

BIRDING LOCATION

GUIDE

for

HAWKE'S BAY

**Wayne Twydle
2005 (updated 2015)**



Muddy Creek channel - Clive

This guide has been produced to help locate the best and most easily accessible birding areas for the visitor to Hawke's Bay. It describes public access areas only. The maps are not to scale, and should be used in conjunction with commercially available road maps. The Department of Conservation office on Marine Parade in Napier has a range of topographic maps as well as several information sheets which include track diagrams; eg – Boundary Stream Mainland Island, Mohi Bush, and Cape Kidnappers. The DoC website also has information on various reserves. This booklet doesn't include the extensive network of recently established walking/cycling trails. Maps of these trails are obtainable at the Information Centres, and also on the HB Regional Council website. These trails can give very good access to many of the Ahuriri and Clive wetlands.

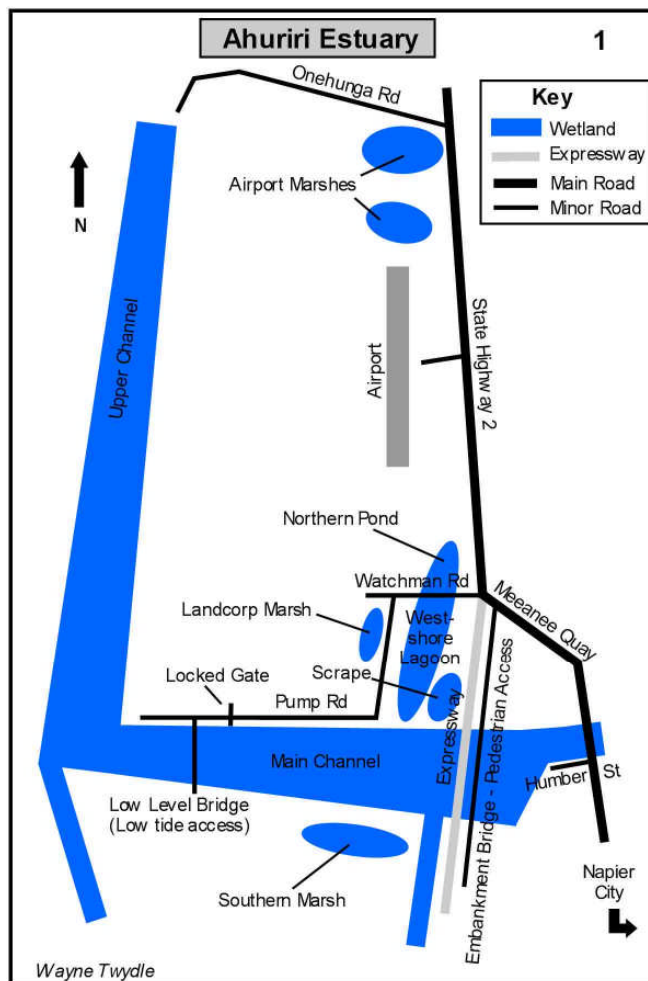
AHURIRI ESTUARY (Map 1)

The prime birding spot closest to Napier is at Ahuriri, which comprises a main estuarine channel (tidal up to at least the Low Level Bridge), together with the adjacent Southern Marsh, Westshore Lagoon and Scrape, Northern Pond, and Landcorp Marsh. The Airport Marshes are a little further beyond the airport. All of these wetlands are the remnants of the Inner Harbour, a vast salt-water lagoon prior to the 1931 earthquake. After an average uplift of two metres, most of the original lagoon was reclaimed. Between the Embankment Bridge and the Southern Marsh can be seen a side channel, which prior to the earthquake was the Tutaekuri River mouth. Due to extensive damage to the river's banks, it was diverted to its present mouth at Awatoto. The main "Ahuriri Estuary" channel was excavated as a drainage channel from the western hills to the sea.

Unlike many estuarine habitats, Ahuriri does not have a regular and reliable high-tide roost. Often the roosting flocks can be found on exposed mud between the bridges, but extra high tides covering all the mud will force them to go elsewhere – sometimes to the Southern Marsh. Another favoured roosting site is the south-east shore of the Westshore Lagoon adjacent to the scrape.

