

---

---

# NZLSAR News

---

---

Volume 11 Issue 2

April 2005

---

---

## CONTENTS

Chairman's message  
Lost in the Buller  
Starfish Pictures Ltd  
We are all different?

MLSO course attendance opportunity  
A training programme for 2005  
North Island Search Dog Course  
Rescue in the Tararua's

## Chairman's Message

NZLSAR, as an organisation, has only been operating for a relatively short period of time - just over 10 years. During those ten years there has been a significant change in SAR in New Zealand. At that time NZLSAR was founded, one of the main areas that the National Committee of NZLSAR focused on was training and here I use the word in its widest sense. A tremendous amount of work has gone into providing a wide range of SAR related training via courses, development of standards, defining roles, resources, etc for Land SAR volunteers. A significant amount of this work has been done through the NZLSAR Standing Subcommittees; the Specialist and Training subcommittees in particular.

From the initial Emergency Management Ltd courses introduced by Ross Gordon, we have been very successful in building a reasonable and sustainable training regime over the years that has been strengthened with the recent involvement of Tai Poutini Polytechnic and SARINZ. This has enabled our volunteers to receive the appropriate SAR training for the roles they undertake with Land SAR.

The national committee's view is that it is essential that the next step is taken; that is

to take a good look at the total organisation and put the processes and systems in place for the next five to ten years. We also now need to put more focus on what resources are needed and what can be done to assist the Regional, District and local SAR committees, especially with the increased amount of administrative work that is now required these days.

While work on identifying funding options is progressing well, a full strategic plan for the next five to ten years needs to be developed and implemented. As part of this process we will be undertaking a review of the total NZLSAR organisation to determine the views at all levels within the SAR community over the next few months. A review team will be travelling around the country and talking to as many people as possible to capture a full range of views on Land SAR. The results from this will be fully analysed and then developed into a sustainable strategic plan for NZLSAR for the next 5 to 10 years. Your participation and contributions would be gratefully appreciated.

Roscoe Tait  
Chairman, NZLSAR

+

### Lost in the Buller Gorge

Amongst the e-mails being circulated amongst the search dog fraternity is one I received below from Larry Charles (an operational dog handler) to Clair Robertson as Chairman of the NZLSAR Search Dog Subcommittee. Larry has two Operational dogs – Mishka and Wulff. Below is the email and in it Larry outlines a very successful search and find of a tourist missing in the Buller Gorge. JPT NFO.

**C**lair  
Just to let you know we had a callout on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> December to a popular local tourist attraction (Buller Gorge Swingbridge). An 18 year old male (Ukrainian) who went for short walk leaving

his parents at the swingbridge at approx 1600 hours and hadn't returned by 1900 when I was called out. Kim's brother in law Tony Chittock (an Adviser with Balclutha SAR) was here so he came with me as well as a local SAR member.



The weather was wet but not particularly cold, if you are used to it. The area had been visited by over 400 people that day and

Staff had already checked the tracks. The river does a big U-turn and the land he was missing on was a peninsular of approx 150 -

200 acres mostly thick steep bush. The Buller River is on three sides and the Brunner Ranges are behind. The river also has the Ariki falls on it, which is a scenic attraction on the eastern side. The main highway is on the other side of the river and on three sides such that traffic is easily heard anywhere on the peninsular.

My plan was to sign cut around a kahikatea tree which people visit and is a dead end track to see if we could locate where he left the track. Nothing seen so we walked down the west side of the peninsula, again with nothing obvious. We went another 300 metres along the edge of the river then cut straight uphill and turned back towards the kahikatea tree parallel to the river still trying to cut his track. It was approximately 2015 by this time.

