

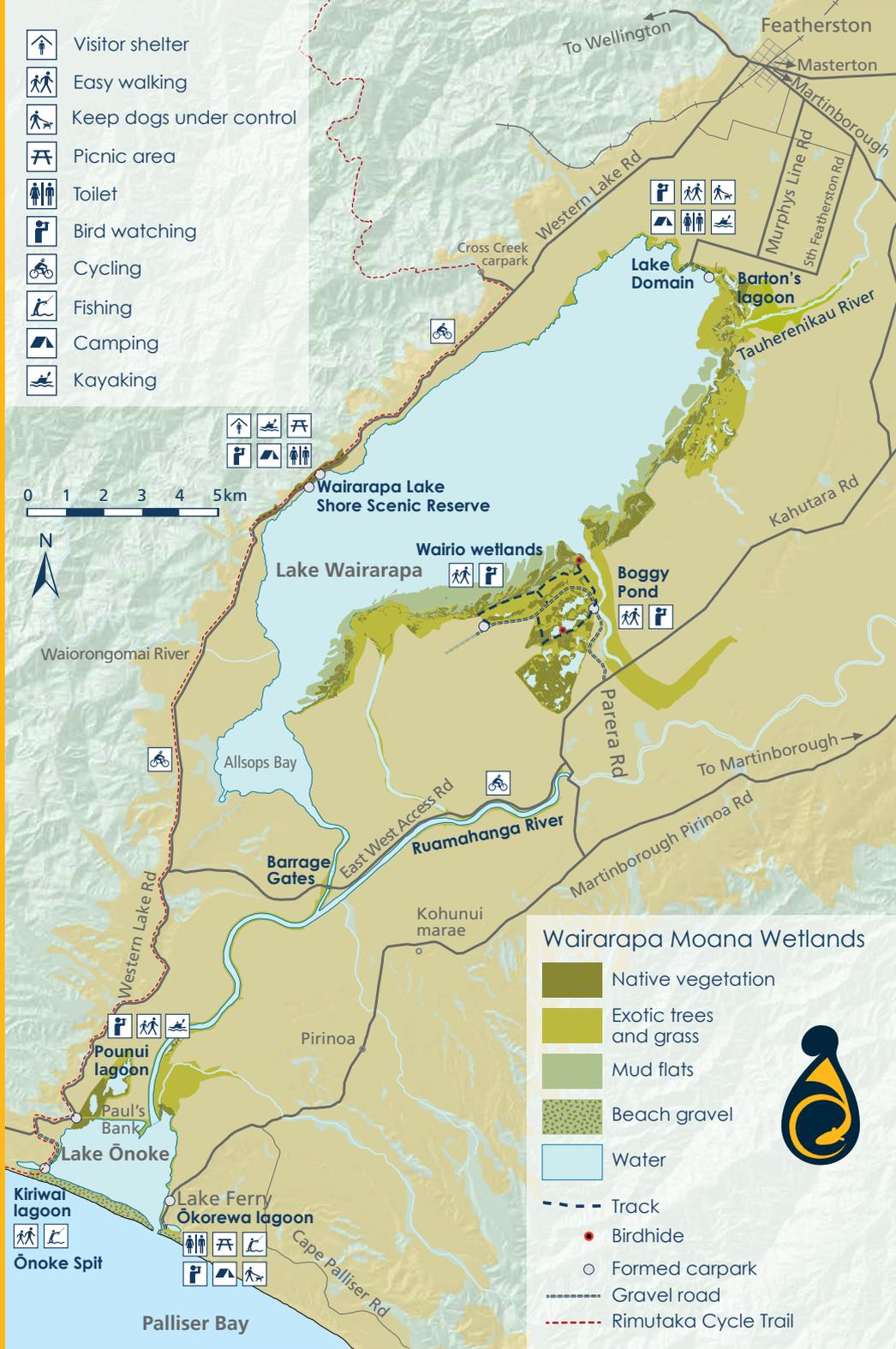
WAIRARAPA MOANA WETLANDS

SEA OF GLISTENING WATERS



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THINGS TO DO

Bird watching

Enjoy bird watching from natural vantage points at the main visitor sites, or from the bird hides at Boggy Pond and the lake shore at Wairio wetland. Bird watching sites are marked on the map opposite. Take your camera and binoculars!

Walking

Walks range from about 20 minutes to 3 hours. Most are an easy gradient over uneven ground. Tracks are marked on the map overleaf and signposted from car parks.

