beechleaves

Newsletter of the Manawatu Tramping and Skiing Club

www.mtsc.nz https://www.facebook.com/MTandSC

Issue 03. April, 2026

Club meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of the month at the Rose City Aquatic Club Rooms, 50 Park Road, Palmerston North (next to the Lido). Meetings begin at 7 pm.

7 pm Tuesday 7 April, 2026: Outdoor Training New Zealand (OTNZ) by Heather Grady

Heather Grady is the national chairperson of Outdoor Training New Zealand, a not for profit organisation that provides courses and training that enable people to enjoy the outdoors safely. She will explain how the organisation was established after the Mountain Safety Council abandoned physical training courses in favour of online messaging, what OTNZ has to offer and, in particular, how the Manawatu branch operates. There will be a slide show illustrating some of the activities the local branch is involved with, often with the support of MTSC members. Since our club has so many people with years of experience in the outdoors, Heather will outline ways in which our members can get involved.

19.03.26 Daphne Longview Loop by Carolyn Brody

REPORTS AND NOTICES

MTSC President: Nicki Fielder

president@mtsc.nz

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge all our club members. Everyone contributes in their own way — from chatting and supporting each other on tramps, bike rides and adventures, to reaching out in everyday life, organising trips, and the many unsung heroes who work quietly behind the scenes. It is these combined efforts that keep our club strong, growing, and able to provide safe and enjoyable adventures for all.

A great example of this spirit was the recent combined tramp with the Wellington-based Kaumātua Group. I was disappointed to be away and miss it, but from all accounts it was a wonderful experience. I'm sure this will be the first of many shared adventures. Be sure to read Jeff's report later in the newsletter.

It is with sadness, but also very fond memories, that I mention Chris Mercer. He was a special person and a good friend to many, and I know he truly valued his time tramping and socialising with our club. He will be greatly missed. Royce has written a lovely tribute to him below.

With autumn just around the corner, please take care, enjoy the camaraderie of the club, and happy adventuring.

Chris Mercer

by Royce Mills

We were very saddened to hear the news of the death of Chris Mercer on 2 March 2026, following a long illness.

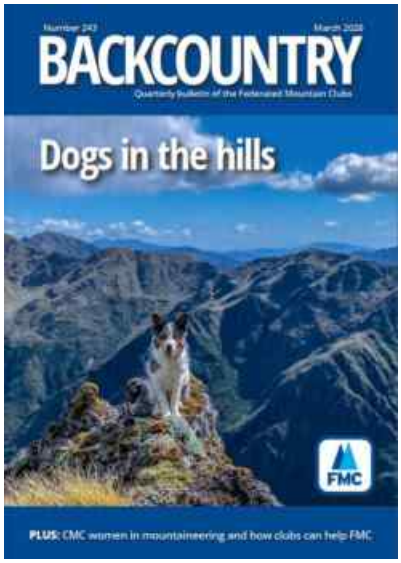
Chris was very active and loyal member of the MTSC Thursday trampers for many years. Although a very strong tramper Chris was always thoughtful of others. He would often ensure our group kept together by walking at the back to support and encourage those who might be finding the going tough. Chris, we will miss your wise, calm, positive presence on our tramps and always your concern for safety of our group in the outdoors.

As well as tramping Chris had many diverse interests. Topics of conversation would include kayaking, music, art, foreign films and travel. He had a very wide knowledge of New Zealand trees, plants and insects. His passion was a conservation project at Hatepe close to his house at Lake Taupo, the Hinemaiaia Bush Restoration Trust. Getting rid of overgrown problem weeds and unwanted trees was a huge challenge.

Chris organised a memorable overnight trip in June 2023. Eight Thursday trampers drove to the Kaimanawa Road end and then walked up to the trig at Mt Urchin. This was followed by a walk to view the Pillars of Hercules. All eight of us squeezed into his lakeside house and enjoyed a fine shared dinner and a lot of

laughs. Next morning our group took a walk to look at the extensive conservation work done by Chris and his team of volunteers at the Reserve. Much clearing, weeding and planting could be seen. It is good to hear that that this work will continue on.

