

## MacLennan Hut, Catlins Conservation Park

The Catlins is known for its stunning beaches and rugged coastline, but few venture into its lush interior clad in ancient rainforest.

MacLennan Hut (curiously spelt McLennan on topo maps) sits in the middle of a lush pocket of bush and is a hidden jewel of the Catlins Conservation Park. Access is via the Thisbe Valley Track which comes off Cairn Road.

There are no signs at the trailhead, making the start of the track difficult to find. However, it begins on a farm track that leads towards the forest where at the forest's edge a trio of biodiversity bivouacs sit mysteriously, unmarked on the DOC website but open for public use. The fenceline beside these bivs marks the boundary into the conservation park.

From there, the track enters the rainforest and meanders beneath the canopy as tea-coloured streams bubble their way towards the sea. Aside from the main track that follows Thisbe Stream, a multitude of others criss-cross the valley. They're the result of extensive biodiversity work that has been done in the area.

Initially, the track goes upstream at a gentle pace, only briefly interrupted by a steep uphill grunt out of Thisbe Stream.

On the other side of the incline, the track resumes its gentle climb towards the Calliope Saddle. Calliope is a fitting name; meaning 'beautiful voice' in ancient Greek. The bush around the saddle echoes with the song of native birds, including kakariki and mohua.

From the saddle, the track descends towards the confluence of Kaka Stream and MacLennan River. The terrain is just steep enough to keep you on your toes, following a rounded spur down to the water.

At the confluence, tannin soaked water cascades through primeval forest and the track weaves over and around fallen trees that are slowly being retaken by the forest.

MacLennan Hut sits not far from the confluence in a large clearing on the far side of the river. The ford in normal flows is not difficult.

The hut enjoys good sun in spring and summer, but, according to the hut book, it can get very frosty in the colder months.

The track to MacLennan Hut is seldom trodden if the hut book is to be believed, but a trip here pays dividends from the vibrant and living forest it passes through.

### Wild File

**Access** Cairn Road

**Grade** Moderate

**Time** 2-3hr

**Distance** 7.63km

**Total ascent** 315m

**Accommodation** MacLennan Hut (free, two bunks)

**Topo50 map** CG13, CG14

**Further information** Permission is required to cross the private land at the start of the track. DOC's Murihiku/Invercargill Office (P: 03 211 2400) can provide the landowner's contact details

### Elevation profile



