



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# New Zealand

7 Ramsar Site(s) covering 67,586 ha

### Awarua Wetland

Site number: 102 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: South Island  
Area: 20,000 ha | Coordinates: 46°34'S 168°31'E | Designation dates: 13-08-1976  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

13/08/76; South Island; ~20,000 ha; 46°34S 168°31E. Scientific Reserve. The site consists of a coastal lagoon, peatlands, saltmarsh, gravel beach, ponds, and lakes. These habitats provide important staging areas for waders, as well as breeding, feeding, and molting areas for various other waterbirds. Endemic butterfly species occur, as do two species of endangered fish. The site supports numerous native plant species, some typical of alpine regions. Human activities include sport fishing, bird hunting, and general recreation. Formerly called Waituna Lagoon Ramsar site, boundaries extended in 2008. Ramsar site no. 102. Most recent RIS information: 2008.

### Farewell Spit

Site number: 103 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: South Island  
Area: 11,388 ha | Coordinates: 40°32'34"S 172°54'54"E | Designation dates: 13-08-1976  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Farewell Spit. 13/08/76; South Island; 11,388 ha; 40°32'S 172°50'E. Nature Reserve; Shorebird Network Site. A 30km long sand spit, and intertidal area, extending at a rate of 15m annually. Exposed to the Tasman Sea on the north and with a dune complex giving way to mudflats on the south. Particularly important as a staging area for shorebirds. Supports several notable plant species as well. Ramsar site no. 103. Most recent RIS information: 1992.

### Firth of Thames

Site number: 459 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: North Island  
Area: 8,927 ha | Coordinates: 37°13'S 175°22'59"E | Designation dates: 29-01-1990  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Firth of Thames. 29/01/90; North Island; ~7,800 ha; 37°13'S 175°23'E. Coastal Reserve; Shorebird Network Site. A large coastal reserve bounded by peninsula and mountains. Consisting of shallow marine water, mud and grass flats, mangrove swamp, saltmarsh, and swampland. Includes a globally rare land formation of graded shell beach ridges which support grazing. Important site for roosting, wintering and staging wading birds. Ramsar site no. 459. Most recent RIS information: 1990.

## Kopuatai Peat Dome

Site number: 444 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: North Island  
Area: 10,201 ha | Coordinates: 37°25'59"S 175°33'E | Designation dates: 04-12-1989  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Kopuatai Peat Dome. 04/12/89; North Island; 10,201 ha; 37°26'S 175°33'E. Stewardship Area, Wildlife Management Reserve. The largest unaltered raised bog in New Zealand, surrounded by mineralized swampland and associated lagoons. Important area for threatened birds and plants and notable invertebrates. A spawning site for threatened fish. Bird hunting is the predominant human use. Ramsar site no. 444. Most recent RIS information: 1992.

## Manawatū River mouth and estuary

Site number: 1,491 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: Manawatū, North Island, New Zealand  
Area: 600 ha | Coordinates: 40°28'50"S 175°13'58"E | Designation dates: 25-07-2005  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is one of the largest estuaries on the North Island and retains a high degree of naturalness and endemic biodiversity. It consists of sandflats, estuary waters and intertidal marshes that support rare communities of tidal flat herb-fields and coastal marsh, dominated by ribbonwood (*Plagianthus divaricatus*) and jointed wire-rush (*Apodasmia similis*). Human disturbance is limited by the Site's inaccessibility, which has helped to maintain large populations of threatened Australasian bitterns (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) and fernbirds (*Megalurus punctatus*). Fifteen freshwater and ten estuarine fish either inhabit or migrate to the Site, many of them threatened or rare such as Galaxiidae and New Zealand longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachia*). The Site is nationally important for migratory shorebirds, with at least 95 species recorded here. A significant proportion of the regional population of wrybill (*Anarhynchus frontalis*) breeds in the Site. In the decade to 2023, however, the international migrant shorebird numbers declined, in particular of the red knot (*Calidris canutus*). Invasive plants and increasing tourist and agricultural activities pose potential threats, but measures to address these with local stakeholders' cooperation are progressing and a Site-specific management plan has been prepared.

## Wairarapa Moana Wetland

Site number: 2,432 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: Greater Wellington region  
Area: 10,547 ha | Coordinates: 41°13'48"S 175°12'06"E | Designation dates: 20-08-2020  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Wairarapa Moana, meaning "sea of glistening water" in the Māori language, is a culturally significant wetland on New Zealand's North Island. The largest wetland complex on the southern part of the Island, the site contains North Island's third largest lake, the freshwater Lake Wairarapa. It also includes diverse wetland environments including freshwater swamps and marshes, an estuarine lake (Lake Onoke), coastal marshes, river and streams, and extensive coastal shore habitats. More than 50 rare and threatened species are found at the site, such as the endangered black-fronted tern (*Chlidonias albostrigatus*). A number of those species are also endemic, including the endangered New Zealand longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*) and the vulnerable torrent fish (*Cheimarrichthys fosteri*). The cultural significance of the site stems from its history as an indigenous settlement and rich fishing ground, in particular for freshwater eel, which could be preserved and therefore traded. Nutrient accumulation within the waterways from the surrounding land uses, invasive species and earthquakes in this active tectonic zone all represent significant threats. Lake Wairarapa and the surrounding wetlands are nonetheless highly significant for species conservation, and retain a high degree of natural character, as well as important cultural heritage, recreation and other values.

## Whangamarino

Site number: 443 | Country: New Zealand | Administrative region: North Island  
Area: 5,923 ha | Coordinates: 37°18'S 175°07'E | Designation dates: 04-12-1989  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Whangamarino. 04/12/89; North Island; ~5,923 ha; 37°18'S 175°07'E. Stewardship Area. The second largest peat bog and swamp complex on the North Island. The most important breeding area in New Zealand for *Botaurus poiciloptilus*. Habitat for wintering birds and a diverse invertebrate fauna, including new, endemic, threatened, and endangered species of plants or fish. Supports a commercial fishery, cattle grazing, recreational activities, and nearby coal mining. Ramsar site no. 443. Most recent RIS information: 1992.