



New Zealand 01.2 Canoeing

Spring has sprung!

It's a bit warmer, there's LOTS of water around, and it's time to go boating. Welcome to the Spring issue of NZ Canoeing. This issue has a slightly different slant from usual – our lead article is about a major multisport event. The story of what actually happened when Don Allardice paddled the Hokitika last year is told by the man himself on page 9. We also have a special focus on the signing of the Buller Water Conservation Order, a very positive end to over a decade of negotiation for protection of some of our most important rivers. We bring you the latest on the developing West Coast White Water Search and Rescue team, as well as more information on Surfer's Ear. It's time to buy ear plugs!

The 2001 Annual General Meeting for the Association went well, with particular focus on river conservation. The NZRCA are seeking people keen to help out with the growing action in this area. If you're keen, please contact Maree Baker at conservation@rivers.org.nz.

Because we know that a lot of paddlers who might not be as fit as they can remember being last season are likely to be out on rivers everywhere, we encourage you to check your gear, talk to your kayaking companions and paddle within your limits.

The NZRCA wishes you the very best (and safest) of paddling seasons.

Photo 1: Playing on the front wave at O' Sullivans on the Buller River. Photo, Robin Rutter.

Playing on the front wave at O' Sullivans on the nationally important Buller River. Photo, Robin Rutter.

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The NZRCA would like
to congratulate
Dr Douglas Rankin on
receiving the
prestigious Canard Cup
for his efforts in
securing a National
Water Conservation
Order for the Buller
River.

About New Zealand Canoeing

New Zealand Canoeing is the official newsletter of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (NZRCA) Inc. *NZ Canoeing* is published quarterly and distributed free to around 1,000 members of the NZRCA throughout New Zealand/Aotearoa.

The views expressed in *New Zealand Canoeing* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Executive of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association.

NZ Canoeing welcomes advertising from organisations associated with recreational canoeing. Please contact us for our advertising rates, and find out how to show your products and services to kayakers around NZ.

Thanks to Doug Rankin, Laura Nichol, Sam Rainey, Alan Bell, Day Two, River Valley, Taupo Kayak School, Auckland Canoe Centre, Robin Rutter and the myriad of e-mail correspondents for their contributions to this issue of *NZ Canoeing*. May the rivers flow for you!

Contributions of articles, trip reports, classified advertisements, and letters for publication are gratefully received.

Please send items to:

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The deadline for material for the Summer newsletter is 15 December 2001.

All map references are to NZMS Infomap 260 Topographical series.

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as elected at the 2001 NZRCA AGM

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NZRCA Canoeist of the Year - Alan Bell, Hutt Valley Canoe Club

Laura Nicol

Alan Bell is representative of those people who are pivotal to the survival of clubs throughout New Zealand. Not only is Alan the Secretary of the Hutt Club, he is the Treasurer and Newsletter editor. He is often the first point of contact for many kayakers in the Wellington region and his enthusiasm never seems to wane. Above all, Alan is a great communicator. He ensures that people are kept informed either by the monthly newsletter, the email group or by phone. He will often go that extra bit by chasing and encouraging people to have a go.

He is as excited about somebody doing their first 'real' river as he is about his own achievements. Alan ensures everybody has a great time and nobody is left out. For instance, one Sunday the Hutt Gorge (grade 3) was running but a single Grade 2 kayaker turned up for a paddle. Alan did not think it was fair that a paddler should miss out so he went off and did a grade 2 river with the kayaker while everyone else did the Gorge.

Alan promotes the Hutt Club by making contact with paddlers in the area and encouraging them to join. He is conscious that Clubs will only survive by encouraging new people to have a go at paddling whether they are learners or seasoned kayakers. He is often down at pool nights instructing as well as organising river trips. Alan always has little bits of information and help available to paddlers. He promotes safety and is the person on the trip willing to share his thermos flask with whoever needs warming up.

There is an awareness that Clubs need to cater for a wide range of levels and as a result of Alan's efforts the Hutt Club trips are well patronised. The Club has quite a few multisport members and Alan ensures that communication between the various interest groups is maintained.



Alan is the person who goes that extra mile. He recognises that paddling is as much social as it is a physical exercise and that ultimately it is about having a good time. He does everything possible to ensure that paddling is a positive experience and it is because of all his efforts we have awarded him Canoeist of the Year.

Photo 2: Alan on Source of the Buller.

