

Parengarenga Paradise



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THE PARENGARENGA'S waters flow crystal clear through narrow channels that open onto vast estuaries, brilliant white sand dunes, mangrove forests and shell banks. There are over twenty thousand birds there each summer and an amazing array of fish, sharks and rays in the water year round.

The Maori people, who own much of the land around the harbour, are clustered in just two areas. About 150 Ngati-kuri people live right on the harbour at Te Hapua and another 250 Te Aupouri people are gathered around Te Kao, just south of the harbour. They are known by the collective name of the Aupouri people.

The Parengarenga could be a "garden of Eden" but all is not well there. This magnificent harbour and its people are besieged by a variety of problems from within and without. But the most critical issue for the Aupouri people is their pri-

It's a place few New Zealanders have ever heard of and fewer have ever seen. The closest thing to a wilderness harbour left in the country. It's called the Parengarenga and it's a jewel in New Zealand's crown. For MARK FELDMAN this Northland harbour is an oasis of austere beauty, a wild and empty place in an overcrowded world.

mary food supply, the fishery. As jobs have disappeared from the privatised forests, and public benefits have declined, the Aupouri have had to look to the harbour for their food only to discover that the food is no longer there. Not long ago the Parengarenga was a cornucopia of seafood. There were year-

round supplies of trevally, kahawai, mullet, kingfish and snapper. In winter the numbers of kingfish might decline but the schools of trevally more than made up for it. In the summer enormous numbers of school sharks flooded the harbour and provided a plentiful supply of oil, hides and meat to be dried and traded with other tribes. There was no way anyone who lived on the harbour could go hungry. Even an unskilled fisherman could always catch a meal.

But all that has changed. The fishery has been damaged and the harbour depleted of its riches. Here's what's happened to some of the Aupouri people's fish.

The kahawai, a non-quota species, were plentiful in the harbour when the Quota Management System (QMS) was introduced in 1986. With the temporary reduction of quota for other species, the big companies, led by Sanfords, targeted schooling kahawai during the winter months. In just four years they killed