

# Back Country Pit Stops

By Ruth E. Henderson



Poo is not something we usually talk about in polite circles ...some folk are so delicate that they don't or can't even use the word toilet, but rather 'go to the bathroom', or ask where the 'ladies or gents' are. On the other hand, young parents endlessly compare notes on potty training or the virtues of different nappies.

If you're into kayaking, you are probably like me, in neither of those categories. However toilet waste in the environment is a concern; on a trip, the location of pit-stops, is part of my planning. There may be rules and regulations for vessels on the water, dogs and campervans on the land – but when you unavoidably end up paddling thru brown scum or step into dog poo whilst unloading your kayak – we know what you say, but who do you call? And perhaps more importantly, if you are caught short what do you do? DOC doesn't always locate long-drops where one would expect, a classic would be Roberton Island in the Bay of Islands, and beyond the road end, which is where we often paddle...there are not many 'public conveniences'.

Finding a tree, for a wee, is ok if it's just you, but there are places such as Deep Water Cove, B.O.I. popular with divers and hikers where the stench of urine is, to put it mildly, strong!

So, what is best practice and why should we follow the guidelines?

The first step is planning. When working out where you and your group are paddling and wanting to camp, look for places that do have toilets. Even in places where only boats can reach,



A welcome sight.

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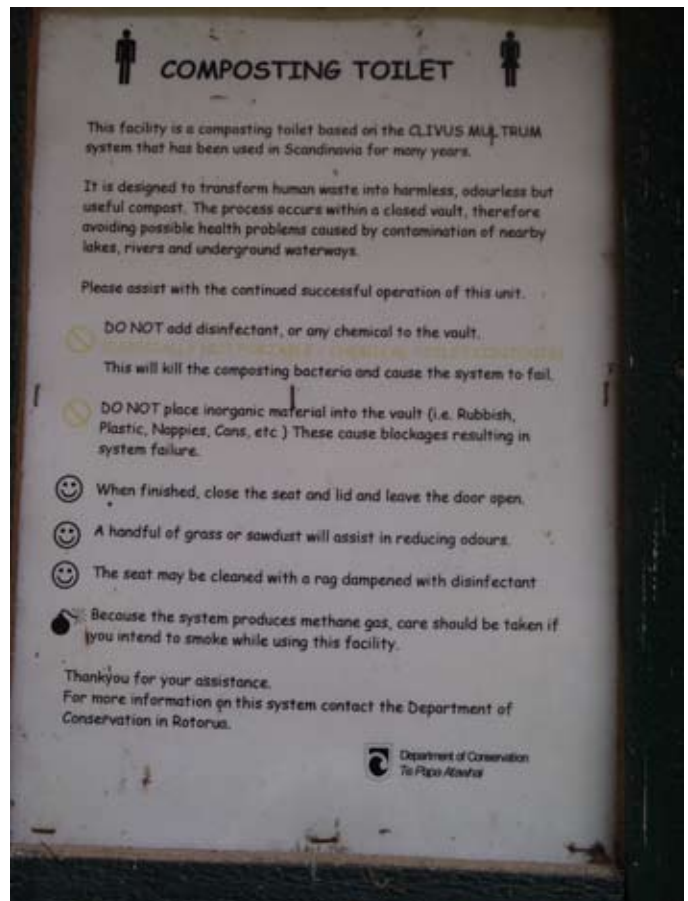
in a lot of districts - certainly where I have been recently - Rotorua, the Waikato, and Auckland if not DOC then the respective councils are, in the main, doing a great job in providing these and telling you about it on their websites. They can be hard to spot from the water and if over-grown, on the land! When you discover other ones, mark them on your map for future reference, and spread the word, as a loo with a seat sure beats the next option; disposing of your own waste.

To be commended are clubs and organisations such as the Classic and Wooden Boat Association who have addressed the toilet issue by gaining permission from landowners to build and maintain toilets in places they frequent.

Peeing shouldn't be a big issue. The other week at the International Kayak Week, the accepted view was to pee into the sea or below the high tide mark. And girls, using a 'shewee' were just as discreet and inoffensive as boys.

Number two's are a different story. Obviously, seeing, smelling, or stepping into someone's excreta is not nice, but worse than that leaving human waste in the wild can mean you are contaminating water supplies and soils and lead to the spread of diseases such as Giardia. This parasite can survive in cold water, and infects the intestine resulting in chronic diarrhoea, nausea, stomach cramps, and dehydration. Not a gift to give to friends or strangers!