A good place to start exploring Ahuriri Estuary and its adjacent wetlands is from Humber Street. From the carpark a Department of Conservation walkway begins along the southern side of the lower channel until the old Embankment Bridge is reached. The walkway continues north over the bridge, then follows the northern side of the channel back to the main highway. Walk back alongside the road to Humber Street. However, if you want to explore further upstream from the bridge, there is a pedestrian underpass below both the Embankment and Expressway Bridges, leading to the southern bank of the main channel where you can continue walking past the Southern Marsh. Continue beyond the Low Level Bridge to the corner where Royal Spoonbills are often present (a hide has been constructed at this point). Note that the northern bank, accessed from the Low Level Bridge is private property. When you return to Humber Street, walk out onto the spit. This is a good vantage point for most of the lower estuary, especially with a spotting scope.

Drive north to the Expressway/Meeanee Quay junction, and continue across to Watchman Road. This will take you between Westshore Lagoon and the Northern Pond. Turn left at the end of the road and drive behind the lagoon. Stop between the lagoon and the Landcorp Marsh and scan. In dry summers



the water can drop to very low levels, and the lagoon weed can have several sandpipers foraging on it within close viewing range.

There is no public vehicle access beyond the warning signage halfway along this back section of Watchman Road. However, the limestone walking trail can be clearly seen to continue to the end of the lagoon, parallel to the road. By following this on foot it will take you around the southern end of the lagoon, passing the scrape, which is worth investigating. Also check the edge of the lagoon adjacent to the scrape (other side of the bushes) for roosting birds. Backtrack to your vehicle. While driving back to the main road, check for any rain puddles at the edge of the fields – these are favoured by Black-fronted Dotterels. It is worth studying the trails map (available from the Information Centre). If you are prepared to walk, most of these Ahuriri birding areas can be reached by following the trails. The Airport Marshes are worth scanning with a scope, but should only be viewed from the roadside. However, the “Water Ride” trail leads behind the marshes.

POSSIBLE SPECIES TO BE SEEN

Lower Channel: The spit at Humber Street can be a high tide roost for Bar-tailed Godwit, but is less likely these days due to increased recreational activity in this part of the estuary. More likely are Black, Little Black, and Little Shags, together with South Island Pied and Variable Oystercatchers. Closer to the Embankment Bridge there are often roosting godwits, sandpipers, and sometimes small numbers of Red Knots and Pacific Golden Plovers. The spit used to be a regular roost for wintering Royal Spoonbills, but is unusual today. Other species seen in the Lower Channel may include Caspian Terns, Black-backed Gulls, Pied Stilts, and White-faced Herons. NZ Dotterels are regular visitors now. A Little Egret is sometimes seen in the vicinity of the Embankment Bridge.

Southern Marsh: This is the first place to check for wintering Royal Spoonbills. Black-fronted Dotterels nest there, as well as Black-backed Gulls, Black Swans, and Pied Stilts. Bar-tailed Godwit are more likely to use the marsh as a roost if it is a very high tide and there are no exposed areas in the channel itself. The smaller waders may use the marsh too, but are easily overlooked among the vegetation.

Westshore Lagoon & Northern Pond: The lagoon is much more likely to have large numbers of Grey Teal and Shovelers, especially during the shooting season, whereas the Northern Pond tends to attract Mallards. Several Dabchick spend the winter in the pond, and are sometimes seen in the lagoon too. Both areas have nesting Black Swans and Pukeko. The rushes verging the pond have been used for nesting by Swamp Harriers in the past, and perhaps still do. Large numbers of Canada Geese frequent the lagoon and the pond. During a summer drought when the lagoon water level is low, the margins should be checked for small waders. The scrape at the southern end of the lagoon should also be checked for small waders, including nesting Black-fronted Dotterels.



Landcorp Marsh: Apart from Black Swans and Pukeko, look for Black-fronted Dotterels at the marsh edges. Spur-winged Plovers breed in the adjacent field, and a few pairs of Black-backed Gulls and Pied Stilts nest near the back of the marsh.