Alan Bell on the Source of the Buller. Photo: Mike Savory.

Water Conservation Order on the Buller River

Doug Rankin

On 21 July the Buller River Conservation Order took effect with a celebration at the source of the Buller at Lake Rotoiti. After nearly fifteen years of hearings and negotiations, it's great to finally have a Conservation Order on the Buller River. Recognition at last of the intrinsic values of this majestic waterway for its scenic, Maori, historic, fishing, wilderness, canoeing, wildlife, flora, rafting and cultural values.

What does the Order consist of?

The Order declares that waters in two schedules are to be retained in their natural state or protected because of the outstanding characteristics, features and values. Rivers and waters of interest to paddlers included in the order are:

- Retention of lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa and their tributaries and the upper reaches of the Matakaitaki, Matiri, Glenroy, Maruia, Deepdale, Owen, Blackwater, Ohikaiti, and Ohikanui (and others) in their natural state.
- Protection of the Buller mainstem from the lake to Te Kuha (at the bottom of the lower Buller Gorge), Gowan, Mangles, Maruia (around Mt Rutland).

The rivers we missed out on include the middle Matakaitaki and earthquake rapid on the Matakaitaki, the Matiri run, the Glenroy and rivers in the Inangahua catchment.

What does the Order mean?

The Order is really a snapshot in time, in that it recognizes the values attributed to the river(s) at the time of the Hearings and accepted by the last body to adjudicate on the case, namely the Planning Tribunal. The Order contains rules, which local councils must abide by when considering resource consents for using water from rivers included in the Order or in the Buller catchment. This has the potential to control resource development, which might otherwise have continued in a potentially harmful manner to the values of the river.

How did the Order come into being?

In September 1987 the Nelson Acclimatisation Society and the Council of South Island Acclimatisation Societies (now represented by the Nelson/Marlborough Fish and Game Council (NMFGC)) applied for a National Water Conservation Order on the Buller River catchment. The Minister for the Environment agreed after considering submissions from various interested parties, including the New Zealand Canoeing Association (NZCA), and appointed a Special Tribunal to hear evidence on the matter. The NZCA presented evidence at this Special Tribunal Hearing in 1989, along with many other parties. The Tribunal recommended an order be granted essentially over the whole Buller River system.

This recommendation was then appealed by a number of parties and so began a long process in which the Planning Tribunal sought resolution of the issues, including a number of legal ones. The Tribunal asked parties to seek agreement where possible on uncontested waters and then to negotiate as much as possible to see if agreement could be reached on contested waters.

Our main issues were Tasman Energy's interest in building a dam on the Matiri and the Gowan, and possible schemes on the Matakaitaki and Maruia. After about 9 months of intense negotiation in 1994/95 the NZCA could not reach agreement with Tasman Energy on conditions for their proposed hydroelectric schemes on the Matiri and Gowan, which they wanted in exchange for not contesting the proposed Order covering the Matakaitaki and Maruia.

Finally the Planning Tribunal met at Westport in May 1995 to hear evidence on the remaining contested waterways. The Tribunal finally published a decision on 31 May 1996 recommending a Conservation Order for the Buller River. The recommendation confirmed most of the uncontested waters, supported the inclusion of the Gowan River on a split decision of the Tribunal, but excluded parts of the lower Matakaitaki and Matiri on canoeing grounds.

Why were some important rivers for paddlers contested and not included in the Order?

The Planning Tribunal rejected the 'whole catchment' approach. Judge Skelton stated the Tribunal's view that each specific part of the catchment needed to be identified as outstanding for a particular reason and either preserved or specific conditions outlined in the Order to protect that feature. This made the case for protection of the contested but important canoeing rivers such as the Gowan, Matiri, and Matakaitaki more difficult. In isolation many of these rivers are harder to justify as nationally significant. For example, they don't rank as high as other rivers throughout the country but they are still really important and an integral part of the Buller 'experience'.

Issues at the Tribunal hearing

At the Tribunal hearing Tasman Energy produced evidence from a number of parties on the HEP values of the Matiri, Gowan and surprisingly the Matakītaki, and canoeing values on the contested waterways (the latter by a canoeist). The canoeist, much to our chagrin, disputed the claimed values of the Matakītaki and Matiri, and in particular their national significance. Tasman Energy also described possible hydro schemes on the Matakītaki, something that before the hearing, we thought they were not interested in.

