

# MAKING THE MOST OF

By Bev Abbott, N.Z. Mountain Safety Council.



**Choose your trip to suit the capabilities of your party — walkways are good for short walks especially with inexperienced people.**

Rick Hargreaves

The New Zealand outdoors offers wonderful opportunities for recreation. Each year more and more people are discovering the rewards of spending time in the bush. Some go on their own to find peace and solitude. Others go with their families or small groups of friends to enjoy fresh air and exercise. There are also special interest groups like branches of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society who go to study the plant life or animal life and the fascinating inter-relationships of living things and their environment.

Land managers in the New Zealand Forest Service, the Department of Lands and Survey and many local bodies have responded to this increased demand for outdoor recreation in many ways. One exciting development has been the rapid growth in the number of tracks and walkways. Accompanying this has been a vast increase in the amount of publicity about walks in newspaper articles, radio programmes and pamphlets. Every encouragement is being given to people to get out and enjoy New Zealand's natural environments.

There is however, another side to the story. Experienced bush users have long known that New Zealand's bush and mountains can be very unforgiving to the ill-prepared, the unaware and the careless.

What was intended as an easy, relaxing trip can quickly become very demanding, both physically and mentally if the weather turns cold and wet, if someone is lost or injured, or if the party lacks the necessary equipment, skill, fitness or leadership. All people going into the outdoors, even if just for a short afternoon's walk need to know about the potential problems they may have to face. They need to know how to prevent the preventable and how to cope with the unexpected.

There are probably three vital ingredients for successful and enjoyable trips; careful preparation, competent leadership, and overall, a spirit of cooperation between the people.

## Planning

Pre-trip planning includes such tasks as planning the route, obtaining permission for crossing private land, checking that everyone knows what to bring, and leaving trip details with a responsible contact person. It's also important that the leader "knows" the party. An awareness of each individual's strengths and weaknesses may help the leader to anticipate and avoid situations where problems could arise. It may also indicate ways that the leader can organise the trip so that everyone has a more enjoyable time. Some leaders work

**What can be an easy walk in good conditions can become much harder in bad weather — Tongariro National Park.**



Photo: Colin Abbott