

Kaweka Forest Park & Puketitiri Reserves



HAWKE'S BAY



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Kaweka Road.

Photo: C Tiffen

Please remember to check with DOC staff before commencing your trip to ensure that track information contained in this brochure has not changed.

Cover photo: The Mohaka River.

Photo: C Tiffen

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Kaweka Forest Park

The Kaweka Forest Park, and several of the neighbouring Puketitiri Reserves, are managed by the Department of Conservation. The Hawke's Bay Area Office in Napier is responsible for the day to day management of the area with staff located at the Puketitiri Field Centre. Hunting permits, hut passes and general information are available from DOC's offices.



Beech forest, Kaweka Flats.

Photo: C Tiffen

History of the Kaweka Forest Park

In pre-European times there were Maori settlements on the eastern Kaweka foothills, particularly near the head of the Tutaekuri River, which provided an excellent transport route. The Kaweka Forests were a good food source and the foothills were at times burned.

The Mangatutu and Mangatainoka Hot Springs were no less attractive in pre-European times than they are today. There were Maori settlements near both springs. The people who lived in the area were the Ngati Mahu and Ngati Hinepare (on the Puketitiri side of the Mohaka River) and the Ngati Hineru (on the river's true left).

The upper Mohaka River contained renowned eeling grounds and transient camps were established during the eeling season by tribes from as far away as Taupo.

In 1848, missionary-explorer William Colenso found the Kuripapango area so desolate and bereft of vegetation he was moved to write:

"The solitude – which is only broken by the rush of dark water and the shrill beating of the fitful mountain blasts against the grey cliffs... In fact, the whole of the country...is of utmost desolate description."

Large-scale modification of the forests began in the late 1800's when merino sheep were grazed over the entire range. Kaweka Flats was once a musterers' holding paddock. Huge fires were lit to clear the forests. One shepherd wrote "we were given a box of matches as we mustered and told to burn off where we could".

By the late 1800's there was considerable farming activity in the area. Pakaututu Station ran sheep over some 7,500 acres between the Ripia and Mohaka Rivers.

The Mohaka faces above the Mohaka-Makino confluence were leased and stocked several miles up river. Grazing also extended into the Makino Valley, despite difficulty of access.

Farmers had also taken up large holdings in inland Patea, an area stretching from Taihape, north to the central volcanoes. Initially the only route to this region was from Hawke's Bay, via Kuripapango, through the southern Kaweka Range. At first there was only a packhorse track, however by 1881 the road had reached Kuripapango and in 1893 was completed through to Taihape.

Kuripapango became an important stopping place – both for packhorse trains and bullock wagons and as a fashionable holiday retreat for Hawke's Bay people. Two hotels, which later amalgamated, offered such holiday pursuits as tennis, trout fishing, pig hunting and pheasant shooting. But Kuripapango's heyday was shortlived.

In 1901 McDonald's hotel burnt down, and in 1905 the main trunk railway was completed, thus negating the need for a transport route from the interior to Hawke's Bay. The Lumsden family persisted with farming the rugged Kuripapango area for some 50 years. Their farmhouse, built in 1908, was later used by Kaweka Forest foreman Morrie Robson. It is known today as Robson's Lodge and used as an outdoor education centre.

Land to the south of the Mohaka River was farmed from around 1870 by Hawkston Station, which grazed merino sheep over much of the Kaweka Range. The fern and flax faces were overburned and overgrazed yet soon reverted to the manuka, kanuka and beech regeneration of today.



Dawn from Mangaturutu.

Photo: G Crail



Mist from Mangaturutu.

Photo: G Crail

However, continued burning, trampling by stock then grazing of regrowth either stripped any remaining fertility from the soil, or simply exposed it to be blown or washed away. Erosion was rife. Farming could not be sustained and by about 1900 all but the wild, stray sheep had been mustered out of the southern Kaweka Range, leaving behind bare, exposed hills with poor soils for revegetation.

Other introduced animals – rabbits, deer and possums later added to erosion problems.

Makahu Road to Mangatutu Hot Springs was first formed in 1915, for horse drawn vehicle. By the 1930's, this two metre wide road had reverted to a rough track. Efforts by local farmers, community fundraising and assistance from the New Zealand Forest Service resulted in the public road being reopened in 1962. A bridge built over the Mangatutunui Stream in 1990 opened up the road for year round, two-wheel drive access.

The track along the Mohaka River to Te Puia was begun in the 1960's to be part of the then proposed North Island east west walkway. It was this development, which included blasting through the rocky gorge down stream from Te Puia Lodge that really opened up the area for recreation.

In more recent history, much of the area became State Forest and since 1964 extensive commercial pine forest has been planted, thus changing the landscape dramatically.

In 1974 52,000 hectares of existing State Forest was gazetted as a Forest Park. A further 7,000 hectares was later added bringing the total to 59,000 hectares. The New Zealand Forest Service managed the park until 1987, then was disestablished and the new Department of Conservation took over the management.

Makahu Saddle has been the scene of much scientific research. In 1959, to combat the erosion problems here and elsewhere in the North Island high country, the New Zealand Forest Service established an experimental station at the saddle. For 12 years detailed climatic records were kept and research undertaken to develop revegetation techniques. Initially access was by foot over the Black Birch Range until the road to Makahu Saddle was completed in 1967.

As a result of these experiments extensive revegetation programmes, using mainly the exotic tree *Pinus contorta* were carried out in some sections of the park. Tracks were bulldozed around Makahu Saddle to facilitate the planting.

Today the hardy invasive *Pinus contorta* has become a major problem for park management, particularly in areas above bushline where it is displacing native plants. Management is now focusing on eliminating the *Pinus contorta* and to control deer and possums in an attempt to reduce largescale, unnatural erosion. Other current management projects include hut and track upgrades, ecosystem protection, public information/education resources and protection of historic assets.



Trig at Te Pukeohikarua.

