

Wetlands you can visit in the Northland Region

The Northland Region tapers to a long remote peninsula at the top of the North Island, representing, in Maori mythology, the tail of the great fish hauled up by the demi-god Maui.

The region has nine main types of wetlands including; bogs, fens, salt marshes, swamps, shallow lakes, marshes, gumlands, seepages and ephemeral (seasonal) wetlands.

The 1,700 km coastline is indented with several extensive, shallow harbours and estuaries. Peninsulas are dotted with dune lakes (over 400 of them). They are often edged by marsh wetlands, and support a large diversity of native plants and animals, including dwarf inanga, a rare freshwater fish found only in Northland.

Gumland wetlands occur on areas of strongly leached soils with impeded drainage, characterised by an endemic grass tree (*Dracophyllum*), mānuka, sedges, native orchids and tangle fern. Being infertile, they share many species with bogs. Most have been cleared or developed.

Northland also has many inland wetlands, the most significant being Ngawha Springs, Motatau wetlands, Waitangi wetland complex, Maitahi fen, Kaihu Swamp Forest and Mangonui River wetlands.

The area includes:

- **Aupouri and Pouto Peninsulas**, extensive wind-blown dunes with many dune lakes, swamps & ephemeral ponds.
- **Ahipara Massif and Epikauri Gumfield**, Northland's best and biggest gumland
- **Kaimaumau/ Motutangi Wetlands** an extensive band of parallel sand dunes, peat bogs and gumlands.
- **Lake Ohia**, an ephemeral lake studded with fossil kauri tree stumps.
- **Te Pahi and Parengarenga Harbour**, extensive swamps, bogs, gumlands shrublands and dunelands with salt marshes, mangroves and sand flats.

Many smaller wetlands are being restored or enhanced by agencies and community groups working in partnership.

Northland once supported over 25,000 hectares of wetlands, today just 5.5% remains. Some are still in a very natural state and provide habitat for endemic and threatened species, including brown teal (pateke), banded rail, NZ dabchick, marsh crake, North Island fernbird, Australasian bittern, black mudfish, banded kokopu, short jawed kokopu and locally endemic Pouto dwarf inanga and Northland mudfish.

Rare wetland plants found here include milfoil (*Myriophyllum robustum*), hydatella, a tiny relative of the water lily (*Trithuria inconspicua*), marsh fern (*Thelypteris confluenta*), and the sand spike sedge (*Eleocharis neozelandica*). Borrow Cut wetland is the only known NZ location for the bittercress herb *Rorippa laciniata*. It contains an unnamed species of rare Hebe and is one of the strongholds for heart leaved kohuhu *Pittosporum obcordatum*.

The area offers a diverse range of hunting and fishing with 10 game bird species. Contact Fish & Game for further information and permits.

