

Discover MURPHY'S BUSH SELF-GUIDED WALK

NAU MAI HARAE MAI

This self-guided walk starts from the carpark at the main Murphy's Bush Road entrance to the reserve. It follows a path up to a large clearing and through the forested areas of the reserve.

The numbered points on the map are associated with suggested activities and the following notes.

Please remember to
'Take nothing but memories, leave
nothing but footprints'
'Haria ko ngā maharatanga anake, waiho
ko ngā tapuae anake'.

1. By the sign at the entrance to the reserve

Prior to the arrival of missionaries and European settlers in the mid 1800's, this area was the home to Ngāi Tai (iwi of Tainui descent) interlinked with other iwi including Te Wai ō Hua, Ngāti Pāoa and Ngāti Tamaterā. Today, Ngāi Tai and Ngāti Pāoa are recognised as holding Mana Whenua status.

The Flat Bush School House and historic cottage are a short walk across the carpark and grassed area. The school house was built in 1877 from solid kauri and was used until 1929; it then served as a haybarn until being restored in 1980. Stancombe Cottage (also known as Baverstock Cottage) was built in the 1870s from kauri and other native timber. It was moved from its original location at Stancombe Road to this reserve in 2012. Both buildings are of significant historic value as houses of this age and quality are now relatively rare in the Auckland region. They are owned and maintained by Auckland Council.

2. On the bridge looking over the stream

This is a good spot to stand quietly and look to see if you can see anything living in the stream. The plants growing on the bank of the stream and the forest canopy above help to keep the stream shaded and cool, and their roots help prevent soil erosion and silt building up in the water. Stream-dwelling animals need cool, clear, clean water to survive. Cool flowing water has more oxygen dissolved in it, which is beneficial to the animals living in it. Murky or polluted water can clog up the gills of freshwater insects and fish.

3. In the clearing / picnic area

Rākau Rangatira
Tū Teitei I te Wao Nui
Ki te Kore Koutou
Mā Wai e Mihi te Rā

Chiefly Trees
Standing Tall in the Forest
Without you
Who will greet the Sun

Kahikatea (white pine) is New Zealand's tallest and most ancient native tree, pollen records date back to over 100 million years ago! The juicy orange seed bases known as 'koroī' ripen in autumn attracting a number of birds and were once an important food source for Māori, 60 baskets full could be served at one feast! The wood of kahikatea was also highly valued by Māori, it was one of the five trees in which Mahuika (ancestor of Māui) hid the secret of fire. European settlers used the wood for making butter boxes because it was odourless and lightweight.

Tōtara, rimu, mataī and pūriri had a number of uses for both Māori and Europeans including carving, making waka (canoes), furniture, fence posts, houses, railway sleepers, telegraph poles and much more. Pūriri is said to be New Zealand's strongest and most durable wood, sometimes needing dynamite to split it!

4. Next to the bird sign, before entering the forest track

There will be a number of benches along the forest track which provide lovely spots to sit quietly to observe and listen for birds. You are likely to hear the tuneful song of tūī, they have two voice boxes that enable them to produce a melody of complex ringing sounds, clicks and whistles. Piwakawaka (fantails) have short sharp repetitive cheeping calls. Riroriro (grey warblers) are more often heard than seen – their song starts with three squeaks and then becomes a long wavering warble. You may hear the noisy chattering of eastern rosella or rainbow lorikeets. Although pretty to look at and fun to watch, these are non-native birds originally from Australia and they are a threat to our native birds as they compete with them for food and nest sites. At night you would likely to hear the sound of ruru (morepork).

nzbirdsonline.org.nz is a great online tool for helping to identify what you see.

Visit doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds to listen to birdcalls.

5. Next to the giant tōtara tree

Tōtara are dioecious, meaning they have separate male and female trees. In autumn, the female trees produce a green seed that sits in a juicy red base, this was a valued food source for Māori. You might spot birds feeding on the fruit between March and May, and bees collecting pollen from the cones of trees between September and October. Spiders make their home in amongst the flaky bark and a 2cm long horn beetle is sometimes found on dead and dying twigs.

Mature tōtara take over 100 years to reach 30m tall. A tree that had been carefully selected to make a waka would have been felled using stone axes with the help of small fires set near the base of the trunk. The huge log was hollowed out with stone tools and fire, before being further shaped and carved using greenstone chisels.

The forest was a spiritual place for Māori. A special ceremony would have been performed before removing a tree to give thanks to Tāne, the god of the forest.

Tōtara e tū whakahirahira nei, Ko koe I tohia mai, Hei rākau mahi I o mātou waka nui, Kia whakareireia koe ki te whakairo, Ko tō hiako hei kete pupuri kai, Ka mihi atu.

Tōtara so tall and strong, You were chosen as the log from which we will make our great canoe, May your wood be dressed with elaborate carving, And your bark be fashioned into receptacles in which we will keep food, Thank you.

6. In the nīkau grove

The nīkau grove is a great place to build your own mini shelter. You could try propping up large nīkau fronds to create a teepee shape or place them across a low branch to create a lean-to.

7. As you walk along the track – looking for different leaves

As you walk along the track looking for different leaves, you might like to also observe the different forest layers and the ways in which plants are adapted to find sunlight. Light is needed by plants to photosynthesize, the process by which plants make their own food using light energy, water and carbon dioxide. Plants that find an opening in the canopy and receive more sunlight can grow faster than others. Epiphytes and vines such as kareao (supplejack), mokimoki (fragrant fern) and northern rātā climb or grow on the trunks and branches of other plants to help them reach the sunlight. For more information on the structure of conifer-broadleaf forests visit teara.govt.nz/en/conifer-broadleaf-forests.

8. Along the track on the left is a large pūriri tree to investigate

The holes in the branches and trunk are created by the pūriri moth caterpillar. Adult moths may emerge at any time of year, but the most common season is October–December. The tree flowers and fruits throughout the year, but particularly in winter, providing an important food source for birds. The fruit is popular with kererū, tūi and kākā, with smaller native birds and insects visiting the flowers for nectar. Māori used the infusions of the leaves to bathe aches and sprains and to treat ulcers and sore throats. A yellow dye was extracted from the bark to colour weaving. The wood is extremely strong and durable and was used for piles, fencing, bridges and railway sleepers. To grow from seed, soften the coating with boiling water and soak overnight before planting.

On your way back to the park entrance

The walk back to the park entrance takes about 15 minutes from here.

You might like to stop and reflect on the things you've discovered and discussed on your walk today, including how people can help to protect the biodiversity of forest and stream ecosystems. One important way to protect and increase the number of our native species is to control pests including possums, rats, ferrets, weasels, stoats and hedgehogs; they cause havoc in forest ecosystems by eating leaves, berries, flowers, insects, snails, eggs, chicks and even adult birds. Forests with good pest control have higher populations of native animals and a greater diversity of plants.

Visit predatorfreenz.org or pestdetective.org.nz to find out how you could help control pests in your own backyard or join a local group to help.

TOP TIPS FOR VISITING

- This self-guided walk has been designed to take 1.5 hours at a moderate pace.
- Bring a wildlife guide to help you identify what you see.
- Insect repellent could be handy to avoid mosquito bites.
- To find out how to get involved with projects in Auckland's parks and reserves please email: mylocalpark@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
- To report a problem please visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/report-it or call 09 301 0101.