Photo: G Crail

Natural Features

Natural vegetation on the eastern facing country has been extensively affected by fire and introduced animals. The former blanket of forest has almost totally gone. In its place are remnants of rapidly regenerating manuka and kanuka.

On the open tops of the Kaweka Range there are sub alpine shrublands, tussock and hardy alpine herbs and flowers. On the flanks of the range red and mountain beech are the predominant trees.

At lower altitudes, in the river valleys, there are pockets of podocarp forest (rimu, miro, matai) and varied broadleaved species such as lacebark, five finger and kohuhu.

Despite the modification that has occurred several rare, threatened species have been recorded in the area.

These include the North Island brown kiwi, New Zealand falcon (karearea), North Island kaka, and blue duck, dactylanthus and mistletoe.



North Island Kaka.
Photo: R Henderson

Visitors to the area may be treated to the sight or sound of yellow crowned parakeet, whitehead (popokatea), North Island fernbird (matata), bellbird (korimako), tui, North Island robin (toutouwai), grey warbler (riroriro) tomtit (miromiro), NZ pigeon (kereru), rifleman (titipounamu) kingfisher (kotare), NZ pipit (pihoihoi) fantail (piwakwaka), silver eye (tauhou), welcome swallow, and, in summertime, long tailed cuckoo (koekoe), are all present.

A total of ten native freshwater fish species have been recorded in the Mohaka River.

Track Standards

Tracks are graded into the three following classifications:



Walk: Well formed. Suitable for all ages.



Track: Well defined. Good fitness required.



Route: Lightly marked. For well equipped, experienced trampers only.

Huts

A fee is payable for overnight use of park huts – this contributes to the cost of hut maintenance and servicing.

Fees should be paid in advance – overnight tickets or annual passes are available from the Department of Conservation.

Camping

Designated campsites are available at some roadsides and road ends containing minimal facilities such as toilets, picnic tables and fireplaces. Fees may be applicable, please enquire at a Department of Conservation office. No rubbish receptacles are provided, so please remove your rubbish as you leave the park.

Informal camping is permitted throughout the park. Ensure you leave no trace of your visit with minimal disturbance to vegetation and water courses and be considerate to other visitors.

Also available for public use is the William Hartree Memorial Lodge. Bookings can be organised through the Napier Branch of the Forest and Bird Protection Society.

Safety

This is a mountainous area. Visitors should be prepared for sudden weather changes, cloud whiteouts and high winds on the ranges and rapidly rising water levels in rivers and streams.

If you think there is a safety hazard or conservation emergency in a conservation area, call the DOC Hotline 0800 362 468 or the nearest Department of Conservation office. For fire and search and rescue call 111.

Fires

Extreme fire conditions can exist during summer. The park is a restricted fire area, which means permits to light fires are required all year round.

Dogs

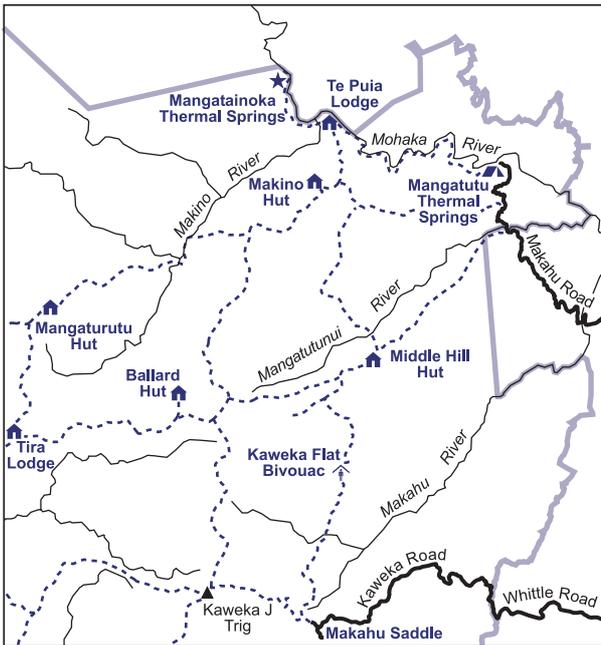
Only registered, avian aversion certified hunting dogs, Guide dogs and dogs used for special services (including conservation management activities) are permitted in the park. **All other dogs are banned.**



Moira Lee negotiating the track to Te Puia Springs. Photo: M Thorsen

Recreation Opportunities from Makahu Road

Two bridges built over previous fords have improved Makahu Road for two-wheel drive access. Park visitors should be warned, however, that the road is narrow and may be slippery when wet.



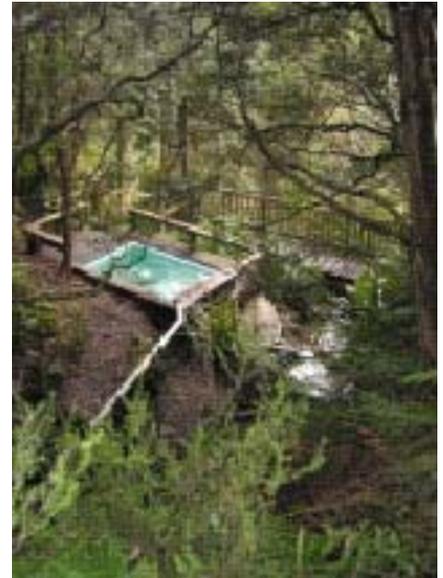
Mangatutu Hot Springs

Mangatutu Hot Springs is a popular camping, picnic and fishing spot; and a starting point for tramping, hunting or day walks up the Mohaka River and further into the Kaweka Forest Park.

There are barbecues, picnic tables and toilets located in secluded clearings among the manuka surrounds, and there are access tracks descending to the Mohaka River. The feature here is, of course, the thermal springs.

Thermal water issues from a deep, undercut, steaming hole on the top terrace. The water trickles down a riverside bluff and after a short way is channelled into a pool.

At the very end of the road, 500 metres from the hot springs, is "The Gums" parking area and shelter. The track to Te Puia Lodge, Makino River and Mangatutu Hot Springs begins here.



