

# The Hunters Hills/Te Tari a Te Kaumira



SOUTH CANTERBURY



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

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## The Hunters Hills/ Te Tari a Te Kaumira

Stay in nearby Waimate or at a local DOC campsite, to enjoy a wide range of outdoor experiences—camping, gentle walks with the family, stunning views out over the Canterbury Plains, sparkling streams and abundant birdlife.

### Takata whenua—first people of the land

Long ago, a travelling party led by the chief Te Kaumira wished to travel from the Hakataramea valley to the Pureora district. While crossing The Hunters Hills they were overtaken by an unexpected snowstorm. They hurried to reach safety but during the blizzard everyone got separated and when they re-assembled only Te Kaumira was missing. After the storm Te Kaumira's body was eventually discovered under a rock shelter, and the mountain range was named Te Tari a Te Kaumira (The Long Range of Te Kaumira) in memory of Te Kaumira. Since the day Rākaihautū first walked upon this land Te Tari a Te Kaumira has been an important area for gathering food and other resources. The large number of umu (earth ovens) within this area attest to its importance to those peoples of Waitaha, Rapuwai, Kāti Mamoe and Ngāi Tahu who dwelt within the shadow of these peaks and whose descendants still walk these trails.

It was from these lofty peaks that the pouākai, the greatest eagle to have ever lived, watched sentinel on all below, forever ready to swoop down upon any unsuspecting moa. Legend also tells us that the peoples of old had to guard their children so the pouakai would not carry them off as well.

In 1849, local respected Ngāi Tahu raketira Te Huruwhiri explained to Charles Torlesse, a surveyor for the Canterbury Association, that the hills behind Waimate were a significant area of hunting for local Ngāi Tahu. Subsequently Te Tari a Te Kaumira was named 'The Hunters Hills' in recognition of the significance of the hills as a hunting area for local Ngāi Tahu.



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Cover: On Mt Nimrod Track

This page: Mt Nimrod Scenic Reserve

## European history

From 1864 Waimate supplied the growing towns of Timaru and Oamaru with timber from the forests along The Hunters Hills. The first steam-driven sawmill was established in 1865, and by 1877 this had grown to five. The risk of fire was a constant worry. Some major fires were caused by bushworkers, travellers' cooking fires and shepherds burning grass lands.

In 1878 a huge fire destroyed the remaining forest and ruined the Waimate timber industry. An unusually strong northwest gale, which blew roofs off houses and even St Andrews railway station off its piles, swept over Waimate and fanned grass fires on The Hunters Hills.

At 4 pm on 15 November the Timaru Herald's Waimate correspondent telegraphed, "Even now I see traps coming down with families and what furniture they have been able to save. . . in fact, if the present wind continues, I believe the whole of the bush in Waimate will be completely cleared out".

After an eight-day rampage the fires finally burnt out, leaving part of Waimate and much of the surrounding countryside, a desolate blackened ruin.

The fire put many men out of work and destroyed what was left of one of the finest tōtara forests in New Zealand.

## Native plants you might see

Small pockets of forest have survived the fire; they are an example of the dry-climate forest that used to be found from Ashburton to Waimate.

These remnants are mainly broadleaf/kāpuka with mahoe, ribbonwood/mānatu, tree fuchsia/kōtukutuku and occasional kahikatea, mataī and tōtara.

At higher elevations there are sub-alpine species while lower down there are scattered podocarps on river terraces. In the south at Studholme Bush Scenic Reserve ngaio makes an unusual appearance, reflecting the influence of the coastal climate.

A few notable plant species have been recorded at both

low and high altitudes including the closely-branched shrub *Teucrium parvifolium*, a rocky outcrop plant *Helichrysum plumeum* (it is only found in South Canterbury and almost entirely in The Hunters Hills) and the climbing groundsel *Brachyglottis sciadophila*. This area also has the country's largest population of the iconic, but threatened, Canterbury pink broom.

## . . . and native animals

Short, energetic streams have carved out the landscape and provide homes to a range of indigenous fish.