On the way home we stopped for a walk around beautiful Lake Rotopounamu: Wonderful memories and a demonstration of how Chris shared his enjoyment of being in the hills, being close to nature and leaving the environment better than he found it.



Your digital *Backcountry* magazine

In this issue we talk about dogs in the hills, explore what causes downslope windstorms, Canterbury Mountaineering Club share the history of women in the club and we welcome back Love our Huts for a second season.

Plus you will find our regular columns and we ask how clubs can support FMC.

Backcountry March 2026

Note: We are still printing *Backcountry*. Any affiliated club member can recieve a printed copy, posted quarterly to their home address for only $25 by subscribing to D2U, *Backcountry's* 'Direct to You' service.

Track Clearing

Chris Teo-Sherell and Kyle Burmeister gave an interesting talk at the February Club Night about their work clearing tracks in the Southern Ruahines, a project they have been working on for over 12 years. It is a major undertaking given the size of the leather wood and other vegetation combined with the rate it regenerates. However it is a fantastic to have tramping tracks cleared for us all so close to Palmerston North. Chris and Kyle, with help from other volunteers, have been very generous with their time but could do with some financial help for equipment.

To:
Christopher Teo-Sherell
15-3959-0636969-00
Particulars: Your name
Reference: CutGrass

We welcome the following new member to the club: Dan Lynch.

Summit Adventures has two upcoming departures for Everest Base Camp:

22 Sept – 08 Oct **2026**
(6 spaces remaining)

29 March – 14 April **2027** (4 spaces remaining)

More on upcoming trips on the [MTSC website]

April Wednesday Tramps				**April Thursday Tramps**		
01	Terry Carkeek	021 378 446		02	Geoff Phillips	027 466 2779
08	Denise Shailer	027 386 1733		09	Nicki Fielder	022 515 3807
15	Rod McKenzie	027 246 8156		16	Michael Taylor	022 678 2970
22	Geoff McKay	027 498 8376		23	Richard Goodwin	021 076 5657
29	Alan Hawkins	021 062 4106		30	Vaughan Cruden	027 353 7754
April Cycling						
11	Zig Zag-Ridge Rd Loop: Trip Leader – Ken and Mary Mercer – 027 364 6475 (More over page).					
25-27	Anzac weekend in Hawkes Bay: Trip Leaders: Peter Rawlins & Lynda Hunt - 027 678 0747					

Trip Intentions: The email address for leaving trip intentions is intentions@mtsc.nz . Intentions sent to this address will not be acted upon UNLESS a party is reported overdue (e.g. by a family member, flatmate, friend, etc). The email is sent to several MTSC members. This information will be provided to Land SAR/RCC only if the party is reported overdue or a MTSC-owned PLB is activated. The email should include: a list of participants and their contact details; a brief description of the intended route and possible alternative routes; starting point; start date; date/time due out; vehicle registration; and any other relevant details.

Saturday 11 April, 2026: ZigZag Road - Ridge Road Loop Bike Ride

Trip Leaders: Ken and Mary Mercer

This ride was proposed by Peter and Lynda for March but cancelled due to lack of interest. It is a nice ride conveniently close to Palmerston North so we thought we would have another attempt this month. Lynda and Peter have very kindly said we can start from their place at 1031 Valley Road at 9:30am. We will head up Valley Road then turn right into Zig Zag Road, turn right onto Finnis Road, left onto Ridge Road, left onto Te Awa Road, left onto Coulter's Line, right onto Ridge Road, left onto Finnis Road, down to Pohangina, right onto Pohangina Road, and then right onto Valley Road again. Total distance 43.6 km. We will have tea and coffee at Lynda and Peter's place so bring something to share. For more information please ring Ken on 027 364 6475.

25-27 April, 2026: Anzac Weekend Bike Riding in Hawkes Bay

Trip Leaders: Peter Rawlins and Lynda Hunt

The plan for this trip is similar to have a sociable trip and ride some of the easy Hawkes Bay Trails. We plan to stay at the Napier Beach Top 10 Holiday Park (10 Gill Road Bay View). We've booked a cabin but they have campsites etc. as well. The plan is to travel up independently on Saturday morning to meet up at the start of the first ride at 11.30 am. This will be an adapted Water Ride of about 35 km. Start point is the carpark behind the Petane War Memorial gates, approximately 100 m past Onehunga Road on the left as you travel north on State highway 2 north of Napier. If you get to Bayview you have gone too far.

