



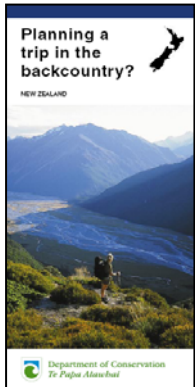
# Off-road driving in conservation areas



## SOUTH ISLAND



Photo: Kristen Mckinley



Pick up a copy of *Planning a trip in the backcountry?* to help you plan your trip

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### Introduction

New Zealand has some great places for responsible off-road driving. Whether you use your vehicle to go camping, hunting, fishing, or to simply enjoy driving through spectacular landscapes, there are many different sites in Department of Conservation (DOC) managed areas to choose from.

Driving **responsibly** is easy. It's about caring for the environment and for other recreationists. Your minimal impact driving skills will also make a good impression and ensure that off-wheel driving locations *remain* available for all of us. This brochure provides some helpful information for minimal impact driving, the off-road care code and a list of places to go.

### Safety first

#### Be prepared for the unexpected

- Remember safety is your responsibility.
- Make sure you *always* have adequate warm and waterproof clothing and equipment for all weather conditions.
- Carry maps and a compass or GPS and know how to use them.
- Let someone know before you go. Remember to leave your trip intentions with a reliable person.

#### Weather

Changes in weather can have major effects on a track; rain can turn a track into a bog, a slope into a slide and create impassable streams very quickly. Always get a weather report before you set out from Met Service, call 0900 999 + your Area Code or go to [www.metservice.co.nz](http://www.metservice.co.nz)

#### Conditions and services change

Tracks may be closed by natural hazards or maintenance work. Always check with the nearest DOC visitor centre for the latest track updates and notices before you set out. Visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) to obtain a list of all DOC visitor centres and their opening hours.



### Off-road care code

- Abide by the laws and regulations covering all vehicles and drivers
- Stay on the main four-wheel drive (4WD) tracks. Avoid widening tracks
- Do not drive on sensitive areas such as alpine landscapes, swamps, waterways, sand dunes and river beds which are easily damaged
- Keep the environment clean. Take all your rubbish with you
- Respect all wildlife, look but don't disturb. Keep your distance
- Plan your trip. Ask the local DOC visitors centre about track conditions, fire restrictions, huts and campsites. Find out if a permit is required for access. If your trip crosses private land obtain permission. Leave gates as you find them
- Take plenty of water, food, fuel, break-down tools, radio equipment and spares on trips. In remote areas travel with another vehicle
- Always thoroughly clean your vehicle before trips to minimize spreading damaging weeds and diseases
- Respect the right of others for quiet enjoyment. Avoiding noisy driving. Give way to walkers, mountain bikers (MTB) and others using tracks
- Be prepared for the unexpected, drive at a speed which will allow you to stop if a hazard arises
- If winching is necessary, use another vehicle. If you must use a tree use webbing or padding to prevent damage to the tree
- Cross waterways at designated crossings
- Avoid tracks that are wet, they are easily damaged and expensive to repair
- Carry a tent as huts can be full
- Join a responsible 4WD club and learn more about how you can drive with minimal impact



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## Knowledge

### The power to protect and prolong

Know about sensitive areas such as bird nesting sites, water ways, alpine landscapes, swamps and dune systems and avoid disturbing them. The nearest DOC visitor centre will be happy to provide more information for you. Restricted access signs are there for the protection or recovery of fragile ecosystems and their inhabitants. Please follow these signs, or you may unwittingly crush a nest of eggs, or set back the recovery of a threatened plant with a single set of tracks.

## Stay on the track

Stay on the major designated four wheel drive tracks to prevent track widening, erosion and habitat destruction. Detours may not seem to have an immediate impact, but they encourage others to follow your path which rapidly becomes a new route at the expense of the surrounding environment.



Every detour leaves its mark. Erosion damage caused by 4WD on the Old Women Range, Otago. Photo: Matthew Sole



Driving in wet conditions quickly cuts up the track causing severe damage. Avoid driving in these conditions. Photo: Marcus Simons

## Cunning creek crossings



Caution and skill are required when crossing a waterway. Getting stuck is not just a major hassle for you; it also damages the stream bed, effects water quality and may kill a number of the stream inhabitants. If you can't avoid crossing the creek please choose an existing ford or find somewhere that has an easy access and exit point. Cross at a right angle to the water and to limit the damage to the stream bank.

