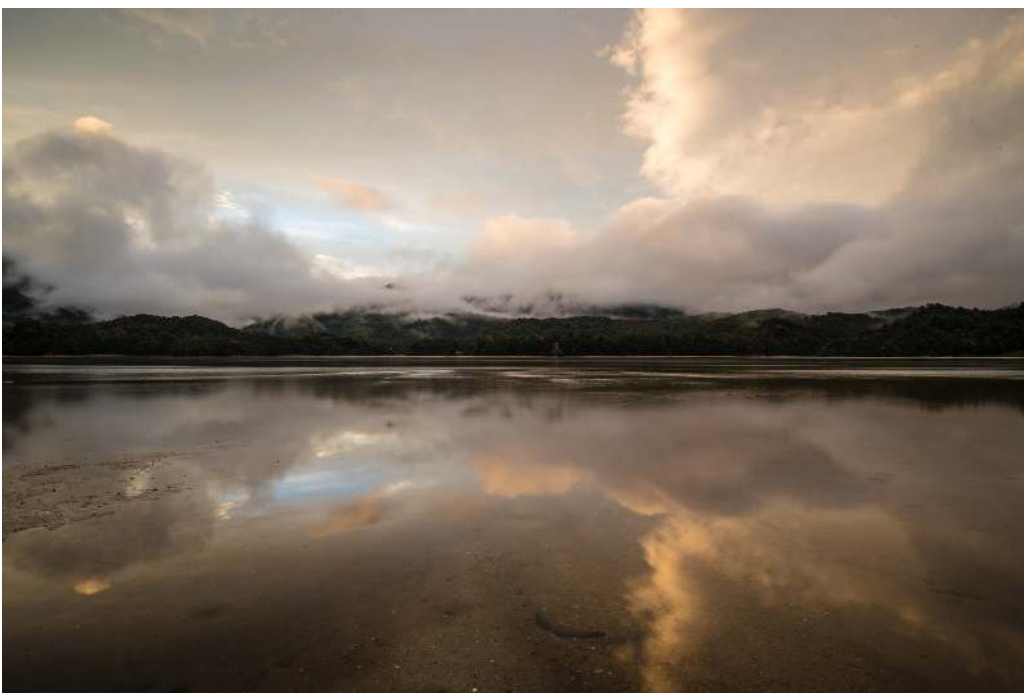


# Discover Awaroa in the dark

**Be sure to look for fresh water fish in streams near Awaroa hut but it is the salt water inhabitants that will put on the best night-time display.**

Take your strong torch, sensible shoes and information about the tides out to the Awaroa Estuary. It's always fun to see crabs and their awkward night-time dance but if you can make it to Sawpit Point (head back towards the coast from the hut) and the tide is in, you will see the more graceful display of many sting ray as they come in at night to search for food. Watch carefully and you may spot flounder as well.

Awaroa is the biggest estuary in the park, and with it comes the biggest display of animal interaction in the mudflats. To appreciate the abundance of estuary life you must consider what is living in the mud. Detritus (dead organic matter) accumulates, attracting animals in search of food. When the tide retreats, thousands of burrows, tracks and deposits belonging to various types of animals become apparent. With these abundant mudflats come the fish and birds that rely on them. In New Zealand for example, at least 30 types of fish use estuaries at significant times in their life (TeAra, The Encyclopedia of New Zealand).



*Sunset at Awaroa - photo Ruth Bollongino fern photos.com*





*Photo courtesy Wilson's Abel Tasman*

## Stingray

New Zealand has 26 species of rays and skates which are wide, flattened fish belonging to the same family as sharks. Rays and skates differ from sharks in that they have blunt rather than sharp teeth, and their gill slits are on the belly rather than along the sides. Although skates and rays have similar kite-shaped bodies, skates are usually not as large or as venomous. Rays are not aggressive animals, but if attacked or accidentally stood on they can inflict painful and serious wounds.



*Photo Mark Whatmough (Giant long tailed Stingray) via Wikimedia Commons*

## Invertebrates

If the tides don't cooperate, Awaroa hut is also a good spot for a night time invertebrate hunt. Keep to the trails and flash your torch in the bushes.

Invertebrates have no backbone or spinal column – beetles, moths, stick insects, weevil, spiders and weta all make for surprisingly interesting night viewing. New Zealand has distinctive and diverse land invertebrates, with 22,000 species described and at least that number again awaiting discovery. Approximately 80% of these species are endemic, which means they are found nowhere else in the world.

You may be surprised by the hundreds of red eyes staring back at you – look closely. And yes if you haven't seen enough glow worms, you will find a few behind the camp.