

Restoring the balance

The Department of Conservation and Fish and Game New Zealand (Eastern Region) share management of the reserve assisted by the Te Puke Fish and Game Club and volunteers. Conservation is an ongoing process and a management plan guides the work programme. Projects include:

- Re-creation and maintenance of open water habitats.
- Keeping water channels clear of weed species and blockages to allow free movement of water.
- Controlling water levels.
- Animal pest control.
- Weed control.
- Monitoring of bird and plant species.
- Excluding stock access (except in areas where grazing is used as a method of weed control).
- Development of part of the reserve by local iwi for cultural use.
- Community activities such as planting.



Toitu te whenua

Remember

We hope you enjoy your visit to this special place. To help protect it:

- Please stay on the formed tracks.
- No mountain bikes.
- No vehicles in the reserve (registered hunters have limited vehicle access before the hunting season).
- Take any rubbish out with you.
- Dogs are not permitted outside of the hunting season. Restrictions apply during the season.
- No fires.
- Don't disturb the wildlife.
- Contact your DOC office to find out how you can be involved in the management of the reserve.

Please note: hunters use this reserve during the waterfowl hunting season (usually from the first weekend in May until the end of June). Other recreational users are advised not to use the reserve at this time.

For more information

If you would like to know more about the Lower Kaituna Wildlife Management Reserve please contact either:

The Department of Conservation
 Tauranga Area Office
 PO Box 9003
 TAURANGA
 Tel 07 578 7677
www.doc.govt.nz



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



or
 Fish and Game New Zealand
 Eastern Region
 Private Bag 3010
 ROTORUA
 Tel 07 357 5501

Welcome to the *Lower Kaituna*

Wildlife Management Reserve

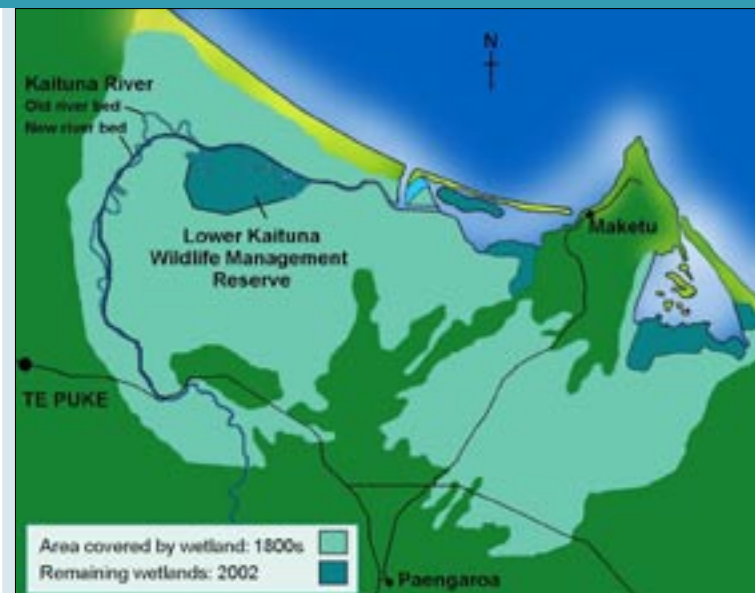


wetlands

The ups and downs of wetland life

Once, not all that long ago, wetlands made up most of the coastal strip between Tauranga and Whakatane. The Kaituna Reserve protects all that is left of one vast, shallow wetland that covered much of the Kaituna, Waihi and Rangitaiki Plains. What happened to this watery wilderness is no fairytale – it, like other similar wetlands around New Zealand, stood in the way of progress and pasture. Drains were dug, fires lit and grass sown. Soon dairy farms and orchards had replaced kahikatea and flax, the rich peat soils supporting a thriving economy and a growing population.

The Kaituna Plains: 1880 and 2000



Riding high: Kaituna is known as a ‘perched’ wetland. The surrounding farmland has been cultivated and drained and the peat soils have shrunk so that the wetland now sits above the land around it. This makes it even harder to maintain suitable water levels.

While Kaituna survived, it wasn’t unscathed. Flax was milled from the area in the early 1900s, and parts of it were drained, burnt and grazed. It was also invaded by a range of introduced pest species: plants like willows, predators such as stoats, and destructive fish like the prolific *Gambusia*. However, the biggest changes occurred during the 1970s and 80s when the Kaituna River, which fed the wetland with fresh water, was straightened and stopbanked. Water levels in the wetland dropped and much valuable wildlife habitat was lost.

Fortunately that is not the end of the story. Much of the wetland was purchased by the Tauranga Acclimatisation Society and later gifted to the Crown. It was gazetted as a Wildlife Management Reserve in 1985. In the late 1980s and early 1990s several culverts were built to let more river water into the wetland. These restoration attempts were only partially successful so in 1999, one last, very large culvert was installed with great results. Water levels are now the highest they have been for 20 years and natural wetland communities are starting to recover.

Come and visit

The Lower Kaituna Reserve is located northeast of Te Puke in the Western Bay of Plenty, alongside the lower reaches of the Kaituna River. Several walking tracks and a wonderful viewing hide have been built so that you get up close and personal with the wetland. That’s something that is normally quite hard to achieve given the damp nature of wetlands and the often impenetrable vegetation. Information signs are also in place to explain some of Kaituna’s special places and faces.



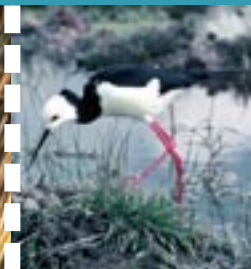
Wild in the wetland

Kaituna is a wonderful reminder of how things once were. Cabbage trees and flaxes are flourishing, pukeko prowl through the raupo, numerous ducks, shags and pied stilts forage for food in the waterways.

North Island fernbird



Pied stilt



Spotless crane



Less visible inhabitants include the Australasian bittern, spotless crane, North Island fernbird, banded rail and marsh crane. These secretive birds usually remain hidden amongst the rushes when heavy-footed humans wander by. A number of unusual plants are also present: swamp maire (now absent from the rest of the coastal plain) and regionally rare residents, like kahikatea.



Nau mai, piki mai, tenei te reo powhiri o te “Pou taapui taonga koiora” o Kaituna