

# NZ

## CANYONING

A S S O C I A T I O N

### ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2017/18 CANYONING SEASON

#### Presidents report

*By Dan Clearwater*

Its fantastic to see how canyoning is taking off in NZ, with so many people getting out there into the established canyons, plus a growing number of explorers opening up new canyons and areas for us to visit.

The NZCA has made a number of great achievements this season, from Bolting Codes of practice, establishing the Canyon Fund, running the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canyoning Festival, advocating for canyoning in management plans and supporting the development of new canyoning areas. A huge thanks from me to all those who have assisted with the work of the NZCA and the canyoning community, especially to Richard Bramley and team for their work at the festival, and to the NZCA executives whose reports follow below.

It is with regret that we farewell two of our executive members. Justin Venable (Westland Rep) and Leesa Fraser (Treasurer) were both part of the founding members of the NZCA and have contributed greatly to the organisations success. We thank them for their hard work.

We welcome 5 new members to the NZCA executive; Nola Collie, James Abbot, Andy White and Chris Whitehouse (General executive members) as well as Warren Fitzgerald (Sec/Treas) we look forward to their contributions to the association.

As the season draws to a close, we look forward to the next summer, and even beyond to the 2020 Canyoning Festival in Canterbury. Thanks for your support!

#### Technical Standards report

*By Shanan Fraser*

Technical Standards Officer Shanan Fraser, with assistance from Dan Clearwater and others from the exec published the long awaited **NZCA Bolting Code of Practice** at the end of 2017. The COP sets out the legal, moral and technical standards for Canyon bolting in New Zealand. The document is perhaps the most detailed of its kind for canyoning anywhere in the world, and was viewed by more than 15,000 people on Facebook after its release.

#### Community Report

*By Dan Clearwater*

##### NZCA Canyon Fund

The Canyon Fund was established in late 2017 to ensure the funds raised from NZCA activities are re-invested in the canyoning community. Since its launch, a number of retrospective applications have been approved; Funding for anchor materials in Hydrophobia (Kauaeranga Valley), Tunakohoia (Mt

Te Aroha), Twin Creek (Arthurs Pass), and Red Granite Creek (Mokinui, West Coast). A significant application for canyons which were part of the 2018 festival was also approved, no doubt contributing to the viability and success of the festival. Pete Smith of Access Gear has provided a NZCA discount for hardware for canyon fund projects.

The NZCA welcomes more applications to the fund. <http://nzcanyoningassociation.org/about-us/the-canyon-fund/>

## Advocacy Report

*By Annette Phillips*

Around this time last year I submitted for the NZCA on the draft Wellington Conservation Management Strategy. An outcome to submissions on this draft were expected a few months ago, so am waiting news on that and will share as it comes out.

Upcoming for this year:

Waiting for the draft Aoraki National Park Plan, this is advertised to be open for submissions now. So waiting for the draft to be released. Once I've drafted a submission, I'll send it out for input from the executive.

I am looking to develop processes whereby the permission for bolting can be gained through liaison with relevant managers/land owners. We're working to ensure the bolting COP can be fully recognised as the guiding document for relevant agencies and stakeholders outside the NZCA.

Any other management plans for public lands that are opened up for submissions.

## Upper North Island report

*By Oli Polson*

The upper North Island canyoning scene is cranking! While we had a slow period over winter with the Kauaeranga valley closed to the public after a massive flood event in late Feb 17 took out the road access. The road was reopened temporarily over Christmas and the classics saw a flurry of descents. Pleasingly the flood event did not damage any anchors in the area and the canyons themselves saw only a minimum impact. The road was open through to 16 April and according to Russ, **Sleeping Gods** is getting a hammering from the recreational crowds in their PFD's on double ropes.

Further south the canyons of Mt Te Aroha are starting to prove popular. Pete Smith and his merry band of helpers have rebolted the most popular trip. **Tunakohoia Canyon** is now equipped with double bolt anchors at each pitch, thanks to the NZCA Canyon Fund. No more dodgy rock pile anchors!

