

Wetlands you can visit in the Auckland Region

Auckland is a maritime region nestled between the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean. At its centre, a city of over 1 million people sprawls across an active volcanic field flanked by two harbours. The region's landforms are diverse and stunning; a marine park dotted with islands, an intricate coastline, bush clad ranges, extensive sand peninsulas, and lowlands of uplifted ancient sea bed.

Its wetlands are equally diverse, and include;

- harbours and estuaries,
- dune lakes and swamps
- volcanic springs, swamps, and crater lakes
- flax or raupo-dominated gully wetlands
- remnant swamp forest
- gumland heaths
- water supply reservoirs and water treatment ponds.

On the narrow Auckland isthmus, the low-lying western suburbs were once full of cabbage trees and flax swamps, and inhabited by weka, banded rail, bittern and pukeko. Wetlands formed here when lava flows blocked streams, or in volcanic craters and ponds on lava flow depressions.



In the Kaipara, Franklin and Rodney district lowlands, swamp forests with kahikatea, pukatea, swamp maire, raupo, cabbage trees and harakeke (flax) covered large expanses of poorly drained land. At the coast they graded into saltmarshes with oioi and sea rush.

Dune lakes formed on the peninsulas of Awhitu and Kaipara built by sand deposited by the Waikato River and transported northwards by strong currents.

As with the rest of New Zealand, wetlands here have been seriously depleted and degraded, with most freshwater wetland now less than 10 hectares in extent, however they continue to support a range of native species including;

- Australasian bittern, fernbird, brown teal, grey duck, banded rail, NZ dabchick, spotless crake, and marsh crake
- Eight native fish species including inanga, kokopu, and black mudfish
- Around one third of the nationally threatened plants in Auckland

Today Auckland has an estimated 3700 ha of freshwater wetlands and 14,000 ha of estuarine wetland, along with over 30 lakes and 10,000 km of rivers and streams.



The Auckland wetlands directory is sponsored by Auckland Regional Council

www.wetlandtrust.org.nz

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Some of the better known wetlands in the Region include:

- The Waitemata, Kaipara and Manukau harbours
- The Firth of Thames - an internationally recognised wetland
- Kaitoke swamp and Whangapoua estuary on Great Barrier Island
- Te Henga wetland, north of then Waitakere Ranges
- The dune lake systems on the Kaipara and Awhitu peninsulas and at Pakiri
- Poukaraka, Te Matuku, Owhiti and Awaawaroa wetlands on Waiheke Island
- Wetlands fed by volcanic aquifers at Western Springs, Lake Pupuke, and The Grotto
- The kahikatea swamp forest and saltmarshes at Omaha
- The extensive damp sand flats at Whatipu on the West Coast

Auckland wetlands that have been substantially restored or created include:

- Waiatarua at Meadowbank near central Auckland
- Manawa wetland in New Lynn – created in an abandoned clay quarry
- Awhitu and Tawharanui regional parks where previously drained wetlands have been restored
- Manukau Foreshore - extensive restoration of intertidal areas in former oxidation ponds accessible via Ambury Reigonal Park
- Matiatia wetland at the ferry gateway to Waiheke Island

A number of agencies and care groups including Meola Creek Eco-care, Friends of Oakley Creek, Friends of The Whau, Project Twin-streams, Te Ara O Puhinui, Waitakere Rivercare, and the Waiheke Island Wetland Initiative are restoring wetlands in the Auckland Region.