### Wash it off – Check, Clean, Dry

When you drive between waterways you could be transferring aquatic pests and diseases from one waterway to another. To limit their spread, ensure that you check, clean, dry when driving between waterways.



Use existing fords or cross at a right angle to the water to limit damage to the stream bed and bank. Photo: DOC

**Check:** Remove all obvious clumps of debris from your vehicle

for at least one minute in either, hot (60°C) water, a two percent solution of household bleach or a five percent solution of salt, nappy cleaner, antiseptic hand cleaner or dishwashing detergent. A two percent solution is 200 ml, a five percent solution is 500 ml (two large cups), with water added to make 10 litres.

**Clean;** Clean all parts of your vehicle that has been in the water

**Dry:** If cleaning is not practical, allow your vehicle to dry for 48 hours before crossing another waterway.

For further details on aquatic pests and how to check, clean, dry [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo)



'Rock snot' or Didymo forms massive carpets that reduce water clarity. It affects every animal that uses the river, including you!



## Driving on beaches



The NZ Dotterel is critically endangered. There are only 1500 left in the world.  
Photo: Dave Wills



Black-fronted turn crushed by a 4WD.  
Photo: Alicia Warren

### Invisible victims

You may not know it but beaches and sand dunes are vulnerable ecosystems home to rare plants and shore birds like the New Zealand Dotterel and Variable Oyster Catcher. These birds nest in the soft sand on the beach and lower dune system and depend on easy access to the waterline for survival. Unfortunately, their open nests are well camouflaged and many helpless chicks die each year, unwittingly crushed by unsuspecting people and vehicles.

Dive-bombing birds are not demonstrating their aerodynamics; they're warning you that you are close to their nest. The local DOC visitor centre will be happy to advise you about known nesting sites on the beach so you can avoid these areas.

Try and avoid driving over seaweed and other beach debris as they contain thousands of minute invertebrates which are a major food source for shore birds.

### Dunes – fragile foundations

Dunes are a protective barrier between the sea and the land. The building blocks of a dune system are its grasses which keep the sand from drying out and being carried away by the wind. It takes just a few vehicle passes to damage these grasses and open the sand dunes up to erosion, dramatically changing the landscape not only of the beach, but also the surrounding countryside.

If driving on the beach cannot be avoided, always use established access routes and then stick to the hard sand below the high tide mark you can easily reduce your impact on the dunes.



Children participating in an Otago dune restoration.  
Photo: Nicola Vallance, DOC

## Staying in the bush

For detailed information about DOC huts and campsites contact your local DOC visitors centre or visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) to download a copy of the backcountry huts, or conservation campsites brochure.

### Camp fires not forest fires!

Check with the local DOC office regarding fire restrictions before you set out. A permit may be required. Choose a safe place away from vegetation, keep the fire small and only collect dead wood. Remember to *always* fully extinguish the fire before you leave.



DOC campsite, Molesworth Station. Photo: Dianna Parr, DOC

### Waste

Use toilets provided or walk at least 100 paces away from water and campsites. Dig a hole and bury your waste and toilet paper. This will prevent the spread of infectious disease such as Giardia.

Washing with detergents, toothpaste and soap can harm aquatic life, so use a container well away from the waters edge. Remember to take all your rubbish with you.

### Hunters

Ensure that you obtain a hunting permit and pesticide summary specific to the region you plan to hunt in. Permits are issued at the DOC visitors centre nearest to the area you plan to hunt in.

### Dogs

Dogs are not permitted in national parks, but they are allowed in some forest parks provided they are under control at all times. Many of our native birds are killed each year by dogs, so please be mindful of your pets activities. Refer to [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) for a list of places in conservation areas where you may take your dog.



