



# THE WAIKATO TRAMPER

Official Bulletin of

**WAIKATO TRAMPING CLUB (INC)**

PO Box 685, Hamilton 3240 • [www.wtc.org.nz](http://www.wtc.org.nz)

February 2026



Which way up? Photo by Jacqui Dick

# WAIKATO HUT

Your lodge on Mt Ruapehu  
Tongariro National Park



[www.wtc.org.nz](http://www.wtc.org.nz)



White heron by Dianne  
June

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WAIKATO TRAMPING CLUB  
P. O. Box 685, Hamilton 3240 • [www.wtc.org.nz](http://www.wtc.org.nz)

Free to members

Member of: Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc  
Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association

BULLETIN No 882

February 2026

### General Committee

<b>President:</b>	Rupert Craggs	027 6811926
<b>Secretary:</b>	Dorothy Cawdron	027 7424222
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Guy Domett	027 2483008
<b>Members:</b>	Judith Bogle (VP Tramp) Ashley Hoskin (VP Ski)	
<b>Members: Tramp:</b>	Allan Wickens Selwyn June	Mike Peck
<b>Members: Ski:</b>	Stephen Phillips Mary Reed	David Macdonald

### Tramping Subcommittee

Tramping email: [waikatotrampingclub@gmail.com](mailto:waikatotrampingclub@gmail.com)

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Judith Bogle	027 3810283
<b>Secretary:</b>	Dorothy Cawdron	027 7424222
<b>Club Captain:</b>	Mike Peck	021 369256
<b>Membership:</b>	Jocelyn Widmer	027 8664795
<b>Member:</b>	Selwyn June	027 4978151
<b>Transport:</b>	Allan Wickens	027 9509546
<b>Social convenor:</b>	David Totman	021 868720

### Ski Subcommittee

Ski email: [waikatoski@gmail.com](mailto:waikatoski@gmail.com)

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Ashley Hoskin	027 4909545
<b>Secretary:</b>	Dorothy Cawdron	027 7424222
<b>Ski VP:</b>	Stephen Phillips	021 1031436
<b>Bookings:</b>	Ashley Hoskin	027 4909545
<b>Finance officer:</b>	Michael Barker	021 2463500

<b>Facebook:</b>	Jacqui Dick	021 1375201
<b>Administrator</b>	Lynette Morris	<a href="mailto:waikatotrampingclub@gmail.com">waikatotrampingclub@gmail.com</a>
<b>Website:</b>	Kat Rowe	<a href="mailto:wtcwebmanager@gmail.com">wtcwebmanager@gmail.com</a>
<b>Bulletin:</b>	Lesley Kuggeleijn	027 4942414
<b>Editor &amp; Club Librarian:</b>	Dianne June	<a href="mailto:djune@xtra.co.nz">djune@xtra.co.nz</a> 07 8433066

Waikato Tramping Club account: 03 1555 0091625 02 (include the trip no.)

## Club Night: Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2026

We meet at St. Peter's Cathedral in Victoria St.

Door opens at 7.00pm, and the meeting starts at 7.30pm.

Watch this space -

### ACTIVITIES CALENDAR 2026

	13-15 Feb	E/M	Firewood on Ruapehu	Mary Reed
	13-15 Feb	E/M	Okahukura bait removal	Dianne & Selwyn
3224	14 Feb	E/M	Matapeka falls	Cathy Dickson/ Lynette Morris
3225	22 Feb	E/M	Homanga bay to Waihi	Allan Wickens
	26 & 28 Feb	E/M	River safety course	Belinda Cooper
3226	27 Feb-1 Mar	M/F	Syme Hut/Mt Taranaki	Mike Peck
3227	8 Mar	E/M	Hapuakohe	Club Captain
3228	1-7 Mar	M	Greenstone-Caples	Peter Ayson
	12 & 14 Mar	M	Navigation course	Belinda Cooper
3229	9/10 Mar	M/F	Brewster Glacier	John McArthur
3230	15 Mar	E/M	Where shall we go?	Club captain
3232	22-28 Mar	M/F	Gillespies Pass circuit	David Totman
3233	29 Mar	M	Pudding Falls / Salvation Hut	Les Warren
3234	3-6 Apr	M	Tama Lakes circuit	Les Warren
3235	3-6 Apr	M	Whangarei Falls	Allan Wickens
3236	12 Apr	E/M	Otanewainuku photography	Nicola Lye
3237	17-19 Apr	E	Whirinaki loop	Jeanette Dodson
3238	25-27 Apr	M	Sunrise Hut	Maddie Fiddes

Don't let a lack of equipment deter you from coming on a trip. Talk to the trip leader – who may be able to assist with lending or sharing gear.

#### TIME and FITNESS GUIDELINES

**E = Easy.**

Up to 4 hours per day, pace slower than E/M.

**E/M = Easy/Medium.**

Up to 5-6 hours/day, pace slower than M.

**M = Medium.**

Up to 6-7 hours/day, at standard walking pace.

**M/F = Medium/Fit.**

Up to 7-8 hours/day, pace faster than M.

**F = Fit.**

Over 8 hours/day, pace faster than M/F.

Note that factors such as party size, fitness, weather, terrain and leadership will influence actual times, so the above are estimates only.

**Bookings and Cancellations:** no later than the **TUESDAY** before the trip. Any person withdrawing after this day without good reason will be charged the full cost of the trip.

**Departure Point:** Weekend trips depart from the Gate 1 at Waikato University. Park

closer to other vehicles as this area is security monitored. Leave on Friday nights at 7pm sharp unless otherwise stated. **Day** trips depart from London St at the river end-park on the roadside. Leave Sunday mornings at 8am sharp. If someone is concerned because a trip is **late back**, contact: 1. Club Captain; 2) President; 3) a committee member.

**Minimum equipment required:**

**Day Trips:** A thermal layer (polypropylene, polyester etc or wool), an insulating layer of fleece (polartec etc) or wool and a water & wind-proof parka outer shell. Shorts or long-johns/over-trousers in cool or wet weather. Torch and sunscreen. Boots or strong shoes. Lunch, snacks and water bottle. First aid kit.