Northland Wetland Agencies

Northland Regional Council
www.nrc.govt.nz

Department of Conservation
www.doc.govt.nz

Fish & Game New Zealand
www.fishandgame.org.nz

Wetlands to visit in the Northland Region

Name	Activities / Facilities ¹	Access, further information
Kai Iwi Lakes ★ ★ ★ ★	Three clear, blue rain-fed dune lakes with white sand beaches, surrounded by gumland and wetlands. Among the deepest dune lakes in the country, they support rare dwarf inanga and hydatella (<i>Trithuria inconspicua</i>), as well as freshwater crayfish, crabs and mussels, eels, and rainbow trout, dabchick, grey ducks, grey teal, and other waterfowl. Several walkways. 	http://kai-iwi-lakes.co.nz/ Contact Kaipara District Council for more information and to book campgrounds (09) 439 7059 <i>45 mins drive (35 kms) NW of Dargaville . Taharoa Domain access via State Highway 12 to the junction of Omamari Road, go 11 km along Omamari Road and then Kai Iwi Lakes Road to the Domain.</i>
Lake Ohia ★ ★ ★ ★	Other-worldly 500 ha site of charred stumps and gumland scrub in a former lake bed which is dry over summer, wet in winter. The site of a drowned forest, with a maze of 30,000 year old kauri tree stumps exposed when the lake was drained earlier this century for gum-digging. Important habitat for rare ferns, mosses and orchids. The surrounding swamps and shrubland contain threatened fish and bird species. The Gumhole Reserve Walk is a 10 min loop track through manuka passing a series of holes excavated by gum diggers (watch out for holes as you walk). Not suitable for swimming, this is a dry lake bed. 	www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/land-and-freshwater/wetlands/wetlands-by-region/northland/lake-ohia/ <i>Base of Karikari Peninsula, a 40-minute drive northeast of Kaitaia. Turn off State Highway 10 onto Inland Road, the Lake is just off Inland Road. The track to Lake Ohia is on the left, 1 km north.</i>
Te Werahi Wetland ★ ★ ★ ★	One of the largest raupo swamps in Te Paki near the tip of New Zealand. The landscape is remote and highly natural and scenic. The wetland can be accessed via boardwalks 1.5 km down the Twilight–Te Werahi Loop Track. The full 16 km loop track takes 4-5 hours – take water and food - and passes through farmland, swamp, dunes, shrubland and coastal wetlands. Links to 3 day Cape Reinga Coastal Walkway. Very important site for waterfowl and a regionally important moulting site. 	www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/northland/kaitaia-area/twilight-te-werahi-loop-track/ www.wonderwalkers.co.nz/default,1227,te-werahi-beach-to-twilight-beach.sm http://nzwalksinfo.co.nz/tracks/159-twilight-te-werahi-loop-track <i>Access from the Te Werahi Gate car park on State Highway 1, signposted about 4.5 km before Cape Reinga, 60 km north of Kaitaia.</i>

KEY



Walks



Birdlife



Boating



Fishing / shooting



Highly scenic



Info centre



Interpretation panels



Lookout/ bird hide



Picnic area



Accommodation



Swimming or snorkelling

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Arethusa Wetland ★ ★ ★ ★	Wetland areas (14 ha) and a shallow lake with excavated ponds. Home to grey duck, black swan, pied cormorant, pukeko, kingfisher, paradise shelduck, spotless crane, and eels. Planted native and exotic plants. Walking track. 	www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/lodges/arethusa-lodge-/arethusa-reserve Managed by Forest and Bird Protection Society – see their website for contact details and to book lodge accommodation. <i>Lamb Road, Pukenui</i>
Flaxmill Wetland ★ ★ ★	Former flax growing operation, now valued game bird hunting area. Abounds with waterfowl as well as native species including grey duck, paradise duck, shoveler and black swan. Awakino Wetland next door contains the threatened sedge <i>Baumea complanata</i> . A number of other wetlands in the region are administered for game bird hunting, contact Fish & Game for details. 	www.fishandgame.org.nz/Site/Regions/Northland/huntingAccess.aspx Contact Fish & Game Northland for permission to access 09 438 4135 <i>15 minutes NW of Dargaville on Waihue Rd.</i>
Houhora Harbour and Rangaunu Harbour ★ ★ ★	Two large estuaries that support major concentrations of national and international migratory waterfowl including turnstone, knot, and godwit. Other birds recorded here include the New Zealand dotterel, reef heron, bittern, banded dotterel, wrybill, black stilt and in the coastal shrub, large numbers of fernbird. The wetlands also support a high number of endangered endemic plants. 	www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/nzwetlands01.pdf DoC. Northland Conservancy Office, Whangarei, (09) 470 3301 <i>Rangaunu is 24 km north of Kaitia on Kaimaumau Rd whilst Houhora Harbour is a further 17km north on SH1 at Pukenui which is a small town.</i>
Lake Waiparera ★ ★ ★	The Aupouri Peninsula has numerous lakes, bogs, swamps, with a range of endemic and threatened species. Lake Waiparera is the most accessible dune lake, with a small lake-side reserve. Important water fowl moulting site 	www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/nzwetlands01.pdf DoC. Northland Conservancy Office, Whangarei, (09) 470 3301 <i>Lake Waiparera is accessible from SH1, 70 km north of Kaitia. Parking area and toilet.</i>
Limeburners Creek Estuary & Waimahanga Walk ★ ★ ★	Extensive estuary in Whangarei Harbour with mangroves, saltmarsh, and mud flats with lush eelgrass beds. Two flat, all-weather walks, Limeburners Creek (1.3 km, Interpretation panels and boardwalk) and Waimahanga walkway (2 hours, along a disused old railway line and through mangroves swamps, shorter sections can be walked). 	www.wdc.govt.nz/FacilitiesandRecreation/WalksTrails/WalkingTracks/Pages/Waimahanga.aspx www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/nzwetlands01.pdf Whangarei District Council (09) 430 4200 <i>Limeburners Bay access off Kioreroa Road (opposite #143) in Whangarei. Waimahanga Walkway via Waimahanga Rd, George Point Road, Waverley Street or Cockburn St at Onerahi.</i>