Auckland Wetland Agencies











Auckland Regional Council
www.arc.govt.nz
09 366 2000

Department of Conservation
www.doc.govt.nz
09 307 9279

Fish and Game New Zealand
www.fishandgame.org.nz
07 849 1666













Wetlands to visit in the Auckland Region, New Zealand

1Name / type	Description / special features	Activities ²					Facilities					Access, further information
		 Walks	 Birdlife	 Boating	 Fishing / shooting	 Highly scenic	 Info centre	 Interp. panels	 Lookout/ bird hide	 Picnic area	 Accom.	
Whatipu Dune flats ★★★★★	Spectacular area of coastal dunes and wetlands on rugged west coast (Scientific Reserve). Threatened species incl. NZ dotterel breed here.	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	http://www.arc.govt.nz/albany/main/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/whatipu/ To book lodge (09) 811 8860 Swimming not recommended!	
Ambury Regional Park Intertidal mudflats, Manukau Harbour ★★★★	Regional farm park. Constructed shell banks are an important roosting sites for waders at high tide including the threatened endemic wrybill and NZ dotterel	✓	✓					✓	✓		http://www.arc.govt.nz/albany/main/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/ambury/ <i>Manukau Harbour, 20 mins from Auckland City. Follow Auckland airport signs to Mahunga Drive/ Favona exit, turn right into Church/Wallace Rd, right into Muir Ave, left into Ambury Rd.</i>	
Regional Botanic Gardens Threatened ecosystems exhibit ★★★★	65 ha park with gardens, bush, lake. Several Auckland wetland types and rare wetland plants are represented in the threatened ecosystems exhibit.	✓				✓	✓		✓		http://www.arc.govt.nz/albany/main/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/auckland-botanic-gardens/ <i>Hill Rd, 25 km south of Auckland City. Go south on the Southern Motorway (SH1) – exit at Manurewa/ Hill Road. Heading north exit SH1 at Takanini, turn left onto Great South Road, turn right into Alfriston Road, left at Claude Road and continue to Hill Rd.</i>	
Tahuna Torea Saltmarsh and freshwater complex ★★★★	Coastal wetland complex (25 ha). Sand bank extends out into the Tamaki Estuary. View wading birds between full-tide and half-tide Nov-March.	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/whatson/places/walkways/tahunatorea/index.asp <i>Tamaki Estuary, East Auckland. Access via Roberta Reserve, Vista Cres (Glendowie) or West Tamaki Road (Glen Innes)</i>	











¹ ★★★★★ Must see ★★★★ Worth a special visit ★★★ Worth a short detour ★★ Plan to visit if passing ★ Short stop if passing

² Fishing for freshwater fish and gamebird hunting in New Zealand requires a licence: see <http://www.fishandgame.org.nz/>











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Tawharanui Freshwater and coastal wetlands ★★★★	Regional Park (588 ha) on a peninsula within a predator proof fence. Restored freshwater wetlands, saline wetland and lagoon. Re-introduced rare pateke (brown teal). Safe swimming.	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	http://www.arc.govt.nz/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/tawharanui/ Contact (09) 366 2000 for opening hours and camping <i>At Matakana village, north of Auckland, turn right at the Omaha intersection into Takatu Road and follow signs.</i>	
Kaitoke Swamp Freshwater swamp and fen ★★★★	Largest (320 ha) and most pristine freshwater wetland in Auckland. Endangered birds and 163 species of plants. Natural hot springs and boardwalk.	✓	✓			✓					http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/auckland/great-barrier-area/kaitoke-hot-springs-track/ <i>Near Claris village, Great Barrier Island. Flights to Claris (30 mins) from Auckland domestic airport or North Shore aerodrome. Rent a car at Claris.</i>	
Poukaraka Wetland Freshwater swamp, coastal wetlands ★★★★	Whakanewha Regional Park - native forest, large freshwater wetland, estuary and beaches. Bittern, banded rail, NZ dotterel, godwits, white faced heron, pied stilts, oystercatchers, Caspian terns, spotless crane.	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	http://www.arc.govt.nz/albany/main/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/whakanewha/ Auckland Regional Council, (09) 366 2000 <i>Southern side of Waiheke Island. Ferry from downtown Auckland (35 mins). Hire a car or take the Rocky Bay bus from Matiatia to Gordons Rd, 15 mins walk to park entrance.</i>	
Kauritutahi Wetland Freshwater and intertidal wetlands ★★★	Awhitu Regional Park has beaches, farmland and regenerating freshwater and coastal wetlands. Fernbird, grey duck, grey teal, banded rail. Camping and lodge accommodation available.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	http://www.arc.govt.nz/albany/main/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/awhitu/ <i>Awhitu Peninsula, 90 kms from Auckland City. Take State Highway 1 south, turn off at Drury and follow the signs to Waiuku. From Waiuku drive up the Awhitu Peninsula through Matakawau. About 2 km past Matakawau turn right down Brook Rd.</i>	