**Weekend Trips:** The above, plus pack with plastic liner bag, sleeping bag, tent, sleeping mat, cooker, billy, plate or bowl, spoon, food, spare dry clothes for evening, towel, toilet gear, light camp shoes. A water purifier can be useful. Plus, in extreme weather or country: additional warm top, over-trousers or woollen/ fleece trousers, warm outdoor mittens or gloves, over-mitts, warm hat or balaclava, sunglasses. Ice axe and crampons for snow.

## Trip Descriptions

### Firewood at Waikato Hut

13-15 Feb

The Waikato Ski Club is running a working party at the lodge with a focus on getting firewood up to Waikato Hut to keep us all warm this winter. You can help with lifting and carrying firewood to the Hut, stacking wood, or pitching in with a range of other jobs that need doing. Accommodation at the Hut is provided, and food is supplied from Saturday morning through to Sunday lunchtime.

It's also fine to come up for part of the weekend if you can't make the whole time. It's a great way to get fit for your tramping, enjoy some time in the hills, have a sociable time and give back to the club. Feel free to invite your friends & family/prospective members to come and be involved in the working party too.

**Leader:** Mary Reed

**Ph:** 021 1185107

**Grade:** E/M to fit

**Email:** [drmarydoll@hotmail.com](mailto:drmarydoll@hotmail.com)

**Transport:** private vehicles & carpooling

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### Bait removal in Okahukura

13-15 Feb

This is the final trip for the season and the aim is to remove all the uneaten bait from the bait stations in this valley of the North Pureora Forest. Accommodation at the Pureora Lions Lodge is paid for by the Pirongia Restoration Society. You need to bring all your own food except the tea/coffee/milk/milo/sugar. The Society will supply treat for the end of the day on Saturday – sweets, fruit & fruit juice, and home baking.

You get to walk in a beautiful forest looking at magnificent trees and hearing kokako, kaka, tomtits, popokatea(whiteheads), and the occasional falcon. The

Waipapa loop walk near the lodge also has kakariki to be heard along it – a great night-time walk and good fun if you take a UV torch along too. You are teamed up with another person who has done the work in the past so newcomers are very welcome. The safety briefing takes place at 7.45pm on Friday night so we recommend newcomers be present at that time. We will supply the maps for the allocated bait lines, and safety equipment such as first aid kits, PLBs, and compasses for each team. Everyone will be supplied with Hi-vis vest, and gloves if so desired. Contact the trip leaders for more info.

**Leaders:** Dianne & Selwyn June **Ph:**0274978151 or 07 8433066 **Grade:** E/M

**Email:** [djune@xtra.co.nz](mailto:djune@xtra.co.nz)

**Transport:** Private vehicles but carpooling can be arranged

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### **Trip 3224**

### **Matapeka Falls**

**14 Feb**

A day trip from Hamilton to Matapeka Falls (Jurassic Waterfall) — a quiet waterfall set in rural Taranaki bushland — with details at the Department of Conservation’s places-to-go portal: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/taranaki/> A short walk leads toward the falls, with time to relax by the river (swim possible in warm conditions). This trip has been attempted before but high river levels meant we couldn’t reach the waterfall, so this is a return visit hoping for better conditions. If time allows, we’ll also walk along Ruapane Beach before heading home

**Leaders:** Cathy Dickson

**Ph:** 021 353 561

**Grade:** E/M

Lynette Morris

**Ph:** 027 073 4519

**Email:** [dicksoncatherine@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dicksoncatherine@xtra.co.nz) or [lynettemorris00@gmail.com](mailto:lynettemorris00@gmail.com)

**Transport:** Senior member \$20-25 ior non-member: Senior rate +\$10.

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### **Trip 3225**

### **Homanga bay to Waihi beach**

**22 Feb**

This trip is the one we should have done in mid-January but weather conditions were not at all suitable to make it enjoyable. This is another attempt to do it. Get in quick as we will be taking just a vanload. We would like to have a driver for this A to B trip. From the end of Ngatitangata Road we will walk down to a beach at Homanga Bay for a short break, then along the top of coastal cliffs to Orokawa Bay where we’ll have lunch under the shade of spreading pohutukawa. There are great views out to Mayor Island/Tuhua and White Island along the way. The last part of the walk is over the hill and along the coastline to Waihi Beach, with time for a swim and ice cream before heading back to Hamilton. A fairly easy 8.5 km walk on a good track with a few steep sections.

**Leader:** Allan Wickens

**Ph:** 027 9509546

**Grade:** E/M

**Email:** [allanwickens@hotmail.com](mailto:allanwickens@hotmail.com)

**Transport:** Senior member \$20-25

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

## River Safety course

26 & 28<sup>th</sup> Feb

The online safety briefing will take place on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> from 7-8pm, and then followed by the practical part on Sat 28<sup>th</sup> February, 9am -approx. 4pm, in the Kaueranga Valley.

This one-day course is designed for hikers, Te Araroa Trail walkers, teachers and leaders working in outdoor settings – in fact, anyone who will be tramping and doing activities near water. Rivers are one of the greatest hazards in the New Zealand outdoors so learn how to read a river (basic hydrology), when not to cross and where to cross and how to safely cross (solo and in groups). Participants must be reasonably confident around shallow and deep water and be able to swim.

Please contact the leader for the online registration form and cost.

**Leader:** Belinda Cooper

**Grade:** E/M

**Email:** [waikatoadmin@outdoortraining.nz](mailto:waikatoadmin@outdoortraining.nz)

**Transport:** Private vehicles

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### Trip 3226

### Syme Hut

27 Feb – 1 Mar

Driving down to Friday night to stay at the Camphouse near the North Egmont visitor centre. Saturday will be a traverse around the eastern side of Taranaki to Dawson Falls and then up to Syme Hut. Sunday will be a climb to the summit of Taranaki and traverse over to the Northern Summit Route and back to the Camphouse.

