

# Kaipara Harbour Hunting Access Guide

The Kaipara Harbour is the largest inland coastal harbour in the southern hemisphere and is a significant habitat to various forms of marine and wildlife.

The sheer richness of the area provides recreational users with wonderful opportunities to explore and experience.

For the game bird participant the harbour and its tributaries provide an exciting scope of experiences with some superb hunting. The experience may be likened to shooting found in the Firth of Thames, which has similar features.

The sheer distance around the Kaipara's shoreline offers perhaps some of the most untouched hunting on offer in the country. Three quarters of this huge periphery lies within the Northland Fish & Game Council's regional boundary. The hunter has a vast array of shooting alternatives at hand which can range from tidal creeks, mangrove swamps and lagoons to low lying tidal bars and sandbanks. The immense variety of opportunities that exist is only limited by the hunter's own imagination and initiative.

An area such as this is best explored with the aid of some form of water transport that is preferably large enough to be safe, reliable, and comfortable as well as sea worthy. As the Kaipara Harbour is tidal, the usual window of two hours either side of a full tide is considered the best time to hunt. Shore based opportunities also exist and can be productive where access is obtainable.

The promotion of this unique harbour as with any hunting area is not without its anomalies. Tidal influences can make zones of this harbour treacherous or tricky so some research and reconnaissance is usually advisable.

The production of this pamphlet is designed to help shooters find a suitable launching facility or ramp, and a base from which to explore.

## 1. Waikiri Creek Ramp, Taporā/Okahukura Peninsula.

Tidal Boat Ramp provides access to Waikiri Creek. Shell/Sand/Mud base. Launching preferable from half tide in, using four-wheel drive. Ramp chained off from 7pm to 7am. For after hours access phone Mr Brown @ (021) 773839. No hunting in Council beachfront Reserve.

## 2. Port Albert Ramp

An all tide concrete boat ramp suitable for most vehicles. Good safe parking. Ramp gives good access to upper Topuni River and Maeneene and Whakapirau creeks. Great area for water based mangrove shooting.

## 3. Oruawharo River Ramp

Situated at the end of the school and practically adjacent to Port Albert. Sand/shell launching from the beach. Preferably four-wheel drive launching from half tide in. Gives good access to Kaira creek (see map), a large mangrove backwater. Location of a small Maori settlement and an early mission station settlement.

## 4. Rangiora Ramp

Rangiora is a small end of road, secluded area with a few bachs. The ramp runs directly off the end of the road and gives good all tide access to the same areas as Tanoa. Four wheel drive launching is recommended but heavy standard vehicles will cope. As with Tanoa's ramp, access is gained to the upper Otamatea River right through to Kaiwaka.

## 5. Tanoa

Tanoa is a sleepy little Maori settlement with a cemetery, church and a marae. Located at the end of Tanoa Road, this ramp gives access to the upper Otamatea River. This area has a range of shooting opportunities and is a good place to find hidden backwater hunting opportunities in mangrove creeks. The ramp is a sand/shell mix to half tide and access is best achieved with a four-wheel drive. Launching on the incoming tide is preferable.

## 6. Batley Ramp

Batley was once a small settlement and is situated at Ngaupiko Point. Batley's ramp location gives hunter access to the Otamatea and Arapaoa Rivers as well as the Hokoraka Creek. South of Batley shooters can hunt the Whakaki River and the northern side of the Puketotara Peninsula. The ramp is located at the end of the sealed road and is concrete to half tide. Two pole markers out from the ramp assist with launching and retrieval.

## 7. Davis Landing Street Ramp - Maungaturoto

Situated off State Highway 12 near Maungaturoto, this small ramp is located at the end of a business service lane, and suited to small watercraft with four-wheel drive assistance. The ramp is extremely steep but gives access to the Wairau River and surrounding creeks. A good area to hunt and explore with birds throughout.

