



THE WAIKATO TRAMPER

Official Bulletin of

WAIKATO TRAMPING CLUB (INC)

PO Box 685, Hamilton 3240 • www.wtc.org.nz

September 2026



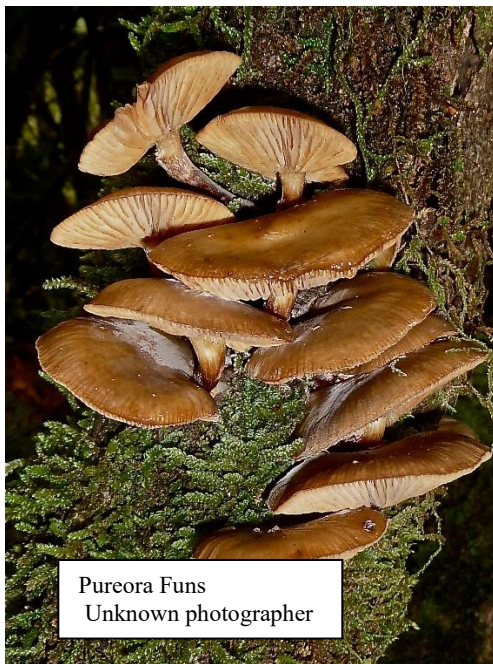
Edelweiss Photo by John Wilson

WAIKATO HUT

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Official Bulletin of
WAIKATO TRAMPING CLUB
P. O. Box 685, Hamilton 3240 • www.wtc.org.nz

Free to members

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

Bulletin No. 889

September 2026

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Secretary: Dorothy Cawdron 027 7424222
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Members: Judith Bogle (VP Tramp) Ashley Hoskin (VP Ski)
Members: Tramp: Allan Wickens Selwyn June Peter Ayson Mike Peck
Members: Ski: Ashley Hoskin

Tramping Subcommittee

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Secretary: Dorothy Cawdron 027 7424222
Club Captain: Mike Peck 021 369256
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Allan Wickens 027 9509546
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Editor & Club Librarian: Dianne June djune@xtra.co.nz 07 8433066

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

## Club Night: Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June

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

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

Our guest speaker will be Assoc. Professor Chris Lusk. We walk through the forest often but don't stop to look at the trees very often do we? Chris is a lecturer in forest ecology at Waikato University so he'll teach us some things we didn't know about the podocarps – you know – rimu, matai, miro, kahikatea and totara.

**Trip planning meeting:** Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September, at 7pm. Venue of the Hawk club rooms in Grantham Street is to be confirmed by the club captain. Come along with your suggestions of where we should go for the first half of 2027. All ideas and club members are welcome.

## ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

|       |               |         |                             |                      |
|-------|---------------|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 3258  | 11-13 Sept    | E/M-M/F | Okahukura baiting           | Selwyn & Dianne June |
| 3259A | 18-20 Sept    | M/F     | Ruapehu Summit              | Mike Harris          |
| 3259B | 19/20 Sept    | E/M     | Miranda birds & bikes       | Maddie Fiddes        |
|       | 23 Sept       |         | Trip Planning               | Mike Peck            |
| 3260  | 28 Sept       | E/M     | Taupiri Scientific reserve  | Selwyn June          |
| 3261  | 3 / 4 Oct     | M       | Te Rereatukahia Hut         | John McArthur        |
| 3262  | 9-11 Oct      | E/M-M/F | Okahukura baiting           | Selwyn & Dianne June |
|       | 7 October     |         | CLUB NIGHT                  | David Totman         |
| 3263  | 18 Oct        |         | Where shall we go?          | Club captain         |
| 3264  | 23-26 Oct     | M/F     | Te Tatau Pounamu wilderness | Les Warren           |
| 3265  | 30 Oct- 1 Nov | M/F     | Kaimanawa ranges            | Miles Rowe           |
|       | 4 Nov         |         | CLUB NIGHT                  | David Totman         |

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. PLB is recommended but the club does have some for members' use

**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 conditions. PLB is recommended but the club does have some for members' use that you can pick up from Bivouac outdoor store.

