

**Key**

- Spurs
- Top of escarpment
- ..... Rough vehicle track
- Streams, coastline and reefs
- W ..... Weevil colony
- H ..... Huts
- For key to vegetation types 1. - 10.  
see biological description.

**Map 11 Red Rocks to Karori Stream**

GRID REF  
N 164 : 292, 132 - 247, 150

LOCATION Part of the South Wellington coastline, including Sinclair Head, west of the Harbour entrance.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The area concerned forms a 6 km stretch of coastline and associated escarpment situated west of Owhiro Bay at the southern tip of the Wellington coast. This coastline is typical of the Wellington Region by having high steep slopes rising above a raised beach terrace to a height of 300 metres in some places, and covered by low coastal vegetation. This site is well known to the Wellington public, partly due to its close proximity to the city and its ease of access. The quarrying operation based near the eastern end affects the beach and slopes around to Red Rocks. A vehicle track from this point continues on the beach terrace for the length of the coast to Karori Stream but is used only by those with off-road vehicles. A few small dwellings are situated along this route. The shore is characterised by rough water and rocky headlands and can be very dangerous, especially during strong southerly winds. The area is notable for its flora, fauna and geology which account partly for the high number of visitors. Visitors are also attracted by its scenic and recreational values.

AIR PHOTO

5497 B/9

SIZE

140 hectares

OWNERS Red Rocks - Lands & Survey Dept.  
Sinclair Head, 10 hectares - Crown.  
Remainder in private ownership.

STATUS/CURRENT PROTECTION

Proposed scientific reserve at Sinclair Head. Scientific reserve at Red Rocks.  
*Lyperobius huttoni*, a rare weevil, is a protected animal. No other protection.

ACCESS A car park at the Owhiro Bay Quarry marks the beginning of a 2 km walk to Red Rocks. Sinclair Head lies 1 km beyond and from here it is about 5 km to Karori Stream.

JUSTIFICATION FOR RESERVE STATUS

1. Contains 13 species of regionally rare or endangered plant. Also contains one nationally rare species: pingao.
2. Contains wildlife of national importance, including rare weevil colonies and a seal haul-out area.
3. Contains geological features of national importance.
4. Is a popular recreation area with close proximity to large residential areas.

RATING 0-10

SCENIC 6...

SCIENTIFIC 9...

RECREATION 7(B)

BIOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

COMMUNITY TYPES

1. Shrubland - herbfield dominated by *Olearia solandri* and *Cassinia leptophylla* with many smaller herbs and shrubs growing on and among large rocks and beach gravel at the top of the beach terrace.
2. Sedgeland - rushland with *Carex* spp, *Leptocarpus similis*, assorted creepers and aquatic species, growing near the high water mark in semi-saline rock pools.
3. Flax shrubland with *Cassinia leptophylla*, *Coprosma propinqua* and *Olearia solandri* growing on steep but stable coastal slope. Forms main vegetation type on slopes in this area.
- 3a. Shrubland of *Cassinia leptophylla*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *Olearia solandri*, *Pteridium esculentum*, *Muehlenbeckia complexa* and occasional *Phormium cookianum*. This is found on less stable surface materials, especially near the base of slopes.
4. Recently burnt areas.
5. Herbfield on partly consolidated gravel fans at the base of slopes. Succumbs easily to the effects of trail bikes.
6. Karaka forest with heavily grazed understorey.
7. Manuka - kanuka scrub with *Olearia paniculata* and flax.
8. Mixed broadleaved scrub with *Coprosma* spp, *Hebe* spp, *Pseudopanax arboreus*, *Griselinia lucida*, mahoe, tree ferns and kowhai. Understorey with kawakawa and a moderate ground cover of grasses and ferns on a steep, stable surface.
9. Dune grasslands of *Spinifex* and haretail with patches of *Desmoschoenus spiralis* - pingao.
10. Dune grasslands of marram grass.

