

# Clarence visitor information



## Ka Whata Tu o Rakihouia Conservation Park



Locality



### NEW ZEALAND environmental CARE CODE

- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep waterways clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit
- *Toitu te whenua* (leave the land undisturbed)



### Introduction

Welcome to the Clarence in Ka Whata Tu o Rakihouia Conservation Park, a vast and rugged high-country landscape, straddling the Seaward Kaikoura Range. Endless vistas of convoluted mountains and twisted rock formations greet the visitor; small streams rush to the mighty Clarence River and gardens of alpine plants cling tenaciously to craggy slopes and pinnacles.

### About the area

This valuable conservation land is managed by the Department of Conservation following purchase by the Forest Heritage Fund in 1993. Within the Clarence sit some of the highest mountains in New Zealand outside the Southern Alps. It is of national significance geologically and for the many rare, interesting and unique native plants and animals it harbours.

Due to its relatively dry climate, the area escaped extensive glaciation during the Ice Age. Instead of glacial features, landforms above the original bushline are a result of mass movement of rock and debris. In places, it seems the very bones of the mountains are revealed—chalky white outcrops of limestone, contrasting vividly with deep-red remnants of ancient underground volcanic activity.

The vegetation forms a complex mosaic of tussock grasslands, shrublands, forest, flaxes, screefields and bare rock. Several threatened plants, a number of species at their northern or southern limits and numerous plants endemic to the region are found here. These include the rare pink broom, New Zealand lilac, coral daisy and Marlborough rock daisy. Despite overgrazing, burning, spraying and damage by pests, the lower altitudes still support some important remnant communities. The many bluffs are goat-proof havens for plants, some of which live only on the limestone outcrops.

The Seaward Kaikoura Range is a very important area for a whole range of native animals. The world's only breeding colonies of Hutton's Shearwaters are found on the cliff faces in the area. Eleven species of lizard have been recorded, including the threatened black-eyed gecko and scree skink. The New Zealand falcon occurs throughout the area; and kea live in the alpine zone. Blind Saddle is one of the most important areas known for large invertebrates in New Zealand: two weta species, a tussock butterfly and two speargrass weevil species survive there.

Introduced animals, including rabbits, pigs, stoats, hares and possums, pose a threat to the native wildlife and vegetation. Introduced weeds, such as hawkweed and briar, are also a major nuisance.

### History

Māori living at the mouth of the Clarence River used the river valley as a route through to Waiau for at least 750 years. In 1857 the first sheep runs were taken up in the Clarence by Joseph Ward and C. F. Watts. By 1890 no lessee could be found for the difficult runs, which were infested with scab, a skin disease in sheep. The area became part of the Crown's reserve of unoccupied pastoral lands.

Access was always a major obstacle. Horses were a valuable asset and the old pack track can still be seen in places. The modern vehicle track was only completed in 1969.

The leaseholders used materials at hand for building their homes and farm buildings. Trees, including introduced species, such as willow and elm, were used for framing. Cob was used for constructing walls; sometimes even the dog kennels and outside ovens were made from this mixture of mud and tussock.

### How to get there

The main access into the Clarence is over the Blind Saddle Road. From Kaikoura, follow State Highway 1 south for five kilometres to the Waiau/Mt Lyford turnoff and head inland to the car park at Kahutara River bridge, 25 kilometres from Kaikoura. There is a locked gate here restricting horse and vehicle access.

### Activities in the Clarence



#### Tramping/mountain biking

The Clarence offers excellent recreation opportunities for trampers making the walk over the range to Warden Hut. Trampers and mountain bikers do not need an access permit. Mountain bikers are requested to use roads and formed tracks only.



#### Rafting/kayaking

Travelling the Clarence River by raft, canoe, or kayak is a great way to see the Clarence. There are four huts accessible to river users; Seymour, Palmer, Goose Flat and Snowgrass. Please see the map for locations.





**Standard huts** have mattresses, water supply and toilet. Wood heaters are provided at huts below the bush line. The Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets are required.



**Basic huts** provide very basic shelter with limited facilities. No charge.



**Backcountry campsites.** Hut facilities may be used unless otherwise stated. Please follow minimal impact practice. Backcountry campsites at Standard and Basic huts are free.