The big issue facing this area however is kauri die back and most importantly the Rahui placed on the Waitakere ranges to attempt to help control the spread of this disease. This is a highly controversial subject (especially amongst the "09ers") but in my opinion the closure of the park is something that should be supported at least in the short-medium term. If we are to secure "proper" access for canyoning in the future, then as a community we need to be seen to be respecting the

Rahui and any potential council enforced closure by staying out of the Waitak' canyons until such time that it is appropriate to begin advocating for access again. Kauri die back is known to be present in the northern Coromandel region and we certainly don't want it in the Kauaeranga valley or the northern Kaimai ranges. It is super important (equally as important as dydimo in the SI) that ALL canyoneers clean their gear, especially footwear of all soil material and use the cleaning stations (if available) before and after any trips in these areas.

With the popularity of the sport growing significantly and large population bases (Auckland and Tauranga) nearby, Russ and myself are keen to host a beginner canyoning workshop of sorts in the not too distant future. Plans are afoot so watch this space!

## Lower North Island report

*By Dan Clearwater*

The Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club have been organising a few club trips to the Tararua Canyons, with lots of reports of individual club members getting stuck into the capital canyons.

Fergus Bramley and friends recently released a set of topos for canyons in the Akatarawa Valley. Being of beginner/intermediate grade and very close to Wellington, these canyons are likely to prove very popular!

Lee den Haan recently moved to Wellington, so will be taking up the representative position for this region.

## Top of the south report

*By Richard Bramley*

Upper South Island rep Richard Bramley, with support from the executive and members ran a highly successful Canyoning Festival in the Nelson Lakes area. More than 100 participants enjoyed workshops, hosted descents and exercises over the 3 days of the festival. After festival expenses, we raised more than \$4,000 for the Canyon Fund. The festival concluded a period of significant new explorations in the Upper South Island, with over 10 new canyons (worth of repeating) being descended, equipped, and written up over the past two seasons.

The Top of the South is now a strong canyoning destination, with a good mix of canyons that are reasonably easy to access. For the festival, Richard produced an 'Info Pack' detailing the canyons, which he hopes to convert to a Guidebook Supplement in the near future.

In the lead up to the festival Richard had several meetings with DOC in St Arnaud. They visited one of the canyons and NZCA shared the bolting COP with them, although there was no resolution on whether NZCA members could bolt in the Nelson Lakes National Park without case-by-case approval from DOC. The Nelson Lakes Management Plan is very out of date and due to be updated. If and when that finally happens, NZCA will make a submission.

With respect to Search and Rescue, Richard helped assemble a list of experienced canyoneers based in the Top of the South that can be called out in the event of a rescue. This list is currently being managed by Nelson CaveSAR, who are usually the first group to be called by the local Police for this

type of rescue. However Malcolm York of the Nelson Police has recently set up a local Swiftwater Rescue team, which will also have skills that canyon SAR can draw on. Richard will continue to stay in touch with both the local CaveSAR and Swiftwater Rescue teams to try and keep canyoning on their radar.

## Canterbury report

*By Grant Prattley*

### Canterbury Foothills

More and more people are heading into the canyons close to Christchurch giving it a go – mainly into Tui.

A local crew has been heading out to local day trips especially during the fine weather of pre-Christmas. Canyons mainly include **Ryde falls, Sharplin, Three Fellahs, Kaumira** and **Trifalls**. After the big cyclones in April 2017 the canyons were cleaned out of debris.