## 8. Whakapirau/Pahi Ramps

These two launching destinations provide hunters with a good central point from which to explore various rivers and creeks. Both launching sites are within a couple of hundred metres of each other, supporting small holiday communities. A campground is situated at Pahi for accommodation and both areas have good launching facilities. The central positioning of these launching areas means that hunters are also well placed to explore the inner eastern side of the Tinopai Peninsula up to as far as Matakoho and Paparoa.

## 9. Matakoho Wharf Road Ramp

Matakoho is a famous tourist destination on the Kaipara due to its fascinating Kauri Museum depicting the area's early pioneering. Hunters are able to access the upper Kaipara and its many mangrove lined backwater lagoons. Beach launching is better suited to four-wheel drive vehicles as the approach onto the shoreline is difficult. Launching is best achieved on the incoming tide.

## 10. Tinopai Ramps

Tinopai is a popular holiday destination for visitors over the Christmas period but also has a few residents all year round. A lovely area to explore, with a camping ground and shop facilities. Launching facilities are generally from the shell/sand beaches but an all tide concrete ramp is located at the very end of the public road. Caution should be taken when venturing out from Tinopai to explore the western side of this Peninsula, as tide run is sometimes strong with mud and sand banks prevalent and ever changing.

The areas to check are the upper creek/river heads with the use of a reasonably sized watercraft, as distances covered are probably greater than any other Kaipara hunting/launching destinations.

## 11. Mapau

Situated at the end of Simpson's Road is a flood protection wall, which surrounds the low-lying Ruawai farmland. From this area emerges the Awaroa River, which is famous for its waterfowl shooting. Although this area doesn't have any proper boat launching facilities, hunters are still able to manhandle punts and small aluminium boats down the gradually sloping stonewalls to the nearby Northern Wairoa River. A good place to start exploring the rivers and surrounding mangrove inlets. Care should be taken to observe tidal river flows and currents.

## 12. Ruawai Ramps

Ruawai is the main township on the eastern side of the Northern Wairoa River before it merges with the Kaipara Harbour proper. The township, although small, acts as the service centre for the lower Wairoa River and its surrounding farming district.

An all tide concrete ramp facility is located in the centre of the township, which provides access to both the upper and lower Wairoa River's eastern and western shorelines. A short distance down river from this ramp is the confluence with the Awaroa River, which is probably a good place to hunt as evading birds use the river as a departing flight path from surrounding farmland. Extensive stretches of this area are mangrove swamps, which are ideal to shoot in and around with a rising tide. Tidal flow can be strong, so good boating practice and safety measures are a must.



## 13. Tokatoka Ramp

Approximately half a kilometre north on State Highway 12 heading towards Dargaville from Tokatoka is a small stony/mud boat ramp, which is mainly used by commercial fishermen. Suited to four-wheel drives, it is a great place to launch and take advantage of passing birds departing the upper Wairoa River. This ramp caters for launching at all tide levels but care should be taken at low tide to avoid getting stuck. The ramp is positioned directly next to the highway and is visible as a cutting in the abundant Manchurian Rice Grass lined riverbank.

## 14. Hoanga Road Launching Points

Hoanga Road is found off State Highway 12 when heading from Dargaville to Ruawai. When leaving Dargaville turn left into Hoanga Road just after crossing the Northern Wairoa Bridge. Follow this road until it comes into close proximity to the river. Along this stretch of road, hunters will encounter drains that can provide small boat access to the river. From this area, hunters can explore the upper Wairoa and also venture up the Manganui River. Good shooting is encountered on most of these river stretches as waterfowl seek the safety of exposed riverbanks during the lower half of the tide. Shooters need to be aware of water currents and submerged debris when negotiating this river. It can also be unsafe for dog retrieval at certain points.

### 15. Kirikopuni Ramp

At the corner of Kirikopuni Valley Road and State Highway 14 is a road bridge. Under this bridge is a roughly fashioned ramp used by commercial eel fisherman to access their nets. Only good from half tide in as the mud is very deep and dangerous. Four-wheel drive vehicles are a must for small boat retrieval as the banks are all grass. A good ramp to explore upriver to Tangiteroria or down to the Manganui River confluence. As with all stretches of this river, care should be taken with submerged debris and water currents.

