



*experience and enjoy*

# Lake Okareka Walkway

The Lake Okareka Walkway was built by the Rotorua District Council with assistance from Environment Bay of Plenty's Environmental Enhancement Fund, Landcare Okareka, Fish & Game New Zealand, Department of Conservation and Wildland Consultants.

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Next you will experience crossing a wetland by means of a timber boardwalk. A hide has been constructed here to take advantage of the outstanding birdwatching opportunities.



The wetlands near the beginning of the walkway are home to a wide range of aquatic birds, such as black swan, canada goose, pied stilt, white-faced heron, mallard, paradise duck, grey teal, pukeko, coot, scaup, dabchick, shags and gulls.



Nearby Silver Beach is popular with water skiers and picnickers, taking advantage of the sandy beach. A wheelchair accessible composting toilet has been built here.

The first part of the walkway is through a re-vegetated area of native trees and shrubs which is partly on land donated by the adjoining owners, the Playne family.

Further on is a shade structure within a grove of kowhai which provides a pleasant area to relax.

The walkway continues at a higher level, through stands of kanuka and past seats sited to take advantage of the pleasant views, before descending to the lake outlet.

## General Information

Lake Okareka (approx 12 km southeast of Rotorua city) is one of the smaller Rotorua lakes and is situated in a picturesque setting of hills, native forest and farmland with an adjacent lakeside settlement. The lake, forest, reserves and walking tracks offer a range of recreational opportunities for both local residents and visitors.

The walkway starts from a Council lakeside reserve on Acacia Road, where a parking area is provided, and continues for approximately 2.5 kms around the shore to the outlet. The return walk of about an hour and a half features native vegetation, farmland, beach, lake and wetland scenery, expansive views and wildlife. The walkway and

composting toilets are pushchair and wheelchair accessible as far as Silver Beach, a distance of about 2 kms.

### **Bicycles and dogs are not permitted on the walkway.**

After discussion of the proposal by interested parties for a number of years, construction of the walkway commenced in 2001, and it was opened in February 2003. The initial construction of the walkway was done by Task Force Green labour and later involved the local Landcare Group, contractors, local residents, and school groups in upgrading the track, building structures, planting and maintenance. An important part of the project has been fencing off a strip of land along the lakeshore to exclude farm stock, and planting this up with native vegetation. This together with natural

regeneration will help protect and improve the water quality of the lake and enhance the habitat for wildlife. There are many opportunities while walking the walkway to study the natural history of the area including the native plants, wildlife and geology, with the help of a number of interpretive signs. The area provides an outdoor classroom with opportunities for all levels of education to learn, and be involved in the re-vegetation project.

Landcare Okareka, was established with the objective of carrying out maintenance and enhancement of the area surrounding Lake Okareka. The volunteers have put in hundreds of hours in planting and upkeep of the track and surrounding areas to ensure the walkway has become the success it is.