On Sunday we will do the Tukituki River Ride and add a side trip to Clifton. This ride is about 50 km. Monday will be Puketapu loop of 18 km with the option of riding to the coast and back for an additional 28 km. Of course, these rides may change due to weather. All the trails are easy and suitable for all types of bikes. For the evening meal please bring food to share and something you would like to drink. For more please ring Peter on 027 678 0747. Please let me know if you are on WhatsApp as I will be setting up a group for the trip.

Rangitikei River near White Cliffs Boulders by Tricia Eder 11.03.26

Wednesday 25 February, 2026: Escarpment Walk and Frolic in the Waves

Trip Leader and Reporter: Robyn Laing

Photographers: Royce Mills (1 & 4), Denise Shailer, Lesley Warburton

Just after 10 am, 17 of us assembled with our Gold cards at the ready, to catch the suburban train from Paekakariki to Pukerua Bay. In fact, we timed it so perfectly – thanks to a long delay en route due to road works - we had to dash to make it. On board, the slightly overwhelmed conductor, seeing us all flashing our Gold Cards, quickly gave up and asked how many were in our group. Leonie, being the baby among us, also got a free trip. It pays to hang out with a Golden Oldie group!

Once we arrived at Pukerua Bay, Bill Milham and some other eager beavers took off to ensure that the tide didn't go out before they completed the walk. The rest of us stopped for morning tea in a lovely park at the beginning of the walk. Refreshed with a drink and a snack, we hit the track.

What was interesting was the number of walkers, heading both south and north, we shared the path with over the day. Some were even running it. The other times I have done this track I have met no one else. The day was very hot and the blue water, way below, looked beautifully deep as the waves rolled lazily in. At our lunch point at the highest elevation, I noticed that they now have a defibrillator in a glass box - hopefully, never needed. Lunch was gratefully eaten while enjoying the fabulous views up and down the coast. Then we all started the descent which eventually took us through trees – and much appreciated shade - back to Paekakariki. I was very grateful that Mary had moved the van from the station to near the cafes and toilets.

Thursday 26 February, 2026: Makahika Track not Mangahao Hut

Trip Leader, Photographer and Reporter: William Laing

Rachel Keedwell was leading this overnight tramp to the Mangahao Hut to clean and tidy the hut and I was asked to lead the day walk up the Mangahao Track to Harris Creek and return. Not a difficult walk in terms of climbing but a lot of small creeks to cross and ridges to climb plus a pleasant walk up the floor of the reservoir. We were looking forward to this tramp. By Sunday night I had five people who wanted to come and no car or driver. Then Christine volunteered to drive us in her car. We just had to get to her place near Linton; Heather volunteered to drive the four others there. All was settled. Then another person wanted to come and that made six, too many for one car, so I sent out an email asking for another vehicle or a van driver. Ken volunteered to be the van driver and that made seven, then Angela volunteered her car and to join the tramp, making eight, so the van load was a suitable number.....All was settled.

Then a person disappeared in the Manawatu River, and Ken was asked to search the river in his kayak. So no van driver but all was not lost. We reverted to cars. With Christine and Angela as drivers, we could fit the seven in the two cars. On Thursday morning, we set out in our cars, firstly diverting to Christine's place to swap cars and drivers, and then to drive to Mangahao. We got to the power station after meeting two big trucks coming down the road to see a sign saying road closed; residents only. Given the size of the trucks, we did not want to meet them on the long drive to the road end. Rather than risk it we conferred about another option. Given that earlier in the week the Te Araroa Manawatu Trust volunteers had been installing track rafts on the Makahika Track in muddy places, we decided to inspect these to see if they were up to standard. Thus, we diverted to the start of the Makahika Track and set off at 9 am for a 3 hour walk to the lookout point near the top. The first few kilometres are over farmland so easy going. Then you cross the creek/stream at least 25 times but the track rafts were wonderful: above the mud, stable and easy to walk on. A few more could be usefully installed but they are along the track and ready to go. There was a 400 m steep climb to the lunch lookout where we had a relaxed snack and then descended at a faster pace down hill and over the streams to arrive back at the cars.

