

VISITING TAPUAE MARINE RESERVE

NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Photo: Mike Tapp

Key information



Tapuae Marine Reserve is near New Plymouth, on the Taranaki coast. This rugged coast is a changeable environment, but is home to many diverse species.

The 1404 hectare reserve adjoins the Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area (SLIMPA) and extends southwest to the Tapuae Stream. The reserve was established in 2008 by the Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society, with support from Ngā Mahanga a Tairi. Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands are of great significance to the iwi.

For further information and a map of the reserve, see: www.doc.govt.nz/tapuae-marine-reserve.

Visitor facilities and parking

You can access this marine reserve via New Plymouth's Centennial Drive. The southern part of the reserve can be accessed from Surf Highway 45, 8 km south of New Plymouth.

Parking is available at Centennial Park car park (immediately south of Paritutu rock). Toilets are available at the second car park, several hundred metres south.

Drinking water is not available at this reserve. For refreshments, visit the nearby Moturoa Shopping Centre.

There is information about the reserve at the Marine Information Centre on Ocean View Parade.

See DOC brochure for detailed directions to the reserve: www.doc.govt.nz/tapuae-brochure.




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Tapuae Marine Reserve

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Suggested self-guided activities for school groups

Biodiversity survey


The Marine Metre Squared Project (Mm2) is an easy quadrat survey for investigating what is living in your marine reserve. See  www.mm2.net.nz for resources. Rocky shore surveys or sandy shore surveys can be carried out approximately 2 hours either side of low tide. For more information, see  *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.

Note: when conducting a Mm2 survey, it is important to keep disturbance of sand and animals to a minimum and put them back where you found them.


Litter survey

Try a litter survey on the beach. See page 9 of the DOC *Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment* resource for instructions:  www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf. Survey sheets and guidance for beach clean-ups and litter audits are available at  www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn (Love Your Coast/Sustainable Coastlines).

Dune plant survey

Look at the dune plants around Tapuae stream and see if you can identify them. Be careful not to walk on dunes during your survey and respect any barriers. See page 10 of the DOC *Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment* resource for instructions:  www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf.

Health and safety considerations

- **Please note: Students are not advised to snorkel or get into the water at Tapuae.** This rough, exposed coast can be dangerous for swimming/snorkelling. There are no lifeguards in the area. The sea in this reserve can be wild, and large waves are common. Due to the exposed nature and murky water in the reserve, most educational activities occur at Ngāmotu Beach.
- It is possible to get caught against the cliffs when the tide comes in. If undertaking a survey or Mm2 and reef investigation this can only be done during low tide. Make sure there is time to do the survey and return before the tide turns and reaches the base of the cliffs, as you will need to cross the Herekawe Stream (this is usually shallow and not a concern).
- Ensure you check the weather forecast and sea conditions carefully before exploring the rock shelf. The weather and waves can cause unsafe conditions in the reserve.
- Keep well away from the cliffs as they are unstable and there is a risk of falling debris or collapse.
- NZ fur seals/kekeno may be along the beach – stay at least 20 m away from any seals.
- Teachers should also consider general risk management around water and rock shelves. See also general health and safety considerations for schools in marine environments:  *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.

Please note: These notes are not a substitute for school safety planning.

Staff, students and the Board of Trustees of a school will need to consider other factors before conducting a visit outside the school and follow school procedures. Identifying and managing risks before the trip is essential, therefore a prior site visit is highly recommended.




Habitats and species in the reserve

Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands are the remnants of an ancient volcanic cone. They provide a diverse range of habitats and sheltered areas for marine life. Subtidal habitats include caves, canyons, rock faces with crevices and overhangs, large pinnacles, boulder fields and extensive areas of mud and sand. As the habitat is unique to the region, it is considered to be of significant conservation value. In contrast, the intertidal and subtidal habitats in the southwestern part of the Tapuae Marine Reserve are a classic example of the wild Taranaki coastline.


The rocky reefs are covered with macroalgae, bryozoans, kina, sea cucumbers/rori whiore, molluscs and sea stars/papatangaroa. Triplefins and other reef-associated fish (e.g. red moki/ngutere, butterfly perch/oia), may be visible in the shallows.

The reserve is an important breeding and haul-out site for New Zealand fur seals, and has the northernmost breeding population of this species. Other marine mammals that have been observed in this area include common dolphins/aihe, NZ fur seals/kekeno, pilot whales/parakipīhi, orca/maki, humpback whales/paieka and southern right whales/raiti wēra.

Education providers working here

Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society runs the Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR) programme Taranaki. Please email: taranaki@emr.org.nz or see the website for more information:  www.emr.org.nz/index.php/emr-areas/emr-taranaki.

Other education experiences

The Marine Information Centre on Ocean View Parade hosts information displays about this marine reserve as well Taranaki's other marine reserve: the Parininihi Marine Reserve. For more information about this reserve, see:  www.doc.govt.nz/parininihi-marine-reserve.

PROTECT OUR MARINE RESERVES

They are special places that protect the species and habitats within them.

- No fishing of any kind
- Don't take or kill marine life
- Don't remove or disturb any marine life or materials
- Don't feed fish – it disturbs their natural behaviour
- Take care when anchoring to avoid damaging the sea floor
- Call **0800 DOC HOT** (0800 362 468) to report any illegal activity.