Mangatutu Hot Springs
Photo: C Tiffen

Fishing

The Mohaka and Makino Rivers are popular fishing rivers for rainbow and brown trout. The area is remote, unspoiled and scenic, yet access is not difficult. There is a variety of fishing water available including rapids and bouldery runs of clear water to deep, calm pools. There is scope for both the novice and experienced; using wet flies, nymphs or spinners.

Trout here are bred naturally in the rivers as opposed to being introduced from hatcheries and they are known for their size and fighting ability.

Hunting

The Makino and Mohaka River areas are popular for hunting sika and red deer. Sika deer migrated to the area in the 1930's and these elusive animals provide a challenge for hunters from all over the world. Extreme care and consideration for other park users should be shown by anyone carrying firearms in the area.

Hunting permits are required and can be obtained from the Area Office in Napier.

Rafting

The Mohaka River is one of two remaining 'wild and scenic' rivers in the North Island which offer multi-day trips and are not affected by hydro development.

Commercial rafting companies operate trips on the upper Mohaka, starting from the boundary of Kaimanawa Forest Park and Poronui Station, or from the confluence of the Mohaka and Taharua Rivers. These trips pass through the Te Puia and Mangatutu areas and end where the Mohaka is crossed by the Napier/Taupo Highway.

Because of difficulty of access through private land, however, few individual groups raft the upper Mohaka.

A feasible option is the 22km stretch from Pakaututu Road to the Napier/Taupo Highway. This section contains mainly grade 2 rapids (based on the N.Z. Canoeing Association's grading scale of 1 to 6) and takes 3-4 hours to complete. Entry point is by the bridge over the Mohaka River, about 5 kms along Pakaututu Road from the Makahu Road turnoff. A track leads to the left from the Puketitiri side of the bridge down to an entry point to the river.

A second option for a short rafting trip is from the end of Makahu Road to the bridge on Pakaututu Road. This section has Grade 2 rapids and takes 2-3 hours to complete. Access to the river from the Mangatutu Hot Springs is difficult but feasible.



Looking towards Kaweka J and the main range from the lookout.
Photo: G Craill

Makahu Road to Te Puia Lodge

(2 - 3 hours) 

From the end of Makahu Road a track leads up the true right of the Mohaka River to Te Puia Lodge; a 20 bunk hut which is popular with trampers and hunters, and also a rest spot on the way to the Mangatainoka Hot Springs.

From "The Gums" carpark the track first sidles high then drops down to grassy river flats. The track continues through manuka and some podocarp forest. In parts the track climbs to avoid bluffs, and other sections where a scramble around riverside rocks is necessary. If the Mohaka River is in flood and covers the track at these points it is feasible to get around by climbing high above the bluffs. Te Puia Lodge is located beside the Mohaka River - look out for the rare blue duck.



Blue duck (male)

Photo: Alan Reith

Te Puia Lodge to Mangatainoka Hot Springs

(45 minutes) 

The Mangatainoka Hot Springs are a popular respite for hunters, fishing enthusiasts, trampers, rafters and family groups. From Te Puia Lodge the track continues up river, passes the turnoff to Makino Hut then crosses a wire bridge over the Makino River, just above its confluence with the Mohaka River. The track continues alongside the Mohaka, then climbs steeply to a large terrace before dropping back to the river.

There are two small fibreglass baths surrounded by a decking area at the hot spring which is situated on a small manuka terrace beside the Mohaka River. Those wishing to proceed up this river from the hot pools should be aware this is private land and prior permission from the landowner is required.

Makahu Road to Makino Hut

(2 - 3 hours) 

A short distance after Makahu Road enters the park it climbs to a saddle. It is from this point the track to Makino Hut leaves the road.

The track leads up a manuka ridge for 10 minutes – from where there are good views of the Mohaka valley and surrounding plateau farmland. Look and listen for fernbirds in the ground level scrubland and listen for kiwi at night. The track continues along a manuka covered flat, then climbs again to a further flat section. Manuka vegetation gives way to red beech as altitude is gained. The track continues past the Middle Hill turnoff to the left, then to the right to the steeply descending track to Te Puia Lodge. About 30 minutes from this junction, in a small clearing, is Makino Hut.

For experienced tramping parties there is access from Makino Hut to Ballard Hut (via the main Kaweka Range) or to Mangaturutu Hut (via the upper reaches of the Makino River).

Makahu Road to Middle Hill Hut

(2 -3 hours) 

The track to Middle Hill Hut begins on Makahu Station, across the Mangatutunui Stream from the privately owned Pinks Hut. Please respect the landowner's rights, leave gates as they are found, don't frighten stock unnecessarily, or drive vehicles or bikes on farmlands, and keep to the marked track.

The track crosses a stream, then climbs and sidles through manuka forest to a plateau. Further climbing leads to a grass and tussock clearing. Middle Hill Hut is located soon after the far end of this clearing.

An alternative route to Middle Hill for experienced trampers is the Makino Hut Track. However because of the constant "up and down" nature of this track, as it winds in and out of major creeks, this is not a popular option.

From Middle Hill, tracks lead further afield to Makahu Saddle, or over the Kaweka Range to Ballard Hut.

Te Puia Lodge to Makino River

(30 minutes) 

The route leads for about 30 minutes up the true left of the Makino River from its confluence with the Mohaka, provides access for fishing and hunting. The track ends by a gorge and upriver from here there is no marked track.

Alternatively, a track which drops steeply down from the Makino to Ballard Track provides access to the river's upper reaches. A three-wire bridge which crosses the Makino River, links with a track to Mangaturutu Hut.

Makahu Road to Makino Hut to Te Puia to Makahu Rd

(6 -7 hours) 

An interesting day or overnight trip is the circuit from Makahu Road to Makino Hut, descending to Te Puia Lodge, (perhaps diverting to Mangatainoka Hot Springs), following the Mohaka River to the Mangatutu Thermal Springs, then returning to the starting point along Makahu Road.