The bush there is magnificent and the track in very good condition due to the track rafts. The steep climb gave us a bit of a challenge after the flat walk over the farm and streams. We capped the trip with real fruit ice creams in Shannon, noting that it is open until 4.30 (I think).

Thanks to the drivers, Angela, Heather and Christine.

Thursday 26 February, 2026: Mangahao Flats Hut Overnight

Trip Leader, Photographer and Reporter: Rachel Keedwell

Jenny suggested turning this Thursday trip into an overnighter so we could give the hut a proper clean. The club hadn't been in for a working bee for at least a year and, as I'd never been there before, it sounded like a great plan. Only three of us were keen to stay the night, but William kindly offered to coordinate a day trip for the rest of the group (Report p7). The plan was for everyone to walk to Harris Creek for lunch, after which the day-trippers would head back while we continued on to the hut.

Brian, Jenny and I arrived at the road end and waited for the van to appear. When it hadn't turned up 15 minutes later, we decided to head off, hoping they'd catch up. The reservoir level was too high to walk up the river, so we took the sidle track instead. Jenny and Brian came armed with saws and took the opportunity to tidy up windfall along the way. By midday the rain had set in properly so on went the raincoats. We put our heads down, ignored the remaining fallen branches, and pushed on to the hut. As it turned out, the hut was already looking pretty tidy but, after a late lunch, we set about giving it an extra sparkle. Brian made the most of the heavy rain by cleaning out the spouting and also drew the short straw with the loo. Jenny and I tackled the windows and swept and wiped down all the interior surfaces.

Thanks to satellite texting, we later heard from the day-trippers that the road had been closed due to heavy vehicle use so they'd opted for a walk from the Makahika Road end instead.

We must have just sneaked in before the closure!

The next morning the weather was fine as we headed out and we dealt with the remaining windfalls we'd bypassed the previous day — although there was at least one that would have required a bulldozer rather than a handsaw. The rain returned just as we reached the halfway point but by then all the necessary track work was done.

If you're heading into the hut in the near future, do take a moment to admire the sparkling windows and freshly cleaned loo!

Wednesday 4 March, 2026: Field Hut

Trip Leader and Reporter: Angela Cameron

Photographers: Royce Mills, John Salisbury

Sixteen tramped: 11 in the van from Memorial Park (plus one picked up at Cafe Summerhill) and four from Summerhill in a private car. We set off at 9.15am from Boielles Flat Campsite under an overcast sky with no wind and a cool 10°C. We walked up in three groups; ten made it to the hut after a 780 m climb and covered about 12 km there and back. Six climbed to 580 m and walked about 9.5 km. The Steep zig zag ascent before we reached the bush line saw early morning layers peeled off. Gorgeous bush lines a more undulating track after that. We heard tuis and bell birds early on and riflemen were seen up at the hut. Two helicopters, flying multiple trips to deliver pre-feed bait, provided some extra entertainment.

We met many, mostly young trampers at the hut and on the way down, heading to Field, Kime and Maungahuka. Ten of our group exited via the old track - an interesting variation. The sky was blue as we descended and it was 17°C by the time we got back to the campsite. A fabulous excursion. All back by 3:40 pm.

Thursday 5 March, 2026: Field Hut, Table Top and Beyond or We've had warmer trips in winter!

Trip Leader and Reporter: Anja Scholz

Photographer: William Laing

Last October my planned Field Hut trip evaporated, as the new road to Otaki Forks was yet again buried under a slip - small slip, but timed badly. Spoiler alert: this time they/them and I (= we) made it to the hut, to Table Top and team Rachel and Brian even beyond.

