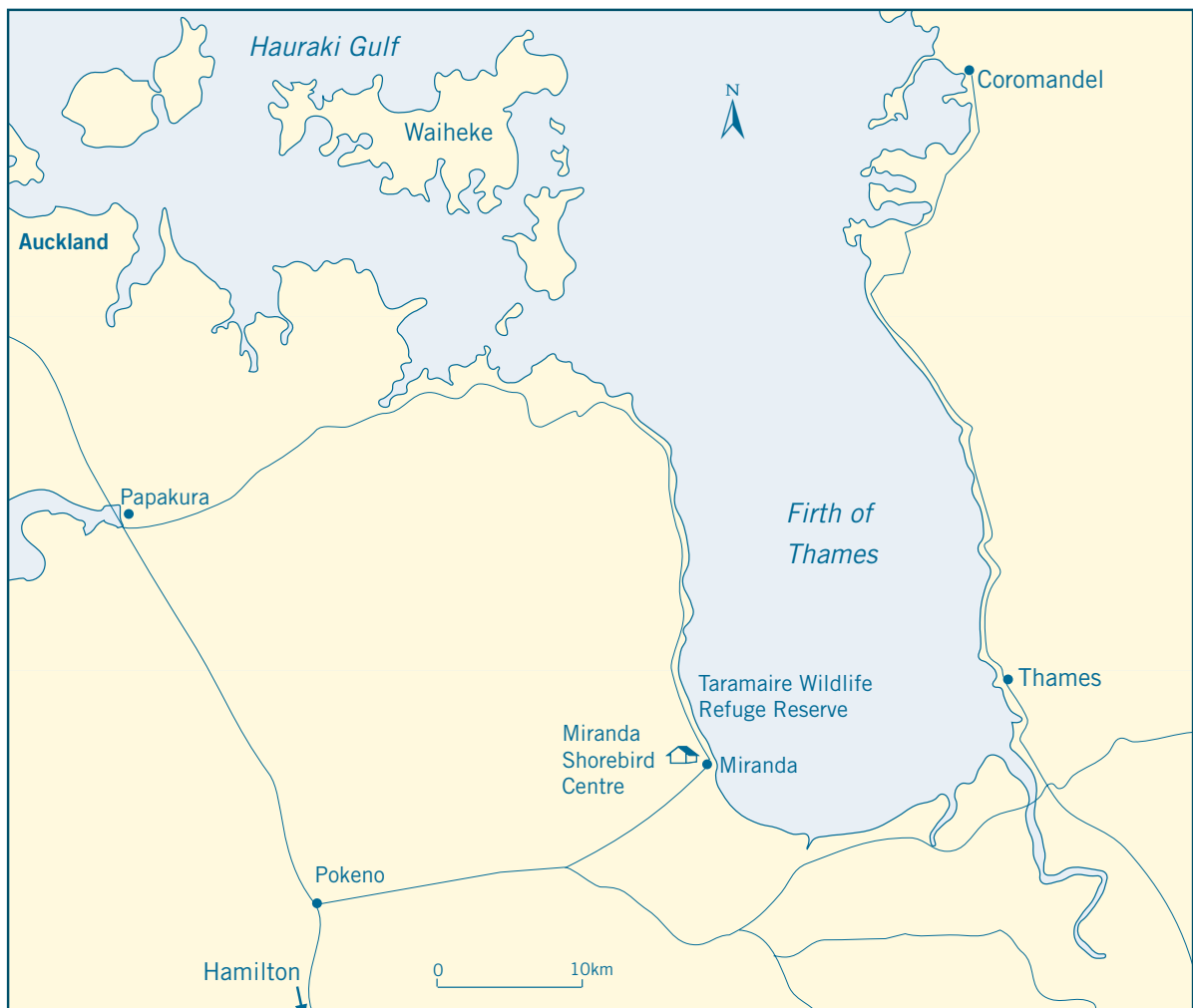


# Miranda wildlife refuge and wetlands

Listed as an internationally significant wetland under the Ramsar Convention, the Miranda Wildlife Refuge and nearby wetlands are a seasonal home to thousands of wading and shorebirds.

The area (an hour's drive from Auckland), at the southwestern corner of the Firth of Thames, is suitable for day or longer visits from Auckland or Waikato. The Miranda Naturalists' Trust manages a shorebird centre at the site and offers accommodation and guided programmes by arrangement.



# What's special about Miranda

## Birds galore

The Firth's 8,500 hectares of inter-tidal flats support some 40,000 birds. Sixty different species have been recorded, 24 of them wading birds. They include godwits, the dramatic looking eastern curlew and the tiny red-necked stint.

## Long distance fliers

Many of Miranda's migratory wading birds make an arduous 10-12,000km journey from the Arctic Circle to arrive in spring (September-October) and fly north again in the autumn (mid-March.) They need to stopover at mudflats along the way to 'refuel'. Bar-tailed godwits, the most common Arctic wader at Miranda, are believed to make only one stopover on the way north (in the Yellow Sea region of China and Korea). Coming south they are believed to cross the Pacific in one non-stop flight to New Zealand. Red knots, the second most common bird, stopover during northern migration in northern Australia and in the Yellow Sea. They also make several stops on their way south. Many of these birds will double their bodyweight before setting off on such long flights. Arctic terns can travel up to one million kilometres during a 30 year lifetime!