As soon as I turned back towards the tree I noticed Wulff had gone, I waited and then noticed Mishka had also gone. Mishka returned to where she could see me (50 metres above me), she stopped and indicated she wanted me to follow. I climbed up 60 metres and found Yuri's footprints crossing a gully. As it was getting dark I decided not to wait for the rest of the team

and radioed up my intentions. I harnessed Mishka and let Wulff free track, the dogs were tracking really well (track probably about 4 hours old at this point). Wulff led all the way up to top of ridge then turned north back towards the swingbridge. He continued approx 400 metres, then did a hard right and dropped down off the ridge on the eastern side.

We zig zagged down through some very steep stuff for another 400 metres and found Yuri standing in the bush very wet and confused about his position and unaware he was standing right next to a walking track near Ariki Falls. By this time it was dark in the bush. I was stoked with the dogs, and pleased I'd told our police I was going in before dark. The weather deteriorated over night and apart from the print I covered with Kim's raincoat all others were washed out the next day when I went back to get the coat. The area is also crawling in wasp nests (ask Tony). Home again by 2230, beats getting up at 0230 in morning and travelling to where ever.

**Larry Charles**  
Dog Handler  
Murchison

### **Starfish Pictures Ltd – Television Series**

An document has been agreed to and signed between Police and Starfish Pictures Ltd in which Police agree to cooperate with Starfish in the production of seven half hour programmes featuring Police search and rescue operations. Starfish is an Auckland based company and as such will attempt to gain the required footage from Auckland and surrounding districts. The Producer has been involved with numerous other "reality" TV series and is passionate about capturing footage showing the skills and dedication of SAR personnel both Police and volunteers. The aim is to produce a series that rates well allowing a second series to be filmed which can then visit other parts of the country.

The production will take place between February 2005 to June 2006 to be later screened on Television New Zealand TV One network. The NZLSAR Committee at it meeting in February 2005 supported by resolution the proposal.

What does this mean to the volunteers – the people who at times make up a considerable percentage of the participants of an operation? Well firstly and as I understand it unlike actors or even extras in a film you will receive no payment. Secondly you must agree to being filmed, you must be aware of this requirement at the time and if you do not wish to be filmed you must say so. It would become extremely difficult for all concerned if you change your mind some months after the filming took place. Police have control at all times and if no Police person is present and volunteers believe a situation is prejudicial to the good running of the operation, they take control. Finally NZLSAR has the right to nominate a person for the viewing panel towards the end of 2005 or early 2006

**Dave Erson**  
**Chairman, NZLSAR Specialist Subcommittee**

## We're All Different - But Exactly the Same!

I am going to begin with a paragraph from "Computers and SAR" by Linda Cook printed in the December newsletter – then expand a little.

*"On the software front, as Matthew Farrelly (NZLSAR News June 2004) rightly observed, "due to the unique circumstances in NZ it is preferable to support locally made software that is being tailored to our unique needs". It is inconceivable that any company other than a local NZ one would be so accommodating and willing to adapt and develop their products to suit the very specific and critical requirements of the NZ SAR community."*

This general concept of "the unique circumstances in NZ", it seems does not only apply to the issue of computers and software as covered in the article, but is thought to be true across many aspects of Search and Rescue and beyond!

In the rest of this article I will discuss the following: The unique landscape, lost person behaviour, logistics and software.

I too thought that New Zealand was so unique in terms of the environment that SAR in NZ had a unique set of circumstances and problems. However, since attending the National Conference it is my belief this thought is incorrect.

On the subject of our 'Unique Landscape' and its effect on the lost person, those who heard Bob Koester speak at the pre-conference courses learned that he is compiling lost person behaviour data from around the world. In order to make sense of it has utilised the concept of Eco-Regions. In simple terms the type of eco-region is determined by landscape and vegetation (plus rainfall etc.). And on a global level, areas in different countries may be classed as the same general type of eco-region. A couple of examples given were the similarities between the South Island's West Coast and Washington State, USA and the similarities of the Canterbury plains to the American prairies. To further support this, think about the differences between the Canterbury plains and the West Coast environment. The affects of landscape on the actions of a missing person in Canterbury is going to be very different from

those which would be imposed upon him/her by the terrain of the West Coast a few hundred miles away, but one would expect similar behaviour from a missing person on the prairies of the USA - an ocean and thousands of miles away.

