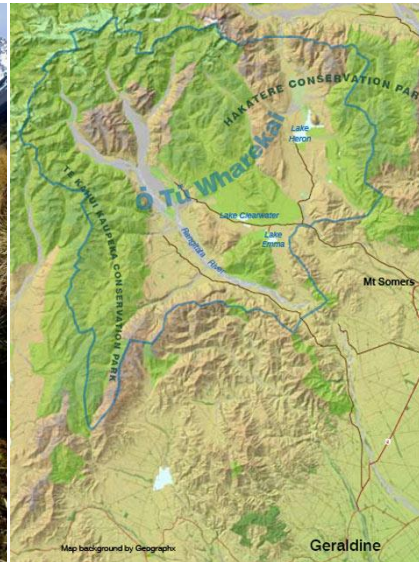


Biodiversity in the Ashburton District

February 2012 Feature: O Tu Wharekai



Photo credit: Hilary Iles



Map of O Tu Wharekai

Ō Tū Wharekai is one of the best examples of a wetland system between mountains that remains in New Zealand. The area contains a mosaic of diverse wetland habitats including the braided upper Rangitata River and the 12 lakes that make up the Ashburton Lakes.

Nestled amongst high country tussocklands and set against the towering Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, Hakaterere Conservation Park, centred on Ō Tū Wharekai, was opened in October 2007.

This area is unique, due to the glaciers that shaped the landscape. Because of this, Ō Tū Wharekai is nationally important for wildlife, with over 30 bird species regularly using the lakes and wetlands.

Ō Tū Wharekai is also home to a number of rare native plants, such as endangered marsh arrowrush (*Triglochin palustris*), pygmy forget-me-not (*Myosotis pygmaea* var. *minutiflora*), and pygmy clubrush (*Isolepis basilaris*). The area also has one of the largest known populations of the native lily, *Iphigenia novae-zelandiae*.

Many community groups are involved in the protection and maintenance of Ō Tū Wharekai including Forest and Bird and the Ornithological Society, the Rangitata Landcare Group, The Lake Clearwater Hut Holders Association and the Hakaterere Heritage Committee.

You can learn more about the natural and cultural significance of Ō Tū Wharekai and discover how you can get involved on the Department of Conservation's website <http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/land-and-freshwater/wetlands/wetlands-by-region/canterbury/o-tu-wharekai/>