**Leader:** Mike Peck

**Ph:** 021 369256

**Grade:** M/F

**Email:** [mikeypeck@yahoo.com](mailto:mikeypeck@yahoo.com)

**Trip cost:** tba

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### Trip 3227

### Hapuakohe

8 Mar

The WTC last did this tramp in August 2020 and on that occasion, it took 8 hours 9 minutes for the 15.9km. The leader got us lost but I'm sure he'll do better this time. The track is by no means flat and GPS records show a total climb and descent of approximately 1000m up and down along the track. The state of the track was considered somewhat overgrown. The majority of the tramp is in good bush with most of the views to the west across to Huntly and Waikato lakes. Some brief views to the East and the Hauraki Plains.

**Leader:** Club Captain

**Ph:** 021 369256

**Grade:** M

**Email:** 021 369256

**Transport:** Senior member \$20-25                      enior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

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### Trip 3228

### Greenstone-Caples out over the Routeburn

1-7 Mar

**THIS IS NOW FULL**

**Leader:** Peter Ayson

**Ph:** 0274 797 077

**Grade:** M

**Email:** [peter.ayson@yahoo.com](mailto:peter.ayson@yahoo.com)    **Trip costs:** tba

**Trip 3229****Brewster Glacier****9/10 Mar**

The plan is to leave Wanaka early on March 9<sup>th</sup> and drive to the carpark at the base of the climb, at the Fantail Falls carpark. This carpark fills rapidly and it will be best to arrive super early.

We then cross the Haast River and start a very steady ascent to the Brewster Hut. This is 1000m climb from 450m to 1450m altitude and at about 1250m you break out of the bush and awake to the amazing mountain scenery around you. About the first thing you see is the dunny, but it's miles ahead and you can keep that in mind as your target as you climb up through tussock hill country.

The hut is well placed for amazing views to the high peaks around. The plan is to stay at the hut on the 9<sup>th</sup> March, and it is bookable so we will need to keep an eye on the bookings and jump in. You should book a bunk in the hut for the night of 9<sup>th</sup> March before registering.

After lunch at the hut, and dropping most gear on our bunks, we head up about 300m altitude and 3km of high country tussock and then rock scrambling to get to the glacier. It's something of a classic big ice face with cave and surging water - or it was 3 years ago - we may have to walk further. Once we have thrown ice at each other we can head back to the hut.

I'm looking forward to the Kea concert at the hut in the evening - last time there must have been 30 kea playing and doing their best to steal anything on the deck of the hut - a real joy to watch. Next day we retreat down the track to our car(s) and Wanaka.

**Leader:** John McArthur**Ph:** 021 2889641**Grade:** F**Email:** [mcArthur@outlook.co.nz](mailto:mcArthur@outlook.co.nz)**Transport:** TBA, from Queenstown Airport**Mapping:** kml and gpx track files available

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**Navigation course****12 & 14 Mar**

The online safety briefing will take place on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March from 7-9pm, and then followed by the practical part on Sat 14<sup>th</sup> March, 8am -approx. 4pm, in Waiorongomai Valley, Kaimais.

This course is designed to provide participants with some knowledge and skills to be able to navigate using a map and ground features on well-marked tracks as well as in a simple off-track environment. Maps and compasses provided.

Please contact the leader for the online registration form and cost

**Leader:** Belinda Cooper**Email:** [waiatoadmin@outdoortraining.nz](mailto:waiatoadmin@outdoortraining.nz)**Transport:** Private vehicles

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**Trip 3230****Where shall we go today?****15 Mar**

This is an opportunity to take your tramping enthusiasts to somewhere you'd like to go. It could also be a weekend trip. It could be a familiar place or somewhere new or different. Got a great idea? Contact the 'leader'.

**Leaders:** Mike Peck**Ph:** 021 369256**Grade:** E/M or?

**Email:** *mikeypeck@yahoo.com*

**Transport:** Senior member \$20-25

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10.

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**Trip 3231**

**Waikato Hut**

**20-22 Mar**

This will be a weekend of wanderings visiting places of interest around Mt. Ruapehu or, if there is someone keen to do something very specific, please forward your idea to the club captain. The Hut is well-equipped, a great place to stay, and right in the middle of some interesting walks. Think Stanton memorial, the Skyline walk, Silica rapids, check out the buttercup field and look for the edelweiss flowers, climb up to the crater lake, check out the visitors Centre, ... need we say more?

**Leader:** Mike Peck

**Ph:** 021 369256

**Grade:** M/F

**Email:** *mikeypeck@yahoo.com*

**Trip & accommodation costs:** tba

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**Trip 3232**

**Gillespies' Pass circuit**

**22-28 Mar**

**THIS TRIP IS NOW FULL.**

**Leader:** David Totman

**Ph:** 021 868 720

**Grade:** M/F

**Email:** *dtotman@gmail.com*

**Transport:** Private arrangements

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**Trip 3233**

**Pudding Falla/Salvation Hut**

**29 Mar**

This day trip will be approx. 5hrs. I know where I am going as per some local Youtube videos but need to do my own visual recce. I have done one recce trip along a marked track which is a mix of mud, tree roots and nice walking.

**Leader:** Les Warren

**Ph:** 027 8644937

**Grade:** M

**Email:** *warrenlb2017@outlook.com*

**Transport:** Senior member \$20-25

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

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**Trip 3234**

**Tama Lakes Circuit**

**3-6 Apr**

For this trip I am looking at two options. The brief route for option 1 is to walk from Whakapapa along the Upper Tama Lakes track, climb up Mt Tama and drop down to a campsite; next day head to Saddle Cone and camp nearby; then walk back to Whakapapa via Ridge Track. There is one spare day which we can look at doing a side-trip/day walk from a camp site. Option 2 is to do day walks from a "base" that can fit in most of the areas of a circuit trip. Looking at Waihohonu Campsite / Hut as our base but has some issues. I plan on doing a recce trip for option 2 to see if it is workable. The aim for option 2 is to offer more choices. The group will be limited to 10 people.