Logistics is another where we are not by any means unique.

I recently spent a few days in Canada and was hosted by a member of SAR in Vancouver. He introduced me to members of SAR around the Vancouver area. These people discussed their unique circumstances which affect logistics. And guess what. They are exactly the same as our unique circumstances. So perhaps they (and we) are not so unique after all.

One interesting aspect regarding logistics is that of mutual support. Canadian SAR groups typically request the support of neighbouring groups earlier than I have seen in my own area (and this is probably true in many other regions). When discussing this locally it was pointed out that many of our searches are over within the first operational period so if support was called in more often than not the people travelling would arrive on scene to find the search had finished. This situation is not unique. The folks in Canada often strike this situation but still continue to request support very early since they understand that the benefits outweigh the inconveniences.

Also these people are the same passionate volunteers as you will meet anywhere in NZ (and probably Australia, USA, UK, and any other country with a volunteer SAR community). They have the same issues with regards to time off from work to attend searches, pressure on family life, the same problems recruiting new people etc. They also have some SAR groups who have close to 100 call-outs per year and other groups who get perhaps two or three. Once again, just like New Zealand! This gives them the same problems as we have, volunteers in some areas who have problems taking any more time off work, whilst in other areas they see so little action that they 'get rusty'.

This finally brings us back to the subject of software.

Why is New Zealand going it's own way with search management software when there is good proven software available? Whilst it may be true that software packages such as "Incident Commander" have been developed in another country, they have been developed in such a way as to be adaptable to local circumstances. (Incidentally, for anyone convinced that the software mentioned is only of use in Canada the package was used by NASA to search for wreckage of the Shuttle and to the best of my knowledge this did not crash land in Canada). Surely it would be better for those developing software in New Zealand to be investing their efforts by working alongside an overseas entity for the benefit of both

parties (and search managers world-wide), rather than competing with them.

As an endnote, I raise the question - if we are so unique in New Zealand, why did we go to the expense of bringing overseas speakers to our conference? The answer to this is simple. Because we can learn from these people, they operate in very similar circumstances with the same challenges and problems that we are faced with. Could someone please explain to me what "*the very specific and critical requirements of the NZ SAR community*" are, because I really don't know!

**Pete Renshaw**  
Gisborne SAR

### Managing Land Search Operations (MLSO) Courses 2005

Over the last few years NZ Land SAR and Police have been running a very successful joint training program (50:50 Police and NZLSAR personnel) with the MLSO course at the Police College. This week long course, which is funded by Tai Poutini Polytechnic is aimed at those people who are responsible for organising and running SAR operations, especially extended ones. SARINZ instructors will run the course.

Two courses are planned for the 05/06 financial year and will be held at the Police College during the weeks of 08 to 12 and 15 to 19 August 2005. Usually North Island people attend the first week and South Island people the second as it has been found to be beneficial for Police and volunteers from the same area to attend the same course.

The exact starting and finishing times will be announced nearer the event but with the course probably starting 0800 Monday mornings, accommodation will be need to be provided on Sunday night. Departure on Friday will be about 1600. NZLSAR and Police meet all transport, accommodation and meal costs.

Information on the courses will be sent to the Regional Committees for consideration by each of them. However it is important

that this opportunity be "advertised" widely and with encouragement to all those who have or aspire to take part in SAR management. Succession planning is a vital regeneration process for any organisation. Keen but less experienced people attending this course will add depth to your management pool.

Enquires can be made to myself, John Tristram or your Regional Training Coordinator, contact details for whom may be found elsewhere in this copy of the News. We would ask that each Regional Committee submit their nominees to John Tristram by 01 July to allow NZLSAR the best opportunity of purchasing "economy" priced tickets. To help us manage the risk associated with early the purchase of non-transferable air tickets please ensure that all names put forward are in a position to attend.

