

REGATTA TIME FOR SEA SCOUTS

BY ANDREW STEVENS

The fleet at the Ice Breaker regatta



The Waikato Spring Regatta, more affectionately known as the “Ice Breaker” regatta signifies the start of the summer regatta season for many upper North Island Sea Scout groups.

Winter is typically spent in one of two ways, undertaking maintenance on boats, or for those in Auckland, trying to outthink the ever changing weather patterns at one of the two winter sailing series on offer hosted by the Pt Chevalier and Pakuranga sailing clubs.

The regatta season however provides the opportunity to fine tune and test a multitude of water based skills against many other groups. The “Ice Breaker” is a one day event held on Lake Rotorua in Hamilton; no trophies and no points but it is still a race to be first across the line in the rowing, sailing and canoeing events. This location tends to test skills over a “short” course in a sprint type environment due to the size of the lake, with rowing events only about 300m compared to the 750 -1,500m range used at other venues.

The Young Mariners Open Regatta and the Bay of Plenty Regatta are next on the calendar. Both are full weekend events and usually include additional activities such as iron man and rigging competitions. These two events typically move around the region as they are hosted by different groups, this year sees both being held on different lakes in Rotorua. Using a range of venues raises the awareness of groups to a variety of facilities and tests them against different wind and tidal patterns; from lakes to exposed coastal waters to bays and inland water ways.

The Waitemata Challenge follows in December, timed for a blow out for the seniors following the completion of exams. This event takes on a bit of a difference from typical regattas. Rather than having a series of discrete events, crews are set a series of challenges that requires them to navigate around the Waitemata Harbour. In the past this has included the likes of a 5nm rowing race from Okahu Bay to the light house on Rangitoto then rigging for a sail, while at sea, and circumnavigating the island. It is a bit of a challenge getting under the bridge between Rangitoto and Motutapu with the mast still up, and then there is timing the passage over the causeway so you don't get left high and dry. This is then followed by a run up to the summit and a sail back to Okahu: an example of typical one day activity.

Most groups have a bit of down time at Christmas, but this year many will converge on Porirua Harbour for the National Sea Scout Regatta. This is the ultimate test of knowledge and skill, eight days of non stop competition for the prize of a

New Lynn seniors pulling away



Trident for the top all round group in NZ.

The New Year will see Kai Iwi lakes used as the venue for the Northland regatta and provides an ideal environment for families to travel with groups. A month later, the Auckland Regatta is held at Te Haruhi Bay in Shakespear Regional Park on Whagapararua Peninsula. The Auckland event is the single largest weekend regatta held by Scouting in NZ, typically with up to 500 in attendance. Both these events add camping competitions and seamanship tests to all the other disciplines and are considered as the top two local scout regattas in NZ.

Having been tested for stamina and technique in the rowing, tactics and rules of the road in sailing, strength in the canoeing and iron man, discipline in the camping and all round skills in the seamanship it is time for something a little different.

And the final regatta, held over Easter at Westshore in Napier, introduces some novelty events on top of the traditional ones. The caterpillar race sees the rowing boats being paddled like a waka with as many people on board as you can fit. With no rudder and standing room only, this requires some great communication (and balance) and is always mixed with a lot of laughter. But what a way to finish the regatta season.

Scouting uses these regattas as one of its many tools to promote and develop the skill base of its membership with respect to water activities.

The photographs are provided by the New Lynn Sea Scout Group of Auckland, who in 2006 became the first Group ever to attend and win all the regattas mentioned above in one season and then top it off by taking the national title at the regatta held at Home Bay on Motutapu Island over Christmas 2006. 