At the end of the day we could not persuade the Tribunal of the national significance of the Matiri nor the Matakītaki. Judge Skelton was persuaded by many of the canoeist's arguments. It was a pity the canoeist was happy to act against the wishes and aims of many paddlers throughout the country and the NZCA. He hadn't run a number of the rivers he spoke on (eg, the Matiri) and yet he was happy to express opinions, which a number of people at the hearing felt did not agree with those of the wider paddling fraternity. I feel sure the outcome of the process would have been significantly different if it wasn't for the case mounted by Tasman Energy.

Could we have done it better?

Of course hindsight makes you wiser, and some outcomes could have been better for kayakers. For example, the Matakītaki might have been included in the Order, if we had focused more strongly on this rather than on the Matiri, the latter which in hindsight might have always been a marginal call.

Continuing threats

Recently water rights on the Gowan and Matiri were sold by Tasman Energy to the Talley family, who are at present interested in developing a hydroelectric scheme on the Gowan. This seems interesting to me, why were Tasman Energy so opposed to the Order, did they just see the water access they tried to request as a way of making money? If they were serious why have they sold their rights? The Talley family Majac Trust want to rescind the Order on the Gowan as I understand it so that they can develop a scheme of a suitable size.

I understand some business leaders have recently instigated a review of the necessity for WCO's. Such activities give cause for concern, given the effort that has been made to date to enshrine a mechanism for the protection of the best examples of our waterways in law, and the rivers that have been recognized in this process to date. It seems a pity that our society has such a short memory about the passing of the 1981 Wild and Scenic Rivers Amendment and the need for it.

Concluding comments

I think the importance of this Order should not be underestimated, and that even though we have not got all the rivers we wanted included in the Order, we have a tremendous start. As Guy Salmon commented at a ceremony to celebrate the Order at St Arnaud on 21 July, 'the rivers not included in the Order are those for the next generation of paddlers to fight for and get protection for'.

"The rivers not included in the Order are those for the next generation of paddlers to fight for."

Thanks & acknowledgements

A number of key people from the paddling fraternity have been pivotal in seeing this Order finally granted. At the risk of missing out someone I wish to acknowledge the following people for their efforts in supporting our case: the late Graham Egarr, Hugh Canard, Jens Recker, Adrienne Jones, Jonathan Hunt, Martin Unwin, Graeme Boddy, Sarah McRae, Mike Savory, Colin Leitch, John Mackay, Gillian Wratt, Steve Chapman, Rick McGregor and Mick Hopkinson. To all those paddlers who I have met over the years and who share a passion for paddling who have given encouragement with what we have tried to achieve, a huge thank you.

Finally we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Fish & Game for their support in seeing this Order through. In particular, the advice and support of Stephen Christensen (from Anderson Lloyd, NMFGC lawyer for the case) and Neil Deans (NMFGC) is also gratefully appreciated. In addition we paddlers must acknowledge the support from many other parties (including DoC and the Maruia Society) who have been instrumental in helping to gain this Order. **Editors Note: An extended version of this article can be found at: www.rivers.org.nz/conservation/**



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The Story of the **Tortoise** and her **Knee** on her Journey of the Coast to Coast

Laura Nicol

At the start of 2000 I decided that working in an office all day was beginning to make me look like a broad based isosceles triangle. I decided that I needed to get fit. Not wanting to do things by halves, my goal became to complete the 2001 Coast to Coast race. First thoughts were to do it as a team but my running partner pulled out so I decided that I would do the lot myself. I would not be breaking any records, the challenge was to finish so I was realistic about setting targets and times.

Various friends assisted me by loaning equipment and giving plenty of encouragement. Husband Mike was my main training partner. He did not put up with any procrastination but wasn't too pushy. Mike taught me the art of closely cycling behind someone so that I could bunch ride. First attempt ended up with me hitting his wheel and kissing the gutter! My weak right knee was a major concern and after two re-injuries – one mountain bike crash and one rock hopping, I decided that if I was going to finish the race I would be better to walk as fast as I could. At this point I nicknamed myself the Tortoise.

