

Te Matuku Marine Reserve

Te Matuku Marine Reserve protects one of Waiheke Island's largest and least disturbed estuaries and extends seaward to include an area outside the bay in the Waiheke Channel.

Te Matuku Bay has many special features. Its outstanding natural areas link native bush with freshwater and coastal wetlands to the sea and is one of the few intact estuarine systems like this left in northern New

A network of marine reserves



Other marine reserves protect a variety of marine environments within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park:

- Cape Rodney – Okakari Point Marine Reserve, near Leigh
- Long Bay – Okura Marine Reserve on Auckland's North Shore
- Motu Manawa (Pollen Island) Marine Reserve in the Waitamata Harbour

What are marine reserves?

Marine reserves are areas of sea and foreshore where all marine life is totally protected. They are the national parks of the marine world and fishing, shellfish gathering and any other disturbance of marine life is prohibited.

Marine species and habitats are left to grow naturally and degraded areas allowed to recover. This makes them ideal places to study marine ecosystems, and for comparisons with other unprotected marine areas.

A place to look and learn

People are welcome to visit the Te Matuku Marine Reserve to picnic, swim, snorkel, dive, take photos, kayak and watch birds. Water within the tidal bay is often murky and not great for underwater viewing.

Te Matuku Bay is home to a variety of bird life, some of which is very sensitive to disturbance. The endangered New Zealand dotterel breeds on the shell spits. Breeding pairs are easily disturbed and may abandon their nests and young if people approach.

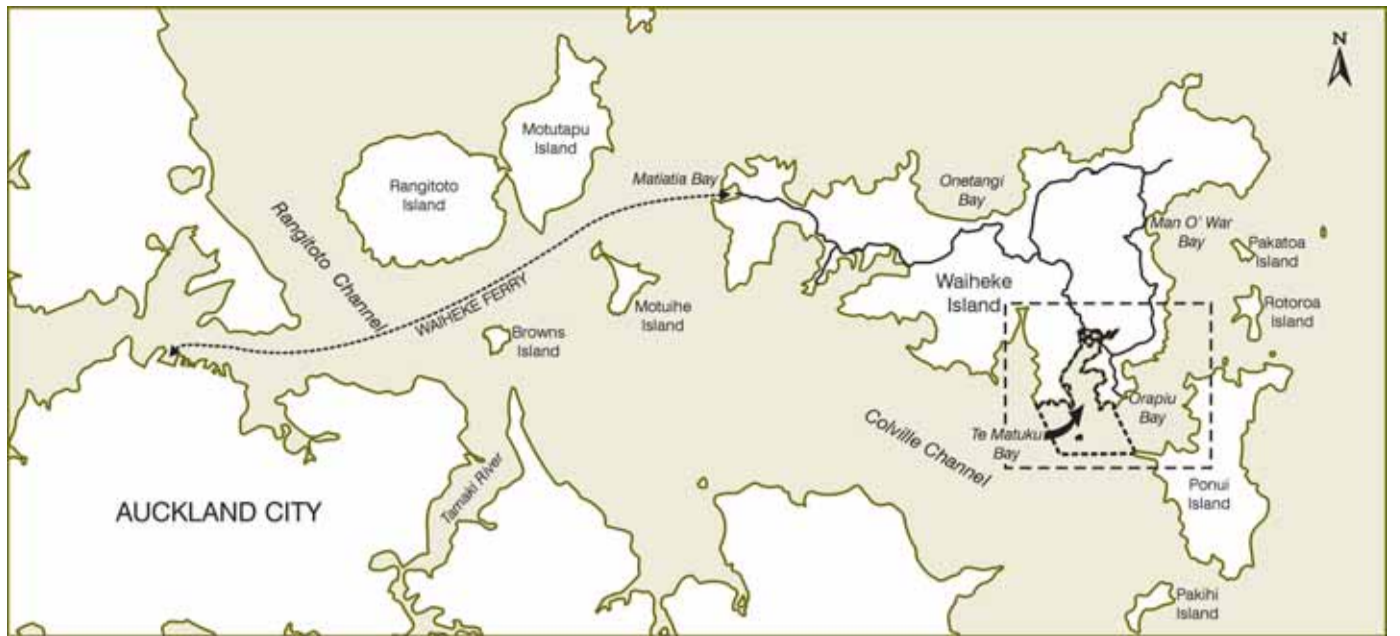
Dogs are not allowed on the shell spits as they put ground-nesting birds, like the New Zealand dotterel, at risk.



Caring for marine reserves

Te Matuku Marine Reserve is managed by the Department of Conservation in Auckland. Its rangers watch over the area and enforce the "no take" restrictions.

