

On the approach of dusk all available cameras were assembled down at the lagoon in the hope of catching the colours of that elusive sunset. Once again we were disappointed and the beauty that one comes to expect with a West Coast sunset was not seen.

A rest day

In spite of a bad forecast, the next day dawned warm and clear. After a quick discussion a rest day was declared, and this was a chance to soak up the sun and explore the Heaphy. Despite the sandflies it was a shirts-off day as fantails, bellbirds, goldfinches, and a solitary kingfisher were seen on our explorations of the limestone caves and general environs of the lagoon. Silhouetted nikau and crashing waves made an impressive scene for our last night on the Heaphy.

End of the track

Overcast skies and a cool sea breeze accompanied us on the 4½-hour walk to the end of the track. The nikau-lined paths, rocky beaches, and the deep blue sea made for some striking views along this final stretch. Black oystercatchers, reef herons, family groups of pied shags, and red-billed gulls were among the sea birds noted.

Locals had previously told us that kiwis were present along this section, and numerous clawprints in the sand soon confirmed this.

Not far from Katipo Creek shelter we stumbled across a colony of *Paryphanta* snails (numerous empty shells had been seen throughout the downs). These carnivorous and usually nocturnal snails (with shells up to 8 cm across) were quite a find, and we watched their fascinating, slow progress.

Eventually the Kohaihai Bluff was reached, and after a short climb and the crossing of the final swing bridge we came to the end of the Heaphy Track.

After 5 days and 76 km of track and seeing 35 bird species and a vast range of vegetation types we had finished one of the most interesting tracks in New Zealand.

Walking the track in winter meant we had avoided the number of people usual in summer; if the weather had not been all it was hoped for, we had seen enough of the country to entice us back at a later date.

Further reading

New Zealand Forest Service, 1979: "Heaphy Track, North-west Nelson Forest Park." Government Printer.

Temple, Phillip, 1976: "A Shell Guide to the Heaphy Track." Whitcoulls.

Temple, Phillip, 1977: "Ways to the Wilderness". Whitcoulls.
Photos by K. Drew ■



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