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May 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE OTAGO SECTION NZAC



NEW ZEALAND
ALPINE CLUB

Dom Deep in Pow on Japanese Volcanos
Photo: Riley Smith

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Hello all,

Talk about a challenge: how to put together a newsletter about climbing when no climbing has taken place here for the last month.

The lateness of this issue is due to procrastination. I've been working on some other projects that I'm really enjoying, and rustling up content just didn't seem very attractive. We get to things eventually.

Anyways, not much has changed since last month in terms of events and trips and such. We're all waiting for further guidance as to what Level 2 means and when that might come into effect.

In the meantime, this month we've got a story about a ski trip in Japan, Jane Luddeman's perspective of Covid-19 as a cancer patient, and a random story about bears in Canada. It's a mixed bag.

Stay safe and stay healthy!

Alex Weller, Editor

SECTION NEWS AND NOTICES

Level 3 Guidelines

Some of you are getting back to work and enjoying a flat white again, but keep in mind that climbing is still not permitted under Level 3 guidelines. The National Board is trying to get clarification as to what is and is not included under Level 2 guidelines, but regardless, we ask that members please stick to these guidelines and recommendations. Our position as a club as a whole is greatly strengthened by members following public health recommendations.

A Note on Finances

Like everyone right now, the Otago Section is very aware of reduced cash-flow. The Banff Festival is our major source of revenue for the year, and with that being postponed our income has decreased dramatically. The Section Committee has been looking over our financial situation, and we are relatively stable for the moment. We will be downsizing certain expenses for the moment with an aim to keep on essential section services into the future. In the meantime you can help by keeping your membership up to date.

Banff Postponement

As I'm sure you all know by now, the Banff Film Festival in New Zealand has been postponed. There has been some talk about running the tour later this year. The Otago Section has not yet made any steps in this direction: we are waiting to see what happens in the next weeks and months.

Backcountry Hut Passes can be extended

The DOC has released notice that customers who have purchased Backcountry Hut Passes are eligible for extensions on their pass.

Passes will be extended by the length of time that huts remain closed (which could be awhile yet). To access this extension, customers will need to take their pass to a DOC Visitor Centre, where they will be issued with a new pass with an extended expiry date. This will only be possible once the COVID-19 Alert Level has reduced and Visitor Centres have reopened.

UPCOMING EVENTS

None yet, but we're cautiously optimistic.

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a body of water, likely Otago Harbour. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, red, and yellow clouds, with the sun low on the horizon. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the distance, there are silhouettes of hills and mountains. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

*A Lockdown Sunrise over
Otago Harbour
Photo: Alex Weller*

Climbing Volcanoes in Japan

By Riley Smith



Editor's Note: This was written while Riley was still in Japan and before the virus. We can all use some solid pre-virus skiing inspiration! Thanks also to Riley for his great talk over FB live: if you haven't had a chance yet, [check it out](#)

To set the scene a bit - I currently live in a place called Kutchan, which is in the northernmost island of Japan called Hokkaido. I'm here as a ski instructor, and I work based out of Niseko Grand Hirafu Ski Resort. The resort is insane on a powder day (which we usually get once or twice a week), and there is only about an hour in the morning before it is tracked out - so there is lots of draw towards ski touring to get your very own fresh faceshots all day in rural Japan.

I love how no matter what country you are in or who you are with, the best touring or climbing trips are never worked out until the night before. This trip was no different.

The story really begins with a Japanese man that we call "Dodgy Yoshi". I don't actually know if his real name is Yoshi, but he certainly is Dodgy. Mr Yoshi deals

rental cars, but it's the kind of rental cars that reminds you of a drug smuggling operation. You arrange everything over WhatsApp (if he replies), then he drops a van off, unlocked, at some completely random location. You then do your trip, and when done leave the car at an organized spot, unlocked with the cash in the dash.

The objective for this mission was a local classic. There is a volcano beside Kutchan, called Mount Yotei. Yotei is a 1900m cone volcano that looks like it's straight out of someone's science fair experiment... it's perfect. Kutchan sits at roughly 200m above sea level, so it's a long skin!

