

THIS CHAPTER COVERS:

Biodiversity on land

- Indigenous vegetation
- Indigenous species

Freshwater biodiversity

- Wetlands
- Freshwater fish
- Fish passage
- Macroinvertebrates

Coastal and marine biodiversity

- Coastal habitats on land
- Rocky reef communities
- Estuarine communities
- Protected areas

BIODIVERSITY

New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity contributes to a distinct national identity and has important social, recreational and cultural values. In particular, the relationship tangata whenua have with indigenous plants, animals, and their habitat has been woven into Māori culture and traditions for centuries.

New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity was radically changed by the arrival of humans, including the Taranaki region, which is now a highly modified landscape. Nonetheless, Taranaki is still a biologically diverse region with species unique to this area.

Protecting the region's plants, animals and ecosystems is important for Taranaki and for New Zealand as a whole. Biodiversity management in the Taranaki region is part of a national effort to safeguard the indigenous biodiversity in New Zealand's land, freshwater and marine environments.



'Local community groups and organisations play an important part in managing biodiversity in the region ...'

Biodiversity

Biodiversity, or biological diversity, describes the variety of all biological life, large and small. It includes micro-organisms, fungi, ferns, trees, plants, insects, and the ecosystems to which they belong. It includes genetic diversity within species and between species. It encompasses ecosystems on land, in freshwater, within the coastal margins, and offshore.

The arrival of humans radically changed New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity when introduced plant and animal species and human activity changed the landscape. Just over half of Taranaki's land area has less than 20% of its original vegetation remaining and these areas are considered to be acutely or chronically threatened ecosystems. However, the Taranaki region is still biologically diverse. The iconic mountain, enveloped by a national park, is home to species such as *Powelliphanta 'Egmont'*, a native land snail found only on the slopes of Mount Taranaki. Substantial areas of indigenous vegetation in east Taranaki provide significant habitat for kiwi, a number of native fish live in the region's many rivers, and the coast has an interesting and diverse range of coastal and marine habitats. The general condition of the remaining biodiversity across the region's land, water and coastal ecosystems is very good and in many cases is improving as a result of the active management of Council's targeted programmes.

'In 2013/2014 the Council's biodiversity spend was almost \$1.2 million...'

While national policy for managing biodiversity has been under development for some time, the Council has led the biodiversity charge by working with landowners to improve and protect indigenous biodiversity on private land in the Taranaki region. In 2008, in conjunction with the community, the *Biodiversity Strategy* was developed. This strategy established priorities for the Council, including working with landowners to make a difference in those areas that have important biodiversity values—our Key Native Ecosystems (KNEs). Identifying KNEs (which is ongoing as new information comes to hand) has been an important first step in targeting our efforts to ensure our limited resources are applied where they are most needed. A series of structural reviews saw the Environmental Services Department created, comprising a dedicated team of officers to drive a coordinated approach to biodiversity and pest management operations. In the past six years, we have made significant investment in biodiversity. In 2013/2014 the Council's biodiversity spend was almost \$1.2 million—including working with others through biodiversity enhancement grants.

The Council's biodiversity management approach is largely about balancing production with protection, particularly in areas such as the intensively farmed ring plain. For example, a number of Council programmes support landowners to restore and enhance biodiversity within a successful and sustainable farming business. Initiatives such as protecting wetlands and forest remnants, planting riparian buffer zones, fencing streams, and controlling weeds and pests have benefits for the landowner and all help to preserve native biodiversity.

A number of agencies, local community groups and organisations also play an important part in managing biodiversity in Taranaki's land, freshwater and marine environments. The Council works alongside these groups and the region's district councils to protect and restore remnant bush, wetland, and dune systems, and control land, freshwater and marine pests. The Council has also initiated and facilitated the Taranaki Biodiversity Forum Accord and the Taranaki Biodiversity Trust, the 19 signatories of which set annual priorities for biodiversity management in the region.

These relationships, and the Council's existing programmes and initiatives, mean that together we are making positive progress towards the biodiversity priorities of the region and the Council will easily align with any national policies and frameworks that are developed in the future.