Camping

Free campsites at Lake Domain Reserve and Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve offer basic facilities for tent and motorhome camping. For more camping options nearby see www.wairarapanz.com

Swimming

Lake Wairarapa has lots of sediment making it look muddy. However, the water is usually safe to swim in unless there has been heavy rainfall when some pollutants might be present. Swimming is not recommended in Lake Ōnoke due to strong tidal flows when the mouth of the lake is open to the sea.

Kayaking, canoeing and windsurfing

The best launch spots are at Lake Domain Reserve, Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve, Lake Ōnoke and Ōnoke Spit. These sites are marked on the map opposite.

Cycling

The Rimutaka Cycle Trail joins Western Lake Road at Cross Creek Road (see www.nzcycletrail.com). Cyclists can continue south on the trail to the coast of Palliser Bay or 12km north to Featherston. Cycling via Western Lake Road, East-West Access Road and Kahutara Road forms a 67km loop ride around Lake Wairarapa from Featherston.

Fishing

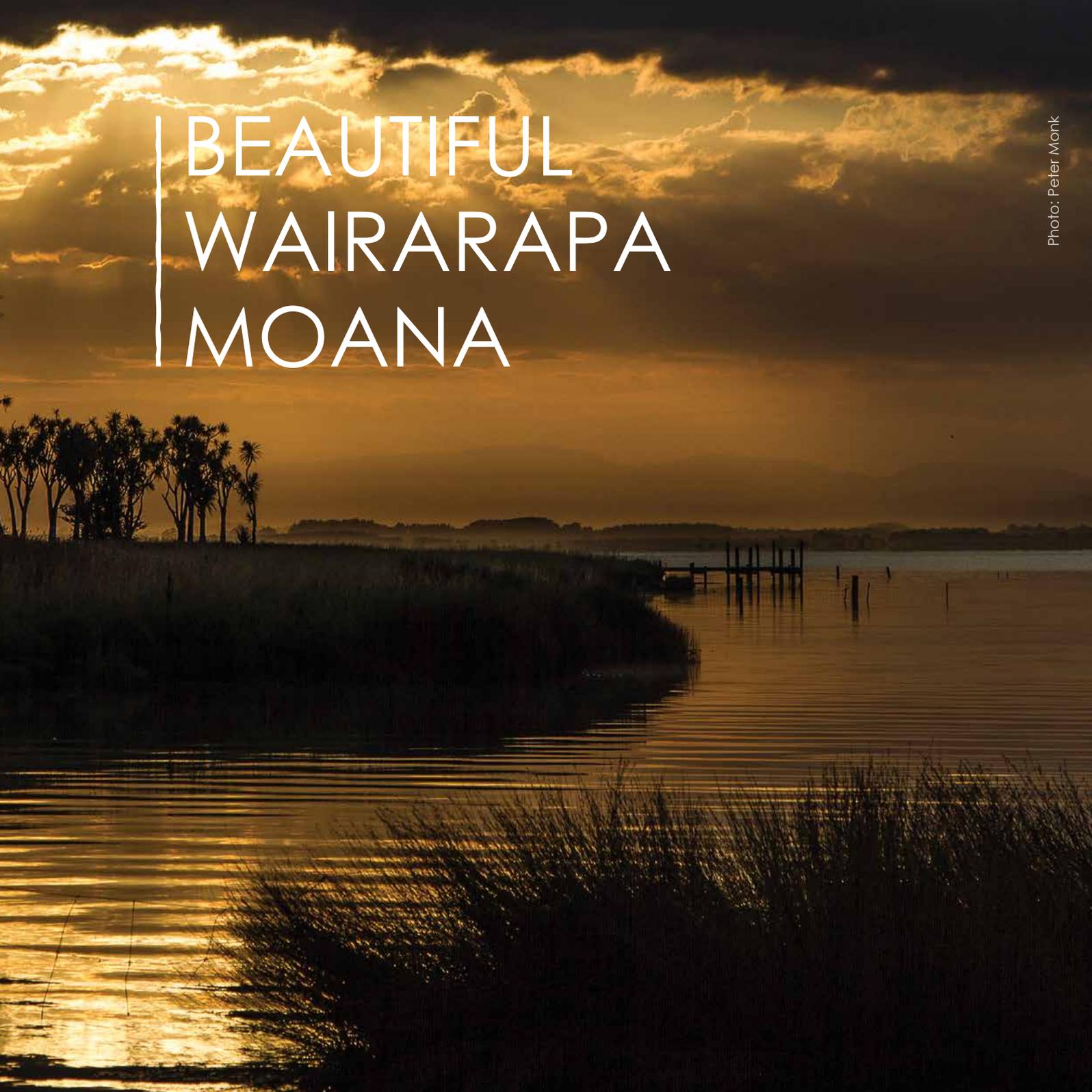
Brown trout in Lake Wairarapa are best found in river deltas where fly fishing and spinning can be effective. A fishing licence is required for trout, perch and tench. Licences can be purchased at some outdoor sports stores or online at www.fishandgame.org.nz. Part of the licence fee supports waterfowl and wetland conservation.