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## Trip Descriptions

### Trip 3258

### Okahukura baiting

11-13 Sept

Come walk with us in the most beautiful native forest of our region and help look after it at the same time. The Pirongia Restoration Society manages a pest control operation in the Okahukura Valley of North Pureora forest, primarily to protect a growing kokako population – but with great side effects for the other flora and fauna. Kiwi have been snapped on camera in the general area too so a night-time walk around the Waipapa loop track should be on your agenda also. The Society covers the cost of the accommodation which has 5 bunkrooms, oodles of space for campervans, caravans and tents, a large dining room, well-appointed kitchen, shared shower facilities with hot & cold water, a drying room, and proper toilets. For the lodge you need to bring a sleeping bag & pillow, toilet gear, torch for that night-time walk, water bottle, all the food you wish to eat but tea, coffee, milk and sugar will be supplied. For the field work you will need a weekend pack, parka, sturdy boots, and optional gardening gloves. A small pair of pliers can be useful when working at the bait stations. Pack liners, Hi-vis vests, first aid kits, maps, and a PLB/team will be supplied, along with the bait you will be carrying. We meet on Friday evening at the Pureora Lions Lodge in time for the safety briefing at 7.45pm when you will be advised which lines you are to visit, and who your teammate will

be. Newcomers are matched up with someone who has done this work before so no need to be scared. A bag of bait is placed in each bait station along your designated lines. Most teams get 2 lines to do on Saturday and if you finish these early you may be asked to do more if you think you could manage this. Finish time is set at 3.30-4pm by which time you should either be back at the base (which is 40 minutes' drive away from the accommodation) or at least on the roads leading to the base. The 'carrot' to get you there will be fruit juice, fruit, sweets, and home baking on offer - if you can contribute to this feast, please do. Whatever lines we don't get to on Saturday will be visited on Sunday morning. The more people we have present on Saturday means the less likely we are to need to return to the field on Sunday. The weekends' activity is weather dependent of course but to date we have not. Please be good so the weather gods are kind to us too. The same process will take place over the weekend of October 9-11<sup>th</sup> but your pack will be lighter

**Leader:** Dianne & Selwyn June      **Ph:** 0274978151      **Grade:** E/M – M

**Email:** [djune@xtra.co.nz](mailto:djune@xtra.co.nz)      **Ph:** 07 8433066

**Transport:** private vehicles with carpooling where possible.

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**Trip 3259A**      **Ruapehu Summit**      **18-20 Sept**

We will depart by 5:30pm Friday evening from the usual Waikato University departure point. When registering for the trip please indicate in the comments part your experience with Alpine Tramping - Have you been on a Snowcraft Course? Need to have completed snowcraft training (WTC or equivalent) and be confident using crampons and ice axe. Depending on numbers, experience and conditions, we may split into two groups near the Summit Plateau. Those with suitable stiff boots may have the opportunity to climb one or two Ruapehu peaks. This trip going ahead is highly weather-dependent.

**Leader:** Mike Harris      **Ph:** 022 0500499      **Grade:** M/F

**Email:** [mike@bvisual.co.nz](mailto:mike@bvisual.co.nz)

**Costs:** tba, but will include transport & hut fees. Saturday dinner yet to be decided, but probably self-catered.

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**Trip 3259B**      **Miranda bird watching & bikes**      **19/20 Sept**

This weekend is focussing on getting to know more about wetlands and shorebirds especially the very interesting migration of the Godwits! We are planning to leave early Saturday morning and, depending on tides, visit the bird sanctuary either Saturday or Sunday. You will have an opportunity to bike to Kaiaua for fish and chips or Thames for a visit to the historical town! If time allows, we may be able to do a walk or visit Ngatea Water gardens. Situated within a Ramsar Wetland of International Significance, an area that supports thousands of SHOREBIRDS, and the best place to see them in Aotearoa. Watch from our bird hides as shorebirds swirl in flocks over the beautiful coast and visit the Centre to learn more about their fascinating world. This is a hidden and peaceful gem for birders, locals and international guests. The best bird-watching is 2 hours either side

of high tide and you can find this information and more about the guided tours, accommodation, book shop on the website. Discover more about the incredible Arctic migrants like kuaka bar-tailed godwits and red knots, and our endemic Wrybill. Guided tours up to 10 people for 90min – \$50/person