Brian had lulled me into a false sense of security by offering to drive the van on all the 'weird' roads, but then he wouldn't, so the infamous five (they/them) had to bite their nails while I was negotiating dips, ruts and potholes on the gravelling, I mean gruelling, Otaki Forks road – it was eerily quiet in the back.... But at least, believing in Brian, I had not woken up multiple times during the night from nightmares about careening off cliffs.

We left 'le van' (yup, that's it in French!) at 'le carpark' (nope, wrong) and pretty instantly the A(mazing)-team of Rachel, Brian and William had left the A(lso ran)-team of Roswitha, Alistair and me breathing dust. At morning tea time William joined us again, while R'n'B (think Marvin Gaye) carried on through to the hut (think that's where they had morning T after 2 hours climbing). There was no view, and no promise of a view further up, and I am certain the temperature was about 8°C (potentially even Fahrenheit) with the lightest of misty droplets.

Having put the required $$ amount into the sun-o-metre, I was rather disappointed, and am convinced the metre has developed an electrical fault affecting its calendar memory – there was a Wednesdays Field Hut trip the previous day, so the money must have got used up mostly for that. Alas, onwards we went to Table Top (also known as No-View-Top on 324 days of the year), had no view, and came back to the hut for lunch. The weather cleared and warmed up then. Hmph.

R'n'B (think Little Richard) had carried on beyond No-View-Top and, on their way back to the hut, they glimpsed the seldom seen Table Top views. After lunch it was all the way downhill, without incidents or accidents, with some views and some sighs (by some knees – acknowledging we did nearly 1000 m AsC/DesCent). More quiet time in the back on the gravel road out (apart from anxiety breathing exercises), and a diesel stop in Otaki (so I still had a back up driver in case I got 'le van' stuck at the petrol station), combined with ice creams. Just as an aside, cough cough, I didn't stall the van a single time! Also lucky me looked so forlorn in Eton Place that Ken helped me clean 'le van'; nice one!

Fun Fact and learning point for today: the loudest cicada is –

African cicada, *Brevisana brevis*, 106.7 decibels – so: It is unlikely but not impossible that cicadas could cause hearing loss, [...] but generally the sound is more irritating to some than dangerous. Still, try to avoid sticking a cicada directly into your ear this time of year, although that's really pretty good advice any time (RNZ article).

Wednesday 11 March, 2026: White Cliffs Boulders

Trip Leader and Reporter: Jan Eyre

Photographers: Lesley Warburton, Tricia Eder

Twenty-eight trampers gathered at White Cliffs Farm on a warm but overcast morning. Bron welcomed us to the farm, gave us a short introductory talk and sent us off along the farm track to the boulders. We stopped for morning tea at the top of an uphill stretch and enjoyed the wonderful views out over the Rangitikei valley. Then it was a steep descent to the river and the site of the boulders. Here we met up with Gay, Robyn, Judy and Rosalie who had taken the alternative route. We were joined by a couple of other groups as well as some cyclists – a busy day at the boulders!

We all enjoyed a leisurely wander through the bush area, exploring the boulders and marvelling at how the trees were living alongside them – growing on, through, and over the large mossy rocks. Many photographs were taken – it really is a magical kind of place.

Our leisurely explorations were followed by an equally leisurely lunch by the river. Once refuelled, we all made it back up the steep uphill then down again to the homestead, although a small group managed to miss a turning and ended up taking a detour. The afternoon turned warm and sunny and we enjoyed a rest in the shady garden before heading home. Patience was needed as some of us were held up for a good half hour at road works on the way out to SH1.

It was a lovely relaxed and social day, with some decent uphills thrown in for good measure though no one swam in the river. Many thanks to all who came and made the day memorable. Special thanks to Royce, who was an invaluable help with planning and who guided us on the day, Mary for driving the van, and car drivers, Terry, Alan, Marilyn, Chris, and Gay.

Thursday 12 March, 2026: Joint Trip with Kaumatua Tramping Club

Trip Leader and Off Track Reporter: Jeff Baldwin

Photographer: William Laing

The idea of having a joint trip with the Kaumatua TC came from Geoff Soper. We had met KTC club members randomly a few times and Geoff thought we would get along so he reached out to us with the idea of a joint trip. Geoff and I did a recce in February and decided to plan two separate trips, one easy/medium and one medium/fit; easy was along the Mikimiki track and medium fit going off trail after starting the loop track in the Kiriwhakapapa area. I also decided to settle my nerves by doing another recce prior to our tramp, replacing tape on trees to help with navigation.