## Recreation is for everyone!

Remember that there are other users enjoying the outdoors. Trampers, mountain bikers (MTB), hunters and fisherman often use off-road tracks, so take care and drive at a speed that allows you to stop if you encounter others on the track. Make a good impression and be an ambassador for your sport.

## Where can I drive?

A list of the of North and South Island off-road driving opportunities in conservation areas can be found on the following pages. Go to any DOC visitors centre for more information about off-road driving and other recreation opportunities. Most visitor centres are open Monday to Friday 9:00am – 4:30pm. Go to [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) to obtain a list of all DOC visitor centres.

## Further information

### Other Places

There are many other great places to go off-road driving outside of conservation areas. Contact your local four wheel drive association or club for advice and details on where you can go and what skills are necessary.

### Useful Publications

*4WD North Island, Volume One and Two* by Andy Cockroft

*4WD South Island, Volume One and Two* by Ken Sibly and Mark Wilson

### Useful Websites

Tread Lightly [www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org)

Land transport and safety authority [www.ltsa.govt.nz](http://www.ltsa.govt.nz)

Four wheel driving association Inc. [www.nzfda.org.nz](http://www.nzfda.org.nz)

New Zealand cross country vehicle club [www.ccv.org.nz](http://www.ccv.org.nz)



DOC uses 4WD vehicles for maintenance and conservation purposes. Photo: DOC



## Where can I drive?

As the majority of tracks list below are described in detail in Ken Sibly and Mark Wilson books *4WD South Island, 107 Off Road Adventures Volume One* and *4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Volume Two*, we have not included a great deal of detail about each track.

### Track conditions

Please be aware that many of the four-wheel drive (4WD) tracks listed below can be rugged with overgrowth which may reach out and scratch paintwork.

A 4WD **maintained** track is managed by the department to ensure that it is passable in a 4WD. It does not mean that the track will be free from overgrown vegetation or have an even surfact.

**Not maintained** tracks are open to the public, but are not actively managed by the department. This means that the track may develop impassable obstacles or have substantial overgrowth which the department may not be aware of.

LOCATION	KM	TRACK CONDITION	ACCESS
<b>NELSON / MARLBOROUGH</b>			
<b>GOLDEN BAY</b>			
Barons Flat Road End to Upper Takaka Track	5	Maintained for 4WD	
Note: This track passes through private land. Before you leave check access details with the Golden Bay area office Ph +64 3 525 8026, email <a href="mailto:goldenbayao@doc.govt.nz">goldenbayao@doc.govt.nz</a>			
Goldfields Track	11.4	4WD track. Technical 4WD skills required	Access via Devil Boots Rd, Aorere Valley. Open all year round
<b>SOUTH MARLBOROUGH AREA</b>			
Branch River Road	14	Well maintained for 4WD	Branch River Valley, Wairau Valley off SH 63 south of Blenheim.
Note: Access available to Griegs Hut. The road is subject to ford crossing of Leatham River which is impassable after rain. Contact the South Marlborough Area Office +64 3 572 9100, email <a href="mailto:southmarlboroughao@doc.govt.nz">southmarlboroughao@doc.govt.nz</a> for information. Refer to <i>4WD South Island, 101 Off Road Adventures, Vol 1, p 114</i>			
Goulter 4WD Road	6.7	Maintained for 4WD	Goulter River, north Bank Wairau
Note: Refer to <i>4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol 2, p 114</i>			
Boulder 4WD Road	5	Maintained for 4WD	Off Leatham 4WD road, year round access to Boulder Forks Hut
Leatham 4WD road	24	Maintained for 4WD	Leatham River Valley, Wairau Valley
Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Road from Leatham Homestead to Boulder Stream 3km</li> <li>Road from Leatham / Boulder confluence to Caves Hut 5km</li> <li>Caves Hut to Barbers Hut 7km</li> <li>Barbers Hut to Bottom Gordons Hut 9km</li> </ul> Refer to <i>4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol 2, p 119</i>			
Pine Valley Roads 1 and 2	3.2	Rd 1 2WD Rd 2 4WD due to ford crossing	Pine Valley Rd, Northbank, Wairau River
Note: These tracks provide access to Pine Valley Hut and Mill Flat picnic area			
Ragland Road	14.8	Maintained to 4WD standard	Leatham Conservation Area, The Branch, Homestead, SH 63
Note: Crosses private land, permission is required. Contact DOC South Marlborough Area Office Ph +64 3 527 9100 email <a href="mailto:southmarlboroughao@doc.govt.nz">southmarlboroughao@doc.govt.nz</a> . Refer to <i>4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol 2 p 119</i>			
Wairau Bar Picnic Area Road 1 and Road 2	4	Rd 1 2WD Rd 2 4WD	Wairau Lagoon Conservation Area, Wairau Bar, Blenheim
Note: Open all year round. Excellent picnic spots. Avoid damaging sensitive coastal habitat by staying on the track			
<b>ST ARNAUD AREA</b>			
Beeby's know Road	14.2	Maintained for 4WD	Beebys 4WD, Tophouse Rd, SH65, Mount Richmond Forest Park
Rainbow-Hammer Road and Molesworth Station	116	4WD. A wilderness experience	SH 63 west of Blenheim