Duck shooting

Lake Wairarapa is a top waterfowl hunting location in Aotearoa/New Zealand, attracting hunters from overseas and throughout the country. The game bird hunting season runs for six to eight weeks starting in early May. A game bird hunting licence is required to hunt waterfowl. For more information on licencing visit www.fishandgame.org.nz or an outdoor sports store. Part of the licence fee supports waterfowl and wetland conservation.

BEAUTIFUL WAIRARAPA MOANA

Photo: Peter Monk



The glistening waters and big sky vistas of Wairarapa Moana appeal to those looking for a peaceful experience. The lakeside silence is broken only by the wind and the flap of wings.

Visitors can explore and enjoy the wildlife of the lakes, natural wetlands and sand dunes. Despite its sense of remoteness, Wairarapa Moana is surrounded by farmland and is easily reached from nearby Featherston, Greytown and Martinborough.

A wetland taonga

Wairarapa Moana, meaning “sea of glistening waters”, is an internationally important wetland and the largest lake and remaining wetland complex in the lower North Island. For some 800 years it has been a place of significant customary and spiritual importance, abundant in natural food and resources.

Wairarapa Moana has a history that links farmers and tangata whenua. In the 1840's land leases from Māori by sheep farmers were barred by a Crown keen to buy the land and sell it on for profit. Just the lakes and the flood-prone areas crucial for tuna/eel fishing were left in Māori ownership. The Moana was subsequently gifted by tangata whenua to the Crown in 1896 in exchange for reserves. Māori eventually received land in the Waikato, and redress for Wairarapa iwi is being progressed under the Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi.

A place of change

In 1855 one of the largest known earthquakes in Aotearoa/New Zealand contributed to raising the lakebed and wetlands. Lake Wairarapa, the shallow remains of a once larger lake, is part of a depression formed by the convergence of two tectonic plates.

