

# A Wilderness of Urban Streams



Lying between two harbours, Auckland is drained by 10,000 kilometres of streams.  
Text SARAH GIBBS;  
photographs,  
GORDON ELL.

Under the shade of a coastal broadleaf forest, a small stream drops over a waterfall and winds its way through a valley. The waters run slowly past the damp, fern-clad banks the stream has carved out of striated Waitemata sandstone. It is quiet except for the rustle of wind in the trees and the occasional tui call. Tonight glow-worms will adorn the banks like a mini galaxy hidden in the parataniwha. But today the sunlight trickling through the canopy reflects off the water and plays hopscotch on the vegetation along the banks.

The tranquillity belies the fact that the road running down the adjacent ridge is one of the busiest residential roads in the country. You are in Le Roy's Bush, a small reserve on the urban North Shore, and just minutes away is the bustling hub of New Zealand's largest city.

Ten thousand kilometres of streams run through the Auckland region. Many are short in length and less than two metres wide, which is hardly surprising given that Auckland straddles an isthmus. At least 11 of

*Auckland is rich in natural corridors, running along its small streams. In Le Roy's Bush, in suburban Birkenhead, a coastal broadleaf forest including kauri and hard beech lines the course of a short stream. Forest and Bird led the campaign to reserve the forest in the 1950s and volunteers from the Society still help maintain it as part of Forest and Bird's 'Auckland Naturally' campaign.*

GORDON ELL, BUSH FILMS