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Ruakaka Estuary & Waipu Estuary ★★★	Two high value estuaries with a diverse range of vegetation types and threatened bird species. The Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge is located at the Ruakaka River Mouth. This is a breeding area for New Zealand dotterel and variable oystercatchers. It is a major habitat for godwits. The Waipu Estuary has international significance and is the nesting area for New Zealand dotterel, variable oyster catcher and New Zealand fairy tern. Other species include reef heron, wrybill, Caspian tern and banded dotterel. All are protected rare or threatened species. 	www.planmyplay.co.nz/CustomContentRetrieve.aspx?ID=97883 <i>For Ruakaka start at Surf Club at low tide. Walk north toward the Power Station. Turn in at the river mouth and follow around. Come out through Reserve Camp. For Waipu walk cross the estuary at low tide and walk down beach. Stay on shore line or tracks. Please do not disturb native birds. Access at the end of Johnston Point Road in Waipu.</i>
Sweetwater Lakes ★★★	Community group Bushland Trust is working towards improving a cluster of dune lakes using filters and native plants. An easy walking track (1 hour) leads you around the edge of Lake Ngatu in a Recreation A longer (10 km) path goes around Lake Ngatu and down to Sandhills Road via Lake Heather and Lake Rotoroa. It takes approx. 2 hours to walk. Reserve. Frequented by bittern, dabchick and Caspian tern. Very popular swimming and boating lake. 	www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/northland/kaitaia-area/lake-ngatu-track www.bushlandtrust.com/ <i>5 km north of Awanui. Travel 3 km north of Awanui, turn left onto Waipapakauri Road, and left again on Sweetwater Rd, Look for the Department of Conservation sign for Lake Ngatu. There is parking at several different spots around the lake but the most common sites are at the northern and southern end of the lake where there are toilet facilities.</i>
Wairua River (Hikurangi Swamp) ★★★	Formerly part of the original Hikurangi swamp, this area is crown land co-managed by the Department of Conservation and Northland Fish and Game Council. It is one of last remnants of divaricating shrubland, marshes and fens associated with the Wairua River, which was straightened to allow for flood management. Species such as mallard, grey, paradise shelduck, pukeko, pheasant, quail and spoonbill. Bittern, fernbird and banded rail. Large population of black mudfish. Several highly threatened plant including unnamed hebe and heart leaved kohuhu <i>Pittosporum obcordatum</i>. A network of grass tracks is open to the public but may be wet in winter. Used by game bird hunters in season (May- August). 	www.fishandgame.org.nz/Site/Regions/Northland/huntingAccess.aspx <i>Access across farmland from gate on Swamp Road 6 km inland from Hikurangi</i>
William Upton Hewett Memorial Reserve ★★★	Regenerating shrubland and gumland with a large kahikatea swamp along the eastern stream boundary with kowhai, cabbage tree, raupo, flax and swamp maire. Contains possibly the largest population of North Island fernbird in the Whangarei area. There is a small kiwi population as well as grey warbler, kingfisher, kereru, pied tit, morepork, pied stilt, pukeko, spotless crane, fantail and tui. Loop tracks up to 2-3 hours. The track skirts the edge of the swamp via a boardwalk 	www.nznfrt.org.nz/index.php?page_id=92 Notice board at reserve entrance. Managed by NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust <i>North-west of Whangarei on Wright Rd. The entrance is on the eastern side of Wright Rd where there is a carpark and noticeboard</i>

