



Forest & Bird
TE REO O TE TAIAO | Giving Nature a Voice

EVERY WETLAND COUNTS

HE PUIPUIAKI IA ROHE KŌREPOREPO

A national campaign to protect and restore Aotearoa New Zealand's wetlands for the climate, nature, and community



Wetland drainage canals, Te Puke. © Rob Suisted



Matuku-hūrepo bittern. © Neil Robert Hutton



Salt marsh, Marlborough. © Rob Suisted

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR WETLANDS?

We have lost 90% of our wetlands over the last century. They have been drained, degraded, and destroyed to make way for farming, housing, mining, quarrying, and landfills. This is still happening today, much of it done illegally and with impunity.¹

Every drained wetland has negative effects on our climate. Their loss also reduces the natural diversity of our special wetland birds, fish, insects, and plants.

But we can do something about it. Drained wetlands can be rewetted and restored, and when they are it's a WIN-WIN-WIN for the climate, nature, and communities.

HEALTHY WETLANDS HEALTHY NATURE

The survival of threatened wetland birds such as matuku-hūrepo Australasian bittern, pāteke brown teal, mātātā fernbird, and kōtuku white heron relies on remnant wetlands.

Native fish like inanga, tuna longfin eel, and waikaka mudfish are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.⁵ In New Zealand, wetlands support the greatest concentration of wildlife species than any other native habitat.⁶

Special plants need wetlands too, like the critically endangered swamp helmet orchid which is only found in Whangamarino Wetland.⁷ And the plant Māori musk, found in salt marshes, will continue to be vulnerable if coastal wetlands are not mapped and restored.

HEALTHY WETLANDS HEALTHY CLIMATE

Wetlands store large amounts of carbon, helping mitigate the impacts of climate change. Peatlands are significant long-term carbon sinks and hold carbon in compact spaces over thousands of years.

Globally, peatlands store twice as much carbon as all the world's forests combined.⁸

Coastal wetlands such as mangroves, salt marshes, and sea grass beds are vital for the sequestration of blue carbon. Coastal wetlands store carbon quickly in their fast-growing plants and accumulated soil.

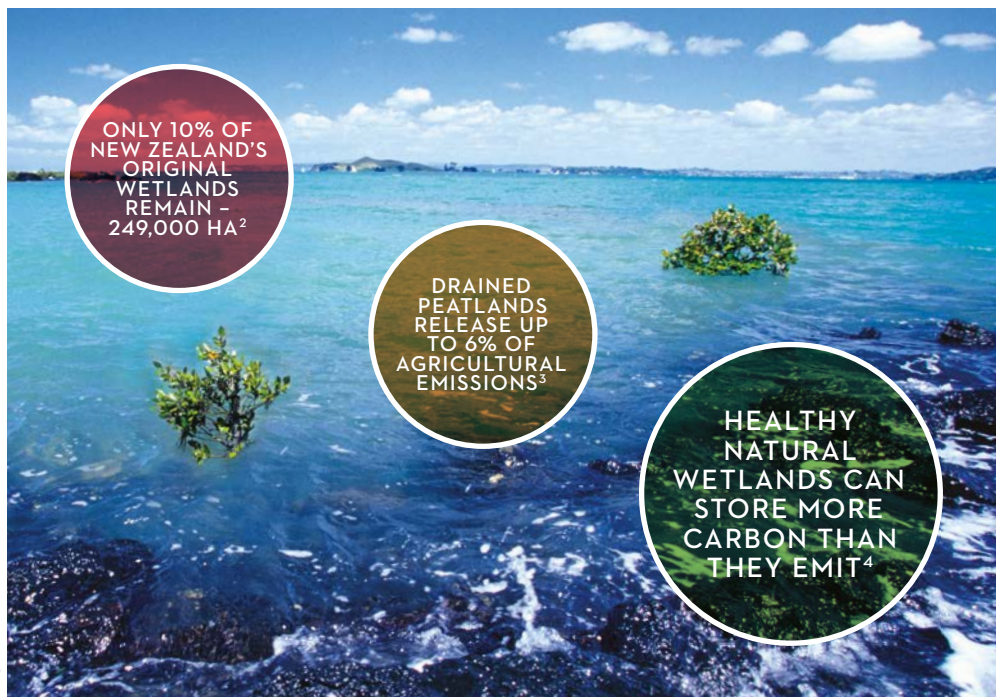
Coastal wetlands sequester carbon up to 57 times faster than a tropical forest.⁹