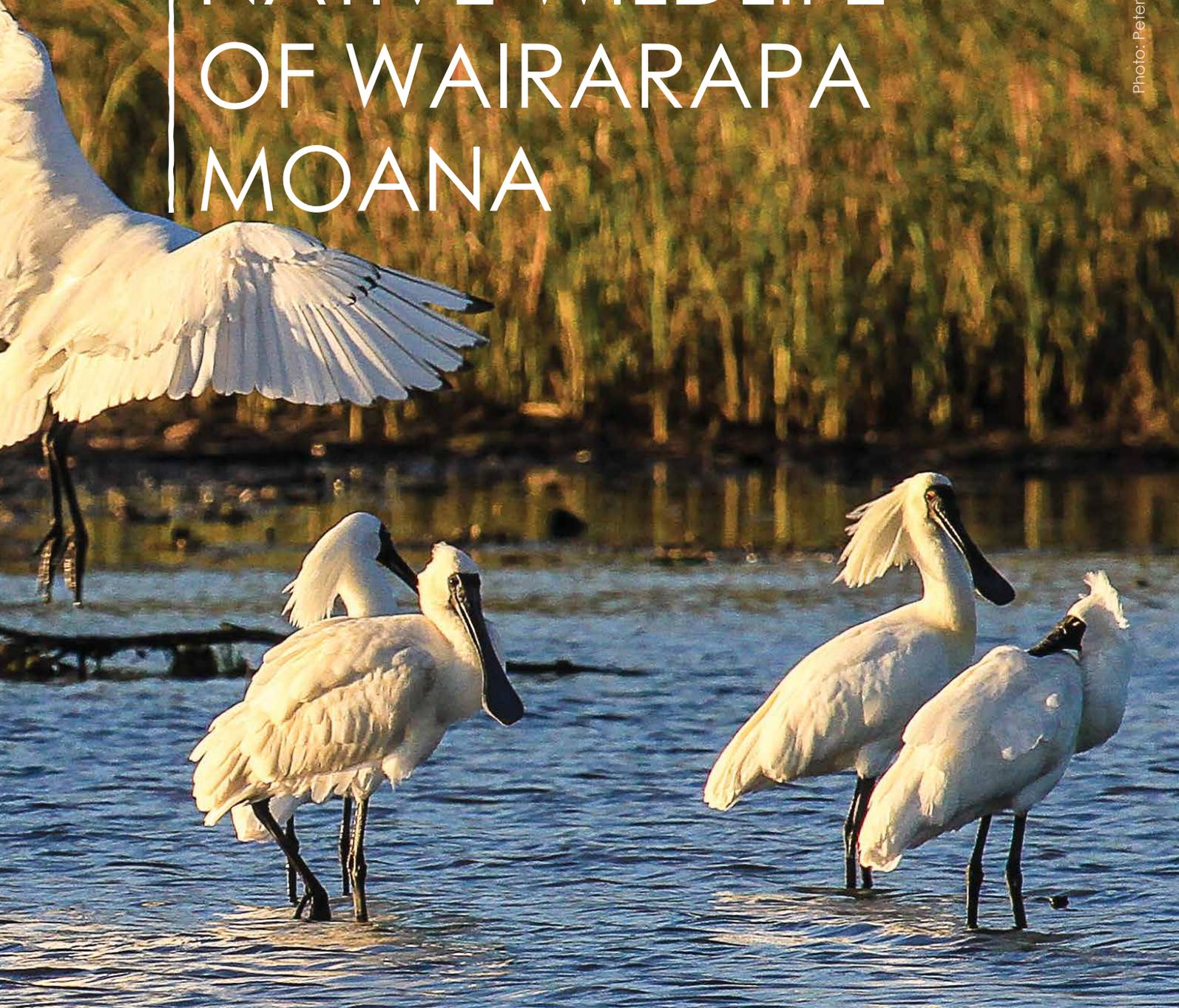
While the wetlands continue to evolve naturally, human intervention has reduced the area and changed the character of Wairarapa Moana. Swamps, predominant in the low-lying area of Wairarapa Moana, were drained and cleared for farming.

The Lower Wairarapa Valley Development Scheme, a flood management system completed in the 1970's, saw diversion of the Ruamahanga River away from Lake Wairarapa and the installation of the Barrage Gates. This system is still used to artificially manage the lake levels.

In 2012, a formal partnership was established in response to a growing recognition of the need to improve the health and to restore the mauri of the lakes and the surrounding environment. Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, Rangitāne o Wairarapa, local hapū, Greater Wellington Regional Council, South Wairarapa District Council, the Department of Conservation, farmers and the wider community now work together to help protect and enhance the natural, recreational, historical and cultural values of Wairarapa Moana.

NATIVE WILDLIFE OF WAIRARAPA MOANA

Photo: Peter Monk



Birds

The range of habitats in Wairarapa Moana supports many wading, shore, wetland and forest birds. Kawau/black shags can often be seen posing with wings outstretched to dry. A flock of kotuku-ngutupapa/royal spoonbills and other wading birds might be seen feeding on the lake shore mudflats. When the water level is low, they may be joined by the kuaka/bar-tailed godwit, which are Arctic migrants.

Rare and secretive wetland birds may be heard rather than seen. A population of endangered matuku/Australasian bittern 'boom' a territorial call during their breeding season.

Threatened taranui/Caspian terns and karoro/black-backed gulls nest in the exposed sands of Ōnoke Spit.

Fish and shellfish

The waterbodies of Wairarapa Moana provide freshwater and estuarine habitats for fish. Tuna/longfin eel are iconic to the area, having previously migrated in their thousands across Ōnoke Spit.

The lower tributaries of Lake Ōnoke provide spawning habitat for inanga/whitebait, while pātiki mohoao/black flounder inhabit the lake bed.

Plants

When lake levels on the eastern shore are low, a large expanse of tiny prostrate plants (a turf field) is visible. This vegetation supports a seasonal influx of migratory birds. The lake and lagoon sedgeland play an important role in helping to improve water quality and to provide a buffer from flood waters. They also provide more secure habitat for birds to nest.

Don't discount the value of the scruffy looking Buchanan's and curly sedges at the water's edge at Lake Domain Reserve. While they are more common in gardens, they are unusual inhabitants of this locality.