Geckos and skinks are also found with common skinks in large numbers, and some confirmed reports of the scree skink *Oligosoma waimatense*/mokomoko.

Bird life is varied, with both introduced and native species present. Natives include NZ bush falcon/kārearea, bellbird/korimako, fantail/pīwakawaka, brown creeper/pīpī and South Island tomtit/miromiro.

Other forest species include the New Zealand woodpigeon/kererū, South Island rifleman/tītipounamu, shining cuckoo/pīpīwharau (seasonally), and occasional tūi.



Rifleman/tītipounamu Photo: M F Soper



Photo: A Fleming

South Island tomtit/miromiro



NZ falcon/kārearea Photo: K Lange



Common skink

## Track grades

Choose the type of track that matches your skills, fitness and the experience you want—be realistic.

### Walking track



- Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day.
- Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy.
- Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities.
- Clearly signposted. Stream and river crossings are bridged.
- Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.

### Tramping track



- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections.
- Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Tramping/hiking boots required.

### Route



- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track unformed and natural, rough, muddy or very steep.
- Suitable for people with above-average fitness. High-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required.
- Complete self-sufficiency required.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.

## Maps you may need

NZTopo50

CA 18 Waituna CB 18 Ikawai

## Mountain-bike tracks



**Grade 1**—fairly flat, wide, smooth track or gravel road.



**Grade 2**—mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily-avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.



**Grade 3**—steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at track's outer edge.

## Safety is your responsibility

Follow these five simple rules to help you plan and prepare before engaging in land-based outdoor activities:

**Plan your trip**

**Tell someone**

**Be aware of the weather**

**Know your limits**

**Take sufficient supplies**

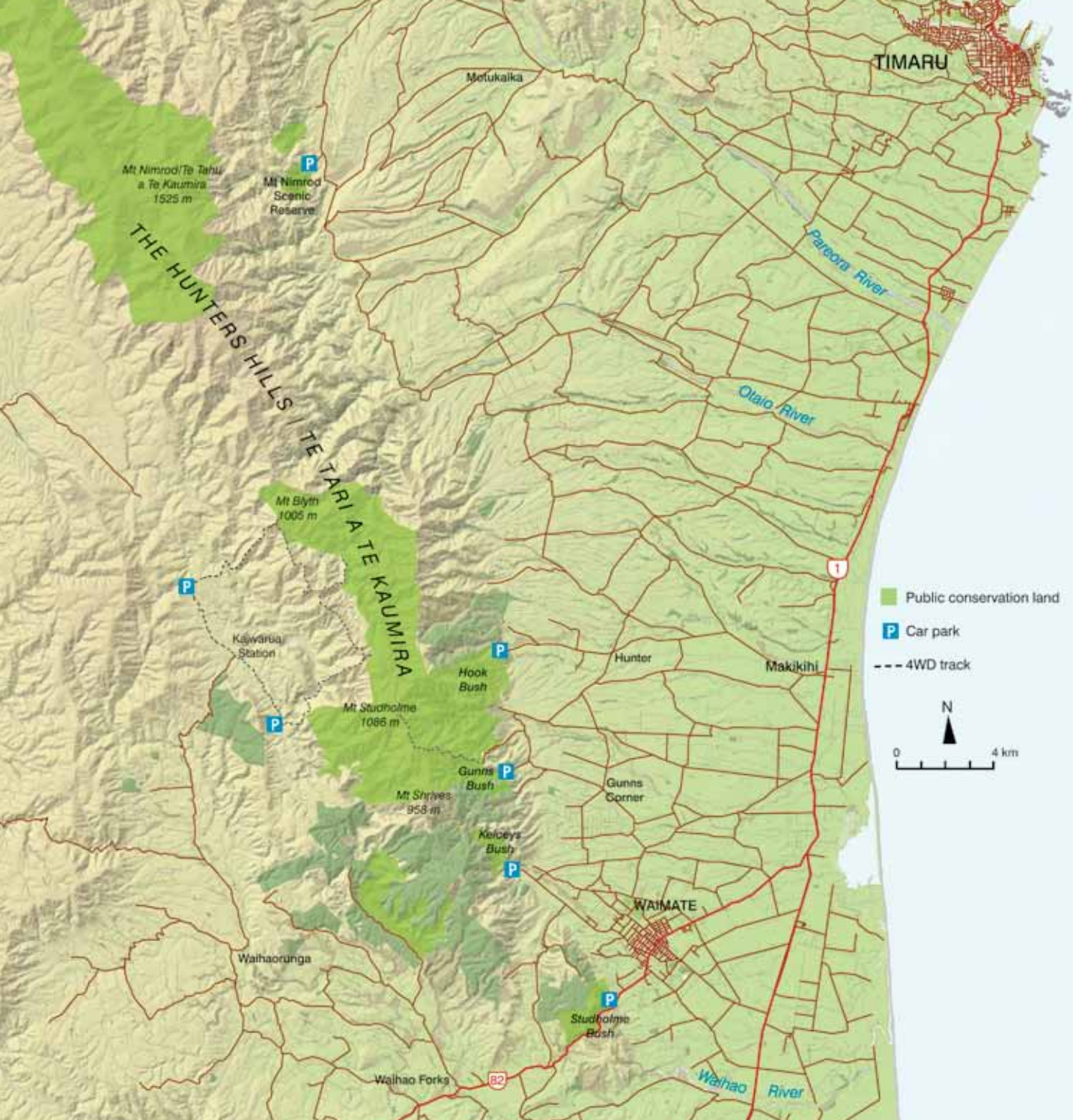
Visit [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz) to learn more and to log your outdoor intentions with your trusted contact.