After acquiring a car from Yoshi, a group consisting of me, Noah, Chess and Dom set off from our flats at 4:15 am, aiming to make the summit before lunch time in order to avoid sun affected snow, and have plenty of time in case we wanted to do a few laps in the trees.

Eventually we made it to as close as the road would take us to the beginning of our route (after being blocked by uncleared roads at least twice!). We began skinning in the dark, but due to the full moon we didn't need torches - it was absolutely magical. Open snowy fields, forests and farm sheds all lit up by soft moonlight, it was so serene!

We eventually got to the trail sign for the summer walk, and continued skinning up an old skin track where we could, as there had been about 10cm of snow overnight covering most of it. The sun rose and the views became even more spectacular of the surrounding mountains, fields and towns waking up down in the valley.

After cramming Onigiris (rice balls) and other exotic snacks bought at the seicomar (convenience store) in us for breakfast at the treeline, we continued up into the exposed open half of the mountain.

The team had made extremely good time, but once out of the trees we noticed the snow change drastically. The snow went from deep japow, to sun and wind effected crud, making skinning difficult as it was hard to compact a flattish surface. Our speed slowed right down, but we kept on going. This is where ski crampons would have been useful, however we stuck as much as we could to the safe angled bowls to remain in the better snow.

The avi risk for the day was low on our aspect, however the day before, a lone snowboarder went missing on the opposite side of the mountain (which was very loaded) and so we were circled by Japanese search helicopters for a while.

As we got higher, the clouds rolled in and wind picked up drastically. The temperature was cold, like frozen eyelash cold. We switched to boot packing around 200 vert from the summit as the skinning was too steep and exposed. This ended up being difficult as the snow was still waist deep when your foot



Some Crazy Views!

broke the first 10 cm layer of ice.

Eventually, around 50 vert from the summit, we made the decision to turn around. The wind was high, clouds thick and progress was too slow to make the summit worth it - plus we had some skiing to do, which was the real reason that we were there!

Here, the real fun began. We traversed into a steep volcanic chute, which was full of wonderful 'dry smoke' powder. One at a time, we got some of the best turns of our lives in the kind of snow that, with every turn, covers you with a curtain of white. It really was the kind of snow you dream of.

We exited the bottom of the chute with huge grins, and realized that we had ended up perfectly where we needed to be, about 500m above the treeline, where the snow was still semi good! The slope angle was shallower here, and after checking the snow out thoroughly, we decided it was safe to ski together.

It must have been a funny sight. Four people hurtling down a volcano in rural northern Japan, screaming, laughing and enjoying the snow and each other's company.

When we reached the trees, the snow changed to more deep, dry, smoke. Unreal is all I can say. We reached the bottom of the hill beaming, and skied back down our approach track down to the car.

It would have to be the most unreal experience of my life that I will never forget. New friends in a new country, great snow, great views, and a great adventure. So what next... the convenience store for more snacks and a cold Sapporo Classic!



Looking Back at Our Lines

A Cancer Patient's Perspective in the time of Covid-19

By Jane Lundemann

When the lockdown started, I was relieved.

As a rare cancer patient, the news from friends overseas was worrisome. Though I missed people contact, my husband travels a lot for work so it was nice to have him home.

And to be completely honest, having missed out on so much the past few years - the FOMO is much less when everyone else is in lockdown together. I feel like the lack of "business" in people's lives led to much more opportunities to connect, albeit from a distance.

I am lucky to live in a beautiful Dunedin neighbourhood with access to bush tracks which helped. And as a cancer patient, level 3 doesn't really change all that much for me.

Lockdown has also been confronting because the implications of Covid-19 are challenging. There are so many questions and uncertainties. My long-term prognosis is pretty poor, and in the short-term cancer laboratory closures and

longer term economic consequences threaten to slow what already seems a glacial process to find better treatments.

With a limited life expectancy, I don't know if I'll ever get to climb in Arapiles again. If I'll be able to repeat that memorable snowshoe in Kananaskis (Canada) and visit the ski field overlooking Lake Louise where my husband proposed. Nor if I'll remain 'healthy' enough to travel to the highlands of Scotland and the Fjords in Iceland for the first time.