**Leader:** Les Warren

**Ph:** 027 864 4937

**Grade:** M

**Email:** *warrenlb2017@outlook.com*

**Trip costs:** tba

**Trip 3235****Whangarei Walks****3-6 Apr**

Over this long weekend, we will be based at a house in Whangarei that is for our sole use. However, the group will be limited to 10 initially and if numbers exceed that, we'll look at getting an additional place to stay. The accommodation is at Regent Residential House (look it up to see what amenities there are), at a cost of \$180 per person for the three nights. The plan is to drive to Whangarei on Good Friday morning, leaving time to do some walking in the afternoon. Over Saturday-Sunday, we'll look at doing walks at Bream Head and Whangarei Heads. We will allow time to head a bit further north to Whananaki (on the east coast about an hour from Whangarei) to explore this area as well. The sea temperature should be good so bring your bathers as there is a nice walk on offer – the 6-hour return Whananaki Coastal Walkway. On Monday morning, we'll head back home, possibly by the Kaipara Coast Highway (there's a 12km circular walk that starts and finishes at historic Mataia Homestead). The programme overall will depend on what the group would like to do. Most walks will be graded easy-medium overall. You'll need to register early to guarantee a spot in this trip.

**Leader:** Allan Wickens**Ph:** 027 9509546**Grade:** E/M**Email:** *allanwickens@hotmail***Accommodation:** \$180/person for 3 nights**Transport:** Senior member \$90-110

Senior non-member: members rate +\$10

**Trip 3236****Otanewainuku photography****12 Apr**

This will primarily be a photography trip, with Whataroa Falls our destination in Otanewainuku Forest. This is a small forest south of Tauranga and is well known for its prolific fungi. We will head in via the Rimu Loop Walk and take the side trip to the picturesque Whataroa Falls. We can also spend time photographing fungi. This is roughly a 3-hour return trip, excluding the time we spend taking photos.

Ideally you will have a camera with “Manual Mode”, a tripod, and a lens that is 24mm or less (for the waterfall), and a macro lens, if you have one, for fungi. A polariser makes a big difference in forest/waterfall photography, so bring that along if you have one. I have a couple of tripods that I am happy to lend out if you have a camera but don't have a tripod and would like to try your hand photographing the waterfall or fungi.

**Leader:** Nicola Lye**Ph:** 027 4213458**Grade:** E**Email:** *nicolahlye@gmail.com***Transport:** Senior member \$20-25

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

**Trip 3237****Whirinaki loop****17-19 Apr**

On the Whirinaki Waterfall Loop Track you'll follow the Whirinaki River as it flows through podocarp forest. This easy loop track follows the Whirinaki River through superb podocarp forest with many excellent vantage points of the river.

The waterfall can be heard from some distance. Take your lunch to enjoy along the way - there are picnic tables and a toilet at the waterfall. This track visits some of the parks special features and shows off the magnificent 'dinosaur forest', dominated by towering examples of kahikatea, tōtara, matai, rimu, miro and tawa. We may stop off along the track where you can see the river as it is the best river in the Bay of Plenty to view blue duck/whio. More info next bulletin.

**Leader:** Jeanette Dodson

**Ph:** 027 4485033

**Grade:** E/M

**Email:** [jeanette.dodson456@gmail.com](mailto:jeanette.dodson456@gmail.com)

**Transport:** Senior Member \$65-75

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

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### **Trip 3238**

### **Sunrise Hut**

**25-27 Apr**

This is a serviced 20-bunk hut in the Hawke's Bay area. Located in the mid-eastern Ruahine Forest Park, Sunrise Hut is situated on the tops of the Ruahine Range. This hut is the most popular in the park. Sited in a tussock basin beside the bush edge at 1,280 m, the hut offers magnificent views across the Hawke's Bay. The original hut was constructed in 1983 by NZFS. It was upgraded in 2005. This is a large hut that is a popular recreational destination for day trips or weekend visits. The hut is heated by a woodburner. It is a popular walk for many family groups. The track is well formed, with a significant elevation gain from the carpark to hut of approximately 600 m. It takes 2-3 hours to walk from the carpark to Sunrise hut

Note: this is a popular hut so make your hut booking early and it is cheaper if you book online.

**Leader:** Maddie Fiddes

**Ph:** 021 2273560

**Grade:** E

**Email:** [madeleine@actrix.co.nz](mailto:madeleine@actrix.co.nz)

**Transport:** tba

**Accommodation:** Hut fees: Adults \$55 Juniors \$17.50

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## *Editorial*

The second trip of the year wasn't cancelled – we just went somewhere else in the interests of safety and enjoyment. Just as well we have a good depth of knowledge of trips in the area we can do when Mother Nature doesn't play ball. I was really thrilled to be able to be out with the club on this alternative trip. Progress for me indeed! Read the trip report. Allan is keen to lead the trip from Homanga Bay to Waihi Beach for a swim/ice cream stop option later in the month so all is not lost. Have you ever thought about reading back copies of the bulletin? Are you a trip leader going somewhere we may have already been? Are you looking for a great place to go? Our trip records are a very worthwhile place to search through. I have copies of all the bulletins and the club captain has the log reports you can browse through. Do make use of the resource as you never know what you might find. Meantime, have a good look at the trip programme- there are some new and some

previously visited destinations on the programme as well as training in navigation, night navigation, and photography available.

At our Feb club night we put out a lot of gear and books that have been donated by Peter Tribe and his wife Katherine Tozer. They are ‘emigrating’ home to Australia and these items will no longer be required. Many of you have been able to take home some nice items and have generously donated \$235 in exchange. The leftover items will be donated to new trampers or other groups who can benefit from them.

Dianne

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## *Presidential blog*

*(Ed comment: now I know what he’s up to when I’m looking for his monthly blog 😊)*

Hello fellow trampers

After going leafy (Whispering Grove), we set our sights on something wetter, wobblier, and—according to Tom—“statistically more likely to involve accidental swimming.” Yes: the river. Armed with dry bags, optimism, and Tessa’s laminated “Flow State Manifesto,” we made our way to Ripplebend River Track. The name alone promised movement. So did the sandflies. Entry was dramatic. The river shimmered like a silver ribbon, sunlight dancing across its surface as if auditioning for a fantasy film. Maggie called it “refreshing already.” Tom called it “a cold, wet mistake waiting to happen.” We moved on.