## Hunting

Public conservation land in and around The Hunters Hills/Te Tari a Te Kaumira is open for recreational hunting. Wallaby are present throughout the area and there may be occasional goat, pig, red deer, fallow deer and chamois.

Hunters require a hunting permit, available along with additional information through [www.doc.govt.nz/canterbury-hunting](http://www.doc.govt.nz/canterbury-hunting)



## Studholme Bush Scenic Reserve

*Enjoy—a wide range of tracks, from an easy, fun cycle with the family along Railway Track, to a steep 50-minute walk to the Whitehorse monument (Waimate District Council) with great views out over Waimate.*

Follow State Highway 82 (Hakataramea Highway) from Waimate; after about 3.5 km the car park is on the right of the road.

The reserve is named after Michael Studholme who was the first European settler in Waimate—he came to New Zealand with his two brothers in 1848.

His pastoral lease, 'Te Waimate' was said to be; “an estate which Lincoln delegates, after having visited and inspected the land throughout the Colonies, pronounced to be the very finest in New Zealand, if not in the Southern Hemisphere. So rich is a large portion of the land that it is said to be able to carry a bullock to the acre.”

The reserve was donated to the public by the Gama Foundation in 2008 and then generously gifted to the Department of Conservation to manage in 2009. There is a mixture of regenerating podocarp and hardwoods and some coastal species, like ngaio, are present due to the micro climate in the gorge.

In December 2010, a fire started by a tree falling on power-lines burnt 154 hectares and took six days to put out. Native bush will again regenerate through the gorse and broom over the coming decades.