But if I am able to travel in New Zealand, there is a lot left to do. To finish the great walks left on my bucket list. Go climbing at Paynes Ford and kayaking in Abel Tasman again. Relax at Unwin lodge with my camera and listen to others impressive adventures.

The reality is my bucket list has always been larger than the time allocated to me and our backyard in New Zealand is spectacular. When you're faced with the worst thing imaginable you have to find the light where you can.

May 8th is World Ovarian Cancer Day. You can visit my blog janehascancer.com to learn more.

And lastly, thank you for making sacrifices to keep people like me safe.

Jane Ludemann



*Sunrise at Lake Hope
Photo: Ryan Thomas*

NOTES FROM OUR MEMBERS



We're (Almost) Out !!

By Mark Sedon

The NZ Mountain Film & Book Festival hopes you have been surviving in your bubble well over the past four weeks. It's great news that New Zealand has managed to dampen down the virus' spread.

We are still planning for our Festival in Wanaka and Queenstown June 26 to June 28, and also nationally online through a Vimeo platform and our website June 26 to July 5.

We will have the option of three 100 person venues in Wanaka and another two in Queenstown to allow us to comply with current government event guidelines, including having a metre between seats if it's necessary (Lets hope we are in Level 1 by late June!). During the festival, we will also be offering the live talks free through our Facebook page.

Keep an eye on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) for the list of this year's films. Ticket sales, including for the online event, go on sale starting June 1.

The lock down was a good time to start judging our 180 film and 23 book entries, and we are busy choosing the programme to bring to you. Check out [this preview](#) of a film by Wanaka filmmaker Richard Sidey having its World Premier at this year's festival. It's a story about five Central Lakes paragliders going to see if they can fly off Mt Kilimanjaro in Africa.

You can further support the festival, and get complimentary links to watch the online festival, by becoming a Friend or Patron of the festival. Starting at a tax-deductable donation of \$75, you can check out options and benefits [here](#). Our festival is operated by a non-profit charitable trust, and we are incredibly fortunate to receive financial support from a group of loyal patrons, especially in a year like this one.

Competition is fierce this year for the NZ Mountain Book of the Year. This \$1000 award was founded and is supported by Dave Bamford and John Nankervis. The award is only for a book of the very highest quality, and the judges say there are several books at that level.

If you're looking for reading material, seven books have been shortlisted in our 4th Annual Mountain Book Competition.

For the Mountain and Adventure Heritage Award:

[Leading the Way: 100 years of the Tararua Tramping Club](#), by Shaun Barnett and Chris Maclean,

[Exploring the Transantarctic Mountains by dog sledge 1960-62](#), by Peter Otway,

[The Great Unknown: Mountain Journeys in the Southern Alps](#), by Geoff Spearpoint, and

[Everest: Reflections on the Solukhumbu](#), by Lisa Choegyal, with photography by Sujoy Das

For the Mountain and Adventure Narrative Award:

[Living the Best Day Ever](#), by Hendri Coetzee. Published posthumously after Coetzee's African whitewater adventures ended with a fatal encounter with a saltwater crocodile.

[Bewildered](#), by Laura Waters. An account of a life changing walk on the Te Araroa track.

[Fearless: The life of an adventurer, equestrian and endurance rider](#), by Chloe Phillips-Harris. Recounting one of the world's most gruelling horse race – the Mongol Derby, a 1000 kilometre unsupported race across the wilds of Mongolia.

Stay strong, wash your hands and be friendly to people.

Warm Regards,

Mark Sedon

Festival Director

A MOMENT OF LEVITY

I was lamenting to a Canadian friend of mine that I had no idea what I should include in this month's newsletter. Luckily, some of our members have come through with content spectacularly, but in that moment of panic I followed her advice to write down one of my own stories. Since it's been written it seems a shame not to share, so here you are: an ocean away and very much unrelated to New Zealand bush, but hey, we're all for escapism.

The Summer of Bears By Alex Weller

A Bear-y Scary Childhood

I was born and raised in rural British Columbia, Canada, tucked away in a valley between two mountain ranges. I grew up with bears.

The first time I remember seeing a bear was from the deck of our house. My brother and I were playing with a paper airplane in the garage, and when the plane flew out the open door my brother went after it. The next thing I knew I was being rushed inside. Turns out my brother had just come face to face with teddy in the compost pile. I was allowed to watch him from the safety of our elevated deck.