The trail—when it existed—zigzagged along the riverbank, alternating between gravel, mud, and that mysterious type of ground that looks solid but behaves like pudding. Tessa led again, claiming that her ancestors were “river whisperers.” We didn’t argue. She had the map.

Highlights included:

Skipping stones that somehow came back. Tom insists one ricocheted upstream. Physics disagrees.

A heron that stared at us for 20 minutes, judging every life choice that led us here.

Myself attempting river haiku, earning an encouraging splash from nature itself.

Challenges:

The Great Crossing. A knee-deep ford that turned out to be “knee-deep for tall people.” Maggie performed an involuntary sit-down. The river accepted her sacrifice.

Tessa’s driftwood staff. Useful for balance, less useful for poking things that didn’t want to be poked.

A rogue eel encounter, during which Tom briefly achieved levitation.

By the time we reached the halfway point, we were glistening with a mixture of river spray, effort, and the kind of pride that comes from not falling in (yet). The return trip was smoother—either we finally mastered river walking, or we were too tired to make mistakes.

We emerged damp, triumphant, and smelling faintly of freshwater and courage.

Losses:

- One sock (claimed by current)
- Maggie’s dignity (briefly, during the sit-down)
- Tessa’s driftwood staff (cracked during an “interpretive splash”)

Victories:

- Everyone remained technically upright
- Tom now holds club record for highest eel reaction
- I completed a full haiku cycle, river-blessed

Next month: the summit. Because after up, under, sideways, leafy, and flowy—it's time to go high again. But gently. Maybe. Ever onward,  
Rupert

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### *Waikato Hut*

The summer rates have started (adult \$25, child \$15) and the lodge bookings are still available to anyone interested. This is a great place to chill out (or not) over a weekend. Why not take a group of family and friends up to our home away from home and enjoy the views and activities you can get up to there. Over the weekend of Feb13-15 you can even improve your fitness for tramps later in the year by helping to carry firewood from the road end up to the Hut – about a 40minute round trip. The club cover your hut fees and catering so you just have to bring your nibbles and refreshments as well as toilet gear and suitable clothing – see the trip description at the start of the activities list earlier in this bulletin.

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## Trip Reports

### **Trip 3218**

### **Monowai & Hope arm Huts**

**21-25 Jan**

The five of us set off from Te Anau to Borland Bivv which was the starting point for our five-day tramp.

The tranquil undulating beech forest made the start very enjoyable. As we descended to a golden tussock valley a couple of tarns came into view. The tussock however was boggy and very uneven making progress slow. The second tussock valley was much easier to negotiate. After a strenuous 350m climb and then a downhill section, we arrived at Green Lake itself. The hut was situated further up the lake. We later learnt that the lake was full to the brim which meant that the shoreline track was underwater. After 30 minutes of bush bashing around tussock, hebes and bog rush, we arrived at the hut.

And, what a great hut; double glazed and warm. However. We were not alone, as the sandflies were there in their thousands. But the boardwalk all the way to the toilet made up for the pesky sandflies. The birdlife along the track included robins, tomtits, warblers and waterfowl on the lake.

On day 2 we retraced our steps back along the tussock shoreline, over the hill to the junction which heads to Clark A-Frame Hut, our bed for the night. Island Lake was our morning tea stop with lovely views. A short time later we arrived at the lake outlet to find that the water level was extremely high and swift. It was decided that it was too dangerous to cross and as rain was forecast, we could not afford to get

trapped on the way back.

Les, our leader, was in regular communication with the shuttle driver, so we were able to arrange an early pick up. However, this entailed a very steep road climb of 2-3 three km to the top of the saddle. Lovely views down the valley of the many pylons that spanned the countryside. Now plan B swung into action. Les (Leader), Dale, Fiona, Helen, Lois (Scribe)

After returning to Te Anau, four of us set off to do an overnight stay at Hope Arm Hut, a comfortable older style 12 bunk hut on the edge of Lake Manapouri.

This walk was much easier than the Monowai track. The terrain was a generous mix of beech trees, tall ferns, swamp with boardwalk just high enough to keep our boots dry. Some parts of the track were muddy with tree falls, but nothing too hard to negotiate. It was interesting seeing parts looking desolate, dead for lack of water flow. Just under three hours we were alongside the foreshore, a great area for tenting, including toilet and fireplace. A little further along was the hut, set back under bush.

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That evening we shared it with two well-travelled tramping ladies. They were very friendly and we had a great evening laughing and sharing tramping experiences. The next day two of our group returned via Back Valley Hut. They said it was a quaint four bunk rustic looking hut, mostly used by deer hunters. This track was swampy but mainly flat. They noticed plenty of deer footprints. The track had a few undulating areas, but said it was an easy track. We met up on the track just before getting to our dingy boat transport across the Waiau River where it flows into lake Manapouri. Plan B was a great overnight trip. Participants were Fiona, Dale, Lois, Helen (Scribe)

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A tussock flat

Photo by Lois Rowell

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A tarn en route to Monowai Hut

Photo by Lois Rowell



Hope Arm Hut

Photo by Lois Rowell

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### Trip 3216      A Perfect Alternative – Waiorongomai Walking Track    18 Jan

Sometimes the weather gods have other plans.

Our original trip to **Homanga Bay, Waihi** was sensibly canned thanks to an incoming *weather bomb* and some rather unfriendly-looking forecasts. Despite this, **everyone still turned up bang on time** at the **London Street Carpark**, proving once again that nothing short of an apocalypse will stop this bunch from going tramping.



The intrepid trampers

Photo by Kathy Tao

After a quick yarn and a bit of weather-watching, **10 out of the 12** decided to **live dangerously** and go ahead anyway. A rapid Plan B was formed and off we went to the **Waiorongomai Walking Track** — which turned out to be a brilliant choice. It was great to see our ever-positive **Ray**, lovely **Dianne and Selwyn**, club stalwart **Jannette**, and the delightful senior duo **Russell and Annemarie**, along with **Jim**. All accompanied by scribe **Kathy Tao**. Adding extra sparkle and energy were our awesome young bloods **Zoe and Lisa**, who definitely lifted the pace — and the banter.