 **Dogs**—are not allowed.

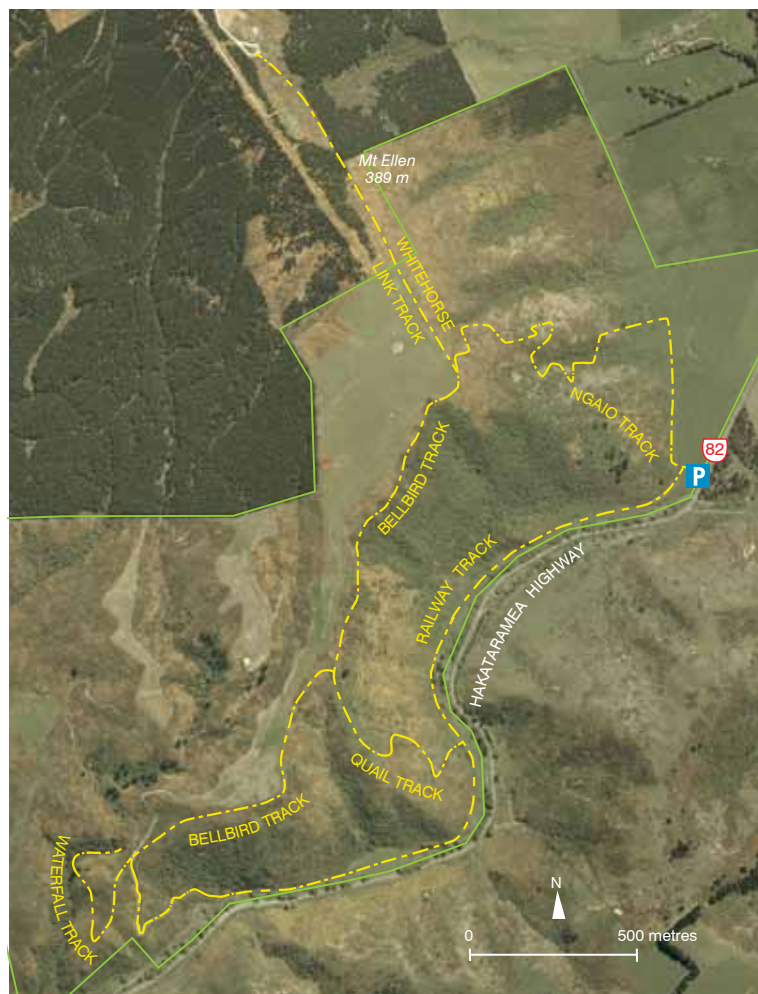
### Railway Track

30 minutes one way

An easy, level track where the family can enjoy pretending to be trains!

This former railway from Waimate to Waihao Forks was opened in 1882. It stopped taking passengers in 1931 and closed in 1953 due to lack of freight.

The 2-km section of railway embankment provides a flat track with Deep Creek on one side and wetlands and regenerating bush on the other.



### Ngaio Track 35 minutes one way

This track climbs steeply after a few hundred metres and provides great views over Waimate and the surrounding country. The numerous ngaio trees are very unusual; these trees are usually found on the coast but here they enjoy the micro-climate in the gorge.

### Waterfall Track 30 minutes return

The waterfall, about 15-m high, is fed by a small stream that may run dry in periods of drought.

Follow Railway Track and then walk up Bellbird Track for about 15 minutes until you reach Waterfall Track.

## Bellbird Track

45 minutes one way



This 2-km walk between Railway Track and the top of Ngaio Track passes through areas of regenerating bush.

## Quail Track

30 minutes one way



Quail Track connects the middle section of Bellbird Track with Railway Track. It provides an alternative route back to the car park.

## Whitehorse Link Track

15 minutes one way



This track connects with Waimate District Council's Centrewood Park and the monument commemorating the Clydesdale horse.

## Kelceys Bush

*Stroll—to a small waterfall or picnic along a sparkling stream and listen to the bird song.*

### Access

Kelceys Bush is northwest of Waimate.

In Waimate turn off Queen Street (Highway 82) onto Mill Road. Follow this road to Kelceys Bush.

Kelceys Bush is named after two brothers Julius and Frank Kelcy (the spelling of their name became changed over time) who helped clear the surrounding land after the Waimate fire.

Despite milling for firewood and stock grazing, which continued until 1965, Kelceys Bush was a popular picnic spot, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1901, local MP Sir William Stewards suggested that a portion of Kelceys Bush should be reserved for the preservation of the forest and abundant native bird life; kākā, kererū and tūi. A recommendation was made to the Surveyor General suggesting it would be a mistake to allow this piece of bush to disappear.

This forest remnant is mainly broadleaf/kāpuka with mahoe, ribbonwood/mānau, tree fuchsia/kōtukutuku and occasional kahikatea, mataī and tōtara.

A community group, Friends of Kelceys Bush, was formed in 2002 and they are actively engaged in managing and protecting the area.