The weather was perfect as 21 of us set off on the loop track leaving the car park at 9:30 am. The smaller

group left at the same time for the Mikimiki track. After 15 minutes, we headed off track and started the bush bash part. Not much bush bash but a steady climb and no real track to follow. After an hour we found the perfect morning tea spot for 21 people after a steady climb. It happened to be the 510 m high point.

After morning tea we dropped down before climbing up eventually getting to 770 m and the main track to Blue Range Hut at 12.30 pm. On the way up the sun was hitting the kidney fern and making it almost translucent. There's something about going slow and off track and getting up close and personal with the plants. It means you have to concentrate instead of just walking along the garden path. Having said that, reaching the main track was also a good experience, because you could chat more freely without having to concentrate so much. Hats off to the speedsters who controlled their urge and stayed with the slower group in the morning. I felt lucky to be part of such an experienced group.

At lunch I avoided all responsibility and said I didn't care what people did from then on as long as they were back at the van by 3 pm. I was 100% confident everyone would be okay on the main track so off went the stronger, fitter ones, Heather, Caroline, Brian, Margaret, and Rachel toward Blue Range Hut. The latter three got all the way to the hut and then made it down in one hour 10 minutes. This speedy trio cooled off in the stream (with steam arising from their bodies I imagine). The rest of us had a leisurely lunch and took about one hour 15 minutes to get down, arriving at 2:15 pm.

I think the general feeling was that the joint tramp was a success and should be at least an annual event. It also has been suggested that maybe we could do a shared tramp to the lodge.

Part 2 Joint Trip: Mikimiki Track

Trip Reporter & Photographer: Helen Peek

Thanks Jeff for organising the tramp with the Kaumatua club; we had a great time with lots of laughs. It would be great to do some more with them as well as learning more about all the tramps in their stamping ground - they sounded really interesting.

We did do a little side trip to see some very tall eucalyptus trees and a couple of the tramline remnants, along with what looked like a great swimming hole if there had been time.

Thanks to everyone for your patience at the end; hopefully it gave you all time to catch-up lots.

Wednesday 18 March, 2026: Makahika

Trip Leader, Photographer and Reporter: Angela Cameron

It was a slower trip down to Levin than expected due to dense fog between Palmerston and Shannon but, eventually, eighteen trampers met at the southern end of the Makahika to Mangahao section of the Te Araraoa trail. The group set off at around 8:45 am from the Poulton Road car park, farewelling a local visitor to the trail entrance - a friendly tabby cat. - It was a gorgeous autumn day for tramping: fine and warm with little wind as we headed out. There was a large bank of cloud ahead, however, over the ranges.

Two trampers walked in to around the 5 km mark before returning. Sixteen trampers, in three groups, walked approximately 6 km to Archey's lookout and 13 ventured on and, after another steep climb and shortish descent, had reached the Horowhenua lookout within 25 minutes and 3 hours after departing the car park. Mary counted 27 stream crossings on the way out so 54 stream crossings in total for this there and back tramp; fortunately the stream was not that deep. The views from Archey's and Horowhenua Lookout before midday were of solid clouds but, as we were about to leave our lunch spots, the cloud lifted and the

promised views back over the Horowhenua were revealed. Even the outline of Kapiti Island could be seen from Archey's Lookout.

We were all safely back at the vehicles by 3:50 pm and the tabby cat came running up the road to greet the earliest returnees. Thank you to Mary and Blair for driving the van.