Airport Marshes: This area can be scanned from the road (or viewed from the “Water Ride” trail) but not entered. At the northern end of the marshes, beside the Bayview Caravan Park, is a pond which the trail skirts. Marsh Crake have been recorded in this vicinity.

ANDERSON PARK - GREENMEADOWS

This popular public park is worth visiting. The ponds have Shovelers, Grey Teal and Mallard, as well as various hybrids of the latter. Black Swans are present, as well as a pair or two of lurking Spur-winged Plovers. The main pond closest to Kennedy Road has a nesting colony of Little Shags. A White Heron is often present in the pond closest to York Avenue during the winter. A Little Egret has been a

visitor during 2015. Three Plumed Whistling Ducks appeared at the Kennedy Road ponds in 2011, and two were still present in August 2014. White-faced Herons nest in the trees near the York Avenue side.

MARINE PARADE – NAPIER

Before heading south to Waitangi and Clive, check the Napier waterfront, especially south of Ellison Street carpark. Banded Dotterel nest along the shingle at regular intervals. Black-fronted Terns used to roost at Ellison Street, but now need to be searched for from Waitangi and beyond (autumn and winter).

WAITANGI, CLIVE, & HAUMOANA (Map 2)

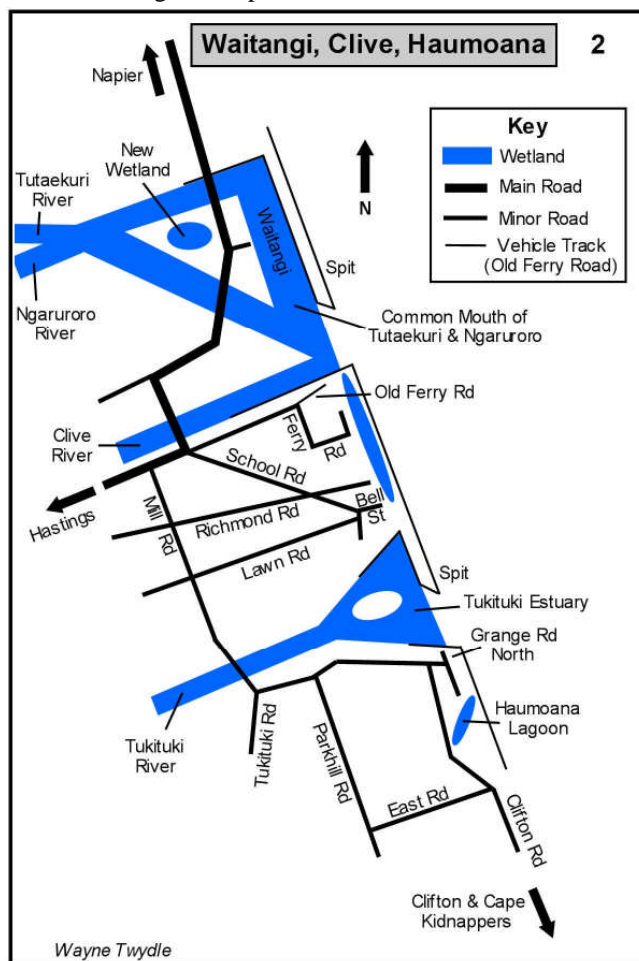
Travelling from Napier, the first area to explore is Waitangi. Turn left just after the Tutaekuri Bridge, over the cattle stop. The carpark sometimes has NZ Pipits. The wetland directly in front of the carpark may have waders, but the increased public activity here in recent years has made this less likely.

The shingle bar closest to the sea often has wintering Black-fronted Terns. They may not be visible from the carpark, in which case you will need to walk out to the bar. The estuary entrance frequently changes its position, so access to the bar also changes.



White-fronted Terns sometimes have a nesting colony on the other side of the common mouth, which can be approached closer from the track leading from the end of Ferry Road. Drive from Waitangi towards Clive, turning hard left at the hotel, into Ferry Road. Drive to the end of Ferry Road, park, and walk out along the stopbank towards the sea. A track on the seaward side of the wetland continues to

the left back towards the common mouth. If the terns are present, it is worth watching for skuas chasing them. A similar – but not quite so close – position can be reached from Old Ferry Road, but progress is blocked by a usually impassable channel. However, it is a pleasant walk along the embankment from Old Ferry Road to Ferry Road, then following the track. Indeed, the embankments and limestone trails connect most Clive wetland areas, and is a good walk all the way to the Tukituki Estuary and beyond.