DOC staff member talking to children ready to plant Pingao, as part of a community project to protect sand dunes, Otago. Photo: Nicola Vallance



Help off-road recreation by doing the right thing. There are lots of ways to get involved and you'll have fun doing it. Photo: 4WD club repairing a 4WD track, DOC



Clarence Reserve, Molesworth. Photo: DOC

LOCATION	KM	TRACK CONDITION	ACCESS
<p>Note: The drive takes about 3 hr and combined with the Acheron Road through Molesworth makes a good round trip. The route is remarkable for the landscape's transition from wide tussock lands and scree along Clarence River to craggy, beech-covered mountains in the Wairau catchment. Drivers must be self-sufficient and prepared for sudden weather changes.</p> <p><b>Molesworth Farm Park.</b> Scenic highlights include Lake Tennyson - surrounded by mountains, Forest Island Saddle and wetlands around the Sedgemere Lakes. Hut and camping accommodation is available at several points along the way. Full access is only available during certain times of the year and a small toll is charged. For details contact Nelson Regional Visitor Centre +64 3 546 9339, email <a href="mailto:nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz">nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz</a></p>			
Glenroy Valley	15.3	Difficult 4WD terrain for experienced drivers only	Glenroy Rd, Upper Matakaitaki



Note: This drive is best tackled with two vehicles equipped with extraction devices as there are very rough and difficult sections and most of the track is unformed. The DOC land is under lease and access permission is required for 4WDing from the leaseholder Ph +64 3 523 9426

### CANTERBURY

#### TWIZEL AREA

Ahuriri River Valley	11.1	maintained for 2WD and 4WD	Te Manahuna Area. Ahuriri Conservation Park Boundary to Canyon creek car park
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Note: In dry conditions there is 2WD access up to the Ahuriri Conservation Park boundary from there it becomes 4WD access to a car park just before Canyon Creek. No vehicle access beyond this point. Road is subject to closure during heavy rains or during freeze / thaw cycles. Contact Twizel Area Office +64 3 435 0802, email [twizelao@doc.govt.nz](mailto:twizelao@doc.govt.nz) before setting out for the latest track conditions. Refer to *4WD South Island, 107 Off Road Adventures, Vol 1*, p 186

### WEST COAST

#### BULLER

Denniston Circuit	11	Maintained for 4WD	Drive through Denniston township (north of Westport) and turn onto Mt Rochfort Rd. After 1.5 km look for signs on the right to the start of the circuit
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Note: The track traverses the Denniston okateau which has significant historic and natural values and a unique landscape. The alpine environment is extremely fragile, keep to the formed track. The access gate to the circuit is locked, contact DOC Buller Ph +64 3 788 8008 or the Buller 4WD Club Ph +64 3 789 8608.

Denniston to Iron Bridge	15	Maintained for 4WD by ABB for Transpower	Denniston township, north of Westport
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Note: The road follows the Power transmission lines from Denniston township which follows the road to Burnett's Face continuing through to traverse the Mt William Saddle. The land tenure is predominately public conservation land, however the road does not include sections administered by Solid Energy, and private ownership. Access is open except for a short section at the Iron Bridge where permission must be sought by the land owner, Ph +64 3 789 0239.