Makahu Rd to Middle Hill Hut to Kaweka Flats to Makahu Saddle

(6 - 7 hours) 

This day or overnight trip, along the eastern side of the Kaweka Range, passes through a variety of manuka, beech and sub alpine forest, and rewards trampers with good views of the mountain tops. There is a bivouac on Kaweka Flats. Organisation of transport is necessary from Makahu Saddle to Makahu Road.

Recreation Opportunities from Kaweka Road

Access to Makahu Saddle is by Whittle Road, which passes partly through farmland, to the park entrance (please leave all gates as found). This road may be closed at times during winter because of snow.

The saddle is a popular starting point for tramping excursions into the back country – up and over the mountain tops for a variety of short walks.

Hunters frequent the area in search of sika and red deer.



Ngahere Loop Track

(1 hour return) 

From the carpark a track leads to Ngahere Base (the former hydrological survey base) then follows an old road down to a stream. Across the bridge the Matauria Ridge Track turns to the right and the Ngahere Loop Track climbs straight ahead.

About thirty minutes easy walking, through beech forest, takes one over Ngahere Hill (1114m) and out to Kaweka Road just over 1.8 kilometres from the carpark.

Matauria Ridge

(30 minutes) 

A worthwhile detour from the Ngahere Loop Track is to walk along Matauria Ridge. From this wide, open ridge there are fine views into the beech forested Donald catchment, back to Makahu Saddle and across to the main Kaweka Range.

Little's Clearing

(20 minutes return) 

Four kilometres before Makahu Saddle a short road turns off Kaweka Road and leads to Little's Clearing. Here there is a picnic area and a 20 minute loop walk through beech forest. The clearing itself is a tussock bog.

A track which is used mainly for hunting access leads from the loop walk on to Black Birch Range. Black Birch Bivouac is 1.5 hours along the range.



A winterscene on Kaweka Road.

Photo: C Taylor

Makahu Saddle to Trials Spur

(2 - 3 hours return) 

This round walk climbs above the forest line, gives good views of the surrounding country and is an easier “above bushline” option than climbing to Kaweka J.

From Makahu Saddle Hut a benched track fords Pinnacle Stream then zigzags up through manuka, toe toe, hebes, flax, tutu, mountain toatoa and scattered mountain beech. The track then passes an area where trial plantings of pine species were carried out in the 1960's.

The track crosses a narrow shingle covered ridge which leads around the head of Pinnacle Stream and up to Makahu Spur. (Dominie Bivouac is 10 minutes further uphill from this point, just off the spur on the right). Here the only vegetation is hardy alpine plants – tussock, some hebe species and mountain daisies.

From here you could continue up the steep poled track to the Kaweka J and or return via the other track.



Tussock at Kaweka J, looking north.

Photo: G Crail

Makahu Saddle to Kaweka J (Trig)

(3 - 5 hours return) 

Perhaps the most popular, and certainly most spectacular walk from the saddle is the climb to Kaweka J (1724m) and the open tops of the Kaweka Range.

A benched track leads from the carpark through scattered mountain beech to a steep shingle face. About thirty minutes from the carpark a short climb leads to Makahu Spur. From here a well-defined track climbs the shinglecovered spur past Dominie Bivouac and on to the main Kaweka Range.

The track turns south and an easy five minute walk leads to the trig on Kaweka J. This is the highest point of Kaweka Forest Park. All along the summit ridge there are fine views of Hawke's Bay, the mountains of Tongariro National Park and great expanses of the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Ranges.

In summer months hardy alpine gentians, edelweiss and mountain daisies relieve the monotony of the mountain shingle.

Care should be taken on this walk to the tops. Mists throughout the year and snow and ice in winter can make conditions extremely dangerous to the inexperienced visitor.

Dons Stream

(1 hour return) 

This stream is the headwaters of the Donald River. Follow the Makahu Spur Track from the carpark. After five minutes turn to the left and follow a wide, grassy track. This sidles through open, sub alpine country first, then mountain beech forest to a pleasant picnic spot on Dons Stream.

Dons Spur

(1 hour return) 

To the south of the carpark an old bulldozed road now makes an excellent walking track to Dons Spur. The track sidles at first through tall, red beech forest at the head of the Donald River, then climbs gradually through thick, sub alpine vegetation to Dons Spur.

The wide track stops abruptly beside a huge, steep scree slip. From here there is an excellent outlook – north to Makahu Saddle and south into the Donald River.

Kaweka Flats

(2 hours return) 

This benched track leaves from behind Makahu Saddle Hut, 2 minutes from the carpark. It sidles through beech forest, in and out of sidestream gullies, in a northerly direction. The vegetation on the main track gradually changes to thick regenerating manuka.

About 40 minutes from the saddle the track descends to a large creek and heads up to a large manuka covered plateau. Kaweka Flats, a large grassy clearing at the base of Dicks Spur, is 10 minutes from here. A small bivouac is located on the clearing.

Further Afield

For experienced trampers there is a network of tramping options, including overnight and round trips. Tracks to the south follow Maturia Ridge to Mackintosh Hut and return along the Kaweka Range to Kaweka J Trig. There is also access to the upper Tutaekuri River and the Napier/Taihape Road, via Maturia Ridge and Mackintosh Hut.

To the north, the track continues from Kaweka Flats to Middle Hill Hut, climbs over to Ballard Hut and returns along the main range. A trip from Makahu Saddle to Makahu Road in the north east of the park, via Kaweka Flats and Middle Hill Hut, is a good day or overnight possibility. There are also good tramping options from Ballard and Middle Hill to the remote north western area of the park.