The outfall platform at Richmond Road is the next place to visit. You can continue to walk to it, or drive around from Ferry Road, up School Road, and turn left into Richmond Road. When you get to the outfall, check the platform. There are usually Spotted Shags roosting on it; the only known site other than a few on the cliffs at Cape Kidnappers.

The channel leading to Bell Street sometimes has a few NZ Dabchick. Pied Stilts and Banded Dotterels nest amongst the beach debris. This section is one of the best places to check for the Little Egret. Walk on to Bell Street, or drive around, then walk along the beach

to the Tukituki Estuary. The estuary entrance is variable, so access obviously varies too. Check for Caspian and Black-fronted Terns.

Drive around to the opposite side of the estuary – Grange Road North in Haumoana. There is signage showing the beach access. As well as checking the estuary from this side, walk the embankment beside the car park. The channel sometimes harbours a White Heron.

On the return trip to Napier, stop opposite Waitangi just before the Tutaekuri Bridge. There is a foot track beside the bridge leading across the railway line where you can scan a newly established wetland (The Horseshoe). This wetland can also be accessed by foot whilst at Waitangi.

POSSIBLE SPECIES TO BE SEEN

Wherever you are in Clive, watch for a Little Egret which is usually present each winter. If it is not seen, Ahuriri Estuary should be checked. Also check for a White Heron. Both species may be in the



Clive River beside the bridge, or in any of the wetlands. A favoured place is in the channel between Richmond Road and Bell Street. (It should be noted that another location to be checked for both species is Anderson Park at Greenmeadows.) Cattle Egret, when present, usually frequent fields in Ferry Road and Richmond Road, but may be encountered elsewhere. Bittern are a possibility between Ferry Road and Bell Street. The Horseshoe wetland at Waitangi has become the most likely spot to see one (or two). Black-fronted Terns can be present at any location on the beach, but are most likely at Waitangi and the

Tukituki Estuary, roosting with White-fronted Terns. If no Black-fronted Terns are found during winter, drive around some of the fields inland at Meeanee, especially during adverse weather conditions when they cannot fish at sea. At this time they feed over the rain-soaked fields.

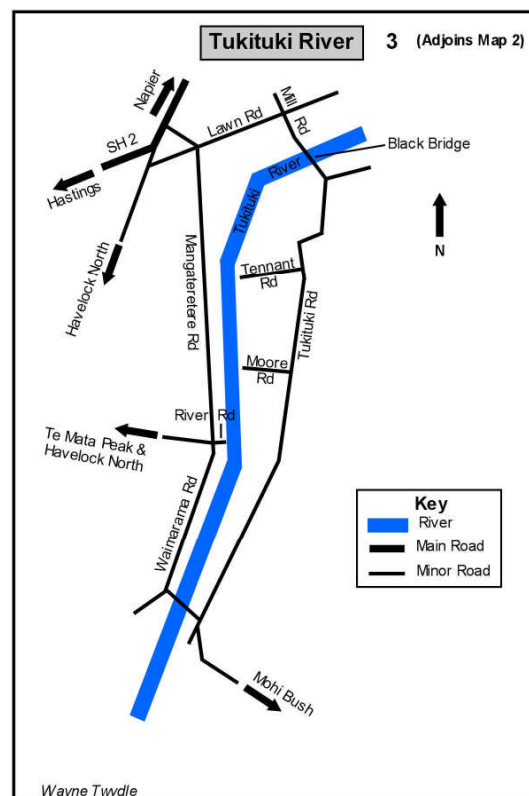
TUKITUKI RIVER (Map 3)

The directions for this river assume that you are already in the Clive/Haumoana area, so Map 3 adjoins Map 2. There is easy access to the riverbed at Black Bridge. Then drive south along Tukituki Road from Mill Road and turn into Tennant Road. This is the first road which gives public access to the riverbed. Further on is Moore Road, which usually gives access to a large shingle area. This of course is dependant on the current river channel course. Continue on towards the Waimarama Bridge. (At this point you may choose to drive on to Mohi Bush, which will be described later.)

