



Keep an eye out for takoketai/black petrels

Once widespread on the North Island, breeding colonies of these large, burrow-nesting seabirds are now confined to Aotea and Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island. The main colony breeds here on the slopes of Hirakimata (Mt Hobson) between October and May each year. Mature birds spend months at sea flying as far as South America and only return to the island to breed. Watch out for them on the road at night.



Photo: Terry C Greene

Enjoy the hot pools but take care – they might be too hot in places. Do not put your head under the water.

Allow approx 35 minutes hiking time between the hot springs car park and the springs.

Please Note: Due to damage, courtesy of Cyclone Gabrielle, the Kaiaraara Track section of the Aotea Track is currently closed. The South Fork Track is offered as a great alternative route between Kaiaraara Hut and Mt Heale Hut.

Many of the reptiles, amphibians and birds on Aotea are now rare or extinct on the mainland. They can be secretive and require patience to spot. Keep an eye out for the following on the walk: Chevron skink –one of NZ's most endangered lizards, they can grow up to 30cm long. North Island kaka – Large brown noisy parrots are often seen flying high above the forest canopy, their raucous call is part of the island's atmosphere. Banded Rail – often mistaken for baby weka, banded rails are a common site. Black Petrel, North Island Robin and tomtit also inhabit the slopes of the highest point Hirakimata. The native forest on Aotea is regenerating after a history of land clearance and kauri logging. Impressive Kauri trees can be seen just a short walk from the Forest Rd section of the track. Three plant species found only on the island are found along the track; the Great Barrier tree daisy, prostrate kānuka, and a subspecies of hebe. Maori oral history speaks of early occupation, of Ngati Wai and its chief Rehua settling on Aotea (Great Barrier Island) and claiming mana whenua over the land in the late 1700's. Being ancestral land, the entire island is sacred to Maori. At its centre stands Hirakimata, Mt Hobson, the maunga tapu (sacred mountain) of Ngati Rehua.