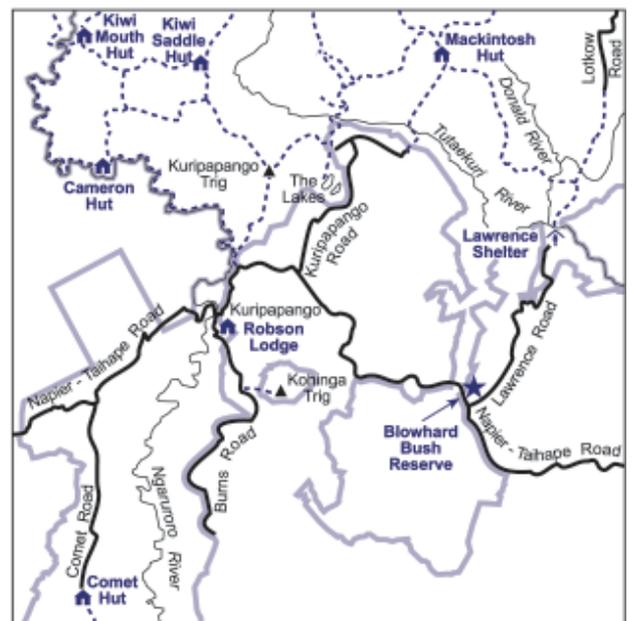


Snow-covered spur, trees close to Dicks Spur.

Photo: C Taylor

Recreation Opportunities from Lotkow Road

Lotkow Road branches off Whittle Road at the entry point to the Kaweka Forest Park. This 7 kilometre long road is used predominantly by hunters. Gorge Stream, Don Juan Peak, and Cable Creek are all popular hunting areas which are accessible from the road. Visitors should note that there are two fords on Lotkow Road which can become too high to negotiate after heavy rain. The road end is a pleasant spot for picnicking or camping.



Lotkow Road to Little's Clearing

(3 - 4 hours) 

Five kilometres along Lotkow Road the track commences with a steep climb to the Black Birch Range then goes along the range to Little's Clearing.

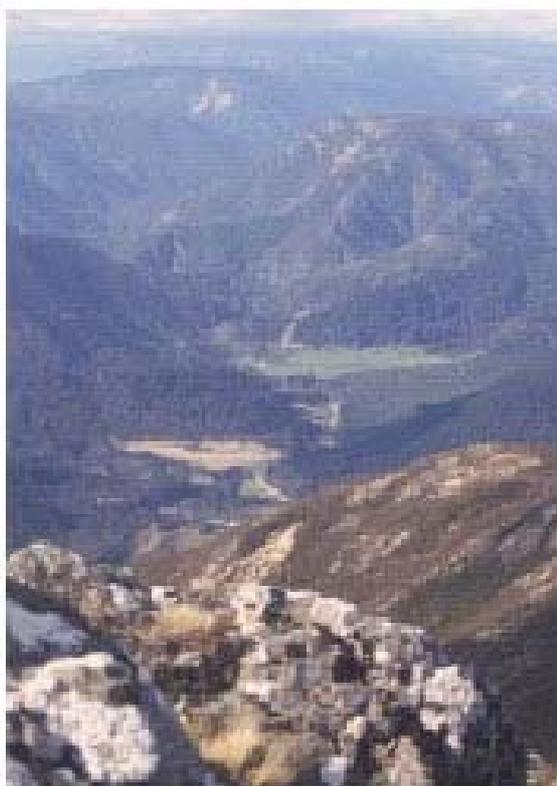
From the road end there are also tramping opportunities to Lawrence Road end (2-3 hours) and Mt Juan (1 hour).

Recreation Opportunities off the Napier/Taihape Road

The Napier/Taihape Road dissects the southern Kaweka Forest Park, which forms part of the North Island's main dividing range. Two major rivers, Tutaekuri and Ngaruroro emerge from the ranges here.

Altitude in the area ranges from about 800 to 1200 metres and the area is exposed apart from the steep river gorges.

As the Napier/Taihape Road passes through the "Blowhard" and Kuripapango areas there are a number of access points to the southern Kaweka Forest Park. These lead to a variety of recreational opportunities for tramping, hunting, trout fishing, rafting or simply for day walks, camping and picnicking.



Kuripapango from Kuri Hill.

Photo: G Crail

Recreation Opportunities off Lawrence Road

From the Lawrence road end there are a variety of options, through differing landscapes, for day or overnight trips. Some are round trips and some link with other road ends or access points to the park. At the end of Lawrence Road, Lawrence Shelter is a pleasant spot for camping and picnicking.

Blowhard Bush

(2 - 3 hours) 

Near the start of Lawrence Road is Blowhard Bush Reserve. This reserve is owned by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and managed by the Hastings/Havelock North Branch. A carpark is located on the left of Lawrence Road, some 500 metres from the main road turnoff.

A network of tracks lead through this interesting remnant of podocarp-broadleaf forest, much of which escaped the fires of last century. Intriguing rock formations of Waitotaran limestone nestle among rimu, miro, kahikatea and fuchsia trees. The rocks and boulders are weathered by water into fascinating shapes and there is a maze of tunnels, passages and caves between them.



Kahikatea berries.

There are varying routes which lead to the top of the reserve where there are rewarding views. These routes return to the stream below the carpark and can be negotiated within 2-3 hours. Lowry Lodge, a picnic shelter built by society members, is located at the southern end of the reserve.

Lawrence Road to Lotkow Shelter

(2 - 3 hours) 

Nearby, a swingbridge crosses the Tutaekuri River giving access to a park track that leads to the Lotkow road end. For day visitors there are two interesting options from here. Cross the bridge and follow the Lotkow Track, which sidles steeply at first, then gently uphill through kanuka forest.

After about 45 minutes the Mackintosh Track turns off to the left and 5 minutes along this track is an open, rocky knoll, an excellent vantage point with views across the Mackintosh Plateau and up the Donald River to the peaks of the main Kaweka Range.

For an alternative route back from Lotkow Road to the Lawrence Shelter, follow the Mackintosh Track, which drops steeply off the ridge for 10 minutes and then descends steadily to the Donald River for 20 minutes.

