



Natural areas of Tokatoka Ecological District

Reconnaissance survey report for the
Protected Natural Areas Programme

2011



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Protected Natural Areas Programme

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Cover: Aerial view of a riverine flood forest, Manganui River Complex, Northland.

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Foreword

This report contains information on the ecological values and natural character of the Tokatoka Ecological District. The Tokatoka Ecological District has been subject to widespread modification and is characterised by a paucity of large areas of natural habitats and ecosystems. Remaining natural areas are generally small, fragmented, and vulnerable to further losses. There are still, however, some outstanding natural features in the District.

In particular, the Manganui River Complex is an exceptional ecosystem within this District and is of regional and national importance. The river complex contains the best remaining example of riverine flood forest in Northland (and probably the North Island) and is one of the best examples in the whole of New Zealand. It is the only large river system in Northland which contains substantial areas of original floodplain still functioning as a natural wetland.

Other nationally significant sites include Maungaraho Rock Scenic Reserve which supports several nationally threatened plants including a hebe—*Hebe saxicola*—that is only known from this site.

Some of the larger forested areas remaining in the Ecological District are protected or partially protected, such as Pukekohe Hill Scenic Reserve (101 ha), Smoky Hill Scenic Reserve (43 ha), Parahi Scenic Reserve (39 ha) and the Manganui River Government Purpose Wildlife Management Reserve (211 ha).

A natural habitat that is not adequately protected or managed is vulnerable to further modification or loss. Further protection and management is therefore recommended to secure other significant habitats such as floodplain forest, lowland forest and old growth forest. In doing so, the best, representative areas in the Ecological District will be retained, thus preserving existing biodiversity and natural character for future generations.

It is the collective responsibility of all of us to cherish, protect and enhance our natural heritage. Effective conservation requires collaborative work with groups such as iwi, landowners, councils, the local community and the wider public working towards a common goal.

Collaboration works best when there is good information. This is why this report is, with all the information it contains, an important step towards the protection and management of significant sites within the Tokatoka Ecological District.



Chris Jenkins

Conservator Northland

Abstract

The Tokatoka Ecological District covers approximately 74 610 ha, of which 5514.9 ha or 7.4 % makes up the natural areas described in this report. This survey identified a total of 161 natural areas of significance during a reconnaissance survey largely conducted between March 1998 and December 1999.

Before the publication of this report, site boundaries were checked and updated against the latest aerial photography (2002 and 2008) with the photography also scrutinised to ensure that all important natural areas were recorded. As a result, several new sites were identified that weren't found in the original survey. However, this work also showed that some natural areas had been cleared or reduced in size since the 1998/99 survey. About 75% of the Ecological District could be overlaid onto both 2002 and 2008 aerial photography. This comparison showed that during this 6-year period at least 159 ha of significant habitat had been cleared. This is concerning in an Ecological District where only about 7.4% of significant natural areas remain.

The natural areas were then accorded one of two status levels—either Level 1 (most significant—89 sites) or Level 2 (less significant—72 sites).

Geologically, the Tokatoka Ecological District is very interesting. The nationally significant landforms of Tokatoka peak and Maungaraho dike provide distinctive landmarks in the northern Wairoa landscape.

Ecologically, habitats that remain are generally small, fragmented and modified. In particular, compared with other ecological districts in Northland, there is a paucity of large forests and wetlands and it is not known whether NI brown kiwi still occur within the District.

The riverine flood forest ecosystem and associated habitats of the Manganui River Complex (P07/086) stands out within this District because of its ecological significance, size, relative intactness and complexity. This river complex is the only large river system in Northland which contains substantial areas of original floodplain still functioning as a natural wetland. The Manganui River Complex is the best remaining example of its type in Northland (and probably the North Island) and is one of the best examples in the country.

Within the Ecological District there are records of 4 Threatened plants, 8 At Risk plants, 1 Data Deficient and 43 Regionally significant plants. Of the native and indigenous animals present, 9 are Threatened, 10 At Risk and 6 Regionally significant.

Many of the larger forested areas remaining in the District are under some form of protection. There are, however, many habitat types that are not well represented within the protected natural area framework, including riverine flood forest, floodplain forest, lowland forest and old growth forest (see section 5.1 on p. 402).