In early December I decided to do a reconnaissance mission of the race terrain, which meant a solo tramp up the Deception and Mingha Rivers in Arthur's Pass. There is no track in the Deception valley, and you just follow the river. To assist my knees, I had invested in some walking poles, and as I was tramping alone I took enough supplies to last almost any emergency. As I wandered up the valley with my substantial pack, I met a friend Jim, from Gisborne. Jim is a retired farmer, who having had some heart problems decided it was time to get fit. His son had done the Coast to Coast so now it was Jim's turn. He was a few stone lighter and loving being out and about. Jim was a bit surprised when he found out I was tramping alone and in typical blunt farmer fashion he said 'Good God girl you are game!' There was me thinking – 'well Jim's up here with a dodgy ticker at least I've only got a bad knee'. Jim and I argued about winning last position – we both felt equally qualified. After a few more pleasantries I walked on.

As the Deception got more mountainous I had to bush bash rather than risk crossing deeper water. I wondered about my sanity and IQ level at entering the race. After jumping a smallish gap the pack swung me to one side and aggravated my old knee injury, and I lost it completely. I sat on a rock in the middle of the Deception at 7pm at night crying, swearing and cursing at my own stupidity. After about a minute of feeling sorry for myself reality kicked in – you are on your own here kid – get cracking. Out of my pack came my various cures and vast quantities of anti inflammatories were consumed as I soaked my poor knee in the cold water. Then I got back on my feet and carried on. When I finally made Goat Pass Hut (a total of 9 hours of walking) a fellow tramper took one look at me and said, 'Would you like a cup of tea?' That cuppa was marvelous.

Next morning I re-strapped my knee and hobbled out of the hut. After all I had told my mother that I would finish the race even if I had to crawl! The poles were great and 5.5 hours later I made the road. Two days later I did the Waimakariri Classic, I considered that you only use your knees for bracing in a boat. Being Scottish, I hate pulling out of races after I have paid my fees.

Photo 3: The Tortoise's knees still holding out. Photo: Paul's Camera Shop

The Tortoise's knees still holding out. Photo: Paul's Camera Shop

When I returned to Wellington I started endless lunges to improve the thigh muscles and support the knee. I retrained my left leg to be the one that lands first rather than the dominant right leg. This was achieved by jumping down four steps and landing on the left leg.

February arrived and so did the nerves. At Camp Kumara, the beginning of the Coast to Coast, I bumped into old friends including Jim. I reminded myself that the only competitor I am racing is me. It did not always work when I looked at all the super fit gazelles and hares, tortoises don't compare well. My great support crew consisted of my sister Janet and Mike.

As I walked to the start, Mike had wonderful encouraging words. He said 'You know in a way you are halfway there. You have managed to train and protect that knee whereas there will be plenty of people that will have had to pull out because of training injuries. Now just run your race and have fun.' 'Yes' I thought 'I can do this' but I wasn't sure if my bladder was going to make it. Obviously Robin Juddins (AKA Juddys, and the race organiser) knew about this problem because Port-A-Loos had been strategically placed along the 3Km run. At the beach I went and dipped my hands in the water – it was a bit like the beginning of a pilgrimage.

When the start hooter went I'm sure the competitors' cheer was just sheer relief that the 'moment' had finally arrived. Andy Clark had warned me that the 3km run was very fast. I had trained to jog it but the pace was ridiculous, but I jogged, I told my heavily strapped knee what a well-behaved part of my anatomy it was being. After the 3kms it was time to change shoes and hop on the bike. I learnt a few things – don't double knot your shoelaces like you usually do, run with your camel back on and do up your helmet, preferably before you get halfway through the first cycle stage.

I finished stage one with my knee intact, and Janet and Mike had a chair ready. It was off with cycling shoes and on with the runners, grab a honey sandwich, my poles and plaster on sun block. A few of my hardy one dayer friends yelled, 'Go Laura' and I raised my poles in salute. At the start of my walk I passed Jeff Moore from Nelson. Jeff has only one leg. I had such an overwhelming sense of admiration for him even attempting to walk on those rocks because I knew how careful I had to be with my wonky knee and here he was with an artificial limb. (Jeff finished his walk in 14 hours).

Frank from Auckland asked if he could team up with me. Really these Aucklanders! Frank's nickname is Buddha. At a height of about 5ft5inches and weighing in at 90kgs of muscle Frank informed me his body is better at rugby league than mountain running. The weather was kind, the scenery wonderful and the rata in flower. It was so much easier without a huge pack on your back. The officials were friendly and seemed able to cope with anything including my singing. I felt great. I wanted to run – I felt fit enough – but I stuck to my race strategy of walking as fast as I could.