Thursday 19 March, 2026: Daphne/Longview Loop

Trip Leader, Photographer and Reporter: Jo Arnott

A keen team of ten headed off on the 2 hr drive to Daphne Hut car park on Kashmir Rd. The weather forecast was looking a bit murky for a walk that was going to take in a good stretch on the tops. We headed off through a patch of slightly boggy ground with a couple of small stream crossings, before climbing up a steep track through healthy, regenerating bush. It was a bit overgrown but pole markers kept us on track. Once we hit the beautiful beech forest, the going was clearer and the gradient a bit easier. When we got to the junction at the top of the Daphne Track, the weather looked good enough to head off across the tops towards Longview Hut. The route was not poled and not always obvious, but good visibility meant we were able to make our way with only the occasional "detour".

We sat on a knoll for lunch, with the cloud high enough for us to take in the beautiful views, across to Pohangina Saddle, back to Te Hekenga, and out across Hawkes Bay. It was a bit cool on top so we didn't linger over lunch. We then headed towards the junction to Longview Hut, bypassing this, and making our way down the rocky exposed track to Longview carpark. This track was poled and, in places, a bit like walking on marbles. A few of us took an unintentional side trip so as to be able to look back and take in a view of Longview Hut. Once down, we walked 1.5 km on gravel road back to the van at Daphne carpark.

It was a great day, with lots of variety, stream crossings, beech forest, open tops, great views and plenty of convivial conversation. Even the weather played the game! A big thanks to Jeff: a long drive but hokey pokey ice cream seemed to do the trick.

18 - 19 March, 2026: Totara Flats Hut

Trip Leader and Reporter: Anja Scholz
Photographer: Royce Mills

"*To reach the flats, one must climb and descend some steep, rooty tracks*"
(ancient Tararua proverb, possibly dating back to
when local Maori first discovered this mountain range)
"*When climbing or descending steep rooty tracks, one may mutter whatever swear word comes to ones mind*"
(novel Tararua proverb, possibly coined on this recent overnight tramp)

The main reason for offering an overnighter was of course that this year I was going to get my hut pass money's worth, come rain, shine or rooty tracks. I think I am one hut night away from breaking bad - I mean even. After that I will sort of make a profit. This is as well, noting that what my car drinks (diesel) is now the same price per litre as the liquids I like to drink (apple/orange juice). When diesel will (don't dismiss it!) cost as much as what I also like to drink (Pinot Gris) – around $20/litre – I assume we will discover that there are likely 25 new ways of doing a Gorge off-track tramping option. However, here is hoping that there are a few sane people left on this planet that will manage to negotiate and stop this newest war and I am not just thinking of my own small inconvenience.

Back to last week, when we gathered eight hardy overnight trampers (also known as Snow Geoff and the seven dwarfettes) and a somewhat less hardy (less foolhardy?) day tramper at the Holdsworth carpark. Hi Ho, off we went up the Gentle Annie, less gentle to those with a heavy overnight pack (come on, some of us, I am known for my sun-o-meter skills, so why carry rain gear? Mistrusting me?), but soon we reached the still Rocky Lookout for morning tea. Onwards and less upwards to the track junction for Totara Flats / Mountain House, where day tramper Lorraine left us to saunter on by herself.

The fairy tale crew sidled for a short while and then started on the downhill, rooty path, which started deceptively gentle, but turned into a "Herepai descent"- lookalike further down. As I was carrying the splint packet, I sure was hoping it didn't have the "she who carries the first aid material will need the first aid material" curse (fairly recent curse – see last trip report for Kapakapanui)! Luckily we all made it and had lunch at the bottom before ascending, and then descending from, a lot easier high point, to end up at the Totara Creek swing bridge: No three "Billy Goat's Gruff" here after the "Billy Goats Tough" track from earlier.

Next thing the German style over-engineered Waiohine bridge indicated that the hut was neigh! The Big Bad Wolf (staying with the fairy tale theme but mixing things up a bit) was in residence (name's Brett btw) and gave Geoff a bit of relief from the dwarfettes. Other than a couple of late-ish arriving trampers, we

were the only residents, so ten trampers for 26 beds meant a double bed for all.
As we had made it to the hut early, it was arvo tea and some exploring around the place before tea around 6 and then folk read, chatted, or got drawn into some card games.
No one took me up on the gambling suggestion, so no one lost all their money to me as I obviously won the card game that I had initiated – maybe because there still seemed to be some confusion about the rules by the end of it..??

