

Enjoying the reserve

In the water

Diving, swimming, and snorkelling are the best ways to experience the reserve, as these allow you to interact with the underwater world. Please refer to the Diving Care Code before doing so.

Diving Care Code

- Don't let your dive gear drag
- Be neutrally buoyant
- Know by instinct where your fins are
- Minimise touching marine life and substrate
- Maintain sea creature comforts



Warning

Please be aware that the waters around Motukaroro/Passage Island have strong tidal currents and back eddies. Experience and local knowledge is recommended for a safe and enjoyable dive or snorkel.

On the water

If you are not keen to take the plunge, kayaking and boating are fun ways to explore the reserve, but please familiarise yourself with the boating rules of marine reserves (see the Marine Reserves Regulations 1993), which can be summarised as:

- The **maximum speed** permitted for all boats in New Zealand is 5 knots (about 9 km/h) within **200 metres** of shore or any boat with a dive flag, and within **50 metres** of any other boat or swimmer.
- Drop your anchor responsibly to avoid damage to the reserve.

For the safety of all users, boaties please keep a good lookout for snorkellers and divers.

Motukaroro Island. Photo: Crispin Middleton

Please report unusual activities or events that may impact on marine life and habitats to your nearest Department of Conservation office.

To report offences **DOC HOTline**
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

For more information on the reserve, contact:

DOC Whangarei Office
2 South End Ave
Raumanga
Whangarei 0110
Ph: 4703300
Email: whangarei@doc.govt.nz



Common triplefin. Photo: Crispin Middleton

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New Zealand Government

Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Introduction

Kia ora and welcome to the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve.

The reserve was established in October 2006 and is located on the east coast of Northland. The reserve is the result of over 16 years of hard work, supported by marine experts and initiated by Kamo High School students of Whangarei.

Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve comprises two sites: an intertidal mudflat/mangrove environment at Waikaraka, which is approximately 8 km from Whangarei town; and a mix of sandy beach, rocky reef and small high-current outcrops at Motukaroro/Passage Island, approximately 30 km from Whangarei. It protects a combined area of 253.7 hectares of shore and sea providing a safe haven where the region's marine life can flourish.



Visitors to the marine reserve are welcome and activities like boating, snorkelling, scuba diving, picnicking and canoeing are encouraged. We hope you enjoy your visit.

What are marine reserves?



Marine reserves are areas of sea in which all marine life is protected. Fishing, shellfish gathering and any other disturbance of marine life is prohibited. Free from exploitation, marine reserves return to a near-natural state.

They also allow the study of marine life in an environment where there is minimal human disturbance, enabling comparative studies of similar habitats inside and outside the reserve.

The Department of Conservation looks after all of the marine reserves on behalf of all New Zealanders. Its protection depends on the care and vigilance of its users.

Please remember

The following activities are strictly prohibited under the Marine Reserves Act 1971 and offenders will be prosecuted:

-  Fishing of any kind.
-  Taking or disturbing any marine life, including shellfish, and seaweeds and sea urchins.
- Taking of any part of the sea floor including rocks and shells.

Offences under the Marine Reserves Act 1971 have penalties of up to 3 months imprisonment or a \$250,000 fine or both. You may also have your vessel, fishing or diving equipment used, and any marine life taken, seized by a warranted enforcement officer.

Marine reserves are protected under the Marine Reserves Act 1971, which states that:

'The public shall have freedom of access and entry to the reserves, so that they may enjoy in full measure the opportunity to study, observe, and record marine life in its natural habitat.'

New Zealand's first marine reserve, at Goat Island, was established in 1975 and was the pioneer for all other created and proposed marine reserves. The extensive benefits of this reserve are evident as marine life now flourishes in an area where fish populations were once greatly reduced. An added bonus at Goat Island and all other marine reserves is that people are able to visit and experience the rich variety of marine life first-hand.



