

# Abel Tasman Adventure

- *A blend of four clubs*

By Pauline Ross (Auckland club member)

**A brief taste of Abel Tasman had made me eager to return. I knew about the Wellington club's experience and there was no question that joining their club trip would be the way to go.**

Well aware that the weather forecast was 'variable' (ok dodgy) eight clubbies left Wellington for an extended Easter weekend, laughing and keen to give it our best shot.

Five of us were from Wellington and one each from Taranaki, Bay of Plenty and Auckland clubs. Our experience levels ranged from very new to Jim Walker's. He had recently circumnavigated Stewart Island (story in Issue 57) and was our leader.

In beautiful calm conditions we paddled from Marahau around Fisherman Island, enjoying our first taste of remote beaches, kids paddling in the gentle waters, and wonderful bird life. Off the southern shore of Adele Island we sighted our first seal, heard amazing birdsong and then paddled the western shore's bays looking towards the mainland for our home for the night. Many of the bays looked much the same and made map reading for some of us difficult. Tim referred to his trusty GPS!

We camped at Observation Beach where in gentle rain and a rising wind we settled ourselves under the tarp for card games and ludo.

Next day our plan was to paddle up The Mad Mile to Mosquito Bay. The northerly wind, already high, was expected to reach 25 knots with a rough sea building, but we gave it a shot. Headwinds along the coast were a new experience for some, and the swell, visible on the horizon, gave a

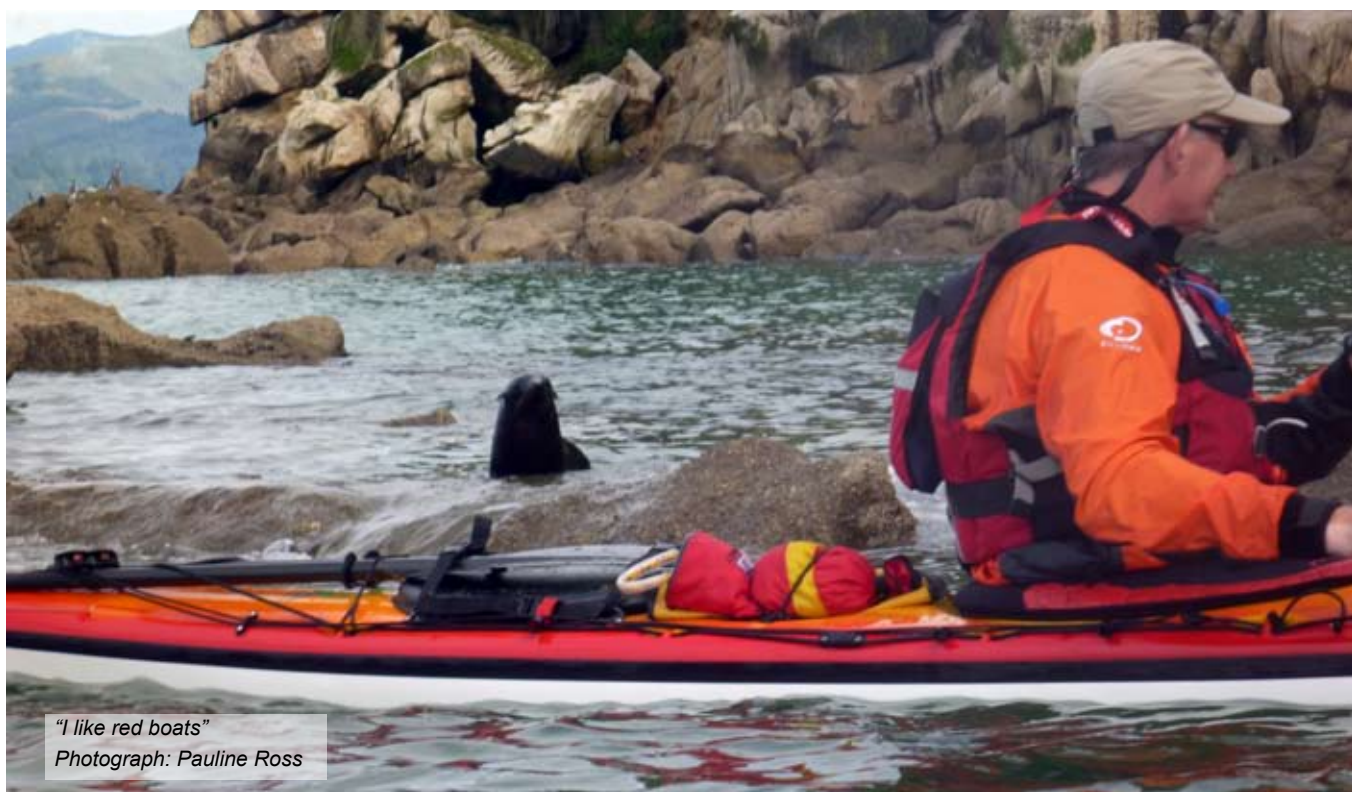
sinking feeling. We sent our fearless leader to check it out – "no go".

The VHF forecast indicated that the weather was not going to improve so we adopted Plan B, turned around and cruised down the coast, stopping at Stilwell Bay to sit on the waves sideways close to shore and practise bracing strokes. At Appletree Bay, our base for the next couple of nights, the surf was up and Jim's head was all we could see as he went in. Observed by trampers further down the beach we followed him, one of us having an unexpected swim.

With bad weather setting in we soon had tents and tarp up, warm food in our stomachs, and were hunkered down for the afternoon. We soon were in the routine of camp life, when possible hanging up gear to dry, keeping your tent organised (or else you keep losing things...) and clean (Pauline's brush and pan set got used a fair bit), and planning ahead to boil and then cool water to drink.

Next day conditions were a little better and most of the group started a paddle to Anchorage and beyond. All went well to the beginning of The Mad Mile, but heading up the coast we struck strong headwinds and a well established northerly 1m swell. Mindful of different experience levels we turned around and moved to Plan C.

We navigated the swell and shared the east coast of Adele Island with groups of seals. At Stream Cove, where we stopped for coffee, we waited for the tide to come in and take us away. Unfortunately for Pam the game of 'Catch the tide' meant going backwards not forwards. Why not throw in some rescues as well? Two were unintentional, and one was planned so



"I like red boats"

Photograph: Pauline Ross

Chris could practise what she had learnt on the skills course.

The weather forecast was good for the next day, but a gale was due the day after, so we decided to paddle for a day and then head for Nelson a day ahead of time. In absolutely dead calm, and not a drop of rain, the full group gently paddled to Adele Island and explored the east coast again. The seals were more interested in sleeping than coming to play with us but in a quiet cove three of us had a lovely few minutes with two seal pups. Their grace, nimbleness, and wicked sense of fun, twisting and turning towards and then away from us, amazed me.

We cruised down the coast to Coquille Bay and Split Apple Rock taking photos to complete our Abel Tasman adventure.

What was it like to be the only person from my club on a blended club trip? Great fun.

Camaraderie built up quickly to unite the four clubs. Everyone had at least the basic skills from the beginner's course. The more experienced shared tips and skills. Those who safely experienced new, challenging sea conditions learnt to handle them confidently. Each of us with kayaking or tramping experience of camping had useful ideas on gear, packet and dehydrated food. The prize for the freshest food goes jointly to Jim and Tim.

I definitely recommend joining trips from clubs in other cities. It's a great way to paddle.



Rock Gardening is always fun.  
Photograph: Pat Thorn



The locals kept an eye on us.  
Photograph: Pat Thorn

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