

Significance to takata whenua

For early Māori, the area was a major kaik/village and part of the seasonal mahinga kai and resource-gathering trail. Mahinga kai taken include: tuna/eels, weka, kākā, kererū, tūi, pūkeko, freshwater mussels, fern root/aruhe, kiore, native trout/kōkopu, mountain daisy/tikumumu and cabbage tree/ti kōuka. The area was also part of the pounamu trails and an ara to Poutini/West Coast

Through the Ngāi Tahu Settlement Act 1998, a Statutory Acknowledgement and Deed of Recognition is in place over the area to formally acknowledge the association and values Ō Tū Wharekai holds for Ngāi Tahu.



Pioneer settlement

Pastoralism developed in the 1850s and 1860s, and the export of wool, tallow and meat became an important industry. In 1856 Charles George Tripp and John Barton Arundel Acland travelled into the Ashburton high country to discover land for high-country farming. High-country sheep stations were run on an annual cycle of mustering and shearing with musterers' huts and shearing sheds built in appropriate places. Considerable folklore developed around these activities, enduring to the present day. One station owner titled his memoirs *Many a glorious morning*, demonstrating a deep bond felt by many for the landscape and lifestyle.



Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.



NEW ZEALAND environmental CARE CODE

- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste more than 50 m from waterway
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Toitu te whenua (leave the land undisturbed)

For further information go to www.doc.govt.nz/otuwarekai

Cover: Swin River Photo: G Iles

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Ō Tū Wharekai wetland



Ashburton lakes and upper
Rangitata River, Canterbury



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Arawai Kākāriki wetland restoration programme

Arawai Kākāriki is a wetland restoration programme focusing on three very different nationally important wetlands: Whangamarino (Waikato), Ō Tū Wharekai (Canterbury) and Awarua/Waituna (Southland). Launched in July 2007, the programme aims to restore these three wetlands with the assistance of the community and along the way learn more about methods that can be used on other wetlands.



Ō Tū Wharekai Wetland Restoration Project

Our vision is that the intrinsic values of one of the best remaining high-country freshwater wetland and braided-river ecosystems are protected, enhanced and appreciated.

What are our aims?

- Maintain and enhance hydrology and water quality
- Protect intact wetland habitat and rehabilitate degraded wetland habitat
- Protect and enhance species diversity and threatened flora and fauna
- Conserve historic and cultural sites
- Promote sustainable land use
- Improve facilities and opportunities for the public to visit the site and increase awareness, appreciation and community involvement in the project
- Support research that increases understanding of wetland management

Why was Ō Tū Wharekai chosen?

Ō Tū Wharekai is one of the best examples of an unspoiled, intact, inter-montane wetland system remaining in New Zealand, and is nationally important for wildlife. It contains a mosaic of diverse wetland habitats nestled amongst high-country tussocklands and set against the towering Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana. The project includes the braided upper reaches of the Rangitata River, and the 12 lakes that make up the Ashburton lakes, along with ephemeral turfs, streams, swamps and bogs.

Wetlands aren't always wet

Ephemeral turfs are one of the most poorly recognised wetland types. They occur where kettleholes (below), or surface depressions, become ponded with water during wet seasons or wet years, yet are partially or wholly dry at other times. Vegetation consists mainly of herbaceous plants forming a ground-hugging and often dense carpet of intertwined plants. Species present change with changing water levels.