#### Highlights

- Use a telescope to see thousands of shorebirds in their natural habitat
- Explore an internationally significant wetland
- Learn about the incredible migration of the kuaka (Godwits)
- Support an organisation committed to conservation

Accommodation – available at the shorebird centre 2 self-contained units – 4max and 6max persons. Bunk rooms – 6 bunks

#### Possible options for walks

Moanataiari stream track

Moanataiari Link Track - start of the track begins at the end of the Moanataiari Creek road, Thames. 1 km to the lookout or 1.5 km to Waiotahi Track. The track leads to an awesome lookout with views of Thames

Rocky's Walk is a well-marked 5.5km loop track - starts from Dickson Holiday Park in Tararu. Prepare for steep parts, stream crossings, muddy sections, and challenging technical points. It can be a loop walk, plus there are some good swimming holes located next to the road, making it worthwhile. It is really important to let me now as soon as possible regarding accommodation – to enable a group booking at shore bird centre. Another option is to stay at Miranda Hot Pools Holiday Park and enjoy a soak!

**Leader:** Maddie Fiddes

**Ph:** 021 2512772

**Grade:** E/M

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

**Transport:** tba      **Accommodation:** Miranda bunks: \$35/person; Holiday Park: tba

**Guided tour:** Guided tours up to 10 people for 90min – \$50/person

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#### **Trip 3260**

#### **Taupiri Scientific reserve**

**27 Sept**

This reserve is located beside the SH 1 Huntly Bypass as it heads through the hills north of Taupiri. It extends from the stop-off parking area to the east of the highway. Once owned by Auckland University for research purposes, it is now public conservation land. Its scientific values are unknown but there are patches of kauri and tanekaha. DoC have eliminated all the goats so the bush should be in a regeneration phase.

We will enter the reserve from the end of Old Road and make our way, using modern and old navigation aids, through the forest along ridges to the high point (231m a.s.l.) and then back again in a loop towards the highway and across a valley to the start point. An off-track experience with a few steep sections.

**Leader:** Selwyn June

**Ph:** 027 4978151

**Grade:** M

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

**Transport:** Senior Member \$30-35

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

**Trip 3261****Te Rereatukahia Hut****3 / 4 Oct**

The plan is to climb up to the hut from the Wairakau road car park on Saturday morning, claim our bunks then explore the track heading north. We should get past Baldy and may get past Tangitu before turning back to the hut. We will judge turnaround time on our progress and daylight hours available. Sunday we will head south along the North - South track and may get as far as the Motutapere hut before turning back and down the Tuahu track to our vehicle. This can be considered an overnighiter training event if you haven't done an overnight in a hut before. The hut needs to be booked so I will close bookings as I see the hut booking system fill up. Please book early if you are interested.

**Leader:** John McArthur**Ph:** 021 2889641**Grade:** M**Email:** [mcArthur@outlook.co.nz](mailto:mcArthur@outlook.co.nz)**Transport:** Senior Member \$ \$30-35

Senior non-member: Senior rate +\$10

**Trip 3262****Okahukura baiting****9-11 Oct**

Having given the rats in the Okahukura valley of North Pureora forest a meal or 2 in September, it is time to give them some more tasty treats in case their buffet has run out of stock. We really would love to absolutely eliminate all the rats in the valley. We will follow the same procedure as the September visit but this time your pack will be much lighter. Newcomers, experienced hands, and young adults are most welcome for a great walk in a beautiful forest and a chance to hear the glorious haunting call of the kokako, along with the karearea, tomtit, kakariki and whiteheads.