#### FRANZ JOSEF AREA

Greens Beach Road	2	4WD rough logging road, overgrown sections	Off SH 6 south of Ross. Turnoff south of Pukekura
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Note: Access to the remote Greens beach via Timberlands West Coast logging roads and DOC access roads. Sections of logging road are actively used by Timberlands West Coast – take care, slow down and drive with headlight on. Good fishing and picnic spots at Lake Ianthe and Greens Beach. Refer to *4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol2*, p 136

Okarito Forest Block	5.2	4WD, overgrown sections	North Okarito Forest Block, east of Okarito Lagoon
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Note: Okutua Road and Loop Road run partly through logged Rimu forest. Caution is required in narrow sections

#### GREYMOUTH AREA

No Name Road and Cockeye Creek Road	15	4WD rough terrain. <b>Experienced drivers only.</b> This road is not maintained. Drive with other vehicles	Marsden, south of Greymouth off SH 6, Turn right at Marsden, cross the concrete bridge where you come to a T intersection. Turn left at the intersection and just before a concrete ford turn right to the start of Cockeye Creek Road
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4WD negotiating the Denniston Circuit. Photo:DOC



Traversing No Name Road. Photo: Malcolm Langley





Truck exiting Nobles Stream caves - Napoleon Hill Route. Photo: Malcolm Langley

LOCATION	KM	TRACK CONDITION	ACCESS
<p>Note: Originally built to allow access for native logging, there are several creek crossings and the road has been washed out in many places. This trip should only be attempted by <b>experienced 4WD drivers</b> with winches and in the company of other 4WD's. After approximately 8km the trip ends where it meets Nemona Road; a 2WD gravel road. From here there are several options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• return by going back down Cockeye Creek</li> <li>• turn left and return to Marsden via Nemona and then Ogilvies Road</li> <li>• turn right for a short distance and then turn left onto Boarding House Road, after approximately 7 km this leads you on to Kumara-Inchbonnie Road. This is the Council maintained road between Kumara and Mitchells</li> <li>• turn right and follow Nemona Road for approximately 6 kilometres until you reach the intersection of Nemona Road and No Name 4WD road (topographical map J32 659 445). Here you can turn right and return to Marsden or turn left and come out on the Kumara-Inchbonnie Road after crossing the Greenstone River.</li> </ul> <p><b>Important:</b> Ogilvies and Nemona Roads are forestry roads owned by Timberlands West Coast. While normally open to the public, these roads can be closed if there are forestry operations in the area. Refer to <i>4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol2, p 130</i></p>			

Big River Road	15	4WD rough terrain, experienced drivers only. Narrow sections. Drive with other vehicles	Soldiers Road turn-off just south of Reefton, SH 7
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Note: This route travels through one of the most intact mining areas on the West Coast to the Big River settlement. Several historic sites are signposted on the way in, including the site of the Merrijigs Hotel which operated up to 1945. A 20 bunk hut is within close walking distance from the road end. Note that the Big River has to be forded just before the Hut is reached. This river can not be forded after heavy rain, so be mindful of the weather.

A number of historic relics can be reached by vehicle or short walk from Big River; The winding engine shed, the mine poppet-head, the remains of tin town and the battery. An hrs walk north leads to the remains of a steam powered sawmill. An hours walk south-east leads to the remains of the Big River Dam. Day tramps to the Historic Township of Waiuta, or to the Inangahua River are also optional.

Do not take detours or enter fenced areas as large parts of this area are still highly contaminated from mining activity. Come. Contact the Greymouth Area Office +64 3 768 0427, email [greymouthao@doc.govt.nz](mailto:greymouthao@doc.govt.nz) for further information

Napoleon Hill Road	30.9	4WD, difficult track. Narrow sections. Do not attempt when wet	Ahaura, east of Greymouth, SH 7
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Note: Begins at the turn-off on Orwell Creek Road and ends where Waipuna Creek meets the Waipuna-Clarke Road. Drive from south to north for accessibility and to reduce congestion. The track is to narrow for passing.

