Fensham

Facilities

- Parking
- Walking tracks
- Toilets
- Bird watching
- Look out
- Picnic table

Highlight

Fensham is one of the best examples of a forest remnant on the Wairarapa Plains, freely accessible to the public, and offering a rich tapestry of ecosystems - it is the Wairarapa in a matchbox.

Description, values & significance

This 48 hectare reserve contains approximately three hectares of wetland, 29 hectares of regenerating native bush, and nine hectares of primary bush which contains kahikatea sentinels between 400 and 700 years old. Explore the swamp forest then climb the ridge through the beech stands to emerge at the lookout and see the Wairarapa unfolding before you. The restoration work Forest and Bird have done here has won them three conservation awards over the years.

Accessibility/How to get there/particular time of year to visit

It is situated 3 km west of Carterton between Belvedere and Cobden Roads. From the square in Carterton on SH2, turn west into Belvedere Road and drive about 2 km until you get to Cobden Road. Turn right there and the Reserve (signposted) is located by the junction of Cobden and Haringa Roads. There is one entrance there and another (preferred) a further km on Belvedere Road. Tracks are all-weather.

Threatened species/species of interest

Kanuka, matai, rimu, titoki and rewarewa thrive on the alluvial plains, there is a remnant kahikatea swamp forest, and the drier hillsides and ridges are dominated by black beech with an understorey of late stage regenerating bush. There are important low-lying wetlands on the western boundary, which are home to the nationally vulnerable mudfish. NZ kingfisher, kereru (wood pigeon), tui, morepork, fantail, grey warbler and wax-eyes frequent the reserve.

Key threats

The reserve is fully fenced off from the surrounding farmland. Once problematic old man’s beard, gorse and wilding pines are all now at an unnoticeable level. Feral cats, stoats, possums and other pest animals will always be a risk to such an area but levels are kept low with ongoing control and monitoring.
Walks (length)
There is one circuit track on the reserve that takes approximately one hour to walk. From this track you can access the old fence track and the brow track. A side track on the south-west leads to a lookout with extensive Wairarapa views. Descriptive signboards are located in the picnic area and at the Cobden Road entrance.

Walks (grade)
Easy to moderate walking

Manager
Forest and Bird

Protection status
Scenic Reserve

Community Involvement
The site is administered by Forest and Bird Society and The Fensham Group. They have undertaken pest plant and pest animal plant control and are conducting restorative and developmental planting programmes.

How to get there