

Kia ora, welcome to Te Kohanga

Te Kohanga (the nesting ground) is the 97 hectare, recreation and conservation area of Pegasus. This area is a freshwater wetland and ancient coastal dune system. Careful work is under way to create a range of natural habitats so that it will once again support the variety and numbers of native plants and animals that once lived here.

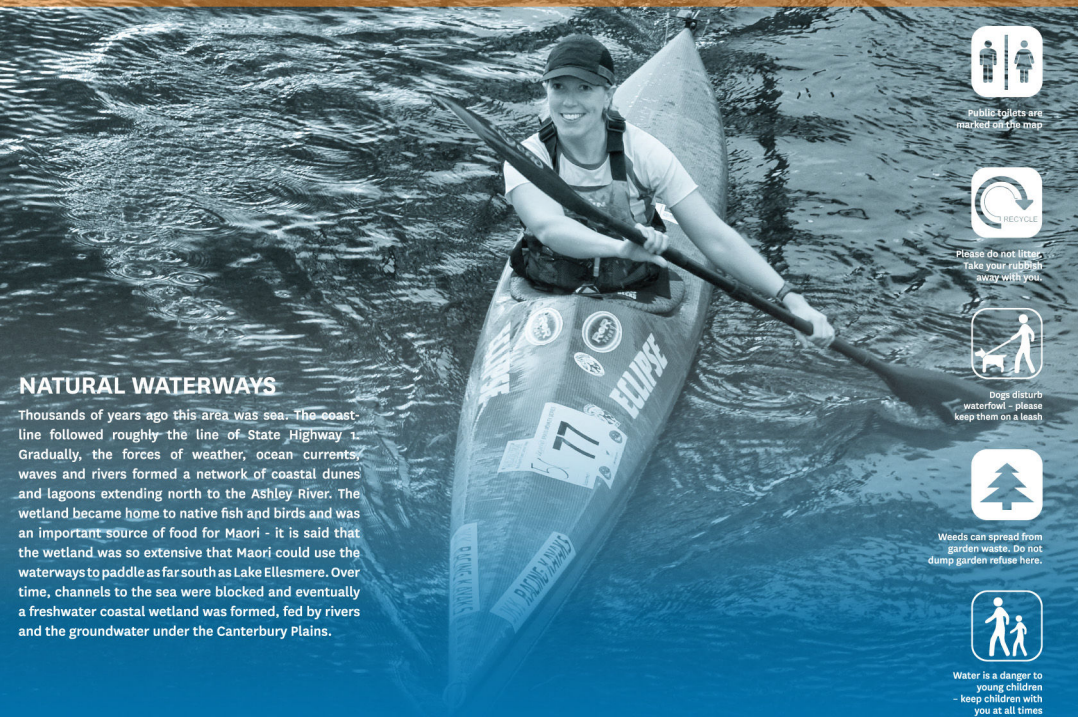


CONSERVATION WATERWAYS

With the development of Pegasus township, native plant, bird and invertebrate species are being given a chance to thrive here once more, alongside people who enjoy Te Kohanga for recreation. The willows have been largely removed and a programme for their gradual control is in place. Stock grazing has ended, and weed control and planting with natives are well underway. The willows at the south end of Te Kohanga have been left almost untouched and a population of the rare Canterbury mudfish lives here. Other mudfish that lived closer to the town construction area, have been transferred here temporarily. In the future it is planned to transfer some of them back into specially built ponds.

FARMING

Following European settlement in North Canterbury, the area that we now call Te Kohanga was partly drained for farmland. Introduced pasture grasses, marram grass and willows became the dominant vegetation between Waikuku Beach and Pines Beach. Only a few native plants remained in isolated pockets; only the most adaptable species of wetland birds and fish continued to live here, but in much lower numbers.



NATURAL WATERWAYS

Thousands of years ago this area was sea. The coastline followed roughly the line of State Highway 1. Gradually, the forces of weather, ocean currents, waves and rivers formed a network of coastal dunes and lagoons extending north to the Ashley River. The wetland became home to native fish and birds and was an important source of food for Maori - it is said that the wetland was so extensive that Maori could use the waterways to paddle as far south as Lake Ellesmere. Over time, channels to the sea were blocked and eventually a freshwater coastal wetland was formed, fed by rivers and the groundwater under the Canterbury Plains.