Ōnoke Spit is one of the national strongholds for hinarepe/sand tussock. Also tenaciously holding on are the mat daisy (*Raoulia* species) and pinatoro (*Pimelea* species), in which survives a Notorea moth species endemic to this area and the endangered katipo spider.

For more information on Wairarapa Moana biodiversity see www.waiwetlands.org.nz

Kākahi

Kākahi/freshwater mussels are found in some of the rivers and lakes around Wairarapa Moana. They prefer soft muds with gently flowing water. Kākahi have historically been a food source for Māori and the shells were used as cutting tools. Kākahi face an uncertain future as they are a species in decline. The health of the Wairarapa Moana population is being monitored.



Photo: Peter Monk

PLANNING A TRIP

Traveling to the Moana

Wairarapa Moana is close to Greytown, Featherston, Martinborough and the small coastal settlement of Lake Ferry.

Distances between sites by vehicle

Featherston to Lake Domain Reserve	8km / 10 mins
Featherston to Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve	18km / 20mins
Featherston to Ōnoke Spit	40km / 50 mins
Featherston to Boggy Pond/Wairio	25km / 30 mins
Martinborough to Boggy Pond/Wairio	28km / 30 mins
Lake Ferry to Boggy Pond/Wairio	26km / 23 mins
Lake Ferry to Ōnoke Spit	43km / 45 mins



Photo: Peter Monk

Half day itinerary suggestions

Pounui Lagoon and Ōnoke Spit

Pack a picnic for a stop at Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve, part way down the western shore of Lake Wairarapa. Take a pair of binoculars and walk or kayak for some bird observing at Pounui Lagoon. A return walk along a stop bank leading north overlooks the wetlands. An alternative route is along Paul's Bank, running east along the northern edge of Lake Ōnoke.

Access to Ōnoke Spit (a 3km stretch) is just a few kilometres further south. There are more wetland birds to be observed at Kiriwai Lagoon (adjacent to the car parking area) or shorebirds along the Spit.

Lake Ferry and Ōkorewa Lagoon

An unsealed road after the Lake Ferry Hotel leads to a lagoon for a short walk or bird observing and to the beach for fishing or longer walks (3km east to Whangaimoana Beach or west across to Ōnoke Spit if the outlet is closed).

Boggy Pond and Wairio wetland

Take a peaceful walk along the stopbank tracks around Boggy Pond, the north east end of Wairio wetland or along the lake shore beyond Wairio wetland. Listen and look for birds along the way, or take your binoculars to do some observing from the bird hide at Boggy Pond (800m from the car park) or from the brush hide at the lake shore (1200m towards the lake shore from Boggy Pond car park).



Overnight stays

Freedom camping is allowed at Lake Domain Reserve and at the Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve. There are toilet facilities but you'll need your own supply of drinking water. For other camping and accommodation options see www.wairarapanz.com

Keen on cycling? Make South Wairarapa your destination as part of cycling the Rimutaka Cycle Trail or the Wairarapa Valley Cycleway, www.nzcycletrail.com

Public transport

There is no public transport around the lake – see www.wairarapanz.com for information about tours in the area.



PLACES TO VISIT

Photo: Peter Monk





Lake Domain Reserve (and Barton's Lagoon)

Lake Domain Reserve on the northern shore of Lake Wairarapa has large open spaces. The Domain is exposed to the elements from the north and south, so be prepared for very strong winds.

In the south-east section of the Domain, about 600 metres from the entrance, are a large wetland (Barton's lagoon) and an informal area for trail bikes. There are some vantage points at Barton's Lagoon for observing wetland birds on the open water.

Continuing further along the lake shore, by walking or kayaking, will lead you to the Tauherenikau River delta.

Wildlife you might see:

The open water of the lake and lagoon, and the lake shore, provide good opportunities to view waterfowl and shorebirds such as kawau/black shag, poaka/pied stilt, tūturiwhatu/banded dotterel, black-fronted

dotterel, tōrea pango/variable oystercatcher and sometimes kōtuku ngutupapa/royal spoonbills.

Along the lake edge, Buchanan's sedge and curly sedge can be found. These native sedges are reddish-brown in colour and are often under water for extended periods.

Kōkahi/freshwater mussel shells are often found washed up along the shore – you may also feel the mussels underfoot when wading.