The first time I *actually* encountered a bear was a few years later. We were playing outside this time, maybe fifty metres from the front door, when we looked down the hill and saw teddy in the apple trees. He wasn't bothered with us – he had apples – but I was terrified. Every part of me wanted to sprint to the safety of the house as fast as I could. But of course I couldn't. The first lesson you learn growing up with bears is that you're not allowed to run. So I walked as slowly as I could, fighting adrenaline the whole way.

Not long after we were out camping when a little bear, a yearling cub likely, woke me up in the middle of the night. It was rubbing against the wall of the (ridiculously thin) nylon tent, right above my head. Back and forth, back and forth. I could have poked it. Instead I lay there, frozen, hardly daring to breath, until it went away.

When I turned off the lights in our basement, plunging it into darkness, I would sprint up the stairs as fast as I could. It wasn't the dark that I was scared of so much that I was convinced a black bear might have snuck in from outside and was waiting for that darkness to emerge.

Then Came That Summer

It was the summer of 2011. I had just finished Uni and was living at home and working full time (the morning shift at the local bakery: awesome job). My dog (Jem) and I were keen to take every advantage of my early quitting time, but very quickly a pattern emerged. Every other time I went outside I ran into a bear.

I would start down to the beach, I would be stopped by a bear. I went for a walk, and there was a bear.

One of these first encounters was while we were on an extended walk: the kind that takes a good part of the day and ranges well back into the bush. At the furthest point from home I noted a rather large rock some hundred metres away, only to realize the next second that that rock was moving. I looked closer. It was a grizzly bear.

In an interest to keep Jem from noticing teddy and because, well, I was freaked, I decided to make a beeline for home. Sometimes having a good sense of direction is not a good thing. A strategic retreat on the trail would have been easier, but nope, I chose the direct line, bashing through deadfall trees and swamp for the next couple of hours. For the first forty-five minutes or so I saw bear sign absolutely everywhere.

For Want of Bear-ies

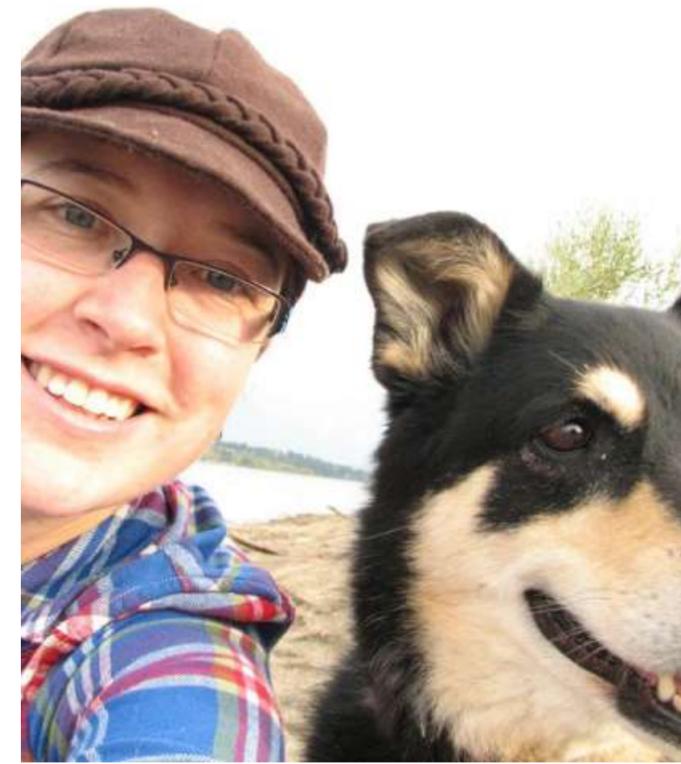
Fast forward to around midsummer. I was keen for a solid day hike, so I planned a traverse from the valley, over a pass, across a mountain, and down the local ski resort. It was a long trip so Jem stayed home.

I took my time going up. There were wild strawberries to snack on, followed by slopes of delicious, tiny, [pinhead-sized huckleberries](#). It shouldn't have come as much surprise then that as I approached the pass I looked up to see a black bear just down the trail. I froze.