**Dogs**—are allowed.

## Sanders Falls Walk

20 minutes return



A gentle climb and some steps take you to a viewing platform overlooking the falls. The pipe alongside the track, and at the falls, supplied Waimate's water from 1915 to 1932 when it was discontinued following a major flood.

## Intake Track

1 hour return



This track goes upstream following Waimate Creek past Rock Pool weir. It crosses the creek several times so be prepared to get your feet wet, though thanks to Friends of Kelceys Bush there are concrete stepping stones at most crossings.

The pipe alongside the track and the weir at Rock Pool are the remains of Waimate's second water supply, which operated between 1926 and 1954.



At Kelceys Bush



## Te Tāpuae a Urihia

### Mt Blyth, Mt Cecil, Mt Studholme, Mt Shrives

This area is in the southern part of The Hunters Hills and lies to the northwest of Waimate. The highest point is Mt Studholme at 1085 m.

The vegetation is a mix of broadleaf and podocarp forest on the eastern flanks, which gives way to tussock. Some stream gullies have dracophyllum, matagouri/tūmatakuru and coprosma.

*Enjoy—extensive views out across the Canterbury Plain.*

#### Access

Access to the eastern side is from Mt Studholme Road or Jacksons Bush Road.

#### Jacksons Bush Road

See the Hook Bush Conservation Area; access section.



### Mt Studholme Road

This unmetalled road is 2WD for about 2.5 km. Just past the old woolshed it becomes a steep, four-wheel-drive single track with precipitous drops to the stream below.

*Walking access to the western side* is reached by following Waimate Kurow Highway (82) from Waimate. Then turn right at Waihao Forks onto Stony Creek Road and then left onto Waihaorunga Road. At Wahaorunga turn right onto Pentland Hills Road. After about 8.5 km this becomes Kaiwarua Road. Follow Kaiwarua Road to its end at Kaiwarua Station woolshed. Just past the woolshed turn either left (north west) or right (south east) to reach the signposted public easements across private land to public conservation land. See map page 6.

When driving across farm land please leave gates as you find them and do not block gateways into paddocks.

**Dogs**—are allowed.

## Gunns Bush

*Walk—along an enchanting moss carpet.*

Gunns Bush is 10 km northwest of Waimate.

From the eastern outskirts of Waimate turn off Timaru Road (SH 82) onto Maytown Road. Take the second right onto Waimate Hunter Road. At Gunns Corner go straight ahead on Upper Hook Road. After about 9 km turn left onto Gunns Bush Road and follow this road past the Christian Camp to the car park at the road end.



**Dogs**—are allowed.



## Gunns Bush Track



1 hour 30 min return

Moss grows underfoot, making the first part of this walk a magic green carpet. The walk follows the stream and then does a small loop before coming back the same way. There are many large tree-fuchsia/ kōtukutuku which are commonly found in regenerating sites. The kōtukutuku is the largest fuchsia in the world and one of our few native deciduous trees.



## Hook Bush Conservation Area

*Enjoy—expansive views out across the Canterbury Plain along an unmarked route up into The Hunters Hills.*

### Access

Access to Hook Bush is about 14 km northwest of Waimate.

On the eastern outskirts of Waimate turn right off Timaru Road (SH 82) onto Maytown Road. Take the second right onto Waimate Hunter Road and follow this

road for about 12.5 km. At Hunter turn left onto Jacksons Bush Road, which is followed to its end. The entrance is marked by the Hook Bush Conservation Area sign.

Hook Bush had extensive tracts of tōtara, mataī and miro. It escaped the fire of 1878 and was surveyed in 1880 and freeholded for logging in 1889. The bush has some of the best remaining areas of podocarp forest along the The Hunters Hills; it contains mataī which are now rare in Canterbury. The area also has some exceptionally large broadleaf, māhoe and coprosma which may have become established after pre-European fires.

**Dogs**—are allowed.

### Hook Bush Route 1 hour one way



An unmarked track leads from the end of Jacksons Bush Road to a stream which is followed for a while before the track ascends to a ridge.

