

Top Christchurch Walk: Kennedys Bush

This park is a hidden gem in regenerating bush.

Head west 4.5km from the Dyers Pass/Summit Rodd intersection to the car park on Summit Rd opposite the Sign of the Bellbird and Kennedys Bush, stated to be New Zealand's first scenic reserve, formed in 1906.

The Kennedys Bush track leads past the old stone shelter into the 130-hectare bush. The shelter is one of Harry Ell's rest houses and functioned as tearooms from 1916 until the 1940s. Harry Ell promoted the creation of access along the length of the Port Hills and towards Akaroa, with rest houses along the way for refreshments. Four remain in various states of repair.

There are choices of several loop tracks through one of the largest bush reserves on these hills. An information panel near the start of the walk can help you decide which to take: Totara Trail, 20 minutes; Fantail Trail, 30 minutes; Quarry Trail, 30 minutes; or Orongamai Trail, 1 hour.

All tracks go through some delightful native bush, which once was widespread on the Port Hills. The Orongamai Trail leads downhill to some large remnant totara trees, while the Quarry Trail passes through a disused quarry.

This is a wonderful place to see some of Christchurch's native wildlife. The city council rangers and community groups have been doing pest control in the reserve since the 1990s and 14 species of birds are recorded as living there. As well as an abundance of bellbird and kereru (wood pigeon), there are many bush birds, such as grey warblers and fantails. On a fine day, the song of bellbirds is a delight.

Time: 20 minutes - 1 hour

Distance: 1 - 2km

Starting Point: Summit Road carpark, opposite Sign of the Bellbird.

Difficulty: Medium

Highlights: Native bush, birds, old stone building and views.



Native bush and birds are in abundance on the Kennedys Bush track.

Photo: Rebecca Bijl