

How to get there

Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve is approximately 10km south of the Rimutaka Forest Park main entrance, on the Wainuiomata Coast Road. The public road ends 3km short of Turakirae Head. You must park your vehicle in the public carpark that is 300m before the end of the public road. From the carpark, walk along the road and over the Orongorongo River Bridge.

Access to Turakirae Head is via a covenant on private property. A fenceline defines the extent of the covenant. Visitors must keep to the seaward side of the fence.



Attractions



It takes about 45 minutes to walk to Turakirae Head. The eastern boundary of the reserve is a further 1 hour.



Fur seals are present in highest numbers during winter. Never approach seals too closely, and do not get between a seal and the sea.



The coast is popular for surfcasting, diving and surfing.

Please remember

Access to Turakirae Head is via a covenant area across private property. Please keep to the seaward side of the fence. The landowner's permission must be obtained for access over the vehicle track which is outside the covenant. Tel (04) 564 8208.



Dogs are not permitted on the access covenant or in the scientific reserve.



Fires may not be lit anywhere in this area because of the high risk to vegetation.



Mountain bikes may not be taken onto private property, including the access covenant.

Take care visiting natural areas

New Zealand's back country is renowned for its rugged terrain and changeable weather. Be prepared for adverse conditions.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies
For fire and search and rescue call 111

Many areas have few or basic facilities. Natural hazards, such as slips or fallen trees, may disrupt the use of facilities at any time.

- Carry food and warm, waterproof clothing, even on short walks.
- Overnight parties should always include experienced trampers.
- Use a *Parkmap* or appropriate NZMS 260 topographical maps. Ensure that someone in your group has good navigational skills.
- Advise someone of your planned route and expected time back, and contact them when you return.

More information

Department of Conservation Wellington Visitor Centre,
18–32 Manners St, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington 6143
Ph: (04) 384 7770; E-mail: wellingtonvc@doc.govt.nz



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Cover photo: View northeast from Turakirae Head into Palliser Bay.
Photo: Lloyd Homer, © Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences.

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Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve

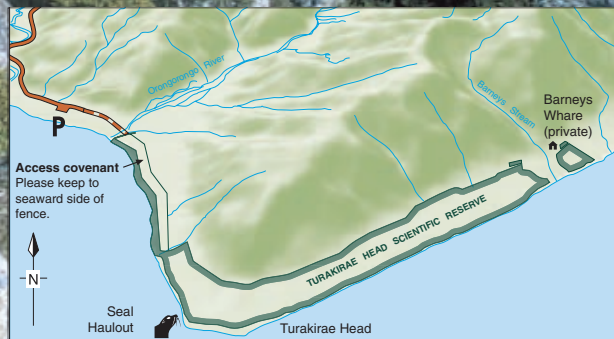


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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

The name Turakirae tells us that this is the headland (rae) where the Rimutaka Range comes down (turaki) to the sea. Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve provides valuable habitat for a variety of plants and wildlife, and preserves a well defined sequence of five earthquake-raised beaches.



Geological features

The earthquake-raised beaches provide a continuous record of geological upheaval over the past 7,000 years.

The most recent uplift occurred in 1855 when an earthquake measuring 8 on the Richter scale raised the beach 2.5 metres at Turakirae Head and 1.7 metres in Wellington Harbour. The second beach ridge was uplifted by a similar 'quake around 1460 A.D. This is now about 8 metres above sea level and is separated from the 1855 beach by a platform of large boulders. A similar platform separates the third beach at about 16 metres above sea level. This beach is estimated to have been uplifted about 3,000 years ago.

Two other ridges are mostly obscured by screens from the steep slopes behind. They occur at 22 and 25 metres above sea level. Evidence of much earlier uplift can be seen in the hills west of the Orongorongo River.

Vegetation

The vegetation within the Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve consists of a mixture of salt-tolerant herbs, tussock and reed associations, dune associations and coastal forest. Fire, both pre-European and more recent, has been the principal environmental factor influencing the present vegetation pattern. The vegetation is still subject to grazing by sheep, cattle and rabbits.

A nationally threatened plant, the shrubby tororaro, *Muehlenbeckia astonii*, occurs within the reserve. A new population of shrubby tororaro was established at Turakirae Head in 1998 as part of a programme to avert the extinction of the species.



Shrubby tororaro, *Muehlenbeckia astonii*. Photos: Jeremy Rolfe.

Wildlife

Up to 500 New Zealand fur seals stay at Turakirae Head each winter. The colony mainly comprises juvenile males, which spend their time here building up condition before moving to breeding colonies in other areas. During the breeding season they will not eat for three months or more, living off the fat reserves they build up over winter.

This colony began in 1950 and has steadily increased since then to become the largest haulout on the south Wellington coast.



NZ fur seal. Photo: Jeremy Rolfe.

Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve also provides habitat for a variety of native birds and reptiles. Banded dotterel, caspian tern and variable oystercatcher are among the bird species that may be observed. Copper skink, spotted skink, common skink and common gecko are all present within the reserve.



Copper skink. Photo: G.R. Parrish.