

Pukenui/Western Hills Forest

Pukenui/Western Hills Forest – the Lungs of Whangarei – is the largest remaining area of native forest in the Whangarei District, located on the doorstep of Whangarei City. It is a mixture of regenerating and old growth forest and contains giant trees such as kauri, totara, kahikatea and puriri. Human impacts on the forest ecosystem have been significant, particularly from kauri extraction and the proliferation of introduced plants and animals.

This large remnant of what was once a vast and rich ecosystem is known to contain a number of threatened species such as Long-tailed bat (Pekapeka), North Island brown kiwi, NZ wood-pigeon (Kukupa) and North Island tomtit (Miromiro).

There are a number of important Maori archaeological sites of interest including several defended pa sites (such as Kauika Pa site and Pa of Te Parawhau) and kainga (villages).

Pukenui/Western Hills Forest is accessed by a network of walking and tramping tracks that link the 1,700 hectares of public land, administered by the Whangarei District Council and Department of Conservation. The forest is comprised of a number of reserves, parks and gardens. These include:

- Whau Valley Water Catchment (865 hectares)
- Pukenui Forest (592 hectares)
- Coronation Scenic Reserve (102 hectares)
- Barge Park Showgrounds (64.6 hectares)
- Maunu Scenic Reserve (38.7 hectares)
- Whangarei Quarry Gardens (24.2 hectares)
- And a number of smaller reserves and parks.



Pukenui/Western Hills Forest is a lowland broadleaf forest containing rich ecological, hydrological and geological values. These include soil types, and remarkably challenging physical characteristics such as a volcanic plateau, an abrupt escarpment and a high diversity of vegetation types, all of which is dissected by a dense network of water courses and dramatic waterfalls.

Pukenui/Western Hills Forest Charitable Trust

The Trust is an elected committee of trustees, with a funded part-time ranger and trapper, formed to oversee the implementation and future development of the Pukenui Forest – Ngahere o Pukenui Management Plan. It was formed in 2009 following several years of consultation with stakeholder groups that included landowners, tangata whenua, Whangarei District Council, Northland Regional Council, Department of Conservation and community groups.

The Trust is now working closely with these agencies and supporters to achieve its objective to restore the forest, as much as possible, to its former glory.

Predator Control

Funds have been raised to control the major pests in the forest including possums, rats, stoats and goats. The removal of nearly 500 goats is a significant achievement. Another important achievement is what the Trust calls the “Ark in the Park” (inspired by Auckland Council’s work in the Waitakere Ranges). To date, 260 hectares of bush have been intensively trapped and poisoned, reducing possum and rat numbers to less than 5%. This is a major step in returning native wildlife back to the forest. Several hundred stoat boxes have also been placed strategically throughout the forest with the aim of eventually returning kiwi.



Planting and Weed Control

The Trust has secured funding for planting projects to enhance two of the forest entrances. Weed control has been initiated in Coronation Scenic Reserve by the Whangarei District Council, with the help of the Northland Regional Council.

Track Upgrades

Maintenance of the public track system is on-going with several tracks receiving attention. Further information on the walking tracks can be found on the web site.

Baseline Data

- A forest-wide assessment of the possum population was carried out in 2009 to aid possum control operation.
- In 2010, 10 permanent vegetation plots (20m x 20m) were established throughout the forest complex to aid in assessing the effectiveness of animal pest control, on-going maintenance and to assist future decision-making.
- Freshwater fish populations in the Mangere and Whau Valley Catchments have been surveyed, updating current knowledge of the native fauna.
- Aquatic insect surveys and biological monitoring have been carried out in the forest streams. Several species recorded are nationally rare.
- Kiwi listening is being undertaken to assess kiwi presence.
- A Department of Conservation survey has shown that Long-tailed bats are present in reasonable numbers.
- Students are conducting research into fauna such as spiders and insects.

Services and Programmes

Activities of the Trust include public education and promotion, outdoor education programmes with schools and dog advocacy (for kiwi protection).

Trust Vision

The human history of New Zealand has been both short and interesting. The biological history of New Zealand has been very long and extremely interesting. Human impact on this country can be described as devastating; however, there are still many important values which we can treasure. Pukenui/Western Hills Forest is one of these.

It supports a surprisingly rich complex of forest types in which, until relatively recently, good numbers of kiwi, native pigeon, kaka, native bats and a collection of geckos, skinks and invertebrates were found. The reality is that this stunning natural heritage is in decline. Our challenge is to stop the decline and restore what has been lost.

Mayfly (*Mauiulus luma*)



How You Can Help

Become a volunteer
Donations and sponsorship

For more information visit our website
www.pukenuitrust.org.nz

Principal Stakeholders



Major Sponsors

ASB Community Trust
Northland Hospitality
NZ Guardian Trust: Robert C Bruce Trust
Oxford Sports Trust
Pub Charity
Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
(Northern and Waikato Branches)
Whangarei Native Forest and Bird
Protection Society.

Long tailed bat



Tomtit

