

## Central and East Northland

Ruakākā Dune Lake (also known as Roto Pārera) (East Northland), NRC Lake No. 247A



**Ruakākā Dune Lake:** Image taken from the western shore (Jacki Byrd, 2025).

Summary	Ruakākā Dune Lake
<b>Surveyed:</b>	2007 and 2025
<b>Overall ranking:</b>	<b>Low:</b> Degraded waterbody with no significant submerged vegetation, some invasive species, but good wading bird habitat.
<b>Threats:</b>	The new subdivision is likely to increase disturbance to water birds.
<b>Management recommendations:</b>	No regular monitoring.

## Cultural significance

Ruakākā Dune Lake, also known as Roto Pārera, is a site of significance to Patuharakeke. It is a valued mahinga kai; as a source of weaving materials, rongoa (medicinal plants) and kai (food). Roto Pārera needs to be safeguarded to protect cultural values, as well as biodiversity and habitat values. The lake is the only dune lake in Waipu Ecological District, and the whole Eastern Northland Ecological Region. For more information see:

<https://www.nrc.govt.nz/media/4pokffyc/patuharakekeruakakadunelake.pdf>

## Description

A coastal dune lake (1731500E 6027385N) adjacent to the Ruakākā Racecourse. The lake was shallow at the time of the 2025 survey, at 0.3 m deep. It may be considerably deeper at times as it receives stormwater from the adjacent subdivision. Access through marginal vegetation was difficult

at the time of survey, but the northern end of the lake has been developed for residential properties.

### Wetland vegetation

The lake was completely bordered by emergent vegetation, with raupō (*Typha orientalis*), *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*, *Eleocharis acuta*, kuta (*Eleocharis sphacelata*) and *Machaerina articulata* recorded. The introduced invasive alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) was common. An emerged sodd of *Myriophyllum propinquum* and the non-native water forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa*) was noted in 2025, with emerged *Potamogeton cheesemanii* seen within taller emergent vegetation in 2007.

### Submerged vegetation

In 2025, no established submerged vegetation was found using rake tosses. The invasive *Utricularia gibba* was found amongst tall emergents and a few viable fragments of the native charophyte *Nitella* sp. aff. *cristata* were found close to an old maimai.

### Water birds

In 2025, 62 paradise shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*), 27 mallard or hybrid mallard duck (*Anas p. platyrhynchos*), three Australasian little grebe (*Tachybaptus n. novaehollandiae*), one Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*), 11 royal spoonbill (*Platalea regia*), >30 bar-tailed godwits (*Limosa lapponica baueri*), black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo novaehollandiae*) and pied shag (*Phalacrocorax v. varius*) were seen.

Additional prior records from Ruakākā Dune Lake include little black shag and little shag (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* and *P. melanoleucos brevirostris*), grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*), scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*), Australasian shoveler (*Anas rhynchotis*), spotless crake (*Porzana t. tabuensis*) and banded rail (*Gallirallus philippensis assimilis*) (Ray Pierce pers. comm.).

### Fish

In 2025, alien invasive gambusia (*Gambusia affinis*) were recorded by the NIWA team.

### Aquatic invertebrates

None seen.

### Endangered species

A couple of tussocks of the Nationally Vulnerable grass *Paspalum orbiculare* were seen in vegetation surrounding the western margin of the lake.

The Nationally Critical Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) was seen, along with the following At Risk species: Declining bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica baueri*); Relict black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo novaehollandiae*), Recovering pied shag (*Phalacrocorax v. varius*) and Naturally Uncommon royal spoonbill (*Platalea regia*).

### Lake Ecological Value

In 2025, an Ecological Value rating of **Low** was calculated for Ruakākā Dune Lake, with a score of 3. It is a degraded non-vegetated shallow water system, with invasive alligator weed and gambusia.

However, the dense emergent vegetation and shallow water is attractive to a variety of wading birds, including migratory godwits.

### Threats

Degraded water body, the adjacent subdivision is likely to increase disturbance to water birds.

### Management recommendations

No regular monitoring.

### Lake ecological report card scope

The scope of the Northland Regional Council lake report cards is to provide five yearly lake ecological assessment and allow a comparison of the lakes ecological condition through time and to compare lakes across the region. The reports do not present the full extent of the cultural, biodiversity, and restoration values of the lakes.