We hit the track around **9am** and headed off along the **Lower-Level Loop Track and Piako County Tramline**, where history, scenery, and storytelling combined beautifully.

Fungus photo by Kathy Tao



### What We Saw (and Learnt, allegedly)

- The **Waiorongomai Valley** boasts **New Zealand's oldest bush tramway**, complete with original rails still in place — no Health & Safety in sight back in those days.
  - Massive chunks of **old mining machinery** line the tramway, thoughtfully positioned to remind us just how tough those miners really were. Each piece weighs **over 3.5 tonnes**, which explains why nobody offered to carry one home.
  - The final restoration touches were done in **2009**, including the impressive helicopter drop-in of a **reconstructed headframe**, recreating the original mining setup.
  - We passed several **mine tunnels and shafts**, complete with “no entry” signs — which everyone obeyed... mostly.
  - According to **Jim**, he personally worked in these very mines back in the **1880s**. Sadly, the gold didn't stretch to early retirement, so he later retrained on big diggers and heavy machinery, continuing his lifelong mission to move large amounts of earth around.
  - **Zoe** shared some modern wisdom, explaining that it is perfectly acceptable for a caring daughter to **find a boyfriend for her mum**.
  - She also reassured us that **online dating definitely works**, as long as you don't give up after the first 37 attempts.
  - As always, **food and coffee tasted unbelievably good afterwards**,

proving once again that tramping is the best seasoning.

**The Takeaway:** It's not where you go or what you do — **it's who you're with.**  
Good tracks, good laughs, great company, a cracking day out. A perfect Plan B.

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### From the committee table:

**New Members:** Welcome to Chris Keith, and Jeanette Brooker

**Resignations:** Michelle Cunningham, Wendy Harris, Angie An, Shaunik Punjabi, Laraine Hughes, Kieran Smith, Vicki Moon.

**Membership:** The club has 202 tramping members. Have you claimed your FMC membership card yet? Please contact Lesley or John McArthur.

**From the committee:**

This search for a new home for our records is now somewhat urgent. Over many years Colin Jones has allowed the club to use his storage space for our archived papers, gear and materials. He is now relinquishing this space so we have to move all our gear too. Does anyone have some space they could allow the club to use please? The main requirement is that the space be watertight, and if possible, have some form of shelving but this could be supplied by the club if needed.

Also needed very soon is a place to park our club trailer. Contact: Dianne 07 8433066 or email [djune@xtra.co.nz](mailto:djune@xtra.co.nz)

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### *Snippets*

➤ Recently your editor made contact with the friend of a foundation member of the club – Peter Dosser. He had accumulated a bundle of topographical maps as well as a hand-drawn map of the Waiorongomai/Waitawheta area from about the early 1950s. It has been scanned and a digital version is now available. Peter died a wee while ago but his wife Carol wanted these maps to come back to the club and this has happened. Along with the map was a large set of older NZtopo maps which may be fun to peruse and seek out tracks that we haven't visited for a long while, or perhaps old tracks that we have never visited and be fun to check them out. Remember recces are also good tramping trips.

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### *...from DoC.....*

➤ Oh dear, yet again: Coromandel's Mautohe **Cathedral Cove is closed** until further notice after the recent storm event and intense rainfall caused damage and slumping on the popular track. The track has been assessed by staff, and there are visible signs of slumping caused by the saturation of the hillside the track traverses. There are also parts of the track covered in deep mud and debris which will need to be cleared so further assessments can be undertaken – including geotechnical inspections.

Geological assessments undertaken previously at Mautohe Cathedral Cove have also shown there is a residual risk of landslides and rockfalls as the soil above and around the cove dries out after rain events. The cove can still be accessed from the sea but anyone planning to do this should think carefully about the risks – including the possibility of rockfall and further landslides – and whether visiting is sensible at this time. The storm has also impacted track reinstatement works at nearby Waimata Gemstone Bay.

➤ The successful **removal of wild deer from Pukenui/Anchor Island** and Indian Island in Fiordland has returned these important sanctuaries to deer-free status. During annual checks of islands in Dusky Sound and Preservation Inlet – areas managed to remain deer-free – three deer were removed: one from Indian Island and two from Anchor Island. These checks also included surrounding islets, ensuring these islands continue to provide safe, intact habitats for native plants and wildlife. Anchor Island is one of Fiordland's most treasured islands, with lush forests that support rare species including the critically endangered kākāpō and kākārīki karaka. Protecting vegetation is critical to maintaining these ecosystems. Anchor Island achieved a wild deer-free status in 2007.

Monty Williams, DoC Project Lead Biodiversity, says, "If left unchecked, even a few deer can quickly rebuild a population – potentially undoing decades of conservation gains. Acting now prevents a far bigger and costlier problem later. This investment secures the islands' long-term ecological health and ensures Fiordland's unique biodiversity continues to thrive. Removing deer from such remote and rugged locations is hard and expensive work. Anchor and Indian Islands sit deep in Fiordland, accessible only by boat or helicopter. DoC contractors used a combination of aerial hunting with thermal technology and ground hunting to locate and remove the animals. Every step required precision planning to avoid disturbing sensitive habitats and ensure staff safety.

➤ The **first kākāpō breeding season in four years** is officially underway, DoC and Ngāi Tahu announced in early January. Remote monitoring technology used to track the critically threatened taonga has detected mating activity started on 29 December. DoC Operations Manager for Kākāpō Recovery Deidre Vercoe says the milestone feels particularly significant for the species this year. "It's always exciting when the breeding season officially begins, but this year it feels especially long-awaited after such a big gap since the last season in 2022," she says. "Now it is underway, we expect more mating over the next month, and we are preparing for what might be the biggest breeding season since the programme began 30 years ago. The flightless, nocturnal parrots only breed once every two to four years, when the rimu trees mast (mass fruiting). They are among the most intensively managed species in the world. The total population sits at 236 ahead of the breeding season, including 83 breeding-age females. With most kākāpō mothers