Finally it is a NZLSAR Committee decision that all who wish to continue after the 30 July 2005 in the role of Advisers must have attended a 40 hour MLSO course. This is an ideal opportunity to work with a group of like minded people and obtain this qualification.

**Barry Were**  
Chairman, Training Subcommittee

## Wellington Land Search and Rescue Organisation training programme 2005

*I was recently emailed the Wellington Land Search and Rescue training programme for this year. It covers a wide range of the SAR skills needed in providing a first class service such that it is worth giving wider consideration. JPT. NFO.*

- January No training
- Feb 17 New Member Induction Evening
- Feb 19/20 TCA 1 – postponed
- March 12-13 Search Methods (SARINZ)
- March 31(Thurs eve) New Member Induction Evening
- April 2-3 Region 4 Iman/GMan
- April 16 - 17 Foundation Ropes Course (SARINZ)
- April 21 (Thurs eve) Comms/GPS
- May 7-8 Team Leader Training (SARINZ)
- May 14-15 TCA 1 (SARINZ)
- May 19 (Thurs eve) HQ Systems training and desktop exercise
- May 21-22 Region 4 TUMONZ (SARINZ)
- June 9 and 12 First Aid Course (Thurs night/Sat)
- June 18 and/or 19 HQ training (CIMS level 4?)
- June 23 (Thurs eve) WLSAR Induction training
- July 21 (Thursday eve) GPS training evening
- July 23-24 Region 4 TUMONZ (SARINZ)
- August 08-12 and 15-27 Managing Land Search Operations – two five 4 day residential course for Search
- Headquarters staff. Participants will be selected by Advisers
- August 13-14 TCA 1 (SARINZ)
- August 18 & 21 Helicopter Winch Training – Thursday evening + Sunday
- Sept 11 SAREX involving Search Dogs
- Sept 24 NAVEX 05 – a challenging navigation exercise, using map, compass and GPS.
- October 8-9 TCA 2 (SARINZ)
- Oct 20 (Thurs evening) Induction training
- Oct 22-23 (Labour WE) Foundation Ropes Course (SARINZ)
- November 19-20 Annual SAREX (two days)
- (A full operational work-up of Wellington Land SAR – designed to test all aspects of the system)
- December 2005 No training planned

In addition to the above training evenings and days, Wellington Land Search and Rescue plan to hold the following evening meetings the Organisation:

- Monday 21 March 2005
  - Monday 20 June 2005
  - Monday 17 October.2005 - AGM.
- Meetings will be held at the Wellington Central Police Station commencing at 1930 and cover a variety of topics relevant to all members of Wellington Land SAR.

### Training Objectives

- build on our improving skill base
- create as many hands on learning opportunities as possible
- maintain a manageable training program
- make use of Sundays, evenings and short sessions where possible
- gain new ideas and understandings from external sources
- add value to the Wellington SAR Organisation meetings
- broaden our instructor base to ease the teaching load
- continue to require 50% attendance at all relevant training per year
- aim to train between 12 and 16 people or four teams on the day programs
- keep training days to between 0830 and 1600 finish
- spread the weekend courses throughout the year
- keep the fun element in Land SAR training

**Dave Walker**

Wellington Land SAR Organisation

## North Island Search Dog Training and Assessment Course

The Tihoi Venture School is the venue for the 2005 North Island Search Dog Training and Assessment Course. Starting first thing on the morning of Thursday 21 April it will run through till about 1500 hours on Sunday 24 April. Canine First Aid, a session by Police on their requirements, a night SAREX and lots and lots of practical dog training sessions will see the time fly by. All this will culminate with an assessment for Operational Status for those thought ready to undergo this trial. This course is for those active in a SAR Organisation and training a dog for land search and rescue. Enrolment forms can be found on the web or from myself at 04-470-7247. It will be a cracker! JPT. NFO.