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Lake Wainamu Dune lake (14 ha) and associated dunes ★★★	Deep lake in native forest beside tall dunes. Shag species, bittern, spotless crane, fernbird. Native fish include banded kokopu, inanga, common smelt, common bully, grey mullet, long fin and short fin eel.	✓	✓			✓						http://www.wonderwalkers.co.nz/default,361,lake-wainamu-bethells-beach.sm <i>Northern Waitakere Ranges, near Te Henga wetland. Take Te Henga Road (becomes Bethells Rd), off the northern end of Scenic Drive. At Te Henga/Bethells Beach there is a small carpark at the track entrance, on the left just after the Waiti Stream bridge. Also visit Te Henga while here.</i>
Little Shoal Bay Coastal and freshwater wetland ★★★	Regionally rare forest to swamp to coast sequence and largest freshwater wetland remaining on the North Shore. Banded rail, fernbird and spotless crane reported.	✓	✓									<i>Main entrance is between 210 and 212 Onewa road, Birkenhead.</i>
Omaha Kahikatea swamp forest and saltmarsh ★★★	One of Auckland's best examples of intact swamp forest with wetland scrub and saltmarsh sequence. No walkways, but good view from road, or explore the harbour by kayak.		✓	✓		✓						<i><u>From Warkworth, take Matakana Rd/Leigh Rd, turn right onto Takatu Rd, left onto Omaha Flats Rd continue to Broadlands Dr over the causeway to the spit. Road passes through the kahikatea stand.</u></i>
Te Henga / Matuku Reserve Freshwater swamp ★★★	One of Auckland's largest freshwater wetlands (140 ha). >300 species of plants and 45 bird species (including fernbird and bittern), 6 native fish. Boardwalk.	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓		http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/reserves/matuku-reserve Contact: John Staniland bushridge@slingshot.co.nz <i>Waitakere Ranges. Matuku Reserve accessed from Snow's Lane off Jonkers Road. Views of Te Henga wetland from Bethells Road. Also visit Lake Wainamu while here.</i>











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Te Wai Orea (Western Springs) Volcanic springs ★★★	Urban park with natural spring-fed lake and restored wetlands. Refuge for the native eel, pukeko, teal, Australian coot and shovelers. Lawns and gardens. The springs emerge from lava flow aquifers.	✓	✓						✓		http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/whatson/places/parks/westernsprings.asp About 5 km from downtown Auckland City. Access from Great North Road, take the St Lukes exit from SH 16 to access Great North Road	
Waiatarua Reserve Restored wetland ★★★	Recently restored freshwater wetland in 40 ha urban park. Habitat for harriers, scaup, Caspian terns, little black shag, shoveler duck, occ. kotuku (white heron, rare in the North Island). Paved walkways.	✓	✓						✓		http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/whatson/places/parks/online/detail.asp?pParkId=2235 98 Abbots Way, Meadowbank. Take SH 1 south from Auckland City, exit left to Green Lane East, right at Peach Pde, right at Ladies Mile, left at Abbots Way. Also visit Michaels Ave, Marua Rd	
Atawhai Whenua Reserve Restored wetland ★★	Freshwater raupo and flax swamp with planted native trees on Waiheke Island. Short walk through replanted native forest skirts the wetland.	✓	✓								http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/reserves/atawhai-reserve Forest and Bird Reserve Take the Waiheke passenger ferry to Matiatia – from the ferry building walk along the foreshore past the kayak hire building to the start of the walking track.	
Chelsea Estate Estuary, freshwater reservoir ★★	An area of native forest with four freshwater reservoirs constructed between 1883 & 1917. Nesting colonies of pied and little shag.	✓	✓						✓		http://www.chelsea.co.nz/Envltems.aspx 15 mins from Downtown Auckland. Follow Motorway North across Harbour bridge take Onewa Rd exit. Chelsea Sugar works are located on Colonial Rd.	