The success of this reserve also depends on the local community and visitors caring for it. If you see people taking fish or other marine life within the marine reserve please report this to the Department of Conservation as soon as possible (Ph 0800 DOCHOT, 0800 362468).



Marine reserve boundaries

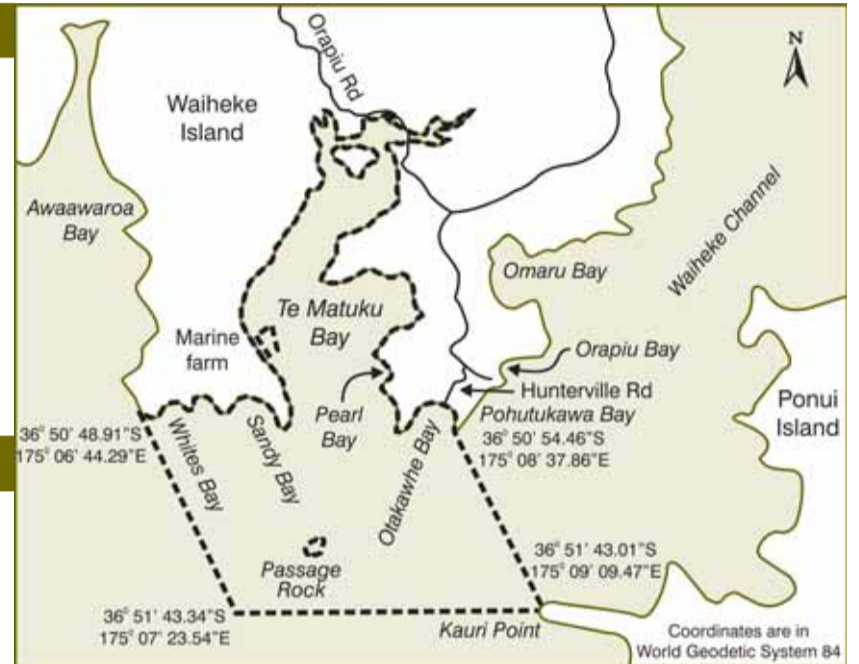
The 690ha marine reserve includes all of Te Matuku Bay, apart from a small marine farm area on the outer western shore, and extends into deeper water across Waiheke Channel beyond Passage Rock.

The boundaries are from the mean high water mark around Te Matuku Bay and the bays at its entrance (Whites Bay, Little Bay, Sandy Bay and Otakawhe Bay) out to a line level with Kauri Point on Ponui Island.

How to get there

The reserve is located at the far south-east corner of Waiheke Island and can be accessed by land and sea.

By land access is via Orapiu Road, which skirts around the head of Te Matuku Bay and continues out to Orapiu Bay (about 30 minutes from the wharf in Matiatia Bay). There are good views of Te Matuku Bay at several points along this road. Pearl Bay, on the outer eastern side of Te Matuku Bay, is a 20 minute walk from Otakawhe Bay at the end of Hunterville Road.



Boating

Boats are allowed within the marine reserve, but care should be taken to avoid damaging marine life by dragging anchors. No waste or ballast water should be discharged within the reserve boundaries.

Passage Rock is an important navigation aid and boats commonly pass between it and Te Matuku Bay through the marine reserve. Navigation within the reserve is not restricted.

Please remember

All marine life, both plant and animal, and all sand, rocks and shells are protected in the marine reserve. The following are offences under the Marine Reserves Act:

- Fishing of any kind
- Taking or disturbing any marine life, including shellfish and seaweeds
- Feeding the fish: it disturbs natural behaviour



Exceeding five knots in a boat or on a jetski within 200 metres of the shore or of any vessel flying a diver flag, or within 50 metres of a boat or person in the water is an offence under the Maritime Transport Act.

Please take your rubbish away with you.

For more information or to report offences contact:

Auckland Area Office
North Head Historic Reserve
Takarunga Rd, Devonport.
Ph 09-445 9142 (office hours)
DOC Hotline: 0800 DOCHOT or 0800 36 24 68 (24 hours)
DOC Visitors Centre, Ph 09-379 6476
Email: aucklandvc@doc.govt.nz
www.doc.govt.nz

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Te Matuku Marine Reserve Waiheke Island

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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Marks of settlement

In pre-European times Te Matuku Bay was an important food gathering and canoe-landing place for Maori living in the coastal settlements and nearby mountain pa of Maunganui. Thick shell middens in the bay are evidence of its past bounty.

Te Matuku Bay was also Waiheke's earliest European settlement but all that remains are the sites of the first school and the Pioneer Cemetery at the head of the bay, both accessible from Orapiu Road.

