

## Exotic domination

In Northland, the exotic plants which infest certain lakes tend to take over completely. These include Lakes Omapere, Owhareiti and Rotorua (*egeria*); Waingata (*elodea*); and Ngakeketa (*hornwort*). As in the Rotorua and Waikato lakes, they form tall, dense, monospecific weedbeds which exclude natives from large areas. Mounds of broken off plants may also smother shallow water communities.

Unlike introduced species, native plants rarely interfere with our use of lakes. They generally form a low growing mixed canopy which provides stability to bottom sediments and rich habitats for invertebrate and fish species. Native *Potamogeton*, *Ruppia*, and *Myriophyllum* species may cause temporary weed problems when they grow to the surface and flower, but on the credit side their seedheads are an important part of the diet of many waterbird species.

## Protection

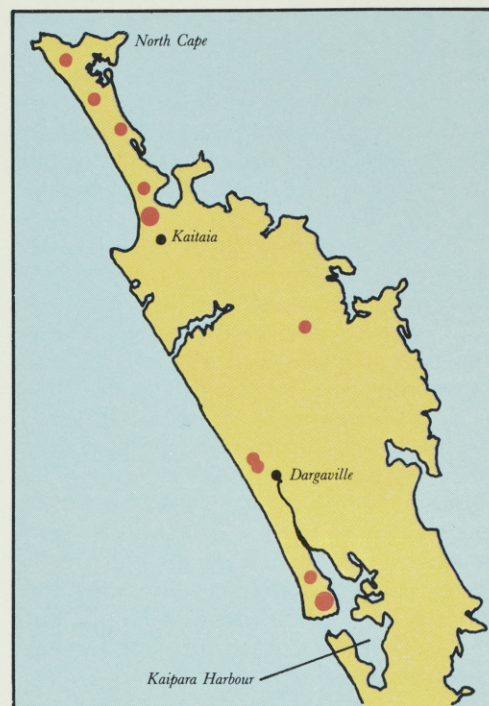
The myriad of small, often isolated lakes scattered amongst the fossilised dunelands of Northland remain as possibly the only substantial areas in New Zealand largely free of introduced water weeds. Up until now, the region's isolation has kept it relatively free of such weeds, but those days could be over with

the recent spread of introduced species into Northland.

In the past, management of any submerged vegetation has been haphazard and fragmented, and a "fire brigade" approach has been taken in order to tackle politically sensitive weed problems (eg in the Rotorua Lakes).

Thus there exists the ridiculous anomaly whereby lakes, while they are probably our most widely valued wetlands (some forming the central focus of national parks), rarely have their beds of native plants reserved. They are also often excluded from management plans and legal protection.

Pressure is now mounting to have reserves which protect significant native habitats and areas representative of New Zealand's original character. Unless suitable measures are soon taken to include "native lakes" into this concept the opportunity will be lost, as introduced water weeds are very difficult to eradicate once established. After areas are reserved, positive action will have to be taken by a specific authority. It must make ecological assessments, monitor for plant introductions, and develop contingency plans to deal with these, exclude stock from lake margins, promote public education and erect warning signs to increase local awareness of the dangers of exotic introductions. Motorboats and floatplanes may have to be excluded from such lakes.



**Figure 1: Map of main Northland dune lakes.**

Many of the Northland lakes, especially Lake Ngatu (near Kaitia), the Kai-iwi lakes (near Dargaville) and a number of the Kaipara lakes are worthy of protection and further study in order that we don't forget our unique and rapidly disappearing native submerged plant flora.



## M.V. WAKAPAI

Spend 5 days boating over 200km and through 239 rapids down the

## WANGANUI RIVER

*"Feel" and experience the great natural beauty of the North Island's largest remaining area of LOWLAND FOREST*

---

Suitable for all age groups

---

Comfort — Safety

---

Leaving Taumarunui each Monday arriving at Wanganui Fridays.

---

Bookings and free brochures at most travel agents or write to the operator:

W. G. Oliver  
R.D.6  
RAETIHI

---

**5 DAY PACKAGE — \$360.**

---