The first section passes through farm land on legal road, then follow alongside Orwell Creek through Timberlands West Coast's plantation, before climbing Napoleon Hill. The remains of the old township and cemetery can be found here. The road branches to the right on the top of Napoleon Hill and leads to the headwaters of Mosquito Creek. It is **not** advisable to proceed far this way. Recent gold mining has obliterated much of the old road; also most of the road is through private property.

Approx half a kilometre further on there is the remains of a track on the left, leading back to Orwell Creek. This is **not** suitable for 4WD driving, but does make a very challenging downhill mountain-bike ride.

A step downhill section leads into Nobles Creek where (if your vehicle is not too wide) you can drive through historic gold mining tunnels that were built to divert the creek. Following Nobles Creek downstream leads you into Waipuna Creek which should be followed down until you reach the Waipuna-Clarke Road.

Refer to *4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol 2 p 128*

Waitahu River Road	12	4WD. Take care of trampers	Gannons Road, north of Reefton
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Note: This route leads to Montgomery Hut (6 bunks) and is part of the Kirwans Loop Track. Good fishing in Waitahu River. Refer to *4WD South Island, 107 Off Road Adventures, Vol 1, p 136*

## OTAGO

### CENTRAL OTAGO AREA

Old Woman Hut access road	0.7	Maintained for 4WD	Old woman conservation area
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Note: Restricted access. Open in summer during dry conditions only

Bendigo CA Top Access Road	17.2	Maintained for 4WD	Bendigo Scenic Reserve, east of Lake Dunstan
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Note: Restricted access. Open in summer during dry conditions only

Serpentine Scenic Reserve Road	4.3	Maintained for 4WD	Rough Ridge, between Alexandra and Middlemarch
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Note: Restricted access. Open in summer during dry conditions only. Refer to *4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol 2* p 243

COSTAL OTAGO AREA

Kinvara Road	7.8	Maintained for 4WD	Rock and Pillar Scenic Reserve
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Note: Restricted access. Open in summer during dry conditions only

Te Papanui Conservation Area Access Road	25.5	Maintained for 4WD	Te Papanui Conservation Park
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Note: The site of the first Otago tussock grassland conservation park. Restricted access. Open in summer during dry conditions only

WANAKA AREA

LOCATION	KM	TRACK CONDITION	ACCESS
Kirtle Burn Road	12	Maintained for 4WD	Roaring Meg Reserve, Kirtle Burn road, Pisa range

Note: Restricted access. Open in summer during dry conditions only. Contact DOC Wanaka visitor centre Ph +64 3 443 7660, email [wanakavc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:wanakavc@doc.govt.nz) for further information



SOUTHLAND

MURIHIKU AREA

Eyre Mountains - Mt Bee Ridge	7.2	Maintained for 4WD by local community	Off SH 6 at Athol to the end of Mulholland Track , Eyre Mountains Conservation Park
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Note: 4WD access leads off the end of Irthing Road and climbs up Mt Bee to a group of huts and beyond the huts there is ready access to both the upper Irthing and Cromel Valleys. Contact Murihiku Area Office +64 3 214 4589. Refer to *4WD South Island, 93 New Off Road Adventures, Vol 2*, p 228

Eyre Mountains	3.8	Maintained to 4WD standard	Off SH 6 at Athol to the end of Mulholland Track , Eyre Mountains Conservation Park
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Note: The track passes through about 3 km of privately owned native forest before reaching public land. The Cromel Hut (6 bunks) is another 3 km along the track. The track then climbs to the saddle between the Acton and Cromel Branch before descending to the Cromel Branch Hut

Boarland Road	15	Maintained to 4WD standard. Kept for maintenance purposes of electrical pylons	Borland Fiordland
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Note: The road is often closed due to slips and washouts especially from the Grebe Lookout to Lake Manapouri South Arm. Users should check road conditions before setting out. Contact Fiordland visitor centre Ph +64 3 249 7921, email [fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz)



A NZ dotterel (critically endangered) near her nest. Her only defence is camouflage. Nesting season; Sept – Feb, please be extra careful on the beaches during this time. Photo: Dick Veitch