I had a very anxious moment of indecision before teddy looked up and saw me. It froze too. We both stood there, staring at each other, wondering what the heck we were supposed to do next. Before I could move the little guy beat me too it. It turned tail and sprinted off into the trees. I stood there in shock, listening as teddy frantically bashed its way through the deadfall down the hill for what seemed like forever. Huh.

Surprisingly this wasn't the most memorable part of that hike. I was almost at the top of the ski hill when I stopped for a water break, taking off my backpack and dropping it to the ground. There was a crack and a hissing noise, and suddenly there was orange liquid shooting out in every direction: all over my backpack and all over me. As the hissing slowed I realised what had happened. My can of bear spray, clipped to the waist belt, had cracked open

My dog (Jem) and myself, during the summer of bears





on a rock as I had dropped my bag, and I was now absolutely covered with it. The rest of the hike was extremely unpleasant. Luckily the spray had missed my eyes, but it was all over my arms, my neck, and the lower part of my face. The longer it stayed the more it itched, and I couldn't seem to wash it off with the little water I had left. The can of bear spray had been old, like, definitely-expired, probably-not-much-good-against-a-bear-anymore old, which made it less potent, but not much less unpleasant.

I had 1,300 vertical metres to descend down the ski-hill, and what is fun on skis is excruciating on foot in the sun covered in capsicum. As I approached the bottom was a group enjoying a drink on the deck of the wee café. They yelled over asking if I had seen a bear. I gritted my teeth and stumbled on.

When I finally got home I jumped in the shower, which was a mistake. It turns out that bear spray is oil based (like oil paint), so water only serves to spread it around. After further tears and a very frantic call to poison control we learned that the only way to get oil off is with oil. So I got an olive oil scrub instead.

If You Can't Beat 'em!

The bear spray incident wasn't the end of the summer, but it was a turning point. A co-worker and I did a road trip one day to Lake Louise in Banff National Park. On the drive we came across a black bear on the side of the road. My co-worker was from overseas, and this was her first bear – she was thrilled. Still, she lamented teddy not being closer. I told her I'd see what I could do.

A week later we went on a hike. On the drive to the trailhead we came across a bear in the middle of the road. He took his time ambling along before eventually wandering off into the bush. She looked at me in awe. I humbly accepted credit where credit is due.

Maybe a week later I was on a quick after-work walk with Jem when we came around a corner and there was teddy again. I really didn't want to scare him, so we turned around and took the long way home, me muttering in frustration.

Towards the end of the summer I found myself sitting up on the hill behind our house, enjoying the view. Down below I spotted a bear wandering along the

road, sampling the Saskatoon berries growing in the ditch. I watched, curious. There was a clanging sound as one of the neighbours drove over the cattle guard just around the corner. Teddy heard it too. It slipped into the bush and waited for the truck to go by, then as the engine sounds faded into the distance he came right back out again and resumed snacking.

By the end of the season I figured that bears and I could get along together just fine, thank you very much. They kept to their business, I kept to mine, and if we both happened to be in the woods, then so be it.

That isn't to say that I abandoned caution to the wind. One of the strangest feelings I've ever had was a year later in the forest at Fontainebleau, France (I was on a backpacking trip, and I wanted to check out the bouldering). I remember stopping in surprise with the realization that as soon as I had entered the trees I was suddenly hyper aware of my surroundings. But this was France: there were no bears, cougars, or moose to worry about. My mind got so twisted around by the contradiction that I didn't know quite what to do.

New Zealand Bound

The week before I came to New Zealand in 2015 we had a family of bears in the apple trees (again). Somehow this made it even more jarring to live in a country with no large predators. A part of me worries that the bush here is making me soft, but then we do a couple thousand-metre days and I realize it's making me tough in a different way.

With no predators to worry about here, within months my bush awareness had shifted from predator awareness to finding the source of the strange bird sounds. I paid little attention to birds before I came here, but I've come to really appreciate them. When I spot a whio or a rifleman or even a kiwi I'm free to be thrilled to pieces, no worry attached. From experience, any similar feelings of awe from almost walking into a mama bear and her cubs are delayed by hours, after the adrenaline dissipates a bit. (From what I saw of those cubs, they were super cute!).