At the bottom of Goat's Pass my power walking up Mt Kau Kau paid off and Frank got left behind. Once over the Pass I knew I could make the 8 hour target I had set for myself. As I continued down the Mingha side I could hear some muttering and cursing. I recognised Gisborne Jim. I yelled, 'Jim is that you? What's wrong?' 'Oh Laura' came the reply, 'I'm bugged – its my knees, they've gone.' Ah ha – I thought to myself – knees are my specialty. Dr Nicol went to work. A quick cross examination and I told Jim he probably had strained his ligaments. Out came the compulsory first aid kits and the tape and bandages. I strapped the knee caps in place and bandaged up the ligaments. As I gave Jim my Cataflam and tried to get him to take

at least one of my poles he kept telling me that he was holding me up. He said he has a stick and can grab another on the way. I told Jim I didn't think he is going to be the cause of me missing out on any prizes. I secretly think Jim wanted me to get moving so that he could keep that last position for himself.

I finished the 26km walk in 8.03 hours. I figured with the ten or so minutes I had stopped to help Jim that I was under my eight hour goal. Klondyke Corner sure looked good.

You would think after all that exercise I would fall asleep, but I was just too hyped. As the sun sank, a bugle player gave us a rendition of 'The Last Post'. It was a beautiful evening with a wonderful moon, the call of a Morepork and my knee and I had survived Day One of the Coast to Coast. I slept for three hours.

Day Two started with groups of ten cyclists leaving at one minute intervals commencing at 7.30am. My group left about 7.50ish, unfortunately it was full of hares being chased by the devil and once again the tortoise was on her own for the 15km ride.

Photo 4: The kayaking leg. Photo: Paul's Camera Shop.

The kayaking leg. Photo: Paul's Camera Shop.

I got to my boat and my trusty assistants had spotted a deep entry point so I did not grovel in the shallows. The Waimak kayak leg consists of a large amount of flat braided paddling before entering a gorge and then more braids. It's a total of 67 km, and the river was low, so any kayaking advantage I thought I might have was lost. Still, I saw empty boats floating past before I ever reached the gorge.

It must be my motherly look (ha ha) but again someone asked if they can follow me. I replied that "I don't mind" but I should have qualified that with 'don't follow too closely'. At the start of the gorge there is a nice wave train but at this flow it is a bit broken. I picked my way through the waves but somehow I suddenly did a ninety degree turn and ended up side on in a big wave. Over I went - I rolled but my Arrow decided to go over again, and I pulled the tag. Three young men helped me up, emptied my boat, checked whether I needed to eat, and assisted me back in the boat. Actually the swim was very refreshing, and the rest of the gorge was straightforward. The 55 - 70 cumecs flow has substantially reduced the buffer waves so the bluffs are no problem.

When you pass Woodstock you can see the hills that indicate the finish line is near. I tried not to look as it's still about 45 - 60 minutes away. Finally the end came, and I took 6.09 hours for the paddle and bike ride which was within my target of 6.5. I had taken at least 30 minutes off my previous paddle time down the Waimak which was also done at a much higher flow of 125 cumecs. Training has paid off.

Mike and Janet hauled me out of the boat and ran me part way up the hill, to where they had cunningly positioned the chair in some shade. I felt like a two year old when I proudly informed Mike that he didn't have to worry when emptying the boat because I hadn't piddled in it - someone replied 'Good Girl' while someone else shoved a banana in my mouth. Clothes were changed and I was physically pushed up the hill with Janet yelling 'Make way competitor coming thru!' Then I was on my bike and on the last 70km cycling leg - yahoo.

I cycled up the hill from the bridge and as I reached the flat two cyclists yelled 'Hop on if you can!' We all introduced ourselves and started working as a team. More people joined and soon we were up to eight. Everyone took a turn at the front and it was a real buzz. Best of all I coped, I didn't cause any mayhem and no one swore at me. After 45 minutes I realised I could not maintain the pace. I was not used to the surging and obviously needed to work on my ability to rotate to the back of the bunch without losing too much ground.

Shortly after dropping off the bunch I teamed up with ex Hutt Club member Lisa Nichol. We chatted away taking turns up the front and encouraged by respective family members passing us in their cars. We made it to Christchurch but were separated at an intersection. Cautious tortoises stop for red lights. Alone again but knowing I was near the end I picked up the pace as spectators cheered me on.