Getting there:

From Featherston, turn off SH2 into SH53, then head south along Murphy's Line for 5km. Turn right onto Lake Domain Road, then left onto South Soldiers' Settlement Road. Lake Domain Reserve is 500m at the end of this road. Turn right into the Lake Domain camping area or left towards Barton's Lagoon.





Boggy Pond and Wairio Wetland

Much of this area is being restored with willow and alder being controlled and pasture being returned to wetland. The natural regeneration and planting of native wetland vegetation will restore and enhance habitat for birds.

Two bird hides are accessible from the Boggy Pond car park on Parera Road. One is an 800m walk to a hide overlooking the open water of Boggy Pond. Continue on for a longer 2.6km loop, returning along Parera Road. On the Wairio wetland side, near the lake shore, is a brush hide accessed 1.2km along a stopbank track. Another track branches off to the south, providing a loop to enjoy the character of this regenerating wetland.

Wildlife you might see:

National and international migratory wading birds visit the lake shore between October

and April, including ngutuparore/wrybills from Te Waipounamu/South Island and kuaka/bar-tailed godwits from the Arctic. The weweia/New Zealand dabchick can be seen on the open water. Other birds such as the koitareke/marsh crane and pūweto/spotless crane are very secretive and hard to spot. Listen out for the early morning or late evening booming call of the matuku/Australasian bittern.

The lake shore is carpeted with extensive areas of turf vegetation - small, prostrate plants that are salt-tolerant. The wetlands support traditional wetland plants including harakeke/swamp flax, raupo/bulrush and fī kōuka/cabbage trees as well as more obscure plants such as the threatened water brome, a semi-aquatic grass.

Getting there:

From SH53, just out of Featherston, turn onto Kahutara Road and follow this for 16km until reaching Parera Road. Boggy Pond is 5km down Parera Road and is on your left; Wairio wetlands and access to the eastern lake edge is on your right. A second car park is located at the southern end of Boggy Pond/Wairio on Parera Road.





Wairarapa Lake Shore Scenic Reserve

This reserve provides peaceful camping and picnic spots shaded by native bush. An expansive view across the lake highlights the Aorangi Range. A day shelter and toilet are located at the southern-most off-road area.

Wildlife you might see:

The native bush here represents forest that was typical between the Remutaka Range and the lake shore. Tawairauriki/black beech, fītoki, nīkau palm, kowhai and karaka transition to mānuka scrub with sedges in the wet

depressions. Tūī, kererū, and pīwakawaka/fantail are common resident birds amongst the trees.

Kākahi/freshwater mussel shells are often washed up along the shore, and if the wind is strong enough to create a mini tidal effect, the local population is visible in areas of lake bed mud.

Getting there:

From Featherston, travel south for approximately 16km along the Western Lake Road, following the west side of Lake Wairarapa.