% WGTN	RES	RARE/UNCOMMON PLANTS	NCC STATUS	RES WGTN
1	yes	<i>Pellaea</i> spp unnamed ) <i>Crassula moschafa</i> ) <i>Discaria toumatou</i> ) - & other locat- <i>Eryngium vesiculosum</i> ) ion/s in <i>Fuchsia perscandens</i> ) Wellington <i>Blechnum banksii</i> ) <i>Cheilanthes distans</i> ) <i>C. sieberiana</i> ) <i>Hymenophyllum minimum</i> ) <i>Microseris scapigera</i> - only Wgton	-	no
1	yes	<i>Scandia geniculata</i> ) location <i>Coprosma acerosa</i> ) not found recently	-	no
73	no	<i>Desmoschoenus spiralis</i> - other locations - not on Bot. Soc. list.	vulnerable	no
10	yes	RARE/UNCOMMON ANIMALS <i>Lyperobius huttoni</i> - A rare weevil which lives only on <i>Aciphylla</i> spp. The only two North Island colonies known are found within this area and are marked on the map. Book.	-	no
2		<i>Arctocephalus forsteri</i> , New Zealand Fur Seal. One of the 5 Wellington colonies is situated at Sinclair Head and is occupied during winter.	-	yes
1	yes		-	no
1	yes		-	no
5	yes		-	yes
5	yes		-	yes
1	no		-	no
1	yes		-	no

MODIFICATIONS AND TRENDS At the eastern end above Red Rocks the slope has been partially modified by the quarrying operation which has cut tracks on the slope. The effect of quarrying on the coast from Red Rocks to Owhiro Bay has been devastating. The whole area from Red Rocks west to Karori Stream, has been cleared of all but a small remnant of forest which once clothed the slopes. The area were introduced to the slopes causing damage both to the vegetation and to the surface, although erosion is not as serious here as it is elsewhere on the Wellington coast. Considerable damage has been caused by off-road vehicles to vegetation on the beach terrace, leading to the decline of the community types which occupy this zone. Hardy adventives such as marramgrass fare well under these modified conditions while pingao and others are steadily declining. Many small fires scar the hillside and threaten the vegetation and the weevil colonies.

THREATS

1. The slope vegetation and the rare weevil colonies are threatened by further quarrying, stock grazing and fires which are started by visitors.
2. Trail bikes and other off-road vehicles threaten the beach terrace vegetation.
3. Erosion becomes a threat as a result of damage to the vegetation.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

1. Closure of access for vehicles unless there is a good reason for their use.
2. Placement of refuse bins to discourage littering.
3. Removal of dwellings on beach terrace.
4. Fencing at top of slope to exclude stock.