Follow the Donald River downstream for an hour, to where it joins the Tutaekuri River, about 5 minutes upriver from the Lawrence Swingbridge. The walk along the Donald River is unmarked, but access along the manuka terraces is not difficult.

Lawrence Shelter Loop via Lotkow Track, Lookout and Donald River

(2 - 3 hours) 

The return track through kanuka forest from Lawrence Shelter, via Lotkow Track to Lookout to Donald River.

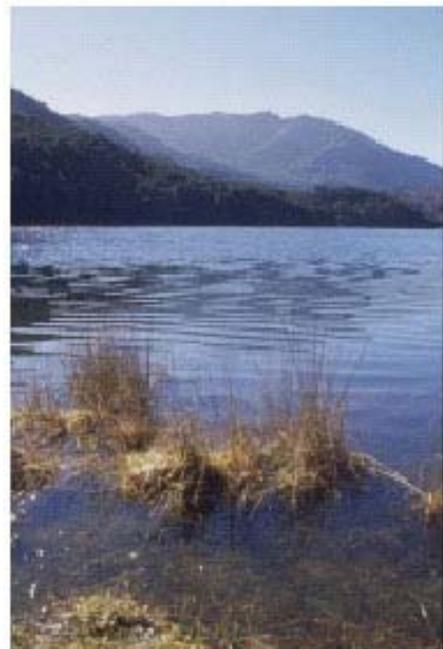
Recreation Opportunities off Kuripapango Road

Lakes Carpark to the Lakes

(30 minutes) 

The track to the lakes heads to the left from the carpark. It passes through kanuka and hardwood forest, and after 30 minutes branches left and descends to the western lake. The lakes were formed many thousands of years ago as a result of the damming of 2 streams by debris from a massive slip off Mt Kuripapango. Although small the lakes are of considerable ecological and botanical significance, for the large number of plant species and vegetation types in the immediate surrounds.

Although the level of the western lake fluctuates there is generally a sandy shoreline, where there is opportunity for picnics, fishing (for brown trout) and for walking. Visitors should take care not to damage the ecologically important flora and fauna of the lakes.



The Kuripapango Lakes.

Photo: G Craill

There are a variety of options, through differing landscapes, for day or overnight trips in the Kuripapango area. Some are round trips and some link with other road ends or access points to the park.

Kuripapango Road to Mackintosh Hut

(2 - 3 hours) 

From the car park, the track drops down a steep but well graded track to the Tutaekuri River, climbs to the top of Mackintosh Plateau then continues on the flat through manuka and beech forest and through some open areas to the hut. The Tutaekuri River is crossed by a three-wire bridge.

Lakes Carpark to Mt Kuripapango

(2 - 3 hours return) 

To reach the Lakes Carpark, turn left at the T-junction on Kuripapango Road (5 kms from the main road) and after 0.5 kms veer right. From here there is scope for picnics (at the lakes), daytrips to the tops or for extended tramping trips.

A strenuous but rewarding walk from the Lakes Carpark is to the top of Mt Kuripapango (1250m). This track zigzags through kanuka forest to the main ridge. As the main ridge is climbed, increasingly spectacular views appear; looking down to the lakes and east to Hawke's Bay. Alpine flowers and tussock are scattered among the scree on top.

From the top an alternative option, instead of returning to the Lakes Carpark, is to descend the southern side of Mt Kuripapango, to Cameron Carpark on the Napier/ Taihape Road. A track to Kiwi Saddle Hut, and the southern end of the Kaweka Range, continues to the northwest from the top of Mt Kuripapango.

Lakes Carpark to Mackintosh Carpark via Mackintosh Hut

(5 - 6 hours) 

To reach the hut, drop downhill to the right of the carpark, through pine trees for 30 minutes to reach the Tutaekuri River. Cross the river, then climb through kanuka then beech forest over 2 ridges. Follow a tributary stream until it reaches a track branch. Mackintosh Hut is on the track branching to the right, the left track provides access on to the Kaweka Range. From Mackintosh Hut follow the track to the Mackintosh Carpark (the distance by road between the carparks is 2.5 kilometres).

From Kuripapango Road there are further opportunities for tramping.

Mackintosh Carpark to Lawrence Shelter via Mackintosh Hut

(5 - 6 hours) 

A track through manuka and beech forest offering river scenery via the Donald River.

Lakes Carpark Loop to The "Tits" and Rogue Ridge

(3 - 4 hours) 

A return track with river crossings through manuka and beech forest and open tops offering expansive views.

Lakes Carpark to Cameron Carpark via Mt Kuripapango

The track travels through manuka forest, alpine vegetation and open tops offering magnificent views. 

Recreation Opportunities off Cameron Road

Cameron Carpark to Kuripapango Trig

(3 - 4 hours return) 

Just before the water gauge a track turns to the right and climbs steeply through manuka forest. The track then crosses a broad, tussock saddle and alpine herbfield to reach the summit ridge. Tracks at the trig branch northwest to Kiwi Saddle Hut, and east to the Lakes Carpark.

Cameron Carpark to Cameron Hut

(3 - 4 hours) 

The route from Cameron Carpark to Cameron Hut follows the Ngaruroro River. It begins just upriver from the water gauge. As at least 30 fordings are necessary it can only be negotiated when the Ngaruroro River is not in flood. Extended tramping options lead from Cameron Carpark to Kiwi Saddle and the Kaweka Range, or to Kiwi Mouth Hut and Back Ridge.



Hawke's Bay in the distance.

Photo: C Taylor

Recreation Opportunities at Kuripapango

Charlie Brown Road to Mt Kohinga

(3 - 4 hours) 

Just before Robson Lodge, Charlie Brown Road turns right, climbs past an old quarry, then heads south and joins with Burns Road, which leads to the Burns Range in the southernmost Kaweka Forest Park.

Two kilometres along Charlie Brown Road from Kuripapango, a track to the left leads to the open summit of Mt Kohinga (1009m). The vantage point over looks surrounding pine forest to the Kaweka mountains.