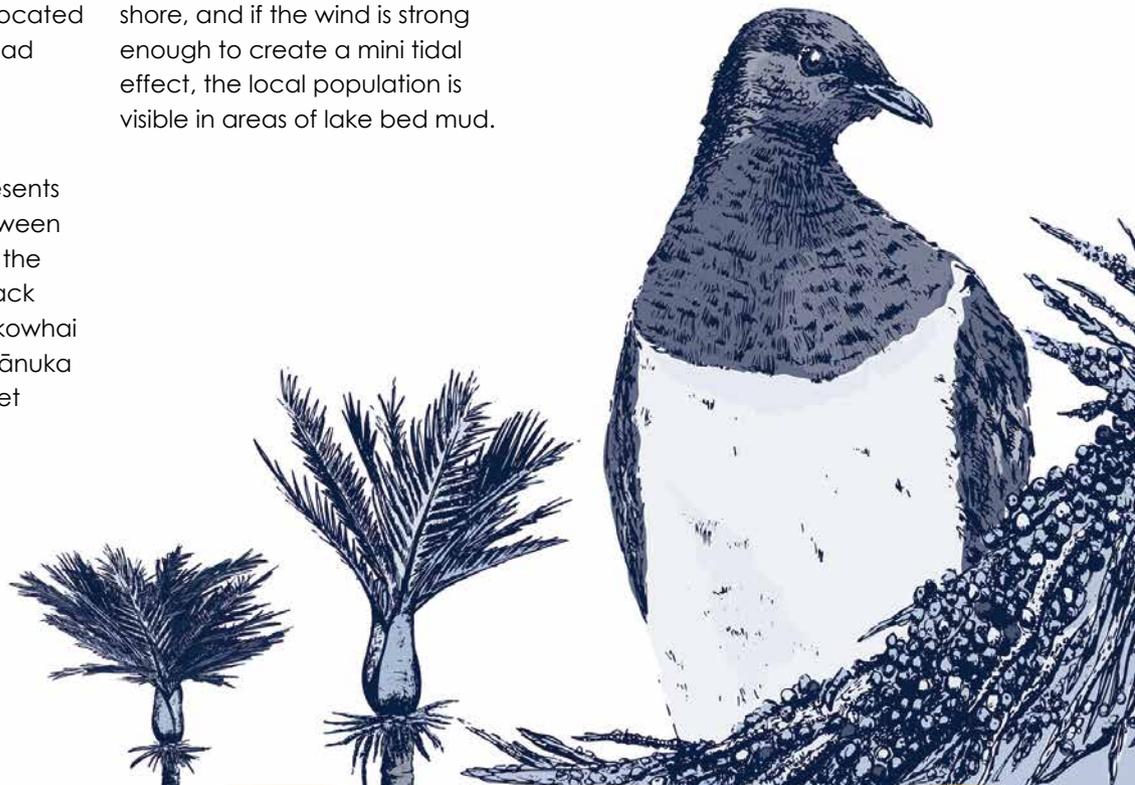




Photo: Dougal Mackenzie



Pounui Lagoon

Pounui lagoon was once part of the salt marsh edges of Lake Ōnoke. It is separated from the lake by Paul's Bank, a stop bank heading south-east. Another stop bank runs north along the edge of Pounui Lagoon. These stop banks provide an easy gradient of walking for good views of the surrounding landscape and for observing wetland and passing sea birds.

Wildlife you might see:

Some of the many native waterfowl species that nest in or frequent the lagoon include: pūtangitangi/paradise shelduck, kuruwheangi/Australasian shoveler, pāpango/scaup, tētē moroiti/grey teal, weweia/New Zealand dabchick, pūkeko/swamp hen and matuku/Australasian bittern. Wading birds that forage around the edges are the matuku moana/white-faced heron, poaka/pied stilt and black-fronted dotterel. You might be lucky enough for the flock of kōtuku ngutupapa/royal spoonbill

to time their visit with yours.

Vegetation around the shrub-dominated wetlands (now adapted to contain water less brackish than Lake Ōnoke) includes mākaka/saltmarsh ribbonwood, harakeke/swamp flax and seasonally intermittent marsh plants on the edges.

Getting there:

Travel southwest along the Western Lake Road from Featherston for approximately 37km. Park on the short section of gravel road between the boundary fence and Western Lake Road.





Ōnoke Spit

The dry and windswept Ōnoke Spit, at the south western corner of Wairarapa Moana, separates Lake Ōnoke and the coast of Palliser Bay. The 3km long sand and gravel bar runs east towards Lake Ferry settlement (only accessible if the mouth to the sea is closed).

Ōnoke Spit provides a good stretch of beach for surfcasting. It also provides for a fascinating nature walk in this exposed but sensitive coastal environment.

There is no formed track for off-road vehicles and there are sections of very soft sand. Visitors could consider the option of taking a guided tour; see www.wairarapanz.com

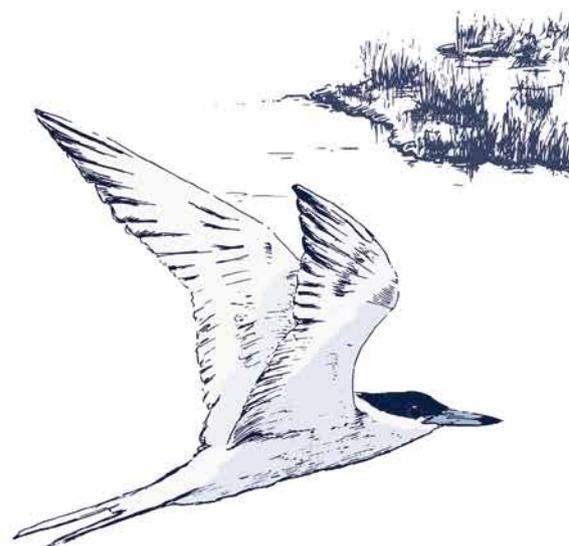
Wildlife you might see:

Ōnoke Spit is a breeding ground for karoro/southern black-backed gull, taranui/Caspian tern, tarāpunga/red-billed gull and tūturiwhatu/banded dotterel (all Threatened species). Other birds that frequent the Spit and the Kiriwai Lagoon area are tōrea pango/variable oystercatcher, tara/white-fronted tern, matuku moana/white-faced heron, kawau/black shag, kawau tui/little black shag and kāruhiruhi/pied shag.