**Leader:** Dianne & Selwyn June**Ph:** 0274978151**Grade:** E/M - M**Email:** [djune@xtra.co.nz](mailto:djune@xtra.co.nz)**Ph:** 07 8433066**Transport:** Private transport with carpooling where possible**Trip 3263****Kauaeranga valley exploration****11 Oct**

This is a weekend of exploration. There are many tracks up the Kauaeranga valley we do not explore normally, and these are the ones we will be doing. These can include going to Mount Rowe, Moss Creek campsite, Moutepere trip, easier options Tarawea falls, and some of the lookouts. Also, there is the Goat track loop which has been suggested. Tracks walked will depend on weather, group, and preferences. The Kauaeranga valley is like walking into Jurassic park and has some great bush and views from various points. The plan is to stay at one of the Kauaeranga valley cottages for the weekend. There is a nature walk around here if that is your preference. Therefore, I need numbers quickly to know whether to book the cottage. Tramping will be over 3 days- Friday- Sunday, so you can choose if you want to do 3-2-1 days.

**Leader:** Judith Bogle**Ph:** 027 3810283**Grade:** E-M**Email:** [judith.bogle@outlook.com](mailto:judith.bogle@outlook.com)**Transport:** tba**Trip 3264****Te Tatau Pounamu wilderness area****23-25 Oct**

This trip is mainly off-track in the Te Tatau-Pounamu Wilderness Area of the

Tongariro National Park. Not many people venture into this area but I have read several trip reports and seen some videos since. I have several options on a route, which probably will be a loop to make transport logistics easy. The majority of the area is exposed to the elements. Once in the Wilderness area, there are no facilities and we will be camping. We most likely will depart Hamilton late-afternoon on the Friday. Once I have finalised my route and relevant details, I will update the website and bulletin.

**Leader:** Les Warren

**Ph:** 027 8644937

**Grade:** M/F

**Email:** [warrenlb20172025@outlook.com](mailto:warrenlb20172025@outlook.com)

**Transport:** tba

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### **Trip 3265**

### **Kaimanawa Ranges**

**30/31 Oct**

We will leave Hamilton on Friday night and likely camp at either the Urchin or Waikoko campsites. Saturday morning will be an early departure from the road end, with a car at either end or 1 car left at the end, and a 3km hike to the track start. The track climbs steadily through beech forest to the treeline, then follows a poled route along the Umukarikari range, with spectacular views across the Kaimanawa Forest Park, Lake Taupo, and the volcanoes. The route passes Sharp Cone (1481) and the Umukarikari summit (1561m) along an open ridge, before dropping into the Waipakihi valley. The track crosses the Waipakihi river (unbridged), followed by a short track up to the Waipakihi hut (12 buns). The hut is popular but camping is available nearby. The walk will take 6-8 hours.

On Sunday, we may return the same way to Umukarikari summit then take the long open ridgeline on the left leading to the Urchin Trig, or follow the Waipakihi river, if conditions allow, for approximately 10km to find the track that climbs steeply through the bush to the ridgeline and onto Urchin Trig. From here the track descends steeply through the bush to the road end. This could be a long day – 8-10 hours - plus the drive home.

**Leader:** Mike Rowe

**Ph:** 027 2762532

**Grade:** M/F

**Email:** [miles.rowe@gmail.com](mailto:miles.rowe@gmail.com)

**Transport:** tba

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### **Trip 3266**

### **Kaitarakihi Summit**

**8 Nov**

A challenging day hike to Kaitarakihi summit in the Coromandel ranges. The track starts from SH25A Kopu-Hikuai road. We then follow an undulating track which crosses rugged terrain with the track ending with a steep 150m climb assisted by chains to Kaitarakihi summit (852m). The return trip is approximately 5-6 hours depending on the stops. It can be very slippery after rain, so sturdy footwear is important. For those not comfortable with the final climb, there is a suitable place nearby. The trip will go ahead only when reasonably fine conditions precede the day.

**Leader:** Mike Peck

**Ph:** 022 0500499

**Grade:** M/F

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

**Transport cost:** tba

## *Mid-week Walks & Tramps*

We have a walk or tramp on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month. The activities have proven to be as varied as the group is and the communication is via the Mid-week W & Ts Group page on WhatsApp. If you would like to be part of this communication, please download WhatsApp on your phone and text your request to Marion on 021 442 452.