As I approached Sumner the traffic was nose to tail, and I snuck up on the inside. At the last intersection a points man was directing traffic. A truck stopped in front of me and I couldn't get my foot out of the pedal quick enough - down I went. There I was, sprawled in the middle of the intersection and the points man had his back to me. All I could think was, what a place to make a spectacle of yourself - you're only 2 km from the finish line! As I nursed my nicely bruised elbow, wrist and pride some young guys yelled 'Go Go Go'. Back I hopped on the bike and before I knew it Sumner Beach was looking good.

An official grabbed my bike and another competitor and I sprinted to the finish line. When the entrance narrows he suggested that I should go first as he has been in a team - 'You deserve it' - I didn't argue. Once again Juddy's smiling face congratulated me and I felt a great sense of 'I've done it'. Mike, Janet and friends joined me for hugs and celebration. In order to finish the race totally I had to touch the water - only this time I went for complete submersion along with quite a few other competitors.

Jim's knees held out and he managed to complete Day Two. Neither of us were last - Jeff Moore also completed the race and won that position. I had achieved my goal of finishing without reinjury. I was one of 56 individual women and 4 of us were over 40. Will I do it again? I'm not sure but I was third in every section of the Veteran woman except for the mountain run. If I could run that section I could improve my time by at least two hours, my transitions could be quicker, and you never know, maybe by 2003 my assistants will have recovered and be ready for a rerun.

**Photo 5: Laura races for the finish line.
Photo: Paul's Camera Shop.**

Laura races for the finish line. Photo: Paul's Camera Shop.

Don Allardice

Have you ever made a stuff-up, then had to make judgement calls to make the best of a bad situation? Be honest, no one is infallible, and even some of the gurus that we look up to probably have a story or two. I've been asked to write an account of how a simple mistake turned a kayaking trip on the Lower Hokitika River last season into an epic.

Take from it what you will, it certainly tested my decision making skills both on and off the river, and thankfully the only thing hurt was my pride. The initial reaction from my peers was very supportive, but it's fair to say that I also copped some flak. Here is an account of what actually happened and the factors (lemons) that contributed.

Lemon #1: Preparation

Although this is no excuse, the trip fell on the day after Bullerfest. It had been a big weekend, and I was buggered. Anyway, after packing and checking our equipment, the team members; myself, co-worker Tim and two Swiss paddlers who had recently paddled along with one of our rafting trips, departed by helicopter from the Hokitika Gorge Road to the put in.

Lemon #2: Mistaken Identity

It had been awhile since I'd run the Lower Hokitika, and from the helicopter I failed to identify the correct put in. Instead of putting on at the beginning of the grade III-IV section, instead we landed just upstream of the last gorge of the Hokitika River's grade V run. A simple f#@! up that I still find hard to believe.

We put on the river, reveled in some fun grade 3-4, before walking around a nasty sieve. Alarm bells started ringing. Shortly after this, we stopped above a tricky looking grade V entry rapid to a narrow steep walled gorge. You can imagine the feeling in my gut when I realised what had happened! Shit!

I thought, "OK don't panic, you got us into this mess, and you'll get us out." Weighing the options, I hatched a plan. Carrying on was not an option; the priority now was to get everyone safely off the river. Walking everyone out though the rugged bush was likely to take too long, so I decided to leave the two Swiss paddlers where they were with some food, first aid and fire lighting kit, while Tim and I would carry the smallest and lightest kayak around the gorge. I'd paddle out and arrange for a helicopter to retrieve them. If the helicopter didn't make it before dark, then they were to hunker down for the night, stay put, and get picked up in the morning.

With the decision made, we set off. Two and a half hours of bush bashing saw us at the "real" put in, where I left Tim and paddled like crazy down the lower Hokitika. I arrived at the Whitcombe confluence 25 minutes later, and the valley opened out. By now totally shagged, I continued on my down-river race.

Lemon #3: Helicopter Pilots

As I neared the take-out I encountered helicopter activity overhead. I knew this could be an opportunity to speed up the recovery of my friends still up the river. I also knew that once I had flagged it down word of our epic would quickly spread through the grapevine. My priority was to retrieve my friends, so as the Hughes 300 approached I waved my paddle frantically to attract attention. Away it flew, and I paddled on.

Ten minutes later back it came, resulting in more frantic waving from me. It flew over several more times without responding. In the midst of my frustration I couldn't help but think of the consequences if I had a medical emergency on my hands. Finally, the helicopter did stop and check me out, and by this time I was at the take out, and he was too busy to help anyway.

