Carter’s Bush is a rare piece of protected original Wairarapa Plains forest spared from clearing in the 1880’s and 1900’s. Carter Scenic Reserve is named for the same man that the township of Carterton was named after.

Description, values & significance
Carter’s Bush contains swamp and semi-swamp forest on two old terraces of the Ruamahanga River. The reserve is one of the few remaining remnants of patchwork landscape of tussock, wetland, and shrub land. On the wetland edge, kahikatea forest changes to tītoki and mataī while tōtara grows on the drier slopes. This rare mix of grassland, wetland, shrub-land, and lowland forest was once typical of the Wairarapa.

Accessibility/How to get there/particular time of year to visit
The reserve is 12km south-east of Carterton on Gladstone Rd, Wairarapa. From Carterton follow Park Road to the end, turn left into Carters Line and right into Gladstone Rd. The reserve is signposted approximately 3km along Gladstone Road.

Threatened species/species of interest
Situated next to Pikes Lagoon, Carter’s Bush is home to native birds, lizards, fish including brown mudfish and two species of threatened plants including Coprosma pedicellata (a small leafed plant that grows in areas that are very wet in winter and very dry in summer) and the large leaved milk tree (tōwai). Rare tree species that once thrived in the area are being propagated for planting amongst the regenerating forest.

Key threats
Protected by Charles Carter in 1896 the 30 hectares of land was gazetted as a Scenic Reserve in 1921. Recently Pikes Lagoon was drained and levelled for dairy farming, threatening not only this ecosystem but also a nearby dotterel-nesting colony. The forest will be altered as water is taken for irrigation and the water table drops.

Walks (length)
Ruamahanga River Walk - 20min each way. Kahikatea Walk - 15min return
Walks (grade)
Ruamahanga River Walk - Easy walking.
Kahikatea Walk - Easy walking.

Manager
Department of Conservation

Protection status
Scenic Reserve

Community Involvement
Interest from the community has resulted in the start of a care-group

How to get there

[Map of area with Carter's Bush and Gladstone Road marked]