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## *Editorial*

There is a superb range of interesting trips on the upcoming programme that I would really love to take part in but due to other commitments and my own physical ability my participation will be very limited. However, the trip planning meeting later this month will provide a chance to add some more ideas for early next year. It is always an interesting get together and all ideas are listened to. Top marks to those stepping up as leaders – without you these destinations would not be possible.

And I will be following up on trip reports in the coming month as we don't have many to read this month. In my opinion, one of the best parts of your monthly bulletin is reading about the recent trips. But we need you to write them up and send them in. If you offered, were asked, or see the need for a report, please do attend it promptly while your memory of those amusing incidents is still fresh.

I would also like to thank in advance those who will be joining us in Okahukura this month and again in October. The forest is looking particularly good and is a great place to wander along enjoying listening to the wide variety of birds, and seeing a wide variety of plants and insects.

Dianne

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## *Presidential blog*

Hi everyone. Further to my message last month about Spam emails that appear to come from me, please be extra vigilant as more people have received them in the last few weeks.

Here is an example of what the email might look like:

*From Rupert Craggs,*

*[presidentexecutive291@gmail.com](mailto:presidentexecutive291@gmail.com)*

*to [dorothycawdron@gmail.com](mailto:dorothycawdron@gmail.com) 4 Sep 2026 at 7:24am*

*Dorothy, kindly spare me some minutes. There's something I need you to look into. I'll be in meetings, so please send me an email instead of calling. Please do not reply and report as SPAM, thanks Rupert.*

Your help in preventing these SPAMS being circulated within our membership would be appreciated.

Rupert

# Waikato Hut

The 2026 winter season is underway at Whakapapa. We have seen wet weather take away some of the lower snow. The gondola run is still riding well and the upper mountain T-bars in the valley and Knoll have been good, as long as you avoid the ice. The upper mountain looks great, just waiting on far west. The view here is still amazing.

Waikato Ski Club members are well positioned to take advantage of on-mountain accommodation, offering convenient access, a relaxed lodge environment, and excellent value for families and groups. Members are encouraged to book early, particularly for school holidays and key event weekends.

A full calendar of activity is planned across the Maunga, including, mid-winter competitions such as the Rangatira race and Ngauruhoe trophy race, Rail Jam and spring highlights like the Adaptive Festival and Pond Skim. These events provide good opportunities to plan lodge stays, whether for participation or simply enjoying the atmosphere. Whakapapa continues to offer a well-rounded ski experience, with extensive terrain, strong beginner facilities, and increasing focus on family-friendly and first-time snow experiences.

The seasonal forecast indicates a transition toward El Niño conditions, with a higher likelihood of colder south-westerly weather patterns through August. This suggests improving snow conditions in the core winter period, making mid-season the best opportunity for consistent skiing. Overall, the combination of a full events programme, improving seasonal outlook, and the unique on-mountain lodge experience positions 2026 as an excellent year.

**Hut bookings** can be made using the sirvoy booking system <https://b9c5011ab7bb99eb.sirvoy.me/>

All Club members can use the club code, **SBENDS26**, which is valid for the Winter 2026.

The winter hut nightly rates until October 30<sup>th</sup> are as follows: Adult \$40 and Child \$25. Non-members Adult \$60 Child \$35.

The summer rates will commence after this time: Adult \$30 and Child \$20. Non-members Adult \$35 Child \$25. Valid the rest of the year

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## Trip Reports

**Trip 3255**

**Waiorongomai to Te Aroha Trig**

**22 Aug**

Three of us were dropped off at Waiorongomai road end carpark while our driver carried on to Te Aroha Domain. We started out on the High Pack Track (closely follows the old Piako County Tramway) with a steady incline, initially some 'dry mud' areas, a brief sun shower while still under the bushline, otherwise fine weather. Passing a waterfall and tunnel then on to Te Aroha Link track leading to Waipapa

track arriving at Te Aroha Trig where we met our driver. Photo call at the trig before lunch in a sheltered spot away from the cold wind. We then made our way down Te Aroha track to the domain. This was a medium grade tramp about 6 hours long. Participants were Lynley, Lynette, Judith, Jocelyn. Thanks to Judith (driver) for team leader support. Jocelyn (leader & scribe)

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## From the committee table:

No **new members or resignations** this month.