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Duder Regional Park Estuary & farmpark ★★	Adjacent to the Wairoa Estuary, one of the best saline wetland systems in the region. Supports a high diversity of coastal wading birds including pied shag, white-faced heron, pied oystercatcher, gulls, pied stilt, godwit.	✓	✓	✓					✓		http://www.arc.govt.nz/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/duder/ <i>South Auckland. Access from Maraetai-Clevedon Rd. to Umupuia. The park is just to the south of Umupuia on North Rd.</i>	
Kauri Park Swamp forest ★★	Rare wetland sequence in Soldiers Bay from salt marsh to reedland to kahikatea and maire tawake swamp forest.	✓							✓		Contact: North Shore City Council 09 486 8600 <i>20 mins from Downtown Auckland. Follow Motorway North across harbour bridge take Onewa Rd exit. Access via Kauri Rd and Balmain Rd.</i>	
Lake Ototoa Dune lake (110 ha) ★★	Lake with outstanding water quality and regionally rare native fish. Rainbow and brown trout fishery. Birds include NZ dabchick, scaup, grey duck, shoveler, bittern, pukeko, and fernbird.		✓	✓	✓	✓					http://www.arc.govt.nz/environment/water/regional-lakes/lake-ototoa.cfm <i>Kaipara Peninsula, access via Ototoa Road and Donahues Road.</i> Protect this lake's special water quality - clean clothing / boats / equipment!	
Lake Pupuke Volcanic explosion crater ★★	Deep crater lake with small areas of wetland sedges and rushes on the northern margins. Birds include bittern, black swan, grey duck, NZ scaup, and species of heron, tern, stilt and cormorant. Eels and coarse fish present.		✓	✓	✓ Fishing only				✓		<i>From downtown Auckland take Northern Motorway over the Harbour Bridge, exit at Northcote Rd (right at Northcote), to Access via any one of five council reserves; Killarney, Sylvan, Kitchener and Henderson Parks and Quarry Lake.</i> Note ! Fishing for freshwater fish requires a licence in NZ , see http://www.fishandgame.org.nz/	

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Mangemangeroa Reserve Estuary ★★	Estuary in east Auckland with podocarp forest edge. A community restoration programme. Boardwalk through estuary and past waterfall	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		http://www.aerolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html Contact: Manukau City Council (09) 262 5104 <i>108 Sommerville Road, off Whitford Road from Chapel Road, Manukau City</i>	
Marie Neverman Reserve Lake and wetland ★★	Tupare wetland, in the Marie Neverman Reserve is a lake and freshwater reedland complex. Birds include dabchick, bittern, grey duck, grey teal, little grebes and pied shag.	✓	✓								http://www.nznfrt.org.nz/newsletter.php?newsletter_no=51 Contact: Brian Davis briandavis@ihug.nz <i>Kaipara Lake Road, off South Head Road, Tupare, Kaipara Peninsula, 12 km north of Parakai Hot Pools near Helensville</i>	
Onepoto and Tank Farm Crater wetland and saltmarsh ★★	30,000 year old volcanic craters. Originally crater lakes, Tank Farm was breached by the sea and became saline supporting mangroves, while Onepoto became infilled to form a freshwater swamp. Habitat for birds including cormorants, white-faced herons, and grey duck.	✓	✓						✓		<i>From Auckland City take northern motorway over the Harbour Bridge, exit at Sylvan Ave, left into Tarahanga Rd right into Puawai Place. To get to Tank Farm (Tuff Crater) turn right off Sylvan Ave at Exmouth, immediate right into McBreen Ave.</i>	
Puhinui Reserve Estuary ★★	Farm park (40 ha) adjacent to the Manukau Harbour with extensive saltmarsh and brackish wetland habitat. Black stilt, NZ dotterel, fernbird, wrybill.	✓	✓								http://www.manukau.govt.nz/default.aspx?id=10411 <i>Take Puhinui Rd off the Southwestern Motorway, turn left into Prices Rd</i>	

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Sandspit Estuary ★★	Return walk (45 mins), boardwalks through mangroves, past Deans Island and bird roosting area on sandbar	✓	✓	✓								Contact: Rodney District Council 0800 426 5169 <i>Sandspit Rd, Sandspit, north of Auckland City.</i>
Tomarata Lakes Dune lakes ★★	Dune lakes with wetland fringes. Best explored by kayak. Safe for swimming.		✓	✓	✓				✓			Contact: Rodney District Council 0800 426 5169 <i>From SH1 north of Wellsford, turn right into Mangawhai Rd, right into School Road, left into Ocean View Rd, right into Atkins.</i>
Manawa Reserve Created wetland ★	Small wetland created in an abandoned clay quarry – a council / community initiative. Boardwalk planned.	✓							✓			http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/cnlser/pbr/prkgrnsp/manawa.asp Contact: Waitakere City Council (09) 839 0400 <i>Access via Margan Avenue or Ambrico Place, New Lynn. Short walk from New Lynn rail / bus station.</i>
Te Arai Pt Lakes Dune lakes and kahikatea forest Not rated	Recently acquired Regional Park, not yet open to the public. Wetland, forest & dune complex, 2 dune lakes.	Park under development, contact Auckland Regional Council for details									http://www.arc.govt.nz/parks/our-parks/parks-in-the-region/te-arai/te-arai_home.cfm Contact (09) 366 2000 to determine if the park is open. <i>Te Arai Point Road, Mangawhai</i>	