The main river access point is at the Acheron Bridge, accessible via Hanmer Springs and Jacks Pass Road. This is an isolated multi day trip suitable for experienced or guided groups only.



### Horse trekking

Access for horse trekking is by permit only. Feed availability is unpredictable so it is recommended to take supplementary feed. To reduce the spread of weeds only take grain feed. Please contact the DOC South Marlborough Area Office at Renwick for further information.



### Helicopter

There are a number of bivvies and huts which are not accessible by road or track. Helicopter operators must have a landing concession. Please contact the DOC South Marlborough Area Office for further information on these huts and helicopter access.



### 4WD weekends

Vehicle access into the Clarence is offered during five 4WD weekends each year. Please contact DOC South Marlborough Area Office for dates or visit the Clarence page on the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

Participating in 4WD weekends is at your own risk. The section between the Kahutara gate to Quail Flat is 30km and will take a minimum of two hours. The road is steep, rough and narrow in places, with several fords. Slips and floods are common; there can be no guarantee of a safe vehicle passage. The road is suited to people with 4WD experience and drivers need to be fully aware of their surroundings. Note: no hunting during 4WD weekends.



### Other vehicle access

Limited vehicle access can be arranged by contacting Muzzle Station on (03) 319 5791.

Note: the road is closed to vehicles over the winter months.



### Huts and camping

The Warden, Seymour, Goose Flat, Palmer, Alfred, Limestone, Jam and Snowgrass huts are all standard huts, requiring a Backcountry Hut Pass or one Backcountry Hut Ticket per night. They are equipped with bunks and wood fires, but it is best to take a portable cooker as fire wood supplies are not guaranteed. Purchase of a hut pass/ticket does not entitle exclusive rights to any specific hut. Huts are managed on a 'first come, first served' basis.

The basic huts and bivvies are free of charge.

Camping within the Clarence is free. Camping is promoted at the hut sites in the Clarence. Take a portable gas cooker as open fires are not permitted.

The historic buildings are not to be used for accommodation due to safety reasons.



### Fishing

The Clarence River provides ideal brown trout and salmon fishing. A licence from Fish and Game New Zealand is required. Didymo is present in the Clarence River so it is essential all fishing gear is cleaned in accordance with Biosecurity New Zealand guidelines.



### Hunting

Hunting on public conservation land is by permit only. Hunting on the Muzzle Grazing Concession requires a separate Clarence Hunting Permit; please contact the South Marlborough Area Office for further information. An additional licence from Fish and Game New Zealand is also required for game bird hunting. Note: no hunting during 4WD weekends.

## Route description/huts

### Kahutara car park to Warden Hut (12 bunks), 18 km

The vehicle track first crosses Kahutara River and then begins climbing through farmland. A fantastic panorama awaits the visitor at Blind Saddle (1190m), a good place to pause and check the weather. After Bushy Saddle (540m), the track steepens; native forest clads the mountains on either side, gradually changing to shrublands then alpine vegetation near the top.

As the track descends from the saddle, incredible landforms can be seen on the surrounding mountains. Near the valley bottom is Tent Poles Hut (emergency accommodation only), an historic, corrugated iron hut. Soon after, the track crosses Seymour Stream to Warden Hut (12 bunks). Nearby is historic Bluff Dump Hut, built in 1928. Warden Hut is a great base for weekend tramping and mountain biking as well as hunting (outside of the special lease area only).

### Warden Hut to Seymour Hut (10 bunks) via Seymour Stream, 9 km

Below Warden Hut, the track stays in the bed of Seymour Stream (being a bulldozer track, it is rideable on a mountain bike). Historic Black Spur Hut is two kilometres downstream from Warden Hut. Black Spur Hut was built in the 1920s out of slabs of poplar and is hidden behind a volcanic spur.

Further downstream you will reach a junction in the track. Beyond this junction, the land is under special lease—vehicles must keep to the track.

At the junction, follow the track downstream to the confluence of Seymour Stream and Clarence River, where you will find Seymour Hut (10 bunks). Seymour Hut is a great base for fishing and exploring the historic Quail Flat area. As the hut is close to the river it also provides a stop-off for river users.

