

TARANAKI SECTION

 NEW ZEALAND ALPINE CLUB

SPRING 2023
SECTION NEWSLETTER

Photo: Sharkstooth in June (Fletcher Miles)

BANFF FILM FESTIVAL

We had another great turnout this year with a sell out crowd of over 530 people.

There was a great range of films, from the hilarious bridge crack climbers (spending four days climbing upside down along one of the longest bridges in the UK) to a thought provoking film reminding us of the dangers that we face from avalanches whenever we go into the backcountry.

Thanks to all the team who helped out on this great club event which provides us with the money we need to enable us to promote climbing in our section.



Top: Some of our youngest members drawing spot prizes.

Bottom: Full house of 530 guests!

TARANAKI SECTION UPDATE

Welcome to the spring instalment of the NZAC Taranaki Section newsletter.

There has been a lot going on in our climbing and mountaineering focussed section. On April 27 we hosted a screening of Reel Rock 17 at the Event Cinema in New Plymouth. This was a fantastic night which showcased the leading edge of global rock climbing. The films included the story of Seb Bouin projecting and sending DNA (9c/39), as well as a repeat of the bold 'Eternal Flame' trad route in the Karakorum mountain range.

Winter arrived, and with it came the 2023 Banff Mountain Film Festival. As our major fundraiser, this ever popular event was a great success. Learning from previous years, we opted to run the event in a more slick operation. This meant our sell out crowd were treated to a punctual start time, 2 hours of mountain focussed films, and still got home to bed at a reasonable hour. Mark Hall did a great job MC'ing the event, and thank you to all of our volunteers on the night.

As a committee, we are proud of our targeted contributions to the Taranaki climbing and mountaineering scene this year. We recently welcomed Chris Prudden, originally from Taranaki and based in Queenstown, to speak at a club night in conjunction with Taranaki Alpine Club. Chris is a pioneer of the Taranaki mountaineering/guiding scene and we were thrilled to have 80 people in attendance to hear Chris's stories. Recommendations for future guest speakers would be well received.

The NZAC Taranaki Section has also committed to help grow rock climbing in our region. We have some of the best adventure trad climbing in the North Island, however, we have the smallest and oldest climbing gym to train at when the weather is poor. We have committed to donate \$1000 worth of new large and modern climbing holds to the YMCA climbing gym. This will ensure Taranaki rock climbers have access to modern style holds and route setting. Given the countless amount of members (and non members) who use the YMCA gym, we feel this is a worthwhile investment.

TARANAKI ROCK & ICE UPDATE

From a mountaineering perspective, the loud calls for a big winter full of perfect climbing conditions and large snow falls were answered. This resulted in some great days out. The snowfalls started early, and on one particular early May day we were treated to snowline as low as the visitor centre. On this day a record was set for the slowest ascent of the Surrey tussock bank (Tahurangi lodge to the lone snow pole at the start of the Surrey Road route). The time of 45 mins was mainly a result of thigh deep loose snow.

With the progression into winter and onset of colder temperatures, Taranaki Maunga followed traditional protocol and locked up the snowpack into a familiar hard early season surface. With these conditions, the majority of mountain enthusiasts went into hibernation. This resulted in many days being enjoyed with perfect conditions yet no one else around. A certain Taranaki mountaineer was even heard saying “You would have to be young and dumb to venture onto the apparent lack of early season snow coverage”. As long as you are good at staying on your feet, early winter would have to be one of the most rewarding seasons to be out mountaineering on Taranaki. Dave and Fletch had a memorable day dodging ice bombs in Crater Valley to tick a summit, whilst young Lucas Flay (15 years), ticked 4 summits over the month of June via the North Ridge and South Face.

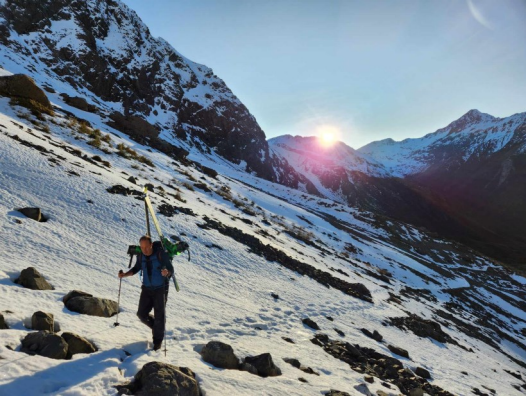
Many of our active members were involved volunteering their time to help instruct on Taranaki Snowcraft courses for TAC, from which great feedback was yielded. In future, it is possible NZAC Taranaki could make use of our skilled members to run instruction courses and further contribute to Taranaki mountaineering - watch this space!