## Three days for rescue of a person disabled on Tararua tops

Wellington SAR conducted its largest rescue operation in the Tararuas in many years in the first week of January. On the third day more than 30 SAR members were in the field.

A 49 year old female solo tramper using her cellphone had called for help from near Atkinson on the Southern Crossing, a two or

three day, long time favourite Tararua tramping trip. Atkinson is 1472 meters ASL, well above the bush line and a couple of hours from Kime Hut to the north or Alpha Hut to the south. Weather conditions were unseasonable but typical of Tararua conditions – high winds, poor visibility and cold.



The Westpac helicopter was dispatched with a medic by Police but was unable to reach the woman.

Wellington SAR called for teams worried that in the first week of January many searchers

would be out of town on tramping or climbing trips. Wairarapa SAR dispatched two members in their favourite Hughes 500 and managed to reach the prominent feature False Spur, not too far from the woman's reported location. They played a vital role in

finding the woman and keeping her warm until a medic arrived.

Wellington dispatched a team including a medic for a very bumpy ride into the hills. Helicopter staff warned searchers not to get out of the machine if they felt ill at their destination because the effects would last for a considerable time and would prevent them from participating in the operation.

The first Wellington team reached the woman and determined that she could not be moved. She was suffering from hypothermia and exhaustion. Even a move of 20 metres for a toilet stop was a major effort risking collapse.

That night the weather conditions were atrocious. More than 250 mm of rain fell and homes were flooded in the Kapiti and Hutt Valley areas. The SAR team had a difficult night and one of the alpine tents was ripped by the wind. The team discreetly discussed how they would evacuate the site if the weather worsened and considered the possibility of having to leave the woman on the exposed tops.

As back up two teams were waiting at Alpha Hut with extra gear including dry clothing and additional sleeping bags.

Search HQ was running a number of evacuation scenarios and maintaining close contact with the Metrological Office. After night one it appeared that the weather would worsen again causing the woman to remain in the hills for perhaps another two or even three nights.

Meanwhile an Iroquois had arrived and was available to “snatch” the patient if a gap appeared in the weather. HQ decided on a “stretcher carry option” in case the helicopter

was unable to reach the rescue site. Calls for more SAR members were made and teams from Wellington and Wairarapa were flown into the hills.

Night two saw a big improvement in the weather. The rain stopped but the high wind and poor visibility remained. A fresh team and medic spent the night with the woman.

Poor visibility and high winds again prevented a helicopter rescue so teams were moved forward to the rescue site. A lightweight titanium stretcher was used for the carry. While Wellington City basked in sunlight only a few miles away the SAR teams were belaying the stretcher in very windy and cold conditions. The patient was carried down False Spur to a location where a helicopter had greater chance of a gap in the weather. That gap occurred and the patient was whisked to Masterton hospital.

A mammoth extraction began, as teams had to climb the Spur and travel back along the ridge tops to Alpha Hut. The Iroquois was used to lift teams out until darkness meant flying could not continue. The remaining teams were airlifted out the next day – day four.

The search emphasised:-

- the convenience of rat packs – Back Country packs were used
- the necessity of always packing for extreme weather in the NZ mountains
- the value of good cooperation between neighbouring SAR areas
- the skills and commitment of SAR volunteers, medics, pilots and Police

Matthew Nolan  
Adviser, Wellington.

**Editors Comments.** A very big thank you to **Roscoe, Larry, Dave Erson, Pete, Barry, Dave Walker, Matthew** for your articles and the **Wellington Land SAR website for the photo**. Copy for the **June News** is most welcome and the close-off date is **Friday 27 May**. Articles on gear, SAR training or operations are most welcome. Please either mail as neatly hand-written, printed hard copy or on a disc to **NZLSAR, PO Box 12081, Thorndon, Wellington**. Alternatively email it to **tristram.nzlsar@xtra.co.nz** Even if you have some thoughts on an article but are diffident in putting pen to paper, feel free to give me a ring on **04-470-7247** and we can talk it through.

**John P Tristram, National Field Officer**