### Warden Hut to Palmer Hut (12 bunks), 26 km

Turning left at the junction and crossing Seymour Stream, leads over foothills to Palmer Hut (12 bunks),

situated at the confluence of Palmer Stream and Clarence River. On route you will find the historic Old Willows Hut, a slab hut from the early 1920s. From here an unmarked route, for experienced trampers only, crosses the Seaward Kaikoura Range via Palmer Saddle (970 m) to the Kaikoura–Waiau Road.

### Seymour Hut (10 bunks) to Quail Flat Hut, 3 km

Follow the marked track over the flats to Quail Flat, the homestead area of Joseph Ward’s run. The cob homestead dates from the 1860s or 1870s. Visitors are welcome to look around the historic buildings at Quail Flat but accommodation is not available for public use.

### Quail Flat to Goose Flat, 19 km

The marked track travels through scrubland and limestone country to Goose Flat Hut (10 bunks) situated at Goose Flat. This is a good place for river users to stop over or for a spot of fishing.

### Goose Flat to Stoney Flat, 6 km

Follow the track to the road end at the confluence of Fidget Stream and Clarence River. The road end at Stoney Flat is a good base for hunting and exploring.

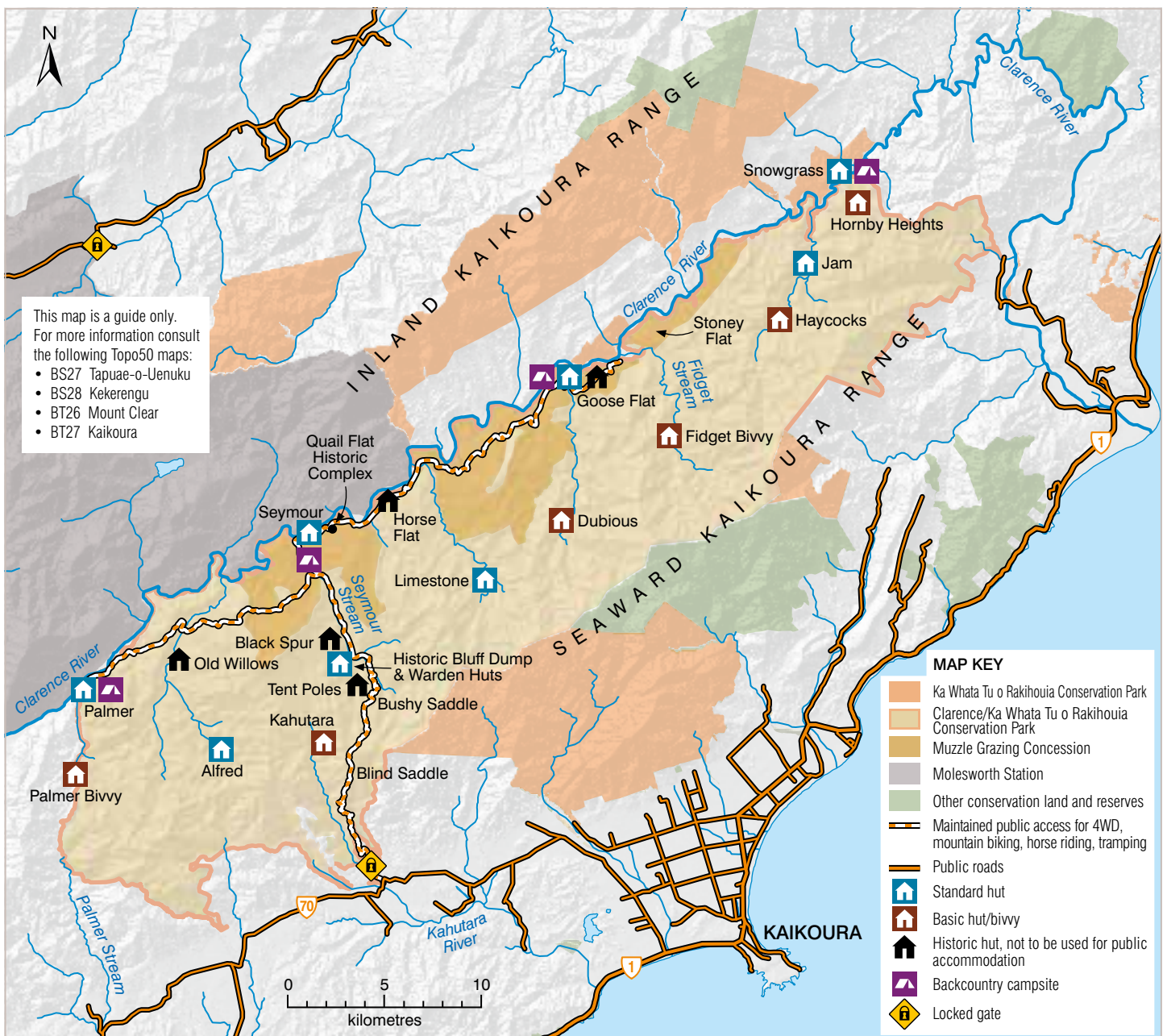
### Snowgrass Hut (12 bunks)