Kettlehole wetland monitoring

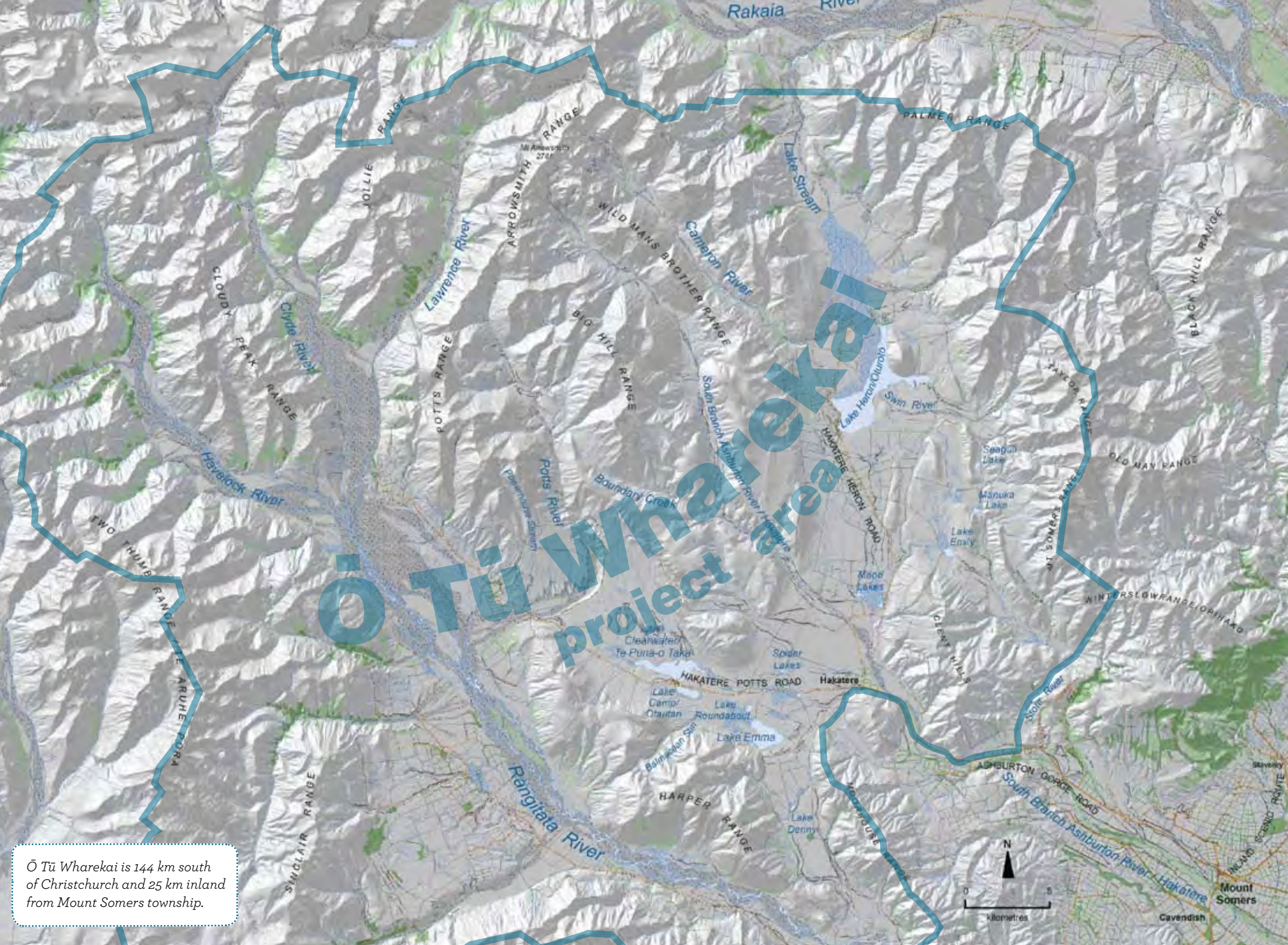
Gentians Photo: G Iles

What makes it valuable?

- Threatened native fish including longfin eel/tuna, and upland longjaw galaxias
- Important sports-fish populations and spawning streams
- Threatened bird species including Australasian bittern/matuku, black-fronted tern/tarapirohe, and black-billed gull, wrybill/ngutu pare, banded dotterel/turiwhatu, Australasian crested grebe/kāmāna and Caspian tern/tārā nui
- Threatened lizard species, such as scree skink/mokomoko and long-toed skink
- Widespread kettlehole wetlands and associated ephemeral turf, a rare habitat type
- Threatened plant species, such as the endangered marsh arrowrush *Triglochin palustris*, pygmy forget-me-not *Myosotis pygmaea* var. *minutiflora*, pygmy clubrush *Isolepis basilaris*, a threatened grass *Amphibromus fluitans*, and one of the largest known populations of a threatened native lily, *Iphigenia novae-zelandiae*
- Some of the best examples of red tussock *Chionochloa rubra* and *Carex secta*/pūkiō wetlands in Canterbury.