**Membership:** The club has 198 tramping members.

**From the club captain:** If you are **picking up a club PLB** from Bivouac please ensure the staff are aware that you are a club member as they get the device from a different box to those the business hires out to the general public – who have to pay.

**From the bulletin distributor:** **FMC Concession cards** will be available at club nights, along with the latest issue of Backcountry magazine. Alternatively, if you receive a Bulletin by mail, you should get a card in the next issue; or contact us via [waikatotrampingclub@gmail.com](mailto:waikatotrampingclub@gmail.com) to arrange a pickup.

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## Snippets



The club trailer is available for hire to club members for a reasonable rate. It is kept at a location very handy to Hamilton city. Please contact Allan Wickens for more details.

Ph; 027 9509546 or email:

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

➤ Club member Les Warren has created a **YouTube channel** - Wilderness Hiking. Currently, the best way to view the videos is by the following search: Google search "Wilderness Hiking" and the channel address will show near the top of the page. Click on YouTube site, In the top "search box" type in "Back Valley Hut and Out", then look for this video with a "W in a purple circle, then click on this "W in a circle" which will take you to my Channel and showing five videos. Any nice feedback is welcome. Thanks, Les Warren.

➤ The Waikato Tramping Club's annual **photo competition** showcases members' photographic talents, capturing the beauty and spirit of tramping in New Zealand and beyond. The event highlights a diverse range of images that tell stories

of nature, adventure, and camaraderie. Each photo has a story and a memory behind it. Thanks to everyone who shared those memories with us.

This year our judges, Nicola and Annemarie, assessed 91 images from almost 20 keen trampers. The winners of each category (apart from Club Character and International) will go into the Federated Mountains Club competition.

| <b>Category</b>                        | <b>Place</b>      | <b>Winning image</b>                                | <b>Photographer</b> |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Above bushline -<br>no human element   | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Lunch at Lake Crucible                              | David Totman        |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Camping at its finest                               | Alicia Carthew      |
|                                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup>   | Start of the day                                    | Kat Rowe            |
|                                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Juvenile Keas near Dart R.                          | Peter Roberts       |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Reflections of ice, Lake Crucible                   | David Totman        |
| Below bushline –<br>with human element | 3 <sup>rd</sup>   | Sunset                                              | Kat Rowe            |
|                                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Inside of a hut                                     | Allan Wickens       |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Path runs through it, Ada R valley                  | David Totman        |
|                                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> = | If the shoe fits                                    | Jacqui Dick         |
| Below bushline – no<br>human element   |                   | Bike packing with Mike Peck                         | Kat Rowe            |
|                                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Untitled                                            | Kathy Tao           |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Elephant rock                                       | Jacqui Dick         |
|                                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup>   | Rushing away                                        | John Wilson         |
| Historic                               | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Waiorongomai Hut 1979                               | John Wilson         |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Central Hut                                         | Jean Wilson         |
|                                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup>   | Waterfall Face - South Branch<br>Wilkin late 1979   | Russell Lamb        |
| Native flora &<br>fauna                | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Edelweiss                                           | John Wilson         |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Why me                                              | Mike Peck           |
|                                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> = | Butterfly                                           | Kat Rowe            |
| Long exposure<br>International         |                   | Morning light in the Ruahines                       | Peter Roberts       |
|                                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Untitled                                            | Stephen Phillips    |
|                                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Waiting for dawn, Poon Hill                         | David Totman        |
|                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | Light & water beam me down,<br>Bhudi Gandaki valley | David Totman        |
| Club Character                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup>   | Cable car, France                                   | Kat Rowe            |
|                                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>   | Cheers                                              | Jacqui Dick         |



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

- New funding for **Whangamarino wetland & Mahoenui giant weta** Conservation Minister Tama Potaka has announced funding to protect the Whangamarino wetland, and further work to maximise breeding opportunities for the Māhoenui giant wētā at Otorohanga Kiwi House. \$2 million will be committed over 2 years to kickstart work on the Whangamarino Action Plan and help restore the habitat as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site). Whangamarino is under significant pressure due to a history of drainage and frequent flood events. Working with Iwi and stakeholders, the aim is to improve

water level management for biodiversity conservation and improved water quality, and to recognising the role of the wetland in natural flood management.