In rocky areas (including alpine or snow areas) carrying out your waste in a "poo pot" or re-sealable plastic bags is an option. There are plenty of hints on how to do this, and how to make your own "poo pot or tube" on



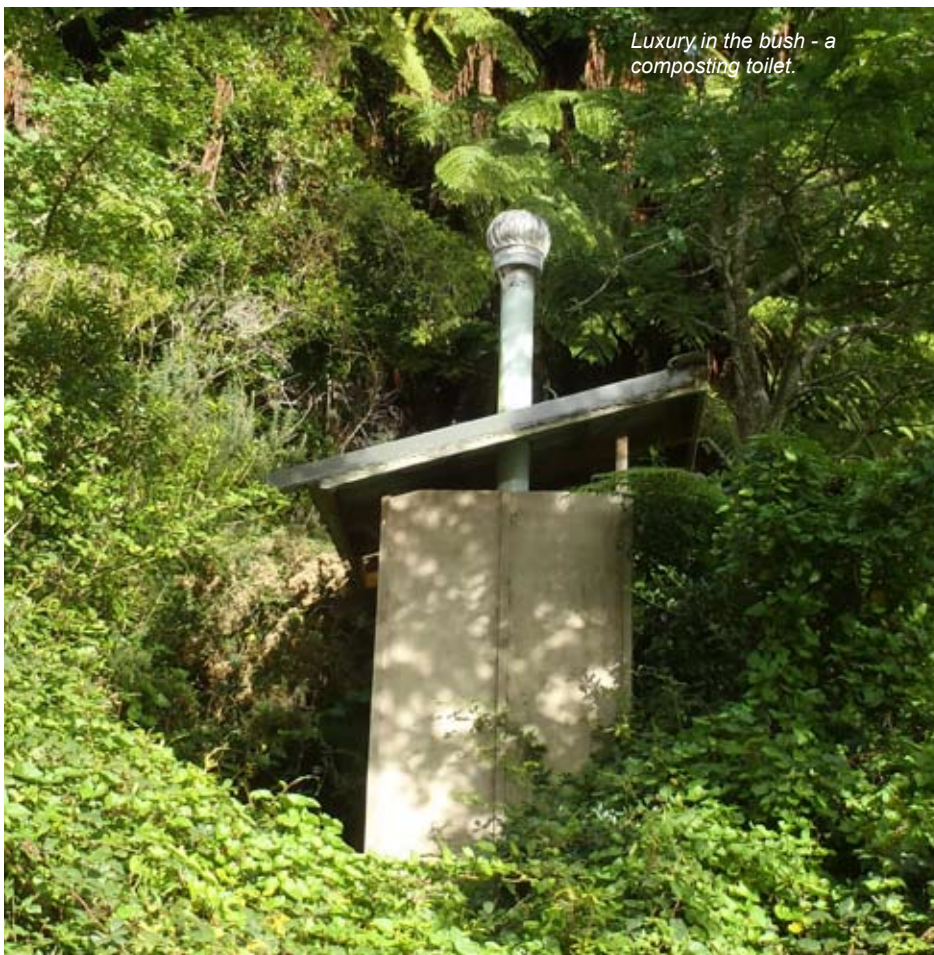
A Wooden Boat Association toilet - a welcome lunch & loo break on Lake Rotoiti, Rotorua.

the web. In Alaska we were instructed to poo on a rock, and then toss it in the tide. Tricky! But in popular 'Thunder Bay' near Cox Glacier, on the Harriman Fiord in Prince William Sound it was better than inadvertently digging a hole, on top of someone else's hole!

However, for most of us, we are paddling below the snow line and a shallow hole is our option. Select a site for your hole that is a least 50 m away from water, stream beds, tracks and campsites. Use a trowel or folding spade to dig a hole 150 – 200 mm deep (length of finger-tips to just above your wrist) and 100 – 150 mm wide. After use, back fill with soil and camouflage with leaves or twigs. If in a group, have one person dig a bigger hole for everyone to use. It is helpful if you find some wood or other flat material to use either side of the hole for footrests whilst squatting...prevents sandy soil caving in, and maybe you falling in too.

If you use toilet paper (versus using leaves e.g. rangiora bushman's friend, moss or bark) then use only plain, unbleached, non-perfumed types. Don't burn it, you could end up creating a bush fire! Bury your paper or carry it out in a re-sealable plastic bag.

As well as a lightweight trowel, handbag



*Luxury in the bush - a composting toilet.*



*Keep it clean - bring a spade. Whangamumu, Northland.*

sized hand sanitizers are a good idea.

Have a look at [www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/care-codes](http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/care-codes) in particular 'Activity minimal impact' for tips on camping and "disposing of human waste where no toilets are provided".

A lot of websites on the subject are 'rubbish' but [www.lotsafreshair.com](http://www.lotsafreshair.com) has many camping tips including one post called "poos, wees and other mysteries".

And ladies take a look at this website to see not one but seven different FUD's (female urinary devices) [www.backpacker.com/gear/apparel/trail-clothes/category-womens-apparel/gear-review-female-urination-devices](http://www.backpacker.com/gear/apparel/trail-clothes/category-womens-apparel/gear-review-female-urination-devices)

The best reviews appear to be for these ones: [www.sheewee.com](http://www.sheewee.com) and [www.freshette.com](http://www.freshette.com)

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