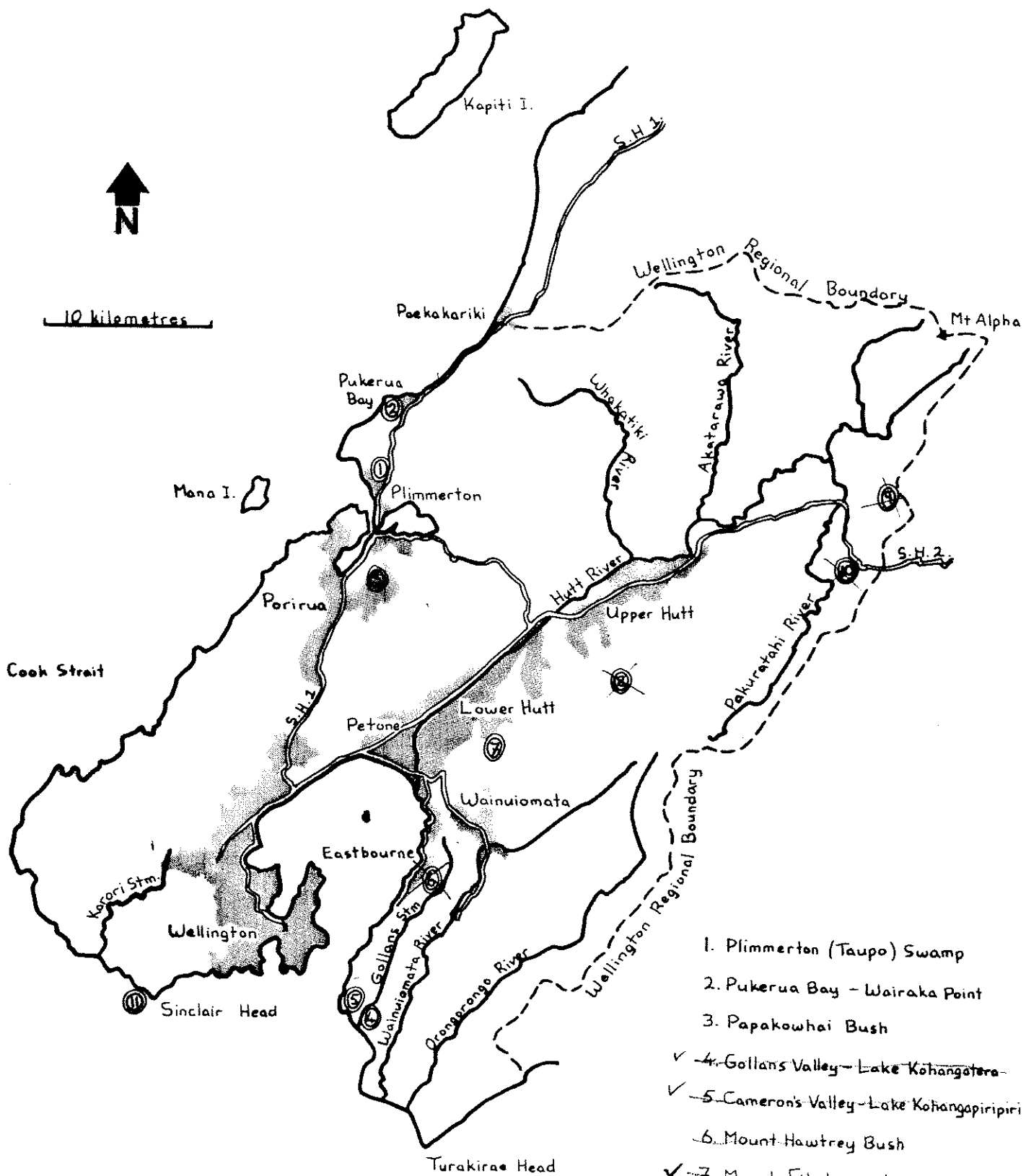
COMMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Red Rocks to Karori Stream is well endowed with both nationally and regionally important fauna and flora. It has a high number of regionally rare or endangered plant species, and one species, pingao, which is considered by some authorities to be nationally rare. The rare weevil colonies and the seal colony are extremely valuable also. Geologically the area has national importance with the pillow larvae of Red Rocks, which are protected under scientific reserve status. The seal colony is included in a proposed scientific reserve at Sinclair Head. Protection is urgently needed for the whole area to ensure that its value is not lost by the activities of quarrying and stock grazing. Quarrying should be prevented in the area and stock should be removed from these steep slopes which are unsuitable for grazing. Much has already been lost, including other weevil colonies and many plant species. The continuation of stock browsing over much of the area will lead to further deterioration of the vegetation and the surface on which it grows. It is therefore recommended that areas of beach, beach terrace and coastal slope outside existing or proposed scientific reserves be acquired for the purpose of creating a recreation reserve. An assessment of the needs of the rare weevil colonies will be needed before it can be determined whether special protection for these is necessary.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY DC

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## Locality Map

- Wellington Region showing  
location of surveyed sites.

1. Plimmerton (Taupo) Swamp
2. Pukerua Bay - Wairaka Point
3. Papakowhai Bush
- ✓ 4. Gollans Valley - Lake Kohangotere
- ✓ 5. Cameron's Valley - Lake Kohangapiripiri
6. Mount Hawtrey Bush
- ✓ 7. Mount Fitzherbert
8. Blue Mountains Bush
9. The Puffer
10. Rimutaka Bush A, B
11. Red Rocks to Karori Stream