After checking the river from near the bridge, head north along the opposite side (Waimarama Road) following the river. River Road is the next public road for riverbed access. Continue on to the main road. (Opposite River Road is Te Mata Road, which leads to Te Mata Peak and Havelock North. NZ Pipits are easily seen in the Te Mata Peak carpark.)

POSSIBLE SPECIES TO BE SEEN

Of most interest during the breeding season are nesting Black-fronted Dotterels, Banded Dotterels, and Pied Stilts. There are usually scattered nests of Black-backed Gulls as well. During the winter months Black-fronted Dotterels are still present, but the Banded Dotterels have left – large flocks are present in coastal fields, whilst many migrate north. Displaying males have returned to the



riverbeds by July, or even earlier. The Banded Dotterels nest on the main shingle bed, but the Black-fronteds tend to nest on ridges beside the river backwaters.

MOHI BUSH

Continue along Waimarama Road (see Map 3) which leads uphill. Turn right into Maraetotara Road, then right into Waipoapoa Road (signage is clear). Mohi Bush is on the left by the junction of Waipoapoa and Tawa Roads. The entrance is easy to miss. You can drive across the field – there is a carpark beside the bush. The tracks are easy walking except for the Long Track which involves some clambering in places. The most common species are Riflemen, Tui, and NZ Pigeon. In the spring and summer, Shining Cuckoos are present, and are best watched during spring from outside the bush, looking back at the sunlit branches.

CAPE KIDNAPPERS

The gannet colony is open from about November to June (check DoC website for details). Te Awanga/Clifton is the start point for the various ways of reaching the cape and is clearly signposted (see Map 2 which includes Clifton Road). The main form of transport is the tractor and trailer ride along the beach from Clifton. This is run by Gannet Beach Adventures. Another company – Gannet Safaris Overland Ltd – run an air-conditioned vehicle overland from Te Awanga to the cape. Some people choose to walk, which is dependant on the tides, and advice should be sought at the Visitor Centre in Napier. The 8 km walk (one way) can be covered in 1 ½ to 2 hours.

There are three Australasian Gannet colonies at Cape Kidnappers. The first to be encountered if you are travelling along the beach is at Black Reef. This provides excellent viewing, and is ideal for those not wanting to climb the hill to see the other colonies. If you follow the track to the top of the hill, you can view the Saddle and Plateau colonies.

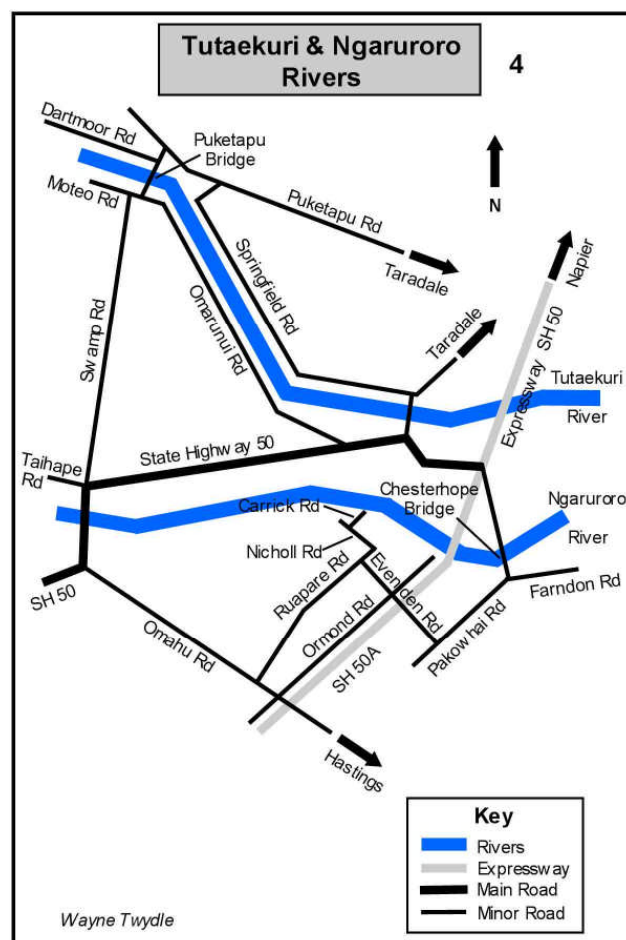
TUTAEKURI RIVER (Map 4)

This is the easiest river for access. However, some of the access points are very public, so described here are some areas which are more suitable for birding. As with most rivers, the water flow can drastically change the way you approach the shingle habitat.