The protected natural areas network in the Tokatoka Ecological District comprises 490 ha of public conservation land administered by the Department of Conservation, 231.8 ha of covenants with the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust and 70.2 ha administered by the Kaipara District Council. This represents just 14.3% of the natural areas identified in this report.

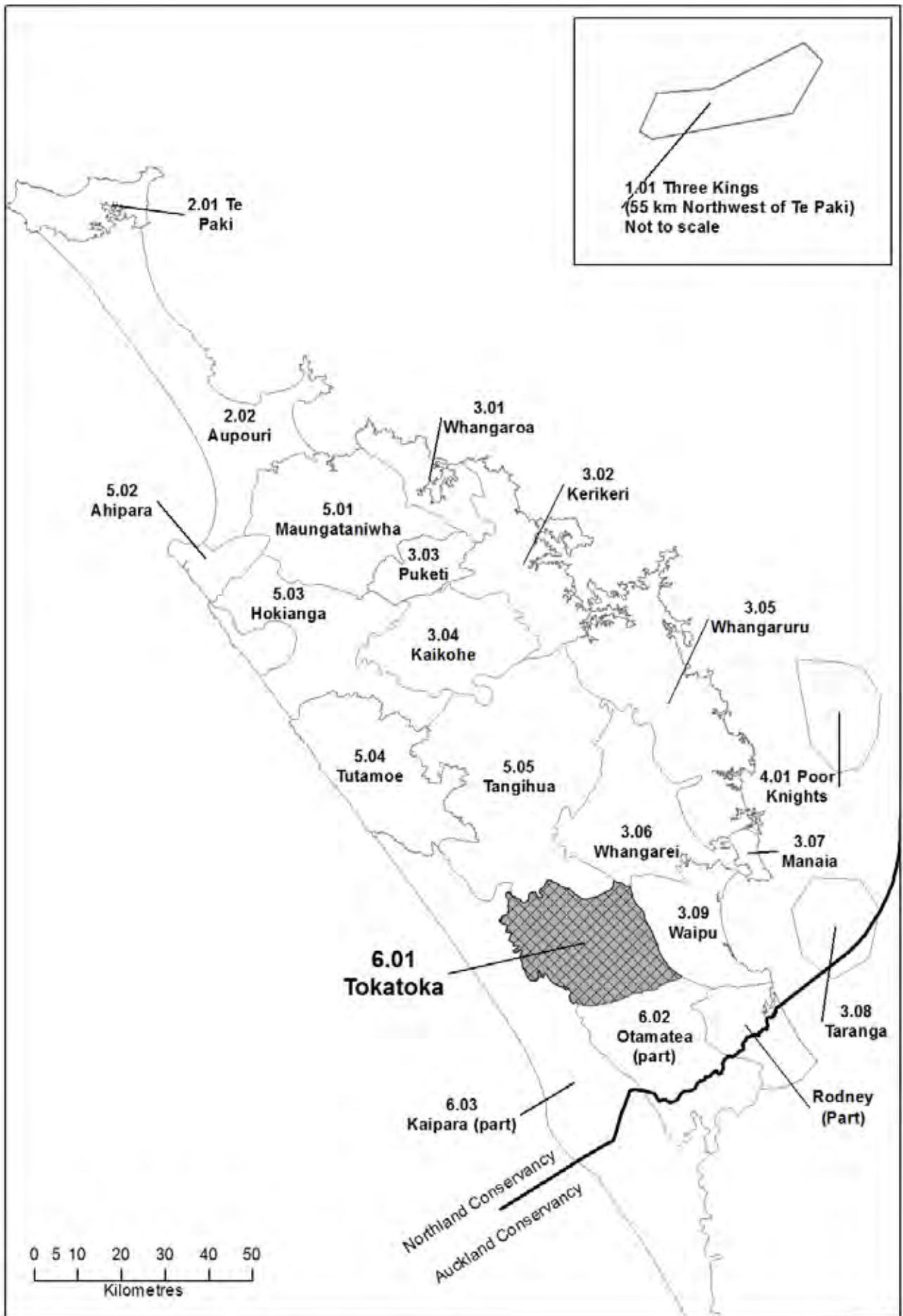


Figure 1. Location of Tokatoka Ecological District (Brook 1996).



Figure 2. Map of surveyed sites, Tokatoka Ecological District.