Tangata whenua

Ngati Paoa is tangata whenua and traditional guardians for Waiheke and Te Matuku Bay, although other iwi, such as Hauraki, also have ancestral ties with this area. The area is of historic, cultural and spiritual importance to the tribe.

Special natural features

A special feature of the reserve is its diverse mix of habitats. It has saltwater wetlands, broad intertidal mudflats, low lying islands, shell spits, rocky shorelines and the deep water of the Waiheke Channel around Passage Rock. Each of these distinct marine habitats provide homes for particular groups of plants and animals.

The estuary

The estuary extends from the seaward edge of the intertidal zone, over 28 hectares of mudflats, towards the land. Fine silty muds dominate this area, largely derived from sediment washed from the surrounding land.

A sequence of plants - from eel grass on the mudflats through mangrove and salt marsh, to maritime fringing bush and finally up into lowland broadleaf forest - is special because such natural successions of changing plant communities are now rare in northern New Zealand.

The eel grass (*Zostera*) grows patchily across the lower mudflats and may help stabilise the lower shore. The soft mudflats and intertidal sands of the bay provide habitat for a variety of shellfish such as cockles, pipi and wedge shells, and some seashore snails, crabs and worms.

All provide rich pickings for wading birds at low tide and, as the tide rises, juvenile flounder and mullet move in to feed on this abundant invertebrate marine life in the bay.

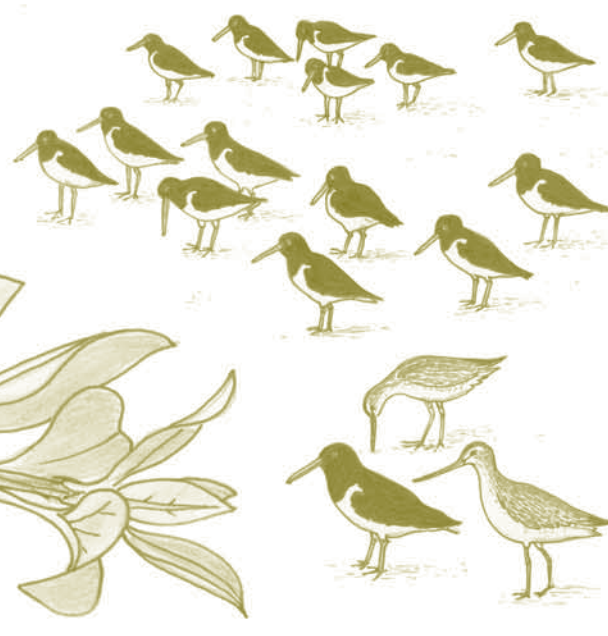
Close to the head of Te Matuku Bay, mangroves grow in dense stands, especially along the banks of channels that run out onto the mudflats. The mangrove stands are havens for mud snails, mud crabs and other creatures which feed on the leaf litter and they are also a refuge for the birds that feed on these animals.

Behind the mangroves, the salt marsh of glasswort, rushes and sedges is submerged only by the high spring tides. It is fringed by salt meadow that includes a range of mostly herbaceous plants such as sea goosefoot, sea plantain, sea primrose, remuremu, shore celery and bachelor's button.

Rocky shores

The entrance to Te Matuku Bay has rocky shores and gravel beaches where common seashore snails, chitons, acorn barnacles, small black mussels and tubeworms abound in the intertidal zone. This area has also been colonised by the introduced pacific oyster. Outside the bay a variety of brown seaweeds grow below the low tide level.

A place for birds



Two shell spits on the eastern side of Te Matuku Bay are important roosting and nesting areas for native and overseas migrant shorebirds. The variable oystercatcher, Caspian tern and the endangered New Zealand dotterel nest on these spits.

Annual migrants such as godwits, knots, sandpipers and turnstones, that breed on the Siberian tundra during the northern summer, fly south to avoid the winter there and enjoy another spring and summer in New Zealand.

Our internal migrants, wrybills and pied oystercatchers, that breed along the shingle banks of the South Island's braided rivers, overwinter in northern harbours and are frequent visitors to Te Matuku Bay.

Other coastal birds that live in or use the bay are banded dotterels, white-fronted terns, reef herons and spotless crakes. The Australasian bittern (or matuku), a rare wetland bird, has been recorded in the bay.

Passage Rock and offshore

The bay's fine muds extend out into the Waiheke Channel, around Passage Rock and to deeper holes beyond the entrance to Te Matuku Bay. Typical mud dwellers found here include burrowing polychaetes, echinoids, sea stars, sand dollars and gastropods. On subtidal reefs, sponges, anemones and nudibranchs are found.

Extensive beds of horse mussels and large seaweeds, common in the gulf, grow around Passage Rock, which is also habitat for crayfish and snapper.