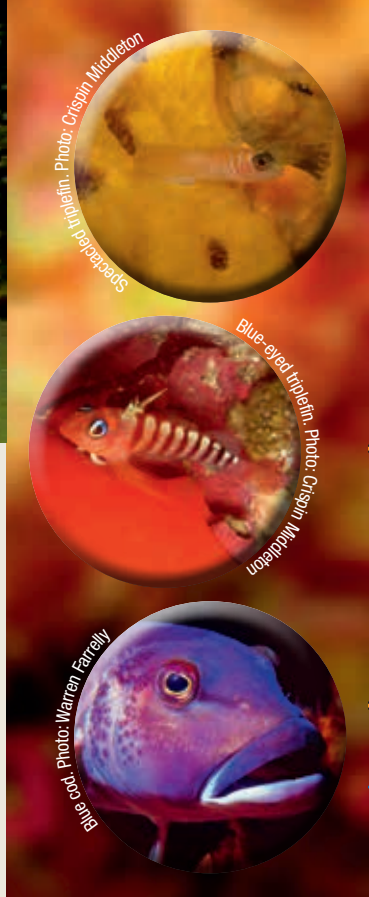
Waikaraka. Photo: Marie Jordan

History and establishment of the reserve

The proposal to establish a marine reserve in Whangarei Harbour was unique and an impressive example of community-driven conservation. It began in 1990 when impassioned local students, wanting to do something for the environment, chose to initiate a marine reserve proposal. Hundreds of Kamo High School students put time and energy into the proposal, inspiring marine experts to provide valuable scientific data, photographs and recommendations. After years of gathering information; biological investigation; consultation with the community, local iwi and hapū; and securing funding the proposal was submitted. As a result, the Motukaroro Island and Waikaraka sites were formally established as the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserve in 2006.



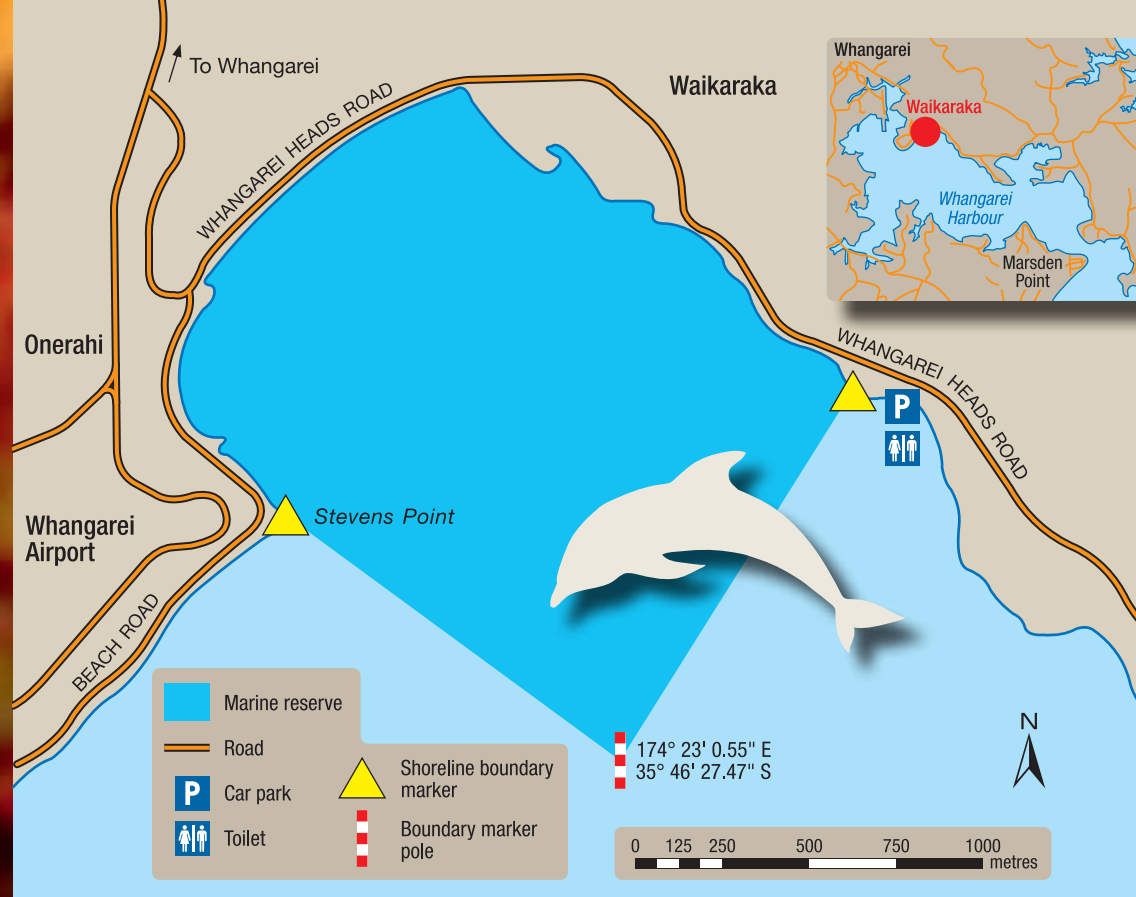
Students, parents and teachers created a human chain around the marine reserve boundary to celebrate conservation week. Photo: Andre Hueber