This pretty tributary of the Makikihi River is bordered by large kōwhai and lacebark/houhere. Once you leave the stream the route ascends steeply up through thick gorse which in places closely embraces the track—long pants recommended! The wide views out to the coast and over Hook Bush Conservation Area make the climb worthwhile. The ridge can then be followed on up to The Hunters Hills and the trig point at 960 m.



## Mt Nimrod Scenic Reserve

**Note**—the scenic reserve does not give public access to Mt Nimrod which is on private land.

*Stay—in a tent; walk to see a cascading waterfall and enjoy gorgeous views out to the coast.*



Mt Nimrod Scenic Reserve is on the eastern side of The Hunters Hills. It is 32 km southwest of Timaru and 43 km northwest of Waimate. The reserve is spread over the deep and spectacular gorges of Nimrod Stream and White Rock River.

From Timaru follow State Highway 1 south for about 10.5 km. Turn right on Pareora River Road. Just after Pareora Huts turn left on Pareora Gorge Road. At Motukaika monument turn right on Motukaika Road. Turn left on Back Line Road, after about 2 km turn left to the scenic reserve.

This area was recognised as important for its birdlife as early as 1891. In 1897 the bush was reported to be thick and almost impenetrable, however burning, logging and stock grazing has changed the original forest cover. In 1932 the area was gazetted as a scenic reserve.

## Camping/picnicing

There are sheltered and private picnic and camping sites (20 sites) amongst the bush and grass terraces beside Nimrod Stream. See brochure *Conservation Campsites—South Island* or [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



**Dogs**—are not permitted

## Mt Nimrod Track

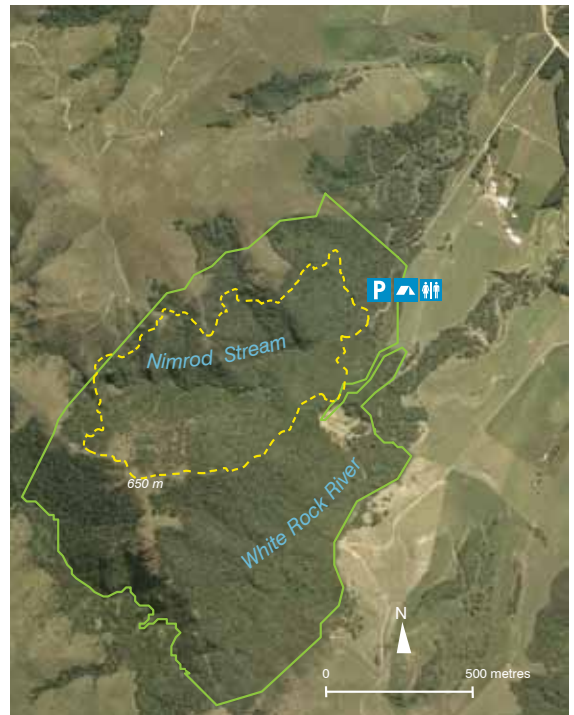
3-4 hour loop track



*This track has great views and a waterfall that plummets through a rock arch.*

Just beyond the camping area the loop track takes you on a clockwise circuit of the reserve. Initially it climbs steeply up out of the forest to a lookout point which gives good views out to the coast. The track then drops sharply down to Nimrod Stream which has to be forded. A short detour upstream (watch out for slippery rocks) takes you to a pretty 15-m waterfall cascading through a small rock arch.

From here the track climbs again to rocky knolls with great views out over the reserve to the coast. The track then drops back through the forest to the car park.





NEW ZEALAND  
environmental  
**CARE CODE**

Protect plants  
and animals

Remove rubbish

Bury toilet waste

Keep streams  
and lakes clean

Camp carefully

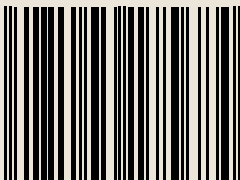
Keep to the track

Consider others

Respect our  
cultural heritage

Enjoy your visit

Toitu te whenua  
(Leave the land  
undisturbed)



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