Limestone outcrop, Mount Kohinga.

Photo: G Crail

Robson's Lodge (at Kuripapango)

This old homestead, located a few hundred metres from the Department's base is available for hire by schools, clubs or family groups. The lodge sleeps 13, has a coal range for cooking and hot water, Kent fire for heating and a diesel generator for lighting. Current hire rates are available from the Hawkes Bay Area Office in Napier.

With the wealth of tramping, fishing, swimming and rafting opportunities that are within the vicinity, the Lodge is ideally located for groups who wish to partake in a range of outdoor activities.

Rafting

Rafting the Ngaruroro River is a popular wilderness experience. Commercial and private groups use Kuripapango as an exit or entrance point to the river, which is usually rafted in two sections.

The upper river, from Boyd Hut in the Kaimanawa Forest Park to Kuripapango, is a 3-4 day trip through the remote country of the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest Parks. The rapids are not technically difficult (generally Grade 2 on the N.Z. Canoeing Association's grading scale of 1 to 6).

A popular 1-2 hour rafting excursion at Kuripapango itself is to travel the Ngaruroro River's "Oxbow", putting in at the Cameron Carpark and pulling out at Kuripapango. There are Grade 2 rapids along this scenic stretch of the river.

From Kuripapango downriver is a 1-2 day trip, initially through remote gorge country (Grade 2 and 3 rapids), then through farmland (Grade 1 and 2 rapids) to Whanawhana Road.

Recreation Opportunities from Comet Road

Comet Road end to Shutes Hut

(2 - 3 hours) 

Comet Hut is at the end of the road. A track leads from this point to the Taruarau River and on to Shutes Hut in the northern Ruahine Forest Park. Shutes Hut is a quaint historic building made of local stone and cement mortar. It was built in 1920 and used first as a rabbiters hut and then by musterers. The 4-bunk hut is maintained to ensure its historic integrity is retained.

Puketitiri Reserves

Puketitiri's Reserves exist largely through the efforts of some local dedicated conservationists. Their advocacy for the cause of conservation and generosity in gifting land for reserves was at a time when the need for conservation wasn't so apparent.

Efforts to first conserve native vegetation in this area began in 1918 when Puketitiri resident Frank Hutchinson bought a forest stand to save it from the saws. His friend Guthrie Smith later wrote that this purchase "was not the chance whim of a wealthy man...it was paid for not in coin, but in personal frugalities and self denials."

Later in 1930 residents petitioned for the preservation of at least one stand of the magnificent forests. This became Ball's Clearing Scenic Reserve after the colourful local figure Jack Ball, the man who reputedly pulled his own plough.

Interestingly these earlier pioneering efforts are reflected in many of the local residents' present efforts of re-forestation and conservation in this area.

From Napier, Puketitiri is a one hour drive through rolling pasturelands.

Hutchinson Scenic Reserve

(20 minutes)

The reserve entrance and picnic area is adjacent to the DOC Puketitiri Field Centre. There is a pleasant 20 minute grassed loop walk through open forest and clearings, including groves of cabbage trees.

The reserve has three blocks of varying vegetation which had its origins from the devastating and widespread fire of the 1940's. The western block closest to Hukanui Road and where the loop walk is located, is made up of replanted exotics, some mature kahikatea and rimu and regenerating scrub and juvenile forest.

Separating the eastern block of mature forest, is a pastoral area with scattered manuka and kanuka. No tracks are provided within this impressive grove of trees dominated by kahikatea, rimu and matai.

Common native birds are the kereru (wood pigeon), tui and korimako (bellbird). Mr and Mrs Hutchinson through their concern for the disappearing native forest in the region donated the land for reserve purposes not long after they purchased it in 1937.

Ball's Clearing Scenic Reserve

(10 - 40 minutes)

There is no better place in Hawke's Bay to experience a lowland podocarp forest than Balls Clearing Scenic Reserve, located 5 kilometres from Puketitiri along the Pakaututu Road.

This outstanding example of dense virgin podocarp forest is best seen from the network of walking tracks that vary in time from 10 to 40 minutes. Photography, birdwatching and natural history studies are appropriate activities here. Picnic shelters are provided at the reserve entrance as well as a large grassed area, toilets and water.

Please note that no fires or camping are allowed.

The forest escaped the widespread forest milling which was prominent in the area in the 1930's as well as the extensive fires in the 1940's. The dense stands of straight boled trees are dominated by rimu, matai, miro, and kahikatea. There is also a fringe of red beech around the clearing. An understory of kohuhu, putaputaweta, broadleaf, mature fuchsia and five finger is complemented by a variety of ground ferns.



Balls Clearing.

Photo: C Tiffen

Native birds are numerous, though more commonly heard rather than seen, particularly in early mornings and late evenings. They include the kereru (wood pigeon), tui and korimako (bellbird). There are also significant colonies of the not so common long tailed bat.

New Zealand has only three kinds of native land mammal and they are all bats. One is the long tailed variety which finds a home in hollow trees in the mature forests in this area. Little is known about them because their small size and nocturnal habits make them difficult to study.

Research at Ball's Clearing Scenic Reserve reveals that rats are possibly the main culprit for the bats declining population. Bats have a soft noiseless flight and emit ultrasonic waves (echolocation) to determine their distance from prey and solid objects. Their food is largely moths and flying insects and they rest by suspending, head downwards, from the claws of their hind legs.



A long tailed bat with its wings outstretched.

Photo: J L Kendrick

One of the most striking plants in New Zealand's forests is the mistletoe. Although its colourful presence has been substantially reduced by possum browsing over a long period, there is evidence in this area of vigorous regrowth in response to a long term possum control programme.

It grows on the branches of host trees and with its specialised roots, often in the form of pad like attachments, it is able to penetrate the host trees to gain water and nutrients and is therefore known as semi-parasitic. The most common species found in these reserves is *Tupeia antarctica*.

