

Just south of the Wangapeka Saddle in the Karamea region lie these limestone/mudstone plateaux, part of the fascinating Matiri Range in the proposed 37,000-ha Mokihinui Forks ecological reserve. The Misery Plateau here leads on to the Haystack (5076 ft); to the right can be seen the beginning of another plateau, the Thousand Acres Plateau. Photo: Guy Salmon



The Mokihinui Forks, the South Branch to the left and the North to the right. From here the Mokihinui River makes its way to the coast midway between Westport and Karamea; the Tasman Sea can just be seen in the distance. This is superb tramping country. Photo: Guy Salmon

The Reserves and their features

Ngakawau extension ER (3,700 ha — native forest and coal measure shrublands). This area was first proposed for reservation in 1977 as part of a large Ngakawau basin reserve including both state forest and state coal land. In 1986 the Government's Protected Area Scientific Advisory Committee (PASAC) approved reservation of the state forest portion of the basin. Perceived tenure complications dissuaded PASAC from considering the other portion, the Blackburn State Coal Reserve (BSCR) controlled by the Ministry of Energy.

However their recently completed coal exploration survey has confirmed earlier work showing that no areas of interest to State Coal Mines are present within the proposed extension and the way is now clear for it to be reserved. The BSCR covers half the Ngakawau basin and includes a flight of forested terraces. Nearest the Ngakawau river these support tall beech-rimu forests while vegetation on higher terraces becomes progressively more stunted up to rare unmodified pakihi swamps on the Blackburn/Ngakawau watershed. The Blackburn catchment supports a regionally unique variety of mixed beech — cedar — podocarp forest with rimu particularly abundant. This reflects the unusual wet and impoverished coal measure soils that cap the coal plateau.

Great spotted kiwi are common throughout while kaka and parakeet with their large territories need lowland forest areas like this to survive.

The reserve also includes part of the historic mining track between Lyell in the

Buller Gorge and the Mokihinui coal mine near Seddonville.

Glasseye Creek E. R. (2,000 ha — proposed 1986 — native forest on lime and mudstone and habitat of a rare snail).

This extension to the Karamea Bluffs ecological area would protect much of the habitat of the large land snail *Powelliphanta lignaria lusca*.

Radcliffe extension E. R. (450 ha — proposed 1986 — native forest). This is a wildlife corridor linking two existing ecological reserves along the Radcliffe ridge overlooking the Buller sea coast. It includes uncommon beech-free podocarp hardwood forest.

Mokihinui Forks E. R. (37,000 ha — proposed 1981 — Lowland forest extending up to tussock on the flat topped Matiri plateau).

The north and south branches of the Mokihinui river join together in the broad valley of the Mokihinui Forks, before travelling seaward through the Mokihinui Gorge to emerge near Seddonville. Terrace forests of outstanding conservation value line the valley, with those bounding the South branch classed by Botany Division of DSIR as a "key site" for silver beech dominant forest with red beech and emergent rimu and kahikatea.

Forests in the North and South branches of the river are also the main habitat of two different carnivorous land snail species. Behind the Mokihinui Forks unmodified forest rises to the remarkable Matiri range with its



conical peaks and layered ridges rising from great uplifted limestone plateaux. Formed under ancient seas in the Tertiary era, these plateaux have since been uplifted, eroded and broken by earthquakes into their present shapes. The Matiri Range forms the most outstanding landscape in New Zealand where calcareous Tertiary limestones and mudstones occur extensively above the bush line. This unique landscape with its broad tussock lands, shrublands, forests and herbfields supports 437 species of plants, more than any other area of comparable altitude in New Zealand.

Mid Orikaka E. R. (6,820 ha-proposed 1979 — Exceptional beech forests and stunted coal measure vegetation).

The Forest Service first proposed this area for protection and their recommendation was endorsed by their reserves advi-