Snowgrass Hut, situated at the confluence of Snowgrass Stream and Clarence River, is only accessible by river.

## Clarence Code of Conduct

### Please take care with fires

Fire risks damaging protected natural areas in the Clarence, exposing soil to erosion and destroying vegetation. It can also threaten critical winter feed for stock. No open fires. Use portable stoves for cooking.



### Leave gates as you find them

Part of the Clarence is a working farm. Please leave gates as you find them, ensuring they are properly latched. Failing to shut a gate can mean days of extra work in re-mustering blocks and separating mixed mobs of stock.

If there is no gate and you need to cross a fence, climb carefully through or over the fence at a post or stile.

### Keep vehicles to the formed roads which are provided for public access

This is a vast area where weather and road conditions can change rapidly; it is important that you can be found quickly if isolated. Off-road driving can damage fragile plants, spread weeds, and risks starting a fire.

### Dogs are prohibited, without a permit

Dogs endanger native wildlife and can upset and transfer diseases to livestock. Hunters may apply for written consent to bring a dog into the Clarence.

### Protect native plants and animals

The Clarence supports plant and animal species which are unique and often rare. Damaging or removing native plants and animals destroys part of this special environment.

### Help reduce the spread of weeds

Care must be taken not to carry plant material into the Clarence, including checking for seeds and for aquatic weed plants on water craft and equipment.

### Remove rubbish

Rubbish is unattractive, harmful to stock and wildlife and can increase vermin and disease. Plan your visits to reduce rubbish, and carry out what you carry in.

### Bury toilet waste

Use the toilets provided. Otherwise, bury your toilet waste in a hole well away from waterways, tracks, campsites, and huts.

### Keep streams and lakes clean

When cleaning and washing, take the water and wash well away from the water source. Soaps and detergents are harmful to water-life, so tip used water into the soil where it will be filtered. Water may be contaminated so boil it for at least three minutes before drinking, filter or chemically treat it.

### Respect our cultural heritage

The historic buildings on the Clarence are a reminder of our past. Treat these places with consideration and respect. Historic huts are not to be used for public accommodation.

## Enjoy your visit

Take a last look before leaving an area; will the next visitor know that you have been there? Protect the environment for your own sake, for the sake of those who come after you, and for the environment itself.

*Toitu te whenua*—Leave the land undisturbed.

## Didymo

Didymo is present in the Clarence River.

### Check, Clean, Dry



Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*) is an exotic alga that invades waterways.

To prevent the spread of freshwater pests such as didymo, always Check, Clean, Dry all footwear, bicycles, vehicles, fishing equipment and other items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

For more information and specific cleaning guidelines go to [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo) or [www.doc.govt.nz/stopthespread](http://www.doc.govt.nz/stopthespread).

To report a suspected find of didymo, to Biosecurity New Zealand, contact the Ministry of Fisheries Exotic Disease and Pest emergency hotline 0800 809 966.

## Safety

### Remember: your safety is your responsibility.

Visitors should be prepared for all weathers; snow can fall at any time of the year and the sun can be relentlessly hot. It is important to carry water and be equipped with warm, waterproof clothing, adequate food and accurate maps. It is advised to leave your intentions with family or friends.



To report any safety hazards, call **0800 DOC HOTline (0800 362 468)**.

## Further information

To find out more contact:

### Department of Conservation South Marlborough Area Office

PO Box 51, Renwick 7243

Gee Street, Renwick 7204

Ph: (03) 572 9100

Email: [southmarlboroughao@doc.govt.nz](mailto:southmarlboroughao@doc.govt.nz)

Or visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)