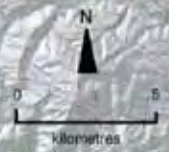


Photo: G Iles



Ō Tū Wharekai project

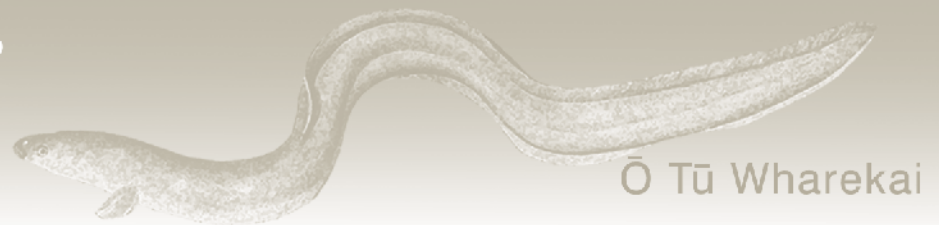
Ō Tū Wharekai is 144 km south of Christchurch and 25 km inland from Mount Somers township.



Mount Somers
Cavendish

Arawai Kākāriki

wetland restoration programme



Ō Tū Wharekai

Why is it at risk?

There is the potential for water abstraction and storage for irrigation and stock water, and degraded water quality due to sediment and nutrient inputs from intensified farming practice.

The upper Rangitata is one of few braided rivers in New Zealand still largely free of invasive weeds. Broom and Russell lupins are emerging weeds that are not fully under control. Grey and crack willow threaten the hydrology of lakes, streams and swamps by increasing sedimentation.

Swamps, bogs and ephemeral turfs can be damaged by vehicles, rabbits and hares and stock. The disturbance caused may open up the wetland to weed invasion.

Predators such as ferrets, stoats, weasels, feral cats, hedgehogs and possums threaten birds, lizards and invertebrates.

What is the project about?

The work involved in managing Ō Tū Wharekai includes:

- Inventories of plant, bird, lizard, invertebrate and fish populations and setting up permanent monitoring programs
- Inventory of cultural values and setting up a taonga monitoring program
- Willow, Russell lupin and broom control
- Research on wrybill, bittern and grebe breeding success and habitat use
- Fencing riparian margins
- Planning for compatible recreational use
- Raising awareness of wetland values

A place for recreation & relaxation

The Ashburton lakes landscape is noted as outstanding for its many relatively unmodified vistas, geological formations and water bodies. The lakes provide for extensive recreation including wind surfing, sailing, bird watching, kayaking and swimming, and provide a regionally-significant sports fishery. The wider area provides opportunities for hunting, mountain biking and walking, including Te Araroa—a walking trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff, www.teararoa.org.nz. For recreational opportunities, refer to Hakatere Conservation Park information.

Where are boats allowed?

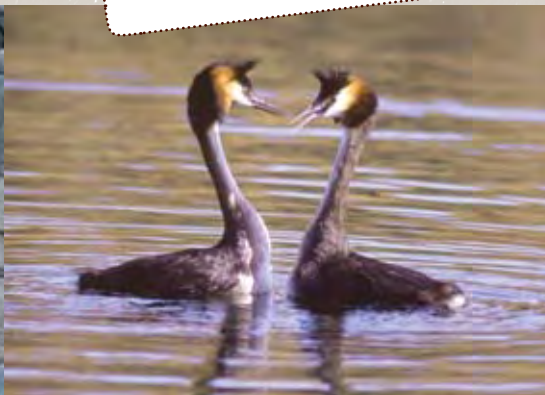
Motor-powered craft are permitted only on Lake Camp/Otautari; wind powered-craft are allowed only on Lake Clearwater/Te Puna-o Taka. On all other lakes, paddle-powered craft is the only form of boating allowed, due to the wildlife values of these lakes. For all boating regulations, refer to Environment Canterbury Navigational Safety Bylaws 2005.

Working with the community

In managing Ō Tū Wharekai, the Department of Conservation works closely with Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua, Environment Canterbury, Fish and Game New Zealand, Ashburton District Council, Forest and Bird, Rangitata Landcare Group, Land Information New Zealand, Lake Clearwater bach owners, landowners and recreational groups, as well as many interested individuals.



Wrybill/ngutu pare Photo: G Iles



Australasian crested grebe/kāmāna Photo: G Chance



Longjaw galaxias Photo: S Madill



Scree skink/mokomoko Photo: M Lettink