By 8:30 pm the hut lay in darkness, and only faint breathing sounds were heard (at least in my bunk room)

UNTIL 6:30 AM WHEN THE QUIET WAS SHATTERED BY, oh well, some rustling and talking and getting up and having breakfast and packing and leaving the hut – yet again – well before the appointed time. Snow Geoff, Wolf Brett, and Dwarfettes Roswitha, Royce, Leonie, Helen, Emma, Christine, and Anja huffed and puffed, huffed and puffed, and finally all made it back up the steep rooty track, knowing the Gentle Annie slide down to the car park awaited.

Ice cream/coffee stop at Eketahuna (named by the local Maori and when translated means "to run aground on a sandbank" according to Tararua DoC – someone was quite off course to find a sandbank there, huh?), where we noted that the Pakeha guy in the 4Square gave us far smaller scoops of ice cream than the Indian guy last time – boooh!
While we had discussed other overnight or two-night options, hopefully someone will offer one of those before October – remember my hut pass needs another night!

Thanks from drivers Geoff and Anja to Christine for suggesting, and to all for voting in favour, to pay a top up to petrol money. We might all have to scratch our heads a bit over that one in the coming weeks.

Contact Details for Committee 2025 - 2026

President	Nicki Fielder	022 515 3807
Secretary	Blair Petersen	027 600 4263
Treasurer	William Laing	022 099 7988
Chief Guide	Ken Mercer	027 364 6475
Membership	Anne Jolly	021 067 5898
Newsletter Editor	Mary Mercer	027 372 5375
Lodge Manager	John Lyttle	027 433 6307
Mini-Bus Manager	Ken Mercer	027 364 6475

General Committee: Howard Nicholson**,** Rob Pringle, Anja Scholz

Appointees

Lodge Bookings	Ken Mercer	027 364 6475	
Gear Custodian	Rob Pringle	020 426 2176	
Ski Captain	Rob Pringle	020 426 2176	
Social Convenor	Tim Swale	022 134 8384	
Wednesday Trips	Rod McKenzie & Marion Beadle		
Thursday Trips	William Laing		022 099 7988
Biking Trips	Nicki Fielder		022 515 3807
Website Administration	Howard Nicholson		027 294 1941
Lodge Food Coordinator	Howard Nicholson		027 294 1941
Facebook	Rob Pringle, Karen Tutt, Howard Nicholson	facebook@mtsc.nz	

New Members

Prospective members must be nominated by a Proposer and a Seconder who are current MTSC members and have been so for at least one year. New memberships are confirmed at the next monthly committee meeting. Prospective members are encouraged to go on a club trip or attend a club night before joining. For further information or an application form please see the club website.

Club Equipment

Hire equipment: we have packs, 2 and 3 person tents, tent flies (small and large), snow mats, gas cookers, size 8 and 9 boots, billies and two bivvy bags. Ice axes, crampons, and helmets are also available. We have three personal locator beacons (PLB) for which there is no charge. Contact the Gear Custodian: Rob Pringle on 020 426 2176.

Website https://www.mtsc.nz/

This contains club information, photos, contact details and back issues of this newsletter, Beechleaves. The club website is maintained by Howard Nicholson 027 294 1941.

Facebook https://www.facebook.com/MTandSC

Accommodation at the MTSC lodge on Mount Ruapehu

The lodge is close to Iwikau Village, has power, heating, hot showers and is stocked with food. Members and their guests are welcome. The lodge can be booked online. The best way to pay for your bookings is to go to the Wallet top up page where there are full instructions, then make a bank transfer to the MTSC account (your Wallet is stored credit); this may take a day or two to be processed. The alternative is to pay by credit card but the club will be charged a fee of approximately 3% fee for each transaction For group rates contact the booking officer. If you need help check out Booking the Lodge Help Page. The current rates, which include main meals, are:

	Members	Guests
19+ yrs (Adult)	**$50**	**$75**
12-18 yrs (Youth)	**$40**	**$60**
5-11 yrs (Child)	**$32**	**$52**
0-4 yrs (Pres-school)	**$0**	**$0**