth. The rain had left the skies a clear pearly white and the Marlborough looked now even closer as the horizon turns red. As we gazed upon the dying rays of the year, the silence from the group spoke of how each of us had navigated another year in our young lives. Is life not an adventure? So much has happened. How much has changed! Was I the same person that I was one year ago? Probably not."

We were outside for a long time that night. All the way until we spotted moving stars greeting the New Year. How magical it was to be spending this transition along the Tararua Range. How beautiful it was a place to be.

1st of January 2016 – Day 6

The weather forecast had predicted a significant weather system approaching directly over the range on the 2nd of January. Due to the absence of a wet weather jacket and the high risk of being caught along the ridge in bad weather, we decided to boost our tramping and make only a quick stop at Alpha prior to tramping directly to Hell's Gates to Te Tutuwai.

The tracks closer to the Southern Crossing were predictably smoother, and we started the morning with a leisurely ascent up Mt Hector to the Memorial Cross. Following our summit, (and to the probable shock of all podiatrists) Toby attempted to demonstrate the usage of minimalist footwear by walking to The Beehives in his infamous tramping jandels. They snapped on the sandstone after half an hour. To the bemusement of the entire team, a traverse of Atkinson, Aston and Alpha and descent of Alpha Hut by Toby was subsequently completed in barefeet. Apparently it's all about 'where you position your legs'.



Following a luncheon at Alpha Hut, we continued onwards to Hells Gate and Omega. The climb towards Hell's Gates had appeared marginal on map, but under the growing heat, a further steep descent into the saddle similarly revealed why the location was aptly named: a subsequent ascent up to the Omega would make our previous expenditure of gravitational potential energy utterly futile. Nevertheless, we descended from the Omega in good spirits, and subsequently spent the rest of the afternoon climbing down eight hundred metres towards Te Tutuwai. The tinkles of water greeted our ears and hour later and we were soon welcomed with the flows of fresh water of the Tauherenikau River. It was time for a bath!

2nd of January 2015 – Day 7

The rain was a gentle patter along the valley as we made our exit. Gazing up at the ranges, we wondered what sort of misty storm was brewing up on the main range. We had begun our tramp out at 7:00am and followed the Tauherenikau River out towards Smith Creek Shelter and down the Dobson Loop Track towards the Puffer Saddle. The cover of trees and whispers of the water was a welcome change to the arid slopes, and it seemed somewhat apt that both the commencement and completion of our tramp would be marked by a trail along the water's edge. We exited on Kiwi Ranch Road near the YMCA at midday marking the completion of our week long expedition.

The traverse of the Tararua Ranges was a week long journey that challenged us with its terrain and climate in ways that would not have been imagined. Collectively, we learnt not only more about this rugged, stunning piece of New Zealand geography but similarly grew as a team and as individuals. Would this route or place be recommended for others in the future? Most certainly. It is clear why the Tararuas is described as the 'birthplace of New Zealand tramping'. We were driven to not only adventure, but to learn. We scaled mountains, navigated rivers and planned routes with an intent that had not been such experienced and together with the support of the FMC, six young trampers were able to traverse the Tararua Range.

Finn's Field Guide to the Mountain Cabbage Tree:

The magnificent Mountain Cabbage Tree (Cordyline indivisa) is one of NZ's best kept botanical secrets. Larger and more striking than its swampland cousins, it is the king of the sub-canopy and gained the (much coveted) 'People's Choice Tree Award' for our tramp. These Avatar like trees are found in wet mountainous areas from The Coromandel to Stewart Island and may be identified by leaves that grow up to two metres long and 30cm wide. Look out for two stunning specimens adjacent to the Mangahao Hut, Tararua Range.