From State Highway 50 drive along Omarunui Road. There are clearly marked



access points along this road which usually lead to large shingle beds. Cross the Puketapu Bridge. At this stage, before continuing down the other of the river, you may choose to drive up Dartmoor Road. There are several places you may stop, and an advantage is that you are getting away from the popular recreation areas. Drive back along Puketapu Road, then turn sharp right into Springfield Road. The usual birds are to be found – Banded and Black-fronted Dotterels, Pied Stilts, and Black-backed Gulls.



NGARURORO RIVER (Map 4)

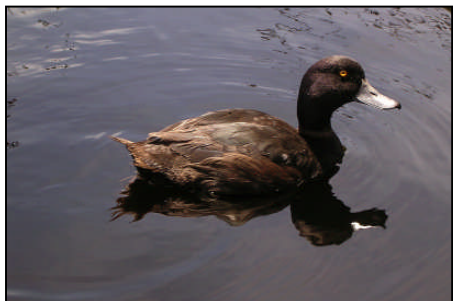
The best areas to explore are above the Chesterhope Bridge. Drive towards Hastings along the Expressway or Pakowhai Road, and turn into Evenden Road. This leads to two very good spots – the end of Ormond Road, and Carrick Road. Further upstream there is access at Fernhill. If you drive up the Taihape Road, continue to Matapiro and Whanawhana, where there are huge areas of shingle. You will need to search for public vehicle tracks, most of which are not well marked. In these upper reaches of the Ngaruroro, a few pairs of South Island Pied Oystercatchers have regularly nested for many years, and in the past there has been a nesting colony of Black-billed Gulls nesting in the vicinity.

WHITE PINE BUSH & TANGOIO WALKWAY (Map 5)

White Pine Bush is about 30km north of Napier on State Highway 2. The entrance is clearly signposted on the left. The more common bush birds are present, in particular New Zealand Pigeons. The loop walking track provides wheelchair access. Tangoio Falls Reserve is also worth a visit. Similar birds to White Pine Bush are present, and in addition Tomtits can sometimes be found.

LAKE TUTIRA (Map 5)

Beyond White Pine Bush is Lake Tutira. Drive into the picnic area between the two lakes – Tutira and Waikopiro. It is possible to continue driving along the track beside Lake Tutira, but eventually you will need to park, then walk. Notable birds include NZ Scaup, Australian Coot, and NZ Dabchick. However, they are often some distance out on the lake, so a spotting scope is useful.



There are a few parking bays along the highway beside the lake, but they don't always provide good, unobstructed views.

Continue on towards the Matahorua Road turnoff on the left, between the Tutira Store and the school.

LAKE OPOUahi (Map 5)

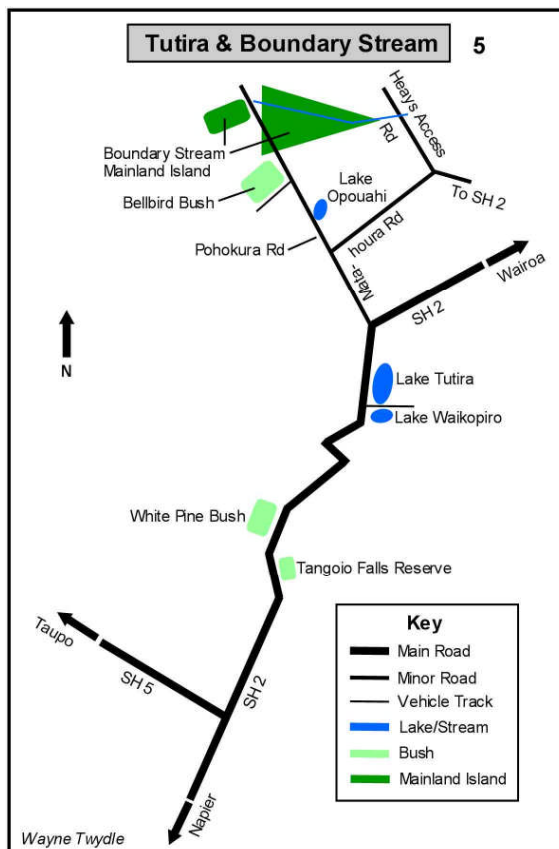
Matahorua Road branches into Pohokura Road, which you should follow. 11km from State Highway 2 is Lake Opouahi on your right. The lake is surrounded with regenerating bush, with a 30 minute loop track around the lake. The area around the jetty provides an excellent opportunity for close viewing of Fernbirds. Another excellent Fernbird area be be found by walking half the loop track then carrying on for a short distance beyond the lake as if heading to Thomas' Bush.