It is prominent in Ball's Clearing Scenic Reserve where it mainly grows on the five finger (whauwhaupaka) but has a wide host range in other areas including introduced plants.

In Hartree Scenic Reserve *Tupeia* is just about exclusively growing on putaputaweta. The small yellow/green flowers are strongly scented and its white fruits with pink spots was a food of the Maori. Its adaptiveness to growing on hosts is enhanced by its sticky seed which easily adheres to the bark of a tree after being eaten and excreted by a bird.



White mistletoe, *Tupeia antarctica*.
Photo: G M Crowcroft

Little Bush

(45 minutes)

Little Bush refers to the smaller area of native forest remaining from the extensive earlier firing. This contrasts with Ball's Clearing Forest which was earlier referred to as Big Bush. It is a private reserve, open to the public at all times. It was purchased by the NZ Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society from Mr and Mrs Whittle who had nurtured its protection for over 40 years and continue to do so.

A 45 minute circular track passes through regenerating forest of abundant ferns, climbers and native orchids.

The low forest canopy enables rewarding bird watching. The more common birds are tui and piwakawaka (fantail) but also present are korimako (bellbird) and kereru (wood pigeon).

William Hartree Memorial Scenic Reserve

(20 minutes to 1 hour)

Mrs Audrey Hartree donated this area in 1962 in memory of her late husband William. The family were active conservationists and helped to set up a biological research station in the reserve that was later donated to the NZ Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. It is known as the William Hartree Memorial Lodge and is available for use by the public. Bookings can be organised through the Napier Branch of Forest and Bird.

Keep a look out for the directional roadside sign 6 kilometres past Patoka on the left. The network of tracks ranging from 20 minutes to a one hour walk gives a good insight into the varied regenerating vegetation.

Logging in the 1930's and the great fire of 1946 destroyed much of the original mature forest. The vigorous regenerating forest is made up of broadleaves, podocarps, manuka, kanuka and many tree ferns. A notable feature is the mistletoe, which is found growing on putaputaweta and five finger.

Other Attractions

Heritage Trail

Your drive can be made more interesting by following the Kaweka Heritage Trail that includes descriptions on places of historical, cultural and scenic interest. Brochures are available at Department of Conservation offices and Information Centres in Hawke's Bay.

Puketitiri Museum

The Puketitiri Museum with its old curiosities and memorabilia is worth a visit.

Environmental Care Code

-  PROTECT PLANTS AND ANIMALS
-  REMOVE RUBBISH
-  BURY TOILET WASTE
-  KEEP STREAMS AND LAKES CLEAN
-  TAKE CARE WITH FIRES
-  CAMP CAREFULLY
-  KEEP TO THE TRACK
-  CONSIDER OTHERS
-  RESPECT OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE
-  ENJOY YOUR VISIT

Toitu te whenua

(Leave the land undisturbed)

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

**Report any safety hazards or
conservation emergencies**

For fire and search and rescue call 111

About the Department

The Department of Conservation administers much of New Zealand's public land that is protected for the natural, scientific, historic, cultural or recreational qualities it contains. New Zealand has 14 national parks and more than five million hectares – a third of New Zealand – protected in parks and reserves. They cover an incredible variety of landscape and vegetation for so small a country.

The East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy includes the majority of the East Coast and Hawke's Bay regions. It covers 2.7 million hectares of land, of which 600,000 hectares are managed by the Department of Conservation.

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Further Reading

A Kaweka Forest Park map and the Kaweka and Kaimanawa Recreation Areas Terramap is available, while the topographical maps that cover the park are NZMS 260:

- Sheet U19, Kaimanawa
- Sheet U20, Kaweka
- Sheet V20, Esk
- Sheet U21, Kereru

Other publications include:

North Island Rivers
Graham Egarr
1990

Hawkes Bay for the Happy Wanderer
Shelia Cunningham
1993

Kaweka Heritage Trail brochures

Published by:

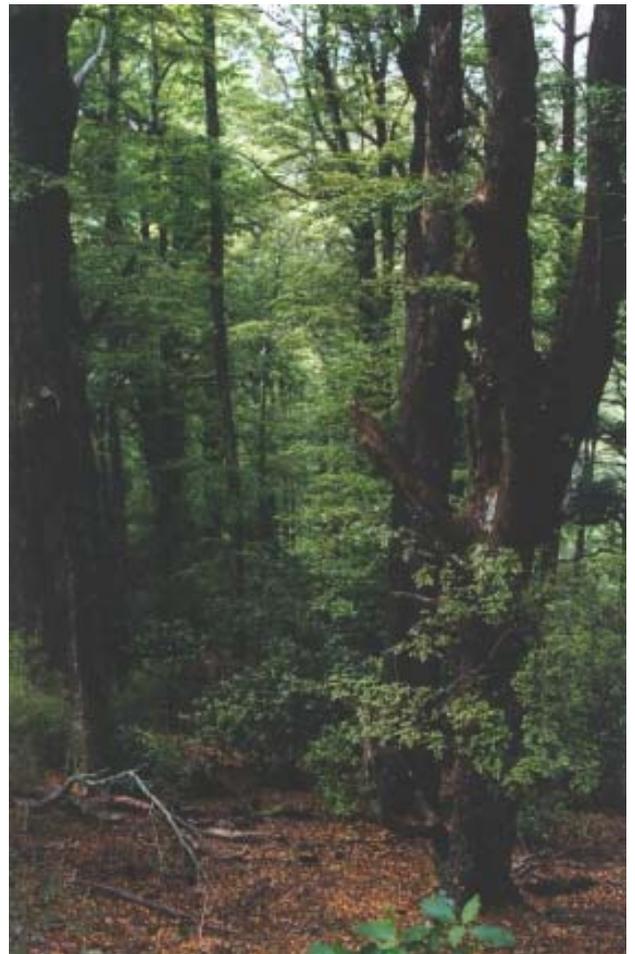
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Te Papa Atawhai



Beech forest, Kaweka Flats

Photo: C Tiffen