### 16. Dargaville Ramp

Located in the centre of Dargaville is the local Northern Wairoa Boating Club's ramp and facilities. The ramp can be found off the main street down Totara Street. The facility is excellent with all tide launching and retrieval. A small donation in the club's honesty box is the least people can give for using this first class ramp. Amenities at hand in Dargaville; this launching site marks the point where the Northern Wairoa River really starts to become the Kaipara Harbour.

### 17. Notorious East Ramp

At the end of Notorious East Road which is positioned midway between Te Kopuru and Dargaville, is a small grass ramp suitable for launching small boats with a four-wheel drive. This facility isn't the best so care should be exercised. Best used from half tide in, as it is mostly mud at low water.

### 18. Te Kopuru Ramp

A concrete boat ramp is situated down a side street at Te Kopuru, which acts as the launching point for local boat club members. The ramp is situated on Kaipara District Council land and allows hunters to explore either riverbank in close proximity to Dargaville. Down river from this point are some good areas to shoot, with various creeks and drains. The ramp is reached from Te Kopuru's main street (Norton). Turn down Withers then left into Walker then right into Wilson Roads. The ramp is located at the end of this road. A good all tide ramp with good facilities handy.

### 19. Tikinui Ramps

Situated down Slip Road off Pouto Point Road, is a concrete all tide ramp at a small settlement called Tikinui. The Northern Wairoa River narrows at this point, so access can be gained to opposing riverbank mangrove stands. A good place to explore, with passing birds within calling distance on either riverbank. About 1.5 kms north of this ramp is another launching spot off Pouto Point Road. A limestone quarry is situated on the riverbank and can be identified by the limestone pillar structures visible from the road. A reserve road following the drain to the river will bring you to a small stony based ramp. Probably better suited to four-wheel drive launching up to half the tide. Various tidal drains and small creeks can be explored from here up towards Dargaville.

### 20. Taingaehe Road Bridge Ramp

This small launching point is situated on the northern side of the road bridge at Taingaehe. Although not officially designated a public ramp, this launching facility has probably been created by commercial fishermen for accessing the Taingaehe creek from the roadside reserve. A sand/shell mud base allows reasonably

sized boats to use this ramp from half incoming tide. However, smaller craft could launch at any tide. Shoreline covered mangroves stands and the opposing Awaroa river confluence near Ruawai are worth investigating.

### 21. Kelly's Bay Ramp

A lovely holiday spot with scattered baches and houses and good boat launching facilities. An all tide concrete ramp provides good access to the inner and outer saltwater lagoons/creeks and backwaters that exist either side of Kelly's Bay. This spot has a camping ground for those who want to spend a bit of time in the area.

### 22. Pouto Point Ramp

The most southern launching facility on the Pouto Peninsula, this ramp is probably better suited for anglers, however, launching from this point can provide shooting inland towards Dargaville in some of the scattered tidal lagoons that exist. The sand based ramp is primarily for four-wheel drives, which can be used for most of the tide. The tidal flow is strong so safety is a priority. The area has a campground for those wanting to explore the area. The peninsula inland particularly northwest of this point, is a favourite haunt of countless numbers of waterfowl, which seek shelter in the protected Conservation areas that scatter the dune/sand country. The overflow affect of game into the Kaipara catchment and tidal areas provides good opportunities to the water-based hunter.

The Kaipara Harbour is a large expanse of open water with fast tidal currents and as such hunters are advised to use care when venturing out. Good boating practice accompanied with good water safety equipment is essential when negotiating this area. Hunters should be aware of the need to plan their hunting trips around the tidal influence, as an unexpected delay in the trip home due to a lack of draught can worry those waiting at home.

The Kaipara Harbour is an opportunity waiting to happen, so explore with delight and above all enjoy your hunting.

For further information and assistance regarding this hunting location, please contact the office of Northland Fish & Game.



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