BELLBIRD BUSH (Map 5)

This reserve is 15km from State Highway 2. There are walking tracks throughout. Two species of note are Bellbirds and NZ Pigeon.

SHINE FALLS & BOUNDARY STREAM (Map 5)

This is a truly amazing place to visit! It is managed as a mainland island, with intensive predator control, so bird life now abounds, thanks to Department of Conservation staff and volunteers. The DoC website has a detailed description. The first reintroduction



was of North Island Robin, followed by North Island Brown Kiwi and Kokako. More recently Kaka and Yellow-crowned Parakeets have been released into the reserve. Other birds to be seen include NZ Falcon, Tomtit, Whitehead, and NZ Pigeon. Grey Warblers and Riflemen are common.

One entry point is from Pohokura Road where there is signage which includes a map of the walking tracks.

Another start point to be considered is from Heays Access Road which leads to Shine Falls. This vicinity is worthwhile in the spring and summer when Shining Cuckoos abound. Allow 1½ hours return for this walk. Both entry points have car parking.

It is possible to walk from the Pohokura Road end of the track through to Shine Fall. The track follows Boundary Stream for the second half of the walk, ending at the falls. Allow 5 hours to walk the 8km. The track from the falls to the Heays Access Road carpark is mostly across farmland, and is clearly marked.

PORANGAHAU BEACH/ESTUARY

This is a rich estuarine habitat which includes a 7km sandspit. The only public access to this area is from the southern end. Park near the bridge at Beach Road and walk north. Parts of this walk can be very muddy and slippery, so care is needed. Low tide is the most rewarding, with birds feeding on the exposed estuary. Birds which nest on the sandspit include Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls, Caspian Terns, White-fronted Terns, and Variable Oystercatchers. Most recently Royal Spoonbills have established a small nesting colony on Bird Island. Over-summering waders include Bar-tailed Godwits and Red-necked Stints, whilst winter is the best time to see Wrybills, Banded Dotterels and NZ Dotterels.

BALLS CLEARING

Balls Clearing is reached via Puketitiri Road. Drive through the settlement of Puketitiri which is about 60km from Napier. About 2km beyond this take the right turn into Pakaututu Road. Drive another 2km along this road and you will see Balls Clearing Reserve on your right. There is plenty of parking at the picnic area.

There are good, clearly marked walking tracks through this bush. Commonly seen birds include Whiteheads, Bellbirds, Tui, Fantails, Grey Warblers, and Silvereyes; whilst NZ Pigeons and Shining Cuckoos are common seasonal visitors. Riflemen and Tomtits are resident birds, but are not particularly plentiful.

BLOWHARD BUSH

Blowhard Bush is 53km from Hastings, just off the Taihape Road. Join the Taihape Road at Fernhill on the Napier side of the bridge. Continue towards Taihape. A few kilometres beyond the Kaweka Forest Headquarters, turn right into Lawrence Road. About 500m along Lawrence Road is the Blowhard Bush carpark. The tracks are well marked, and are illustrated on an information board at the start of the tracks. Whiteheads are common birds, and you should see/hear NI Robins and Tomtits. It is difficult to not hear Long-tailed Cuckoos during the spring and summer, and with luck close sightings can be had.



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