Author: Carmen Chan
Field Guide by Finn Drummond



Photo Competition

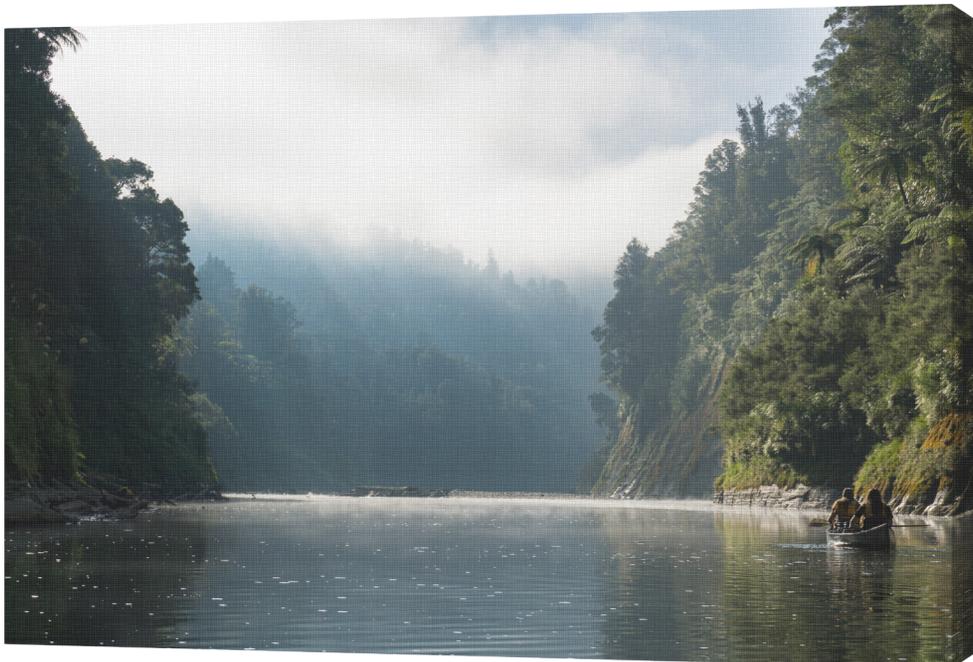
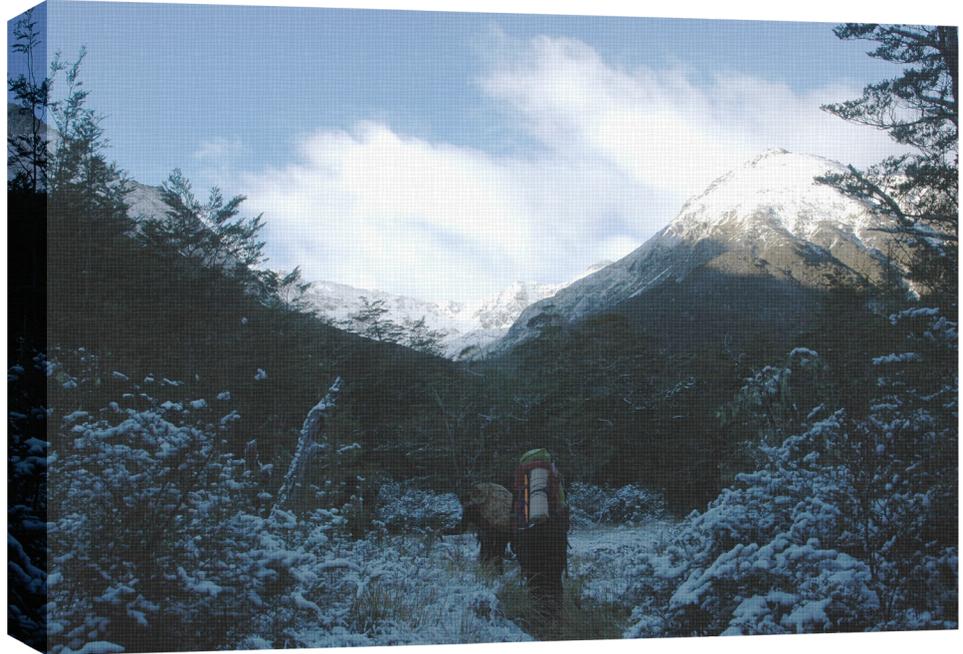
Akhil Suhas
Winner
Overall and
Above the Bushline



Akhil Suhas
Runner Up
Above the Bushline



Matt Battley
Winner
Below the Bushline



Hamish Buckley
Runner Up
Below the Bushline



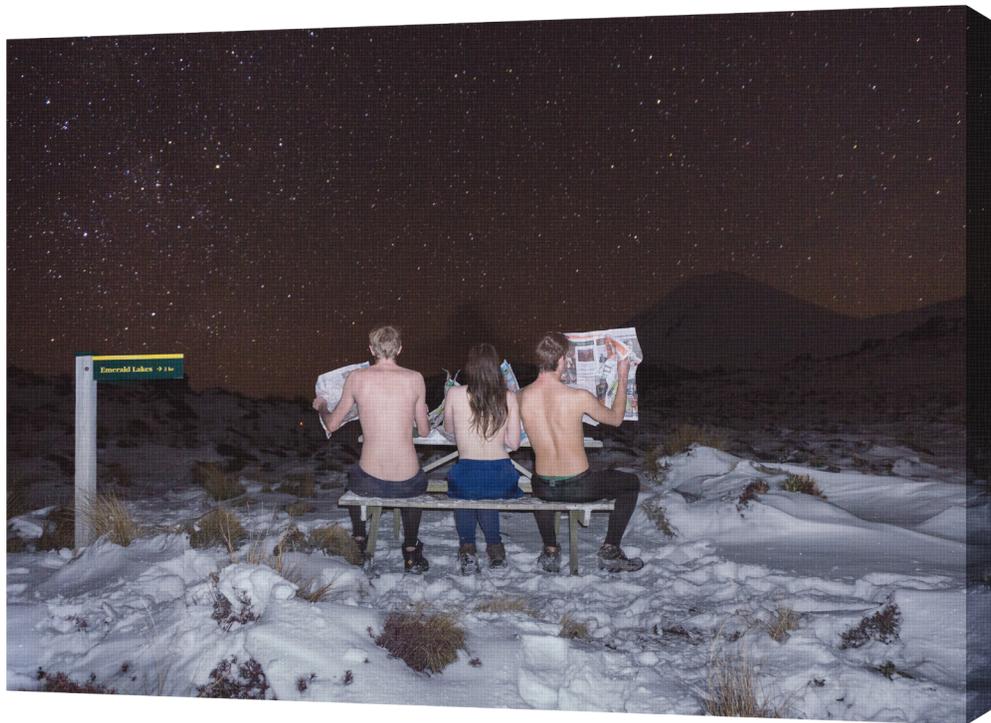
Matt Battley
Winner
Camp Life



Gordon Kang
Runner Up
Camp Life



Gordon Kang
Winner
Comedy



Hamish Buckley
Runner Up
Comedy



