



MOTUKARORO

WHANGAREI HARBOUR MARINE RESERVE WHANGAREI TEREंगा PARAOA

The tidal waters at Motukaroro swirl endlessly around its rocky pinnacles and gently caress the neighbouring shoreline of Reotahi. The land and sea combine to create a unique marine environment at the mouth of the Whangarei Harbour.

The Marine Habitat at Motukaroro

A diverse range of marine plants and animals live in this place of strong tidal currents. Shallow reefs line the coast between Reotahi and Little Munro Bay. While on the southern side of Motukaroro Island the reef plunges 30 metres to the deepwater channel of the Whangarei harbour. These examples of underwater zones provide a 'wet library' for any marine life enthusiast.



Kingfish



Trevally

What you will see

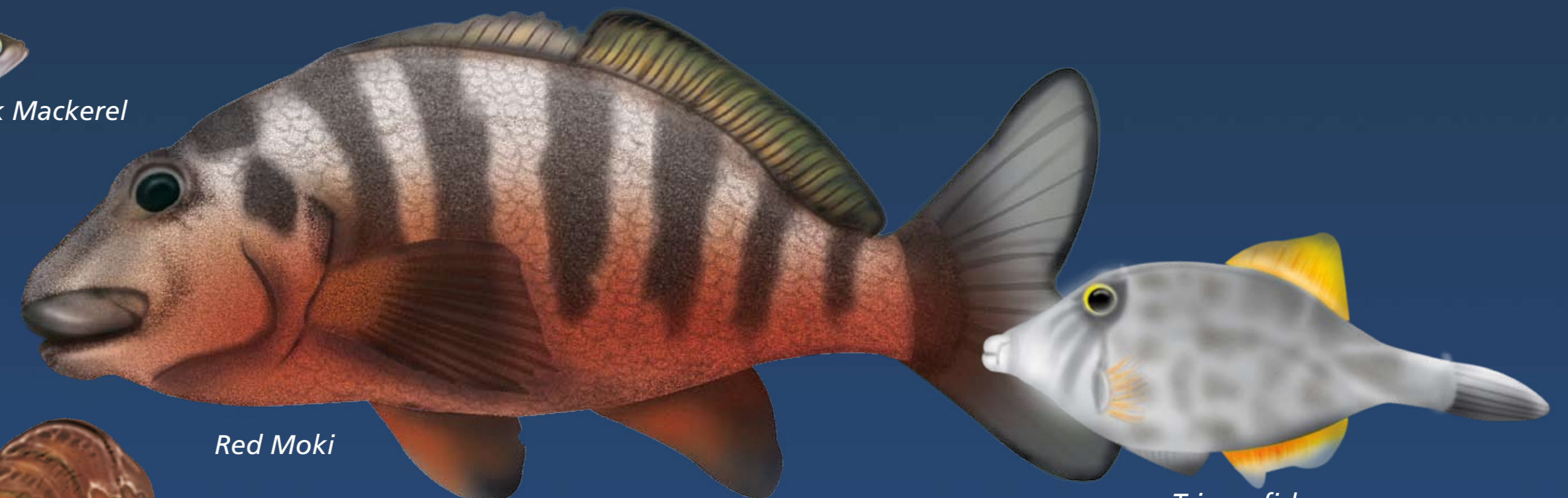
Fishes

About 50 species of fish can be found in the waters surrounding Motukaroro Island. Fish that swim in the open water, often in schools, are termed "pelagic". They frequently move about the coast. Pelagic species at Motukaroro include kingfish, trevally and jack mackerel.



Jack Mackerel

Reef fish are species that stay close to the rocky areas relying on them for shelter and food. One example is the Red Moki, which are long-lived and tend to stay in one area. Other reef fish you will see include blue maomao, parore, leatherjacket and butterfly perch.



Red Moki



Triggerfish

Crayfish or rock lobsters can be found hiding in rocky crevices. When young crayfish first settle on reefs they are at risk of being eaten by a wide range of fish. However, once they reach a large size they have few natural predators. Protecting the large crayfish at Motukaroro will increase their chances of breeding and adding to crayfish numbers in the surrounding harbour waters.



Kelp Forest

Dense kelp forests extend down to about 10 metres and provides habitat for rich encrusting life and fishes. As the light diminishes the kelp forests gradually give way to flat faced walls covered in brightly coloured anemones and fragile sponge gardens.



Deep Reefs

Sheets of vibrant jewel anemones replace the light dependant kelp forests at about 10 metres. Amidst the anemone colonies, colourful sea slugs eggs form circular clusters and triplefins perch and pounce. A wealth of sponges and other brightly coloured filter feeding animals become common as the depth increases and the light diminishes.



Cultural History

The Whangarei Harbour, Whangarei Terenga Paraoa, has a long history of Maori settlement. Many subtribal groups settled around its shores, in productive valleys and along the coast. The harbour acted as their food basket for generations. Today, the descendants of those first settlers will continue to play an important part by advising on the management of the reserve and the natural resources within.

History of the Marine Reserve

The Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve proposal was unique. It began in 1990 when local students chose to do something for the environment. Hundreds of Kamo High School students put time and energy into the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve proposal.

Marine experts supported the project and provided valuable scientific data, photographs and recommendations. After years of gathering information, the proposal was submitted and consequently, both the Motukaroro Island and Waikaraka sites were formally established as the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve in 2006.



WARNING
THERE ARE STRONG TIDAL CURRENTS AND BACK EDDIES IN THIS AREA – PLEASE EXERCISE CAUTION WHEN ENTERING THE WATER.



MOTUKARORO ISLAND



Reotahi



WHANGAREI DISTRICT COUNCIL



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai