

Poutō Peninsula

Lake Waingata (Poutō), NRC Lake No. 371.



Lake Waingata: Livestock access to the lake has destroyed emergent vegetation, note extensive pugging (Mary de Winton 2025).

Summary	Lake Waingata
Surveyed:	2005, 2010, 2018 and 2025 (reconnaissance).
Overall ranking:	Low: Mostly de-vegetated by grass carp, but fish numbers appear to have declined below the threshold where grazing pressure can suppress aquatic plant growth.
Threats:	Low risk of introduction and establishment of invasive weeds. Stock access is a threat to riparian vegetation, water quality and overall lake health.
Management recommendations:	No regular ecological monitoring is advocated until riparian retirement is achieved.

Description

A small (9 ha) dune lake (1703256E, 5976471N) of 9.5 m depth, set in a pastoral catchment. Access mostly on a well-formed track through 2 km private farmland, and requiring 4-WD if wet. Small boats can be launched with a 4-WD vehicle from northern lake edge.

Wetland vegetation

In 2018, emergent species were noted for the first time since grass carp were stocked, with *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*, *Eleocharis acuta*, oioi (*Apodasmia similis*) and *Juncus pallidus*. noted. In 2025, no emergent vegetation was noted, with cattle pugging and grazed emergent beds evident.



Lake Waingata: Grazed emergent vegetation at the eastern end of the lake (Lisa Forester, 2025).

The pest plant alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) was well established around the lake in 2001 and has continued to proliferate.

Submerged vegetation

In 2025, a reconnaissance dive was carried out at one site. Water clarity was poor but submerged vegetation extended from the shore to 1.9 m. A dense amphibious turf with *Lilaeopsis novae-zelandiae*, *Elatine gratioloides* and *Glossostigma elatinoides* was recorded to 1.1 m depth, also with the taller submerged species *Chara australis*, *C. acanthopitys*, *Nitella mucosa*, *Potamogeton ochreatus* and *P. cheesemanii*. The two pondweeds and *C. australis* were found in deeper water at covers $\leq 5\%$.

The presence of submerged and emergent vegetation (prior to its removal by cattle) indicate that natural attrition of grass carp has reduced the population sufficiently to permit the redevelopment of aquatic vegetation.

LakeSPI

A LakeSPI score was not generated as a diving at a single site in insufficient for this method.

Water birds

The lake provides minimal bird habitat. Despite this, black swan (*Cygnus atratus*), mallard (*Anas p. platyrhynchos*), paradise shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*) New Zealand dabchick (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*), black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and little shag (*P. melanoleucos*) were recorded in 2018. No bird survey was undertaken in 2025.

Fish

No fish were seen in 2025. The lake was stocked with rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) in the 1950's until 1980 but are presumed to have since died out. Īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*) were present in the lake and were recorded as abundant in 1997. Common bully (*Gobiomorphus cotidianus*) were the only other fish present in Waingata until 67 grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) were introduced in 1995 to eradicate the pest plant elodea (*Elodea canadensis*) (Rowe et al. 1999). A dead grass carp was noted on the lake margin in 2025.



Lake Waingata: Grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) corpse on the margin of the lake. Note alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) plants adjacent to the fish (Mary de Winton 2025).

Aquatic invertebrates

No invertebrates were recorded in 2025. The non-native snail *Physa acuta* and native leech *Richardsonianus mauianus* were recorded on previous occasions.

Endangered species

The At-Risk Declining lake-bound population of īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*) is likely to persist in Lake Waingata.

The Critically Endangered *Trithuria inconspicua* was last seen in the lake in 1995 (Rowe et al. 1999).

Lake Ecological Value

In 2025, an ecological value rating of **Moderate to Low** was assigned to Lake Waingata, with a score of 4. This is a slight improvement from the **Low** score of 3 in 2018, due to an improved native freshwater-dependant plant species richness.

Threats

The isolation of the lake and absence of eel fishing provide a low risk of pest introduction and establishment of invasive weeds has been unlikely due to continued grass carp browsing pressure. However, grass carp browsing pressure has apparently reduced sufficiently for submerged species to grow in Lake Waingata, although poor water quality constrains the depth colonised by these plants.

Management recommendations

Fencing and keeping livestock out of this water body should be advocated to the landowner.

No regular ecological monitoring is advocated until riparian retirement is achieved.

References

- Rowe, D.K., Champion, P.D., de Winton, M.D. (1999) Lake management trials for dwarf inanga (*Galaxias gracilis*) and a rare plant (*Hydatella inconspicua*) in Northland dune lakes. NIWA Client Report DOC90202. 77.