Now if only I had a summer where every time I went outside I had an encounter with a kiwi or a kakapo...

OTHER NOTICES

Tableland: the History behind Mount Arthur Ray Salisbury

Located in Kahurangi National Park, near Nelson, the Mount Arthur range has a long history. This social history has chapters reflecting the diverse land usage of this area, from a goldfield, to grazing lands, to a National Park. It includes historical photos, maps, and interviews with dozens of old-timers. You can sign up on the [book's website](#) to get an early bird discount from the publisher, and be eligible to win a free book.

SECTION CONTACTS

2019-20 Otago Section Committee		
Chair	Ryan Thomas	Ryan.j.thomas1@gmail.com 027 311 5723
Treasurer, Equipment	Keith Moffat	Moffat.k172@gmail.com 027 664 4037
Secretary, Rock climbing	Eve O'Brien	eve.j.obrien@gmail.com 027 642 3211
Trips, Banff Film Festival	Danilo Hegg	danilo_hegg@hotmail.com 027 339 2688
Instruction	Heather Rhodes	heathermayrhodes@gmail.com 027 258 6534
Newsletter	Alex Weller	alexhweller@gmail.com 027 604 1711
Committee members	Jono Squire	jonosquire@icloud.com 021 0326 218
	Alastair Campbell	Alastair.campbell@obhs.school.nz 021 149 6636

Otago Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club
c/o 172 Gladstone Rd, Dalmore, Dunedin 9016
Email: otago.climber@gmail.com
Web: <https://alpineclub.org.nz/region/otago/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/osonzac>
Trip info & booking: www.osonzac.org.nz



Anyone else spending more time
watching birds around their house?
Photo: Alex Weller

DISCOUNT PAGE

Under Level 3 restrictions on shipping goods have been loosened. Kiwi businesses such as these are going to need all the help they can get in the next year or so!

Check the [NZAC Website](#) for a full discount list and details.

Gear/Clothing

Note that most of these discounts are off the regularly priced gear only, and that a lot of gear will have a better discount when it goes on regular sale. Just saying retailers.



Aspiring Safety 10% off

In-store and online, wide variety of climbing gear and snow/ice tools



Bivouac 10% off

This one seems variable – ask at the till and you may get more



Cactus Outdoor 10% off

In-store and online, a range of clothing/gear, made in New Zealand



Climbing Equipment NZ 25% off

Rock climbing and mountaineering gear, free freight orders over \$20



Earth Sea Sky 15% off

Free freight in NZ



Further Faster 15% off

Online or in-store (ChCh)



Gearshop 10% off

Phone orders, online outdoor gear retailer



GoNative 10% off



Wellington based with ready to eat food (not freeze dried) and energy fruit bars



Good Rotating – Up to 10% Bicycle Shop

Bicycles, packrafting, accessories in Wanaka. Sale and rent.



Kai Carrier 25% off

Entire pouch range. Reusable pouches and packaging to make your backcountry trips waste free



Koaro Packrafts \$50 off

Discount off any new packraft, Christchurch Company



Macpac 30%/15% off

30% off Macpac branded gear, 15% off everything else



Monster Merinos 10% off

Kids merino clothing built to last



North Face 15% off

In-store (Qtown and ChCh)



Outfitters 10% off

Extensive range of global outdoor adventure brands



Small Planet 10% off

Gear, clothing and equipment in Queenstown

Other Services



Peak Safety 15% off

Courses and medical supplies



Packrafting Queenstown 10% off

Courses, rentals, and guided trips. Rentals can be couriered anywhere in NZ



Twin Needle Repairs 10% off

Gear repairs including packs, tents, sleeping bags, tents, rainwear clothing

Travel/Experiences



DOC Annual Backcountry Hut 30% off Pass

Show your hut pass and NZAC Card and get 10% off Great Walk fees



Real Journeys 10% off

Cruises in Milford or Doubtful Sounds, TSS Earnslaw



Stewart Island Experience 10% off

Ferry services (we tested this: includes ferry to/from Oban)



Whale Watch Kaikoura 50% off

Whale watching tours between 1st May and 31st October. Makes it reasonably affordable!