



Island sanctuaries in the Marlborough Sounds



Nelson/Marlborough

The islands of the Marlborough Sounds have a vital role to play in the conservation of New Zealand's natural heritage. Almost all are free of non-native animal pest species such as rats, mice, stoats, ferrets, pigs, deer, and possums.

Removing pests is a first step in restoring islands' natural ecosystems. With pests gone, native vegetation and wildlife can flourish and species that once lived there can be safely returned, or the islands can be used as safe havens for critically threatened species that cannot survive in the presence of introduced mammals on the mainland.

Predator-free islands act as sanctuaries for some of our most endangered species, including ones that have disappeared from the mainland. The island reserves of the Marlborough Sounds are a safe haven for an array of native animals including kiwi, tuatara, native frogs, giant wētā, saddleback (tīeke), takahē and geckos.

Open islands

Several islands in the Sounds are open to the public without special landing permission.

Motuara

Motuara is a popular spot for visitors and a restoration success story. Since rats were eradicated in 1992, native forest has been regenerating and a range of threatened species have been reintroduced to the island. It also serves a vital role in 'Operation Nest Egg', as a nursery for Okarito brown kiwi chicks until

the birds are large enough to survive on their own in their home in South Westland.

Blumine Island

At 337 ha, Blumine Island is the largest reserve island in the Marlborough Sounds. It has historic WWII gun emplacements, a campsite and several walking tracks. Stoats and mice have recently been eradicated and wildlife such as weka, tomtits, tūi, bellbirds, kererū and native land snails are abundant. The restoration programme will see a number of rare birds and animals returned to Blumine in the coming years.

Stephens Island
H. Cooper
M. Aviss



The sanctuary islands

Some of the islands in the Sounds are carefully managed wildlife reserves, and to protect the wildlife, they are closed to the public or have restricted access. Some are last-ditch refuges for endangered and rare species, some are fragile seabird islands, and others hold species attractive to wildlife smugglers. Boat operators must know which islands are closed as it is illegal to land on them.

Stephens Island / Takapourewa Nature Reserve

This island holds the world's largest population of tuatara. Other species found here include fairy prion, giant wētā, seven species of lizard and the endemic Hamilton's frog.

Maud Island / Te Hoiere Scientific Reserve

Maud Island / Te Hoiere is the second largest of numerous island reserves in the Marlborough Sounds. Although the island had been virtually denuded of forest and heavily grazed for decades, its native vegetation has been making an impressive comeback. Remarkably, mice and rats have never established, so the island is home to some charismatic and rare residents. Te Hoiere's largest mature forest remnant supports virtually the entire population of the threatened Maud Island frog (pakeka). Maud is also one of only two locations for the vulnerable Stephens Island striped gecko, one of New Zealand's rarest geckos.

Some species do not naturally occur on the island but have been put there as part of efforts to establish healthy populations in predator-free habitats. The Cook Strait giant wētā is one such species, brought to Te Hoiere in 1977. Endangered takahē were first put on Te Hoiere in 1984 and the island is now an integral part of DOC's Takahē Recovery Programme.

Other restricted landing places

Boat operators are asked to stay at least 100 metres away from shore on Duffers Reef, Sentinel Rock, White Rocks and North Trio Island in order to avoid disturbing nesting king shags. These rare birds are very shy of people and will readily leave their nests, enabling gulls to raid their nests.

Visiting the islands

Your help is essential in ensuring island sanctuaries remain pest-free and safe for our native species. Please abide by regulations in place to protect these special islands.

- Only land on islands open to the public and at designated landing sites. Islands closed to the public or with restricted access have important natural values that can only be protected if they are isolated from humans.
- Do not take dogs, cats or other animals onto or near the islands.
- Be vigilant about ensuring that rodents do not stow away on boats.
- Check all bags and gear before going onto islands to ensure that they do not harbour rodents, ants, spiders or other pests.
- Clean shoes and equipment of foreign seeds and plant material.
- If you see a rodent on a pest-free island, immediately contact the DOC emergency hotline (0800 36 24 68).
- Do not light fires.
- Take all rubbish away with you.

Further information

To find out more about the islands of the Marlborough Sounds, contact the DOC Sounds Area Office (ph 03 520 3002, soundsao@doc.govt.nz) or the

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Millers Acre Centre, Taha o te awa
79 Trafalgar Street
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King shags A. Cox

Stephens Island and the Rangitoto Islands M. Avis



Hamilton's frog
H. Cooper