## Hazardous flightpath

The waderbirds' migration is one of nature's miracles. Not only must the birds survive wind, weather and huge distances, they must also contend with the reclamation and pollution of their mudflat stopovers and mass hunting. A million Arctic migrants are shot for food each year.

## Banding and tracking the birds

The Miranda Naturalists' Trust is part of an international movement monitoring the birds and promoting protection of tidal mudflats along the waderbirds' flyway. While at Miranda ornithologists attach a small white plastic flag and band to a bird's upper leg. As reports of sightings filter in, a more complete picture of their perilous journeys can be put together, along with statistics to help persuade governments to preserve vital mid-journey habitats.

## An internationally ranked wetland

Miranda is listed as an internationally important wetland under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Nature Resources Ramsar Convention. The Taramaire Wildlife Refuge, a few minutes up the coast from the shorebird centre is administered by the Department of Conservation.



# Planning a visit

## Getting there

From Auckland turn off State Highway 1 to Thames and follow the signs to Miranda or follow the Scenic Highway along the coast from Clevedon. The Miranda Naturalists' Trust Shorebird Centre is on the coast south of Kaiaua.

## Facilities

The Miranda Naturalists' Trust operates an excellent visitor information centre across the road from the shellbanks. You will find displays, an educational shop (usually closed during school visits), toilets and a telephone. There is no food or drink available at the centre except tea and coffee and hot water (for which donations are requested). Visits need to be organised through the Miranda Naturalists Trust, phone 09 232 2781.

Accommodation for school groups can be arranged at the Shorebird Centre. Bunkrooms and units can accommodate up to 35 people. Check the Trust's website, [www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz](http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz). The nearest store for food and drink is at Kaiaua.

## Be prepared

### What you need to bring

Good walking shoes, warm clothes and wet weather gear, binoculars, sunblock, hat, food and drinking water.

## Safety and emergencies

In the case of emergency contact the Department of Conservation's Auckland Area Office, phone 09 445 9142, or the Miranda Naturalists' Trust at the Shorebird Centre, phone 09 232 2781.

## Teaching resources

The Miranda Shorebird Migration Teachers' Kit provides information to plan a day or longer programme at Miranda. It includes background material on wetlands and migratory species, student activities for both site and classroom, and links and references to other resources. Some activities can be adapted to other wetland/migratory bird sites. A supplementary resource box is available on loan from the department. A pre-trip visit to the site by the trip leader is recommended to enable the best organisation for class/es on the day.

The Miranda Naturalists' Trust offers talks and guided programmes (maximum two classes or 60 students) using the Shorebird Centre as a base. All educational levels are catered for.

## Help look after the wetlands and their wildlife

The mudflats, marshes and shellbanks are fragile environments and many of the birds who frequent them are also sensitive to human disturbances. If possible, please organise your visit through the Miranda Naturalists' Trust who will guide you through the area to ensure minimum impact on the environment. If you make your own way please ensure your students don't trample on vegetation or frighten the birds.

If you find an injured bird or see anyone disturbing the birds please contact DOC or the Miranda Naturalists' Trust.

## Contacts

The Department of Conservation  
Auckland Area Office  
phone 09 445 9142

Miranda Naturalists' Trust  
RD 3 Pokeno  
phone 09 232 2781  
email: shorebird@xtra.co.nz  
www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz

To order kits and resources:  
Education Officer  
Auckland Conservancy  
phone: 09 307 9279  
fax: 09 377 2919  
email: aucklandeducation@doc.govt.nz  
www.doc.govt.nz



# At the centre

Ph/Fax 09 232 2781  
email: Shorebird@xtra.co.nz

## Before the visit

- It is recommended that you visit the Centre, meet the manager, and explore the area yourself before you visit with your class
- The Miranda Shorebird Centre has an on-site manager. Let the manager know how many students will be in your party, what age levels will be there and expected time of arrival
- Be sure that students are well aware of the fragility of a natural area such as the Miranda shellbanks and mudflats and the fact that the area is home to the thousands of visiting birds. Be 'Conservation Aware' – no rushing around in the areas which to some people may seem to be wasteland.

## It is essential that you book well ahead!

- Phone the centre manager well ahead of the time you plan to visit. He will be able to recommend days and times when the tides are suitable (a visit at low tide will be a great disappointment if you are planning to see wader birds: they will be well out in the distance searching for a meal on the mudflats)
- Be aware that some dates may be already booked out, particularly during February to early April, and from September to December
- Allow approximately two hours for your class visit. This will give you and your students time to hear a talk by the manager and to study the information panels, as well as time out on the shellbanks to watch the birds in action.

## On Arrival

Please notify the manager when the group arrives before students enter the building.

## Facilities

There are excellent toilet facilities in the main building. There is no food or drink available at the Centre except tea and coffee and hot water (donation please). There is a shop which stocks educational books, t-shirts, and gifts. Usually this is closed during visits by large groups of children.

## Accommodation

Accommodation is available at \$10 per person for up to 24 people in bunkrooms and units. A further 10 mattresses are available. There are cooking and ablution facilities. Refer to the website or contact the manager for further information.

## Safety

Schools are reminded of the need to do a risk analysis and management plan for their visit (your school Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible). For help, consult the appropriate documents listed in the references of this resource kit.

Please include all adults accompanying your group in the briefing sessions about risks on your trip. Make sure their responsibilities are clear.

For further pre-trip planning information refer to the Environmental Behaviour Guide section of this resource as well as the Super Sites information pages.