typically raising one chick per season, 2026 could see the most chicks since records began. However success can no longer be measured by numbers alone, Deidre says. “Kākāpō are still critically endangered, so we’ll keep working hard to increase numbers, but looking ahead, chick numbers are not our only measure of success,” says Deidre. “We want to create healthy, self-sustaining populations of kākāpō that are thriving, not just surviving. This means with each successful breeding season, we’re aiming to reduce the level of intensive, hands-on management to return to a more natural state. We’re working towards the goal of returning them to their former range around New Zealand so that one day, hearing a kākāpō boom might be a normal part of naturing.” This season, a range of lower-intervention strategies will be applied to varying degrees across the three remote southern breeding islands. These include; prioritising checks for genetically valuable eggs and chicks, leaving more eggs to hatch in nests rather than incubators, reduce nest interference for mothers raising multiple chicks, and reducing supplementary feeding. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu representative on the Kākāpō Recovery Group Tāne Davis has been involved with the programme for 20 years and says growth brings its own advantages and challenges. “Every breeding season marks a significant step toward restoring the mauri of kākāpō and our aim for them to one day thrive on their own throughout the Ngāi Tahu takiwā o Te Waipounamu. “As part of the more hands-off approach to enhance the mauri of the species, a Ngāi Tahu aspiration is also for a percentage of the chicks hatched this year to remain nameless, acknowledging the beginning of returning the manu to their own natural ways. “The predicted scale of this season also reminds us of the need for more safe homes, like a predator free Rakiura, for this taonga species.” Deidre says the support of partners, volunteers and supporters all play a critical part in bringing kākāpō back from the brink. “It takes a collective effort to turn the tide and bring kākāpō back from the brink. We’re grateful for all the support shown over the years from people keen to do their bit for nature.” The Kākāpō Recovery Programme has been supported since 2016 by National Partner Meridian Energy through both financial and in-kind support, including infrastructure development, engineering expertise, and volunteer efforts. During breeding seasons, Meridian's support in maintaining generators and power systems on the remote breeding islands is vital to support the seasonal influx of people and power critical equipment like chick incubators. The first chicks are expected to start hatching from mid-February.

➤ **Pouri Hut** in Whanganui National Park has been **destroyed by a fire**, prompting a warning to visitors to bring their own shelter and water on 11 December a fire broke out in the 12-bunk hut which provides a critical link on the Matemateāonga Track. The fire razed the hut completely. No-one was in the hut at the time, and the fire did not extend to the surrounding forest. Fire and Emergency

New Zealand investigators were unable to determine a cause, but have ruled out the wood burner, gas bottle and cooker. Visitors who had left the hut in the morning saw no signs of fire. The cause of the fire isn't known but with the dry conditions we're experiencing, it's a reminder to all of us to be careful storing fuel, disposing of ashes, and using fire.

This is also a perfect time to check any charging equipment, batteries and power banks you travel with to ensure they are in good, safe condition. FENZ cautions damaged or incorrectly used batteries can pose a fire risk both at home and when travelling.

DoC staff say Pouri Hut, built in the 1970s, was critical for biodiversity work in Whanganui National Park and its loss will be felt. "We'll be working with partners in the new year to see how we can replace this. We're a bit gutted to be honest, especially after the work Backcountry Trust has put in to support us with this hut. Backcountry Trust Manager Rob Brown says he's always disappointed to see this sort of thing happen. "The Backcountry Trust, along with other groups like the Greater Wellington Backcountry Network, have put a lot of time and effort into the Matemateāonga Track in the last few years, and I really feel for the DoC team as well – we've all been quite invested in this special part of Whanganui National Park," says Rob. Hopefully we'll find a way forward in the new year, we're always ready to play our part for ensuring these places are maintained for future generations." Any visitors planning on naturing in the area should bring their own shelter and water, as these are not currently available at Pouri Hut.

➤ Recent analysis of long-term monitoring shows low possum numbers in a South Westland valley are leading to more **native mistletoe**. This summer,



intrepid visitors naturing in the remote Hope River valley could see scarlet, red and yellow mistletoe. As well as being “Christmassy”, New Zealand’s mistletoes provide nectar for forest birds and geckos. They are semi-parasitic plants, living on host trees which provide them with nutrients, that also photosynthesise some of their own food. Wayne Costello, DoC South Westland Operations Manager says, NZ mistletoes flower between December and January but are under threat from possums. It is a highly preferred food for possums – often considered the “ice cream” plant for this introduced species. In the Hope valley, mistletoe has been monitored since 2006. The results show that since this time, the population has increased by 2.34% per year – an overall 57 per cent increase over the 19 years monitoring has been underway. “The results of monitoring suggest that management of possums in the valley with aerial 1080 has been successful in maintaining healthy populations of possum-sensitive tree species. Mistletoe is an indicator species, which means that if it’s doing well, other species in the forest are also likely in good health. It’s awesome to see predator control is paying off in the long term – the results give us confidence we are making a difference. It’s also heartwarming to know that this plant, which plays an important role in a healthy ecosystem, is on the rise in this valley and people who go there can enjoy its beauty in the forest.”

Mistletoes were once widespread in New Zealand beech forests. However, due to possum browse, they are now absent from many forests. Possums arrived late in South Westland compared to the rest of New Zealand, which is why in the 1990’s, when pest control using 1080 began, there was still a population of mistletoe to build on.

*(Editors note: have you seen the mistletoe flowering around Whakapapa village in January? Wander around the trees behind the Chateau or along track from the Campground beside the Whakapapa stream. to the Bruce road).*

➤ Touted as the longest in New Zealand, the **new swing bridge** being built in **Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park** has been giving everyone a bit of a headache. Contractors refer to it as “the beast” for its sheer size but also because of the unseasonal bad weather they have had to battle over the past few months. The bridge will span 189 metres across the Hooker River on the upper section of the popular Hooker Valley Track. It will replace an existing swing bridge which had to be closed in April due to riverbank erosion near the bridge supports. Construction on the new bridge began in August and since then, Mother Nature has thrown everything at the team working on site. The construction supervisor from said that while he’d worked on many challenging bridge builds around the Pacific and in New Zealand, including on the Milford Track, this one takes the cake for stress. “Spring really threw absolutely everything at us, to be honest. We had heavy snow and ridiculously strong winds that blew sheds and equipment down steep banks.