Growing tenaciously on the duneland is hinarepe/sand tussock, pīngao and kowhangatara/spinifex as well as some less typical mat plants such as pinatoro/*Pimelea* (a prostrate daphne) and *Rauolia* (a mat daisy). The driftwood and some of the plants are habitat for lizards and the rare katipō spider.

Getting there:

From the south end of Featherston turn into Western Lake Road and follow for about 40km. Turn left into Beach Road (1km, unsealed) which leads to an informal parking area.





Lake Ōnoke (Lake Ferry settlement)

This area has Māori and European history dating back hundreds of years. A coastal lagoon sits near the site of a historical fishing village called Ōkorewa, the area having been a significant resource for the harvesting and trade of tuna/freshwater eels and fish. A ferry service, established in the early 1850's, once provided transport across Lake Ōnoke to enable travellers to follow an inland journey up the Ruamahanga River.

When the river mouth is closed and there is less risk of strong tidal currents, the lake is suitable for boating and windsurfing. The area provides informal beach walking along the shore of Lake Ōnoke, east along the beach past Ōkorewa Lagoon to Whangaimoana Beach (3km) or west along Ōnoke Spit (if the outlet is closed).

A road from just past the Lake Ferry Hotel leads to the beach which is popular for fishing.

Wildlife you might see:

The shore of Lake Ōnoke hosts a range of visiting birds as described for Ōnoke Spit. Ōkorewa Lagoon is visited by a range of waterfowl and wading birds and the pīhoihoi/New Zealand pipit and tuturiwhatu/banded dotterel nest along the beach.

The estuarine outlet is an important migratory route for tuna/freshwater eel and whitebait species.

Getting there:

Take Lake Ferry Road from Martinborough and follow for 35km to Lake Ōnoke/Lake Ferry settlement.





Photo: Peter Monk

Caring for Wairarapa Moana

Help protect this special environment so that native plants and animals can thrive.

- Check the local "Fire Season" status before lighting camp fires www.wrfd.org.nz
- Control and extinguish fires responsibly to protect habitats
- Plan your activities to avoid disturbing birds during the spring breeding season
- Keep all vehicles on formed tracks – some native birds nest on the beach
- Keep dogs on a lead – they can frighten birds off their nests
- Leave traps undisturbed – they catch pest animals that kill native birds
- Join a Wairarapa Moana community volunteer group www.waiwetlands.org.nz

Caring for you

- Be water safety smart - waves and water levels can rise up to a metre
- Take extra layers of clothing to keep warm and dry - parts of Wairarapa Moana are remote and exposed to strong winds
- Mobile reception is variable - plan communication before you leave

Find out more

For more information about restoration activities, volunteer group work, culture and biodiversity of Wairarapa Moana, visit www.waiwetlands.org.nz



Observing nature in Wairarapa Moana

Have you spotted some of our native wildlife?

For more information on the plants and animals found in Wairarapa Moana, including details to help with identification, please visit our website www.waiwetlands.org.nz

To learn more in general about the natural world visit the Department of Conservation website www.doc.govt.nz or Naturewatch NZ website www.naturewatch.org.nz

Download the Naturewatch NZ mobile app iNaturalist to help identify and record your wildlife observations.

Tell us about your visit!

We'd really appreciate knowing whether this guide has been useful to you and that you enjoyed your visit to Wairarapa Moana.

Please email Biodiversity@gw.govt.nz with any feedback or with your ideas on any improvements that could be made.

Glossary of Māori terms

Word or phrase	Meaning
Aotearoa -----	Māori name for New Zealand
Hapū -----	clan, tribe, descent group
Iwi -----	extended kinship group, tribe
Māori -----	aboriginal people of Aotearoa/New Zealand; the Polynesian language of the Māori people
Mauri -----	life force
Moana -----	sea, large lake
Tangata whenua -----	local or indigenous people
Taonga -----	treasure
Te Waipounamu -----	South Island
Tiriti o Waitangi -----	Treaty of Waitangi
Whakaora te repo, ka ora te taonga wai	Restoring our wetland treasure
Wairarapa Moana -----	sea of glistening waters



Restoring our wetland treasure
Whakaora te repo, ka ora te taonga wai



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