

Nelson Lakes Easter Trip

Edith Mills

Special thanks to Roger who rang me as a replacement on his as-usual Amazing Easter Trip.

To Maurice; Leader, who probably thought "Why me?"

Dora; a great tramping companion

Jim; the Trendy Gourmet with his interesting comments

The weather report when we left Auckland sounded anything but tramping weather! We arrived at Nelson airport, where we had a four hour wait on account of road closure, brought about by rising river and slips. Finally the shuttle got through, by which time it was decided that we would reverse our itinerary. We had a short boat trip on Lake Rotoiti to Lake Head hut where we left our food drop.

Saturday. We left for John Tait hut. The river was running high with debris everywhere, flooded streams to cross and landslides to work around. We met four hunters coming down from Hopeless – they had decided to come out before the weather closed in.

Sunday. We left John Tait for Cuppola hut, taking a side route to Travers waterfall. There was a lot of bird life : cheeky little robins and fan tails. The hut is nicely situated with lovely views. We did a short climb that afternoon.

Next morning we climbed up behind the hut- Dora and I stayed at Base Camp, it sounded impressive. While the men were climbing up to Gunsight Pass we were sitting on a rocky slope and a deer suddenly appeared and bounded along the valley in front of us. So pleased the hunters had left and this lovely creature had a reprieve.



Monday. Headed back to John Tait- a lovely walk, the water had subsided. Maurice slipped on a rock face and gashed his arm. Nurse Dora held the torch, with her eyes shut, while I cleaned and dressed the wound- must have done a good job as after one more dressing it healed well.

Tuesday. Back to Lake Head Hut to collect the food drop. This is becoming familiar territory. There were strong winds in the night.

Wednesday. I had decided to swap with Maurice and carry a tent- not one of my better ideas- he got it back that night!

We met a DoC worker (Erica) on our way to Hopeless Hut- she advised against going over Sunset Saddle due to high winds and snow.

Thursday. The mountains looked spectacular when we awoke – lots of snow on the tops. Then we had to re-trace our route down the valley to the swing bridge- 3 hours. From there it was a 1000m climb to Angelus via the Cascade Valley. It sure lived up to its name, water and waterfalls everywhere. The lower climb was just lovely through mossy beech forest – then on to a grassy area before the real climb began up a steep rock face beside waterfalls. Quite a challenge! 8 hours to Angelus Hut which was as usual crowded with tourists – and also, Campbell's group. There was an amazing sunset reflecting in the lake and a fabulous clear starry night.



Friday. A small group climbed up past Hinepouri Tarn through the tussock and rock slopes to Sunset saddle and looked over at the slope we intended to climb. The clouds were starting to roll in so we returned to the hut, without climbing Angelus. There was quite a lot of snow about.

Saturday. We woke to low cloud and strong winds. After climbing to Roberts Ridge the decision was made to take the Speargrass Creek Route. There were many stream crossings and snow grass then through beech forest to the car park. Towards the end I fell into a blackberry patch and let forth one of Jim's favourite words. The thought of the one and a half hour road bash to St Arnaud was quite depressing- however, there was Campbell's party waiting for a shuttle. Just enough room for us- GREAT!

Made a remarkable recovery after a shower at the Yellow House – followed by drinks and steak at the pub. Just a perfect end to a fantastic trip.

To Maurice who kept getting behind (probably to avoid my prattling on!) , my dear friend, Dora, and to Jim with his great sense of humour- thank you for making this such a memorable trip.