If you read any old NZAC alpine journal Taranaki entry, it is clear to see that getting the rope out for some local technical winter climbing was a common occurrence. It is disappointing to think how infrequently this happens now, especially considering the locally available pitched snow climbing courses are always full. When was the last time the classic *RH*, *LH* or *10 Second Gully* routes on Sharkstooth received traffic? The *Original Route* at the organ pipes received an ascent this season in some primo conditions. On this day, Don Paterson even got the opportunity to remember how to place some ice screws. This route would be appropriate for a SC2 graduate’s hit list.

As the winter season progressed, countless days of perfect weather and equally perfect conditions presented themselves. Some members were seen lapping summits via classic routes such as Surrey Road, whilst other members enjoyed numerous ski days both locally and further abroad. One particular Friday saw at least seven members wag work (or school) to rip up Manganui Skifield in some great conditions.

However, mountaineering on Taranaki Maunga isn’t the only thing our local crew has been up to. Many trips have been made out of the region to hunt out great skiing bouldering and tramping. Harrison Larkin made the trip to Waipari (Froggatt) and sent the classic pocket pulling test piece *Totalling Dad’s Car* (26). The Waitomo Airstrip boulders received numerous trips from members. A notable ascent was Conrad Bolger (13 years) sending his project *Wazzyup* (V8).





These strong ascents from our regions young climbers are great achievements.

Many South Trips have been made recently by our members. Some great climbing days were had at the Castle Hill Basin area. For those who have no previously climbed there, the climbing style (particularly Quantum Field) is known to upset visiting climbers due to its apparent blankness, lack of positive holds, and weird features. Conrad Murray made a quick ascent of *One Move Boulder* (V6) which involved starting on pockets and then throwing a big campus lat move out to some jugs.



Further down the road in Arthur's Pass, Mark Hall teamed up with former local Duncan Kemsley for a day trip up the low peak of Mt Rolleston, and then skied the Otira Slide back to the car.

On a global level, Chris Hayes put his woody training to good use enjoyed an extended climbing/bouldering trip to the Font in France, where he ticked too many boulders to list.

Last but not least, there has been success from our regions competition climbers. Both Conrad and Huxley Bolger came second in their respective divisions of the national indoor bouldering series (NIBS). Taranaki's Taylor Manning also had great success, placing second in the NZ female open bouldering competition. You could argue that currently our competition climbers are at a disadvantage with respect to training facilities. They are commonly up against competitors that have state of the art gyms such as BoulderCo or Uprising at their fingertips, so this makes our regions efforts particularly significant.



Spring is now in full swing and no doubt our members will be hungry to score some final spring mountaineering days before turning their attention to summer climbing.

OLD NZAC JOURNAL COLLECTION

NZAC Life Member John Jordan has some of Roger Manns collection of NZAC Alpine Journals that he is looking to rehome. Please email fletcherkmiles2012@gmail.com if you are interested in taking on this collection.

TARANAKI SECTION 2023 AGM

The NZAC Taranaki Section AGM will be held on Wednesday 25th of October. 7pm at Mike's Brewery. We are looking forward to catching up with our membership, and would also love to see some new faces on the committee. It's the chairperson's shout so come and get your first drink on us!



AGM - 7PM WED 25 OCTOBER

TRIP REPORT: ‘WE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN BOOTS’

Words by Stephen Ritson—recipient of our 2022 South Island Climbing Grant

Back in February myself and Dave decided to stop talking a good climb and just get one organised!!...the South Island here we come!!

We knew about the NZAC “Taranaki” branch climbing grant and so thought we best plan a suitable mission and apply for some funding to help us succeed.

The mission was to do a big alpine rock route, nothing too technically crazy but something well worth getting our teeth into and getting some big exposure or, plan B...whatever we can do wherever (weather dictating!!) keeping an open mind and remaining flexible.

I drafted a letter and submitted this to the committee with our intentions and request for support.

With it being a “rock mission” and not alpine we both decided to go lighter, approach shoes, a decent full rack n rope and armed with coffee and a jet boil proceeded to head south!