Restoring wetlands increases climate resilience by buffering communities from coastal storm surges, wave damage, and floods. They help stabilise shorelines, waterways, water supplies, and local microclimates.

Wetlands offer nature-based solutions to help us adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risk.¹⁰

Wetlands maintain local climate and reduce temperature extremes. By storing rainwater and slowly releasing it to the surrounding environment, they can recharge water to the ground, rivers, lakes, and streams.

The water released from wetland vegetation has a local cooling effect and reduces fire risk.¹¹



ONLY 10% OF NEW ZEALAND'S ORIGINAL WETLANDS REMAIN – 249,000 HA²

DRAINED PEATLANDS RELEASE UP TO 6% OF AGRICULTURAL EMISSIONS³

HEALTHY NATURAL WETLANDS CAN STORE MORE CARBON THAN THEY EMIT⁴

Mangroves, Hauraki Gulf. © Rob Suisted



HEALTHY WETLANDS HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Wetlands are taonga for tangata whenua with cultural, economic, historical, and spiritual significance. They are sources of many things including mātauranga knowledge, oranga wellbeing, mahinga kai food gathering, and rongoā medicines. Healthy wetlands protect the mauri of freshwater and the wellbeing of the wider environment and community.¹²

Protecting and restoring wetlands delivers many co-benefits for people. Wetlands can clean pollution from water and provide a place for leisure, recreation, and cultural practices. Identifying, valuing, and restoring wetlands as a climate action will also support community health and wellbeing.¹³

Rewetting drained peatlands can provide a pathway for the primary sector to transition toward more sustainable land uses. Paludiculture is the productive use of formerly drained peat wetlands. Landowners can restore wetlands to reduce emissions, provide valuable habitat, and still generate income.¹⁴



SAVE OUR WETLANDS

Forest & Bird and 10 leading climate, environment, health, and recreation organisations are calling on the Government to draw up a national wetland protection and restoration plan. As part of the country's climate response, we want to see the Prime Minister and her ministers:

- 1 **Double the extent of natural wetlands by 2050** with interim goals.
- 2 Establish and implement an **Aotearoa Wetland Protection and Restoration Plan** for carbon sequestration and the mitigation of climate change effects with ambitious, measurable, and enforceable regional targets.
- 3 **Provide \$100 million of additional government funding** in the next four years to establish seed funding for new wetland restoration and paludiculture trials.
- 4 **Map** current and historical mangrove, salt marsh, and sea grass extent by 2030.
- 5 Require land managers to **account for drained wetlands in the Emissions Trading Scheme**, and protect and restore wetlands as emission reduction mechanisms in Farm Environment Plans.
- 6 Stop the current destruction of wetlands by agriculture, urban development, mining, quarrying, and landfills by ensuring **existing regulations are not watered down - and are properly enforced.**

Taken together, these six actions will significantly boost the ability of New Zealand's wetlands to help mitigate climate change impacts for the benefit of people, nature, and the planet.



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*"The Awarua-Waituna wetlands is one of the largest remaining wetland complexes in New Zealand and is important for its biological diversity and cultural values."*¹⁵



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For more information, email freshwater@forestandbird.org.nz or go to www.forestandbird.org.nz

The following organisations endorse Every Wetland Counts He Puipuiaki Ia Rohe Kōreporepo.