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Matapouri Estuary ★ ★	A stunning underwater experience of mangroves and the creatures that live within them. Renowned for snorkelling and underwater photography in the clear estuarine waters. 	<i>For a snorkel drift, access from the first bridge at the southern end of Matapouri Bay 1 hour before high tide to drift up the estuary and back with the ebbing tide.</i>
Ngunguru mangrove walk ★ ★	A 20 min easy urban stroll along wheelchair accessible mown paths and boardwalks through bush and mangroves, with views of saltmarsh. Look for secretive birds like banded rail. Seating is provided along the way. For a longer walk, start at the shops/cafe at Ngunguru and walk along the estuary to the walkway. 	www.tutukakacoastnz.com/index.php/2008/09/ngunguru-walkway/ <i>Access the walkway either beside the Ngunguru Library or from Munroe Place, return the same way.</i>
Parengarenga Harbour ★ ★	A large (6,500 ha), relatively unmodified estuary with sand flats, mangrove forest, eel grass beds, and reed-beds. Several threatened species. Major staging area for migratory shorebirds, supporting up to 20,000 birds from over 80 species. Major breeding area for NZ dotterel. Home to 2500 black swan. A highly scenic area, though access is not easy. 	www.nzbirds.com/birding/parengarenga.html www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/nzwetlands01.pdf <i>Turn left off SH 1 into Paua Rd about 85 km north of Kaitiaki. The area is best visited by boat. Kayak tours and boat services are available. Access fees may be charged to cross private land.</i>
Lake Rotokawau & Waiporohita ★ ★	Three accessible dune lakes with high value for threatened bird and plant species. Reed beds and native submerged vegetation. Snorkelling is possible in Lake Waiporohita when water is clear. Walks around Lake Rotokawau and wetlands can be accessed from Puheke Road 	<i>Turn off onto Inland Rd (Karikari) on SH10 north of Taipa. Lake Waiporohita is approx 10km on left. Turn left onto Puheke Rd a further 2.5 kms along the road.</i>
Rotopokaka (Coca Cola Lake) ★ ★	The peat and tannins in the water of this 11 ha dune lake gives it a distinct 'cola' colour. Large areas of emergent vegetation around much of the lake, mainly raupo, spike sedge, and flax, providing good habitat for many aquatic birds including bittern, spotless crane, and fernbird. Common bullies, inanga, longfin eels and black mudfish. Well formed tracks to the western and northern shore. 	<i>There is an easy walk around the shoreline of the lake from the end of Ramp Road, off Inland Road, at Tokerau Beach</i>

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Lake Rototuna, Pouto Peninsula ★ ★	The Peninsula has a complex of 22 freshwater dune lakes and swamps that support a wide range of species. Bittern stronghold, crakes and banded rail present. Dwarf galaxiid fish present in some of the lakes. Lake Rototuna is a good example, visible from the road (but no access to or around the lake). The rest of the Pouto lakes tend to be accessible only via privately owned land. Large flocks of scaup and other waterfowl. 	www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/nzwetlands01.pdf <i>Lake Rototuna is located within an area of conservation estate off Pouto Road. Locked gate.</i>
Rawene Mangrove Walkway ★ ★	Walkway built as a community project to allow people to get close to the mangroves and historic sites. Built on the site of a century old timber mill and box factory and provides visitors with a fascinating view of a unique and valuable wetland habitat. Has wheelchair access.  	<i>Access off Clendon Esplanade, Rawene</i>