To bring the episode to a conclusion, I drove to the nearest phone at a farmer's place, called the pilot that dropped us in, and he retrieved the paddlers and equipment. The Swiss team had built a fire and a helicopter pad, and Tim had spent most of the afternoon sunbathing on a rock. Later we all enjoyed a hearty stew at the farmer's place, and I called home to let everyone know that we were OK. I found out we had already received a good "ear chewing" over the incident. Word sure does travel fast!

So there you have it. What did I learn? You snooze you lose! Give all rivers the respect they deserve and make sure that your planning is up to scratch. I certainly won't be making the same mistake again. If we'd had the mountain radio we carry on rafting expeditions we could have saved ourselves a whole lot of hassle. Happy boating!

West Coast Whitewater Search and Rescue Update


Sam Rainey

The paddling season is almost upon us, and things are progressing well with plans for a white water Search and Rescue team on the West Coast. Hokitika Land SAR has made a considerable contribution toward the purchase of rescue equipment which we are currently in the process of buying.


The last few weeks have been particularly hectic organising a funding application to the Lotteries commission. Keith Morfett from the Hokitika Land SAR group has been instrumental in putting this together and I would also like to thank all those people in the kayaking community who provided letters of support for this project at very short notice. In dealing with a wide number of people in the kayak community over the last few months I have encountered nothing but positive encouragement and a great amount of cooperation, and this support has been very much appreciated.

Funding is necessary to fully equip our team and finance a major training exercise at the start of December. This is still very much in the planning stage but we are looking at running a weekend exercise in the Lower Perth or Whataroa gorges incorporating three or four kayak-related scenarios. This is going to be a major undertaking as we are hoping to utilise both Land SAR and Kayaking people. It also looks like it will be costly due to the limited access to the area and huge amount of helicopter time required.

Following the exercise in December we should, all things going to plan, have a fully functional white water SAR response on the West Coast. **We must stress that the SAR response is by no means a replacement for your experience and expertise on the river. Your team is your best, and in the case of an entrapment, your only chance of rescue.** So buy a big boat, sharpen up your rescue skills and paddle within your limits, there's no rush and the name of this game is staying in it long enough to run all those rivers. For those with further comments about SAR on the West Coast, contact Sam Rainey at 2B Howitt Place Hokitika, (03) 755 7767.



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Update on Surfer's Ear

Doug Rankin

In an article in the last issue of New Zealand Canoeing I discussed the condition known as Surfer's Ear, the appearance of bone growths over time in the ears of paddlers, divers, surfers and other water sports people exposed to cold water. With restrictions to the size of the ear canal it can lead to frequent ear infections when you dunk your head under water (water gets trapped in the ear and bugs grow) and it can eventually render you deaf. I have since heard of the condition afflicting a number of other paddlers around my vintage here locally in Christchurch. Some of them are just recovering from ear re-boring operations.

At the end of the last article I promised to report further on the use of earplugs, which I have heard are thought to offer a solution to the problem. I found a local supplier of Doc's Proplugs (Gary Maw, 281 Woodham Road, Christchurch, ph (03) 381 0731, also see website www.proplugs.com), and bought a pair.

The plugs are a soft silicone rubber (I think), which come in different sizes, and you choose one that fits your ears. I have flexible leashes attached to mine with a loop that goes around my neck. So when you have nose-clips with leashes on as well you end up with all this paraphernalia around your face. It felt a little strange to start with but I have finally got used to using them.

The plugs I have contain a vented hole, which gives you improved hearing over the older style solid ones. Although vented, the watertight seal keeps water out but I have noticed in use that they sometimes feel as though they are blocked. I have read this apparently can happen when droplets collect on the outside of the plugs and I have noted that a tweak of your ear will often clear them and restore hearing.

I have only really used the plugs a lot in surf so far and in general have found them pretty good at staying put, although in one or two cases after a particularly vigorous trashing underwater a plug has become dislodged. In general though they seem to keep my ears a lot warmer and don't seem to affect my hearing too much.

So it's probably a good idea if you're doing cold water boating to get a set of these plugs to prevent getting surfer's ear. Gary is the New Zealand agent and he sells to a lot of Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists and chemists throughout the country. If you contact him I am sure you can find a local place where you can be fitted with a set.

Been on a good trip lately?

Write it up and send it in!

Deadline for the Summer Edition is 15 December



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