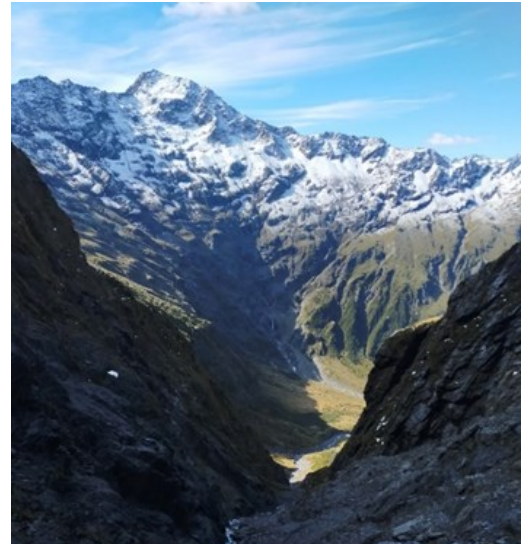
“We should’ve brought boots” we thought as we were knee deep in places in soft snow after a freezing front passed through Gunsight Pass into the South Temple Valley!! A good solid, eye opening lung expanding yomp brought us onto the pass and looking at the route planned, Bruce Peak! 2190 via Butterfly Buttress IV,5. Though, what’s plan B then. Its got snow on ithhhllllll

Dave being the old sweet knowledgeable guy that he is had a plan B and after making camp and demolishing coffee and a feed decided to tame things down due to the cold and attack a similar, but shorter route called Soft Tahrget III,4 with is on an outlier of Steeple Peak.

We knew a front was coming in but knew we had at least one good day up high, therefore rack up and set off on the upward traverse to the start line where Dave led an amazing climb to our new smaller peak. The climbing itself, around the 12 to 14 mark wasn’t too bad but the crumbling rock, cold and rubble bouncing around made it the truly amazing, exposed route we were after!! Well done Dave!! Oh and me for getting the gear out!!

On the summit, accompanied by a Rock Wren and mountain goats (I think they were after the fruit n nut bar?) we sat in awe of the scenery, the snow capped mountains, cold and magnificent views and just us, the exposure, living the dream!...

”See those big clouds coming in, fast and the wind increasing”?, was our topic of conversation. This was the front we knew about, but it seemed to be earlier. A quick descent, big feed and a hasty decision to break camp and get off the mountain was the plan, which, at 2am in the hunting cabin back in the valley was the best call ever as the heavens opened, torrential rain. It would have been an epic up on the mountain!





We then headed off to Cromwell for a well deserved date with a curry and beer where we did a recce on some local crags and then climbed the next day whilst our gear dried out, both mumbling thoughts of what a dream piece of rock, if only we had this back home in town!!

So far this was day 5 and we'd been climbing, yomping and doing something everyday so far. What a trip!

We then proceeded to Arrowtown, an amazing warm welcome by the Gardner family and a few more sociable beers with mates to talk about more climbing!

The Remarkables was the next mission, new for me but Daves old hunting ground so the lads decided to keep it real and do a classic multi pith route up the guts! Again, nothing too crazy, we weren't rocking the boat with technical ability but an alpine rock experience on long runouts certainly kept us honest and just loving the mountains. I loved it, the exposure, the route, new climbing mates, what a day!!



So there you go, all good things must come to an end. An amazing 9 days in all on the big Alpine ranges, rock climbing in Cromwell, and finishing off in Queenstown on the Remarkables. Amazing trip and we couldn't have wanted it any other way. Challenging conditions (Im sure we should've had boots!) dodging epic weather and amazing to die for scenery!!

My conclusion here for you readers, make a plan, get it on paper and apply for a loan!! Be ambitious, dream and get out there and do it. From myself and Dave, a huge thank you to the Committee members of the "Taranaki" NZAC for supporting our trip and I look forward to doing a presentation one day and talking through the amazing photos we took!!

Steve "Geordie" Ritson & Dave

MEMBER TRIPS

Have you been on any exciting trips into the mountains or on the rock that are worthy of a write up? Contact the committee to feature in the next instalment of the NZAC Taranaki Section newsletter. As a relatively small section, we enjoy hearing about our member's reports of successful (or unsuccessful) ventures into the mountains or ticks at the crag



COMMITTEE

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