Mentally it was tough for the staff working in such extreme conditions. The weather can change many times a day up here. We have our own weather station, and an average day has winds of between 80 and 150 kmh blowing. “It’s a very special place to work in and sometimes you want to pinch yourself with the view, but there are many times, when the wind gets up and you just pray for calm fine days in a row where we can get the work done without worrying about the elements,” he says. The team have just completed drilling of the main bridge support masts and are now in the process of completing wind-anchor drilling and concrete foundation pours. The work of assembling the bridge cables should have begun by now. The engineer and architect behind the unique bridge design said getting to design New Zealand’s longest span footbridge in one of our most iconic locations was an amazing opportunity. “It’s been designed with state-of-the-art pedestrian vibration and wind dynamics due to the unique location. We wanted a design which was a “light touch” in such a pristine landscape, so that visitors can revel in the experience and thrill of such a large crossing while appreciating the magnitude of the surrounding peaks.” The DoC Aoraki/Mount Cook Operations Manager said “The new swing bridge will become a destination in its own right for people who love getting out natureing. The design is spectacular, and visitors will find crossing it exhilarating because of the length. The construction team are doing an awesome job, as the past few months have been really full on, weatherwise. At this stage, we’re hoping to have the bridge open towards the end of Autumn next year. The weather has put things a little behind schedule, but fingers crossed, it’s settled down, and we can get some calm periods for the construction team,” she says. The Hooker Valley Track is currently open to a viewing platform overlooking Mueller Lake, past the first suspension bridge, while the upper part of the track is closed due to the construction. DoC recently installed security cameras and warned people to stay away from the building site, after some visitors were seen climbing through barrier fences and gates to access the closed part of the track. “We can’t wait to re-open the upper part of the Hooker Track and Hooker Hut and celebrate the opening of the longest swing bridge in New Zealand,” she says.

➤ Conservation Minister Tama Potaka has announced decisions that will provide clarity for approximately 80 % of **stewardship land** assessed on the West Coast of the South Island. Of the 576 reclassification proposals notified, 385 will now proceed. “I have decided that more than 190,000 ha of stewardship land will now be protected under the Reserves Act and more than 300,000 ha as specially protected areas under the Conservation Act. I am also referring almost 4,300 ha of land be added to National Parks and a further 3,300 ha be considered for disposal. Reclassifying stewardship land has been a long time coming with this being the most significant reclassification since DoC’s inception in 1987. The vast majority of areas will finally have the accurate classification as they deserve,

reflecting their conservation and cultural values. Existing rights on stewardship land – such as concessions for tourism activities, mining, and grazing licences, for example – can continue. Reclassifying this land will deliver more certainty on land use options for our tourism, farming, mining and hunting sectors. New concessions will be easier to obtain.

Access for the gathering of pounamu under the Ngāi Tahu (Pounamu Vesting) Act will also be unaffected. Key changes include:

- 6 proposals being referred to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
- 63 proposals for disposal investigations, covering up to 3,352 ha of land
- 151 proposals for protection under the Reserves Act covering 192,973 ha of land, including historic and scenic reserves
- 157 proposals for protection under the Conservation Act, including increased clarity through classification as conservation parks, and additional protections for ecological areas

(NZCA) to consider the suitability of adding 4298 ha of land to existing national parks. 191 proposals (130,975 ha) won't be progressed and will remain held as stewardship land. The new classifications will provide certainty and clarity for those operating on these areas. I want to recognise the incredible work carried out by the National Panel and Ngāi Tahu Mana Whenua Panel to reach this point, and all the time and effort put in by submitters. "I am particularly excited about the creation of the 181,000 ha Tarahanga e Toru Historic Reserve, which recognises the significance of the area for Poutini Ngāi Tahu, alongside protecting the extensive natural and recreational values. The reserve does not result in a change in ownership, decision making, or joint management and public access remains the same. Six stewardship areas will be referred to the NZCA to consider as proposed national park additions ensuring this land is protected for future generations. This includes land associated with the Cave Creek and Pike River disasters, which are of particular interest to the affected families and the local community, and land previously identified for addition in National Park Management Plans. This process is the culmination of four years of work. I am proud we have reached this point, recognising the many complexities in the process. It was important we got this right," Mr Potaka says. "I will seek DoC advice before deciding on the future for the reclassification work programme."

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### *FMC News*

FMC opposes the Winstone Pulp International Limited resource consent application to enable the discharge of treated pulp mill wastewater, stormwater and a foam inhibitor to the Whangaehu River

Our reasons are outlined below:

**1. The river is of significant recreational value for whitewater paddlers.**

- The Whangaehu river is a well-known section of Grade 3 whitewater which is frequented by paddlers. It would be considered regionally significant in terms of recreational whitewater use. It features in multiple guidebooks, and is also featured on Whitewater New Zealand’s online River Guide1 and on Packrafting Trips NZ2.
- Whitewater paddling will often result in participants being immersed in the river, including their head going underwater. “Swims” or “rolls” generally happen with little notice, so it is not unusual for a paddler to consume river water when this happens.
- The “put in” for paddlers is approximately 10km downstream from the discharge point. There are no significant tributaries between the discharge point and the put-in point.
- We conclude that paddlers may be subject to increased health risks from the discharge. Furthermore, there is a significant “ick” factor in the knowledge that people would be recreating in waste discharge.

## 2. The unique nature of the river

The Whangaehu river flows from the crater lake on Mount Ruapehu. It is the only river in New Zealand that flows from a volcanic lake all the way to the ocean and this makes it a unique and coveted river for paddlers.

## 3. Environmental concerns

The Whangaehu river ecological systems are already under pressure from adjoining land use and runoff. We have significant concerns around the impact the approval of this consent would have on further degradation of the river and its ecological systems.

4. We understand that **Ngati Rangi have opposed the consent**. It is not our place to comment on matters relating to the cultural significance of the river, but we support their submission.



“Hi” - 2021 photo comp entry

by John McArthur



Podium star – 2021 Photo competition entry

by Amanda Collins



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