A few updates:

- **Ryde Falls** now has an extra jump and a really good 12m slide especially fun in higher flow.
- **Sharplin** has had the boardwalk removed after being destroyed by rocks. So now after the last waterfall you head down the stream to gain the track 2 minutes before the carpark. The canyon is extended a further pitch so it has 6 pitches and is well worth the visit.
- **Trifalls** has been descended several times by leaving a rope on the second pitch of Woolshed creek and swimming/ascending back up and out of the canyon (and avoiding the 2.5hr boulder hop).
- **Kaumira** access has always been only to the lower canyon via the public walking track as per the guidebook. As a reminder there is no public access to the upper canyon. There are signs and a deer fence on both sides of the canyon.

A canyon up the Rakia, **Colonial Stream**, had its first full descent (Nola Collie, James Abbott and Grant Prattley) after 3 previous visits. It sits on private farmland so talk to Nola if you are keen on doing this 16 pitch canyon. **Little Mt Peel/Lynn stream** had a first descent Nola Collie, James Abbott.

### University of Canterbury Canyoning Club (UCanCan)

This group is going from strength to strength. I caught up with a group of new canyoners heading through Kaumira last week ably led by Ashley and Rocky. Great to see the future of the sport growing. Here is some info from them:

‘We are the University of Canterbury Canyoning Club (UCanCan). With the recent boom of popularity of the sport and an ever growing interest from students we want to provide a platform to help people safely build their skills in this relatively new sport. Our goal is to promote interest and to participate in the sport of canyoning while having a large focus on water/outdoor safety and other areas such as river conservation.’

### Wilberforce

Tom Johns (and team) continues to be the driving force descending new canyons up the Wilberforce river. The latest canyon (**Wilberhorse Canyon**) is the catchment north of Hut Stream and featured a 110m pitch. First descent by Tom Johns, Ashley Stewart, Danny Kingan, Sarah Hamilton, Rocky Smith, March 2018. It brings the total to 5 canyons up the Wilberforce.

## Arthurs Pass

Things have been quite busy around the Arthurs Pass area.

**Twin creek** has an extension to the top another 5 pitches. With an hours walk you get 16 pitches and then a short boulder hop to the car.

**Bridal Veil** has seen multiple descents with Koryn and Richard most likely undertaking the second descent and having to replace many of the anchors as much of the rigging was missing after water flow damage.

**Pegleg creek** was first descended by Nola Collie, James Abbott, Grant Prattley and Victor Mendes in late 2017. This featured 11 pitches with a 47m waterfall to finish.

In January a second descent of **Curtis creek**. None of the anchors were there from the first descent and another waterfall was found. This has a great finish over the Otira viaduct.

In March a second descent of **Holts Creek** following and finishing off a first descent a year previous. A big day out through a committing lower section.

To finish off the season another canyon, at the start of the lagoon saddle track (near **Bealy**), was descended. This was a 7 pitch first descent by Nola Collie, James Abbott and Grant Prattley.

## Westland report

*By Justin Venable*

Increased participation and enthusiasm for canyoning by the whitewater kayaking community on the West Coast was facilitated by low water levels in the rivers this summer.

Richard Bramley and Lee Den Haan, in addition to bolting **North Falls**, also completed the rigging in lower section of **Red Granite Creek** in the Mikonui drainage. Since then, over 20 groups have used this resource.

Future projects include the first attempted descent of the Tuke river gorges via a new fusion sport being developed on the West Coast - a combination of canyoning and kayaking and aid climbing techniques, using suction cups and packrafts on tethers. Standby for updates y'all!

## Aspiring area report

*By Annette Phillips*

**Gloomy Gorge** got a visit this season!! Very, very awesome news, and have been in touch with Akira with the hope of documenting their trip and updating some info on the hardware and condition of the canyon. With the bigger canyons getting few descents, I'm keen to encourage those adventurers to pass their info this way for others to benefit from.

I have started some dialogue with Forest & Bird to look at the possibility of working with them for pest control (traps in the forest) around some of the popular Haast Pass canyons that undoubtedly get a good proportion of recreational activity. So hopefully I might be organizing some volunteer trips into those canyons next season. Over time that might also merge into looking at the aquatic environment of the canyon itself..