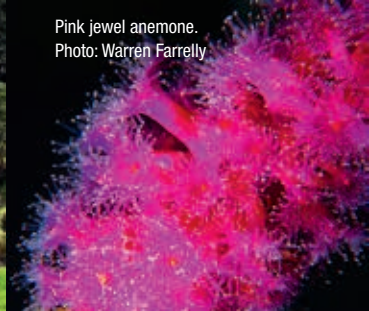
Speckled triplefin. Photo: Crispin Middleton

Blue-eyed triplefin. Photo: Crispin Middleton

Blue cod. Photo: Warren Farrelly



Community-guided kayak day at Waikaraka. Photo: Marie Jordan



Pink jewel anemone. Photo: Warren Farrelly



Scorpionfish. Photo: Warren Farrelly

Waikaraka

The 227.5 ha marine area at Waikaraka is almost entirely mangrove forest with associated intertidal mud flats and a sub tidal channel edge. Being one of nature's most highly productive zones, the gentle flowing waters and mud surrounding the mangrove roots are home to many organisms: fish and shellfish as well as crabs, worms and shrimps.

Fish like snapper, trevally, kahawai, kingfish and mackerel spend important parts of their lives among mangroves, thereby contributing to the replenishment of fish numbers in the harbour. The mangroves also provide habitat for a wide variety of birdlife.



Nesting pied shags. Photo: Marie Jordan

Motukaroro

This 26.2 ha reserve is home to a diverse range of marine plants and animals. Shallow reefs, which line the coast between Reotahi and Little Munro Bay, are a haven for triplefins and nudibranchs. Pipefish and grey mullets are regularly observed by snorkellers close to the shore. While on the southern side of Motukaroro Island, the reef plunges 30 m to the deepwater channel of the Whangarei Harbour. The combination of deeper water and swift current flows has produced a diverse reef-fish assemblage quite unique in a harbour environment.

On the westward point there is a large fragile environment of filter feeders, including anemones and sponges, whose brilliant array of colours are stunning and provide a spectacular dive.

Tube worm. Photo: Warren Farrelly



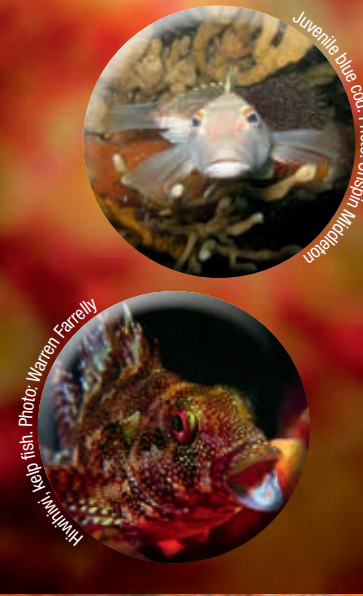
Nesting pied shags. Photo: Marie Jordan



Crayfish. Photo: Warren Farrelly



Fan worms. Photo: Crispin Middleton

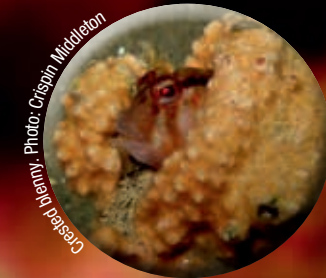


Juvenile blue cod. Photo: Crispin Middleton

Hawkbit pipefish. Photo: Warren Farrelly



Clown nudibranch. Photo: Crispin Middleton



Crested barrelfish. Photo: Crispin Middleton



Yellow and black triplefin. Photo: Crispin Middleton



White-striped anemone. Photo: Crispin Middleton



Sandgob wasp. Photo: Warren Farrelly