\$75,000 from the IVL will be granted to the Māhoenui giant wētā captive breeding work at Otorohanga Kiwi House, which is carried in partnership with Te Whare o Mōkau ki Runga (Ngāti Maniapoto). Otorohanga Kiwi House has been doing fantastic work to breed giant wētā for release. The programme, which is delivered in partnership with Te Whare o Mōkau ki Runga, has successfully bred over 300 Māhoenui giant wētā in captivity since 2021, helping secure the future of one of New Zealand's most threatened invertebrate species.

► The full **Tongariro Northern Circuit** will operate as a loop this summer, but setbacks in construction of the new Oturere Hut have delayed the hut's opening until mid-December. Progress has been made in repairing structural damage on **Mangatepopo Track**, which was impacted by fires in late 2025, and the track is on course for a summer reopening. Mangatepopo Track is a critical link between Whakapapa Village and Mangatepopo Hut, and without it the Tongariro Northern Circuit hasn't been a circuit. Although progress has been made at the track, poor weather has prevented contractors flying materials in to **Oturere Hut**, delaying construction on the much-anticipated new hut. The hut and the campsite will now open for bookings from 18 December 2026. Visitors with affected bookings will be emailed directly next week by DoC and given the opportunity to change their booking or receive a full refund. It is disappointing for those who had booked to stay in the brand-new hut, but unfortunately it has been unavoidable this time.

➤ A **full closure of Wairere Falls Track, carpark and toilets** will allow completion of works and reopening in time for summer naturing. The popular track on the edge of Kaimai Mamaku Conservation Park has been partially closed since mid-2025 due to rockfall activity and instability. From 7 September, the carpark and toilets will also be closed to allow for substantial works to occur safely. DoC says as well as addressing critical safety issues, the programme will replace aging infrastructure and improve the overall experience. "We'll be replacing platforms, a bridge, and generally improving the quality of infrastructure at the site". The rugged geology which forms the spectacular falls is also prone to rockfall and instability which has necessitated the works. It is hoped to have the track open by the end of November.

➤ **Kākāpō population reaches new milestone high of 325 birds.** 90 chicks from the 2026 breeding season were officially added to the population at the beginning of this month, after the youngest surviving chick reached 150 days of age, the milestone at which young kākāpō have fledged and are considered independent enough to join the official tally. There was a 4-year gap between breeding seasons, so it's fantastic to finally see the population increase after all that time. It's also a significant milestone for the species, as the last time the population is thought to have exceeded 300 birds may have been as long as 75 years ago." The

Kākāpō Recovery Programme began in 1995 with a population of just 51 birds, including only 20 females. Since then, the species has been through 13 breeding seasons, with recovery efforts working to overcome challenges associated with low genetic diversity, including infertility and poor hatching success. There is still a long road of recovery ahead, but 90 chicks in a single season is a record. In the early years of recovery, it took 16 years to produce that many chicks." Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu representative on the Kākāpō Recovery Group Tāne Davis says the measure of success isn't just in the numbers. "This season, the programme trialled several approaches aimed at reducing intensive management, such as fewer egg and chick checks through careful monitoring of remote nest technology data, and reducing supplementary feeding," Tāne says. "Our focus is increasingly on determining where intensive intervention is still needed and where we can start to return to more natural levels of kākāpō breeding outcomes." The successful season also highlights the importance of creating more predator-free habitat for the species, and he has his sights set on a predator free Rakiura. "All but one of the founders of the modern population came from Rakiura, so seeing their ancestral home become safe for them to one day return remains a key aspiration." For many of this year's chicks, the next milestone will be receiving a name on the anniversary of their hatch days in February and March next year. However, a small number of 2026 chicks will remain unnamed. The first unnamed kākāpō in modern recovery history will signify the gradual shift towards a more natural future for the species as it continues its recovery journey. Early predictions suggest there may not be such a long wait between breeding seasons, with the next season potentially occurring in 2028. A DoC staff member said "Our modelling indicates there may be only a two-year gap between breeding seasons this time round. So, while we'll take a moment to stop and reflect on this remarkable year, we're already looking ahead to 2028 and preparing for what could come next."

