Waikanae Estuary

Facilities

- Parking
- Toilets
- Pram accessible (but only trail buggy)
- Walking tracks
- Dog walking (on leash)
- Swimming
- Bird watching
- Picnic table

Highlight

More species of coastal and aquatic birds, including a large number of migratory species, visit Waikanae Estuary than any other site on the Wellington coast. Stroll the tracks and see how many birds you can identify!

Description, values & significance

At Waikanae Estuary freshwater from the Tararua Ranges meets the sea. This mixing of the waters and the ever-shifting river mouth creates an environment sustaining rich plant and animal communities. The estuary provides an important habitat for birds, aquatic plants and is an important breeding ground and nursery for both fresh water and marine fish species. Waikanae Estuary is a nationally significant reserve and restoration work by a dedicated care group continually improves it.

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

Waikanae Estuary is located between Paraparaumu and Waikanae on the Kāpiti coast north of Wellington. The main entry points into the Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve are on Manly St North, Paraparaumu Beach. One track leads out onto the seaward side of the lagoon and the other follows the inland side of the estuary. Whitebait fishing is permitted in the reserve by a gazette notice, from 15 August and 30 November (inclusive).

Threatened species/species of interest

The mosaic of tidal sand flats, sand dunes, salt marshes and lakelets provide a home for vulnerable plants such as two regionally rare carex species and carpets of remuremu (*Selliera radicans*) growing in the firm mud of the estuary. More than 60 species of birds are resident or visit the estuary including banded dotterel, variable oystercatcher, pukeko, dabchick, white-fronted tern, caspian tern, pied stilt, scaup, brown teal, grey duck, royal spoonbills, shoveler and mallard.

Key threats

As subdivision creeps closer to the estuary the threat to wildlife from pets, pests, trail bikes and erosion increases. Development also brings about changes in water quality, sedimentation and the introduction of weeds. Aquatic plant species are highly sensitive to pollutants, temperature changes and weeds and the removal of riverside bush limits fish breeding areas.
Walks (length)
5kms of tracks no loop tracks but there are tracks to beach and river.

Walks (grade)
Easy to moderate walking.

Manager
Department of Conservation and Kāpiti Coast District Council.

Protection status
Scientific Reserve

Community Involvement
Waikanae Estuary Care Group

How to get there