

# Update from Wwoof Headquarters

Wwoof NZ Newsletter

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## From the Coordinator's Desk

Hi from Nelson. The cold southerlies have died away, our young trees are growing fresh leaves, and the goats have already jumped the fence to nibble them off! Oh, the joys of Spring. Maybe the goats get sick of eating gorse all winter?

Your new Wwoof book is enclosed. Some changes you may notice are more symbols and less pages. Thanks to many weeks work by Dominik Vogel the book now has a more professional layout. It is more economical with space and should be easier to read once you learn what the symbols represent (check page 3 for a guide to the symbols). If you have any ideas on this new design let us know and we may be able to incorporate them. There will another update to the book around Feb '05.

If you asked for a Wwoofer Register Book this is enclosed also. The aim of the register is to provide a simple, friendly routine that gives you a record of who has stayed with you. When your new Wwoofer arrives get them to fill in their personal details and membership number from their Wwoof Book. When they leave you can also ask them to write comments. In this way it doubles as a register and a visitors' book.

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## New Zealand Nature Farming Society

### EM Field Day & Seminar 2005

In early March 2005 at Lincoln there will be an EM (Effective Microorganisms) Field Day & Seminar focusing on the use of EM in farming in New Zealand. There will be a keynote address given by Prof. Ravi Sangakara of Sri Lanka along with other NZ speakers, and a field trip.

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## Bouquets for Hosts

When Wwoofers write about their time Wwoofing in NZ they often speak highly of their hosts. As a way of recognising the positive influence hosts provide to the Wwoof Organisation some hosts are chosen to receive a gift. Heather and Andrew Smith Martin have been mentioned on various occasions by their Wwoofers as a place where they felt at home and learnt various aspects of organic farming.

They will receive a \$50 Eco Store gift voucher.

So thanks to all hosts who have given their Wwoofers so much and contributed to the great reputation Wwoof and New Zealanders in general have around the world!



## **Grant and Amrita's house truck.**

A high proportion of Wwoof hosts use alternative accommodation such as sleepouts, caravans, house trucks/buses etc. As these are often without power there is a tendency to use candles for lighting. The dangers of doing this were dramatically demonstrated when the above Golden Bay house truck was destroyed, along with the unlucky Wwoofer's possessions. This also left the host without Wwoofer accommodation for a while.

LPG lanterns may lessen the risk of fire but in confined spaces there is the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Other ideas: If the accommodation is not too far you could run an extension cord as long as an RCD protected plug is used at the house end. Torches that can be recharged in the main house would be a cheap option. To set up a sleepout or caravan with solar panels, batteries, controller and 12 volt lights would cost around \$2000 and would be a good project for a technically minded Wwoofer!

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## Wwoof Grants

In order to encourage more substantial projects the value of these grants is increasing from \$500 to \$1000 each. These grants are aimed at helping hosts carry out environmental development projects on their property. If you are interested in applying please contact Wwoof Headquarters and an application will be sent to you. If you wish, information and photos about your project could be included in the newsletter for others to read about.

## Wwoofing

By Alex Banks-Watson

Between the ages of six and thirteen, I lived with my family on a communal farm, a 280 acres slice of rain forest valley in North-Eastern New South Wales. We and the five or so other households living there ran a small dairy herd, chooks and a large vegetable garden. To help with the workload, we hosted Wwoofers. These Willing Workers On Organic Farms (WWOOF - still one of the coolest acronyms I know of!) would join Wwoof Australia and receive a directory of host farms whom they could then contact about coming to stay. Our Wwoofers hailed from all corners of the globe, countries such as England, Japan, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Israel, Canada, and of course Australian as well. They would work an average of 4 hours per day in exchange for a place to sleep and food. This was a win-win situation: they received housing, organic home-cooked food and interaction with Real people (instead of the tourism industry) all for only half a days gardening or building, and we enjoyed the company and assistance of fascinating world travelers with stories to tell. As my three siblings and I were educated at home, this time with Wwoofers gave us a great awareness of the world at large and the different people and cultures in it. Having experienced this from the age of six, it was some time before I realized just how wonderful an opportunity this really was. However, in my eighteenth year, I finally joined Wwoof myself due to a burning desire to see something of New Zealand.

I bought a ticket for Dunedin in the bottom of the South Island and set forth on 6 of the most memorable weeks of my life to date. I figured I'd take a circuit of the South Island and save the North Island for another trip. After a day in Dunedin savouring the cities architecture and art galleries and phoning a bunch of hosts for a place to stay, I caught a bus to Timaru, and stayed for 5 days with Ian, picking carrots, trimming hedges and mowing his tennis court. We got on very well and after three days work, he offered me his car to take a 400km drive up to Mt. Cook and back. It was and remains one of the most amazing days of my life, just me, in awe of the lakes, the mountains, and the generosity of a stranger. Having determined that my next stop would be Christchurch where I have some friends, I made my way there and spent two weeks helping Jack and Sally-Ann to build their house by the beach.

I put in the insulation, and helped lay the floor and line the ceiling, and went swimming every day in the surf till my feet got itchy and I headed north again. This time it was to Kaikoura where I spent a few days with a potter, gardening around her beautiful house and walking along the rocky coastline gazing one moment at the sea the next at the snow capped peaks behind the town. When I told her my next destination was in the Motueka area, she lined me up with a friend who was traveling in the same direction and I even took the opportunity to go and hear a Tibetan Lama speak about the inner journey, with my impromptu driver. I stayed with a wonderful couple who run a bed and breakfast enjoying a very peaceful few days preparing their gardens for spring planting, watching the river roll by and running up the steep walls of the valley. Having reached the top of the Island I headed down the spectacular western coastline to Hokatika where I spent a couple days with a Scottish sculptor and his German wife nailing together the framing for the roof of their new house. Their Wwoofer accommodation was the best I'd ever seen, a little cabin with a huge window looking out over the river to the southern alps... You could pay \$150 a night for that view I'd be willing to bet! A bus carried me over the mountains to Wanaka where I stayed for a night and then on to Dunedin again where I stayed with an interesting couple caring for their animals and mowing for the few remaining days of my NZ trip.

So there it was, 6 weeks, a bunch of new friends, and memories in my mind of a great deal of the south island all for less than 800 Australian dollars including the airfare!!! I like the way Wwoofing feels purposeful, the way you're helping your hosts to live their chosen lifestyle, and they're enabling you to travel immensely cheaply. The hours are completely flexible and negotiable between Wwoofer and host. Often Wwoofers will work a several full days in return for a few days off to see more of the local area. And you can stay as long or as short a time as you and your host are comfortable with, from a couple of days up to many months. Wwoofing is possible in most western European countries, North and Central America, the U.K., and as I've said, Australia and New Zealand. It's the best way I know to see the world. Try it!