► **Ruahine ungulate controls** were the 'GOAT'. A 4-year funding boost of \$9.7 million, announced by Minister for Conservation Tama Potaka today, will help protect New Zealand's national parks and native ecosystems from wild goats and deer. "This IVL investment means DOC will continue achieving significant conservation gains by reducing wild goat and deer impacts across some of New Zealand's most important conservation landscapes — including Whanganui National Park and Waitōtara Conservation Area in the North Island, and Kahurangi, Nelson Lakes, Westland Te Tai Poutini, and Fiordland National Parks in the South Island," Mr Potaka says. Wild goats heavily browse native plant species, which reduces forest regeneration, weakens ecosystems, and reduces food and habitat for native wildlife. Ruahine Forest Park covers approximately 93,000 hectares and is hugely important for local wildlife, including habitat for kiwi, whio, Powelliphanta snails, and many native forest bird species. Dan Tuohy, Operations Advisor at DoC, says the operation, between October 2025 and June 2026, focused

on maintaining and expanding progress made in previous years, targeting not just goats already within Ruahine Forest Park, but also source populations on adjoining private land buffers. “The ground hunting programme was highly successful, particularly where intensive buffer control has removed source populations on adjoining farmland,” says Dan. Continued control on neighbouring farmland has proven highly effective at suppressing source populations and reducing reinvasion into the park. Across the programme, a surprisingly low kill rate of 1.29 goats per hunter per day, compared to 5 per day last year, indicates goat densities have been substantially across Ruahine. To maintain progress toward a zero-density goat population, the next steps are to include current levels of funding and hunting effort, ensure helicopter survey capability continues, target known hotspot areas after winter and expand control onto additional buffer properties where access can be secured.

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### *.....FMC News.....*

#### ➤ **Oral Submission: Conservation Amendment Bill.**

FMC President Allan Brent flew to Wellington to present an oral submission on the Conservation Amendment Bill this month. We were one of 21 organisations invited to present to the Select Committee, and it was a real privilege to do so. Allan reminded the Select Committee that for New Zealanders, public conservation lands are theirs, and their home. FMC's view is that the Bill should prioritise the conservation and protection of these lands and access to them. Without the changes FMC and others are arguing for, the Bill would prioritise economic development, and its broad and encompassing provisions risk locking ordinary New Zealanders out of public land.

Allan also argued that decision-making powers shouldn't be centralised to the Minister, whose priorities shift between Government cycles. The New Zealand Conservation Authority and conservation boards must retain at least joint approval powers, to ensure everyday Kiwis are represented.

The Committee will report back to Parliament after the election. Because its report might change what conservation land is for, who it is for, and who decides, and because key aspects of the Bill are so unsettled even within the government, we are asking for everyone to have another chance to submit once there is a draft Bill that has genuine government backing.

#### ➤ **National Conservation Policy Statement.**

FMC also lodged its submission on the National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS) this month. The NCPS will be enabled through the Conservation Amendment Bill and guides all national policies related to our public conservation land.

Our submission provided detailed answers to the questions in the NCPS proposal document and presented 16 recommendations to DOC.

It raised issues including the NCPS placing too much emphasis on enabling commercial use of public conservation land, vague and undefined provisions that could allow inappropriate development while lacking clear safeguards for conservation and public access, people undertaking voluntary work requiring commercial concessions, and a potential lack of management around commercial activities that could result in loss of tranquillity and environmental degradation.

We support faster, simpler planning processes, but not at the expense of our wild places and New Zealanders' enjoyment of them.

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Another John Wilson flower



Coral fungus in Okahukura valley Photo by Dianne June

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